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PGCPS Teacher of the Year Clara Allsup Named Finalist for 2027 Maryland Teacher of the Year

International High School at Langley Park educator brings personal experience, military service and deep commitment to multilingual learners to statewide honor

By PRESS OFFICER
Prince George's County Public Schools

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (Sept. 9, 2026)—Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) 2026–27 Teacher of the Year Clara Allsup has been named one of seven finalists for 2027 Maryland Teacher of the Year. An English teacher at International High School at Langley Park, Allsup is a National Board Certified Teacher and former U.S. Air Force cryptologic linguist whose own journey has shaped the way she teaches, leads and advocates for students.

“Ms. Allsup embodies the very best of what it means to be a PGCPS educator,” said Superintendent Dr. Shawn Joseph. “Her personal journey, her deep understanding of our multilingual learners and her belief in the potential of every student are a powerful reflection of the educators who serve our students every day. We are incredibly proud to see Clara represent Prince George's County on the statewide stage.”

The daughter of immigrants from Egypt and Mexico, Allsup was born in Prince George's County and attended



PHOTO CREDIT PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

“When an educator believes in [students] and helps, most importantly, to build their sense of academic identity as a student, that's where change begins to happen,” said PGCPS 2026–27 Teacher of the Year Clara Allsup.

PGCPS as a young student. Her parents instilled in her from an early age the transformative power of education and the opportunities it can create. At International High School at Lang-

ley Park, Allsup teaches English to multilingual learners, provides professional

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COMMUNITY EVENTS

Women-Led Celebration Honoring Black Men Marks 10th Anniversary in Upper Marlboro

By PRESS OFFICER
BOCC Foundation

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (Sept. 9, 2026)—Honoring the Divine Masculine Day, a women-led cultural and community observance devoted to intentionally honoring and affirming Black men and men of color, will celebrate its 10th anniversary on **Saturday, September 19, 2026**, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Upper Marlboro.

Created in 2016 by Adina Gittens-Smith, Founder & Visionary of Honoring the Divine Masculine Day and Founder/President of the Bellydancers of Color Collective Foundation, the observance is built around a simple affirmation: “Men are needed. Men are wanted. Men are valued.”

Unlike Father's Day, the observance is not tied to whether a man is a father. Its premise is

that Black men and men of color are worthy of intentional honor and affirmation because of their inherent humanity and value.

This year's theme, Sacred Balance, reflects the observance's connection to the Fall Equinox and its emphasis on harmony between the Divine Masculine and Divine Feminine. The gathering will include affirmation, flowers, movement, drumming, ritual, wellness, food, family connection and celebration.

Men and children ages 17 and under attend free as honored guests. Admission for women is \$44. Advance registration is encouraged because attendance is limited to 150 people. The exact Upper Marlboro location is pro-

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28 PGCPS Schools Named Among ‘America's Healthiest Schools’

PGCPS more than doubles its number of nationally recognized schools, leads Maryland with 28 of the state's 37 honorees and earns four prestigious All-Star distinctions

By PRESS OFFICER
Prince George's County Public Schools

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (Sept. 10, 2026)—Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) is celebrating a remarkable expansion of its commitment to whole-child health, with 28 schools named among the 2026 America's Healthiest Schools by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation.

The recognition represents more than double the number of PGCPS schools honored in 2025, when 13 schools earned a place on the national list. This year, PGCPS schools account for 28 of the 37 Maryland schools recognized, nearly 76% of all honorees statewide.

The national recognition celebrates schools that are creating healthier, more supportive learning environments through comprehensive approaches to student and staff well-being, including nutrition and food access, physical activity, school health services, mental health, staff wellness and family and community engagement.

Four PGCPS Schools Earn All-Star Recognition

Four PGCPS elementary schools including Carmody Hills, Melwood, Robert R. Gray and

Springhill Lake earned the Alliance's prestigious All-Star Award by achieving recognition across all nine health and wellness categories.

Only six schools statewide achieved the distinction, meaning four of Maryland's six All-Star schools are in PGCPS.

The All-Star designation represents the highest level of recognition from the Alliance for a Healthier Generation and recognizes schools demonstrating comprehensive commitment across nine areas of health and wellness.

- Those areas include:
- Nutrition & Food Access
 - Physical Education & Physical Activity
 - School Health Services
 - Mental Health & Well-Being
 - Staff Well-Being
 - Family & Community Engagement
 - And additional areas supporting healthy school environments

“This recognition is a reflection of the work happening every day in our schools,” said Superintendent Dr. Shawn Joseph. “Our schools are not simply talking about wellness, they are building it into the student experience, from what students eat and how they move to the relationships, supports and opportunities that help them feel connected and ready to learn.”

PGCPS leads all districts in Maryland for the number of schools recognized on the 2026 America's Healthiest Schools list.

PGCPS' 2026 America's Healthiest Schools

The 28 PGCPS schools recognized this year are:

- Beacon Heights Elementary School
- Bladensburg Elementary School
- Carmody Hills Elementary School ★ All-Star
- Charles Carroll Middle School
- Clinton Grove Elementary School
- Colin Powell Academy
- Cora L. Rice Elementary School
- Doswell E. Brooks Elementary School
- Drew Freeman Middle School
- Eleanor Roosevelt High School
- Flintstone Elementary School
- Fort Washington Forest Elementary School
- Frances Fuchs Early Childhood Center
- Francis T. Evans Elementary School
- General James Gholson Middle School
- Judge Sylvania Woods Sr. Elementary School
- Kettering Middle School
- Largo High School
- Melwood Elementary School ★ All-Star
- Northwestern High School
- Overlook Full Spanish Immersion School

- Oxon Hill Middle School
- Robert R. Gray Elementary School ★ All-Star
- Rosaryville Elementary School
- Springhill Lake Elementary School ★ All-Star
- Thomas S. Stone Elementary School
- Valley View Elementary School
- Waldon Woods Elementary School

The 2026 recognition builds on the momentum of the 13 PGCPS schools honored in 2025 and demonstrates the district's growing focus on comprehensive wellness as part of the educational experience.

From nutritious meals and increased opportunities for physical activity to health services, mental health supports and partnerships that connect families with resources, PGCPS schools are taking a holistic approach to helping students thrive.

“This is what it looks like when wellness becomes part of the culture of a school,” Joseph said. “We are proud of every school recognized and especially proud of the educators, staff, students and families who make this work possible.”

The America's Healthiest Schools recognition is presented by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation to schools that demonstrate a commitment to advancing the health and well-being of students and staff through evidence-based practices and policies.

Governor Moore Announces New Maryland Headquarters for Founding Farmers

By PRESS OFFICER
Office of the Governor

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (Sept. 8, 2026)—Governor Wes Moore today announced that Founding Farmers—a farmer-owned restaurant, full-service catering, and distilling business—has expanded operations in Prince George's County. In 2024, Founding Farmers purchased 8100 Cryden Way in District Heights to grow its commercial kitchen; since then, the company has moved its D.C. headquarters into the 17,000 square-foot facility, here in Maryland.

The Prince George's County space is now fully operational, producing scratch-made food and drink—including house-roasted coffee, handcrafted

chocolates, fresh-baked pastries, and more—for Founding Farmers restaurants and its catering and events company. By the end of 2027, Founding Farmers expects to have created more than 90 new full-time jobs, making it a welcome addition to the Prince George's County community.

“Here in Maryland, we're welcoming businesses and building a competitive, dynamic economy that brings prosperity to our communities,” said Gov. Moore. “We are excited to welcome the Founding Farmers headquarters to our state, as they continue to expand on Maryland's world-class cuisine, champion our local farmers and bring high-quality food industry jobs to our people.”

Founding Farmers employs more

than 1,400 employees throughout the Mid-Atlantic, including its catering company and eight restaurant locations. As a farmer-owned establishment, the business has thrived on making its products from scratch, utilizing ingredients from trusted farmers, while continuing to send a greater portion of the food dollar back to its farmer-owners. The facility centralizes pieces of their production and administration in one space, including catering operations, some of its food and drink, holiday offerings, culinary classes, contact center, and more. Looking ahead, the space will support the future launch of a direct-to-consumer online shop, bringing Founding Farmers scratch-made products directly to customers nationwide.

“We're all-in for Maryland, and we're thrilled to have our District Heights headquarters,” said Co-founder of Founding Farmers and long-time Maryland resident Dan Simons. “The employee base is strong, the long-term investment thesis in the area is compelling, and the proximity to the Beltway is an essential ingredient for our expansion recipe that helps us better serve our restaurants, diners, and customers.”

The concept of Founding Farmers was originally conceived in 2005 and is majority owned by American family farmers, including the 70,000 members of the North Dakota Farmers Union. The group established its first restaurant in 2008 in Washington, D.C., expanding

to eight restaurant locations across the Mid-Atlantic, and opening its Founding Spirits distillery in 2016 in Washington, D.C. Each location upholds the Founding Farmers mission: delicious, sustainable food and drink made from scratch with high-quality ingredients sourced from family-owned farms, ranches, and producers across the nation. In 2023, the group launched Founding Farmers Co. Catering & Events, now competing directly with the top ten caterers in the trade area.

The Moore-Miller administration is committed to supporting all businesses that call Maryland home. To assist with

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To Be Equal: America's Reading Crisis Demands More Than Concern. It Demands Action.

Reading is the foundation upon which all learning rests. A child who struggles to read struggles to learn history, science, mathematics, and civics.

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Girado Smith Named to The Daily Record's 2026 Most Influential Marylanders

The annual recognition honors leaders whose influence extends well beyond their organizations to strengthen communities, shape industries, and improve the lives of Marylanders.

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TOWNS *and* NEIGHBORS

Brandywine-Aquasco by Audrey Johnson 301-922-5384

BOWIE STATE ALUMNI

BSUNA 2026 Homecoming After Dark Party: Bowie State Alumni, get ready. BSU Bulldogs, it’s Homecoming time. Bowie State University National Alumni Association, in conjunction with BSU Foundation, presents Homecoming After Dark Party. An unforgettable event of fellowship, music, vendors, networking, and Bulldog Pride while supporting a meaningful cause. Let’s do more than celebrate, we’re investing in the next generation of Bulldogs. Alumni Homecoming After Dark 2026. Saturday, October 24, 2026, 7 p.m.–Midnight at Boswell Hall, 6111 Columbian Way Bowie, Maryland. Early Bird Tickets & VIP Tables are sold out. Thank you for your overwhelming support. Advance tickets are \$50 available now. Buy now and save before prices increase at the door. Food Trucks, Vendors. Party with a purpose. Every ticket purchased helps strengthen the BSUNAA Scholarship Fund and supports future alumni engagement programs that keep our Bulldog family connected and thriving.

Because of supporters like you, BSUNAA made bold 2026 impacts. Awarded \$10,000 in scholarship to deserving Bowie State University students, helping them pursue their educational goals. Hosted the Inaugural BSUNAA Gala & Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony recognizing distinguished alumni and celebrating the outstanding achievements that continue to elevate the legacy of Bowie State University.

After the game, the reunion begins, Alumni, Greeks, classmates, friends, family, and supporters this is the reunion vibe you don’t want to miss. Come celebrate the memories we’ve made, reconnect with familiar faces, make new friendships, dance the night away, and most importantly help invest in the next generation of Bowie State students. Together, we can make this Homecoming one to remember while creating scholarship opportunities that will impact Bulldogs for years to come. We look forward to celebrating with you. Call your BSU crew and friends to make plans now. Share BSUNAA with fellow Alum! #BSU Homecoming #BSUNAA.

REVIVAL/JUBILEE

Clinton United Methodist Church, 10700 Brandywine Road, Clinton, Maryland will be celebrating their Revival/Jubilee September 18–20. September 18 at 6 p.m., Youth Revival Pastor Natiya Bennett. September 19 at 5 p.m. Revival Rev. Shemaiah Strickland. September 20 at 10:30 a.m. Rev. Sonja King.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN CHARLES COUNTY

The Charles County Historic Preservation Commission cordially invites you to the 12th Anniversary Preservation Reception and Awards Ceremony on Sunday, September 27, 2026, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at Historic Maxwell Hall, 17388 Teagues Point Road, Hughesville, Maryland. Rain Date is October 4, 2026. Light refreshments will be served. A tour of Maxwell Hall will follow the Ceremony. A donation of \$5 is encouraged which will go to the sponsors of our event (The Friends of Maxwell Hall and the Farm Heritage Conservancy).

CELEBRITIES WHO WENT TO BSU

Several notable actors, musicians, and public figures

who attended Bowie State University are MYLES FROST: The Tony Award-winning Broadway star who played Michael Jackson in “MJ the Musical” attended Bowie State University and completed his degree there. JOVAN ADEPO: The acclaimed actor known for his roles in “Fences”, “Baby-lon”, and “The Leftovers” graduated from Bowie State University with a degree in political science and history. TONI BRAXTON: The legendary R&B singer attended Bowie State University to study education before launching her professional music career. WALE (Olubowale Victor Akin-timhin): The prominent rapper and hip-hop artist attended Bowie State University before pursuing music full-time. CHRISTA McAULIFFE was an American teacher and astronaut from Concord, New Hampshire, who died on the Space Shuttle Challenger on mission STS-51-L, where she was serving as a payload specialist. KHARI LEE is an American former professional football player who was a tight end in the National Football League for (NFL). He played college football for the Bowie State Bulldogs. BRANDON TRISTAN TODD is a lobbyist for Washington Gas and a former American politician who represented Ward 4 on the Council of the District of Columbia. Todd previously worked in the Council office of Muriel Bowser and in various campaign positions during her successful campaign for Mayor of the District Columbia. Todd won a special election in May 2015, succeeding Muriel Bowser, who was elected as mayor. After serving one full term on the council, Todd lost the 2020 Democratic primary to Janeese Lewis George.

CRAB FEAST

All you can eat Crab Feast sponsored by Peter A. Gross Sr. Scholarship October 11, 2026. from 2–5 p.m. A Community Fundraiser. Adults \$75.00, Children 12 and under \$35.00. Advance purchased tickets only. No tickets are sold at door. Menu: Fried Chicken, Hot Dogs, Corn on the Cob, String Beans, Tea, Lemonade. Ticket Contacts: Shirley Cleaves 302-690-4260, Vivian Rich 804-301-9530, Michele Chase 240-882-3369. Cash or Cash app: SPAGScholarship. Crab Feast will be held at St. Philip’s Church Hall, 13801 Baden Westwood Road, Brandywine, Maryland.

BOWIE STATE HOMECOMING 2026

Bowie State University Homecoming main event Push Play Band, Pam Ward, Donnell Floyd, Go Go Mickey, Saturday, October 24, 2026. Doors open at 7 p.m. and the show starts at 9 p.m. 5S LOUNGE, 12617 Laurel Bowie Road, Laurel, Maryland 20708. Early bird tickets on sale now <https://BSUHomecoming2026.eventbrite.com>.

ANNIVERSARY BANQUET

Alexandria Chapel United Methodist Church Anniversary Banquet will be held Saturday, October 10, 2026, from 2–6 p.m. at Indian Head Pavilion 100 Walter Thomas Road, Indian Head, Maryland 20640. Pastor Nurbert A. Hughes. Tickets cost \$40.00. Telephone: 301-743-3939.

FedChoice Charitable Foundation and APLUS Deliver Essential Supplies to Local Students, Educators, and Young Families

By ANDREY GIDASPOV
FedChoice Charitable Foundation

LANHAM, Md. (Sept. 11, 2026)—The FedChoice Charitable Foundation (FCF) and the African American Postal League United States (APLUS) joined forces to support students, educators, and families across Prince George’s County through their second annual school supply drive.

FedChoice Charitable Foundation Board members joined the APLUS leadership team, led by Co-Founders Camille Wider and Angelo Wider, to deliver donations to Cora L. Rice Elementary School and support the Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPS) Adolescent Single Parents Program at International High School at Langley Park.

Thanks to the generosity of APLUS members and donors, the team provided school supplies, hygiene products, and two microwaves for teachers at Cora L. Rice Elementary School. They also delivered baby products to support adolescent single parents and their children, helping ensure young families have access to essential resources as the school year begins.

Dr. Kia Payne, Principal of Cora L. Rice Elementary School, and Kai Hernandez, Community Liaison, welcomed the donation team and thanked APLUS and FCF for investing in the well-being and success of local students and educators. Karina Juarez, PGCPS Adolescent Single Parents Coordinator, also ex-

pressed gratitude for the support provided to young parents participating in the program.

Brett Noll, FCF Board President, said:

“Supporting our local students, educators, and young families is at the heart of the FedChoice Charitable Foundation’s mission. We are proud to partner with APLUS and Cora L. Rice Elementary for a second year to provide resources that address real needs in our community.”

Camille Wider, Co-Founder, APLUS, said:

“It was truly rewarding to see APLUS

members from across the Washington metropolitan area join forces with FedChoice Credit Union and the FedChoice Charitable Foundation for our second annual school supply drive. Together, we supported Cora L. Rice Elementary School and the Prince George’s County Adolescent Single Parents Program with resources that will make a meaningful difference for students, educators, and young families. This effort reflects the power of partnership, generosity, and community service.”

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PHOTOS COURTESY FEDCHOICE CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

Events from A1

vided to registered guests.
Registration: bit.ly/honorblackmen
Information: Honoring the Divine Masculine Day
Phone: 240-600-1720
Email: bocccfoundation@gmail.com

St. Philip’s Little Chapel Food Pantry Distribution Sunday, September 20, 9–Noon

By PRESS OFFICER
St. Philip’s Episcopal Church

Our next St. Philip’s Little Chapel Food Pantry distribution event is scheduled for **Sunday, September 20, 2026** from 9 a.m. to noon. While supplies last, fresh produce, some frozen items, and non-perishable goods will be available. We are located at the corner of 6th and Prince George Streets in Laurel, MD, behind the church off Main Street. We encourage people to bring their reusable bag(s). We are also encouraging people to carpool and pay attention to the area they park as this is mostly a residential area. Please do not block the roads, intersection, or driveways.

Author and Entrepreneur Moniesha Shorter to Celebrate Release of “Function” With Fireside Chat and Book Signing in College Park

By RACINE TUCKER-HAMILTON
Moniesha Shorter

COLLEGE PARK, Md. (Sept. 8 2026)—Author, entrepreneur, and business strategist Moniesha Shorter celebrates the release of her new book, “Function: Embracing Your Divine Design for Purpose and Impact”, with a fireside chat and book signing on **Wednesday, September 23, 2026**, from 5 to 7 p.m. at Venture X in College Park, Maryland (5825 University Research Court, Suite 2000, College Park, MD 20740). Admission is free; [register on eventbrite](https://register.on.eventbrite). Books will be available on-site.

Shorter, a Prince George’s County resident, will be joined in conversation by Timothy Bond, publisher and founder of True Vine Publishing Co., for a discussion of the experiences, questions, and convictions that shaped Function and why she believes that understanding one’s purpose is only the beginning.

“People spend a lot of time trying to find their purpose, but I don’t believe purpose was ever intended to simply be discovered and admired,” says Shorter. “At some point, what you know has to become how you live. You have to make decisions that are aligned with what you believe you have been

called to do. That is really the heart of Function.”

Published August 20, Function examines the relationship between identity, faith, adversity, work, relationships, and the unique assignment each person is equipped to fulfill. Drawing from Shorter’s own experiences across corporate leadership, entrepreneurship, health challenges, family, faith, and personal reinvention, the book asks readers to look beyond traditional definitions of success and consider a more fundamental question: Are you functioning in the way you were designed to?

The book reflects a theme that has increasingly shaped Shorter’s work as an entrepreneur, strategist, and community builder: clarity alone does not create impact. Purpose becomes meaningful when it is accompanied by action, obedience and the willingness to use one’s gifts in service of something larger.

The September 23 event will create space for that conversation beyond the book’s pages. Bond and Shorter will discuss the writing process, the personal experiences behind Function, the difference between purpose and function, and what it looks like to move from reflection into action. The fireside chat will be followed by a book signing and reception.

Marietta Historic Site & Museum’s Community Day

FREE, Saturday, September 26, 2026, 11 a.m.–3 p.m.

By STACEY HAWKINS
Marietta Historic Site & Museum

FREE event for all ages! Join us **Saturday, September 26, 2026** from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. for a day with friends, family, and neighbors to celebrate our community! Celebrate America 250 at Marietta Historic Site & Museum. Enjoy Free Ice Cream available to everyone while supplies last. Browse the local Farmers Market, explore music, family crafts, nature center critters, listen to poetry, and see Native American and local archaeological finds.

Join a lively discussion on “The Declaration of Independence & What It Means Today” with Artura Jackson, Assistant Director for the Division of African American History of Historic Alexandria.

Visit our Public Affairs booth and see our Community Portrait Gallery with photos from last year’s Community Day. Family and friends can visit the Sankofa Mobile Museum with in-

teractive digital ways to “do” history!

Enjoy family crafts with the colorful Arts on a Roll Van. Families can try out a set of African drums and musical instruments. Learn how to dye scarves.

House tours will be at 11:30 a.m., 1 p.m., and 2:30 p.m., and the Law Office and Tack House will be open all day. Guests can have some friendly competition playing cornhole and horseshoes, as well as historical games and crafts to make and take home. We hope to see you here!

The L.H. Farmers Market is on site from 9 a.m.–1 p.m. for those who wish to come early and visit the market, as well as a mocktail vendor and a pound cake vendor.

For more information, please call 301-464-5291 or email marietta-house@pgparks.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.

Salute to all Veterans

November 11, 2026, 12–3 p.m.
Birchwood Recreation Center
1331 Fenwood Avenue, Oxon Hill MD 20745
Complimentary luncheon and patriotic entertainment by the Youth **RSVP by October 15, 2026** to
Chairman Tyria Henry, 202-300-8304/tyria788@gmail.com
Vice-Chairman Arnita A Foster, 240-521-2706/fosterarnita75@gmail.com

COMMUNITY

Wellpoint Maryland Helps Students Start the School Year Ready for Success

By ENID DOGGETT
Wellpoint Maryland

As students across Maryland prepared to return to the classroom, Wellpoint Maryland teamed up with community leaders and local physicians’ offices to help families get ready for the new school year. Through back-to-school events held across the state, Wellpoint distributed backpacks and essential school supplies, helping students start the year equipped with the tools they need to succeed.

Wellpoint Maryland also partnered with WPGC 95.5 for the station’s annual Community Cut for Kids event, a free, family-friendly celebration designed to help students head back to school looking and feeling their best. The event offered complimentary haircuts, braiding and other back-to-school resources, giving students an added boost of confidence as they prepared to return to the classroom.

These efforts highlight Wellpoint Maryland’s commitment to working alongside trusted community partners to support children and families throughout the state. By helping address practical back-to-school needs and creating opportunities for students to feel prepared and empowered, Wellpoint Maryland is helping young people begin the school year with confidence and ready to learn.



PHOTO COURTESY WELLPOINT MARYLAND

Wellpoint Maryland also partnered with WPGC 95.5 for the station’s annual Community Cut for Kids event, a free, family-friendly celebration designed to help students head back to school looking and feeling their best.

Finalist from A1

learning for educators and leaders, helps design her school’s master schedule to expand academic support for multilingual learners, and chairs the Recruitment and Intake Committee, connecting newly enrolled students with critical services.

“I see my multilingual learners and my students as extensions of my family,” Allsup said. “They look like my family. They talk like my family. We just have a lot of cultural connections.”

Growing up navigating Arab, Latino and American cultures, Allsup said she sometimes felt as though she did not fully belong in any one of them.

It was in public school that she found a place where she could simply be a student.

“The public school system served everyone, regardless of their backgrounds or their beliefs,” she said. “I felt like it was a place where I could just be a student and belong. And that’s what I strive to bring to my classroom. I really want school to be a place where all of our students can just be their authentic selves and belong.”

That belief is reflected in her classroom practice. Allsup works with colleagues to incorporate diverse texts that reflect students’ identities, teaches students about the evolution of American identity and the role of immigrants in shaping the country, and creates opportunities for students to build community through discussion, shared reading and debate.

She also recognizes that multilingual learners are not a single group with a single set of needs.

“Students who are new to the country, students who are more experienced long-term multilingual

learners, and students with interrupted education all have different needs,” she said.

Allsup challenges fellow educators to look beyond language proficiency and recognize what students already know and can do.

“We have such a great opportunity to be the catalyst for change in students’ lives,” she said. “When an educator believes in them and helps, most importantly, to build their sense of academic identity as a student, that’s where change begins to happen.”

Her work extends to families as well.

As the daughter of immigrants, Allsup understands the sacrifices families make in pursuit of opportunity for their children.

“Immigrant families make so many sacrifices and take so many risks just for the chance of providing a better life for their loved ones,” she said. “They place their complete trust in us ... to nurture their children. So for me, families are our strongest partners in the classroom.”

Maryland Teacher of the Year finalists were selected from the 24 local school system Teachers of the Year across Maryland. Finalists were evaluated on rigorous criteria including student achievement, teaching philosophy, academic results, community involvement and knowledge of educational issues.

The 2027 Maryland Teacher of the Year will be announced during a gala reception and dinner on Friday, October 9, at Martin’s Valley Mansion in Cockeysville. The Maryland Teacher of the Year will compete for the National Teacher of the Year Award, which will be announced in April, and will serve during the 2026–2027 school year as a speaker and advisor on statewide education issues.

Antioch Baptist Church to Host Community Day, Connecting Prince George’s County Residents With Health, Wellness and Community Resources

By PRESS OFFICER
Antioch Baptist Church of Upper Marlboro

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (Sept. 9, 2026)—For nearly 50 years, Antioch Baptist Church of Upper Marlboro has been a part of and served the Prince George’s County community. Continuing that legacy of service, Antioch will host its Community Day on **Sunday, September 20, 2026**, bringing residents together for a day of worship, community resources, health and wellness information, family activities, food and fellowship.

Held under the theme “Elevating Our Community through Support, Engagement and Awareness,” Community Day reflects Antioch’s commitment to reaching beyond the walls of the church and serving as a resource and partner to the surrounding community.

The day will begin with an outdoor worship service at 10 a.m., followed by Community Day activities from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. at Antioch Baptist Church,

EVENT DETAILS:

WHAT: Antioch Baptist Church Community Day 2026

WHEN: Sunday, September 20, 2026

OUTDOOR WORSHIP: 10 a.m.

COMMUNITY DAY: 12–3 p.m.

WHERE: Antioch Baptist Church of Upper Marlboro
13205 Old Marlboro Pike
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

13205 Old Marlboro Pike, Upper Marlboro, MD 20772.

Community Day will connect residents with resources and activities focused on several areas of community well-being, including:

- **Know Your Numbers**—vital health checks and awareness
- **Mental Health Matters**—resources and support
- **Senior Matters**—information and resources for older adults
- **Local Farming & Produce**—fresh,

local and healthy options

- **Food Trucks & More**
- **Kid and Play Activities**—games, crafts, music and family fun

“At Antioch, we believe the church has a responsibility to serve not only those inside its walls, but the community around us,” said Pastor L. Tanai White. “Community Day is an opportunity to bring people together, connect families with meaningful resources and demonstrate what it looks like when the church and community work together.”

Community Day is free and open to all, and residents are encouraged to bring their families, friends and lawn chairs and spend the day connecting with neighbors and community resources.

For nearly 50 years, Antioch Baptist Church of Upper Marlboro has served the Prince George’s County community through faith, fellowship, outreach and service. Antioch remains committed to reaching beyond the walls of the church by supporting, engaging and connecting with the community it serves.

Get Moving, Get Screened and Get Connected at Free Prince George’s County Health Fair

Top Ladies of Distinction, Inc. Prince George’s County Chapter to host Sept. 26 event featuring health screenings, interactive wellness activities and fun for all ages

By LADY MARIA JAMES
Top Ladies of Distinction, Inc.
Prince George’s County Chapter

CAPITOL HEIGHTS, Md. (Aug. 17, 2026)—Get ready to move, learn and take charge of your health! From children ready for a challenge to older adults looking for fun ways to stay active, there will be something for every generation at the Let’s Move Prince George’s County Community Health Fair.

The Top Ladies of Distinction, Inc. Prince George’s County Chapter, in partnership with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Department of Parks and Recreation, will host the free event **Saturday, Sept. 26**, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Oakcrest Community Center in Capitol Heights.

Under the theme “Wellness for All: Mind, Body, and Community,” this won’t be your typical health fair. In addition to valuable health information, attendees will be invited to get up, participate and try something new through interactive activities for all ages.

Children can take on a Kids Challenge, while teens and adults can get moving through fitness activities or learn practical techniques during a self-defense demonstration. Adults and older residents can try chair yoga, and attendees can pick up healthy eating ideas through a nutrition workshop and cooking demonstration.



PHOTO CREDIT SLK PRODUCTIONS

Teens and adults can get moving through fitness activities.

Men’s health will also take center stage, with a special panel designed to engage men in conversations about their health and wellness.

Visitors can learn important information about their health through screenings and services, including blood pressure and A1C checks, vision and hearing screenings, and sickle cell trait testing and education. Mental health and other community wellness resources will also be available.

The fair will bring together organizations including the Prince George’s County Health Department, AARP Maryland, Howard University Sickle Cell Center, NAMI, the Colorectal Cancer Alliance and other health and com-

munity partners.

Whether you come to get screened, join an activity, learn about men’s health, discover a new healthy habit or enjoy the day with your family, the health fair offers Prince George’s County residents an opportunity to make wellness active, accessible and fun.

EVENT DETAILS

Let’s Move Prince George’s County Community Health Fair
Saturday, Sept. 26 | 10 a.m.–2 p.m.
Oakcrest Community Center
1300 Capitol Heights Blvd., Capitol Heights, MD 20743
Free and open to the community

Pack the Pack Delivers Over 16,000 Pounds of School Supplies to Maryland Students

By PRESS OFFICER
Support Education Foundation

ROCKVILLE, Md. (Sept. 11, 2026)—The Support Education Foundation recently completed its annual Pack the Pack initiative, distributing more than 16,000 pounds of backpacks and school supplies to help 5,000 students across 14 Maryland counties start the new school year ready to learn.

Volunteers from the Support Education Foundation, Educational Systems Federal Credit Union and the community gathered at the Foundation’s office in Rockville to sort, pack and prepare supplies for distribution to students in Allegany, Anne Arundel, Calvert, Caroline, Charles, Dorchester, Frederick, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George’s, Queen Anne’s, St. Mary’s, Talbot and Wicomico counties.

“Pack the Pack is about making sure students have the tools they need to walk into the classroom ready to learn and



PHOTO CREDIT SUPPORT EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Support Education Foundation Board member, Andrea Hall, packs a backpack with school supplies for students in need.

succeed,” said Dominic Powell, Board Member of the Support Education Foundation. “Thanks to the tremendous support of our volunteers and community partners, 5,000 students across 14 Maryland counties will begin the school year with the supplies they need.”

Among the organizations receiving supplies was the Education Foundation of Anne Arundel County Public Schools.

“We are deeply grateful for the generosity of the Support Education Foundation and its donation of 150 filled backpacks,” said Joe Callahan, Executive Director of the Education Foundation of Anne Arundel County Public Schools. “These critical school supplies will ensure that our students have everything they need to start the new school year ready to learn. The supplies allow our families, especially those who are unable to afford them, to breathe a sigh of relief

COMMENTARY

Marc Morial

President and CEO, National Urban League



To Be Equal:

America’s Reading Crisis Demands More Than Concern. It Demands Action.

New York City’s troubling decline in reading scores, despite one of the most ambitious literacy reform efforts in the nation, is a wakeup call for the entire nation.

Across the country, reading achievement continues to decline. Nearly 40 percent of fourth graders read below the basic level and roughly a third of eighth graders are reading below basic, the highest share ever recorded.

Taken together, these numbers reveal a national literacy crisis that threatens economic opportunity, educational equity, and our nation’s future competitiveness.

Reading is not merely another subject in school. Reading is the foundation upon which all learning rests. A child who struggles to read struggles to learn history, science, mathematics, and civics. A young person who cannot effectively read and analyze complex information faces barriers to college completion, workforce success, and informed participation in our democracy.

That is why the growing literacy crisis is fundamentally an opportunity crisis. Behind every percentage point is a child whose future opportunities hang in the balance. Persistent achievement gaps mean that Black and Latino students continue to bear a disproportionate share of the consequences when reading instruction falls short. If we are serious about economic mobility and educational justice, literacy must be at the center of the conversation.

For more than two decades, many schools embraced Balanced Literacy approaches that sought to cultivate a love of reading by putting books in students’ hands and encouraging independent reading. The approach was well-intentioned, but too often foundational skills instruction, particularly phonics and decoding, suffered.

The evidence is increasingly clear that explicit, systematic instruction helps more children become successful readers. States and school districts that are embracing these principles deserve credit for

moving in the right direction. But millions of students are already in middle school, high school, and even college struggling to read complicated texts, analyze difficult arguments, and complete entire books.

What is our plan for them?

Too many students arrive in high school lacking the reading stamina necessary to engage deeply with literature, history, or complex informational texts. College professors increasingly describe students who struggle with lengthy assignments that previous generations navigated more comfortably.

To be clear, Balanced Literacy alone cannot explain these trends. Increased screen time, constant digital distractions, shortened attention spans, and the dominance of algorithm-driven content all influence students’ reading habits and learning experiences.

Yet recognizing these factors cannot become an excuse for inaction.

Instead, it should compel us to think more broadly about literacy.

The challenge before us is not simply helping children sound out words. It is helping them develop the capacity to wrestle with complex ideas, sustain attention, evaluate evidence, and build knowledge through reading. It is helping them become informed citizens and lifelong learners.

And that requires a comprehensive, systemic strategy.

We need high-quality literacy instruction beginning in early childhood settings and extending throughout elementary school. We need to strengthen early intervention so that struggling readers receive support before learning gaps become

entrenched. We must carefully examine the quality and effectiveness of programs serving our youngest learners, including Head Start and other early childhood initiatives.

At the same time, we need a national commitment to literacy recovery for older students. Districts and states should be developing evidence-based strategies that help adolescents strengthen comprehension, vocabulary, knowledge-building, and engagement with complex texts. Students who fell behind during the pandemic and those who continue to struggle deserve intensive support, not lowered expectations.

We should also have serious conversations about the role of technology in children’s lives. Restricting unnecessary screen exposure, particularly in the early grades, should be part of a broader effort to rebuild reading habits and attention spans that support learning.

More concerning than the decline in reading scores is the absence of a clear, large-scale strategy to address the growing crisis. Every year that a struggling reader falls further behind increases the likelihood that they will face lifelong educational and economic disadvantages.

The recent reading results from New York City are a warning. The national NAEP results are an even louder one. Together, they tell us that incremental change is not enough.

We know more about how children learn to read than ever before. We know that literacy is the gateway to opportunity. What remains to be seen is whether we have the collective will to act with the urgency this moment demands.

Our children cannot afford for us to wait.

—September 5, 2026

HEALTH *and* WELLNESS

Fall and Holiday Season Workshops and Support Groups Foster Healing After Loss

By ELYZABETH MARCUSSEN
Hospice of the Chesapeake

PASADENA, Md. (Sept. 10, 2026)—As autumn leaves change and holiday gatherings approach, the season can bring a mix of nostalgia, stress and heightened grief for those who have lost a loved one. Chesapeake Life Center offers a variety of workshops, support groups and special events throughout the fall and into winter designed to provide connection, comfort and meaningful opportunities for healing.

From nature-based experiences and creative expression to support groups, holiday-focused programming and community gatherings, these offerings help participants navigate grief while connecting with others who understand. Programs such as the Memory Pillow Making Workshop, which turns a loved one’s clothing into a lasting keepsake and A Blue Christmas Family Karaoke, a night of music and remembrance during the holidays, join favorites like Paws, Poses and Peace and SoulCollage Studio.

With both in-person and virtual options available, the center’s grief professionals are committed to helping individuals and families find hope, resilience and connection as they move through their grief journeys, especially during a season that can make loss feel even more present.

WORKSHOPS AND SPECIAL PROGRAMS

- **Creating Hope: Therapeutic Art Exercises in Grief Work**—Open to teens and adults, this session uses art therapy techniques to help participants remember loved ones, process grief and build coping strategies. Participants will take part in a garden journaling exercise, using natural elements including pressed flowers to create a window box card. They will be exploring what’s growing, fading, blooming and in need of pruning or nurturing in their lives. It will be held at 10 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 10, at the Burnett Center for Hope and Healing, 4559 Sixes Road, Prince Frederick, Maryland. The cost is \$10.
- **Self-Care While Grieving: Chunky Blanket Edition**—Grief can feel especially heavy in the fall, making it an important time to slow down, create and care for yourself. Take part in a comforting, hands-on experience making a chunky blanket while connecting with others who understand the grief journey. No experience is needed. It will be held from 6:30 to 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 13, on the John & Cathy Belcher Campus, 90 Ritchie Highway, Pasadena. The cost is \$40.
- **The Healing Power of Nature**—Come together with others experiencing loss and pot plants to take home while reflecting on the life lost to each of us as we honor the life that continues to grow. Planting supplies will be provided. This event will be held from 10:30 a.m. to noon Saturday, Oct. 17, on the John & Cathy Belcher Campus, 90 Ritchie Highway, Pasadena. The cost is free.
- **Little Pumpkins, Big Feelings**—Children ages 6 to 18 can gather for a cozy fall evening designed to help them explore feelings, creativity and connection! First there will be a special screening of a favorite seasonal movie. Then all will enjoy some pumpkin painting before heading outside for a nature walk to take in the sights and sounds of the season. Through play, creativity and time outdoors, children will have an opportunity to talk about big feelings, practice healthy ways to express themselves and simply enjoy being together. This event will take place from 5:30 to 7



- p.m. Thursday, Oct. 22, on the John & Cathy Belcher Campus, 90 Ritchie Highway, Pasadena. The cost is free.
- **Handling the Holidays: A Workshop for Those Living with Loss**—After a loss, celebrations hit different. This workshop explores what to expect from grief and strategies to manage holiday stress, schedules, invitations, interactions and traditions. There will also be an opportunity to honor memories. Separate sessions are available for adults and for children ages 6 and older. It will be held from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturday, Oct. 24, at the Burnett Center for Hope and Healing, 4559 Sixes Road, Prince Frederick. The cost is \$10 per person or \$20 per household. Registration is required by Oct. 19.
- **Memory Pillow Making Workshop**—Using a button-down shirt or T-shirt belonging to a loved one, participants will receive step-by-step support to transform it into a keepsake pillow. No sewing experience is required. This workshop is limited to 10 participants and registration is required. It will take place from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturday, Oct. 24, on the John & Cathy Belcher Campus, 90 Ritchie Highway, Pasadena. The cost is \$10.
- **Lessons from Nature: Carrying Love Through the Seasons**—This quarterly children’s nature event is a seasonal, nature-informed gathering designed to help children and teens ages 6 to 18 express emotions and honor loved ones through expressive arts, gentle outdoor experiences and guided reflection. Facilitated by Marie Burgess, a grief therapist, nature-informed therapist and hospice volunteer, it will be held from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturday, Nov. 7, on the John & Cathy Belcher Campus, 90 Ritchie Highway, Pasadena. Light snacks will be provided. The cost is free.
- **Paws, Poses and Peace: Yoga and Therapy Dogs**—This event features guided meditation, soothing breathing exercises, gentle yoga postures and cuddle time with therapy dogs. No experience, special ability or specific reason is required and people of all ages are welcome. Some mats will be available for use. It will be held from 6:30 to 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 10, on the John & Cathy Belcher Campus, 90 Ritchie Highway, Pasadena. The cost is \$5.
- **SoulCollage Studio**—Join others for a time to create unique collages reflecting and expressing loss and the journey through life. It will meet from 2 to 5 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 16, at the Hospice of the Chesapeake offices at 1221 Caraway Court, Largo, Maryland. The supply fee is \$10.
- **Living with Loss Through the Holidays**—This workshop offers guidance on coping with the holiday season while grieving. Designed for adults ages 18 and older, it will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 19, at the Hospice of the Chesapeake of-

fices at 1221 Caraway Court, Largo. The cost is \$10 to cover supplies.

- **Loss of Life Partner/Spouse Workshop**—This support group is for those who have experienced the recent loss of a life partner or spouse within the last year. It will be held from 5 to 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 3, at Hospice of the Chesapeake’s offices at 2505 Davis Road in Waldorf. The cost is free.
- **A Blue Christmas Family Karaoke**—Join in on a night of music and karaoke alongside a music therapist to honor loved ones by singing songs they loved or shared together, solo or as a group. All ages are welcome to participate and find connection with others navigating loss during the holidays. It will be held from 5:30 to 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 8, at the Hope and Healing Center on the John & Cathy Belcher Campus, 90 Ritchie Highway, Pasadena. The cost is free.

VIRTUAL SUPPORT

- **Loss of Life Partner Virtual Support Group**—This online support group is for those who have lost a life partner or spouse. It will meet from 10:30 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays, Oct. 13, Nov. 10 and Dec. 8 via Zoom. The cost is free.
- **Caring for the Caregiver**—This support group is available for family caregivers of any Chesapeake Supportive Care or Hospice of the Chesapeake and affiliates’ patients. Topics include the importance of self-care, effective coping skills and how to access local supportive resources. It will meet from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. on Thursdays, Oct. 8, Nov. 12 and Dec. 10 via Zoom. The cost is free.
- **Holding Steady While the Floor is Gone: A Workshop on Parenting While Grieving**—This virtual gathering offers guidance for those parenting while grieving, including self-care strategies

See HEALING Page A6

The Prince George’s Post

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BUSINESS AND FINANCE

Hospice of the Chesapeake Welcomes Dr. Emily Grodinsky to its Team of Physicians

By ELYZABETH MARCUSSEN
Hospice of the Chesapeake

PASADENA, Md. (Sept. 10, 2026)—Hospice of the Chesapeake is pleased to announce that Dr. Emily Grodinsky has joined its team as a hospice and palliative physician.

Grodinsky is originally from the Chicago area, where she attended Northwestern University for her undergraduate studies before moving to New York City to pursue medical school at Weill Cornell Medical College. She went on to complete a neurology residency at Rush University Medical Center, followed by a vascular neurology fellowship focused on the care of patients suffering from a stroke at the University of Pennsylvania. From 2021 to 2024, she practiced as a neurologist in Northern Virginia.

It was her experience caring for patients with life-altering neurological conditions that inspired Grodinsky to pursue dedicated training in hospice and palliative care. She went on to complete a Hospice and Palliative Medicine fellowship at MedStar Health Georgetown University/Washington Hospital Center, deepening her ability to support patients and families through some of life’s most challenging moments with compassion and expertise.

“We are delighted to welcome Dr. Grodinsky to our team,” said Becky Miller, CEO of Hospice of the Chesapeake. “Her background in neurology brings valuable insight into the complex challenges many of our patients and families face. Her decision to dedicate her career to hospice and palliative care reflects the compassion and commitment she brings to every patient she serves. We are grateful for the expertise, kindness and perspective she adds to our team and the care we provide each day.”

Grodinsky joins Hospice of the Chesapeake’s team of physicians, including Hospice Medical Director and Vice President of Medical Affairs Dr. Thomas Walsh and hospice and palliative physicians Drs. Jennifer Clark, Ruth Gallatin, Susie Kim, Ever Ponciano and Frank Ryan.



COURTESY PHOTO

Dr. Emily Grodinsky, Hospice and Palliative Care Physician, Hospice of the Chesapeake

TEDxLargo: Love, AI and the Art of Not Drowning

“Ideas That Nourish” brings provocative talks, fresh perspectives and bold ideas to Prince George’s County September 17

By PRESS OFFICER
The Arc Prince George’s County

LARGO, Md. (Sept. 10, 2026)—What do love, AI, resilience and the possibilities we can’t yet see have in common?

They’re among the big ideas taking the stage at TEDxLargo 2026: Ideas That Nourish, happening one week from today—**Thursday, September 17**, from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Center for Performing Arts at Prince George’s Community College.

This year’s theme, “Ideas That Nourish,” explores the power of ideas to feed our curiosity, challenge what we believe, strengthen our communities and inspire us to see new possibilities.

And the talks promise to get people thinking.

This year’s speakers will tackle ideas that are personal, provocative and sometimes unexpected. Talk topics include “The Other AI You Need,” “The Art of Not Drowning,” “You Can’t Choose What You’ve Never Seen” and “Love Has a PR Problem”—just a glimpse of what audiences will hear from the TEDxLargo stage.

Last year’s inaugural TEDxLargo demonstrated how far a local idea can travel. Ashley Viagbo’s TEDxLargo talk was later selected as a TED Editors’ Pick, bringing national and international attention to a voice from Prince George’s County.

Now, TEDxLargo returns with a new group of voices and a new question: What ideas will stay with us this year?

“Some ideas stay with you. They make you think differently, start a conversation or inspire you to do something you hadn’t considered before,” said Rob Malone, CEO of The Arc Prince George’s County. “That’s what we want TEDxLargo to be. ‘Ideas That Nourish’ is about bringing people together around ideas that have the potential to make a difference.”

Tickets are available now for TEDxLargo 2026: Ideas That Nourish.

WHAT: TEDxLargo 2026: Ideas That Nourish **WHEN:** Thursday, September 17, 2026 | 6–9 p.m. **WHERE:** Center for Performing Arts at Prince George’s Community College, 301 Largo Road, Largo, MD 20774

TICKETS: TEDx-Largo.com

Girado Smith Named to The Daily Record’s 2026 Most Influential Marylanders

Educational Systems Federal Credit Union President & CEO Recognized for Leadership, Community Impact, and Advancing Financial Opportunity Across Maryland

By MONICA BISCOPE
ESFCU

GREENBELT, Md. (Sept. 10, 2026)—Girado Smith, President and Chief Executive Officer of Educational Systems Federal Credit Union (ESFCU), has been named to The Daily Record’s 2026 Influential Marylanders, a recognition honoring individuals whose leadership, vision, and service are making a lasting impact across the State.

The annual recognition honors leaders whose influence extends well beyond their organizations to strengthen communities, shape industries, and improve the lives of Marylanders.

“I am deeply humbled and honored to receive this recognition” said Girado Smith. “While this award bears my name, it truly belongs to our Board of Directors, our dedicated Educational Systems FCU Ambassadors, and the educators, students, and families who inspire our work every day. Together, we are building stronger communities by expanding opportunity and improving financial well-being across Maryland.”

Since being named President and CEO in January 2023, following more than 18 years as the Credit Union’s Chief Financial Officer, Smith has led ESFCU through one of the most transformative periods in its 70-year history. Under his leadership, the Credit Union successfully merged with Howard University Employees Federal Credit Union, expanded its field of membership to include Mount St. Mary’s University, Frederick County Public Schools, and Howard County Public School System, opened new branches in Bowie, Lexington Park, and Easton, and continued to strengthen its position as one of Maryland’s leading financial institutions. Today, ESFCU manages ap-

proximately \$1.4 billion in assets, serves more than 80,000 members through 13 branches statewide, and remains steadfast in its mission of serving the education community.

“Girado is a visionary leader whose influence extends far beyond our organization,” said Alonia C. Sharps, Chair of ESFCU’s Board of Directors. “He leads with integrity, strategic vision, and an unwavering commitment to serving others. Under his leadership, Educational Systems FCU has grown stronger, expanded its reach, and deepened its impact while remaining true to its mission of supporting educators, students, and families throughout Maryland.”

Smith’s leadership philosophy is rooted in empowering people and investing in culture. He refers to every employee as an “Ambassador,” reflecting his belief that each individual represents the Credit Union’s promise to its members and communities. That people-first culture has earned Educational Systems FCU national workplace recognition, including designation as USA Today Top Workplace in 2026 and a Washington Post Top Workplace in 2025, honors based entirely on anonymous employee feedback.

Beyond organizational excellence, Smith has championed initiatives that expand educational opportunity and financial wellness throughout Maryland. In 2025 alone, The Credit Union’s Support Education Foundation awarded \$142,000 in scholarships and professional development grants to Maryland educators and students. Through partnerships with organizations including Free State PTA, the Howard County Library System, and school systems across Maryland, the Credit Union continues to provide financial education resources that empower

thousands of families each year.

Smith’s leadership has also earned national industry recognition. In March 2025, he was inducted into the African American Credit Union Coalition (AACUC) Hall of Fame, one of the industry’s highest honors, in part for his role in creating the Rosemary Brinkley C-Level Leadership Development Program, which prepares emerging executives for leadership roles nationwide. He was also recognized with the 2025 Washington Business Journal Diversity in Business Award for his commitment to advancing inclusive leadership and expanding opportunity within both the workplace and the broader community.

“It has never been about the recognitions,” Smith said. “It has always been about the educators, students, and families who trust us with their financial lives, and about doing right by them every single day. When we remain focused on serving others with excellence, everything else follows.”

Smith and his fellow honorees will be honored at an upcoming awards ceremony on Wednesday, September 30, 2026 at the Grand Lodge of Maryland in Cockeysville, Maryland. To learn more about The Daily Record’s Influential Marylanders, visit thedailyrecord.com

Educational Systems Federal Credit Union (ESFCU) *has proudly served the education community since 1955, providing financial solutions tailored for educators, students, and their families. With \$1.3 billion in assets, 13 branch locations across Maryland, and more than 200 Ambassadors, ESFCU is committed to supporting its members with personalized banking services, financial education, and community-driven initiatives. Learn more at www.esfcu.org.*

Social Security Matters

Ask Rusty:

Must I Enroll in Medicare at Age 65?

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

Dear Rusty: I will be turning 65 next month, I am currently retired and I am not on Social Security. My question is: is there anything I have to do, if I don’t want Medicare? I am on my wife’s employer plan, and she works for the Postal Service as a Rural Carrier. She doesn’t plan on retiring for another 8 yrs. Also, I would like to wait till my full retirement age (FRA) before I draw Social Security at 67. Do I have to draw Medicare at that point? **Signed: Retired but Curious**

Dear Retired but Curious: As long as you are covered by a “creditable” healthcare plan (such as that from your wife’s US Postal Service employer), you can defer enrolling in Medicare until your Postal Service Health Benefit (PSHB) coverage from your wife’s employer ends. When that happens, you (and your wife) will enter a Medicare “Special Enrollment Period” (SEP) during which you can enroll in Medicare without incurring a Late Enrollment Penalty. Thus, in your specific circumstances, you don’t need to do anything about enrolling in Medicare when you turn 65.

That is still true, regardless of when you claim your Social Security benefits. If you claim Social Security at age 67 and before your wife retires from the USPS, you will be required to take Medicare Part A (coverage for inpatient hospitalization services), but Medicare Part A is premium-free for those also eligible for Social Security.

However, enrollment in Medicare Part B (coverage for outpatient healthcare services) is always optional because there is a premium associated with it, and you can continue to defer enrollment in Medicare Part B as long as you have “creditable” healthcare coverage from your wife’s employer (even while you are collecting Social Security).

When you apply for Social Security, you can inform SS that you are declining Medicare Part B because you are still covered by your wife’s USPS employer healthcare plan. Then, when your wife retires and you lose your USPS healthcare coverage, you can enroll in Medicare Part B at that time without a late enrollment penalty.

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.

AMAC | Washington DC | 917-846-8485

Headquarters from A1

project costs, the company is eligible for a \$375,000 conditional loan through Advantage Maryland, administered by the Maryland Department of Commerce, and a matching \$375,000 conditional loan through Prince George’s County’s Economic Development Incentive Fund.

“We are thrilled to partner with Founding Farmers as it continues to grow in Maryland. This farmer-owned enterprise is set to enrich Prince George’s County by bringing new jobs and a strong commitment to the agriculture industry to the re-

gion,” said Maryland Department of Commerce Secretary Harry Coker, Jr. “We look forward to celebrating this exciting achievement with the company.”

“The arrival of Founding Farmers represents a powerful investment in both our local workforce and importance for the future of sustainable agriculture. Their growth strengthens our commitment to supporting Prince George’s County producers, expanding our workforce, and building a resilient, community-centered economy,” said Prince George’s County Executive Aisha N. Braveboy. “We are proud to welcome Founding Farmers as

Supplies from A2

This collaborative effort reflects the shared commitment of the FedChoice Charitable Foundation and APLUS to expanding educational opportunities, supporting families, and building stronger

communities through service and partnership.

The FedChoice Charitable Foundation advances financial well-being and community prosperity through charitable giving, volunteerism, financial education, and strategic

partnerships that create lasting impact.

The African American Postal League United States (APLUS) promotes community service, leadership development, education, and advocacy through programs and initiatives that improve the lives of individuals and families nationwide.

Students from A3

knowing their community is there to support them.”

Pack the Pack is part of the Support Education Foundation’s commitment to helping students, educators and schools

thrive. Through partnerships and volunteerism, the Foundation provides resources and opportunities that strengthen education throughout the communities it serves.

The Support Education Foundation is a

501(c)(3) organization founded by Educational Systems Federal Credit Union in 2017 to support student programs, scholarships and professional development opportunities for educators. For more information, visit SupportEducation.org.

