

# The Prince George's Post



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## REALTORS® Support Annual Local Food Drive

By PRESS OFFICER  
PGCAR

LANDOVER, Md. (Dec. 16, 2024)—On December 11, 2024, The Prince George's County Association of REALTORS® (PGCAR), the premier advocate for real estate and private property rights in the County, representing nearly 3,500 real estate professionals, hosted its highly anticipated annual holiday charity event at The Grove at Oak Creek. This year's event achieved remarkable success, raising over \$3,000 in support of the Prince George's County Public Safety Assistance Program (PSAP) holiday food drive.

The funds raised will be dedicated to purchasing and assembling complete holiday food baskets, ensuring they reach families in need across Prince George's County just in time

for the holiday season. Through this heartfelt initiative, REALTORS®, in partnership with PSAP and other committed sponsors, endeavor to address critical needs within the community. This year, over 2,500 food baskets will be distributed, bringing joy and much-needed relief to local families.

"We're truly honored to support those in need this holiday season through our partnership with PSAP," said Shameeka Price, Chair of PGCAR's Community Service Committee. REALTORS® understand the importance of giving back, recognizing that many in the community face challenges during the holidays."

President Arnita Greene added, "This event was filled with joy and unity, as PGCAR members came to-

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PHOTO COURTESY PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®

From left, Prince George's County Fire Chief Tiffany D. Green, Prince George's County Chief of Police Malik Aziz, Prince George's County Association of REALTORS® Chair of Community Service Committee Shameeka Price, Prince George's County Association of REALTORS® President Arnita Greene, Prince George's County Office of Homeland Security Director, Ronald E. Gill, Jr. and Prince George's County Sheriff John D. B. Carr at the annual holiday charity event hosted by the Prince George's County Association of REALTORS® at The Grove at Oak Creek.

## Governor Moore Welcomes Vice President Kamala Harris at Prince George's Community College to Celebrate Service and Inspire Continued Civic Engagement

By PRESS OFFICER  
Office of the Governor

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (Dec. 17, 2024)—Governor Wes Moore today welcomed Vice President Kamala Harris at Prince George's County Community College to celebrate youth who are serving their communities. Together with Lieutenant Governor Aruna K. Miller; U.S. Senator-elect Angela Alsobrooks; AmeriCorps Chief Executive Officer Michael Smith; Maryland Department of Service and Civic Innovation Secretary Paul Monteiro, the

leaders rallied more than 200 Maryland Service Year Option and AmeriCorps members to promote continued civic engagement.

"To all the young leaders who are here, I thank you for your service to the people of Maryland. Each one of you has decided to dedicate yourself to the work of service. This service will affect people who may never know your names, but their lives will forever be touched in a positive way because of your work and dedication," said Vice President Harris. "Today, I came by to express my gratitude for the work you and so many across our

nation have been doing to lift up our fellow Americans. I am also here to reaffirm our shared commitment to the work ahead because in moments like this, the true test of our character is how resilient and persistent we are to pursue the future that we all can see—an America where we are guided by the ideals that have always defined us when we are at our best: dignity and decency, fairness, freedom, and opportunity for all."

"Vice President Kamala Harris is a change-maker and a trailblazer. We are honored to host her in Maryland to share her message of service

with our young people," said Gov. Moore. "Our administration launched the Maryland Service Year Option because we recognized that in this moment of challenge for our country, service will save us. Vice President Harris' journey is a testament to the power of that philosophy, and her example has inspired—and will continue to inspire—a new generation of leaders to raise their hands and give back to the country we love."

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## Governor Moore Announces Inaugural ENOUGH Grant Awardees

By PRESS OFFICER  
Office of the Governor

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (Dec. 12, 2024)—Governor Wes Moore today announced the inaugural grant awardees of the Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments, and Households (ENOUGH) initiative, a first-of-its-kind, community-based strategy to address concentrated child poverty in Maryland. The \$13.1 million in grants will fund 27 entities across all 12 statutorily eligible counties, part of the historic \$20 million in total investment to support communities most in need as they work in partnership to develop solutions to deeply rooted challenges.

"We know that there are many root causes of child poverty—and the solutions are unique to the challenges on the ground," said Gov. Moore. "So we are directly partnering in the work to create safe and thriving communities; support healthy and economically secure families; and ensure access to high-quality education. Because partnership produces progress—and nothing else does."

Bridging a diverse set of organizations, awardees include partnerships made up of community-based organizations, local government actors, community schools, and other local entities. Grantees span western to eastern Maryland, representing rural, urban, and suburban communities. Recipients will work with a coalition of partners across the public and private sectors.

"ENOUGH brings together government, philanthropy, and community in an effort to build meaningful partnerships to address the critical challenges faced by too many families across the state," said Governor's Office for Children Special Secretary Carmel Martin. "Governor Moore made clear his vision to leave no one behind, and the Governor's Office for Children is

thrilled to work with the Children's Cabinet to ensure an all of government approach to providing support and resources to the inaugural grantees as we collectively work to eradicate child poverty and create a better, more equitable future for all of Maryland's children."

ENOUGH grantees were selected through a competitive process. Each application was independently scored using objective rubric criteria including quality community engagement; coordination and partnership experience; strength of governance structure; progress monitoring capacity; quality and feasibility of proposed activities; evidence-based strategies; and sustainability.

"Child poverty is a public policy choice and today's announcement marks a major milestone in the fight against child poverty. Too often, children living in under-resourced neighborhoods face enormous barriers to success and their futures are discounted simply because of the ZIP code from which they come from," said Harlem Children's Zone Founder and President and William Julius Wilson Institute Founder Geoffrey Canada. "I applaud Governor Moore and the Maryland legislature for recognizing that the community organizations who will receive funding and resources will take an important step to ensure that children are better positioned to succeed in adulthood. Maryland's children cannot afford to wait."

ENOUGH has three separate development tracks. As communities continue to engage in grant-funded work, they will have the opportunity to apply for subsequent, higher level tracks in future funding cycles.

**Track 1: Partnership Development Grantees** will receive a grant and technical assis-

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## Prince George's County Department of Social Services Among First Cohort of Recipients of Competitive Inaugural ENOUGH Grant Award to Fight Child Poverty

Department is Set to Receive \$65,000 Through this Innovative Grant Program Designed to Create Opportunities for Economic Mobility in Regions Facing Concentrated Child Poverty

By PRESS OFFICER  
Prince George's Co. Dept. of Social Services

LANDOVER, Md. (Dec. 16, 2024)—The Governor's Office for Children (GOC) announced on Thursday, December 12, 2024, that the Prince George's County Department of Social Services (DSS) has been selected as an inaugural recipient of the innovative Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments and Households (ENOUGH) Grant. This initiative is a groundbreaking, state-led, place-based strategy to address childhood poverty across historically underserved communities in the County and equip communities with funding and technical support to create effective solutions in our fight against child poverty through partnership and data informed by community members' lived experiences.

The FY25 grant, submitted by the Department's Office of Strategic Partnerships and Community Solutions (OSPCS), will increase the Department's investments in partnership development opportunities aimed at strategically addressing and preventing child poverty focusing on the Hillcrest Heights and Marlow Heights communities. This grant award aligns with the strategic investments DSS continues to make in strengthening families and empowering disadvantaged communities. The ENOUGH Initiative was created under and authorized by the Moore-Miller Administration's ENOUGH Act, landmark legislation passed in Spring 2024.

"We are proud to secure this incredible ENOUGH grant that will not only support us in fighting con-

centrated childhood poverty but improve quality of life for many Prince Georgians," said Stephen Liggett-Creel, Director of the Department of Social Services. "We are honored to be one of four grantees for Prince George's County that will be working with community organizations to strengthen our partnerships in developing community-designed solutions to support our children and help families thrive. We are thankful for our Governor, County Executive, and State and local leaders that continue to invest in our children and their future."

Across the County, DSS supports Prince Georgians facing insecure living conditions and limited access to financial resources through programs such as Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Energy Assistance, and more. With this new funding and technical assistance from the GOC, the Department can create new opportunities for support, partnerships and give more young residents greater stability in their life.

Prince George's County Department of Social Services: *Our agency proudly serves over 900,000 residents who call Prince George's County, Maryland home by providing opportunities for families, children, and vulnerable adults to become independent, responsible, and stable community members. We do this by developing community-based solutions and providing intervention services that strengthen families, protect children and vulnerable adults, encourage self-sufficiency and promote personal responsibility. Follow @PrinceGeorgesMD: Facebook, X, LinkedIn*

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To Be Equal: Tennessee State's Historic Foray Into Ice Hockey Could Break Barriers for Black Youth in Sports

TSU is not alone among HBCU's in adding non-traditional sports in recent years.

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If Only Birds Were 'Puppies': Lights Out Baltimore Tracks 3,000 Window Collisions Since 2018

"You know, if we had a ton of puppies that ran into glass, people would be more motivated to do something, but it's a disconnect from a bird," Jacks said.

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# TOWNS *and* NEIGHBORS

## In & Around Morningside-Skyline

**Theresa O'Connell, CIA intelligence analyst, dies at 81**

Theresa Amelia O'Connell, longtime Manchester Drive resident and Georgetown University graduate, died November 29.

Terry (as I always knew her) graduated from St. Francis Xavier Grade School and Notre Dame Academy. After graduating from Georgetown University in 1962, she worked as a CIA intelligence analyst.

She married Edmond O'Connell in 1968 and stopped working in 1970 to focus the next 20 years of her life raising her sons Denis and Paul. She encouraged them in all their personal, educational and professional endeavors.

Her second career, as a Usability Engineer, began after receiving her master's degree from University of Maryland in 1992. She was able to combine her passion for linguistics and love of technology and landed her dream job after graduating from UMD. She worked for almost 20 years before retiring.

Terry and Ed loved to travel, both domestically and internationally, but, above all, she loved to spend time with family and friends. She officially became the family archivist in 2016. She collected, scanned and digitally restored old photos. She took joy in reaching out to family and friends to learn as much about a photo as possible (names, date, location and story). Her passion for this family history project strengthened family relationships, generated a library of over 2000 photos and left a wonderful legacy.

She took solace in her Catholic faith which guided her in every aspect of her life.

Theresa was predeceased by her parents, Paul & Amelia (Milabile) Interdonato, and her husband Edmond G. O'Connell. Survivors include sons Denis (Shannon) and Paul; grandchildren, Edmond and Sophia; brothers, Andrew (Beverly) and Anthony (Katie); sister Rita Interdonato. And her large, extended family.

Mass of Christian Burial was at St. Philip's in Camp Springs on Dec. 11. A private family ceremony will be held later at Mount Olivet Cemetery, Washington, D.C.

Theresa always had cats; she leaves behind her cherished Columbo and Gatino.

**Town of Morningside**

Sad to say, Caroling and house-decoration-judging on December 15 had to be cancelled because of rain. It was not rescheduled.

Morningside's January meetings will be the 14 and the 21.

I recently had my grandson David McHale here from Denver, so I thought I'd introduce him to a small town. We drove over to the Morningside Town Hall and caught Karen on her way out. She invited us in, and we sat down in her office. As she was giving us a little news, in came someone from the Town Council. He sat down and passed on some news when Morningside's Chief of Police dropped by, and—not to be outdone by the gathering in the Chief's office—the Fire Chief. David witnessed a small town ready to pass on the news.

Thank you, Morningside!

**Gingerbread House Winners of the Viewers' Choice Awards**

Meghan Decker sent a report on the 25th Annual Gingerbread House Contest. She writes, "Our 25th Annual Gingerbread House Contest and Show wrapped up on Sunday, December 15. We had 25 entries in our contest and saw over 1,200 guests in the three weeks the show ran. It was an excellent way to celebrate 25 years of sweet memories!" Winners of the Viewers' Choice Awards:

Adult Category: Christmas Lights the Way by Renee Lakner. Child Category: Tangled Christmas by Violet Stallings. Family Category: Tiny Dancers' Academy by Nick's Legacy.

And as one of the many viewers and voters, I can tell you the entrees were so inventive, and so delightful. If you've never been, promise yourself that next year you'll visit the contest at the annual Gingerbread Show.

**Changing landscape**

Chaney Enterprises is new to the area at 3709 Forestville Road, in Forestville. They have Ready Mix Concrete, sand, gravel, recycled concrete, stone, traction sand, low-carbon concrete, colored concrete, Flowable Fill & Building Materials. For more information, Contact info@ChaneyEnterprises.com. Phone: 301-932-5000.

by Mary McHale 301-735-3451

**Things to do**

Festival of Lights is back and runs through January 1 at Watkins Regional Park. "Experience dazzling holiday scenes from the comfort of your car." I love to go!!

The Knights of Columbus, 3611 Stewart Road, has Bingo every Wednesday (though, not on Christmas day) at 7 p.m. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Food and drinks available for purchase. Smoke-free. Safe, free parking in a well-lighted parking lot with police officer on duty. Open on New Years Day! Come, join them for fun. And to win money! Pull tabs also sold. WIN WIN WIN!

The Building Museum has opened a synthetic indoor rink that skaters can use until Jan. 4 without the need for outerwear. The rink will be open from noon to 8 p.m. through Jan. 4, excluding Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, and New Year's Eve and New Year's Day.

**Neighbors & other good people**

My friend Rich Landon is playing Santa again. This time in Merrifield, Va. on Saturday, and on Sunday, at the Knights of Columbus's kids' cookie-making event. He says "Ho Ho Ho!"

Dunkirk Native has a new book out as of Nov. 18: "False Trespass." Among his previous books are "Confessions of the Soul: A Maryland Mystery" and "Shadows on the Soul: A Maryland Mystery."

Tara Jackson will act as Prince George's County administrator pending a special election. "I believe in keeping the trains running." She says. I know she will.

**Milestones**

Happy Birthday to Brayden Proctor, Dec. 29; Amy Anthony Wade and Robert Tretler, Dec. 30; Pat Spry and Janet Ferguson Hemming, Dec. 31; Sister Haimanot, Dorothy Cullinan and Bridget Vilky, Jan. 1; Evelyn Lozano, Jan. 2; Gene Desmarais and Courtni Bland, Jan. 3; Jennifer Jung, J.B. Thomas, and Christa Neale, Jan. 4.

Happy Anniversary to my grandson David and Nina McHale, their 24th on Dec. 30; and to my son John and Michelle McHale, their 27th on Jan. 4, 2025.

*And to all, a  
Happy New Year 2025!*

## Around the County

### School Pedestrian Safety Workgroup Presents Final Report to County Council

On Friday, December 13, the School Pedestrian Safety Workgroup, established by the Prince George's County Council, presented its final findings and recommendations of 2024 to the Council after five months of collaboration and problem solving. The Workgroup was created in April 2024 when the Council adopted a resolution proposed by Council Member Wanika Fisher (District 2) following the tragic deaths of multiple students. The Workgroup began meeting in July, crafting a list of more than a dozen recommendations for the state, county, local municipalities, and Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS), with the goal of creating a safer and more walkable community around schools, while reducing traffic accidents and deaths involving pedestrians.

The recommendations include both short-, medium-, and long-term goals and measures. They were drafted by Workgroup members, including Council Members Fisher and Eric Olson (District 3); PGCPS leadership, parents, and students; Prince George's County Board of Education members; and representatives from the Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation, Prince George's County Police Department, and multiple municipalities.

The list of 18 recommendations includes:

- Reducing speed limits around schools
- Closing streets or restricting traffic around schools during drop off and pick up times
- Improving education in the community surrounding school pedestrian safety
- Requiring developers for future school projects to gather input from PGCPS and meet pedestrian safety requirements
- Establishing and conducting a "walk audit" throughout the county to standardize data across departments and identify areas of concern
- Holding proactive meetings between local, county, and state agencies to identify potential problems and develop solutions
- Creating objective criteria to assess pedestrian risk while setting safety goals and objectives

"I am so grateful to all the members of the Workgroup, who provided their knowledge, expertise, hard work, and ingenuity to develop these recommendations for improving pedestrian safety around schools," said Council Member Fisher. "I am confident that these solutions will have a positive impact on the well-being of children attending Prince George's County Public Schools and will significantly enrich the quality of life for all county residents. I look forward to seeing all entities work together to put these recommendations into action."

For more information about the School Pedestrian Safety Workgroup, or to view the full report, visit [https://pgccouncil.us/993/School-Pedestrian-Safety-Workgroup?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=govdelivery](https://pgccouncil.us/993/School-Pedestrian-Safety-Workgroup?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)

—Prince George's County Council Media

## Brandywine-Aquasco

by Audrey Johnson 301-922-5384

**WEDNESDAY OPEN MIC KARAOKE**

Wednesday, Open Mic Karaoke at Piano Keys Lounge with DJ Big John. Karaoke Open Mic Night every Wednesday 4–11 p.m. Come sing your heart out and get paid for it. You are the STAR at Piano Keys Lounge. Dates are Wednesday, December 25 at 6 p.m., Wednesday, January 1, 2025, at 6 p.m., Wednesday, January 8, 2025, at 6 p.m., Wednesday, January 15, 2025, at 6 p.m. Doors open 4 p.m. Karaoke starts at 7 p.m. Cash prize to the best performance. Drink specials from 4–7 p.m. No reservations. Seating first come first to be seated. Free admission all night. Piano Keys Restaurant is located at 7651 Matapeake Business Drive, Suite 104, Brandywine, Maryland 20613.

**SAARC SENIOR PROGRAM: TRIPS**

Let Us Eat! Join us as we visit a local restaurant and enjoy a delicious meal with good friends Thursday, January 9, 2025. BON APPETIT: Mystery Restaurant 10:45 a.m.–2:00 p.m. FEE: \$10(R); \$13(NR). The meal is at your own expense (average menu prices: \$15–\$35). Fee includes transportation on the M-NCPPC Activity Bus. PARKS DIRECT: SAARC-20250109. Check your email and voicemail 24–48 hours prior to the trip for details. Plan to arrive at SAARC 30 minutes before stated time for processing, loading, and departure. Let us know if onboarding assistance is needed.

**DAY OF SERVICE HELD TO REMEMBER  
1ST LIEUTENANT RICHARD COLLINS III**

Hundreds of students from the University of Maryland, Bowie State University, Morgan State University, Coppin State University, ROTC Cadets and Veterans from The Mission Continues, a Veterans Service Organization, participated in a Day of Service in Baltimore this past Saturday in remembrance of 1st Lieutenant Richard Collins III and celebration of his 31st birthday on December 12. The Day of Service, held at the Strength to Love II Farm in West Baltimore, was organized by the 2nd Lieutenant Richard W. Collins III Foundation and the Social Justice Alliance, in collaboration between Bowie State University and University of Maryland created to honor the legacy of BSU alumnus Lt. Collins and promote social justice on their respective campuses.

Strength to Love II Farm is a community-based urban farm that has taken vacant land and transformed it into an operational farm that grows spinach, cabbage, turnips, beets, carrots, and other organic vegetables. Day of Service volunteers participated in several tasks at the farm including clearing fields, building green houses, reinforcing fencing and irrigation work to help ensure fresh produce can be provided to a community faced with food insecurity.

Many of the Day of Service participants were ROTC Cadets who said they felt it was their duty to become involved. "I have to be here," said Adonis Soul, a Bowie State cadet majoring in broadcast journalism. "I receive financial support from the Richard Collins III Leadership with Honor Scholarship which means I do not have to worry about the financial burden of tuition while simultaneously worrying about my studies. It has made a huge difference in my life, and helping on this urban farm is my way of giving back."

"The \$10,000 Collins Scholarship has allowed me to go to school and pursue my degree in mechatronics without the financial cost of college, and better myself by becoming an Army Officer," said Baltimore native and University of Maryland junior Dirichi Nwanegwo.

Leaders of the Social Justice Alliance from Bowie State and University of Maryland brought members of the organization to the Day of Service to show support and help make a difference. "It's absolutely imperative that the Social Justice Alliance continues to honor the legacy of Lt. Collins," said Bowie State Professor Matasha Harris, co-chair of the alliance. "This event brings the SJAs from Bowie State and the University of Maryland together to collectively work on a project so that students at the institutions develop a better understanding of the importance of giving back and service."

Rosalyn Alexander, a Bowie State senior from Princess Anne, Maryland and a member of the Social Justice Alliance, said supporting the Day of Service is the right thing to do. "Since my major is criminal justice, I feel obligated to be here," she said. "Lt. Collins lost his life due a hate crime and all he wanted to do was be of service to his country. Therefore, I feel as though this is something I must do to honor him."

"My son, 1st Lieutenant Richard Collins III was dedicated to serving others through his commitment to the U.S. Army," said Dawn Collins, president and co-founder of the 2nd Lieutenant Richard W. Collins III Foundation. "By coming together as a community to serve, we not only honor his memory but also carry forward his vision of making a tangible difference."

1st Lieutenant Richard Collins III was a student at Bowie State University who was killed on May 20, 2017, at a bus stop on the campus of the University of Maryland three days before he would have graduated from Bowie State University with a degree in business. MEDIA CONTACT: David Thompson, dlthompson@bowiestate.edu, 301-860-4311.

*"MERRY CHRISTMAS TO EVERYONE"*

### Little Miner Taco Brentwood Announces Initiative to Eliminate Student Meal Debt in Prince George's County Public Schools

BRENTWOOD, Md. (Dec. 13, 2024)—Little Miner Taco is expanding its initiative to eliminate student meal debt in its communities and now partnering with Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) to donate 100% of proceeds from kids' meal sales at its Brentwood location to The Excellence in Education Foundation for PGCPS, Inc.

The initiative launched on Giving Tuesday, Dec. 3, with a check presentation at Little Miner Taco's Brentwood location.

"The last thing kids should have to worry about is having money to pay for their food," said Kathy Voss, founder of Little Miner Taco. "Little Miner Taco has always been committed to making great food accessible to all, so we wanted to tackle this issue not just with financial contributions but also by raising awareness."

The Excellence in Education Foundation for PGCPS praised the partnership. "We are grateful for our collaboration with Little Miner Taco in our shared mission to eliminate food insecurity in Prince George's County Public Schools," Executive Director Thea Wilson said. "Their donation of all proceeds from kids' meals reflects a broader commitment to community support and student well-being."

Little Miner Taco's kids' menu features \$3 meals such as cheese quesadillas, chicken quesadillas, and chicken and rice bowls. Every dollar from these sales at the Brentwood location goes directly to The Excellence in Education Foundation for PGCPS to support student meal debt relief.

This effort builds on a similar initiative at Little Miner Taco's Rockville, Maryland location, which donates all proceeds from kids' meal sales to the MCPS Educational Foundation's Dine with Dignity Program.

*Little Miner Taco is a fast-casual restaurant known for its signature birria tacos, creative menu options, and commitment to community impact. With locations in Rockville, Maryland, Brentwood, Maryland, Capital One Arena, and NoMa Washington, D.C., as well as three food trucks, Little Miner Taco serves communities across the D.C., Maryland, and Virginia (DMV) and Baltimore regions. The restaurant supports student well-being and food accessibility through charitable partnerships with local education foundations. For more information, visit [littleminertaco.com](http://littleminertaco.com) and follow Little Miner Taco on Instagram (@littleminertaco) and Facebook (Little Miner Taco).*

# COMMUNITY

## Food Drive from A1

gether to make a profound impact, giving back to their communities and lending a helping hand to those who need it most.”

REALTORS® are proud participants in efforts that support the communities in which we live, work and serve.

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

## Social Security Matters

Ask Rusty:

### Have I Saved Social Security Money by Claiming at 62?

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 had to start collecting Social Security at 62, and I am 75 now. I believe that in the last 13 years I have saved Social Security money, so I do not know why I cannot draw my full benefits now.

If I had started drawing at 65 at \$1,200 per month, then I would have drawn \$16,400 per year. Instead, I got \$680 per month from 62 to 75, or \$8,160 per year, or about \$106,000 over 13 years. Compare that to the age 65 amount of \$14,400 per year for 10 years, which is \$144,000. So, by claiming at 62, at age 75 I have saved the government over \$38,000. It would make seniors lives so much easier if they could draw full Social Security at 75 years old, after getting only part of their SS. **Signed: Second-guessing**

**Dear Second-guessing:** The difference between benefits claimed at various ages causes many to reflect, as you have done, about what might have been had you waited longer to claim. But there is an error in your calculations. If your age 62 monthly benefit is \$680, your age 65 monthly benefit would have been about \$845, not \$1,200. Thus, at 75 you would have collected about \$101,400 by claiming at 65, vs. the \$106,000 you have received by claiming at age 62. In other words, you still would not have broken even had you claimed at age 65.

Social Security says that it doesn't matter when you claim—they say that if you claim early your payments will be less, but you'll get more of them. Where SSA's argument falls apart is when life expectancy is longer. Our experience is that if you wait until your full retirement age (FRA) to claim (which is age 66 in your case), vs. claiming at age 62, you will collect the same amount of total money at about age 78. In other words, the “breakeven age” for waiting until FRA to claim is about 78. So, you will reach your personal “breakeven age” in about 2-½ years (at age 78). And this is precisely why we encourage everyone to understand their life expectancy when deciding when to claim Social Security—those who expect to live longer will, indeed, get more SS money if they delay claiming.

Your benefit is determined by your age when you claim, and if you claim before your FRA your monthly amount is permanently reduced. If you claimed at age 62 and your monthly amount was \$680, then in the four years until you reached age 66 (your FRA) you would have received about \$32,640. If you had, instead, waited until your FRA to claim, your benefit at age 66 would have been about \$906/month. Collecting \$906/month (at 66) vs. \$680/month (at 62) would make your breakeven age about 78. If you claimed at age 65 instead of 62, your breakeven age would have been about a year earlier (77).

So, have you saved Social Security money? Up to this point, you have not. Since you claimed at age 62, you have collected about \$680/month for 13 years until you were 75 (or about \$106,000). If you had waited until age 65 to claim you would have, instead, collected about \$101,400—in other words you have received more, so far, by claiming at age 62. But that will change when you reach 77 (your breakeven age, had you claimed at 65). Starting at age 77, you will have received less in cumulative lifetime benefits because you claimed at age 62. Which, again, is why—at the AMAC Foundation's Social Security Advisory Service—we encourage everyone to consider life expectancy when deciding when to take Social Security. Of course there are other factors too, not the least of which is financial need, but life expectancy is key. And since the benefit you get when you claim is permanent (except for annual Cost of Living Adjustments), deciding when to claim Social Security is a decision which affects a lifetime.

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

*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.*

## Prince George's County Native Serves Aboard USS Carl Vinson



241214-N-FS097-1018 PHILIPPINE SEA (Dec. 14, 2024) Aviation Ordnanceman Airman Jonathan Rivera, of Prince George's County, Md., prepares to fire the shot line on the flight deck aboard the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70) during a fueling-at-sea with the Henry J. Kaiser-class fleet replenishment oiler USNS Henry J. Kaiser (T-AO 187), Dec. 14, 2024. Vinson, the flagship of Carrier Strike Group ONE, is underway conducting routine operations in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations.

U.S. NAVY PHOTO BY MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST 3RD CLASS NATE JORDAN

## Maryland Wellness Announces Relocation of Lanham Office to Upper Marlboro

By PRESS OFFICER  
Maryland Wellness

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (Dec. 18, 2024)—Maryland Wellness is pleased to announce the relocation of its Lanham office to a new location in Upper Marlboro, effective Monday, Jan. 6, 2025. This move reflects Maryland Wellness' continued commitment to providing high-quality care while further strengthening its long-term presence in the community.

The Lanham office will close on Friday, Dec. 27, 2024, and services will resume at the new Upper Marlboro location on Monday, Jan. 6, 2025. Office hours will remain unchanged: Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The new office address is:  
1300 Caraway Ct., Unit 207  
Upper Marlboro, MD 20774

We are thrilled about this next step for Maryland Wellness,” said Jon D’Souza, MD, Chief Executive Officer at Maryland Wellness. “As we grow our presence and services in Prince George’s County, this new location allows us to better serve our clients while continuing to provide the compassionate, quality care they rely on.

During this transition week, from Dec. 27 through Jan. 6, we will be unable to meet with clients or partners at our office location; virtual services will be available for any scheduled appointments. We remain committed to minimizing disruptions to the services you rely on and ap-

preciate the community’s understanding and support during this important move.

Clients and community members with questions about the relocation can contact Maryland Wellness at 301-429-6100 or by email at [info@mdwellness.org](mailto:info@mdwellness.org).

For more information about Maryland Wellness and its services, please visit [www.mdwellness.org](http://www.mdwellness.org).

*Maryland Wellness provides comprehensive mental health services across the state, offering therapy, medication management, and supportive care to individuals and families. With a commitment to accessible, high-quality care, Maryland Wellness continues to empower communities and strengthen mental health resources. You matter to us!*

## Maryland Department of Health Announces Expansion of Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly

By PRESS OFFICER  
Maryland Department of Health

BALTIMORE (Dec. 18, 2024)—The Maryland Department of Health today announced the expansion of the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) from one location to four. This expansion will allow the state to serve up to 800 seniors, allowing more older adults to remain in their homes while receiving essential care within their communities. Currently, the program is only available through Hopkins ElderPlus in East Baltimore.

The program provides older adults with comprehensive access to their health and supportive care in one convenient location. Participants can benefit from a wide range of services, including primary medical care, prescription medications, transportation, physical therapy, and meal assistance. These services encompass doctor visits, home care, dental care, emergency support, and social activities.

“It is critical that we provide aging Marylanders with a variety of options, such as those who need nursing home-level care but prefer to remain in their own homes and communities,” said Maryland Secretary of Health Dr. Laura Herrera Scott. “Through a personalized care plan created by a dedicated team, our goal is to ensure they get all the care they need while staying in the place they feel most comfortable—home.”

PACE is not limited to those on Medicare and/or Medicaid. The new locations and their anticipated opening dates are as follows:

- Edensbridge Health West Baltimore PACE Community Coalition—Accepting participants, opening in January 2025
- Trinity Health PACE in Montgomery County—Accepting participants, opening in January 2025.
- Senior Community Care of Maryland in Prince George's County—Opening in 2025

“Maryland is dedicated to ensuring that more older adults can access comprehensive care without having to leave their homes,” said Deputy Secretary for Health Care Financing and Medicaid Director Ryan Moran. “We aim to encourage healthcare providers and community organizations to refer eligible individuals to the program, helping Maryland residents lead healthier and more independent lives.”

To learn more about this program and coverage, visit [health.maryland.gov/mmcp/waiverprograms/Pages/PACE.aspx](http://health.maryland.gov/mmcp/waiverprograms/Pages/PACE.aspx).

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

## Engagement from A1

The Service Year Option is the first-in-the-nation public service year program for recent high school graduates. The Maryland Department of Service and Civic Innovation launched the inaugural cohort in the fall of 2023. The 2024–2025 cohort represents all 24 Maryland jurisdictions, with participants who serve with more than 150 host site partners representing non-profit organizations, businesses and more than 20 government agencies.

“When we serve, we shift from a life of consumption to a life of contribution,” said Lt. Gov. Aruna K. Miller. “I’m a believer that people inherently want to

bring change, they just need opportunities to do it. I’m proud to help lead a state that provides that opportunity, and even more proud to see our Maryland Corps and Service Year Option grads take the next step in their journey.”

“It’s a privilege to serve a state that believes not only in the value of public service but in its ability to move us forward as a country,” said U.S. Senatorelect Angela Alsobrooks. “Vice President Harris has shown us time and again that power, and we in the great state of Maryland will continue to honor our rich legacy of service with a commitment to our future and to our young people.”

“The Department of Service and Civic Innovation is building leaders through

service, experience, and civic engagement,” said Secretary Paul Monteiro. “The Vice President’s call to action for our young people builds on this momentum as we continue to build a state that serves.”

“Be the change your community needs. Civic engagement through service starts with you,” said AmeriCorps Chief Executive Officer Michael Smith. “Throughout our country’s history, service to others has been the common thread that encourages unity, inclusion, and positive impact in communities across America.”

More information about Maryland Corps and Service Year Option is available at [serve.maryland.gov](http://serve.maryland.gov).

**The Prince George's Post**  
*Serving Prince George's County Since 1932*

# COMMENTARY

## Marc Morial

President and CEO, National Urban League



### To Be Equal:

## Tennessee State's Historic Foray Into Ice Hockey Could Break Barriers for Black Youth in Sports

*"I think it's important to invest in these unorthodox sports for Black athletes because it allows Black children to have more opportunities to play sports in general. The more opportunities that children have, the better. They won't feel like they are boxed into one thing or sport."*

—Zion Williams

Detroit radio icon and hockey fan Gerald McBride was inspired to write the screenplay for

his film *Black Ice: The Rhythm* when he looked around at a sold out University of Michigan hockey game and realized he was the only Black fan among 10,000.

Among the "Big Four" professional sports leagues in the United States, the National Hockey League has the least racial diversity among its players, 90% of whom are white, and only 0.052% of whom are Black. In contrast, about 70.4% of NBA players, 53.5% of NFL players, and 6.2% of

Major League Baseball players are Black.

With an eye toward diversifying the sport in general and breaking down barriers for Black athletes, Tennessee State University is poised to make history in the 2025–2026 season when it launches the first NCAA Division I ice hockey team at a historically Black college or university.

The NHL also was the last of the Big Four to break the color line. Willie O'Ree, sometimes referred to as "the Jackie Robinson of hockey" became the first Black NHL player in 1958, more than a decade after real Jackie Robinson debuted with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947. The Los Angeles Rams had signed the first Black NFL player of the modern era, Kenny Washington, in 1946. Earl Lloyd became the first African-American to play in the NBA game in 1950.

While outright bans on Black hockey players are a thing of the past, the sport has remained charged with a current of racism in recent years. Someone flung a banana at Philadelphia Flyers winger Wayne Simmonds in 2011. New York Rangers prospect K'Andre Miller was taunted with racial slurs during a video chat in 2020.

Economic barriers are also a factor. Hockey is an expensive sport, typically costing thousands of dollars a year for equipment, ice time and club membership fees.

The groundbreaking program at TSU is part of the NHL's to confront racial inequity within the sport. Kevin Westgarth, vice president of hockey development and strategic collaboration for the NHL, told *The Tennessean* the league already was discussing the establishment of a hockey team at an HBCU when he received an email from TSU athletic director Dr. Mikki Allen.

"We were having a brainstorming session around what it would take to get a hockey team on an HBCU campus," Westgarth said. "Literally as we got off that call, we got an email forwarded from Dr. Allen at Tennessee State saying they're interested in adding varsity hockey. It was beautiful timing."

TSU is not alone among HBCU's in adding non-traditional sports in recent years. According to the Associated Press, at least 20 schools have added more than 40 new sports NCAA championship or emerging sports since 2016, such as wrestling, gymnastics, lacrosse, and volleyball.

Former NHL player Anson Carter, a co-chair of the league's Player Inclusion Coalition aimed at diversifying hockey, said, "To have the ability to even open up the HBCU in the hockey space ... it really is a game-changer for young kids playing hockey in the United States and Canada."

—December 13, 2024

## Ben Jealous

Executive Director,  
Sierra Club



## A Better Discussion Guide: Finding Common Ground Around the Holiday Dinner Table

The holidays are a time for coming together. We should not just be coming together physically to drive us further apart mentally, emotionally, and spiritually by reinforcing our differences.

Yet a lot of organizations, brands, and politicians put out discussion guides and talking points to help their supporters "win the debate" at holiday gatherings, or change the minds of their family and friends who hold "opposing" views.

Let's instead focus on what we know we all agree on, what we have in common, and strengthen bonds at the family and friend-group level—which will eventually lead to strengthened bonds at the community level and beyond.

And we agree on a lot.

You would be hard-pressed to find someone who

does not want cheaper utility bills. With clean energy jobs already powering the economy, that increasingly means lighting and heating our homes with clean energy sources like solar, wind, and batteries. The transition is not so far along because of some hidden green agenda; it is because clean, renewable energy is both cheaper and more resilient than fossil fuels. Speeding up the clean energy transition already underway is the true path to lower prices for ratepayers and more reliable power grids. But that does not mean you need to show up ready to argue about it or put someone on the spot for not already being aware of it. Start where you agree—that we all want lower prices. The mutual understanding that will create must come before people's minds can be open to new ideas.

We all want to protect our children's health. Moreover, we all know that toxic, polluted water and air are threats to people's health. When it comes to the water we drink and our kids swim in, there is near universal agreement: 96 percent of voters polled this year said protecting the health and safety of drinking water is important; 94 percent said protecting our nation's lakes, rivers, and streams is important. There are few things people agree on more. People also generally agree about the importance of breathing safe, healthy air. If faced with the choice of managing their kid's asthma with new inhalers and lifestyle restrictions or simply having cleaner air to breathe, what do you think they would choose? People do not need to be well versed in statistics about the sources of pollution and their true costs in order to care that the water and air are not making their families sick. That is a solid starting point for any conversation about solving the public health crises caused by pollution.

And who doesn't want to make it easier for people to get outdoors? People already know that getting outside is good for you. The benefits to physical and mental health are well documented. (I would add it is great for spiritual health as well.) And Americans are increasingly trying to get outside more. But we all know there are barriers—especially for those of us who lack green spaces in our neighborhoods. With 80 percent of Americans living in or near cities, that could be a real obstacle. We can all agree that having easier access to nature is important. Whether it is in community

parks and gardens, or the natural spaces that are part of our heritage as Americans like our National Parks, virtually everyone wants more options for enjoying the outdoors and greater ability to do so.

Americans are a lot more unified than the media and many of our networks care to admit. We are coming out of an election year that many regarded as the peak of American polarization. But while that political polarization may be real, it does not mean that people on different sides of a debate or the political spectrum don't see eye to eye on a lot of things.

In many cases, what we agree on are the overarching values, and the goals we should be striving towards. The big stuff. Even if we disagree on how we get there. Keeping our eyes on the prize can help keep us unified.

So let's zoom out from the disagreements over how we solve the problems we all agree are problems. We are immersed in different news and commentary, thanks to agenda-driven news outlets and algorithm-driven online feeds that steer us in different directions and pit us against each other. But the human condition remains constant. And we should all be able to connect on a human level. What we can build from there, together, is only limited by our own imaginations.

—December 16, 2024

*Ben Jealous is the Executive Director of the Sierra Club and a Professor of Practice at the University of Pennsylvania.*

### ENOUGH from A1

tance from Local Management Boards to build their capacity to address the root causes of poverty at the community level. Funded activities may include building capacity to do place-based work; strengthening community engagement; and creating cross-sector partnerships in education, health, workforce, housing, public safety and community development issue areas, united in the common goal of ending childhood poverty.

Five million dollars has been allocated to Local Management Boards to support this effort.

**Track 2: Plan Development** Grantees will work with partners including non-profits, anchor institutions, schools, local governments, unions, philanthropy, residents to conduct community asset mapping and needs assessments, building a neighborhood action plan to end child poverty tailored to local needs and assets.

**Track 3: Implementation** Grantees will launch approved strategies that address the three ENOUGH pillars—cradle to career education, healthy and economically secure families, and safe and thriving communities—and engage in ongoing progress monitoring, community engagement and continuous improvement. Grantees will also develop plans to secure and leverage additional funding streams to support their strategic vision.

"I am grateful for the vision and courage of Governor Wes Moore, and for the hard work of the Governor's Office for Children in bringing to life this great investment in self-determination

for Maryland's communities," said Cherry Hill Strong Founding Executive Director Zeevelle Nottingham-Lemon. "This award will support implementation of the community's plan for transformation, helping to sustain the years of groundwork necessary for our success. Most importantly, it allows us to do this work in a way that is true to our values. We will center Cherry Hill residents—working together to make sure neighbors are not displaced as the community improves, but that our neighbors are able to benefit from the community's transformation."

Grantees will launch their efforts with the support of the Governor's Office for Children and partnership organizations in early January. The Governor's Office for Children will coordinate a range of support for the ENOUGH communities, including hands-on coaching with local and national experts. State agencies will also support ENOUGH communities through additional funding opportunities and technical assistance.

"We believe in a Frederick County where everyone can thrive while enjoying a strong sense of place and belonging," said Frederick County Executive Jessica Fitzwater. "By giving us better tools to fight concentrated poverty, the ENOUGH initiative will take us one step closer to making that vision a reality for all of our residents."

"I am thrilled to congratulate our Baltimore City community based organizations including Cherry Hill Strong, South Baltimore Community Land Trust, and Park Heights Renaissance on be-

ing a part of the first cohort of the ENOUGH initiative from Governor Moore and the Governor's Office of Children," said Baltimore City Councilwoman Phylicia Porter. "This is a transformative step forward—what began as a tragedy has now become a powerful movement for change. These funds will fuel our continued work to create safer, stronger, and more resilient neighborhoods. Together, we are turning pain into progress and building a brighter future for our children and families."

Select communities and ENOUGH grant awardees include:

**Implementation Award Recipients (approximately \$3 million each):**

- Cherry Hill Strong (Cherry Hill, Baltimore City)
- Park Heights Renaissance Inc. (Park Heights, Baltimore City)
- San Mar Family & Community Services (South End, Hagerstown, Washington County)

**Planning Award Recipients (\$300,000 each)**

- Anne Arundel Partnership for Children, Youth and Families (Pumphrey / Brooklyn Park, Anne Arundel County)
- Child First Authority (Druid Heights, Upton and Westside, Baltimore City)
- Elev8 Baltimore, Inc. (Sandtown Winchester and Harlem Park, Baltimore City)
- South Baltimore Community Land Trust (Brooklyn and Curtis Bay, Baltimore City)
- The Central Baltimore Partnership, Inc. (Greater Greenmount, Baltimore City)

- The Y in Central Maryland (Waverly, Baltimore City)
- Moving Dorchester Forward Inc (Cambridge / South Dorchester, Dorchester County)
- Frederick County Local Management Board (Route 40 "The Golden Mile", Frederick County)
- CHEER - Community Health and Empowerment through Education and Research (Long Branch, Montgomery County)
- Identity, Inc. (Central Gaithersburg, Montgomery County)
- Latin American Youth Center (East Riverdale / Adelphi, Prince George's County)
- United Communities Against Poverty (District Heights and Suitland, Prince George's County)

**Partnership Award Recipients (\$65,000 each)**

- City of Cumberland (South Penn and John Humbird, Allegany County)
- One Annapolis, Inc. (Bay Ridge Gardens, Anne Arundel County)
- Greater Mondawmin Coordinating Council (Greater Mondawmin, Baltimore City)
- Tendea Family Inc. (McElderry Park, Baltimore City)
- Urban Strategies Inc. (Perkins Somerset Oldtown, Baltimore City)
- We Our Us (Upton & Druid Heights, Baltimore City)
- Community Assistance Network (Essex, Baltimore County)
- Caroline Human Services Council, Inc. (Federalsburg, Caroline County)
- LifeStyles of Maryland Foun-

- dation, Inc. (Waldorf, Charles County)
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Harford and Cecil Counties (Edgewood, Harford County)
- CASA, Inc. (Langley Park, Prince George's County)
- Prince George's Department of Social Services (Hillcrest Heights and Marlow Heights, Prince George's County)

"This amazing grant opportunity recognizes the unique needs facing diverse communities, such as our rural neighborhoods in Hagerstown, Maryland. We've been waiting a long time for a day like today," said San Mar Family

Community Services President and Chief Executive Officer Keith Fanjoy. "ENOUGH will enable San Mar Family and Community Services to deeply address root causes of poverty such as housing and difficult living conditions. Today is about recognizing the quiet persistence and grit of parents who everyday work to open doors of opportunity for their children. And those in the community who listen and sacrifice greatly to join them to break down those barriers to access."

For more information about ENOUGH, visit [www.goc.maryland.gov](http://www.goc.maryland.gov).

## The Prince George's Post

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# ENVIRONMENT

## If Only Birds Were 'Puppies': Lights Out Baltimore Tracks 3,000 Window Collisions Since 2018

By ALISHA CAMACHO  
Capital News Service

A little after 4:30 a.m. in downtown Baltimore, Nicole Hartig and Jon Merryman spotted their first victim.

"We have one bird here," said Merryman, a veteran volunteer.

He snapped photos of the white-throated sparrow while Hartig, 37, placed the bird in its tomb, a crinkling plastic sandwich bag.

Merryman, 62, spoke into his phone: "20 S. Charles Street, North East corner of the lobby," transcribing his notes into iNaturalist, an online tracking tool cataloging the group's work since 2008.

Not a poetic obituary. But their 5-mile expedition just began at the peak of fall migration.

It's time to go.

### Dimming light on a deadly problem

An estimated 4 billion birds soar over the United States each fall. Hartig and Merryman are part of an initiative advocating for bird-safe building practices to protect these migratory marvels from fatal window collisions.

Lights Out began in the '90s in Toronto when volunteers noticed birds drawn to artificial lights. Volunteers asked building managers to turn off night lights, a call that reached the Baltimore Bird Club by 2008.

Their call to action caught the eye of Lindsay Jacks, a recent transplant to Maryland. By 2012, Jacks became the executive director of Lights Out Baltimore, volunteering up to 20 hours a week during migration seasons, coordinating rescues, collecting data and working with building managers.

Baltimore's proximity to the bay makes it a perfect stopover for migratory birds, Jacks said. The group's consistent route includes high-risk buildings near the harbor.

"Dead birds are science," Jacks said. "If we can't collect it, we don't have the data to make change."

Volunteers have encountered nearly 3,000 dead and injured birds since 2018, according to a Capital News Service analysis of the group's data on iNaturalist.



ALISHA CAMACHO / CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

**Nicole Hartig holds a song sparrow, relieved that the bird survived a window collision.**

And so, as they fly toward this sanctuary, bam. Their lights go out.

In response to concerns, the center's leadership team recently met with Jacks. "Due to our sustainability focus, the (Baltimore Convention Center) has already followed many recommendations, such as turning off lights for spaces that are not in use," said deputy director Phil Costa in a written response to CNS. The Convention Center plans to incorporate bird-friendly elements into future renovations as funds allow.

"I'm not sure if you can ask for more than that," Merryman said.

### Guided by starlight, re-routed to death

Dawn broke over the Inner Harbor as the dynamic duo approached the Hyatt Regency hotel. A yellow scarlet tanager lay between the hotel and its multi-story parking lot, brimmed with foliage.

Males, known for their bright red plumage, molt to a yellow-green before migrating to the tropical Andean foothills.

Like other migratory birds, tanagers rely on the moon and stars to navigate. This one likely mistook artificial lights for starlight while soaring over Baltimore City. Disoriented, he may have interpreted plant reflections in the windows as its destination—or been drawn to the hotel's interior lights, like a moth to a flame. Either way, this bird's migration was cut short.

About 75% of the birds they encounter are going to be dead, said Merryman, "but you got to get past those to get to the one that's still alive."

Merryman crouched down, scooping the body into the bucket-turned-morgue.

The deceased birds will be stored in a volunteer's freezer until transported to the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History, joining one of the world's largest collections of bird specimens.

Rescued birds are secured into brown-paper lunch bags and driven to the Phoenix Wildlife Center. Trained volunteers tend to their medical needs until they can be released.

### Progress comes with a learning curve

Morning rays shimmered off the inner harbor and the tall glass facade of the Maryland Science Center.

Hartig and Merryman scurried past a native garden. Less than 30 feet away, the skeletal outlines of dinosaurs stood behind glass walls.

Distance matters, Merryman said. Placing trees (or bird feeders) less than 3 feet or more than 30 feet reduces collisions.

While native gardens are becoming popular, there is a learning curve. Bird-friendly infrastructure is not "a centralized conversation at this point," Hartig said. It's "still sort of on the fringes." So, while a valuable food source and habitat, the garden may double as a death trap when placed too close to windows.

According to a CNS data analysis, the Science Center ranked second for bird strikes documented since 2018.

Interior and exterior lights are left on to "create a safe and secure environment for our guests and neighbors," said spokesperson Christopher Cropper in an email.

In response to concerns raised by Lights Out Baltimore, the center "pledged to address the issues" and aims to retrofit the glass facade with bird-friendly sticker treatments by June 2026, as part of their \$10 million campus greening project.

"We have no formal agreement with the organization," Cropper said, but "it is fair to say that Lights Out Baltimore was the first to alert us to the scale of the issue, which is why we are actively working toward a solution."

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology surveyed barriers to participating in the Lights Out program. "In cities, there is certainly a concern

about safety in darkened areas," said Tina Phillips, a social scientist at the lab. "However, targeted, downward lighting has been shown to be more effective and safe." Some city districts also resist darkening their skylines, she said.

Jacks stresses, "It's not about turning every single light out so that we're in pitch black ... it just means we need to be better and more efficient with how we use lighting."

Former Baltimore Mayor Catherine Pugh's administration worked with Lights Out Baltimore to update the city's lighting. As old sugar cube lights burn out, they're replaced with warm, downward-shielded fixtures, Jacks said.

The jury is out on the right color tones for bird safety. "The best but highly imperfect science holds that white and blue light generally creates more problems for birds," said Andrew Farnsworth, visiting scientist at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. "Intensity is a serious issue and an almost completely understudied variable."

While further research is underway, Farnsworth said turning off non-essential lights is ideal. The lab also supports tools like BirdCast, sending localized migration alerts to your phone.

### It's a tough sell

A song sparrow lay beside the World Trade Center.

Officer Morgan Kaimon, intrigued by the investigation, stepped out.

"It's like that every day," Kaimon said, pointing to different windows on site.

"This side, that side—they're just constantly running into the windows."

"The biggest problem is that they will get a concussion," Hartig explained.

"What we're doing is taking him to a rehabilitator who can give him an anti-inflammatory so that the swelling goes down. And usually, they are released in about a day or two."

"It's great what you're doing," Kaimon said.

"God bless."

Employees are usually curious about their work.

Other people are terrified. On a different walk, Hartig encountered a woman screaming while rescuing a bird. The woman said, "Birds in the city are basically like rats."

Motivating people to take action on window strikes—regardless of whether they enjoy birds—can be difficult, Jacks said.

"I think my biggest challenge is getting people to look at birds as something more important than something to look at." She also wants people to recognize how essential they are.

"You know, if we had a ton of puppies that ran into glass, people would be more motivated to do something, but it's a disconnect from a bird," Jacks said.

Still, Jacks believes the program has gained traction. Of the 27 buildings they monitor, 22 participate in it, she said.

But relationships can be fickle. "It is frustrating," Merryman said. Setbacks occur as new businesses and staff come along. "All of a sudden, lights are on again, right? And we're starting all over."

Merryman shares updates and photos from walks on Facebook. "You want people to realize it's an issue, but you don't want to, you know, bombard them so much that they just look away."

Some people don't want to make those connections "because maybe it's sad for them," he said.

Jacks takes a practical, compartmentalized approach to the work. "If I were to get emotional every day, I would not be able to do it. But I know that if I don't have that dead bird or that dead Baltimore oriole, I may not encourage a building to turn their lights out or make a building bird safe."

### Doing what they can, one day and bird at a time

It's past 9 a.m., and the volunteers risk getting a ticket or towed. Meanwhile, the buckets are visibly vibrating—a breakout is emerging.

Hartig and Merryman speed-walk to the final hand-off location, where another volunteer waits to transport the survivors to the Phoenix Wildlife Center.

It can be difficult to move on when you know more birds could be saved. "But you gotta walk away at some point," said Merryman. Then you "show up the next day and do your part again."

Ten rescued birds are relocated to the backseat of the car while the remaining 13 deceased birds are packed away.

The occasional rescues are a big help, Hartig said. Some days are harder than others, but this morning, all rescued birds survived and were released by the Phoenix Wildlife Center.



ALISHA CAMACHO / CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

**Jon Merryman examines a deceased scarlet tanager near the Hyatt Regency Hotel.**

### 'Alcove of death'

Buckets and nets in hand, Hartig and Merryman scanned their surroundings.

"Hold on, I think I see a bat," Merryman said.

"Nope, it's just a leaf," he shrugged, crunching it with his boot. "An easy mistake."

The group has collected over 127 bats since 2008, including an eastern red bat Hartig recently rescued near the District Courthouse.

Their next stop: the "alcove of death," a nickname for the Baltimore Convention Center.

According to a CNS analysis, the Convention Center has seen the most bird strikes along their route since 2018, surpassing its predecessor, the National Aquarium.

The National Aquarium was retrofitted with a bird-friendly film in 2018, Jacks said. Bird-friendly glass was added to its rainforest exhibit in 2022.

Zero window strikes have been documented at the aquarium by Lights Out Baltimore volunteers since 2018, according to a CNS analysis.

For humans, the Baltimore Convention Center is a structural glass marvel, with floor-to-ceiling windows displaying natural light and sustainable landscapes.

Birds think so, too—except these soaring balls of feathers can't see glass.



ALISHA CAMACHO / CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

**A Lights Out Baltimore volunteer holds a common yellowthroat that survived a window collision near Baltimore's Inner Harbor.**

## Join the Climate Stewards Academy

The Prince George's County Climate Stewards Academy is looking for motivated residents to join a transformative program that will prepare you to lead local climate actions efforts.

Apply Today! **Applications are due January 7, 2025.** Visit <https://forms.gle/dXZ7KcrJKTacj7va6> for more information and to apply.

—Department of the Environment, Prince George's County, DoE Sprout, Dec. 12, 2024

# COUNTY CHURCH DIRECTORY

## UNITED METHODIST

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**ALL ARE WELCOME**  
**Web Site:**  
**www.westphaliaum.org**

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**Have a Safe Weekend**

# EarthTalk® Q&A Monarch Butterfly Finally Granted Threatened Status

By Roddy Scheer and Doug Moss | December 12, 2024

**Dear EarthTalk:**  
*What is the status of the monarch butterfly in the U.S. and is it listed as threatened or endangered?*  
 —M. Smith, Raleigh, NC

The monarch butterfly, known for its awe-inspiring migration across North America, has become a symbol of both ecological wonder and environmental decline. Once abundant across the continent, their numbers have plummeted in recent decades, raising concerns about the species' long-term survival. In 2014, the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD), a leading conservation group, petitioned the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) to list the monarch as "threatened." FWS launched a review of the butterfly's status, concluding six years later that listing was warranted although other species took priority. In 2022, CBD filed a federal lawsuit and won a settlement calling for the government to decide whether to list monarchs by late 2024, which FWS did in December, finally granted "threatened" status to the species.

The monarch's eastern population, which migrates from the U.S. and Canada to central Mexico for the winter, has experienced a staggering 80 percent drop over

the past 20 years, largely due to habitat loss, especially the destruction of milkweed—the sole food source for monarch larvae. The widespread use of herbicides and pesticides kill both milkweed and other pollinator-friendly plants. Climate is compounding the issue by altering the availability of suitable habitats, affecting migration patterns. The monarch's western population migrates along the U.S. West Coast to winter in California, and has also seen a drastic decline. It has not yet been listed as threatened or endangered by FWS, but the western monarch is still considered to be in serious jeopardy, with some estimates suggesting a 99 percent decline since the 1980s.

Being listed as "threatened" means that while monarchs are not yet in immediate danger of extinction, their populations are at significant risk. This status has prompted federal agencies to prioritize monarch conservation, leading to a variety of initiatives aimed at halting or reversing the decline. FWS has created a recovery plan, which includes restoring migratory and breeding habitats, reducing pesticide use and raising public awareness about the importance of monarchs and pollinators in general.

Despite official recognition of the problem and action, habitat

destruction continues at an alarming rate, exacerbated by logging and urban sprawl. In response, conservation and governmental agencies and researchers are all working toward restoring monarch habitats and promoting the planting of milkweed.

Everyone can play a role in helping the monarchs. Readers can help by planting milkweed in your garden, backyard or community space. You can also reduce pesticide use in your yard and choose organic gardening practices. Support organizations working to protect monarch habitats and advocate for policies that protect pollinators and raise awareness about their decline can also create broader change.

**CONTACTS:** FWS, <https://www.fws.gov/initiative/pollinators/monarchs>; Monarch Watch, <https://www.monarchwatch.org>; Monarch Joint Venture, <https://monarchjointventure.org>.

EarthTalk® is produced by Roddy Scheer & Doug Moss for the 501(c)3 nonprofit EarthTalk. See more at <https://emagazine.com>. To donate, visit <https://earthtalk.org>. Send questions to: [question@earthtalk.org](mailto:question@earthtalk.org)

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