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Pandemic Financially Devastated Minority-Led Nonprofits

By RACHEL LOGAN
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (Dec. 8, 2021)—Tiffany Turner-Allen said she is tired of her nonprofit organization and workers being seen as resilient and coworkers calling themselves martyrs to their community causes.

"We're expected to do good and do well from a place of scarcity," said Turner-Allen, who runs Nonprofit Prince George's County, a group supporting other nonprofits on a \$300,000 budget.

Minority-led nonprofits struggled disproportionately during the pandemic, fueled by hard-to-reach government funding and catastrophic losses on every income source, according to Maryland Nonprofit survey data released Dec. 1.

To counter this distress, over 215 nonprofits and individuals are calling for state administrators to allocate \$1 billion of Maryland's reported budget surplus to aid struggling nonprofits, with half of that spent in the near term, and half set aside in years to come.

When the pandemic hit, Turner-Allen, who is Black, said she worked 16-hour days or longer seven days a week; though she had a 1-year-old at home, her organization didn't have the money or staff to ease the pressure.

On average, 80% of over 4,000 registered Prince George's County nonprofits operate on \$25,000 or

less, Turner-Allen said to Capital News Service in a phone interview.

Of Turner-Allen's organization's 150 member nonprofits, 50% operate on \$250,000 or less, the lowest tier of financial information the organization collects. Smaller organizations may not have the resources to participate in Nonprofit Prince George's County meetings, she said Wednesday.

When a full-time employee can cost \$30,000 to \$40,000, these smaller organizations rely on volunteer work, but volunteers are burnt out, she said.

"Prince George's County has experienced the brunt of the pandemic," Turner-Allen said, calling the county a "majority-melanated community" that felt great job loss and death tolls.

Minority-led nonprofits made up 60% of those with revenues under \$25,000, and were more likely to have experienced declines over 50% in all revenue sources, according to Maryland Nonprofits's COVID-19 Pandemic and Racial Equity Survey.

The survey received 710 unique responses from nonprofits across the state about finances from August 2020.

The Paycheck Protection Program, which reached 60% of responders, was the government funding opportunity most used by surveyed nonprofits. It was less accessible, however, to those led by people of color, the survey reported.

"They were less likely to be eligible, less likely to hear about it and more likely to be declined than



PHOTO COURTESY NONPROFIT PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

Nonprofit Prince George's County Program Coordinator Breonna Smith, left, chats with Communications Assistant Amir Shaw at the organization's resource center at Bowie's Vista Gardens Marketplace on Dec. 2, 2021.

white-led organizations," according to the report.

Turner-Allen tried to ameliorate the struggles of fellow nonprofits, and started work in June on a resource center for nonprofits in Vista Gardens Marketplace, a shopping mall in Bowie.

After months of work painting, organizing furniture donations and calling in favors for wiring while her young son napped on a corner cot, Turner-Allen said the center has rented out three of its four office

spaces to nonprofit organizations needing administrative spaces—but it won't break even until all four are filled.

The center also offers mailboxes for rent, giving nonprofits an opportunity to apply for some grants requiring a physical address.

See **NONPROFITS** Page A5

Fort Washington Native Selected As Military Engineer of the Year

By JC KREIDEL
NAVFAC Atlantic Public Affairs/
Communications Office

NORFOLK, Va. (Dec. 8, 2021)—Officer in Charge of Construction (OICC) Portsmouth Naval Shipyard (PNSY) in Maine recently announced Lt. Cmdr. Chris Thomas, P.E., its 2022 Military Engineer of the Year.

Thomas is a native of Fort Washington, Maryland. "Please join me in congratulating Lt. Cmdr. Chris Thomas, earning the first Military Engineer of the Year for Officer In Charge of Construction Portsmouth Naval Shipyard," said Capt. Frank Carroll OICC PNSY commanding officer. "He had an amazing year documented in submissions and is most deserving."

Thomas been instrumental in the initial foundation of a \$1.7 billion multi-mission dry dock effort to recapitalize PNSY, formally establishing a new command charged with providing robust on-site construction oversight and command-level accountability for resident engineering services, as well as coordination among stakeholders.

The OICC PNSY team has executed numerous large contracts and is applying innovative and efficient processes to improve critical existing drydock complexes as a part of Navy's Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program (SIOP) aboard PNSY. SIOP is a Navy wide effort to modernize infrastructure at the four public shipyards, including critical dry dock repairs, restoring and optimally placing shipyard facilities and replacing aging and deteriorating capital equipment.

Assigned to NAVFAC Mid-Atlantic, a fleet engineering command within NAVFAC Atlantic, Thomas was tapped to move to OICC PNSY in March 2021. Noted for his engineering acumen and leadership strengths, Thomas oversaw the team development of 15 distinct projects, leading his team to manage a program valued at \$2.3 billion overall.

"I'm humbled and honored to be selected as the OICC's Military Engineer of the Year given the work being executed to support the shipyard and the Navy," said Thomas. "I'm extremely proud to be a part of this team."

Construction efforts to date include the installation of deep foundation elements, dredging, underwater rock blasting in an operational environment, sheet pile cellular cofferdams, delivery and installation of 5,600-ton pre-cast concrete structures, crane rail to support a 140-ton crane, train rail to support subma-



PHOTO COURTESY NAVFAC ATLANTIC PUBLIC AFFAIRS/COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

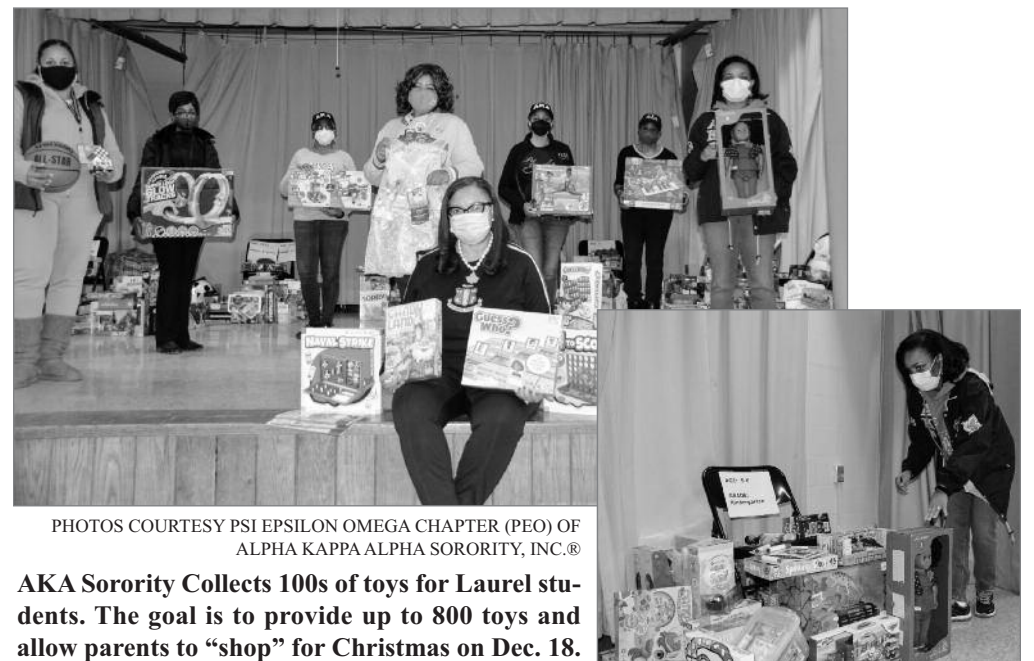
Lt. Cmdr. Chris Thomas, P.E., OICC PNSY Military Engineer of the Year.

rine power units, and mechanical and electrical utility distribution infrastructure.

A herculean effort in both scope and value, Thomas has kept an aggressive tempo to keep the important venture on schedule—these projects have a direct and immediate impact on critical shipyard operations, supporting the shipyard's ability to conduct maintenance, repairs and upgrades quickly and efficiently and returning submarines to the fleet on time. This in turn supports the Navy's operational posture and enables the fleet to be wherever it's needed, whenever it's needed, around the globe. Using a new 120-ton crane, Thomas also supervised a \$60 million refueling complex as well as assistance to the shipyard as they finished submarine repairs during a notable overhaul.

Beyond the myriad complex features associated with the operational requirements project, Thomas also oversaw the official commissioning of the OICC PNSY command as executive officer in September 2021.

Thomas is an alumnus of University of Maryland, receiving both his bachelor's and master's degrees. Thomas is a registered Professional Engineer in the state of Illinois.



PHOTOS COURTESY PSI EPSILON OMEGA CHAPTER (PEO) OF ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA SORORITY, INC.®

AKA Sorority Collects 100s of toys for Laurel students. The goal is to provide up to 800 toys and allow parents to "shop" for Christmas on Dec. 18.

Psi Epsilon Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated® Collects Hundreds of Toys for Students at Laurel Elementary School

By RACINE TUCKER-HAMILTON
Psi Epsilon Omega Chapter

LAUREL, Md. (Dec. 10, 2021)—Barbies, board games, and basketballs are just a sprinkling of the toys collected by members of Psi Epsilon Omega Chapter (PEO) of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.® in partnership with the Pearl Elegance Foundation (PEF), for its adopted school, Oaklands Elementary School on Sat., Dec. 4.

"This support means everything to us. Through our partnership with PEO and PEF, we have provided a food pantry, monetary donations, and volunteer hours. Unlike previous years, we wanted to do something special for the kids this year. A toy drive is something that the students can directly benefit from," said Jewel Preston, principal of Oaklands Elementary School. "Parents will be able to shop for their kids secretly. We wanted our students to be able to get gifts and feel the love during Christmas."

On Dec. 18, parents are invited to the school for a day of shopping, they are encouraged to sign up to attend the in-person shopping day. Each parent will be able to collect two gifts per student along with a coat, hat, gloves, scarf, and blanket. The gifts will not be wrapped, allowing the parents to pick what they know their child would like and can enjoy wrapping themselves.

"For Psi Epsilon Omega service to the community and to the families at Oaklands happens all year long, but this time of year is an opportunity to do something special and meaningful for the students," said Benita Swindell, PEO president. "Our members are overwhelmingly supporting this project."

The members successfully collected nearly 600 toys, including but not limited to games, blocks, action figures, and playsets so far, with the goal of 800 in total so that each child can receive two toys each. Deliveries are still arriving at the school daily from online shopping, so PEO and PEF are hopeful of reaching its goal by Dec. 18.

This toy drive is a local effort aligned with the organization's national Target 3: Operation AKA Assist and Target 5: Global Impact for the community.

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated®, Psi Epsilon Omega Chapter was chartered in 2007. Since its founding, the chapter has implemented its service programs in Laurel, Bowie, and Greenbelt, Maryland.

Pearl Elegance Foundation, Incorporated is a non-profit 501(c)3 charity established in 2014 in Maryland. PEF is a direct outgrowth of the Psi Epsilon Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated.

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TOWNS *and* NEIGHBORS

In and Around Morningside-Skyline

by Mary McHale 301-735-3451

Happy 79th Wedding Anniversary, Mayor Jerry and Jean!

It all began 80 years ago, in August 1941, at the five-and-dime in Lincoln, Nebraska. Jean was a clerk and Jerry a shopper. He was impressed with her and asked for a date. But she was 17 and had to get permission from her folks. Jerry was a 21-year-old sailor, home on leave from the USS San Francisco.

He returned to his ship, anchored in balmy Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Four months later, on December 7, Jerry spent the evening with friends in Honolulu, but early in the morning the frenzied announcement came, "All sailors report to their ships!"

As Jerry and fellow sailors piled into his 1932 Graham-Paige roadster, they saw billowing black smoke and heard bombs exploding. They dashed from the car and boarded the ship. Jerry never saw that roadster again.

Jerry and the USS San Francisco survived the bombing and the mayhem.

Over the next year, loving letters traveled back and forth between Nebraska and the Pacific. Then on leave, Jerry returned to Nebraska and on December 23, 1942, Gerald August Glaubitz and Jean Loree Quapp were wed at the American Lutheran Church in Lincoln.

After the war, Jerry went to work for the Naval Research Lab where he was a radar and Missile guidance engineer.

In August 1947 Jerry and Jean moved to 507 Maple Road in Morningside. (Jerry told me he paid \$6,930 for the house and got a \$100 rebate.) He became Morningside's first chief of police, held many positions with the Morningside Volunteer Fire Department, and in 1961 became Morningside Mayor, a position he held for 43 years.

On December 7, 1991, as National President of the Pearl Harbor Survivors, Jerry, with his wife Jean, accompanied President and Mrs. George H. W. Bush to services aboard the Arizona Memorial in Pearl Harbor.

Jerry was involved in countless organizations, and the recipient of dozens of awards. In 2004 the Maple Road Circle in Morningside was dedicated to him. It is now Glaubitz Circle.

Jerry died April 26, 2005. He left behind his wife Jean, daughter Carol Lee and son

Larry Glaubitz, their spouses and families. Services for him were at Bethany Lutheran Church in Suitland with burial at Cheltenham Veterans Cemetery. Jean died March 19, 2014.

Happy anniversary, Jerry and Jean! And thank you! There would be no Morningside as I know it had that sailor not met that clerk at that five-and-dime in 1941.

Town of Morningside: Santa's coming Dec. 18

Morningside has invited Santa to attend two events this Christmas season: Breakfast with Santa (8 a.m. to 10 a.m.) and Lunch with Santa (11 a.m. to 1 p.m.). Both events are on Saturday, Dec. 18, at the Municipal Center, 6901 Ames Street.

Breakfast with Santa attendees will dine on a pastry, fruit cup and drink. Lunch with Santa offers hotdog, chips and drink. There'll be amazing entertainment at each session.

Due to social distancing, only 40 (including adults and infants) will be admitted at each session. Admission: \$5 per person. For information or to make your reservation, call 301-736-2300.

Also, Morningside will hold its monthly Town Meeting Dec. 21, at 7 p.m. in the Municipal Center. Town offices will be closed Dec. 24 and Christmas Day.

Neighbors & other good people

Dolores Steinhilber, the Skyline Citizens Association's first president when we organized back in 1970, is seriously ill and in the hospital. In recent years she has lived in Waldorf. Her husband Gus died several years ago. Dolores is a dear friend of mine. Say a prayer for her and her family.

Jerald H. "Jerry" Thompson, 92, of Bradenton, Fla. died Aug. 1. He had a distinguished military career and was project officer on many stratospheric balloon launches, most notable "Stargazer." He was stationed for some years at Andrews, was a member of the Andrews Players and Commander of American Legion Post 259, in Clinton. Survivors include his wife Verna Raye Hogan, children and grandchildren.

Changing landscape

Whole Foods Market Quarter Avenue, has opened in Capital Heights.
Captain White Seafood City has oper-

ated out of the District's 200-year-old Municipal Fish Market since 1972. But no more. By Saturday, Nov. 6, the barge bearing the large flagship sign for Captain White Seafood City was gone. The Fish Market continues, but it won't be the same.

A home at 4120 Maple Road, in Morningside, just sold for \$390,00.

Christmas tree, oh Christmas tree!

This is the 99th year for the celebration of the National Christmas Tree. The ceremony was first held in 1923 when President Calvin Coolidge lit a 48-foot balsam fir from Vermont, decorated with festive bulbs in red, white and green, on Christmas Eve.

Christmas season 2021 officially began in Washington as President Joe Biden, joined by first lady Jill Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris and second gentleman Doug Emhoff, lit the National Christmas Tree outside the White House the evening of Dec. 2.

The Capitol Christmas Tree traveled the county, even making a stop at Andrews, before heading to the U. S. Capitol. On Wednesday, December 1, Congressional leadership and other representatives gathered to watch the Capitol Christmas Tree flicker on and illuminate the night for the first time this year.

The Joint Base Andrews Christmas tree's lights were turned on for the first time Dec. 1 during the base's annual Christmas tree-lighting ceremony. The ceremony kicks off the holiday season and helps foster a sense of community among base members. I appreciate it every time I drive Alentown Road, past Andrews.

Milestones

Happy birthday to my wonderful next-door neighbor Stacie Branham-Smith and Erin Nicole Brown-Sandoval, Dec. 16; Bradley Wade and David Williams III, Dec. 17; Charlene Baker and Paul Ratliff, Dec. 18; my grandson Michael Gallegos, Dec. 19; Ricky Nichols, Dec. 20; Timothy Flaherty and former Morningside Mayor Irving Robinson, Dec. 22; Paul Ford and Russ Kyser, Dec. 23.

Happy anniversary to Margaret & Leslie Greene who were wed Dec. 18, 1943, and to Pastor of Suitland Road Baptist Church, Dr. and Mrs. Kelvin McCune who married Dec. 21, 1985.

by Audrey Johnson 301-922-5384

Brandywine-Aquasco

LIVE FROM BALTIMORE CENTER STAGE

Office of Alumni Engagements Facebook Page heard from "Tiffany T" Watson ('12) "live" from Baltimore Center Stage December 1, 2021. "Lady T" is a FOX45 assignment editor for digital news, a former entertainment news correspondent and a PROUD BSU ALUMNA.

CHRISTMAS CONCERT

The Music and Drama Ministries of Westphalia United Methodist Church presents Jesus the Light of The World Christmas Concert 2021 Sunday, December 19, at 5 p.m. Free admission. Virtual and In-Person. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCEjwztaxD-ABHZVQMpTwAg>, YouTube: www.youtube.com, Facebook/www.facebook.com (5) Westphalia United Methodist Church/Facebook. Westphalia 9363 D'Arcy Road Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20774 Rev. Dr. Timothy West, Senior Pastor.

WATCH NIGHT SERVICE

Need a place to go? Celebrate with Westphalia Hour of Prayer Watch Night Service: Old Journey Ending 2021 and New Beginning for 2022. Reflect, Repent, Renew Friday, December 31, 2021, at 11 p.m.—Midnight. Doors close at 11:15 p.m. The service will be virtual and in person. YouTube: www.youtube.com. Westphalia 9363 D'Arcy Road Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20774 Rev. Dr. Timothy West, Senior Pastor.

STORY AND CRAFTS

Wednesday, December 22, 2021, at Old Maryland Farm 301 Watkins Park Drive Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772 there will be Story and Craft-Horses for ages two to ten from 10 a.m.—11 a.m. Must register by 12/21/2021. Register through Parks Direct using this activity code: 22605-156A. Cost: \$3 per resident, \$4 non-resident. Link: Register through PARKSDIRECT.

GLIMPSSES OF PROGRESS BY DECADES (PART TWO)

In 1904 a Teachers Retired List was set up. "Every person so placed upon the said retired list was entitled to receive a pension from the state of two-hundred dollars per annum, to be paid quarterly by the Treasurer of this state, upon the warrant of the Comptroller." Only one name appeared on the list for Prince George's County during this period—that of Ms. Alice Harper.

A system of accounting for and distributing free textbooks to the schools of the county was inaugurated in 1900 under the direction of Mr. W.R.C. Connick. In that same year, the School Commissioners requested the exclusive use of the room which they had been sharing.

The local trustees were actively engaged in school matters at the beginning of the century. To them was delegated the responsi-

bility of recommending the principal teacher for the local school. The principal teacher in turn served as secretary to the Board of Trustees. Repairs and improvements were effected under their direction. Fuel and other supplies were ordered through them or with their approvals. The records show that trustees often became divided in their decisions with respect to school policies creating factions which made it difficult to secure and retain good teachers in those situations. In 1902 the appointment of all assistant teachers was delegated to the School Board to be performed "in accordance with the instruction of the State Board of Education."

The first mention of consolidation of schools occurs in the minutes of the Board dated December 10, 1907. Certain small schools found it impossible to meet the attendance requirements prescribed by law. Other communities were discovering that concerted action secured better educational facilities.

A system of transportation was discussed and on February 16, 1909, it was ordered "that a wagon be run to Lanham School for accommodation of children near Ardwick, provided it can be secured at a reasonable rate and be satisfactory to a majority of patrons."

Most of the schools were heated by wood stoves for which the trustees were authorized "to purchase oak wood to be delivered sawed to stove lengths at a cost not to exceed \$4.00 per cord". One of the first central heating systems installed was in the Riverdale School (1908) where steam heat was provided.

Nearly all the schools depended upon springs or upon neighbors' wells for their water supply. The first record of water systems being installed occurred in 1908 when water was ordered put in the Laurel schools at a cost "not to exceed \$30.00" and the Board not to be liable for the water rent.

The enrollment in the schools of the county increased from 5,072 to 6,347 during the first ten years of the century. The corps of teachers numbered 153. The county was ranked eleventh in the state in its expenditures for schools. The average teacher's salary was \$298.72 a year. The total school budget amounted to \$98,767.43. The per pupil cost was \$10.66. Information received from the Forty-Second Annual Report State Board of Education of Maryland 1908.

MASTERCLASS WITH FILMMAKER DAVID TALBERT

Prince George's County Public Schools Alum and Award-winning filmmaker David E. Talbert, recently inducted into the PGCPs Alumni Hall of Fame, hosted a recording session and master class with high school media arts students. Participants learned hands-on-lessons while operating cameras, troubleshooting audio and recording b-roll from behind the scenes. Talbert also shared words of wisdom with students and staff.

Around the County

Prince George's County Council Elects 2022 Leadership Team

At-Large Council Member Calvin S. Hawkins, II, Elected for Second Consecutive Term as Chair; Council Member Sydney Harrison to Serve as Vice-Chair

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (Dec. 7, 2021)—The Prince George's County Council, convening virtually for its Gavel Exchange ceremony on Tuesday, Dec. 7, 2021, unanimously reelected At-Large Council Member Calvin S. Hawkins, II, to serve as Chair for Legislative Year 2022. Council Member Sydney Harrison (D-District 9) was unanimously elected by his colleagues to serve as Vice-Chair. Chair Hawkins and Vice-Chair Harrison will serve in leadership through December 6, 2022.

Chair Hawkins thanked his colleagues for the opportunity to serve as Chair, and for entrusting him with the Gavel of Leadership for a second consecutive year.

"I want to sincerely thank my distinguished colleagues on the Prince George's County Council for the coveted privilege of presiding over this august body over the past Legislative Year. I am humbled beyond words to accept the Gavel of Leadership once again for Legislative Year 2022 and promise to meet the moment with integrity, unity, and clear purpose."

During his remarks, Chair Hawkins addressed several Council-supported initiatives that have "come to life" in the County over the past year, including the appointment of a new Police Chief; the opening of the new University of Maryland Capital Region Health; groundbreaking legislation this year supporting Qualified Data Centers in the County; and approval of the Countywide Map Amendment, the first update of the County's Zoning Code in over fifty years.

Chair Hawkins also noted the challenges of the past year, while expressing hope for the future.

"These are times like none other—not only for the challenges, but also for the opportunities before us. COVID notwithstanding, we are charting our path forward, and working together in new ways to restore the County's shared prosperity."

Prince George's County Executive Angela Alsobrooks attended the virtual Gavel Exchange ceremony, thanking the Council for its work on behalf of Prince George's County residents and congratulating the new leadership team.

"This Council has been indispensable to the welfare of our county and the health of our residents. Together we are making change that benefits our whole community. Greatness is growing in Prince George's County and each of you should be proud of your important work. I extend my warmest congratulations to the incoming Chair and Vice Chair."

Chair Hawkins, of Upper Marlboro, was elected to serve At-Large for his first four-year term on the Prince George's County Council in the 2018 General Election. He served as Council Vice-Chair in Legislative Year 2020. Vice-Chair Harrison was elected to serve his first four-year term on the County Council in the November 2018 General Election as the County Council Member representing District 9.

To watch on-demand video of the Gavel Exchange Ceremony, visit https://princegeorgescountymd.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?clip_id=2170&utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery&view_id=4. The Gavel Exchange ceremony will also be cablecast on Prince George's Community Television (CTV), Channel 42 (Verizon FIOS) and Channel 76, (Comcast). For air dates and times, please visit www.pgctv.org or contact CTV at 301-773-0900.

—Angela J. Rouson, Prince George's County Council Media

Prince George's County Partners with the MDOT State Highway Administration for Countywide Litter Blitz

LARGO, Md. (Dec. 9, 2021)—The Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T) is partnering with the MDOT State Highway Administration (SHA) on multiple dates for the Countywide Litter Blitz. The Litter Blitz is an ongoing initiative that focuses on the removal of litter and illegal signs from County and state-maintained roadways.

DPW&T, through its partnership with SHA, will be out on roadways throughout the County collecting litter and debris, as part of a sustained effort to eradicate litter in the County. This effort follows the County's very successful Fall 2021 "Growing Green with Pride Day" cleanup event, where there were close to 3,000 volunteers and participants that collected 24.4 tons, or 48,800 pounds, of litter.

The partnership with the State is critical in helping to keep Prince George's County clean and beautiful. "In order to keep our communities clean and aesthetically appealing, we must all work together and do our part, so we are happy about this partnership with the State Highway Administration," said County Executive Angela Alsobrooks. "Together, we will ensure that Prince George's County remains the Crown Jewel of Maryland."

To report litter or illegal signs on County-maintained roadways, please call Prince George's CountyClick 311 at 3-1-1 or 301-883-4748 from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. Monday–Friday. You may also submit your service request online at www.countyclick311.com.

WHAT: Countywide Litter Blitz
WHEN: December 17, 2021, January 14, 2022, January 21, 2022

Friday, December 17, 2021

SHA Laurel: Exit 29 (MD-212)
SHA Upper Marlboro: Exit 13 (Ritchie Marlboro Rd)
County Roads: Ritchie Marlboro Road, Old Gunpowder Rd

Friday, January 14, 2022

SHA Laurel: Exit 25 (U.S. 1)
SHA Upper Marlboro: Exit 9 (MD-337), 11 (MD-4)
County Roads: Cherry Hill Road, Hollywood Gateway, Suitland Road

Friday, January 21, 2022

SHA Laurel: Exit 23 (MD-201)
SHA Upper Marlboro: Exit 3 (MD-210), 4 (MD-414)
County Roads: Old Baltimore Pike, Livingston Road

WHO: Prince George's Department of Public Works and Transportation, MDOT State Highway Administration

—Paulette L. Jones, Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T)

COMMUNITY

Nine Top Things to Do at National Harbor During the Holidays

Celebrate the most wonderful time of the year with a whimsical Conservatory display, special holiday dishes from Voltaggio Brothers Steak House and festive treats at Bellagio Patisserie

By PRESS OFFICER
MGM National Harbor

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. (Dec. 8, 2021)—National Harbor is one of the Washington, D.C. region's top destinations. With more than 12 million visitors a year, the waterfront destination is constantly adding new shops, restaurants and entertainment options to continue to delight guests. The holidays are no exception. The whole property is dressed up with more than two million lights. While Holidays at the Harbor features dozens of things to see and do, here are nine highlights:

1. See the 54-foot tree with its spectacular light show and a dazzling fireworks display following tree lighting on Saturdays. Tree lighting takes place every half hour daily starting at sunset through 9 p.m. (at the Belvedere event space, adjacent to Bond 45, 149 Waterfront St.) On Saturdays through Dec. 18, tree lighting is followed by fireworks at 5:30 p.m.

2. Enjoy a classic holiday movie with Movies on the Potomac every Sunday through Jan. 2 at 2 p.m. on the waterfront screen (150 National Plaza.) Movie schedule is at <https://www.nationalharbor.com/event/s/annual-events/movies-on-the-potomac/>.

3. Gaylord National celebrates the season with its I Love Christmas Movies™ exhibit. Participants walk through iconic scenes from favorite Christmas movies (some are the same movies being shown on the waterfront above,) in a multi-sensory experience. The fun continues with Christmas activities like the new ice bumper cars and snow tubing. Christmas on the Potomac runs through Dec 31.

4. MGM National Harbor brings back its annual tradition of Cirque Dreams Holiday on Dec. 16-19—a family holiday spectacular that will delight all ages. It has been described as “A Broadway-style musical infused with contemporary circus artistry.” Don't miss the MGM Conservatory while you're there with its spectacular holiday design.

5. Grab a drink, make s'mores and catch up with friends at the new (pop-up) Gumdrop Tavern. This fun, creative drink spot (137 Waterfront St.) with a gingerbread theme features cocktails, mocktails, hot chocolate and s'more kits to enjoy indoors or on the outdoor patio with fire pits. Open through Jan. 9 from Thursday to Sunday with hours of 4 to 9 pm. Thursdays and Fridays and 1 to 9 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays.

6. Young children will want to visit National Harbor to see



PHOTO COURTESY MGM NATIONAL HARBOR

Holiday Conservatory display of a 20-foot-tall snowman, with a little girl adding a carrot nose atop a 12-foot wooden ladder.

Santa and take in Storytime. Santa will be at The Capital Wheel on Saturdays and Sundays through Dec. 19 from 2 to 4 p.m. Storytime takes place on Saturdays at 2 p.m. on American Way where Prince George's County Library and Mahogany Books take turns reading to children.

7. Shop and Sip in the Waterfront District at National Harbor with dozens of unique boutiques and brands you know. Select Water-

front District retailers and restaurants will provide free hot chocolate on Saturdays and Sundays from noon to 6 p.m. through Jan. 2. Free cocoa mugs will also be given out by select retailers with a purchase of \$50 or more, while supplies last.

8. Keep up your golf swing over the holidays and relax with friends at Topgolf (6400 Clipper Way) with half-price Tuesdays and a special Holiday Bonus Card-a-thon (buy a \$50

card, get \$10 free.)

9. Mix fun with shopping at MGM National Harbor and Tanger Outlets. Shop Tanger's 85 designer brands while you partake in a holiday scavenger hunt with Elf on the Shelf, a Christmas Tradition.

For more information about all of National Harbor's holiday fun, visit www.NationalHarbor.com/hohoho.

Saving Money Sure Is Sweet

DriveEzMD.com

Former Homeless Veteran Gives Shelter To Others Who Struggle

By GABRIEL PIETRORAZIO
Capital News Service

WASHINGTON (Dec. 8, 2021)—Michael Strong was stranded, barely staying alive on the bustling streets of metropolitan Baltimore for five years.

The South Carolina native and Air Force veteran was homeless because of his addiction to cocaine and alcohol. He even feared for his own life on a few occasions.

“It was one night, actually sleeping on the streets in a doorway, and a guy comes up, and he's got a knife in his hand. He says, ‘Get out of my house.’ That scared me to death,” Strong remembered about the incident in 1995.

Encountering a life-threatening situation was traumatic but not too abnormal for homeless veterans like himself.

“After that, no more staying in doorways,” Strong told Capital News Service. “At the time, I was working at Blue Cross Blue Shield. That's when I started using the buses and the subway. Once you got paid, you'd go get a monthly bus pass so you could just ride. As long as you have a pass, they can't bother you.”

After decades of struggle, he's no longer spending nights sleeping in the streets. Now Strong is helping homeless veterans find shelter at a place a little more than three miles south of the United States Capitol.

For Strong, much of his life has been a circuitous route through achievement, reverses and battles with debilitating addiction.

Upon graduating from Marlboro County's Wallace High School in 1980, Strong enlisted in the U.S. Air Force. He served as a data systems analyst, co-writing one of the first computer programs replacing key-punch cards.



PHOTO CREDIT GABRIEL PIETRORAZIO/CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON—Michael Strong, program manager at D.C. Vets, stands outside the Chesapeake Health and Education Program's transitional housing center on 6th Street in Southeast Washington.

Strong traveled across the globe for eight years until leaving the service after writing a few bad checks as a noncommissioned officer. He was in debt and already had a substance abuse problem. Rather than receiving a court martial, Strong scraped by with an honorable discharge since he had a spotless record otherwise.

While Strong still found success working high-profile jobs while transitioning back into civilian life, he couldn't escape his struggle with a nearly life-long addiction, which he says began after drinking his first alcoholic beverage at the age of eight.

Working as a network administrator for the Baltimore City Health Department, Strong got busted for stealing company computers and flipping them to feed his drug habits.

He received a lenient sentence of unsupervised probation for six months and was ordered to pay restitution for all stolen equipment. But he was fired from his job.

Three months later, on Aug. 22, 2002, he woke up one morn-

ing inside the basement of a crack house in the inner city. That's when he decided to change his life.

At the age of 41, Strong entered the Maryland Center for Veterans Education and Training on High Street in Baltimore, a transitional housing program funded by the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs. With only \$3.47 to his name, he stayed there for 33 months, enduring nearly three years of detoxification and receiving intensive counseling.

Strong's struggles with alcoholism cost him 13 years of close contact with his ex-wife LaDonna, his son DeMarkco and daughter Sade. They were reunited shortly after his release from the facility in 2005.

“I took my daughter and my son to school on the first day, but after that, it was a blur,” Strong recalled. “So, by the time I got back in my kids' lives, my daughter was 16, and my son was 18.”

James Mett, a former sharp-

COMMENTARY

Marc Morial

President and CEO, National Urban League



To Be Equal:

U.S. Democracy at “Critical Risk” Without Filibuster Reform

“If Congress fails to pass the Freedom to Vote Act, American democracy will be at critical risk ... Defenders of democracy in America still have a slim window of opportunity to act. But time is ticking away, and midnight is approaching. To lose our democracy but preserve the filibuster in its current form—in which a minority can block popular legislation without even having to hold the floor—would be a short-sighted blunder that future historians will forever puzzle over.”

—“Statement in Support of the Freedom to Vote Act,” an open letter signed by more than 150 scholars of US democracy

This week, the Biden administration convened

111 world leaders in a virtual meeting dubbed the Summit for Democracy.

Focused on three vital areas—defending democracy against authoritarianism, the fight against corruption, and respect for human rights—the summit will be followed by a “year of action.” In the United States, this “action” is to include new initiatives for supporting free media, combatting corruption, democratic reforms, civic technology, and electoral integrity.

Unless reform of the filibuster is among these initiatives, all the others are likely to fail.

American democracy is at a tipping point, and only filibuster reform can save it.

This is not a partisan observation. Last month,

for the first time, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance added the United States to its list of “backsliding” democracies.

IDEA defines democracy as based on five core attributes: Representative Government, Fundamental Rights, Checks on Government, Impartial Administration and Participatory Engagement.

As long as the filibuster can be used to block legislation to protect voting rights and reverse states’ efforts to overturn and undermine free and fair elections, the United States cannot guarantee democracy.

According to IDEA’s report: “Unlike outright authoritarian regimes or even hybrid regimes, backsliding democracies use parliamentary majorities, obtained by initially free and fair elections and high levels of electoral support, to gradually dismantle checks on government, freedom of expression, a free media and minority rights from within the democratic system.”

Though this process “is often gradual,” the report called Donald Trump’s baseless attack on the 2020 election results a “historic turning point” that “undermined fundamental trust in the electoral process.”

Our nation faces an existential choice between an arcane and outdated procedural Senate rule and democracy itself. The Freedom to Vote Act expands opportunities to vote, thwarts voter suppression, limits partisan gerrymandering, prevents elec-

tion sabotage, and promotes election security. The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act would restore a requirement in the Voting Rights Act that jurisdictions with recent histories of discrimination secure federal “preclearance” before altering their voting laws and allow. The bill the U.S. Department of Justice and other stakeholders to more effectively challenge discriminatory voting laws.

Very simply, American democracy cannot survive if these measures are not enacted, and these measures cannot be enacted as long as the filibuster exists in its current form.

Currently, there are more than 160 exemptions from the filibuster, for issues ranging from foreign policy and defense to judicial confirmations and health care. Unless we create an exemption for voting rights, none of the other exceptions will matter. The extended minority rule that will result from the Senate’s failure will endanger not only democracy but our economic stability and national security.

As International IDEA Secretary General wrote, “This is about more than safeguarding abstract principles or winning geopolitical battles—it is about protecting the dignity of real human beings, which democracy does better than any other political arrangement. Every democratic reversal is not a geopolitical battle lost—it is a constellation of lives that goes dark.”

Chris Van Hollen

United States Senator for Maryland



Van Hollen Announces Launch of John Amara Walters Memorial Internship

The internship, memorializing a former Van Hollen team member, will be available to Maryland students attending Howard University

WASHINGTON (Dec. 8, 2021)—Today, U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) announced the launch of the John Amara Walters Memorial Internship—a new paid internship position within his office available to Maryland students attending Howard University. The internship program honors the life and legacy of John Amara Walters, a member of the Senator’s staff who died on October 2, 2021 at the age of 29 from complications related to sickle cell disease.

“John Amara was a beloved and dedicated member of the Van Hollen family. He had been a part of our team since my days in the House of Representatives, starting as an intern and serving in a number of roles, but most recently as a Legislative Aide in my Senate office. John was a proud graduate of Howard University, a dedicated public servant, and

a loyal friend, with a laugh that filled the room. I will always remember John for the twinkle in his eye, his enthusiasm for all he did, and his brilliance. To honor John’s memory, I’m proud to launch this internship to ensure Maryland students of his alma mater have the opportunity to intern with our office like he did. As we continue to grieve the loss of John, I hope this internship opportunity will carry on his legacy of a purposeful life dedicated to pursuing positive change for our community and country,” said Senator Van Hollen.

“My family and I are truly grateful for Senator Van Hollen honoring John Amara and his determination to make a difference as a public servant,” said Kimberley H. Davis Walters, John Amara’s mother. “While we are saddened by his untimely passing, we are encouraged that other leading Howard Uni-

versity students will have the opportunity to learn from and continue his legacy. A Luta Continua (the Struggle Continues)!”

“John Amara Walters was and continues to be a truly inspiring individual who deserves to be recognized and remembered,” said Howard University President Wayne A. I. Frederick. “Like John, I am a sickle cell warrior, and I understand the debilitating effects of the disease and the social stigma associated with it. John always defied expectations. He never used his condition as an excuse to lower his ambitions. On the contrary, he was a true torchbearer of Howard University’s mission, striving for excellence in his pursuit of truth and service. I am deeply appreciative of Senator Van Hollen’s efforts to memorialize John by creating an internship for Howard students in his name. While John was taken from us far too soon, his legacy and impact are only beginning to be realized.”

“This is a heartwarming tribute to my dear nephew, John Amara. As a graduate of Howard University myself, I am over-joyed at Senator Van Hollen’s commitment to providing opportunities for the next generation of Howard leaders,” said Jacqueline Sales Davis, John Amara’s aunt. “We are forever grateful!”

John graduated magna cum laude from Howard University in 2015 with a major in Psychology and a minor in Political Science. While a student at Howard, John served as an intern for then-Congressman Van Hollen. He joined the staff in the House of Representatives following his graduation and moved

to the Senate following the Senator’s swearing-in on January 3, 2017.

As a member of the Senator’s staff, John directed the correspondence program and was a subject matter expert for the Senator on the issues of judicial nominations, criminal justice reform, gun safety, telecommunications and digital inclusion and equity, election security, consumer protection and safety, labor, postal issues, and federal employees. He was a devoted member of our office family who was always eager to serve and willing to give.

John passed away on October 2, 2021 in his mother’s arms at MedStar Washington Hospital Center in Washington, D.C. He lived every moment to the fullest—and though his life on this earth was short in years, it was long in the empathy, in the joy, and in the love he shared with all of us. Through this internship, we honor John’s life and his commitment to public service.

To be eligible for the John Amara Walters Memorial Internship, a student must be a resident of Maryland, attend Howard University, and be a psychology or political science major or minor. Students must be able to work a minimum of 20 hours/week in the Senator’s Capitol Hill or state offices.

John Amara Walters Memorial Internship Spring 2022 Internship Session: January 24, 2022–May 13, 2022

John Amara Walters Memorial Internship Spring 2022 Application—Deadline: January 5, 2022 at 11:59 p.m.

Anthony Brown

Maryland Congressional District 4



Brown, Kelly Introduce Legislation To Improve VA Flexibility for Veteran Homeowners

The VA Home Loan Grace Act would account for veterans’ evolving housing needs and financial wellbeing

WASHINGTON (Dec. 8, 2021) —Congressman Anthony G. Brown (MD-04) and Congressman Trent Kelly (MS-01) introduced the VA Home Loan GRACE Act of 2021, H.R.6124, to ensure flexibility for veteran owners utilizing the Veterans’ Affairs (VA) Home Loan program. Congressman Tim Ryan (OH-13) is an original cosponsor.

The VA Home Loan GRACE Act would ensure that the VA home loan program does not unintentionally prevent beneficiaries from utilizing their full entitled benefit while also providing the flexibility needed to meet evolving housing needs throughout their lives.

“We make a sacred promise to look after our veterans when they return home. A core part of that commitment

is ensuring that they and their families can achieve the American dream of owning a home, and build a strong financial future,” said Congressman Brown, a 30-year Army veteran. “Ensuring our veterans have the flexibility they need with their earned and well-deserved benefits is critical to supporting those who served and allowing veterans to make the best decisions for themselves and their loved ones.”

“Our Veterans have earned and deserve the best benefits that our great Nation can provide,” said Rep. Kelly. “Streamlining this process will help them to acquire a home and improve quality of life for Veterans and their families.”

The VA Home Loan GRACE Act would: Streamline and simplify

the VA Home Loan benefit structure to allow veterans with remaining entitlement the ability to use that entitlement on homes that cost less than \$144,000.

Expand the “bonus” entitlement from 25% of the Freddie Mac conforming loan limit to 50%, to address disparities in benefit created by loan location and when loan was taken out.

Safeguard the VA Home Loan program against abuse by empowering the VA to take action against those whom knowingly and materially make false certification, increasing the solvency of the program.

The legislation is endorsed by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, The American Legion, and Blinded Veterans Association (BVA).

Council Member Derrick L. Davis Receives Elizabeth and David Scull Metropolitan Public Service Award

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Presents Davis with Highest Honor

By ANGELA J. ROUSON
Prince George’s County Council Media

Prince George’s County Council Member Derrick Leon Davis (D-District 6) was presented with the Elizabeth and David Scull Metropolitan Public Service Award by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG), during its Annual Membership Meeting and Awards Luncheon on Wednesday, December 8, 2021.

Council Member Davis was honored for his regional efforts to support transit-oriented communities. During his tenure as COG Board Chair in 2020, Council Member Davis prioritized planning efforts related to transit-oriented communities and led the adoption of a COG Board resolution establishing equity as a fundamental COG value.

In 2021, Council Member Davis co-chaired a COG Task Force that produced unanimous regional support and advocacy for District of Columbia statehood. In previous years, he was among the leaders of COG’s Metro Strategy Group, which helped forge consensus on the transit system’s capital needs and supported the push for a dedicated funding agreement, and he Co-Chaired the COG Housing Strategy Group with Montgomery County Council Member Nancy Navarro that developed regional housing production and affordability targets.

Council Member Davis was grateful to be the recipient of the 2021 Elizabeth and David Scull Metropolitan Public Service Award, COG’s highest honor. “As the sun begins to set on my time of service with the Prince George’s County Council, it is truly an honor to receive this prestigious award. To improve the communities of Prince George’s County, and our region, have been my long-held passions, and this spurs me to keep that work going strong. I sincerely thank COG Board Chairman Robert White, Vice Chair Christian Dorsey and all of COG’s leadership and affiliates for this recognition. I thank my Council

colleagues and torchbearers, Chair Calvin Hawkins and Vice Chair Sydney Harrison, for accepting the Scull Award on my behalf.”

In a news release dated December 8, 2021, COG Board Vice Chair and Arlington County Board Member Christian Dorsey, who presented Davis with the award stated, “Derrick Davis has his fingerprints over much of what the COG Board has accomplished over the last 5 years. Through his leadership in chairing initiatives and the Board, his infectious boosterism of our region, and willingness to ‘walk the walk’ in seeking consensus, he has epitomized the spirit of the Scull Metropolitan Public Service Award.”

The Prince George’s Post

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BUSINESS AND FINANCE

Sheppard Pratt Receives \$5 Million Grant From SAMHSA

Grant will fund essential community mental health programs in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties

By PRESS OFFICER
Sheppard Pratt

BALTIMORE (Dec. 2, 2021)—Sheppard Pratt today announced that it was selected to receive a \$5 million grant from the Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to support and restore behavioral health services in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties that were impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Funding will support telehealth and in-person services as well as patient and community engagement in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties. Specifically, the grant enables Sheppard Pratt to restore its same-day access services, expand telehealth services to include on-site access for video visits using FSI equipment and Zoom for clients to improve virtual engagement, as well as restore case management services. The grant is projected to serve 1,800 individuals in the first year of funding and 2,300 in the second. Funds will also be allocated toward continuing education for staff on trauma-informed care and cultural competence, as well as to provide support services to manage stress related to client care and the pandemic.

"The pandemic presented a number of challenges in delivery of care for our community. This grant provides essential funding to help us restore our same day access services as well as upgrade the technology we use to connect with clients virtually," says Jeff Richardson, LCSW-C, MBA, vice president and COO of Sheppard Pratt Community Services.

"Sheppard Pratt is pleased to receive this grant so that we can continue to provide essential services to our clients," says Harsh K. Trivedi, MD, MBA, president and CEO of Sheppard Pratt. "Community-based behavioral health programs are society's safety net to help individuals with mental illness access the essential care they need."

Sheppard Pratt is the largest private, nonprofit provider of mental health, substance use, developmental disability, special education, and social services in the country. A nationwide resource, Sheppard Pratt provides services across a comprehensive continuum of care, spanning both hospital- and community-based resources. Since its founding in 1853, Sheppard Pratt has been innovating the field through research, best practice implementation, and a focus on improving the quality of mental health care on a global level.

SBA Administrator Announces Plans to Elevate the Office of Women's Business Ownership

The proposed change reflects the importance of women entrepreneurs held by the Biden-Harris Administration and SBA.

By JACK SPIRAKES, MPA
U.S. Small Business Administration

WASHINGTON (Dec. 7, 2021)—Today, U.S. Small Business Administration Administrator Isabella Casillas Guzman announced that the SBA intends to elevate its Office of Women's Business Ownership (OWBO) to directly report to the Office of the Administrator. Under Administrator Guzman, the SBA has expanded the number of Women's Business Centers (WBCs) to a record 140 locations nationwide. These WBCs offer a network of extensive on-the-ground resources that include free to low-cost counseling, training, business development technical assistance and are dedicated to assisting women entrepreneurs to start, grow, and expand their enterprises.

"In 1972, there were a little over 400,000 women-owned businesses in the United States. Today, there are over 12 million proving that women entrepreneurs have become the fastest growing and one of the most impactful segments of the business community," said Administrator Guzman. "While there has been historic progress in women's entrepreneurship, significant disparities still persist, impacting women entrepreneurs' access to resources and opportunity, especially in the face of the economic challenges posed by COVID. That is why I am proud to advance the mission of the Office of Women's Business Ownership and reaffirm our commitment to America's women-owned small businesses."

"Female entrepreneurs are integral to

the American economy, starting new businesses at high rates and employing millions. But COVID dealt a severe blow to women-owned businesses, and we can't afford to leave them behind," said Rep. Nydia M. Velázquez (D-NY), Chairwoman of the House Small Business Committee. "I'm pleased to see the Biden-Harris Administration prioritizing driving recovery for these small firms and addressing longstanding inequities for women entrepreneurs. I look forward to continuing to work with Administrator Guzman to eliminate obstacles for women in the small business sector and ensure they are in a position to thrive."

As the fastest-growing entrepreneurial segment in the country, the high growth in entrepreneurship amongst multicultural women is particularly noteworthy. Data from the SBA's Office of Advocacy found that between 2014 and 2016, the number of employer firms owned by women grew six percent, twice the growth rate of employer firms owned by men. This exponential growth was mainly driven by an increase in employer businesses owned by minority women, which grew 14 percent in that time.

"It is an honor to lead OWBO during this historic time of entrepreneurial growth for women, and when supporting them through recovery and ensuring that women small business owners are positioned for the future is so imperative. I look forward to working directly with Administrator Guzman to keep the concerns of women, especially those from underserved and disadvantaged communities, at the forefront

of SBA's executive leadership, initiatives, and programming, and I am grateful for her championship of this fast-growing and critical segment of American small businesses," said Natalie Madeira Cofield, Assistant Administrator, Office of Women's Business Ownership, U.S. Small Business Administration.

This announcement comes after the release of the first-ever National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality commissioned by the White House outlining objectives and priorities for obtaining equity for women.

Women entrepreneurs play a key role in our society and economy. Yet, they remain underrepresented in a myriad of key factors, including access to capital, contracts, and connections. Led by OWBO, the SBA will lead the way in assisting women-owned businesses in leveraging government resources—including recently announced opportunities through an equitable federal procurement strategy, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and the Build Back Better Act—to level the playing field.

Currently, the OWBO is an organizational component of the Office of Entrepreneurial Development. The SBA emphasizes that the reorganization is still in the planning stages and likely will not be finalized until the close of fiscal year 2022; however, Ms. Madeira Cofield will begin reporting to Administrator Guzman effective immediately. As legislated by Congress, Ms. Madeira Cofield's title will remain unchanged.

Social Security Matters

Ask Rusty:

How Do I Apply for Social Security Benefits?

By RUSSELL GLOOR, AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor
Association of Mature American Citizens

Dear Rusty: I would like some advice concerning Social Security. In January I will be 62.5 years old. I was laid off two years ago and have not had a steady income since (though I still have bills to pay). I also did not qualify for unemployment. Therefore, what little I had for "retirement" is now gone. For this reason, I have been seriously considering applying for Social Security as soon as I'm able. I remember reading something that said I should begin the "paperwork" three months ahead of time. I'd like to begin that process, but don't know where to begin. Could you guide me to the right place?
Signed: Ready to Claim Benefits

Dear Ready to Claim: Sorry to hear of your loss of employment and your current financial struggle, but the Social Security benefits you earned from a lifetime of working are there for you. Here's what you need to know about applying for Social Security:

Since you are already 62 years of age, you can apply for your Social Security at any time now. The process is fairly simple, especially if you apply online, which you can do at www.ssa.gov. Just click on the "Retirement" icon and you'll see a link to the online application. You simply fill out the application, save it if you need more time to work on it, and later when you're done submit it online to Social Security. Before you do that, however, you'll need to create your personal "my Social Security" online account, which is easy to do at www.ssa.gov/myaccount. Once you have your online account set up you can fill out and submit the online application. Of course, you can also apply via telephone by calling either the national Social Security service center at 1-800-772-1213 or your local Social Security office to make an appointment to apply but applying online at www.ssa.gov is by far the most efficient way.

You can apply for your SS benefits up to 4 months before the month you wish your payments to start. On the application you will tell them which month you want your benefits to begin so you can apply before you want to start benefits. Since you're applying before your full retirement age of 66 years and 10 months, there are a couple of things to keep in mind:

- By claiming at age 62 ½ your benefit amount will be permanently reduced by about 29%. You only get your full benefits if you wait to claim until your full retirement age (FRA) which for you is 66 years and 10 months; claiming any earlier means a permanently reduced benefit.

- If you claim before your FRA and you return to work, you'll be subject to an "earnings test" which limits how much you can earn from working while collecting early SS benefits. The 2022 earnings limit is \$19,560 and if that is exceeded SS will take back \$1 for every \$2 you are over the limit (half of what you exceed the limit by). The earnings limit will apply until you reach your full retirement age, and the allowable earnings are more in the year you reach FRA.

Applying online for Social Security benefits is a reasonably easy process, and if you have even moderate computer skills you shouldn't be intimidated by the thought. But if you are, simply call Social Security and request an appointment to apply. They will walk you through the application process.

The 2.4 million member Association of Mature American Citizens [AMAC] www.amac.us is a vibrant, vital senior advocacy organization that takes its marching orders from its members. AMAC Action is a non-profit, non-partisan organization representing the membership in our nation's capital and in local Congressional Districts throughout the country. And the AMAC Foundation (www.AMACFoundation.org) is the Association's non-profit organization, dedicated to supporting and educating America's Seniors. Together, we act and speak on the Association members' behalf, protecting their interests and offering a practical insight on how to best solve the problems they face today. Live long and make a difference by joining us today at www.amac.us/join-amac. This article is intended for information purposes only and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the AMAC Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association (NSSA). NSSA and the AMAC Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. To submit a question, visit our website (amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory) or email us at ssadviser@amacfoundation.org.

Nonprofits from A1

Funding has been inaccessible in more ways than that, Turner-Allen explained.

Some applications require the same long application no matter how much money is applied for, increasing the administrative burden on smaller nonprofits, she said—those without the resources to complete an application are sometimes unable to apply for more resources.

Others, like that for an operating assistance grant through the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, first announced aid would be distributed in August, but she said as of Dec. 7, nearly halfway through the fiscal year, money still hadn't been doled out.

Carol Gilbert, assistant secretary for Neighborhood Revitalization in the state housing department whose office manages the grant, said in a phone call Tuesday that the awards are in the final stages of review and likely will be announced by the end of the calendar year.

"I'm not saying they're not overwhelmed," Turner-Allen said of grant-managing agencies. "I am saying that if a nonprofit operated in the same way the government is allowed to, we would be shut down."

There's an expectation that nonprofits can simply shoulder financial burdens, she said, continuing to do more with less in a crisis, the full mental strain of which is yet unknown.

Turner-Allen compared resilience versus value to the care of a rugged pick-up truck versus an antique car. The truck is driven through mud and rocky roads, taking dings and scrapes because it's perceived it can. The antique car, however, is protected, kept under cover and wiped down.

"Pressure bursts pipes. Get out of the narrative that we're resilient, and start valuing Black and brown leadership."

Turner-Allen spoke at a "Putting People First" press conference Dec. 1 announcing a letter to state administrators requesting that \$1 billion of surplus funds be reallocated to aiding nonprofits.

"The stress and strain is unbearable, and it is untenable," she said at the conference, hosted by Maryland Nonprofits.

Over 215 organizations and individuals have signed the letter, which has been submitted to Gov. Larry Hogan, Comptroller Peter Franchot, outgoing Treasurer Nancy Kopp, and Senate President Bill Ferguson, among others.

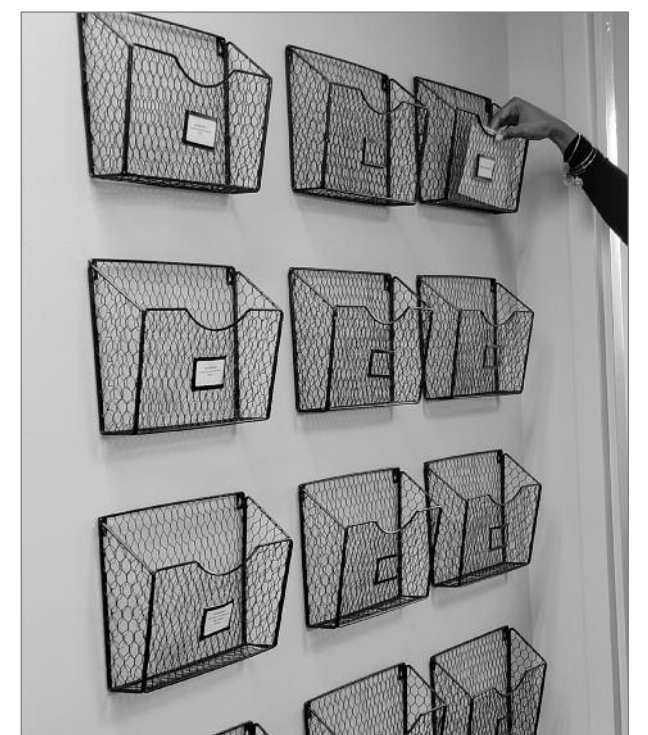


PHOTO COURTESY NONPROFIT PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

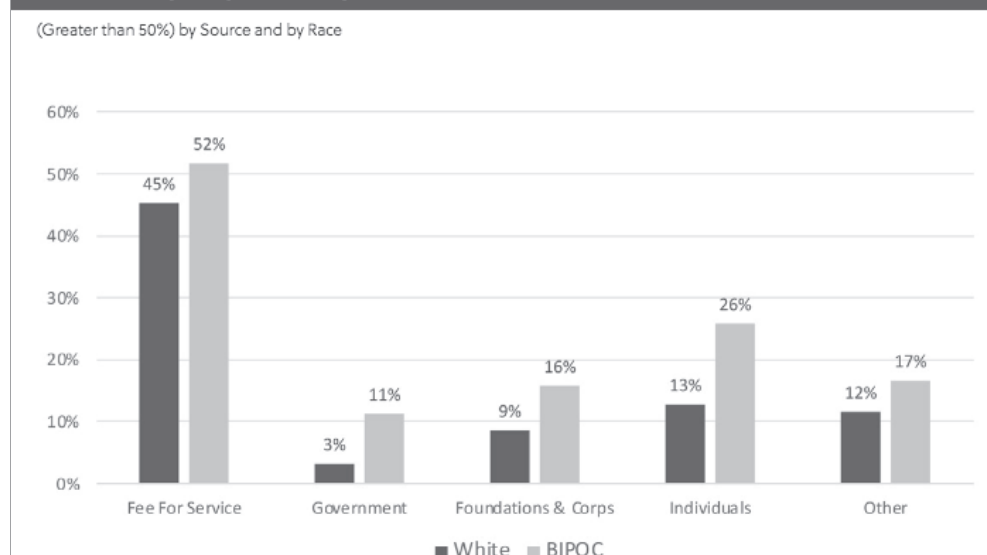
Mailboxes like those available at Nonprofit Prince George's County's resource center in Bowie can help nonprofits list a physical address on grant applications, the organization's executive director, Tiffany Turner-Allen, said.

The letter lists four improvements for grant allocation processes: adequate staffing for public grant and contracting agencies; delegating administration to nonprofit intermediaries; simplified applications and reports; and timely payments.

The letter also lists overall priorities moving forward, including emphasizing basic human need services, like bilingual behavioral health services and food and rental assistance, as well as increasing pay to essential human service workers, who are likely to be women, minorities and sole breadwinners.

The letter also requests emphasis on funding vocational schools and apprenticeships to help skilled workers enter the workforce to support a post-pandemic economy.

CHART 20: REVENUE CHANGES – PERCENT OF ORGANIZATIONS REPORTING CATASTROPHIC DECLINES IN REVENUE



Nonprofits led by people of color were more likely to experience greater than 50% losses in every revenue stream than white-led nonprofits, according to Maryland Nonprofits' COVID-19 Pandemic and Racial Equity Survey, released Dec. 1, 2021.

A Sweet, Simple Way to Make Your Holiday Healthier

FAMILY FEATURES

With holiday menus in full swing, many Americans aim to add healthier dishes and ingredients to their seasonal tables but are hesitant to compromise on tried-and-true favorites. Whether you're looking to reduce the fat or added sugar content of a recipe or add more plants to your table, raisins are a healthy, natural option for topping or adding to your favorite dishes.

Raisins fit seamlessly into many family-friendly recipes, like traditional oatmeal cookies, stuffing, casseroles and sweet breads. They also make for easy salad, oatmeal and yogurt toppers, provide a naturally sweet fruit option on charcuterie boards and act as a great standalone holiday snack. Raisins are free of added sugars and contribute micronutrients to your diet, such as iron, potassium and fiber.

Many health-conscious consumers are interested in wholesome foods and products with less ingredients and natural sugars, like those that occur naturally in fruits, vegetables, grains and dairy products. Added sugars, however, refer to any sugars or caloric sweeteners that are added to foods during processing or preparation. The consumption of excessive added sugars may be associated with health consequences, such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, insulin resistance, fatty liver, dental caries and more, according to research published by the National Library of Medicine.

The 2020-2025 U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends that added sugars comprise no more than 10% of the overall diet for adults and children ages 2 and older.

"Aiming to consume regular, balanced meals throughout the day with adequate fiber is especially important around the holidays," said registered dietitian Sarah Schlichter. "This helps keep blood sugar and energy levels balanced and consistent. We know limiting sugars in our diets can be beneficial to health and we can do this by choosing foods that offer less added sugars throughout the day."

Swapping dried cranberries, which contain 27 grams of added sugars per 1/4-cup serving, for nutrient-dense raisins, which contain 0 grams of added sugars per 1/4-cup serving, is an easy substitution that can reduce overall sugar intake without compromising flavor or texture.



Photos courtesy of Getty Images



Understanding Natural Sugars vs. Added Sugars

Nutrition labels haven't always distinguished between natural and added sugars, Schlichter said, but instead lumped them together under "total sugars." However, the updated Food and Drug Administration's Nutrition Facts label, which is in the transition stage, makes this easily discernible by clearly outlining how much of the total sugar content comes from added sugars.

"One key difference between natural and added sugars is natural sugars usually complement other nutrients organically found in a food or fruit, such as fiber, potassium, iron, vitamin C or antioxidants, all of which confer several health benefits," Schlichter said. "These complementary nutrients may also slow the rate of digestion, keeping blood sugar more stable. Conversely, added sugars are added during processing and aren't adding any nutrients to the product."

To put this in perspective, 1/4 cup of dried sweetened cranberries contains 29 grams of sugar. Of those 29 grams of sugar, 27 grams are added sugars, meaning that most of the sugar is not found naturally in dried cranberries. While a 1/4-cup serving of raisins also contains 29 grams of sugar, the difference is that all 29 grams are naturally found in raisins

and none are added. Raisins also naturally offer potassium, iron and fiber.

Making the Case for Raisins

To reduce added and total sugars, many products are formulated using artificial sweeteners, such as sucralose, aspartame or other no-calorie sweeteners. No-calorie sweeteners are not free from health risks, however, and have been linked to weight gain, obesity, changes to the microbiome, decreased satiety and altered blood sugar levels, according to research published by the National Library of Medicine.

Additionally, 50% less sugar dried cranberries also contain unnecessary ingredients such as soluble corn fiber, table sugar, glycerin and sucralose.

These products are not any healthier, Schlichter said, noting there is still much unknown about artificial sweeteners and how they impact hormones, satiety and gut health. Because raisins have no added sugars, no artificial flavors and no unnecessary ingredients, Schlichter recommends utilizing them as an alternative this holiday season.

Find more information at sunmaid.com.

'Tis the Holiday Baking Season

FAMILY FEATURES

One of the best parts of the holidays is the aromas and flavors of the season, from walnuts and cinnamon to peppermint and nutmeg. Sweet treats and mouthwatering desserts can bring family and friends around the table to celebrate the season together, one bite at a time.

During your festive gatherings this year, choose walnuts as the star baking ingredient. As many home cooks turn to wholesome ingredients that offer health benefits this holiday baking season, California walnuts make for a perfect addition to almost any dish and are an excellent source of omega-3 ALA (2.5g/oz). With a buttery flavor that elevates traditional and modern recipes, home bakers can do more with walnuts in the kitchen.

Part pumpkin, part cheesecake, this Walnut Pumpkin Cream Cheese Tart spices up the classic pumpkin pie recipe. Top it, or other favorite desserts, with light and airy Vanilla Walnut Whipped Cream flavored with honey and vanilla to complement festive dishes.

This holiday season, pick up a bag of walnuts for all your baking needs. To discover more festive dessert ideas, visit walnuts.org.

Vanilla Walnut Whipped Cream

Total time: 8 minutes
Servings: 14

- 2 1/2 cups California walnuts, divided
- 1 cup water
- 2 tablespoons powdered sugar
- 1-2 teaspoons honey, divided
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 pinch salt

In blender, puree 2 cups walnuts and water 2 minutes, or until light and fluffy.

Add powdered sugar, 1 teaspoon honey, vanilla extract and salt; blend 30 seconds. Add remaining honey if sweeter taste is desired.

To achieve thicker whipped cream, add remaining walnuts and puree until light and fluffy.

Store tightly covered in refrigerator until ready to use.



Vanilla Walnut Whipped Cream



Walnut Pumpkin Cream Cheese Tart

Walnut Pumpkin Cream Cheese Tart

Total time: 2 hours, 30 minutes
Servings: 12

Sweet Tart Crust:

- 1 1/4 cups flour
- 1/3 cup California walnuts, finely chopped
- 1/3 cup powdered sugar
- 1/3 cup salted butter, softened
- 1 large egg
- nonstick cooking spray

Filling:

- 1 can (15 ounces) pumpkin
- 4 ounces low-fat cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 cup brown sugar, packed
- 2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 egg, plus 1 egg yolk
- 1/2 cup California walnuts, coarsely chopped

whipped cream, for serving (optional)

To make sweet tart crust: In medium bowl, stir flour, walnuts and powdered sugar. Stir in butter and egg. Using fork, stir well until soft dough forms. Gather into ball and wrap tightly.

Refrigerate at least 1 hour, or until dough is easy to handle. Preheat oven to 350 F and coat 9-inch tart pan with removable bottom with nonstick cooking spray.

Roll pastry dough on lightly floured board and roll into 11-inch circle. Press dough into bottom and sides of prepared pan and poke with fork on bottom and sides. Bake 20 minutes.

To make filling: In medium bowl, whisk pumpkin and cream cheese until smooth. Add brown sugar, pumpkin pie spice, vanilla extract, egg and egg yolk, beating until incorporated.

Pour into prepared crust and top with walnuts. Bake 40 minutes, or until filling is set when pan is gently tapped.

Remove from oven and let cool. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

Serve each slice with dollop of whipped cream, if desired.

