

The Prince George's Post



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Prince George's County Native Yvette Sams Gets First BET Her Original Movie

A Royal Surprise Airing Saturday, March 12 at 5 p.m. PT / 8 p.m. ET

By PRESS OFFICER
BET Her

LOS ANGELES (March 2, 2022)—Yvette Sams, a Prince George's County native and accomplished writer, producer and director based out of Beverly Hills, is releasing "A Royal Surprise," a romantic drama, and her first written television project for BET Her, a network that is an extension of the prolific BET brand. The show will air on BET Her on Saturday, March 12 at 5 p.m. PT / 8 p.m. ET.

Sams, who grew up in Clinton, MD, wrote "A Royal Surprise" in 2020, a project shot entirely on location in South Africa by American Cinema Inspires and Black Sheep Films.

"A Royal Surprise" stars Jennifer Freeman ("Staycation"), as bookstore owner Riley Stevenson, and South African actors Makgotso M. ("Survive"), and Thapelo Mokoena ("Trackers"), who play Sonya, Riley's best friend and trusted assistant and Mandla Amitu, Riley's boyfriend, respectively. When Riley's boyfriend, Mandla, invites her to South Africa to meet his family, she is shocked to discover that he is very wealthy and a prince, born in royalty. The news puts Riley's trust in Mandla in jeopardy, and he must do what he can to win her love back.

"Being hired to write this project was a blessing," says Sams, who focuses on multi-genre projects within the categories of Faith & Family, Romcom, Drama and more. "It was such a joy to write a royal romance featuring a strong black female lead -- a love story for the entire family to watch. This collaboration has taken many years of trying and trying again. I can't wait to hear the audience reaction to this special project and hope they enjoy watching as much as I enjoyed writing."

Sams launched her screenwriting career with a series of short films, one of which was recently released—"Sunday School." She wrote, directed, and executive produced the short, which won both the "Best Write of Passage" and "Audience Choice Awards" at the 168 Film Festival in 2019, an international faith-based competition that challenges entrants to craft a 12-page script in 168 hours. Her latest film, "Storm Watch" which she directed and produced, garnered a record 17 nominations at the 2021 168 Film Festival.

Her thriller, "Deadly Return" and her pilot series "Edge of the South, have been optioned by New Legacy Entertainment, and additional projects are waiting in the wings. Sams is repped by Richard Sindell of CSP Management.

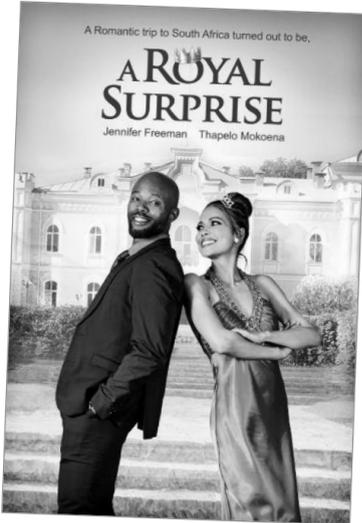


IMAGE COURTESY BET HER

BET Her is an American basic cable television network owned by Paramount Media Networks. The network is a spin-off of BET with a focus on general entertainment targeting African-American women. Learn more by visiting <https://www.bet.com/topic/bet-her>.

Graduation Rate Increases Amid Ongoing Pandemic

Dropout rate declines to lowest since 2017

By PRESS OFFICER
PGCPS

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (March 2, 2022)—The Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) four-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate increased by 1.5 percentage points to nearly 78 percent for the 2020-21 academic year with 10 schools registering a graduation rate of more than 90 percent. According to data released from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), the high school dropout rate fell to a five-year low with gains among several student groups, including a 4 percentage point-increase for Hispanic students. There were also increases among English language learners and students who come from families with low-income.

"Despite challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and distance learning, we

have made progress," said Dr. Monica Goldson, Chief Executive Officer. "I remain grateful for the commitment and resilience of our students, educators and staff who continue to keep teaching and learning at the forefront."

The statewide graduation rate increased by less than 1 percent.

High schools with graduation rate gains of three or more percentage points included High Point, Largo, Laurel, Northwestern, Potomac, International High School at Largo and College Park Academy.

MSDE uses a four-year cohort method to calculate graduation rates, following a set group of students from freshman year through their senior year.

For more information, visit the 2021 Maryland Report Card website: <https://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/Graphs/#/AtaGance/Index/3/17/6/16/XXXX/2021>.



U.S. NAVY PHOTO BY MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST SEAMAN JACK HOPPE

220227-N-GP384-1080 ADRIATIC SEA (Feb. 27, 2022) Sailors pose for a photo holding a selective reenlistment bonus check after reenlisting in the hangar bay of the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75), Feb. 27, 2022. The Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group is on a scheduled deployment in the U.S. Sixth Fleet area of operations in support of U.S., allied and partner interests in Europe and Africa.

District Heights Native Reenlists Aboard Aircraft Carrier

By MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST 2ND CLASS KELSEY TRINH,
USS HARRY S. TRUMAN (CVN 75) PUBLIC AFFAIRS
Navy Office of Community Outreach

ADRIATIC SEA (March 3, 2022)—A District Heights, Maryland, native was one of forty sailors assigned to the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) who took the next step in their Navy careers by reenlisting as a group during a mass-reenlistment ceremony in the ship's hangar bay, Feb. 27.

Petty Officer 1st Class Michael Newman-Ross, an aviation ordnanceman, held up his right hand and reenlisted for six more years.

"I am reenlisting to continue my service to my country, to be a part of something bigger than myself, and lastly to continue to make my family and loved ones proud," said Newman-Ross. "Thank you for all the love and support! I hope I continue to make you all proud, I miss you all and love you dearly!"

Chief Navy Career Counselor Eduardo

Rivera said reenlisting is a significant event in a sailor's career where they are rewarded for their dedication and hard work. It also helps in some cases due to certain factors, such as manning and specific NEC's, a specific amount of money is awarded to them as well.

"With this being my first time on a carrier this event is unique because I have never seen anything like this," said Rivera.

The reenlisting officer, Capt. Gavin Duff, Truman's commanding officer, said he is grateful to have the opportunity to serve alongside them and even more fortunate they elected to stay Navy.

"Commanding officers get to do a lot of cool things but this—reenlisting eighty-seven sailors is humbling," said Duff. "The sailors raising their right hand on the deck of a de-

ployed CVN and swearing to continue support and defend the Constitution will remember this moment for the rest of their life and so will I."

Truman is the flagship of the Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group (HSTCSG) which includes the embarked staff of Carrier Strike Group 8 and Destroyer Squadron 28; the embarked aircraft of Carrier Air Wing 1; San Jacinto (CG 56); the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Gonzalez (DDG 66), USS Cole (DDG 67), USS Bainbridge (DDG 96), USS Gravelly (DDG 107), and USS Jason Dunham (DDG 109); and the Royal Norwegian Navy's Fridtjof Nansen class frigate HNoMS Fridtjof Nansen (F310).

The Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group is on a scheduled deployment in the U.S. Sixth Fleet area of operations in support of U.S. national interests, security, and stability in Europe and Africa.

For more news from CSG 8, visit www.facebook.com/CSG8, www.navy.mil/local/cvn75/, www.facebook.com/usnavy, www.instagram.com/uss_harrys.truman, www.navy.mil, or www.twitter.com/usnavy.



PHOTO COURTESY OF NATIONAL HARBOR

National Harbor has more than 200 cherry trees.

National Harbor Celebrates Cherry Blossoms, March 17 to April 17 With the Region's Earliest Blooming Cherry Tree Waterfront Display

Special concert on Saturday, March 19 and Sakura Sunday celebration on Sunday, April 3

By PRESS OFFICER
National Harbor

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. (March 2, 2022)—National Harbor has become known for its spring display of hundreds of cherry trees lining the waterfront. The trees bloom each year in March and are some of the earliest blooms in the D.C. region. This year marks the 110th anniversary since Japan gifted its beautiful cherry trees to Washington, D.C. and, once again, National Harbor is an official participant of the National Cherry Blossom Festival.

To celebrate National Harbor's own spectacular display (the trees are now blooming!), the property is hosting a Cherry Blossom Celebration beginning March 17 through April 17. The month-long celebration will be filled with entertainment, hotel

room packages, food and drink specials, classes and more.

On Saturday, March 19, Minyo Crusaders will perform from 4 to 5 p.m. on the waterfront stage (150 National Plaza.) The group performs minyo music with Latin and African influences and uses instruments from around the world. They will give a short talk explaining minyo and traditional Japanese dance and then will invite (voluntary) audience participation in learning the dance choreography and being part of the performance. The Japan Foundation organized the performance in collaboration with the Embassy of Japan in the U.S.A. and National Harbor.

In addition, there will be a formal cherry tree planting ceremony at 3 p.m. on March 19

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The premiere was a fitting end to Black History Month and the documentary will now be rebroadcast and streamed throughout Women's History Month.

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TOWNS and NEIGHBORS

In & Around Morningside-Skyline by Mary McHale 301-735-3451

Brandywine columnist for 40 years, Elsie Sweeney, dies in Brandywine

Elsie L. Sweeney, whose "Brandywine Notes" column ran in The Enquirer-Gazette for 40 years, died February 11 at her home in Brandywine. She was 84.

The daughter of Clyde and Mary Elizabeth Beaton, Elsie grew up in Brandywine and attended Gwynn Park Junior/Senior High School. It was there she met Robert Sweeney. They married in 1956, a year after graduation, and built a home in Brandywine where they raised two sons, Brian and Daren. They lived in that house for more than 56 years.

Robert Sweeney began a career in banking as a courier at Riggs National Bank in Washington, became a teller, branch manager and Vice President at Citizen's Bank of Maryland. After retiring, he spent 10 years at Old Line Bank in Waldorf.

Meanwhile, Elsie was a homemaker, with many talents and interests, including authoring "Brandywine Notes" every week. She was an avid seamstress, belonged to a quilting group, enjoyed baking, gardening, reading historical novels, music, watching hockey and British television. And most of all, dogs.

Robert, Elsie's husband of 58 years, died in 2014. Elsie's viewing and service were at Lee Funeral Home with burial at Trinity Memorial Gardens in Waldorf.

I wish Elsie was still there in Brandywine writing "Brandywine Notes." We columnists have been the chroniclers of our neighborhoods. When we're gone...

Town of Morningside: Election Judges needed

Election update: All petitions had to be turned in by March 7. Now campaigning will start. Seats to be filled are for Mayor and two Council Members.

The Town is seeking two election judges. Volunteers must live in Morningside. For information or to volunteer, call 301-736-2300.

The next Town Meeting will be March 15, 7 p.m. at the Town Hall. All welcome.

Lost pup

Town of Morningside News had a notice: "Hi, Neighbors, Please contact me at 240-515-1232 if you see a medium-sized puppy, white with tan spots and ears flopped at the top."

The saga of Drew-Freeman

I wondered about the huge building under construction on what was once the front lawn of La Reine High School. According to Jim Reilly, it is the new middle school.

When La Reine High School closed its beautiful building in the 1990s, it was bought by the County and became Francis Scott Key Jr. Middle School. Later, it was renamed for two African American scientists, Dr. Charles Drew, famous surgeon and pioneer in the preservation of life-saving blood plasma, and Jesse L. Freeman, principal of Francis Scott Key Jr., science teacher, and eventually, Associate Superintendent.

In 2021, its students were moved to Forestville High School where they are still. Last year, the abandoned building was demolished. When that big new building celebrates its opening in a year or two, it will be the brand-new Drew-Freeman Middle School, with the latest of everything.

Changing landscape

The National Cherry Blossom Festival will be held fully in-person beginning March 20, after being virtual in 2020 and 2021.

I drove past G. I. Liquors which has stood there on Suitland Road since at least the 1940s, and it was closed. In the middle of the day! I called—no answer. Has it gone out of business? Where am I going to buy my wine now?

Sharon, owner of The Barber Lounge for Men, located in Waldorf, announced their 10th anniversary celebration on Feb. 27.

The Lewis is under construction in the new Towne Square at Suitland Federal Center next to the Suitland Metro Center. When The Lewis opens, there'll be 137 apartments for seniors, offering one or two bedrooms, stainless steel ap-

pliances, granite countertops, fitness center, yoga studio, on-site laundry facilities, community rooms and a roof-top garden. Call The Lewis Leasing Office at 240-312-5252 to apply.

This month, Maryland Delegate Brian Crosby won over the state's House of Delegates, which voted to permanently shift daytime so that an extra hour of sunlight lands in the afternoon year-round—pending congressional approval. Crosby said, "I always hated changing my clock."

A home at 6608 Pine Grove Drive in Morningside recently sold for \$280,000.

Winners in the annual Gingerbread House Contest

Meghan Decker emailed the list of winners in Darnall's Chance House Museum's 2021 Gingerbread House Contest. Here's the list and the prizes.

Adult Winners: 1st place, Michelle Howell (\$100); 2nd, Ami Hazell (\$75); 3rd, Anita Guit (\$50).

Family Winners: 1st, McClain-Hosman Family (\$75); 2nd, Koneman-Moran Family (\$50); 3rd, Muldowney Family (\$25).

Child Winners: 1st, Fiona Murray (\$75); 2nd, Violet Stallings (\$50); 3rd, Saoirse Hosman (\$25).

All entries were eligible for The Viewer's Choice, awarded to one adult, one child and one family entry. Winners were selected by viewer voting.

Adult: "Extreme Mouse Takeover, Christmas Edition" by Michelle Howell (\$275).

Family: "The Heaven's Christmas Greenhouse," by the Koneman-Moran Family (\$275).

Child: "It's Christmas Thyme" by Fiona Murray (\$275).

I already look forward to this year's contest.

Remember the Goatman?

Stan Holmes emailed the legend to me—The Goatman of Prince George's County. He asked me if I remembered

See **MORNINGSIDE** Page A3

Around the County

M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George's County Announces Updated Requirements on Use of Face Masks/Coverings

RIVERDALE, Md. (March 3, 2022)—The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Department of Parks and Recreation in Prince George's County announced today that it will no longer require the use of masks inside most of its facilities. The indoor mask mandate does remain in place for all childcare facilities and programs, including Pre-school, Before Care, After Care, and Therapeutic Recreation Programs.

"Throughout the pandemic, we have monitored guidance from the CDC and followed the recommendations of our County Health Department regarding protocols for controlling the spread of COVID-19. Today is no exception," states Bill Tyler, Director of the M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation. "We are happy to lift the indoor mask requirement at most of our facilities and continue welcoming patrons back to enjoy our amenities, programs, and services."

In facilities where masks are now optional, individuals who are not fully vaccinated are encouraged to continue to wear face masks, especially where physical distancing cannot be maintained. Any individual who chooses to wear a mask, may do so without interference. In our childcare facilities and programs, patrons must continue to comply with the mask requirements. Failure to comply will result in refusal of entry into the facility or program.

The Department will continue to monitor CDC, State, and County information for relevant updates and follow preventive measures as indicated by public health agencies. For more information regarding face masks and coverings, visit <https://pgparks.com/4826/Find-COVID-19-Information>.

—Prince George's County Department of Parks and Recreation

BOE Approves \$2.6B Budget Request For Fiscal Year 2023

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (March 1, 2022)—The Prince George's County Board of Education has approved a \$2.6 billion budget request for fiscal year 2023, focusing on investments in educational and operational improvements for Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) through transformation, equity and innovation.

Chief Executive Officer Dr. Monica Goldson's revised spending plan includes a \$7.2 million decrease for both revenues and expenditures due to lower than projected state unrestricted revenue.

The budget proposal reflects Board of Education priorities, supports the Transformation 2026 strategic plan and addresses strategies for closing funding shortfalls based on the nearly 9,000-student enrollment gap.

The strategic plan includes five focus areas: Academic Innovation, Transformational Workforce, Organizational Learning Culture, Safe and Supportive Environments and Infrastructure and Operational Enhancements.

Budget priorities for the 2022–23 school year include:

- Mitigate impact of interruption of student instruction
- Maintain one-to-one student technology
- Increase substitute teacher pay rates
- Provide student mental health supports and resources
- Increase funding and staffing for school maintenance

The budget also includes the redesign of five alternative schools—Annapolis Road, Green Valley, Croom, Tall Oaks, Community Based Classroom. The redesign does not eliminate services to students, but increases services and expands the programs to include sixth through eighth grade students.

The process for developing and adopting the budget included significant public input. The Board of Education hosted three public hearings and public work sessions. An online survey was also available to solicit community input on budget priorities.

The Board of Education approved the revised proposal at its Thursday, Feb. 24 meeting. State law requires the school board to approve and transmit its FY 2023 Board of Education Annual Operating Budget Request to the County Executive by Tuesday, March 1. The Board will reconcile the budget after the County Council finalizes its appropriations.

—PGCPS

Youth@Work/Summer Youth Enrichment Program

The Youth@Work/Summer Youth Enrichment Program (SYEP) is an award-winning program through the Office of Human Resources Management that provides career readiness and summer employment opportunities to young people ages 14 to 22. Youth@Work/SYEP offers employment opportunities in Prince George's County Government, Prince George's County Public Schools, The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and over 250 non-profit and faith-based organizations, businesses, and municipalities.

In addition, the new Talent Pipeline Program was created to provide County residents ages 18 to 22 with internship opportunities in Prince George's County Government with the goal of gaining full-time employment. Check out this video featuring Youth@Work/SYEP participants describing their experience with the program.

Youth@Work/SYEP began accepting applications for this summer's program March 1. For more information or to apply, visit the Youth@Work/SYEP website: https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/4218/Summer-Youth-Enrichment-Program?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery.

—Community Connections, Feb. 28, 2022

New Graduate of Columbus State Community College

COLUMBUS, Ohio (March 3, 2022)—The following student graduated from Columbus State Community College during Autumn Semester Commencement Ceremonies held on December 17, 2021.

Laurel, MD: **Christina A Coffie**

—David Wayne, Columbus State Community College

Brandywine-Aquasco

by Audrey Johnson 301-922-5384

UPCOMING VIRTUAL JOB FAIR

Prince George's County Public Schools will have a Virtual Job Fair for School Bus Drivers March 16, 2022. Join our team of Bus Drivers. Starting pay is \$19.35–\$25.39 per hour. No experience necessary, paid/certified commercial, driver's license (CDL) Training, health insurance benefits, retirement benefits, personal and sick leave, summer opportunities.

Requirements and how to apply: You must be at least 21 years of age with a valid Driver's License to apply, at least three years driving history, communicate effectively in English. Ability to obtain a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Class A or B with passenger and school bus endorsements or Class B Learners' Permit with passenger and school bus endorsements. No more than two current points on driving record; no more than three points issued in the past 10 years. Satisfactory past driving record. Pass a DOT Physical Examination. Ability to meet special training and qualifications determined by PGCPS. Apply online for a BUS DRIVER POSITION. Bus driver position (CDL) holders: use keyword IRC170760, Temporary bus driver trainee (non-CDL): use keyword IRC170064. Recruitment-Apply Now: Immediate Openings. Questions? For more information about the hiring of school bus drivers, contact hros.transportation@pgcps.org or Nicole Eubanks at Nicole.Eubanks@pgcps.org or contact Human Resources at 301-952-6134. Contact: Prince George's County Public Schools, Sasscer Administration Building, 14201 School Lane, Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772. Telephone: 301-952-6000

BSU DANCE CONCERT

The Bowie State University Dance Concert will showcase the choreography of BSU students and faculty. Come and view our proud BSU students presenting their artistry April 8 and April 9 from 7:30 p.m.–9:30 p.m.

Location: Fine & Performing Arts Center, Main Stage Theater, 14000 Jericho Park Road, Bowie, Maryland, 20715. Contact is Jennifer Dorsey, email: jdorsey@bowiestate.edu. Categories: Fine and Performing Arts. Get to know us at 301-860-4000 or 1-877-77-Bowie. A University System of Maryland Member Institution. Contact: webmaster@bowiestate.edu.

DREAM GIRLS

R&B Hits the stage as three women move their way to the top as they tackle love, heartache, and stardom April 21, 2022. Location: Fine & Performing Arts Center, Main Stage Theater, 14000 Jericho Park Road, Bowie, Maryland 20715.

Categories: Fine and Performing Arts. Contact: Elena Velasco for more information email: evelasco@bowiestate.edu, website: <https://www.bowiestate.edu/academics/colleges/college-of-arts-and-sciences/departments/fine-and-perf> A University System of Maryland Member Institution. Contact: webmaster@bowiestate.edu

HARMONY HALL ARTS CENTER

More than a month: Commemorating 40 years of the M-NCPPC Black History Program, 1982–2022 Sunday, January 30, 2022. This program is for all ages until March 31, 2022, all day. The cost is free, the address is 10701 Livingston Road, Fort Washington, Maryland 20744.

This year's exhibition commemorates the 40th anniversary of the M-NCPPC Black History Program. Founded in 1982, the program was born out of grassroots activism as members of Prince George's County's growing Black community pushed for more research and historic site identification and preservation highlighting Black narratives within the County. In subsequent decades, the program expanded its mission from this early historic research to include historic site management and preservation, exhibition and programmatic development, and collections acquisition, all with a focus on uplifting the often-obscured history of people of African descent in Prince George's County throughout the entire year. Come out and learn about the past, present, and future of M-NCPPC's Black History program.

Guided tours of the exhibition are available for schools and community groups. Exhibition Gallery hours are Monday-Friday: 9 a.m.–5 p.m. Saturday: 10 a.m.–4 p.m. The Gallery is also open during evening performances that occur outside normal gallery hours. Contact the M-NCPPC Black History Program at Abraham Hall at 240-264-3415 or blackhistory@parks.com to schedule a tour.

BSU WORSHIP SERVICE

Bowie State University ended the CIAA Tournament week with BSU Worship Service "Returning to Our Roots" at the birthplace of Bowie State University's founding Union Baptist Church, 1219 Druid Hill Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland 21217, Sunday, February 27, 2022.

BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

Happy Birthday to Elizabeth Davis, Brewer Clark, Marquis Wallace, Shirley Brown, Dezmood Wood, Anthony Oghogho, Elena Gatling, Safiya Terry-Joseph, Brittany Baker, Denise Reid Bourne, Mildred Edwards, Vedall Grant, Lloyd Brown, Patricia Stephens, Tina Fields, Maya Stammer, Aja LayLonie, Bonnie Drotor, Shirley Jackson, Judy Jones-Terry, Amiya Knight, Shannel Noel, Daniel Jones, Daniel Glee, Niecia Tay, Amiah Knight who are celebrating birthdays in March.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

International Women's Day was celebrated Tuesday, March 8, 2022. Imagine a gender equal world. A world free of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination. A world that is diverse, equitable and inclusive. A world where difference is valued and celebrated. Together we can forge women's equality. Collectively we can all "Break the Bias."

COMMUNITY

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

Nearly two-thirds of nighttime U.S. traffic deaths immediately following St. Patrick's Day involve drunk drivers

By PRESS OFFICER WRAP

WASHINGTON (March 2, 2022)—Preparing to combat that time of year when, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, nearly two-thirds (63%) of nighttime U.S. traffic deaths involve drunk drivers,* a local nonprofit organization announced today that free safe rides will be offered to would-be drunk drivers throughout the Washington-metropolitan area during this month's St. Patrick's Day celebrations.

Offered by the nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP), the 2022 St. Patrick's Day SoberRide® program will be in operation beginning at 4 p.m. on Thursday, March 17 (St. Patrick's Day) and operate until 4 a.m. on Friday, March 18 as a way to keep local roads safe from impaired drivers during this traditionally high-risk period.

During this twelve-hour period, area residents ages 21 and older celebrating with alcohol may download the Lyft app to their phones, then enter the SoberRide® code in the app's "Payment" tab (under the "Add Lyft Pass" option) to receive their no-cost (up to \$15) safe transportation home. WRAP's 2022 St. Patrick's Day

SoberRide® promo code will be posted at 3 p.m. on Thursday, March 17 on www.SoberRide.com

"Nearly two-thirds of nighttime U.S. traffic deaths immediately following St. Patrick's Day involve drunk drivers according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration," said WRAP President Kurt Erickson.

During the 2019 St. Patrick's Day campaign (COVID-19 eliminated the 2020 campaign and limited last year's offering), nearly 700 (697) persons in the Washington-metropolitan area used WRAP's SoberRide® program rather than possibly driving home impaired—the second highest level of ridership for St. Patrick's Day in SoberRide's 31-year history. The charity also offers its SoberRide® program on Cinco de Mayo, Independence Day, Halloween and the winter holidays through and including New Year's Eve.

More information about WRAP's SoberRide® initiative can be found at www.SoberRide.com

*Source National Highway Traffic Safety Administration: https://www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov/sites/tsm.gov/files/2022-01/15488b-St.PatricksDay_BuzzedDriving_FactSheet_122221_v2_tag.docx

Blossoms from A1

with the Embassy of Japan. National Harbor has selected a special Kanzan cherry tree. They have been characterized as the "showiest" cherry trees with dramatic, deep pink blossoms.

Special Sakura Sunday festivities will be held on Sunday, April 3 and will feature free cultural activities including Japanese inspired art, music, dance, culinary delights and a Japanese market.

Art in Bloom artist Josue Martinez who has a gallery at National Harbor will update his chair in time for the festival. Last year's National Cherry Blossom Festival featured a number of artist's cherry blossom inspired chairs. National Harbor artist Martinez has updated his chair at National Harbor and will have it on display.

National Harbor's more than 200 trees are Okame cherry trees—recognizable by their masses of striking pink flowers. They are more tolerant to cold than most other types of cherry trees and are early bloomers with flowers lasting up to three weeks. They also grow about two feet a year and are very desirable

for areas that want quick, hardy, spectacular color. In a region that is known for its cherry blossom displays and celebrations, the trees at National Harbor have quickly become a large draw.

During the same timeframe, National Harbor will light up every night as The Capital Wheel and lights throughout the property turn pink in honor of the celebration.

Hotels and shops at National Harbor will have a variety of specials and displays. MGM National Harbor will have its beautiful conservatory installation that includes cherry blossoms. In the Waterfront District, shop windows will be creatively decorated to celebrate the cherry blossoms and retailers will feature a wide array of cherry blossom promotions. Some of the classes that will take place during the celebration include origami, cherry blossom painting, flower making, Japanese gardens and more.

For more information on National Harbor and cherry blossom activities and offerings, go to <https://www.nationalharbor.com/cherryblossom/>. Events and activities will be added to the schedule in the coming weeks.

Morningside from A2

it, and I do recall the spooky story.

Supposedly, it was 1970. A researcher at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center was doing experiments on goats when something went awry, turning him into a hideous creature with the upper body of a goat.

I won't say more, but you might want to go online and scare him up.

Mary's COVID report: we've finally broken a million!

Through 5 p.m. Wednesday, March 2, there have been 1,300,039 cases reported in Maryland. Of these, 405 were the last day. As for deaths, Maryland has had 14,146 COVID deaths. Eleven died the last day. It's not over.

Milestones

Happy birthday to Harold Wilson, Rebecca Turner, Marcy Richardson, Anita (Beall) Cook and Mary McHale (that's me), March 12; Pamela Woodall, Kathy Elborne, Cordelia Bland, Shirley Carruth and Gregory Ritter, March 13; my daughter Therese Gallegos and Belinda Benavidaz, March 14; Jacob Thompson, Jose Gryskewicz and Jonathan Capps, March 15; Constance Bennett and my great-grandson Riley McHale, March 16; Sharon Ryan, Helene Williams, Judy Bornman and Alysha Perez, March 18.

Happy St. Patrick's Day to all you Irish out there!

Healing in Nature: Many Grief Programs Head Outdoors for Spring

By ELYZABETH MARCUSSEN Hospice of the Chesapeake

PASADENA, Md. (March 1, 2022)—From a walk in the park to an evening watching "Encanto" under the stars, Chesapeake Life Center is offering ways for people in Anne Arundel, Charles and Prince George's counties to head outdoors to find a path to healing from loss. But if you do your healing better indoors, the center has you covered, with a schedule of spring programs to help people in the community work through their grief in ways that best meet their needs.

Grief through Expression is a writing and art workshop that uses creative expression as a way to promote healing and explore grief in a safe, supportive environment. How you choose to define grief and loss is up to you. By expressing our grief stories and sharing them, we no longer feel so alone. This workshop provides the opportunity to use therapeutic writing prompts and mixed media art to process and grow through your grief. It will be held from 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, April 2, at our Hospice of Charles County office, 2505 Davis Road in Waldorf, Maryland. The cost is \$15.

Walking through Grief offers two free opportunities to join other grievers on a peaceful spring walk. In each walk, participants will reflect on this season of new beginnings and nature's capacity to provide healing in times of grief. Choose one or both:

Quiet Waters Park, 600 Quiet Waters Park Rd., Annapolis, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday, April 23.

Lake Artemesia Natural Area, 8200 55th Ave., College Park, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Monday, June 13.

Living with Loss: In Our Dreams will explore dreams and how they impact grief. Dreaming of a departed loved one is a common conversation among grievers. Dreams can serve as a powerful tool to help navigate one's personal journey with loss. And if you haven't dreamt of a loved one, you can wonder if you still have a connection. Learn more about the role of dreams in grief in this workshop which will be held from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Monday, May 2, in our conference center on our John & Cathy Belcher Campus, 90 Ritchie Highway, Pasadena, Maryland. The cost is \$10 and includes refreshments.

Grief through Literature is a quarterly book group that uses literature to better understand loss. This quarter's group will discuss "I Keep Trying to Catch His Eye" by ESPN commentator Ivan Maisel. In this book, Maisel shares about losing his son to suicide, how men's mental health is often overlooked and learning to share his grief on his path to greater healing. The event is free and

will take place in person from 10:30 a.m. to noon Wednesday, May 11, on the John & Cathy Belcher Campus in Pasadena. Participants must provide their own book.

Nurturing the Grieving Heart through Yoga is a four-week workshop led by certified yoga instructor Cathy Rees that will be held in person on our campus in Pasadena. Participants will explore how grief shows up in your mind and body and learn breathwork, movement and meditation to help you compassionately journey through suffering toward a healing path. No experience is necessary for this gentle yoga, which will be practiced using a mat on the floor. Participants will need to bring a yoga mat, two yoga blocks and a strap. The group will meet from 6:30 to 8 p.m. on four consecutive Wednesdays, May 11 to June 1. The cost is \$40 for all four weeks.

Smash & Mend is a workshop that allows participants to engage in the cathartic process of smashing ceramics and then using the broken pieces to create something new in the form of a mosaic project. Our grief can leave us feeling shattered and broken. Through grief work and healing, after a significant loss, we begin to rebuild and redefine ourselves. This workshop will be held from 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, May 21, at our Waldorf location. The cost is \$25.

Family Movie Night is a free event that invites families to watch the popular animated film "Encanto," which tells the tale of an extraordinary family, the Madrigals, who have endured a lot of loss. We will watch the film and then talk about grief from a family perspective, exploring how people in the same family and across generations grieve. It will be held from 6 to 8 p.m., Friday, June 3, on our Pasadena campus—hopefully outdoors, but if the weather doesn't allow it, it will be held indoors. Popcorn and other refreshments will be served.

Attendance restrictions and requirements will be updated using the most recent Centers for Disease Control guidelines and organizational policies prior to each event.

Registration is required and can be completed by calling 888-501-7077 or emailing griefinfo@chesapeakehospice.org. Visit www.hospicechesapeake.org/events for a complete listing of in-person and virtual groups and workshops for adults and children.

Adult grief support programs meeting this spring

PASADENA, Md. (March 1, 2022) — Chesapeake Life Center will offer a variety of grief support groups for adults that will be meeting in person and virtually this spring.

The following grief support groups will meet in person:

Four-Week General Grief In-Person Support Group is a facilitated group offering attendees an opportunity to explore grief themes and share strategies for navigating grief in a community of trust. A four-week commitment is required. The group will meet from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays, June 7 to 28, on the John & Cathy Belcher Campus, 90 Ritchie Highway, Pasadena, Maryland.

Loss of Life Partner/Spouse Monthly Evening Group is for individuals grieving the death of a spouse or life partner. It will meet on our Pasadena campus from 6:30 to 8 p.m. on the second Wednesday of the month, April 13, May 11, and June 8.

Two groups will be meeting both in-person and virtually:

Child Loss Support Group will meet both in-person and virtually. This group is for parents who have experienced the death of a child of any age or circumstance. The group will meet on our Pasadena campus as well as via Zoom for Healthcare from 6 to 7:30 p.m. on the first Wednesday of the month, April 6, May 4, and June 1.

SoulCollage Grief Support Group has participants create a series of collages to commemorate lost loved ones and to visually journal the grief process. The group will meet from 5 to 8 p.m. Mondays, April 11, May 2, and June 6 at the nonprofit's office at 9500 Medical Center Drive, Suite 250, in Largo, Maryland, as well as via Zoom.

Attendance restrictions and requirements will be updated using the most recent Centers for Disease Control guidelines and organizational policies prior to each event. Childcare is not provided, and children are not permitted in any of these groups.

The following group will meet virtually via Zoom for Healthcare:

Loss of Life Partner/Spouse Monthly Morning Group is for individuals grieving the death of a spouse or life partner. It will meet from 10:30 a.m. to noon on the second Wednesday of the month, April 13, May 11, and June 8.

Acknowledging that not everyone has access to this technology or may not be comfortable with it, the center suggests people call or email the office and grief professionals will work with individuals to help them find other appropriate resources if needed.

Registration is required for all groups and can be completed by calling 888-501-7077 or emailing griefinfo@chesapeakehospice.org. Visit www.hospicechesapeake.org/events for a complete listing of in-person and virtual groups and workshops for adults and children.

Record-Setting 182,000+ Enroll in Coverage Through Maryland Health Connection During Open Enrollment

Uninsured Marylanders can enroll through state tax forms' easy enrollment or, if eligible, through Medicaid

By SHAREESE CHURCHILL Office of the Governor

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (March 3, 2022)—Governor Larry Hogan today announced that a record number of Marylanders enrolled for health coverage for 2022 in the annual open enrollment that just ended through Maryland Health Connection. The 182,861 enrollments marked a new record for the state-based health insurance marketplace, a 10% increase over the 2021 open enrollment total of 166,038.

"We were proud to be one of just four marketplaces that extended open enrollment in response to the Omicron surge," said Governor Hogan. "Among the many lessons of the pandemic is the importance of having affordable, reliable coverage, and Marylanders are getting covered in record numbers."

Maryland was one of four state marketplaces, along with Colorado, New York, and the District of Columbia, that extended their original open enrollment deadlines in response to the hospitalization surge driven by the Omicron variant

of COVID-19. Maryland's open enrollment was originally scheduled to run from Nov. 1, 2021 to Jan. 15, 2022, but was extended through February.

Additionally, a record was set for enrollees new to Maryland Health Connection with 47,315 new enrollments, 70% more than the 26,497 Marylanders who newly enrolled a year ago. More than 8,000 new enrollments occurred in the six weeks Maryland extended open enrollment from mid-January to the end of February.

Young adults between 18 and 34 years old also enrolled at a record pace, surpassing 50,000, or 7% above a year earlier. The gain was propelled by added financial help from a \$20 million fund that Maryland set aside to encourage more young adults to enroll, both for their own health and to help bring down the cost of coverage for all ages. That program reduced the average premium by about \$40 a month for the more than 33,000 young adults who qualified.

"We are very happy that nearly 11,000 of those young adults were new to Maryland Health Connection," said Michele

Eberle, executive director for the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange. "That achieved the state projections for the young adult subsidy pilot program that is in place for next year as well."

The young adult subsidy was on top of other new savings through the American Rescue Plan Act that covered all ages. In fact, enrollment grew by more than 60% for middle-income households (earning more than 400% of the Federal Poverty Level) now eligible for financial help to buy coverage.

Other action in recent years by state and federal officials also helped hold down prices for consumers. The Reinsurance Program that Governor Hogan and the Maryland General Assembly created four years ago with federal approval led Maryland to offer some of the least expensive plans in the nation for individuals who purchase their own coverage, according to a Kaiser Family Foundation study last fall.

Reduced rates attracted new enroll-

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COMMENTARY

Marion Wright Edelman

President Emerita,
Children's Defense Fund



ChildWatch:

Revisiting Fannie Lou Hamer

On February 22 the wonderful documentary Fannie Lou Hamer's America received its broadcast premiere on PBS. Mrs. Hamer's grandniece Monica Land, one of the film's producers, began with the idea of creating a documentary that would highlight the personal and family side of her "Aunt Fannie Lou." But as she and her colleagues started their official research they realized they were finding a treasure trove of rare photographs, news footage of public speeches, original television interviews, and recordings of Mrs. Hamer singing that hadn't been collected before and in some cases had not yet been digitized or formally preserved. The rich archival materials were a revelation and steered the project in a new direction—and the finished documentary now tells Mrs. Hamer's extraordinary life story using her own powerful voice.

The premiere was a fitting end to Black History Month and the documentary will now be rebroadcast and streamed throughout Women's History Month. It allows a new generation to hear firsthand the courageous witness and words of one of our nation's civil rights heroes and one of my own great lanterns and role models from the dog days of struggle in Mississippi. Mrs. Hamer, the twentieth child born of poor Mississippi sharecroppers, once asked her mother why they weren't white. She internalized and lived her mother's answer: "You must respect yourself as a little child, a little Black child. And as you grow older, respect yourself as a Black woman. Then one day, other people

will respect you." And we did respect Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer as a Black woman. And we loved her. I loved her.

Her indomitable spirit and self-respect famously led her to co-found the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) and challenge the discriminatory Mississippi Democratic Party's segregated slate of delegates on the floor of the 1964 Democratic Convention. Her testimony on the intimidation, arrest, and brutal jailhouse beating she had experienced trying to register to vote in Mississippi was nationally televised, despite President Lyndon Johnson's last minute attempts to push her off the air to avoid alienating white Southern voters. When potential vice presidential nominee Hubert Humphrey was ordered by President Johnson to stop "that illiterate woman" and urged Mrs. Hamer to accept an unjust compromise, offering the MFDP two at-large seats instead of the opportunity to replace the segregated delegation, she refused. She wanted to sit at the Democratic Party table and not be thrown a few Democratic Party crumbs over the side.

Mrs. Hamer had come by her early political education the long and hard way. She was 44 and working on a plantation when civil rights workers arrived in Sunflower County. Mrs. Hamer went to hear them when they spoke about voter registration, and when they asked if anyone was willing to try to register to vote, she raised her hand. Soon afterwards she led a group of volunteers from a bus into the circuit clerk's office.

The clerk told all but two to leave and only Mrs. Hamer was allowed to stay for the voter test. When she failed to interpret a section of the state constitution she was unable to register ("It was the first time I realized Mississippi had a constitution!" she said). The police arrested and fined the bus driver (allegedly because the bus was "too yellow"). When the others who had come with Mrs. Hamer became frightened, she started singing, and they managed to scramble together enough money to pay the fine so the bus driver could take them home.

When Mrs. Hamer arrived home, the owner of the plantation told her that if she wanted to stay she shouldn't try to register to vote. She answered him with her truth: "I didn't go down there to register for you. I went down to register for myself." He told her to pack her family's things and leave, and when he relented the next day, she refused his offer to allow her to return. Fearing for her safety, her husband "Pap" took her to live with relatives in another county. But she didn't stay there. Returning to town she said, "Well, killing or no killing, I'm going to stick with civil rights."

For the rest of her life, as the documentary shows, that is exactly what she did. She let nothing turn her back although as she once said, "I'm never sure anymore when I leave home whether I'll get back or not. Sometimes it seem like to tell the truth is to run the risk of being killed. But if I fall, I'll fall five feet four inches forward in the fight for freedom. I'm not backing off."

I respected and loved her for her wit that used to make us double over with laughter as she used it to teach us serious lessons about tolerance and decency towards the very whites who oppressed her when she sought the vote for Blacks and the poor. I respected and loved her for her faithful practice of the hard message of Christianity which kept us from hating when we wanted to hate. She gave everything for Jesus, freedom, and justice. I was so proud when she came to visit me in Washington to participate in the dedication of my first child Joshua Robert to God. May her spirit of grit, love, and courage infuse his life and all my and our children's lives. I still try to be half as strong and half as good as Mrs. Hamer.

Maryland Delegation Announces Over \$120 Million in American Rescue Plan Funding For WMATA

WASHINGTON (March 7, 2022)—Today, Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD-05), Senators Ben Cardin (D-MD) and Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), and Congressmen John Sarbanes (MD-03), Anthony G. Brown (MD-04), Jamie Raskin (MD-08), and David Trone (MD-06) announced \$120,145,016 in additional American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). Funding will help strengthen Metro train operations and rider safety, avoid service cuts, and increase workforce retention.

"A safe and reliable Metro system is essential for Marylanders and the region," the lawmakers said. "As we turn a page on COVID-19 and more Marylanders return to in-person work, our public transportation systems, including WMATA, must meet its daily demands. This funding will provide WMATA with the resources it needs to operate safely and efficiently for riders, and Team Maryland will continue to advocate for federal funding for the national capital's transit system."

This ARP Additional Assistance funding was made available through a discretionary process to eligible recipients or subrecipients of Urbanized Area Formula funds or Rural Area Formula funds in response to COVID-19.

The recently-enacted Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act also provides a reauthorization of dedicated, federal funding for WMATA through 2030.

Biden Administration Preps New Rules Covering Sexual Misconduct at Schools, Colleges

By MARGARET ATTRIDGE, JULIA ROSIER AND ASHKAN MOTAMEDDI
Capital News Service

WASHINGTON (March 3, 2022)—The Biden administration is expected to propose new rules this spring aimed at reversing the controversial Trump administration regulations governing the rights of those accused of sexual misconduct in colleges and schools.

Then-Education Secretary Betsy DeVos in 2017 set off a firestorm over new rules under Title IX that gave additional legal protections to accused offenders.

The Trump White House contended that colleges and universities "have often stacked the deck against the accused, failing to offer protections such as a presumption of innocence or adequate ability to rebut allegations." But critics denounced the shift, saying the new policies could lead to courtroom-like hearings where accusers could be cross-examined over their credibility. Some observers said the changes would lead to scores of lawsuits.

President Joe Biden was critical of the regulations during his presidential campaign, saying that "survivors deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, and when they step forward they should be heard, not silenced," and he promised he would put a "quick end" to it if he was elected.

Biden signed an executive order on March 8, 2021, instructing the education secretary to review existing regulations "as soon as practicable, and as appropriate and consistent with applicable law."

The Department of Education confirmed to Capital News Service that the notice is expected in the spring and "will provide the public an opportunity to comment and will precede the issuance of a final rule."

The new policies are also expected to create additional protections for LGBTQ+ students, according to Biden's executive order.

Title IX, a federal civil rights law passed in 1972, prohibits sex-based discrimination in schools or educational settings that receive funding from the federal government.

In 2018, Rep. Rosa DeLauro, D-Connecticut, was one of many members of Congress to speak out against the regulations implemented by the Trump administration, saying that DeVos was "on the side of those accused rather than the victims." DeLauro said she worried that her proposed rules would "remove policies that hold perpetrators accountable and help ensure schools are maintaining a safe environment for their students."

Four years later, DeLauro said she is looking forward to the release of new rules.

"I am encouraged by the Biden administration's plans to undo the previous administration's harmful, unjust Title IX policies," DeLauro told CNS. "Through the rulemaking process, revisions to enforcement, and updates to case processing, the Department of Education must restore critical protections for student survivors of sexual assault and sexual harassment."

Major educational organizations including the National Education Association (NEA) have spoken out against DeVos' regulations. In a 2018 statement, NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia said that the "Trump-DeVos agenda would return schools to a time when rape, assault, and harassment were swept under the rug."

Rep. Virginia Foxx, R-North Carolina, supported the Trump administration regulations. She argued in a statement a year ago that it took DeVos nearly three years to get the Title IX changes "right."

Foxx opposed Biden's executive order.

"The right to due process is bigger than partisan politics - it is a cornerstone of American democracy," the congresswoman said in a March 2021 statement. "By overturning these stakeholder-vetted,

court-supported rules, key protections for victims and the due process rights of the accused would be jeopardized."

It's On Us, a national sexual assault prevention organization, along with other similar groups, created the #EdActNow campaign to petition the Department of Education to issue proposed changes as early as October 2021, and until then, to not enforce the DeVos rule.

However, the 2020 regulations are still in place and will be in effect until new rules are passed by the Department of Education.

Tracey Vitchers, executive director of It's On Us, said she was upset when the Department of Education was not able to meet the October deadline. She told CNS she believes part of the reason lies with the Senate delaying the confirmation of Catherine Lhamon, narrowly confirmed last October as the Education Department's assistant secretary for civil rights.

Lhamon served as assistant secretary under the Obama administration and worked on guidance that created protections for transgender students in schools and set out how schools should investigate Title IX claims. These were among the guidelines repealed by the Trump administration.

Vitchers said she hopes that the Biden administration puts forward a rule that takes into consideration how traumatic sexual violence can be for survivors and that will emphasize reporting and holding accountable schools that have "a culture of violence on campus."

"I also am hopeful that them taking the amount of additional time that they have results in a stronger rule, results in a rule change that is effective, is supportive of student safety and survivor rights," she said.

Vitchers said she has seen the harm that the existing regulations have caused. She specifically highlighted "equity issues" within the reporting process, including how schools are prevented from taking anything seen as disciplinary action on students who are accused of sexual misconduct until they have gone through the full "investigative and adjudicated process."

"Student survivors on campus are like, 'Well, why is so-and-so, who we know has been accused of sexual assault, still playing the football game on Saturday?' It's because the investigation has not been completed," Vitchers said. "The coach's hands are tied because prohibiting that student from competition because of the allegations of sexual assault could be interpreted as unwarranted disciplinary action that violates the accused student's rights."

Vitchers also highlighted the inequities within the live cross-examination process at Title IX hearings that the 2020 rules laid out. Advocacy groups and individuals sued the Department of Education over the 2020 rules, claiming that the agency violated the Administrative Procedure Act and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fifth Amendment.

While the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts upheld most of the rules put in effect under DeVos, the court invalidated one part that prohibited "decision-makers in Title IX proceedings" from "considering any 'statement' from a person who did not submit to cross-examination at the live hearing."

The court called the provision "arbitrary and capricious" and underscored how respondents could schedule live hearings at inconvenient times or talk witnesses out of attending hearings and "rest easy knowing that the school could not subpoena other witnesses to appear."

As of August 24, 2021, the Department of Education has not enforced parts of the rules that the court vacated. However, all other provisions put in place by the Trump Administration remain in effect until new rules are announced.

Backers of the Trump rules are not eager to see major changes.

The 2020 regulations brought "balance to campus proceedings" by including procedural protections for accused students, according to Joe Cohn, the legislative & policy director for the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE). FIRE is a non-profit and non-partisan organization that advocates for student and faculty individual rights at colleges and universities.

"The 2020 regulations were extremely helpful...because prior to the regulations, there were minimal if any rights for accused students that were required by the federal government," Cohn told CNS. "The only way to secure particular due process proceedings was to sue after the fact when basic procedural protections were skipped."

Data on the impact of the regulations isn't widely available yet due to the COVID-19 pandemic, according to Cohn.

"For most of 2020 and 2021 schools were remote," Cohn said. "So data on decreased or increased reports is unreliable because there were too many other variables to really draw any conclusions from."

Cohn said he hopes that the new regulations will constitute modest changes.

"We're happy to work with this administration if they're really serious about having a policy that respects the rights of all students," he said. "We hope they go that route instead of deciding to just play ping pong with Title IX policy."

Vitchers said she also recognized that Title IX regulations regarding sexual assault and sexual harassment have turned into a political back-and-forth. Since 2011, the regulations have been rewritten multiple times and have generated campaign promises to undo or redo specific provisions, by the administrations of Barack Obama, Trump and now Biden.

"Sexual assault does not care if you are a Democrat or Republican...so the fact that Betsy DeVos and the Trump administration turned it into this political issue that it never should have been, was really harmful," Vitchers said. "My hope is that with the rule change, we will return to a rule that is fundamentally grounded in upholding students' civil rights and campus safety at large because that's what Title IX is about."

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BUSINESS AND FINANCE

Southern Management Honored With Inaugural Presidential Flagship Award

By LAURA CECH
University of Maryland

(March 2, 2022)—For its deep commitment to the University of Maryland community and impact on students, Southern Management Companies receive[d] the Presidential Flagship Award on March 2.

Presented by UMD President Darryll J. Pines, the annual award honors the outstanding commitment of a university partner to the continued success of the university and the growth of the Greater College Park ecosystem as an educational, research and business corridor. Today's ceremony will celebrate Southern Management and its founders who created the Southern Management Leadership Program and continue to partner with the university on paramount projects such as The Hotel at University of Maryland and its new Visitor Center for UMD's Office of Undergraduate Admissions.

"Southern Management shares our ambitious vision for the future. They have invested in our diverse student body and the Greater College Park community," said Pines. "Their impact and generosity is extraordinary and we are pleased to honor them with this award."

The Southern Management Leadership Program supports and develops students who have an interest in entrepreneurship and an enthusiasm for starting a

business venture, leading a company, or changing the world. Through mentorship, guidance, and scholarship support, the program aims to identify, encourage, and graduate ethical leaders who want to energize and give back to their local communities.

The program was founded 16 years ago by Suzanne Hillman (President and CEO of Southern Management Companies) and her late husband as a way to enrich the education of students living in and around the apartment home communities Southern owns and manages.

"We are deeply honored by this award and the recognition of our company's core value-giving back to the communities we serve," said Suzanne Hillman. "We have always been committed to being good corporate citizens where we do business and we remain absolutely dedicated to developing impactful, creative and inspiring local leaders."

Since its inception in 2006, the Southern Management Leadership Program has provided more than 500 scholarships to students at Prince George's Community College, Montgomery College, and the University of Maryland. In addition to scholarships, students receive guidance from full-time mentors at each institution. Students earn a minor in technology entrepreneurship from the A. James Clark School of Engineering while building essential profes-

sional skills and participating in community and team-building activities.

"We are truly grateful to Southern Management Companies and for the vision of the founders of the Southern Management Leadership Program for providing these incredible undergraduate student opportunities," said Associate Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Studies William A. Cohen. "The program and its students exemplify the entrepreneurial spirit of our university."

In addition to SMLP, Southern Management provides housing each year to a U.S. military veteran seeking a graduate degree at Maryland. They also participate in dozens of other local charitable efforts including providing backpacks and school supplies to local grade-school students.

The company's impact is visible all around College Park: Graduate Hills and Gardens provides housing for UMD graduate students, and two Southern Management hotels anchor downtown College Park. The Cambria Hotel, which opened in 2018, is owned and operated by Southern Management. The Hotel at the University of Maryland, a luxury property that opened in 2017, is also owned and operated by Southern Management and is home to the new Visitor Center for UMD's Office of Undergraduate Admissions.

WSSC Water Commissioners' Scholarship Now Accepting Applications

Scholarship to Award up to \$8,000 over Four Consecutive Years
Application Deadline: March 31, 2022

By LUIS MAYA
WSSC Water

LAUREL, Md. (March 2, 2022)— WSSC Water launched its 2022 Commissioners' Engineering Scholarship to attract aspiring engineers to careers in the water industry. Scholarship winners receive \$2,000 per year and up to \$8,000 over four consecutive years.

"With COVID-19 causing more Americans to question their employment choices and future career goals, we need to do all we can to help spark interest in water-sector jobs for up-and-coming engineers," said WSSC Water Commission Chair Keith E. Bell. "We are proud to offer this scholarship to current engineering students from Montgomery and Prince George's counties. With a renewed focus on fixing aging infrastructure thanks to the passage of the infrastructure bill, now is the time to deepen our bench."

The scholarship is open to students with permanent residency in Montgomery or Prince George's County who are enrolled in a full-time college or university engineering program. High school seniors already accepted into an engineering program are also eligible. The application deadline is Thursday, March 31, 2022.

Two scholarships, one from each county, of \$2,000 each may be awarded. Recipients are eligible for additional \$2,000 awards for up to four consecutive years, including post-graduate studies in engineering.

"This pandemic has shone a light on the importance of having uninterrupted access to safe drinking water, which is why building our talent pipeline through efforts like this scholarship is so crucial," said WSSC Water General Manager and CEO Carla A. Reid. "I appreciate the continued efforts by our Commissioners to fund this worthwhile program."

This year, applicants can choose one of three topics to write a 500- to 1,000-word essay:

1. WSSC Water's strategic vision is to be a world-class provider of safe, reliable water and wastewater services that protect its customers' health, safety and quality of life in Montgomery and Prince George's counties. The combination of rising sea levels and more intense rain events due to climate change presents several challenges to drinking water and wastewater utilities such as WSSC Water. Discuss in detail one of the issues WSSC Water might face and some of the methods WSSC Water can undertake to address climate change challenges to better prepare for its effect and ensure a sustainable water supply.

2. Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) and other emerging contaminants are of increasing concern for water and wastewater utilities. Many of these are found in very low quantities (parts per billion). What processes would you recommend a water and wastewater utility implement to handle PFAS or other emerging contaminants? Also,

address how the utility should fund the improvements.

3. Fresh water is a finite and vulnerable resource, essential to sustain life, development, and the environment. Ensuring equal access to adequate and affordable water for all water users (particularly marginalized) needs to be considered when planning the future of service provision. This requires bringing the greatest benefit to the most users with the available financial and water resources. Water serves diverse needs, and persons with disabilities, for example, may have underlying health conditions that make them particularly vulnerable when there is inadequate or unaffordable access to water. Discuss the relationship between natural resources and service provision and how WSSC Water can promote social inclusion while maintaining the necessary economic efficiency required to maintain its water systems now and in the future.

In addition to the essay, applicants must include an introductory video and proof of residency in WSSC Water's service district. Get complete details and application requirements at wsscwater.com/scholarship.

WSSC Water is the proud provider of safe, seamless and satisfying water services, making the essential possible every day for our neighbors in Montgomery and Prince George's counties. We work to deliver our best because it's what our customers expect and deserve.

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY SURPLUS PARCEL PURCHASE College Park Metro Station Development
College Ave., Lehigh Rd., Corporal Frank Scott Dr. & 52nd Ave.

± 2.6 ac 113,256 SF

Surface Parking Lot (Redevelopment) County Owned

Transit-oriented Development Near College Park Metro +UMD's Discovery District/Junior Tennis Champions Center

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
ISSUANCE OF RFP: Feb. 25, 2022
SITE TOUR: Mar. 11, 2022, at 1 P.M.
SUBMISSION DEADLINE: Apr. 14, 2022
AWARD: Summer 2022
THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) at <https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/807/Central-Services>.

Social Security Matters

Ask Rusty:

I'm Confused About Taking Medicare and Social Security

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

Dear Rusty: I just turned 64 and now get stuff about Medicare and Medigap and so on. I really don't know how to retire when it's time. What should I do? What am I looking for? Am I eligible for anything as of now? I'm so confused about all this that I don't even know if I can retire when it's time. Maybe I should just continue working so I don't have to try to figure this out. **Signed: Confused**

Dear Confused: Deciding when to retire from work is usually a difficult decision for everyone, so don't feel alone as you struggle with deciding what's best for you personally. I'll try to provide some insight into what you should be looking at now, at age 64:

The reason you're now getting all that unsolicited information about Medicare and "Medigap" is because you're approaching the magic age of 65, when you first become eligible for those senior healthcare services. But if you are still working and now have "creditable" healthcare coverage from your employer, you don't need to enroll in any Medicare plan until your employer coverage ends (If your employer healthcare coverage is a group plan with at least 20 participants, that coverage is "creditable"). So, if you plan to continue working and have creditable healthcare coverage, you can simply ignore all those healthcare solicitations. You don't need to worry about enrolling in Medicare until your creditable employer coverage ends, at which point you will be able to enroll in a Medicare program without incurring a late enrollment penalty.

You also do not need to apply for Social Security now (or at age 65)—you can wait until you retire from working full time to apply for Social Security. In fact, you probably should wait until you fully retire from working to claim Social Security, because at age 64 (or 65) you will be subject to Social Security's "earnings test" if you claim SS benefits. The earnings test limits how much you can earn before Social Security takes away some of your benefits and, if your earnings are high enough, it could even

disqualify you from getting SS benefits while you are still working. Social Security's earnings test applies until you reach your full retirement age, which is 66 years and 6 months. If you claim Social Security before that and exceed the annual earnings limit (\$19,560 for 2022), SS will take away benefits equal to \$1 for every \$2 you are over the limit. So, if you're working full time and plan to continue that, waiting to apply for Social Security would be prudent. Delaying Social Security would also mean a higher benefit when you later claim because your benefit will grow for as long as you delay (up to age 70). And although you will become eligible for Medicare when you turn 65, if you're still working and have creditable healthcare coverage from your employer at that time, you can defer enrolling in Medicare until your employer coverage ends.

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

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ENVIRONMENT

Commercial Developers Object to Legislation's Climate Change Costs

By STEPHEN NEUKAM
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS—The renewed effort by Maryland Democrats to push sweeping climate legislation through the General Assembly has hit one of its first major challenges, with commercial real estate representatives balking at the bill's major alterations to building efficiency standards and questioning the affordability of the proposed changes.

The Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022, the Senate version of a cross-chamber environmental legislation push, would prohibit newly-constructed buildings beginning in 2024 from using fossil fuels for heating and hot water and existing buildings over 25,000 square feet to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2040.

Representatives for the commercial real estate industry argue the new standards would be too costly for developers and that the changes are unrealistic to be accomplished on the timeline lawmakers have set.

The debate is expected to continue at a hearing Friday before the House Environment and Transportation Committee for a bill, HB831, sponsored by Del. Dana Stein, D-Baltimore County, which features many of the same building efficiency provisions.

The developers' objections illustrate the tension between what many agree is a need to act on climate change and the

cost of taking aggressive action to combat building emissions. Commercial real estate representatives argue the bill does not do enough to incentivize owners to make buildings more energy efficient.

The Senate bill, SB528, establishes a task force to provide recommendations for financial incentives for building owners to achieve incremental emission reductions.

Real estate representatives and some lawmakers say that is not good enough. They note the bill already has penalties for building owners if they do not meet the new environmental standards, but does not offer specific financial incentives to help them transition to lower carbon emissions.

Michael Powell of NAIOP Maryland, which lobbies on behalf of the commercial real estate industry, said in an interview with Capital News Service that the Senate bill should have concrete incentives for owners to reduce building emissions instead of a working group to study potential incentives.

Sen. Paul Pinsky, D-Prince George's, the lead sponsor of the bill, said in an interview he has discussed possibly adding specific financial incentives to his bill, such as tax credits, but said the working group is the more appropriate venue to consider feedback from all stakeholders about potential incentives.

Pinsky briefed the Senate Finance Committee on the bill last Friday. At the hearing, Sen. Benjamin F. Kramer, D-

Montgomery, questioned the costs and logistics of the retrofitting needed to comply with stricter energy standards.

Kramer, who owns commercial real estate buildings, said in an interview many large buildings were designed specifically to use oil and natural gas. The cost and logistical challenge of large retrofitting projects would be immense, he said.

"Where is the money going to come from?" he said. "(Lawmakers) already fight and scrap for every penny in the budget."

If specific incentives were included in the legislation, he said, they would help ease some of the concerns of the commercial real estate industry.

Michael Hindle, co-owner of the Maryland-based high performance building consulting firm Passive to Positive, does not buy the argument about the barrier of costs from the commercial real estate industry. Instead, he said in an interview real estate leaders should consider the long-term value of an investment in more efficient buildings.

Hindle agreed that retrofitting projects can prove difficult, and said allowing tax incentives could be a fair way to encourage building owners to achieve the emission cuts.

Hindle, who has worked on new construction and retrofitting projects across the country, emphasized the social cost of not taking action to tackle greenhouse gas emissions.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation touts the Philip Merrill Environmental Center as a success story in green infrastructure. Officials said the building uses 57% less energy than a standard office building, saving up to \$80,000 annually.

Building owners can reduce emissions by undertaking creative solutions that do not involve overhauling a building's structure, he said.

"The greatest obstacle to achieving this in a cost-effective way is the resistance of the developers and professionals," Hindle said. "They've got to get in the ballgame and start solving the problems."

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation, which is backing the legislation, touted its own 32,000-square-foot Maryland office in Annapolis, the Philip Merrill Environmental Center, as an example of a successful investment in green infrastructure.

The center uses 57% less energy than a comparable office building, and the organization sees an annual energy savings of between \$67,000 and \$80,000, Josh Kurtz, the executive director of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation Maryland,

said in an email.

During testimony, Kurtz said he did not have an estimate of the cost of the multiple renovation projects to the Annapolis office. He told the committee and Capital News Service that once he had an estimate, he would supply the number.

Pinsky has repeatedly said he is open to amendments to the legislation, and told Capital News Service that he would continue meeting with commercial real estate lobbyists.

Powell said conversations with lawmakers have not yielded any solutions, but industry representatives continue to air their issues with the bill.

The Philip Merrill Environmental Center is not affiliated with the Philip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland or the Capital News Service.

Earth TALK™

Too Late for Coral Reefs?

Dear EarthTalk:

How are the world's coral reefs doing these days? I haven't heard much about them lately despite all the recent talk about climate change's ill effects.

— Jo. S., Bowie, MD

Coral reefs are being hit by climate change in just about every way possible. Wildfire, drought and other land-based climate disasters have captured global headlines, but coral reefs have been bleaching at record levels, and as such their future is uncertain. The science of climate change's impact on coral reefs is simple. As humans pump greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere, the ocean acts as a carbon sink, absorbing carbon dioxide (CO₂) and dissolving it into acid. As a result, ocean acidity has increased by about 25 percent since the early 19th century, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). That acidity is incredibly harmful to coral reefs. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA), ocean acidification "decreases growth rates and structural integrity" of coral skeletons,



IMAGE CREDIT: GEORGE BECKER, PEXELS

It's going to get harder and harder to find Nemo and other clown fish as the world's living coral reefs become more and more scarce.

damaging their ability to support the diversity of life that makes up a reef ecosystem.

One of the most immediate threats to coral is ocean temperature increases. Coral reefs exist only in narrow bands of water that stay within a moderate temperature range, not too hot or cold. Even

moderate temperature increases can cause thermal stress that contributes to coral bleaching and infectious disease. The ocean has warmed 1.3 degrees (F) since the Industrial Revolution, meaning many reefs are stuck in dangerously hot water. The stress on reef creatures has been immense. When coral polyps—small, anemone-like animals that form the living base of reefs—get stressed, they expel the symbiotic algae that grows on them and provides them with nutrients. This is what's called coral bleaching. With no algae to feed coral and give it its color, the abandoned coral turns white. That doesn't necessarily mean it's dead, but with no nutrient supply its ability to grow and fight off diseases is significantly hampered.

Warming water also causes stronger and bigger storms, which can destroy entire reef systems as they pass. Hurricane Dorian hit the Bahamas in 2019 and destroyed 30 percent of the islands' coral reefs. In 2005, Hurricane Rita caused extensive damage to coral reefs in the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary off the coast of Texas. Research suggests some storms may at times be beneficial for coral reefs by lowering water temperature. The influx of cool water can reduce heat stress on polyps, according to the Reef Resilience Network. But that temporary relief isn't enough to make up for long-term warming.

As surface temperatures increase, scientists hope that coral reefs might be able to slowly move

themselves into cooler water—or that deep-water reefs already exist undiscovered. Researchers in Tahiti announced in February 2022 that they had found a nearly two-mile-long healthy coral reef in uncharacteristically deep water, leading to speculation that more deep-water reefs might exist in unexplored areas.

Still, the rate of human-caused warming far outpaces the speed at which coral reefs can move. Several start-ups and labs around the world are developing small, human-made coral systems, which could eventually be deposited in the ocean and grow into full reefs. But that technology is still a long way away. Until then, cutting emissions by driving less, using energy-efficient appliances and divesting from fossil fuel companies is the best way individuals can look out for the future of coral reefs.

CONTACTS: EPA on ocean acidification, epa.gov/ocean-acidification/understanding-science-ocean-and-coastal-acidification#ocean; NOAA, oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/coralreef-climate.html; Tahiti deep-water reef, [washingtonpost.com/world/2022/01/20/tahiti-coral-reef-discovery/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/01/20/tahiti-coral-reef-discovery/).

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GWRCCC Advocates for Increased Federal Investments in Clean Air, Renewable Energy & Jobs On Capitol Hill

By PRESS OFFICER
GWRCCC

WASHINGTON (Feb. 28, 2022)—The Greater Washington Region Clean Cities Coalition (GWRCCC), a public-private partnership of the Washington, DC Metro Area partner[ed] with Transportation Energy Partners, and other Clean Cities organizations from across the country to host virtual meetings with Members of Congress and their staff on February 28, 2022, to March 4, 2022.

Three quarters of the 20 million barrels of petroleum consumed by America each day is used for transportation. Transportation is the nation's largest source of greenhouse emissions, the largest source of local air pollution, and largest energy expense in many communities. Even though the U.S. is now the

world's largest energy producer, we remain vulnerable to the actions of foreign governments that do not share our interests.

GWRCCC calls on Congress to continue the nation's investment in clean transportation fuels and vehicles by acting immediately on the following urgent policy matters:

- Increase federal funding in FY 2023 for the Department of Energy (DOE) Clean Cities alternative fuel deployment program and the U.S. EPA Diesel Emission Reduction Grants
 - Authorize the DOE Clean Cities Program
 - Provide long term extensions and improvements in the federal tax incentives for alternative fuels, vehicles, and infrastructure
 - Preserve the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS)
- "The U.S. must dramatically

increase federal investments in alternative fuels and renewable energy programs and initiatives. The dependence on foreign petroleum leaves the country economically vulnerable, contributes to climate change, and negatively impacts health outcomes for all Americans," stated Antoine M. Thompson, GWRCCC Executive Director.

GWRCCC is a 501(c)3 nonprofit public-private partnership in the Greater Washington Region promoting the use of clean and American transportation fuels for homeland security and improved air quality. GWRCCC is one of approximately 80 coalitions around the country. GWRCCC stakeholders include government jurisdictions, the Council of Governments and regional planning authorities, trade associations, private companies and concerned citizens. Visit www.gwrccc.org.

Van Hollen, Markey, Levin, Bowman Urge EPA to Support Funding to Address Harmful Toxins in Schools

Approximately one-third of all school-aged children may be exposed to PCBs in school environments

WASHINGTON (Feb. 28, 2022)—Senators Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) and Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.) and Congressmen Andy Levin (Mich.-09) and Jamaal Bowman (N.Y.-16) sent a letter urging the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to include project funding for the testing and remediation of dangerous polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in schools and childcare facilities in its budget request for Fiscal Year 2023. According to the EPA, "PCBs have been demonstrated to cause a variety of adverse health effects," and have been linked to cancer, immune effects, and other health harms. Despite efforts by the EPA to provide best practices on how to address PCB contamination in schools from light ballasts, paint, caulk, and other sources, insufficient funding and staff levels have impeded its ability to provide individual technical assistance or grants to communities in need.

In August 2021, Senator Van Hollen joined Senators Markey and Representatives Levin and Bow-

man in introducing the Get Toxic Substances Out of Schools Act of 2021 which would remove toxic substances from school buildings across the country. Schools with large concentrations of Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and AAPI students, as well as those in high poverty areas, are contaminated with dangerous amounts of lead, asbestos, PCBs, and per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), among other harmful chemicals. The remediation of these toxics is an issue of environmental justice, which could affect nearly 100 Baltimore City Public School builds and hundreds more throughout Maryland that were built during the PCB construction era between 1950 and 1979. Additionally, PCB pollutants have been found in the Chesapeake Bay.

"As more and more communities reach out for sampling support, technical assistance in developing clean-up plans, and help to afford remediation, additional EPA resources could help support the important work that EPA regional of-

fices are already doing to protect children from PCB exposure," write the lawmakers in their letter. "We applaud the Administration's renewed focus on toxic chemical management and remediation, and look forward to collaborating further on this important issue."

In their letter, the lawmakers specifically ask that EPA request sufficient funding and staffing to help provide technical assistance in all EPA regional offices regarding PCB sampling, testing, exposure, and remediation; develop new pilot programs or grant funding for direct PCB remediation projects; and support national data collection and surveying efforts in order to better document and understand PCB exposure risks for children in schools and childcare facilities.

The letter, led by Senator Markey and Congressmen Levin and Bowman, was also signed by Senators Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.), Alex Padilla (D-Calif.), Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), and Jon Ossoff (D-Ga.).

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ments, including in communities of color that disproportionately have lacked health insurance. For 2022, Black enrollment grew by 11% to 30,776 and Hispanic enrollment grew by 14% to 20,396—both greater than the 10% growth rate as a whole.

More stable rates also strengthened the purchasing power of families: More than 18,000 Marylanders chose platinum or gold level, which costs a little more but also offers the lowest out-of-pocket deductibles.

Additional enrollment opportunities for uninsured Marylanders who did not enroll will continue this year, including the Easy Enrollment Program that allows uninsured people to get coverage if they check a box when filing their state income tax form with the Comptroller. In the past two years, seven state marketplaces—Massachusetts, Colorado, New Mexico, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and California—have followed Maryland's lead to launch or pursue their own state tax form checkoff programs.

Maryland Health Benefit Exchange will launch a similar program later this year in concert with the Maryland Department of Labor. Anyone filing for Unemployment Insurance who checks a box to state they need coverage will be able to receive immediate free help to enroll in free or low-cost coverage. Marylanders who qualify for Medicaid can enroll at any time.

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