

# The Prince George's Post



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## Happy New Year!

from your friends at the Prince George's Post

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## Some Construction Projects More Costly Due to Labor Shortage

By TERESA JOHNSON  
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (December 13, 2019)—Some construction projects in Maryland are costing tens of millions of dollars more than original estimates, in large measure because of a lack of skilled trades in the region.

The increase in price for just two large projects at the University of Maryland? About \$64 million.

"It was about 2014 when the labor shortages started appearing, first in the D.C. submarkets then in Baltimore a couple years later, then fairly prevalent throughout the state now," said Maryland Center for Construction Education & Innovation President Bob Aydukovic.

He said that the labor shortages in Maryland, and nationally, can be traced back to the Great Recession of 2008 to 2009.

The Board of Public Works on Nov. 20 tabled votes on \$64 million more for two projects? the University's Cole Field House, and the construction and design of a new residence hall

and replacement dining facility.

The multi-story residence hall will have 900 beds in "suite-style units"; the dining hall will seat 1,200 and replace an outdated facility.

The new, final construction cost for the residence hall and dining facility is \$155.6 million—an increase of about \$40 million from a June estimate, according to documents presented to the board.

Construction costs for the renovation and expansion of Cole Field House—"to create an academic, research, and athletic facility," including football practice fields—have increased by about \$24 million since January, bringing the project total to about \$210 million, according to board documents.

Supporting documentation sent to the board said that the cost of the total projects has in-



PHOTOGRAPH BY TERESA JOHNSON, COURTESY CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE  
**Construction at Cole Field House at the University of Maryland-College Park on Dec. 9, 2019.**

creased based on issues within the construction industry.

Issues include a high demand for and low supply of skilled workers, which result in higher wages, adjustments to the scope of projects and rebidding trade packages. The documentation also indicated that multiple large mechanical, electrical, and plumbing contractors are no longer in business.

Holder Construction Co. and Gilbane Building Co. each in charge of one of the university

construction projects, did not respond to requests for comment.

Lt. Gov. Boyd Rutherford said during the board meeting that Maryland lacks skilled workers who are able to fill in-demand, high paying jobs.

"I would like to see more students in Maryland be exposed to apprenticeships and skills training opportunities so they are aware of all of their

See LABOR Page A5

## Greater Washington Law Enforcement Lauded For Fight Against Drunk Driving

By TAMMY WAN  
WRAP

WASHINGTON (December 13, 2019)—Fifteen Washington-metropolitan area police officers were cited today for their "outstanding commitment in the fight against drunk driving in Greater Washington" and presented with the area's 22nd-annual "Law Enforcement Awards of Excellence for Impaired Driving Prevention."

Bestowed at a regional ceremony held in McLean, Virginia, the nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP) presented its 2019 Law Enforcement Awards to: Officer Patrick Cushing, City of Alexandria Police Department; Corporal Brett Kooharian, Arlington County Police Department; Officer Bryce Cooper, City of Falls Church Police Department; DWI Enforcement Squad, Fairfax County Police Department; Senior Sergeant Bobby Galpin, Town of Herndon Police Department; Deputy Caleb Hwang, Loudoun County Sheriff's Office; Trooper First Class Anthony Wallace, Mary-

land State Police; Officer Henry Gallagher, Metropolitan Police Department; Corporal Patricia Cox, Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority; Police Officer III John Romack, Montgomery County Department of Police; Corporal Thomas Kosakowski, Prince George's County Police Department; Officer Chad Mason, Prince William County Police Department; Officer Daniel Begendorf, United States Capitol Police; Officer Christopher Gogarty, United States Park Police; Trooper Lucie Vajglova, Virginia State Police

The annual awards, presented at a ceremony [last Friday morning] at Maggiano's Little Italy in the Tysons Galleria, were bestowed by WRAP in memory of Metropolitan Police Department's Motor Patrol Officer Anthony W. Simms. Officer Simms, as a result of injuries sustained while on duty, lost his life to an impaired driver during Memorial Day weekend in 1996. WRAP's 2019 Law Enforcement Awards were

See AWARDS Page A3

## Keith E. Bell Becomes Newest WSSC Water Commissioner Representing Prince George's County

Administrative Law Judge Brings Extensive Background in Complex Disability and Labor Law Issues

By PRESS OFFICER  
WSSC

LAUREL, Md. (December 18, 2019)—On December 18, Keith E. Bell participate[d] in his first WSSC Water Commission meeting as the newest member of the water utility's Board of Commissioners. The Prince George's County resident was unanimously approved to serve as a Commissioner by members of the Prince George's County Council in November.

"This appointment fits in nicely with my professional skills and personal passion to protect this vital natural resource," said Bell. "In fact, efforts to safeguard drinking water sources in the 1970s actually led me to become a prosecutor. I'm committed to helping WSSC Water continue delivering on its clean water mission, and I extend my sincere appreciation to County Executive Angela Alsobrooks and members of the Prince George's County Council for their confidence in appointing me to this important role."

Bell currently serves as Administrative Law Judge at the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission in Washington, D.C. In this capacity, he has adjudicated cases arising under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970. A career public servant, Bell began his legal career as an assistant district attorney in the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office. Thereafter, he en-



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY WSSC

**Keith E. Bell, Commissioner for Prince George's County**

joyed a long career as a civil litigator/prosecutor in the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of the Solicitor, Mine Safety and Health Division. With undergraduate and Juris Doctorate degrees from North Carolina Central University, Bell has been a resident of Prince George's County for more than 20 years. His full bio can be read at [www.wsscwater.com/about-us/our-governance/commissioners/keith-e-bell.html](http://www.wsscwater.com/about-us/our-governance/commissioners/keith-e-bell.html).

Bell's appointment fills the final vacant Commission seat. Six Commissioners, three from each county, govern WSSC Water. The Commissioners are appointed to four-year terms by their respective county executives and are confirmed by their county councils. More information on Bell and the other WSSC Water Commissioners can be found at [www.wsscwater.com/governance](http://www.wsscwater.com/governance).

## Reading Is Fundamental and State Farm Celebrate Reading With Book Celebration at Carmody Hills Elementary

By PRESS OFFICER  
State Farm Insurance

CAPITOL HEIGHTS, Md. (December 13, 2019)—Carmody Hills Elementary celebrated the power and excitement of reading with a book celebration event for children on November 26, thanks to a partnership between Reading Is Fundamental, State Farm, and Maryland State Senator Joanne Benson.

At the book celebration, a donation from State Farm enabled students at Carmody Hills Elementary to choose three books to take home and keep for their own. The children also celebrated reading by participating in engaging and interactive read aloud of 10 Fat Turkeys, read by Senator Benson. "The Reading Is Fundamental program sponsored by State Farm, provided an unselfish and marvelous opportunity for our children to enjoy, participate and understand the im-

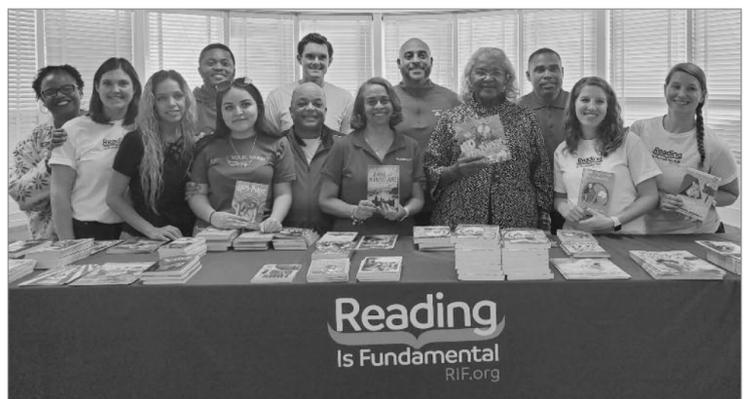
portance of reading. Seeing each child choose three books to have and hold was most uplifting! I was overjoyed to be a part of this great and exciting occasion."

Research has shown that when children have access to books, they enjoy reading more and they read more frequently. And when children read more, they become accomplished readers. By providing children with choice and access to books and literacy resources, State Farm hopes to create a culture of literacy

in the communities in which its employees live and work.

This book celebration event is part of Reading Is Fundamental's Books for Ownership flagship reading program which enables children to select new, age-appropriate books to take home and own. The books are supported by free online resources for parents, educators, and volunteers to create a continuous focus on reading.

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PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY STATE FARM INSURANCE

**Maryland State Senator Joanne Benson and her good neighbors from Reading Is Fundamental and State Farm Insurance visited Carmody Hills Elementary to help make education an experience to remember.**

### INSIDE

#### Joint Effort Aims at Addressing Langley Park Housing Ills

According to the report, about three-fourths of Langley Park's residents live in the 13 apartment complexes that are an average of over 60 years old. Two of these properties have been on the county's distressed properties list since 2012 for multiple code violations.

Community, Page A3

#### To Be Equal: New Jersey Anti-Semitic Shootings Are Part of a Horrifying Spike in Hate Crime That Demands Our Action

We must not lose sight of our ideals as Americans—as brothers and sisters and parents and neighbors—to love and protect one another.

Commentary, Page A4

#### Building Pride, Students First: CEO Proposes \$2.3B Operating Budget

"By supporting students in and outside of the classroom, we prepare the next generation for the world beyond our schoolhouse doors," said Chief Executive Officer Dr. Monica Goldson.

Business and Finance, Page A5

#### Tips for a New You in 2020

- **Health:** 10 Doctor-Recommended Health Tips For the New Year
- **Green Living:** Resolve to Green Your Grocery Shopping in 2020
- **Personal Finance:** Tips for the Best Financial You in the New Year

New Year, New Goals, Page A6

#### Holiday Light Displays:

- Festival of Lights, Watkins Park
- Lights on the Bay, Sandy Point State Park
- Smithsonian's National Zoo

The ZooLights display started 13 years ago to increase foot traffic during the zoo's off-season.

Features, Page A7

# TOWNS and NEIGHBORS

## In and Around Morningside-Skyline

by Mary McHale 301-735-3451

### Three Suitland High School alumni die within six weeks

Sue Mason, one of my best correspondents, sent me obits for three Suitland High graduates who died recently. When we moved here in 1958, high school students in Morningside and Skyline attended Suitland, so I'm glad to be kept informed. The three are:

- Pearl May (Waple) McNamara, 75, died Oct. 31. A celebration of her life will be held Saturday, Dec. 28, 2 p.m. at the American Legion in Severn. She grew up in Boulevard Heights and married Leo McNamara in 1962. They moved to California where they raised their three children, and later returned to Maryland. Pearl worked many years as a publications tech for several companies, including Hughes Aircraft.

- Patricia "Patsy" Laverne (Heiston) Quade, 75, of Mechanicsville, died at home on Nov. 25, surrounded by her family. She was born in District Heights and married John Morris Quade, Sr. in 1960. She and her husband owned and operated Seabreeze Restaurant for 17 years. She was also a hairdresser and a member of the Hollywood-Leonardtown Optimist Club, American Legion Auxiliary and Mechanicsville Moose Lodge. Her husband, three children and grandkids survive her. Services were at St. John Francis Regis Catholic Church in Hollywood.

- Alfred M. Dintino, Jr., 83, an Air Force veteran of the Korean War, died Dec. 12. A native Washingtonian, he grew up in Bradbury Heights, graduated from Suitland in 1954, and joined the military. He was the husband of 61 years to Nancy (Poirier) Dintino and the father of five. He was a 50-plus-years member of Steamfitters Local 602. He retired from Johnson Controls in 1998. He was a member of the Knights of Columbus, the St. Vincent de Paul Society and American Legion Post 82, La Plata. Services were at St. Peter's in Waldorf.

### Neighbors and other good people

Sam Cox, the newly-elected president of the Suitland Civic Association (SCA), called thinking I might be able to tell him how many years it's been since a man (rather than a woman) held the office. I didn't know. But he's drop-

ping by to borrow Darlie Norton's history of Suitland. Next week I'll update you on the SCA and its new officers.

Priscilla Jones, my fellow columnist, recently wrote about her scary battle with shingles. It caused her right eye to swell, so much so that it covered her eye. It affected her face and her head, and prevented her from driving. I called and found she is recovering and can drive and will finally get shingle shots. She advised me to do as well. I will. And maybe you should, too.

Richard Robinson, longtime custodian at St. Philip's church and school, died Dec. 11. He was 70. He was buried from Peoples Community Baptist Church in Silver Spring. He was a big guy with a big heart and a great smile. We all loved him.

St. Philip's School is seeking men and women who graduated from the school and fondly remember Sister Viventia in 1st grade, Sister Josene in 2nd, Sister Josita in 3rd or any of the other teachers down through the years. Next year St. Philip's celebrates its 60th anniversary. Email [stpaoffice@gmail.com](mailto:stpaoffice@gmail.com) to reconnect.

### Applause

The Dr. Henry A. Wise Jr. football team, the Pumas, have won their 4th state title in five years! Head coach DaLawn Parrish proudly held aloft the MPSSAA (Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Assn.) 4A Trophy after defeating Northwestern 35-14 at the Navy-Marine Memorial Stadium in Annapolis on Dec. 6.

Wise is the assigned high school for students from Morningside and Skyline.

### Changing landscape

Starting the week of December 8, MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital opened a temporary front entrance to provide access to their emergency department and main hospital during construction. The hospital also warns that at some point during construction, the hospital's visitor parking may fill up. Designated overflow parking will be at Colony South Hotel.

I'm used to driving into Washington via Suitland Parkway and the Frederick Douglass Bridge. Well, I did that on the way into the city, could not find my

way back to Suitland Parkway on the way home; I ended up taking South Capitol Street to Eastover.

The problem is, of course, the new 6-lane Frederick Douglass Bridge. Plus, a new traffic oval west of the river that connects south Capitol Street, Potomac Avenue and Q Street SE, a new at-grade traffic oval east of the river that connects South Capitol Street, Suitland Parkway and Howard Road SE, reconstruction of the Suitland Parkway/Interstate 295 interchange, bicycle and pedestrian facilities and more. I think driving will be a mess for many, many months. Be aware.

### Volunteers wanted

The Surratt House Museum in Clinton, suggest you "Turn your love of history into a hobby!" E-mail [surrattmuseum.org](mailto:surrattmuseum.org) to learn about volunteer opportunities, or call 301-868-1121.

### Morningside Memories: Christmas, 33 years ago

December 1986: There was a lot going on, beginning with the Morningside Sportsmen Club's 15th Annual Canned Goods Drive, which sent Santa and his helpers cruising the neighborhood. A different Santa came to the Town Hall for breakfast and photo ops (pictures were \$1).

The Morningside-Skyline Rec Council gathered singers to party at the Town Hall and practice Christmas carols. Then, they strolled Morningside caroling beautifully, particularly serenading ailing and housebound residents. I remember them, especially, performing at the Randolph Road Circle.

And on Dec. 19 judges had traveled the town seeking the best-decorated yuletide houses. The winners: first place, in four categories, were 6719 Larkspur, 6602 Woodland Road, 4005 Forest Grove Dr. and 6324 Suitland Road.

Do you remember Christmas in Morningside? I do, and loved it. Especially when it snowed and the kids sled-ded Skyline Drive.

### Milestones

Happy birthday to Virginia Simms,

See **MORNINGSIDE** Page A3

## Brandywine-Aquasco

by Audrey Johnson 301-922-5384

### BSU WINTER COMMENCEMENT

Bowie State University Winter Commencement was held on Friday, December 13, 2019 in the Leonidas S. James Physical Education Complex on the campus. You can watch the broadcast livestream. Celebrate the class of 2019 and their families. We stream around the world internationally. Visit us at <https://bowiestate.edu/commencement>.

### CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL FRENCH PROGRAM AMONG BEST IN U.S.

French bilingual students at Central High School in Forestville, Maryland were honored for their language proficiency in a ceremony at the French Embassy in Washington, D.C. Four students received a DELF (Diplome d'Etudes en Langue Francaise) B2 diploma, allowing them to study at a French university. Nine students received a DELF B1 diploma which pre-qualifies them to receive a Maryland Seal of Biliteracy on their high school diploma.

Additionally, Educational Attache Mr. Mathieu Ausseil recognized Central High School for its recent naming as a Label Franc Education school, a seal of excellence by the French government for high quality, French immersion programs. The status is valid for three years and provides a dual guarantee for families: the assurance of high-quality French bilingual teaching and belonging to a national and global network, with over 390 Label France Education programs across 59 countries. Central is one of only three high schools in the United States and the only public school to hold Label Franc Education accreditation. (INSIDE PGCPSS)

### WILMER'S PARK PROJECT

Commander Ron Fisher, from American Legion Post 381, provided an update on the plans to rehabilitate Wilmer's Park in Brandywine, Maryland at the November Brandywine-North Keys Civic Association meeting. "He mentioned the name of several musical artists who performed at Wilmer's Park years ago." "Commander Fisher stated that there was a meeting with the Historic Preservation Committee about 18 months ago." "The Committee had heard about a proposal for rehabilitation of the Park and approved it right away." He brought pictures of the current condition of the park. The plan is to bring the Park back to its original condition with some new attractions and additions.

### BRANDYWINE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

"Mr. Mitchell stated at the November Brandywine-North

Keys Civic Association Meeting that he received correspondence from the school asking the Association to provide "food gift certificates" to support the needy family Community Outreach Program." Each year the Association has assisted the school with the program initiative including purchasing coats and hats for needy students at the school and donating "food gift certificates" to needy families during the Christmas holiday season.

### VALENTINE'S DAY CONCERT

Join us for a Valentine's Day Concert featuring Christie Dashiell Thursday, February 13, 2020 at 11 a.m. She is known for her soulful jazz style. Billboard-charting jazz vocalist Christie Dashiell and her quartet will present a special Valentine's Day performance. Music will include songs from her critically acclaimed debut album Time All Mine. Concert is for ages 60 & better. Tickets (General Admission): \$10/person.

Address is Publick Playhouse, 5445 Landover Road, Cheverly, Maryland. Telephone number is 301-277-1710 AND TTY 301-699-2544. Website is [www.arts.pgpparks.com](http://www.arts.pgpparks.com).

### MARYLAND VETERANS CREATIVE ARTS FESTIVAL

Maryland Veterans Creative Arts Festival will be held Sunday, March 22, 2020 at the Bowie Center for the Performing Arts. The address is 15200 Annapolis Road (MD Route 450), Bowie, Maryland 20715.

Art Show opening at 12 p.m. and Stage Show at 2 p.m. Donations for tickets is \$10.00. (Free to active duty military and families, Legion family junior members, ROTC/JROTC, and senior facilities residents). Sponsors are American Legion Auxiliary Department of Maryland, Inc. the city of Bowie. Contact information is Rusty Beeg: 301-602-7214 or [rbeeg5908@gmail.com](mailto:rbeeg5908@gmail.com) or Ivy Christoffers: 240-421-9580 or [ivywc1935@gmail.com](mailto:ivywc1935@gmail.com).

*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to everyone. Hope that everyone will have a very prosperous New Year.*

**CORRECTION:** Information concerning three UMES 1890 SCHOLARS in the December 12–December 18, 2019 edition came from UMES (The Key). The Key is published by the Office of Public Relations.

## Around the County

### Hoyer Statement on the Guilty Verdict In the Murder Trial of Second Lt. Richard Collins III

WASHINGTON (December 18, 2019)—Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD-05) released the following statement today on the first-degree murder conviction in the death of Bowie State University student Second Lt. Richard Collins III:

"My thoughts continue to be with the family and friends of Second Lt. Richard Collins III. Today's verdict won't bring Second Lt. Collins back, but I hope it provides some relief for his family and friends. We must continue to remember his life and the positive impact he had on his community. I join in mourning the loss of an incredible young man whose life was cut tragically short by hatred and violence, but I am glad the perpetrator of this horrific act has been brought to justice."

### Prince George's County Public Schools News More Schools Recognized For Excellence in Gifted and Talented Education

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (December 16, 2019)—Eight schools were selected to receive 2019 Maryland Excellence in Gifted and Talented Education (EGATE) awards, the highest single-year total in Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS). The 2019 recipients include Greenbelt, Heather Hills, Mattaponi, Pointer Ridge and Valley View elementary schools, Accokeek Academy and Benjamin Tasker and Walker Mill middle schools.

Nine county schools were previously awarded EGATE status. This year, only 13 Maryland schools received the honor.

"These schools go above and beyond to provide a model academic program for students," said Dr. Monica Goldson, Chief Executive Officer. "Having access to quality gifted and talented programs is key to ensuring advanced learners meet their full potential."

This year's EGATE recipients will receive a school banner and citations from the Governor and the Maryland State Department of Education to display in their schools. They will be recognized during an awards ceremony in February, participate in the 2020 EGATE Showcase and Networking event and host a celebratory visit from MSDE representatives and the State Advisory Council for Gifted and Talented Education.

The EGATE Award recognizes public schools that offer superior and equitable gifted and talented education. The rigorous application process requires school teams to document how their school's gifted and talented education program aligns with the 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.

### DARCARS Automotive Group to Pay Off Entire \$25,000 School Lunch Debt For PGCPSS Students

BETHESDA, Md. (December 17, 2019)—On December 17, DARCARS Automotive Group announced that DARCARS Toyota would pay off the school lunch debt for every student in Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS).

DARCARS Chief Operating Officer Jamie Darvish present[ed] a \$25,000 check to the nonprofit Excellence in Education Foundation for PGCPSS on Tuesday, Dec. 17 at William Hall Academy in Capitol Heights.

"DARCARS Toyota is happy for the opportunity to be able to pay off the current school lunch debt of every student in Prince George's County," said DARCARS COO Jamie Darvish. "School lunch debt is a serious problem in this country that impacts the well-being of students and their families. As a member of the Prince George's County community, we at DARCARS felt it was our obligation to step up and help families in need."

"By clearing school lunch debt, DARCARS Toyota is giving a special present this holiday season to the Excellence in Education Foundation for PGCPSS, our students and their families," said Dr. Monica Goldson, Prince George's County Public Schools CEO. "This donation will not only cover debt accumulated from the start of this school year, but help extend the community that surrounds Prince George's County Public Schools."

Unfortunately, more than 75% of school districts across the country report having unpaid student school lunch debt, including Prince George's County. When parents fall behind on school lunch payments, it is the children who ultimately suffer from embarrassment, poor nutrition, and potentially long term self-esteem issues. Fortunately, people are becoming educated about this issue as celebrities and ordinary people are stepping up to help retire the debt.

—Office of Communications, Prince George's County Public Schools

### Junior League of Prince George's County

The Junior League is a group of women committed to promoting volunteerism, developing the potential of women and improving communities through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. Its purpose is exclusively educational and charitable.

We are hosting our next information meeting on Jan. 25, 2020, from 10 a.m.–12:30 p.m. at the Savage Library Branch (Howard County Library System), 9525 Durness Ln., Laurel, MD 20723. Become a founding member today of the Junior League of Prince George's County. RSVP at [jlppresident@gmail.com](mailto:jlppresident@gmail.com).

—Diana Emerson, President, Junior League of Prince George's County

### Library News

The Library will be closed for New Year's Day on Wednesday, January 1 and Martin Luther King, Jr. Day holiday on Sunday–Monday, January 19–20.

### Winter Reading Challenge 2020

Lighten up the mind this winter and enjoy reading! Hundreds of libraries and schools across the nation will encourage their communities to read a target number of minutes and books. PGCPSS customers who read and log 200 minutes will be entered into the grand prize drawing of a \$50 gift card. Sign up and keep track of your reading on Beanstack. Winter Reading Challenge is sponsored by Penguin Random House (PRH).

Top-performing libraries and schools will earn the Golden Penguin and Random House awards. PRH pledges to donate \$50,000 in prizes, including author visits and new books, to be shared among the winners. Want new books and an author visit? Then read on and make PGCPSS a winner!

—D. Scott-Martin, Prince George's County Memorial Library System

# COMMUNITY

## The American Counseling Association's Counseling Corner

### Opening Communications With an Aging Parent

Many families today are facing the important issue of having one or more aging parents reaching the point where they can no longer care for themselves as they once did. Understanding and accepting that point in life is difficult for most people, regardless of their age.

It's not easy to admit that one's physical abilities have deteriorated with age and that many of the seemingly simple activities of daily life are slipping past one's capabilities. This is a time when family members usually have to step in, but even beginning to discuss such issues can be difficult, and reaching decisions about health services, living arrangements, financial situations and similar topics related to loss of independence can be very frustrating.

Numerous emotional elements play into what are always going to be life-changing discussions about decisions regarding assisted living, surrendering a driver's license, having a will and similar topics.

While these discussions with an aging parent are necessary, there are ways to approach such talks to make them less difficult and more likely to lead to desired results. Some tips to help include:

- Use "I" statements to talk about what you feel regarding an issue. Don't take the position that whatever you believe is correct while the parent's views are simply wrong.
- Plan a good time and place for important conversations where your parent will feel comfortable.
- Don't have multiple family members gang up on your parent. Consider including someone you and your parent mutually trust.
- Don't dominate the discussion. Respect your parent's right to argue and disagree. Listen to your parent's views and ideas, especially when the subject involves major decisions.
- Don't be judgmental or dictate what "has to be." This only helps initiate a stubborn fight.
- Accept that making necessary decisions will take time. Your job is to offer advice and support, not demand how things must change immediately. Even when there seem to be no alternatives, it will take time for an aging parent to accept the inevitable.

It can be emotionally difficult for the parent, as well as the child, when that aging parent can no longer manage living on his or her own. Effective discussions on changes can be much more productive, and far less traumatic, than simply trying to dictate decisions. And if extra help is needed, consider seeking out a professional counselor who specializes in geriatric issues.

Counseling Corner is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to [ACAcorner@counseling.org](mailto:ACAcorner@counseling.org) or visit the ACA website at [www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org).

### Awards from A1

presented by Officer Simms' widow, Lieutenant Pamela Simms, also formerly with the Metropolitan Police Department, along with News4's (NBC) Traffic Reporter Melissa Mollet. Today's event speakers included Virginia's Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Brian Moran, Congressman Gerry Connolly (D-VA), Metropolitan Police Department (D.C.) Chief Peter Newsham (the Metropolitan Police Department co-hosted this morning's event with WRAP) and Richard Leotta, father of late Montgomery County Police Officer Noah Leotta.

"Today's awardees represent the front lines in the fight against drunk driving in Greater Washington," said Kurt Gregory Erickson, WRAP's President. "Their collective effort to annually arrest and remove over 13,500 drunk drivers from Washington-metropolitan area roadways has undoubtedly saved lives."

In addition to receiving the Law Enforcement Awards, each of the 2019 WRAP honorees also received a pair of complementary Washington Nationals tickets (courtesy of the Washington Nationals) and a \$ 25

gift card to Glory Days Grill (courtesy of Glory Days Grill).

Sponsors of WRAP's 2019 Law Enforcement Awards & Holiday Campaign Kick-Off included The Beer Institute, BREAKTHRU BEVERAGE—Washington, D.C., GEICO, Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility, George Washington University Hospital, Glory Days Grill, Interstate Moving | Relocation | Logistic and Lyft.

Founded in 1982, the nonprofit [501(c)(3)] Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP) is a coalition of diverse interests using effective education, innovative programs and targeted advocacy to end alcohol-impaired driving and underage drinking in the Washington, DC metro area. Through public education, innovative health education programs and advocacy, WRAP is credited with historically keeping the metro-Washington area's alcohol-related traffic deaths lower than the national average. WRAP, however, may best be known to area residents via the organization's popular free safe ride service for would-be drunk drivers, SoberRide®. For more information, visit WRAP's web site at [www.wrap.org](http://www.wrap.org).

### Morningside from A2

Carolyn Jeffcoat and Kirra Starr Mears, Dec. 27; Christopher Garris, Anne Lucas, Patsy Anderson, and my granddaughter Samantha McHale, Dec. 28; Brayden Proctor, Dec. 29; Amy Anthony Wade and Robert Treter, Dec. 30; Pat Spry, Sister Haimanot, Dorothy Cullinan and Bridget Vilky, Jan. 1;

and Evelyn Lozano who turns 99 on Jan. 2.

Happy anniversary to Gerald and Arvilla Atkinson who'll celebrate their 65th on Dec. 27; Nola and Bruce Thomas, their 42nd on Dec. 27; and my grandson David and Nina McHale, their 19th anniversary, Dec. 30.

## Joint Effort Aims at Addressing Langley Park Housing Ills

By GABRIELLE WANNEH  
Capital News Service

LANGLEY PARK, Md. (December 11, 2019)—Just outside the nation's capital, this community has been struggling for years with aging and neglected housing.

Many properties are overcrowded, poorly maintained, and have multiple environmental health hazards such as mold, lead-based paints, and pest infestations. For all of that, housing is still too expensive for some residents.

"At first, everything starts off nice, everything starts off normal," said Heidi Martinez, a former tenant leader for Maryland-based immigration rights organization CASA. "But after a few months, you start noticing that the A.C. doesn't work, the heater doesn't come on, and a few little animals and rats start coming out of nowhere."

Martinez added that sometimes, tenants might have to sacrifice groceries or other expenses in order to pay rent on time, even though the living space remains in poor condition.

"Some property managers don't recognize that and they don't work with us or fix the housing conditions," she said during a press conference in October.

CASA and the University of Maryland-College Park released a report recently publicizing the poor living conditions in the predominantly Latino immigrant neighborhood and recommending a number of steps to improve conditions.

"Housing Matters: Ensuring Quality, Safe, and Healthy Housing in Langley Park, Maryland," details the findings of two years worth of data collection and observation of properties in the community. It also focuses on ways to revitalize Langley Park and similar neighborhoods in Prince George's County, Maryland.

"Ultimately, these recommendations are about the need for collaboration amongst community members, government agencies, and property owners," said Willow Lung-Amam, assistant professor of Urban Studies and Planning at the University of Maryland and a primary author of the report. "And about increasing the number of tools that can not only

improve homes here in Langley Park, but also the health and well-being of residents."

CASA created the Housing Matters Coalition in 2016 through a two-year grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Although the coalition addressed environmental health hazards in apartments in Langley Park, it also sought to empower tenants and improve the relationships among the community, landlords, and county staff.

"For several years, tenants in our community have shared with us their stories of sub-par and dangerous housing conditions," said Julio Murrillo, government and strategic relations specialist for CASA at the conference. "And in addition to the decline in housing quality and increasing rent, some tenants face challenges holding landlords accountable."

According to the report, about three-fourths of Langley Park's residents live in the 13 apartment complexes that are an average of over 60 years old. Two of these properties have been on the county's distressed properties list since 2012 for multiple code violations.

Murrillo showed photographs of damage that had occurred in a young tenant's bathroom, where part of the ceiling collapsed and fell on him while he was in the room.

Although there is an urgent need for better maintenance and reinvestment, the report said, many residents feared calling their landlords, code enforcement and other agencies to tackle these issues.

"There's a lack of communication between residents and landlords, residents and property managers, and residents and the county," Lung-Amam said.

Langley Park is home to a majority of immigrant residents and, according to the Migration Policy Institute, has one of the largest concentrations of undocumented Latino immigrants in the county. Language and cultural barriers, and lower levels of education contribute to difficulties in communication, the report said.

The report also said this strained relationship takes its toll on landlords.

Due to the age and condition of Langley

Park's apartment complexes, repairs tend to require extensive financial investments in order to keep in compliance with housing codes, according to the report. Property owners and managers can find it challenging to do so between overextended maintenance budgets and the lack of trust from residents, the report added.

During the coalition's two-year run, the report said, it found multiple ways to engage residents, property owners and code enforcement officers to address the community's environmental health hazards and housing quality issues.

Monthly coalition meetings were used as a platform for all parties to air concerns and find a common ground that helped in building a more trusting relationship.

The coalition also held door-to-door campaigns, community workshop events, and town hall meetings that were meant to spread awareness about identifying potential hazards, asserting tenants' rights, and locating resources for residents.

"One of the wonderful things that happened during the course of producing the report is that the housing code enforcement and the tenants and the landlords were just sitting in the same room together," Lung-Amam said. "A lot went on during those conversations."

District 2 Councilmember Deni Taveras introduced local legislation in 2017 after attending several meetings as a member of a coalition and hearing the stories of constituents.

This four-bill legislation passed unanimously and aims to tackle issues of poor property conditions and maintenance. The bills hone in on amending county ordinances to address residential overcrowding, eliminating blight and providing accountability for property owners, improving existing laws on landlord retaliation, and establishing civil fines and penalties for the violation of housing codes.

In September, Taveras and District 1 Councilmember Tom Dernoga introduced the Fair Housing Act, a tenant-protection bill focused on strengthening code enforcement to improve the quality of housing in the county.

"We can do better as a county to ensure that all multifamily tenants have a safe living space," Dernoga said.

The legislation will be reviewed for approval in January.



PHOTOGRAPHS CREDIT HIRAM LAREW

Crystal Hypolite at the House of Delegates, Dec. 18, 2019.

## County's Poetry on Display at the Maryland House of Delegates

By HIRAM LAREW  
PoetryxHunger.com

The first-ever display of poetry at the Maryland House of Delegates was installed in the hallways on Dec. 18, 2019.

The Poetry Poster Project is now on exhibit until Feb. 21, 2020 on the second floor (near Room 207—the Prince George's County Delegation Room) of the House of Delegates, 84 College Avenue, Annapolis, MD 21401. For full info on the House building, visit the Maryland House of Delegates website.

The Poetry Poster Project, as supported by the Prince George's (MD) Arts and Humanities Council, showcases the poetry of six wonderful living County-based (as of 2017) poets—Diane Wilbon Parks, Edgar Silex, Samantha Jackson, Sistah Joy Alford, Ladi Di Beverly and Forestine Bynum. Their poetry is displayed as framed "artwork."

A special thanks to Delegate Michael A. Jackson who chairs the County's Delegation for sponsoring the exhibit, and to Crystal Hypolite (pictured viewing the exhibit) on his team for her help. Matt Stoller, House Administrator, also provided really important assistance. Starmanda Duker was a big help early on in this process.

For more info on the Project, visit Facebook—The Poetry Poster Project.



## Joseph Sheppard to Open "An African-American Experience" In Commemoration of Black History Month

Exhibit at The Leroy Merritt Center to open Feb. 23, 2020

Decades before the first celebration of Black History Month in 1970, Baltimore-based and world-renowned artist Joseph Sheppard was painting and exhibiting art that depicted the life of African Americans. From his first National Prize for "Preston Street" in a 1956 Allied Artist show to "Mr. Mack's Fighter's Gym," which earned other national awards and years later, in 2003, was part of an exhibit called "Joe Sheppard's Fighters" at the Walter's Museum, Sheppard has been at the forefront of creating art that depicts diversity and inclusivity.



IMAGE COURTESY OF JOSEPH SHEPPARD  
Girl with Flowers

Sheppard was prolific in creating a body of work that represented the life of African American workers, celebrities, athletes and scholars. Beginning February 23 more than 30 of those pieces will be on display as part of his "An African-American Experience" exhibit at The Leroy Merritt Center at the University of Maryland Global Campus.

"Early in my career there wasn't any art being exhibited with African-Americans as the subject and, in fact, most all of my subject matter was taboo," said Sheppard. "Having this body of work on display here in Maryland is a great honor to me and a tribute to the subjects of my work."

The exhibition at The Leroy Merritt Center will feature Sheppard's oils, large drawings and sculptures that date from the 1940s to the present time and include subjects such as Muhammad Ali, Joe Louis, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mack Lewis' Fighter's Gym and Frederick Douglass.

The Leroy Merritt Center showcases the work of Joseph Sheppard, honors his extraordinary work, underscores his lifelong devotion to creating and promoting classical art and celebrates the legacy of Maryland philanthropist and businessman Leroy Merritt. Sheppard was born in 1930 in Owings Mills, Maryland, and educated at the Maryland Institute College of Art under Jacques Maroger, the former technical director of the Louvre Museum in Paris. One of Maryland's most renowned artists, Sheppard stands now as an acknowledged master of a realism that recalls the style of the Renaissance masters.

The Leroy Merritt Center for the Work of Joseph Sheppard is located at 3501 University Boulevard East, Adelphi, MD 20783. For additional information, visit <https://www.umgc.edu/administration/arts-and-diversity/arts/leroy-merritt-center-for-art-of-joseph-sheppard/index.cfm>.  
—Press Officer, The Leroy Merritt Center

# COMMENTARY

## Marc Morial

President and CEO, National Urban League



### To Be Equal:

## New Jersey Anti-Semitic Shootings Are Part of a Horrifying Spike in Hate Crime That Demands Our Action

*"If this incident was motivated by hate, which news reports indicate, then this is another incident in a long line of violent incidents targeting the Jewish community. This hatred is a disease and right now we are experiencing an epidemic. Leaders must lead and call out hate wherever and whenever it rears its ugly head—regardless of politics. This is about principle."*

—Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO and National Director, Anti-Defamation League

(December 13, 2019)—For the third time in just over a year, the nation is reeling in the face of a deadly mass shooting that appears to have been motivated by anti-Semitism.

Earlier this week, a man and woman killed a police detective near a Jersey City cemetery and then stormed a nearby Jewish market, shooting and killing three people there. The two were killed in a subsequent shootout with police.

The suspects have been linked to a religious sect that includes factions designated as anti-Semitic hate groups. In the stolen van they were driving, investigators found a note that contained anti-Semitic and anti-police sentiments. Similar sentiments were found in social media posts linked to the suspects.

In April of this year, a gunman opened fire in a San Diego synagogue on the last day of Passover, killing a 60-year-old woman and wounding three other people, including a rabbi and an 8-year-old girl.

Shortly before the attack, the gunman posted an anti-Semitic and racist manifesto on social media, citing conspiracy theories, expressing admiration for the gunmen who perpetrated the anti-Muslim killings at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Six months earlier, in Pittsburgh, 11 people were killed at the Tree of Life Synagogue. That shooter, too, deeply enmeshed in anti-Semitic conspiracy theories on social media.

These acts are part of a horrifying three-year trend that has coincided with a spike in course and heated racial rhetoric in political discourse. It is one that demands action on several fronts, including gun policy, moderation of social media terms of service, and a sweeping reexamination of racial and religious intolerance.

As a child of the Civil Rights Movement and the leader of the nation's largest racial justice organization, I have witnessed the recent rise of white nationalism with equal parts dismay and a sickening sense of familiarity. Our nation's history is sullied with racial and religious intolerance and violence. What has sustained us, as famously expressed by Martin Luther King, Jr., is that "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."

In this particular period of history, the arc seems especially long. Leaked emails recently revealed that one of the President's closest advisors, Stephen Miller, has cited and promoted white nationalist ideologies and conspiracy theories about "white genocide," the criminality of

immigrants, and the reviled eugenics movement. Congressional response to the emails has been almost nonexistent.

Meanwhile, personal attacks motivated by bias or prejudice reached a 16-year high last year, according to the F.B.I.

More than 4,300 attacks on people, motivated by racial or religious hatred, were recorded by the FBI. State and local police forces are not required to report hate crimes to the F.B.I., and as many as half the victims of hate crimes never file a report, so the actual number of hate-fueled assaults is significantly higher than the official record.

Lately it seems that the atrocities and outrages of racism and intolerance are falling too fast and too frequently to respond appropriately. But we must not lose sight of our ideals as Americans—as brothers and sisters and parents and neighbors—to love and protect one another. Let your elected representatives know that these incidents call for responsible gun reform, holding social media companies accountable for dissemination of hate speech, and a moderation of their public rhetoric. And join us in our prayers for the victims and their families.

To Be Equal is a syndicated weekly opinion column distributed by the National Urban League to news outlets across the nation since 1963, when it was started as "the Voice of Black America" by National Urban League President, Whitney M. Young, Jr.

## Marion Wright Edelman

President Emerita, Children's Defense Fund



### ChildWatch:

## Great Civil Rights Lawyer and Friend John W. Walker

(December 13, 2019)—We must all learn to live together as brothers in this world or we will all die together as fools. We must work passionately and unremittingly for first-class citizenship. But we must not use second-class methods to get it... Go home determined to revolt against segregation and discrimination everywhere." Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said this in a commencement speech in 1958 at Arkansas AM&N College (now the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff). One of the graduating seniors in his audience that day was Arkansas native John W. Walker.

A season of change was germinating in the South including Arkansas, where the Little Rock Nine had fought to enroll at segregated Little Rock Central High School in the fall of 1957. Dr. King was not yet 30 but had gained national prominence in the Montgomery Alabama bus boycott and was inspiring countless other young people like John and me who chafed at the idea of racial discrimination and determined to be at the forefront of the movement for racial change.

John became one of the most influential civil rights attorneys in the entire south and a five-term member of the Arkansas House of Representatives where he served until his death this past October. He was also my friend, law school classmate, and fellow NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF) intern and board member. He spent his whole life relentlessly using the legal system to follow Dr. King's mandate to fight for equal citizenship for African Americans and others left behind, revolting against segregation and discrimination everywhere, including his home state.

By the time he graduated from Arkansas AM&N John already had been involved in a dramatic case challenging racial discrimination. He was the first Black undergraduate admitted to the University of Texas in 1954 after Brown v. Board of Education, but the university decided to revoke the offers of admission to Black students before the school year began. He chose to attend the historically Black Arkansas AM&N, where he excelled, earned a master's degree from New York University and his law degree from Yale University in 1964. The civil rights movement was bringing a wide range of legal challenges and LDF had established an internship program for new lawyers who wanted to practice in the South after a year of training with LDF's extraordinary New York lawyers who included Jack Greenberg, Constance Baker Motley, Derrick Bell, and James Nabrit III. Julius Chambers and I were lucky enough to serve as the first two LDF interns, and John Walker was the third.

He quickly established his practice in Little Rock, opening one of the first racially integrated law firms in the South, and became an LDF cooperating attorney working on education, death penalty, and voting rights cases among others.

From 1965 John was personally involved in most of the important reported cases involving racial discrimination in Arkansas. The Little Rock school desegregation case began during his senior year in college and became one of his major battles over more than three decades going back and forth in the courts. The segregationists never gave up their attempts to obstruct and deny our Black children's rights to equal education.

Ted Shaw, former Legal Defense Fund President and Director-Counsel, who worked with John on that case called John, "a superb trial lawyer who dominated courtrooms with lawyerly charisma and crackling cross-examination... More than anything else, I remember how people would come up to John in backwoods catfish and po' boy joints to shake his hand and thank him for what he had done or was doing as he represented them. No matter where we went, people knew John Walker and he knew them. He represented them in employment discrimination, voting rights, education, housing, and other civil rights cases. And he knew them. He was a thorn in the side of the powerful and a warrior on behalf of the disadvantaged. In Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas, John Walker was the civil rights lawyer."

John decided to seek public office and in 2010 became an Arkansas state legislator to continue fighting for equal justice and opportunity as he had in the courtroom. Although he was often at odds with the most powerful forces in Arkansas his body laid in state at the Arkansas State Capitol with flags at half-staff. Tributes poured in from across the state and nation—powerful symbols of the transforming change he fought so hard to achieve for those left behind.

How many young people today find such a passionate calling? It was an extraordinary privilege to be a young lawyer at the height of the civil rights movement alongside colleagues like John when there was so much work to be done. There is still so much work to be done to break down the barriers—many more subtle but equally real that keep every child from having equal access to opportunity in America. Today, when our nation is at risk of moving dangerously backwards, the work continues and is as urgent as it ever was with nearly 12 million children still living in poverty and many more trapped in inequitably funded and racially segregated schools. The Legal Defense Fund remembered that John "once noted that he made a promise to himself early on in life that, in retrospect, now aptly captures the essence of his career: 'I would not engage in prejudice, or sit idly by while someone else did.'" I am so grateful for his example and tireless work for justice, for our young and all of us. Let's praise his life but emulate his example.

.....  
*Marian Wright Edelman is Founder and President Emerita of the Children's Defense Fund whose Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. For more information go to [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org).*

## Anthony Brown

Maryland Congressional District 4



## Paid Family Leave is an Important Step Forward For Federal Workers and Public Service

WASHINGTON (December 17, 2019)—Congressman Anthony G. Brown (MD-04) praised the inclusion and passage of paid parental leave for non-military federal employees in this year's National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The enactment of parental leave benefits for more than 2 million federal workers is a step toward America joining the rest of the industrialized world in offering this critical benefit to new families.

The state of Maryland is home to more than 120,000 dedicated federal public servants. Congressman Brown's Congressional district, spanning both Prince George's and Anne Arundel counties, boasts over 50,000 federal employees—the fifth largest population in the country.

The provision, included in this year's NDAA, will provide 12 weeks of paid parental leave for parents who have a new baby or have just adopted a child. Currently, non-military federal employees are only offered 12 weeks of unpaid leave. Paid parental leave has been shown to improve workforce retention—particularly among

women—and recruitment, boost maternal and infant health outcomes and create stronger families.

"Federal employees go to work each day to better this country and our communities. Paid parental leave for federal workers is the right choice for our local economies and, more importantly, the right thing to do for our families," said Congressman Anthony Brown. "While public service is a calling, modern benefits like parental leave will more readily attract the highly skilled, diverse federal workforce we need and better retain the talent we have."

"AFGE has been fighting to provide all federal workers with paid family leave for decades, and this agreement is a huge step in that direction. Providing federal employees with 12 weeks of paid time off for the birth, adoption, or foster placement of a child will help them better balance their work and home lives, and it will give agencies a needed advantage when recruiting and retaining workers to carry out critical missions on behalf of our country,"

said American Federation of Government Employees. "We thank Congressman Brown for supporting this critical new benefit and we look forward to working with Congress on our ultimate goal of providing all American workers with paid family leave."

"Creation of a paid parental leave program for federal employees is nothing short of historic. Finally, our nation's civil servants will be able to spend time with their new arrivals—through birth, adoption or foster—without jeopardizing their ability to pay their bills. This is a basic, human right that will make the federal government a more family-friendly place to work. We commend Rep. Brown for his strong support on this issue and for working with his colleagues—and with us—to get this done. Our persistence has paid off. Federal employees around the country—and their families—are grateful," said Tony Reardon, President of the National Treasury Employees Union, which represents 150,000 employees in 33 agencies and departments.

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# BUSINESS AND FINANCE

## Social Security Matters

Ask Rusty:

### How Can We Change Social Security's Earnings Limit?

By RUSSELL GLOOR, AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor  
Association of Mature American Citizens

Dear Rusty:

How do we change the Social Security earnings cap amount? Do I need to go through my Congressman? Social Security is withholding my benefit because they say I earned too much. The system is very unfair! **Signed: Disgruntled Worker**

**Dear Disgruntled:** The Social Security earnings test has been a part of Social Security's rules and regulations since the original Social Security Act of 1935. In fact, benefits were originally paid only if someone was not working at all, and if a beneficiary worked after they started collecting, they lost all benefits. The law has undergone changes over the years to bring it to where it is today, which is to limit the amount of earnings someone can have while collecting Social Security prior to their full retirement age before taking back some benefits.

If the earnings limit is exceeded, and you have not yet reached your full retirement age, Social Security typically withholds your benefits until they recover what you owe for exceeding the limit. The limit is adjusted annually based upon changes to the National Wage Index, and the annual limit for 2020 is \$18,240, up from \$17,640 last year. There is also a "first year rule" which will subject those who haven't yet reached their full retirement age and claim benefits mid-year to a monthly limit (1/12th of the annual limit) for the remainder of that year. The earnings limit increases significantly (by about 2.6 times) during the year you reach your full retirement age (FRA), and goes away entirely once your FRA is attained.

As you are probably aware, exceeding the limit will cause Social Security to take back \$1 for every \$2 you are over the limit, or if you're subject to the "first year rule" they will take back your entire benefit for any month you exceed the monthly limit. In the year you reach your FRA (but before your FRA) the "penalty" for exceeding the limit is less severe—\$1 for every \$3 over the limit. What you may not be aware of is that when you reach your full retirement age, Social Security will give you time credit for any months you did not receive benefits because you exceeded the earnings limit and receiving that time credit at your FRA will result in your benefit being increased. For example, if, over the years before you reached your FRA, Social Security withheld 12 months of benefits due to you exceeding the earnings limit, when you reach your full retirement age Social Security will recalculate your benefit to account for those 12 months by changing your claim date to 12 months later than when you actually applied. That will increase your benefit somewhat and, as a result, you may be able to eventually recoup some, or all, of the benefits which were withheld (depending upon your longevity).

How can we change the earnings cap? Well, the earnings limit already increases automatically each year with changes to the National Wage Index. But if you mean how can we eliminate it, I'm not optimistic that is possible since it would require full Congressional approval as well as Executive Branch approval to do so, and since Congress is now more focused on Social Security's broader issue of the Trust Fund being depleted in about 2035 (which will result in an across-the-board cut in benefits unless Congress acts sooner). Nevertheless, you should certainly feel free to bring your concerns about Social Security's "earnings cap" to the attention of your Congressional Representatives. Congressional Representatives are always willing to hear and understand the concerns of their constituents, and Social Security is very much a topic of discussion in Congress today.

The 2 million member Association of Mature American Citizens (AMAC) (<https://www.amac.us>) is a vibrant, vital senior advocacy organization that takes its marching orders from its members. We act and speak on their 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 <https://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 [ssadviser@amacfoundation.org](mailto:ssadviser@amacfoundation.org).

## Labor from A1

options for employment," Rutherford said in a statement.

At the Nov. 20 meeting, Rutherford—attending for Gov. Larry Hogan—said that Maryland's unemployment rate is the lowest it's been in 11 years.

Rutherford said that it's created a challenge for some skilled labor and skilled professions in finding labor.

"One of the things that we've been working at, the last couple of years, particularly with one of the local school districts, is getting the trades back into these local schools," Rutherford said.

"Construction trades are willing to help because they need people," Rutherford said.

Rutherford said there is a sense of urgency in bringing trades back into the schools.

"There are young people who could use these skills and an opportunity to make a very good living coming out of school," Rutherford said.

The governor's office declined to comment and referred questions about the increase in costs to the university, which also declined to comment but referred calls to trade associations to reach out to on industry trends.

The cost of labor increases in part because people have to make the lumber and materials, which includes production cost, said Aydukovic.

The cost of professional services, such as architecture, engineering and financing, also has an additional cost.

Aydukovic said that there is wage inflation among construction companies across the United States, "from the lumber yards, to the skilled craftspeople on site, to the professionals in the office, that are contributing to the increasing costs of construction."

He said that these jobs, which include the groundwork of being electricians and plumbers, and laborers of a certain sort, take a lot of brains and dedication.

Aydukovic explained that it took until 2016 before profit margins returned to normal and some contractors just simply ran out of runway waiting for normalcy to return.

"What parent would encourage their kids to go into construction when it was nothing but bad news for the better part of six years, so we lost almost an entire generation of new entries to the industry," Aydukovic told Capital News Service.

Aydukovic said that there were several contractors that went out of business, one of them being Truland Group Inc., an electrical contracting business which filed for bankruptcy protection more than five years ago.

Marco Giamberardino, vice president for government and public affairs of the National Electrical Contractors Association, said there's a serious need to build the next generation of skilled electricians.

"In the electrical construction industry alone, Baby Boomers make up about 70 percent of our supervision," Giamberardino said. "Apprenticeship graduates go on to become journeyman electricians as well as project managers, contractors, engineers, training directors and college graduates."

Daniel Loveless, a business manager of Steamfitters Union Local 602, said that tradespeople are making upward of \$100,000 a year out of high school.

Loveless said that it's important not to mislead young men and women in their last year of high school to take heating, ventilation and air conditioning training, thinking that they will immediately go and perform the

job because it's a five-year intensive program.

"We're a very diverse trade and I'd like them to see high schools prepare students but also I'd like to see us be able to talk to these kids so that they can be aware of opportunities like this," Loveless said.

Loveless wants to "get the message to the parents to have a conversation with them about their child and allow them to know more about what trades and construction people do so they don't uneducatedly discourage their child from pursuing a career like this."

"College isn't for everyone, whether it is a financial reason," Loveless said. "Some people are meant to work with their hands and build."

Loveless said that contractors sometimes go out of business because it's highly competitive and sometimes when they are competing to win a contract, they end up losing money.

He said lately there is more work out there and the industry has become more competitive.

Loveless said his union took in about 225 new apprentices last year and expects to take in about 250 this year.

"If we have any shortage of

## Building Pride, Students First: CEO Proposes \$2.3B Operating Budget

Amid enrollment gains, budget invests in student services and success through universal meals program, mental health services and new academic initiatives

By OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS  
Prince George's County Public Schools

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (December 12, 2019)—On December 12, Chief Executive Officer Dr. Monica Goldson unveiled a \$2.3 billion operating budget proposal for fiscal year 2021 with a focus on student services and new academic programs in Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS).

The budget proposal invests in a universal meals program at 45 community schools that will provide free breakfast, lunch and supper to approximately 31,360 students. Other highlights include a new middle school language immersion program, Career and Technical Education enhancements and expanded mental health supports in every school. The plan also meets last year's commitment to salary increases for educators, administrators and support staff, improving the school system's efforts to recruit and retain high-quality employees.

"All families have the same dream for their child: a quality education that nurtures their talents and propels their dreams into reality. These budget investments prioritize our students' diverse needs and our commitment to attracting and keeping the best and brightest employees," said Dr. Goldson. "By supporting students in and outside of the classroom, we prepare the next generation for the world beyond our schoolhouse doors."

The budget proposal focuses on five key areas: academic excellence (\$15.7 million), high-performing workforce (\$94.2 million); safe and supportive environments (\$6.9 million), family and community engagement (\$2.9 million) and organizational effectiveness (\$1.2 million).

This school year, enrollment increased by 4,000 students—an historic single-year high—continuing a seven-year growth trend.

PGCPS has continued its commitment to transparency and organizational effectiveness in FY21 by making \$8 million in cuts across various programs. Since the beginning of her tenure, Dr. Goldson has cut nearly \$30 million from central office functions and invested these resources in employees, students and programs.

The CEO's proposal is the first step of the budget cycle. Public hearings will begin in January. The Board of Education is expected to adopt the budget request in February and submit the request to the County Executive for approval by March 1. The County Council will consider the

budget for approval in May.

Additional details on the budget request are below. For more information, visit [www.pgcps.org/budget](http://www.pgcps.org/budget).

### CEO's Proposed Fiscal Year 2021 Operating Budget Highlights

#### High-Performing Workforce (\$94.2 million increase):

- Meets commitments for current agreements with PGCEA, ASASP, ACE/AFSCME, SEIU
- Prioritizes new salary increases to make PGCPS competitive with neighboring jurisdictions

#### Academic Excellence (\$15.7 million increase):

- Special Education supports
- Universal early childhood center
- Career and Technical Education program enhancements
- Middle school language immersion program

#### Safe and Supportive Environments (\$6.9 million increase):

- Expanded mental health supports for students and families
- Middle school safety and security
- Additional maintenance staff to address aging infrastructure

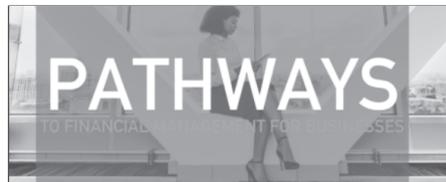
#### Family and Community Engagement (\$2.9 million increase):

- New universal meal program at all community schools (breakfast, lunch, supper)
- Additional background check sites and improved school websites

#### Organizational Effectiveness (\$1.2 million increase):

- Specialized professional development
- Modernized business processes and audit compliance enhancements

Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS), one of the nation's 25 largest school districts, has 206 schools and centers, more than 134,000 students and 22,000 employees. Under the leadership of Dr. Monica Goldson, the school system serves a diverse student population from urban, suburban and rural communities located in the Washington, DC suburbs. PGCPS is nationally recognized for college and career-readiness programs that provide students with unique learning opportunities, including dual enrollment and language immersion.



Join us on January 16, 2020 when the PGCEDC will launch Pathways to Financial Management for Businesses, a new initiative that will provide businesses with the technical assistance they need to successfully manage their business finances. Through this initiative, the PGCEDC and its lending partner FSC First, will hold a series of six seminars on topics from 'Financial Planning' to 'How to

Approach Lenders for Financing'.

The free kick-off event on January 16 will introduce participants to the program and will include a panel of bankers and finance experts.

The kick-off event will be held: Thursday, January 16, 2020 10 a.m.–12 p.m.

Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation, 1801 McCormick Drive, Largo, MD 20774

## Pathways to Financial Management For Businesses

Free kick off January 16, 2020

RSVP at [www.pgcedc.com/events-calendar/2019/11/26/pathways-kick-off-event](http://www.pgcedc.com/events-calendar/2019/11/26/pathways-kick-off-event)

The series will conclude with a free matchmaking event where business will meet one-on-one with lenders and apply for financing on-site.

Visit the website ([www.pgcedc.com/pathways](http://www.pgcedc.com/pathways)) to learn more about Pathways and to register today!

—Biz Buzz Weekly Newsletter



PHOTOGRAPH BY TERESA JOHNSON, COURTESY CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE  
Construction at Cole Field House at the University of Maryland-College Park on Dec. 9, 2019.

manpower, not gender specific, it has to do with a specialized and specific skill set. So we do not have a real shortage of people for our contractors," Loveless said.

The state's Department of Education in November published its four-year Career and Technical education plan, which aims to prepare students for jobs "meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers, including in existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations."

That report cites state labor projections, which anticipate at least 30,000 more construction-related jobs needed by 2026.

Adam Mendelson, a spokesman with the Maryland State Education Association, said that expanding career and technical education is a key component of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, recommended by the state's Kirwan commission.

"Educators know that making sure that more students have access to dynamic career, technology and education programs won't just enhance the quality of our schools, it will also help our economy when more students graduate with job-ready industry certifications for well-paying jobs," Mendelson said.

# NEW YEAR, NEW GOALS

## HEALTH

### 10 Doctor-Recommended Health Tips For the New Year

(StatePoint) Four in 10 adults in the U.S. have two or more chronic diseases, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. While certain conditions and risk factors are beyond one's control, the new year is the perfect time to consider the many lifestyle choices you can make for improved health.

"With too many holiday sweets and not enough exercise likely in the rearview mirror, now is the perfect time to consider your personal goals and how you can make positive health choices in the coming year," says American Medical Association (AMA) President Patrice A. Harris, M.D. "The good news is that there are a few easy steps you can take that will set you on the right track for a healthier 2020."

To get you started, the AMA is offering 10 wellness tips for the new year:

**1. Steps you take now can help prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes.** Learn your risk by taking the self-screening test at [DoIHavePrediabetes.org](http://DoIHavePrediabetes.org).

**2. Be more physically active.** Adults should do at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity activity, or 75 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity activity.

**3. Visit [LowerYourHBP.org](http://LowerYourHBP.org)** to better understand blood pressure numbers and take necessary steps to get high blood pressure—also

known as hypertension—under control. Doing so will reduce your risk of heart attack or stroke.

**4. Reduce your intake of processed foods,** especially those with added sodium and sugar. Eat less red meat and processed meats, and add more plant-based foods, such as olive oil, nuts and seeds to your diet. Also reduce your consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages and drink more water instead. Drinking sugary beverages—even 100% fruit juices—is associated with a higher all-cause mortality risk, a new study published in JAMA Network Open suggests.

**5. If your health care professional determines that you need antibiotics, take them exactly as prescribed.** Antibiotic resistance is a serious public health problem and antibiotics will not make you feel better if you have a virus, such as a cold or flu.

**6. If consuming alcohol, do so in moderation** as defined by the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans—up to one drink daily for women and two drinks daily for men, and only by adults of legal drinking age.

**7. Talk with your doctor about tobacco and e-cigarette use (or vaping) and how to**

**quit.** Declare your home and car smoke- and aerosol-free to eliminate secondhand exposure.

**8. Pain medication is personal.** If you're taking prescription opioids or other medications, follow your doctor's instructions. Store them safely to prevent misuse and properly dispose of any leftover medication.

**9. Make sure your family is up-to-date on vaccines,** including the annual influenza vaccine for everyone age six months or older. If you're

pregnant, you can receive the flu vaccine during any trimester, but should receive the Tdap vaccine early in the third trimester to protect yourself against flu and whooping cough.

**10. Manage stress.** A good diet, sufficient sleep (at least 7.5 hours per night), daily exercise and wellness activities, like yoga and meditation, are key ingredients to maintaining and improving your mental health, but don't hesitate to ask for help from a mental health professional when you need it.



IMAGE © LIGHTFIELDSTUDIOS / ISTOCK VIA GETTY IMAGES PLUS

## GREEN LIVING

### Resolve to Green Your Grocery Shopping in 2020

(StatePoint) In our grab-and-go culture, plastic is pervasive at the grocery store. But as more supermarkets worldwide adopt smart strategies for reducing single-use plastic packaging, experts say that these same changes are possible here in the U.S., so long as retailers, companies and individuals commit to making them a reality.

"It's time to build smarter supermarkets," says Kate Melges, plastics campaigner, Greenpeace. "We're starting to see examples of retailers moving away from throwaway packaging, but not at the urgency and scale needed to address this crisis."

A new report from Greenpeace, "The Smart Supermarket," travels through a hypothetical grocery store to explore how single-use packaging-free initiatives can be implemented in every aisle, as well as details the benefits each change would have on consumers and retailers.

As you head into a new year and possibly resolve to reduce your environmental impact, consider these report insights:

• **"Nude" food:** Plastic-wrapped produce creates needless packaging waste and potentially leads to wasted food, as consumers are required to buy portion sizes they may not need. "Nude" food lets you buy exactly what you need. For those products that do require packaging, stores and consumers should consider natural alternatives, such as banana leaves tied with bamboo twine.

• **Bulk staples:** Smart dispensing systems for such shelf-stable foods as rice, beans and lentils, allow customers to buy the quantities they need and can afford. And when customers dispense products into reusable containers they've brought from home or are supplied by the store, the system can eliminate single-use packaging.

• **Refillable personal and home products:** While the public is becoming aware of the need for reusable shopping bags and coffee

cups, there's less awareness about alternatives to single-use plastics for beauty and cleaning supplies. Refill stations on favorite shampoos, dish soaps and more can substantially reduce plastic waste.

• **Smarter takeout:** Many grocery stores have to-go options like salad bars and hot food counters. At a smart supermarket, takeout will not mean throwaway. Technology is at the heart of the concept, with customers using an app to collect rewards when they return reusable cups and containers. This is great for stores who want to establish brand loyalty, and great for customers who want kickbacks and to reduce their plastic use.

• **Sustainable checkout:** Five trillion single-use plastic bags will be used this year alone—that is 160,000 bags per second. Providing durable, reusable bags at checkout through a rent-a-bag scheme is an easy way for stores to reverse this trend.

• **Mindful online shopping:** Buy your groceries online? A number of online retailers are already dropping off and collecting reusable containers via more sustainable transport. A smart supermarket can follow the same model.



IMAGE © MONKEYBUSINESSIMAGES / ISTOCK VIA GETTY IMAGES PLUS

For more information on how to help build a smarter supermarket, visit: [greenpeace.org/usa/research/report-the-smart-supermarket](http://greenpeace.org/usa/research/report-the-smart-supermarket).

Without decisive action, plastic production is set to quadruple by 2050. This new year, advocates say that everyone can resolve to do their part to stem the tide, with retailers and consumer goods companies cooperating to create eco-friendly solutions, and consumers demanding these alternatives and opting for them when they become available.

## PERSONAL FINANCE

### Tips for the Best Financial You In the New Year

(StatePoint) At the same time that Americans are feeling the financial pinch of the holidays, they're gearing up for 2020, with their top two goals being to save more and increase their credit scores, according to a national consumer survey by Experian.

Almost three out of four consumers surveyed are motivated to improve their finances. To reach their New Year goals, survey respondents say they'll spend less money to improve their credit score (59%) and pay off credit card debt (58%).

To help get you started, Experian Boost ambassador, actor and financial empowerment activist, Hill Harper is providing these money tips:

• **Create a Financial Blueprint:** The first step is to create a blueprint identifying your money, saving and investing goals. Examine your priorities and determine how much money you require to meet your basic needs. From there, you should assess what else you need to be happy and how you can use money as a resource to achieve it.

• **Assess the Cost of Being You:** If your expenses or debt outpace your income, then it's very difficult to live the best version of your life. Rather than continuously playing catch-up, track your spending to discover new ways to reduce

monthly expenses. Apply those savings towards self-investment.

• **Understand Smart vs. Dumb Money:** Not all dollars spent hold the same value. Knowing the difference between "smart" and "dumb" money is key to building a solid financial foundation, according to Harper, who says that "dumb money" is spending on things like credit card interest or items that lose value quickly, whereas "smart money" is spending on things that pay dividends, like an education or home.

• **Control Your Credit Score:** A good credit score can help you gain access to capital with better terms at affordable rates. To improve it, pay bills on time and use a resource like Experian Boost, which is a free online tool that allows you to add positive payment history from utility and telecom bills to your Experian credit file, which can increase your score instantly.

• **New Year, New You:** "We're starting a new decade and what better opportunity is there to do a complete financial makeover?" says Harper, who recommends many other steps that will set you up for financial success, including building an emergency fund, securing health insurance, avoiding



IMAGE © PROSTOCK-STUDIO / ISTOCK VIA GETTY IMAGES PLUS

debt for unnecessary purchases and investing wisely.

"No one has a crystal ball, but given lower unemployment rates and low interest rates, 2020 could be a good year to have a plan for growth. A diversified portfolio for this next decade is a good portfolio," says Harper. More tips from

Harper can be found at [www.experian.com/education](http://www.experian.com/education).

While managing finances can seem intimidating, identifying trouble spots is the first step toward conquering your goals.

**Last Chance!: Holiday Lights Spotlight**

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC



**Festival of Lights, Watkins Park**

PHOTO CREDIT: WATKINS PARKS

**33 Annual Festival of Lights!** Bring a little twinkle to your holidays at this spectacular drive-through event featuring dazzling displays with more than 2.5 million lights throughout the park! You won't want to miss our giant, 54-foot LED musical tree! The Festival of Lights runs Friday, November 29, 2019–Tuesday, January 1, 2020, from 5–9:30 p.m. daily. Get your free festival spectacles while supplies last! A surprise for your eyes—watch as the lenses magically transform every point of light in our holiday displays into magical floating holograms! Please bring canned goods for donation to local food banks. Purchase your tickets in advance online and pay only \$8 (\$10 regular admission). For more information and complete pricing by vehicle-type, visit the festival's website (below).

Watkins Regional Park: 301 Watkins Park Drive, Upper Marlboro, Maryland • 301-699-2456  
<http://www.pgparcs.com/742/Festival-of-Lights>

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC



**Lights on the Bay, Sandy Point State Park**

PHOTO CREDIT: ASPCA OF AACOUNTY

**Lights on the Bay** is an annual holiday light show featuring a two mile scenic drive along the shores of the Chesapeake Bay through Sandy Point State Park, with more than 70 animated and stationary displays depicting regional and holiday themes. For only \$20 per car, you can drive through and enjoy the beautiful displays and celebrate the most wonderful time of the year! All proceeds from this family-friendly event will go directly to the SPCA to help care for the animals.

Tickets can be purchased at [lightsonthebay.org](http://lightsonthebay.org) or can be purchased at the event gates during regular hours of operation.

Sandy Point State Park: 1100 E College Parkway, Annapolis, Maryland, 21409 • 410-268-4388  
<http://www.lightsonthebay.org/>

**Calendar of Events**

December 27, 2019–January 6, 2020

**Xtreme Teens: Holiday Movie Night**

Date and Time: Friday, December 27, 2019, 7–9:30 p.m.  
 Description: Grab some popcorn. Get your drink. Get comfortable as you prepare to watch one of the classic holiday movies—courtesy of M-NCPPC! Tell a friend and make this experience the ultimate in fun!

Cost: FREE  
 Ages: 10–17  
 Location: Huntington Community Center  
 13022 8th Street, Bowie, MD 20720  
 Contact: 301-464-3725; TTY 301-699-2544

*Cheers to a Happy and Healthy 2020!*

**Teens on the Go: Library of Congress Trip**

Date and Time: Saturday, January 4, 2020, 2–5 p.m.  
 Description: Join us for an educational journey through the Library of Congress. The group will take the introductory tour to learn about the Thomas Jefferson Building and the history of the library! Will leave LPCC at noon and will return at 5 p.m.

Cost: Free,\*Do Not forget to bring money for food\* Light snacks will be provided throughout the day.  
 Ages: 301-445-4508; TTY 301-699-2544  
 Location: Langley Park Community Center  
 1500 Merrimac Drive, Hyattsville, MD 20783  
 Contact: 301-445-4508; TTY 301-699-2544

**Craft & Create: Planners and Pastries**

Date and Time: Saturday, January 4, 2020, 3 p.m.  
 Description: Participants will be able to bring their planners and share decoration ideas, tips and tricks including: monthly/weekly spreads, dashboard decor, and layout creation.

Cost: FREE  
 Ages: Adults  
 Location: PGCMLS, Hillcrest Heights Branch Library  
 2398 Iverson St., Temple Hills, MD 20748  
 Contact: 301-630-4900

**Teen Advisory Board: Build a Better Book**

Date and Time: Monday, January 6, 2020, 3:30 p.m.  
 Description: Earn service hours while making your library a great place for teens. This week, learn how to design and create your own tactile book that can be seen, touched and heard! Presented by the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

Cost: FREE  
 Ages: 13–18  
 Location: PGCMLS, Bowie Branch Library  
 15210 Annapolis Rd., Bowie, MD 20715  
 Contact: 301-262-7000



WASHINGTON—Visitors pass under the entrance to Zoolights, the annual holiday light festival at the Smithsonian's National Zoo.



WASHINGTON—At the Smithsonian's National Zoo, the immersive outdoor art installation "Entre Les Rangs" is meant to depict a walkable wheat-like field of light. The installation, part of ZooLights, is made up of glowing crystalline reflectors.

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS CREDIT HEATHER KIM/CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

**It's All Happening at the Zoo—  
At Night During the Holidays**

By JULIANNE HEBERLEIN  
 Capital News Service

WASHINGTON (December 10, 2019)— Each holiday season since 2007, after the animals go to sleep, the rest of the Smithsonian National Zoo comes to life as a colorful winter wonderland.

More than half a million LED lights are transforming the zoo's grounds into a bright holiday celebration this year, with a new outdoor art installation, 3D glowing animal sculptures, a laser light show and a virtual experience featuring the zoo's pandas.

The ZooLights display started 13 years ago to increase foot traffic during the zoo's off-season, zoo spokeswoman Pamela Baker-Masson said.

"Because we're so weather dependent, we wanted to have a special community-focused event," Baker-Masson said. "ZooLights seemed to be the perfect answer and it has been."

On Wednesday evening, families and couples stopped to take in the glow of the new animal-shaped lanterns lining the central walkway as the warm, sweet smell of funnel cake wafted through the crisp air. A pair of monkeys, a flock of flamingos, a group of cheetahs, a family of lions, a couple of pandas and a herd of zebras, among other animal shapes, illuminated the grounds.

Rebecca Hankins, a Washington resident, attended ZooLights for the first time in 2016. This year, she came back with a friend to take in the new attractions.

"The animal lanterns were really cool," Hankins said. "The new additions made (ZooLights) more interactive for kids and friends this year."

The immersive outdoor art installation, "Entre Les Rangs," located adjacent to the zoo's lion and tiger exhibit, becomes a walkable, wheat-like field of light. This week, visitors strolled through hundreds of glowing crystalline reflectors as they swayed with the wind.

A laser light show dances along to Christmas carols like "Walking in a Winter Wonderland," with animations of animal characters, including rabbits, ostriches and songbirds, projected on the side of the Elephant Community Center.

"(ZooLights) just keeps getting bigger and bigger with LED lights, more trees are wrapped, more decorations and more activities," Baker-Masson said.

Aside from this year's new additions, returning attractions include the ZooTubes slide down the hill near the lion and tiger exhibits, the Zoo Choo Choo train ride, a



WASHINGTON—Lion lanterns are one of the features of the Smithsonian's National Zoo annual ZooLights festival.

classic carousel and live musical performances from local groups and schools.

Sarah Heydemann and Alexandra Waters, both Washington residents, attended the light festival for the first time together this year.

"ZooLights is like a very quiet outdoor club," Heydemann said, commenting on the lively and upbeat atmosphere.

Both of them visited the new outdoor art installation but Waters said the light reflectors were not lighting up to their full potential.

Still, Waters said she "would definitely come back—probably tomorrow."

The light festival is free to the public and will be open each evening from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. until Jan. 1, except on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Year's Eve.

**Earth TALK™ Degrowth: Is Scaling Back the Answer to Climate and Environmental Woes?**

Dear EarthTalk:

What is the Degrowth movement all about and how can I get involved?  
 —P. Warren, Baltimore, MD

Degrowth is an aspirational term describing a way of life where economic expansion is deprioritized, resulting in stronger social bonds between people and within communities, greater economic equality and far less environmental degradation. Proponents decry the current economic/social paradigm of "faster, higher, further" as harmful to nature, given its relentless race to extract and monetize natural resources. They also abhor its competitiveness, stress and exclusion at the expense of the care, solidarity and cooperation necessary to help ourselves out of our humanitarian and ecological crises.

The term "degrowth" first came into common usage among proponents following the first international conference devoted to the topic in Paris in 2008. It has since entered the wider social lexicon through the media and academic writing—and as a battle cry for many environmental advocates working to ratchet down our carbon emissions to combat climate change.

According to the web portal Degrowth.info, a society refocused on degrowth would prioritize achieving "the good life for all" by fostering a culture of "deceleration, time welfare and conviviality." Meanwhile, developed countries would reduce production and consumption, partly to reduce their impact on the planet but also as not to lead less-developed countries down the wrong road through bad example.

Degrowth is also predicated on extending democratic decision-making and political par-

ticipation to all corners of society, acknowledging the ability of local populations to make their own decisions about how to retain self-sufficiency and sustainability in the face of socially and ecologically turbulent times. Also, degrowth advocates say we should be relying on cooperation, planning and a conservation ethic to solve our environmental problems instead of waiting for technological fixes that may or may not even work.

But just because we would be sacrificing some of our consumerism doesn't mean degrowth would lead to a lesser quality of life. In fact, proponents argue the opposite, envisioning happier lives where we would derive more satisfaction from healthier time-tested pursuits like art, music, walks outside and time with friends and family than from sitting inside by a screen plotting another amazon.com purchase.

Achieving degrowth—and attaining a "steady-state" economy that can function without getting bigger—is of course easier said than done. Rich nations would have to pare down their energy and resource demands significantly and let poorer nations increase their consumption so their citizens get the chance to live healthy, safe lives with access to the conveniences (electricity, sanitation ...) modern life has to offer.

If you want to learn more about degrowth, Degrowth.info is a great resource and can point you toward local gatherings of like-minded activists. Another way to get involved is by attending the Picnic 4 De-



IMAGE CREDIT: FLICKRCC

Activists who want us to scale back our economic consumption come together at locations all around the world at the Picnic 4 Degrowth that takes place every year in early June.

growth that takes place in parks all over the world on the first weekend of June every year. And if you really want to go deep, get yourself to Europe for one of the non-profit Research and Degrowth's annual movement-wide gatherings (May 29–June 1 in Vienna, Austria and/or September 1–5 in Manchester, England).

**CONTACTS:** Degrowth info; degrowth.info; Picnic 4 Degrowth, picnic4degrowth.wordpress.com; Research & Degrowth, degrowth.org.

.....  
**EarthTalk®** is produced by Roddy Scheer & Doug Moss for the 501(c)3 nonprofit **EarthTalk**. Check out our other columns at <https://www.emagazine.com/earthtalk-qa/>. To donate, visit <https://www.earthtalk.org>. Send questions to: [question@earthtalk.org](mailto:question@earthtalk.org).

**New Years' Service**

Date and Time: Tuesday, December 31, 2019, Noon • Rev. Paula H. Collins, Lead Pastor  
 Location: Accokeek First Church of God, 15821 Livingston Road, Accokeek, MD 20607  
 Contact: 301-283-2116, [www.accokeekchog.org](http://www.accokeekchog.org)

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Wednesday Prayer Service 8p.m.

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**Have a  
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Weekend**

## Reading from A1

This program relies on a simple yet fundamental truth: if you allow children choice and access to books, they will be more engaged readers. More than 50 million children nationwide have had the opportunity to experience the power and excitement of the Books for Ownership program and we are thrilled to offer Books for Ownership at Carmody Hills.

Parents and caregivers can continue to encourage reading at home by visiting <https://www.rif.org/literacy-central> to find free reading activities, videos, parent guides, and much more.

"Reading Is Fundamental is committed to creating a culture of literacy in communities nationwide and reading helps to ensure every child has the fundamental building blocks needed to achieve in life," says Reading Is Fundamental President and CEO, Alicia Levi. "For more than 50 years, Reading Is Fundamental has supported communities with the books and resources needed to impact children. We are excited to partner with State Farm to and believe that together we can make a difference."

*The mission of State Farm is to help people manage the risks of everyday life, recover from the unexpected, and realize their dreams. State Farm and its affiliates are the largest providers of auto and home insurance in the United States. Its nearly 19,000 agents and nearly 65,000 employees serve more than 84 million policies and accounts—more than 81 million auto, fire, life, health and commercial policies, along with coverage for renters, business owners, boats and motorcycles, is available. State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company is the parent of the State Farm family of companies. State Farm is ranked No. 33 on the 2017 Fortune 500 list of largest companies. For more information, please visit <http://www.statefarm.com>.*

Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) is committed to a literate America by inspiring a passion for reading among all children, providing quality content to create impact, and engaging communities in the solution to give every child the fundamentals for success. As the nation's largest nonprofit organization for children's literacy, RIF has provided more than 416 million books to 50 million kids in all 50 states, inspiring generations to read, learn and grow.

## First Day Hikes Offer a Fresh Start to 2020

Maryland Public Lands Hosting 40 Hikes Across State

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (December 18, 2019)—The Maryland Department of Natural Resources invites everyone to join a First Day Hike, Maryland's annual tradition for a fun, healthy kickoff to the New Year.

On Jan. 1, 2020, the Maryland Park Service will offer 40 guided hikes on 33 state lands and parks, as part of a nationwide event sponsored by America's State Parks. The earliest of the hikes starts at 8 a.m. while the latest has been planned to take advantage of year's first sunset.

Among the new hikes planned are a "Year of the Woman" hike at Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park in Dorchester County, and a First Day Birding Hike at Chapman State Park in Charles County.

These hikes will provide a variety of outdoor adventures and experiences for every level of hiker and walker, including unique access to Maryland's cultural, historic natural resources and treasures, along with opportunities for education and stewardship. Many hikes are even pet-friendly.

Numerous parks, state forests, and wildlife management areas will also be open Jan. 1 for self-guided treks.

"There's no better way to start 2020 than with an invigorating hike exploring Maryland's beautiful public lands," Maryland Secretary of Natural Resources Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio said. "This growing tradition brings thousands of Marylanders together in resolution for better health and connection with our natural resources. There is a hike waiting for you in every corner of our state, for every ability and age."

Among those hiking will be Lt. Gov. Boyd Rutherford, continuing his commitment to visiting all Maryland state parks and other public lands by the time he leaves office. Lt. Gov. Rutherford began 2019 with a hike at Patapsco Valley State Park.

On New Year's Day 2019, more than 3,700 people hiked 8,500 miles on 36 different First Day Hikes throughout Maryland—triple the previous year's numbers.

### Prince Georges County First Day Hikes: Cedarville State Forest: First Day Hike!

Time of Event: 1 p.m.

Meeting Location: Cedarville State Forest Visitor Center parking lot—10201 Bee Oak Road, Brandywine, Maryland 20613

Degree of Difficulty: Easy hike for families

Length of Hike: 1.5 miles (round-trip). Hike will last approximately 1 hour

Things to Bring: Wear clothing and shoes appropriate for the weather (rain, snow, or shine), and bring water for drinking

RSVP: Register via email to [Cedarville.statepark@Maryland.gov](mailto:Cedarville.statepark@Maryland.gov) or call Cedarville State Forest at 301-888-1410

Additional Information: Come kick off the New Year by joining a ranger for a fun, family-friendly hike at Cedarville State Forest! The trail is approximately 1.5 miles round-trip. We will stop along the hike to discuss the trees and plants with the assistance of park staff. We will finish the hike with refreshments. Dogs on a leash are welcome!

### Merkle Wildlife Sanctuary: First Day in the Forests of the Patuxent

Time of Event: 11 a.m.

Meeting Location: Merkle Wildlife Sanctuary, Visitor Center, 11704 Fenno Road, Upper Marlboro, Maryland

Degree of Difficulty: Moderate

Length of Trail: 3.5 miles (round-trip). Hike will last approximately 2 hours

Things to bring: Wear clothing and shoes appropriate for the weather (rain, snow, or shine), and bring water for drinking

RSVP: Register via email to [MerkleWildlife.NRMA@Maryland.gov](mailto:MerkleWildlife.NRMA@Maryland.gov) or call Merkle Wildlife NRMA at 443-510-9920.

Additional Information: Join park staff for a 3.5 mile hike along Poplar Springs to include a newly constructed extension to the trail! The trail winds through the forests of Merkle Wildlife Sanctuary, passing by an award-winning poplar tree. Afterwards, refreshments will be served in the Visitor Center and participants are welcome to stop in, learn about the history of the park, and meet some of our resident animals. Dogs on a leash are welcome! Trail is not stroller friendly.

—Maryland Department of Natural Resources

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