

# The Prince George's Post



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## Capitals Hockey School Program Surpasses 1 Million Students With Partnership Between Caps, Prince George's County Public Schools

By PRESS OFFICER  
Washington Capitals

ARLINGTON, Va. (Jan. 4, 2024)—The Washington Capitals and Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) announced today a partnership through which the Capitals will introduce hockey to more than 93,460 students across the county's 167 elementary, middle and charter schools through the Capitals Hockey School program presented by Capital One. Through the partnership, the Capitals Hockey School program will surpass 1 million students reached per year through the program's presence in schools across more than 20 counties across Maryland, Virginia and Washington, D.C.

To celebrate the announcement and milestone, the Capitals hosted a hockey school clinic on Jan. 4 at Capitol Heights Elementary School in Capitol Heights, Md.

Following remarks by representatives from the Capitals, NHL and PGCPS, the Capitals Youth Hockey Development

staff led an assembly for third-through fifth-grade students to introduce them to hockey skills including stickhandling, passing and taking a shot on net.

To kick off the event, director of youth hockey development Peter Robinson made remarks on the partnership and PGCPS's participation in the hockey school program marking more than 1 million local students introduced to hockey by the Capitals since the Hockey School program's inception. National Hockey League senior director of youth hockey and industry growth Matt Herr also made remarks on the Capitals and NHL's efforts to introduce children across the region to hockey. Capitol Heights Elementary School principal Shawna Berry also spoke toward the importance of the Hockey School program providing the opportunity for students to interact with the sport and what it means for Prince George's County Public Schools to partner with the Capitals. Capitals manager of youth hockey development Andrew



PHOTO COURTESY WASHINGTON CAPITALS

The Capitals hosted a hockey school clinic on Jan. 4 at Capitol Heights Elementary School in Capitol Heights, Md., where third-through fifth-grade students were introduced to hockey skills including stickhandling, passing and taking a shot on net.

Nash also presented the school system with a gold stick in honor of the program surpassing 1 million students engaged with hockey through Hockey School.

The Capitals Hockey School program is aimed at providing access to the sport of hockey by introducing it to children in elementary and middle school. The Capitals donate hockey equipment including sticks, nets, balls and pucks to each school, and P.E. teachers receive a standard-

ized curriculum following SHAPE America's national requirements. In addition, the Capitals Youth Hockey Development staff visits schools to host assemblies surrounding the game. The PGCPS programming, which will become a core unit in the county's physical education curriculum, is part of the Capitals' investment of more than \$3.5 million toward the development of youth hockey in Maryland, Virginia, and Wash-

ington, D.C., and is funded primarily by the National Hockey League's Industry Growth Fund (IGF).

There are currently 1,601 schools in the Hockey School program, reaching 1,052,294 students across Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C. During the 2015-16 season, the Capitals launched initial IGF Fund programming with DC Public Schools, introducing a hockey curriculum to more than 48,000

DCPS students across more than 110 schools. In 2018-19, the Capitals launched a partnership with Baltimore City Public Schools to donate equipment and a physical education curriculum to introduce hockey to more than 75,000 students across more than 150 schools. There are more than 20 additional participating counties in Virginia and Maryland. For a complete list, VISIT <https://www.capsyouthhockey.com/hockeyschool>.

## Special MLK Tribute Concert: Baltimore Symphony Orchestra at the B&O Railroad Museum

Special Performance to Feature World Premiere of New Song by Baltimore artist Wordsmith

By PRESS OFFICER  
B&O Railroad Museum

BALTIMORE (Jan. 4, 2024)—The B&O Railroad Museum proudly presents an extraordinary tribute concert in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Freedom Seekers of the Underground Railroad performed by the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra (BSO) in the beautiful 1884 B&O Roundhouse. Scheduled for MLK Day on **Monday, January 15**, at 7 p.m., the event promises an unprecedented fusion of history and music as part of the B&O Railroad Museum's Underground Railroad programming and the BSO's Symphony in the City Series.

This special performance will mark the world premiere of a new, original song, "Network to Freedom," written by Wordsmith and commissioned by the BSO. Wordsmith's tribute song is a homage to the Freedom Seekers and directly inspired by the compelling narratives featured in the B&O Railroad Museum's Underground Railroad exhibit. Designated as a National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Site since 2021, the museum unveiled its perma-

nent "The Underground Railroad: Freedom Seekers on the B&O Railroad" exhibit in 2022.

Wordsmith's powerful new work dives into the rich tapestry of American Railroad at the B&O. According to Wordsmith, the composition aims to "explore the impact of the B&O during the Civil War, its economic influence, and the roots of the Underground Railroad. Unearthing tales of resilience from historical figures like Henry Box Brown and William & Ellen Craft, the B&O Railroad holds a treasure trove of stories that have shaped our nation."

"We could not be more honored to have our exhibit be the inspiration for Wordsmith's original song and to have it debuted as tribute to Dr. King's message of equality and unity," said Kris Hoellen, Executive Director of the B&O Railroad Museum. "This will be a truly moving experience not to be missed."

The concert will also feature selections by prominent Black composers, Florence Price, Duke Ellington, and Carlos Simon, alongside the

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## Governor Moore Signs Executive Order Establishing Longevity Ready Maryland Initiative

By PRESS OFFICER  
Office of the Governor

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (Jan. 3, 2024)—Governor Wes Moore today signed an executive order establishing the Longevity Ready Maryland Initiative, directing the Maryland Department of Aging to prioritize the well-being of older people, people living with disabilities, and caregivers across all of state government, proactively addressing the needs arising from a growing older adult population.

"Our administration made a commitment to honor the lives and contributions of older Marylanders by expanding access to critical care and services," said Gov. Moore. "If we are going to meet the twenty-first century needs of this rapidly changing demographic, we must evaluate our programs, advocate for change, target resources, and formulate

data-driven policies with a whole-of-government approach."

The executive order directs the Department of Aging to develop a plan that will coordinate and build upon existing efforts across state agencies, private and philanthropic sectors, and other stakeholders to tackle real life challenges throughout the lifespan, including access to employment opportunities, a robust care workforce, adequate caregiver support, and equitable health care. Unlike other state plans on aging that focus primarily on caring for the older population, the Longevity Ready Maryland plan will take a whole-of-life approach.

"We envision a future where all Marylanders lead lives that are healthy, financially secure, socially connected, and purposeful from birth throughout retirement, regardless of socioeconomic status," said Maryland Department of Aging Secretary Carmel Roques.

"Integrating a longevity lens into every government department and agency, promoting coordinated responses, and helping the state shape how public services are planned and delivered will help us prepare, serve, and utilize our changing population."

Today, more than a third of Maryland's population is over the age of 50, with some 1.4 million people over 60—and like the rest of the country, Maryland's older adult population will continue to grow over the next several decades. As the population ages, so will disparities in healthcare, education, housing, and other opportunities to experience longer, healthier lives. By 2035, and for the first time in Maryland's history, there will be nearly 2.1 million adults 60 and over compared to 1.6 million children under the

See **LONGEVITY** Page A4

## Governor Moore Announces Action to Transform Maryland Executive Branch Digital Services

By PRESS OFFICER  
Office of the Governor

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (Jan. 8, 2023)—Governor Wes Moore today announced four major actions that the Moore-Miller Administration is taking to transform the digital experience in State government. The transformation focuses on the responsible use of artificial intelligence, user-centered design in digital services, ensuring equal access to all information technology, and protecting Maryland's digital infrastructure through enhanced intergovernmental partnerships.

"In our first year, we learned that it isn't enough to rebuild state government—we need to modernize state government too," said Gov. Moore. "Together, we will improve the experience that Marylanders have on state websites to make it easier to access state resources; together, we will ensure that

all state services are accessible to the public — including individuals with disabilities; and together, we will bolster cybersecurity across the public sector so we remain safe from cyberattacks. By modernizing state government, we will better meet our constituent needs, we will better address our community challenges, and we will better assert Maryland's leadership in this decade."

The Moore-Miller Administration and the Maryland Department of Information Technology are committed to providing vital technology solutions that allow the executive branch, state agencies and coordinating offices to provide Marylanders with the services that enable them to live and work more safely, efficiently, and productively. The department leads the state's strategic direction for IT and telecommunications, encouraging cross-agency collaboration and advocating for best practices for operations and project

management, including the actions announced today:

- **Issuing an Artificial Intelligence Executive Order** to direct the foundational work to catalyze the responsible and productive use of artificial intelligence by state agencies. The executive order also establishes an AI Subcabinet that will develop and implement a comprehensive AI action plan to operationalize the State's AI principles and create appropriate "guard rails" for agencies' use of AI. The AI Subcabinet will also promote AI knowledge, skills, and talent in state government.
- **Creating the Maryland Digital Service** within the Maryland Department of Information Technology to support state agency

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# TOWNS *and* NEIGHBORS

## In & Around Morningside-Skyline

by Mary McHale 301-735-3451

### Town of Morningside: Snow? Speed cameras?

Even as I sit here typing, snow is predicted for tomorrow (Jan. 6).

Morningside asks that you park your vehicles on the odd side of the street if snow or ice is in the forecast. This will allow plows, salt trucks and emergency vehicles to service the Town streets more efficiently.

Also, a reminder. Speed cameras will soon be installed in Morningside. They will be installed in the 6500 block of Suitland Road, one in front of the Exxon station and one across the street in front of the strip mall. Once the cameras are in place, there will be a 30-day warning period; after that, a \$40 warning violation ticket will be issued.

These cameras are a safety tool to prevent another accident or fatality (such as the one that recently took the life of one of my neighbors, a handicapped woman attempting to cross).

The next Morningside Town Meeting will be January 16, 7 p.m. at the Town Hall.

### John Kelly is leaving

I've been reading and appreciating "John Kelly's Washington" in The Washington Post ever since John Kelly took over from Bob Levey in 2004. Bob Levey had taken over from Bill Gold's "The District Line" in 1981. And Bill Gold had created this daily, local, human-interest column in 1947.

Not only have these three columnists entertained and informed us, but they've encouraged readers to donate to worthy local charities.

Now, who is The Washington Post going to find to take over from John Kelly now that he has announced that he's leaving? I'll miss him!

### Dulles architect was local

In last week's column, I wrote about

Dulles Airport facing new changes. My daughter, Kathleen Shearer, reminded me that she was there when it was dedicated by President John F. Kennedy on November 17, 1961. She was there with her good friend Valerie, daughter of Ralph Clark, of Temple Hills. He was one of the architects of the airport.

### Morningside Sportsman Club

I received a note about the Morningside Sportsman's Club, a group that did so much for our community, including the annual canned food drive. It was created April 8, 1971, and the name underwent changes on July 7, 2017. It's still around. Keep me posted.

Also, I have to boast that I am a member. I have the jacket to prove it.

### Changing landscape

House Da Jerk, at 6703 Suitland Road, is open for business and has been listed among the 10 Best Jamaican eateries in the area.

A home at 4708 English Court, in Skyline, recently sold for \$355,000.

### Remembering Wynona

On January 10, I remembered the late Wynona Skinner, of Croom Station Road, whose birthday was January 10. She was an inspiration for me—for years she wrote a column for The Enquirer-Gazette, named "In and around Croom."

Here's an example of her down-home country writing: "I passed the farm where Lewis and Mary Branson lived many years, but it is now divided by Md. 4... I passed O'Donnell's Farm and Restaurant where Penn Mar and Forest Plaza shopping centers now are..."

Wynona died August 12, 2001. No one could take her place.

### Brenda Handley loved to bowl

Brenda Carr Handley, 74, who grew up in Morningside, died December 22.

She was the daughter of the late Carrie and Grover L. Carr, who used to live on Pine Grove Drive.

She attended Crossland High School, married Leo E. Handley and was a homemaker for many years. As her children got older, she went to work for Clairrol.

She loved bowling and was a weekly bowler for the past 50 years.

She was a caring and nurturing person and cared for many family members in their times of need including her father, mother, her husband, and her Aunt Dot. And she had two rescue cats, Squeaky and Felix, who were incredibly spoiled.

When she moved to Golden Beach, she could be found on her front porch, sipping a Miller Lite and chatting with any neighbor that happened to walk by. Neighbors Cindy and Buddy Ford quickly became family to Brenda and were so important in her life.

Her husband of 46 years, Leo, predeceased her. Survivors include daughters Lea D. Auman (Jeffrey) and Tracey D. King (Geoffrey); five grandchildren and four great-grandchildren; Siblings, Gilbert Carr, Dennis Carr, Randy Myers, and brother-in-law William Handley. Her memorial service was at the Mechanicsville Moose Lodge in Mechanicsville with burial at Resurrection Cemetery.

### Milestones

Happy Birthday to Curtis DeMarco Knowles, Kathleen Giroux, Joanie Mangum and my son Mike McHale, Jan. 14; Robert Koch, Jan. 15; Dolly Wood, Jan. 16; Nikial M. Boston, Jan. 17; Dennis Seaman and former St. Philip's Principal Linda Cullinan, Jan. 19; June Nicholson and Gina Glagola Hull, Jan. 20.

Happy Anniversary to Gary and Melody Barnes on January 14.

## Brandywine-Aquasco

by Audrey Johnson 301-922-5384

### PRE-ANNUAL BIG GAME SPAGHETTI DINNER

St. Philip's Church, Baden Parish PRE-Annual Big Game Spaghetti Dinner will be Sunday, February 4, 2024, from 11 a.m.–1 p.m. St. Philip's Church Baden Parish, 13801 Baden Westwood Road, Brandywine, Maryland 20613-8426.

Dinners cost \$7.00, children 5–10 Years \$3.00. Pre-Orders and Pre-Payments only. Cash App is also available (@stphilipbaden). Dinners will include Mitty's Homemade Spaghetti, Potato Chips, Garlic Bread, Water, Fruit Cup, and a Dessert. Points of contacts about this matter are Shirley Ann (302) 690-4260 or Doretha Ann (301) 233-3136 and/or Vivian (804) 301-9530. Benefit St. Philip's Church (301) 888-1536.

### CAPITAL REGION CALLING

With incredible museums, theater, arts, culture, cuisine and even roller coasters all just a quick jaunt from Washington, D.C., you will experience the breadth of the world in the cool, cosmopolitan Capital Region. Plan a family getaway or an upscale escape in gleaming National Harbor with its beautiful boardwalk, towering Capital Wheel, the world-class MGM National Harbor casino. Get your adrenaline pumping on the dozens of roller coasters at Six Flags America in Upper Maryland, Maryland. There is no end to the adventures awaiting you in the Capital Region.

### EXPERIENCE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND

Experience Prince George's for extraordinary times. Affordable, accessible, and authentic. Prince George's County the Crown Jewel of Maryland is an exceptional destination to explore. Visit ExperiencePrinceGeorges.com to book your next visit.

### EDNA'S LOVE BLOOD DRIVE

We are all joined by blood. Donate today. Blood Drive EDNA's Love at Suitland Community Center, Multipurpose, 5600 Regency Lane, District Heights, Maryland 20747, Monday, January 15, 2024, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Please call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or visitRedCrossBlood.org and enter: "EDNASLOVE" to schedule an appointment.

Streamline your donation experience and save up to 15 minutes by visiting RedCrossBlood.org/RapidPass to complete your pre-donation reading and health history questions on the day of your appointment. Your blood can save lives. Thank you to the 8 Real lifesavers and genuine heroes who have already signed up to give the gift of life.

### HOME SHOW

Suburban Maryland Home Show will be Saturday, January 13, 2024, 10 a.m.–8 p.m. Sunday, January 14, 2024, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. at Show Place Arena, 14900 Pennsylvania Avenue, Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772. The Home Show is everything for in and around your home. Sponsored by American Consumer Shows.

The event features a wide selection of home improvement professionals in a fun interactive environment. After meeting and comparing our expert exhibitors, we know you will be in-

spired and motivated to start planning with confidence. Most importantly, we want you to be excited for all the fantastic possibilities that come with your project. Free! Reserve a spot. Get your free passes on the show's website: <http://www.MD-HomeShows-sp.com>.

### COMMUNITY FOOD DONATION DRIVE

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Alpha Alpha Sigma Omega Chapter Community Food Donation Drive (MLK Day of service) is January 15, 2024, at Brandywine Fire Station, 14201 Brandywine Road, Brandywine, Maryland 20613.

CHIPP donations helping Baden and Mattaponi Elementary Schools. Breakfast bars, oatmeal packs, Cup Noodles, mac & cheese cups, juice boxes (no canned goods). Help us fight childhood hunger. Amazon Wish List: [bit.ly/3GLZWyx](http://bit.ly/3GLZWyx). Andrea Sims-Parson, President, Tamara Johnson, Programs Chairperson. For more information: [Programs.AASO@gmail.com](mailto:Programs.AASO@gmail.com)

### PERFORMANCE BY RAHEEM DEVAUGHN

Friday, January 19, 2024, at 8 p.m. to Saturday, January 20, 2024, at 2 a.m. Raheem Devaughn performing with The Crank Crusaders at Piano Keys Restaurant and Lounge. The address is 7651 Matapeake Business Drive, Suite 104, Brandywine, Maryland 20613.

### BLACK HISTORY MONTH EXHIBITION

The M-NCPPC Black History Program returns to Harmony Hall Arts Center with its exhibition in honor of Black History Month. For over 40 years, the Black History Program has worked to preserve, honor, and celebrate Prince George's County's rich African American heritage. The annual exhibition is part of this tradition. Come out and explore stories from our county's past that highlight the challenges and triumphs of the African American community. Saturday, January 27, 2024, from 10 a.m.–5 p.m. The exhibition will be at Harmony Hall Arts Center. The address is 10701 Livingston Road, Fort Washington, Maryland 20744. Telephone number is (301) 203-6070. [harmonyhallarts@pgparks.com](mailto:harmonyhallarts@pgparks.com) Ticket Price: FREE.

### FILM SCREENING: STORMY WEATHER (1943)

This 1943 film was one of the first to feature an entirely African American cast. A struggling performer meets a beautiful vocalist named Selina Rogers. He promises her that they will be together after he becomes a success. However, they both skyrocket to fame and lose contact. Fortunately, he just might get one more chance to woo her at a huge musical stage show. Popular entertainers of the 1940s, including Fats Waller and Cab Calloway, perform as themselves in the film also starring Bill Robinson and Lena Horne. Post screening discussion.

The event will be at Harmony Hall Arts Center, Thursday, January 18, 2024, from 7 p.m.–10:30 p.m. Ticket price is \$10. This event is for all ages. Address is 10701 Livingston Road, Fort Washington, Maryland 20744. Telephone number is (301) 203-6070.

## Belcroft Bible Church Acquires Mt. Oak Church Property

By PRESS OFFICER

### Belcroft Bible Church

Belcroft Bible Church (BBC) has acquired the 16.6-acre property and all furnishings and equipment of Mt. Oak United Methodist Church (MOUMC), also known as Mount Oak Fellowship at 14110 Mount Oak Road, Bowie, Maryland. The church property includes a 6.3-acre cemetery established in 1905 at the southwest corner of Church Road and Woodmore Road. BBC will continue to maintain and manage the cemetery.

Belcroft currently worships at 13000 Beechtree Lane in Bowie, in a church building constructed in 1968. The church worship services will transfer to the Mount Oak property in the late summer of 2024, following renovations and upgrades to the worship center at Mount Oak. The current BBC property will be sold, most likely to another growing church body.

The genesis of BBC began with a Saturday morning men's Bible study and soon expanded to a home church on Sussex Lane in Bowie. Property was acquired on Beechtree Lane with a church built in 1968. BBC has experienced significant growth and welcomes as many as 350 members and guests during its Sunday worship services. It has a thriving Young Adult Ministry with a specialized program entitled "Rooted," featuring a variety of guest speakers. In addition to substantial Men's and Women's Ministries, it also has a Grand Living Ministry for older members, with fellowship, meals and Bible studies held at different venues across the region. Wednesday nights are dedicated to training and discipleship for all ages, with a special emphasis on children and young adults.

MOUMC was originally built in 1881 and has undergone several modifications in the intervening years, with the most significant expansion in 1994. By 1998, their church body grew to an average weekly attendance of 900 with a thriving youth and children's ministry. However, for various reasons, attendance declined. In March 2023, MOUMC voted to disaffiliate from the Baltimore Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church and had until December 31, 2023 to make specified payments to the Conference. In September 2023, MOUMC reached out to BBC for assistance and in late October, the Mount Oak congregation voted to approve the sale of its property and furnishings to BBC.

Current MOUMC members may choose to attend and become members of BBC or elect to attend other area churches of their choosing. BBC will allow the current eXtend Homeschool Tutorial and the Boy Scouts of America to continue use of the MOUMC facilities until the conclusion of the current school year. MOUMC worship services and all other activities will cease after December 31, 2023.

For more information about BBC, go to [www.belcroft.org](http://www.belcroft.org) or call the church offices at 301-262-5055.

## Around the County

### County Animal Shelter Temporarily Closes due to Outbreak of Canine Illness

*Staff will initiate quarantine protocols to contain the illness and treat affected animals*

LARGO, Md. (Jan. 4, 2024)—Effective immediately, the Prince George's County Animals Services Facility and Adoption Center (ASFAC) will temporarily close to the public and stop dog adoptions due to an outbreak of an undetermined illness spreading at the facility until further notice. The temporary closure will allow staff to initiate quarantine protocols to stop the spread of the disease and to treat dogs who are ill. At this time, the disease is not spreading from dogs to any other animals within the facility, and testing is ongoing.

"As we are seeing an uptick of this disease strike shelters nationwide, we are acting out of an abundance of caution to help stop the spread of this disease," says David Fisher, Associate Director of the Department of Animal Services. "The best place for a dog to be at this time is in a home being watched carefully by their owner."

ASFAC will allow pets to leave the facility if:

- It is a return to the owner (RTO);
- An adoption is in process, and the pet shows no signs of illness; and
- The pet is considered for foster and shows no signs of illness.

In all circumstances of release, ASFAC will have paperwork for the pet owner to sign to acknowledge the possible illness of the animal before release.

To help reduce the spread of the disease in the community, ASFAC encourages pet owners to limit visits to dog parks, doggie daycares, groomers, and other public spaces where pets have dog-to-dog contact. They also encourage pet owners to keep their pets updated on vaccines, avoid communal water bowls, and seek medical advice from a veterinarian if any symptoms like a cough or runny nose develop.

For more information or updates on when the facility will reopen, contact (301) 780-7200.

—Linda Lowe, Department of the Environment

### Mercer University Announces

#### Fall 2023 President's, Dean's Lists

MACON, Ga. (Jan. 4, 2024)—Mercer University recently announced the President's List and Dean's List for the fall 2023 semester. Inclusion on these lists requires students to meet rigorous GPA standards specific to the college or school within the University.

The following area students earned a place on the lists:

Bowie, Maryland: **Mary Allen**, senior, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Dean's List

—Jennifer Fairfield-Williams, Mercer University



# COMMUNITY

## Social Security Matters

### Ask Rusty:

## Will My Friend's Fiancée be Entitled to a 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:** I have a very good friend who has cancer and will begin chemotherapy this week. He is 71 years old and is currently receiving Social Security benefits. He has been living with his fiancée for a little more than 2 years, but they have been a couple for about 15 years and will be married in the next few weeks. She is 60 years old.

I am naturally concerned about his, and her, future so my questions are:

- What, if anything, should he and his wife do to ensure that she gets his Social Security benefits?
- What benefits will she be entitled to, and how soon will she be able to begin receiving them after his death?

**Signed: A Friend with Questions**

**Dear Friend:** You are kind to be concerned about your friend and his fiancée. Here's what you need to know:

Social Security goes by state rules when it comes to what is often referred to as "common law marriage." That means that whether your friend's fiancée will receive any benefits as a surviving spouse in a "common law" relationship depends on whether they live in a state which recognizes common law marriage. Most states do not, but state laws have changed over the years and many states which once recognized such unions as "marriage" no longer do. Although they may have "been a couple" for 15 years, if your friend and his fiancée have been living together for only two it is likely only the last two years will count for Social Security benefit purposes. So, whether your friend's fiancée will get anything when your friend dies depends on where they live—unless they get married, in which case the rules are different.

In order for a married widow(er) to receive surviving spouse benefits, the couple must have been married for at least 9 months. If they marry and your friend lives longer than 9 months thereafter, then his wife will be entitled to a surviving spouse benefit from her husband. The amount of his wife's benefit will be based upon the amount your friend is receiving at his death, adjusted for her age when she claims her surviving spouse benefit.

A surviving spouse can claim benefits from the deceased as early as age 60, but those benefits will be reduced for claiming before full retirement age (FRA). Taken at age 60, the wife's benefit would be 71.5% of your friend's SS benefit at his death. The wife need not claim the survivor benefit immediately; she could opt to delay claiming in order to get a higher percentage of the husband's amount. Survivor benefits reach maximum—100% of the deceased's benefit amount—at the recipient's FRA.

So, if your friend and his fiancée now live in a state which currently recognizes common law marriage (CO, IA, KS, MT, NH, SC, TX, UT, RI, or in the District of Columbia), then your friend's partner will be considered his "wife" and entitled to survivor benefits as normal (the fiancée would need to prove they cohabitate in a marriage-like relationship to claim benefits).

If they do not live in one of those states, but they get married and the marriage lasts for at least 9 months, then the wife will be entitled to normal benefits as a surviving spouse (as described above).

But if the couple do not live in one of the above states which recognize "common law" relationships, or if their soon-to-occur marriage doesn't last at least 9 months, or if they do not get married, I'm afraid your friend's partner will not be entitled to any survivor benefits from your friend.

The 2.4 million member Association of Mature American Citizens [AMAC] [www.amac.us](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory)) or email us at [ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org](mailto:ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org).

## Psi Epsilon Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated® Announces New Leadership and January Service Projects Addressing Food Insecurity and Supporting Local Students

By DARLENE SPEARS-REED  
Psi Epsilon Omega Chapter

LAUREL, Md. (Jan. 5, 2024)—Psi Epsilon Omega (PEO) Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.® (AKA) has new leadership. President Karen S. Hicks takes the helm of the more than 600 member organization that serves the communities of Laurel, Bowie, and Greenbelt, Maryland.

Hicks' 40 years of experience includes finance, leadership, and management. She is an active member of the Winston-Salem State University National Alumni Association where she has held several local, regional, and national offices. Her 30 plus years of continuous sorority serv-

ice at the local and regional levels have prepared her for this role. Prior to her installation, Karen Hicks held over 10 leadership positions in the sorority, including vice president, treasurer and membership chairman.

"My administration will provide a supportive, inclusive and sisterly environment for Psi Epsilon Omega members while maintaining our commitment to E.L.E.V.A.T.E. programs that will strengthen our community," said Hicks. "My E.L.E.V.A.T.E platform stands for Empower and Leverage Every Valuable Asset to Enhance PEO."

Hicks will kick off her "E.L.E.V.A.T.E." administration by tackling food insecurity and supporting local

students. On Jan. 7, PEO members join[ed] over 25 other AKA chapters in a joint Founders' Day initiative to combat food insecurity among college students by contributing non-perishable food items and toiletries to two on-campus food pantries. Additionally, on Jan. 15, PEO members will partner with members of Iota Gamma Omega chapter of AKA for a "We Are One" AKA Service Day to support students at G. James Gholson Middle School in Landover, Md.

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated®, Psi Epsilon Omega Chapter was chartered in 2007. Since its founding, the chapter has implemented its service programs in Laurel, Bowie, and Greenbelt, Md.

## Upcoming Events at Marietta House Museum

By STACEY HAWKINS  
Marietta House Museum

### Marietta House Museum "African Arrival on Colonial Maryland Shores", a Hybrid Presentation

Coming up at Marietta House Museum on **Thursday, January 25**, 6:30–8 p.m. is a not-to-be-missed hybrid talk: "African Arrival on Colonial Maryland Shores"

Scholar-in-residence Kat Wilmot will present her research on the enslaved population held by Gabriel Duvall's great-grandfather, the 17th century merchant-planter and enslaver Maren Duvall of Middle Plantation in Anne Arundel County. Wilmot will discuss the early slave trade in colonial Maryland as the background to Maren Duvall's rise in society and his impact on slavery plantations and commerce systems in early Maryland. Her research highlights the long-silenced history of the eighteen enslaved individuals responsible for the wealth of Maren Duvall. Learn their names and find out how they lived on Middle Plantation.

\$5/person. Recommended for ages 8 & up, under 16 must be accompanied by an adult. Registration is required for on-line guests to receive the Teams link. Please register at this direct link: <https://tinyurl.com/2u8m8hsh>, or call 301-395-9541, or email [mariettahouse@pgparks.com](mailto:mariettahouse@pgparks.com).

Marietta House Museum is located at 5626 Bell Station

Road, Glenn Dale, MD. 20769, and is a property of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

### Black History Month Talk at Marietta House Museum: Baltimore's 19th Century Slave Trade

On **Wednesday, February 7**, from noon–1 p.m., Marietta House Museum presents a Lunchtime Lecture, "Baltimore's 19th Century Slave Trade" with Richard Messick.

Mr. Messick will discuss the notorious interstate slave trade in Baltimore where Gabriel Duvall sold Seneca Jackson to slave trader Hope H. Slatter.

Mr. Messick is with Baltimore Heritage, LLC. He will discuss some of the many forgotten locations where human trafficking took place with a focus on Austin Woolfolk and Hope H. Slatter.

This is a free hybrid program. For those attendees online, registration is required. Please register at this direct link: <https://tinyurl.com/4nj6r3h3>

Visitors may bring a bag lunch. We hope you can join us for this fascinating talk!

For more information, please call 301-464-5291 or email [mariettahouse@pgparks.com](mailto:mariettahouse@pgparks.com).

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## Project Opportunity: Free Entrepreneur Training for Veterans

By PRESS OFFICER  
Project Opportunity

**MUST BE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY RESIDENT**  
*Is Entrepreneurship the right choice for you?*

*Do you have a business idea but not sure where to start?*

*Do you have a business and want to take it to the next level?*

Want to know more, register for the Project Opportunity Prince George's Spring 2024 Orientation Session which will be held on Wednesday, February 28, 2024 from 6:30–8:30 p.m. at Prince George's Community College Lanham Hall (Room 203), 301 Largo Road, Largo, Maryland [www.project-opportunity.com/class/registration](http://www.project-opportunity.com/class/registration)

Attendance at the Orientation Session is a mandatory step in our application process. If you are interested in this class but unable to attend you must contact Program Director Joe Giordano, [joe.giordano@project-opportunity.com](mailto:joe.giordano@project-opportunity.com)

Classes Begin Wednesday March 13, 2024. Project Opportunity is an intensive curriculum based 10-week cohort pro-



gram. The Spring 2024 program will meet every Wednesday March 13–May 15, 2024, from 6:30–9:30 p.m. at Prince George's Community College Lanham Hall Room 203. Sponsored by Employ Prince George's this program is free to all veterans. The curriculum and material are facilitated by small business professionals and subject matter experts. The program concludes with a formal business pitch and Graduation Ceremony on Wednesday May 22, 2024.

Training Includes:

- Assessing Your Business Idea
- Marketing Analysis
- Financing and Financial Management
- Business Structure and Taxes
- Development of a Business Plan

## EarthTalk® Q&A: What Are the Health Impacts of Food Dyes in Drinks?

Dear EarthTalk:

What's the deal with food dyes in sodas and other drinks? Are they really bad for us, and how can we avoid them if so?

—Laura C., Pittsburgh, PA

Food dyes have been a controversial ingredient in sodas and various beverages for decades, due to concerns about their potential health risks. These dyes are synthetic color additives used to enhance the visual appeal of foods and drinks. While they serve an aesthetic purpose, their safety and impact on health have sparked considerable debate among consumers and health experts.

The most commonly used food dyes in beverages include Red 40, Yellow 5,

Yellow 6, and Blue 1. These dyes are derived from petroleum or coal tar sources and undergo rigorous testing by regulatory agencies like the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) before approval for use in food and drinks.

Critics argue that these synthetic dyes might be problematic, especially in sensitive individuals. Research has suggested potential links between artificial food dyes and behavioral problems in children, such as hyperactivity and attention issues. However, the scientific evidence remains inconclusive, with some studies supporting these claims while others find no significant impact on behavior.

Moreover, some individuals might experience adverse reactions or allergies

to certain food dyes, resulting in skin rashes, digestive problems or respiratory issues. For these people, avoiding products containing artificial dyes may be crucial to feeling their best.

To steer clear of artificial food dyes in beverages, consumers can opt for alternatives that prioritize natural colorants or those that don't use any added dyes. Several brands offer drinks made with natural coloring from fruit or vegetable extracts, such as beet juice, turmeric or spirulina, to achieve vibrant hues without resorting to synthetic dyes. Reading product labels meticulously is vital making the right choices. Furthermore, choosing homemade or freshly squeezed juices, herbal teas or infused water can eliminate exposure

to artificial dyes altogether. These options not only ensure a lack of synthetic additives but also provide nutritional benefits and a more wholesome drinking experience.

Maintaining a balanced and varied diet with an emphasis on whole, unprocessed foods will help you steer clear of most troublesome synthetic ingredients. By reducing reliance on heavily processed beverages, individuals can limit their exposure to not just artificial dyes but also excess sugar, artificial sweeteners and other potentially harmful additives commonly found in commercial sodas and drinks.

Nutritionists and public health advocates continue to worry about all the synthetic dyes in our food supply these days and are hoping for more research to clear up whether or not these often-unnecessary additives are doing irreparable harm to our individual bodies and our collective health.

**CONTACTS:** Food Dyes: Rainbow Risks, <https://www.cspinet.org/sites/default/files/attachment/food-dyes-rainbow-of-risks.pdf>; Toxicology of food dyes, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1179/1077352512Z.00000000034>; Red Dye in Foods: Uses and Health Risks, <https://health.usnews.com/wellness/food/articles/red-dye-in-foods-health-risks>; Health Effects Assessment: Potential Neurobehavioral Effects of Synthetic Food Dyes in Children, <https://oehha.ca.gov/media/downloads/risk-assessment/report/fooddyesassessmentdraft082820.pdf>.

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# COMMENTARY

## Marc Morial

President and CEO, National Urban League



### To Be Equal:

## Haley's Hypocritical Embrace of "Lost Cause" Ideology Shows She Is Eager to Defend White Supremacy

*"The Lost Cause mythology was more than bad history. It provided the intellectual justification for Jim Crow—not just in the former Confederacy, but everywhere systemic racism denied Black citizens equal citizenship and economic rights ... That's why the recent retreat to Lost Cause mythos is troubling. One would think that a Republican candidate for the presidency might be proud of the party's roots as a firmly antislavery organization that dismantled the "Peculiar Institution" and fomented a critical constitutional revolution during Reconstruction—one that truly made the country more free."*

—Joshua Zeitz

When she was inaugurated as South Carolina's first woman and first non-white governor in 2011, Nikki Haley said "it would be wrong to mention our greatness during the revolutionary period without noting the ugliness of much that followed. The horrors of slavery and discrimination ... remain part of our history and a part of the fabric of our lives."

It would be wrong.

That didn't stop Haley, now a presidential candidate, from flagrantly pandering to racists by lying about the cause of the Civil War during a town hall in New Hampshire.

When she told her questioner that answering

him wasn't "easy," it wasn't because she didn't know that slavery was the cause of the Civil War. It was because she knew that giving the correct answer would alienate voters who have embraced a false version of history.

In the Declaration of the Immediate Causes Which Induce and Justify the Secession of South Carolina from the Federal Union, issued December 24, 1860, the government of South Carolina explained its reasons for seceding from the United States. Those reasons bear no resemblance to Haley's cowardly blather about "the freedoms" and "the role of government."

Unlike Haley, South Carolina's lawmakers were honest about their reasons for seceding. "An increasing hostility on the part of the non-slaveholding States to the institution of slavery has led to a disregard of their obligations" to return people who escaped from enslavement back to their enslavers.

All eleven states who seceded—and the pro-secession minority of legislators in Missouri and Kentucky—cited slavery as their reason.

Haley does not claim to be ignorant of this history. The day after her craven response in New Hampshire sparked national outrage, she declared, "Of course the Civil War was about slavery," but quickly returned to her vague talking points about "the role of government" and "individual liberties."

Haley's pandering on the issue of slavery in New Hampshire appears to contrast with her comments

in 2015, after a white supremacist who draped himself in symbols of the Confederacy murdered nine Black worshippers at Mother Emanuel Church in Charleston. Announcing the removal of the Confederate flag from the State House grounds, she called it—for some—"a deeply offensive symbol of a brutally offensive past."

But she has long been willing to overlook "the horrors of slavery" in discussing the cause of the Civil War. In a 2010 interview with an activist group called Palmetto Patriots, she said the war was a conflict between "tradition" and "change," never mentioning that the tradition was slavery.

Interestingly, the reason why Palmetto Patriots asked the question of Haley, who is of South Asian ancestry and none of the other candidates for governor, is rooted in racism. The other candidates were "Southerners whose families go back to beyond the war between the states, back to antebellum times, and they would have a deeper appreciation of Southern thinking and mentality," a spokesman said.

As the daughter of Sikh immigrants from India, Haley's loyalty to the false "Lost Cause" interpretation of history could not be assumed when she was running for Governor. As a presidential candidate, she has proved that she is eager to defend white supremacy by distorting history and presenting racial gaps as the result of "merit" and "hard work" instead of systemic oppression.

—January 5, 2024

## Marian Wright Edelman

Founder and President Emerita, Children's Defense Fund



### ChildWatch:

## Prayers for the New Year

I begin 2024 with prayers for the year ahead. For many people, the start of a new year is a focused time for reflection and renewal. I've often set aside the first few days of January as a time for spiritual retreat, and sometimes seek out quiet retreats again as the year goes on—for example, sinking into a cushion of silence, hospitality, and worship with the nuns of All Saints Convent in Catonsville, Maryland. I share here a prayer I found some years ago at All Saints that I hope might resonate with others finding their own paths to rebalance and reset right now.

### The Nuns' Twenty-Third Psalm

The Lord is my pace-setter, I shall not rush.  
He makes me stop and rest for quiet intervals;  
He provides me with images of stillness,  
which restore my serenity.

He leads me in ways of efficiency through calmness of mind.  
And His guidance is peace.  
Even though I have a great many things to accomplish each day,  
I will not fret, for His presence is here.

His timelessness, his all-importance will keep me in balance.  
He prepares refreshment and renewal in the midst of my activity  
By anointing my mind with His oils of tranquility.  
My cup of joyous energy overflows.

Surely harmony and effectiveness shall be the fruit of my hours for  
I shall walk in the place of my Lord and dwell in His House forever.

I share two more prayers as we go on into this year.

### 90th Psalm for Child and Youth Advocates

O God, who has been our dwelling place in all generations  
for whom a thousand years are like yesterday  
and like a watch in the night in Your sight.

Teach us to count our days  
that we may apply our hearts to wisdom  
and raise our voices for justice.

Let Your work be manifest in Your servants  
and Your glorious power to their children.

Let Your favor be upon us  
and prosper for us the work of our hands  
O prosper the work of our hands  
for our children's sake.

God thank You so much for giving me a new beginning each day  
and each minute.

Help me to grow in grace and faith and hope, and shine your light  
everywhere I go today and all throughout the New Year

—January 5, 2024

### Concert from A1

world premiere of "Network to Freedom."

"Over the past few years, the B&O Museum has made great strides in unearthing stories of free slaves passing through their historic grounds while revitalizing Mt. Claire Station; a site where freedom seekers made their way to freedom," said the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra's Artistic Partner, Wordsmith. "I'm beyond proud to tell these stories along with the beginnings of the American railroad system with my BSO colleagues on such a monumental evening where we celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr."

For the concert, Jeri Lynne Johnson will conduct the performance, joined by Wordsmith as the spoken word artist, with further vocalists Nazarene Maloney (soprano), Samone Scriber (soprano), Asia Haynie (mezzo-soprano), Jaillah Wehye (mezzo-soprano), Oguchi Eburnine (tenor), Darrin Scott (tenor), Dorian Forbes (baritone) and Cameron Potts (bass).

The program will include:

CARLOS SIMON "The Block"  
ELLINGTON (arr. Henderson, red. Blanchard) *Three Black Kings*

III. Martin Luther King

BONDS *Montgomery Variations*

VI. Lament

VII. Benediction

STILL Symphony No. 1, "Afro-American"

I. Longing: Moderato assai

PRICE Symphony No. 3

III. Juba: Allegro

WORDSMITH *Network to Freedom* (world premiere, BSO commission)

Don't miss this uplifting performance, symbolizing Dr. King's unwavering message of equality and unity. Tickets for this event are available for free at Eventbrite.

For more information and updates, please visit B&O Railroad Museum Events and Baltimore Symphony Orchestra Events online.

### Longevity from A1

age of 19, according to the Maryland Department of Planning.

Under the leadership of Secretary Roques, the Department of Aging has already begun collaborating with other state agencies, including the Department of Planning, to develop a forward-facing data tool and dashboard to report longevity ready goals, performance indicators, and progress; the Department of Health to redesign the long-term services and supports system; and the Department of Housing and Community Development to examine affordable housing options for older people.

In addition to its goals of optimizing health and wellness, pro-

moting economic opportunities, affording the 100-year lifespan, and ensuring caregivers are recognized and valued, Longevity Ready Maryland will also focus on creating a more age-integrated state, promoting intergenerational relationships, and recognizing the potential of the older population to the social fabric of Maryland.

Over the next 18 months, the Maryland Department of Aging will continue to target stakeholder engagement that will lead to recommendations for Longevity Ready Maryland to be implemented over the next ten years. The final Longevity Ready Plan will be published in mid-2025.

To learn more about Longevity Ready Maryland, go to [aging.maryland.gov](http://aging.maryland.gov).

## Save the Date: Hospice of the Chesapeake's 45th Anniversary Celebration

By ELYZABETH MARCUSSEN  
Hospice of the Chesapeake

PASADENA, Md. (Jan. 4, 2024)—Hospice of the Chesapeake will commemorate its historic tradition of hospice, supportive and grief care with its 45th Anniversary Celebration, from 5:30 to 10 p.m. **Saturday, May 11, 2024**, at The Fluegel Alumni Center, 301 King George St., Annapolis, Maryland.

The evening features an open bar, silent auction, and a variety of food stations created by Main & Market. The program will include stories, milestones, and reflections from 45 years of caring for life in the community. The organization has grown to become the largest independent not-for-profit hospice organization in Maryland and continues to celebrate its status as a community-based healthcare leader. Since its beginnings with four patients in 1979, it now cares for more than 600 patients each day in Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles and Prince George's counties.

For sponsorship opportunities, contact the events team at 443-837-1531 or [events@hospicechesapeake.org](mailto:events@hospicechesapeake.org). For additional details, visit <https://www.hospicechesapeake.org/45th-anniversary>.

*Caring for life throughout the journey with illness and loss is the mission of Hospice of the Chesapeake. For more information, please visit [www.hospicechesapeake.org](http://www.hospicechesapeake.org).*

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# HEALTHY EATING

## Solve Dinnertime Dilemmas with *Speedy, Nutritious* Whole Grains

**FAMILY FEATURES**

Putting dinner on the table quickly seems to be a goal more often than not, particularly in today's sped-up world. However, spending less time cooking doesn't have to mean sacrificing nutrition or taste.

To enjoy better-for-you meals in the blink of an eye, lean into versatile ingredients prepared without the hassle like Minute Brown Rice & Quinoa Cups. In just 1 minute, you can savor a blend of two 100% whole grains with the crunchiness of red quinoa and chewy texture of brown rice that total 55 grams of whole grains and provide a good source of fiber in each serving.

Packed in single-serve portions, you can eat right out of the BPA-free cup or serve the whole grains as the base of this speedy Sweet Chili Shrimp with Quinoa mixed with succulent shrimp, umami-like flavors from sweet chili sauce and the satisfying flavor and crunch of green onions and chopped peanuts. A delicious dish that's filling without the fuss, this recipe is ready in less than 5 minutes to save time without relying on takeout.

Switch up your family's stir-fry routine with this savory version of Whole Grain Sesame Chicken Stir-Fry made with rice, quinoa, vegetables, rotisserie chicken and a blend of soy sauce and sesame oil. This simple meal is perfect for those busy weeknights when you need to save time without skimping on taste.

Ready to complement the succulent chicken and sesame-infused veggies, Minute Instant Rice & Quinoa offers a blend of four whole-grain ingredients: brown rice, red rice, wild rice and quinoa. Available in four convenient, pre-portioned, two-serving bags, it cooks in just 10 minutes for light, fluffy and delicious nutty flavor for recipe versatility from breakfast to dessert so you can rely on it as a family favorite for less time cooking and more time enjoying meals and moments together.

To find more quick, nutritious dinner solutions, visit [MinuteRice.com](http://MinuteRice.com).



**Sweet Chili Shrimp with Quinoa**

Prep time: 2 minutes  
Cook time: 2 minutes  
Servings: 1

- 1 Minute Brown Rice & Quinoa Cup
- 4 ounces (1/2 cup) cooked shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1/2 cup frozen Asian-style mixed vegetables, thawed
- 2 tablespoons sweet chili sauce
- 2 tablespoons thinly sliced green onions
- 1 tablespoon chopped peanuts

Heat rice and quinoa cup according to package directions. In small, microwave-safe bowl, combine shrimp and vegetables. Microwave on high 30 seconds. Stir in sweet chili sauce. Blend well. Serve shrimp mixture over rice topped with green onions and peanuts.

**Whole Grain Sesame Chicken Stir-Fry**

Prep time: 3 minutes  
Cook time: 12 minutes  
Servings: 3-4

- 1 bag Minute Instant Rice & Quinoa
- 1 cup vegetable broth
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil, divided
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1/2 cup thinly sliced red onion
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 cups rotisserie cooked chicken, shredded
- 2 cups frozen, Asian-style mixed vegetables, thawed
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce

Prepare rice and quinoa according to package directions, substituting broth for water.

In medium wok or skillet over medium-high heat, heat 1/2 tablespoon sesame oil. Add eggs and, using spatula, quickly soft scramble. Continue stirring eggs until light and fluffy. Remove from pan and reserve.

Add remaining sesame oil to wok or skillet over medium-high heat. Add onion and garlic; stir-fry 2 minutes.

Add chicken and vegetables; stir-fry 2 minutes, or until heated through. Fold in rice and quinoa, eggs and soy sauce.



## Turn to Whole Grains for a Nutritional Boost



**FAMILY FEATURES**

Nutritious eating, including smarter snacking, is an important way to protect your heart and maintain overall health and wellness. While many people understand the basics of healthy eating – avoiding too many sugary treats, for example – some are confused about important food categories that can impact nutrition.

According to a survey conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of the American Heart Association, U.S. adults are least knowledgeable about refined vs. whole grains compared to other food categories like fruits, vegetables and proteins. Whole grains are, in fact, a key feature of the Association's recommendations for a heart-healthy diet.

There are two types of grain products: whole grains, which contain the entire grain, and refined grains, which have been milled into a finer texture like flour or meal. Most adults, according to the survey, are able to distinguish whole vs. refined grains. However, there are a few misperceptions.

Most incorrectly believe multi-grain bread is a whole grain. Additionally, only 17% believe sorghum is an example of a whole grain when it is, in fact, a whole grain option. Whole grains like sorghum, oatmeal and brown rice are rich sources of dietary fiber, may improve blood cholesterol levels and provide nutrients that help the body form new cells, regulate the thyroid and maintain a healthy immune system.

These sweet, chewy Date Nut Granola Bars from the American Heart Association's Healthy for Good initiative, supported by the Sorghum Checkoff, are a perfect go-to snack for enjoying throughout the week. Popped sorghum adds a surprise ingredient for crunchy texture while dry-roasted oats and nuts provide a delicious, toasted flavor.

To discover more whole-grain recipes that can support a healthy heart, visit [Heart.org/healthyforgood](http://Heart.org/healthyforgood).

**Date Nut Granola Bars**

Recipe courtesy of the American Heart Association and Sorghum Checkoff  
Servings: 12 (1 bar per serving)

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 1/2 cups rolled oats
- 1/4 cup almond slices or whole almonds, coarsely chopped
- 1/4 cup shelled pistachios, coarsely chopped
- 1 cup pitted dates
- 1/2 cup unsweetened dried cranberries
- 1/4 cup uncooked whole-grain sorghum
- 1/4 cup honey
- 1/4 cup low-sodium peanut butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/8 teaspoon salt

Preheat oven to 350 F.

Line bottom and sides of 8-inch square baking pan with plastic wrap or parchment paper. Lightly spray with nonstick cooking spray.

On large baking sheet, spread oats, almonds and pistachios in single layer. Bake 10-15 minutes, or until lightly brown, stirring occasionally. Let cool slightly.

In food processor or blender, process dates and cranberries 1-1 1/2 minutes, or until chopped and clumpy. Transfer to large bowl.

Put 2 tablespoons sorghum in silicone microwaveable bowl or clean, brown paper bag. If using microwaveable bowl, cover with lid. If using paper bag, roll shut and place on microwavable dinner plate with fold facing down. Microwave on high 2 minutes, or until there are more than 10 seconds between pops. Repeat with

remaining sorghum, microwaving 1 1/2 minutes, or until more than 10 seconds between pops.

Stir popped sorghum, oats, almonds and pistachios into date mixture.

In small saucepan over low heat, heat honey and peanut butter 5 minutes, or until peanut butter is smooth and mixture is warmed, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat. Stir in vanilla and salt.

Pour peanut butter mixture over date mixture, stirring to break into small clumps. Transfer half to baking pan. Using bottom of drinking glass or fingers lightly sprayed with nonstick cooking spray, press down firmly to flatten and pack tightly so clumps adhere to each other. Repeat with remaining half. Freeze, covered, about 1 hour, to firm.

Place cutting board over pan. Turn pan over. Discard plastic wrap. Using knife, cut into 12 bars. Refrigerate leftovers in airtight container up to 1 week.



