

The Prince George's Post



A COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER FOR PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY SINCE 1932

Vol. 92, No. 21 May 23 — May 29, 2024

Prince George's County, Maryland

Newspaper of Record

Phone: 301-627-0900

25 cents

M-NCPPC Prince George's County Planning Department Recognizes the Neighborhood Planning Academy Spring 2024 Cohort With Graduation Ceremony

By CALISTA BLACK
M-NCPPC

LARGO, Md. (May 16, 2024) —The Prince George's County Planning Department of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission hosted a graduation ceremony to celebrate the Spring 2024 Cohort of the recently launched Neighborhood Planning Academy on Wednesday, May 15,

2024, at the M-NCPPC Largo Headquarters. Designed specifically for Prince George's County residents and community stakeholders, the Neighborhood Planning Academy demystifies the often-complex process of planning and development and empowers participants to become advocates for their current needs and future of their neighborhoods. This spring, 40 representatives, re-

flecting all regions of Prince George's County, were selected from more than 230 applications to participate in a seven-week program to learn the ins and outs of the planning framework in Prince George's County, how to engage in the development review process, and how to advocate for their community goals and visions.

During the graduation ceremony, participants delivered

Capstone Project Presentations that incorporated independent research findings and lessons and topics from the curriculum. Through weekly classes, the participants explored the History, Present, and Future of Prince George's County, Planning 101, the Development Review Process, Building Healthy,

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PHOTO COURTESY M-NCPPC

The Prince George's County Planning Department of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission hosted a graduation ceremony to celebrate the Spring 2024 Cohort of the recently launched Neighborhood Planning Academy on Wednesday, May 15, 2024, at the M-NCPPC Largo Headquarters.

Prince George's County Leads Environmental Justice Initiative in Partnership With GWRCCC: Cleaner Vehicles for Healthier Communities

By PRESS OFFICER
GWRCCC

LARGO, Md. (May 15, 2024)—Prince George's County teamed up with Optimus Technologies, Chevron REG and the Greater Washington Region Clean Cities Coalition (GWRCCC) to announce the launch of an exciting new transit project, the 100% Biodiesel (B100) Transit Pilot Program. This initiative, made possible by support from the Maryland Energy Administration's (MEA) OPEN grant program, is a major step forward for environmental justice, emission reductions, and decarbonization in underserved communities in our region.

The program aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions right away. It uses the Optimus Vector System, an advanced fuel system upgrade, to power buses with B100 biodiesel. This system can also cut CO2 emissions by over 90%. In addition to biodiesel buses, electric buses will be used for certain routes. Instead of relying solely on

diesel for longer routes, Prince George's County views the use of B100 biodiesel as an opportunity to achieve significant carbon emissions reductions, with a minimum reduction of 75% per gallon compared to diesel.

The Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T) and Office of Central Services (OCS) are leading Prince George's County's B100 pilot effort. Prince George's County operates 3,500 vehicles, and the success of this pilot has the opportunity to lead to the County transitioning 375 current diesels to B100. Since these vehicles are currently operating on diesel fuel, the use of B100 will reduce their carbon emissions by over 75% immediately.

Potentially, the County could reduce its direct carbon emissions by 44,858 metric tons annually and about 450,000 metric tons over the course of 10 years.

Michael Johnson, Director of DPW&T, credits the B100 Pilot

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Prince George's Has More New Businesses Than Any Maryland County. What's Behind the Surge?

By JAMES MATHESON
Capital News Service

Prince George's County has long been considered the poor step-sibling of the Washington area's more affluent and business savvy counties.

But that image is starting to change as the county becomes an increasingly attractive location for new companies, including many that are developing innovative products and services.

Business leaders say the county is seeing growth in many types of companies, including high technology, cybersecurity and bio-health firms.

Some of the new firms are offspring of business incubators and entrepreneurial support centers at the University of Maryland, Bowie State University and NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, according to the Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation.

Prince George's, which has a large



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAITLIN BARTLETT, CLOUDFORCE

Cloudforce's ribbon-cutting ceremony for its expanded office space at National Harbor in February 2024. CEO Husein Sharaf is third from right.

minority population, is also seeing a spurt in the number of African American and Latino owned business, which

range from government contractors and business service providers to small mom-and-pop retail companies.

Jennifer Rios, president of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Prince George's County, described what she called a "surge" in new businesses in the past few years, including many owned by Latino immigrants.

A study by the American Immigration Council found that immigrants in the county are 30 percent more likely to start a business when compared to other county residents. Latinos, said Rios, are guided by a desire "to build generational wealth that they can pass along to their children."

Rios herself owns two businesses, including VARIDD, a commercial landscaping and construction company established in 2022 that has contracts with the Department of Veteran Affairs and the National Cemetery Administration.

Data from the United States Census Bureau seems to confirm Rios' observations.

The data shows that in Prince George's, the second most populous county in Maryland, business formations have been rising at a rapid clip for nearly a decade, when they started to surpass the number of formations in Montgomery County, the most populous

county in the state.

The data shows that in 2022, there were 22,452 business formations in Prince George's, more than double the number in 2012. In Montgomery, business formations totaled 16,471 in 2022, a 48% increase from 10 years earlier. (The Census Bureau will release business formations statistics for 2023 this summer.)

The government tracks a business formation when an application is filed for an employment identification number, or EIN. (See note below on page A5.) Not every entity that requests an EIN actually forms a business or hires employees. But economists watch the data for patterns to discern changes.

The trends clearly show positive developments for Prince George's County.

Although Prince George's has long been home to some high-level research centers and federal government agencies, it also has many low-income communities and higher rates of crime than neighboring counties. The county has pockets with high rates of poverty, but

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A Black-owned Startup in Prince George's County: PerVista Aims to Prevent Active Shooters

By JAMES MATHESON
Capital News Service

A yellow bus filled with middle schoolers heading home slowed to a stop at the corner of Sutler Drive and Iverson Street in Prince George's County. It was just before 5 p.m. on a spring Monday in May 2023.

Three young people hidden behind black face-coverings burst onto the bus, past the driver and the bus aide.

The masked juveniles held a handgun to the chest of the lone middle schooler who remained on the bus, ac-

ording to Prince George's County Police. The trigger was pulled, but the gun jammed three times. The assailants beat the boy and fled the scene.

Although disaster was averted that day, the incident weighed on Vennard Wright, a security and technology specialist who a few years earlier formed a cybersecurity firm called Wave Welcome.

As a native of Prince George's county, Wright had seen enough gun violence and wanted to do something about it.

"Thankfully the gun jammed," Wright said of that heartbreaking day

last May. "But because of that, we developed a technology that uses AI to detect firearms and notify police."

Wright is among a growing number of African Americans who in recent years have formed companies in Prince George's County, which has become the leading county in the state for the number of new businesses, according to data from the United States Census Bureau.

Wright's newest company, which

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Vennard Wright, co-founder of PerVista and Wave Welcome, speaking at an event in 2023 shortly after PerVista started.

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TOWNS and NEIGHBORS

In & Around Morningside-Skyline

by Mary McHale 301-735-3451

Morningside welcomes Police Chief Franklin

Morningside has a new Chief of Police, Daniel Franklin, who began his new job on May 13. Chief Franklin comes from the PD in Federalsburg, a town in Caroline County on the Eastern Shore.

As for other Morningside news: Council Members John Anthony and Sharon Fowler were re-elected in the Town's annual election on May 6. They were sworn in on May 20.

Morningside's annual Spring Clean-Up has been canceled due to weather. The event has been rescheduled for the weekend of June 29/30. Hours will be 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Also, on Sunday June 30, a Low-Cost Dog & Cat Shot Clinic.

Coming up June 22: Skate Van & Ice-Cream Social.

Volunteers are needed for the 4th of July Parade, Family Fun, and Fireworks. For information or to volunteer, call 301-736-2301. If you have a classic auto, you should be riding it in the Parade.

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

Break-in at Andrews Cocktail Lounge

The Lounge (which I fondly remember as Skyline Restaurant) was broken into recently, in the middle of the night. Intruders smashed the front window, tried to break into the safe (may have stolen it), and exited with a Molotov cocktail. Less than a block away, I heard nothing.

Memorial Day Mass at the cemeteries

Outdoor Mass will be celebrated at the Catholic Cemeteries of the Archdiocese of Washington on Memorial Day, Monday, May 27, at 10 a.m., in memory of the deceased. Weather permitting, Mass will be in a big tent, with plenty of folding chairs. And it's open to everyone.

The closest Catholic Cemetery to us is Resurrection, in Clinton. From the Capital Beltway, go South on Rt. 5 (Branch Avenue) four miles to Woodyard

Road east, two miles to Resurrection Cemetery on the right. It's a beautiful cemetery. And it's where my husband Jack is buried. So, I plan to be there.

Other Catholic cemeteries include Gate of Heaven in Silver Spring; Mount Olivet, Washington; All Souls, Gaithersburg; St. Mary's Queen of Peace, Mechanicsville. All will hold an outdoor Memorial Day Mass at 10 a.m.

But whatever you do for Memorial Day, it's a good day to remember those you have lost over the years.

Graduates

The following Morningsiders are graduating from Dr. Henry A. Wise Jr. High School on May 28. Graduation ceremonies will be at the XFINITY Center at University of Maryland.

- Savannah Foster, Maple Road
- Austin Fowler, Maple Road
- Brian Holder, Maple Road
- Jamia Cherry, Boxwood Drive

My great-granddaughter, Mary McHale, is graduating from Bishop McNamara High, in Forestville. Graduation will be at the Basilica of the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, in Washington, on May 24. Mary is the daughter of Conor and Heather McHale, of Clinton. She plans to attend the University of Maryland and major in theater.

Email me (muddmm@gmail.com) with the names of more students who are graduating from high school or college. If possible add a tribute for the graduate. Let's give these remarkable kids the publicity they deserve.

Blessed event

Regina Foster is happy to announce the birth of her niece, "the most beautiful baby girl," on May 2 at Holy Cross Hospital in Silver Spring. Myla Bre weighed in at 8 pounds, 6 ounces. Her Mom, Alyssa, grew up in Morningside and Dad Jaylen grew up in Clinton. Myla is the first grandchild of Leon and Carly Abbott and of Larry Ellis Jr. and Lela Wilhite. Gina says, "Our entire family is over the moon with the new addition."

Changing landscape

The McDonald's, Suitland Road at Alentown, is closed for renovation.

Cori's Modern Kitchen, at 4710 Auth Place (ground floor), Camp Springs, is a full-service, polished casual New American restaurant and bar. "Cori's offers freshness, spice, flare to American food with emphasis on Creole fusion and southern dishes. The bar offers a premium select of craft beer and classy spirits. Entrees include Cajun Salmon, Creole Catfish, "Spiced Pork Soup served with roasted garlic broccoli, crispy herb crusted sweet potatoes tossed in honey butter." Hungry? Call 301-842-4023.

English Court, 4412, in Skyline, has sold for \$340,000.

Travel back to 1865

Consider a visit to the Dr. Samuel Mudd House. Remarkable docents have maintained this farmhouse and grounds much as they were the early morning of April 16, 1865, when John Wilkes Booth stopped there to have his broken leg set, after assassinating President Lincoln at Ford's Theatre.

Excellent guided tours are provided Wednesdays and Saturdays, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.; Sundays, noon to 4 p.m. Tours are \$10; ages 6-12, \$3; under 5, free. The House is at 1725 Dr. Samuel Mudd Road, in Waldorf. Information: 301-645-5870.

And, yes, Dr. Samuel Alexander Mudd is my great-grandfather. I've often reflected on how his family suffered because of a broken leg. I've taken the tour many times and I've also visited the prison at Dry Tortugas in the Gulf of Mexico, to which Dr. Mudd was sentenced for life.

After three years, President Andrew Johnson pardoned Dr. Mudd because of his efforts to halt the spread of an outbreak of deadly yellow fever at the prison. He and his wife Sarah Frances are buried at St. Mary's Church in Bryantown.

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Brandywine-Aquasco

by Audrey Johnson 301-922-5384

NOTTINGHAM MYERS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Nottingham Myers United Methodist Church located at 15601 Brooks Church Road, Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772 is a small church growing community that believes in maintaining a vital connection to the Kingdom of God. "We offer uplifting worship experiences, opportunities for spiritual growth through multiple Bible Study options, a weekly commitment to prayer, and several ministries that provide opportunities for fellowship.

We have a big vision. We strive to meet the needs of our community located in Southern Prince George's County, Maryland. Our outreach efforts include a partnership with the MedStar Georgetown Cancer Institute at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital, the Dementia Friendly America Organization, the Community Support Systems Food Pantry, The Project SPIRIT organization for Sickle Cell Awareness, and more. In addition, we host events during the year to help bring awareness to local community concerns as well as provide opportunities that bring the community together.

As our church's history is over 155-year-old, we could not have made it this far without our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. God's vision for us is to move as the Body of Christ, committing ourselves to serving humanity by loving our neighbor as ourselves. We are an inclusive and diverse congregation that lives into the belief that God loves all. Through God, we continue to challenge ourselves to learn and grow together, knowing that no matter our limitations, we serve a Bigger God. Our Service times are Sunday Mornings at 11 a.m. Bible Study Wednesday 7 p.m. (Via Zoom), Rev. Shemaiah Strickland, Pastor.

PARKS & RECREATION M-NCPPC

Pre-teens and Teens programs push the boundaries of traditional recreation. These programs strive to reduce idleness among teenagers and pre-teens and prepare them for the future. These programs aim to increase the readiness of young people through high-quality, and community-supported events, programs, and services.

Most importantly, M-NCPPC provides programs and other activities that vest in the future of pre-teens, ages 10 to 17. Learn more about our programs and all the exciting recreational adventures that await you.

JUNETEENTH

WHAT IS JUNETEENTH? Juneteenth June 19, 1865, or "Freedom Day" is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the emancipation of African Americans from slavery in the United States. Understand the history and celebration the emancipation of African Americans from slavery in the United States at National Harbor. Freedom Day celebration Cultural performances will be June 19th, 2024, from 5-7 p.m. Celebrate Juneteenth at National Harbor with a variety of cultural performances on our Plaza Stage. Check back soon for the schedule of performers.

FREEDOM DAY BLACK-OWNED MARKETPLACE June 19 from 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Celebrate Juneteenth at National Harbor

and visit our Freedom Day Black Owned Marketplace in the Capital Canopy. Support the community and check out a variety of businesses, food vendors and stick around for the cultural performances starting at 5 p.m. on the Plaza Stage. Save the date. We are back with a Juneteenth Celebration experience unlike any other on Wednesday, June 19th from 11 a.m.-7 p.m.

BULLDOG GOLF CLASSIC

Save the date for our 13th Annual Bulldog Golf Classic Tuesday, October 8, 2024. For more information contact Jennifer Coke, Executive Director of Philanthropy: 301-860-4778. Proceeds from the Bulldog Golf Classic provides scholarship funding for student-athletes and helps to meet the growing needs of the Bowie State University Department of Athletics.

We look forward to seeing you at the 13th Annual Bulldog Golf Classic. More details coming soon. To learn more about sponsorship opportunities, please contact Jennifer Coke.

ANNUAL PRIDE WALK

Join the Prince George's County Police Department for the second annual Prince George's County Pride Walk June 2, 2024, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Walk the harbor trail and celebrate with a finish line party. There will be live music, face painting, gaming truck, activities, and vendors/resources within Prince George's County.

The goal of the pride walk is to bring more inclusion efforts to members of the LGBTQIA plus community and provide wrap around services. The event is free and four hours at 150 National Plaza, National Harbor, Maryland. Organized by Lieutenant Maria Massey.

CARIBBEAN AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH FESTIVAL

Come join us and the Prince George's County Caribbean Council as we kickoff Caribbean American Heritage Month Saturday, June 1, 2024, from 12 p.m. to 7 p.m. Ticket Price: No registration required. Age: ALL. Bring the whole family out for this decade-long, fan-favorite event. Headlined by Image Band and Flambé, this year's festival will feature food/craft vendors and newly added attractions like the Sankofa Mobile Museum, Get Fit mobile, Skate mobile, table/lawn games, hula hoops, scooters, soccer activity, park police, house/motorcycle, and more. Bring your bike out early and join in a guided ride of the Anacostia River Trail. *Attraction subject to change based on availability.

"Since 2006, June has been designated as Caribbean American Heritage Month by Presidential Proclamation. The month-long observance promotes the rich culture and heritage of the Caribbean American people and their contribution to the United States of America." National Archives (.gov).

Location: Bladensburg Waterfront Park (301) 779-0371 at 4601 Annapolis Road, Bladensburg, Maryland, 20710. Maryland relay 7-1-1, BladensburgWP@pgparks.com. Parks & Recreation M-NCPPC Live more, play more pgparks.com.

Rose Valley Elementary Educator Named Prince George's County Teacher of the Year

By PRESS OFFICER PGCPSS

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (May 20, 2024)—Kathy Russell, Reading/Language Arts teacher at Rose Valley Elementary School, has been named the 2024 Prince George's County Teacher of the Year. The announcement was made during a special presentation at her school on Monday, May 20, where she was presented with a three-year leased car from sponsors Pohanka Automotive Group and NAI Michael.

Russell has devoted twenty-six years to students in Prince George's County, making significant contributions to reading development and student success. She holds a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership from George Washington University and a Bachelor's Degree in Behavioral and Social Sciences from the University of Maryland. She is a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) and has served as a NBCT candidate support provider, reflecting her commitment to excellence in education.

"With a systemic focus on building students' skills in core subject areas, it is entirely fitting that Mrs. Russell has been selected as this year's Teacher of the Year," said Millard House II, Superintendent. "Early literacy is key to ensuring that students graduate well-prepared for college and careers."

Russell's peers nominated her for her outstanding teaching skills, passion for education and mentorship. She has taken on numerous leadership roles, including Mentor Teacher, Reading Department Chairperson and Professional Development Lead Teacher. Additionally, she served on the district's reading curriculum selection committee, was an ESOL Program Coordinator and reviewed NBCT Fellowship Candidate's applications.

"Mrs. Russell embodies the qualities of an exceptional teacher," said Dr. Sharon H. Porter, principal of Rose Valley Elementary. "She instills in her students an intense desire to learn and to achieve at a high level. She also supports her colleagues in their professional growth through her leadership and mentorship."

In addition to her teaching responsibilities, Mrs. Russell founded a school-based reading club and developed an after-school program for struggling students. She has also hosted Math Family Night, involving the community and providing support and incentives to over 300 students and parents.

Mrs. Russell will compete statewide with representatives from all 24 counties for the title of Maryland Teacher of the Year, coordinated by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). The winner will be announced in the fall and will represent Maryland in the national competition.

Seat Pleasant Commemorates Local Government Service, Marks 100th Anniversary of National League of Cities, Designates May as "Cities, Towns, and Villages Month"

By PRESS OFFICER City of Seat Pleasant

SEAT PLEASANT, Md. (May 13, 2024)—In a resounding declaration of reverence for local government service, Seat Pleasant proudly designates May as "National Cities, Towns, and Villages Month." This proclamation, spearheaded by Seat Pleasant in tandem with the National League of Cities (NLC), venerates the crucial role played by municipal governments in shaping the fabric of American democracy.

"Local governments are the bedrock of American democracy," stated the proclamation, highlighting the unwavering commitment of these institutions to accountability, responsiveness, inclusivity, ethics, and transparency. From the quaintest villages to bustling metropolises, America's local governments have been instrumental in propelling the nation to its eminent stature on the global stage.

Mayor Kelly Porter of Seat Pleasant reinforced the city's dedication to progress and innovation, affirming, "Seat Pleasant stands as a beacon of prosperity, a Smart City of Excellence at the forefront of technological advances. As the gateway to the Nation's Capital, we tirelessly provide our diverse community with essential infrastructure, ensuring our city remains a shining example of progress and opportunity."

This year's commemoration holds special significance as it coincides with the centennial anniversary of the National League of Cities, established in 1924. NLC, a nonpartisan organization committed to enhancing the quality of life for residents across the nation, continues to provide invaluable

resources to local leaders and advocates vigorously for the interests of cities, towns, and villages in the corridors of power in Washington, DC.

Clarence Anthony, CEO and Executive Director of NLC, emphasized the pivotal role of local public servants, stating, "NLC's historic 100th anniversary is a chance to reflect on the contributions local governments have made, look ahead to the next 100 years, and thank the mayors, city councilmembers, and staff who have dedicated themselves to leading our communities."

Throughout the month of May 2024, hundreds of local governments nationwide will echo Seat Pleasant's proclamation, underscoring the collective appreciation for the tireless efforts of local public servants. The culmination of this celebratory month will be marked by the ringing of bells on May 22, symbolizing unity and gratitude across the nation.

Since 1931, Seat Pleasant has been a vibrant city located in Maryland, renowned for its commitment to innovation and community development. Seat Pleasant is the first small Smart City in the United States, a city of excellence dedicated to leveraging technology for the betterment of its residents and fostering an environment of prosperity and opportunity.

The National League of Cities (NLC) is the voice of America's cities, towns, and villages, working to strengthen local leadership, influence federal policy, and drive innovative solutions. Celebrating its centennial anniversary in 2024, NLC remains steadfast in its mission to empower local leaders and build thriving communities nationwide.

COMMUNITY

Students From 17 Maryland Counties and Baltimore City Win Awards at Maryland History Day

By SARAH WEISSMAN
Maryland Humanities

BALTIMORE (May 10, 2024)—On May 4, over 500 middle and high school students showcased their original documentary film, exhibit, performance, research paper, or website—representing a year's worth of historical research—in hope of receiving an award. They competed in the Maryland History Day State Contest, held at University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC).

The contest is the culmination of a year-long program from Maryland Humanities. Last year, more than 27,000 Maryland students participated at the school level.

Maryland History Day, produced by Maryland Humanities since 1999, sparks critical thinking and helps develop skills in research and analysis, writing, and public speaking. Working solo or in small groups, students create a project exploring a historical topic of their choice on an annual theme. This year's theme is "Turning Points in History." Maryland History Day is open to public, private, parochial, and homeschool students in grades 6 through 12.

Competitors at Maryland History Day have already won first or second place in their category at school and/or district levels. Students from twelve counties and Baltimore City received special awards, designated for outstanding Maryland History Day projects that cover specific subjects.

Students from nine Maryland counties and Baltimore City will represent Maryland in

the National History Day competition, where they will compete among an estimated 3,000 participants from across the country and beyond. National History Day runs June 9–13 at University of Maryland in College Park.

The national competition involves students from all 50 states plus the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, and international schools in China, Korea, and South Asia. Maryland History Day is an affiliate of National History Day, a non-profit education organization that promotes an appreciation for historical research among middle and high school students through multiple annual programs, including the National History Day Contest.

Maryland History Day at Maryland Humanities is an affiliate of National History Day. Support for Maryland History Day is provided by the State of Maryland through the Maryland State Department of Education, The Citizens of Baltimore County, and Thalheimer-Eurich Charitable Fund.

Maryland Humanities creates and supports bold experiences that explore and elevate our shared stories to connect people, enhance lives, and enrich communities. For more information, visit www.mdhumanities.org. Maryland Humanities is generously supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities; the State of Maryland; the Citizens of Baltimore County; private foundations; corporations; small businesses; and individual donors. Connect with Maryland Humanities on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube.

Maryland History Day is an affiliate of National History Day and a year-long educational program of Maryland Humanities. More than 26,000 middle and high school students create original projects that explore a historical topic of their choice on an annual theme. Professional development for teachers is offered through online courses and platforms, summer teacher institutes, workshops, and classroom outreach. Maryland Humanities produces Maryland History Day. For more information, visit www.mdhistoryday.org. Connect with Maryland History Day on Facebook and Twitter.

National History Day® (NHD) is a non-profit organization based in College Park, Maryland, that seeks to improve the teaching and learning of history. The National History Day Contest was established in 1974 and currently engages more than half a million students every year in conducting original research on historical topics of interest. Students present their research as a documentary, exhibit, paper, performance, or website. Projects compete first at the local and affiliate levels, where the top entries are invited to the National Contest at the University of Maryland at College Park. NHD is sponsored in part by HISTORY®, the National Endowment for the Humanities, Patricia Behring Foundation, Diana Davis Spencer Foundation, World Education Foundation, the National Park Service, the 400 Years of African-American History Commission, the Better Angels Society, The Dr. Scholl Foundation, and individual donors. For more information, visit nhd.org.

Maryland History Day Winners 2024 PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

Advancers to National History Day:

Student: Joshua Herrera-Guzman
Award: Senior Individual Exhibit, Second Place
Topic: The Birthing of the First Socialist State
School: Eleanor Roosevelt High School
Teacher: Victoria Patch Williams

Student: Aashi Moola

Award: Senior Paper, Second Place
Topic: Mosquitos, Medicine and Major Milestones: William Gorgas's Legacy on the Panama Canal
School: Eleanor Roosevelt High School
Teacher: Victoria Patch Williams

Special Prize Winners:

Students: Angelo Catimbang, Elijah James Centeno, Caleb Dotson

Award: George Washington Leadership Prize, Senior Division, sponsored by George Washington's Mount Vernon
Topic: The Formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance
Category: Senior Group Documentary
School: Oxon Hill High School
Teacher: Nathaniel Wallace

Students: Aria Durant and Aminata Raschid

Award: Marilyn Hatza Award for Excellence in African American History, Junior Division, sponsored by Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture
Topic: Grandmaster Flash and the Furious five: Spin on hip-hop
Category: Junior Group Exhibit
School: Benjamin Tasker Middle School
Teacher: Davlyn Hollie

Maryland History Day District Teacher of the Year:

Carol Carter, Kenmoor Middle School

GRAD SZN: Celebrating the PGCPS Class of 2024

By PRESS OFFICER
PGCPS

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (May 14, 2024)—Graduation season for the Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) Class of 2024 will begin this week as nearly 8,000 graduates and their families celebrate achievements.

Commencement ceremonies kick[ed] off on Friday, May 17 with the Academy of Health Sciences at Prince George's Community College for students who will receive both a high school diploma and associate's degree on the same day, as well as Largo High School grads.

"The Class of 2024 embodies resilience. These are students who completed middle school amid the Covid pandemic and began high school at a time when masks were required and schools were just reopening for full-time, in-person learning," said Superintendent Millard House II. "Their high school experience was not conventional, but they have navigated challenges with adaptability and shown exceptional dedication to their success."

Class of 2024 graduates excelled academically, collectively earning more than \$200 million in college scholarships.

Notable Class of 2024 scholars:

- Laurel High School senior **Daniel Perez** will be the first male in his family to graduate from high school (his father only made it to the third grade and his older brother dropped out of high school). He plans to complete a Culinary Arts Program or try his hands in an Apprenticeship Program as an electrician.
- Oxon Hill High School has two sets of twins who are future STEM leaders! Twin sisters **Imani and Brandi O'Neal**, and **Anise and Kai Lampley** each will graduate from the school's Science and Technology program with higher than a 4.2 GPA.
- PGCPS Online Campus senior **Gabriella Gresham** will graduate with more than 400 community service hours and nearly \$4 million in scholarships from 44 colleges and universities. She will attend McDaniel College on a full ride scholarship and aspires to return to Prince George's County Public Schools as a school teacher.

- Parkdale High School senior **Justin Zhang** received a full ride to Yale. He is in the IB program and has the highest GPA of the school.
 - Despite speaking little English upon immigrating from El Salvador to the U.S. and enrolling at Oxon Hill High School in 2022, senior **Henry Teo Palma** advocated for himself to attain credit for courses earned in his home country. Throughout his three years at Oxon Hill, Henry has maintained employment and saved enough money to bring his younger sister from El Salvador. Henry will be graduating Oxon Hill High School as an emancipated student.
 - With one of the highest GPAs in her class, International High School at Langley Park senior **Ashly Cifuentes** immigrated from Peru in her sophomore year and has since taken more than 10 AP/Dual Enrollment courses. She also started a global leaders program to provide better support to ESOL students and newcomers. Ashly will attend Notre Dame University in Indiana on a full merit scholarship to study aerospace engineering and Latino studies.
 - After witnessing a parent being killed his sophomore year, Central High School senior **Jordan Proctor** has excelled, with acceptances and some full-ride scholarships to more than a dozen colleges and universities including Morehouse College.
 - Despite losing his father during senior year, Charles H. Flowers High School scholar-athlete **Braydon Lee** has 32 full ride offers to Division I schools, has accumulated nearly \$8 million in scholarship offers and is an All Met/All State Player attending the University of Maryland.
 - After ending his 9th grade year at Oxon Hill High School with a 0.438 GPA, **Manuel Pinto Lopez** turned things around and has earned honor roll every quarter during his junior and senior years as well as becoming an advocate for his peers. He is leaning toward attending Prince George's Community College while also attending trade school to become an electrician.
- Visit our GRAD SZN portal for ceremony dates, news, stories, photo galleries, videos and more celebrating this year's grads.



Pictured from left to right: Enoch Omotayo, Kristina Winn, Adenike Aderibigbe, and Kalen Wright. Since its inception in 2008, the Scholarship Fund has provided over \$135,000 in scholarships to students graduating from Prince George's County High Schools.

County REALTORS® Award \$10,000 in Scholarships to High School Seniors

By PRESS OFFICER
PGCAR

At a recent ceremony, The Prince George's County Association of REALTORS® (PGCAR) awarded \$10,000 in college scholarships to deserving high school graduates. Through the REALTORS® David and Juanita Maclin Memorial Scholarship Fund, named in memory of PGCAR's 2006 President, David Maclin, and his wife, REALTOR® Juanita Maclin, the fund awarded four \$2,500 college scholarships.

David and Juanita contributed to the economic development of Prince George's County, and they were key contributors to the growth and development of area churches. Their efforts were acknowledged by numerous awards, certifications, and special recognitions.

It is because of their many contributions to the community, that the Prince George's County Association of REALTORS® established the David & Juanita Maclin Memorial Scholarship Fund in 2008. Based on the theme "How I made a difference in my Community," the

Scholarship Fund awards college scholarships to Prince George's County High School seniors who are actively engaged in giving back to their communities. "Unlike traditional academic or athletic scholarships, these are given based on the students local community service efforts", said Donald Frederick, Chair of the Scholarship Committee. This year's recipients served the needs of Prince George's County communities in providing services in college preparatory workshops for students with disabilities, providing education to the community on properly caring for animals and the importance of eating healthy, empowering students to take an active interest in the well-being and future of Prince George's County by getting involved in the local government, and by volunteering to do hairstyling services for those in need throughout the county.

Of the 34 entries, four Prince George's County high school seniors were each awarded \$2,500 college scholarships:

- Enoch Omotayo**, of Charles Herbert Flowers High School, planning to attend Morehouse College

- Kristina Winn** of Academy of Health Sciences of Prince George's Community College, planning to attend Bowie State University
- Adenike Aderibigbe** of Dr. Henry A. Wise Jr. High School, planning to attend University of Maryland College Park
- Kalen Wright** of Northwestern High School, planning to attend Towson University

The Prince George's County Association of REALTORS® (PGCAR) is the voice for REALTORS® 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 homeownership and private property rights.

Morningside from A2

Milestones

Happy Birthday to Chris Desmarais and Christopher Nichols, May 26; Gary Lewis, Sr. and Steven Busky, May 27; my former next-door neighbor Teddy Burke and Kevin Nichols, May 30; Carl Desmarais, Ruth Garner and my

granddaughter Sarah McHale, May 31; Nicole Proctor and Kathleen Stahl, June 1.

Happy Anniversary to Tyonda Simms-Taylor and Michael Taylor who wed June 1, 1995.

Email me (muddmm@gmail.com) with birthdays and anniversaries.

COMMUNITY

M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation in Prince George's County Honored With Historic Preservation Award

A significant moment for the Department's Historic Preservation Unit

By PRESS OFFICER
M-NCPPC

RIVERDALE, Md. (May 14, 2024)— Today, the Department of Parks and Recreation in Prince George's County's Historic Preservation Unit has been honored with the 2024 Maryland Preservation Award for "Outstanding Stewardship by a Government Agency." The Historic Preservation Unit is a small team of specialists within the Natural and Historic Resources Division of the Department.

In an outdoor ceremony at Marietta House Museum in Glenn Dale—dignitaries, elected officials, historians and community members gathered to celebrate and honor the Department's laudable preservation successes over the past five years. Presenting the award was Elizabeth Hughes, Director of the Maryland Historical Trust. Also participating in the event were Senator Malcolm Augustine and Delegate Jamila Woods.

"This award highlights the distinguished work of a vital part of our team who enrich our community through

their skillful and determined preservation work, preserving and protecting the cultural and architectural heritage of our historic properties."—Bill Tyler, Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George's County

The Historic Preservation Unit manages one of the nation's most distinctive publicly-owned concentrations of historic assets—14 are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, 7 are subject to Maryland Historical Trust Easements, and two are National Historic Landmarks. The unit's portfolio of nearly 50 sites (with more than 175 structures) includes museums, historic houses, monuments, chapels, mills, and cultural landscapes. Recent preservation success stories at projects like Darnall's Chance Museum (c. 1742), Marietta House Museum (c. 1812), Surratt House Museum (c. 1852), and the Bladensburg Peace Cross (c. 1919) exemplify years of steadfast preservation work.

Projects range from interpreted museums like Montpelier House, Riversdale House, and Ridgely Rosenwald School to historic homes that have been

repurposed into special event venues such as Oxon Hill Manor, Snow Hill Manor, and Newton White Mansion. Historic mills, chapels, monuments, archeological sites, outbuildings, and cultural landscapes are also part of the portfolio. Historic programming at these sites develops and shares previously underrepresented stories. Tens of thousands of people visit these restored properties every year.

"This is a significant moment for our Historic Preservation Unit, which is widely respected for its authentic restoration and rehabilitation work—and also for its practical approach to adaptive use, as well as advocacy and education efforts."—Edward Day, Chief Historic Preservation Officer

To learn more about the Department's preservation projects, visit pgparks.com/activities-events/history/historicpreservation.

With over 28,000 acres of parkland, trails, athletic fields, playgrounds and more, the M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation in Prince George's



PHOTO COURTESY M-NCPPC

At Marietta House Museum in Glenn Dale, left to right: Christine Fanning, Peter Shapiro, Del. Jamila Woods, Edward Day, Elizabeth Hughes, Sen. Malcolm Augustine, Bill Tyler.

County provides an award-winning park system through progressive, quality, innovative leadership and a commitment to its community and environment. The Department delivers first-class recreational activities and programs for people of all ages and ability levels. It strives to improve the quality of life for residents in Prince George's County and the communities in which they live, work, and

raise families. The Department's Formula 2040 Plan establishes a framework that will assure the Department can meet future parks and recreation programmatic and facility needs, fulfilling its mission to determine the combination of land, facilities and programs that will provide appropriate experiences for Prince Georgians in the future.

Hoyer Announces Winner of the 2024 Fifth District Congressional Art Competition

By PRESS OFFICER
Congressman Steny Hoyer's Office

WASHINGTON (May 17, 2024)—Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD-05) announced the winner of the 2024 Fifth District Congressional Art Competition. **Lusenie Turay, a junior at Charles Herbert Flowers High School in Prince George's County,** won the competition with his piece titled "Regal Musing."

"Congratulations to Lusenie Turay on winning the 2024 Fifth District Congressional Art Competition," said Congressman Hoyer. "I was captivated by his artwork and impressed by the time and effort he put into creating it. I look forward to viewing his thought-provoking piece in the Capitol complex this year."

"I am truly honored and humbled that my artwork "Regal Musing" has been selected as the winning piece to represent District 5. As a Sierra Leonean-American, to be able to share the spirit of my home country through art connects me to my roots. The opportunity for it to represent not only Sierra Leone's culture, but our district in the United States Capitol, is an honor. I poured my heart into capturing my story, and I truly hope my work sparks a deeper appreciation for diverse perspectives and encourages others to share their own unique voices," said Lusenie Turay.

Lusenie Turay lives in Bowie, Maryland.



IMAGE COURTESY
CONGRESSMAN STENY HOYER'S OFFICE

Lusenie Turay's winning piece, "Regal Musing."

His artwork, titled "Regal Musing," was created using Procreate software and depicts a striking image of a boy with amethyst colored skin and intricate gold markings.

"I am also thrilled to congratulate our other top placement winners," continued Congressman Hoyer. "Each piece of artwork demonstrated great skill, and I was extremely impressed by the creations. These submissions further highlight the outstanding talent of young people in Maryland's Fifth District. I congratulate every student who participated in the 2024 competition. I want to especially

thank the members of the art jury who took great care to carefully evaluate each piece and determine our 2024 winner. This was no easy feat with such a talented group of young Marylanders."

2nd Place – Eaton Ekolrintaragon; Huntington High School in Calvert County; "Hidden Treasure"

3rd Place – Joseph Harrison IV; Georgetown Prep in Prince George's County; "A Black Boy's Childhood"

4th Place – Emma Johnson; North Point High School in Charles County; "New Beginnings"

5th Place – Hailey Muise; Chopticon High School in St. Mary's County; "Milo"

The Congressional Arts Competition provides Members of Congress with the opportunity to showcase the artistic talent of high school students in their districts. Since 1982, the competition has involved hundreds of thousands of students, and the winners have had their pieces hung in the Capitol complex for a year to be seen by the many visitors who come to the Capitol and by Members of Congress every day. Each year, Congressman Hoyer sends letters to all the high schools in the Fifth District announcing the Congressional Fifth District High School Arts Competition. After all entries have been submitted, a panel of local judges from the education and business communities participate in a panel to determine the winner.

Vehicles from A1

Project as part of the Transit Transformation Initiative. "The Department of Public Works and Transportation is committed to creating a comprehensive, integrated multi-modal transportation network accessible to everyone," said Johnson. "During the project's implementation, we will continue to work with our critical regional partner, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority (WMATA). In addition to pursuits with local transit systems, TheBus and Call-A-Bus, the Transit Transformation initiative is projected to prioritize transit performance, enhance accessibility to jobs, schools, and essential services, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions."

Colin Huwyler, the CEO of Optimus Technologies, the manufacturer of the Vector System, expressed enthusiasm stating "I am thrilled to see the expansion of our Vector System Technology to use B100 in Prince George's County's transit fleet. This demonstrates the practicality and success of using biodiesel to drive positive change in local communities. Prince George's is the first County government using the technology for transit bus applications and is setting the standard for other transit fleets to follow."

Jon Scharingson, Director of Strategic Initiatives for Chevron Renewable Energy Group, highlighted the pivotal role of forward-thinking leaders and collaborative funding in propelling this initiative forward. "The expanded use of B100 in Prince George's County showcases the momentum of fleets recognizing that they must move toward reducing carbon emissions today rather than waiting for the electric vehicle technologies of tomorrow. This progress wouldn't have happened without the help of programs like Maryland Energy Administration's OPEN grant. Chevron REG is proud to be contributing to this effort."

The MEA's OPEN grant program has been instrumental in bringing this project to life. By supporting visionary leaders in Prince

George's County, the grant enables the implementation of sustainable solutions tailored to Environmental Justice (EJ) communities. This investment not only reduces emissions but also promotes cleaner transit options, fostering a healthier and more equitable environment for all residents.

The Greater Washington Region Clean Cities Coalition will assist Prince George's County with outreach and education in EJ communities, with an emphasis on increasing access to clean transportation. Antoine M. Thompson, GWRCCC's CEO/Executive Director remarked "GWRCCC has made it a high priority to ensure that all communities benefit from clean transportation. We are excited to help Prince George's County improve its sustainability efforts in cleaner transportation while ensuring that disadvantaged communities of color are not left behind, stated Thompson."

County officials have highlighted the environmental justice benefits of this grant, emphasizing its significance in emission reduction and equity advancement within underserved communities. The B100 Transit Project Stands as a testament to the County's commitment to addressing environmental challenges and leading the way towards a greener, more sustainable future.

For more information about the Greater Washington Region Clean Cities Coalition, contact Antoine M. Thompson, Executive Director/CEO at antoinehompson@gwrccc.org or (202)-671-1580.

For more information about the B100 transit pilot and the grant's impact, contact Efon Epanty at emepanty@co.pg.md.us.

The Greater Washington Region Clean Cities Coalition (GWRCCC), focused in the Washington, D.C. metro area, is one of nearly 80 coalitions in the U.S. that fosters economic, environmental, and energy security by working locally to advance affordable, domestic transportation fuels, environmental justice, energy efficient mobility systems, and other fuel-saving technologies and practices. Find out more at <https://gwrccc.org>.

Ceremony from A1

Sustainable and Resilient Communities, and Multimodal Transportation and Street Safety. Based on feedback from the Fall 2023 inaugural cohort, a new class was added to the program to delve deeper into PGAtlas.com—a free public web application and online mapping tool.

"M-NCPPC sees the importance of an empowered community, and the Neighborhood Planning Academy teaches us that there is leadership at every level," said Peter A. Shapiro, Chair of M-NCPPC and the Prince George's County Planning Board. "Learning is a two-way street, and the wonderful capstone project presentations provide fresh perspectives on community challenges."

"The Neighborhood Planning Academy is a top-notch program that sets a standard for other regional and national programs to follow," said Lakisha Hull, Director of the M-NCPPC Prince George's County Planning Department. "As the new planning director in Prince George's County, as well as a brand new resident, I can attest to the high-quality curriculum and basic understanding that the team delivers to our residents and stakeholders."

The Spring 2024 Cohort of the Neighborhood Planning Academy included Joseph Adams, Aaron Adams, Nohely Alvarez, Marina Anwuri, Genesis Baez, Tiffany Belk, Tawana Bostic, Dr. Cecil Boyd, Stephanie Bradley, June Bullock-Dixon, Teilla Chase, Adewale Dada, Marian Dombroski, Harold Dugger, Hala Flores, Chyna Fries, Michelle Garcia, Lakisha Hull, Angela Jackson, Donnie Joyner, Amber Maikui, Jamileth Mendez, Camille Mosley-Pasley, Chris Nelson, Emmanuel Ogunpide, Stephanie Perry, Alvin Pounds, Michelle Rennie, Jim Schmitz, Ashley Sharp, John Sheridan, Valerie Silensky, Quineesa Smith, Erika Vivar, Evan Waksler, Malaysia White, John-Phillip Williams, Garrett Williams, and Daija Yisrael.

Since the launch of the program in the fall of 2023, the Neighborhood Planning Academy has received more than 500 applications from interested Prince George's County residents and stakeholders. For more information on the Neighborhood Planning Academy, visit: <https://academy.pgplanning.com>. Prince George's County residents and stakeholders may join the mailing list to receive announcements on applications for the Fall 2024 cohort and upcoming courses.

Visit our website, www.pgplanning.org, to learn how you can become engaged in shaping the future of your community.

The Prince George's Post

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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.

BUSINESS AND FINANCE



PHOTO COURTESY PGCEDC

Opening celebration of XPO's new service center in Landover, MD.

XPO Opens New Service Center in Landover, MD to Strengthen Service to Customers Across the Washington, DC-Baltimore Metro Region

The new site enables faster service to customers and more efficient routing of freight across the Washington, DC-Baltimore Metro region

By PRESS OFFICER

Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation

LANDOVER, Md. (May 13, 2024)—XPO (NYSE: XPO), a leading provider of LTL freight transportation in North America, today announced the opening of a major new freight transportation center in Landover, MD. The new site enables faster service to customers and more efficient routing of freight across the Washington, DC-Baltimore Metro region.

David Iannucci, President & CEO of the Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation, and Jose Burnes, PGCEDC Business Development Manager for Manufacturing and Warehousing, were in attendance along with local leadership.

Dave Bates, Chief Operating Officer of XPO, said, "We're pleased to continue opening our new service centers on schedule and to be deepening our presence in Prince George's County. We're excited about the opportunities this location creates for our customers and the elevated service it will enable us to provide in the region."

This newly renovated 20,000 square foot service center is located approximately 10 miles east of Washington, DC and 30 miles southwest of Baltimore. This center will reduce travel times to customers in the region and expand capacity to meet growing freight demand across the area.

XPO, Inc. (NYSE: XPO) is a leader in asset-based less-than-truckload (LTL) freight transportation in North America. The company's customer-focused organization efficiently moves 18 billion pounds of freight per year, enabled by its proprietary technology. XPO serves approximately 52,000 customers with 610 locations and 39,000 employees in North America and Europe, with headquarters in Greenwich, Conn., USA. Visit xpo.com for more information, and connect with XPO on LinkedIn, Facebook, X, Instagram and YouTube.

Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation (PGCEDC)'s mission is to cultivate and promote a strong local economy that supports the growth and prosperity of entrepreneurs and businesses, dedicated to strengthening communities through business development and job creation. For more information about the services the Economic Development Corporation provides to local companies, visit www.pgcedc.com.

Maryland Food and Beverage Businesses Invited to Trade Missions in China and Hong Kong

Sign up with the Southern US Trade Association by July 2, 2024

By PRESS OFFICER

Maryland Department of Agriculture

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (May 16, 2024)—The Maryland Department of Agriculture has announced they are seeking Maryland food and beverage businesses to participate in outbound trade missions to China and Hong Kong later this summer. Hosted by the Southern United States Trade Association, these missions will connect Maryland companies with key pre-qualified buyers in Beijing, Guangzhou, and Hong Kong. The mission itinerary is designed to provide valuable market briefings from the USDA Agricultural Trade Office and market tours to observe the local retail sector.

"SUSTA is an essential tool that food and beverage producers in the state can utilize to develop sales in foreign markets," said Maryland Department of Agriculture Secretary Kevin Atticks. "Their trade missions offer opportunities to meet top-tier buyers and gain market insight through in-country consultants."

Beijing, the capital of China, is one of the most important markets for imported food and drinks, with an established base of importers. Guangzhou, a sprawling port city northwest of Hong Kong on the Pearl River, serves as a major port and transportation hub and is one of China's three largest cities. Both cities have consumers who have high

See TRADE MISSIONS Page A6

Surge from AI

also affluent communities.

Prince George's median average household income was about \$98,000 in 2022, according to the Census Bureau. That was higher than the national average of \$75,000 but lower than the neighboring counties of Montgomery at \$126,000; Fairfax, Virginia, at \$129,000 and Washington, D.C., at \$102,000.

Not only is the county seeing growth in startups, it's welcoming agencies and companies relocating from Washington, D.C., and neighboring counties in Maryland and Virginia.

Most notably, the federal government announced late last year that the FBI's long-awaited new headquarters will be built in Prince George's, a major win for the county which beat out bids from Virginia. The FBI is expected to be a draw for a new crop of cybersecurity companies.

The county is already home to several new security firms, including Wave Welcome, which was founded in 2020 by Vennard Wright.

Prior to starting Wave Welcome, Wright held a number of senior technology positions for organizations and was the director of technology for Hillary Clinton's re-election campaign for U.S. senator from New York in 2006 and for her unsuccessful presidential run in 2008.

Wright started Wave Welcome to provide technology and cybersecurity services to smaller and mid-sized companies, non-profit organizations and universities.

Such establishments "typically don't have access to high level technology expertise, because they can't afford it," said Wright. "We make it so that they have access to the technologies and cybersecurity best practices to keep them secure from data breaches and ransomware attacks."

In May 2023, Wright and his wife Janelle started a second company called PerVista, which uses artificial intelligence

to analyze video streams in an effort to spot and prevent gun violence. (See related story, starting on A1.)

Wright, who is African American and a Prince George's County native, says he was motivated to start his company to "leverage technology to build wealth for minority communities."

David Iannucci, president and CEO of Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation, says the growth in new technology businesses isn't an accident.

"Going back more than 10 years, we analyzed the county's retention rate for these companies and saw room for improvement," he said.

The development corporation started to provide greater support to startups and small businesses, such as providing information about funding and hosting workshops and networking events.

Some already existing tech companies are relocating to Prince George's as well, in part to take advantage of lower real estate costs but also to be an early arrival in what some believe will be a new tech hub and to take advantage of services provided by economic development agencies.

"I originally started my company in Northern Virginia, and I realized there's a million other little companies just like mine that are vying for the same resources and vying for attention," said Husein Sharaf, the 36-year old founder and chief executive of Cloudforce, a computer consulting firm that specializes in the Microsoft cloud operating system, primarily for Fortune 500 corporations.

Sharaf founded Cloudforce in 2010 as a one-man operation before moving its home-base to Prince George's in 2014.

"It's just less crowded," Sharaf said. "Which ultimately means there's more (funding) per business that's eligible... there's more attention here if you know how to network."

The Washington Business Journal named Cloudforce one of the region's best

PerVista from AI

he founded last year with his wife Janelle, is called PerVista. It uses artificial intelligence to scan surveillance footage alongside a database of firearms. The system triggers an alert and sends the portion of video to public safety officials and police if anything from the footage matches the database.

The company hopes to sell its services to schools, shopping malls, sporting venues and office buildings.

Wright says the technology can detect firearms if any part of the gun is showing, but won't alert police unless the gun is

produced and can accurately be verified as a weapon.

The technology also utilizes a drone called WatchWing to verify the software's finding. Right now, PerVista does not target concealed carry and doesn't scan the inside of backpacks.

"Our goal is to reduce the impact and number of active shooter events in schools, hospitals and other public places," Wright said.

Janelle Wright is now CEO of Wave Welcome while Vennard Wright took the reins at PerVista, which has six full-time employees. The couple is committed to developing an artificial intelligence work-

force in the county.

Wright, who graduated from the University of Maryland with a degree in business administration, is author of "Cracking the C-Code," a book to help readers become C-level executives.

He was also director of technology for Hillary Clinton during her successful re-election campaign for the U.S. Senate in New York in 2006 and her unsuccessful presidential run in 2008. He also served as Prince George's County chief information officer from 2010 to 2017 and was honored as "Innovator of the Year" in 2023 by the Prince George's County Chamber of Commerce.

force to work for three consecutive years.

The company has 65 full time employees working from offices at National Harbor, the large business and entertainment complex on the Potomac River just across the line from the District of Columbia.

Sharaf estimates that he's paying 25% to 30% less for office space in Prince George's when compared to other nearby locations.

"Finding similar space in Northern Virginia or D.C. that's Class A waterfront and as nice as National Harbor is going to be obviously much more expensive," he added.

Sharaf is hoping that as the number of technology businesses in the county grows, the image of the county will improve, encouraging more funders and venture capitalists to take notice.

"Just having a tech ecosystem in the county is good for us because it makes people actually want to come here and stay here and work here," Sharaf said. "One of the issues that this county has had historically, is that people don't really see it as being one of those places. So the more activity that we have that is public, the more I think we start to create a name for this area."

NOTE: How the government counts business formations:

The formations data is not a perfect measure for startups, although the numbers are followed closely to interpret trends. The government tracks when an application is filed for an employment identification number (EIN,) the first step toward starting a business and hiring employees. Just as every worker needs a Social Security number, every business that plans to hire employees or files taxes as a corporation or partnership needs an EIN. Not every entity that receives an EIN actually creates a business, but the sharp increase in applications in the past decade is an indication of growing interest in business ownership.

A Black-owned Startup in Prince George's County: Tetragram Helps Cannabis Users Keep Track of Products

By KIRSTIN NICHOLS
Capital News Service

Otha Smith III has always aimed to live holistically. He eats a plant-based diet and runs three to four miles a day.

After suffering a traumatic brain injury in a car crash 18 years ago, during his senior year at Bowie State University, Smith was prescribed a regimen of opioids and other prescription medications to manage his pain.

But soon he ditched the prescriptions, which he considered dangerous, and decided to manage his pain with cannabis, a nontoxic alternative to the doctor's prescriptions.

The cannabis was an improvement but it was difficult for him to remember which strains and dosages had the desired effect on his pain without leaving him drowsy. So he started to keep track of different products and the rate of effectiveness.

Years later, when cannabis became legal in many states across the United States, including Maryland, Smith dove deeper into the medical

benefits of cannabis.

One thing he found is that there wasn't much data that consumers could use to compare products and make informed buying decisions. Even dispensaries selling cannabis and doctors who wanted to recommend specific products, didn't have enough information to make recommendations.

That's when "I saw an opportunity," Smith said.

In 2020, the Prince George's County native launched Tetragram, a mobile app for cannabis users that allows them to keep track of their product, including where it was purchased, how many milligrams were consumed and the effectiveness on medical conditions such as insomnia and anxiety.

Users have the option to anonymously share their rankings of products or keep them private. Over time, users can look back on entries to determine which product consistencies, consumption methods and dosage amounts best allow them to reach their goals.

Tetragram now works

with nearly 300 dispensaries throughout the nation and currently has over 15,000 users on the app.

Smith, who is African American, is part of a trend. In recent years, many new Black-owned companies have set up shop in Prince George's County, which has become the leading county in Maryland for the number of new businesses, according to data from the United States

Census Bureau.

One year after starting Tetragram, at the age of 39, Smith was recognized by Marijuana Venture magazine as one of the rising stars in the cannabis industry under the age of 40.

"All that data that we collect, as you imagine, could become very powerful to the

See TETRAGRAM Page A6



PHOTO COURTESY OF TETRAGRAM

Tetragram founder Otha Smith being interviewed in 2018 at MJBizCon, a cannabis conference that took place in Las Vegas.

COUNTY CHURCH DIRECTORY

<p>UNITED METHODIST</p> <p>WESTPHALIA Christian Community Church</p> <p>"A CHURCH ON THE REACH FOR GOD"</p> <p>9363 D'Arcy Road Upper Marlboro, MD</p> <p>Worship Service: 9 a.m.</p> <p>(301) 735-9373 Fax: (301) 735-1844</p> <p>Rev. Dr. Timothy West, Pastor</p> <p>ALL ARE WELCOME</p> <p>Web Site: www.westphaliaum.org</p>	<p>BAPTIST</p> <p>FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF HIGHLAND PARK</p> <p>'A Bible Based, Christ Centered & Spirit Led Congregation'</p> <p>6801 Sheriff Road Landover, MD 20785 (301) 773-6655</p> <p>Sunday Biblical Institute: 9:30 a.m. Sunday Worship: 7:30 a.m., 10:45 a.m. Saturday Worship: 6:30 p.m.</p> <p>*WONDERFUL WEDNESDAYS WITH JESUS*: 12 noon (The Power Hour) and 6:45 pm</p> <p>"A Time of Prayer, Praise, Worship, & The Word" Dr. Henry P. Davis III, Pastor www.fhbp.org</p>	<p>BAPTIST</p> <p>First Baptist Church of College Park</p> <p>Welcomes You Where Jesus Christ Is Lord and King Stephen L. Wright, Sr., Pastor</p> <p>5018 Lakeland Road College Park, MD 20740 301-474-3995 www.fbc-cp.org</p> <p>Sunday School 9:30a.m. Sunday Worship 11a.m. Holy Communion 1st Sunday Wednesday Bible Study 7-8p.m. Wednesday Prayer Service 8p.m.</p>	<p>UNITED METHODIST</p> <p>Union United Methodist Church</p> <p>14418 Old Marlboro Pike, Upper Marlboro, MD</p> <p>Church (301) 627-7389</p> <p>Sunday School (Children/Adults) - 8:30 a.m. Sunday Worship: 10:00 a.m.</p> <p>Reverend Twanda E. King, Pastor www.uumchurch.com</p>
<p>S. G. Spottswood A.M.E. Zion Church</p> <p>419 Hill Road, Landover, MD 20785 • 301-490-2625</p> <p><i>Rev. Ranesa Mayo, Pastor</i></p> <p>"We are training disciples to experience victory in every area of their lives"</p> <p>Matthew 28:19-20</p> <p>Sunday School 9:00 a.m. Morning Worship 10:00 a.m.</p> <p>Soulful Thursdays Bible Study 7:00 p.m.</p>	<p>BAPTIST</p> <p>Forest Heights Baptist Church</p> <p>We exist to strengthen your relationship with God. 6371 Oxon Hill Road Oxon Hill, Maryland 20745 Sunday School (Adults & Children) - 9:30 A.M. Worship Service - 11:00 A.M. Wed. Prayer Service & Bible Study - 7:00 P.M. Office (301) 839-1166 Fax (301) 839-1721 E-mail: FHBC@verizon.net Pastor: Rev. Waymond B. Duke</p>	<p>COMMUNITY CHURCH</p> <p>WORD OF GOD COMMUNITY CHURCH</p> <p>"The Church Where Everybody is Somebody and Jesus is Lord"</p> <p>4109 Edmonston Road Bladensburg, MD (301) 864-3437</p> <p>Intercessory Prayer: Sundays - 8:30 a.m. Church School: 9:15 a.m. Morning Worship Celebration - 10:30 a.m. Wed. Night Bible Study - 7:45 p.m. Elder Willie W. Duvall, Pastor</p>	<p>Have a Safe Weekend</p> <p>Church Directory Advertisements are paid ads.</p> <p>Call the Prince George's Post today and have your Church information published in our Directory.</p> <p>Call Today! 301-627-0900</p>

Tetragram from A5

consumer," said Smith, who is now 42 years old. A new version of the app was released just before Thanksgiving last year that allows healthcare providers to see information from an aggregate level without identifying users.

Tetragram, which has five employees, charges dispensaries and healthcare providers a monthly fee to access the platform. It also sells its data to researchers, universities and medical groups.

Smith primarily works out of his home office in Bowie, the largest city in Prince George's County, although Tetragram also has offices in the Locust Point neighborhood in Baltimore.

Smith said he specifically wanted to start Tetragram in Prince George's because of the county's majority Black population.

"Cannabis has been used to marginalize people of color," who historically have been arrested for cannabis more than others, said Smith.

His goal now, he says, is to educate people in the Black community and elsewhere about the health benefits of cannabis and how to use the product as an alternative to prescription drugs.

In the near future, Smith is looking to expand the app to allow for documentation of psychedelics, such as magic mushrooms, as those products become more widely legalized.

"It's been one hell of a ride," Smith said. "We had no idea that building this simple app would be so impactful to peoples' lives."

Trade Missions from A5

purchasing power and familiarity with imported foods, making them prime markets for introducing food and drinks from the U.S.

Hong Kong is one of the most vibrant and dynamic markets in Asia. Due to its limited arable land and resources for food production, Hong Kong relies nearly entirely on imports to fulfill its local food supply, making it a key importer of food and agricultural products globally. In 2023, Hong Kong ranked the 18th largest importer of agricultural products from the United States with \$1.69 billion. Bordering Guangdong province, Hong Kong makes a strong case for U.S. exporters who may have an eye on the mainland China market.

Participants interested in the China and Hong Kong trade missions must be members of SUSTA. For more information or to register for the China outbound trade mission please visit <https://www.susta.org/event/detail/14C3C6E8-94E2-44CB-95FE-008233A9608A/search/>. Those interested in the Hong Kong outbound trade mission may visit <https://www.susta.org/event/detail/476E8D09-80D1-456E-A255-7646FFA851C3/search/>. Sign up for the August trade missions is by July 2, 2024.

For any questions about Maryland Department of Agriculture's international efforts or SUSTA, please contact the department's Director of International Marketing Stone Slade, at stone.slade@maryland.gov.

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