

The Prince George's Post



A COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER FOR PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY SINCE 1932

Vol. 87, No. 52 December 26, 2019 — January 1, 2020 Prince George's County, Maryland Newspaper of Record Phone: 301-627-0900 25 cents

Happy New Year!

from your friends at the Prince George's Post

BACKGROUND IMAGE BY PELLINNI, COURTESY MORGUEFILE.COM

Some Construction Projects More Costly Due to Labor Shortage

By TERESA JOHNSON
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (December 13, 2019)—Some construction projects in Maryland are costing tens of millions of dollars more than original estimates, in large measure because of a lack of skilled trades in the region.

The increase in price for just two large projects at the University of Maryland? About \$64 million.

"It was about 2014 when the labor shortages started appearing, first in the D.C. submarkets then in Baltimore a couple years later, then fairly prevalent throughout the state now," said Maryland Center for Construction Education & Innovation President Bob Aydukovic.

He said that the labor shortages in Maryland, and nationally, can be traced back to the Great Recession of 2008 to 2009.

The Board of Public Works on Nov. 20 tabled votes on \$64 million more for two projects? the University's Cole Field House, and the construction and design of a new residence hall

and replacement dining facility.

The multi-story residence hall will have 900 beds in "suite-style units"; the dining hall will seat 1,200 and replace an outdated facility.

The new, final construction cost for the residence hall and dining facility is \$155.6 million—an increase of about \$40 million from a June estimate, according to documents presented to the board.

Construction costs for the renovation and expansion of Cole Field House—"to create an academic, research, and athletic facility," including football practice fields—have increased by about \$24 million since January, bringing the project total to about \$210 million, according to board documents.

Supporting documentation sent to the board said that the cost of the total projects has in-



PHOTOGRAPH BY TERESA JOHNSON, COURTESY CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE
Construction at Cole Field House at the University of Maryland-College Park on Dec. 9, 2019.

creased based on issues within the construction industry.

Issues include a high demand for and low supply of skilled workers, which result in higher wages, adjustments to the scope of projects and rebidding trade packages. The documentation also indicated that multiple large mechanical, electrical, and plumbing contractors are no longer in business.

Holder Construction Co. and Gilbane Building Co. each in charge of one of the university

construction projects, did not respond to requests for comment.

Lt. Gov. Boyd Rutherford said during the board meeting that Maryland lacks skilled workers who are able to fill in-demand, high paying jobs.

"I would like to see more students in Maryland be exposed to apprenticeships and skills training opportunities so they are aware of all of their

See LABOR Page A5

Greater Washington Law Enforcement Lauded For Fight Against Drunk Driving

By TAMMY WAN
WRAP

WASHINGTON (December 13, 2019)—Fifteen Washington-metropolitan area police officers were cited today for their "outstanding commitment in the fight against drunk driving in Greater Washington" and presented with the area's 22nd-annual "Law Enforcement Awards of Excellence for Impaired Driving Prevention."

Bestowed at a regional ceremony held in McLean, Virginia, the nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP) presented its 2019 Law Enforcement Awards to: Officer Patrick Cushing, City of Alexandria Police Department; Corporal Brett Kooharian, Arlington County Police Department; Officer Bryce Cooper, City of Falls Church Police Department; DWI Enforcement Squad, Fairfax County Police Department; Senior Sergeant Bobby Galpin, Town of Herndon Police Department; Deputy Caleb Hwang, Loudoun County Sheriff's Office; Trooper First Class Anthony Wallace, Mary-

land State Police; Officer Henry Gallagher, Metropolitan Police Department; Corporal Patricia Cox, Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority; Police Officer III John Romack, Montgomery County Department of Police; Corporal Thomas Kosakowski, Prince George's County Police Department; Officer Chad Mason, Prince William County Police Department; Officer Daniel Begendorf, United States Capitol Police; Officer Christopher Gogarty, United States Park Police; Trooper Lucie Vajglova, Virginia State Police

The annual awards, presented at a ceremony [last Friday morning] at Maggiano's Little Italy in the Tysons Galleria, were bestowed by WRAP in memory of Metropolitan Police Department's Motor Patrol Officer Anthony W. Simms. Officer Simms, as a result of injuries sustained while on duty, lost his life to an impaired driver during Memorial Day weekend in 1996. WRAP's 2019 Law Enforcement Awards were

See AWARDS Page A3

Keith E. Bell Becomes Newest WSSC Water Commissioner Representing Prince George's County

Administrative Law Judge Brings Extensive Background in Complex Disability and Labor Law Issues

By PRESS OFFICER
WSSC

LAUREL, Md. (December 18, 2019)—On December 18, Keith E. Bell participate[d] in his first WSSC Water Commission meeting as the newest member of the water utility's Board of Commissioners. The Prince George's County resident was unanimously approved to serve as a Commissioner by members of the Prince George's County Council in November.

"This appointment fits in nicely with my professional skills and personal passion to protect this vital natural resource," said Bell. "In fact, efforts to safeguard drinking water sources in the 1970s actually led me to become a prosecutor. I'm committed to helping WSSC Water continue delivering on its clean water mission, and I extend my sincere appreciation to County Executive Angela Alsobrooks and members of the Prince George's County Council for their confidence in appointing me to this important role."

Bell currently serves as Administrative Law Judge at the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission in Washington, D.C. In this capacity, he has adjudicated cases arising under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970. A career public servant, Bell began his legal career as an assistant district attorney in the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office. Thereafter, he en-



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY WSSC

Keith E. Bell, Commissioner for Prince George's County

joyed a long career as a civil litigator/prosecutor in the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of the Solicitor, Mine Safety and Health Division. With undergraduate and Juris Doctorate degrees from North Carolina Central University, Bell has been a resident of Prince George's County for more than 20 years. His full bio can be read at www.wsscwater.com/about-us/our-governance/commissioners/keith-e-bell.html.

Bell's appointment fills the final vacant Commission seat. Six Commissioners, three from each county, govern WSSC Water. The Commissioners are appointed to four-year terms by their respective county executives and are confirmed by their county councils. More information on Bell and the other WSSC Water Commissioners can be found at www.wsscwater.com/governance.

Reading Is Fundamental and State Farm Celebrate Reading With Book Celebration at Carmody Hills Elementary

By PRESS OFFICER
State Farm Insurance

CAPITOL HEIGHTS, Md. (December 13, 2019)—Carmody Hills Elementary celebrated the power and excitement of reading with a book celebration event for children on November 26, thanks to a partnership between Reading Is Fundamental, State Farm, and Maryland State Senator Joanne Benson.

At the book celebration, a donation from State Farm enabled students at Carmody Hills Elementary to choose three books to take home and keep for their own. The children also celebrated reading by participating in engaging and interactive read aloud of 10 Fat Turkeys, read by Senator Benson. "The Reading Is Fundamental program sponsored by State Farm, provided an unselfish and marvelous opportunity for our children to enjoy, participate and understand the im-

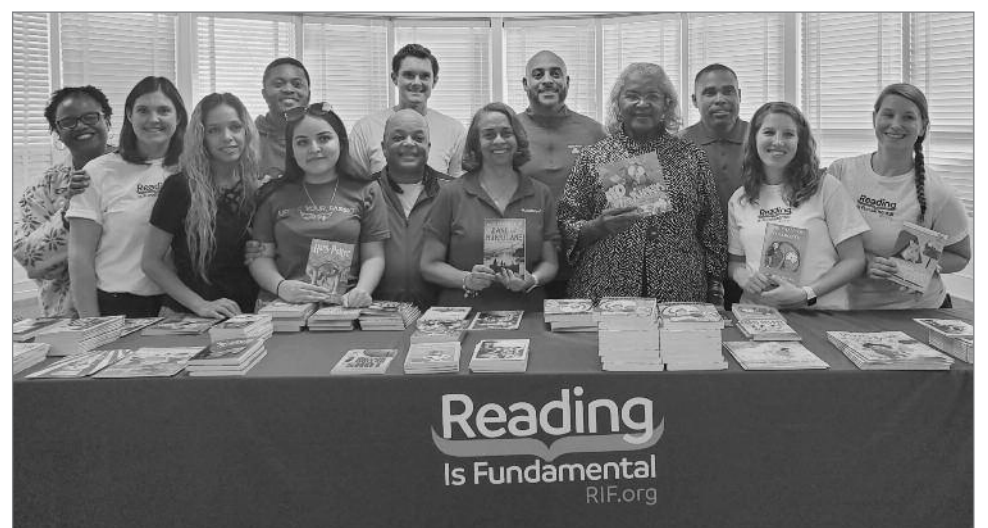
portance of reading. Seeing each child choose three books to have and hold was most uplifting! I was overjoyed to be a part of this great and exciting occasion."

Research has shown that when children have access to books, they enjoy reading more and they read more frequently. And when children read more, they become accomplished readers. By providing children with choice and access to books and literacy resources, State Farm hopes to create a culture of literacy

in the communities in which its employees live and work.

This book celebration event is part of Reading Is Fundamental's Books for Ownership flagship reading program which enables children to select new, age-appropriate books to take home and own. The books are supported by free online resources for parents, educators, and volunteers to create a continuous focus on reading.

See READING Page A8



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY STATE FARM INSURANCE

Maryland State Senator Joanne Benson and her good neighbors from Reading Is Fundamental and State Farm Insurance visited Carmody Hills Elementary to help make education an experience to remember.

INSIDE

Joint Effort Aims at Addressing Langley Park Housing Ills

According to the report, about three-fourths of Langley Park's residents live in the 13 apartment complexes that are an average of over 60 years old. Two of these properties have been on the county's distressed properties list since 2012 for multiple code violations.

Community, Page A3

To Be Equal: New Jersey Anti-Semitic Shootings Are Part of a Horrifying Spike in Hate Crime That Demands Our Action

We must not lose sight of our ideals as Americans—as brothers and sisters and parents and neighbors—to love and protect one another.

Commentary, Page A4

Building Pride, Students First: CEO Proposes \$2.3B Operating Budget

"By supporting students in and outside of the classroom, we prepare the next generation for the world beyond our schoolhouse doors," said Chief Executive Officer Dr. Monica Goldson.

Business and Finance, Page A5

Tips for a New You in 2020

- **Health:** 10 Doctor-Recommended Health Tips For the New Year
- **Green Living:** Resolve to Green Your Grocery Shopping in 2020
- **Personal Finance:** Tips for the Best Financial You in the New Year

New Year, New Goals, Page A6

Holiday Light Displays:

- Festival of Lights, Watkins Park
- Lights on the Bay, Sandy Point State Park
- Smithsonian's National Zoo

The ZooLights display started 13 years ago to increase foot traffic during the zoo's off-season.

Features, Page A7

NEW YEAR, NEW GOALS

HEALTH

10 Doctor-Recommended Health Tips For the New Year

(StatePoint) Four in 10 adults in the U.S. have two or more chronic diseases, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. While certain conditions and risk factors are beyond one's control, the new year is the perfect time to consider the many lifestyle choices you can make for improved health.

"With too many holiday sweets and not enough exercise likely in the rearview mirror, now is the perfect time to consider your personal goals and how you can make positive health choices in the coming year," says American Medical Association (AMA) President Patrice A. Harris, M.D. "The good news is that there are a few easy steps you can take that will set you on the right track for a healthier 2020."

To get you started, the AMA is offering 10 wellness tips for the new year:

1. Steps you take now can help prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes. Learn your risk by taking the self-screening test at DoIHavePrediabetes.org.

2. Be more physically active. Adults should do at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity activity, or 75 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity activity.

3. Visit LowerYourHBP.org to better understand blood pressure numbers and take necessary steps to get high blood pressure—also

known as hypertension—under control. Doing so will reduce your risk of heart attack or stroke.

4. Reduce your intake of processed foods, especially those with added sodium and sugar. Eat less red meat and processed meats, and add more plant-based foods, such as olive oil, nuts and seeds to your diet. Also reduce your consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages and drink more water instead. Drinking sugary beverages—even 100% fruit juices—is associated with a higher all-cause mortality risk, a new study published in JAMA Network Open suggests.

5. If your health care professional determines that you need antibiotics, take them exactly as prescribed. Antibiotic resistance is a serious public health problem and antibiotics will not make you feel better if you have a virus, such as a cold or flu.

6. If consuming alcohol, do so in moderation as defined by the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans—up to one drink daily for women and two drinks daily for men, and only by adults of legal drinking age.

7. Talk with your doctor about tobacco and e-cigarette use (or vaping) and how to

quit. Declare your home and car smoke- and aerosol-free to eliminate secondhand exposure.

8. Pain medication is personal. If you're taking prescription opioids or other medications, follow your doctor's instructions. Store them safely to prevent misuse and properly dispose of any leftover medication.

9. Make sure your family is up-to-date on vaccines, including the annual influenza vaccine for everyone age six months or older. If you're

pregnant, you can receive the flu vaccine during any trimester, but should receive the Tdap vaccine early in the third trimester to protect yourself against flu and whooping cough.

10. Manage stress. A good diet, sufficient sleep (at least 7.5 hours per night), daily exercise and wellness activities, like yoga and meditation, are key ingredients to maintaining and improving your mental health, but don't hesitate to ask for help from a mental health professional when you need it.



IMAGE © LIGHTFIELDSTUDIOS / ISTOCK VIA GETTY IMAGES PLUS

GREEN LIVING

Resolve to Green Your Grocery Shopping in 2020

(StatePoint) In our grab-and-go culture, plastic is pervasive at the grocery store. But as more supermarkets worldwide adopt smart strategies for reducing single-use plastic packaging, experts say that these same changes are possible here in the U.S., so long as retailers, companies and individuals commit to making them a reality.

"It's time to build smarter supermarkets," says Kate Melges, plastics campaigner, Greenpeace. "We're starting to see examples of retailers moving away from throwaway packaging, but not at the urgency and scale needed to address this crisis."

A new report from Greenpeace, "The Smart Supermarket," travels through a hypothetical grocery store to explore how single-use packaging-free initiatives can be implemented in every aisle, as well as details the benefits each change would have on consumers and retailers.

As you head into a new year and possibly resolve to reduce your environmental impact, consider these report insights:

• **"Nude" food:** Plastic-wrapped produce creates needless packaging waste and potentially leads to wasted food, as consumers are required to buy portion sizes they may not need. "Nude" food lets you buy exactly what you need. For those products that do require packaging, stores and consumers should consider natural alternatives, such as banana leaves tied with bamboo twine.

• **Bulk staples:** Smart dispensing systems for such shelf-stable foods as rice, beans and lentils, allow customers to buy the quantities they need and can afford. And when customers dispense products into reusable containers they've brought from home or are supplied by the store, the system can eliminate single-use packaging.

• **Refillable personal and home products:** While the public is becoming aware of the need for reusable shopping bags and coffee

cups, there's less awareness about alternatives to single-use plastics for beauty and cleaning supplies. Refill stations on favorite shampoos, dish soaps and more can substantially reduce plastic waste.

• **Smarter takeout:** Many grocery stores have to-go options like salad bars and hot food counters. At a smart supermarket, takeout will not mean throwaway. Technology is at the heart of the concept, with customers using an app to collect rewards when they return reusable cups and containers. This is great for stores who want to establish brand loyalty, and great for customers who want kickbacks and to reduce their plastic use.

• **Sustainable checkout:** Five trillion single-use plastic bags will be used this year alone—that is 160,000 bags per second. Providing durable, reusable bags at checkout through a rent-a-bag scheme is an easy way for stores to reverse this trend.

• **Mindful online shopping:** Buy your groceries online? A number of online retailers are already dropping off and collecting reusable containers via more sustainable transport. A smart supermarket can follow the same model.



IMAGE © MONKEYBUSINESSIMAGES / ISTOCK VIA GETTY IMAGES PLUS

For more information on how to help build a smarter supermarket, visit: greenpeace.org/usa/research/report-the-smart-supermarket.

Without decisive action, plastic production is set to quadruple by 2050. This new year, advocates say that everyone can resolve to do their part to stem the tide, with retailers and consumer goods companies cooperating to create eco-friendly solutions, and consumers demanding these alternatives and opting for them when they become available.

PERSONAL FINANCE

Tips for the Best Financial You In the New Year

(StatePoint) At the same time that Americans are feeling the financial pinch of the holidays, they're gearing up for 2020, with their top two goals being to save more and increase their credit scores, according to a national consumer survey by Experian.

Almost three out of four consumers surveyed are motivated to improve their finances. To reach their New Year goals, survey respondents say they'll spend less money to improve their credit score (59%) and pay off credit card debt (58%).

To help get you started, Experian Boost ambassador, actor and financial empowerment activist, Hill Harper is providing these money tips:

• **Create a Financial Blueprint:** The first step is to create a blueprint identifying your money, saving and investing goals. Examine your priorities and determine how much money you require to meet your basic needs. From there, you should assess what else you need to be happy and how you can use money as a resource to achieve it.

• **Assess the Cost of Being You:** If your expenses or debt outpace your income, then it's very difficult to live the best version of your life. Rather than continuously playing catch-up, track your spending to discover new ways to reduce

monthly expenses. Apply those savings towards self-investment.

• **Understand Smart vs. Dumb Money:** Not all dollars spent hold the same value. Knowing the difference between "smart" and "dumb" money is key to building a solid financial foundation, according to Harper, who says that "dumb money" is spending on things like credit card interest or items that lose value quickly, whereas "smart money" is spending on things that pay dividends, like an education or home.

• **Control Your Credit Score:** A good credit score can help you gain access to capital with better terms at affordable rates. To improve it, pay bills on time and use a resource like Experian Boost, which is a free online tool that allows you to add positive payment history from utility and telecom bills to your Experian credit file, which can increase your score instantly.

• **New Year, New You:** "We're starting a new decade and what better opportunity is there to do a complete financial makeover?" says Harper, who recommends many other steps that will set you up for financial success, including building an emergency fund, securing health insurance, avoiding



IMAGE © PROSTOCK-STUDIO / ISTOCK VIA GETTY IMAGES PLUS

debt for unnecessary purchases and investing wisely.

"No one has a crystal ball, but given lower unemployment rates and low interest rates, 2020 could be a good year to have a plan for growth. A diversified portfolio for this next decade is a good portfolio," says Harper. More tips from

Harper can be found at www.experian.com/education.

While managing finances can seem intimidating, identifying trouble spots is the first step toward conquering your goals.

Last Chance!: Holiday Lights Spotlight

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC



Festival of Lights, Watkins Park

PHOTO CREDIT: WATKINS PARKS

33 Annual Festival of Lights! Bring a little twinkle to your holidays at this spectacular drive-through event featuring dazzling displays with more than 2.5 million lights throughout the park! You won't want to miss our giant, 54-foot LED musical tree! The Festival of Lights runs Friday, November 29, 2019–Tuesday, January 1, 2020, from 5–9:30 p.m. daily. Get your free festival spectacles while supplies last! A surprise for your eyes—watch as the lenses magically transform every point of light in our holiday displays into magical floating holograms! Please bring canned goods for donation to local food banks. Purchase your tickets in advance online and pay only \$8 (\$10 regular admission). For more information and complete pricing by vehicle-type, visit the festival's website (below).

Watkins Regional Park: 301 Watkins Park Drive, Upper Marlboro, Maryland • 301-699-2456
<http://www.pgiparks.com/742/Festival-of-Lights>

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC



Lights on the Bay, Sandy Point State Park

PHOTO CREDIT: ASPCA OF AACOUNTY

Lights on the Bay is an annual holiday light show featuring a two mile scenic drive along the shores of the Chesapeake Bay through Sandy Point State Park, with more than 70 animated and stationary displays depicting regional and holiday themes. For only \$20 per car, you can drive through and enjoy the beautiful displays and celebrate the most wonderful time of the year! All proceeds from this family-friendly event will go directly to the SPCA to help care for the animals. Tickets can be purchased at lightsonthebay.org or can be purchased at the event gates during regular hours of operation.

Sandy Point State Park: 1100 E College Parkway, Annapolis, Maryland, 21409 • 410-268-4388
<http://www.lightsonthebay.org/>

Calendar of Events

December 27, 2019–January 6, 2020

Xtreme Teens: Holiday Movie Night

Date and Time: Friday, December 27, 2019, 7–9:30 p.m.
 Description: Grab some popcorn. Get your drink. Get comfortable as you prepare to watch one of the classic holiday movies—courtesy of M-NCPPC! Tell a friend and make this experience the ultimate in fun!
 Cost: FREE
 Ages: 10–17
 Location: Huntington Community Center
 13022 8th Street, Bowie, MD 20720
 Contact: 301-464-3725; TTY 301-699-2544

Cheers to a Happy and Healthy 2020!

Teens on The Go: Library of Congress Trip

Date and Time: Saturday, January 4, 2020, 2–5 p.m.
 Description: Join us for an educational journey through the Library of Congress. The group will take the introductory tour to learn about the Thomas Jefferson Building and the history of the library! Will leave LPCC at noon and will return at 5 p.m.
 Cost: Free,*Do Not forget to bring money for food* Light snacks will be provided throughout the day.
 Ages: 301-445-4508; TTY 301-699-2544
 Location: Langley Park Community Center
 1500 Merrimac Drive, Hyattsville, MD 20783
 Contact: 301-445-4508; TTY 301-699-2544

Craft & Create: Planners and Pastries

Date and Time: Saturday, January 4, 2020, 3 p.m.
 Description: Participants will be able to bring their planners and share decoration ideas, tips and tricks including: monthly/weekly spreads, dashboard decor, and layout creation.
 Cost: FREE
 Ages: Adults
 Location: PGCMLS, Hillcrest Heights Branch Library
 2398 Iverson St., Temple Hills, MD 20748
 Contact: 301-630-4900

Teen Advisory Board: Build a Better Book

Date and Time: Monday, January 6, 2020, 3:30 p.m.
 Description: Earn service hours while making your library a great place for teens. This week, learn how to design and create your own tactile book that can be seen, touched and heard! Presented by the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.
 Cost: FREE
 Ages: 13–18
 Location: PGCMLS, Bowie Branch Library
 15210 Annapolis Rd., Bowie, MD 20715
 Contact: 301-262-7000



WASHINGTON—Visitors pass under the entrance to ZooLights, the annual holiday light festival at the Smithsonian's National Zoo.

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS CREDIT HEATHER KIM/CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE



WASHINGTON—At the Smithsonian's National Zoo, the immersive outdoor art installation "Entre Les Rangs" is meant to depict a walkable wheat-like field of light. The installation, part of ZooLights, is made up of glowing crystalline reflectors.

It's All Happening at the Zoo— At Night During the Holidays

By JULIANNE HEBERLEIN
 Capital News Service

WASHINGTON (December 10, 2019)— Each holiday season since 2007, after the animals go to sleep, the rest of the Smithsonian National Zoo comes to life as a colorful winter wonderland.

More than half a million LED lights are transforming the zoo's grounds into a bright holiday celebration this year, with a new outdoor art installation, 3D glowing animal sculptures, a laser light show and a virtual experience featuring the zoo's pandas.

The ZooLights display started 13 years ago to increase foot traffic during the zoo's off-season, zoo spokeswoman Pamela Baker-Masson said.

"Because we're so weather dependent, we wanted to have a special community-focused event," Baker-Masson said. "ZooLights seemed to be the perfect answer and it has been."

On Wednesday evening, families and couples stopped to take in the glow of the new animal-shaped lanterns lining the central walkway as the warm, sweet smell of funnel cake wafted through the crisp air. A pair of monkeys, a flock of flamingos, a group of cheetahs, a family of lions, a couple of pandas and a herd of zebras, among other animal shapes, illuminated the grounds.

Rebecca Hankins, a Washington resident, attended ZooLights for the first time in 2016. This year, she came back with a friend to take in the new attractions.

"The animal lanterns were really cool," Hankins said. "The new additions made (ZooLights) more interactive for kids and friends this year."

The immersive outdoor art installation, "Entre Les Rangs," located adjacent to the zoo's lion and tiger exhibit, becomes a walkable, wheat-like field of light. This week, visitors strolled through hundreds of glowing crystalline reflectors as they swayed with the wind.

A laser light show dances along to Christmas carols like "Walking in a Winter Wonderland," with animations of animal characters, including rabbits, ostriches and songbirds, projected on the side of the Elephant Community Center.

"(ZooLights) just keeps getting bigger and bigger with LED lights, more trees are wrapped, more decorations and more activities," Baker-Masson said.

Aside from this year's new additions, returning attractions include the ZooTubes slide down the hill near the lion and tiger exhibits, the Zoo Choo Choo train ride, a



WASHINGTON—Lion lanterns are one of the features of the Smithsonian's National Zoo annual ZooLights festival.

classic carousel and live musical performances from local groups and schools.

Sarah Heydemann and Alexandra Waters, both Washington residents, attended the light festival for the first time together this year. "ZooLights is like a very quiet outdoor club," Heydemann said, commenting on the lively and upbeat atmosphere.

Both of them visited the new outdoor art installation but Waters said the light reflectors were not lighting up to their full potential.

Still, Waters said she "would definitely come back—probably tomorrow."

The light festival is free to the public and will be open each evening from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. until Jan. 1, except on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Year's Eve.

Earth TALK™ Degrowth: Is Scaling Back the Answer to Climate and Environmental Woes?

Dear EarthTalk:

What is the Degrowth movement all about and how can I get involved?

—P. Warren, Baltimore, MD

Degrowth is an aspirational term describing a way of life where economic expansion is deprioritized, resulting in stronger social bonds between people and within communities, greater economic equality and far less environmental degradation. Proponents decry the current economic/social paradigm of "faster, higher, further" as harmful to nature, given its relentless race to extract and monetize natural resources. They also abhor its competitiveness, stress and exclusion at the expense of the care, solidarity and cooperation necessary to help ourselves out of our humanitarian and ecological crises.

The term "degrowth" first came into common usage among proponents following the first international conference devoted to the topic in Paris in 2008. It has since entered the wider social lexicon through the media and academic writing—and as a battle cry for many environmental advocates working to ratchet down our carbon emissions to combat climate change.

According to the web portal Degrowth.info, a society refocused on degrowth would prioritize achieving "the good life for all" by fostering a culture of "deceleration, time welfare and conviviality." Meanwhile, developed countries would reduce production and consumption, partly to reduce their impact on the planet but also as not to lead less-developed countries down the wrong road through bad example.

Degrowth is also predicated on extending democratic decision-making and political participation to all corners of society,

acknowledging the ability of local populations to make their own decisions about how to retain self-sufficiency and sustainability in the face of socially and ecologically turbulent times. Also, degrowth advocates say we should be relying on cooperation, planning and a conservation ethic to solve our environmental problems instead of waiting for technological fixes that may or may not even work.

But just because we would be sacrificing some of our consumerism doesn't mean degrowth would lead to a lesser quality of life. In fact, proponents argue the opposite, envisioning happier lives where we would derive more satisfaction from healthier time-tested pursuits like art, music, walks outside and time with friends and family than from sitting inside by a screen plotting another amazon.com purchase.

Achieving degrowth—and attaining a "steady-state" economy that can function without getting bigger—is of course easier said than done. Rich nations would have to pare down their energy and resource demands significantly and let poorer nations increase their consumption so their citizens get the chance to live healthy, safe lives with access to the conveniences (electricity, sanitation ...) modern life has to offer.

If you want to learn more about degrowth, Degrowth.info is a great resource and can point you toward local gatherings of like-minded activists. Another way to get involved is by attending the Picnic 4



IMAGE CREDIT: FLICKRCC

Activists who want us to scale back our economic consumption come together at locations all around the world at the Picnic 4 Degrowth that takes place every year in early June.

growth that takes place in parks all over the world on the first weekend of June every year. And if you really want to go deep, get yourself to Europe for one of the non-profit Research and Degrowth's annual movement-wide gatherings (May 29–June 1 in Vienna, Austria and/or September 1–5 in Manchester, England).

CONTACTS: Degrowth info; degrowth.info; Picnic 4 Degrowth, picnic4degrowth.wordpress.com; Research & Degrowth, degrowth.org.

EarthTalk® is produced by Roddy Scheer & Doug Moss for the 501(c)3 nonprofit EarthTalk. Check out our other columns at <https://www.emagazine.com/earthtalk-qa/>. To donate, visit <https://www.earthtalk.org>. Send questions to: question@earthtalk.org.

New Years' Service

Date and Time: Tuesday, December 31, 2019, Noon • Rev. Paula H. Collins, Lead Pastor
 Location: Accokeek First Church of God, 15821 Livingston Road, Accokeek, MD 20607
 Contact: 301-283-2116, www.accokeekchog.org

