

# The Prince George's Post



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## Psi Epsilon Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.® Partners With Three Towns for Earth Day Events

By DARLENE SPEARS-REED  
Psi Epsilon Omega Chapter

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, Md. (April 29, 2025)—In celebration of Earth Day, the Psi Epsilon Omega Chapter (PEO) of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.® deployed members to three towns in its service area to plant trees. During the month of April, the City of Greenbelt invited chapter members to participate in its Arbor Day event. Members were also encouraged to sign a pledge with the Arbor Day Foundation to commit to an eco-friendly habit in exchange for the organization planting a tree in a recovery forest—helping to restore ecosystems and combat climate change. Over 120 PEO members committed to composting, planting trees, shopping at local farmers' markets, and carrying reusable bags and cups.

Additionally, PEO partnered with Oaklands Elementary School in Laurel to plant four trees, and PEO's Youth Leadership Institute (YLI) students and members of the chapter's "Enhancing Our Environment" committee planted trees at the City of Bowie's Kenhill Center.

"Earth Day is not just a celebration but a reminder that every act of care for the planet is a promise to future generations," said Karen S. Hicks, PEO President. "Creating a cleaner world for the future begins with the choices we make today."

**PEO First Vice President Marsha A. Mims-Word plants trees with Greenbelt, MD Mayor Emmett V. Jordan and members of the Greenbelt city council.**

PHOTO COURTESY PSI EPSILON OMEGA CHAPTER



## Prince George's Chamber of Commerce to Host Annual Golf Tournament

More than 100 golf enthusiasts set to drive range at Upper Marlboro, MD golf course

By PRESS OFFICER  
PGCOC

LANHAM, Md. (April 29, 2025)—The Prince George's Chamber of Commerce is pleased to announce it will hold its Annual Golf Tournament on Thursday, May 15, 2025, at The Oak Creek Country Club in Upper Marlboro, Maryland (3201 Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway, Upper Marlboro, MD 20721). Sponsorship opportunities are available for businesses and golfers at every level. Traditionally, this event attracts local businesses and golf enthusiasts who either love the sport or are looking to network and get a chance to play on one of those most prestigious golf courses in Prince George's County, Maryland.

Players will enjoy a continental breakfast, assigned carts, bottled water, lunch, and an

awards ceremony announcing winners of contests and raffle prizes. Each registered player will receive a golf bag with golf-related items, and snacks will be provided. In addition, several sponsorship opportunities are available to businesses wishing to receive recognition from this popular tournament. The format for this tournament is a Scramble with a shotgun start time of 8 a.m.

"The annual golf tournament is more than just a great day on the green it's an incredible opportunity for business leaders, entrepreneurs, and small business owners to connect in a relaxed, engaging setting," said Alexander K. Austin, president & CEO. "Business deals happen on the green, and this event creates the perfect environment for meaningful conversations, fresh collaborations, and even new contracts to take shape. It's where strategy meets spontaneity,

and where a handshake over a fairway can lead to your next big client or partnership. We're proud to host an event that blends fun with real business potential."

Oak Creek Golf Club is located just a short drive from Washington, D.C., and anchors a gated community in Upper Marlboro, Maryland. The 18-hole championship layout, which has made Golf Advisor's list of the Top Courses in Maryland multiple times, is a popular tee time for golfers throughout Prince George's County. The golf course architecture firm of Ault, Clark, and Associates laid out this originally private golf course in 2007.

For additional information and to register, visit: <https://birdease.com/pgcoc>.

To receive sponsorship, please contact the Prince George's Chamber of Commerce at: [sponsorship@pgcoc.org](mailto:sponsorship@pgcoc.org).

## Prince George's County Memorial Library System Celebrates Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

By PRESS OFFICER  
PGCMLS

LARGO, Md. (May 1, 2025)—Throughout May, the Prince George's County Memorial Library System (PGCMLS) will be hosting a variety of programs for all ages in observance of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month.

Commemorated each May since 1979, Asian Pacific American Heritage Month is expansive in its scope—and the programming to be hosted across the Prince George's County Memorial Library System is equally wide-ranging.

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month spins on regular library programming include film and anime screenings featuring titles like "Ne Zha," "95 and 6 to Go," "The Joy Luck Club," "Monkey Man," and "The Apothecary Diaries"; themed "Ready 2 Read" storytimes and "Story Explorer" programs; and "Crafternoon" projects featuring paper cranes, koinobori, kakudaku kites, ukiyo-e neko woodblock prints, and



Origami—the last made both by hand and with the Cricut machine at the Fairmount Heights DREAM Lab!

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month also gives PGCMLS the opportunity to showcase and share the diversity that is a signature of the Prince George's community—and of PGCMLS library staff.

"[PGCMLS has] a really big collection of picture books featuring Filipino culture," says James Caparas, a librarian at the New Carrollton Branch Library who will be presenting an extended dual-language Filipino

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## Prince George's County Celebrates Arbor Day at Oxon Hill Elementary

County officials join students and faculty in planting 14 native trees

By PRESS OFFICER  
Department of the Environment

LARGO, Md. (April 29, 2025)—The Prince George's County Beautification Committee (PGCBC), along with County officials and volunteers, joined the students and faculty members of Oxon Hill Elementary School on Friday, April 25, to plant 14 native trees in honor of Arbor Day.

"We're delighted to join Oxon Hill Elementary students in planting 14 native trees on Arbor Day," says Master Gardener, Judge, and Vice-Chair of the Beautification Committee, Dave Kneipp. "This event ensures young students learn the importance of trees to our environment, community, and neighborhoods, while also teaching them to be good environmental stewards."

The Department of the Environment (DoE) Deputy Director Michelle Russell presented the Sibigi Lipford-Transou, Principal of Oxon Hill Elementary, with an Arbor Day proclamation signed by Acting County Executive Tara Jackson. Other invited speakers who stressed the importance of trees to the students included James Roberson, Instructional Specialist, Environmental Literacy, Prince George's County Public Schools

(PGCPS); Stacey Smalls, Deputy Director, Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T); and Alfred Bascom, Community Forest Coordinator, Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Prince George's County was recognized by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Forest Service with the Tree City USA® award. Prince George's County is the only County in the state to receive this award for 41 consecutive years.

The Tree City USA program has been greening cities and towns across America since 1976. It's a nationwide movement that provides the framework for communities to manage and increase their public trees. The Beautification Committee collaborates with the DoE, DPW&T, Maryland DNR Forest Service, Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Master Gardeners/the University of Maryland Extension, Neighborhood Design Center, Prince George's Soil Conservation District, and Prince George's Forestry Board to host the Arbor Day celebration.

For more information on securing trees for your community, contact Carole Barth, DoE Tree Conservation Program Manager, at [cabarth@co.pg.md.us](mailto:cabarth@co.pg.md.us).

## PGCPS Continues to Lead in MD Green School Awards

District Celebrates 27 Renewed Schools and 5 New Awardee Schools, Reinforces Commitment to Environmental Stewardship

By PRESS OFFICER  
PGCPS

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (May 1, 2025)—Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) continues to set the standard for environmental education in Maryland, with 27 schools recently renewing their award through the Maryland Green Schools program and five schools earning the award for the first time. With this milestone, the district now boasts a total of 154 MD Green Schools—the highest number in the state.

"Maintaining Prince George's County's leadership in the Maryland Green School program is a true team effort, driven by the dedication of both our students and staff," said Superintendent Milton House II. "This recognition aligns with the priorities of our nationally-recognized Climate Change Action Plan and reflects our continued commitment to reducing our carbon footprint, enhancing energy efficiency, and fostering a culture of environmental responsibility across our schools."

The William S. Schmidt Outdoor Education Center, home to

the district's environmental education program, continues to play a pivotal role in helping schools earn and maintain MD Green School status. In 2024, the Center received Maryland Green Center Sustainable Bronze status for maintaining certification for 18 consecutive years.

"PGCPS continues to be a leader across Maryland in supporting sustainable actions and culture in schools," said James Roberson, Instructional Specialist for Environmental Literacy at the Schmidt Center. "Teachers and students not only learn about present day environmental issues, but look to implement solutions on their campuses and communities. The Maryland Green School program provides the framework to make this happen."

**Schools Earning Recertification**

High Schools (7): Bladensburg, Dr. Henry A. Wise Jr., Fairmount Heights, Gwynn Park, Largo, Laurel, Potomac

K-8/Middle Schools (4): Ac-

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Children and young people need adults who never give up on them, are constantly searching for their special gifts, and who refuse to let them fail.

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# TOWNS *and* NEIGHBORS

## In and Around Morningside-Skyline

With Mary McHale, will return soon!

### Brandywine-Aquasco by Audrey Johnson 301-922-5384

#### INTERNATIONAL DANCE EXPERIENCE

Dancers representing countries from across the globe get together to showcase their talent in this interactive and immersive dance experience Sunday, May 18, 2025, from 4–6 p.m. Enjoy a live DJ spinning the latest international dance tracks and learn a few new moves to celebrate diversity in our community. Space is limited, advance registration is recommended.

Ticket Price \$20, \$15 Senior/Student. Age: All Ages. Event Category: Arts Heritage Celebrations Performances Senior Youth. Event Programs and series. Prince George's Publick Playhouse. The International Dance Experience event will be held at Prince George's Publick Playhouse, 5445 Landover Road, Hyattsville, Maryland 20784. Telephone number is (301) 277-1710. publickplayhouse@pgparks.com.

#### SAARC HEALTH AND WELLNESS FAIR

SAARC Health and Wellness Fair is designed to promote health, and wellness. We look forward to you joining us. The Health and Wellness Fair will feature various health screenings, informational booths, fitness activities, healthy snacks and much more. It is a great opportunity to learn more about leading a healthy lifestyle and to connect with health care professionals.

The Fair will be held Saturday, May 10, 2025, from 10 a.m.–3 p.m. at (SAARC) Southern Area Aquatics Recreation Complex, 13601 Missouri Avenue, Brandywine, Maryland 20613. Ticket Price: Free. Ages: All. Event Category: May is Fitness, Health and Wellness Lifestyle and Learning Senior Fitness Youth Free. Event Programs and Series: May is National Physical Fitness and Sports Month.

#### MAY BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Happy Birthday to Joan Falby, Joyce Isaac, Lincoln Lucas, Janet Smalling, Nana Acheampong Akwo, Abena Acheampong Van-ness, Andrea Johnson, Angela Williams, De'Andre Bowden, Theresa Joiner, Kolbi M. Dee, Agatha Nicol, Ihuoma Mbakwe, Alayah Bourne, Blair Stephens, Cameron Barron, Loki Lucas, Mia Kerrick, Carolyn Glee, Alysia Falby, Dacinth Dorsett, Karen Nauman who are Clinton United Methodist Church members celebrating Birthdays in May. Hope that everyone will have a fantastic birthday.

#### MAY WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Congratulations and Happy Wedding Anniversary to Valentine and Charmaine Grant, Marcus and Nadia Long who are Clinton United Methodist Church members celebrating Wedding Anniversaries in May. Enjoy your anniversary and I hope that you will have many more anniversary celebrations.

#### CLINTON UMC VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Join Clinton United Methodist Church's Vacation Bible School. Our theme this year is Road Trip: On the Road with God, July 14–July 18, 2025, from 9 a.m. to Noon. Each day our K–5th graders will discover God is with us everywhere we go. Join us

for church service on Sunday, July 20, 2025, for the Children's Church VBS summary presentation. Please register your child for VBS on our website: <http://cumcmd.org>. If you need a print registration form, please contact our office at 301-868-1281. Interested in volunteering time? Contact us and we will let you know where you can help. Church address is 10700 Brandywine Road, Clinton, Maryland, 20735.

#### NATIONAL HARMONY MEMORIAL PARK

"National Harmony Memorial Park is a historic Hyattsville cemetery that dates back to 1825. We have a rich story that is closely tied to black history and many prominent African Americans burials. We continue to serve the cemetery needs of those who live in and around Prince George's County, including Washington, D.C. Nestled off a main road, the cemetery has a peaceful and secluded feel. Once you are through the entrance, the cemetery property sprawls across 100 acres of well-kept grounds with picturesque views. At the higher levels of the memorial park, you can see the U.S. Capitol building and Washington Monument." <https://www.dignitymemorial.com>

#### 2025 DELEGATE JAZZ M. LEWIS SCHOLARSHIP

Applications Open for 2025 Scholarship. "Every year, I have the honor of awarding exceptional students scholarships to pursue their higher education. I am always honored to support the dedicated students of Prince George's County in their educational pursuits."

"As a proud graduate of Prince George's Public Schools, it is important to me to see the young people of Prince George's County excel for the betterment of our communities, and strengthen the hope for a stronger, brighter future for all. Requirements include an application, unofficial transcript, 500-word essay written from one or two prompts provided, an updated resume, and optional letters of recommendation". The application deadline is JUNE 1, 2025. "Looking forward to reviewing the work of our talented students."

Delegate Jazz Lewis, Democrat, District 24, Prince George's County. Taylor House Office Building, Room 151, 6 Bladen Street, Annapolis, Maryland 21401. [jazzlewis@house.state.md.us](mailto:jazzlewis@house.state.md.us) [www.jazzlewis.com](http://www.jazzlewis.com).

#### BULLDOG EMPOWERMENT ALUMNI CHAPTER

Join Bowie State Alumni 8th Anniversary Black & Gold Sneaker Gala live entertainment performance PUSH PLAY & SAXOPHONIST EDDIEK JR. at Martin's Crosswinds, 7400 Greenway Center Drive, Greenbelt, Maryland 20770 Sunday, May 18, 2025, from 5–9 p.m. (No door sales). Open Bar, Buffet Dinner and more. This will be a night of celebration, recognition, and HBCU pride. Tickets cost \$65pp or \$12 (2tix). Limited tickets. Grab your ticket before it sells out. All Bowie State Alumni, Family, & Friends are welcome. For more information contact 301-237-1802/ 202-651-0999. Hosted by ASIA (Majic102.3FM).

## New Gospel Choir Brings Joy to The Sky Bridge at Town Center

*Talented residents, who formed a new gospel choir at the Watermark retirement community, excitedly performed an Easter-themed cantata concert*

By PRESS OFFICER

### Watermark Retirement Communities

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (May 2, 2025)—At The Sky Bridge at Town Center, the sounds of Easter didn't come from an outside entertainer—they rose up from the community's own residents. On the Thursday before Easter, a newly formed gospel choir at the Watermark retirement community performed a special cantata concert that showed off the vocal talents of residents.

The gospel choir, which boasts more than 25 members, was born from a simple idea of resident La Quetta Golden: connecting residents around their shared love of music. Golden saw the potential when she and her husband, William, moved to the community less than a year ago. A long-time performer and accomplished choir director, Golden led her first church choir in the 1970s as a teenager. "We had an awesome church choir where I grew up and that inspired me to sing and direct. It all started in the church. I sang all through grade school, junior, and high school."

With her experience as a director, she began a casual sing-along at The Sky Bridge at Town Center with the enthusiastic support of the community's associates in November 2024. The response from fellow residents was equally energetic and quickly turned into a full choir. The joy was contagious: "To see the glee and joy in people's eyes and the excitement in the air, it's amazing. It's like putting life into everybody around. We came here to live and through singing we get to do that."

Since its founding, the choir has performed for several holidays, from Christmas caroling to a tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The Easter performance, which was held on the last day of Lent, was one of their most ambitious shows yet. "It was a memorable performance for this new Gospel Choir."

*Photos courtesy  
Watermark Retirement Communities*



The Sky Bridge at Town Center had a full house for the choir performance.



Members of the choir had the chance to do solo numbers and spoken word during the concert.



The gospel choir boasts more than 25 members.

## Around the County

### Statements from Prince George's County Council Chair Burroughs and District 6 Council Member Blegay on the Announced Closure of Six Flags America

#### Statement from Chair Edward Burroughs III:

"For years, Six Flags America has been a cherished space for families and children in Prince George's County—a place where joy, laughter, and community connections thrived. The announcement of its closure is deeply disappointing and a significant loss for our residents, particularly our children, who deserve safe, accessible, and engaging recreational spaces.

This decision does not just impact one business; it impacts the very fabric of our community. It means fewer opportunities for families to come together, fewer spaces for children to play and explore, and a gap in accessible entertainment that many relied upon. The closure disproportionately affects working-class families, who may not have the means to travel outside the county for similar experiences.

As an elected leader and a frequent visitor to the park, I pledge to work with my colleagues to find a viable solution to this loss. We must ensure that Prince George's County remains a place where families can thrive. Our kids deserve better."

#### Statement from Council Member Wala Blegay:

"It is deeply disappointing to hear that Six Flags America, a long-standing fixture in our community, will be closing its doors after years of service to Prince George's County. This amusement park has not only provided entertainment and memories for countless families, but it has also been a critical community partner, employing many of our youth and local residents, and contributing to the local economy.

The closure represents a significant loss, especially for our District 6 families who have built generational ties to the park. While this news is difficult, it is also a pivotal moment for us to reimagine what comes next.

As a Council Member, I am committed to working closely with the incoming County Executive, my Council colleagues, and responsible developers to ensure that any future redevelopment of the site prioritizes the needs and voices of our residents. We will push for high-quality, community-centered development that honors the legacy of this site while creating new opportunities for economic growth, jobs, and recreation.

We will not allow this closure to lead to stagnation. We will turn it into an opportunity for renewal."

### County Animal Services Facility and Adoption Center Announces New Hours

*Changes took effect Sunday, May 4, 2025*

LARGO, Md. (April 25, 2025)—The Prince George's County Animal Services Facility and Adoption Center has updated its hours to make connecting with the shelter's animals easier. Effective Sunday, May 4, 2025, the new hours will be:

**Tuesday–Friday: 11 a.m.–7 p.m.**

**Saturday: 10 a.m.–4 p.m.**

**\*Sunday: 12 p.m.–4 p.m.**

\* (Open for stray animal intake and return to owners **ONLY** on Sundays)

In addition to the new hours listed above, please note the following times for walk-throughs, pet interactions, and building access have also changed, effective Sunday, May 4, 2025:

**Last walk-through one hour before closing.**

6:00 p.m. Tuesday–Friday; 3 p.m. Saturday

**Last interaction 45 minutes before closing.**

6:15 p.m. Tuesday–Friday; 3:15 p.m. Saturday

**Last person in the building 15 minutes before closing.**

6:45 p.m. Tuesday–Friday; 3:45 p.m. Saturday

**All adoption applications must be completed one hour before closing.**

For more information, visit [www.princegeorgespet4us.com](http://www.princegeorgespet4us.com).

### Prince George's County Department of Social Services Raises Awareness for Child Abuse & Neglect With 2nd Annual Awareness Walkathon

LANDOVER, Md. (April 26, 2025)—During Child Abuse Awareness Month, the Prince George's County Department of Social Services (PGDSS) Child Advocacy Center (CAC) hosted its 2nd Annual Child Abuse Awareness Walkathon on Saturday, April 26, 2025, in Landover, MD. Director Stephen Liggett-Creel welcomed the crowd of participants and community partners with remarks of reflection and gratitude for community support and a call-to-action to residents reminding the community that child abuse and neglect ends when we come together as a community to report it, stop it, and prevent it. Prince George's County CAC Director Rubi Nelson, also spoke on the importance of the trauma-informed work performed by her staff to gather the needed investigation information from the involved child in a safe, child-friendly environment. The walkathon highlighted available resources in the County for persons impacted by child abuse and neglect.

The event featured over 10+ exhibitors from organizations and agencies across the State, offering critical information and resources to families about preventing child abuse and neglect. Participants took a 3K walk around the parking lot of the Centre Pointe Business Park on Brightseat Road, where the CAC and Administrative Services Division of the Department of Social Services are currently located, at 925 Brightseat Road and 805 Brightseat Road, respectively.

The 3rd Annual Child Abuse Awareness Walkathon is set to be hosted next April to again highlight Child Abuse Awareness Month in Prince George's County. To report allegations of abuse or neglect, please call the Maryland Department of Human Services Child & Adult Welfare Hotline at 1-800-917-7383 or the Prince George's County Neglect/Protect Hotline at 301-909-2450.



# COMMUNITY

## M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation in Prince George's County Announces Events for May

By PRESS OFFICER  
M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George's County

RIVERDALE, Md. (April 28, 2025)—Get out and get active this May with M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George's County. From art and cultural celebrations to fitness programs, there's something for the entire family to enjoy all month long. Mark your calendars and join the Department for a month of exciting events.

**Upcoming events include...**  
**Community Days at Historic Sites**  
**Every Saturday in May** (excluding Memorial Day weekend) | FREE

Connect with the people, places, and past that make Prince George's County like no other! Enjoy museum tours, family-friendly activities, free professional photography, and more.

**May is National Physical Fitness & Sports Month**

**All month long** | FREE & Low Cost  
Celebrate National Physical Fitness & Sports Month by participating in free and low-cost sports and fitness programs throughout May. Offering fitness classes, health education and nutrition programs,

sports and aquatic activities, senior programs, fitness center open houses, and outdoor adventures.

**Mother's Day Spring Fling**  
**Friday, May 9, 7–11 p.m.** | The Show Place Arena

Celebrate Mother's Day with an evening of hand dancing, line dancing and bop, featuring music by Lady D. Dress to impress! Tickets include a light fare buffet.

**Pull up & play**  
**Saturday, May 10, 2–5 p.m.** | Rollingcrest Chillum Community Center | FREE

Join M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation and the Pull Up Fund for an action-packed afternoon of sports, family fun and entertainment. Enjoy live music, free food and giveaways, interactive games, sports demos and more!

**International Dance Experience**  
**Sunday, May 18, 4 p.m.** | Prince George's Public Playhouse

Celebrate the rich diversity of global dance traditions. This dynamic event will feature performances including West African Dance, Salsa, Mexican Folk Dance, Irish Dance, Brazilian Dance and more.

**Langley Park Day**  
**Sunday, May 18, 12 noon–4 p.m.** | Langley Park Community Center | FREE

Bring the whole family to enjoy an intercultural celebration featuring music, traditional dance performances, community resources, children's activities, games, and food vendors. Attendees are encouraged to wear their country's traditional attire.

**Senior Health and Fitness Day**  
**Wednesday, May 21, 10 a.m.–1 p.m.** | Southern Area Aquatics & Recreation Complex | FREE

Celebrate healthy living and physical activity for older adults at this annual event. Seniors from across the community will participate in fitness activities, health screenings, and wellness workshops designed to promote active lifestyles and well-being.

**In the Life: An LGBTQ+ Pride Celebration**  
**Saturday, May 31, 12 noon–4 p.m.** | Prince George's Sports and Learning Complex

Celebrate the Prince George's County LGBTQ+ community and allies at this vibrant Pride event. In the life will showcase the DMV Ballroom scene and its influence on mainstream entertainment and fashion. The event includes four dynamic work-

shops focused on Vogue, female figure runways, male runway and choreography in heels.

For more information about upcoming M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation events, visit <https://www.pgpc.com/activities-events/events>.

*With over 29,000 acres of parkland, trails, athletic fields, playgrounds, and more, the M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation in Prince George's County provides an award-winning park system through progressive, quality, innovative leadership and a commitment to its community and environment. The Department delivers first-class recreational activities and programs for people of all ages and ability levels. It strives to improve the quality of life for Prince George's County residents and the communities in which they live, work, and raise families. The Department's Formula 2040 Plan establishes a framework that will ensure the Department can meet future parks and recreation programmatic and facility needs, fulfilling its mission to determine the combination of land, facilities, and programs that will provide appropriate experiences for Prince Georgians in the future. To learn more, visit [www.pgpc.com](http://www.pgpc.com).*

## Break Things to Start Anew With Smash and Mend Healing Retreat

By ELYZABETH MARCUSSEN  
Hospice of the Chesapeake

PASADENA, Md. (April 28, 2025)—For anyone who's felt broken by loss, Chesapeake Life Center invites you to a healing experience like no other. The Smash and Mend Healing Retreat offers grieving hearts a chance to shatter—and rebuild—on **Saturday, May 17**, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on the John & Cathy Belcher Campus at 90 Ritchie Highway, Pasadena, Maryland.

This unique workshop is designed to help individuals process grief in both gentle and powerful ways. The day begins with a calming yoga session led by Cathy Rees, a certified yoga instructor and grief yoga specialist. The session is beginner-friendly and accessible for all; yoga mats and chairs will be provided.

Following a break for lunch, which will be provided, the real smashing begins—literally. Participants will have the opportunity to safely shatter ceramics and repurpose the fragments into beautiful mosaic creations. This



COURTESY PHOTO  
**Cathy Rees, certified yoga instructor and grief yoga specialist.**

hands-on activity offers a cathartic release while symbolizing how we can build something new from what's been broken. Attendees are welcome to bring a sentimental porcelain item to

smash, though plenty of materials will be available.

"Grief can leave us feeling shattered," Alena Dailey, Chesapeake Life Center and Integrative Arts Manager said. "This retreat offers a safe space to acknowledge that pain and begin piecing together a new version of ourselves."

The workshop fee is \$20, and registration is required. Space is limited, so reserve your spot by calling 888-501-7077 or emailing [griefinfo@chesapeakelifecenter.org](mailto:griefinfo@chesapeakelifecenter.org).

For a full list of upcoming events for adults and children, visit [www.hospicechesapeake.org/events](http://www.hospicechesapeake.org/events).

*Chesapeake Life Center, a program service of Hospice of the Chesapeake, serves hospice family members and the community with bereavement services and activities to enhance the quality of life for those grieving the loss of a loved one. For details, visit [www.chesapeakelifecenter.org](http://www.chesapeakelifecenter.org).*



**Pasadena, MD (March 19, 2022) — A Smash and Mend participant slams a bag filled with ceramics against a wall.**  
BY ELYZABETH MARCUSSEN, HOSPICE OF THE CHESAPEAKE



**Pasadena, MD (March 19, 2022) — A Smash and Mend participant takes broken pieces of ceramics to create a mosaic.**  
BY ELYZABETH MARCUSSEN, HOSPICE OF THE CHESAPEAKE

### Green from A1

cokeek Academy, Martin Luther King Jr., Non-Traditional Program Middle at Edgar Allan Poe, Oxon Hill

Elementary Schools (19): Allenwood, Ardmore, Catherine T. Reed, Cool Spring, Cora L. Rice, Deerfield Run, District Heights, Dodge Park, Edward M. Felegy, Gladys Noon Spellman, Hyattsville, Laurel, Lewisdale, Marlton, Montpelier, Paint Branch, Princton, William Beanes, William Paca

Specialty Schools (2): Judith P. Hoyer Montessori, Maya Angelou French Immersion

PGCPS schools must renew every four years to retain their MD Green School status. This year, Deerfield Run Elementary, Lewisdale Elementary, and Gwynn Park High School reached Sustainable Status for maintaining certification over 14 consecutive years. Laurel

Elementary was recognized with Sustainable Bronze status for 18 years of consistent achievement.

Schools will be honored during the Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education's (MAEOE) Annual Youth Summit on **Thursday, May 29**, at Sandy Point State Park in Annapolis. Participating schools will receive a Maryland Green School flag, statewide and local recognition, and special commemorative gifts.

Sponsored by MAEOE, the Maryland Green Schools program is one of the most rigorous and comprehensive environmental education programs in the nation. It promotes hands-on learning, fosters environmental awareness, and supports sustainable practices through eight key criteria areas in a non-competitive application process.

For more information about the Maryland Green Schools Program, visit the MAEOE website.

### Heritage from A1

storytime on **Saturday, May 10** at 11 a.m. "This storytime is a great way to let our library customers from different communities and backgrounds get to know more about our library's resources and each other's cultures."

In addition to the library system's staff-led programming, several branches will be hosting special feature programming highlighting performance styles from India, Japan, the Philippines, and Korea, all featuring local artists and guests.

These featured Asian Pacific American Heritage Month performances are highlighted below, alongside a couple highlights from the library system's standard branch programs.

For the full calendar of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month events at PGCMLS branch libraries, please visit our website here: <https://www.pgcmlls.info/events?&range&start=2025-05-01&end=2025-05-31>.

### YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH PART TEN

## Schools Can Screen Students for Behavioral Health Issues—But Many Are Reluctant to do So

By ALEXANDER TAYLOR  
Capital News Service

After Achilles Bardos learned about the internet in the 1990s, he thought to himself, "Why not in psychology?"

A school psychology professor, Bardos talked with his colleagues about using the web to quickly collect data on student behavior. A few years later, he and his colleagues created the Behavior Intervention Monitoring Assessment System, or BIMAS.

"It was identifying kiddos, students, through parents or through teacher ratings and the kids themselves who were able to tell us, 'Hey, we are OK, some of us are not as OK and some of us really need lots of supports,'" Bardos said.

The BIMAS—now the BIMAS-2—is one of several behavioral health screenings used in schools throughout the United States. Yet amid a youth mental health crisis that, according to federal statistics, means 40% of high schoolers reported feeling sad or hopeless in 2023, computer-based mental health screenings remain fairly uncommon in America's public schools.

A 2021 survey found 12.8% of school districts that responded have policies calling for mental health screenings. Another study from that same year found only 5.4% of schools offered behavioral health screenings to all their students.

Bardos said no Maryland schools use

his company's screening tool. But other screening tools are in use in the state's schools, said Sharon Hoover, co-director of the National Center for School Mental Health, which is based at the University of Maryland School of Medicine.

"However, schools also may have concerns about being responsible for universal screening of students because they may then feel responsible for addressing any identified issues," Hoover said. "Often schools do not have the resources to implement and respond to mental health screening, especially if done without community partnerships."

In some cases, then, schools only use screening tools in particular grades. At the Green Bay Area Public School District in Wisconsin, for example, fifth- and eighth-graders are the only ones screened. Christina Gingle, a school official in Green Bay, said screenings the district uses allow staffers to more quickly identify students in need.

She said the BIMAS-2 "has greatly strengthened our ability to be able to support the mental wellness of our students."

What's in a screening?  
Bardos is now CEO of EduMetrisis, the company that publishes the BIMAS-2, which calls on respondents to fill out a 34-question form. The respondent can either be a teacher, a parent, the student themselves or a combination of the three.

Bardos said schools can begin screening students as early as pre-K. The earlier

a school implements screenings and follows up with the appropriate interventions, the better the outcome is going to be, he said.

The respondent fills out the form online and the responses are immediately collected in a database for school officials to examine. It takes about five minutes to fill out the form, Bardos said.

The form asks the respondent to rate whether the student has performed a specific behavior in the past week on a five-point scale from never to very often. The questions range from how often the student followed directions to how often they threatened or bullied others.

Another question asks students how often they have thought of hurting themselves. Bardos said that question gives the first initial indication that a student needs help.

"It's just a little opening to a box that says to you, 'Please take a look at me,'" he said.

Another common behavioral health screening is the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment, or DESSA.

That screener evaluates students on six different competencies: optimistic thinking, relationship skills, self-management, responsible decision-making, social awareness and self-awareness.

Like the BIMAS-2, respondents com-



# COMMENTARY

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



### ChildWatch: Education

## Teacher Appreciation

*"Teaching children may be the highest way to seek God. It is, however, also the most daunting way, in the sense of the greatest responsibility."*  
—Gabriela Mistral, Chilean Nobel Prize Laureate in Literature, school leader, and teacher

Every year, the first full week of May is a chance to show special gratitude and thanks to America's teachers. This year Teacher Appreciation Week comes at a moment when the nation's Department of Education itself is under attack. Children's Defense Fund recently noted that if the Department of Education were to close:

"Students attending roughly 98,000 public schools and 32,000 private schools in 18,200

school districts would face unnecessary negative consequences.

"More than 12 million post-secondary students who depend on its grants, loans, and work-study assistance would be negatively impacted.

"Title I funds for schools serving children experiencing poverty by supporting 180,300 teaching positions for more than 2.8 million students would be threatened.

"Historically marginalized students, including those who are Black and Brown, living with disabilities, transgender, nonbinary, and immigrant students will lack necessary civil rights protections."

Now more than ever is a time to thank the

teachers who are supporting children and young people every day despite all headwinds and who are making a difference.

Being the kind of educator who consistently nurtures, respects, and inspires the students in their care remains a special calling, and we all owe an immense debt of gratitude to every professional who answers this call. We know teachers are not sufficiently valued in our society if we measure their worth by money—yet after parents, teachers are probably the greatest influencers and molders of children's and young people's futures. I have written before about my own teachers who joined parents and other community members in weaving a seamless safety net of caring for children, and provided buffers of love and encouragement that helped combat the negative influences of segregated small-town southern life. They were role models who didn't equate book smarts with common sense or goodness, but always stressed the importance of education as a means to help improve the lives of others and leave your community and world better than you found it. They were also dedicated to working with children and young adults to set high standards and made clear their own belief that every student could achieve at high levels. All young people need adults who believe in them and expect them to achieve, who love them, and whom they love so much that they live

up to their expectations of success.

The Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools program is especially proud that so many of the college-aged Servant Leader Interns (SLIs) who are trained to teach at CDF Freedom Schools sites every summer go on to pursue careers in education and become these teachers and mentors for the next generation. Thirty years ago the indomitable Dr. Maya Angelou spoke at the graduation of our first small class of CDF Freedom Schools servant leaders. She engulfed us with her passion and confidence in them: "Let me tell you who you are. You are the rainbow in the clouds for people whose faces you have not seen yet, whose names you don't know yet, whose histories you haven't been told yet. And you are, each one of you, individually, privately, each one of you is a rainbow chosen to be in the clouds for somebody."

Every teacher has the unique opportunity to be that rainbow of hope for their students. Children and young people need adults who never give up on them, are constantly searching for their special gifts, and who refuse to let them fail. The best teachers do this every day. Teacher Appreciation Week is once again a special opportunity to thank all who are already doing their part to transform young people's chances and our nation's future by mentoring, challenging, nurturing, and inspiring the students in their care right now.—*May 2, 2025*

## Marc Morial

President and CEO, National Urban League



### To Be Equal:

## 100 Days of Chaos Meets 100 Days of Resistance

*"Trump wants us to be demoralized. He wants his despotic plans to be a fait accompli. They will be if no one stands in the way. But every time we—and especially those with power and authority—make ourselves into obstacles, we also make it a little less likely that the administration's authoritarian fantasy becomes our reality."*

—Janelle Bouie

The first 100 days of President Trump's second administration have been an unrelenting assault on civil rights, civil liberties, economic justice, the constitutional separation of powers, and the rule of law itself.

His administration has upended the global financial system, alienated longstanding allies, and steered the United States rapidly toward autocracy.

He has imposed a grossly distorted version of the nation's history to justify the elimination of pathways to equity and inclusion, and appointed Cabinet members and staffers who have actively embraced conspiracy theories, bigotry and racism.

Since Trump's inauguration, at least \$9.6 trillion was erased from the U.S. stock market—more than half of that in just two record-setting days. His first 100 days in office have been the worst

for the stock market in more than 50 years.

His administration has blocked at least \$3 trillion in federal spending, defying court orders to unfreeze the funds that tens of millions of Americans rely on to keep a roof over their heads, food on the table, and access to lifesaving medical care.

The first 100 days of this administration have been an assault on the last 70 years of progress, from Brown v Board all the way forward. It is an assault on the American future. The administration is trying to convince the American people that the future is a replay of the past. Instead of looking forward, they've been looking in their rearview mirror.

This is reflected in the early verdict of the American people. President Trump has the lowest 100-day approval rating of any president in the last 80 years, and twice as many Americans give the administration a grade of "F" than any other grade.

This is not what people voted for, and it is not what people expected.

And so these 100 days of unprecedented chaos have also been 100 days of principled resistance.

Within a day of the inauguration, the National Urban League convened dozens of the nation's top civil and human rights leaders for an emergency strategy session and launch of the new De-

mand Diversity Roundtable to defend equal opportunity for all Americans.

Individual Americans, businesses, faith communities, schools, state officials and advocacy organizations including the National Urban League have filed more than 200 lawsuits challenging Trump's actions as reckless, harmful, illegal, and unconstitutional. "These acts of resistance have resulted in nearly 100 rulings that put a stop—to at least temporarily—to some of these actions.

The National Urban League also has spearheaded the Fair Budget Coalition, an alliance of civil rights, economic justice, and policy organizations advocating for a responsible federal budget that centers fairness, opportunity, and economic security for all Americans—including people and communities long overlooked and under-resourced.

We've mobilized opposition to the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act (SAVE Act), an extremist proposal to dismantle democracy and disenfranchise millions of American citizens.

As we mark 100 days into this antagonistic and chaotic administration, we take hope and inspiration from the millions of Americans who continue to stand in defense of democracy, equality, and the rule of law.

—*May 3, 2025*

### Reluctant from A3

plete the DESSA online. Respondents can be students, teachers or parents. The respondent, like in the BIMAS-2, is asked how often the student performs a certain behavior on a five-point scale from never to almost always.

Some of the questions include: "During the past four weeks, how often did the student keep trying when unsuccessful?" and "During the past four weeks, how often did the student believe they can achieve their goals?"

The DESSA groups students into three different categories based on how they respond to its questions: strength, typical and need for instruction—equivalent to above average, average and below average.

There are two versions of the DESSA. DESSA-mini is a shorter, eight-question form meant to serve as a benchmark for districts and help them gather information about the entire student body, said Evelyn Johnson, vice president for research at Riverside Insights, the company that publishes the screening tool.

The full DESSA assessment, which can evaluate individual students, has 72 questions.

Just like Bardos' test, the DESSA can be used with students in grades K-12.

Equipped with information from the DESSA, "schools can start thinking about: How can I help this student build on the strengths they already are demonstrating to then develop skills in other areas that are going to serve them well?" Johnson said.

### Screenings in schools

In its screening guide, the National Center for School Mental Health recommends schools start small when they begin screening students—and that's what the Green Bay area schools did.

The district is in its second year of implementing the BIMAS-2. Gingle, the district's associate director of pupil services, said district officials favored a slow rollout to make sure they could address students' concerns, especially if they mentioned self-harm.

The district chose to only screen students in the fifth and eighth grades because those are critical times in their lives—just before they transition from elementary school to middle school and from middle school to high school.

Gingle said the district created an intervention guide and conducted trainings for teachers, administrators and parents before implementing the screening tool.

"I think it has been really well-received and [is] hopefully preventing any types of crises and keeping students in really that least restrictive setting to receive the level of needed care," she said.

In Northern Virginia, Alexandria City Public Schools took a more comprehensive approach by screening all students from kindergarten to grade 12.

"What we're trying to do is identify those life skills students have already learned and things, but also try to enhance ones that might need to be developed as it relates to social emotional com-

petencies," said Victor Martin, the district's executive director of student support teams.

Martin's district has been using the DESSA for three years. He said the district chose to use that screening tool because it measures social and emotional learning, or the process in which people develop their identities, manage their emotions and create relationships.

The district screens students twice a year. Teachers fill out a shorter assessment for students in kindergarten through eighth grade. It takes about two minutes to fill out the form for each student, Martin said.

In high school, students complete a longer assessment on their own. It takes them about 20 minutes to complete, according to Martin.

The district then compiles the data and uses it to help its student support teams and teachers provide small group instruction, while other students may be referred for individual or online counseling.

"Perhaps you might see that an entire grade level is maybe struggling with relationship skills, and maybe that's an opportunity for us, in collaboration with the classroom teacher, to work on providing lessons that might help with building relationship skills," Martin said.

Using that approach, some schools in the district have seen entire grade levels improve from the fall assessment to the spring assessment.

"We've seen students improve to a strengths-based level because of strategies and interventions that

have been put in place by those schools," Martin said.

### A reluctance to screen

Students in Green Bay and Alexandria can opt out of the screenings if their parents prefer—but elsewhere, many school districts are entirely opting out of behavioral health screenings, or limiting their use, for a number of reasons.

A 2023 poll published in Phi Delta Kappan found the public has mixed views on mental health assessments in schools. Of those that responded to the survey, 45% said schools should assess students only when their parents or guardians request it, 39% said schools should assess all students and 14% said schools should not assess students.

Sometimes school officials worry parents are going to be upset if their children are screened, said Elizabeth Connors, an associate professor of psychiatry at Yale School of Medicine.

She said that worry is often unfounded. "I don't think there's often that much resistance, but it certainly does happen," she said. "So that's why we encourage schools to be reaching out to their parents."

Yet the screenings have caused a stir in some places. When Wake County schools in North Carolina implemented the BIMAS-2, some parents objected to the idea that teachers would be evaluating the behavioral health of their students.

"I don't think it's fair to put the teachers in the position to have to analyze the students in

this way," Rachael Ayscue, the parent of a high schooler, told ABC11 in Raleigh-Durham in 2019. "They're educated in the curriculum that they're teaching, not in behavioral science."

Students sometimes object to the screenings, too. In 2022, Isaiah Steinberg, at the time a student at Jamesville-Dewitt High School in upstate New York, wrote an essay criticizing the BIMAS-2 in the school newspaper, the RamPage. He said students were reluctant to complete the screening, and for a good reason.

"The truth is that J-D students

are nervous that they will be singled out by their counselors and administrators, people who they often do not know or trust very well," Steinberg wrote.

Another potential limitation of mental health screenings is the cost. For example, it would cost a school district the size of Green Bay over \$70,000 each year to use the BIMAS-2.

### Signs of success

There's evidence, though, that the screenings do some good.

See **RELUCTANT** Page A5

## The Prince George's Post

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# BUSINESS AND FINANCE

## Social Security Matters

Ask Rusty:

### Applying for Social Security at 62; When Should I Enroll in Medicare?

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 am writing to ask for your advice on when I should sign up or enroll in a Medicare Plan. I have submitted an early retirement application to request benefits to begin 30 days after my 62nd birthday, in April 2025. I am a single lady with no dependents and currently rent my residence. Please advise. **Signed: Approaching Senior Citizenship**

**Dear Approaching:** I assume that when you say you have submitted “an early retirement application to request benefits to begin 30 days after my 62nd birthday” you mean you have applied for your Social Security retirement benefits to start in April 2025, and that you will be 62 in March. To be sure you are clear, you must be 62 for an entire month to start your Social Security retirement benefits.

Even though you are starting your Social Security retirement benefits at age 62, you will not be eligible to enroll in Medicare until you are 65 years old. Since you will be already receiving Social Security when you turn 65, you will be automatically enrolled in Medicare Part A (inpatient hospitalization coverage) and Medicare Part B (coverage for outpatient services), effective with the month you turn 65, and you will get a “Welcome to Medicare” packet about 3 months before your 65th birthday. Your Medicare Part A (inpatient hospitalization coverage) will be free, but there will be a monthly premium (\$185 for 2025) associated with your Medicare Part B (coverage for outpatient services), which will be deducted from your Social Security payment.

Note that Medicare does not cover all healthcare expenses so, when the time comes, you may wish to explore other private healthcare coverage (either a Medicare Supplement plan, or a Medicare Advantage plan). Also, Medicare Part A or Part B do not include coverage for prescription drugs, so you may wish to obtain such coverage separately. One way to explore all of this is by, shortly before you are 65, contacting AMAC’s Medicare department at 1.800.334.9330 or [www.amac.us/medicare](http://www.amac.us/medicare). And until you are eligible to enroll in Medicare at 65, you may wish to seek regular healthcare insurance for those under 65 years of age.

Please understand that we are here to answer all your questions about Social Security and Medicare enrollment. However, at the AMAC Foundation, we are not insurance specialists, which is why I suggest contacting an insurance specialist as described above.

I hope this is helpful, but please don’t hesitate to contact us again at any time.

*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](http://amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory)) or email us at [ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org](mailto:ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org).*

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

## Reluctant from A4

A March 2025 study by University of Nebraska researchers found the BIMAS-2 “effectively identifies at-risk students, offering an effective approach to addressing adolescent mental health needs in rural communities.”

And a 2017 study of low-income kindergartners evaluated with the DESSA found the screening accurately evaluated their self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making.

Both Gingle and Martin mentioned screenings are just one data point they look at when they consider a child’s mental well-being.

Martin said Alexandria schools wouldn’t automatically put a child into therapy based on the results of the screening. “We would take that in consideration with attendance and grades and disciplinary reasons and concerns from the teacher,” he said.

Connors said that’s the right approach. She likens mental health screenings to vision screenings in schools.

“Just because you, you know, fail that vision screening, it

doesn’t mean that you need glasses. You actually need to go to the optometrist, and they’re going to have sharper tools there,” she said.

A lower score on the screening just means that school officials should follow up with those students and understand whether the student would benefit from some kind of service, she added.

Despite the occasional concerns of parents and students elsewhere, Gingle and Martin said the response from parents to the screenings in their schools has been positive. Both said their districts have made sure to do outreach to parents to make sure they understand the screenings and how they are conducted.

Connors said when school districts start doing mental health screenings, they begin to understand their students have a lot of mental health needs that, without screenings, may have gone unnoticed.

“Once you identify one student who otherwise might have fallen through the cracks, you realize how essential this is to supporting student mental health and well-being and success,” Connors said.

## Deidre Blackmore Graduates From Maryland REALTORS® Leadership Academy, Class of 2025

By PRESS OFFICER  
Maryland REALTORS®

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (April 24, 2025)—Deidre Blackmore, a Broker and REALTOR® with Iron Valley Real Estate of Central Maryland based in Westminster, graduated from the Maryland REALTORS® Leadership Academy, a leadership development program that builds leaders for the industry and in the communities they serve.

“We’re always thrilled to celebrate a new class of Leadership Academy graduates,” said Jenn Klarman, Chair of the Leadership Academy Advisory Group. “We’re especially proud of Deidre and the leadership she brings to our REALTOR® community—locally through Prince George’s County Association of REALTORS® (PGCAR), and beyond, at the state and national levels.”

Blackmore brings a wealth of expertise and dedication to her real estate practice, holding eight REALTOR® designations—including ABR (Accredited Buyer’s Representative), MRP (Military Relocation Professional), and SRS (Seller Representative Specialist). Her commitment to elevating the profession is reflected in her leadership as she serves her second term as President



PHOTO CREDIT PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® (PGCAR)

Deidre Blackmore

of the Women’s Council of REALTORS® Prince George’s County, where she has been instrumental in mentoring and supporting fellow real estate professionals. In addition to her leadership role, Blackmore serves on the Professionalism Committee of PGCAR. Beyond her professional contributions, she is an active volunteer, notably supporting initiatives that provide clothing and re-

sources to women and children impacted by domestic violence.

The mission of the Leadership Academy is to build tomorrow’s strong leaders today: leaders who can address the challenges facing real estate with professionalism, transparency, and leadership.

The Leadership Academy vets hundreds of applications annually to select a diversified group of qualified members for the prestigious program. The program consists of seven sessions held monthly between October and April, to develop leadership skills and competencies. Courses include legislation and advocacy, communication skills, and relationship management and networking. Most who enter the program go on to serve in leadership capacities within their communities and with Maryland REALTORS® at the state level.

“As a 2011 Leadership Academy graduate, the insight that I received from the programming really set the stage for me to make more of a difference in our industry,” said Cheryl Abrams Davis, 2025 President, Maryland REALTORS®. “Today, we’re celebrating 19 new leaders in the industry. It will be exciting to see how they shape the future of real estate in the months and years to come.”



PHOTO COURTESY M-NCPPC

The Spring 2025 Cohort of the Neighborhood Planning Academy

## M-NCPPC Prince George’s County Planning Department Recognizes the Neighborhood Planning Academy Spring 2025 Cohort With Graduation Ceremony

By PRESS OFFICER  
M-NCPPC

LARGO, Md. (May 1, 2025)—The Prince George’s County Planning Department of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission hosted a graduation ceremony to celebrate the Spring 2025 Cohort of the Neighborhood Planning Academy on Wednesday, April 30, 2025, at the M-NCPPC Largo Headquarters. Designed specifically to engage Prince George’s County residents and community stakeholders, the Neighborhood Planning Academy explains the County’s planning framework, how to engage in the development review process, and how to advocate for their community goals and visions.

This spring, 62 representatives, reflecting all regions of Prince George’s County, were selected to participate in a seven-week program to learn the ins and outs of the County’s planning framework, how to engage in the development review process, and how to advocate for their community goals and visions. Since the launch of the program in the fall of 2023, nearly 200 individuals have participated in the Neighborhood Planning Academy.

“The Neighborhood Planning Academy provides a platform for residents, community stakeholders, and municipal leaders to learn the ins and outs of the County’s very complex review process,” said Peter A. Shapiro, Chair of the M-NCPPC Prince George’s County Planning Board. “It’s really a leadership development program in many ways.”

“The program gives residents hands-on knowledge of how developments are created in the County,” said Lakisha Hull, Director of the M-NCPPC Prince

George’s County Planning Department. “The award-winning program not only empowers residents to advocate on behalf of their communities, but it also helps meet the mission of the Planning Department by promoting economic vitality, environmental sustainability, design excellence, and quality development that promotes healthy lifestyles in Prince George’s County neighborhoods.”

The Spring 2025 Cohort of the Neighborhood Planning Academy included Oluwafolajimi Akinsiku, Robert Alejnikov, Shelby Austin, Paula Bailey, Lisa Bailey, Kisha Barnes, Amara Bilal, Samia Bingham, Adrienne Blocker, Akilah Brewer, Dwan Bryant, Nastasia Buckley, Kristen Buker, Anton Carty, Kischenna Coley, Geoffrey Collins, Ayana Crawford, Patricia Crews, Cashenna Cross, Stacey Cunningham, Helder de Almeida, Kalisha Dixon, Daniel Douglas, Maureen Farrington, Winona Francis, Roger Gaines, Jeanette Gass, Anna Helm, Monica Higgs, Katrina Hill, Tiffany Hughes, Darrell Jones, Chalya Lar, Jamel Lattimore, Sharon Lawrence, Major Lewis, Carrie Mack, Dr. Theresa Mason Ford, Derricka McCray, Melinda Mendoza, Traci Miller, Cynthia Miller, Marcus Monroe, Pernell Murray, Elder Dr. Jacqueline V. Norris, Alison Pages, Linda Pennoyer, Rakhmel Rafi, Safiya Ransome, Joy Ren, Victoria Reynolds, Kilil Roussaw, Gwen Sherrod, Clyde Springfield, Stephen Toth, Lucia Vasquez, Charlene Vaughn, Terry Waller, JaMea Williams, Laurie Williams, Leslie Wolfinger, and Christopher Brittan-Powell.

During the graduation ceremony, participants delivered capstone project presentations that incorporated independent research findings as well as lessons and

topics from the curriculum. Through weekly classes, participants explored the History, Present, and Future of Prince George’s County, Planning 101, the Development Review Process, Building Healthy, Sustainable and Resilient Communities, Multimodal Transportation and Street Safety, and PGAtlas.com—a free public web application and online mapping tool.

For more information on the Neighborhood Planning Academy, visit: <https://academy.pgplanning.com>. Prince George’s County residents and stakeholders may join the mailing list to receive announcements on applications for the Fall 2025 cohort and upcoming courses.

*The Prince George’s County Planning Department of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) is responsible for preserving, protecting, and managing the county’s resources through high-quality planning services and growth management guidance. Our mission is to promote economic vitality, environmental sustainability, design excellence, and quality development in Prince George’s County. Visit our website, [www.pgplanning.org](http://www.pgplanning.org), to learn how you can become engaged in shaping the future of your community. Assistance: The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission encourages the participation of persons with disabilities in all its programs and services. Register at least a minimum of two weeks in advance of the program start date to request and receive a disability accommodation. Call the Public Affairs Office at 301-952-3038, email [PublicAffairs@ppd.mncppc.org](mailto:PublicAffairs@ppd.mncppc.org), or complete the online form.*



## EarthTalk® Are Salmon Returning to the American West? Q&A

By Shashwat Mishra | April 24, 2025

Dear EarthTalk:

What's up with efforts to restore wild salmon to the U.S. West? —J.D. via email

Over the past century, wild salmon populations on the U.S. West Coast have declined drastically. In Washington State alone, salmon populations have dropped to as little as five to 10 percent of their historical numbers, according to the Recreation and Conservation Office. In response, efforts to restore them have ramped up as concerns grow about their survival.

Salmon play a crucial role in the environment, supporting ecosystems, fishing industries and Indigenous communities that have depended on them for centuries. But between habitat destruction, overfishing and climate change, the numbers really took a hit. In recent years, there's been a big push to restore them, with new projects and funding, though overall progress has been inconsistent in certain areas.

One of the biggest problems is that salmon habitats have changed over time. Dams block their migration routes, making it harder for them to reach the places where they spawn. Some projects, such as those on California's Yuba River, are working on removing barriers or building special passages so salmon can get through easier. Another issue is water temperature—rivers are getting too warm because of climate change and salmon need cold water to survive. In some areas people have been planting more trees along riverbanks to help provide more shade but it's a slow process. Plus, erosion

causes too much dirt in the water which can end up burying salmon eggs before they can hatch.

There's been a lot more funding lately to help salmon recover, but this isn't a new effort. Since the 1990s, billions of dollars have been invested in salmon restoration across the Pacific Northwest, with funding from federal, state and tribal governments. In 2023, the U.S. Congress allocated an additional \$60 million to support restoration projects, with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) leading multi-agency federal efforts to improve wild salmon populations. Some hatcheries are also stepping in, raising salmon to release into the wild, though some scientists worry that hatchery fish might not act like real wild salmon and could mess with natural populations.

But even with all these efforts, salmon still have a lot of problems. Climate change is making rivers drier in some places and flooding in others, which totally throws off their migration. Plus, there's still a debate over whether big dams should be taken down to let salmon move freely again. Meanwhile, predators like sea lions have been snatching up more salmon lately, making it even harder for the fish to bounce back.

To help, check to see if seafood is sustainably caught, support policies that protect salmon, and volunteer for local conservation projects. And of course, tackling climate change matters, because without fixing bigger environmental issues, salmon recovery will be an uphill battle. There's a long way to go, but with enough effort, wild salmon could still make a comeback.



CREDIT: RODDY SCHEER

2025 was a record year for chum salmon returning to Piper Creek in Seattle.

CONTACTS: NOAA's Plan to Save Wild Salmon and Steelhead, fisheries.noaa.gov/west-coast/endangered-species-conservation/saving-pacific-salmon-and-steelhead.

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