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MARCH 2026

Shelter Dogs Find Forever Homes After Being Fostered During Snowstorm

By Judy Tacyn

While most area residents were scrambling to grab milk and toilet paper ahead of the forecasted winter storm in January that threatened to have them snowed in for days on end, Claudia Roll, director of Anne Arundel County's Animal Services, and her crew were thinking of the animals in their care.

"With the severity of the predicted storm, we were concerned about the number of staff who would be able to safely get to the shelter to care for the animals," Roll said. "Fewer animals at the shelter would mean each one receives the necessary attention from a smaller care team."

Animal Services put out an urgent call for animal fosters on its social media » **Continued on page 6**

Arnold residents (l-r) Carter, Adam, Gwen and Brooke Willms love their new addition, Bear, a foster-fail they brought home to care for during the January snowstorm.

Photo by Judy Tacyn



CHAMPIONS ONCE AGAIN: Severna Park Girls Break 49-Year Drought



February brought an end to several athletic seasons but not without a dazzling display of grit from a group of newly crowned state champions.

On the strength of their distance specialists, and some help from the pole vault pit, Severna Park High School claimed their first girls indoor track championship since 1977, the first year of Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) records in the sport. Josie Kamas and Lexi Fitzsimmons finished one-two in the 3A girls 3,200-meter event; Grace Redmond and Siena Pegues came home first and second, respectively, in the 800- and 1,600-meter competitions; and Kamas, Fitzsimmons, Harper Wallace and Kathryn Murphy raced to victory in the 4x800 relay.

On the boys' side, Severna Park high jumper Matthew Williams and Broadneck pole vaulter Cooper Rivas ascended to new heights to claim individual championships.

Read more by flipping to page 21.

Ice Cream Venture Nets Philanthropic Opportunities, Family Fun For Arnold Couple

By Meredith Winter

Every zany idea Dustin Ellington has pitched to his wife, Lindsay, has been swiftly met with, "No, we're not doing that." That is, until one involved ice cream.

The Ellingtons are not from New Zealand. In fact, it's still on their list to visit. But one sampling of New Zealand style ice cream was all it took for an idea to take flight.

Dustin said they had never had anything like it; it was fresh and made with wholesome ingredients.

The Broadneck High School grad is a former pilot and works for Collins Aerospace, and Lindsay, who attended Severna Park elementary, middle and high schools, works at Arnold Christian Academy (ACA) and is a nurse at

Luminis Health Anne Arundel Medical Center. Love at first bite launched them on a journey to learn all they could about New Zealand style ice cream, not to change careers, but to create something fun for their son and daughter that they can do together as a family and perhaps eventually hand off to the kids.

Soon, Flying Kiwi Ice Cream was hatched. Around this time last year, the Ellingtons acquired a cargo trailer, and with help from his father, Dustin built out an ice cream truck in their driveway. Lindsay developed the trailer's aesthetics, working with a local company to wrap it with vibrant graphics.

The Ellingtons sourced their ice cream equipment directly from New Zealand, and set to work creating fresh flavors including strawberry, banana, blueberry, mango, passion fruit, peach, cherry, pineapple and others. Banana is Lindsay's favorite, while Dustin said passion fruit is his top pick.

The recipe is simple: They start with » **Continued on page 8**



Arnold residents Lindsay and Dustin Ellington started Flying Kiwi Ice Cream in early 2025 after discovering New Zealand style ice cream.

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Margueritte Mills - Volunteer Of The Month

Every month, the Voice recognizes the good work of a local volunteer to honor Voice founder and lifelong Severna Park resident Margueritte Mills.

“S(o)uper” Volunteer Nancy Rando Combats Food Insecurity With Good Neighbors Group

By Jaina Peveto

Severna Park resident Nancy Rando has never shied away from helping people in need. Since the inception of Good Neighbors Group (GNG) in 2006, Rando has stepped up to volunteer at various events held by the nonprofit.

Rando first became involved through a connection in her own neighborhood — GNG founder Julie Shay’s mother, Francine Shay, is a fellow Manhattan Beach resident. Rando has led Manhattan Beach’s participation in Good Neighbors Group’s annual S(o)uper Bowl since the event’s inception nine years ago.

“Because I’m Francine’s neighbor and I’m a bit of an extrovert at some level, I volunteered,” Rando said.

During the food drive, which takes place annually over Super Bowl weekend, neighborhoods compete by collecting donations for local food pantries. As the neighborhood captain for Manhattan Beach, Rando spreads the word about the event both online and in-person. This year, she distributed about 100 flyers, and she put a large poster on the neighborhood bulletin board. She also sent text messages and emails to community members, following up with reminders about the upcoming food drive.

In addition, Rando helps take charge of the collection. She and Shay put out a donation table in Shay’s driveway, and Rando then takes the donations into her own house to keep them out of the cold. At the end of the event, Rando brings donations to the neighborhood’s designated food pantry, which was



As Manhattan Beach’s S(o)uper Bowl captain, Nancy Rando distributed about 100 flyers and put a poster on the neighborhood bulletin board.

Open Hands of Maryland this year.

“It was a challenge this year because of the freezing weather, the ice and the snow,” Rando said.

She quoted the S(o)upper Bowl flyer: “Like the flyer says, ‘No one can do everything, but everyone can do something.’ So I think that people are hungry to give in any way they can.”

During this year’s S(o)uper Bowl, Manhattan Beach collected 462 items. In addition to her own donations, Rando made donating accessible for others by shopping for homebound neighbors and friends who live outside the community.

In total, between 71 neighborhoods and businesses, the S(o)uper Bowl collected over 18,000 personal care and food items this year, which went to six food pantries and the Anne Arundel County Food Bank.

“Good Neighbors Group reaches into so many areas of help in really connecting with other nonprofits who are doing so much good and having a social impact and environmental impact in the community,” Rando said.

The S(o)uper Bowl isn’t the only GNG event that Rando takes part in. The nonprofit’s environmental mission is important to her as well. She helped the Rogue Gardeners clear out the garden at Pluto Station on the B&A Trail. She also helps each year at the Earth Day Festival, which will take place this year on April 25. In past years, she sold plants at the festival and then donated the money she made to GNG.

She also participates in Donations Before Dumpsters, which helps people rehome or recycle items instead of just throwing them out.

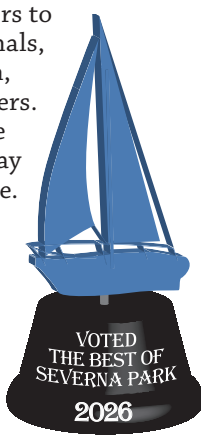
“This goes back to sometime in the ‘90s, I think,” Rando said. “I was living in Columbia, and (my home state of) Massachusetts was doing recycling, but we weren’t. So I was driving home one time and filled a bag with recyclables, and my father said, ‘I can’t believe you came all the way to Massachusetts with your trash.’ I said, ‘It’s not trash. It’s recycling.’”

Though Rando plays an active role in GNG in these other ways, the S(o)uper Bowl is an especially important event to her. “Growing up in an Italian Catholic family, food was the centerpiece of our lives,” Rando said. “I also just feel really moved that in some small way for at least some small period of time, we can support our neighbors in need, in need of food, and take away a little bit of food insecurity.”

About Two Weeks Left To Vote For The Best Of Severna Park

The votes are pouring in, more than 2,000 to be exact, since we started accepting votes for the Best of Severna Park in February. If you’re unfamiliar with the annual contest, here’s a simple summary: we ask readers to vote for their favorite professionals, places and services around town, then we publish the list of winners. Many of those winners will have their pictures featured in the May edition of the Severna Park Voice.

To cast your votes, fill out the online ballot at www.severnaparkvoice.com/bestofsevernapark by March 24. We want the results to reflect the opinions of as much of the Severna Park and Broadneck population as possible, so thank you for participating.



Golf Tournament Will Raise Funds For Basketball Program

Breakthrough Academy, a nonprofit founded by Severna Park High School graduates Hunter Roberts and Jeremy Carr, is gearing up for its next fundraiser at Compass Pointe Golf Courses in Pasadena on April 18.

Since 2024, Roberts and Carr have empowered youth through mentorship, using basketball as a tool for personal growth and leadership development.

Through gym time and Saturday games, elementary and middle school students flourish as they get to be part of a nurturing and inclusive team environment. Administrators have cited improved attendance, behavior and school pride as benefits for players.

The coaches recently established

Breakthrough Academy as a nonprofit, allowing them to grow the program further, adding individualized coaching to their offerings.

The Breakthrough Academy golf tournament will raise money that will cover the cost of these programs for families. Money raised will go toward gym fees, uniforms, registration fees, equipment and transportation for students.

The tournament will feature a shotgun start, scramble tournament, meals and unlimited beverages, entertainment by a professional long driver, a par 5 competition and a silent auction.

For more information, including a registration link for the tournament, visit www.breakthroughacademy.info.



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Partners In Care Volunteers Donate 1 Million Hours

By Judy Tacyn

For more than 30 years, Partners In Care (PIC) has served the aging Anne Arundel County community through a growing base of volunteers with hearts for service. No matter what a senior needs, a volunteer is available to assist. In 2025, more than 2,600 members provided over 1 million volunteer hours, and some of those hours will be used in the future.

Through a unique time-banking and service-exchange model, members can donate volunteer hours served to a pool of available hours for other members, use them for other services, or they can even bank those hours for themselves should they ever need assistance in the future.

PIC members decide how they want to “pay” for assistance. Some choose a minimal monthly payment, while others choose to exchange service-for-service or use banked hours. If a member needs transportation to and from the grocery store because he doesn’t have a car, he can exchange his volunteer hours for that service by making phone calls or sending birthday cards to other members, cleaning out an unused closet and donating the contents to PIC’s Upscale Resale Boutique, or even tapping into the member hours bank.

“We try to give everyone an opportunity to help in any way they can,” said Lauren Lucabaugh, director of member care. “No one should ever feel like they cannot assist. Whatever your expertise, whatever your passion, we probably have a member who needs that assistance.”

For example, a young plumber wants



Partners In Care’s (l-r) Derek Milley, director of communications; Lauren Lucabaugh, director of member care; and Amy Van Orden, director of operations, displayed volunteers’ handmade items in the Upscale Resale Boutique, which is filled with thousands of items available for purchase to support PIC.

to help his community and signs up to offer free plumbing services to PIC members on Friday afternoons. He’s not expecting that he will need assistance himself in the near future, so he offers his volunteer hours served to the member bank where any member in need might use them.

Planning to retire at the end of the school year, a teacher wants to spend some of her time visiting homebound members, making crafts to sell in the

boutique or volunteering there. She can bank her hours for herself to be used in the future.

These and dozens of other scenarios play out every week at Partners In Care. It may seem like a complex system, but really, it’s one loving community full of members who help one another in times of need.

PIC operates in Anne Arundel County, Frederick County, and on the Eastern Shore. More than 709,000

“We try to give everyone an opportunity to help in any way they can. No one should ever feel like they cannot assist. Whatever your expertise, whatever your passion, we probably have a member who needs that assistance.”

— LAUREN LUCABAUGH

of the volunteer hours last year were served right here in Anne Arundel County. Derek Milley, director of communications, shared that while impressive, PIC expects a 20% growth rate. “Volunteers drive our entire system. We cannot do what we do without them,” he said.

In addition to transportation and the more common needs of seniors, PIC volunteers offer unique services like translation, reflexology, interior home painting, decluttering, even spider catching. If you have a service you’d like to offer, or if you can provide a ride for, share a meal with, or simply reach out to members, Amy Van Orden, director of operations, said PIC has a member who can use your assistance.

To learn more about the services available to seniors, visit www.partnersincare.org. To discuss ways in which you can volunteer your time or talents, contact Van Orden at 410-544-4800 or contactus@partnersincare.org.

Host Families Sought For International High School Students

By Judy Tacyn

The application period for Anne Arundel County families interested in hosting an international high school student is now open through ASSE, previously known as the American Scandinavian Student Exchange. According to the organization’s website, “the history of ASSE goes back to 1938 when the Swedish Ministry of Education instituted an exchange program for Swedish and German students. In the post-World War II era, this was expanded to include Great Britain, France, Spain, and Switzerland and later the United States, where ASSE was established in 1976, by the Swedish government, as the American Scandinavian Student Exchange.”

Katie McCord, a guidance counselor at Severna Park Elementary School, serves as ASSE’s area representative and would love to welcome international students to Maryland to experience the county’s exceptional area high schools. She said families make amazing life-long connections and often visit the countries the exchange students are from. The students are top scholars, often taking Advanced Placement courses, and gifted athletes or musicians. They are bilingual and fluent in English.

“We encourage exchange students to join sports, clubs or drama activities,” said McCord, noting that Broadneck High School is hosting a student from the



A group of ASSE students from across the state experienced the beauty of the Maryland waters on a boat trip in St. Mary’s.

Czech Republic this year. “The host families love the connection with the exchange students and families. The lasting relationships created may also lead the host family to visit the exchange student’s family.”

To be eligible, the host family needs to have space for the exchange student, either a bedroom or a bed in the room of one of the host family’s children of the same age and gender as the exchange student. They also need to have space to do their homework in the home. Family members over the age of 18 will undergo a criminal background check. It’s not a requirement that the host family

have children in the home.

McCord’s family has welcomed ASSE students in the past. “I’ve hosted two exchange students who participated in cheerleading, and even got to cheerlead at Walt Disney World,” McCord shared. “In school, they took advanced U.S. history and government classes and really became more comfortable and fluent in English.”

Host families receive an education, too. Students help with cooking and share their native foods. Throughout the year, they may celebrate their country’s traditions and share those with their hosts.

If your family is ready to host a student for the 2026-2027 school year and completes an application, ASSE area representatives will visit your home to talk about the experience and expectations in depth. Host families have an opportunity to view

information on the potential exchange students to find the best fit for both family and student.

Once a student is matched with a host family, they will arrive with their own funds and insurance. Exchange students receive many trip options with the other exchange students in Maryland and Delaware, for which the area representative provides transportation, and they may also go on domestic vacations with the host families.

For more information, visit www.asse.com or contact Katie McCord at kmccord@aacps.org. Ready to apply? Visit bit.ly/ASSEapply.

Severna Park Resident Named New Annapolis Chief Of Police

By Elsa Webster
Student Intern

Annapolis Mayor Jared Littmann announced in February that Annapolis Chief of Police Edward Jackson had been removed from command due to differing approaches to management. Immediately after, Littmann named Captain Amy Miguez as the city's acting chief of police.

A Severna Park resident, Miguez has worked with the Annapolis Police Department for over 20 years, beginning in 2000 as a dispatcher. She held that role for two years before becoming an officer in 2002. Both Miguez and her



Amy Miguez

husband worked for the Annapolis Police Department, commuting from Severna Park to the city.

"It really makes us feel more part of the community, like as far as being close to Annapolis where we work, but then also having our community in Severna Park," Miguez said.

In addition to being named the acting chief of police, Miguez works as the administrative services captain for the Annapolis Police Department, meeting the necessary requirements from

the city charter. She has also held leadership positions throughout the department relating to investigations, patrol, public information and community outreach.

Her role as administrative services captain had prepared her to step in as acting chief of police as it gave her more experience in budgeting and grants. Though with any new position, it comes with its own challenges.

"I've actually kind of equated it to having children. You don't really know what you're getting into until it happens," Miguez said. "Like everyone can give you all the advice and you can read all the books and do all the learning you can, but until it actually happens, you don't really know what it's going to be like. So it's been busy, but I've been really enjoying it and hopefully I'll get the chance to continue doing the job."

Annapolis has off-year elections with Littmann being sworn into office in December. With shifts in mayoral leadership, department heads are often replaced, which was the reason for the Annapolis Police Department's new change in leadership.

The process of finding a permanent chief is still ongoing. Once the mayor selects a candidate for the position, he or she has to be confirmed by the city council.

"Our former chief, chief Jackson, brought a lot of good programs to the department, including our re-entry program for returning citizens, and also a cold case investigator looking at some of our older homicide cases that have kind of gotten stuck, to try and work on what we can with the state's attorney and looking at the cases to see where we can improve those. Those are definitely things I want to continue and strengthen," Miguez said.

One of her goals is strengthening support for victims of crimes. While many organizations help victims, and there are victim advocates who help in court, Miguez hopes to improve outreach from the department after someone has reported a crime.

In her new role, she has worked on maximizing the resources the Annapolis Police Department has to increase the services provided to the community.

"I would say that our department as a whole, just the people that work here, we're very dedicated to the safety of the people who will come into our city. That we all work together as a team," she said. "The more we can work internally, I think the better we are externally."

"When you are dealing with the public, when people are reporting crimes to us, when we're interacting with people, I think it's really important for us internally to have the same kind of communication and relationships and respect that we want our officers to have externally," she said. "I would just say that the sign of a healthy department is those external things that citizens want, but you have to have the internal part too."

AARP Tax-Aide District 8 Helps Severna Park Residents

By Margaret Bates

AARP's Tax-Aide is a national program where volunteer counselors help senior citizens as well as anyone seeking no-cost tax services, regardless of age, prepare their yearly returns. In 2025, 28,000 national volunteers helped secure nearly \$1.7 billion in returns for filers. Locally, in Queen Anne's and Anne Arundel counties, Tax-Aide District 8 handled over 3,400 returns, earning more than \$300,000 in refunds. Jay Hessey, District 8's local coordinator, and Jane Hickey, shift coordinator, shared details about their local operation, run out of the Severna Park Library.

They were effusive about how volunteers were the backbone of their work. The volunteer counselors come from various backgrounds. For example, Hessey was trained as an engineer before he retired, and while Hickey worked in college financial aid previously, her degree is in English literature. However, with the appropriate training, their volunteer counselors are ready to help with returns.

Hickey explained, "It's a long process to train, and some people find it intimidating at first. But we have group classes as well and self-study at home. We can also pair new volunteers 1:1 with more experienced counselors for training. It's how they get prepared to be certified by Tax-Aide before working with filers."

Hessey echoed that sentiment, stating, "We could put out more tables at our location, but we stay the size that we are because of the number of volunteer

counselors we have so we maintain quality."

While the counselors might be the main drivers of District 8's operations, Tax-Aide's services are a collaborative process. "We have 75-minute sessions," Hessey explained. "We might not get everything done in one session, but we try. Filers bring last year's returns and their financial information. They might expect to hand it off to the counselors to put into the computer program, but we have the filers

sit with the counselors and go through everything together."

Besides successfully securing returns, Tax-Aide's coordinators find personal satisfaction in their work. Hickey was already helping her mother with her taxes and expanded to working with Tax-Aide. As she noted, while some people find the process intimidating, "taxes don't scare me none."

Both Hickey and Hessey take pride in saving people money. These coordinators know that a few hundred dollars saved can be the difference between some filers having enough money for medications or other needs and falling short instead.

And with over 108 appointments completed before the end of February 2026, Tax-Aide District 8 is already fulfilling its mission to help Severna Park residents.

If you are interested in volunteering, you can email District 8 at jaytaxprep@gmail.com or sign up for training at www.sites.google.com/view/anne-arundel-taxaide. Similarly, if you'd like to meet with AARP Tax-Aide for help with filing, its site has intake sheet links in both English and Spanish.



Through Tax-Aide, Jay Hessey (left) and Jane Hickey help people file their taxes at the Severna Park Library.

Dogs Find Homes

» Continued from page 1

platforms, hoping residents would open their warm homes to an animal in need, Saturday through Tuesday, just before the first snowflakes flew.

Arnold resident and dog lover Gwen Willms saw the Facebook post and knew despite having two toddlers and other dogs in her home, she and her husband, Adam, would be up for the short-term foster role. Willms and her daughters headed to the shelter the morning of January 24.

"We started that Saturday with 39 dogs at the shelter. Eleven were not eligible for foster," Roll explained. By the end of the afternoon, all 28 adoption-eligible dogs went to foster, including a handsome and loveable dog now named Bear.

"We arrived a little late and there were only three dogs left to choose from," said Willms, who added that her 4-year-old daughter, Carter, refused to leave the shelter without a dog. "We took him (then named Bayard) for a walk outside and he seemed a little aloof. He didn't react to the girls, which I thought was fine if we were only going to have him for four days."

Once he got to the Willms' SUV, Bear was a different dog. "He jumped in the back seat, sat between two car seats, and immediately perked up!" Willms exclaimed. "His demeanor changed immediately; he was happy and ready to go!"

Bear arrived at the shelter as a stray on November 5 after being found running loose near a school. He was anxious during his time at the shelter, which along with him being labeled a pit bull mix, likely affected a lack of interest as potential adopters looked at the available dogs.

Willms said she didn't know anything about pit bulls, nor did she have any bias toward the breed

one way or another. But one thing was for sure: Bear stole their hearts during his first three days in their home and became a foster-fail. He has taken to the young girls and serves as their protector, even blocking a crawling baby Brooke from getting near the top of a staircase.

"In the end, we saw what is so common ... the animals in our care who are especially stressed here just need that new person or family to help them feel safe," said Roll.

Bear was one of four dogs adopted by their fosters after the snowy weekend. Fifteen of the fosters decided to keep dogs as regular fosters until they were adopted, and only nine dogs came back to the shelter.

The snow and ice aren't the only things that have melted since January, but the hearts of the entire Willms family have as well.

"We call him the 'Manny,'" Willms joked, using the term for a male nanny. "He is a Staffordshire bull terrier, and they are known as the 'nanny dogs.'"

She added that Bear is focused on the girls, who love him dearly. "He is meant to be around children. He's so tuned into them, very calm, obedient and protective. He was definitely ready to love and to be loved," she said.

Roll said, "(January 24) was a wonderfully hectic day as the community responded to our call to action. There were staff and volunteers who left that day crying happy tears. It is inspiring to experience such strong public support. Thank you to everyone who participated in the snowstorm foster event, and also to those who shared our social media post. And a special thank you to Bear's new family. Congratulations, Bear!"

To learn more about the foster program at Animal Services, go to www.aacounty.org/animal-services/pet-adoption-fostering or visit the shelter at 411 Maxwell Frye Road in Millersville during viewing hours.



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Ice Cream Venture Nets Philanthropic Opportunities, Family Fun



Flying Kiwi's New Zealand style ice cream is made with premium vanilla ice cream and fresh frozen fruit blended into soft serve.



So, we'll do it as a topping or a mix-in," Dustin said of Hokey Pokey, adding, "(It) gives a little crunch to the ice cream."

The Ellingtons publish the Flying Kiwi Ice Cream truck's schedule on their social media pages. They've brought the truck to various communities, pools, parties, corporate settings — even nurses' week at Luminis — and have used it to give back to various churches and nonprofits as well.

Lindsay shared that for church events, they donate 15% to 20% to the church. The same is true for events they've done for Pinked Perspective, a local nonprofit supporting those with breast cancer; a Pilots for Christ event; concert nights at Goshen Farm, and more. This season, they've already scheduled an Arnold vacation bible school and will donate back to the host church there, too.

Though their schedules are busy with work, kids' sports, ice cream events and more, family is at the root of Flying Kiwi Ice Cream for Dustin and Lindsay.

"The ice cream is (something) we can do together as a family," Lindsay said, "And that's been really cool." Their 10-year-old daughter, Laura, has become less shy as she interacts with customers, and enjoys helping with the toppings. Seven-year-old Asher has tried pitching in by stamping frequent-flier cards.

Lindsay's mom often helps in the truck, as well, and both Lindsay and Dustin's parents — three of whom are also SPHS grads — help watch the kids too.

Lindsay noted that being a family-run business sets them apart because they are so passionate about both their product and the connections they make along the way.

"We're very personable with people when they come to the truck. We want them to have a good experience," Dustin added. "It's about the ice cream, but it's also about the people, because it makes a difference."

To learn more about Flying Kiwi Ice Cream, go to www.flyingkiwiicecream.com.

» Continued from page 1

a premium vanilla ice cream and auger in fresh frozen fruit, resulting in a soft-serve ice cream. They steer clear of "junk" ingredients, offering toppings that are free from artificial flavors and dyes.

Dustin shared that the name Flying Kiwi Ice Cream is a play on words.

"Kiwi birds are native to New Zealand, and they don't fly, but Dustin does," Lindsay said. Dustin actively flies a small plane he co-owns for the nonprofit Pilots for Christ. Thus, their logo is a kiwi bird in aviation goggles, perched in a small red plane.

The Ellingtons are grateful for the guidance they received from their friends who own Black Market Bakers and Chevys Fresh Mex. But their early days as ice cream truck operators were not without a bit of turbulence.

Their first event was in April 2025, a school

fundraiser at ACA where they quickly learned that making ice cream to order takes a lot longer than say, a snowball. They've since developed an efficient process.

After that event came the three-star review that served as a catalyst for Lindsay to take things to the next level. A patron had said their product wasn't really New Zealand ice cream because it lacked "Hokey Pokey."

Lindsay had tried to source the iconic ingredient — which she explained is caramelized sugar that, once it reaches a certain temperature and has baking soda mixed in, becomes fluffy and looks like a honeycomb when you cut it. She couldn't find a local vendor that made Hokey Pokey, but the online review reignited her search, and they now get it fresh from California.

"It's probably the number one topping request.




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Redefining Residential Care For People With Developmental Disabilities

Dr. Robert Ireland

CEO, Bello Machre



“Who will provide a loving home for my child when I am no longer able?” This is the question faced by many aging parents of adult children with developmental disabilities.

More than 100,000 Marylanders have developmental disabilities. Transitioning to residential services leads to many questions and lingering concerns. Too often, the term

“group home” evokes outdated images of cold, institutional settings. In truth, today’s residential services offer loving, community-based care where people with disabilities live full, independent, rich lives.

Consider Katherine, who lives in a Bello Machre home in a Taneytown neighborhood. Medical challenges, including cerebral palsy and seizures, mean Katherine requires the right support to thrive. As an adult today, she enjoys her own room, three loving housemates, and a full weekly schedule of swimming at the Y, community outings, crafts and time with her dedicated, one-on-one care team. For her mom, Kim, the greatest impact is the peace of mind in knowing her daughter is loved, has good care, and lives in a permanent, stable home.

In honor of Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month (DDAM) this March, let’s debunk myths around residential services and share the reality of loving care that offers such peace of mind.

MYTH 1: “Group homes are like institutions — cold, overcrowded and unsafe.”

Today’s community living homes are real homes in neighborhoods — typically serving three to four

people, not 30 or 300. They are licensed, monitored and held to strict Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) and Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR). Safety, dignity and individualized support are at the center of care. Rooms and common spaces are personalized to reflect each person’s interests, making the house feel like their home.

MYTH 2: “My child will lose their independence in a group home.”

Residential services are designed to empower adults to live as independently as possible, with supports that meet their needs. Staff members help build skills such as cooking, budgeting, self-care and socializing. Residents retain their full rights and autonomy, choosing their own meals, routines and how they wish to spend their free time.

MYTH 3: “Staff in group homes don’t care and people are neglected.”

Staff are highly trained to provide person-centered care. They are background-checked and supported by nurses and specialists, with multiple layers of accountability, including delegating nurses, program

directors, and family living directors. Families serve as vital partners, encouraged to visit, stay closely connected, and share in decision-making.

MYTH 4: “Group homes isolate people from their families and community.”

Individuals live in the community, shop at local stores, attend church, go to restaurants, work or volunteer, and join clubs. Families are always welcome — whether for dinner, outings or holiday traditions. The home is theirs — decorated with their belongings, reflecting their choices. Individuals enjoy travel and vacations of their choosing. Life does not stop because someone lives in a group home!

MYTH 5: “Residential services are one-size-fits-all.”

Supports are person-centered. Some may need help with daily living skills, others may need medical support, and others may focus on employment. Schedules, activities, and routines are built around each person’s goals and preferences.

The history of institutions has left a legacy of fear, but today’s residential services are built on the belief that every person deserves a life of dignity, choice and community connection. At Bello Machre, we are honored to walk alongside families in this transition — providing not just a service but a home filled with safety, compassion and opportunity.

Learn more at www.bellomachre.org.

Annual State Of The Magothy Address Set For March 27

As the organization celebrates 80 years of community service, the Magothy River Association invites the public to attend its annual State of the Magothy update on Friday, March 27. The event will take place at Anne Arundel Commu-

nity College’s Health and Life Sciences Building. The evening will start at 6:00pm with activities and information in the lobby followed by the program at 7:00pm. Department of Natural Resources fisheries biologist Jeff Horne will present infor-

mation on his fin fish survey work in the Magothy River. The event is open to all, especially those passionate about the health of the local waterway. Stay up to date with the Magothy River Association via its Facebook page.



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APRIL 23 DON CICCIO COCKTAIL DINNER

Thursday April 23 Cafe Mezzanotte will be hosting Don Ciccio & Figli Amaro and Spirit makers for a five course Cocktail Dinner and Presentation! Complete details coming soon



Celebrating Women Throughout Severna Park's History

Marches, lectures, hunger strikes and civil disobedience all became tools in the women's suffrage movement from the late 1800s to early 1900s. While the 19th Amendment was ratified in 1920, granting women the right to vote, it would take another 43 years before Congress passed the Equal Pay Act.

While they did not use the same tactics, some Severna Park trailblazers created more opportunities for other women. Here are just a few of their stories.

Marjorie Holt

Before she became Maryland's first female member of Congress, Marjorie Holt embarked on a journey of breaking boundaries. While pursuing her Juris Doctor, she was one of only five women accepted into her class. Though she faced discrimination and outright harassment from her professors, she graduated in the top 2% of her class in 1949.

Her husband's job brought the couple from Florida to Pennsylvania and eventually to Maryland, and the couple had a home built in Severna Park.

Holt surprised everyone in 1966 when she defeated longtime political stalwart Louis Phipps Jr. in a race for the clerk of the Anne Arundel County Circuit Court, where she served until 1972. As a circuit court clerk, she married couples and helped businesspeople and contractors obtain licenses.

With that base of followers, she campaigned for the newly formed Congressional District 4 following a 1970s Census. This new district had more than twice as many Democrats as Republicans, but Holt's followers were loyal, and she won with 59% of the vote. For the Severna Park representative, it was the first of seven successive terms, each of which earned bipartisan support.

After 14 years in Congress, in 1986, Holt retired from politics to spend more time with family, though she continued to be a community leader in other ways. She volunteered through Woods Church — where she had worshiped since moving to Severna Park and had been the first woman elected as an elder — as well as through Meals on Wheels and Light Street Soup Kitchen.

Lillian "Lil" Shelton

Georgia native Lillian "Lil" Shelton fought for women's equality in a different way: through athletics. She moved to Alabama and then Virginia before moving to Severna Park in 1971. In 1973, Lillian "Lil" Shelton began her coaching career as the first softball coach for Severna Park High School, and two years later, she started the field hockey program.

"There was no sports for girls in Anne Arundel County when I moved here and I couldn't stand that," Shelton explained in a 2011 interview with The Washington Post. "I felt that the girls were being denied some things that they should have."

Shelton became Severna Park High School's first field hockey coach in 1975. From there, she carved out a spot in the state athletic record books, winning 20 state championships along with 31 county finals victories and 29 regional titles.

A wife and mother, Shelton wanted to give all girls the opportunity to discover a love for sports. She co-founded the SPark indoor field hockey program, the Field Hockey Coaches Association of Maryland and the Maryland State Games.

Sure, her resume was impressive. She was inducted into the Severna Park High School Hall of Fame, the Anne Arundel County Hall of Fame, and the National Field Hockey Association Hall of Fame. She was U.S. Coach of the Year, and Coach of the Year for The Washington Post, the Baltimore Sun, and The Capital numerous times. Severna Park High School honored her by naming a field after her. But some of her favorite achievements were helping young athletes, an impact that has continued to last after she died in 2021.

"She brought out the best in every player," said Shelton's daughter Lorie Hankins. "She made them work hard but they had fun. She had a great record, yes, but her legacy is the values she taught ... (the girls) knew she cared about them as people, not as players."

Margaret Moss started teaching at Severna Park Elementary School in 1914 and never looked back, spending over 50 years as a teacher and principal. Meanwhile, she continued her own education with credits and certifications from Towson's Teacher's College (now Towson University), the University of

Virginia, St. John's College, Johns Hopkins University and the University of Maryland. She retired in 1967 at age 76.

Catherine Wilson took matters into her own hands as a member of the Earleigh Heights VFC Ladies Auxiliary. Organized in May 1939, the auxiliary became especially active during World War II when the men overseas and the fire departments were suffering. The women had to step up and fight fires, as they were the only able-bodied people around. Wilson is one person named throughout the Earleigh Heights records. Her husband had a farm, and she knew how to drive the farm truck, which meant that she was able to drive the fire trucks.

Margueritte Mills and **Pat Troy** partnered to publish hyperlocal news and improve their community. Troy chaired the Severna Park Small Area Plan Committee to maintain the wishes of residents regarding development, and she helped organize the Severna Park Independence Day parade, which was founded by Peg Nelson, Sue and John Norris, and Mills, who also created the Severna Park Voice. "She was a visionary woman and very tenacious," Troy said of Mills.

Troy was also a former president of the Greater Severna Park Council for three years and was co-chair of the town's centennial celebration in 2006. As owner of Bay Media Inc., she published several books by authors who featured local landmarks. Those works included "Severna Park Reflections: An Album of Memories," "Linstead on the Severn" and "Arnold, Maryland and Neighbors on the Broadneck."

Janet Owens became the first female Anne Arundel County executive after promising to slow development and increase school funding. The Millersville resident served two terms from 1998 to 2006.

Cathy Vitale served on the Anne Arundel County Council from 2000-2010, and it would take another eight years before another woman was elected to the same position (voters picked Amanda Fiedler and four other women as councilmembers during the 2018 election). Vitale also served in the House of Delegates from 2011-2015 before becoming a circuit court judge in 2015.

Why Waterfront Real Estate Continues To Outperform

David Orso

Berkshire Hathaway
Home Services/
PenFed Realty



Over the past decade, the average sales price of waterfront homes has climbed steadily, rising from \$840,000 in 2015 to \$1.05 million in 2020, and reaching approximately \$1.7 million by 2025.

That kind of growth isn't accidental. Waterfront property benefits from one simple, unchangeable truth — there is only so much shoreline. Unlike other types of housing, waterfront cannot be expanded or replicated. As demand grows, the value of existing homes naturally follows. This scarcity has helped waterfront properties remain resilient, even as the broader housing market experiences periodic shifts.

A recent look at local waterfront market trends tells a story many longtime residents already sense: waterfront real estate continues to stand in a class of its own.

Rising prices have also changed the dynamics between buyers and sellers. The average sale-to-list price ratio has increased from 94% to 98% over the same period. In real terms, that means buyers have far less room to negotiate than they once did, and sellers are seeing strong results when their homes come to market.

The takeaway is clear: waterfront homes rarely linger. When they do become available, competition is strong, decisions are made quickly, and the market responds accordingly. In places like Anne Arundel County, waterfront real estate continues to prove that scarcity, demand and lifestyle appeal remain a powerful combination.

In the last 10 years, David Orso has been the agent on 55 of 331 waterfront home sales in Severna Park. His office is conveniently located at 8 Evergreen Road in the heart of Severna Park (the white rancher across from Severn School). Stop by or schedule a private confidential conversation if you are thinking of buying or selling your home.

This branded content is brought to you by an expert in his or her respective field.

	UNITS SOLD	AVERAGE SALES PRICE	\$5 MILLION – \$10 MILLION	ABOVE \$10 MILLION	RATIO TO LIST PRICE
2025	337	\$1.7 million	7	4	97%
2024	302	\$1.5 million	9	0	98%
2023	291	\$1.5 million	8	0	98%
2022	368	\$1.45 million	11	1	99%
2021	526	\$1.275 million	8	2	99%
2020	594	\$1.05 million	4	0	97%
2019	462	\$912,000	0	0	96%
2018	418	\$985,000	2	0	95%
2017	452	\$900,000	1	0	95%
2016	431	\$840,000	1	0	94%
2015	399	\$840,000	0	0	94%
2014	371	\$840,000	2	0	94%
2013	388	\$840,000	1	0	94%
2012	379	\$800,000	1	0	93%
2011	306	\$865,000	1	0	92%
AVG.	401				

March Madness At SPAN

By Maia Grabau

Director of Operations, SPAN Inc.

The month of March for many is synonymous with March Madness. For those of us at SPAN, March signals the beginning of our own version of March Madness! Two significant things are happening this month.

First, this is the month for SPAN's Easter Caring program. Each spring, we provide Easter dinner boxes or grocery gift cards for a holiday meal to families in need in the area. Our hope is to provide a dinner box or gift card to all the families we serve in the coming month. If you would like to support this program, we are accepting donations of either grocery gift cards or Easter dinner boxes. Giant, Safeway and Visa gift cards are preferred.

If your family or group would like to provide an Easter dinner box, this can

be a meaningful activity to do together.

Please include the following items in the box: a \$25 grocery gift card for meat; four cans of green beans; one jar of minced garlic; one large box of mashed potatoes or potatoes au gratin; three cans of carrots; one bag of brown sugar; two boxes of deluxe mac and cheese; one honey cornbread mix; one small vegetable oil; and a dessert such as brownie mix, cake mix and frosting, or cheesecake mix.

If you would like to make the box extra special, you can also include breakfast items such as pancake mix with syrup, a package of fully cooked bacon, Easter candies, sugar cookie mix with sprinkles, or party plates. Please pack the food in a canvas tote bag or heavy-duty box.

If possible, all gift cards and dinner boxes should be dropped off at SPAN (behind Our Shepherd Lutheran Church) by Monday, March 23. If that

is not possible, we can accept these donations the following week as well. Our office is open Monday through Thursday between 9:00am and 2:30pm.

The month of March is also significant because it marks the end of a two-month moratorium on BGE shutoffs. In the coming weeks, we at SPAN will likely experience a deluge of clients with utility turnoff notices. The Public Service Commission issued a moratorium on BGE turnoffs for the months of January and February due to concerns about the BGE call center. The moratorium ended on February 28.

Therefore, those people who were potentially facing a turnoff will now receive a much higher bill than what they would have received in the past two months. The higher turnoff bill will make it more difficult for low-income clients to collect the funds needed to avoid being disconnected.

Most of our clients at SPAN are seeking emergency financial assistance with

utility turnoffs, evictions or limited medical expenses. We help hundreds of families each year with these needs.

If you would like to help with this critical need and make a financial donation to SPAN, there are several ways to do so. Donating online? We accept all forms of online payment. Simply go to www.spanhelps.org to donate. Or you can mail a check to SPAN at P.O. Box 626, Severna Park, MD 21146. All donations are tax-deductible and are used to provide financial assistance to clients unless otherwise designated.

We can only do what we do with the continued support of donors like you! Thank you for considering a donation.

SPAN (Serving People Across Neighborhoods) is a nonprofit food pantry and emergency services provider that helps local families with eviction prevention, utility turnoffs, medical/prescription bills, and food. To learn more, call 410-647-0889, email spanhelps@yahoo.com or visit www.spanhelps.org.

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Celebrate Easter With Worship Services Around Town

Churches of various denominations across the greater Severna Park area are planning worship services to celebrate Holy Week. This year, Good Friday falls on April 3 and Easter Sunday is on April 5. All services below are held in the church's main gathering space unless otherwise noted. For more information about a particular church or additional services throughout Holy Week, visit that church online.

ANTIOCH, THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH
1535 Ritchie Highway, Arnold
Easter Sunday

10:00am — Easter service

ASBURY TOWN NECK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

429 Asbury Drive, Severna Park

Good Friday — Seven Last Words Service at noon

Easter Sunday

6:30am — Sunrise service

9:00am — Easter service

ASBURY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

78 Church Road, Arnold

Easter Sunday

11:00am — Easter service

BROADNECK EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

235 Bay Dale Drive, Arnold

Good Friday — 6:00pm

Easter Sunday

9:30am — Easter service

CHRIST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

8249 Jumpers Hole Role Road, Millersville

Good Friday — 7:00pm

Easter Sunday

6:45am — Sunrise service

10:00am — Easter worship

COLLEGE PARKWAY BAPTIST CHURCH

301 College Parkway, Arnold

Easter Sunday

10:30am — Easter service

CROSSPOINTE CHURCH

365 Jones Station Road, Arnold

Easter Sunday

10:00am — Resurrection

Sunday service

GLORIA DEI! LUTHERAN CHURCH

461 College Parkway, Arnold

Good Friday

Noon — Worship Service

7:00pm — Worship Service

Easter Sunday

9:00am — Festive worship

with communion

11:00am — Festive worship

with communion

OUR SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH

400 Benfield Road, Severna Park

Good Friday — 7:00pm

Easter Sunday

7:30am — Sunrise service

(memorial garden)

9:45am — Worship service

SAINTS BAPTIST CHURCH

160 Truck House Road, Severna Park

Easter Sunday

10:00am — Easter service

SEVERNA PARK BAPTIST CHURCH

506 Benfield Road, Severna Park

Good Friday — 7:00pm

Easter Sunday

10:45am — Easter service

SEVERNA PARK EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

110 Ritchie Highway, Pasadena

Good Friday — 7:00pm

Easter Sunday

6:45am — Sunrise service (outdoors)

9:30am — Easter service

SEVERNA PARK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

731 Benfield Road, Severna Park

Good Friday — 7:00pm

Easter Sunday

6:30am — Sunrise service

(memorial garden)

8:00am — Traditional service

9:15am — Contemporary service

10:45am — Traditional service

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

689 Ritchie Highway, Severna Park

Good Friday

8:30am — morning prayer

10:30am — children's living stations

Noon — stations of the cross

3:00pm — service of the lord's passion

7:00pm — stations of the cross

Easter Sunday

6:30am — Easter Mass

8:30am — Easter Mass

9:00am — Easter Mass

(Severna Park High School auditorium)

10:30am — Easter Mass

11:00am — Easter Mass

(Severna Park High School auditorium)

12:30pm — Easter Mass

ST. MARTIN'S-IN-THE-FIELD EPISCOPAL CHURCH

375 Benfield Road, Severna Park

Good Friday

Noon — Interactive stations

of the cross

7:00pm — Liturgy with choir

Easter Sunday

10:00am — Easter service

THE POTTER'S HOUSE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

8220 Ritchie Highway, Pasadena

Easter Sunday

11:00am — Communion service

TRINITY BIBLE CHURCH

99 Truck House Road, Severna Park

Good Friday — 7:00pm

Communion service

Easter Sunday

7:30am — Sunrise service

11:00am — Worship service

WOODS MEMORIAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

611 Baltimore Annapolis Boulevard, Severna Park

Good Friday — 7:30pm

Easter Sunday

6:30am — Sunrise service

(amphitheater)

8:00am — Traditional service

9:30am — Traditional service

9:30am — Interactive family service

(fellowship hall)

11:00am — Contemporary service



The Significance Of Easter In 2026: Local Pastors Weigh In

Though Easter is celebrated today in diverse ways by Christians and non-Christians alike, its historical significance is rooted in the biblical account of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. With the holiday approaching, the Severna Park Voice staff reached out to several local church leaders for their comments regarding this question:

“For thousands of years, Easter has marked the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. What relevance does the resurrection of Christ have to those of us living in 2026?”

“As Easter approaches, I am reminded of the African American tradition of tarrying. It's typically when family, friends and church family would surround the body of someone who is sick or actively passing away and begin to sing or pray. They were hoping and at times begging God to change the circumstance. This is where many Christians are on Good Friday and Holy Saturday. Easter is a reminder that when all hope is lost, there is a God in heaven who has heard our prayers and not only declares he is the resurrection and the life; he shows us, because early Sunday morning, Jesus rose with all power and authority in his hands.”

— **Reverend Tori Butler**

Asbury Town Neck United Methodist Church

“As we remember that Jesus was raised from the dead in history, it continues to hold out hope for us in 2026. Death seems so final. It wasn't for Jesus, and it won't be for those who trust in him. There's hope of life beyond the grave. God says in his word, ‘He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead’ (1 Peter 1:3). We have a living hope in our living lord.”

— **Pastor Jon Pickens**

Broadneck Evangelical Presbyterian Church

“The resurrection of Christ is central to our faith. ‘And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins (1 Corinthians 15:17).’ But we receive the promise that, ‘...in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep (1 Corinthians 15:20).’ Jesus paid the penalty for our sins, and

his resurrection proves that he is who he said he was, and those who believe in him will be raised and have eternal life.”

— **Pastor Dan Allen**

College Parkway Baptist Church

“The resurrection is relevant to us today because it tells us of God's promise for this life. Through Jesus, we are told about a God who is with us, especially when we encounter hard times, face struggles, and yearn for healing and wholeness. The empty tomb proclaims a God who joined with us in our wounds so that we may be joined with God in healing, wholeness, and the promise of brand-new life — and that starts today in this life. If God is with us, then what can be against us?”

— **Pastor Matthew Beers**

Our Shepherd Lutheran Church

“Our world is divided. That division extends even to our closest relationships. The Bible tells us the root of all division is our sin. But in the resurrection of Christ, we see that there is hope despite sorrow; there is life despite death; and there is unity despite brokenness because God has forgiven us. This Easter, may we look to Christ's grace for forgiveness, and may we look to his example for unity and forgiveness with one another as well.”

— **Pastor Alex Bouffard**

Saints Baptist Church

“Resurrection hope is oxygen to our soul. But our faults and sin suffocate the life God intends. So, we can't have resurrection life without first dying to self and admitting our need of forgiving and strengthening grace. The good news is that Jesus

» Continued on page 14

Passover Origins And Observances

Rabbi Ari J. Goldstein

Temple Beth Shalom



The Jewish holiday of Passover, which comes from the Torah (Pentateuch), is the most widely observed holiday on the Jewish calendar. While its origins are agricultural, celebrating the barley harvest of the spring, our tradition assigned it a prominent meaning as a festival of liberation from slavery in Egypt and the beginning of Jewish nationhood as well.

The book of Exodus describes the foundation of Passover by explaining that the ancient Israelites greatly suffered as slaves to the pharaoh in Egypt. But God heard our cries and sent Moses to free our people. After 10 punishing plagues, the pharaoh agreed to let our people go and we set out on a 40-year journey through the wilderness to Canaan.

Today, Jews observe Passover for seven (or eight) days by refraining from eating anything that is leavened (no bread products) and participating in a seder, which is a festive service containing stories, prayers and songs preceding a meal.

The seder draws upon various themes of the season and holiday and incorporates them into a

pseudo-liturgical experience for the purpose of reminding us of our origins and the significant role that God played in getting us to where we are today.

Some of the symbols that are included in the seder are:

1. Matzah — Unleavened bread, which reminds us of how our people left Egypt in such a hurry that there wasn't enough time for the bread to rise.

2. Maror — A bitter herb reminding us of how our lives were embittered due to our bondage.

3. Haroset — A mixture of fruits and nuts intended to remind us of the mortar that was used during our enslavement.

4. Parsley dipped in saltwater — A green vegetable, symbolizing the emergence of springtime, dipped into a liquid reminding us of our tears.

One of the best parts of Passover is that no two seders are the same. Some seders are long (two to three hours before eating) while others are short. Some are traditional (sticking to the liturgy established for us) while others have fun themes ("The Simpsons" and "Harry Potter" being two of my favorites). All seders have the same purpose: To tell our story over and over so that future generations maintain our traditions and reflect on how we got to where we are.

The Significance Of Easter In 2026

» Continued from page 13

loves the mess out of us. Putting our faith in God unites us to Jesus, making his resurrection power not just future hope after death, but present help in every difficulty or darkness we face. Because Jesus lives, we can face tomorrow, and every day afterward."

— **Pastor David Brown**

Severna Park Baptist Church

"We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him" (Romans 6:9). Because Christ is raised from the dead and dies no more, his resurrection is a "now" event for us. It has power now in 2026 to set us free from sin. It has power now in 2026 to raise us to new life with him. Easter means forgiveness of sins and new life in Christ for us now in 2026!"

— **Father Erik Arnold**

St. John The Evangelist Catholic Church

"Being reminded that we are a 'resurrection people' is what gets me through so many difficult moments in life. I am not someone who believes that everything happens for a reason, but I am firmly planted in the belief that God can bring beauty out of even the ugliest situation. Celebrating the resurrection of Jesus at Easter is the bells-and-whistles reminder of that truth that I need

to face the uncertainties of my daily life with hope in a risen Christ."

— **Reverend Lauren Holder**

St. Martin's-in-the-Field Episcopal Church

"The resurrection of Christ is the most pivotal moment in human history. It means that Jesus of Nazareth was more than a teacher, more than a philosopher, more than a prophet; he was and is the son of the living God, whose perfect moral life and perfect sacrifice on the cross mean forgiveness and our own resurrection, if you believe. Easter means there is living hope for tomorrow, and hope for where we will spend eternity. Jesus is alive; are you?"

— **Pastor Stephen Mitchell**

Trinity Bible Church

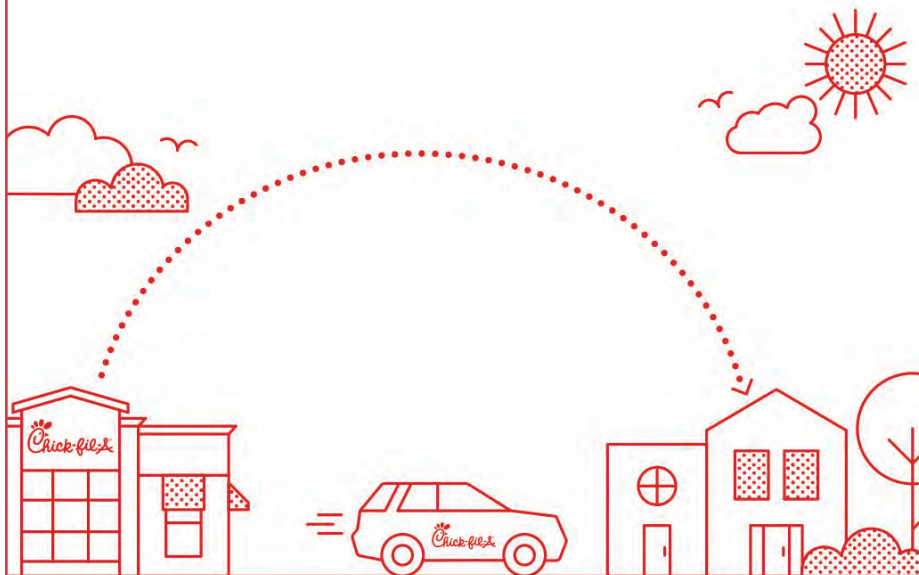
"In one sense, the relevance of Christ's resurrection is the same in 2026 as it has been since the first Easter morning: there is nothing that can contain or defeat God's gracious, reconciling love, including death itself. But in a time when so many people feel that so many long-known and long-treasured things seem to be coming to an end, it is particularly comforting to be reminded that there is no end that is so dead that God cannot open it into a new beginning."

— **Reverend J.C. Austin**

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Severna Park Area Residents Travel To Ancient Jerusalem In “The Chosen”

By Jaina Peveto

Deborah Mackall and her mother, Severna Park resident Gerry Wood, have been big fans of “The Chosen” for a long time. They’ve been to the show’s convention, ChosenCon, multiple times. In 2025, they took a trip together to Texas for Mackall to be featured as an extra in the show.

At the beginning of the trip, they spent time with Mackall’s brother who lives in Texas and then drove out to stay in an Airbnb near the set. Each day, Mackall got up early to head to set for a long day of filming, braving the heat of an August day in Texas.

“*Their goal is to reach over a billion people with a gospel message. They want it to be in 600 languages. So you’re part of making that happen; you’re part of getting the gospel message out there and being part of this grand story, and that’s the best feeling.*”

— DEBORAH MACKALL

Participating in the show helped Mackall gain greater appreciation for the work that the actors do. “I learned that I wasn’t an actor. It’s much more skilled than we think, right?” she said. “They do a lot of research. They do a lot of writing it out and figuring out what their character is like and how their character would act.”

This wasn’t Mackall’s first time traveling to be part of the show. She did the same for season five, although her scenes didn’t make it into the final

product. She has more hope that she’ll be seen in season six, due to her proximity to the main story. During her season five trip, she made friends with fellow extras, and season six gave her the opportunity to reunite with them.

The show asked the extras to provide their own costumes, although the producers had strict guidelines to keep things consistent with the look of the show. Mackall created her own costumes, which she also wore to ChosenCon with Wood.

Wood and Mackall began taking trips together regularly after going on a cruise together. “We have a lot of fun,” Wood said. “I pretty much am agreeable to whatever she wants to do, and I don’t give her a hard time, and I always want her to invite me again.”

Though Wood wasn’t an extra, her voice is still heard in the show. In one episode, the people sing “Hosanna” during Jesus’ triumphal entry. “They wanted it to feel more full, more people,” Mackall said. “So at ChosenCon with all 5,000 of us in the auditorium, they had recorded us singing the song. So that was cool. So she was a background actor there.”

“The biggest thing on being a background actor is having this sense that you’re part of something so much bigger than yourself,” Mackall said. “Their goal is to reach over a billion people with a gospel message. They want it to be in 600 languages. So you’re part of making that happen; you’re part of getting the gospel message out there and being part of this grand story, and that’s the best feeling.”

The scenes with Mackall are part of season six, which will portray the final hours of Jesus’ life culminating in his crucifixion. The new season will premiere in fall 2026, leading up to the season finale, which is slated to come out around Easter 2027.



Deborah Mackall and Gerry Wood attended ChosenCon. Mackall created her costumes to wear on the set of “The Chosen.”



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Council Update

Amanda Fiedler

*Councilwoman
District 5*



Spring is just around the corner. After the January ice event that left a thick layer of frozen snow on the ground for weeks, I am more eager than ever for warmer weather. With the

change of seasons comes an increase in activity to county parks and trails, so it is important for you to know about proposed changes to the rules and regulations of those public amenities in Bill 11-26.

Updates to sections of our code are necessary as language becomes dated and does not cover the full array of new technologies and the activities that may come with those technologies or advancement of recreational devices, and overall updates on the rules within county parks and on county trails.

Bill 11-26 proposes several minor updates related to camping and waste removal from campsites, and expands protections of flowers, grass and trees to include "all foliage."

Plan on having a gathering or long day out at the park this season that includes a prepared meal? Grilling of any kind is currently allowed with permission from the director – updated language would prohibit any grilling outside of the designated grilling area, thereby allowing grilling in designated areas without express permission. The director retains the ability to prohibit grilling even in designated areas, for safety reasons (wind, drought, etc.).

"Vaping" has been added as a prohibited activity, as well as the display of items that contain confetti, glitter, helium, mylar or aerosol propelled liquid plastic. "Drone" is added to the list of remote-control devices that must receive a permit for use in county parks, and "pickleball court(s)" are added to the list of areas where private instruction for profit may not take place. In addition to pickleball courts, the bill clearly outlines that private lessons or instruction where a fee is charged cannot take place anywhere on county property, including on trails, fields, forest, beaches, ponds, lakes, wetlands or other natural areas.

An entire new section of prohibitions is proposed as it relates to boat ramps in county parks. Proposed prohibitions include no moor or tie off of any boat on county property in any area not designated as a wharf, dock or quay, and sets limitations for launching or landing a motorized watercraft at a Department of Recreation and Parks area. Swimming or wading

» Continued on page 18

Class Rank Makes A Return?

Dana Schallheim

*AACPS Board
of Education
District 5*



Proposed changes to the grading policy that could include calculation of class rank are back before the Board of Education of Anne Arundel County. The issue of class rank was last discussed

and disposed of in spring 2019. The student member of the board at the time, Josie Urrea, championed the issue, which produced many hours of public testimony and heated debate during board meetings.

In June 2019, the board — myself included — voted to get rid of class rank in favor of developing an alternative process for valedictorian and salutatorian selection. I am the only member of the board who was serving at that time.

The debate over class rank in 2019 hinged around a few key issues — course selection, scholarships, and, most importantly, student mental health. Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) already had the Latin honors system in place along-

side weighted GPAs, awarding up to a 5.0 for a grade of A in an AP, IB or dual-enrollment class.

In her public testimony in support of getting rid of class rank, the Severna Park High School (SPHS) class of 2019 valedictorian stated, "I did not take classes that interested me, because I knew they would bring down my rank. I missed out on robotics, and speech and debate, and piano, and aerospace engineering, and architecture, and creative writing and social issues, all standard or honors classes that I would have liked to try."

Should class rank return and be available to students prior to the start of their senior year, I have no doubt that high-achieving students at SPHS and every other high school will forgo opportunities to take classes based on interest in favor of piling on AP classes as the 2019 SPHS valedictorian did when she graduated with 15 APs or equivalent credits under her belt.

Secondly, there is the question of whether there are universities or scholarships that both require class rank for consideration and disadvantage students who do not have access to their class rank. This myth was widely debunked in 2019 because a majority of school systems in the U.S. had abandoned class rank. It's even

more true today. Even though some universities and service academies list class rank as a factor for admissions, there is no institution I can find that punishes students for not providing it.

In recent years, many universities have moved toward an admissions model that looks at students more holistically, taking into account the variety and purpose of classes completed, GPA, essays, extracurricular activities, school profile, etc. over the quantity of AP classes — the predominant way one can be ranked near the top under a weighted GPA model.

SPHS graduates one of the highest, if not the highest, number of students who earn the Summa Cum Laude designation in the county, requiring a weighted GPA of 4.3 or higher. In 2025, nearly 43% of SPHS graduates achieved a GPA greater than a 4.0. This makes getting into the top 10% very difficult.

It's also worth mentioning that most schools in Montgomery County got rid of class rank roughly 20 years ago and Howard County Public Schools did the same in 2019. Key School, Severn School, The Gunston School, and Indian Creek School also do not calculate class rank. There is no evidence to suggest that students who attend any of these schools, whether public or private, have been disadvantaged or harmed in terms of

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Closing The Gaps In Maternal Mental Health Care

Dawn Gile

*Senator
District 33*



A mother in Maryland gave birth to a healthy baby boy in August 2023. She loved him deeply. She wanted to be well for him. She asked for help, but the system did not move quickly

enough. Three months later, she died by suicide — one day after her 35th birthday. Her name was Andrea.

Her sister, Kyra, testified before the Maryland Senate Finance Committee about the gaps Andrea fell through — a system that can screen without guaranteeing connection to care, without urgent referral pathways, without coordinated follow-up. Andrea's story is devastating. It is also not rare.

In the United States, one in five mothers experiences a mental health condition during pregnancy or in the year after birth. More than 75% go untreated. In Maryland, behavioral health conditions are the leading cause of pregnancy-associated deaths, accounting for nearly a quarter of preventable maternal deaths

in 2020. The majority of those deaths were considered preventable.

Behind those statistics are real women — professionals, stay-at-home moms, first-time parents, experienced parents — who are quietly battling postpartum depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, bipolar disorder or psychosis. Many assume what they are feeling is simply exhaustion. Many are ashamed. Many are afraid to speak up. And when they do speak up, the response is not always clear, coordinated or timely.

That is why I sponsored Senate Bill 891, cross-filed in the House of Delegates by Delegate Jennifer White Holland. SB 891 strengthens Maryland's framework for identifying and treating perinatal mental health conditions. It requires screening not only during pregnancy and at the postpartum visit but also throughout the baby's first year of life — including at well-child visits, where parents are already interacting with trusted providers. Early detection is not a formality; it is often the entry point to lifesaving intervention.

But screening alone is not enough. This bill requires insurers to provide a standing referral to a mental health provider during pregnancy and for

one year after birth. That means when a mother screens positive, she does not have to start from scratch by navigating approvals and paperwork. The pathway to care is already open.

The legislation also strengthens insurance protections when timely in-network mental health care is unavailable. If access does not exist within a reasonable timeframe, families should not be penalized for seeking help elsewhere. Delays during the postpartum period can be dangerous. Weeks matter. Sometimes days matter — as Andrea's family so painfully reminds us.

SB 891 also ensures that women receive written, evidence-based information about perinatal mental health from their providers and through WIC offices. Many parents simply do not know what postpartum depression or anxiety can look like. Education reduces stigma and empowers families to recognize warning signs early.

Finally, the bill strengthens provider education requirements so clinicians are equipped with updated screening tools and response protocols. Maryland recently received an F for screening and reimbursement in a national maternal mental health report card. That is not a grade we should accept, especially when the consequences are measured in lives.

The mental health of a mother is inseparable from the health of her child. From birth to age 3, a child's brain forms 1 million neural connec-

» Continued on page 18

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Letter To The Editor: Trail Crossing

Dear Severna Park Voice,
I'm reaching out as a concerned resident of The Village of Severna Park (Olde Severna Park). Back in July of 2023, I first contacted the county about installing a flashing crosswalk sign at a dangerous crossing near our local bike trail right off Baltimore & Annapolis Boulevard. After some delay, the county confirmed this is a state highway and that I should contact them. That said, I escalated the request to the Maryland State Highway Administration. I was also told other residents had made similar requests with the county.

In July 2023 — now 31 months ago — I submitted my official ticket (SR-0489833). Since then, despite follow-ups, nothing has been done. When I called today, I was told they still don't know who to route the ticket to.

This crossing is vital for children walking to school and for community access to the trail. The lack of action is not just frustrating; it's putting lives at risk every day this is delayed.

I believe the public deserves to know how critical safety requests are being lost in bureaucracy. I would appreciate your help in amplifying this issue so action can finally be taken before a preventable tragedy occurs.

Sincerely, Shaina Wedington

Closing The Gaps In Maternal Mental Health Care

» Continued from page 17

tions per second. That development depends on a stable, healthy attachment to a caregiver. When a mother is overwhelmed by untreated depression or psychosis, that bond can be disrupted — not because she does not love her child but because she is suffering.

SB 891 is about ensuring that when a mother says, "I'm not OK," the system responds with urgency, clarity and care. Andrea's son will grow up knowing his mother through stories. Her family will always wonder what might have been different if stronger systems had been in place.

We cannot change what happened to Andrea. But we can change what happens next for Maryland mothers. I am grateful to the advocates, clinicians and families who have shared their expertise and, in many cases, their heartbreak in support of this legislation. Their courage is shaping policy that can save lives.

It is an honor to represent you. If you have questions or concerns, please contact my office at dawn.gile@senate.maryland.gov or 410-841-3568.

Council Update

» Continued from page 17

outside of areas designated by the department is prohibited. And finally, the bill updates county code to add definitions of e-bikes and e-scooters to allow for enforcement of existing department policy that prohibits certain types of electric-powered two-wheeled e-vehicles. The bill is moving through the legislative process and will go into effect 45 days after passage.

County parks are a great amenity for residents, and knowing the rules and regulations before you go helps everyone have an enjoyable experience.

It is also important to have enjoyment on your private property, and over the years I have heard from residents who are experiencing light pollution from a neighboring commercial property. Our current code has zoning requirements within residential districts, that lights installed on residential lots shall be directed down and away from adjoining lots. For property owners who neighbor a property that is not zoned residential (commercial, industrial, etc.), there is no lighting requirement that the lights be situated in the same manner, even if they are next to a residential lot.

I have introduced Bill 15-26, which would do just that. It is a simple bill that adds the same requirements for any property that adjoins a residential lot to direct the light downward and away from the residential lot or aim to confine the light to a specific area of the non-residential property. The first hearing for this bill is March 16.

Lights of any kind and located

anywhere need power, as do nearly all of our daily devices and household appliances. Power and energy have been topics of discussion in recent years, especially during the Maryland General Assembly session where energy policy is made.

Technology is already being used for outside-the-box ways we can store unused energy for use at a later time to support the grid, or backfill if the grid cannot keep up with demand. Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) aim to fill that gap but are currently not a use listed in our zoning code. BESS can range from larger facilities to smaller obscure units strategically located to shore up grids in key areas.

I have introduced Bill 9-26 that would allow for BESS systems as a conditional use in commercial, industrial and mixed-use districts. Conditions included, but not limited to, are that the BESS be surrounded by fencing and any necessary landscaping buffers or vegetation, be in compliance with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards for installation of energy storage systems and have a hazard mitigation analysis conducted prior to permit approval. These facilities would have little to no traffic and could fill the energy gap in critical times. Bill 9-26 is moving through the legislative process and will have at least one more hearing in March.

Your feedback is always important to me. If you have thoughts on these bills, other legislation, or a constituent concern, please email me at amanda.fiedler@aacounty.org.

It is an honor to serve you and your family.

350 Firefighters Short: Anne Arundel County Below National Safety Standards

“Safe staffing is not a workforce issue — it’s a public safety issue. It directly affects response times, operational safety, and our ability to effectively protect lives and property when residents call 911.”

— BETH OLDERSHAW, LOCAL 1563 SECOND VICE PRESIDENT

Editor’s note: This column was submitted by Anne Arundel County Professional Fire Fighters Local 1563.

The Anne Arundel County Fire Department is operating approximately 350 firefighters below the national minimum standard for safe staffing, according to a recently completed independent Standards of Coverage study.

Members of Anne Arundel County Professional Fire Fighters Local 1563 delivered that message at multiple county budget town hall meetings during January and February, urging County Executive Stuart Pittman and members of the county council to prioritize public safety funding in the upcoming budget.

The independent study evaluated emergency response demand, call volume, current staffing levels, and projected population growth. Union leaders say the findings confirmed what firefighters and paramedics experience daily: staffing levels are not keeping pace with the county’s growing service demands.

“Safe staffing is not a workforce



issue — it’s a public safety issue,” said Local 1563 Second Vice President Beth Oldershaw. “It directly affects response times, operational safety, and our ability to effectively protect lives and property when residents call 911.”

Anne Arundel County continues to see sustained growth in both population and emergency calls for service.

Firefighters say that without additional personnel, strain on response capacity will increase, potentially impacting how quickly help arrives during emergencies.

Local 1563 emphasized that it is seeking collaboration with Fire Chief Trisha Wolford and county leadership to identify responsible, long-term

solutions. Among those solutions is encouraging the county to apply for the federal Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant, which is specifically designed to help fire departments hire and retain firefighters.

Union officials say securing SAFER funding would represent a significant step toward closing the staffing gap and strengthening emergency response capabilities countywide.

Class Rank Makes A Return?

» Continued from page 17

scholarship opportunities or college admissions, including admissions to service academies.

In fact, the contrary might prove to be true because class rank tends to advantage small, rural school districts. Large, suburban districts like AACPS benefited from eliminating it. If class rank is restored, AACPS students may lose slots at universities like the University of Maryland to rural counties as well as to Montgomery and Howard, which don’t rank.

Lastly, and most importantly, is the question regarding the negative effects of class rank on our students and their mental health. Returning to the cutthroat culture of who will be ranked near or at the top each year will result in more stress, lower self-esteem, greater depression, and poor mental health according to a vast body of research that dates back decades.

Research has shown that comparing students in this way has lasting

effects that persist long after graduation and shapes how students see themselves as learners going forward into college and careers. Negative social comparisons like class rank can harm both physical and mental development in young people. Assigning even part of one’s self-worth to a number calculated to the thousandth decimal place will prove again to be harmful.

Those who wish to submit their opinion on this topic can testify either virtually or in person during our March 18 (6:30pm), April 8 (noon), and/or April 22 (6:30pm) meetings. Details about how to sign up are released on the Friday preceding each meeting via all usual channels including on AACPS Facebook and Instagram pages. Those who wish to email can do so by writing to boardoffice@aacps.org and request that their email be forwarded to all members. As always, I can be reached at dschallheim@aacps.org, 443-534-2660, or on the socials.

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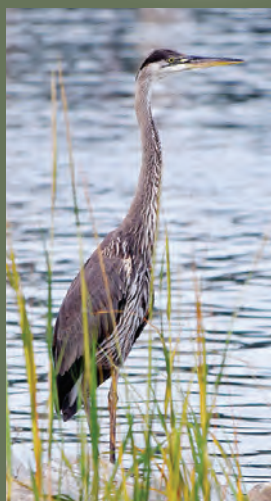


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BACK ON TRACK

Falcons Fly To Indoor Title

Severna Park Claims First Girls Indoor Crown Since 1977

By David Bashore

As **Josie Kamas** led **Lexi Fitzsimmons** home in the 3A girls 3,200-meter race at the indoor state track championship on February 18, the Severna Park bench started roaring their teammates on.

It wasn't only because the Falcons were about to post another one-two finish in a distance race: in that moment, they collectively realized they were on the verge of ending a near-half-century drought.

On the strength of their distance specialists, and some help from the pole vault pit, the Falcons doubled up second-place Largo in the team standings and claimed their first girls indoor track championship since 1977, the first year of Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) records in the sport.

"We were watching and cheering them on. I remember looking at the scores and realizing we could actually win it," said **Grace Redmond**, who came home first in the 800- and 1,600-meter races. "It was just an amazing feeling to realize that we were going to do it."

Redmond led **Siena Pegues** to a one-two finish in both of those events, a reversal of the region meet where Pegues came out narrowly on top.

In addition to going one-two in all three distance races, the Falcons raced to victory in the 4x800 relay, where Kamas, Fitzsimmons, **Harper Wallace** and **Kathryn Murphy** outpaced the field.

Adding three more capable distance racers to the indoor team — Redmond plays field hockey in the fall, and Pegues and Wallace are on the soccer team — proved to be a massive upgrade that helped parlay the cross-country program's longtime success into an indoor triumph at long last.

"We have a distance-heavy squad, so we really needed to sweep in those events. Grace and I are both really pretty new in our racing careers (having only started in high school), so we were just at it after the gun," Pegues

» Continued on page 28

Severna Park's Williams, Broadneck's Rivas Win Individual Indoor Titles

Left: In the 4A boys pole vault, Cooper Rivas cleared 13-feet-2-inches to take the title on February 17. Right: Matthew Williams became a high jump state champion during the 3A state indoor track meet on February 18.

By David Bashore

When high jumper **Matthew Williams** woke up on the morning of the 3A state indoor track meet, it was already a good day to go for gold.

He'd had a great night of sleep, great carb load the night before, an energy drink at the ready — his ideal prep.

Oh, and the meet fell on his 18th birthday.

"Everything felt really good," Williams quipped.

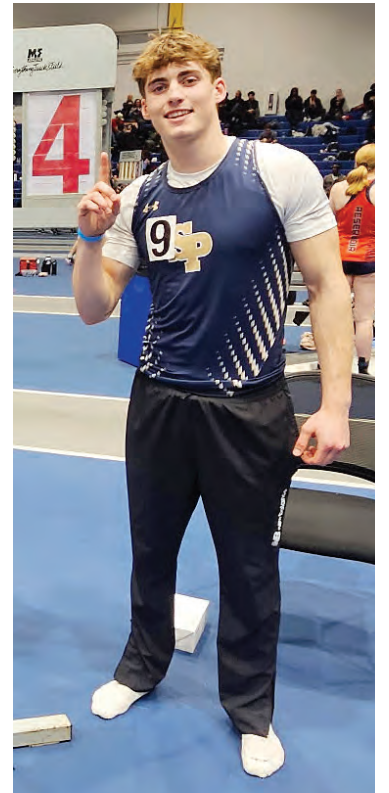
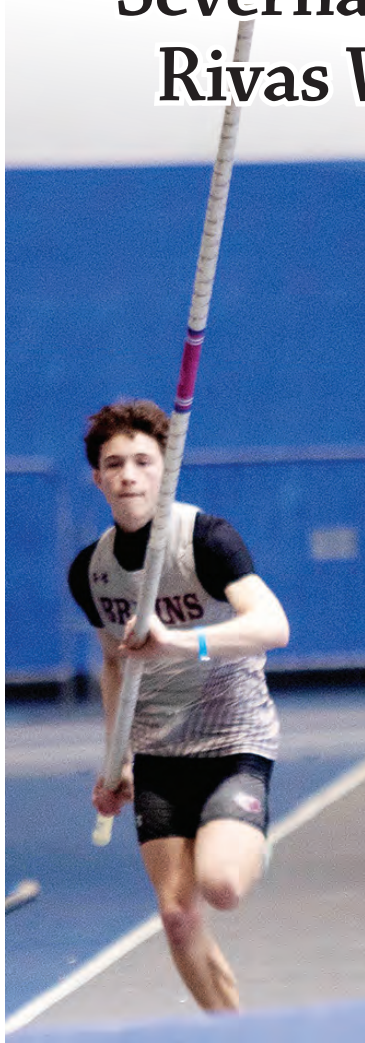
Fate smiled on the Severna Park senior, as he cleared 6-foot-4 to match his personal best set a week prior. Three others did it within the allotted three attempts, but only Williams did it on the first try.

At 6-foot-6, all four failed on the first two tries. Then the first two failed their last attempt. Williams went and just clipped the bar, leaving one more jumper, **Samuel Cooper** of Tuscarora, who had already cleared 6-foot-8 this season.

But he too failed, and with the tiebreak being fewest jumps required to clear the previous height, Williams joined his older brother **Kian** as a high jump state champion.

"It was a nervous wait. I'm friends with a lot of the jumpers, and we're in group texts and all of that," Williams said. "You're never rooting for someone else to fail, so there wasn't a big celebration or

» Continued on page 28



Falcon Girls First, Boys Second At Swim Regionals

Severna Park's girls swim team won the 4A/3A East Region championship in February, clipping Crofton by just one point.

The Falcon girls scored high in several categories, headlined by **Ava Mallik**'s second-place finish in the 500-yard freestyle, where teammate **Cassie Steppe** finished fourth. **Reese Corey** was second in the 100-yard backstroke, and Steppe finished second in the 200-yard freestyle, just ahead of **Charlotte Fleureton**.

The Falcons' 400-yard freestyle relay of Mallik, Corey, **Macie Rice** and **Gray Neubauer** finished third, as did the 200-yard medley relay of Corey, Rice, Mallik and Fleureton.

Rhys Garrahy helped lead the charge for the Falcons on the boys side, winning the 100-yard backstroke and helping the 400-yard freestyle and 200-yard medley relays to second place. **Kyle Winters** placed second in the 500-yard freestyle, while **William Ferguson** was third in the 100-yard backstroke. **Denver Straub** was third in the 200-yard freestyle, just ahead of Winters.

Severna Park finished second to Annapolis in the boys team standings.

Broadneck's boys and girls both finished fifth in their respective team standings.

Keely Cornelius finished second in the girls 100-yard butterfly and third in the 500-yard freestyle, while **Brendan Rose** was fourth in the boys 500-yard freestyle.



The Falcon girls scored high in several categories to take first place at the 4A/3A East Region championship in February. Below Left: Severna Park's Ava Mallik finished second in the women's 500-yard freestyle and third in the women's 100-yard butterfly. Below Right: Reese Corey took second place in the women's 100-yard backstroke.



Photos by Alex Bardakh

Severna Park Ice Hockey Claims Eastern Conference Crown



Photos courtesy of Andrew Pham/PhamGFX

Entering the Eastern Conference playoffs as the fourth seed, the Falcons took down the top-seeded Seahawks, 3-2, at Bowie Ice Arena in February. **Right:** Team captain Beckett Dickson received the Eastern Conference championship trophy.



By Zach Sparks

When the season started, Severna Park could have easily guessed the foe that would stand in the way of them winning their first Maryland Student Hockey League (MSHL) Eastern Conference championship since 2022.

The Falcons' senior class had lost to South River as freshmen. Then came conference championship losses to the Seahawks in 2023 and 2024. And this year, South River tied Severna Park 1-1 on January 9 and won 4-2 on January 30.

It's not hyperbole to say that Severna Park had a big opportunity in front of them in February, a chance at a redemption story four years in the making.

After opening the playoffs as the No. 4 seed with a 9-3 win over Broadneck and a 6-3 victory over Easton, Severna Park faced No. 1 South River at Bowie Ice Arena with the conference title on the line.

"When you play against South River, you're going to have a lump in your throat," said Severna Park forward and alternate captain **Max Grotheer**. "You're nervous and jittery all day in class, but you have to be confident. When we got into the locker room, everyone was ready to play."

Facing a team with "a lot of depth" and an excellent goalie, as Grotheer put it, his Falcons delivered with a 3-2 win.

Will Petrick started off the scoring on a power-play goal, assisted by **Tommy Osborne**, and **Griffin Grotheer** added a second goal in the first period. **Henry Marriner** put the bow on a teamwide effort as he buried a rebound late in the

second period off a shot from **Mason Sipe** for the game-winning goal.

"Everyone played the simple game to protect the puck and generate quality scoring chances," said **Dave Petrick**, Severna Park ice hockey head coach. "Winning puck battles, crisp passing, getting the puck deep into the South River zone, and creating traffic in front of their net were all aspects that helped win the game."

Coach Petrick also noted the stellar play of **Jake Beaver** in net, and he praised his defense.

"Our defense played physical with multiple big hits from junior **Luke Lester** and senior **Declan Laughlin**," Petrick said. "Physical play from **Axel Haagen** (junior) and **Matty Butcher**. Senior **Max Grotheer** cleared out a net-front rebound late in the second period to save a goal. (We had) blocked shots from Declan Laughlin and Henry Marriner."

First-team Eastern Conference senior defenseman and team captain **Beckett Dickson** received the cup from center ice. "It felt great," Dickson said. "My freshman year, we lost to them in the finals. It was personal."

Beaver capped his playoff run with more than 80 saves. Will Petrick led Severna Park's scoring with eight goals and four assists.

Their season ended five days later with an overtime loss in the first round of the state playoffs vs. Walter Johnson. Goals by Butcher and Dickson put the Falcons up 2-0. Walter Johnson scored on a penalty shot, then tied it 2-2 and

eventually scored on a 3-on-3 overtime goal to end the game.

That ended an up-and-down campaign for the Falcons that saw the players grow both individually and as teammates.

"We found a style and lineups that worked," coach Petrick said. "Asked the team to play the simple game. Make a simple pass, tape to tape. Dump the puck deep in the defensive zone and chase to gain control. Work hard. Rebound goals. They put it all together for three games in one week for a memorable championship run. It won them the right to have their year forever etched onto that cup."

Dickson reflected on the team's early-season tie against Broadneck as a turning point.

"Everyone got mad at that because we did not want to tie or lose," he said. "After that tie, everything shifted. (Our team) wanted to win."

That led to building team chemistry on and off the ice through sharper practices, group dinners and an active group chat.

"Just making sure everyone was included was my thing this year," Dickson said. "We were not necessarily the most skilled team, but we were the most connected."

A forward and alternate captain, Osborne had a similar observation.

"After that game, there was a trend toward wanting to be better. The first couple practices were a lot more focused, with guys giving more effort. For me, it started during practice, telling guys to do drills intentionally. We had some great leaders ... and they proved you don't necessarily need a C on your chest."

Meanwhile, coach Petrick instilled his team with confidence.

"He created a bond instead of (focusing on) the best three guys," Max Grotheer said. "He can make a low A player look like an AA player. He was really crucial when we needed it in the season."

The Falcons finished 9-3-4 with Dave Petrick at the helm and a coaching staff that included **Eric Haagen**, **Adam Brenner** and **Dave Keefe**.

The team will graduate Dickson, Osborne, Laughlin, Marriner, Max Grotheer, **Jack Clark**, **Jacob Masone**, **Zach Simpkins** and **Connor Earle**. This year's team also included juniors **Matty Butcher**, **Thomas Lynn**, **Axel Haagen**, **Jake Beaver**, **Will Petrick**, **Luke Lester** and **Griffin Grotheer**.

Sophomores **Owen Keefe**, **Alex Lorentzen**, **Maya Brenner**, **Mikey Ballagh** and freshman **Mason Sipe** were regular contributors. Fellow sophomores **Gino Battitori** and **Xander Weeks** added valuable minutes, as did freshmen **Jack Gianvittori**, **Paige Buhler**, **Padraig Daugherty**, **Gabriel Pollock** and **Camden Major**. **Norah Cornwall** and **Jackson DuPee** assisted as student team managers and statisticians.

"I'm so proud of this group," Osborne said. "I wouldn't want to do it with any other team. It was the bond that we had that helped us win a championship."

For Max Grotheer, the feeling is mutual. "My senior class was the one to win it in 2026," he said. "Looking back in 10 years and coming to the alumni reunion season, that's what we will talk about."

Playoff Recap

Quarterfinals Vs. Broadneck: Facing the two top scorers in the Eastern Conference, Severna Park played tough defense. Jake Beaver had 43 saves to give the team a chance to win. The Falcons broke through with five goals in the third period to win the game 9-3. Will Petrick registered four goals and three assists. Beckett Dickson added two goals and one assist. Declan Laughlin, Tommy Osborne and Griffin Grotheer all added goals. Assists came from Matty Butcher, Tommy Osborne and Griffin Grotheer.

Semifinals Vs. Easton: This matchup featured a first-team All-MSHL goalie. Severna Park beat Easton 7-0 earlier in the season (with a shutout from Jake Beaver and hat trick from Tommy Osborne). In this game, Thomas Lynn scored the go-ahead goal and the Falcons led 4-3 going into the third period. Griffin Grotheer piled on with the team's fifth goal and Matty Butcher added an empty netter. Jake Beaver totaled 24 saves. Will Petrick scored three goals. Tommy Osborne, Matty Butcher, Thomas Lynn, Mikey Ballagh and Will Petrick had assists.

Season Highlights and Stats

- Beckett Dickson earned first-team Eastern Conference and all-state honorable mention. He finished second in defensive scoring in the conference.
- Will Petrick and Tommy Osborne were named second-team Eastern Conference.
- Jake Beaver and Griffin Grotheer secured honorable mentions.
- Severna Park relied on nine seniors and seven juniors.
- The team featured two solid goalies with Jake Beaver and Maya Brenner.
- Max Grotheer had three two-goal games.
- Will Petrick led the team in overall scoring with 29 goals and 10 assists. He also led the MSHL in short-handed goals with six and recorded four hat tricks.
- Tommy Osborne scored 10 goals to go with 12 assists.



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STUDENT-ATHLETE OF THE MONTH

ALEXANDRA VANDIVER

St. Mary's High School — Girls Basketball

By Kevin Murnane

East Carolina University women's basketball head coach **Kim McNeill** wanted her 2026 recruiting class to include players who were tough, gritty, energetic and versatile.

Severna Park's **Alexandra Vandiver** is a shining example of all these qualities as well as being a gifted 3-point shooter. East Carolina is currently in second place in the American Athletic Association with a 20-9 record and is a program on the rise. A prize recruit, Vandiver possesses skills that will be a valuable addition for the Pirates in the next four years.

She was a four-year starter and three-year captain for the Saints, has led St. Mary's in numerous offensive and defensive categories, and she has added her name to the school's record books.

Vandiver closed her high school basketball chapter this winter by establishing statistics including:

- 1,584 points, fourth all-time at St. Mary's
 - 1,001 rebounds, setting a new record at St. Mary's
 - 50 career double-doubles, setting a new record at St. Mary's
 - All-time leader at St. Mary's in made 3-point shots with over 200. Finished with an incredible 43% 3-point shooting average over her four years
 - Ranked No. 1 in assists in the Interscholastic Athletic Association of Maryland (IAAM) A Conference with 4.2 assists per game this year
- "Alexandra is maybe the best shooter, boy or girl, that I've ever seen and I have been doing this for

Photo by Laura Johnson
St. Mary's High School

Alexandra Vandiver brought the ball upcourt during a game at St. Mary's in Annapolis.

a while," said St. Mary's girls basketball head coach **Leo Latonick**. "For her career, she has made 200 3-point shots with a 43% shooting accuracy. That percentage is even more remarkable when you consider that she was frequently targeted by the opponent's defense with one of their better defenders."

At 6-foot-1, Vandiver can play any position on the floor but is most effective as a power or small forward. She works hard at all facets of her game but takes special pride in rebounding.

"I really like rebounding, and when the ball goes up you just have to go get it," Vandiver shared. "I love to compete, and getting rebounds and outworking my opponents is one of the areas of the game I really enjoy."

After playing travel ball with the Green Hornets, Vandiver advanced to playing Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) for the Maryland Stars in the Washington-Baltimore area. Playing against elite competition really sharpened Vandiver's skills, and when she entered high school, she immediately started on the varsity team as a freshman.



"Our freshman year was great, and we went 27-0 and won the IAAM B Conference championship," Vandiver said. "The next year, we moved to the A Conference, and we were playing great competition like St. Frances of Baltimore, Spalding and Pallotti."

Her steady improvement made a noticeable jump between her junior and senior year when the Division I college coaches began to heavily recruit her.

"Alexandra had one Division I college offer after her junior year, but through her hard work in the offseason with conditioning and AAU exposure, she had close to 20 Division I offers," Latonick said.

Vandiver knew during her visit to East Carolina that she wanted to spend her next four years playing for the Pirates.

"Coach Kim (McNeill) was extremely personable, and she told me how she liked my versatility and I will be a big part of next year's team. I'll probably play the three (small forward) with them," Vandiver said.

Vandiver has a 4.2 grade point average (GPA) with six Advanced Placement classes completed. She will pursue a business degree at East Carolina in hopes of attending law school and becoming a sports agent.

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Falcon Girls Rally To Reach Region Final

By David Bashore

Sitting at 2-9 at the midway point of the season, few would have held it against Severna Park had they written off the girls basketball season.

Instead, they ripped off an 11-2 run to navigate the Anne Arundel County gauntlet, ensure a winning season, and come within one game of making it back to the state playoffs. That run included a 45-33 win over Broadneck, a two-point loss to Annapolis, and a 39-31 win over Leonardtown.

Severna Park got to the 4A East 1 region final before seeing their season end with a 56-47 loss at perennial power Western of Baltimore City.

"That's Severna Park basketball: two seasons," said Severna Park coach Kristofer Dean. "These girls have really bought in and really looked good down the stretch."

In the final, senior guard **Maria Bragg** netted 23 points as the Falcons raced out to an early 15-point lead. But foul trouble hounded Bragg and the Falcons in the second half, allowing Western to chip away at the lead and take it for good with three minutes to play.

Severna Park, which finished the season with a 13-12 record, will graduate eight seniors from the squad: **Bragg, Rowan Laughon, Gabi Villegas, Ava Scott, Naomi Batty, Lizzy Thompson, Emerson Scott** and **Brooke Barnes**.

BHS Girls Ousted In Region Quarters



Photo by Dennis McGinley

Carmen Hubbard drove with the basketball during Broadneck's first round 4A East 2 region playoff game against North Point on February 27.

The Bruins won a coin toss with North Point for the right to host their 4A East 2 regional quarterfinal game, but the Eagles went back to Waldorf with a 40-38 win.

Broadneck trailed throughout, including facing an eight-point deficit in the fourth quarter before rallying to tie the game in the final minute. But a putback just before the buzzer gave North Point the victory and ended the Bruins' season at 14-8.

Broadneck graduates just one senior from this year's squad: dominant post presence **Makayla Kropfelder**.

Selfless Play And Toughness Propel Bruin Boys To Basketball State Quarterfinals

By David Bashore

Two years ago, **Kamari Williams** emerged as a sophomore on Broadneck's boys basketball team, trying to will the Bruins to victory in the region final at Bowie.

They came up short that day, but the experience gained — and built upon over the next two years — would come in handy down the road.

This time, the senior version of Williams and another sophomore, **Liam Sabo**, answered the ball and got Broadneck over the line in crunch time.

Williams clutched up as the distributor and Sabo, struggling to find his scoring game, delivered a dominant defensive performance as Broadneck beat Bowie 42-38 on March 4 to advance to win the 4A East 2 region final and advance to the state quarterfinals for the first time since 2023.

"Those two guys made some great plays, but as a whole, everyone that went in did their job," said Broadneck coach **Jeff Starr**. "We were just able to make the winning plays that we needed to make in the fourth quarter."

The entire game was played within a margin of 11 points: Bowie's largest lead of the night was six points, Broadneck's five.

The Bruins scored the first point of the game but didn't lead again until late in the third quarter on a 3-pointer from **Ashton Sellman**.

Sabo, who had trouble scoring early, helped himself and Broadneck find a groove by moving from the perimeter to the post in the second half. He scored only 10, to Williams' 12, but his active defense resulted in six blocked shots in the second half alone and several other steals and tough rebounds.

"We knew coming in here as an away game we could get it done because of what we had done in the past, beating defending state champion teams (Laurel and Cambridge-South Dorchester) on the road," Sabo said. "It was a tough game, and my shot wasn't falling early, but I knew I could trust myself down in the post and went to work. I know that when it doesn't fall, I know I'm a rebounder and can make stops on defense, and if I go for a super aggressive play, my teammates have me on the help side."

That toughness and Williams' fearlessness provided the winning formula. But it took the collective: **Kemarri Collison** doing tough work inside; **Alijah Hawkins** providing ball movement and perimeter defense; sophomore **Mason Hunt** emerging as a reliable No. 2 ballhandler; **Cole Schabow** stealing minutes amid foul



Photo by Dennis McGinley

Liam Sabo blocked a shot against North Point during Broadneck's 60-58 win over the Eagles in the semifinals of the 4A East 2 region playoffs on March 2.

trouble and offering a 3-point threat; Sellman's length and athleticism giving Bowie one more thing to think about.

Tagged with four fouls, Williams made a decisive, fearless move that changed the course of the game: he drove to the basket anyway, shifting his body just enough on the drive to get the blocking foul rather than a charge.

"I knew for my team I had to put my body on the line whether I fouled out or not. It was the right play to make," Williams said.

He hit both free throws to put Broadneck up five in the final minutes. The ball came back into his hand at the foul line with a second left, and he hit one of two for the final points to set up a celebration on Bowie's home court.

Though the road would end two nights later in a 74-54 loss to undefeated top seed Charles H. Flowers, the Bruins put everything on the floor and ended the season with a 16-9 record, a region championship, and no regrets.

"The kids fought hard and never quit. (The Jaguars) are good," Starr said.

Hunt had a team-best 17 points in the loss, while Williams added 16 and Sabo 10.

The Bruins will graduate five seniors from this season's squad: Williams, Sellman, Collison, Hawkins and **Evan Zelinsky**.

SPHS Boys Finish 19-4

A promising season came to a sudden end as the Severna Park boys basketball team dropped successive games to end the season. They fell to Meade 63-48 in the county championship game, then lost at home to Mergenthaler Vo-Tech 54-53 in the 4A East 1 region semifinals.

The Falcons had an early lead against Meade but

could not pull off their second win over the Mustangs on the season, and they fell behind early against Mervo and could not quite complete the comeback.

Severna Park closed the season with a 19-4 record and a regular-season county championship. The Falcons clinched that regular-season title by beating Meade (64-59), Broadneck (53-43), and South River (54-49) in succession in mid-February.

They'll graduate five seniors from this season's team: **Lane August, Garrett Moden, Dash Havens, Ozzy Jones** and **Sam Matthews**.

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JV Falcons Finish Season Undefeated

The Severna Park girls basketball team completed an undefeated 22-0 season by beating South River 50-29 to claim the JV county championship on February 20. In addition to sweeping the county, the Falcons also scored victories over Oakdale, Severn, Allegany, Baltimore Poly, Sherwood and Leonardtown. The team was comprised of sophomores **Quinn Makarovich, Meg Feemster, Claire Farley, Molly Koistinen, Ella Hartman, Delaney Jones, Kyra Trippett, Rebecca Sullivan and Emma Vancaster**, and freshmen **Kylie Crockett, Sienna McPhee, Meredith Campion, Sarah Murphy, Heather Sealey and Alexandra Stokes**. **Pat Carr** coached the team, assisted by **Donny Williams**.



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Queen Sets Single-Season, Career Win Marks in Placing Third At Wrestling States

By David Bashore

When the dust settled after the region wrestling tournaments, Broadneck and Severna Park combined to send nine entrants to the state meet in Upper Marlboro March 5-7, and history was made at the state meet.

Michael Queen, Severna Park's standout wrestler who became a three-time county champion in February, secured a third straight top-three states finish when he placed third in the 4A/3A 126-pound bracket. Though he suffered his only loss of the season in the semifinal round, Queen rebounded to cement his place in Severna Park and Anne Arundel County history.

He finishes his decorated prep career with three county championships and 172 victories, six more than any other county wrestler before him. Queen also owns the single-season Severna Park record for wins, having gone 45-1

this season. His previous best was a co-record 43, a mark set during his freshman season and shared with current Falcons coach **Sam Ziff**.

Also for Severna Park, **Jack Queen** (106) reached the third consolation round before bowing out of the tournament, while teammates **Brody Clark** (132) and **Andrew Bonk** (144) each reached the second consolation round.

Broadneck's **Andrew Bevilacqua** (126) and **Jack Joseph** (138) also qualified for the championship meet.

In the girls-only championship, Severna Park's **Madison Bull-ock** dropped her first match in the 120-pound bracket but battled back to place fifth. Broadneck's **Jahzara Smith** (105) and Severna Park's **Blair McDaniel** (170) also emerged from regionals to make the state meet. Smith won her opening match at the tournament before going out in the second consolation round.

Williams, Rivas Win Individual Indoor Titles

» Continued from page 21

anything like that. I don't think it actually sank in that I won until we were almost home."

In the 4A boys pole vault, **Cooper Rivas** had no such dramatics in his championship quest. The Broadneck junior didn't even enter the field until the bar was at 12-foot-6, half a foot higher than anyone else in the field had cleared before using their allotted three misses on the same height.

Alone in his attempts, Rivas managed the spotlight and the change in tempo well to get as high as 13-2, 14 inches ahead of second place but five inches off his personal best.

"It was good and bad," Rivas said of performing alone for his entire participation in the pole vault. "There was one other vaulter who was going to jump with me and hopefully we would pace each other, but he got hurt. I didn't do as well as I think I could have, but it was good because I managed my tempo and enjoyed getting the win."

Rivas and Williams both expressed optimism of getting new personal records in the upcoming outdoor season. Williams is going for 6-foot-6, which he narrowly missed at the state meet, while Rivas has been nearing 15 feet in practice.

Falcons Fly To Indoor Title

» Continued from page 21

said. "I think we knew that we had a shot to win it, but I don't think anyone anticipated it would be by that much. My parents weren't even alive the last time we won, so it was nice to get that name up (in the gym) and see that as a competitive sport as well."

The unsung performances of **Alexa Holt**, who was the pole vault runner-up, and **Sydney Davis**, who had a huge personal best to finish fifth in the 3,200, underscored the team dynamic and scoring valuable points in case your big guns don't quite fire as intended.

And when it all comes together, it's even better.

"A lot can go wrong at a meet and your best laid plans end up not working out, but fortunately not much went wrong for us," said Severna Park coach **Josh Alcombright**. "We didn't talk a lot about where we would end up, but we encouraged the girls to just do what

they've been doing, and it was really great to see it pay off."

It was a historic day for a storied running school, and it seemed fitting that the reality of their success set in as Kamas, the cross-country stalwart and distance team leader, set off on her final dash.

By the time Kamas started her kick, sporting a cast due to a broken hand sustained earlier in the winter, she had dropped most of the field, but she wasn't sure where Fitzsimmons and Davis were.

"I normally start going a little faster around 600 (meters) and then really go at around 200, but in this meet I just went all out from the start of my kick," Kamas said. "I just had to give it all I had just because I didn't know who was right behind me; it could have been someone from another school and we needed the points. When I crossed and saw it was Lexi right behind me, I was really happy."

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From Kinder Park To Coaching First Base In The World Series

Mark Budzinski Has Gone From Player To Minor League Manager To Major League Coach

By Kevin Murnane

“The greatest human alive, the most selfless guy you’ll ever meet.” That’s how Major League Baseball (MLB) Network baseball analyst **Sean Casey** described Severna Park High School graduate **Mark Budzinski** in a 2025 interview with University of Richmond Magazine.

Casey and Budzinski were teammates at the University of Richmond in the early 1990s and are still close friends today. Both players were instrumental in the Spiders’ 43-win season in 1995, which resulted in an NCAA tournament appearance.

In 1995, Casey and Budzinski were both drafted by the then Cleveland Indians (now Guardians). Casey enjoyed a 12-year major league career with multiple teams while Budzinski played with the Cincinnati Reds in 2003. Budzinski played 11 seasons in the minor leagues with multiple organizations including Cleveland, the Chicago Cubs, the Milwaukee Brewers, Cincinnati and the Philadelphia Phillies.

Budzinski hit above a .280 batting average in eight of his 11 minor league seasons before he retired in 2005 and began selling real estate in Richmond. However, he missed the allure of being on the diamond with the fresh scent of recently cut grass, the crack of the bat and the sounds of baseballs popping into gloves.

He returned to professional baseball in 2014 and became the manager of the Lake

County Captains in the Midwest League in Cleveland’s minor league system. He continued managing four more years in Cleveland’s minor leagues before being added to the Indians’ major league coaching staff in 2017. In 2019, he was named Toronto’s first base and outfield coach.

Coaching was a natural move for Budzinski, who had been around baseball his whole life. He started playing baseball when he was 5 years old for the Greater Glen Burnie (GGB) organization and stayed in the GGB until he was in Severna Park Middle School.

“We lived in Severna Park, but the Green Hornets wouldn’t allow me to play when I was 5, so my dad registered me in the GGB,” Budzinski said.

It was 2025 Anne Arundel County Sports Hall of Fame inductee **Charlie Becker** who noticed Budzinski at various tournaments and approached the family about playing for the Green Hornets.

“Mark was my first recruit for our Mickey Mantle team,” Becker said with a smile. “Mark was a soccer player as well, and I could see he was a great athlete and became a vital part of our success with our teams in the Mickey Mantle, American Legion and Severna Park High School teams.”

Budzinski cherished those seasons playing for **Jim McCandless** and Becker and always looked forward to going to practice and games.

“Jim McCandless and Charlie Becker taught me more about baseball than anyone else,” Budzinski said. “In addition to teaching us the skills to be better baseball players, they taught us how to carry ourselves on and off the field.”

His work ethic and attention to detail, for which he credits his parents and



Photo courtesy of the Toronto Blue Jays
Severna Park’s Mark Budzinski congratulated Vladimir Guerrero Jr. after he hit one of his 23 home runs as a Toronto Blue Jay last year.

give the players could mean the difference in winning or losing games. For my first base coaching duties, I watch video tape that includes watching the pitchers’ tendencies and moves to first base and the catchers’ throwing time to second base.”

Toronto won 94 games and the American League title last year and faced the Dodgers in the World Series. Baseball fans will remember game seven as the lead changed throughout the game. The Blue Jays eventually lost 5-4 in extra innings.

“There were a lot of tears in that locker room,” Budzinski said. “It was as somber of a locker room as you’ll ever see. It’s so hard to win the division and advance in the playoffs. I’m just so thankful for that experience.”

After the World Series, Budzinski went home to Richmond for a few months, visited his parents in Severna Park and went to his favorite restaurants like Garry’s Grill and Adam’s Taphouse and Grille.

“The offseason goes by very fast and now we’re in spring training to get the players ready to compete against all of the great teams in the major leagues,” Budzinski said.

Toronto will look to defend their American League East divisional title. Competing in arguably the toughest division in baseball, it will take a Herculean effort to repeat as champs. “It will be a bloodbath again in our division with the Orioles, Yankees and Red Sox, and we’re going to battle every day,” Budzinski said.

Snow Snarls AACC Baseball Season

By Kevin Murnane

Calling it a “good workout,” Anne Arundel Community College (AACC) Athletic Director **Duane Herr** chipped and shoveled snow and ice for three consecutive days to clear just half of the school’s turf field so spring athletic teams could have a place to practice.

“The first day, our Coordinator of Athletics, **Tyler Richardson**, and I maneuvered through the foot of snow and ice, and I finally just slid down the bleachers,” Herr said. “It was the only way to get to the field and chisel open the gates. We used a sledgehammer and shovels and made some progress every day.”

Being an athletic director at a community college has a myriad of unwritten duties like shoveling snow off of a turf field because any type of snow-removal machine may damage the turf. However, being a community college athlete also has those untold tasks as well.

“We had the lacrosse team, women’s basketball team and baseball team all shoveling the field during that last week in January so we could have space for the baseball team to throw and lacrosse team to have conditioning drills and play catch,” Herr said.

College baseball teams start their season in early February because they need to play a certain number of games to qualify for the regional tournaments, which begin in early May.

“At the end of the regular season, the league will examine all the teams’ records and create the tournament bracket based on wins and losses and how many games played,” Herr explained. “You’re allowed to have 56 regular-season games in addition to your postseason games.”



Left: Severna Park’s Matt Dove got ready to take batting practice at AACC’s indoor batting cages. Dove is a power-hitting first baseman/designated hitter. Right: Arnold’s Chase Hannon began his throwing regimen on AACC’s turf field as its baseball field was covered by the late-January snowstorm.



Photos by Kevin Murnane

Last year, AACC went 35-26 and fell one game short of qualifying to go to the National Junior College (JUCO) World Series. It was the first time since 2011 that the Riverhawks advanced to the Region 20 championship round.

For this year’s team to achieve their goal of playing in the JUCO World Series, it was imperative to start practice in late January, but Mother Nature threw them a curveball.

“Some things are out of our control,” said AACC baseball head coach **Nick Hoffner**. “We’re fortunate to have some indoor batting cages and indoor pitching mounds that we set up in the gym. Also, with the help of many staff members and athletes, we were able to use half of our turf field for infield practice and throwing.”

The Riverhawks are off to a 8-3 start as of March 6, having traveled out of state and used the turf field at Joe Cannon Stadium in Hanover. They have had to postpone or cancel 11 games so far.

For this year’s team, the Riverhawks return many players who were instrumental in their success last year including Severna Park’s **Matt Dove**. The first baseman/designated hitter bats fifth or sixth in the lineup and started this season on a ferocious pace by going 3-for-3 with two walks in a recent doubleheader against Virginia Peninsula Community College.

“Matt can swing the bat,” Hoffner said. “He’s a good hitter and can drive the ball over the fence. He’s off to a hot start.”

Another standout who will be a key part of the pitching staff is Arnold resident **Chase Hannon**. The southpaw made second-team All-County last year and had a 7-1 record with a microscopic 0.92 earned run average (ERA) for Broadneck.

Hoffner said, “Chase is going to be a big part of our season. He looked very good in our fall season.”

To keep opposing batters off balance, Hannon uses a variety of pitches including a two-seam fastball, slider and changeup.

The Riverhawks have seen a steady ascension of their baseball program in the last few years with Hoffner recruiting talented players from across the region.

In addition to players from Anne Arundel County, Hoffner has recruited players from Howard, Carroll, Montgomery and Baltimore counties as well as the Eastern Shore.

The Riverhawks play community colleges in Virginia, New Jersey, Delaware, Pennsylvania and throughout Maryland. AACC hopes that playing a strenuous schedule will provide them with an edge in the regional tournament and going to Oklahoma for the JUCO World Series this year.

Folger McKinsey Goes Down Under In “Finding Nemo Jr.”



Photos by Judy Tacyn
Above: Director Atticus Boidy gave instruction during scene rehearsal at Folger McKinsey Elementary School. **Left:** (L-R) Brooke Harrison, Everett Clarke, Renner Riley (back) and Nelly Mongello are just a few of the talented fish in the “Finding Nemo Jr.” musical.

By Judy Tacyn

After a particularly cold and snowy winter in Severna Park, Folger McKinsey Elementary School is inviting the community to experience a warm, underwater adventure to Australia and Wallaby Way in, “Finding Nemo Jr.,” a musical adaptation of the 2003 Pixar film, taking stage March 21 and 22.

Atticus Boidy, a local theater stalwart and winner of the 2025 Annie Award for Arts Education, takes the director’s chair in this much-loved musical. More than 50 fourth- and fifth-grade students are in the strong ensemble cast and crew, who guarantee this performance will warm your heart and your toes (just try not to tap your feet during the heart-thumping choreography and powerful vocal performances).

Fifth-grader Everett Clarke plays Bruce, the shark who famously says, “Fish are friends, not food,” and Everett is confident that families will enjoy “Finding Nemo Jr.”

“When we put hard work into something at this school, we get a great result,” he said about Folger McKinsey. “We are just the best here. I have no other way to describe it. We have more enthusiasm, more craziness and more fun. When people come, we can show them that!”

Boidy is thrilled with the level of excitement felt by everyone in the production. “Enthusiasm is through the roof!” Boidy said. “All of these kids are naturals onstage, and they have taken to their parts so strongly!”

Brooke Harrison plays Professor Ray,

a spotted ray who takes Nemo and other young sea creatures on adventures in the Great Barrier Reef and warns of the “drop off.” The fifth-grader said she loves playing Professor Ray because he’s smart and uses fancy words for everything. But what she loves most is being with her longtime friends to produce this magical production.

“Most of us have known each other for five years, so it’s really easy and fun to work together because we know each other really well,” Brooke said. “It’s so much fun to bring characters to life together with our friends.”

Boidy, known for his innovative approach toward productions many audiences have already seen, said creating a stage that is set underwater for much of the show lent itself to creative use of scale and puppetry like costuming and set design. With the help of a talented parent costume crew, Boidy said their challenge was to make kids look like fish without putting on costumes of the character. The custom-made costumes feature embellishments that help show the flowy, underwater nature of movement.

Despite being more than 20 years old, “Finding Nemo” is a story that continues to excite children and adults no matter how many times it has been viewed.

Auditions took place before Thanksgiving break last November, and every student who auditioned was given a role.

“I love this show because every single actor has a named part. Everybody has

» Continued on page 34

Hunt For Eggs And Hang With The Easter Bunny

Children’s Events Offer
Easter Fun Around Town

Easter is just around the corner, and with it, so too are many events throughout the greater Severna Park area for kids of all ages to have fun hunting for Easter eggs, visiting with the Easter Bunny, and learning about the significance of the holiday.

Snacks With The Easter Bunny

March 22, 2:00-4:00pm

Earleigh Heights Volunteer Fire Company

Bring your kiddos to the Earleigh Heights Volunteer Fire Company for this free event where children can enjoy snacks, beverages, crafts, activities and fire prevention materials. Lunch items will be available for sale, and donation boots will be placed around the hall for those who would like to help offset costs. Registration is not required and photos with the Easter Bunny will be available for \$5. To learn more, go to www.ehvfc.org or email ladiesauxiliary@ehvfc.org.

Easter Journey

March 28, 11:00am-1:00pm

Severna Park Baptist Church

Experience the Easter story as a family at this free annual event that

offers a guided journey through the stations of Holy Week. Each station is interactive, with dramatic presentations for children and adults. Kids



can enjoy crafts, an egg hunt and photos with the Easter Bunny. Lunch and baked goods are available for purchase as a fundraiser for the church’s youth. For more information, go to www.spbcmd.com/events.

Friends of Kinder Farm Park Easter Egg Hunt

March 28, 1:00pm-3:00pm

Kinder Farm Park

This rain-or-shine event is for children ages 8 and under, with

Easter egg hunts split by age and starting at 1:00pm, 1:30pm, 2:00pm and 2:30pm. Meet the Easter Bunny and enjoy the company of friendly barnyard animals as well. The cost is \$10 per child, and tickets must be purchased in advance online at www.kinderfarmpark.org. Park gate fees apply.

Photos With The Easter Bunny

March 29, noon - 3:00pm

Homestead Gardens (Severna Park)

Bring your own camera for free photos with the Easter Bunny at Homestead Gardens. Pets are welcome to have their pics taken, too, and kids and kids at heart can look forward to meeting and petting real baby bunnies in the store.

Easter Splash

April 3, 6:15pm-7:15pm

Severna Park Community Center

An Easter egg hunt like no other — grab your swimsuits and get ready to make a splash hunting for treasure in the swimming pools at the Severna Park Community Center! Participants can collect floating eggs and toys during a safe and supervised evening of fun. Kids can

also enjoy festive treats and a special visit from the Easter Bunny. Certified lifeguards will be on duty. The cost is \$13 per child and registration is required at www.spcommunity-center.org/events.

Brunch With The Bunny And Egg Hunt

April 4, 9:00am

Saints Baptist Church

Bring your appetites for brunch with the Easter Bunny hosted by Saints Baptist Church at the Severna Park Elks Lodge. The event is completely free, and kids can look forward to an Easter egg hunt as well. Registration is required and can be completed using the link in the Facebook event at www.facebook.com/saintschurchmd.

Easter EGGstravaganza!

April 4, 9:00am-11:00am

Severna Park United Methodist Church

Get ready for a morning of crafts, games and snacks in the fellowship hall at Severna Park United Methodist Church, with an Easter egg hunt that starts promptly at 10:00am. Learn more about this and other events leading up to Easter at www.severnaparkumc.org/lent.

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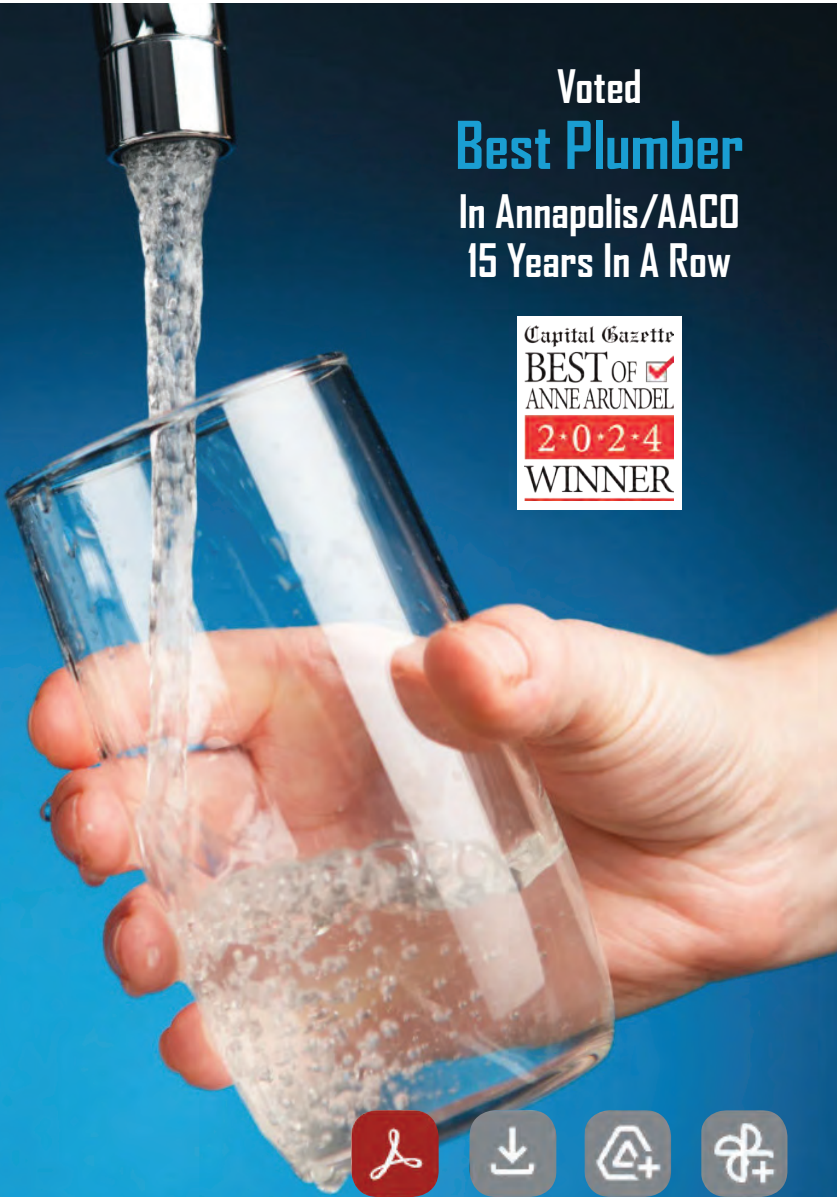
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Each month, the Severna Park Voice poses a question to a local fifth-grade class. This month, students from Ms. Hayman's class at Severn School answered the question:

“If you could invent something, what would it be, and why?”

I would invent an endless bag because you could pack anything and everything in it. It could grow bigger than a skyscraper or be smaller than a grain of sand. Whenever you want to grab something from it, just think about it, and it will go straight to your hand. My invention would cost 10 million pounds, so Mr. Beast and the King of England would buy it.

Adam H.

I would invent a robot that would do anything you asked it to do. It would cook, do chores, and it could even do my homework with its heavily trained AI brain. It would cost \$13,000. This invention could help older people or people with disabilities if they couldn't do the tasks themselves.

Ben C.

I would invent a make-up mask. The price is \$15.99 for one mask and \$25.99 for a pack of two masks! First, you put the mask on your face like a normal skin care mask and leave it on for 10 minutes. Then, peel off the mask, and you will have a full face of make-up!

Caroline C.

I would invent an AI robot chef. It would be in a big box and have an arm on top, a stove and an oven on a small counter, and tools on the side. When you want it to make something, you would order it on



an app or on the screen where the robot is. When the robot is done making the food, it will put it on a conveyor belt and deliver it to any room in your house.

Cole P.

I would make a never-ending water bottle. I would do this because every day, many people run out of water in their water bottles, and they can't refill them where they are. This invention would help people stay hydrated during the day and always have access to water.

Elizabeth L.

I would invent something called the “Every Other.” Basically, it is a watch, and you select something to learn, and it will teach you. The watch has everything in the world programmed into it, so you can learn anything within seconds. The watch scans your brain and puts everything you need to know into it.

Elle J.

I would invent something called CFA Sunday. CFA stands for “Chick-fil-A,” and as we know, Chick-fil-A is always closed on Sundays. So, I am creating an invention so you can get Chick-fil-A on Sundays when you really want

it. The design of the invention will be a rectangular box, and on one side of the box will be the Chick-fil-A menu. The middle of the box will look like a microwave. After you order, your meal will be freshly made in the box.

Elsa F.

I would invent a machine that can transport you into your favorite books or stories. You would be able to interact with characters and follow along with the plot while completing the story. My invention would also work for games, movies or series.

Eve D.

I would invent a silent basketball hoop because when I wake up in the morning, I want to play basketball. I have a mini hoop in my bedroom and a hoop outside, and I am an early riser. I don't want to wake my parents up because then they get grumpy.

Everett B.

I would invent a magical pen that takes you anywhere you want to go. You could write down on a piece of paper, “I want to go to Rome, Italy,” or “I need to get to my field hockey game!” and in an

instant, you'll find yourself at your destination! Sometimes you just want to be able to travel anywhere, knowing that you would be able to come back home.

Grace C.

I would invent a purse that has a built-in lock. The purse would have a button on the side that would open a compartment, and inside the compartment would be a combination lock. When you put the combination in, the zipper of the purse would lock. On the inside of the purse would be a small slot to put an AirTag so your family and friends would know where you are. Also, the purse would come in every color and size. I would call it “The Lock Box Bag.”

Harper D.

I would invent a baseball mouse for your computer. I think it would be really cool to have a rolling baseball on your desk as a mouse. You could toss it up and catch it like a ball because it's basically the same as a ball.

J.P. K.

I would invent grip tape on a lacrosse stick that never loses its grip because I love lacrosse, and it

is my favorite sport ever. It would help people who love lacrosse because the tape would always stay grippy, and you would not have to change it every year.

Jillian J.

I would invent a game called “Shoot Hoops for Robux.” In this game, you move an arrow using your finger or mouse. Once your aim is good, you let go and release the basketball into a hoop. If you make it, you receive 25 Robux. You would have to put in your password and username so the Robux could be sent. You get to play three times a day so that you don't overload yourself with Robux.

Liam T.

I would invent functioning robot NFL referees because the NFL referees are so biased. Also, I love the Ravens, and usually all the teams we play get bailed out. Finally, I would have to program the referees not to make every call. This is because, if you watch closely enough, there is a flag on every play, but the current referees let them go to keep the game going. So, I would have to make it the same.

Mason A.

I would invent a teleportation device that could teleport anything, from people to staplers. If I could make this device, it could end the need for cars, trains, boats and even planes. This device would look like a high-tech version of an elevator — you would step in and type in where you wanted to go on a keypad. It would say, “Going to...” and then wherever you typed in, it would take you there in less than 10 seconds. My device would be sold for a significant amount of money, maybe about \$300 million.

Nadia S.

If I could invent anything in the world, maybe even the galaxy, it would be never-ending flavor bubble gum. I don't like when I have good-flavored gum and it runs out of flavor. I could have one piece of gum that lasts forever, and I would never need another one.

Sam P.

I would invent a teleporting machine. I travel a lot, and it takes a long time. This teleporting machine would take one second to travel, and it would be free. The first place I would want to go is Dubai to see the tallest building in the world.

Xavier L.

Applications Being Accepted For Military Service Award

The Board of Education of Anne Arundel County is now accepting applications for the 2026 Military Service Award in honor of Candace C.W. Antwine, an initiative designed to aid Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) students who enlist in the military after graduation.

The monetary awards are given each spring in honor of Antwine, a Navy veteran who served on the Board of Education from 2018

until her death in 2021, to AACPS students who have made a similar commitment by enlisting to serve in the United States military upon graduation. Funds assist awardees with initial expenses related to enlisting, including uniforms and basic training supplies, and aim to remove financial barriers to military service.

Applications can be found online at www.aacps.org/serviceaward. The deadline to apply is 11:59pm on April 17.

Folger McKinsey's “Finding Nemo Jr.”

» Continued from page 32

a solo. Everybody has a spoken line. Everyone has their shining moment. They all have something,” Boidy explained. “I think that is really important because it gives them ownership and autonomy in choices for their character. I encourage them to act as big and as hard as they possibly can.”

Fourth-grader Renner Riley plays Nigel, the leader of the pelicans. This is her first Folger McKinsey production. “This experience is just amazing. Everyone has talent!” she exclaimed. “The directors pulled everything together to ensure that this

production is going to be amazing. Everyone deserves this!”

Nelly Mongello plays Pearl's parent, a flapjack octopus in Professor Ray's class. She summed up her experience and that of the entire cast and crew with a giggle. “Everyone worked really hard for this play,” she said. “But the set and the cast is really very fun. We have fun every day.”

Catch your “Finding Nemo Jr.” tickets before they swim away! Choose from three show times: Saturday, March 21, at 2:00pm or 7:00pm, or Sunday, March 22, at 2:00pm. Tickets can be purchased at cur8.com/40303/project/137477.

A New Era For SPHS A Cappella Group SOL

For many high school music groups, graduating a majority of members would mean a rebuilding year. For Severna Park High School’s (SPHS) a cappella group SOL, it meant a fresh start, and an extraordinary one at that.

After most of last year’s award-winning ensemble graduated, only four returning members remained: Brooklyn LaBrier, Kayelin Bowerman, Bella Holmes and Syrenna McNutt. With eight new voices joining the group, SOL essentially began the year as a new ensemble.

And yet, on February 7, this reimagined group took the stage at St. Charles High School to compete in the Mid-Atlantic quarterfinals of the International Championship of High School A Cappella — a national competition that showcases the top high school a cappella groups across the country. Schools compete in regional quarterfinals and semifinals, with the strongest advancing toward national finals.

SOL earned second place among nine powerhouse groups, an impressive feat considering they were one of the smallest ensembles performing.

With only 12 members, SOL creates a sound

that feels orchestral. There are no instruments, no backing tracks. Just voices. “The biggest challenge without instruments is that we need to rely on each other and our voices,” said Bowerman, a senior. “We need to learn how to sound like a trumpet, a drum, guitar and any other instruments we may need.”

Special Honors and Standout Moments

In addition to their second-place finish, SOL also received two prestigious individual awards:

Outstanding Vocal Percussion – Owen Panitz
Outstanding Arrangement – Syrenna McNutt for “Back to Friends/We Can’t Be Friends”

Panitz credited his inspiration to former SOL beatboxer Robert Heath. “He taught me everything I learned and is genuinely one of my favorite people ever,” Panitz shared. “I try to balance technical skill with musicality by adding dynamics and matching the tone of everyone else.”

For McNutt, the recognition came as a complete surprise. “I was actually in shock when I got that award,” she said. “It was so cool seeing something I wrote come to life. I really like the idea that music can make peo-

ple feel certain things; it really is a sixth sense.”

SOL’s haunting arrangement of “Creep” by Radiohead, featuring soloist Destiny Felder, has left more than a few audience members visibly moved.

“For me, this song speaks to that inner voice we all have, the one that tells us we’re not good enough or that we don’t belong,” Felder shared. “As teenagers, I think we hear that voice louder than ever. That’s what makes this song feel so personal.”

More Than A Music Group – A Family

Holmes noted, “The most noticeable difference between SOL and other performing ensembles is the level of teamwork required. From learning music to choreographing to carpooling, we are always relying on one another.”

“It feels surreal,” Bowerman said of advancing to semifinals. “For my last high school a cappella experience, to have the opportunity to go to semifinals again is amazing.”

Don’t Miss SOL Live

The community will have a chance to see this award-winning group perform at home. SOL will take the stage at SPHS on April 17 at 7:00pm. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for students, available at the door.



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Summer At Indian Creek Brings Enriched Camp Experiences To The Annapolis Community



As families across Anne Arundel County make plans for summer, Indian Creek School's 114-acre wooded campus prepares for a season of fun and adventure. The school's turf fields, forest trails, athletics dome, stages, studios, classrooms and labs will transform into a camp oasis as "Summer at the Creek" welcomes campers from across the region for six weeks of enrichment, exploration and connection.

While Indian Creek is known during the academic year as a premier Annapolis area independent school, its summer program opens those same resources to a broader community. Campers do not need to attend Indian Creek to register. The program is open to all families seeking a dynamic and well-rounded summer experience for children ages 4 to 14. New transportation options for 2026 have expanded access to Creek Camps, making it easier for families throughout the Annapolis area to participate.

This year's offerings span traditional day camps, theater intensives, sports programs and specialty camps, reflecting the breadth of the school's facilities and faculty expertise.

On any given day, younger campers in Imagination Station or Discovery Highway will immerse themselves in hands-on activities designed to spark curiosity. Older students might be programming in Everything Drones, experimenting in Indoor and Outdoor STEM, crafting in Sewing Studio, or strategizing through Dungeons and Dragons.

Outdoor adventure is a defining feature of Summer at the Creek, carrying the school's environmental studies curriculum into the summer. With access to wooded trails, expansive athletic facilities, and plenty of off-site travel, campers participate in mountain biking, standup paddleboarding, skateboarding, and a range of indoor and outdoor sports. The Eagles Athletics Complex, including turf fields, courts, a dome, gym and fitness center, allows students to train and play in spaces typically reserved for school year competition.

The performing arts will take center stage this summer, as Broadway Bound and Rising Stars campers produce two full-scale shows, "Madagascar" and Disney's "Dare to Dream." Students rehearse in dedicated performing arts spaces, working with experienced professionals on choreography, vocal performance and stagecraft. For many participants, the productions offer both artistic challenge and the opportunity to collaborate closely with peers from different schools and backgrounds.

A defining quality that distinguishes Summer at the Creek is not only the range of activities offered but also the intentional community that ties them together. Daily camp meetings and character-themed conversations bring all campers together, reinforcing values such as leadership, empathy and perseverance. Whether a child spends the morning coding, paddling, painting or rehearsing, the shared gatherings create a sense of unity across age groups and interests.

For families seeking academic enrichment, creative exploration, or simply an active and engaging environment, Summer at the Creek offers a glimpse of the independent school experience beyond the traditional school year. By combining robust facilities, experienced educators and an open-enrollment model, the program is not just as a camp but a summer extension of purposeful learning. Learn more at www.indiancreekschool.org/summer.

For more information, contact Indian Creek Summer Program Director Bob Laffey at 410-923-3660 or emailsummer@indiancreekschool.org.

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Educator Of The Month

Marissa Miller-Vasquez
Ruth Parker Eason School

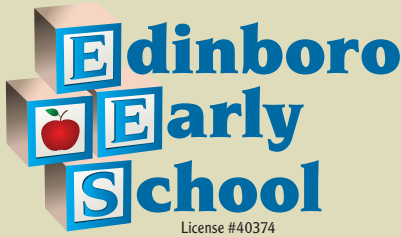


By Zach Sparks

At Ruth Parker Eason School in Millerville, students range in age from 3 to 21. Instead of a diploma, they receive a certificate of completion. For seven years, Marissa Miller-Vasquez has taught at Ruth Parker Eason, helping students with moderate to severe disabilities gain independence. “We have medically fragile kids to the tippy top of the autism spectrum, and each kid brings their own personality,” she said. “Specialized education is more than accommodations and lesson plans. It’s creating a safe learning environment for kids and that requires a lot of resilience to help them figure out goals and encourage self-advocacy.” Miller-Vasquez works in the high school department and is on the school’s leadership team. A big part of her job is collaborating with colleagues to ensure students have individualized support. Her previous job as a teacher’s aide, or paraeducator, at Sheppard Pratt, laid the groundwork for her career as a special educator. “I learned a lot about empathy and how behavior is a form of communication,” she said. “(That experience) shaped me as a person and as an educator.” Her students focus on reading, math, written expression, science and social studies — as most public-school students do — but activities are modified to ensure their success. Miller-Vasquez tries to make education fun. While each student has his or her own unique way of learning, Miller-Vasquez has found that tactile exploration, or engaging in the sense of touch, has

“Specialized education is more than accommodations and lesson plans. It’s creating a safe learning environment for kids and that requires a lot of resilience to help them figure out goals and encourage self-advocacy.”
— **MARISSA MILLER-VASQUEZ**

been especially helpful. “For a number sense routine, we use foam numbers,” she said to name one example. “Severe and profound students touch these as we’re counting and use switches to turn pages in stories. I am always looking for ways to enhance their learning. I am also learning too.” During her seven years at Ruth Parker Eason School, she has witnessed “a lot of wins.” “We had students who were younger and learning how to walk in the building,” she said, citing one example. Miller-Vasquez and her fellow staff members have fostered an environment that brings out the best among students and teachers. “It’s definitely family oriented here,” she said. “I have a good relationship with my principal and assistant principal ... I am very grateful for my coworkers, who are some of my best friends.” “You’re an angel on Earth,” she said of special education teachers. “I also say the same thing about nurses, even though they also deal with bodily fluids. I couldn’t be a nurse, and I appreciate what they do.” As part of an annual tradition, each public school nominates one person as Teacher of the Year. Ruth Parker Eason’s nominee this school year was Miller-Vasquez. She did not need to be named a finalist to feel appreciated and honored, although she will be recognized alongside other nominees during the 40th annual Excellence in Education Awards this April. “That was probably my most defining moment,” Miller-Vasquez said of the recognition. “I see people being nominated after 30 years of teaching, so just being nominated means so much.” That joy can be rivaled by few things. One equally satisfying moment? Seeing her students thrive. “A lot of times when we take kids out in the community, we get a lot of stares, but I wish people would see that the kids are talented, they’re capable and they’re full of potential,” Miller-Vasquez said. “They’re deserving of opportunities.”



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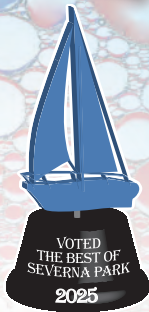
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Turning Congestive Heart Failure Into Success

Asghar Fakhri, MD
Associate Chair
of Cardiology
UM Baltimore
Washington
Medical Center



Hearing the words “congestive heart failure” can be frightening. But with the right combination of medications and, when appropriate, implantable devices, heart failure is often a highly treatable condition with patients able to

live longer with a higher quality of life.

Heart failure means the heart muscle is either weak or stiff and cannot pump blood efficiently. This can cause fluid buildup in the lungs (leading to shortness of breath), abdomen (causing bloating and poor appetite), and legs (resulting in swelling and difficulty walking).

Without treatment, it can worsen and affect other organs. The good news is that early, guideline-directed therapy can dramatically improve quality of life and survival.

Medications that treat congestive heart failure are highly effective, resulting in patients seeing a 90% to 95% improvement in symptoms. These drugs strengthen the heart, reduce fluid buildup, regulate blood pressure and can protect against harmful hormonal changes. For many patients, medications along with a heart healthy diet and exercise can stabilize the condition and prevent hospitalizations.

Some patients may benefit from also having an implantable device, such as a pacemaker or a defibrillator.

There are two key tests used to understand if a patient may need an implantable device in addition to medications to treat their heart failure. The first is an echocardiogram, or an ultrasound of the heart, that measures the heart’s pumping strength, called ejection fraction. Patients with a significantly reduced ejection fraction (especially below 35%) may benefit from a device in addition to medication.

The second test is an electrocardiogram (EKG), which is used to evaluate electrical patterns in the heart. Patients with a specific pattern called a left bundle branch block, where the electrical impulse to the left ventricle of the heart is delayed or blocked, also benefit from an implantable device.

It’s important to understand that devices do not replace medications; they enhance protection in carefully selected patients. If diet, exercise and medication are used to treat 90% to 95% of heart failure symptoms, the last 5% to 10% is achieved with the implantable devices.

Who needs a pacemaker versus a defibrillator?

Devices are typically reserved for more advanced heart failure cases.

A defibrillator is recommended for patients with weak heart muscles who are at risk for life-threatening fast heart rhythms. It continuously monitors the heart and can deliver a life-saving shock if needed. It does not make the heart stronger, but it prevents sudden cardiac death.

A pacemaker treats slow heart rhythms. However, in heart failure patients with reduced ejection fraction who require constant pacing — or who have left bundle branch block — a specialized pacemaker called cardiac resynchronization therapy (CRT) may be needed. CRT improves coordination of the heart’s contractions and can actually strengthen the heart over time. Some patients receive a combined CRT-defibrillator device. All of these devices are implantable through surgery and are considered permanent solutions.

These devices are implanted through a minor surgical procedure, and 99.9% of the time, patients do very well.

While heart failure is serious, it is not hopeless. With the right diet and exercise, modern medications and implantable technologies, we can turn what can be a frightening diagnosis into a manageable success story.

Listen to a podcast with Dr. Fakhri to learn more about the differences between pacemakers and defibrillators here: youtu.be/_kLG1Fvssgk?si=rytzq6YhBE9Khwsz. Have questions about your heart health? Schedule an appointment with a cardiologist at University of Maryland Baltimore Washington Heart Associates today at www.umbwmc.org/heart.

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UM BWMC Recognized For Patient Safety

The University of Maryland Baltimore Washington Medical Center (UM BWMC) was recognized by the Mid-Atlantic Patient Safety Center as a Circle of Honor winner in the 2026 Minogue Awards for a new population health initiative that’s reducing readmissions through the emergency department.

A member organization of the University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS), UM BWMC was one of only eight hospitals recognized for its commitment to high-quality care by the annual Minogue

What Your Back Pain Might Be Telling You

Christopher Taleghani, MD
Luminis Health



Many of us suffer from back pain. It’s one of the most common health problems in the United States. From a steady, dull throbbing to a sharp, sudden pain that radiates down

your leg, there’s a wide range of ways you might experience it — and an even wider range of ways it can happen.

It’s important to let a specialist take a closer look, so you can better understand your options and work together to build a treatment plan.

Causes of back pain symptoms

Most of us experience back pain at some point in our lives. It can be caused by factors such as:

- Age • Diet • Family history
- Fitness level • Job-related risk
- Stress level • Weight

When to see a doctor about your back pain symptoms

See your doctor right away if your back pain doesn’t improve after a few weeks, or if you have these symptoms:

- Back pain after a fall or injury
- Fever, which can be a sign of discitis or an epidural abscess
- Numbness and tingling
- Severe back pain that medicine doesn’t help
- Trouble urinating
- Unplanned weight loss
- Weakness

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Treatment options

The right treatment depends on the cause of your pain. Your doctor will do a full exam, which may include X-rays and scans, to better pinpoint what’s causing your pain and how best to treat it. An accurate diagnosis is essential as different structural problems can give similar and often overlapping symptoms.

In some cases, you can improve back pain with lifestyle changes, such as staying active to increase strength and balance. You could also work to maintain a healthy body weight to lower stress on your back.

When you may need surgery for back pain

Conservative treatments, including physical therapy, relieve pain in about 80% of cases. If these don’t work, surgery may help. Options range from minimally invasive procedures to open surgery, with sacroiliac (SI) joint fusion effective in about 20% of cases to reduce pain and restore stability.

What is SI fusion?

The SI joint is where the spine and pelvis meet. SI fusion makes the SI joint more stable since it, like any joint, can break down over time or because of an injury. The result is often a painful lower back.

Your neurosurgeon will make a small incision and use an implant system to stabilize and fuse the SI joint to prevent ongoing pain. The procedure is designed to help you recover faster with fewer complications and better outcomes.

SI fusion is a minimally invasive surgery that has a high success rate. After surgery, patients typically recover in about three weeks using a walker or crutch, and most don’t need physical therapy.

Expert care for your back pain

If your back pain hasn’t improved, ask your doctor whether it may be related to your SI joints. If diagnosed with an SI joint condition, contact Dr. Christopher Taleghani at 443-451-4994.

Christopher Taleghani has performed more than 500 SI fusion procedures.

Awards program, an honor that received more than 50 submissions from health care organizations and hospitals across Maryland. The Minogue Awards celebrate innovation and excellence in patient safety across the Mid-Atlantic region.

This is the fifth consecutive year UM BWMC has had care programs honored by the Mid-Atlantic Patient Safety Center, formerly known as the Maryland Patient Safety Center.

The 2026 honoree, Dr. Alisa Larbalestrier, medical director for population health and data analytics at UM BWMC, saw a persistent safety and quality challenge in the high volume of readmissions that occur at the hospital. Working with colleagues in the population health and emergency departments at UM BWMC, she developed a program that sought to decrease readmissions and advance

health equity by addressing social drivers of health, improving access to medications and outpatient care, and supporting medically fragile patients in maintaining their health safely at home.

“At UM BWMC, most admissions and readmissions come through the emergency department,” Larbalestrier said. “We embarked on a new quality improvement initiative called IMPACT — Interventions to Minimize Preventable Admissions through Care Transitions — to address preventable hospital readmissions by intervening earlier in the care continuum. This approach hardwires safety into daily operations, resulting in more timely, equitable, and clinically appropriate discharge planning and reducing the chances of needing post-discharge intervention.”

To learn more about UM BWMC’s outreach efforts, visit umbwmc.org.

“Broadway Backwards: A Miscast Cabaret” To Raise Money For The TMC



Many cast members of “Broadway Backwards: A Miscast Cabaret” united for a group photo during rehearsal.

By Jaina Peveto

In an upcoming cabaret, The Talent Machine Company will feature actors in roles that go against expected casting in more than one way. Though Talent Machine is a children’s theater, “Broadway Backwards: A Miscast Cabaret” will feature actors ages 18 and older performing in a variety of roles in which they would not usually be cast. The show is a benefit fundraiser for the children’s shows.

“This cabaret is just one very small piece of how I’m able to give back to something that gave so much to me as a kid,” said cabaret director and Talent Machine alum Sarah Johansen.

Talent Machine holds four performances for kids and teens each year: two summer shows, a holiday spectacular and a spring production. In partnership with The Penguin Project, the spring musical is open to performers with disabilities ages 7 to 21 and pairs performers with volunteer peer mentors. The cabaret will raise money for the children’s performances, which the actors participate in without having to pay substantial fees.

“I think it’s a great organization; I think the arts are so important,” said Arnold resident and cabaret cast member Layne Cassidy, who performed with Talent Machine until graduating from Broadneck High School (BHS). “It really is a place of community at the end of the day.”

Johansen, who grew up in Arnold, performed with Talent

Machine from the late 1990s through her graduation from BHS in 2010. Last year, she and fellow Talent Machine alum Taylor Rector had the idea to bring together adults to perform in a cabaret-style show featuring solos, duets, trios and group numbers. “Broadway Backwards” will be their second adult cabaret.

“Going to rehearsals with such a vibrant, accepting and talented group of people has been such a joy.”

— **ABBY BURNS**
SEVERNA PARK HIGH
SCHOOL ALUM

In addition to directing, Johansen is co-hosting the show with Rector, as well as writing a script that will connect the various performances together. The script will make the show fall somewhere in between a full show and a standard cabaret in terms of style.

“It’s a fun muscle to flex,” Johansen said. “As someone who directs, you’re not usually part of that part of the process.”

Though some of the performers are working with the group for the first time, many of the actors are Talent Machine alumni enjoying the opportunity to return to their musical theater roots. Some of the actors had not participated in any productions in a long time.

“It really means a lot to me to be able to incorporate music and performing into my busy schedule,” said cabaret cast member and Severna Park High School alum Abby Burns. “Going to rehearsals with such a vibrant, accepting and talented group of people has been such a joy.”

Rehearsals have taken place at Talent Machine’s usual space at Stageworkz in Millersville. Though they’re putting a lot of work into the production, the cast has also enjoyed rehearsals having a more casual approach. “We go to rehearsal at night and then we sing and have fun and play,” Johansen said. “It’s a combination of philanthropy and a fun activity for people. It’s a very social activity, but we do take the show very seriously.”

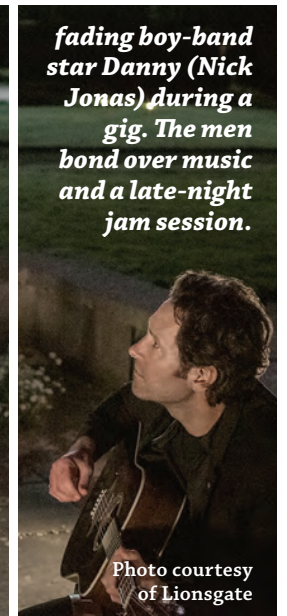
Johansen hopes that the cabarets will continue to take place regularly, maybe even moving from once a year to twice a year. “It is a new series, so it kind of is like a big experiment,” she said. “We got a lot of great feedback last year about people enjoying the show. So hopefully if we keep the themes different every time and we keep that kind of new and fresh, people will keep coming back.”

“Broadway Backwards: A Miscast Cabaret” will take place at Live Arts Studio in Annapolis Mall at 7:30pm on Friday, March 27. Johansen recommends PG-13 as a rating for the audience. To purchase tickets and learn more about the show, visit www.talent-machine.com/cabaret.

Annapolis Film Festival Celebrates The Heartbeat Of Film



In the film “Power Ballad,” Rick (right, played by Paul Rudd) is a past-his-prime wedding singer who meets



fading boy-band star Danny (Nick Jonas) during a gig. The men bond over music and a late-night jam session.

Photo courtesy of Lionsgate

By Jaina Peveto

From March 26-29, the Annapolis Film Festival will bring film lovers to Naptown for a weekend full of movie screenings, panels and more. The theme of the festival is “The Heartbeat of Film.”

“We’re looking to find the heart in films,” explained festival director and co-founder Patti White. “And this year, we have a lot of films that show that and bring that out. But what we really are, we feel like we’re running on a pulse. The pulse and the beat.”

This year’s opening-night film is “Power Ballad,” a musical comedy directed by “Sing Street” director John Carney and starring Nick Jonas and Paul Rudd. The festival will be the film’s Maryland premiere, ahead of its theatrical release date of June 5. The premiere will take place at Maryland Hall.

“We’re excited about this film because really, when it comes down to it, it’s about friendship. And it’s about how sort of revenge and friendship and all kinds of things happen that pull people apart and then bring people together,” White said.

The festival also includes six themed showcases, beginning on Friday. The environmental showcase will feature “This Is Not A Drill,” a documentary that features people battling against environmental racism by pushing against the idea of a pipeline that would release harmful chemicals.

The Black Experience will show “The Eyes of Ghana,” a documentary directed by Ben Proudfoot and executive produced by Barack and Michelle Obama. The Latine Experience is set to feature “American Pachuco,” which won the Audience Award at the 2026 Sundance Film Festival.

» Continued on page 42



**ANNAPOLIS
FILM
FESTIVAL**

DINING OUT AROUND THE PARK

Southern Inspiration, Culinary Innovation And Warm Hospitality Converge At Elephant In The Room



Above: The Elephant Stack is a signature dish featuring mac and cheese, collards and melt-in-your-mouth short rib.

By Meredith Winter

The dinner, lunch and drink menus are creative and thoughtfully curated. The staff members are approachable and knowledgeable. The food itself is a superb addition to the local restaurant scene. So, let's talk about the elephant in the room: Barely open a full month now, Millersville's newest restaurant is already so popular that you may encounter a short wait to be seated, even if you arrive early on a Friday evening.

That's likely not a problem for owner and U.S. Navy veteran Jeremy Allen Sr., and it wasn't an issue for my husband, Scott, and I when we went to check out Elephant in the Room in late February. The Southern-inspired restaurant and bar had officially opened its doors just two weeks prior, and that evening, it had a packed house and was hosting a birthday party for another Navy vet.

We used the extra moments to study the menu online, knowing we'd have tough choices to make from among many enticing options. The website advertised "soulful Southern influence," so we mapped out a meal that would take our taste buds on a road trip across the south, from North Carolina to the Lowcountry, down to New Orleans and beyond.

We were seated at a large commu-



Photos by Meredith Winter

Above: Piled high with crab and corn salsa, the fried green tomatoes are fried to crispy perfection. **Below:** The Creole pasta is flavorful, with a generous amount of shrimp, chicken and sausage.



nity-style table between two other couples who both stated that they were dining at the new haunt for their fourth time. Green flag.

I was stoked to try the bacon-wrapped dates, something you don't see on many local menus, but due to the success the restaurant had enjoyed in its first two weeks, it had temporarily run out of them. That made the fried green tomatoes (\$16.50) and the pulled pork sliders (\$12.95) easy selections as starters.

Our attentive server hooked us up with something to drink, and our food came out in short order. Golden-fried and served over arugula, the trio of fried green tomatoes were rich in flavor and had a satisfying crunch accentuated by corn salsa and crab meat.

Carolina style pork can be hit-or-miss for me depending on how strong the vinegar comes through; the pulled pork sliders were a definite hit, though, with flavorful pork and tangy slaw. We rounded out our first course with a side of cornbread with hot honey drizzle (\$4.50), a nice complement to the

other southern staples.

My aversion to vinegar — and therefore collard greens — almost steered me away from ordering the Elephant Stack (\$25) as my main course, but it was labeled a signature item, so I went for it. The dish's short rib, mac and cheese, and collards were served layered in a bowl, a pleasantly surprising presentation of what I expected to be a more standard plate of 'cue. The short rib was melt-in-your-mouth tender, and the mac was comforting and creamy, but the greens were the plot twist.

I not only liked them; I loved them. I couldn't put my finger on why, so on our way out I stopped the owner and basically asked, "what gives?" Allen shared that his greens are prepared with turkey and a unique blend of seasonings. Whatever the X factor was, he had converted me.

My husband opted for the Creole pasta (\$28). A large bowl of penne came coated in Creole marinara and generously filled with shrimp, sausage, chicken, peppers and onions. The shrimp — his favorite part



Above: The Elephant in the Room proudly serves an iconic Maryland dessert, Smith Island cake, made by hand from a local bakery.

— were large and plentiful; the chicken was tender and the sausage brought just the right heat.

The entrée portions were sizable enough that we both took a little home (they were good reheated, too), and of course we were saving room for dessert.

Our friendly server informed us that the restaurant was offering red velvet Smith Island cake and bread pudding that evening.

We opted for the cake (\$11.50), described on the restaurant's Facebook page as "made by hand from a local bakery using a recipe passed down for generations by the ladies of Smith Island." The thin, alternating layers of red velvet cake and cream cheese icing were a sweet finale to our meal.

The Elephant in the Room describes itself as a place "where comfort food gets dressed up." The food was certainly dressed to the nines, but the crowd and the environment were inviting and unpretentious. The restaurant is a casual place to savor the company of family and friends or perhaps meet new ones.

We left looking forward to our next visit — and our third and fourth, to catch up with the "regulars." After all, I still need to try those bacon-wrapped dates, Scott wants to know how the shrimp and grits stack up to our Charleston favorites, and the menu offers much more to explore.



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Maryland Day Celebration Returns March 19-25

Heritage Celebration Features Over 50 Partners And Events Across The County

Maryland Day Celebration 2026 will run from March 19-25, giving residents and visitors an entire week to explore the rich history and heritage of the Chesapeake region, where Maryland began. Now in its 18th year, the expanded celebration has become the unofficial launch of the spring heritage tourism season.

The week-long format allows more families, tourists and history enthusiasts to participate on their own schedules. Presented by Chesapeake Crossroads Heritage Area, the celebration will feature more than 50 partner organizations hosting special events, programs, and activities throughout Annapolis and Anne Arundel County.

The celebration showcases local museums, historic buildings, heritage sites, art galleries, natural resources, archaeological sites, parks, trails and historic communities. Many Maryland Day events are offered for free or for just \$1, making history accessible to everyone. The diverse programming allows visitors to build their own itinerary, exploring everything from maritime heritage to colonial architecture, from artistic expressions to natural landscapes.

Maryland Day commemorates the anniversary of March 25, 1634, when the first European settlers from the ships Ark and Dove landed on Maryland soil. Marylanders began observing Maryland Day in 1903 when the State Board of Education designated it as a day devoted to the study of Maryland history. In 1916, the General Assembly authorized the celebration of Maryland Day as a legal state holiday.

As the nation prepares to commemorate its founding and 250th anniversary, Maryland Day 2026 offers a timely opportunity to discover, reflect on, and celebrate the Chesapeake region's central role in American history.

Visitors can plan their Maryland Day experience using an interactive map available at www.maryland-day.org, where they can filter events by location, date and type to build a personalized itinerary.

Maryland Day Celebration 2026 is presented by Chesapeake Crossroads Heritage Area Inc. with the generous support of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority, Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County, the City of Annapolis, and Anne Arundel County, in collaboration with Maryland Two Fifty and Annapolis 250.

For more information, event listings, and to plan your visit, visit www.marylandday.org or follow @marylanddaycelebration on Instagram and Maryland Day on Facebook.



Annapolis Film Festival

» Continued from page 39

The film set to be shown on Saturday as part of the Faith Experience showcase, "Elijah Peel," will have its world premiere at the Annapolis Film Festival. Cast members from the film will attend, including Kevin Sorbo, who played Hercules in "Hercules: The Legendary Journeys" and Professor Jeffrey Radisson in "God's Not Dead."

The Sailing Showcase will also take place on Saturday, and it will feature "Expedition Antarctica," a film made in the 1990s by Gary Jobsten. It was shown once on ESPN a long time ago but has not been shown many times since its footage was filmed. Jobsten will bring some of the people from the expedition to the festival.

The Jewish Showcase will show "Tovah," a biographical documentary about the life of Tovah Feldshuh. The showcase will also include a Q&A and breakfast.

Family Days, the family screening, will feature "Cookie Queen," a film about the entrepreneurial efforts of Girl Scouts selling cookies. The first 25 Girl Scouts wearing their uniforms will get a free ticket. Another highlight of the festival is the student showcase, which shows the work of emerging filmmakers.

Other films in primetime spots include "Carolina Caroline," the director of which will attend the festival, and "Poetic License," the directorial debut of Maude Apatow. The closing-day film is "Run Amok," a dark comedy directed by NB Mager.

A Sunday awards ceremony will feature audience awards for documentary and

narrative, as well as for short films. Juried awards will also be presented by individuals from the film industry. The winning films will be shown that night.

"We're going into our 14th year, and we feel this is one of the strongest slates we've had, complete slates in a long time," said festival director and co-founder Lee Anderson.

The festival will also include four industry panels on Friday, including a new screenwriting panel. Other panels include one on distribution, one on producing and one on making a movie in Maryland.

People can also attend coffee talks at Rams Head On Stage, where each morning, they can enjoy a continental breakfast and curated and hosted conversations with unannounced guests from the film industry. The audience will have the chance to interact with those guests and ask questions about how they got where they are.

On Saturday morning, aspiring filmmakers can join the festival's live pitch competition, where judges from the industry attend and five lucky finalists get to pitch their ideas for a short film. The winner wins a package worth about \$30,000 that will help them produce their short film, to be shown at next year's festival.

"These are some really terrific independent films being shown here that otherwise you're not going to get to see," White said.

Anderson added, "This festival is one of the highlights of living in Annapolis, Maryland, now. If you haven't been to the festival, try it ... anyone can come."

To purchase tickets, see the slated films, and learn more, visit www.annapolisfilmfestival.com.

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"Good Luck, Have Fun, Don't Die" Takes Viewers On An Apocalyptic Sci-Fi Adventure

By James Buxton

Film Critic

If there's one truth that can be taken from the last few years of cinema, it's that we're in dire need of more weird movies. We've had big movies, and great movies, and movies that will be watched for decades to come, but it's simply been too long since we've had something truly "out there."

Enter Gore Verbinski, the mastermind behind the first three "Pirates of the Caribbean" movies. Until this latest entry, he had spent the best part of a decade away from the camera. "Good Luck, Have Fun, Don't Die" is, in a word, madness. Take the mile-a-minute gonzo energy of the most frenetic "Pirates" movie, multiply it by 100, blend in a dozen other inspirations, and you've got something that doesn't really feel like anything else we've ever seen before.

It's a little bit "Black Mirror," a little bit "Groundhog Day," a little bit "Everything Everywhere All at Once," and yet simultaneously entirely its own thing. While individual moments largely come across as relatively small-scale (a huge chunk of the first act is contained entirely within a single diner), it's a movie with seemingly infinite scope — Sam Rockwell is incredible as the endlessly exhausted but determined man from the future, playing just unhinged enough to make his rambling seem mildly terrifying, but with an earnestness that puts you firmly on his side.

It's a film with a lot to say about the state of the world right now. Set in Los Angeles on the cusp of the artificial intelligence (AI) singularity, the point at which it takes over everything and effectively dooms mankind, "Good Luck, Have Fun, Don't Die" oddly stands out as one of the most optimistic films about the oncoming apocalypse. Rockwell's character understands what needs to be done to save the world,

but unlike the protagonists in "The Terminator" or the more recent "Mission: Impossible" movies, he isn't wholly intent on destroying it but rather harnessing it for something better. At that point, there's no evil mastermind at work, just an artificial intelligence so captivating that it distracts the planet into killing itself.

It's a unique take on the genre that feels very aligned with our own modern understanding of the AI threat, now that we're already living with it. It's unlikely that ChatGPT is going to morph into SkyNet and wipe us out by taking control of our defense networks, but making it so we never interact with anyone or anything else ever again? That's just close enough to real that it feels like a real threat.

The movie is interspersed with a fair few flashbacks that could easily stand as solo "Black Mirror" episodes, but all interlink into one final twist-laden, satisfying showdown. It is, however, a long journey to that ending. This movie may take some of the best elements from Verbinski's work on the "Pirates of the Caribbean" movies, namely its spectacular supporting cast and fantastic action sequences, but it also adopts a number of its less desirable traits, such as an overly bloated runtime and the sense that it could have easily been half an hour shorter. The movie is a ton of fun and deserves to be seen on the big screen, but those final moments, as cathartic as they may feel, come after two of the longest hours experienced in a theater.

But it's a rip-roaring time nonetheless, and a sure sign that, assuming he doesn't disappear for 10 years again, director Gore Verbinski has still got it in him to make something grand. The whole cast is great, with special shoutouts to Rockwell, Haley Lu Richardson, and Asim Chaudhry of "Taskmaster," and if there's any movie this month that deserves to be seen on the biggest screen you can find, it's this one.



Photos courtesy of Briarcliff Entertainment

Set in Los Angeles during a time when artificial intelligence effectively dooms mankind, "Good Luck, Have Fun, Don't Die" oddly stands out as an optimistic film.



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Long-Term Care: Your Options For Planning

Jason LaBarge
Financial Advisor
and President
LaBarge Financial



Americans are living longer than ever before, but that longevity comes with financial challenges for retirees.

Today, the average American lives to be 78. However, while medical

advancements have extended lifespan, the average "health span," the years lived in good health, is closer to 67 years. That means many individuals spend more than a decade managing chronic conditions or other health concerns later in life.

As a result, health care has become one of the largest expenses in retirement. In 2025, the average 65-year-old could expect to spend approximately \$172,500 on health care throughout retirement, up from \$165,000 in 2024. In Maryland, health care costs are projected to rise 6.5% in 2026, adding additional pressure to retirement budgets.

Planning ahead is essential. Below are several strategies to consider.

Annuities

Annuities have received mixed reviews over the years, but when used appropriately, they can serve as a valuable tool in a retirement plan. They are designed to provide a steady stream of income, which can help cover health care expenses in retirement.

Certain riders have optional features that provide added benefits and can enhance an annuity's value. For example, a Guaranteed Minimum Income Benefit (GMIB) rider establishes a minimum level of lifetime income, even if market performance declines. This type of guarantee can help ensure reliable income for general living expenses or potential long-term care needs.

Annuities offer various structures and features, so it is important to carefully evaluate your individual goals, risk tolerance, and overall financial picture before selecting one.

Self-Insurance

Another approach is self-insuring, which means relying on your personal savings and investment portfolio to cover health care and long-term care costs.

While the average health care expense for a 65-year-old is around

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Chamber Update

Liz League
CEO
GSPACC



Please give a warm welcome to our newest members and enjoy reading about all the businesses that make our community the best place to live!

Chief Health & Wellness LLC

Chief Health & Wellness is a medical clinic focusing on primary care and wellness services. It offers preventive/primary care from birth to end-of-life, accepting most major insurances. Chief Health & Wellness also offers alternative services such as bioidentical hormone replacement, medical weight loss, and IV vitamin therapy. To learn more, email chiefhealthwellness@gmail.com.

Riverside Pediatrics

www.riversidepediatricsmd.com

This is a small pediatric primary care office in Arnold where you will always find familiar faces and personalized attention. With years of combined experience, Dr. Eliza Huebner and certified registered nurse practitioner Cathy Gvozden are proud to deliver exceptional medical care in a welcoming, family-focused setting. Here, your children aren't just patients; they are neighbors, friends, and will be taken care of as their own.

Park Plumbing

www.parkplumbingllc.com

Welcome to Park Plumbing, where Master Plumber Ryan Hufnell and his skilled team have been redefining residential plumbing in Severna Park since September 2022. They don't just fix leaks; they offer a full spectrum of plumbing services, from expert consultations to thorough maintenance and major plumbing service replacements. Serving Anne Arundel County and beyond.

Elephant in the Room (new silver member)

www.eatdrinkelephant.com

Welcome to Elephant in the Room — a refined yet inviting dining destination where conversation, connection and cuisine take center stage. A nod to what's often left unspoken, inviting guests to slow down, gather, and savor both food and company in an atmosphere that feels approachable, warm and memorable. The menu is thoughtfully curated by award-winning chef Rock Harper, widely known for his victory on "Hell's Kitchen." Inspired by the best of American flavors with a soulful southern influence, the menu brings together comfort and creativity, featuring elevated classics, seasonal ingredients, and dishes that spark nostalgia while delivering something fresh. The restaurant is veteran-owned.

Lightbridge Academy Gambrills

www.lightbridgeacademy.com/gambrills-waughchapel-md

Lightbridge Academy of Gambrills-Waugh Chapel is more than just a day care, providing high-quality child care and early education programs for infants, toddlers, preschoolers and pre-K. Located near Waugh Chapel and Crofton, Lightbridge Academy is currently enrolling for full-day, year-round programs that combine learning and play to help children thrive. Its new facility is currently under construction, and the staff members cannot wait to open their doors to provide a nurturing environment for your little one.

Bookkeeping by Jennifer

www.bookkeepingbyjennifer.com

Bookkeeping by Jennifer helps service-based businesses stay organized, goal-focused and serving their customers. Jennifer Davis handles accounts payable, accounts receivable, reconciliations, full-cycle accounting, and reporting so you can focus on growth. She makes bookkeeping "centsible" and stress-free and is there to help you succeed.

Flying Kiwi Ice Cream LLC

www.flyingkiwiicecream.com

Flying Kiwi Ice Cream is a family-owned LLC founded in 2025 by lifelong residents of Severna Park and Arnold. They built their food truck from scratch to bring authentic New Zealand-style ice cream to our community. Each serving is made fresh to order using premium ice cream blended with real organic fruit — 100% free from artificial dyes and flavors. They are passionate about quality ingredients and creating joyful community connections.

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www.crawfordqexec.com

Dave Crawford is running for county executive in Anne Arundel County.

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February started with a multi-chamber networking event held at the **Yumi Hogan International Art Gallery at BWI Airport**. More than 100 attendees were warmly welcomed by Shanetta Griffin, the new CEO of the Maryland Aviation Administration, » Continued on page 46

GSPACC Honors Christina Prieto With 2026 Harmony Award



Christina Prieto (center), owner of Christina Josephs Salon in Millersville, was honored with the Greater Severna Park and Arnold Chamber of Commerce's (GSPACC) 2026 Harmony Award in February. GSPACC CEO Liz League (left) and President Patrick Lee presented the award during the chamber's winter general membership meeting. Prieto was recognized for her philanthropic work with nonprofits, including House of Ruth, and for being a role model through scholarships, training and internships for students pursuing a career in the hair industry. The Harmony Award is given in recognition of generous efforts to better the lives of others in the community.



Who should get a Hearing Test?

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- Cardiac Patients** - Inadequate blood flow from heart disease can contribute to hearing loss.
- Diabetics** - High blood glucose levels can damage the small blood vessels in your inner ear, diminishing the ability to hear.
- Cancer Survivors** - Damaged hair cells in your inner ear do not grow back, and can lead to hearing loss, ringing in the ear and dizziness.



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Rachel Muñoz, Esq



Young Entrepreneurs, Save The Date

Children's Business Fair Slated For April 11

Kids ages 5-16, if you run your own small business, this event is for you! The Maryland Curiosity Lab is partnering with the Greater Severna Park and Arnold Chamber of Commerce to host its fourth annual Acton Children's Business Fair. Launched in 2022 with 24 young entrepreneurs,

the fair has grown each year — so much so that it is moving to the Park Plaza shopping center this year in order to host up to 70 child-run businesses. Interested kids can apply online for a booth, and if accepted, the cost is \$25. The event will run from 1:00pm-4:00pm on Saturday, April 11, and is free for anyone to attend. Learn more and apply at www.marylandcuriositylab.org.



Long-Term Care: Your Options For Planning

» Continued from page 44

\$172,000, actual costs vary widely depending on health status, longevity, and location. Choosing to self-insure requires a substantial level of savings and disciplined portfolio management to help ensure assets continue to grow and keep pace with inflation.

Because health care expenses tend to rise over time, younger individuals should plan for even higher future costs. This strategy can be effective but requires careful financial planning and ongoing oversight.

Long-Term Care Insurance

Long-term care insurance may be appropriate for individuals who prefer risk protection rather than relying solely on assets or income products. These policies function similarly to traditional insurance: You pay a premium in exchange for coverage if long-term care is needed. Benefits often include inflation adjustments to help preserve purchasing power over time.

In 2026, a \$165,000 policy could cost \$2,000 to \$7,000 each year for the average 55-year-old, depending on your gender and whether you're single or married. While this protects you, it can be costly over time, and if

you never end up needing the policy, the money spent on premiums can't be recouped.

Building a Retirement Plan That Supports Your Health and Wealth

Each of these options has advantages and trade-offs. The right choice depends on your assets, income needs, health outlook, and personal preferences. Consulting with a qualified financial professional can help you evaluate these strategies and design a plan tailored to your situation.

Beyond financial preparation, maintaining an active and healthy lifestyle can also play a meaningful role in reducing long-term health care costs. Studies show this can lead to positive long-term benefits, like increasing brain and heart health, lowering cancer risk and extending the length of independent living, potentially reducing your long-term care expenses.

You deserve a retirement that is both financially secure and personally fulfilling. With thoughtful planning and proactive health management, you can build a strategy that supports both your longevity and your quality of life.

**Jason LaBarge, financial advisor
and president of LaBarge Financial**
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Chamber Update

» Continued from page 44

who oversees the airport.

Our Successful Women in Business group was treated to a Galentine's party at **Dental FX** in Pasadena. Dr. Judy Yu, the owner of the practice, delivered a presentation on the importance of good dental hygiene for a healthy heart. And she made delicious appetizers herself.

Our Monthly Mingle was held at **Elephant in the Room**, and we were treated like royalty. We enjoyed a variety of delicious appetizers, including fried pickles and mac and cheese balls. Owner Jeremy Allen was gracious and accommodating and obviously enjoys supporting our community.

Our Business "Bites" brown bag lunch speakers were Keri Wise and Aimee Merchant, founders of **Two Truths Solutions LLC**. They delivered an engaging presentation on conflict resolution and ways to view and change how we react in uncomfortable situations.

We held three ribbon-cutting celebrations in February: the grand opening of **Palma** in Millersville, the grand reopening of **Stretch Zone Severna Park**, and the grand opening of **Riverside Pediatrics** in Arnold. Congratulations!

Our annual winter general membership meeting was held at **Romilo's Restaurant and Bar**, and it was an opportunity to recognize leaders within the chamber and celebrate the 2026 board of directors. We were honored to have Judge Cathy Vitale perform the swearing-in ceremony of the board. The room was filled with outstanding individuals who have made a meaningful impact on our business community, and we are looking forward to a fantastic year!

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RIBBON CUTTINGS

Elephant In The Room Provides Elevated Comfort Food

Following its official opening in mid-February, Millersville's newest restaurant and bar, Elephant in the Room, celebrated new beginnings with a ribbon-cutting hosted by the Greater Severna Park and Arnold Chamber of Commerce in early March. Owned by Navy veteran Jeremy Allen Sr., the Southern-inspired eatery offers thoughtfully curated food and beverage menus in a casual atmosphere that invites patrons to savor the moment. Elephant in the Room is located at 8421 Veterans Highway. Discover all the restaurant has to offer at www.eatdrinkelephant.com.



Arnold Welcomes Pediatric Primary Care Practice

In late February, Dr. Eliza Huebner and certified registered nurse practitioner Cathy Gvozden celebrated the grand opening of Riverside Pediatrics in Arnold with a ribbon-cutting hosted by the Greater Severna Park and Arnold Chamber of Commerce. Owned by Huebner, the small pediatric primary care practice offers personalized attention through sick visits, well visits and mental health consultations in a family focused setting. Riverside Pediatrics is located at 1521 Ritchie Highway, Suite 201. Learn more at www.riversidepediatricsmd.com.

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