

Road To  
Baseball  
Playoffs  
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AACPS Teacher  
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MAY 2026



Photos courtesy of NASA

**Foreground:** Andy and Debra Needham gathered after splashdown on April 10 from inside the science evaluation room, where the science team cheered on the Artemis II crew's safe return. **Background:** The crew aboard Orion watched Earth approach and ultimately hide behind the moon, cutting off all visual and audio ties to their home planet.

## NASA Scientists Reflect On Artemis II Mission

By Zach Sparks

zach@severnaparkvoice.com

“Moon joy” — the term coined to capture the awe and enthusiasm astronauts and people worldwide felt as Artemis II became the first crewed lunar flyby in over 50 years.

From the Florida launch of NASA's Orion spacecraft on April 1 to splashdown off the coast of San Diego on April 10, the mission marked a new stage in human space exploration, and two Severna Park residents had roles in its success.

NASA scientists Andy and Debra Needham traveled to Houston for about two weeks as they worked from mission control as members of the science team.

“This is a historical first for this mission: science had a position in the flight control room, so the very famous mission control room that you see on TV, science had a position on that,” said Debra, a program scientist. “We’ve never had that before; we’ve always been a backroom support room. So we were in the support room, which is

great, but we were supporting someone in the actual front room, which was very special and exciting.”

Artemis II was the second in a series of five missions that are scheduled to result in boots on the moon in 2028.

From mission control, the husband-and-wife duo of Andy and Debra watched as Commander Reid Wiseman, pilot Victor Glover, mission

» **Continued on page 8**

## SPHS Alum Smack Selected By Packers In NFL Draft



Photo courtesy of the  
University of Florida

**Trey Smack** was the starting kicker for the Florida Gators for three years.

tering the weekend with just four selections, was a willing trade partner.

The trade was confirmed, and moments later, Severna Park High had its first-ever NFL draftee with the final pick in the sixth round.

“I was hopeful about getting drafted, and it became

a surreal moment when it happened,” said Smack, who stood out at the University of Florida and saw his prospects rise even further with a strong pre-draft circuit. “You just hang out with your family (watching the draft) and if your name gets called, your name gets called. I’m so excited to be a Green Bay Packer.”

Usually only a select few kickers have reason to even hope to be drafted each year, and Smack was the only

» **Continued on page 10**

By David Bashore

Trey Smack took the rare step of dropping lacrosse for football as his sport upon graduating from Severna Park High School.

On April 25, Smack saw a return from his post-prep gamble.

With the Seattle Seahawks on the clock for the 216th pick in the 2026 NFL Draft, Green Bay placed a phone call. The Packers had two seventh-round picks and wanted to move up. Seattle, starved for picks after en-

## BEST OF SEVERNA PARK WINNERS RECEIVE AWARDS



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Each year, the Severna Park Voice asks readers to select the Best Of Severna Park by voting for the top businesses and services, most beloved school and nonprofit, and all of the other entities that make the community a special place. The winners were announced in our April edition, and the Voice staff stopped by to congratulate many of them last month. See more photos of the winners on **pages 14-23**.





## 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.

# Kathy Middel Brings Organization, Compassion To St. Vincent De Paul Food Pantry

By Judy Tacyn

Following her November 2019 retirement from the University of Maryland Baltimore Washington Medical Center, Arnold resident Kathy Middel was eager to put her tremendous organizational skills she'd acquired as a medical laboratory scientist for 37 years to work in a volunteer role.

At her church, St. John the Evangelist, she was already serving as a Sunday Mass lector and was instrumental in starting a widow and widower ministry. Newly retired, she was ready to take on a larger role. She joined the St. Vincent de Paul Society (SVDP), a Catholic organization run by lay people with a mission "to ensure those impacted by poverty have the skills, resources and opportunities to achieve their full potential."

Her volunteer career was almost over before it began due to the pandemic shutdown early in 2020, and with it, the closure of the SVDP food pantry. When the pantry reopened late that year, Middel was thrown into the leadership role she longed for.

The former manager stepped down, and the pantry was relocated from three small rooms in the basement of the parish office building to the large blue barn located on the corner of Ritchie Highway and Cypress Creek Road. The move tripled the space SVDP had occupied in the parish office. With more space and post-COVID impacts on employment and government services, the number of people needing assistance and the number of people SVDP could serve increased exponentially.

"I took on the role of pantry manager and led the transition to a new space and much larger operation," Middel said. "In the basement we would help three, maybe five, families in a three-hour day. Now we are serving 250 households with 950 bags of groceries every month, and we only operate eight hours a week!"

To maintain an adequate inventory of nonperishable foods, personal hygiene items, paper products, cleaning and laundry supplies, and an unpredictable intake of fresh items and donations, Middel uses her organizational skills to keep the pantry shelves full. Imagine a family's



Photo by Judy Tacyn

*Kathy Middel said, "Volunteering at the food pantry has greatly expanded my circle my friends and deepened my relationships, not only with other volunteers but with the many neighbors who share their personal stories with us when they come for assistance."*

weekly needs and multiply it by 250 to get an idea of what Middel and her team accomplish every month.

"Kathy's heart for service and organizational skills have helped our St. Vincent de Paul food pantry to grow and meet the ever-greater needs of our community," said the Rev. Erik Arnold, pastor of St. John the Evangelist. "Her dedication has helped our parish expand its service to those who are in need and help bring more volunteers in to assist. She is energetic in her service and it's a source of inspiration for our parish family."

Most of the nonperishable foods come from donations of church parishioners, but local youth and civic groups, including the St. John school, often host food or supply drives for the pantry. The food pantry is open three days a week — Monday, Tuesday and Friday — for just two or three hours at a time. Following every opening, Middel takes inventory of what items are low in stock.

On Sundays, churchgoers drop off donations, which get put on the shelves and factored into Middel's inventory. She then creates a shopping list and uses financial donations to purchase fresh meats, produce and items of greatest need and gets them on the shelves before a new week begins.

"When I am not in the food pantry, I am shopping for food and supplies, or I'm making lists and coordinating deliveries from government agencies like the Maryland Food Bank," Middel said. "My brother likes to say, 'My sister is retired, but she works a full-time job she doesn't get paid for!' But that's OK, I am really happy. My heart is full."

A food pantry is mandated to maintain food handling and storage regulations, just like a restaurant or grocery store. Middel is responsible for ensuring that all food safety regulations are followed. She also makes sure volunteers are trained annually in food safety and civil rights compliance.

More than 60 volunteers make up the SVDP conference.

Middel knows it's hard for people to ask for help, and she's seen all sorts of situations. She doesn't simply give people food. She gives them a friend. She sits

with people, talks with them, gets to know them, and prays with them. Visitors are not clients; they are neighbors, and SVDP is here to help.

"One of the greatest misconceptions is that people who come to the food pantry or to St. Vincent de Paul for financial assistance are lazy. That is simply not true," Middel said. "So many people are one setback away from crisis. A car breaks down, or someone falls ill, and a person can't get to work. Money is tight and people have to make really hard decisions like, 'Do I feed my children or pay my rent?' These are real very difficult questions they wrestle with."

Meeting people in desperate situations makes Middel grateful for the many resources she's been given and the "very good life" she's had. She lives her life knowing that "everyone has been made in God's image and likeness," she said. "We don't judge. We never judge. Jesus taught us that every human being should be treated with dignity and respect, and that's what we as Christians must do."

In addition to the food pantry, SVDP may provide limited financial help with utilities, prevention of eviction, and prescriptions. If you need help, or if you can help support SVDP, call 443-261-0109 or email [svdp@stjohnsp.org](mailto:svdp@stjohnsp.org).



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## Correction: Eagle Scout William Rollison

In the April 2026 edition of the Severna Park Voice, we printed an incorrect last name for Eagle Scout William Rollison. This is the correct name for the Broadneck High School junior who led a team to create six circular picnic tables at the Naval Academy Primary & Secondary School (NAPS). We apologize for the error.



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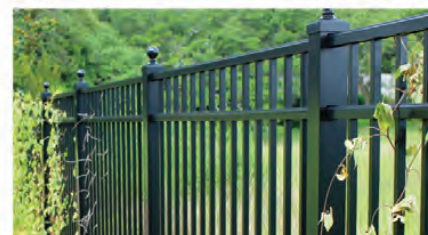
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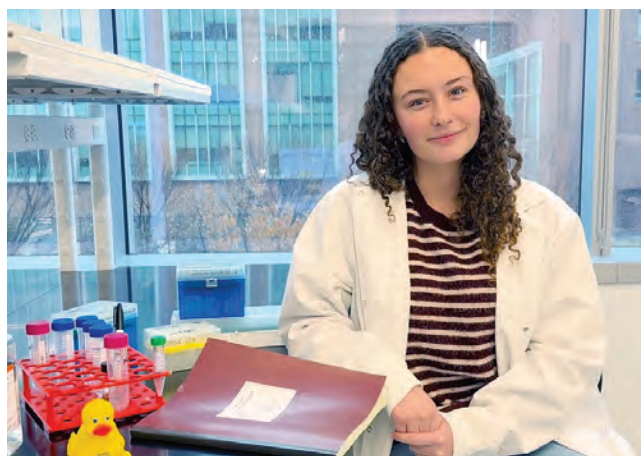
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## Young Bioengineer Earns Prestigious Research Fellowship



*University of Maryland student Cameron White is ready to take her cancer research to the University of Pennsylvania on a full fellowship while pursuing a Ph.D.*

**By Judy Tacyn**

It's not a surprise that Arnold resident Cameron White has loved science for as long as she can remember. It was her mother — long-time middle school science teacher, now vice principal at St. John the Evangelist School, Cindi White — who sparked her daughter's interest in performing experiments and doing research even before Cameron started elementary school.

This May, the younger White will graduate from the University of Maryland's Gemstone Honors program with a Bachelor of Science degree in bioengineering before starting the bioengineering Ph.D. program at the University of Pennsylvania School of Engineering and Applied Science in Philadelphia in the fall.

She will enter graduate school as just one of 2,500 National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowship Program recipients. Nearly 14,000 applications were received. The fellowship includes full tuition and a three-year annual stipend of \$37,000 to help fund her research project.

After graduating from Archbishop Spalding High School, White received the Banneker/Key Scholarship, the University of Maryland's most prestigious award, which included full tuition, room, board and a book allowance.

"I was honored that University of Maryland recognized the potential in me as a researcher and provided me with the resources needed to achieve my goals," White said. "I really liked the bioengineering program at Maryland and appreciated being closer to my home support system."

During her freshman year in College Park, White was tasked with proposing a four-year research project. She chose to study HIV medication side effects. She had previously worked with HIV patients through research projects with the University of Maryland in Baltimore.

"In addition to improving my science skills and research abilities, being tasked with managing a four-year research project taught me to be a leader," White said. "I learned that science doesn't always work the way you thought it might, to pivot if you don't get the results you expected or wanted, and to be resilient and confident in yourself."

To be considered for the National

Science Foundation's Graduate Research Fellowship, White's accepted proposal will consist of working with two University of Pennsylvania professors to determine if their individual research can be integrated.

Terence Peter Gade, a Matthew J. Wilson professor of research radiology II at the Perelman School of Medicine, has developed a promising liver cancer therapy in rats. The model is similar to what researchers might expect in human liver cancer.

Adam Stevens, assistant professor of cancer biology at the Perelman School of Medicine, has developed encouraging findings in engineered synthetic adhesion molecules. These molecules allow for cancer therapy to better adhere to solid mass tumors.

White will attempt to establish a good translational model for liver cancer, meaning, can the adhesion molecules be used in the rat therapy to make it even more effective? Her long-term goal is to apply synthetic adhesion molecules to other cancer therapies and study their effectiveness.

"The fellowship allows me to support two professors that I had already planned on working with," White added. "It also gives me a lot of flexibility on how I want to pursue my work in the next five years."

Though she isn't sure where her research will take her after graduating with her Ph.D., White knows that cancer research will always be her focus. Her father, Craig, a former teacher at Old Mill High School, died of an aggressive melanoma when she was in middle school.

"The University of Pennsylvania is very supportive of both clinical cancer research and entrepreneurship," White explained. "Maybe I'll work in a lab to continue research. Maybe I'll look to take clinical research to trial or to the marketplace."

According to the NSF website, since 1952, the organization has funded more than 70,000 Graduate Research Fellowships out of more than 500,000 applicants. More than 40 fellows have gone on to become Nobel laureates, and more than 450 have become members of the National Academy of Sciences.

However her career plays out, White is excited for the opportunity to add her name to the list of renowned researchers working hard every day to drive cancer therapy innovation and better outcomes for cancer patients.

## County Breaks Ground On New Cape St. Claire Fire Station

In late April, county officials, career firefighters, members of the Cape St. Claire Volunteer Fire Company (CSCVFC) and community members gathered for a ceremonial groundbreaking on a new \$18 million fire station in Cape St. Claire. Construction has already begun on the new 21,571-square-foot facility, which will feature four drive-through apparatus bays, 17 bunks for career and volunteer staff, a community meeting room, safety upgrades and more. Station 19 serves not only Cape St. Claire, but also a large portion of Arnold and the Broadneck Peninsula including Sandy Point State Park and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. Station 19's career firefighters also operate one of the county's two fire boats.



Photos by Meredith Winter

With construction already underway behind them, (l-r) Senator Dawn Gile, Councilwoman Allison Pickard, County Executive Stuart Pittman, Fire Chief Trisha Wolford, Captain Michael Mayo, Councilwoman Amanda Fiedler and CSCVFC Chief Drew Mutch ceremonially broke ground on the new station.



Career firefighters assigned to the station participated in the groundbreaking.



Station 19 is a combination career- and volunteer-staffed station, and many CSCVFC members were present to take part in the ceremony as well.

## Bring The Kids To Meet The Kids At KFP

Families can look forward to a day of fun down on the farm at Kinder Farm Park's annual Meet the Kids springtime event. Hosted by the Friends of Kinder Farm Park, the event gives community members an opportunity to meet baby animals recently born at the farm — including goats, lambs, piglets and chicks this year.

Meet the Kids attendees can also

look forward to games, hayrides, photo opportunities, animal encounters, educational experiences and face painting. The event is scheduled for Saturday, May 30, from 10:00am-2:00pm. All park gate fees will go to Kinder Farm Park 4-H and the Friends of Kinder Farm Park's Farm and Livestock Education Program. Look for more information to come at [www.kinderfarmpark.org](http://www.kinderfarmpark.org).



# SPCC's Gin & Jazz Annual Gala Honored Landmark Roofing's Artie Hendricks

On April 25, community members stepped back a century into the Roaring Twenties, dressed in their 1920s best for the Severna Park Community Center's (SPCC) Gin & Jazz Gala held at Chartwell Golf & Country Club.

This year's honoree was Artie Hendricks (below, top left), owner and president of operations at Landmark Roofing, who was recognized for his generosity, leadership and service to the community. Through his business, Hendricks has

led numerous philanthropic efforts throughout Anne Arundel County. A former chair of the SPCC board of directors, he is a longtime supporter of the center's mission.

Gala attendees enjoyed an evening of craft cocktails, silent and live auctions, a surf-and-turf dinner, live music and dancing. Gin & Jazz is a fundraising event that directly supports the SPCC, with The Cottage as this year's presenting sponsor.



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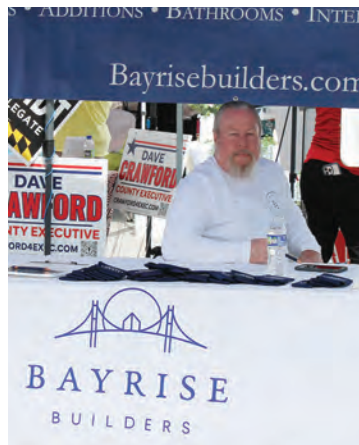
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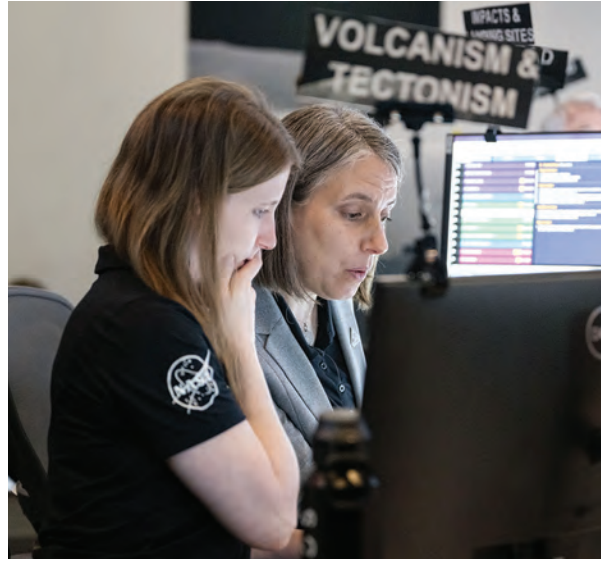
# Spring Local Fun Festival Highlights Community Businesses, Philanthropy

On May 2, crowds gathered at the Park Plaza Shopping Center for the Greater Severna Park and Arnold Chamber of Commerce's annual Spring Local Fun Festival. A celebration of shopping locally, the event featured a health and wellness expo, food, music, entertainment, and of course, a showcase of local businesses and organizations.

Several event sponsors presented \$500 donations to local nonprofits as well. Landmark Roofing supported NAMI; Checkmark Power Washing supported the Katherine's Light Foundation; Kitchen Tune-Up and Prime IV Hydration & Wellness both supported the Earleigh Heights Volunteer Fire Company; Lean on Dee Senior Home Care supported the Alzheimer's Association; SERVPRO of Annapolis/Severna Park supported the Caring Cupboard; and the Severna Park Elks supported SPAN.



## NASA Scientists Reflect On Artemis II



**Left:** Debra Needham (left) and her colleague Julianne Gross finalized the lunar targeting plan, the list of craters, volcanic plains and other lunar features that the science team requested the crew to observe, image and describe. **Right:** Inside the science mission operations room, Andy Needham updated the data processing team on the status of the roughly 24 hours of audio files the crew recorded during the six-hour flyby that he and his team were charged with processing.

### » Continued from page 1

specialist Christina Koch from NASA, and mission specialist Jeremy Hansen from the Canadian Space Agency embarked on the Artemis II launch.

The astronauts witnessed a solar eclipse and named a moon crater after Wiseman's wife, who died from cancer in 2020. They also set a record by traveling 252,756 miles from Earth, surpassing the 248,655-mile distance set by Apollo 13 in 1970.

A research scientist, Andy had several responsibilities before and during the mission. He and his colleagues determined which of Orion's windows would be the best for photography.

"We make sure we get the best images possible, and it really paid off once we got to the fly-by image of the moon," Andy said. "The images were much better with the tests, because the windows are seriously thick acrylic."

During the lunar fly-by, Andy served as an audio analyst, listening to crew descriptions in real time.

"During the fly-by, as an audio analyst, (I was) going through transcripts and AI generated stripped-in text," Andy said, "really trying to pick out all the keywords for the geological features we were trying to see and the colors, like if they were seeing red patches or green patches, or if they saw a flash of light, impact flashes of meteors hitting, so really trying to tease out all that information before it's forgotten."

Debra contributed to a lunar targeting plan: the list of lunar craters, volcanic plains and other moon features that the science team requested the crew to observe, image and describe.

"We had many plans in place before we got to the mission, but what they actually saw, what was illuminated on the moon, was very dependent on when they launched because just a couple days later, the moon has shifted, the sun's position has shifted, so the terrain that is illuminated is different," Debra said. "And it greatly impacts what you can see. The solar eclipse wouldn't be visible at all if they had launched April 3."

Many moons ago, or 1969 to be exact, NASA sent astronauts Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins to the moon during the Apollo 11 mission. Film cameras are no longer the standard, and astronauts can now get crisper images in real time. The Needhams compared the lunar fly-by to a Grand Canyon moment for the astronauts.

"You see pictures of some big feature, like the Grand Canyon," Debra said. "You go stand on the rim. It's like a physical sensation of the ground

dropping out from under you. You just feel it internally. I think they had that experience."

The mission had another purpose: gathering information for future research.

"The crew was looking at the south pole — that's where Artemis IV and V are going to go," Andy said. "That's kind of the next step — knowing what that crew is seeing where future rovers are going to land, trying to set up the moon base, and understand what does utilization look like — how do you use the resources there? How do you extract water or other compounds from the soil and learn to live there long-term? That is the first step to getting to Mars."

As big as Artemis II was, the Needhams had one more mission: return to Severna Park in time to celebrate their daughter's sixth birthday. Mission accomplished.

They also spent time with their 4-year-old son, who is educated on planets and dwarf planets. Next, they will turn their attention to future Artemis missions, even if they are working in a different capacity.

Working on the science team for Artemis II was a "dream come true" for Debra. While she won't be on the science operations team for the upcoming Artemis projects, she will support the science team from the programmatic side.

"What are the instruments that we're going to be bringing onboard and making sure that they fit inside the vehicle or when the astronauts are walking on the surface," Debra said, explaining her future role. "I'm doing it from a programmatic perspective but working with the engineers who are in charge of developing that hardware or working with the vendors to make sure as they develop that hardware, develop the tools, that they're doing what we need them to do," she said.

Andy is most inspired by knowing that Artemis I and II are just the start in this new chapter for space exploration. His moon joy is not leaving him anytime soon.

"Hopefully in the next couple of years, we will see this generation's Apollo 11 moment," Andy said. "I wasn't alive whenever humans last stepped on the moon, so that for me is a huge thing: this is the beginning and there is so much more to look forward to. It's going to get bigger, better, and we're going to stay. Hopefully this is not the few years and then another 50 years before we go back."

"We're going to build a moon base, we're going to have lots of rovers, we're going to have lots of hoppers. It's a grand architecture coming. It's going to be exciting to see how it develops."



# the Cottage

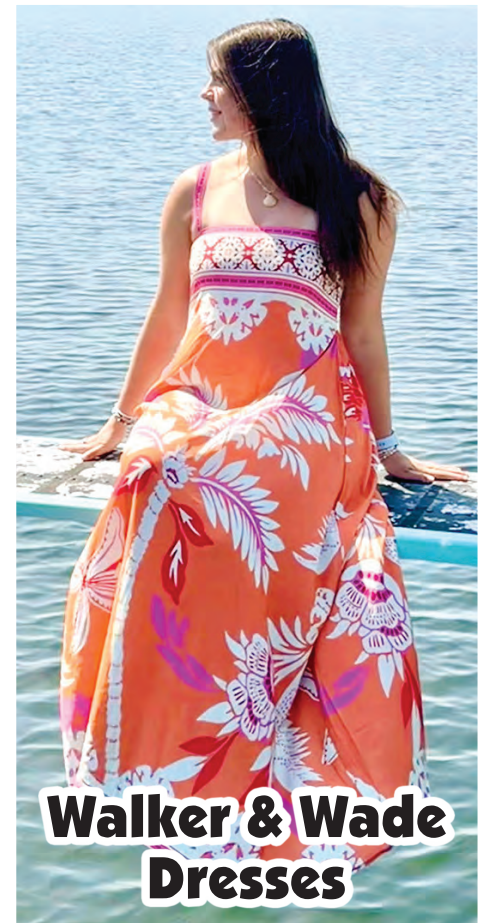
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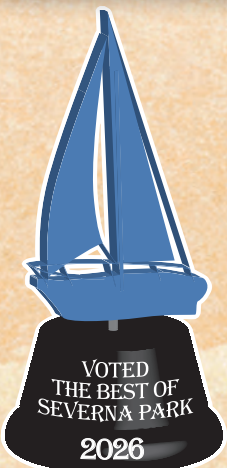
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## Following Give-Back Initiative, Severna Park Voice Presents Check To Walk The Walk Foundation



In April, Severna Park Voice advertisers were invited to join the Voice in supporting our nonprofit of the year, the Millersville-based Walk the Walk Foundation (WTWF), through a give-back initiative. Nearly 40 local businesses contributed a total of \$3,000. Voice Publisher Dianna Lancione (right) presented the donation to WTWF Executive Director Nicole Dolan (left) on May 2 at the chamber's Spring Local Fun Festival. Thank you to all of our community partners who participated! Through the end of May, WTWF will continue to host its Anne Arundel County's Largest Diaper Drive event. Diaper donation locations include Spring Arbor of Severna Park, BD Provisions, Thrive Gym and Rolly Pollies of Severna Park. To learn more about WTWF, go to [www.wtwf.org](http://www.wtwf.org).

## SPHS Alum Smack Selected By Packers In NFL Draft

» Continued from page 1

kicker taken in the 2026 draft. Rarer still is the scenario in which a team trades up to take a kicker.

But after hitting a 57-yard field goal in the East-West Shrine Bowl and a 60-yarder in the NFL Combine Specialists Showcase after being iced by the coaching staff, Smack pinned himself at the top of the placekicker ratings and the Packers made the move to go get him.

*"But I feel like every kick is pressure. I played in the biggest stadiums in all of college football in the SEC. It's just normal for me. Pressure is fun to me."*

— TREY SMACK

"We liked (Smack) quite a bit and think he has a good chance to be a good kicker in the National Football League," Green Bay General Manager Brian Gutekunst said. "The way the (draft) board was falling, where we were sitting in the seventh round, I didn't feel great about what we were going to have to select during those two picks and didn't feel great that he would be there (without trading up). We think very highly of him and think he has a very good chance to succeed in this league."

Gutekunst said Smack will be in an

open kicking contest with incumbent kicker Brandon McManus, who is an accomplished 12-year NFL veteran but was dogged by accuracy issues last season, including three missed kicks in the team's 31-27 loss to Chicago in the playoffs.

Smack has been given the No. 28 jersey.

After switching from soccer to football during high school and leaning into that as his full-time college dream, Smack excelled at Florida, becoming a two-time semifinalist for the Lou Groza Award, given annually to college football's most outstanding placekicker.

In three years as the starting kicker for the Gators, he connected on 83% of his field goals (53 of 64) and 99% of his extra points (100 of 101). His mark of 10 field goals of 50 yards or longer, on just 13 attempts, stands as Florida's all-time career record.

Now he aims to go from "The Swamp" in Gainesville to the "Frozen Tundra" of Lambeau Field in Green Bay. It will be a different kind of pressure and different elements, but Smack will lean on his Maryland upbringing and his Southeastern Conference (SEC) credentials to help him along the way.

"I started out kicking in cold weather. It's a little different in Gainesville, so I've got to get back in that cold weather rhythm that I had," Smack said. "But I feel like every kick is pressure. I played in the biggest stadiums in all of college football in the SEC. It's just normal for me. Pressure is fun to me."

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## Securing Fair Compensation For Clients Suffering From Catastrophic Injuries

**David V. Diggs, Esq. and  
Lisa Bogan-Reohr, Esq.**



**W**hile most clients with negligence cases suffer serious injuries, leading a normal life remains possible. For a significant minority of cases, however, the injuries can be forever life-changing.

Catastrophic injuries may result in permanent, life-altering consequences, which may be physical, emotional, financial or all of the above. Common examples include the loss of one or more limbs; fractures (other than compression fractures) anywhere along the spinal column; non-correctable loss of vision or hearing; traumatic brain injuries; damage to organs; and loss of senses, among others.

The following example, in which the client was fortunate to have survived a motor vehicle collision, illustrates the necessity of having effective legal representation. The analysis is applicable to any and all serious injury cases.

Erin Quinn, age 24, was proceeding southbound on Ritchie Highway in her 2024 Toyota RAV-4. She stopped for a red light at the intersection of Ritchie and College Parkway. As she was waiting for the light to turn green, Ms. Quinn was struck forcibly from behind by a 2022 Dodge Durango, driven by Dennis Devlin, and owned by his employer,

Derry Moving Solutions Inc. Mr. Devlin failed to brake. He did not slow down at all prior to hitting Ms. Quinn. The force of the impact was so great that it propelled the Toyota into the median, where it struck a guardrail, a second powerful impact.

Ms. Quinn suffered a concussion, fractured C-4 vertebrae in her neck, sprains to her left wrist, and fractures to both ankles. Somewhat fortunately, she has no memory of the aftermath. She feels lucky and blessed to have survived Mr. Devlin's carelessness.

Lost wage documentation and medical records were assembled. Ms. Quinn had surgery at a University of Maryland Medical System facility on January 10, 2025. Her medical bills totaled nearly \$160,000. She was out of work from her teaching job for five months and had lost wages of \$25,000.

After about a year of gathering documents on Ms. Quinn's behalf and following her recovery, the Aviva Insurance Company was sent a 12-page settlement proposal, outlining and expanding upon the above-noted facts. Based upon a report from Ms. Quinn's treating surgeon, the letter also explained the future medical expenses that Ms. Quinn would incur, including a second surgery to remove the hardware in her neck. A future wage loss of nearly \$500,000 was also predicted, given her occupational limitations.

Following several months of negotiations, the case was settled, without the filing of a lawsuit, in consideration for a payment in excess of \$1 million. Counsel continues to work with the client to satisfy her substantial outstanding medical bills. She had no

health insurance at the time of the collision.

Any discussion about catastrophic injuries in Maryland must include mention of the state's unfair and potentially unconstitutional caps on non-economic damages, such as pain, suffering, disability and loss of enjoyment of life. These are separate limits on the amounts recoverable, depending upon when the negligent act occurred. For causes of action arising on or after October 1, 2025, the cap is \$965,000. If there is more than one beneficiary in a wrongful death case, the cap is multiplied by a factor of 1.5, creating a cap of \$1.44 million. These caps increase to \$980,000 and \$1.47 million as of October 1, 2026. No amount may be awarded above these figures.

If a jury, after considering all evidence, rules that non-economic damages exceed this amount for the death of a parent, spouse or child, the award is automatically reduced to the capped levels. So far, challenges to caps based upon their denial of due process and equal protection under the law have been denied by Maryland's appellate courts. Such challenges have succeeded in overturning caps in other states.

If you or someone you know suffers a catastrophic injury as the result of the careless and/or intentional acts of another person, you should consult with an attorney familiar in this area.

*The attorneys at The Law Office of David V. Diggs are experienced in all facets of catastrophic injury and death. If you need further information, contact The Law Office of David V. Diggs LLC, located at 8684 Veterans Highway, Suite 302, in Millersville, by calling 410-244-1189 or by emailing david@diggsllaw.com.*

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## Dawn And David Orso Recognized For Philanthropy With Citations



**On April 28, Realtor David Orso (left) and his wife Dawn were recognized for their ongoing philanthropic efforts and service in the community with citations from Governor Wes Moore and Senator Dawn Gile (right).**

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# Annapolis' Secret Garden: Little-Known Green Space Showcases Nature In The State Capital



Photos by Meredith Winter

**Left:** Azaleas bloomed in Tawes Garden in late April. **Center:** The garden features several sculptures along its winding pathways. **Right:** A pond with a fountain invites waterfowl to frequent the downtown Annapolis green space.

## Tawes Garden Has Provided A Free Public Space For Nearly 50 Years

By Meredith Winter

Thousands of commuters pass Maryland's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) headquarters daily, located in Annapolis across from Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium. But few know that situated behind it is a five-acre garden that represents various geographic areas around the state, including the forests of western Maryland, stream environments in central Maryland, and Eastern Shore marshes.

Referred to as "Annapolis' secret garden" by The Friends of Helen Avalynne Tawes Garden and Arboretum board president Mary Stuart Sierra, the Tawes Garden is a free public green space tucked behind the Tawes State Office Building along Rowe Boulevard.

The Tawes Garden features a pond with a fountain, sculptures, towering trees, flowering plants, walking paths, places to sit and observe wildlife, and more. Depending on the season, Sierra shared that visitors can enjoy a pollinator garden, azaleas, daffodils, bluebells

and other flowering plants. The arboretum has bald cypress trees with "knees," or woody projections above the roots; the pond is surrounded by marsh plants; and redbuds and dogwoods dot the garden as well.

"It's a good place for bird watching," Sierra said. "About 120 species have been recorded in the garden — everything from great blue herons to wrens."

She shared that other animal friends can be spotted at Tawes Garden, too, including foxes, opossums, raccoons, deer and turtles.

"It does offer shelter for local wildlife, and the garden horticulturist and the park service are working very hard on establishing it as an important pollinator space both for migrating and for local bees and butterflies," Sierra added.

Signage and QR codes are placed throughout the garden for further education.

In the midst of a heavily developed area, the garden is an intimate, tranquil place for locals to go for a stroll, enjoy a picnic, and observe nature.

Prior to construction of the Tawes State Office Building and adjacent garden, the property was a flat cinder lot that served as home to the West Annapolis

carnival for many years.

The garden is named in honor of Helen Avalynne Tawes, a former first lady of Maryland. Her husband J. Millard Tawes served as the state's 54th governor from 1959-1967 and the couple shared a passion for environmental conservation. While in office, Governor Tawes doubled the land area managed by Maryland's state park system and led the effort to establish Assateague Island as a National Seashore.

In 1975, Helen Avalynne Tawes broke ground on the garden named after her, and it was completed in 1977. Tawes was also an avid musician and cook; she studied piano and voice at the Peabody Conservatory and authored a popular cookbook, according to a biography on the DNR website.

Open seven days a week from dawn to dusk, Tawes Garden is accessible through the DNR lobby during business hours, or by following signs along a path around the building after hours and on weekends. Leashed dogs are welcome, and free guided tours are offered by advance request only.

The Tawes Garden is located at 580 Taylor Avenue in Annapolis. Learn more at [www.tawesgarden.org](http://www.tawesgarden.org).

## It Costs Nothing To Be Kind

Michele Sabean

Director of  
Development  
SPAN Inc.



**"You can always, always give something, even if it is only kindness!"**

— Anne Frank

After several weeks out on medical leave, what struck me most upon

returning wasn't what had changed — it was what had continued. I came back to stories of generosity and saw it in action through SPAN's volunteers and clients, in both their words and the time they give to help others.

Here are some examples of the generosity of the community. Members of Woods Memorial Presbyterian Church donated 120 bags of food, cleaning supplies and personal hygiene items during Lent! Our Lady

of the Fields Catholic Church continued its annual tradition of providing Easter dinner baskets and grocery gift cards to provide holiday dinners for our clients. St. Martins-in-the-Field Episcopal Church once again donated Easter baskets for children. Members of those churches, along with other individuals' contributions, made Easter a little brighter for many of our clients.

In addition to the Easter donations, other individuals, businesses, civic groups and churches keep stepping up to make SPAN's work possible. Team Caropreso at Keller Williams once again brought their truck filled with food donations, Chartwell Garden Club makes donating to SPAN a regular part of its meetings, and Severna Park Health Association contributed \$5,000! These are just a few examples of the contributions, both large and small, that help SPAN continue to help our neighbors in need.

My first days back, I also noticed

the quieter moments — volunteers supporting one another, kind words shared, and a client who, after receiving help during a crisis, is now trying to find a way to pay it forward.

I reflected on the many individuals who, despite working full-time, still find ways to contribute time to our special events and initiatives.

Everyone and anyone can help. It costs nothing to be kind.

I'm reminded of this when young people ask how they can serve. You don't need to be a certain age to help others. I love seeing examples like Rhett and Peter, two teens who have helped sort and move food at our large food drives and then have continued to help in other ways such as doing a pasta drive and making birthday bags.

One of the projects for teens that truly costs nothing and can be done at any time is making cards with words of inspiration. One client, who received a note of encouragement, took the time to call and let us know how much it meant to her. A kind word, a thoughtful note, or even a

few minutes of effort can brighten someone's day more than we realize.

During my recovery at home, I experienced the same kindness from friends sending cards and food and coming by to visit. These gestures made a difference. It's easy to think that helping requires grand gestures. But often, it's the quiet, consistent acts of kindness that matter most.

As I settle back into my routine, I carry with me a renewed appreciation for the kindness that surrounds us every day. It's a reminder worth sharing: no matter who you are or where you are, you always have something to give. And sometimes, that something is exactly what someone else needs.

SPAN (Serving People Across Neighborhoods) is an independent nonprofit food pantry and emergency services provider that has been helping local families with eviction prevention, utility turnoffs, medical/prescription bills, and food since 1990. For more information, call 410-647-0889, email [spanhelps@yahoo.com](mailto:spanhelps@yahoo.com) or visit [www.spanhelps.org](http://www.spanhelps.org).



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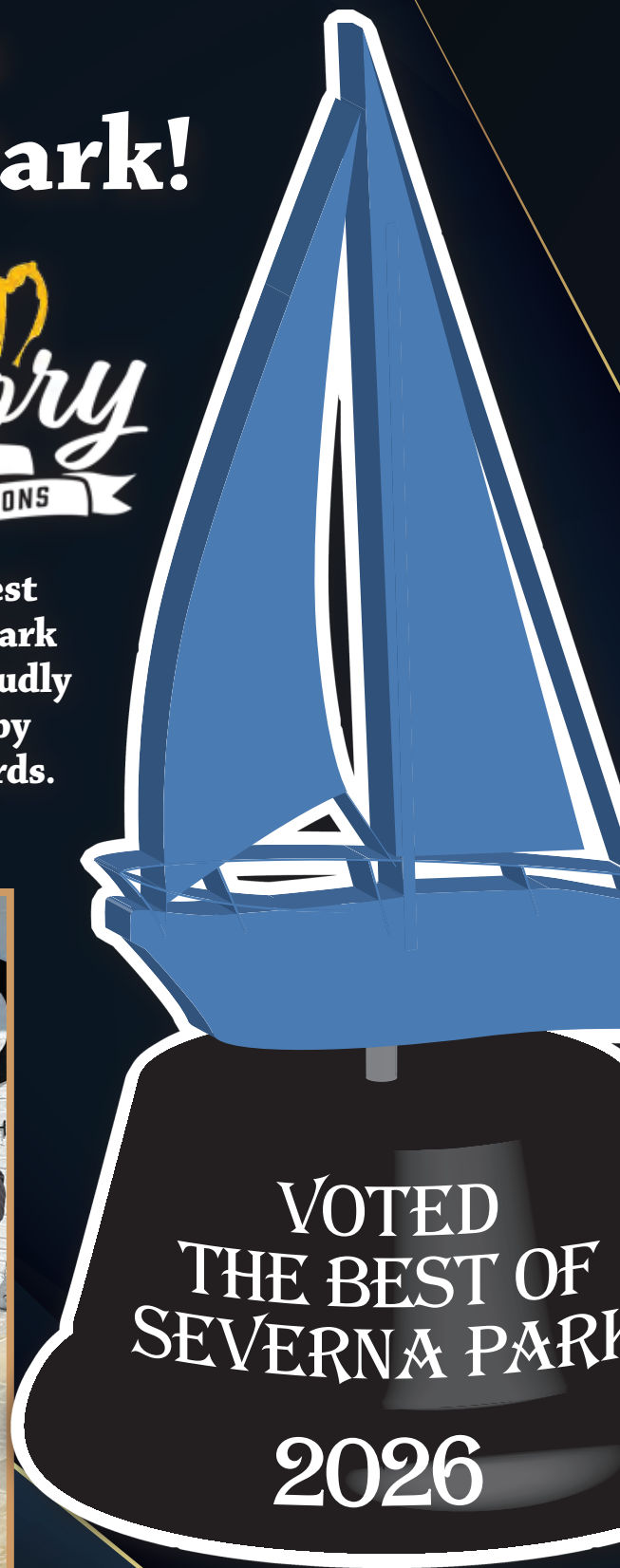
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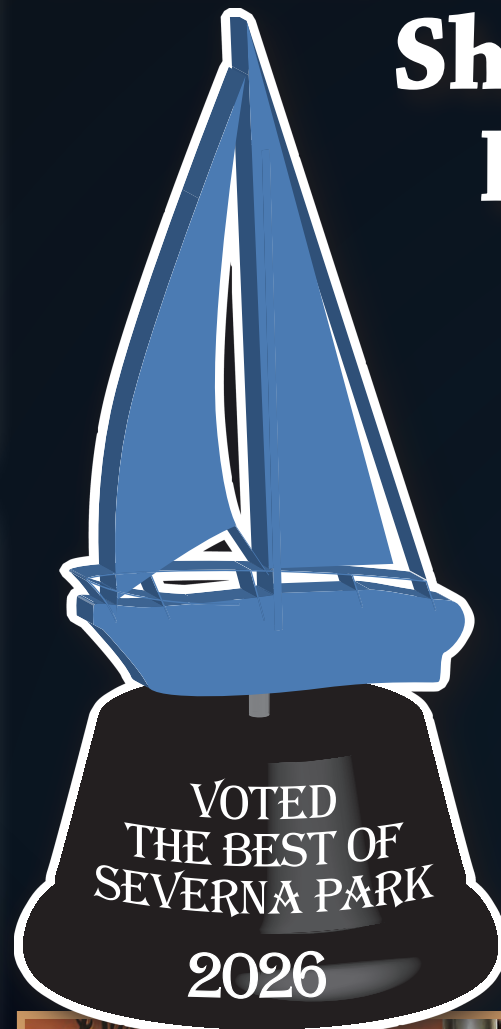
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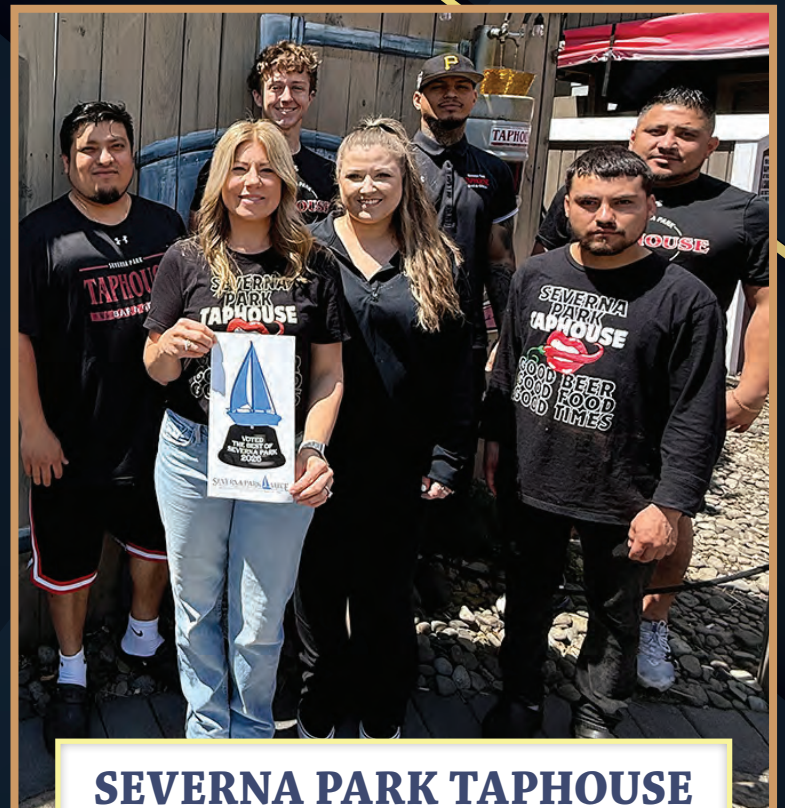
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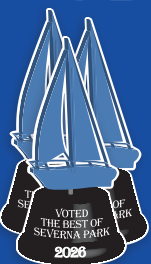
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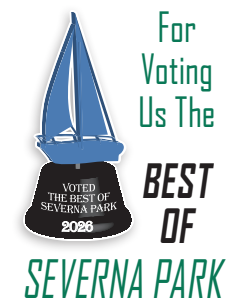
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## End Of Session Update

**Dawn Gile**  
Senator  
District 33



The Maryland General Assembly concluded its 2026 legislative session on April 13, wrapping up 90 days focused on lowering costs, strengthening public safety, and making smart investments in our communities. At a time of economic uncertainty and shifting federal policy, our priority was clear: protect Marylanders and position our state for long-term stability and growth.

This session, we took meaningful steps to address one of the most immediate concerns I hear from families: rising costs. The Utility RELIEF Act delivers real savings by lowering annual energy bills, increasing oversight of utility spending, and requiring large energy users, like data centers, to pay their fair share. It also invests in in-state energy generation and expands assistance programs for families who need it most. At the same time, we passed the nation's first law to prohibit predatory pricing practices that use personal data to charge consumers different prices for the same product.

We also met our constitutional responsibility to pass a balanced state budget — without raising taxes or creating new fees. The Fiscal Year 2027 budget makes disciplined investments in what matters most, including public education, health care, and child care, while maintaining more than \$2.4 billion in reserves to prepare for economic uncertainty. These were not easy choices, but they were necessary to ensure Maryland remains on strong fiscal footing.

Public safety remained a central focus. We strengthened protections for children by closing gaps in laws related

to abuse by individuals in positions of authority and by creating a statewide framework to ensure schools respond consistently and transparently to allegations of misconduct. We also took steps to reduce gun violence, improve accountability for firearm dealers, and invest in prevention and rehabilitation programs that make our communities safer over the long term.

In health care, we advanced targeted policies that expand access and improve quality of care. This includes strengthening maternal mental health screening and support, expanding access to menopause-related care, improving coverage for prosthetics, and ensuring continuity of care during insurance disputes. We also increased access to treatment for opioid use disorder by enabling greater collaboration between pharmacists and prescribers, particularly in underserved areas.

We continued to invest in education at every stage. From expanding access to child care and prekindergarten to strengthening tutoring programs and dual enrollment opportunities, these efforts help set students up for success. We also passed legislation to reduce distractions in classrooms by requiring school systems to adopt policies limiting cellphone use during the school day, supporting both student focus and classroom learning.

Recognizing the importance of a strong economy, we supported small businesses, expanded access to capital, and invested in high-growth industries like advanced manufacturing. We also took steps to ensure Maryland leads responsibly in emerging areas like artificial intelligence, with new protections against fraud and misuse alongside efforts to prepare students and institutions for the future.

Just as importantly, I worked to deliver for District 33 directly. This year, with my colleagues, I secured

» Continued on page 26

## April And May Are When Bills Are Signed Into Law

**LaToya Nkongolo**  
Delegate  
District 31



I entered the 2026 legislative session with a clear mission: Advocate for District 31 families, uphold common sense values, and deliver results on the issues that matter most to my constituents. My efforts this session were marked by both leadership and legislative success, including being appointed as Deputy Minority Whip of the House Judiciary Committee and passing more bills than any Republican delegate.

During the 2026 session, I successfully sponsored and passed four key pieces of legislation and co-sponsored eleven additional bills that were also passed.

Four pieces of legislation I championed were:

**House Bill 393**, which requires certain insurers to cover scalp cooling therapy for patients undergoing chemotherapy. Previously considered a cosmetic expense, this treatment can significantly reduce chemotherapy-related hair loss. The advocacy of Amy Tanner, Rossalynn Ripper and others helped ensure the therapy is recognized as a medical necessity, easing both the emotional and financial burden on cancer patients. The bill was signed into law on April 14 and will take effect January 1, 2027.

**House Bill 596**, the Maryland Uniform Simultaneous Death Act, addresses inheritance complica-

tions when individuals, such as spouses, die within 120 hours of one another and survivorship cannot be determined. The law simplifies estate proceedings by treating each individual as having predeceased the other, preventing multiple and costly probate cases.

**House Bill 606**, which provides property tax payment deferrals for service members in Anne Arundel County.

**House Bill 677**, which expands protections to ensure the dignified disposition of veterans' remains. Both measures reflect my continued support for those who serve the nation.

In addition, I sponsored **House Bill 1358**, known as the Local Workforce Solutions Investment Act, and helped secure passage of its senate counterpart, **Senate Bill 777**. This legislation strengthens local workforce development boards and enhances support for retraining programs, apprenticeships and rapid response efforts for workers impacted by layoffs, improving access to new employment opportunities across Maryland.

I also introduced several additional bills focused on business growth, family protection, child safety and parental rights — underscoring my ongoing commitment to policies that prioritize strong communities and economic opportunity.

As the 2026 legislative session concludes, my record reflects a focus on practical solutions and measurable outcomes for the residents of District 31. If you need assistance, please reach out to my office by calling 410-841-3510 or emailing [latoya.nkongolo@house.maryland.gov](mailto:latoya.nkongolo@house.maryland.gov). I look forward to continuing to serve our community.

## Council Update

**Amanda Fiedler**  
Councilwoman  
District 5



It was hot and humid in mid-August of 2025. Typical Maryland weather for the time of year. Pool water felt like bathwater. Relief from the heat came from retreating indoors, as is often the case in August.

Then came notification from Baltimore Gas and Electric Company (BGE). Due to an unexplained connection breach from the grid, rolling energy conservation was possible. A widespread intentional outage was being considered. This was not the first time our area had heard of potential grid conservation, but it hit a little different with the words "widespread" and an unknown period of time.

Thankfully, the connection to the grid was repaired and our cooling stations and indoor cool air retreats in homes and businesses were not compromised. Daily routines continued without concern over losing electricity. But what solutions exist

to combat this growing trend of potential rolling brownouts during peak use times?

The power grid strain and cost of energy in our state have been at the forefront of legislation discussion and cost-of-living considerations in recent years. State energy policy has had an incredible impact on the cost to you and your family. The county council does not have purview over the majority of energy policy. The state legislature controls the number of providers, the kind of energy available, clean energy requirements, where energy comes from, etc.

State law does give local legislatures the authority to permit alternative types of energy storage through local land use laws and the permitting process. With ongoing energy concerns, I was all ears when a company interested in locating in our county contacted me and offered me an opportunity to learn about battery energy storage systems (BESS).

BESS are large battery facilities that store unused energy during periods of low demand and offer that stored energy back to the grid during periods of high demand, helping to reduce the potential of rolling brownouts. Anne Arundel County law had no language to guide where this type of energy storage could be located.

Termed "front of the meter" storage because they

are located on the utility provider side, these battery storage systems are larger scale than the "behind the meter" energy storage systems that are on the customer side, and options for private property owners in a lower-scale private market.

Without local code guidance, this technology was impossible in our county. That was the case, until the unanimous passing of my bill, Bill 9-26, which sets permit requirements and allows battery energy storage systems to locate under certain conditions or through approval by the administrative hearing officer in a limited number of zoning categories in our county, including commercial and industrial zones.

By nature, BESS locations create little to no traffic but provide a huge benefit to the county as a whole. They will be required to have landscaping screening and will have to meet strict National Fire Protection Association standards, while creating revenue for our county and making our local grid more reliable during high demand periods.

I am proud to say that Bill 9-26 was one of the first local bills in the state to pass and I am so excited to see the energy support potential it will provide and how the technology will evolve to better serve our county. I hope

» Continued on page 26





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## Maryland State Board Of Elections Reminds Marylanders Of Voter Registration Options

As the 2026 primary election approaches, the Maryland State Board of Elections (SBE) reminds residents of their voter registration options and deadlines.

"Maryland is at its strongest when residents make their voices heard in our electoral process, and that starts with registering to vote," said SBE Administrator Jared DeMarinis. "By registering early and making a plan to vote, Marylanders take an active role in shaping the future through our democratic process."

### How To Register To Vote

There are three ways to register to vote in this year's elections.

Register online: The preliminary deadline to register or update voter registration is **Tuesday, June 2**. To register online, use SBE's online registration system.

Register by mail: Residents can register by printing the registration form (English version and Spanish version) and mailing it by **June 2**. Mailed registrations must be postmarked by this date. Alternatively, residents can submit it at their local board of elections.

Register in-person: Residents can register during early voting from **June 11-18**, or on Primary Election Day, **June 23**. Polls are open from 7:00am to 8:00pm. Voters in line by 8:00pm will be able to register. A list of early voting locations will be posted online. Make sure to bring a document that proves where you live when you attempt to vote at your local polling place or early voting center.

Learn more about Maryland's Primary Election at [vote.md.gov/vote2026](http://vote.md.gov/vote2026) or by downloading the Go Vote Maryland! app from the Google Play store or the Apple store.

## Council Update

» Continued from page 24  
it sets the framework for other counties to take similar steps.

### County Budget

It is that time of year again! The Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27) budget season is underway, with the introduction of County Executive Stuart Pittman's eighth and final budget on May 1. The council will deliberate over the proposed tax rates and county expenditures before voting on the budget in mid-June. Please stay engaged in this process. These are your hard-earned tax dollars at work, and I would love to hear your thoughts.

If you are interested in testifying on the proposed FY27 budget, there are two public hearings.

- Wednesday, May 13, at 7:00pm in the council chambers, located at 44 Calvert Street in Annapolis
- Tuesday, May 19, at 7:00pm at Severn Run High School, located at 8065 New Cut Road in Severn

Electronic testimony is always welcome by visiting the county council website.

It is important to note that the county council can only propose cuts to the county executive's budget and has no

line-item veto authority. The balance of cuts made by the council is then repurposed through the supplemental budget. It is in that supplemental budget where the council works to find common ground and priorities to address areas within departments not funded in the original budget proposal. The county executive must agree with the council's priorities as the proposing authority of the supplemental budget.

In addition to the budget, there are a number of other bills currently under consideration that may interest you:

- Bills 17-26 and 18-26 are the rezoning bills for the area of Gambrills/Odenton.
- Bill 19-26 offers a property tax credit for child or adult daycare facilities for the portion of a property that is used for the daycare and operated by the property owner.
- Bill 29-26 seeks to set additional requirements for the location of licensed cannabis dispensaries.

From battery energy storage systems to budget, it is an honor to represent our district on the issues that matter to you and your family.

You can contact me for county related concerns and feedback on this column by emailing [amanda.fiedler@aacounty.org](mailto:amanda.fiedler@aacounty.org).

## End Of Session

» Continued from page 24

significant capital funding for local projects, including \$450,000 to rebuild the Marsh Walk at Arlington Echo, a vital outdoor classroom along the Severn River used by Anne Arundel County students; \$400,000 to support a new, expanded facility for the Anne Arundel County Food Bank; and funding for improvements to parks, schools and community spaces across our district.

I was also proud to sponsor and pass legislation that makes a difference in people's daily lives, from improving maternal mental health care and expanding access to cancer treatment supports, to strengthening protections for children and supporting small businesses.

Serving as your state senator is an honor I take seriously. I remain committed to staying accessible, listening to your concerns, and delivering results that matter for our community — both during session and throughout the year.

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# Chairing The Maryland House Health Committee

**Heather Bagnall**  
Delegate  
District 33C



Every year, the May issue of the Voice is always a challenging one. With over 2,600 bills introduced and over 900 passed during the session, the same question always looms:

What should be the focus? Should I talk about the budget, which despite an immensely difficult time with a looming structural deficit, deficiencies due to aging infrastructure, job losses due to the firing of federal workers, and great uncertainty from Washington, passed balanced, early and delivered key investments in education, health care, transportation and child care? The budget also reined in and created greater oversight of spending and ensures the long-term sustainability of our programs for our most vulnerable Marylanders.

How about the work we did to lower utility costs and to hold CEOs accountable first and foremost to their ratepayers, rather than their shareholders, to ramp up energy generation?

There's also the work to protect the rights of our immigrant communities, our black and brown communities, and our LGBTQ communities, our neighbors, who find themselves under an all-out assault from a hostile administration who seem to have forgotten that the constitutional rights of freedom of speech, assembly, religion and due process are guaranteed to all.

This session saw a historic election of our new speaker, Joseline Peña-Melnyk, and my appointment as the chair of the newly configured House Health Committee. As chair I helped shepherd legislation addressing long-standing disparities in the management of menopause and perimenopause; raising the standards and increasing the quality of our assisted living facilities and nursing homes; addressing pediatric overstay in hospitals while ending the practice of boarding adolescents in unlicensed settings; overhauling our broken foster care system; modernizing our antiquat-

ed health department technology infrastructure; and reforming our public health system to ensure better communication, coordination, training, and professional development between our local health authorities and the state department of health.

We protected our most vulnerable communities, ensured continued access to Medicaid, expanded our behavioral health system coordination, codified federal protections for pregnancy-related emergencies and behavioral health parity into state law, and ensured that recommendations for vaccinations and preventive services would be based on science, not politics.

We passed legislation to address our long emergency department wait times and ensure workers who have a front seat to the challenges have a seat at the table in creating solutions, and we continued our work on addressing our maternal mortality and morbidity rates with legislation that ensures moms and babies are getting the care they need not only in the essential first 48 hours but throughout that first essential year.

We passed the Commission on Re-Imagining Health Care in Maryland — an initiative to consider not what is but what could be — to ensure patient-centered, outcomes-driven, quality health care for every Marylander. Where others saw uncertainty, we saw opportunity. I believe that may have been my biggest contribution - not the bills I passed or the meetings I held but my insistence on approaching this work with pragmatism and hope.

Eight years ago, I ran to put our district on the map because I felt we were underrepresented, under-resourced and underestimated. Eight years later we have a tremendous advocate, friend and one of the most effective senators in the chamber. We've established great relationships with our local and state agencies, with our community organizations and local chambers, and our first-ever chair of a House Standing Committee. Though the session has come to an end, the work is far from over, but we all should celebrate that even in the most challenging of times, we put our heads down, do the work, and turn challenges into opportunities.

## County Executive Primary Candidate Forum To Take Place On May 11

Residents are invited to attend a county executive primary candidate forum to hear candidates speak about solutions to issues affecting the Broadneck Peninsula and Anne Arundel County. Moderated by Dan Nataf, director of the Center for the Study of Local Issues, and Elizabeth Rosborg, president of the Arnold Preservation Council, the forum will take place on May 11 at 7:00pm in Anne Arundel Community College's Health and Life Sciences Auditorium.

## County Executive Pittman Delivers Final Budget Proposal

*FY27 Proposed Budget Includes Investments In Education, Health And Human Services, And Public Safety*

On May 1 Anne Arundel County Executive Stuart Pittman released his proposed Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27) budget, a plan guided by the theme "A House In Good Order."

Pittman introduced the budget with an address to the County Council.

"Budgets are a statement of values and strategy. This budget, along with the seven I have presented before it, demonstrates our belief that government matters," County Executive Stuart Pittman said. "Our schools, our public safety, our environment, our health, and the people who live here all benefit when we invest in effective government. With the final budget of my administration, I am able to leave my successor and our residents what I promised: a house in good order, a foundation from which we can truly make Anne Arundel County The Best Place — For All."

### Education

The FY27 budget proposal includes a record-breaking \$72.8 million increase in direct funding to support Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS). The proposal also provides a step increase for all AACPS bargaining units plus a 2.25% COLA to match what other county employees are getting, and adds 26 new special education positions.

### Health and Human Services

This budget proposal continues to create opportunities for those who have too often been left behind and prioritizes the county executive's mission to protect people from federal threats. To meet these goals, the proposal:

- Provides \$2 million to the Anne Arundel County Food Bank, an increase from last year's support of \$1.5 million.
- Creates five new Medicaid Navigator positions to help recipients keep their health coverage amidst new federal administrative burdens.
- Adds two new case managers to the REACH Program to connect uninsured residents to volunteer and discounted medical providers.
- Doubles funding for the Family Protection Initiative to provide immigrant families with legal assistance and crisis support services.
- Expands the Department of Health's violence interruption program to Brooklyn Park and continues to support their work in Eastport and Severn.
- Funds the Housing In Place, Home Our Priority (Hip Hop) Program to assist homeless youth.

### Public Safety

This proposal continues to grow the county's public safety agencies

based on achievable proposals from county chiefs and directors. The budget adds nine new positions to the police department, including the six positions needed to staff the final shift at the Real Time Information Center.

For the fire department, this budget adds 21 new firefighter positions to fully staff a new fire truck in the Annapolis Neck and South County area.

The proposal also continues to invest in new public safety facilities, funding the new Northern Police Station and the new Arundel, Waugh Chapel and Jessup fire stations.

### Land Use and Government Operations

To continue the county's work to protect natural spaces and ensure efficient government services for residents, the proposal:

- Funds the new Capital Program Optimization Initiative to speed up projects and address bottlenecks in the design and construction process.
- Invests nearly \$60 million to divert wastewater flow from the Patapsco Treatment Plant to county facilities, creating capacity and supporting work to lift the moratorium.
- Provides a one-time boost of \$458,000 for the road repair fund to address potholes.
- Funds designs for recreation facilities and housing with supportive services at Crownsville Hospital Memorial Park.
- Funds the next phase of planning for the Regional Agricultural Center at the Lothian Grain Elevator site.
- Adds Recreation and Parks staffing for the new Edgewater Community Center, Lake Waterford Indoor Tennis Facility, and recent natural area acquisitions at Glebe Heights, Saltworks and Looper properties.
- Adds an adoption coordinator at Animal Services and funds the concept design for a new animal shelter.

The budget proposal maintains the county's current income tax rates. It also lowers the property tax rate to 96.8 cents per \$100. The proposed property tax rate is .9 cents below the rate that residents pay today, and is .6 cents above the tax cap that local jurisdictions may exceed for education funding.

Residents can review the full FY27 proposed budget at [www.aacounty.org/FY27budget](http://www.aacounty.org/FY27budget). County Council budget public hearings will be held on May 13 and May 19, and all residents are encouraged to participate.



## Falcons Baseball Eyeing Playoffs

By David Bashore

Severna Park had seven hits but scratched across just one run in their rivalry game with Broadneck on April 22. But in the seventh inning with the leadoff runner on, **Charlie Delobe** stepped in and ripped a shot down the first baseline.

It landed right in first baseman **Logan Sabo's** glove, and he stepped on first to double off the runner. The next pitch was a groundout and suddenly the game was over, with the Bruins winning 4-1.

Sometimes it's just not your day. But the Falcons remain undaunted as they continue their recent good fortunes in the build-up to the postseason, which starts later this week.

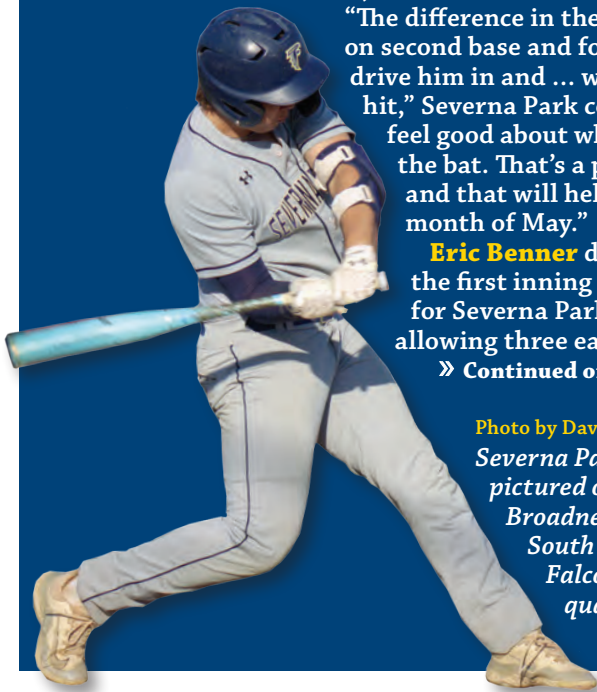
"The difference in the game is they got a guy on second base and found a way to get a hit and drive him in and ... we didn't get the clutch hit," Severna Park coach **Pete Buck** said. "I feel good about where the kids are swinging the bat. That's a playoff game right there and that will help us get ready for the month of May."

**Eric Benner** danced around trouble in the first inning but pitched all six innings for Severna Park, scattering six hits and allowing three earned runs.

» Continued on page 35

Photo by David Bashore

Severna Park's Logan Moran, pictured offering at a pitch against Broadneck, homered twice against South River and has helped the Falcon offense back up their quality pitching.



## Severna Park Softball Enjoying Pressure, Successes

By David Bashore

Though Severna Park came up on the wrong end of a 1-0, nine-inning loss at Broadneck on April 22, the Falcons took the setback in stride.

A spirited showing in that contest, combined with dominance over other opponents and a chance to show growth in a rematch with Northeast from earlier in the season, Severna Park is moving forward toward what it hopes is an elusive region championship.

The 12-game stretch out of spring break to close the regular season provided multiple challenges, highlighted by the game against Broadneck. The teams combined for five hits and 31 strikeouts, as Severna Park junior **Quinlyn Bary** dueled her opposite number from Broadneck, **Rylan Crisafulli**.

Predictably the bats went dormant for both teams, the defense rose to the occasion, and one run was all it would take.

"Something was going to squeak by at some point. I did think it was going to be us in the top of the (ninth) inning, but both defenses were lights out. Anytime someone

tried to make it happen, the defenses were both right there," said Severna Park coach **Bailey Benedick**. "I remember being here back when I was a sophomore and we had a 10-inning game here to beat

» Continued on page 35



Photos by David Bashore

Severna Park's Quinlyn Bary struck out 12 in their matchup with Broadneck.

## Bruins Softball Rides Momentum To County Berth

By David Bashore

Nobody needed to remind **Corinn Bennett** of the stakes.

There were two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning in a scoreless game between Broadneck and Severna Park, and the Bruins had the winning run on base. Stud pitchers **Quinlyn Bary** and **Rylan Crisafulli** had combined to hold batters 4-for-57 with an eye-popping 31 strikeouts.

Even with the international tiebreaker putting a runner on second for extra innings, scoring chances remained at a premium. Bennett ended it with the first pitch she saw from Bary, singling to center field to score **Rowan Haas** and empty the Broadneck dugout in celebration.

With both pitchers looking good despite being so deep into the game, Bennett sensed hers was the opportunity that needed to be decisive.

"It didn't matter what kind of pitch it was, I just knew I had to get a hit," said Bennett, who had two of Broadneck's three hits in the game. "We needed (to win) this game, and hopefully this is going to take us a long way."

With Broadneck sitting at one loss and Severna Park unbeaten in county

play heading into the game, the Bruins needed a win to keep hope alive in the county championship race.

In a battle of two of the best pitchers in the state regardless of division, Crisafulli outdueled Bary as they continued to bring out the best in each other.

» Continued on page 36

Photo by David Bashore

Broadneck pitcher Rylan Crisafulli fanned 19 Severna Park batters on April 22, furthering her own program single-season strikeout record.



## Broadneck Baseball Rounding Into Form

By David Bashore

In a charged playoff atmosphere, Broadneck's baseball team rose to the occasion.

**Bodhi Samson** delivered a first-inning two-run single, and **Greg Miteff**, **Tripp Zwerlein** and the Bruins defense did the rest in a 4-1 win over Severna Park on April 22.

The victory was a key marker in Broadneck's quest to return to the county championship game and gear up for another run deep into May.

"It's a great ball team and great pitcher, and they put up a great fight. You have to play to the last out with these guys," Samson said of Severna Park. "The bench got loud and helped us get some momentum. First at-bat I wanted to put hard contact on it, and I sensed a curveball was coming."

That would hold up, but the Bruins added two more runs in the later innings to provide some cushion for Miteff, who pitched the first four innings, and Zwerlein, who picked up the rare three-inning save.

The pitching tandem has worked well for Broadneck, who lost their top three hurlers from last season but has figured out a workable solution.

Having a power lineup helps as well. The Bruins have

» Continued on page 36

Photos by David Bashore

Broadneck's Greg Miteff celebrated getting out of a jam during the Bruins' 4-1 win over Severna Park.









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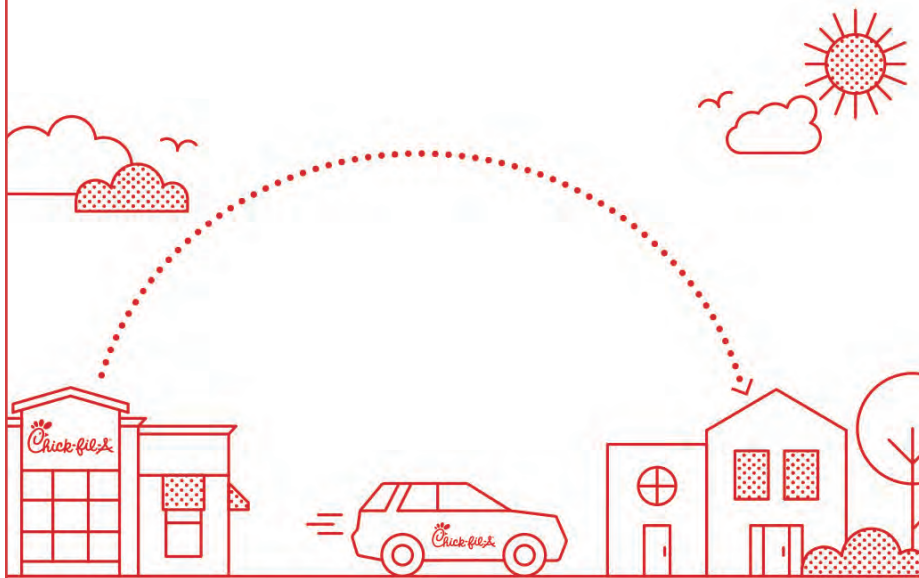


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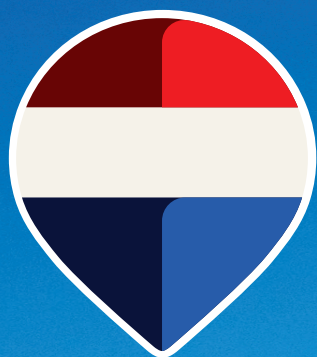
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# Broadneck Lacrosse Aligning Strengths As Playoffs Loom

By David Bashore

In assessing Broadneck's potential for the boys lacrosse playoffs, head coach **Jeff McGuire** doesn't want to think about a narrow win over 2A power Stephen Decatur, nor the blowouts over county foes, and especially not a humbling 15-7 loss at Severna Park.

He points to a rare late-season out-of-county matchup against Cape Henlopen, played April 22. Broadneck stifled the Delaware power and got a late goal to snatch a 10-9 home victory in their most complete performance of the season.

"Against Cape Henlopen, we played like the team we should be," McGuire said. "There are still some things to work out, but compared to one to two weeks ago, we feel like we have a different look for the better."

It certainly helped that **Wyatt Hicks** had yet another five-goal game. The last of his five against Cape Henlopen came in the game's dying seconds when he took a feed from Broadneck draw man **Keaton Walker**, faked an off-hand shot, then spun 360 degrees and fired with the right-hand shot to give the Bruins the win.

In addition to four goals against Severna Park, Hicks hit five against both Southern and Cape Henlopen, as he continues his assault on the Broadneck record books.

The next time out against Annapolis, a 14-4 win, Hicks set a new program career record with his 128th goal — he's just a sophomore.

With Hicks' scoring prowess, a senior leadership core, and stout defense led by long-sticks **Wyatt Shaw** and **Grayson Boone**, the Bruins think they have worked out the recipe for success deep into May.

"The Wyatts are the strength of our team," McGuire said. "Shaw might be the best overall player I have had the pleasure of coaching, and he still always strives to be better."



Photos by David Bashore

Above: Broadneck's Wyatt Hicks (23) scored one of his four goals against Severna Park. Left: Broadneck's Grayson Boone (16) has helped solidify the Bruins' defensive midfield, making life tough on opposing attackers.

That has rubbed off on the rest of the squad. Before the Severna Park loss, they beat Stephen Decatur 12-10 and Crofton 15-5. After that loss, they took it out on Southern (24-2) and Arundel

(19-1) before beating Cape Henlopen. They finished the regular season with wins over North County 17-0 and Chesapeake 16-3, but fell 6-4 to Severna Park in the May 1 county championship game.

After that it's the 4A East 1 region playoffs, where North County, Glen Burnie, Meade and Annapolis await.

## Bruin Girls Back In County Lacrosse Title Game

By David Bashore

Photos by David Bashore

Broadneck's Scarlett Burrows (19) looked for a way through the Severna Park defense during their game April 14.

Sitting at 5-4 midway through the season is not something that many state championship-caliber teams would accept.

But when you're a five-time reigning state champion, everyone wants to give you their best shot and quality programs from around the region are calling to get on your schedule, it comes with the territory.

Broadneck's girls lacrosse team found themselves in that familiar near-500 record territory after nine games, but they didn't panic. After all, that slate included four reigning state champions, two runners-up, and one of the top private school teams in the country.

Instead, they took the lessons from big wins over Marriotts Ridge, South Carroll and Cape Henlopen, and from losses against Manchester Valley, Glenelg, Severna Park and St. Mary's, and used those to tailor the back end of their schedule in a way they could build momentum.

"That's part of having that reputation, is that great teams want to play you," said Broadneck coach **Caitlin Gogoll**. "We had to have a lot of those games earlier in the schedule than we would have liked because of the way the schedule fell, so we have spent the last couple of weeks working really intensely in training, putting them

under pressure, so that the games hopefully feel easier for them (in comparison)."

In addition to the attacking trio of **Ceci Facciponti**, **Avery Katzen** and **Nora Lopes**, the Bruins have gotten contributions from all over the field as they navigated a challenging early schedule and ramped up the intensity as the season progressed.

Gogoll singled out multi-year starting goalie **Molly Robison** for elevating her game that much more, being involved with defensive interceptions, and using her athleticism to impact more than simply stopping shots, and sophomore midfielder **Harper Frye** for developing into a two-way threat that helps bridge defense and attack.

After losing to Manchester Valley 9-6, beating Crofton 16-4, and falling to St. Mary's 10-6 and Severna Park 7-6 to fall to 5-4, Broadneck closed the regular season on a five-game win streak. They beat Southern 18-4, Arundel 14-1, Annapolis 19-3, North County 20-3 and Chesapeake 16-7, but lost to Severna Park 12-5 in the county championship on May 1.

Next, it's off to the region playoffs, where the Bruins are the top seed in the 4A East 1 bracket. North County, Glen Burnie, Annapolis and Meade are the teams standing in their way of returning to the state playoffs.



Broadneck's Charlotte Robertson raced upfield as the Bruins tried to rally from a five-goal deficit.





# STUDENT-ATHLETE OF THE MONTH



Photo by Fincham Photography

## GRACIE CIUBA

Severna Park High School | Lacrosse

By David Bashore

**G**racie Ciuba has gained a lot from her time in Severna Park. She's been determined to turn that right back around.

The Falcon senior didn't really play lacrosse before moving to Severna Park nearly 10 years ago. She was a soccer specialist, but she quickly realized how big the sport was here and that it was a fast way to make new friends.

"I started playing three years after I moved out here because my friends were doing it, but then it kind of took over from soccer because it was such a big deal out here," Ciuba said. "I've been fortunate enough to be fed into a high school where everyone is so good at lacrosse. Playing with girls like **Maria (Bragg)** and my good friend **Bella (Mazzola)**, they're so good. Being on varsity for the first time last year, it's such a big jump, but having girls with so much knowledge about the sport and coaches with big ties to the program ... it's great to have those resources when you're playing in such a good program."

Ciuba had a steep learning curve to pick up lacrosse, having started so much later than her peers. But she has evolved into a capable midfielder in her own right and will take her talents back to her old stomping grounds. She will play collegiately at American University in the nation's capital.

She hopes to use the skills she's picked up in Severna Park to dovetail with her experience growing up in Washington, D.C. in forging a meaningful career down the road.

Ciuba carries a 4.2 GPA and is a member of four organizations and clubs at Severna Park: National Business Honor Society and Best Buddies — she serves as an officer in both — and National Honor Society and OneLove. Outside of school, she serves as a coach for the seventh-grade team at Maryland United Lacrosse Club.

But it's Best Buddies that has most of her attention and imagination as she moves forward, with an aim to study political science at American and use that to potentially work in advocacy spaces.

"I grew up in D.C. and I know the area. We have a lot of friends in D.C., and one of them is a lobbyist, which I find interesting. I love public speaking and sharing my opinions, so I think (political science) would be an interesting thing," Ciuba said. "Coming into high school was my first experience (with Best Buddies), but it's something I'm passionate about both in the school and in the community."

"Taking on a leadership role was important because it kind of dies out (senior year) for a lot of people because they don't want to stay around for the club (with a senior early release). But making those connections has been important to me because if I continue on in a career with government, maybe I can do something that advocates for special needs."

*"Having girls with so much knowledge about the sport and coaches with big ties to the program ... it's great to have those resources when you're playing in such a good program."*

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# Falcon Baseball

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The Broadneck game was their second loss in succession, after the Falcons lost a wild 14-13 game against Arundel. Other than that, though, the season has progressed well. They came out of spring break with six straight wins, topping South River 4-1, Meade 20-0, Annapolis 14-0, Glen Burnie 18-6, Southern 7-2, and Chesapeake 16-3. After the Broadneck game, they beat Old Mill 10-0 and Crofton 8-0. **Reese Davis** threw a no-hitter, striking out 12 and walking none. Crofton's only baserunner came on an error in the second inning.

The Falcons went on to oust North County 16-2 and Northeast 3-2, clinching a spot in the county championship game against Broadneck, to be played May 5 at Joe Cannon Stadium.

Though the Falcons sat at 13-6 with one regular season game remaining and the county championship against Broadneck on May 5, they feel optimistic about the path forward to the 4A East 1 region playoffs. There they have North County, Meade, Glen Burnie, Severn Run and Mervo standing in their way on the road to the state quarterfinals.

Severna Park looks to ride Benner and Davis on the mound, while getting contributions from the plate to push them across the line.

"Our strength is our pitching staff. I love where we're moving toward and that's going to help us in May," Buck said. "When we come to the playoffs, I love the fact we have Benner-Davis for five games in the playoffs back-to-back, and if we can get the bats, we're going to make some noise."

# Severna Park Softball Enjoying Pressure, Successes



Severna Park's Taylor Moran, facing, and Morgan Rausch celebrated Rausch's diving catch during their game against Broadneck High School.

» Continued from page 30

them for the first time in five years. I love when both of these teams are that good, because it makes it so much more fun every time you do this."

Despite the loss, the Falcons were in county championship contention to the very end. They rebounded to beat Old Mill 13-3 and Crofton 10-0, but lost 10-3 to Northeast. They closed the regular season May 1 with the resumption of a suspended game with North County, tied 2-2 in the seventh inning.

Earlier in the month they ripped off seven straight wins, with four shutouts in the first five of those games: an 11-1 win over South River, followed by shutouts of Meade (19-0), Annapolis (14-0), Glen Burnie (15-0), and Southern (11-0).

They then capped the run with an emotional week, including a 7-6 win over Chesapeake and a 4-0 win over Arundel, in a game dedicated to the memory of **Lauryan Bary**, who passed away in October and has two daughters on the softball team.

Severna Park sits at 13-4 and faces North County on May 4. Depending on the outcome of that game, the Falcons will enter the playoffs in contention for the top seed in 3A's East 2 region tournament.

"They're showing already how much growth has come over the last couple of years. We just keep adding a little bit more every year," Benedick said. "We learned a lot of really good things (against Broadneck). The amount of pressure they were under and they just went with it in stride. Mentally we're there; we're ready to go, and we just need to work on the execution piece, because the end goal is states."



  
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## Broadneck Baseball Rounding Into Form

» Continued from page 30 won in a variety of ways coming out of spring break, with the 4-1 win over Severna Park and 5-1 win over North County bookending six other wins, four of which saw them crack double figures in the run column — 13-5 over Southern, 10-3 over Chesapeake, 14-6 over Severn Run, and 16-8 over South River. They also squeaked out a 5-4 win over Northeast and an 8-7 victory against Arundel.

Broadneck closed county play by beating Meade 24-0, Old Mill 13-4, and Annapolis 7-3 to clinch a berth in the county championship game against Severna Park. They also had a rematch with Crofton, which Crofton won 4-1.

The Bruins played St. Mary's on May 4 before the county championship game against the Falcons on May 5.

With the regular season in the rear view, Broadneck now turns to a challenging 4A East 2 region tournament beginning May 9 where they will be one of the higher seeds, with Leonardtown and Crofton also to worry about.

Still, they feel like the recipe is right to win the region and make a second straight trip to the state level of the playoffs.

"There's a great friendship here and I think that is what drives us," Samson said. "We just keep getting better and better."



*Shortstop Avik Cherry made a strong off-balance throw during the Bruins' 4-1 win over Severna Park.*

## Bruins Softball Closes In On County Berth

» Continued from page 30 The Broadneck junior added to her program single-season record strikeout total, tacking on 19 in the victory. She also allowed two hits and walked two. Her current 2026 strikeout mark sits at 222, well above the previous mark of 163.

"I know I have to make my pitches to help the team, and then I just trust my defense," Crisafulli said.

In addition to the Severna Park win, the Bruins also beat North County 2-0, Southern 3-0, Chesapeake 3-2, Severn Run 10-0, Arundel 2-1, South River 10-2, Old Mill 11-0, Annapolis 15-1, and Crofton 3-0 to clinch a spot in the county championship game opposite Northeast, May 5 at Bachman Sports Complex in Glen Burnie. Crisafulli threw a no-hitter and struck out 18 in the win over North County.

They started the month with losses against Northern, Huntingtown, and Northeast, but finished on a nine-game winning streak.

Broadneck ends the regular season with a 15-3 record.



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## Falcon Boys Lax Cranks Up Heat



Photos by David Bashore

Above: **Severna Park's Ben Ruppert (7) ran into traffic during their 15-7 win over Broadneck on April 14.** Left: **Ethan Fish (3) and Tyler Lawhorne (28) celebrated one of the Falcons' 15 goals scored against Broadneck.**

By David Bashore

After an 11-8 setback to Severn School, the Severna Park boys lacrosse team looked in the mirror and delivered some hard truths.

The leadership group assessed the team's fortunes — that loss, squandering a late lead at home before losing in overtime to Urbana, and a general malaise in a program that has won nine straight state titles — and rendered a verdict.

"We got together, talked about it, and said this isn't acceptable," said Severna Park senior **Duke Sealey**. "Defense has been playing well all year, so we talked to the offense and got some things set up. All five captains, I think we started getting on guys in a good way to get things going in the right direction."

Since taking themselves behind the woodshed, the Falcons have looked much more like themselves. And so far, the rest of the state has paid the price.

Not only has Severna Park not lost since the Severn game, but there hasn't

even really been a threat: they've rolled up eight straight wins, the narrowest margin of which was by eight goals.

They shut out Marriotts Ridge 11-0, then topped Southern 19-1, Broadneck 15-7, and Annapolis 18-4 before shutting out South River 16-0. They wrapped up the regular season with wins over Chesapeake 15-1, Arundel 24-0, and North County 25-1.

In case the other blowouts seemed ho-hum, the Falcons ensured they would make their "we're still here" statement against Broadneck. Sealey scored the first of his five goals 17 seconds into the game as they quickly built a multi-goal lead. They stretched the margin to 10 in the fourth quarter before taking their foot off the gas.

"Defense gives us the opportunities to score, and those defenders on Broadneck are legit. Getting going early gets the bench hyped and keeps the game flowing," Sealey said. "We hadn't put up a lot of goals against the best teams, so getting a performance like that was important."

After overcoming Broadneck 6-4 on May 1 to win the county championship game, the Falcons move on to the 3A East 2 region playoff, for which they are the top seed and have earned a bye into the semifinals.



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# Severna Park Girls Lacrosse Rebounds After Tough Start

By David Bashore

As the Severna Park girls lacrosse team hit the midway point of the season, they found themselves in unfamiliar territory: hunter rather than hunted, and owner of a sub-.500 record having lost four straight games.

Mindful that their season-opening slate was nothing short of brutal, the Falcons picked themselves up and moved forward. They haven't lost since.

The first game out of spring break was a 10-6 loss at reigning 3A champion Marriotts Ridge, but since then it's been seven straight victories, highlighted by a narrow 7-6 success over Broadneck.

In that game, **Quinn Allison's** tally early in the third period gave the Falcons a five-goal lead. They wouldn't score again, but they clamped down defensively and methodically worked the clock as the gap narrowed. "I looked up and said it's never going to stay like that. We just came together and said if we made our stops and took care of the ball, we were going to be OK," said Severna Park senior **Maria Bragg**, who scored twice in the win. "It got really intense and you know it's always going to be back and forth. They had some really good offensive makes, but our defense pulled it together really well."

In addition to the win over Broadneck, Severna Park defeated Southern 17-5, Annapolis 14-1, South River 8-3, Chesapeake 14-6, Arundel 20-2, and North County 18-0.

The Broadneck and South River wins ensured the Falcons returned to the county championship game, in which they beat the Bruins 12-5, and earned the top seed for their 3A East 2 region playoff run, which starts this week.

Then it's a return to the grind, where the Falcons hope to play for the 3A title for the fourth straight season, potentially again squaring off against Marriotts Ridge.

"These are the great games and this is what great lacrosse is made of," said Severna Park coach **Annie Houghton**. "We learned some lessons from those tougher games, so keeping those games close and getting those girls in helped us with close games and knowing what our competition is, that we can play tough against really good teams."



Photos by David Bashore  
Right: **Severna Park's Maria Bragg (12)** scored twice and quarterbacked the offense during the Falcons' 7-6 win over the Bruins. Below: **Quinn Allison (4)** scored the decisive goal in Severna Park's 7-6 win over Broadneck.



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# Severna Park Softball Family Honors Lauryn McAlister Bary

*Three-Sport Athlete And Coach  
Died Last October*

By Kevin Murnane

**I** was thinking of her with every pitch,” said Severna Park softball pitcher **Quinlyn Bary**. “Her” is Quinlyn’s mother, **Lauryn McAlister Bary**, who died suddenly at her home last October. She was only 47 years old.

The Severna Park softball community paid tribute to Lauryn with a pregame ceremony on April 20. Players and coaches from the Falcons and Arundel Wildcats wore jerseys that read “One Family” with Lauryn’s initials (LB) in the center along with the phrase “For The Love The Game” across the bottom.

Lauryn was a 1996 graduate of Severna Park High School, where she played soccer, basketball and softball. She then went to play soccer and softball at Long Island University in Brooklyn, New York.

After college, Lauryn became involved with coaching soccer and softball in the Green Hornets organization and then advanced to coaching club softball teams in the API, TNT and Starz Gold programs.

Because of Lauryn’s tenure as a club coach in central Anne Arundel County, players from both Arundel and Severna Park had her as a coach in their under-14 program. All of those players were recognized before the game.

In the emotional ceremony prior to the game, Quinlyn Bary remembered her mother by stating, “Something that has been said to me is that we live on in the hearts of the people who love us the most. By playing this game, it allows my mom to live with us another day. She coached many of the young women standing here today. If my mom was here today, she would remind us to play hard, have fun, and in tough moments, just breathe.”

Lauryn’s youngest daughter, McKenna, sang the national anthem for the packed crowd at the Falcons’ home field.

In the game versus the Wildcats, the Falcons broke out to an early 4-0 lead on a key hit by catcher **Morgan Rausch**. The game then became a pitcher’s duel between Quinlyn and Arundel’s **Brianna Porter**.

However, Quinlyn’s four-pitch arsenal became dominant as the game progressed and she finished with 12 strikeouts and complete game shutout.

After the game the Bary sisters reflected on the ceremony and the anticipation of this sentimental contest.

“I was looking forward to this game all day and I couldn’t wait for 3:18pm (the end of the school day) to come around so I could change and come down to the field,” Quinlyn said. “Our crowd was very supportive and our team was very vocal the entire game.”



Photos by Kevin Murnane

**Left:** Severna Park’s Quinlyn “Q” Bary hurled a pitch during an April home game. **Right:** McKenna and Quinlyn Bary accepted flowers dedicated to their mother.

Severna Park head softball coach **Bailey Benedick** coached with Lauryn and knew how much energy and passion she put into every game and practice.

“Lauryn would have loved every second of this game,” Benedick said. “Between the camaraderie, great pitching, defense and fun the players were having, it was what Lauryn taught her players about the game.”

Benedick added that Lauryn would be so proud of both her daughters.

“Hands down, Quinlyn is the best pitcher I’ve ever had, and McKenna, who is only a freshman, is extremely mature and nothing fazes her,” Benedick said. “She has a bright future as a pitcher and first baseman and she also plays field hockey.”

Benedick took over the program three years ago with the goal of re-establishing the Falcons as a dominant force in the county and region.

“I have such a strong junior class and we’ve been together since they were freshmen,” Benedick said. “Those players, of which many excel in multiple sports, include Bary, Rausch, **Andrea Rom**, **Lucy Benner** and **Megan Young**.”

Rausch, who has been Quinlyn’s catcher for eight years, attributed Quinlyn’s phenomenal pitching

record to keeping the opposition off balance with a four-pitch mix including a 70-mile-per-hour fastball, riser, changeup and off-speed repertoire.

“Her speed is amazing but (Quinlyn) also hits her spots,” Rausch said.

Quinlyn has committed to Arkansas to continue her softball career and during the April game honoring her mother, Quinlyn recorded her 400th strikeout as a Falcon.

“Quinlyn has so much potential and she’s capable of doing whatever she puts her mind to, whether it’s school, softball or anything else,” said **Meredith McAlister Kraus**, Quinlyn and McKenna’s aunt, and former Falcons head softball coach for nearly 20 years.

Kraus also addressed the crowd before the game and mentioned that she and her sister had the same ideals for development, inclusion and opportunities for their players.

“Lauryn was incredible at making sure her players knew she was 100% there for them,” Kraus said.

Quinlyn concluded her pregame comments by saying, “I want to thank everyone on both teams, coaches and supporters, for allowing us to have my mom live another day with us.”

## MPSSAA Sanctions Girls Flag Football As Maryland’s 26th State Championship Sport

**T**he Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) officially sanctioned girls flag football as its 26th state championship sport in April. Following a landmark unanimous vote by the MPSSAA Board of Control and approval of Maryland State Superintendent of Schools Carey Wright, the sport will transition from “emerging” status to a fully recognized varsity state championship effective for the 2026-2027 academic year.

The MPSSAA inaugural season will operate three separate state championship classification tournaments based on each school’s enrollment. The season will begin on the first

official fall sport practice date of August 12 and culminate with the state championship games at M&T Bank Stadium by mid-November.

“This is a historic day for our student-athletes and the sport of girls flag football,” said Andy Warner, MPSSAA executive director. “The growth of girls flag football demonstrates its inclusive reach to our female student-athletes, providing opportunities for teamwork and leadership in an equitable sporting environment. We are thrilled to see these young women compete for state titles and showcase their talents under the lights of our high school stadiums.”

This decision marks the culmination of a multi-year initiative in partnership with the Baltimore Ravens. The journey began in January 2021, when the MPSSAA initiated discussion with the Ravens and collaboratively built a shared vision for a sustainable competitive framework.

The Ravens and Frederick County Public Schools combined to make the vision a reality with the pilot season in 2023 with 10 teams. In four years, participation has grown to 66% of MPSSAA-member schools participating by 2026 (132 schools). The MPSSAA Board of Control criteria requires at least 40% of the member-

ship for state championship consideration, surpassing the regulatory threshold for consideration.

The growth of girls flag football has been meteoric:

- 2023-2024: 10 participating schools
- 2024-2025: 53 participating schools
- 2025-2026: 91 participating schools
- 2026-2027 (projected): 132 participating schools statewide

The rapid growth of girls flag football can be attributed to the partnerships developed by the Ravens and local school systems, with the Ravens to date having provided over \$1 million in total funding support to participating school systems. In conjunction with Under Armour, the Ravens have also provided uniforms to each participating county since launching the initiative.

Further information will be released in the coming weeks on [www.mpssaa.org](http://www.mpssaa.org).



## Magothy River Middle STEM Educator Joe Bigsby Named AACPS Teacher Of The Year

Photo courtesy of Anne Arundel County Public Schools

*STEM teacher Joe Bigsby has been an educator at Magothy River Middle School for eight years. On April 24, he was named the 2026 AACPS Teacher of the Year.*

By Meredith Winter

At the beginning of the process to select the 2026 Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) Teacher of the Year, 88 educators were nominated for the award. Later, 18 semifinalists were announced. Then, the field was narrowed to seven finalists. That's when it started to become a reality for Magothy River Middle School (MRMS) STEM teacher Joe Bigsby that he might actually be selected for the honor.

Bigsby, a Calvert County native, was named AACPS' Teacher of the Year on April 24 at the 40th annual Excellence in Education Awards held at the Live! Event Center at Arundel Mills.

"You have to prepare a speech ahead of (the event), so I was a little bit prepared, not thinking it was go-



ing to be me, but like, this could happen," Bigsby said days after receiving the award. He shared that he's been "riding the rollercoaster ever since."

The former accountant has been an educator for 13 years, eight of them at MRMS. In addition to teaching STEM classes, he has started a robotics team at the school and facilitates an afterschool game group

called the strategy club.

"This is not about one person," Bigsby told the 700-person crowd at the awards ceremony moments after his name was announced, according to an AACPS statement. "It's about all of Anne Arundel County and what we bring, the excellence that we bring. I am reminded of that every single day as I talk to other teachers and I realize that it's not a solo thing. I did not win tonight. We won tonight. The kids won tonight. Anne Arundel County won tonight because that's what we do. We do things excellent."

Reflecting on the sentiments he shared, Bigsby stated that getting to thank all of the teachers he's worked with in the past was the highlight of his speech.

"One of the things I've always found of value is building your teacher's tool belt, and that means things that you learn from other teachers, that you're able to take away from professional developments, or just conversations or co-planning, and bring them back to your classroom," he said. "And when you do that for — I've been teaching for 13 years — you begin to take the best parts of all the teachers you've encountered. And so, I made sure to say thank you to all the teachers out there that have contributed to my success in the classroom and beyond."

» Continued on page 46

## "Shipley's Starlight Sounds" Thrills Audiences At "Mini Rock 'N' Roll Revival"



By Judy Tacyn

For 15 years, Shipley's Choice Elementary School fourth and fifth grade students have danced and sang a wide range of chart-topping hits from across the decades. On May 2 and 3, the students once again put on Grammy-worthy performances in "Shipley's Starlight Sounds," this year's "Mini Rock 'N' Roll Revival" show that included a total of 92 cast and tech crew members.

Shipley's music teacher Caitlan Peachey served again as director. "Our 'Mini Rock 'N' Roll Revival' is something the kids look forward to as soon as they start elementary school," Peachey said. "I like the creative freedom the format gives me and our choreographers because we can choose songs that fit the kids who participate each year."

Students auditioned last November and put in a tremendous amount of time to

*The cast and crew of Shipley's "Mini Rock 'N' Roll Revival," entitled "Shipley's Starlight Sounds," comprised 92 fourth and fifth graders.*

perfect their dances and songs. The hard work was evident as they showcased their talents during 20 numbers spanning diverse genres, tempos and musical decades from the '60s through the 2000s.

While the audience enjoyed the show, Peachey couldn't help but express pride in how each participant commanded the stage.

"My favorite part is watching the kids grow from the beginning and seeing them evolve into stronger vocalists and dancers by the end of the production," Peachey explained. "The kids were extremely talented and versatile with strengths in every single area, and were willing to work hard to make the show a

» Continued on page 46





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## Educator Of The Month

### Emily Clark Benfield Elementary School



*A quarter-mile path loops around the field at Benfield Elementary School — a project championed by physical education teacher Emily Clark.*

By Lauren Cowin

When the dismissal bell rang on a Monday afternoon, a small group of Benfield Elementary School students met in the school gymnasium to practice — for a math competition.

Their leader? Benfield physical education teacher Emily Clark.

"It's awesome to see a different side of them," Clark said of watching her students thrive in an environment other than her P.E. class.

Clark has held court in the Benfield gym since 2015, when she sought a change in school location, and moving from the classroom to physical education was the most logical path.

She also discovered while in a graduate program to become a reading specialist that her ideal career wouldn't keep her sitting in a chair for hours on end.

"That was the tipping point," Clark said. "I (had) to find something where I can get up and move."

It's hard to imagine Clark sitting still, ever.

Upon her arrival at Benfield, she created a dance company and club to provide students with another avenue to move their bodies and grow their confidence. Today, some of her former dancers can be found

in Severna Park High School's "Rock 'N' Revival" playbill. With Clark's coordination, they pay it forward by coming back to their old stomping grounds to assist their younger counterparts.

Perhaps Clark's hardest-earned achievement at Benfield is the quarter-mile walking path that loops around the field adjacent to the playground.

Clark found that the field was often wet, making it hard to use for her P.E. class, and students avoided it during recess. With the support of her principal, she proposed the idea of installing a path around the field to county officials.

Though her plan was initially denied, Clark was urged to not give up. Eventually, the county invested \$60,000 in her vision, and the path is now used daily by Benfield students and parents attending youth sporting events at the field.

Clark didn't stop with just a path. Using iPads and QR codes, students can track their laps and miles, which have multiplied over the years. She even created a competition to incentivize movement, and she had her students write letters to local businesses of their choice to request prizes for the winners.

Watching her students grow and mature over their years at Benfield is what Clark finds most rewarding about her job.

"I don't get them for a year; I get them for six," she said. "Even though my role is P.E., I think it's more than that. I make it more than that."

This unwavering dedication to her students' well-being is what prompted Benfield Principal Sue Myers to nominate her for the 2026 Anne Arundel County Public Schools Teacher of the Year award.

"Mrs. Clark is the kind of educator who inspires, supports and uplifts every child she encounters. ... She constantly explores new strategies and programs to ensure every student has the best possible experience," Myers said in her nomination.

A coach and personal trainer

outside of school as well, Clark sometimes finds herself coaching her students' parents. She believes that this full-circle experience helps set a good example of prioritizing health and wellness.

"However you find joy in moving your body, find it and do it," Clark said.



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# Vacation Bible Schools Offer Faith-Based Summertime Fun

Churches around town are gearing up to host Vacation Bible School (VBS), where kids can have fun playing games, learning songs, making friends, and learning about biblical stories and principles. Below are a few houses of worship with registration now open for VBS.

## St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church

June 22-26

[www.stjohnsp.org](http://www.stjohnsp.org)

Themed "Rainforest Falls: Exploring the Nature of God," this VBS will help root children in a relationship with God through Bible storytelling, saint adventures, recreation, music, arts and crafts, and snacks daily. The event is for children in prekindergarten through fifth grade and will run mornings, 9:30am-11:30am.

## Asbury Town Neck United Methodist Church

July 6-10

410-647-3461

Centered around a positive theme each year, this VBS features a daily routine of devotionals, Bible lessons, arts and crafts, sports, games and a meal. The week will conclude with a celebration for the whole family. Kids ages 4 to 18 are welcome, and VBS will run evenings from 5:30pm-8:00pm.

## Woods Memorial Presbyterian Church

July 6-10 and 13-17

[www.woodschurch.org](http://www.woodschurch.org)

Woods Church will host multiple "Art & The Bible" camps over two weeks this summer. The first is themed "I Am Who I Am: God in Scripture and the Arts" and will run July 6-10 for kids in kindergarten through fifth grade from 9:00am-4:00pm. From July 13-17, children of the same ages can attend "Be Strong and Courageous," themed around Joshua 1:9, also from 9:00am-4:00pm. "VBS Express" will run from 4:00pm-6:00pm and is open to 2-year-olds through fifth-graders.

## Severna Park Baptist Church

July 13-17

[www.spbcm.com/vbs](http://www.spbcm.com/vbs)

Kids in kindergarten through fifth grade can look forward to a daily opening rally before splitting into age stations involving crafts, recreation, Bible study, music and more with snacks provided. VBS will run daily from 9:00am-12:15pm.

## Trinity Bible Church

July 20-23

[www.trinitysevernapark.org](http://www.trinitysevernapark.org)

Crafts, music, Bible stories and games will make for a week of evening fun as kids in kindergarten through fifth grade attend this VBS, running from 6:00pm-8:30pm. Children will explore the nature of God through a "Rainforest Falls" theme.

## Severna Park United Methodist Church

July 20-24 1:00pm-4:00pm

[www.severnaparkumc.org/vbs](http://www.severnaparkumc.org/vbs)

Kids who are 4 years old through entering fifth grade can explore how the Psalms illustrate that no matter the day, God hears us, loves us and is with us — through joy, laughter, worry or sadness. Attendees will discover how the writers of scripture felt the same emotions that they do. VBS will take place from 1:00pm-4:00pm.

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

July 27-31

[www.stmartinsinthefield.com/events](http://www.stmartinsinthefield.com/events)

"Snowball Mountain Challenge" will help kids in kindergarten through fifth grade find their strength in God, with half-day (8:30am-12:30pm) and full-day (8:30am-3:30pm) options available. At this cool summer adventure, children will experience a week of Bible stories, crafts, music, science and games, exploring what it means to trust God and find strength through faith.

## Gloria Dei! Lutheran Church

July 27-31, August 2

[www.gloriadei.org](http://www.gloriadei.org)

Children in prekindergarten through fourth grade can explore the nature of God through a weeklong VBS themed "Rainforest Falls." A finale will be held on August 2. Watch the church website and social media for more information.

# St. Martin's-In-The-Field Episcopal School Announces Tracy Bonday As Head Of School

St. Martin's-in-the-Field Episcopal School has appointed Tracy Bonday as its next head of school beginning July 1, 2026. Following a comprehensive national search, the search committee selected Bonday for her distinguished 25-year career in educational leadership, her deep commitment to faith-based education, and her proven ability to build vibrant, mission-driven school communities.

"We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Tracy Bonday to the St. Martin's family," said Samantha Burdette, head of school search committee chair and board of trustees co-chair. "Throughout our search, Tracy's extraordinary breadth of experience, her dedication to student growth, her deep commitment to academic excellence, and her collaborative yet decisive leadership style set her apart. We are confident she will inspire our community and lead St. Martin's into an exciting next chapter."

Bonday currently serves as head of upper school at Trinity Preparatory School, a rigorous Episcopal college preparatory school in Winter Park, Florida, serving grades six through 12. Over the course of her 25-year career, she has held a wide range of leadership roles including teacher, development director, head of school, and diocesan superintendent.

Her experience includes serving as superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Des Moines, where she oversaw 17 Catholic schools caring for more than 6,300 students. She has also served as head of high school at Ursuline Academy in New Orleans and head of school at Blessed Sacrament Huguenot Catholic School in Virginia. Throughout her career, Bonday has demonstrated strong leadership in



Tracy Bonday

strategic planning, financial stewardship, institutional advancement, and faculty development, along with a deep commitment to mission-driven education.

"I am humbled and honored to join the St. Martin's-in-the-Field community,"

Bonday said. "St. Martin's commitment to nurturing students' confidence, compassion, and character so they become people who make the world better aligns profoundly with my own educational values. I look forward to partnering with faculty, families and students to build upon the school's strong academic program and to foster trust, respect, and transparency in support of the school's mission and its vision moving forward."

The Rev. Lauren Holder, rector of St. Martin's-in-the-Field Episcopal Church, shared, "As a parent of two students at St. Martin's, I could not be more excited about the care, candor and commitment Dr. Bonday will bring to our school. As rector, I am excited for the partner I have already discovered in Dr. Bonday. I look forward to rolling up our sleeves together in preparation for the coming year! I am also so grateful for the leadership of interim Head of School Kathy Mahar these past two years. She has provided the stability and credibility needed to launch us into our school's 70th year and beyond."

## SPMS Delights Audiences With "Seussical Jr."



More than 40 students were involved in Severna Park Middle School's recent production of "Seussical Jr." performing interwoven parts of beloved Dr. Seuss stories April 24-26. "Seussical Jr." is an adaptation of "Seussical," first performed on Broadway in 2000.

Photos by Mandala Wojnar





## “Shipley’s Starlight Sounds” Thrills Audiences

» Continued from page 42

success by practicing outside of school.”

The show opened with an all-cast performance of Joan Jett & the Blackhearts’ 1981 song, “I Love Rock ‘n’ Roll.” The song fired up both the cast and the audience. For the rest of the show, the kids demonstrated the opening act’s title through their full voices and intricate choreography.

Carter Herring is a fifth grader who danced in “Hip to Be Square” by Huey Lewis and the News from 1986, “Let’s Go Crazy,” by Prince & The New Power Generation from 1984, and the all-cast numbers. The crowd loved his performance as Michael Jackson.

“My favorite song was ‘Thriller’ because I was Michael Jackson while everybody else were zombies,” Carter said with a smile. “I did all of his signature moves, too.”

The “Starlight Sounds” production was fifth grader Felicity Gangl’s second “Mini Rock ‘N’ Roll Revival” show. In addition to the all-cast numbers, Felicity danced in “Thriller,” ABBA’s 1976 “Dancing Queen,” and the Cheetah Girls’ 2006 “Strut.” Her favorite number was “Lean on Me” by Club Nouveau from 1986, in which she also sang.

“The best thing about my favorite song, ‘Lean on Me,’ was that I can sing and feel free at the same time,” Felicity explained. “I understand the lyrics and what they’re saying. It feels like I can sing to it and dance to it because I understand the song.”

The dynamic evening closed with a rousing all-cast performance of “(I’ve Had) The Time of My Life,” the title track from the 1987 movie “Dirty Dancing.” It was the perfect closing number that



Photos by Judy Tacyn

**Above:** During Act 2, an all-boys ensemble performed the Backstreet Boys’ “Larger Than Life,” led by (l-r) Jack Brennan, Carson Nardone, Tripp Olienyk and Shane Jackson. **Below:** “Thriller” was a hit, with fifth grader Carter Herring breaking out Michael Jackson’s signature dance moves and (l-r) Will Etter, Maanya Aggarwal, Harper Sanborn and Claire Scott providing lead vocals.



captured the spirit of the students’ time at Shipley’s Choice Elementary School.

“I really want to thank all of the parents who volunteered and spent countless hours making sure each detail was considered, and the kids looked and

sounded amazing,” Peachey said. “Our parents were meticulous behind the scenes, and our set and costume committee did a great job working with the students to find the perfect look for set and costumes.”

## Joe Bigsby Named TOY

» Continued from page 42

In the days since being named Teacher of the Year, Bigsby has received an outpouring of encouragement from colleagues, which he takes as an affirmation of his efforts to always try to improve.

MRMS Principal Lindsay Abruzzo shared, “Mr. Bigsby gives everything he has to all his students, from the ones that need him the most, to the ones that pop in and out of his classes through their middle school years. Mr. Bigsby is the type of teacher every parent wants in their children’s lives. He cares and wants them to be successful. I knew when we nominated him that he was truly deserving of this honor. I am so excited and cannot wait to see what he does with this honor. He represents what Magothy is all about.”

Bigsby’s parents, sister, aunt and wife, a special education teacher at Annapolis High School, were present at the Excellence in Education Awards to witness him receive the great honor.

With his wife and two young boys, ages 3 and 5, Bigsby resides in Cape St. Claire, within his school district. He enjoys seeing students around the neighborhood, and shared that building relationships and a sense of belonging at the school and in the community is of great importance to him.

The second MRMS educator to win the award in its 40-year history, Bigsby will go on to represent AACPS in the Maryland Teacher of the Year competition.

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# "The Little Mermaid Jr." Swims Into The Park



*Even the youngest Theater in the Park thespians have the opportunity to fall in love with theater in the Broadway Babies group.*

By Judy Tacyn

Disney's "The Little Mermaid Jr." is coming to Anne Arundel Community College (AACC) May 16–20 via Severna Park's Theater in the Park performance company. The 60-minute musical is based on the 2008 Broadway production and the 1989 animated film. Theater in the Park's casts consist of five age groups, each with their own performances.

On any given Saturday morning, more than 160 kids with Theater in the Park are rehearsing in every far-reaching corner of the Severna Park Com-

munity Center. A large directing staff of 20 talented folks work with approximately 40 children or teens in one of five age groups, which include:

**Broadway Teens** ages 12–16  
directed by Atticus Boidy

**Broadway Mixteen** ages 9–13  
directed by Matthew Walter

**Broadway Preteens** ages 9–11  
directed by Kylie Sjolie

**Broadway Juniors** ages 6–9  
directed by Phil Kittiver

**Broadway Babies** ages 3–6  
directed by Kylie Sjolie and Andy Lawrie

This month, each of the age groups will take to the stage for unique performances. The preteen, mixteen and teen groups will each perform "The Little Mermaid Jr.," while the two younger groups will perform "Tales of a Little Mermaid." Each group has its own director, music director, choreographer and assistants to the director.

For the Broadway Juniors and Broadway Babies groups, directors write special scripts for the younger kids to ensure each child has lines and the story is more geared toward their age group. The massive undertaking unfolding at the same time is what makes Theater in the Park so unique.

Established in 2016, Theater in the Park is operated by Jennifer Kraus, the owner and artistic director, and daughters Kylie Sjolie and Alyssa Kraus. Theater in the Park draws participants from Severna Park and beyond, including Annapolis, Crofton, Pasadena, Arnold, Millersville, Severn and Baltimore, without losing any of the charm of a small-town community theater company.

"Parents tell me often that our program gives their kids confidence and positive self-esteem. For some kids, they find their 'people,' a place where they fit in and feel a sense of belonging," Jennifer Kraus said. "Sports are not for everyone, and some kids find it hard to fit in at school. But at Theater in the Park, they find connections and, as a team, the kids produce something they are so proud of."

Can't decide which production to attend? The directors are happy to share details about the talents of their casts and invite audiences to their respective performances.

Broadway Teens director Atticus Boidy

said, "The talent in the teen group is very strong, but what stands out even more is their willingness to take direction, make bold choices, and push themselves to try new things. There's a real sense of accountability and collaboration that elevates the entire production. It's exciting to watch them grow, not just as performers, but as thoughtful people and friends."

Matthew Walter, mixteen group director, shared, "Our young performers bring remarkable enthusiasm and dedication to their work. Seeing their growing confidence and commitment to storytelling has been a highlight of doing a production with Theater in the Park. Theater has a really special way of bringing people together, regardless of age. In a group like mixteen, you see friendships form, confidence grow, and a true sense of family develop. Through the process of storytelling, they learn to listen, connect and support one another in meaningful ways. It's not just about putting on a show."

Broadway Babies and preteen director Kylie Sjolie said, "There is something so special about this class and watching these little ones fall in love with theater. Seeing that excitement in their eyes and getting to be a part of that journey means everything to me. Our Broadway Babies work so hard learning their lines, dances and songs. While they may not always remember every single step or word, it truly doesn't matter; the audience is completely captivated by their joy, confidence and sheer adorableness."

Performances will take place at AACC's Robert E. Kauffman Theater in the Pascal Center for Performing Arts. Tickets can be purchased at [www.theaterintheparkboxoffice.net](http://www.theaterintheparkboxoffice.net).

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## Mental Health Awareness Month: Should You Use Chatbots For Mental Health Advice?

**Danny Watkins**  
Luminis Health



Artificial intelligence (AI) is quickly becoming part of everyday life. You can get instant answers to almost any question at your fingertips. A recent poll found that about one in three adults nationwide used AI for health-related questions in the past year.

Chatbots are easy to use and can simplify complex health information, helping you understand symptoms, treatments and even plan workouts or diets. They can also prepare you for more productive doctor visits. However, they aren't a substitute for medical professionals, as missing details can lead to incomplete or misleading advice. This is especially true for mental health, which often requires deeper understanding and professional guidance.

### Chatbots and your mental health

You might turn to a chatbot when dealing with a personal or emotional concern. While that can feel helpful in the moment, it's important not to rely on it too heavily. There are a few signs to watch out for:

**Overuse:** You find yourself turning to a chatbot repeatedly and overanalyzing your thoughts or situations.

**Dependence on decisions:** You rely on it to make even simple choices, such as weekend plans.

**Catastrophizing:** You take responses at face value and begin to assume the worst about your situation.

### Teenagers and AI chatbots

With millions of teens using AI chatbots, there's a good chance your child has tried one. For some, it's just entertainment. For others, it can fill time when they're

bored or feeling lonely. Over time, these tools can start to feel like companions, always available and responsive.

If your child begins relying on AI for emotional support or reassurance, or struggles to make decisions without it, it might be time to step in. Learning how to make healthy decisions and applying creativity are important milestones that you want them to achieve. Keep in mind, the goal isn't to take technology away completely but to help your child build a healthy balance.

### Start with an open conversation

Ask how they're using AI tools and what they like about them. Keeping the tone curious — not critical — makes it more likely they'll be honest.

### Set reasonable boundaries

Create limits around when and how often AI can be used, especially during times meant for schoolwork, family or sleep.

### Encourage real-world connections

Help your child stay engaged with friends, hobbies and activities that build social skills and confidence outside of a screen.

### Teach them to think critically about AI

Remind them that chatbots don't truly understand them and can be wrong. Encourage them to question responses rather than accept them as fact.

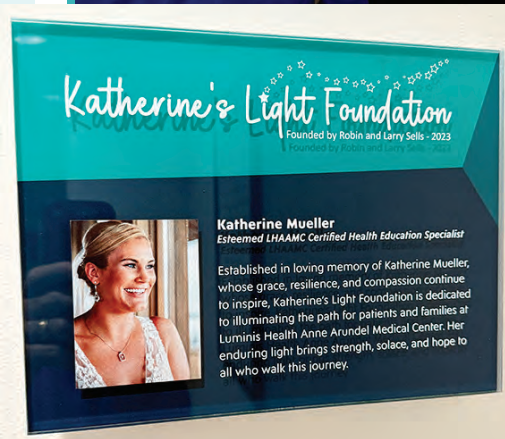
### Help is here if you need it

If you or your child feels withdrawn, anxious or overly dependent on AI, consider reaching out to a counselor or mental health professional.

*Luminis Health is here to help. Visit [www.luminis.health/behavioral-health](http://www.luminis.health/behavioral-health) to make an appointment with a professional near you. Danny Watkins is Luminis Health's senior director of behavioral health nursing and operations.*

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## Luminis Health DeCesaris Cancer Institute Unveils Katherine Mueller Plaque



*The Luminis Health DeCesaris Cancer Institute recently unveiled a plaque to honor Katherine Mueller and Katherine's Light Foundation. Katherine was a longtime Luminis Health employee who worked in community outreach. Her plaque was added to the lobby to provide hope and inspiration for*

*DeCesaris Cancer Institute patients. To celebrate the unveiling, the following people gathered: (l-r) Katherine's Light co-founders Larry Sells and Robin Sells; Matt Mueller, Katherine's husband; and Barry Meisenberg, Luminis Health chair of the department of medicine.*

## St. Jude Zumbathon Continues To Support Cancer Patients, Families

Over the last 14 years, the St. Jude Zumbathon has raised more than \$168,000 for the children and families receiving care and help from St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, which is based in Tennessee and has eight affiliate clinics across the country. This year's Maryland event returns to the Earleigh Heights Volunteer Fire Company on Sunday, June 7, from 10:00am-12:30pm.

Seventeen instructors will get people moving during the Zumbathon, which will also offer

raffles, door prizes, music from a live DJ, and more. Natalie Haskell from Work It With Natalie is again serving as the event organizer. This year's fundraising goal is \$200,000, and Haskell hopes that those efforts ensure that families

never receive a bill from St. Jude for treatment, travel, housing or food — so they can focus on helping their child live.

Tickets are \$20 in advance, \$25 at the door, and \$30 for VIP (first three rows). For more details, visit the event Facebook page or St. Jude website.





## Park Band Perfunctory To Perform In AACPS Showcase

By Judy Tacyn

For the last two years, School Sounds, a student-led communication channel of Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS), has created and shared videos of county high school student band performances. According to their YouTube description, "School Sounds is a traveling music showcase that highlights the talent of AACPS students in intimate, live performances. ... The performances are filmed at various schools throughout the year, creating a rotating stage where students can perform in diverse environments, offering viewers a unique snapshot of AACPS' vibrant student music scene."

Performances of 10 bands were made available on multiple social media platforms. Students county-wide had the opportunity to view the performances, and from March 23–26, vote on their favorites. The three bands with the most votes earned the opportunity to perform on stage for the School Sounds LIVE! concert at the Chesapeake Arts Center on May 22 at 6:00pm.

Falcons (l-r) Jonny Reneau, Matthew Stimpson, Sammy Kramer and Jacob Lovejoy make up *Perfunctory*, a student band chosen to play at *School Sounds LIVE!* at the Chesapeake Arts Center.



Perfunctory comprises four Severna Park High School juniors: Matthew Stimpson (lead singer and rhythm guitar), Jonny Reneau (guitar), Sammy Kramer (drums) and Jacob Lovejoy (bass guitar). The young musicians formed their band in 2024 with a classic pop-punk sound (examples

» Continued on page 54

### THE TOP THREE BANDS

**PERFUNCTORY** – Severna Park High School

**HERE LIES** – Crofton High School

**RUBY TOMBSTONE** – Chesapeake High School

## Woods Church Invites Community



## To Two Upcoming Concerts

By Margaret Bates

Woods Memorial Presbyterian Church has been a staple of the Severna Park community for decades, but over the last nine years, an inclusive music program has become a core part of their outreach. Late this spring, they will host two musical celebrations. "A Night on Broadway" is slated for May 23. On June 6, "A Tapestry of Music" will be a celebration of the country's 250th anniversary, featuring great American composers including John Williams and Leonard Bernstein, along with a retrospective look at some of the greats who inspired them, like Bach and Beethoven.

With accompaniment by pianist Jung-hoon Park, "A Night on Broadway" will feature popular musical theater numbers sung by local talent Sarah Kent (soprano), Jenna Augustine (soprano), Dillon McCarrick (tenor), Lucas White (tenor) and David Merrill (tenor). The performance will include a guest appearance by the Elysian Dance Theater.

"A Tapestry of Music" will include

a full orchestra, Woods' adult choir, the Elysian Dance Theater, vocal and instrumental solos, and a special piano solo by Park.

Merrill, Woods' director of music and the arts, began a run of musicals at the church with "Godspell" in 2017. Since then, Woods has put on shows ranging from "Jesus Christ Superstar" to "The Prince of Egypt." Even during COVID, the troupe filmed "Amahl and the Night Visitors" outside behind the church so members could watch the musical online.

Merrill has classical opera training and spoke enthusiastically about the group effort involved in performances. "To do a musical here at the church, it takes eight months of time. ... The majority are so supportive (of us). It's a wonderful outreach to learn about your faith."

It's also a family affair. His wife, Elysia Merrill, who has previously performed at the Kennedy Center, runs the Elysian dance group.

Merrill was also effusive about Park, Woods' pianist, sharing, "He's

» Continued on page 54

## Harbor City Music Company Wins Regional Championship, Advances To International In Seattle

Based in Severna Park, Harbor City Music Company competes in events hosted by Sweet Adelines International, one of the world's largest singing organizations for women, with a membership of approximately 21,000 singers across the globe.

Harbor City Music Company Show Chorus (HCMC) has officially reclaimed its spot among the a cappella elite. Following a first-place win at the Atlantic Bay-Mountain regional competition in April, the chorus is eligible to compete at the Sweet Adelines international convention in Seattle in October 2027.

Competing against top-tier ensembles from across the region, members of Harbor City Music

Company wowed the panel of judges with their technical expertise, vibrant energy and soulful storytelling. Known for their intricate four-part a cappella harmony in the barbershop style, the chorus continues to push the boundaries of the art form.

"Winning the regional title is a testament to the dedication, talent and heart of every single singer in this chorus," said Michael Gellert, director of

» Continued on page 54







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## Save The Date For Annual Katherine Mueller All-Day Music Festival

*Katherine's Light Foundation*  
Founded by Robin and Larry Sells - 2023

Local nonprofit Katherine's Light Foundation will once again host the Katherine Mueller All-Day Music Festival honoring the memory of Katherine Mueller, who passed away from Neuroendocrine tumor cancer in 2021. The event will take place Saturday, June 13, from noon-8:00pm at Severna Park Taphouse.

There will be live music scheduled throughout the day with full bands outside under a tent and an acoustic listening room inside. Featured bands performing outside include Cameron Fryes, the Lost and Found Trio, TMI and Honey Sol, culminating with Nashville recording artist MIGGS from 6:00pm-8:00pm. Inside acoustic artists include Ray Paice, Billy Z and more.

In addition to music, there will be a silent auction, raffle and live auction, as well as a 50/50 raffle and more. Some of the live auction items include a Deep Creek home rental, an Ocean City condo, a Pinehurst golfing condo, and a fishing charter for six aboard the Simonizer captained by Lenny Simmons.

Silent auction items include a 21-day membership from Park Fitness, gift baskets from Cafe Mezzanotte, a home wash from CheckMark Power Wash, a stay at Live! Casino & Hotel Maryland with dinner for two at The Prime Rib, a Whimsicality basket and more. Park Hardware is also providing a \$2,700 Napoleon Grill with \$25 dollar raffle tickets available for purchase.

This year's presenting event sponsor is Landmark Roofing.

Last year Katherine's Light Foundation donated \$100,000 to seven local nonprofits to support education, research and awareness for those on a cancer journey.

Sponsorships and tickets for the Katherine Mueller All-Day Music Festival are available at [www.katherineslight.org](http://www.katherineslight.org).

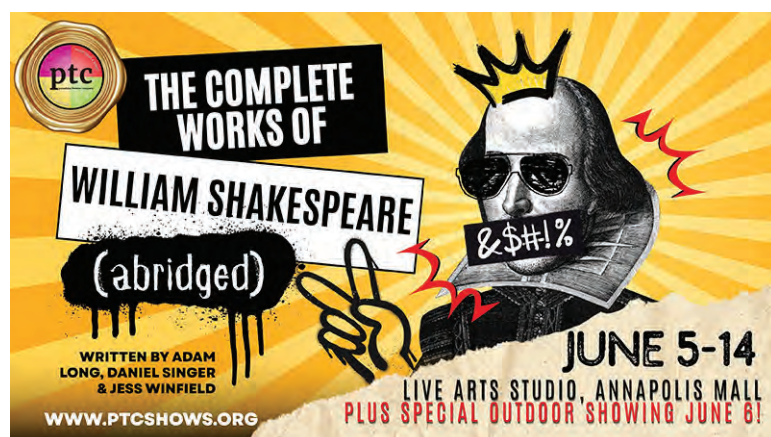
## PTC To Present "The Complete Works Of William Shakespeare (Abridged)"

Get ready for a wildly fast-paced comedy as Pasadena Theatre Company (PTC) presents "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)" at two locations from June 5-14.

PTC's adaptation is directed by Robin Schwartz and written by Adam Long, Daniel Singer and Jess Winfield. The troupe includes Brendan Cuddihee, Crista Drysdale, Amanda Matousek, Richard Miller, Jonathan Monroe and Jason Vaughan.

The show takes on all 37 of Shakespeare's plays — plus the sonnets — in a single, uproarious performance. Using only a handful of actors and maximum imagination, the show barrels through the tragedies, comedies and histories with gleeful chaos. Equal parts parody and love letter to Shakespeare, the play celebrates the bard by making his works accessible and irresistibly fun for actors and audiences alike.

This production includes occasional mature humor, suggestive language, and playful irreverence



toward classic texts. Viewers should be comfortable with comedic material that may include sexual innuendo, strong language, and staged violence/gore.

Performances run from June 5-14 at Live Arts Studio in the Annapolis Mall. The play will come to the Woods Church amphitheater in Severna Park on June 6.

Tickets are \$20 for general admission. For tickets or more information, visit [www.ptcshows.org](http://www.ptcshows.org).

## Musician To Share "Uplifting, Emotionally Resonant" Songs During Annapolis Show

Singer-songwriter Eli Lev is trying to make the world a smaller place, one song at a time. He will share that mission through his music during a concert at Unity by the Bay in Annapolis on May 22 at 6:30pm.

Lev pens lyrics and melodies for everyday enlightenment — songs that he hopes will resonate because they are heartfelt, earthy, and offer the wisdom he's gained through life-long travel and self-discovery. His latest project, an EP called "Present Journey," is inspired by his current life stage as a middle-aged, full-time independent musician who is a mobile lifestyle pioneer and international touring artist.

His previous release, "The Four Directions Project," imaginatively and intrepidly connects spheres and generations within a body of work that is irresistibly uplifting, emotionally resonant, and down to Earth. With a style that is a cross between The Avett Brothers and The Lumineers, Lev has opened for both Shooter Jennings and Lee DeWyze, performed at The Kennedy Center and 9:30 Club in Washington, D.C. and toured extensively within the United States and abroad.



Eli Lev is excited to perform songs that aim for everyday enlightenment and connection during a concert on May 22.

"I'd say the audience can expect an evening of heartfelt, earthy songs that aim for everyday enlightenment and connection," Lev said when asked about the May show. "I'm really looking forward to sharing music with the Annapolis community at Unity by the Bay."

Learn more at [www.unitybythebay.org/elilev](http://www.unitybythebay.org/elilev).

## Youth Go-Go Band Pock3t Onstage At Maryland Hall

### Family-Friendly Concert Celebrates Next Generation Of A Homegrown Sound

Pock3t, a youth go-go band, will bring its high-energy, percussion-heavy sound to Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts on Saturday, May 16, at 6:00pm, in an all-ages performance titled "Put It in the Pock3t." Blending raw talent with a deep respect for a uniquely regional genre, this band is quickly emerging as a powerful force in keeping go-go music alive.

Formed in 2022 by percussionists Troy "TJ" Sellman

Jr. and Derrin Brown Jr., Pock3t features six musicians whose versatility and chemistry drive their shows. Four members are students in the Apex Arts magnet program in Anne Arundel County Public Schools.

The group's rapid rise has already earned notable recognition. In 2025, Pock3t won the prestigious Annie Award for performing arts, honoring their significant and inspiring contributions to an art form in Anne Arundel County. In January 2026, they were nominated for Breakout Band of the Year at the Go-Go Awards in Washington, D.C., marking the genre's 50th anniversary. Pock3t has performed at notable venues including the CareFirst Arena and the Howard Theatre.

Go-go music, born in the D.C. area in the early 1970s, fuses funk, blues, soul and Latin rhythms. Pioneered by bandleader Chuck Brown, known as "the godfather of Go-Go," the genre's free-flowing style keeps people "going and going" on the dance floor — thus the origin of its name. In 2020, the District of Columbia passed a law designating go-go the city's official music.

Pock3t's name reflects the genre's defining "pocket" — a deep, locked-in rhythmic groove. For the band, that groove is also a mission.

"We're a youth band, and we want people our age to care about go-go and about live music in general," Sellman said. "We're carrying this music forward. We're the next generation of go-go and we want others to keep go-go alive after us."

Band members play multiple instruments, many of them self-taught, contributing to a layered, resonant sound. Their simple goal is to build community through music.

"We love playing together, and we want people to feel that," said keyboardist and vocalist Makenzee Adams. "If we can lift people's spirits, get them dancing and having fun, that's success."

The May 16 show will open with Got My Own Sound, a genre-blending group performing R&B, hip-hop, jazz fusion and funk.

Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts is located at 801 Chase Street in Annapolis.

Tickets are \$30 in advance, \$40 at the door and \$25 for students, plus a \$6 service fee per ticket. Buy tickets here: [tinyurl.com/Pock3t](http://tinyurl.com/Pock3t).



## Woods Church Concerts

» Continued from page 50  
incredible on the piano.”

Park turned that attention back to God. “All the music I make is meant to glorify God, not as a display of performance, but as an act of prayer,” he said.

Park is hopeful that as Woods’ musical ministry grows, the church will be able to acquire a new sanctuary piano for future concerts, which may include works by Rachmaninoff and Gershwin.

The upcoming performances will help support Woods’ musical ministry. “It’s expensive to do a show ... the ticket sales really go back to the budget,” Merrill said. Licensing the music can add up, as can creating props and costumes, so every time someone buys a ticket, it helps keep this large ministry going.

As Merrill noted, “We try to find a place for everyone, so it becomes a huge endeavor.”

Currently, there’s no word about the 2027 musical selection, but Woods’ performances will continue to be focused on faith. What is certain is that both “A Night on Broadway,” with numbers from as diverse a repertoire as “Carousel” and “Wicked,” and “A Tapestry of Music,” with its patriotic focus, will be great. As a bonus, these performances will ensure that Woods’ musical ministry can entertain the Severna Park community for years to come.

Tickets for “A Night on Broadway” are \$30 and include an Italian dinner. Entry to “A Tapestry of Music” is free, though guests must RSVP at [www.woodstix.org](http://www.woodstix.org).

Those interested in getting involved in the musical ministry can email Merrill at [dmerrill@woodschurch.org](mailto:dmerrill@woodschurch.org).

## Park Band To Perform In Showcase

» Continued from page 50

are Green Day, blink-182 and Fall Out Boy from the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s respectively). More recently, the genre is heavy on guitars and fuses punk rock with upbeat catchy pop music, though it has been around for decades.

Kramer said the group’s music is a chance to “bring back the original, classic sounds of the genre from the late ‘60s and ‘70s with music from, among others, Stevie Wonder and The Meters,” a group formed in 1965 in New Orleans. “If you haven’t heard of pop funk, we’d love for you to come to the (School Sounds LIVE!) concert and get to

know our music.”

Stimpson added that while Perfunctory covers songs from bands that inspire them, they also write their own original music. They practice at Bach to Rock in Severna Park and get guidance from George Evans, a professional musician and director of Bach to Rock who helps the band secure gigs at local venues, and from Max Smith, an audio engineer who helps the group with band coaching and the technical aspects of mixing and creating music.

“Perfunctory is an energetic band made up of intelligent rock-and-rollers,” Evans said. “Matthew is a really good frontman who engages with the audience, and Sammy is really fun to watch. Their delivery when playing live is really very good.”

“School Sounds LIVE! is a great way to share the

music of many of the student bands in our area,” Matthew said. “We are grateful to be voted into the top three and be able to play the concert, but we don’t feel like it’s a competition. (Bands) are all different, and there are some really talented student bands out there.”

To learn more about Perfunctory, including their upcoming appearance schedule, follow them on Instagram at [@official\\_perfunctory](https://www.instagram.com/official_perfunctory).

To learn more about AACPS’ Student Voice, find them on Instagram at [@aacps\\_studentvoice](https://www.instagram.com/aacps_studentvoice) or find AACPS on YouTube and search “School Sounds” for related videos.

Tickets for the May 22 concert are free but must be reserved through Eventbrite by searching “AACPS Student Voice.” The Chesapeake Arts Center is located at 194 Hammonds Lane in Brooklyn Park.

## Harbor City Music Company

» Continued from page 50

Harbor City Music Company, which rehearses in Severna Park.

“We are thrilled to represent the Atlantic Bay-Mountain region in Seattle. It’s an honor to share our music with an international audience and to stand alongside the best choruses in the world.”

This regional victory comes on the heels of HCMC’s performance at last year’s international competition in Columbus, Ohio, where they placed fourth in the world.

The road to Seattle 2027 begins now. Over the next year, HCMC will embark on an intensive journey of musical refinement, choreography rehearsals, and community fundraising to support their travel to the Pacific Northwest.

To celebrate this milestone with the community that supports them, Harbor City Music Company will host a special live performance on October 11. This concert offers the public a front-row seat to the award-winning sound and choreography that impressed the regional judges.

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## The Strait Of Hormuz: How Is It Impacting Marylanders?

**Jason LaBarge**  
Financial Advisor  
and President  
LaBarge Financial



Just a stone's throw from our office are small businesses that are part of the fabric of Severna Park, including Pedal Pushers Bicycle Shop, Always Ice Cream and Park Tavern. I love the different members of our community, but it's easy to forget that the world is much bigger, and outside conflicts can impact our neighbors.

The conflict in Iran has impacted the economy, causing difficulties for everyone, including small businesses here in Maryland and around the country.

At the center of this conflict is the Strait of Hormuz. You've likely heard a lot about this waterway, but why is it so important, and why is it hitting our wallets so hard?

Here's a rundown of why this news matters to you.

### What is the Strait of Hormuz?

The Strait of Hormuz is a waterway between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, running right near Iran. It

is one of the world's busiest oil shipping channels, and around 20% of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas passes through the strait each year, totaling nearly \$600 billion of oil.

As soon as the conflict started, the strait became nearly impassable due to the risk of being attacked by drone and missile attacks. Daily traffic was down around 95% since the conflict started in late February through early April, with significant ripple effects on the world's economy.

### How does this impact Marylanders?

Gas and energy prices steadily increased the longer the Strait of Hormuz remained closed. In Maryland, gas prices averaged \$3.46 in February, but that jumped to over \$4 in just a month.

The S&P 500 experienced five straight losing weeks immediately after the conflict started, and news updates led to rapid swings. Rising fuel prices led to other expenses, including increased delivery costs and mortgage rates.

Any supply chain disruption could significantly impact small businesses in Severna Park and around the country, and regardless of whether the strait is open or not, this impact could be felt at home in the near future.

» Continued on page 56

## Chamber Update

**Liz League**  
CEO • GSPACC



**Bradford Counseling Services**  
(new bronze member)

[www.bradfordcounseling.com](http://www.bradfordcounseling.com)

Bradford Counseling Services LLC provides counseling to adults, adolescents, families, couples and children (ages 5 and up). Owner Talya Bradford and her clinicians serve individuals throughout Anne Arundel, Howard and Montgomery counties. Their clinicians treat clients with eating disorders, addictions, trauma, depression, anxiety, stress and life transitions.

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a campaign that makes a measurable impact on your business.

### Zen Leaf Pasadena

[www.zenleafdispensaries.com/locations/pasadena](http://www.zenleafdispensaries.com/locations/pasadena)

Zen Leaf Pasadena brings a well-rounded product selection, knowledgeable staff, and a dispensary experience that fits the character of the Magothy River community. Founded in 2016, Zen Leaf now operates in eight states. Its mission is to guide you along the path toward elevated wellness through medicinal and recreational products, education and expertly trained advisors at each dispensary.

### RISE Pediatrics

[www.risepediatricsmd.com](http://www.risepediatricsmd.com)

Owner April Maloney holds a master's degree in nursing from The Catholic University of America and specializes in pediatric obesity. April partners closely with families to uncover root causes, connect the dots, and build sustainable, personalized plans. She combines evidence-based medicine with a more holistic, thoughtful approach, focusing not just on weight or symptoms but on the whole child.

### Golden Paws Animal Rehabilitation Center

[www.goldenpawsarc.com](http://www.goldenpawsarc.com)

At Golden Paws, the mission is simple yet impactful: to help aging pets live their best lives. By addressing mobility challenges, managing pain, and supporting overall well-being, Dr. Jennifer Levitsky and her team offer expert care and comfort for pets and their families. Golden Paws is a place

» Continued on page 58

## LIKE IT NEVER EVEN HAPPENED

## SERVPRO Of Annapolis/Severna Park Marks 50 Years Of Restoring Property

Water and fire damage, mold, sewage spills — in the world of restoration and cleaning, SERVPRO of Annapolis/Severna Park has seen it all during the last five decades.

The mother-son duo of Diane and Nick Whittles operate the Annapolis/Severna Park franchise, along with three others in Anne Arundel County. Additionally, Diane's daughter, Jessica, and her husband, Chris, manage their reconstruction company.

"It is a very rewarding job," Nick said. "It could be a hot water heater that caused flooding in the basement, or it could be a house fire. ... We ease that burden for people and help them get their lives restored."

That ability to help people was one reason Mike Whittles felt compelled to open SERVPRO of Annapolis/Severna Park in 1976, years before Diane and Nick took over. Mike worked out of the Cirelli Building in Severna Park.

With Diane at his side, Mike continued to grow the business while giving back to the community as a football coach for Archbishop Spalding and the Green Hornets. Though he did not do it for accolades, the championship-winning coach earned Annapolis Touchdown Club Coach of the Year and Baltimore Ravens Coach of the Year honors.



Mike, his family and the community received devastating news in 2011: Mike had pancreatic cancer. After a 17-month battle, he died in 2012. Diane took the reins of the business.

"I considered what I might do with the business," Diane recalled. "Nick was still in college, and I was only our bookkeeper!"

During that time, she got herself trained up

The mother-son duo of Diane and Nick Whittles operate the Annapolis/Severna Park franchise, along with three others in Anne Arundel County.

"Nick is like a clone of his dad. My husband had all these years of coaching experience. Nick is more like a coach than a business owner. He's extremely positive and motivating. One of Nick's greatest strengths is to hire the best people he can find and try to put them on a career path at SERVPRO."

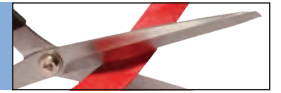
— DIANE WHITTLES

and is now Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification (IICRC) certified in applied structural drying, water damage restoration, health and safety, and applied microbial remediation, as well as being Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) certified. She is very proud that she can now say that most of her employees have just as many credentials and SERVPRO of

» Continued on page 58



## RIBBON CUTTINGS



### Hass & Sons Electric Celebrates 10 Years Of Service

*Priding themselves as “Your Neighborhood Electrician,” the team at Hass & Sons Electric marked a decade in business in April with a ribbon cutting hosted by the Greater Severna Park and Arnold Chamber of Commerce. Offering lighting installation, electrical design, electric car charger installation, panel upgrades, and routine maintenance and repair, the Millersville-based business provides a full range of services. For more information, go to [www.haasandsons.com](http://www.haasandsons.com).*



### SERVPRO Of Annapolis/Severna Park Commemorates A Half Century



*In late April, SERVPRO of Annapolis/Severna Park hosted an open house and multi-chamber ribbon cutting — including the Greater Severna Park and Arnold Chamber of Commerce — to mark the occasion of its 50th anniversary. SERVPRO has helped local residents and businesses with restoration and cleaning spanning the gamut of fire, water, mold and other types of damage for five decades. SERVPRO of Annapolis/Severna Park is located at 1446 Ritchie Highway in Arnold.*

### Vivi's Chicken N' Mac Open For Business In Severna Park

*Offering comfort food with a twist, Vivi's Chicken n' Mac celebrated its official grand opening with an open house and a ribbon cutting ceremony hosted by the Greater Severna Park and Arnold Chamber of Commerce in mid-April. Part of the MONTE Restaurant Development Group, the eatery serves chicken tenders, sandwiches, mac and cheese, salads, signature sauces and more. Vivi's Chicken n' Mac is located at 544 Baltimore Annapolis Boulevard. Learn more at [www.vivischicken.com](http://www.vivischicken.com).*



## The Strait Of Hormuz: How Is It Impacting Marylanders?

» Continued from page 55

### How should we react?

Investors may understandably feel fear and anxiety as they spend more on gas and other goods, and their retirement portfolios potentially swing up and down with the market volatility. In moments like these, it's important to remove emotions from your

decision-making process.

Higher costs may be hard on your wallet, but there are some steps you can take to make it more manageable within your budget. Consider tracking your budget and identifying expenses that you can cut to keep your spending in check. This could include vacations, dining out or sporting events.

Selling your assets during a volatile market, which has declined in value, might feel like a smart move, but history shows that it could be a mistake. It's important to focus on time in the market, not timing the market.

I coach clients to think of invested money as being in two categories: red and green money. Red money refers to assets that carry a higher risk of loss but also higher

potential returns, such as stocks. Green money is safer money, like municipal bonds and fixed annuities. The growth potential may be lower, but the tradeoff is lower risk. It's important to avoid allowing short-term market conditions to derail your investment strategy.

A financial advisor can help you navigate these financial storms and devise a strategy that's appropriate for your unique financial situation. Retirement is about more than just money, and no matter what the future holds for Iran, it's important to have a trusted financial advisor on your side during uncertain times.

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

Jason LaBarge, financial advisor and president of LaBarge Financial, 7 Riggs Avenue, Severna Park, MD 21146, 443-647-4321 • [www.labargefinancial.com](http://www.labargefinancial.com)

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## SERVPRO Marks 50 Years Of Restoring Property

### » Continued from page 55

Annapolis pays for it! The homeowner or business owner benefits.

In the 14 years since she took over, she has overseen rapid growth for the franchise, which now has over 18,000 square feet of warehouse space along-side Ritchie Highway in Arnold.

"We have not limited ourselves to water and mold and biohazard. We can put on a roof or siding or replace flooring or install new cabinets for homeowners through our reconstruction division, Chase Creek Remodeling, run by Chris Goedeke," said Nick, who joined the company over 10 years ago. "We're full service."

They also guide homeowners through the claims process.

Diane and Nick's styles have complemented each other as they have grown SERVPRO to offer more services and keep staff up to date with training from the IICRC, OSHA and other organizations.

"Nick is like a clone of his dad," Diane said. "My husband had all these years of coaching experience with the Green Hornets and (Archbishop) Spalding. Nick is more like a coach than a business owner. He's extremely positive and motivating. One of Nick's greatest strengths is to hire the best people he can find and try to put them on a career path at SERVPRO."

That leadership approach has helped the Whittles retain long-term employees including Justin Pfeiler and Jim Black, who have both been with SERVPRO for more than 10 years.

"We have one employee who has been with us over 30 years," Nick

added. "His name is Eglis Moron, and there are pictures of him holding me when I was a baby."

The family-run business operates with a family mindset, helping neighbors in need whenever possible. SERVPRO supports nonprofits and community groups including Chrysalis House, Hope House, the Light House shelter, Earleigh Heights Volunteer Fire Company, Hospice of the Chesapeake and others.

Diane grew up in the area and attended St. John the Evangelist and Severna Park High School, so she believes it's important to give back.

"I think it's a very wholesome community, and we would like to do our part to keep it that way," Diane said.

Nick and other team members also seek to make the world a better place through their work with SERVPRO's storm response teams. The work has taken them to Virginia Beach, New Jersey and Georgia, but the worst disaster may have been in Houston, Texas, in 2021. A mix of snow, sleet and freezing rain triggered a loss of electricity for millions of Texans.

"People had been in houses with broken pipes for eight weeks," Nick said. "My team and I hit the road and helped as many homeowners as possible. I had never experienced such gratitude from homeowners. It was inspiring to my team!"

As for the future, the Whittles hope to find more space for expansion with an additional piece of commercial property to increase their content restoration, and they want to keep helping people during emergencies in Anne Arundel County with four franchise licenses.

## Chamber Update

### » Continued from page 55

where older animals can thrive, regain their strength, and enjoy the highest

quality of life possible. They offer a wide array of treatments including underwater treadmill therapy, acupuncture, massage, laser, chiropractic, thermal imaging and more.

The highlight of April was our partnership with the Maryland Curiosity Lab to bring the Children's Business Fair to Severna Park. The event was held on April 11 at Park Plaza and featured close to 90 young entrepreneurs ages 5 to 16.

It was so exciting to see these young innovators offering handmade crafts and delicious treats, 3D dragons in eggs, soaps, and more, explaining their products and ideas. Families and community members showed up in full force at this unique "marketplace." So many kids expressed that they want to participate next year, so we expect an even larger turnout and booth participation!

There were 15 judges who visited the booths and provided feedback. The winners of the Children's Business Fair are:

### AGES 5-9

**Most Original Business Idea:** Restaurant Fun Bags

— Kelson and Wyatt Engel

**Highest Business Potential:** CPD Handkraft

— Phoenix Lowman and Callie Kinahan

**Best Presentation:** Magic Shop — Emma Gray

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TO THESE YOUNG  
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### AGES 10-12

**Most Original Business Idea:** The Paper Garden — Jovie Shinnamon

**Highest Business Potential:** The Bakery of Botany

— William Price and Clayton Wise

**Best Presentation:** Sunshine Fresh — Juliette Partawi

### AGES 13-16

**Most Original Business Idea:** Whittle & Co. Surfboard Company — Liam Dowling

**Highest Business Potential:** Colossus Cookie Company — Rocco Katsikides

**Best Presentation:** Gabby Luxe Loops — Gabriella Abrams

We had three ribbon-cutting celebrations in April. These included the 10th anniversary celebration of **Haas & Sons Electric** in Millersville and the grand opening of **Play & Thrive Speech Therapy's** second location. We also participated in the much-anticipated official grand opening of **Vivi's Chicken n' Mac** in Severna Park. Owned by the DiMeo family, founders and operators of Squisitos, this is the second location

of the new restaurant.

We are accepting applications and sponsorships for our July 4 parade where we will celebrate the 250th birthday of our country. Please visit our website for more information and an application if you plan to participate!

Follow us on Facebook, check out our website at [www.gspacc.com](http://www.gspacc.com), and join our email list to stay in the loop. Email me at [ceo@gspacc.com](mailto:ceo@gspacc.com). Thanks for all you do to support our local businesses!

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# Severna Park Leaders Share Workplace Insights In New Collaborative Book

By Abby Fontz

For many small business owners, the hardest parts of the job are not always financial. They are the conversations no one prepares you for, the leadership decisions that feel uncertain, and the responsibility of shaping a workplace where people actually want to be. That reality is at the center of “When People Rise: HR Secrets for Small Business Growth, Success, and Legacy,” a new book released in April by a group of business professionals, including several from the Severna Park area.

The book features 22 contributors, many based in Maryland, who share personal experiences and practical advice on navigating challenges in the workplace. It is led by Severna Park resident Susan Mahaffee, president and founder of People Rise LLC.

Mahaffee said the idea for the project was rooted in a simple question: Where do people turn when they do not know how to handle difficult situations at work?

“I wanted to create something that people could actually use,” Mahaffee said. “Not a textbook, but real stories, paired with tools that help you handle those situations.”

After nearly 25 years working in human resources, Mahaffee launched her business in 2022 with a focus on helping organizations build stronger workplace cultures. She said many small business owners still see HR as limited to compliance or hiring, rather than something that shapes the overall health of a company.

“A lot of small business owners think HR is just hiring and firing,” she said. “But it’s really about how you build a place where people want to work.”

The book reflects that approach. Each chapter is written by a different contributor and focuses on a specific topic, ranging from leadership challenges to employee wellness. Mahaffee said the format is intentionally flexible, allowing readers to move through chapters in any order and take away ideas they can apply immediately.

“It’s meant to be accessible,” she said. “You can pick it up, read one story, and try something new right away.”

Rick Miller, owner and president of Zeskind’s Hardware & Millwork in Severna Park, is among the contributors. His company, a fourth-generation family business, has grown significantly over the past two decades, evolving from a small retail hardware store into a regional manufacturing and distribution operation.

Miller said he joined the project largely because of his trust in Mahaffee’s vision.

“I knew she was going to assemble a great group of people,” he said. “And I trusted that she knew what she wanted the voice of the book to be.”

For Miller, writing his chapter offered a chance to reflect on his experience leading his company through years of change and growth.

“You live it day-to-day, but you don’t always step back and think about how far you’ve come,” he said.

In his contribution, Miller highlights the importance of using fractional experts, or experienced professionals who work with businesses on a part-time basis. He said this approach allows small businesses to access high-level expertise without the cost of full-time staff.

“Most small businesses don’t have the need or the capacity for full-time leading experts,” Miller said. “So using fractional experts is exactly what a business of our size needs.”

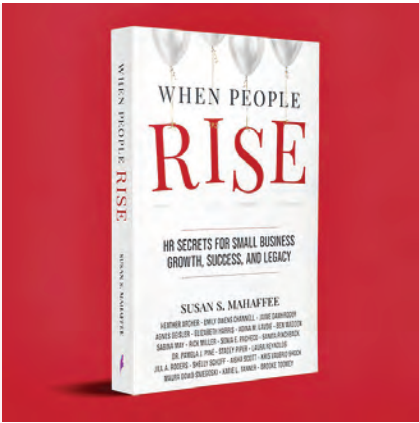
That idea of making resources more accessible is a common theme throughout the book. Mahaffee said

many contributors chose to share personal challenges, including difficult conversations, career setbacks, and moments of uncertainty.

“The goal is to make readers feel seen,” she said. Mahaffee also emphasized the broader role that workplace culture plays in local communities. In areas like Severna Park, where small businesses are a central part of the economy, she said strong people practices can have a ripple effect.

“When businesses treat people well, that spreads,” she said. “It shapes how people experience their jobs and how they talk about those companies.”

Each chapter includes not only a story, but also a practical tool, such as a checklist or set of questions,



*Released in April, “When People Rise” features 22 contributors who share personal experiences and practical advice on navigating challenges in the workplace.*

that readers can apply in their own workplaces. The book also includes contributor profiles and contact information, encouraging readers to connect directly with the authors.

Early response to the book has been strong, with “When People Rise” reaching the top of Amazon’s human resources category shortly after its release.

For Mahaffee, the focus remains on impact rather than recognition.

“If someone reads even one chapter and thinks, ‘I never thought of it that way,’ then we’ve already made an impact,” she said.

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