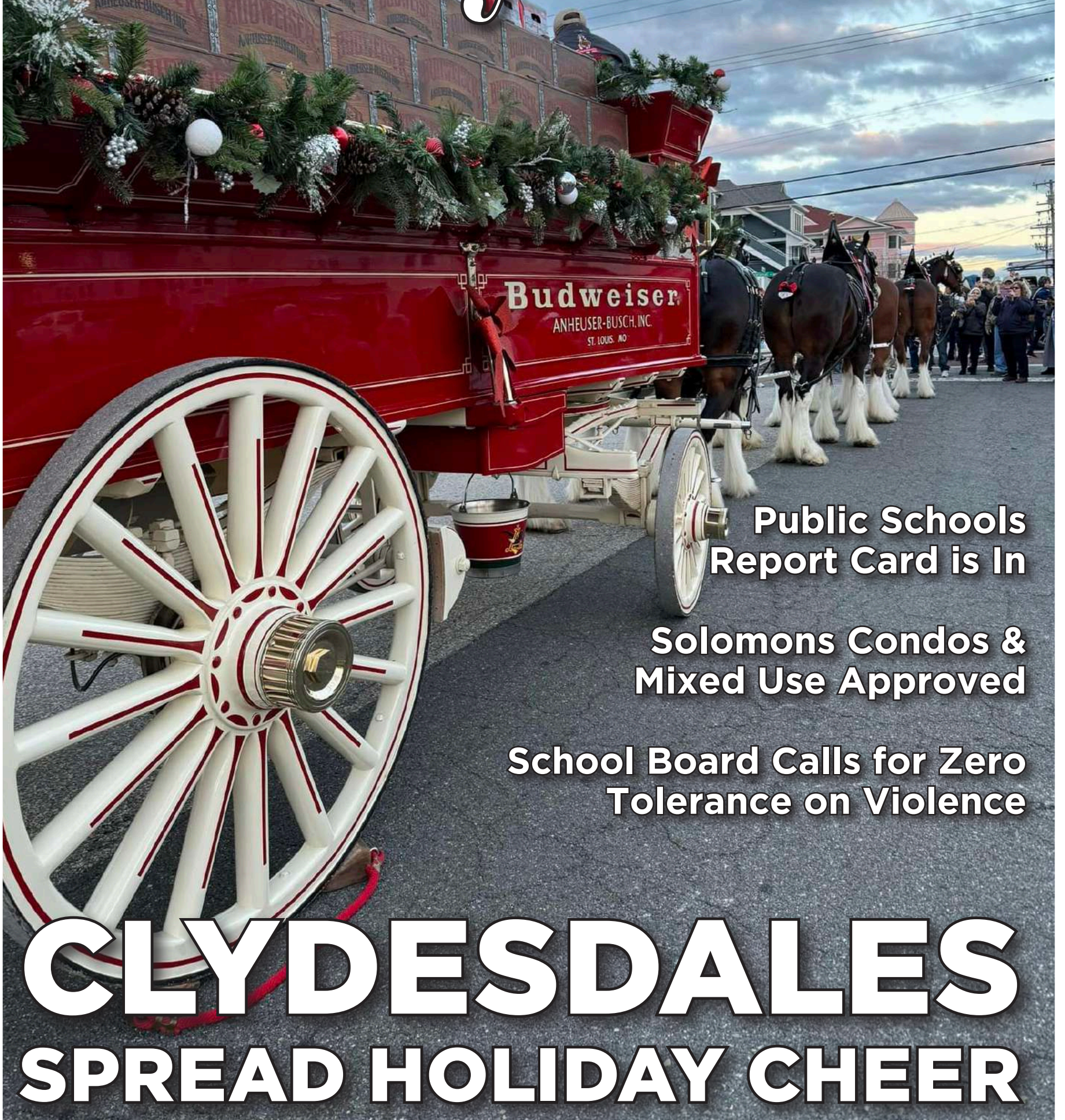


# Calvert County Times

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2023

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**Public Schools  
Report Card is In**

**Solomons Condos &  
Mixed Use Approved**

**School Board Calls for Zero  
Tolerance on Violence**

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# CONTENTS

LOCAL NEWS	4	CALENDAR	9
COPS & COURTS	8		

## A NOTE TO OUR READERS:

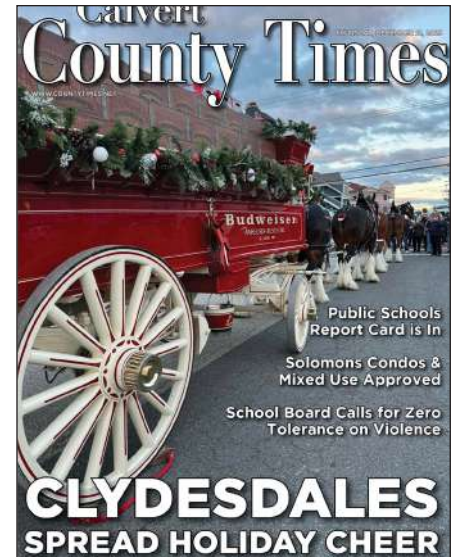
In order to allow our staff to enjoy the holidays with their loved ones, the County Times will not publish on December 28. We will resume our normal publishing schedule on Thursday, January 4, 2024. We wish all our readers a happy holiday season, and look forward to seeing you in the new year.



**LOCAL** 4  
Locust Inn redevelopment project approved



**LOCAL** 6  
EV charging station requirements discussed



**ON THE COVER**  
The Budweiser Clydesdales came to North Beach this week

## WEEKLY FORECAST

<p>THU, DEC 21</p> <p>Mostly Sunny Hi: 48° Lo: 31°</p>	<p>FRI, DEC 22</p> <p>Partly Cloudy Hi: 46° Lo: 31°</p>	<p>SAT, DEC 23</p> <p>Mostly Cloudy Hi: 51° Lo: 36°</p>	<p>SUN, DEC 24</p> <p>Partly Cloudy Hi: 56° Lo: 38°</p>
<p>MON, DEC 25</p> <p>Partly Cloudy Hi: 56° Lo: 43°</p>	<p>TUE, DEC 26</p> <p>Showers Hi: 55° Lo: 47°</p>	<p>WED, DEC 27</p> <p>Showers Hi: 55° Lo: 47°</p>	<p>THU, DEC 28</p> <p>AM Showers Hi: 53° Lo: 36°</p>



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# Grenis: Zero Tolerance for Student Violence

## School Board Reacts to Commissioner Concerns

By Dick Myers  
Staff Writer

Members of the Calvert County Board of Education, in the wake of concerns raised by the county commissioners about violence by students against teachers, has once again logged in on the subject with one member calling for zero tolerance. The concerns came after a teacher sent emails to both the commissioners and school board about violence against her.

School board member Lisa Grenis, at the Dec. 14 school board meeting, was firm. She said, "This board and the CCPS (Calvert County Public Schools) need to address an important issue impacting the safety and wellbeing of our teachers and staff. Specifically, I'm talking about the physical and verbal assaults on teachers. This is a serious issue, and it's not new to CCPS, but it was recently brought to light by a brave teacher in our county who was both physically assaulted and verbally threatened. The assault was so traumatizing that this teacher is considering giving up her profession that she loves with a 25-year career. The letter that she sent to us board members stating what happened is shocking to say the least, and a testament to a growing problem. The letter states that the student was physically violent and threatened to harm this teacher. For this, the student received a one-day, out-of-school suspension. This teacher also stated that it's the fourth time this year that a teacher has been assaulted in her school."

Grenis went on to say, "Many students clearly find this to be an acceptable behavior. I found it incredibly disturbing, and it prompted me to research the Calvert County Public School policy on student violence against teachers, staff, and students. Specifically, the code of conduct disciplinary action is determined on a case-by-case basis, which can be too lenient. This is unacceptable and detrimental to our ability to operate safe schools and hold students accountable.

"These assaults aren't happening constantly, but they happen frequently enough that it's a problem that needs to be addressed. I'm requesting that (Superintendent) Dr. Townsel and my fellow board members support and establish a zero-tolerance policy that is grade and developmentally appropriate to our code of conduct for physical assaults on teachers, staff members, students, and other adults on school grounds.

We owe this to our teachers and staff who are doing the best they can every day to help our students receive a quality education. We state in our code of conduct that CCPS promises a safe environment for our teachers, staff, and students. It's time to deliver on that promise."

Board member Jana Post said, "There's been a number of things that have kind of been weighing on my spirit, if you will," including, "the escalation of challenging behaviors in our schools and community as the result of a multitude of factors ranging from items like changing social dynamics, to the influence of technology and social media, as well as varying levels of parental involvement, mental health concerns, and limited resources. The list goes on. While each factor may present unique challenges and (show) our collective failure to act, it is insufficient to assert that things are good compared to other places, or that we want to downplay the frequency of incident."

Post added, "Sometimes it's not easy to talk about it, but it's really important to talk about it, to discuss and address these issues. If we don't discuss them head on, it perpetuates the problem. The significance of boundaries seems to have faded in this community and in this country. As s adults. If we cannot actively embrace the importance of establishing and reinforcing healthy boundaries for ourselves and for our children, we cannot reasonably expect the education system to excel in setting and maintaining those same boundaries. The responsibility lies not only with schools, but with the broader community to recognize the impact of neglecting these crucial aspects and to collectively work towards a culture that prioritizes and reinforces healthy boundaries in our roles as parents and guardians. It is counterproductive to verbally attack school staff when being contacted about our children. Simultaneously as school staff, criticizing parents and community members for their desire to safeguard their children is unproductive. Imparting an understanding of consequences for actions should be a consistent practice at every stage of a child's development."

Board member Dawn Balinski said, "I was disappointed to hear that we do have still reportable problems of behavioral issues in the schools. When I was president, that was 2018 I believe, we were inundated. It was very distressing. And I believed at the time (that) quite a few innovative solu-

tions were put in place. And we invested in more adults in the building with the behavioral development staff and the like. And we were, I thought, making progress. And then of course, 2020 hit. Now we're making our way back. And there's just behavioral problems apparently all over the United States."

Balinski insisted, "Physical assaults are just absolutely intolerable. So, I agree. If we could just put whatever resources we have there to provide safety in our classrooms, that is a priority that I'd like to see as well."

Board Vice President Antoine White said, "There are things that can be put into place like restorative justice and things like that. And there are a lot of schools who are realizing that, and they're not taking it upon themselves to try to work a program that they haven't probably been trained in. So, we have the Community Mediation Center.... and schools are taking advantage of that because yes, there's a lot of violence and behavior issues and things like that. But what we need to do is to do something different than what we have been doing. So, I just wanted to put that out there, that there are different schools who are reaching out to try to do a culture change with some of the students."

Earlier in the meeting, Calvert Education Association (CEA) President Dona Ostenso spoke out for the teachers, "Students punching other students, throwing chairs, walking or running out of classrooms, grabbing, pushing or hitting teachers, getting in a teacher's face and cussing them out, or threatening to bring a gun to school and shoot classmates in the face. These behaviors are present at both the elementary and secondary levels and are not unique to Calvert or even the state. Many want to blame the pandemic. In 2011, my sister was assaulted in a Calvert County Elementary School and was left 20 percent disabled. In 2019, another elementary school teacher had her jaw broken by a student, and to this day, still physically suffers from the assault. Both of these assaults occurred pre-pandemic. So, what has changed the increase in out-of-control disruptive behaviors? How many times is a student allowed to assault an adult before someone says enough?

"How long will we allow the learning of the other students in the class to be impacted by disruptive students? How long will we continue to ignore the problem or put a band-aid on it as a temporary solution hoping it will fix itself or just go away? I love my



Calvert Board of Education member Lisa Grenis



Calvert Education Association President Dona Ostenso

profession and believe in public education, but as a system, we are not doing enough. I am asking the elected board of education to direct Dr. Townsel to crack down on disruptive students. Students need to know that they're going to be held accountable for their behavior. Teachers need to know that when they write a referral, their principal is going to address it in a timely fashion and take action. What message is being sent to the other students in the school who are witnessing these traumatic events? CCPS needs to acknowledge that we have a problem in our schools and what we are currently doing is not working."

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# Locust Inn Site Redevelopment Approved

## Planners Okay Solomons Concept Site Plan

By Dick Myers  
Staff Writer

The Calvert County Planning Commission has approved the redevelopment plan for the property in Solomons that once was the home of the Locust Inn. That more than 100-year-old building was destroyed in an arson fire on April 23, 2017.

According to Principal Planner Christine Finamore at the Dec. 13 planning commission meeting, the project consists of two parcels that will be consolidated before the record plat is approved. She said, "The total acreage of the two parcels is roughly 0.67 acres (29,379 sq. ft.). The development proposal is for three buildings, to include 13 residential condominium units (Buildings A-C), first-floor restaurant/retail space (Building C), and associated site improvements."

The first floor of commercial building facing the street will be restricted to "eating establishments and/or retail commercial uses only. Thirteen parking spaces are required and provided on-site for the condo units." Parking for the commercial space will be across the street in the public lot along the boardwalk, she added.

Base zoning density for reg parcel is just one unit per acre but can be increased to 20 units, which can be achieved with the purchase of development rights, Finamore explain ed.

The density drew the concern of planning



Artist's rendering of the view from Back Creek

commission member Chris Gadway, which eventually led to his sole vote against the project's proposed concept site plan that otherwise passed the commission.

Gadway said, "We've seen here in Prince Frederick huge apartment buildings and condos over there across Route 4, (which are) 13 point something, right up against that 14-dwelling unit per acre looks like."

He noted on contrast the Solomons project would be 20 units per acre. "This is setting precedents, I don't know if precedent's the right word, but this is going to be the highest density location in the county,

maybe outside save Calver Pines or something like that. It's right at 20 units per acre mark. I don't know if there's any other residential units throughout the county that are that high."

After the vote to approve and during public comment time, James McQueen of Lusby registered his opposition, He said, "You guys' years ago created the parking along Solomons with the boardwalk and that's public parking. All the commercial units there use that for public parking," adding, "Between May and September, there ain't no public parking. It's blocked. It's full.

People park down the road and walk up. You're putting in more condos. Who has one car at their house or one car at their apartment right now. There's a husband and a wife usually if it's a family unit and that usually means two vehicles. That means 13 new cars will be in the public parking spot.

McQueen added, "This building's going to tower over the entire island...so, the look of the entire island is going to totally change, something that we've been trying to preserve for years."

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# Middle, High School Science Proficiency Drops

## Teaching Methods Evolve with the Times

By Dick Myers  
Staff Writer

It's called the Maryland Integrated Science Assessment (MISA), and the results are in for the 2022-23 school year. According to the results presented at the Dec. 14 Calvert County Board of Education meeting, elementary students performed better but middle and high school students dropped somewhat compared to the previous year. Calvert's trends mirrored state trends.

The school board was told one of the reasons for the decline might be a change in the way science is taught and thus in the makeup of the tests.

According to Jackie Jacobs, director of System and Instructional Performance, "The percentage of students in grade five that met science proficiency increased by nearly four percentage points from school year 21-22 to 35 percent in school years 22-23. Notable gains were seen for most student groups in grade five."

She went on to explain, "The percentage of students scoring proficient on the grade eight science test was 26.4 percent for school year 22-23 as compared to 35 percent the prior year results on the grade eight science tests, which is a cumulative assessment, are still impacted by the effects of the pandemic and the impact of grade six, and seven."

Janelle McPhillips, supervisor of Elementary and Environmental Science,

said of the fifth grade improvements, "We are pleased that with more attention given to science and the time able to teach science in this past year that our scores increased with Calvert County students earning 41.9 percent of our students were proficient or advanced, and the state average was 34.5 percent." Calvert went from 11<sup>th</sup> to sixth in the state.

Dr. Yovonda Kolo, supervisor of Secondary Science and STEM, said, "Integrated in MISA "is a combination of two integration components. One integration is a perspective of science and engineering practices, crosscutting concepts that will cross over any science discipline and the actual content of life, physical and earth science. So those three dimensions is what the NGSS is promoting --- next generation science standards. The next piece of integration is integration of the actual contents of life, physical and earth science. So, MISA eight is a combination of students taking the test in eighth grade, but the content is from sixth, seventh, and eighth grades."

She added, "So this middle school curriculum is a spiraled curriculum. They're getting a little bit of life, physical and earth at some point through all three grades. And then they take the assessment in the eighth grade."

In 2021-22 and 22-23, she said, "In both years, Calvert County outperformed the state, and this year statewide, there was a 10 percent decrease in all MISA eight scores. So, although we decreased, our ranking

went from four to seven. So, our ranking increased, although our proficiency scores decreased along with the rest of the state."

She explained, "The high school assessment is called the Life Science MISA and life science," which is equivalent to biology and typically taught in the ninth grade.

She said, "The life science MISA is integrated with those three dimensions of the cross-cutting concepts, science and engineering practices, and the disciplinary core ideas of life science only. So, this test is life science only."

"So, in 2013," she said, "The state adopted the next generation science standards. From 2013 to 2017, we were still under the high school assessment (HAS). The HAS was a test of pretty much rote memorization. What is a cell list of parts of the circulatory system, et cetera. So, it was more of a memorization type of test. Of course, science has changed in the world. The way we think, the way we're being innovative have changed. Therefore, the assessment changes, the standards change as well as the assessment. So, the assessment now is a test of analyzing, synthesizing, reading a text, looking at data tables, looking at graphs, synthesizing that information to answer questions and writing a constructed response with the claims evidence and reasoning. So that has been the shift."

She observed, "That's very challenging in high school because in order to say a child can take a test and they're prepared for life,

physical and earth science, we will have to dictate their progression of courses. And high school is really an opportunity where students have more choice."

All of that was by way of answering the question as to why the high school scores have dropped statewide and in Calvert, where the level of proficiency slipped from 48 percent to 36 percent.

Dr. Kolo said, "Our ranking decreased this year. We were ranked second last year. This year we're ranked seventh. I'm not happy about that. But I do want to highlight that our proficiency score was 7 48 last year and 7 46 this year. So, the rank dropped, but the points, it was a two-point difference. And also, I want to highlight that there are three school districts that had one point higher, so all three of them bumped in that ranking with that one point higher."

"It's really a shift, a major shift instructionally what we're teaching," she said. "Obviously not as much lecture. Where students should be engaged, they should be using multiple sources. And those are things that we're doing now to make sure that our students are prepared for a MISA."

She added, "Instruction should be more relevant. It's really promoting more thinking versus more memorization."

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# Zoning Ordinance Parking Requirements Discussed at Joint Session

By Dick Myers  
Staff Writer

As planning and zoning staff continue to work on the rewrite of the county's zoning ordinance, they have been looking at potential changes to parking requirements. One consideration is what to do about the increasing popularity of electric vehicles (EVs) and whether to require spaces for charging stations or to create an incentive for them. Also being discussed are requirements for bicycle racks in shopping center parking lots.

Those and other issues were discussed by Planner III / Zoning Will Hager at a Dec. 13 joint work session between the planning commission and the county commissioners.

Hager said the proposed changes in the current draft include, "things like requirements that parking structures be designed to minimize blank exterior walls and mask interior ramps through architectural detail or public art and landscape decorative fencing and landscape is required to screen parking spaces on the ground floor and vehicular clear site zones included at vehicular exit areas. The minimum required off-street parking spaces for specific uses have mostly been left unchanged in this draft with a few exceptions. One example of a use where the requirement was revised is for the minimum required parking spaces for places of worship. Under the current regulations, the requirement is one parking space per four seats of maximum seating capacity in the main assembly hall and one space per

200 square feet of the parish hall, whichever is greater. There were planning and zoning staff that did not feel this would be sufficient and there were buildings considered accessory to the assembly area that aren't part of parish hall, like gymnasiums, for instance, which were falling the (through the) cracks and not being included in this calculation. So in the draft, this has been revised so that the requirement would now be one parking space per four seats of maximum seating capacity in the main assembly area, plus one space per 300 square feet, a gross floor area, and accessory buildings or expansions to existing buildings, not part of main assembly area."

Commissioner President Buddy Hance observed that shopping centers seem to have a lot of vacant parking spaces. He said, "We were just at MACO (Maryland Association of Counties convention) and there's some discussion at MACO about reducing parking requirements for large commercial retail facilities. Do you have any discussions about that?"

Hager responded, "We've had discussions about that, and I think that's something that we're going to take another look at before we solidify the draft, after we take feedback and public input into consideration. I think that that's a general trend across the country."

Environmental activist Bob Estes observed later in the meeting that parking lots with a lot of impervious spaces create runoff that is detrimental to water quality.

Hager said, "The provisions addressing required bicycle parking have been revised. In

the draft zoning ordinance, a minimum of two bicycle parking spaces or one bicycle parking space for every 5,000 square feet of retail or office spaces required, whichever is greater. A minimum of two bicycle parking spaces or one bicycle parking space for every 2,500 square feet of institutional spaces required whichever is greater and a minimum of one bicycle parking space for every five dwelling units in multi-family residential developments is required. These provisions would replace the current requirements, which are that bicycle racks with a space for a minimum of 10 bicycles are required for every 100,000 square feet of retail space, every 50,000 square feet of office space and every 50 units of multi-family. So, this revision would be strengthening those requirements a bit."

"The provisions addressing electric vehicle charging stations," Hager explained, "have been revised under the current zoning ordinance. An incentive to reduce the required number of parking spaces by two spaces is available for parking areas requiring 50 or more spaces when an electric vehicle charging device is provided to serve a minimum of two vehicles. In the draft zoning ordinance, these regulations have been revised so that for parking facilities that require 25-49 spaces, when electric vehicle charging stations are installed that serve a minimum of two parking spaces, the minimum required number of parking spaces may be reduced by two. For parking facilities that require 50 or more spaces, electric vehicle charging stations that serve a mini-

um of four vehicles shall be provided if more than the required amount of electric vehicle charging stations are provided. Then the minimum required number of parking spaces may be reduced by the amount of parking spaces that can be served by the additional charging stations not to exceed 10 percent of the minimum required number of parking spaces."

But Hager said, "There are other approaches that you could take for these type of requirements. A different approach might be to have a certain percentage of the required parking spaces be dedicated to electric vehicle charging stations for specific uses. And I don't know the right percentage would be, but just throwing some numbers out there, maybe something like 10 percent of the required parking spaces for multi-family residential developments. Maybe five percent for grocery stores, maybe some uses are exempt."

Commissioner Vice President Mike Hart said, "That's big expense. Indeed. You talk about rent in places, that's a real big expense as you know. Who's going to pay that rent is every tenant in that place and I don't have a clue what it costs in that infrastructure to start it out, but to run those lines out there. And who pays that electric bill?"

Hance informed him, "The person that's charging the car. You charge your car. You put your credit card in there and they bill you."

"The electric ain't free," Hance quipped.

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# Calendar Approved for Next School Year

## Board Denies Holiday for Yom Kippur

By Dick Myers  
Staff Writer

The Calvert County Board of Education on Dec. 14 adopted a calendar for the school year 2024-25 with a start date for students of Aug. 27. A committee that worked on the calendar had presented an alternate calendar that would have started school on Aug. 20.

Several school board members had expressed a preference for an earlier starting date because they felt learning was more successful earlier in the school year than at the end and that it gives teachers more time for the first marking period. But in the end the majority opted for the later start date out of concern it may cause disruption to schedules for summer school and family vacations.

The calendar committee for the first time this year also presented a proposal for two years in the future. There is still an option to start school earlier for 2025-26, but that decision was postponed until next month so an email poll can be sent out to staff and parents to see what they would prefer. At the suggestion of Student Member of the Board Jordan Hayes, the poll also will be sent to students.

School Board Vice President Antoine White opposed the start date for next year. He had made a failed motion to start earlier this year and later in the following year.

Also, a proposal by Hayes to designate March 31, 2025, Yom Kippur in the Jewish faith, a school holiday instead of an alternate makeup snow date failed to carry,

although it could be resurrected for a later school calendar.

Hayes argued, "I think we have a very exciting opportunity here to make this an official day off school for CCPS students. This past month I've spent working with my peers across the state of Maryland as well in Calvert County to gain support for this to make an official day off school. And as I noted in my report, we received 275 signatures from students in Calvert County, as well as across the state of Maryland supporting making this a day off school for Calvert County Public Schools."

Under Hayes' proposal, an additional school day would be added at the end of the year to make up for the holiday.

White observed, "There are other religious holidays if we do approve this one? You know, we would possibly be setting a precedence that we're going to accept them all. So, I didn't know if that was taken into consideration with this."

Director of System and Instructional Performance Jacquelyn Jacobs said, "I would say when the calendar committee met, we've had several conversations about religious holidays, and part of those conversations included which ones, and it was hard to say. So, we're looking at about four to five different religious holidays that fall throughout the calendar year. And we were not able to come to a consensus of this one's okay, but this one's not. So, we really stuck to the ones that are outlined in whatever days are

no longer student days outlined in Comar (Maryland code)."

She said the school system does not track the religious preferences of teachers, so it would be difficult to know how many would be impacted by various religious holidays.

Hayes said, "This has been a topic discussed by Calvert County students for years now. It's something that I heard when I started involving myself in student leadership in the sixth grade. And it's something that I've heard come up every year, but it's not something I've seen action taken on. So, I think just by being able to say we're working towards this or we're working towards really hearing what our students have to say and understanding that this is what they've been advocating for years now, and we have an opportunity to fulfill that. That was really just an inspiration behind pulling through with this and getting student voice again and working towards advocating for this."

Regarding the start date, board member Lisa Grenis, a former teacher, noted the dilemma: "The early start date would in this time of learning loss, I keep saying, teachers need. We keep hearing teachers need the time with the students before the major testing and things like that. So every day counts, which I totally can understand. We all know that the end of the year, those days are not as efficient for kids learning. But then this whole host of things came up about the problems that we'd be creating by starting that early. We're asking teachers to be back



Student Member of the Board Jordan Hayes

in the school class on August the seventh. So that effectively takes away almost the entire month of August and since we're still getting out of school late this year, it would be a squeeze."

Another complication, as noted by board member Jana Post: "Teachers can retire or resign up until July 15th. So, if that's accurate, that essentially only gives us a couple of weeks for new teachers, for us to potentially hire and/or onboard new teachers."

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## CALVERT COUNTY CRIME BLOTTER

During the week of December 4 – December 10, 2023, Calvert County Sheriff's Office Deputies responded to 1,831 calls for service throughout the community.

### Burglary: 23-86099

On December 4, 2023, at 2:45 a.m., Deputy Aurich was in the area of the Sunderland 7-Eleven located on Dalrymple Road and heard the sound of glass breaking coming from the Sunderland Village Center across the street. Deputy Aurich located an abandoned vehicle, a 2016 Kia Soul, that had crashed into the glass panel of the front door to three shared businesses (Consolation Evangelistic Ministries, Liquid Visions Tattoo Gallery, and the gun store PSG Armory). Investigation revealed the abandoned vehicle was reported stolen through Anne Arundel County. The estimated value of the damaged property to the exterior door is \$3,000.00. No property was reported to be missing.

### Property Destruction: 23-86136

On December 4, 2023, Deputy MacWilliams responded to the intersection of Rt. 4 and White Sands Drive in Lusby, for the report of property destruction. Investigation revealed the signs at the entrance of the White Sand's neighborhood belonging to Vera's restaurant had been damaged. The signs along with the electrical panels had been knocked off their posts and damaged. The estimated value of the damaged property is \$250.00.

### Theft: 23-87206

On December 7, 2023, Deputy R. Jones responded to the 11200 block of Cove Lake Drive in Lusby, for the report of a theft. The complainant advised a pair of Apple AirPods were stolen from an unsecured locker in the men's locker room at Patuxent High School. The estimated value of stolen property is \$150.00.

### Theft: 23-86166

On December 4, 2023, DFC Ostazeski responded to the Weis located at 13300 HG Trueman Road in Solomons, for the report of a theft. Investigation revealed an unidentified black female entered the store and stole a large quantity of seafood then proceeded to leave the store without paying for the stolen items. The suspect is described as a black female in her 20s, wearing black pants, a black shower cap, a gray hooded sweatshirt with pink accents, and black and white Nike shoes. The estimated value of stolen property is \$267.70.

### Theft: 23-87601

On December 9, 2023, DFC Crum responded to Ulta Beauty located at 845 N. Solomons Island Road in Prince Frederick, for the report of a theft. Investigation revealed three suspects entered the store wearing surgical masks. Two of the suspects were observed grabbing multiple fragrance products, placing them into bags, passing all points of sale, and fleeing the parking lot. Witnesses observed the suspect vehicle to be a black Acura SUV traveling at speeds over 100 mph north on Rt. 4. The estimated value of the stolen property is \$1000.00 +.

### Vandalism: 23-87046

On December 7, 2023, Deputy Tunnell responded to 25 Family Lane in Prince Frederick, for the report of property destruction/vandalism. The complainant advised two of the victim's busses had broken down as a result of diesel fuel that had been intentionally added to the exhaust fluid in the busses causing significant damage to the fuel lines. A total of ten buses were found to have a contaminated mixture in their fuel tanks. The estimated value of property damage is \$54,000.00.

### ARRESTS



On December 7, 2023, DFC Plant responded to the Bob Evans located at 65 Main Street in Prince Frederick, for the reported trespassing. Upon arrival, contact was made with **Robert Allen Rice, 57** of no fixed address, who was observed to be standing near the front entrance of the establishment. Rice had been previously trespassed indefinitely from the property. Rice was transported to the Calvert County Detention Center where he was charged with Trespassing: Private Property.

*Editor's Note: The above arrests are not an indication of guilt or innocence as the cases have not been adjudicated.*

*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 [ccsotips@calvertcountymd.gov](mailto:ccsotips@calvertcountymd.gov)*

## Public Schools Report Card Released

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) released the 2023 Report Card data, star ratings for individual schools, and other resource information on Dec. 13. The School Report Card highlights school performance in a variety of areas, which include academic achievement, academic progress for elementary and middle schools, school quality and student success, as well as graduation rates and college and career readiness for high schools.

The 2023 MSDE School Report Card reflects how the school district performed on the Maryland accountability system for the 2022-2023 school year. It is important to note that this data represents a new baseline as there were several changes to the accountability standards for 2022-2023, which include:

- Academic Achievement Indicator for High Schools – Academic achievement in English Language Arts (ELA) and math for high schools will be reported based on the population of students who completed high school in SY 2022-2023.
- The Student Growth Methodology – The student growth measure in ELA and math for elementary and middle school uses Student Growth Percentile (SGP) data.
- Social Studies 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Assessment – This is the first year that the Social Studies 8<sup>th</sup> grade assessment is included in the Academic Progress Indicator for middle schools.
- Chronic Absenteeism Points Assignment – returned to the pre-pandemic methods of calculation.

There are many factors that impact student growth and achievement. The goal of the MSDE School Report Card is to provide specific accountability information for each school's performance that is easy to access and understand.

"We commend our teachers, administrators, supervisors, and staff for the preparation of curriculum, the instructional delivery of the curriculum, and the assessment of our students. Information gleaned from areas outlined on the Maryland Report

Card assists in determining the next steps in meeting the needs of each of our students," said Calvert County Public Schools (CCPS) Chief Academic Officer Dr. Susan Johnson.

Calvert County Public Schools 2023 Report Card Data Results for the district reflect improvement in many areas. Overall CCPS elementary and middle schools showed improvement in the areas of Academic Achievement and Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency and overall CCPS high schools showed improvement in graduation rate and Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency.

CCPS' percent proficient for all students in both Math and English Language Arts showed gains at all levels from the previous year's Report Card data.

CCPS' graduation is almost 10 percent higher than the current State average of 86.29 percent. The 2022 four-year graduation rate for CCPS is 95.91 percent, which reflects an increase of 1.21 percent over the previous year.

"We are confident that the continuous improvement of our campuses and the social and emotional supports provided by our highly qualified and dedicated educators will positively impact our future accountability data," shared CCPS Superintendent Dr. Andraé Townsel. "More importantly, by fostering a culture of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making, we are teaching lifelong lessons," continued Townsel.

The School Report Card information for Calvert County Public Schools can be viewed at the Maryland Report Card website [www.MDReportCard.org](http://www.MDReportCard.org). It is important to note that while schools may have made improvements, a school's overall report card score might have decreased due to the return to pre-pandemic calculations.

CCPS encourages parents and guardians to reach out to their child's school for a more comprehensive understanding about their child's academic progress and ways they can support their child's academic as well as social and emotional growth.

## Man Sentenced for M&T Bank Robbery

On December 15, 2023, Cedric Fonta Moore, of Washington, DC, was sentenced in Calvert County Circuit Court to 23 years incarceration, with 9 years active, for his role in the May 2023 robbery of the M&T Bank in Dunkirk. The sentence was imposed by Judge Mark S. Chandlee.

Because robbery is a crime of violence, Moore will have to serve at least half of his sentence before becoming parole eligible.

Two other individuals who participated in the robbery received active sentences of 8 and 15 years, respectively. One individual, Jemel Anthony Brown, is scheduled for sentencing on January 18, 2024. Senior Assistant State's Attorney Christopher J. Monte prosecuted these cases.



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# Calvert Community Calendar

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

## Thu, Dec 21

### TACOS Teen Advisory Council of Students

Calvert Library Prince Frederick  
850 Costley Way and on DISCORD  
6:30-7:30 p.m.

Teens! Calvert Library needs you! We want the library to be a safe space where teens can hang out and freely access books and information. TACOS meets from September through May, to help us with our events and services planning. Join us on the third Thursday! Receive 1 Service Learning hour for each meeting attended. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

## Fri, Dec 22

### On Pins & Needles

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>

## Sat, Dec 23

### Christmas Bird Count

Calvert Marine Museum  
10 a.m.--3 p.m.

This is the day for the National Audubon Society-sponsored annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) for the Patuxent River! Help us with this citizen science project that will gather data on local bird populations. Guided bird walks on the CMM campus at 10:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m., and 12:30 p.m. Registration is not required but, space is limited. Bird guides and binoculars will be available for participant use on the museum

campus. Program is free; however, admission fees apply for access to CMM exhibits.

## Wed, Dec 27

### Job Seeker Resources: Skillbuilders

Calvert Library Prince Frederick  
850 Costley Way  
9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Maryland Department of Labor, Veterans Program, Senior Community Service Employment and Job Service representatives will be in person at Calvert Library, Prince Frederick to meet with those seeking employment or career change. Walk ins welcome on the second and fourth Wednesdays of every month. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

### Overcoming 7 Challenges: Skill Builders

Calvert Library Prince Frederick  
850 Costley Way  
10 a.m.-12 p.m.

This workshop offered by Maryland Department of Labor, American Job Center encourages you to move forward from the most common challenges that interfere with your success. Learn how to say 'YES' to a rewarding work life! Registration ends 24 hours before the event. , 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

### Reading Buddies

Calvert Library Prince Frederick  
850 Costley Way  
6:30-7:30 p.m.

At this event, elementary-aged children will do fun activities and read out loud to teen volunteers. Teen volunteers can earn one service learning hour for participating. Register for the event. 410-535-0291 or 301-855-1862. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>.

### Hellbender Day

Calvert Marine Museum

11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Welcome our newest and rarest members to the CMM community: Harry and Sally Hellbender! Hellbenders are the largest salamanders in North America. Formerly widely found in the Chesapeake Bay region, they are now native to northern Maryland. Make a one-of-a-kind woodcraft to celebrate. Supplies are limited. Craft is appropriate for ages 4 - 10. Suggested \$2 donation for supplies; program included with museum admission.

## Thu, Dec 28

### Reading Buddies

Calvert Library Southern Branch  
13920 H. G. Trueman Road, Solomons  
6:30-7:30 p.m.

At this event, elementary-aged children will do fun activities and read out loud to teen volunteers. Teen volunteers can earn one service learning hour for participating. Please register for the event. Help a young reader by being a kind and patient listener!, 410-326-5289. <https://CalvertLibrary.info>

### Winter Wildlife

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

Discover the survival strategies of the animals that make the wintry waters of the Chesapeake their home. Activities are appropriate for ages 4 - 10. Included with museum admission.

## Ongoing

### Dee of St. Mary's Dockside Tours

Calvert Marine Museum  
Saturdays, Dec. 23 & 30  
Thursday and Friday, Dec. 28 & 29  
1 – 4 p.m.

Step aboard the museum's sailing skip-

jack for an up-close tour of her 56 ft. deck with crew members during the off-season. Learn how watermen dredge for oysters, hoist the sails, and navigate the waterways of the Chesapeake. Included with museum admission.

### Annmarie Garden in Lights

Annemarie Sculpture Garden  
Through January 1, 2024  
5-9 p.m. nightly; closed some evenings  
Advance timed-entry tickets required

Join us for the most magical time of year as the grounds of Annmarie Sculpture Garden & Arts Center are transformed into an outdoor twinkling wonderland! Annmarie Garden in Lights will transport you and your family to an enchanted world full of glowing "light sculptures" and wondrous light installations. Discover magical creatures, wintry wonderlands, musical holiday scenes, deep sea treasures, shimmering trees, and so much more! You'll find sparkling delights and fun photo ops around each corner! Check out the full schedule of special nights, including the Holiday Train Display, Santa Sundays, Local Heroes Nights, Special Needs Night, Golf Cart Tours, and more! Advance timed-entry tickets required; \$15/person (\$17 at the gate, if not sold out).

Reduced cost tickets for SNAP card holders available. Rain or shine event, no pets, no smoking. Details: [www.annmariegarden.org](http://www.annmariegarden.org).

## Upcoming

### Winter Industry

Calvert Marine Museum, Friday, Dec. 29, 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Learn what winter work used to be like on the Chesapeake Bay. Discover the secrets of harvesting oysters and take a guided tour of the Lore Oyster House. Activities are appropriate for ages 4 - 10. \*Programming will take place at the Lore Oyster House offsite exhibit, located 1/4 mile south of the Calvert Marine Museum. Free; museum admission not included.

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To be considered for publication, articles and letters to the editor submitted must include the writer's full name, address and daytime phone number. Submissions must be delivered by 4 p.m. on the Monday prior to our Thursday publication to ensure placement for that week. After that deadline, the County Times will make every attempt possible to publish late content, but cannot guarantee so. Letters may be condensed/edited for clarity, although care is taken to preserve the core of the writer's argument. Copyright in material submitted to the newspaper and accepted for publication remains with the author, but the County Times and its licensees may freely reproduce it in print, electronic or other forms. We are unable to acknowledge receipt of letters. The County Times cannot guarantee that every letter or photo(s) submitted will be published, due to time or space constraints.



# County Times

P. O. Box 250 • Hollywood, MD 20636

# St. Mary's Community Calendar

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

## Thu, Dec 21

### Movie Nights: "It's a Wonderful Life"

Garvey Senior Activity Center  
23630 Hayden Farm Ln., Leonardtown  
5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.  
Cost: \$3

Come join us in the dining room on the third Thursday of each month to enjoy a movie and snacks! Snacks and refreshments will be provided. The movie will be playing on the large screen. You are welcome to bring your own dinner or order your own meal, but we will not be providing dinner. Advance registration is required.

farm/ag, non-profit, restaurant, school or individual who exemplifies environmental stewardship and sustainability! <https://www.stmaryscountymd.gov/boards/13/>

### Kids Countdown to Noon at Piney Point: A New Year's Event

Piney Point Lighthouse Museum  
10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Looking for family-friendly New Year's Eve fun for children without having to stay up until midnight? Bring the kids to Piney Point on December 31 and enjoy a countdown to noon—a party just for them!

Enjoy lots of New Year's Eve activities among the historic workboats at the Maritime Building here at Piney Point, including themed crafts/activities, a sock skate, snacks/beverages and lots more—plus a colorful ice "ball drop" at Noon! Your ticket will also include full admission to the museum, lighthouse and historic park!

Tickets are required via the Eventbrite link above (\$12 per child ages 2 to 12). Two (2) adults/guardians (18 or older) may accompany their child but must register for

a free ticket via the Eventbrite link above. No walk-ins accepted due to limited space. Please note: this event is appropriate for ages 2 to 12; children 13-17 not permitted.

Though much of this event will take place indoors, please come prepared for the weather for the outdoor ball drop. The Maritime Building can also get a little chilly, so sweaters are recommended as well. Socks are a must for the sock skate and will be available for purchase if needed. Children cannot be left unattended and must always be supervised by a parent or guardian.

Your completed receipt will be your admission ticket and can be printed or stored on your phone to show proof of purchase. All sales are FINAL—the event is rain or shine; no refunds will be issued.

For more information, please call 301-994-1471.

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### Alcoholics Anonymous Holiday Alcothons

Hollywood Volunteer Rescue Squad  
23469 Rescue Ln, Hollywood

The holidays can be difficult. If you or someone you know has a problem with alcohol, Alcoholics Anonymous can help.

Come out to the Alcoholics Anonymous Christmas and New Years Alcothon's!

Twenty four hours of hourly meetings. Christmas Eve beginning at 9pm and running thru 9pm Christmas night.

The New Years Alcothon starts at 6pm New Years Eve, and goes until 6pm New Years evening.

## Sun, Dec 31

### 2023 Sustainability Award Nomination Window Opens

St Mary's County Commission on the Environment Sustainability Awards nomination window open from 31 Dec—28 Feb 2024. Submit a nomination for a business,

## Ongoing

### Seniors Dancing for Wellness

Clagett Hall  
15837 Prince Frederick Rd., Hughesville

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(David) of San Marcos, TX and Christine Elaine Nicholson Bechtel (Stephen) of Westminster, MD. She is also survived by her mother-in-law, Mary Alberta Goddard of Leonardtown, MD; and her sister/brother-in-laws: Ruth Perry (Jack), Clarence Goddard III (Betty), Lucy Goddard, Sam Goddard (Donna), Dan Goddard (Donna), Phillip Goddard, Becky Boyer (David), Betty Guy (Mike), and Marian Cory (Wes); and many extended family and friends. In addition to her parents, she is also preceded in death by her sister, Sharon Jean Nicholson and her sister-in-law, Catherine Goddard.

Memorial contributions may be made to Autism Speaks, P.O. Box 37148, Boone, IA 50037-0148 and American Cancer Society, 405 Williams Court, Suite 120, Baltimore, Maryland 21220.

Condolences to the family may be made at [www.brinsfieldfuneral.com](http://www.brinsfieldfuneral.com)

**Raymond Harding, 81**



Raymond Clifton Harding, 81, of Newburg, Maryland, passed away at home on December 9, 2023, surrounded by his loving wife, Doris, and family members. Born on November 24, 1942 in St. Mary's County, MD, he was the son of the late Raymond E. and Mary Quade Harding. Raymond was the loving husband of Doris Wathen Harding, whom he married on October 20, 1962 in St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Morganza, Maryland. They shared sixty-one years of marriage. In addition to his wife, Raymond is survived by his children Raymond "Ray" Harding Jr., Deborah Ann (Robert Coates), and Donna Caye (Martin Osakowicz), his siblings Susan Greenwell of Hollywood, MD, and Johnny Harding of Virginia, grandchildren Kyle Coates, Travis Coates, Karissa Coates, Savanna Bullard, Kayla Hancock, and Madison Osakowicz, as well as his great-grandchildren Quentin Bullard, Liam Bullard, Jack Bullard, Adelina Bullard, Lacey Coates, Ava Coates, and Magnolia Hancock. He was preceded in death by James "Jimmy" Harding, Kenneth Harding, and Mary Harding Myers Readmond.

Raymond was also a talented musician who loved playing the guitar and drums, as well as singing. He played with numerous bands and had his own band, Kicking Country. His interests included watching Western movies, country music shows, and fishing and crabbing. He worked in the grocery store industry for many years, including at A&P and Super Fresh, retiring in the 90s.

The family will receive friends on Thursday, December 21, 2023 from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM in the Mattingley-Gardiner Funeral Home, Leonardtown, MD, where a funeral service will be held in the funeral home chapel at 11:00 AM with Pastor Matthew Tate officiating. Interment will follow at Charles Memorial Gardens, Leonardtown, MD. Serving as pallbearers will be Marty Osakowicz, Robert Coats, Billy Bullard, Quentin Bullard, Nick Hancock, and Ricky Harding.

Condolences may be made to the family at [www.mgfh.com](http://www.mgfh.com). Arrangements provided by the Mattingley-Gardiner Funeral Home and Cremation Services, P.A., Leonardtown, MD.

**Frank Roys, 95**



Frank Edgar "Pabst" Roys, 95, of Avenue, MD passed away on December 4, 2023 at Charlotte Hall Veterans Home in Charlotte Hall, MD.

He was born on March 20, 1928 in Washington, DC to the late Frank Secandus Roys and Rosemary (Garden) Roys.

Frank was raised in the neighborhood of Anacostia, Washington DC, however, he and his siblings spent every summer at their beautiful Coltons Point home in St. Mary's County. Frank graduated from Eastern High School, Washington, DC in 1947 where he met his future wife, Laura Grace Pace. Frank and Laura married on June 29, 1949 in Washington DC. Soon after they wed he entered into the military serving in the U.S. Air Force from 1950 to 1953. While serving he was stationed in Michigan, and received a certificate of Draftsmanship. He then worked for PEPCO as a Draftsman for many years and move to Camp Springs MD with his wife and children. In retirement he and his wife moved to St. Mary's County in the 1980's from Camp Springs. They spent 66 wonderful years together before her passing in January of 2014. Together he and Laura enjoyed taking trips to Florida with many of their St Mary's friends. He loved being outdoors whether he was fishing, crabbing, or oystering on his boat named "Lauralia" He was affectionately known as "Pabst" to everyone who knew him because he loved to drink his Pabst Blue Ribbon beer. Frank was a historian; he loved volunteering his time and knowledge of various historical sites in St. Mary's County. One of his favorite sites was St. Clements Island and the museum in which he was an integral member of the St. Clements 100 Club. In addition to that he also volunteered his time and energy with many other organizations in the county including the 7th District Optimist Club, the American Legion-Avenue, and ACTS.

He is survived by his children, Frank Branan Roys (Theresa) of Fredericksburg, VA, Ronald Jeffrey Roys (Michelle Boggs) of Dallas, TX, and Daniel Mark Roys (Tammy) of Prince Frederick, MD; grandchildren, Lianne Roys Tidwell, Megan Scallan, Danielle Coleman, Bre Byble, Wesley Berry, Rebecca Gellrud, Ronald "Jason" Roys, and Daniel Mark Roys; and 18 great grandchildren. In addition to his parents and his wife, he was preceded in death by his siblings, Betty Estes and Allen Roys, and his grandson, Kevin Elkins.

There will be a memorial service with military honors TBD.

Memorial contributions may be made to ACTS, P.P. Box 54, Bushwood, MD 20618, St. Clement's Hundred, P.O. Box 71, Colton's Point, MD 20626, and Hospice of St Mary's, P.O. Box 625, Leonardtown, MD 20650.

Condolences to the family may be made at [www.brinsfieldfuneral.com](http://www.brinsfieldfuneral.com).

Arrangements by the Brinsfield Funeral Home, P.A.

**Dave Wilson, 93**



We are heartbroken to announce the passing of a great man and gentle soul, who has resided in Hollywood, MD for over 50 years. David Wilson, "Dave", passed away on

December 9, 2023 in Callaway, MD. Born on September 24, 1936 in Philadelphia, PA, where he spent his youth, he was the son of the late David Wilson, Jr. and the late Catherine Marie Wilson.

In 1953, two days after his high school graduation, he joined the U.S. Navy. During his 22 years of service, he fought in the Vietnam War and retired as a Senior Chief Petty Officer in 1975. Later, he retired from a career in Civil Service, where he made many lasting friendships.

David met his bride, Joan Ann Cameron Wilson, of Hollywood, MD, in 1958 and they wed at St. John's Catholic Church. They celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary this past August.

His children, Stephen C. Wilson (Beverly) of Hollywood, MD, Angela McCreary (Mark) of Charleston, SC, the late Brian Wilson, and Kathleen "Kate" Deroche (David) of Mechanicsville, MD, are forever grateful and blessed to have such a devoted father, grandfather, and friend.

He is also survived by his ten grandchildren who grew up with his humor, wisdom, and loving spirit; Beth Martin (Kelsey) of Hughesville, MD, Jonathan Martin (Bianca

of Mt. Pleasant, SC, Kassie Irwin (Johnny) of Ireland, Adam Martin (Mae Mae) of Awendaw, SC, Ben Martin (Makaela) of Charleston, SC, David Wilson (Chen) of Katy, TX, Joann Dedge (Daniel) of Altha, FL, Maria Kirby (Sam) of Niceville, FL, Andrea Deroche of Mechanicsville, MD, and Erin Deroche (Daniel) of Mechanicsville, MD, and his nine great grandchildren who were the highlight of his later years.

In his younger years he ran many marathons and later competed in the Senior Olympics. Softball was also a big part of his sport and social life.

Dave was also a blood donor and regularly donated platelets. He received an award for his 150th donation at Bethesda Naval Hospital. He always said he just "wanted to help a fellow sailor in need", and he did.

Dave led his family with faith and moral integrity, teaching invaluable life lessons, the pursuit of happiness, and, most important, to love unconditionally. He's their forever role model and lives on always in the hearts of all who loved him. Fair Winds and Following Seas.

Contributions may be made to Hospice of St. Mary's and/or St. John's Catholic Church.

Serving as pallbearers will be Jonathan Martin, Adam Martin, Benjamin Martin, and David Wilson.

Services will be announced at a later date. Arrangements provided by the Mattingley-Gardiner Funeral Home and Cremation Services, P.A., Leonardtown, MD.



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**Bud Virts, 91**

Dr. Henry Alan "Bud" Virts, 91 of Mechanicsville, MD passed away December 13, 2023, at his home with his loving family at his side

He was born on November 10, 1932, in Washington, D.C. to the late Verna Virts Bailey (nee: Putnam) and Henry Alan Virts, Sr. Shortly after his birth his parents moved to Clarendon, VA where he resided until high school. At the young age of five, his father passed away and he spent much of his time with his mother and her three sisters, often checking each house to see who was having the best dinner. His mother remarried, Paul Jacob Bailey and he was a devoted stepfather to Bud.

Bud is a graduate of Washington Lee High School in Arlington, VA. He attended the University Of Maryland from 1950 to 1952. He completed his Doctorate in Veterinary Medicine from the University of Georgia in 1956. Later, he was inducted into the United States Army and proudly served his country until his Honorable Discharge as a Captain on June 30, 1964.

In 1959, he started his own veterinary practice at Trent Hall Farm with Clarence Little. This was where he performed one of his first surgeries out of med school in his home at Trent Hall. Later Clarence and Bud moved their practice and opened Tidewater Veterinary Hospital in Charlotte Hall; one of the only veterinary practice in the tri-county

area servicing large animals. In designing the new location they made sure to include horse head hitches to accommodate and welcome the local Amish and Mennonite community. Many times, he would travel across the Benedict Bridge to Solomon's Island to care for his animal patients (this was before the Solomon's Bridge was built). He worked tirelessly and built a strong business model and was known for his exemplary care for the animals and for serving the tri-county community. He retired in 1987 and sold Tidewater to Dr. Chris Runde DVM and Dr. Mike Parks DVM, who remain the current owners.

After retiring from private practice in 1987, Dr. Virts continued to dedicate his life to veterinary and agricultural issues, beginning as a volunteer with the advisory board to the Maryland Secretary of Agriculture. Shortly thereafter, he became the Assistant Chief of Animal Health and State Veterinarian from 1987 to 1989 and then Chief of Animal Health and State Veterinarian from 1989 to 1993. In 1994, he was appointed as the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture for the State of Maryland until 1997. In 1998, Governor Parris Glendening appointed Dr. Virts as the Secretary of Agriculture until 2001. He was the first Veterinarian to be appointed the Maryland Secretary of Agriculture. During his tenure in Maryland State government, he was instrumental in setting regulations to help fund and support research for many animal diseases, including, West Nile Virus, and rabies. He remained actively involved with the Maryland Veterinary Medical Association during his government service to aid in meeting the needs of veterinary medicine.

From 1998 to 2001, Dr. Virts was actively

involved on many committees/councils/foundations including: Member of the Board of Regents, University of Maryland System; Governor's Executive Council; Smart Growth and Neighborhood Conservation Subcabinet, Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation; Governor's Council on the Chesapeake Bay; Maryland Food Center Authority; Maryland Horse Industry Board; Mid-Atlantic Poultry Health Council; Governor's Pesticide Council; Rural Legacy Board; Scenic and Wild Rivers Review Board; State Soil Conservation Committee; Maryland Winery and Grape Growers' Advisory Board; Co-Chair of Interagency Nutrient Reduction Oversight Committee; 1999 - Member of Drought Emergency Coordinating Committee; 1999-2000 Shore Erosion Task Force; 1999-2001-Task Force on Tobacco Crop Conversion in Maryland; 2000-2001-State Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council.

In addition to the many committees he served and contributed to during his tenure as Secretary of Agriculture he also served as a member of the Maryland Agricultural Commission from 1970 to 1987, serving as the Vice Chairman from 1985-1987. He was on the Board of Trustees for the Maryland Environmental Trust from 2003 to 2005 and the Co-Sponsor of the Ward Virts Concert Series at the College of Southern Maryland. He served on the Board of Directors for St. Mary's Hospital, the Calverton School, and Leonard Hall Junior Naval Academy. He was very active in the academic affairs of the Maryland-Virginia Regional College of Veterinary Medicine and taught many students since it opened in 1980. In August 2008, he was awarded the A.M. Mills Award from the University of Georgia for being a distinguished practitioner having exemplary contributions in Veterinary medicine, and being the first Veterinarian ever to be appointed to the Secretary of Agriculture for the State of Maryland.

On June 24, 1962, he married the love of his life, Nancy Lucretia Ward Virts, whom he met while stationed at Fitzsimmons Army Hospital in Denver, CO. Together they had three sons, Ward, Eric, and Paul Virts. They celebrated over 61 wonderful years of marriage. They especially enjoyed tropical vacations, with a favorite trip being to Barbados. In 2004, Bud and Nancy adopted Paul's youngest daughter, Breann, raising her as their own, instilling a strong work ethic and compassion for others. Bud's hobbies included sailing, which he enjoyed with his beloved friend, Jack Gumtow, and photography with his lifelong friend, Jimmy Weaver. He loved spending time on the family farms, loved all things agricultural, and had an affinity for all animals. He also enjoyed hunting waterfowl with his late stepfather, Paul Bailey, friends, John "Doc" Roach, and John Bailey, "the crew." Other hobbies included wood carving, and watching horse races and golf tournaments. Dr. Virts was an exemplary man who loved his community, agriculture, and animals. He was professional, passionate about whatever job he took on, and always worked to achieve the best outcome possible. He was a leader and inspiration to many.

In addition to his beloved wife, Nancy, he is also survived by his children, Eric Putnam Virts (Alice) of California, MD, Paul Ashcom Virts of Hagerstown, MD, and Breann Nicole Virts Uber (Kaidin) of

Mechanicsville, MD; his grandchildren: Matthew Virts (Alexandra Fehn), John Virts (Jacka line), Hannah Virts (Lorenzo Sena), and great-granddaughter Raelynn Virts Uber; his great-grandsons, Grahm and James Virts; and many extended family and friends. In addition to his parents, Verna Virts Bailey (nee: Putnam), Henry Alan Virts, Sr., and step-father, Paul Bailey, he is also preceded in death by his son, Ward Alan Virts.

Family will receive friends on December 20, 2023, from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm with prayers at 7:30 pm at Brinsfield Funeral Home, 30195 Three Notch Road, Charlotte Hall, MD 20622. A Funeral Service will be celebrated by Reverend Debbie Kirk on Saturday, December 30, 2023, at 1:30 pm at All Faith Episcopal Church, 38885 New Market Turner Road, Mechanicsville, MD 20659. Interment will be private

Serving as pallbearers will be John Virts, Paul Reppening, Eric Virts, Matt Virts, Charles Benedict, and Kaidin Uber. Honorary Pallbearers will be John Roache, John Bailey, and Jack Bailey.

Memorial contributions may be made to All Faith Church or Wounded Warriors

Condolences may be made to the family at [www.brinsfieldfuneral.com](http://www.brinsfieldfuneral.com).

Arrangements by Brinsfield Funeral Home & Crematory, P.A., Charlotte Hall, MD.

**Amy Goddard, 52**

Amy Rebecca Nicholson Goddard, 52, of Leonardtown, MD passed away peacefully on December 11, 2023 at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital in Leonardtown, MD with her loving family at her side.

Amy was born on May 8, 1971 to the late Charles William Nicholson and Antonia May Repici Nicholson.

Amy grew up in Ridge, Maryland and is a 1989 graduate of Great Mills High School. On October 11, 2003, she married the man of her dreams Stephen Claude Goddard at Mount Zion United Methodist Church in Mechanicsville, MD. Together they ultimately moved to the Goddard family farm and celebrated over 20 wonderful years of marriage. Amy was exceptional at everything that she set her mind to. Initially, this was her art where she expressed her creativity through sketches and paintings, but most recently presented this gift through hand-crafted wristlets, bags, and purses which she sold through her personal business, Leonardtown Home Sewn. Amy was exceptional with animals, where she has always had an affinity for cats and dogs, but held a special place in her heart for horses. She was a proponent of natural horsemanship, and truly held a deep and special connection with King, Redford, Tonka, and Pony. Amy held a strong belief in community, and initiated her family's development of a successful produce stand to support the White Point neighborhood. Amy was most exceptional at being a mother to Alex, where her attributes of creativity, persistence, and dedication converged to support him to grow into an outstanding young man.

In addition to her beloved husband, Stephen, Amy is also survived by her son, Alexander Charles Goddard and her sisters, Linda Dee Nicholson Dreibrodt

*Merry Christmas to You  
in Heaven  
Mary Catherine Kane  
Sept. 18, 1924–Nov. 22, 2019*

**Mama, as we listen to Christmas songs and watch the Christmas lights, all we can do is remember how you enjoyed those things. You are in our hearts as always. We know you are watching over us.**

**Merry Christmas, Mama.  
Love,  
Larry & Ellen**

# A View From The BLEACHERS



## SAME AS EVER

By Ronald N. Guy Jr.  
Contributing Writer

Podcast-land is a vast landscape of diverse interests and budding obsessions. Every media member, former athlete, B-list celebrity or grasping-for-fame influencer has one. And much like a tour through any team roster, this massive ocean of multi-media content contains some standouts, a host of solid contributors and some unfortunate (that they exist) filler, sans any trace of killer.

Avoiding the regrettable and finding quality topics of interest takes some effort. I wouldn't say it is an exercise that makes me long for the pre-digital days of five television channels and three radio stations, but there are certainly moments when the appreciation those far off, simpler times rises. When lacking the opportunity to proactively pod-surf, say when life suddenly bequeaths you a rare hour to kill, finding an instant treasure in the podcast hinterland is daunting. Channeling Dirty Harry, the obvious question is, "Do I feel lucky?"

When faced with such a dilemma last week, the universe was kind to me. The dumb-luck discovered podcast was "Plan English", hosted by Derek Thompson. The selected episode was titled "What Most People Get Wrong About Wealth, Fame and Happiness" and featured author Morgan Housel and his new book, "Same as Ever". It was fantastic.

The title introduces the content. Housel's book, which features stories illustrating historical patterns and habitual human flaws, accentuated the conversation with proof of our repetitive "wrongs" and the hope that awareness produces wisdom, which leads to better choices, which leads to greater wealth, and a better understanding of fame and happiness.

This, curiously, got me thinking about sports and the holidays. My brain: when you figure out yours, help me with mine.

Let me try to connect the dots. You may want to grab a beer. Nothing in sports is the "same as ever." Some things stick for a long time – Andy Reid coaching winning NFL teams, LeBron James dominating basketball, the Houston Astros in the MLB playoffs, and the Washington Commanders playing losing football, for example. But nothing lasts forever. That counterpoint's examples: the Bill Belichick-Tom Brady Patriots dynasty, the Nicklas Backstrom-Alexander Ovechkin connection, and the Capitals and Wizards leaving D.C. (probably).

For those of adequate vintage, this fluid dynamic creates a coexistence of nostalgia for the past, appreciation for the present and excitement for the future. Two good examples are the Orioles and Nationals. For the O's, it's impossible for anyone over 40 to see the warehouse at Camden Yards and forget the numbers counting down Cal Ripken Jr.'s march to the consecutive games played record, while also being jacked about the youngsters that arrived this season and the promise they offer for the future. Similarly, for Nats fans, the yearning for Juan Soto, Trea Turner and that magical 2019 team is palatable; but the rebuild is underway and 2024 should mark the arrival of more future stars.

In my scrambled mind, this seamlessly transitions to the holiday season. Whatever you celebrate, this time of year is often – and hopefully - synonymous with family gatherings and reconnections with good friends and loved ones. It is that rare opportunity to dismount the hamster wheel, wrestle control over the pace of life and invest in cherished relationships.

Of course, for those who have lapped the sun a few dozen times, the emotions of the holidays, like those of longtime sports fans, cover the gamut – the togetherness is special and the promise of the years to come is alluring, but these feeling share headspace with a hint of nostalgia for yesteryears and an ache for loved ones lost.

The popular saying is life throws a lot of curveballs. But curveballs are predictable. No, life is more like a knuckleball – fascinating, beautiful and unpredictable. As Hunter S. Thompson quipped about life's complexities, "Hope rises and dreams flicker and die; love plans for tomorrow and loneliness thinks of yesterday; life is beautiful and living is pain." Recognizing the personal emotional complexities of the season, I supposed the holidays are simply time to seek joy in moments, to find hope in a future waiting to be revealed, and to feel gratitude for memories now locked in the past.

Send comments to [RonaldGuyJr@gmail.com](mailto:RonaldGuyJr@gmail.com)



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Sunday, Dec. 24  
11 AM - 3 PM

Monday, Christmas Day  
Closed

Tuesday, Dec. 26  
Closed

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Merry Christmas from your friends at SOF Market  
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May you have a happy, prosperous and healthy new year!



**David McDonough**  
Financial Advisor

41680 Miss Bessie Dr Suite 302  
Leonardtown, MD 20650  
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MKT-9811D-A AECSPAD 20815623

# Mike's Turkey Drive Helps Neighbors in Need for the Holidays



The annual holiday food drive organized by Mike Schwartz, owner of Mike's Bikes, took place Monday and Tuesday this week, allowing families in need to receive a free turkey dinner. Pictured left is Schwartz with Delegate Todd Morgan, Shell Shubrooks, and Alonzo Gaskin. Pictured right is one of many volunteers who helped make the event possible. Photos courtesy of Ceandra Scott.

## Legal Notices

**COMMISSIONERS OF LEONARDTOWN  
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING  
Franchise Agreement with Comcast of Maryland, LLC**

The Commissioners of Leonardtown will hold a public hearing on Monday, January 8, 2024 at 4:30 p.m. at the Town Office, 22670 Washington Street, regarding the proposed franchise agreement with Comcast of Maryland, LLC and The Commissioners of Leonardtown. The purpose of the hearing will be to present for public review and receive public comment regarding the request to enter into a ten-year Franchise Agreement with Comcast Maryland, LLC. Copies of the documents are available for public review at the Leonardtown Town Office. The public is invited to attend and/or send written comments to the Commissioners of Leonardtown, P.O. Box 1, Leonardtown, MD 20650 to be received no later than January 8, 2024 at 4:00 p.m. Special accommodations will be made for persons with disabilities upon request.

By Authority: Laschelle E. McKay, Town Administrator

**COMMISSIONERS OF LEONARDTOWN  
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING  
Rezoning Request 22675 Cedar Lane Court, Leonardtown, MD 20650**

The Commissioners of Leonardtown will hold a public hearing on Monday, January 8, 2024 at 4:15 p.m. at the Town Office, 22670 Washington Street, regarding Tax Map 040, Parcel 017. The purpose of the hearing will be to present for public review and receive public comment regarding the request to rezone the parcel located at 22675 Cedar Lane Court. from Residential Single Family (RSF) to Commercial Business (C-B). Copies of the documents are available for public review at the Leonardtown Town Office. The public is invited to attend and/or send written comments to the Commissioners of Leonardtown, P.O. Box 1, Leonardtown, MD 20650 to be received no later than January 8, 2024 at 4:00 p.m. Special accommodations will be made for persons with disabilities upon request.

By Authority: Laschelle E. McKay, Town Administrator

## SPINACH DIP

Submitted by Dan Burris, Mayor of Leonardtown

### INGREDIENTS:

- (2) 10 oz packages chopped spinach
- 1/4 cup melted butter
- 2 tbs chopped onion
- 3 tbs flour
- 1/4 cup evaporated milk
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- 3/4 tsp each celery & garlic salt
- 1 tsp Worcestershire sauce
- 8 oz jalapeño pepper cheese

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Cook spinach & drain, reserving 1/2 cup of cooking liquid. Set cooked spinach aside.
2. Mix butter, onion, and flour and cook for 1 minute.
3. Add reserved spinach liquid and evaporated milk, heating until thickened.
4. Add remaining ingredients and stir until cheese melts, adding spinach back in at the end. Serve with crackers or Melba toast. Best if kept heated in a chaffing dish.

## SPICE COOKIES

Submitted by Rachel Wilson, Graphic Designer for the County Times

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 1/2 cups unsalted butter
- 1 cup white granulated sugar
- 1 cup dark brown sugar
- 6 tbsp molasses
- 1 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
- 4 tsp ginger
- 2 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp cloves
- 1/4 tsp nutmeg
- 1/4 tsp cardamom
- 1/4 tsp cayenne pepper
- 2 large eggs
- 4 1/2 cups all purpose flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 1 1/4 tsp salt
- Turbinado sugar for rolling

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat to 350°
2. In stand mixer, or with hand mixer in a large bowl beat together butter and sugars until pale and fluffy
3. Beat in molasses, vanilla, and spices
4. Beat in eggs
5. Combine flour, baking powder, and baking soda in separate bowl and gradually mix into wet ingredients.
6. Scoop dough into balls and roll through turbinado sugar to coat.
7. Bake for 11-12 minutes
8. Cool on baking sheet for 10-15 minutes then transfer to rack to finish cooling.

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# Pet

## OF THE WEEK

### MEET FLYNN



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To see more of my amazing friends also available for adoption, "like" us on Facebook @ Charles County Animal Care Center or view us on our website at <https://www.charlescountymd.gov/services/animal-care-control/animal-care-center>



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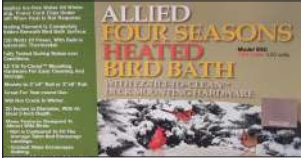


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\*Valid on full priced merchandise. Can't be combined with any other coupon or Sales offer Excludes: Christmas Closeouts, Bird Feed, Firewood, Bagged Mulches, Stones & Soils, Pavers & Wallstones, Landscaping, Gift Certificates & Labor. Valid on in-stock merchandise only. Expires 12/24/2023

**Wentworth Nursery**  
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**SEASON COUPON**

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Winter Hours: Start 12/26  
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# Season's EATINGS

## A HOLIDAY RECIPE COLLECTION

The County Times recently invited readers, staff, and community leaders to share their favorite holiday recipes. We hope you enjoy.

### STERLING FAMILY STUFFED HAM

Submitted by Jaymi Sterling, State's Attorney for St. Mary's County

#### INGREDIENTS:

- (1) 18-20 lbs. corned ham, boned and slightly trimmed of excess fat
- 5-6 lbs. of kale, washed and stripped from stalk
- 1 head green cabbage, washed, and cored
- 3 large onions
- 1 bunch celery
- crushed red pepper
- ground cayenne pepper
- celery seed
- mustard seed
- ground black pepper
- Cheesecloth
- 1 white clean pillow case
- Butchers' twine

#### DIRECTIONS:

1. Rinse and soak ham for 1-2 hours in cold water
2. Process kale, cabbage, onions, and celery in a food processor with a small slicer attachment. They should be 1/4"-1/2"
3. In a large pot add kale, and slowly add cabbage until you get a good mix. If you live up north county that would be a pretty small amount, down south you are going to need more than 1 head. Typically, we would use about 1/2 or 2/3's of the cabbage from one head
4. Add onions and celery and mix by hand.
5. Add approximately 1/4 cup of ground black pepper and crushed red pepper. Toss by hand until it's thoroughly mixed.
6. Add approximately 1/4 cup of celery and mustard seed and again toss by hand.
7. Add approximately 2 tablespoons of ground cayenne pepper and thoroughly mix by hand. At this point we would continue adding until you can feel the heat from the pepper in your hands as you mix, and the stuffing will take on some color. If you don't like it spicy like we do stop there.
8. Pat ham dry with paper towels, then start stuffing cavities where bone was removed. Then thoroughly tie the ham tightly with twine.
9. Spread out the cheesecloth neatly folded in 2, so you get two layers. Place some stuffing on the cloth, about the same size as the tied ham. Place the ham on the stuffing then continue coating the exterior of the ham with stuffing. Tie the cheese cloth tightly around the ham so stuffing cannot escape.
10. Place covered ham in a pillow case, again tying it tightly, and refrigerate overnight.
11. Heat a large pot of water (enough to fully cover ham) to boiling, and slowly drop ham and cover. You will adjust heat to keep a slow rolling boil.
12. Cook ham 13.5 mins per pound of the original ham's weight from the butcher.
13. Once time is complete remove heat but allow ham to sit in water for 30 min, then remove from water. Remove the pillow case and set it on a rack over a sheet pan and place it in a refrigerator.
14. Once fully cooled (8-12 hours) set ham on a clean sheet pan and remove cheese cloth. Separate loose stuffing to a bowl and refrigerate.
15. Thinly slice ham and serve it cold on martin's potato rolls with stuffing on top.

# Chill Deals



7 To 8-Oz., Selected Kraft Sliced, Chunk Or Shredded Cheese

SALE PRICE **2/\$6**  
DIGITAL COUPON **2.00** OFF TWO

FINAL PRICE **2/\$4**



24-Ct. Cinnamon Stix, 12-Ct. Cornbread Swirls Or 8-Ct., Selected Pillsbury Grands Biscuits

**2/\$6**



8 To 12.4-Oz. Selected Crescent Rolls Or Pillsbury Cinnamon Rolls

**2/\$7**



2-Ct. 14.1-Oz. Pillsbury Pie Crusts

**2/\$7**



1-Lb., Selected Food Club Butter

SALE PRICE **3.78**  
DIGITAL COUPON **1.00** OFF TWO

FINAL PRICE **3.28**

## Bakery & Deli Fresh



Honey Kretschmar Off The Bone Ham **5.98 Lb.**

White Or Yellow Kretschmar American Cheese **5.98 Lb.**



8-Inch Pumpkin Or Sweet Potato Pie **4.98**



21-Oz., Maplehurst 8-Inch Pecan Pie **6.98**



Crunch Time! 8-Piece Fried Chicken **8.98**



19.5 Oz., Dutch Apron Pumpkin, Red Velvet Or Carrot Cake Rolls **6.58**



52-Oz. Double Layer Red Velvet Cake **11.98**



12-Ct., Selected King's Hawaiian Rolls **3.78**

## Liquor and Beer



10-Oz. Cans 24 Pack Bud Light **19.89**



12-Oz. Cans 18-Pack Miller Lite **14.99**



10-Oz. Cans 12-Pack Coors **10.99**



10-Oz. Cans 12-Pack Michelob Ultra **10.99**



12 Pack, 12-Oz. Cans Half and Half Arnold Palmer Spiked Tea **15.99**



1.75L Tito's Vodka **30.49**



1.75L Jim Beam **28.99**



1.75L Ketel One Vodka **34.99**



1.75L Crown Royal **42.99**



1.75-Liter Jose Cuervo Especial **37.99**



750 ML Loosen Brothers Riesling **11.98**



750 ML K Cellars Chardonnay **7.98**



750ml. Cabernet and Sauvignon Blanc Josh Cellars Wine **12.98**

### Wines of the Month



750ML Lamarca Prosecco or Rose **13.99**



3 Pack LaMarca Prosecco **14.99**



750ML Mark West Black **11.99**



750ML Mark West Pinot Noir **8.99**

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**Smithfield Spirals**  
SMOKED HAM  
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**Certified Angus Beef Boneless Bottom Round Roast**  
**4.98**Lb.

**USDA Inspected Whole Boneless Pork Loin**  
**1.98**Lb.

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**2.98**

**Certified Angus Beef Boneless New York Strip Steaks**  
**10.98**Lb.

**12 To 24-Oz., Selected Bob Evans Side Dishes**  
**3.98**

**2 To 3-Oz., Frozen Lobster Tails**  
**3.98**

**Delicious Corned Ham**  
**2.99**Lb.

**FREE ITEM Friday**  
IFREE! 15.8-Oz. Bush's Zero Sugar Added Baked Beans

**LIMIT 1 OFFER**  
12 To 16-Oz., Selected Oscar Mayer Sliced Bacon  
**3.98**

**14-Oz. Eckrich Cocktail Lil' Smokies**  
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## FARM to TABLE

**3-Lb. Bag, Easy To Peel Halos Clementines**  
**4.98**

**Farmers Finest Large Stalk Celery**  
**1.78**

**12-Oz. Bag Ocean Spray Fresh Whole Cranberries**  
**2/\$5**

**NC Grown Orange Flesh Sweet Potatoes**  
**.68**Lb.

**Sweet Seedless California Navel Oranges**  
**4/\$5**

**42-oz @ 12.98 Or 21-Oz Del Monte Veggie Tray**  
**7.98**

**4-Lb. Domino Sugar**  
**2/\$6**

**5-Lb. Plain Pillsbury Flour**  
**3.48**

**24.5 To 30.6-Oz., Selected Maxwell House Ground Coffee**  
**4.98**

**8.8 To 13.7-Oz., Selected Ritz Crackers**  
**2/\$6**

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working this Christmas on a different shift. "I love this job, I'm not complaining," Estrada said. "It's good [for people] to know there's someone out there protecting them."

Estrada said he was looking forward to working this holiday season.

"Every day's different working this job," Estrada told The County Times. "So I'm pretty curious how it's going to be."

At the Bay District Volunteer Fire Department's station on FDR Boulevard, Blake Tarleton, a sergeant there, will be on standby this Christmas.

"This will be my second Christmas on duty," Tarleton said. "Last Christmas we were very busy."

The chill temperatures last year, Tarleton, 19, said froze a lot of water bearing pipes in homes and buildings, leading them to eventually burst. Firefighters being who they are, he said, they respond to virtually all emergency calls, even if they involve water and not fire.

"We run just about everything," Tarleton said.

As a volunteer, he chose to take the Christmas watch, he said, but crews will still get some time to spend with their loved ones.

"It's whoever has the time," Tarleton said. "Some people come in and then go home to have dinner with their families, some can go home and do breakfast and lunch."

The job doesn't change during the Christmas holiday, Tarleton said, but the holiday does have an effect on the mood at the station house.

"In the firehouse everyone wants to sit and chat and eat food," Tarleton said. "I really like seeing all of the guys together."

"It's a good thing," Tarleton said residents should still exercise caution over the holiday, particularly when they're using anything related to heating, fire or combustion.

"Safety while cooking is critical," Tarleton said. "And being careful on the roads is a big thing for me."

Many times, firefighters respond to car crashes as much or even more than they do fire calls, locally.

"If you're not sure about something, just call 911," Tarleton said, advising erring on the side of caution. "The guys don't mind coming out."

Farther south, at the Ridge Volunteer Rescue Squad, two career emergency medical technicians (EMTs), Victoria "Vicky" Gray and Elizabeth Morgan, were waiting

for any calls near the end of their shift. As career EMTs, they are shuffled to any of the volunteer squads where they may be needed to fill personnel gaps. On Christmas, Gray will staff the Mechanicsville squad, while Morgan will staff the Lexington Park squad located on Buck Hewitt Road.

Working on the holiday is no problem for them, they said.

"It's another day," Gray, who helped train Morgan when they were both volunteers, said. "If we weren't scheduled, we would've offered."

Gray said their working on Christmas left the opportunity for others in the rescue service to spend time with their families.

"It's a rewarding job, you're helping people on their worst day," Gray said.

Morgan said it was important for EMTs to maintain the same level of concern for their patients, even if they think the patient may not be suffering that much. EMTs often get calls where the severity is not as high as initially thought, but they must respond all the same.

"It's their emergency, they called you for a reason," Morgan said. "It doesn't matter what you may think they're going through."

Gray said with so much food available to many during the holidays, there was danger in eating something they shouldn't.

"Be aware of allergies," Gray said. "Be careful with what you eat, be sure you know what's in it."

Morgan said: "And know the signs of a stroke or heart attack."

Supporting all of the first responders at the county's emergency communications center are the emergency dispatchers, taking call after call for anything from a burglary to a car crash. Among them this Christmas will be Skyler Jones, who worked during the day last Christmas Eve and then again the night of Christmas Day. She's happy to do it, she said.

"It's my assigned schedule," Jones, 22, told The County Times. "I'd rather have people with families have the time to spend with them."

Going into this holiday, Jones isn't sure what awaits her and her fellow dispatchers this Christmas but they're ready for it.

"I love it," Jones said of her job, which is like her home away from home. "I like working the Christmas holiday. I really like the people I'll be working with."

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# First Responders Celebrate Christmas on the Job



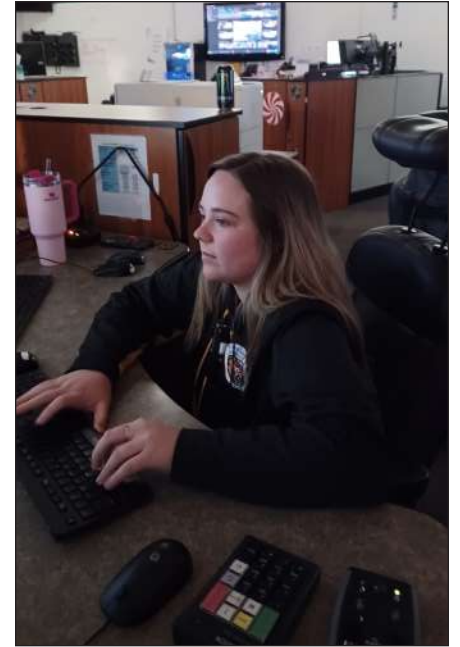
Dep. Santiago Estrada



From left: Firefighters Jevaughn and Jamari Mackall, Noah Rogers, and Blake Tarleton



EMTs Elizabeth Morgan and Victoria Gray



Emergency dispatcher Skyler Jones

By Guy Leonard  
Staff Writer

Christmas is a time for family and spending time with loved ones and for appreciating the blessings of the year. While much of the world stops — or at least slows down — for a night and day, some still keep going to watch over those who celebrate the holidays.

For some St. Mary's first responders, Christmas is another day on the job.

For sheriff's deputy Santiago Estrada it gives him the chance to keep doing what he does best.

"I've wanted to do this my whole life," Estrada, 22, said. "Helping people is something energizing. It's nice when people say 'Thank you.'"

Originally born in Colombia, Estrada moved to the United States when he was 5 years old, living most of his life in New York. Eventually moving to St. Mary's,

he found a community that embraces and appreciates law enforcement.

"They support police," Estrada, who also serves in the military police in the Army Reserves, said. "They appreciate what we do."

On Christmas Day, Santiago will be patrolling sheriff's office District 4, which extends from the Route 4 and Three Notch Road intersection all the way down to Ridge. It's a big area, he said, and he could have to take calls in California if needed.

"When you're on patrol and you have to stop and do some paperwork you do it somewhere where you are visible," Estrada said. "The public likes that. If you're out hiding somewhere that's not good."

This will be Estrada's first Christmas shift, it was assigned to him, he said, but it's what he signed up for when he joined the agency.

"It's the job you chose," Estrada said, noting his fiancé, who is also a deputy, will be

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# Ice Cream and Baked Goods Mix in Leonardtown

By Guy Leonard  
Staff Writer

Mark and April Mumpower, owners of the Salted Scoop ice cream shop, and Kelly Davin, owner of Kneaded bakery share the same business space in the Leonardtown town square but once you enter there's very little separating their operations.

Just a small border of windows stands between their businesses but they have built an effective partnership and they have come to depend on each other.

The three met at a Leonard's Grant community event, the Mumpowers selling premium ice cream from a truck and Davin offering some custom-made baked goods a couple of years ago and hit it off.

Now, they've teamed up to take over the space once held by Heritage Chocolates.

"We're a team," Mark Mumpower said. "We share everything in here."

The Mumpowers have taken over an ice cream business owned by another entrepreneur and made it into one of the most popular in the county.

Mark, a retired Navy veteran, and April

were looking for the next step in their lives — Mark also loves ice cream and is something of a connoisseur.

"In his mind, it was the best ice cream he'd tasted in his entire life," April said, noting she wasn't quite the connoisseur her husband was. "But it's broadened my horizons."

After years of work and refining her recipes, Davin is fulfilling her lifelong dream.

She's only been open since March and her business is already renowned for its professionally made cakes, scones, pastries and more.

Davin holds a degree in Baking and Pastry Arts from Johnson and Wales University and has worked for years to finally open her own business doing what she loves.

"I've wanted to open a bakery since I was 19 years old," Davin, 47 said. "I fell in love with the beauty of pastry."

"You eat with your eyes first."

Her culinary creations aren't for those on a diet, but the flavors are exceptional and lasting.

"I try to make the calories worth it," Davin said. "It took me eight years to hone my scone recipe the way I wanted."

During the summer time customers are lined up out the door to get ice cream at The



Salted Scoop, likewise in the mornings at Kneaded to get an early pastry or croissant quiche combination for breakfast.

Davin, who admits she can be a bit of a snob when it comes to the quality of food, said she approves of the some odd 30 flavors her partners have brought in — from originals like vanilla and chocolate to more exotic and seasonal ones like eggnog.

"They really impressed me," Davin said. April said she and her husband could not

have become so successful so quickly without the dedicated group of "scoopers" who have come to work for them.

She wants them to love working there as much as customers love getting their ice cream there, too.

"That's my goal for my scoopers," April said. "For most of them this is their first job."

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# Firefighters Request Portable Individual Radios

By Guy Leonard  
Staff Writer

Last summer a meeting of the leadership of all of the volunteer fire companies determined that all firefighters riding on an apparatus — essentially all those responding to an emergency such as a fire ground — should have their own personal radios to be used as an added safety measure.

“Basically, we identified that if you’re riding on a fire apparatus you need to have the ability to communicate,” said county Emergency Services Board member John Nelson at their Dec. 13 meeting. “That’s for if you’re inside a house or where ever you are operating.”

Nelson added: “There is a shortcoming of radios available to us.”

Each fire department in St. Mary’s has identified how many radios they need, Nelson said, and have attuned their budget requests accordingly.

“It’s important that we recognize that part of the reason for this conversation is from looking at some our shortcomings in our line of duty death,” said ESB member and county rescue chief Shawn Davidson. “We have identified a specific need for our rank-

and-file firefighters.

“Any person who is walking into something while it’s on fire needs to have a way to ask for help if they need it.”

Davidson said the rescue side of the service was looking for ways to pare back its radio communication needs to help fulfill the new request from the fire service.

On June 27 Firefighter Brice Trossbach was killed while responding to a house fire in Leonardtown; when he entered the structure that was fully engulfed in flame he fell through the floor into the basement and had to be rescued.

After being rushed to a nearby hospital he was declared deceased; the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has begun an investigation into the circumstances surrounding Trossbach’s death and the Leonardtown Volunteer Fire Department, of which Trossbach was a member, has assembled a group of fire safety specialists to conduct their own investigation.

Trossbach was working as a firefighter stationed at NAS Patuxent River when he was killed.

[guyleonard@countytimes.net](mailto:guyleonard@countytimes.net)

# Two Animals Test Positive for Rabies in Northern St. Mary's

The St. Mary’s County Health Department (SMCHD) reports two animals collected in the Mechanicsville and Charlotte Hall areas have tested positive for rabies. On December 16, 2023, a raccoon was collected from the Wicomico Shores Subdivision, and a skunk was collected from the North Indian Creek Subdivision. The test results were confirmed by the State’s laboratory at the Maryland Department of Health in Baltimore.

Rabies is a potentially fatal virus that is transmitted through the saliva of an infectious animal. Residents are advised to use caution when approaching wild animals or unknown domesticated animals. Pet owners in the area are advised to examine their animals for bites, scratches, or wounds of unknown origin, and report suspect injuries to the St. Mary’s County Animal Control Office at 301-475-8018.

The following precautions are recommended to protect your pets and family members from the threat of rabies:

- Be sure your pet has an up-to-date rabies vaccination. Maryland law requires that all cats, dogs, and ferrets four months and older have a current

rabies vaccination. Low-cost rabies clinics are provided by the health department and St. Mary’s Animal Welfare League (SMAWL) from March – November.

- Keep pets in your home or yard and walk them on a leash.
- Never approach or touch animals unknown to you.
- Do not feed pets outdoors. Pet food and other food sources, such as unsecured garbage cans, may attract unwanted and unhealthy animals into your yard.

The health department investigates reports of animal bites and, based on the outcome of the investigation, refers the affected person(s) to the hospital’s emergency department or to their primary healthcare provider for treatment and vaccination. Residents are asked to report any animal exposures involving humans to the St. Mary’s County Sheriff’s Office at 301-475-8008.

For more information about rabies and the rabies vaccination clinics, visit the health department’s website at [smchd.org/rabies-prevention](http://smchd.org/rabies-prevention).

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# Beloved Veterinarian, Former Agriculture Secretary Dies

By Guy Leonard  
Staff Writer

Dr. Henry "Bud" Virts, a well-known veterinarian who served as former Secretary of Agriculture more than two decades ago, died Dec. 13. He was 91.

Virts was a business entrepreneur as well as a veterinarian, founding Tidewater Veterinary Hospital in Charlotte in 1959 and owning it until 1987.

He also owned the Trent Hall Bed and Breakfast in Mechanicsville.

His granddaughter, Bree Virts, said her grandfather was loved by many in the community for the services he provided and for his caring nature.

"He was well liked by so many people," she said. "He was really big in the Amish

and Mennonite communities because he took care of their animals."

Virts gained custody of his granddaughter and raised her, she said, starting from when she was just a few months old.

"He was just a great family man," she said. "He raised me; he got custody of me when he was 72."

Bree said she would ride a lawnmower when cutting the grass of her grandfather's farm and when she would come in for lunch he would try to sneak on it to try and mow the grass himself.

"I'd half to run out and try and stop him," Bree said. "He never slowed down, even when he got sick."

The list of Virts' civic accomplishments is long; he served as Secretary of Agriculture from 1998 to 2001, before that he served in the

deputy secretary position from 1994 to 1997.

He held the post of State Veterinarian from 1989 to 1993 and held the assistant state veterinarian position from 1987 to 1989, according to state archives.

Virts also served on the Board of Regents for the University of Maryland, the Governor's Council on the Chesapeake Bay, the Maryland Horse Industry Board and the Maryland Agricultural Commission to name just a few.

His granddaughter said her grandfather was loved because he gave so much first.

"He radiated love, compassion and kindness everywhere he went," she said.

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Dr. Henry "Bud" Virts



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# Commissioners to Spend Hundreds of Thousands on Consultant

By Guy Leonard  
Staff Writer

The Commissioners of St. Mary's County voted last week to spend \$300,000 on a consultant to help with the formulation of the county's comprehensive plan, the guiding document for economic growth, development and resource allocation for the entirety of St. Mary's.

The vote was not unanimous, though, as Commissioner Eric Colvin was the lone opponent to the measure, citing cost and the fact that the county had the ability to complete the task on its own.

Jessica Andritz, the head of the Department of Land Use and Growth Management, made the request of the commissioners to provide the funds from their commissioners' reserve.

Andritz said that her department does not have the resources to perform the proper analysis required for such an update, and historically the land use department had not budgeted for the update.

The last time commissioners adopted a plan was more than 13 years ago, in March of 2010.

The process to begin the renewed review of the comprehensive plan began in 2021, county documents stated, but the COVID-19 pandemic stalled the effort.

In performing a survey of 12 neighboring jurisdictions in Maryland, Andritz showed that nine of them had used a third-party consultant firm of multiple land use experts to do the comprehensive plan analysis and update.

The commissioners reserve fund before the request was \$1.2 million.

"When you think about the investment this funding represents in the future of this

county... we do need to ask for this money," Andritz said, imploring commissioners to approve her request.

Colvin said Andritz had "inherited" this duty when she took the job and that it should have been done before she came to work for the county.

Andritz confirmed to Colvin that notes from stakeholder meetings held several years ago at the start of the comprehensive plan review still existed.

"This is all feedback that will be given to the consultant once [they are] selected," Andritz said, noting some of it will have to be redone.

"A lot has happened in the past few years," she said.

Calling the comprehensive plan "an incredibly important document," Colvin said the county had the "expertise within"

to allow it to continue the process itself.

He fronted the idea of a citizen committee that would have six to eight months to deal with the revision of the comprehensive plan.

"We've heard it repeatedly that we're in a 'keep the lights on' budget mode and \$300,000 is a lot of money to spend on this when I think we have the expertise in our county," said Colvin.

Commissioner Mike Hewitt said staffing vacancies in Andritz's department, like elsewhere in county government, were making their daily duties more difficult to fulfill without such a hefty task as the comprehensive plan update.

"We're going to get quality from [spending] this \$300,000," Hewitt said. "I believe it."

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# Three Fire Companies Want Tax Increase

By Guy Leonard  
Staff Writer

The volunteer fire departments in Leonardtown, Mechanicsville and Ridge have all made requests of the county government for an increase in their fire tax rates for the coming budget year.

Leonardtown has asked that their fire tax rate be more than doubled from 2.4 cents per \$100 to 5.6 cents.

In a letter to the Commissioners of St. Mary's County, the Company 1 leadership said that an increase in price by \$110,000 for a fire engine they have on order and a \$2.1 million price tag on a replacement ladder truck are among the increasing expenses with which they and other fire companies must deal.

The company must also consider relocation. "[Leonardtown Volunteer Fire Department] has outgrown its current facility and needs additional space and land which is easily accessible for members to respond on calls," the letter reads. "[The fire company] has received cost estimates ranging from to \$28 to \$30 million for various options — including acquisition of land, engineering, sitework costs and construction of a new station."

The other two fire companies submitted extensive financial documents detailing their revenues and expenditures but did not reveal specifically how much they wanted to raise their fire tax rates.

The county's volunteer fire board, a conglomerate of all the volunteer fire companies here, unanimously approved sending the request of each company to the county's Emergency Service Board (ESB), which in turn gave their unanimous blessing to the requests.

The ESB met Dec. 13.

The proposals will be sent to the county commissioners for inclusion in the fiscal 2025 budgeting process now underway.

"The cost of apparatus and the cost of doing business has dramatically increased," said ESB board member John Nelson. "Everything is going up 15 to 20 percent,



County Rescue Chief Shawn Davidson

so you're looking at \$1 million, essentially, to build a standard fire engine anymore."

Shawn Davidson, ESB board member and county rescue services chief, said both rescue and fire services would have to be cautious in their budget requests moving forward.

"We're going to have to find the bandwidth to police ourselves on how we're spending the tax dollars we're asking for," Davidson said. "Making sure that we're spending those dollars in the best way to meet the needs of the citizens we're here to serve."

The ESB, Davidson said, would have to start asking more questions about budget and tax increases for fire and rescue organizations given the many competing priorities brought before the advisory board.

The ESB made little discussion of the three tax increase requests before unanimously endorsing them.

"We're not going to be able to meet every, single need, every single time," Davidson warned. "We need to triage the requests we're going to be getting."

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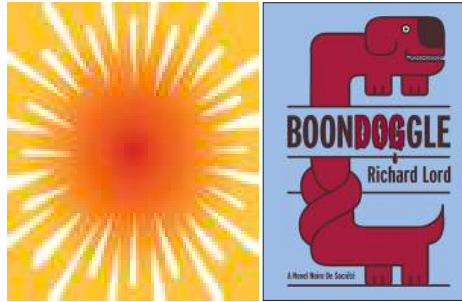
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TO ALLURE MANKIND FROM OVER THE EARTH  
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I BELIEVE THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM  
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## HAVE A BLESSED CHRISTMAS

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Created By: 76-year-old Richard Lord, MPA, BYU Romney Institute of Public Service and Ethics; Analyst-in-Charge, Criminal Alien Division, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) (retired); Publisher of [www.7thDistrict.org](http://www.7thDistrict.org) Bushwood, Maryland; author of an ISBN novel see [www.BoonDOGgle.dog](http://www.BoonDOGgle.dog); and a recent St. Mary's County Election Judge

With Inspiration From

77-year-old Nancy Lord Zearfoss, Ph.D. at age 51 in Public Policy and Management, John Glenn School of Public Affairs, The Ohio State University; Executive Advisor to then Maryland PSC Chairman Glenn Ivey stopping the telecoms from adding three new area codes to Maryland including a new one for St. Mary's County saving businesses, governments, and you millions of dollars in not having to change telephone numbers on signs, billboards, trucks, letterhead, business cards, etc.; Analyst-in-Charge US Government Accountability Office (GAO), (retired); ABC TV series EMMY winner as its Producer as well as Location Manager in the film industry in San Francisco & Hollywood; current lead female vocalist on keyboards in area classic rock & blues bands; Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), Guardian Ad Litem, protecting neglected & abused children placed in Foster Care; and a recent St. Mary's County Maryland Election Judge

# CONTENTS

LOCAL NEWS	5	OBITUARIES	20
COMMUNITY	16	CALENDARS	23

## A NOTE TO OUR READERS:

In order to allow our staff to enjoy the holidays with their loved ones, the County Times will not publish on December 28. We will resume our normal publishing schedule on Thursday, January 4, 2024. We wish all our readers a happy holiday season, and look forward to seeing you in the new year.



**LOCAL 5**  
Fire companies want tax increase



**LOCAL 7**  
Veterinarian, former ag secretary passes away



**ON THE COVER**  
First responders continue to protect and serve through the holiday

## WEEKLY FORECAST

<p><b>THU, DEC 21</b></p> <p>Mostly Sunny Hi: 48° Lo: 31°</p>	<p><b>FRI, DEC 22</b></p> <p>Partly Cloudy Hi: 46° Lo: 31°</p>	<p><b>SAT, DEC 23</b></p> <p>Mostly Cloudy Hi: 51° Lo: 36°</p>	<p><b>SUN, DEC 24</b></p> <p>Partly Cloudy Hi: 56° Lo: 38°</p>
<p><b>MON, DEC 25</b></p> <p>Partly Cloudy Hi: 56° Lo: 43°</p>	<p><b>TUE, DEC 26</b></p> <p>Showers Hi: 55° Lo: 47°</p>	<p><b>WED, DEC 27</b></p> <p>Showers Hi: 55° Lo: 47°</p>	<p><b>THU, DEC 28</b></p> <p>AM Showers Hi: 53° Lo: 36°</p>

### - LAND FOR SALE -

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Holiday Hours: Christmas Eve (Dec. 24<sup>th</sup>) 7am – 2pm  
Closed Dec. 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> • Open Dec. 27<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup>  
We will be closed from Dec. 31<sup>st</sup> for the move to our  
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# THE JOY OF GIVING

Giving gifts is one of the most simple joys of life. I remember the first time I could afford to buy a notable Christmas gift for my brother. I had finally landed a decently paying job out of college and saved up for Eli's gift. There was great anticipation as we sat around the tree and he finally got to the small box I had purchased for him, a new game he'd been eyeing for quite some time. The look on his face lit me up, as he tore open the wrapping paper and realized he'd been given the very thing he had spent months fawning over. The gift I gave my brother only lasted him a few months of play, but for myself it became a lasting memory of joy in making him happy.

Jesus also was a giver of gifts. He gave wholeness of community to the woman at the well in John 4, He gave the gift of sight in John 9, and He gave provisions to the multitudes in John 6. The gifts He gave lasted much longer than most, as their focus was on reconciling the recipients with their realities, and He took joy in them, never withholding His healing and His life from one who earnestly sought Him.

He spent much of His ministry providing for people. In fact, Christ's primary purpose, itself, was a gift unto all of humanity. As John 3:16 states, "God loved the whole of humanity, and gave His only Son..." Christ was a love letter written in flesh, giving not only an invitation to heaven, but an invitation to participate in His Way of Life.

He taught loving one another greater than one's self, feeding those who were hungry, clothing those who had naught, and providing friendship for those who had been outcasted. He didn't just teach these things, but also exemplified them. He gave to all who came to Him and never forced His gifts onto others. When the rich young ruler could not part with his wealth for the sake of Jesus' call, He was saddened, but did not recall His offer (Mark 10).

Jesus ended His time on earth the same way it began, with a gift. His birth came as a gift of promise, a promise of joy and reconciliation. His time on earth was a gift of teaching and showing His love for the people He created, and in death He gave the greatest gift, an open invitation to join Him eternally, an invitation that remains open for us to accept.

This Christmas my prayer is that you would be filled with the things Christ gave, community, love, and comforts, and that these things would bring Him to the forefront of your minds. As James said, "every good and perfect gift comes from above" (1:17), so let the good gifts that come along with this season be a reminder of Christ and a calling from the Father to join Him in Truth and Love.

**Spencer Arthur**



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The Mission, P.O Box 2011, California, MD 20650 or a credit card donation can be made at:**

**[seekingshelter.com](http://seekingshelter.com)**

**Please consider supporting The Mission with a Christmas donation.**

Send checks to P.O. Box 2011 California MD 20650. Credit card donations can be made at [seekingshelter.com](http://seekingshelter.com). See The Mission's Christmas message on page 2.

# St. Mary's County Times

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2023

*'Tis the Season*  
**TO SERVE & PROTECT**

