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Other States Have Tackled Youth Gambling. Why Hasn't Maryland?

PART THREE

By ADAM HUDACEK
Capital News Service

For two decades, William Hinman had been an addict—first to alcohol, then to gambling.

But 10 years ago, he decided to get clean, and it worked. He's now 52 and spending his days as a peer mentor at the Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling, helping those out of the addictions that once defined his life.

The issue is, many of those seeking similar help today are far younger than he was.

Nearly one in five Maryland high school students have gambled in the past year, according to data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. In Garrett and Queen Anne's counties, that rate is close to one in four.

At the Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling, gambling's rising popu-



GIUSEPPE LOPICCOLO/CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

William Hinman, a peer mentor at the Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling, poses for a portrait at that organization's office in Baltimore on Feb. 27, 2025.

larity among youth has been reflected in the demographics of those calling the helpline.

"We've seen a huge uptick, especially in parents reaching out, and younger people reaching out," Hinman said.

Yet unlike neighbors West Virginia and Virginia, or a handful of other states such as

North Carolina and Oregon, Maryland has no statewide education policy built to combat the rising popularity of online gambling among teenagers, nor mitigate its effects on the state's youths.

In those states, education efforts have been effective—but so far, such efforts have faltered

in the Maryland General Assembly.

Absent a statewide effort, the Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling offers the MD-Smart Choices curriculum, which was implemented in some Baltimore City and Prince George's County schools before the COVID-19 pandemic. But staffing shortages have since stalled the program, which required three 45-minute in-person sessions, all taught by the center's often stretched-thin personnel.

"I can't be in every school," said Heather Eshleman, the center's prevention manager. "The guy before me, pretty much all he did was he would go into the schools."

A major problem

Although rates of youth gambling in Maryland dipped

See GAMBLING Page A3

M-NCPPC Prince George's County Planning Department to Host Open House Events for Go Prince George's Preliminary Countywide Master Plan of Transportation

By PRESS OFFICER
M-NCPPC

LARGO, Md. (March 11, 2025)—The Prince George's County Planning Department of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) will host two open house events to discuss Go Prince George's Preliminary Countywide Master Plan of Transportation on Wednesday, March 26, 2025, from 6–8 p.m. and Thursday, March 27, 2025, from noon–2 p.m., at the M-NCPPC Largo Headquarters, 1616 McCormick Drive, Largo, MD 20774. Open House attendees will be able to view and learn more about the long-range multi-modal transportation plan, speak directly with planners, and provide feedback on the recommendations. Advance registration is available at <https://pgplan.org/goopenhouse>.

Go Prince George's Preliminary Countywide Master Plan of Transportation will advance the vision and goals of Plan Prince George's 2035—the County's approved general plan, replace the

2009 Approved Countywide Master Plan of Transportation, and combine previously adopted transportation policies and recommendations for a comprehensive approach throughout the County. The long-range multi-modal transportation plan sets a guiding vision, supporting goals, and measurable actions to transform the County's transportation network by creating more travel options and focusing on the movement of people versus the sole movement of vehicles. For more details on Go Prince George's, visit <https://pgplan.org/go>.

Details:

Open House Events for Go Prince George's Preliminary Countywide Plan of Transportation

Wednesday, March 26, 2025
6–8 p.m.

Thursday, March 27, 2025
noon–2 p.m.

M-NCPPC Largo Headquarters, 1616 McCormick Drive, Largo, MD 20774

Advance registration is available at <https://pgplan.org/goopenhouse>

Upper Marlboro Resident Moniesha Shorter Crowned Mrs. Maryland, Heads to National Competition in Las Vegas

By RACINE TUCKER-HAMILTON
USOA Pageants

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (March 13, 2025)—Moniesha Shorter has been crowned United States of America's (USOA) Mrs. Maryland, earning the opportunity to represent the state at the USOA Mrs. National Pageant in Las Vegas, NV.

A dedicated advocate for women's health, Moniesha, a three-time breast cancer survivor, will use her platform to promote preventive healthcare, self-care, and proactive health screenings. Passionate about empowering women, she believes true beauty lies in the unique qualities that make each person special.

"I am honored to hold the title of USOA Mrs. Maryland," said Shorter. "The USOA Pageant is about more than just beauty; it's about empowerment, confidence, and community service. Through this journey, I hope to inspire other women to prioritize their health and embrace their inner and outer beauty. As a breast-cancer survivor I know the importance of preventative care, proac-

tive health screenings, and early detection."

The USOA Pageants focus on uplifting and inspiring women while fostering a sisterhood of support and encouragement. The organization's mission is to empower women, inspire others, and uplift communities.

Moniesha will continue engaging with the Upper Marlboro community and beyond as she prepares for the national competition, raising awareness about the importance of women's health and self-care.

Moniesha was crowned Mrs. Maryland on February 22, 2025 during the state competition held in South Hill, Va. She is a graduate of University of Maryland College Park and grew up in Largo in Prince George's County. She is also a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and works as a product manager for a health tech firm.

To learn more about her and keep up with her journey click follow her on Instagram @usoamrsmaryland.

United States of America's (USOA) Pageants are designed to help women achieve their



PHOTO COURTESY USOA PAGEANTS

Mrs. Maryland Moniesha Shorter

hopes, dreams, and goals while promoting confidence and positive self-image. Contestants participate in community service, leadership initiatives, and advocacy efforts, making a meaningful impact in their communities.

MedStar Health Celebrates Opening of Renovated Pre-operative and PACU Space at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center

The renovation aims to improve efficiency, comfort, and patient experience.

By CHERYL RICHARDSON
MedStar Health

CLINTON, Md. (March 13, 2025)—A special ribbon-cutting and dedication ceremony on March 10 celebrated the re-opening of the newly renovated pre-operative surgery and post-anesthesia care unit (PACU) at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center.

The approximately \$3 million renovation of the existing 4,000 sq. ft. space transformed the PACU and pre-operative

surgical unit from a segmented and outdated area to a fully integrated, open, modern, and accessible layout. The new space was designed for improved collaboration and efficiency among healthcare providers and enhanced comfort for patients before and after surgery. Pre-op now occupies one side of the unit and PACU the other. The updated unit features 17 patient bays with the ability to flex as needed, as well as two nurses' stations, a breakroom, a dictation room, a workroom, and three restrooms (two for patients and

one for staff). The revamped space greatly enhances patient flow, comfort, and privacy before and after surgery while accommodating state-of-the-art medical equipment and technology to optimize care.

"For our nurses and providers, this is a game-changer. The improved layout will allow us to be more efficient and streamlined in the way we deliver care," stated

See CELEBRATES Page A3

Metro Sees a Spike in Rides Amidst Return to Work Orders

By ELA JALIL
Capital News Service

Metro rail has seen some of its busiest days since the beginning of the pandemic in the last week of February, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) communications said.

This comes one month after President Donald Trump issued a memorandum that required federal employees across the country to terminate remote-work arrangements and return to in-person work.

"Federal return to office is only one component," said Jordan Pascale, Metro's media relations manager. "Many industries have implemented return to work policies and discretionary travel (like tourists visiting cherry blossoms) will also continue to rise as the weather gets warmer."

The week of Feb. 25 saw the third, fourth and seventh highest ridership days since the beginning of the pandemic. Tuesday, Feb. 26 had the highest morning rush hour in the past five years with 170,000 rail trips before 9:30 a.m., said Whitney Nichels, Metro's vice president of communications.

Ridership has been steadily increasing for almost four years, a trend that is expected to continue, Pascale said. It has still

not reached pre-pandemic levels, where the average ridership in 2019 was about 625,000 trips and the average ridership in 2025 is about 381,000 trips.

This increase could be beneficial for the Metro, which derives part of its funding from rider revenue. Funding also comes from federal grants and contributions from Maryland, D.C and Virginia to make up any gaps in the budget. A potential freeze in federal funding could have a detrimental impact on the safety of services, workers and riders, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 689 spokesperson Benjamin Lynn said.

The Metro's Board of Directors is considering service increases as a part of its budgetary process that would be implemented in July if approved, Pascale said. Increased hours of operation on weekends and adjusting lines for peak service are some of the proposed changes.

Despite this recent spike, Metro said its workers remain prepared to provide its services to the best of its ability.

"Whether the bus has five people on it, or 50 whether a rail car has, you know, 10 people on it or 100, our members are there to help transport and move people from point A to point B," Lynn said.

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ChildWatch:

Women's History: Vision and Light

Just as with February's commemorations of Black History Month, our nation is marking these observances in perilous times.

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Girado Smith Selected as an Honoree for the Washington Business Journal's 2025 Diversity in Business Awards

Agreement Between UMGC and the Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families to Boost Services for Vets Business and Finance, Page A5

TOWNS *and* NEIGHBORS

In & Around Morningside-Skyline by Mary McHale 301-735-3451

We took a trip to Suitland

My daughter Therese and I decided to go to the Suitland Library one day last week.

As we drove into town, I was aware of how the sidewalk extends along our entire route, from where I live in Skyline to downtown Suitland. My husband Jack, who occasionally had to walk home from Suitland when his bus didn't run, appreciated that.

We began our outing at Suitland Library, where one of my favorite signs is still out front: "Please. Do not drop your cigarette butts on the ground. The rabbits come out at night to smoke them. And we are trying to get them to quit."

Inside the library, I found five promising large-print books to check out. (Large print makes it possible for me to still read!) Therese meanwhile noted some cute, very well-behaved kids from an after-school program called "God's Little People." Their teacher, Tiffany Pannell, was letting them play quietly with the toys in the children's section.

When we had trouble managing the library checkout process, Aida, one of the librarians, patiently explained how to do it. When I thanked her, she smiled and said, "That's what we're here for."

We're so blessed to have the Suitland Branch Library!

As we drove home past Suitland High School, we admired the mural. And we stopped at a small Latin supermarket, La Bendicion, where Therese bought a bag of red beans and a large avocado. Then we stopped off at La Tienda Karina Spanish Market where there were lots of the typical Hispanic grocery items, plus fresh produce and hot take-out dishes.

Next time you need queso fresco or frijoles, you may want to try one of these little stores. But, if you decide to take a trip to Suitland, don't forget those speed cameras!

Allentown Road

On March 13, there was a community update on the progress of Allentown Road. WSSC General Manager and CEO Kishia L. Powell gave reports. I was unable to at-

tend and look forward that getting those reports.

Town of Morningside

The next Town meetings will be the Work Session, April 8, followed by the Town Meeting, April 15. Both beginning at 7 p.m. Information, 301-736-2300.

On April 12, there'll be Breakfast with the Easter Bunny and an egg hunt for children. For more information or to register, call 301-736-2301.

7th Best Hotel

The Hotel at the University of Maryland has been ranked the seventh best hotel in Maryland this year by U.S. News & World Report:

"Whether you're visiting at the Hotel for business or leisure, we strive to provide an elevated experience in a modern, innovative setting," said Southern Management Companies Vice President of Hospitality and Sales Jeff Brainard.

Clarence Richardson dies at 99

Clarence T. Richardson, who retired in 1985 as Chief Master Sergeant at Andrews, died March 6. He was 99.

He was born in Seagrove, N.C., and moved to Washington, D.C. in 1946. In addition to his work at Andrews, he taught heating, ventilation and air conditioning classes and later had his own HVAC business.

He was a member of the 459th Wing Association, RSES, American Legion, an investment club, New Vision Fellowship Church in Forestville, and later Sudley UMC in Manassas.

Survivors include daughters Joanne Miller and husband Terry; Mary Mast and husband Steve; Terry Miller; Linda Lyons and her husband Chris Lyon; sister Ann Suggs and husband Steve, five grandchildren and three great-grands. He was preceded in death by his wife Mildred, parents Wendell and Mary Peal Richardson, brothers Clinton, Bobby and Benny and sisters Nell, Marie, Louise and Mary Deloris.

Services were at Demaine Funeral Home, in Springfield, Va.

About me

On March 12, I turned 96. Doesn't feel any different than 95. But I thought I'd give you—whether you want it or not—an abbreviated bio of Mary Margaret Mudd McHale.

I was born on March 12, 1929, at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit, to Dr. Richard Dyer Mudd, of Anacostia, D.C., and Rose Marie Krummack Mudd of Ravenna, Neb., an R.N. at Henry Ford. They were married in Ravenna in 1928.

My earliest years were in Dearborn, Michigan, where I attended Kindergarten at Charles A. Lindbergh School. (Chas. Lindbergh is famous for being the first to fly alone across the Atlantic.) My father, then a doctor for General Motors, was transferred to Cincinnati, Ohio, where I started school. When I about to start grade 3, we were transferred again to Saginaw, Michigan, and I attended St. Andrew's and, later, St. Mary's Cathedral schools. Then, one day I heard on the radio, that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. My reaction, "What is Pearl Harbor?"

I soon learned. Dad was called to service at Kelly Field, in San Antonio, Texas. We moved there, and I high-schooled at Our Lady of the Lake, where I edited the school newspaper. Four years later, with Peace declared, we returned to Saginaw, and I went off to St. Mary's College in South Bend, Ind., where, at a Tea Dance, I met a Notre Dame man from Houston, Texas. We graduated in 1946 and married at St. Mary's Cathedral on Jan. 3, 1951.

Jack was a newspaper reporter when I married him, but he joined the FBI. We were stationed in Los Angeles and San Francisco before moving, in 1958, to 4304 Skyline Drive, where we raised our seven kids and where I still live.

Jack eventually retired from the FBI, became Prince George's Chief of Police, and retired again; he died in 2004. Son Brian died in 2016. My other six kids are scattered around the U.S., and I now have 13 grandkids and some great-grands.

See MORNINGSIDE Page A5

Twelfth Annual Maryland Financial Education and Capability Awards Announced

Awards highlight financial education achievements of Public School Teachers, Community Champions & Outstanding Organizations statewide with one winner in each category

By PRESS OFFICER
CASH / MCEE / MSDE

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (March 11, 2025)—The nonprofits CASH (Creating Assets, Savings, and Hope) Campaign of Maryland (CASH), Maryland Council on Economic Education (MCEE), and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) are pleased to announce the 2025 winners of the twelfth annual Maryland Financial Education and Capability Awards. The Award winners were highlighted during an in-person reception on March 10 at the Maryland Inn in Annapolis, Maryland. The reception was sponsored by SECU. The honorees are the sole winners in their categories statewide and highlight the importance of financial education for all age groups. Following the reception, the honorees were recognized for their excellence by the Maryland General Assembly during their evening Session in the State House.

The Maryland Financial Education and Capability Awards highlight the dedication and success of elementary, middle and high school public school teachers, community champions and outstanding organizations who deliver financial education. Financial education focuses on a range of financial management concepts and behaviors including budgeting, careers and income, credit, savings, financial decision-making, and understanding values and habits about money. The Awards were first imagined and funded by the late Sheldon K. Caplis, who was CASH's first board president. Then they were developed by the CASH Campaign of Maryland and MCEE, in conjunction with the Maryland Financial Education and Capability Commission, to call attention to the importance of financial education to the lives of Marylanders. An easy and free way for people across the state to learn to better manage their personal finances is by accessing the Maryland CASH Academy, a statewide online source for free, stand-alone financial education webinars and classes at www.mdcashacademy.org. Financial educators can access personal finance resources and training, and hands-on K-12 student programs from MCEE at <http://www.econed.org/>

2025 Maryland Financial Education and Capability Award Winners:

- Elementary School Teacher Award: Michelle Classon, Cromwell Valley Elementary Magnet School (Baltimore County)—For hosting Financial Friday where she involves her students and their families in understanding the global economy and encourages them to research investment decisions
- Middle School Teacher Award: Dr. Amanda Price, Northern Middle School (Calvert County)—For integrating financial education with her science classes and after school programs and encouraging her students to develop elevator pitches with financial components to be judged by parents and staff members.
- High School Teacher Award: Jeeva Ashok, Eleanor Roosevelt High School (Prince George's County)—For innovative teaching methods in personal finance and for helping her students relate financial

concepts and skills to real-life scenarios

- Community Champion: Janet Currie, President, Greater Baltimore, Bank of America (Baltimore & Statewide)—For promoting economic opportunity and community empowerment by connecting individuals and businesses with banking and financial education.
- Outstanding Organization: Maryland Center for Collegiate Financial Wellness (MCCFW) (Prince George's County)—For fostering a continuum of campus-based financial wellness programs and supports that build financial life skills and empower collegiate students to thrive in young adulthood and beyond.
- New Award! Sheldon K. Caplis Award for Outstanding Corporate Partner: Misty Allen, VP of Government and Regulatory Affairs, Comcast's Beltway Region (Baltimore)—For going above and beyond to support financial education and advance economic mobility in our local communities.

Each of the winning Elementary, Middle and High School teachers, Outstanding Organization, and Community Champion receives a \$1,000 financial award made possible by the Woodside Foundation and the Maryland Society of Accounting and Tax Professionals (MSATP). The CASH Campaign of Maryland, MCEE and MSDE thank them all for their support.

The CASH Campaign of Maryland, MCEE and MSDE coordinated the Teacher Awards intended to recognize teachers in Maryland who exemplify excellence in financial education and who practice innovative strategies in the classroom. Recognition of public school teachers is tied to the Maryland State Curriculum for Personal Financial Literacy Education, which was created under the leadership of the Maryland State Department of Education and mandated for implementation in local school systems in grades three through twelve beginning in September of 2011. The awards program places the spotlight on the outstanding work taking place in our schools and communities.

The nonprofit CASH Campaign of Maryland works with its partners across the state to promote programs, products, and policies that increase the financial security of low-to-moderate-income individuals and families across the state. www.cashmd.org

The nonprofit Maryland Council on Economic Education (MCEE) provides engaging financial and economic education programs, grade-appropriate lesson plans and resources, and innovative professional development experiences to over 2,000 educators a year across Maryland as they prepare their students to make informed, rational financial decisions as consumers, workers, citizens, savers, and investors. For more information, email mcee@towson.edu.

The mission of Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is to ensure a rigorous and world-class educational experience for every Maryland student, in every neighborhood, that prepares each to be college and career ready. For more information, contact Raven Hill, Senior Executive Director, Office of Communications and Community Engagement, MSDE at 410-767-0486 or raven.hill@maryland.gov

Brandywine-Aquasco by Audrey Johnson 301-922-5384

A HELPING HAND

A helping hand for those caring for Loved Ones. Caring for a loved one can also be challenging. No one is ever completely prepared for the job, especially since caregiving is often a long-term responsibility that may become more difficult over time. The five steps every caregiver should take are: Step #1: Start the conversation. You may be wary of initiating a conversation with your loved one about sensitive topics, but sooner is better. Having a plan will help you be more prepared during a crisis. Step #2: Form your team of support. Caregivers should be creative about enlisting support. Step #3: Make a plan. Consider developing your caregiving plan into an electronic calendar of tasks that is accessible to each member of the caregiving team with AARP's Caregiving app at www.aarp.org/caregivingapp. Step #4: Find support among caregivers. Caregivers, you are not alone. According to AARP Public Policy Institute's 2015 "Valuing the Invaluable" report, there are about 40 million unpaid family caregivers of 18+ adults in the U.S. Visit aarp.org/caregiving and click on the Care Provider Locator to find resources in your area. Step #5: Care for yourself. Making time for exercise, nutrition, and sleep. Caring for yourself helps you better care for others. Joining caregiver support groups for information, insight, and support. Being an effective caregiver means asking for help when you need it. By taking time to care for your own needs, you are less likely to feel worn out by your caregiving responsibilities. Find Articles, Tips, and Tools for Caregivers at aarp.org/caregiving. Information from AARP Real Possibilities.

SOCIAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE SPRING SYMPOSIUM

Social Justice Alliance Spring Symposium, Rise up: Mobilizing for Justice and Democracy will be Friday, April 18, 2025, from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Location: Martin Luther King, Jr. Center, Bowie State University, 14000 Jericho Park Road, Bowie, Maryland 20715-9465. You need to register for the Symposium.

This year's symposium seeks to inspire meaningful dialogue and action around the urgent issues of social justice, civic engagement, and democratic renewal. The BSU/UMD Social Justice Alliance annual symposium will bring together changemakers, scholars, and community leaders to explore the grassroots mobilization, coalition-building, and activism in today's complex social and political landscape. The Social Justice Alliance continues to honor the legacy of BSU student 1st Lt. Richard W. Collins III, who was murdered in 2017 by a UMD student.

Hosted by BSU/UMD Social Justice Alliance, 2nd Lieutenant Richard W. Collins III Foundation and the UMD Anti-Black Racism Initiative. Parking information will be shared prior to the event. Transportation will be provided for folks traveling from UMD's campus, more information to come. For questions, please contact Victoria Alexander (she/her/hers), at valex@umd.edu.

EASTER BAKE SALE

A fundraiser to benefit the Peter A. Gross Scholarship. Homemade cookies (dozen) \$18, Sweet Potato Pie \$20, Brownies (pan) \$20. 7Up Cake Iced \$10; Reg \$25, Carrot Cake (Sheet) \$25, Straw-

berry Short Cake \$25. Limited Supply. Pre-Orders only no later than April 13. Monetary donations are always welcome. Pick up Location: St. Philip's Church Baden, Maryland. Pick up Dates/Times: Saturday, April 19, from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m., Sunday, April 20, from 11 a.m. to Noon. Point of Contacts: Trenda Hall 703-201-3863, Janice Harper 301-385-2620, Michele Chase 240-882-3369, Tasha Harley 443-404-5373.

MOTHER DAY CELEBRATION

BRENCORE Entertainment and Bowie Center for The Performing Arts Mother Day Celebration May 10, 2025, Bowie Center Performing Arts, 15200 Annapolis Road, Bowie, Maryland 20716. The BRENCORE ALL STARS and special guests will be honoring Moms with their favorite Gospel, R&B, Jazz and inspirational songs. Let us honor the special ladies in our lives. Advanced Tickets \$35.00. Day of event \$45.00. Doors open at 6 p.m. Concert at 7 p.m. Tickets: BRENCORE.COM/BOWIECENTER.org. Free Parking, Vendors, Food and Cash Bar. Organizer BRENCORE ENTERTAINMENT.

A CULINARY STAPLE

Pig feet are considered a culinary staple in several countries China, the Southern United States, France, Germany, Mexico, the Philippines, and parts of Eastern Europe where they are often prepared in different ways like pickled, boiled, roasted, or used in stews depending on the region. Information from Wikipedia.

KIDS TO CAMP SCHOLARSHIP

The Kids to Camp Scholarship allows you to find the perfect camp that fits the imagination of your child. This is a needs-based scholarship. Applicants will be reviewed on a first-come, first served basis. Kids to Camp registration 2025 is underway. Apply today pgparks.com/fee-assistance-scholarships.

A TRIBUTE TO THE MUSIC OF BOBBY WOMACK

Join us as national recording artists Jamar Dukes, Reggie Baker, and Bryan Fox will perform some of Bobby Womack's greatest hits such as "If You Think You Are Lonely Now," "Harry Hippie," "That's The Way I Feel About Cha," "Woman's Gotta Have It," and many more. Saturday, March 22, 2025, from 8 p.m.-10:30 p.m. If you are a fan of Bobby Womack's music, then this is a tribute you do not want to miss. Ticket Price: General \$30; Senior & Student \$25. All ages. Event Category: Arts Performances Senior Youth. Event Programs & Series: Concert Harmony Hall Arts Center. (301) 203-6070 harmonyhallarts@pgparks.com.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Cultivate something new. Now's the time to plant the seed of something great in your life, help it grow and see it thrive. Dig into new interests, skills and hobbies, with classes in gardening, stainability, healthy living, and much more this summer at the College of Southern Maryland. Go to csm.edu/community_education to explore CSM's full range of Community Education offerings.

COMMUNITY

Celebrates from A1



PHOTO COURTESY MEDSTAR HEALTH

A special ribbon-cutting and dedication ceremony on March 10 celebrated the re-opening of the newly renovated pre-operative surgery and post-anesthesia care unit (PACU) at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center.

David Weiner, MD, spine surgeon. “I’m most excited about what this means for our patients. This isn’t just about more space; it is about better care, smoother transitions, and a more comfortable experience for those who trust us with their health.”

Stephen T. Michaels, MD, president of MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center and senior vice president of MedStar Health explained that the renovated pre- and post-operative surgical space is part of MedStar Health’s ongoing commitment and investment plan for MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center.

“The much-needed renovation of the pre-operative surgical unit and PACU was driven by significant growth in surgical and pro-



PHOTO CREDIT COYLE STUDIOS

Stephen T. Michaels, MD, president of MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center explained that the renovated pre- and post-operative surgical space is part of MedStar Health’s ongoing commitment and investment plan for MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center.

cedural volumes at MedStar Southern Maryland over the past several years,” stated Dr. Michaels. “The updated space is an

achievement that reflects our ongoing commitment to enhancing patient care at the hospital and in our community.”

Hyattsville Native Serves With U.S. Navy

By ASHLEY CRAIG
Navy Office of Community Outreach

SAN DIEGO (Feb. 28, 2025)—Petty Officer 1st Class Freddy Ventura, a native of Hyattsville, Maryland, serves the U.S. Navy assigned to Naval Base Point Loma.

Ventura graduated from James Hubert Blake High School in 2007. Additionally, Ventura is working toward an associate degree in general studies through the University of Maryland Global Campus.

The skills and values needed to succeed in the Navy are similar to those found in Hyattsville.

“Growing up, I learned to do your best wherever you go and the importance of family and friends,” Ventura said. “I also learned that dedication paves the path for success and to see every challenge as an opportunity to succeed. It helps with problem-solving in work environments, whether on shore duty or on the ship. You run into problems daily, and instead of complaining, they expect you to find a way to succeed. That’s what helps make a great leader. People follow you because of that.”

Ventura joined the Navy 12 years ago. Today, Ventura serves as a personnel specialist.

“I joined the Navy to serve, gain an education, achieve financial stability and build a better future for myself and my family,” Ventura said. “When I was in high school in 2007, I missed the bus to school. I didn’t want to tell my parents because then I’d be in trouble. I went to a McDonald’s near the bus stop, but I didn’t know what to do, so I approached a retired sailor, randomly, and asked for a ride to

school. He gave me a ride to school. I kept that with me, that he helped me. Years later, when I was going to work at Five Guys, I saw the recruiting officer and he told me to come talk to him. I did and joined the Navy.”

Naval Base Point Loma provides support to 70 U.S. Pacific Fleet commands headquartered on the base, including five nuclear-powered fast-attack submarines. The base is also home to Cabrillo National Park and the Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery, which averages more than 1.2 million visitors annually.

The U.S. Navy is celebrating its 250th birthday this year.

According to Navy officials, “America is a maritime nation and for 250 years, America’s Warfighting Navy has sailed the globe in defense of freedom.”

With 90% of global commerce traveling by sea and access to the internet relying on the security of undersea fiber optic cables, Navy officials continue to emphasize that the prosperity of the United States is directly linked to recruiting and retaining talented people from across the rich fabric of America.

Ventura has many opportunities to achieve accomplishments during military service.

“I’m proud of everything I’ve accomplished so far,” Ventura said. “Things like advancing in rank, earning awards and nominations, completing qualifications and frocking mentees, despite any challenges and adversities. These accomplishments reflect hard work, growth and a positive impact on others.”

Ventura serves a Navy that operates far forward, around the world and around the clock, pro-



PHOTO BY MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST SEAMAN JOEY SITTER, NAVY PUBLIC AFFAIRS SUPPORT ELEMENT WEST

Petty Officer 1st Class Freddy Ventura

moting the nation’s prosperity and security.

“Serving in the Navy means pride and honor,” Ventura said. “I’m proud of being part of the greatest navy in the world. All of the true friends and positive role models I’ve met through my career have shaped me into who I am today.”

Ventura is grateful to others for helping make a Navy career possible.

“I want to thank my family, friends, leaders and mentors—Chief Boatswain’s Mate Green, Chief Personnel Specialist Lat, Chief Personnel Specialist Coronado, Senior Chief Personnel Specialist Thomas, Master Chief Personnel Specialist Spruill, Senior Chief Personnel Specialist Sanchez, Chief Personnel Specialist Seaman and Command Master Chief Venegas—for their guidance and support throughout my career,” Ventura added.



I-495 Southside Express Lanes Study City of Alexandria and Fairfax County, VA Prince George’s County, MD

In-person Public Information Meetings
Meeting times: 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Meeting format: Open house with a presentation at 7 p.m.

Tuesday, April 1, 2025

West Potomac High School (Cafeteria)
6500 Quander Rd., Alexandria, VA 22307

Wednesday, April 2, 2025

Oxon Hill High School (Auditorium)
6701 Leyte Dr., Oxon Hill, MD 20745

Monday, April 7, 2025

Thomas A. Edison High School (Cafeteria)
5801 Franconia Rd., Alexandria, VA 22310

Wednesday, April 9, 2025

Nannie J. Lee Memorial Recreation Center
1108 Jefferson St., Alexandria, VA 22314

Virtual Public Information Room available starting on April 1, 2025, at www.vdot.virginia.gov/495southside

Learn about and provide input on the Virginia Department of Transportation’s (VDOT) I-495 Southside Express Lanes Study, an environmental study evaluating the potential extension of the express lanes system on the southern section of the Capital Beltway (I-495) by 11 miles from the Springfield Interchange (I-95/I-395/I-495) in Fairfax County, Virginia, across the Woodrow Wilson Memorial Bridge, to the MD 210 interchange in Prince George’s County, Maryland. VDOT, in coordination with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and other federal, state, and local agencies in Virginia and Maryland, is conducting an Environmental Assessment in compliance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and 23 CFR Part 771.

VDOT will provide information at upcoming public meetings on the three alternatives under study to address identified transportation needs within the study area. These needs include extending and providing continuity of the express lanes system on I-495, providing additional travel choices, reducing congestion and improving travel reliability, improving safety, and providing consistency with local and regional plans. VDOT will also provide preliminary traffic analysis data and updates on study progress and ongoing coordination.

The in-person meetings will be held from 6:30- 8:30 p.m. The meeting format will include an open house with a presentation at 7 p.m. VDOT representatives will be present at various stations to answer questions.

The virtual public information room will contain the meeting presentation and boards, and opportunities to provide input.

Review information on the study webpage (www.vdot.virginia.gov/495southside), during the in-person public information meetings, or during business hours at VDOT Northern Virginia District Office, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030. Please call ahead at 703-691-6044 or TTY/TDD 711 to ensure appropriate personnel are available to answer your questions.

Provide your input by submitting oral and/or written comments at the meetings, or via the online comment form at www.vdot.virginia.gov/495southside, email to 495southsideexpresslanes@vdot.virginia.gov, or mail to Michelle Shropshire, P.E., VDOT Northern Virginia Megaprojects Director, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030, by Monday, April 21, 2025.

VDOT ensures nondiscrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended. If you need more information or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, contact VDOT Civil Rights at 703-259-1775 or TTY/TDD 711.

UPC: 122608

Gambling from A1

to 15.3% during the COVID-19 pandemic, they climbed to 17.5% during the 2022–23 school year, driven primarily by teenage boys, according to the center. In that same school year, a quarter of high school age males gambled, while about 10% of their female classmates did.

In Maryland high schools, 18-year-olds are most likely to gamble. They’re also the only students legally able to do so. In Maryland, it’s legal for 18-year-olds to purchase lottery tickets, and wager on horse races and fantasy sports betting. But it’s not legal for Maryland 18-year-olds to enter casinos, play poker or participate in sports betting. Those venues and activities require participants to be 21.

Despite this, more than 17% of younger teens gamble, according to the center’s data.

Although many online gambling venues have terms of service that bar underage use, some teens use deceitful methods to sidestep state law. According to Hinman, he’s encountered children as young as 15 using offshore betting sites, while others have forged legitimate online profiles by using an older person’s identification—sometimes with their permission.

“A lot of times, the parents are thinking it’s a harmless activity,” Hinman said. “I think it’s a family member, in a lot of cases, that help those underage kids ... open up accounts.”

Even seemingly innocuous actions, like gifting lottery tickets as stocking stuffers on Christmas or letting them pick horses during the Preakness Stakes, can introduce children to dangerous gambling behaviors, Hinman said.

Eshleman characterized gambling as similar to addictive substances, like alcohol. Many can control their consumption, but for a small population, it spirals out of control, destroying lives in the process. The earlier someone starts gambling, the more likely they are to become addicted, Eshleman said.

Since 2020, helpline calls at the Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling have more than doubled, and many callers are seeking help for more than just a gambling problem. When the center analyzed its helpline callers in April 2024, about a third reported depression, 16% reported alcohol problems and 14% reported drug use. Nearly two-thirds had financial problems and almost a third struggled with their mental health.

While alcohol and drug abuse have long been the targets of Maryland’s health curricula, gambling addiction has never seen the same focus.

“There needs to be more education around it,” Hinman said. “We’re seeing it start to become a real serious problem. Let’s take some action before it becomes a major, major problem.”

North Carolina’s solution

Youth gambling in North Carolina could have looked similar to Maryland.

North Carolina legalized sports betting in March 2024, three years after Maryland. But state gambling prevention experts identified another worrying trend growing among the state’s youth: gambling mechanics within online gaming and digital media.

“What we’ve realized is this convergence of media—gambling, gaming, two very popular things to do, two very socially normal things to do, ... we needed to talk about all of it together,” said Alison Wood, the youth prevention coordinator for the North Carolina Problem Gambling Program.

Video games like Hogwarts Legacy, Madden NFL 24 and Marvel’s Spider-Man 2—all of which were in the top five best-selling games of 2023—feature loot boxes, chance-based blind boxes that can be purchased with in-game or real currency for a chance at rare prizes or rewards.

The widespread implementation of these mechanics within video games has even led to a proposed addition to the fifth edition of the “Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders”—internet gaming disorder. It would be just the second diagnosable behavioral addiction after gambling.

To combat the growth in gambling behaviors in high school-aged North Carolinians, Wood worked with Stacked Deck, a gambling addiction education package and grant program, beginning in 2010. A 2022 report from the company showed the curriculum resulted in a 25% increase in students believing gambling’s risks far outweigh its benefits, as well as an overall reduction in reported gambling activities within the high school age group.

Last year, Wood worked to introduce a new program, Choice Led Health, a variation of which has also been recently implemented in Virginia. This program was placed within existing health and physical education curricula, starting with over 10,000 seventh graders in Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools. The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services reported the program resulted in a 20% decrease in gambling activities after just a single school year.

Wood is focused on expanding the state’s gambling addiction curricula, both to other counties and to other educators. North Carolina’s next evolution will open gambling risk education to any educator, as not all schools in the state have health educators.

“Health education should be just as important as math class, as science class,” Wood said.

See **GAMBLING** Page A4

COMMENTARY

Marian Wright Edelman
*Founder and President Emerita,
 Children's Defense Fund*



ChildWatch:

Women's History: Vision and Light

Forty-five years ago, President Jimmy Carter issued the first presidential proclamation designating March 2–8, 1980, as National Women's History Week. The final day of that period was International Women's Day, which had already been celebrated in many countries for much of the 20th century and recognized by the United Nations as a day to acknowledge women's contributions and call for women's economic, political, and civil rights. American women historians, community leaders, and advocates believed it was past time for the United States to participate in a national commemoration too. It would

be seven more years before the week-long observance expanded to the full month of March, but this was a milestone and victory for American women's history.

President Carter's proclamation read: "From the first settlers who came to our shores, from the first American Indian families who befriended them, men and women have worked together to build this nation. Too often the women were unsung and sometimes their contributions went unnoticed. But the achievements, leadership, courage, strength and love of the women who built America was as vital as that of the

men whose names we know so well. As Dr. Gerda Lerner has noted, 'Women's History is Women's Right.'—It is an essential and indispensable heritage from which we can draw pride, comfort, courage, and long-range vision."

The proclamation continued: "I urge libraries, schools, and community organizations to focus their observances on the leaders who struggled for equality—Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, Lucy Stone, Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Harriet Tubman, and Alice Paul. Understanding the true history of our country will help us to comprehend the need for full equality under the law for all our people. This goal can be achieved by ratifying the 27th Amendment to the United States Constitution, which states that 'Equality of Rights under the Law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.'"

Of course, the measure that President Carter then hoped would become the 27th Amendment, the Equal Rights Amendment, has still not been enshrined into the Constitution. To the contrary, women's rights are now under a dangerous onslaught of new attacks, along with the nation's larger commitment to protecting equal rights for

all people and the basic ability to acknowledge, study, and honor American women's specific history and contributions at all. Just as with February's commemorations of Black History Month, our nation is marking these observances in perilous times. But prohibitions on talking about or teaching the truth about history in any culture only serve to underscore that history's importance and value, and once again the long thread of women's history in America provides examples and light for the current struggle.

To quote the proclamation's words again, this history should give all of us not only pride but "comfort, courage, and long-range vision." When President Carter urged the nation to study specific women leaders who fought for equality in the past as a path to understanding America's true history and ongoing need for equality today, he gave seven names as examples from a list that includes a constellation. Remember these words attributed to one of them and one of my own lanterns, Sojourner Truth: *I will not allow my life's light to be determined by the darkness around me.*

—March 14, 2025

Marc Morial

President and CEO, National Urban League



To Be Equal:

If it Walks Like a Tax and Quacks Like a Tax, We Call it a Tax

"You can't really run a campaign where you're like: I want to cut taxes for rich people and raise them on the poor. So instead, it's all of this smoke-and-mirrors distraction about how foreigners are taking advantage of us ... It's a story that, if you don't know any economics and you haven't stopped to think about it, sounds appealing. And the more people who buy that story, the more he can do this fiscal switch and have an excuse for the tax cuts."

—Kimberly Clausing

President Trump says "tariff is the most beautiful word in the dictionary."

The beauty, for him, is that it allows him to avoid the word "tax."

"If a candidate announced a tax increase on the poor and middle class to fund a tax cut for the rich, voters would soundly reject that proposal," UCLA tax law professor Kimberly Clausing wrote in the New York Times. "But tariffs wrap this fiscal switch in a veneer of nationalism."

In other words, if it looks like a tax and sounds like a tax and raises prices for the average American like a tax, we call it a tax.

Trump imposed a massive, job-killing tax increase on American consumers this week, one of a dizzying array that he has threatened, withdrawn, postponed, or introduced. The uncertainty has thrown the U.S. stock market into chaos and stymied economists' efforts to precisely calculate the potential damage.

The 25% tax on all steel and aluminum imports that went into effect this week—on top of a 20% tax on Chinese imports Trump already imposed—could cost the U.S. 100,000 jobs in the aluminum industry alone.

Trump's proposed tax increases combined could cost the U.S. a stunning 600,000 full-time jobs.

One calculation of a combination of proposed tax increases estimated an annual household cost of more than \$2,600 a—more than 17% of the annual income of a full-time worker earning the federal minimum wage.

Trump has offered a nonsensical and ever-changing list of rationales for his tax hike agenda, from the absurd notion of forcing

Canada to become a U.S. state to raising revenue to fund child care?

In reality, his wildly-unrealistic predictions of revenue from these tax hikes are meant to justify yet another tax break for billionaires. And because poorer families spend a greater percentage of their income on the affected products, the burden of that tax break falls squarely on their backs.

Trump's 2017 tax shift reduced federal revenue and produced the third-largest increase in the federal debt of any president in U.S. history—and the largest for a president who wasn't trying to fund a war.

And a trade war didn't work the last time he tried it. Nearly every dollar raised through increased tariffs on Chinese imports went to bail out the farmers who were casualties of his trade war. His tax increase on imported metals sent prices soaring for cars, tools, and machines even as those industries' output shrank to the tune of \$3 billion.

As Moody's chief economist Mark Zandi said, "It's just a lose-lose for everybody."

—March 15, 2025

Elizabeth Seton High School's Young Women's Entrepreneurship Program Hosts 2nd Annual Social Entrepreneurs: Senior Pitch Competition

By PRESS OFFICER
Elizabeth Seton High School

BLADENSBURG, Md. (March 2, 2025)—Elizabeth Seton High School's Young Women's Entrepreneurship Program (YWEP) will host its 2nd Annual Social Entrepreneurs: Senior Pitch Competition on Thursday, April 3, 2025, from 6 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. At this event, 14 students from YWEP will present their innovative business ventures to a panel of judges, competing for a prize package totaling \$20,000,

including investment funds, business sponsorships, and professional services.

The Senior Capstone competition has three rounds. In Round 1, students give a 60-second pitch, with the top nine advancing. In Round 2, they deliver a 3–5 minute pitch to judges, and the top five move on. The final round takes place on the main stage, judged by Angel Gregorio, Melanie Royster '11, Christopher Alexander, Monica Elston-Carter '04, Nakirnsri Sintaisong and Sarah Ghaith.

Prize Package:

- 1st Place—\$10,000 Bundle (\$6,000 cash + \$4,000 in business support)
- 2nd Place—\$7,000 Bundle (\$3,500 cash + \$3,500 in business support)
- 3rd Place—\$3,000 Bundle (business support only)

The business support package includes professional mentorship, branding and marketing resources, financial advising, and other services to help propel these young entrepreneurs' businesses forward.

"This competition is an exciting opportunity for our students to not only showcase their businesses but also gain real-world experience in pitching, networking, and securing funding," said Joy Lawson '11, Program Director of YWEP.

YWEP is a two-year program designed to equip young women with entrepreneurial skills, leadership development, and a strong foundation in business strategy. The program encourages students to become social entrepreneurs, leveraging innovation to create

meaningful change in their communities.

The Senior Pitch Competition is open to the public, and Seton is actively seeking media and community partners to support the next generation of women entrepreneurs.

For more information or to RSVP, visit the registration link <https://setonhs.myschoolapp.com/page/event-detail?siteId=1327&ssl=1®ister=52503> or contact Mrs. Joy Lawson at jlawson@setonhs.org or (301) 864-4532 x7668.

Elizabeth Seton High School, rooted in Catholic values and the *charism of the Daughters of Charity, cultivates confidence in young women to excel in college, careers, and life through an innovative and rigorous academic experience. As a diverse and inclusive learning community, students are taught to think critically and creatively, work collaboratively, and serve others. Visit our website for more information: <https://www.setonhs.org>*

Gambling from A3

"What are the tools that [students] need to practice healthy coping strategies, as opposed to what we call maladaptive coping strategies, which can lead to addictions?"

What's the hold-up?

Maryland is behind on gambling addiction education, but not for a lack of trying.

Sen. Bryan Simonaire, a Republican representing northern Anne Arundel County, has worked for years to implement a statewide problem gambling curriculum, spurred by his own experiences with disordered gambling. His father was an addict, which was exacerbated by gambling's legalization in his home state.

"I've seen the personal side of addiction for that, and I try to do everything I can to help other families not to have to go through that," Simonaire said.

Despite his best efforts, the legislation has stalled since its original introduction in 2020, just before the pandemic shut down that year's legislative session early.

When the Maryland Senate reconvened, Simonaire's proposal found opposition from the Maryland State Department of Education, county boards of education and the Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland. These organizations pushed back due to Simonaire's proposal for an additional mandated curriculum, which can increase a teacher's required workload. The bill was declared dead in April 2021.

A different story played out in Virginia's state legislature.

Del. Sam Rasoul, a Democrat representing Roanoke in Virginia's lower house, successfully pushed through similar legislation in 2022, facing little opposition. Unlike Simonaire's bill, Rasoul's legislation inserted problem gambling content into existing mandated addiction curricula, effectively sidestepping the resistance encountered by Simonaire a year prior.

"There was already instruction time allocated to addiction, and we just ensured that we were revising those guidelines to inform on the extreme dangers of addiction gambling," Rasoul said.

Rasoul created the legislation alongside the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, just as Simonaire worked with Eshleman and the Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling on his bill. Virginia's curriculum takes inspiration from both MD-Smart Choices and Stacked Deck, said Anne Rogers, Virginia's responsible gambling promotion coordinator.

According to Rogers, Virginia finalized its first draft of the updated curriculum in January, which is set to be followed by a final draft in March and implementation of the revisions at the start of the 2025-26 school year.

While Virginia moves ahead with its successful legislation, Simonaire is working to replicate Rasoul's success.

His new legislation in Maryland follows a similar pattern to Rasoul's bill, adding new information about problem gambling to existing health curricula. Simonaire is targeting the Maryland youth suicide prevention school program, as gambling addiction, especially addiction that results in severe debt, can be a risk factor for suicidal behaviors. It would be the first revision to the program since 2008.

About half of disordered gamblers in the United States have reported suicidal ideations, according to statistics from the American Psychiatric Association. Nearly one in five have attempted suicide. That being the case, Simonaire said the state must act.

"This is not a mandated curriculum that says every county has to do it. This is an overarching guideline as far as how to handle suicide," Simonaire said. "What we've done is we've included gambling in it to show from the legislative standpoint, we want this included in those discussions."

The bill's fate will be decided during Maryland's 2025 legislative session, which began on Jan. 8 and runs until April 7. Despite past setbacks, Simonaire said he is confident, both in the legislation's

chances and its mission. Simonaire said health professionals, education specialists and casino operators all back the bill, which had its first Senate hearing Feb. 12.

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," Simonaire said.

The Prince George's Post

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BUSINESS AND FINANCE

Social Security Matters

Ask Rusty:

Can I Avoid Paying the Medicare Premium?

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

Dear Rusty: Is there any way I can get out of paying the \$185 I am told will be taken out of my Social Security for Medicare Part B when I turn 65? We pay for Medicare all our working lives, and now I have to pay a monthly premium for insurance that only covers 80%. **Signed: Disheartened Senior**

Dear Disheartened: For clarification, the money you paid into Medicare while working during your lifetime was for Medicare Part A (inpatient hospitalization coverage). The Medicare taxes paid while working entitled you to FREE Medicare coverage for Part A inpatient hospitalization coverage, but they do not entitle you to Medicare coverage for outpatient services (coverage for doctors, medical tests, etc.). For that coverage from Medicare, you must enroll in Medicare Part B, for which there is a monthly premium (\$185/month for 2025). If you wish to have Medicare Part B coverage, you must enroll in Medicare Part B at age 65—unless you have other “creditable” healthcare coverage from an employer.

The Medicare Part B premium will be automatically deducted from your Social Security payment when you enroll in Medicare, and there is no way to avoid it if you wish to have Medicare healthcare coverage for outpatient medical services. But, if you currently have “creditable” healthcare coverage from an employer, you can delay enrolling in Medicare Part B (thus avoiding the premium) until your employer coverage ends. If you don’t enroll in Medicare Part B during your initial enrollment period (at 65), or in a Special Enrollment Period following the end of your creditable employer healthcare coverage, then you will incur a penalty for enrolling in Medicare Part B outside of the prescribed enrollment periods. That penalty is a permanent increase in your Medicare Part B premium. FYI, “creditable” is an employer group plan with at least 20 participants.

We do not advise going without outpatient healthcare coverage, so you should carefully consider enrolling in Medicare Part B when you turn 65. If you are already collecting Social Security benefits, you will be automatically enrolled, but you can opt out of Part B if you wish—it’s just not advisable, unless you have current creditable healthcare coverage from an employer.

So, to recap: the Medicare taxes you paid while working only entitled you to free Medicare Part A inpatient hospitalization coverage. You must enroll in Medicare Part B (for which there is a monthly premium) to have Medicare healthcare coverage for outpatient healthcare services. Both Medicare Part A and Part B have deductibles and copayments, for which you may wish to consider getting either a supplemental insurance plan or a Medicare Advantage plan. But, in either case, you must still have both Medicare Part A and Part B to obtain such additional healthcare coverage.

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.

Morningside from A2

I’m reasonably healthy. This column is my only job (and I don’t get paid). I rely on YOU to not only read it, but to keep giving me news. Send it to muddmm@AOL.com.

Clarence Richardson dies at 99

Clarence T. Richardson, who retired in 1985 as Chief Master Sergeant at Andrews, died March 6. He was 99.

He was born in Seagrove, N.C., and moved to DC in 1946. In addition to his work at Andrews, he taught heating, ventilation and air conditioning classes and later had his own HVAC business.

He was a member of the 459th Wing Association, RSES, American Legion, an investment club, New Vision Fellowship Church in Forestville, and later Sudley UMC in Manassas.

Survivors include daughters Joanne Miller and husband Terry; Mary Mast and husband Steve; Terry Miller; Linda Lyons and her husband Chris Lyon; sister Ann Suggs and husband Steve, five grandchildren and three great-grandsons. He was preceded in death by his wife Mildred, parents Wendell and Mary Peal Richardson, brothers Clinton, Bobby and Benny and sisters Nell, Marie, Louise and Mary Deloris.

Services were at Demaine Funeral Home, in Springfield, Va.

Milestones

Happy Birthday to Ruth Anthony, my great-grandson Jack McHale and Hudson Murphy Glaubitz, March 23; Lewis Woods, March 24; Ken Kyser and Jay Rollins, March 25; Gina Foster, March 26; Walter Dimes, March 27; Robert Hay, Jr. and David Righter, March 28; and Ben Surratt, Kimberly Smith, March 29;

Happy Anniversary to Terry and Gina Foster, March 26, and to Antoinette and Charles Mattison, March 29.

Proposed FY26 Budget Presented to County Council

By LINDSAY WATTS
Prince George’s County Council
Media

On Thursday, March 13, 2025, Acting County Executive Tara Jackson presented her proposed draft of the Fiscal Year 2026 budget to the County Council.

The \$5.8 billion proposed operating budget comes at a turbulent time, with a myriad of challenges and economic uncertainties. The county remains focused on prioritizing education, public safety, economic development, and core services

residents depend on.

“The unprecedented actions at the federal level, including mass layoffs and funding cuts, pose a significant threat to our county and state,” said Council Chair Jolene Ivey. “This is one of the most difficult budget years in recent history and there are some tough decisions to make, but we are committed to finding solutions and protecting essential services for our residents.”

The Council will thoroughly analyze the budget, solicit input from the community, make necessary adjustments, and

approve a final budget by June 1, 2025, as mandated by the County Charter. Fiscal Year 2026 begins on July 1, 2025.

To view the County Executive’s proposed budget, visit https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/departments-offices/management-budget/operating-budget/2026-fiscal-year-proposed-budget?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery.

All Council meetings, including budget sessions, are live streamed and available via the Council’s website for on-demand viewing. For updated information on the Council budget process, committee work sessions, and public hearings, visit the Council’s FY 26 Budget Portal.

Girado Smith, CEO of Educational Systems Federal Credit Union, Selected as an Honoree for the Washington Business Journal’s 2025 Diversity in Business Awards

By PRESS OFFICER
ESFCU

GREENBELT, Md. (March 12, 2025)—Girado Smith, CPA, President/CEO of Educational Systems Federal Credit Union (ESFCU), has been named an honoree for the *Washington Business Journal’s* 2025 Diversity in Business Awards. The prestigious recognition celebrates diversity and inclusion in the workforce while honoring inspiring leaders of color who are making a lasting impact in the Greater Washington business community.

“I am deeply honored and grateful to be selected as an honoree for this award and commend the *Washington Business Journal* for recognizing and celebrating diverse business leaders and their contributions,” said Girado Smith, CEO of ESFCU. “This honor is a testament to the incredible colleagues who have supported me throughout my journey and to our dedicated Ambassadors and board of directors, whose unwavering commitment makes our mission of supporting our communities a reality.”

Smith’s rise through the ranks of one of Maryland’s leading credit unions reflects his deep expertise and dedication to the financial services industry. Beginning his career at ESFCU as an Accounting Manager, he advanced to Assistant Vice President of Accounting, Vice President of Accounting & Finance, and Executive Vice President & Chief Finance Officer,

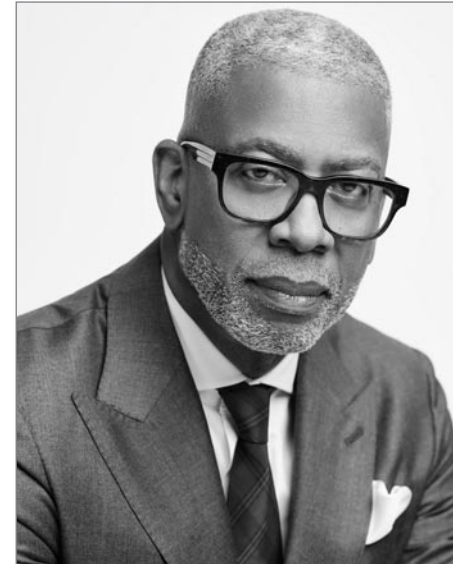


PHOTO COURTESY ESFCU

Girado Smith

before stepping into the role of Chief Executive Officer. His experience, leadership, and commitment to workplace culture continue to drive innovation and growth at ESFCU.

Under Smith’s leadership, ESFCU recently merged with Howard University Employees Federal Credit Union (HUEFCU), significantly expanding the range of financial services for Howard University employees, students, alumni, and Howard University Hospital staff. With more than 200 employees, 14 branch locations, and \$1.2 billion in assets, ESFCU has been serving the education community

since 1955. In April 2024, the *Washington Business Journal* recognized ESFCU as the 12th largest credit union in the Greater Washington area.

“It’s not just about the numbers,” Smith says. “From the very first loan we made until now, it’s about deepening the trust and impact we have within the communities we serve. Every member’s success is our success.”

Honorees for the WBJ 2025 Diversity in Business Awards are selected based on professional accomplishments, community leadership, philanthropy, and industry impact.

Smith and his fellow honorees will be recognized at a ceremony on April 24, 2025. To learn more about the *Washington Business Journal’s* 2025 Diversity in Business Awards, visit Meet the Diversity in Business Awards honorees of 2025 - *Washington Business Journal*: <https://www.bizjournals.com/washington/news/2025/02/27/diversity-business-awards-2025.html>.

Educational Systems Federal Credit Union (ESFCU) has proudly served the education community since 1955, providing financial solutions tailored for educators, students, and their families. With \$1.2 billion in assets, 14 branch locations, and more than 200 employees, ESFCU is committed to supporting its members with personalized banking services, financial education, and community-driven initiatives. www.esfcu.org.

Agreement Between University of Maryland Global Campus and the Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families to Boost Services for Vets

By PRESS OFFICER
University of Maryland Global Campus

ADELPHI, Md. (March 11, 2025)—University of Maryland Global Campus and the Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families have signed an agreement that will help each organization communicate their shared goal to empower veterans and military families.

“Both the university and the department provide benefits, services and support for the large number of Maryland veterans,” said Keith Hauk, UMGC’s Vice President of Stateside Military Operations. “The Department will help encourage veterans to take advantage of the university’s academic programs, while the university will publicize the Department’s services among our students.”

With more than 8,300 active service members, veterans and their families from Maryland enrolled in university programs, UMGC has a ready audience to promote the Department’s programs that include benefits, health programs, community care, support for the homeless, suicide prevention and education support.

“Our commitment is to provide meaningful opportunities for Maryland veterans and their families,” said Secretary Anthony Woods, Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families. “Through the partnership with the University of Maryland Global Campus, we are offering access to higher education,

helping them advance their careers, and enhancing their overall quality of life. This collaboration is a testament to our dedication to supporting those who have served, and together, we are helping build brighter futures for our heroes.”

In return, the Department will publicize with veterans and their families educational resources provided by the university as well as university events aimed at veterans. UMGC offers more than 135 academic programs in workforce-relevant areas such as cybersecurity, business, data analytics, healthcare management, information technology, and nursing.

The university also offers coaching and counseling with personnel that are specifically trained to work with military-affiliated students and staffs the Hildebrand Veterans Student Lounge at the Dorsey Station (Md) Education Center. The Vessey Virtual Student Union is an online resource that is also available 24/7 to military-affiliated students.

UMGC will serve as a partner in the Department’s Maryland Joins Forces (MJF) initiative that is mobilizing partners across many sectors.

That initiative seeks to reduce veteran and military spouse unemployment and make it easier for spouses to transition in the state without career disruptions. It wants to make sure that no military-connected family experiences food insecurity or homelessness. It promotes education so that veterans and their families gain the skills and credentials they need

to advance their careers. It wants military-connected families to live healthier lives, both physically and mentally. And, it seeks to promote volunteer opportunities so that military families can serve with non-military families to reduce the civil-military divide.

“All of these are goals that the university shares,” Hauk said, “and we already are doing our part in providing services, events and information for our thousands of military families around the world who have come to the University to accomplish their educational goals and advance their careers.”

The partnership is designed to build trust in communities engaging in efforts to improve outcomes for veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors receiving services and benefits from both the Maryland department and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

University of Maryland Global Campus (UMGC) was established in 1947 to serve adults in the workforce and the military. Today, UMGC enrolls some 90,000 students annually, offering bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degree programs, as well as certificates in more than 135 fully online and hybrid programs and specializations. UMGC now offers classes to military service personnel and their families at some 175 locations in more than 20 countries. More than half of the university’s students are active-duty military personnel, their families, members of the National Guard and veterans.

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Have a Safe Weekend

EarthTalk® Q&A Greens Urge Federal Protection for Prairie Dogs

By Shashwat Mishra | March 12, 2025

Dear EarthTalk:
Are prairie dogs threatened or endangered these days?
—Joseph P., via email

Prairie dogs play a key role in grassland ecosystems but encounter many threats. These cute 18" tall tan rodents live in small pockets of habitat across 10 western U.S. states: Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas and Wyoming. However, they are now extinct in Arizona. Roughly half of the U.S. population is in South Dakota, Montana and Wyoming. As keystone species—those whose presence is critical for the balance and health of their ecosystems—they support more than 130 other species such as burrowing owls and black-footed ferrets.

Habitat loss is one of the most noteworthy threats. Urban development, agriculture and land conversion have dramatically reduced habitats. This leaves fragmented areas that make it hard for populations to thrive. Climate change further compounds things by altering grassland ecosystems: Rising temperatures and prolonged droughts reduce food and water availability, further impacting prairie dogs and the species that depend on them.

"Everything that was in the southern part of their range is kind of lopped off, and you're really seeing almost Colorado become the central core part of their range and then shifting north," says Sterling Krank, Prairie Dog Coalition Director at The Humane Society of the United States.

Another challenge is sylvatic plague, a disease transmitted by fleas that has wiped out large colonies. Also, prairie dogs are viewed as pests by farmers and ranchers. This leads to poisoning and other eradication efforts. "Prairie dogs, once one of the most abundant animals on the prairie, now occupy two percent of their historic range," reports Christine Peterson in High Country News.

Prairie dogs aren't federally recognized as endangered. But activists are working to conserve them, launching a wide range of initiatives including habitat restoration, vaccination efforts against the plague, and public awareness programs. These initiatives have brought achievements. But difficulties remain.

Anybody can help safeguard prairie dogs and their habitat. Supporting groups such as Defenders of Wildlife and the Prairie Dog Coalition aids in financing habitat restoration and

disease prevention initiatives. Promoting sustainable methods that protect grasslands and reduce human-wildlife conflicts is another way to help. Raising awareness about the ecological importance of prairie dogs and taking part in citizen science initiatives to track their populations are additional methods to help in their conservation.

Prairie dogs may not hold endangered status at the moment, but their decreasing populations and the dangers they encounter highlight the necessity for intervention. Assisting conservation efforts and adopting sustainable methods is one approach to help guarantee the survival of these species and uphold the balance of North America's grassland ecosystems.

CONTACTS: Conservation Efforts for Prairie Dogs, <https://www.prairiedoghoogland.com/conservation>.

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

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