



# St. Mary's County Times

THURSDAY, JANUARY 2, 2025

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**General Assembly to  
Focus on Budget Deficit**

**Schools Face Chronic  
Absenteeism**

**Teen Seriously Injured  
in House Fire**

**PROPERTY  
TAXES  
TO CLIMB**



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“WE’RE GOING TO BE DOING WHATEVER WE CAN TO HELP OUR RESIDENTS.”

COMMISSIONER ERIC COLVIN ON CURBING THE TAX INCREASE IMPACTS DUE TO INCREASING PROPERTY ASSESSMENTS.



**LOCAL** 7  
Injured teen needs help



**LOCAL** 7  
Bubby's Farewell exceeds expectations



**ON THE COVER**  
Property assessments rise again

## WEEKLY FORECAST

THU, JAN 2	FRI, JAN 3	SAT, JAN 4	SUN, JAN 5
Mostly Sunny Hi: 42° Lo: 29°	Mostly Cloudy Hi: 42° Lo: 26°	Mostly Sunny Hi: 35° Lo: 25°	Partly Cloudy Hi: 35° Lo: 28°
MON, JAN 6	TUE, JAN 7	WED, JAN 8	THU, JAN 9
AM Snow Showers Hi: 36° Lo: 25°	Partly Cloudy Hi: 35° Lo: 22°	Partly Cloudy Hi: 35° Lo: 23°	Partly Cloudy Hi: 31° Lo: 18°

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# Budget Woes Will Be Focus of General Assembly



Del. Matt Morgan

By Guy Leonard  
Staff Writer

The state faces what looks to be a \$3 billion structural deficit and District 29 lawmakers are worried that that can mean only one thing; balancing the budget on the backs of taxpayers.

District 29 A Del. Matt Morgan has feared this for quite some time, he said.

"This session is going to revolve around the budget," Morgan said. "It's sad that the governor [Wes Moore] hasn't taken our warning about this for years.

"We had a \$5 billion surplus, now we have a \$3 billion deficit."

Morgan was quick to point out that Maryland's neighbor, Virginia had a budget surplus equal to our shortfall.

"We're the only state in the region with this budget crisis," Morgan said. "[Senate Majority Leader] Sen. Bill Ferguson has said everything's on the table."

Morgan said he took that to mean citizens can expect much talk of tax increases.

Morgan said one of his major bills he will introduce this session is one to recoup the losses to the state's transportation trust fund, which counties and municipalities depend on for funding of critical road construction and maintenance projects.

The bill would cut the gasoline tax, Morgan said, and reduce the amount to which the state subsidizes mass transit to 70 percent.

"Currently, we subsidize 92 percent of people riding mass transit," Morgan told The County Times.



Del. Todd Morgan

Morgan also wants to introduce a bill to create a commemorative day, which would be called Victims of Communism Day, to commemorate the lives lost worldwide to that political ideology's reign.

Del. Todd Morgan (R-District 29C) said the state continues on a path of little to no fiscal discipline.

"The problem is spending and no discipline to what you're spending it on," Todd Morgan said. "People are leaving, people are leaving the state."

Maryland has had a net loss of some 200,000 people, he said, meaning that there are fewer people to bear the current tax burden, let alone any new ones.

The state also faces problems with juvenile justice reform, which has proven to make difficult the jobs of law enforcement to curb crime as recent law changes restrict heavily their ability to detain and question potential juvenile offenders.

"Catch and release policies aren't doing us any good," Todd Morgan said.

He said he plans to introduce a bill this session that would eliminate "swipe fees" on credit card purchases dealing with taxes and tips.

"It's going to be very contested by the banking industry," Todd Morgan said. "I'm not voting to raise taxes or fees."

"Economic growth is stagnant." Sen. Jack Bailey and Del. Brian Crosby did not answer requests for comment for this article as of press time.

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*Brian Haislip Photography*



# State Raises Property Assessments Again

By Guy Leonard  
Staff Writer

County residents can expect to pay even higher property taxes in the coming year after the state announced this week that the latest wave of property assessments have increased in value more than 20 percent.

Locally, one elected official expressed surprise and the increase and said the Commissioners of St. Mary's County would try to ameliorate the impact as best they could in the coming budget year.

Commissioners already raised taxes in the prior budget year and are currently formulating the fiscal 2026 operating and capital budgets.

"We're very early in the budget process but we'll definitely be looking at that," said Commissioner Eric Colvin. "We're going to be doing everything we can to help our residents."

"I'm very worried about what the state's going to do."

In Maryland, a release from the Department of Assessments and Taxation explained,

there are more than two million property accounts that are split into three groups, each appraised once every three years.

The overall statewide value increase for Group 1 properties was 20.1 percent over the three years since the last reassessment.

The overall statewide increase represents an average increase in value of 21.1 percent for all residential properties and 16.4 percent for all commercial properties during this period, the release stated.

"For seven consecutive years, all 23 counties and Baltimore City have experienced an increase in property values," said Department of Assessments and Taxation Director Dan Phillips. "As part of our Tax Credit Awareness Campaign, each reassessment notice includes the status of the property as the owner's principal residence and the status of their homestead tax credit application. Owners are encouraged to apply for the homestead tax credit if the property is their principal residence and they have not applied."

guyleonard@countytimes.net

# Chronic Absenteeism Continues to Plague Schools

By Guy Leonard  
Staff Writer

At the Dec. 18 school board meeting in Leonardtown, elected officials were briefed on the latest scores for academic achievement of students on the state standardized tests and staff reiterated just how important it was for students to continue to come to class.

Whether a school got a high grade on the current five-star grading system used by the state was judged on academic achievement, academic growth, school climate and even aspects such as whether students were chronically absent or not.

Superintendent Dr. J. Scott Smith said a student who was absent three days or more in a month fit that description.

That included both excused and unexcused absences.

"It's important that we have kids in school every single day," Smith said, noting the distinction even went to those students who were experiencing health issues. "It's a straight calculation...they're not interested in the story behind it."

"Eighteen days out of 180 you are considered chronically absent."

The state provided data on the percentage of students in St. Mary's public schools who are not chronically absent, showing some improvement from 2023 to 2024.

In 2023 72 percent of elementary students, 70.5 percent of middle and 64.7 percent of high school students here were not chronically absent, the data showed.

By 2024 75.7 percent of elementary, 71.3 percent of middle and 67 percent high school students were not chronically absent.

Chronic absenteeism also has another severe consequence, according to the state's Blueprint for Education reform plan, Smith said, as it could stop a student from graduating high school.

This follows even if a student has superior grades and performance in other areas.

"So, if your child has less than a 90 percent attendance rate they are not going to graduate high school, according to Blueprint," Smith said.

guyleonard@countytimes.net

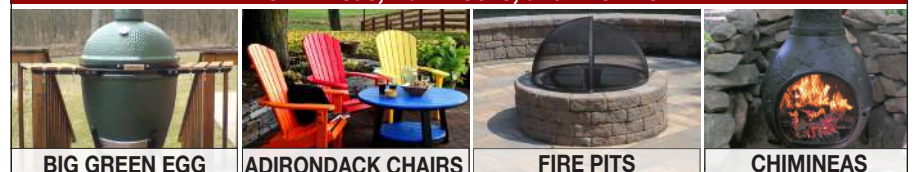
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Michael Steven Williams, 59, Leonardtown, MD  
Breanne Curly Murphy, 30, Leonardtown, MD

Erin Elizabeth De La Paz, 36, Leonardtown, MD  
Ryan Patrick Kaslavage, 27, Leonardtown, MD

Morgan Lorelei Jenkins-Houk, 30, Park Hall, MD  
Sarah Mcdowell Gillelan, 30, Park Hall, MD

Xiomara Vannesa Hernandez Fernandez, 32, Great Mills, MD  
Sergio Guillermo Acevedo Alvizu, 32, Great Mills, MD

Miranda Lee Cook, 25, Ridge, MD  
Khyri Hassan Wells, 29, Lexington Park, MD

Amanda Camille Hayes, 53, Mechanicsville, MD  
Spencer Garrett Wait, 52, Mechanicsville, MD

Macy Reese Garcia, 23, Leonardtown, MD  
Maxwell David Baker, 25, Clovis, Ca

Nicholas William Winkle, 30, Lexington Park, MD  
Kellsee Patricia Peake, 27, Lexington Park, MD

Dillon Dominick Delricco, 26, Upper Marlboro, MD  
Elizabeth Marie Mccarthy, 23, Lexington Park, MD

Denise Elizabeth Kay Norris, 34, Charlotte Hall, MD  
Brandon Joseph Bentley, 31, Charlotte Hall, MD

Tkeyah Otionna Battle, 31, Great Mills, MD  
Markko Darvelle Morsell, 34, Port Republic, MD

Melissa Rae Rivera, 44, California, MD  
Juan Carlos Munoz Rodriguez, 41, California, MD

Kenneth Scott Warren, Jr., 28, California, MD  
Britton Davis Beegle, 30, California, MD

Jaden Paul Elliott, 19, Lexington Park, MD  
Mary Carmen Espinoza Portillo, 21, Lexington Park, MD

Amir Graydon Cain Al-Khafaji, 23, Ann Arbor, Mi  
Ruby Nicole Larimer, 23, Ann Arbor, Mi

Michael Allen Graham, 52, Mechanicsville, MD  
Sascha Miles Vom Heede, 32, Mechanicsville, MD

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# Donations Sought for Teen Injured in Fire

By Guy Leonard  
Staff Writer

A girl who suffered serious burns in a house fire in Mechanicsville last week has the community rallying to support her recovery with a Go-Fund-Me account bringing in money to pay numerous bills and expenses.

"Rylee Johnson, my 13-year-old cousin, sustained second- and third-degree burns in a house fire in her Mechanicsville home on December 23<sup>rd</sup>," wrote Michelle Gwaltney. "Rylee was burned on her face, neck, arm, and torso.

"She will require multiple trips to Children's Hospital for wound treatments and daily home treatments. Rylee was home with her grandparents, Bobby and Pat Johnson, and her older brother when this horrible fire took place."

Gwaltney went on to say that Rylee and her family will have to start over again in recovering from the fire.

"Rylee lost everything in her bedroom, and the entire house was destroyed by soot and water damage," Gwaltney stated. "The family has been displaced and is currently in a hotel, having to foot the expenses and emotional struggle of this event.

"Bobby and Pat are asking for basic needs at this time and anything that you could do to help out to get this little girl's



Rylee Johnson

belongings replaced. Insurance will eventually kick in, but it is such a long and expensive process."

So far, according to the Go-Fund-Me website there have been 254 donations, totaling \$16,882 raised for Rylee and her family.

The Mechanicsville Volunteer Fire Department responded to the blaze; Johnson is a past fire chief of the company and currently sits on their board of directors.

[guyleonard@countytimes.net](mailto:guyleonard@countytimes.net)

# Bubby's Farewell Beats Fundraising Goal

By Guy Leonard  
Staff Writer

Friends and family of Joseph "Bubby" Knott, who passed away last January, wanted to honor his memory of philanthropy by having one last Flat Iron Farm Christmas extravaganza to raise at least \$100,000 for local charities.

They succeeded beyond what they had dreamed.

"I'm happy to say we exceeded our expectations," said Karen Siebert, Knott's daughter. "I'm proud of it."

The organizers of the farewell to Bubby were able to raise \$120,291.13, Siebert said, with many who attended the Christmas themed event, which took place over many days, enjoying the experience.

With a donation of \$200,000 from the Knott family, the total rises to more than \$320,000 for local charities.

"I think there were mixed reactions," Siebert told The County Times. "Some people were blown away by some of the displays we had; some people missed some of the things that were no longer there."

For decades the displays of lights and other mockups at Flat Iron Farm had been arranged in familiar patterns, and those who attended every holiday season became used to the same attractions being there year



after year and had come to expect them.

"Everyone knew exactly what to expect," Siebert said.

But this year Siebert and many volunteers worked to put together many new things for visitors to enjoy.

"We wanted to do something new, different and special," Siebert said. "It took a lot of people to pull this off in the way we wanted to do it."

Siebert said she believed that the Christmas farewell was a fitting tribute to her father's legacy of giving and hoped the rest of St. Mary's felt the same way.

"We wanted to create a sense of giving, we wanted to create a sense of community," Siebert said. "I hope we did that; I think we did that."

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# Lexington Park Man Arrested Following Domestic Shooting

St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office Deputies responded to a call for a report of shots fired this morning at approximately 2:30 a.m. in Lexington Park. When they arrived, deputies located several spent Aguila .380 caliber shell casings on the ground in front of an apartment in the 22000 block of Valley Estates Drive.

Witnesses told deputies they heard an argument between a male and a female in which the male threatened to shoot the female. A short time later, the witnesses also heard shots being fired from that area.

No injuries were reported during the incident.

Detectives from the Criminal Investigations Division obtained a search warrant for the residence, and Donnie Richardson, 49, of Lexington Park, was located in a closet. Richardson was taken into custody, and during the search of the residence, deputies located a Ruger .380 caliber handgun loaded with the same brand of ammunition as was found outside the residence and a box of the same ammunition in another part of the room.

The subsequent investigation determined Richardson is prohibited from possessing firearms and ammunition due to being convicted of a disqualifying crime. Richardson was charged with five offenses:

- knowingly possessing a regulated firearm by a person convicted of a disqualifying crime
- knowingly possessing ammunition



Donnie Richardson

after being prohibited from possessing a regulated firearm

- reckless endangerment
- two counts of wearing/carrying a handgun on or about their person.

Richardson was transported to an area hospital at his request for evaluation for an unrelated, preexisting medical issue. He has since been discharged and is incarcerated at the Detention and Rehabilitation Center in Leonardtown, pending a bond hearing before the court commissioner.

The case remains under investigation. Anyone with information about this incident is asked to contact Detective Warren Forinash at 301-475-4200, ext. 8072, or by email at Warren.Forinash@stmaryscountymd.gov.

# Deputies Investigating Theft of Guns from Local Business

St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office Deputies were dispatched to a Charlotte Hall location for an alarm call at a business that sells guns at approximately 11:53 p.m. Friday, December 27, 2024.

Upon arrival, deputies discovered the front window of GLR Enterprise shattered. A search of the premises determined no suspects were inside the store. The preliminary investigation indicates that an unidentified individual or individuals broke into the business and stole several muzzle-loading rifles before fleeing the scene.

The Criminal Investigations Division has assumed the case. Detective Keith Moritz is

the lead investigator, and anyone with information related to this incident is asked to contact Detective Moritz at 301-475-4200, ext. 8093, or by email at Keith.Moritz@stmaryscountymd.gov.

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

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

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**County Times**



# Man Arrested Following Disruptions at Local Churches

Deputies from the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office have arrested and charged Thomas Campbell Bolling Von Goetz, 56, of Avenue, after incidents at two local churches disrupted religious services and endangered citizens.

On December 24, 2024, shortly after 5 p.m., Von Goetz entered Holy Angels Catholic Church in Avenue during a Mass. He approached the altar and dropped an onion in the aisle, disturbing the peace of those attending. A citizen followed Von Goetz as he exited the church to ensure he was leaving the premises. Outside, Von Goetz assaulted the citizen by throwing tangerines at them.

Later that night, during Midnight Mass at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church in Leonardtown, Von Goetz disrupted the service by pouring whiskey into the holy water and threatening to harm parishioners. As church attendees escorted him from the building, he attempted unsuccessfully to strike several individuals with a whiskey bottle. Parishioners detained Von Goetz until deputies arrived; he was then transported to MedStar St. Mary's Hospital for medical evaluation.

On December 26, 2024, Von Goetz was arrested and charged with the following



Thomas Campbell Bolling Von Goetz

offenses:

- Second-Degree Assault
- Disorderly Conduct
- Defacing Religious Property
- Religious Crime Against a Group
- Obstructing a Religious Exercise
- Threat of Mass Violence
- Disturbing the Peace

Von-Goetz is currently being held at the St. Mary's County Detention and Rehabilitation Center, pending an appearance before a District Court Commissioner.



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## Letters to the Editor

### 'Reforming schools is a lost cause'

Now that the election is over, I'd like to offer the following comments:

Regarding the three school board elections, a majority of voters indicated: no interest in imposing term limits; no scrutiny of incumbents responsible for a failing school system; no concern for the age-inappropriate inculcation of children in gender identity concepts; no regard for candidates' qualifications or lack thereof; no displeasure with the limited influence and participation of parents in the school system; no support for parent's rights; and, no opposition to ever-increasing school system driven taxes.

A friend recently stated that "St. Mary's voters opted to maintain the status quo, in opposition to their national vote." As a former candidate, I met many voters who were sick of the status quo; many who did their research of the candidates and who voted for change, but it wasn't enough. What could have made a difference in the outcome of our local elections was to have heard from our existing elected officials. Make no mistake, our local elected officials were aware of the need for change on our school board, but they remained silent on their personal picks. Why? I'll tell you why because I had

personal conversations with some of them. To be succinct, they care more about being popular than standing up for change and the "right" choice for the direction that students in our county need.

Let me put it another way, our elected officials wouldn't endorse any candidate and for reasons mostly revolving around themselves. They care more about becoming re-elected or going out with a high popularity rating than attaching their name to "change agents for better school policies and positions."

My friend was also correct when he stated that "Attendance will continue to decline, costs will continue to soar, with the same dismal academic performance across the county," but I suggest that we not forget that the existing people that we've entrusted to look out for our best interests did nothing but protect their own.

Reforming the board of education and the school system is a lost cause. This is what the voters have decided to accept, though the children deserve better.

Brandie Edelen  
Mechanicsville



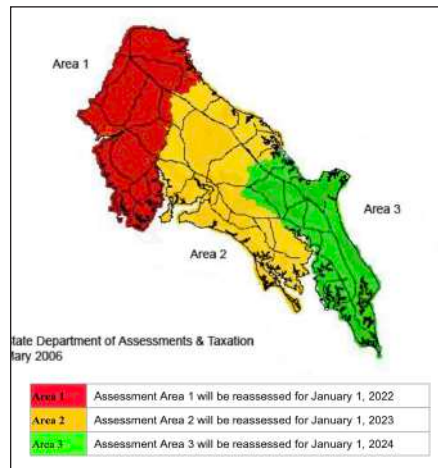
# 2024 St. Mary's County Year in Review

By Guy Leonard  
Staff Writer

County residents felt the pinch in their pocketbooks this year as rising consumer costs — edged on by inflation nationwide — took more of their purchasing power. They also cast their ballots for new elected officials in the 2024 Presidential election and helped bring Donald Trump back into the White House for an historic second term.

## JANUARY

County residents started off the year with the realization that their property taxes would rise about 25 percent as the state reassessed property values here and across Maryland upwards.



“It’s very important that people who own their homes are taking advantage of the Homestead Tax Credit on their primary residence,” said Commissioner Mike Hewitt in a social media post at the time. “The increase for those who claim the credit is three percent versus the 10 percent charged in Calvert County and the seven percent charged in Charles County.”

Hewitt said property owners should take care to ensure they are enrolled in the homestead program.

“Your assessment can go up 20 percent but your property taxes will only increase three percent,” Hewitt said of the situation in St. Mary’s. “Look in the upper right-hand corner of your property tax bill and it will say if it’s a primary residence or not.”

“Too many county residents just don’t know about this important way to save money on property taxes.”

St. Mary’s County also lost one of its most beloved citizens at the outset of 2024.

Joseph “Bubby” Knott, celebrated locally for his philanthropy, was an integral part of life in St. Mary’s according to many who knew him throughout his life, though he largely eschewed the limelight for his many acts of charity.

Knott passed away last week at the age of 77.

Knott was the owner of the construction business The Great Mills Trading Post.

His business empire, which, according to County Commissioner President James “Randy” Guy speaking a week after Knott’s passing, started out as a junk collecting business that he parlayed into a huge construction concern.

“He had a single truck that he used to go around and pick up metal and take it up to a scrap yard in Washington, D.C. for extra money,” Guy said.

“That’s how he started and he built up a huge business.”

Knott went into the excavating business like his father did, Guy said, and he went on to do many construction projects for the county — including the latest section of FDR Boulevard — and also the replacement runways for the Navy at Patuxent River Naval Air Station.

His cousin, former state senator Roy Dyson, said he was hard pressed to think of anyone in St. Mary’s who had contributed as much through their generosity as Knott had as a life-long resident of the county.

“He was an extraordinary man,” Dyson said. “He gave it all back to St. Mary’s County.”



Joseph “Bubby” Knott

“He seemed to back everybody; he had a legacy — I don’t know of any place where he didn’t help financially or build things for.”

His daughter, Karen Knott Siebert, said her father passed away the morning of Jan. 4. The response from the community with sympathy for the Knott family has been strong and immediate.

Knott was famous for his business acumen and also for his giving nature; in 2022 he bought the old Brass Rail sports bar on Route 5 and donated it as the new home of the St. Mary’s Caring Soup Kitchen.

Knott also founded the tradition of Christmas lights and holiday themed displays that had drawn and delighted the community to view the sprawling work for decades at Flat Iron Farm.

This past Christmas his family put on a farewell yuletide celebration at his old home to raise money for the many charities he had supported in life, raising nearly \$100,000.

Another prominent St. Mary’s citizen,

though, got a new lease on their long-time popular business after many years of uncertainty about their future in the restaurant business.

The Linda’s Café on Tulagi Place in Lexington Park is no more, its owner — Linda Palchinsky — and staff moved out on Jan. 14 after having served thousands of loyal customers for decades.

But that is hardly the end of the story; the community favorite restaurant should be reopened soon, its owner has announced, after successfully taking over the space of the former Days Off Deli at the intersection of Three Notch Road and Millstone Landing Road.



Linda Palchinsky and her daughter, Melissa Rivera, at the new location of Linda’s Café

“It’s been a long road deciding to make this move to a new location,” said Melissa Rivera, Palchinsky’s daughter, in a social media post the day of the move. “We really had to look deep and make sure that we wanted to make this level of commitment again.”

“So many ranges of emotions came over us today, I really had to think about the fact that I grew up in this restaurant.”

Palchinsky had been operating her restaurant on Tulagi Place for about three- and-a-half decades, leasing the property month to month from property owners based in Virginia.

Tulagi Place was demolished to make way for a Royal Farm fueling station and convenience store.

Another institution here in St. Mary’s faced an adapt-or-fade-away watershed moment as well.

Time seemed to be running out for Leonard Hall Junior Naval Academy in Leonardtown, as the county government had decided not to extend its long-standing lease to allow it to stay in the county-owned building.

The junior naval academy has been in operation for more than 100 years and has operated out of the building immediately adjacent to the county government headquarters for decades.

Commissioner Eric Colvin revealed to The County Times that four out of five commissioners agreed in executive session Jan. 9 to not extend the lease.

“They decided it wasn’t in the county’s best interest to continue to keep the school there,” Colvin said, noting he was the sole commissioner in favor of extending the lease.

In a later interview Colvin said the rationale for the executive session regarding the building’s fate was to seek legal advice for options available to the commissioners in dealing with the lease.

Executive sessions are often called for purposes of property acquisitions but that was not the case here since the county already owns the building.

It is also procedure for commissioners to return to public session and vote on decisions agreed upon in executive session, in this case no public vote was cast, Colvin confirmed.

“There was not [a public vote,]” Colvin said. “It probably should’ve been made clear to the public.”

The parent-centric leadership board was eventually able to get the county’s assistance in finding alternative sites, one in Mechanicsville and another in Callaway as options.



Students from Leonard Hall Junior Naval Academy participate in Leonardtown’s annual Veterans Day Parade.

## FEBRUARY

On the streets, the sheriff’s office continued its mission of getting illegal guns out of the hands of those who should not have them.

Deputies of the county sheriff’s office went out in the community, knocking on doors of those they believe who are engaged in the continuing epidemic of gun violence, and telling them they face steep consequences — either death, severe injury or arrest and incarceration.

But they also have another message; that they are also valued and don’t have to engage in that kind of life.

It’s called the Group Violence Intervention Program and the sheriff’s office has embraced it as a tool to deal with one of the worst and newly emergent problems here.

“We go out on a monthly basis and talk to these individuals,” said Sgt. Austin Schultz. “We explain to them that we want them to be alive, safe and free.”

Schultz and Sheriff Steven Hall, made their announcement to the membership of the NAACP’s local chapter during the winter.

“The people in this room are the solution,” Hall said. “It is not simply a law



enforcement problem.

"If a young person has access to a weapon, and uses the weapon in a crime, we're responsible for the active response to that."

But, Hall said, the question remained as to who was influencing and guiding a young person either away or towards the use of that gun.

"These young people are flopping in houses, they have little to no supervision, they have no role models, no mentors," Hall said. "They are finding worth, finding power, finding value holding a gun."

"It gives them power, it gives them purpose and it scares me to death."



Sheriff Steve Hall addresses a gathering of the local NAACP chapter 7025.

Hall said using a little compassion towards someone at risk of being in that lifestyle was important.

"We have to care, we have to reach out," Hall said. "If you know someone who is at risk, put them into contact with someone who can get them services, mentoring."

"Call one of us."

Candidates began to flood the public consciousness as well in the winter, with people signing on to races in the board of education races with battles for the at large seat, District 2 and District 4 seats breaking out.

St. Mary's also chose between a long-time county attorney in private practice — Susan Armitage — and sitting Judge Amy Lorenzini to serve in the circuit court.

Lorenzini would keep her seat while newcomer Josh Guy would be selected for the at-large school board seat.



Judge Amy Lorenzini celebrating with her family in Leonardtown on election night.

Long-time incumbents Cathy Allen and Mary Washington would also keep their seats.

## MARCH

The year once again saw a request from

county schools for more money from local government to cover rising state mandates for teacher pay.

"One of the largest challenges of the blueprint is to actually live up to the aspirational goal of teachers and leaders," Smith said at the March 6 school board meeting.

The local school system was able to increase the entire salary scale for teachers by 10 percent, Smith said, in the five-year period mandated by the blueprint but there was still much to do for teacher pay.

"Even with all of that... our starting teacher salary for this year is still \$52,500," Smith said. "Far off is the career ladder for teachers and that ladder starts out with \$60,000 minimum salary for certificated teachers."

"That is an aspirational goal in a county where we have had not really the most competitive starting salaries for teachers."

County commissioners also began their budget work sessions just before the spring and quickly moved to the tax increase debate.

Commissioner Eric Colvin sparked a discussion at the Mar. 12 budget work session amongst local elected leaders over whether they should consider raising the income tax to pay for increases in spending pushed on the county by the state, particularly in education.

"I'm going to talk about the unpopular thing and talk about the income tax," Colvin said. "It's not something I want to do... but we're stuck with it."

Colvin was referring to the state's mandate that all teacher salaries must begin at a base of \$60,000 by 2026 as part of the Blueprint for Education funding scheme that is aimed at vastly improving education statewide.

"There's really no other way around it," Colvin said.

But Commissioner Mike Hewitt disagreed.

"I'm not going to raise taxes," Hewitt said near the end of a three-and-a-half-hour budget work session. "I think we can make adjustments and there are salary savings with these positions that haven't been filled."

Hewitt was speaking of the more than 120 positions in county government that remain vacant, which include 30 sworn positions within the Office of the Sheriff.

Commissioners decided to use salary savings from the other vacant positions to provide a 3 percent pay increase for sheriff's deputies to maintain a level of competitiveness with neighboring counties and the Maryland State Police.

## APRIL

As springtime came around, the revitalization of Leonardtown's town square continued with meeting a long-awaited milestone of progress.

Workers are in a flurry of activity at the old Duke building at the corner of Washington Street and Fenwick Street in downtown Leonardtown, pushing to meet the Apr. 6 deadline for the opening of the new Social Coffeehouse's home, just across the street from its much smaller original establishment.

Sean Coogan, its owner, is confident that the interior of the newly renovated building

will be ready in time.

When he bought the space, he thought it would take a much shorter period of time to get it ready; but it's already been two years, he said.



Sean Coogan and Kelly Hintze oversee work at the Duke Building

The COVID-19 pandemic hurt many businesses badly, but, Coogan said, it brought much more business his way than before the dread disease struck.

"We made twice as much in revenue in 2020 than 2019," Coogan said, noting that the shift to allow outdoor seating in town brought out many customers who wanted to socialize after being cooped up during early lockdowns. "We just blew up because of COVID-19."

Spring was a good time to get outside; especially this past April when residents came out by the thousands to witness a solar eclipse.

It was here and then it was gone.

After weeks of hype the solar eclipse of April 8, 2024 drew hundreds of people to Dorsey Park in Hollywood, many of them families leaving school and work early, to see the moon occlude the sun by about 86-to-88 percent.

As the time approached — approximately 3:20 p.m. was the stated time of maximum eclipse residents would be able to see locally — the sky dimmed noticeably but not exceptionally.

Using such accoutrements as specially made glasses to view the eclipse safely, viewers could see much of the sun turned black by the intercession of the moon passing in front of it. But the effect was not visible to the naked eye.



Crowds gather at Dorsey Park to watch the solar eclipse

It lasted perhaps a minute and viewers could actually see the moon moving off and away from the sun as full brightness returned.

The day quickly became more about enjoying a family outing than bearing wit-

ness to a rare astronomical event.

"It was nice to get outside but not very exciting," said Benjamin Pennington, who had brought his family out to see the event. "It met expectations."

"It's about what happened the last time."

## MAY

Pet owners, particularly dog lovers, became concerned over changes to the animal control ordinance that increased fines and added more mandates for licensing of their pets.

Some of the more significant changes to the current ordinance include fines up to \$1,000 for not taking adequate care of domestic animals or if a dog is found to be stray.

The new ordinance defines stray as a dog found to be at-large three times or more; an animal control officer who finds any animal that poses a direct threat to the public can pursue and trap the animal.

A potentially dangerous dog — one that has bitten a person, killed or inflicted injury on a domestic animal, for example — must be submitted to enhanced enclosures and microchipping as well as other requirements.

Owners of such dogs must also carry \$50,000 in public liability insurance to cover their canine, according to the new ordinance.

Also, dog licenses would now come with a fee set by commissioners and dogs without a license cost their owners \$250 in fines.

Maria Hoover, a member of a local animal rescue group, said the new ordinance's requirements for licensing of commercial animal establishments could hurt efforts by foster homes to take in dogs.

The new ordinance states that any establishment with five or more dogs must have a license and faces up to \$1,000 in fines without one as well as a bi-annual inspection.

Feeding cats in county owned parks would also be prohibited under the new ordinance.



"I'm very concerned at some of these fees I'm seeing," Hoover told county commissioners. "We face overwhelmed shelters, rescues cannot keep up."

"People are giving up their animals because they can't afford to feed them, they can't afford the veterinary care."

Law enforcement continued to sound the alarm over synthetic opioids on the streets, particularly illicitly-produced fentanyl.

The synthetic opioid fentanyl is responsible for the most opioid overdose related deaths in Maryland, the latest state-provided data shows and local health department harm reduction specialists say the powerful narcotic has infiltrated nearly every illicitly available drug that can be found on the street.

"Fentanyl has been found in 90 percent



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of all illicit and street pharmaceuticals said Zuriel Savoy, a registered peer supervisor with the St. Mary's County Health Department speaking to the local branch of the NAACP last week in Lexington Park. "So, if it hasn't come from a physician or a pharmacy, 90 percent — to include marijuana — has included fentanyl."

Health department staff said there was a nearly 18 percent increase in opioid related deaths involving cocaine abuse statewide.

"The people here doing crack and cocaine do not realize that there is a pretty high chance that there is fentanyl mixed with it," said Nicole Barrows, a recovery specialist who closely tracks all non-fatal overdoses in the county or involving county residents wherever they may be.

The current year's numbers would not be available until sometime in the fall, she told the meeting attendees, but she expected the local numbers to "skyrocket" by that time.

Barrows also said fentanyl has been found in vape cartridges.

"Not the ones you can get from dispensaries," Barrows said. "But the ones your peers are getting from smoke shops."

### JUNE

Along with the demolition of Tulagi Place, so was the aged firehouse on Great Mills Road.

It was torn down June 4 to make way for redevelopment of the property to allow for a Royal Farms convenience store and fueling center.



Demolition of the old firehouse on Great Mills Road

The Bay District volunteers issued a statement on the fate of their long-vacant station. "This station has been a cornerstone of our community, witnessing countless acts of bravery, service, and camaraderie," the statement reads. "As we say goodbye to this beloved building, we reflect on the countless memories and the dedication of all the firefighters who called it their second home." The volunteers now operate out of two stations, one located near to the old site on Shangri-La Drive and the other on FDR Boulevard at the intersection with Chancellors Run Road.

Del. Todd Morgan (R-Dist. 29C) lamented the loss of the old, iconic building but said that progress moved ever onward.

"The old fire house is monumental in the history of Lexington Park," Morgan told The County Times. "But they outgrew their facility."

Apparatus only grew bigger as the years went on, Morgan said, and the number of volunteers grew, as well as did the needs of their first due area.

"It's sad to see it go but it's progress and the redevelopment of Lexington Park," said

Morgan.

A son of St. Mary's was also set to make history as he and other soldiers prepared for a special commemoration of the invasion of Europe in 1944 to free it from Nazi tyranny.

U.S. Army Capt. Patrick Bauk, a 2010 graduate of Leonardtown High School and West Point graduate who grew up here in St. Mary's County dropped with more than 1,000 other paratroopers from all over the world June 6 to commemorate the invasion of Europe by the Allied Powers during World War II.

On June 6, 1944, allied paratroopers, including the 101st Airborne Division, of which Bauk was once a member, dropped into Normandy coast in France under cover of night but under fire to begin the liberation of the Nazi occupied territory.

Paratroopers were first dropped into the combat zone to disrupt operations behind enemy lines and pave the way for the main invasion on the Atlantic coast.

Their mission also included capturing key bridges and routes to allow invasion forces to flow inland.

The latest jump into Normandy commemorated the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings.



An image captured mid-jump over Normandy by Capt. Patrick Bauk's helmet camera

Bauk's family, including his mother and father, joined him in France for the commemorative airborne drop.

They toured many of the battle sites long committed to history, Omaha Beach, Pegasus Bridge, St. Mere Eglise, Point du Hoc, and Carentan; all places that either the 101st Airborne, British paratroopers or U.S. Army Rangers fought their way inland.

Bauk said he was able to secure a seat on a French aircraft and use their parachute to make the 1,000-foot jump.

They took off from France — about 1,300 paratroopers in all, he said — flew to Great Britain to bring British planes into the formation and head back to jump over Normandy using the original invasion route.

"In 1944 they were making the jump from about 400-to-500 feet," Bauk told The County Times. "The ground comes up in a hurry."

### JULY

As the summer temperatures increased parents and other stakeholders in the education system began to decide the future of cell-phones in classrooms as they had become a distraction in many cases.

"We're talking about all of the overwhelming data that demonstrates while the cell phone is an incredibly productive technology tool that makes us feel connected to

others and secure, is a real challenge in all high school, middle school and even some elementary school settings," Superintendent Dr. J Scott Smith said in late June to the school board.

Florida already bans cell phones in schools, Smith continued, and California is considering following suit.

"And New York City public schools, over one million students, it looks like they're going to be banning cell phones," Smith said. "It's the right time to really be talking about it."

That workgroup's final product would lead to cellphone use during the instructional day being virtually eliminated.

As the year went on one local family continued to pursue what they considered justice for their son's death at the hands of a state trooper.

More than three years ago, 16-year-old Peyton Ham was shot to death by a state trooper in his family's own yard in Leonardtown after he pointed what turned out to be a replica handgun at the law officer.

After months of investigations by the Maryland State Police and then State's Attorney Richard Fritz, Trooper Joseph Azzari was cleared of any wrongdoing in the shooting but Ham's family filed a civil rights suit against the trooper, claiming the trooper used excessive force in killing their son.



Azzari approaching Ham after firing the first salvo.

The U.S. District Court in Greenbelt quashed Kristee Boyle's, Ham's mother's, case but the case may have just had new life breathed into it after the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, Va. said the lower court erred in its decision.

The latest ruling was issued July 9; the case was argued before the court May 10.

"The successful appeal highlights that our case was improperly dismissed, affirming the validity and importance of pursuing accountability and justice in cases such as this," Boyle wrote in a social media post. "This ruling grants us the opportunity to proceed to discovery and potentially obtain a new federal jury trial, ensuring that the truth is brought to light and that those responsible are held accountable."

Two of three judges on the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals sided with Boyle in their majority ruling.

"On review, we conclude that discoverable evidence could create a material dispute of fact and thus the district court abused its discretion in denying Boyle an opportunity to conduct discovery," the 4th Circuit ruled. "Accordingly, without assessing the court's

determination on the merits, we reverse its denial of Boyle's motion for discovery, vacate its grant of summary judgment to Azzari as premature, and remand for additional proceedings."

The county would have to deal with its own scandal involving an employee engaging in illegal activity as well.

Since January of 2023 Thomas Patrick Raley, a veteran emergency medical technician (EMT) and paramedic, had been fulfilling the role of chief of the county's career EMT force.

Almost six years ago, The County Times had reported, Raley was the same person who was charged with breaking into a medic box at the Leonardtown Volunteer Rescue Squad and taking prescription opioids to use for his own admitted addiction.

Coverage from The County Times and other local media outlets from 2019 showed that Raley had been charged with destruction of property and theft less than \$100.

Court records of the charges against Raley no longer exist, according to an on-line search of the Maryland judiciary website.

On July 23 the Commissioners of St. Mary's County moved to terminate his contract as the county rescue chief; that same day the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office named Raley as the sole suspect in a recent spate of tampering incidents in county owned medic boxes that had reportedly been pilfered of narcotics and other drugs.

Raley was later charged with 34 criminal counts including theft scheme.

The commissioners had hired Raley for the top post despite full knowledge of his past involvement with the theft of narcotics.

### AUGUST

Near the end of the summer an old county family was continuing its bid to sell an iconic piece of St. Mary's property that was one of the county's many hidden treasures.

An historic nearly 500-acre plantation nestled away on the banks of the Potomac River in Leonardtown has been up for sale for almost a year now with an asking price of \$30 million.

Not widely known because it has always been held in private ownership over the centuries — yes, centuries — Mulberry Fields is still owned by the Jansson family, which first took possession of it about 70 years ago.

Built in 1763, Mulberry Fields has survived the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812 and the Civil War as well as efforts by developers to reshape its land and character.

It still stands today.



Mulberry Fields



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Holger and Mary Jansson, long since passed away and having left the mansion and the grounds, much of it split between agricultural land and pristine forest, to their children, became well known in the community for their philanthropy and advocacy for preserving historical resources like Mulberry Fields.

They opened their home in the mid-1970s to archaeologists eager to study a remaining example of Georgian-style home architecture and a prime example of the gentrified, agrarian lifestyle of the mid-18th century in St. Mary's County.

One of those young archaeologists was Henry Miller, now a Ph. D and Maryland Heritage Scholar at Historic St. Mary's City.

He was a little saddened at the prospect of such a cultural and historic resource passing out of the hands of the Jansson family who had long held it in trust.

"Holger and Mary did so much to protect it," Miller told The County Times. "Everything [in the interior of the mansion] is original from the 1760's.

"I would hope whoever acquires it would respect the building; it's the best Georgian-style mansion in St. Mary's County.

"It's a fabulous building."

## SEPTEMBER

By the fall the county could finally learn more about the circumstances that led to a young firefighter losing his life in the line of duty in 2023.

On June 27 of last year firefighter Brice Trossbach was killed while trying to extinguish a housefire in Leonardtown when the floor of the home he had entered collapsed.

More than a year later, a report on the details of that fire from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) reveals the apparent actions made that morning that led up to Trossbach's tragic death.



Brice Trossbach

The report stated the factors contributing to the death of Trossbach, 25, included compromised situational awareness, an ineffective analysis of the situation on the fireground as well as an ineffective cost/benefit analysis of an interior attack on the fire and an ineffective use of "appropriate strategy and tactics."

The county's volunteer fire chief, C.P. Miedzinski, said the other company fire chiefs would gather next week to review the report.

"We're going to take this report and use

it to ensure St. Mary's County provides the highest level of service and also ensure the life and safety off all of our firefighters," Miedzinski said. "We're going to use this report to ensure this — another line of duty death — never happens again."

The report, which was released Sept. 11, also stated that ineffective professional development, lack of ongoing crew integrity and a lack of information shared from the 911 caller to responding units was also to blame.

Leonardtown firefighters deployed an attack line to the front of the house, called side Alpha in the report, while Engine 132 setup a portable dump tank in the yard to fight the fire.

The report showed the situation quickly deteriorated from there.

"At approximately [4:25 a.m.], two firefighters from Engine 132 advanced their ... attack line through a first-floor window to the left of the front door," the report stated. "The Engine 132 officer [Trossbach] took the other attack line from an Engine 1 firefighter and entered through the front door.

"At 4:26 a.m., emergency traffic was transmitted from the safety officer Chief 9B on the tactical channel that the second floor collapsed on side Charlie [the back of the house]."

Just one minute after the collapse and the call for a total evacuation of the house, an alert was sounded that a firefighter — Trossbach — had gone missing.

"After several attempts to rescue the Engine 132 company officer, the strategy was changed from a rescue operation to recovery," the report stated. "[Trossbach] was removed from the structure at approximately 0616 hours and transported by an advanced life support ambulance to a local hospital where he was pronounced deceased."

The report recommendations said firefighters should develop and maintain "effective situational awareness during emergency incidents" as a result of Trossbach's death.

It also placed the onus on incident commanders to "define their fireground strategy, tactics and goals based upon a risk/benefit analysis and a detailed scene size-up to include known risk" and other factors.

## OCTOBER

The county again lost another of its most admired public servants as the fall continued on.

The county's longtime Administrative Judge Michael J. Stamm died on Oct. 2 succumbing to a brief and sudden illness; he was 68.

Stamm served on the bench for 18 years, the longest serving jurist in St. Mary's, and began his legal career in private practice and then as a prosecutor with the St. Mary's County State's Attorney's Office but before that he was a public school middle teacher here.

Commissioner Mike Hewitt said he had known Stamm for decades and how he went to law school while teaching young children.

"He wanted to be an attorney ... so he had to go to school at night," Hewitt said this week during the business meeting of the Commissioners of St. Mary's County. "It's very hard to do; he pulled himself up by his bootstraps."

Stamm had just returned from a trip to

Ireland upon his death.

"Mike was a great guy, he had a lot of time on the bench," Hewitt said. "They had just started travelling; the point is, do something while you can, don't put things off."

Stamm was the judge who heard juvenile cases and oversaw the juvenile drug court. Debra Burch, circuit court clerk, said

Stamm had a passion for ensuring juveniles who had lurched towards a life of crime had a chance to redeem and reform themselves in hopes of a better life.

"He got that passion from his time teaching," Burch told The County Times. "He wanted them working to the potential he knew they had."

Laura Caspar, a former state's attorney in St. Mary's now working in Charles County, said Stamm always took an interest in people and their families whether they were in his courtroom or outside of it.



Judge Michael Stamm with Nora Sterling, State's Attorney Jaymi Sterling's daughter.

"He has always been kind and caring," Caspar said. "I thought he was very middle of the road.

"He was someone you were always happy to go in front of... he was a calm, intelligent, knowledgeable jurist."

But even as the county mourned its loss, many more rallied to help thousands in North Carolina and Florida who had suffered terribly due to massive hurricanes that had devastated their communities.

A newly formed cooperative of local non-profit service groups came together to continue the drive for relief supplies for the survivors of Hurricane Helene, particularly in North Carolina, which was the hardest hit of seven states back in late September.

The Proactive Alliance of Community Emergency Relief Services (PACERS) is comprised of the local Knights of Columbus, American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion and the Lions Club.

PACERS is sought a plethora of items, including: personal hygiene products, potable water, water purification tablets, pet food, baby formula, diapers and infant care products, cold weather gear, flashlights, small grills and charcoal, hand tools and axes, sleeping bags, pillows and blankets, batteries and cell phone charging devices and cell power storage devices.

PACERS is also accepted cash donations to pay for fuel costs and vehicle rentals to transport the supplies down to North Carolina by truck.

Brandy Turnbull, a local veteran who

started up a relief convoy to deliver supplies reported she is now working with PACERS to continue the relief efforts. She has just helped ship more than 41,500 pounds of supplies to hurricane-stricken areas.

Some of the many donations collected by volunteers. Photos courtesy of: Brandy and James Turnbull, P.J. Forrest, Leo and Christina Gillespie and Carla Tomaszewski been washed out and power lines badly damaged.

Turnbull said some communities may not have power restored for as much as two months.

The supply donations have come so heavily, Turnbull said, that she has had to turn some of them away because she had run out of space to store it.



Donations collected locally to support hurricane victims in North Carolina

Mearl Rusaw, with the local Knights of Columbus organization, said he and other volunteers continue to package the supplies being donated from all over Southern Maryland.

"It just keeps coming in," Rusaw said. "We've got a little bit of everything."

PACERS has four donation locations including the Dean Lumber Warehouse "C" on Mervell Dean Road, Tom Hodges Auto Sales in Hollywood, Bank of America in Mechanicsville and the Weis stores in Callaway, Lexington Park and Lusby.

"It's amazing," said Deborah Rusaw, Mearl's wife helping package the donations. "It's amazing what people have been bringing in."

Monetary donations can be made to the VFW Post in Waynesville, North Carolina through Cash App, Venmo and PayPal, according to PACERS, as well as through the Ridge Lions Club using Zelle.

Women Veterans United Committee, Inc. is also accepting monetary donations.

She has seen the devastation, Turnbull said, and the pictures and reports commonly reported "aren't doing the situation justice."

"The closer you get to where North Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia meet, the worse the damage gets," Turnbull said. "The devastation is just indescribable.

"It's really bad."

She called the conditions she saw "heartbreaking."

"There were entire towns of between 5,000 and 15,000 people where everything was gone except one stud wall standing,"

Turnbull said. "There were boulders just sitting in parking lots that were the size of an SUV."



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"There was asphalt ripped up like a band aid torn away."

She credited her son Hunter, 6, a student at Ridge Elementary School, with coming up with the idea to make signs at collection sites to help sort out all of the donations of supplies.

### NOVEMBER

Predictably St. Mary's had a strong voter turnout for the Presidential Election of 2024 in both early voting and on General Election day.

At just after 10 p.m. on Nov. 5, with all 28 precincts in St. Mary's County reporting in, new comer Josh Guy had prevailed over his opponent, also a first-time office seeker, Brandie Edelen in the race for the open at-large school board seat by a margin of 25,794 votes to 19,522.

"I'm honored and humbled to be your next board of education member," Guy said in a social media post to his supporters. "I travelled this county listening to parents, teachers, bus drivers, maintenance workers, and even our students.

"I will work hard to keep our students safe, increase parental involvement, retain our educators, and ensure our budget respects the taxpayer."

Guy will be the sole new member on the Board of Education.

District 2 School Board member Cathy Allen also secured another term on the board with 24,515 votes to the 18,257 earned by her opponent Elena Brewer.

Mary Washington, the District 4 incumbent, also held onto her seat by a comfortable margin of 25,447 votes to opponent David Drys' 18,008.



Incoming school board member Josh Guy (left) and incumbents Cathy Allen (center) and Mary Washington (right).

Both Washington and Allen have been on the school board for nearly 30 years.

Circuit Court Judge Amy Lorenzini also retained her seat on the bench after taking in more than 45,000 votes in the general election; she ran unopposed in the race following besting Susan Armitage in the primary election.

While former Gov. Larry Hogan easily won a majority of St. Mary's votes in his race for U.S. Senate, he fell well short of his Democrat opponent, Prince George's County Executive Angela Alsobrooks and her campaign to replace outgoing Senator Ben Cardin.

Michelle Talkington, the Republican candidate who ran against long-time District 5 U.S. Rep. Steny Hoyer for a seat in Congress and took 28,884 votes in St. Mary's as opposed to Hoyer's 20,749 but the incumbent easily went on to victory in the rest of his district to retain his seat in the

federal government.

Marylanders overwhelmingly voted to enshrine abortion rights — alternatively known as reproductive rights — in the state's constitution and that trend, perhaps surprisingly, followed in St. Mary's where Republican voters are in the majority and typically socially conservative.

County voters resoundingly voted to approve the constitutional amendment, known as Question No. 1; 30,222 voted for it while just 18,714 voted against it.

President Elect Donald J. Trump will take his place as the 47th chief executive of the nation with a clear majority of electoral votes; he will be only the second person to win a non-consecutive term for president since Grover Cleveland in 1892.

St. Mary's overwhelmingly voted in favor of Trump and his Vice President-Elect Sen. J.D. Vance with 30,683 votes to 18,928 for current Vice President Kamala Harris and her campaign partner Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz.

But, predictably, Maryland's 10 electoral votes went to the Harris campaign as the Democrat's advantage in the state versus Republicans is two-to-one.

And in November the county finally began work on a much-anticipated community center that activists had been clamoring for.

After years of negotiations, surveys and planning, the county finally broke ground in partnership with the YMCA of the Chesapeake this week to build one of their community recreation and learning centers in Lexington Park right on Great Mills Road.

A cold, blustery day did little to dim the spirits of the dozens of project supporters who turned up to celebrate the ground breaking ceremony that kicks off the construction of the first YMCA in St. Mary's County and in Southern Maryland as well.



Breaking ground on the new YMCA

Janice Walthour, chair of the education committee for the local NAACP chapter and a local activist, said the pending YMCA was a long-awaited counter to the argument oft repeated here that "there's nothing to do here." "This started nine years ago when we tried to get the funding for a community center," Walthour told the assembled crowd on land next to the county-owned Great Mills Swimming Pool. "We are uplifted to bring this YMCA to our community."

The facility will be two stories, about 65,000 square feet and take about 17 to 18 months to complete; the total cost of the project is \$22 million, of which the county has already footed \$16 million in tax payer

funding.

U.S. Rep. Steny Hoyer, who just weeks ago helped deliver federal funding for the project as a result of an earmark, the community's desire for the project would be the driving force behind its success.

"It takes a community to build a community center," Hoyer said. "And for those of you who have some money... left in your pockets, we still have \$2 million to go."

### DECEMBER

As the year came to a close, a St. Mary's County man made sure to achieve a long-held dream of his, getting into outer space.

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.



James D. Russell in the New Shepherd capsule

"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."

In a time of year when all was supposed to be focused on peace and tranquility, the skies of the Eastern Seaboard, especially New Jersey and Pennsylvania were anything but with reports of unknown drone swarms whipping people into a frenzy.

Local authorities cautioned restraint.

"Our counter UAS (unmanned aerial systems) system hasn't seen anything," said Patrick Gordon, NAS Patuxent River base public information officer. "We haven't had any drone incursions since all of this began."

The sightings of masses of drones began in mid-November in and around a military installation in New Jersey and federal authorities have said simultaneously that they do not know who is operating them and that they pose no threat.

Similar sightings have been reported in Pennsylvania and former Gov. Larry Hogan publicly called for federal government intervention and transparency when he filmed what he said were a swarm of drones over his home in Davidsonville.

John Slaughter, director of the University of Maryland's UAS Research and Operations Center (UROC) in California said that while there may not have been any local drone incursions of military airspace, that sort of thing happens all the time.

"And they have the authority to do something about it if they consider it a threat," Slaughter told The County Times. "There are techniques by which you can take over a drone, make it go back to where it came from, force it to land or make it stay away. "It's just not legal to use in this country because it's illegal to hack a computer and a drone is a computer."

Only the military can use such technology, Slaughter said, and only if the drone violates the installation's territory or operations.

"It's used in combat all the time," Slaughter said of the counter drone systems. "It's just not legal to use in the states.

"The laws need to be updated."

Slaughter said he was dubious of the many reports of mass drone encounters, particularly the accounts of their size.

Some have reported that the drones in question are the size of an SUV.

"I'm 99 percent sure they don't exist," Slaughter said. "Big drones stay at higher altitudes where it's safer to operate."

He also did not believe the drones allegedly flying in and around the Eastern seaboard were necessarily a threat.

"If I wanted to do something nefarious with my drones... why would I keep their lights on?," Slaughter asked. "There are more than one million registered drones in the United States and it's perfectly legal to fly them, as long as you follow the rules, even at night."

Slaughter said people may be mistaking planes, helicopters or even satellites in the night sky for drones and reporting it; this in turn could help fuel a kind of mania to confuse objects in the night sky as drones.

[guyleonard@countytimes.net](mailto:guyleonard@countytimes.net)





# NAVAL AIR STATION PATUXENT RIVER *News*

## NAVAIR Additive Manufacturing Team Helps Coast Guard Maintain Operational Readiness

When the U.S. Coast Guard was unable to procure a wiring system part that affected its entire fleet of MH-60T helicopters in late November, they turned to the Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) Additive Manufacturing (AM) Team. Thanks to a collaborative workplace culture between services and a recognition for urgent solutions at the time of need, the Coast Guard kept its aircraft flying without a break in operations.

As members of the Coast Guard prepared to upgrade the MH-60T Automatic Asset Tracking System's (AATS) wiring system and distribute it to the fleet, they noticed one item was missing. "All the parts must be in the kit before the upgrade is pushed out to the fleet," explained Lt. Cmdr. Andrew Armstrong, Surface Forces Logistics Center Industrial Operations Division National Industrial Enterprise, Organic Depot Maintenance branch chief and Surface Fleet Additive Manufacturing lead. "One unique wiring part, the AATS spacer mount, was unavailable via commercial means; the only approved fabrication method to meet this need is additive manufacturing (AM)," he said.

The Coast Guard's AM team ran into another problem after its AM shop designed, printed a prototype and began to manufacture the spacing mount. The material to 3D print it, called Black Ultem — a polyetherimide material with high mechanical strength and rigidity — was not in stock. Familiar with NAVAIR's AM capabilities, Armstrong contacted NAVAIR AM Program Manager Ted Gronda. The Coast Guard already had an approved AM technical data package (TDP) for the part, which specified the same AM machines as NAVAIR's. All Armstrong needed to do was transfer his TDP files via the Joint Technical Data Integration (JTDI) website, Gronda said.

The U.S. Navy, and NAVAIR in particular, has a long history of supporting other federal agencies with AM. "It's an opportunity to strengthen relationships across



organizations and create channels for future collaboration and exchange of information. We were more than willing to help," he said.

Gronda quickly set the NAVAIR AM Team to work. Engineers determined NAVAIR's AM systems could meet the requirements, so they authorized a deviation for printing on the AM system at Fleet Readiness Center Mid-Atlantic Detachment Oceana in Virginia Beach, Virginia, the closest NAVAIR AM system to the point of need.

However, Lakehurst did not have the thermoplastic AM material on hand. After several calls to different NAVAIR sites, the team learned the Polymers Research Branch at Patuxent River had the required thermoplastic. Of course, how to get the material to the AM machines at Oceana posed another challenge.

"Recognizing the urgency and the importance — this impacted the Coast Guard's entire MH-60T fleet — one of our team members volunteered to drive the materials from Pax River to Virginia Beach that evening, an almost four-hour drive," Gronda said. While the materials were being delivered, Armstrong uploaded the TDP to JTDI.

Officer 2nd class Charles Oneal downloaded the TDP and began manufacturing the required parts. Within 24 hours, Oneal printed and delivered 15 AATS spacer mounts to Coast Guard representatives.

Because of the team's collaboration, forward thinking and can-do attitude, the parts kits will go out much earlier to facilitate the required capability upgrade for the Coast Guard's MH-60T fleet. Every Coast Guard MH-60T will carry the additively manufactured spacer as a part of the outfitting, Armstrong explained.

"This effort marked yet another extraordinarily successful example of a cross-organizational collaborative effort," said NAVAIR AM Polymer Lead Dr. Kate Thorn. Knowing cases like this will continue to present themselves, she further noted, "We're now documenting the process, so future needs can be expedited and standardized."

"I appreciate the priority the Navy gave this effort," Armstrong said. "Working together, across services, we improved the readiness of a critical asset and reduced the time required to do so."

Then, Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division Lakehurst Additive Manufacturing Team Lead Anna Carlson modified the build file to print on Oceana's AM system while still meeting Coast Guard drawing requirements.

Once the materials arrived in Oceana, Aviation Electronics Technician Petty

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www.museums.stmarysmd.com • www.facebook.com/SCIMuseum  
Event made possible by the Commissioners of St. Mary's County.

## First Friday Itinerary

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

**5 p.m. - 8 p.m.** North End Gallery "All Things Art" Pop-Up Show

**5 p.m. - 8 p.m.** Susan Liselle Carney Art Studio Closing – Live Music by Chris Dean



## Special Offers & Deals

The Good Earth Natural Foods Store will offer a choice of two special drinks this January! **The Carrot Orange Ginger Smoothie** boasts a Vitamin C boost this cold season OR, for those wanting something a little sweeter, a creamy **Carrot Cake Smoothie!**

**Specials and sales** throughout Shepherd's Old Field Market all weekend.

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# Recycle Your Christmas Tree for Free



St. Mary's County residents can drop off undecorated Christmas trees at the Landfill and Convenience Centers free of charge through January 31, 2025! Just make sure you've removed all decorations!

Last year, we collected nearly 2 tons of Christmas trees, which were mixed with yard waste to create mulch. Over 5,000 tons

of mulch are available annually for free to our residents at the St. Andrews Landfill—while supplies last!

Let's work together to keep our community green and sustainable this holiday season. For hours of operation and locations, visit: <https://www.stmaryscountymd.gov/dpw/Hourofoperation/>

# 2025 Mother Son Dance Registration Now Open



Mark your calendars and polish your dancing shoes! St. Mary's County Government's Department of Recreation & Parks (R&P) is thrilled to announce that registration for the 2025 Mother Son Dance is now open.

Open to boys ages 4 and up, this semi-formal dance is set for Saturday, January 25, 2025, from 7 p.m. – 9 p.m. at the Chancellors Run Loffler Center in Great Mills. The theme, "You Are My SON-Shine," promises an evening filled with joy, connection, and memories to last a lifetime.

For \$50.00 per couple and \$20.00 for each additional son, attendees will enjoy live music, refreshments, and fun-filled selfie stations to capture those perfect moments. Whether you're a mother, stepmother, aunt, or grandmother, this is your chance to cre-

ate lasting memories with the special young man in your life.

Space is limited, and pre-registration is required. Tickets are non-transferable and non-refundable, so secure your spot today! Register online at [www.stmaryscountymd.gov/recreate](http://www.stmaryscountymd.gov/recreate); click "Online Registration" and then "Special Events". In-person registration is also available at the R&P main office in Leonardtown.

For questions or assistance with online registration, please contact us at (301) 475-4200 ext. 1800 or via email to [webtrac@stmaryscountymd.gov](mailto:webtrac@stmaryscountymd.gov).

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

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# Wanderings of an Aimless Mind

by Shelby Oppermann



## The Promise of a New, Exciting Year

Happy New Year! I am trying to do anything possible to ensure a happy and healthy New Year. Dear friends of ours gave us a Christmas gift bag filled with all sorts of wonderful treats from moist delicious pumpkin bread that we look forward to every year, to beautiful towels I will put out for my after Christmas decorating season of cardinals, a spring cap, and a beautiful fabric bag of birdseed which we love since we love to watch and feed our birds. The bag had a sweet saying on it. "It is a Scandinavian tradition to feed the birds on Christmas Day to ensure good luck in the year ahead. Spread birdseed on your doorstep Christmas morning for luck in the New Year". Well, you can rest assured that I was out there Christmas morning sprinkling birdseed out on the front stoop and some under the bird feeder area too. I only wish the saying had said that spreading this birdseed will ensure you great energy too.

Last night, I took out the frozen smoked ham bone from the ham my husband smoked for Christmas dinner. I've already rinsed the beans. After I finish writing, I will get down the medium soup pot and start the New Year's traditional ham and bean soup. I don't know if we will eat that tonight on New Year's Eve, we usually get a couple pounds of spiced shrimp. But tomorrow for our New Year's Day dinner, I'll bring it up from the basement fridge to heat through for a perfect dinner. I am hoping every one of those little black-eyed peas in the mix have a bit of luck in them. My husband even asked if I was making the ham and bean for good luck last night and I told him that yes, I have already got the hambone in the fridge. We will eat little cups of it for another day or two and promptly get sick of ham and bean soup until next year. I usually freeze some that we will bring out again when it snows.

I still have a few little presents to mail out, and a set of boots my husband ordered for me to mail back for a refund today. We both laughed when I opened the box which was supposed to be 8 1/2 WW to allow for winter weight socks. These boots were so hard and so narrow that I have no idea who can fit in them. My husband said, "Just exchange them for another pair". I said I'd have to order a size 12WW for them to even possibly fit. I'll wait until I can actually go in a store and try them on.

Before I go out for errands I think I should really tackle the guest room and put all the gift wrap, tissue, tags, bows, boxes and bags away, especially all the tissue I snatched out of everyone's hands here at the house before it ended up in the big gift wrap trash bag, destined for the recycling bin at the convenience center. I will head downstairs and carefully smooth and refold all the tissue paper that is in a large mound on the guest bed. The weeks leading up to Christmas, the guest room bed was the designated space for all the Christmas presents. I gradually organized them into each giftee's piles, then we took them to my basement worktable to wrap each set of gifts by person. I am sure that most people have a better system than mine, but this works because all the gift wrapping supplies are behind the guest room door or under the bed in space bags. If anyone stays the night and forgets they had to wrap a gift, they have all the supplies they need. Am I a hoarder or an organizer? Probably a bit of both.

My husband and I did take a nice break last Friday night, even though we were both still exhausted from Christmas, and on a whim we went to see the new movie about Bob Dylan; A Complete Unknown, starring Timothée Chalamet as Bob Dylan, Elle Fanning as his first muse, and Edward Norton as Pete Seeger. It really was a good movie, and Chalamet can definitely sing Dylan, the two actors that impressed me the most were Edward Norton as Pete Seeger (he was so good I had a hard time believing he was an actor and not Seeger) and Monica Barbero as Joan Baez (she was perfect both for her singing and acting). When we got home, we sat outside, had some wine and YouTube'd the entire Bob Dylan's Greatest Hits album from 1967 which I inherited from my brother in 1974 and listened to incessantly. We had a fun evening and may have to do some other full album nights. Okay, it's time to head downstairs to the tissue jungle and start straightening and organizing for the New Year. I hope yours is filled with health and happiness.

To each New Year's adventure, Shelby

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

# A View From The BLEACHERS



## CHEERS TO THE CALM

By Ronald N. Guy  
Contributing Writer

It's the Saturday before Christmas. The first college football playoff game was played the night before in whatever the postseason process of selecting the national champion is called now. Today the sports calendar is packed: three more college football playoff games and two NFL games. The Terps played Syracuse in NYC. It wasn't close; it's cold outside but College Park's reptiles blew out the Orange. Oh, and on another unknown channel (who can keep track of such things these days), I caught a glimpse of two Woods's – Tiger, of course, and his son Charlie playing in some sort of golf tournament together. A broader view of the sports landscape delivers the good and the sad: a Capitals team among the best in the NHL, despite the prolonged absence of Alex Ovechkin and his "lower leg" injury (classic hockey vagueness) and the death of MLB Hall of Famer Rickey Henderson.

Regarding all of that football, resisting the urge to overthink this unprecedented college/pro intersection is proving to be a difficult task. The right answer, if in the correct frame of mind, is to simply sink deeply into the couch, grab the remote and commit fully to consuming at least three times more calories than a sedentary body will burn. Working the remote with fervor, though, has to count for some level of cardio, right? Right. I trust few readers will dispute that obnoxious and scientifically dubious statement.

When the bass player and drummer are out of time, the entire backbone of a song disintegrates. Any compensatory actions by the singer or guitar player are futile. The song is just off. My mental bass player and drummer are not in synch. I'm watching all of these college playoff games, every one a blowout, and trying to get my head around Notre Dame playing football non-descript Indiana and SMU playing Penn State in Happy Valley. Somehow Arizona State and Boise State get involved later. Gotcha. And to clarify, all rosters of all schools get reset every offseason through the transfer portal. Gotcha, again. I'm sure this is totally legit. Tons of money will not allow for any other conclusion.

As for the Caps and the Woods family, these are fantastic stories. How the Caps are doing this I neither know nor need to know. My interest in this completely unexpected success is only in its continuation deep into next spring. The Woods's story is, shall we say, uncomfortable for those of certain ages. In a nut: How does Tiger have an adult son who will soon be (is?) his golf superior? If Tiger is that old, what does that say about me? Rhetorical. No answer required or desired. As for Rick Henderson, his death is hard to process. He seemed indestructible and forever young, playing profession ball into his late forties. He was just 65. Double sky point to the greatest leadoff hitter of all time.

The holiday season lands in the middle of all of this change, chaos and surprise (both exciting and uncomfortable). With it comes the familiar, the traditional, the reliable: the stuff that never changes! Green and red. Lights on homes. Well-adorned trees. A red-suited, rotund dude with a serious commitment to facial hair. Flying deer. Talking snowmen. Elves on shelves. An entire genre of timeless music. Then New Year's arrives: countdowns, descending balls, toasts, resolutions and hope for the year ahead (real...or manufactured in an attempt to fool the mind's processing of a concerning future).

It's all a fantastic tonic: a pause on an impossibly fluid world where control is but an illusion, plans are merely suggestions awaiting inevitable modification, and nearly everything - except for entrenched holiday traditions - will be tweaked, manipulated or forever altered by the winds of change. For a brief moment, things slow down and the world slips into an unspoken yet fully coordinated annual routine – fabulous repetition for the old and an amazing introduction for the young. Unpredictable chaos, in sports and life, will return soon enough, but that's a January 2025 problem, and that calendar hasn't yet been hung. In the interim, cheers to the calm.

Happy Holidays!

Send comments to RonaldGuyJr@gmail.com



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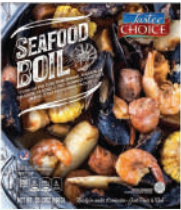
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# In Remembrance

To schedule an obituary in the County Times, submit text and picture to [aldailey@countytimes.net](mailto: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.

## Marilyn Meehan, 86



Marilyn Massarini Meehan, 86, passed away peacefully on December 15, 2024 in California, MD.

Born in New Orleans, LA, she was the loving daughter of the late

Jules Massarini, Sr., and Claire Massarini. Along with her parents, Marilyn is preceded in death by her spouse of 62 years, RCMC Hugh Meehan, Sr. Ret. USN, and siblings Sylvia Hansel and Jules Massarini, Jr.

Marilyn is survived by her children, Angela Bronson, Hugh Meehan, Jr. (Lorrie), Michelle Schuck (Tod), and Tina Wood (Jeff), her sister, Janet Giroir, and seven grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

Marilyn was a loving daughter, sister, wife, mother, and grandmother who cherished spending time with her family and friends. After high school she joined the US Navy, where she met and married her husband Hugh. She spent three years in the Navy until she was honorably discharged after she became pregnant with their first child. Although she was no longer in the Navy, she spent the next 20 years moving from Naval duty station to duty station, supporting Hugh's military career while raising their four children. They retired to St. Mary's County, MD, where she finally got the chance to lay down roots.

As the children grew and left the nest, Marilyn went back to work in retail. She ended her career in her dream job working at Cecil's General Store. Marilyn will be forever remembered for her love of decorating and celebrating Christmas.

Her other loves were traveling and bowling. Whether it was cruises, trips local and abroad, or bowling tournaments, she enjoyed traveling with family and friends, exploring new places, as well as returning to familiar places.

Marilyn will be missed by everyone that knew her. The family will have a Celebration of Life Friday, December 27, 2024 at gathering at 12:00 pm with a small service at 12:30 pm at the Wildewood Village Event Center, 23154 Wetstone Lane California,

MD 20619. Interment will be held at a later date at Arlington National Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers please donate to Hospice of St. Mary's, P.O. Box 625, Leonardtown, MD 20650.

Condolences may be made to the family at [www.brinsfieldfuneral.com](http://www.brinsfieldfuneral.com)

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

## Son Wood, 86



James G. "Son" Wood, 86, of Hollywood, MD, passed away peacefully on December 24, 2024, at home, surrounded by his loving family.

Born on April 19, 1938, in Leonardtown, MD, Son was the beloved son of the late James Gibbons Allston Wood and Lucy Yvonne Cusic Wood. A lifelong resident of St. Mary's County, MD, Son embraced the community he called home. On August 6, 1966, he married Mary Elaine Adams, sharing over 58 wonderful years together.

Son was a skilled plumber whose dedication and work ethic were unmatched. Even after retiring, he often returned to the trade he loved, always eager to lend his expertise. Known for his resourcefulness and ability to fix anything, Son was a true problem-solver and a helping hand to all who knew him.

He took great pride in gardening, especially the tomatoes he sold from his roadside stand, and enjoyed sharing the fruits of his labor with neighbors and friends. Son was an avid sports fan who rarely missed cheering on the Baltimore Orioles, Baltimore Ravens, or attending Potomac Speedway races after a full day's work. Though a man of few words, his humor and wit left a lasting impression on everyone he met. Above all, he cherished his family, never boasting but deeply proud of their accomplishments.

Son is survived by his devoted wife, Mary Elaine Wood, and his three daughters: Mary Jo Thompson (Bobby) of Chaptico, MD; Kelly Dombrosky (Bernie) of Hollywood, MD; and Sandee Pappaconstantinou (Chuck) of Mechanicsville, MD. He was

the cherished grandfather of Katie Beavan, Mary Beth Pappaconstantinou, Karly Guy, Brooke Pappaconstantinou, Kaylee Pappaconstantinou, Derek Pappaconstantinou, and Connor Dombrosky, and the proud great-grandfather of Rowan Guy, with another great-grandchild on the way.

He is also survived by his siblings: Emily Norris (Dickie, deceased) of Mechanicsville, MD; Michael Wood (Sue) of Mechanicsville, MD; Quintin Wood (Mary) of Mechanicsville, MD; Gerald Wood of Mechanicsville, MD; Nancy Hall (Sonny, deceased) of Mechanicsville, MD; Victor Wood of Mechanicsville, MD; Steve Wood of Mechanicsville, MD; Susan Pullen (Lou, deceased) of Ocean Isle Beach, NC; Vivian Downey (Jim) of Mechanicsville, MD; Lynn Wood of Mechanicsville, MD; Sheila Hill (Adrian) of Mechanicsville, MD; and Justine Farrell (Jay) of Mechanicsville, MD. He was preceded in death by his parents and two siblings, Pat Wood of Mechanicsville, MD, and Becky Norris (Billy, deceased) of Leonardtown, MD.

Family and friends are invited to gather on January 2, 2025, in St. John's Catholic Church, Hollywood, MD. Visitation will be held from 9:00 A.M. to 11:00 A.M., followed by a Mass of Christian Burial at 11:00 A.M., officiated by Father Raymond Schmidt. Interment will follow in the church cemetery.

Pallbearers will include Bobby Thompson, Bernie Dombrosky, Chuck Pappaconstantinou, Kevin Cusic, Donald Johnson, and Robbie Williams. Honorary pallbearers will be his brothers, sisters, grandsons, and Jerome Goldsborough.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to St. John's Francis Regis Catholic Church, Hollywood, MD.

Condolences may be made to the family at [www.mgfh.com](http://www.mgfh.com).

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

## Jamie Fowler, 70



It is with great sadness that we announce the sudden passing of James Aubrey "Jamie" Fowler, 70, of Avenue, MD, on December 27, 2024. Jamie died peacefully

with his family holding his hand and surrounding him with love. Jamie was born on January 1, 1954, in Washington, D.C. to his loving parents, the late Helen and George Fowler. His family moved to St. George's Island in the 60s, and he attended St. Teresa and Little Flower Elementary Schools and Great Mills High School. Jamie was the youngest of eight siblings, who liked to call him baby brother. Even though he wasn't born here, Jamie was totally a St. Mary's County good old boy.

On March 15, 1974, he married the love of his life, Gay Fowler, at Holy Angels Church, and together they celebrated over 50 years of

love and happiness. He lived on beautiful St. Catherine's Sounds, where he loved looking out over the river and watching all the wildlife. Jamie was the proud father of his loving daughter, Lorrie, and was an awesome Pop to his grandsons, Adam and Aaron. He was always there for every event in their lives. Family was everything to Jamie and he was dearly loved by everyone; his nieces and nephews called him their "cool uncle."

In 1977, Jamie started his own painting company and over the years he had many loyal and long-term customers. He had an outstanding work ethic; he took pride in every job and always tried to ensure that every customer received the absolute best that he could provide.

Jamie was an avid reader, reading a couple of books a week. He made sure he got his coffee and newspaper every morning and stayed on top of what was happening. Everyone liked to see and talk to Jamie, he was interesting and funny. He kept a great outlook on life and was always cheerful. He loved rock and roll and blues music and was an avid fan of the Nighthawks. He was a member of the Bucksnots and enjoyed attending every party. Jamie had a very strong faith; he was a longtime parishioner at Holy Angels Catholic Church where he was a greeter, welcoming everyone. He also served as an usher and helped out with many church functions.

Jamie is survived by his loving wife, Gay Fowler, daughter, Lorrie Fowler, grandsons, Adam Lemoi and Aaron Lemoi, his siblings, Mary Russell, Zoe Ann Vest, and Tony Fowler, and many nieces, nephews, and cousins. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his siblings, Rick Fowler, George "Bitsy" Fowler, Celeste Downs, and Virginia Hughes.

There are no words to express our pain at losing Jamie so suddenly and unexpectedly. He will be missed every day. But sadness was not his style; he liked laughter and music, good food, and great conversation. We will honor his memory by doing the things he loved and keeping his spirit close until we meet again.

The family will receive friends on Thursday, January 9, 2024, from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM, with prayers recited at 7:00 PM, in the Mattingley-Gardiner Funeral Home, Leonardtown, MD. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated on Friday, January 10, 2024, at 11:00 AM in Holy Angels Catholic Church, Avenue, MD with Father William Gurnee officiating. Interment will follow at Sacred Heart Catholic Cemetery, Bushwood, MD. Serving as pallbearers will be Adam Lemoi, Aaron Lemoi, Chris Sundberg, Mark Vest, Johnny Norris, and Joey Tippet.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the 7th District Volunteer Rescue Squad, P.O. Box 7, Avenue, MD 20609.

Condolences may be made to the family at [www.mgfh.com](http://www.mgfh.com).

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

*A Tribute to the Loved One  
Whose Memory Lives  
On Forever in Your Heart*

Honor the memory of your cherished one by sharing the story of their life with friends, neighbors and associates here in the community.

For details and to place your notice of remembrance, call 301-373-4125 for assistance.



**REMEMBRANCES**  
IN PRINT & ONLINE

**County Times**  
St. Mary's County • California County



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Blue Bonnet  
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Swiss  
Cheese

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Cake

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Smash Variety

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750mL  
818 Tequila  
Reposado

**37.99**



750mL  
Svedka  
Gin

**6.99**



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La Gritona  
Tequila Reposado

**52.99**



1.75L  
Captain Morgan  
Spiced Rum

**26.99**



750mL  
Skrewball Peanut  
Butter Whiskey

**24.99**



1.75L  
Dewar's  
White Label

**33.99**



750mL, Selected  
XXL  
Wines

**11.49**



750mL  
La Luca Prosecco Or  
Prosecco Rose

**11.99**



750mL  
Cupcake  
Pinot Grigio

**10.99**



750mL  
Stoneleigh  
Sauvignon Blanc

**12.99**



750mL  
William Hill  
Chardonnay

**12.49**



750mL  
Chateau D' Esclands  
Whispering Angel Rose

**17.99**



750mL  
Domaine Bousquet  
Cabernet Sauvignon

**8.49**



750mL  
Cupcake  
Moscato d'Asti

**9.99**



750mL  
True Myth Paso Robles  
Cabernet Sauvignon

**17.99**



750mL  
Threadcount  
Red Blend

**18.99**



750mL  
Rodney Strong  
Merlot

**15.99**



## Wine of the Month

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Wines

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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](mailto:timescalendar@countytimes.net) with the listing details by 12 p.m. on the Monday prior to our Thursday publication.

## Thu, Jan 2

### 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](mailto:alpost221@aol.com) or call 301\*481\*6625 for more information.

## Sun, Jan 5

### Southern Maryland Bluegrass presents Rhonda Vincent

Calvert Elks 2620  
1015 Dares Beach Rd., Prince Frederick  
2 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Grand Ole Opry Member and "Queen of Bluegrass" Music, Rhonda Vincent comes to Southern Maryland

She's an "All-American Bluegrass Girl", multi-award winner, star of Nashville's Grand Ole Opry, and a firecracker of talent that powers one of the hottest bands in any genre of

music today. Rhonda Vincent and her band The Rage will kick off the new year as she headlines the 4th concert in the Southern Maryland Bluegrass at the Elks Series.

## Tue, Jan 7

### Unnecessary Farce Auditions

Three Notch Theater  
21744 South Coral Dr., Lexington Park  
6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

"Two cops. Three crooks. Eight doors. Go!" Unnecessary Farce is an award-winning stage comedy that combines all the elements of a classic farce with a contemporary American plot. In an economy motel room, an embezzling mayor is supposed to meet with his female accountant. In the room next door, two undercover cops are supposed to catch the meeting on videotape. But there's some confusion about who's in which room, who's watching the video, who's taken the money, who's hired a hitman, and why the accountant keeps taking off her clothes.

Audition Dates:

- Tuesday, January 7th 6:30pm-9:30pm
  - Saturday, January 11th, 3 pm to 6 pm
- Callback Date (if needed):

- Sunday, January 12th 1:00pm-3:00pm
- If you are unable to attend in-person auditions, please contact us at [auditions@newtowneplayers.org](mailto:auditions@newtowneplayers.org).

Performance Dates:

- April 24th (Sponsor's Night)
- April 25th—May 11th Performances
- Every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday will be evening performances and Sundays will be afternoon matinee performances.

Directors: Steve Pugh & Neil Compton

Producer: Ryan Gravelle

Stage Manager: Beth Sanford

## Wed, Jan 8

### 2025 Men's Night

First Missionary Baptist Church  
46370 Pegg Ln., Lexington Park  
7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

You are cordially invited to join us! First Missionary Baptist Church, under the leadership of Pastor Roderick W. McClanahan, will host Men's Night "MEN DOING THE WILL OF THE LORD!!!" The guest preacher for the occasion will be Bishop Rodney Thompson, Sr., To Tell The Truth

Outreach and Deliverance Ministries, Inc., Great Mills, MD, on Wednesday, January 8, 2025, at 7 pm. All Men/Men's Ministries and Women are welcome to attend.

The occasion will be held in the church Sanctuary; as well as virtually. The virtual phone number is 617-691-8533 or virtual meeting ID: [join.freeconferencecall.com/fmhc0](https://join.freeconferencecall.com/fmhc0). For additional information please contact First Missionary Baptist Church at 301-863-8388.

### Lions Club Meeting

The Olde Breton Inn  
21890 Society Hill Rd., Leonardtown  
6:30 p.m.

The Leonardtown Lions Club is honored to have Mr. Randy Guy, President of the St. Mary's County Board of County Commissioners, as our next guest speaker.

All community members are welcome to attend to hear his view of the "State of the County". The meeting begins with a meet and greet social period with hors d'oeuvres at 6:30, and the regular meeting begins at 7PM. Cost of dinner is only \$20. For more information, call Frank Nuhfer at 301-904-8140.

# ST. MARY'S COUNTY Library

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Winter Reading

- Be a Reading Machine this January! Register for Winter Reading with St. Mary's County Library! From January 1 - 31, read and track to fill in a bingo board on Beanstack to be entered to win gift cards.

### STEAMing Through Winter

- Tackle challenging STEAM activities while laughing, learning and discovering the joy in every scientific twist and turn.
- Ages 4-14 are invited to join us for dif-

ferent STEAM activities appropriate to their skills and interests. Tackle them all, or master one, you get to choose! Lexington Park Library, Friday, January 3 from 1 - 3 p.m. Register on [www.stmalib.org](http://www.stmalib.org).

### Mixed Media Art Collage

Making art can feel overwhelming at times, but we deserve to see our art on the wall! Come and create a collage using watercolor-painted paper. You'll be delighted with what you can make! Lexington Park Library,

Saturday, January 4 from 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. Register on [www.stmalib.org](http://www.stmalib.org).

### Onyx Storm: Fan Theories

Let's discuss fan theories before the release of Onyx Storm, the 3rd book from the Emphyrean book series by Rebecca Yarros! Are you ready for the 3rd book? Onyx Storm is scheduled to be released on January 21, 2025. Enjoy light refreshments as we discuss the first two books, Fourth Wing and Iron Flame, and all the fan theories! There will be spoilers! This event is for 18+. Lexington Park Library, Saturday, January 4 from 2 - 3:30 p.m. Register on [www.stmalib.org](http://www.stmalib.org).

### DIY Adventure Cloches

Join us to create your very own adventure cloche craft! A cloche is a round cover made of clear material, usually used to cover plants. In this program, however, you'll be using a small cloche to display a sign of plac-

es you love or would like to visit—maybe even in the new year! This craft can be customized to your liking. The library will provide all supplies; we just need you to provide the creativity! Charlotte Hall Library, Saturday, January 4 from 3 - 4 p.m. Register on [www.stmalib.org](http://www.stmalib.org).

### Adventures in Art: Painting Under the Table

Join us for a fun and creative art program inspired by the legendary Michelangelo! Kids in grades 3-8 will explore the techniques and artistry of one of the greatest Renaissance artists. We'll be learning about his famous works, like the Sistine Chapel, and create our own masterpieces. Lexington Park Library, Monday, January 6 from 6 - 7 p.m. Register on [www.stmalib.org](http://www.stmalib.org).

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**Contributing Writers** Tim Flaherty, Ron Guy, Ken Lamb, Shelby Opperman, Dave Spigler

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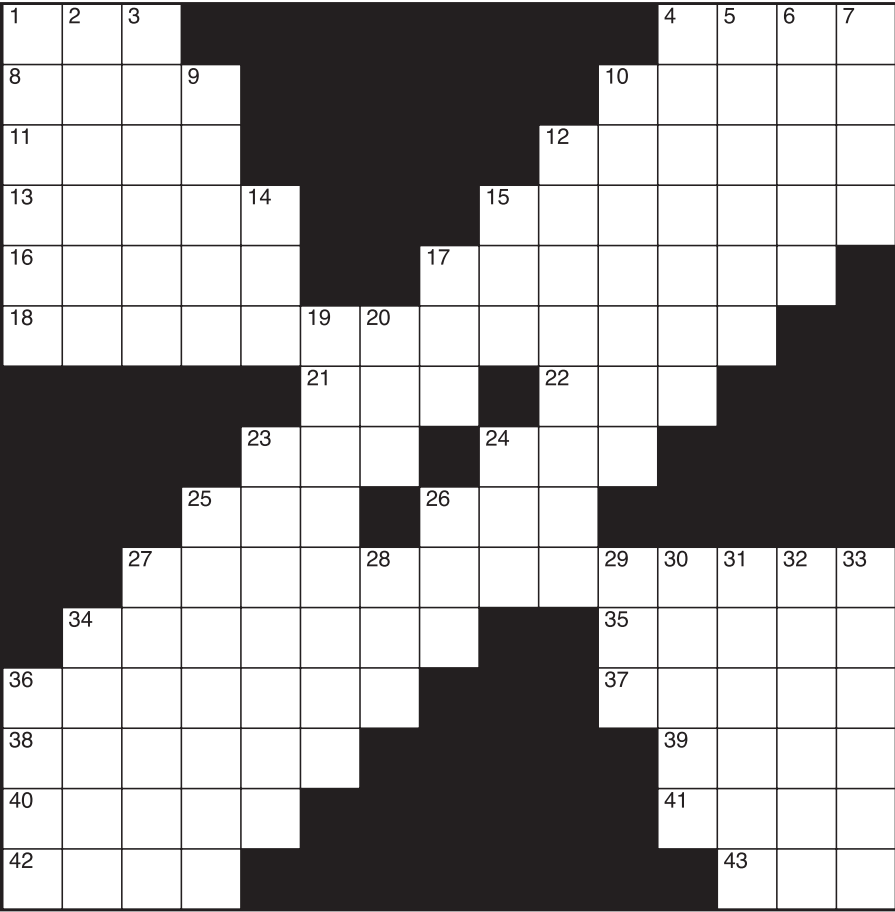
To be considered for publication, articles and letters to the editor submitted must include the writer's full name, address and daytime phone number. Submissions must be delivered by 4 p.m. on the Monday prior to our Thursday publication to ensure placement for that week. After that deadline, the County 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





- CLUES ACROSS**
- 1. Americans' "uncle"
  - 4. Chair
  - 8. Ancient kingdom
  - 10. Egyptian city
  - 11. Alaskan glacier
  - 12. One from Somalia
  - 13. Ancient alphabets
  - 15. Relating to vocabulary
  - 16. Small mongrels
  - 17. Natural settings
  - 18. Weekend entertainments
  - 21. Line from which light seemingly streams
  - 22. Your own private code
  - 23. Swiss river
  - 24. Satisfaction
  - 25. A person's brother or sister
  - 26. Folk singer DiFranco
  - 27. The Blonde Bombshell
  - 34. Kids' school project
  - 35. Bluish greens
  - 36. Classifying
  - 37. Cube-shaped
  - 38. Choo-choos
  - 39. Indian religious god of dissolution
  - 40. French department
  - 41. Leak into gradually
  - 42. Foundation
  - 43. Midway between south and southeast

- CLUES DOWN**
- 1. Counterbalancing debt
  - 2. In slow tempo
  - 3. Glamorous city
  - 4. Japanese lute
  - 5. Makes law
  - 6. Informative book
  - 7. Animal's body part
  - 9. American playwright
  - 10. Blood poisoning
  - 12. Angels
  - 14. Sino-Soviet block (abbr.)
  - 15. Written account
  - 17. Unwelcome pest
  - 19. Saddle horses
  - 20. Type of gibbon
  - 23. Delta is one
  - 24. NE Massachusetts cape
  - 25. Soup cracker
  - 26. Yes vote
  - 27. Muddy ground
  - 28. Physics apparatus (abbr.)
  - 29. Type of drug
  - 30. German city
  - 31. Animal disease
  - 32. Martini ingredients
  - 33. Get away
  - 34. Spanish municipality
  - 36. Thrust a knife into

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



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# Calvert Community Calendar

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

## Thu, Jan 2

### Sea Squirts

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

This month's theme is "Wacky Weather." 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 – 40 minutes. Sign up at the Admissions Desk when you arrive. Included with museum admission.

## Fri, Jan 3

### First Fossil Friday!

Calvert Marine Museum  
1 – 4:30 p.m.

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

## Sat, Jan 4

### Pop-in with Poppie

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

Make your Saturday afternoon memorable by coming to visit with our very own Pop Star "Poppie," our Virginia Opossum. You can join the Poppie paparazzi in the museum lobby with one of our educational interpreters, learn all kinds of fun possum facts, and visit our Museum Store for possum fan gear. Since the welfare of our animals is our primary concern, Poppie's ability to visit with her adoring public may occasionally be subject to change on short notice.

## Sun, Jan 5

### Beyond the Displays: Artifact Stories

Calvert Marine Museum,  
1:30 p.m.

Discover the history behind the emblem from a paddle wheel boat, the tools found in the blacksmith shop, and the Gov. R. M.

McLane name board. Hear captivating stories about WWII's impact on the Solomons community and uncover hidden pictures within the museum murals. It's a unique opportunity to delve into local history and see these artifacts in a new light. Included with museum admission.

### Southern Maryland Bluegrass

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

Grand Ole Opry Member and "Queen of Bluegrass" Music, Rhonda Vincent is coming to Southern Maryland. She's an "All-American Bluegrass Girl", multi-award winner, star of Nashville's Grand Ole Opry, and a firecracker of talent that powers one of the hottest bands in any genre of music today.

## Thu, Jan 9

### Sea Squirts

Calvert Marine Museum

10:15 a.m. & 11:15 a.m.

This month's theme is "Wacky Weather." 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 – 40 minutes. Sign up at the Admissions Desk when you arrive. Included with museum admission.

## Upcoming

### Creature Feature Celebrating the Chinese New Year: Year of the Snake!

Calvert Marine Museum  
Sunday, Jan 12  
10:15 – 11:15 a.m.

This month, we're celebrating the Chinese New Year: Year of the Snake! Discover the fascinating world of snakes and learn about their role in the ecosystem. Take-home educational coloring pages will be available! Included with museum admission.



# 25

YEARS OF SERVICE

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# CALVERT COUNTY POLICE BLOTTER

During the week of December 9, 2024 – December 15, 2024, Calvert County Sheriff's Office Deputies responded to 2,077 calls for service throughout the community including, but not limited to:

- Check Welfare / Mental Health: 60
- Disorderly: 13
- Domestic: 19
- Motor Vehicle Crashes: 46
- Patrol Checks / School Checks: 980
- Suspicious Persons / Vehicles: 18
- Traffic Complaints: 67
- Traffic Stops: 432
- 911 Hang-Ups: 47
- ARRESTS: 32



Alan Douglas Oberlander

## Assault: 24-96924

On December 14, 2024, Deputy Shuart received a report of an assault at the Calvert County Detention Center located at 325 Stafford Road in Prince Frederick.

The complainant advised a disorderly inmate, **Alan Douglas Oberlander**, 50 of Prince Frederick, assaulted a Correctional Deputy. Alan was held for prosecution at the Detention Center on an unrelated assault charge. Alan was charged with Second-Degree Assault.



Brian Thornel Elzey, Jr.

## Assault: 24-97342

On December 15, 2024, Deputy Deinert responded to the Calvert County Detention Center at 325 Stafford Road in Prince Frederick for a reported assault. Investigation revealed that an argument between two inmates escalated into a physical altercation. As a result, **Brian Thornel Elzey, Jr.**, 22 of Upper Marlboro, was charged with Second-Degree Assault.



Monica Linnett Lowe

## Disorderly

### Conduct: 24-95587

On December 9, 2024, Deputy Zinn responded to the 4100 block of 3rd Street in North Beach, for a reported fight. Upon arrival, the fight was determined to be unfounded. However, a female on the porch of the residence was shouting vulgar language at passing citizens. Deputies advised the individual, identified as **Monica Linnett Lowe**, 57 of North Beach, to cease her behavior and return inside. Despite multiple warnings, Lowe continued to yell profanities and act in a disorderly manner, disturbing the peace.

Lowe was taken into custody, transported to the Calvert County Detention Center, and charged with Disorderly Conduct.



Dontray Joseph Creek

## False Statement:

### 24-95649

On December 9, 2024, Deputy Deinert conducted a traffic stop near the intersection of Armory Road and Fairgrounds Road in Prince Frederick, for an equipment violation. During the stop, the driver was found to be operating the vehicle on an expired learner's permit. As a result, the deputy attempted to identify the passenger to determine if he had a valid driver's license. Initially, the passenger provided a false name but was later identified as **Dontray Joseph Creek**, 30 of Prince Frederick. Creek admitted to giving a false name because he was aware of outstanding warrants for child support. He was taken into custody, transported to the Calvert County Detention Center, and served with two open warrants. Creek was additionally charged with Fraud—Per Identification to Avoid Prosecution.



Bryan Scott Patterson

## CDS Violation:

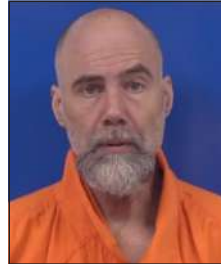
### 24-96028

On December 11, 2024, DFC Hendrickson observed a suspicious vehicle in the parking lot of the Surestay by Best Western located at 75 Main Street in Prince Frederick. Upon making contact with the occupants, the passenger exited the vehicle and attempted to walk towards the woods. The driver, **Bryan Scott Patterson**, 52 of Lothian, quickly accelerated out of the parking lot and north on Rt. 4. A traffic stop was initiated on Patterson's vehicle in the area of NB Rt. 4 and Hospital Road in Prince Frederick. Investigation revealed K9 Atlas conducted a free air sniff of the vehicle resulting in a positive alert for narcotics. A search of the vehicle revealed a plastic tie off of containing 6.7 grams of crack cocaine and \$115. A search of the passenger **Kelcie Elizabeth Cook**, 30 of no fixed address, revealed one metal pipe, one glass pipe, two metal push rods, and two rocks of crack cocaine (totaling 1.1 grams). Both Patterson and Cook were transported to the Calvert County Detention Center. Cook was charged with CDS: Possession Not Cannabis and CDS: Possession of Paraphernalia. Patterson was charged with CDS: Possession-Not Cannabis and CDS: Distribution of Narcotics.



Kelcie Elizabeth Cook

**CDS Violation: 24-96174** On December 11, 2024, DFC Hudson responded to Safeway, located at 80 W. Dares Beach Road in Prince Frederick, for a reported theft from a vehicle. The complainant advised her silver HP laptop was stolen from her unlocked vehicle parked in the parking lot. The estimated value of stolen property is \$1,000.



Harry Albert Vredenburg

Frederick, for a reported Controlled Dangerous Substance (CDS) violation. F/Sgt. Shrawder had observed two individuals, identified as **Kelcie Elizabeth Cook**, 30, of no fixed address, and

**Harry Albert Vredenburg**, 57, of Prince Frederick, openly huffing multiple cans of dust cleaner in public view at the shopping center. As DFC Hudson arrived on the scene, Vredenburg fled through a wooded area toward Walmart, prompting a foot pursuit. During the chase, DFC Hudson witnessed Vredenburg discard cans of dust cleaner into the woodline. Vredenburg was apprehended, and a search of his person revealed a knife. Both suspects were transported to the Calvert County Detention Center. Vredenburg was charged with Obstructing and Hindering, Failure to Obey a Lawful Order, CDS: Inhaling a Harmful Substance, and CDS: Possession-Not Cannabis. Cook was charged with Trespassing on Private Property and CDS: Inhaling a Harmful Substance.



David Peter Lambert

## Theft: 24-96739

On December 13, 2024, DFC T. Bowen responded to North Beach Union Church, located at 8912 Chesapeake Avenue in North Beach, for a report of a disorderly individual. Upon arrival, deputies observed **David Peter Lambert**, 53 of Huntingtown retrieving mail from the church's mailbox. Lambert proceeded to tear up the mail and church pamphlets, scattering the debris on the ground. He then began walking into the roadway, raising his hands in the air as bystanders looked on. Lambert was placed into custody and transported to the Calvert County Detention Center and charged with Disorderly Conduct, Theft: Less than \$100, Littering, and Malicious Destruction of Property.



Sean Edward Brady

## Theft: 24-96827

On December 13, 2024, Deputy Deinert responded to Spirits and Wine of Calvert, located at 73 Sherry Lane in Prince Frederick, for a reported theft. The complainant stated that her credit card had been used to make a \$407.20 purchase at the store, along with \$300 in miscellaneous purchases at nearby locations. Through a review of store surveillance footage, **Sean Edward Brady**, 32, of no fixed address, was identified as the suspect. A search of Brady's person revealed a glass pipe commonly

associated with smoking crack cocaine. Brady was arrested and transported to the Calvert County Detention Center, where he was charged with Stealing Another's Credit Card, Theft (\$100 to less than \$1500), and CDS: Possession of Paraphernalia.

**Theft: 24-96801** On December 13, 2024, Deputy Shuart responded to the parking lot of the TJ Maxx located at 140 W. Dares Beach Road in Prince Frederick, for the reported theft from a vehicle. The complainant advised her silver HP laptop was stolen from her unlocked vehicle parked in the parking lot. The estimated value of stolen property is \$1,000.

**Theft: 24-96415** On December 12, 2024, Cpl. Cress responded to the Calvert County Sheriff's Office District One Station located at 10500 Southern Maryland Blvd. in Dunkirk, for the report of a theft from a vehicle. The complainant advised his Dell Precision 7760 laptop was stolen from his unlocked vehicle while parked in the Market Place Shopping Center located at 10276 Southern Maryland Blvd. in Dunkirk. The estimated value of stolen property is \$4,000.

**Theft: 24-95890** On December 10, 2024, DFC Ostazeski responded to a residence in the 12700 block of Rio Grande Trail in Lusby, for the report of a theft from a vehicle. The complainant reported her Coach wallet, social security card, and three prescriptions were stolen from her vehicle. The estimated value of stolen property is \$469.

**Trespassing: 24-96877** On December 13, 2024, at approximately 10:32 p.m., Deputy First Class (DFC) Plant responded to the Wawa located at 305 Market Square Drive in Prince Frederick for a harassment complaint. The complainant reported that **David Peter Lambert**, 53 of Huntingtown, was harassing customers. Deputies located Lambert at the Prince Frederick Exxon, where further investigation revealed he had been indefinitely trespassed from the Wawa property. The following day, on December 14, 2024, at 5:11 p.m., Deputy Shuart responded to the same Wawa for a report of trespassing. The complainant advised that Lambert had returned to the property despite the prior trespass order. Lambert was apprehended and subsequently charged with Trespassing: Private Property.

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

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



# What's Coming to Calvert

The following list of pending Category 1 site plans was presented to the Calvert County Planning Commission at their Dec. 18 meeting. That means that the proposals are on the list for consideration by the planning commission at a future meeting. The meeting was in a hybrid form, both virtually and in person at the Harriet E. Brown Community Center (HEBCC), 901 Dares Beach Road, Prince Frederick

1. CSPR-143116, 145

**Adelina Business Office**, located at 145 Adelina Road, Prince Frederick, combining Parcel 120 and Parcel 250, Lot 2 for a total of 2.44 acres zoned Rural Commercial. Proposed remodeling of existing structure for use as an office and construction of a new 7,400-sf, two-story building for business-related storage with associated parking area required for the two buildings. This project will utilize private well and septic. The concept submittal was accepted December 20, 2023. Agent: COA Barrett.

2. CSPR-143112, **CCIP Lot 3R**, located at 171 Skipjack Road, Prince Frederick, Lot 3R in the Calvert County Industrial Park, zoned Light Industrial. Proposed redevelopment of a portion of the 4.5-acre lot by demolishing the existing office and constructing a new two-story office building in its place. It is further proposed to repave the southern portion of the site and to construct a storage warehouse and wall to segregate parking between the storage building yard & adjacent flex space tenants. A total of 6,524 sf of new construction with a total disturbance of 1.2-acres is proposed and the amenities will utilize public water and sewer. The concept submittal was accepted December 20, 2023. Agent: COA Barrett 3)

3. CSPR-143186, **CCIP Lot 37 – Flex Space**, located at 5241 Cutter Court, Prince Frederick, Lot 37 in the Calvert County Industrial Park, zoned Light Industrial. Proposed development of



**COMING SOON**

34,000-sf flex space comprised of fourteen tenant spaces with disturbed acreage of 2.75 acres. The amenities will utilize public water and sewer. The concept submittal was accepted August 28, 2024. Agent: COA Barrett

4. CSPR-143166, **Prince Frederick Assisted Living & Memory Care Facility**, located on the approx. 22-acre property adjacent to 3 Armory Road, in Prince Frederick, MD and is zoned Prince Frederick Town Center/Old Town Transition Sub-Area. The project consists of a two story Assisted Living and a one-story Memory Care facility totaling 69,251 sq. ft. and 98 total beds, as well as 20 residential, age restricted cottages (10 duplex units). The development proposes to utilize public water and sewer. The concept submittal was accepted September 25, 2024. Agent: COA Barrett.

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

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

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

# Revitalization Program Announces Local Awards

## Two Projects in Calvert Included

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has announced that Southern Maryland counties have received a combined \$1.3 million through three of the state's seven State Revitalization Programs for eight projects and activities that promote community development and economic growth.

The projects in Calvert were:

- Calvert Common Resilience Partners, Inc. Twin Beaches Facade Improvement; Program Implement minor improvements to properties within the downtown business districts of Chesapeake Beach and North Beach. — \$200,000.
- Calvert County Commissioners, 87 Main St Acquisition in Prince Frederick ;to develop a future Transfer Station & Services Hub — \$250,000.00

"For Maryland to win the decade, we must transcend the status quo and continue our work to improve communities across the state," said Governor Wes Moore. "From creation of affordable housing and community space to improvements to streetscapes and infrastructure, vibrant, revitalized communities not only make Maryland a desirable home for all; they are the cornerstone for a better Maryland."

The state's seven State Revitalization Programs support revitalization and redevelopment projects and activities including: business expansion and retention; façade and streetscape improvements; homeownership and home rehabilitation incentives; commercial improvement programs; community facilities; mixed-use development, and demolition activities.

Press Release

# Winner Claims Second Big Lottery Prize

Around of golf led to a big *Powerball* payday for one Calvert County resident, who also won a *Mega Millions* prize several years ago. The winner drew inspiration for his numbers from a recent round of golf. Those numbers produced a \$151,210 *Powerball* win.

His idea for selecting his *Powerball* numbers was derived from a day of playing golf, he explained to Lottery officials. Someone in his party hit a blind hole in one, a very rare feat, which was the inspiration for the number 1. This occurred on the 17<sup>th</sup> hole on the 21<sup>st</sup> day of the month, thus giving him numbers 17 and 21. Lastly, the two carts being driven were numbered 5 and 8. He then decided to combine the two golf cart numbers for the number 58.

The winner played five lines on his ticket, all with the same first five numbers. The *Powerball* number on each line was different.

He matched four numbers plus the

*Powerball* number on one line to win the initial \$50,000 prize. But, when purchasing the ticket, he added the Power Play feature for an additional \$1. The Power Play multiplier for the Dec. 21 drawing was X3, which turned a \$50,000 win into a \$150,000 prize. Since he also matched four numbers (without the *Powerball*) on the other four lines, that produced another \$1,200. In addition, he added the Double Play option to the ticket which led to another \$10.

He learned he was a winner the day after the drawing. Although no big celebration took place, he told officials he was very grateful. Not at all a surprise that he plans to use some of his winnings for new golf clubs.

The winning ticket was purchased at Dunkirk Fastop at 9880 Southern Maryland Boulevard in Calvert County.

Press Release from MD Lottery

**Southern Maryland**  
**Online**

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**WWW.SOMD.COM**



# Planners Set Town Center Public Hearing Will Consider Prince Frederick Plan Changes

By Dick Myers  
Staff Writer

As the fifth anniversary of the process to update the Prince Frederick Town Center Master Plan nears, the Calvert County Planning Commission is finally ready for a public hearing on the final draft. The hearing will be at the planning commission's February meeting.

The decision was unanimous by the commission at their Dec. 18 meeting after a presentation by staff.

According to Long Range Planner Tay Harris, "County department, state agency and public comments have been incorporated into the Prince Frederick Town Center Master Plan's December 2024 Draft and posted online on the Prince Frederick Town Center Master Plan Update webpage. Notable revisions to the plan include:

1. changing the vision of the draft plan from 'incentivizing growth' to 'managing growth' to address residential development either in the pipeline or constructed since 2020;
2. incorporating commercial and institutional redevelopment and acquisition activities along Armory Road and Main Street;
3. recommending 'focus areas' to create memorable places along Armory Road, Main Street and Prince Frederick Boulevard;
4. maintaining the label of 'Forest District' in the southwest quadrant of the Town Center and applying the county's Natural Resource Protection Area provisions (Article 21 of the Calvert County Zoning Ordinance Update) to

protect the stream valley that is part of the Parkers Creek headwaters; and

5. removing references to road improvements that were in the Phase II expansion of the Town Center that was significantly reduced in 2022, removing a large area encompassing MD 231 (Hallowing Point Road)."

Director of Planning and Zoning Mary Beth Cook said there were more than 800 units in the town center in the pipeline in various stages of the process that could be grandfathered in before the update is finalized.

The process was derailed by Covid 19 interposing itself just as it got underway. But actions by the county commissioners along the way caused staff to have to go back to the drawing board on several occasions.

For instance one of the original drafts had the two-tiered growth area process with the second tier extending growth along Route 231 out to the College of Southern Maryland. The commissioners ordered that the second tier be removed.

And then the new commissioner board reduced the allowable density in the town center from seven units per acre down to four, with transferrable development rights required to achieve the maximum density.

At the Dec. 19 meeting, the planning commission members suggested several minor changes but generally went along with what was proposed for the purpose of going to public hearing.

Meanwhile, the commission held a special meeting on Dec. 30 to consider changes to the proposed update of the county zoning ordinance (see separate story).

[dickmyers@countytimes.net](mailto:dickmyers@countytimes.net)

# Lusby Man Sentenced for Child Pornography

Henry Joseph Rupinski, 53, of Lusby, was sentenced on Dec. 20 in Calvert County Circuit Court to 15 years, with 18 months of active time, for possession of child pornography. Upon release Rupinski will be on 5 years supervised probation and will be required to register as a sex offender for life, forfeit all devices, and have no unsupervised contact with children. The sentence was imposed by Judge Mark S. Chandlee.

In January 2023, investigators from the Maryland State Police began an online investigation into the Bit Torrent file sharing network. During the investigation, Rupinski allegedly shared a file containing child pornography. Investigators obtained a search warrant for Rupinski's electronic devices and uncovered numerous images of child pornography.

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



Henry Rupinski

# Chesapeake Beach Announces New Town Administrator

By Dick Myers  
Staff Writer

After the new mayor and town council of Chesapeake Beach were sworn in on Dec. 19, Mayor Bruce Wahl, as his first order of business announced the new town administrator, Dr. Samelia Okpodu-Pyuzza.

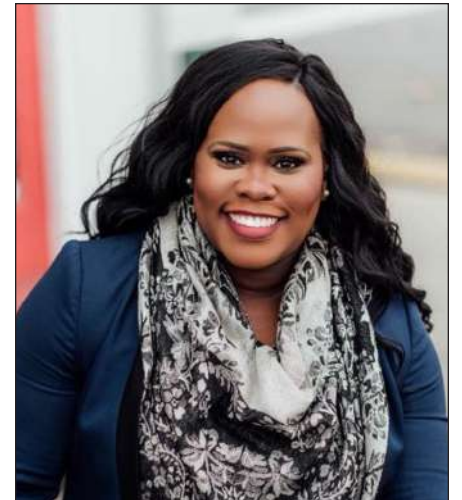
Wahl said, "She and I have known each other for probably about 10 years. But I did not know her incredible resume or skillset until she began to help me with my campaign for mayor. And we got to talking a little bit later on, and I mentioned to Samelia that I was looking for a new town administrator, and many of you know the story behind that. And she indicated an interest. And when she sent me her resume, I was absolutely blown away. This lady is highly educated. It's Doctor Samelia and has incredible background. The only thing I knew when we first got together on the campaign is that she could sing so sweetly that it would bring tears to your eyes. But she is an amazing woman."

Wahl added, "I am looking for great things working with her. I know the council is going to enjoy getting to know her. The staff are going to enjoy getting to know her. She is a loving and caring person."

Okpodu-Pyuzza said, "I'm a dedicated servant/leader. I really care about making things work harmoniously. I look at it as a calling when you get called into public service. And so, I'm really just excited to be able to help make things go smoothly and continue the culture of excellence."

Information on her presented to the town at the meeting said, "Dr. Okpodu-Pyuzza brings a wealth of experience, a proven track record of leadership, and an unwavering commitment to public service, making her exceptionally qualified to lead the operations of our town. Dr. Okpodu-Pyuzza's background reflects a unique combination of expertise in biomedical research and community development. She began her career as a researcher, earning a Ph.D. in physiology and biophysics and conducting groundbreaking studies in molecular and cellular biology.

"Her transition into community development and public service was marked by a term as an AmeriCorps member, where she worked directly with communities to address pressing needs. Her dedication to service led her to support a regional food bank and an international NGO before being appointed as a State Commissioner for the Maryland Governor's Commission on Service and Volunteerism. As Executive Director of the Maryland State Service Commission, Dr. Okpodu-Pyuzza demonstrated unparalleled leadership, successfully closing an Office of Inspector General's Federal investigation, and earning recognition from the State Comptroller for repair-



Dr. Samelia Okpodu-Pyuzza

ing state and federal fiscal systems.

"Her ability to foster bipartisan collaboration under both Democratic and Republican governors exemplifies her adaptability and dedication to effective governance.

"Additionally, Dr. Okpodu-Pyuzza co-founded the Gilded Alliance Group, where she has served as Principal Consultant, supporting state and local organizations in designing impactful community programs. Her extensive expertise includes:

- "Strategic planning and organizational leadership.
- "Budget development, fiscal management, and resource allocation.
- "Program direction, policy development, and public engagement.
- "Grant administration and funding strategy.
- "Crisis management, conflict resolution, and stakeholder relations.

"Dr. Okpodu-Pyuzza's career is marked by her ethical leadership, problem-solving abilities, and dedication to fostering sustainable community growth. Her academic achievements, including a Ph.D. in Physiology and Biophysics and a Bachelor of Science in Optical Engineering, provide a strong foundation for her analytical approach to problem-solving. As a proud AmeriCorps Alum, she embodies the spirit of service and is deeply committed to driving innovation and transparency in municipal operations.

"Dr. Okpodu-Pyuzza's appointment aligns with our town's vision for progress, ensuring that we meet the needs of our residents while planning strategically for the future. I am confident that Dr. Okpodu-Pyuzza's leadership will bring stability, efficiency, and innovation to our town. Her ability to manage complex systems, build collaborative relationships, and prioritize community engagement will serve us well in the years to come," Wahl said.

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# Calvert County Public Schools: The Story of 2024

By Dick Myers  
Staff Writer

If Time Magazine was awarding a Person of the Year for 2024 in Calvert County, that person would have to be Superintendent of Schools Dr. André Townsel. Although he would just be a symbol of the larger story, which was the school system as a whole.

The school system had emerged from the pandemic and it's online learning still trying to deal with the aftermath for some students of lost learning and socialization.

An issue that raised its ugly head before the pandemic, violence in the classrooms and on the busses, was still there to be dealt with.

During the first half of the year, the biggest story was the state cut of \$22 million because of the expiration of the Cove Point LNG's Payment on Lieu of Taxes [PILOT].

The cut created considerable angst among the school system employees, fearful for their jobs, and the county commissioners, who were faced with decisions on how to make up for the lost money.

During the spring, school system employees were hit with the possibility of draconian cuts, as Townsel released a worst-case scenario budget.

But the school system has a lot of supporters, and the commissioners heard from them. In the end, the schools used \$20 million of their fund balance and the county kicked in \$10 million to balance the budget and ensure that the negotiated agreements with the school system unions were honored. And no one was laid off.

Later in the year the commissioners announced a new PILOT with the plant's new owner, Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway. But as the new year begins, the state still has not restored that lost money and the school board budget will once again be a story on the front pages of The Calvert County Times.

Which brings us to the second part of this Year of 2024 – the school board itself.

Two years ago, two new school board members, Lisa Grenis and Jana Post, were elected with the support of the county's now majority Republican Party. That left the school board at times with a 3-2 vote, with those two new members still in the minority.

An example of the splits was over the inclusion of the words "white privilege" and "white supremacy" in the system's Anti-Racism Policy.

The policy said, "to acknowledge and understand the concept of white privilege and white supremacy and its hindrances on achieving equity."

Grenis and Post tried to get it removed but lost 3-2. Grenis said, "Words matter, and the words white privilege and white supremacy divide our community and unfairly point the racism finger at a large percentage of our students, staff, and teachers. This is wrong. And according to the state's anti-discrimination and anti-racism law, it is a racist statement. Title VII protects civil and constitutional rights by authorizing the Attorney General to institute suits, to protect constitutional rights in public facilities and public education, and to prevent discrimination in

federally assisted programs, including education. The disparate impact regulations ensure that public funds to which all taxpayers of all races contribute, not be spent in any fashion which encourages, entrenches, subsidizes, or results in racial discrimination. Additionally, the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment states policies that classify persons based upon race are presumptive, presumptively invalid."

Board member Dawn Balinski countered with, "The term white privilege and white supremacy are historical truths. They are concepts that when a dominant group is in power and is actively oppressing another group, that's what happens. The term white privilege is not attacking white people sitting in classrooms, white people teaching in classrooms. This is just a concept that this is what happens."

"I am from Alabama. I know about how blacks were discriminated against when I was growing up. So, when you put a whole group of people 150 feet behind you in the race, you're going to be ahead. You didn't do it. You know, I did not do that. But I agree that I was, when I was growing up, 150 feet ahead of some of my Black friends."

Not all issues ended in split votes. The move by Grenis to ban cell phones and hoodies down over ears succeeded after initial resistance by the majority.

With the controversies as a backdrop, the 2024 election for three school board seats played out in dramatic fashion.

The Republican Party dove right in to what is supposed to be a non-partisan elec-



Superintendent of Schools Dr. André Townsel

tion, endorsing three candidates, Melissa Goshorn, Paul Harrison and Joseph Marchio, and leaving former commissioner and school board member Kelly McConkey as the odd man out in the primary, and insured in the general election a clean sweep for the more conservative slate. They will be sworn in on Jan. 9.

Goshorn, for one, vowed to get the white privilege and supremacy terms removed from the policy.

These actions in 2024 could mean that when we write a Year in Review story a year from now, the issues will either still be there or will have been resolved.

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## Calvert Holds 'Historical Election'

By Dick Myers  
Staff Writer

"This has really been a historical election." That was Calvert County Elections Administrator Gail Hatfield's assessment of the 2024 General Election. She gave a recap at the Dec. 17 meeting of the Calvert County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC).

"This was the highest amount of voters Calvert County has ever seen come out to vote," she said, with a 78 percent voter turnout. "We have 69,000 some voters right on our registration rolls. But 54,122, wow, of those actually voted."

Showing a graph to the commissioners, she noted, "You see that giant increase, an upsweep of how many actually showed up and voted, by mail, by early voting, and also at the polls on election day."

She said that was a dramatic increase from the last general election in 2020. "We thought that was one of our highest turnouts, but that was only 49,000... in 2016 we had 47,000."

"Early voting is really picking up," Hatfield said, with 23,340 at the three sites during eight days, far surpassing the previous high of 14,324.

Hatfield told the commissioners, "Can you imagine if you all had not granted us those other two sites. We would never have



been able to accommodate 23,000 in that one spot."

Even this year's new site in a trailer at Ward Farm Park in Dunkirk was successful, with over 8,000 voters showing up. And the laggard site at the Southern Community Center in Lusby is also showing gains.

At the early voting sites, she said, "There were no waits. The highest wait time during our early voting might have been six minutes."

Hatfield reported, "On election day at

those 18 precincts we had 18,625."

She said, "It's like 50 percent on election day, but the other 50 percent is now divided up between the mail-in ballots and the early vote, which allows us to go down to those 18 precincts. There are less people left to come out on election day."

Mail-ins were off from the pandemic election year of 2020 when everyone received mail-in ballots. But Hatfield said, "We actually had 12,579 total of our mail-in ballots. And 54 percent of that 12,000 actually used

the dropbox. So, I'm excited because that means more are starting to use that dropbox, which saves me money because then we're not paying that postage coming back. They are so secure. We have cameras on them 24/7, our staff goes out and picks up the ballots a couple times a day just to make sure that there's nothing really left in those ballot boxes for very long."

Hatfield praised her election judges. "They are the backbone in there. We trained over 327 election judges to work the polls this year for early voting and on election day. And they also came in and helped us canvas all of those ballots because we were allowed to count some of the ballots that we had prior to early voting, which really helped us not to be overwhelmed."

She noted, "They're being compensated, but to me it's still like community service. These election judges, it's their heart and soul."

She also praised the other parts of county government for their help.

Hatfield also introduced her staff. Commissioner Catherine Grasso said, "A couple of incidents we had in previous elections when outsiders came in and wanted to make sure every vote counted in Calvert County; every vote always counts in Calvert County. And it's because of you all."

[dickmyers@countytimes.net](mailto:dickmyers@countytimes.net)



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## “THIS HAS REALLY BEEN A HISTORICAL ELECTION.”

CALVERT COUNTY ELECTIONS ADMINISTRATOR GAIL HATFIELD  
ON HIGH VOTER TURNOUT



**LOCAL** 5  
Hearing date for town center plan set



**LOCAL** 5  
Lusby man sentenced for child porn



**ON THE COVER**  
Calvert schools, superintendent, grabbed most of the attention in 2024

## WEEKLY FORECAST

THU, JAN 2	FRI, JAN 3	SAT, JAN 4	SUN, JAN 5
Mostly Sunny Hi: 42° Lo: 29°	Mostly Cloudy Hi: 42° Lo: 26°	Partly Cloudy Hi: 34° Lo: 25°	Partly Cloudy Hi: 34° Lo: 28°
MON, JAN 6	TUE, JAN 7	WED, JAN 8	THU, JAN 9
AM Snow Showers Hi: 36° Lo: 25°	Partly Cloudy Hi: 34° Lo: 23°	Partly Cloudy Hi: 34° Lo: 23°	Partly Cloudy Hi: 31° Lo: 18°



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**Public Hearing Set on  
Town Center Plan**

**Calvert Saw Record  
Voter Turnout**

**Chesapeake Beach Gets  
New Town Administrator**

## SCHOOLS, TOWNSEL 2024'S TOP STORY