

# The Prince George's Post



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## Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated® Donates More Than \$29,000 to Support Community Service Efforts in Washington, D.C., Maryland and Northern Virginia

*Donations of More Than 13,120 Items and In-Kind Support Valued at \$29,000  
Provided to Greater DC Diaper Bank; Appearance by Phylicia Rashad Highlighted  
the Founders' Day Celebration with Thousands of DMV AKA Members*

By RACINE TUCKER-HAMILTON  
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority,  
Incorporated® North Atlantic and  
Mid-Atlantic Regions

WASHINGTON (Jan. 3, 2025)—Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated®

North Atlantic Regional Director Elicia Pegues Spearman, Esq., and Mid-Atlantic Regional Director Nadine Vargas Stewart and members of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority gathered at the Joint Metropolitan Founders' Day on Saturday, January 3, 2026, at the Gaylord

National Harbor Resort & Convention Center, 201 Waterfront Street in Oxon Hill, MD 20745.

Under the theme, "United in Sister-

See AKA DONATES Page A3



PHOTO CREDIT: MID-ATLANTIC AND NORTH ATLANTIC REGIONS

Leaders and members of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated® showcase baby and menstrual products AKA members donated to the Greater DC Diaper Bank at the sorority's 118th Founders' Day Celebration in National Harbor, MD, January 3, 2026. More than 13,000 items valued at \$29,000 were donated. From left: Tracy Terrell; Melody Johnson Morales; Alpha Kappa Alpha North Atlantic Regional Director Elicia Pegues Spearman, Esq.; Alpha Kappa Alpha Mid-Atlantic Regional Director Nadine Vargas Stewart; Greater DC Diaper Bank Executive Director Liz Schurgen; Ashley Jones, Greater DC Diaper Bank; Jacqueline Jiles; Antionette Duncombe



PHOTOS COURTESY TOWN OF UPPER MARLBORO

Mayor Charles Colbert (left) and Vice Mayor Derrick Brooks (right)

## Councilmember Charles Colbert Appointed as New Mayor in the Town of Upper Marlboro

*Derrick Brooks Also Appointed As Vice Mayor  
Following Recent Town Elections*

By RAY FELDMANN  
Town of Upper Marlboro

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (Jan. 5, 2026)—Councilman Charles Colbert has been appointed as the new Mayor in the Town of Upper Marlboro, Town Manager Clayton A. Anderson announced today. Additionally, Derrick Brooks was appointed as the municipality's new Vice Mayor.

Mayor Colbert and Vice Mayor Brooks were both formally sworn into office last month and will serve through December 2027.

"I am honored to have been se-

lected by my fellow Councilmembers to serve in this important role as your Mayor," Colbert said. "I am eager to get to work as Mayor to make our town an even better place to live, work, and raise a family. We have made significant progress in recent years, especially in downtown economic development, infrastructure improvements, and expanding recreational opportunities for our residents.

"I look forward to working closely with my colleagues on the Council,"

See MAYOR Page A3

## Governor Moore Announces Record Funding to Support Law Enforcement in Proposed FY 2027 Budget Amid Historic Drops in Violent Crime Statewide

By PRESS OFFICER  
Office of the Governor

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (Jan. 8, 2026)—Governor Wes Moore this morning announced a record \$124.1 million in funding to support law enforcement in the governor's proposed FY 2027 budget. Administered through the State Aid for Police Protection Program, the funding represents the Moore-Miller Administration's continued commitment to making Maryland safer, as the state continues to see historic drops in violent crime.

"Our administration is committed to creating a safer state for every Marylander through an all-of-the-above approach that supports law enforcement, strengthens our communities, and invests in our people," said Gov. Moore. "Our public safety strategy is delivering real results, but we are building on that progress with new investments so that every Marylander can live with the safety and dignity they deserve."

Preliminary data indicate that in 2025:

- Homicides are down 25% statewide—the lowest in nearly 40 years.
- Non-fatal shootings are down 28% statewide compared to 2024.
- Robberies are down more than 25% statewide—extending a decades-long continuous drop in incidents.

Preliminary data indicate that since the Moore-Miller Administration took office:

- Homicides are down 44% across the state, down 58% in Baltimore City

and down 39% in Prince George's County.

- Non-fatal shootings are down 40% statewide.

Since Day One, the Moore-Miller Administration has engaged in an all-of-the-above approach to break the back of violent crime across Maryland. The administration's public safety mission is defined by three core pillars: to provide the resources and support that law enforcement needs; to build stronger, more vibrant communities that leave no one behind; and to coordinate across all aspects of government to make our state safer.

To provide resources and support for law enforcement officials, the governor reinstated full investment in the Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center—including the reintegration of Baltimore City into its operations—to enhance data and information sharing between federal, state, and local entities and drive significant improvements in closure rates. The administration has provided direct funding and grants to support new equipment and overtime; prioritized investment in the Office of the Public Defender; secured landmark investment in the Baltimore State's Attorney's Office; and continued investment with the U.S. Attorney through the Special Assistant U.S. Attorney program to hold criminals accountable—all while working with state and local partners to develop re-entry programming to break the cycle of recidivism.

Most recently, Governor Moore reinstated state law enforcement resources



PHOTO CREDIT: POLLY IRUNGU, MARYLAND GOVERNOR'S PRESS OFFICE  
Governor Moore and Maryland State Police hold a SAPP Funding Announcement and Public Safety Press Conference at Barrack Q - College Park, 10100 Rhode Island Ave, College Park, MD 20740 on January 8, 2026.

to support Baltimore City law enforcement, marking the return to a true public safety partnership following the previous administration's termination of similar efforts. The renewed collaboration continues to build upon the historic progress made to reduce violent crime in Baltimore City through enhanced collaboration and community resource deployment.

"Working together across jurisdictional boundaries is critical to the public safety services we provide throughout the state," said Maryland State Police Acting Superintendent Colonel Michael A. Jackson. "At the direction of Governor Moore and working alongside our

local, state, and federal law enforcement partners, we are committed to building on our progress to keep Marylanders safe."

To build stronger, more vibrant communities, the Moore-Miller Administration has been sharply focused on addressing the underlying and generational impacts of policies that not only fail to deter crime, but facilitate the circumstances that lead to it. Through the ENOUGH program, the governor continues to support community-driven action to tackle the root causes of poverty, providing grants to 28 communities; strengthened access to mental and behavioral health supports;

and maintained support for nonprofit and faith-based organizations to help protect against hate crimes.

The administration has also instituted innovative agency-based initiatives to promote intervention, opportunity and education, including the first-ever formal interagency effort to help families affected by crime and violence through the Safer Stronger Together project. The administration launched the THRIVE Academy to serve youth who are determined to be at a heightened risk for involvement in gun violence; championed initiatives like the Service Year Option to promote access to mentorship and apprenticeship opportunities; and worked hand-in-hand with partners in communities across the state to engage in initiatives to uplift men and boys.

"Governor Wes Moore's partnership and commitment to public safety is real. It is an approach to public safety that has been instrumental to the historic 40% reduction in homicides we've achieved in Prince George's County," said Prince George's County Executive Aisha Braveboy. "The synergy between state and local governments is vital, and it's clear that with today's record funding announcement, in addition to strategic investments the governor and General Assembly have made, we share the view that public safety and economic development are intertwined. In Prince George's County, we look forward to continuing our work with the Moore-Miller Administration to deliver safer, stronger, and more prosperous neighborhoods for county residents."

## INSIDE

Brandywine-Aquasco

Southern Maryland National Heritage Area  
Launches Regional Passport Program

Towns and Neighbors, Page A2

Prince George's Youth Voices Take Center Stage at the 14th Annual Dr. King Prayer Breakfast

OFFLINE: TRACING THE SOURCE  
New Works by Hadiya Williams Explore Ancestral Memory and Contemporary Tech  
Community, Page A3

To Be Equal:

ICE Has Ushered in a New Era of Domestic Terror and Attacks on Civil Liberties

In a time when efforts to ramp up immigrant enforcement are juxtaposed with a deepening erosion of privacy, we are entering uncharted waters.

Commentary, Page A4

Governor Moore Announces New Maryland.gov, Improving Access to State Benefits, Services, and Resources

CAREERS: 3 New Year's Resolutions to Boost Your Career

Business and Finance, Page A5

# TOWNS and NEIGHBORS

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

### ANNUAL SPAGHETTI DINNER

St. Philip's Church Baden Parish Annual Spaghetti Dinner will be held Sunday, February 1, 2026, at 11 a.m. Dinners includes Homemade Spaghetti (Beef or Turkey), salad, garlic bread, homemade dessert, water. Pre-orders are accepted until January 26, 2026. Cash App Available-\$stphilipschurchbaden. Donation \$10.00. Children 10 and under \$5.00. Pre-Orders and Pre-Paid Only.

Contacts: Michele Chase 240-882-3369, Doretha Savoy 301-233-3136, Vivian Rich 804-301-9530. St. Philip's Church Baden Parish, 13801 Baden Westwood Road, Brandywine, Maryland 20613. Telephone: 301-888-1536.

### NIGHT OF ROMANCE

Night of Romance will be held Valentine's Day Saturday, February 14, 2026, from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. There will be dinner, dance and giveaways. Special performance by Tony Craddock, Jr., Saxophonist. For tickets contact/text Stephanie at 240-926-9199. Cost is \$75 per couple. The event will be held at St. Philip's Church Hall, 13801 Baden Westwood Road, Brandywine, Maryland 20613.

### HISTORIC SITES

Cows grazed in front of Montpelier Manor Farms, c. 1922, in Laurel. Montpelier Mansion is National Historic Landmark. Montpelier was built for Major Thomas Snowden and, in the twentieth century, was the home of assistant secretary of state Breckinridge Long. (Submitted by Friends of Montpelier.)

The historic and elegant mansion in Riverdale, at the time of its construction in 1801, was one of the finest examples of Georgian architecture in existence. Modeled after the Chateau du Mick, the home of Baron de Stier in Belgium, the house was made of brick, stuccoed, and painted. The mansion was home to a branch of the Calvert family for much of the nineteenth century. (Submitted by Riverdale Park Mayor Ann Ferguson from the town of Riverdale, Maryland 1920-70); courtesy of James C. Wilfong, Jr.

Mount Calvert in Croom was built in the 1700s by John Brown and remained in the family until 1835 when it was sold to Captain John Brooks. Mount Calvert is the only historic structure remaining in the site of Charles Town, the first seat of Prince George's County government. More modest in scale than the county's other Federal-Style mansions, it is an outstanding example of this type, distinguished also by its scenic location overlooking the confluence of the Western Branch and the Patuxent River. (Courtesy of the University of Maryland Libraries, Special Collections).

### MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was an American Civil rights activist and Baptist minister who was a leader of the civil rights movement from 1955 until his assassination in 1968. He was married to Coretta Scott King (1953-1968). Children: Martin Luther King III, Bernice King, Dexter King, Yolanda King. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is Monday, January 19, 2026.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (officially Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr.) is an American federal holiday marking the

birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. It is observed on the third Monday of January each year. Wikipedia.

### 2026 UNCF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. BREAKFAST

Join us for the 43rd annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Breakfast Celebration January 19, 2026, from 9-11 a.m. at the University of Maryland Hotel located in Prince George's County, 7777 Baltimore Ave., College Park, Maryland 20740. Event Contact Tanya Sweeney. Telephone 202-810-0182, email: tanya.sweeney@uncf.org

For over 80 years, UNCF, the nation's largest and most effective minority education organization, has provided financial support to ensure that our students can succeed and that UNCF-member institutions continue to keep moving forward toward the pursuit of educational excellence.

For more than 30 years, the Washington, DC office of UNCF and the Washington Inter-Alumni Council (WIAC) have come together to present the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Celebration to support students from the Washington Metropolitan Area and to support UNCF-member institutions. Highlights from last year event, event leadership, event honorees, event venue, sponsorship opportunities available at <https://uncf.org/events/2026-uncf-martin-luther-king-jr-breakfast-washington-dc>.

### PRINCE'S GEORGE'S COUNTY FIRE/ EMS

To learn about the PGFD's frontline safety classes offered to Seniors, call the Office of Community Relations and Engagement at 301-883-5250.

### CELEBRATING GENERATIONS BLACK HISTORY MONTH FASHION SHOW

Join us for a family fun event at St. Philip's Episcopal Church Saturday, February 21, 2026, while we showcase various styles from 2-4:30 p.m. The various styles that we will be showcasing are African Attire, The Event, Cruise Casual, The St. Philip's Men, White Party, Sunday Best. Light refreshments (Proceeds Benefit St. Philip's Church). Door Prizes. Admission: Adults \$20, Children 5-17 \$5, Under 5-Free. Tickets: Contacts: Mrs. Butler 301-520-3145, Mrs. Hall 703-201-3863, Mrs. Somerville 240-682-3657. St. Philip's Episcopal Church address is 13801 Baden Westwood Road, Brandywine, Maryland, 20613.

### WOMEN OF COLOR NETWORK CONFERENCE

The 20th Anniversary of the Maryland Women of Color Network Conference is Friday, March 6, 2026, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. at Bowie State University in the Student Center Ballrooms, 14000 Jericho Park Road, Bowie, Maryland. Price \$60.00. Join Bowie State University for a conference where professionals in public health, government, nonprofit, and education come together to discuss sexual violence prevention and response. Connect with staff from rape crisis centers, government agencies, faith-based and community organizations, and students who are dedicated to supporting survivors and building safer communities. Learn more: <https://mcasa.org/providers/mwocn> and <https://www.bowiestate.edu/calendar1/#event-details/60ffba2f-23e1-4f94-b19d-eea22fcda2c3>

## In and Around Morningside-Skyline

With Mary McHale, will return soon!

## Southern Maryland National Heritage Area Launches Regional Passport Program

*The passport program invites visitors to explore sites throughout the Southern Maryland National Heritage Area.*

By PRESS OFFICER  
Southern Maryland National Heritage Area

HUGHESVILLE, Md. (Jan. 5, 2026)—The Southern Maryland National Heritage Area today announced the launch of its new regional passport program, an interactive initiative designed to encourage residents and visitors to discover the region's storied past, abundant culture, and natural beauty across Calvert, Charles, St. Mary's, and Southern Prince George's Counties.

Fifteen designated heritage sites throughout the Area are now offering complimentary passport booklets to visitors. The passports feature space for unique stamps to commemorate visits to participating locations—visit a new heritage site, get a new stamp designed for that site. The program highlights museums, historic sites, natural landscapes, and cultural destinations that collectively tell the story of Southern Maryland's enduring legacy.

"The passport program is a fun and engaging way to showcase the extraordinary heritage found in every corner of Southern Maryland," said Lucille Walker, executive director of the Southern Maryland National Heritage Area. "Each site

included in this program represents a chapter of our shared regional story, encompassing Indigenous, Black, and European history, maritime and agricultural traditions, and the creative spirit and groundbreaking innovations that continue to uplift and shape our communities. We hope this inspires visitors to explore, learn, and form deeper connections with the places that make Southern Maryland remarkable."

Participating sites include:

- Annmarie Sculpture Garden and Arts Center
- Calvert Cliffs (stamping opportunity available in the Spring)
- Calvert Marine Museum
- Darnall's Chance House Museum
- Dr. Samuel A. Mudd House
- Historic Sotterley
- Historic St. Mary's City
- Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum
- Maryland Veterans Museum
- Patuxent River Naval Air Museum
- Piney Point Lighthouse Museum and Historic Park
- Piscataway Park
- Serenity Farm
- The Surratt House Museum
- Thomas Stone National Historic Site (stamping opportunity available in the Spring)

Visitors are encouraged to pick up a passport at any participating site and explore as many locations as they can, collecting stamps along the way. Some of the sites have winter hours, or are closed during the winter. Visitors are encouraged to call ahead to determine hours of each site, if hours are not listed on partner websites.

To see photos of the passports, Ms. Walker's tours to participating sites, and site staff testing out their new stamps, visit the Heritage Area's Instagram or Facebook.

For general information about the Southern Maryland National Heritage Area and updates on programs and initiatives, visit [destinationsouthernmaryland.com](http://destinationsouthernmaryland.com).

*As a newly designated National Heritage Area, the Southern Maryland National Heritage Area represents Calvert, Charles, St. Mary's, and southern Prince George's Counties with a mission to enhance the region through innovative heritage tourism experiences, comprehensive cultural and natural resource conservation, and excellence in educational opportunities. Visit our website: <https://destinationsouthernmaryland.com/>.*

## Honors for Local Students

### College Park Native Named to SRU Dean's List for Fall 2025 Semester

SLIPPERY ROCK, Pa. (Jan. 8, 2026)—In recognition of outstanding academic achievement, **Joy Charbonneau-Lovaas** from College Park, MD, was named to the dean's list for the Fall 2025 semester at Slippery Rock University. The dean's list consists of SRU undergraduate students who earned an adjusted semester grade-point average of 3.5 or higher, based on a schedule of at least 12 newly attempted and earned credits.

### Alice Gatti of Laurel Earned President's List Honors During the Fall 2025 Semester

CANTON, N.Y. (Jan. 8, 2026)—Alice Gatti, a SUNY Canton Game Design and Development major from Laurel, MD (20708) earned President's List honors during the fall 2025 semester.

"Your academic achievements during the fall semester reflect your dedication, perseverance and commitment to excellence," said SUNY Canton President Zvi Szafran. "We are proud of all you have accomplished and applaud your success on behalf of the faculty, staff and administration at SUNY Canton."

To earn a spot on the President's List, full-time students must earn a 3.75 or greater GPA during a single semester of study.

### Troy University Announces Fall graduates

TROY, Ala. (Jan. 8, 2026)—Troy University is pleased to recognize students who completed the requirements for graduation during the Fall Semester of the 2025-2026 academic year. The Fall Semester includes graduates from the Troy, Ala., campus. Graduates include students at TROY's campuses in Dothan and Montgomery, Ala., along with teaching sites outside of Alabama and online.

**Brett Autrey** of Hyattsville (20785)

**Maysen Elliott** of Hyattsville (20785)

### Goshen College Announces Dean's List for Fall 2025 Semester

GOSHEN, Ind. (Jan. 8, 2026)—Goshen College recently recognized 180 undergraduate students for excellence in academics on the 2025-26 fall semester Dean's List.

**Sadie Sherman**, a sophomore Psychology and Music major from Mt. Ranier, was recognized for academic excellence on the fall semester Dean's List at Goshen College.

The Dean's List includes traditional undergraduate students earning at least a 3.75 GPA, while completing at least 12 hours of coursework for a letter grade. Only grades from the designated semester are included in the Dean's List selection process.

The college initiated its Dean's List in fall 1999, celebrating the achievement of students who have met high academic standards.

### UW-Madison Announces Fall Dean's List

MADISON, Wisc. (Jan. 8, 2026)—The University of Wisconsin-Madison has recognized students named to the Dean's List for the fall semester of the 2025-2026 academic year.

Students who achieve at a high level academically are recognized by the dean at the close of each semester. To be eligible for the Dean's List, students must complete a minimum of 12 graded degree credits in that semester. Each university school or college sets its own GPA requirements for students to be eligible to receive the distinction.

Here are the students from your circulation area who have received this honor.

Bowie, MD: **Amaya Horace**, College of Letters and Science, Dean's List

Laurel, MD: **Daniela Luseko**, College of Letters and Science, Dean's List

### More Than 900 Students Named to Lebanon Valley College Fall 2025 Dean's List

ANNVILLE, Pa. (Jan. 8, 2026)—Lebanon Valley College congratulates more than 900 students named to the Dean's List for the fall 2025 semester. Dean's list students must maintain a GPA of at least 3.4 out of 4.0.

Local students include:

**Kyla Hebert** of Upper Marlboro (20772), a graduate of Northern High School, is pursuing a bachelor of science in nursing in nursing.

**Emilee Schmidt** of Bowie (20715), a graduate of Bowie High School, is pursuing a bachelor of arts in sociology.

### Angelo State University Announces Fall 2025 Graduates

SAN ANGELO, Texas (Jan. 6, 2026)—Angelo State University conferred 652 undergraduate and graduate degrees on 644 graduates during the 2025 fall commencement exercises on December 12, 2025, at the ASU Junell Center/Stephens Arena in San Angelo, Texas.

Graduates from your area include:

**Marrisa Joseph** of Upper Marlboro—Master of Arts in Mental Health and Wellness Couns.

**Beyleigh Winkler Moreno** of Clinton—Bachelor of Business Administration in Management Information Systems

### Local Student Named to Columbia College Fall 2025 Semester Dean's List

COLUMBIA, Mo. (Jan. 5, 2026)—Columbia College recently announced its dean's list for the Fall 2025 Semester (August-December 2025). To be named to the dean's list, a student must have completed 12 undergraduate credit hours in a 16-week period and achieved a minimum GPA of 3.5 on a 4.0-point scale.

Among those named to the dean's list is **Tyrone Gibson** of Hyattsville, who attended Online.

# COMMUNITY

## AKA Donates from A1

hood, Anchored in Legacy: Celebrating 118 Years," accomplished actor and stage director Phylicia Rashad, a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha, was the speaker at the brunch program. Danette Anthony Reed, International President & CEO of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated®, Charletta Wilson Jacks, First Vice President of the sorority, also participated in the program.

A service project in partnership with Greater DC Diaper Bank, themed Women Supporting Women—One Essential at a Time,” was the key focus of the Founders’ Day event. AKA members from the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia joined in a collective effort to provide essential supplies for vulnerable families who are supported by two Diaper Bank programs: The Baby Pantry and The Monthly. Sorority members donated items, such as diapers, pacifiers and breast pumps to The Baby Pantry, and menstrual products to The Monthly.

Alpha Kappa Alpha members donated 13,120 items to both projects and provided in-kind contributions totaling \$29,000. CeraVe, a subsidiary of L’Oreal, was an in-kind corporate sponsor and provided items for moms and babies in support of The Mommy Closet, one of the service initiatives.

According to Liz Schurgin, executive director of the Greater DC Diaper Bank, “We are so grateful for these donations. Now, more than ever our families need it. Over half the families in our region are struggling to access the diapers they need to keep their children healthy and dry. It is especially important that we start the year off with so much generosity,” said Schurgin. “This drive is historic for us in receiving donated items in-kind from a non-corporate community partner.”

“Gathering as sisters 118 years after Alpha Kappa Alpha’s founding at Howard University is a powerful testament to how we continue to advance our timeless mission to provide ‘Service to All Mankind,’” stated Spearman. “Through the critical act of collecting items that nurture and uplift our community, we honor our founders’ vision and reaffirm our commitment to caring for those who need us most.”

“Service is the heartbeat of Alpha Kappa Alpha, and our members consistently rise to meet the needs of women and children with extraordinary compassion,” said Stewart. “By giving generously, we not only provide essential resources for families today—we honor 118 years of a proud legacy rooted in uplifting our communities locally and across the globe. This is who we are, and this is the enduring impact of our founders’ vision.”

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated® Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated® (AKA), an international service organization, was founded on the campus of Howard University in Washington, D.C. in 1908. It is the oldest Greek-letter organization established by African American college-educated women. The sorority is comprised of more than 390,000 initiated members in more than 1,105 graduate and undergraduate chapters located in 14 nations and territories including the United States, the Bahamas, Bermuda, Canada, Germany, Japan, Liberia, Nigeria, Puerto Rico, South Korea, South Africa, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Led by International President & CEO Danette Anthony Reed of Dallas, Texas, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, often is hailed as “America’s premier Greek-letter organization for African American women.”

## Mayor from A1

he added, “along with elected officials at the federal, state, county, and local levels, to continue the recent progress we have made.”

Colbert was the top vote-getter in the recently held Nov. 4 Town elections, finishing with 115 votes. Councilmember and former Mayor Sarah Franklin placed second with 108 votes, while Brooks was third with 103 votes. Incumbent Councilmember Karen Lott finished fourth with 103 votes, followed by fellow incumbent Joseph “Joe” Hourcle at 68.

Colbert is a Prince George’s County native and dedicated public servant. He first entered public service in 2022 as a Town Commissioner and later served as a Councilmember following the Town’s transition to a Council. In December 2025, he was selected by his fellow Councilmembers to serve as Mayor.

Colbert is committed to transparent governance, community engagement, and thoughtful growth that honors the Town’s rich history. Mayor Colbert focuses on advancing economic vitality, improving infrastructure, enhancing resident services, and ensuring the community has a strong voice in local government. Outside of office, he brings experience in business operations and government contracting, and is a devoted husband and father actively involved in the Upper Marlboro community.

Brooks is a lifelong resident of Maryland, born and raised in Calvert County. In 1990, Brooks relocated to Prince George’s County where he has resided for the past 36 years. Brooks has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to public service and community engagement. From 2023–2025, he served as one of the Commissioners for Upper Marlboro, gaining hands-on experience in local government and community leadership. He has worked collaboratively to support policies focused on community development, public safety, and resident engagement.

Professionally, Brooks has been employed by the Prince George’s County Circuit Court for 36 years in various capacities and has also served as a part-time employee at the Prince George’s Community College for over 23 years, helping the students navigate their way through the college experience.

“In this new role as Vice Mayor, I look forward to continuing to advocate for all town residents and make positive impacts everywhere I can,” Brooks said.

Per the Town Charter, the five Councilmembers met on the first Monday in December after the Nov. 4 election and selected Colbert and Brooks as Mayor and Vice Mayor, respectively.

## The Prince George's Post

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## Prince George's Youth Voices Take Center Stage at the Top Ladies of Distinction, Inc. Prince George's County's 14th Annual Dr. King Prayer Breakfast

By PRESS OFFICER

Top Ladies of Distinction, Inc.  
Prince George's County Chapter

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, Md. (Jan. 6, 2026)—The Top Ladies of Distinction, Inc. Prince George's County Chapter will host its 14th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Prayer Breakfast on **Saturday, January 17, 2026** from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Martin's Crosswinds, located at 7400 Greenway Center Dr., Greenbelt, MD 20770. bringing together community leaders, residents, and youth to honor the life, legacy, and enduring impact of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

This year's breakfast places a special emphasis on youth voices and leadership, with members of the chapter's Top Teen of America program actively participating

ing throughout the program. Teen participants will offer reflections, prayer, a dramatic presentation, and musical selections that speak to what Dr. King's legacy means to the next generation.

“Our Top Teens represent the future Dr. King envisioned—young people who are thoughtful, civically engaged, and committed to service,” said Lady Carolyn Culver, Chapter President. “Their presence and leadership throughout the program make this year's event especially meaningful.”

The annual breakfast, which has already drawn over 300 registered attendees, serves as a cornerstone event for the chapter's commitment to service, education, and community uplift. Attendees will experience an inspiring morning program featuring music, prayer, youth presentations, and mes-

sages centered on faith, unity, and social responsibility.

In addition to honoring Dr. King's legacy, the program will include a tribute recognizing the life and service of the late Lady Ozell Dean, the last of the organization's living founders who passed away in 2024 at 100 years old.

Top Ladies of Distinction, Inc. (TLOD) is a national service organization of professional women committed to improving the quality of life in communities through youth development, women's empowerment, senior citizen support, community beautification, and community partnerships. The Prince George's County Chapter continues this legacy through service projects that uplift families and strengthen the fabric of our community. Visit <https://tlodpgcc.org>.

## OFFLINE: TRACING THE SOURCE New Works by Hadiya Williams Explore Ancestral Memory and Contemporary Tech

By KATE TAYLOR DAVIS  
Pyramid Atlantic Art Center

HYATTSVILLE, Md. (Jan. 12, 2026)—Featuring hand pulled prints, 32 AI generated giclees, ceramics, and textiles, Pyramid's gallery will be layered with color, texture, and patterns as it showcases work by the multifaceted Artist Hadiya Williams. Curated by Anika Hobbs, OFFLINE invites viewers to consider how materiality, memory, and technology together expand the possibilities of modernism itself.

OFFLINE: TRACING THE SOURCE opens **January 23, 2026** with a reception from 7–9 p.m. The exhibition runs through March 3, 2026 in Pyramid's Helen C. Frederick Gallery. Gallery hours are Wed & Thu, 10–8 p.m. and Fri–Sun, 10–6 p.m. Pyramid is located at 4318 Galatin Street, Hyattsville, Maryland 20781. For more information and an RSVP link, visit [pyramidatlantic.org](http://pyramidatlantic.org) or call 301-608-9101.

Williams and Pyramid have collaborated to create three hand-pulled limited edition screenprints and one letterpress print as part of Pyramid's Denbo Publishing program. These new prints join Williams' digitally

printed work, hand cut paper images, and ceramics. Each piece is a visual bridge between mid-century modernist language and Afro-diasporic design traditions. Patterns, textures, and structures drawn from Black cultural archives are reconfigured through digital tools, then re-embodied by hand—asserting the tactile presence of Black creativity in a world increasingly mediated by code.

Hadiya Williams is an artist and designer with over two decades of professional experience in graphic design. She earned her BS from Bowie State University and a BFA from Columbia College Chicago. In 2017, she transitioned from a successful career in graphic design to focus on handmade ceramics, surface design, and later generative art.

Hadiya is the founder and creative director of Black Pepper Paperie Co.®. Her work draws inspiration from the through-line between West African art forms, early 20th-century design, and the graphic styles of the Black Arts Movement of the '60s and '70s. Her work is in permanent collections at the National Museum of African American History and Culture and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.



IMAGE COURTESY PYRAMID ATLANTIC

One of 32 “Ancestor Index” collages by Hadiya Williams. 10x10", Digital collage/generative art

Hadiya has collaborated with brands such as F. Schumacher & Co., Esembly Baby, Nubian Hueman, and Lulu & Georgia bringing her creative perspective to audiences worldwide.

Grounded in her personal and cultural history, Hadiya's artwork celebrates what it means to be a Black woman in this world while exploring modern interpretations of art and design.

Founded in 1981, Pyramid Atlantic is a nonprofit contempo-

rary art center. Our mission is to sustain and elevate a welcoming arts hub in Hyattsville, MD that champions contemporary printmaking, papermaking, and book arts. We equip, educate, and exhibit while prioritizing artistic integrity, creative growth, and inclusivity. Our vision is to anchor an arts community that recognizes and uplifts the importance of artists, the intrinsic values of working with your hands, and the economy of artist-made work. <https://pyramidatlanticartcenter.org>

## Council Appoints Danielle Hunter to Fill District 6 Vacancy

By PRESS OFFICER  
Prince George's County Council  
Media

On Friday, January 9, the Prince George's County Council unanimously appointed Danielle Hunter to fill the District 6 Council vacancy created when Council Member Wala Blegray was sworn in to her current At-Large seat. Hunter, currently the Director of Appointments in County Executive Aisha Braveboy's administration, was selected from a list of more than 20 applicants.

“I want to congratulate Danielle Hunter on the unanimous vote, and I look forward to her joining the Council to serve with us,” said Council Chair Krystal Oriadha. “Her dedication, vision, and commitment to our county is invaluable as we start our new legislative session later this month.”

Aside from her work for the Prince



PHOTO COURTESY PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COUNCIL MEDIA

Danielle Hunter

George's County government, Hunter is heavily involved in her Oak Creek com-

munity and works alongside her husband to introduce young students in Prince George's County to the world of aviation through their co-owned Take Flight Consulting Group, LLC., encouraging young people to pursue aviation-related careers.

“I am ready to get to work on behalf of the residents of District 6,” Hunter told the Council during Friday's public selection process. “I had the opportunity to meet with residents of Cameron Grove, who expressed concerns about economic development initiatives, affordable housing, and public safety. I too share those concerns and am committed to working toward sound policy-based solutions to enhance the lives of our residents.”

Pursuant to the County Code, when there is a vacancy in the Office of a Council Member that occurs during the last year of a term, a majority of the remaining Council Members make an appointment to fill the vacancy.

# COMMENTARY

**Marc Morial**

*President and CEO, National Urban League*



**To Be Equal:**

## ICE Has Ushered in a New Era of Domestic Terror and Attacks on Civil Liberties

*"The Party told you to reject the evidence of your eyes and ears. It was their final, most essential command."*

—George Orwell, 1984

"Don't believe your lying eyes."

The quote, which originated in the Marx Brothers' movie *Duck Soup* in 1933, has been deployed in a variety of contexts by comics, authors, and orators, leaning into irony for nearly a century.

I never thought that I would see the day when the federal government would use it to defend the execution of an American citizen on American soil, in broad daylight, on camera. That is precisely

what occurred on the morning of January 7, when 37-year-old wife and mother, Renee Nicole Good, was shot at point-blank range by an immigration enforcement officer as she tried to leave the scene of a protest in Minneapolis.

The shooting has ignited a firestorm of controversy for a number of reasons. Since this administration has accelerated its ruthless immigration enforcement activities, sending masked, armed officers with minimal training and experience into major cities primarily led by political opponents, nine people have been shot by agents.

But the driving factor behind this outrage was the federal government's response. Leaders from immigration enforcement to the office of the Vice

President took to social media and the airwaves to not only place blame on the deceased, but also to outright lie by stating that the driver attempted to assault officers with her vehicle. An accusation that was clearly debunked by videos from multiple angles of the incident.

Beyond the government's willingness to lie without compunction, perhaps, the most chilling part of this story is the message it sends to the American people. A message that says that the state can do anything that it wants to you, including claiming your life, and not only will there be no effort to bring your assailant, this case killer, to justice, but they will be justified.

For millions of Americans, entering the new year emboldened to take a stand against a government that has seemingly gone rogue. Americans had just set down their New Year's Eve party hats when the news broke of the White House abandoning the balance of power that requires Congress to approve acts of war when it decided to take over Venezuela.

Less than a week later, an American is killed, not by a foreign government or terror organization from abroad, but by her own government. And not for breaking the law or even fully exercising her right to peacefully protest as protected by the 1st Amendment of our Constitution. But for simply being in the vicinity of one.

In a time when efforts to ramp up immigrant enforcement are juxtaposed with a deepening erosion of privacy, we are entering uncharted waters. When immigration enforcement can track and tar-

get Americans without permission through cell towers and social media, we have entered a police state. A police state that can question you without cause, charge you with an increasingly broadening definition of "domestic terrorism" under NSPM-7, and federal officers can take your life on camera simply because they want to.

In African American communities, we are no strangers to surveillance and overpolicing. From the Jim Crow laws enacted during Reconstruction and the CIA-led tactics to suppress Civil Rights organizations in the 1960s to the countless deaths caused by officers and vigilantes who have been exonerated by simply stating they "feared for their lives," Black life in America is a cautionary tale for what is to come.

It is also a blueprint for elected officials, community leaders, and legal professionals to take a stand against the criminal activity of rogue officers emboldened by corrupt leaders.

As we mourn the death of Renee Good and hope for the speedy recovery of the two people shot just a day after her by ICE officers in Portland, Oregon, we denounce state-sanctioned violence in all forms. We stand by the 1st Amendment clauses that protect free speech and the right to protest peacefully. We stand by the 4th Amendment's protection of American citizens from unreasonable search and seizure, where, as we saw in the disturbing videos in Minneapolis, far too often result in death and/or serious injury. And we stand beside Americans fighting for justice against tyranny in all forms.

—January 10, 2026

## AAA Shares "Insurance Resolutions" to Help Consumers Start 2026 Prepared and Protected

*The New Year Is a Great Time to Take a New Look at What's Covered*

By PRESS OFFICER  
AAA Club Alliance Inc

WASHINGTON, Md. (Jan. 7, 2026)—As Americans settle into the new year, AAA is encouraging them to add one more item to their list of resolutions: reviewing their insurance coverage. With life changes happening throughout the year—job shifts, moves, and renovations, new drivers in the household—AAA says now is the ideal time to ensure policies still match current needs.

"The start of a new year is the perfect moment to take a fresh look at your insurance," says Dan Scroggins, Vice President, Personal Lines Insurance, AAA. "A lot can change in a year, and your policies should change right along with your life."

### Auto Insurance: Adjust for New Driving Habits

• AAA recommends that motorists reassess how much they're driving. With many people working from home or entering retirement, changes in mileage may qualify them for lower rates. Households with students leaving for college or teens gaining driving privileges should also up-

date their policies.

- Drivers with older vehicles may want to review whether collision or comprehensive coverage is still cost-effective. AAA also encourages taking a defensive driving course, which can offer both safety benefits and potential premium savings.

### Home & Renters Insurance: Update Inventories and Renovation Details

- Homeowners and renters are urged to update their home inventories—either by listing valuables or recording a simple smartphone walk-through, especially after major purchases or home upgrades.
- Renovations such as finished basements or updated bathrooms can change the value of a home and the coverage needed. AAA reminds consumers that insurance is based on the cost to rebuild, not the home's market value.

### Life Insurance: Healthy Habits Can Save Money

- Maintaining a healthy lifestyle and seeing a doctor regularly are not only good for long-term wellness, but they may also help lower life-in-

surance rates. Because premiums are based partly on age and overall health, younger and healthier applicants often receive better options.

- AAA advises reviewing beneficiaries annually and ensuring important documents are stored securely and shared with a trusted contact.

### Mind the Gaps: Consider Additional Coverage

- A standard homeowners policy leaves several costly gaps in coverage, including water backup, service line failures, and mold remediation, issues that can lead to major unexpected expenses. Adding the appropriate endorsements ensures homeowners are protected from these common but often overlooked risks.
- Flood insurance, which is not included in standard homeowners policies, may be essential for people living near water or in areas prone to heavy rainfall, even if not in a designated high-risk flood zone.
- Umbrella insurance, which is extended liability coverage beyond home and auto policies, can also offer added financial protection at an affordable cost.

### Travel & Pet Insurance: Protect What You Love

- For frequent travelers, travel insurance can provide reimbursement for cancellations and coverage for medical emergencies or evacuations during trips.
- Pet owners may also benefit from pet insurance, which helps offset the cost of veterinary care in case of illness or injury.

"No one wants to think about worst-case scenarios but taking an hour to review your insurance at the start of the year can make a huge difference," Scroggins says. "It helps ensure you're protected and that you're not overpaying for coverage you don't need."

*AAA provides automotive, travel, and insurance services to more than 65.2 million members nationwide, over 80,000 members in Washington, D.C. and more than 1 million members in Maryland. AAA advocates for the safety and mobility of its members and has been committed to outstanding road service for more than 100 years. AAA is a non-stock, not-for-profit membership corporation working on behalf of motorists, who can map a route, find local gas prices and electric vehicle charging stations, discover discounts, book a hotel, and track their roadside assistance service with the AAA Mobile app (AAA.com/mobile) for iPhone, iPad and Android. For more information on joining or renewing a Membership, visit www.AAA.com.*

## M-NCPPC Prince George's County Planning Department Announces Opening of Spring Application Process for the Neighborhood Planning Academy

By PRESS OFFICER  
M-NCPPC

LARGO, Md. (Jan. 5, 2026)—The Prince George's County Planning Department of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) announces that applications for the next Neighborhood Planning Academy are now open. The program offers a unique opportunity for community-minded individuals to learn about urban planning and actively shape the future of Prince George's County. The curriculum covers essential topics in urban planning, community engagement, and sustainable development. The program also aims to empower residents to actively engage in planning and decision-making processes in their communities.

The free, seven-week course offered by the M-NCPPC Prince George's County Planning Department supports residents, municipalities, non-profit organizations, and the business community in understanding how the development process works, how to better engage, and how to advocate for community goals and visions.

"I am excited about how the Neighborhood Planning Academy is transforming Prince George's County, educating residents, and empowering community advocates," said Darryl Barnes, Chairman of the M-NCPPC Prince George's Planning Board. "Past participants have introduced some amazing ideas and suggestions to

help improve our communities and elevate our County."

"We are proud of the 250 alumni who are active in their communities and look forward to welcoming the new cohort," said James Hunt, Acting Director of the M-NCPPC Prince George's County Planning Department. "This award-winning program helps to promote environmental sustainability, design excellence, and quality development while encouraging healthy lifestyles in Prince George's County neighborhoods."

Applicants will be selected from each councilmanic district for geographic diversity. The spring session runs on Wednesdays from March 4, 2026–April 15, 2026, from 6:30–8:30 p.m. The first six sessions will be conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams. The final session includes an in-person graduation with capstone project presentations that highlight newly acquired skills and planning knowledge. **The application deadline is January 31, 2026.**

Since the launch of the program in the fall of 2023, the Neighborhood Planning Academy has received nearly 1,200 applications from interested Prince George's County residents and stakeholders. Spaces are limited! To apply and learn more about the NPA program visit <http://academy.pgplanning.com>. For any questions, please email [PGCNPA@ppd.mncppc.org](mailto:PGCNPA@ppd.mncppc.org).

*The Prince George's County Planning Department of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) is re-*

*sponsible 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 that promotes healthy lifestyles 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. To 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: <https://www.pgplanning.org/patron-sign-language-service-request-form>.*

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# BUSINESS AND FINANCE

## Social Security Matters

### Ask Rusty: Why Didn't My Friend's Wife Get All Her SS Immediately?

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

**Dear Rusty:** A friend told me about what he believes is a strange thing in the Social Security system. His wife reached her full retirement age (FRA) of 66 several years ago. She delayed filing for Social Security past her FRA and claimed on her 68th birthday in June of that year, exactly 2 years after her FRA. When she filed, she was told she would receive approximately \$300/month, which, of course, was more than she would have received at her FRA. She was told however that she would only receive \$300/month as of January 1 of the following year. Between June of the year she turned 68 and filed for SS until the end of that year, she would receive an amount less than \$300. This lower amount was the amount she would have received if she had filed in December, the year she turned 67. She said she was told that was how SS works. She would never receive the difference in benefits she lost from June through December of the year she filed. If the above is true, can you explain? **Signed:** *Astounded Friend*

**Dear Astounded:** What your friend described is, indeed, a unique methodology for how Social Security handles benefit payments for those who choose to wait beyond their full retirement age (FRA) to claim SS benefits. To understand it, let me first describe how Social Security retirement benefits are calculated.

At full retirement age, a person is entitled to 100% of the SS benefit they have earned from a lifetime of working. That FRA benefit amount is known as the person's "Primary Insurance Amount" (PIA) and is based upon the highest earning 35 years over the individual's lifetime. From those past years, average lifetime monthly earnings are computed, known as the person's "Average Indexed Monthly Earnings" (AIME). Their AIME is subjected to a formula which yields their Primary Insurance Amount – the benefit the person is entitled to in the month they attain their full retirement age – typically about 40% of the person's average monthly lifetime earnings. However, if the person chooses to do so, they can wait beyond their FRA to claim Social Security to get a monthly benefit even higher than their PIA, by earning Delayed Retirement Credits (DRCs).

DRCs are applied to the person's PIA when they claim Social Security. For each month after FRA the person claims, they will have .667% added to their PIA. That means that for each full year of delay, that person will get an extra 8% added to their PIA. For someone (like your friend's wife) who claimed 24 months after her FRA, she would receive a benefit 16% higher than her FRA amount. However, Social Security normally only applies DRCs in January of each year.

So, even though your friend's wife claimed her SS benefits in June, 24 months after her FRA, she would initially only get the DRCs she had accumulated through the end of the previous year – in this case, about 18 months' worth of DRCs, or an SS payment about 12% higher than her PIA (her FRA amount). She would not get her remaining earned DRCs (another 4%) until January of the following year. So, in effect, the wife's initial benefit didn't reflect all her earned DRCs until her later January benefit payment. Thus, the wife essentially lost that extra benefit money for the period between June and December of the year she claimed Social Security. In other words, she wouldn't get the full 16% amount until SS applied the additional 4% DRCs to her benefit payment the following January. And that is why your friend's wife initially received a payment a bit less than the \$300 Social Security said she was entitled to by waiting 2 years after her FRA to claim.

This surprises many who choose to wait beyond their full retirement age to claim Social Security. But, curiously, this process doesn't apply to those who wait until age 70 to claim their SS benefits. For those who wait until age 70 to claim, Social Security will immediately apply all DRCs that they have accumulated and provide them with their maximum SS benefit immediately.

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## Governor Moore Announces New Maryland.gov, Improving Access to State Benefits, Services, and Resources

By PRESS OFFICER  
Office of the Governor

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (Jan. 6, 2025)—Governor Wes Moore today unveiled the fully rebuilt Maryland.gov, which transforms the state's official website into a user-friendly "digital front door," improving how residents can access critical benefits, government services, and resources. Built on a modern platform centered on an accessible design, the new Maryland.gov is a major step forward in the administration's commitment to deliver world-class customer service and more efficient government for all Marylanders.

"In Maryland, we leave no one behind. This includes how we serve and connect with our people online," said Gov. Moore. "This new website is proof that state government can be fast, efficient, and collaborative, replacing bureaucratic mazes with a simple, accessible path to the resources Marylanders need."

The redesign of the State's flagship website was spearheaded by the Maryland Department of Information Technology's Maryland Digital Service, which Governor Moore created via executive action to enhance State websites and web applications. The work to transform Maryland.gov was guided by input from Maryland residents and personnel from dozens of state agencies, with the goal to help Marylanders more efficiently engage with the State's most frequently used resources, including job and career support, food and nutrition benefits, and unemployment insurance.

"The new Maryland.gov is more than a visual redesign," said Maryland Department of Information Technology Secretary Katie Savage. "It's a reflection of how we are rebuilding State websites to make them more accessible for the people we serve. You shouldn't need a degree in state government to know everything Maryland can do for you—if you live or work here, Maryland.gov is the perfect place to learn more about everything our great state has to offer."

The new Maryland.gov is built on a more modern and secure content management system. The system centers on accessibility, part of an ongoing effort led by the Maryland Digital Service to make state websites more readable, secure, and consistent for visitors. In addition to relaunching Maryland.gov, Maryland Digital Service is actively partnering with state agencies to improve their site architecture and content, ensuring that crucial webpages are modernized before they are moved to the new platform. The interagency partnership is ongoing, with dozens of new websites are on track to launch later this year.

Improvements made to the Maryland.gov website include:

- Consistent user experience:** The overall user experience across state agency websites is often inconsistent, siloed,

and cumbersome, hindering residents' and businesses' ability to find information and complete tasks. The redesigned websites leverage user-centered design to ensure Maryland websites provide a seamless path towards frequently-used resources.

- Built-in accessibility features:** According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 1 million Marylanders have a disability, with many relying on assistive technology to access state benefits, resources, services, and opportunities online. Maryland's new website technology has a stronger foundation of accessibility, ensuring that all Marylanders can take advantage of Maryland resources.

- Plain language content:** Government websites can often contain jargon and technical language, which can be difficult for visitors to understand. To increase readability on frequently used webpages, the Maryland Digital Service is working in partnership with agencies to implement plain language content that is easy to understand and more clearly answers questions.

To simplify navigation, Maryland.gov now organizes resources into five clear categories: "Benefits," "Services," "Business and Work;" "Visit and Explore;" and "Your Government." The "Benefits" section highlights the key benefits provided by the State of Maryland, grouped both by topic and by audience type, including families and children, and veterans.

"We were intentional about directing Marylanders to the most direct resources to get the help they deserve quickly," said Maryland Human Services Secretary Rafael López. "This new site reflects an administration that prioritizes world-class customer service and putting people first."

In addition to the benefits that eligible Marylanders can apply for, the state provides a wide range of services that people rely on to live in and travel in the state—from renewing a driver's license to filing taxes. The "Services" section on Maryland.gov makes it easier to access the government entities they interact with most in their daily lives.

"Transportation impacts nearly every part of our daily life, and Marylanders deserve simple, reliable access to the services they depend on," said Maryland Department of Transportation Assistant Secretary for Planning and Project Development Joe McAndrew. "The redesigned site organizes state services by topic, helping connect people to MDOT and other essential state services easily and effortlessly."

Easy access to information on how to start a business or seek better job opportunities is key to economic growth in Maryland. The new Maryland.gov "Business and Work" section empowers employees, employers, and prospective business owners by providing simple paths to permits and licenses, along with other es-

sential services, including job and career support, volunteer opportunities, and resources for vendors looking to do business with Maryland's government.

"The new Maryland.gov platform will help residents grow their careers, assist entrepreneurs with starting a business, and encourage individuals to explore the outdoors across our beautiful state," said Maryland Department of Commerce Secretary Harry Coker, Jr. "This improved and easy-to-navigate website is another step to ensuring that everyone, no matter what age or background, has equal opportunity to Maryland's resources."

The "Visit and Explore" section informs visitors about the process of moving to or enjoying the state, offering resources to help residents get to know Maryland, find new jobs and communities, and explore activities. The "Your Government" section provides easy access to Maryland government offices, State agencies, and election information.

The launch of the new Maryland.gov website is a bold step in the ongoing effort by the Moore-Miller Administration to make state government's digital services more accessible, secure, reliable and easy to use—building on several landmark initiatives:

- One Application for Benefits:** This streamlined, mobile-friendly tool allows Marylanders to apply for multiple critical benefits—including Medicaid, SNAP, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Women, Infants, Children (WIC) programming, and energy assistance—in a single, seamless application at MarylandBenefits.gov. Since its launch in July, Marylanders have completed more than 220,000 applications for vital support, proving the success of its human-centered design.

- AI Grants for Service Delivery:** Maryland state agencies were awarded more than \$2.6 million in grants to responsibly harness artificial intelligence to remove barriers to public services. The funding supports projects that will explore using AI to streamline complex processes like work verification for SNAP and Medicaid, and to improve agency staff support in navigating regulations and processing documents. The awards position Maryland as a national leader in using technology to deliver government services more efficiently and equitably.

- Modernized COMAR Platform:** Through a partnership between the Maryland Digital Service and Maryland Secretary of State's Office, the state launched a modernized online version of the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR), making state laws more accessible, transparent, and usable with enhanced search and automated publishing capabilities.

All those who live, work, and explore in our great state can learn more at Maryland.gov.

## CAREERS: 3 New Year's Resolutions to Boost Your Career

(StatePoint) Looking for a fresh professional start in 2026? Here are three New Year's resolutions you can make to boost your career.

### Refresh Your Resume

Whether you're actively job searching or not, it's a good idea to give your resume, CV and LinkedIn profile a refresh. Doing so will mean you're ready to apply for a new job quickly, if needed or when compelling opportunities come your way. While you'll want to tweak your resume with each application to emphasize the skills and experience most crucial to the position, it's helpful to have an up-to-date document as a foundation.

### Explore Growing Fields

At a time when many companies and industries are downsizing, you can help bolster your long-term job security by exploring fields that are anticipated to grow in the coming years. Whether you're in school now or considering a mid-career pivot, consider targeting positions in hot industries such as green energy, artificial intelligence, actuarial science and home health care.

Financial planning is another great path to consider. Firms large and small are actively filling their ranks as senior professionals retire and the number of Americans in search of wealth management advisors grows. With the onset of artificial intelligence (AI), technology and financial planning experts alike agree that emerging digital tools will only enhance the work of financial planners.



PHOTO SOURCE: (C) ND3000 / ISTOCK VIA GETTY IMAGES PLUS

### Get the Right Credentials

The right credentials can help you stand out in a crowded job market, alerting employers and clients that you have experience and knowledge they can trust. In the case of financial services, 90% of consumers see an advisor's certification as important. Employers understand this and it's part of the reason why becoming a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER® professional can have a tangible impact on your earnings potential. In fact, CFP® professionals earn 13% more than other financial planners, according to CFP Board's 2025 Compensation Study. Considered the standard of excellence for 50 years, CFP® certification involves an intensive education program in 72 areas of financial expertise and rigorous experience and ethical requirements. In the new year, check out the many resources available to help you take steps to earn CFP® certification, from scholarships and mentorships to a dashboard that helps you track your certification status. Get started today at CFP.net.

To ring in 2026 with professional confidence, give your career a boost by both focusing on what you've achieved so far and what you can accomplish in the future.

## EarthTalk® Q&A

# Plants Talk? It Turns Out, Flora Can Communicate

By Pravit Kochar | January 8, 2026

Dear EarthTalk:

*Is it true that plants communicate by sending chemical signals through the air?*

—Melissa Hart, via email

Recent research reveals that plants, despite lacking brains or nervous systems, possess a surprising ability to "talk" via chemical signals. This fascinating discovery sheds light on a hidden world of plant communication with profound implications for agriculture, ecology and climate resilience. Plants communicate mainly through volatile organic compounds (VOCs)—chemical signals they release into the air—which serve as a sophisticated alarm system, warning other plants about potential threats like herbivores, pathogens or environmental stressors. When a plant detects an attack, it can alert other plants, enabling them to ready defensive chemicals or close their stomata to conserve water and nutrients.

According to National Geographic, this signaling system operates like an "early warning network," letting plants prepare themselves and the surrounding community for incoming dangers. This highlights the intricate interdependence within plant ecosystems. One well-documented example involves tomato plants. When attacked by pests, tomato plants release VOCs that signal neighboring plants to ramp up their production of defensive chemicals, effectively creating a shared defense strategy. This phenomenon isn't limited to a

single plant species—"eavesdropping" plants in the vicinity can also benefit from these warnings, adapting their defenses even if they aren't directly under attack. In addition to defensive strategies, plants use VOCs for environmental adaptation. Certain plants release VOCs to attract the predators of their attackers. A classic example is caterpillar-infested plants emitting signals to draw in parasitic wasps, which lay eggs in the caterpillars and effectively neutralize the threat.

Understanding plant communication could revolutionize agriculture. Farmers could enhance crop resistance to pests and reduce reliance on chemical pesticides. This would contribute to ecological balance by preserving biodiversity and reducing environmental impact. Moreover, plant communication plays a crucial role in maintaining ecosystem health. As *Wired* notes, this "language of chemical signals" isn't just about individual survival—it's about fostering community resilience in the face of challenges.

Plant communication does have skeptics. Some scientists believe it is simply a passive chemical response and not "communication." Nonetheless, the discovery of chemical signaling in plants highlights the complexity and interconnectedness of ecosystems. As *SciTech-Daily* notes, understanding these signals could revolutionize how we protect crops and manage natural ecosystems. By unraveling the secrets of plant communication, we gain not only insights into the hidden lives of plants but also tools to build a more sustainable and resilient future.



PHOTO COURTESY EARTHTALK

**It turns out plants can talk, at least if you mean send out chemical signals to each other.**

**CONTACTS:** Plants can talk. Yes, really. Here's how, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/plants-can-talk-yes-really-heres-how>.

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

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