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Billie Jean King poses with the Champion of Equality Award winners at the 2023 US Open, Thursday, Sept. 7, 2023 in Flushing, NY. Upper Marlboro resident Brenda Gilmore is seated in the front row, at left.

USTA / Upper Marlboro Resident Receives National Honor at US Open

By PRESS OFFICER
United States Tennis Association (USTA)

FLUSHING, N.Y. (Sept. 8, 2023)—The US Open's inaugural 'Champions of Equality' event, a celebration of the fight for equality and the pioneering women who have led the way, saw formal honors bestowed on tennis' foremost trailblazers at both the professional and grassroots levels ahead of Thursday (Sept. 7) night's women's singles semifinals.

Upper Marlboro resident Brenda Gilmore received the US Open's inaugural Champions of Equality honor at this year's US Open in Flushing, NY, representing the USTA Mid-Atlantic. Ms. Gilmore co-founded the Prince George's County National Junior Tennis and Learning (NJTL) network offering free and low-cost tennis and education programming to local youth.

The legendary Billie Jean King received the night's Lifetime Achievement Award, the iconic Venus Williams received the first US Open Billie Jean King Champion of Equality Award and 16 women nominated from the USTA Sections were honored with their own Champion of Equality awards for their contributions at the grassroots level put toward the ongoing effort of leveling the playing field for all.

A 'Be Open' event presented by Cadillac—who also sponsored the broadcast of the iconic Battle of the Sexes match in 1973—Champions of Equality featured a dynamic conversation with King and Williams, tennis' trailblazers who have been at the forefront of the fight for equal pay, alongside Telva McGruder, Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer at General Motors, and award-winning broadcast journalist Christiane Amanpour, who moderated.

Maryland's 2023 Traffic Fatalities May Top 2007's Grim Death Toll

By LUCY HUBBARD
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (Oct. 4, 2023)—Maryland is on track to see the highest number of roadway fatalities since 2007, according to Motor Vehicle Administrator Christine Nizer, with Prince George's County leading the state in fatal crashes.

As of Oct. 4, Maryland has seen 456 roadway fatalities this year, according to Maryland Department of Transportation's Crash Data Dashboard. Last year, 564 people died on Maryland roadways, while in 2007, 615 people were killed on state roads.

"We are on track at this point,

if the numbers stay consistent, to go over 600 fatalities," Nizer said during the Transportation Revenue and Infrastructure Needs meeting last month. "We have not seen that kind of numbers since 2007 and so we are sounding the alarm."

More traffic around the fall and winter holidays often increases the toll.

"We see a lot of fatal crashes during holiday weekends and especially during those highly traveled holidays," Elena Russo, a spokesperson for the Maryland State Police, said. "We see a higher volume of traffic and with a higher volume of traffic, as you can guess, we see a lot more vi-

olations of the rules of the road."

The number of roadway fatalities in Maryland rose in 2020. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic decreasing travel across the state, Maryland saw 574 roadway fatalities in 2020, 39 more deaths than the year prior. Traffic deaths continued higher than typical pre-pandemic numbers into this year.

On Sept. 12, Gov. Wes Moore announced more than \$11.5 million in funding for 85 organizations, agencies and programs working to improve roadway safety in Maryland. The money

See TRAFFIC Page A2

Maryland's Push to Phase Out Gas-powered Car Sales by 2035

By ILANA WILLIAMS
Capital News Service

When Andrea Crooms drove her rental electric vehicle (EV) to a meeting she was late to in Calvert County, she knew there were electric vehicle chargers that took a long time to charge along her route, but did not want to spend five to 10 minutes finding adequate charging. Instead, she had to find a charger near her house.

"There's lots of dead zones," Crooms, the director of the Prince George's County Department of the Environment, said. "The level of planning that you

have to do to drive across the state right now is not really reasonable."

Maryland's Advanced Clean Car Regulations took effect on Sept. 18 in response to Gov. Wes Moore's announcement of his support to phase out gas-powered passenger car and light-truck sales by 2035.

The regulation is similar to California's ban to get rid of gas-powered cars in the next 15 years.

According to the Maryland Department of Transportation, the state has seen an increase in electric vehicles every year. However, counties across Maryland are struggling to develop the

charging infrastructure the growth requires.

There are 81,000 registered electric vehicles in Maryland, though MDOT plans to have at least 300,000 registered electric vehicles by 2025, Deron Lovaas, chief of environment and sustainable transportation at MDOT, told Capital News Service. To help with the increase, the state is working with local jurisdictions on a tool that maps existing charging stations and where new charging stations can be built.

Over the last five years, EV

See CAR SALES Page A5

Bowie High School Supports the Old Town Bowie Community Festival 2023

By C/PO1 AARON EDWARDS
Bowie High School NJROTC

Bowie High School NJROTC Cadets supported the Old Town Bowie Festival on Saturday, October 7, 2023. The day began cool, damp and brisk. The cadets were under the leadership of Capt Anderson (USN Ret.) and GySgt Hinton (USMC Ret.). Cadets from Bowie High School NJROTC assisted vendors with setting up tables and traffic control. The City of Bowie encompasses a very large tract of land in northeastern Prince George's County that was once composed of a vast number of colonial and early national period plantations, farms and

early churches. Every year the community gathers to celebrate the rich tradition and heritage of the people with a festival, though the themes change, the good time for all remains the same.

The Bowie High School Cadets received a surprise welcome by the Mayor of Bowie, the Honorable Tim Adams, who asked that the cadets join him at center stage for the playing of the National Anthem and the opening remarks. The NJROTC Cadets assembled around the Mayor as he gave an impressive speech on the history of the Old Bowie Festival and the City of Bowie.

Cadets involved were able to see the value of supporting their community. As-

sisting with the setup of displays by street vendors, cadets were able to utilize their citizenship, communication, and initiative skills to interact with members of the community in which they live. The Senior Cadet was Cadet Kira Mack, a member of the Bowie NJROTC Color Guard. Cadets were able to earn a combined total of 45 community service hours.

Bowie High School NJROTC Cadets and Leaders received a surprise welcome by the Mayor of Bowie, the Honorable Tim Adams.

PHOTO COURTESY
BOWIE HIGH SCHOOL NJROTC



Five Prince George's County Businesses Make The Washington Business Journal Top 100 Private Companies List

Power Solutions, LLC, FreeState Electrical Cos, PowerTrain, ERP International, LLC and K. Neal Truck and Bus Center lead for Prince George's County

By PRESS OFFICER
Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation

LARGO, Md. (Oct. 6, 2023)—Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation congratulates five Prince George's County based companies for making The Washington Business Journal Top 100 Private Companies List. With Power Solutions, LLC leading as the number thirty-five mention and FreeState Electrical Cos, PowerTrain, ERP International, LLC and K. Neal Truck and Bus Center in the 59-96 slots, the accomplishment is another testament that Expansion Starts Here in Prince George's County.

"This is yet another major listing of Prince George's County based companies in The Washington Business Journal this year, following company's making the Top 100 Public Companies List," said David Iannucci, President & CEO of Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation. "We are Prince George's Proud of these companies that have brought exciting new employment opportunities

and industry sectors while also creating a better quality of life for all Prince George's County residents. Expansion starts here!"

Power Solutions, LLC, located in Bowie, MD, is the Mid-Atlantic region's premier electrical contractor for mission-critical environments, Power Solutions was founded and is run by former electricians. For over 20 years, Power Solutions has been working in partnership with some of the country's largest general contractors—crafting, building and maintaining electrical systems for hospitals, data centers, medical laboratories, telecommunications centers, government and military institutions and more.

Freestone Electrical Cos., located in Laurel, MD, has won numerous awards for quality, craftsmanship and overall excellence thanks to its dedicated and highly skilled personnel. In addition to being recognized as a Best In Class specialty contractor, Freestone has also been chosen to receive multiple awards for its exemplary safety and risk control record through its participation in the Archway Captive Insurance Company.

PowerTrain, located in Landover, MD, was founded in 1994 as a woman-owned, small business. Since then, they have supported thousands of government and commercial projects on a wide variety of human performance initiatives. In a rapidly evolving industry in which technological adaptability and innovation are critical, PowerTrain is proud to celebrate 29 years in the business.

ERP International, LLC, located in Laurel, MD, is commemorating its fifteenth year as a comprehensive science and technology solutions provider to federal agencies, providing mission services in the areas of health, national security, and defense.

K. Neal Truck and Bus Center, located in Hyattsville and Capitol Heights, MD, has been a mainstay in Prince George's County, Md. for more than 40 years. K. Neal is an award winning, full-service, minority-owned commercial truck and bus dealership committed to improving fleet uptime, anticipating the future of mobility, integrating emerging technology and supporting the profitability of the transportation ecosystem.

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TOWNS *and* NEIGHBORS

In & Around Morningside-Skyline

Ange Meoli, 65 years with the federal government, dies at 88

Angelo Anthony Meoli, longtime resident of Camp Springs and lifelong volunteer at St. Philip the Apostle, died September 27 surrounded by family and friends, in his home at Village Crossing at Wormans Mill Assisted Living Community in Frederick.

Ange grew up in Berwyn, Pa., the oldest of the three sons of Peter and Victoria Meoli. His family owned a general store turned wholesale meat market. He graduated from Treddyffrin/Easttown H. S. in 1953, College of the Holy Cross, in Worcester, Mass., 1957 and graduate school at the University of Pennsylvania, before completing a two-year tour with the U.S. Army, 18 months as a radio operator in Germany.

In September 1960, he returned home to his first federal government job at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard. On June 16, 1962, Ange and Mary Marlyn Pasquarello were married.

He transferred to Naval Oceanographic in Suitland in 1966, settled in a home on Cable Avenue in Camp Springs, and became involved at St. Philip's.

At work, he was a key member of the team seeking to create a new agency that would combine the mapping and charting elements of the U.S. Department of Defense. He spent the next 24 years advising agency directors in the "subtle science of human resource management." He ended his career with the creation with the new National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA).

He retired, served as consultant to several federal agencies, and helped create a new organization, National Geospatial-Intelligence Alumni Association, serving as president and webmaster over the years.

Ange and Marlyn were amazing volunteers at St. Philip's. He was a lector, president of the Home & School, chair of the Parish Council and more than I can list here. He also worked with the Auth Road/Camp Springs Civic Association, loved "Robert's Rules of Order," and was involved in every school, Scout troop, and sports program of his children.

In the senior-living chapter of their lives, they continued organizing and leading such groups as the Resident Council, Catholic Community, Train Club at Heartlands Senior Living Community in Ellicott City. Ange became the first resident of the Village Crossing at Wormans Mill where he was known as the "Mayor of Village Crossing."

Marlyn, Ange's wife of 58 years and brother Dominic, predeceased him. Survivors include his children, Nicole, Peter, Victoria, Marc and Andrew; their spouses; grandchildren; and brother Peter Meoli. His funeral Mass was at St. Philip's.

Town of Morningside

Trunk-or-Treat, Morningside's Halloween celebration is on Saturday, Oct. 28. If you want to participate by decorating your car or have the trunk open with Halloween treats, call the Town at 301-736-2301 to reserve. And there'll be a movie, games, food for sale and a Halloween costume contest for all ages. Please note, "for all ages," so you can compete, no matter how old you are.

The next Town Meeting is Tuesday, October 17, 7 p.m.

Neighbors & other good people

Christine Webb, of Camp Springs, died Oct. 2, just four months after of the death of her son Shawn on May 30. I'll have an obit for her next week.

Gisele Booker, of Clinton, a 1973 graduate of La Reine High School, died in July. She resumed her education in the 1980s, attending Mary Washington College, in Virginia; and Monterey Peninsula College, Hartnell College, and Golden Gate University where she earned her BS in 1985.

I congratulate grandson Conor McHale, on being presented the 2023 Fine Arts Volunteer of the Year award at Bishop McNamara High School. He has spent many hours building sets for the school plays. Right now, he's working on the set for the fall musical, "Guys and Dolls," featuring my great-granddaughter Mary McHale as Miss Adelaide.

DNA match unites cousins

Jody Bowman Nyers recently traveled to Ocean City from her home in Conway, S.C., to meet cousins she knew nothing about until a DNA match through 23&Me put them together earlier this year. Jody's birth father had two sisters who had children who didn't know Jody.

She says, It was a wonderful visit, meeting her cousins for the first time. Goes to show that after all the years apart, they were able to discover what each other's lives have been like and now to make up for lost time and visit as often as they can.

Jody advises everyone to "make the best of every good situation."

by Mary McHale 301-735-3451

Break-in at Suitland Road Baptist Church

Parishioner Carolyn Pruitt, of Skyline, called with the news. She said, on September 29, the culprit broke one of the side windows to get into the church and stole a few things. Fortunately, nothing major, and no one was hurt. An arrest has not been made.

The church had been closed by Covid, but recently reopened for services at 11 a.m. every Sunday. Also, community outreach conference Bible Study is available by calling 617-769-8377.

Changing landscape

The House of Jerk, a Jamaican eatery, has opened on Suitland Road, in the shop which started life as Taste Freeze. I don't know much about Jerk but will give you a report once I've tried it.

A home at 6713 Larches Court, in Morningside, has sold for \$220,000.

Walk-in pet adoptions resume

Animal Services Facility & Adoption Center has resumed adoption of all pets, including dogs. To minimize the risk of disease, visitors are prohibited from walking through the facility. Instead, the staff will assist buyers in selecting the perfect pet.

Also, they are looking for volunteers to help walk and socialize dogs, play with cats, assist with feeding animals, cleaning, office work, off-site events and more. If you are 18 or older, and are interested in helping with animals, contact www.princegeorgespets4us.com or call 301-780-7200 for information.

Is there an old TV gathering dust in your basement?

Electronics Recycling & Household Hazardous Waste Disposal, Saturday, Oct. 28, at Friendly High School in Ft. Washington, and Saturday, Nov. 4, at High Point High School, Beltsville, both 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. View a list of acceptable electronics and HHW items online at bit.ly/pgcwaste-facilities.

Milestones

Happy Birthday to Mildred Peaire and Carolyn Williams, Oct. 16; Carol Kline De-Graba, Andrew Nicholas Smith and VFW 9619's Nola Cook, Oct. 18.

Happy 43rd anniversary to Michael and Anita (Fulton) Freeman who were married October 18, 1980.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 15, 2023 Little Chapel Food Pantry

Please note that the next St. Philip's Little Chapel Food Pantry Distribution will be held this Sunday, October 15, 2023, from 9 a.m. to Noon, while supplies last. Our Pantry is located behind the main church building at the corner of 6th and Prince George Streets in Historic Laurel (by the playground), one block off of Main Street. We will have non-perishable items, frozen items, and some produce available while supplies last.

Ebenezer A.M.E. Church Poetry Ministry to host 2023 NAHM celebration, "Daring to Soar Through the Arts" with Featured Poet, Gayle Danley

Join the Ebenezer AME Church Poetry Ministry for our 2023 National Arts and Humanities Month (NAHM) celebration, "Daring to Soar Through the Arts" with Featured Poet, Gayle Danley; Featured Musician, Djembe Drummer, Doc Powell; and The Psalmists of Solomon.

This Poetry & Praise event is free and includes an Open Mic. All ages are welcome. Light refreshments will be served. Free-will donations are accepted.

Date: Friday, October 20, 2023, 7-9 p.m.

Location: Ebenezer A.M.E. Church, 7707 Allentown Road (Rms 303 & 304), Fort Washington, MD 20744

Traffic from A1

is destined for measures such as overtime traffic enforcement, to prevent distracted or impaired driving and to promote use of seat belts and child seats.

Changes in driving behaviors since 2020 are at least partly responsible for the increase in roadway fatalities, said Ragina Ali, public and government affairs manager for the American Automobile Association - Mid Atlantic.

"We know there were less people on the roadways, at least in our area and across most of the country, but it seemed like those who were driving were engaging in more dangerous and risky behaviors," Ali said. "That they kind of thought the roadways were open and raceways and we did definitely see an alarming increase in dangerous driving behaviors."

The unsafe and reckless driving habits that proliferated during 2020 have continued into 2023, she said.

"Any increase in the fatalities on our highways is alarming," said Russo. "And when we see our numbers increasing, it should be a wake-up call to motorists to sort of revisit the rules of the road."

The leading causes of roadway fatalities have been consistent in the years since 2020. Over the last four years, distracted driving has been involved in the most crashes, followed by speed. Often, though, several things contribute to a crash.

"In some instances, a crash may have multiple factors," Ali said. "In other words, somebody may be impaired and be distracted. They may be distracted and speeding."

According to John Seng, founder of the Maryland Coalition for Roadway Safety, a shortage of police officers monitoring roadways and, ironically, an increase in speed cameras encourages speeding.

"(When) you get to drive 11 to 12 miles over the speed limit and still not get a ticket for speeding through electronic speed enforcement," Seng said, "you are tacitly saying, 'It's OK if you speed eight miles over the speed limit.'"

According to Russo, law enforcement agencies across the country have faced difficulties recruiting officers.

"Like every law enforcement agency in this nation right now, we're having a tough time recruiting individuals who are qualified for the job," Russo said. "One of the primary reasons may be public perception at this time of law enforcement. In the media, you've seen a lot of high-profile incidents that include police misconduct ... and therefore our citizens may have lost trust in their law enforcement agency."

While the number of crashes has decreased every year since 2018, the number of fatal crashes continues to rise, according to MDOT. In 2018, one in every 243 crashes was fatal. Comparatively, in 2022, one in every 203 crashes was fatal.

Prince George's County has led the state every year at least since 2016 with more fatal crashes than any other county, according to MDOT's Crash Data Dashboard. In 2022, 121 roadway fatalities were reported in Prince George's County, 21% of the statewide total.

Just a few days ago, on Sept. 29, four people died in a crash in Prince George's County after their car ran into a tree on Woodmore Road.

Commuters' reliance on Prince George's roadways is one reason the county sees higher rates of fatal accidents than any other county in Maryland, according to Ron Weiss, a member of the MD Route 210 Traffic Safety Committee.

"A lot of people travel through Prince George's County to get to the District to work," Weiss said. "A lot of the traffic on our roads is commuting back and forth from the Beltway and I think that plays a part (in) it."

One area of concern for drivers in Prince George's County is Maryland Route 210, known colloquially as Indian Head Highway. According to Rev. Robert L. Screen, founder of MD Route 210 Traffic Safety Committee, in 2022 10 people died on the 14-mile segment of MD 210 in Prince George's County.

"People are scared, they're nervous, they're anxious," Screen said. "I can't tell you the number of people that avoid 210, they go on other roads to avoid going on Indian Head Highway. The reputation precedes itself in the mindset of a lot of people that live in this community."

According to Screen, Route 210, sees higher volumes of traffic than other highways because it offers access to Washington, D.C., which when combined with increasing populations in Charles County and St. Mary's County from infrastructure improvements has meant more wrecks.

"It's got a reputation in the area and it's not a good reputation," Weiss said. "It reflects not just on Fort Washington or Accokeek or Oxon Hill; it reflects poorly on all of Prince George's County and Maryland."

Brandywine-Aquasco

by Audrey Johnson 301-922-5384

FALL BAZAAR

Please join us for a Fall Bazaar on November 18, 2023, from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Asbury United Methodist Church Women in Faith, 4004 Accokeek Road, Brandywine, Maryland 20613. Crafts, silent auctions and more. Surprise someone by purchasing that unique gift for the holiday.

For table rentals or more information contact: Minister Pearl Chase at 240-417-6117, email: pearlchase621@gmail.com, Sister Evelyn Spriggs at 202-746-5071, email: evelynspriggs31@gmail.com.

PETER A. GROSS SR. SCHOLARSHIP MEMORIAL FUND. INC.

The Pete A. Gross, Sr. Scholarship Memorial Fund, Inc. has selected their 2023-2024 scholarship recipients. There are four outstanding students that will receive scholarships to support their respective college educations. The scholarship recipients are Jadon Carter (Bowie State University); Malachi Tolbert (Frostburg State University); Mayfair Quaye (Old Dominion University); and Chyanne Barbour (Prince George's Community College).

This scholarship program enables local youth to continue their education on the collegiate level. The organization has a long-standing history of service to local communities, and these funds help support those who exhibit the same commitment. Congratulations students for your high achievements and thanks to all who supported the Scholarship fund. There was no award ceremony held this year and all checks were mailed to each recipient.

CONGRATULATIONS MAKAYLA

Congratulations to Makayla Eugene who attends North Carolina A&T, the daughter of Curtis and Stephanie Eugene of Brandywine, Maryland. Makayla was featured by the NCAT College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences for presenting on her intern this past summer as a Lead Classroom Teacher for D.C. Arts and Education.

"Proud of her as admirably just showing up on the school's farm, was very difficult. She showed up but the school thought enough of her presentation to make her 1 of 4 (out of ninety-eight students) that they showcased," said Stephanie Eugene.

MCKINLEY HAYES

McKinley Hayes, a resident of Prince George's County, received his Bachelor of Science Degree from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. He received his Master of Education degree in Guidance and Counseling from Bowie State University and pursued additional post graduate work at University of Maryland College

Park, Trinity College, Catholic University of America, and Nova University.

As a graduate of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Mr. Hayes has remained an active member of UMES National Alumni Association since graduation. He has had numerous workshops and receptions for the sole purpose of recruiting students who can enhance the University. He also served as President and Vice-President of the Greater Washington Metropolitan Area Alumni Chapter. As an alumnus of University of Maryland Eastern Shore, he is one of the recipients of the Presidential Medal of Honor and numerous other awards. Two of the highest honors he has received were the Distinguished Alumni Award from the National Association for Equal Opportunity (NAFEO) and an inductee in the University of Maryland Eastern Shore Hall of Excellence. As a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. he has been involved with chartering a few chapters as well as involved with the Guide Right Program and Social Action Committees. In the area of community service, McKinley believes in giving back and making a community a better place.

ERIC SPENCER

Eric Spencer is a native of Prince George's County, Maryland. Spencer earned a Bachelor of Science Degree from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore in 1985 and a master's degree from Ohio University in 1987. He has been actively involved in supporting the University of Maryland Eastern Shore by serving two terms as President of the Washington Metropolitan Area Alumni Chapter and is currently serving his second term as Financial Secretary of the National Alumni Association. Mr. Spencer will begin a three-year term as a member of the UMES Board of Visitors in December 2023. During his time on campus in Princess Anne, Spencer was a point guard on the 1980-81 and 1981-82 basketball teams, a member of the Gamma Xi Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., Junior Class President in 1983, 1984 Student Activities Board President, Sports Editor of the Campus Newspaper and Yearbook and Mr. Senior in 1984.

READY 2 READ STORYTIME

Bring your preschoolers and enjoy stories, songs, finger plays and more Friday, November 3, 2023, from 10:15 a.m.-10:45 a.m. at the Prince George's County Memorial Library System Bowie Branch. Age group: Young children (0-5 years). You must register to attend. The address is 15210 Annapolis Road, Bowie, Maryland 20715. Telephone 240-455-5451. Relay Dial 7-1-1 to place call through Maryland Relay.

COMMUNITY

Maryland's First Black Film Festival Launched

KA ZARR Entertainment, an award-winning film production company, announced the launch of the Maryland Black Film Festival (MBFF), the first film festival in Maryland dedicated exclusively to showcasing films that highlight the Black experience. The festival will be held March 4, 2024 in Greenbelt, MD

By PRESS OFFICER
KA ZARR Entertainment

BRANDYWINE, Md. (Oct. 1, 2023)—(PR.com)—The MBFF is the vision of KA ZARR Entertainment CEO and award-winning indie filmmaker KA ZARR COLEMAN. KA ZARR created the festival to provide a platform for Maryland's talented Black filmmakers, directors, producers, actors, and crews to showcase their work. The MBFF will feature narrative films, documentaries, shorts, web series, and music videos from filmmakers across Maryland.

"There is so much amazing talent in Maryland, but not enough opportunities for Black filmmakers to showcase their work," without seemingly bias political agendas, said KA ZARR. "The MBFF is going to change that. This festival will be a celebration of Black art, Black stories, and Black talent. It's going to be an exciting annual event that brings the community together to experience the power of film and visual storytelling.

The MBFF will kick off with an opening night gala, followed by 2 days of film screenings, Q&A's, and a networking event. Awards will be presented for Best Narrative Feature, Best Documentary, Best Director, and other categories.

"Maryland has a long history of filmmaking, but filmmakers of color have faced disproportionate challenges in finding funding and distribution for their projects," said KA ZARR Coleman, CEO. "The MBFF will shine a light on these filmmakers and giving them a platform to share their creative vision. This festival is an important step toward building a more inclusive film community in Maryland.

The MBFF is currently accepting film submissions. Filmmakers can submit their films for consideration via <https://filmfreeway.com/MBFF2024> through January 6, 2024. **Tickets for the MBFF will go on sale October 15, 2023.**

About KA ZARR Entertainment CEO & Founder: KA Zarr Coleman is a 16-year, 22-time multi-award-winning international Indie filmmaker, cinematographer, Author, TV show host, and Custom Italian Shoe Designer. KA Zarr is motivational speaker in the film entertainment industry teaching Masterclasses. He has acquired well 144 combined professional Actors, Producers, directors, and production crew credits on the Internet Movie Database (IMDB). KA Zarr founded KA Zarr Productions which later became KA Zarr Entertainments, LLC, a full-service film and media production company based out of the Prince George's County area.

Council Member Krystal Oriadha Partners With Community Group to Provide District 7 Security Cameras

District 7 residents can now apply to receive a camera and funds for a one year subscription

By TIFFANY HANNON
Prince George's County Council Media

On March 21, 2023, Council Member Krystal Oriadha passed legislation to provide vouchers or rebates to offset the cost of security cameras for residents in the county. This was in response to the tragic death of Jayz Agnew, a 13-year-old boy shot while raking leaves in his front yard last year. There is no known surveillance video of the shooter which has stalled leads on bringing justice to the family for this senseless act of violence.

Residents have been inquiring about this program since Council Member Oriadha passed the legislation and negotiated its funding into the FY2024 budget. The District 7 office has been actively following up with the County Executive's office regarding updates on the roll out of this program. In the interim, while we await a response, Council Member Oriadha is stepping up to fill the gap for District 7 residents.

This program is different from the countywide program and will only serve District 7 residents. Council Member Oriadha has partnered with the organization Community on the Frontlines which will provide free security cameras with an option to help with installation and funds towards a one year subscription fee.

Applicants' property must be within District 7 to apply. Applications are now being accepted. Supplies are limited and will be distributed on a first come, first serve basis.

The U.S. Navy's "NIMITZ" Virtual Reality Mobile Experience Visits Bowie High School

By C/PO1 AARON EDWARDS
Bowie High School NJROTC

The Navy's Virtual Reality Mobile Experience, NIMITZ, made a remarkable visit to Bowie High School on Friday, September 22, 2023, along with local recruiters in the area who came to support the event and discuss career and scholarship opportunities. The Virtual Reality

mobile included video briefings to the participants and the opportunity to navigate missions using equipment replicating real-world scenarios.

The Virtual Reality mobile offered an immersive experience for over 180 students, allowing them to explore life on an aircraft carrier and sparking interest in military careers. Distinguished guest speakers, including Chief Petty Officer Latonya Per-

ossier, Lieutenant Markus Howard, Ensign Michael DuLare, and Lieutenant Commander Shannon Davis, shared insights about five scholarships exclusive to JROTC Cadets, opening new educational and career doors. Bowie High School's NJROTC expresses its heartfelt gratitude to the Nimitz team for this enriching event, exemplifying their commitment to education and inspiring young minds.

Cirque Dreams Holidaze Is Set to Illuminate MGM National Harbor December 15-17

Tickets now on sale!

By PRESS OFFICER
MGM National Harbor

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. (Oct. 2, 2023)—CIRQUE DREAMS HOLIDAZE will be dazzling audiences in the D.C. area during its 7-week, 70-city U.S. tour this holiday season. Audiences from coast-to-coast will be captivated by this brilliant and whimsical holiday spectacular. As the nation's premiere family holiday tradition, CIRQUE DREAMS HOLIDAZE will convey the magic of the season with a Broadway-style production infused with contemporary circus arts. Tickets are now on sale for five unforgettable performances at The Theater at MGM National Harbor in Maryland.

As lights dim and the music swells, a fantastical cast of holiday storybook characters come to life. Both critics and audiences alike agree that CIRQUE



DREAMS HOLIDAZE is "a show for all ages to enjoy where families can make Christmas memories together." And Broadway World exclaims, "Lose yourself for 90 minutes and go back to those wonderful dreams you had as a kid."

Imaginative and fun for children to seniors and everyone in between, CIRQUE DREAMS HOLIDAZE features a world-renowned cast of performers accompanied by an ensemble of aerial circus acts, sleight-of-hand jugglers, fun-

loving skippers, breath-catching acrobatics, and much more. An original music score includes new twists on seasonal favorites such as "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree" and "Carol of the Bells." Singers, dancers, penguins, toy soldiers, and reindeer invoke the dreams behind a child's eye on the most magical of nights. Amidst a backdrop of new sets, scenery, and storylines, this family-friendly production is sure to put a twinkle in your eye!

CIRQUE DREAMS HOLIDAZE is affordably priced with tickets starting at \$32.50 and will perform five shows at MGM National Harbor. Guests can enjoy performances on December 15 at 7 p.m. and December 16-17 at 12 p.m. and 4 p.m. Tickets are available at The Theater box office or MGMNationalHarbor.com.

For more information, visit: <https://cirquedreams.com/>

Governor Wes Moore Proclaims October as 'Maryland Horse Month'

By PRESS OFFICER
Maryland Department of Agriculture

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (Oct. 1, 2023)—Governor Wes Moore has proclaimed October as Maryland Horse Month in celebration of the Maryland horse industry. The month-long celebration will showcase the many ways the State is enriched by it, from the economic benefits to the recreational and therapeutic benefits.

"Maryland is a national leader as the only state to host both a Triple Crown Race and two international 5-Star events," said Governor Moore. "The Maryland horse industry has an annual economic impact of 2.1 billion dollars and with more horses per square mile than any other state, Maryland is clearly wild about horses. I'm excited to celebrate Maryland Horse Month!"

In celebration of Maryland Horse Month, the Maryland Horse Industry Board and its industry partners are highlighting the many statewide attractions, events, activities, trails, exhibits, and experiences that have an equestrian connection. These events include the Maryland 5-Star at Fair Hill, a major international equestrian event that will draw competitors from across the U.S. and abroad, which takes place Oct. 19-22 in Elkton.

Other major Maryland horse events include the Capital Challenge Horse Show, which is one of the largest horse shows in the country, at the Prince George's Equestrian Center in Upper

Marlboro Sept. 28-Oct. 8; the Jim McKay Maryland Million horse race at Laurel Park Racetrack on Oct. 14; and the **Washington International Horse Show, also at Prince George's Equestrian Center, Oct. 23-29.**

In between these major events are championship finals in jousting—the official state sport since 1962—rodeo and hunter/jumper disciplines on Oct. 14, as well as the Tuckahoe Equestrian Center's Celebration of the Horse [which was] Oct. 7. The state's 42 Horse Discovery Centers, individual farm owners and equine organizations will also host All Breed exhibitions, carriage driving displays, and numerous other events.

"With so many exciting equestrian events taking place around the state throughout the month of October, I encourage all Marylanders to get out and experience the Maryland horse industry," said Maryland Department of Agriculture Secretary Kevin Atticks. "From dressage to trail riding, there is something for everyone to enjoy!"

Horse enthusiasts can also visit the new Maryland Horse Library and Education Center on Historic Main Street in Reisterstown. This month marks the one year anniversary of the center, which serves as an information hub for the industry and includes a fine collection of sporting books, a memorabilia area, meeting space, interactive kiosks and rotating exhibits.

"Not only does Maryland play host to the world's top horses and riders at our two 5 Stars at Fair Hill and Upper

Marlboro, but October Horse Month puts on display our finest local equestrians at events statewide," said Maryland Horse Industry Board Executive Director Ross Peddicord. "For those who love horses and the outdoors, it's time to enjoy the best we have to offer."

The Maryland Department of Commerce's Office of Tourism has joined the Horse Industry Board and the Board's many private-sector equestrian organizations to promote Maryland Horse Month.

"Maryland is home to world-class destinations such as Assateague Island National Seashore and Assateague State Park among major equestrian events that draw thousands of visitors to the state," said Liz Fitzsimmons, Managing Director of the Maryland Department of Commerce Office of Tourism and Film. "Drive along the Horses & Hounds Scenic Byway to explore our beautiful countryside also famous for producing Thoroughbreds that have raced on major tracks across America."

Follow Maryland Horse Month on social media and use #MDHorse, #MDHorseMonth, #VisitMaryland, and #MDinFocus when posting about your tour of Maryland's Equestrian Travel Collection. For the individual events, add #Maryland5Star, #Makeit5Star, #CapitalChallenge, #MDMillion and #WIHS2023 #FEIWorldCup #TimeToBeat.

For additional travel information, please visit [marylandhorse.com/maryland-horse-month](http://marylandhorse.com/) and visitmaryland.org.

Harmony Hall Arts Center October Programming Announced by Dept of Parks and Rec, Pr. Geo. County

By PRESS OFFICER
Prince George's County Department of Parks and Recreation

RIVERDALE, Md. (Oct. 6, 2023)—Harmony Hall Arts Center, part of the Department of Parks and Recreation in Prince George's County, is happy to announce its programming lineup for October 2023. Highlights this month include, but are not limited to:

October 14, The Manhattans featuring Gerald Alston

The Manhattans struck chart gold in 1973 with "There's No Me Without You." Then their biggest song was their March 1976 release "Kiss and Say Goodbye," written by Blue Lovett and arranged/co-produced by Bobby Martin, a former member of the MFSB band of session musicians. The song quickly became a #1 chart-topper on both the U.S. Billboard Pop and R&B charts. The group found further success in March 1980 with the release of "Shining Star," which received a Grammy Award. The group is celebrating 60 years of bringing the best of R&B to the masses. Tickets are available for purchase via PARKSDIRECT.

October 21, "Coco" Film Screening and Oaxacan Art Event

This event promises to be a celebration of Mexican culture, highlighting the rich traditions of Dia de los Muertos (The Day of the Dead) and the captivating world of Oaxacan art. For just \$10, attendees can embark on a journey that includes:

- Insightful discussions on Mexican culture and the significance of Dia de los Muertos.
- An Interactive "alebrije" crafting workshop, where participants of all ages can create their own vibrant keepsakes inspired by this cherished tradition.
- A heartwarming screening of the beloved film "Coco" (2017) featuring animation inspired by this vibrantly colorful artform.

The event welcomes attendees of all ages, making it a perfect family outing. Light refreshments will be served to enhance the experience. Tickets are available for purchase via PARKSDIRECT.

October 30-January 6, Camouflage and Coalescence Exhibit

This exhibition will be an introduction to Frank Mancino's new

body of work titled "Camouflage and Coalescence."

Mr. Mancino's use of a kaleidoscopic array of intense colors and textures invites the viewer to enjoy a decorative "camouflage" of sensual layers. Proceeding this "camouflage," it de-focusses and allows the viewer's initial perception to "coalesce" into their own inner visions and tensions. The result is color working both for and against each other to "fight nice." Admission is free for all ages.

To learn more about Harmony Hall Arts Center and its upcoming programs, visit pgparks.com/facilities/harmony-hall-art-center.

With over 28,000 acres of parkland, trails, athletic fields, playgrounds and more, The M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation in Prince George's County provides an award-winning park system through progressive, quality, innovative leadership and a commitment to its community and environment. The Department delivers first-class recreational activities and programs for people of all ages and ability levels. For more information, visit www.pgparks.com.

COMMENTARY

Marian Wright Edelman

Founder and President Emerita,
Children's Defense Fund



ChildWatch:

More Lessons in Leadership

"It will not be sufficient for Morehouse College, for any college, for that matter, to produce clever graduates, men fluent in speech and able to argue their way through; but rather honest men, men who can be trusted in public and private—who are sensitive to the wrongs, the sufferings, and the injustices of society and who are willing to accept responsibility for correcting the ills."

—Dr. Benjamin E. Mays

Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, Morehouse College's president from 1940–1967, said this about the kind of graduates and leaders he expected Morehouse to produce. As a student at neighboring Spelman College, I heard and saw Dr. Mays often and had the privilege of singing in Morehouse's Sunday morning chapel choir and hearing this great man's wisdom. Of the six college presidents in the Atlanta University academic complex Dr. Mays was the one students looked up to most. He inspired and

taught us by example and stood by us when we challenged Atlanta's racial discrimination, and we hungrily internalized his unerring belief that we were God's instruments for helping transform the world.

Some of his teachings I wrote in my college diary. Others I internalized and, like many others who heard him frequently, I often shared his words. I especially remember his oft-repeated "God's Minute" from an anonymous sage:

I have just one minute
Only sixty seconds in it,
Forced upon me—can't refuse it
Didn't seek it, didn't choose it,
But it's up to me to use it.
I must suffer if I lose it,
Give account if I abuse it.
Just a tiny little minute—
But eternity is in it.

He taught us all "the tragedy of life is often not in our failure, but rather in our complacency; not in our doing too much, but rather in our doing too

little; not in our living above our ability, but rather in our living below our capacities." One of the many Morehouse students Dr. Mays helped shape was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. When Morehouse College bade Dr. King farewell after his assassination at a service on the grassy rectangle connecting Atlanta University with Morehouse, where I stood with thousands of others who had marched behind his simple mule-driven cortege, Dr. Mays movingly saluted his former student, fellow freedom fighter, and servant of God with Ralph Waldo Emerson's words: "See how the masses of men worry themselves into nameless graves, while here and there a great unselfish soul forgets himself into immortality."

Who are our Dr. Mayses today—our moral compasses in crucial sectors of American life? Every time there is a new debate over political leadership it is worth returning to the examples we want to see. It is also up to us to encourage the next generation of unselfish citizens and servant-leaders who are sensitive to the wrongs, sufferings, and injustices of society and ready to do their own part to transform the world.

—October 6, 2023

Governor Moore's Statement Regarding Senator Melony G. Griffith's Hiring as New President and Chief Executive Officer of the Maryland Hospital Association

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (Oct. 6, 2023)—Governor Wes Moore today released the following statement regarding Senator Melony G. Griffith's hiring as new president and chief executive officer of the Maryland Hospital Association:

"Melony Griffith has represented Prince George's

County with distinction in the Maryland General Assembly. We are grateful for her fierce advocacy for reducing health disparities, driving economic development, and building a responsible budget. Senator Griffith's legacy of service will strengthen our communities for generations to come.

Though we will miss her in the Senate, I am confident that Melony Griffith will bring her trademark tenacity to this new role with the Maryland Hospital Association. We look forward to continuing our work together and wish her all the best in this new chapter."

District 4 Council Member Ingrid Watson Responds to Shooting at Bowie State University

As a member of the Prince George's County Council, I am firmly committed to the public safety of our citizens, especially the residents I represent in Bowie, including Bowie State University, and throughout the communities of District 4.

News that two people were shot and injured during on-campus weekend violence that interrupted the university's homecoming celebration, a special time for

students, alumni and the surrounding community to connect and experience the joy of tradition, is sad and disturbing.

I commend the leadership and joint efforts of Bowie State University President Aminta Breaux and law enforcement to address safety concerns in advance of homecoming events, and the swift and coordinated response of law enforcement to this incident.

Law enforcement is conducting a full investigation of this matter. Anyone with information or social media video related to this case is asked to call the Bowie State Police tips line at 301-860-4688.

I encourage our community to join me in prayer for all affected, especially for the campus community.

Lawsuit Accuses Maryland-based Disability Claims Firm of Unlawful Practices

By FATEMA HOSSEINI
Capital News Service

WASHINGTON (Oct. 6, 2023)—A recent lawsuit filed on behalf of veterans alleges that Just4Veterans, a Clarksburg, Maryland-based disability claims consultancy that operates nationally, is violating federal law.

The company is accused of operating without the required Veterans Administration accreditation and imposing consulting fees that are illegally excessive.

The lawsuit, filed in Circuit Court for Montgomery County by the Pels Law Firm in Bethesda, Maryland, alleges that Just4Veterans charged Air Force veteran Grant Gallagher, of San Antonio, Texas, a fee of more than \$7,000, five times the increase in his monthly disability benefits that the firm helped him obtain.

In a text message to Capital News Service, Just4Veterans owner Frederick Castanos Justo declined to comment on the lawsuit against him and his company but added: "Gallagher has an outstanding invoice to my company," he said. "This is under investigation and I will see him in court to collect his outstanding debt."

Gallagher joined the Air Force in March 2016 as an information technology specialist, was "deployed in support of special operations units in Africa and received recognition (coined) by the seal team 10 commander," Gallagher told CNS in written responses to questions.

As of August 2022, 4.9 million veterans—27% of all veterans, had a service-connected disability, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The Veterans Benefits Administration last year processed over 1.7 million claims related to disability compensation and pensions for veterans, setting a new record for the VA and exceeding the prior year's record by 12%.

Many veterans have complained that the system is overly cumbersome and confusing.

The lawsuit against Just4Veterans claims that "Justo relies on

his personal status as a veteran to gain other veterans' trust and to entice other veterans to enter into contracts with Just4Veterans."

After Gallagher had been out of the service for nearly a year, on February 23, he entered into a contract with Just4Veterans to help him obtain an increase in his VA disability rate from 90% to 100% disabled.

"The contract was for 'coaching services' and I felt rushed by the guy I was talking to into signing the contract," Gallagher said. "I was 'pitched' that they can help me get to 100% VA disabled."

Documents from the lawsuit show that on April 15, Gallagher was billed \$7,426.95, and then asked to pay a lump sum payment of \$6,878.09, which included "a 10% discount."

On April 25, Gallagher had made a payment of \$742.69, followed by another payment of \$300.00 on July 1.

"This worked out to be an approx \$7,500 'fee' when in reality they likely spent less than four hours worth of work," Gallagher wrote. "They are not accredited and I feel like they are preying on veterans."

Gallagher also said he is uncomfortable knowing the firm has personal information about him.

"Additionally due to the nature of the information they have about me... I certainly felt uneasy about them possibly using that info against me in a malicious way and I have had a couple PTSD anxiety attacks around this thought," Gallagher said.

According to the Just4Veterans website, owner Justo is a retired veteran who served in the U.S. Marine Corps for 23 years. "Recognizing the need to provide Veterans help in processing their VA disability claims, Fred has started Just4Veterans to aid veterans get the highest VA rating possible," the company's website states.

According to the Just4Veterans contract with Gallagher attached as part of the lawsuit, "J4V does NOT assist Client with the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of his/her VA disability claims for VA ben-

efits. Client shall prepare and file his/her own claim utilizing free government websites."

Contrary to what's outlined in the contract, Gallagher said he had a different experience.

"I had all my documentation ready to go so they basically just organized it, told me what to claim, and had me log into my VA.gov account, then submitted my own documents as me via a zoom call where they took control over my mouse," Gallagher explained. "This didn't feel right to me when it was happening but I didn't realize this was illegal for them to do."

An increasing number of veterans organizations have complained recently about firms that charge exorbitant rates for claims assistance.

Congress has also heard testimony about the rise of so-called "claim sharks"—companies that charge more than legally permitted for preparing VA claim documents.

"Veterans seeking to access their benefits should not face another battle to do so," Rep. Chris Pappas, D-New Hampshire, said in a statement in February.

He reintroduced the Governing Unaccredited Representatives Defrauding (GUARD) VA Benefits Act, which would impose penalties on non-accredited firms.

"Unfortunately, unaccredited, for-profit companies are scamming veterans of their earned benefits under the guise of helping them, and they must be stopped and held accountable," Pappas charged.

Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pennsylvania, one of the co-sponsors of the bill, said that "for too long, heinous actors have taken advantage of and preyed upon veterans in need of assistance, and without consequences, and this practice must end."

In April 2022, Ryan Galluci, the executive director of the Washington office of Veterans of Foreign Wars, shared his concerns over non-accredited consulting groups targeting veterans before a subcommittee of the House Veterans Affairs Committee.

"Certain predatory companies have used the confusion created by the COVID-19 pandemic to

infiltrate networks of veterans in need, and have grown by more than six hundred percent in the last two years alone," Galluci said.

He added that based on the VFW's long-term observations of these companies, it's evident that they have no intention of complying with existing regulations.

Rather than focusing on altering the VA accreditation system to favor these unethical companies, the committee should prioritize enforcing penalties for those who blatantly breach VA guidelines, according to Galluci.

Jon Pels, a Bethesda-based lawyer representing Gallagher, told CNS that "what is ironic about what we believe the defendants will argue in these cases is...they are not accredited and therefore they can charge whatever they want."

"...However, to assist disabled veterans you need to be accredited," Pels said. "So it is a very circular argument. It would be like somebody charging illegal and excessive fees as an attorney to a worker's compensation client but then arguing, 'well I'm not a licensed attorney so I can charge whatever I want.'"

In early September, an employee of Just4Veterans, who called himself "Coach Sion," sent a text message to Gallagher. According to the text message attached in the lawsuit, Sion threatened to contact Gallagher's employer and to bring legal action against him if he refused to pay the fees.

"My goal is to prevent this from requiring legal action which will result in additional fee's (sic.) being added to your invoice as well as court cost. We will also reach to (sic.) your employer to discuss garnishment actions," the text said.

The text also said that "as Military Veterans one of the most important traits is INTEGRITY which comes along with trust." The text added that "this is a legal binding contract which will be enforced through legal matters if required."

The lawsuit alleges Just4Veterans is aware that charging veterans fees for any assistance with

claims for VA disability benefits by unaccredited organizations is illegal.

"Defendants contort the language on their website and in their contract(s) to make it seem that they are not assisting veterans and charging illegal fees," the lawsuit says.

The suit points to the company contract, attached as part of the lawsuit, which clearly states that "J4V is NOT accredited VSO, VA claims agent, or attorney. J4V does NOT represent the Client before the VA as an advocate or a legal representative and does not provide legal advice. While J4V may provide practical, legal, and educational advice in certain situations, Client acknowledges that this is NOT legal advice in any way."

However, the lawsuit says, the Just4Veterans' website suggests otherwise: "Helping Veterans to Get the Benefits They Deserve," it states in bold blue letters.

"Just4Veterans VA claims assistance will walk you through every step of the application process," the website states under "Our Services."

There are 30 "veteran coaches" with the company, in-

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BUSINESS AND FINANCE

Social Security Matters

Ask Rusty:

How Do Disability Programs Affect Social Security's Budget?

By RUSSELL GLOOR,

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

Dear Rusty: I read with interest an analysis of the history, reasons, and financial costs of the SSI (Supplemental Security Income) and SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance) programs. My question is, specifically, what portion of the Social Security budget goes toward SSI and SSDI vs. for regular SS retirement income for those who paid into the fund during their working lives? How are the costs of SSI and SSDI covered by the federal government? When did these two sections of the budget enter the law and what was the impetus behind them? *Signed: An Inquiring Mind*

Dear Inquiring Mind: No part of Social Security's "budget" is used to pay SSI (Supplemental Security Income). SSI is a means-tested general assistance program for disadvantaged children and needy disabled adults and aged seniors who have very little income and very few assets. Federal SSI benefits are paid from the government's General Treasury, not from Social Security Trust Funds. SSI is jointly administered by the person's state of residence and the Social Security Administration, and the state usually provides additional benefits to supplement the financial assistance provided by the federal government under the SSI program. The Social Security Administration only administers the SSI program, it does not fund it.

By contrast, SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance) benefits are for employed Americans who become disabled and unable to work full time. SSDI benefits are meant to provide limited income replacement for the disabled worker, and those benefits are paid from a separate Social Security "DI" (Disability Insurance) Trust Fund. The DI fund receives a portion (0.9%) of the FICA SS payroll taxes every American worker pays on their earnings and is used to pay disability benefits to eligible American workers who are unable to perform "substantial gainful activity" for a year or more. The eligibility criteria to collect SSDI are very strict, but those approved receive their benefits from this separate DI trust fund, not from Social Security's Old Age and Survivors Trust Fund. Payroll taxes collected for disability purposes are deposited in the DI Trust Fund as interest-bearing government bonds, and those DI assets are redeemed as needed to pay SSDI benefits. FYI, SSDI (disability) benefits stop when the person reaches full retirement age, at which point the beneficiary is automatically switched to regular SS retirement, and after which their benefits are paid from the regular "OASI" Trust Fund.

"Regular" Social Security retirement benefits, spousal benefits, dependent benefits, and survivor benefits are paid from Social Security's Old Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI) Trust Fund, which receives most (5.3%) of the 6.2% FICA Social Security tax withheld from the paychecks of American workers. As of the end of 2022, the OASI Trust Fund held about \$2.7 trillion in interest bearing government bonds. Neither SSI or SSDI affect this "regular" OASI Trust Fund - only true SS retirement benefits and benefits for dependents of the retiree are paid from the OASI Trust Fund (As an aside, Social Security reform is needed to prevent the OASI Trust Fund from being fully depleted in 2033).

To answer your last questions, the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) Trust Fund was established in 1956, after which SSDI benefit payments to eligible disabled American workers began. Federal "Supplemental Security Income" (SSI) assistance was codified into law in 1974. And, as you likely know, Social Security retirement, spousal and dependent benefits were enacted in the 1930s, before the first monthly Social Security check was mailed in January 1940. The impetus behind these programs? Avoiding poverty for the neediest among us. Without these programs, at least 22 million more Americans would be living below the poverty line.

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.

This article is intended for information purposes only and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the AMAC Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association (NSSA). NSSA and the AMAC Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. To submit a question, visit our website (amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory) or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org.

District Heights Acquires 1.4 Acres on Marlboro Pike and Launches Economic Development Initiative

By PRESS OFFICER
City of District Heights

DISTRICT HEIGHTS, Md. (Oct. 5, 2023)—The City of District Heights has acquired three parcels on the 6100 block of Marlboro Pike for public use. The 1.4-acre site is planned to be the Incorporated City of District Height's first expansion onto Marlboro Pike focusing on community policing and public service delivery.

The City's expansion onto Marlboro Pike coincides with the official launch of the City's economic development initiative. The City's economic development initiative is focused on attracting and retaining businesses in the Marlboro Pike corridor, facilitating redevelopment of aging commercial building-stock, enhancing workforce and job development opportunities for residents, and establishing District Heights as a leader in inner beltway economic opportunity.

The growth, expansion, and future of District Heights is intrinsically tied to the redevelopment and success of Marlboro Pike. City presence on Marlboro Pike will allow the municipal government to further support regional interconnectivity and development initiatives planned for the Silver, Blue, and Green Metrorail line corridors in Prince George's County.

Prince George's County Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. in Partnership With Google Offers Job Training Program for County Residents for the 2nd Year

Certificate program provide access to in-demand skills through job training

By PRESS OFFICER
PGCAC of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority

CAPITOL HEIGHTS, Md. (Oct. 3, 2023)—The Prince George's County Alumnae Chapter (PGCAC) of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated in partnership with Google will provide job readiness training for the 2nd year to Prince George's County residents through the Google Career Certificate program. No degree or experience is required and PGCAC will award up to 100 scholarships to residents who meet the program requirements.

Designed by Google, this self-paced, online training program offers certificates in data analytics, digital marketing and e-commerce, IT support, project management, cybersecurity, and user experience (UX) design. Google employees with decades of experience in these fields develop and teach the certificates. Each certificate includes 150+ assessments as well

as hands-on experience so participants have the necessary skills to be successful on the job.

"I am excited for the opportunity to offer scholarships to the community for a second year in a row," said Miriam L. Brewer, PGCAC's president. "As a public service organization, we believe in serving our community and hope that our county residents will take advantage of this free opportunity."

Program participants can earn a certificate in 3 to 6 months part-time. Upon completion of the program, graduates will be able to connect directly with a network of employers across the U.S. that have signed on to hire certificate graduates. Currently, there are 1.5 million job openings in the certificate fields offered by Google.

The application period for the program is October 1–October 31, 2023. **The deadline to apply is October 31, 2023.**

For more information about the pro-

gram or how to apply for a scholarship, visit our website at www.pgcacdst.org or email GCC@pgcacdst.org

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. was founded in 1913 on the campus of Howard University to promote academic excellence; to provide scholarships; to provide support to the underserved; educate and stimulate participation in the establishment of positive public policy; and to highlight issues and provide solutions for problems in their communities. Today, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority has over 300,000 initiated members and more than 1000 chapters worldwide, including seven in Wisconsin. The Sorority uses its Five-Point Programmatic Thrust of economic development, educational development, international awareness and involvement, physical and mental health, and political awareness and involvement to create its national and local programs.

Onelife Fitness Opens New 55,000-Square-Foot Sports Club in Clinton

100 new jobs & fully renovated former Toys "R" Us location in the Landing at Woodyard Shopping Center

By PRESS OFFICER
Onelife Fitness

CLINTON, Md. (Oct. 10, 2023)—Onelife Fitness open[ed] its 52nd location today in the former Toys "R" Us at 8401 Mike Shapiro Drive, Clinton, MD. The \$8 million premier Onelife Fitness Sports Club is 55,000 square feet and brings 100 jobs to the community. Onelife Fitness Clinton joins Aldi, Burlington, and Ross in the Landing at Woodyard shopping center and will be the fitness anchor and community hub serving residents in and around Clinton/Prince George's County.

Renowned as the best value in fitness, Onelife Fitness offers the largest clubs, amenities, and trained, knowledgeable professionals at affordable rates.

"At Onelife, we prioritize fitness and bringing positive impacts to the communities we serve," said Ori Gorfine, President of Onelife Fitness. "As the largest health and fitness provider in the Washington, DC area, Onelife Fitness is committed to economic revitalization by bringing jobs and renovating vacant stores like the former Toys R Us in Clinton. With so many locations in the DC area, our members can use any Onelife location between home and work, which is key to making

fitness possible and staying healthy."

This location is the 29th Onelife Fitness in the Washington, DC area and over 50 locations throughout Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Washington, DC, and Georgia. The new sports club will feature luxurious amenities in a modern design its existing members have come to enjoy, including:

- A large indoor saltwater lap pool and whirlpool
- Over \$1 million in top-of-the-line cardio and strength equipment
- Three boutique studios featuring Onelife Signature Classes, BodyPump, Zumba, APEX-HIIT, Spark, and more
- Mind/Body Studio featuring Barre, Yoga, and Pilates classes
- State-of-the-art stadium-style spin studio with Coach by Color bikes
- Signature Strike Boxing Studio
- Olympic lifting platforms
- Large functional athletic turf training areas
- Kids Club with interactive games, basketball, and theater
- Recovery Studio with HydroMassage, Red Light Therapy, Percussion and Compression Equipment
- AirPHX air and equipment sanitation system that cleans 24 hours a day; and

- Luxurious spa-inspired locker rooms, sauna, and more!

To learn more about the club, visit onelifefitness.com/gyms/clinton or call 240-398-3634.

To learn more about career opportunities please visit careers.onelifefitness.com

Founded in 2011, Onelife Fitness began with a singular focus to develop the most welcoming and modern health club that delivers unparalleled value without compromising on amenities and service. We believe that the best fitness plan is the one you do, which is why we offer the latest in cardio and strength equipment, functional turf workout areas, cutting-edge group, and personal training programs combined with the greatest variety of group fitness classes all complimented by luxury-spa facilities and recovery options. The club's proprietary fitness offerings include Explosive Performance, APEX-HIIT, Spark Cycle, and Strike Boxing, which deliver the experience and performance of leading boutique fitness studios all under one roof. Supported by more than 3,000 professional team members, Onelife is committed to providing the most supportive and valued fitness experience in our Clubs. Visit us at onelifefitness.com.

Car Sales from A1

registrations in Maryland have increased by 742% from August 2017 to August 2023, Jim Joyner, a spokesperson with MDOT, said in an email. Montgomery County has the most electric vehicles registered and Somerset has the least EVs as of August 2023.

In Maryland, there are over 1,400 EV charging stations with almost 4,000 charging ports, 819 of which are DC fast-charging ports, the quickest and most powerful option, Joyner said. Baltimore City has the most EV charging stations and Dorchester County has the least.

"There's a dance that has to happen between the vehicles out there and charging infrastructure," Lovaas said. "People have to feel like they can charge reliably across Maryland's road network."

In Montgomery County, 3% of vehicles in the county are electric, but 15% of all newly registered

vehicles have been electric over the last 12 months, Brian Booher, the senior planning specialist for zero emissions for the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection, said.

The department offers benefits for people who purchase an electric vehicle and is also working to expand EV charging, Booher said.

At-home charging and the reliability of chargers are the county's biggest challenges.

"This electric vehicle revolution is happening," Booher said. "We're going to need to be proactive in making sure that there's enough charging infrastructure."

Howard County is working to increase EV charging stations in future homes and multi-residential units, Howard County Executive Calvin Ball said, with a goal of at least one EV charging station for every 25 units.

The county has a goal to increase public charging to 400 charging stations by 2030 and expand to

2,600 chargers by 2045, Ball said, and is working on a geographic information system to identify areas that lack adequate access to charging stations.

"We're trying to make sure that we are having the diversity level of charging," Ball said. "It's going to be a balancing act from what we have in place now and what our energy goals are."

Prince George's County is focused on making public facilities a place to charge, Crooms said. One of the challenges is working with the private sector for private charging.

In 2021, Prince George's County passed a law that requires gas stations to have EV charging stations if they do not already have zoning approval, Crooms said. Another law requires new buildings and multi-unit housing with parking garages and spaces to have EV charging.

"We have such a diverse group of folks," Crooms said. "Figuring out how charging is going to be fair and equitable in those areas where we have renters

or where we have folks who simply don't have a dedicated parking space is complicated."

Frederick County encourages residents to take advantage of state and federal incentives, Dawn Ashbacher, climate and energy manager at Frederick County, said. The county can help residents connect to resources.

The county updated its ordinance to require new homes to have EV charging, Ashbacher said. Part of the issue is charging at multi-unit housing, existing buildings and disadvantaged communities.

The National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Program created under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, gives states funding for charging infrastructure across highways, Lovaas said. The state will receive \$57.5 million over the next five years to improve charging across the state.

"We're going to see a lot more infrastructure built," Booher said. "It's going to make the reality of owning an electric vehicle possible for a lot of people."

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