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United Way of the National Capital Area Supports Local Students with 2024 'Stuff the Bus' Event

By CYNDI SUTTON
JR Communications

WASHINGTON, D.C. (August 9, 2024)—United Way of the National Capital Area (United Way NCA) held their annual Stuff the Bus event earlier this week—providing school supplies to 1,200 middle and high school students in the region.

The Stuff the Bus initiative created by United Way of the National Capital Area (United Way NCA) helps to bridge the gap to equitable access to education for students in and around the National Capital region. Through the 2024 Stuff the Bus campaign, 1,200 students at seven Title I middle schools in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia received backpacks filled with grade-appropriate school supplies.

ALICE is an acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed and it represents the more than 500,000 low- and moderate-income households in the National Capital Area earning above the Federal Poverty Level but below what's needed to survive in the current economy. United Way NCA's ALICE Lives Here initiative aims to reduce disparities in the areas of health, education and economic opportunity and improve outcomes for individuals and families in the National Capital Area.

According to the most recent ALICE in the Crosscurrents report (May 2024), 31% of Washington, D.C., families with children were below the ALICE threshold. In Maryland and Virginia, the number of households with children that were below the ALICE threshold were 34% and 35%, respectively. By providing school essentials for students living in ALICE households, United Way NCA is reducing back-to-school costs for families

and helping to set students up for academic success. The seven schools supported by United Way NCA's 2024 Stuff the Bus event include:

1. A. Mario Loiederman Middle School (Silver Spring, Maryland)
2. Buck Lodge Middle School (Hyattsville, Maryland)
3. Francis C. Hammond Middle School (Alexandria, Virginia)
4. International High School at Largo (Upper Marlboro, Maryland)
5. Kelly Miller Middle School (Washington, DC)
6. Thurgood G. Marshall Middle School (Temple Hills, Maryland)
7. Walt Whitman Middle School (Alexandria, Virginia)

PHOTO COURTESY OF UNITED WAY OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA

Volunteers from across the region stuff 800+ backpacks full of school supplies for middle and high school students who are part of the ALICE population.

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"Education is essential to unlocking a student's potential, and more than 100 volunteers came together for this year's Stuff the Bus event to reduce barriers in education by packing more than 800 backpacks. Through the 2024 Stuff the Bus initiative, a total of 1,200 backpacks were provided for students at seven Title I middle and high schools in D.C., Maryland, and Virginia. United Way of the National Capital Area's goal is to reduce any barriers students may face to achieving academic success—including access to school supplies—and by providing school essentials for ALICE household students, we're helping to reduce that extra cost for families."—Ian Gordon, Vice President for Community Impact & Engagement at United Way NCA

Key sponsors for the 2024 Stuff the Bus initiative were CareFirst, Deloitte, Enterprise Foundation, and Equitable Foundation. For more details, visit <https://unitedwaynca.org/stuff-the-bus/>.

Governor Announces \$9.2 Million Renewable Energy Workforce Development Program for Maryland Higher Education Institutions

By PRESS OFFICER
Office of the Governor

ANNAPOLIS, MD (August 9, 2024)—Governor Wes Moore today announced the launch of the Higher Education Clean Energy Grant Pilot Program, a \$9.2 million competitive pilot opportunity to support clean energy transitions within Maryland's colleges and universities. The program will promote both workforce development and Maryland's climate goals by funding solar installations, comprehensive campus clean energy planning, and specialized renewable energy sector academic programming.

"We need to prepare the next generation of Marylanders to lead industries of the future. Today, our administration takes an important step toward doing exactly that by investing in programs that will arm students with the skills they need to compete for jobs in clean energy," said Gov. Moore. "Together, we are demonstrating how climate action builds new pathways to work, wages, and wealth."

The pilot program is open to all of the state's accredited two- and four-year colleges and universities. Participation must support workforce development programs that design courses and curricula focused on skills for careers in the renewable energy industry, in addition to internships that encourage hands-

on student involvement in campus sustainability and workforce development projects.

The pilot provides funding for several key clean energy initiatives, including solar panel installation on Maryland's campuses to boost onsite renewable energy production. Participating institutions have the option to use or sell the renewable energy they generate. Funding will also support creation of campus clean energy master plans, which outline strategic paths for campuses to reduce energy consumption, integrate renewable energy, and reach sustainability goals.

"Maryland's higher education institutions have a key role to play in reducing the state's carbon footprint, while fostering the next generation of clean energy professionals," said Maryland Energy Administration Director Paul G. Pinsky. "This pilot program empowers campuses to lead by example, creating cutting-edge energy solutions and providing students with essential opportunities in the booming green economy."

Colleges and universities have until October 30 to review program guidelines and submit applications for consideration.

For more information, including program terms, conditions and instructions on how to apply, visit <https://energy.maryland.gov/Pages/HigherEducationCleanEnergy.aspx>.

IRS, States, Tax Industry Announce New Joint Effort to Combat Growing Scams and Schemes

Ongoing Coordination to Follow in Footsteps of Security Summit's Identity Theft Efforts to Help Taxpayers and Protect Revenue

By PRESS OFFICER
Internal Revenue Service

WASHINGTON, D.C. (August 16, 2024)—A coalition representing the Internal Revenue Service, state tax agencies and the spectrum of the nation's tax industry today announced a new joint effort to combat the growth of scams and schemes threatening taxpayers and tax systems.

The new combined effort follows a variety of increased scams and schemes that intensified during the past filing season that aimed to exploit vulnerable taxpayers while enriching fraudsters and promoters.

Convened at the request of IRS Commissioner Danny Werfel, the coalition of federal and state tax agencies along with software and financial companies as well as key national tax professional associations agreed to a three-pronged approach. They will work to expand outreach and education about emerging scams, develop new approaches to identify potentially fraudulent returns at the point of filing and create infrastructure improvements to protect taxpayers as well as federal, state and industry tax systems.

The new task force will be called the Coalition Against Scam and Scheme Threats (CASST).

"Across the spectrum of the tax system, we've seen a rising tide of scams and schemes that try to exploit taxpayers and find gaps in government and industry defenses," Werfel said. "This new collaborative approach will allow the private and public sectors to throw our combined weight against this threat. We will do more to work closely together, share information faster, respond quickly to threats and quickly alert the public to new and emerging threats. Our goal is to have a mass effect on this expanding problem that's spread on social media and through bad actors."

The new CASST project has wide support across the nation's tax community. In addition to the IRS, other participants include state tax agencies represented by the Federation of Tax Administrators as well as the leading software and financial industries working in the tax space and key na-

See SCAMS Page A5

PHOTO COURTESY THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



Dream Big: 143rd Maryland State Fair Opens this Weekend

Maryland Department of Tourism and the Maryland State Fair

Annually, the Maryland State Fair provides new family entertainment while preserving traditional favorites, honors the talents of Maryland youth and adults through competition and showcases, and provides fun, educational opportunities to help promote Maryland's leading industry, agriculture. Since many people are generations away from the farm, the Maryland

State Fair expands and changes its exhibits to keep up with technological and industry advancements. Among the many current exhibits are: the Maryland State Fair Birthing Center, U-Learn Farm, the University of Maryland Dairy and Wye Beef Herds exhibits, Horseland, Nature Play Space, and more agricultural programs.

The Maryland State Fair will run for three weekends: August 22-25, August 29-September 2, and September 5-8 offering food, fun, family enter-

tainment, agriculture education and horse racing, and more that is sure to captivate all ages.

For more details, hours, and prices, visit www.marylandstatefair.com.

Maryland State Fair & Agricultural Society, Inc., a non-profit 501 (c) (3), continues its mission to support agriculture, education, preserve and promote Maryland's agricultural roots, and provide competitions and events showcasing Maryland's premier industry, agriculture.

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The grants strengthen the homegrown talent pipeline for Maryland businesses ...

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TOWNS and NEIGHBORS

In & Around Morningside-Skyline

by Mary McHale 301-735-3451

8 New Schools Planned for Prince George's

The County Council has approved construction of eight schools which will replace 14 outdated schools and add about 8,000 seats.

The new schools include Fairwood Area Elementary in Bowie and Margaret Brent Elementary in New Carrollton, both of which will open by 2026.

Other schools include Springhill Lake Elementary, in Greenbelt; Templeton Elementary, Riverdale Park; James Duckworth Elementary, Beltsville; Hyattsville Elementary; Robert Frost Area PK-8; New Carrollton; and—closest to us—Brandywine Area PK.

It's expected construction will begin next month.

I have two questions: Why are almost all the schools in the northern part of the County? And which are the "14 outdated schools?"

Town of Morningside

On September 21, the Fall Yard Sale will be held at the Morningside Volunteer Fire Department. Cost for Table/Space Rentals, 1 for \$15; 2 for \$25.

Whether you are a resident looking to help, or a PGCPs student wanted to acquire some service hours, Morningside has the opportunity for you. Their office can track your service hours and provide documentation.

Town offices will be closed Labor Day, September 2.

Call 301-736-2301 for registration or information.

Neighbors and Other Good People

Jolene Ivey won in the Special Primary, August 6, to fill the open at-large seat on the Prince George's County Council.

Zenobia G. Shields died at the age of 103 on June 19. Services were at From the Heart Church Ministries on Allentown Road. Interment, St. Pius at Fort Lincoln Cemetery, Brentwood.

Bill Jacobs, in March, and Ray Hopper, April, were Knights of the Month for St. Pius X Council. Families of the Month were the Richardson Family, for March, and the Crawford Family, April. Knights of Columbus Council is at 3611 Stewart Road in Forestville.

Changing Landscape

Maryland's Board of Public Works has voted to approve a \$50 million contract for clearing debris from the Patapsco River following the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge last March.

MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center has been named a Center for Comprehensive Multiple Sclerosis.

A home at 6315 Auth Road just sold for \$365,000.

Groove at the Senior Center

Hear ye, hear ye! It's carnival time on Friday, August 30, at the Camp Springs Senior Activity Center! Enjoy craft projects, a variety of games, tasty treats, prizes and surprises at this outdoors event. Wear comfortable shoes so you can groove to the sounds of a live DJ. The Center is at 6420 Allentown Road. Information, 301-449-0498.

McHale Family Weddings

I've missed a column or two in recent weeks because of my crazy life and two weddings, which brought McHales and Mudds from around the country, many staying with me.

In April, granddaughter Leah Katherine Mudd (daughter of Sheila and John Mudd) married John Ryan McRae Sharp. On August 3, Sam (son of Sheila and John) married Kendall Ohrwassel.

Among my out-of-town visitors: daughter Kathleen Shearer from West Chester, Ohio; son Mike and Sandy McHale from El Paso, Texas; Therese Gallegos from Brownsville, Texas; and my siblings, Tom and Stella, from Saginaw, Mich.

Kathleen is still here for another two weeks or so and is my jigsaw buddy and a great help. I don't see more weddings for the immediate future, so maybe I'll get my columns written.

Meanwhile, please send me news.

Morningside Memories: 50 Years Ago

In the May 1974 election, the citizens voted against reducing the Mayor's minimum age from 30 to 25 and the Council Members from 25 to 21. They also elected Council Members Myron Lee Ditmar, Mary E. Hood, Harry F. Messer and William A. Schaub. Gerald A. Glaubitz was Mayor.

Linda Bugg, Frederick Douglas High Grad, Dies at 84

Mary Linda Valerie Adams Bugg, who spent 47 years working for the federal government, died August 3.

Linda was born in Washington, daughter of Josias and Mary Adams. She graduated from Frederick Douglass H.S., Bowie State and American University. She retired as Administrative Officer at the Department of Education.

Her husband John Thomas Bugg, brothers Chester and Lawrence, and sister, Jane predeceased her. Survivors include their son David (Ana Negoescu) and grandchildren Silviu and Teodor; sisters Carole Thompson and Ann Windsor.

Mass of Christian Burial was at St. Mary of the Assumption in Upper Marlboro with interment at Cheltenham.

Milestones

Happy Birthday to Savannah Foster, Aug. 11; Mary Berkley and Brittany Short, Aug. 13; Kathy Beardmore, Aug. 15; Margaret Hunt, Nancy Stacey and Gracie Mothershead, Aug. 16; Hildagard Koinig, Aug. 17; my Granddaughter-in-law Heather McHale, Le August Brent and Mark Cummings, Jr., Aug. 19; Fr. Patrick Lewis and Melody Barnes, Aug. 20; Austin Michael Fowler, Aug. 21; Wayne Anderson, Barbara Phipps and Gavin Michael Glaubitz, Aug. 22; Shelly Sansbury and Joseph R. Maiden, Jr., Aug. 23; Edith Hull, Aug. 26; Chris Busky, William Fowler and twins Anthony and Avery Simmons, Aug. 27; Dorothy Stevenson, Aug. 28; my granddaughter-in-law Michelle McHale, Aug. 29; and Lavine Callicott and her husband Bill, both on Aug. 29.

Happy anniversary to Sharon and Mike Fowler, their 45th on Aug. 11; and my next-door neighbors John and Stacie Smith, their 21st on Aug. 23.

Around the County



PHOTO COURTESY OF CLEAN WATER PARTNERSHIP

Clean Water Partnership Hosted Back-to-School Carnival to Support Students in Prince George's County

By PRESS OFFICER, The Clean Water Partnership

BLADENSBURG, MD (August 13, 2024)—The Clean Water Partnership (CWP), the community-based partnership between Prince George's County and Corvias, kicked off their Back-to-School Carnival at Bladensburg Community Center in Bladensburg, MD on August 10. The fun-filled event featured a backpack giveaway and the CWP gave away more than 500+ bookbags to elementary, middle and high school students. Each backpack included resources, supplies and essentials needed so students can stay active and engaged throughout the school year.

This Back-to-School Festival featured onsite activities, including interactive games and prizes for all ages, educational demonstrations, complimentary snacks, face painting, and much more.

About Clean Water Partnership: In 2015, Prince George's County launched the Clean Water Partnership (CWP) with the expectation of improving the health of the County's waterways and reducing the costs of retrofitting and maintaining the County's stormwater infrastructure. The CWP optimizes the social and economic benefits to County residents by enhancing environmental stewardship and education as well as mentoring, developing, and hiring local businesses that will become the backbone of the County's green economy. Prince George's County was the first municipality to pursue the Community Based Public Private Partnership model developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

County Celebrates New Behavioral Health Crisis Center

An Update from County Executive Angela Alsobrooks

Last week, we hosted the ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Dyer Care Crisis Stabilization Center, a very important facility that will help our County lead the way on mental healthcare. This new emergency care center meets stringent national guidelines for crisis care and will help us provide residents with the services they need during a behavioral health crisis.

Providing behavioral health crisis care is part of our overarching strategy to improve healthcare access for Prince Georgians. It was clear to us that Prince Georgians needed greater access to behavioral and mental health resources, which is why we have worked to improve healthcare for all of our residents by opening new hospitals, new medical offices, new behavioral health facilities, and facilities for women's health across the County since the beginning of my administration.

For too long, our mental healthcare infrastructure has not met the needs of residents. Countless communities across our country do not have adequate facilities for people in crisis and too many people who are experiencing a mental health crisis are met with delays, denial of services, and even imprisonment. This is why we are working so hard to improve access to quality behavioral healthcare and why we are so proud to have taken yet another important step forward in providing mental healthcare and resources for Prince Georgians.

The Dyer Care Center is a state-of-the-art crisis stabilization facility that will provide access to mental health services for all, accepting walk-ins, police drop-offs, and ambulance drop-offs. The Center works like an Emergency Room for people experiencing a mental health crisis. Simply put, the Dyer Center is a place where people who feel lost can find compassion, guidance, and a path to follow. It is a place where our residents will receive care that is befitting of their dignity, care that meets their basic needs and care that helps ensure that we, as a community, are providing opportunities for a brighter future.

We are so grateful to be adding this important crisis stabilization center to our community. From now on, the Dyer Care Center will be here, providing a safe place for Prince Georgians and Marylanders during their greatest time of need.

Brandywine-Aquasco

by Audrey Johnson 301-922-5384

PROSPECT CAMP

Bowie State University head softball coach Ed Powell has announced his prospect camp will take place on Saturday, September 21, 2024, 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. at the BSU Softball Field for Grades 8th through 12th. REGISTER HERE: https://bsubulldogs.com/sb_output.aspx?form=18. Open to any and all entrants. Limited.

The camp is on the campus of Bowie State University with the back-to-back Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) Champions in the Bulldogs). Softball players will be able to develop and showcase their skills during each camp. Coach Powell, his coaching staff, and current Bowie State student-athletes will instruct all participants on the skills necessary to play softball at the Division II level. With defensive, offensive, pitching and catching portions, participants will have the opportunity to develop skills in all areas of their game. The fee to participate is \$125 for the camp. All attendees are asked to bring all necessary softball equipment as well as their own lunch and snacks.

148TH HOMECOMING ANNIVERSARY

"St. Philip's Episcopal Church, Baden Parish will be celebrating their 148th Homecoming Anniversary Sunday, September 15, 2024. Worship Service-Holy Eucharist will be held at 10:00 a.m. Theme: 'Walking in Love as Christ Loves Us.' We are honored to have The Rev. Dr. Bernard Winchester, Jr. Senior Pastor at First Baptist Church of Fairmount Heights, Maryland as our speaker of the hour. Please plan to attend and hear the spiritual message. Lunch will be served immediately following service."—Vivian Rich

SML IDENTITY CRISIS

This year's SML Experience presents "IDENTITY CRISIS," Saturday October 19, 2024, from 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. at Harmony Hall Regional Center—10701 Livingston Road, Fort Washington, MD, 20744. Tele-

phone: 301-203-6040. Host Milo and Alicia. Organized by Alicia Briscoe.

Come join us for a thought-provoking event at Harmony Hall Regional Center where we dive into the depths of identity. Explore the question of who you are in a supportive engaging environment. This in-person event promises to spark introspection and discussion as we navigate the complexities of self-discovery. Do not miss the opportunity to connect with others and gain insight into your authentic self. In addition to this discussion, you will receive lunch and raffles will be available. Tickets: Preferred Seating: \$135.23, incl. \$10.23 Fee; General Admission: \$81.88 incl. No refunds.

CASTING CALLS

Casting Call Conversations in Faith casting call for a stage play coming fall 2024. Based on the stage play Conversations in Faith by Jocelyn B. D. Moore. Talk show hosts interview Cain, Jonah, Queen Jezebel and other Godly and ungodly notable figures from the Bible. Calling men and women ages 21-74. Amateurs, professionals, singers, and musicians are welcome. Audition is cold reading. We are accepting auditions for the roles of Hosts, Adam, Eve, Cain, Jonah, Delilah, Judas, Ruth and Naomi. Audition dates and times are flexible. Call 240-755-9008 to schedule an audition. Please email headshot and resume to jocelyn@jmentertainment.info. Audition location: Surratts-Clinton Branch Library, 9400 Piscataway Road, Clinton, Maryland 20735.

FOOD PANTRIES IN PRINCE GEORGE'S, MARYLAND

Food pantries and distribution centers in Prince George's County Maryland administer several assistance programs. The locations may have meals, free food, gift baskets, and items such as clothing available to low-income seniors and disabled in the community. Resources offered by these centers can range from groceries and

boxes of food up through limited amounts of financial help for bills, housing, or basic needs such as diapers or baby formula.

Some of Prince George's food banks partner with national non-profits, government agencies, or local charities. For example, many sites can help people apply for resources such as food stamps, LI-HEAP, or low-income housing. Other services will also be arranged as needed. Anything noted above would of course be in addition to helping needy families by providing free or low-cost food, meals, and perishable items. The goal is to prevent hunger in the region.

Beltway Church of Christ, 6000 Davis Boulevard, Camp Springs, MD, 20746. Dial the church at 301-423-2320 for hours. The First New Horizon Baptist Church, 9511 Piscataway Road, Clinton, MD, 20735, telephone: 301-856-9177. Free meals, including delivery to the homebound, can be arranged. Greater Refuge Ministries Food Pantry, 9512 Piscataway Road, Clinton, MD, 20735, telephone: 866-515-1317. FISH of Greater Bowie, PO Box 858, Bowie, MD, 20718, main phone: 301-262-8479. The disabled and elderly can receive a Meals on Wheels service or transportation. Free groceries and Christmas food baskets as well as gifts are available. Bethel House, 6810 Floral Park Road, Brandywine, MD, 20613, telephone: 301-372-1700. Fresh fruits and vegetables can be provided along with snacks for students in Prince George's County. Bowie Pantry and Emergency Aid Fund, 3120 Belair Drive, Bowie, MD, 20715, telephone: 301-262-6765. Emergency food is provided. Other support may help pay bills, offer grocery and prescription vouchers, shelter, and other services for the low income and people facing hardship. Many other pantries operate in the region. For more details, call 410-737-8282. Callers learn about Meals on Wheels for senior citizens or Christmas and Thanksgiving programs. <https://joannebenson.com/flyer>>FoodPantries.

COMMUNITY



ages. Major additional acts include Topsy Turvy, Markita's One Woman Stunt Show; Piper Jones; The Queen of Hoops, Paolo Garbanzo; Hilby, the Skinny German Juggle Boy amazes and confuses; the enormously popular Jacques Ze Whipper for six weekends, Vixens En Garde, and Barely Balanced acrobatic antics, and in the 51st year of their enormously popular comedy sword fighting and witty repartee Puke and Snot bedazzle with their fast paced humor. Add in a village full of stilt walkers, beggars, hermits, wenches, pick pockets, rakes and rogues for an entertainment experience not only to be seen but to be immersed amongst. Visit www.rennfest.com/entertainment for a full listing and their dates.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MARYLAND RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL

At left: Of dance and merriment—Honorable Mention, “Best Spirit” photo by Stacy Sutton

Below, top: A musical act—3rd Place, “Best Character” photo by Cynthia Lodens Dowdle

Below, bottom: Chariot racing—3rd Place, “Best Photo” by Frank Terrel

Time Travel to Fun with the 2024 Maryland Renaissance Festival

Let Merriment Abound with Entertainment, Feasting, and Crafts for All!

By JULES SMITH
Maryland Renaissance Festival

CROWNSVILLE, MD—The Maryland Renaissance Festival, a tradition for the entire family, begins its 48th season August 24th and runs Saturdays and Sundays and Labor Day Monday through October 20th for nine weekends of thrills, feasting, handmade crafts, entertainment and merriment in Crownsville, near Annapolis, Maryland.

The 27 acre Village of Revel Grove comes to life each autumn with more than 200 professional performers on ten stages, a 3,000 seat arena with armored jousting on magnificent steeds and streets filled with village characters. Join His Most Royal Highness King Henry VIII in the forests and glades

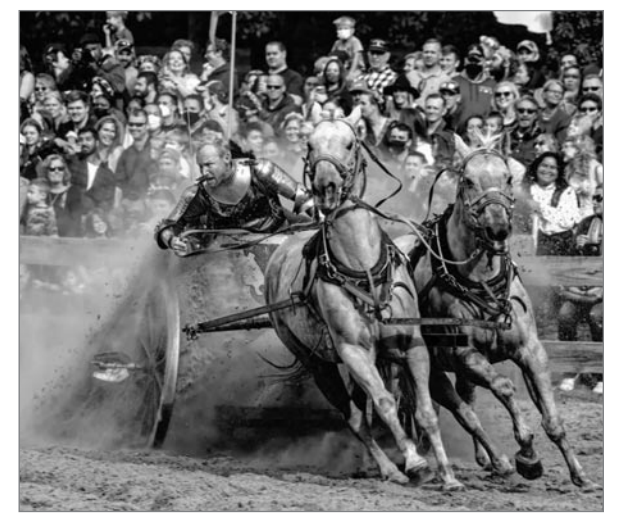
with over 140 artisans exhibiting crafts in their own renaissance shops, five taverns featuring cool libations, 42 food and beverage emporiums providing a vast array of succulent and sweet treats to sate even the most hearty of appetites.

The almost continuous entertainment on all ten stages features many returning favorite performers: Shakespeare's Skum with rollicking twenty-minute renditions of the Bard's most popular plays; A Fool Named “O” and LaLa mime show; walk with nobility through the village with King Henry and his Royal Court. Minstrels, magicians, musicians, jugglers, daring feats of skill and artistry abound. Returning this season is the jousting troupe Debracey Productions with a field full of horses, men in armor, chariots, trick riding and thrills for all

The Maryland Renaissance Festival's reputation of unique and predominately hand-made wares by the very artists in their renaissance shops is among the best in the realm of festivals. Metal work, wood sculpture, jewelry, furniture, clothing, footwear, ceramics, stained glass, headwear, glassblowing and many demonstrating craftsmen fill the shops and studios.

The King's kitchens prepare a sumptuous feast of delicious and wondrous delights to satisfy most any Lord or Lady. One pound smoked turkey legs, steak on a stake, fresh crepes, stuffed chili peppers, gyros, succulent ribs, a fresh seafood raw bar, sweet concoctions and tender sandwiches of chicken, fish, crab, beef and pork with bountiful servings of all manner of sides add to your table. Cool, mild drinks and an array of ales, ciders and wines cleanse your pallet and refresh your constitution.

The first three weekends, from August 20th through September 8th, the Festival reduces pricing for all without coupons or special purchasing required to offer family friendly entertainment pricing. Tickets beginning September 14th through October 20th are for peak season and still among the lowest of any renaissance festival in the country. Prices, special event info and full schedules are available at www.rennfest.com.



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First Lady Moore Honored for Advocacy in the Arts During Association of African American Museums National Conference

By PRESS OFFICER
The Office of the First Lady

ANNAPOLIS, MD (August 12, 2024)—First Lady Dawn Moore today received the President's Award from the Association of African American Museums during their 46th annual conference in Baltimore. The award, given to Governor Wes Moore and First Lady Moore, honors the administration's commitment to preserving Maryland's African American history and culture and advocacy for museums and cultural institutions dedicated to highlighting the contributions of African Americans in Maryland.

“One of my top priorities as First Lady is advocating for the arts in our state and preserving all of Maryland's history and culture for our future generations,” said First Lady Moore. “I am proud to receive this honor, as our administration continues to partner with our local cultural institutions to protect Maryland's rich cultural heritage that has been shaped over the last two centuries by trailblazers who fought to build a state, and a country, that leaves no one behind.”

Earlier at the conference, First Lady Moore participated in a fireside chat with Reginald F. Lewis Museum President Terri L. Freeman. The conversation focused on the 60th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act, the legacy of the Supreme Court's Brown v. Board of Education decision, and the importance of celebrating and

preserving the art, history, and culture of the Black diaspora.

“As the First Lady of Maryland, Dawn Moore is a walking legacy and embodiment of the Civil Rights Act and Brown vs. Board of Education, making her presence at the 46th annual conference for the Association of African American Museums truly significant,” said Association of African American Museums President and CEO Vedet Coleman-Robinson. “Her commitment to advocating for African American history and culture, alongside her extensive experience in public service, community organizing, and fundraising, makes her a deserving recipient of the President's Award. First Lady Moore's dedication to preserving Maryland's rich history and culture through the arts serves as an inspiring example for us all.”

The Association of African American Museums is a non-profit member organization established to support African and African American-focused museums nationally and internationally and the professionals who protect, preserve and interpret African and African American art, history and culture. The association has more than 800 individual and institutional members and is composed of museums, museum professionals, institutions, and individuals that share an interest in African American art, culture, and history.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OFFICE OF THE FIRST LADY



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COMMENTARY

Marc Morial

President and CEO, National Urban League



To Be Equal:

The Power of the Gumbo Spirit was On Display at Paris Olympics

"In addition to giving us countless thrilling moments of athletic excellence, the Summer Games have given the DEI movement the greatest gift it could ever hope for: a picture of success that can inspire people from across the political spectrum ... They represent what makes America great: individuals from diverse backgrounds, viewing their distinctive identities as sources of pride, cooperating together to achieve excellence and bring honor to their nation."

—Eboo Patel

The power of the Gumbo spirit was on full display in Team USA at the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris.

The most diverse women's gymnastics team in U.S. history was the most decorated, with 10 medals total, 3 of them gold, including the coveted individual all-around.

Team USA members of every racial and ethnic background found success in Paris, bringing home the gold in track and field, swimming, and other events. But the diversity of the women's gymnastics team has captured the world's attention, given the historic exclusion of women of color from the sport.

When Dominique Dawes competed in the Olympic trials for the 1992 Barcelona Games, she was the first Black gymnast to ever qualify. She was part of the celebrated "Magnificent Seven" in the 1996 Atlanta games who won the first-ever

gold medal for the United States in the women's team competition.

A decade after Dawes Olympics debut, Gabby Douglas became the first Black woman of any nationality to win the all-around gold medal in gymnastics.

It would be absurd to argue that Black women were absent from Olympic gymnastics for nearly a century because of a lack of talent. It is an equally absurd argument to make about executive leadership in the nation's top corporations, admissions to elite colleges and universities, or the Oval Office.

The anti-racial justice extremists who want to ban DEI policies would doom Team USA to mediocrity just to assure their own place on the roster.

Diverse organizations—from Fortune 500 companies to Olympic gymnastics teams—perform better than exclusive organizations. People from different backgrounds bring a wealth of different experiences, knowledge, and skills. One study found that diverse and inclusive teams made better decisions than individuals 87% of the time.

Diverse companies see higher revenue, with 75% of companies with strong DEI policies in their management teams will surpass their financial goals.

The gymnastics world did not sit passively by and wait for a fully-trained Simone Biles to find her own way, unbidden, to the National Championships in 2012. Were it not for a sharp-eyed coach who noticed the tiny 6-year-old on a day-care field trip to a gym, Biles may never have been steered toward the sport. Today she is almost universally recognized as the greatest gymnast of all time.

The leaders of the so-called "anti-woke" movement would rather dominate second-rate institutions than collaborate to build world-class organizations.

We can give thanks, at least, they're not entrusted to assemble our sports teams.

Marian Wright Edelman

Founder and President Emerita, Children's Defense Fund



ChildWatch:

Staying Strong

At a discouraging time in my life, I heard beloved late spiritual director Gordon Cosby of the Church of the Saviour in Washington, D.C., read this "Request for Transfer" by an unknown author. I often return to it and share it to help keep spurring us forward.

"Request for Transfer"

To: Commander-in-Chief
From: Battlefield Soldier
Subject: Request for Transfer

Dear Lord,

I'm writing this to You to request a transfer to a desk job. I herewith present my reasons:

I began my career as a private, but because of the intensity of the battle, You quickly moved me up in the ranks. You made me an officer and gave me a tremendous amount of responsibility. There are many soldiers and recruits under my charge. I'm constantly being called upon to dispense wisdom, make judgments, and find solutions to complex problems.

You have placed me in a position to function as an officer, when in my heart I know I have only the skills of a private. I realize that You promised to supply all I would need for the battle. But sir, I must present You a re-

alist picture of my equipment. My uniform, once so crisp and starched, is now stained with tears and blood of those I have tried to help. The soles of my boots are cracked and worn from the miles I have walked trying to enlist and encourage the troops.

My weapons are marred, tarnished, and chipped from constant battle against the enemy. Even the Book of Regulations I was issued has been torn and tattered from endless use. The words are now smeared.

You promised You would be with me throughout the war, but when the noise of the battle is so loud and the confusion is so great, I can neither see nor hear You. I feel so alone. I'm tired. I'm discouraged. I have battle fatigue.

I'd never ask for a discharge. I love being in Your service. But I humbly request a demotion and transfer. I'll file papers or clean latrines. Just get me out of the battle—please, sir.

Your faithful, but tired, soldier,
John/Jane Q. Servant

To: Faithful but Tired Soldier
From: Commander-in-Chief
Subject: Request for Transfer

Dear Soldier:
Your request for transfer has

been denied. I herewith present My reasons:

You are needed in the battle. I have selected you, and I gave My word to supply your need. You do not need a demotion and transfer. (You'd never cut it on latrine duty.) You need a period of "R and R"—renewal and rekindling. I am setting aside a place on the battlefield that is insulated from all sound and fully protected from the enemy. I will meet you there, and I will give you rest. I will remove your old equipment and make all things new.

You have been wounded in the battle, My soldier. Your wounds are not visible, but you have received grave internal injuries. I will heal you. You have been weakened in the battle. I will strengthen you, and I will be your strength. I will instill in you confidence and ability. My Words will rekindle within you a renewed love, zeal, and enthusiasm.

Report to Me tattered and empty. I will refill you.

Compassionately,
Your Commander-in-Chief,
God

Let's continue to cling to the Commander-in-Chief's response in this exchange. Let's engage in renewal and rekindling, recharging for the battle ahead, and continue to fight for and with the 74 million children and youth across this nation who are depending on us.

Ben Jealous

Executive Director, Sierra Club



The IRA is Still Our Biggest Step Toward a Brighter Future for Our Children

I often think about a factory hallway in Dalton, Georgia that is filled with pictures drawn by children. It is a reminder of what can be, what will be, thanks to the historic Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which celebrates its second anniversary this month.

The drawings capture how these children see their parents who work at this solar manufacturing plant. There are pictures of beautiful sunny days, of the earth with pristine water. Of their parents saving the world. These children see their parents as superheroes. As I remember these pictures, I wonder: how can anyone not be inspired by these children to fight every day for a better, livable future? For more clean energy jobs, in big cities and rural communities across the country, that will power our economy — and our homes — for generations to come?

Around this anniversary, the news has been filled with reflection on what the IRA has achieved and what still needs to be done. It is — as it should be — a major focal point at the Democratic National Convention happening now in Chicago.

You do not have to look hard to find examples of its success. More than 334,000 new clean energy jobs have been created across the country. More than 3 million U.S. households have collectively saved over \$8 billion on upgrades that will save them money and make their homes more energy efficient. In Illinois alone, for example, nearly 140,000 residents claimed more than \$260 million in tax credits on their 2023 tax returns for installing solar or

making other energy efficiency improvements on their homes.

One fact should loom larger than most: the IRA is still this nation's biggest single step ever toward securing a healthy and livable planet for all. No other single piece of legislation has done more to address our climate goals and support the clean energy revolution already underway. Through the Climate Pollution Reduction Grants program, the IRA is projected to reduce greenhouse gas pollution by as much as 971 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent by 2050. That's equivalent to the emissions from about 5 million homes' energy use every year for more than 25 years.

Need a reminder of the urgency and necessity of this investment in combating the climate crisis? Just turn on the news. Or step outside. We are experiencing the hottest summer on record ... in the hottest year on record. Supercharged storms and wildfires from all that heat are impacting more and more Americans. Hurricane Ernesto is just the latest storm to batter homes and businesses and leave hundreds of thousands of Americans without power. With so many people hurting and at risk, the IRA remains one of our most powerful tools to mitigate climate change's harm. We must continue to learn from our experience implementing it, fill gaps where we see them, and double down on our efforts to protect people, places and the planet we call home. And we must remember that throwing everything we have at combating the climate crisis is also the way America wins in the next economy.

In the decades since the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the shipping of U.S. jobs overseas has helped destroy towns and cities across America. Now, the IRA is fueling a manufacturing rebirth that is creating good-paying jobs while bringing our energy economy into the 21st century.

Plans to build a new solar cell factory near Minneapolis, Minnesota are currently underway. This factory will create more clean energy jobs in the Midwest while addressing the need for more American-made solar cells. The solar company Heliene, which co-owns the project, publicly credits the IRA's tax credits for inspiring its decision to invest in U.S. solar manufacturing.

Just an hour drive away from Minneapolis is the town of Becker. It is the home to one of the largest coal-burning power plants in the country. Yet Becker will soon be known for something else: being a national leader in the transition to clean, renewable energy. Xcel Energy is fully retiring the Sherco coal-burning power plant by 2030. Literally within eyesight of the old plant, they are building what will become the fifth largest solar project in the United States. Taking advantage of new and extended tax credits and grant programs, the Sherco solar and energy storage facility will bring 1.8 million solar panels online in 2026. It will employ hundreds of workers — many of them moving over from the coal plant — and power more than 150,000 Midwest homes each year.

The IRA was always designed to set us up for long-term economic success. Part of how it achieves this is by putting money back into Americans' pockets and ensuring that no community is left out of the transition to cleaner, safer, and more affordable clean energy. Tax credits and rebates are lowering the cost of home improvements and electric vehicles that themselves will save consumers money. The Solar For All program is awarding \$7 billion to projects across the country that will help over 900,000 low-income households benefit from solar energy.

We owe it to ourselves and to our kids to build on this momentum. On this IRA anniversary, I think of those children in Dalton and children in communities big and small across the country. I am excited for all the pictures to come if we get this right.

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BUSINESS AND FINANCE

Social Security Matters

Ask Rusty:

Does Some of My Social Security Payment Include Repayment of My Contributions?

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 have a question about my Social Security benefits. Would I be correct to assume that part of the monthly Social Security income I get is a repayment of what I contributed to the fund while I was working? If so, how much of my monthly benefit payment is my own money coming back to me? **Signed: Curious Beneficiary**

Dear Curious: I'm afraid that is not how Social Security works. The money you contribute to Social Security during your working years does not go into a special account to be repaid to you. Rather, the Social Security taxes you pay while working are used to pay benefits to all those currently receiving Social Security benefits. The system is, in effect, a "pay as you go" program where all those currently contributing help pay benefits for all those now receiving. What your contributions do, however, is earn you "quarter credits" and, when you have enough credits, you become eligible for Social Security retirement benefits for life. Generally, someone must have about 40 quarters (about 10 years) contributing to Social Security to be eligible for SS retirement benefits.

How much you receive monthly is determined not by how much you contributed but, rather, by how much your work earnings were over your lifetime. You will get a percentage of your average pre-retirement work income as your monthly Social Security payment, but that is also affected by your age when you claim benefits. It is your average lifetime earnings (adjusted for inflation) which determines your "Primary Insurance Amount" (or "PIA"). Your PIA is what you get at your Social Security full retirement age (FRA), but your age when you claim benefits determines if you get more or less than your PIA. Claiming SS before your FRA means a smaller monthly benefit, while waiting longer than your FRA means a benefit higher than your PIA. (SS benefits reach maximum at age 70). FYI, each person's FRA is different based on the year they were born, but full retirement age today is between age 66 and 67. When you claim benefits relative to your FRA determines how much of your PIA you will receive each month.

So, your contributions to Social Security aren't used to determine your monthly benefit amount, but your average lifetime work earnings and age when you claim are. Nevertheless, you may be interested to know that most people get back everything they have personally contributed to Social Security within about 3 to 5 years of collecting their benefits. In that sense, Social Security is an exceptionally good deal, since most Americans now collect benefits for about two decades. And therein lies much of Social Security's financial dilemma — people are now collecting benefits for many more years than the current program is designed to support. And that is what Congress needs to fix as soon as possible. The Social Security trust funds (which now provide supplemental money to pay benefits) are projected to be depleted around 2033, which will mean a cut in everyone's monthly Social Security payment, unless Congress acts soon to reform the program and restore it to fiscal solvency.

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

Governor Moore Announces \$7.3 Million in EARN Workforce Grants to Supercharge High-Demand Industries and Make Maryland More Competitive

By PRESS OFFICER
Office of the Governor

ANNAPOLIS, MD (August 12, 2024)—Governor Wes Moore today announced \$7.3 million in workforce grants to upskill Maryland's workforce and make Maryland more competitive in emerging healthcare, information technology, skilled trade, and hospitality industries through the Employment Advancement Right Now (EARN) Maryland program. The grants, administered by the Maryland Department of Labor, strengthen the homegrown talent pipeline for Maryland businesses to meet increasing demand for their products and services.

"We are proud to announce the largest investment to date in the EARN Workforce Grant Program—an effort which will help over 500 businesses throughout the state," said Gov. Moore. "These grants empower our business owners and their employees to build up our local economies, strengthen Maryland's workforce pipeline, and provide much-needed resources to more than 3,400 workers who are on the front lines every day, getting the work done."

For the last decade, EARN Maryland has strengthened the state's workforce pipeline to supply businesses with a well-trained workforce and get residents into good-paying careers. Based upon employer-identified training needs, EARN grantees provide education and skills training to unemployed and underemployed Marylanders. The program also provides career advancement training for incumbent workers, leading to a more highly-skilled workforce.

"EARN grants make our economy more competitive by delivering highly-skilled workers to our key industry sectors and businesses," said Maryland Department of Labor Secretary Portia Wu. "Year after year, EARN grants deliver a big return on investment. I'm excited to see the impact of this year, because it is the

biggest one-year allocation of EARN grants in the program's 10-year history."

The grants announced bring the total investment from the Moore-Miller Administration to more than \$13.7 million in EARN funding, which in total will train or upskill more than 5,500 Maryland workers. The awards include a number of new partnerships as well as enhanced funding for already established and highly effective partnerships. The 46 grant awards announced during this round include more than 500 employer partners representing key industries.

EARN Maryland's innovative sector strategies have earned national recognition as a best practice, highlighted by esteemed organizations including the National Skills Coalition and Urban Institute. The recognition underscores the program's effectiveness, as nearly 10,000 individuals have already been placed into employment from EARN and more than 14,000 incumbent workers have benefited from its training opportunities.

A number of the partnerships will offer career advancement in the healthcare industry, giving more workers access to this important sector and expanding equity and diversity.

"The Anne Arundel County Healthcare Collaborative is excited to be selected as a recipient of EARN Maryland funding," said President and Chief Executive Officer of Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation Kirkland J. Murray. "Through the Collaborative's work, we will help address the critical healthcare workforce shortage by bringing together a diverse range of partners including healthcare businesses, industry partners, and workforce organizations. This important work would not be possible without the support of the Maryland Department of Labor and the EARN Maryland program."

Grantees will deploy creative strategies that make Maryland more competitive by connecting residents to jobs,

while investing in the growth of registered apprenticeships and developing a highly-skilled workforce to meet priorities around infrastructure, clean energy, and healthcare.

"The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 26 and the Washington, DC National Electrical Contractors Association are thrilled to be recipients of the Maryland Department of Labor EARN Grant," said IBEW Communications Director David Pala. "This Electrical Career Pathways program will help many aspiring electricians from local high schools in Montgomery County learn real skills and receive basic certifications while earning a paycheck, as well as invaluable on-the-job training."

The state's community colleges also play an important role in many of the partnerships.

"We are honored to receive EARN funding from the Maryland Department of Labor, a significant boost to our efforts in connecting Upper Shore residents with quality jobs in the skilled trades," said Chesapeake College President Dr. Clifford Coppersmith. "These funds will enable us to provide scholarships in industries that typically lack such resources, as well as comprehensive support services to ensure our students are fully equipped for successful careers. Our diverse partnerships—encompassing the regional Workforce Investment Board, economic development offices, and local employers across Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot counties—exemplify the power of collaboration and will be essential to our students' success. Together, we are creating robust pathways from education to employment, addressing industry needs while empowering our community with the skills and opportunities to thrive."

For more information about EARN Maryland, including information on the grants announced today, visit <https://abor.maryland.gov/earn/>.

Maryland's Seafood, Eat Food Pass

Indulge in Maryland Seafood and Win Prizes

By PRESS OFFICER
MD Department of Agriculture

ANNAPOLIS, MD (August 15, 2024)—Maryland's Best, a marketing program of the Maryland Department of Agriculture, has announced the release of the Maryland's Best Seafood, Eat Food pass. Consumers who sign up for the pass will use it to explore Maryland restaurants dishing out fresh and local seafood.

"Maryland is known for its blue crabs, but we also have many other local seafood options now, such as perch, farmed oysters, wild Chesapeake blue catfish," said Maryland Department of Agriculture Secretary Kevin Atticks. "I invite Maryland residents and visitors to download the app and start eating your way through the state."

The pass, developed in partnership with Bandwango, aims to encourage the consumption of fresh Maryland seafood. Consumers can head to MarylandsBest.net and follow the instructions

to download the web-based platform. From there, simply select a restaurant on the list, or a seafood event, check in on the platform and build up points to win prizes including a Seafood, Eat Food cutlery set, water bottle, or "Shuck Yeah, I ate Maryland Seafood" t-shirt.

"Not only are you enjoying delicious seafood from Maryland's waterways, you are also supporting local jobs and the economy by ensuring you're eating local," said Stephanie Pazzaglia, Chair of the Maryland Seafood Marketing Commission.

Additionally, some participating restaurants may have special offers that can be redeemed and be used towards building up points for prizes. Enjoy your summer filled with Maryland seafood, and feel good knowing you're supporting local watermen and getting the freshest Maryland seafood around!

For more information and to see a list of participating restaurants, please visit MarylandsBest.net or contact Maryland's Best Seafood Marketing Director Matthew Scales at matthew.scales1@maryland.gov.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MD DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Scam from AI

tional tax professional organizations. The Council for Electronic Revenue Communication Advancement, the National Association of Computerized Tax Processors and the American Coalition for Taxpayer Rights are among those that have signed on to support the initiative. In all, more than 60 different groups from the private sector have signed on to the initiative, either individually or as part of a group.

"The FTA membership is dedicated to protecting taxpayers from fraudulent attacks on the country's tax ecosystem," said Federation of Tax Administrators Executive Director Sharonne Bonardi. "We are committed to continuing our collaborative efforts by working with the IRS, industry and other stakeholders to implement strategies that allow for proactive detection, prevention and mitigation of scams and schemes deployed by bad actors intending to defraud tax agencies."

The new coalition is an outgrowth of the Security Summit effort, and while the new collaborative effort will not replace the Summit, the scams coalition will be closely modeled on the

Summit. The Security Summit was launched in 2015 by the same groups to stem the growth in tax-related identity theft. The combined effort improved information sharing between the groups, identified common approaches to combat tax-related identity theft, improved internal tax system defenses and conducted extensive public awareness campaigns for taxpayers and tax professionals. While tax-related identity theft remains a concern, the improved protections have protected millions of taxpayers and prevented billions of dollars of fraudulent payments.

For this new project targeting scams, the CASST task force has agreed to high-level principles. The purpose of the group will be to better protect taxpayers from falling prey to unscrupulous actors by leveraging multilateral relationships across the tax ecosystem to minimize the filing of fraudulent tax returns.

"CERCA is pleased to work with the IRS and the states to combat the proliferation of 'scams and schemes' that are victimizing millions of Americans," said Shannon Bond, chair of the Council for Electronic Revenue Communication Advancement. CERCA represents companies in

the tax software and preparation industries as well as financial service groups and others in the tax community. "Continuing our long partnership with the IRS, CERCA stands shoulder to shoulder with both the federal government and the states to reduce first-party fraud, which threatens the viability of tax systems and imperils vulnerable taxpayers."

During the past tax season, there has been increased activity involving a variety of scams and schemes harming taxpayers, including the Fuel Tax Credit, household employment taxes and the Sick and Family Leave Credit. The IRS has seen hundreds of thousands of dubious claims come in where it appears taxpayers are claiming credits for which they are not eligible, leading to refunds being delayed and the need for taxpayers to show they have legitimate documentation to support these claims.

Numerous other scams and schemes continue to be seen circulating on social media and are highlighted through efforts including the annual IRS Dirty Dozen list and alerts from the Security Summit partners. The new approach will increase collaborative efforts to raise awareness and edu-

cation about schemes, not just during tax season but throughout the year.

With the new scam and scheme initiatives, the IRS, states and the private sector will work to put in place new protections by filing season 2025. The combined effort is particularly important because the group has seen instances where scammers look for weak points in government systems and the private sector to exploit. The combined effort will improve defenses across both the private and public sector with a goal of making it more difficult for scammers to slip improper or false tax returns through the system.

The group will also work to make long-term structural changes to fundamentally improve the ability to identify and stop scams. This includes working to improve EFIN and PTIN validation and new steps to combat "ghost preparers," who prepare tax returns for a fee and do not in any way sign a tax return or disclose their role on the tax return as the preparer. In many cases, these are inflated tax refunds that lead to millions in revenue loss and add risk for taxpayers who file potentially improper claims with only the individual's name associated with the tax return.

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EarthTalk® Q&A

What are some "nature-based solutions" to fight climate change?

Dear EarthTalk:
What are some "nature-based solutions" to fight climate change?
— J. M., via email

As we come to terms with the growing effects of climate change, many are turning to so-called nature-based solutions, which are holistic approaches that promote biodiversity and ecosystem preservation. Nature-based solutions harness natural processes to address problems rooted in climate change. Countries such as Africa, the Philippines and Brazil are at the forefront of using nature-based solutions.

One example of a nature-based solution is reforestation, the replanting of native trees in areas subject to deforestation. Many initiatives are underway to restore regions of the world negatively affected by logging, burning and land use change. For example, Africa's Great Green Wall project aims to restore 100 million hectares of degraded land across 20 countries. This is already dramatically reducing atmospheric carbon in the region while providing a livelihood for local communities.

Mangroves are a lesser-known climate champion, essential for both carbon storage and coastal protection. The Zoological Society of London (ZSL) is spearheading an extensive mangrove restoration program in the Philippines where over 50 percent of mangrove habitats have been lost. By regrowing the mangroves that line the islands, they are building a defense against rising sea levels.

Urban greening is perhaps one of the most easily accessible nature-based solutions and is most advantageous in areas with little to no nature already present. An example of this is New York City's High Line, a 1.5-mile long track that was previously abandoned before it was

transformed by Friends of the Highline who now use it as a community space to grow native plants, host events and display local art. Urban greening is highly effective, easy, and beneficial to communities.

Agroforestry integrates trees and native brush into farms to mimic natural environments. In Brazil's Atlantic Forest, agroforestry has been instrumental in transforming disrupted land into systems that support biodiversity without costing communities who rely on farms. Such projects promote soil health, improve water retention and support the spread of nutrients. Planting trees around farmland or introducing wildflower seeds at the edge of a property can be instrumental in promoting ecosystem health.

Nature-based solutions may often be presented as large-scale initiatives, but such solutions are still vital and more accessible in a smaller context. Consider joining an ongoing project in your area, or starting one yourself, taking inspiration from other established programs around the world.

CONTACTS: The role of agroforestry in restoring Brazil's Atlantic Forest: Opportunities and challenges for smallholder farmers, <https://besjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/pan3.10297>; Mangroves as a solution to the climate crisis, <https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/mangroves-as-a-solution-to-the-climate-crisis>; The High Line, <https://www.thehighline.org>.

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