

# The Beltsville News

An All Volunteer Newspaper

Vol. 74, Number 1

Beltsville, Maryland

January 2026



Our new Speaker of the House of Delegates, District 21's Joseline Peña-Melnyk

## Joseline Peña-Melnyk Makes History as Maryland House Speaker

By Rick Bergmann

History was made on Tuesday, December 16, 2025, as Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk became the first Afro-Latina and first immigrant to be named Speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates. She is the 109th Speaker and only the second woman of color to hold the position.

Peña-Melnyk has represented District 21, including Beltsville, for a decade, earning a reputation as a tireless advocate for her community. She was a constant presence at meetings during the fight against Tiffany Green over the local fire department, proving her commitment to constituents.

Born in the Dominican Republic, she immigrated to the U.S. as a child and grew up in New York with her single mother and sister. Her website notes, "Her mom worked in New York's garment industry, often struggled to make ends meet, and there was a time when the family was on welfare because Joseline's father did not pay child support. But despite tough circumstances, Joseline succeeded in school and learned English."

Delegate Ben Barnes praised her as "somebody who will be there for you in a time of need, someone who will pick you up when you need it." Her reputation

**SPEAKER**  
continues on page 2

## Pack 1031 Getting Ready to Celebrate our Holidays!

By Regina Halper

For the month of December Cub Pack 1031 has been practicing doing an opening and closing to give all the scouts a chance to present, post and lead the pack. They are all doing a great job!

We also collected toys for WJLA Toys for Tots collection and last Friday the toys were taken to the College Park Ikea for donation.

At our Holiday Party we learned how all the different ways our families celebrate the holidays. We saw an icon of the Nativity from our Russian Orthodox Tiger, learned how to play the Dreidel game and saw a menorah with our Jewish family and learned how diverse our pack is with seven different faiths! Very fascinating to learn about our ways of celebrating the Winter holidays.

Check out our new website:



Arrow of Light Scout Breanna H. guides the younger scouts in leading the opening of the Den Meeting.

<https://pack1031.org/> There you can find information on how to join our Pack.

If you are interested in Cub Scouts, contact Regina Halper at Pack1031cubscouting@gmail.com for information. We are a

family scouting unit. During the school year we meet at Beltsville Academy for our den meetings and in the summer, we meet at least twice a month mostly in the parks.

## Spreading Holiday Cheer to Beltsville's Children



Christmas Gifts waiting to be delivered to local families from the Women's Community Club of Beltsville!

Christmas cheer is on the way for the 2025 holiday season thanks to the Women's Community Club of Beltsville. This year, the club provided Christmas presents for 96 local children, helping to make the season brighter for families in our community.

A complete list of generous sponsors will be published in the February edition of the Beltsville News.

Those interested in joining the Women's Community Club of Beltsville are invited to attend the next meeting on Monday, January 12, at 7:00 p.m. Meetings are held at the Beltsville Boys and Girls Club, 11705 Roby Avenue. For more information, email [womensclubbeltsville@gmail.com](mailto:womensclubbeltsville@gmail.com).

## Help Keep Our Community Warm This Winter

By Cpl. Fraser, Prince George's County Police, Beltsville Division VI

As the colder months arrive, we invite our community to come together to support those in need. We are collecting new socks, hats, and gloves to provide warmth and comfort to individuals and families in our area. All donated items will be dis-

tributed to schools within our community.

Donation Drop-Off Location:  
PGPD – District VI  
4321 Sellman Road  
Beltsville, MD 20705

Every contribution, no matter the size, makes a difference. Thank you for helping keep our neighbors warm this winter.

## NEXT ISSUE:

Submissions Due

No Later Than:

January 14

Paper Out:

January 24

## News You Can Use



Karen Coakley

By Karen Coakley

## Happy New Year!

While helping local families at Thanksgiving, I learned about a wonderful year-round food assistance program called **SHARE Food Network**. Operated by Catholic Charities, SHARE allows *anyone* to purchase wholesome, nutritious groceries at a greatly reduced cost—no application or eligibility requirements needed.

For just **\$30 per month**, participants can purchase a **Value Package** that includes up to **\$50 worth of food**. The December package, for example, included a whole chicken, one pound of marinated chicken strips, one pound of tilapia fillets, one pound of ground sausage, and **8–12 pounds of fresh produce**. Packages typically contain **four to six pounds of frozen protein** along with fresh fruits and vegetables, and seasonal items or desserts are often available.

## How SHARE Works

SHARE operates through community host sites and

**NEWS YOU CAN USE**  
continues on page 7



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Struggling with job loss, to pay rent, to get food, or need emergency help? The Beltsville Adventist Community Center (BACC) exists to help those in the Beltsville Community and beyond take the next step toward financial independence.

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- Professional Counseling

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Tues and Wed 9 am to 2 pm.

### Office calling HOURS:

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9 am to 4:30 pm

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- SAIL: Apply for services on-line
- Food Supplement (FS)
- Medical Assistance for Families & Children (FAC)
- Maryland Children's Health Program (MCHP)
- Recertify—(Redetermination) -Dropoff documents
- Other DSS Emergency Assistance

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## Beltsville News: Blast from the Past

By Ted Ladd

(From the Beltsville News issue of January 2000)

### Artist Natalie Fleming Takes First Place

Natalie Fleming's "Croton in Bloom" received the coveted first place award at the Patuxent Art League's 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Open Juried Art Exhibit. A plant growing on her Montpelier Arts Center studio windowsill inspired the free-flowing watercolor of the tropical croton.

One hundred and ten artists submitted their artwork to be displayed at the Montpelier Cultural Arts Center exhibition and 60 were selected. Award winning pieces had good workmanship, composition and color. According to founder Rose Lomangino, the

Patuxent Art League was founded to provide opportunities for greater exposure for area artists.

Fleming has degrees in art and has taught art in the Montgomery County school system. Her paintings have been widely exhibited in galleries in Annapolis, Alexandria, Baltimore and Laurel. She has also exhibited at the Smithsonian and was an exchange artist to Kazakhstan. Her medium is most often watercolor and photography featuring the beauty of nature, but she has worked with acrylics, oil and printmaking. Her works of art are done in one of her three studios in Calverton, at the Montpelier Arts Center in Laurel, or at the Berkeley Springs area of West Virginia.

## Honoring a True Community Champion: Cpl. Hibbert Recognized for Dedicated Service



(L-R) Lt Wilson, Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnik, Cpl. Hibbert, Major Martin.

CONGRATULATIONS, Cpl. Hibbert!

Delegate Peña-Melnik recently honored Cpl. Hibbert with a Citation from the Maryland General Assembly, as well as a Governor's Citation, in recognition of his outstanding service.

Cpl. Hibbert has proudly served as a Prince George's County Police Officer for 20 years, including the last 16 years as a Community Police Officer in the greater Beltsville-Laurel area. He has been the guiding mentor behind the Police Explorers Program in our community, encouraging and challenging local youth to think ahead and plan for their futures.

In addition, Cpl. Hibbert has worked closely with businesses and residents, offering valuable advice on safety and crime prevention. Our community is truly fortunate to have such a dedicated officer—one who genuinely cares.

## The Beltsville News

An All Volunteer Newspaper

PUBLISHED BY THE BELTSVILLE-VANVILLE DISTRICT CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION INC.

News: Rick Bergmann, editor@beltsvillenewstoday.com, 8 Center Street, Laurel, MD 20723. Enclose self-addressed stamped envelope if photo is to be returned. Accepted material may be edited. Letters to the Editor on local topics are encouraged. Names may be withheld upon request.

### Advertising:

301-257-3408 Ted Ladd, 11722 Emack Rd., Beltsville 20705 • tedladd02@aol.com

### Subscriptions:

One year is \$20. Send check to Beltsville News, 11722 Emack Road, Beltsville MD 20705

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### Staff Listings

Managing Editor/News Director: Rick Bergmann  
Advertising Manager and Business Manager: Ted Ladd

Supporting Staff Members: Karen Coakley, Rebecca Hutchings, Jason Inanga, Elizabeth Olson, and Nancy Thrush.

### Circulation

Hard copies may be picked up at more than 50 locations in greater Beltsville, including the Beltsville Library, Wawa, Beltsville Community Center, schools, churches, restaurants and more. Many receive a monthly pdf of the paper via e-mail at no charge. To receive copies by email, go to www.beltsvillenewstoday.com, and enter your e-mail address.

Please join our Facebook page  
(https://www.facebook.com/groups/300944563420364/) and follow us at beltsville news on Instagram.  
Check out our website: www.beltsvillenewstoday.com

## SPEAKER

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for collaboration extends across party lines. Republican Delegate Thomas Hutchinson said, "She is a leader who listens and understands, regardless of the side of the aisle. She has always respected me and my values. I respect her immensely and look forward to working with her."

In a divided political landscape, Peña-Melnik represents the kind of leadership Maryland needs—determined, compassionate, and inclusive. Congratulations to Speaker Peña-Melnik on this historic achievement.

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Kitty Post



With Heartfelt Thanks to Our Volunteers & Supporters

By Sallie Rhodes

Beltsville Community Cats (BCC) is an all-volunteer non-profit that began in 2019 with just \$2,000 — and a big dream. Thanks to the dedication of our volunteers, board members, donors, and community partners, BCC has grown into a thriving trap-neuter-vaccinate-return (TNVR) and rescue organization. Together, we’ve helped more than **2,400 cats**, with nearly **1,000 finding loving forever homes**.



Our volunteers truly are the heart of BCC — trapping and transporting cats, caring for colonies, helping sick and injured cats, educating the public, hosting fundraisers, and representing BCC throughout the community. We are also deeply grateful to the individuals, businesses, and grant partners like the Maryland Department of Agriculture’s Spay and Neuter Program, the Prince George’s County Council, the Petco Love Lost Foundation, and Athletes for Animals whose generosity makes this work possible.

**2026 Annual Volunteer Meeting**  
**January 11, 2026**  
**1:00–4:00 pm**  
Emmanuel United Methodist Church  
11416 Cedar Lane, Beltsville  
(Parking and entrance is behind the church.)

As I step down as President in January, I want to say **thank you from the bottom of my heart** to everyone who has supported BCC in any way. This organization exists because of you.

As we begin a new year, I warmly invite you to join us for our **2026 Annual Volunteer Meeting** — whether you’re a current volunteer, a past volunteer, or someone interested in getting involved. Many volunteers say the best part of BCC is the caring, passionate community behind the work. We hope you’ll come experience that for yourself.

We’ll conduct a brief business meeting and hold our board elections, leaving plenty of time for **snacks, socializing, reconnecting with friends, and meeting new ones**.

We hope to see you there — and thank you for being part of the BCC family!

**THE WELL**

There is a well of great compassion fed by flowing springs;  
These waters have their source from Heaven,  
fresh and sweet to drink.

In lands of dry and desert, famine,  
hearts may seek to cling  
To what may seem to satisfy them,  
but we must rethink.

Unless the truth God has provided  
sates us we will sink;  
A thirst quenched by our human pride  
can  
ruin ev’rything.

Let’s lay aside our earthy wisdom,  
turn instead to Him,  
The One Who rules o’er kings and kingdoms  
sees what lies within.

Our time, too soon, will find its ending,  
where will we be then?  
Christ’s fount alone brings comprehending  
what is e’rlasting.

*Beckie Hutchings*  
12/11/2025



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## Ask the Expert

BY ANDRE GIBSON, CHAMPION  
HOME IMPROVEMENTS

As temperatures begin to drop and forecasts hint at the season's first frost, preparing your home for a cold winter becomes essential for comfort, safety, and energy efficiency. Winterizing doesn't have to be overwhelming; with a strategic plan and a few practical steps, you can shield your home from harsh conditions while reducing heating costs. Here are key areas to focus on as you get ready for the colder months.

### 1. Inspect and Strengthen Your Home's Insulation

Proper insulation is one of the most effective ways to keep warm air inside and cold air out. Start by checking your attic, basement, and crawl spaces, as these areas often lose heat quickly. Ensure that insulation is thick, dry, and evenly distributed. If you feel drafts around windows or doors, consider adding weatherstripping or caulking to seal gaps. Thermal curtains can further help retain heat, especially during the night.

### 2. Service Your Heating System

Before winter arrives, schedule a professional inspection for your furnace, boiler, or heat pump. A technician can clean filters, check for leaks, and make necessary adjustments to ensure your system runs efficiently. Dirty or clogged filters force your system to work harder,

wasting energy and increasing utility bills. If you rely on a fireplace or wood stove, have your chimney cleaned and inspected to remove creosote buildup and ensure proper ventilation.

### 3. Protect Water Pipes from Freezing

Frozen pipes can burst and cause extensive water damage, so take preventive action early. Insulate exposed pipes in unheated areas such as garages, basements, and under sinks. During extremely cold periods, let faucets drip slightly to keep water flowing. Know the location of your main water shut-off valve in case a pipe does freeze, allowing you to respond quickly and limit damage.

### 4. Prepare Windows and Door

Windows and doors are major sources of heat loss. Repair or replace damaged seals, install draft stoppers, and use window film kits to create an additional insulation barrier. If your home has older single-pane windows, consider upgrading to double- or triple-pane designs for long-term energy savings and improved comfort.

### 5. Maintain Your Roof and Gutters

Heavy snow and ice can strain your roof, so inspect shingles for cracks, curling, or missing sections. Replace damaged areas

before winter storms arrive. Clean gutters and downspouts to ensure that melting snow can drain properly, reducing the risk of ice dams, which can cause leaks and structural damage.

### 6. Prepare for Winter Emergencies

Unexpected storms or power outages are common in winter. Stock up on essentials like bottled water, nonperishable food, flashlights, batteries, and warm blankets. A backup generator can be invaluable in maintaining heat during extended outages. Also ensure your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are functioning, as heating systems are used more heavily during winter months.

### 7. Winterize Outdoor Areas

Store garden hoses, shut off exterior faucets, and cover outdoor furniture to prevent weather damage. If you have walkways or driveways, keep salt, sand, or de-icing products on hand to ensure safe footing during icy conditions.

Preparing your home for winter not only protects your property but also provides peace of mind as cold weather approaches. With thoughtful planning and a few proactive measures, you can enjoy a warm, safe, and energy-efficient home all season long.

## Neighbors in the News

### Advocacy for the Eastern Ecological Science Center at Patuxent Research Refuge, Now More than Ever

Dear Friends of Patuxent Research Refuge,

During the last several months you have followed with us the very real threat that has been proposed by this Administration to essentially wipe out the budget, positions, and personnel at the Eastern Ecological Science Center of USGS that operates at Patuxent Research Center.

By way of brief background, the USGS operates 17 science centers across the country which are designated under the Ecosystems Mission Area, one of 7 mission areas of USGS. At the recommendations of the Department of Government Service (DOGE), the President's budget for FY26 called for wiping out virtually the entire Ecosystems Mission Area, presumably because the Administration feels that the work they accomplish is no longer in line with their priorities. However, since that budget proposal was released earlier this year, the Friends of Patuxent and more than 75 national and international organizations have embarked on a campaign to inform the President and his Administration how vital the work of EESC is for our nation.

Under the Administration's budget proposal, the staff and work units at Patuxent would be eliminated. These include but are not limited to the Bird Banding Lab, the repository of all bird banding records in the US and from around the world

that are vital to not just scientists and researchers, but to waterfowl hunters across the country because of their importance in determining flyway populations and distribution of waterfowl species; the Breeding Bird Survey, an annual citizen science-aided collection of data that identifies breeding bird species throughout North America; and the Bee Lab, a research program that identifies, catalogues, and studies native bee populations which are seriously declining across America. All this, and more, would be eliminated if current budget recommendations are approved.

There is hope, however, that Congress will not allow such draconian cuts to be enacted. The House and Senate approved preliminary topline budget appropriations that would cut programs and spending in the EMA, but not at amounts contemplated by the Administration. It is vital that advocates like us speak out and encourage members of Congress on both sides of the aisle to reject the devastating cuts to USGS in the Ecosystems Mission Area, to save the Eastern Ecological Science Center at Patuxent and the other fish and wildlife science programs in the Eastern US, and to restore funding to the levels that the House and Senate Interior Appropriations Committees have already approved.

Won't you take just a few minutes to compose an email or make a phone call to your Members of Congress?

**Addressees:** All members of the Maryland Congressional delegation matter, with special emphasis on those whose districts touch or encompass parts of the Patuxent Research Refuge, namely both Maryland's Senators, Sen Chris Van Hollen and Angela Alsobrooks, and Representatives Elfreth, Ivey, and Hoyer, whose districts 3, 4, and 5 include a portion of the Patuxent Research Refuge.

**NOTE:** Any messages to Maryland's US Members of Congress whose districts don't cover Patuxent Research Refuge should appeal to the importance of this facility to Maryland and the nation. Members with a direct connection to Patuxent identified below are starred (\*).

Handwritten letters or postcards are very effective, but they take a long time to process through Congressional mail handling. It is fine if you write a traditional letter and mail it, but please follow up with an email or phone call.

Very importantly, if you live in US Congressional district 3, 4, or 5, be sure to include "As your constituent..." in every call or message you write. This is extremely helpful and

**ADVOCACY**

continues on page 10

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**BELTS26**



Awesome Con Taps Game Kastle to Lead 2026 Tabletop Area

(WASHINGTON, DC, DECEMBER 17, 2025) – Awesome Con has selected local game store Game Kastle College Park to manage the Tabletop Gaming area at its 2026 convention. Game Kastle will be responsible for all tabletop programming, organizing hundreds of gaming providers and tournaments for Awesome Con 2026 attendees.

Awesome Con is a comic, pop culture, anime, and gaming convention held annually at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, DC. Awesome Con 2025 drew more than 63,000 visitors to Washington, DC, and convention organizers expect the event to draw even more in 2026.

“We’re thrilled to be joining forces with Game Kastle in 2026. Fans can look forward to the gaming demos and tournaments they have come to love, along with new additions that we’ll announce over the coming weeks,” said Heather Barnes, Sr. Marketing Manager.



Awesome Con has selected local game store Game Kastle College Park to manage the Tabletop Gaming area at its 2026 convention.

“Awesome Con’s Tabletop area has become a Washington, DC, gaming institution, and I was both humbled and excited when the organizers contacted me about managing it,” said Game Kastle College Park owner Boyd Stephen-

son. “Part of my mission is highlighting small and local designers and publishers in the store. Now, I’m looking forward to the opportunity to do that on a larger stage. We want attendees to have the opportunity to connect with their favorite games and the chance to find a great, new game they might never see otherwise.”

Nicholas Ruchlewicz, Venture Captain of the DMV-area Pathfinder Society lodge, said, “Our local lodges run games in multiple stores, but we always host our large gatherings events at Game Kastle because of their organization, the ease of working with their staff, and their dedication to making sure everyone feels included.”

Jason Tremblay, the award-winning local designer of the nationwide hit game TACTA (2025), agreed, saying, “Game Kastle was instrumental to the development and early play testing of TACTA. I’m excited to be there to support their team and for what they can bring to Awesome Con!”



Riderwood Staff posing with a Thank You Banner to thank the residents for their generosity.

Generous Contributions Fuel 2025 Staff Appreciation Fund at Riderwood

*Residents thank dedicated employees by contributing \$630,260*

Riderwood, the Erickson Senior Living community in Silver Spring, MD, distributed more than \$630,260 to eligible hourly team members through its 2025 Staff Appreciation Fund (SAF).

The SAF, made possible through contributions from generous residents, was distributed during a festive community event on December 3. The gifts

express residents’ gratitude for the exceptional services team members provide throughout the year to support an engaging, worry-free lifestyle.

This year, Riderwood residents contributed more to the Staff Appreciation Fund than ever before.

“The generosity of our resi-

**RIDERWOOD**  
continues on page 14

Statepoint Crossword: Year In Review

CROSSWORD

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ACROSS

- 1. W.E.B Du Bois’ org.
- 6. Rascal
- 9. Ho-hum
- 13. “Pomp and Circumstance” composer
- 14. Tropical constrictor
- 15. Forgo
- 16. Tequila source
- 17. + or - atom
- 18. Reason by deduction
- 19. \*Trade war “weapon,” pl.
- 21. \*2025 MLB World Series winners
- 23. \_\_\_\_-tzu
- 24. C&H crop
- 25. Dunce
- 28. Western necktie
- 30. Catch in a snare
- 35. Ginger cookie
- 37. Master of his castle
- 39. Use a razor
- 40. British slang for donkey
- 41. Arch and ball locations
- 43. Winglike
- 44. March celebrants
- 46. \*Arthur Sze, 2025 \_\_\_\_ Laureate
- 47. Dam-like structure
- 48. \*Beyoncé’s “Cowboy \_\_\_\_,” 2025 Grammy winner
- 50. King Kong and Curious George, e.g.
- 52. Like a fox
- 53. What Pinocchio did
- 55. \*Florida Panthers won this

- org.’s ‘25 championship
- 57. \*”Wicked: \_\_\_\_”
- 61. \*Late environmentalist and chimpanzee expert
- 65. German submarine destroyer
- 66. \*2025 Ryder Cup loser
- 68. Manuscript sheet
- 69. Brazilian coins
- 70. Roll-your-own one, for short
- 71. To the left, on a boat
- 72. Orpheus’ instrument
- 73. Geological time period
- 74. They are cut by Federal Reserve

DOWN

- 1. At room temperature, bar order
- 2. Algae, sing.
- 3. Petri dish filler
- 4. Raise trivial objections
- 5. Ready to be assembled
- 6. Avian wader
- 7. Farm sound
- 8. China’s goodwill “\_\_\_\_ diplomacy”
- 9. Collision, onomatopoeically speaking
- 10. \*Taylor Swift’s “The \_\_\_\_ of a Showgirl”
- 11. Affirm solemnly
- 12. Third-person possessive pronoun
- 15. Makes broader

- 20. Why do they fall in love?
- 22. \*Aryna Sabalenka’s seed
- 24. Auto contents
- 25. Pertaining to osmium
- 26. \*2025 Academy Awards Best Picture winner
- 27. Faquir, alt.spelling
- 29. Pilot’s stunt
- 31. Spring event
- 32. Pneumonia symptom, pl.
- 33. Be of use
- 34. \*Blue Origin’s 2025 singing passenger
- 36. Boll weevil, e.g.
- 38. \*\_\_\_\_Seek
- 42. Shorthand typist, for short
- 45. Serfs
- 49. 2016 Olympics host, for short
- 51. Ram’s horn at a synagogue
- 54. Draw a conclusion
- 56. Parkinson’s disease drug
- 57. Roll up
- 58. Heed
- 59. Lion sound
- 60. Dorothy’s last name
- 61. \*Lady of “The Mayhem Ball”
- 62. Tons (2 words)
- 63. Lira, pl.
- 64. Land parcels
- 67. \*Gary Oldman received this honorific in 2025

See Solution on page 6



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## Obituaries



Jane Law Brown

### Brown, Jane Law

On Wednesday, November 26, 2025, beloved wife of 63 years to the late Albert Cleveland "Cleve" Brown; mother of Lucinda "Cindy," Lauri (John), Matthew, and Frances (DR); also survived by many loving cousins, extended family, and friends; preceded in death by her parents, Frank E. and Magda Law. A funeral service was held at Borgwardt Funeral Home on Wednesday, December 3, at 12 noon. Interment was private. Memorial contributions may be made to a charity of your choice.

cated member of the First Baptist Church in Beltsville, MD, where, until recently, she was actively involved in the church community.

An avid gardener, Shirley took great pleasure in caring for her flowers and spending time outdoors. She cherished every moment with her grandchildren and found great joy in being surrounded by family and friends.

She was predeceased by her husband, Lillard C. Yeatts; her brother, Luther Hundley; and her sisters, Barbara Reed and Pansy Lykins.

She is survived by her son, Les Yeatts, and his wife, Barbara Melvin, of Lewes, DE; her daughter, Joan Mougey, and her husband, Alan, of Woodbine, MD; and her son, Dan Yeatts, and his wife, Jennifer, of Severna Park, MD; as well as five beloved grandchildren: Christina Mougey, Zachary Mougey, Brian Yeatts, Kathryn Yeatts, and Rachel Yeatts. Shirley also leaves behind her beloved nieces and nephews: Mark, Kelli, Daryl, Robin, Rhonda, and Jeff.

Memorial donations may be made to the First Baptist Church of Beltsville, 4700 Odell Road, Beltsville, MD 20705.



Shirley Yeatts

### Yeatts, Shirley

Shirley Hundley Yeatts of Odenton, MD, passed away peacefully on November 22, 2025, her 88th birthday, surrounded by her loving family. She was born on November 22, 1937, in Martinsville, VA, to the late John Melvin Hundley and Martha Jane Hundley. She met and married her husband, Lillard Conroy Yeatts, in Martinsville. They later moved to Baltimore, MD, and then to the Washington, DC, area to start a family.

Shirley began her career in early childhood development and later transitioned into a position with the Prince George's County school system, where she eventually retired. She was a dedi-



Judy Yu Thomas

### Yu Thomas, Judy

Judy Yu Thomas, age 62, passed away peacefully from cancer on November 21, 2025, in Baltimore, Maryland.

Born on June 24, 1963, in Butuan City, Philippines, Judy was the daughter of Julian Yu and Lilia "Ivy" Yu (Lampadio). She experienced a profound loss early in life in 1970 with the passing of her father in a plane crash—an event that shaped her strength and resilience from a young age. As a result of this tragedy, Judy and her siblings came under the care of her paternal grandparents until her grandfather's death from stomach cancer in 1976.

Her family then moved to Manila to join her aunt and uncle,

Lourdes "Ludy" and Sui Biak G. "Victor" Yu, while her mother migrated to the United States. Judy pursued her education with determination and excellence, graduating from the University of Santo Tomas (UST) in Manila, Philippines. She later continued her studies at the Johns Hopkins Hospital School of Cytotechnology in Baltimore. Her academic achievements laid the foundation for a long and dedicated career in medical diagnostics.

For over three decades, Judy worked as a medical cytotechnologist. Upon obtaining her certification, she worked for a small laboratory in Rockville, Maryland, for five years, then returned to Johns Hopkins Hospital for two years. After marrying Robert in 1993, she began her tenure at MetPath, Inc., which later became Quest Diagnostics, Inc., through a succession of mergers. During her employment, she was a registered member of the American Society of Cytopathology (ASC). Judy retired on disability after completing 30 years of service with Quest.

In addition to her professional life, Judy was a devoted wife and mother. She supported her daughter Ashley's ballet training and became a scouting mom while her sons, Kyle and Jake, participated in Cub Scouts. Judy assisted Kyle in his journey to obtain the rank of Eagle Scout in 2017.

Judy became a cancer patient when she was diagnosed with and successfully treated for breast cancer in 2017. After five years of remission, lung cancer was detected in October 2022. She underwent treatment for 18 months and transitioned to hospice care in May 2024.

Judy is lovingly remembered by her husband, Robert "Bob" Thomas Jr.; her daughter, Ashley; son-in-law, Charles; and grandson, Theodore Truxillo; her sons, Kyle and Jake Thomas; her brother, Jorge Yu, and his wife, Maria "Beth"; her sister, Jo-Ann Yu; her mother-in-law, Margaret Thomas; her brother-in-law, Kevin Thomas, and his wife, Jane; and her brother-in-law, Brian Thomas, and his wife, Robbin; along with many aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and cousins. She was preceded in death by her father, Julian Yu; her mother, Lilia Yu Fisco; her brother, Jimmy Yu; and her father-in-law, Robert Thomas.

Memorial donations may be made in her name to the American Cancer Society, the PGCMLS Foundation, or any charity of your choosing.

May Judy's memory bring comfort to all who knew and loved her.

**Share Your News! Send your article submissions to  
News Director Rick Bergmann at [editor@beltsvillenewstoday.co](mailto:editor@beltsvillenewstoday.co)**

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## Crossword Solution from page 5

N	A	A	C	P		I	M	P		B	L	A	H
E	L	G	A	R		B	O	A		W	A	I	V
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# Rosapepe's Report to Beltsville



## New Speaker of Maryland House Joseline Peña-Melnyk

Every day, Delegate Peña-Melnyk works with Senator Jim Rosapepe and Delegates Ben Barnes and Mary Lehman to represent Beltsville—fighting against crime, speeding, and overdevelopment, and fighting for our children and seniors.

In December, in recognition of her vision and grit, her House colleagues elected her Speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates. That's good news for Maryland—and good news for Beltsville.

## SAVE THE DATE: 21st District Delegation Reception in Annapolis - Monday, February 2

Delegates Joseline Peña-Melnyk, Ben Barnes, Mary Lehman, and I appreciate the opportunity to represent you in the Maryland Legislature. We hope you can join us—and your neighbors—on Monday evening, February 2, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Market House for good food and good fellowship.

We will be joined by other state and local leaders who represent you.

Stay tuned for more details! If you have questions, please email our 21st District Community Liaison, Kerry Fisher, at [rosapepe.liaison@gmail.com](mailto:rosapepe.liaison@gmail.com).

## District Scholarships

Each year, Delegates Peña-Melnyk, Lehman, Barnes, and I are able to offer scholarships to students living in District 21 who are attending institutions of higher education in Maryland during the 2026–2027 academic year.

Applications typically open in January and remain open through the end of May. Students attending out-of-state institutions may also apply if they have been approved for a unique major by the Maryland Higher Education Commission.

Applications are available through the District 21 Delegation website. If you have questions about the application process, please contact my office at [jim.rosapepe@senate.maryland.gov](mailto:jim.rosapepe@senate.maryland.gov).

## Snow and Ice Control: Roadways

When a snow emergency is declared, the Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T) is responsible for maintaining "passable" conditions on County roadways.

To learn more about the County's Snow Plan or to report cold weather-related concerns, visit [bit.ly/DPWTSnowPortal](http://bit.ly/DPWTSnowPortal).

To track snow removal progress in your neighborhood using the new PGC Snow Tracker, visit [bit.ly/SnowCitizenInsight](http://bit.ly/SnowCitizenInsight).

## Contact me

If you have questions, concerns, or ideas about issues affecting our community, I encourage you to reach out. My team and I are always glad to assist in any way we can.

You may contact us at 21stDistrictDelegation@gmail.com or by calling 410-841-3141.



Delegates Ben Barnes, Mary Lehman, Jocelyn Peña-Melnyk, and Senator Jim Rosapepe.

## NEWS YOU CAN USE

continued from page 1

dedicated volunteers. Food orders are due during the **first week of each month**, and packages are available for **pickup during the third week** at your selected host site. Home delivery is not available.

Anyone may purchase SHARE food packages—there is **no application, qualification, identification, or documentation required**. To support the program's community spirit, each customer is asked to complete **at least two hours of community service each month** before purchasing. Just as volunteers donate their time to make SHARE possible, participants help strengthen their own communities.

## Local SHARE Host Sites

Two SHARE host sites are conveniently located in our community:

### Queen's Chapel United Methodist Church

7410 Old Muirkirk Road, Beltsville, MD 20705

Contact: Maurice Foushee  
Phone: 301-980-3077  
Email: [mauricekf@msn.com](mailto:mauricekf@msn.com)

### PG Knights of Columbus

9450 Cherry Hill Road, College Park, MD 20740  
Contact: Carolyn Lank  
Phone: 301-937-8756  
Email: [ladybaker44@verizon.net](mailto:ladybaker44@verizon.net)

## How to Place an Order

1. Review the month's menu.
2. Choose the SHARE host site closest to you.
3. Contact the site coordinator to place your order, submit payment, and receive pickup details.

For more information, call **301-864-3114**, email [shareorders@cc-dc.org](mailto:shareorders@cc-dc.org), or visit [catholiccharitiesdc.org/program/share-food-network](http://catholiccharitiesdc.org/program/share-food-network).

As we begin a new year, SHARE Food Network offers a practical way to save money, access healthy food, and give back to the community—all at the same time.

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## Resolutions That Will Help You Declutter Your Home

(SPM Wire) Are your possessions overwhelming your living spaces and causing you stress? Keep clutter at bay with these three resolutions:

### Tackle one pile a day:

Clearing out clutter is often emotional, so don't overwhelm yourself by taking on too much at once. Instead, resolve to tackle just one manageable pile or surface a day.

### Stop clutter in its tracks:

New clutter can have a habit

of accumulating each time you enter your home. To mitigate this, put away everything that you're holding when you walk in the door. Hang your coat and put your shoes on the shoe rack. Store essentials like your keys, phone and wallet in a drop zone so you always know where they are. Recycle unwanted junk mail and deal with important correspondence right away. Put groceries and other items away immediately.

### Put a pause on shopping:

Consider taking on a "no-

buy challenge." This means not purchasing anything beyond the essentials (groceries, toiletries, etc.) for a specific duration of time, such as a month or longer. While the purpose of these challenges is usually to save money or reduce one's environmental footprint, it can also be beneficial for those with a clutter problem. Getting a handle on your current possessions can help you make more mindful decisions about what new items you bring into your home.



**New Patients Welcome**

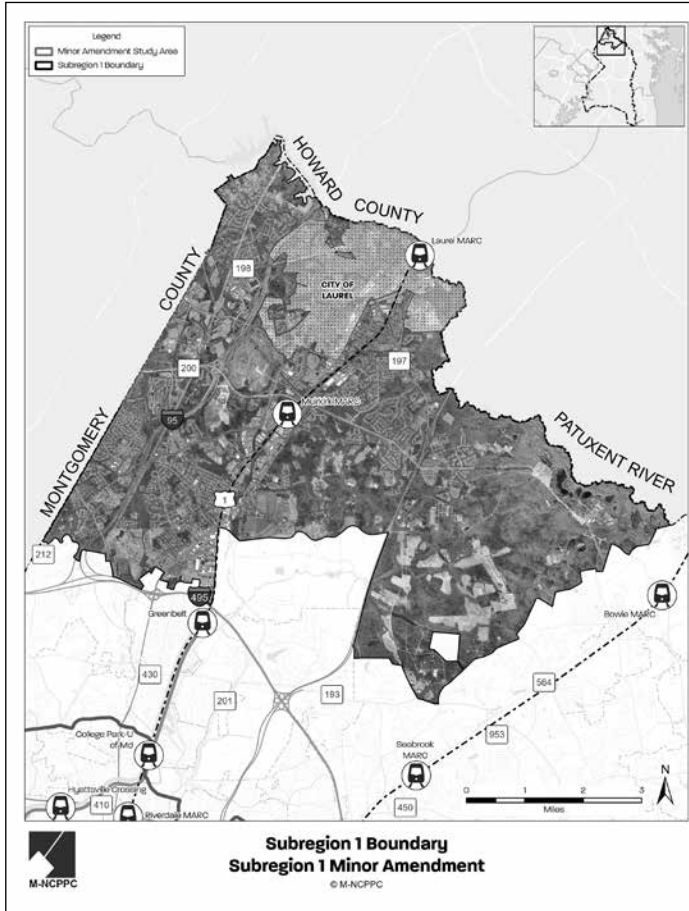
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# M-NCPPC to Host Meeting Showcasing DRAFT Updates to the 2010 Subregion 1 Master Plan and Sectional Map Amendment for Feedback

The Prince George's County Planning Department of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) will host a community meeting on Wednesday, January 21, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. at the Laurel-Beltsville Senior Activity Center, 7120 Contee Rd, Laurel, Maryland to present draft updates to the 2010 *Approved Master Plan and Sectional Map Amendment for Subregion 1* as part of a Minor Plan Amendment process. The project team, including County Planning Department staff and consultants from Stantec's Arlington, VA office, will provide project updates, highlight input gathered from the community and stakeholders, share the initial draft master plan and proposed zoning changes, and collect feedback. This meeting is an opportunity for stakeholders to help shape the official plan update to guide the future of their community. The event will focus

on the two designated centers at Konterra and the Muirkirk MARC station, strengthening connections to places along the US 1 and I-95 corridors, and welcoming and supporting businesses and residents in the area for a thriving place to live and work. The draft updates to the master plan are guided by public participation input collected at the Listening Session event in November 2025, an online survey, and multiple analyses focused on land use and zoning; strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT); and market projections for the area.

Interested participants should register for the workshop in advance at <https://pgplan.org/sub1openhouse>. To access additional details on the Minor Plan Amendment project (in English and Spanish), individuals may visit the Prince George's County Planning Department's website: <https://pgplan.org/subregion1>.



# Prince George's County Planning Board Announces Tara Eggleston Stewart as the New Deputy Director for M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George's County

LARGO, MD. – The Prince George's County Planning Board of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) announces the appointment of Tara Eggleston Stewart as the new Deputy Director of Recreation and Leisure Services of M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George's County. Eggleston Stewart will provide high-level administrative oversight of the Department's Aquatics & Athletic Facilities, Northern Recreation and Leisure Services, Southern Recreation & Leisure Services, Special Programs, and Youth & Countywide Sports Divisions.

"Tara Eggleston Stewart's expertise, passion, and commitment to advancing inclusive recreation services are unmatched," said Darryl Barnes, Chairman of the Prince George's County Planning Board, "Her deep connection to the community and her proven leadership in parks and recreation



Tara Eggleston Stewart, the new Deputy Director of Recreation and Leisure Services of M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George's County

make her an incredible asset for the Department."

The Department of Parks and Recreation in Prince George's County, a six-time National Gold Medal Award winner, is a national

leader in innovation, service, and community impact. With more than 29,000 acres of parkland, including trails, cultural spaces, and historic sites, the Department remains dedicated to creating inclusive, accessible, and sustainable opportunities for all residents and visitors. With a guiding plan, Formula 2040, and the mission to help people "Live More, Play More," the Department provides opportunities for active lifestyles, meaningful connections, and community pride through programs, classes, events, and accessible facilities.

"I am honored to return to the Department of Parks and Recreation, where my passion for service and community were born," said Eggleston Stewart. "I look forward to working alongside our dedicated staff to expand access and strengthen our programs to ensure Prince George's County residents have the opportunity to Live More, Play More."



The M-NCPPC Fall 2025 Cohort of the Neighborhood Planning Academy

# M-NCPPC Prince George's County Planning Department Recognizes the Neighborhood Planning Academy Fall 2025 Cohort with Graduation Ceremony

LARGO, MD – The Prince George's County Planning Department of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission hosted a graduation ceremony to celebrate the Fall 2025 Cohort of the Neighborhood Planning Academy on Wednesday, December 3, 2025, at the M-NCPPC Largo Headquarters. Designed specifically to engage Prince George's County residents and community stakeholders, the Neighborhood Planning Academy explains the County's

planning framework, how to engage in the development review process, and how to advocate for their community goals and visions.

This fall, 61 representatives, reflecting all regions of Prince George's County, were selected to participate in a seven-week program to learn the ins and outs of the County's planning framework, how to engage in the development review process, and how to advocate for their community goals and visions. During this cohort, a dedicated student and

Prince George's County resident viewed sessions and participated while located in Guam. A father and son were randomly selected and participated in the program, as well - a first for the Neighborhood Planning Academy. Since the launch of the program in the fall of 2023, more than 250 individuals have participated in the Neighborhood Planning Academy.

"I am excited to see the Neighborhood Planning Acad-

**CEREMONY**  
continues on page 11



# *A Slice of Holiday Cheer: Pizza with Santa Brings Smiles to Beltsville*

**By Rick Bergmann**

Beltsville's Volunteer Fire Department hosted its annual Pizza with Santa event on December 13, and it proved to be a joyful afternoon for families throughout the community. Filled with food, laughter, and holiday spirit, the event served both as a special treat for local families and as a fundraiser supporting the department.

Families enjoyed pizza generously donated by Beltsville Pizza Boli's, thanks to store manager Ollie, along with freshly baked pasta, sweets, and other festive treats. Members of UpStage Artists, Beltsville's local community theater, also volunteered their time, helping at the event and gifting children with coloring books and markers.

No Pizza with Santa celebration would be complete without a visit from Santa Claus himself. Santa spent time chatting with children and posing for photos, and he even brought along a surprise guest—the Grinch! Following the event, Santa took to the streets aboard a fire truck, riding through neighborhood routes and spreading holiday cheer to Beltsville residents.

The Beltsville Volunteer Fire Department remains a steadfast presence in the community, providing not only protection but also compassion and care. Events like Pizza with Santa continue to be a cherished holiday tradition, bringing neighbors together and highlighting the department's commitment to serving Beltsville year-round.





# Technology New Year 2026

This month is a potpourri of miscellaneous technology information covering a wide variety of unrelated items.

## RAM Shortage Effects Home Users

Random Access Memory (RAM) is now in short supply. The impact affects new computers, graphics cards, Solid State Drives (SSD), and every other device using RAM memory. Industry blames high RAM demand from the AI industry for the RAM pricing increases. Many are expecting it to take 2 to 3 years until memory prices return to normal levels. Manufacturers of computers, laptops, game machines, and other consumer electronics will increase by 10% to 25% in the first half of 2026 and may go up as far as 40% before the end of the year.

## Raspberry Pi Prices Creep Up

If you read my column, you know I am a fan of the Raspberry Pi collection of small inexpensive single board computers. The prices of some of the Pi 4 and Pi 5 units have started to creep up. The cause, creeping prices for RAM memory. The Pi 4 cost for 4 GB is \$5 more than the previous \$55, and the 8 GB version is now \$10 more. The Pi 5 has added back the 1 GB version for \$45, while the 2GB, 4GB, 8GB, and 16 GB, increased by \$5, \$10, \$15, and \$25 each. The Raspberry Pi organization has said they expect their prices will come back down when RAM prices return to normal.



## AI Doesn't Keep Secrets

AI chatting has become popular in recent months. If you share a secret with a friend, you expect them to keep the secret and not share it with others. Sadly, many AI systems store their conversations to "improve" their AI. This information is recoverable by others and exposing your shared secrets. AI friends are not trustworthy.

## iRobot Bankrupts

My aunt once told me that the greatest invention I could create would be an automatic vacuum robot to clean her carpet. I passed on that project, but iRobot created the successful autonomous Roomba, devices to sweep, mop, and vacuum your floors (actions depend on the models). It even learned how to avoid animal feces to prevent them from spreading them all over the room. The Roomba would learn how to map the floor and would find its power

station automatically connecting to recharge.

Sadly, iRobot has fallen into bankruptcy and its assets transferred to a Chinese firm. In 2022, Amazon attempted to purchase the company, but anti-trust concerns thwarted the plan.

## Air Tags for Android Phones

The Apple Air Tag is a great device for Apple Phones. You can attach the Air Tag to things like car keys and the Apple will communicate with the Tag and help you find the missing item. People have used this to find luggage, missing bikes, pets, and a large number of missing devices. The Air Tags work so well because the tags will talk to any nearby Apple Phone and relay the information about the tag to the phone that is looking for it.

Air Tags are the Apple name for these tags. Today we know alternate or Android Tags as Bluetooth Tags, Bluetooth Trackers, or

Smart Tags. A couple of years ago Google decided to give Android phones a similar capability to find Smart Tags. Google does not make the tags themselves, but they created a standard so that all of the conforming tags will work with the Android devices. Some of these newer tags work with both Apple and Android (look for Chipolo Brand).

Sadly, based on reports I have read, these tags seem to work well if the lost device is nearby but not if they are at a distance. I have an older device, and it is great finding things in my house when I am home. However, it doesn't work well when I'm home, but the tag is somewhere else. These issues seem to be issues with Android networking issues. I have heard that recent updates have improved some of the Android issues. I hope to get some newer tags to test on various Android devices in the future.

## Media Tools: VLC Media Player

I am not sure if I have ever mentioned the VLC media in a previous column. VLC is a Media Player that works with Linux, Windows, macOS, Android, and iOS. It supports audio and video; it plays many different formats for both audio and video, and supports streaming across networks, and playing CD and DVD discs. VLC is free and open source (FOSS). You can download the phone versions from the Apple Store and Google Play. If you don't already have it, you should try it.

## Media Tools: Handbrake Video Converter

Handbrake is a video format converter. It is free and open source and is very useful when you need to convert between different video formats. I typically use it to convert movies made on old video cameras into MP4 video files to play on my computer. It is also useful for converting DVDs into other formats allowing watching on portable devices.

## Media Tools: Audacity

Audacity is a free and open-source sound editor. I have used it to create ringtones for telephones and remove noises from old vinyl albums. Once I started with a silent 8mm film converted to a VHS tape. I converted the tape to an MP4 video file on my computer. I then watched the film with my 100-year-old grandfather asking him questions about what we were seeing and recording the conversation. I then used audacity to remove any extraneous noises. Finally, I used a video editor to add the soundtrack to the video so viewers and listen to the narration provided by my grandfather and me.

## Happy New Year

Well, this ends my little bit of potpourri. I wish all of you a happy New Year and I hope you had wonderful holidays.

## ADVOCACY

continued from page 4

gets your message to the top of the pile!

**US Senators in Maryland**—you are a constituent of both Senators equally:

Chris Van Hollen\*  
Angela Alsobrooks\*

**US Representatives in Maryland**—you have one Representative from your district:

Andy Harris (1<sup>st</sup>-R)  
Johnny Olszewski (2<sup>nd</sup>-D)  
Sarah Elfreth (3<sup>rd</sup>-D)\*  
Glenn Ivey (4<sup>th</sup>-D)\*  
Steny Hoyer (5<sup>th</sup>-D)\*  
April McClain Delaney (6<sup>th</sup>-D)  
Kweisi Mfume (7<sup>th</sup>-D)  
Jamie Raskin (8<sup>th</sup>-D)

If you need the email address or phone number of your Member of Congress, you can find it here: <https://www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm> or <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>

**Key Points—use any of these or compose your own:**

- The Eastern Ecological Science

Center of the US Geological Survey is under grave threat of having its appropriations slashed and all of its scientists, biologists, and other staff terminated. Please fight to preserve these people and the invaluable work they do protecting the natural resources and wildlife of Maryland and the Nation.

- I am writing to ask you to pass a fully funded budget for the Interior Appropriations and other agencies budget for FY26. The Eastern Ecological Science Center at Patuxent Research Refuge is threatened with losing all funding and staff.
- I am proud to see our Maryland Delegation fight to protect the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center and dedicate new funding for its needs. We now need you to continue to fight to protect the science center staff at Patuxent Research Refuge. This is an even more dire situation than BARC since the 80+ EESC positions at Patuxent are proposed to be

## ADVOCACY

continues on page 14

## 10 Doctor-Recommended Health Resolutions for 2026

(StatePoint) With a new year ahead, the American Medical Association (AMA) is offering Americans 10 evidence-based tips for staying healthy in 2026 and beyond:

- Get health screenings: Schedule preventive visits, tests and screenings so your physician can catch conditions before they become more serious.
- Manage stress: Mental health is part of overall health. Techniques such as meditation, deep breathing and yoga can help reduce stress. Ask for help from a mental health professional when you need it.
- Be physically active: Start the year off by prioritizing physical activity. Strive for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity each week. If you have a sedentary lifestyle or primarily sit for long stretches at work, build in frequent breaks



(c) Koto / iStock via Getty Images Plus

to stretch and move throughout your day.

- Follow a healthy diet: Drink water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages and eat nutritious, whole foods, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds, low-fat dairy products and lean proteins. Avoid unhealthy ultra-processed foods, especially those with high levels of added sodium, saturated fats and sugar. Drinking sugary beverages, even 100% fruit juice, is

associated with a higher mortality risk, according to a study published in JAMA Network Open.

- Stay hydrated: Drink plenty of water or other beverages composed mostly of water, such as milk or herbal tea, to avoid dehydration and to keep your body functioning properly. Even mild dehydration can drain your energy and make you tired. Adult men should get about 15.5 cups of fluids a day and women should get 11.5 cups, according to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

- Get plenty of good sleep: To maintain your health and emotional well-being, most adults need 7 to 9 hours of quality sleep. Rest helps boost immunity and improve mental clarity.

- Update vaccinations: Vaccinations remain the best defense

## HEALTH

continues on page 15



From the Office of Council Member Tom Dernoga

Reporting Missed Waste Collection to PGC311

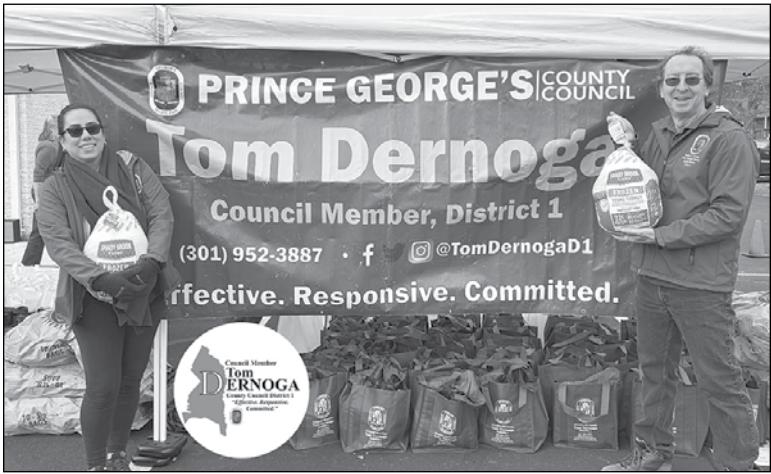
To report any concerns to an agency within Prince George’s County, start with PGC311. You can access this by calling 3-1-1, visiting PGC311.com, or using the PGC311 App, which you can download from your phone’s App Store.

If your waste collection (trash, recycling, or compost) is not completed, there is a new standard for the window to report this concern to the Department of Environment (DoE) through PGC311. Residents can report missed collections starting at 12:00 PM on the day of collections, and as late as the close of business the following business day.

If your issue is not addressed promptly, don’t hesitate to contact our team and share your service request number at 301-952-3887 or CouncilDistrict1@co.pg.md.us. We will assign your case to a team member who will follow up with the appropriate agency.

**Apply for the Neighborhood Planning Academy**

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) Planning Department’s Neighborhood Planning Academy (NPA) provides an opportunity for Prince Georgians to learn the planning framework for the County, engage in the planning and development review process, and delve into specialized planning topics that affect the sustainability and livelihood of their communities. The topics of the sessions include the history of Prince George’s County, introduc-



(From left to right) Chief of Staff Michelle Garcia and Council Member Tom Dernoga at the Beltsville Adventist Community Center (BACC) for the Annual District 1 Thanksgiving Meal Giveaway on November 25, 2025.

tion to urban planning, introduction to the development review process, health and sustainability planning, and transportation planning.

The academy sessions are mostly virtual, and held during the evenings for seven consecutive Wednesdays. Join the NPA for their Spring 2026 session from March 4, to April 15, 2026. Applications are open from January 1, through January 31, 2026. Visit [www.pgplanning.org/npa-program-application/](http://www.pgplanning.org/npa-program-application/) to apply.

**Learn about Development with the Planning Department**

The Prince George’s County Planning Department hosts a monthly “Brown Bag Series” covering various Development Review topics at the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) Largo Headquarters, along with a virtual option. For the January 2026 session, the focus will be the new Intake and Regulatory

Review Division (IRRD), along with an overview of the Development Application Review Tracking System (DARTS). This will be on Tuesday, January 13, from 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM. Register at least a week in advance at [pgplan.org/brownbag](http://pgplan.org/brownbag).

If you have any questions, contact the Planning Department at 301-780-2231 or [Marian.Honecзы@ppd.mnccpc.org](mailto:Marian.Honecзы@ppd.mnccpc.org).

**Join our District 1 eNewsletter**

We will email you about twice a month to provide you with updates on local happenings and, on occasion, alert you to important county news. Sign up at <https://bit.ly/D1eNewsletterOptIn>.

**Contact Us**

Please keep in touch. You can email us at [councildistrict1@co.pg.md.us](mailto:councildistrict1@co.pg.md.us) or call 301-952-3887. Se habla español. Follow us on Facebook, Threads, Bluesky, and Instagram: @TomDernogaD1.

CEREMONY

continued from page 8

emy continue to educate and engage our community,” said Darryl Barnes, Chairman of the M-NCPPC Prince George’s County Planning Board. “This award-winning program will help remove barriers to meaningful engagement and empower residents to become important stakeholders in the future of their community.”

“The Neighborhood Planning Academy provides Prince Georgians an opportunity to engage in the planning and development review process,” said Lakisha Hull, Director of the M-NCPPC Prince George’s County Planning Department. “The award-winning program also delves into specialized planning topics that affect the sustainability and livelihood of our communities.”

The Fall 2025 Cohort of the Neighborhood Planning Academy included Bridgett Allen-Williams, Nathan Arbach, Michele Atcher-son, Kim Bagley, Tolson Ban-

ner, Ta Misha Bascombe, DaCia Bell, Daphne Benbow, Ashwin Bhouraskar, Jomo Blackman, Lori Bledsoe, Alexandra Bolden, Linora Carr, Latisha Crawford, Curtis Crutchfield, Marlon Cruz, Brandi Cypress, Alicia Denning, Lee Eismann, Aaliyah El-amin, Gerri Elliott, Camille Exum, Iman Freeman, Charlotte Fritts, Stalina Goodwin, Donald Hamilton, Marie Hinds Kamara, Benjamin Hobbs, Amanda Jackson, Jesse Johnson, Cheyenne Johnson, Denise Jones, Ashley Kearney, Aisha Khan, JaRonn Latney, Jamel Lattimore, Nicaury Lora Vasquez, Sharon McInnis, Hal Metzler, Gina Miller, Quentin Miner, Yvette Moore, Pernell Murray Jr., Carlos Nunes, Kiara Palmer, Janna Parker, Terri Powell-Brown, Briana Rorie, Amy Sawyer, Melissa Schweisguth, Shivali Shah, Gugu Sikhakhane, Jesse Springfield, Clyde Springfield, Phyllis Thomas, Chris Van De Moortel, Orlando Velez, Nathaniel Wallace, Heather Urwiller, Darius

Stanton, and Amelia Chisholm.

During the graduation ceremony, participants delivered capstone project presentations that incorporated independent research findings as well as lessons and topics from the curriculum. Through weekly classes, participants explored the History, Present, and Future of Prince George’s County, Planning 101, the Development Review Process, Building Healthy, Sustainable and Resilient Communities, Multimodal Transportation and Street Safety, and [PGAtlas.com](http://PGAtlas.com) – a free public web application and online mapping tool.

For more information on the Neighborhood Planning Academy, visit: <https://academy.pgplanning.com>. Prince George’s County residents and stakeholders may join the mailing list (<https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/Sr06lVL>) to receive announcements on applications for the Spring 2026 cohort and upcoming courses.

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# Calendar of Events

## COLLEGE PARK AVIATION MUSEUM

Address: 1985 Corporal Frank Scott Dr., College Park, MD 20740. Phone: 301.864.6029. Fax: 301.927.6472. E-mail: collegeparkaviation@pgparks.com.  
Regular hours of operation: Open Tuesday – Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Closed Mondays and some holidays (double-check with the museum regarding the specific holidays). Special events may have different costs and hours of operation. General admission: Adults/\$5; Seniors/\$4; Children and Students with ID/\$2 (1-year-old and under, free). The museum exhibit area highlights 10 unique aircraft and objects relating the history of early aviation at the College Park Airport. For special events see [www.pgparks.com/facilities/college-park-aviation-museum](http://www.pgparks.com/facilities/college-park-aviation-museum).

### CUB CORNER

Sat., Jan. 17 from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Join us for a special bilingual reading of *Almost Underwear* authored by local teacher Jonathan Roth. After the story, kids can get creative by making their own adorable canvas or fabric pals—just like the character in the book! This program is recommended for little learners Ages 3 – 6. Register in advance to secure your spot! Walk-in spaces will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. Visit [pgparksdirect.com](http://pgparksdirect.com) and register for Activity Code: Cub Corner! Cost: Free with museum admission. Age: 3 – 6. FREE with museum admission.

### SATURDAY STEAM HOUR

Sat., Jan. 24 from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Join our educators at this hands-on activity table where creativity takes flight! Perfect for budding engineers and aviation enthusiasts, this interactive program allows visitors to design and build their own creations. Whether you're constructing airplanes, airports, or inventing something entirely new, Saturday STEAM Hour encourages you to dream big and bring your ideas to life. Drop in anytime during the hour for an opportunity to explore the wonders of aviation through play. This program is ideal for learners ages 6 – 12 and is FREE with museum admission.

### RUNWAY RHYTHMS FAMILY CONCERT

Sun., Jan. 25 from 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Join us for a fun, multilingual family concert with the Riverdale Chamber Music Woodwind Quintet! Enjoy the thrilling adventure of Peter and the Wolf, brought to life through classical music. This concert is specially crafted for families and children, offering a vibrant, interactive experience that transcends language barriers. Enjoy refreshments and meet the musicians after the performance. Register in advance to secure your spot! Walk-in spaces will be available on a first-

come, first-served basis. All ages. FREE with museum admission.

### SAVE THE DATE

Sat., Feb. 21 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
**Berliner Helicopter Family Day:** 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. All ages. FREE with museum admission.

## NATIONAL WILDLIFE VISITOR CENTER

Main phone: 301.497.5772. Website: <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/patuxent-research/events>.

Address: 10901 Scarlet Tanager Loop, Laurel, MD 20708. The entrance is accessed from Powder Mill Rd. between the Baltimore–Washington Pkwy. and Rt. 197. The grounds are open from sunrise to sunset daily, except Tuesdays when they close at 4 p.m. Regular business hours for the building are Wed. – Sat. from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., except for Federal holidays.

- **Free admission, parking, exhibits, and programs.**
- **Miles of walking trails.**
- **Great for birdwatching and photography.**
- **All dogs must be kept on a leash** (no longer than 6 feet) for their own safety as well as that of other visitors and wildlife.
- **Weather closures:** Hours of access may be altered as needed to clear roads and grounds.

### SCHOOLS AND YOUTH GROUPS

Invitation to enjoy educational species exhibits, the grounds and trails, bird blind, and pollinator gardens. There is a patio for picnics. Send your questions to Jason at [michael\\_cangelosi@fws.gov](mailto:michael_cangelosi@fws.gov).

### AGENTS OF DISCOVERY

Sunrise to sunset daily, except only until 4 p.m. on Tuesdays. All ages. This is an outdoor self-guided nature-challenge game on the grounds. Download free phone app at home first. Complete challenges and earn a patch. Play: <https://fws.gov/media/agents-discovery-patuxent-research-refuge>.

### KIDS DISCOVERY CENTER

10 a.m. to 12 noon (35-minute time slots, on the hour). Free. Ages 3 – 10, w/adult. Crafts, puzzles, games, nature exploration.

- **January theme:** River otters.
  - **February theme:** Field mice and voles—Do they differ?
- Registration is strongly recommended: Call 301.497.5772 during regular business hours. For large groups contact [michael\\_cangelosi@fws.gov](mailto:michael_cangelosi@fws.gov).

## HOLLINGSWORTH WILDLIFE ART GALLERY

Free. All ages. Open when the building is open. The art gallery is next to the bookstore.

- January art: David Jonathan Cohen returns with his new photo exhibit, ***In the Galapagos Islands***. See Galapagos giant tortoises, sea lions, marine iguanas, Sally Lightfoot crabs, and birds found only in the Galapagos Islands.

### WINGSPAN GAME DAYS

Friday, Jan. 9 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. both days. Ages 12+. No experience needed. Play the award-winning board game and learn more about birds! Use our game or bring yours and sign in at the Front Desk to play.

## LAUREL–BELTSVILLE SENIOR ACTIVITY CENTER

Masks are optional. Contact the center for updates. Membership is free for Beltsville residents who are 60 years old or older. Regular hours of operation are Mon. – Thur. from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Fri. from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sat. from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Closed on Sundays and most major holidays. Address: 7120 Contee Rd., Laurel, MD 20707, next to the University of Maryland Laurel Medical Center. Phone: 301.206.3350. Fax: 301.206.3387. Maryland Relay 7-1-1 for customers who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability.

## LAUREL SENIOR FRIENDSHIP CLUB (LSFC)

Reservations for our monthly luncheon are due two weeks before the meeting. **Contact the LSFC office for reservations and information about events planned for 2026.** The office is open Mon. – Fri. from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; call 301.206.3380.  
• Every Tuesday Bingo starts at 12 noon (doors open at 11 a.m.); fee for cards, NO admission fee. If any doubt about Bingo being held, call 240.788.2290.

## BELTSVILLE EVENTS

## NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL LIBRARY (NAL)

Address: 10301 Baltimore Ave. in Beltsville. Main phone number: 301.504.5755. We continue to serve our customers remotely during regular business hours. Website: <https://www.nal.usda.gov/>; online information products are always available. NAL is on X at [https://x.com/National\\_Ag\\_Lib](https://x.com/National_Ag_Lib). The National Agricultural Library (NAL) is one of five national libraries of the United States. It houses one of the world's largest collections devoted to agriculture and its related sciences. See nutrition information for every stage of

life at <https://www.nutrition.gov/>. Get *MyPlate* nutrition information for babies and toddlers via the free Amazon Alexa app. To learn more, visit [www.myplate.gov/myplateassistant](http://www.myplate.gov/myplateassistant).

## YOUNG AT HEART CLUB

Thur., Jan. 15 at 10:30 a.m. Address: the Beltsville Community Center, 3900 Sellman Rd., Beltsville. The Beltsville Young at Heart Club meets on the third Thursday of each month (weather permitting) and is for residents who are 55 years of age and older. Contact Lois at 301.498.9736 for more information.

## BELTSVILLE LIBRARY EVENTS

**Closures: a) Wed., Dec. 31 and Thur., Jan. 1 for New Year's, and b) Sun., Jan. 18 and Mon., Jan. 19 for Martin Luther King Day.**

Address: 4319 Sellman Rd., Beltsville, next door to the police station. The main phone number is 301.937.0294. TTY: 301.808.2061. *Ask a Librarian* telephone reference is available when the library is open; call 240.455.5451. Regular hours of operation are Mon., Thur., and Fri. from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Tue. and Wed. from 12 noon to 8 p.m.; Sat. from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and Sun. 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.; closed on most major holidays. See [www.pgcmis.info/location/Beltsville](http://www.pgcmis.info/location/Beltsville) for online services and information about other county library branches and programs.

## PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

### READY 2 READ STORYTIME

Mondays at 10:30 a.m. Bring your toddler and enjoy stories, songs, fingerplays, and more! Ages 2 – 3.

### SPANISH–ENGLISH READY 2 READ STORYTIME

Thursdays at 10:30 a.m. Stories, fingerplays, and songs will be presented in Spanish and English. Edades 3 a 5. Se presentarán cuentos, actividades de “Fingerplay,” y canciones en inglés y español. Ages 3 – 5.

### TAIL WAGGIN' TUTORS

Two dates: Sat., Jan. 10 and Fri., Jan. 16 from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. each day. Boost your child's confidence by reading to friendly, trained therapy dogs! Whether they bring a favorite book or choose one from the library, each child gets 10 – 15 minutes of one-on-one reading time with a furry friend.=

## KIDS ACHIEVE CLUB | AYUDA CON LA TAREA

Two dates: Tuesdays, Jan. 20 and Jan. 27 from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. each day. Get the support you need with homework help and reading practice for students in grades 1 through 6. This is a great

opportunity to boost your skills and gain confidence in your abilities. This program is especially useful for English Language Learner students, but all are welcome.

## STEM FUN

Thur., Jan. 22 from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. STEM Fun: Snowstorm in a Jar. Dive into the world of science, technology, engineering, and math with fun, hands-on experiments and activities! Explore making a project that sparks curiosity and creativity.

## SAVE THE DATE IN FEBRUARY

Celebrate Black History Month with Children's Author Allen Wells: Reading & Fun Activity! – Sat., Feb. 14 at 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. Join celebrated children's author Allen Wells for a lively reading of his books, including ***Yvonne Clark and Her Engineering Spark*** and ***Danté Plays His Blues***. After the reading, kids will enjoy a fun, hands-on activity inspired by the stories—designed to spark curiosity and creativity. Celebrate Black voices, music, and imagination in this engaging experience for children ages 4 – 8.

## PROGRAM FOR TEENS

### NEEDLEWORK SOCIAL

Mon., Jan. 12 from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. Connect with others in your community who share your love for needlecraft! Bring your current project and enjoy a relaxed atmosphere while exchanging tips, ideas, and conversation.

## PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS

## WORKFORCE RESOURCE TOOLKIT SERIES

• **Brainfuse JobNow**  
Tue., Jan. 13 from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Discover Brainfuse JobNow, which offers live online job and resume coaching. Learn how to complete a career assessment, create a standout resume, and get interview tips with expert coaching to advance your career.

• **LinkedIn Learning**  
Tue., Jan. 20 from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Join us for LinkedIn Learning! Discover over 16,000 courses available in seven languages on an easy-to-use platform. Gain new skills in animation, business, design, marketing, programming, and more to broaden your knowledge and advance your career.

• **Learning Express Library**  
Tue., Jan. 27 from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Explore practice tests for college entrance, employment, and citizenship exams, and access tutorials designed to strengthen your math, reading, and writing skills. This session workshop also includes sessions on Academic Skills and Test Preparation, Career Development and Job Readiness, as well as Skill Building and Professional Development to support your success.

# Share Your News!

Send your article submissions to News Director Rick Bergmann at [editor@beltsvillenewstoday.com](mailto:editor@beltsvillenewstoday.com)



## Club News

### Beltsville Young at Heart

by Lois Hamilton

Happy New Year--

We join 2026, thankful for our December, Santa Bingo. Fun and gifts were enjoyed by all.

We start this year on January 15 with Beltsville entertainer—Johnny Seaton.

We have enjoyed him before and know he will do a terrific job. We meet at the Beltsville Community Center, 3900 Sellman Road, at 10:30 am. You can join us with light refreshments, a chance to win at our 50/50 drawing, sign up for any 2026 trips and find something at our "New 2 You" table.

I am looking for some topics that

seniors are interested in, so I can find a speaker to speak to our senior group. We are a daytime group and usually finish by 1:00 pm. Call me with any suggestions.

If you need any other information, please call me or leave a message at 301-498-9736 and I'll get back to you as soon as I can. We are a small group, but always looking for new people to join—you do NOT have to live in Beltsville to attend.

"As we grow older, we become master weavers, spinning the wild and reckless straw of our youth into the precious enduring GOLD of wisdom."

—G.B. Shaw



Beltsville Lions and guests at 3 December meeting

### District Governor Lois Barb Visits Beltsville Lions

By Ted Ladd

District Governor (DG) Lois Barb paid her official visit to the Club on the evening of December 3. In her comments, she emphasized membership growth as a key factor in her objectives for this Lion year. She was accompanied by husband, PAST District Governor (PDG) Rich Barb, who at DG Lois's invitation provided insight to the various foundations the district supports. PDG Barb reviewed the Lions Community Outreach Foundation, Lions Camp Merrick, The Lions Vision Research Foundation and Leader Dogs for the Blind. Club members enjoyed the informative presentations by DG Lois



Members of the Beltsville Lions Club donate backpacks to Cpl. Hibbert for the Police Explorers youth group.

and PDG Rich.

Visitors at this meeting included First Vice Governor Courtney McAlmont, Lion Brindisi from DC Special Olympics Lions and Corporal Kenneth Hibbert, District VI, Prince George's County

Police. Lion Brindisi brought a dozen stuffed backpacks containing gifts, which she and the Beltsville Lions presented to Corporal Hibbert for youth participating in the Police Explorers program.

## Church News

### Emmanuel United Methodist Church's Monthly Food Distribution Schedule for 2026

By Emmanuel United Methodist Church

Emmanuel United Methodist Church in Beltsville (11416 Cedar Lane, Beltsville, MD 20705) has been serving the community with food distributions for over ten years—and we will continue this ministry in 2026.

In the book of Matthew, Jesus tells His disciples: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me." He explains that when we care for others, we are also serving God. Emmanuel recognizes the needs within our community and is committed to helping meet them.

Our monthly food distributions usually take place on the

fourth Saturday of each month, from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. You do not need to be a resident of Beltsville or a member of Emmanuel to participate. The only requirement is that you are in need—no questions asked.

If you or someone you know could benefit from this service, please reach out to us at office@eumcbeltsville.com.

#### 2026 Distribution Schedule

Saturday, January 24  
Saturday, February 28  
Saturday, March 28  
Saturday, April 25  
Saturday, May 23  
Saturday, June 27  
Saturday, July 25  
Saturday, August 22  
Saturday, September 26  
Saturday, October 24  
Saturday, November 21  
Saturday, December 19

### Calendario de Distribución de Alimentos Mensual de la Iglesia Metodista Unida Emmanuel para 2026

Por la Iglesia Metodista Unida Emmanuel

La Iglesia Metodista Unida Emmanuel en Beltsville (11416 Cedar Lane, Beltsville, MD 20705) ha estado sirviendo a la comunidad con distribuciones de alimentos durante más de diez años, y continuará con este ministerio en 2026.

En el libro de Mateo, Jesús les dice a sus discípulos: "Porque tuve hambre y me dieron de comer, tuve sed y me dieron de beber, fui

forastero y me recibieron." Él explica que al ayudar a los demás, también estamos sirviendo a Dios. Emmanuel reconoce las necesidades de nuestra comunidad y está comprometida a ayudarlas a satisfacer.

Nuestras distribuciones mensuales de alimentos generalmente se llevan a cabo el cuarto sábado de cada mes, de 8:00 a.m. a 11:00 a.m. No es necesario ser residente de Beltsville ni miembro de

#### SCHEDULE

continues on page 14

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(301)937-7114 † [office@eumcbeltsville.com](mailto:office@eumcbeltsville.com)  
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Find us on Facebook  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/EUMCBeltsville>  
Follow us on Instagram @eumc\_beltsville

Sunday Morning Worship 10 AM  
You can watch the live broadcast on our website  
[www.eumcbeltsville.com](http://www.eumcbeltsville.com)  
*"For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them"*

 **Upcoming Events** 

January 24: 8am-11am Free Food Distribution




**Abiding Presence Lutheran Church**  
10774 Rhode Island Avenue  
301-937-7646



Sunday Worship: 10:00 a.m.  
Rev. Jongkil Na  
[www.APLChurch.org](http://www.APLChurch.org)

***Come and Join Us***  
*Located in the Beltsville Professional Center*



**St. Joseph Catholic Church**  
[www.stjosephbeltsville.org](http://www.stjosephbeltsville.org)

Pastor: Rev. Shaun T. Foggo  
Deacon: Rev. Mr. Armando Jimenez  
Adult, Youth and Children Faith Formation  
[reled@stjosephbeltsville.org](mailto:reled@stjosephbeltsville.org)  
Director: Mrs. Helene H. Stever  
St. Joseph's Regional Catholic School  
[www.stjosrcs.org](http://www.stjosrcs.org)  
Principal: Mrs. Erin Meunier

11007 Montgomery Road  
Beltsville, MD 20705  
301-937-7183

Masses: Sat Vigil 5:00pm, Sun's 8:30am\*, 10:30am, and 12:15pm (Spanish)  
Monday-Friday 8:00am; Wed 9:30am; and 1st Sat's 8:00am  
\*The Mass on Sunday 8:30am is also live streamed, connect with us on Flocknote for the link. \*\* The Mass on Wednesday is only when School is open.

\*\*\*\*\*

**St. John's Episcopal/Anglican Church**  
11040 Baltimore Avenue Beltsville, MD 20704  
301-937-4292 • [www.saintjohnsbeltsville.org](http://www.saintjohnsbeltsville.org)  
*The Reverend Joseph M. Constant, Rector*

Join us for In Person Worship every Sunday at 10 AM  
Youth Sunday School 11:15 AM

To view services online:  
Go to <https://www.facebook.com/StJohnsZionParish/Live/>

Other services online via Zoom: Wednesday Noonday;  
Thursday Bible Study and Compline 7 PM via Zoom

Contact the Church office if you  
are interested in any of these  
resources

Our Mission: To Share God's  
love with everyone to bring  
hope and change lives.



**First Baptist Church  
of Beltsville (SBC)**

**4700 Odell Road  
Beltsville, MD 20705  
301-937-7771**  
[www.fbcbeltsville.org](http://www.fbcbeltsville.org)  
**Keith Holland, Pastor**

---

**Abundant Grace;  
Abundant Life;  
Abundant God!**

**Sundays:**

Sunday School for all ages	9:45 a.m.
Morning Worship	11:00 a.m.
Children's Church (4yr -4th gr)	11:00 a.m.
Evening Worship	6:00 p.m.

**Wednesdays:**

Adult Bible Study & Prayer	7:00 p.m.
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\*Childcare available for children up to 3 years old

## SCHEDULE

continued from page 13

Emmanuel para participar. El único requisito es que tenga necesidad—sin preguntas ni requisitos adicionales.

Si usted o alguien que conoce podría beneficiarse de este servicio, por favor comuníquese con nosotros en [office@eumcbeltsville.com](mailto:office@eumcbeltsville.com).

## Calendario de Distribución 2026

Sábado, 24 de enero  
Sábado, 28 de febrero  
Sábado, 28 de marzo  
Sábado, 25 de abril  
Sábado, 23 de mayo  
Sábado, 27 de junio  
Sábado, 25 de julio  
Sábado, 22 de agosto  
Sábado, 26 de septiembre  
Sábado, 24 de octubre  
Sábado, 21 de noviembre  
Sábado, 19 de diciembre

## RIDERWOOD

continued from page 5

dents truly embodies the spirit of the season," says Human Resources Director Josephine White. "Their support of the Staff Appreciation Fund reflects the close-knit community we've built together. Our team members consistently go above and beyond by bringing dedication, warmth, and enthusiasm to everything they do. Thanks to their efforts, Riderwood is an extraordinary place to live and work."

## ADVOCACY

continued from page 10

wiped out in the President's FY26 budget. Please save them!

- The Eastern Ecological Science Center that has been known as the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center for almost all of its 90 history, is proposed to be zeroed out in the President's FY26 budget. This would close the Bird Banding Lab, the Breeding Bird Survey, and the Bee Lab among other very important programs to not just Maryland, but to our nation. Please ensure that funding is included in FY 26 Appropriations to keep these vital programs and staff funded.
- I am writing to ask you to please do all you can to save the Ecosystems Mission Area of the USGS FY 26 budget. This program contains the Bird Banding Lab, the Breeding Bird Survey, the Bee Lab, and all the scientists and biologists at Patuxent Research Refuge who are in danger of being eliminated. Please ensure that this program is funded in the FY 26 budget.

Thank you for taking the time and making the effort. It is the only way we will be able to help save the Eastern Ecological Science Center and the people working at Patuxent!

Richard Dolesh  
Chair of the Board of Directors  
Friends of Patuxent Research Refuge



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It has been a very busy period, but I had to take the time to share a moment with you to wish you a Merry Christmas and blessings, good health and prosperity in 2026.

Apart from a full-time job, I have stepped into new waters, working along with a reggae artiste Virgil Hodge, a former track and field star at Texas Christian University, TCU, in Texas. She is a former Olympian, representing St. Kitts-Nevis. She competed in the same era with stars like Muna Lee, Torri Edwards, Lauryn Williams Anita Pistone and Guzel Khubbieva. Hodge retired from track in October 2018 and officially started a full-time music career in 2024. Her first EP, "New Beginnings" was released in August 2025. I have had the honor of being her Media and Marketing Manager since July 2025. So, life for me has taken on a new turn, working with and for her, daily. She was in Dallas recently for a few months, so we could do some work together and get her in the studios here to do some work. She made a few appearances on the local Dallas circuit and in Florida and also had a few performances in Canada. I say this to say; it has been a great challenge to work with an artist to build her career. Will share a lot more about her with you, but the whole experience has been eye opening for me. (Follow her on

Instagram @virghodge). Meeting with people in the industry to work on opening creative avenues for her, growing the fan base and just working with her to create her brand. I do not know what the future holds for me as I also do Media and Marketing for an afro-beats artiste on the rise in Nigeria, Mario System (he just qualified as a medical doctor, but music is his passion. Instagram @mario\_system). My little portfolio also includes Eva! Bittersuite (she is based in the DMV area, Instagram @evabittersuite). Last on my list is Jainy, a rising afrobeats artiste, described as the next Ayra Starr. I am part of Jainy's media team.

The challenge is living in Dallas and working with people in different time zones. It has opened my eyes to how global the world is. The other side of the globe is just one phone call away. As these artistes grow, I will share their stories with you.

I have shared this with you to say that in life, everything has its own time and place. Dreams and aspirations have no expiry date. I always wanted to produce my own newspaper/magazine. I am thankful that I started this in February 2025 and it is still going strong. It is a bit of a challenge following up with people, tracking interviews, reviewing content for accuracy or changing lead stories at the last

moment as situations arise. Do not ever give up on your dreams. I have been involved in the media since my teenage years, and I am now beginning to enjoy the fruits of my professional career. I will share more with you in 2026.

Switching gears, in November this year, I went home to St. Kitts-Nevis briefly and while there, I had a chance meeting with Erasmus Williams, a senior colleague and Press Secretary to former Prime Minister Denzil Douglas. Mr. Williams (as I call him) and I shared a healthy impromptu conversation for almost an hour. The more I spoke with him, the more I realized he has a vault of media memories to share with the world. I have encouraged him to document his memoir – it includes interviews with many leading Caribbean political figures who have since passed on. I have not told him anything yet, but I would love to document some of the memories he shared with me. If this comes to pass, I will let you know. I have never written a book, but this would be an honor to do for him. We did not always get along, when he was Press Secretary to the Prime Minister and I was the St. Kitts Correspondent for The Daily Herald (St. Marten), but the mutual respect was always there.

Enjoy your Christmas and happy new year when it comes.

## HEALTH

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against flu and other serious respiratory viruses. Since significant flu activity can stretch into May, it's not too late to get a flu shot. The AMA recommends vaccination as long as the threat of flu remains. Talk with your physician or other health care professional to determine which vaccines are right for you. To cut through vaccine confusion and have open, honest conversations with your physician, first go to the AMA website for evidence-based information. For help finding a flu vaccine in your

area, visit GetMyFluShot.org.

- Drink in moderation: If consuming alcohol, do so in moderation as defined by the U.S. Dietary Guidelines: up to one drink per day for women and two drinks for men, and only for adults of legal drinking age.

- Quit tobacco, nicotine and e-cigarettes: Ask your doctor or health care professional for resources and guidance to help quit smoking, vaping or using other nicotine products. Make your home and car smoke-free to eliminate secondhand smoke exposure.

- Follow medication directions: When taking prescriptions, store

them safely to prevent diversion or misuse, and properly dispose of any leftover medication. If you're prescribed antibiotics, complete the full course to prevent antibiotic resistance.

For more health tips and resources visit ama-assn.org. "With the holiday cookies eaten and those missed workouts officially last year's worry, the new year is a great chance to refocus on the healthy choices you want to make in 2026," said AMA president Dr. Bobby Mukkamala. "Even tiny changes now can snowball into major gains for your long-term health."

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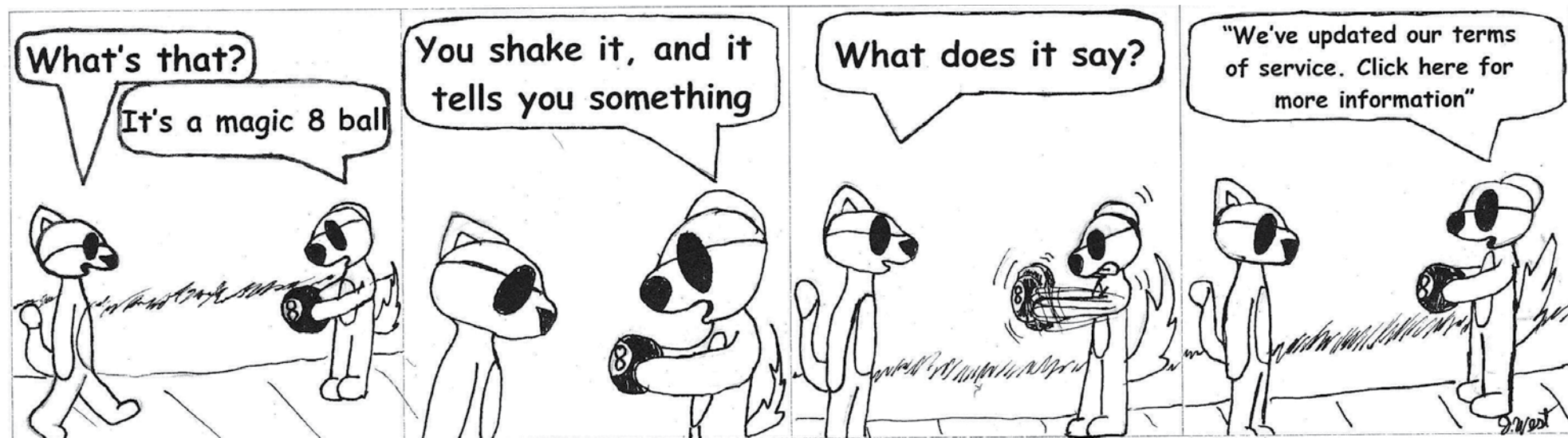
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\*Available to the first 25 applications approved and funded. APR= Annual percentage rate. APRs are effective as of 1/1/2026 and are subject to change without notice. Debt consolidation loan rates and terms are based on creditworthiness. Your rate may vary if applicable. This offer is not guaranteed if you do not meet our credit criteria or if your account is not in good standings. This offer is available for personal loans for debt consolidation. Prince George's Community Federal Credit Union expressly reserves the right to terminate this offer at any time and without notice provided to you. Prince George's Community Federal Credit Union is not affiliated with or sponsored by Amazon. Membership requirements apply. Loan amounts may vary based on a variety of factors such as income and credit rating. Maximum loan limit is \$30,000.00 per qualifying member. Terms and conditions are subject to change at any time. Call 301-627-2666, visit a convenient branch location, or visit [www.PrinceGeorgesCFCU.org/DebtRelief](http://www.PrinceGeorgesCFCU.org/DebtRelief) for details.

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