

# The Prince George's Post



A COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER FOR PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY SINCE 1932

Vol. 92, No. 20 May 16 — May 22, 2024

Prince George's County, Maryland

Newspaper of Record

Phone: 301-627-0900

25 cents

## Laurel High School Students Win Prince George's County 2024 Envirothon Competition!

By PRESS OFFICER  
Prince George's Soil Conservation District

BRANDYWINE, Md. (April 30, 2024)—The Prince George's Soil Conservation District (PGSCD) is pleased to announce that Laurel High School won first-place honors in the 2024 Prince George's County Envirothon Competition. Academy of Health Sciences at Prince George's Community College came in second place. The Prince George's Soil Conservation District and the William S. Schmidt Outdoor Education Center hosted the event at the Schmidt Center on April 24. Seventeen teams from eleven Prince George's County high schools were tested in five categories: aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and this year's fifth issue, "Renewable Energy for a Sustainable Future." Participating high schools were Academy of Health Sciences at Prince George's Community College, Bladensburg High School, Crossland High School, Dr. Henry

Wise High School, Fairmont Heights High School, Frederick Douglas High School, Laurel High School, Non-Traditional North Program, Oxon Hill High School and Potomac High School.

"We are extremely proud of the students who competed in the 2024 Prince George's County Envirothon competition. A special congratulations to the winning team from Laurel High School and to the runners-up from the Academy of Health Sciences," said Steven E. Darcey, PGSCD's District Manager. "This program wouldn't have been a success without the hard work and dedication of the local Envirothon coordinators, resource specialists, coaches, and sponsors. We give heartfelt thanks to everyone involved. Now, let's go win the Maryland State Envirothon!"

The event was sponsored by several organizations in addition to PGSCD and Prince



PHOTO COURTESY PRINCE GEORGE'S SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Laurel High School won first-place honors in the 2024 Prince George's County Envirothon Competition. Laurel High School will head to the State competition at Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg, June 12-13.

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PHOTO CREDIT: RHETT BUTLER / PGCEDC

PGCEDC Executive Vice President Ebony Stocks holds the check from Truist Bank.

### Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation Receives a \$25,000 Grant From Truist Bank to Support Small Businesses

PGCEDC continues its stellar track record of grant awarding to fund programs across various business industry sectors

By PRESS OFFICER  
PGCEDC

LARGO, Md. (May 9, 2024)—Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation (PGCEDC) is pleased to announce that it has received a \$25,000 grant from Truist Bank to support small businesses in Prince George's County. The grant will be used to fund the new Catalyst 360 program, which will provide support to tenants of PGCEDC's in-house incubator, Innovation Station Business Incubator (ISBI) beginning in July 2024.

In addition to the Catalyst 360 program, the grant will also be used to continue current programs like the Entrepreneurs and Experts in Residence program, which is currently facilitated within ISBI. The grant will also provide monetary awards to help ISBI's incubator business tenants, with three awards of \$1,000 each.

The successful acquisition of this grant was made possible by the dedi-

cated efforts of the PGCEDC Executive Vice President, Ebony Stocks, who led the grant team. Her instrumental role in securing funding for PGCEDC from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) is a testament to her commitment to the economic development of Prince George's County. The ARPA funding has paved the way for the Grow Prince George's umbrella of programs, which provides support for small businesses in Prince George's County by industry sector.

"We are incredibly grateful to Truist Bank for their generous grant, which will allow us to continue supporting small businesses in Prince George's County," said Ebony Stocks, Executive Vice President of PGCEDC. "The upcoming Catalyst 360 program and the Entrepreneurs and Experts in Residence program are vital resources for our incubator tenants, and this grant

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### Upper Marlboro Town Commissioner Charles Colbert Urges Prince George's County Council to Release \$2.5 Million in Capital Improvement Funding for Upper Marlboro

By RAY FELDMANN  
Town of Upper Marlboro

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (May 7, 2024)—Town of Upper Marlboro Commissioner Charles Colbert tonight formally asked the Prince George's County Council to schedule the release \$2.5 million in previously approved Redevelopment Authority funding for the town's economic development efforts.

Last Monday evening, April 29, Mayor Sarah Franklin made a similar request before the County Council during a Prince George's County FY '25 budget hearing.

Commissioner Colbert offered the following testimony before the County Council Tuesday night:

"Since 2017, the Prince George's County Capital Improvement Plan Budget has included a line item and

project page within the Redevelopment Authority's budget for \$2.5M to be allocated for redevelopment activities in the downtown corridor of the Town of Upper Marlboro. Also since 2017, that funding profile has slipped to the right each year with the passage of the annual budget and as of the current proposed budget, stands to not be initially disbursed until 2028. We request that the Council accelerate this timeline and begin appropriating the funding in FY25.

"The Town is in need of investment and support in revitalizing the downtown corridor in order to attract businesses to the community and adequately provide services for the residents within and surrounding the Town. Currently, 64% of the Town's landmass is untaxable, government owned property which hinders our ability to collect adequate revenue to fund

revitalization efforts. We are essentially providing services for a population that swells ten-fold during business hours on 40% of the potential revenue.

"However, the Town has invested significant resources and undergone a Vision Planning process for downtown redevelopment. We have engaged residents and contracted with an economic development firm to provide expert guidance on what and how we can make positive change to impact the residents not only of the Town but the greater Upper Marlboro area. That firm solicited input from residents, both in and out of Town, business and property owners, elected officials at the state and county level and anyone else who had a vested interest in the Town and was willing to provide input.

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### It's Police Recruitment Season, But Filling Vacancies Is a Struggle Across Maryland

By HENRY J. BROWN  
Capital News Service

Maryland has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country, which would typically be considered a bright spot for the state's economy. But for companies and government agencies searching for workers, Maryland's low unemployment is a problem that's leading to labor shortages.

One of the hardest hit industries is law enforcement.

As police recruitment season kicks off—it generally runs from April to June—police departments across the state are recruiting more aggressively than ever to fill patrol cars. Many are offering larger salaries and bigger signing bonuses.

"There are many occu-

pational categories that suffer worker and skill shortfalls," said Anirban Basu, chief executive of Sage Policy Group, an economic consulting firm in Baltimore. "But the most visible of these categories are public safety officials or police officers in particular," he said, adding that "there are so many other occupational categories that are actively hiring right now that naturally it is difficult for departments to recruit sufficient numbers of officers."

The shortage of police officers is most severe in Baltimore city and county.

"We're so short now, we can't be all things to all people," meaning police departments are taking officers away from paperwork and putting them on more pressing work, said Dave



PHOTO CREDIT HENRY J. BROWN/CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

BOWIE, Md. - Bowie Police Chief Dwayne Preston, in the white shirt, provides points to police officers during an exhibition game against students at Benjamin Tasker Middle School in Bowie.

Rose, president of Baltimore County Fraternal Order of Police, Lodge 4.

Currently, the depart-

ment has 235 vacant jobs

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# TOWNS and NEIGHBORS

## In & Around Morningside-Skyline

### Charles Brown, Master Optician, dies at 81

Charles Henry Brown, of Charles Brown Opticians in the medical office building on Piscataway Road across from the Clinton Post Office, died April 26 at his home in Bryantown.

He was born in Cumberland, Md., to the late Vella and Robert Brown. He graduated from Fort Hill High School, Class of 1961.

Charles was an Optician for 50 years and a Master Optician for the last 30 career years. He was a Fellow of the National Academy of Opticianry and was listed in Washington Consumer Checkbook as among the area's Best Opticians. He was a Charter Certified Optician and received many plaques for Excellence.

A Deacon at The Grace Church of Waldorf, he played guitar, sang tenor in the church choir and was a member of the Brothers in Grace Quartet. In 1994, with his wife and 10 others, he went on a mission trip to Argentina where the twelve of them built a church in twelve days.

He was the past president of the Clinton Lions Club 1984 to 1985.

He loved golf. And he learned to fly an airplane with the Flight Instruction of Bob Jeter in 1977.

Survivors include his wife of nearly 47 years, Karen H. (Ferry) Brown, daughter Lisa, sons William Walter and Andrew Walter; grandchildren and great-grands, sister Marybell and her husband Lester Elder. Memorial Service was at The Grace Church in Waldorf.

### Time for Morningside's Annual Clean-up

Morningside will have its annual Spring Clean-Up the weekend of May 18-19. As it says on the website, "It's that time of year. Let's get it done inside and out—from that overflowing closet and basement to the shed, garage, and yard."

Hours: Saturday, May 18, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Sunday, May 19, 9 a.m. to noon. Rain-dates, June 29/30.

There'll be roll-off containers for household items, yard waste and scrap metal drop off.

First Come, First Served (maximum 2 loads per household). ID required. (Re-

strictions apply: no mattresses, paint, tires, hazmat, gas-powered equipment, etc.)

Raffle & Free Bag of Mulch (while supplies last).

Senior Residents: "If you are unable to bring your items, call 301-736-2301 by Thursday, May 16 at 4:00 and let us know. A member of our Public Works team will assist you."

Also, this year, on Sunday, May 19 (rain-date, June 30), they'll host a Low-Cost Shot Clinic for cats and dogs: Rabies \$15, Distemper/Parvo \$20, Deworming \$10 & Admin. Charge \$3.00 per pet. Vet will be onsite Sunday, May 19, 9-12 noon (rain date June 30).

### More from the Town of Morningside

Monthly Work Session, May 14; monthly Town Meeting, May 21. Both start at 7 p.m.

Administrative offices will be closed Memorial Day, Monday, May 27.

Driving Suitland Road, passing Morningside? Slow down! The new speed cameras have been installed.

### Congratulations, Washington Post!

The Pulitzer Prize is regarded as the highest national honor in print journalism. It was established in 1917 from funds endowed by journalist and newspaper publisher Joseph Pulitzer. Prizes are awarded yearly in twenty-one categories. This year, The Washington Post received three awards: National reporting by the Staff of Reuters and Staff of The Washington Post, Commentary, and Editorial writing by David E. Hoffman of the Washington Post.

### Graduations

Donna Glagola Gentile, who grew up in Morningside, sent an email announcing their granddaughter Mackenzie is graduating from Cape Henlopen High School, Lewes, Delaware, on June 2. She will be attending Coastal Carolina University in the fall. Mackenzie is their daughter Lori's daughter.

Send news about the graduates in your family (muddmm@gmail.com).

### Fur & feature report

A young black bear has been seen hanging out in the Brookland neighbor of NE

Washington. The Department of Natural Resources website advises, if you come across a wild bear, "speak to it calmly in a low tone." And don't let it feel "cornered."

### Changing landscape

"La'Caj Seafood is A Cajun Latin Fusion Kitchen & Bar with the perfect balance of flavors and influence. It's the perfect place to catch a good dinner, lunch or Sunday brunch with amazing, handcrafted cocktails and a vibe like no other!" It's at 4531 Telfair Blvd. in Camp Springs. Info: (240) 838-7575.

A home at 4503 Maple Road has sold for \$300,000.

### Mary Tolson, served under five mayors

Mary Bernadette (Wise) Tolson died April 22, in Clinton. She was 81. Survivors include her children, Dana Tolson Blake and Donald G. Tolson II; grandchildren and great-grands.

She was born in Newton Grove, NC, and moved to Washington in 1958.

Mary is noted for her illustrious career which began at C&P Telephone Co. and Freedmen's Hospital. Later, she joined D.C.'s Department of Employment Services, serving under five of Washington's mayors. She was widely recognized as the go-to person in the D.C. Government.

Among her talents, she will be remembered for her love of gardening.

Mary's Mass of Christian Burial was held May 14 at St. Philip the Apostle Church in Camp Springs. Interment will be on May 17 at Our Lady of Guadalupe Cemetery in her birthplace, Newton Grove, N.C.

### Milestones

Happy Birthday to Kaylin Barbour, Otis Jones and Ellen Ashby, May 10; Jim Behr, May 20; Crystal Foster, Juanita Hood and Linda Holsonbake, May 22; Ricci Lee Jr., L. Dorothy Jones, Nancy Sawyer, Dory Babecki and Chester Lanehart IV, May 23; Edna Lucas and Harry Messer, May 24; Dennis Cook, Norma Edwards and my son John McHale, May 25.

Happy Anniversary to Dennis & Leigh D'Avanzo, their 35th, on May 20; Ronnie and Karen Ellis, their 58th on May 20; and John and Nichole Barbour, on May 25.

## Around the County

### MGM National Harbor Guest Wins \$1.259 Million at Ultimate Texas Hold'em

*Local Virginian wins large progressive payout at the table game*

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. (May 9, 2024)—A local Virginia resident hit it big this weekend at MGM National Harbor, winning a \$1.259 million progressive jackpot while playing Ultimate Texas Hold'em. The winning Royal Flush of diamonds took place on Sunday, May 5, marking one of the largest payouts ever in the United States for that specific table game.

"What an incredible moment for our guest to win this huge jackpot at MGM National Harbor," said Alex Alvarado, Vice President of Casino Operations. "As an entertainment destination, our mission is to provide a variety of options for guests to have an unforgettable experience—whether at a restaurant, a show or in the casino. We're thrilled that a local struck a big payday on one of our many table games that feature progressive jackpots."

### Local Students Named to Dean's List

COLUMBIA, Mo. (May 9, 2024)—Columbia College recently announced its dean's list for the Spring 2024 Semester (January–April 2024). To be named to the dean's list, a student must have completed 12 credit hours in a 16-week period and achieved a minimum GPA of 3.5 on a 4.0-point scale.

Students from the area who received this honor include:

Andrews Air Force Base: **Armani Williams**, MCRD San Diego - CA

Bowie: **Salamah Peake**, Online

## Social Security Matters

### Ask Rusty:

## Future Retiree Worried About Social Security's Future

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 keep reading that the SSA will only be able to pay out 75% of benefits come 2033. If congress were to do nothing and this reduction in benefits occurred, would seniors already collecting benefits in 2033 have their benefits reduced or would it only be those who have not begun to collect have their future benefits reduced? I will be collecting my benefits no later than 2027 but my wife will not reach full retirement age until 2033 and we are looking for information on whether we need to adjust savings now to account for mine or my wife's possible reduction in benefits. **Signed: Worried Senior**

**Dear Worried Senior:** If Congress does nothing to prevent Social Security's reserves from depletion, Social Security—by law—will only be able to pay out benefits equal to income, which is estimated to be about 23% to 25% short of what will be needed to pay full benefits starting in 2033. That would mean everyone who is already receiving monthly Social Security benefits would get a payment 23% to 25% less than they were previously receiving. And without reform, new beneficiaries would get benefits similarly reduced.

The action needed to prevent those cuts from happening resides with Congress, and any program reform they enact would likely only affect those who are not yet collecting. Whether or how that would affect you and your wife as future SS beneficiaries depends on the scope of reform Congress will enact which, of course, is not yet known. That uncertainty, itself, is reason enough to bolster your savings for your future retirement.

The probability of Congress allowing the Trust Funds to be depleted, thus necessitating an across the board cut in everyone's benefit is, in my opinion, slim (it would be political suicide). Congress already knows how to fix Social Security's financial woes—they just currently lack the bipartisanship and political fortitude to do so. And it's doubtful any Social Security reform will happen this election year - rather, the opposing sides will likely just sling accusations at each other in 2024. But rest assured that both sides of Congress are acutely aware that reform of the Social Security program is needed soon, and we are already seeing signs that progress on reform may be forthcoming (but not until after the 2024 elections).

Congress is notorious for waiting until the last possible moment to act, and I don't suggest you alter your Social Security claiming strategy based on the unknown. But building a bigger nest egg for retirement is always a prudent goal. Also, calling your Congressional Representative to endorse needed Social Security reform which ensures your future benefits will not be cut would be a good move.

*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 ssadviser@amacfoundation.org.*

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

## Brandywine-Aquasco

by Audrey Johnson 301-922-5384

### DOROTHEA BELT STROMAN RETIREMENT

Together let us honor and celebrate the retirement of Dorothea Belt Stroman, 38 years of Pastoral Ministry, Sunday, June 9, 2024, Clinton United Methodist Church, Worship Service 10:30 a.m. The Guest Preacher will be Pastor Tony Love, Assistant to the Bishop, Interim Pastor of St. Paul United Methodist Church, Oxon Hill, Maryland.

### GOSPEL EXTRAVAGANZA

Come out and enjoy a Gospel Extravaganza June 30, 2024, at the Willing Helpers Hall, 1002 Washington Avenue, La Plata, Maryland 20646. Outdoor event. Bring a chair. Special guest Dr. Edith Patterson and Sheriff Troy Berry. Performances by Chosen Few, Burning Light Singers, The Mighty Gospel Melodies, The New Biscoe Brothers, The Gospel Disciples, The Harmonies of Faith, Martha Scott & Sisters in Christ & More. Emcees: Chuck Farmer and Nigel Good. Tickets: \$15. Contact Evelyn Farmer-Brown 240-416-1972, Chuck Farmer 240-342-0631.

Food for Sale at 12 p.m.! Chicken & Potato Salad: \$10, Bill Farmer's Famous Fish & Fries: &10.00, Homemade Cake Slice: \$2.00, Soda & Water: \$1.00.

### MAY BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Happy Birthday to Joan Falby, Joyce Isaac, Lincoln Lucas, Janet Smalling, Nana Acheampong Akwo, Abena Acheampong, Andrea Johnson, Angela Williams, De'Andre Bowden, Theresa Joiner, Kolbi M. Dee, Agatha Jalloh, Ihuoma Mbakwe, Blair Stephens, Cameron Barron, Loki Lucas, Mia Kerrick, Carolyn Glee, Alysia Falby, Ricky Thomas, Dacinth Dorsett, Alayah Bourne, and Karen Nauman who are Clinton United Methodist Church members celebrating Birthday in May.

### MAY WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Congratulations to Valentine and Charmaine, Marcus and Nadia Long who are Clinton United Methodist Church members celebrating Wedding Anniversaries in May.

### KUDOS TO BSU ALUMNI

Shout out to Kerry J. Gilliard ('01), Music Department Chairman and Director of Instrumental Music at DuVal High School. He is bringing his talents back to Bowie State University for a free joint concert with DuVal High School Symphonic Band and the Bowie State University Symphonic Band. #BSU4LIFE.

Join the Virtual BSU Alumni community. Facebook: @BSUOAE, Instagram: @BowieAlum, : @BSUAlumniOffice. Questions? Email alumni@bowiestate.edu.

### FESTIVAL SUNDAY JAZZ BRUNCH

Join us back at MGM National Harbor Casino for the Festival Sunday Jazz Brunch and an afternoon of soul and contemporary jazz featuring sultry songstress Maysa and acclaimed singer and song writer Lindsey Webster, Sunday, July 21, 2024. General Doors- 11 a.m. Brunch served 11:30 a.m. Performances start at 1 p.m. The jazz brunch features a mimosa bar, delectable buffet, and a

fantastic afternoon of live entertainment against the backdrop of National Harbor, featuring Ladies of Jazz. Premium reserved brunch table seating is available. Get tickets now. This will be a sold out event (Please note that no tickets will be sold at the door.) Suggested Attire: Summer Casual.

Individual tickets, \$185.00 Premium Reserved Table Seat, \$165.00 General Reserved Table Seat. Advance ticket sales end Friday, July 19, 2024. The Lake Arbor Jazz Festival sells tickets online through Eventbrite exclusively. When purchasing festival tickets online, be sure to purchase only from Eventbrite through this website. Patrons attempting to enter the festival events with counterfeit tickets will be refused admission. If you suspect that a ticket is not legitimate, please notify us at [info@lakearborjazz.com](mailto:info@lakearborjazz.com) before purchasing.

MGM National Harbor Hotel & Casino-Grand Ballroom address is 101 MGM National Avenue, Oxon Hill, Maryland 20745. Proceeds from the event will benefit the Prince George's Cultural Arts Foundation Scholarship Fund. The Prince George's Cultural Arts Foundation is a 501(c), nonprofit organization.

### MAY BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Happy Birthday to Donavan Curtis, Patricia Hunt, Raven Pinkney, Deborah Proctor, Jacobi Simms, Jackie Taylor and Dayna Worthy who are members of Christ United Methodist Church in Aquasco, Maryland celebrating birthdays in May.

### MAY WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Congratulations to Mr. & Mrs. DeSales Dade, Sr., Mr. & Mrs. Charles Williams who are members of Christ United Methodist Church in Aquasco, Maryland celebrating Wedding Anniversaries in May.

### SALSA DANCING

Ready to learn some new moves or dust off your dance skills? Join us for a Latin Dance workshop, led by choreographer and dance instructor Carolina Hernandez Wednesday, May 22, 2024, 1 p.m.–2 p.m. She will take you through salsa, bachata, and merengue moves that will get your heart pumping. No experience necessary. Address is 10701 Livingston Road, Fort Washington, Maryland, 20744 Phone: (301) 203-6040.

Events Category: Arts Youth Free Youth Health & Wellness. Event Programs & Series: Harmony Halls Arts Center. May is National Physical Fitness and Sports Month.

### CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Shekinah Pearl Duffin, great niece of Raymond Porchea who graduated from Claflin University in Orangeburg, South Carolina Saturday, May 4, with a degree in Business Administration with concentration in Finance.

### NOTTINGHAM MYERS CHURCH

Prayer every Saturday at 12 p.m. on Nottingham Myers United Methodist Church grounds. The church address is 15601 Brooks Church Road, Upper Marlboro, Maryland. Rev. Shemaiah Strickland, Pastor.



# COMMUNITY

## Boot Scootin' in the DMV: Why Line Dancing Is so Popular and How to Get Started

By CAROLINE KOUTSOS  
Capital News Service

The Electric Slide, Cupid Shuffle, Cotton-Eyed Joe and Cha Cha Slide: Just a few of the most popular ways to get everyone up out of their seats and onto the dance floor at any function.

These iconic songs are also forms of line dancing, a choreographed movement with a group of people that has repeated and sequential steps.

Where did line dancing originate?

Line dancing comes from a myriad of cultures. Traditional country line dancing originated in the folk music of American settlers and was distinct among regions in the United States, according to the Grizzly Rose, a decades-old saloon and concert hall in Denver. American folk music developed into the country and Western flair we know today.

Soul line dancing is similar to country in that it is a group, choreographed dance. However, soul line dancing uses R&B, hip-hop or contemporary music, according to NPR. It has roots in African and Caribbean culture.

As music has evolved with the times, line dancing has adjusted to fit the culture and genres of the day. Today, you can look up a YouTube video and learn how to line dance to Ed Sheeran's "Shivers".

What is the experience of a beginner line dancer?

Mason Joseph, a 21-year-old who works in concrete and the carnival industry, became a frequent visitor as soon as he was legally allowed to go to the Original Cancun Cantina, a popular 21-and-over line dancing bar in Hanover, Md.

"I just remember being a kid, always driving by that road and seeing Cancun Cantina. And I always wanted to go there," Joseph said. "People say Disney's claim to fame is 'the most magical place on earth.' Well, they haven't been to Cancun Cantina."

The building, brightly adorned with a large neon sign and a longhorn skull with glowing eyes, transports you directly into what feels like a Wild West movie with a thumping bass soundtrack.

Despite falling in love with the atmosphere, Joseph was hesitant to join the dance floor at first.

"It's a little intimidating ... your first time you won't catch it right away," Joseph admitted. "Watch a YouTube video or two, maybe a TikTok ... and you'll be rolling next time you go around. Because trust me, you will be wanting to go back."

Tyler Breitschwerdt, 32-year-old manager of Cancun Cantina, said that line dancing started picking up in popularity at the bar around two years ago.

"A lot of the people that come up here, it's not even as much for the drinking or any of that," Breitschwerdt said. "It's the camaraderie, them and all their friends dancing together [and] having a hobby to do."

Want to give it a go?

Line dancing is a great way to experience a sense of community and get some exercise. Below are five places and organizations in the DMV that offer line dancing events and lessons, no matter the experience level.

**The D.C. Rawhides:** LGBTQ+ country-western style line dancing organization in the D.C. area. They teach and hold same-sex dance events. <https://dcrawhides.com/>

**LDW Studios:** This dance studio located in District Heights, Md. encourages people to "experience fun, fitness and fellowship through line dancing." They offer regular line dancing classes. <https://ldw-studios.com/>

**The Original Cancun Cantina:** A line dancing club in Hanover, Md. They have a floor for line dancing and live music featuring country, pop and hip-hop artists. <https://www.theoriginalcancuncantina.com/>

**Cowboy Coast Saloon:** The first country bar and restaurant in Ocean City, Md. Features southern-style food and a dance floor for line dancing late into the night. <https://saloon.cowboycoast.com/about-us/>

**Jessie's Soul Line Dancers:** Line dance organization that started in 1998. Based in the DMV area, this group emphasizes the fun of line dancing. <https://www.facebook.com/Jessiesoullinedancers/>

### Competition from A1

George's County Public School System (PGCPS). The program requires significant funding for instruments, transportation, and lunch, to name a few. This year's sponsors included Keep Prince George's County Beautiful, Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative (SMECO), Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission, Prince George's County Farm Bureau, Green Landing Nursery, Atwell LLC, Robin Hill Farm & Vineyard, Patuxent River 4-H Center Foundation, and the Forest Garden Club.

"We are proud that our Envirothon students are learning content and gaining skills that are essential for addressing local and global environmental issues," said Donald Belle, Environmental Outreach Educator with the Department of Environmental Education at the William S. Schmidt Center. "We want to build on their enthusiasm by providing methods from which they can address climate change and create awareness at their schools."

PGSCD and the Schmidt Center collaborated with partners from the Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission's Parks and Recreation division, Maryland's USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS), University of Maryland Extension, and Prince George's County's Department of the Environment to provide training opportunities and resources to teams and their coaches.

Envirothon Coach, Nadisha Clayton, says, "I am immensely proud of our team this year as they persevered despite facing challenges on the day of the competition. They are also mostly a new team as we bid farewell to our seniors last year. With only two returning members, both in the tenth grade, the team was able to achieve success through hard work and perseverance. The students are extremely excited and happy for the \$1500 grants awarded by PGSCD."

Laurel High School will head to the State competition at Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg, June 12-13. The Maryland State Envirothon champions will advance to the National Conservation Foundation (NCF) Envirothon competition held in July at Hobart and William Smith Colleges Geneva, New York. With more counties and states participating each year, the Envirothon competition continues to expand its reach. PGSCD remains committed to its goal to educate as many students and teachers as possible on the importance of conserving our natural resources to preserve and protect the environment. As always, we are #PrinceGeorgesProud!

## Farm-Fresh, Local Maryland Produce Available From CBF's Clagett Farm

By PRESS OFFICER  
Chesapeake Bay Foundation

There is still time for Maryland residents seeking local, healthy produce this summer to sign up for Clagett Farm's Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program.

CSA members can secure seasonal produce between May and November at convenient pick-up locations in Prince George's and Anne Arundel Counties. Seasonal harvests can include salad greens, green beans, peppers, tomatoes, and other varieties.

"Eating locally grown food is one of the most effective ways people can support local farmers and minimize their carbon footprint," said Jared Planz, program manager at Clagett Farm. "It is also delicious and healthier than what you'll find at the grocery store."

Clagett Farm, owned and operated by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, is a sus-

tainable, regenerative farm that uses best management practices to improve soil health and water quality. The farm grows produce year-round and harvests 100 percent certified organic vegetables.

Through its CSA program, Clagett Farm offers local Maryland residents a chance to pre-purchase shares of their seasonal harvest each week. CSA sales are now open for the main season.

"We've really enjoyed being a part of the CSA," said Shelby Johnson, shareholder since 2019. "It makes nourishing our family with seasonal produce super easy, but also we know and can trust where our food is coming from."

CSA members can choose from three pick-up locations where they'll retrieve their bounties each week. Locations include Clagett Farm in Upper Marlboro, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Philip Merrill Center headquarters in Annapolis, and the Vineyards at Dodon in Davidsonville. An exciting addition to this

year's program is the ability for shareholders to pre-order and pick up Clagett's grass-fed beef and lamb, in addition to their weekly produce.

Prices vary based on pick-up location and duration, but range from \$415 for 13 weeks to \$825 for the full 26 weeks. Roughly 70 percent of Clagett Farm's harvest will go to CSA shareholders, and the other 30 percent is donated to local food banks and pantries.

*The Chesapeake Bay Foundation is the largest nonprofit dedicated solely to saving the Chesapeake Bay. Part of that mission includes working with farmers and demonstrating regenerative agriculture practices, which are key to addressing climate change and reducing pollution by minimizing nutrient runoff, reducing greenhouse gases, and mitigating flooding caused by more intense storms.*

## Prince George's County Animal Shelter Is Near Critical Capacity in its Dog Population; Seeks Pet Adopters and Fosters

Waives Pet Adoptions Fees Through May 31

By PRESS OFFICER  
Prince George's County Department of the Environment

LARGO, Md. (May 9, 2024)—The Prince George's County Animal Services Facility and Adoption Center (ASFAC) will offer FREE pet adoptions starting Friday, May 10, and running through Friday, May 31, 2024. The facility is nearing capacity, and fees are being waived to help move more pets out of the facility to save lives and give dogs in their care a second chance at a forever home.

"As we continue to move hundreds of pets out of the facility monthly through our robust adoption and foster programs and support of our rescue partners, unfortunately, a larger quantity come into

our care daily," says David Fisher, Associate Director of the Animal Services Facility. "We need the community's help for these dogs in our care as we reach our capacity. We encourage anyone who loves pets to find room in their heart and home to adopt one of our many dogs. This is especially the case with our dogs that are 50+ pounds. Please remember that big dogs need love, too!"

The ASFAC, like other shelters across the nation, is dealing with a large influx of pets, especially dogs. Large and senior dogs account for many of the animals at the facility. While the facility has resumed accepting owner surrenders to serve our community, this has dramatically affected our dog population. The ASFAC stresses that the public should

only consider bringing their pets to the shelter as a last resort. If you need help keeping your pet, please contact the ASFAC to learn more about the resources available so your pet can stay in your loving home. If the pet must find a new home, they are encouraged to contact one of our County-approved rescue organizations to see if they can accept your pet or consider rehoming it with family and friends.

The ASFAC is open to the public Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m., and Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

To view the many animals available for adoption, visit [princegeorgespets4us.com](http://princegeorgespets4us.com).

## SU Delegation Receives Honorable Mention at National Model UN Conference

By PRESS OFFICER  
Salisbury University

SALISBURY, Md. (May 8, 2024)—After helping last year's cohort of Salisbury University students prepare for the national Model United Nations (UN) Conference, this year it was Erin Bindewald's turn to make the trip as part of the delegation representing Guyana.

She was one of 12 to represent SU at the event, with 10—including herself—doing so for the first time alongside two veterans. Little did she know when the conference started that she and Jacob Cudmore-Maupai, on his third Model UN appearance, would be thrown into fire when faced with an escalating situation while serving on the mock UN Security Council, representing the principal UN agency responsible for maintaining international peace and security.

"I wasn't sure what to expect," said Bindewald, a sophomore conflict analysis and dispute resolution major from Frederick, Md. "All I knew was security council is top of the top and I needed to be on my game. Even then, it was a trial by fire. I felt so vastly underprepared when I got there, but you just have to work through that. There is no point where you can stop and decide you can't do it. You just have to step up and rise to the occasion."

While serving on their committee, the pair was handed an envelope marked "Confidential." It contained a note and a tweet showing a potential invasion from their South American neighbors in Venezuela.

"We were prepared, but were not prepared for the surprise we got as it made us the center of attention for one of the busiest days of the conference and the day after," said Cudmore-Maupai, a senior international studies major from Edgewater, Md. "Once we made that



PHOTO COURTESY SALISBURY UNIVERSITY

Back row from left: Jeremy Mercado, Jacob Cudmore-Maupai, Joseph Triplett, Autumn Bryant and Nico Blom. Front row from left: Scott Stohman, Erin Bindewald, Nina Romano, Mohammad Murtaza Aqil, Thabiso Ratlou, Millie Goodwin and Anna Belong.

shift, we needed to be on it as much as we possibly could."

The two learned quickly that the five permanent members—the U.S., China, France, Russia and the United Kingdom—drive discussion within the council. Needing to get a vote from the council to amend the agenda to even discuss the impending conflict, Russia—a known ally of Venezuela—blocked the conversation.

Eventually, Russia's representatives came around and the council was able to approve a presidential and press statement that affirmed Guyana's territorial integrity and called for a diplomatic solution to the crisis.

SU's delegation of students served on multiple committees, and due to their strong work across the board, the University earned an Honorable Mention Delegation award.

Additional members of the SU delegation included Mohammad Murtaza Aqil of Salisbury; Anna Belong of Elkton, Md; Nico Blom of Silver Spring,

Md; Autumn Bryant of Spencerville, Md; Millie Goodwin of Davidsonville, Md; Jeremy Mercado of Hyattsville, Md; Thabiso Ratlou of Bethesda, Md; Nina Romano of Arnold, Md; Scott Stohman of Mt. Airy, Md; and Joseph Triplett of Millersville, Md.

Like many who participate in Model UN, Bindewald and Cudmore-Maupai hope to enter careers with international humanitarian components. The Model UN experience has reinforced those decisions.

"I think the experience really increased my passion for the whole subject of working in the UN or humanitarian assistance and anything to help people really," said Bindewald.

SU students interested in participating in future conferences may contact Dr. Eric Rittinger, chair of the Political Science Department, at [erittinger@salisbury.edu](mailto:erittinger@salisbury.edu).

Learn more about SU and opportunities to Make Tomorrow Yours at [www.salisbury.edu](http://www.salisbury.edu).



**Funding from A1**

“Last year, the Town Board of Commissioners approved the Town’s Vision Plan providing avenues for commercial revitalization, increased housing availability, and recreation. These avenues include streetscape redesign for pedestrian and vehicle safety, Main Street re-configuration, and revitalization of old and abandoned buildings for mixed use development.

“The Town shares the County’s goal of diversifying revenue streams to relieve the burden on individual taxpayers. This investment in the Town’s revitalization efforts provides a significant return to the County in helping to meet this goal and in providing revenue from previously untaxed sources.

“Releasing this funding and partnering with County agencies will allow the Town to make significant progress toward these initiatives.”

Following an exhaustive public engagement and participation process, last year The Board of Commissioners unveiled a vision plan that outlined three specific priorities: to create a vibrant downtown, a connected community, and safe place.

**Police from A1**

out of a total sworn force of 1950.

“If you’ve ever watched an Orioles game, we’ve got ‘Baltimore County is hiring’ signs everywhere,” he said.

Baltimore city, Maryland’s largest municipality, is short of nearly 600 police officers compared to its capacity of 3,100.

Baltimore increased its starting salaries to \$61,349 last July in an attempt to fill vacancies, but still has a long way to go in filling the officer void, according to the department.

Smaller cities like Ocean City are having trouble competing against larger departments for applicants.

The seaside vacation town announced earlier this year that it is ending its summer hiring program, due to the sharp decline in applicants, and will instead seek to hire more full-time officers.

In a press release on its website, the department explained that “the law enforcement career field used to be very competitive, with few vacancies. As interest in law enforcement has downshifted, most agencies are now competing against one another to fill their spots from a smaller applicant pool.”

Many states, not just Maryland, are having trouble recruiting police officers.

The job is dangerous and the image of law enforcement has been tarnished in recent years by numerous examples

across the country of police using excessive force, which in some cases have led to police being prosecuted.

“It is a difficult moment in history to be a police officer,” added Basu.

But Maryland has some unique issues. The biggest issue is salaries, which haven’t kept pace with the state’s high cost of living. For example, home prices in Maryland have risen more than 50% over the past 10 years and averaged \$473,442 in March, according to the Maryland Association of Realtors.

Police officer salaries have also risen.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median pay for police officers in Maryland was about \$76,000 in 2023, slightly ahead of the national median average of \$74,910.

But police union leaders and some politicians argue that salaries in Maryland still aren’t high enough when compared to other civil servants. Education administrators, for example, had median wages of \$125,720 in 2023.

The high cost of housing has prompted a growing number of workers to leave the state and move to less expensive areas. That out-migration includes many people who might have been attracted to police work.

“If you could find a superior employment market in the south or a less expensive cost of living, why wouldn’t one pursue that?” asks Basu.

Recruitment has also been hurt by

growing anti-police sentiment in the aftermath of several high-profile police encounters across the nation that led to protests and charges of excessive force. That includes the 2015 death of Freddie Gray Jr., a 25-year-old African American who suffered fatal injuries while under custody of Baltimore police officers, after he was apprehended for possessing a knife.

Some police officers believe that the attack on the United States Capitol in Washington, on Jan. 6, 2021, by supporters of then-President Donald Trump also turned some potential recruits away from policing.

“On (a day like) Jan. 6, officers were put in a position where their lives were at risk. I think that was an eye-opener for a lot of our candidates who were interested and backed out,” said Lt. Sean Schwartz, a hiring strategist for the police department in Bowie, the largest city in Prince George’s County.

Bowie is currently short eight cops out of a 67-officer minimum.

“We’re all hands on in putting in our effort in speaking to people...and sharing the good things about the police department,” Schwartz said.

Bowie City Councilman Michael Estéve has spent the past several years trying to lift police pay and benefits. While initial salaries aren’t as high as he would like, he notes that officers who remain on the job will do well financially in the long-term.

“The benefits accrue, so if you stay

in the profession for 25, 35 years, you can retire very comfortably,” he said.

Bowie currently offers a starting salary of \$59,020, and the department tenders signing bonuses between \$15,000 and \$20,000 depending on an officer’s prior experience level.

Meanwhile, Bowie Police Chief Dwayne Preston is scrambling to find new recruits.

“I’ve done a lot of talk shows, I’ve done a lot of advertising with social media, we’ve changed incentives and raised signing bonuses with the support of the city council and city manager to make us competitive,” he said.

The department also attends career fairs and looks for new ways to engage with younger members of the community, which it hopes will help with recruitment in the future.

One recent Saturday afternoon, a dozen Bowie police officers squared off against Benjamin Tasker Middle School’s basketball team in a friendly exhibition game. Though the edge went to the students, the mission succeeded in helping officers interact with students in a positive atmosphere.

“We start to get busy with a lot of the community events that we do throughout the spring, throughout the summer, but these are the things that are most fulfilling to us,” Preston said. “That’s one of the things that allows us...to serve this community in such a way that they feel like they appreciate it.”

# HEALTH *and* WELLNESS

## Melanoma in Darker Skin Tones: Race and Sex Play a Role, Mayo Study Finds

By PRESS OFFICER  
Mayo Clinic

ROCHESTER, Minn. (May 10, 2024)—Melanoma, an aggressive form of skin cancer that accounts for 75% of all skin-cancer-related deaths, is often detected later in people with darker skin complexions—and the consequences can be devastating, a Mayo Clinic study reveals.

While melanoma may be found less frequently in people with darker complexions than fair ones, this potentially serious form of cancer can strike anyone. The study, which consisted of 492,597 patients with melanoma, suggests that added vigilance in early screening is particularly needed for Black men, whose cancers are often found at later stages, leading to worse outcomes compared to white patients.

“We compared non-Hispanic Black patients to white patients and saw striking differences in how patients presented with the disease,” says surgical oncologist Tina Hieken, M.D., senior author of the study and a researcher at Mayo Clinic Comprehensive Cancer Center. “We saw more extremity melanoma, and more later-stage disease.”

Extremity melanoma refers to skin cancer that can develop on the arms, legs, hands and feet. Various factors, including social risk factors and biological components, could be at play, but further research is needed to help determine why these

differences exist.

### Revealing differences in sex-based immune response

The research found that Black female patients with melanoma fared better than Black male patients.

Men tended to be older at diagnosis and more likely to have cancer that had spread to their lymph nodes compared to women. This translated to worse survival rates. The researchers learned that Black men with stage 3 melanoma have only a 42% chance of surviving for five years, compared to 71% for Black women.

Most research on melanoma hasn’t focused on how race and sex affect outcomes and hasn’t looked at the influence of race and ethnicity across all groups. Dr. Hieken says the study highlights the need to understand these differences better, noting that this is the first large study to confirm that sex-based differences in melanoma outcomes exist within the non-Hispanic Black population.

“When we talk about later-stage melanoma patients who are female versus male in that non-Hispanic Black patient cohort who ended up doing worse, some biological things may be going on here that are interesting,” says Dr. Hieken.

One theory centers on variations in immune response.

“Several immune signals suggest that women may respond better to some immunotherapies than males,” says Dr. Hieken.

### Identifying the need

Researchers note that more studies focused on melanoma in a broader range of people, including more Black participants in clinical trials, is key to bridging this knowledge gap and potentially identifying more effective treatments.

“We want to broaden and deepen our reach to better understand the disease that affects all patients,” says Dr. Hieken.

She underscores the role played by the Mayo Clinic Robert D. and Patricia E. Kern Center for the Science of Health Care Delivery in this study.

“What we’ve done with the Kern Center, with this study and others, is to identify the need,” says Dr. Hieken. “We have a rich, integrated, multidisciplinary clinical research practice in melanoma, and we want to address clinical needs and knowledge gaps relevant to our practice.”

### A wake-up call in the battle against melanoma

Dr. Hieken notes that this study is a wake-up call for everyone battling to diagnose and cure melanoma, regardless of the patient’s sex or skin tone.

She emphasizes that healthcare professionals should carefully examine areas like palms, soles and under fingernails, where melanoma might be more challenging to spot on darker skin.

“We can incorporate screening for skin lesions or lesions under the nails into the visit for patients as part of their regular checkups,” says Dr. Hieken.

“What we want to do is elevate care for our patients.”

The Mayo Clinic Robert D. and Patricia E. Kern Center for the Science of Health Care Delivery and Breast and Melanoma Surgical Oncology in the Department of Surgery supported this research.

Review the study (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/38436625/#:~:text=Conclusions%3A%20NHB%20melanoma%20patients%20presented,and%20treatment%20may%20improve%20outcomes>) for a complete list of authors, disclosures and funding.

*The Mayo Clinic Robert D. and Patricia E. Kern Center for the Science of Health Care Delivery collaborates with clinical areas across Mayo to create and evaluate data-driven solutions to transform the experience of health and healthcare for patients, staff, and communities. It drives continuous improvement of Mayo Clinic as a learning health system, enabling always safe, evidence-based, high-quality care.*

*Designated as a comprehensive cancer center by the National Cancer Institute, Mayo Clinic Comprehensive Cancer Center is defining new boundaries in possibility, focusing on patient-centered care, developing novel treatments, training future generations of cancer experts and bringing cancer research to communities. At Mayo Clinic Comprehensive Cancer Center, a culture of innovation and collaboration is driving research breakthroughs that are changing approaches to cancer prevention, screening and treatment, and improving the lives of cancer survivors.*

## Pneumococcal Pneumonia Vaccination Can Save Your Life

(StatePoint) Pneumococcal pneumonia is a potentially serious bacterial lung disease that can disrupt a person’s life for weeks. When severe, it can result in hospitalization and even be life threatening. Each year, pneumococcal pneumonia results in an estimated 150,000 hospitalizations in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). But it doesn’t have to be this way.

The American Lung Association and Pfizer are partnering to raise awareness about pneumococcal pneumonia and encourage adults to get vaccinated if they are eligible, and are highlighting the collective action needed to reduce the burden of pneumococcal pneumonia.

Here are some fast facts about the disease, along with tips and actions you can take to help stay healthy:

### What are the symptoms of pneumococcal pneumonia?

Common symptoms of pneumococcal pneumonia include high fever, excessive sweating, shaking chills, coughing, difficulty breathing, shortness of breath, and chest pain. Some symptoms can appear quickly and without warning.

### Should I receive a pneumococcal pneumonia vaccination?

Pneumococcal pneumonia vaccines are available to help prevent the disease and are recommended if you are at increased risk. The CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends pneumococcal vaccination for all adults aged 65 years or older and adults aged 19 to 64 with certain underlying medical conditions or other risk factors, including: chronic lung disease like asthma or COPD, chronic heart disease, diabetes, and smoking cigarettes.

### What if I am healthy?

Even healthy adults 65 years or older are at increased risk for pneumococcal pneumonia. Because the body’s immune system naturally weakens with age, it can be more difficult for your body to defend against pneumococcal disease. In fact, adults 65 years old and older are over 10 times more likely to be hospitalized with pneumococcal pneumonia than adults aged 18–49.

### What if I’ve had pneumonia before?

You can get pneumococcal pneumonia more than once and having pneumococcal disease does not protect you from future infection.

### What if I’ve already been vaccinated?

Even if you’ve been vaccinated against pneumococcal pneumonia in the past, it’s important to speak to your healthcare provider, as they may recommend an additional vaccination.

### How can I help protect myself and my community?

Getting the word out about the importance of vaccination against preventable illness can help keep people healthier. Recent data from the National Health Interview Survey estimates that only 22.2% of adults 19–64 at increased risk of pneumococcal disease ever received a vaccination, and only 65.8% of adults 65 years or older received at least one dose. Unfortunately, rates of vaccination are lower among Black, Hispanic/Latino and Asian adults compared with their white counterparts, putting members of these communities at risk of infection.

To learn more about pneumococcal pneumonia and your risk for it, visit [Lung.org/pneumococcal](http://Lung.org/pneumococcal).

“It’s always the right time to discuss pneumococcal pneumonia vaccination with a healthcare provider. While cold and flu season is behind us, this disease can strike anytime, in any season and you can be vaccinated any time of year, too,” says Dr. Albert Rizzo, chief medical officer of the American Lung Association.

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Contents © 2023, The Prince George’s Post

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Prince George’s County, Md. Member National Newspaper Publishers Association, and the Maryland, Delaware, District of Columbia Press Association. The Prince George’s Post (ISSN 10532226) is published every Thursday by the New Prince George’s Post Inc., 15207 Marlboro Pike, Upper Marlboro, Md. 20772-3151. Subscription rate: 25 cents per single copy; \$15 per year; \$7.50 senior citizens and students; out of county add \$1; out of state add \$2. Periodical postage paid at Southern Md. 20790. Postmaster, send address changes to Prince George’s Post, P.O. Box 1001, Upper Marlboro, Md. 20773.



# HEALTH *and* WELLNESS



PHOTO COURTESY MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

**First Lady Dawn Moore discusses maternal health and the Moore-Miller administration's initiatives to increase healthcare resources for women in Maryland.**

## Maryland Department of Health, Maryland Patient Safety Center Host Inaugural Maryland Maternal Mortality Summit

*Department announces statewide Women's Health Action Plan and the State of Birth Equity partnership at summit*

By PRESS OFFICER  
Maryland Department of Health

BALTIMORE (May 9, 2024)—The Maryland Department of Health and the Maryland Patient Safety Center hosted [last week's] inaugural Maryland Maternal Mortality Summit at Coppin State University. The summit brought together various stakeholders and birth workers from across the state, encouraging them to learn, innovate, and collaborate on ways to eliminate Maryland's preventable maternal mortality rate. The summit also addressed disparities in care, access, and outcomes for expecting women and their families.

First Lady Dawn Moore attended the summit to advocate for maternal health and the importance of healthcare equity for mothers and expectant mothers in Maryland. During the summit, First Lady Moore announced the State of Birth Equity partnership with Horizon Foundation, Maryland's largest independent health philanthropy. The partnership also includes the Sherman Family Foundation, the Aaron Straus and Lillie Straus Foundation, the Richman Foundation, Zanvyl and Isabelle Krieger Fund, Boldly Go Philanthropy, and Community Health Acceleration Partnership.

"We need to work together to ensure greater access to maternal health services for all women, regardless of zip code, income, and background," said First Lady Dawn Moore. "These partnerships are a critical step toward reducing maternal mortality, eliminating racial disparities, and improving the lives of mothers and their babies."

At the summit, Dr. Laura Herrera Scott, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Health, unveiled the Women's Health Action Plan for the state. The plan aims to enhance women's health and prioritizes health equity for non-

Hispanic Black women and those residing in rural areas, who are disproportionately impacted. The action plan consists of six goals:

- Protecting reproductive rights of women and expanding access to reproductive health services, including abortion care.
- Advancing birth equity, with a focus on Black maternal and infant health, through the perinatal continuum.
- Supporting behavioral health needs across the life course.
- Improving access to comprehensive, high-quality somatic services throughout life.
- Increasing place-based and community-centered approaches to promote health and prevent diseases.
- Expanding, supporting and diversifying the perinatal workforce.

"The Women's Health Action Plan elevates women's health and focuses on equity, choice, and access," said Health Secretary Dr. Laura Herrera Scott. "I want all women in our state to achieve and maintain their highest level of physical, behavioral health and emotional wellbeing and to have the right to make choices regarding their body, reproductive and sexual health."

To learn more about the Maryland Women's Health Action Plan, visit [health.maryland.gov/womens-action-plan](http://health.maryland.gov/womens-action-plan).

For more information about the Maryland Department of Health's maternal and child health programs, visit [health.maryland.gov/phpa/mch](http://health.maryland.gov/phpa/mch).

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



PHOTO COURTESY MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

**Dr. Laura Herrera Scott, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Health, speaks about the Women's Health Action Plan at the Maryland Maternal Mortality Summit.**

## Maryland Sees Improvement in Fatal Overdose Rates Despite Nationwide Opioid Epidemic

By EMMA TUFO  
Capital News Service

Fatal overdoses in Maryland continued their downward trajectory, dropping 3% in 2023 to 2,503, according to data from the Maryland Office of Overdose Response. This trend is in contrast to the surge in the United States, which topped 112,000 overdoses in a 12-month period for the first time, according to new provisional data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The pandemic era of 2020 and 2021 saw an escalation in overdose deaths, both in Maryland and the United States. While the United States grapples with escalating rates, Maryland overdoses have declined 11% since then.

"Seven people a day are still dying from fatal overdoses in Maryland and that is very high. But, we've made some progress," said the Director of Communications at the Maryland Office of Overdose Response, Michael Coury.

Overdoses in the United States rose roughly 72% from 2020 to 2023, according to the CDC. The increase from approximately 65,000 deaths in a year to what policymakers fear is a new standard of over 110,000, according to NPR.

Studies and experts initially linked the surge in overdoses to the COVID-19 pandemic, but since then, national numbers have risen to six-figures, mainly due to the increase of illicitly manufactured fentanyl in the drug market.

The primary contributor to the majority of overdose deaths involves some form of opioids, including heroin, prescription painkillers, and, more prominently in recent years, fentanyl.

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that's often mixed into other drugs like heroin, cocaine, crack and pills before purchase to increase

the potency of the drug and because of its cheap production.

The first wave of the opioid epidemic began in 1990, following the increased prescribing of opioids to patients by doctors, according to the CDC. In 2010, the second wave began, as the increased use of heroin led to mass numbers of overdose deaths. The third wave started in 2013 when illicitly manufactured fentanyl began to increasingly be distributed across the country and sold on the illegal drug market, according to the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

In Maryland, fentanyl is implicated in the highest number of overdose deaths.

"Fentanyl is still, by and large, the driver of overdose mortality," as noted by Coury.

In 2023, 87 percent of the over 2,500 overdose deaths in Maryland were in combination with the deadly drug. Despite its lethal potency, fentanyl's presence cannot be detected by sight, taste, or smell; it's invisible. It can be sold as powders and nasal sprays and is increasingly being pressed into pills made to look like legitimate prescription opioids.

There is no quality control, and these counterfeit pills often contain lethal doses of fentanyl, according to the DEA. When combined with other substances like cocaine and heroin, fentanyl exerts a devastating effect, often without individuals realizing they are consuming it.

Cocaine-related fatal overdoses experienced an annual increase of 21% in 2023, according to the Maryland Office of Overdose Response dashboard. Cocaine was involved in nearly half of all overdoses in Maryland. Experts and annual state reports attribute the rise in cocaine-related deaths primarily to opioids rather than to cocaine use alone.

In contrast, overdoses involving heroin have been steadily declining in Maryland.

In 2023, the number of heroin-related fatalities decreased to 121, a 78% drop from 2020. Deaths from heroin increased rapidly beginning around 2011 and were responsible for the highest national overdose death rates in 2015, according to the State Health Access Data Assistance Center (SHADAC).

In July 2013, an ongoing epidemic of illicit fentanyl overdose deaths started in Maryland, according to a study published in the journal *Academic Forensic Pathology*. Heroin's decline in opioid-related overdoses echoes fentanyl's takeover.

In Maryland, overdose deaths among people aged 55 and older have been rapidly rising since 2016, hitting 873 in 2023.

While Maryland's overdose rates are decreasing, the state continues to take proactive steps in addressing the crisis. In December 2023, Governor Wes Moore announced the establishment of Maryland's Office of Overdose Response within the Maryland Department of Health, aiming to coordinate and promote efforts across state agencies to combat the overdose crisis.

Governor Moore emphasized Maryland's commitment to addressing the opioid crisis as a public health issue and setting an example for other states to follow.

At the national level, policy changes allowing the over-the-counter sale of naloxone, a medication that can reverse most opioid overdoses, have been implemented, aiming to provide easier access to life-saving interventions.

Locally, the Anne Arundel County Department of Health installed seven vending machines in Maryland stocked with free naloxone to encourage more individuals to carry this life-saving medication.

"Moral of the story, we still have a lot of work to do. The opioid crisis is still very much with us. We're losing over 100,000 people a year at the national level and that is still a crisis," said Coury.

## The Arc and United Health Foundation Launch \$2.5M Partnership to Tackle Mental Health Crisis for People With Disabilities

*The partnership will provide \$100,000 to 10 communities to expand mental health support for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities*

By PRESS OFFICER  
The Arc

The United Health Foundation, the philanthropic foundation of UnitedHealth Group (NYSE: UNH), has awarded The Arc of the United States a three-year, \$2.5 million grant to improve mental health care for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Up to 40% of people with IDD have co-occurring mental health conditions, and this critical funding will help address their unmet mental health needs.

Currently, only 1 in 10 children and adolescents with IDD and mental health disorders receive specialized services. Additionally, people with disabilities report 3 times more suicidal ideation compared to those without disabilities, and adults with disabilities are 3.5 times more likely to experience frequent mental distress. These statistics highlight the need for training and awareness to ensure providers and caregivers are equipped to support the mental health needs of people with disabilities.

"People with intellectual and developmental disabilities face barriers from the moment they are born, which can have a direct impact on their mental health," said Katy Neas, CEO of The Arc of the United States. "But too often, their mental health needs are going unmet due to stigma, lack of training, and biases. This generous investment by the United Health Foundation gives us a path to tackle this mental health crisis head-on by providing critical training to all who interact with our community—medical professionals, caregivers, first responders, educators, families and more. Let's work together to improve coordination of care, raise awareness, and ensure everyone's mental health needs are supported."

The partnership will deploy \$100,000 in direct grants to 10 chapters of The Arc nationwide to build comprehensive local solutions tailored to people with IDD. This includes expanding access to quality men-

tal health care services, improving coordination between disability and health systems, training over 2,000 providers and caregivers to recognize mental health needs in people with IDD, and launching public awareness campaigns to counteract stigma and misconceptions.

The 10 chapters receiving grants are: The Arc of Arizona, The Arc of Loudoun (VA), The Arc of Macomb County (MI), The Arc of Mississippi, The Arc of Oklahoma, The Arc of Oregon, **The Arc Prince George's County (MD)**, The Arc Rhode Island, St. Louis Arc (MO) and Sertoma Star Services (IL).

"When we root ourselves in empathy and build alongside those with lived experiences, pretty powerful things begin to take shape," said Dan Schumacher, executive vice president, UnitedHealth Group, who also serves on the Board of Directors of the United Health Foundation and as the executive sponsor of UnitedHealth Group's disability inclusion employee resource group. "The United Health Foundation is committed to building strong partnerships and providing resources to address the needs of our communities. Together with The Arc, we're excited to see the impact this work has on providers, caregivers and the people they serve."

A key component of the grant is partnering with the National Council for Mental Wellbeing to adapt its evidence-based Mental Health First Aid program with information on IDD. The training teaches how to identify and respond to signs of mental illness and substance disorders. As the Council notes, "Most of us would know how to help someone having a heart attack, but too few know how to respond if someone was having a panic attack or showing signs of substance abuse. Mental Health First Aid takes the fear out of starting these conversations."

Over three years, the United Health Foundation grant will help train caregivers, health care professionals, first responders, educators and family members to recognize the mental health needs of people

with IDD and decrease the number of mental health crisis incidents experienced by this population. The partnership will also provide mental health resources directly to people with IDD through the participating chapters to help them recognize and communicate their own needs. This is vital for individuals, and also for families, as research shows the mental wellbeing of parents of children with IDD is strongly influenced by the severity of their child's co-occurring mental health conditions.

*The Arc advocates for and serves people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), including Down syndrome, autism, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, cerebral palsy, and other diagnoses. Founded in 1950 by parents who believed their children with IDD deserved more, The Arc is now a network of nearly 600 chapters across the country promoting and protecting the human rights of people with IDD and actively supporting their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes. Through the decades, The Arc has been at the forefront of advances in disability rights and supports. There are over 7 million people with IDD in the United States, which encompasses over 100 different diagnoses. Visit [www.thearc.org](http://www.thearc.org) or follow us @TheArcUS to learn more.*

*Through collaboration with community partners, grants and outreach efforts, the United Health Foundation works to improve the health system, build a diverse and dynamic health workforce and enhance the well-being of local communities. The United Health Foundation was established by UnitedHealth Group (NYSE: UNH) in 1999 as a not-for-profit, private foundation dedicated to improving health and health care. To date, the United Health Foundation has committed nearly \$800 million to programs and communities around the world, including a \$100 million commitment to help diversify the health workforce. To learn more, visit [UnitedHealthFoundation.org](http://UnitedHealthFoundation.org).*



# COUNTY CHURCH DIRECTORY

**UNITED METHODIST**

**WESTPHALIA Christian Community Church**

"A CHURCH ON THE REACH FOR GOD"

9363 D'Arcy Road  
Upper Marlboro, MD

**Worship Service:**  
9 a.m.

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

Rev. Dr. Timothy West,  
Pastor

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Web Site:  
www.westphaliaum.org

**BAPTIST**

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20785 (301) 773-6655

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Sunday Worship:  
7:30 a.m., 10:45 a.m.  
Saturday Worship:  
6:30 p.m.

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

"A Time of Prayer, Praise, Worship, & The Word"  
Dr. Henry P. Davis III, Pastor  
www.fbhp.org

**BAPTIST**

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

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

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

**UNITED METHODIST**

**Union United Methodist Church**

14418 Old Marlboro Pike,  
Upper Marlboro, MD

**Church (301) 627-7389**

Sunday School (Children/Adults) - 8:30 a.m.  
Sunday Worship: 10:00 a.m.

Reverend Twanda E. King,  
Pastor  
www.uumchurch.com

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419 Hill Road, Landover, MD  
20785 • 301-490-2625

Rev. Ranesa Mayo, Pastor

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Matthew 28:19-20

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Morning Worship 10:00 a.m.

Soulful Thursdays  
Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

**BAPTIST**

**Forest Heights Baptist Church**

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6371 Oxon Hill Road  
Oxon Hill, Maryland 20745

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

**COMMUNITY CHURCH**

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Wed. Night Bible Study - 7:45 p.m.  
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