

# The Prince George's Post



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## Tension Between Rivals Growing

By LAUREN LORICCHIO  
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS - Tension is building between Democratic rivals Lt. Gov. Anthony Brown and Attorney General Doug Gansler, both vying to become Maryland's next governor — and it's likely to escalate as the candidates get closer to the June primary, political observers say.

It's part of growing incivility in American political life, experts believe.

The Gansler campaign has taken shots at Brown for his leadership of Maryland's troubled rollout of the Affordable Care Act, saying he is "ducking responsibility and pointing fingers while tens of thousands of Marylanders cannot get access to health care."

Gansler also recently released the first negative ad of the gubernatorial race, which criticizes Brown's management of Maryland's new health care law.

In response, Brown campaign manager Justin Schall said, "While some are disappointed to see Doug sounding

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## Celerate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day



Martin Luther King, Jr. (January 15, 1929 – April 4, 1968) was an American clergyman, activist, humanitarian, and leader in the African-American Civil Rights Movement. He is best known for his role in the advancement of civil rights using nonviolent civil disobedience. King has become a national icon in the history of American progressivism.

## Wood Heat More Popular, but There are Environmental Concerns

By ROBBIE FEINBERG  
Capital News Service

Bill Traver has sold wood stoves to customers in Maryland, Pennsylvania and West Virginia from his small shop in Hedgesville, W. Va., for nearly three decades, but over the past few years, he's seen an increase in sales.

"It's because people are finally getting away from gas and oil," Traver said. "Because they can't afford it."

Traver's store isn't an exception. According to U.S. Census data, the use of wood heat in Maryland grew by 33 percent from 2000 to 2010. Much of that increase is due to the market - the recent economic downturn, combined with increased prices for oil and propane, has led to many customers switching to wood stoves and boilers for heat.

But as wood heating has grown, concerns over its emissions have grown, as well - so much, in fact, that in October,

Maryland and six other states, along with the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency, sued the Environmental Protection Agency over certain high-emission wood boilers.

Wood-fired boilers are different from wood stoves, which heat wood inside the home. Boilers operate outside a home, using combustion to heat water, which runs through pipes into the home to heat it.

But the trouble with older boilers and wood stoves comes from the soot, smoke and small particles they emit.

In 1988, the Environmental Protection Agency placed regulations on stationary wood-burning devices like new wood stoves. Currently, those rules require catalytic stoves, which use a device to start combustion at lower temperatures, to emit less than 4.1 grams of particulates. Non-catalytic stoves must emit less than 7.5 grams.

See HEAT, Page A3

## With Climate Change, State Insect Could Move North

By KATE ANDRIES  
Capital News Service

COLLEGE PARK - Climate change has become synonymous with melting glaciers and blazing summer months, but

there is one very small casualty of global warming that isn't front page news: butterflies.

Unpredictable and shifting climates are forcing butterflies around the world to change the time they emerge from their chrysalises, when and where

they move, and even shift the range in which they travel.

"Climate change is definitely affecting butterflies on a vast scale," said Jeffrey Glassberg, president of the North American Butterfly Association. "There's a whole suite of

butterflies whose ranges are retreating. Butterflies that used to be found in New Jersey and Massachusetts haven't been seen in years."

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## Mental Illness Stigma Pushes Captain to Edge

By BRANDON GOLDNER  
Capital News Service

PRINCE FREDERICK - U.S. Navy Capt. Todd Kruder and his wife, Sharon, had a joyous 2012: The couple marked 25 years of marriage, their oldest son was married, and their second son was commissioned into the Marine Corps. But Kruder almost didn't get the chance to celebrate that year with his family because on three different occasions, he attempted suicide.

"First time I tried, I thought about suicide, I chickened," Kruder said. "The second time, my son interrupted. So I had to come up with a different way."

The different way, he explained, was to over-exercise himself to death.

"It was the perfect solution to the problem I had, which was I didn't want the stigma of suicide," Kruder said.

Kruder's over-exercising, together with his 17 hour-a-day job as an executive assistant to a three-star admiral, were taking its toll. It was all part of what Kruder, 47, called his "master plan."

But what he didn't expect was his family and friends becoming concerned about his 60-pound weight loss as well as his personality changes.

Then, one morning in 2011, Kruder hit rock bottom.

"We were probably days, hours maybe, away from



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPT. TODD KRUDER.

During his battle with depression, U.S. Navy Capt. Todd Kruder -- shown here with his wife, Sharon -- attempted suicide three times.

breaking the marriage up," Kruder said.

Despite the near constant fighting, Todd and Sharon Kruder had kept their wedding rings firmly on their fingers.

In their 24 years of marriage, they rarely, if ever, took them off until that day.

See STIGMA, Page A7

## Holiday Season Puts Strain on Families in Need

By COLLEEN WILSON  
Capital News Service

Maryland food banks tend to see an influx of families during the holiday season, but this year local pantries are seeing more people in need because of cuts to food stamps. Now, food pantries are counting on donations from the community to keep supplies stocked.

"We always see an increase [in need] around the holiday," said Kate Sam, spokeswoman for the Maryland Food Bank, based in Baltimore. "This occurs all year-round year-round, and it's grown a lot over the last five years since the recession. Our distribution has more than tripled since 2007."

Sam said that this year has been especially tough for families, which was evident, she said, by the numbers.

"Our distribution this past July was what it would have been in November just a few years ago," she said. "This year the demand is growing even more, which we think definitely has to do with the recent [reduction in] SNAP benefits."

SNAP, which stands for the Supplemental Nutritional Aid

Program, is funded by the government and provides low-income families with food stamps and nutrition education.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, created in 2009 to increase funds for SNAP benefits in response to the recession, expired Nov. 1. In addition, Congress is currently debating the House of Representatives' version of the farm bill that would cut SNAP's program funds by \$40 billion.

"We're looking at it as an edge of a cliff right now," said Sam. "The Maryland Food Bank and every food bank across the nation would need to double the amount of food just to maintain the amount of hunger. There's 50 million people that are food insecure right now."

Cathy Bird, executive director of Annapolis-based Food Link, said the holiday season is more about maintaining tradition rather than about gifts for struggling families.

"They [families] don't have the means to provide a Thanksgiving dinner by taking away from their food budget through the normal year," Bird said.

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## INSIDE

### Millions Received for Health Care

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has awarded over \$307 million in performance bonuses to 23 states for improving access to children's health coverage and successfully enrolling eligible children in Medicaid, CMS Administrator Marilyn Tavenner announced. Community, Page A3

### Top 10 Events of 2013

We have put together a list of the top 10 events that have particularly affected African Americans and communities of color over the past 12 months. Presented in no particular order, this list is a mix of triumphs and tragedies that mark 2013. Lives were touched in some way by these headline events. Commentary, Page A4

### Time Warner Named Top Company

Time Warner Cable was selected as a 2013 Top Company for People of Color by the National Association for Multi-Ethnicity in Communications, an organization that educates, advocates and empowers for multi-ethnic diversity in the communications industry. The company was named based on the results from a Survey. Business, Page A5

### Movie Review: "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty,"

In "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," the title character has to wake up from his daydreams and live life to its fullest. And you know what helps him do this? The fact that his real life turns out to be almost as exciting and improbable as his fantasies. Out on the Town, Page A6

### Earth Talk

Dear Earth Talk,

What are "dark factories" and are they good for the environment?

— Mitchell Pearson,  
Erie, PA

Features, Page A7



# Towns and NEIGHBORS

## In and Around Morningside-Skyline

by Mary McHale 301 735 3451

### Ban on plastic bags for leaves now in effect

As you bag your leaves and twigs and dead flowers, remember they may not be collected on yard-waste day if they are in plastic. The County Department of Environmental Resources (DER) announces, as of Jan. 1, 2014, there's a law prohibiting the use of plastic bags for yard-waste collection.

You must put yard-waste in paper bags or reusable containers. The container—such as a garbage can—must have a study handle and a tight-fitting lid, and should bear a sign with the words YARD WASTE taped or painted on it. Paper yard-bags are for sale in most groceries and home improvement stores.

I've talked to residents who are confusing this collection with the twice-weekly trash, or garbage, pickup. Garbage or trash can still be in plastic.

Why this new law? DER Director Adam Ortiz says, "As we shred our leaves, branches and Christmas trees, plastic bags clog the machinery, make a huge mess and contaminate our compost product. Then we have additional costs disposing of the plastic bags."

He goes on to say that by using alternatives to plastic bags, we will "reduce needless pollution and costs and help our County go greener."

A minimal grace period will be provided during the transition, but residents are strongly encouraged to start the new practice of placing their yard-waste debris in paper bags or reusable containers as soon as possible. For more information on the yard-waste plastic-bag ban, contact CountyClick 3-11.

### 2013 obituaries

Most years I compile a list of people whose obits I've run in my column the previous year, men and women who have lived or worked in Morn-

ingside or Skyline. I like to pay that last respect to them.

I have made up the 2013 list, but know I've missed many whose names have not been given to me. If you have family members, friends, neighbors or mere acquaintances who lived or worked in our Morningside/Skyline community and who died in 2013, call me at 301-735-3451 or email muddmm@aol.com with the deceased's name and date of death. I will run the list in a couple of weeks.

### Neighbors

Darlie Norton, former Suitland resident and historian, writes from Lost Creek, West Virginia, that a flock of birds flew into her corn, pulled down the shucks and ruined all of it. She said the birds had a feast; she had none. She also reports that she is active with the West Milford Baptist Church and the West Milford Senior Center. She turned 76 on Jan. 6, and I miss her. Darlie, I wish you'd move back and update your book on Suitland!

Carol Kline DeGraba, former Morningside Council Member, writes from Rockville that her daughter Maria graduated from our Lady of Good Counsel High in May and is now attending the University of North Carolina at Wilmington.

James Hay was Baby Jesus for St. Philip's 9th Annual Living nativity on Christmas Eve. He is the four-month-old son of Bobby and Megan Hay and the grandson of Robert and Suzanne Hay, of Auth Village. James' three-year-old sister Anabella was an Angel. As for the rest of the Holy Family, Elizabeth-Rose Eakman was Mary and Thomas Do was Joseph.

My daughter Kathleen and I saw the New Year in during a retreat at Loyola on the Potomac, in Faulkner. It was an inspiring and restful time, interrupted by revelry at mid-

night. One benefit of such retreats is the company—old friends and new acquaintances.

One new acquaintance is Juanita Marsh, longtime Suitland resident. She's retired after years teaching in a Montessori school in Washington. And, she is a regular reader of my column. I expect to get to know her better.

An old friend at the retreat was Jean Conlon Ferrante, of Golden Beach, who grew up on Boxwood Drive in Morningside. Her late parents John and Leona Conlon once coached many Morningside ball teams.

Jean is the widow of Joe Ferrante, formerly of Hillcrest Heights and Clinton, who retired in 2007 as president and owner of Nick's Supermarket. He died Nov. 12, 2011.

### Changing landscape

A new drug store, Suitland EPIC Pharmacy, has opened at 4731 Silver Hill Road across from the Census Bureau. It offers full service including prescription delivery.

Lawrence O'Neal of Family First Neighborhood Initiative sent photos of the wide, empty space that was Pyles Lumber Company, considered an eyesore after it burned was left unused. "We count that as one of our biggest victories over the past year," he writes, "and to see it come to fruition is a tremendous blessing for the community!!!!"

### Milestones

Happy birthday to Dwight Holloway Sr., Martin Miller, Frank Binsted and Roc Wheeler, Jan. 13; Curtis DeMarco Knowles, my son Mike McHale, Kathleen Giroux and Joanie Mangum, Jan. 14; Dolly Wood, Jan. 16; and Nikial M. Boston, Jan. 17.

Happy anniversary to Gary and Melody Barnes on Jan. 14 and Frank and Sharleen Kelly Cappella on their 59th, Jan. 15.

## How Baby Boomers Get Fit

by Joy Powell, President, Fitness Market

(NAPSI)—A new generation is getting involved with gyms and fitness programs in record numbers—the baby boomer generation. The 78 million Americans who make up this generation are savvy and better versed in fitness than any other aging generation seen before as exercise has been more ingrained in their culture and daily routines.

Healthways and the SilverSneakers® Fitness Program recognize that baby boomers' reasons and motivations for getting fit are as varied as their workout interests. From tennis and yoga to hiking and dance, exercise offers many benefits for older adults, including reducing and minimizing the signs, symptoms and risk factors for chronic diseases and conditions like arthritis, obesity and diabetes. Additionally, exercise can help fight depression and improve energy, balance and strength.

SilverSneakers, the nation's leading exercise program designed exclusively for older adults, knows there is no one-size-fits-all solution for anyone, and trying to fit exercise into a busy schedule can be hard.

SilverSneakers offers these workout tips for baby boomers to ensure they enjoy and stick with their workout routine.

Exercise with a friend. Healthways research has shown that 80 percent of baby boomers prefer to exercise with friends or a group they feel comfortable with. This gives people motivation and accountability while making the activity more enjoyable.

Select an exercise that you enjoy. Not surprisingly, you're much more likely to stick to activities you enjoy and that fit into your schedule. Think back to activities you did when you were younger and try different types of exercise to find what works best for you. SilverSneakers offers a variety of classes to suit each person's needs.

Do a mix of cardio and strength training. Don't just fo-

cus on one or the other; do a mix of both to increase strength, endurance and flexibility.

Healthways is incorporating baby boomers' needs and wants into its menu of fitness programs with the new FLEX program. FLEX is a community-oriented program consisting of instructor-led fitness activities at churches, community centers and parks. Classes are designed to create a sense of community beyond the gym, with flexible and fun options that keep participants engaged and active.

For more information, to see if you are eligible for SilverSneakers and FLEX, and to find a class in your area, visit [www.SilverSneakers.com](http://www.SilverSneakers.com).

Joy Powell is president of the Fitness Market for Healthways. She oversees a variety of fitness programs, including the award-winning SilverSneakers® Fitness Program, the nation's leading exercise program designed specifically for older adults.

## Neighborhood Events

### Prince George's County Offers Free Christmas Tree Recycling

*Program offers eco-friendly disposal of holiday trees; creates valuable landscaping mulch*

LARGO, MD — The Prince George's County Department of Environmental Resources' (DER) Waste Management Division is encouraging all County residents to go green this holiday season by recycling their live Christmas trees instead of throwing it in the trash. Beginning December 26, 2013, all County residents will have the opportunity to recycle their undecorated Christmas trees, free of charge, through their yard waste collection or at one of two designated drop-off locations. Once collected, the trees will be shredded and cured to produce mulch for DER's annual spring Mulch Giveaway.

"I urge all County residents to go green this holiday season and recycle their Christmas tree, said DER Director Adam Ortiz. "By doing so, you will dispose of your tree in an eco-friendly way, and will help decrease the amount of debris hauled to the landfill and create a valuable resource that can later be used for landscaping."

To participate, residents with County-provided yard waste collection should place their live Christmas trees at the curb before 6:30 a.m. on their regularly scheduled collection day. Residents may also bring their tree, free of charge, to the Prince George's County Yard Waste Composting Facility located at 6601 Southeast Crain Highway in Upper Marlboro, Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. or to the Brown Station Road Public Convenience Center located at 3501 Brown Station Road in Upper Marlboro, Monday through Saturday from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Trees must be free of all lights, ornaments and tinsel, and must be removed from plastics bags before placing at the curb for collection.

For more information on this program or recycling, contact CountyClick at 3-1-1.

### Statement from Lt. Governor Brown on House GOP Cutting of Unemployment Benefits to Over 23,000 Marylanders

"I'm deeply disappointed that House Republicans have put partisan politics in Washington ahead of helping families who are facing tough economic problems. Unemployment benefits are a lifeline to those who are struggling to get back on their feet and take care of their children. It's unconscionable that during the holidays, House Republicans are turning their backs on more than 23,000 Marylanders. I strongly urge them to do the right thing and pass an unemployment insurance extension immediately."

### Prince George's County Announces Changes to TheBus Schedule for Routes 21, 21X, 51, 51 Extended and 52

LARGO, MD — The Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T) announced changes to TheBus schedule for Routes 21, 21X, 51, 51 Extended and 52 that will take effect on January 6, 2014.



**Prince George's County Department of Environmental Resources' (DER) Waste Management Division grind Christmas trees into mulch.**

"The new schedules are designed to better accommodate the patrons at those times of day when the ridership is at its peak," said Acting DPW&T Director Darrell Mobley. "The improved schedules will also provide more frequent service to key locations such as the Metrorail stations, Prince George's Community College and the Motor Vehicle Administration."

Changes to the Route 21 schedule include an earlier morning southbound service from the New Carrollton Metrorail Station and more frequent service during the peak hours before 10 a.m. and after 3 p.m. These changes will benefit riders traveling to the Prince George's Community College and the Largo Town Center Metrorail Station.

The Route 21X schedule will provide midday service every 20 minutes rather than the current 30 minute service frequency. The adjustments to the schedule will benefit riders traveling to the Prince George's Community College, the Motor Vehicle Administration and the New Carrollton Metrorail Station.

The resources of Route 51 Extended and Route 52 have been consolidated into TheBus Route 51 and those routes will be discontinued effective January 6, 2014. The new schedule for Route 51 will provide more frequent service to the Courthouse and the County Administration Building. In addition, Route 51 will continue to transport patrons to the Chrysler Building and the County Board of Education facility by request.

For more information, visit the TheBus webpage at <http://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/sites/PublicWorks/Transit/TheBus/Page/default.aspx> or call DPW&T's Office of Transportation at 301.883.5656.

### MIKULSKI, CARDIN CONGRATULATE MARYLAND FOR WINNING A FEDERAL PERFORMANCE BONUS TO HELP COVER COSTS OF PROVIDING MORE MARYLAND KIDS WITH HEALTH COVERAGE

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senators Barbara A. Mikulski and Ben Cardin (both D-Md.) today praised Maryland's dedication and innovation in improving access to Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) that led to winning a \$43.4 million "performance bonus" from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in fiscal

year 2013 to cover the costs of providing more Maryland kids with health coverage.

"Hats off to Governor O'Malley and his team for saving lives and saving money by getting more kids covered and keeping more kids healthy," Senator Mikulski said. "Maryland is a leader and innovator in getting kids off to the right start in life. It begins with making access to health care a top priority. I fought to create the CHIP program in 1997. I have been fighting ever since to expand coverage and increase payment to states. States want to do the right thing, but they can't do it on their own. That's why I will keep standing up for a federal government that fulfills its responsibilities to America's families, America's children and America's future."

"Keeping all of our kids healthy is a priority. Congratulations to all those who have made Maryland's program a success, making it possible for even more low-income children across our state to access important primary health care services, including dental care," said Senator Cardin.

Performance bonuses provide additional federal funding for qualifying states that have taken specific steps to simplify Medicaid and CHIP enrollment and renewal processes, and have also increased enrollment of children.

Maryland received this performance bonus because the State adopted a number of innovative policy changes to increase the enrollment of children in Medicaid and CHIP, such as using data from state income tax filings to identify eligible but unenrolled children for outreach. The number of Maryland children enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP coverage increased from more than 407,000 in January 2007 to more than 586,000 in October 2013.

CHIP is a joint federal and state program that provides health insurance to children in low-income, working families. Under CHIP, children whose families cannot afford health insurance have access to doctor visits and medicines they need when they are sick and the checkups they need to stay well. CHIP protects the health care coverage of nearly 6.7 million children, including more than 150,000 in Maryland.

**PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY WILL NO LONGER ACCEPT YARD WASTE IN PLASTIC BAGS.**

**RESIDENTS SHOULD PLACE THEIR YARD WASTE RECYCLABLES IN A COLLECTION CONTAINER OR IN PAPER BAGS**

**THE TOWN CAN NOT PICK-UP YARD WASTE IN PLASTIC BAGS AFTER JANUARY 1ST**

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# COMMUNITY

## Practical Money Skills

By Jason Alderman

### What If Your Car Gets Totaled?

Each year, auto insurance companies declare millions of vehicles to be "totaled," meaning it's not worth the cost to repair them. It doesn't matter whether the car was damaged in a collision, during a flood or after a thief's joyride went bad.

It's hard to argue with such an assessment if your car was wrapped around a telephone pole or the gas tank exploded. But what if the damage was more cosmetic, such as major dents on the roof and hood from a hailstorm?

A vehicle is considered a total loss if the insurance company determines that the total cost to repair your car to pre-accident condition, plus fees for storage, salvage and a replacement rental car (if included in your policy), is more than a certain percentage of car's retail value. Insurers set their own allowable percentage, within state-mandated guidelines (typically around 60 to 75 percent), and use their own formulas to determine a car's value and estimated repair costs.

Thus, if your \$4,500-valued 2002 Honda Civic sustains \$1,800 worth of damage — moderate bodywork and repainting these days — it might be deemed totaled, even though the engine still runs fine. On the other hand, a late-model Mercedes could sustain far greater damage and still be considered salvageable.

What's worse, if the accident was your fault, or you must otherwise tap your own insurance (e.g., it was caused by an uninsured driver), you would only receive that \$4,500 minus your deductible. Good luck finding a comparable car for that amount.

Other big losers when a car is totaled are people still paying off their auto loan. Since the lender technically owns the car, they'll get first crack at any insurance payment; and you'll still be responsible for paying off the loan balance.

As a preventative measure, you may want to purchase gap insurance if you owe more than the car's retail value — or if you rolled past debt into the new car loan. It will pay the outstanding loan balance if your car is totaled or stolen. Most insurers will let you add gap insurance at any time.

Here are a few additional points you should know about when and why a car is declared totaled, and precautions you can take ahead of time to lessen the impact:

Make sure the insurance appraisal includes the value of all extra features and aftermarket accessories, like heated seats, custom wheels or an upgraded audio system.

Be prepared to show documentation of any major repairs or upgrades you made that might boost the car's value — say you recently replaced the engine or bought new tires.

Do your own research. Use independent pricing sites like Kelly Blue Book or Edmunds to determine your car's worth, factoring in its mileage, added features and overall condition before the accident.

If your estimate is far off from the proposed settlement, ask whether your policy includes the right to hire your own appraiser for a second opinion. Most states have a procedure for settling such disputes. Understand, however, that no matter the arbitration outcome, you'll still have to pay your appraiser, and likely, a portion of arbitration costs.

Make sure the insurer's totaled car value includes estimated sales tax to replace the car, as well as registration and title costs, since you wouldn't have incurred these costs if you didn't need to replace the car.

Let's hope your car is never totaled, but it pays to know in advance what to do if it is.

Jason Alderman directs Visa's financial education programs.

To Follow Jason Alderman on Twitter:  
[www.twitter.com/PracticalMoney](http://www.twitter.com/PracticalMoney)



## 23 States Receive Over \$307 Million in Bonuses for Enrolling Children in Health Coverage

By PRESS OFFICER (CMS)

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has awarded over \$307 million in performance bonuses to 23 states for improving access to children's health coverage and successfully enrolling eligible children in Medicaid, CMS Administrator Marilyn Tavenner announced.

The performance bonuses were authorized under the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009 (CHIPRA), one of the first pieces of legislation signed into law by President Obama. This is the fifth and final year of performance bonus awards. States could qualify for a bonus by implementing procedures to simplify Medicaid and CHIP enrollment and renewal processes to improve eligible children's access to coverage. The amount of a state's bonus corresponds to the increase in children's Medicaid enrollment over a specified target.

"States are working hard to ensure children get access to the health coverage they need," Administrator Tavenner said. "We are pleased to provide financial support to reward states that are reducing enrollment barriers and are connecting kids to coverage."

Such efforts have been paying off. Recent Census data show that uninsurance rates for children declined from 8.6 percent in 2009 to 7.5 percent in 2011. In addition, an analysis by the Urban Institute found that participation rates in Medicaid and CHIP have continued to improve over time. In 2011, 87.2 percent of eligible children were enrolled, a 5.5 percentage point increase from 81.7 percent in 2008.

The bonuses help states by offsetting the costs of insuring the lowest income children and encouraging them to adopt sustainable improvements in their children's health coverage programs. Such improvements include eliminating face-to-face interview require-



PHOTO COURTESY OFFICE OF THE LT. GOVERNOR

**Lt. Governor Anthony G. Brown held a press conference to provide an update on the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange, including the staff surge and reorganization of leadership at the Exchange, as well as overall progress addressing technical issues.**

ments so that applications can be filed online or through the mail, using electronic data-matching to reduce paperwork, and making it easier to renew, thereby minimizing interrup-

tions in coverage and necessary treatment.

Many of the simplifications that states adopted to qualify for performance bonuses will be in place in all states in 2014 and applied consistently across Medicaid, CHIP, and the Marketplace. These simplifications have led to improved coverage for children and have helped lay the groundwork for outreach efforts aimed at enrolling people now eligible for coverage under the Affordable Care Act.

The 23 states awarded performance bonuses include: Alabama, Alaska, Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, Utah, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin.

For more information on today's CHIPRA performance bonus awards, visit [http://www.insurekidsnow.gov/p/professionals/eligibility/performance\\_bonuses.html](http://www.insurekidsnow.gov/p/professionals/eligibility/performance_bonuses.html).

### Heat from A1

Wood boilers, however, were exempted from the rules. That's made it so even though cleaner boilers are available, the older, dirtier versions are still sold and used across the country.

Jonathan Kays, a natural resource extension specialist with the University of Maryland, said that even with the concerns over boilers, wood heat can still be a clean, cheap option, especially if residents in rural areas use newer, cleaner wood stoves.

"You know, renewable energy is focused on solar and wind and geothermal, but to take advantage of those, you have to have \$20-or-\$30,000," Kays said. "But the average person could buy a wood stove for \$2-or-\$3,000 and could cut their heating bills in half or more. And that's what's happened. The wood is cheap."

Kays added that wood also has a stable price due to its steady supply, meaning it won't vary from year to year like other fuels such as propane or natural gas.

The cleanest-burning wood stoves on the market today emit about .4 grams of particulates per hour, but older versions of those stoves can emit up to 75 times that. Emissions

from older wood boilers are far higher still, averaging about 161 grams of particulates per hour.

In its lawsuit, the states wrote that even though new, cleaner boilers have been developed in the past 25 years, older boilers still in use can cause significant damage to the environment, and that new regulations "will result in cleaner and healthier air in the States, benefiting the health and welfare of their citizens."

Failure to regulate older wood heaters has had a big impact on Maryland's environment. According to EPA data, residential wood burning accounts for nearly 15 percent of all of Maryland's small particulate emissions, even though only 1.2 percent of residents use it as a primary heat source.

Michael Brauer, a professor at the University of British Columbia's School of Population and Public Health who has studied the effects of air pollution, said that those emissions can also harm the health of nearby residents.

"Mostly, the effects are serious respiratory diseases," Brauer said. "For people with asthma, it makes it worse. It can make infections more severe or harder for you to basically fight

the infections...we also see ear infections, even emphysema."

As an example of those detrimental effects, Brauer pointed to a 2013 study from Australia's University of Tasmania that looked at a specific city that relied primarily on wood burning devices for heat. When over half of those devices were replaced by other fuel sources, respiratory-related deaths during the winter in the city decreased by 28 percent.

"So that's really dramatic," Brauer said. "And it's a really well-done study, so it's hard to poke any holes in it."

For its part, the EPA has added recommendations requiring new boilers to emit less than 4.8 grams of particulates per hour in order to meet EPA certification. However, in most states, those recommendations are only voluntary.

Maryland has taken steps to fix the problem on a statewide level over the past few years. The state added a regulation in 2009 requiring small wood boilers sold in Maryland to meet the new EPA recommendations, but those requirements only address new units, not existing ones.

In order to clean up those boilers and older wood stoves, the state introduced a program

in 2012 to provide rebates of \$500 to \$700 for residents to purchase new, cleaner wood stoves and pellet stoves to replace dirtier fuel sources.

Randy Mosier, chief of the Maryland Department of the Environment's Air Quality Planning Program, said the department still receives complaints, but since the new regulations have gone through, the situation has significantly improved.

"It's been a decline," Mosier said. "Especially since we've come out with our regulations since 2009 requiring that any units would have to meet those strict standards."

As more states start to regulate wood heat like Maryland does, Mosier said technology should continue to improve and hopefully make his department's job even easier.

Kays, the University of Maryland extension specialist, said those continual improvements in emissions, combined with lower costs, should make wood heat a solid option for the future.

"They're heating homes. They're saving a lot of money on energy costs," Kays said. "It's much more difficult in rural areas to get by, and with local wood and these low costs, this is a great way to get by."

### Political from A1

like the Republicans, we hope that [he] will join the effort to get every Marylander affordable health care instead of playing political games with this important issue."

The Gansler campaign hasn't been alone in its use of negative tactics. Brown's campaign has employed a full-time tracker to catch any missteps his opponent makes, said Gansler campaign communications director Bob Wheelock. The Gansler campaign doesn't deploy one, Wheelock said.

Brown's campaign manager, Justin Schall, confirmed that the campaign has a tracker — which Schall said was standard in modern political campaigns.

Delegate Heather Mizeur, D-Takoma Park, another con-

tender in the race, has largely avoided the conflict.

While negative campaigning has been around since George Washington's days, it's gotten worse over time.

"It's a little bit nastier than I recall from recent races [in Maryland]. They had their disagreements. But I don't recall it as being as uncivil as this one," said Laura Hussey, professor of political science at University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

Despite the incivility between the two candidates, their behavior isn't a reflection of the type of people they are, Hussey said.

"It's part of a trend toward greater incivility in our politics that is afflicting everybody," Hussey said, adding: "Politics is nastier. We can see that [on the national level] in what goes

on between Democrats and Republicans in Congress."

"They don't have the same social ties that they used to. They don't practice the same norms of politeness and deference," she said.

Senate President Thomas V. "Mike" Miller Jr., who has been a Maryland legislator since 1975, said he has witnessed incivility grow over the years among politicians in Annapolis. "Gansler is forced to campaign negatively because the 'establishment' has endorsed his opponent," said Miller, who has endorsed Brown for governor.

Because Gansler is down in the polls, "he needs to gin up his campaign by going negative," Miller said, adding, "It's fair game."

Negative campaign ads can be an effective strategy to win

an election, but incivility has an adverse effect on the electorate, said Bryan Gervais, assistant professor of political science at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Gervais said incivility in political discussions and political campaigns has an unfavorable effect on the public.

When people hear negative comments from the opposing party, it makes them angry, causing them to be less likely to be open minded and more unwilling to compromise, Gervais said.

It also causes those who are turned off by incivility in politics to be less likely to participate, Gervais said.

The result is that you get an active citizenry that is more polarized and partisan, and another set of people who aren't interested in politics at all, he said.

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# COMMENTARY

**Marc Morial, President and CEO**  
*National Urban League*



## 2013 Top 10 News Events of 2013

*"Facing the rising sun of our new day begun, let us march on till victory is won."*  
 James Weldon Johnson

As the sun sets over a tumultuous 2013 and rises over the promise of a brighter new year, we have put together a list of the top 10 events that have particularly affected African Americans and communities of color over the past 12 months. Presented in no particular order, this list is a mix of triumphs and tragedies that mark the progress we've made, highlight the problems that still plague us, and point the way forward in 2014. There is no doubt that all of our lives were touched in some way by these headline events of the past year.

1. Voting Rights/Voter Suppression: Despite an unprecedented outbreak of voter suppression efforts across the nation and the Supreme Court's appalling ruling in June that Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act was unconstitutional, African Americans are going to the polls in record numbers. In fact, Black voters were decisive in ensuring the second inauguration of Barack Obama on January 20th. African American voter turnout in the presidential election surpassed white voter turnout for the first time in history. As voter suppression efforts grow more intense, African Americans must continue the fight where it matters most - at the polls.

2. George Zimmerman Acquittal: African Americans and people of goodwill throughout the nation were stunned by the July 13 not-guilty verdict in the trial of George Zimmerman, the man who shot and killed Trayvon Martin, an unarmed 17-year-old high school student on February 26, 2012. The killing of Trayvon Martin reminded us of the persistent gap in racial attitudes in America and generated new calls for an end to racial profiling.

3. March on Washington Anniversary: 2013 marked the 50th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s historic "I Have a Dream" speech. On August 24th, the National Urban League joined thousands of citizens in a return pilgrimage to the Lincoln Memorial and the new King Memorial to commemorate that historic moment in a march for Economic Power and Justice - and to call for a continuation of the work that remains undone.

4. Affordable Care Act: While start-up problems have plagued the roll-out, the new law expands access to affordable health care to more than 30 million people, including 6.8 million African Americans who make up the largest share of the uninsured. This isn't about politics. It's about people.

5. Stop-and-Frisk/Shop-and-Frisk: On August 12th, a New York District Court Judge ruled that the New York City police department's stop-and-frisk program, which disproportionately targets African Americans and Latinos, was unconstitutional. An appeals court subsequently overturned that ruling. Mayor-elect Bill de Blasio has pledged to make changes in the policy - which is practiced in communities across the country - and has appointed a new police commissioner. African American shoppers in stores across the country have also been unfairly profiled. The New York State Attorney General has launched an investigation into security practices at a few retailers after at least four customers claimed they were unfairly targeted for police action while shopping in the stores. The National Urban League, National Action Network and other civil rights organizations were instrumental in working with several national retailers on the release of a "Customers' Bill of Rights" aimed at protecting customers from profiling practices. We will continue to work with the retailers on recommendations towards high standard, best-in-in-

dustry store security protocols and cultural sensitivity efforts that can be adopted by retailers across the country.

6. Government Shutdown/Effects of Sequestration: The across-the-board "sequestration" budget cuts that went into effect this year slashed funding for Head Start, youth job training, long-term unemployment benefits and other critical human service and safety net programs. With the nation's highest unemployment rate at 12.5 percent, these cuts fell especially hard on African Americans, who still have double-digit unemployment. The 17-day Government Shutdown in October also had an out-sized impact on African Americans who make up a large share of the Federal workforce. Thankfully, Congress has taken necessary steps to avoid a repeat in January 2014. However, while "governing by crisis" has ended for now and there is partial relief from sequestration cuts, a major flaw of the budget deal is its failure to include a crucial extension of federal jobless aid where more than 1.3 million workers will immediately lose unemployment benefits - a vital source of income that covers basic family needs.

7. African American Leaders Convening (AALC)/Release of the 21st Century Agenda for Jobs and Freedom: On August 23, 2013 at the National Urban League's "Redeem the Dream" Summit during the 50th Anniversary March on Washington celebration, national civil rights leaders joined together - for the first time - for an historic release of a policy agenda addressing five urgent domestic goals for the nation - the 21st Century Agenda for Jobs and Freedom. It covers critical areas including jobs and the economy, healthcare, education, voting rights and criminal justice system reform. The document was the result of months of joint meetings convened by me, along with Rev. Al Sharpton/National Action Network; Benjamin Jealous/NAACP; and Melanie Campbell/National Coalition on Black Civic Participation with nearly 60 of America's leading civil rights, social justice, business and community leaders.

8. Rise of Economic Inequality: While the richest one-percent have seen their incomes rise astronomically over the past 20 years, millions of middle class and low-wage workers are falling into poverty and struggling to make ends meet. This phenomenon worsened in the wake of the recession - and has only widened through the recovery. This growing inequality is not only unjust; it is unsustainable for our economy. This year, Pope Francis, President Obama and a growing number of economists sounded the alarm.

9. The Death of Nelson Mandela: On December 5th, the world lost one of the greatest champions for freedom, justice and peace ever to walk this Earth. After 27 years of political imprisonment as a leader in the fight against apartheid, Mandela was released from prison in 1990. In 1994, he became South Africa's first democratically elected president. His leadership was marked by his constant reliance on forgiveness, reconciliation and unity in the building of a new South Africa. His life and legacy will forever inspire the world.

10. Banner Year for Black Films: This year was a notable one for Black films ranging from the true event-inspired stories of "The Butler," "12 Years a Slave," "Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom," and "Fruitvale Station" to the highly anticipated "Best Man Holiday" and holiday classic "Black Nativity."

From the National Urban League family to yours - we wish you a blessed holiday and a Happy New Year. In the words of Oprah Winfrey, "Cheers to a New Year and another chance for us to get it right."



*Andrews Air Force Base  
 Home of Air Force One*

President Obama's first trip: Col. Steven Shepro, 316th Wing commander, and 316th Wing protocol members render a salute as Air Force One departs.(US Air Force/Bobby Jones) Camp Springs, MD - Home to one of the nation's largest annual air shows. It is also home to "Air Force One." The Airlift Wing provides air transportation for the President, Vice President, cabinet members and other high-ranking US officials. For information contact the AAFB Public Affairs office at 301-981-4511.

## Child Watch

by Marion Wright Edelman



## Extend Emergency Unemployment Insurance Benefits Now!

In the last few days of this year, most Americans are wrapping up their holiday celebrations and pondering the promise of 2014. But millions of Americans who have been struggling the longest to find work in our slowly recovering economy are now facing deep uncertainty and despair instead of a Happy New Year. The budget deal Congress finally reached in December did not extend emergency unemployment insurance benefits for the long-term unemployed and 1.3 million struggling jobseekers are losing those desperately needed survival benefits on December 28. Unless Congress acts immediately in the new year to extend these benefits, huge numbers of struggling jobseekers will be affected: the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimates almost five million jobless workers will lose benefits over the next twelve months. The President's Council of Economic Advisors estimates that if Congress lets emergency unemployment insurance expire, it will cost the economy 240,000 jobs and impact families with 3.6 million children by the end of 2014.

Federal emergency unemployment insurance benefits were designed to be a critical safety net for unemployed workers who have exhausted regular state unemployment insurance payments. During the recent recession the number of unemployed workers unable to find new jobs before their regular benefits ran out has soared. Although the Emergency Unemployment Compensation program had already started phasing down as the labor market improved, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities points out it's still far too soon to let the program expire completely since almost two-fifths — 4.1 million of the 10.9 million unemployed — are long-term unemployed who have been looking for work for 27 weeks or longer. Although the overall unemployment rate went down in November, the proportion of long-term unemployed workers rose from 36.9 percent to 37.3, double the rate in 2007 before the recession hit. This is the first time Congress

has let long-term unemployment insurance benefits expire when the long-term jobless were more than 1.3 percent of the labor force. Today 2.6 percent of the labor force is long-term unemployed in our still sluggish economy.

New jobs are desperately needed in this "post-recession" economy. One recent example in the nation's capital paints the picture. Walmart was opening two new stores and offering 600 jobs for which 23,000 jobseekers applied. People desperately want to work! Getting a job at Walmart has become as competitive as getting into Harvard. We don't know how many of those 23,000 jobseekers were long-term unemployed workers. What we do know is that employers tend to discriminate against those workers and hire people who want to change jobs or have only been unemployed for a short time first. Congress must act to support the millions of Americans and their children who have been tossed around in our stormy economic seas by extending emergency unemployment insurance and focus on creating more jobs.

All of us at the Children's Defense Fund were disappointed when budget negotia-

tors and Congress failed in this budget deal to ask the richest Americans and corporations to pay their fair share or close even the smallest and most egregious tax loopholes that could fund desperately needed investments in children and poor families and strengthen the American economy. Helping workers without jobs who are seeking employment should be an obvious lifeline during periods of economic downturn and recovery. In 2012, 2.5 million people escaped poverty through unemployment compensation including 600,000 children. Many families who lose unemployment insurance benefits, especially long-term jobless workers, will face poverty again. They may have to rely on other government supports like the nearly-disappeared Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) which Congress cut in November and the House of Representatives is threatening to slash again by \$40 billion as part of the farm bill. Allowing emergency unemployment insurance

See WATCH, Page A8

## The Prince George's Post

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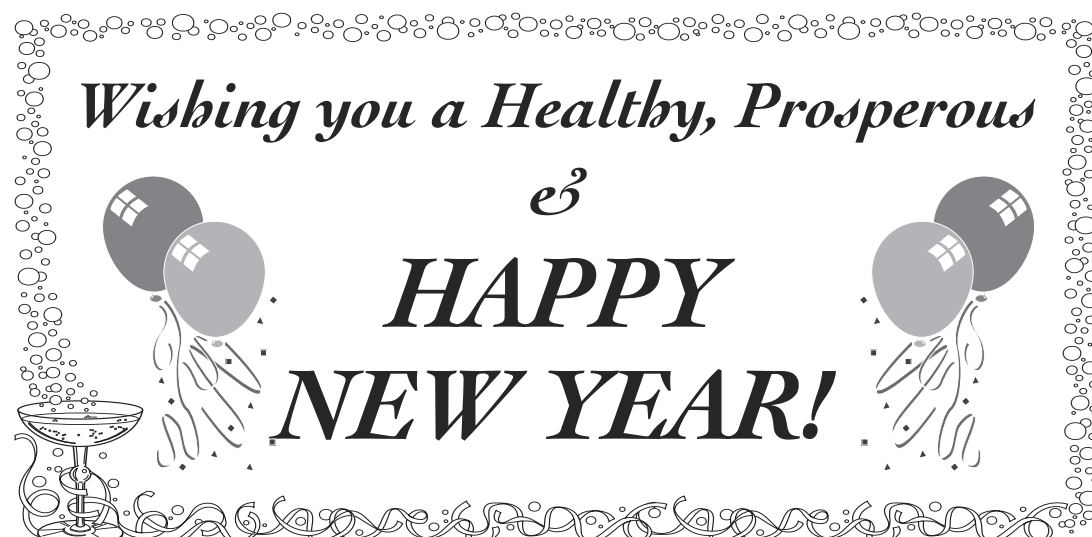
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*Wishing you a Healthy, Prosperous*

*and*

**HAPPY  
 NEW YEAR!**





# BUSINESS

## The American Counseling Association's Counseling Corner

### Improving Your Chances In Today's Job Market

While the nation's economy is improving in many areas, the employment market still presents numerous challenges. If you are currently job hunting, now is a good time to examine how you're presenting yourself and to see if there are ways to improve your marketability.

The following suggestions can help you better focus your job search, especially if you are in the midst of looking for a new career path:

1. Explore your desires. Take time to evaluate where you are in life and where you'd like to be. What career options would excite you, make you happy? Give yourself permission to dream.
2. Inventory yourself. What are your best work skills? How good are they? Are there things you need to improve? What do you, or would you, enjoy most in your daily work?
3. Update your resume. Update it regularly. Check out a local career center, or a current resume writing book, to be sure yours is looking polished and presenting the best picture of you. Consider doing multiple resumes, each highlighting a specific skill or interest area.
4. Attend workshops. Look for opportunities to strengthen or broaden your skills. Consider taking a local community college course to add new skills.
5. Network. Networking is the primary way people get interviews. Make contacts a key strategy in your job search. Check out your local career center, volunteer for committees at your place of worship or a local charity, call old work colleagues and friends. "Who you know" really does matter. The more people you meet, the more likely you are to hear about a job opening in an area that interests you, and the more likely you are to meet someone who can recommend you. Asking for "informational interviews" with those in a company or a field that interests you is another way to make contacts.
6. Make yourself marketable. Take a hard, honest look at yourself. If you were an employer, would you hire you? What can you do to improve your marketability? Write out a plan with a timeline over the next month or so, then take the steps to make changes.

Finding a job or changing to a new career can not only bring financial rewards, but can result in your being happier and more fulfilled in your work. If you need help, consider talking to a professional counselor who specializes in career counseling.

*Counseling Corner* is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to [ACA-corner@counseling.org](mailto:ACA-corner@counseling.org) or visit the ACA website at [www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org)

## Business Spotlight

### Prince George's County Will Deploy Crews in Preparation for Snow and High Winds Forecasted for Our Area

LARGO, MD — With the forecasts of snow, high winds and freezing temperatures, the Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T) will activate crews for a full operation for snow and ice removal. Employees from DPW&T, the Department of Environmental Resources, Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement, and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission will be salting and removing snow or slushy accumulations from County roadways to prevent slippery conditions.

"The forecasts for our area are calling for the snow to begin late this afternoon and continue into Friday morning with a possible accumulation of 1 to 3 inches," said Darrell Mobley Acting Director of DPW&T. "With the high winds forecast for the region, motorists are encouraged to stay alert, listen for updated forecasts and drive with caution."

To assist the crews with clearing the roads, DPW&T requests County residents to park on the even-numbered sides of residential streets or in their driveways, to shovel their driveways after plowing has occurred and to remove snow/ice from the sidewalks abutting their homes and businesses.

Residents are encouraged to wait 12 hours after the precipitation has stopped to call CountyClick at 311, the Snow Information Center at 301.350.0500 or go to the Snow Request Form to report snow conditions on their street.

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## Time Warner Cable Named a 2013 Top Company for People of Color by National Association for Multi-Ethnicity in Communications

By PRESS OFFICER  
NAMIC

(BLACK PR WIRE)--NEW YORK--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Time Warner Cable was selected as a 2013 Top Company for People of Color by the National Association for Multi-Ethnicity in Communications (NAMIC), an organization that educates, advocates and empowers for multi-ethnic diversity in the communications industry. The company was named to this list based on the results from a joint NAMIC and Women in Cable Telecommunications (WICT) Workforce Diversity Survey. This is NAMIC's first "Top Companies for People of Color" list.

"The 52,000 people of Time Warner Cable are honored to receive this recognition from NAMIC," said Peter Stern, Time Warner Cable's Chief Strategy, People and Corporate Development Officer. "We believe passionately that our commitment to diverse voices makes us a great place to work, helps us better serve our communities, and enhances our relevance to our 15 million customers."

"Time Warner Cable shares NAMIC's goal of advancing diversity and inclusion within the evolving marketplace," said Alicin Williamson, interim head of NAMIC and principal of The Raben Group. "Their support of members at the national and chapter levels

and our Executive Leadership Development Program and Leadership Seminar programs continues to demonstrate their commitment to the career development of professionals of color throughout all levels of their organization."

NAMIC named Time Warner Cable to its "Top Company" list based on several categories, including the hiring and promotion of people of color to its management and workforce, as well as the alignment of diversity with its business goals and objectives. Other criteria included the company's demonstration to support diversity and inclusion, and strategies to guarantee diversity of vendors and suppliers. NAMIC and WICT engaged Mercer, an independent research partner and global human capital consultants, to conduct the survey.

Time Warner Cable is a longstanding partner of NAMIC. As part of this partnership, Time Warner Cable employees have participated in events, conferences, mentorship and leadership development programs.

In addition, Time Warner Cable actively supports several employee resource groups that provide professional development and leverage the diversity of people and experiences. Employee resource groups available to Time Warner Cable employees include the Black Business Employee Network, OUT@twc, VetNet and !Hola TWC!.



PHOTO TIME WARNER CABLE

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### About Time Warner Cable

Time Warner Cable Inc. (NYSE:TWC) is among the largest providers of video, high-speed data and voice services in the United States, connecting more than 15 million customers to entertainment, information and each other. Time Warner Cable Business Class offers data, video and voice services to businesses of all sizes, cell tower backhaul services to wireless carriers and managed and outsourced information technology solutions and cloud services. Time Warner Cable Media, the advertising arm of Time Warner Cable, offers national, regional and local companies innovative advertising solutions. More information about the services of Time Warner Cable is available at [twc.com](http://twc.com), [twcbc.com](http://twcbc.com) and [twc-media.com](http://twc-media.com).

### ABOUT NAMIC

NAMIC (National Association for Multi-ethnicity in Communications) is the premier organization focusing on multi-ethnic diversity in the communications industry. Founded in 1980 as a non-profit trade association, today NAMIC comprises 2,200 professionals belonging to a network of 16 chapters nationwide. Through initiatives that focus on education, advocacy and empowerment, NAMIC champions equity and inclusion in the workforce, with special attention given to ensuring that the leadership cadres of our nation's communications industry giants reflect the multi-ethnic richness of the populations they serve.

For more information, please visit [www.namic.com](http://www.namic.com) and stay connected to NAMIC on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. *Source: Time Warner Cable Inc.*

### Insect from A1

This could potentially hit Maryland especially hard; the state insect is a rare butterfly called the Baltimore Checkerspot. Thanks to habitat destruction and warming climates, the butterflies are in danger of being forced to pack their bags and move north.

The Baltimore Checkerspot has been Maryland's state insect since 1973 and, much like bees, they pollinate a number of crops and wild flora throughout the state. At one point, Baltimore Checkerspots could be found statewide.

"They were all over Maryland, from the western to the easternmost counties," said Jennifer Frye, the invertebrate ecologist for the state's Wildlife and Heritage Service. "Now they're in seven counties, less than 15 sites."

Sites generally refer to breeding colonies in a wetland where the Baltimore Checkerspot's host plant—the white turtlehead—is found, Frye explained. While caterpillars can transition to secondary plants as they grow older, the white turtlehead is the primary host plant in the beginning stages of life.

"If you don't have white turtlehead, you don't have [Bal-

timore] Checkerspots in Maryland," Frye said.

While not listed as endangered quite yet, the Baltimore Checkerspot is recorded as 'rare' on the Maryland Department of Natural Resources' list of rare, threatened, and endangered animals. This means the population is vulnerable to becoming extinct in the state but is not quite qualified to be listed as endangered.

"Climate change comes into play in the way sites are disappearing. The decline has been pretty systematic," Frye said. "Right now the only places they're really doing well are in the western part of the state, particularly Garrett County."

But climate change is only one of many factors in the decline of Baltimore Checkerspots. Degradation and destruction of wetland habitats for commercial or residential purposes has drastically reduced the areas in which the butterflies thrive.

Their host plant—the white turtlehead—is easily run out of an area by invasive plant species and is a favorite snack of deer.

These issues are only compounded by climate change, and aren't solely present in

Maryland. Butterflies are struggling worldwide.

Heather Kharouba, a post doctoral researcher at the University of California, Davis, used museum records and weather data to look at climate change's effect on the flight seasons of butterflies in Canada.

While other research has shown that butterflies are susceptible to temperature changes and other environmental stressors, Kharouba explained, hers emphasizes the scale to which flight seasons are affected.

"It's happening everywhere [...] Canada doesn't seem to be an outlier," she said.

Flight seasons refer to the period of time in which butterflies either emerge from hibernation in the spring or emerge from the hard shell that protects butterflies as they transition into adults, called chrysalises. If butterflies emerge too early, they could encounter frost and die or face starvation.

"As climate change continues to happen, these flight seasons are going to change," Kharouba said.

Luckily, some species are able to travel long distances—like Monarchs that travel to Mexico in colder months—and can attempt to escape the ef-

fects of warming temperatures. But not all species are able to handle a great migration. Baltimore Checkerspots, Frye said, are fairly lazy and won't travel far to find new habitats.

Though little is being done to curb the effect of climate change on butterfly populations on a larger, federal level, conservationists in Maryland are attempting to help keep the Baltimore Checkerspot from leaving the state.

By planting white turtlehead in areas that the butterflies are prevalent and preserving existing habitats as much as possible, ecologists like Frye hope to boost the dwindling population.

"We want to keep it around and do everything we can for it. But if the climate continues to shift, and Maryland continues to be progressively unsuitable for this species we want to at least give it the chance to move," Frye said.

But planting white turtlehead and preserving sites can only do so much, and climate change doesn't appear to be slowing, which is worrisome to ecologists like Frye.

"Sometimes you feel so helpless," Frye said. "All you can sit and do is watch as things disappear. It's affecting so much."

### Food from A1

"With Christmas, it's the same thing. If you can't afford a holiday meal, you sure as heck can't afford gifts."

While there is increased need in the winter season, there is also increased giving.

"We have a lot more people that are willing to help around the holidays," Bird said.

Going forward, Sam said they are reaching out to more people and garnering support.

"Our focus right now is continuing to strengthen what we're doing and getting out to the public that this is an issue the public needs to be aware of," Sam said. "Maryland food banks can't do it alone; we can't end hunger alone. It's just going to take a lot of partners at the table."

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# OUT ON THE TOWN

ERIC D. SNIDER'S  
IN THE DARK

## Movie Review

### “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty”

*The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*  
Grade: D  
Rated PG, some peril and mild crude language  
1 hr., 54 min.

In “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty,” the title character — a timid Life magazine photo archivist played by Ben Stiller (who also directed) — has to wake up from his daydreams and live life to its fullest. And you know what helps him do this? The fact that his real life turns out to be almost as exciting and improbable as his fantasies. A victorious bar-fight with a drunken brute, an unprotected dive into treacherous ocean waters, a magnificent hike through the mountains of Afghanistan, and a spur-of-the-moment trip to Greenland and Iceland (not to mention the disposable income to afford it) are just a few of the unrealistic “real life” things that happen when Walter (who’s never traveled, fought, or hiked before) breaks out of his shell and grabs life by the nipples.

Based on James Thurber’s 1939 short story in the sense that it has the same title, and

written by Steve Conrad (“The Pursuit of Happyness”), Stiller’s film is a curiously antiseptic dud. It’s obviously meant to be inspiring, but it’s airless and flat, like it was made by aliens who don’t understand how human emotions work, only that they are desirable and can be produced by some combination of panoramic images and stirring music.

Here is the protagonist making inroads with his secret crush, who is played by Kristen Wiig, whom you have enjoyed in other films! This makes you “happy,” yes? And here he is learning that if you’ll take some risks, life will reward you with impossible magic! This brings you to “tears,” right? Are we saying that right? “Tears”? What about this Arcade Fire song? These are good things, no?

I’d be more forgiving of the movie’s cluelessness if the story weren’t 100% stupid and crammed with shameless product placement for Papa John’s and eHarmony (for starters). A flaky but brilliant photographer named Sean O’Connell (Sean Penn) sends Life a roll of film containing what he believes will be the perfect image for the



**Ben Stiller directs and stars in THE SECRET LIFE OF WALTER MITTY, James Thurber’s classic story of a day-dreamer who escapes his anonymous life by disappearing into a world of fantasies filled with heroism, romance and action. When his job along with that of his co-worker (Kristen Wiig) are threatened, Walter takes action in the real world embarking on a global journey that turns into an adventure more extraordinary than anything he could have ever imagined. (c) Fox**

magazine’s final cover — only the picture isn’t there. Rather than tell report this to his boss (Adam Scott, miserably playing a villain) or try more diligently to contact the phone-less and email-less O’Connell, Walter simply hops on a plane bound for the last place O’Connell is known to have been, which happens to be Greenland. He does this at the prompting of his co-worker, Cheryl (Wiig), who

thinks it’s not only a great idea but the only real option. Along the way, he talks on the phone a lot with an eHarmony employee (played by Patton Oswalt), who also inspires him. More faux-motivational nonsense ensues, each unlikely plot point giving way to the next until it finally ends and you leave the theater either weeping or wondering what, exactly, was supposed to have made you weep.

## For Safety’s Sake, Remove That Snow or Ice From Your Vehicle Before Hitting the Road at Rush Hour

### Dislodged Or Falling Snow Or Ice From Vehicles Pose Risks of Death And Injuries

By PRESS OFFICER  
AAA

WASHINGTON, D. C. — With up to five inches of heavy snow in the forecast, area motorists should make sure to remove snow and ice from all of their vehicle’s windows and mirrors before venturing out on area roadways, warns AAA Mid-Atlantic. It is against the law in an increasing number of states and cities to drive around with an icy or snowy build-up on the vehicle. In the District of Columbia the drivers of trucks with heavy snow will be pulled over by an array of law enforcement agencies operating in the city.

In addition to shattering windshields and causing property damage, it can be downright dangerous too, causing death or serious bodily injury to other drivers and their passengers and forcing drivers to swerve to avoid the flying chunk of accumulated snow and ice. When heavy snow or ice becomes airborne from a vehicle traveling at 65 mph or at highway speeds, it seemingly has the velocity of a heat-vehicle missile aimed at your windshield. In fact, the excessive weight of ice and snow atop a trailer can add as much as two tons of extra weight to a semi-trailer rig, the trucking industry estimates. That’s a clear and present danger on area highways after a “snow event.”

Once a winter storm hits it happens all the time. Motorists find themselves dodging hoary blankets of snow and ice flying from the roofs of cars, SUVs, trucks and tractor-trailer rigs. In the District, the law lays it down. Police officers can pull drivers over for traveling through the city with accumulated snow or ice on their vehicles. Neither Maryland nor Virginia has a specific vehicle snow removal law aimed at protecting the safety of traveling public.

“It is imperative for drivers to first remove snow and ice from the roofs, windshield, trunks, and hoods of their vehicles before hitting the roads,” warned John B. Townsend, AAA Mid-Atlantic’s Manager of Public and Government Affairs. “For safety’s sake, all motorists should clear snow from the roof as well as from the windows and windshields. It is plain old common sense. Unfortunately, many drivers fail to realize or to care enough that the accumulated snow can fly off the vehicle while driving, posing a big hazard to others on the road. Once it is dislodged, it can fall onto the windshield while driving, obscuring the driver’s vision and putting their lives and their passengers at risk.”

Currently, however, there is no fine for the violation in the nation’s capital even though there is such a law in place. Although the District Council passed an emergency vehicle snow removal law in 2009 that remained on the books for 225 days, it has not since passed a permanent law specifically setting a fine for the offense.

Two years ago members of a Virginia General Assembly subcommittee tabled a bill drafted to penalize drivers up to \$75 for failing to remove snow and ice from their motor vehicles. Yet, Maryland law requires drivers to clear snow and ice from their windows and vehicle lights, but not from their hoods or roofs, according to published reports. Curiously, Maryland has “no allowance for snow or ice when the truck is weighed,” the trucking industry says.

“Just as the removal of snow from sidewalks along your home and business is a responsibility of all citizens, removing snow and ice from vehicles should be the responsibility of every driver. It is the duty and debt we owe one another,” said Townsend.

Given the sheer weight and density of accumulated snow and ice on vehicles, it constitutes inconsiderate driving at the very least and careless driving at worst, cautions AAA Mid-Atlantic. Drivers should be mindful of the fact that freezing rain can add 10 to 20 pounds per foot to the weight of a vehicle, which can result in serious danger when it is not removed from the roof, windshields, windows, mirrors and lights, warns the auto club.

Every winter drivers get into vehicle crashes because they fail to properly clear their windows of ice and snow, highway safety officials warn. To combat this, a tiny handful of states on the east coast, namely New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut, has passed laws requiring drivers of vehicles to remove snow or ice from their cars before driving. Reportedly, a new vehicle snow and ice removal law goes into effect in Connecticut in late 2013.

In New Jersey, the drivers of commercial vehicles can be fined from \$500 up to \$1,500 for violating the state’s snow and ice removal law, which went into effect in 2010. A survey by AAA Mid-Atlantic showed that 67 percent of the drivers it polled in that state supported the law. Under Pennsylvania law, the operator of a vehicle can be fined up to \$1,000 if the snow or ice is dislodged or falls from a moving vehicle and strikes another vehicle or pedestrian causing death or serious bodily injury, according to the Pennsylvania State Police. In New Hampshire, motorists can “be fined \$250 to \$500 for not clearing snow and ice off your roof with higher fines for second offenses.”

Compounding matters, over half (54 percent) of big rig drivers surveyed in the United States and Canada said they “rarely or never” remove accumulated snow and ice from their vehicles,

according to a 2009 study by the American Transportation Research Institute (ATRI), headquartered in Arlington, Virginia. Yet 35 percent of the tractor-trailer drivers surveyed could tell of an experience of snow or ice causing injury or property damage to another motorist, the ATRI study revealed.

Driving around large trucks can be very challenging, and even more difficult in poor weather conditions, advises AAA Mid-Atlantic. If drivers notice ice or snow falling from or flying off a big-rig, they should avoid traveling alongside or close behind the truck, warns the auto club. Here’s the upshot for all drivers, no matter the size of the vehicle. Before starting out in snowy weather, take time to remove the snow from the entire car, especially the roof and hood, so it doesn’t blow onto your windshield or blow into the path of other vehicles. Make sure your mirrors and lights are clear as well.

Is your vehicle covered in snow after the big winter storm? Here is a link to a video presentation of AAA’s tips for properly removing snow from your vehicle. Remember, removing snow and ice from your car before leaving home improves visibility and makes your car lighter and more responsive. Using proper snow removal procedure protects yourself, your passengers, and your vehicle.

AAA Mid-Atlantic advocates on behalf of its nearly four million members in the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. It provides a wide range of personal insurance, travel, financial and automotive services through its 50-plus retail branches, regional operations centers, and the Internet.

## The Edge of Sports

by DAVE ZIRIN

### Dear NFL Owners: It’s Not Your Coaches. It’s You.

The Cleveland Browns, Minnesota Vikings, Detroit Lions, Tampa Bay Buccaneers and Washington [redacted] have all fired their head coaches in the ritual known as Black Monday (although technically the Browns let their coach Rob Chudzinski go Sunday night, the first time Cleveland football has been first at something in a long time.)



Weep not for the tossed out coaches who are being paid millions to leave a twenty-hour a day job that seems like a toboggan ride to an angioplasty. Instead, save your tears for the fans, because this annual NFL colon cleanse should not blind us to a blaring truth. The problem with these franchises runs far deeper than whatever alpha male with pretensions of Patton is roaming the sidelines. There is a reason three of these teams have never won a Super Bowl in the forty-seven-year history of the big game.

The Browns are owned by a man named Jimmy Haslam, who is under a federal investigation for his company’s involvement in “fuel rebate fraud.” He said this week that the criminal probe and looming indictment “has been a distraction.” The Vikings are owned by Zygi Wilf, who was ordered by a judge in September to pay an \$84.5 million settlement to someone he defrauded in the 1980s. This did not stop the state of Minnesota from giving him the funds to build a new billion-dollar stadium. Despite civic protest, Wilf received the money this year after threatening to move the team to Los Angeles. (“Moving the team to Los Angeles” has become the NFL version of “It’s not me, it’s you.”) In Washington, a former dynasty turned laughingstock, team owner Dan Snyder has taken what was once the most valuable franchise in sports and created a situation that was described by Steve Coll in The New Yorker in 2009 as “a failed state, an intractable dictator, and an impotent and suffering populace.” He also spent the last year defending his team’s racist “Redskins” nickname in a manner so shrill, he turned Charles Krauthammer against him.

These are not franchises in need of “someone inspiring” or “smarter game schemes” or “Jon Gruden” or whatever threadbare hokey gets expectorated from NFL talking heads. The problem is owners whose duplicity, meddling, graft and parasitical parsimony have turned their teams into joy-sucking failures. Most damning is that in each and every case, with the possible exception of Detroit and Tampa Bay, the team would be better served by just firing the owners and keeping the head coaches who were sent packing. Even in the cases of Detroit and Tampa Bay, where it is a definite positive for all concerned to wave goodbye to Jim Schwartz and Greg “Chet” Schiano, you are still left with owners who once thought it would be a great idea to hire Jim Schwartz and Greg Schiano.

These are teams who are blaring advertisements for the idea that “sports without owners” should be a universal aspiration. If our taxes are now paying for the stadiums anyway, if the NFL’s annual flood of revenues, divided at the top, guarantee profitability and if we can all agree that no one has ever bought a ticket to watch Bucs owner Malcolm Glazer fire a concession worker, then what purpose do any of them serve? I have written often in the past that the Green Bay Packers model of fan ownership should be the goal in every city. It ensures your team won’t continue to bleed municipalities of millions and it also guarantees that football decisions would be made by football people and not billionaires working out their junior high gym class pathologies. Look at what just happened in Green Bay. Star quarterback Aaron Rodgers broke his collarbone earlier this season. Message boards and the media alternated between shouting for him to get back in the damn game or to just hang it up for the season so the team (really the fans) wouldn’t be in limbo. Instead, football people made football decisions and Rodgers returned for the team’s last game, sneaking a suddenly dangerous Packers team into the playoffs. If Dan Snyder owned the Packers, he would just have had Rodgers stuffed and mounted in his living room wearing a knitted sweater that read, “Friends 4ever.”

So many of these owners upon firing their coaches said some variant of “Our fans deserve better.” We do. It starts with failed owners being compelled by the league, by fans or by their own sclerotic consciences to get out the “for sale” signs and head out of town. It would be honorable. It would be admirable and it would be the best for all concerned. To the owners of these punch-line franchises: It’s not us. It’s not the players. It’s not the coach. It’s you. And we’re just not that into you.



# Calendar of Events

January 9 — January 15, 2014

## First Tuesdays At Abraham Hall

Date & Time: Monthly, First Tuesdays  
Description: Abraham Hall, constructed in 1889, is the best example of an African American benevolent society lodge in Prince George's County. Located in the community of Rossville, it is the first African American historic site in the county to be fully restored using public funds. Home of M-NCPPC's Black History Program, please call the number listed below for more information about the First Tuesday program.  
Ages: All ages  
Location: *Abraham Hall*  
7612 Old Muirkirk Road, Beltsville 20705  
Contact: 240-264-3415; TTY 301-699-2544

## A Black and White Affair at the Potomac

Date and Time: Saturday, January 11, 2014 8 pm-12 am  
Description: Adults come ring in the new year socializing and mingling with new and old friends! Come dressed to dance the night away to the latest line and hand dance styles! Light refreshments will be served.  
Cost: Resident \$8; Non-Resident \$10  
Ages: 18 & up  
Location: *Potomac Landing Community Center Park*  
12500 Fort Washington Road, Fort Washington 20744  
Contact: 301-292-9191; TTY 301-203-6030

## Senior Days

Date and Time: Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays, 8 am-12 noon  
Description: Seniors (Prince George's County residents only) are allowed FREE use of both the fitness center and pool during these times.  
Cost: FREE  
Ages: 60 & up  
Location: *Prince George's Sports & Learning Complex*  
8001 Sheriff Road  
Landover, MD 20785  
Contact: 301-583-2400; TTY 301-583-2483

## The Subdivision and Development Review Committee (SDRC) meeting

Event date: Friday, January 17, 2014, at 9:30 AM  
Location: Room 4045 - Fourth Floor Board Room, CAB, 14741 Gov. Oden Bowie Drive, Upper Marlboro, MD 20772  
Date: Every other Friday (or other assigned days) Time: 9:30 a.m.  
Location: *Room 4085 - 4th Floor Board Room, County Administration Building, 14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive, Upper Marlboro, MD 20772*  
Reports/Documentation: Friday, January 17, 2014 Meeting Agenda (TBA)  
Contact: Development Review Division at 301-952-3520, TTY 301-952-4366.  
Comments: The Subdivision and Development Review Committee (SDRC) meeting is held every other Friday in the CAB 4th Floor Conference Room at 9:30 a.m. This meeting is open to the public but is not a public hearing. SDRC is a coordination and interagency meeting early in the development review process with the applicant and M-NCPPC staff where the public can be invited to speak.

## National Great Blacks In Wax Museum Excursion

Date & Time: Monday, January 20, 8 am-2 pm  
Description: Join us for a visit to Baltimore and tour the Historic Blacks In Wax Museum. Explore the past during the colonial period and learn about the magnificence of Africa. On your own, enjoy lunch at a nearby restaurant. A continental breakfast will be provided. Pre-registration is required by January 16, 2014. Register for SMARTlink #1330421. Fee includes transportation and museum admission fee.  
Cost: Resident \$30/person; Non-Resident \$36/person  
Ages: 10 & Up (Children 17 & under must be accompanied by an adult.)  
Location: *Prince George's Sports & Learning Complex*  
8001 Sheriff Road, Landover 20785  
Contact: 301-583-2582; TTY 301-583-2483

## Charmed Fashion Show

Date and Time: Saturday, January 25, 2014 2-3 pm  
Description: Come see for yourself the results that the 'Charmed' program can give kids! This fashion show will give benefits such as self-esteem, poise, etiquette and manners.  
Cost: Free  
Ages: 4-14  
Location: *Baden Community Center*  
13601 Baden-Westwood Road, Brandywine 20613  
Contact: 301-888-1500; TTY 301-203-6030

## 31st Annual Choreographers' Showcase

Date and Time: Saturday, January 25, 2014 3 pm & 8 pm  
Description: Enjoy a gala concert in the Dance Theater, featuring original dance works by area choreographers! Each performance is selected by adjudicators Sidra Bell and Zvi Goetheiner.  
Ages: All ages welcome  
Location: *Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center (University of Maryland)*  
Rte 193 and Stadium Drive, College Park 20742  
Contact: For tickets, call the box office at 301-405-ARTS  
For other information, call 301-446-3238; TTY 301-446-6802

## Afternoon Aviators

Date & Time: Fridays, 2-4 pm  
Description: Join us for fun, hands-on aviation-themed activities. A weekly series for children ages five and up. To schedule a group larger than 10, please call the museum to make a private group reservation.  
Cost: FREE with museum admission  
Ages: 5 & up  
Location: *College Park Aviation Museum*  
1985 Cpl. Frank Scott Drive, College Park 20740  
Contact: 301-864-6029; TTY 301-699-2544

# EARTH TALK ... "Dark Factories"

Dear EarthTalk:

*What are "dark factories" and are they good for the environment?*

— Mitchell Pearson,  
Erie, PA

So-called dark factories—otherwise known as “lights out” or “automatic” factories—are manufacturing facilities that do not depend on human labor to get work done. While they may have some benefits for the environment they are certainly not beneficial overall considering the impact widespread adoption would have on needed jobs.

Without human line workers, such factories can operate without lights, heating and cooling and other “amenities” required by human workers. Of course, very few such facilities are completely automated, as human workers are usually required to set up equipment or remove completed parts. And some run “lights-out” between human labor shifts or as separate shifts to meet increasing demand or save money.

And while the up-front costs of setting up automated work routines manned by robots and other machines may be higher than setting up a traditional factory, on-going expenses can be significantly less given the lack of human payroll and other human-centric outlays.

The first dark factories started appearing in Japan in the 1980s as companies there started to take advantage of improvements in the technology of robotics and automation to get around the high costs of human labor. At that time, business analysts predicted then that as

technology improved and qualified workers became harder to find and more expensive to support, dark factories would become more prevalent around the world. But in the interim the spread of manufacturing to developing nations with cheap human labor may have temporarily forestalled the rise of dark factories. Also, General Motors' unsuccessful implementation of automated manufacturing in the 1980s—quality declined and sales fell accordingly—soured many big companies on the concept back then.

That said, there are many thriving examples of dark factories around the world. Many machine shops in the U.S. run “unattended” all or part of the time. Robots are commonplace now in the auto industry despite GM's faltering early on. Amazon.com makes extensive use of robotic systems in its distribution centers and last year even acquired the company behind the technology, Kiva Systems, for \$775 million in cash. In Japan, FANUC Robotics operates a lights-out factory employing robots to make other robots. Japanese camera giant Canon recently announced that it is phasing out human workers at several camera factories by 2015. And in the Netherlands, Philips produces electric razors in a facility with 128 robots and nine human quality assurance workers.

While widespread adoption, lights-out manufacturing could deliver substantial energy savings and thus be environmentally beneficial, but analysts wonder whether replacing human laborers with computers, machines and robots is a good thing for humanity overall. According to NaturalNews.com editor Mike



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**Manufacturing facilities that do not depend on human labor to get work done may have some energy saving benefits but are certainly not beneficial overall considering the impact widespread adoption would have on needed jobs. Pictured: A robotic arm loading Coca Cola bottles into boxes and loading the boxes onto an assembly line.**

Adams, the rise of automation is more likely to sharply divide the economic classes and cause widespread strife. “Those who are replaced by robots will become jobless and homeless,” he explains. “Those whose lives are enriched by the benefit of the robots will become abundantly wealthy in the material quality of their lives.”

CONTACTS:  
FANUC Robotics,  
[www.fanucrobotics.com](http://www.fanucrobotics.com);

Kiva Systems,  
[www.kivasystems.com](http://www.kivasystems.com); SingularityHub,  
[www.singularityhub.com](http://www.singularityhub.com),  
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[earthtalk@emagazine.com](mailto:earthtalk@emagazine.com).

## Stigma from A1

“He took his wedding band off, and threw his wedding band,” Sharon Kruder said.

He threw it right at her. “There’s too much memory behind them, and for him to take off something that I hold that dear to me, it hurt,” she said.

“When you see a woman that you’ve married for 25 years, love very much; when you see her crumpled in a ball against the wall, crying because of what you did, because of who you were ... that was enough,” Todd Kruder said. “That was enough for me to know that I had to fess up to myself; I had to fess up to others.”

What he had to “fess up” to was his severe depression, the result of what Todd Kruder said were several events throughout his life, including being deployed to Iraq for nine months from 2007 to 2008.

Mental illness continues to be an issue in today’s military: The Department of Veterans Affairs estimates 22 veterans commit suicide every day, about 8,000 annually.

U.S. Navy Capt. Anthony Arita, director of the Defense Department’s Deployment Health Clinical Center in Northern Virginia, said many service members don’t seek help for mental illness because of perceived stigma.

Service members might believe “That somehow it would be adverse to your career,” Arita said. “That somehow you would not be viewed favorably in the light of your leadership, your chain of command.”

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America surveyed members last year and found 40 percent declined to seek help for their mental illness because of that perceived harm to their careers.

In order to encourage soldiers to seek help for mental

illness, the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury started a multimedia campaign called Real Warriors, to assist service members and veterans.

Todd Kruder said it was the stigma of mental illness in the military which pushed him to the edge.

“I didn’t want people to know. I didn’t want my career affected. I didn’t want my name to be associated with depression, a weakness that I felt was there,” he said. “And I was willing to die for that”

Todd Kruder is better now thanks to medication and therapy, but the battle goes on for fellow veterans.

So he is waging a new fight, to eliminate the shame of mental illness.

“It almost killed me, that stigma, and what I’d encourage folks to do is put it away,” he said.

Todd Kruder said he is now writing a series of books that can be found on Amazon that document his battle with depression.

“It’s about putting a face out there that says severe depression affects anyone, everyone, and it doesn’t matter,” he said.

His wife said they still have work to do, but for now life is a lot smoother.

“I think it takes a huge amount of courage [for Todd] to be able to come out to tell people ‘This is what I’m dealing with. This is what I’m going through,’” Sharon Kruder said.

“Yeah [we] had some bad times with everything that went on, but the final outcome is happy,” she added. “I have more good than bad in my life. I really do.”

# Tips On Saving Money With An HVAC System



(NAPSI)—There’s good news for homeowners who want to reduce their energy costs. With a little bit of homework, savings are possible.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), most Americans are paying more for electricity and natural gas than they did four years ago, with the average household utility bill now

about \$1,900 each year. And, according to the Department of Energy (DOE), heating and cooling accounts for about 56 percent of the energy use in a typical U.S. home, making it the largest energy expense for most homes.

To reduce these costs, the experts at the Luxaire® brand of heating and air conditioning recommend the following:

- **Adjust your thermostat.** By raising your thermostat just a few degrees in mild temperatures and lowering it in cooler temperatures, you can help your heating and cooling system work less to maintain a comfortable indoor temperature. Programming your thermostat to accommodate your family’s time away from home

and sleeping schedules will also help to ensure that your system is operating only when you need it.

- **Install a dehumidifier.** Humidity can make the air feel hotter and heavier in warm weather. By removing the humidity, the air will feel drier and cooler and you will be able to rely less heavily on your heating and cooling system to make the air comfortable.

- **Perform regular maintenance.** Clean air filters, seal any duct leaks and make sure the areas around your system are clear of obstructions. According to the EPA, improper insulation can reduce system efficiency by up to 30 percent.

- **Have your existing home comfort system inspected and serviced by a qualified technician.** The technician will make sure your system is working properly and at peak efficiency. A knowledgeable technician will also be able to recommend a new, more efficient replacement system, such as ENERGY STAR®-qualified equipment that can help you save money on energy bills.

- **Learn more.** To learn more about efficient products that can help you save money and energy, or to find a heating and cooling contractor, visit [www.luxaire.com](http://www.luxaire.com).



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**Watch from A4**

benefits to expire on top of cuts to SNAP and other programs is cruel and unnecessary and asks sacrifices from those least able to bear it.

Please ask your Senators and Representatives to act now to extend emergency unemployment insurance benefits as soon as they return in January to assist those who need help most in this jobless recovery.

Marian Wright Edelman is President of the Children's De-

fense Fund whose *Leave No Child Behind*® mission is to ensure every child a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start* and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. For more information go to [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org).

Mrs. Edelman's *Child Watch* Column also appears each week on [The Huffington Post](http://The Huffington Post).

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