The Prince George's Post

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LLD Scholars Expo Series Connects Hundreds of Students to $14.2 Million in Scholarship Opportunities

By DR. LAURA L. DORSEY
LLD Scholars

Over three days and three venues across Prince George's County and Baltimore, the Fall 2026 LLD Scholars Expo Series yielded results that speak volumes. Three days, three venues, and one mission generated $14,299,200 in on-the-spot scholarship opportunities, 602 completed scholarship applications, and 98 career interest applications.

The Expo Series began on October 14 at Surrattsville High School in Clinton. It continued October 15 at the Outreach Worship and Education (O.W.E.) Center, in Baltimore. On October 16, the series closed at First Baptist Church of Highland Park in Landover. Each venue represented a distinct community, united by a shared commitment to connecting young people with the resources they need for a future beyond high school.

Forty-one colleges, universities, and post-secondary institutions participated, representing schools from Maryland, Washington, D.C., Virginia, Louisiana, and Pennsylvania. 26 career partners highlighted workforce development, financial services, healthcare, public safety, and the military as options other than a traditional four-year college degree.

Dr. Laura L. Dorsey, founder and President of LLD Scholars, Inc., said the series reflects years of relationship-building with institutions and community partners who believe in what our students can accomplish. LLD Scholars thanks our Board of

See **SCHOLARSHIP** *Page* **A3**



PHOTO COURTESY DR. CANDICE CAMILLE

Dr. Candice Camille with two student scholarship recipients



PHOTO COURTESY DR. CANDICE CAMILLE

Dr. Candice Camille, Student Imani Palmer, Dr. Laura Dorsey, and Dr. Josephine Mourning

Prince George's County's GoPGC Named Transit Fleet of the Year by Greater Washington Region Clean Cities Coalition

By PRESS OFFICER
Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation

LARGO, Md. (Oct. 23, 2026)—The Department of Public Works and Transportation's GoPGC has been named Transit Fleet of the Year by the Greater Washington Clean Cities Coalition (GWRCCC).

The Transit Fleet of the Year Award recognizes the work of DPW&T's transit operations and fleet teams as the County continues to invest in the future of public transportation. Through ongoing fleet improvements, the advancement of cleaner vehicle technologies, and a broader vision for transit transformation, DPW&T continues its work to provide residents with transportation that is safe, reliable, accessible and responsive to the needs of a growing community. Since June 2025, DPW&T has introduced 26 new fixed route buses into service, including 11 battery electric buses. Additionally, five more battery electric buses are on order with expected delivery in March 2027.

"Public transportation is essential to the daily lives of our residents, and this recognition reflects our commitment to elevating our system for the people who rely on it," said Prince George's County Executive Aisha Braveboy. "Our investments in transit are about more than buses and infrastructure;

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Prince George's County Council Approves Sphere Financing, Community Impact Fund

By SOL GARCIA-TERRAZAS
Capital News Service

The Prince George's County Council approved financing Tuesday for the proposed Sphere entertainment venue at National Harbor, advancing the project after months of debate over public investment, worker protections, and benefits for surrounding communities.

The council voted 8-0 to authorize up to $215 million in special obligation bonds to help finance construction-related costs for the 6,000-seat venue and refinance existing National Harbor debt. Of the bond proceeds, $130 million would help finance the construction of the Sphere, a large globe theater that features immersive video and music programs. The project will cost $1.4 billion.

At a press conference, after the vote, County Executive Aisha Braveboy said the Sphere could strengthen Prince George's County's tax base and attract additional investment, as it grapples with the closure of Six Flags and the Washington Commanders' planned departure.

"The decision to go after Sphere, to work to bring it to Prince George's County, will more than triple in tax revenue we are losing with the Commanders leaving in a few years and the closure of Six Flags. This is amazing," Braveboy said.

The county would repay the so-called tax increment financing bonds using designated National Harbor tax revenues, including property tax revenue generated by growth in assessed values.

Paul Schwalb, executive secretary-treasurer of UNITE HERE Local 25, which represents hotel, restaurant and casino workers, welcomed labor peace language supporting hospitality and services workers' ability to organize at the Sphere. A labor peace agreement allows workers to organize without employer interference in exchange for unions agreeing not to strike or picket.

However, the union remained "deeply disappointed by the lack of a Project Labor Agreement to protect construction jobs," Schwalb said in a statement. "Publicly financed projects have to protect all workers."

Council members also approved a separate community impact fund to address neighborhood concerns about traffic and other issues related to the Sphere's construction and operation. The fund would receive 15% of qualifying county revenues generated by Sphere, drawn from admissions and amusement taxes and a share of the real estate taxes not already pledged for the tax increment bonds.

The council resolution didn't specify the size of the community impact fund, and messages to county staff were not immediately returned. Half of the money would support community programs and services, and the other half would fund infrastructure and capital improvements. Neighborhoods within six miles of the venue would qualify for the funding.

In the project's tax increment financing proposal, Sphere Enter-

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Maryland Police License Plate Cameras Logged 4.8 Billion Scans in 2025. Locals Want to Know Where the Data Is Going

By SAMMY LIU and JAKE TIGER
Capital News Service

Thousands of automated license plate reading cameras installed on poles and patrol vehicles throughout Maryland are photographing every car that passes by. The photos are converted to data—plate number, date, time, location and vehicle model—and stored in rapidly growing databases, which totaled at least 4.8 billion scans across 26 Maryland law enforcement agencies in 2025, according to a Capital News Service analysis of state reports. As more agencies have deployed automated license plate readers, known as ALPRs, to help with daily tasks, the annual number of scans has more than tripled since 2022.

Databases are swelling as agencies add cameras to Maryland's traffic hotspots. From 2022 to 2025, Montgomery County Police expanded its network from 30 cameras to 860, Harford County Sheriff's Office from 18 to 274 and Anne Arundel County Police from 94 to 314.

In Maryland, how long the data is kept and what it takes for other agencies to obtain it depend largely on each agency's own policies, which vary widely according to reports from the Maryland Department of State Police.

The CNS analysis is based on annual License Plate Reader Program reports that every Maryland agency capturing and storing ALPR data must submit under the state's Public Safety Article, Section 3-509.

Police officers across the state have been using databases compiled from these cameras' photos to help with investigations.

Anne Arundel County Police Department says the data is a source of "valuable leads" that helps officers "quickly identify and locate" vehicles and people tied to crimes, according to the department's website.

The Baltimore Police Department has an additional 220 ALPR cameras available to use after the city approved a $153 million bundled contract this year with Axon, the Arizona-based company best known for Tasers and police body cameras. Baltimore police told CNS in an email that the technology helps achieve a nearly 70% recovery rate on stolen autos and gets investigators actionable information faster.

Salisbury Mayor Randy Taylor earlier this year called the cameras a "force multiplier" for investigations, as the city inked a $1.1 million, 40-camera contract with Atlanta-based Flock Safety this year, The Baltimore Sun reported.

But some residents feel like they're being watched. Critics have said the cameras' indiscriminate, nonstop data collection has crossed a line.

Nancy Meyer, who has lived in Hyattsville for 33 years, has watched cameras go up in her community. "Personally, I am not comfortable with cameras," she said, adding that her neighbors and friends feel "apprehensive" about having their daily movements monitored.

"Folks don't really know what the city or the vendors are doing with the information," Meyer said.

Meyer has become involved with a group of Hyattsville residents who formed DeFlock HVL, calling for the removal of all cameras in the city. Some residents have called the network "a clear violation of their Fourth Amendment rights," said Alex Koch, the organizer of DeFlock HVL.

The exact locations of ALPR cameras deployed are not made publicly available by law enforcement agencies. People have instead created crowdsourced maps, like DeFlock Maps, where volunteers report the locations and vendors of cameras they spot, though some cameras may be misidentified or may have been removed since they were recorded.

Maryland strengthened its data privacy laws in July as federal agencies were using the data for immigration enforcement. The new protections prevent the selling of personal data, including ALPR scans, to groups like Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Previously, private data brokers and state and local agencies could sell data—including Motor Vehicle Administration records and school enrollment data—to ICE without a warrant, according to advocacy organization We Are CASA.

State lawmakers have discussed introducing additional regulations for ALPRs

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TOWNS and NEIGHBORS

Brandywine-Aquasco by Audrey Johnson 301-922-5384

ST. PAUL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

St. Paul United Methodist Church located at 6634 Saint Barnabas Road, Oxon Hill, Maryland 20745 celebrated their Homecoming October 24, 2026. Rev. Jacob Cogman, a Provisional Elder in the Baltimore-Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church and United Methodist Chaplain at Howard University preached for the Annual Homecoming celebration.

A yearlong church anniversary celebration from October 2026 will remember, reflect, and give thanks as we celebrate 235 years of God's abiding presence and faithfulness. Throughout this extraordinary anniversary year, we will honor the rich legacy of our church while celebrating its ministry, mission, witness, outreach, and continuing commitment to being a beacon of God's love in the community and beyond.

Our celebration will be filled with a variety of special worship services, events, activities, fellowship opportunities, and moments of reflection designed to bring us together as the body of Christ. Each gathering will invite us to look back with gratitude, celebrate the blessings of today, and look forward with faith and expectation toward the bright future God has prepared us for.

BACK TO SCHOOL BLESSING

This school year, O Lord belongs only to you. Please lead the way in all we say, think, and do. May we always welcome everyone with respect and grace. May your presence be felt throughout the entire place. Please be present in every classroom. A mentor in morning meetings. A protector to every entrance and a peace with every greeting. Bless the work of our hands to help shape every mind not only with academics but to genuinely be kind. Let us be good stewards of the children sent our way. Seeing them through your eyes as they learn, grow, and play and through every month and every season this blessed school year will bring. May it be built on the firm foundation of seeing you in everything. Words by Kendra Bunch-Neal who is a Clinton United Methodist Church member.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Connect with yourself, your community, and the friends you haven't met yet with community education experiences at the College of Southern Maryland (CSM). Find what moves your body, mind, and soul with classes in wellness, dance, and much more. NHH-5570 Couples Massage, NHH-5540 Foundations of Mindfulness, PEP-7890 Hand Dancing, NHH-5250 Holistic Approach to a Healthy Weight, PEP-9420 Plant-Powered Wellness, WFA-6240 Tai Chi Sun Style. Take your next step toward living your life in motion with CSM community education. Go to go.csmd.edu/ce to explore CSM's full range of community education offerings.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Happy birthday to Sonia Douwana, Markell S. Dabney, Dieon Jalloh, Owen Johnson, Ugo Mbakwe, Shurrell Bell, Ronald Crawford, Jr., Tiffany Knight, Daphne Rojas, Evangeline Crawford, Sheila Holmes, Grace Omoregbe, Dorothy Glasgow-Reid, Sinaya Cromartie, Pauline Clark who are Clinton United Methodist Church members celebrating birthdays in November. Hope that you will have many more birthdays to celebrate.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Congratulations to Brandon and Ashley Holmes, Barron and Kendra Neal who are Clinton United Methodist Church members celebrating Wedding Anniversaries in November.

CLARK SENIOR CENTER

Ongoing programs: Give your pre-loved arts a new home. Do you have framed paintings or prints that no longer match your décor? Instead of letting beautiful artwork sit in storage, consider donating it to Richard R. Clark Senior Center. We are looking for paintings and framed prints in clean, ready for display condition. We are located at 1210 Charles Street, La Plata, Maryland 20646. Telephone 301-934-5423 or 301-870-2015.

CIAA MEN'S BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

The 2027 CIAA Men's Basketball Tournament will take place from February 23 to 27, 2027 at CFG Bank Arena in Baltimore, Maryland, marking the 81st men's and 52nd women's championships of the event. Each year we come together to create memories and build the legacy of the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association, the nation's oldest historically Black athletic conference.

WELCOME HOME JOEY CONSTANT

Bowie State University welcomes Joey Constant as News Media Relations Coordinator, bringing a familiar face back to the Bulldogs while adding a rising young professional with collegiate athletics experience, a strong storytelling background and a passion for serving athletes. Constant joins Bowie State after spending the 2025–26 academic year at Howard Community College, where he served as an Assistant Sports Information and Game Operations Specialist. During this time with the Dragons, Constant worked across multiple sports, including women's volleyball, women's basketball and women's flag basketball. He was responsible for a wide range of athletic communications and game day responsibilities, including statistics, game operations, media days, graphics, commentary, and feature storytelling.

Constant's experience at Howard Community College provided an opportunity to develop as a versatile athletics communications specialist while working directly with coaches, student athletes and administrators. His work included producing written content for the Howard Community College Athletics website, with Constant serving as the author of multiple stories throughout the 2025–26 season.

"Constantplays," is founded by Joey Constant. It is a sport media platform dedicated to athletic storytelling, sports conversations, and providing a platform for individuals to share their journeys and experiences. Through interviews and digital content, Constantplays aims to highlight the personalities, achievements, and stories that make sports impactful both on and off the field. Joey has interviewed Lil Uzi Vert, Jeremiah Smith, Sheryl Swoopes, and many more high-level individuals.

Constant's return to Bowie State represents a full-circle moment in his developing career. A Bowie State alumnus, Constant attended the university from 2021–2025 before beginning his professional career in collegiate athletics. His return to Bowie is more than a new professional opportunity. It represents the continuation of a journey that began as a student and now brings him back to the university in a role where he can help tell the stories of the next generations of Bulldog student athletes. Constant brings energy, creativity and a student athlete-centered approach to Bowie State Athletics Media Relations Office.

America's Adopt A Soldier Seeks 300,000 Thank-You Letters for Deployed Service Members and Veterans

National Care Letter Campaign invites families, schools, businesses and community groups to participate through Dec. 31

By PRESS OFFICER
America's Adopt A Soldier

WASHINGTON (Nov. 2, 2026)—Ahead of Veterans Day, America's Adopt A Soldier® is inviting Americans to share a handwritten message of gratitude through its 2026 National Care Letter Campaign. The organization aims to collect more than 300,000 cards and letters for deployed service members and veterans in veterans homes and hospitals.

"Annually, over 200,000 care letters were shared," said Mary Keeser, America's Adopt A Soldier® Founder. "This year, the goal is to reach over 300,000, which would allow us to send at least four letters to every Veteran in a Veterans Home or Veterans Hospital as well as to our deployed Service Members."

"The cards and letters we receive are drawn or written by a diverse group of individuals, from 3 years-old to over 100 years-old," Mary adds. "From kitchen tables to classrooms, to businesses, to college dorms to faith-based establishments, the pens, pencils, crayons and pieces of paper used to create messages of hope, appreciation, unity and support will have a positive impact. The letters of care are truly the caring pulse of America towards our Service men and women."

Participants can write a note of thanks, create a handmade card or draw a picture expressing appreciation for a recipient's service and sacrifices. Families, classrooms, college groups, businesses, faith communities and civic organizations are encouraged to take part together.

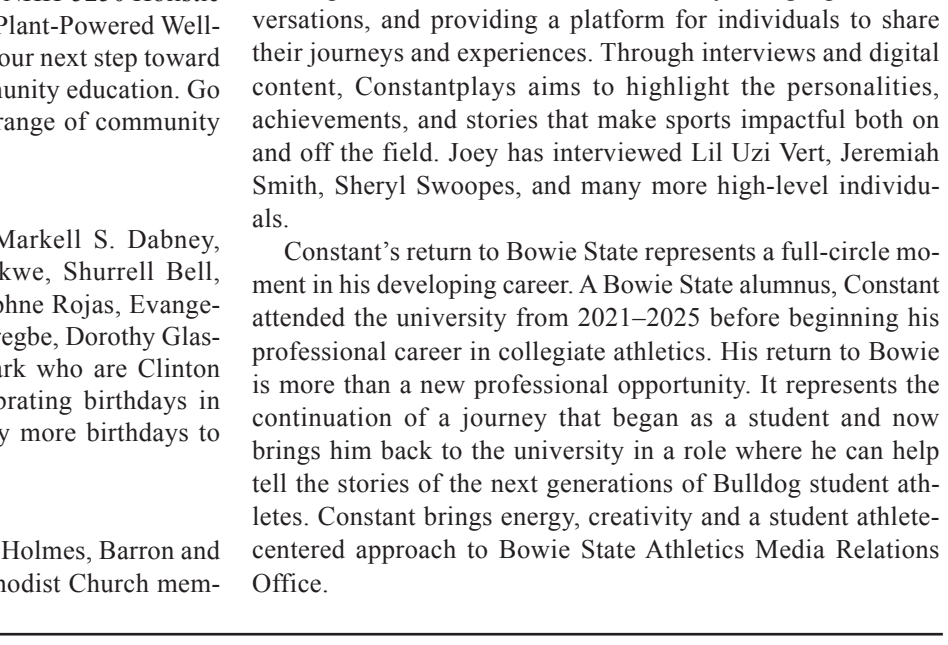


PHOTO COURTESY AMERICA'S ADOPT A SOLDIER

Participants can write a note of thanks, create a handmade card or draw a picture expressing appreciation for a recipient's service and sacrifices.

Cards and letters will be accepted through Dec. 31, 2026. Mail contributions to:

America's Adopt A Soldier
5240 Port Royal Rd Ste 204
Springfield, VA 22151

For campaign information, visit www.americasadoptasoldier.org, email CareLetters@AmericasAdoptASoldier.org or call 703-278-3718.

America's Adopt A Soldier *is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization supporting service members, veterans and their families. Its National Care Letter Campaign shares messages of thanks and encouragement with deployed service members and veterans in veterans homes and hospitals.*

Around the County

Statement From Prince George's County Council Member Danielle Hunter on Rental Housing and Tenant Rights Legislation

LARGO, Md. (Oct. 27, 2026)— Prince George's County Council Member Danielle Hunter (District 6) issued the following statement regarding CB-113, CB-114 and CB-115:

"Every resident deserves a safe place to live and clear information about their rights as a tenant. When families face unsafe housing conditions or the possibility of relocation, they need answers they can understand and a County government prepared to respond.

CB-113, CB-114 and CB-115 would strengthen the connection between tenant protections and the information and enforcement needed to make those protections meaningful for residents in District 6 and across Prince George's County.

CB-113, Rental Housing—Tenant Relocation Rights Disclosure, would require landlords to provide notice and disclosures concerning relocation rights. It would also require County agencies to establish enforcement procedures and report to the Council on implementation. Residents facing relocation should have the information they need to understand their rights and plan their next steps.

CB-114, the Tenant Rights Education and Accessibility Act, would require the Department of Housing and Community Development, the Office of Community Relations, and the Office of Homeland Security to prepare and distribute a centralized, plain-language, multilingual tenant rights resource guide. Access to information should not depend on a resident's ability to interpret legal language or navigate multiple agencies.

CB-115, Rental Housing—Expedited Health and Safety Enforcement, would establish a clearer, accelerated process for addressing serious housing conditions, including landlord notification and information requirements. It would direct relevant County agencies to prioritize urgent cases and unsafe conditions, establish enforcement procedures, and provide reports. When a rental unit is unsafe for occupancy, residents need a timely response and clear accountability.

These bills recognize that tenant rights must be understandable and supported by effective enforcement. My focus is on helping residents protect their health, maintain housing stability, and get the information they need when their homes are at risk."

PG Valor Basketball Team Celebrates 10 Years of Professional Basketball in Prince George's County—Enters 2026–27 Season With New Head Coach, Renewed Energy, And Championship Aspirations

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (Oct. 30, 2026)—Ten years of perseverance, dedication, community representation, and basketball! The PG Valor Basketball Team is preparing for its 2026–27 season, marking its 10th anniversary of bringing professional basketball excitement to Prince George's County, Maryland.

Founded in 2015, PG Valor has remained committed to providing opportunities for adult male basketball players, ages 18 and older, to compete at a high level while representing the DMV and beyond. This season, players from Maryland, Washington, D.C., Virginia, and other states will take the court with one common goal: compete for an opportunity to advance through the American Basketball Association (ABA) and pursue an ABA Championship.

The organization is welcoming a new face to its coaching leadership with Head Coach Jon Sanders, bringing passion, basketball knowledge, and valuable playing experience to the program. Having competed at a high level, including overseas, Coach Sanders brings a depth of experience and understanding of the game that the organization believes will help elevate the team both on and off the court.

According to PG Valor Team Owner Ms. LaDonna M. Smith, the excitement surrounding this year's team is unlike anything the organization has experienced before.

"I honestly believe this appears to be the best team we have ever had. As we celebrate our 10th year of playing, I couldn't be more excited about what is ahead. We have worked hard to get here, and I believe we have something special this season. We have players who are hungry, talented, and ready to compete. Now it's time to put in the work and see what we can accomplish together. And for those who counted us out—you can't count. We will not quit until God himself says so!"

The ABA has a rich basketball history and has served as a launching pad for some of the sport's most recognizable names and franchises. Basketball legend Julius "Dr. J" Erving rose to prominence in the ABA before the league's merger with the NBA. The ABA also has historical connections to franchises such as the Rockets, Spurs, Nuggets, and Clippers.

Over the years, PG Valor has continued to build its presence in the DMV basketball community, establishing a home for players, supporters, families, and fans who enjoy competitive basketball. Its 10th anniversary is not simply a celebration of time passed; it represents resilience, commitment, and the determination to keep building despite the challenges.

As the 2026–27 season gets underway, PG Valor invites the community, basketball enthusiasts, families, businesses, sponsors, and supporters to become part of the journey. Whether attending a home game, supporting a player, becoming a sponsor, or simply spreading the word, the organization welcomes everyone to experience the excitement.

Pro Basketball Is in Your Backyard!

PG Valor is ready to make its 10th anniversary season one to remember. The team is looking forward to an exciting season filled with competition, community engagement, and the pursuit of an ABA Championship. Visit https://www.thepgvalor.com/

Community



PHOTO COURTESY MCDANIEL COLLEGE

McDaniel College Music faculty members, students, alumni, and community members perform in a special seasonal concert celebrating the holiday season.

McDaniel College Students Perform in "McDaniel for the Holidays" Seasonal Concert

By PRESS OFFICER
McDaniel College

WESTMINSTER, Md. (October 29, 2026)—McDaniel College's Department of Music presents a special seasonal concert titled "McDaniel for the Holidays." The free performance takes place **Sunday, Nov. 15**, at 7 p.m. in Baker Memorial Chapel at McDaniel College, 2 College Hill, Westminster, Maryland.

Organized by Senior Adjunct Lecturer Shelley Ensor, "McDaniel for the Holidays" features students, faculty, and alumni, as well as community members, in a program celebrating the holiday season.

Students include:

Declan McGinnis of Laurel (20707), a freshman Psychology major, performs as a member of McDaniel College's Gospel Choir.

Kaitlyn Gebhardt of Laurel (20708), a sophomore Psychology major, performs as a member of the McDaniel College Pep Band.

Ensor said, "Prepare yourself for an evening of holiday favorites and surprises. Come ready to sing along and wearing your dancing shoes! Kick off this holidays season with McDaniel for the Holidays...yule love it!"

The concert is free and open to the public. For more information, visit www.mcdaniel.edu/music-events.



PHOTO CREDIT DR. CANDICE CAMILLE

Dr. Laura Dorsey, scholarship recipient Imani Palmer, Mr. McKinley Hayes and parent Rebekah Palmer

Scholarship from A1

Directors: Dr. Josephine Mourning, Dr. Candice Camille, Dr. Tashiek Hawkins, Mary Murrill, Peggy Morris, and Brandon Washington. Your guidance and belief in this work made the 2026 series a success. Let me tell you what $14 million really represents. It is the number of opportunities that were unlocked for all the students who walked through those doors.

This success would not have been possible without our community partners: Southern Christian Leadership Conference of Prince George's County, Sisters4Sisters Network, Inc., Liberty Community Development Corp., Set The Captives Free Outreach Center, Baltimore County Public Schools, First Baptist Church of Highland Park, and Surrattsville High School. Thank you to our sponsors: Dr. Candice Camille- The Wellologist, Rescue Me Virtually, Prime Image Photography, and Krimson Achievement Foundation.

LLD Scholars, Inc. is a Maryland-based nonprofit organization dedicated to connecting pre-K through post-secondary students with college access, scholarship navigation, and career readiness resources. For more information, visit https://lldscholars.com/ or contact admin@lldscholars.com.

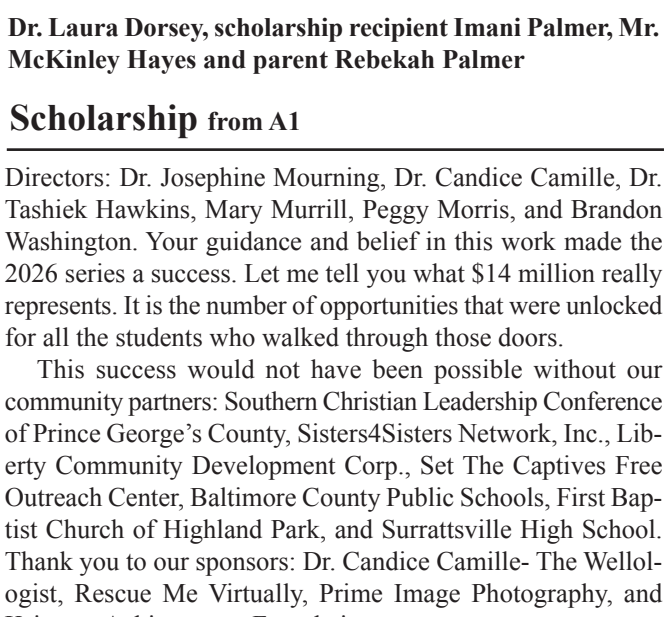


PHOTO CREDIT DR. CANDICE CAMILLE

Employ Prince George's representative talks to students

Celebrate the Start of the Holiday Season: M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George's County Announces November Events

By PRESS OFFICER
M-NCPPC

RIVERDALE, Md. (Oct. 27, 2026)—The holiday season arrives in Prince George's County! M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation announces free and low-cost events throughout November. From dazzling light displays and live performances to family-friendly events, there's something for everyone to enjoy.

30th Annual Jug Bay Run/Walk for Wildlife

Saturday, November 7, 9–11 a.m.
Patuxent River Park

Register to walk or run and preserve wildlife! Together, the Patuxent River Park and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Merkle Wildlife Sanctuary comprise over 3,500 acres along the banks of the Patuxent River. The river and its shore are home to an incredible variety of wildlife. Proceeds from this event support projects, research, conservation, and education in the Patuxent River watershed.

Jason Marsalis Quartet with Vanisha Gould

Saturday, November 7, 8 p.m.
Harmony Hall Art Center

Enjoy an evening of world-class jazz with a concert starring the Jason Marsalis Quartet, featuring vocalist Vanisha Gould. Rooted in swing, blues, and modern jazz traditions, the quartet delivers a dynamic and deeply expressive performance led by Jason Marsalis' masterful rhythm and musical insight. The night is elevated further by Vanisha Gould, whose rich tone, storytelling, and effortless phrasing bring warmth and sophistication to every song. Together, they create an intimate yet powerful concert experience that celebrates jazz artistry, spontaneity, and the timeless connection between voice and ensemble.

43rd Annual Choreographers' Showcase: Move Different

Saturday, November 14, 7–8:30 p.m.
Prince George's Publick Playhouse

Experience an evening of innovative movement and distinct perspectives at the 43rd Annual Choreographers' Showcase, featuring contemporary and modern dance works by local emerging and established choreographers, followed by an artist talkback with the choreographers behind the work.

Trot for a Turkey

Saturday, November 21, 6–8 p.m.
Watkins Regional Park

Help families in need by running or walking through the beautiful Festival of Lights! The almost 3-mile course will feature dazzling light displays. The registration fee will provide a family in need with a holiday turkey.

Bikes and Lights

Sunday, November 22, 5–7 p.m.
Watkins Regional Park

Enjoy over 100 new light displays while riding your bike through the Festival of Lights at Watkins Regional Park. Experience dazzling scenes celebrating the magic of the holiday season. For safety, bike lights and helmets are required. Free for children riding in a tagalong/bike seat/trailer.

Festival of Lights

Friday, November 27—Friday, January 1, 5:30–9:30 p.m. (open nightly)
Watkins Regional Park

One of Prince George's County's most cherished holiday traditions is celebrating a milestone this year with the 40th Annual Festival of Lights. Enjoy over 5 million dazzling lights throughout the 3-mile driving trail at Watkins Regional Park. For a unique experience, you can enjoy the light displays aboard a hayride, offering guests a memorable holiday experience.

For more information about upcoming M-NCPPC events, visit pgparks.com.

Educational Systems Federal Credit Union Celebrates Customer Service Week 2026

By MIGUEL GONZALEZ
ESFCU

GREENBELT, Md. (Oct. 29, 2026)—Educational Systems Federal Credit Union celebrated Customer Service Week from October 5–9 with a variety of activities designed to recognize Ambassadors, strengthen connections across the organization and promote wellness.

Throughout the week, Ambassadors had opportunities to participate in activities that encouraged teamwork, relaxation and friendly competition. Events included a virtual meditation class, Virtual Bingo, a virtual deskercise class and Virtual Jeopardy.

Additional activities gave Ambassadors opportunities to engage with one another throughout the week. "Who's That Ambassador? Baby Edition" challenged participants to match baby and toddler photos with their colleagues, while "What's in My Office/Home Office" invited Ambassadors to complete a workspace-themed checklist. Wellness Bingo encouraged healthy habits through activities focused on personal well-being.

Member feedback was also incorporated into the celebration, highlighting Ambassadors who made a positive impact through personalized service, helpful guidance and memorable member experiences.

"Customer Service Week gives us an opportunity to recognize the people behind the experiences our members value every day," said Girado Smith, President/CEO of Educational Systems Federal Credit Union. "Our Ambassadors bring care, knowledge and commitment to every interaction, and this week is an important reminder that the way we support one another directly contributes to the way we serve our members."

The activities reflected the Credit Union's continued focus on creating an environment where Ambassadors feel connected, appreciated and empowered to provide exceptional member service.

"Our culture is built through the everyday actions of our Ambassadors," Smith said. "By creating opportunities to connect, recharge and celebrate one another, we strengthen the relationships that help us deliver a consistent and meaningful member experience."

Educational Systems Federal Credit Union has proudly served the education community since 1955. With $1.4 billion in assets and 13 branches, the Credit Union serves over 80,000 members of the education community including school employees, students, parents and individuals working for education-related organizations. For more information, visit https://www.esfcu.org/.

PGCPS Schools Post Strongest Upward Momentum in Maryland School Report Card History; 84% Earn Three Stars or Higher

More schools moved up and fewer moved down in 2026 as the district records the largest single-year reduction in two-star schools.

By PRESS OFFICER
PGCPS

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (Oct. 29, 2026)—Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) recorded its strongest upward momentum in the history of the Maryland Public Schools Report Card, with 37 schools increasing their star ratings, fewer schools declining and a significant shift away from lower-performing tiers.

The results, released by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), show continued progress across the district. The number of schools earning three, four or five stars increased to 157, representing 84% of the 187 rated schools. Meanwhile, the number of two-star schools fell from 45 to 30—the largest single-year reduction in that rating tier since the state's accountability system launched in 2018.

"More schools are improving, fewer are moving backward, and more are demonstrating stronger performance than at any point in the report card's history, " said Superintendent Dr. Shawn Joseph. "Our next challenge is to accelerate that progress, scale excellence across the district, and reduce variance among schools. Our public promise commits us to improving reading and mathematics, and we must ensure every school has the support to deliver results. We cannot settle for pockets of excellence. We must make excellence the standard in every school, for every student, every day."

A Record Year of Improvement

The 2026 results mark the third consecutive year of net improvement in school star ratings, with the pace of progress accelerating.

- 37 schools increased their star ratings, a record high for rating advancements in the district's seven-year trend.
- 13 schools declined in their ratings, down from 20 in 2025.
- 157 schools earned three or more stars, an increase of 14 schools from the previous year.
- Zero schools received a one-star rating, continuing a three-year streak without a school in the lowest accountability tier.

Fewer Schools in the Two-Star Tier

The most significant shift occurred among two-star rated schools, as more schools moved into the three-star rating.

The number of two-star schools plunged from 45 in 2025 to 30 in 2026, a reduction of 15 schools. Sixteen elementary schools and four middle schools moved from two stars to three stars, demonstrating progress across grade levels.

At the same time, the number of four-star schools increased from 26 to 35, a gain of nine schools. The three-star category grew from 111 to 116 schools, while the number of five-star schools remained at six.

These shifts indicate that more schools are moving into higher performance tiers, with fewer schools concentrated in the lower end of the rating system. The district's continued focus is to sustain this growth, accelerate improvement and ensure that progress reaches every school community.

SY26 Maryland School Report Card Ratings for PGCPS

- Five-star: 6 schools
- Four-star: 35 schools
- Three-star: 116 schools
- Two-star: 30 schools
- One-star: 0 schools

The six five-star schools are César Chávez Dual Spanish Immersion (new for 2026), Academy of Health Sciences at Prince George's Community College, Dora Kennedy French Immersion, Glenarden Woods Elementary, Heather Hills Elementary and Robert Goddard Montessori.

The Academy of Health Sciences at Prince George's Community College maintained its five-star rating for the seventh consecutive year.

Continued Progress Across School Levels

Elementary schools drove much of the district's upward movement, with 29 schools improving their ratings. Sixteen advanced from two stars to three, 12 moved from three stars to four, and one moved from four stars to five. At the elementary level, major gains were also recorded in chronic absenteeism,

See **UPWARD** *Page* **A6**

Environment

Researcher: Aquaponics Shows Potential of Sustainable Agriculture

By ZAMONE PEREZ
Public News Service



PHOTO CREDIT ADOBE STOCK

Researchers are looking at how aquaponic agricultural practices could help make growing produce and raising fish more sustainable.

Researchers are looking at how aquaponic agricultural practices could help make growing produce and raising fish more sustainable. Some University of Maryland students are even tasting the results of the research in one of the school's dining halls.

Aquaponics is the practice of combining aquaculture and hydroponics, where plants grow in water without soil. The system relies on a circulating process where the waste products of fish provide crops with nutrients. Then, the crops help keep the water in tanks clean and oxygenated for the fish.

Jose-Luis Izursa, senior environmental science and technology lecturer and adviser at the University of Maryland, said aquaponics can be a useful and sustainable tool to grow food in certain places, like urban areas.

"Because of the small footprint that requires to produce in an intensive way, if it's in a controlled environment, it can produce all year round and may help people to produce their own food if they have a space in their backyard or the basement," Izursa explained.

Aquaponics' market share was $1.4 billion in 2025 and it is set to nearly triple by 2035. According to a 2022 United Nations Water Development report, nearly 70% of water consumed annually is for agricultural production. Aquaponics uses nearly 90% less water.

Izursa explained aquaponics is unlikely to replace large-scale or industrial agriculture for cash crops, like corn, soybeans, wheat or rice but noted some types of crops like leafy greens have great potential with aquaponics.

"It's very possible. It's a good alternative. There are commercial farms even here in Maryland, in the area, that they provide to grocery stores and they can help profit because they are dealing with herbs or leafy greens that have a good price for a producer," Izursa observed.

The aquaponics lab at the University of Maryland makes deliveries once or twice a week to a dining hall on campus, providing up to 20 pounds of basil and 300 pounds of tilapia each week in the spring semester. What's left is donated to the food pantry on campus.

News From Department of the Environment, Prince George's County:

Be Part of the Climate Solution: Register for the 2026 Braveboy Climate Leadership Summit!

How can we turn climate challenges into opportunities for innovation, economic growth, and stronger communities? Join Prince George's County on **Thursday, November 19, 2026**, at Bowie State University for the Second Annual Braveboy Climate Leadership Summit, a day of ideas, collaboration, and action. This year's theme, "Climate Leadership in Action: Bridging Innovation, Equity, and the Workforce of the Future," brings together leaders and changemakers to explore practical solutions for a more sustainable and resilient future.

The Summit will feature engaging panel discussions, interactive workshops, networking opportunities, and an exhibitor showcase highlighting climate solutions and community initiatives. Sessions will explore topics including clean energy, green careers, environmental justice, climate resilience, sustainable land use, and food security. Residents, students, educators, business leaders, entrepreneurs, nonprofit organizations, environmental advocates, and government partners are all encouraged to attend. Whether you're already working in climate and sustainability or simply interested in learning how you can make a difference, there's a place for you at the Summit.

Registration is free, but advance registration is encouraged! Join us to connect with community leaders, discover resources and opportunities, and help shape the future of climate action in Prince George's County.

Be part of the conversation—and the action! Register today: https://braveboyclimate2026.rsvpify.com/

Thursday, November 19, 2026, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

Bowie State University | Martin Luther King Jr. Center

14000 Jericho Park Road, Bowie, MD 20715

After Halloween, Give Your Pumpkin a Second Life

Halloween may be over, but that pumpkin on the porch does not have to end up in the trash.

Prince George's County residents who receive County-provided curbside collection services can compost pumpkins along with other organics and yard trim. Pumpkins, dried corn, hay, and straw may be placed curbside for Monday collection using the County-issued green wheeled cart or paper lawn-and-leaf bags.

Before putting a pumpkin out for collection, residents should remove candles, wax, artificial lighting, paint, decorations, and other non-compostable materials. Plastic bags are not accepted in our recycling programs or organic collection.

So what happens next?

Organic material collected through the County's program is part of a larger effort to keep compostable materials out of the waste stream and put them to productive use. Prince George's County's Organics Composting Facility processes yard trim such as leaves, grass clippings, brush, and small branches into compost.

Residents who receive County-collected trash and recycling services are also eligible to participate in the PGC Composts program, which provides weekly organics collection on Mondays.

For The Green Table, it is a simple reminder that environmental action does not always require a major project. Sometimes it begins with knowing that something headed for the trash can have another use.

So after the costumes are put away and the candy bowl is empty, give that pumpkin one more job. Visit www.mypgc.us/compost.

BAY NATURALIST, a column in the Chesapeake Bay Journal

For Autumn Wildlife Watching, Pick a Refuge—Any Refuge

By KATHY RESHETILOFF
Chesapeake Bay Journal, bayjournal.com

Autumn is a season of change. Trees transform from green to fiery shades of yellow, orange and red. The monarch butterfly, one of the few butterfly species that migrate, is on the move. From the first week of September to the third week of October, the monarch, that familiar orange and black beauty, is making its way south through the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Birds are also flying south. The Chesapeake watershed straddles what is known as the Atlantic Flyway, a superhighway for countless species of migrating birds—in an especially concentrated fashion during fall, when they're heading south. Mountain chains to the west and coastal shorelines to the east serve as geographic boundaries channeling millions of migrating birds through the Bay region.

Raptors, including eagles, falcons and hawks, begin their southward migration before the fall color change. The earliest birds are scattered enough that they may go unnoticed. As the first autumn cold front passes through the area, though, the skies fill with more migrating raptors. As they approach the Chesapeake, some funnel along the coast, while the others are steered along the mountains. At the same time, songbirds and shorebirds begin their long flights to wintering areas.

The shortening of days signals waterfowl to begin moving south. And for some of them—swans, geese and many types of ducks—the Chesapeake Bay is as far south as they need to go for the winter. One of the most familiar of these is the Canada goose, which migrates in flocks noted for their distinctive v-shaped flying pattern. That's only the migrating population. There is also a large population of year-round, or resident, Canada geese in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Some of the best spots to see these long-distance travelers are our national wildlife refuges. These are public lands set aside specifically for the conservation of fish, wildlife and plants that provide habitat for hundreds of bird, mammal, reptile and amphibian species; thousands of fish species; and countless insects and plants. Migratory wildlife uses refuges as steppingstones while they travel or as homes to overwinter.

About 98% of the land in the National Wildlife Refuge System is open to the public for wildlife watching and recreational activities. Some provide hunting and fishing opportunities. You can explore refuges any time of the year, but autumn is an especially good time for birdwatchers to visit.

Here is a small sampling of the refuges in the Mid-Atlantic region. The first three are in the Bay watershed. The last two are just outside of it but in striking distance for many of us. For information or to find a refuge close to you, call (800) 344-WILD or go to fws.gov/refuges.

Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge in Cambridge, MD: Habitats here include rich tidal marsh, mixed hardwood and loblolly pine forests, managed freshwater wetlands, and croplands. Blackwater is home to an incredible diversity of plants and animals. The refuge contains one-third of Maryland's tidal wetlands, which are critical to migrating waterfowl. Blackwater is also home to the largest natural population of Delmarva Peninsula fox squirrels and one of the largest breeding populations of American bald eagles on the East Coast north of Florida.

Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge in Woodbridge, VA: At the confluence of the Potomac and Occoquan rivers, Occoquan Bay is an oasis where migrating birds and busy city residents both seek a quiet escape. Diverse grasslands and marshes attract songbirds, raptors, waterfowl and butterflies that depend on the area for food, nesting sites and a place to rest during migration. Visitors share this feeling of respite at this sanctuary near an urban setting.

Patuxent Research Refuge in Laurel, MD: Located between Baltimore and the District of Columbia, the National Wildlife Visitor Center and North Tract at this refuge are open for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and educational programs. The refuge is the largest block of unfragmented forest of the region, sometime called its "green lungs." Patuxent supports a wide diversity of wildlife in forest, meadow and wetland habitats.

Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge in Virginia Beach, VA: Back Bay habitats include beach, dunes, woodlands, shrub-scrub, agricultural fields and freshwater marshes. Thousands of tundra swans, snow geese, Canada geese and a large variety of ducks visit during the fall/winter migration. Popular recreation activities include hiking, biking, fishing, kayaking, canoeing and wildlife observation.



PHOTO CREDIT U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

Dense autumn woods await visitors who cross a footbridge at the Patuxent Research Refuge in Laurel, MD.

Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge in Smyrna, DE: Located along the coast of Delaware Bay, Bombay Hook protects one of the largest remaining expanses of tidal salt marsh in the Mid-Atlantic region. The refuge also includes freshwater and upland habitats that are managed for migratory birds and other wildlife. It is an important link in the chain of refuges extending from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico that support migratory birds.



Migrating monarchs alight on goldenrod at Virginia's Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge.
PHOTO CREDIT EMARIE AYALA/ U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



Snow geese take flight from their winter roost at blackwater national wildlife refuge on Maryland's eastern shore.
PHOTO CREDIT DAVE HARP/CHESAPEAKE BAY JOURNAL

The Prince George's Post

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Business and Finance

Social Security Matters

Ask Rusty:

What Happens if Social Security Runs Out of Money to Pay Benefits?

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

Dear Rusty: What happens to seniors if the country runs out of funds to pay out monthly Social Security to beneficiaries? I am 78 yrs old and Social Security is my only income. ***Signed: Worried Senior***

Dear Worried Senior: Please put your mind at ease—the government will never run out of money to pay Social Security benefits. That's because if people are working and contributing to the program (e.g., always), Social Security will always have at least some money to pay benefits. What you are hearing about are recent media reports about Social Security having financial issues, expected to come to a head in just a few (six) years.

The primary risk for you (and everyone else) is this: if the reserves in the Social Security Trust Fund (currently about $2.5 trillion) run dry, it would result in a reduction to everyone's monthly benefits. Right now, the Social Security Trustees are projecting a cut of about 22% starting in the fall of 2032. But that will only happen if Congress fails to act and reform the SS program before the SS reserves are fully depleted. And that is, in our opinion, not likely to happen unless Congress is completely and totally derelict in its obligations to American seniors and their dependents. Not a pleasant scenario, but neither is it one likely to occur.

Here at the AMAC Foundation, we are working vigorously to prevent the depletion of the Social Security Trust Fund, and our expectation is that Congress will, indeed, eventually take action to prevent any cuts to monthly benefits. It would be political suicide for Congress (and any President) to allow those Social Security benefit cuts to occur. That would greatly increase the poverty level in America. As we have often reported publicly, we have already proposed a commonsense plan to restore Social Security to long term solvency and are working in Congress and with the Social Security Administration to promote the needed reform. You can see more details of AMAC's plan here: https://amac.us/social-security-guarantee

So, while we fully understand your personal anxiety, we feel confident in assuring you that you are very unlikely to experience any cuts to your monthly Social Security income. We are firmly committed to preventing that from happening and will continue to vigorously lobby Congress to make the SS changes needed before the SS Trust Fund is fully depleted.

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

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

AMAC | Washington DC | 917-846-8485

Fleet from A1

they are about connecting residents to jobs, education, health care, and economic development opportunities while building a cleaner, more sustainable transportation system for the future. I want to congratulate DPW&T for a job well done."

DPW&T operates GoPGC (formerly TheBus), PGC Link and +Plus, providing fixed-route and specialized transportation services throughout Prince George's County. The Transit Fleet of the Year recognition comes as DPW&T continues the implementation of its Transit Transformation initiative, a comprehensive effort focused on creating a transit system that is equitable, safe, reliable, user-friendly, and community centered.

"This award is a reflection of the people behind our transit system who keep our fleet moving every day," said DPW&T Acting Director Anthony Bennett. "From our operators and maintenance teams to our planning and administrative personnel, it takes a collective effort to provide service for our residents. We are proud of the progress made and remain focused on building a transit system that meets today's needs while preparing for the future."

The Transit Fleet of the Year award is presented by the Greater Washington Region Clean Cities Coalition, a public-private partnership that promotes clean and sustainable transportation solutions throughout the greater Washington region. GWRCCC works with public and private fleets, transportation providers, and other stakeholders to advance alternative fuels, energy-efficient mobility systems, and cleaner vehicle technologies.

The award was formally presented during GWRCCC's 2026 Clean Energy and Transportation Annual Conference, Expo and Awards Luncheon on October 22 at Martin's Crosswinds in Greenbelt, Maryland.

PGCPS Strengthens Procurement Oversight and Accountability Following Inspector General Report

By PRESS OFFICER
PGCPS

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (Oct. 28, 2026)—Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) has implemented corrective measures to strengthen procurement oversight, address weaknesses in internal controls, and reinforce accountability following an investigation by the Maryland Office of the Inspector General of Education (OIGE).

The investigation identified an undisclosed conflict of interest involving a former employee and roofing project contracts totaling approximately $16.8 million directed to a single subcontractor between 2023 and 2024. The report states that the contracted work was completed and that no funds were misappropriated or unaccounted for. Those findings do not diminish the seriousness of the conflict of interest or the district's responsibility to safeguard public trust.

After receiving the preliminary findings, PGCPS leadership met directly with OIGE and initiated corrective action. Under the leadership of Superintendent Shawn Joseph, Ed.D., the district has strengthened procurement procedures, supervisory review, and compliance oversight.

Actions taken include:

- **Stronger contracting requirements.** Introduced standard operating procedures requiring market research, price and best-value analyses, independent quality reviews, and auditable documentation before cooperative or rider contracts are awarded.
- **Expanded compliance monitoring.** Launched a digital request system, established a dedicated procurement compliance team, and introduced tracking tools to strengthen supervisory oversight.
- **Additional capital project oversight.** Created a Deputy Director position within the Department of Capital Programs to oversee project management and retained legal counsel from Husch Blackwell to support procurement improvements.
- **New purchasing leadership.** Appointed a new Director of Purchasing and strengthened departmental oversight to improve compliance, accountability, and supervisory review.

The district has also developed revisions to Administrative Procedure 3323. Those revisions are undergoing legal and executive review before final approval.

"Public trust requires clear standards, effective oversight, and accountability when those standards are breached," said Shawn Joseph, Ed.D., Superintendent of PGCPS. "We take these findings seriously. We have acted to address the weaknesses identified and strengthen the controls that protect resources intended for our students and schools. Our responsibility is to ensure these safeguards are consistently followed."

PGCPS plans to refer the investigative report to the Prince George's County State's Attorney's Office for review and determination of any appropriate next steps.

The district will continue reviewing procurement practices and monitoring compliance with its strengthened procedures. Responsible stewardship of public funds is essential to delivering the education students deserve and maintaining the confidence of families, employees, and taxpayers.

Andrews Federal Credit Union Announces Promotion of Tanya Evans to Director of Consumer Lending

By NATALIE TATE
Andrews Federal Credit Union

SUITLAND, Md. (Oct. 28, 2026)—Andrews Federal Credit Union is pleased to announce that long-time employee Tanya Evans has been promoted to Director of Consumer Lending.

Evans brings extensive underwriting expertise and more than two decades of experience with Andrews Federal to her new role. Since joining Andrews Federal in 2002, she has consistently excelled in a variety of roles and has demonstrated strong operational and leadership capabilities.

Prior to taking on this consumer lending leadership position, Evans led Andrews Federal's New Jersey operations as branch manager at the Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst (JBMDL) branch before transitioning to the Joint Base Andrews (JBA) branch. She has also served the credit union as an Underwriter.



PHOTO COURTESY
ANDREWS FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

Tanya Evans

Her deep understanding of branch operations, combined with her underwriting knowledge, will provide valuable perspective as she contributes to the credit union's consumer lending efforts.

"Tanya has demonstrated leadership and initiative throughout her career with Andrews Federal," said Kenneth Orgeron, President and CEO of Andrews Federal Credit Union. "Her experience and knowledge, combined with her commitment to member service, will be tremendous assets as we continue to grow and strengthen our credit union."

Founded in 1948, Andrews Federal Credit Union *has grown to serve more than 163,000 members in the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, New Jersey, and military installations in central Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands. For more information about Andrews Federal, visit andrewsfcu.org.*

Cameras from A1

during next year's legislative session, two Maryland delegates told CNS.

The troves of location data held by law enforcement have raised public concerns about surveillance. A growing number of reported misuse cases nationwide show how the data can be abused, from officers stalking ex-partners and searching for a woman who had an abortion to data shared with federal immigration authorities without the knowledge of those being tracked.

Salisbury cited misuse cases as a reason for launching its Flock transparency portal in August, which includes a running audit of the department's searches in the last 30 days.

Salisbury Police Chief Dave Meienschein told WMDT last month that each search in the audits would include a relevant case number, but current Salisbury Flock reports do not include this information, CNS found.

The Salisbury Police Department did not offer comment in time for publication.

Maryland has no statewide limit on how long law enforcement agencies can keep ALPR data that isn't connected to a crime. Depending on the agency, some delete it after 30 days; others keep it for 90 days to a year. And some agencies with short retention periods transfer partial or complete datasets to agencies that keep the data for up to a year, according to a CNS analysis of Maryland Department of State Police reports on ALPR usage and policies from individual police departments posted on their websites.

One such agency is the Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center, a state fusion center that pools data from municipal and county police to analyze crime and alert police when a plate on a watch list is spotted.

In August, Flock updated its data-retention recommendation from 30 days to seven days citing misuse by law enforcement, but the recommendation is just that. Local police departments would have to amend their policies to incorporate the new recommendation, according to Flock. Salisbury and Anne Arundel County, for example, still hold data for 30 days, according to their transparency portals.

Although state law requires a "legitimate law enforcement purpose" to share ALPR data with outside agencies, it sets no standard for what requesting agencies must provide to prove it and agencies have taken different approaches.

Some agencies, such as Baltimore and Frederick police departments, according to the state report, do not accept law enforcement requests for license plate data. Prince George's County police, by contrast, released data in response to all 123 out-of-state and 312 federal requests they received from 2022 through 2025, according to the state reports.

Prince George's Police replied in an email that its system requires a case number or justification before searching license plates, including those from out-of-state and federal agencies. The department did not respond by publication time to follow-up questions about how it audits these requests.

Opponents of the technology argue that collecting data on all people—regardless of their relevance to an active investigation— is effectively a police search without a warrant, violating Fourth Amendment protections. That's the position of the Electronic Privacy Information Center, a research foundation based in Washington that has wrestled with the cameras for years.

Maria Villegas Bravo, a lawyer for EPIC, told CNS, "Your location data is some of the most sensitive information about you. It can tell people whether you're going to church, whether you're going to a doctor's office."

Questions about the technology's place in law enforcement have even bubbled up within the industry. Charles Degliomini, an executive vice president at Columbia-based ALPR company Rekor Systems has called for regulation that limits who police can track.

"Every day you read about a police officer being arrested or fired or both for misusing the system," he said in an interview with CNS. "That's what we think needs to change."

As a Marylander himself, Degliomini has seen the new cameras spring up on his commute from Baltimore to Columbia. It's something many others in the state have experienced over the last few years, as familiar highways and back roads have been dotted with solar-powered cameras.

Maryland Del. Sarah Wolek, D-Montgomery, who co-sponsored the state's anti-ICE data privacy bill earlier this year, told CNS she will be bringing forward a bill in the upcoming legislative session that regulates ALPR technology. When asked if she would consider a seven-day legal limit on data retention that aligns with Flock's recommendation, she said she was "looking at everything."

"Having advancements in technology doesn't mean that we are making progress as a society and that we need to be really thoughtful about how we're incorporating those advancements into governance," Wolek said.

Another co-sponsor of state privacy protections, Del. Lorig Charkoudian, D-Montgomery, similarly said, "There's conversations that are happening" on ALPR regulation for Maryland.

In speaking with her constituents, Wolek believes Marylanders are OK with cameras that have clearly defined purposes that make their communities safer, like speeding and red-light cameras. Marylanders have taken issue with ALPRs because they see them increasingly often—whether it be on their morning commute or a trip to the movies—but it's unclear where the information is going and how it's being used.

EarthTalk® Q&A

My Way or the Flyway: Migratory Birds Need Your Help to Get Along

By Tim Weighart | October 22, 2026

Dear EarthTalk:
What are some ways we can help migratory birds make it safely past our regions during the critical fall and spring migration seasons?

—L.K., Boone, IA

Nearly half a billion birds cross the U.S. to travel to their northern nesting grounds in the spring, and then return to central and south America to escape the cold in the fall. These long-distance migrants know when and where to travel by noting the changing length of the days, orienting themselves with the moon and stars, and even sensing magnetic fields. "The movements are massive," migration ecologist Andrew Farnsworth says. "On a big night in the spring, you're talking 450 [million] to 500 million birds flying under the cover of darkness."

Many birds fail to make the trip. Not only do they have to weather thousand-mile-long flights while avoiding predators, enduring extreme weather conditions, and finding food and shelter, but there are also a wide variety of manmade obstacles that now account for some of the largest causes of avian fatalities.

House cats are the largest human threat to birds, killing roughly 2.4 billion birds a year in the U.S. alone. Cat owners can do their part by keeping their feline companions indoors, within enclosed outdoor patio areas, or on a leash. Homeowners can do even more for migratory birds in their backyards by growing native plants to provide either food or shelter for them, and by providing clean bird-feeders and baths.



PHOTO CREDIT: RODDY SCHEER

Our everyday actions help determine the fate of migratory birds that fly thousands of miles every year between winter and summer grounds.

At least one billion more birds die annually from crashing into buildings, usually because the reflections of glass windows confuse them. Additionally, bright city lights disorient birds that rely on the moon and stars for navigation, causing them to get drawn away from their migration routes and into the city. They are then more likely to collide with buildings or waste valuable energy on a detour.

In order to reduce bird collisions, experts advise turning off or dimming external lights later at night to reduce light pollution and help the stars remain visible to migrating birds. Adding patterns to your windows via streamers, tempera paint or glass window films and decals can also make glass surfaces more visible to passing birds.

Those looking to inspire greater systemic change to benefit migratory birds should look into the advocacy programs and educational events provided by their local governments and Audubon chapters. If you have noticed substantial threats or changes to migration in your area, consider canvassing your officials and neighbors, organizing community trash pickups or tree plantings, and reporting your daily sightings on eBird.

There are also many ways for curious birders to monitor migration patterns in their area. Anyone can sign up for free daily updates from BirdCast to hear localized reports on the large bird populations passing by.

Anyone out birdwatching from March to May or September to November should keep an eye out for unusual sightings. "It's always like Christmas morning, going out each morning and seeing what new presents arrived from the north," migratory bird research assistant Dylan Osterhaus says.

CONTACTS: eBird, ebird.org/; BirdCast, birdcast.org/; Thirteen Tips to Make the Journey Safer for Migrating Birds, abcbirds.org/news/thirteen-tips-to-make-the-journey-safer-for-migrating-birds/.

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

Sphere from A1

tainment Co. argued that county assistance was necessary to secure the venue's location against competing jurisdictions. Council members agreed to send a letter to county executive Braveboy setting goals for small and county-based minority businesses in the Sphere construction.

The plan calls for Sphere Entertainment Co. to direct at least 50% of eligible construction spending to county-based small businesses or locally owned and operated businesses. It also sets best-effort goals to direct 40% of that spending to county-based minority businesses and 45% of eligible construction work hours to county residents.

Some residents opposed the project. Christopher Goins, a county resident, criticized an economic analysis report by the accounting firm Ernst & Young that touted construction employment.

"Before the council votes to create this future tax burden, we need to go behind the sales pitch and examine the balance sheet," Goins said.

Dan Smith, a Cheverly resident, questioned why the council would prioritize National Harbor over unfinished infrastructure elsewhere in the county.

"National Harbor is already a successful regional destination, built with substantial public support," Smith said.

Councilmember Jolene Ivey has supported the Sphere as a way to diversify the county's tax base and reduce its reliance on residential property taxes. In an interview after Tuesday's vote, Ivey pointed to successful technology businesses around the University of Maryland as another opportunity for diversification.

"Diversification is helpful because if one area suffers, you're not completely dependent on it," Ivey said. "You can still bring in tax dollars from someplace else. It's like diversifying your portfolio as a household.

Upward from A3

English learners' progress toward English proficiency and Science MCAP proficiency.

Middle schools also recorded gains, with Buck Lodge, Charles Carroll, Stephen Decatur and Walker Mill middle schools advancing from two stars to three. At the middle school level, the strongest gains were in math student growth percentile, access to a well-rounded curriculum and student survey results.

Four high schools maintained the rating increases achieved last year, while no additional high schools advanced in star ratings in 2026. Despite unchanged star ratings, high schools showed improvement in Math MCAP scores and student survey results.

The district's upward momentum is also reflected in fewer schools experiencing declines. Thirteen schools saw their star ratings decrease, down from 20 in 2025, while 37 schools improved their ratings.

The district will continue analyzing school-level data to identify effective practices, target support and accelerate improvement across all school levels.

How the Ratings Work

The Maryland School Report Card measures school performance using multiple indicators, including academic achievement, academic progress, graduation rates, English language proficiency, readiness for postsecondary success, and school quality and student success. The indicators used vary by school level.

Schools receive between one and five stars based on the percentage of points earned across the applicable indicators. The ratings provide one measure of school performance and should be considered alongside other information about student achievement, growth and school climate.

For more information and to view school-level data, visit www.mdreportcard.org.

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