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Community Roundtable Addresses Improving Access to Hospice Care in Prince George's County

By ELYZABETH MARCUSSEN
Hospice of the Chesapeake

LARGO, Md. (Nov. 20, 2023)—Medical professionals and elected officials gathered Nov. 9 at the Student Center at Bowie State University to participate in Hospice of the Chesapeake's community roundtable, "Hos-

pice and Palliative Care in Prince George's County."

The panel was moderated by Hospice of the Chesapeake's Director of Nursing and Clinical Advocacy Rachel Sherman, DNP, FNP-BC, who is passion-

ate about bringing health equity to the county where she grew up and calls home. Also on the panel were community professionals and leaders, including Dr. Alvin Reaves III with U.S. Acute Care Solutions; Jacqueline Hill, PhD, RN, CNE, of Bowie State University; Prince George's County District 9 Council Member Sydney Harrison; Maryland State Senator Michael Jackson; and Chaplain Robin Walker, MDiv., BCC, of the University of Maryland Capital Region Medical Center. Hospice of the Chesapeake team members speaking on the panel included Chief Medical Officer Dr. Marny Fetzer; Nurse Practitioner Ashley Kinnally; Vice President of Hospice Operations Kristin Williams; Professional Liaison Miriam Rendon-Ponce; and Bereavement Counselor Jennifer Ward.

Noting that Prince George's County residents' utilization of hospice services is one of the lowest in the state, Sherman said



Bowie, Md.—Nov. 9, 2023, at the Student Center at Bowie State University. Pictured from top left, Rachel Sherman; Council Member Sydney Harrison; Kristin Williams; Miriam Rendon-Ponce; Jennifer Ward; and Robin Walker. From bottom left, Dr. Marny Fetzer; Dr. Alvin Reaves III; State Senator Michael Jackson; Ashley Kinnally; and Jacqueline Hill

BOTH PHOTOS CREDIT ELYZABETH MARCUSSEN, HOSPICE OF THE CHESAPEAKE.

the roundtable was refreshing as it was the start of a collaboration to overcome barriers in the community. "I left Bowie State University with an overwhelming sense of pride knowing that I work for an organization that truly wants to make a difference in Prince George's County,"

Sherman said. "We had a robust discussion, and the vision is clear. Together, we are ready and willing to do the work."

The panelists addressed multiple topics including lack of awareness, cultural differences, myths and misunderstandings, religious implications, physician

engagement and educational program gaps.

Caring for life throughout the journey with illness and loss is the mission of the Hospice of the Chesapeake family. For more information, please visit www.hospicechesapeake.org.



Rachel Sherman's mentor, nursing consultant Dr. Melani Bell, DN, RN, shares a moment at the podium with the audience and panel.

Historic Laurel Park Faces Shaky Future

By ANGELIQUE GINGRAS
Capital News Service

LAUREL, Md. (Nov. 17, 2023)—Laurel Park's horse racing future hinges on a proposal to be made to the Maryland General Assembly next month that could alter Thoroughbred racing in the state as we know it.

A determination will come from the Maryland Thoroughbred Racetrack Operating Authority, a commission established by Senate Bill 720 in the 2023 legislative session, to make recommendations on the redevelopment of Laurel Park and Pimlico racecourses—the two most prominent, historic, but aging, Thoroughbred race-tracks in the state.

Chairman Greg Cross, an experienced attorney with Venable LLP appointed to the racetrack operating authority in June, said the commission is tasked with assessing the conditions of the tracks and recommending a path forward for the industry.

While the commission has not confirmed it, all signs point to a scenario that would end more than 100 years of racing in Laurel—whether it's turned into a training facility or closed as an equine center altogether.

"There has not been enough money to redevelop both tracks based upon what the legislature has authorized," Cross told Capital News Service. "The Preakness is in Baltimore and it's going to stay in Baltimore, and so we have to put ourselves in a position to be a good host to the Preakness, and then we have to figure out what money we have left and what we can do with that money most efficiently."

The state has authorized \$375 million to renovate the

race courses.

Craig Fravel, executive vice chairman of 1/ST Racing and Gaming, a division of The Stronach Group that owns Laurel Park and Pimlico, told Capital News Service, "Ultimately Laurel would be transitioning away from both racing and training in all likelihood."

Closing Laurel would end 112 years of racing history at the track, and change the course of a pastime that dates to pre-Revolutionary War days. The Maryland Jockey Club, which runs the state's Thoroughbred tracks, was founded in 1743, followed by the first official Thoroughbred horse race two years later.

Baltimore's Pimlico Race Course—the second-oldest racetrack in the nation behind Saratoga Race Course in Saratoga Springs, New York—opened in 1870 and celebrated its 148th running of the Preakness Stakes in May. The Preakness is the state's premier horse race and the second leg of the most famous Thoroughbred racing series in the U.S.—the Triple Crown.

Anne Arundel County's Laurel Park, home of the Maryland Million, debuted in 1911, followed by a number of other race courses over the years, including Bowie and Marlboro race tracks in 1914 and Rosecroft Raceway in 1949—all which have since closed. Ocean Downs, a harness track, and Timonium racecourses still run seasonal races.

But the hey-day for horse racing has long since passed.

Pimlico and Laurel Park are both well overdue for renovation. Some facilities, including the clubhouse, backstretch and



PHOTO ANGELIQUE GINGRAS/CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

Outdated facilities at Laurel Park put it at risk of change or closure when the Maryland Thoroughbred Racetrack Operating Authority reports to the Maryland General Assembly by Dec. 1.

grandstands date back to the mid-20th century. In fact, Pimlico was forced to close a portion of its grandstand weeks before the Preakness in 2019 over concerns of its deterioration. The degeneration of the tracks—not to mention the decrease in revenue amid the pandemic and the rise of online sports betting—has led to declining participation, attendance and prestige.

"With the old, dilapidated, antiquated facilities, you don't attract some of the bigger and better outfits," said Tim Keefe, president of the Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association. "It's very important for the livelihood and longevity of the sport in Maryland to upgrade its facilities."

And this isn't the first time that Maryland has considered consolidating its racing industry.

According to a 1949 Associated Press article, former Maryland governor William Preston Lane Jr. withdrew his

support of a bill to close Pimlico and move all racing days to Laurel, because there was overwhelming public support for keeping the then-79-year-old Baltimore facility running.

Fast-forward 70 years to a near-identical circumstance, when in 2019, The Stronach Group considered moving the Preakness Stakes to the Anne Arundel County site because the conditions at Pimlico were too deteriorated to continue hosting the second leg of the Triple Crown.

This, in turn, prompted the City of Baltimore to file a lawsuit against the owners, The Stronach Group and its affiliates, to obtain Pimlico through condemnation. The lawsuit was dropped in the subsequent months, and the owners reached an agreement to keep the Preakness in Baltimore.

In 2020, the Maryland Stadium Authority was brought in

See LAUREL PARK Page A4

Prince George's County Health Department Named National Diabetes Prevention Program Umbrella Hub Arrangement With 'Full Plus' Recognition

Prince George's County Health Department receives full plus recognition as National Diabetes Prevention Program Umbrella Hub Arrangement, leading the fight against diabetes with community-based partnerships

By LAUREN MOSES
Office of the Health Officer

LARGO, Md. (Nov. 27, 2023)—The Prince George's County Health Department has been chosen as the first jurisdiction in Maryland to become a National Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) Umbrella Hub Arrangement (UHA) with full recognition. This recognition will help fight diabetes in Prince George's County by connecting residents to healthcare services that offer a lifestyle change program. The Department will collaborate with several community partners to include HCD International, Vibrant Health & Wellness Foundation, Shining Lytes, Greater Baden Medical Services, CPESN Maryland, LindaBen Foundation, and Mel Johnson International, to create a successful and long-term strategy against diabetes.

"We are thrilled to become a National Diabetes Prevention Program Umbrella Hub Arrangement with 'full plus' recognition," said Matthew D. Levy, Health Officer of the Prince George's County Health Depart-

ment. "This achievement represents a big step in supporting diabetes prevention in our community. Through these partnerships with our community-based organizations, we will be able to make an impact in reducing the incidence of diabetes in Prince George's County and advancing the health and well-being of our residents."

The National DPP is an evidence-based lifestyle change program designed to prevent type 2 diabetes among prediabetic individuals. The program teaches participants strategies involving physical activity and healthy eating into their daily lives.

The UHA provides numerous benefits to improve diabetes prevention and management in the County, including support from lifestyle coaches, widespread access for Medicaid beneficiaries, community-specific services that target social determinants of health barriers, cost savings by enrolling high-use beneficiaries in the year-long National DPP,

See DIABETES Page A2

INSIDE

Governor Moore and Lieutenant Governor Miller Serve Thanksgiving Meals to Charlotte Hall Veterans Home Residents

Governor Moore and Lieutenant Governor Miller Announce Actions to Protect Maryland Roadway Workers Towns and Neighbors, Page A2

REALTORS® Host Thanksgiving Meal Give-Away Drive-by Event

Maryland Department of the Environment Honors Student Artists at "Rethink Recycling" Sculpture Contest

Community, Page A3

ChildWatch: "A Litany of Thanksgiving"

Before our meal, children read various inspirational passages and this beautiful prayer by great Black theologian Howard Thurman, A Litany of Thanksgiving.

Commentary, Page A4

Endangered Species Act at 50: Wins, Losses and Controversy

Since its inception, the endangered and threatened species list has had 117 species delisted. In the past 50 years, 32 species were delisted due to extinction.

But proving extinction is harder than it seems. Environment, Page A5

TOWNS *and* NEIGHBORS

In and Around Morningside-Skyline

With Mary McHale, will return next week!

Brandywine-Aquasco

by Audrey Johnson 301-922-5384

LET'S CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS TOGETHER

"Let's celebrate Christmas together Saturday, December 23, 2023, Pre-Christmas Eve". It is a community event. "Jesus is the Reason for the Season" at St. Philip's Episcopal Church Baden 13801 Baden Westwood Road, Brandywine, Maryland with Tyrone Johnson. We will be having Holy Eucharist Service at 10 a.m. You, Me, the Children and All. Followed by Brunch with Christmas music, family pictures, games, fun and cheer.

HOME SHOW

Suburban Maryland Home Show will be held Saturday, January 13, 2024, 10 a.m.–8 p.m., Sunday, January 14, 2024, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Show Place Arena, 14900 Pennsylvania Avenue, Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772.

The Home Show! It is everything for, in and around your home. By American Consumer Shows. The event features a wide selection of home improvement professionals in a fun interactive environment. After meeting with and comparing our expert exhibitors, we know you will be inspired and motivated to start planning with confidence. Most importantly, we want you to be excited about all the fantastic possibilities that come with our project. Free! Reserve a spot. Get your free passes on the show's website: <http://www.MDHomeShows-ap.com>.

BRANDYWINE AMERICAN LEGION POST 227

Brandywine American Legion Post 227 is located at 13505 Cherry Tree Crossing in Brandywine, Maryland and has been in the business of Veterans' Organization since 2010.

BSU 2023 MARYLAND CHARITY CAMPAIGN

The Bowie State University 2023 Maryland Charity Campaign is in full swing. The Maryland Charity Campaign is a workplace charitable giving program that offers employees and eligible retirees the opportunity to conveniently contribute to the charities they care about. The campaign officially launched on October 2, 2023, and will end on December 11, 2023. Maryland Charity Campaign (GIVE) leaves no one behind mcc.maryland.gov.

CIAA BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

Do not forget about the 2024 CIAA Basketball Tournament February 26–March 3, 2024, in Baltimore, Maryland. ciaatournament.org.

FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

Festival of Lights, Watkins Nature Center, Watkins Regional Park November to January 1, 2024. Time: 5 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Save time and money. Buy online. Cars pay \$10 with online purchases or \$15 admission at the gate. Purchase tickets online. Please note online ticket sales end daily at 4 p.m. To enhance your experience please have your printed ticket ready. Cars: \$10 online (online sale ends at 4 p.m.), \$15 at the gate Van/Sprinter (15 passengers only): \$20 Buses (over fifteen passengers) and Limos not permitted. Free admissions December 25 in appreciation to the residents of

Prince George's County for the year-round support of the Department of Parks and recreation programs. Make a difference this season and remember to donate canned goods to a local family in need.

CONGRESSMAN HOYER AND TEAM MARYLAND

Congressman Hoyer and Team Maryland welcome the FBI to Greenbelt. The GSA announced that a 61-acre site in Greenbelt, Maryland will be the new home for the FBI headquarters after scoring highest in four of five selection criteria: Greenbelt provides the lowest overall cost to taxpayers; Greenbelt is the most transit accessible site, due to its 0.1 mile walking distance to Metro and commuter rail; Greenbelt provides for a consistent and predictable construction schedule as the site is owned by a public entity and offers a clear public process and time line to achieve site control; Greenbelt offers the best opportunity for the government's investment to positively impact the region through sustainable and equitable development.

"Our work does not end today. Team Maryland is eager to do whatever we can do to ensure FBI is welcomed to Maryland as soon as possible." Congressman Hoyer. Information sent to me by Congressman Hoyer.

REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Maryland Registered Apprenticeship Program Accelerator Cyber Security Event will be held Friday, January 19, 2024, from 10 a.m.–1:30 p.m. Event is free. Mobile eTicket. Location is Bowie State University, 14000 Jericho Park Road, Bowie, Maryland 20715.

Learn about the Maryland Registered Apprentice Accelerator, in collaboration with Black Wall Street of Bowie State University, an effort supported by the Maryland Office of Apprenticeship to raise awareness about Apprenticeship opportunities for local employees.

At this event, you will hear from industry leaders using Apprenticeships, educators, and other workforce stakeholders on how RAPs can assist you in finding talent and diversifying your workforce pipeline while increasing recruitment and retention. We will also discuss state and federal funding available to offset the cost of launching RAPs and training apprentices.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH EXHIBITION

The M-NCPPC Black History Program returns to Harmony Hall Arts Center with its annual exhibition in honor of Black History Month. For over 40 years, the Black History Program has worked to preserve, honor, and celebrate Prince George's County's rich African American heritage. The annual exhibition is part of this tradition. Come out and explore stories from our county's past that highlight the challenges and triumphs of the African American community.

The exhibition is free and will be at Harmony Hall Arts Center Arts Center Saturday, January 27, 2024, from 10 a.m.–5 p.m. harmonyhallarts@pgparks.com telephone (301) 203-6070.

Diabetes from A1

and leverage technology such as the bi-directional referrals system to enroll residents for multiple prevention programs.

The UHA is recognized by the CDC for its quality assurance program, ensuring the highest standards in the delivery of the National DPP lifestyle change program. With this latest achievement, the Prince George's County Health Department is committed to advancing the health and well-being of the community and leading the fight against diabetes.

For more information about the National DPP or the UHA, visit the Prince George's County Health Department PreventionLink website at: <https://preventionlinkmd.com/>.

Around the County

M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George's County Announces The 37th Annual Winter Festival of Lights

RIVERDALE, Md. (Nov. 22, 2023)—Today, the Department of Parks and Recreation in Prince George's County announces the 2023 Winter Festival of Lights. Now in its 37th year, the festival is a staple in local holiday traditions. With more lights, displays, and entertainment, it is the biggest of its kind in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area.

Drive through three miles of whimsical lights and celebrate the magic of the season from the comfort of your vehicle. This year's spectacular drive-through event features dazzling displays with more than 2.5 million LED lights throughout the park and a giant, 54-foot LED musical tree. New this year are hayrides and horseback riding!

Hayrides—Sit cozied up with your loved ones as you ride behind a tractor through the festival. Don't forget your hats, gloves, and a blanket. Hayrides are offered every Saturday at the top of the hour. Preregistration is required.

Horseback riding—Create unforgettable memories with this unique experience as you ride through the park on sweet, well-trained horses. Afterwards, sit by our bonfire and enjoy a cup of hot cocoa if you like. Ages 12 and up. Preregistration is required.

"We know it's the holiday season when the Winter Festival of Lights begins. The Festival of Lights gets better every year. There's always something new to see," exclaims Bill Tyler, Director of the M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation. "This year we are happy to offer hayrides and horseback riding for attendees. We want to ensure the best possible experience for visitors and their families this holiday season," says Tyler.

WHAT: 37th Annual Winter Festival of Lights

WHEN: **November 24, 2023–January 1, 2024, daily from 5–9:30 p.m.**

WHERE: Watkins Regional Park, Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20774

COST: Admission fees based on vehicle type and method of payment. Online registration is encouraged. Purchase tickets in advance online and pay only \$10 for cars (\$15 standard admission). Please bring a canned good to donate to local food banks. Preregistration for hayrides and horseback riding is required, since availability is limited. Both are available through <https://www.pgparks.com/742/Festival-of-Lights>.

Bring a little twinkle to your holidays at this spectacular drive-through event. Come celebrate the season with the Department of Parks and Recreation.

Governor Moore and Lieutenant Governor Miller Serve Thanksgiving Meals to Charlotte Hall Veterans Home Residents

By PRESS OFFICER
Maryland Governor News

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (Nov. 22, 2023)—[Last Wednesday], Governor Wes Moore and Lieutenant Governor Aruna Miller visited the Charlotte Hall Veterans Home in St. Mary's County to serve Thanksgiving meals to residents. Congressman Steny Hoyer, Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Anthony Woods, and Major General Janeen L. Birchhead, Adjutant General of the Maryland National Guard, joined the governor and lieutenant governor for the visit.

"On this Thanksgiving eve, I could not be more grateful for the staff at Charlotte Hall for their caring commitment," said Gov. Moore. "To the residents who valiantly served our nation, I could not be more thankful for your service. I wish everyone a very safe, healthy, and happy holiday season."

"In this season of Thanksgiving, we are reminded of the enormous debt of gratitude we owe to our veteran communities," said Lt. Gov. Miller. "Our administration is dedicated to upholding our commitment to veterans, including to the residents

at Charlotte Hall. It was an honor to show our thanks today to those who have served our nation."

Under the leadership of Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Anthony Woods, Charlotte Hall is undergoing a transformation following a history of poor survey findings and documented instances of abuse and neglect. The facility's committed staff are continually working to develop and deliver safe, dignified, and compassionate care in a nurturing and engaging home environment for Maryland's veterans. To support

that effort, Governor Moore in March announced \$17.2 million in capital grants committed to transforming care at the Charlotte Hall Veterans Home.

"These are hard problems, but we must not lose sight of our mission. Governor Moore was elected on a creed to leave no one behind, which is a solemn pledge, a promise to take care of the men and women who bravely risked all," said Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Anthony Woods. "Our work to fulfill that oath is now underway. Our veterans deserve nothing less."



PHOTO
MARYLAND GOVERNOR'S PRESS OFFICE

Governor Moore and Lieutenant Governor Miller Announce Actions to Protect Maryland Roadway Workers

By PRESS OFFICER
Maryland Governor News

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (Nov. 17, 2023)—Today, Governor Wes Moore and Lieutenant Governor Aruna Miller announced a substantial set of recommendations to improve safety on Maryland roadways and decrease the number of crashes and fatalities in work zones. The announcements follow finalized recommendations of the Work Zone Safety Work Group, which was established by the Governor in April. Lieutenant Governor Miller served as chair.

"Our administration takes

work zone safety incredibly seriously, and our work has only just begun," said Gov. Moore. "These comprehensive recommendations led by Lieutenant Governor Miller will guide our administration as we implement an aggressive strategy to make our roads safer and protect the people who work on them—beginning with the actions we're taking today."

The Work Zone Safety Group's recommendations were developed and approved by a diverse team of highway safety experts, law enforcement, labor leaders and roadway workers. The recommendations were informed by more than 2,000

members of the public, who completed a survey and voiced what they wanted to see changed in order to make work zones safer.

"Every Maryland worker deserves to go to work and be confident that they will return home safely to their families at the end of the day," said Lt. Gov. Miller. "By increasing driver education and awareness on workzones and enhancing enforcement tactics, the finalized recommendations of the Work Zone Safety Work Group will spark a culture change around the way motorists behave when traveling through a work zone."

Upon the release of the recommendations, Governor Moore announced the State of Maryland will be taking immediate action to adopt recommendations in the report and protect roadway workers, including:

- Increasing the presence of Maryland state troopers in work zones and coordinating with local law enforcement to boost additional officer enforcement presence in work zones.
- Working with the Maryland State Department of Education to implement a new work zone safety campaign in schools.

The State of Maryland also announced \$500,000 in immediate funding for work zone safety awareness and educational campaigns.

These recommendations aim to spark a culture change among Maryland motorists through initiatives designed to increase driver education and awareness on work zones, and enhance enforcement tactics for violating traffic laws in a work zone, including:

- Updating the Maryland driver manual to educate drivers about what to do in a work zone.
- Partnering with high profile leaders in the community to

spread the message about work zone safety.

- Working to implement educational campaigns in schools—so culture change can stem from our young people.
- Increasing the number of speed cameras deployed in the state and removing antiquated technologies that prevent camera deployment.
- Raising the citation for speeding in a work zone from \$40—which is currently the lowest speed camera citation amount in the nation.

So far this year there have been more than 1,100 crashes in work zones in Maryland.

COMMUNITY

Governor Moore Announces Appointment of The Honorable Cheri Nicole Simpkins to the Prince George's County Circuit Court

By PRESS OFFICER
Maryland Governor News

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (Nov. 21, 2023)—Governor Wes Moore today announced the elevation of The Honorable Cheri Nicole Simpkins to the Prince George's County Circuit Court.

"I am proud to announce the appointment of the Honorable Cheri Nicole Simpkins to serve on the Prince George's County Circuit Court," said Gov. Moore. "She has repeatedly answered the call to serve and I am confident that she will be an inspirational leader while enhancing the lives of Prince George's County residents."

The Honorable Cheri Nicole Simpkins has served for six years as an associate judge on the District

Court for Prince George's County. She was appointed to the District Court by Governor Hogan in 2017. Prior to her appointment to the bench, she served for 15 years as a prosecutor with the Prince George's County State's Attorney's Office, ultimately serving as the Chief of the Juvenile Division. As a prosecutor she handled cases involving child sexual and physical abuse and neglect, child pornography, and sexual assault. She also handled vehicular homicides, major felonies and narcotics cases earlier in her career and worked in private practice as a family law attorney with Butler, McKee and Associates.

Simpkins received her J.D. from Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale.

Social Security Matters

Ask Rusty:

About the Fairness of "WEP" and "GPO"

By RUSSELL GLOOR,

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

Dear Rusty: I was married to my ex-husband for 30 years. For 14 of those years, I was an unemployed mom and community volunteer. After my sons were grown, I began teaching in California and earned a teacher pension. That teacher pension eliminates ALL the spousal benefits my husband paid for. How can that be justified? I, like a number of my retired friends, rent out rooms in my house to be able to live on a small teacher's pension and get none of my earned spousal benefits. **Signed: Frustrated Teacher**

Dear Frustrated Teacher: I can only say that your frustration is shared by many retirees from public service in States which do not participate in the federal Social Security program—that is, neither the employee nor the State contribute to the federal Social Security program. There are about 26 states (including California) which exempt at least some of their employees (and themselves) from paying Social Security payroll taxes, but those states are obligated to provide retirement benefits robust enough to offset the loss of Social Security benefits which will occur later in life after the employee retires. As controversial as these laws—the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO)—are, they have withstood legal challenges since they were enacted four decades ago.

Because you have a "non-covered" pension from your state employment, WEP reduces any personal Social Security retirement benefit you may have earned elsewhere and, to your specific point, the GPO has eliminated the spousal benefit you might otherwise have been entitled to from your ex-husband. Like you, many who are affected believe this to be unfair, but Congress has steadfastly failed to enact legislation to repeal these provisions, or even to soften their impact. The likely reason is that Congress has evaluated the fundamental premise of the provisions and concluded they appropriately equalize the way benefits are paid to all Social Security beneficiaries.

It might help to think of it this way: in normal circumstances, if one spouse has a personally earned Social Security retirement benefit which is more than 50% of their partner's full retirement age (FRA) amount, no spousal benefit is paid (the spouse benefit is offset by the recipient's own SS retirement benefit). The GPO (the provision which affects SS spousal and survivor benefits) applies that same logic for a spouse who has a "non-covered" pension earned outside of the Social Security program, their spousal benefit is offset by the amount of the person's own "non-covered" retirement pension. The one difference is that the GPO offset is actually a bit smaller (2/3rds of the non-covered pension vs. 100% offset for a spouse with their own SS retirement benefit).

Both WEP (which reduces SS retirement benefits) and the GPO (which reduces spousal or survivor benefits) are consequences of working for a State which has chosen to not participate in the federal Social Security program, and those states are obligated to inform their employees of those consequences. I know that doesn't make your situation any less frustrating, but Congress "justifies" these provisions as being necessary to equalize how benefits are paid to all Social Security beneficiaries. There are about 2 million beneficiaries affected by WEP and over 700,000 affected by the GPO, most of whom share your displeasure. Nevertheless, Congress has so far maintained both these provisions as originally enacted. If you wish to add your voice to those who believe WEP and GPO are unfair, you may wish to contact your federal Congressional Representatives to express that point.

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

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

REALTORS® Host Thanksgiving Meal Give-Away Drive-by Event in Partnership With Phoenix Sun's Damion Lee, The L.E.E. Way Foundation, and Wegmans

By ANIYAH WASHINGTON
PGCAR

LANDOVER, Md. (Nov. 21, 2023)—On Saturday, November 18, the Prince George's County Association of REALTORS® (PGCAR) hosted a Thanksgiving Meal Drive-By co-sponsored by Damion Lee and Michelle Riddick of The L.E.E. Way Foundation and Wegmans. Members of the Association's Community Service Committee joined volunteers from The L.E.E. Way Foundation on Friday (11/17/2023) to prepare and pack holiday food gift bags; these holiday food bags were given away to over 150 families in need at a drive-by event held at PGCAR's offices in Landover, MD.

PGCAR's Community Service Committee Vice Chair, Shameeka Price shared, "It's a whirlwind effort pulling this together through our REALTOR® committee alongside our partner volunteers. REALTORS® find great reward in giving back to the communities that we serve."

The L.E.E. Way Foundation was founded by NBA's Damion Lee of the Phoenix Suns and Michelle Riddick, the foundations' goal is "to provide a sense of community and safe environment for the youth around the world. Focusing on self-esteem, teamwork, relationship building, communication, and leadership skills. They strive to give youth an opportunity to be heard and room to grow."

The Prince George's County Association of REALTORS® is the voice for real estate in Prince George's County, Maryland, representing more than 3,500 real estate professionals in the national capital area. PGCAR is an affiliate of the Maryland and National Association of REALTORS®. We are proud to serve our members and our community and work to ensure professionalism in the industry. Our volunteers and staff work to offer services to real estate professionals and to provide avenues for our members to become more successful. We proudly work to promote and protect home ownership and private property rights.

Maryland Department of the Environment Honors Student Artists at "Rethink Recycling" Sculpture Contest

Suitland High School students win top prizes; annual awards promote recycling, creativity among students

By PRESS OFFICER
Maryland Department of the Environment

BALTIMORE (Nov. 17, 2023)—Maya Glass, a student at Jemicy School in Baltimore County, won the grand prize of a Microsoft Surface Pro 7+ Tablet and two passes to the National Aquarium at the Maryland Department of the Environment's 22nd annual "Rethink Recycling" Sculpture Contest today at Montgomery Park in Baltimore City. The winning entry, made from shoes, was entitled "Trampled."

Students from Carroll, Queen Anne's and Prince George's counties won the top prizes in four other categories. This year, 62 entries from 20 high schools were on display. The students made their sculptures from reused materials.

"These sculptures bring the benefits of recycling to life in a beautiful way," said Maryland Department of the Environment Secretary Serena McIlwain. "Waste diversion reduces the amount of material going into landfills, and that helps us reduce greenhouse gasses and fight climate change."

The category first-place winners, each of whom received Bose QuietComfort Earbuds and two passes to the National Aquarium were:

- **Creativity:** Ashlynn Kief, Manchester Valley High School, for "Lady Dale & Milkbone"
- **Workmanship:** Kyra Stefanoski, Century High School, for "Bernard the Boysenberry Octopus"
- **Use of Materials:** Lexi Harris, Kent Island High School, for "Precious Peacock"
- **People's Choice:** Samina Nelson,

Suitland High School, for "The Royal"

The second-place winners in each category, who received \$100 Amazon gift cards and two passes to the National Aquarium, were:

- **Creativity:** Samadhi Jones, Suitland High School, for "The Departure"
- **Workmanship:** Azera Graham, Suitland High School, for "Esterfester"
- **Use of Materials:** Santania Vo, Century High School, for "Tree of Life"
- **People's Choice:** Ryli Standcliff, South Carroll High School, for "CDs with a Parpoise"

To see photos of the winning entries, visit <https://www.flickr.com/photos/mdenvironment/sets/72177720312758378/with/53337290387/>

Sponsors of the event were the American Cleaning Institute, Waste Management, the Maryland Recycling Network, made+ and the National Aquarium. Sponsors donated prizes, funding and refreshments for this year's contest.

"ACI is proud to support this effort to bring greater attention to recycling," said Ana Fraisse, Manager, Sustainability Engagement at the American Cleaning Institute. "Our goals to reduce waste from cleaning product packaging won't be met without greater understanding of how to recycle, so we thank the Maryland Department of the Environment and the contest participants for their hard work in this event!"

Contest judges were: Chelsea Anspach, communications manager for the Waterfront Partnership of Baltimore; Rahne Alexander, an intermedia artist, writer and senior publicist Johns



PHOTO COURTESY MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

"The Royal" by Samina Nelson of Suitland High School, won the People's Choice award.

Hopkins University Press; and Juliet Ames, who makes jewelry and art using recycled china and glass.

Since 2001, MDE has celebrated America Recycles Day by hosting the annual "Rethink Recycling" Sculpture Contest. High school students from across Maryland are invited to participate by creating sculptures made of recycled and reusable materials. The competition is just one way MDE educates and empowers the public to reuse and recycle materials that would have otherwise gone into landfills.

To find out what you can do to reduce, reuse, recycle and buy recycled products, visit MDE's recycling webpage. The department's mission is to protect and restore the environment for the health and well-being of all Marylanders.

The Lights Are up and Washington's Downtown Holiday Market Is Open

By PARKER LEIPZIG
Capital News Service

WASHINGTON (Nov. 17, 2023)—The Downtown Holiday Market opened on Friday in the nation's capital.

Located along F Street N.W. between 7th and 9th Streets, next to the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the National Portrait Gallery, the market is celebrating its 19th year and features more than 70 vendors.

Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser joined the vendors, performers and attendees in celebration of the opening day. Shoppers were entertained by singer Jennifer Holliday, the Washington Ballet and the Washington National Opera.

Michael Berman, the operator of the Downtown Holiday Market and owner of Diverse Markets Management, said planning for the weeks-long market usu-

ally starts in April.

Berman's company also puts on the flea market at the Washington's Eastern Market and farmers markets in the city's Southwest and NoMa neighborhoods.

"So when we put out a call for small businesses and vendors to participate in this we get an international, actually, response," he told Capital News Service. "So, we have a lot to choose from, but this is such an extraordinary event and it's so busy and they are here for such a long time that it's almost like they open a little store here."

Most of the vendors offer handmade products or are representing consumer homemade products from a specific country, so tourists and Washington residents alike will find unique gifts such as crafts, art, clothing and jewelry.

The Downtown Holiday Market is unusual because of its size and how long

the market is open, Berman said.

"This is the one that has the most infrastructure built in to really put on a show and a special event. I mean, we live here for 40 days non-stop," Berman said. "So these businesses really go all out in their display and in their store that they build in the tent."

Visitors will be treated to daily performances and activities in partnership with local restaurants and museums.

The market will open daily in all weather from 12 p.m. to 8 p.m. until its closing on Dec. 23.

The market opens just ahead of DC Cocktail week, scheduled Nov. 28–Dec. 5. Presented by the Restaurant Association of Metropolitan Washington, more than 100 eateries and bars will be offering special cocktails and non-alcoholic drinks paired with food items.

COMMENTARY

Marian Wright Edelman

Founder and President Emerita,
Children's Defense Fund



ChildWatch:

“A Litany of Thanksgiving”

For many years I always cooked Thanksgiving dinner for our whole family and for friends away from their homes. Before our meal, children read various inspirational passages and this beautiful prayer by great Black theologian Howard Thurman, A Litany of Thanksgiving. After my sister Olive moved back to our hometown, we continued this tradition for many more years as we gathered to celebrate Thanksgiving with her in Bennettsville, South Carolina. She too loved this prayer, found in his book Meditations of the Heart. It is an expression of thanks for all that has sustained us in the past and for the hope and promise of tomorrow.

I share it here once again as I have over the years with its simple and profound sense of gratitude, and the eternal hope that our kind “will study war no more, that love and tenderness and all the inner graces of Almighty affection will cover the

life of the children of God as the waters cover the sea.”

Today, I make my Sacrament of Thanksgiving. I begin with the simple things of my days:
Fresh air to breathe,
Cool water to drink,
The taste of food,
The protection of houses and clothes,
The comforts of home.
For all these I make an act of Thanksgiving this day!

I bring to mind all the warmth of humankind that I have known:
My mother's arms,
The strength of my father,
The playmates of my childhood,
The wonderful stories brought to me from the lives of many who talked of days gone by when

fairies and giants and all kinds of magic held sway;
The tears I have shed, the tears I have seen;
The excitement of laughter and the twinkle in the eye with its reminder that life is good.
For all these I make an act of Thanksgiving this day.

I finger one by one the messages of hope that awaited me at the crossroads:
The smile of approval from those who held in their hands the reins of my security;
The tightening of the grip in a single handshake when I feared the step before me in the darkness;
The whisper in my heart when the temptation was fiercest and the claims of appetite were not to be denied;
The crucial word said, the simple sentence from an open page when my decision hung in the balance.
For all these I make an act of Thanksgiving this day.

I pass before me the mainsprings of my heritage:
The fruits of the labors of countless generations who lived before me, without whom my own life would have no meaning;
The seers who saw visions and dreamed dreams;
The prophets who sensed a truth greater than the mind could grasp and whose words could only find fulfillment in the years which they would never see;

The workers whose sweat has watered the trees, the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations;

The pilgrims who set their sails for lands beyond all horizons, whose courage made paths into new worlds and far-off places;

The saviors whose blood was shed with a recklessness that only a dream could inspire and God could command.

For all this I make an act of Thanksgiving this day.

I linger over the meaning of my own life and the commitment to which I give the loyalty of my heart and mind:

The little purposes in which I have shared with my loves, my desires, my gifts;

The restlessness which bottoms all I do with its stark insistence that I have never done my best, I have never reached for the highest;

The big hope that never quite deserts me, that I and my kind will study war no more, that love and tenderness and all the inner graces of Almighty affection will cover the life of the children of God as the waters cover the sea.

All these and more than mind can think and heart can feel,

I make as my sacrament of Thanksgiving to Thee,

Our Father, in humbleness of mind and simplicity of heart.

—November 22, 2023

MGM National Harbor Rings in the Holiday Season With Delightful New Winter Display

Celebrate the most wonderful time of the year with a 20-foot-tall toy snowman, 15-foot snow globe and more festive delights

By PRESS OFFICER
MGM National Harbor

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. (Nov. 22, 2023)—MGM National Harbor is capturing the magic of the holiday season with a new Conservatory display featuring enchanting snowy Christmas trees, 10,000 glittering ornaments and a colossal 20-foot-tall toy snowman. On display now through January 20, MGM National Harbor's holiday display explores the wonderment of the season with grand decor for a timeless and magical experience.

Fun facts:

- The Conservatory is comprised of nearly 1,800 poinsettias
- The centerpiece of the holiday display features a 20-foot-tall toy snowman with a little girl adding a carrot nose atop a 12-foot wooden ladder
- Nine oversized ornaments hang overhead, each featuring 10,000 small ornaments within
- Features a seven-foot-tall and 22-foot-long train with

smoke billowing from the smokestack

- A 30-foot-tall soldier on the drum stands tall in one of the beds
- A 15-foot snow globe with a Christmas village and Santa with reindeer spreads cheer
- Eight large white Christmas trees ranging from 16 feet to 25 feet tall stand throughout with gold stars atop

In addition to whimsical décor, MGM National Harbor is bringing back its popular seasonal show, Cirque Dreams Holiday, for five shows from December 15 through December 17. This family holiday spectacular will feature a world-renowned cast of performers who light up the stage, wrapping a Broadway-style musical infused with contemporary circus artistry into the ultimate holiday gift for the entire family!

Cirque Dreams Holiday Showtimes

Date: Friday, December 15
Time: 7 p.m.
Buy: Tickets are available



PHOTO COURTESY MGM NATIONAL HARBOR

MGM National Harbor's holiday display explores the wonderment of the season.

at mgmnationalharbor.com or ticketmaster.com.

Date: Saturday, December 16
Time: 12 p.m.
Buy: Tickets are available at mgmnationalharbor.com or ticketmaster.com.

Date: Sunday, December 17
Time: 12 p.m.
Buy: Tickets are available at mgmnationalharbor.com or ticketmaster.com.

Date: Saturday, December 16
Time: 4 p.m.
Buy: Tickets are available at mgmnationalharbor.com or ticketmaster.com.

Date: Saturday, December 17
Time: 4 p.m.
Buy: Tickets are available at mgmnationalharbor.com or ticketmaster.com.

Laurel Park from A1

to assess the planning, design and construction of the Laurel Park and Pimlico facilities. The Racing and Community Development Act of 2020 authorized the MSA to finance up to \$375 million to redevelop both parks—a sum equal to the original cost of moving everything to Laurel the year before.

It quickly became clear that conditions at both sites would require more than the estimates to rehabilitate, particularly with costs worsened by pandemic supply chain issues.

“We worked with the stakeholders for two and a half years, coming up with different plans that they wanted for the horse industry and Stronach,” said Gary McGuigan, executive vice president of the Stadium Authority. “We provided cost estimates for all those ideas and they all came in vastly over what the statutory limit is for the bonds.”

After two years without a shovel in the ground, new legislation was proposed in 2022. House Bill 897 required the Stadium Authority and the Maryland Economic Development Corporation to report to the Maryland General Assembly on the feasibility of renovating Laurel and Pimlico with the new cost estimates.

That's what turned the tables back on Laurel.

“The cheapest scenario was \$100 million over budget, and that was Pimlico redeveloped (to) be training and racing, and have Laurel just be a training facility,” said McGuigan. “We can't do anything unless the state authorizes some more money.”

The economic development corporation's report pushed Laurel to the edge.

Its Sept. 2022 feasibility report to the General Assembly rated components of the Laurel facility either “poor” or “bad,” including the clubhouse and grandstand roofs, HVAC, plumbing and electrical systems. The corporation determined that “the structures at Laurel do not warrant additional investment, and demolition is the next logical step.”

The racetrack operating authority has been holding frequent meetings with the state's top racing affiliates to gather recommendations for its final report. At a Sept. 29 meeting, The Stronach Group and the Maryland Jockey Club called the redevelopment of Pimlico as the future home of Maryland racing a key consideration for the Authority.

“The idea of there being one racetrack in the state of Maryland is not something that is unique or unusual,” said I/ST's Fravel at the Sept. 29 meeting of the racetrack operating authority. “Simply put, because it's so expensive to maintain these facilities and

operate them, we need to find better and more efficient models.”

Despite the mounting criticism of Laurel, the support for shifting to Pimlico isn't universal.

“The idea that Laurel won't be a part of the big picture moving forward concerns me very much,” said Keefe, of the Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association. “But change is difficult for everyone... and if the reality is that way, we have to move forward. I'm confident that in some respect we will be able to adjust.”

Outside Laurel, the panel is considering other ideas, including the renovation of the training center at the former Bowie Race Track or breaking ground on newer sites.

The racetrack operating authority's report must be submitted to the General Assembly by Dec. 1. After the recommendation is made, it will be up to the General Assembly to lay out plans for its implementation.

“I'm confident with the abilities of this racing authority that (the plan) will move forward in some way, shape or form,” said Keefe. “It wasn't going anywhere prior to the implementation of the Authority. I'm confident that it's because of the leadership with Greg Cross and the rest of the team that the governor has appointed to this authority that something will move forward.”

APEX Solar & Roofing and Former Washington WR #89 Santana Moss Team Up to Give Away a FREE ROOF to One Lucky Maryland Resident

By PRESS OFFICER
APEX Solar & Roofing

FREDERICK, Md. (Nov. 16, 2023)—APEX Solar & Roofing, a leading provider of sustainable energy solutions and roofing services in Maryland, is thrilled to announce the launch of its Free Roof Giveaway. This generous sweepstakes, open to all legal residents of Maryland within the APEX service area, reflects APEX's commitment to giving back to the community and promoting sustainable living.

As part of the giveaway, one grand prize winner will be awarded a brand-new roof featuring the cutting-edge ATLAS Roofing System with a 50-year shingle. This giveaway is a testament to APEX's dedication to quality and the company's partnership with nationally recognized manufacturers like ATLAS Roofing, who are generously supplying the materials for this year's event.

How to Enter:

Participants can enter the sweepstakes simply by following APEX Solar & Roofing on their social media platforms—Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, or TikTok—with each follow counting as one entry. The sweepstakes will run until December 31, 2023, and is open to all Maryland residents within the APEX service area aged 18 or older. The winner will be chosen randomly from the pool of entrants.

Additional Prizes:

In addition to the grand prize, four runners-up will receive a \$500 Amazon gift card, adding extra excitement to the event.

Terms and Conditions:

For a complete list of terms and conditions, please visit yourapex.com/free.

APEX Solar & Roofing is a locally owned business providing eco-friendly energy solutions and top-quality roofing services across Maryland. With a focus on sustainability and community engagement, APEX is dedicated to positively impacting the lives of Maryland residents.

The Prince George's Post

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ENVIRONMENT

Endangered Species Act at 50: Wins, Losses and Controversy

By **ABBY WALLACE**
Capital News Service

WASHINGTON (Nov. 17, 2023)—Marking its 50th anniversary this year, the federal Endangered Species Act is credited as one of U.S. history's most effective environmental conservation laws.

Created to preserve declining species populations and their native ecosystems, the law has reversed the path to extinction for 99% of species under its protection, according to the World Wide Fund for Nature.

Seventy-three species actually have come off the endangered list because of the law. The dramatic recoveries of the iconic bald eagle and the grizzly bear are perhaps two of the law's best-known victories.

But the challenge is underscored by 21 species of plants and wildlife newly classified as extinct, which includes 10 birds, eight mussels, two fish and a bat.

In addition, the Biden administration and Republicans in Congress have been wrangling over whether the law should be strengthened.

In June, the administration proposed reinstating so-called blanket protections for threatened species that had been jettisoned in 2019 under President Donald Trump with the backing of industry groups.

"These proposed revisions reaffirm our commitment to conserving America's wildlife and ensuring the Endangered Species Act works for both species and people," U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Martha Williams said in a statement.

However, this session, over three dozen bills have been introduced in Congress in what Defenders of Wildlife called "an all-out assault" on the Endangered Species Act.

"The American public, regardless of party affiliation, overwhelmingly supports the Endangered Species Act and believes it should be fully funded to protect species from extinction," Jamie Rappaport Clark, president and CEO of Defenders of Wildlife, said in a statement in September. "Congress needs to wake up to this fact and cease their continual attacks."

Rep. Bruce Westerman, R-Arkansas, has accused the Biden administration of using the Endangered Species Act as "a political battering ram."

Westerman, chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, said: "America is home to a rich diversity of species, and we have a responsibility to care for and conserve them well. Unfortunately, the Endangered Species Act is not accomplishing this goal. Radical litigants have completely overtaken this law and weaponized it to line their own pockets, not protect our most sensitive habitats and wildlife."

The Endangered Species Act was signed into law on Dec. 28, 1973, by President Richard Nixon.

"Nothing is more priceless and more worthy of preservation than the rich array of animal life with which our country has been blessed," Nixon said.

The goal of the law is "to take the necessary conservation measures and actions to recover...species so that at some point, they no longer need the protections of the Endangered Species Act and have recovered," Angela Somma, chief of the Endangered Species Division at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), told Capital News Service.

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are responsible for implementing the Endangered Species Act.

NOAA oversees most marine species such as corals, seals, whales, sharks and species that migrate between saltwater and freshwater.

The Fish and Wildlife Service oversees all freshwater and terres-



PHOTO ASHLEE HORN/MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Nicholas Coleman, left, a University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science student, and Maryland Department of Natural Resources scientist Matt Baldwin release "Igor," a tagged Atlantic sturgeon and an endangered species, into the Marshyhope Creek in September 2021. The fish has been detected every fall for the past eight years during the spawning run in the creek.

trial species, including manatees, polar bears, sea otters and sea birds.

Both agencies are responsible for species that may overlap jurisdictions, such as Gulf sturgeon, sea turtles and Atlantic salmon.

Over the past 50 years, many species have been added and removed from the endangered or threatened list. NOAA and the Fish and Wildlife Service currently list 1,344 animal species and 944 plant species as threatened or endangered.

Such designations for certain species have upset Republicans in Congress.

They passed bills that sought to keep the northern long-eared bat listed as threatened rather than endangered and to block a rule designating one population of the lesser prairie chicken as endangered and another as threatened.

Biden vetoed both measures. Regarding the bat, the president said the GOP legislation "would undermine America's proud wildlife conservation traditions and risk extinction of the species."

Biden had the same concern regarding the lesser prairie chicken, adding that blocking the rule would "risk the extinction of a once-abundant American bird, and create uncertainty for landowners and industries who have been working for years to forge the durable, locally led conservation strategies that this rule supports."

Senate and House Republicans also are sponsoring legislation to reinstate the Trump rules.

"Abandoning clear and well-functioning Trump-era reforms in favor of a one-size-fits-all mandate from disconnected Washington bureaucrats underscores just how out of touch this administration is with western priorities," said Sen. Cynthia Lumis, R-Wyoming, principal sponsor of the Senate bill.

Somma said that the decision to list a species as "endangered" or "threatened" is based on the "best available scientific and commercial data."

Under the law, a plant or animal species must meet at least one of five criteria to be classified as endangered and threatened.

The first criterion is that a species must face a "present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of its habitat or range." A common example is deforestation, which can directly or indirectly

kill species populations by degrading their habitats.

Over-harvesting or overhunting, as in the case of tigers, for example, is another way species become threatened or endangered.

Disease or predation is another route to the endangered species list. Millions of bats across North America have died due to "white-nose syndrome." According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, six species of bats have seen massive population declines due to the disease.

A species can also be listed if laws and policies do not slow its decline.

"Other natural or manmade factors" affecting the survival of a species, such as overpopulation or pollution, can qualify a species for the endangered or threatened list.

After a species is on the list, the federal agencies designate the "critical habitat" for that animal or plant.

"And those are really important areas that contain the features of habitat that a species needs that are essential to their conservation and recovery," Somma said. "(The federal agencies are) required to make sure that any action they authorize, undertake or fund does not adversely modify or destroy that critical habitat for endangered species."

Plants and animals can get off the list by recovering enough and becoming so numerous they aren't endangered. Some species are delisted because they ended up on the list in error.

And, sadly and obviously, extinction removes a species from the list.

Since its inception, the endangered and threatened species list has had 117 species delisted. In the past 50 years, 32 species were delisted due to extinction.

But proving extinction is harder than it seems.

Typically, scientists look for species that are extirpated.

Dr. Dave Secor, a professor at the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science's Chesapeake Biological Laboratory, explained: "The populations live in different areas and so a species has a broad range. But there may be many different reproducing populations within that range of species. If it goes extinct that means that all the populations are extirpated."

He added that true extinction, meaning no individuals were left within that species, is rare unless a global threat occurs. So more often than not, it is easier for scientists to claim species are extirpated in certain areas rather than absolutely extinct.

"Extinction is forever," said Matt Ashton, the Freshwater Mussel Assessment Project leader at the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. "And a lot of times you might need several decades of evidence to be built before you can really declare something truly extirpated or extinct. Just because you can't search everywhere."

He researches Maryland mussel populations, their size and structure and how viable they are. There are 16 species of mussels found in Maryland and 14 of them are considered rare, threatened or endangered, according to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

For small species like the dwarf wedgemussel, one of the greatest challenges in crafting a conservation strategy is getting an accurate read of how many individuals are left in a population, Ashton said.

Dwarf wedgemussels, which are listed as endangered, were one of the first mussel species to have an official recovery plan, he said. They are so small that they can be washed away very easily and tend to spend most of their time buried at the bottom of rivers.

"It makes them very difficult to find," Ashton said. "So we're literally, when we do work on them, we're literally searching for kind of needles in haystacks in a river."

EarthTalk® Can We Mitigate the Public Health Impacts of Climate Change?

Dear EarthTalk:
What are the major public health impacts of climate change and what's being done on the public health side to mitigate these risks?
—Jane Sherwood, Ocala, FL

Public health experts have worried about climate change for decades, but accelerated warming globally has now led to a reexamination of just how bad our greenhouse gas sins might be affecting our own health and well-being. More heat-related illnesses and infectious diseases, lower air quality, food and water insecurity, and a heightened risk of natural disasters are a few of the ways climate change is wreaking havoc on our mental and physical health.

Heat-related illnesses are a prominent concern. Rising temperatures amplify the rate and intensity of heatwaves, leading to heat exhaustion, heatstroke and aggravation of pre-existing conditions. Vulnerable people like the elderly, children and those with chronic illnesses, face heightened risks. A recent update to the Lancet Countdown, a yearly survey of climate change health impacts, found that global heat deaths could increase by 370 percent in coming years if we don't significantly rein in carbon emissions. Infectious diseases find favorable conditions to thrive and spread due to changing climate

patterns. Warmer temperatures expand the geographic range of disease-carrying insects like mosquitoes and ticks, resulting in the spread of diseases like malaria, dengue fever, Lyme disease and Zika virus. And changes in rainfall patterns and temperatures affect water and foodborne diseases, exacerbating public health risks.

Air quality worsens as climate change increases smog formation, triggers wildfires and increases pollen. These factors aggravate conditions like asthma and allergies, leading to more respiratory illnesses. Food and water insecurity arise from altered precipitation patterns impacting crop yields and water availability. Droughts, floods and extreme weather events disrupt food production, leading to malnutrition and shortages. Contaminated water sources from floods or poor sanitation lead to waterborne diseases.

Moreover, mental health is affected by the psychological toll of climate-related disasters, loss of livelihoods, displacement and a looming sense of uncertainty about the future. Anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorders are increasingly observed in affected communities.

It's important to ID links between climate change and public health, but it's another matter entirely to mitigate them. Policymakers are working on adaptive



CREDIT: PEXELS.COM

Accelerated global warming may be affecting public health in more dramatic ways than we ever imagined...

measures that seek to enhance public health systems to better cope with climate-related health challenges. These include improving disease surveillance, early warning systems for extreme weather events, and capacity building in healthcare facilities to handle increased patient loads. Meanwhile, government entities at every level need to implement climate-friendly policies and practices—heat wave preparedness plans, insect control programs, promoting sustainable practices for food and water security—in order to model good behavior for their constituencies.

Collaboration among various sectors is essential to tackling the complex intersection of climate change and public health. By implementing robust policies, fostering community resilience and

prioritizing public health in climate action plans, we can build a healthier, more resilient future.

CONTACTS: The Lancet Countdown, <https://www.the-lancet.com/countdown-health-climate>; EPA's Understanding the Connections Between Climate Change and Human Health, <https://www.epa.gov/climate-indicators/understanding-connections-between-climate-change-and-human-health>

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HOME

5 Things to Look for When Buying a New Stove

(StatePoint) Choosing the right slide-in range, (AKA "stove") is essential for any home chef, and yours should not only cater to your cooking needs, but also complement your kitchen design.

"Navigating the many slide-in range options available today can feel daunting. That's why it's important to identify your must-have features before making a purchase," says Peter Weedfald, senior vice president of sales and marketing at Sharp Home Electronics Company of America.

Not sure where to start? This range-purchasing guide offers five important factors to consider:

1. Size. A standard 30-inch slide-in range is a great option for most homes. If you're looking for more cooking surface however, scale up to a 36-inch model. There are also 24-inch options for compact kitchens. Before making any purchase, measure the space to ensure the unit will fit, and that you can open the door.

2. Cooktop Surface and Fuel Source. There are three main cooktop surfaces to choose from: gas, radiant (electric) and induction. This decision can be influenced by the power source supply in your kitchen. If you have a gas line, you could choose any of the three, as long as there is also electric connectivity. If you don't, consider a radiant or induction slide-in range. If you love the power from the open flame of a gas cooktop but desire the cooking capabilities of electric ovens, you can narrow your search to dual ovens. Helpful Hint: The cooking power measurement will indicate whether you're dealing with gas or electricity. Gas ranges use BTUs (British Thermal Units) and electric ranges measure power output in watts.

3. Capacity. The interior capacity is the space within the range's cavity. This is the oven. Knowing your cooking habits can help guide you in the right direction. While a standard slide-in range often offers enough capacity for an average-sized family, if you're prone to entertaining crowds, a larger capacity like 6.1 or 6.3 cubic feet may better suit you. If you find yourself often preparing food at two different temperatures and cooking times, a dual oven may be your best bet.

4. Finish. Whether you're curating your kitchen piece by piece or all at once, choose an exterior finish that fits your vision. Check out the oven's interior cavity as well. You can make a

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5. Oven Features. When prioritizing features, consider your cooking habits and needs. If counter space is a priority, the Sharp SSG3065JS is a family-size air fryer, so that is one less thing to take up your precious space.

The Sharp SSG3065JS has 34,500 BTUs of cooking power and a variety of cooking modes, including Pizza, Convection Bake/Roast, and Air Fry. The Sharp Slide-In Ranges SSG3065JS and SSR3065JS can help take the guesswork out of cooking meat. Both ranges have built-in precision probe thermometers that automatically turn off the oven when the internal food temperature reaches the programmed setting.

Learn more about slide-in range cooking features and design choices by visiting shop.sharppusa.com/products/ranges.

"When curating your dream kitchen, the ultimate goal is finding a range that looks great in your space and can help you bring your culinary creations to life," recommends Weedfald.

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