

# The Prince George's Post



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## M-NCPPC Mourns the Passing of Former Director Marye Wells-Harley, Visionary Leader and Champion of Excellence

By PRESS OFFICER  
M-NCPPC

RIVERDALE, Md. (Feb. 17, 2026)—The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) announces with profound sadness the passing of Marye Wells-Harley, a transformational leader whose legacy shaped parks, recreation, and planning across the National Capital Region for generations.

Wells-Harley dedicated 42 years of exemplary service to M-NCPPC, serving as Director of the Prince George's County Department of Parks and Recreation from 1996 until her retirement, and later as a Montgomery County Planning Board Commissioner and Vice Chair from 2009 to 2017. She was the first African American woman to serve on the Montgomery County Planning Board.

Her distinguished career was marked by unwavering commitment to excellence, innovation, and community enrichment, earning her recognition as one of Maryland's Top 100 Women in 2004, alongside numerous other accolades at the national, state, and local levels.

"Marye Wells-Harley exemplified the best of M-NCPPC's bi-county mission," said Darryl Barnes, Chairman, The Mary-

land-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and the Prince George's County Planning Board. "Her more than four decades of service demonstrated that parks, recreation, and planning are not just about spaces and policies. They are about people, opportunities, and building stronger communities. Her trailblazing influence will continue to be felt for generations to come."

"Marye Wells-Harley's legacy is one of service, leadership, and lasting impact. On the Planning Board and across the Commission, she brought a deep commitment to community and public stewardship that helped shape our county," said Commission Vice Chair and Montgomery County Planning Board Chair Artie Harris. "Marye opened doors for others and set a standard of excellence that continues to guide our work today. We are grateful for her vision and the example she leaves behind."

### Prince George's County Legacy

Under Wells-Harley's visionary leadership, M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George's County achieved unprecedented national recognition, receiving



PHOTO COURTESY M-NCPPC

Marye Wells-Harley

five National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Gold Medals for Excellence in Parks and Recreation Management, establishing it as a national

leader in innovative programming and services.

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## A Place for Mom Honors The Sky Bridge at Town Center With Best of Senior Living Award

Based on top reviews by family and resident reviews, The Sky Bridge at Town Center was awarded for outstanding support and care.

By PRESS OFFICER

### Watermark Retirement Communities

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (Feb. 19, 2026)—The Sky Bridge at Town Center, a Watermark retirement community based in Upper Marlboro, Maryland is proud to announce that it has been honored as a Best of Senior Living 2026 award winner by A Place for Mom (APFM), in recognition of their commitment to helping their residents thrive in retirement.

The best of senior living honor represents the top-rated senior living communities and in-home care providers across the United States and Canada, determined by the reviews of residents and their families. APFM's 2026 Best of Senior Living Awards recognizes the top 1-2% of nearly 45,000 senior care providers across the country for providing exemplary care and support to aging seniors.

"We are honored to be named one of the best Senior Living Communities by APFM! This recognition celebrates our residents, families, and team members who make Skybridge at Town Center a special place," said Executive Director Tyshan

Wilson. "Our mission to provide exceptional care and purposeful connections, centered around human focus, is the core value of Watermark's culture. To be human is to feel, care, and keep going! That's what we do to win every day at Skybridge to help our residents live better lives!"

This year's Best of Senior Living Awards recognize top providers in nearly every state and several Canadian provinces based on reviews from seniors and their loved ones. The top reviews across aplaceformom.com often highlight the excellent care and support provided by senior living communities. A Place for Mom has found that, on average, families are six times more likely to move into communities with recent reviews, further reinforcing the importance of reviews in helping families make decisions.

To learn more about A Place for Mom's 2026 Best of Senior Living Award winners, visit [www.aplaceformom.com/awards](http://www.aplaceformom.com/awards). To learn more about The Sky Bridge at Town Center, visit [www.watermarkcommunities.com](http://www.watermarkcommunities.com)

## Lawmakers Push for Independent Investigation Into Cheltenham Reformatory School

By MIRA BEINART AND NINA WILSON  
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (Feb. 19, 2026)—A proposed state investigation of the deaths of some 230 Black boys at the Cheltenham reform school faced no opposition Thursday at the House of Delegates hearing.

"Naming the unnamed is not symbolic," Del. Jeffrie E. Long, Jr., D-Calvert and Prince George's said. "It is an act of accountability, an act of dignity, an act of restoration."

The bill, a priority for the Black caucus, calls for an independent investigation into the abuses at House of Reformation for Colored Boys in southern Prince George's County in order to "account for every child buried in unmarked graves, and to understand the system that allowed such a tragedy to occur," the bill text reads.

An estimated 230 boys died and many are buried in unmarked graves in the woods near the reform school.

Long, the main House sponsor of the bill, testified alongside

Betsy Fox Tolentino, the acting secretary of juvenile services at Maryland's Department of Juvenile Services, who supports the legislation. Members of the House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee asked few questions about the bill.

"Restoration alone does not answer the questions that remain," Long said. "How did so many children die in state custody? What were the conditions that led to their deaths? Were warning signs ignored?"

The hearing comes weeks after a \$200,000 grant was announced by the Maryland Historical Trust to fund a ground-penetrating radar survey and restoration of the burial grounds.

The Department of Juvenile Services will be working with the investigating team to create a plan to use the grant in uncovering the graves, according to Fox Tolentino.

A companion bill, introduced by Sen. William C. Smith Jr., D-Montgomery County, is scheduled to be heard on Feb. 25.

A priority of the state investigation involves the restoration of the boys' burial site.



MIRA BEINART/CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

Del. Jeffrie E. Long, Jr., D-Calvert and Prince George's presents a bill to the House of Delegates on Feb. 19, 2026.

"I don't want to keep calling it a cemetery, because right now, it's a mass grave site," Long said. "I refuse to call it a cemetery until it's treated like one."

## Prince George's County Executive Aisha Braveboy and Governor Wes Moore Share EY Analysis Projecting \$1.5 Billion Annual Total Economic Impact for Maryland From Sphere National Harbor Operations

By PRESS OFFICER  
Prince George's County, Maryland

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. (Feb. 17, 2026)—Prince George's County Executive Aisha Braveboy and Governor Wes Moore, with Sphere Entertainment Co. and Peterson Companies, unveiled today a new economic analysis that demonstrates how the recently announced Sphere National Harbor venue would drive significant economic benefits for Prince George's County and the State of Maryland.

As the second Sphere venue in the U.S., once operational this new 6,000-seat landmark destination planned for National Harbor is expected to drive \$1.3 billion in economic impact for Prince George's County, and an additional \$200 million outside the County, for a total of \$1.5 billion overall for the State, according to the new analysis. Construction is expected to bring in \$1.6 billion in economic benefits to Prince George's County, and an additional \$250 million outside the County, for a statewide total of \$1.85 billion. The new

economic impact analysis by EY is available at [mypgc.us/sphere](http://mypgc.us/sphere).

"We knew immediately Sphere National Harbor was going to be transformational. This new economic data has reconfirmed how amazing a win this is for the people of Prince George's County and Maryland," said Prince George's County Executive Aisha Braveboy. "Partnering with Gov. Moore, we developed the most compelling and responsible incentive package to draw Sphere to National Harbor, it will pay dividends for generations and

create a new landmark on the edge of the Potomac River."

"Maryland has a proud tradition of world-class entertainment, and we're excited to partner with Sphere Entertainment to bring this bold, cutting-edge project to life," said Governor Wes Moore. "This landmark investment will be one of the largest economic projects in Prince George's County history—creating jobs, driving growth, and showcasing the very best of Maryland to the world."

"Sphere Entertainment is looking

forward to partnering with Governor Moore, County Executive Braveboy, and other stakeholders to make the vision of Sphere National Harbor a reality," said Sphere Entertainment Executive Vice President David Granville-Smith. "Through this partnership, we can deliver a transformative project for the State and the region."

"We are proud to work alongside the State of Maryland, Prince George's

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Prince George's County's First Running Specialty Store Celebrated Grand Opening February 21

Haraka—meaning "speed" in Swahili—opened December 26, 2025, at 5501 Baltimore Avenue in Hyattsville.

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Local Warning: Climate Change In Maryland As Maryland Turns to Solar Farms to Meet Renewable Energy Goals, Opposition Grows

State lawmakers have had to walk a fine line between expanding solar and appeasing farmers who have an abundance of concerns about solar projects being built on agricultural land.

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# TOWNS *and* NEIGHBORS

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

## GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER

“George Washington Carver was an Agricultural Chemist, Inventor and Environmentalist born in 1864 in Diamond, MO. He grew up happily on the farm of his former owner who adopted him after he was orphaned by the Civil War. When George was 10, he attended a one-room school in Neosho, MO. George sustained himself in Neosho by working in the kitchen of a family for room and board. In 1878, George traveled to Fort Scott, KS to attend high school. He graduated and was accepted at Highland University but was denied admission because of his race. In 1890, George was finally accepted at Simpson College in Indianola, IA studying art. A year later he transferred to Iowa State University to study botany. George was the first Black student. In 1894, he submitted his bachelor thesis entitled “Plants Modified by Man”. He graduated, started teaching, and quickly earned his Master’s.”

“In 1896, Booker T. Washington, the first principal and president of the Tuskegee University in AL invited George to head its Agriculture Department. Booker and George disagreed with the operation of the Agricultural Department and as a result of the clash of wills, George was demoted. In 1911, George contended that his laboratory had not received promised equipment and submitted his resignation. Booker relented and created his new research department. In 1915 to 1923, George experimented and researched new uses for peanuts, formulated fertilizers, crop rotation yields and an improved cotton plant.”

“George and his peanut products were almost solely responsible for the rise in U.S. peanut production after the boll weevil devastated the American cotton crop beginning about 1892. George developed over 300 uses from peanuts including oil, dyes, soap, plastic and ink. George was a dedicated environmentalist and rejected many offers and patents. The money he did receive he willingly contributed to research. For his work, George received many awards including the prestigious Spingarn Medal in 1923 and was made a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in London. George died on January 5, 1943, in Tuskegee, AL. He dedicated his life to his fellow man and sought to end the misery of starvation in the world.” Wikipedia

## CLINTON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Clinton United Methodist Church, Clinton, Maryland is now hiring a Part-time Children & Youth Director 12–14 hours per week, \$20/hour. Clinton United Methodist Church is seeking a passionate, creative and faith-centered leader to help rebuild vibrant ministry with the next generation. What will you do? Lead children and youth programs. Facilitate youth groups (Middle & High School). Create online Bible studies. Plan seasoned events and retreats. Engage with families and support volunteers. Who you are: Passionate about ministry with kids & teens, inclusive and justice-rooted, organized & collaborative, experienced in ministry or education. To Apply: Send your resume &

cover letter to cumcmd@verizon.net. Applications received on a rolling basis.

## SUMMER YOUTH ENRICHMENT PROGRAM (SYEP)

The Prince George's County Summer Youth Enrichment Program (SYEP) provides opportunities for young people ages 14 to 24 across the County to receive career development, job readiness training and employment. Get ready. Application Dates: March 1–March 31, 2026. Program Dates: July 6–August 14, 2026. The Summer Youth Enrichment Program (SYEP) offers County Youth and young adults ages 14 to 24 with enriching and constructive summer work experiences in community organizations, private sector companies, and government agencies.

## FREDERICK DOUGLASS

“Frederick was an abolitionist, orator, writer, strategist and statesman born a slave in February 1818, in Cordova, Maryland. He was sent to Baltimore at age 10. His mistress felt compassion and began to teach him to read. The tutoring was discovered, and Frederick was beaten for his lessons by his master and six years later, Fredrick was sent to a slave breaker. One day the youth refused to allow the overseer to strike him ever again. His defiant courage was an inspiration to the other slaves. In 1838 Fredrick was apprenticed to be a caulker in Baltimore, Maryland, where he was able to disguise himself as a sailor and escape to New York, NY”.

“Frederick married and settled in New Bedford, MA, which had a thriving free Black community, and he often made impromptu anti-slavery speeches. In 1941 he was invited to join the abolitionist movement. Despite being an outspoken advocate for anti-slavery he was often abused and attacked. In 1845 the fugitive slave laws soon forced Fredrick to flee to England. His fiery speeches on the evils of slavery aroused the sympathy of the British people. In 1847 they gathered funds to purchase his legal freedom. He returned to New York a free man and published the famous “North Star” newspaper. In 1959 civil tensions were eminent. Frederick secretly met with abolitionist John Brown and pleaded with him to abandon his planned attack at Harpers Ferry. When the Civil War broke out Douglass advised President Lincoln to make use of Black soldiers for the Union cause. After the war, he served as a member of the Legislative Council of the District of Columbia. He was the first African American to hold a government rank. He was appointed secretary to a commission to Santo Domingo by President Ulysses S. Grant. Fredrick was given many honors and duties but continued to actively express his views, especially his advocacy for women’s suffrage. Until his death in 1895, Fredrick’s heart was open to his people. He courageously broke the bonds of slavery and famously stated: “If there is no struggle, there is no progress.” He stands as the foremost Black American of the 19th century”. Wikipedia

## County Executive Aisha N. Braveboy Signs Executive Order Placing Moratorium on Detention Centers—Unveils Logo Designating County Properties, Lots and Garages Safe Spaces

By PRESS OFFICER

**County Executive Aisha Braveboy**

LARGO, Md. (Feb. 19, 2026)—County Executive Aisha Braveboy, on Thursday, February 19, 2026, flanked by U.S. Representative Glen Ivey, County Council Chair Krystal Oriadha and members of the Prince George’s County Council, representatives from Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), and mayors and municipal leaders from throughout the county, signed Executive Order No. 9-2026, establishing an immediate moratorium on any proposal seeking to use any property in Prince George’s County as a detention center.

U.S. Representative Glen Ivey—criticizing conditions of a detention facility he visited in Maryland said, “The animal shelters in Prince George’s County are better maintained than the ICE detention centers,”

highlighting concerns about both treatment and conditions.

Council Members emphasized the importance of reassuring residents who have expressed fear about visiting local businesses and community spaces. “Residents are being told to beware of visiting international grocery markets,” said Council Member Wala Blegay. “We want residents to know, do not be afraid. We are here to help you.”

Braveboy unveiled a new logo design that will be posted on county buildings, garages, and parking lots designating them safe spaces like churches and schools.

County Executive Braveboy introduced City of Mount Rainier Mayor Celina Benitez who introduced 10-year-old Prince George’s County resident Liliana Ramirez who shared her family’s experience after her father was detained at his construction

job site two days before the new year. She and her family have not seen or heard from him since. Her testimony highlighted the profound human impact of recent enforcement activity.

“I am the daughter of an immigrant. My father came to this country in pursuit of the American Dream,” said County Executive Braveboy. “The disregard for human life will not be tolerated in Prince George’s County. Not today. Not tomorrow. Not Ever.” Braveboy praised Liliana’s bravery, recognizing that they share being born in America, although their fathers were not.

Asked by a reporter if she thought her actions might appear antagonistic to ICE officials, County Executive Braveboy said, “The time is always right to do the right thing. You know, to think or believe that if we just say nothing, we’ll get overlooked? I don’t think that’s the right strategy.”

The Maryland Department of Health is monitoring for any potential impacts to human health, working in coordination with Montgomery, Prince George’s, Charles, and St. Mary’s counties. Montgomery, Prince George’s and Charles counties have issued advisories, including:

- Avoiding contact with the water or shore line of the impacted area;
- Avoiding consumption of any food or water from the impacted area;
- Keeping pets away from the impacted area;
- Avoiding flushing wipes or grease down any pipes; and
- Washing hands and skin should they come into contact with the impacted area.

Additional public health guidance may be issued as more information becomes available.

## Around the County

### Progress in Motion:

### Purple Line Spring Community Advisory Team Meetings Announced

#### Construction Progress and Advancing Light Rail Vehicle Testing Will Highlight Virtual Meetings

RIVERDALE, Md. (Feb. 19, 2026)—The Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Transit Administration Purple Line today announced the Spring 2026 Community Advisory Team (CAT) meeting schedule as construction nears 90% completion and light rail vehicle (LRV) testing advances along the 16-mile alignment. CAT meetings provide an opportunity to share construction progress and preview anticipated 2026 milestones, including completion of the Spring Street Bridge and the advancement of live-wire and LRV testing west from Prince George’s County into Montgomery County. **The seven meetings will be held virtually April 14–28 from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.** Local businesses, residents and community organizations are encouraged to attend to stay informed and involved.

“The Purple Line is moving toward completion with significant construction, track installation, systems and dynamic testing progress clearly visible along the alignment in both Prince George’s and Montgomery counties,” said Senior Project Director Ray Biggs II. “The team is looking forward to sharing the tremendous work that has been accomplished and previewing future goals, leading the project to completion and the start of service.”

Purple Line CAT meetings include leaders and experts from the Maryland Transit Administration, concessionaire Purple Line Transit Partners, design builder Maryland Transit Solutions and the system and maintenance operator Purple Line Transit Operators. These meetings include an easy-to-follow presentation with progress and testing photos and video, and provide time for attendees to ask questions and offer feedback. All virtual CAT meetings are hosted on Microsoft Teams and offer captioning in multiple languages. The meeting schedule and instructions on enabling live captioning is posted to the Purple Line website public meetings and events page. Past CAT meeting presentations and recordings are also available at [www.purplelinemd.com](http://www.purplelinemd.com).

All CAT meetings are scheduled from 6–7:30 p.m., with Microsoft Teams links posted at Purple Line MD | Public Meetings and Events. The Spring 2026 CAT schedule follows:

Tuesday, April 14	University Boulevard
Thursday, April 16	Long Branch
Tuesday, April 21	Lyttonsville/Woodside
<b>Wednesday, April 22</b>	<b>Riverdale Park/New Carrollton</b>
Thursday, April 23	Bethesda/Chevy Chase
<b>Monday, April 27</b>	<b>College Park</b>
Tuesday, April 28	Silver Spring

Questions on the upcoming CAT meetings can be directed to the Purple Line Outreach Team via email at [outreach@purplelinemd.com](mailto:outreach@purplelinemd.com) or by phone to the outreach line at 443-451-3706 (in English) or 443-451-3705 (in Spanish).

### Donation Honors the Life and Legacy of Tyrena Spry at Luminis Health Doctors Community Medical Center

LANHAM, Md. (Feb. 5, 2026)—Luminis Health Doctors Community Medical Center (LHDCMC) has received a meaningful donation made in memory of Tyrena Spry, a beloved mother, sister, daughter, and friend who was cared for at the hospital before her passing in 2012 following a courageous battle with breast cancer. The donation of “chemo comfy bags” is intended to support patients currently undergoing cancer treatment and to honor Tyrena’s enduring spirit, strength, and compassion.

Known as the glue that held her family together, Tyrena Spry was affectionately called Ma, Tye-Tye, Weenie, May May, Rennie, and Auntie Rena. Even as cancer challenged her body, Tyrena remained defined by her warmth, creativity, and devotion to her son, Kennedy Birdwell, while continuing to uplift everyone around her.

“The hospital staff was with our family during one of the most difficult chapters of our lives,” said Shavon Spry, Tyrena’s sister. “This donation is our way of saying thank you and carrying on Tyrena’s belief that even in the hardest moments, kindness and hope matter. She would want every patient to know they are not alone and that their strength is greater than they realize.”

The donation of “chemo comfy bags” are designed to provide comfort and encouragement to patients undergoing cancer treatment. Each bag is thoughtfully filled with items such as books, journals, cozy blankets, scarves, hats, snacks, and more to help ease long treatment days.

The family initially set a goal of assembling 50 bags in honor of what would have been Tyrena’s 50th birthday, but the effort quickly gained momentum throughout the community. With support from friends, neighbors, and a local Girl Scout troop that joined the initiative, the drive ultimately resulted in the donation of more than 100 “chemo comfy bags” to cancer patients.

To express gratitude for the family’s generosity and the opportunity to carry Tyrena’s legacy forward, nurses, physicians, and care team members gathered for a ceremony honoring Tyrena’s memory and reflecting on her courageous journey.

“We are deeply honored to receive this donation in memory of Tyrena Spry,” said Deneen Richmond, president of LHDCMC. “Her story reflects the courage, love, and perseverance we see in so many of our patients every day. Gifts like this help us provide comfort, compassion, and support to individuals and families navigating cancer treatment, and we are grateful to the Spry family for allowing us to be part of Tyrena’s lasting impact.”

The donation will help support comfort initiatives for patients undergoing treatment, offering reassurance during a challenging time. The Spry family hopes that each recipient feels a sense of peace and encouragement, carrying forward Tyrena’s message of courage, faith, and joy.

“Tyrena taught us that true strength isn’t about never falling,” added representatives of the family. “It’s about rising every time and lifting others along the way.”

## Maryland Department of the Environment Issues Update on Potomac Interceptor Support and Response

By PRESS OFFICER

**Maryland Department of the Environment**

BALTIMORE (Feb. 20, 2026)—On January 19, a section of the Potomac Interceptor—a large sewer pipe that is owned and maintained by D.C. Water—experienced a breach along the Clara Barton Parkway in Montgomery County. Since the breach, the State of Maryland has been engaged in a supportive capacity, working across multiple State agencies and with local and federal partners, to restore service to the interceptor and ensure the health and safety of Marylanders.

The failed section of sewer pipe is 72 inches in diameter. D.C. Water estimates that approximately 240 to 300 million gallons of wastewater spilled into the Potomac as a result of the break. Wastewater has

since stopped flowing into the Potomac, with no wastewater from the break entering the Potomac since Sunday, Feb. 8. Through D.C. Water, crews accessed the damaged section, began repairs, and are working to provide long-term solutions that reduce the risk of future spills.

Maryland has been engaged since the beginning of the incident in mid-January and will remain engaged in a supportive and interagency response to the incident.

The Maryland Department of Environment is leading the state’s response and is in close coordination with D.C. Water and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, who are responsible for the maintenance and monitoring of the Potomac Interceptor and have been engaged in emergency repairs and bypass operations since mid-January.

# COMMUNITY

## OBITUARY

### Frances Stevenson Bowie

Frances Stevenson Bowie, age 103, of Solomon's, MD, peacefully passed away on 16 Jan 2026. Born on 10 Sep 1922 in Philadelphia, PA, she was the daughter of Alfred Brockie Stevenson, Sr. and Caroline Lansdale Sill. She was preceded in death by her husband Forrest Dodge Bowie of Largo, MD and only sibling Alfred Brockie Stevenson, Jr., a renowned artist and Professor at the Corcoran School of the Arts & Design in Washington, DC. After high school graduation, she attended Pennsylvania Hospital's School of Nursing and upon graduation she shipped out to France as a Lt. with the US-ANC, meeting her brother in Metz, France right after VE Day. She was then sent to the Pacific Theater, assigned to the 27th General Hospital in Tokyo, Japan until Mar 1946. Thereafter, she practiced nursing in Philadelphia, PA. While singing in a church choir she experienced a spiritual awakening and devoted her life to the work of God. In 1952 she married and bore four children: Dennis, Thomas, Ann and Caroline (deceased). On her husband's ancestral farm, Mt. Lubentia, she provided her family with scratch made meals and instilled a work ethic and discipline that would carry her children through life's challenges. After her husband's passing, she managed the farm until retiring at Solomons, MD. She has four grandchildren: Barbara, Mark, Jaclyn and Jessica.

A service will be held at St. Anne's Anglican Catholic Church, 29449 Charlotte Hall Road, Charlotte Hall, MD.

Condolences may be made to the family via [abbirtcil@gmail.com](mailto:abbirtcil@gmail.com) or Annie Birtcil, 521 Park Valley Dr E, Hopkins, MN 55343.

## Calendar of Events



PHOTO COURTESY UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND MEMORIAL CHAPEL

**University of Maryland Memorial Chapel All-Event Open Houses**  
Date and time: Saturday, March 14 from 11 a.m.–1 p.m.; Saturday, April 11 from 10 a.m.–12 p.m.

Description: Whether you are planning a wedding, a memorial service, or a special milestone celebration, our historic Chapel offers a serene and stunning backdrop for your most cherished moments. During these open houses, visitors are welcome to explore our beautiful sacred spaces, speak with our professional staff about event coordination, and envision how our venue can bring their unique visions to life. We look forward to welcoming you to the Memorial Chapel and helping you begin the journey of planning your next meaningful event.

Cost: Open house is free

Location: 1101 Memorial Chapel, College Park, MD 20742

Contact: [https://stamp.umd.edu/visit/memorial\\_chapel](https://stamp.umd.edu/visit/memorial_chapel)

**The Chesapeake Chorale presents Sing Peace, Sing Love, Sing Justice**  
Date and time: Sunday, March 15, 2026, 3 p.m.

Description: The Chesapeake Chorale, an auditioned chorus based in Bowie, MD, now in its 45th season, will present a concert of choral music. Under the direction of Dr. Iain Sturrock, the Chesapeake Chorale raises voices of compassion, equity, and hope for a better world, featuring works of Craig Hella Johnson, Brittany Boykin, Felix Mendelssohn, Kyle Pedersen, Bob Dylan, and John Lennon & Paul McCartney, among others. **Please bring canned goods to support the Bowie Food Pantry.**

Cost: Adults: \$20, Senior/Military: \$15, Students \$5. Advance Ticket Sales: <http://www.chesapeakechorale.org>

Location: Christian Community Presbyterian Church, 3120 Belair Dr., Bowie, MD 20715

Contact: <http://www.chesapeakechorale.org>, 443-292-2176

**National Harbor Cherry Blossom Celebration**

Date and time: March 21 to April 12, 2026

Description: The month-long celebration will be filled with entertainment, hotel room packages, food and drink specials, classes and more. The destination will host their annual Sakura Sunday event on March 29 from noon to 5 p.m., featuring live entertainment, a Japanese market, demonstrations, and more. The Water Lantern Festival from March 27–29 is a ticketed event that brings families and friends together.

Location: National Harbor, 165 Waterfront Street, National Harbor, MD 20745

See all events: [www.nationalharbor.com/events/annual-events/cherry-blossom-festival/](http://www.nationalharbor.com/events/annual-events/cherry-blossom-festival/).

**Alabama A&M University, Washington, D.C. Metro Alumni Chapter (Bowie)—5th Annual Scholarship Golf Tournament**

Date and time: Friday, May 29, 2026

Description: This annual event raises funds to support scholarships and academic opportunities for Alabama A&M University students from the DMV area. The event will bring together alumni, corporate sponsors, small businesses, and community leaders for a day of golf, fellowship, and fundraising.

Register: <https://www.alabama-am-dc-metro.perfectgolfevent.com>.

Location: Renditions Golf Course in Davidsonville, Maryland



PHOTOS COURTESY HARMONY AT ENTERPRISE

On February 18, residents of Harmony at Enterprise came together for the first time in a shared appreciation for African American heritage through the power of music.

## Come Sing With Me!

By ZENOLA MALONE, Concierge  
Harmony at Enterprise

On February 18, 2026, the residents of Harmony at Enterprise, 12000 Traditions Boulevard, in Bowie, came together in a heartfelt celebration of Black History Month, uniting for the first time in a shared appreciation for African American heritage through the power of music. The charming Mistress of Ceremony, Lorraine W. Johnson, encouraged everyone to come together in remembrance and song.

Accompanying her was pianist Janice Boettger who provided the musical backdrop for the event.

With the venue filled with warmth and camaraderie, participants performed traditional songs that have long stood as symbols of resilience, hope,

and enduring spirit.

The soloist for the evening was James Pindell and he performed the beloved classic "When the Saints Go Marching In." Among the revered pieces showcased were "Battle Hymn of the Republic," a stirring anthem that calls for justice and reflects the struggle for equality. The sweet, uplifting melodies of "Go Tell It on the Mountain" echoed through the Black Eyes Susan Pub, reminding all present of the triumphs and faith that characterize the African American experience. Additionally, the soulful rendition of "Were You There?" with its poignant reflection on sacrifice and the shared journey toward freedom, added depth to the gathering.

I thought to myself, this musical tribute was not just a display of talent; it

served as a profound homage to the rich cultural legacy that Black History Month aims to celebrate. Our dear Residents engaged not only in performance but also in conversations that highlighted the significant contributions of African Americans throughout history, fostering a deeper understanding of their struggles and accomplishments. The atmosphere was charged with a sense of unity and purpose, as individuals came together to honor the past while advocating for a more inclusive future.

Through this celebration, Harmony at Enterprise embodied the essence of community, illustrating how shared experiences and collective remembrance can forge stronger bonds among residents while uplifting the vibrant tapestry of African American history.

## Luminis Health to Host Breast Cancer Survivor Christine Handy for Film Screening and Panel Discussion March 3

By PRESS OFFICER  
Luminis Health

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (Feb. 17, 2026)—Luminis Health's Geaton and JoAnn Decesaris Cancer Institute will host breast cancer survivor, author and advocate Christine Handy for an inspiring community event on **March 3** at 5:30 p.m. at the Doordan Institute on the campus of Luminis Health Anne Arundel Medical Center in Annapolis. The free event will feature a screening of the acclaimed film "Hello Beautiful", followed by a live Q&A with Handy and a panel of Luminis Health experts.

"Hello Beautiful" is a character-driven drama that follows Willow Boutrous as she navigates love, identity and self-worth after a breast cancer diagnosis. Based on Handy's memoir, the film shifts the focus from illness to survivorship, exploring the emotional and relational impact of diagnosis and treatment.

"Hello Beautiful" shines a light on what it really means to be a patient," said Christine Handy. "It offers breast cancer doctors and the medical community a powerful glimpse into the emotional re-

ality of treatment—reminding us that breast cancer affects the whole family, not just the person diagnosed. Understanding starts with listening."

Handy's personal journey inspired the story. A former professional model, including work with Victoria's Secret, she draws on her experience navigating illness, identity and recovery to shape the film's perspective, bringing an authentic voice to conversations about survivorship and life after diagnosis.

"Hello Beautiful" is a powerful reminder that cancer care extends far beyond medical treatment," said Dr. Young Joo Lee, medical director of Luminis Health's Breast Medical Oncology. "As oncologists, we focus on delivering the most advanced therapies available, but we also recognize the profound emotional and relational impact a diagnosis has on patients and their families. This film captures the resilience, vulnerability and humanity of survivorship in a way that truly resonates with both patients and providers."

The March 3 event at the Doordan Institute is free and open to the public. Pre-registration is strongly encouraged. At-

tendees will have the opportunity to engage directly with Handy and Luminis Health clinicians during the post-screening discussion, fostering meaningful dialogue about survivorship, identity and compassionate cancer care.

Wrabyn Boutique in Annapolis will host a welcome reception and fundraiser for Christine Handy on March 2 from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Proceeds will benefit Luminis Health's Geaton and JoAnn Decesaris Cancer Institute.

Luminis Health is a non-profit regional health system headquartered in Annapolis, Maryland. Comprised of Anne Arundel Medical Center, Doctors Community Medical Center (DCMC), J. Kent McNew Family Medical Center, Pathways, DCMC Rehab, and Luminis Health Clinical Enterprise, the system serves a population of 1.5 million people. As one of the area's largest charitable organizations—with 880 licensed beds, 100+ sites of care, and 8,700 team members—Luminis Health contributes more than \$120 million in community benefit annually. Visit [LuminisHealth.org](http://LuminisHealth.org) and connect with us on LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

## Chesapeake Life Center's Pet Loss Workshop Returns to Perfect Pet Resort

By ELYZABETH MARCUSSEN  
Hospice of the Chesapeake

PASADENA, Md. (Feb. 18, 2026)—In response to continued community interest and the deep need for support after the loss of a beloved pet, Chesapeake Life Center is pleased to bring back its popular Pet Loss Workshop, offering comfort, connection and healthy coping strategies for grieving adults.

The free workshop will be held from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. **Saturday, April 18**, at Perfect Pet Resort, 840 W. Bay Front Road, Lothian, Maryland.

For many, pets are cherished family members. When they die, the grief can be profound, but is too often pushed aside or minimized. This workshop creates a safe, understanding space where participants can honor their bond, share their stories and learn practical ways to navigate their grief.

Sponsored by Perfect Pet Resort and led by grief experts, the workshop includes a welcome, guided time to share individual experiences, an introduction to the grief process, a brief nature walk focused on healing and connection and a discussion of healthy coping strategies.

Registration is required and can be completed by calling 888-501-7077 or emailing [griefinfo@chesapeakecenter.org](mailto:griefinfo@chesapeakecenter.org). Visit [www.hospicechesapeake.org/events](http://www.hospicechesapeake.org/events) for a complete



listing of in-person and virtual grief support groups and workshops for adults and children.

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

# BUSINESS AND FINANCE

## Social Security Matters

Ask Rusty:

### My Friend Is 65; Shouldn't She Be Exempt From Medicare Payroll Taxes?

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

**Dear Rusty:** My girlfriend is 65 and she just enrolled in Medicare. She is still working full time as a nurse, but they are still deducting Medicare taxes from her paycheck. I thought as soon as you started Medicare, that they would no longer take any Medicare taxes from her paychecks. Is that not correct? **Signed: Concerned Friend**

**Dear Concerned Friend:** Your understanding about Medicare payroll tax is, indeed, not correct. Medicare taxes are levied on everyone who works and earns, regardless of whether or not they are currently enrolled in the Medicare program. That is how Medicare has worked since it was first enacted in the mid-1960s and how it still works today.

FYI, everyone who works for an employer must pay "FICA" (Federal Insurance Contributions Act) payroll tax of 7.65%. Most (6.2%) of that payroll tax goes to support Social Security, but 1.45% goes to support Medicare Part A. Self-employed individuals must also pay this tax under the Self-Employed Contributions Act (SECA) which is equivalent to FICA, except the self-employed individual must also pay the employer portion of the payroll tax. The Social Security portion of the FICA/SECA tax has an earnings cap (\$184,500 in 2026), but there is no cap on earnings for the Medicare portion of the FICA/SECA payroll tax. FYI, employers pay an equivalent amount of Social Security and Medicare taxes, and the Medicare portion of the payroll tax is paid on all earnings (there is no cap on earnings from which the Medicare payroll tax is withheld).

To ensure understanding, Medicare Part A provides healthcare coverage for inpatient hospitalization services, and Medicare Part B provides coverage for outpatient medical services (doctors, medical tests, etc.). That 1.45% of the FICA (and SECA tax for the self-employed) is paid by those who work to help fund the Medicare Part A program, which is premium-free for most Americans after age 65. For Medicare Part B, there is a separate premium which helps pay for Medicare outpatient healthcare services. The standard Medicare Part B premium for 2026 is \$202.90 per month, compared to Medicare Part A which is free to all who are eligible for Social Security benefits. But the 1.45% payroll tax which is being withheld from your girlfriend's paycheck is paid by everyone who has work earnings, even if they are enrolled in Medicare.

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

The 2.4 million member Association of Mature American Citizens [AMAC] [www.amac.us](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.Amac-Foundation.org](http://www.Amac-Foundation.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).

## Prince George's County's First Running Specialty Store Celebrated Grand Opening February 21

Weekend of Events Included Fun Run, Shoe Demos from Top Brands, and Local Run Club Fair

By PRESS OFFICER  
Haraka Run and Walk

HYATTSVILLE, Md. (Feb. 16, 2026)—Haraka Run and Walk, Prince George's County's first running specialty store, celebrated its grand opening on Saturday, February 21, 2026, with a ribbon cutting at 11 a.m. and a weekend of events for the running and walking community.

The grand opening weekend included a pre-grand opening fun run on the Rhode Island Avenue Trolley Trail, shoe demos from Brooks, Altra, ASICS and other major brands, a local run club fair, giveaways, discounts, and surprises.

"Montgomery County has four running specialty stores. D.C. has five. Fairfax has ten. Until now, Prince George's County—home to nearly one million residents—had none," said co-owner Jesse Holland. "That changes now. Prince George's County deserves the same level of specialized service that our neighbors have enjoyed for years."

Haraka—meaning "speed" in Swahili—opened December 26, 2025, at 5501 Baltimore Avenue in Hyattsville. Owners Carol and Jesse Holland, Bowie residents, are the inaugural recipients of the Running Industry Diversity Coalition's RUN THE BLOCK grant, a \$200,000 award with mentorship from major brands. Haraka is believed to be one of only a handful of Black-owned running specialty stores in the nation.

Co-owner Carol Holland is a Prince George's County native and the first Black female All-American track athlete in U.S. Naval Academy history. She won the NCAA Division II championship in the 800 meters and was inducted into the Academy's Athletic Hall of Fame. The Naval Academy still presents the Carol Womack Holland Award annually to female athletes who exemplify exceptional grit.

"I know what it's like to push through barriers—on the track and in life," Carol Holland said. "Haraka is our way of opening doors for the next



PHOTO COURTESY HARAKA RUN AND WALK  
**The Holland family of Haraka, Prince George's County's first running specialty store**

generation of runners right here in the county where I grew up."

The store's mission extends beyond retail. Prince George's County faces significant health challenges, including higher rates of obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease compared to surrounding areas. Haraka addresses these disparities by making running and walking accessible through expert guidance, community pro-

gramming, and the Wednesday Weekly Walk on the Rhode Island Avenue Trolley Trail.

The grand opening took place during Black History Month—a fitting time to celebrate a store that honors Black excellence in motion while serving runners, joggers, and walkers of all backgrounds.

The doors are open. The trail is waiting. At Haraka, they're fast forward.

## Impact from A1

County, and Sphere to bring forward a project that strengthens our regional economy, creates job opportunities, and reinforces National Harbor's position as one of the country's premier destinations. This project reflects thoughtful leadership, strong collaboration, and a shared commitment to delivering lasting benefits for our community," said Jon Peterson, CEO at Peterson Companies.

Key to the new economic analysis, which builds upon the initial numbers included in first announcing the Sphere project, is an increase in the number of jobs, direct and indirect that would be created by Sphere National Harbor. Construction-related jobs are now expected at 3,350 construction and full- or part-time local supplier and consumer-supported jobs over the construction period. Once operational, Sphere National Harbor is expected to support 7,100 full- and part-time jobs at Sphere and throughout Prince George's County. This includes an estimated 1,250 Sphere employees, ranging from video and sound engineers, technical production, marketing, concessions and more, as well as 5,850 jobs supported by visitors, suppliers, and induced employee spending at Sphere and throughout Prince George's County. An additional 880 jobs are expected elsewhere in Maryland for a total of nearly 8,000 positions.

Sphere is an experiential medium, powered by advanced technologies, that is re-



CREDIT - SPHERE ENTERTAINMENT AND PETERSON COMPANIES

defining the future of immersive experiences. The proposed National Harbor venue would be the first smaller-scale Sphere, with capacity of 6,000 seats, and deliver the fully immersive experiences that are the signature of the first Sphere venue in Las Vegas. It would feature an Exosphere—the exterior LED display of Sphere that showcases both artistic and branded content and reaches audiences globally. The venue would also feature a 16K x 16K interior display plane—the world's highest-resolution LED screen. All of Sphere's advanced technologies would be incorporated, including Sphere Immersive Sound, as well as haptic seating and 4D environmental effects.

Located just 15 minutes from Washington, D.C., National Harbor is a top entertainment and tourism destination in the DMV (District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia) region. Situated along the Potomac River, National Harbor offers world-class entertainment, dining, retail, gaming, convention, and leisure activities to more than 15 million visits annually. A Sphere at National Harbor would become a major year-round draw, offering an array of immersive experiences, including original Sphere Experiences, concerts, and brand events, for residents and the millions of domestic and international visitors who travel to the area each year.

## Mourns from A1

Wells-Harley's impact resonates through many groundbreaking initiatives she championed, including award-winning inclusion services for individuals with disabilities, state-supported historic preservation and arts programs, and the highly celebrated Black History Month program that has drawn tens of thousands to cultural and educational events over the years. She was instrumental in modernizing operations through the automation of program registration via SMARTlink and supported the development of world-class facilities such as the Prince George's Sports & Learning Complex. Her dedication to youth was exemplified through initiatives including the Teen Cotillion program.

"Marye Wells-Harley's contributions to our Department and community cannot be overstated," said Darius A. Stanton, Director, M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George's County. "We are forever thankful for her commitment to excellence and her belief in the power of our parks and recreation staff to transform lives. Her legacy lives on through the programs, services, facilities, and opportunities that she personally created or contributed to enrich the lives of Prince George's County residents."

## Montgomery County Legacy

Wells-Harley's leadership extended across the bi-county region, where she brought a deep commitment to community and public stewardship to the Montgomery County Planning Board. She was a steadfast champion of thoughtful growth, environmental stewardship, and equitable access to parks and public spaces. After completing her terms with the Planning Board, in 2017 Wells-Harley joined the Montgomery Parks Foundation Board. She served as a Trustee, and most recently Vice President. Montgomery Parks' Marye Wells-

Harley Dream Camp Scholarship was established in 2018 to honor her commitment to young people, equity, and access to recreational opportunities. In partnership with the Montgomery Parks Foundation, the scholarship supports young people from diverse backgrounds within Montgomery County to participate in summer camp programs.

Wells-Harley's leadership also included service on the Maryland State Arts Council and the Prince George's County Advisory Committee on Aging. Throughout her career, she championed programs that ensured all families, regardless of background, could fully participate in community life.

M-NCPPC extends its deepest condolences to Marye Wells-Harley's family and her extended family throughout the parks, recreation, and planning community during this difficult time. Additional information will be shared as it becomes available.

Founded in 1927, The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) is a nationally recognized leader in land use planning, parks, and recreation achieving countless awards for innovation, stewardship and exemplary vision for enhancing the lives of current and future generations. The agency, which is chartered by the State of Maryland, has geographic authority in the Montgomery County and Prince George's County region, which are the two Maryland counties surrounding Washington, DC. The Commission is comprised of seven distinct departments, each led by their respective Department Head. The Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George's County, and the Prince George's County Planning Department carry out services for the Prince George's County region. Montgomery Parks and Montgomery Planning carry out services for Montgomery County. For more information, visit <https://www.mncppc.org/> and <https://www.pgparcs.com>.

## The Prince George's Post

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# ENVIRONMENT



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**Bacteria can help combat pollution by breaking down harmful plastic waste, but can it scale?**

## EarthTalk® Q&A

### Using Bacteria to Break Down Plastic Waste

By Grace Lee | February 18, 2026

Dear EarthTalk:

*Couldn't we use bacteria to break down plastic in the environment so it isn't such an ecosystem hazard?*

—Patricia S., via email

Since 2001, the world has generated over 2.5 billion tons of plastic, an amount expected to triple by 2060. Plastic pollutes beaches and landfills as well as the ocean. In fact, a patch of plastic rubbish as large as Great Britain now exists in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. In addition to traditional bottles or straws causing damage, microplastic particles are also found in fruits, vegetables and water sources such as lakes or rivers. Despite the severity of this issue, only around nine percent of plastic enters a recycling plant and the alternate solution of incinerating plastic releases carbon dioxide that contributes to global warming. The use of bacteria has emerged as an innovative method to mitigate plastic waste. Comamonas bacterium commonly breaks down plastic for food; Ideonella sakaiensis breaks down Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET) plastics. And Japanese scientists have found bacteria consuming plastic in a garbage dump there.

Scientists initially hoped bacteria would simply attack the plastic surfaces, but the bacteria proved capable of doing much more, going so far as to break plastic down fully and process it into basic nutrients. "We have systematically shown, for the first time, that a wastewater bacterium can take a starting plastic material, deteriorate it, fragment it, break it down and use it as a source of carbon," Ludmilla Aristilde, an environmental chemistry researcher at Northwestern University, told Northwestern Now.

Despite the benefits, the practice of using bacteria for plastic degradation has downsides. Bacteria often degrade plastic into nanoplastics, tiny plastic particles that could potentially cause serious health effects in the human body. Nanoplastics can be found in food, vegetables and water. Thus, if bacteria continue to produce nanoplastics when degrading waste, they may contribute to greater risks to humans, wildlife and ecosystem health. Furthermore, the use of bacteria has significant limitations. Some types of bacteria are much too slow; scientists have also determined that bacteria effectively degrade only softened, pre-treated plastic.

Many scientists are working to improve and develop bacteria for plastic waste mitigation. National Renewable Energy Laboratory researcher Elizabeth Bell enhanced enzymes to degrade plastic much faster with genetic engineering after testing thousands of mutant bacteria. And the French biochem company Carbios processes 250 kilograms of PET plastic daily with bacterial enzymes, creating 51 percent fewer emissions compared to if they were creating new plastic. The European Union is also currently funding research into microbes that can fully biodegrade plastic. Ultimately, while bacteria as a plastic waste mitigative method is still in development, recent progressions have demonstrated its strong potential.

**CONTACTS:** We are just getting started: the plastic-eating bacteria that could change the world, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/sep/28/plastic-eating-bacteria-enzyme-recycling-waste>.

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## HOME & GARDEN

### Now Is the Time to Give Your Mower a Tune-Up

(StatePoint) As the weather starts to turn in early spring, giving your mower a tune-up is a must for performance, safety and efficiency.

"Before the spring season truly kicks off, take stock of your mower's maintenance needs. Paying a bit of attention to your machine now will set you up for a smooth and easy cutting season, and extend the life of your mower," says Exmark marketing manager, Lenny Mangnall.

In addition to consulting your owner's manual to determine tasks specific to your model, you can also follow this checklist from Exmark to make sure your mower is in top shape:

1. **Change the oil.** A healthy engine is a happy engine.
2. **Sharpen or replace blades.** Fresh blades cut faster, smoother and cleaner.
3. **Give the mower a deep clean.** Use a putty knife to remove caked grass from under the deck.
4. **Replace old fuel.** Never use fuel left in the tank from the last season.

See TUNE-UP Page A6

## LOCAL WARMING: CLIMATE CHANGE IN MARYLAND

### As Maryland Turns to Solar Farms to Meet Renewable Energy Goals, Opposition Grows From Farmers, Trump

By MARIJKE FRIEDMAN  
Capital News Service

As the sun emerges from behind the clouds above a former farm in Germantown, Maryland, rows of solar panels begin to hum. The soft buzz is barely audible over the sounds of children and coaches shouting on soccer fields in the distance.

Nestled in a grassy valley at the Maryland SoccerPlex, the nearly 6-acre solar field helps provide power and energy to dozens of Montgomery Parks facilities.

There are 181 of these solar farms in Maryland, according to data from Cleanview, a clean energy tracking platform. Together, they have a total operating capacity of more than 800 megawatts—about 45% as much as the Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant, the state's biggest source of electricity. These solar farms provide energy to thousands of homes.

Climate experts and activists said these farms are necessary for Maryland to meet its aggressive renewable energy goals, including reaching net-zero carbon emissions in the near future.

"They're never going to reach those goals by people putting panels on their roof, because just not enough people can put panels on their roof," said Tony Napolitano, the CEO and owner of U.S. Community Solar.

However, Maryland has had to balance its need for reliable and renewable energy with federal attacks on solar and complaints from farmers about land usage.

#### The state of solar in Maryland

As of earlier this year, nearly 7% of Maryland's electricity came from solar. That is enough energy to power more than 300,000 homes, according to the Solar Energy Industries Association.

Consumers may think most of this energy comes from solar panels attached to the roofs of individual homes and businesses. But utility-scale solar projects, also known as solar farms, play a huge role in providing clean energy.

The Solar Energy Industries Association defines utility-scale solar projects as ones that generate at least one megawatt of energy. Some of these bigger projects are owned by large utility companies, while others are part of community solar programs.

Community solar programs remove some of the barriers to capitalizing on solar by allowing households and businesses to subscribe to a shared power source without installing panels directly on their roofs or properties.

"If you leverage economies of scale, like building a solar farm on unused farmland or an old landfill or other areas that are not in use, then you can have thousands of people do the same thing as putting solar on their roof, but it's way easier and way faster," Napolitano said.

U.S. Community Solar has an office in Maryland that works to connect consumers with community solar programs.

Bernie Vogel, one of these consumers, owns a restaurant in Carroll County, but does not own the building his restaurant leases. He does everything he can to run a sustainable business, but knew he could not install solar panels on a building he rented.

Vogel said subscribing to a community solar farm was a more practical option. He knows this won't solve all of the world's energy problems, but he said every individual step helps.

"It's not the home runs that win ballgames," he said. "I'm not here to swing it over the fence. I just want to get on base."

#### Reaching renewable energy goals

State leaders said expanding solar energy is needed to help Maryland achieve its ambitious goal of reaching net-zero carbon emissions by 2035.

Solar can help reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, and is crucial in helping the state move away from fossil fuel-based sources of energy, according to the Maryland Department of the Environment.

It will be impossible for Maryland to



PHOTO CREDIT SAM GAUNTT/CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

Rows of solar panels charge in a field outside Germantown on Nov. 16, 2025.

reach its energy goals without utility-scale solar, Napolitano said.

"These goals are really aggressive," he said.

It's crucial to deploy diversified types of solar, especially because utility-scale solar can be more affordable than rooftop solar, said Maryland Sierra Club Executive Director Josh Tulkin.

"If you combine solar with battery storage, then you have both cheap renewable energy and reliability," he said. "It's something we strongly support."

Maryland could soon face a shortage of energy, said State Sen. Brian Feldman, D-Montgomery County. Already, he said, the state has to import a lot of its energy from out of state.

This looming energy crisis pushed Feldman to take action in the Maryland General Assembly to smooth the regulatory processes for renewable energy projects. Localities across Maryland have set strict standards that have prohibited some solar projects, Feldman said.

During last year's legislative session, the General Assembly passed Feldman's bill to standardize permitting and regulation of solar projects. The Renewable Energy Certainty Act will develop standardized regulations for solar farms and overrule some local jurisdictions.

"Every local jurisdiction in the state cannot just use local zoning to make sure there's no energy projects in their county," Feldman said.

#### Overcoming the opposition

State lawmakers have had to walk a fine line between expanding solar and appeasing farmers who have an abundance of concerns about solar projects being built on agricultural land.

Last spring, the Farmers Alliance for Rural Maryland fought Feldman's bill.

"The so-called 'Renewable Energy Certainty Act' was rushed through the legislature, putting solar developers ahead of local communities and stripping counties of their zoning authority over large-scale energy projects," said the alliance's petition against the bill.

In order to address the concerns of the state's farmers, lawmakers added a cap to the bill that limits how much the state can override local zoning decisions. Feldman said it's important to not overdo solar development, but it's also important to note no farmer is forced to sell their land or lease land to a solar developer.

Paul Goeringer, a principal faculty specialist and extension specialist in the University of Maryland's Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, works to help farmers understand solar development and looks into how this development has impacted farmland.

"I think the biggest concerns have been a lot of areas related to taking farmland out of production," he said. "It is a balancing act of trying to find the prime spots to put it that help but also maintaining farmland."

Napolitano, the owner and CEO of U.S. Community Solar, said farmers are often interested in installing solar on their own property if they have an unused plot of land.

"They can have a solar farm there for 20 years and get paid a steady income that they can count on for that time," he said. "For rural communities, community solar

can be a big boon for them. It can support local farms. It can help the local economy. Also, it just brings investment."

#### Trouble out of D.C.

Beyond Maryland, the solar industry is facing threats from President Donald Trump and his administration. The president has canceled some solar projects and worked with Republicans to end federal solar credits through his signature One Big Beautiful Bill Act.

This summer, the Trump administration announced U.S. Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum must personally approve permits for solar projects. Dozens of solar companies have urged lawmakers to block the policy, saying it could jeopardize hundreds of projects.

In August, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins announced her department will no longer allow solar panels subsidized by the federal government to be built on farmland.

"Subsidized solar farms have made it more difficult for farmers to access farmland by making it more expensive and less available," Rollins said in a news release announcing the change.

Goeringer said Maryland hasn't yet seen an impact from tax credits being taken away, but this will likely slow down the development of large solar projects in the coming years.

These are just a few of the steps the Trump administration has taken to slow or roll back solar projects.

Diana Furchtgott-Roth, former director of the Center for Energy, Climate and Environment at the conservative Heritage Foundation, said the country has been investing too much in solar and wind development, which has driven up electricity prices and left behind other energy sources.

"We are facing instability and a weakening of the electricity grid," she said. "I'm in favor of any energy source as long as it doesn't have subsidies."

She said Maryland should be focusing on the least expensive sources of power to try and lower costs for residents.

#### Looking to the future

It's too early to assess the impact of the Renewable Energy Certainty Act, Feldman said, but it's likely additional amendments will be made to the bill during the current legislative session as the state hears more from stakeholders.

Tulkin, the Maryland Sierra Club executive director, said as the bill is implemented, the state needs to consider the views of county governments while prohibiting arbitrary delays and denials that could block solar farm construction.

As the demand for energy quickly rises, it's crucial the state uses diverse sources of energy, Feldman said.

"I think it's an all hands on deck situation," he said. "New nuclear, new natural gas projects, solar, wind, geothermal. I think everything needs to be on the table."

Napolitano said Maryland is moving in the right direction and he hopes to see more people take advantage of community solar.

"My hope is that it just keeps going the way it's going," he said. "I just want to see more people take advantage of [it] and I want to see Maryland reach its renewable energy goals."

