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Calvert County Times

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2025

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Todd Ireland Voted
Commissioner President

School Board Member
Calls for Flat Budget

State Investigating
Officer-Involved Crash

OP

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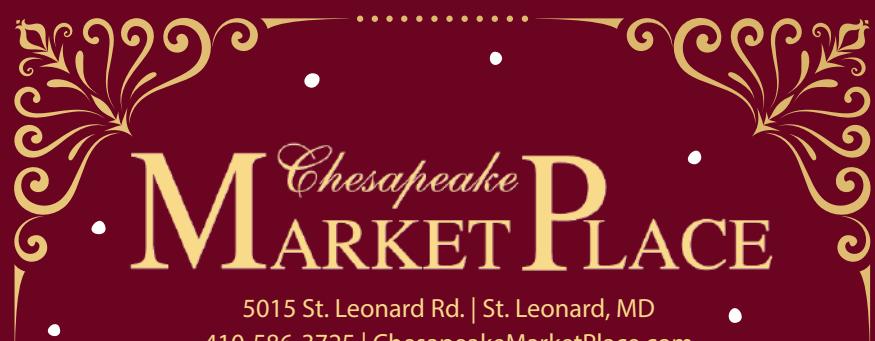


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“WE NEED TO OPERATE IN A SPACE... THAT OUR FUNDING IS GOING TO BE FLAT OR LOWER.”

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER PAU HARRISON ON UPCOMING BUDGET



LOCAL

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Hance steps down, Ireland steps up as Commissioner President



LOCAL

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Fourteen Calvert organizations benefit from cannabis funds



ON THE COVER
Calvert celebrates the holidays

WEEKLY FORECAST

THU, DEC 18	FRI, DEC 19	SAT, DEC 20	SUN, DEC 21
			
Mostly Cloudy Hi: 53° Lo: 47°	AM Rain Hi: 59° Lo: 29°	Partly Cloudy Hi: 44° Lo: 38°	Mostly Sunny Hi: 54° Lo: 24°
MON, DEC 22	TUE, DEC 23	WED, DEC 24	THU, DEC 25
			
Partly Cloudy Hi: 37° Lo: 30°	Cloudy Hi: 44° Lo: 40°	Partly Cloudy Hi: 51° Lo: 37°	Mostly Cloudy Hi: 47° Lo: 41°

A NOTE TO OUR READERS:

In order to allow our staff to enjoy the holidays with their loved ones, the County Times will not publish on December 25. We will resume our normal publishing schedule on Wednesday, December 31, 2025. We wish all our readers a happy holiday season, and look forward to seeing you in the new year.

School Board Member Calls for Flat Budget

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

As the Calvert County Board of Education continues to give advice to Acting Superintendent Dr. Marcus Newsome as he prepares to release his proposal budget next month, at least one board member has a clear message to him – prepare a flat budget. The other members in attendance at the Dec. 11 board meeting appeared to agree with Paul Harrison, with some caveats.

During a brief presentation, Chief Financial Officer Scott Johnson informed the board, “Over 50 new or additional positions have been requested for FY 27 from the unrestricted fund, and there’s also a possibility that one or more requests will be coming yet related to Blueprint related positions.”

Johnson noted that several of the new positions had previously been requested by the board.

Harrison, an accountant in his day job, noted that the enrollment trend in the schools was still on the decline.

Harrison said, “I think the tough part of when you say there’s 50 new positions requested, I don’t think that’s an FY 27 issue. I think that’s going to be an FY later issue. I think part of the problem we have is that if we’re going to continue to fund it at the MOE (Maintenance of Effort) predicated on the number of students and the number of students is less, we’re going to have less to work with. Is that a fair statement?”

Johnson replied, “It’ll depend largely on the amount of state aid increase per pupil in FY 27.”

Harrison asked, “So does the MOE number change from year to year?”

Johnson said, “It’s driven in part by the enrollment, and I believe also by the legislative amount for the various categoricals.”

Harrison asked, “So the MOE for Calvert is different than the MOE for St. Mary’s, is that correct?” He was told it was.

He said, “For us, I think we need to operate in a space where we should consider that our funding is going to be flat or lower,” adding, “The state is facing a \$1.4 billion deficit. My MVA renewal was double what it was last year, and I think it’s going to be double again to try to ease this \$1.4 billion (deficit). I don’t suspect our state allocation is going to go up and I certainly wouldn’t make a demand of the commissioners for our MOE number to go higher.”

Harrison tried to make a motion for a flat budget, but board President Jana Post said it was premature.

“I think it might be a little bit too premature to say that we’re only going to ask for flat funding from the commissioners,” Post said.



School board member Paul Harrison

Harrison continued to press for flat funding as the budget is prepared. “We should work on the mindset of flat. Now if something comes up that we absolutely must have, then I think we should reserve the right to go back to the commissioners and ask for some amount of money plus.”

Post noted the audit the board ordered. “I think the purpose of accelerating the audit that we’re doing is its going to provide us with some insight and help us maybe formulate areas for savings.”

But Post agreed with Harrison. “I think to have the mindset going forward that that’s (flat funding) what we should try to do.”

One issue to be resolved is how much of the fund balance should be devoted to balancing the budget. Johnson said, “For many persons, a balanced budget is one in which total revenues equal or exceed the total expenditures. For others, however, a balanced budget can include the use of some previously accumulated fund balance. Depletion of fund balance, however, could impair the board’s ability to meet the fund balance target specified in Policy 55-20 (12 to 15 percent).”

Regarding the proposed new positions, board Vice President Lisa Grenis said, “I think we need to look at those positions and see how many are directly working with students. But I also think we need to keep in mind that before we approve any positions, we need to first fund all negotiated agreements.”

Regarding the fund balance policy, board member Melissa Goshorn said, “That’s what I would expect we maintain and meet our policy. I personally wouldn’t want to see the use of any fund balance if we ended up having extra than more than 16 percent projected in fund balance, unless they were for very strategic one-time purchases.”

dickmyers@countytimes.net

Ireland Takes Commissioner Helm

Hance Steps Down After Five Years

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

St. Mary’s County Commissioner Vice President Todd Ireland has assumed the Calvert County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) presidency after a unanimous vote at the Dec. 16 meeting. The president is selected yearly at the final meeting of the year.

Ireland replaces Buddy Hance, who had been president for five years, including the entire term of the current commissioner board. He voluntarily stepped down.

Hance said before the vote, “I just want to take this opportunity to thank my fellow board members for giving the opportunity to be president. It’s a privilege and an honor to represent you. It’s a great opportunity and great experience and this is a great board. So, whoever’s the next president’s going to be, he or she, it’s going to be in good shape. So, I just want to thank you all for the opportunity.”

Commissioner Mark Cox was unanimously chosen vice president for the next year. He would lead the meeting in Ireland’s absence.

Hance and Ireland have been closely aligned since the last election, as has Cox.

Commissioner Mike Hart made the motion for both appointments.

After assuming the commissioner’s seat, Ireland said to Hance, “You served five years as the president,” adding, “You’ve had a lot of responsibility on you. You’ve conducted a lot of county business, and you always kept the citizens at the forefront during that time. And I appreciate everything you’ve done in helping this board along too. You had three new ones coming into this board and you steered us along and guided us along throughout the process. So, I thank you for your time.”

Later, during commissioner time, Ireland said, “To the citizens of our county, we’re going to do everything we can to ensure that Calvert County’s character and rural character, our rural integrity is maintained. We’re going to make decisions again for our constituents, not for ourselves. And so



Commissioner President Todd Ireland

moving forward, I believe this board is all right there with me on that. And Buddy, thanks again for Commissioner Hance for the last five years of your service to this board as president.”

His biography on the county website says, “County Commissioner Todd Ireland took office in December 2022 as an at-large representative on the Calvert County, Maryland, Board of County Commissioners. He is serving his first term.

“Ireland served as a Calvert County Sheriff’s Deputy for nearly 29 years, retiring as a captain in December 2021. He had a rewarding law enforcement career, receiving numerous awards and recognitions. He has also worked on the water his entire life, fishing and crabbing on the Chesapeake Bay and Patuxent River.

“Ireland is a lifelong Calvert County resident, whose family history is deeply entrenched in the county. Many of his ancestors were watermen and farmers. He resides on his family’s farm in Huntingtown, a longstanding tobacco farm that is now in a conservation program. When he is not working on the water, Ireland can be found working around the family farm or in his shop with his father and two sons.”

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Cannabis Fund Supports 14 Organizations

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

Fourteen organizations in Calvert County will receive funding under the Community Reinvestment and Repair Fund, which provides the county a share of revenue from cannabis sales. The total award is \$78,556.

The recipients were chosen by review panels consisting of citizens and Department of Community Resources staff representatives, according to department director Jennifer Moreland.

The 14 organizations were selected out of 17 applicants.

Deputy Director Jacquelyn Culver explained what the money will be used for: "A lot of it's recommended for youth programming to help engage youth in afterschool activities. So, there are priority funding areas for education afterschool programs. Housing and homelessness prevention initiatives (are provided).

"So, there are some funding recommendations for survivors of domestic violence as well as persons experiencing homelessness. Job training and workforce development programs for the community to build capacity for at risk vulnerable populations and folks in those Lusby and Prince Frederick areas.

"We also have programs benefiting individuals and families impacted by incarceration. That was a priority funding area just due to the nature of cannabis restitution. So, you'll see examples like Project Echo is applying for funds to help do infrastructure upgrades that will help them better serve their clients and have more safe, and trauma informed care.

"You'll see programs from Loving Care are covered, safe housing, the library doing literacy programs for children and a sensory experience to get families and youth engaged.

"CAASA (Calvert Alliance Against Substance Abuse) will be doing direct educa-



Department of Community Resources Director Jennifer Moreland

tion mailers about substance use and misuse.

"So, you'll see a variety of different programs and that is really what the intent of this funds is to serve the community with programs that will help the community."

The organizations receiving funding are:

- Arts Council of Calvert County
- Barstow Acres Children's Center and Loving Arms
- CAASA
- Calvert County Minority Business Alliance
- Calvert Library
- Calvert Safe Housing Network
- LEAP Forward
- LifeStyles of Maryland
- Loving Care
- Positive Outcome Mentoring and Dance, Inc.
- Project ECHO
- Stella's Girls, Inc.
- Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland
- New Start "Boss-Up & Build"

dickmyers@countytimes.net

Commissioners Honor Outgoing County Attorney



John Norris, who served 14 years as county attorney, was honored on Dec. 16 by the county commissioners. Norris is leaving to become St. Mary's County's Director of Public Works and Transportation, hence the hard hat gift. Photo courtesy of Calvert County Government.

Governor Moore Outlines Priorities for 2026

Governor Wes Moore on Dec. 11 addressed the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) Winter Conference in Cambridge, charting a course for 2026 focused on the “ABCs” of good governing: affordability, budgets, and competitiveness.

The governor championed the state’s successes despite unprecedented headwinds from the federal government, including delivering a tax cut for Maryland’s middle class families and attracting more than \$10 billion in private investment in Maryland’s economy.

Preceding his remarks, Governor Moore installed the 2025-2026 Maryland Association of Counties board of directors and officers. Frederick County Councilmember M.C. Keegan-Ayer was installed as the board’s president, succeeding Queen Anne’s County Commissioner Jack Wilson.

Excerpts from Governor Moore’s remarks as prepared:

“The Trump-Vance Administration has made our work harder. [...] But I don’t want to spend my time tonight listing the bad things Washington has done to our state—because I know who I’m here with. [...] I am here with people who do not have the luxury of complaining when there’s a problem, but who feel a deep obligation to figure out the solution. And because of that abiding spirit of public service, we end this year not from a position of weakness, but from a position



Gov. Moore at the MACo Winter Conference

of strength.”

“Together, we will continue our work to build a state where everyone has the opportunity to succeed—no matter their background or family lineage. And to meet that mission, we need to focus on our ABCs: affordability, budgets, and competitiveness.”

“This year, we worked with the General Assembly to deliver energy rebates to Marylanders facing financial hardship. But

there is still more to do. We will not wait until 2027 to move the needle on energy. We are also accelerating housing production across the state, to strengthen the housing market and bring down costs.”

“Last year, we turned an inherited deficit into a surplus, gave the middle class a tax cut, and asked those of us who have done especially well financially to give a little more so we can have the best schools in the

nation. We’re proud of that achievement. It took a lot of hard work. And I want to thank our partners in the Maryland General Assembly for their collaboration. But there is still more to do.”

“We cannot—and will not—balance our budget on the backs of Marylanders. At the same time, we must right-size programs that need to be made more sustainable. The budget decisions in front of us won’t be easy or simple. But in Maryland, we don’t shy away from what’s complicated or difficult. We lean in.”

“It’s not lost on me that many of the people in this room will be going before the voters at the end of next year. We will ask for the support of the people who first put us in these seats. Yes, they want to know that we are standing between them and the White House. But they also want to know that we stand for something more than resistance—that we are guided by our own aspirations for the future of the state.”

“A future where you can get a good-paying job with benefits, regardless of whether you went to a four-year college or not. A future where all Marylanders have a shot at success, no matter how much money you have or where you live. A future where everyone can access work, wages, and wealth and claim their slice of prosperity.”

Press release from Office of Gov. Wes Moore

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CALVERT COUNTY POLICE BLOTTER

During the week of November 24, 2025 – November 30, 2025, Calvert County Sheriff's Office Deputies responded to 2,335 calls for service throughout the community including, but not limited to:

- Check Welfare / Mental Health: 44
- Disorderly: 8
- Domestic: 29
- Motor Vehicle Crashes: 45
- Patrol Checks / School Checks: 1249
- Suspicious Persons / Vehicles: 34
- Traffic Complaints: 57
- Traffic Stops: 399
- 911 Hang Ups: 47
- ARRESTS: 30



Shane Andrew Jennings



Kristen Danielle Thomas

with K9 Atlas, who conducted a scan of the vehicle and alerted to the odor of narcotics. A subsequent search revealed several pieces of drug paraphernalia coated in suspected crack cocaine residue. Thomas was arrested and charged with CDS: Possession – Not Cannabis and CDS: Possession of Paraphernalia. Jennings was charged with CDS: Possession – Not Cannabis.



Devean Michael Gemoya

Frederick, for a report of a disorderly subject and a possible fight. Employees and patrons identified the suspect, **Devean Michael Gemoya**, 22 of St. Leonard, as the primary aggressor and advised he had been verbally disruptive inside the bar and was being removed from the property. Gemoya was instructed to arrange transportation from the scene and refused. He continued

to speak loudly, act disorderly, and disregard multiple commands to lower his voice. Gemoya refused to leave the property and continued to ignore lawful orders. Gemoya was taken into custody and transported to the Calvert County Detention Center where he was charged with Failure to Obey a Lawful Order, Disorderly Conduct, and Intoxicated Public Disturbance.

Theft: 25-108862 On November 27, 2025, DFC Mister responded to the 2400 block of Emmanuel Court in Huntingtown for the report of a theft. The complainant advised that an unknown suspect stole a Bass Pro Shops Pond Prowler 10 fishing boat from the area of the victim's pond, along with a paddle. The estimated value of the stolen property is \$925. The investigation is ongoing.



Albert Michael Shott

reported a Caucasian or Hispanic male wearing a black jacket and a Washington Commanders hat stole a 4-pack of Vuse vape cartridge refills and fled in a gray Toyota traveling south on Maryland Route 4. DFC S. Hendrickson located the suspect vehicle traveling south, and both deputies initiated a traffic stop at MD Rt. 4 South and Main Street. Contact was made with the occupants, including the right-rear passenger, **Albert Michael Shott**, 42 of Lusby. A records check revealed Shott had a suspended license and an open warrant through Anne Arundel County. Shott was taken into custody without incident. During the investigation, deputies observed the unopened packaging for the stolen vape refills inside the vehicle where Shott had been seated. Store management confirmed Shott concealed the vape refills and fled the store. The estimated value of the stolen property is \$43.98. Shott was transported to the Calvert County Detention Center and charged with Theft: Less than \$100.

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

Attorney General Investigating Fatal Police-Involved Crash Lusby Woman Killed in Accident

The Independent Investigations Division (IID) of the Maryland Office of the Attorney General is investigating a fatal police-involved collision that occurred on Dec. 12 in Prince Frederick.

The preliminary investigation revealed on Friday, Dec. 12, at approximately 12:30 a.m., Deputy Ryan Campbell with the Calvert County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) observed a Nissan sedan drive past his cruiser in the 500 block of Rt 4/Solomons Island Rd. The deputy followed the Nissan and turned on his emergency equipment in an attempt to stop the Nissan for a traffic violation in the area of Prince Frederick Road and Calvert Hills Road. The driver of the Nissan, Savon Samuel, 32, of Pikesville, did not stop, and the deputy continued following the Nissan.

Approximately one mile after the attempted car stop, the Nissan entered the intersection of Stokley Road and Rt 4 and struck a Honda sedan driven by Servon Gatewood, 58, of Lusby. A third vehicle, a Kia SUV, was struck in the collision.

Gatewood was transported to a local hospital where she was pronounced dead. The driver and passenger of the Kia were transported to a local hospital and treated for non-life-threatening injuries.

Samuel was taken into custody and transported to an area hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.

Campbell was equipped with body-worn camera. The IID, with assistance from the Maryland State Police Crash Team, is investigating the circumstances leading up to the collision.

Campbell, a four-year veteran of the sheriff's office, is assigned to the Patrol Division.

The IID continues to investigate the circumstances of the fatal officer-involved vehicle collision. Anyone with information about this incident, including cell phone or private surveillance video, is asked to contact the IID at (410) 576-7070 or by email at IID@oag.maryland.gov

IID will generally release body-worn camera footage within 20 business days of an incident. There may be situations where more than 20 days is necessary, including if investigators need more time to complete witness interviews, if there are technical delays caused by the need to shield the identities of civilian witnesses, or to allow family members to view the video before it is released to the public.

Press releases from MD Office of the Attorney General

Huntingtown Man Sentenced to 22 Years in Prison

On December 16, 2025, a Calvert County Circuit Court Judge sentenced Andre Xavier Howe, of Huntingtown, to 22 years in prison. Judge Mark S. Chandlee also sentenced Howe to serve 5 years of supervised probation upon release. Howe will be required to serve half of his sentence before becoming parole eligible.

Howe was convicted of attempted second degree murder, first degree assault, and use of a firearm in connection with a July, 2024, incident in which Howe fired multiple gunshots into a townhouse complex in Prince Frederick, injuring two innocent victims. The intended victim was not harmed.

Although Howe was 17 at the time of the incident, he was charged and prosecuted as an adult. State's Attorney Robert Harvey noted, "It's important that the State have the legal authority to charge certain juveniles as adults when they commit violent crimes. The juvenile justice system does not have adequate secure facilities or appropriate programs to deal with these individuals. Mr. Howe has been authorized to serve his sentence at Patuxent Institution, which is a maximum security adult facility in Jessup



Andre Xavier Howe

that has a program tailored for youthful violent offenders."

The case was prosecuted by Assistant State's Attorney Allison S. Walton.

Press release from Calvert County State's Attorney

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. 17 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 County Administration Building (CAB) 150 Main Street, Ground Floor/Chesapeake Room Prince Frederick, MD 20678 and live stream.

1. CSPR-143112, **Calvert County Industrial Park 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

2. CSPR-143253, **Calvert Gateway Business Center, Lot12R**, located on the 4.04-acre parcel at 10380 Town Center Blvd. in Dunkirk, MD and is zoned Dunkirk Town Center. Proposed development of two shell buildings containing 18,075 sf of proposed of retail space and 15,835 sf of flex space with disturbed acreage of 2.52 acres. The project proposes to utilize private water and sewer. The concept submittal was accepted January 22, 2025. Agent: Atwell Group
3. CSPR-143260, **Westside on Main**, located on about 3.8-acres of combined parcels at 305 & 445 Main Street in Prince Frederick, MD and is zoned Town Center. The project consists of 66,680 sf of newly constructed townhomes and office building with disturbed acreage of 3.05 acres. The project proposes to utilize public water and sewer. The concept submittal was accepted January 22, 2025. Agent: COA Barrett
4. CSPR-143276, **Meadow Run Gun**

Range, located on the 11.86-acre parcel at 7625 Meadow Run Lane in Owings, MD and is zoned Light Industrial. The project consists of an approximately 61,000-sf indoor gun range with disturbed acreage of 10 acres. The project proposes to utilize private water and septic. The concept submittal was accepted February 26, 2025. Agent: COA Barrett

Concept submittals being reviewed under the March 2025 Development Review Process have been excluded from this list. There is no assurance that those projects will reach Step 2 of the process. If/when they do, they will be placed on this list under their Detailed Site Development Plan project number.

The following is a list of proposed major subdivisions for upcoming review:

1. SD-143478, **Westside on Main**, located on Main Street in Prince Frederick. A Mixed-Use project consisting of 24 town homes, one commercial office building and an existing commercial building to remain. Proposed on two parcels consisting of 11,724 sf & 3.8 acres, Zoned



Prince Frederick Town Center, Old Town District, Tier I. The Preliminary Plan submittal was accepted October 23, 2025. Agent: COA Barrett.

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.

Office on Aging Staff Earn Specialist Certifications

Two staff members from the Calvert County Department of Community Resources, Office on Aging, have earned national specialist certifications.

Jenna Cisse and Kristy Matchett each earned the Inform USA Certified Community Resource Specialist Certification, a professional credential awarded to individuals working in the information and referral sector of human services.

The Community Resource Specialist certification is designed for practitioners who work directly with clients, either by phone or in person, and provide information and referrals to community services. To earn the certification, candidates must demonstrate competency in key areas and pass a comprehensive exam.

"Our department's frontline staff strive to provide the best customer service possible for Calvert County residents. These certifications are the result of their dedication and professionalism," said Jennifer Moreland, director of Community Resources.

The Calvert County Office on Aging provides a broad range of programs and services to help older adults maintain the best possible quality of life.

Find more information online at www.CalvertCountyMd.gov/Aging.

Press release from Calvert County Government



CalvertHealth Medical Center Named to Top Hospital List



CalvertHealth Medical Center has earned two major national recognitions highlighting the hospital's ongoing commitment to quality, safety and exceptional patient care.

CalvertHealth was named to the inaugural *Forbes Top Hospitals* list, a new national ranking that evaluates hospitals across a range of publicly reported quality measures, including clinical outcomes, patient experience, adherence to best practices and overall value. The list reflects data-driven performance indicators across thousands of U.S. hospitals.

In addition, CalvertHealth was recognized by *Becker's Hospital Review* as one of 518 hospitals nationwide with the lowest catheter-associated urinary tract infection (CAUTI) rates. This distinction reflects the hospital's strong performance in infection prevention and its sustained focus on maintaining a safe care environment.

"These recognitions are a testament to the skill, dedication and compassion of our

entire team," said Jeremy Bradford, president and CEO of CalvertHealth. "Being included in *Forbes*' inaugural Top Hospitals list, along with our exceptional performance in preventing infections, underscores our unwavering commitment to providing safe, high-quality, patient-centered care to the community we serve."

The *Forbes Top Hospitals* List uses publicly available quality data to identify high-performing hospitals across the country. The *Becker's Hospital Review* CAUTI recognition highlights organizations achieving some of the lowest infection rates reported nationally.

CalvertHealth continues to advance clinical excellence, invest in best practices and deliver on its mission to provide exceptional care close to home for the residents of Southern Maryland.

Press release from CalvertHealth

Animal Shelter Hosts Santa Paws' Nice List



A few of the animals currently available for adoption. Picture clockwise from top left are Calliope, Biscuit, Sunset, and Blitzen.

The Linda L. Kelley Animal Shelter will host its Santa Paws' Nice List Adoption Special through Wednesday, Dec. 24. Adoption fees for all animals on the "Nice List" will be waived.

Animals of all ages are available for adoption, including dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters, roosters, pigs and more. Adoptions include spay or neuter surgery, microchipping, age-appropriate vaccinations and a starter care package to help pets transition into their new homes.

All potential adopters will go through the shelter's usual screening process to ensure each animal is placed in a safe, loving and appropriate home.

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

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

Press release from Calvert County Government

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Sixteenth Annual Maritime Performance Series Returns



Pictured clockwise from top left: Ken Kolodner Quartet, The Burnett Sisters Band, Janie Meneely and Rob van Sante, David and Ginger Hildebrand

Tickets are available now for the 2026 Maritime Performance Series at the Calvert Marine Museum. Guests will be treated to a rich and varied lineup of musicians — from the driving acoustic roots of the Ken Kolodner Quartet to the bluegrass-infused harmonies of the Burnett Sisters Band, the Chesapeake-tinged folk storytelling of Janie Meneely & Rob van Sante, and a historically grounded musical journey with David and Ginger Hildebrand bringing the sounds of the American Revolution to life.

Performances begin in the museum's Harms Gallery at 7 p.m. (doors open at 6 p.m.), with beer, wine, soda, and water available for purchase. Tickets are \$20 online (available until one day prior) and \$25 at the door or online on the day of the concert.

Friday, Jan. 30: Ken Kolodner Quartet
Experience the acclaimed father-son duo Ken and Brad Kolodner as they blend hammered dulcimer and clawhammer banjo into a fresh take on old-time bluegrass and American roots music. Joined by bassist Alex Lacquement and multi-instrumentalist Rachel Eddy, the quartet delivers a driving, innovative acoustic sound.

Friday, Feb. 27: The Burnett Sisters Band
The Burnett Sisters Band, as siblings Anissa, Sophia, and Anneli from Boone, North Carolina, along with Geary Allen from Minster, England, are all gifted multi-instrumentalists who are well-loved in the traditional music circuit. To assign a genre to The Burnett Sisters Band would be to oversimplify the breadth of their musical influences—at a typical show, a driving bluegrass standard might be followed by an old-time fiddle tune, a classic Hank Williams song, a recognizable Geary Allen original, or a soaring gospel melody, all topped off with a flatfooting dance number by Anneli.

Friday, March 27: Janie Meneely and Rob van Sante

Chesapeake songster Janie Meneely and guitar-playing balladeer Rob van Sante join forces for an evening concert showcasing their largely homespun music from the Chesapeake Bay and beyond. A Maryland native, Janie Meneely brings a nautical perspective to the world of folk music and storytelling. She partnered with Dutch-born guitarist and singer Rob van Sante, who draws deep from the well of traditional music, adding his virtuoso guitar as accompaniment. Whether they sing about the past or the present, the Bay or beyond, Janie Meneely and Rob van Sante are delighted to share a few hours of music, merriment, and sometimes mayhem. Be ready to sing along!

Friday, April 18: David and Ginger Hildebrand

Celebrate the 250th anniversary of America's War for Independence with performances of special period music by renowned music historians David and Ginger Hildebrand. Donned in period attire, David and Ginger will perform patriotic songs, ballads, dance tunes, and theater songs known by George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and others. The Hildebrands will explain and demonstrate their instruments, including the hammered dulcimer, violin, and Spanish and English guitars—interpreting various musical traditions, featuring both the formal and less refined aspects of music in early America.

For more information on the Maritime Performance Series, please contact Rachelle.Green@calvertcountymd.gov.

Press release from CMM

Calvert Community Calendar

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

Thu, Dec 18

TACOS Teen Advisory Council of Students

Calvert Library Southern Branch
13920 H. G. Trueman Road, Solomons
5-6 p.m.

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

Teens! Calvert Library needs you! We want the library to be a safe space where teens can hang out and freely access books, information, and form community. You can receive one Service Learning hour for each meeting attended. 410-326-5289. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Song Circle

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

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

Fri, Dec 19

Pins and Needles

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

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

Wine & Lights

Annmarie Sculpture Garden & Arts Center
5-9 p.m.

At Annmarie Garden in Lights—an optional

add-on to your light show ticket. Advance reservations required. For adults 21 & older. Join us for a special evening of wine tasting and the beautiful lights! Enjoy a variety of tasting stations in the Arts Building, then enjoy a stroll through the most magical light show. Enjoy live music and food options. \$50/person includes five tastings and special treats. Must show ID at the gate. Advance tickets are required, no walk-ins. To purchase tickets, go to Garden in Lights tickets and select December 19, Wine and Lights option. Visit www.annmariegarden.org for details.

Sat, Dec 20

Brain Games: Mahjongg, Scrabble & More

Calvert Library Prince Frederick
850 Costley Way
12-3 p.m.

Games are a great way to keep your brain sharp while having fun! Join us! Please register. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

On Pins And Needles – South

Calvert Library Southern Branch
13920 H. G. Trueman Road
2-4 p.m.

If you knit, embroider or crochet, or would like to learn, join us on the 3rd Saturday of the month. Get together with other fiber crafters to learn or develop your skills. Work on projects in progress or start something new! Registration requested. BYOY! (Bring Your Own Yarn!) Calvert Libra strives to make our events accessible to all. 410-326-5289. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Mon, Dec 22

Mindfulness Series: Meditation with Allie

Calvert Library Fairview Branch
Rt. 4 and Chaneyville Road, Owings
6:30-7:30 p.m.

Discover the power of presence. Begin

with gentle guidance into mindfulness, sink into a soothing meditation, and close with space for reflection. Allie's warm, insightful approach invites you to find clarity, deepen self-awareness, and embrace moments of stillness and transformation. 410-257-2101. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Fri, Dec 26

Pins and Needles

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

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

Sat, Dec 27

Drop In Switch

Calvert Library Prince Frederick
850 Costley Way
2-4 p.m.

Have fun and make friends at this electronic twist on game night! Play games using the Nintendo Switch. Registration is not required. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Mon, Dec 29

Hibernation

Calvert Marine Museum
10 a.m.-3 p.m.

While winter air temperatures throughout the Chesapeake region are relatively mild, the water temperatures are downright icy! Discover how different species cope with the arrival of winter at the museum. Activities appropriate for ages 5-10. Included with museum admission.

Tue, Dec 30

Evolution and Extinction: Megalodon

Calvert Marine Museum
10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Today is all about the top predator of the Miocene seas – Megalodon! Uncover how this massive shark evolved and how it ultimately met its extinction during the Pliocene Epoch. Activities appropriate for ages 5-10. Included with museum admission.

Teen Night at Annmarie Garden in Lights

Annmarie Sculpture Garden & Arts Center
8-10 p.m.

For teens only. Take in the light show with your friends and enjoy special activities, like face painting, live music, and other surprises. \$5/teen; valid high school ID required for entry. Must be 13-19 years old. Reserve your tickets in advance or purchase them at the door. Plan your visit at www.annmariegarden.org

Wed, Dec 31

Noon Year's Eve Storytime

All Calvert libraries
11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

You're invited to count down to Noon Year's Eve with us! We'll read stories, sing songs and most of all have fun! There will be a ball drop when the clock strikes 12 and dance party to follow after. Dress attire optional. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

On Pins and Needles

Calvert Library Twin Beaches Branch
4100 5th St., North Beach
1-4 p.m.

Bring your quilting, needlework, knitting, crocheting or other project for an afternoon of conversation and shared creativity. 410-257-2411. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>

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

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



County Times

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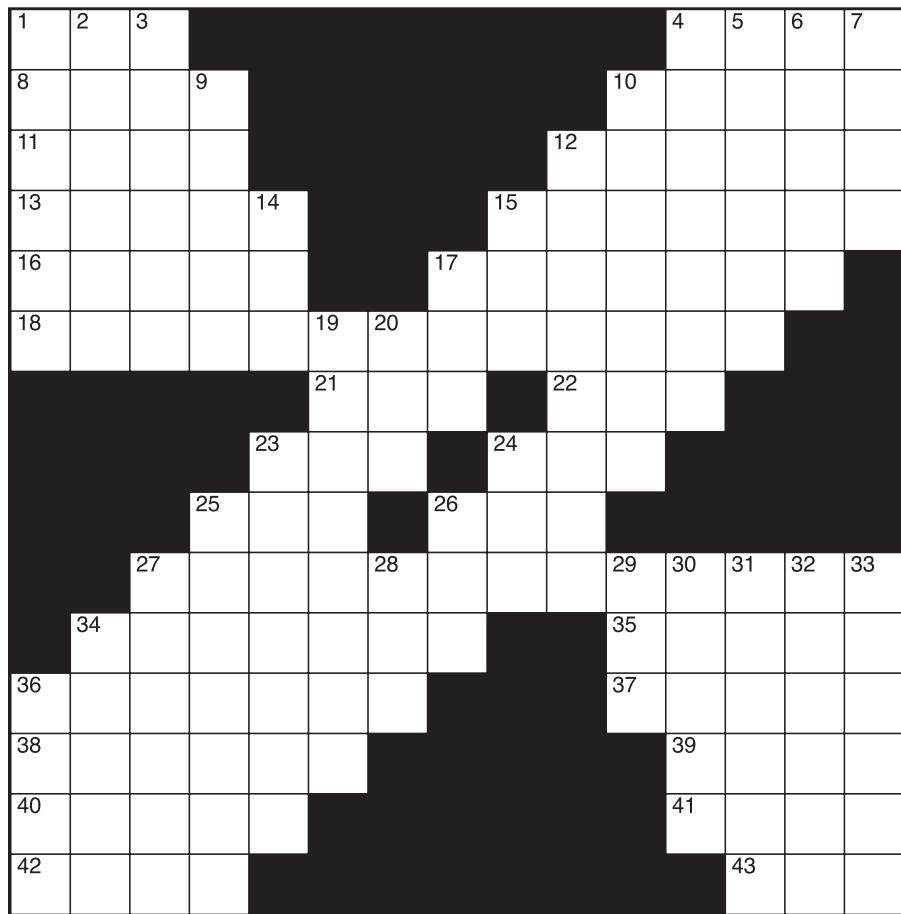
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FUN & GAMES

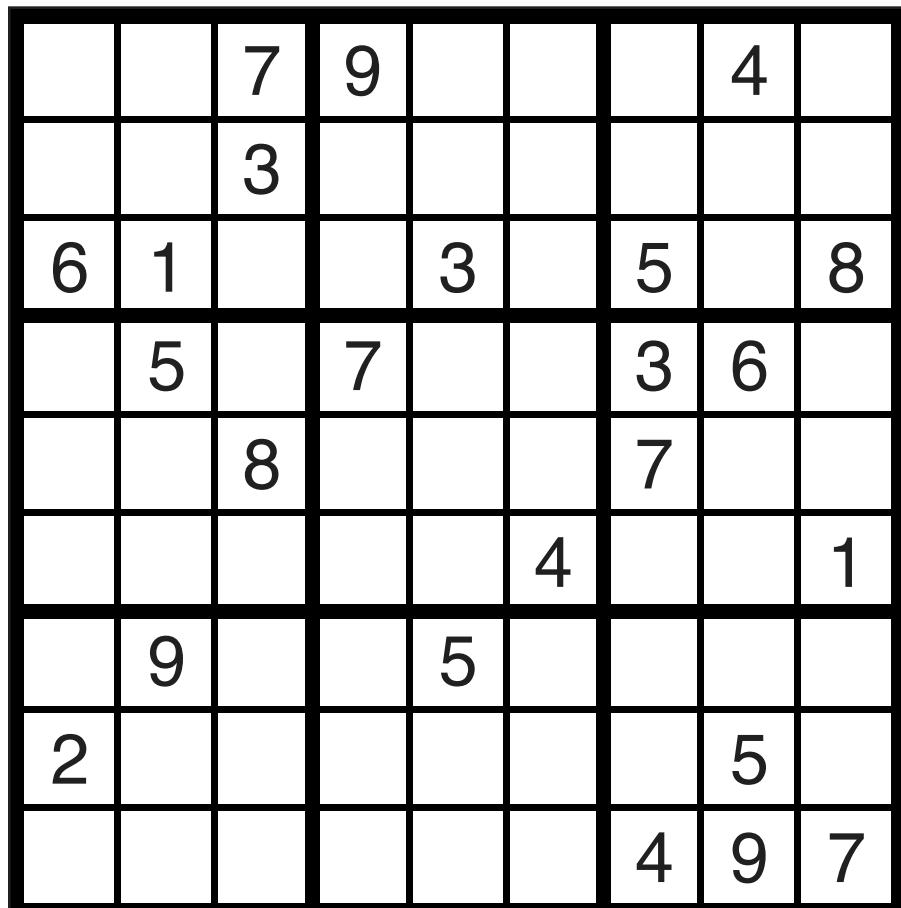



CLUES ACROSS

1. Tax collector
4. Fishes without the line touching water
8. Brooklyn hoopsters
10. Actress Lathan
11. A metric for athletes
12. Food storage location
13. Colossus
15. Desolations
16. Accustom to something unpleasant
17. ___ Kubrick, filmmaker
18. You might ask this at Thanksgiving
21. Arkansas city
22. Gave food to
23. Request
24. V-shaped open trough
25. Make lively
26. It accompanies feather
27. Blonde bombshell
34. One who revolves
35. Bluish greens
36. Charity
37. Having the shape of a cube
38. Unwind
39. Believed by some to be the supreme being
40. Checks or guides
41. Leak slowly through
42. Top-quality
43. Midway between south and southeast

CLUES DOWN

1. Part of your foot
2. It's at the back of the eyeball
3. Where things stand
4. Offered
5. Contains pollen
6. Boisterous get-together
7. Asserts out loud
9. They're in the sky
10. Canonized
12. A politician's official stances
14. It can catch fish
15. British thermal unit
17. Helps little firms
19. Where patients go for treatment
20. Large red deer
23. Pokes holes in
24. "Star Wars" hero Solo
25. One in a hospital
26. Scandinavian god of battle
27. Famous cat
28. ___ Angeles: City of Angels
29. Type of drug (abbr.)
30. City along the Rhine
31. Animal disease
32. Martini ingredients
33. Get away
34. Rare species of rodent
36. Suppress


DECEMBER 11 SOLUTIONS

R	A	B	B	I	S	S	A	L	I	N	E
M	A	D	E	I	R	A	A	B	A	L	O
A	B		A	N	A	L	O	G	I	Z	E
H	I	N	D	S		A	U	G	E	A	G
D	E	U	S		S	A	T	E	S	C	R
I	S	M		R	A	M		D	K	G	O
E	X	E					R	O	G	U	E
A	C	R	I	S					W	U	N
B	R	A	V	E	D				I	D	
R	U	T		T	A	R		P		H	U
E	S	O	P		B	A	S	A	L	T	O
A	A	R	O	N							E
S	D		S	A	T	I	R	I	C	A	L
T	E	H	E	R	A	N		S	A	R	C
S	E	R	A	P	E				C	A	S

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

ST. MARY'S COUNTY library

UPCOMING EVENTS



Holiday Hours

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

Jólabókaflóð (The Yule Book Flood)

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

Lexington Park Chess Day

An all-ages chess social hang-out! Drop in and out to play as needed,

no experience required. Staff will be available to assist those who haven't played before. Lexington Park Library on Saturday, December 20, 2 - 4 p.m. No registration.

Cardboard Cat Cabins & Castles

Use cardboard to make adorable and impressive castles or cabins for your feline friends to enjoy! Using the Library's ChompSaw, a child-safe specialized saw for cutting cardboard, and some other child-safe cutting tools, participants will be given a starter design and then be encouraged to improve and experiment with designs of their own. Through trial-and-error testing, learn what goes into engineering to create more effective supports, and work together to share and implement ideas. Lexington Park Library, Sunday, December 21 from 1 - 3 p.m. Register on www.stmalib.org.

Robot Lab Drop-In

Kids and teens! Open-ended robot fun! Tinker, test, & create with Botley, Indi, &

Ozobot. Solve mazes, tackle challenges, & build your own mini games. It's hands-on fun for all skill levels. No registration needed. Two sessions: Charlotte Hall Library on Monday, December 22, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. and Leonardtown Library on Tuesday, December 23, 1 - 4 p.m.

The Book Worm Club: A Kid's Book Club

Do you like reading? Do you like talking about what books you're reading with people who love reading as much as you do? Do you like crafts and book related activities? Join us for our kids book club! Participants can bring in and discuss whatever they're reading, whether it's novels, graphic novels, nonfiction books, audiobooks, etc., participate in a craft, and enjoy refreshments with peers. Leonardtown Library on Monday, December 29, 6 - 7 p.m.

Noon Year's Eve

All the fun of a New Year's Eve party for our young friends with early bed-

times! Countdown to a Happy NOON Year with silly songs, creative crafts, and awesome activities. Attend at Charlotte Hall Library, Leonardtown Library, or Lexington Park Library! Wednesday, December 31 from 11:30 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. Please register to attend the event at Charlotte Hall Library, no registration required for Leonardtown Library or Lexington Park Library.

Arts and Crafts Day for All

Start off the new year by exploring a new hobby. Drop in to try a variety of arts and craft mediums provided by the library. All ages welcome. Children must be accompanied by an adult. The following mediums will be available to try: Acrylic Paint, Watercolor Paint, Drawing mediums, Pearler Beads, Diamond Art. Aprons will be available for use, but please wear clothing that can get messy. Lexington Park Library on Saturday, January 3, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. No registration.

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St. Mary's Community Calendar

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

Fri, Dec 19

SMTMD Holiday Open Mic & Potluck

Christ Episcopal Church Parish Hall
37497 Zach Fowler Rd, Chaptico
6:30-9:30 p.m.

Acoustic musicians of all skill levels are welcome to perform their favorite tunes or enjoy a night out listening to some local talent. A keyboard can be made available by prior arrangement. Contact Chris Dudley in advance (ccdudley@rocketmail.com) to sign up as a performer. Event held at the Christ Church Parish Hall, 37497 Zach Fowler Rd, Chaptico, MD. This event is holiday themed and will begin early (6:30 pm) to give performers and audience members a chance to eat and mingle. A table will be set up in the back for you to drop off any contributions for the potluck. Doors open at 7 pm with performances beginning promptly at 7:30 PM. Admission is \$8; performers are admitted free of charge. Info: smtmd2@gmail.com, www.smtmd.org/new-events/

Wine & Lights

Annmarie Sculpture Garden & Arts Center
5-9 p.m.

At Annmarie Garden in Lights—an optional add-on to your light show ticket

Advance reservations required. For adults

21 & older. Join us for a special evening of wine tasting and the beautiful lights! Enjoy a variety of tasting stations in the Arts Building, then enjoy a stroll through the most magical light show. Enjoy live music and food options. \$50/person includes five tastings and special treats. Must show ID at the gate. Advance tickets are required, no walk-ins. To purchase tickets, go to Garden in Lights tickets and select December 19, Wine and Lights option. Visit www.annmariegarden.org for details.

Wed, Dec 24

Family Christmas Eve Service

Hollywood United Methodist Church
24422 Mervell Dean Road, Hollywood
4 p.m.

The whole family will enjoy this Christmas Eve service and the children get to participate! All are welcome!

Christmas Eve Service

Hollywood Church of the Nazarene
24710 Sotterley Road, Hollywood
6 p.m.

The whole family will appreciate our traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight Service! All are welcome!

Christmas Eve Service

All Saints Episcopal Church
22598 Oakley Road, Avenue
7 p.m.

Candlelight Christmas Eve Service

Hollywood United Methodist Church
24422 Mervell Dean Road, Hollywood
7 p.m.

Our traditional Candlelight Christmas Eve Service features music from our choir, scripture readings, carols, and of course, candles. Bring the whole family! All are welcome!

Christmas Eve Vigil

Hollywood United Methodist Church
24422 Mervell Dean Road, Hollywood
11 p.m.

Embrace the peace you need this Christmas at our 11PM Vigil.

Sat, Dec 27

Band of Brothers

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

PTSD/Suicide Prevention Group of So.

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

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

Tue, Dec 30

Teen Night at Annmarie Garden in Lights

Annmarie Sculpture Garden & Arts Center
8-10 p.m.

For teens only. Take in the light show with your friends and enjoy special activities, like face painting, live music, and other surprises. \$5/teen; valid high school ID required for entry. Must be 13-19 years old. Reserve your tickets in advance or purchase them at the door. Plan your visit at www.annmariegarden.org

Keep your family safe this holiday season



Use no more than three light sets on any one extension cord. Extension cords should be placed against the wall to **avoid tripping hazards**.

Never nail, tack, or stress wiring when hanging lights; keep plugs off the ground away from puddles and snow.

Don't use frayed or damaged electric cords, and never use electric lights on a metallic tree.

Turn off all holiday lights when you go to bed or leave the house.

Use only non-combustible or flame-resistant materials to trim a tree.

In homes with small children and pets, take special care to **avoid sharp or breakable decorations**.

Here are a few simple tips to remember to keep safety in mind.

LIVE TREE: Make sure it always has an **adequate amount of water**, and keep it **away from any heat source**.

ARTIFICIAL TREE: Choose one that is tested and labeled as **fire resistant**. Artificial trees with built-in electrical systems should have the **Underwriters Laboratory (UL) label**.

Make sure the Christmas tree **does not block foot traffic or doorways**.



Avoid using candles; they are a primary cause of house fires during the holidays.

SMECO cares about your safety. Have a safe and fun-filled holiday.

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Mary Catherine Kane

Sept. 18, 1924–Nov. 22, 2019

Mama you are always in our thoughts, for as long that you are in our memories you will live in our hearts. On Christmas we celebrate all the joy a love that you shared with us. The love you gave us is everlasting. Merry Christmas Mama.

**Love,
Larry & Ellen**

In Remembrance

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

George Thompson, 89

George Russell Thompson, 89, of Hollywood, MD, passed away peacefully at his home on December 13, 2025. Born on September 9, 1936, on the family farm in Avenue, MD, he was the son of the late Thomas Bertrand Thompson, Sr. and Ann Louise Russell Thompson. He is survived by his loving wife, Franny, whom he married on August 8, 1959, at St. John's Church, Hollywood, MD, and his two children, Kris Ann Marsh (Scott) and Glenn Andrew (Jennifer). He is also survived by four grandchildren, Ashley Reardon (Sean), Andrea Begens (Eric), Jeff Mattingly (Kira), and Jessica Stosser (Devon), two great-grandchildren, Breagan Reardon and Gatlin Reardon. George was predeceased by one great-grandchild, Maverick Glenn Begens.

George is survived by his sibling, Thomas (Billy) Thompson (Alice Ann), of Mechanicsville MD. He was predeceased by Sr. Mary Martha Thompson, Harriet Cuel, Johnny Thompson, Theresa Mills, Dot Reichard, Robert "Butch" Thompson, and Joan Victoria Thompson.

Upon graduating from Margaret Brent High School in 1954, he served in the Air Force from 1954-1958. After that, he worked at National Airport specializing in aircraft electrical maintenance.

George began his 38-year career at Patuxent River Naval Air Station in 1963. He started as an aircraft electrician and was promoted to Electrical Equipment Inspector in two years. His career earned him a reputation throughout the aerospace community as perhaps the most knowledgeable person in the field of aircraft electrical and electronic installations. This earned him a promotion to team leader, traveling all over the United States to contractors' facilities to perform inspections. After retiring in 1992, he was employed by Eagle Systems in the same position until 2000 when back trouble sidelined him.

Starting his volunteer fire department career in his teens with the Seventh District Volunteer Fire Department, he later became a member of the Hollywood Volunteer Fire Department in 1964, serving as president from 1981-82. He held positions of Chief Engineer and Assistant Engineer, earned the President's Award three times, and was inducted into the SMVFA Hall of Fame in 1991. He was a member of the American Legion Post #0221 in Avenue and of the Wicomico Senior Blitz Golf Club.



George was a very devoted husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, brother, and friend. His hobbies included golfing and tending his lawn on his John Deere. He was also an avid antique car enthusiast and a Ravens fan. He will truly be missed.

The family will receive friends on Sunday, December 21, 2025, from 2:00 PM to 5:00 PM, with prayers recited at 4:00 PM, at the Hollywood Volunteer Fire Department, Hollywood, MD. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated on Monday, December 22, 2025, at 11:00 AM, in St. John's Catholic Church, Hollywood, MD, with Father Ray Schmidt officiating. Interment will follow at the church cemetery. Serving as pallbearers will be Bill Mattingly, Mike Burdette, Donnie Johnson, Kenny Johnson, Tony Norris, and Mike Sullivan. Honorary pallbearers will be Scott Marsh, Sean Reardon, Eric Begens, Jeff Mattingly, and Devon Stosser.

Donations may be made to the Hollywood Volunteer Fire Department, P.O. Box 7, Hollywood, MD 20636, St. John's Church, 43950 St. John's Road, Hollywood, MD 20636, or ACTS, P.O. Box 54, Bushwood MD, 20618.

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

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

Michael Tippett, 86



Michael C. Tippett, 86, of Hollywood, Maryland, formerly of Washington, D.C. and Cape Coral, Florida, passed away on December 13, 2025.

Born on November 27, 1939, he was the beloved husband of Jacqueline Tippett; devoted father of Michelle and Kelly; proud grandfather of seven grandchildren and great-grandfather of six, with three great-grandchildren expected. Mike retired as Deputy Fire Chief from the Washington, D.C. Fire Department after 28 years of dedicated service.

Family will receive friends on Tuesday, December 23, 2025, from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at St. John Francis Regis Catholic Church, 43927 St. John's Road, Hollywood, MD 20636. A Mass of Christian Burial will follow at 12:00 p.m., officiated by Father Ray.

Arrangements by Brinsfield Funeral Home, P.A., Leonardtown, Maryland. Condolences may be offered at www.brinsfieldsfuneral.com.

Wanderings of an Aimless Mind



No! I Need More Time!

By Shelby Opperman
Contributing Writer

There can't be just one week left until Christmas! I need more time, and I truly don't know where all the time has gone — it just always seems like we are crazy busy. No decorations are up, no tree, and only about 10 presents have been purchased. At this rate it may be an IOU Christmas. I already told my brother and sister-in-law in Utah that they will have New Years presents instead. Normally I have my brother's annual Velatis' sugary caramels and turtles ordered and sent to him. Many of you may remember Velatis from either 9th and G street or Woodward & Lothrop (Woodies) in DC, but the caramel company got its start in Richmond in the 1860's, which I didn't know until this week. Their new location is in Bethesda. I know that Velatis caramels have been a part of our family's Christmas tradition as long as I can remember. I may need to order one box of vanilla sugary's for me. I can feel my teeth hurting just thinking about it.

One of the (many) reasons I feel so behind for Christmas is that we just got home from the Boca Raton area of Florida on Monday night where we had been since last Wednesday. Our granddaughter Leigha graduated from Florida Atlantic University Magna Cum Laude in Finance. We are all so proud of her. Leigha, and her mom Michelle, showed us all of the great sites around the area like Palm Springs and Pompano Beach, plus all of the hot college spots on what they call "The Ave" in Delray Beach. Think 10 times the activity of King Street in Old Town Alexandria or a mini Vegas Strip. It was crazy, and I was told its busy all the time. Everything from the palm trees to the businesses are lit up and jamming with every type of live music or different types of music. This is the place to people watch — which is what my husband and I love to do. The restaurants were creative with amazing food. You could call for a golf cart Uber, or a regular uber to go anywhere (or to send tired grandparents back to the Airbnb), but the golf cart Ubers were really fast as they rattled down the streets. If you use them make sure you have plenty of hairspray because there are no windows. What a great six days!

Now its time not only to prepare for Christmas, but we are having our annual Christ Church Christmas Family Night at our parish hall this Saturday evening. We had it for many years and brought it back last year. It is so much fun with tables for crafting, an area for cookie decorating with Mrs. Claus, an appearance by Santa Claus, and a fresh greenery station to make centerpieces. My husband has been making round wood slice ornaments that I will paint a background on so the kids and adults can make into snowmen or into Santa ornaments to hang on their Christmas trees. The photos show the ornaments I'm getting ready to paint backgrounds on and some finished snowmen from last year. I will have my youngest son's two sturdy young sons to help and to have fun that night. It is a lot of fun, though I may end up sleeping through Christmas this year.

And Dottie, from your email, you got me thinking about what type of hangars to use on the standing wooden ornaments that Robert put together, I may have to use little screw eyes on the top for the ribbon instead of hot gluing twine on those. I know what you are saying about having to fix ornaments on the tree that never seem to face the right direction. I know I've gotten up off the couch lots of times over the years when an ornament I thought I had facing the right way had turned itself sideways or backwards. I have a little more control with the ones I make than what the pre-made ornaments have for hanging apparatus.

I just want to say how much it means to me when readers respond to what I've written either by email, Facebook, text, or in person. It lets me know that I am not just sending my column out into the cloud, that I am reaching the readers of *Wanderings of an aimless mind*. Thank you, and Merry Christmas 2025.

To each new day's adventure,
Shelby

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



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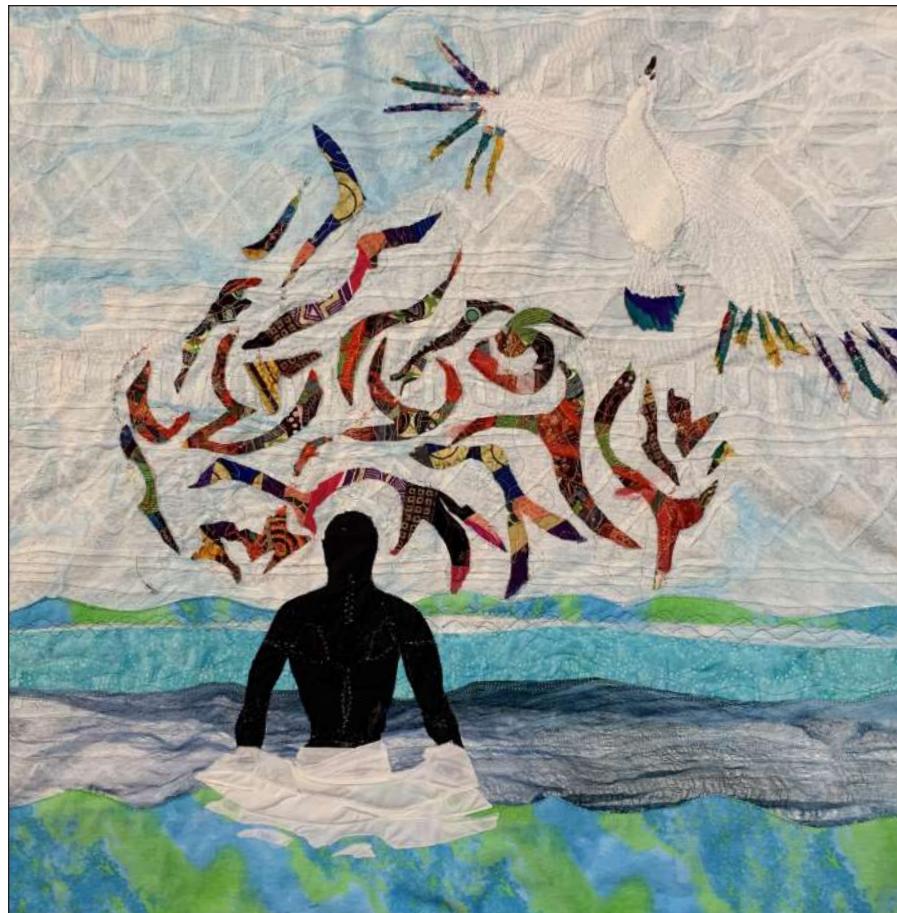
The annual Shop with a Cop on Dec. 13 featured 110 kids being treated to a shopping spree at Walmart with officers from the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office and over a dozen other law enforcement agencies. Everyone gathered at Wildwood Centre for coffee and donuts and then later assembled at the fairgrounds for breakfast provided by the Optimists. Photos courtesy of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office.

Three Oaks Center Dedicates Men's Shelter



A ribbon cutting and dedication ceremony was held Dec. 15 to reopen the newly renovated Andre Rice Emergency Men's Shelter in Lexington Park. Photo by Ceandra Scott.

MedStar St. Mary's Hospital Hosts Local Artists Exhibit



In Whom I Am Well-Pleased by Andrea Cullins

MedStar St. Mary's Hospital and the St. Mary's County Arts Council have unveiled the third installment of their rotating art exhibition in the hospital's emergency department.

Since June, new artwork has been installed every three months as part of a philanthropy-led initiative to create a more welcoming, healing environment for patients, visitors, and associates.

The latest exhibit features vibrant, hand-sewn art quilts by Washington, D.C. artist Andrea "Andi" Cullins. Her collection, *Second Life Quilter*, features intricate mosaics made from hand-cut fabric, rich in color, movement, and emotion. The quilts will be on display through January 2026.

"We're thrilled to showcase Andi's incredible work," said Emily Stagner, assistant vice president of philanthropy, who organized the partnership. "The art wall is part of our ongoing effort to enhance the healing environment for patients, visitors, and associates by highlighting local talent."

Created in partnership with the St. Mary's County Arts Council, the art wall launched in June and has showcased work from local and international artists. This new installation introduces a fresh medium to the series, following earlier exhibits of traditional paintings.

"All of the artists featured have been members of the St. Mary's County Arts Council," Stagner added. "This partnership has allowed us to provide remarkable works of art that offer inspiration and comfort to our patients, visitors, and associates."

Art is a second career for Cullins, a longtime resident of the DC metro area. Following a more than 40-year career in corporate executive search, she retired in 2019 after battling cancer. During retirement, she rekindled the creative spark she first discovered as a student in the Philadelphia public schools' Saturday Art League.

Cullins' work has been widely recognized since she began her Second Life Quilter collection in 2020. Her quilts have been exhibited throughout the region, including solo shows with the St. Mary's County Arts Council, The Catholic University of America, and The Art League Gallery at the Torpedo Factory in Alexandria, Virginia. She has also been featured in *Southern Maryland* magazine and honored as the visual artist for Prince George's County's 2021 Juneteenth celebration.

Visit SecondLifeQuilter.com to learn more about Cullins' art.

Press Release from MedStar Health

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MEET CHRISTIAN GREY

Hi, I'm Christian Grey. The only handsome billionaire who will nap on your laptop and chase laser pointers. I'm a super playful, 6-month-old little man who doesn't do business deals. I'm obsessed with the serious business of zoomies and surprise attacks on shoelaces. I might occasionally look at you with intense, smoldering eyes, but I'm mostly just plotting how to knock your favorite pen off the counter. I promise to be super friendly and very available for cuddles once my daily playtime quota is met. Are you ready to sign the contract for a lifetime of adorable dominance? Complete the deal during adoption hours Mon-Fri 11am-4pm and Sat 10am-3pm. To see more of my amazing friends also available for adoption, "like" us on Facebook @ Charles County Animal Care Center or at <https://www.charlescountymd.gov/services/animal-care-control/animal-care-center>



MEET JAXX

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

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Historic Sotterley Announces New Executive Director

The Board of Trustees of Historic Sotterley is pleased to announce the selection and installation of Dr. Scott Gray, Ed.D., as Executive Director. He assumes the position from Nancy Easterling, who announced her retirement in May.

Dr. Gray will be responsible for the overall operation of Sotterley's museum, historic buildings, and 90 acres of farmland, gardens, and open rural space.

Dr. Gray brings 30 years of museum and non-profit leadership experience to his new role. Before joining Historic Sotterley, he served as Chief Executive Officer at the Patuxent River Naval Air Museum, where he established new funding streams for aircraft preservation, facilitated a state-of-the-art media artifact digitization program, and expanded the museum's community outreach.

An instructor at St. Mary's College of Maryland's Department of Anthropology, he teaches Museum Studies and Museum Management courses. Dr. Gray has long supported Historic Sotterley, and his experience expanding museum operations and outreach will benefit the organization and strengthen the site's position as a Southern Maryland treasure.

"I am more than honored to have been selected to become the next executive director of Historic Sotterley," said Dr. Gray. "It is professionally gratifying to be a part of one of the most important historic



Dr. Scott Gray

sites. But it is also of personal importance to me as we work for greater learning and understanding."

Historic Sotterley is a 320-year-old National Historic Landmark, a UNESCO Site of Memory for the Routes of Enslaved Peoples, and a Middle Passage Ceremonies and Port Markets Project site. With honesty and integrity, Sotterley embraces the responsibility of interpreting all aspects of our shared history while serving as an exceptional educational and cultural resource.

Press release from Historic Sotterley

Dancing in a Winter Wonderland

*Mother-Son & Daddy-Daughter Dances
Coming to Loffler Center*

St. Mary's County Government's Department of Recreation & Parks (R&P) is pleased to announce the opening of registration for the 2026 Mother-Son Dance and Daddy-Daughter Dance on *CivicPlus*, the new online registration platform for county recreation programs. Registration starts Thursday, December 18.

The Mother-Son Dance will be held Saturday, January 24, 2026, from 6–8 p.m. and the Daddy-Daughter Dance will be on Saturday, February 7, 2026, from 6–8 p.m.

Parents, stepparents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles are all welcome to get out on the dance floor with their special young man or young lady, ages 4–14. Both semi-formal dance events will be held at the Loffler Center at Chancellor's Run Regional Park. This space will be transformed into an exciting Winter Wonderland, complete with music, dancing, light refreshments, photo opportunities, and activities.

The resident registration fee for each event will be \$60 per adult-child pair, plus \$25 for each additional participant. Pre-

registration is required; event day walk-ins will not be accepted.

To register, visit www.stmaryscountymd.gov/ReCreate on or after Thursday, December 18 and click *Online Registration* to reach the catalog. Both dances can be found on the *Events & Activities* tab. If you have not already done so, you will need to create an account in *CivicPlus* to register. Information about the new platform, including how to create a household account, can be found in the *CivicPlus Info Guide* at www.stmaryscountymd.gov/docs/CivicPlusInfo.pdf.

For additional questions about registration, please contact the R&P Main Office at (301) 475-4200 ext. 1800 or email RPInfo@stmaryscountymd.gov.

Stay up to date on the latest updates by following Recreation & Parks on social media at www.instagram.com/StMarysRecAndParks and www.facebook.com/StMarysMDRecreation.

Press release from St. Mary's County Government

Miss Maryland Visits St. Michael's School

Shares Message on Goal-Setting and Perseverance

By Marcia Hart
Contributing Writer

Miss Maryland 2025 Maria Derisavi visited St. Michael's School on December 16 to spend time with students and share an inspiring message focused on resilience, perseverance, and the importance of setting SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound) goals.

Derisavi, a St. Mary's County native and Little Flower School alumna, said the visit was especially meaningful because of her personal connection to the school. As a student, she attended basketball games and school dances at St. Michael's, making her return a full-circle moment.

"Coming back to St. Michael's is so fun and meaningful," Derisavi said. "I used to come here for dances and games, so it means a lot to be back. These are children I really see myself in."

During her visit, Derisavi read stories to PreK-2nd grade students, encouraging early literacy and engagement. She then met with students in grades 3-8, leading an interactive discussion on SMART goal-setting.

Using personal experiences, Derisavi shared how she struggled early in high school when she repeatedly tried out for sports teams and did not make them. Rather than giving up, she explained how learning to set realistic goals and focus on her



Miss Maryland 2025 Maria Derisavi reads to PreK-2nd grade students during her visit to St. Michael's School, encouraging early literacy and a love of learning.

strengths ultimately helped her succeed.

"I hope the students realize that trying and failing is a positive thing," she said. "Failing is just the first step to success. It's not bad or embarrassing. It's an important part of the journey."

The visit was coordinated by John Padukiewicz, St. Michael's Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and

Mathematics (STEAM) instructor, who said Derisavi's message closely aligns with the school's academic environment and emphasis on perseverance.

"She talked about goal-setting and perseverance, which connects directly to what students experience in the classroom — especially in science," Padukiewicz said.

He added that in subjects like science,

students learn through trial and error, reinforcing the message Derisavi shared.

"If an experiment fails, you don't give up," Padukiewicz said. "You keep trying until you get the results you want. That's exactly what she was encouraging students to do."

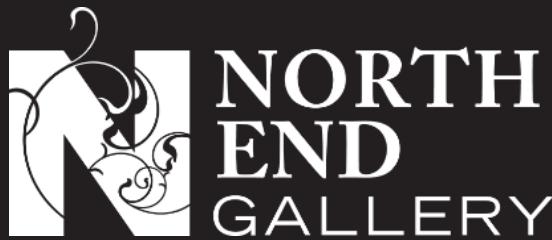
Students were invited to share their own goals related to academics, athletics, and personal development and were encouraged to apply SMART strategies to help achieve them.

Brandon Cambara Gonzales, a seventh-grade student at St. Michael's, said her presentation made a lasting impression.

"It was really good to hear from Miss Maryland," Brandon said. "I'm going to use SMART goals to help me in basketball and my education. It made me think more about planning and not giving up. I'm thankful she came to talk to us."

Derisavi regularly visits schools throughout St. Mary's County to encourage students to believe in their potential and stay motivated. She is the first Miss Maryland from St. Mary's County.

In addition to her role as Miss Maryland, Derisavi works full time as a litigation paralegal at a corporate law firm in Washington, D.C., and plans to apply to law school next year. She credits scholarship opportunities through the Miss Maryland program with helping her graduate debt-free from the University of Alabama.



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NAVAL AIR STATION PATUXENT RIVER News

U.S. Naval Test Pilot School Graduates Class 167

The U.S. Naval Test Pilot School (USNTPS) graduated its Class 167 during a ceremony near Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland on Dec. 12.

"As graduates of USNTPS, you are now part of an elite group of professionals who play a vital role in shaping the future of aviation," said Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (NAWCAD) Commander and USNTPS Class 119 alum Rear Adm. Todd Evans, who keynoted the graduation ceremony. "Your work will ensure that the platforms we develop are safe, effective, and ready to meet the demands of our fellow military service members."

Thirty-three students completed the intense 11-month course of instruction and earned their designations as USNTPS graduates. Graduates included members of the U.S. Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard as well as the Royal Australian, Republic of Singapore, Spanish, and German Air Forces.

"At USNTPS we don't just teach precision flying, we forge disciplined problem



solvers and critical thinkers ready to tackle the most complex challenges in aerospace," said Cmdr. Travis Hartman. "Graduating is more than earning a designation, it proves you've thrived under extraordinary pressure

and gained the skills and mindset to lead the future of military aviation."

Navy Lt. Eric Fast earned USNTPS' Capt. Willie McCool Outstanding Student Award, which recognizes the student who

most embodies the ethos of developmental flight testers and demonstrates mastery of the curriculum across academics, flight execution, and technical communication.

Coast Guard Cmdr. Ryan McCue earned the Sydney Sherby Leadership Award, named for the school's founder Capt. Sydney Sherby and recognizing the student who displays exemplary leadership through the duration of the class.

Army Capt. William Watson II earned the Empire Test Pilots' School's Developmental Testing Thesis Award, which recognizes exceptional performance during the course's Capstone exercise. The prestigious award symbolizes the strong, longstanding partnership between the United Kingdom's and United States' test pilot schools.

USNTPS trains pilots, flight officers, and engineers for developmental test and evaluation of aircraft and airborne systems. USNTPS is a component of Naval Test Wing Atlantic under NAWCAD in Patuxent River, Maryland. NAWCAD advances capability and operational readiness for naval aviation.

UAS Surpass One Million Hours in ISR Operations

The Navy and Marine Corps Small Tactical Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) program office (PMA-263) recently announced that the Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) Services UAS surpassed one million flight hours in support of operations on land and at sea.

Sailors aboard achieved the one million flight hours milestone during routine mission support in the 6th Fleet.

Since the program's inception in 2005, PMA-263 has successfully completed more than 50 UAS installations aboard Navy and Military Sealift Command (MSC) ships and operated from more than 50 land-based locations worldwide. The ISR Services team ensures ships in the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th fleets, as well as land-based operations worldwide are equipped to provide day and night ISR support to joint force and coalition partners.



A Textron MQ-19 Aerosonde Unmanned Aircraft System is launched from the expeditionary sea base USS Hershel "Woody" Williams. (U.S. Navy photo)

"Every hour flown represents more than mission success – it reflects the resilience of our people, the trust of our partners and the impact we've had on history," said

Gregg Skinner, PMA-263 program manager. "Together, we've supported operations in every corner of the globe, advanced unmanned systems into the fight, and stood

ready in times of uncertainty."

Currently, more than a dozen ships are equipped with ISR Services UAS, enabling naval vessels to deploy and retrieve aircraft in support of missions. Sea- and land-based systems include the Boeing Insitu MQ-27 ScanEagle and the Textron MQ-19 Aerosonde, both delivering unique capabilities to the warfighter. They provide day and night surveillance, supporting around the clock mission support.

The UAS installations are optimized to facilitate the seamless transfer of full-motion video and other sensor data to personnel in critical locations. The information gathered by these systems plays a vital role in tactical operational decision-making and long-term intelligence gathering, enhancing the Navy and Marine Corps' ability to maintain maritime domain awareness and operational readiness.

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'How neighbors quietly heal nations'

During the recent government shutdown, the Helping Hands food pantry in Mechanicsville experienced a manifold increase in demand for food assistance. The pantry ran completely out of government-provided food. Those shelves were emptied on a Friday, and the next shipment was not due for two weeks.

The remaining shelves—stocked by local donations—were not fully depleted, but they would not have supported the increased need expected the following Friday.

The call for help came from Fr. Paul Nguyen, the new administrator of Immaculate Conception parish. He appealed for assistance after all Masses that weekend. Immaculate Conception Knights of Columbus Council 8159 responded immediately with an emergency monetary donation, and parishioners and community members began a steady stream of food deliveries.

Ken Housewright, a Knight who volunteers at the pantry with his wife Connie, summed it up simply: "I've never seen anything like it. People just keep delivering food."

With the donated funds, volunteers shopped and filled freezers with frozen meats. With the unprecedented influx of food donations, the shelves were not only restocked—they overflowed. When the pantry opened that Friday, every person who came seeking food was served. No one was turned away. The need was met. The crisis passed—because people are good.

This is what civic faith and civic charity look like for real.

Nations begin to heal not when everyone agrees politically, but when ordinary people recover faith in each other and practice charity as a civic duty—not a slogan. Faith, in the civic sense, is simply the refusal to give up on each other.

In moments like the one at Helping Hands, labels disappear. No one asked who voted for whom, where anyone worships, or what anyone believes about national politics. What mattered was that neighbors were hungry—and neighbors responded.

This is the same moral pattern you see wherever disaster strikes: after storms, fires, accidents, and tragedies. It is the human

instinct to stabilize the wounded first and argue later.

That instinct is older than any political system.

The Apostle Peter wrote that "love covers a multitude of sins." The Apostle John wrote that "God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them." However one receives those words, the lived truth behind them is unmistakable: when people act with self-giving love, something greater than division takes hold.

This is how ordinary people demonstrate their faith and abide in God's presence. It is also how neighbors quietly heal nations.

Politics can pass laws. It can fund programs. It can enforce boundaries. What it cannot manufacture is trust. Trust is built in food pantries, volunteer fire halls, classrooms, hospital rooms, and kitchens where neighbors quietly help one another without cameras, hashtags, or applause.

National division isn't only a national problem. It's a local problem first. And it will only be solved locally—one act of quiet duty at a time.

Nations do not survive on outrage. They survive on "civil duty."

The work of healing doesn't belong to one party, one church, or one movement. It belongs to whoever shows up first and leaves last.

That's how faith is revived and charity is rekindled. And that's how communities outlive their divisions.

Don't misunderstand, the divisions are real. The anger is real. The fear and distrust are real. Yet, so is faith, the Charity, and goodwill.

Author and psychologist, Dr. Jordan Peterson, teaches that naturally, half of us are wired liberal and the other half conservative. Agreement is not the goal; civil discourse in the spirit of goodwill is.

Thank you and God bless everyone of you who make love and goodwill possible.

Best wishes for a joyous Christmas and a prosperous New Year 2026. May God bless America.

Mearland J. Rusaw Jr.
Mechanicsville, MD

'An existential threat'

In his Dec. 4 letter entitled "Known good," Mr. Mearland J. Rusaw Jr. stated, "Every election feels existential." I would argue that existentiality is not a feeling but a reality.

There was a time when the difference between the two major political parties was generic liberals vs conservatives, and both had shared American values. This is no longer the case.

Now, the differences are socialism vs capitalism, globalism vs national sovereignty, multiculturalism vs assimilation, illegal migration vs lawful immigration, equity vs equality, indoctrination vs education, affirmative action vs merit, social justice vs equal justice, paternalism vs individu-

alism, censorship vs free speech, gender vs biological sex, disaffection vs patriotism, and conformity vs liberty.

What we have is an ideological conflict, which will not be resolved by a societal return to ethical and moral norms, as suggested by Mr. Rusaw Jr.

By its policies and actions, the Democratic Party's goal is to reimagine and transform the American way of life, and achieve dominate one-party rule, which is an existential threat.

Vernon Gray
California, MD

If you would like to submit a Letter to the Editor, please include your name & town of residence.

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Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

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Letters to the Editor

'One simple mistake could cost you your life'

My dad was fighting kidney failure and was on dialysis. This time last year, December 2024, my mom & dad went to the Charlotte Hall SSA so that he could apply for Medicare B. It was there that a clerk told him that he was listed as deceased in their "master death file." They promised that they would correct the issue in their system, but SSA failed to do so.

My dad was scheduled to have surgery in January 2025, along with other medical procedures, but the SSA automatically dropped his health insurance because he was still listed as deceased in the SSA's system. His surgery was cancelled because the surgeon refused to do surgery without him having health insurance.

Doctor's were refusing to treat him for other medical treatments as well.

My mom fought tooth and nail trying to get the SSA to do their job as it was starting to become life and death for my dad. She even reached out to Steny Hoyer's office multiple times, who did absolutely nothing to help her.

She also reached out to MD Senator Chris Van Hollen, who sent a letter back to my mom saying since Steny's office was involved in helping, he's bowing out to help.

But that's the thing! Steny's office was not helping at all!

Sadly, in March 2025 my dad really did pass away. I truly believe if he was to have gotten the surgery he needed, he would still be with us here today. He was an Army Veteran who gave his all for this country and sadly his gov't failed him.

Still to this day, a year later when this all first started, nothing has been resolved by the SSA and not even one apology from them either!

My mom continues to get bills in the mail and has racked up well over \$15k in medical bills for my dad that she doesn't know how to get paid due to the SSA failing to approve my dad's Medicare B and for automatically dropping his health insurance.

NBC4 news was nice enough to do an interview on my mom. I don't know what the future holds, but my mom and I will continue to seek justice and advocate for my dad who is no longer here with us.

Thank you for reading and hopefully sharing this story to make the public aware that this is scary, real, and can happen to anyone at no fault of their own. One simple mistake like that could cost you your life and that's exactly what it did to my dad.

*Laura Wathen
Hollywood, MD*

'What can possibly go wrong?'

The public should be quite concerned about the recent breach of CodeRed as mentioned in the December 4, 2025 County Times. This was a emergency notification system. I used past tense because I question whether or not it will be reliable in the event of an actual emergency after what is described as a ransomware attack. While the FBI is leading this investigation, some attacks such as this have been from outside our country making it difficult to hold the criminals accountable.

Anyone who has some reasonable training in cyber security would be quite aware of the possibility of one or more "bots" placed within the CodeRed system. "Bots" can be placed with the intent of a cyber security investigator finding it or not finding it. Some bots can be found when others remain hidden. On the surface a breach can be made to appear like it is simply a data theft in an attempt to make a cyber security investigator assume that it is the only intent, when the actual intent is far more severe. Hopefully the county is performing a thorough forensic analysis to check for any residual malware, including bots. A bot is a software program that operates on the Internet and performs to adversely effect the website.

So, think about this, we live near a nuclear

plant. It is 50 years old. We also have a LNG plant not far away. Drone technology can be used for good. And, it can be used for a wide range of bad stuff. We had a wide open border that let countless people with bad intentions in our country. And there are people that are way too easily brainwashed to believe the United States is terrible. There are some school systems that are used as indoctrination centers. And of course artificial intelligence that may decide at some point that mankind is no longer useful. We have radio station frequencies that have had a poor signal in some areas. The TV stations that can reach St. Mary's County (SMC) are not usually monitored by most of the folks in SMC. Cell phone signals are not reliable throughout the county. What can possibly go wrong?

If I was the Emergency Management Director of this county, I know I would have a lot of questions about CodeRed and I would demand concrete answers before I would tell the citizens of my county to sign up for it again. Too many people trust Internet based systems. We are told they are "safe and reliable". But, are they really?

*Roy Fedders
Dameron, MD*

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Identity Sought in Fraud Investigation

The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office is investigating a fraud case and is seeking to identify and locate the suspect pictured.

On Friday, Nov. 28, 2025, the suspect was seen on security camera video making fraudulent withdrawals from the victim's checking and savings accounts at a financial institution in Charlotte Hall and cashing three counterfeit money orders. The total loss is approximately \$7,647.

After leaving, the suspect walked south and was picked up by an unidentified individual in an unknown vehicle.

Anyone with information regarding this incident is asked to contact Deputy First Class Michael Walker at 301-475-4200, ext. 8092, or by email at Michael.Walker@stmaryscountymd.gov; please reference case #2025-72964.

Tipsters can also submit tips anonymously:

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



SMCSO app. Download the free app from the Google Play Store or Apple App Store.

For those who prefer to make a phone call, tips can also be shared through the Crime Solvers line at 301-475-3333. With Crime Solvers, you never have to give your name. You may be eligible for a cash reward if your information leads to an arrest.

Press release from SMCSO

Serious Motor Vehicle Collision Under Investigation

On Wednesday, Dec. 10 at around 6:42 a.m., patrol units from the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office were dispatched to a serious motor vehicle collision in the area of Three Notch Road and Charlotte Hall School Road in Charlotte Hall. Deputies arrived at the site to find one person trapped.

The preliminary investigation indicates that a 2018 gray Hyundai Tucson was traveling northbound on Three Notch Road and attempted to turn left onto Charlotte Hall School Road. The vehicle failed to yield the right of way, crossed into the southbound lanes of Three Notch Road, and was struck by a 2015 Ford F150 XLT operated by Maynor Caal Choc, 28, of Lanham.

The driver of the Hyundai Tucson was transported by Maryland State Police Aviation Command Trooper 7 to an area trauma center with life-threatening injuries.

Currently, speed does not appear to be a factor in the collision.

Due to the severity of the crash, the Collision Reconstruction Unit responded and assumed the investigation. Anyone who witnessed the crash or events leading up to it and has not already provided a statement is asked to contact Corporal Rachael Owens at 301-475-4200, ext. 8108, or at rachael.owens@stmaryscountymd.gov.

Press release from SMCSO

Mechanicsville Collision Under Investigation

On Saturday, Dec. 13 at around 4:48 p.m., patrol units from the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office were dispatched to a serious motor vehicle collision in the area of Three Notch Road and Cedar Grove Street in Mechanicsville.

The preliminary investigation indicates that a 2019 white Chevrolet Impala, operated by Orrin Stacy, 35, of Mechanicsville, was traveling eastbound on Cedar Grove Street and attempted to turn left onto Three Notch Road. The vehicle failed to yield the right of way, crossed into the southbound lanes of Three Notch Road, and was struck by a 2002 Yamaha YZF600R Motorcycle, operated by Darius Jackson-Jordan, 26, of Drayden.

The driver of the motorcycle was transported by Maryland State Police Aviation Command Trooper 7 to an area trauma center with life-threatening injuries, where he is currently listed in critical condition.

Currently, speed does not appear to be a factor in the collision.

Due to the severity of the crash, the Collision Reconstruction Unit responded and assumed the investigation. Anyone who witnessed the crash or events leading up to it and has not already provided a statement is asked to contact Corporal Rachael Owens at 301-475-4200, ext. 8108, or at rachael.owens@stmaryscountymd.gov.

Press release from SMCSO

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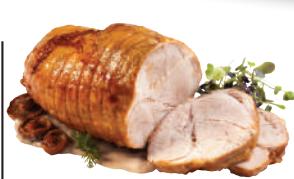
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Jury Convicts Man in Knife Attack Case

State's Attorney Jaymi Sterling announced on Dec. 15 that William Francis Dixon, 52, of Mechanicsville was convicted of attempted kidnapping, armed robbery, and other charges stemming from a March 2025 incident where he attacked a female victim with a knife in Mechanicsville.

- After a five-day trial, a St. Mary's County jury found Dixon guilty of the following offenses:
- Attempted kidnapping (maximum penalty of 30 years in prison);
- Armed robbery (maximum penalty of 20 years in prison);
- First-degree assault (maximum penalty of 25 years in prison);
- Theft \$100-\$1,500 (maximum penalty of 6 months in prison); and
- Wear and carry dangerous weapon with intent to injure (maximum penalty of three years in prison).

"The victim bravely fought off a large stranger who attacked her with a knife. He pulled her from her car and tried to drag her to his vehicle. She escaped and quickly gave dispatchers critical information that helped investigators identify and locate her attacker," said Sterling. "Because of her courage, a dangerous repeat violent offender was apprehended and successfully prosecuted."

Dixon remains held without bond pending a sentencing hearing, where he faces a



William Francis Dixon

maximum sentence of 78 years in prison.

Senior Assistant State's Attorney Alena Mosier and Assistant State's Attorney Holley Hickman prosecuted the case on behalf of the citizens of St. Mary's County.

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

The Honorable Timothy Doory presided over the case.

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

Identity Sought for Theft Suspects



The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office is seeking to identify and locate the two suspects seen in these photos in connection with a suspected theft that occurred at The Dollar General in Ridge.

On Sunday, Nov. 2 the suspects entered the store, filled a shopping cart with multiple items, and the black male went to the register with only a few items. The white male left the store with the remaining items in the cart without paying.

The two suspects then left the area in a Nissan Versa with Virginia license plates; the vehicle was determined to be a rental, but they were not listed as the renters.

Anyone with information about this case is asked to contact Deputy Jacob Mills at 301-475-4200, ext. 8119, or by email at Jacob.Mills@stmaryscountymd.gov, referencing case # 2025-66530.

Tipsters can also submit tips anonymously:

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

For those who prefer to make a phone call, tips can also be shared through the Crime Solvers line at 301-475-3333. With Crime Solvers, you never have to give your name. You may be eligible for a cash reward if your information leads to an arrest.

Press release from SMCSO

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Mechanicsville Man Charged with Arson

Deputy State Fire Marshals have charged a Mechanicsville man in connection with a series of intentionally set fires that occurred the evening of Dec. 9 along the 26400 block of Three Notch Road.

Jeffrey Allen Wathen, 41, is facing multiple charges, including first-degree arson, after investigators—assisted by K9 Taylor—identified him as a suspect.

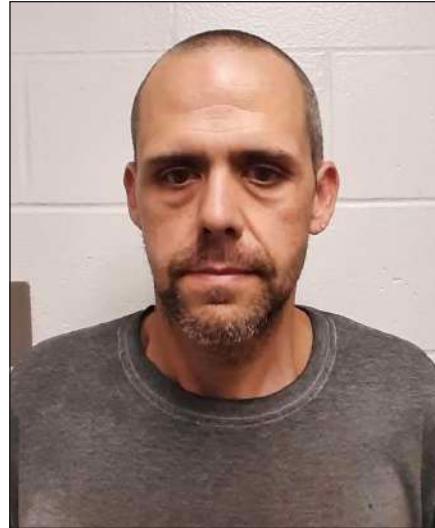
Wathen approached investigators at one of the scenes and claimed he was also a victim of a fire, prompting additional scrutiny.

The Hollywood Volunteer Fire Department responded shortly after 9:00 p.m. to multiple fires reported within the 26000 block of Three Notch Road. These incidents included an exterior flower bed, a shed, a deck, and an additional exterior area behind a nearby property. Firefighters or the occupants quickly extinguished each fire.

The Office of the State Fire Marshal was requested to investigate, and a team of Deputy State Fire Marshals responded to each scene.

While deputies were investigating, they encountered Wathen, a nearby resident, who was yelling about a supposed fire in his yard. As the investigation progressed, investigators obtained several pieces of evidence, including surveillance video from a neighboring property showing Wathen running from one of the fire scenes moments after flames became visible.

With the assistance of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office, Wathen was arrested and transported to the St. Mary's County Detention Center. He was charged



Jeffrey Allen Wathen

with first-degree arson, two counts of second-degree arson, and two counts of first-degree malicious burning.

"Thanks to the quick work of the fire department, our deputies, K9 Taylor, and the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office, this suspect was taken into custody before he could set any more fires. Their fast, coordinated response prevented further danger to the community," said Acting State Fire Marshal Jason M. Mowbray. "This case is a reminder of the importance of vigilance and teamwork in keeping Marylanders safe."

Press release from Office of State Fire Marshal

PG Man Sentenced for Hollywood Murder

State's Attorney Jaymi Sterling announced today that Lee L. Richardson, 24, of Capitol Heights was sentenced to life in prison for the first-degree murder of a 19-year-old victim.

In January 2025, the victim's family reported their loved one missing. The family communicated daily with the young man until January 21, 2025, when all communications suddenly ceased.

Following a thorough and comprehensive investigation, investigators from the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office determined that Lee Richardson, a person known to the victim, had murdered the victim by shooting him in the head.

Investigators further learned that Richardson attempted to conceal the crime by cleaning up the scene inside the victim's residence located in Hollywood.

"After murdering his friend in a senseless betrayal, the defendant callously disposed of the victim's body," said Sterling. "The defendant murdered someone who trusted him, lied to the victim's family about his involvement or knowledge, and left them to discover the truth on their own when they found their son's body in a trash can. A life sentence is the only just outcome for the devastating harm the defendant caused to this innocent family."

Detective Benjamin Raley of the St.



Lee L. Richardson

Mary's County Sheriff's Office was the lead investigator.

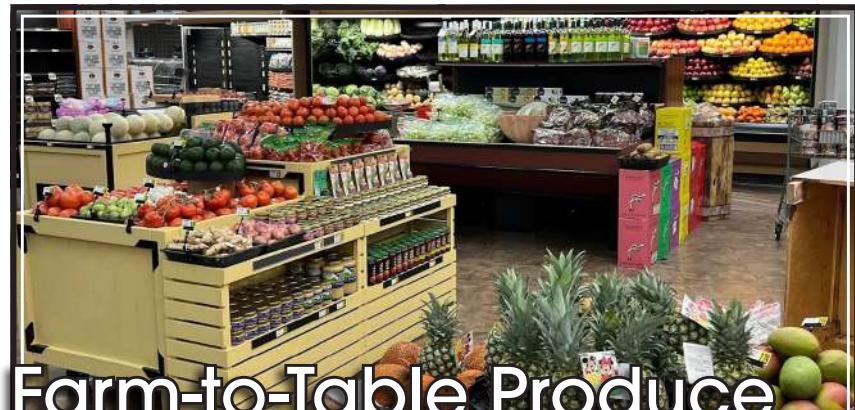
Senior Assistant State's Attorneys Donna Pettersen and Alena Mosier prosecuted the case on behalf of the citizens of St. Mary's County.

The Honorable Joseph Stanalonis presided over the case.

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

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County Approves 100-Year Fairgrounds Lease

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Commissioners of St. Mary's County have approved a 100-year lease with the St. Mary's County Fair Board for use of the county fairgrounds on Route 5 south of Leonardtown.

County Attorney Buffy Giddens explained the lease at the Dec. 9 commissioner's meeting. Fair Board President Jay Farrell and former long-time president John Richards appeared with Giddens.

She said, "They had a previous lease that was signed in 2002 that was a 25-year lease. It is set to expire in 2027. So, they're ahead of the game in renewing their lease agreement. A couple of changes happened between 2002 and today, one of which is that we had a cell tower built over by the fairgrounds. So, in 2015, that 2002 lease was amended to allow for the tower to be built and maintained."

"The proposed lease carves out that piece of property from the premises and also preserves access for the county for maintenance to and from that tower. Another thing that happened regarding that tower was there were rent payments coming from Verizon to the county in the amount of \$12,000 approximately a year. In exchange for having Verizon to come to the county and construct the tower, the county agreed to abate those rent payments for 12 years, which means the rent payments are due to begin around 2034/2035 timeframe. This lease directs the payment of the rent from the towers to the



Fairgrounds Association."

Giddens said of the lease, "It has a 25-year initial term with three additional renewal terms. I've asked that there be a 10-year meeting so that nobody forgets that we have this lease and that it exists."

Giddens said, "Either party could terminate the lease for any reason with six-month's notice."

Commissioner Mike Hewitt said, "I think this is great. I like the idea. And look, what you gentlemen have done out there at the fairgrounds is just phenomenal. What you've been able to do for the county is just great."

Giddens said of the lease, "I think it gives

security to the leasing tenant that I know they've invested in the fairgrounds already. They've invested in the buildings and things that they've put on that property."

Farrell said of Richards, "To follow in footsteps that you're putting down now instead of a complete 180-degree change. And that's what we don't want to lose with the fair. We want stay fair oriented and farm and agriculture supported there. And that's one of the big things that we look at for a prolonged lease or future type look so everybody knows that that's where it was deemed to go. And that was the outlook that we tried to perceive at this time and promote all the

way through."

Farrell added, "You can't predict the future, but you can hopefully form it the way that the county (you) want to see it stay and succeed."

Commissioner Eric Colvin said, "The fairs changed a lot. I've seen it in my lifetime and I'm sure you've seen it more in your lifetimes, but at its heart it's agriculture and that's what it's about. And this board and previous boards have been very supportive of agriculture in St. Mary's County. And I think this is another sign of the commitment for the long-term support of agriculture in St. Mary's County. But it's also so impressive all that you do at the fairgrounds beyond the fair, from 4-H to scouts."

Richards said of the long lease, "The fairgrounds equipment and buildings and stuff, they're not very movable, I can tell you that."

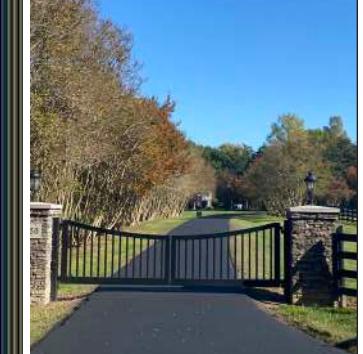
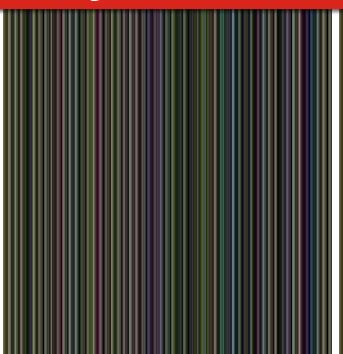
Richards observed the community use of the fairgrounds. "Last weekend we had on Saturday, Vacation for Vets sponsored a Christmas party for Charlotte Hall Veterans Home. It was really impressive. It got me into Christmas spirit. Down a couple of buildings from that, there was a group of Girl Scouts and parents who were painting our display shelves for part of an Eagle Scout program. So yes, it's agriculture, promoting agriculture and making people aware of the fact that there is still agriculture here, but it's also a community asset."

Richards added, "And the fact that it's built by volunteers. Wow! That's crazy."

dickmyers@countytimes.net



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Town Council Approves Cedar Lane Annexation

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

The Leonardtown Town Council has approved annexation into own of a 52-acre parcel on Cedar Lane slated for townhouses. The approval came over objection of neighbors and Town Commissioner Nick Colvin.

Developer Rodney Gertz of Quality Built Homes said, "We do see a combination of maybe townhomes and single family and we're just excited to be involved in this piece of land that became available in the town."

Neighbor John MacDonald said they didn't object to single-family homes but felt townhomes were out of character with the neighborhood. But Gertz said single-family homes alone were not economically feasible.

"We're just trying to find what's needed, what makes sense for the town and move forward with a project that hopefully enhances the town and keeps building this incredible place you created," Gertz added.

MacDonald said getting out of Cedar Lane onto Route 5 now is almost impossible in the morning.

"We're not against the single family, we're not against improving and things like that. It's just not a location for townhouses, it would be too overcrowded. There has to be a better plan that will go along with the needs of the community."

Earl Lumpkins was adamantly opposed. "If this goes through, he's going to take one...of the prettiest drives through St. Mary's County and it's going to screw it up."

"We ain't got no infrastructure to handle all this," he added.

Lumpkins said, "I know it costs a lot and all that, but destroying our farmland is not the answer. When farmland is gone, you don't get it back. It's gone."

Gerta countered, "We are one of the two designated growth areas of the county, California/Lexington Park and Leonardtown. So, if you want to maintain the rural character of the county, you do have to allow the growth in these two areas."

Councilwoman Heather Earhart, who lives in nearby Academy Hills, said the town master plan calls for a roundabout



Leonardtown Commissioner Nick Colvin

on Route 5. She said, "I realize we can't put state highway on a timeline, but what would be the reality of even trying to get that roundabout that we talked about. The county had made a request too."

In the end it came down to a chicken/egg situation. Colvin, who ultimately voted against the annexation, felt the needed infrastructure should be in place first. He said the developer might end up on the short end if the site plan was turned down because the infrastructure couldn't be accomplished.

But several council members said the annexation shouldn't be dependent on that. They felt the infrastructure could be accomplished during the site plan process.

Earlier, the council did delay a decision on a proposed annexation of the David K. and Nancy L. Hall Property on Route 5 across from Leonardtown Centre.

If annexed, the 16.35-acre property would be zoned Commercial Highway.

The property is accessed by a shared driveway whose width constitutes the property's frontage on Route 5.

The council wanted a clarification of the status of that shared driveway before making a decision.

dickmyers@countytimes.net

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Health Officer Details Impact of Federal Healthcare Cuts

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

St. Mary's County Health Officer Dr. Meenakshi Brewster on Dec. 16 met with the Commissioners of St. Mary's County, sitting as the Board of Health, for her semi-annual briefing.

Brewster touched on a number of topics, including the impact of actions at the federal level on her department and on county residents.

She said, "There are a variety of current or evolving changes in the national public health landscape."

Dr. Brewster noted, "Our local approach remains evidence-based, practical and focuses on protecting access to healthcare, while keeping our families and our healthcare providers supported."

Specifically, she said, "Our local health department for decades has received significant funding from the federal government and significant technical assistance from staff at the federal government, through many of these grant mechanisms. Some of the support has changed recently because of staffing changes at the federal departments, and also because of efforts to end certain grants that come to local communities."

"For example, we will no longer be receiving federal funding to treat tuberculosis for uninsured or underinsured individuals. For decades, health departments have been addressing tuberculosis, which is a very contagious lung disease. It's one that for decades we've been working to control, and keep from spreading in our communities. That is an example of how this change is impacting us locally."

"In the access to healthcare category of changes, there are anticipated changes to Medicaid eligibility in the state, and therefore, in our county. One in five county residents rely upon Medicaid for health coverage. This data was from a recent assessment by Hilltop Institute. Coverage losses are expected under these federal changes to Medicaid, and we do think that these fami-



County Health Officer Dr. Meenakshi Brewster

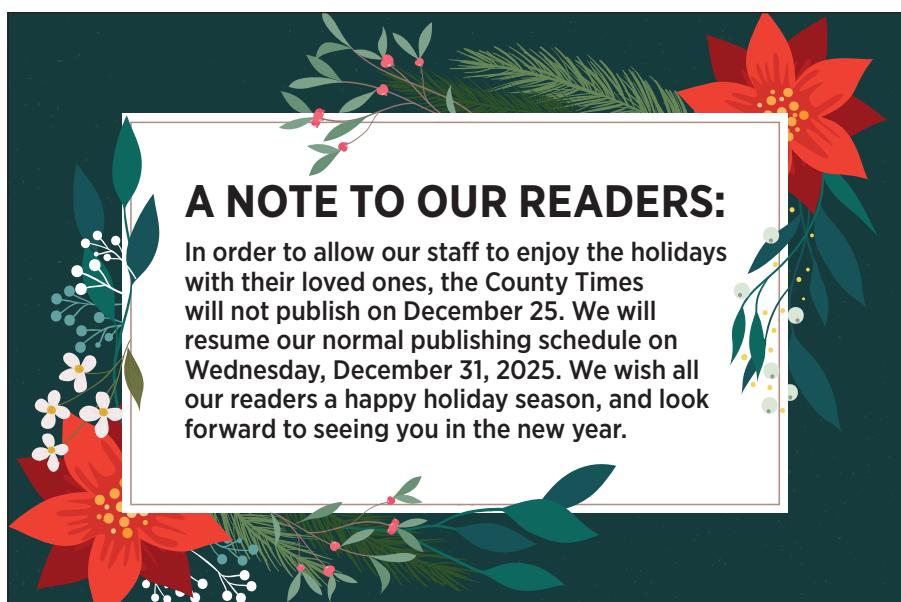
lies who will be affected locally may experience more gaps in their care, and some financial hardship associated with that."

Brewster explained, "We also, at the health department, given our role in getting individuals enrolled in Medicaid and recertified in Medicaid, because the eligibility redeterminations will now be every six months instead of every year, that will translate to an increased burden of work on the small team that we have handling this at the health department."

She said, "Another access to care anticipated change, is potential changes to subsidies for insurance purchased on the Maryland Health Benefits Exchange or Maryland Health Connections." In St. Mary County, 2,6520 residents are enrolled in the health insurance exchange.

"At this point, we're waiting to see if there will be a continuation of the subsidies for these health insurance policies purchased on exchanges. And if there are changes to those subsidies or reduction in those subsidies, it may lead to coverage losses and more uninsured individuals in our county."

dickmyers@countytimes.net



A NOTE TO OUR READERS:

In order to allow our staff to enjoy the holidays with their loved ones, the County Times will not publish on December 25. We will resume our normal publishing schedule on Wednesday, December 31, 2025. We wish all our readers a happy holiday season, and look forward to seeing you in the new year.



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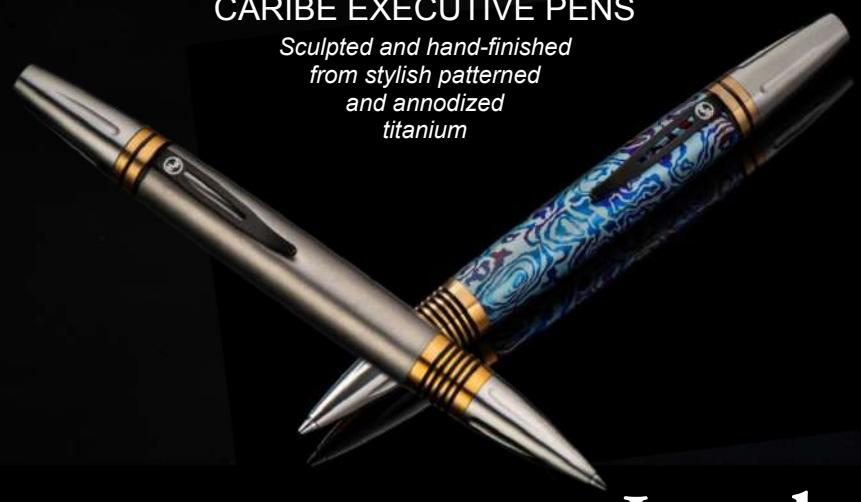
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“AND THE FACT THAT IT’S BUILT BY VOLUNTEERS. WOW! THAT’S CRAZY.”

FORMER ST. MARY'S FAIR PRESIDENT JOHN RICHARDS ON FAIRGROUNDS



LOCAL 5

Health officer outlines upcoming impacts of federal actions



LOCAL 11

County approves 100-year fairgrounds lease



ON THE COVER

Maria Derisavi, St. Mary's native Miss Maryland, visits St. Michael's School

WEEKLY FORECAST

THU, DEC 18	FRI, DEC 19	SAT, DEC 20	SUN, DEC 21
Partly Cloudy Hi: 55° Lo: 47°	AM Rain Hi: 59° Lo: 28°	Mostly Sunny Hi: 45° Lo: 38°	Mostly Sunny Hi: 56° Lo: 24°
MON, DEC 22	TUE, DEC 23	WED, DEC 24	THU, DEC 25
Mostly Sunny Hi: 37° Lo: 29°	Cloudy Hi: 45° Lo: 40°	Partly Cloudy Hi: 52° Lo: 37°	AM Showers Hi: 48° Lo: 41°



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The Mission is changing and saving lives. This past year, The Mission served more than 13,200 meals and sheltered or provided a bed to many local St. Mary's County folks, including veterans. The Steve L. Kessler Center, a private temporary vocational shelter for single men and women, serves those who are serious about turning their lives around. It also temporarily shelters those who are homeless because of losing a job. For many, The Mission is the only local available resource.

The Mission purchased 6 years ago a building for its new headquarters through a Community (Go-Fund-Me) campaign. The Robert E. Myers Center finally opened its doors on September 15, 2025. This facility is a place for individuals to get off the streets during the day, take showers, wash clothes, get counseling and attend life skills classes. It houses offices, a chapel, and a food pantry. A total renovation of this property took a little over 5 years. Paid for again by the community at large, it's been a long task because we have taken on as little debt as possible, so that our ministry doesn't take too much to operate. We have only two full-time employees. The Mission is almost solely run by volunteers. ***None of its executive staff is paid.***

PLEASE SUPPORT The Mission with a Holiday/End of Year Donation to meet the needs of those we serve. More than 95% of The Mission's yearly budget comes from the community. That's a lot of \$50, \$100, and \$250 individual donations. Some said many years ago that it would be impossible to have a privately run community ministry, solely supported by the residents of St. Mary's County, but the generosity of the County has proven them wrong.

THANK YOU in advance for your consideration in supporting those who come to us and are ready to change their lives and move forward. We are devoted to serving the homeless and working poor of St. Mary's County and spreading the good news and love of Jesus Christ.

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God Bless,

**Richard E. Myers
Executive Director/Founder, The Mission
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St. Mary's County Times

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2025

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Shop with a Cop Treats 110 Kids

Commissioners Outline Budget Priorities

Town Approves Cedar Lane Annexation

MISS MARYLAND VISITS ST. MICHAEL'S

A woman in a floral dress and a Miss Maryland sash is standing in front of a classroom, gesturing with her hand. Several children are seated in the foreground, facing her. The background shows a classroom with a whiteboard and various educational materials.