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PHOTO COURTESY OF TED SULLIVAN, CEO OF GAME CHANGER

GameChanger gives fans the ability to follow their local basketball, baseball or softball teams as the game progresses in real time on a phone, computer or tablet.

Maryland Coaches Embrace Affordable, High-Tech Toolset

By DYLAN MOROSES
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS – The quality gap between professional and amateur coaching tools is rapidly shrinking.

Parents who miss their child's games can follow along on their phone. Coaches and players now stay on the same page when learning and practicing thanks to organized, computer-created playbooks and game notes.

Athletes, coaches and fans were disconnected until

technology gave sport enthusiasts the affordable avenues to customize team statistics, create reports and provide live game tracking.

"Kids question coaching, and so do parents, whether it's about starting a certain player or playing a certain way," DeMatha Catholic High School baseball head coach Sean O'Connor said. "Technology allows us to say why we do something more effectively, and show a player the reasons why rather than just tell them, 'Do something because I said so.'"

GameChanger Media (gc.com)

Ted Sullivan loved coaching youth baseball, but dreaded the tedious processes of keeping stats with paper and pen and calling the press with game results, so he created GameChanger, a digital scorebook and game tracker free for coaches.

"Parents, grandparents and local fans have very strong connections to the young athletes in their communities," said Sullivan, who played baseball for an Annapolis American Legion

team growing up in the Washington, D.C., area. "GameChanger makes it super easy for anyone to access the latest statistics and game events."

Embracing technology like GameChanger in DeMatha Catholic High School's baseball program erased communication barriers among coaches, players and their parents, O'Connor said.

GameChanger is an online-based application that allows

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The Cutting Edge: Sensor Technology for the Modern Coach

By DYLAN MOROSES
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS – Radar guns, bat swing sensors and monitor devices, once exclusive to the elite level of sport, are now affordable to the everyday coach.

Where there were once sports skill trainers who used video analysis, there are now clip-on dongles and mobile apps to provide instant visual evidence that anyone can use.

Parents can follow kids' games on the train home, coaches can spend less time tallying and more time training, and student athletes can take in stats like everything else – with a snappy digital interface.

"Kids are visual learners and live in the 160-character world; embrace it, there's no risk," said baseball head coach Sean O'Connor of DeMatha Catholic High School.

The budding sports technology industry includes both costly and affordable devices available to players and coaches that improve methods of communication and instruction.

Avida Sports Technology

During a chaotic burst of strokes and kicking, swimmers cannot hear their coach or receive feedback on their performance to adjust during practice, or a race.

Michigan-based Avida Sports Technology began in 2006 and provides stats for swimming, with no effort by coaches, through a set of sensors and a Wi-Fi device.

For generations, coaches calculated on video many of the statistics Avida tracks, laboriously watching race after race, counting strokes. The device eliminates these hours of analysis completely by providing coaches the same statistics in real time.

Avida Sports uses sensors on the swimmers' ankles, wrists and in their swim caps to monitor a range of statistics, including stroke count and leg kicks, that can be relayed to the swimmer in practice through an earpiece in the cap.

"It's pretty much Siri in my head," said Navy Men's swim team captain Riley Mita, who is originally from Los Angeles.

The Navy men's swimming team began using Avida Sports



CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE PHOTO BY DYLAN MOROSES

The Navy men's swimming team waits for the Avida sensors to reset, and head coach Bill Roberts to send them through another sprint lap, at the U.S. Naval Academy's Lejeune Hall on Sept. 24, 2014.

technology in 2013, installing a permanent system in their training facility to monitor their team's performance during practices. This system monitors eight different measurements, including kick rate and distance per stroke, on up to 100 swimmers simultaneously.

"Once we get it working consistent, it will be inval-

able," said Daniel Bowden, a team manager who tracks Avida's data on a computer during practice, making sure the sensors function properly. "I think it helps swimmers reach their potential, figuring out

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Cardin Welcomes HUD Secretary Castro to Prince George's County

By PRES OFFICER
Office of Senator Ben Cardin

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. – U.S. Senator Ben Cardin (D-Md.), Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Julián Castro and Prince George's County Executive Rushern Baker convened a roundtable of housing counselors Monday to discuss the current challenges facing local homeowners. HUD and Prince George's County have a number of programs designed specifically to help struggling homeowners

and to educate potential homeowners before they commit to what may be the largest purchase in their lifetime.

"The State of Maryland and Prince George's County have been working hard with federal partners, including HUD, to help local residents navigate through the hardest of economic times. Prince George's County was Ground Zero for Maryland during the peak of the housing crisis. While the

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Lady Bulldogs Earn 68-62 Road Victory at Alderson Broaddus

By TAMIEKA BRISCOE
Capital News Service

PHILIPPI, W.Va. – After a 15-day layoff, Bowie State women's basketball returned to action on Wednesday evening and captured a 68-62 road win over Alderson Broaddus University. The win evens the Lady Bulldogs record at 3-3 on the year.

Senior Donia Naylor (Washington, D.C.) led four Bowie State players in double figures with 17 points. Joining Naylor with double figure scoring were junior Ty-Nita Baker (Houston, Miss.) with 13 points and seniors Alisha Burley (Baltimore, Md.) and Jasmine McIntosh (Bowie, Md.) with 12 and 10 points respectively. Junior Jour-

dan Stanhope (Columbus, Ohio) ripped down a game-high and personal season-best 11 rebounds for the Lady Bulldogs to go along with two blocks, one steal and one assist.

As a team, Bowie State shot 24-for-59 from the field (40.7 percent) and 15-for-22 (68.2 percent) at the free throw line. The Battlers of Alderson Broaddus went 19-for-58 (32.8 percent) for the game, that included 11-for-27 behind the 3-point line and made 13-of-18 (72.2 percent) free throws.

The Lady Bulldogs came out of fast in the first half

See **BULLDOGS** Page A5

Prince George's County 16 Year-Old Tennis Champion Francis Tiafoe Wins Another Award

By JACK OLENDER
Jack Olender & Associates

Prince George's County 16 year-old Tennis Champion Francis Tiafoe was honored with the Jack & Lovell Olender Foundation's "America's Role Model" Award on December 4, 2014 at the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. Presentation was by NBC News 4 anchor and tennis ace Jim Handly. The grant went to Junior Tennis Champions Center in College Park, Maryland. Lovell Olender, Posthumously was honored by the Jack and Lovell Olender Foundation's "Generous Heart" Award. Her husband Jack

Olender, Esq. medical malpractice lawyer, licensed in Maryland and District of Columbia, their two nieces, and Lovell's three wonder-



PHOTO COURTESY JACK H. OLENDER & ASSOCIATES (l-r) Tennis Champion Francis Tiafoe "America's Role Model" awardee of the Olender Foundation, grant to Junior Tennis Champions Center in College Park, Maryland. Presentation by NBC News 4 anchor and tennis ace Jim Handly at the 29th Annual Olender Foundation Awards.

George's Tennis & Education Foundation was formed by former wheelchair tennis champion, Brenda Gilmore.

INSIDE

Families Join DHMH to Support Improvements in Mental Health Care in Maryland

Through a number of key initiatives in the past 20 years, the state has expanded access to community- and evidence-based mental health treatment, has developed innovative services and has expanded access to crisis services, supportive services and housing. **Community**, Page A3

Progress for Babies, Toddlers, and Preschoolers

The bipartisan budget agreement reached at the beginning of the year placed a priority on new investments in early learning by providing \$250 million in new funding for Preschool Development Grants to enhance and expand access to quality preschool programs. **Commentary**, Page A4

Water Quality Certification application for proposed Conowingo Dam relicensing withdrawn

MDE had stated its intention to deny the Proposed Relicensing of the Conowingo Hydroelectric Project Application for Water Quality Certification application due to insufficient information provided by the applicant. **Business**, Page A5

Movie Review: "Wild"

With the dissolution of her marriage and the death of her mother, Cheryl Strayed has lost all hope. After years of reckless, destructive behavior, she makes a rash decision. With absolutely no experience, driven only by sheer determination, Cheryl hikes more than a thousand miles of the Pacific Crest Trail. **Out on the Town**, Page A6

Earth Talk

Dear EarthTalk:

What is biochar and how can it help reduce my carbon footprint?

— William Jarvis, Bethlehem, PA

Features, Page A7

Towns and NEIGHBORS

In and Around Morningside-Skyline

by Mary McHale 301 735 3451

Longtime residents, Agnes Barber and Betty Oppido, die at 89

In the past two weeks two longtime residents of Skyline passed away. Both women were 89 years old, charter members of the Skyline Citizens Association and active members of St. Philip's Church where I attended their funerals. They'll be much missed.

Agnes Idola Barber

Agnes Barber died Dec. 6. She was youngest of the 16 children born to John and Lena Fredrick of Clemmons, Md. She graduated from Bancker High School and earned a diploma from the National Institute of Practical Nursing. In 1948 she married the late Joseph A. Barber Sr.

In 1964 she moved to McKeldin Drive, in Skyline, where she shared a house with her sisters Florine and Henrietta. She drove a cab in Washington and then spent years as a cook at Tucker's, Lamp Post Inn and, finally, Skyline Restaurant. After retiring, she took a cake-decorating class, which began the era of The Doll Cakes. She was also known for her Whiskey Cakes (with lots of whiskey).

In recent years she lived with her daughter and son-in-law Bernadette and Willie Pace. Other survivors include Joseph A. and Chauncey P. Barber, four grandchildren and two-great-grandchildren. Two of her sons, Rodney Barber and Wilbert Edwards, preceded her in death. Father Edward Hegnauer celebrated her Mass of Christian Burial. Readings were by Susan Becker, Deacon John Somerville and Deacon James Somerville. Beautiful hymns were sung by Venita Parker a cappella. Burial is at Resurrection Cemetery.

Elizabeth Florentz "Betty" Oppido

Betty Oppido passed away on Dec. 12. She was born in Mahanomen, Minn., the daughter of Ole Nappe and Anna Haugo. After high school she left the small community of Mahanomen in search of adventure. The road led her to

Chicago, then to Seattle where she was one of those women who became known as Rosie the Riveter, and she continued on to Alaska.

It was there, in Alaska, that she met her future husband, Antonio Carmen Oppido, a career military man. By 1970 or so, Antonio's career brought them to the Washington area and to Elmendorf Drive, in Skyline. Betty worked at Andrew's base nursery, volunteered with the Ladies Auxiliary of Post 9619, and helped at Melwood and SPRED, organizations for persons with developmental disabilities, like her son Jimmy. She was extra proud of Jimmy when he was one of four gift-bearers for the Papal Benedict's Mass at the new Nationals Stadium on April 17, 2008.

Her husband, Antonio, predeceased her. Survivors include her children, Kathryn, Frederick, Judith, John and James; seven grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Fathers Edward Hegnauer and Bernard Ihrle concelebrated her Mass of Christian Burial. Joe Messina did the readings; Steve Dameron provided the music.

Neighbors

J. Steward Smith, of Skyline, was among the honorees at the Prince George's 2014 Supplier Diversity Appreciation Night, hosted by the Prince George's County Supplier Development & Diversity Division. He is Business Development Manager for FSC First, which encourages small and minority business financing.

I had a Christmas letter from Agnes Koch of Bothell, Wash., formerly of Morningside and Suitland. She is 101 and last year moved in with her daughter Julie. She writes, "I am thankful for the gift of a long life, and grateful that I could see and read until I was well past 100... Now Julie reads for me."

My grandson Conor McHale, his wife Heather and their children, Mary and Wesley, and I had a delightful pre-Christmas day last week when we took in the annual Ginger-

bread House judging at Darnall's Chance House Museum in Upper Marlboro, and then drove through the annual Festival of Lights at Watkins Park. We (and you) should do it every year.

Changing landscape

Murry's Steaks is closed. It was located in the Penn Randall industrial park at Pennsylvania Avenue and Old Marlboro Pike and was founded in 1948. According to a profile I found on line, it had 50 to 100 employees and annual sales of \$25,000,000 to \$74,999,999.

Christmas Awards, 30 years ago

The following Morningside residents were declared winners in four different categories in the 1984 Christmas Decorating Contest, as reported by Chairman Deborah K. Detrick-Breuer:

Colonial: 1st place, Benjamin & Linda Gryskewicz, Larkspur Rd.; 2nd place, David & Dyane Wright, Woodland Rd. Religious: 1st, Michael, Ginger & Nicki Goods, Pine Grove Dr.; 2nd, Richard & Sharon Adams, Suitland Rd. Child's Delight: 1st, Cecilio P. & Shirley Torres, Woodland Rd.; 2nd, Michael & Catherine Miller, Woodland Rd. Judge's Choice: 1st, Larry & Vera Bauer, Morgan Rd.; 2nd, Bob & Eunice Walker, Maple Rd.

Milestones

Happy birthday to Jeffrey Norton and Michael Nichols, Dec. 26; Virginia Simms, Carolyn Jeffcoat and Kirra Starr Mears, Dec. 27; Christopher Garris, Anne Lucas, Patsy Anderson and my granddaughter Samantha McHale, Dec. 28; Brayden Proctor, Dec. 29; Amy Anthony and Robert Tretler, Dec. 30; and Pat Spry, Dec. 31.

Happy anniversaries to Nola and Bruce Thomas, their 37th on Dec. 27, and to my grandson David and Nina McHale, their 14th on Dec. 30.

A Blessed Christmas to all my wonderful readers!

Brandywine-Aquasco

by Audrey Johnson 301 888 2153

A HOLIDAY CELEBRATION

Bowie State University "Tis the Season" a Holiday Celebration held Saturday December 13, 2014 at Bowie State University Fine and Performing Arts Center was spectacular. The program featured Bowie State University Jazz Band Ensemble, Artist Irvin Stacy Haywood and talented local youth musicians and dancers.

LINE DANCE SOCIAL NIGHT

The last date for St. Philip's Line Dance Social Night this year is Friday December 26, 2014 at 7:00 PM. Points of contact are Ruby E. Hinnant (301) 627-1235 (301) 943-2816 (Cell), Shirley A. Cleaves (301) 888-1475, (302) 690-4260 (Cell), Michele K. Chase (301) 888-2510, (240) 882-3369 (Cell).

BADEN COMMUNITY CENTER

Zumba fitness for adults is offered from Monday January 5, 2015- Wednesday February 11, 2015 at Baden Community Center. Smartlink# number is 1578721. Zumba is a fusion of

Latin and International music and dance themes that create a dynamic and exciting workout.

Baden Community Center is located at 13601 Baden-Westwood Road Brandywine, Maryland 20613. Please call 301-888-1500; TTY 301-203-6030 for additional information.

NEW YEARS EVE WATCH SERVICE

The guest speaker Pastor Stroman and the Men's Chorus of Clinton United Methodist Church will be celebrating New Year's Watch Service at Zion Wesley United Methodist Church December 31, 2014 at 9:30 PM. The church is located at 11500 Berry Road, Waldorf, Maryland.

CHRISTMAS ON THE POTOMAC ICE

Ice featuring Frosty the Snowman is brought to life carved from over two million pounds of colorful ice January 1- January 4, 2015. You will be able to walk thru this classic story, slide down ice slides over two stories high and watch artisans as they create these frozen

marvels in a special bonus area- The Frostbite Factory (a LIVE ice carving zone). It's all part of Christmas on the Potomac at Gaylord National Resort (\$).

The location is Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center 201 Water Front Street National Harbor, Maryland. Telephone number is 301-965-2000. Visit www.christmason-thepotomac.com.

SHOW PLACE ARENA

City of Praise Family Ministries presents New Year's Eve Celebration 2015, December 31, 2014 (Wednesday 7:00 PM) and January 1, 2015 (Thursday 12:30 AM). Come celebrate the ending of this year by bringing in 2015 with a prophetic word from Bishop Joel and Pastor Ylawnda Peebles. There will be special guests Mary Mary, J. Moss, Kevin LeVar and Janay Peebles. The address is 14900 Pennsylvania Avenue Upper Marlboro, Maryland. You can purchase tickets via eventbrite.com/

MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR

Neighborhood Events

Passage of The Chesapeake Bay Accountability and Recovery Act

Washington, D.C. — Congresswoman Donna F. Edwards (MD-4) issued the following statement after The Chesapeake Bay Accountability and Recovery Act, S. 1000, passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 416-0. The bill now goes to President Obama to be signed into law.

"The Chesapeake Bay is a national treasure that requires all entities involved in its preservation and restoration to coordinate their activities. House passage of the Chesapeake Bay Accountability and Recovery Act, S. 1000, is a welcome step in that effort and will provide a comprehensive picture of the programs and their associated costs at federal, state, and local agencies. The resulting report will help Congress and stakeholders make informed decisions about the most effective and cost-efficient activities moving forward."

Six Local Athletes Named to Special Olympics Team USA

491 Athletes and Coaches to Represent U.S. at 2015 Special Olympics World Summer Games Baltimore, Md. -- Special Olympics Maryland is proud to announce that six athletes from Maryland have been named to Special Olympics Team USA. The 491 member delegation will represent the United States at the 2015 Special Olympics World Summer Games, being held July 25-August 2, 2015, in Los Angeles, California.

These athletes, hailing from various counties throughout Maryland, will compete in several sports over the course of the 2015 Special Olympics World Summer Games, including:

- Abigail Reznick (Prince George's County) – Aquatics
- Alicia Gogue (Anne Arundel County) – Cycling
- Edward Murphy (Upper Shore) – Cycling
- Benjamin Stevik (Prince George's County) – Equestrian
- Christopher Dooley (Upper Shore) – Kayaking
- Terrel Limerick (Montgomery County) – Sailing

The U.S. "home team" will include 304 athletes and 43 Unified Partners competing in 17 sports, 102 volunteer coaches, and 42 volunteer sports and management team members, representing all fifty states and the District of Columbia. The team also includes several Special Olympics Unified Sports® teams, where people with and without intellectual disability compete together, as teammates.

Every two years, the world transcends the boundaries of geography, nationality, political philosophy, gender, age, culture and religion to come together for Special Olympics World Games. Alternating between summer and winter Games, this event is the flagship event of the Special Olympics movement, which promotes equality, tolerance and acceptance through the power and joy of sport. This prominent world stage brings attention to the Special Olympics movement and the abilities of people with intellectual disabilities. Currently, more than 4.4 million Special Olympics athletes train and compete year-round in 170 nations across the globe.



Congresswoman
Donna F. Edwards

To learn more about Special Olympics Team USA and to follow the team to the World Games, visit www.specialolympicsteamusa.org, follow on Facebook at www.facebook.com/SOTeamUSA, Twitter @SOTeamUSA, Instagram: SOTeamUSA

About Special Olympics MD
SOMD is a year-round sports organization dedicated to providing quality sports training and competition opportunities to Maryland's children and adults with intellectual disabilities and/or closely related developmental disabilities. SOMD currently serves thousands of athletes statewide, and offers 24 sports, all at no cost to the athletes or their families. For more information about SOMD visit www.somd.org or call 410-242-1515 ext. 118.

Thompson Creek Window Company named to Professional Remodeler's 2014 America's Top Remodelers list

LANHAM, MD – Local window replacement company Thompson Creek Window Company has been named to Professional Remodeler magazine's annual America's Top Remodelers list as one of the top remodelers in the United States. "The annual America's Top Remodelers list recognizes those companies that stand above the competition," said Professional Remodeler Editorial Director Sal Alfano. "These companies represent the top remodeling firms in the country and are truly among the elite firms nationally."

Specializing in replacement windows, doors, gutter protection systems and siding, Thompson Creek is a family-owned company founded in Annapolis, Maryland by the Wuest family in 1980. The company has grown from its beginnings on West Street to become one of the nation's largest home improvement contractors while remaining a community-based company.

Rick Wuest, president of Thompson Creek, said, "I am proud to have our company recognized as one of the top remodelers in the country for another year. Sustainability in our business requires the highest-quality product, perfect installation, and top-notch customer service. Thompson Creek reviews feedback from every customer survey to make sure that we are living up to our mission to create the best customer service experience in our industry."

The Thompson Creek Window Company is a privately owned and family-operated manufacturer and installer of energy-efficient home improvement replacement products. Founded in 1980, Thompson Creek Window Company began as a manufacturer of energy-efficient, maintenance-free vinyl windows. Since that time, Thompson Creek Window Company has evolved into one of the leading specialty home improvement contracting companies in the nation. The company's product mix includes replacement windows and doors, vinyl siding and a clog-free gutter system. Thompson Creek Window Company is headquartered in Lanham, MD with an 80,000 square-foot manufacturing facility in Landover, MD.

COMMUNITY

Practical Money Skills

By Jason Alderman

Planning a Home Remodel That Actually Pays Off

There was a time when contractors building McMansion-style home additions or Michelin-worthy kitchens were a regular sight in many neighborhoods — until around 2006, when the Great Recession began to take hold.

Here's the good news: home improvements are starting to add value in a rising housing market. Here's the bad news: you have to be very careful about the renovation or remodeling projects you select to avoid over-stretching your budget.



In 2014, completing successful home improvements comes down to two critical questions:

- Will you get most of your money back when you sell your property? (The days of 100 percent-plus returns on renovations are over, at least for now.)
- How will project costs affect your overall financial plan?

Here are questions to fuel your planning:

- How long you plan to live in the home after the renovation. The Great Recession proved many homeowners didn't recoup elaborate — or sometimes modest — improvement costs when selling their homes. Even in a recovering market, it's good to be wary. For now, renovate for the long haul and your personal enjoyment, not overnight sale.
- Neighborhood style and standards. We've all seen it — the oversized addition that dwarfs the rest of the houses on the block, the \$50,000 kitchen upgrade in a small home where a spruce-up for \$10,000 or less would do. It's important to know how your tastes align with what is salable in your market (see Cost vs. Value, below).
- Opportunistic buying and installation times for various projects. Take replacement windows, for example. Collect bids in mid-summer and recheck them in late fall — you'll likely find significant savings on both windows and installation.
- Available renovation tax credits on federal, state and local levels. Are there credits or tax incentives on structural equipment or appliances that can offset the cost of whatever you're planning?
- Potential effect on property taxes. Could an elaborate renovation actually turn off future buyers thanks to higher maintenance costs and property taxes?
- Intelligence on recent purchase prices and home features. Smart homeowners keep an eye on recent home sale prices in the neighborhood and the features — or lack of them — that made the transaction.

Now here's where you can find some answers.

Remodeling magazine's annual Cost vs. Value Report (<http://www.remodeling.hw.net/cost-vs-value/2014/>) has become a leading consumer resource for pricing improvements and cost recovery nationwide, regionally and in major metro areas. The online format allows users to compare project cost and recovery at sale all the way back to 2002.

While the nation's housing market is generally in recovery, some of the publication's 2014 top-producing projects were surprisingly small. The top three 2014 home improvements in terms of cost return were:

- Entry door replacement (96.6 percent cost recovery)
- Wooden deck addition (87.4 percent)
- Attic bedroom addition/renovation (84.3 percent)

Remodeling reported that the value of remodeling projects began to slide nationally with home values in 2006 and only began to recover in 2013. As home resale values rise, so will cost recovery on incrementally bigger projects. As the publication notes, it's a cautious environment.

For more detailed information, seek knowledge on a more local level:

- Get to know your neighbors. If your neighbors have done home improvements inside and out, politely ask if they'll share their story.
- Befriend a broker. Real estate brokers and agents are happiest when they're closing deals, but they like to build long-term relationships, too. The best brokers are happy to share neighborhood renovation value intelligence in exchange for a house tour. They can't sell a house filled with overpriced improvements.
- Before major projects, consider a home inspector. A home inspector's job is to determine if the structural and mechanical aspects of a property are up to code. If a home hasn't had a structural or mechanical upgrade for many years, professional inspection may detect trouble spots and intermediate upgrades that could be far more valuable than cosmetic work.
- Talk to a tax professional. Federal and state tax credits and deductions may be available as part of any project you do. The IRS has a current summary (<http://www.irs.gov/uac/Newsroom/Energy-Efficient-Home-Improvements-Can-Lower-Your-Taxes>) of 2014 energy credits and related resources.
- Check your credit reports and scores. If you need to borrow to complete a project, it's a good idea to check your credit reports and current credit score to determine whether you'll qualify for a loan. You have the right to get all three of your credit reports — from Experian, TransUnion and Equifax — once a year for free. You can do so by ordering directly from AnnualCreditReport.com.
- Talk to a financial planner. Any home improvement project is potentially major when compared to what you earn or have in savings. A certified financial planner can help you evaluate potential projects against the competing financial goals in your life like saving for retirement and your children's college tuition.
- Figure out what you can do yourself. Whether it's painting, landscaping, carpentry or electrical work, helping with a few DIY finishing touches on a home improvement project can save money. Just make sure you have the time and skill to pitch in.

Bottom line: Approach a home renovation as you would any other major financial decision — do your homework and see how it fits into your overall financial plan.

Families Join DHMH to Support Improvements in Mental Health Care in Maryland

By PRESS OFFICER
DHMH

Baltimore, MD — Families of individuals with serious mental illness joined state health leaders to recommend today that the state implement three proposals to improve treatment for the severely mentally ill in Maryland.

The first proposal would create an outpatient civil commitment program to help severely mentally ill individuals pursue stable lives. Maryland is currently one of just five states to lack such a program.

"Outpatient civil commitment provides the option of outpatient treatment to a small, clearly defined population when it is the least-restrictive alternative to maintain an individual's health and safety," stated Jessica Honke, Policy and Advocacy Director of NAMI Maryland. "Many individuals with serious mental illness and their families have been in crisis for years because there is no outpatient treatment option for those who refuse voluntary treatment. Without this alternative the small, high-risk subset of people will be served by emergency rooms, hospitals, jails and prisons, or will suffer the outcomes of

non-treatment: homelessness, criminalization, victimization, suicide or violence."

"Our goal is to help individuals with severe mental illness receive treatment and end the debilitating cycle of hospitalizations, homelessness and incarcerations," said

Dr. Gayle M. Jordan-Randolph, Deputy Secretary of Behavioral Health at the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

An outpatient civil commitment law involves mandatory monitoring and participation in clinically approved treatment that often includes the use of psychotropic medications, along with other support services, for individuals who repeatedly have been hospitalized and who, despite voluntary treatment opportunities, have struggled in the community. The program is intended as a time-limited intervention to support recovery from illness, to reduce the long-term impact of incomplete or interrupted mental health treatment, to increase quality of the life and to reduce the arrest/re-arrest rates in people suffering from severe mental illness.

Marylanders with adult children grappling with severe mental illness today urged the state to adopt outpatient civil

commitment. Judith Kerner-McIver spoke of having to transport her adult son to Pennsylvania, where outpatient civil commitment treatment has helped her son regain stability and employment. Susan Kneller spoke of her son's illness and how she fears a lack of treatment will result in negative interactions with law enforcement. And H. Giles Knight spoke of his son's inability to lead a stable, productive life within Maryland's current voluntary-only, outpatient treatment framework.

The second proposal would improve access to such voluntary community-based services as assertive community treatment, rental subsidies and crisis services — including services that are readily accessible to individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing. Maryland has long been a national leader in providing quality, community-based care to individuals with mental illness. Through a number of key initiatives in the past 20 years, the state has expanded access to community- and evidence-based mental health treatment, has developed innovative services and has expanded access to crisis services, supportive services and housing. As a result of these

efforts, an overwhelming majority of individuals with mental illness have improved access to care, enabling them to live fulfilling and productive lives in the community. This proposal would build upon previous successes in the state and would help ensure that services remain accessible to those most in need.

The final proposal would define dangerousness in regulation and would provide comprehensive training around the dangerousness standard. Due to variances in how the dangerousness standard is interpreted, there is often uncertainty about whether an individual meets the criteria for involuntary hospitalization. However, by defining dangerousness and providing training to health care providers, this proposal will promote a more consistent application of the standard throughout the health care system.

These recommendations are further detailed in the workgroup report. The report, its appendices and other related documents can be viewed at the DHMH website under "Final Report" at <http://dhmh.maryland.gov/bhd/ServicePages/Outpatient%20Services%20Programs%20Stakeholder%20Workgroup.aspx>.

PG County from A1

housing market is improving in some parts of the country, it is clear that Prince George's County still greatly needs our support—both locally and federally. Too many Maryland families still find themselves in financial jeopardy," said Senator Cardin. "I thank Secretary Castro for visiting Prince George's County so early in his tenure at HUD. It has been invaluable for us to hear firsthand from the very counselors on the front lines providing the support and resources to help preserve the dream of home ownership. I will continue to ensure that our community receives appropriate funding from the Federal Government and resources from HUD. Clear from our discussion also is the need to engage more banks in the process of keeping families in their homes. As a member of the Senate Finance Committee, I also understand the great importance of ensuring that our tax code provides mortgage forgiveness relief to homeowners, so we do not unfairly penalize families who are already struggling economically."

"We can all agree that when the circumstances are right, homeownership enhances com-

munities and help folks strengthen their financial futures. We're working to preserve the dream of homeownership for all of those who've already bought a home, but are struggling a bit," said HUD Secretary Julián Castro.

"I want to thank Senator Cardin and Secretary Castro for facilitating this important discussion about the housing

the County. However, there are still a number of families who are struggling from the loss of jobs and opportunities due to the Great Recession. With a quickly improving economy, the engagement and help of our federal partners — specifically from our County's Congressional Delegation and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) — we are

Despite progress, Maryland continues to rank second nationwide in number of foreclosures, with Prince George's County making up 22.3 percent of all statewide

and foreclosures challenges facing Prince George's County," said Prince George's County Executive Rushern L. Baker, III. "The County's foreclosure crisis was a major jolt to our economy, but this administration has worked diligently to turn things around. We have successfully attracted several large economic development projects, significantly reduced crime and worked to improve our school system. These efforts along with implementing homeownership programs are contributing to the rise in residential housing values around

overcoming these challenges and helping our impacted residents get back on their feet. It is important to them and the County."

"High foreclosure rates are a major drag on our economy and create a significant burden for hardworking Marylanders," U.S. Senator Barbara A. Mikulski said. "Families in Prince George's County and across Maryland need a government on their side. That's why I've continued to fight to protect homebuyers, especially those in poor and underserved communities, who often fall prey to intention-

ally confusing mortgages that appear affordable at first, only to become a crushing hardship later. It's time to foreclose on the bad guys and stop the foreclosures on homes."

According to the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development: Maryland's foreclosure rate increased from 47.7 foreclosures per 10,000 households in the second quarter to 48.9 in the third quarter of 2014, although its ranking remained unchanged as the second highest nationwide behind Florida. Also according to RealtyTrac data, the State's foreclosure rate was 103.0 percent above the U.S. rate of 24.1 in the third quarter of 2014.

Prince George's County, with 2,684 foreclosures, had the largest share of foreclosures statewide, accounting for 23.1 percent of the total. Foreclosure activity in Prince George's County increased 17.8 percent above the previous quarter and by 32.9 percent over last year. Foreclosure sales increased by 24.4 percent in Prince George's County, to 1,101 notices, and were up 8.0 percent above last year.

Foreclosure sales in the county accounted for 22.3 percent of all foreclosure sales statewide, the largest share among the State's twenty-four jurisdictions.

Toolset from A1

coaches to plug in game events in real time, using it as a scorebook on their phone or tablet.

The app takes the game data and allows parents and fans to follow the contest from their mobile device or computer, watching a virtual playing field update with symbols and a running box score, Sullivan said.

O'Connor has been using GameChanger since he began coaching in 2008 as one of its earliest adopters. Although hard work has no substitute, the ability to see which players are performing well or need coaching instantly improved DeMatha's preparation and practice, O'Connor said.

Elementary school to collegiate coaches have access to tools that digest statistics and game data, provide game recaps without writing a word,

and organize team activities through GameChanger.

Coaches enjoy all that the application offers, but can choose to put certain features behind a pay wall for parents and fans to access many of GameChanger's services.

GameChanger costs \$7.99 per month for premium access or \$39.99 yearly.

GameChanger tracks statistics common in baseball, softball and basketball, but also includes advanced metrics and special statistics for youth players and teams that make up the majority of the service's customer base, called "developmental metrics," Sullivan said.

"We calculate things like 'first pitch strike percentage' and 'hard hit ball percentage,' which are easy to calculate, but are essential things to teach young athletes about how to play baseball well early on," Sullivan said.



PHOTO COURTESY OF TED SULLIVAN, CEO OF GAME CHANGER

Coaches can use GameChanger as their scorebook, plugging in game events to the app that compiles the events into a box score.

"I'm not a huge stats guy, because they can be manipulated in any way, but GameChanger allows me to see how everyone is progressing in all levels of our program," O'Connor said. "GameChanger

helps us find our weaknesses fast, improves our coaching in the process and makes practice much more efficient."

COMMENTARY

Barbara A. Mikulski United States Senator for Maryland



Mikulski Announces FY15 Spending Bill Keeps Promises to Veterans

Change in law means beginning in FY16, federal funding will be appropriated in the federal checkbook a year in advance for veterans pensions, spousal support, compensation for service-related injuries and education

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senator Barbara A. Mikulski (D-Md.), Chairwoman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, today announced the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act of 2015 keeps our nation's promises to veterans by changing the law to authorize funding a year in advance for veterans pensions, spousal support, compensation for service-related injuries and education benefits. This change in law will ensure that beginning in fiscal year (FY) 2016, veterans and military families have certainty in the benefits they've earned and deserve, regardless of shutdowns or gridlock in Congress.

The legislation is currently under consideration in the House of Representatives. The Senate is expected to take it up later this week.

"Today we have forged a new way forward for veterans that changes the lawbooks to provide certainty in the federal checkbooks for the benefits veterans have earned and deserve," Senator Mikulski said. "This means that beginning next year, veterans will receive their benefits regardless of shutdowns, slowdowns and gridlock in Congress. Veterans and their families should not have to question whether they will get their benefits if the government cannot work together to get the job done. This change

in law will better ensure that promises made to veterans are promises kept."

The legislation includes a new provision to authorize advance funding for U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) mandatory accounts. Advance funding would provide certainty for veterans benefits including compensation for illnesses and injuries while serving in the military such as combat wounds, hearing loss and PTSD. It also includes advance funding for pensions for those that have been permanently disabled while serving in the military, education benefits including the G.I. Bill ensuring military veterans get assistance with college education, housing, books and board while in school, and spousal support for deceased veterans. Taking effect in fiscal year (FY) 2016, this new authorization will ensure veterans benefits are not held hostage to shutdowns and delays.

Senator Mikulski championed this new provision working closely with Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) along with leaders of the Senate and House Veterans Affairs committees.

As a member of the Senate Military Family Caucus and the Veterans Jobs Caucus, Senator Mikulski has been a strong advocate for our veterans to ensure they receive the care and benefits they have earned and deserve.



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PHOTO CREDIT: ANONYMOUS

Child Watch by Marion Wright Edelman



Progress for Babies, Toddlers, and Preschoolers

On December 10th President Obama hosted a White House Summit on Early Education, bringing together a broad coalition of philanthropic, business, education, child advocacy, and elected leaders and other key stakeholders. It was a welcome chance to celebrate progress in expanding access to quality early childhood development and learning opportunities for children from birth through age 5. Although we haven't yet seen the passage of needed comprehensive legislation to provide low-income and other at-risk children a full continuum of quality supports from voluntary home visiting programs to Early Head Start and Head Start, child care, pre-kindergarten and — I hope — full-day kindergarten, progress has been made in increasing access to and expanding quality programs and building support for future investments.

The bipartisan budget agreement reached at the beginning of the year placed a priority on new investments in early learning by providing \$250 million in new funding for Preschool Development Grants to enhance and expand access to quality preschool programs and \$500 million for Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership awards. The President announced at the summit that 18 states will receive Preschool Development Grants and hundreds of communities across 49 states will benefit from Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership awards. He also announced more than \$330 million in new philanthropic commitments for early childhood development and learning. This new funding will allow the country to keep moving forward for our young children.

This isn't the only good news. In November the President signed into law a bipartisan bill to improve the quality of federally subsidized child care provided by the Child Care and Development Block Grant. The bill sets stronger health and safety standards for subsidized care, makes it easier for parents to find and keep quality child care, and takes steps to improve the quality of child care so that children get quality early childhood development services. A

national poll released by the First Five Years Fund earlier this year found 71 percent of voters, including 60 percent of Republicans, support greater federal investments in early childhood education. Bipartisan efforts like this one reflect what many Americans already believe is the right thing to do for children and working parents. Hopefully adequate new funding for these critical improvements will follow. Action must also be taken early in 2015 to continue the Maternal and Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting Program, which over the last six years has invested \$1.9 billion in evidence-based programs at this critical front end of the early childhood continuum for infants and young children.

We're seeing progress at state and local levels too. For example, Alabama increased funding for its state prekindergarten program by \$10 million for fiscal year 2015, following a \$9.4 million increase for fiscal year 2014. California's budget included about \$264 million in additional funding for early childhood programs, including \$70 million for 11,500 new full-day, full-year preschool spaces, \$17 million to provide child care assistance to an additional 1,500

children, and \$68 million to increase reimbursement rates to child care and early education providers. Michigan increased funding for its Great Start School Readiness program by \$65 million for the second year in a row; this year's increase will allow more than 10,000 additional 4-year-olds to participate. Vermont Governor Peter Shumlin signed a law requiring all school districts to make part-day prekindergarten available to all 3- and 4-year old children.

New York's budget included a \$1.5 billion, five-year investment to expand the state's prekindergarten program, with the majority of funding allocated to New York City. New York City's Mayor Bill de Blasio was elected on a platform that included preschool expansion to combat income inequality. As a result of his strong leadership, more than 51,000 New York City children are being served this school year, more than doubling the reach of the city's preschool system. Seattle voters approved a ballot initiative in November that will pay preschool tuition for up to 2,000 low-income children through a

See WATCH, Page A12

Marc Morial, President and CEO National Urban League



This Is Why We March

"It's just so overwhelming to see all who have come to stand with us. Look at the masses - Black, white, all races, all religions...We need to stand like this at all times."

— Gwen Carr, the mother of Eric Garner, at the "Justice for All" March in Washington, DC on Saturday, December 13

Few times in a nation's history is the conscience of its citizens shocked and awakened — across racial, economic, generational and even ideological — lines. Times when the collective consciousness of a people screams — and demands without apology — that it's time for a change, that things must be different and that it must start today.

So, when people ask, "Why do we march?," I tell them we march because of the views expressed, concerns shared, and pain felt by all the people who took to the stage to speak and the tens of thousands who marched and chanted for "Justice for All" on Saturday in Washington, DC. We march for the millions more across America who know that what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. shared in his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" more than 50 years ago is still true today: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

In this catalytic moment driven by cataclysmic circumstances, what we have witnessed across America since the non-indictments of officers in the killings of Michael Brown and Eric Garner may be new to a generation, but it is not new to a nation.

Catalytic moments birthed by cataclysmic circumstances — the horrific beating and murder of Emmett Till, the killing of four little Black girls in the 1963 Birmingham church bombing and the murders of civil rights workers Schwerner, Goodman and Chaney. These events shocked our nation into more than awareness. They shocked us into action — action that resulted in the passing of the most comprehensive and sweeping civil rights laws our nation has seen in its history.

That is why we march — because Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Akai Gurley, Tamir Rice, John Crawford and others did not deserve to die; because Marlene Pinnock did not deserve to be viciously beaten and Levar Jones did not deserve to be shot for complying with a trooper's request; because the excessive use of force — deadly force — by law enforcement against unarmed African Americans has no place in the land of the free and the home of the brave; because police should not fear the communities they have sworn to pro-

tect and communities should not fear those who serve to protect them; and because we — as a nation — must and can be better.

We marched in Washington — as we have so many times before — as a multicultural band of historic civil rights organizations united with legislators, clergy, everyday Americans and young people who have committed ourselves to working for the change we want to see and to peaceful, nonviolent advocacy, activism and change. Everyone committed to that mission — no matter age, race, religion or background — is and has always been welcome. The challenges before us are big enough that we all have a role to play in the solutions.

We have been here before — and we can change a nation again. That is why we and our partners — the National Action Network, NAACP and Black Women's Roundtable — marched in DC this past weekend along with many others. It's also why we will continue to be in communities across America every day, doing the work that the National Urban League has consistently done for 104 years to ensure a better America for all citizens.

We marched in our nation's capital to protest injustice — and most importantly to put forth a plan of action — a plan that will help ensure that no other family in America ever has to feel the pain of the mothers, fathers, wives, daughters and sons who stood with us that day:

- 10-POINT JUSTICE PLAN: National Urban League Police Reform and Accountability Recommendations
- Widespread Use of Body Cameras and Dashboard Cameras
 - Broken Windows Reform and Implementation of 21st Century Community Policing Model
 - Review Police Use of Deadly Force Policies and Adopt a Uniform Deadly Force Standard
 - Comprehensive Retraining of All Police Officers
 - Comprehensive Review and Strengthening of Police Hiring Standards
 - Appointment of Special Prosecutors to Investigate Police Misconduct
 - Mandatory, Uniform FBI Reporting and Audit of Lethal Force Incidents Involving All Law Enforcement
 - Creation and Audit of National Database of Citizen Complaints against Police
 - Revision of National Police Accreditation System for Mandatory Use by Law Enforcement To Be Eligible for Federal Funds
 - National Comprehensive Anti-Racial Profiling Law

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BUSINESS

The American Counseling Association's Counseling Corner

Worry: More Dangerous To Your Health Than You May Realize

Most of us find plenty of opportunities in daily life to worry. From work problems to family issues to our health, we all have an endless list of things that can cause worry.

But worrying about real things in our lives isn't always bad, though perhaps not very enjoyable. Being worried performs a needed function, getting us to focus on an issue and, hopefully, to take action.

The problem is needless worry. That's worry about things that are imaginary or out of our control. Such worry is harmful as it raises stress levels, yet comes from things we can do nothing about.

Excessive worry is not only unpleasant and stressful, but can lead to very real health issues. Worrying stimulates our bodies to produce various chemicals, such as adrenaline, that cause physiological reactions, such as muscle tension, increased blood pressure and higher heart rates.

The physical reaction to constant worry can result in headaches, back pain and stomach problems. There's evidence it also affects our immune system, leaving us more vulnerable to viruses and bacteria, perhaps even cancer, and appears to increase the risk of heart attack and stroke.

So how to reduce worry in your life? Start by analyzing how real the source of your worrying is. If it's something over which you have control, then channel your worry into action. Develop a plan for dealing with the cause of your worry, then carry it out.

But if your source of worry is outside your control, it will continue to cause you emotional and physical problems without allowing you a way to deal with the problem.

Your goal is to stop such needless worry before it takes control of your emotions. One way is to re-channel your thoughts. A simple diversion, such as music, a book, talking to a friend or getting some exercise, can often help. It takes practice to refocus your thoughts away from needless worry, but it can be done.

Once the worry is under control, think about how real the source of that worry is and whether it's something you might better ignore, rather than letting it control you.

If you find that chronic worry, especially over things you can't control or influence, is negatively affecting your life, consider talking to a professional counselor who can offer a variety of ways to help reduce the non-productive sources of stress.

Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcorner@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org

Bulldogs from A1

jumping out to 10-2 lead with Stanhope scoring five points. Alderson Broaddus' Erica Brooks topped the run with a 3-pointer at the 15:53 mark. Brooks split a pair of free throws and Rachel Ashley connected from behind the arc to cut the Bowie State lead to 10-9 with 15:43 on the clock.

Bowie State pushed the lead back to 15-11 on a Stanhope layup at the 13:49 mark, but the Battlers scored five straight capped by a pair of Jordan Parker free throws to grab its first lead of the game 16-15.

After four straight points by the Lady Bulldogs, the Battlers went on an 8-0 run keyed by five points from Parker and a Brooks triple to take back the lead 24-19 with 8:37 left

in the first. Bowie State answered with a 16-6 spurt to go ahead 37-30 on a McIntosh layup with 24 seconds to play in the first. Terra McKenzie hit a 3-pointer with six seconds left in the first to cut the Alderson Broaddus halftime deficit to 37-33.

Bowie State pushed their lead to a dozen points twice in the second half before Alderson Broaddus battled back. Trailing 62-50 with 4:55 to play in the game, the Battlers went on an 11-3 run to get within four at 65-61 with 58 seconds on the clock. However, that's as close as the Battlers would get. Alderson Broaddus used strong 3-point shooting to get back in the game with Jordan Parker connecting on a pair of triples and Sydney Shaffer adding a trey.

Water Quality Certification application for proposed Conowingo Dam relicensing withdrawn

Exelon agrees to provide up to \$3.5 million for additional study of effects of Conowingo Dam on Chesapeake Bay water quality; previously scheduled public hearing on company's application canceled, company says it must refile application within 90 days

By PRESS OFFICER
MDE

BALTIMORE, MD — Recognizing the Maryland Department of the Environment's position that more information on the effects of the Conowingo Dam is needed before it can be determined whether the facility complies with State water quality standards, Exelon Corporation has withdrawn its application for the Water Quality Certification that is required as part of the relicensing process for the dam and has agreed to fund additional study of the issue.

MDE had stated its intention to deny the Proposed Relicensing of the Conowingo Hydroelectric Project Application for Water Quality Certification application due to insufficient information provided by the applicant. The company said it will work with MDE to coordinate the refile of its application within 90 days. It has also agreed to provide up to \$3.5 million to study the effects of sediment related to the Dam on water quality in the Susquehanna River and the Chesapeake Bay.

MDE had scheduled a public hearing on Exelon's appli-

cation for Water Quality Certification for Jan. 7, 2015, at the Department's Baltimore headquarters. Due to the withdrawal of the application by Exelon, the hearing on the application is canceled. This action does not affect the scheduled public meeting on the Lower Susquehanna River Watershed Assessment draft report. The public meeting on that draft report will still be held at 7 p.m. tomorrow, Dec. 9, at Harford Community College.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) has issued a one-year extension of the current license for the operation of the Conowingo Dam. Under federal law and as part of FERC's relicensing process, Exelon is required to obtain a Clean Water Act, Section 401 Water Quality Certification from MDE for the continued operation of the facility. Issuance of a Water Quality Certification is contingent upon the applicant demonstrating to MDE that the project will comply with State water quality standards. In issuing notice of the application, solicitation of public comments and scheduling of a public

hearing, MDE stated the Department's intent to deny the application due to insufficient information provided by the applicant regarding the impacts of the activity on State water quality standards.

The insufficiency of information is reflected in the draft Lower Susquehanna River Watershed Assessment report. The draft report found that the loss of long-term sediment trapping capacity at the Conowingo Dam is causing impacts to the health of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. It also found that additional nutrient pollution associated with these changed conditions in the lower Susquehanna River system could result in Maryland not being able to meet Chesapeake Bay water quality standards, even with full implementation of Watershed Implementation Plans by 2025, in some of the Bay's deeper northern waters. The draft report recommends additional study to quantify the full impact on Bay water quality caused by conditions at the Conowingo Dam.

Exelon has agreed to provide up to \$3.5 million for additional study. A study plan

has been prepared with input by MDE, Exelon, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Geological Survey, the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Chesapeake Bay Program and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Enhanced monitoring is planned over the next two years.

Exelon cited its understanding of FERC policy requiring that an applicant resubmit its request for Water Quality Certification within 90 days of date of withdrawal in stating its intention to refile an application within that time period. It is possible that a refiled application or applications might also be withdrawn, followed by the resubmission of applications.

If it is ultimately determined that the project cannot comply with State water quality standards, the applicant could be required to mitigate the impacts to water quality through, for example, actions taken at the facility or by offsetting the facility's impacts with pollution reduction activities at other locations in the watershed.

Have a Safe and

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

From the staff of

The Prince George's Post

Coach from A1

where people are getting tired or where they're not breaking out."

"It gives you a pretty extensive report with data that for the most part you can't see with the human eye," said Bill Roberts, Navy's Men's Swim Team head coach. "You would either count these things individually, or use the Avida tech, and get over 40 sets of data."

Avida's products start at about \$10,000 for the portable device and about \$13,000 for a permanent system, plus the subscription costs for each swimmer's data and devices, which range between \$20 and \$40 a month.

Avida's system is not widely adopted by swim teams and clubs nationwide, but the swimmers who do utilize the technol-

ogy have all praised the benefits of the system.

"Not a lot of teams have it," Mita said. "We know Army doesn't have it, which is always a good thing."

Army Men's Swimming does not use Avida, but uses a combination of video and other technological resources to track essential metrics. Army Swimming and Diving Head Coach Mickey Wender said.

"It seems that any high school or club team I read about using this is having good success," Roberts said. "Even then, at a younger age, when they are still learning a lot about the sport, getting swimmers exposed to something like this would yield even greater results."

The Navy men's swim team uses the Avida technology during Wednesday practices for a spe-



CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE PHOTO BY DYLAN MOROSES
PGA professional Kent Keith readying a swing using the Swingbyte device at Blue Mash Golf Course in Laytonville, Maryland, on Oct. 23, 2014.

cific type of session on both endurance training and sprint training, Bowden said.

"We had a terrible time getting this implemented because logistically, this is not a wireless venue," Roberts said. "It's a wireless product, so there was a lot of convincing to do for this to be permissible at the academy. On the athlete's part, at first, Avida is time intensive. You can't just put it on and go; there's a learning curve."

The sensors take getting used to, according to Mita, but Avida's ability to give swimmers a sense of how fast or slow they are swimming during their practice session transformed Navy's way of training.

"Especially later in the season, our swimmers all have great internal awareness of

how to swim in practice, which is really key when going into a race," Roberts said. "How to swim becomes not just a physiological thing, but a neuro-muscular thing. It's kind of conditioning your brain to fire at a certain rate."

During their first season using Avida Sports' devices, Navy Men's Swimming team placed 31st at the NCAA Championship in Austin, Texas, in March, after not making the tournament the previous season.

Roberts said he hopes to better implement the Avida technology in following seasons by using the devices more frequently, and eventually use the communication features to their fullest.



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CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE PHOTO BY DYLAN MOROSES
Blue Mash Golf Course PGA Pro Instructor Kent Keith studies his latest driver swing on his Swingbyte app in Laytonville, Maryland, on Oct. 23, 2014.

OUT ON THE TOWN

ERIC D. SNIDER'S
IN THE DARK
Movie Review
"Wild"

Wild
Grade: B+
Rated R, a lot of harsh
profanity, nudity, some
graphic sexuality
1 hr., 55 min

It's been several years since Reese Witherspoon starred in a movie worth recommending, and a decade since she won her Oscar for playing June Carter Cash. Whether by choice or happenstance, she's been flying under the radar, making easy trifles like *How Do You Know*, *This Means War*, and that one about Robert Pattinson and a circus elephant.

But she comes roaring back to life in *Wild*, a raw portrait of a damaged woman who embarks on a 1,000-mile hike as a means of cleansing herself. Based on Cheryl Strayed's bestselling memoir (the movie rights to which Witherspoon optioned before it was even published), *Wild* may very well be a calculated attempt at reestablishing her bona fides. But calculated or not, it works: Witherspoon gives an unvarnished, all-in performance, free of vanity and entirely devoted to telling Strayed's grueling, triumphant story.

The film, adapted by Nick Hornby and competently directed by Jean-Marc Vallée (Dallas Buyers Club), begins with a glimpse of Cheryl many days into her hike on the Pacific Crest Trail, her body exhausted and bruised, her feet bloody. She curses the wilderness, and we are inclined to curse it with her. As later visions of her pre-hike life will show, however, this is actually the healthiest she's been in some time.

With shocking matter-of-factness, Vallée reveals, piece by piece, the elements of Cheryl's screwed-up life. She



With the dissolution of her marriage and the death of her mother, Cheryl Strayed has lost all hope. After years of reckless, destructive behavior, she makes a rash decision. With absolutely no experience, driven only by sheer determination, Cheryl hikes more than a thousand miles of the Pacific Crest Trail, alone. *WILD* powerfully captures the terrors and pleasures of one young woman forging ahead against all odds on a journey that maddens, strengthens, and ultimately heals her. (c) Fox Searchlight

and her husband, Paul (Thomas Sadoski), have recently divorced because of Cheryl's indiscretions. We see snippets of memories with her blithe mother (Laura Dern), who falls ill at a tragically young age. Like bolts of lightning, there are flashes of heroin needles, sleazy hotel rooms, home pregnancy tests. Gradually we come to understand the hike as a means of spiritual rebirth.

It's a popular trail among hardcore hikers, covering deserts and mountains as it stretches across California, Oregon, and Washington. Cheryl is keenly aware that as a woman traveling solo, she faces risks that men generally don't, as demonstrated in an uneasy sequence with a

rancher (W. Earl Brown) who offers her a ride when she runs out of camp-stove fuel. She has to be wary of him and all the other men she encounters along her journey. Some are openly malevolent, some want to help, and some want to help while also hoping they can seduce her. Flashbacks show Cheryl to be a woman in control of her own sexuality (with Gaby Hoffmann as her valued yet strangely ineffectual best friend), but here on the Pacific Crest Trail, she's vulnerable.

The film gets ponderous now and then, with hokey like a mystical fox that Cheryl sees as a symbol of her growing strength (or something), and some voice-over narration that's more flowery and eye-roll-inducing than it needs to

be. It's also a little on-the-nose that her name is Cheryl Strayed, but I guess you can't fault a movie for its author's choice of pen names.

Without being anything like a screed or manifesto, *Wild* comes across as an empowering, emotional tale about a woman taking control of her downward-spiraling life. Many of her experiences are unique to womanhood, and some may only apply to Cheryl Strayed specifically. But there's also a universality to it, a sense that anyone, male or female, could find inspiration in Cheryl's it's-the-journey-not-the-destination story. Witherspoon must have found strength in it, because it's one of the mostly finely tuned performances she's ever given.

Coach from A5

"One of the neat things we haven't tapped into yet is we can actually talk to the kids while they're swimming," Roberts said. "So eventually, we're going to really get intimate with them."

Swingbyte

Golf is a sport focused on precision, unforgiving to players who hit the ball with a club improperly.

Golf professionals across the country who have taught by tracking ball flight by eye now have Swingbyte and similar devices that show students of the game exactly how and where the ball was struck.

Alex Pedenko and Nathan Wojtkiewicz met at the University of Chicago's Booth Business School masters' program and developed Swingbyte in 2012.

Swingbyte was the first sensor developed for golfers to calculate a wide range of metrics, including club speed on ball impact, club face angle and power of impact, visualizing the data through an app available on phones and tablets.

Visual learners benefit greatly from the device by showing how the club struck the ball exactly and at what angle, but Swingbyte does not replace other forms of training and instruction, like a weighted club or video of a golf swing, said Kent Keith, PGA teaching professional at the Blue Mash Golf Course in Laytonsville.

"Practice makes progress, and Swingbyte's ability to track progress gives golf teachers the visual evidence to validate their instructions with players, and make sure they don't revert to old habits," said Patrick Cerone, Swingbyte's marketing director.

Golfers position the small white rectangular Swingbyte device on their club shaft and link it via Bluetooth to a phone or tablet with a free app that collects swing data and instantly creates a set of statistics and a 3D representation of the person's swing.

"It's a handy tool I started using about three years ago," Keith said. "People are somewhat fascinated by it and it helps promote my business, but it's a small part of my instruction."

"The position of the sensor on the shaft gives a more accurate reading, we feel, because hand grips change for each shot," Cerone said. "Our app's instant feedback allows golfers and instructors to track progress from swing to swing."

"Video ball tracking devices like FlightScope and TrackMan provide more data and visuals, but they cost tens of thousands of dollars that average consumers, golf instructors and even many golf clubs just can't afford," Cerone said.

Swingbyte is available online and in stores like Best Buy and the Apple store for a one-time fee of \$169, making it affordable to players who want to self-evaluate and improve on their own.



P5. Michael Fagan loads his swing getting ready to hit the ball during a private lesson at The Reaper's Den in Columbia, Maryland, on Oct. 22, 2014

The device's installation is very easy, but interpreting the data carries a slight learning curve.

"There are in-app tutorials and resources on our website to help players understand what the app is calculating," Cerone said. "Once they do, the device can easily show them corrections they need to make."

Zepp/Sports Sensors Inc.

California-based Zepp began in 2011 and released their golf sensor in 2012, but aimed to reach as many sports possible through a multi-sport device. Zepp offers their sensor for baseball, softball, tennis and golf.

In the traditional and ritualized game of baseball, generational gaps often exist between

coaches and their teams, and high-tech devices that can show players their habits have yet to reach every ballplayer.

"The Zepp is more than just a gimmick product," said Sean O'Connor, DeMatha Catholic High School head baseball coach. "The ability to see swing path directions and angles I think blows the competition out of the water."

Zepp's app presents users a three-dimensional path of their swing along with a set of statistics to represent the angle the bat, club or racquet hits the ball, how fast it hits the ball, hand speed, and many other sport-spe-

The Edge of Sports

by DAVE ZIRIN

St. Louis Rams Players Tell the World That BlackLivesMatter



Anytime someone says that pro athletes should just "shut up and play," remind them that at every moment of every game "play" is only a small part of what they are actually doing. Instead, their number-one job is being a product. They are the product, selling the righteousness of their global sports brand. They are the models, selling the Nike swooshes that adorn their uniforms or the Gatorade they pour down their throats. They are selling, with each adrenaline pumping play, the myth that spending a billion dollars on this new stadium was a fine investment. They are also often asked to hawk whatever war is under way, their play a glamorous stand-in for blood on faraway battlefields. When fans and the media say to athletes with opinions, "Shut up and play," they are really saying, "Shut up and sell."

That is why it was so important, so daring and so transgressive for several members of the St. Louis Rams to show up at their home field to try to sell the idea that black lives do in fact matter. It started before the game, when wide receivers Kenny Britt and Tavon Austin came out of the tunnel with their hands up, in the now internationally recognized "hands up don't shoot" gesture in solidarity with the family of Ferguson's Michael Brown. Then Stedman Bailey, Jared Cook and Chris Givens joined them. Later, running back Tre Mason put up his hands after scoring a touchdown. (The fact that Tre Mason is the son of DJ Maseo from De La Soul is worth mentioning if only to point out that the political reach of golden-age hip hop lives on.)

After the game, Britt said, according to the Associated Press, "I don't want the people in the community to feel like we turned a blind eye to it....What would I like to see happen? Change in America." He also posted this picture to Instagram of his arm-wraps, with messages of solidarity for Michael Brown written upon them.

Britt wasn't alone. Cook was challenged by one member of the media who asked why the team hasn't gone to Ferguson to protest, if they are so serious about it. His answer was honest. He said, "It's kind of dangerous down there, and none of us want to get caught up in anything.... It takes some guts, it takes some heart, so I admire the people around the world that have been doing it."

Not surprisingly, the backlash against these actions was flying fast and furious, but not only in the sewers of social media or the right-wing blogs hard at work scouring the web for the arrest records of Britt and other Rams players. The more ominous response was from the St. Louis Police Officers Association, which "condemned" the action and promised an organized response against the NFL, the players and the team. It also released a statement demanding punishment for those who took part in the action, calling it "tasteless" and "offensive."

As for social media, the ugliness was on full display. The most common theme, beyond the racist baiting and vitriol, was some form of "If Michael Brown only had his hands up, none of this would have happened." The fact that sixteen of eighteen witnesses say that he in fact did have his hands up has no bearing. They received the ruling that they wanted and nothing is left to do other than slander the dead.

Meanwhile, as players made their gesture inside the stadium, the organization Lost Voices was protesting on the outside, chanting, "No football, no peace!"

I spoke with Charles, one of the protesters, and he said, "It was beyond heartwarming. Protesters erupted in cheers when I showed them the picture of Rams players with their hands up. They are now true ambassadors of a city and country that is in great pain, but refuses to stop fighting for justice."

But let the last word go to another athlete who made a gesture on the field for the ages, Dr. John Carlos. In 1968, Dr. Carlos, along with Tommie Smith, famously raised his fist in Mexico City in the name of human rights. I spoke with Dr. Carlos today and he said, "How about those Rams? They may be under contract to play football, but greater than that, they have a right to care about humanity. They have the right to feel whether something is just or unjust. They are entitled to their opinions, most centrally that Michael Brown's life should not have been taken. Asking them to just 'shut up and play' is like asking a human being to be paint on the wall. They have the right to say what they feel in their heart. A lot more athletes need to step up and speak up as well. These atrocities have been going on and we are saying enough is enough. I remember saying in 1968, you think I'm bad, just wait until this new generation comes out. I feel like that new generation is here at last."

Calendar of Events

December 25 — December 31, 2014

Get To Know Your Neighbour Exhibition

Date & Time: Exhibition: Saturday, December 6, 2014-Thursday, January 1, 2015

Description: Come celebrate artwork created by Prince George's County youth as part of the Get To Know Your Wild Neighbour Contest! This free exhibit opens on December 6 with a reception featuring over 1,500 pieces of artwork inspired by nature.

Cost: Free

Ages: All ages welcome

Location: Prince George's Sports & Learning Complex
8001 Sheriff Road, Landover 20785

Contact: 301-446-3466; TTY 301-446-3401

Xtreme Teens: Festival of Lights

Date and Time: Friday, December 26, 2014 6-10 pm

Description: Come out and bring one or more canned goods and let's see the light show at Watkins Park. We will depart at 6:30 pm and will return by 9:30 pm. Afterwards, we will enjoy a delicious snack at our neighborhood McDonalds. Don't miss out on the fun!

Cost: Free with M-NCPPC Youth ID

Ages: 10-17

Location: Good Luck Community Center
8601 Good Luck Road

Lanham 20706

Contact: 301-552-1093; TTY 301-445-4512

Xtreme Teens: Open Mic Night

Date and Time: Friday, December 26, 2014 7-10 pm

Description: Can you sing, rap, or dance? Show off your talents in front your friends and staff at Open Mic night.

Cost: Free

Ages: 10-17

Location: Indian Queen Recreation Center
9551 Fort Foote Road, Fort Washington 20744

Contact: 301-839-9597; TTY 301-203-6030

The Calverts by Candlelight

Date and Time: Saturday, December 27, 2014 6-9 pm

Description: Spend a festive evening at the candlelit Riversdale House Museum. The Calverts will welcome guests to their home for tours, refreshments, live music, and children's activities.

Cost: \$5/adult; Children 12 & under are free with adult

Ages: All ages welcome

Location: Riversdale House Museum

4811 Riverdale Road, Riverdale Park 20737

Contact: 301-864-0420; TTY 301-699-2544

Xtreme Teens: New Year's Resolutions

Date and Time: Saturday, December 27, 2014 7-10 pm

Description: It's that time, the new year is just around the corner! Join your friends to make New Year's Resolutions. Do YOU think you can keep yours the longest?

Cost: Free with M-NCPPC Youth ID

Ages: 10-17

Location: Beltsville Community Center
3900 Sellman Road, Beltsville 20705

Contact: 301-937-6613; TTY 301-445-4512

Xtreme Teens: New Year's Party

Date and Time: Saturday, December 27, 2014 7-10 pm

Description: Ring in the New Year a few days early. Enjoy music, dancing, refreshments and being with friends. When it nears 10 pm, we will toast in the New Year with sparkling cider.

Cost: Free with M-NCPPC Youth ID

Ages: 10-17

Location: Berwyn Heights Community Center
6200 Pontiac Street, Berwyn Heights 20740

Contact: 301-345-2808; TTY 301-445-4512

Health & Wellness Presents:

Holiday Youth Basketball Jamboree

Date & Time: Saturday, December 27, 2014 9 am-6:30 pm

Description: Deck the halls with basketball and play in the the Holiday Basketball Jamboree for youth! Teams will play four different opponents in two, 10-minute half games. Jamboree is open to all ICB, Boys & Girls Club, and franchise teams.

Cost: Resident: \$120; Non-Resident: \$120

Ages: 8U to 14U teams

Location: University of Maryland-Armory Auxiliary Gym
University of Maryland, College Park

College Park, MD 20740

Contact: 301-446-6800; TTY 301-446-6801

Kwanzaa, Kwanzaa

Date and Time: Sunday, December 28, 2014 3 pm

Description: Sankofa Dance Theatre of Baltimore presents a joyous program celebrating heritage, family and community. The symbols of Kwanzaa will be enhanced with African music, traditional tales, dance and drumming. "Sankofa" means learning from the past to build for the future. Thus, the whole family will learn from the rich culture and history of Africa to embrace the proud, shared culture of African Americans.

Cost: \$20/person; \$15/Seniors, students & groups of 20 or more

Ages: All ages welcome

Location: Publick Playhouse

5445 Landover Rd, Cheverly 20784

Contact: 301-277-1710; TTY 301-277-0312

Gymnastics Workshops

Date and Time: Monday, December 29, 2014 11:30 am-12:30 pm

Description: Looking for a fun activity for your children? Bring them to our gymnastics workshops! These workshops are an open play time for your child to explore gymnastics in a safe and fun environment. Please be aware, these workshops are not structured classes, but open play! Spaces are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Maximum 3 children to 1 adult. Parents are required to be on the floor with the children.

Cost: \$6/per child

Ages: Walking to 12 years

Location: Prince George's Sports & Learning Complex
8001 Sheriff Road, Landover, MD 20785

Contact: 301-583-2400; TTY 301-583-2483

EARTH TALK ... Saving Our Soils and Climate with Biochar

Dear EarthTalk:

What is biochar and how can it help reduce my carbon footprint?

— William Jarvis,
Bethlehem, PA

Biochar is a naturally occurring, fine-grained, highly porous form of charcoal derived from the process of baking biomass—and it's been associated with fertile soils for some two thousand years. "Biochar is found in soils around the world as a result of vegetation fires and historic soil management practices," reports the International Biochar Initiative (IBI), a trade group representing the world's burgeoning biochar industry. "Intensive study of biochar-rich dark earths in the Amazon has led to a wider appreciation of biochar's unique properties as a soil enhancer."

Indeed, researchers have been hard at work perfecting their own methods for manufacturing biochar by baking biomass in giant oxygen-free kilns. The resulting biochar can then be used as a soil amendment to help restore tired, compromised farmland, not to mention contaminated industrial sites, all the while taking carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere. A liquid by-product of the biochar production process can also be converted into a carbon-neutral

"biofuel" that can displace other carbon intensive fuels.

Farmers can layer biochar into their fields where it becomes part of the soil matrix and helps retain water and essential agricultural nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium. "You can basically think of it as a soil reef upon which abiotic and biotic phenomena happen," says David Shearer, CEO of Full Circle Biochar, one of a handful of U.S. based biochar start-ups working to commercialize the age-old "technology." Farmers like the fact that using biochar can lower their water and fertilizer bills as well as yield more and better quality agricultural products—leading to better market performance overall. "This is really a hedge for farmers," reports Shearer. "It really helps them manage their financial risk and it helps them manage risk into the future around production."

Beyond agriculture, biochar can also be used to clean up polluted land. "For example, if you have a mine that has contaminated soil adjacent to it, biochar ... will allow you to remediate soils," says Shearer. He adds that biochar also makes for an excellent filtration medium: "We know that activated charcoal has been used for millennia as a filter mechanism, and so there is discussion in the biochar com-



CREDIT: MARCIA O'CONNOR, FLICKR CC

Environmentalists hail biochar, a form of charcoal derived from baking biomass, as a savior of soils damaged by agricultural overuse and pollution that can sequester significant amounts of carbon dioxide in the process.

munity that maybe the first step we'll use it as a filtration media, and then we'll move to agriculture as the cost of production of biochar comes down."

As far as environmentalists are concerned, the greater the demand for biochar the better, given the fact that it is a potent storage mechanism for carbon dioxide that would otherwise head into the atmosphere and contribute to climate change. "The carbon in biochar resists degradation and can hold carbon in soils for hundreds to thousands of years," reports IBI. "We can use this simple, yet powerful, technology to store 2.2 gigatons of carbon annually by

2050. It's one of the few technologies that is relatively inexpensive, widely applicable and quickly scalable. We really can't afford not to pursue it."

CONTACTS: International Biochar Initiative (IBI), www.biochar-international.org; Full Circle Biochar, www.full-circlebiochar.com.

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(www.emagazine.com).
Send questions to: earthtalk@emagazine.com.

Toolset from A3

FastModel Technologies (fastmodelsports.com)

For years, basketball coaches used blackboards, whiteboards and clipboards to track games, draw up plays, document scouting reports and provide game notes, ultimately producing a jumble of discommodulated information in someone's flurried handwriting that teams could never fully analyze.

With new technologies, piecemeal statistics and insights can be compiled and streamlined with a set of tools from FastModel — called FastScout and FastDraw — reaching all NBA and WNBA teams, and over 600 Division I NCAA basketball programs.

"As a graduate assistant at Providence College about six years ago, I created the scouting reports for the teams we'd play, updating the template with their photos, stats and info," Loyola University-Maryland women's basketball assistant coach Ryan Gensler said. "FastScout eliminates that busywork, giving me the ability to download nationwide stats that update themselves."

FastModel began over a decade ago, providing coaches from the youth to professional levels with tools to create clean and concise playbooks with customizable colors and layouts, charts and scouting reports that all players can

learn from, said Andy Graham, vice president of FastModel Technologies.

"You can look at our software as kind of the 'Microsoft Office' for basketball coaches," Graham said. "FastDraw allows coaches to easily create super customizable playbooks, and FastNote is our report builder, used for either scouting, fan or team reports."

"Before every game our coaches give us a scouting report a couple days before," said Lisa Mirarchi, starting point guard for Loyola University-Maryland's women's basketball team. "It'll show us the starting lineups for our team and theirs, their strengths and weaknesses, and offensive and defensive tendencies for every player."

Loyola University-Maryland men's basketball assistant coach Josh Loeffler found FastModel services improved efficiency and communication through team scouting reports and game notes. "FastModel really allows us to present information the way we want," Loeffler said. "We don't use it much for analysis, but for building reports and playbooks, it has been a great time saver for our staff, allowing us to spend more time after hours with our families."

FastModel programs have options to customize layout and colors, but professional and collegiate teams that want their reports and playbooks to



PHOTO COURTESY OF ANDY GRAHAM

FastModel's FastScout service provides tools to create customized and comprehensive scouting reports for a huge network of teams that can all access team data for game preparation.

include player photos, automatic updates and more custom options can purchase FastModel's professional suite at a higher, undisclosed price. FastScout software is \$75 for the year, and \$149 annually if bundled with FastDraw.

FastModel also developed a database of basketball plays

and practice drills, curated by a network of former and current coaches, called Gooroo.

"Anyone can utilize it, so a high school coach can take some plays and drills right out of a contributor's repertoire, many of whom are professional and collegiate coaches," Graham said.

Coach from A6

cific metrics, Zepp CEO Jason Fass said.

The small, neon-yellow, square sensor is made of two high-performance accelerometers and priced at about \$150. Zepp is mounted on the bottom of a bat or racket, or on the back of the hand for golf, and pairs via Bluetooth to a free mobile app that takes about 10 swings to gain a player's baseline, Fass said.

O'Connor uses the Zepp sensor with players during off-season fall games and plans to implement the device during inter-squad scrimmages for the upcoming 2015 DeMatha baseball season to calculate player performance in game-intense situations.

"We have tons of coaches using it for all our sports,"

Fass said. "In baseball, for example, there's an option in the app to add a whole team and run an entire batting practice with one sensor by just switching to each player on the app. This allows coaches to gauge a hitter's performance like never before."

While swing plane and angles of impact may be newly discovered statistics for youth and high school coaches, baseball bat speed is a critical component that has been calculated for decades, said Bo Vicendese, owner of the indoor training facility The Reaper's Den in Columbia, Maryland.

"I like using the Swing Speed Radar because I can tell if their bat swing is consistent," Vicendese said. "If they go from 55 mph to 40 mph, there's something wrong, but

if a player has a consistent swing, the speed will stay within a range."

The Swing Speed Radar is a simple device held a short distance away from the area a player swings through to calculate bat speed. Vicendese positions his radar working on tee drills to see how fast the swing is at the point of contact with the ball. The Sports Sensors Inc. product costs a one-time fee of \$120.

"For most coaches, a 60 m.p.h. swing or faster is Division I caliber," Vicendese said.

Because baseball is mental-intensive, there are aspects while hitting, like being afraid to miss the ball, that could slow down a player's bat speed in a real game. These situations are hard to replicate in training, Vicendese said.

Although he does not have a Zepp sensor that tracks more stats than the Swing Speed Radar, which only calculates swing speed, Vicendese plans to get one once he sees it in action. The only time he worked with a Zepp, Vicendese could not get the device to work consistently, he said.

"Theoretically, a hitter's swing plane is supposed to be a straight line through the ball, and the Zepp could show many so many things that a player may be doing to affect their bat speed and contact," Vicendese said.

"We really want to help people figure out what works for them," Zepp's Fass said. "Once they understand their goals, we want them to use the app to really dial their swing in. It's not just hit the ball and immediately see what you need to do."