

The Prince George's Post



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Unpredictable Cherry Blossom Bloom Underscores Climate Change Concerns

By HANNAH ZIEGLER
Capital News Service

WASHINGTON (March 3, 2023)—After a mild winter in the Washington metro region triggered some local cherry blossom trees to bloom in early February, the National Park Service announced Wednesday that this spring's peak bloom for the iconic trees will occur between March 23–25.

The announcement signals that warmer winter weather across the region may not significantly disrupt the typical bloom cycle for the cherry blossoms around the Tidal Basin, which

usually peak around the last week of March or the first week of April each year.

Experts determine the peak bloom for cherry blossoms each year by predicting when roughly 70 percent of the flowers will have puffy, white or pink flowers. This year, experts charged with predicting peak bloom have the lowest confidence in their accuracy in roughly a decade, NPS spokesperson Mike Litterst told Capital News Service.

"Everything is all over the place this year. We're seeing things from the trees that we can't explain," Litterst said. "I think the trees are as confused about



HANNAH ZIEGLER/CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

COLLEGE PARK, Md.—A cherry blossom tree was in full bloom in College Park on Feb. 23. It is one of many cherry trees blooming early in the Washington region.

the weather as we are."

The fact that some cherry blossom trees across the region had flowers by Valentine's Day this year, paired with the record-breaking temperatures last week that saw Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport reach a

daily high temperature of 80 degrees, have triggered climate change concerns among some environmentalists.

Changes in timing for events

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The Prince George's Arts and Humanities Council Announces Call for New Poet Laureate

By PRESS OFFICER
PGAHC

LARGO, Md. (March 3, 2023)—The Prince George's Arts and Humanities Council (PGAHC) is seeking applications for the next Prince George's County Poet Laureate. This significant cultural position supports Prince George's County's ever-burgeoning literary community and reflects the county's commitment to elevating poetry into the consciousness of residents and to helping celebrate the literary arts. The selected poet will endeavor to advance the awareness of, access to, and appreciation for poetry, spoken word, and the literary arts within the Prince George's County community through PGAHC's Office of Poet Laureate.

As both a resident of Prince George's County and ambassador and advocate for poetry, spoken word, literature, culture, and the arts, the Poet Laureate will represent the County and the art of poetry through public readings, workshops, lectures, presentations, and participation in civic events. Additionally, the Poet Laureate will serve as a resource for the County's poetry and literary activities, lead and participate in National Poetry Month and National Arts and Humanities Month events and initiatives, and contribute to the growth of a poetic identity for Prince George's County. Specifically, it is expected that the Poet Laureate will propose and lead at least 4 (one per quarter) community projects each year, with

an ongoing community presence, engagement, and participation in community arts events to take place throughout each of the 9 Councilmanic Districts throughout the year. The Poet Laureate also works with the Prince George's County Memorial Library System to offer public programming.

J. Joy "Sistah Joy" Matthews Alford was appointed as the inaugural Prince George's County Poet Laureate. She is an author, arts advocate, as well as the producer and host of the award-winning poetry-based cable television show, *Sojourn with Words*. Sistah Joy also received the Poet Laureate Special Award (2002) for "her outstanding contributions to the art of poetry" in her native Washington, DC. She is an alum of the late Washington, DC Poet Laureate's "Poets in Progress" series and of the Mariposa Writers Retreat. In 1995, she founded the socially conscious poetry ensemble, *Collective Voices*, which has performed nationally and internationally (London, England) and continues to perform in the U.S. primarily along the East coast. Sistah Joy is the author of three books, *Lord I'm Dancin' As Fast As I Can* (2000); *From Pain to Empowerment, The Fabric of My Being* (2009); and *This Garden Called Life* (2011). Her term concludes in April 2023. "It's been an honor to serve as Prince George's County's inaugural Poet Laureate. County residents

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Rent Stabilization Legislation Passes

Legislation Sponsored by District 7 Council Member Krystal Oriadha Temporarily Stops Excessive Rent Increases

By ANGELA J. ROUSON
Prince George's County Council Media

The Prince George's Council, during session on Tuesday, February 28, 2023, voted to support CB-007-2023, legislation establishing the Rent Stabilization Act of 2023. The measure temporarily amends the Landlord-Tenant Code to limit landlords' ability to increase rent for tenants above 3% over a 12-month period.

Council Member Oriadha proposed CB-007-2023 to temporarily stop excessive rent increases and help residents stay in their homes. Under the measure, a landlord cannot increase rent above 3% for any tenant and cannot issue a notice of rent increase over 3% during the twelve months of the Rent Stabilization Act. Additionally, CB-

7-2023 excludes affordable housing units with federal, state, or local subsidies and dwelling units that received an occupancy permit in the last five years.

Following the public hearing, and just prior to voting, Council Member Oriadha offered impassioned remarks to a standing room only crowd in the Council Hearing Room, confirming her commitment to the people of Prince George's County.

"I am excited to pass this bill today. This bill is an opportunity for us to say loud and clear that renters matter. For too long the message has been that they don't. Residents are suffering because of rent increases, and rent stabilization creates stability so renters know that they are not going to wake up and their rent is doubled. We want Prince Georgians to have access to affordable, hab-

itable, and fair housing and this bill gets us to closer to that goal."

County resident Kia Jefferson, whose rent was raised \$800 with 23 days' notice, urged the Council to support the measure. "My rent was raised \$800 with a 23-day notice. I can't take it anymore. Where are people supposed to go? Where are they supposed to live? We need CB-7 and we need it today. Please show the renters of Prince George's County that you understand and are working on a solution."

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), and the Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement (DPIE), will notify license

See **RENT** Page A5



PHOTO BY MICHAEL CHARLES/CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE
Maryland Gov. Wes Moore testifies before the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee on Feb. 22, 2023, in favor of SB551, which would establish a Service Year Option in Maryland.

Existing Service Year Programs May Provide Model for Moore Proposal

By KARA THOMPSON
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (March 2, 2023)—While details of Maryland Gov. Wes Moore's service year option for high school graduates are still being worked out, there are many other existing service year programs in the state, nationally and worldwide that allow people to gain the experience and give back to the community in the way Moore wants.

The governor has made service one of his top priorities this term, signing an executive order creating the Maryland Department of Civic and Service Innovation on his first full day in office. Moore's proposed plan for Maryland so far is a unique combination of the service year programs that have come before it.

One such program is Service Year Alliance, whose board chair, retired Gen. Stanley McChrystal, joined Moore for his testimony in front of the Senate's Education, Energy and the Environment Committee on Feb. 22.

"I'm excited to be here because Maryland is on the verge of doing something really special that I've been involved with for more than a decade," McChrystal said. "To me, service is not just an opportunity to get certain tasks done in the state or in the nation—we can hire people for that. We cannot hire people to be good citizens, we have to make

them, we have to mold them, we've got to give every young American that opportunity."

That molding of young citizens is the idea behind both Moore's Service Year and the Service Year Alliance program. The Alliance runs an online website that connects young people looking to serve their communities with paid opportunities to do so, according to Kristen Bennett, Alliance CEO. It serves a range of people, from high school graduates to GED recipients to college grads to those who are mid-career looking to gain experience. Participants can end up helping clean up from natural disasters, tutoring, rebuilding homes, helping with conservation projects, and many other opportunities.

On serviceyear.com, interested participants fill out a profile about themselves and their interests, as well as time periods and locations where they are available. Based on this information, the platform suggests matches for organizations and opportunities, and participants can then apply to what interests them.

"One of the things that we are always trying to put front and center is that there's not one way to do a service year, there really are a lot of different opportunities," Bennett said.

While Service Year Alliance does not directly host service participants, it partners with other groups like AmeriCorps and the

Peace Corps to link interested individuals with service opportunities. It was formed in 2016, and has over 225,000 users on the platform.

"In a lot of ways, it's like applying for any other job; one of the reasons we created serviceyear.org is because the opportunities to serve are with thousands of organizations across the country, and there wasn't really one place to find all of them," she said. "What we wanted to do was make it approachable."

Participating in a service year program also increases the likelihood of someone returning to school and earning a degree, the Alliance has found.

"We have seen that those who participate in service year programs without a bachelor's degree are over twice as likely than their peers to go and earn a bachelor's degree (after their service year)," said Bennett. An Alliance report from 2018 showed that 24% of service year alum who served without a bachelor's degree went on to earn one, as compared to just 11% of their peers who went on to achieve a bachelor's after two years of full-time work.

Another youth service organization is Youth Service America, a group that helps kids and young people ages 5–25 get in-

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Wolf Trap Awards Two Grants to Prince George's County Public High Schools to Fund Performing Arts Projects

Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts has awarded grants to teachers at public high schools ... to fund music, dance, and theater projects in their classrooms.

Community, Page A3

To Be Equal:

Crushing Student Loan Debt Hinders Black Home Ownership, Feeds Racial Wealth Gap and Stalls Economic Growth

...a black woman only makes 63 cents compared to every dollar a white man makes, forcing Black women to take years to pay off their student loan debt.

Commentary, Page A4

Governor Moore Hosts Community Roundtable, Testifies in House Hearings in Support of the Fair Wage Act

The Fair Wage Act will also increase the family income of hundreds of thousands of Marylanders, including approximately 126,000 Maryland children.

Business and Finance, Page A5

TOWNS *and* NEIGHBORS

In & Around Morningside-Skyline

by Mary McHale 301-735-3451

Byren Harder, Suitland High '66, loved his Harley

Byren Wayne Harder, 74, of Charlotte Hall, died February 21. He was born at Sibley Hospital, son of Donald and Betty Harder, grew up on Marianne Drive in Morningside and graduated from Suitland High, Class of 1966.

He went to work for the phone company in 1967 when it was C & P and retired in 2014 when it is Verizon. He played basketball, volleyball and softball for the company.

Byren loved volleyball, played on coed teams as an adult and coached Girls' Volleyball at Chopticon High School for eleven years. He had many passions, including going to the beach with his family, entertaining all with Doo-Wop on his jukebox, shooting pool and playing cards. He generously participated in charity events, such as breast cancer awareness rides.

After he retired, he purchased a 2009 Harley-Davidson. He loved riding it.

Byren is survived by his daughters, April Roach (Charlie), Melanie Townes (Philip) and Amanda Finch (Randy); seven grandchildren and four great-grandchildren; sisters Diana and Terrie. Services were at Brinsfield Funeral Home in Charlotte Hall, with interment at Trinity Memorial Gardens.

Town of Morningside

The Town is in need of one more Election Judge for the May 1 election. If you're interested, call 301-736-2300. Two Council Seats will be voted on.

Upcoming Town meetings: Work Session, Tuesday, March 14, 7 p.m.; Regular Town Meeting, Tuesday, March 21, 7 p.m.

Neighbors & other good people

Crossland '95 graduates Ryan Whitfield and Shawndell Pullam have opened a BurnBox Pizza in Waldorf. It's getting great reviews such as "Best brick oven pizza." Give it a try at 2921 Crain Hwy. Call 301-578-2876.

Morningside's Clerk/Treasurer Karen Rooker is a life member of VFW 9619, Morningside. She joined in 1979 under the eligibility of her father, Francis McCrone, who served in the Air Force during the Korean and Vietnam Wars. On the Department level, she was elected Department of Maryland President; on the District level, she is serving as President.

Kimberly Chanteuse Briscoe-Tonic died last July 22. Born in Washington, educated in Prince George's, she graduated from Potomac High School, Class of 1986, and

earned an Associate of Applied Science in Mortuary Science from the University of DC. She worked in various funeral homes before opening Briscoe-Tonic Funeral Home in Waldorf. Survivors include husband Tony, daughter Tristan, her father and four siblings. Funeral Mass was at Holy Family Church with burial at Resurrection.

Changing landscape

The cherry blossoms at the tidal basin are expected to be at their peak March 22-25.

The Grand Opening of the La Reine Science & Innovation Center will be March 18. It'll officially open at 10 a.m. for a celebration ceremony, followed by tours. The Center, 6800 Marlboro Pike, is part of Bishop McNamara High School, and is located next door to Mount Calvary Church. Info: 202-633-4820.

The Anacostia Museum will hold a Farmer's Market at the museum beginning Saturday, April 22, continuing through Sept. 16, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The Museum is at 1901 Fort Place SE. Free admission and free parking.

The Maryland State House is the oldest U.S. state capitol in continuous legislative use. It has been undergoing restoration since March of last year and was complete Jan. 10. Gov. Larry Hogan announced its completion with these words, "By raising our nation's flag and the great state of Maryland's flag above the dome, we make the culmination of its restoration and ensure that this landmark will continue to stand strong for generations to come."

A home at 4605 Morgan Road, in Morningside, has sold for \$359,500. A nearby house, at 4606 Morgan Road, sold for \$105,900 in about 1990.

Reflections: On turning 94

On March 12, I move from 93 to 94. I thought I might tell you about me.

I was born in Detroit at Henry Ford Hospital, where my father (Richard Dyer Mudd, of Washington) was an intern, and my mom (Rose Krummack, of Nebraska) was a nurse. I was the first of what eventually became a family with seven children. Dad began to establish medical facilities in General Motors factories and was assigned to Cincinnati where I started first grade. Then to Saginaw, Mich., where I finished junior high at St. Mary's Cathedral School.

WWII began. Dad—in the Army reserves—piled us into a house trailer and

drove us to Kelly Field, Texas, where we lived on officers' row for four years. Dad headed the Medical Department, Mother improved her bridge game, and I enjoyed my high school years at Our Lady of the Lake (now a university) where I edited the campus newspaper.

Peace, came. We packed up and trailed back to Saginaw. August 1946 I enrolled at St. Mary's College across the road from Notre Dame, in South Bend. I majored in Spanish, minored in journalism, edited the school newspaper, worked in the college post office, and graduated in 1950. By that time, I had an engagement ring, from Notre Damer Jack McHale.

We were married at St. Mary's Cathedral in Saginaw and settled in Houston. Jack was a reporter for The Houston Press, but within months, he joined the FBI. We headed to Washington for training, and then to Los Angeles and San Francisco before the FBI reassigned him to headquarters on Pennsylvania Avenue in D.C.

We moved to Skyline Drive in 1958 with five children and, before long, had two more daughters. I worked in the library at St. Philip's School and, in my spare time, earned a master's degree in Library Science at Catholic University. I started writing this column in 1976.

After retiring from the Bureau, Jack served as Prince George's County Chief of Police for four years. I retired from St. Philip's about 1996. My children grew up, married and moved.

I lost Jack in 2004 and son Brian in 2016. But I'm still here and turning 94.

Wordle report

The 7th edition of the Scrabble Players Dictionary is out and has added about 500 new words, such as convo, dox, fauxhawk and zedonk. Also compound words, like pageview and subsweet.

If any of the new words happen to have five letters, I'm sure they'll make Wordle.

Milestones

Happy Birthday to Harold Wilson, Rebecca Turner, Marcy Richardson and Anita (Beall) Cook, March 12; Pamela Woodall, Kathy Elborne, Cordelia Bland, Shirley Carruth and Gregory Ritter, March 13; my daughter (due to visit soon from Brownsville, Tex.) Therese Gallegos and Belinda Benavidaz, March 14; Jacob Thompson, Jose Gryskewicz and Jonathan Capps, March 15; Constance Bennett and my great-grandson Riley McHale, March 16.

by Audrey Johnson 301-922-5384

Brandywine-Aquasco

BIKE-BLESSING

Save the date Sunday, May 21, 2023, and join us at 11 a.m. Bring a fellow-riding buddy. Come grow with us. There will be a special bike blessing at Nottingham Myers United Methodist Church, 15601 Brooks Church Road, Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772. Rev. Shemaiah Strickland, Pastor. Contact Minister Cary Montgomery at 240-381-5914.

MARCH COMMUNITY IN THE COURTHOUSE

Save the date and join us Tuesday, March 28, 2023, from 7:30 p.m. To RSVP: www.pgsao.org/event. Mark your calendar for our March Community in the Courthouse in which we will be celebrating Women's History Month with a panel of extraordinary woman discussing key issues. By Prince George's County State's Attorney Office. Be sure to sign up. This will be a virtual event via Zoom and streamed live on Facebook. For more information contact: Leslie.Johnson-lejohnson@pg.md.us.

BLACK HISTORY

Creative Celebrations with Tracy Pinkney. Tracy is the founder, CEO and Creative Director of the catering business. She has been in the catering business for 20 plus years. Join us at Romano Winery to enjoy delicious shrimp, crab seafood salad, fish, shrimp baskets and grilled shrimp garden salads. Sunday, September 4, 2023, from 12-4 p.m. The address is 15715 Bald Eagle School Road, Brandywine. Creative Celebrations specializes in wedding parties, brunches, showers, reunions, whatever you want to call your event.

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Brendan Johnson who will be inducted into the Spanish Honor Society. Brendon is a Bilingual Scholar Athlete. He is the son of James and Vera Johnson. Grandson of the late Ernest E. Johnson Jr. and the late Brenda Johnson.

NEW CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE

State's Attorney Braveboy welcomed new Circuit Court Judge Darren Johnson. He made his rounds throughout the courthouse getting to know key people and departments.

ST. PHILIP'S CHURCH HALL

Join us March 11, 2023, 12 noon until sold out. Good food and good eating at St. Philip's Church Hall 13801 Baden Westwood Road, Brandywine, Maryland. Chicken or Fish Dinner \$18.00. Sandwiches on Sale. All dinners served with string beans, sweet potato, potato salad, and bread. Baked goods on sale and vendors on site.

"Pre-Orders must be paid in advance." Shirley Cleaves 302-690-4260, Vivian Rich 804-301-9530, Michele Chase 240-882-3369. "Thank you for your support in advance." Sponsored by: Peter A. Gross, Sr. Scholarship/Memorial Fund Inc.

EQUALITY AND JUSTICE

The 2nd Annual State of Justice Symposium, hosted by State's Attorney Aisha N. Braveboy and Bowie State University will be held Thursday, April 13, 2023. This one-day event is part program that consists of the following: 1. Emerging Adult Forum: 9 a.m.—2 p.m. (check-in begins at 8 a.m.). 2. State of Justice Address: 6-9 p.m. (Check-in begins at 5 p.m.). This is a FREE event. If you would like to attend and for questions and/or sponsorship opportunities: LaJoia.Cannon.lcannon@co.pg.md.us.

BOWIE STATE ATHLETIC ADMINISTRATOR HONORED

Arlene Creek has been a part of Bowie State's fabric for almost 60 years as a student-athlete, coach and administrator. She's already been a member of Bowie State's Sports Hall of Fame since 2014, but Creek continues to receive her flowers as she was recognized as one of 50 Title IX trailblazers during the 2023 CIAA tournament in Baltimore honoring the 50th anniversary of Title IX.

"I feel pretty good about it," said Creek, who currently serves as deputy director of athletics in the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics and Recreation. "I have done some things that are recognizable enough to be a CIAA trailblazer and to be inducted into the Hall Of Fame at Bowie State University. I'm feeling good about that."

Creek first arrived at Bowie State in 1966 and immediately took up basketball, volleyball, softball and field hockey while she earned her degree in health, physical education and recreation. "When I grew up, there weren't any female sports," said Creek. "If we got a chance to play, you had to play with the guys. Coming here and being able to have a female team, it was great because I love to play."

But what Creek takes pride in the most is presenting herself as a positive example for students to follow, as well as encouraging them to reach their highest potential in line with the principles of being Bowie Bold.

"My role was to always be a good role model and to work with the student-athletes to make sure they become productive citizens in the world and make sure everybody could be all they can be." MEDIA CONTACT: David Thompson, dthompson@bowiestate.edu, 301-860-4311.

Poet Laureate from A1

and businesses—both arts-related and not, have demonstrated not only interest and appreciation, but a thirst for the literary arts. It has been personally rewarding to help facilitate opportunities for poets, writers, and artists of multiple disciplines as they collaborate in beautiful and enriching ways to embrace the arts programs and opportunities presented by the Office of the Poet Laureate," said Sistah Joy. "I look forward to continuing to support future programs that create a vibrant poetry and literary arts culture in Prince George's County."

The county's Poet Laureate is an honorary position established in 2018. The individual selected will serve a three-year term commencing in May 2023, for which they will receive an honorarium to encompass all official work performed in the position. The deadline to submit applications is 5 p.m. on Wednesday, March 24, 2023. For more information about the application and selection process, visit www.pgahc.org/poet-laureate.

"On behalf of PGAHC, we express our deep gratitude for all that Sistah Joy has done to advance poetry and literary arts throughout the county. She has elevated the poetry landscape in the community, and we are forever grateful for her impact," said PGAHC's CEO and Chief Curator Rhonda Dallas. "We are excited to expand her efforts and to partner with the new Poet Laureate to continue to elevate literary arts within our community and facilitate connection through accessible, dynamic, and influential programming."

The mission of the Office of the Poet Laureate is to highlight literary arts and culture by promoting a countywide appreciation of poetry through engaging programs and services for county residents of all ages, a vibrant and interactive series of community activities, and a focus on initiatives which support and sustain the cultural life of Prince George's county.

As the legislated local arts agency for Prince George's County, PGAHC fosters and expands art opportunities for all County citizens and visitors to create a world-class cultural environment where high-quality arts and humanities programs are diverse, equitable, and inclusive. PGAHC leverages its partnerships to support and provide various arts and cultural programming opportunities, art-centered economic development programs, grants as well as advocacy initiatives for legislative support of the arts on the County and State levels.

Around the County

Centenarian Luncheon

On Friday, May 5, 2023, M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation will host a Centenarian Luncheon, at the Laurel-Beltsville Senior Activity Center, 7120 Contee Road, Laurel, Md. The luncheon will honor centenarian from Prince George's and Montgomery Counties. The event is open to residents who were born prior to December 31, 1923, along with up to five guests. To register, please visit Centenarian Luncheon Registration. **Registration closes on March 15, 2023.** For question and registration assistance, please call 301-206-3351 or email Seniors@pgparks.com.

Growing Green With Pride

Help beautify our county by joining neighbors in your community for a day of cleaning, weed removal and mulching.

Saturday, April 22, 2023

8 a.m.—12 p.m.

Rain or shine!

Registration is required for participation. **Register by April 14, 2023** at mypgc.us/growinggreen.

Students may earn service learning hours! For more information, contact Tonya Hairston at GrowingGreenWithPride@co.pg.md.us.

AT&T Turns on New 5G Site in Clinton, Prince George's County

Ongoing network expansion in Maryland will help give AT&T customers better access to mobile internet

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (March 3, 2023)—AT&T continues its 5G network expansion in Maryland, giving residents, businesses and visitors a big boost in their wireless connectivity.

We recently added a mobile broadband site in Clinton in Prince George's County, to enhance coverage and capacity around Clinton and Rosaryville.

Visit Maryland.att.com to learn more about how AT&T is supporting Maryland. And for the latest news on AT&T 5G, visit about.att.com/pages/5G.

—Karen Twomey, AT&T Corporate Communications

Local Students Named to Dean's List at Hood College

FREDERICK, Md. (March 1, 2023)—The following students were named to the Dean's List at Hood College for the fall 2022 semester.

The Dean's List recognizes degree-seeking students who completed at least six semester hours of Hood work with at least a 3.5 semester GPA.

Accokeek, MD: **Roselyn Taylor**

Bowie, MD: **Colleen Blasko**

District Heights, MD: **Noelly Jerez**

Hyattsville, MD: **Axel Barahona Perez; Olivia Phillips**

Laurel, MD: **Riley Johnston-Napora**

—Office of Marketing & Communications, Hood College

Local Student Earns Distinction at Wichita State University

WICHITA, Kan. (February 28, 2023)—Wichita State University has announced the names of more than 3500 students who were on the WSU dean's honor roll for fall 2022, including

Forestville, MD: **Aniya J Bell**

To be included on the dean's honor roll, a student must be enrolled full time (at least 12 credit hours) and earn at least a 3.5 grade point average on a 4.0 scale.

—Lainie Mazzullo, Wichita State University

COMMUNITY

Speed Monitoring System Deployment Announcement

By PRESS OFFICER
Cottage City Police Department

COTTAGE CITY, Md. (Feb. 28, 2023)—With the passing of Cottage City Ordinance 2021-03, the Town of Cottage City Commission authorized the use of speed cameras in designated speed zones throughout the Town. The Cottage City Speed Reduction Program will start with a 30-day warning period on March 9, 2023. In accordance with State and Local law, starting April 10, 2023, the Cottage City Police Department will issue a civil citation carrying fines of up to \$40.00 to vehicles that exceed the posted speed limit by 12 miles per hour.

A fix speed camera will be located at the 4200 block of Bladensburg Road and a second fix speed camera will be located at the 3500 block of Bladensburg Road. Future locations may be determined based on traffic volume, the magnitude of speeding, and other public safety concerns.

This program works in conjunction with the Police Department's efforts to significantly improve safety on Bladensburg Road.

For additional information, contact Chief Anthony L. Ayers, Sr.
Email: Chief1@cottagecitymd.gov
Office: 301-927-9225

Free St. Patrick's Day Lyft Rides Offered Throughout Greater Washington to Prevent Drunk Driving

Nearly half of U.S. traffic deaths on St. Patrick's Day involve drunk drivers

By PRESS OFFICER
WRAP

TYSONS, Va. (March 1, 2023)—Preparing to combat that time of year when according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, nearly half (45%) of U.S. traffic deaths involve drunk drivers,* a local nonprofit organization announced today that free safe rides will be offered to would-be drunk drivers throughout the Washington-metropolitan area during this month's St. Patrick's Day celebrations.

Offered by the nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP), the 2023 St. Patrick's SoberRide® program will be in operation beginning at 4 p.m. Friday, March 17 (St. Patrick's Day) and operate until 4 a.m. on Saturday, March 18 as a way to keep local roads safe from impaired drivers during this traditionally high-risk period.

During this twelve-hour period, area residents ages 21 and older celebrating with alcohol may download the Lyft app to their phones, then enter the SoberRide® code in the app's 'Promo' section to receive their no-cost (up to \$15) safe transportation home. WRAP's 2023 St. Patrick's Day SoberRide® promo code will be posted at 3 p.m. on Friday, March 17 on www.SoberRide.com.

"Nearly half of U.S. traffic fatalities during St. Patrick's Day involve drunk drivers according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration," said Kurt Erickson, WRAP's President.

During the 2022 St. Patrick's Day campaign, nearly 500 (482) persons in the Washington-metropolitan area used WRAP's SoberRide® program rather than possibly driving home impaired. The charity also offers its SoberRide® program on Cinco de Mayo, Independence Day, Halloween and the winter holidays through and including New Year's Eve.

SoberRide® is offered throughout Lyft's Washington D.C. coverage area which includes all or parts of: the District of Columbia; the Maryland counties of Montgomery and Prince George's and towns therein plus the cities of Bowie, College Park, District Heights, Gaithersburg, Glenarden, Greenbelt, Hyattsville, Laurel, Mount Ranier, New Carrollton, Rockville, Seat Pleasant and Takoma Park; and the Northern Virginia counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William and towns therein plus the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas and Manassas Park.

See LYFT RIDES Page A6

*Source: St. Patrick's Day 2020 (6 p.m. on March 16, 2020 through 5:59 a.m. on March 18, 2020; NHTSA's Fatality Analysis Reporting System [FARS]):

Date	BAC 0.0		BAC 0.01-0.07		Alcohol Impaired BAC 0.08+		Alcohol Impaired BAC .15+		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
6:00 am March 17, 2020 — 5:59 am March 18, 2020	43	54%	1	.01%	21	26%	15	19%	80	100

Wolf Trap Awards Eight Grants to Washington, DC Metro Area Public High Schools to Fund Performing Arts Projects

Students from DC Public Schools and Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, Montgomery, and Prince George's County Schools to Perform at The Barns at Wolf Trap Monday, April 24

By PRESS OFFICER
Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts

VIENNA, Va. (Feb 27, 2023)—Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts has awarded grants to eight teachers at public high schools in Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, DC to fund music, dance, and theater projects in their classrooms. The grants are part of Wolf Trap's Grants for High School Performing Arts Teachers, an annual program that issues financial awards to support area public high school teachers who are working to bring new and exciting performing arts experiences to their students. All grantees and their students are invited to participate in a celebratory day of learning at Wolf Trap, followed by an evening performance opportunity at The Barns at Wolf Trap on Monday, April 24.

This year's grantees include teachers from Annandale High School (Fairfax County); Cardozo Education Campus (DC Public Schools); Charles H. Flowers High School (Prince George's County); Gwynn Park High School (Prince George's County); H-B Woodlawn Secondary Program (Arlington County); Mount Vernon High School (Fairfax County); Tuscarora High School (Loudoun County); and Watkins Mill High School (Montgomery County).

Teachers applied for grants within one or more categories, including Artist Residencies; Commissions; Master Classes; Technology in the Arts; Arts and the Environment; Arts Integration; and Arts and Social Change.

"In 2019, we welcomed grantees and their students to Wolf Trap for the first time to perform on stage at The Barns and participate in a celebratory day of learning, during which we gave them a peek behind the scenes of a real working arts venue, and held conversations with Wolf Trap's leaders that explored different career pathways in the arts," said Cate Bechtold, Director, Internships and Community Programs. "We received a great response from both the teachers and the students who attended, and we're excited to welcome this year's grantees and their stu-

dents back for the first time since 2019, for what we hope will be another rewarding experience."

This year's grants include these in Prince George's County: **Makerspaces for Dancers/Movement Exploration**

Grantee: Karon Johnson
School/County: Gwynn Park High School

Project Details: In their new Makerspace for Dancers, students will explore ways to incorporate immersive technology and multimedia into their choreography. With help from Jeyvon Harvey, a local choreographer and teaching artist, students will prepare to use this technology in a series of dance concerts in the winter and spring.

Sonny House Showcase
Grantee: LeAnn Holden-Martin

School/County: Charles H. Flowers High School

Project Details: In a project designed to give students with special needs the opportunity to be seen by their abilities rather than their disabilities, Sonny House Showcase will partner students with cognitive disabilities and high school general education students in a performance, expressing themselves through dance and puppetry. Students will work with local artists to create original puppets representing themselves and dance routines incorporating accommodations for their physical limitations. This will culminate in an end of the year performance for family, friends, and the community.

Wolf Trap's annual high school grants program acknowledges high-quality instruction and performance achievements of public high school music, dance, and theater teachers. Awardees receive a financial grant in support of special projects that align with Wolf Trap's performance and education priorities. For more information about Wolf Trap's High School Grants program visit wolftrap.org/grants.

Wolf Trap's Grants for High School Performing Arts Teachers is generously supported by Capital One.

Climate from AI

like the cherry blossom bloom have historically been some of the best indicators of how natural systems around the world respond to climate change, said Matt Fitzpatrick, an ecologist and professor at the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science.

"A lot of these events are very tightly aligned with climate, especially temperature," Fitzpatrick said. "In any one year we can't just say, 'oh, it's climate change,' but these events have been trending earlier and earlier."

Cherry blossom trees adjust their blooming process depending on the warmth present in the air throughout the late winter and early spring.

The region's mild winter this year made cherry blossoms unable to reach their winter dormancy and gave experts no starting point for how to predict peak bloom this year, Litterst said.

Over the last 70 years, NPS has tracked a temperature increase of about 2.2 degrees on the Tidal Basin, which is ringed with cherry trees, Litterst said. That has corresponded to peak bloom dates moving up by about six days on average.

The cherry blossoms this year would have to reach their peak before mid-March

to break a record. The earliest peak bloom in recent history occurred on March 15, 1990.

Cherry blossoms around the Tidal Basin are resilient and have become accustomed to unpredictable spring weather during their 112 years in Washington, Litterst said.

But when cherry blossoms have to adapt to extreme weather patterns in the region, it indicates more drastic environmental issues for other species grappling with the effects of climate change.

"The players in these natural systems, some of them are resilient, some of them are not," Fitzpatrick said. "As these systems keep getting pushed towards an edge, the question is, 'when do we hit the cliff?' That's when things can start to unravel."

Pollinators in the region are a key species that could be affected by unpredictable cherry blossom bloom patterns in the future.

While cherry blossoms and other trees typically rely on temperature cues to determine when to bloom, pollinator emergence depends on other environmental factors, such as daylight duration.

"Let's say we get to a point where the cherry trees bloom so early that the blossoms are out, but the bees aren't here yet to do their part," Litterst said. "The earlier

blooming could have a detrimental effect on those interrelationships with other parts of the ecosystem."

If cherry blossoms are in full bloom before pollinators arrive, there can be a "mismatch" in timing for these two organisms. That could leave pollinators without enough food, said David Hawthorne, an associate professor of entomology at the University of Maryland.

Since Tidal Basin cherry blossoms are not native to the ecosystem, pollinators likely won't suffer as much if the trees disappear, Hawthorne said.

But cherry blossoms are a high-profile example of what is happening in hundreds of natural systems across the region grappling with mild winter weather and the effects of climate change.

"We should use these cherry blossoms as an example of important stuff that's happening in the wider world," Hawthorne said. "We obviously care about them because they're local and beautiful and do this thing every spring we celebrate. But they're also telling us what's happening to other trees worldwide."

"It's signaling that something really dramatic is happening out there in the whole world, which means in many places, it is really impactful and could be quite bad," he said.

Twelve From Salisbury University Named 2023–24 Fulbright Student Semifinalists

By JASON RHODES
Salisbury University

SALISBURY, Md. (March 2, 2023)—In 2022, a record nine from Salisbury University were selected as Fulbright Students, enabling them to live, study, conduct research and teach in Europe, Africa and South America.

This year, 12 SU Fulbright Student semifinalists hope to follow in their footsteps. They represent more than 50% of the University's applicants for the 2023–24 program.

"This is the most diverse group of semifinalists we have had," said Dr. Kristen Walton, director of SU's Nationally Competitive Fellowships Office, noting that the cohort includes Pell Grant recipients, first-generation and transfer students, as well as those from varying ethnic backgrounds and those identifying as part of the LGBTQIA+ community.

"This is a truly challenging step, and it is a great honor for these students to have been chosen," she added. "They all worked hard and were supported by a wonderful group of faculty and others around our campus community."

Six seniors and three recent graduates are being considered for English Teaching Assistantships: Samantha Bartell D'22, from Montgomery Village, MD, to Moldova; Nanayaa Boaten, a philosophy and conflict analysis and dispute resolution major

from Laurel, MD, to the Czech Republic; Gabriel Dunn, a political science and environmental studies major from Salisbury, to Indonesia; Shayna Grossberg '20, from Gaithersburg, MD, to Azerbaijan; Allison Latham, an international studies major from Lusby, MD, to Spain; Susannah Randall, an English secondary education major from Clarksburg, MD, to Montenegro; Hira Shahbaz '20, from Salisbury, to Kazakhstan; Ann Thomas, a biology major from Salisbury and member of SU's Glenda Chatham and Robert G. Clarke Honors College, to Kyrgyzstan; and Danitza Verano Roman, a political science, international studies and Spanish major from Silver Spring, MD, to Benin.

Three seniors also are up for academic study and research awards: Sarah Hancock, an art major from Ocean City, MD, to Iceland; Adebola Okusolubo, a biology major from Bowie, MD, to Kenya; and Trey Skinner, a history major from Salisbury, to Germany.

More than 100 SU students have won national and international fellowships, scholarships and awards in the past decade, including 37 Fulbright students. The U.S. Department of State and Chronicle of Higher Education have spotlighted SU as the No. 1 master's-level producer of Fulbright Students in the U.S. for 2022–23 and one of the nation's top producers of Fulbright Students for the past six years.

The Fulbright is America's flagship interna-



PHOTO COURTESY SALISBURY UNIVERSITY

Group photo of semifinalists, from left: Samantha Bartell, Sarah Hancock, Allison Latham, Nanayaa Boaten, Adebola Okusolubo, Ann Thomas and Trey Skinner. Not pictured: Gabriel Dunn, Shayna Grossberg, Susannah Randall, Danitza Verano Roman and Hira Shahbaz.

tional exchange program and is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

SU students or alumni who are interested in applying for national fellowships, may contact

Walton at kpwalton@salisbury.edu for assistance. For more information, visit www.salisbury.edu/nationalfellowships.

Learn more about SU and opportunities to Make Tomorrow Yours at www.salisbury.edu.

COMMENTARY

Marc Morial

President and CEO, National Urban League



To Be Equal:

Crushing Student Loan Debt Hinders Black Home Ownership, Feeds Racial Wealth Gap and Stalls Economic Growth

"I woke up this morning with a lot on my mind, thinking about my own mother. And the history of Black Americans locked out of every major federal relief program from the Homestead Act to the GI Bill, targeted by redlining, denied the ability to build generational wealth because of policy violence, and so we borrow and default at higher rates. I woke up this morning, family, with a lot on my mind. But when we start with the people, the policy is clear. The people demand and deserve student loan cancellation. Student loan debt cancellation will change and save lives."

—Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley

Homeownership is the primary driver of house-

hold wealth in the United States. It fosters educational achievement and civic participation, drives down crime rates and even improves health care outcomes. It remains, for good reason, a key component of the American Dream.

Skyrocketing student debt is crushing the American Dream and driving the racial wealth gap.

President Biden's debt relief plan can restore the dream for millions of Americans, but the Supreme Court seems ready to snatch it away.

This week, six states asked the Court to permanently block the Biden administration's student loan forgiveness program—a program that will provide critical relief to over 40 million borrowers most at risk of defaulting on their student loans

when the repayment pause ends. In less than a month after the student debt relief application was available, 26 million people applied or were deemed automatically eligible for relief. The need and demand for this program has been undeniable. However, since the administration has been banned from implementing its program, the weight of student loan debt has continued to impact the lives of everyday Americans and has proven to have long-term effects on other aspects of their lives including homeownership.

When new graduates enter the workforce, some average \$25,000 in student loan debt. Despite their qualifications, graduates often settle for lower-paying, lower-skill jobs just so they can start paying their loans right away. As a result, graduates in debt often miss out on the benefits that come with a degree. This is even truer for borrowers of color. Research from the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis found that after college graduation, white households receive wealth transfers from their family to help pay for things like the purchase of a home. Students of color are less likely to have wealth to finance either an education or a home purchase, leading to higher rates of loan debt. The different patterns of intergenerational transfers contribute to nearly three-quarters of Black borrowers' student loans having a higher balance today than they did when they first graduated, disproportionately limiting their homeownership possibilities.

Extensive evidence underscores how debt affects mortgage eligibility and credit score, erect clear barriers to homeownership; barriers that

wouldn't exist without the anti-Black policies that have diminished wealth-building opportunities that accelerate economic and social mobility. The racial disparities in wealth and income alone force a disproportionate number of Black students to take on greater financial risks to pursue a higher education—risks that further widen the racial homeownership gap. This is especially true for Black women. As the most educated group in the United States, Black women are more likely to be saddled with student loan debt. A report by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) found that Black women amass an average of \$41,466 of debt by college graduation, compared to the \$33,851 held against white women and \$19,500 held against white men. The numbers nearly double when you consider those who continue their education to attain their master's, PhD's, and their doctorates. This issue is also further compounded by the nation's gender and racial pay gap. Currently, a black woman only makes 63 cents compared to every dollar a white man makes, forcing Black women to take years to pay off their student loan debt.

On Tuesday, the National Urban League and other civil rights and social justice organizations led a rally outside the Supreme Court, lifting up the personal stories of those who are struggling under the weight of student debt. Many of them traveled hundreds of miles, standing for hours in the cold. The National Urban League will continue to stand with them until their voices are heard.

—March 2, 2023

Marian Wright Edelman

Founder and President Emerita, Children's Defense Fund



ChildWatch:

Women's History Month

There is an African proverb that says "women hold up half the sky." Women constitute half the world's population, but still have not realized half of the world's potential, received half of the world's resources, or exercised half of the world's power. But women have always been the invisible backbone—unseen but strong—of transforming social movements and of anchor institutions in society: our families, congregations, schools, and communities. March is Women's History Month in our nation, and a chance to reflect on women's transformational impact on American history and turn it into inspiration and action for the future.

The National Women's History Alliance, which champions women's history across the U.S. all year long, puts it this way: "History helps us learn who we are, but when we don't know our own history, our power and dreams are immediately diminished. Multicultural American women are overlooked in most mainstream approaches to U.S. history, so the

National Women's History Project champions their accomplishments and leads the drive to write women back into history. . . . The impact of women's history might seem abstract to some, and less pressing than the immediate struggles of working women today. But to ignore the vital role that women's dreams and accomplishments play in our own lives would be a great mistake. We draw strength and inspiration from those who came before us—and those remarkable women working among us today."

This annual observance is marking an anniversary this year. Its origins in the United States began 45 years ago in 1978, when the Education Task Force of Sonoma County, California's Commission on the Status of Women first celebrated "Women's History Week" in Santa Rosa. They chose the week that included March 8, International Women's Day, since that had already been celebrated in many countries for much of the 20th century and officially recognized by the United Nations one year earlier as a day to

acknowledge women's contributions and call for women's economic, political, and civil rights. Women historians and community leaders quickly spread the demand for a national commemoration, and in 1980 President Jimmy Carter responded by issuing the first presidential proclamation designating March 2–8 as National Women's History Week.

President Carter's proclamation read: "From the first settlers who came to our shores, from the first American Indian families who befriended them, men and women have worked together to build this nation. Too often the women were unsung and sometimes their contributions went unnoticed. But the achievements, leadership, courage, strength and love of the women who built America was as vital as that of the men whose names we know so well. As Dr. Gerda Lerner has noted, 'Women's history is women's right—an essential and indispensable heritage from which we can draw pride, comfort, courage, and long-range vision' . . . I urge libraries, schools, and community organizations to focus their observances on the leaders who struggled for equality—Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, Lucy Stone, Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Harriet Tubman, and Alice Paul. Understanding the true history of our country will help us to comprehend the need for full equality under the law for all our people. This goal can be achieved by ratifying the 27th Amendment to the United States Constitution, which states that 'Equality of Rights under the Law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.'"

Of course, the measure that President Carter then

hoped would become the 27th Amendment, the Equal Rights Amendment, still has not been enshrined into the Constitution. March formally became a full Women's History Month in the U.S. following a 1987 Congressional resolution, but 45 years after that fledgling Women's History Week, women's rights are under renewed attack in our nation, and American women have not yet received equality on a range of key measures, including equal pay. One of those measures of disparate outcomes hangs in the balance right now: as the Supreme Court hears arguments this week on whether to strike down President Biden's plan to cancel \$10,000 of student loan debt for low- to middle-income borrowers, women are facing a disproportionate threat. Women hold two-thirds of student loan debt in our nation. Black women, who often have fewer family wealth resources to pay for higher education, have the highest average totals. For many of these women and their families, the Biden administration's plan would bring critical relief. Now, as the Supreme Court considers the challenges to the student loan forgiveness plan from six Republican-led states and two plaintiffs, once again women have the most to gain—or lose.

Women's chances are still unequal in our nation, but our will is not and never has been. As a growing number of women gain political power all the way to the highest levels, and a growing number of young women realize how critical it is to use to use their power to vote in every election, women are once again poised to lead transforming and necessary change.

—March 3, 2023

For Maryland Professors, ChatGPT Presents an Opportunity to Rethink Instruction

By DYLAN SHULMAN
Capital News Service

As the use of artificial intelligence in various industries continues to increase, the impact of OpenAI's language model ChatGPT on higher education has become increasingly significant.

At least, that's the line ChatGPT produced after it was prompted by CNS to write the lead of an article about its own influence on higher education. Although vague and unengaging, it's not incorrect.

Since its release on Nov. 30, 2022, ChatGPT has been making headlines as an impressive chat bot powered by artificial intelligence (AI) with the capability to synthesize eerily human writing and dialogue.

ChatGPT is the latest experiment born from the same AI research and development company that recently produced DALL-E 2, the AI image generator whose works can mimic the likes of Monet. OpenAI created ChatGPT via deep learning; programmers first combined the bot with an immense swath of text pulled from the internet, then used both human supervision and automated systems to train the system on how to respond to prompts using the text.

It rocketed into the public consciousness, and the program set a record for the fastest-growing user base in history with 100 million users in January, Reuters reported. Educators have been left to consider its place in the classroom and its capacity for plagiarism.

"From an educational perspective, it's perhaps an opportunity to reconsider how we assess student learning and student progress," University of Maryland computer science professor Hal Daumé said.

Since ChatGPT can easily replicate basic understanding of certain concepts, Daumé said he's been inputting his own assignment questions into the program to see if he needs to make them more difficult. He's not as interested in surface level responses, from students using ChatGPT or not.

"I care that they understand this high-level concept, and I care that they can translate that into an implementation," he said.

He compared the recent release of ChatGPT to that of the calculator. At the time, there was a similar hysteria amongst educators concerned that computers would replace the need for students to learn foundational skills. While calculators are now universally used, mathematics profes-

sors still have their jobs.

"I'm more interested in thinking about how we can teach students to use these tools responsibly," he said.

Several school districts, including Montgomery County and Baltimore County in Maryland, have banned the program outright. On the other hand, NPR reported an associate professor at the University of Pennsylvania has incorporated it into their curriculum, and Daumé mentioned a linguistics professor at the University of Maryland who has done the same.

Daumé did imagine instances where it may make sense for a ban on ChatGPT, like in introductory classes that require assessments on entry-level concepts. He also aired its flaws: the program draws language from websites without attribution, and besides that, it's frequently inaccurate.

Virginia Byrne, an assistant professor in the School of Education and Urban Studies at Morgan State University, echoed the calculator analogy.

"We've learned how to teach with these technologies to help us instead of assuming the worst in people," Byrne said.

She agreed that plagiarism using ChatGPT is a valid issue, but said that making assessments more creative could circumvent

these concerns. Instead of an essay, consider having students make a podcast, presentation or demonstrate experiential learning, she suggested.

ChatGPT has been proven to pass a law school exam, a high school chemistry exam and an AP English essay (although, it seems its chess strategy could use some work), and has quickly become a popular method of academic dishonesty. According to a poll by The Stanford Daily, 17% of Stanford students admitted to using ChatGPT in some capacity on their assignments and exams.

Byrne cautioned against improper uses of ChatGPT by administration, citing the recent Vanderbilt University scandal in which the school used the language model to write a community email regarding the Michigan State University shooting. She voiced concerns that the clamor surrounding ChatGPT could elicit overreactions from professors.

"There's concern that ChatGPT being out in the world will fuel some people's discriminatory accusations of cheating, against particularly people whose first language isn't English. . . . That's why we want to lower the hysteria about plagiarism. And remember that people don't go to college just to cheat; that's not why our

students are here," she said.

April Logan, an associate professor in the Department of English at Salisbury University, read about ChatGPT in campus emails describing the pitfalls of the program and how to navigate concerns of plagiarism.

Logan conceded that the program presents a real temptation for students to cut corners, especially first generation students or those rundown and stressed that may be feeling overwhelmed.

"Here we have just one more system or software that makes it easy for them to maybe not make the best choice," she said.

Like Byrne, she mentioned underlying biases in faculty could lead to more unfounded accusations of plagiarism, but she also questioned the biases built into ChatGPT itself. Could it be drawing from mostly Western, euro-

See CHATGPT Page A6

The Prince George's Post

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BUSINESS AND FINANCE

Rent from A1

holders of the Landlord-Tenant Code change within 15 days of the measure's enactment. DHCD and DPIE will also provide additional information related to the requirements, including important dates and deadlines, on their website. DPIE will serve as the enforcement authority, which will include imposing fines for violations. License holders will be fined \$500 for the first violation and \$1,000 for each subsequent violation.

Prince George's County Executive Angela Alsobrooks, during a press conference prior to the vote, stated her support for CB-7 and thanked the Council for addressing the needs of distressed renters.

"I want to thank Council Member Oriadha for her leadership and compassion. I want to thank her and the other Council Members for demonstrating a true understanding of what many of our residents suffer each and every day. This legislation is extremely important to all of us. We refuse to let any Prince Georgian be priced out of their home, that's what this is about."

New units receiving a use and occupancy permit in the last five years, and affordable housing with Federal, State, or local subsidy units, are exempt from the 3% cap. Additionally, CB-007-2023 excludes affordable housing units with federal, state, or local subsidies and dwelling units that received an occupancy permit in the last five years.

A working group to study permanent rent control in Prince George's County will be established in tandem with the measure to identify permanent solutions for effectively addressing the rising cost of rent in the County.

Social Security Matters

Ask Rusty:

What's the Best Way to Start Receiving My Survivor Benefit?

By RUSSELL GLOOR,
National Social Security Advisor at the AMAC Foundation,
the non-profit arm of the Association of Mature American Citizens

Dear Rusty: When one becomes a widow/widower, what is the most efficient way to start receiving the deceased's monthly Social Security. **Signed: Still Grieving**

Dear Still Grieving: There is really only one way to start receiving surviving spouse benefits—you must contact Social Security directly to apply. You can call 1.800.772.1213 or call your local SS field office (find the number at www.ssa.gov/locator) to make an appointment to apply for your survivor benefits. These appointments are normally conducted over the phone, so a personal visit to the Social Security office isn't usually necessary.

The larger question to consider is when you should claim the survivor benefit. Like most other Social Security benefits, your age when you claim determines how much your survivor benefit will be. And a survivor benefit isn't payable in all cases. Consider these points:

- If the surviving spouse is already receiving their own SS retirement benefit and that is more than the deceased spouse was receiving, the surviving spouse continues to receive only their own higher benefit but will get a one-time lump sum death benefit of \$255.
- If the surviving spouse's own benefit is less than the deceased was receiving, the surviving spouse's benefit will be based on the higher amount.
- If the surviving spouse has reached their full retirement age (FRA), the survivor's benefit will be 100% of the amount the deceased was receiving. If the widow(er) has not yet reached their FRA when they claim their survivor benefit, the amount will be reduced (by 4.75% for each full year earlier than FRA).
- A survivor benefit reaches maximum at the survivor's FRA. If the surviving spouse hasn't yet reached FRA, they have the option to delay claiming their survivor benefit until it reaches maximum at their FRA. There is one exception to this: if the surviving spouse was already receiving only a spousal benefit from the deceased (and not their own SS retirement benefit), the survivor benefit will be automatically awarded regardless of the survivor's age.
- If the surviving spouse hasn't yet claimed their own SS retirement benefit, they have the option to claim only their survivor benefit first and permit their personal SS retirement benefit to grow (up to age 70). That would be prudent if the survivor's own SS retirement benefit at age 70 will be higher than their maximum survivor benefit at their full retirement age.
- If you haven't yet reached your full retirement age and are still working, Social Security has an earnings test which limits how much you can earn before some benefits are taken away. The limit for 2023 is \$21,240 and if that is exceeded, they will take away benefits equal to \$1 for every \$2 you are over the limit. The earnings test goes away when you reach your FRA.

So, as you can see, there are several things to consider as you decide when to claim your Social Security benefits as a widow or widower. I hope the above information helps you make an informed choice.

The 2.4 million member Association of Mature American Citizens [AMAC] www.amac.us is a vibrant, vital senior advocacy organization that takes its marching orders from its members. AMAC Action is a non-profit, non-partisan organization representing the membership in our nation's capital and in local Congressional Districts throughout the country. And the AMAC Foundation (www.AmacFoundation.org) is the Association's non-profit organization, dedicated to supporting and educating America's Seniors. Together, we act and speak on the Association members' behalf, protecting their interests and offering a practical insight on how to best solve the problems they face today. Live long and make a difference by joining us today at www.amac.us/join-amac.

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Governor Moore Hosts Community Roundtable, Testifies in House Hearings in Support of the Fair Wage Act

By PRESS OFFICER
Maryland Governor News

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (Feb. 27, 2023)—Governor Wes Moore today hosted a community round table at the State House and testified in the Maryland House Economic Matters Committee Hearing in support of the Fair Wage Act, presented as HB 549. The legislation accelerates the planned increase to a \$15 minimum wage, fully implementing the increase for all covered employers as of October 1, 2023.

"I believe that we can be a state that lifts up both workers and businesses. I believe that we can help families thrive economically, and help businesses to grow. Those who say it's one or the other are offering a false choice," said Governor Moore. "My legislative agenda rejects that false choice. It proposes new investments in Maryland's economic competitiveness and invests in the innovation economy. These proposals will help Maryland businesses to grow and support the next generation of small business owners."

The Fair Wage Act will also increase the family income of hundreds of thousands of Marylanders, including approximately 126,000 Maryland children. The bill indexes the minimum wage to the Consumer Price Index beginning on July 1, 2025, capped at 5% per year. Indexing

allows for employee wages to keep pace with inflation and provides more predictability for businesses who are able to plan around regularly scheduled, incremental increases in labor costs.

Participants in today's roundtable included Comptroller Brooke Lierman; Maryland Department of Labor Acting Secretary Portia Wu; Maryland Department of Commerce Acting Secretary Kevin A. Anderson; small business owners, advocates, and workers. The session offered the opportunity for leadership from across the Moore-Miller administration to hear directly from Marylanders about how fair wages help families thrive and help businesses stay competitive.

"I was thrilled to participate in this discussion with business owners and advocates on the importance of the Governor's Fair Wage Act legislation that accelerates the phase-in of the \$15 minimum wage and indexes it to the Consumer Price Index for future years," said Comptroller Brooke Lierman. "Our state's economy is stronger when more Marylanders are able to earn enough money to support their families, and this legislation is a step in that direction."

"Increasing the minimum wage to keep up with inflation not only helps workers to support themselves and their families but also ensures they have the stability to

pursue greater opportunity," said Maryland Department of Labor Acting Secretary Wu. "The sensible wage increases in the Fair Wage Act will help Maryland to keep pace with other leading states in our region and across the country and strengthen our economy through expanding Maryland's workforce, supporting stable jobs, and improving productivity."

"Fair wages have the benefit of making businesses more competitive and giving them an edge by improving the culture of their workplace and making it easier to attract and, most importantly, retain talented employees," said Maryland Commerce Acting Secretary Anderson. "When workers are paid wages that keep up with inflation, that translates into a more productive and stable workforce and better customer service which ultimately results in a greater bottom line for businesses."

"Minimum wage increases don't go into workers' pockets and disappear; the money recirculates as spending at local businesses like ours," said Gina Schaefer, A Few Cool Hardware Stores Owner. "Whole communities are strengthened; and investing in employees is the best investment a business can make. Customers keep coming back to businesses where employees are happy to work and deliver great customer service."

Service Year from A1

involved in giving back to their communities. It was founded in 1986, and has engaged over 3.2 million young people in service in the last decade.

"Our biggest strategy is what we call the ask. We know that most young people volunteer for the first time because someone that they know asked them to," said Karen Daniel, vice president of programs at YSA. "We really work hard to make sure that all young people are invited to serve and we know that not all young people are asked to serve at the same rates."

Similar is the National Youth Leadership Council, whose goal since its founding in 1983, is to help young people become civically engaged and informed through serving learning, in the hopes of creating a more "just, sustainable and peaceful world." The group strengthens the sustainability of service learning opportunities in organizations and schools, as well as increases the quality of the service opportunities.

"The benefit of quality service learning is that there are actual outcomes for the students as well as the community," said Amy Meuers, chief executive officer of NYLC. "We see increases in engagement, we see development of academic skills and investment in student success through service learning."

Other national organizations dedicated to offering service opportunities are AmeriCorps, which has been around since 1993, the Peace Corps, founded in 1961, Teach for America, established in 1990, and the more recent Report for America, started in 2017, among others.

Worldwide, there are organizations such as the Republic of the Philippines' National Youth Commission, and South Africa's National Youth Service Programme. Both aim to help combat issues affecting youth in their respective countries.

NYC was created in 1995 with the mission of promoting sustainable programs and policies that benefit Filipino youth. One of the things it offers is a Government Internship Program, which started out as a summer work program for students, where unemployed and out-of-school youth are hired as interns and are paid a monthly stipend.

NYDA, the parent of the National Youth Service Programme, was created by an act of South Africa's Parliament in 2008 for the purpose of addressing issues faced by the youth in the nation. It offers a variety of programs, such as entrepreneurship grants, business management training and a jobs program, which helps young people get connected with opportunities they have skills for.

Elements of all of these programs can be seen in Maryland's Serving Every Region Through Vocational Exploration Act

of 2023, or HB546, which was introduced Feb. 2, on behalf of the Moore administration. The bill establishes and funds the Service Year Option, and has bipartisan support. Its Senate counterpart is SB551.

Under the act, participants would be placed in a service job for a minimum of 30 hours a week, paid \$15 an hour by their employer, and receive mentorship and job training. According to the bill, the service job may be in the public or private sector, but no other specifics have been outlined.

Other things that have yet to be established are what year the program would be available to potential participants, who will be leading the new department or what other positions need to be filled in the department.

Moore testified at both the House hearing in the Appropriations Committee on Feb. 21, and the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee on Feb. 22.

"I believe deeply that all the challenges that our state and all the challenges that our nation are facing, that it is going to be service that is going to help to save us," Moore told the House committee in his testimony. "From the first day of my administration, I have worked to make Maryland a state of service, and it is a mission that all of us collectively are on."

The program would be open to high school graduates and those who have an equivalent degree. The new department is in charge of the design and administration of the program, as well as creating a statewide network of participants and promoting the program to potential participants and employers.

"The Service Year Option established by this bill will provide young people of every background and of every jurisdiction all throughout the state the opportunity to serve our state while also gaining real-world perspectives, skills and experience," Moore said.

This is not the first time the state of Maryland has expanded access to service. In 2016, HB1488 established the Maryland Corps, and was signed by former Gov. Larry Hogan in May of that year. The program aimed to provide service opportunities that addressed community needs across the state for at least 100 participants. Though a bill that expanded and revised the program passed the General Assembly last year, both the chair and executive director positions remain vacant.

Moore's executive order establishing a state department to oversee service and civic engagement makes Maryland one of just a few other states to have these cabinet-level agencies. For example, in California, the state office California Volunteers, led by the state's Chief Service Officer Josh Fryday, helps to oversee Californians' civic engagement, service and volunteering.

"Having a dedicated state agency is a powerful way to value the importance of

service in our democratic society," said Fryday. "Governor Gavin Newsom is a strong proponent of service, elevating the position of California Chief Service Officer to Cabinet-level and investing millions into creating more opportunities. Under Governor Newsom's leadership, California Volunteers has been focused on creating more paid-service opportunities to tackle California's biggest challenges, such as pandemic-related education loss, food insecurity and the climate crisis. We are thrilled by Governor Moore's leadership to double down on the power of service, and know Maryland will benefit greatly as a result."

Some of California Volunteers' programs include College Corps, which partners with campuses across the state to allow students to earn money to help pay for their education by placing them in community-based organizations to do service, Youth Jobs Corps, which partners with local governments and community organizations to provide jobs and job trainings to underserved youth and AmeriCorps.

"We often describe service as a win-win-win. For individuals, they build connections, develop leadership skills, and gain valuable work experience. For the community, service builds connections between individuals of different beliefs, backgrounds and life experiences – helping to bridge divides in our too often polarized society. And for the whole state, we are investing in the next generation of leaders to address our greatest challenges," Fryday said. "We know service shapes lives and changes communities."

However, some Republicans are unhappy with the way the Department of Civic and Service Innovation is being established so far in Maryland. According to a Feb. 22 press release from the Maryland Senate Republican Caucus, Republicans want more transparency on the department, and the ability to work with the governor on its creation.

A secretary for this department has yet to be named by the Moore administration, something Senate President Bill Ferguson, D-Baltimore City, indicated in a news conference on Friday that the legislature was anxiously awaiting in order to move forward with the service year priority.

"From my perspective as the president of the Senate it is essential that all of the secretaries be named and up for consideration for the Senate by the time we leave session," said Ferguson.

Despite these concerns, Moore is dedicated to making Maryland a state of service. "Service will help to save us, because it will help us get to know each other better," Moore said. "Service will give each person an opportunity to actually spend time with others who have a shared and a common understanding and who make sure that their fingerprints are on the future of this state."

