

The Prince George's Post



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MPT Series *Maryland Farm & Harvest* Visits Prince George's County Farm During January 30 Episode

At Purple Mountain Organics in Prince George's County, Nazirahk Amen uses unique methods and exotic equipment to farm rice on dry land.

By PRESS OFFICER
Maryland Public Television

OWINGS MILLS, Md. (Jan. 17, 2024)—Maryland Public Television's (MPT) original series *Maryland Farm & Harvest*, now in its 11th season, will feature farms and locations in Caroline, Prince George's, Talbot, and Wicomico counties during an episode premiering on Tuesday, January 30. A preview of the episode can be found on the series' webpage at mpt.org/farm.

Maryland Farm & Harvest airs on Tuesdays at 7 p.m. on MPT-HD and online at mpt.org/livestream. Episodes are also available to view on the free PBS App and MPT's online video player following their broadcast premiere. Encore broadcasts air on MPT-HD on Thursdays at 11 p.m. and on Sundays at 6 a.m. Episodes also air on MPT2/Create® on Fridays at 7:30 p.m.

The popular weekly series takes viewers on a journey across the Free State, telling engaging and enlightening stories about the farms, people, and technology required to sustain and grow agriculture in Maryland, the state's number one commercial industry.



PHOTO COURTESY MARYLAND PUBLIC TELEVISION

Purple Mountain Organics' Nazirahk Amen operates a specialized Japanese rice cultivation machine at his farm in Takoma Park.

See FARM Page A3

Saniya Pearson of Fort Washington Named 2024 Prince George's County Youth Poet Laureate

On January 11, the 2024 cohort representing excellence in youth poetry competed for the title at Newton White Mansion in Mitchellville.

By PRESS OFFICER
DIALECT of Prince George's

MITCHELLVILLE, Md. (Jan. 17, 2024)—On Thursday, January 11, five outstanding youth poets performed and were honored for their creativity & community activism at The 2024 Prince George's County Youth Poet Laureate Finals. The poems performed, which covered a wide range of topics, displayed a depth, diversity, and craftsmanship that belied their young ages.

This event was the final, performative phase in determining who would represent the youth voices of Prince George's County during the rest of this year, engaging the public in various forums, one of which will be their very own 2024 reading tour in conjunction with PGCMLS. The event also featured performances by former YPL, Sainey Ceesay; a parting poem by outgoing 2023 Prince George's YPL, Precious Foreman; and a special appearance by Poet Laureate of Prince George's County, Dr. Khadijah Z. Ali-Coleman, who also served as one of the judges for the evening alongside Poet, activist & Program Coordinator for Creative Suitland Arts Center, Pi-Anir the Poet; and the Inaugural Poet Laureate for

Prince George's County, Sistah Joy Alford.

The earlier phases, which occurred during the fall included an application submission documenting each teen's poetic & community engagement, and an interview phase where applicants discussed their influences & what initiatives they would pursue as the Youth Poet Laureate. Joining our new Youth Poet Laureate will be four outstanding finalists from across Prince George's who have now been appointed Youth Poet Ambassadors for their areas & will work together on creating & implementing an awareness campaign for youth-related issues—they are:

- Arianna Bosley, Brandywine
- Angie Castellano, New Carrollton
- Chimweke Okoro, New Carrollton
- De'Juan Ouzts-Williams, Capital Heights

The PGC YPL Program is a joint venture of Urban Word of NYC, DIALECT of Prince George's, and Lyrikal Storm, with support from the Prince George's Arts & Humanities Council, M-NCPPC Dept of Parks & Rec, and our partners at the Prince George's County Office of Community Relations, with generous support from county residents like you. For more information: 301-237-6684

Helping Hands Family Expands ABA Therapy Reach With Opening of New Clinic in Prince George's County

By PRESS OFFICER
Helping Hands Family

LANHAM, Md. (Jan. 18, 2024) /PRNewswire/—Helping Hands Family (HHF) Autism Services introduces a state-of-the-art autism therapy clinic in Lanham, Maryland, marking another milestone in their commitment to expanding services across the Northeast.

As a top-rated provider of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy, HHF strives to extend its reach to serve more families and children, now with 3 locations in Maryland: Lanham, North Bethesda, and Columbia.

The new clinic provides a welcoming space where children with autism can learn, grow, and develop essential life skills. HHF's highly skilled and experi-



enced team of clinicians work together to build patient-focused, individualized treatment plans that address each child's unique needs, using evidence-based strategies.

"Today's ABA therapy is about acceptance, compassion, empowerment, and building meaningful skills," says Matthew Leal, M.A., BCBA, L.B.A., Clinical Director of the Lanham Clinic. "I am thrilled to be part of HHF and to play a direct role in changing the lives of children and their families in Lanham."

The opening of the Lanham clinic signifies HHF's commitment to making a positive impact on the entire community by:

- **Local job growth and opportunities:** HHF's expansion creates new employment opportunities for autism professionals in the community.
- **Reduced travel time for families:** HHF brings quality care closer to home, easing logistical barriers and ensuring consistent support.
- **Fostering collaboration:** HHF actively collaborates with local schools and providers to create a comprehensive network of care, ensuring access to resources and support for families.
- **Raising awareness:** HHF's outreach initiatives help raise awareness about autism and ABA

therapy within the community. By breaking down stigmas and promoting inclusivity, they pave the way for a more accepting and supportive environment.

If you are a parent interested in autism services, please contact HHF at (484) 965-9966 to speak with a dedicated Care Coordinator. HHF accepts most insurance plans and aids with applying for insurance coverage. For more information and employment opportunities visit <https://hhfamily.com/>.

Helping Hands Family (HHF) is a leading provider of Applied Behavior Analysis therapy, delivering autism therapy in-clinic, in-home, and in schools based on each child's unique needs. With locations in NJ, CT, MD, PA, and NY, HHF's clinical team is comprised of autism professionals, devoted to delivering customized treatment plans through science-based programs, aiding children with autism in social progress and supporting new ways of interacting with the world.

Moore's Budget Trims Some Programs, Preserves School Reform Blueprint

By KIERSTEN HACKER
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (Jan. 17, 2024)—Gov. Wes Moore unveiled a budget proposal on Wednesday that would balance the books and protect the state's ambitious reform plan for Maryland public schools, without raising taxes in the fiscal year that begins in July.

The \$63.1 billion plan would balance the books where officials had projected a shortfall, in part by returning some programs to spending levels closer to those of the pre-pandemic era. The plan also proposes leveraging state debt and dipping into rainy day funds.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future, the state's sweeping education plan of 2021, will be fully funded, state budget officials said Wednesday. Moore, a De-

mocrat, said his administration crafted the budget plan in partnership with lawmakers, community leaders and other "village elders."

"We wanted to make sure that this proposed budget had everyone's fingerprints on it," Moore said in his public announcement of the new plan. "Because this budget is not just a reflection of an administration. This budget is a reflection of our shared aspiration."

Those aspirations will now go to the Maryland General Assembly for debate. Lawmakers have set a target of early April for passing a budget, and the state Constitution requires that it be balanced.

But the joint Republican Caucus will look closely at where funding transfers in the proposed budget are coming from, House Minority Leader Jason Buckel, R-Allegany, told Capital News Service.

While he said he is pleased that the Moore administration kept total spending similar to that of years past, he expressed concerns about the possibility of fees for certain businesses or tax hikes down the road. Buckel said he'll keep worrying about that possibility until the legislature adjourns.

"All in all, it's a mixed bag, I think, and we'll look forward to working with the governor and working with the Democratic leadership here to try to make the budget as good as possible," Buckel said.

Senate Minority Leader Stephen Hershey also suggested he worries about the possibility of fee increases down the road.

"While it is a relief that the governor's budget spends less than last year and does not raise taxes, the number of



PHOTO KIERSTEN HACKER/CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

Gov. Wes Moore unveiled his new budget plan at an Annapolis press conference on Jan. 17, 2024.

fee increases proposed by his administration through legislation and the regulatory process is concerning," said Hershey, a Republican representing Kent, Cecil, Queen Anne's and Caro-

line, in an email release. He and other Republicans contend fee hikes are com-

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TOWNS *and* NEIGHBORS

In & Around Morningside-Skyline

by Mary McHale 301-735-3451

Evelyn and Joe Poe built their own house, in Ridge

Evelyn Eudora Poe, 96, of California, Md., a longtime resident of Skyline Drive—five houses down from me—died Nov. 30, 2023. She was born Sept. 15, 1917, to Samuel and Clara Eudora Talbert of Union Town, Md.

Evelyn was known as Evie by her late husband, Joseph Warner Poe, a C & P Telephone retiree. Also, Joe would say “Evelyn Eudora, if you knew her you would Eudore her.” Evelyn and Joe shared a long marriage, of 60 years.

For 33 years, Evelyn enjoyed working at Witts greenhouse. Her love for flowers showed in her yard; she planted a great variety.

The Poes are listed on Skyline Drive in the 1952 Morningside Directory. We moved here in 1958 and enjoyed having them as neighbors. I remember Joe Poe “saving us” from a long black snake that had wrapped itself around a kid’s bike in our backyard. The children were astonished when he came over, picked up the snake, showed it off to them, walked across the street and left it in the woods.

After they both retired, they built their own house in Ridge, Md. and lived there 27 years, until Joe’s death in 2008. That’s when Evelyn moved to California, Md.

She enjoyed playing the piano, doing puzzles and going to Bingo.

Evelyn is survived by her daughters Kathleen, Sharon, Teresa and Laura; 7 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren and a great-great-grandchild.

Town of Morningside

The Morningside Recreation Council is planning events for Valentine’s Day and Easter. Details, as I receive them.

The annual Town election will be held May 6, to elect two Council Members. For Morningside information, call 301-736-2300.

Academia

Bishop McNamara’s girls’ basketball team (13-3) is now #1 in the Washington Post high school standings. Bishop McNamara, by the way, is in Forestville.

When completed, the new Suitland High School will have an enrollment of over 2,500. The \$335-million project is proceeding in three phases, estimated to go through 2026. During the buildout, Suitland’s CTE programs will be located at Crossland High.

Changing landscape

To cut waste, Starbucks has expanded its bring-your-own-cup program. They recently announced that they will allow customers to use their personal cups for nearly all drink orders in the United States and Canada. The cup must be clean and can’t be larger than 40 ounces.

After last month’s shocking announcement that D.C.’s NHL and NBA teams are set to leave Capital One Arena for Northern Virginia, Washington is launching an effort to revitalize the blocks immediately surrounding the sports complex. Mayor Bowser has announced a task force to revitalize Chinatown and other areas near the Arena.

Now that the FBI will definitely not be moving to the area I call Landover Mall, Lerner Enterprises is moving forward with plans for a big data center campus, Brightseat Tech Park, on the site.

A home at 6716 Boxwood Drive recently sold for \$265,000.

Places to go & things to do

Fr. Ryan Pineda is leading a pilgrimage to Portugal (Fatima, Obidos, Batalha, Nazare, Porto, etc.) and Spain (Santiago de Compostela) October 1–8, 2024. For information, go to <https://www.canteburypilgrimages.com/tour/portugal-spain-with-father-pineda-st-philip-the-apostle-church/> or email Fr. Ryan at rpineda@stphilip.net.

The Way it Was: Forestville

Rich Landon remembers: “O’Donnell’s farm was before my time but the road between Penn Mar and Forestville Plaza is ‘Donnell Drive.’ Somewhere, somehow, someone dropped the ‘O’ off ‘O’Donnell. An old neighbor told me there was a farm there. After the farm was gone, the area where Forestville Plaza and its parking lot were, there was a baseball field that we used to play on once in a while and I think there might have also been a football field or even 2 on that property before there was any development!”

I love to reflect on “the way it used to be.” I moved here in 1958 and remember what so much of Prince George’s was like. Feel free to send your “The Way it Was.” And, thanks, Rich, for remembering.

Sister Rezan, of the Daughters of St. Anne

Sr. Hanna Rezan Abrha Mehanzel,

who came from her native country, Eritrea, in August 2000 to serve the needs of the Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees and immigrants in the Washington D.C. area, died at the convent just behind my home, on Eastern Christmas, January 7.

Sister Rezan was born May 7, 1951, in Segheneity, Eritrea, daughter of Weizero Abeba Ketema and Ato Abrha Mehanzel. She completed Italian primary education run by her order, the Daughters of St. Anne. After middle school, she joined the order, completed religious formation, and took her first vows on July 26, 1972, and her final vows on Sept. 18, 1977.

She taught elementary school in Eritrea and Ethiopia, was sent to Rome for further study, served as religious superior of her community and completed her nursing education and graduation in Addis Ababa.

She was transferred to Washington in 2000 along with Sr. Ghenet and Sr. Tirhas. They began their mission in the Archdiocese of Washington by settling in St. Philip the Apostle Parish, Camp Springs.

In the past 23 years, Sr. Rezan tirelessly served as superior of her growing community, actively engaged in parish councils, reaching out in compassion to the poor, sick, elderly and mourning, always in collaboration with the Sisters and parish priests. In recent years, the mission in Washington was expanded to Atlanta, under the leadership of Sister Rezan.

Months ago, she became ill and returned from Atlanta to her convent here. She died January 7. Services, in her native Tigrinya, were held at St. Philip’s with burial at Resurrection Cemetery. From her official obituary: “Sr. Hanna Rezan has always been shining the joy of the Gospel, with a great sense of humor and zeal for evangelization, capable of connecting with young and old.”

A final note: The Daughters of St. Anne was founded by Blessed Anna Rosa Gattorno, in 1866, in Italy. They now have communities on five continents.

Milestones

Happy Birthday to San’ Tori Dixon, Jan. 28; Sister Zion and Lisa S., Jan. 29; David Call and Joanne (Clark) Bunch, Jan. 30; Donna Young and Robin Sawyer, Feb. 1; former Skyline President Stanley Holmes, Feb. 2; Philip Desmarais and Ashley Lee, Feb. 3.

Email birthdays and anniversaries to muddmm@gmail.com.

Brandywine-Aquasco

by Audrey Johnson 301-922-5384

DINNER AND CONCERT

Melba Moore Valentine’s Day Dinner and Concert is Saturday, February 10, 2024. Dinner is at 6:30 p.m. and 8:15 p.m. is the Concert. The Dinner and Concert will be at Bowie State University in the Fine and Performing Arts Center, Dionne Warwick Theatre, Bowie, Maryland.

Early Bird Specials before January 26, 2024, Concert Only Ticket includes a complimentary beverage, dinner, concert ticket, includes a meet and greet with the Artist. Early Bird Special/ Original price \$85 pp/ \$100 pp Concert Only, \$125 pp/ 145 pp Dinner/Concert. Non-Refundable tickets, dinner menu: Salad, Choice of Dual Entrée, and Desert. Cash Bar available, Free Parking. TICKET FORMATION: WWW.BOWIESTATE.EDU

DISTANT ECHOES: BLACK FARMERS IN AMERICA

Frank Deville and James Isaiah Lee, residents of Brandywine, Maryland who are now deceased, are featured in the DISTANT ECHOES: BLACK FARMERS IN AMERICA Exhibition that opened on Friday, February 3, 2006, at the Reginald F. Lewis Museum, 830 E. Pratt Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21202. The Distant Echoes exhibition was on display until April 30, 2006.

“The exhibition Distant Echoes is comprised of sixty images featuring photographs by John Francis Ficarra that depict the lives and working conditions of Black farmers from various parts of the United States”. “Frank and Isaiah work and the work of others like these two men and others like them are a genuine tribute to our ancestor and our African American heritage here at home and across the great country of America.”

The Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture is the largest African American museum on the East Coast. The museum’s Permanent Exhibition introduces visitors to Maryland’s African American heritage through three galleries: THINGS HOLD, LINES CONNECT: African American Families and Communities in Maryland; BUILDING MARYLAND, BUILDING AMERICA: Labor

and the Black Experience; and THE STRENGTH OF THE MIND: Black Art and Intellect. Each tells the story of perseverance, triumph, and the celebration of life through the inspiring history and living culture of Maryland’s African Americans.

BOYZ II MEN

Boyz II Men, who redefined popular R&B and continue to create timeless hits that appeal to fans across all generations, will appear February 18, 2024, 8 p.m. at MGM National Harbor Resort & Casino. The address is 101 MGM National Avenue Oxon Hill, MD. The band has penned and performed some of the most celebrated classics of the past two decades. For the past two decades Boyz II Men have given fans a rich catalog of hits filled with smooth harmonies and enduring themes. The group continues to craft new albums and bring their legendary act to stages across the world. Tickets on Ticketmaster and Perto.com.

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. at 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 (\$stphilips-baden). Dinners will include” Mitty’s Homemade Spaghetti, Potato Chips, Garlic Bread, Water, Fruit Cup, and a Desert. Points of contact 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.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

In February, we will celebrate Black History Month that will highlight the varied history and life of American arts and artisans. I will go into detail with more information in my next articles.

Around the County

Three PGCPs Schools, Dozens of Educators Honored for Excellence in Gifted and Talented Education

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (Jan. 18, 2024)—Capitol Heights, Greenbelt and Longfields elementary schools have been named 2023 Maryland Excellence in Gifted and Talented Education (EGATE) Schools. This is the third year Capitol Heights (2013, 2018) and Greenbelt (2014, 2019) received EGATE Awards and the second time for Longfields (2018). Fifty-three Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPS) teachers, administrators and students were also honored.

“I’m extremely proud of our Talented and Gifted (TAG) Program coordinators, teachers and administrators who volunteer to participate in the rigorous EGATE application process to identify their strengths and areas that may need improvement,” said TAG Supervisor Theresa Jackson. “We work collaboratively in teams to complete this process, and I see firsthand the benefits of earning the EGATE recognition.”

The EGATE Award recognizes public schools that offer superior and equitable gifted and talented education. Through a rigorous application process, school teams document how their school’s program aligns with Maryland Criteria for Excellence: Gifted and Talented Education Program Guidelines. The guidelines establish optimal practices in four program components: identification of students, curriculum and instruction, professionally qualified teachers and professional development, and program management and evaluation.

“These school and individual awards are a testament to the hard work and commitment of our students, school leaders and educators,” said Superintendent Millard House II. “By ensuring advanced learners are challenged and engaged, these programs open a world of opportunities while providing a strong foundation for success in high school, college and career.”

Since inception in 2010, 23 PGCPS schools have earned the EGATE Award, with 11 schools earning the award two or more years.

Schools, students and educators will be recognized at a statewide event on February 27, featured on the MSDE website and will serve as models and resources to schools working toward EGATE status.

Learn more about PGCPS Talented and Gifted (<https://www.pgcp.org/about-pgcp/applications/talented-and-gifted-tag-center>) and specialty programs (<https://www.pgcp.org/about-pgcp/applications>).

—Prince George’s County Public Schools

Local Students Honored

Quincy University Hosted its Winter Commencement Ceremony

QUINCY, Ill. (Jan. 19, 2024)—Quincy University hosted its Winter Commencement ceremony on Saturday, December 9, 2023, in QU’s St. Francis Solanus Chapel in Francis Hall, 1800 College Avenue. The 2023 winter graduating class was comprised of 46 undergraduates and five graduate degree recipients.

Sarah Vordtriede-Patton, Ph.D., provost and vice president for academic affairs, convened the ceremony. Phil Conover, president emeritus of Quincy University, delivered the commencement address. Conover’s theme for the graduates focused on self-discovery in service, highlighting how career and personal growth experiences have a compounding effect on graduates and create opportunities to become servant leaders in their chosen professions.

A list of graduates is below:

Brandywine, MD: **Jamaal David**, Master of Science in Education

—Office of Community Relations, Quincy University

NIU Fall 2023 Graduation List

DeKALB, Ill. (Jan. 18, 2024)—Over 1,100 students received their degrees from Northern Illinois University in December. Included among the graduates were the following students from your area:

Upper Marlboro, MD: **Malia Watkins**, Bachelor of Science, Art

—Northern Illinois University, Office of Institutional Communications

Local Student Graduates From Hood College

FREDERICK, Md. (Jan. 17, 2024)—**Yonatan Weldeberuk**, from Riverdale, has graduated from Hood College in January. Weldeberuk earned a BA degree in History.

—Office of Marketing & Communications, Hood College

Zachary Marr of District Heights, MD, Named to Lincoln University of Missouri’s Fall 2023 Dean’s List

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (Jan. 16, 2024)—Zachary Marr of District Heights, MD, was recently named to the Dean’s List of Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri for the fall 2023 semester.

The Lincoln University Dean’s List comprises full-time undergraduate students earning a minimum term GPA of 3.00, excluding grades in courses that do not carry credit toward graduation.

—Misty Nunn, Lincoln University of Missouri

PGSPCA Low Cost Shot Clinic

Sunday, February 4, 2024, No Appointment Needed

The Prince George’s County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PGSPCA) is holding walk-in, low-cost vaccination clinics for cats and dogs on the first Sunday of the month, from 1–3 p.m. at 8210 D’Arcy Road in Forestville, Maryland. No appointment is needed. The gates open at 1 p.m., and anyone in line by 3 p.m. will be served. All dogs MUST be leashed or in a carrier. All cats MUST be in a carrier.

Cash or credit card only; no checks. Without documentation of a prior rabies vaccine, your pet’s rabies vaccine will expire in one year.

For more information, visit www.pgspca.org/clinic/shots.

The Prince George’s Post

Serving Prince George’s County Since 1932

COMMUNITY

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. 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.

Budget from A1

ing through the administrative pipeline.

"Taxes aren't the only way to raise revenue," Hershey said, "and state government should not be in the business of nickel and diming Maryland's families and small businesses."

The only fee increases currently in the budget plan are in the Department of the Environment, and those would generate roughly \$3.5 million in revenue, according to a spokesman for the governor's office.

Working together to approve a balanced budget had been shaping up as no easy task. The state's spending had been projected to outpace revenues starting in the coming fiscal year, according to a recent report from the Department of Legislative Services.

But Moore has now proposed a plan that would instead balance the 2025 budget, saying it is also a step in the right direction toward addressing the state's structural deficit in the years beyond that.

His budget flips the expected cash shortfall of \$1.1 billion to a positive cash balance of \$103 million in fiscal 2025, according to Helene Grady, Maryland's secretary of budget and management.

Moore said his budget prioritizes public safety, affordable housing, child care, education and public service. It also raises pay for state employees.

"We know that budgets, they're moral documents," Moore said. "Where we choose to invest actually defines our values. And it dictates the course of our future."

State budget officials said they avoided wide-ranging cuts across the board, hiring freezes or salary freezes. Rather, state agency heads went through an intense process and found areas to trim, and several agency budgets will be lower this year than they were the year before.

Moore said he proposed a record

\$127 million for local police agencies, citing the importance of supporting law enforcement and getting "more boots on the ground" to solve crimes and keep repeat offenders off the streets. Other investments would go toward the prevention of gun violence and support for crime victims.

While addressing public safety, Moore acknowledged the debates about juvenile justice likely to come during the legislative session, announcing an increase in funding to the Department of Juvenile Services. He didn't specifically discuss any cuts made to DJS programs.

Affordable housing and child care would also receive significant funding under the proposal. Those are two areas Moore claimed are the biggest strains on Maryland residents. Access to housing and child care allow for increased participation in the workforce as Maryland tries to grow its economy, he argued.

"Access to child care doesn't just affect your child and your family," Moore said. "It changes the trajectory of our state's fiscal health."

Options for job training in innovative industries and public service were also a priority. Through Moore's budget, the state is on track to increase the number of Service Year Option and Maryland Corps participants to 500, as required by law.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future will be fully funded in the coming fiscal year, budget officials said, but its money problems are far from resolved. Prior to the beginning of the legislative session, the DLS report projected the state would exhaust the Blueprint balance in fiscal 2027.

"It's not inaccurate to say, 'Hey, we funded the blueprint, or at least the state's portion of the blueprint, for today,'" Buckel said. "But I also think it's completely honest to say the blueprint looming large over the next four or five years, blows billion-dollar holes into our state budget."

Exhibition: CATALUNYA Works in Colored Pulp by Lynn Sures

By KATE TAYLOR DAVIS
Pyramid Atlantic Art Center

HYATTSVILLE, Md. (Jan. 18, 2024)—Rugged shapes and rich earth tones set in pulp fill the gallery in CATALUNYA. Sures' inspiration for this series in colored pulp was Spain's multi-peaked mountain range, Montserrat. Five of her large-scale works and 20 smaller, embossed pieces are on view at Pyramid Atlantic.

The exhibition is FREE and open to the public starting January 12, 2024. **An Artist Reception will be held on January 26 from 6–8 pm. RSVPs requested.** The exhibition runs through February 18, 2024 in Pyramid's Helen C. Frederick Gallery. Gallery hours are Wed–Thu, 10–8 p.m. and Fri–Sun, 10–6 p.m. Pyramid is located at 4318 Gallatin Street, Hyattsville, Maryland 20781. For more information and an RSVP link, visit pyramidatlantic.org or call 301-608-9101.

Sures created this series overseas during an artist residency. She prepped her materials in the US and shipped them to Europe before she even considered the mountain range as a subject.

"Montserrat is a gigantic, imposing, animated presence. I was aware of Montserrat in that vaguest of ways, but was unprepared for the happenstance of driving by it with my Catalonian host," shared Sures.

That happenstance resulted in 5 large



PHOTO COURTESY PYRAMID ATLANTIC ART CENTER

Image: Montserrat Silver 4. Pigmented flax pulp painting, 32 x 24 in.

scale pieces made in Catalonia from Sures' different vantage points at the foot of the mountain. After those were complete, she traversed the mountain range further by car and foot, leading to an additional 20 smaller embossed pulp paintings. "I was able to carry the mountain out of Catalonia with me."

Working in pulp is relatively rare, but Sures has been doing it for over 25 years. Pulp painting involves pigmenting paper pulp and then painting with it on a wet base of handmade paper. In the case of the works in CATALUNYA, this process creates a very rich, thick physical pres-

ence apropos to the subject matter.

Lynn Sures creates multi-media works that examine geology, physics and the origins of humans. She holds a National Museum of Natural History Research Associate fellowship in drawing; was awarded a Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship (SARF) in Kenya (2016); and was a US State Department American Artist Abroad in Sri Lanka (2006). Sures has held residencies at the Museu Moli Paperer de Capellades, Spain; The Pittman/Corcoran Residency at San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, and the Press at the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe, NM. Her work is in public and private collections including the US Department of State; US Library of Congress; Yale University; Schomburg Collection, New York Public Library; Museo della Carta e della Filigrana, Fabriano, Italy; R.C. Williams Museum of Papermaking, Atlanta, GA; and Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Alexandria, Egypt. She is Professor Emerita of Art and Design of the Corcoran College of Art & Design (now George Washington University, DC). She lives and works in Maryland. In winter 2023–4, Radical Paper: Art and Invention with Colored Pulp, by Lynn Sures and Michelle Samour will be published by The Legacy Press. Sures was able to make the work in Catalunya with the support of Museu Moli Paperer de Capellades, Spain and The Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County, MD.

Farm from A1

Joanne Clendining, who has earned two regional Emmy® awards for her work on Maryland Farm & Harvest, serves as series host. She is joined during the season by Al Spoler, host of "The Local Buy" segments, and by a rotation of local chefs who each take a turn hosting a new segment called "Farm to Skillet," during which viewers are led through the process of finding, preparing, and presenting the locally produced ingredients that make up some of the chefs' favorite dishes.

With introductions filmed at the Basil Harding Farmstead—part of the Peace and Plenty Rural Historic District in Frederick County—the January 30 episode features the following segment in Prince George's County:

Purple Mountain Organics Rice (Prince George's County). Nazirahk Amen of Purple Mountain Organics in Takoma Park has been growing rice in Maryland for nearly a decade—just not in the way people usually imagine. Rather than growing the grain underwater as has been common practice for centuries, Nazirahk uses a System of Rice Intensification (SRI) method to grow rice on land as a regular garden vegetable. Viewers join Nazi-



PHOTO COURTESY MARYLAND PUBLIC TELEVISION

MPT videographer Danielle Crone (left) captures farmer Nazirahk Amen harvesting rice at Purple Mountain Organics in Takoma Park.

rakh as he harvests one of the six varieties he grows, observing the unique methods and exotic equipment his SRI farm uses.

More than 16 million viewers have watched Maryland Farm & Harvest on MPT since its debut in 2013. The series has traveled to more than 450 farms, fisheries, and other agriculture-related locations during its first 10 seasons, covering every Maryland county, as well as Baltimore City and Washington, D.C.

Past episodes can be viewed at video.mpt.tv/show/maryland-farm-harvest/, while episode segments are available

on the series' YouTube channel at youtube.com/c/MarylandFarmHarvest/featured. Engage with the show on social media @MarylandFarmHarvest on Facebook and @mdfarmtv on Instagram.

The Maryland Department of Agriculture is MPT's co-production partner for Maryland Farm & Harvest. Major funding is provided by the Maryland Grain Producers Utilization Board.

Additional funding is provided by Maryland's Best; a grant from the Rural Maryland Council Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund; Maryland

Agricultural Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO); a grant from the Maryland Department of Agriculture Specialty Crop Block Program; Farm Credit; Maryland Soybean Board; Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts; Wegmans Food Markets; Maryland Nursery, Landscape & Greenhouse Association; Maryland Farm Bureau; The Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment; and a contribution made by the Citizens of Baltimore County. Other support comes from the Mar-Del Watermelon Association and Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation.

EarthTalk® Compostable Plastic: Q&A Too Good to Be True?

By Taylor Connelly January 11, 2024

Dear EarthTalk:

Is compostable plastic too good to be true?

—Peter C., Pittsburgh, PA

In recent years there has been a global movement to pressure corporations into becoming more eco-friendly. One of the most frequent measures taken by these companies is limiting the use of single-use plastics and replacing them with so-called compostable plastics. Compostable plastics are frequently confused with biodegradable plastics. Biodegradable plastics are defined by their ability to degrade completely into biomass within a given time frame; compostable plastics are designed to be processed in industrial composting facilities. Many of the alleged "100% compostable," plastic-like materials are made from polylactic acid (PLA), a polymer derived from the fermentation of various types of starch.

Of the 6.3 billion tons of plastic that have been discarded since the wonder material started being mass-produced in the 1950s, only around 600 million tons has been recycled. Almost five billion tons have been either sent to landfills or left in the natural environment. Plastic production also contributes immensely to greenhouse gas emissions. Aside from the disastrous effects plastic has on the environment, it can also be extremely dangerous to human health. Microplastics from air or water can cause significant damage to cells in the body, causing cancers, lung disease and birth defects. Residents of "Cancer Alley" in Louisiana face the highest rates of cancer in the U.S., largely as a result of the plastic production plants along the lower Mississippi River.

Compostable plastic—which would theoretically leave no trace on the environment—sounds like a great solution. However, it isn't as simple

as it sounds. While plastic-like materials like PLA will decompose in the right conditions, it's rare that PLA is disposed of correctly. Putting a cup made of PLA in your home compost won't break it down as it requires a specific set of microorganisms used in industrial composting that need temperatures well above what most home composts can reach. A UK-based science experiment from 2022, "The Big Compost Experiment," had citizens carry out home compost experiments to test the performance of compostable plastics. The public was generally very confused about what was compostable and what wasn't, and many of the objects labeled as "home compostable" did not fully disintegrate into their compost bins.

What needs to change to make compostable plastics a more viable option for the future? First off, there are very few facilities in the U.S. that are set up to handle the disposal of PLA products. Research by BioCycle magazine found that only 49 out of 4,700 composters nationwide accepted compostable plastic products. The good intentions of using compostable plastic don't make a difference if the waste system isn't set up to process it. Because so few facilities accept PLA, much of it

ends up in landfills. It is also difficult to distinguish between regular and compostable plastic. When regular plastic gets into composts it can cause soil and waterway pollution. So, yes—compostable plastic is too good to be true. However, improvements in waste system infrastructure could enable them to play a more effective role in the future.

CONTACTS: Home Compostable Plastics Are Too Good to Be True, <https://www.treehugger.com/home-compostable-plastics-too-good-true-7096891>; Your compostable cups and containers aren't reversing the plastic p r o b l e m , <https://www.popsci.com/environment/truth-about-compostable-cups/>; Why biodegradables won't solve the plastic crisis, <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20191030-why-biodegradables-wont-solve-the-plastic-crisis>

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COMMENTARY

Marc Morial

President and CEO, National Urban League



To Be Equal:

Record Number of Police Killings in 2023 Points to the Urgent Need to Adopt National Urban League's 21 Pillars, Enact George Floyd Justice in Policing Act

"The only way to get this number down significantly would be to make more significant changes to, you know, what policing means in this country."

—Justin Nix, criminal justice professor, University of Nebraska Omaha

The sheriff's deputies who shot and killed Tony Cox in Michigan last month said had a gun. He didn't. The deputies said Cox pointed at them with "a two-handed posture." But in the single still image police released—it's not clear whether it's

from a body camera or dashboard—Cox is facing away from the camera.

Police in Fayetteville, N.C., who shot and killed DeMarcus Brodie during a traffic stop on Thanksgiving Day haven't explained why they stopped Brodie, or how the encounter escalated into violence.

Cox and Brodie are two of the 1,329 people killed by police in the United States last year, the deadliest year for police killings since 2013. Black people are three times as likely to be killed by po-

lice as white people. Almost 90% of the victims died by gunfire.

It's no mystery why police killings continue to escalate: the nation is awash in guns, too many police are poorly trained, and most face almost no accountability.

All of these factors point to the urgent need for the nation to adopt the National Urban League's 21 Pillars for Redefining Public Safety and Restoring Community Trust.

A comprehensive framework for criminal justice advocacy, 21 Pillars takes a holistic approach to public safety, the restoration of trust between communities and law enforcement, and a path forward for meaningful change.

Each of the 21 Pillars centers on five key themes that are fundamental to the protection and preservation of life, dignity, and trust, while also building safer communities:

- Collaboration between law enforcement and communities
- Accountability
- Reform of divisive policies
- Transparency, reporting, and data collection
- Improved hiring standards and training.

The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, which the National Urban League emphatically endorses, would accomplish most of the Pillars on the federal level.

About a quarter of those killed by police last year were in the throes of a mental health crisis. Address the needs of individuals experiencing mental health crisis is Pillar 4.

Campaign Zero, the criminal justice reform advocacy group that compiled the data, notes that at least 42% of the incidents were captured on body-worn cameras, which police often don't release to the general public. The footage "commonly" contradicts officers' initial accounts of a fatal encounter.

Mandate the use of dashboard and body-worn cameras and provide public access to the footage is Pillar 15.

Campaign Zero also noted that their research efforts are hampered by the fact that at least half of police killings are not reported in official government data. Collection of data on police misconduct and use of force is Pillar 14.

Chuck Wexler, executive director of the Police Executive Research Forum, told USA Today that de-escalation training is proven to work, but too few departments have implemented it.

Strengthening police hiring standards and improving training to build integrity and trust is Pillar 20.

"Until that training changes, and until the culture with it changes, that number is going to be way too high," Wexler said. "We can cut officer involved shootings with the right training."

—January 19, 2024

Nearly 215,000 Enroll in 2024 Coverage, Most Ever for Maryland Health Connection

Enrollment grew more than 17% since last year to an all-time high in 11th year of state-based marketplace

By PRESS OFFICER
Maryland Health Benefit Exchange

BALTIMORE (Jan. 18, 2024)—More people than ever before enrolled in health coverage during the recent open enrollment through Maryland Health Connection.

Open enrollment began Nov. 1, 2023, and ended Jan. 15. During the 90-day enrollment period, 213,895 enrolled—a 17% increase from the 182,166 Marylanders who enrolled a year ago. It was the largest increase and the largest total ever on Maryland's health insurance marketplace.

"Health care is a basic right that every Marylander deserves. Today, we are one step closer to building a healthier state where everyone can receive the care they need," Governor Wes Moore said. "We will continue to move in partnership to ensure that in Maryland, health care is affordable and accessible to all. It's an integral part of our pledge to leave no one behind."

To share the good news, Michele Eberle, executive director of Maryland Health Benefit Exchange; Ryan Moran, Deputy Secretary for Health

Care Financing & Medicaid Director for the Maryland Department of Health and Traci Kodeck, chief executive officer of HealthCare Access Maryland gathered at the home of the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange to celebrate the milestone for the state's health insurance marketplace, Maryland Health Connection.

"The remarkable growth in Maryland Health Connection's total enrollment has proven that when we collaborate, we not only surpass expectations but also make affordable health coverage a reality for Marylanders," said Maryland Secretary of Health Dr. Laura Herrera Scott.

"We know that health care costs are often a barrier for people to get a health plan. In Maryland, we have worked very hard to keep health coverage affordable, especially as the continuous coverage for Medicaid ends," Eberle said.

Several factors contributed to the record growth:

- More than 14,000 people no longer eligible for Medicaid following the end of the pandemic public health emergency enrolled in private health

insurance through Maryland Health Connection. Most qualified for federal tax credits that lowered their out-of-pocket costs. That was nearly four times as many as the 3,000 who transitioned from Medicaid into private plans during open enrollment one year ago. The 14,089 also represented nearly half of the 31,729 additional total enrollments for 2024 compared to a year ago.

- More than 50,000 young adults qualified for additional financial help offered by the state of Maryland, the only one of its type in the country. It lowered their health insurance premiums by about \$450 a year on average. The Maryland legislature last year extended that program through 2025 and this year, Maryland Health Connection expanded it to cover young adults from 18 to 37. It previously covered Marylanders up to 34 years old. Young adults typically lack health coverage by comparison to other age groups. Their participation helps lower costs for all.
- This is the third full year federal tax credits were increased and expanded

to provide savings to more people since the passage of the American Rescue Plan Act in 2021. Those enhanced subsidies will continue for enrollees through 2025 due to the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022.

The number of individuals who self-identified as Black on their enrollment applications increased by nearly 33% to 41,611. Enrollment by Hispanic residents grew by nearly 30% to 28,701. It grew even more among Black young adults 18-34, up 46% in one year, and Hispanic young adults 18-34, up 50% in one year. Those populations have historically and disproportionately lacked health insurance.

Overall, new enrollments were up 64% to 56,220 from 34,205 a year ago. Renewals were up 7% to 157,675 from 147,961 a year ago.

Also, enrollments by people who qualified for federal financial help increased by 18% to 163,796 from 138,345 a year ago. Enrollments of people who did not qualify for a federal tax credit also grew, up 14% to 50,099 from 43,821 a year ago.

Dental plan enrollment rose 14% to 74,939 from 65,393 last year. New to Maryland Health Connection this year is the availability of vision plans. More than 298 individuals enrolled in vision plans during the enrollment period.

Even after open enrollment, opportunities for people to enroll who lack coverage will continue.

Marylanders who check a box on their state income tax returns that they need health insurance will be able to enroll in a program offered through the Office of the Comptroller of Maryland. Anyone who loses a job and files for unemployment insurance can also check a box during that application process with the Maryland Department of Labor to request help with health coverage. Those innovative "Easy Enrollment" programs have since been replicated by states around the country.

Marylanders who have certain life events, such as losing employer coverage, getting married or divorced, or turning 26 and aging off a parent's plan, may also be eligible to enroll now. People who are eligible for health coverage through Medicaid can enroll any time of year.

Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (MHBE), a public corporation and independent unit of state government established in 2011, administers Maryland Health Connection.

Maryland Health Connection (MHC) is the state-based marketplace for Marylanders to shop and enroll in health insurance, as well as determine eligibility for Medicaid and other assistance programs. It is the only place where Marylanders can access financial help such as tax credits to make coverage more affordable.

Maryland Department of the Environment Appoints First Assistant Secretary for Environmental Justice

Aneca Y. Atkinson to oversee efforts to address environmental disparities and reduce pollution in overburdened communities; Appointment underscores commitment to environmental justice as a top priority

By PRESS OFFICER
Maryland Department of the Environment

BALTIMORE (Jan. 17, 2024)—Maryland Department of the Environment Secretary Serena McIlwain today announced the appointment of Aneca Y. Atkinson as the agency's first Assistant Secretary for Environmental Justice.

"Assistant Secretary Atkinson will lead the way as we reach out to communities that have disproportionately experienced pollution and put into place policies that ensure no one is left behind," Secretary McIlwain said. "She knows how the system works and how we can focus critical resources and action toward communities that have historically been overlooked."

Assistant Secretary Atkinson comes to the department from National Audubon Society Mid-Atlantic, where she served as director of the organization's Delaware River Watershed Program. Prior to that, Assistant Secretary Atkinson served in several roles with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

"I can't wait to get started on this path to

making Maryland a cleaner, greener place to live for everyone," Atkinson said. "The key to environmental justice is communication. We are listening to those who have been ignored in the past and taking action to give everyone the same access to a healthy environment."

Assistant Secretary Atkinson led Audubon's work to incorporate science-driven policy, advocacy, conservation, and public engagement work to increase funding for on-the-ground improvements to the watershed—with a focus on communities that have historically been excluded from greenspaces and other environmental amenities and protections.

In Pennsylvania, she managed erosion and sedimentation control and stormwater management programs. She also served as director of the Office of Program Integration, and, from 2018 to 2022, deputy secretary overseeing the Office of Water Programs. She played a critical role in developing and implementing the strategy and vision for diversity, equity, inclusion and justice.

At the Maryland Department of the Environment, Assistant Secretary Atkinson will provide expert guidance for Secretary McIl-

wain and other senior officials to advance environmental justice as one of the secretary's top priorities. The department previously added an environmental justice coordinator and a liaison responsible for helping communities obtain funding and stay informed.

Other recent environmental accomplishments by the Maryland Department of the Environment include:

Conducting environmental justice listening sessions in overburdened and underserved communities, including Turner Station, Curtis Bay, Cheverly, Langley Park, Eagle Harbor and others.

Working with Attorney General Anthony Brown to obtain one of the largest environmental crime penalties in state history against a Curtis Bay medical waste incinerator.

Collaborating with the Curtis Bay community on a scientific study documenting coal dust emitting from a coal terminal.

Assistant Secretary Atkinson earned a bachelor's degree in engineering from Smith College and a master's degree in water resources and environmental engineering from Villanova University.

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BUSINESS AND FINANCE

Social Security Matters

Ask Rusty:

How Can I Get Details About My Social Security Payment?

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

Dear Rusty: How do I find the actual breakdown of the Medicare insurance that I have auto deducted and my actual Social Security payment? I was just looking at a video which explained the 3% Cost of Living Adjustment we will be receiving this year, and it compared the current payout to the new payout. There seems to be a big difference in what I am getting and what they said in the video. Currently my Social Security payments are \$1,431. My Medicare insurance is supposed to be \$165, which means my total Social Security is about \$1,596. On the video it said all retired workers are getting \$1,848 with the new increase to take it to \$1,938.00. There are a couple hundred dollars there that I seem to be missing out on. Can you help me understand that difference? **Signed: Confused Senior**

Dear Confused Senior: What you're asking for is an itemized breakout of your gross Social Security benefit, any deductions being taken therefrom (e.g., your Medicare Part B premium), the amount of your COLA increase, and your net Social Security payment for 2024. If that is the case, the best way to get this detail is in your personal "my Social Security" online account, which provides all the information mentioned. You can access your online account at www.ssa.gov/myaccount, and if you don't already have that online account set up, you'll need to first establish your online access credentials (instructions for how to do that will be at that website).

I'm not sure which video you watched, but "all retired workers" do not get \$1,848 (or \$1,938). Everyone's Social Security benefit is different, based on their lifetime earnings record and the age at which they claimed benefits. The numbers you heard in the video were likely average Social Security payments, not the actual amount you should personally be receiving. Here's how it works:

- Your personal benefit is based on your Primary Insurance Amount (PIA) which is the amount you get if you claim for your benefits to start at your full retirement age (FRA), which is somewhere between 66 and 67 depending on the year you were born. Claim before your FRA your benefit is permanently reduced; claim after your FRA it is higher. Your personal maximum benefit is achieved if you claim at age 70.
- The Medicare Part B premium (for outpatient healthcare services) is automatically deducted from your Social Security payment. Although the standard 2023 Part B premium was \$164.90, the standard 2024 Part B premium is \$174.70. You may also have other things (e.g., income tax) withheld from your monthly Social Security payment.
- The annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for 2024 is 3.2%. That means your gross Social Security benefit goes up by that percentage starting in 2024. But there was also a \$9.80 increase in your Medicare Part B premium starting in 2024, which means that you won't see all of the COLA increase in your Social Security payment. Since your Medicare premium is deducted from your Social Security, that Medicare increase will also be taken from your SS payment, so you won't see the full 3.2% COLA increase in your 2024 Social Security payment.

To see all of this detail for you personally, I suggest you access your online "my Social Security" account as described above. As an alternative, you can also call Social Security at 1.800.772.1213 and request a Benefit Verification Letter which will include all the information you seek about your Social Security payment.

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.

Prince George's County Fire/EMS Hiring Event

By PRESS OFFICER
Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department

Date: February 3, 2024, 8 a.m.–3 p.m.
Location: Behind Station 802, 100 Shady Glen Dr, Capitol Heights, MD 20743
Attire: Business Professional (No sneakers, sweatshirts, hoodies or jeans)

What to Bring: Resume, Drivers License, High School Diploma, Birth Certificate or Passport

What to Expect: Opportunity to apply on the spot, schedule CPAT orientation, explore career opportunities within PGFD, get Candidate Physical Ability Test preparedness advice, meet current employees and speak to a recruiter.

PGFDRrecruitment@co.pg.md.us, 240-563-2172, 201-883-3164

FedChoice Announces the FedAssist Flex Loan

By PRESS OFFICER
FedChoice Federal Credit Union

LANHAM, Md. (Jan. 16, 2024)—FedChoice Federal Credit Union announces FedAssist, an assistance program to be offered in the event of a government shutdown.

The new FedAssist Flex Loan is designed to allow both federal government employees and federal contractors impacted by the shutdown to receive funds of up to two months of their net pay to help them get through this potentially challenging time. The loan will be available to new and existing FedChoice members who can verify that they have been impacted by the shutdown.

This is not the first time FedChoice has provided aid to its members during a shut-

down. FedChoice also gave support during the longest recorded government shutdown in late 2018 into 2019. The Credit Union also has allowed affected members to skip loan payments and have select withdrawal fees waived. Members affected by the shutdown were also offered exclusive assistance loans which have evolved into the new FedAssist Flex.

"As a credit union built by federal employees for federal employees, we are delighted to be able to provide funds to help Federal employees and contractors continue living as usual even when they aren't being paid during a government shutdown. Serving the Federal community through good times and bad is the reason we exist," said Brett Noll, President and CEO.

Anyone interested in learning more about

the program or membership eligibility can visit <https://www.fedchoice.org/fedassist/>.

FedChoice Federal Credit Union was originally chartered in 1935 when a group of Bureau of Internal Revenue (aka IRS) employees decided to establish a credit union to meet their financial needs. Since then, FedChoice has grown stronger each year by serving all federal employees, retirees, and their immediate family and household members in the Washington DC, Baltimore and Philadelphia metro areas. With access to over 60,000 surcharge-free ATMs, over 5,000 CO-OP Shared Branches, plus online and mobile banking, members may access their accounts 24/7/365. FedChoice has over 24,000 members and \$431 million in assets.

Maryland Department of Health Announces Free Virtual Cottage Foods Business Workshop in 2024

Online training will provide industry guideline updates and tips to start and grow a business

By PRESS OFFICER
Maryland Department of Health

BALTIMORE (Jan. 12, 2024)—The Maryland Department of Health today announced a free virtual Cottage Food Business workshop, to be held in partnership with the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission on February 22, 2024, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.

The Cottage Foods Business Workshop - Basics, Next Steps & Beyond free online

training will provide an overview of Maryland's cottage food law and regulations and build upon information covered during the 2023 workshop. Participants will learn the definition of a cottage food business, the types of products that can be sold, labeling requirements, and approved ways to sell products at a retail food store. The workshop will also present steps for growing a cottage food business.

Participants will receive handouts and links to the latest Maryland Department

of Health Cottage Food resources and guidelines. Established cottage food businesses, farmers market managers, and on-farm store and stand vendors, retail food stores and anyone considering starting a home-based food business are encouraged to participate.

Interested participants can register at <https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/>

See WORKSHOP Page A6

Governor Moore Announces Nichelle Johnson as Maryland's First Minority Business Enterprise Ombudsman

By PRESS OFFICER
Office of the Governor

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (Jan. 16, 2024)—Governor Wes Moore today announced that Nichelle Johnson will serve as Maryland's first Minority Business Enterprise Ombudsman in the Governor's Office of Small, Minority, and Women Business Affairs. Johnson's broad scope of responsibilities includes working with prime contractors and minority business enterprises to resolve issues that arise during contract performance; develop policies and guidance to assist agencies in implementing program compliance; and oversee data collection of documented nonperformance by prime contractors.

"I am grateful that Nichelle has raised her hand to serve Maryland in this new leadership position. Our entire administration is confident in her ability to advocate for our minority-owned businesses and help us grow a more equitable economy," said Gov. Wes Moore. "As the first Minority Business Enterprise Ombudsman in Maryland history, Nichelle will work to forge stronger partnerships between our small businesses and state government.

And in doing so, she will position us to win this decade."

Johnson has a 20-year record of helping entrepreneurs start and expand their businesses in the private sector, providing technical support and IT services as both a prime contractor and subcontractor. Johnson served in the Governor's Office of Small, Minority, and Women Business Affairs across 70 state agencies and departments to collect annual and quarterly performance data, develop compliance best practices, and train minority business enterprise liaisons statewide. She also operated as a program subject matter expert to executives, legislators, state personnel, and stakeholder organizations and led training programs for minority business owners and entrepreneurs.

"Nichelle has been a key member of our team for more than four years," said Governor's Office of Small, Minority, and Women Business Affairs Special Secretary Y. Maria Martinez. "This promotion acknowledges the great work she has been doing and our confidence in her abilities to influence positive outcomes for the minority business enterprise community."

In her new role, Johnson will ensure

that the Governor's Office of Small, Minority, and Women Business Affairs is represented and engaged in advising state personnel on program requirements and will participate in the state's Senior Procurement Advisory Group, the Minority Business Enterprise Advisory Committee, and the Procurement Improvement Council. She will also develop new training programs for both prime contractors and minority business enterprise subcontractors to help ensure final contract outcomes meet established program goals.

Johnson holds a Bachelor of Science in business administration and a graduate level certificate in leadership and management from the University of Maryland Global Campus.

The Moore-Miller administration is working to close the racial wealth gap and promote access to work, wages, and wealth in part through increasing state government's performance toward reaching its 29% Minority Business Enterprise program participation goal. Last February, Governor Moore signed an executive order to promote data reporting and compliance on state agency performance, a first for a Maryland governor.

Governor Moore Announces \$2.8 Million in Grants to Enhance Efforts to Address Maryland's Nursing Shortage

By PRESS OFFICER
Office of the Governor

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (Jan. 11, 2024)—Governor Wes Moore today announced \$2.8 million in grants from the Maryland Higher Education Commission's Nurse Support Program II to help address the state's nursing shortage. Through the New Nursing Faculty Fellowship and Nurse Educator Doctoral Grants for Practice and Dissertation Research, funding will help support the need for more nurse educators who are critical to getting

students out of the classroom and into Maryland's healthcare system.

"By building out the pipeline to careers in nursing, we aren't just strengthening public health, we are laying new pathways to prosperity," said Gov. Moore. "Education is a critical asset for connecting Marylanders with more opportunity—and this investment underscores that truth."

The New Nursing Faculty Fellowship will support 49 newly nominated nurse faculty and 147 previously awarded nurse faculty in recruiting and

retaining additional nursing faculty. The Maryland Higher Education Commission awarded \$2,450,000 among ten universities and eight community colleges in Maryland including:

- Allegany College of Maryland
- Anne Arundel Community College
- Bowie State University
- Community College of Baltimore County
- Coppin State University
- Frederick Community College
- Frostburg State University
- Harford Community College
- Johns Hopkins University

- Montgomery College
- Morgan State University
- Notre Dame of Maryland University
- Prince George's Community College
- Salisbury University
- Stevenson University
- University of Maryland, Baltimore
- Washington Adventist University
- Wor-Wic Community College

In addition, eight nursing faculty members received Nurse Educator Doctoral Grants for Practice and Dissertation Re-

search within five nursing programs across Maryland. Recipients were granted awards between \$17,000 and \$60,000—totaling more than \$369,000—to expedite the completion of their terminal degree and reduce existing student loan debt:

- Bowie State University - 3 awards
- Harford Community College - 1 award
- Montgomery College - 2 awards
- Notre Dame of Maryland University - 1 award
- Prince George's Community College - 1 award

"These grants are another example of how the Maryland Higher Education Commission

is investing in Maryland's future," said Maryland Higher Education Commission Acting Secretary Dr. Sanjay Rai. "We are working every day to meet the need for highly trained and highly educated nurses to become the faculty of the future."

Since 2005, the Nurse Support Program II has awarded more than \$218 million and has increased Registered Nursing enrollment by nearly 7,000 students. Governor Moore previously announced \$5.8 million in Maryland Higher Education Commission grant awards to help address the state's nursing shortage.

For more information, visit nursesupport.org.

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Upper Marlboro, MD

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9 a.m.

(301) 735-9373
Fax: (301) 735-1844

Rev. Dr. Timothy West,
Pastor

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Web Site:
www.westphaliaum.org

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Sunday Biblical Institute:
9:30 a.m.

Sunday Worship:
7:30 a.m., 10:45 a.m.

Saturday Worship:
6:30 p.m.

'WONDERFUL WEDNESDAYS WITH JESUS':
12 noon (The Power Hour) and 6:45 pm

"A Time of Prayer, Praise, Worship, & The Word"

Dr. Henry P. Davis III, Pastor
www.fhbp.org

BAPTIST

First Baptist Church of College Park

Welcomes You Where Jesus Christ Is Lord and King
Stephen L. Wright, Sr., Pastor

5018 Lakeland Road
College Park, MD 20740
301-474-3995
www.fbc-cp.org

Sunday School 9:30a.m.
Sunday Worship 11a.m.
Holy Communion 1st Sunday
Wednesday Bible Study 7-8p.m.
Wednesday Prayer Service 8p.m.

UNITED METHODIST

Union United Methodist Church

14418 Old Marlboro Pike,
Upper Marlboro, MD

Church (301) 627-7389

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Sunday Worship: 10:00 a.m.

Reverend Twanda E. King,
Pastor
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Matthew 28:19-20

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Soulful Thursdays
Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

BAPTIST

Forest Heights Baptist Church

We exist to strengthen your relationship with God.
6371 Oxon Hill Road
Oxon Hill, Maryland 20745

Sunday School (Adults & Children) - 9:30 A.M.
Worship Service - 11:00 A.M.
Wed. Prayer Service & Bible Study - 7:00 P.M.
Office (301) 839-1166
Fax (301) 839-1721
E-mail: FHBC@verizon.net
Pastor: Rev. Waymond B. Duke

COMMUNITY CHURCH

WORD OF GOD COMMUNITY CHURCH

"The Church Where Everybody is Somebody and Jesus is Lord"

4109 Edmonston Road Bladensburg, MD
(301) 864-3437

Intercessory Prayer: Sundays - 8:30 a.m.
Church School: - 9:15 a.m.
Morning Worship Celebration - 10:30 a.m.
Wed. Night Bible Study - 7:45 p.m.
Elder Willie W. Duvall, Pastor

Workshop from A5

3058252e-8763-4ebc-9bdd-d63ff75cc91a@7578883c-b674-4b33-a58d-be38a54992f9.

This workshop is made possible by the Maryland Department of Health's Office of Food Protection, in partnership with the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission, a division of the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland.

For information about the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission and the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, visit www.SMADC.com.

To learn more about Maryland's cottage food industry, visit the Maryland Department of Health Office of Food Protection.

The Maryland Department of Health is dedicated to protecting and improving the health and safety of all Marylanders through disease prevention, access to care, quality management and community engagement. Follow for more updates: Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube and LinkedIn.

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