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St. Mary's County Times

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2022

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Looking Back:

2022



MERRY CHRISTMAS

During this time of Christmas, there are wonderful times of celebrating family traditions and creating memories to last a lifetime. For some, it comes with times of uncertainty, loneliness, and great need. They feel this way every day, but it is amplified during Christmas as they see and hear everyone making plans for gatherings with family, laughing as they prepare the meal and exchange gifts that loved ones specifically chose for them.

As we come out of two years of craziness, leaving the pandemic behind, let us all focus on the Lord and His provision. The Mission was born out of the Lord seeing to the needs of those that have little and to give hope and a helping hand to the less fortunate in our local community.

When I was 17 with no father figure, a stranger did just that for me. To this day, that act of kindness reminds me that someone took the time out of the hustle and bustle for me, if even just for a brief moment. I was in high school, working as a checker at a small supermarket, in the San Joaquin Valley of California. One evening a gentleman walked up and took out of his pocket a small black Bible that had my name inscribed. He said, "Richard, I'm not in good health and I don't think my heart will last too much longer, but I want you to have this' '. I'm not sure how he knew who I was, as I never saw him again; little did he know that 41 years later I would still be sharing his unmeasurable gift to me.

This Christmas season, I humbly ask each of you for a gift that is close to my heart. You will find, by giving this gift, you will be receiving even a greater gift in return. I ask for you to reach out and help or see to the needs of just one person or family, and experience what a wonderful Christmas it would be for those that you touch. A life can be completely changed by such a gesture that will forever be a memory to someone to reflect on reminding them that someone actually cares for them and that they matter.

We all know you don't have to be homeless to feel the pain of despair or have struggles. So, this Christmas Season let's all help someone and give the glory to our good Lord who's the very reason we are celebrating not only Christmas but every day He blesses us with.

Isaiah 9:6 tells us, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders and his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

To everyone in this community that supports The Mission to help keep our doors open; the staff and faithful volunteers say: THANK YOU and MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Richard Myers, Executive Director



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“WE’RE EXCITED TO GET STARTED.”
 JAYMI STERLING, SOON-TO-BE-SWORN-IN STATE’S ATTORNEY



LOCAL 5
Sterling set to take over State's Attorney's Office



St. Mary's saw much change in 2022



LOCAL 5
Barn fire under investigation

WEEKLY FORECAST

THU 12/29 ☀️ 56° /34° Mostly sunny ☁️ 2%	MON 1/2 ☀️ 61° /43° Partly sunny and warm ☁️ 6%
FRI 12/30 ☀️ 61° /45° Mostly sunny and mild ☁️ 2%	TUE 1/3 ☁️ 64° /54° Cloudy, showers around; warm ☁️ 58%
SAT 12/31 ☁️ 59° /50° Cloudy and mild; p.m. showers ☁️ 100%	WED 1/4 ☁️ 65° /50° Cloudy and warm with showers ☁️ 66%
SUN 1/1 ☀️ 64° /42° Partly sunny and warm ☁️ 14%	THU 1/5 ☁️ 61° /38° Cloudy, a little rain; warm ☁️ 55%

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Sterling Set to Take Over As Chief Prosecutor



Soon-to-be State's Attorney Jaymi Sterling

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

Jaymi Sterling will be sworn in as the new State's Attorney for St. Mary's County on Jan. 3.

She has hired new prosecutors and brought back ones who were already serving in the office, she told The County Times, and has also filled all of the support staff positions.

Sterling said she is ready to get to work.

"The excitement in the community, we join in that," Sterling said in a Wednesday interview. "We're excited to get started."

Sterling has 12 assistant state's attorneys working under her — eight of them who worked in the administration of Richard Fritz are returning, she said.

"Everyone who worked here previously was invited to apply," Sterling said. "Well more than 13 people applied."

Those prosecutors returning are John Stackhouse, Sarah Proctor, Laura Caspar, Sean Moran, Michael Kane, Joe Boyd and Duke May.

The office will be welcoming five new attorneys starting Jan. 3, Sterling

said, who, along with the returning prosecutors, will take their oath of office following Sterling's swearing in.

Those 13 attorneys are supported by 33 members of the staff, she said, and those supporting positions have all been filled.

"We're fully staffed," Sterling said.

Sterling said she plans to be more active in the Maryland States Attorneys Association to enact legislation in Annapolis that would increase penalties on violent offenders.

"We want to push legislation that helps protect victims and hold violent offenders accountable," Sterling said.

Working with Sen. Jack Bailey (R-Dist.29) she wants to support legislation this year in the General Assembly that would protect victims of child sex abuse.

Certain sex offenses, she said, are not considered as violent offenses, though they should be.

The legislation she wants to champion in Annapolis would have those sex offenders considered subsequently as violent offenders.

Sterling also wants to put her staff to work on pursuing state and federal grant dollars to support efforts against violent crime that the office, historically, has not often sought, she said.

Included in that effort would be gun violence reduction grants that could be used to fund prosecutors to focus solely on gun crimes or staff who could work solely as victim and witness coordinators in violent crime cases.

It's part of Sterling's efforts, she said, to modernize the office.

"We want our office to run efficiently and effectively," Sterling said.

guyleonard@countytimes.net

Barn Fire Under Investigation

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

A Christmas Eve fire destroyed a long-standing barn at the Budd's Creek raceway in Mechanicsville and Maryland State Fire Marshals are investigating.

The management of the raceway issued a statement on the blaze.

"Tonight at about 6:30, our barn caught fire. The current thinking is that the wind knocked down a live electrical wire. Thankfully everyone is ok, but we lost a lot of equipment," the statement from owner Ezra Beasley reads. "The barn itself was over 100 years old and has been an iconic mainstay of our facility."

"It will be missed. Huge thank you to the volunteers from over 10 departments that came out to fight the fire. They are truly heroes."

Beasley said the barn had once been the property of the Amish who

had also once owned the land upon which it sat and had been used as both a dairy and tobacco barn years ago.

Beasley said it was used as an equipment storage barn of late and a 2022 John Deere skid loader was lost in the fire.

guyleonard@countytimes.net



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Suspect in Police Shooting Still Hospitalized



Tyler Sater

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

An Anne Arundel County man shot last week by a county deputy after allegedly trying to steal a car while armed with a knife remains hospitalized, according to sheriff's officials.

Tyler Ray Marini Sater, 20, of Stoney Beach, has yet to be formally charged in the incident of Dec. 19, in which he was alleged to have attempted to carjack a victim at a California restaurant as deputies pursued him on foot after running across Route 235 from a motel parking lot.

Officials with the sheriff's office say he remains under guard by deputies in hospital awaiting transfer to the adult detention center in Leonardtown.

Sater is awaiting criminal charges for: armed robbery; robbery; attempted armed carjacking; attempted carjacking;

unlawful taking of a motor vehicle; two counts of attempted unlawful taking of a motor vehicle; first-degree assault; second-degree assault; attempted harming of a law enforcement animal; attempted animal cruelty; three counts of rogue and vagabond; malicious destruction of property more than \$1,000; theft: \$1,500 to under \$25,000 and attempted theft: less than \$100.

On December 19 at 9:32 p.m. deputies responded to the California Wawa located in the 23100 block of Three Notch Road in California, for the reported stolen vehicle. Deputies located the stolen vehicle minutes later at a hotel in the 23400 block of Three Notch Road. Contact was made with an individual matching the suspect description, who then fled on foot towards the Wildewood shopping center. Deputies attempted less lethal means by tasing the suspect multi-

ple times with no positive effect, as well as utilizing a Sheriff's Office K-9.

Sater attempted to carjack an occupied vehicle at a restaurant, according to police, but the victim fled. The suspect continued to flee through the shopping center and entered a separate vehicle which was running and was shot by a deputy who fired three rounds from their service weapon. Deputies initiated first aid immediately to the suspect who was subsequently flown to an area trauma center for treatment and remains in critical condition.

Sgt. Timothy Wesner, a 10-year veteran of the agency, was identified as the deputy who fired his weapon, striking the suspect twice. Per policy, Sgt. Wesner remains on administrative leave pending the outcome of the investigation.

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PATUXENT RIVER NAVAL AIR STATION News

Navy Demonstrates Unmanned Cargo Delivery Systems for Ships at Sea



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The Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (NAWCAD) recently demonstrated multiple unmanned systems in a first-of-its-kind mission to move supplies to ships at sea without the use of manned aircraft during an event at Naval Air Station Patuxent River in St. Inigoes, Maryland.

The demo, held in collaboration with the Small Tactical Unmanned Aircraft Systems program (PMA-263), employed unmanned vehicles to transport cargo weighing less than 50 lbs., which accounts for 90% of Navy logistics deliveries.

“We are seeing an increase in manned and unmanned logistics,” said Col. Victor Argobright, PMA-263 program manager. “For the Marine Corps, the Commandant is enthusiastic about where we are going

with unmanned logistics, and is beginning conversations about operations and contested environments. The Navy is currently identifying areas where unmanned logistics would be a critical enabler to operations at sea, and the Blue Water Maritime Logistics UAS is a great demonstration of this emerging requirement.”

During the event, industry partners Skyways Air Transportation, Inc., and Martin UAV operated their unmanned systems through long-range flights from ship-to-ship, ship-to-shore, and shore-to-ship situations, carrying a variety of objects to mimic critical supplies. Both systems successfully delivered cargo over 200 nautical miles onto a moving ship underway.

“[For the future], we are looking at

continued long-term experimentation, how the fleet operates, and how we get the technology out to our Sailors,” said Tony Schmidt, NAWCAD’s Experimentation Office director.

The unmanned systems under consideration are capable of vertical take-off-and-landing to operate from most naval ships at sea and stations ashore, as well as systems that do not require dedicated launch and recovery equipment.

NAWCAD acquired the original Blue Water UAS prototype in 2019 to demonstrate long-range unmanned naval ship-to-ship and ship-to-shore cargo transport. Navy test pilots and engineers have since worked with industry partners to develop a system that best meets

maritime requirements.

To view a video of the demonstrations, go to <https://youtu.be/YazljfUCMs0>

The Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division is the Navy’s warfare center dedicated to aviation employing more than 17,000 military, civilian and contract personnel. It operates test ranges, laboratories and aircraft in support of test, evaluation, research, development and sustainment of everything flown by the Navy and Marine Corps. Based in Patuxent River, Maryland, the command also has major sites in St. Inigoes, Maryland, Lakehurst, New Jersey, and Orlando, Florida.

CH-53K approved for Full Rate Production



The CH-53K King Stallion heavy lift helicopter has entered Full Rate Production (FRP) and its deployment phase, following a decision review by Frederick J. Stefany, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition.

FRP occurs at the end of Low Rate Initial Production following a review assessing the results of Initial Operational Test and Evaluation (IOT&E), Live Fire Test and Evaluation, production readiness reviews, risk, and affordability analyses. On Dec. 21, the Acquisition Decision Memorandum was signed, authorizing entry of the CH-53K into FRP.

FRP is an important milestone to the H-53 Heavy Lift Program Office (PMA-261), as it allows the program to proceed beyond LRIP and begin increasing pro-

urement quantities, thereby gaining production efficiencies and reducing unit costs.

“We have successfully demonstrated the performance and reliability of this aircraft,” said Col. Kate Fleeger, PMA-261 program manager. “With FRP we will continue to build on the strong manufacturing, sustainment and support that has been established for the CH-53K.”

The Marine Corps continues to execute its transition from the CH-53E to the CH-53K and is on schedule to declare Full Operational Capability in FY2029.

PMA-261 manages the cradle to grave procurement, development, support, fielding and disposal of the entire family of H-53 heavy lift helicopters.

Looking Back on 2022

By Guy Leonard
Staff Writer

The past year was full of change. St. Mary's County was able to put much of the COVID-19 pandemic behind it but it left dividends of closed schools in increased street violence by young men armed with guns in gangs.

Residents also chose some new county commissioners, sent one of them to the State House and also elected the first female State's Attorney in county history and the first new sheriff here in 16 years.

But St. Mary's residents started the year off with a rare event in Southern Maryland — a crippling snow storm.

JANUARY

The first snowstorm of the year, just days after the opening of 2022, hit Southern Maryland — and St. Mary's — hard, shutting down the county government and schools for two days, making some roads nearly impassable and leaving thousands without power.

The snow began to fall late into the night of Jan. 2 and continued on into the



SMECO's rate hikes drew outrage

early afternoon of Jan. 3.

Many neighborhoods were blanketed in up to six inches of snow; the frozen precipitation was so heavy it bowed trees, snapped branches and caused an initial power outage for nearly 45,000 Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative (SMECO) customers throughout Southern Maryland.

By Jan. 5 SMECO still had 5,647 customers without power in Southern Maryland; St. Mary's still had 938 customers without power, according to the latest numbers from the utility provider.

Steve Walker, emergency services director, said earlier this year that the storm hit St. Mary's hard.

"When it started snowing the ground was warmer and we had just had some rain," Walker told The County Times. "So, I think we wound up getting about 10 inches of snow."

"There were some people reporting up to 12 inches."

That snow storm and the concurrent cold weather meant residents would have to deal with abruptly rising energy costs; the outcry against the Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative was harsh.

Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative (SMECO) announced it would raise service rates for electricity by about 27 percent, prompting a shock amongst customers at such a sharp rise in costs.

Two St. Mary's County members of the Board of Directors for SMECO defended the increase, saying that the rise in electricity rates was closely tied to the increase in price of oil and natural gas stocks which are burned in the production of electricity.

In a prepared statement released by SMECO in early January, the cooperative made the same argument as to why the costs had to go up so abruptly.

"Higher costs for oil and natural gas, which are the fuels used by electric generating plants, have spurred increases in wholesale energy costs since last fall," explained Sonja M. Cox, SMECO president and CEO. She added, "The co-op does not make a profit on SOS energy charges. We work to keep our rates as low

as possible by using a portfolio approach to purchasing power, with contracts for base load and peak load, structured as long-term and short-term contracts. Because of previous rate reductions, SMECO's new adjusted rates will be similar to where they were in 2017."

St. Mary's County Commissioner Eric Colvin said he and many of his constituents were taken by surprise by SMECO's announcement.

"I've definitely heard from constituents about it," Colvin said. "That [the rate increase] was a little disappointing."

While SMECO and other businesses can pass on their costs for energy to customers, customers must be the last in line to bear the brunt.

"It's getting harder for everyone to pay their bills," Colvin said. "I was very surprised and had no idea this was coming."

Murphy said the cooperative would act if fuel costs decreased.

"If costs do go down, we'll reduce the rates," said Murphy.

FEBRUARY

Still there was some good news. Students and school staff state-wide could finally remove their masks while in class.

It was a nod to the fact that vaccinations and the lesser lethality of COVID-19 variants were the new reality in fighting the pandemic.

The Maryland State Board of Education voted almost unanimously Feb. 22 to rescind its requirement that all students and public schools staff wear masks while in educational facilities.

The vote was 12 to 2 to return the decision to keep mask mandates or rescind them to local school board authorities.

That authority returned to local school boards March 1 when the Maryland General Assembly approved the state board's action.

St. Mary's Superintendent Dr. J. Scott Smith said the local board was hopeful the state legislature would act quickly.

"[St. Mary's County Public Schools] agrees with the Maryland State Department of Education and the State

Superintendent that decisions made closest to the source best serve students," Smith told The County Times. "We look forward to the [Administrative, Executive and Legislative Review] committee convening later this week to take action on the MSDE request to rescind [the mandate] for face coverings in school facilities."

"If repealed, we will move to optional masking in our schools and continue to encourage masking for those medically vulnerable or unvaccinated."

Politics were also controversial as ever as Democrats in the State House moved forward on a redistricting scheme that would eventually bring about legal action from Republicans which did not succeed.

For Southern Maryland the structure of the map has some minor changes but Republican law makers are already predicting the map will bring legal action to overturn it.

"Bring on the law suit," said Del. Matt Morgan in a social media post in February. "One man, one vote is a principle our democracy is built upon."

But unfortunately, the new state legislative map violates that principle and disenfranchises thousands of people across Maryland. That is unfair, and I hope the court strikes down this nonsense."

Morgan was especially critical of the way the map codifies delegate elections in Democrat controlled counties, where districts elect the top three vote earners, while in the more Republican-controlled districts they are broken out into subunits to dilute more conservative votes and help ensure Democrats have a change of winning one seat.

Such is the case in St. Mary's. "I actually wanted to vote for this map, my district's not that bad," Morgan said on the floor of assembly while the map was being debated.

Morgan used the example of Charlotte Hall, which is roughly divided between St. Mary's and Charles counties.

A resident in Charles County has three delegates they could call upon, Morgan said, while one in St. Mary's

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in Charlotte Hall can call on just one to represent them.

“How is that fair,” Morgan said. “If District 28 was divided up into subdistricts then south of Billingsley Road in La Plata then we all know that’s Republican territory.”

“This map disenfranchises tens of thousands of voters in Southern Maryland.”

While the county was ready to shed itself of much of the baggage of the COVID-19 pandemic it would be faced with the worst violence on its streets in recent memory.

Law enforcement officials have said that closed schools led to dozens of young men who were only tangentially involved in education to abandon it for a gang and crime centric lifestyle.

That meant gun violence.

In the not too distant past one or two homicides in St. Mary’s County was about the limit of killings here but homicides, shootings and other violent crimes such as armed robberies have skyrocketed, data from the sheriff’s office shows.

This past year was already off to a violent start as the sheriff’s office dealt with two homicides; both committed in the Lexington Park area — one a drive by shooting and the other a stabbing — and both have been closed with suspects arrested and charged.

Sheriff Timothy K. Cameron, in his final year of service, said the COVID-19 pandemic had played a part in the rise in violence but it was already a problem before the virus came here in March of 2020.

Despite a gun violence task force — aimed at getting illegal guns and those who possess them off the streets — which has since ended its operations, the violence on county streets only increased in 2020 and 2021.

“I’m frustrated,” Cameron told The County Times in an interview in February. “There’s a culture of youth carrying and using guns in our community.”



Guns and drugs are part of the criminal culture leading to growing violence

“There’s a notable number of violent crimes that involve the use of guns across our county.”

This week the sheriff’s office reported investigating a shooting in which no one was injured — a vehicle was struck by multiple rounds — but a child was in the vehicle at the time it was hit, Cameron said.

This shooting, and many others like it, in which homes and vehicles are targeted rather than people, still can put lives in danger, Cameron said.

Again, they were committed in the

Lexington Park community.

“It’s one of my greatest fears,” Cameron said. “That some child is going to get hurt in the crossfire.”

The violence would continue through the summer of 2022, including fatal gang-related shootings, before a short lull between mid-October through late December.

There were other violent deaths that deeply shoot the community and led leaders to call for action from the state; suicidal jumpers from the Gov. Thomas Johnson Bridge.



Dive & Rescue units responded to bridge jumpers

“These tragedies are occurring at a more frequent level and what we can do will remain to be seen,” said Commissioner Todd Morgan.

Morgan and other commissioners said they would include for discussion the suicide prevention measures at a virtual session with the commissioner boards from both Calvert and Charles counties Feb. 9 to discuss common issues.

“It’s a state bridge so we’ll have to look for some state support along the way,” Morgan continued.

Commissioner John O’Connor said commissioners receive notifications of critical incidents when they occur, such as the bridge jumper on Feb. 5.

“I had already been looking into what ways we could intervene,” O’Connor said. “When somebody has reached that point... getting public safety there in time is difficult.”

O’Connor said he “didn’t want to talk about it anymore” in discussions with the Maryland Department of Transportation about possible immediate remedies to the problem.

“There are safety devices throughout the United States — in New York, San Francisco — they have special nets... they tangle you up.

“It’s something to give first responders time, something to give someone pause.”

Despite the call from local leaders, the state would do nothing to put safety apparatus on the bridge due to studies they claimed showed that they would compromise the bridge structurally.

MARCH

As the year went on the community in the 7th District would erupt in controversy over a massive, industrial cannabis growing facility being built in critical area in the heart of the rural preservation district.

An industrial-sized medical marijuana

growing operation in Avenue now under construction had been known to county elected officials, as well as planning, public works, and health department staff for the past four years but in March did the public awoken to the fact.

Documents obtained by The County Times regarding the facility being constructed on Abell Road show that officials had labeled it a horticultural operation, and, thus, under the zoning ordinance and was not subject to go before the county planning commission, board of appeals or any kind of public hearing.

Commissioner Mike Hewitt railed against the project during a regular business meeting of the Commissioners of St. Mary’s County in early March.

He said he had only been informed of its existence in recent days by nearby residents who are concerned about the project’s progress.

“I was appalled at what’s being built in the critical area,” Hewitt said. “There are challenges getting approvals for decks...different small things like that.

“There are challenges getting approvals by the Critical Area Commission.”

The Critical Area Commission, documents show, has been aware of the project for years; the commission strictly regulates growth of any kind on land that is within 1,000 feet of the watershed.

Hewitt questioned how such a project, whose plans include, another large climate controlled growing house as well as administrative offices, could not be placed under more public scrutiny before now.

The site in currently encircled by a chain link fence.

“How in the world does something like that get approval, to get a permit, without a public hearing; no input from the residents,” Hewitt said. “It’s just a monstrosity sitting there.”

The answer lay in a memorandum regarding the decision on how to label the project in county government parlance.

The document was part of an e-mail transmission to Commissioner John O’Connor sent Feb. 17 that O’Connor in turn sent to The County Times on Feb. 24, shortly after community members concerned over the project had informed

journalists of its existence.

“There are two potential use categories in the Zoning Ordinance for growing and processing cannabis. These are use type 2. Agricultural Industry, Minor, which is described as the ‘Processing, drying or storage of crop and animal products, including minor dairy processing facilities and small-scale grain mills.’ The other use is use type 5. Crop Production and Horticulture, which is: ‘Agricultural activity primarily engaged in raising and harvesting of orchard crops, row crops, or field crops on an agricultural or commercial basis, including primary processing and packaging, but excluding canning and secondary food production. Includes horticultural operations engaged in cultivation of flowers, fruits, vegetables, or ornamental trees and shrubs on a wholesale basis with incidental retail sales,’” the memo, which is not on county letter head, nor is it signed, stated.

Charlie Mattingly, the applicant for the project, said he has been sharing his plans with the community from the beginning which was 2018.

“We’ve been extremely transparent,” Mattingly told The County Times. “I shared our exact site plan with neighbors.”

“It’s come down to a couple of neighbors who are spreading misinformation about the project.”

Mattingly said the project includes a “50,000 square foot growing house,” that is now under construction, while a 2,500 square foot facility already exists for breeding different strains of cannabis.

“There are already 200 to 300 plants there already,” Mattingly said.

A 50,000 square-foot greenhouse has been approved for construction, he said, for more growing capacity “if the market needs it.”

One commissioner, Eric Colvin, would later admit that the county had failed in its responsibility to adequately install zoning rules to prevent such a facility in a highly-restrictive-to-development portion of the county.

The commissioners would later in the year enact such rules to restrict industrial-sized cannabis operations from rural areas as well as apply rules to different zoning areas regarding cannabis growing, processing and distribution businesses.

In March state Democrats would lose their bid to impose their congressional redistricting scheme via a court order.

The General Assembly started deliberations on a map offered by the Senate March 28 to meet March 30 deadline set by Senior Judge Lynne Battaglia.

The newly-offered map strengthens District 1, currently held by U.S. Rep. Andy Harris, by returning its boundaries to roughly the same status before Democrats voted their map in last year along a party line vote.

The new map makes the districts much more compact and contiguous than the one thrown out by the court; District 5 was gerrymandered to cut a swath northward from Southern Prince George’s County up into District 4.

District 5 is held by U.S. Rep. Steny Hoyer and includes Calvert, St. Mary’s



The cannabis facility in Avenue

and Charles counties.

Their 2021 map brought District 1 much farther west across the Chesapeake Bay, gathering into it more Democrat voters in an apparent aim to unseat Harris and make the Maryland Congressional Delegation entirely Democrat in part affiliation.

Of the eight congressional members, only Harris is a Republican.

In her ruling, Battaglia called the 2021 plan an example of an “extreme gerrymander that subordinates constitutional criteria to political considerations.”

This was one of the chief claims of Republicans, including Del. Kathy Szeliga who filed a lawsuit, along with other plaintiffs, against the plan.

Local GOP lawmakers were bolstered by the ruling.

“It pays to fight back,” said Del. Matt Morgan, (R-Dist.29A)

Gov. Larry Hogan praised the decision.

“This ruling is a monumental victory for every Marylander who cares about protecting our democracy, bringing fairness to our elections, and putting the people back in charge,” said Gov. Larry Hogan in a statement. “It puts in plain view the partisan, secretive, and rigged process that led to the legislature’s illegal and unconstitutional maps.

“I call on the General Assembly to immediately pass the independent Citizens Redistricting Commission maps that were written with accountability and transparency.”

Battaglia’s ruling also permanently enjoined the state legislature from enacting the 2021 redistricting plan and called on lawmakers to redraw the maps.

“The 2021 Congressional Plan is unconstitutional, and subverts [the] will of those governed,” Battaglia wrote in her ruling.

In local politics, Jaymi Sterling, who would successfully run to become the first female State’s Attorney in county history, began her campaign against her former boss and long-time incumbent prosecutor Richard Fritz.

Sterling resigned from her post after a fast rise in the office after claiming she had witnessed improprieties regarding spending of public dollars; Fritz said he initially demoted Sterling from her post because she had exceeded her authority regarding an internal personnel conflict between office employees.

In her campaign announcement, Sterling said she would work to “return integrity to the office” and focus on curbing rising crime.

“As a prosecutor, I never shied away from taking on tough cases,” Sterling

said. “Throughout my career, I prosecuted some of the worst criminals in St. Mary’s, Anne Arundel, and Frederick counties.

“As State’s Attorney, I will prioritize efforts to fight violent crime, corruption, drug dealing, drunk driving, domestic violence, sex offenders, and repeat offenders.”

She said she would target dealers of synthetic opioids for prosecution.

“We cannot jail our way out of the opioid epidemic; enough is enough,” Sterling said. “I am dedicated to cracking down on drug dealers who peddle this poison.”

Sterling said community members had told her they were concerned there was a lack of transparency in the local criminal justice system and about “prosecutions not being evenly pursued.”

“I believe community trust is a cornerstone of an effective state’s attorney’s office,” Sterling said in her statement. “As a first step to regaining the community’s confidence in an independent, non-partial state’s attorney’s office, I will not be accepting any campaign donations from criminal defense lawyers, criminal defense law firms, or their family members.”

APRIL

By early Spring, Maryland finally had a congressional district map that followed the state constitution.

The new map was a quickly redrawn plan offered by Democrats when Judge Lynn Battaglia ordered the legislature to do so by March 30.

While the new map Hogan signed into law April 4 is viewed by many as far better than the heavily gerrymandered one Democrats tried to enact, not everyone was pleased with the process the majority party in Annapolis used to come up with the new map.

“The Democrats rapidly redrew the congressional maps over the weekend, behind closed-door sessions yet again, with zero input from the citizens and taxpayers of Maryland,” said Del. Matt Morgan (R-District 29A).

Morgan, in a floor speech in the Maryland General Assembly earlier this year, asked Montgomery County Del. Eric Luedtke why maps drawn last year by a citizens’ commission appointed by the governor as an alternative to the Democrats’ map was not considered.

“We had a focus group that went from May to November, the citizens redistricting commission,” Morgan said. “Why were those maps never considered?”

Luedtke said they were drawn up prior

to the judge’s decision.

“But those maps had citizen inputs,” Morgan returned. “How many citizens had input on this map?”

The Montgomery County delegate said just three Republican activists spoke at the public hearing for the proposed map.

“The court gave us five days to redraw the map,” Luedtke said. “Given more time the process might have looked different.”

Morgan said the new map looked better than the old but was still gerrymandered.

The medical cannabis issue would come up again, but this time in Hollywood.

The parcel of land that has until recently been the home of The Greenery on Mervell Dean Road in Hollywood would soon become the site of a cannabis processing facility, according to county planning documents.

The proposed project had already been approved by the St. Mary’s County Board of Appeals after unanimous decision in May of last year; the project was listed on the property placard last year as an Agricultural Industry Major use in the town center’s mixed-use zone.

What the specific use was, a processing facility for medical cannabis, was not listed.

At the May 13 public hearing last year, the fact that the buildings still standing on the old Greenery property would be repurposed to process medical cannabis was openly discussed.

There were no residents from the surrounding community who spoke on the matter and county planning records show there was only one resident who sent in a letter opposing the project.

The plan to put a cannabis processing facility in Hollywood came at a time when the county was pursuing efforts to address how such facilities are treated by the zoning ordinance.

The proposed operation in Hollywood has the major agricultural designation because it would involve the intensive process of a crop that had been grown at another location, then Deputy Director of Planning and Zoning Harry Knight said at last year’s hearing.

“They are not growing the horticultural product on this site,” Knight told appeals board members. “They are processing it on this site.”

Christopher Longmore, attorney for the applicant, Deborah Price, said last year that his client still had to obtain a license to process the cannabis on site.

“This is solely a processing facility for medical cannabis,” said Longmore. “Not for any other uses.”



Palchinsky showing the petition to oppose the Royal Farms that would supplant her business and others at Tulagi Place

Longmore explained in the May 13 hearing that two buildings on the property — approximately 2.28 acres would be used as an administrative building and a cannabis processing facility respectively.

When the community wasn’t concerned over the opening of cannabis facilities it was worried over the coming of convenience stores such as Royal Farms.

Just such a project was approved over much community consternation and a zoning appeal in the area of Great Mills Road and Gate 2 of Patuxent River Naval Air Station.

After a four-and-a-half hour public hearing April 25, the county’s planning commission approved a concept site plan for a Royal Farm convenience store and gas station at the aged shopping center located just outside Gate 2 of Patuxent River Naval Air Station.

It was a close vote; 4-to-3. Those who voted against it noted the sharp increase in traffic the project would bring as well as exacerbating unsafe road conditions.

Those in favor said the applicant had met all the requirements of the law, including on traffic.

This decision means that the historic but deteriorating group of buildings will likely be demolished to make way for the new development; the small businesses that are locally owned will have to move.

That includes the much beloved and often patronized Linda’s Café, owned and operated by Linda Palchinsky.

For 33 years Palchinsky has run her business there, becoming a fixture of Lexington Park in an area where the community first sprang to life to support the navy base during World War II.

Palchinsky said she, and others who have been tenants there, have operated there from month to month on leases with the property owners, who are based in Virginia.

The specter of having to vacate with little notice has always loomed over her, Palchinsky said.

“I’m very despondent, very depressed,” Palchinsky told The County Times the day after the marathon hearing. “That intersection is going to be doomed for accidents.

“It’ll be a mess.”

The Royal farms would be more than 5,000 square feet in size, with the fuel canopy area coming in at roughly the same size.



Jaymi Sterling won a resounding victory to become St. Mary’s first female State’s Attorney

MAY

By the end of spring the county government had continued to collect revenue and would promulgate its biggest operating budget to date.

The Commissioners of St. Mary's County unanimously approved a \$324.8 million budget this week that includes the use of \$25 million from the county's undesignated fund balance to pay for capital construction projects.

It also uses the last of the American Rescue Act funding of about \$11 million.

The \$25 million will be put towards highway maintenance and improvement projects such as the continued build-out of FDR Boulevard, which takes up roughly half of the allocation.

The separate Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budget is \$68.8 million.

The income tax was reduced from 3.17 percent to 3.0 percent in the fiscal 2023 budget. The 3.0 percent income tax rate was last seen in the fiscal 2018 operating budget.

Department of Finance Director Janett Cudmore called the new rate "a big accomplishment" at the May 24 county commissioner business meeting.

The property tax rate remains at .8478 cents per \$100 of assessed value.

The sheriff's office received an extra \$6.7 million in funding to reach to \$27.5 million; it is a 29.2 percent increase over the prior year.

The Board of Education also received more money over the prior year as well; their total local allocation was \$121.5 million.

Commissioner Mike Hewitt praised the budget but issued a warning.

"I've had my share of voting against budgets," said Commissioner Mike Hewitt. "But I think what this budget did is it gave something to everybody."

"It gave income tax breaks to some people; there was no increase in the property tax rate."

The increases for schools, law enforcement and county government also meant salaries for employees there would grow, he said.

But being flush with federal cash would not last much longer.

"We're operating in good financial times, but going forward next year, the year after, this American Rescue money is going to be going away," Hewitt said.

"On top of that we have this inflation going on that's really driving up the costs of everything."

"We need to be vigilant that we are doing the right thing as far as our income and our expenses."

The state would also reveal that the blue crab population would also reach historic levels — low levels — just as the summer season was taking off.

The population density of harvestable male hard crabs has cratered in 2022, according to the latest winter dredge survey conducted by the state's Department of Natural Resources, which reports that there are now only an estimated 227 million living in the region.

The results of the dredge are similar for juvenile and female crabs as well.

Overall, the total population of Maryland hard crab has dwindled to what



Crab populations cratered this year

scientists believe is a 33-year low.

For comparison in 1993 scientists believe that some 850 million crabs lived in the Chesapeake Bay and its surrounding watershed, in 2021 scientists believe that just 282 million crabs lived there.

In 2020, the state believed there were 405 million crabs in the bay, 30 percent greater than the amount found in 2021.

The number of juvenile crabs in 2022 was 101 million crabs, a slight increase from 86 million juvenile crabs in 2021, but the third consecutive year of below average recruitment, according to the state's dredging report.

St. Mary's also got a new Circuit Court judge to replace the retiring Judge David Densford who reached the mandatory retirement age of 70.

Gov. Larry Hogan announced May 10 that he had appointed Amy Lorenzini to fill the vacancy on the St. Mary's County Circuit Court.

"I am confident that Ms. Lorenzini... will bring valuable experience and knowledge to the bench and honorably serve the citizens of [St. Mary's County] admirably," Hogan said in a prepared statement.

Lorenzini lives in St. Mary's County and has been a prosecutor in the St. Mary's state's attorney's office and a clerk for Judge Marvin Kaminetz.

"I'm honored at the appointment," Lorenzini told The County Times. "I'm excited to have the opportunity to serve St. Mary's County."

Lorenzini has been an attorney with the Prince Frederick firm of Cumberland & Erly, LLC, for the past 17 years, serv-



Amy Lorenzini, newly appointed Circuit Court Judge

ing as managing partner for the past eight years. Ms. Lorenzini has a general practice that includes a variety of civil and criminal circuit court litigation. She has been regularly appointed by the court to represent individuals in guardianship matters, children in adoption and custody matters, and military personnel. Before joining Cumberland & Erly, LLC, Ms. Lorenzini was an assistant state's attorney for

St. Mary's County for two years, where she was assigned to the child support enforcement unit and prosecuted district and circuit court criminal matters.

The county also came more and more to grips with the declining ability of volunteer rescue squads to operate without major assistance from taxpayer funded contract emergency medical personnel.

Full-time and hourly paid emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and paramedics are now answering the vast majority of calls for service in St. Mary's.

Steve Walker, director of the Department of Emergency Services, reported to the Commissioners of St. Mary's County that the demand for paid medical assistance hired by the county had grown from at 1,100 hours a week when it first started last year to 2,000 hours a week.

"It's a 61 percent increase," Walker told elected leaders. "The needs are continuing to increase."

From November of 2021 through January, February and March of this year, Walker said, 69 percent of all basic life support calls were answered by county-employed medical staff.

For the same time period paid paramedics with the county's Advanced Life Support (ALS) unit answered 82 percent of calls for service.

Walker said the new data on the effectiveness of paid staffing — which was originally designed to support volunteer rescue squads during daytime staffing hours — was a reflection of the new reality facing the organizations.

"They're doing a great job," Walker said of volunteers who are still answering calls for service. "They're working very hard."

"They just can't get their staff back."

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated a lingering problem that had dogged some volunteer rescue squads for years in that they could not bring in enough volunteers to staff stations during the day.

This left the responsibility for answering calls to some of the larger, better staffed squads all throughout the county.

But soon, with volunteer rosters dwindling because of aging members and fears of contracting COVID-19, the county had to act and use federal stimulus funds to hire contract medics to bridge the gaps in service.

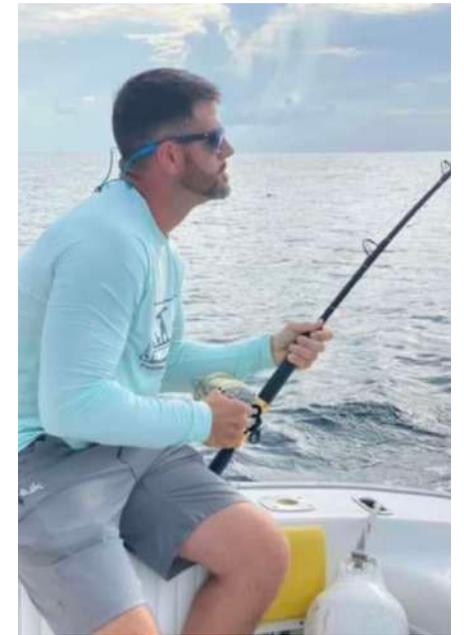
Walker had hoped that the volunteer services would be able to recover their members but as the year wore on, even veterans with the volunteer services

stated publicly that those days would never return.

JUNE

By mid-summer a grieving family finally received closure about the fate of a family member who had gone missing in local waters.

Sixth months after Ernie Sigmon III went missing from his boat in the Patuxent River his body was found in Dorchester County Monday.



Ernest J. Sigmon, lost at sea

Sigmon was a Mechanicsville resident and his disappearance triggered a massive effort to search for him from both law enforcement and volunteers.

Maryland National Resources Police say they are still investigating Sigmon's death.

"After conducting a six-month investigation that involved underwater imaging sonar technology, authorities recovered... [Sigmon] on June 20 at approximately 11 a.m.," the statement reads. "Officers were alerted after receiving a phone call from a concerned citizen who stated they found the victim deceased in the Choptank River in Dorchester County."

Sigmon's father, Ernest Sigmon Jr. offered a prepared statement from the family regarding the discovery of his son.

Back in December, searchers investigated Sigmon's last known position, which appeared to be off the shore of Calvert County.

His 25-foot center console boat was found trolling in the waters off of Dares Beach, the family's Facebook page stated, but he was not there and no blood was found on the boat, they said.

"After 173 days of this unimaginable tragedy, God has brought Ernie home to us," the father wrote. "Our hope, faith, and strength has never been so extensively tested."

Summer temperatures also helped cause a weather anomaly here in St. Mary's.

The National Weather Service (NWS) has confirmed that a tornado touched down in a section of Mechanicsville last week that cut a swath approximately 75

feet wide for a length of a little more than three miles.

The tornado, given the lowest designation of EF-0 by the NWS, reached a maximum speed of 85 miles per hour.

It lasted just five minutes according to a June 10 report by the NWS just two days after the weather event occurred.

“A severe thunderstorm spawned a brief, spin-up tornado between 8:42 and 8:47p.m...” the report stated. “The origins of this severe thunderstorm was the result of cell merger of two separate thunderstorms that approached St. Mary’s County; one crossing eastwards over the Potomac River near Quantico, Va., towards Charles County...and the other one crossing northeast over the Potomac [River] from near Colonial Beach, Va.”

That confluence of weather events occurred between La Plata and Dentsville, NWS reported and then moved to Mechanicsville where the tornado formed.

Meteorologists say that the tornado touched down about 200 yards southwest of the intersection of Route 5 and Three Notch Road, uprooting about 12 trees and snapping tree trunks.

One tree reportedly fell on the roof of residence but the occupant was unharmed; NWS said trees were felled in all directions causing “localized but prolific” damage.

The tornado inflicted similar damage three miles away when it reached the area of 40900 block of Delabrooke Road, NWS reported; the residents in this area received prior warning and reported seeing large pieces of hail the size of a half-dollar coin.

Radar reports showed that the rotation of tornado may have reached 1,400 feet above ground level.

JULY

The community peace and joy that usually ruled in Hollywood was shattered when a gang-related fight that broke out in the Hollywood Volunteer Fire Department’s carnival ended in a fatal shooting.

It proved that the gang violence thought to be only endemic to Lexington Park could move anywhere in the county.

The membership of the fire company had voted not to hold the second half of their annual carnival the gang-related shooting took the life of a 16-year-old during the festivities of the night of July 15.

The carnival was immediately shut down for the following July 16 and July 17 dates.

William Mattingly, president of the volunteer fire company, said the membership came to its decision at a special meeting July 17.

The membership has not abandoned the idea of holding the remainder of the carnival, however, Mattingly told The County Times.

“We are going to have the carnival but it’s just not going to be this weekend,” Mattingly said. “We need to develop a better plan if something like this happens again.

“We can’t do that overnight.”

The carnival would reopen later in August with much more security, no night time hours and fewer attendees.

The carnival has been held for decades without being marred by such violence.

According to police reports the shooting started in the parking lot of the fire station just a few minutes before 11p.m. Friday night and left Syncere Kovey Smith suffering from multiple gunshot wounds.

Smith was evacuated to MedStar St. Mary’s Hospital where he died from his injuries.

Sheriff’s deputies got descriptions of the alleged shooter, a six-foot-tall black male wearing dark clothing with dreadlock-type hair, and found a person matching that description at the Birdies convenience store located at the intersection of Three Notch Road and Hollywood Road south of the fire station.

Deputies reported giving commands to the subject — later identified as Devron Ny’quez Murray, 19, of Lexington Park — who was sitting on the curb.

According to police charging documents, Murray did not comply; instead he stood up and went behind a shed in a grassy area and revealed himself moments later.

Police arrested him and found a 9mm Smith and Wesson handgun behind the shed where Murray had been with the slide locked back and the magazine depleted of ammunition.

As the county dealt with the continuing rise in violence, life as usual in a political season with voters choosing both Jaymi Sterling as their new State’s Attorney and Capt. Steve Hall defeated two other competitors in the GOP primary.

Jaymi Sterling unseated incumbent State’s Attorney Richard Fritz, who had once been her boss, June 19 with a landslide in the GOP primary with 7,290 votes to Fritz’s 2,993 while Capt. Steve Hall, a 24-year veteran of the St. Mary’s County Sheriff’s Office handily won the GOP nomination to be the next sheriff by a large margin of 7,098 votes to the 1,908 garnered by County Commissioner John



A SWAT standoff in Lexington Park

O’Connor who vied for the same office.

Todd Fleenor, a retired sergeant with the agency and senior K-9 handler, got just 1,148 votes in the race.

The winners of the Republican primaries for both races were the presumptive winners of each race as there were no Democrat challengers in the general election.

“St. Mary’s County deserves better protection through harsher penalties for sex offenders, violent criminals and repeat drunk drivers,” Sterling said after declaring victory. “I vow to work closely with our new sheriff, the Maryland State Police and all other law enforcement agencies to crack down on drug dealers and tackle the big city crime seeping into our communities.

“I look forward to restoring integrity to the office and protecting our county’s taxpayers from wasteful spending.”

Hall expressed his gratitude for the win.

“I am truly grateful for our resounding victory last night,” Hall said. “Our campaign was almost a year-long journey.

“Nothing of this magnitude with this level of importance is done by an individual. It was a community effort and I am thankful for everyone who participated.”

AUGUST

By the end of summer, the county was ready to receive an a new icon of its history rebuilt to more accurate standards.

The long awaited new Maryland Dove, a replica of one of two sailing ships that brought colonists from England in 1634, arrived in St. Mary’s City after being built in St. Michaels across the Chesapeake Bay.

According to shipwrights who built the new vessel, the materials used in the construction of the new Dove are much closer in historical accuracy as is the shape of the vessel.

The original Dove was of European construction and built in the early 1600s.

It accompanied the Ark on its voyage to the New World in 1634 when English settlers first founded St. Mary’s City.

The Ark carried the colonists and the Dove was a cargo ship that the colonists would use to travel up and down the local waterways as they explored the lands around their new home.

The Ark was rented by the Calvert family, who bankrolled the colonial expedition, but the Dove, a much smaller vessel, was owned by the colony and stayed with the settlers.

The Dove would eventually fall into disrepair and on an outbound voyage was lost at sea shortly after the colony had been founded.

It was at the bottom of the ocean where the research to build the new Dove would get some assistance

Shipwrights said submarine research of ship wrecks at the bottom of the ocean over the centuries have given them



The new Maryland Dove arrived in St. Mary’s City

more accurate evidence of just what the ships looked like and how the sails were rigged.

Dr. Fred Hocker, a Swedish professor and researcher who has a substantial digital archive of maritime archaeological finds, assisted the shipwrights in building the new vessel.

SEPTEMBER

By the beginning of the fall, St. Mary’s dedicated part of Route 5 through Leonardtown in the memory of the state and county’s first ever African American sheriff.

Joseph Lee Somerville served two terms as sheriff but first was a senior deputy.

Somerville was a lieutenant in the sheriff’s office in 1977 when he was appointed by then Gov. Marvin Mandel to serve out the term of then Sheriff George Sanger, who died in office.

He then ran for the office and handily won the local election to serve another four years.

Throughout the county, Somerville, the patriarch of a large, extended family in St. Mary’s, was known as a gentleman and well-liked by almost everyone who knew him.

After serving as sheriff, he went on to work as a bailiff in the St. Marys’ County Circuit Court.



Sheriff Joseph Lee Somerville

OCTOBER

Residents found they couldn’t even send checks in the mail without the serious risk of them being stolen and “washed” for their cash value.

By mid-autumn dozens of reports of check theft from the mail had been taken in by the sheriff's office.

According to law enforcement and victims, the thieves are intercepting the checks, either at a postal center or from individual mail boxes and "washing" — or altering — the payee names and monetary amounts on the checks and then cashing them.

Then-Sheriff Timothy K. Cameron said anyone using the mail to send checks should reconsider.

"Some habits die hard," Cameron said. "People would really have to consider the security of their sent mail with checks.

"This is clearly a focused ring of people doing this."

"We've seen some massive amounts written on these intercepted checks," said Jason Babcock, spokesman for the county sheriff's office.

Dan Slade, a Leonardtown-based attorney, said several checks of his were stolen and altered in an attempt to bilk thousands from his accounts.

Only one check was fraudulently cashed, Slade said, but his bank was able to catch the rest.

"We were paying our monthly bills... and someone stole our checks," Slade told The County Times. "The next thing we knew we had checks being cashed all across the country."

The inconvenience of the thefts is cou-

pled with paying a monitoring fee to the bank, Slade said — sometimes as much as an extra \$100 per month — to ensure against stolen checks being cashed.

"You get hit multiple times," Slade said. "You don't consider that when you put your mail in the U.S. Postal Service."

NOVEMBER

The general elections revealed that while St. Mary's was still very much a Republican stronghold in Democrat-controlled Maryland, it was not as red as some had hoped.

The only race in which the GOP seemingly fell short was in District 29B where Deb Rey came close to unseating Democrat incumbent Brian Crosby for the delegate seat she once held.

Though the race was close — the candidates were separated by just 327 votes on election night— Crosby claimed victory.

He defeated Rey in 2018 to be the only Democrat in the St. Mary's County delegation to the General Assembly in Annapolis.

"I am humbled to be able to continue my service to you over the next four years," Crosby said in a statement to his supporters on social media. "I want to thank everyone who pitched in over the last 18 months to make this a reality."

Going into election night, Rey said she felt good about her chances.

"It feels a little like 2014," Rey said the night of Nov. 8 waiting for election returns to come in, noting the national sentiment appeared to lean towards a Red Wave much like it did when she was first elected.

Rey unseated the long-serving Democrat John Bohanan in an upset victory eight years ago.

Later, when all of the precincts reported in voting numbers, they showed Rey trailing close behind Crosby with 4,710 votes of her own to the incumbent's 5,037.

Rey would later concede the race.

DECEMBER

Newly-elected Sheriff Steve Hall shared his vision for the coming year for law enforcement in St. Mary's County.

Hall said he is ready to start a program for school resource officers dedicated to county elementary schools shortly after he takes office Dec. 5.

"We are training people for this as we speak," Hall told The County Times this week. "We want to effectively have visibility in the elementary schools throughout the year.

"It's a small contingent now, but it's a good place to start."

So far, the unit has a supervisor and one deputy assigned to it, Hall said but he wants to assign more to make the program grow to all elementary schools here.

"That's one of the things I heard most from people on the campaign," Hall said. "My idea is to have individuals trained and ready to go after the first of the year."

The program is one of several initiatives Hall wants to pursue or continue as the county's new sheriff.

He follows Sheriff Tim Cameron, who served as sheriff and one of the county's most popular elected officials for 16, who will move on to become superintendent of the Wyoming Highway Patrol.

Hall said his predecessor and mentor has put the agency on the right track and he intends to see it stays there.

guyleonard@countytimes.net



Capt. Hall, now St. Mary's new sheriff addresses interns

Season's Greetings

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Sheriff's Office Raises More than \$31,000 for Special Olympics

Through its fundraising events this year, the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office has collected \$31,612.15 for Special Olympics Maryland in 2022. The Sheriff's Office and its community partners raised money during the Law Enforcement Torch Run in September and at the annual St. Mary's Splash, held on Saturday, Dec. 17.

The St. Mary's Splash event in the cold waters of the Potomac River generated about \$17,000 from participants.

The money raised funds for sports and leadership programs that will

benefit more than 200 local Special Olympics athletes.

The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community, according to the organization.



Former Sheriff Tim Cameron, Sheriff Steve Hall, and Chaplain Charlie Wharton



Letters to the Editor

As a youngster, I was blessed to have a great aunt who was a librarian in a small town in northern Missouri. She was not only a librarian, she was *the* librarian. It being the early 1950s, there were no fax machines, no internet connections. There were no study rooms, no story times, no books on tape, and it being a small town, there was no bookmobile.

But there was my great aunt Agnes who presided, quite efficiently and regally, behind the circulation desk.

The bonus of having a wonderful aunt as a librarian was that she enhanced my parents' dedication to my early childhood reading efforts. My Christmas present from her was invariably a book. My first present was "To Think That I Saw It On Mulberry Street". That was followed by "McElligott's Pool", "If I Ran the Zoo", and so forth.

My reading habits have grown far beyond Dr. Seuss' many volumes, but it all started with my Great Aunt Agnes in little old Macon, Missouri.

Consider the modern local library. Books are freely exchanged between branches, and even between different counties (in our case, between Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's County's library systems). There are study rooms, story times, books on tape, fax machines, copy machines, internet connections, a notary public, and, coming soon to St. Mary's County, a bookmobile. (Oops, modern terminology is "mobile library").

If you have not visited your local library lately, treat yourself and visit one. You will see an amazing value created by your local and state tax dollars. And if you are a regular library user, even if only infrequently, take a moment to call your local county commissioner to let them know how important their robust financial support is in creating and maintaining a thriving, growing, and far-sighted library system in your community.

County budgets for the coming fiscal year are being formulated right now. I urge all library patrons to let their local governments know that libraries are important to you and are deserving of substantial and continuing financial support.

John A. Walters, Leonardtown

If you would like to submit a Letter to the Editor, please include your name & town of residence.
Email: aldailey@countytimes.net
P.O. Box 250 Hollywood, MD 20636

Free Child Seat Installation on Thursday, Jan. 12

Is your child safety seat installed correctly? Not Sure? Are you about to become a parent? Let a National Certified Child Safety Seat technician teach you how to install your seat correctly and safely.

The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office and its community partners are hosting another free child safety seat installation event. Deputies and trained staff will install child safety seats on Thursday, Jan. 12, 2023, at the Lexington Park Volunteer Rescue Squad at 21685 FDR Blvd. in Lexington Park, next to the Lexington Park Library.

The installation event runs from 3pm to 6pm. Appointments are preferred, but drive-ups will be accepted up until 5:30 pm.

Sign up for an installation appointment at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70a054caba729a3f49->



The Tackle Box Fishing Report



Part of the Swann family that landed fabulous fish the day after Christmas on the Miss Susie II

By Ken Lamb
Contributing Writer

Not many days left until the new year. The Potomac River striped bass season ends on this Saturday, December 31.

Trollers and jiggers are getting a great bite at daybreak just inside the dividing line that separates the Potomac from the bay. The fish are available all up and down the river from Ragged point to Smith Point. Trolling is best. Umbrellas are the lures of choice.

We have counted five ocean-run

stripped bass that were in the 45-to-51-inch range, weighing close to 50 pounds. The sea monsters have been mixed with the 20-to-35-inch fish that are tearing up the water, chasing bait.

It has been a great fishing season in southern Maryland with rockfish, spot, cobia, redbfish, spanish mackerel, catfish, snakehead, and white perch all being plentiful. We had a good sprinkling of bluefish and speckled trout, too. If we get our croaker back, it will be a spectacular 2023. The season lasts until 31 December and no one needs to let this opportunity get away from them.

Pet

OF THE WEEK

MEET SIMBA



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Hello, my name is Simba. The feeling here at the shelter is that I'll be a GREAT GUY to have around YOUR HOUSE. I'll thrive in a quiet home with a regular routine and I would LOVE to have a stay-at-home mom or dad! My must haves are: a fenced in yard, lots of treats, and a friendly canine sibling. I'm only about A YEAR OLD and I weigh about 90 pounds. My TCAS pals say that I think my NUMBER ONE PURPOSE in life is to be your personal shadow, so get ready to BE LOVED UNCONDITIONALLY! My prayer is to have my New Home by New Year's so email animalshelter@charlescountymd.gov to schedule an appointment to meet me ASAP! BE MY MIRACLE AND PLEASE CHOOSE ME! When you choose to adopt from TCAS, you are literally saving a life.

To see more of my amazing friends also available for adoption, "like" us on Facebook @ Tri-County Animal Shelter Southern MD or view us on our website at <https://www.charlescountymd.gov/services/animal-care-control/tri-county-animal-shelter>

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Passing Assets Through a Trust: What to Know

As the year winds down, your thoughts might drift to the future. And, as part of that future, you may be thinking of where your financial assets will end up. You've worked hard to accumulate them, and you'll certainly need some of them to support your retirement, but what about the rest? What's the best way to pass them on to your loved ones?

There's no single path for everyone to follow. But you might consider establishing a trust, which offers some key benefits. For example, your estate can avoid the time-consuming, and highly public, process of probate. Plus, you can be highly specific about how your assets will be distributed.

To establish a trust, you will need to work with a qualified estate-planning attorney. And while you'll discuss many issues, here are three key questions that will certainly need to be addressed:

- **Who will serve as trustee of the trust?** As the grantor, or creator, of your trust, you will pick the trustee – the individual or corporate entity that will manage the trust's assets and carry out the purpose of the trust. You could choose a trusted loved one, but this individual might not have the knowledge or experience to manage the responsibilities of a trustee. As an alternative, you could choose a corporate fiduciary, such as a bank or trust company. These entities are typically regulated by outside agencies and provide significant public matter expertise. Of course, they charge for their services and often have account minimums.
- **When are distributions made?** As the grantor, you can choose when assets will be distributed to the beneficiaries you've named. You could decide to keep the assets in the trust until a beneficiary reaches the age of majority; note that the age of majority is not the same in all states. Or you could choose to "phase in" the distributions at particular ages – e.g., 30, 35, 40 – or after a certain number of years. You could even hold assets in the trust for the lifetimes of the beneficiaries. These types of choices will depend on several factors, such as your feelings for how responsible a beneficiary might be in managing money.
- **For what purposes can the trust assets be used?** In addition to choosing when your trust should make distributions, you can decide how these assets should be used. You could designate some broad categories, such as health, education, maintenance and support. A beneficiary's request for distributions in these areas is usually granted. But you could also structure the trust to provide mandatory income, perhaps once a year, or include a provision that provides incentives, such as distributing certain amounts of money once the beneficiary has achieved a milestone, such as finishing a degree or purchasing a first home.

One final note: Although you clearly have great control over what your trust can accomplish, its effectiveness will also depend, to a great extent, on its asset level. With this in mind, you'll want to pay close attention to your investment decisions throughout your life and your withdrawal strategy during retirement. The better your choices in these areas, the more options you'll have with your trust – and the greater the potential benefits for your beneficiaries.

*Article was contributed by David McDonough
Financial Advisor at Edward Jones
Office located at 41680 Miss Bessie Dr. Suite 302
Leonardtown, MD 20650
301 997 1707*



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The Way We Were...

History and Stories of St Mary's County from long-ago to just yesterday

Valor in a Border State

This past October, readers of this column were introduced to "Muffled Oars: A Story of St Mary's County During the Civil War". The book, published by the St. Mary's County Historical Society, is available at Fenwick Street Books & Music, the Historical Society Bookstore, and Amazon in softcover and Kindle formats.

Where "Muffled Oars" was a novel, "Valor in a Border State" by County resident Robert L. Long, is non-fiction. Now in its second edition and available at Fenwick Books and Amazon, "Valor in a Border State" presents brief biographies, letters, and history of St. Mary's County men who fought – and died – for the Confederacy. Interestingly, nearly all these men attended the Charlotte Hall Military Academy, as had many who enlisted and fought on the Union side during the Civil War.

Of particular interest to readers of "Muffled Oars" is Long's retelling of the dangers and adventures of nineteen young men who departed Leonardtown for Richmond, VA, on August 14, 1862. The family names of the men are familiar: Combs, Fenwick, Waring, Hayden, and so on. Their conveyance: a York River rowboat which, loaded with men and baggage, left barely two inches of freeboard. Four oarsmen were selected and no doubt the boat's oars were wrapped with burlap to muffle the sounds.

Long draws this story from an article titled "The Efficacy of Prayer" by Confederate veteran John Hickey who was one of the nineteen men. It is a harrowing tale of near captures.

Having been spotted by Union patrol boats on their first attempt to cross the Potomac, the crew took refuge at Flood Creek (near White Point Beach off Medley's Neck Road).

At 5:15pm on the 14th, the crew made ready to row across the Potomac heading to Machodoc Creek in VA (near Coles Point), a distance of about seven miles. Quickly spotted by a Union steam tug just off Blackstone Light. The pursuit was quickly joined by a Union clipper just south of Colonial Beach. In Hickey's words:

"We were within one mile of the Machodoc bar and had slightly the advantage in distance. With the bar between us and the clipper, there was a possibility that the clipper might ground.

"A puff of smoke and the skipping of the ball across our bow warned us of what we might expect. 'Boys' said Foxwell [the captain], there is nothing that can save us but prayer and if any of you can pray aloud, we will join in.'" One of the rowers, Warren Moore, began to recite the Memorare.

Another shot was fired, but the ball fell just short, showering the men with water. Hickey continues:

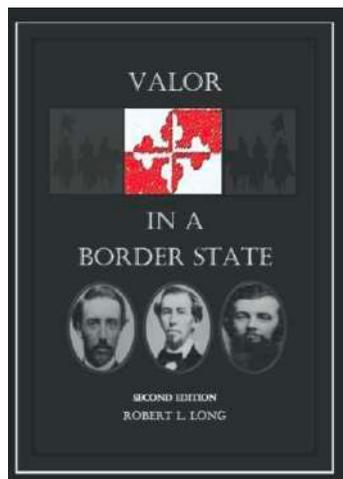
"The full sails of the clipper were seen to flutter as she shifted to catch a breeze and the gun diverted and our prayers were heard."

Cheering broke out as the boat rowed into the mouth of the Machodoc.

"There were many non-Catholics in our party," wrote Hickey, "and I am fully assured that to this day, were any of them interrogated on the subject, they would concur with the writer, that at the time it certainly appeared as a strong manifestation of the 'Efficacy of Prayer.'"



Learn more about the extraordinary history of the County and its people at the St. Mary's County Historical Society. www.stmaryshistory.org



Wanderings of an Aimless Mind

by Shelby Oppermann

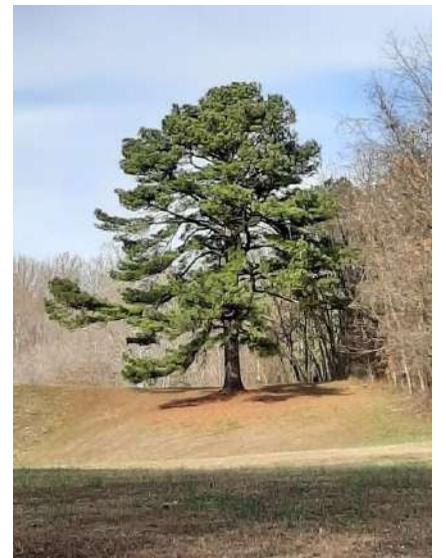


Wanderlust

It's a good thing I love my yard, because unless my husband and I just drive around sightseeing, we aren't going anywhere. Yes the crud starting with a C has hit us both...again. The other time was in February 2021 but was much worse – this just feels like a bad sinus infection (so far) for me. My husband was first to show symptoms like usual, and I thought I may be in the clear having taken precautions of not being near each other, using separate bathrooms, me sleeping on the couch, and Lysoling and disinfecting every possible surface in our home. But unfortunately, it was not enough. It seems like many people we know are going through this same thing right now. Why is it, when you know you can't go anywhere, you want to go somewhere even more. And using curbside pick-up at drugstores just really doesn't cut it.

So, I am wondering where we should wander this week. Two sick people in the same house, even if they love each other very much, is a recipe for disaster. There is so much beautiful scenery and there are so many beautiful parks in Southern Maryland where we could get out and enjoy nature, be far away from people and get fresh air.

Our go to place has always been Gilbert Run Park since it is pretty close to our home in Mechanicsville. The lake is so calm and beautiful and other than getting chased by crazed ducks occasionally we love to walk the path around the lake with Mindy. They also have plenty of logs and jut off areas with picnic tables where we (me) can take a rest. What I would really like to do is grab some hot dogs or the Nick's sweet Italian sausage links from our freezer and have a cookout on the grates. I imagine we can get curbside pickup of charcoal or just use twigs and branches just laying around to fill the standing grills. We might have to do that this week. Now, I am craving hot dogs.



There are a few other parks that we haven't been to yet that I would like to visit. Maxwell Hall Park in Hughesville's website states that they have some nicely maintained trails. And I have always wanted to see the old historic Maxwell Hall. I didn't realize that Maxwell Hall Park has 6 horse riding and hiking trails color-coded by trail intensity and mileage. The Brown Trail is 3.5 miles and covers areas through woods, fords, and hilly areas, but does offer two rest areas and scenic overlooks. It could take me five years to work up to that trail. I also did not know there was shoreline access at the park. It's also close to home.

I've also never been to Bensville Park in White Plains which the website says is connected to The Indian Head Rail Trail. I also found Tilghman Lake Park in La Plata that I have never heard of but looks beautiful too. Friendship Farm Park in Nanjemoy looks peaceful too with a long, meandering Friendship Trail – sounds perfect for Wanderlust. Obviously, there are plenty of new parks or our old favorites to enjoy now and throughout our (normally) mild winters here in Southern Maryland.

And you know I love our St. Mary's County Parks and have walked the trail at St. Mary's River State Park since when my sons were young, and I'm sure I will again. I wonder if the old bench is still there down by the swampy area where I used to journal or listen to music on the Walkman before cell phones? Dorsey Park always brings me happy memories of soccer practice and games when my sons were young, or just walking the trails with them. Lots of days were just spent watching them play on the playground equipment. My sons have always known that it is a special place for me and have arranged cookouts at Dorsey Park for my birthday or Mother's Day over the years. Forests and even just a single beautiful tree are where I have always felt centered or can get my soul centered. I really think I, and my husband, need some centering and definitely healing right now during this last week of 2022. I want a fresh, healthy start for 2023 and wish that for you as well.

To each New Year's adventure, Shelby

Please send your comments or ideas to: shelbys.wanderings@yahoo.com or find me on Facebook

In Remembrance

The County Times publishes obituaries as submitted by funeral homes and readers. We run them in the order we receive them. Submissions may be sent to aldailey@countytimes.net by noon on Mondays in order to be published the following Thursday. Any submissions received after this deadline may run in the following week's edition.

Dottie Brofft, 106



Dottie Pearl Brofft (née Fink) passed away Dec. 16, 2022 at the age of 106 in Leonardtown, MD.

Dottie was born November 10, 1916 and grew up on the family farm in Harrison

County, Indiana with her parents Jesse and Nellie (NEE Keen) Fink and her siblings. Dottie completed high school at age 16 and then attended Indiana University where she earned her BS degree. After graduation, Dottie worked at Wright Patterson AFB and then transferred to aviation support in Wichita, KS. While in Wichita Dottie met and married her husband Rudy Brofft and they eventually settled in Cincinnati, OH. Dottie furthered her career by working with the Public Health Service and later at the

EPA as a research librarian in Cincinnati where she retired.

Dottie was a wonderful letter writer and champion speller. She always remembered birthdays and enjoyed keeping in touch with family and friends. Dottie enjoyed summer vacations at the cabin built by her husband Rudy, and his son Bob, in Lake of The Woods, Ontario, Canada. Many fishing and swim trips, picnicks, shore lunches, blueberry picking and pie making filled those summer days.

Dottie will be remembered as someone that lived a fulfilling and interesting life who loved her family and friends. We are grateful for Dottie's life and will cherish memories that we shared with her.

Dottie is survived by her daughter Peggy (Hamblin), grandchildren Jesse, Molly and Jill. Great grandchildren Carson, Lily and Remi. Niece Lou Alice and extended family.

Dottie will be laid to rest at Spring Grove Cemetery, Cincinnati, OH



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St. Mary's Department of Aging & Human Services

Programs and Activities

Loffler Senior Activity Center 301-475-4200, ext. 1658
Garvey Senior Activity Center, 301-475-4200, ext. 1080
Northern Senior Activity Center, 301-475-4002, ext. 3101

Unless otherwise specified, all activities are open to Senior Activity Center participants ages 50+. Please call your local Senior Activity Center or visit StMarysMD.com/aging for the most up-to-date information.

Cycling Without Age - Rides

Enjoy the fresh air and free rides leaving the Northern Senior Activity Center courtesy of Cycling Without Age, St. Mary's County. These extraordinary experiences are created through trishaw rides for older adults driven by trained volunteers. Christina Allen will provide two rides by appointment on Thursday, January 5, 2023, from 10:30 a.m.-12 p.m., on Three Notch Trail with her trishaw bicycle. To reserve a ride, click on the "View and Sign Up for Activities and Programs" button at www.stmarysmd.com/aging. Accommodations can be made for those requiring registration assistance by leaving a message at 301-475-4200, ext. 3115.

Nintendo Wii Sports: Tennis - Free Play

Do you love Wii Bowling? Take a swing at Wii Tennis! This game is just as easy to learn and friendly to all skill levels. Join us at Northern Senior Activity Center on Thursday, January 12, 2023, from 1-3 p.m. for casual, competitive fun. Keep in mind that it requires swing-

ing your arm and holding a controller. To register, click on the "View and Sign Up for Activities and Programs" button at www.stmarysmd.com/aging. Accommodations can be made for those requiring registration assistance by leaving a message at 301-475-4200, ext. 3115.

Zumba with Leslie Corbin

Come join us at the Garvey Senior Activity Center on Thursdays at 5:30 p.m. for Zumba. A fun, aerobic dance class using music with a Latin beat. It's exercise that is so much fun you don't realize you've been exercising. Try your first class for free! For more information, call 301-475-4200, ext. 1080.

Dungeons and Dragons

Dungeons and Dragon will be meeting at the Garvey Senior Activity Center on Mondays, starting January 9 at 5 p.m. Are you a fan of storytelling? Have you ever wanted to be a character in Lord of the Rings? Join Peter Friesen to learn about D&D and play a series of one-shot campaigns! For more information, call 301-475-4200, ext. 1080.

Loffler Book Club News

Meet at the Loffler Senior Activity Center on Jan. 6 at 2 p.m. to discuss *A Vineyard Christmas* by Jean Stone. During the month of January, the group will be reading *Fresh Water for Flowers* by Valérie Perrin. Discussion will be on Friday, February 3. Our book club is a casual group that enjoys the perspective of others. Contact Sheila.graziano@stmaryscountymd.gov for more information.

Sing Out Loud

The Loffler Sunshine Singers recently delighted 150 partygoers plus staff at the annual St. Mary's County Department of Aging & Human Services Christmas Party on Friday, December 9. If you love music and singing, you may want to consider singing with us! Our director, Joyce Haderly has been leading choirs for decades and has brought out the very best in this newly formed group. We are further graced by piano accompaniment (Tina Watts) and three guitarists (Mary DeLima, Mary Ludwig and Lois

Stephenson). We are taking a holiday break for now but will resume weekly gatherings on Thursday, January 12 at 10 a.m. If you are interested in being a part of this, contact Sheila.graziano@stmaryscountymd.gov Or you can call 301-475-4200, ext. 1658.

Art with Jamie

Jamie's art classes in January will focus on observational drawing- learn the fine art of taking any object and drawing it using observation, points of reference, basic shape then adding high lights and low lights. On January 31 there will be a make and take project featuring a cardinal in a winter setting. The dates for these sessions are Tuesday, Jan. 10, 17, 24 and 31 at 10 a.m. The cost of these sessions is \$25 per session and includes the use of high-quality art materials. The Make and Take project on Jan. 31 includes all materials. Register for these sessions at www.stmarysmd.com/Aging or leave a message on our reservation line at 301-475-4200, ext. 1660.

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Wanted: Walter Crouse Prentiss



The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office is seeking the whereabouts of Walter Crouse Prentiss, age 42 of no fixed address, who is wanted for violating the conditions of his

Pre-Trial Release and removing his GPS monitor. Prentiss was incarcerated at the St. Mary's County Detention and Rehabilitation Center for First-Degree Rape; three counts of First-Degree Assault, three

counts of Second-Degree Assault and Malicious Destruction of Property.

Anyone with information on Prentiss' whereabouts is asked to contact Detective Joseph Bowling at 301-475-4200, ext. 71959 or email joseph.bowling@st-maryscountymd.gov.

Citizens may remain anonymous and contact Crime Solvers at 301-475-3333, or text a tip to "TIP239" plus their message to "CRIMES" (274637). Through the Crime Solvers Program tipsters are eligible for an award of up to \$1,000 for information about a crime in St. Mary's County that leads to an arrest or indictment.

Lexington Park Shooting Under Investigation

On Wednesday, Dec. 21, 2022, at 7:08 pm, St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office deputies responded to the 21800 block of Ronald Drive in Lexington Park for the reported shooting. Deputies arrived on the scene and located a 25-year-old male victim with a gunshot wound to the head. Preliminary investigation determined that the shooting occurred near the intersection of Ronald Drive and Pegg Road.

The victim was flown by helicopter to an area medical facility for treatment for incapacitating injuries where he was listed in stable condition.

Detectives from the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office Criminal Investigations

Division and Crime Lab Technicians responded to the scene to continue the investigation.

Anyone with information about this incident is asked to call Cpl. Austin Schultz at 301-475-4200, ext. 71953 or email austin.schultz@stmaryscountymd.gov.

Citizens may remain anonymous and contact Crime Solvers at 301-475-3333, or text a tip to "TIP239" plus their message to "CRIMES" (274637). Through the Crime Solvers Program tipsters are eligible for an award of up to \$1,000 for information about a crime in St. Mary's County that leads to an arrest or indictment.



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Calvert Community Calendar

To submit your event listing to go in our Community Calendar, please email timescalendar@countytimes.net with the listing details by 12 p.m. on the Monday prior to our Thursday publication.

Thu, Dec 29

Winter Break Programing: Chesapeake Horseshoe Crabs

Calvert Marine Museum
11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Called living fossils by some, horseshoe crabs are a truly ancient species that we are fortunate to have as part of today's Chesapeake ecosystem. Identify the amazing adaptations that have helped horseshoe crabs to survive for millennia and see live Atlantic horseshoe crabs in the museum's animal collection. Activities appropriate for ages 4-10. Included with museum admission.

Little Minnows

Calvert Marine Museum
10:15 a.m. & 11:15 a.m.

This month's theme is Dinosaurs are Fossils Too. For preschoolers ages 3 – 5, with an adult. This program focuses on one of the museum's three themes. Join us for story time and a takeaway craft, available while supplies last. Sessions are 25-40 minutes. Capacity is limited. Sign up at the Admissions Desk when you arrive. Cost is free with admission. For more information, visit: Little Minnows | Calvert Marine Museum, MD - Official Website

Fri, Dec 30

Winter Break Programing: Evolution and Extinction: Megalodon

Calvert Marine Museum
11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Today is all about the top predator of the Miocene seas – Megalodon! Discover how this massive shark evolved and how it ultimately met its extinction during the Pliocene Epoch. Activities appropriate for ages 4-10. Included with museum admission.

On Pins & Needle

Calvert Library Prince Frederick
850 Costley Way
1-4 p.m.

Bring your quilting, needlework, knitting, crocheting or other project for an afternoon of conversation and shared creativity, 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Sun, Jan 1

12 Hikes in '23 Hiking Challenge

American Chestnut Land Trust Trails
8 a.m.

Participants must register, and then sign-in using the QR code at any ACLT trailhead at least one time each month to qualify for a prize at the end of the year. Participants are encouraged to upload photos from each hike to ACLT's FB and Instagram with hashtag #ACLT12Hike-sin23. Encouraged to join Facebook Group "ACLT's Hiking Challenges Group"

Pet Night @ Annmarie Garden In Lights

Annmarie Sculpture Garden & Arts Center
5-8 p.m.

Bring your well-behaved pet for the last night of our holiday light show! Must be on a leash 6' or shorter. Advance tickets required for humans! Purchase tickets at www.annmariegarden.org/annmarie2/content/annmarie-garden-lights-28

Thur, Jan 5

Sea Squirts

Calvert Marine Museum
10:15 a.m. & 11:15 a.m.

This month's theme is See, Hear, Smell & Touch. Children 18 months to 3 years, with an adult, are invited to discover the museum together through

music, stories, and special activities. Join us for story time and craft, available while supplies last. Sessions are 25 - 40 minutes. Sign up at the Admissions Desk when you arrive. Cost is free with admission. For more information visit: Sea Squirts | Calvert Marine Museum, MD - Official Website

Calvert Library Fairview Branch
Rt. 4 and Chaneyville Road, Owings
Month of December

Calvert Library's Art in the Stacks is delighted to exhibit the amazing photographs of local artist Gary Scribner for the months of November through January at Fairview Library. Gary has traveled to all 50 US states and over 35 countries capturing landscape photos on film and digital media since the early 1970's. During his travels, Gary has also enjoyed capturing street scenes of ordinary people in cities he has visited, some of which will be in this exhibit. Check-out his website @ www.scribbleimages.com; 410-257-2101. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Art in the Stacks: Photography by Ray Saunders.

Calvert Library Prince Frederick
850 Costley Way
Month of December

For Ray K. Saunders it's all about the images, the moments and the light. Ray spent his professional life as a photojournalist working for newspapers in Virginia, spending 23 years as a photo editor at The Washington Post. , 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Art In The Stacks: Art by Mimi Little

Calvert Library Southern Branch
13920 H. G. Trueman Rd, Solomons
Month of December

Mimi Little's paintings will be on display at the Southern Branch during the months of November and December. Mimi works with acrylics, collage, and cold/wax oil to create paintings that are abstract in nature. Although the majority of her painting are done in the studio, she enjoys painting en plein air (in nature). Mimi's passion is to make paintings that relate to her life, where she lives, what she is doing and what is socially important to her, 410-326-5289. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

Upcoming

First Fossil Friday!

Calvert Marine Museum
Friday, Jan. 6
1 – 4:30 p.m.

Fossil hunters, bring your fossil finds from the Calvert Cliffs or other local areas to be identified! This service is provided for free; however, admission fees apply for access to CMM exhibits. For more information visit: Calendar • Calvert Marine Museum, MD • CivicEngage

Ongoing

Annmarie Garden in Lights

Annmarie Garden
13470 Dowell Road, Solomons, MD
Nov. 25-Jan. 1 (closed some evenings)
5-9 p.m/ nightly

Dazzling light show - festive exhibits - holiday shopping - food trucks. Admission: ADVANCE TIMED-ENTRY TICKETS REQUIRED! Members FREE (must reserve tickets); Non-members \$15; Ages 2 & under FREE; SNAP card holders, call 410-326-4640 to reserve your reduced price tickets

Holiday Magic

ArtWorks@7th
8905 Chesapeake Avenue (near 2nd street), North Beach
December 1, 2022 – January 1, 2023

Art in the Stacks: Photography by Gary Scribner

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CALVERT SHERIFF'S CRIME BLOTTER

During the week of December 19–December 25, 2022, Calvert County Sheriff's Office Deputies responded to 1,397 calls for service throughout the community.

Damaged Property: 22-74559

On December 23, 2022, Deputy Newton responded to the 6000 block of Gordon Drive in Sunderland, for the report of damaged property. The complainant advised an unknown suspect (s) shot the tailgate of the victim's vehicle with a BB gun. The estimated value of the damaged property is \$500.00.

Motor Vehicle Theft: 22-73730

On December 19, 2022, DFC Ostazski responded to the 12100 block of Long Wolf Lane in Lusby, for a report of a stolen vehicle. The complainant advised a 2013 dark gray GMC Terrain was stolen from the residence sometime between 9 a.m. and noon on Dec. 18. The estimated value of the stolen property is \$8,000.00.

Theft: 22-73695

On December 19, 2022, Deputy Murphy responded to the 12100 block of Long Wolf Lane in Lusby, for the report of a theft from a motor vehicle. The complainant advised an unknown suspect (s) entered the victim's unlocked vehicle parked outside the residence and stole a wallet and its contents. The estimated value of the stolen property is \$200.00.

Theft: 22-73707

On December 19, 2022, DFC Ostazski responded to the 700 block of Lazy

River Road in Lusby, for the report of a theft from a vehicle. The complainant advised a loaded, black Ruger EF 9 semi-automatic pistol was stolen from the center console of a vehicle parked outside the victim's residence during the overnight hours of Dec. 18 into Dec. 19. The estimated value of the stolen property is \$350.00.

Theft: 22-73750

On December 19, 2022, DFC Ostazski responded to the 700 block of Lazy River Road in Lusby, for the report of a theft from a vehicle. Contact was made with the complainant who advised an unknown suspect (s) entered and rummaged through the victim's vehicle and stole a teal Nintendo Switch. The estimated value of the stolen property is \$250.00.

Theft: 22-73834

On December 19, 2022, DFC Ostazski responded to the 700 block of Lazy River Road in Lusby, for the report of a theft from a vehicle. The complainant advised during the overnight hours between Dec. 18 and Dec. 19, an unknown suspect (s) had rummaged through the victim's vehicle and stole a pair of Apple Pro Max AirPods and a small round jewelry box with white pearls. The estimated value of the stolen property is \$250.00.

Theft: 22-73806

On December 19, 2022, Deputy Wilder responded to the 11400 block of Dowell Road in Solomons, for the report of a theft. The complainant advised sometime between Dec. 11 and Dec. 19,

an unknown suspect (s) pried off the lock to a pump house and stole a small radiator-style heater. The estimated value of the stolen property is \$70.00.

Theft: 22-74160

On December 21, 2022, Deputy Murphy received a report of a theft. The complainant advised an iPad Air was stolen from an unlocked vehicle parked in the 1500 block of Dogwood Road in St. Leonard. The estimated value of the stolen property is \$650.00.

Theft: 22-74398

On December 22, 2022, Deputy Daily responded to the 200 block of Athena Lane in Huntingtown, for the report of a theft. The complainant advised a DeWalt air compressor was stolen sometime between Dec. 15 and Dec. 21, from a carport outside the residence. The estimated value of the stolen property is \$500.00.

Theft: 22-74791

On December 24, 2022, Cpl. McCarroll responded to the BP Station/Store located at 2975 W. Chesapeake Beach Road in Dunkirk, for the report of a theft. Investigation revealed a female entered the store and grabbed 2 bottles of Kendall Jackson wine off the shelf and fled the store. The female suspect is described as a black female with a medium build, with black and red braided hair. She was wearing a black hooded sweatshirt, blue jeans, and black boots. The estimated value of the stolen property is \$30.00.

Arrests:



On December 21, 2022, Deputy J. Smith responded to the 500 block of Short Court in Lusby, for the report of a burglary in progress. Investigation revealed the homeowner heard a loud

banging outside the residence. Deputies arrived on the scene and also heard yelling and a loud banging noise coming from a detached garage behind the property. Upon entering the garage, a male was observed wearing a rifle, holding a tackle box, yelling at deputies. The male was identified as Justin Paul Garber, 40 of Broomes Island. A search of Garber's person revealed two hypodermic needles, a Super 8 airsoft rifle, and a green tackle box. Garber was transported to the Calvert County Detention Center and was charged with Burglary Second Degree, Theft: \$100 to Under \$1500, CDS: Possession of Paraphernalia, and Trespassing: Private Property.

Anyone with information about these incidents is asked to call the Sheriff's Office at (410) 535-2800 and reference the case number provided. Citizens may remain anonymous thru the 'Submit a Tip' feature on the Calvert County Sheriff's Office mobile app. To download, visit <https://apps.myocv.com/share/a39520678>. Tipsters may also email csotips@calvertcountymd.gov

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2023 FREE QUIT Tobacco Classes

Classes meet at 6pm. Held at Calvert County Health Department in person or online.

Cigarettes-Cigars-Chew-Vapes

January 12—March 2

March 16—May 4

May 18—July 6

August 10—September 28

October 19—December 14



CALVERT COUNTY
HEALTH
DEPARTMENT

To Register, please call: 410-535-5400, ext. 359
or visit CalvertHealth.org



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and medication assistance from the Maryland Quitline!

Paid for by Cigarette Restitution Funds

Art Exhibit in North Beach: Cabin Fever



artists respond to their cabin fever? Come to Artworks@7th January reception on January 7, 2023 from 1 – 4 (light refreshments will be served). You'll see works by local artists like "Evening Walk" by Mike Smawley, "Tabby at the Window" by Suzanne Shelden and "Cat Sleeping on the Porch" by Davy Strong and much more to help erase those winter doldrums!

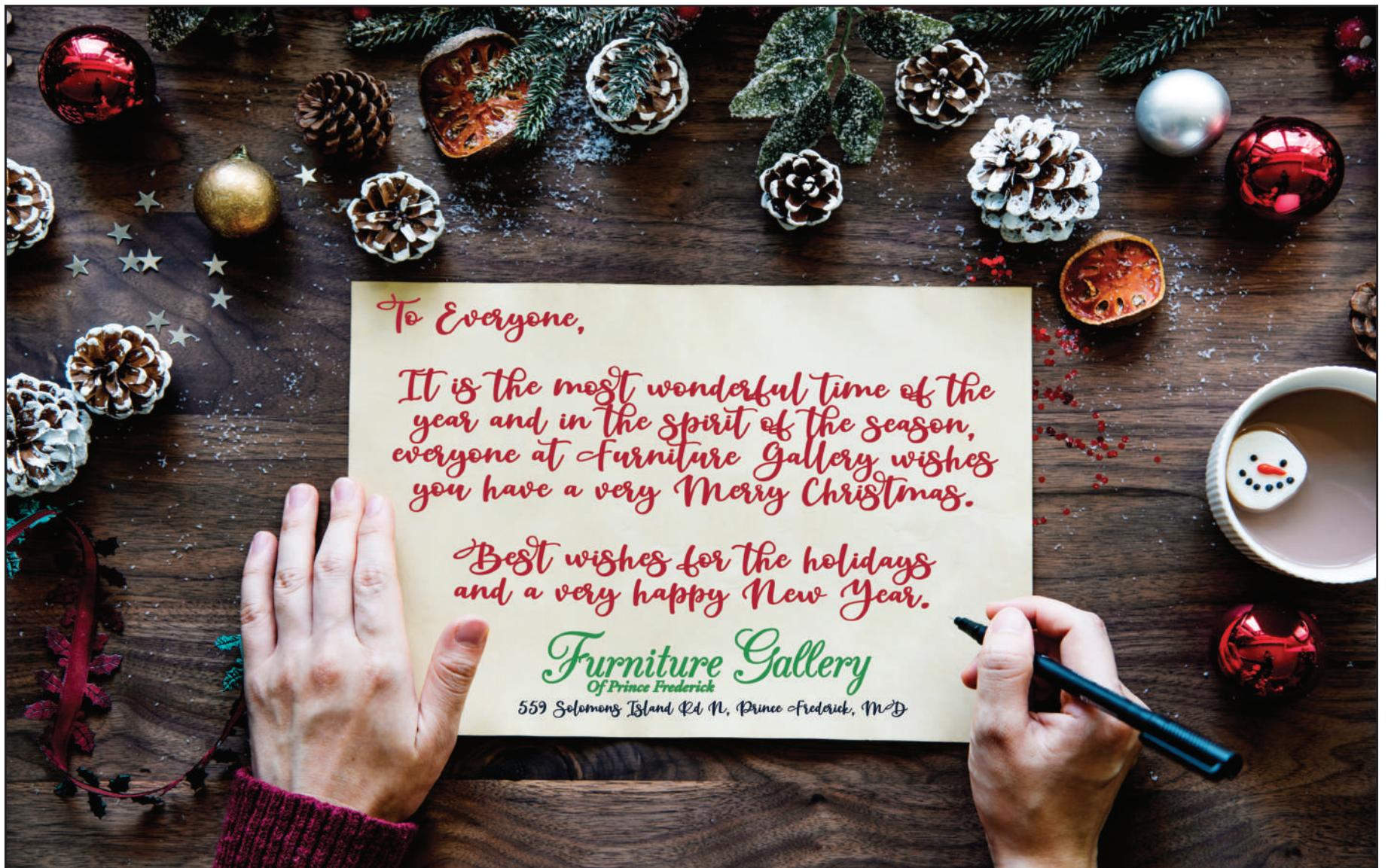
Our featured artist for January is Benita Jenkins. Benita is an enthusiastic new artist eager to share her artistic creations with the community. She paints out of enjoyment and passion and says that painting gives her peace. Come support this aspiring new artist! Her bright colored abstracts will surely brighten your winter day.

Money spent locally stays in the local economy and continues to strengthen the economic base of the entire community. Small local businesses make indispensable contributions to communities and neighborhoods. Supporting local artists allows them the opportunity to continue to serve their communities. You will often see members of Artworks@7th supporting local charities and organizations by participating in art shows, teaching workshops, and donating items for fundraisers.

ArtWorks@7th is located at 8905 Chesapeake Avenue (near 2nd street) in North Beach, Maryland. Our hours are Thursday through Sunday, 11:00 AM – 5:00 PM.



January 5, 2023 – January 29, 2023
Open House January 7, 1 – 4 PM
Hello to a New Year with endless possibilities! Winter days ushered us from frenzied holidays into cold January where gray skies atop leafless trees steal the landscape of warmth and forces us inside day after day - cabin fever has arrived. This visceral need to be among people, the desire to shake off the couch crumbs, the need to take in stimulating scenery is the universe telling you to get up and get out! Listen to your inner artist, take a walk, study the trees' long limbs, smell the cold air, meet a friend for a hot drink. How will Artworks@7th



tingtown Town Center and also some key provisions of the master plan relating to the size of several other town centers, most notably Prince Frederick.

The board also recently voted to adopt new Adequate Public Facilities regulations, requiring that water and sewer, stormwater management and public safety facilities be in place in addition to roads and schools.

During 2022 the county commissioners and planning commission were told by public works staff that the Prince Frederick sewage treatment plants were at capacity only later to be told that was in error and there is plenty capacity. During that discussion, County Administrator Mark Willis promoted a plan to send Prince Frederick sewage down to the Solomons sewage treatment plant. That plan never took hold and was lambasted by the commissioners and the public.

The question for 2023 is whether the majority newcomer members of the commissioner board will continue that slow growth course initiated in 2022. Two of the most pro-growth commissioner candidates, McConkey and Steve Jones, a planning commission member, lost their election bids. Jones lost to Hart. McConkey was defeated by Catherine Grasso in the Republican primary. Grasso was one of the movers of the ethics violation complaint against McConkey.

#2: The Election

Nowhere was change more evident in Calvert County than the year-long story about the 2022 election that concluded on Dec. 20 with the swearing in of three new county commissioners and a new sheriff.

The portent of change occurred in The County Times second issue of the new year with Delegate Jerry Clark, who represented southern Calvert and middle St. Mary's, announcing his intention not to seek re-election. Clark had been appointed in 2016 to take over Tony O'Donnell's seat when he was appointed to the Maryland Public Service Com-

mission and then Clark was elected in 2018. The former county commissioner said, "I put in 20 years. It was a hard decision but it's time for young people to take over and move this county and this state the way they should be." When all was said and done after the November election the seat was claimed by former St. Mary's County Commissioner Todd Morgan.

Clark's announcement was followed by one from veteran commissioner, Steve Weems. And then Board of Education Chairperson Pamela Cousins announced she wasn't seeking re-election. Pat Nutter, who had been appointed to the late Bill Phalen's seat, said he had never intended to seek election ad also announced in fact he wasn't.

So, the announcements left a wide-open at-large commissioner seat, and two at-large school board seats up for grabs. Originally Steve Jones, then planning commission chairman, said he was going to run for that seat, but then switched to run against Mike Hart for the 1st Commissioner District seat, which he lost in the Republican primary. Todd Ireland easily prevailed to join Buddy Hance as at-large commissioners. Hance was the top vote getter through the primary and the general election.

Republican Central Committee Chairperson Catherine Grasso announced she was stepping down from that position to run against beleaguered Commissioner Kelly McConkey. Grasso, on behalf of the central committee, had filed an ethics complaint against McConkey and those problems eventually caught up with him as he lost to Grasso in the Republican primary.

With the county now firmly planted in the GOP column, no Democrat mounted a serious challenge to the five winning Republican county commissioners.

The primary featured a hotly contested sheriff's race to replace retiring Sheriff Mike Evans. The sheriff supported his second in command, Lt. Col. Dave McDowell, but lost in the Republican primary to Ricky Cox.



Clockwise from top left: Catherine Grasso, Ricky Cox, Todd Ireland, and Buddy Hance. All won their bid for elected office.

The fallout from the Oct. 28, 2019, death of Leah Clark, who was struck and killed by a sheriff's deputy while she was walking along Dares Beach Road, may have influenced both the sheriff's race and the 1st District Commissioner race.

The deputy, Joseph Magliaccio, was found not guilty of six criminal charges in a jury trial earlier this year. He had been indicted by the grand jury on negligent manslaughter with an automobile. He was only found guilty of negligent driving and speeding. The verdict raised charges in the community of mishandling of the case by the sheriff's office. McDowell was on duty at the time and Jones was called in to assist.

Both McDowell and Jones vigorously defended their actions that night, but they both lost their races by wide margins.

In the crowded school board primary, taking advantage of the larger number of Democrats who used the mail-in method, Camille Khaleesi overtook Scoot Fowler's election night lead to claim the fourth at-large board of education spot on the ballot in November. The other primary victors were Lisa Grenis, Tracy McGuire and Jana Post.

Although the school board races are supposed to be non-partisan, the two parties supported candidates and those favored by the Republicans, Grenis and Post, prevailed in November.

When the polls closed on election night, three-time Register of Wills GOP candidate Mark Lynch had a lead over Democrat Margaret Phipps, seeking her 12th term. But when the mail-in ballots were counted, Phipps easily overcame the deficit and will be entering her 45th

year in office, indicating the voters in that instance were not interested in change.

"I am truly very thankful for the support the voters gave me," said the always gracious Phipps.

#1: The Economy

Pocketbook issues always trump other news and that was the case in 2022. Our cover photo of the June 16 issue of The County Times declared "Pain at the Pump" as gas prices topped \$5. By year end they had fallen below \$3. The big question remains for 2023 to answer. Will inflation persist? Will the country dip into a recession? Or will the economy rebound, with the troubles of 2022 just a reaction to a perfect storm of issues related to covid, supply chain problems and the war in Ukraine.

The May 19 issue reported from Southern Maryland Association of Realtors that one of the economic fallouts was rising interest rates and a dampening of rising housing costs.

Ironically, the budgets of the county (\$342 million for FY '23) and the municipalities of Chesapeake Beach and North Beach, bolstered by federal stimulus monies and increasing income tax revenues, have yet to see the impact of a slowing economy. As the government entities begin work on their fiscal year 2024 budgets, that could change.

We'll tell you the outcome when we do our Year in Review 2023. And of course in these news pages between now and then.

dickmyers@countytinmes.net



Gas prices skyrocketed in 2022



New Calvert County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Andrae Townsel

ment and in academic learning.”

So, the learning gap was one issue facing new superintendent Dr. Andrae Townsel as students returned to school in August without being required to wear masks or to be vaccinated, both issues for which many parents criticized the school board during their public comment portion of meetings.

Dr. Townsel’s appointment was controversial, with some parents and others questioning his track record and progressive ideas and others saying the opposition was racially motivated. One of his early initiatives, “The Playbook – School Days with Eric Thomas,” was also criticized for its cost (\$344,000) and track record. The county commissioners immediately jumped on the opposition bandwagon in a letter questioning the program, but Townsel defended the initiative: “The Playbook program is one of those resources that is being utilized by all of the Calvert County high schools to promote student achievement and help close the learning loss gaps of students who need additional support,” he said.

The school board seems to be perpetually emersed in controversy, with discipline being the biggest issue pre-covid. But as the students returned to the

schools, the issue raised its ugly head again. Calvert Education Association President Dona Ostenso, representing the teachers, has consistently brought up the subject of discipline and violence against her members and staff at the school board’s public forums.

“This has been an incredibly challenging school year,” Ostenso told the school board in June. Regarding the discipline issues, she added, “This is more than what educators signed up for when they chose this career.”

Those forums were an ongoing issue throughout 2022. Emerging from virtual meetings, the board imposed a 10-person limit on speakers. School board member Pat Nutter at just about every meeting unsuccessfully made a motion to lift the limits. The county commissioners, led by then-Commissioner Chris Gadway, often mentioned the limits and at one school board meeting all five commissioners spoke out against it.

Nutter, who had been appointed to the seat held by the late Bill Phalen, and Pamela Cousins (most recently board president), both chose not to run for election, leaving two at-large seat vacancies on the board. So, the speaker limit became an issue in the school board

election, and also was mentioned often in the commissioner race. The two candidates who spoke out against the policy, Lisa Grenis and Jana Post, prevailed in the at-large school board race and will be seated in January.

Then surprisingly, at the board’s last meeting of the year and Nutter and Cousins’ final meeting, the board majority, who had consistently voted against Nutter, changed the policy to instead limiting comments to an hour. A shocked Nutter exclaimed, “Sometimes something’s better than nothing.”

Another hot topic during the year was Critical Race Theory, with some parents who spoke to the board insisting it was being taught and some school board members and staff denying that. The theory became an issue in the board’s passage of an anti-racism policy.

#3: Controlling Growth

The issue of growth versus no growth (and in between, smart growth or controlled growth) has been around for decades in Calvert County and argued in most local elections, such as the county commissioner races in 2018.

When returnees Steve Weems and Mike Hart joined newcomers Buddy Hance, Tim Hutchins and Kelly McConkey, one of their first major decisions of their first year in office in 2019 was adoption of the rewrite of the county’s comprehensive plan, the guide to zoning in the county. That decision has had reverberations ever since and was played out in 2022 in Maryland’s highest court.

That day in August 2019 in which the decision was made featured a preliminary 3-2 vote to put two pieces of property owned by McConkey into the Huntingtown Town Center. McConkey cast the tiebreaker in that 3-2 decision. And the subsequent 3-2 vote approved the plan update, with McConkey also casting the tiebreaker.

The decisions prompted an ethics complaint against McConkey and also was catalyst for the formation of a new citizens group called Calvert Citizens United (CCU) which appealed the deci-

sion to the circuit court.

Just last week, in his final day in office as county commissioner, McConkey lost his last legal challenge to the Calvert County Ethics Commission ruling that he had a conflict of interest when he cast that tie-breaking vote to put his property within an expanded Huntingtown Town Center. On Monday Dec. 19, in a terse one-line opinion, the Maryland Supreme Court denied McConkey’s request that they hear the case. Known as a writ of certiorari, the denial means that the decision by the state’s second highest court stands upholding the ethics commission’s stance.

The then Maryland Court of Special Appeals (COSA) had earlier ruled that a judge erred in overturning the ethics commission finding that McConkey cast his vote in error. The unanimous decision by the three-judge panel upheld the ethics commission decision “imposing its strongest sanction -- a cease and desist order and a letter of censure, rather than a letter of reprimand,” according to the Aug. 17 opinion by COSA.

The Maryland Supreme Court this year did grant CCU a writ of certiorari to hear their case seeking to overturn the commissioners’ overall vote on the comprehensive plan due in part to McConkey’s ethics violation. That court has not yet rendered a verdict. The citizen’s group has lost their case at both the circuit court and COSA levels.

Commissioners Hance and Weems (who did not seek re-election), were the two negative votes cast in both decisions in 2019. Tim Hutchins, one of the three positive votes, resigned due to health and his replacement Chris Gadway (who lost the Republican primary), voted a more controlled growth position. And Mike Hart has over the last year claimed to have had an epiphany in which he has realized that he voted in error and now has become one of the board’s staunchest anti-growth members, even having supported a moratorium in Prince Frederick.

Meanwhile recently the board, in the absence of McConkey, rescinded the vote putting his properties in the Hun-



Calvert in 2022: A Year of Change

By Dick Myers
Staff Writer

Many people who live in Calvert County may observe from time to time that not much seems to change. If you commute to work in DC or Annapolis, or to Pax River over that bridge, the traffic is still bad and at times a nightmare.

If you work the land or the water, the seasons still change and the bounty still produces a good, though fragile, living.

If you are retired, living in one of Calvert's settled bayside communities, life still is measured by the tides and walks on the beach. It's a peaceful existence seemingly unaffected by the outside world, unless you live in Breezy Point or near a Solomons marina on the weekends in the summer.

If you are lucky enough to work locally at one of our businesses or for local government, schools and police, life is still measured by how well things go at work and still you can treasure more time spent at home with family and in your neighborhoods with friends.

If you are at school, time is still measured by homework, classmates and what will come next in your life.

Yet in 2022 amid that sometimes-slow pace of life here, there were currents of change, some subtle and some more substantive, changes that as we head into 2023 may come into sharper focus as they take hold.

One of the biggest changes in the year was the move away from life coping with covid to a post-covid world in which people were still getting sick but in which those illnesses more often than not were less severe and had a quicker road to recovery.

The change manifest itself in an election in November that will see a new majority county commissioner board, two new school board members and a new sheriff. And 2023 begins with a new school superintendent, a new CalvertHealth CEO and a new College of Southern Maryland president at their respective helms.

THE TOP FIVE STORIES OF 2022

#5: Police Reform

Calvert County leaders have touted how well the county has responded to the state-mandated police reform measures that include the creation of local police accountability and administrative charging committees to oversee actions of local police agencies, most notably in Calvert the sheriff's office, since a separate state framework is being set up to oversee the Maryland State Police.

Thanks in large part to the insistence of former commissioner Tim Hutchins, who as a former state trooper and head of the state police, he knew how important it was to have a fair and impartial oversight of law enforcement agencies.

Hutchins insisted that the county not dawdle in setting up the two aforementioned local agencies along with the local trial board to accompany them. He was successful in that endeavor and the new entities were ready to function when the state-mandated July 1 deadline happened, making Calvert the first in the state to do so, and making its framework a model for others.

Hutchins' insistence that the boards be heavily weighted with persons with law enforcement experience, however, was not as successful. During the public hearings held late last year and early this year the overwhelming citizen response was for the oversight majority to be average citizens who were most affected by police actions.

At the final public hearing in January on the Calvert County Police Accountability Board (CCPAB) makeup, Calvert County NAACP Branch President Michael Kent said, "We are happy with the work done," adding "It is a very good document you have put together." He noted, however, that in the county "young black males and females are fearful of being hauled over by police."

A League of Women Voters representative said, "The role of law enforcement should be to serve as resources but in a non-voting capacity."

The ordinance adopted said, "To the extent practicable, members of the CCPAB shall reflect the racial, gender, and cultural diversity of Calvert County and include, with not less than two members from each County Commissioner District:

So many people applied to serve that the commissioners set up a special committee to review the applications. In the end the process achieved stability with the appointment of former county commissioner and deputy county administrator Wilson Parran, a well-respected African American community leader, to chair the CCPAB and also to be on the charging committee.

At year's end the new charging committee had 35 complaints to review and of the first eight they looked at, six were dismissed and two were still being investigated.

At the final CCPAB meeting of the year, new sheriff Ricky Cox pledged



Maryland State Hall of Fame firefighter Randy Smith

cooperation with the new oversight process.

#4: School Board Turmoil

In The County Times Jan. 20 issue, the lead story carried the headline: "State Test Scores Took a Nose Dive in Calvert." The story confirmed what had been known anecdotally for a while – the virtual learning produced by the pandemic significantly impacted outcomes for many students, so much so there was fear of a lost generation if something wasn't done about it.

The test score decline was particularly severe in mathematics, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Susan Johnson told the school board. When we interviewed Johnson for the Aug. 4 issue, she emphasized the resolve of the school system to address the problem.

Johnson said, "I think COVID has been challenging because it has impacted so many people in different ways. Everyone is concerned about different aspects, and we had to navigate the changing landscape every week during the pandemic."

Because of that, she said, "Our students and staff have struggled with teaching and learning. But there are other things that we deal with that are challenging all the time such as school safety, disproportionality, gaps in learning."

She said, "Through the pandemic our students and staff grew exponentially in their ability to work and learn in a virtual or blended environment. But students do have learning loss. The learning loss is in two areas: social and emotional develop-



Sheriff Ricky Cox

Hoyer Secures Funding for Fifth District Priorities

Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD-05) on Dec. 26 released the following statement following House passage of the 2023 Fiscal Year Omnibus legislation, announcing over \$16,125,150 in Community Project Funding for Fifth District priorities. This total is in addition to the more than \$13,000,000 that Congressman Hoyer secured for projects in the Fifth District in the FY22 Omnibus. The House Committee on Appropriations allowed each Member of Congress to submit up to 15 Community Funding Project requests for their districts in the Fiscal Year 2023 funding bill. As part of that process, Congressman Hoyer solicited requests on his website and submitted 15 projects to the House Appropriations Committee.



Congressman Steny Hoyer

“The funding package that passed the House today is one that reflects a major victory for every community across the Fifth District,” said Congressman Hoyer. “With this package, we avoided a disastrous shutdown and provided reassurance to the American people that Democrats are committed to getting our jobs done. I was proud to bring this legislation to the Floor and to have secured substantial funding for 15 projects for our district. These investments will be critical to improving our infrastructure, expanding resources in our schools, and strengthening our health care facilities. I was glad to work with stakeholders across our District on each of these requests, and will continue working in the years ahead to advocate for their needs.”

Congressman Hoyer secured funding for fifteen projects that will directly benefit the residents of Maryland’s Fifth District, including brge following for

Calvert County:

\$950,000 for CalvertHealth Facilities and Equipment: The funding would be used to purchase the da Vinci Surgical Robot. The da Vinci robot system is used for minimally invasive surgical approaches.

\$300,000 for End Hunger Calvert Pre-Apprentice Skills Program: EHC trains individuals with disabilities in the culinary arts while also offering instruction on the workplace readiness skills needed to gain and retain employment.

\$2,000,000 for Kennedy Krieger Institute (KKI) for services to students with disabilities: This funding will be used to bring KKI’s multidisciplinary approach to a closer location to schools in Calvert, Charles and St. Mary’s Counties for students with complex disabilities.

TOWN OF CHESAPEAKE BEACH PUBLIC NOTICE

The Town of Chesapeake Beach requests sealed proposals for **General Landscape Services**. A mandatory pre-bid meeting will be held January 9th - 10 AM at Town Hall. For further information, contact Holly Wahl at hwahl@chesapeakebeachmd.gov.



Law Office of
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County Awarded \$2M Grant for Open Air Pavilion

Calvert County's Department of Economic Development has received a \$2 million grant from the State of Maryland to develop an open-air pavilion in the heart of Prince Frederick Town Center. The award was announced by Gov. Larry Hogan this month.

"We are thrilled about this project, which will revitalize the vacant Armory location and serve as a central focal point for a walkable community in the Prince Frederick Town Center and complement any future development at Armory Square, while preserving the agricultural character of Calvert County," said Economic Development Director Julie Oberg. "We appreciate Gov. Hogan's support for this exciting investment, which will help to improve the quality of life for our residents and make Prince Frederick more attractive for tourism and economic development."

The multi-use pavilion will promote tourism, create opportunities to stimulate business activity, support a farmers market, community events, arts and entertainment and maximize the variety and nature of events that can be hosted at the pavilion. Plans will include a commercial kitchen, restrooms and a grassy

area surrounding the pavilion.

Calvert County Economic Development was also awarded a \$60,000 grant for the schematic design of the pavilion.

The project will be funded through the \$50 million Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund, which is overseen by the Maryland Department of Commerce and administered by the five rural regional councils to boost economic development activity, stimulate private sector investment and create jobs in the state's rural regions.

The Calvert County Department of Economic Development monitors economic trends and works to execute business programs that complement Calvert County. The department's goal is to attract and retain strong, healthy and dynamic companies of all sizes and industries. For more information, visit www.ChooseCalvert.com.

Find information on Calvert County Government services online at www.CalvertCountyMd.gov. Stay up to date with Calvert County Government on Facebook at www.facebook.com/CalvertCountyMd and YouTube at www.youtube.com/CalvertCountyGov.

Whale Skull Extraction at Maryland Beach



While combing Matoaka Beach for fossils and shark's teeth, Pennsylvania resident, Cody Goddard, made a fascinating discovery. A large hardened block of sediment laying on the beach had an unusual fossil protruding from one end. After further investigation, Goddard realized that he had stumbled upon a Miocene fossil whale skull. He then reached out to Dr. Stephen Godfrey, Curator of Paleontology at the Calvert Marine Museum (CMM), who confirmed, by way of a video text that the fossil encased in the sediment was indeed a whale skull and quickly made the trip to visit the fossil's location in person.

Moving the 650 lb. block of sediment safely from the beach to the museum was no small task. Godfrey and team de-

vised a plan to extract the sediment from the beach first by small pontoon boat, then by truck (Photo 2) to CMM's Fossil Preparation Lab, which is located in the Paleontology Hall inside the museum. The extraction took place Monday, December 19th with a team of paleontology enthusiasts (Photo 3), including Goddard, who traveled down to share in the excitement. Godfrey said, "It felt like we had won the World Cup of Paleontology! We are so blessed to have so many avocational and professional paleontologists, locally."

"We don't yet know what species of Miocene baleen whale this is," says Godfrey, "that we will only know once it has been prepared. It might even prove to be our greatest preparation challenge, depending on how indurated the entombing sediments are." The skull, affectionately christened "Cody," is the most complete fossil whale skull ever recovered from that section of Calvert Cliffs.

The unprepared "raw" fossil skull can be seen on a blue hydraulic cart in the museum's Fossil Preparation Lab. Air scribe-like tools (like miniature jackhammers) will be used to delicately remove the very hardened sediments that encase most of the skull. That process, undertaken by our volunteers, will take many months. Once the bones that make up the top of the skull are uncovered, we should then be able to identify it, if it is a currently known species of Miocene baleen whale.

Adjusted Parks & Rec Fee Schedule to Take Effect Jan. 1

An adjusted fee schedule for Calvert County Parks & Recreation programs, facilities and services will take effect Jan. 1, 2023.

Modest increases in some programs and services account for changes in community needs, cost of goods, program offerings and the addition of programs and services. New discounts have also been added to provide a 50% discount for admission and rental fees to active duty military residents and a 50% discount off rental fees to Calvert nonprofit organizations.

The Department of Parks & Recreation formalized the collection of fees through its Revenue and Fee Manual, adopted by the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) in October 2019.

The fee schedule is reviewed and approved by the BOCC each year. A formalized fee schedule guides the department in the proper collection of those fees and allocation of revenues. It is estimated that adjusting fees will save taxpayers approximately \$60,000 annually in general fund contributions to Parks & Recreation.

View the 2023 Parks & Recreation Fee Schedule at www.calvertcountymd.gov/CCPRFeeSchedule.

Find information on Calvert County Government services online at www.CalvertCountyMd.gov. Stay up to date with Calvert County Government on Facebook at www.facebook.com/CalvertCountyMd and YouTube at www.youtube.com/CalvertCountyGov.

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“THE MORE THINGS CHANGE, THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME.”
 FRENCH WRITER JEAN-BAPTISTE ALPHONSE KARR IN 1849



LOCAL 4
Hoyer secures funding



LOCAL 8
North Beach hosts art exhibit



Calvert got new commissioners, sheriff in 2022

WEEKLY FORECAST

THU 12/29 55° /35° Mostly sunny 2%	MON 1/2 58° /44° Partly sunny and mild 6%
FRI 12/30 59° /45° Mostly sunny and mild 2%	TUE 1/3 60° /53° Cloudy, showers around; mild 60%
SAT 12/31 58° /50° Rain and drizzle in the p.m. 90%	WED 1/4 63° /48° Cloudy and warm with showers 66%
SUN 1/1 62° /42° Partly sunny and warm 14%	THU 1/5 60° /38° Cloudy with a bit of rain 55%

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The Year in Review