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FEBRUARY 2025

The "Best Of Severna Park" Contest Is Back

Your vote matters — the Severna Park Voice is asking readers to recommend the best local neighborhood amenities, restaurants, shops, health and service providers, non-profits and more during the 2025 Best of Severna Park contest.

To participate, fill out the survey by **March 25**. We will tally all the votes and announce this year's winners in our April 10 edition.

You may also cast your ballot by voting online at www.severnaparkvoice.com/bestofsevernapark.

The Rules

- Nominees must be located within the Severna Park Voice distribution area zip codes – 21146 (Severna Park), 21012 (Arnold) and 21108 (Millersville).
- Entries must be made on original newsprint – no photocopies, faxes, scans or emails – and must be mailed to the Voice (one entry per household).
- Responses should not use nicknames. For example, "The Taphouse" could be Severna Park Taphouse or Adam's Taphouse and Grille. Be clear if you want your vote to count.
- Mailing of multiple ballots will not be accepted. Voters must fill in nominations for at least 25 categories for the ballot to be valid. If you are nominating a business that has multiple locations, please specify the exact location you are nominating.
- Entries should be mailed to Severna Park Voice, P.O. Box 608, Severna Park, MD, 21146.

The Dates

Deadline for entry is **Tuesday, March 25**. We will print a reminder in the March issue of The Voice, and the winners will be announced in the April issue.

Thank you for your participation. We look forward to announcing the winners you select!

Find the best of ballot on page 6.



Severna Park's Currie Twins Win Big On "Wheel Of Fortune"

By Meredith Winter

R, S, T, L, N and E gave twin sisters Katie and Christina Currie a decent start, but they had to work together to fill in the rest of the bonus round puzzle on a recent episode of "Wheel of Fortune."

After calling H as one of their consonants, the twins had just 10 seconds to solve "H _ _ S E _ _ E S T."

"HOUSEGUEST!" Katie blurted out as the two raced to figure out the one-word puzzle from the category of "person."

"Wheel of Fortune" host Ryan Seacrest enthusiastically asked the Curries, "Are you ready?" before revealing that their correct bonus round solve had earned them a cool \$50,000 cash prize.

Earlier in the episode, Katie and Christina had already collaborated to solve five other puzzles, giving them a leading total of \$38,248 in cash and trips that sent them to the bonus round.

Their approach was simple and pure, and it turned out to be a good one. "Christina and I decided our strategy was (that) we were going to take turns on everything and just trust each other," Katie shared.

Working together was nothing new for the 22-year-old identical twins, who have done nearly everything together over the years — including graduating from



Photo courtesy of Sony Pictures Television/Tyler Golden

Severna Park High School graduates and 22-year-old twin sisters Christina and Katie Currie won over \$88,000 in cash and prizes on "Wheel of Fortune."

Severna Park High School in 2021 and watching a lot of "Wheel."

"We've always grown up watching 'Wheel of Fortune' for as long as I can remember," Christina said. "We've always had it on at home, in the evenings while we're doing homework (and) dinner's getting ready, so we've really grown up around it, and I think because of that,

Katie and I both developed a love for word games."

Watching from home had prepared the Curries to try to avoid the dreaded "bankrupt" wedge on the game show's iconic wheel. It had not prepared them for just how heavy the wheel is — Katie shared that she left with a sore arm —

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Parents Alarmed By School Redistricting Scenarios

By Zach Sparks

zach@severnaparkvoice.com

Whether-related decisions and redistricting — those are two of the least favorite parts of the job for Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) Superintendent Mark Bedell.

But redistricting is necessary, he said, because of growth in student enrollment, among other factors.

"There are no conspiracies," Bedell said, addressing parent concerns during a Board of Education of Anne Arundel County workshop on January 27. "All we're trying to do is balance the system. It's that simple. We have a growing school district. We have to

balance the system."

AACPS Chief Operating Officer Bill Heiser said the school district currently has over 14,000 available seats and projects to have 9,000 by 2033.

In addition to growth and programmatic changes mandated by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation, "balancing enrollments through redistricting helps optimize future funding," Heiser said. "Both the state and county are less likely to fund renovations or new buildings when there are empty seats available in the district. Lastly, redistricting enhances our case for future capital funding for building additions,

» Continued on page 10

Middle Schools Add Athletics Program

By Kevin Murnane

When he became the Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) superintendent in June 2022, one of the first initiatives Mark Bedell envisioned was creating additional activities for middle school students.

After two years of planning, recruiting, certifying coaches, and meetings, the new program, simply called Middle School Athletics, will begin this spring with boys and girls soccer at all Anne Arundel County public middle schools.

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Margueritte Mills - Volunteer Of The Month

Every month, the *Voice* recognizes the good work of a local volunteer to honor *Voice* founder and lifelong Severna Park resident Margueritte Mills.

The Margueritte Mills Volunteer of the Month is proudly sponsored by Affordable Outdoor Kitchens.



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Linda Zahn Brings Innovation To Orphan Grain Train

By Meredith Winter

For 27 years, Linda Zahn worked on behalf of the local business community as the CEO of the Greater Severna Park and Arnold Chamber of Commerce. After retiring from that role seven years ago, she took a week or two off before diving headfirst into volunteerism.

"I decided before retirement that I'd like to give back and keep busy," Zahn recalled. "I knew Elfie Eberle from Orphan Grain Train (OGT) through the chamber, and we talked about the possibilities at OGT. The people there seemed so welcoming and dedicated to their mission."

With 27 locations across the country, Orphan Grain Train is a Christian volunteer network that ships donated food, clothing, medical and other needed items to people in 71 countries including the U.S.

Established in 2004, OGT's Maryland branch operates out of a 6,300-square-foot warehouse in Millersville, where donations and supplies are packaged and distributed near and far. The branch collects coats for people experiencing homelessness around Baltimore, provides aid in the wake of natural disasters including Hurricane Helene, sends solar-powered lights to people in Ukraine, provides supplies for school children in South Sudan, and so much more.

Zahn joined the OGT board of directors "right off the bat." Over the last seven years, she has brought numerous innovative ideas to fruition while serving with OGT. She set up Constant Contact for the Maryland branch's communications and initiated the "Good Tidings" newsletter, which provides shipment updates, lists donation needs, and spotlights one of its many volunteers each month. She also designed a new brochure for the branch.

Seeing a need for better shipping boxes for the items OGT Maryland distributes, Zahn and her husband,



Photo by Meredith Winter

Since her retirement seven years ago, Linda Zahn has volunteered faithfully for Orphan Grain Train, bringing innovation with the launch of food truck nights and a newsletter, helping significantly with fundraising, and initiating a massive mask making project during the pandemic.

Steve, who also volunteers consistently at OGT, arranged with Severna Park Chick-fil-A owner Chris Schenck to do regular pickups of empty waffle fry boxes. Zahn explained that the boxes are not too heavy when packed and are the perfect size for filling pallets.

Currently OGT Maryland's recording secretary and board member, Steve has also accomplished much for the nonprofit. Zahn explained that, at Eberle's suggestion, Steve initiated the branch's medical walkout program in 2018. The program offers free medical equipment to all who ask, from medical beds to wheelchairs and canes.

Zahn also started the popular food truck nights that take place on the adjacent property owned by Wayne Gerst. But she will tell you with enthusiasm that the biggest highlight of serving with OGT so far was organizing a mask-making project in 2020.

During the height of the COVID pandemic, much of the country, including the greater Severna Park area, experienced a shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) including face masks. Zahn knew of people within the OGT family who could sew, so she got them together, and they all got to work.

"We had nothing to do here, we couldn't do anything, and everybody wanted to do something to help," Zahn said of the project's timing.

By the end of summer 2020, they produced and distributed 4,995 masks and 932 scrub caps to five area hospitals, nursing homes, grocery stores, restaurants and other places that needed PPE.

"It was a great project, and it pulled a lot of people together, gave them something to do. It was my favorite thing I've ever done here," Zahn shared.

Most recently, Zahn has overseen OGT Maryland's fundraising efforts. She held their first bowling fundraiser at Severna Park Lanes in 2024, which generated over \$18,000 for OGT. She and Steve also oversaw fundraising for Giving Tuesday last year; including a \$10,000 matching gift from Thrivent, OGT Maryland received \$42,000 in donations.

OGT Branch Manager Bruce Coonradt credited Zahn for a "banner year" of fundraising in 2024.

Irene Giguere, the branch's administrative assistant, said of Zahn, "She is enthusiastic, caring, and willingly serves in helping positions, as well as leadership roles. We feel blessed that she is part of our OGT family."

The sentiment is mutual. Zahn points to Eberle, Coonradt, longtime volunteer Ron Phipps and others for creating a great serving environment.

Zahn has lived in the Severna Park area for roughly four decades. She and Steve have two grown children who are local, and three grandsons.

Volunteering with Steve was a top priority for Zahn when she retired. The two even took a packed truck to deliver supplies to West Virginia together through OGT, which Zahn noted was rewarding.

"I've always felt that giving back is really important, and this is the point in my life when I can do that best," she said. "I don't regret a minute I've spent with Orphan Grain Train."



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Volunteers Wanted

Do you know of someone who resides in Severna Park, Arnold or Millersville who gives generously of their time and talents in a volunteer capacity in our community? You can nominate someone to be considered as a volunteer of the month by emailing their name and a brief description of their volunteerism to spvnews@severnaparkvoice.com.

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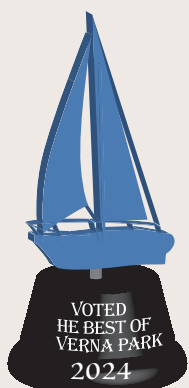
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New Eye In The Sky Is Not “Big Brother”

Anne Arundel County Police Department Unveils Real-Time Information Center

By Zach Sparks
zach@severnaparkvoice.com

Picture this scenario: a truck is stolen from a convenience store. The suspected thief hits two other vehicles and abandons the stolen truck before being joined by an accomplice. The duo changes clothes in a restaurant and flees to a light-rail station.

Police detectives catch the whole sequence on video, follow the duo’s movements with a helicopter, and safely apprehend the suspects.

This is a real scenario that started in Glen Burnie during August 2024. The arrests were made possible thanks to the new Anne Arundel County Real-Time Information Center (RTIC) in Millersville. The Anne Arundel County Police Department tested the technology last summer, and it helped officers with an estimated 200 incidents, solving crimes or de-escalating situations prior to officers’ arrival on-scene.

The police department unveiled RTIC to the public during a ceremony on February 4.

“Essentially, the Real-Time Information Center is a consolidated state-of-the-art data hub under one roof where detectives and analysts examine information from a variety of sources to enhance crime detection, help solve crimes and conduct predictive analysis to better position us to prevent crimes before they occur,” said Anne Arundel County Chief of Police Amal Awad.

The 1,300-square-foot, \$1.5 million center includes 13 workstations with 27-inch desktop monitors and a 24-by-4.5-foot LED video wall that can display up to 12 inputs simultaneously. This public safety hub was funded in the county’s Fiscal Year 2024 budget, with help from state and federal grants.

The RTIC uses situational awareness platforms, CCTV and license plate readers, and data analytics to monitor



The center includes 13 workstations with 27-inch desktop monitors and a 24-by-4.5-foot LED video wall that can display up to 12 inputs simultaneously.

incidents in real-time.

Awad and her team also shared details on a RTIC program called Community Connect that will allow residents and businesses to share security footage.

This real-time access is vital during active assailant events, violent crimes and other emergencies.

Awad emphasized that the program will protect the privacy of participants. If a crime occurs nearby, registered residents may be asked to share relevant footage

that the RTIC can review. The police department will never have live access to residential camera feeds.

“We know there may be some concerns around privacy,” Awad said. “We want you to know the RTIC is not big brother. We understand the responsibility that comes with this new technology, and we’re committed to maintaining transparency and safeguarding individual rights.”

Awad also said that the technology supplements, not replaces, the need for officers.

For bringing the vision to life, Awad credited the RTIC commander, Lieutenant Brian Carney, and Emily Meadows, a public safety portfolio manager.

“They developed the concept, they built the RTIC team and brought to life what you see here today with their forward thinking and creativity — innovation truly in action,” Awad said.

Councilman Pete Smith has advocated for community cameras since 2015, when he visited Baltimore to see police personnel operate the CitiWatch program.

“I would hire 400 police officers today if I could, but recruitment is hard,” Smith said, adding that the RTIC will make perpetrators think twice before committing a crime in Anne Arundel County.

Other jurisdictions have robust surveillance programs, and Anne Arundel County officials hope to partner with them when possible.

County Executive Steuart Pittman praised Awad for bringing the idea to him two years ago.

“We invested in the new Real-Time Information Center because we knew it would be a game-changer for public safety in Anne Arundel County,” Pittman said. “Equipping first responders with real-time data and technology helps save lives by giving our first responders the tools they need to act faster and more effectively.”

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The Categories Are:

COMMUNITY

Most Desirable Community To Reside _____

Best Community Beach _____

Best Community Pool _____

Best Club/Organization _____

Best Nonprofit Organization _____

Best House Of Worship _____

Best Pastor/Church Leader _____

Best Preschool _____

Best School _____

Best Business To Open In 2024 _____

KIDS' ACTIVITIES

Best Activity Center _____

Best After-School Program _____

Best Children's Dance Company _____

Best Day Care _____

Best Music Instruction Program _____

Best Educational Services _____

Best Party/Special Occasion Venue _____

Best Playground _____

Best Summer Camp _____

Best Sports Facility _____

Best Youth Sports League _____

BEAUTY & FITNESS

(Please specify person and company if applicable)

Best Fitness Club _____

Best Hair Salon/Barber Shop _____

Best Martial Arts Program _____

Best Place For A Massage _____

Best Nail Salon _____

Best Spa _____

Best Weight-Loss Program _____

HEALTH

(Please specify person and company if applicable)

Best Medical Practice _____

Best Physician _____

Best Women's Specialty Practice _____

Best Chiropractic Practice _____

Best Dental Practice _____

Best Orthodontic Practice _____

Best Eye Care Practice/Ophthalmologist _____

Best Audiologist _____

Best Pediatric Practice _____

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Best Physical Therapy Practice _____

Best Mental Health Care _____

Best Speech Therapy _____

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Best Auto Repair _____

Best Bank _____

Best Car Wash _____

Best Dry Cleaner _____

Best Marine Repair _____

Best Pet Care _____

RETAIL/SHOPPING

Best Overall Customer Service _____

Best Art/Photography/Frame Shop _____

Best Bicycle Shop _____

Best Consignment Shop _____

Best Clothing Store/Pop-Up Shop _____

Best Florist _____

Best Garden Center _____

Best Gift Shop _____

Best Grocery Store _____

Best Hardware Store _____

Best Home Decor _____

Best Jeweler _____

Best Liquor Store _____

Best Toy Store _____

FOOD/DINING

Best Restaurant Overall _____

Best Wait Staff _____

Best Breakfast _____

Best Lunch _____

Best Dinner _____

Best Kids' Menu _____

Best Barbecue _____

Best Burger _____

Best Coffee _____

Best Crab Cake _____

Best Bakery/Cakes _____

Best Dessert _____

Best Ice Cream/Frozen Treat _____

Best Pizza _____

Best Salad _____

Best Sandwich/Sub _____

Best Seafood _____

Best Wings _____

Best Fast Food _____

Best Asian _____

Best Italian _____

Best Mexican _____

Best Gluten-Free Menu _____

Best Vegetarian Menu _____

Best Caterer _____

Best Bar _____

Best Food Truck _____

Best Special Occasion _____

Best Outside Seating _____

Best Restaurant Outside Of Severna Park, Arnold And Millersville _____

ENTERTAINMENT

Best Place For Family Entertainment _____

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Unity Gardens To Host Lecture

Unity Gardens is a small Anne Arundel County nonprofit that awards grants to community groups to plant native trees, shrubs and plants. The mission is “cultivating communities, one native garden at a time.” Last year, Unity Gardens awarded grants to 34 diverse community groups across Anne Arundel County for native perennials, shrubs and trees to control stormwater runoff and to create pollinator and rain gardens that foster thriving ecosystems.

Unity Gardens is holding a lecture event featuring Ryan Drake speaking on “Nature’s Blueprint: Designing for Resiliency with Native Plants.” Drake is the natural areas manager for the Morris Arboretum at the University of Pennsylvania. His talk will include practical approaches for home and institutional gardens, drought-tolerant gardening, and landscaping suggestions for watershed gardening, among other topics.

The talk will be held on February 22 from 9:30am to noon at St. Philip’s Episcopal Church on Bestgate Road in Annapolis. Tickets are \$40 and the proceeds from the lecture will support the ongoing work of Unity Gardens with grants for community groups.

The spring grant cycle is open until March 1 for community groups in Anne Arundel County to apply for grants up to \$3,000 for native plantings. Visit www.unitygardens.org for more information.

Middle Schools Add Athletics Program

» Continued from page 1

The after-school program is designed to entice students to be more involved with their schools, make new friends, participate in sports and increase their activity levels.

“Learning doesn’t stop after the last bell rings,” said Severna Park Middle School sixth-grade social studies teacher and athletic manager Matthew Looock. “I’ve always been a fan of after-school activities, and this program should really help the students bond with one another and create a sense of pride for their school. The kids are excited and there’s definitely interest in the program.”

The program will be free, and the majority of coaches will be teachers within their respective schools.

“We’ve been extremely busy for the last two years designing this initiative,” said AACPS Coordinator of Athletics Clayton Culp. “We’ve had great support from the administrators, teachers, parents, as well as arranging the contracts with the bus companies and referees. We really have had great enthusiasm about the program and we’re looking forward to kicking off the program this spring.”

AACPS plans to offer nine sports from fall through spring. The middle school program will be run Monday through Thursday and not on weekends, so students can participate in both school and youth league activities.

Currently, the schedule includes boys and girls soccer in the spring; boys and girls basketball in the fall; boys and



Photo by Kevin Murnane

Severna Park Middle School sixth-grade social studies teacher and athletic manager Matthew Looock stood next to the school’s five pillars in the main lobby. Those pillars are perseverance, respect, integrity, determination and empathy.

girls track and field in the fall; boys and girls flag football and unified bocce in the late fall and early winter; and co-ed cross country in spring 2026.

The middle schools will compete against one another and the county will provide bus transportation to and from those venues as well as the referees. Parents will need to pick up their children after practice and when the bus brings them back to their middle school after games.

The county has divided middle schools into geographic networks. Severna Park Middle School will be in the central network with Arundel, MacArthur, Meade, Northeast, Old Mill North and Monarch Global Academy middle schools. Magothy River and Severn River middle schools will be in the southern network with Bates, Central, Crofton and Southern middle schools, along with Phoenix Academy.

“We’ll be continuing to collect data and review every season to plan additional activities and futuristically play middle schools from other counties,” Culp said.

Matt Smith, the AACPS middle school athletic specialist, made numerous presentations at middle schools in late January and received positive feedback from parents.

“The parents have been overwhelmingly supportive about the athletic project and many of the schools’ Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) are organizing concession services for the games,” Smith said.

Looock would like to see that support continue in the Severna Park community once games start.

“We hope that the students create great memories for playing for their schools and (are) proud of wearing their jerseys,” Looock said. “We made the starting times of the games in the late afternoon so many parents can come out and watch their children represent their school.”

To learn more about middle school athletics, visit www.aacps.org/athletics.

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Souper Bowl Food Drive Helps Fill Local Pantries

Dozens of communities participated in the eighth annual S(o)uper Bowl Food Drive, hosted by Good Neighbors Group in February. This yearly competition between neighborhoods restocks local food pantries during the lull that follows the donation-heavy holiday season, to help propel them through the summer months that typically yield less giving. “We were empty this morning,” said ACAN’s executive director, Peggy Wilson, as she welcomed neighborhood captains who dropped off their community’s haul, some with over 1,000 items. Before the day was done, the pantry was restocked.

The pantries receiving this year’s donations were Anne Arundel County Food Bank, ACAN, My Brother’s Pantry, Open Hands of Maryland, Rock Steward Ministry, SPAN and St. Luke’s Food Pantry.

Photos by Lauren Cowin
Left: Amelia Ochalek dropped off the donations she gathered from her neighborhood.

Top Right: Donations rolled in to ACAN.

Bottom Right: The Whitehurst community collected more than 1,000 items for ACAN.



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Holmatro Donates Tool To Earleigh Heights In Honor of Chris Higgins

Montgomery County career firefighter Chris Higgins had a special connection to Earleigh Heights Volunteer Fire Company in Severna Park. It's where he met his future wife and where he started his firefighting career.

He was still a member of Earleigh Heights on January 11 when he responded to a Prince George's County fire call from his Montgomery County station. While on the scene in Laurel, he suffered a medical emergency and later died.

"He was a very valuable part of Earleigh Heights and was very active from the 1990s to about 2016," said Earleigh Heights Volunteer Fire Company Chief Dave Crawford. "When he had his two children, he still made time to help us on the fundraising side."

In Higgins' honor, hydraulic equipment and systems provider Holmatro donated a roughly \$2,600 tool to Earleigh Heights Volunteer Fire Company on February 6. On behalf of the president of Holmatro, Sam Pearce and Mike Toeneboehn presented the tool and expressed their sympathy for



Holmatro donated a roughly \$2,600 forcible entry tool to Earleigh Heights Volunteer Fire Company on February 6.

the loss of Higgins.

The tool is what firefighters call a spreader or cutter, and allows first responders to enter reinforced buildings.

"It's kind of a Swiss Army Knife for forcible entry tool," Crawford said, explaining that the tool helps when buildings are unoccupied. "Every min-

ute a fire builds, it doubles in size. The quicker we can access the building, the better chance we have of saving the property."

Parents Alarmed By School Redistricting Scenarios

» Continued from page 1

replacements and alterations."

AACPS hired a private consultant, WXY, to develop the redistricting scenarios using enrollment patterns to increase the number of "well-utilized" schools while decreasing the number of "over-utilized" schools.

WXY previously reviewed boundary lines for Montgomery County Public Schools, with those plans being abandoned. The firm also did work for Boston Public Schools, the School District of Lancaster and many other organizations.

Phase I of AACPS redistricting was implemented in August 2024 and included the Chesapeake, Glen Burnie, Meade, North County, Northeast, Old Mill and Severn Run clusters.

Phase II includes the Severna Park and Broadneck clusters along with Annapolis, Arundel, Crofton, South River and Southern clusters.

On February 1, AACPS shared three preliminary redistricting options. After soliciting feedback from the community now through May 1, Bedell will choose one of the existing options or present his own modified version to the Board of Education in July. Board members will share their input, followed by public hearings in September and October, before adopting the final redistricting plan in November.

AACPS plans to implement the changes for the 2026-2027 school year.

Each scenario affects schools and neighborhoods differently. For example, all three scenarios would move some kids from Severna Park Elementary School to Oak Hill Elementary School.

From a broad view, Scenario 1 would rezone 3.47% of the district's pupils and alter 41 schools. Scenario 2 would rezone 4.38% of pupils and 43 schools. Scenario 3 would rezone 3.81% of pupils and 34 schools.

Early in the community input process,



Folger McKinsey and Severna Park elementary schools are among the spots affected by the redistricting proposals.

Severna Park and Broadneck residents have been vocal about the proposed changes. Some parents started a petition to prevent the redistricting of Jones Elementary School to Severn River Middle School. The petition advocates for Scenario 3. In the first five days, the petition garnered about 550 verified signatures.

Kristin Lewnes, an attorney and parent of a Severna Park Middle School (SPMS) seventh-grader and Jones Elementary fifth-grader, is part of the group that started the petition. In a letter to the Board of Education, she expressed that the average number of affected Jones Elementary students, 56 fifth-graders annually, is an insignificant percentage shift and that the roughly three-mile distance saved between traveling to Severn River Middle School instead of Severna Park Middle School is also negligible.

She cited previous redistricting plans in Wake County, North Carolina (2020), Howard County, Maryland (2019) and Fairfax County, Virginia (2019) that either allowed students in transitioning years to stay at their schools or allowed younger students to stay in the same districts as their older siblings.

Lewnes' daughter thrived at the small

community of Jones and endured a difficult transition into middle school before receiving Severna Park Middle School's Student of the Month honor in October 2023 as a sixth-grader and again in October 2024 as a seventh-grader.

"She found her rhythm, she found her community, she connected with friends, she connected with teachers, and she has been thriving at SPMS," Lewnes said. "She has been preparing her little brother, a current fifth-grader at Jones, for his transition to middle school at SPMS. He is not as scared because of her leadership and her introducing him to SPMS, including the students, the facilities, the teachers, the activities, the classes and the community. He has been looking forward to enjoying the community and similar educational success that his older sister has found at SPMS."

During the January workshop, Board of Education's District 6 representative Joanna Bache Tobin tried to calm parents' fears.

"The goal here, as Dr. Bedell has laid out, is to ensure that every student has the best possible setting for school, that children are not in situations where there is terrible overcrowding, and that we are as fiscally responsible as possible

and use every seat that we can," she said.

Affected families are asked to provide their feedback via the online tool so all Board of Education members can collectively review that information instead of members receiving individual emails. View the web tool at www.aacpsredistricting.org/webmap.

"There is a human element that will be factored in, but I will say this too: everybody can't get everything that they want," Bedell said. "This is the reason for redistricting. There are going to be some tough decisions that have to be made. But we will take those comments into account as we do everything in our power to do this in a very fair and transparent manner."

Using The Web Tool

1. Visit www.aacpsredistricting.org/webmap
2. Enter an address
3. Select "Comment" in the bottom corner of the webpage
4. Select the dot over your address
5. Choose a facial expression and scenario, and add your comment
6. At the top of the page, click "Take Survey"
7. Enter any additional comments



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Friends Of Kinder Farm Park To Host "Forest Bathing" Speaker

By Jim Rausch

Friends of Kinder Farm Park
Board Member Emeritus

The Friends of Kinder Farm Park group will continue its speaker program in 2025 with Laura Falvey, who will discuss forest bathing. The event is scheduled for March 30 at 2:00pm in the park's harvest hall of the visitors center.

Falvey, a certified guide with the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy, will talk about the experiences associated with forest bathing in a natural environment. Forest bathing is a slow walk along trails, like those at

Kinder Farm Park, that allows participants to tap into their senses and immerse themselves in the beautiful world around them. Slowing down and spending mindful time in nature has been proven to regulate blood pressure, increase immunity, and reduce the production of stress hormones.

Tickets are required for members and non-members and can be ordered through TicketLeap. Admission is free for Friends' members, \$3 for non-members, and will be limited to 90 people.

Register using the following link:
www.kinderfarmpark.org/forestbathing-speaker2025.html.

Currie Twins Win Big On "Wheel"

» Continued from page 1

or how nerve-racking standing under bright lights before a live audience would be.

Katie first applied to be on the show in 2023, long before she and Christina learned that over 1 million hopeful people apply to be on "Wheel of Fortune" every year, though only 600 make it onto the show.

That year, she wasn't selected, so she applied again early in the fall of 2024. Katie created a one-minute video showcasing her personality and interest in the show, did a brief first-round interview, and made it to a longer second-round interview in which she mentioned that she was an identical twin and would graduate from college in the spring.

One of the producers on the call shared that "Wheel of Fortune" would soon be recording a special week of episodes celebrating milestones, in recognition of the show's 50th anniversary, and they were looking for pairs to be on the show. Additional correspondence and interviews led to both girls being selected to be on "Wheel."

They flew out to Los Angeles, California, in November 2024 to tape their episode, accompanied by Christina's boyfriend, Griffin. At the last minute, their parents were unable to join them, leaving Christina and Katie with the awkward task of hiding the results of the episode from their mom and dad until it aired on January 9, 2025.

Katie explained that "Wheel of Fortune" was resolute about contestants not spoiling the outcome of the show, and that it became funny keeping their big secret not only from their parents, but also from their older sister as well.

In January, their family and friends learned that they had won — and won big — walking away with \$88,248 in cash and prizes that include trips to Hawaii and Portugal. The twins are looking forward to taking these vacations in May and October of this year.

Christina and Katie agreed that their entire "once-in-a-lifetime" experience competing on "Wheel of Fortune" was wonderful. From meeting Vanna White while having their hair and makeup done, to chatting briefly with Seacrest during taping, to making friends with their fellow contestants, the Curries created

memories they consider very special.

Because "Wheel" tapes several episodes at a time, Katie and Christina spent a long morning preparing to go onstage not only with the other two pairs from their episode — who were celebrating the milestones of becoming first-time grandparents and being longtime best friends — but also with contestants from other episodes.

"Everyone was rooting for each other and everyone was cheering for each other, and it was just such an awesome experience to have so many people so genuinely happy for everyone else," Christina recalled of the camaraderie among contestants as the episodes were taped.

After all, as one of the producers had told them, they weren't competing against each other; they were competing against the wheel.

With the milestone of college graduation that they celebrated on "Wheel of Fortune" approaching, Katie and Christina already have plans to begin their respective careers. A supply chain management and finance double-major at the University of Pittsburgh, Katie has a job lined up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Christina is majoring in accounting at the University of Richmond, and she will return to the Baltimore area for a job.

Unsure just yet of what they will do with their winnings — they can now afford to buy 353 vowels, among other things — the sisters have memories to save up for a lifetime. "Getting to see what happens on TV in real life and ... going through hair and makeup, and feeling what the lights are actually like onstage, and knowing what the wheel feels like to spin" are things Katie won't soon forget.

"I think my favorite experience was ... being able to do it together with Katie," Christina said, trying to select a top highlight from among so many of being on "Wheel of Fortune." Noting that they've always been best friends, she added, "Getting to share this special experience that not many people get to have, and going through the process, meeting so many nice people, getting to spin the wheel, getting to call out letters, to solve the puzzles, to meet Ryan Seacrest — all things that I don't think we'll ever get the opportunity to do again — that we can share this memory, I feel, is just so special."

Bringing Light Through Everyday Interactions

Michele Sabean
Director of Development
SPAN Inc.



"Those who bring sunshine to the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves."
— **James Matthew Barrie**

Pulling into my driveway, after a set of days above freezing

temperatures, I realize that the snow tunnels my kids built the first week of the year are still standing and lasted the full month of January. This year started off with freezing temperatures, keeping the snow and ice with us longer than usual. During the coldest and darkest days of the year, many people are feeling a lot of stress.

When the world around us seems chaotic, what we can control is ourselves and how we react. When our children are having a meltdown, the traffic is ground to a halt, we hear bad news, or life throws a lot of uncertainties at us — take comfort in the power that we each have in how we react and know we can bring light to others in our small, everyday interactions.

In our words and in our actions, we can bring light to the dark days. The words we use and the kindness we share has the power to make a difference for others. Let someone know they made you smile. Acknowledge the cashier who's helping you and genuinely ask them how they are doing. Share the compliment, make someone smile, lend

a hand. We all — not just the big decision makers — have the power to make a difference for others.

I am blessed to see wonderful examples of this at SPAN all the time. I see the money individuals donate — sometimes in honor of a friend or family member, often in conjunction with a civic group or neighborhood event. I know the monetary donations make a huge difference for our clients with turnoff notices, as the weather is cold and BGE bills are high.

Recently, someone donating food to SPAN asked about our needs. She commented that she knew this was a rough time for many people and was trying to step up her involvement. We are thankful to all who participate in the Good Neighbors Group's annual S(o)uper Bowl food drive. This friendly competition between neighborhoods to collect and donate to local pantries is a huge help in filling our shelves!

I notice the power we each have when I see our volunteers taking the time to listen and go the extra mile. And I notice the effort students take to create beautiful cards and birthday bags for our clients.

SPAN is a small organization, so I can observe directly the difference individuals can make. Together, with the many individuals who donate money or food, we have impacted more than 100,000 people over the last 35 years. This spring, we will celebrate the 35 years of working together with this community to help our neighbors. Mark your calendar for SPAN's 35th birthday fest on Saturday, April 5. The celebration will have food trucks, music and games. Find more details at www.spanhelps.org.

Keeping Severna Park Beautiful

By **Helen Chapman**
The CREW

Have you noticed that Maryland, particularly Anne Arundel County, has gotten progressively more littered since the occurrence of COVID? The litter along our streets and highways, especially along our ramps, is such an eyesore. There are wheel rims and tires, plastic bags in trees and shrubs, discarded signs of all sorts, plastic cups and bottles, paper items like napkins and straws, furniture, cigarette butts, and numerous other trash items, especially at traffic lights.

Members of The CREW found a door at Cattail Creek, a shopping cart along McKinsey Road, a floor mop on Leelyn Drive and discarded longboards along Ritchie Highway.

For fun, we had named some of our frequent-flyer litterers. There is "Shredderman," who consistently shreds his Big Gulp plastic cups before throwing them out his car window. There is "Crushman," who may think he is helping the environment by crushing his cans before throwing them into the brush. Then there is "Tea Bag Lady," who discards her tea bags along a certain section of Leelyn Drive. Finally, we now refer to the numerous cigarette butts as "cig butts."

We cannot expect our county to be solely responsible for cleaning our roads. The county budget is limited, and their priority must be to keep our roads repaired to maintain safety.

From the spring of 2023 through the summer and fall, The CREW, a volunteer group of seven members, picked up litter in the plazas of Severna Park, along Ritchie Highway, McKinsey Road, Asbury Drive, Leelyn Drive, Baltimore Annapolis Boulevard, and Earleigh Heights Road. We worked each Saturday from 9:30am-11:30am. In 2024, due to health reasons, The CREW was reduced to two members. We are now looking for new members to volunteer on Saturdays from 9:00am-10:30am.

We want to grow The CREW to maintain the surrounding beauty of our area. Beginning in April, we will meet weekly on Saturday mornings from 9:00am-10:30am at a designated area. Our first meeting location will be Leelyn Drive at the commuter parking lot on April 6.

Please join us. Families are welcome. Bring a paper bag and a grabber should you have one. Afterward, join us for coffee at Rise Up Coffee Roasters on Ritchie Highway. Timely announcements are made weekly on Facebook under The Cleanup CREW and on Nextdoor.

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The Call Of The Christian In 2025

Stephen Mitchell

Lead Pastor
Trinity Bible
Church



My wife and I recently got a new edition of the video game "The Oregon Trail" for our family Nintendo Switch. If you are not familiar with "The Oregon Trail," it is a video game about settlers heading out to journey on the Oregon Trail, traveling west through the challenges that came for people who would take the journey.

When we first started playing, sure enough, someone in our fictional wagon party died quickly of dysentery and was given a tombstone that read, "Here lies Charles - where there is love, there is dysentery." Yet playing the fun, fictional game got me thinking about the many hardships and difficulties that those who would brave the journey west had to endure to reach their destination. Many did not make it. And that got me wondering, in a spiritual sense, what kind of challenges do Christians in America have to face in 2025?

Following the 2024 presidential election results, pastor and author John Piper posted on X (formerly Twitter), "Having delivered us from one evil, God now tests us with another. 'The lord your God is testing you, to know whether you love the lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul' (Deuteronomy 10:12)." What did he mean by that?

I believe he meant that with the return of Donald Trump to the White House, most evangelical Christians breathed a sigh of relief, with the expectation that religious freedom will be more secure, and that perhaps there might be a reprieve to some degree from the cultural clash against Christian values and beliefs in our country.

Even so, that does not mean there are no challenges facing Christians in America. In fact, the obstacles we face in some ways are more nuanced

and subtle so that we may not even realize what we are going to be dealing with moving forward.

I was recently having breakfast with a fellow pastor and friend, discussing the issues of the moment we live in and what the greatest challenge now is facing Christianity in America in 2025. He thought for a moment between bites at Denny's and said, "The greatest threat to Christianity in America at this moment is losing what it means to be Christian."

Seeing the true message of Christianity get hijacked, misused, minimized or weaponized is what we need to be watchful of. The credibility and authenticity of our gospel witness is at stake. What does it mean to be a Christian in 2025? What does it look like to follow Jesus amid a "crooked and perverse generation" (Philippians 2:15) that is highly polarizing, divided and angry, and how can we stick out for the right reasons on this journey we happen to be on toward our destination?

A Christian is an alien, a stranger, a pilgrim whose identity is to be found not in a political or ideological tribe nor in any of the other spectrums that society tells us to base our identity on; rather, a Christian's identity is in Christ. We are citizens, ultimately not of America or this world, but of heaven (Philippians 3:20) and we are here to build a spiritual kingdom while we are here, not a physical, national, political or ideological one.

We are Christians first, Americans second, and political third, and it must be in that order. This world and this incredible country we love is not our real home and must not be our primary focus.

We belong to a heavenly country, and a strong indicator of whether we have our identity where it should be is whether we desire that heavenly country and long for the home of heaven. We are part of a family, a community of believers that is not just local or national, but global, and while the world around us is divided, we must remain united by our common bond: the cross and our need for the forgiveness of the savior who was on that cross.

A Christian should have compassion as well as

conviction. Christ implores us to not be indifferent to the plight of the hurting and helpless around us. Jesus said how we treat them reflects how we treat him. The tendency in 2025 is to demonize the "other" to the extent that one forgets that every human being is made in the image of God, and every human being is loved by Jesus Christ and therefore, should be loved by us. We must remember what happened to Jonah, the Old Testament prophet, who was so filled with hate for his enemy that he initially refused to even share the message God gave him for the people of Nineveh. The God of the Bible is compassionate, and his people must be characterized by this as well.

However, a Christian must also adhere to biblical conviction. In a world that claims we cannot be compassionate and loving if we do not affirm and condone that which God in the Bible condemns creates the conundrum facing us today. A Christian must be compassionate and loving but not at the expense of biblical truth, even if it earns us being unfriended, unfollowed and disliked. Jesus walked in grace and truth, and we must do the same.

Finally, a Christian is called to share the gospel with a lost and hurting world. Jesus is not an option; he is the answer for all our dilemmas. The problem and challenge before us is to not let the good news of God loving the world so much he gave his son be lost in the noise of the drama, confusion, angst and polarization of our time. If winning is everything, God wants us to be about winning souls for his kingdom. That is what he's up to in 2025 and that's what we should be up to as well.

A Christian should reflect Christ in all that we say and do, so that we bear his name with honor.

"Proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." - 1 Peter 2:9

Stephen Mitchell is the senior pastor of Trinity Bible Church in Severna Park. He also is the host of a regular podcast "Real Christian Talk with Pastor Steve," available on all podcast platforms.

Defying Gravity: A Wicked Good Lent

Ron Foster

Lead Pastor
Severna Park United
Methodist Church



We've just made it through the Grammy Awards ceremony and the Super Bowl a week later, with its showcase of talent both on the field (the game and the halftime show, and not always

in that order for some viewers) and off (the overpriced, overhyped, clever and bizarre commercials). In many years, this would mean that we were nearing the climax of the Mardi Gras season and preparing to eat pancakes in churches all over the community on Shrove Tuesday.

Alas, we'll have to hold off on the pancakes until March this time around the sun. And that's all because Easter falls about as late as it can this year on April 20 for all but the Eastern Orthodox churches. As one of the "moveable feasts" of the church, unlike Christmas, which is always December 25 in the west, Easter is tied to the lunar calendar and "floats" with the vernal equinox.

And all of this means we'll have to wait for Lent a little longer this year, too - itself already a season of intentional waiting and preparation for the great Easter feast. And who doesn't get excited about 40 days of penitence and fasting? Well, maybe not everybody. But as a United Methodist pastor for almost 40 years, I have always looked forward to the season of Lent as a time for personal and communal renewal in all the congregations I have served. Every year, there are some common goals and elements: helping people to focus on prayer and self-discipline; a reordering of priorities and reorientation away from self-absorption toward greater love of our neighbors; and a recommitment to living into the story of Jesus' life, teachings, death and resurrection.

Precisely because it comes every year, though, Lent runs the risk of becoming too routine or overly familiar. Been there, done that. And for that reason, it tends to get my creative juices flowing so that we can invite people into six-plus weeks that have the potential to open us up to new life. I've worked really hard with my colleagues and teams to come up with imaginative ways to frame the season that invites a fresh hearing and authentic engagement from members and friends of my churches.

One of my personal favorites was a "Broadway Journey Through Lent," which paired scripture texts with Broadway songs from "Rent," "Phantom of the Opera," "The Lion King," "Les Misérables" and others. We've done "Lent and Other Four-Letter Words," and flipping the pejorative use of that phrase, we instead considered life-giving words like turn, risk, care, wash (as in feet) and rise (our Easter culmination). Some years, we've focused on

a particular gospel ("Living the Questions"/Luke or "Reading John for Dear Life"), and other years we've gotten very earthy ("Grounded") or ethereal ("Holy Conversations," a series on prayer).

This year, given the enormous popularity and box office success of the movie "Wicked," I'm excited to offer a Bible study at my church called "Defying Gravity: A Wicked Good Lent." We'll turn to the powerful music first popularized by Idina Menzel and Kristin Chenoweth and now revoiced by Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo and use it to explore spiritual themes and texts about the nature of human beings, the allure of being popular, and the power of love and relationships to change us for good.

So, I'm giving you a month's head start to begin thinking about how you plan to observe the season of Lent on your own and/or as part of a faith community. However and wherever you do, I hope it's wicked good!

The Rev. Ron Foster is the lead pastor of Severna Park United Methodist Church, where he has served since July 2014.

Strengthening Protections For Maryland's Children

Dawn Gile
Senator
District 33



Protecting the most vulnerable members of our communities — especially our children — is one of my highest priorities as a Maryland state senator. That is why I am introducing a

bill this legislative session to strengthen child sexual abuse prevention measures by enhancing oversight, improving background checks, and expanding safeguards across all child-serving organizations. This bill builds on past legislative efforts, ensuring that no gaps remain in our commitment to keeping children safe.

This legislation was prompted by concerns from parents and community members regarding how schools handle allegations of child sexual abuse. While the legal process in a recent case is ongoing, this situation highlights the critical need for stronger policies to ensure the safety of our children. Schools and other child-serving organizations must have comprehensive safeguards in place to mitigate risks and ensure that all employees meet the highest standards of trust and integrity. Every child deserves a learning environment where their safety is the top priority.

In 2018 and 2019, Maryland took significant steps in child sexual abuse prevention with the passage of House Bill 1072 and House Bill 486. These bills laid the groundwork for mandatory training, codes of conduct, and employee screening in schools. However, without sufficient oversight and enforcement, policies alone are not enough to ensure effective implementation.

This new legislation will amend House Bills 1072 and 486 to require the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to oversee their implementation. Under this amendment, each jurisdiction will be required to submit its training program, code of conduct, and staff screening policies to MSDE annually. In turn, MSDE will compile this information and report on the progress and compliance of these programs to the Maryland General Assembly. By adding this oversight mechanism, we ensure that policies are not just written but actively enforced and improved upon.

Currently, criminal background checks are required for employees working in Maryland's schools and child-serving institutions. While this is a crucial step in protecting children, it

» Continued on page 17

A Legislative Session With High Stakes

LaToya Nkongolo
Delegate
District 31



On January 10, I had the honor of being sworn in as the new delegate for District 31 in the Maryland General Assembly. The Anne Arundel County Republican Central Committee selected me to fill the seat vacated by Delegate Rachel Muñoz — the very seat I ran for in 2022, but I did not advance past the primary. Despite that setback, I remained actively engaged in our community, championing mental health access, educational excellence, and support for small-business owners, all while staying true to my Christian, conservative principles.

Now, as your state delegate, I am even more committed to addressing

the specific needs of our district while supporting and introducing effective legislation that benefits hardworking families across Maryland.

The 90-day legislative session began on January 8, and among the many priorities, the most pressing issue is the \$3 billion budget deficit. Unfortunately, the governor's proposed solution includes a laundry list of tax hikes and hidden fees that will burden everyday families and small-business owners. Some of these include:

- Eliminating itemized deductions, impacting homeowners and retirees
- Increasing online delivery fees
- Doubling car inspection fees from \$14 to \$30
- Raising the cannabis tax from 9% to 15%
- Adding new taxes on sports gambling

While you may not think some of these apply to you, rest assured, their

far-reaching impact will be felt by all. The Democrat majority in the General Assembly, along with Governor Wes Moore, is looking to balance the budget on the backs of hardworking citizens. Keep in mind, when Governor Moore took office, he inherited a budget surplus from Governor Larry Hogan but squandered it through reckless spending.

This will be a challenging and fast-paced session, but I have hit the ground running. I ask for your prayers and support as I advocate for all District 31 residents, regardless of political affiliation.

You are invited to join me for a District 31 meet and greet on March 3 from 6:00pm–7:30pm at the Lowe House Office Building, room 180, located at 6 Bladen Street in Annapolis. To RSVP or for assistance, contact my office at 410-841-3510 or email me at latoya.nkongolo@house.state.md.us. My chief of staff, Julie Butler, and I are happy to assist you.

A Hot Take On Maryland's Energy Crisis

Brian Chisholm
Delegate
District 31



Editor's note: This column was significantly shortened because of space.

We cannot continue down this irrational path of regulations that will inevitably drive up energy prices, escalate housing costs, and balloon government budgets, all while holding 6 million Marylanders hostage. The debate is over, and everyone recognizes that we have an enormous problem: Maryland is facing an extreme energy crisis. Our consumption is far outpacing our production, and there are currently no viable solutions in place to address the issue.

We need an offramp and guardrails to keep us from heading straight into inevitable disaster. That offramp is the Climate Solutions Affordability Act Bill of 2025. This bill injects common sense and reality into these overly ambitious regulations to the Climate Solutions Act Now Bill of 2022 by simply adding to the "extent economically practical" to all of these regulations. Here is the definition of the extent economically practical.

Extent economically practical – To the extent feasible or capable of being done or carried out with a reasonable effort, taking into account the state of technology, the economics of improvements in relation to benefits to the public health and safety and other societal and social economic considerations.

The crisis we are currently facing didn't happen overnight — it was the result of a series of legislative actions disguised as beneficial for Maryland and the environ-

ment. These policies gradually set the stage for our current energy crisis by prioritizing costly mandates over practicality and affordability. Instead of learning from these miscalculations and unintended outcomes, the uncompromising extreme environmentalists refuse to adapt and propose practical solutions.

Key milestones along this path include:

1. Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (2004)

This law requires Maryland utilities to obtain an increasing percentage of their energy from expensive renewable sources like wind and solar. The state's 2019 Clean Energy Jobs Act accelerated these mandates, driving up costs as utilities scramble to comply with unrealistic targets.

2. EmPOWER Maryland Energy Efficiency Act (2008)

Marketed as a way to cut energy consumption, this program instead created an endless cycle of expensive efficiency upgrades, funded by surcharges on customer bills.

3. Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Act (2009)

This act made Maryland a leader in costly climate policies, requiring drastic reductions in emissions that are forcing the premature closure of reliable fossil fuel plants while failing to replace them with sufficient alternative sources.

4. Office of People's Counsel Environmental Reform Act (2021)

The Office of People's Counsel (OPC) was created to represent the interest of residential ratepayers in matters such as unfair sales practices and unreasonable rate increases. Democrats expanded OPC's role to serve as the climate counsel, representing environmental interests of the state. As a result, ratepayers no longer have an advocate in maintaining affordable rates if the matter conflicts with advancing the Democrats' green energy agenda.

Now, we arrive at the **Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022**, a law that imposes sweeping and detrimental mandates, further exacerbating the crisis by:

1. **Requiring Maryland to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60% (compared to 2006) levels by 2031 and requiring Maryland's emissions to be net zero thereafter.**
2. **Requiring buildings (35,000 square feet or larger) to reduce their emissions by 20% by 2030.**

If my bill adding the language to the "extent economically practical" is not passed, you can say goodbye to the ideas of affordable housing with this regulation!

3. **Requiring the full electrification of the state's passenger and light-duty vehicle fleet.**

If the federal government couldn't accomplish a tiny fraction of this goal, why would legislators in Annapolis believe we could make it happen with a budget that is already \$3 billion in the hole?

4. **Requiring that at least 75% of electricity purchased by Maryland for state facilities must come from no- or low-carbon energy sources starting January 1, 2030.**

Do I need to point out the obvious mismatch here?

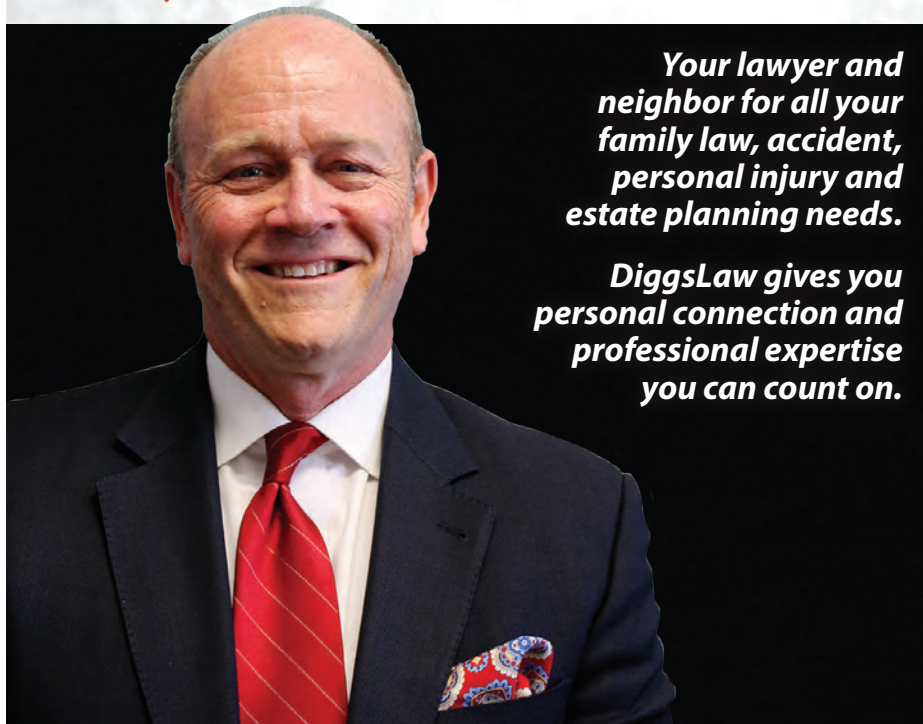
The General Assembly must act now to ensure a balanced approach to energy policy by expanding natural gas generation, investing in reliable energy sources, and halting economically destructive mandates. That's why I'm introducing the Climate Solutions Affordability Act of 2025, a bill that provides critical amendments to the existing Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022. This bill ensures that climate mandates are implemented only to the extent that they are economically practical.



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Strengthening Protections For Maryland's Children

» Continued from page 15

does not catch all individuals who pose a risk. This bill will mandate that all jurisdictions complete Child Protective Services (CPS) background checks prior to hiring new employees. Unlike traditional criminal background checks, CPS checks identify individuals who have been determined responsible for the maltreatment of a child — even if they do not have a criminal conviction. This additional safeguard will help prevent known child abusers from securing positions where they have access to children.

Protecting children should not stop at the schoolhouse doors. Many child predators seek employment in other child-serving organizations, including day care centers, after-school programs, and youth sports leagues. This legislation expands the requirements of House Bills 1072 and 486 to

other child-serving organizations, ensuring that consistent policies are in place across all institutions that work with children. By standardizing and strengthening these requirements, we close loopholes that allow child predators to move from one organization to another undetected.

Every child deserves to learn, play and grow in a safe environment. This legislation represents a critical step forward in ensuring that schools and child-serving organizations have the necessary tools, oversight and accountability to prevent child sexual abuse. My heart aches for every child who is a victim of child sexual abuse. No child should endure such pain, and we must do everything in our power to protect them. We must act now to strengthen our safeguards and prevent child predators from ever having access to our most vulnerable.

Letter To The Editor: Scouts

My name is Riordan Kelley, and I am a Scout in Troop 993 in Severna Park. I would like to talk about the amazing experiences I have had in Scouts and share these with Severna Park Voice readers. We meet at the Severna Park United Methodist Church on Benfield Road every Thursday from 7:30pm-9:00pm. In my troop, we learn many things including teamwork and leadership and we have fun all around.

Scouting has many benefits. One of the benefits I love the most is the high-adventure camps. You might ask what high adventures are? They are seven- to 10-day trips that show the beauty of the outdoors and offer Scouts many experiences. One of my favorite trips I have gone on was to the Kandersteg International Scout Centre in the Swiss Alps. There, our troop got to hike, climb, swim in a glacier lake, and whitewater raft. There are also many other high adventures available, like hiking at Philmont in New Mexico, sailing at Sea Base in the Florida Keys, or canoeing at Northern Tier on the Canadian border.

I encourage anyone currently in sixth to 12th grade to join Scouts. You are welcome to join my troop, 993, to create lifelong memories that you can share with lifelong friends.

Sincerely,
Riordan Kelley
Life Scout, Troop 993

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Park Girls, Broadneck Boys Win County Swimming Titles



Left: The Falcon girls won the county title for the first time since 2014. **Right:** Broadneck's boys had eight event champions on their way to a dominant points victory.

The Severna Park girls and Broadneck boys swim teams captured Anne Arundel County Public Schools county championships on January 31.

The Falcon girls won the county title for the first time since 2014.

Amberlynn Gong won the 100-yard breaststroke and the 200 individual medley, the latter in which she broke a 16-year-old school record time. **KK Sulli-**

van won the 100-yard butterfly.

Gong combined with **Maggie Goodman**, **Tori Wright** and **Lena Rausch** to win the 400 freestyle relay, while Rausch, Wright, Goodman and Sullivan combined to win the 200 freestyle relay.

Broadneck's boys had eight event champions on their way to a dominant points victory. **Kohl Hanes** was victorious in the 200 freestyle and the 500 freestyle, while **Owen Mahoney** took the 50 freestyle

and 100 butterfly. **Marcus Cembrano** won the 100 breaststroke.

Mahoney and Hanes combined with **Brendan Mahoney** and **Nolan Rider** for the 400 freestyle relay title, while Owen Mahoney, Brendan Mahoney, Hanes and **Nik Klee** set a new meet record in winning the 200 freestyle relay.

Rider, Cembrano, Klee and **JoJo Navarro-Monzo** won the 200 medley relay.

Bruins Send 23 To State Indoor Track & Field Meet

Broadneck's indoor track and field team will send almost two dozen athletes to the 4A state meet, following an impressive showing at the 4A Central Region championship meet on February 5.

From that meet, the Bruins earned state meet berths in 10 individual events and three relays by virtue of a top-three finish. Four others also hit state qualifying marks and will advance despite not placing in the top three at regionals. Pending the other 4A regional meets, it's possible more Bruins could receive entry into the state meet.

On the boys side, **Evan Whitford** and **Max Marinello** qualified in the boys 3,200. Whitford smashed his personal best by 18 seconds to win the race by a quarter-second, outkicking Crofton's **Scott Cunningham** with a stunning sub-32-second final lap to win by a quarter-second. Marinello finished third, setting a personal best by five seconds.

Matt Allen finished second in the 55-meter dash, while **Christian Schlauch** was second in the boys shot put.

In the girls' competition, **Raleigh Kerst** qualified in two events, winning
» Continued on page 25

MPSSAA 2025-2027 Realignment Confirmed

Severna Park Has Three Programs Bumped to 4A; Broadneck Lax Shifts Regions

By David Bashore

The Maryland Public Secondary School Athletic Association's biennial classification realignment for the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 school years has been released, and several significant changes are in effect regarding local schools.

Severna Park will see three programs move to the 4A ranks next school year: field hockey, baseball, and outdoor track and field. The field hockey team will enter the 4A East Region I field with Crofton, Meade and Severn Run. Baseball will also compete in 4A East I alongside Glen Burnie, Meade, Mergenthaler, North County and Severn Run. Outdoor track and field will join Broadneck and 11 other schools in a combined 4A East region.

The MPSSAA calculates classifications and regions for each sanctioned sport based largely on a handful of criteria. Each school's overall student body population for grades nine to 11 is ranked from most populous to least (4A to 1A), and then the schools are assigned into roughly even-numbered groups for each sport based on student body rank and the number of schools fielding a given sport.

Though Severna Park is just below the 4A/3A line on student body size, individual programs are classified as 4A if the student body falls in the top quarter of schools offering that sport.

The other region moves for the next two school years sees Broadneck lacrosse jump from 4A East II to 4A East I, where the Bruins will compete against Annapolis, Glen Burnie, Meade and North County.

In track and field and golf specifically, a number of teams have reshuffled in and out of the schools' respective districts. In 4A-3A East football, there is nearly half turnover, with Howard, Long Reach and Reservoir leaving, to be replaced by Arundel, Old Mill and Severn Run.

There are minor changes in virtually all competitions for both schools. Most notably, Crofton replaces Suitland in Broadneck's 4A East II in several sports (soccer, volleyball, basketball, baseball, softball), and Old Mill joins Severna Park's 3A East II in most of those same sports.

MPSSAA 2025-27 Classifications

Cross Country

4A East: Annapolis, Bowie, Broadneck, Charles H. Flowers, Crofton, Dr. Henry A. Wise, Glen Burnie, Leonardtown, Meade, North County, North Point, Severn Run

3A East: Arundel, Chesapeake, Chopticon, Great Mills, James M. Bennett, Northeast, Northern, Old Mill, Severna Park, South River, St. Charles, Stephen Decatur

Field Hockey

4A East I: Crofton, Meade, Severn Run, Severna Park

4A East II: Annapolis, Broadneck, Leonardtown, North Point

Football

4A East: Annapolis, Bowie, Broadneck, Dundalk, Glen Burnie, Meade, North County

4A-3A East: Arundel, Crofton, Great Mills, Leonardtown, North Point, Old Mill, Severn Run, Severna Park

Golf

4A-3A District 5: Annapolis, Arundel, Atholton, Broadneck, Centennial, Chesapeake, Crofton, Glen Burnie, Guilford Park, Marriotts Ridge, Meade, North County, Oakland Mills, Old Mill, Reservoir, Severn Run, Severna Park, South River

Soccer

4A East II: Annapolis, Bowie, Broadneck, Crofton, Leonardtown, North Point

3A East I: Arundel, James M. Bennett, Old Mill, Severna Park, South River, Stephen Decatur

» Continued on page 25



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STUDENT-ATHLETE OF THE MONTH

CHARLIE HARTMAN

Severna Park High School
Football, Baseball

By David Bashore

Charlie Hartman's connection to Severna Park High School, and the students therein, runs deep.

So deep, in fact, he was willing to put himself in an unfamiliar position for the benefit of the school and his friends.

"I'd always kind of wanted to play football, but usually in the fall would be a big recruiting team for baseball. I'd always teased playing, but it never worked out," said Hartman, who before this fall had never played tackle football. "But senior year, I'm best friends with all those kids, and they really wanted me to come out, so I just went for it."

It helped that he had committed to Salisbury University's program to play baseball, his primary sport, just before football season started. And not only did he pick up the game quickly, but he thrived as a chain-moving receiver in the Falcons' high-flying passing attack.

Football gave him a new perspective on something Hartman has been developing for years both in and out of the competitive arena: connecting with people.



Photo courtesy of Fincham Photography

It's through sports that he has connected with people from all walks of life. In addition to now being a three-sport letterman at Severna Park High, Hartman has volunteered in the school and in the community at large both with abled and special needs members of the community.

Those associations include the Best Buddies club and the Athletic Leadership Council at Severna Park, Challenger Baseball in the community, and even connecting through the Big 26 Buddy program at a multi-state baseball showcase in which standout prep baseball

players team with special needs players.

Even more notably, Hartman is Severna Park's male athlete representative for Anne Arundel County Public Schools' Student Athletic Advisory Council, in which one male and one female athlete from each of the district's 15 public schools gather monthly to discuss promoting high school and middle school sports, leadership and teamwork sessions, and community volunteer work.

That has helped Hartman's leadership skills in the athletic field, and it's also laid the groundwork for his career path. He plans to major in business economics and minor in political science at Salisbury, and after that, he hopes to go to law school.

"It's definitely helped my leadership skills and helped me be assertive without hurting people's feelings. I've learned that talking to people human to human, and making a real connection with them, makes it a lot easier to talk to them about sports," Hartman said. "That has helped with my interpersonal skills, being able to talk to people and persuade them to my point of view. I feel like I have a good handle on reading people's emotions and being able to understand them."

That ability has been put into action on the basketball court this winter. Entering the season, Hartman was one of

two players (the other being **Keaghan Gorski**) with any meaningful varsity experience, and each of them played limited minutes in previous seasons. But Hartman has taken all the leadership skills gleaned over the years and helped bring the team up to speed with what it means to be a contributor at the varsity level.

"To put what Charlie means into words is very difficult to do," said Severna Park varsity basketball coach **Pete Young**. "Whether it's a practice, a game, or a team function, he is 110% in. Whether it's his more than commendable baseball career, his basketball career, or adding football to his repertoire — which he had never played before — he gives all of himself to whatever he does."

In describing Hartman's intangibles, Young related a story about former NBA player Donyell Marshall, whom Young counts as an acquaintance. During the last few years of his 15-year pro career, Marshall's body kept telling him it was time to retire, but teams insisted on paying to keep him around less for his on-floor ability and far more for his value in veteran leadership, team chemistry and locker room composure.

"That's Charlie. He's important on the floor, but he's a glue guy and a great locker room presence," Young said. "He's going to be very difficult to replace."

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By David Bashore

Both teams struggled for any measure of consistency and flow over the course of the game. They were disjointed by clock issues, low gym energy, inexperience,



Photos by David Bashore

What ensued was a near backcourt violation saved only by a foul a split-second prior, two more fouls, one made free throw, a desperation Crofton 3-pointer that missed, a putback attempt that also missed but drew a foul as time expired, one made free throw, and then the

Severna Park closes the regular season by hosting Laurel on February 10, then going to Glen Burnie on February 12 and Arundel on February 14. They will host North County on February 18 and round out the regular season at Northeast on February 20.

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Before

After

Stumped By Recent Skid, Bruins Chasing Solutions



Photo by Dennis McGinley

Broadneck's Liam Sabo powered up a shot against the stiff defense of Severna Park's Xavier Marshall and Keaghan Gorski during their game on January 31. The Bruins came up short against the Falcons, losing 45-41.

By David Bashore

Every sports season has its share of ups and downs. The trick is to learn from the downs and make sure they don't become canyons, and to do that in a way that gives higher highs.

The last few weeks have proven an almighty test for the Broadneck boys basketball team. But despite the recent struggles, the Bruins are choosing optimism.

After a four-game win streak put the Bruins at 10-3, they hit a skid that stood at five straight games after a 59-46 setback at South River on February 7.

"It's been something different every time," said Broadneck boys basketball head coach **Jeff Starr**. "We don't give up a lot of second shots, and we turned the ball over. We thought we did a better job of that in the second half, but they got what they needed to keep extending the lead."

The South River game was the fifth, and it came a week after a narrow home loss to Severna Park, 45-41. Old Mill, Arundel and Southern were the other three teams to overcome Broadneck in this string.

The Bruins have relied on the scoring of junior guards **Kamari Williams** and **Ashton Sellman**, with post contributions from senior **Joey Smargissi** and freshman **Liam Sabo**, who's emerged as a scoring leader on a regular basis in the last month. Junior forward **Kemarri Collison** has stepped into a more visible role as a paint presence and someone who's willing to attack the basket from the post.

All have flashed moments of dominance, but rarely have the Bruins fully been in sync. In the South River game, as an example, it was an inefficient first-

half offense combined with uncharacteristic rebounding and second-chance points issues that doomed Broadneck. The Bruins fell behind by double digits late in the first quarter and couldn't get the deficit under 10 until there were 90 seconds left in the game.

In turn, the bench has gotten much deeper in recent games as the Bruins try different combinations to unlock the team's maximum efficiency.

"We're trying different things, using the whole roster to figure out a way to come back in a game. We had some guys who have given us some good minutes, battle a little bit," Starr said. "We've hit some tough stretches here on the streak we've been on, but we've shown fight. We've shown we're capable of competing and executing, but the tough part is putting together a full 32."

That experience may prove handy when it comes to the region tournament that starts in late February. Other than Leonardtown, which boasts a superior record, the other teams in the region are finely balanced, and the middle four could shake out in any order, leading to a potentially unpredictable race for the lone state quarterfinal berth.

"It's all leading toward playoffs. We've been in battles, and (South River) is one of the few that we've lost by double figures, so we're in it," Starr said. "In the regionals, if we get into a situation where we're in a tight game, we've been there before. I'd like to not be in those situations, but we've shown we can compete with a lot of good teams."

Before that, though, Broadneck has four more regular-season games: home games against Severn Run on February 11 and North County on February 14, the road finale at Long Reach on February 18, and the home closer against Crofton on February 20.

Bruins Snap Win Streak, Look To Reassess



Photos by Dennis McGinley

Top Left: Broadneck's London Best launched a running jumper during her team's 29-21 win over Severna Park on January 31. Bottom Left: Makayla Kropfelder put up a layup against the Falcons.

By David Bashore

As Broadneck's girls basketball team hits the stretch run, there's been a consistent theme: long winning streaks, followed by a loss that left them assessing and rethinking.

With three games left in the regular season, the team is once again looking to start a new streak. The Bruins had their latest win string come to a sudden end at South River on February 7, when the Seahawks completed a season sweep with a 68-33 victory.

South River's depth, aggressive defense, and full-court press overwhelmed Broadneck and allowed the score to get out of hand late in the first quarter. The Bruins fell behind 17-3 and never recovered.

"We have good players, but we're still figuring out how to play together," said Broadneck coach **Juan McKinney**. "We've been doing pretty well, but we got smacked (against South River). They're good, and we couldn't get it going, and that's the result. They're tough to beat, and when they're hitting outside shots like that, they're really tough to beat."

The sky is hardly falling for Broadneck, though, as a 14-5 record is indicative of the team's successes this season. Heading into the South River game, the Bruins had been riding the momentum from successive wins over Arundel (64-14 on January 24), Southern (54-13 on January 28), Severna Park (29-21 on January 31), Queen Anne's (48-37 on February 3) and Old Mill (60-31 on February 4).

It's not as simple as the Bruins going as far as **London Best** (7.6 points per game, 4.1 assists per game, 3.9 steals per game) and **Macie McNece** (19.2 points per game) will take them, but if they're struggling, there has yet to be a consistent third answer. Pieces are starting to flash, though.

"They've all been different games, and we've had to win them in different ways," McKinney said. "We've been doing well and we've had different players like **Carmen (Hubbard)** and **Makayla (Kropfelder)** expanding their roles and giving us good minutes to help (Best and McNece)."

Kropfelder, in particular, has added an interior presence the Bruins have lacked, averaging 5.5 points and 5.8 rebounds on the season, and seeing those numbers climb with more minutes as the campaign has progressed.

Broadneck has three games left in the regular season, which concludes February 21 at home to Crofton. After that, the Bruins will move on to regionals, where the task looks steep. Leonardtown and North Point look especially tough, with North Point having a win over South River and Leonardtown one over North Point, while there's also the Annapolis squad that beat Broadneck and will likely contest the county championship on the Bruins' home floor in a couple of weeks.

Bruins Honor Star Basketball Alum And Longtime Coach



Photo by Dennis McGinley

Former Broadneck boys basketball player and coach John Williams addressed the crowd during a ceremony honoring him on January 31.

John Williams made his mark on Broadneck basketball first as a standout player, then as a longtime coach.

On January 31, the program paid him the ultimate honor in return. During the team's home game against Severna Park, the Bruins officially gave Williams his due: a spot of his own on the school's wall of honor, a banner with his name, a graphic of a basketball, and his jersey number 4.

Williams was a three-year starting point guard for Broadneck, during which he led the Bruins to an overall record of 61-12. Among his accolades, Williams was the 1991 Basketball Player of the Year and Athlete of the Year for Anne Arundel County.

He returned to Broadneck as a teacher, then as head basketball coach for 17 years before stepping down in 2023. His teams won two region championships and advanced to the program's only state championship game appearance in 2019.

Scoring Is Down, But Falcon Girls Still Trending Up



Photos by Dennis McGinley
Above: Severna Park's Erin Hussey blocked a shot from Broadneck's London Best during the Falcons' loss to the Bruins on January 31. **Right:** Payton Jeffers fought to gather a rebound against Broadneck.

By David Bashore

Much of the Severna Park girls basketball season has been a matter of finding solutions around injuries and illness and figuring out how to put a competitive team on the floor every night.

While the shorthandedness is yet to fully resolve, the formula appears to be set: the Falcons have trouble scoring, so they need to stymie opponents into even less successful scoring. It might not be pretty, but it's been effective.

Since a 19-point loss to South River on January 17, the Falcons have strung together four wins in their last five games, two wins apiece sandwiching a low-scoring loss to Broadneck.

Severna Park beat Old Mill 44-27 on January 24 and Severn Run 61-17 four days later, before falling to Broadneck on January 31. They then beat Crofton 34-20 on February 4 and Chesapeake 25-24 on February 7.

The run lifts Severna Park's overall record to 9-8 on the season and has them moving in the right direction ahead of the region playoffs, which start in late February.

The Falcons have five games left in the regular season: at home to Glen Burnie on February 12, at Arundel on February 14, at North County on February 18, and then finishing up with back-to-back home games against Northeast on February 20 and Allegany on February 21.

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From Severn School Student-Athlete To Athletic Director

Julian Domenech Came Home To Lead The Admirals For The Last 16 Years

By Kevin Murnane

Author Thomas Wolfe wrote a 1940 novel entitled “You Can’t Go Home Again.”

Severn School athletic director and Severna Park resident **Julian Domenech** dispelled that belief and came home 16 years ago to direct the Admirals’ athletic department.

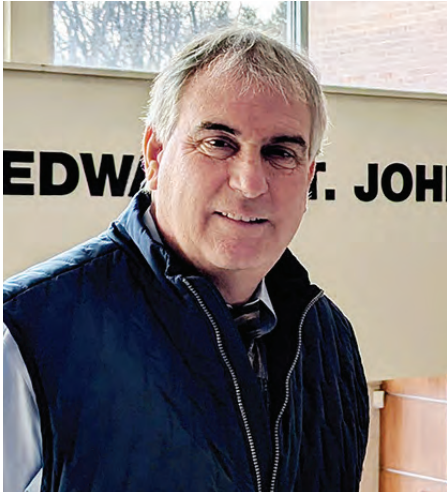
Domenech moved to Severna Park from Massachusetts in 1967 when he was 9 months old. His dad, Julian Sr., accepted a position in Severn’s language department, became head of the department, and advanced to assistant headmaster.

When Domenech was growing up, he lived close to Severn’s campus.

“Severn’s athletic fields were my front yard,” Domenech said. “As a child, (I) lived across the street from campus, and now as an adult, I live within walking distance of the school.”

Domenech played soccer, basketball and lacrosse at Severn and received an athletic scholarship to Pfeiffer University in Misenheimer, North Carolina. His achievements resulted in his being placed in the Hall of Fame for both schools.

“I chose Pfeiffer because I wanted to play both soccer and lacrosse in college,”



Domenech said. “I really liked Pfeiffer because it reminded me of Severn, only had about 1,000 students, and had great academic and athletic programs.”

Domenech also met his wife, Erin, while at Pfeiffer. She competed in field hockey and swimming for the university. Currently, Erin is a physical education teacher as well as Severn’s boys and girls swimming coach.

After Domenech graduated from Pfeiffer in 1989, the college asked him to coach the men’s soccer team for three years. He accepted and then coached the golf team for one year and progressed to lead the women’s lacrosse program for five years. Domenech also handled the college’s fundraising efforts.

Photo by Kevin Murnane

Severn School Athletic Director Julian Domenech has had a long lineage with the education center. His father taught at Severn School and was the assistant headmaster. Domenech played three sports at Severn and is in the school’s Hall of Fame.

He was on a recruiting trip to a junior college tournament at Anne Arundel Community College (AACC) to evaluate players for possible transfers to Pfeiffer when he heard about the vacant athletic director position at Severn School.

“A former Severn School board member, **Doug Lagarde**, told me about the AD (athletic director) position and asked if I was interested,” Domenech said. “I had so many outstanding memories of Severn and Severna Park, as well as many long-standing friendships in the area. It was an easy choice to come home.”

Those childhood memories included riding bikes through Severna Park, fishing and crabbing on the Severn River, and frequenting old Severna Park stores like Listman’s on Earleigh Heights Road.

That community pride is still paramount with Domenech. He continually works with several youth sports programs as well as AACC on sharing his facility.

“Over the last decade, I’ve had the great privilege of working with Julian in various capacities and have admired his professionalism and support,” said AACC Athletic Director **Duane Herr**. “Julian has been a tremendous friend to AACC athletics in times of need and collaboration.”

Domenech is responsible for nearly 50 sports at the Evergreen Road campus. He fills his days with a continual barrage of phone calls, texts, meetings and emails. He is never far from electronic devices during his fast-paced days.

“One of my biggest challenges each day is putting out fires,” Domenech said. “Communication is vital with my coaches and student-athletes, and anytime during the day, something does pop up.”

Severn’s coaches sincerely appreciate Domenech’s thoroughness, accessibility and desire to attend every Severn School home game.

“When Julian hired me back in 2010, I never could have imagined the impact our relationship would have on both my career and Severn’s soccer program,” said Severn School boys soccer head coach **Mike McCarthy**. “Julian’s leadership, vision and commitment to excellence have always inspired me, and his dedication to Severn’s student-athletes is unmatched.”

Domenech’s 12- to 14-hour days are also filled with pride, satisfaction and humility at being able to work at the same school he attended.

“The athletic success that Severn has achieved is a tribute to the good coaches we’ve hired over the years,” he said. “The coaches work hard at bringing in the right students who are a great fit for us both athletically and academically.”

In the last few years, Severn athletics has taken many of its athletic programs to new heights, including football moving up to the Maryland Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) B Conference and the boys basketball team being ranked in the Baltimore area’s top 20 teams.

“I’m excited about the great achievements we made in the last few years, but we’ve also had big improvements in some of our other sports like field hockey and cross country,” Domenech said.

Many Severn School students play multiple sports and attend one another’s games with exuberance.

“It’s always great to see former players come back to campus and get to catch up with their lives,” Domenech said. “That’s who Severn is: a small school that is supportive and caring.”

That support is also felt by members of Domenech’s coaching staff, who know that he is only a phone call or text away for advice or assistance.

“It has been a wonderful experience working with Julian and it’s reassuring to know that he will guide us now and in the future,” said Severn School varsity boys basketball head coach **Michael Glasby**.

Bruins Send 23 To States

» Continued from page 18

the girls 1,600 meters and finishing third in the girls 800. **Annabelle Hall** won the girls 3,200, while **Dana Doubek** won the girls pole vault. **Breanna Brown** finished second in the girls shot put, and **Nkechi Streete** finished third in the girls high jump.

By hitting the minimum qualification standards at regionals, **Lexi Gibb** and **Sedona Clarke** (girls high jump), **Copper Rivas** (boys pole vault) and **Sophie Clements** (girls pole vault) also qualified

for the state meet.

The team also will send entries in the girls 4x400 (**Katelyn Curley, Nya Williams, Natalie Crooks, Ashtyn Coates**) and 4x800 (Williams, Crooks, **Lexi Britton, Sophia Hickey**), as well as the boys 4x800 (**David Gibb, Jonah Collins, Windsor Gwo, Adam Jackson**).

Broadneck finished third in the team standings. The regional qualifying meets continue across all qualifications through February 10.

MPSSAA 2025-2027 Realignment Confirmed

» Continued from page 18

Volleyball

- 4A East II:** Annapolis, Bowie, Broadneck, Crofton, Leonardtown, North Point
- 3A East I:** Arundel, James M. Bennett, Old Mill, Severna Park, South River, Stephen Decatur

Basketball

- 4A East II:** Annapolis, Bowie, Broadneck, Crofton, Leonardtown, North Point
- 3A East I:** Arundel, James M. Bennett, Old Mill, Severna Park, South River, Stephen Decatur

Indoor Track and Field

- 4A East:** Annapolis, Bladensburg, Bowie, Broadneck, Charles H. Flowers, Crofton, Dr. Henry A. Wise, Duval, Glen Burnie, Leonardtown, Meade, North County, North Point, Parkdale, Severn Run, Suitland
- 3A East:** Aberdeen, Arundel, Chesapeake, Chopticon, Edgewood, Great Mills, James M. Bennett, Largo, Northeast, Northern, Old Mill, Oxon Hill, Potomac, Severna Park, South River, St. Charles, Stephen Decatur

Swimming and Diving

- 4A-3A East:** Annapolis, Arundel, Baltimore Polytechnic, Broadneck, Crofton, Digital Harbor, Glen Burnie, Meade, Mergenthaler, North County, Old Mill, Severn Run, Severna Park, South River, Western

Wrestling

- 4A East:** Annapolis, Bladensburg, Bowie, Broadneck, Charles H. Flowers, Dr. Henry A. Wise, Duval, Eleanor Roosevelt, Leonardtown, North Point, Parkdale, Suitland
- 3A East:** Arundel, Chopticon, Great Mills, James M. Bennett, Largo, Oxon Hill, Potomac, Severna Park, South River, St. Charles, Stephen Decatur

Baseball

- 4A East I:** Glen Burnie, Meade, Mergenthaler, North County, Severn Run, Severna Park
- 4A East II:** Annapolis, Bowie, Broadneck, Crofton, Leonardtown, North Point

Lacrosse

- 4A East I:** Annapolis, Broadneck, Glen Burnie, Meade, North County
- 3A East I:** Arundel, Crofton, James M. Bennett, Severna Park, South River

Outdoor Track and Field

- 4A East:** Annapolis, Bowie, Broadneck, Charles H. Flowers, Crofton, Dr. Henry A. Wise, Glen Burnie, Leonardtown, Meade, North County, North Point, Severn Run, Severna Park

Softball

- 4A East II:** Annapolis, Bowie, Broadneck, Crofton, Leonardtown, North Point
- 3A East I:** Arundel, James M. Bennett, Old Mill, Severn Run, Severna Park, South River

Tennis

- 4A East:** Annapolis, Bowie, Broadneck, Charles H. Flowers, Dr. Henry A. Wise, Glen Burnie, Leonardtown, Meade, North County, North Point, Suitland
- 3A East:** Arundel, Chesapeake, Chopticon, Crofton, Great Mills, James M. Bennett, Old Mill, Severn Run, Severna Park, South River, St. Charles, Stephen Decatur



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SCHOOL & YOUTH

Freezin' For A Reason: Local Students Take The Plunge



Photo by Lauren Cowin

Above: A group of Severna Park Middle School plungers ran for the water. **Right:** Ty Suriyachaiwat (left) and Jack Renick headed to shore after charging into the Chesapeake Bay.



St. Martin's-in-the-Field eighth-graders continued a school tradition with the plunge.



Severna Park Middle School had more than 100 students plunge and raised approximately \$21,000.

Sandy Point State Park was packed with local teens ready to run into the near-freezing Chesapeake Bay for the annual Cool Schools Plunge, a subset of the Polar Bear Plunge benefiting Special Olympics Maryland. Participants from Severna Park Middle School, Severna Park High School, Broadneck High School and Magothy River Middle School were all part of the festivities on January 30 — a day dedicated to plungers from Anne Arundel County Public Schools. Those local schools alone raised more than \$90,000 for Special Olympics Maryland, with Magothy River Middle School ranking second overall in the Cool Schools fundraising with \$43,510. St. Martin's-in-the-Field eighth-graders took the plunge a day earlier, a school tradition for over 12 years.

Eagle Scout's Playground Additions Bolster Play Learning

By Judy Tacyn

When Indian Creek School junior Owen Crum considered his options for an Eagle Scout project, he didn't have to look any further than his own troop's backyard. Crum is part of Troop 993, based at Severna Park United Methodist Church (SPUMC). He worked with Catherine Myers, director of the church's nursery school, to design and build an outdoor play kitchen and install a balance beam for the young students.

Over the summer, Crum studied imaginative playground designs and came up with a plan for SPUMC nursery school. The mud kitchen and balance beam were planned as two distinct projects with a foreman assigned by Crum for each. The build took place on August 31 and September

1, 2024, and included between 20–30 Scouts each day, with Crum providing complete oversight of each project.

The church and the nursery school staff were so excited about the playground additions that the two organizations offered to fund the projects. Crum only needed to fundraise for incidentals, round up the necessary tools, and recruit adults with carpentry skills who could share their knowledge with the Scouts assigned to the projects.

"The Severna Park (United Methodist Church) Nursery School has thoroughly enjoyed the balance beam and mud kitchen crafted by Owen for his Eagle Scout project," Myers said. "Both additions have become a hit with the children, providing fun and imaginative play. The balance beam encourages

» Continued on page 32

Eagle Scout Project Protects Neighbors In Need

By Judy Tacyn

Severna Park High School senior Sean Gaffney vividly recalled a time when he visited the former Glen Burnie-based Emmaus Center (an organization committed to breaking

the cycle of homelessness) in the winter when he met a homeless woman who slept in a tent. With nowhere else to go, she stayed in her tent during a harsh snowstorm. As the snow piled up, she constantly needed to brush off the top of her tent, which ultimately succumbed to the weight of the snow and caved in on her.

Gaffney never forgot that story, nor the woman in the tent. After a decade in

scouting and working toward the rank of Eagle Scout, Gaffney knew he wanted his Eagle project to address the needs of his community's most vulnerable people.

"My Uncle Ed (Jansen) and Aunt Trish (Gaffney) are weekly volunteers

at Arundel House of Hope. They inspire me," said Gaffney, who added he is surprised to know how many homeless people there are in Anne Arundel County. "I knew I wanted my Eagle Scout project to help homeless people in need of a place to sleep."

After holding a tent drive looking for donations of new or gently used tents, and starting a GoFundMe page,

» Continued on page 32

"I knew I wanted my Eagle Scout project to help homeless people in need of a place to sleep."

— SEAN GAFFNEY



Severna Park Students Serve Their Community

This year's group of Severna Park High School Leadership Institute III students capped a three-year commitment by partnering with charitable organizations for service projects. Led by teachers Elizabeth Colon and Heather Barnstead, students learned about needs in their communities while becoming more effective leaders with the following projects.

Encouraging Holiday Smiles

**Becca Jimeno,
Sammy Madarang**

Jimeno and Madarang led a group of underclassmen in their partnership with Orphan Grain Train to spread awareness of the importance of hygiene for people all around the world. Orphan Grain Train is a Christian nonprofit that ships donated food, clothing and other supplies to 71 countries. The organization started in 1992 and has grown over the last 30 years; however, the roots of Christianity are still the core of the organization.

Jimeno and Madarang raised funds for hygiene kits. With the help of their family and friends, they raised over \$450, enough to purchase materials for 32 kits, and even had \$215 left to donate to Orphan Grain Train.

Fighting Food Insecurity

**Angelica Coleman,
Caden Lazzor**

Coleman and Lazzor partnered with the local nonprofit organization Services From The Heart (SFTH), which assists students in Anne Arundel County who are facing food insecurity. These meals mainly go to Title I schools: Hilltop Elementary, Belle Grove Elementary, Rippling Woods Elementary and Eastport Elementary.

SFTH was founded in 2013 by Donna Wilson-Johnston, a concerned Severna Park mother. When SFTH began, the group fed 19 children; it has since expanded to help 122 children.

This organization is heavily reliant on volunteers, who spend Friday mornings packing items for students to eat over the weekend, which Coleman and Lazzor did. They named their project Supplies4Success to highlight how important food is to fuel a successful student. With the help of a small group of underclassmen, they dedicated their time to biweekly meal-packing, setting up a food drive and collecting monetary donations.

Changing Cancer Patients' Lives

Covenant Akinremi, Emma Turk

Personal experiences inspired Covenant Akinremi and Emma Turk to help cancer patients through Kits4Kindness. Akinremi was hospitalized for a few days due to sleep apnea and needed surgery at ages 3 and 11. Turk was diagnosed with scoliosis at age 7 and had to wear a full-time brace until 14 while attending numerous appointments. Both girls understood the immense stress that medical treatment can bring.

Finding Sonia Su and her nonprofit organization Kits to Heart was the perfect way for them to get involved. Su's organization collects items that improve the mental health of cancer patients.

On October 25, Akinremi and Turk partnered with the Wishing Crane Project to make origami, which was in low stock at Kits to Heart. About 15 students folded colored paper to make fun creations. Akinremi and Turk collected 25 origami during a 30-minute period. On December 6, Kits4Kindness partnered with Science National Honors Society to make "care bear" towels. Akinremi informed the students about how cancer affects the world while Turk handed out washcloths, rubber bands, scissors, ribbon and tutorial sheets. Fifty care bear towels were constructed in 30 minutes.

Akinremi and Turk donated \$210 to Kits to Heart. Kits4Kindness created 50 handwritten letters with help from members. Both girls enjoyed advocating for cancer patients' mental health from September through January.

Battling Childhood Homelessness

Natalie Frank, Josie Garrett

Seniors Natalie Frank and Josie Garrett hosted a blanket-making event in collaboration with their school's Key Club, creating 10 fleece-tie blankets. The blankets were donated to Binky Patrol, an organization dedicated to supporting foster and homeless youth. With the club's help, Frank and Garrett advanced Binky Patrol's mission and provided much-needed support to marginalized children.

Along with creating blankets, their project aimed to raise \$450 to donate and to collect \$75 worth of fabric and yarn for Binky Patrol. With the support of their community, they successfully achieved these goals.

Supporting Orphan Grain Train

Alethia Brown, Jessica Bui

For their capstone project, Brown and Bui created Railroad to Remedy in partnership with Orphan Grain Train (OGT), a Christian nonprofit that gathers needed items to send to people in the U.S. and around the world.

Brown and Bui had three goals: to volunteer for eight hours, to fundraise \$280 and to collect \$200 worth of medical equipment

donations. By the end of the semester, they exceeded all three goals by volunteering for 15 hours, fundraising \$360 and collecting \$315 worth of donations.

Brown and Bui chose to work with OGT in their junior year because of Bui's interest in the medical field and Brown's Christian beliefs. While volunteering, the girls encountered people coming to the warehouse while seeking mobility aids. This sparked their interest in launching a medical equipment donation drive to help the nonprofit's mission to serve others.

Empowering Iraqi Children

**Isabella Opladen,
Maya Vernugopal**

Severna Park community members joined seniors Isabella Opladen and Maya Vernugopal in Washington, D.C.'s Rock Creek Park on September 28 for the annual fundraising 5K hosted by the Iraqi Children Foundation (ICF). Following the 5K, which raised over \$23,000, Opladen and Vernugopal raised money and brought a guest speaker to their high school.

On January 15, John Opladen attended a virtual meeting to speak to students who were interested in learning more about the ICF. As a veteran and the veteran outreach director for the organization, he used his experiences in Iraq and with the ICF to educate Severna Park students.

The girls chose to work with the Iraqi Children Foundation because of its support for the education of young people, especially girls. Close to 800,000 children are orphaned in Iraq and require support to grow and thrive; the ICF dutifully provides this support. With their project, the Iraqi Children's Initiative, \$270 was raised for the Iraqi Children Foundation.

Gearing Up Greatness

**Theo Skopp,
Keaghan Gorski**

Skopp and Gorski completed a project to support Leveling the Playing Field, a nonprofit dedicated to giving underprivileged children the opportunity to enjoy youth sports. Through their efforts, the students raised \$290, along with over \$3,000 worth of sports equipment to benefit local youth programs. The project focused on fostering community engagement and promoting equitable access to sports. Over the past year, the students organized this initiative, including voicing their mission in their neighborhoods and reaching out to the community for donations of gently used sports equipment.

Connecting Communities

Ty Miller, Reily Miller

The Miller team held "Christmas In Marydel," bringing toys, clothes, food and other necessities and presents to Immaculate Conception Church in Marydel, located in Caroline County, Maryland.

After volunteering regularly at Happy Helpers For The Homeless during the summer, the rising seniors helped over 330 people living in a condemned trailer park by fundraising.

Their leadership project was a success, bringing the community 70 food baskets full of nutritious meals and snacks, over 50 bags, over 300 blankets, and a plethora of LEGOs, board games, electronics, and other toys, making sure everyone had a gift to bring home for Christmas. Since the community is heavily Spanish-speaking, Happy Helpers brought a multilingual Santa to give Christmas well-wishes and take pictures.

To accomplish their goals, the boys used online and in-person fundraising. All donations and supplies for the project were brought to Marydel, along with over 20 Happy Helpers volunteers who set up, organized, and distributed all food and clothing items.

Students Against Food Insecurity

Gillian Bean, Avery Serpa

Bean and Serpa led a group of students to volunteer at the Anne Arundel County Food Bank. Together, they organized food donations, packed boxes of cans and other necessities, and sorted boxes into stacks. Their work made it easier to deliver needed goods to county residents who are struggling. The girls said they created their community service project, Food for Thought, because food insecurity is not only a global problem, but it also heavily affects people on a smaller scale.

In addition to volunteering, the girls raised almost \$600, close to doubling their goal, and collected over \$150 worth of cans and necessities.

Taking On Education Inequality

Lily Diedrich, Charley Coward

This fall, a group of students led by Lily Diedrich and Charley Coward partnered with the Cisco Center to provide a positive learning environment for children with special needs. The girls hosted a cleanup event, raised money, and collected adaptive equipment from donors.

Located in Severna Park, the Cisco Center is a school for individuals with cognitive disabilities, speech or language impairments, and autism. The girls' project was sparked by Diedrich's prior involvement with the center. Coward and Diedrich's clean-up event transformed the Cisco Center's environment, and their fundraising efforts will help the center with repairs and upgrading equipment.

Both girls said their project refined their skills: team management, adaptability and communication.

Helping Ronald McDonald House

Jake Sobocinski, Sam Blake

This duo worked to raise money, collect donations and create kindness cards for families with sick children so they will have a safe home near medical care.

Ronald McDonald House Charities was founded in 1974 to support families of children in Philadelphia hospitals. The charities have expanded to many cities including Baltimore.

Sobocinski and Blake planned to raise \$300, collect \$250 worth of donations and write 50 uplifting cards. These goals were met with the help of two sophomore leadership students and donations from the community.



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Educator Of The Month

Josh Thompson Magothy River Middle School



By Judy Tacyn

Josh Thompson, a sixth-grade math teacher at Magothy River Middle School (MRMS), athlete and sports enthusiast, realizes he's in a unique position to help kids positively transition into middle school by fostering a healthy, inclusionary classroom culture. He credits former teachers and coaches with helping him become the educator and person he is today.

In just his 10th year of teaching, and his seventh year in Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS), Thompson was nominated by MRMS Principal Lindsay Abruzzo to represent the school for the annual AACPS Teacher of the Year award.

"Josh is a teacher that goes above and beyond for his students day in and day out," Abruzzo said. "He is always willing to help, and he gives 110 percent. Josh is an asset to any school he is in, but I am certainly glad he is an MRMS Marlin."

Thompson said, "The nomination is humbling, especially considering there are lots of great staff here that have been teaching for a long time."

Sixth grade is when Thompson feels many children hit their first challenges. "For many students entering middle school, they are not accustomed to not grasping a concept right away," he said. "They haven't yet learned perseverance, so when they face adversity, they can feel failure for the first time in school."

Thompson is a 2009 graduate of Severna Park High School. He played football for the Falcons, as well as several recreational sports through the Greater Severna Park Athletic Association, also known as

"My first priority is to be supportive, remind them they have everything they need to be successful, but I am there to support."

— JOSH THOMPSON

Green Hornets. He strives to create a classroom atmosphere where kids feel safe and included, as part of a team, so they can be successful.

"When kids tell me they don't like math, but they like my class, I know that student will be successful," Thompson said. "Half the middle-school battle is creating an environment where the kids want to come."

He admitted there are parts of his job that he doesn't like, but he does them because he loves to teach. In the same way, he wants students to understand that it's OK not to get something right away.

"My first priority is to be supportive, remind them they have everything they need to be successful, but I am there to support," Thompson said, insisting, "Yes! Math can be fun."

Thompson was a good math student thanks to teachers like Kendra Schauppner from Severna Park Middle School, Mary Brierley from Severna Park High School, and longtime Severna Park sports coach Steve Anstett.

When he graduated from the University of Maryland, College Park, Thompson planned to enter law school. After a stint with AmeriCorps, he discovered his true passion for working with young people, which changed his career trajectory. He started teaching in Baltimore City while attending graduate school, after which he returned to Anne Arundel County. He chose math because it was the subject with the greatest educator need.

Thompson's latest challenge will be in his new role as the MRMS athletic manager for the county's new middle school athletics program, which will give students the opportunity to play a sport for their middle school and compete against other middle school teams in the county.

Thompson was one of 75 public educators nominated for AACPS Teacher of the Year. Although he was not named one of the semifinalists, he and the other nominees will be honored by the Education Foundation of AACPS on April 25 at the 39th annual Excellence in Education Awards, where the 2025 AACPS Teacher of the Year will be announced.



C A F E

M E Z Z A N O T T E

The Educator of the Month is proudly sponsored by Cafe Mezzanotte.

Severna Park Students Excel At SkillsUSA Regionals



Students from Anne Arundel County and Baltimore City participated in the SkillsUSA Region 3 competition on February 1 at the Center of Applied Technology—North in Severn. SkillsUSA showcases the talent of trade and technical students.

Competitions were held in various fields including automotive service technology, barbering, cosmetology, culinary arts, digital cinema production, first aid, and nurse assisting, among others. Severna Park secured three awards. For technical computer applications, Ryan Fleishman (left) took first, followed by Jackson Morton (middle). Fellow Falcon Solomon Nkongolo earned third place in the pin design category. They have advanced to the state competition, which will be held at the Carroll County Career and Technology Center from March 28-29.



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Playground Additions Bolster Learning

» Continued from page 27

physical activity and coordination, while the mud kitchen sparks creativity as the kids get their hands dirty, making 'meals' and working together.

"Owen's thoughtful project has truly enhanced our outdoor play area," Myers continued, "bringing joy and fostering teamwork among the children."

A Scout since first grade, Crum said he's learned many life lessons and business skills that he will take with him for a lifetime.

"The major skill Scouting offers is the opportunity to develop leadership qualities," Crum said. "Scouting doesn't tell you how to act but describes what you, as a Scout, are and what you are to live up to."

Crum's father, Nathan, and brother, Ryan Alcorn, are also Eagle Scouts. Crum added that his father

played a large role in getting him interested in Scouting, and he loved everything he's learned, like how to work as part of a team and how to lead a team, first aid, working with tools, cooking, perseverance, outdoor skills, and so much more.

Crum received his Eagle rank at his Court of Honor ceremony in December. "I'm really proud of my Eagle rank," he said. "I think it shows how much hard work I've put in. I might be finished with this part of my Scouting journey, but I am currently active in the local chapter and on a national level. I look forward to continuing with Scouting and mentoring new Scouts."

Crum is a four-sport athlete in high school, expecting to play water polo in college and study business and linguistics. He is the son of Lauren and Nathan Crum of Millersville.



(L-R) Riordan Kelley, John Blank, Mitchel Klee, Ben Klee, Owen Lynch, Brandt Clark and Owen Crum prepared for the balance beam installation.

Eagle Scout Project Protects Neighbors In Need

Sean Gaffney and several helpers set up donated tents, inspected them for damage, made necessary repairs, and cleaned and waterproofed larger tents to be donated to Arundel House of Hope this winter.



» Continued from page 27

Gaffney held his Scout project on December 8, where he and several others set up donated tents, inspected them for damage, made any necessary repairs, and cleaned and waterproofed larger tents to be donated to Arundel House of Hope.

"Sean spent time over the past few months supporting our unhoused neighbors with a project designed to create temporary shelter and help these disadvantaged members of our community find some stability," said Jason Port, Gaffney's Eagle Scout coach at Troop 450, based out of St. John the Evangelist Church in Severna Park. "Maryland has about 5,000 unhoused citizens on any given night, and this provided temporary shelter to about 25 of them."

Through his Eagle Scout project, Gaffney donated tents that would enable disadvantaged community members to house their belongings and provide them shelter from the inclement weather.

Dawn Baskin, a community engagement associate

with Arundel House of Hope, worked with Gaffney throughout the entirety of the project. Baskin was struck by Gaffney's heartfelt proposal and compelling story of the homeless woman and her tent.

"These tents are invaluable," Baskin said. "Our goal is to find shelter for everyone, so it's great to know we have these tents available should someone need them."

A troop leader for Troop 993 in Severna Park, Baskin added that being on the receiving end of an Eagle Scout project after she has assisted her Scouts through the process was a rewarding, full-circle feeling, and House of Hope looks forward to working with more Scouts in the future.

"I gained valuable leadership skills through this project," Gaffney said, noting that an Eagle project requires several months of planning and documentation before the actual project can begin. "But I also got to volunteer with my friends through Scouting, and I got to make new friends."

Gaffney is on track to earn his Eagle rank this spring. He's the son of April and Mike Gaffney of Severna Park.



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ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY CAMP GUIDE




Be sure to check out the
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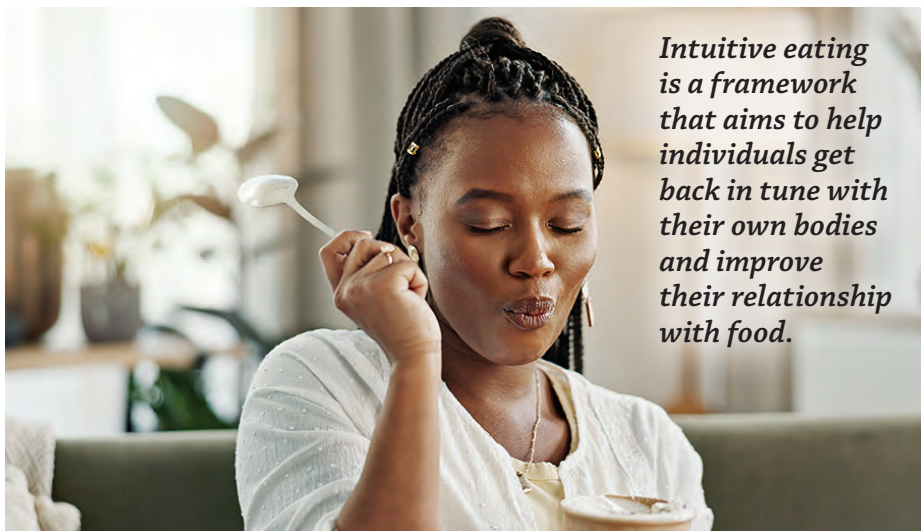
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A Fresh Dieting Perspective For The New Year



Intuitive eating is a framework that aims to help individuals get back in tune with their own bodies and improve their relationship with food.

Andrea Cognetti

Severna Park
Community Center



healthy sleep, or a renewed commitment to healthier eating habits.

When it comes to nutrition, there is no shortage of advice and information waiting for us, handed out freely by both those who are qualified to offer it and those who are not. Eat this, not that, not

The new year is chock full of optimism and hope for many people. This shows up in any number of ways — an influx of newly committed fitness enthusiasts, a new gadget to unlock the secret of

too much, and not after 8:00pm or before noon, or while standing on your head, and be sure to wash your food down with a glass of water, but only room temperature water that's been through a filter, and make sure that filter is organic.

The messages are at best confusing, and at worst, actively harmful. One of the more harmful parts of those messages is specifically diet culture or the belief and expectation that values thinness above all else. One approach that aims to combat diet culture and place individuals on a path to food freedom and joy is intuitive eating.

Intuitive eating is a framework that aims to help individuals get back in tune with their own bodies and improve their relationship with food. Created by Evelyn Tribole and Elyse Resch

» Continued on page 36

Back To Basics — Avian Care

Monica Capella

Associate
Veterinarian
Calvert Veterinary
Center



at least once a year. This visit may include a physical exam, a discussion about husbandry (nutrition, enclosure and environmental enrichment), and specific recommendations for your bird. Unfortunately, birds are considered a “high stress” species, so although we do our best to do fear-free handling, we always tell owners that if a bird is showing signs of stress, sometimes this means that a diagnostic may need to be performed at a later time or that we need to try medications to reduce stress for visits.

It is common that a bird may be a little

You just welcomed a bird buddy to your family. In this exciting time, many owners need guidance to sort facts from fiction for avian care.

Do birds need physical exams? How often?

We recommend examining birds

sleepy or tired for a few hours after a visit, but please let your vet know of any concerns. Practicing a mock exam with positive reinforcement as part of home training your bird is a great way to help in advance. Here are some awesome links about training birds at home:

- www.barbarasffat.com.
- www.lafeber.com/pet-birds/teaching-your-bird

What is foraging and why is it important for birds?

Birds are natural foragers in their environment, so it can be a big transition to go from that to a cage setup. As much as we can, we still want to incorporate foraging into daily routines for birds, ensuring that the environment is safe for them. By providing all food directly in a cage for birds, we can predispose them to becoming overweight or frustrated, or we can promote destructive behaviors. Check out these resources on introducing foraging behavior:

- www.lafeber.com/pet-birds/bird-foraging-and-play
- zupreem.com/avian/bird-foraging-and-enrichment

» Continued on page 36

Managing Chronic Back And Neck Pain

Dr. Christopher Taleghani

Luminis Health



several approaches can help. But when chronic back and neck pain interferes with your daily life and keeps you from the activities you love, it may be time to talk to your doctor about other options, including surgery.

UNDERSTANDING CAUSES OF CHRONIC BACK AND NECK PAIN

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 40% of U.S. adults report having back pain. Neck pain impacts fewer people but is still common, affecting 15% of the population. Pain can range from dull and constant to sharp and sudden, and typically, lifestyle changes and traditional therapies help.

However, chronic back and neck pain — which lasts for months or even years — is usually caused by a specific event like an accident or fall, or changes in the spine due to age or a medical condition, and often requires surgery.

The right treatment for you depends on the cause of your pain. Your doctor will conduct a full examination, including diagnostic tests like X-rays and scans, to better pinpoint the source of your pain so they can best treat it.

LIFESTYLE CHANGES

In some cases, you can improve back and neck pain with lifestyle changes, such as:

- Eating an anti-inflammatory diet that includes calcium and vitamin D for strong bones
- Maintaining a healthy body weight to reduce stress and strain on your neck and spine
- Practicing good posture when sitting or standing
- Sleeping on your side with a pillow between your knees
- Staying active with regular exercise to increase strength and balance
- Wearing comfortable shoes with low heels

If pain limits your daily activities, a physical or occupational therapist can help you learn how to move safely. And while bed rest may seem like a good idea when you don't feel your best, it's important to note that it can make the pain worse.

SURGERY

If you've tried everything else and are still in pain, surgery may provide relief. Surgical approaches to relieve neck and back pain range from minimally invasive to more complex open surgeries, and include:

- Fusing portions of the spine
- Removing bone spurs of the vertebrae of your spine
- Removing part of a herniated disc to relieve pressure
- Replacing damaged discs
- Stimulating the spinal cord
- Widening areas of the spine to relieve pressure on nerves

Before surgery, a Luminis Health neurosurgeons will give you a thorough evaluation to make sure you're a good candidate. He or she will review your medical history, the cause of your pain, your symptoms and your level of support after surgery. Your doctor will review the risks and benefits of the procedure with you so you can make an informed choice.

Dr. Christopher Taleghani of Luminis Health is internationally recognized as a leading minimally invasive surgeon specializing in complex spine and brain conditions.

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Hospice Of The Chesapeake Expands Inpatient Care

Hospice of the Chesapeake has added high-flow oxygen therapy to its inpatient care centers, enhancing the quality of care for patients with complex respiratory needs.

High-flow oxygen therapy is designed to deliver precise oxygen levels, improving breathing efficiency and overall comfort for patients. This therapy is especially beneficial for individuals experiencing respiratory distress, allowing for better management of symptoms and an improved quality of life.

"Adding high-flow oxygen therapy to our inpatient care centers represents our commitment to providing comprehensive, patient-centered care," said Dr. Sonja Richmond, vice president of medical

affairs and hospice medical director. "This advancement enables us to better meet the needs of our patients and their families during a challenging time."

The integration of high-flow oxygen therapy will be available immediately at Hospice of the Chesapeake's Rebecca Fortney Inpatient Care Center in Pasadena and Charles Inpatient Care Center in Waldorf. This will be a suitable option for hospital patients discharged when patients still need noninvasive oxygen support while maintaining comfort and ease of use compared to other methods. This new service is part of the organization's ongoing efforts to incorporate the latest medical advancements and best practices in hospice care.

Back To Basics — Avian Care

» Continued from page 35
What should I feed my bird?

For nutrition, unfortunately we see "bird seed" so commonly available for purchase for birds, and avian nutrition has come a long way in evaluating the impacts of diet on the avian body. A heavy seed diet is too high in fat and does not have the proper number of vitamins and minerals your bird needs to form a healthy immune system. Additionally, this diet predisposes birds to issues such as heart disease, liver disease and hormone imbalances.

I recommend feeding a high-quality pelleted diet from Harrison's, Zupreem, Roudybush or Lafeber. Zupreem also has a great resource on its website on three tried and true methods for switching your bird to a healthy, balanced diet. It can take weeks to months to fully transition their diet, but it is worth it for the long-term health and longevity of your pet. Check it out at zupreem.com/avian-conversion.

Birds can have human food, but this should not be the majority of their diet. There are some toxic foods for birds; see the links below for more information.

- www.lafeber.com/pet-birds/foods-toxic-pet-birds
- zupreem.com/toxic-foods-your-bird-should-never-eat
- www.lafeber.com/pet-birds/bird-food-guide

I recommend introducing one new human food at a time and monitoring your pet's situation for any worsening soft stools. Additionally, too much fruit in the diet can lead to problems with soft stools due to the higher acidity and sugar content. Most of the diet should be

pellet-based combined with some vegetables and occasional fruit and protein components.

What type of enclosure setup should I have for my bird?

This can really depend on what your home setup looks like and what is doable for your home. Some key points include:

- Avoiding sandpaper perches and ensuring you have perches of varying sizes.
- For housing/bird cages, we recommend you do not keep the cage in direct sunlight or by a window as this is prone to changes in temperatures and intimidating from outside predators.
- Eliminating nonstick products containing (polytetrafluoroethylene) PTFE from the home is the only guaranteed way to prevent poisoning.
- Ensure that when using a cage, you have a larger home cage setup and a smaller, safe travel cage.
- A cage should have adequate space for water dishes, food dishes, perches, toys, etc.

What are signs of illness I may see in my bird at home?

We can see changes in appetite, energy level, drinking, breathing effort, weight, etc. I recommend all my bird owners practice weighing with their bird once a week so we can track weights over time as weight gain and loss can be an early sign of illness in birds. We recommend using a gram scale for weighing birds. Zero or tare the scale so that it reads zero grams prior to weighing your pet.

This branded content is brought to you by an expert in his or her respective field.

A Fresh Dieting Perspective

» Continued from page 35

In 1995, it is an evidence-based program to help individuals become aware of the way that diet culture is negatively impacting their life and to relearn how to be more in tune with their bodies.

By challenging food rules and removing restrictions, you can journey to a freer, more mindful, more joyful and more satisfying relationship with food. Every journey begins with a single step, and we welcome the opportunity to help you take that step forward.

Join the Severna Park Community Center for hour-long sessions that will cover more about what intuitive eating is and isn't, commonly held myths and misconceptions, and ways you can begin incorporating these principles into your life. For more information, contact Megan Stidham at mstidham@spcommunitycenter.org.

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Disney Author Visits Library To Share Newest Tale

By Judy Tacyn

New York Times bestselling author Farrah Rochon delighted a gathering of Disney and mythology enthusiasts at the Severna Park Library on February 4, sharing her latest title, “Bemused,” the untold origin story of the five muses from Disney’s “Hercules” movie.

Rochon expects readers of all ages to love the book, which adds new elements to a Disney classic and features fresh twists on mythology. The event was sponsored by Park Books.

Growing up in New Orleans, Rochon said she began making up stories as soon as she could talk. “I was a very good liar!” she admitted when recalling the creative stories she used on her family. “I always wanted to make a situation more interesting, and I just never stopped!”

“Bemused” is the latest novel in an 18-year career that has taken her from the romance genre to young adult. Released January 7 by Disney Press, “Bemused” is a combination of Rochon’s favorite things — Disney and mythology.

“Disney is my personality,” said the author, a self-proclaimed lover of all things Disney and theater. “Never did I imagine writing for Disney Press, which is different than other publishers. Disney Press comes to authors; authors don’t go to Disney. It’s an absolute honor and joy to be able to write for ‘Mickey Mouse!’”

Library visitors were captivated by Rochon’s behind-the-scenes details of writing for Disney, how “Bemused” was developed, and how the muses came to life. In “Hercules,” the story is narrated by the muses. For “Bemused,” the muses take center stage in a mythical adventure.

The five muses are sisters — Calliope, Clio, Melpomene, Terpsichore and Thalia — who learn a shocking secret about themselves after their mother, Mnemosyne, is kidnapped. Working together to find her, they learn more about their family, and most importantly, themselves. Their adventure takes many twists and turns, including running into the powerful god of the underworld, Hades.

Rochon said one difference between writing romance and young adult novels for Disney is character development. She creates the characters in a romance novel; no one knows them better than she does. “Bemused” is set before Hercules is even born. The book is about sisters, all with strong personalities, who learn who they are and about the unbreakable bond of sisterhood.

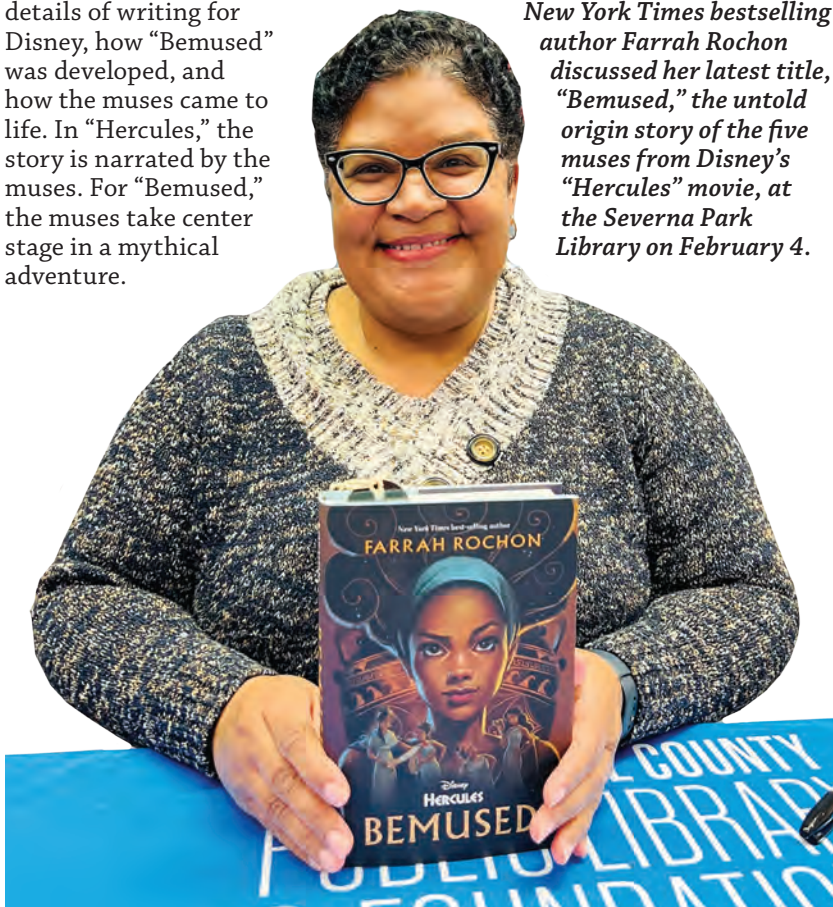
“Everyone knows the Disney characters, so I am not making them up,” Rochon said. “That can be intimidating because people already love these characters; they have expectations on how these characters should behave and how their stories should play out.”

Rochon insisted that she isn’t limited in what she adds to a character’s storyline, though Disney must approve the story. “I will always push creativity as far as I can before someone tells me no,” she said.

“Bemused” is available at Park Books in Severna Park, at all major booksellers, and online.

Photo by Judy Tacyn

New York Times bestselling author Farrah Rochon discussed her latest title, “Bemused,” the untold origin story of the five muses from Disney’s “Hercules” movie, at the Severna Park Library on February 4.



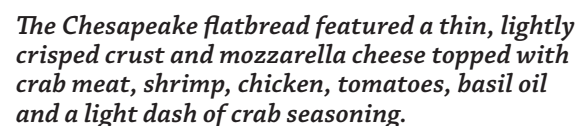
Dining Out Around The Park

Cypress Restaurant Delivers Fresh Takes, Familiar Flavors

Cypress’ signature burger features a thick beef patty layered with bacon, fried green tomato, white cheddar and roasted garlic aioli.



The Chesapeake flatbread featured a thin, lightly crisped crust and mozzarella cheese topped with crab meat, shrimp, chicken, tomatoes, basil oil and a light dash of crab seasoning.



Photos by Meredith Winter



The flourless chocolate torte was a dessert sure to satisfy most any chocolate craving.

By Meredith Winter

Situated on the Park Plaza corner previously occupied by Sullivan’s Cove, Severna Park’s newest eatery boasts a menu that offers something for everyone. After sampling several items from among Cypress Restaurant’s robust selection of apps, handhelds, salads and entrees, I’m inclined to think that’s an accurate claim.

My husband, Scott, and I decided to try Cypress for an early dinner on a Saturday evening, having read that reservations fill quickly on weekends. When we arrived at 4:30pm, the place was more than half full and we were seated at a high-top by the bar; by 5:30pm, the staff was only able to seat patrons who had reservations. Although the restaurant had been open less than two months, people had already discovered that it has much to offer.

Interior renovations have transformed the space — which includes a large bar, booth seating, tables and high-tops — with thoughtful design elements ranging from contemporary lighting to comfortable seating. The atmosphere felt both upscale yet casual, fitting for a work lunch, date night or birthday celebration.

While we appreciated the ambiance, we had come for the food, having perused the menu online. The appetizer offerings at Cypress range from jumbo wings to crispy Brussels sprouts to calamari — all things we enjoy — but we opted to kick off our dining experience with one of the trio of flatbreads. The Chesapeake flatbread (\$18) was a light but satisfying starter. Thin crust, crisped at the edges, was covered in cheese and topped with crab meat, shrimp, chicken, tomatoes, basil oil and a light dash of crab seasoning.

A lifelong Marylander, Scott is more of a seafood enthusiast than I am, but we agreed the flatbread was a great choice, with just the right blend of land and sea and unusually tasty mozzarella.

Choosing our main courses proved to be a challenge, as there are many enticing options for appetites large and small. The “shobb” offers a fresh take on a healthy classic: in place of the traditional chicken on a cobb, this salad is topped with scallops, shrimp and lump crab. Served with fries, the handhelds ranged from a crab cake sandwich to mahi mahi tacos to a short rib sandwich, which was on my short list. The entrees list offered several seafood dishes, including jumbo stuffed shrimp and a rotating chef’s catch; braised short rib and a grilled pork chop for the carnivores among us; and a vegan option in the grilled portobello mushroom. All gluten-free and vegan options were clearly labeled.

Continuing our ongoing quest for the best shrimp and grits north of the coastal Carolinas — no local renditions have yet rivaled our favorite in Charleston — Scott opted to see how the dish stacked up at Cypress. Andouille sausage, tomatoes and white wine creole sauce were layered atop a bed of cheddar grits and five large shrimp. Even though the tails were left on the shrimp, Scott declared Cypress’ shrimp and grits (\$26) to be his new local favorite.

Drawn to burgers with creative toppings, I opted for the Cypress signature burger (\$18). Cooked perfectly to order, the first bite transported me immediately to a summer family cookout — the proper kind, with hand rolled

» Continued on page 40

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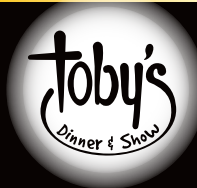
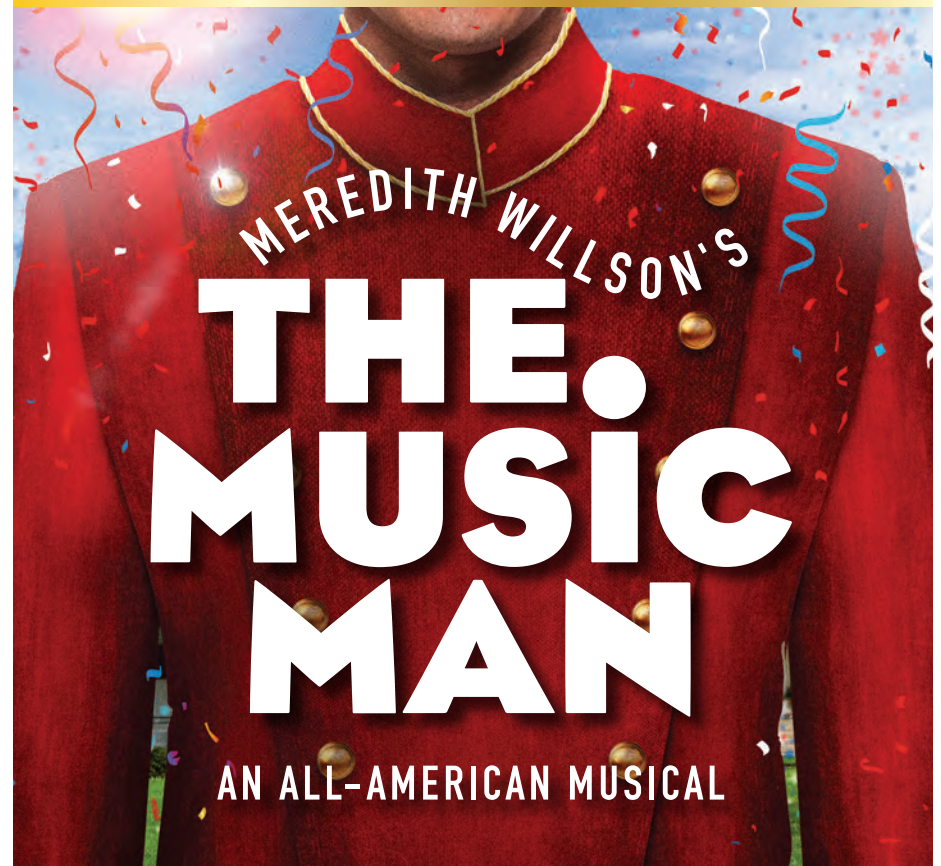
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CTA Dives Down The Rabbit Hole In “Alice In Wonderland”



Photo courtesy of Wendy Hickok Photography

(L-R) The show features Emily Eugene as the Mad Hatter, Emily Steven as Dormouse, Elena Hill as the White Rabbit and Zoe Sommers as Alice.

Children's Theatre of Annapolis (CTA) kicked off its production of “Alice in Wonderland” on February 7, and the magic will continue through February 23.

As the curtain rises, Alice slides into view at the end of her long fall down the rabbit hole. It is a more delightful place for the audience than for Alice, who is trying desperately to get back home. She tries to get help from the Mad Hatter, the White Rabbit and from the nice Cheshire Cat.

“Alice in Wonderland was a fantastical realm that offered a delightful escape, made

all the more enchanting by the wonderful cast that brought it to life,” said Emily Karol, the director of “Alice in Wonderland.”

Showtimes are Fridays at 7:00pm, Saturdays at 11:00am and 4:00pm, and Sundays at 2:00pm. An American Sign Language performance is scheduled for February 15 at 4:00pm and a relaxed performance will be held February 15 at 11:00am.

Children's Theatre of Annapolis is located at 1661 Bay Head Road in Annapolis.

For more information, visit www.childrenstheatreofannapolis.org.

Cypress Delivers Fresh Takes, Familiar Flavors

» Continued from page 38

fresh beef patties. But this was better, as the burgers of my childhood were not topped with thick-cut bacon, fried green tomato, white cheddar or roasted garlic aioli, nor were they served on onion poppy-seed buns.

Half of the burger was plenty for me; I had to save room for dessert. Presented with seven options, we landed on the salted caramel vanilla crunch cake (\$8) and the flourless chocolate torte (\$8), which was gluten free. Both were great choices: the cake was layered with flavor, moist and sweet — but not too sweet — and the torte was rich and dense.

Throughout our dining experience, our server was friendly and attentive, though it was clear, especially toward the end of our meal, that the staff was very busy and perhaps spread a little thin. Arriving early seemed to have been the right call, as even the bar was full before 5:30pm.

We left Cypress full and eager to return to sample more from its menu — and split another slice of the chocolate torte.

Cypress Restaurant is located at 522 Ritchie Highway, Suite L, in Severna Park. Explore the menu at www.eatatcypress.com.



Andouille sausage, tomatoes and white wine creole sauce tie together the shrimp and grits at Cypress, which features five large shrimp served with creamy cheddar grits.

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SPHS Gears Up For 36th “Rock ‘N’ Roll Revival”

For its 36th “Rock ‘N’ Roll Revival,” Severna Park High School will entertain audiences with a “Heart-break Hotel!” show on two weekends, March 13-16 and 20-23. Songs will cover a variety of genres and eras. Learn more at www.sphsdrama.com.



Choir Announces Severna Park, Annapolis Sessions



The Freedom Choir will launch a new spring session in Severna Park and Annapolis beginning the first week of March. The eight-week session will culminate in a performance on April 27, celebrating the 15th anniversary of the choir. The choir’s concerts have raised thousands of dollars for local, regional and national nonprofits. The goal of the community choir is to “liberate your voice.” Led by Annie-award-winning singer and musician Elizabeth Melvin, the choir welcomes singers of all levels to experience the joy of singing in a friendly, supportive group. No audition or prior experience are required. The repertoire of songs is eclectic and uplifting, drawing from a wealth of traditional and contemporary sources. All songs, including easy chants, rounds, layer and harmony

songs, are taught by rote with no score. Singers can practice with lyrics and recordings provided on the choir website. The session begins March 5, from 11:00am-12:15pm at St. Luke’s Church, located at 1101 Bay Ridge Avenue in Annapolis, and March 9, from 7:30pm-8:45pm at Woods Memorial Church, located at 611 Baltimore Annapolis Boulevard in Severna Park. With registration, choose one of these two locations and days, but singers are welcome to attend either one or both each week. The cost is \$150 for the session, with registration online at www.thefreedomchoir.com. Want to try out the choir? Drop-ins are welcome during the first week for \$20. To reserve a drop-in space, email contact@thefreedomchoir.com and put “Drop-In” in the subject line.



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Social Security Fairness Act: What It Means For You

Jason LaBarge
Financial Advisor
and President
LaBarge Financial



When President Joe Biden signed the Social Security Fairness Act on January 5, he finalized a movement that was four decades in the making. Millions of public employees and retirees, including nearly 55,000 Marylanders, will see their Social Security benefits increase this year. In short, for Baltimore and the rest of the country, this is huge.

In 1977, the Government Pension Offset (GPO) was signed into law, followed in 1983 by the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP). These two laws acted together to reduce benefits for government employees who had worked in jobs with pensions not covered by Social Security.

Federal employees — as well as local and state workers such as police officers, teachers and firefighters — are most commonly where these pensions are found. If a worker spent the first part of their career at one of these jobs, then changed to a position covered by Social Security for the remaining 20 years of their career, they could suffer a benefits reduction despite having paid into the system for two decades.

Depending on their income from the non-covered pensions, WEP could reduce retirees' Social Security benefits by as

much as half, while GPO could reduce benefits by two-thirds of a spouse's pension checks.

With the passage of the Fairness Act, retirees will now receive their full Social Security benefits and pensions. As a bonus, retirees will also receive compensation for the amount they were underpaid in 2024 due to WEP and GPO. It really can't be overstated: for millions of retirees nationwide, this is huge.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates the average public-sector retiree will see an extra \$360 in benefits for 2025, while the average spouse and surviving spouse will see payments increase by \$700 and \$1,190, respectively. The average Maryland retiree has a monthly income of just under \$3,000, meaning the higher benefit payments will improve their financial security by a considerable percentage.

Isn't Social Security Going Broke?

The latest Social Security annual report shows an estimated trust fund exhaustion date of 2033. This would stretch to 2035 if the trust that funds Social Security disability were combined with the retiree benefits trust — something that can't happen without congressional intervention. Experts estimate the Social Security Fairness Act will accelerate the retirement fund's exhaustion by six months.

It's important to remember that Social Security is only partially funded by the trusts. Payroll taxes fund the

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Chamber Update

Liz League
CEO
GSPACC



directory at www.gspacc.com.

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www.annapolishomeconcierge.com

Annapolis Home Concierge provides trusted property home watch and home concierge services. The business believes that every homeowner deserves peace of mind regarding their unoccupied property. Whether you are a seasonal resident, away on vacation, or simply away from your home for an extended period, you should have trusted property care when you're not there. Annapolis Home Concierge services Anne Arundel County — including but not limited to — Annapolis, Arnold, Eastport, Edgewater, Severna Park, Severn, Cape St. Claire, Crofton and Bowie.

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The business specializes in various activities that foster physical well-being, good dietary habits, lifestyle adjustment, stress management and more. Whether you prefer individualized attention or group classes, GYMGUYZ caters to your preferences with its mobile personal training and fitness company.

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Young Entrepreneur Gains Wealth Of Business Knowledge On "The Blox"

By Judy Tacyn

During his junior year at Severna Park High School, Emory Jernigan would make an occasional "junk run" with his sturdy pickup truck, hauling other people's discards to Anne Arundel County's landfill in Severn for a contractor. The jobs often required some heavy lifting, but the pay was good and there was always work to be done.

Following his 2020 graduation and a two-year religious mission, Jernigan contemplated studying a trade or going to college for business or marketing, but he ultimately decided to start his own junk removal business, Junk Knights. Last year, he learned of "The Blox," an Amazon Prime Video reality television show focused on small businesses and startups, and he decided to apply. After a weeks-long interview process last August, Jernigan learned that he was selected for Season 20. Filming took place from January 12-19 in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

The creators of "The Blox" consider



Following his 2020 graduation from Severna Park High School, Emory Jernigan started his own junk removal business called Junk Knights.

the program to be an incubator for small business startups in a game-show-style friendly competition

where the goal isn't to earn capital but to learn aspects of business from people who have succeeded and failed

in their own startup endeavors.

Unlike the popular ABC series "Shark Tank," where small-business owners pitch their inventions and businesses for investment cash, "The Blox" brings 100 entrepreneurs of young businesses together for one week of intensive workshops and small groups where business-owner competitors learn as much as they can in short periods of time and use that knowledge to create "pitches" that are scored by the presenters and business mentors.

"I really learned a lot! We had to go from paper to mouth and pitch in a very short amount of time," Jernigan shared while reflecting on the 45 pages of handwritten notes he continues to study. "The scoring rubric not only included how much a contestant learned from that particular session and how well we incorporated that into our pitch but also scored things like our stage presence. Following each session competition, we each had 20 minutes of one-on-one time with the judges where we could ask specific questions."

Throughout the week, daily winners were announced and on the final day the top three competitors with the highest cumulative scores were

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Financial Focus: You Can Put More Into Your 401(K) This Year



Once you retire, you'll likely need to draw on a variety of financial sources — and one of the most important ones may be your 401(k). And for 2025, you can put even more money into your plan than ever.

You can invest in your 401(k) in one of two ways, depending on your employer's plan. With a traditional 401(k), you contribute pre-tax dollars, which can lower your taxable income, and your money can grow tax deferred. If you have a Roth 401(k) option, you can contribute after-tax dollars, which aren't deductible, but your eventual withdrawals will be tax-free if you've had your account at least five years and you're at least 59 and a half.

For either a traditional or Roth 401(k), as well as similar plans such as a 457(b) (for government employees) or a 403(b) (for educators and employees of some nonprofit groups), the contribution limit has increased by \$500 for 2025, to \$23,500. If you're 50 or older, you can contribute an additional \$7,500, for a total of \$31,000. And under the SE-

CURE 2.0 legislation, if you are between 60 and 63, you have a higher catch-up contribution — \$11,250, instead of \$7,500, for a total of \$34,750.

If you can afford to contribute the full amount to your 401(k) or similar plan, consider doing so. Of course, not everyone is in that position. If you're a younger worker, you may have other financial obligations, such as paying off student loans. And even if you've been in the workforce for a while, you may be putting away money for other things — such as your children's education — as well as your own retirement. But even if you can't "max out" on your 401(k), try to contribute at least enough to earn your employer's matching contribution, if one is offered.

Regardless of how much you contribute to your 401(k), consider these suggestions on managing the money within your plan:

Create a portfolio that fits your risk tolerance. Most 401(k) plans offer up to a dozen investment options, while some plans offer many more. You obviously want to increase your 401(k) balance as much as possible, but that doesn't necessarily mean putting all your 401(k) dollars into the most aggressive funds available. Instead, consider spreading your 401(k) contributions among a range of investments, which can help you lower your risk level while still giving you opportunities for

long-term growth. Everyone's risk tolerance is different, though, so you'll want to evaluate yours when constructing your 401(k) portfolio.

Adjust your portfolio as needed. It's a good idea to review your 401(k)'s investment mix at least once a year to see if it's performing as you'd hoped. But be patient — one "down" year doesn't necessarily mean you must make changes. However, as you approach retirement, you may want to lower the risk level of your 401(k) by moving some of your dollars into more conservative vehicles. Still, even when you're retired and have started drawing money from your 401(k), you might want to keep some growth potential in it to help you stay ahead of inflation.

By contributing what you can afford to your 401(k), and by carefully managing the investments within your plan, you can maximize the value of this powerful retirement savings vehicle — and give yourself a key asset to help you enjoy your retirement years.

Brian Conrad is a financial advisor with Edward Jones. His office is located at 479 Jumpers Hole Road, Suite 202, in Severna Park. To learn more, call 410-544-8970, email brian.conrad@edwardjones.com or visit www.edwardjones.com/brian-conrad.

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Nancy Greer Honored With GSPACC's 2025 Harmony Award



At the Greater Severna Park and Arnold Chamber of Commerce's general membership meeting in January, Nancy Greer (right) of Jing Ying Institute of Kung Fu & Tai Chi received the chamber's 2025 Harmony Award. First presented in February 2016, the award was given in recognition of "generous philanthropic efforts to better the lives of others in our community." Along with her husband, Billy, Greer has spearheaded the business' charitable fundraising, food and clothing collections, and donations.

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RIBBON CUTTINGS



Tidy Nest Professional Organizing Officially Marks Opening With Ribbon-Cutting

Owned by friends Kelly Baldwin and Ashley Johnson, Tidy Nest Professional Organizing serves residents of Anne Arundel County. The team organizes homes by creating “simple, smart, personalized and easy-to-maintain solutions,” with the beliefs that a decluttered home allows for focus on what is near and dear and that a calm space brings joy. The Greater Severna Park and Arnold Chamber of Commerce helped Tidy Nest mark its grand opening in January with a ribbon-cutting. To learn more about its services, go to www.yourtidynest.com.



Mi'Chelle Premier Salon Opens In Severna Park



Owned by Tiffany Maddox, Mi'Chelle Premier Salon celebrated its grand opening in January with a ribbon-cutting ceremony hosted by the Greater Severna Park and Arnold Chamber of Commerce. The salon's services include silk press, full color, chemical relaxer, trim, sew-ins and wig installment. Mi'Chelle Premier Salon is located at 356 Ritchie Highway in Severna Park. Find a complete list of services at www.michellepremiersuites.com.

Cassilly & Appel Celebrates New Business Name With Open House

To celebrate its new business name, Cassilly & Appel, CPAs & Advisors — formerly Gardiner & Appel Group — hosted an open house and office reception in late January. The Greater Severna Park and Arnold Chamber of Commerce facilitated a ribbon-cutting to mark the occasion. The accounting firm specializes in business counseling, financial review, tax planning and preparation, and succession planning for when a business changes ownership. Its office is located at 570 Baltimore-Annapolis Boulevard in Severna Park. Learn more at www.cassapp.cpa.



SPRFC Celebrates Expansion Of Free Weight Room



A part of the community since 1981, the Severna Park Racquetball and Fitness Club (SPRFC) held an open house to celebrate its expanded free weight room in late January. The Greater Severna Park and Arnold Chamber of Commerce hosted a ribbon-cutting to mark the occasion. Located at 8514 Veterans Highway in Millersville, the SPRFC offers exercise equipment, fitness classes, certified instructors, racquetball and wallyball leagues, and one-on-one programming. Learn more about the club at www.sprfc.com.



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RIBBON CUTTING

Severna Park Welcomes Integrative Family NP LLC With Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony

In mid-January, the Greater Severna Park and Arnold Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon-cutting ceremony to mark the grand opening of Integrative Family NP LLC. Owned by family nurse practitioner Katherine Grote, Integrative Family NP LLC is a nurse practitioner-based primary care practice that combines "traditional western medicine approaches with integrative and holistic approaches." The office is located at 815 Ritchie Highway, Suite 120, in Severna Park. To learn more, go to www.integrativefamilynp LLC.org.



Social Security Fairness Act

» Continued from page 42

majority of the program, so if the trust became insolvent, retirees would see reduced, not eliminated, benefits. Retirees would continue to receive Social Security checks at 79% of the full amount they're entitled to.

What To Do If You're Impacted

You don't have to do anything to begin receiving the increased benefits. As long as Social Security has your current mailing address and direct deposit information, the increase will be applied automatically.

But for some people, the extra money will present both potential benefits and problems. While on the surface, extra income is a guaranteed positive, in reality, the impact unexpected income can have on the rest of your portfolio and the taxes you pay can be significant.

If you are one of the thousands of Marylanders who will begin receiving higher Social Security benefits in 2025, it's very important to work with a financial professional to understand how this change will impact you and to make sure you're maximizing this new-found income. When I work with clients who are former government employees, I make sure to structure their retirement income so they pay only the taxes they actually owe rather than overpay-

ing. Make sure your financial advisor is doing the same for you.

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Chamber Update

» Continued from page 42

company with over 20 years of experience in buying, rehabbing, stabilizing, and leasing rental properties in and around Baltimore, Anne Arundel and Prince George's counties. The team applies its expertise and experience to helping other investors maximize profits with their rental properties. Provision Property Management and its team has experienced everything it takes to have a successful rental property and are ready to treat your home as one of theirs. It provides everything from tenant management to property maintenance and legal issues.

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The company specializes in the design and documentation of high-end residential and custom commercial projects and is highly experienced with managing code-intensive, large-scale projects that require a unique understanding of construction documentation and management. This includes new custom residences, tenant buildouts, commercial additions, and redevelopment. The firm also has extensive experience with design, development and documentation of food service and retail projects.

Our always busy chamber held five January ribbon-cutting celebrations, three of which were grand openings of new businesses. First was the grand opening of **Tidy Nest Professional Organizing**. Owners Ashley Johnson and Kelly Baldwin celebrated with more than 40 people in attendance at the chamber, and they are already on their way to business success with many projects.

Next was the grand opening of **Integrative Family NP LLC**, a nurse-practitioner based primary care practice combining traditional western medicine approaches with integrative and holistic approaches. Owner Katherine Grote said that her "phone has been ringing off the hook" since she opened her office in Severna Park, and she does take insurance and make house calls.

Gardiner & Appel Group changed its name to **Cassilly & Appel, CPAs & Advisors**, and celebrated with a ribbon-cutting and open house. Founder Scott Gardiner told us his story of opening the business 46 years ago, with Karl Appel joining the firm in the late '90s. The firm has worked with many local businesses for decades.

We celebrated the grand opening of **Mi'Chelle Premier Salon** in Severna Park with owner Tiffany Maddox. The business offers silk press hydration services, hair extensions, hairpiece styling and more in a beautiful space.

Our last ribbon-cutting was to celebrate the expansion of the **Severna Park Racquetball and Fitness Club's** free weight room, and to recognize long-term employee **Brian Ferguson**. Close to 100 people attended the open house and ribbon cutting, and Brian, who has been there for 29 years, was completely surprised!

The chambers in Anne Arundel County held a legislative day in Annapolis to meet with our elected officials and learn about legislative initiatives impacting our small-business community.

We closed the month with our annual winter general membership meeting, held at **La Posta Pizzeria** in Severna Park. Our board meeting included recognizing committee volunteers and premium members. Our Harmony Award, named for a businessperson who makes substantial contributions to the community, was presented to **Nancy Greer of the Jing Ying Institute of Kung Fu & Tai Chi**.

In addition to being an incredibly active member of the chamber, Nancy collaborates with many other chamber members. She spearheads charitable efforts, to date raising over \$160,000 for charity; collects thousands of pounds of food and clothing; and donates thousands more in services and products to support various fundraisers. Her outstanding fundraising efforts were recognized with an ASPIRE Community Leadership Award, and a statewide Small Business Administration award for "Woman in Business Champion of the Year."

For more information about the chamber and events, visit www.gspacc.com.

Young Entrepreneur

» Continued from page 42

announced. The top scorer earned \$10,000, second place \$3,000 and third place \$2,000.

Jernigan learned from the judges that he was the youngest business owner in the competition for Season 20. He also learned he ended up in the top 25% and perhaps as high as top 15% for the season.

Through the process, Jernigan met many business owners who have gone through similar experiences and have become friends. Since the friendly competition is about networking and expanding your circle to get and share ideas on how to grow a business, that makes Jernigan a winner regardless of his final rank.

"I am going to grow the business as long as it lets me. I want people to work with me because they have heard about me or have a relationship with me," he said. "If someone Googles 'junk removal' and sees me in a list, that's great, but I really want to be known for my professionalism, quality of work, and the relationships I've made."

The show's creators have not announced when Season 20 will air, but because Jernigan won a round in a small group and he was interviewed and filmed, he knows he will be on the broadcast.

"The Blox" can be viewed on www.amazon.com for Amazon Prime members, or via "The Blox" website at www.betablox.com or via the app. The producer expects Jernigan's appearance will be available in 2025.

To contact Junk Knights or to learn about the services provided, visit www.junkknightsmd.com or contact Jernigan directly at junkknightsllc@gmail.com or 443-802-4747.

For more information about the chamber and events, visit www.gspacc.com.

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