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GRAPHIC COURTESY PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY MEMORIAL LIBRARY SYSTEM

County Library Celebrates Black History Month With a Variety of Engaging Programs for All Ages

By PRESS OFFICER
Prince George's County Memorial Library System

LARGO, Md. (Feb. 2, 2026)—The Prince George's County Memorial Library System (PGCMLS) is proud to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Black History Month, by hosting more than 70 engaging library programs throughout the month of February that celebrate Black culture, heritage, and history.

The Library's Black History Month programming line-up will feature a "100th Birthday Tribute" to Miles Davis and John Coltrane presented by trumpeter and jazz historian Muneer Nasser; an exciting jump rope showcase presented by the Greenbelt SITY Stars; the return of the family-favorite "Heroes of Black History Puppet Show," presented by Ebony Sonshine Puppets; and a series of special children's storytimes with local authors Ada Ari ("The Spider's Thin Legs," "The Turtle's Cracked Shell") and Allen R. Wells ("Yvonne Clark and Her Engineering Spark," "Danté Plays His Blues").

Alongside these highlights, branch libraries across the system will be hosting specially themed storytimes, craft programs, book discussions, and film screenings for customers of all ages.

"The 100th anniversary of Black History Month, which began as Negro History Week, is truly a milestone," says Dr. Mark Winston, CEO of the Prince George's County Memorial Library System. "We are very pleased to provide such a robust collection of program offerings for our customers throughout Prince George's County as we highlight so many aspects of the richness of Black history and culture."

The Library also invites customers to celebrate Black History Month with a visit to the Sojourner Truth Room at the Oxon Hill Branch Library, where PGCMLS hosts a large multimedia collection dedicated to African American history, both in Prince George's County and beyond. Additionally, customers are encouraged to

See BLACK HISTORY MONTH Page A3

Prince George's County Allows Legal Ownership and Adoption of Pit Bull-Terriers Under a New Law

Registration, licensing, \$25 permit, and training are required

By PRESS OFFICER
Department of the Environment

LARGO, Md. (Feb. 1, 2026)—Prince George's County now allows pit bull-type terriers to be legally owned and adopted following the passage of County Bill CB-97-2025, provided all registration and ownership requirements are met.

Under the new law, individuals who own or wish to adopt pit bull-type terriers must comply with specific County requirements designed to promote responsible pet ownership and public safety. These requirements include registration with the County, obtaining the appropriate County license and permit, and completing mandatory training.

The permit fee is \$25, in addition to the standard County license fee, which applies to all dog breeds. While licensing fees remain the same, dogs will be identified by breed during registration.

Mandatory training is required for individuals who own or wish to adopt pit bull-type terriers. Owners or dogs identified as needing additional support or training will be addressed on a case-by-case basis, including those involving potentially dangerous or high-risk dogs.

"This legislation allows the County to move forward with a balanced approach that supports responsible pet ownership while maintaining safeguards for residents, pets, and the community," said David Fisher, Associate Director of the Animal Services Division.

Residents are reminded that all dogs in Prince George's County must continue to comply with applicable animal control laws, including leash requirements, licensing, and vaccination standards.

For more information about registration, licensing, training requirements, or to determine eligibility, residents may visit environment.mypgc.us/pitbulls.



PHOTO COURTESY MGM NATIONAL HARBOR

MGM National Harbor's iconic Conservatory is transformed for the Year of the Horse into an immersive exhibit experience.

debut in The District at MGM National Harbor as a limited-time, cocktail pop-up. Transformed into a charming, Chinese tea house, the Lounge offers signature Hennessy cocktails, immersive décor including a wishing tree, interactive games, photo ops, and more to welcome the new year. This celebratory experience continues Fridays and Satur-

days until February 28, and will also be open for the MGM National Harbor Lunar New Year celebration on Sunday, February 15.

See YEAR OF THE HORSE Page A3

MGM National Harbor Celebrates Bold Arrival of the Year of the Horse With Month-Long Celebration

Festive offerings include a majestic Conservatory display, all-new Lunar Lounge, traditional dragon and lion dances, special culinary menus, and Mystic Nights V

By PRESS OFFICER
MGM National Harbor

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. (Feb. 2, 2026)—MGM National Harbor invites guests to charge into the Year of the Horse with month-long holiday festivities, a spectacular Conservatory display, authentic culinary specialties with Lunar New Year specials, and high-energy celebrations. Symbolizing strength, freedom, and forward momentum, the Horse sets the tone for 2026, and MGM National Harbor is the ultimate destination to ring in Lunar New Year in style.

The Conservatory

MGM National Harbor's iconic Conservatory is transformed for the Year of the Horse into an immersive exhibit experience. Inspired by the elegance and vitality of the Horse, this year's display invites guests to explore large-scale botanical installations and traditional Lunar New Year designs across three beds.

Highlights of elements inspired by Lunar New Year symbolism include:

- Eight galloping horses stretch across 32-feet in celebration of the Year of the Horse, ushering in prosperity and bold forward momentum
- Golden bamboo forest stretching to 25-feet in height, symbolizing a flourishing, lucky year ahead
- A 15-foot illuminated red lantern that wards off bad luck and brightens a path for prosperity and good fortune
- A towering money tree adorned with oversized gold I-Ching coins and iglots
- 8-foot lanterns accented with firecrackers to scare away negative spirits and to welcome the new year with energy and vitality
- Koi fish and a jade rock fountain, symbolizing abundance, resilience, and harmony

Lunar Lounge by Hennessy

Beginning on Friday, February 6, from 5–10 p.m., the all-new Lunar Lounge by Hennessy will

concerns directly and securely without relying on peers to translate.

"Pocketalk allows our staff to communicate with respect and privacy," said Dr. Jennifer Love, Director of Language Access. "It is a productivity partner that helps our staff reclaim time and focus on what they do best: supporting our students".

PGCPS was the first large district in Maryland to launch a comprehensive AI Framework and Board policy, ensuring that tools used for language access also meet the highest standards for student privacy and security.

For more details, visit the Pocketalk Impact Awards webpage (<https://pocketalk.com/newsroom/pocketalk-announces-2025-impact-award-winners-spotlighting-breakthroughs-in-language-access>) and look for the Education Changemaker Award link.

PGCPS Honored as National 'Education Changemaker' for Removing Language Barriers Through AI-Driven Innovation

By PRESS OFFICER
Prince George's County Public Schools

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (Feb. 2, 2026)—Following the 2026 State of the Schools address where Interim Superintendent Dr. Shawn Joseph declared a new "acceleration imperative" for the district, Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) has been named a national leader in educational equity. The district is the recipient of Pocketalk's Education Changemaker Award, recognized for its pioneering use of secure translation technology to support its diverse student body.

The recognition comes as PGCPS centers AI Literacy as one of five "Strategic Accelerants" designed to move the district from "variance to velocity". Serving more than 131,000 students who represent 116 countries and speak 123 languages, PGCPS is leveraging AI-powered tools like Pocketalk to ensure language is never a barrier to care, connection, or academic achievement.

"In our schools, language should never be a barrier to safety, dignity, or belonging," said Interim Superintendent Dr. Shawn Joseph. "Our work is about moving outcomes, not just maintaining systems, and this award reflects our com-

mitment to disrupting cycles of inequity. By providing real-time, private translation, we are ensuring that every family feels seen, heard, and valued from the moment they enter our buildings."

The district's language access strategy is a core component of its "Five Big Rocks," specifically the goal of improving outcomes for multilingual learners. Implementation began in August 2024 with school nurses to support urgent health communication and has since expanded to front offices, counseling teams, and classrooms. Today, every school nurse is equipped with a Pocketalk device, allowing students to communicate sensitive health

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Brandywine-Aquasco

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- M-NCPPC Programs

Independence Now Announces FashionAble: Couture for a Cause Community, Page A3

Prince George's County Manufacturers Awarded State Funding to Modernize Operations Through Maryland Manufacturing 4.0 Program

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Local Warming: Climate Change In Maryland Climate Action Moves Forward Despite Trump's Policy Rollbacks. Will it Be Enough?

Cook and Use Candles With Caution on Valentine's Day Environment Page A5

TOWNS and NEIGHBORS

Brandywine-Aquasco by Audrey Johnson 301-922-5384

BULLDOG BOOSTER CLUB

We are gearing up for another exciting season, and we want you on the team. By joining the Bulldog Booster Club, you will help champion our #Bowie Bold Student Athletes and keep Bulldog Pride alive all year long. Whether you are cheering from the sidelines or supporting from afar, your membership makes a difference. Join the club today. BULLDOG BOOSTER CLUB at Bowie State University

Calling all former BSU Student-Athletes where are they now? Are you a former Bulldog student-athlete? If so, the Department of Athletics wants to reconnect with you: Please complete the form online to stay in touch and receive updated information from the Department of Athletics. Once a Bulldog, always a Bulldog. STAY CONNECTED. Website: bsubulldogs.com, Facebook: @BSUBulldogs, Twitter BSU Sports Info, Instagram: @BowieStateBulldogs.

CELEBRATING GENERATIONS

Join us for a family fun event while we showcase various styles. Saturday, February 21, 2026 from 2-4:30 p.m. at St. Philip's Episcopal Church. African Attire, The Event, Cruise Casual, The St. Philip's Men, White Party, Sundays Best. Light refreshments and door prizes. Proceeds benefit St. Philip's Church address is 13801 Baden Westwood Road, Brandywine, Maryland 20613. Ticket Contacts: Mrs. Butler 301-520-3145, Mrs. Hall 703-201-3863, Mrs. Somerville 240-682-3657.

ART ENCOUNTER & CREATION MUSEUM

The Outreach Ministry of Christ United Methodist in Aquasco, Maryland has planned a bus trip to Ark Encounter & Creation Museum, Williamstown and Pittsburgh, KY. August 4-7, 2026. We will also visit the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in downtown Cincinnati, OH. Seats are still available. Double Occupancy \$835 per person, Single Occupancy \$1,104 per person. Package includes 3 nights lodging, 3 breakfasts, 3 dinners including a Riverboat Dinner Cruise & Dinner with entertainment, admission to the Creation Museum, admission to the Ark Encounter, National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, guided tour of Cincinnati, souvenir gift, luggage handling, taxes & meal gratuities, motorcoach transportation.

The bus will depart from Christ United Methodist Church, 22919 Christ Church Road, Aquasco, Maryland the morning of August 4, 2026. The time of departure will be given later.

For information and reservations contact: Grace Bryant, Rudell Jones (301) 579-2014, Phyllis Slater (301) 653-7345. Cancellation insurance is available and highly recommended.

If you would like to travel with our outreach Ministry, a deposit of \$75.00 is now due to reserve your seat. The cost of the trip must be paid in full by May 3, 2026. All payments will be NON-REFUNDABLE. Checks should be made payable to Christ UM Church c/o Outreach Ministry

and mailed to 22919 Christ Church Road, Aquasco, MD 20608. Payments can also be made using Cash App: \$Servalikechrist and Zelle: christumcaquasco@gmail.com Memo: Art Encounter Trip. Suggestion for Ark Payment \$835 are February 22, \$200 payment, March 22, \$210, April 19, \$210, May 3, \$215.

WE'RE HIRING

Prince George's County Public Schools are looking for dedicated employees who believe all children can achieve greatness. Learn about available employment opportunities to support our diverse student population.

JACKIE ROBINSON

"Baseball player Jackie Robinson broke Major League Baseball's color barrier as the first Black athlete. The infielder made his debut with the Brooklyn Dodgers on April 15, 1947, and went on to have a decade-long Hall of Fame career despite repeated threats and abuse from fans and opponents. Also, a vocal civil rights activist, Robinson served on the board of the NAACP and advocated for greater racial integration in sports. He died in 1972 at age 53. MLB retired Robinson's jersey No. 42, in 1997, and the league celebrates his legacy and accomplishments annually on Jackie Robinson Day. Quick Facts: Jack Roosevelt Robinson born January 31, 1919, died October 24, 1972. Birthplace Cairo, Georgia, spouse Rachel Robison (1946-1972), children Jack Jr., Sharon, and David, astrological sign Aquarius". Wikipedia the free encyclopedia.

SPRING INDOOR YARD SALE

A Spring Indoor Yard Sale will be held Saturday, March 7 from 7 a.m.-1 p.m. at Mt. Zion United Methodist Church, 27108 Mt. Zion Church Road, Mechanicsville, Maryland 20659. www.mtzionmech.org Bring your family and friends. Food available to purchase, donuts coffee, hot dogs, chili, chips and sodas.

BSU HILTON INNER HARBOR ACTIVITIES

February 26, 2026, check in, chat and chew. Join BSU alumni and friends for a welcome mixer in the Baltimore Hilton Inner Harbor lobby bar. Afterwards head to the BSU Hospitality Suite to the second floor for a robust game night or head to the arena for the evening CIAA games.

February 27, 2026, BREAKFAST, BEIGNETS AND BREAUX. Start your Friday with the BSU community as we enjoy savory breakfast selections and share our BLACK AND GOLD pride as the host institution with our University President.

February 27, 2026, "BEATS N BINGO" Alumni and friends in this robust competition of dance and song recognition. CAN YOU NAME THAT TUNE!

February 28, 2026, BLACK AND GOLD AFTER DARK. After celebrating the championship games in the arena, head back to the Hilton and wind it down in the Black and Gold Lounge before heading to the late-night parties.

Prince George's Community College Selected for National Digital Holistic Student Supports Initiative

By PRESS OFFICER
Prince George's Community College

LARGO, Md. (Feb. 4, 2026)—Prince George's Community College (PGCC) has been selected to participate in the Digital Holistic Student Supports (DHSS) Initiative, a new effort led by Achieving the Dream (ATD). The two-year initiative advances how colleges use technology, data, and integrated systems to deliver more coordinated and effective support to students.

"I am honored that Prince George's Community College has been selected as one of only four community colleges nationwide to participate in the Digital Holistic Student Supports Initiative," PGCC President Falecia D. Williams, Ed.D., said. "This opportunity reflects our commitment to advancing innovative approaches that enhance the student experience, expand access, and prepare our students for success in an ever-changing world."

ATD's DHSS Initiative brings together higher education partners to strengthen how institutions use digital tools to help students find resources, access advising, stay on track academi-

cally, and complete their goals. Through collaboration with DataKind and MDRC, participating colleges will connect data across systems more intentionally, streamline internal processes, and generate practical insights that enhance student support.

As part of the initiative, PGCC will receive a \$500,000 grant to support its participation throughout the 2026-2027 grant period. The College will join a cohort of peer institutions, including Fayetteville State University (NC), Durham Technical Community College (NC), Clovis Community College (NM), and North Central State College (OH).

Through this work, PGCC will strengthen its digital infrastructure, remove barriers created by disconnected systems, and ensure that students receive more seamless, coordinated support inside and outside the classroom.

Named a National Center of Academic Excellence in Information Assurance, designated by the National Security Agency and Department of Homeland Security (2022-2027), Prince George's Community College (PGCC) provides high-quality education and training for the pro-

gressives and career-oriented residents of Prince George's County. From new high school graduates and career seekers to more seasoned professionals and senior citizens looking to enhance their skill sets, PGCC comprises students who represent a wide range of ages, backgrounds, and goals. Serving nearly 25,000 individuals annually, the College is the first choice for higher education for residents of Prince George's County. Collaborative partnerships, responsive degree and training programs, and a commitment to student success enable PGCC to address diverse education and workforce development demands. For more information, visit the College's website at www.pgcc.edu. Prince George's Community College is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104; (267-284-5000); www.msche.org. The Middle States Commission on Higher Education is an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council on Higher Education. Prince George's Community College's Nondiscrimination Statement affirms the College's commitment to comply with all applicable state and federal anti-discrimination laws.

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Support Education Foundation Now Accepting Applications for \$120,000 in 2026 Scholarships

By PRESS OFFICER
Educational Systems FCU

GREENBELT, Md. (Feb. 3, 2026)—The Support Education Foundation is now accepting applications for its 2026 scholarship awards, investing \$120,000 to help students pursue higher education and career training.

Designed to turn ambition into opportunity, the Foundation's annual schol-

arship program provides financial support to students across a wide range of academic pathways, including community colleges, vocational programs and four-year institutions. These awards help reduce financial barriers and empower students to focus on their education and future success.

Applications for the 2026 award cycle open February 2 and must be submitted by March 15. Eligibility requirements

and application details are available online.

To learn more about the 2026 scholarships awards or to apply, visit SupportEducation.org.

The Support Education Foundation, Inc., a 501(c)(3) established by Educational Systems FCU in 2017, supports students and school employees through charitable giving programs. Learn more at SupportEducation.org.

Calendar of Events

Berliner Helicopter Family Day

Date and time: Saturday, February 21, 2026, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Description: Discover the thrill of vertical flight and how it started right here at College Park Airport! Explore the new exhibition, The Berliner Helicopter: America's Forgotten Helicopter, get hands-on with interactives, and explore the wonders of vertical flight technology.

Cost: Free w/ Admission

Location: College Park Aviation Museum, 1985 Corporal Frank Scott Drive, College Park, MD 20740

Contact: (301) 864-6029

The Sistahs 10 Annual African-American History Event

There is Beauty in the Struggle—an original three-act play, Wangari's Story

Date and time: Saturday, February 28, 2026, 12:30-4:30 p.m. (Doors open at 11:45 a.m.)

Description: You are invited to an afternoon filled with great food, fellowship, and celebration. We commemorate the United States Semiquicentennial—250th anniversary. Actors, musicians, poets, and dancers come together to tell the story of Wangari, a young woman taken from middle Africa and placed on a North Carolina plantation. Acts II and III follow the journey of her son and grandchildren, revealing the resilience and evolution of her lineage. African Diaspora Inspired Menu. Local African-American authors and a greeting card artisan will be present to share and sell their work.

Cost: \$60 per person. **Payment MUST be received by February 16, 2026.** Mail checks payable to Marcella Symonette to P.O. Box 4285, Silver Spring, MD 20914. Send Zelle payments to Bernadette Derr, 240-713-7404

Location: Anderson Hall, Colesville United Methodist Church, 52 Randolph Road, Silver Spring, MD 20904 (Free Parking Available)

Contact: Email Dianne Smith at dianne.smith3@outlook.com or Marcella Symonette at jancon4312@gmail.com

UMD The Woods In Your Backyard Online Course

Date and time: March 9 to May 18, 2026

Description: Registration is now open for the spring 2026 of "The Woods in Your Backyard" online course from the University of Maryland Extension's Woodland Stewardship Education program. Our self-directed, non-credit course runs for 10 weeks from March 9 to May 18, 2026. The course will help landowners convert lawn to natural areas and enhance stewardship of existing natural areas. The course provides strategies for landowners of small parcels of land (1-10 acres) that improve the stewardship of their property for personal enjoyment and environmental quality. It uses a hands-on learning approach to help participants develop and implement a plan for their property. Activities include how to map habitat areas, understand basic ecological principles about woodland and wildlife, choose and implement a few habitat management projects, and how to set a timetable and record your progress. Online discussion groups allow participants to interact with others taking the course. A certificate of completion is awarded when all assignments are completed.

Cost: The course costs \$120.00 per person, which includes the 108-page "Woods in Your Backyard" guide, workbook, and a tree identification guide. **The course is limited to 20 participants, so sign up now!**

Registration is through Eventbrite; go to <https://WIYB-Spring2026.eventbrite.com>.

Contact: https://go.umd.edu/the_course, or contact course coordinator Andrew Kling, University of Maryland Extension, akling1@umd.edu, 301-226-7564.

University of Maryland Memorial Chapel All-Event Open Houses

Date and time: Saturday, March 14 from 11 a.m.-1 p.m.; Saturday, April 11 from 10 a.m.-12 p.m.

Description: Whether you are planning a wedding, a memorial service, or a special milestone celebration, our historic Chapel offers a serene and stunning backdrop for your most cherished moments. During these open houses, visitors are welcome to explore our beautiful sacred spaces, speak with our professional staff about event coordination, and envision how our venue can bring their unique visions to life. We look forward to welcoming you to the Memorial Chapel and helping you begin the journey of planning your next meaningful event.

Cost: Open house is free

Location: 1101 Memorial Chapel, College Park, MD 20742

Contact: https://stamp.umd.edu/visit/memorial_chapel

The American Experiment: Democracy at 250

A Conversation with Historian and Philanthropist David Rubenstein and NBC News Correspondent Andrea Mitchell

Date and time: Sunday, April 12, 2026 at 3 p.m.

Description: The program is presented as part of the nation's observance of the upcoming 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Drawing on history, storytelling, and firsthand experiences, Rubenstein and Mitchell will reflect on how our nation's foundational ideals have been documented and interpreted, and how they remain essential and relevant today. Presented by Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts and Historic Annapolis

Cost: This event is ticketed, and advance purchase is required. Seats can be reserved through Maryland Hall's website at marylandhall.org/maryland-hall-presents.

Location: Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts, 801 Chase Street, Annapolis

Contact: <https://marylandhall.org/maryland-hall-presents>

Greater Washington Region Clean Cities Coalition, 2nd Annual Earth Day Walk

Date and time: Saturday, April 18, 2026. Walker Check-in at 8 a.m., Walk at 10 a.m., Exhibits open from 10a.m. to 1p.m.

Description: Every step supports clean energy and sustainability. Walk or cheer—be part of the movement for a better environment and a greener future! Please join us to celebrate Earth Day. Meet community members, government, industry, and nonprofit leaders and enjoy an interactive learning experience focused on a cleaner environment, vehicles, fuels, air, and communities. Exciting alternative fuel vehicles, vendors/exhibitors and live performances. All persons that register for the walk receive a T-shirt!

Cost: Tickets can be purchased on Eventbrite

Location: The National Mall behind the U.S. Capitol. 3rd Street Southwest & Madison Drive Northwest, Washington, DC 20004

Contact: <https://gwrcc.org/earth-day/>

COMMUNITY

Black History Month Program: The American Revolution and the Fate of the World

By STACEY HAWKINS
Marietta Historic Site & Museum

Please join us on Saturday, February 28, 2026, 1–3 p.m., as author, historian, and professor Dr. Richard Bell discusses his book *The American Revolution and the Fate of the World*.

In his book, Dr. Bell offers a fresh look at the impact of the American Revolution by focusing on disenfranchised people and minorities in the colonies, including free and enslaved Black people. Dr. Bell conveys the impact of these developments at home and abroad by grounding the narrative in the gripping stories of individuals.

Book signing and sales, as well as a Q & A will follow. This is a FREE program. Please register on www.pgarksdirect.com and use the ticket code: MHM-SPEC-GA-20260228. Walk-ins are welcome. This program is in partnership with Prince George's County Historical Society.

For more information, please call 301-464-5291 or email mariettahouse@pgarks.com

Marietta Historic Site & Museum is located at 5626 Bell Station Road, Glenn Dale, MD and is a property of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

Year of the Horse from A1

Lunar New Year Activations

- Lion and Dragon Dance**—Guests can experience a ceremonial lion and dragon dance on Sunday, February 15 at 6 p.m. The performance will begin in the Casino Valet and will weave throughout the property. The lion dance is a traditional celebration for the holiday that marks the transition into a new year, and invites blessing, prosperity and positive momentum for the upcoming year.
- Ginger, MGM National Harbor's pan-Asian restaurant**—A limited-time menu will feature traditional celebratory dishes, including steamed whole fish, symbolizing abundance and prosperity, and sweet glutinous rice balls, a classic dessert associate with family together and good fortune. Other specialty dishes include lobster with salted egg yolk and braised chicken with ginseng and abalone. Enjoy these limited offers from February 13–22.
- Mystic Nights V at The Theater**—Mystic Nights V: Song Ca Dâu Xuân (Duets for the New Year) welcomes the Lunar New Year with an elegant evening of unforgettable music, connection, and celebration. This special concert on Saturday, February 28 brings together some of the most beloved voices in Vietnamese music for a night devoted to meaningful duets and timeless melodies that honor new beginnings. Experience iconic performances by Lam Trưởng, Đan Trưởng, Quang Lê, Mai Thiện Vân, Nhu Loan, Vy Oanh, Trinh Lam, Leon Vũ, and Jessica Shum (岑敏芝), accompanied by the live sounds of the Tutti Band. Hosted by the charismatic MC Nghè Sí Thúy Nga, the evening blends heartfelt storytelling with musical moments that reflect hope, love, and renewal. From classic favorites to beautifully arranged collaborations, Mystic Nights V is a festive tribute to the spirit of spring and the joy of welcoming a new year together.

Located in an unrivaled setting, MGM National Harbor offers stunning panoramic views of the Eastern shore of the Potomac River in Maryland. The \$1.4 billion LEED® Gold Certified resort sits a short distance from Washington, D.C. to the north and historic sites, including George Washington's Mount Vernon estate across the river in Virginia. The 24-story, 308-room resort features premier amenities and experiences for locals as well as visitors from around the world including a dynamic two-level casino with over 160,000 square feet of space that includes slots, table games, and poker; a world-class spa and salon; an entertainment theater with flexible seating for up to 3,000; high-end branded retail; 50,000 square feet of meeting space; and restaurants from renowned local, national, and international chefs. MGM National Harbor is owned by MGM Resorts International (NYSE: MGM). For more information, visit mgmnationalharbor.com or follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Black History Month from A1

explore Black History Month collections on Kanopy, Hoopla, and OverDrive, digital resources which are available free on demand with a PGCLMS library card.

Featured PGCLMS Black History Month events are highlighted below. For the full listing of Black Heritage programming at PGCLMS, both in February and throughout the year, please visit our online calendar.

Community members are also invited to visit PGCLMS' Black Heritage hub, which is available 24/7 and serves as a cultural resource that includes book recommendations, historical timelines, research databases, upcoming events, and more. The Black Heritage hub can be visited anytime at pgclms.info/black-heritage.

Featured PGCLMS Events Celebrating Black History Month

Heroes of Black History Puppet Show

Presented by Ebony Sonshine Puppets
Free | Saturday, Feb. 21 at 1 p.m. | Ages 3–8 |
Upper Marlboro Branch Library
Free | Wednesday, Feb. 25 at 6:30 p.m. | Ages 3–8 |
Hillcrest Heights Branch Library
Watch history come to life in this engaging performance by Ebony Sonshine Puppets. Through

dynamic storytelling, music, and puppetry, participants at this program will learn about inspiring Black history makers who changed the world.

Miles Davis & John Coltrane 2026: 100th Birthday Tribute

Presented by Muneer Nasser, Trumpeter and Jazz Historian
Free | Saturday, Feb. 28 at 1 p.m. | Teens and Adults | Surratts-Clinton Branch Library

Did you know that 2026 marks the 100th anniversary of Black History Month? It also marks the centennial of the births of jazz legends Miles Davis and John Coltrane. Join Muneer Nasser and his trio for a special tribute celebrating the groundbreaking music and enduring influence of these two musicians. With his live performance and insights into their remarkable lives, Nasser—a musician, author, historian, and son of the late acclaimed jazz bassist Jamil Nasser—brings a personal and deeply informed perspective to two of jazz's most iconic figures.

Jump Legacy: Honoring the Past, Jumping into the Future

Presented by Greenbelt SITY Stars
Free | Saturday, Feb. 21 at 1 p.m. | Ages 5–12 |
Greenbelt Branch Library
Honor the spirit and endurance of Black history through rhythm and motion with the Greenbelt

Celebrate Black History Month With M-NCPPC Programs

By PRESS OFFICER
M-NCPPC

RIVERDALE, Md. (Feb. 5, 2026)—Celebrate African American heritage in Prince George's County this February through performances, history lessons, tours, and more. The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George's County, is proud to announce its 2026 Black History Month events, highlighting the stories, achievements and contributions of the Black community.

Upcoming Black History Month events include:

Black History Month Exhibition

Exhibition runs from January 26–March 7 at Harmony Hall Arts Center
Harmony Hall Arts Center
10701 Livingston Road, Fort Washington, MD

For close to 45 years, M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation's Black History program has worked to preserve, honor, and celebrate Prince George's County rich African American heritage. The annual exhibition is part of this tradition. Explore stories from the county's past that highlight the challenges and triumphs of the African American community.

Exhibition runs from January 26–March 7 at Harmony Hall Arts Center

Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am (2019)

Saturday, February 14, 2–4 p.m.
Harmony Hall Arts Center
10701 Livingston Road, Fort Washington, MD

Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am is an artful and intimate meditation on the legendary Nobel and Pulitzer Prize-winning author that examines her life, her works, and the powerful themes she has confronted throughout her literary career. The documentary collects written and graphic work from the history of Black Life America, seeking to fill in the gaps in the master narrative of American history.

Annual Black History Month Exhibition —Public Reception

Friday, February 20, 7–9 p.m.

Montpelier Arts Center
9652 Muirkirk Rd, Laurel, MD 20708

Celebrate Black History Month with Montpelier Arts Center! This annual exhibition shows the diverse talents of regional artists. Featured artwork will highlight the lives, stories, and experiences of African Americans through various mediums, including painting, drawing, photography, and more.

Voices From the Past: Black Music of the Colonial Period and Forgotten Patriots

Sunday, February 22, 4–5 p.m.

Montpelier Arts Center
9652 Muirkirk Road, Laurel, MD

This revisiting, narrated recital takes audience members back to America's colonial period to explore the music, instruments, voices, and lives of enslaved Africans and forgotten patriots. The music will feature period instruments, traditional folk songs, patriotic selections, and Negro spirituals, all performed by Black musicians. Produced by the Coalition for African Americans in the Performing Arts (CAAPA).

The History of Black Music Concert: Legends, Lyrics, and Legacy

Sunday, February 28, 7–9 p.m.
Friendly High School
10000 Allentown Road, Fort Washington MD 20744

Join M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George's County for a powerful evening of live music, storytelling, and performance celebrating the rich history and lasting impact of Black music.

This concert highlights the legends, lyrics, and cultural influences that shaped generations and continue to inspire artists today. Through dynamic performances and meaningful narratives, audiences will experience how Black music has served as a voice for expression, resilience, and innovation across time.

For the latest information on the Department's Black History Month happenings, please visit pgparks.com/blackhistory.

With over 29,000 acres of parkland, trails, athletic fields, playgrounds, and more, the M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation in Prince George's County provides an award-winning park system through progressive, quality, innovative leadership and a commitment to its community and environment. The Department delivers first-class recreational activities and programs for people of all ages and ability levels. It strives to improve the quality of life for Prince George's County residents and the communities in which they live, work, and raise families. The Department's Formula 2040 Plan establishes a framework that will ensure the Department can meet future parks and recreation programmatic and facility needs, fulfilling its mission to determine the combination of land, facilities, and programs that will provide appropriate experiences for Prince Georgians in the future. To learn more, visit www.pgparks.com.

Independence Now Announces *FashionAble: Couture for a Cause—An Inclusive Fashion Show Where Style Meets Purpose*

Inclusive fashion show flyer for FashionAble: Couture for a Cause, featuring a model in a blue dress seated on a runway, with event details for April 25, 2026 at Prince George's Ballroom.

By PRESS OFFICER
Independence Now

SILVER SPRING, Md. (Feb. 5, 2026)—Independence Now, a nonprofit dedicated to empowering people with disabilities to live independently and thrive in their communities, is proud to announce *FashionAble: Couture for a Cause*, an inclusive fashion show celebrating confidence, creativity, and the power of community.

Taking place on Saturday, April 25, 2026, from 3–6 p.m. at the Prince George's Ballroom (2411 Pinebrook Avenue, Greater Landover, MD 20785) in Landover, MD, *FashionAble* brings together fashion, advocacy, and storytelling in a high-energy event that challenges stereotypes and centers disability pride. Models with disabilities will take the runway in bold, expressive looks that reflect individuality, resilience, and self-expression—proving that fashion truly belongs to everyone.

"FashionAble is about visibility, confidence, and redefining what inclusion looks like," said Diane Palmer, Executive Director of Independence Now. "It's a celebration of self-expression and a powerful reminder that when people with disabilities have access and opportunity, entire communities are stronger."

Guests will enjoy an elegant afternoon featuring a dynamic runway fashion show, hors d'oeuvres, a cash bar, a post-show reception, and raffle prizes. Proceeds from the event support Independence Now's programs and services, which promote dignity, choice, and independent living for people with disabilities.

Tickets are \$50 and may be purchased online at [eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/fashionable-couture-for-a-cause-tickets-1980126220830?aff=oddtctcreator) (<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/fashionable-couture-for-a-cause-tickets-1980126220830?aff=oddtctcreator>).

Sponsorship opportunities are available for individuals and businesses seeking to make a meaningful impact while receiving

special recognition leading up to and during the event. To learn more about sponsorship opportunities, contact dpalmer@innow.org.

For ticket questions or to request accessibility accommodations, call 240-898-2185 or email info@innow.org.

Independence Now is a nonprofit Center for Independent Living designed, governed, and staffed by people with disabilities and serves consumers residing in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, Maryland. Driven by a vision that people with disabilities live independent and fully inclusive lives and are recognized by society as equal, Independence Now offers a comprehensive suite of services that include Information and Referral, Advocacy, Peer Support, Independent Living Skills training, and Transition. Visit innow.org to learn more and follow us on Facebook, X, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn.



SITY Stars, a local athletic club that has been training young people in the art of jump rope since 1991. At this program, you will enjoy a powerful, expressive jump rope showcase that celebrates storytelling through coordinated movement. Participants will also be invited to jump!

Celebrate Black History Month with Children's Author Allen Wells!
Free | Saturday, Feb. 14 at 1 p.m. | Ages 4–8 |
Beltsville Branch Library

Allen R. Wells—accomplished local author, engineer, and advocate for inclusion and representation in children's literature—returns to PGCLMS to share his children's books celebrating Black

See BLACK HISTORY MONTH Page A4

BUSINESS AND FINANCE

Social Security Matters

Ask Rusty:

Why is my Social Security Retirement Benefit So Small?

By RUSSELL GLOOR,
National Social Security Advisor at the AMAC Foundation,
the non-profit arm of the **Association of Mature American Citizens**

Dear Rusty: Can you help me understand? I have paid into Social Security since I started working in 1978. I did have a lot of tax deductions, but I don't understand why I only receive \$350 a month from Social Security. *Signed: Befuddled Senior*

Dear Befuddled Senior: Your Social Security benefit is based upon your average monthly earnings for the 35 years over your lifetime that you earned the most while contributing to the Social Security program (however, your benefit isn't based on your contributions to SS). Your average lifetime earnings amount is called your "AIME" or "Average Indexed Monthly Earnings," which are adjusted for inflation for years before you turn 60. Your earnings (your net earnings if self-employed) are provided to the SSA by the IRS. Your average lifetime earnings number (your "AIME") is subjected to a formula which calculates your "Primary Insurance Amount" or "PIA," which is the SS benefit you receive if you start benefits in the month you reach your full retirement age. Your personal full retirement age (FRA) depends on the year you were born which, if you were born in 1960 or later, is age 67. However, if you claim Social Security before reaching your FRA, you will get only a percentage of your PIA (reduced from what you would get if you claimed at your FRA).

For example, if you claimed at age 62, you would only get 70% of the amount you would have gotten had you waited until age 67, or if you claimed at age 63 you would get 75% of your age 67 benefit. The reduction is less as you get closer to your FRA; if you claimed at age 65, you'd get about 87% of your full retirement age amount.

You can see your lifetime Social Security earnings record at your personal "my Social Security" online account at www.ssa.gov/myaccount (you will need to first create that online account), or you can call Social Security at 1.800.772.1213 to request an "Earnings Statement" be sent to you. That statement will show your lifetime earnings by year, the 35 highest of which were used to calculate your PIA (your Social Security benefit at your FRA). Generally, your Social Security FRA benefit will be about 40% or less of your average indexed monthly earnings.

So, to recap, your SS retirement benefit isn't based on your contributions to the program; it's based on your average monthly lifetime earnings. If you had less than 35 years contributing to the program, SS would still use 35 years in the benefit formula by using zero dollars in earnings for some number of years, which would result in a smaller AIME. Thus, if you claimed before your full retirement age of 67, your SS benefit was reduced because you claimed early. And if you had less than 35 years of SS-covered employment, your AIME was less, resulting in a smaller PIA. And that is likely why your monthly Social Security retirement benefit is low.

One other thought to consider: if you are married and your spouse's monthly SS benefit is considerably more than yours (e.g., more than twice as much as yours), you may want to explore your options for spouse benefits.

I hope this explains how your SS benefit is calculated, but if you still question your monthly SS retirement amount, I suggest you first obtain your "Earnings Statement" to review the lifetime earnings SS has on file for you. If there are any discrepancies in your Social Security's earnings record, there are correction remedies available to you. If that is the case, please feel free to contact us again for more information.

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 ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org.

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.

Black History Month from A3

voices, music, and imagination. After listening to Wells read from "Yvonne Clark and Her Engineering Spark" and "Danté Plays His Blues," kids will get a chance to participate in an engaging Q&A session. A brief author signing will follow the program, during which Wells will have books available for purchase.

The Prince George's County Memorial Library System (PGCMLS) is a beacon within its diverse and dynamic community. The Library serves Prince George's County, Maryland's 966,000+ residents through 19 public branches, a law library in the County Correctional Center, various pop-up services and events, and 24/7 access to free online resources. As a trusted and responsive community leader, PGCMLS democratizes knowledge and opportunity by providing safe, accessible spaces where customers of all backgrounds can freely engage with the resources needed to build knowledge, literacy, skills, and creativity at every phase of life.

Learn more at pgcmls.info/about-us.

Prince George's County Manufacturers Awarded State Funding to Modernize Operations Through Maryland Manufacturing 4.0 Program

By PRESS OFFICER

Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation

LARGO, Md. (Feb. 5, 2026)—Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation (PGCEDC) congratulates two Prince George's County manufacturing companies—Little Sesame and WD Advanced Materials LLC—on receiving funding through the State of Maryland's Manufacturing 4.0 Grant Program, a competitive initiative designed to help manufacturers modernize operations and adopt Industry 4.0 technologies.

In the February 2026 award cycle, the Maryland Department of Commerce announced \$2 million in Manufacturing 4.0 grants to support manufacturers statewide as they integrate advanced automation, data systems, and digital manufacturing solutions.

"Prince George's County continues to demonstrate that innovation lives at every scale of manufacturing," said Ingrid S. Watson, President & CEO of the Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation. "The Manufacturing 4.0 investments awarded to Little Sesame and WD Advanced Materials reflect the strength and diversity of our local industrial base, from consumer food production to advanced materials supporting the semiconductor supply chain. These companies are modernizing their operations, strengthening their competitiveness, and reinforcing Prince George's County as a place where forward-thinking manufacturers can grow, invest, and thrive."

Prince George's County Awardee

Little Sesame—Prince George's County

Grant Award: \$100,000

Little Sesame will integrate a four-lane automated filler-sealer system to digitize and streamline its hummus packaging operations. This investment will increase production throughput, improve product consistency and quality, enhance traceability, and position the company for smart-factory readiness as it continues to scale.

Prince George's County Awardees

WD Advanced Materials LLC—Prince George's County
Grant Award: \$121,093

WD Advanced Materials LLC will implement a cloud-based MRP/QMS platform and establish an in-house diamond polishing capability. These upgrades will optimize production data, increase yields, enhance quality and traceability, and vertically integrate critical semiconductor-grade diamond finishing processes.

"These investments highlight the depth and diversity of Prince George's County's manufacturing sector," said John A. Mason, Business Development Manager for Manufacturing and Warehouse/ Distribution/Fulfillment at PGCEDC. "Through the Manufacturing 4.0 program, companies like Little Sesame and WD Advanced Materials are modernizing their operations, increasing efficiency, and positioning themselves to compete globally."

See the full list here: <https://commerce.maryland.gov/Documents/Maryland.Manufacturing.4.0.Grant.Recipients.February.2026.pdf>

The Maryland Manufacturing 4.0 program helps small- and mid-sized manufacturers adopt advanced technologies, including automation, robotics, data analytics, and smart manufacturing systems. These investments improve operational resilience, support workforce development, and drive long-term economic growth.

PGCEDC continues to work closely with manufacturing companies across Prince George's County to connect them with state and local resources, capital programs, and strategic partnerships that enable modernization and expansion.

PGCEDC's mission is to cultivate and promote a strong local economy supporting entrepreneurs' and businesses' growth and prosperity. It is dedicated to strengthening communities through business development and job creation. For more information about Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation's services to local companies, visit www.pgcdec.com.

United Way NCA Announces Merger With United Way of Southern Maryland, Expanding Its Reach to 14 Jurisdictions Throughout DC, Maryland, and Virginia

Strategic Combination To Increase Community Impact to Advance Healthy Communities, Youth Opportunity, and Financial Security

By PRESS OFFICER

United Way of the National Capital Area

WASHINGTON (Feb. 2, 2026)—Today, United Way of the National Capital Area (United Way NCA) and United Way of Southern Maryland announce a merger between the two organizations, effective immediately. The merger maximizes both organizations' ability to enhance community impact, streamline operations, and expand services across the region to improve lives and strengthen communities in the now 14 counties, including Southern Maryland's Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's Counties, and United Way NCA's 11 jurisdictions of Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax/Falls Church, Loudoun County, Prince William County, Rappahannock County, Culpeper County, and Fauquier County in Virginia; Montgomery County and Prince George's County in Maryland; and the District of Columbia.

"The fundamental reason for this new model is simple: together, we can make the most meaningful, lasting impact across our three impact areas of: Healthy Communities, Youth Opportunity, and Financial Security to cover our now 14-county footprint by sharing resources, talent, relationships, data, and best practices to expand our reach into the community," said Rosie Allen-Herring, President and CEO, United Way of the National Capital Area.

"The joining of our two United Ways holds extra special meaning for me and my family as lifelong residents of Southern Maryland," Steve Proctor, Board Chair, United Way of National Capital Area and CEO, G.S. Proctor & Associates. "We look forward to continuing this important work so that families thrive in the region."

"This change comes after careful consideration and a shared commitment to strengthening the impact we have together in the community," said Yonelle Moore Lee, Esq., Board Chair, United Way of Southern Maryland. "United Way of Southern Maryland has accomplished incredible work over the years—mobilizing resources, supporting families, and driving initiatives that have improved lives across the three counties we serve. None of this would have been possible without the partnership, generosity, and unwavering support of our communities."

The merger, encouraged and endorsed by United Way Worldwide, provides United Way NCA with a broader footprint to extend its work by enabling the organization to maximize resources, expand data-driven programs and services, and strengthen existing partnerships and create new ones.

As United Way of the National Capital Area seeks to fully serve Southern Maryland communities, a series of town hall events and community volunteer engagements will be held across Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary Counties over the next several months. Details on these important community events will be shared in the coming weeks so that they can be broadly attended by community members, community leaders, and United Way partners.

Additionally, as part of United Way of the National Capital Area's commitment to the communities of Southern Maryland, the organization will be co-hosting an event with Senator Angela Alsobrooks, "Get Back on Your Feet," at the College of Southern

Maryland on March 28, which will provide support for Marylanders navigating financial recovery and stability through rental and utility assistance, debt repair, credit counseling, workforce development, and much more.

"The strength of our organizations allows us to accomplish more and build additional capacity to engage people, communities and organizations, elevate brand strength and awareness, and manage and diversify revenue streams more effectively across 14 counties," said Allen-Herring. "As United Way NCA looks to soon celebrate its 100th birthday, the merger marks a milestone that charts our future for a thriving national capital area."

For nearly 100 years, United Way of the National Capital Area has worked to mobilize communities to action so all can thrive. Guided by our mission, we are committed to creating measurable impact in the areas of Healthy Communities, Youth Opportunity, and Financial Security for every person in Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax/Falls Church, Loudoun County, Prince William County, Rappahannock County, Culpeper County and Fauquier County in Virginia; Calvert, Charles, St. Mary's County, Montgomery County and Prince George's County in Maryland; and the District of Columbia. In 2020, United Way NCA was among 384 organizations across the United States to receive a generous transformational investment from novelist and venture philanthropist, MacKenzie Scott. For more information, visit UnitedWayNCA.org.

The Prince George's Post

The Prince George's Post

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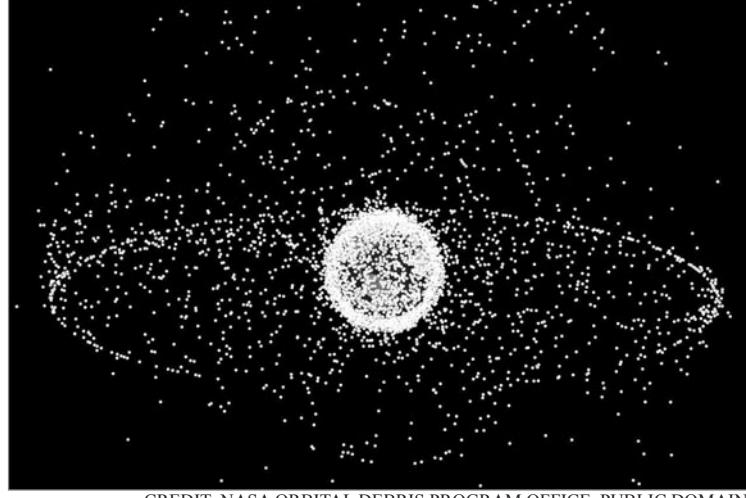
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ENVIRONMENT



CREDIT: NASA ORBITAL DEBRIS PROGRAM OFFICE, PUBLIC DOMAIN

Space debris, which makes up the majority of objects orbiting around Earth (as depicted here in this NASA-generated image), consists of defunct man-made objects, including satellites, spent rocket stages & other fragments.

EarthTalk® Q&A

Exponential Growth in Space Debris Worries Environmentalists

By Daniel Choi | January 31, 2026

Dear EarthTalk:

What is space debris, and can we reduce or eliminate it?

—H.B., Troy, NY

Space debris, also known as space junk, consists of defunct man-made objects that orbit Earth, including satellites, spent rocket stages and other various fragments from collisions. According to the European Space Agency, space surveillance networks are currently tracking approximately 40,000 objects orbiting Earth, only 11,000 of which are active “payloads” (still functioning satellites and other equipment), with the rest classified as space debris.

However, the actual amount of space debris could be over 1.2 million objects more than one centimeter in length and capable of causing catastrophic damage on impact. Lack of proper regulation and surveillance of space debris has exacerbated conversation around the threat posed to life on Earth. In 2021, one of the International Space Station’s (ISS) robotic arms was punctured by a piece of space debris. As space debris is projected to exponentially increase in the next decade, future collisions may cause irreparable damage to satellites, technological systems that support GPS, and weather forecasting.

One major consideration in space debris is the “Kessler Syndrome” risk that describes the cascading effects of the debris as one collision creates multiple fragments that further collide and create more debris. Consider the 2009 collision between the Iridium satellite and Cosmos satellite: some 2,000 fragments created still orbit Earth today and pose significant risks to outer space systems. While most of the 200-400 large pieces of debris that reenter Earth’s atmosphere annually burn up, five to 10 percent survive.

Recently, numerous policies have been established to mitigate the effects of space debris, including the United Nations’ 25-year de-orbit rule, which recommends that spacecraft orbital stages in Low Earth Orbit (LEO) be removed from orbit within 25 years after the end of their operational life. However, the global de-escalation effort is infinitely more convoluted than simply ridding of space debris. Professor of Astronautics and Head of the Astronautics Research Group at the University of Southampton Hugh Lewis stated in an interview that “[Space debris] is not just a technical problem we have to solve, but a social one as well,” in regards to the race between countries, governments and corporations to use space.

Though national competition for space may be inevitable, it is imperative that countries and governments work together for the best interest of our planet and strategize the use of space among one another. Space is a common resource, yet its pollution and befoiling risks astronauts safety, climate security, and more. To reduce space debris, we must support stricter regulations and advocate for cleanup technologies from corporations and the private sector.

CONTACTS: Space Debris by the Numbers, esa.int/Space_Safety/Space_Debris/Space_debris_by_the_numbers.

EarthTalk® is produced by Roddy Scheer & Doug Moss for the 501(c)3 nonprofit **EarthTalk**. See more at <https://emagazine.com>. To donate, visit <https://earthtalk.org>. Send questions to: question@earthtalk.org

Cook and Use Candles With Caution on Valentine's Day

By PRESS OFFICER
National Fire Protection Association

(Feb. 5, 2026)—To keep the spark alive safely this Valentine's Day, the National Fire Protection Association® (NFPA®) encourages extra caution when cooking and using candles to celebrate the holiday. According to NFPA, cooking is the leading cause of U.S. home fires and injuries—nearly half (49 percent) of all reported U.S. home fires involve cooking equipment—while an average of nearly 6,000 home fires involving candles are reported to U.S. fire departments each year.

Over one-quarter (29 percent) of reported home cooking fires and half of the associated deaths are the result of unattended cooking.

Candles are also a leading cause of home fires and must be used with supervision and caution. According to NFPA data, more than half of all candle fires began when a flammable object—furniture, curtains, home decorations, clothing—was too close to an open flame. In 21 percent of home candle fires, the candle was either left unattended, discarded, or otherwise misused. Over one-third (36 percent) of candle fires originated in the bedroom.

A safer alternative to candles is battery-operated flameless candles, which offer a similar look and feel to real candles while simultaneously eliminating the risk of fires.

For more information, visit www.nfpa.org.

LOCAL WARMING: CLIMATE CHANGE IN MARYLAND

Climate Action Moves Forward Despite Trump's Policy Rollbacks. Will it Be Enough?

By SAM GAUNTT
Capital News Service

The world is making progress against climate change even though the U.S. government has left the fight.

Renewable energy usage has surged over the past decade, accounting for more than \$2 trillion in global investment and totalling about 90% of all new energy capacity installed worldwide in 2024.

There's also a big increase in public and private spending aimed at mitigating the effects of climate change or helping communities adapt, which reached almost \$2 trillion as of 2023.

Global per capita carbon emissions remain mostly steady, showing a slow shift away from fossil fuels. In large part due to China's growing investments in renewable energy, total global emissions could soon start to flatten for the first time in decades, according to the International Energy Agency's annual global energy outlook report.

Adding it all up, it's clear the global efforts to prevent the worst possible effects of climate change, which started in earnest in the mid-1990s, are finally making headway. Despite that progress, global temperatures continue to reach record highs, and total carbon emissions continue to increase—just as President Donald Trump's administration ends federal policy to combat climate change.

The question remains whether what's being done will ever be enough to stop climate change's worst predicted effect: making parts of the world uninhabitable.

Baylor Fox-Kemper, a professor of earth, environmental and planetary sciences at Brown University, said he sees both encouraging and discouraging signs.

“The transition toward a clean energy economy is well underway, and that's happening all around the world,” Fox-Kemper said. “We're heading toward more and more of our energy being produced by renewables, which is the most direct way to reduce the worst aspects of climate change.”

Still, he said it's clear the planet is getting hotter, with devastating consequences.

“It's a sign that things are going in the direction where the wildfires, heat waves, flooding, droughts get more and more intense the higher that [temperature] number goes,” Fox-Kemper said.

The progress

The Paris Climate Agreement, the landmark international treaty adopted in 2015, aims to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius, with an ultimate goal of 1.5 degrees Celsius. Fox-Kemper said by some measures, we've already crossed 1.5 degrees of warming.

But there are some signs of progress.

While total global carbon emissions are still increasing, they're not increasing as fast as they once were. During the past decade, total global carbon dioxide emissions grew by about 0.3% per year. In the decade before, emissions grew by about 1.9% per year.

Before the Paris Climate Agreement, projections showed global temperatures were on track to increase by about 3.6 degrees Celsius, according to the Climate Action Tracker. Now, a decade later, that number has dropped to about 2.6 degrees Celsius.

Most importantly, experts say we are already capable of making much of the move away from fossil fuels toward a carbon-free energy system. That's the key to combating climate change, as the carbon released through burning fossil fuels is the primary driver of warmer temperatures.

“The technology is there. We have the knowledge of the skills to do it,” said Greg Jones, deputy director of the science, solutions and policy team at the Climate Reality Project. “It's just a matter of getting policies in place and getting finance distributed fairly and equitably to places that need it the most.”

To fully take part as the world shifts away from fossil fuels, the U.S. needs to deploy new clean energy sources, such as solar and wind, to replace aging electricity infrastructure, Jones said.



PHOTO CREDIT SAM GAUNTT/CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

Rows of solar panels charge in a field outside Germantown on Nov. 16, 2025.

He added that large-scale battery storage needs to keep pace with new clean energy infrastructure—but it can.

Some industries, however, have proven more challenging to address than others.

Emissions from sources such as air travel or cement production are harder to decarbonize and could take longer to solve, said Charles Harvey, a climate and environment professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

“But those are all actually kind of a small part of overall carbon emissions,” Harvey said. “It's kind of counterproductive to stress out about cutting something that's 5% or even 10% of emissions, when 80% of it could be solved right now.”

In addition to making current methods of travel more efficient, changes in the transportation sector could include providing the public with better options, said Anne Criss, director of climate and sustainability initiatives at the University of California, Santa Cruz's Baskin School of Engineering.

“So better and safer bike lanes, pedestrian options, trains, metro systems and the like,” Criss said. “All of those things help reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation sector. There's a lot that governments can do, both at federal, state and local levels, to facilitate that.”

The politics

For climate advocates, though, the U.S. government is doing exactly the opposite of what it should. Abandoning President Joe Biden's aggressive climate efforts, Trump returned to office a year ago and took aim at regulations and initiatives addressing climate change.

Trump ended tax incentives for electric vehicles and renewable energy, once again removed the U.S. from the Paris Climate Agreement, sought to slash funding and headcounts at federal scientific agencies, and rolled back dozens of regulations on carbon emissions and pollution.

The Trump administration is also proposing to repeal the 2009 endangerment finding, a key environmental ruling that determined six major greenhouse gases posed a threat to public health and welfare.

But according to The Washington Post, the administration's efforts to overturn the endangerment finding have stalled out. Fearing that the decision would not be strong enough to withstand a challenge in court, officials are delaying its repeal, The Post reported in January.

Climate scientists and policy experts warn if the ruling is revoked—and if environmentalists lose a likely court battle to try to save the measure—the move would prevent them from carrying out work to address climate change at the federal level.

“The endangerment finding is the cornerstone of regulating greenhouse gases,” Jones said. “So, without that in place, that sort of ability nationally wouldn't exist. You'd be reliant on policies and laws that exist at the state or local level.”

In an August interview with CNN, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lee Zeldin argued the EPA “didn't have the science” in 2009 to justify the endangerment finding.

In a similar move, the EPA recently announced it will limit regulations on air pollutants for new power plants. Going forward, the agency said it would no

longer consider the health and economic benefits from reducing pollution when setting new rules.

On top of that, Office of Management and Budget Director Russell Vought announced in December that the National Science Foundation would shutter the 65-year-old National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado, one of the world's premier climate research facilities.

“This facility is one of the largest sources of climate alarmism in the country,” Vought said on X.

The administration's reversal of course could be devastating to climate science, said Amanda Levin, director of policy analysis at the National Resources Defense Council.

“There is going to be, potentially, a loss in some of the innovation, the pace at which we're able to build out and commercialize some of these important technological solutions,” Levin said.

Jones said the Trump administration's changes create the potential for increased air, water and land-based pollution and increased greenhouse gas emissions.

“Now, the other side of that is there's a lot of progress that's happening that can't really be stopped,” he said. “The economics of renewable energy are really undeniable, even despite the federal subsidies. And this is not just a U.S. thing—this is a global reality as well.”

Then again, Levin said there could still be a ripple effect from the U.S.' shift on climate.

“The fact that the U.S. was committing to go faster on cutting emissions helped push other countries that were maybe more laggards on climate to also make big commitments,” Levin said. “We are going to see that, as the U.S. moves away from its climate commitments, that might give space to other countries to weaken their own commitments.”

The path forward

Though the U.S. federal government is reversing course on climate policy, Levin said other nations are continuing their efforts to transform the electric grid and shift to renewable sources of energy—although not fast enough.

Worldwide investment in solar and other renewable energies is rapidly increasing, as they've become the best options.

According to a 2025 report from the International Renewable Energy Agency, more than 91% of new renewable energy projects are cheaper than alternatives powered by fossil fuels.

Wind and solar power projects are moving forward in America, too, despite Trump's opposition to them. For example, lawsuits have stymied the administration's attempts to block offshore wind projects.

Besides, Levin noted state and local policies account for about 40% of new solar and wind capacity since 2000, providing those governments can continue to push climate-friendly energy development even if the federal government won't.

“The federal picture can be very depressing. We have seen significant losses in the last few months that have torn and destroyed some of the biggest climate wins in U.S. history,” Levin said. “But it

See CLIMATE Page A6

