

Emmitsburg NEWS-JOURNAL

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"EXALTING THE IMPORTANCE OF IDEAS AND INFORMATION" —EDWARD R. MURROW

DECEMBER 2021

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And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

—Luke 2:8-14



Merry Christmas from the staff of the Emmitsburg News-Journal: Andrea, Katie, Marianne, Mary Ann, Michael, Ron, Carol, Mark, Harry, Jack, Claire, Joey, Emmy, Renee, Jefferson, Jen, Sam, McKenna, Shannon, Lindsay, Jack, Tim, Sharon, Brian and Mike.

Gateway to the Cure donations surpasses \$100k

Thurmont Town Municipal Building became a sea of pink Nov. 23 as the community celebrated a Gateway to the Cure grandeur milestone. The Thurmont Town Council presented the Hurwitz Breast Cancer Fund at Frederick Health Hospital with a check for \$18,500, the money having been garnered as the result of Thurmont's 8th Annual Gateway To The Cure Campaign.

Proving a season worth being thankful for, "We give thanks to all who have supported our journey for the last eight years for Gateway to the Cure," said Economic Development Manager Vicki Grinder.

Together, the Town of Thurmont has collected a grand total of \$116,000 since the campaign's inception in 2014, according to Grinder. Grinder marveled in appreciation at the community's dedication and volunteer support to not only keep the campaign running but thriving each and every year. "At every one of our events there are smiles, smiles, smiles everywhere," she said.

Grinder recognized the community of passionate sponsors, donors, town staff, volunteers, and participants that had made the fundraiser successful year after year.

Grinder credited local busi-



nesses as "The heart and soul of Gateway to the Cure" for their continual support even through the pandemic when many businesses had to shut down and restaurants could only have take-out sales for months on end.

In 2020, Gateway to the Cure carried on raising \$15,300 despite the pandemic forcing some events to cancel and fewer businesses being able to participate.

"The fact that this little town has collectively achieved \$100,000 in funds raised in support of research funds, that's phenomenal, that's no small change," said Coach John Steiner, organizer of the campaign's 5K.

The Patty Hurwitz Fund began in 1999, after Hurwitz was diagnosed with breast cancer. The fund is used to support early cancer detection methods at the Stockman Cancer Institute in Frederick, which provides access to the diagnostics County residents need without hav-

ing to travel far from home.

All funds collected stay local for Frederick County breast cancer research and early dedication. To date, the Patty Hurwitz Fund has collected a total of \$2.3 million and "\$116,000 of that is from Thurmont," she said. Hurwitz congratulated Thurmont for reaching such an outstanding milestone for such a small town. "There's a saying, 'You are as big as your heart is,' so I would say you are a really big town," she said.

Hurwitz acknowledged breast cancer doesn't stop because there is a pandemic and the need for breast cancer funding is just as strong if not stronger now than

ever. "You said you could do it, and you did it ... From the bottom of my heart, I thank you all. It takes a lot, this is such a wonderful effort," she said.

Mayor John Kinnaird credited Hurwitz for touching countless lives of local people facing breast cancer; either through themselves or through loved ones. "Patty, you inspire everything that happens up here in Thurmont with breast cancer awareness," he said.

Once again, Gateway to the Cure proved that neighbors helping neighbors and a dedication to cancer awareness is in the spirit of the Town of Thurmont. "It's about the journey," Grinder said.

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EMMITSBURG NEWS

Council questions MS4 requirements

In response to Town Council frustration with requirements and costs pertaining to the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) requirements, an expert was brought in to answer questions at the November Emmitsburg Town Council meeting.

MS4 regulations require municipalities to implement certain actions intended to aid in the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay through storm water runoff management

“On a larger scale, this whole program is revolved around changing perceptions, it’s really about society,” stated Mark Harman of ARRO Consulting, an engineering and environmental firm. Harman compared MS4 requirements to the recycling initiatives in the 1970’s and education regarding seatbelts in the 1980’s, equating the importance of having a strong education component and effective legislation. “Unfortunately, we are at the early stages of this,” he said.

Reforestation is a key element of MS4. The town’s restoration budget for the current permit year is approximately \$690,000, not account-

ing for additional costs of staff time, according to Town Planner Zach Gulden. The town planted thousands of trees in partnership with the Stream-Link Education and the Daughters of Charity.

To help Emmitsburg recover the cost of the tree planting, the town obtained a \$434,000 grant from the Maryland Department of National Resources, as well as \$34,000 from the Chesapeake Bay Trust for the Silo Hill Stormwater Management Basin project. However, this still leaves approximately \$221,000 in funds the town must find in the budget to complete other mandatory MS4 projects by the end of 2023 before the cycle begins anew.

Costs to the town for MS4 projects are expected to increase in 2023-2028 as conservation grants become more competitive as more municipalities become mandated MS4 communities.

Commissioner Frank Davis expressed frustration that unfunded mandates like MS4 put a costly burden on the town and the hundreds of thousands of dollars in program costs

could be better used elsewhere within the town, such as fixing sewers.

“Taking care of the environment is very, very important to us, it’s just that little communities like us, the unfunded mandates are getting outrageous,” Davis said.

While larger communities might not think twice about the MS4 requirement costs, Council Vice President Cliff Sweeny expressed concern for the municipalities even smaller than Emmitsburg’s approximately 3,000 residents.

“Unfortunately, it’s a regulation that has to be met and they will have to find a way to do it,” Harman said, adding that not complying with the mandates is not an option and may have to come down to a municipality raising taxes.

Council President Tim O’Donnell said MS4 requirements have added extra pressure on staff and asked Harman to carry the voice of the town to the EPA regarding MS4 requirements. “It is impinging upon our standard of service to our community profoundly and it is creating tremendous pressure in office, on our staff,” he said.

News Briefs . . .

Forest Conservation Easement Established

During the November Town Council meeting, the council approved a 25-year revertible forest conservation deed of easement for 16 acres with the Daughters of Charity.

In an effort to meet pressing Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System Program and Permit (MS4) requirements, the town has formed a partnership with Stream-Link Education and the Daughters for a tree planting initiative. This partnership will ultimately result in the planting of thousands of trees over two years across the 16 acres owned by the Daughters as well as 11 acres owned by the town.

The deed of easement protects the tree plantings for 25 years, after which land will be returned to the Daughters for their discretion. “We’re just really appreciative of the Daughters of Charity for giving us 16 acres for tree plantings,” Town Planner Zach Gulden said.

The reforestation program was established as part of the town’s initiative to plant 27 total acres of trees along streams to help meet mandatory federal and state requirements for the MS4 program while creating a forest to protect streams from stormwater runoff.

Since the 16 acres borders the town’s wastewater treatment facility and Flat Run Stream, the tree planting will alleviate pollutant issues and previous plans to annex the 16 acres into the town are not needed at this time, Gulden said.

“The Sisters are very good stewards of the environment; they are pleased to offer the 16 acres for planting,” George Brenton, Administrator of the Daughters’ Emmitsburg Campus said in a press release of the initiative.

Sewer Connection Approved

The Town Council approved a new sewer connection agreement with 500 East Main Street. The agree-

ment was necessary after the old sewer line connecting the property to the town’s sewer system failed. As the town was unable to determine the cause of the failure, it opted to take responsibility for the cost of the replacement.

The new agreements will allow the town to install a new sewer line from the residence to the town’s main sewerage line that runs along Creamery Road. Besides installing a new sewer connection, the agreement includes installing new sidewalks for any disturbed area during the digging process, replacing slate pavers and reinstalling the property’s fence. It is estimated that the project will cost \$13,000.

Work On Rutter’s Begins In Earnest

Construction for Emmitsburg’s new Rutter’s convenience store, located on the east side of Rt. 15 on Taneytown Pike, has begun in earnest. After the project broke ground in September, work was put on hold until all permits were finalized and construction

and earth moving equipment arrived on site.

Multiple permits were required by the county for the project’s construction and sewer line because the facility is so close to a major highway. With the arrival of the earth moving equipment at the start of November, little time was wasted putting it to work once all the permits were approved.

“Nothing is halting the project,” Emmitsburg Mayor Don

Briggs said, “We are doing everything to accommodate it. The town of Emmitsburg continues to be very excited for Rutter’s convenient location for goods and fuel as well as the jobs it will bring to the community. It will really benefit the town in a great way,” Briggs said.

The 500 square feet, 15-acre convenience store project has been in the works for about two years, and is expected to be completed and open by May or June.

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Senior Advisors:

Eric Glass, Taney Corporation
Greg Reaver, Emmitsburg Glass

Executive Editor: Michael Hillman, editor@emmitsburg.com

Managing Editor: Harry Scherer, MSMU Class of 2022

Assistant Editor: Emmy Jansen, MSMU Class of 2023

News Editor: Andrea Grabenstein, news@emmitsburg.com

News Reporter: Shannon Amos, news@emmitsburg.com

Graphic Design and layout: Brian Barth, timebombstudios.com

Advertising: Sharon Graham, advertising@emmitsburg.com

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FAIRFIELD/CARROLL VALLEY NEWS

Fountaindale VFC celebrates 75th anniversary

Members of the community gathered at Fountaindale Volunteer Fire Department Nov. 7 to celebrate 75 years of service to the community.

Throughout the daylong celebration, Fountaindale department members and the public shared stories and poured over photo albums of the station's legacy. In addition, fire apparatus and vehicles were on display along with commemorative anniversary T-shirts and challenge coins for purchase.

Going strong since 1946, Fountaindale is a completely volunteer-based organization driven by the dedication

of its members to serve 600 houses in portions of Hamiltonban & Liberty Townships, and Carroll Valley Borough. One of the largest accomplishments of Fountaindale was the Jack's Mountain fire in 1998 that lasted 48 hours and required a joint effort of 45 stations and the support of the entire community.

Although firefighting technology and equipment has updated since, the passion in the men and women of Fountaindale to be ready to serve their community at a moment's notice is as strong as ever.

Karen Rudisill joined the department along with her husband

Department President Keith Rudisill and before long had her two daughters qualified as interior fire fighters.

Dana Lowe became involved with the department when her son Isaac joined the Junior Fire Fighter program to learn the basics and never looked back. "I knew I wanted to be involved as well," she said.

Lieutenant Sarah Ginn was born and raised in the fire service and has been devoted to Fountaindale since she began as a junior fire fighter at the age of 14. "We appreciate the support of the community getting us here and we look forward to another 75 years and more," she said.

Fire departments must be able to adapt and change to continue serving the community, according to Deputy Chief Sam Ginn. "It's a challenge for any organization to have to change with the times," he said.

Actively fighting fires is never a requirement to be a member of the fire department. Many different aspects of keeping the department running fall on to social members, for instance fundraising and organizing community events. Fountaindale takes pride in the family atmosphere they have worked hard to build that welcomes anyone who wants to join the department. "We

have a great group of volunteers. Everybody has a voice, and we want everyone to be involved," he said.

Being a volunteer means dedication and answering the tough call of duty, but it also means a family and a support system. As more local fire departments face difficulty maintaining volunteers, Fountaindale is proud to share its dedication milestone with the community and looks forward to many more decades of service.

Also in attendance at the celebration were Adams County Board of Commissioners Randy Phiel, Jim Martin, and Marty Qually as well as Pennsylvania Representative Dan Moul, with a citation of recognition to honor Fountaindale's milestone.

Liberty Township identifies transportation priorities

At their November meeting, the Liberty Township Board of Supervisors received a presentation by the Adams County Transportation Planning Organization (ACTPO) soliciting input on the agency's long-range transportation plan, including its list of projects and their priorities.

The staff of the ACTPO told the supervisors that its purpose was to prioritize and allocate federal, state, and local transportation funds for roads, bridges, pedestrian safety, and public transit, according to Comprehensive Planner Laura Neiderer.

The Adams County 2017-2040 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) identifies extended needs and strategies for improv-

ing the transportation network of the county, relative to community development and economic growth challenges. The LRTP ensures the county's continued eligibility for Federal transportation funding.

The long-range transportation plan has an overarching strategy "to address the transportation system in the county and what needs to occur to it to continue to support life here in Adams County as a functioning transportation system," Neiderer said.

Liberty Township tends to have trouble competing for grants with other municipalities, according to Chairman Walter Barlow. "Our projects are not as high priority as other townships," he said.

In response to requests for transportation related infrastructure projects, Barlow suggested turning lanes at the intersection at Route 16 and Steelman Marker Road and another for Route 16 and Ranch Trail. "Those two intersections are Liberty, but Ranch Trail enters into Carroll Valley," he said. Barlow contributed vehicle speed and the lack of turning lanes as a contributor to many incidents. "We've had rear end accidents there multiple times over the years," he said that now a "No Left Turn" sign is posted east at Steelman Marker.

Another aspect of the area to consider is the heavy tractor trailer traffic on Route 16, Police Chief Sherri Hansen said. "Because those guys

can't stop on a dime, and if someone decides to put their turn signal on at the last minute and stop in front of them," she said.

Barlow also proposed the creation of a bridge over Friends Creek at \$500,000. Not only has there never been a bridge at that location, "it has been recommended to the township for the last thirty years," he said, adding "They're always made it very clear to us that the responsibility of that particular crossing is part of the township, and we should address it and we just don't have the resources to address it, never."

The township also looked for assistance in upgrading local roads that go to private developments that currently cannot allow for emergency vehicle

access after flooding. Emergency vehicles have "actually gotten swamped" at the narrow roads attempting to respond to a call, according to Barlow.

"Right now, some of those roads are only eight feet wide and they've got gullies in them two feet deep," he said. "Saying that it's a private road doesn't let us off the hook for the safety of our residents," Barlow said. "Those roads are not passable for emergency vehicles... We can't find any funding at all to help these people," he said.

Neiderer stated the county would review Liberty's needs and consider ways to address some of the critical issues that were not on state owned roads. "Our first priority is the safety and welfare of all our residents," Barlow said.

Borough considers dissolving sewer and water authority

Borough Manager Dave Hazlett has proposed to the Carroll Valley Borough Council to consider dissolving the Borough's sewer and water authority. The Authority is responsible for the long-range public sewer and water facilities planning goals of Carroll Valley.

The authority has struggled to find volunteers to serve on its board as of late, forcing council members to often sit in to keep meetings going, according to Borough Manager Dave Hazlett. When the sewer water authority was created in the 1970's, municipalities had very limited borrowing power and the way to get around that was to set up 'authorities' that on paper had tangible property that they could take loans out on. However, times have changed, according to Hazlett, and municipalities like Carroll Valley can now easily borrow money, or see bonds to cover operating cost, he said.

Carroll Valley has a legal 'lease-back' agreement with the authority, whereby the authority owns the sewer plant, piping and lines, and the collection system, and leases them all back to the borough. "Borough staff operates everything and all the money form customers, as well as bill paying is being handled by the borough staff," he said, adding "the authority doesn't have any real employees, just a volunteer Board."

Hazlett noted that for years the agreement has only served to created an unnecessary level of bureaucracy between the borough and the author-

ity. Dissolvement would eliminate the current confusing leaseback operations, as well as streamline the application process for future funding needs, according to Hazlett.

If the council agrees to dissolve the authority, ownership of the sewer system will revert back directly to the Borough which will then be whole responsible for all aspect of the operation, eliminating any future need for Borough staff to interact with the authority's Board on such things as maintenance and operations issues and cost, necessary modifications, or permitting issues.

"Dissolving the authority in no way

discounts the efforts put in by volunteers who run the authority" Hazlett said. "Everyone that has served has done a wonderful job."

The positive aspect of having a sewer and water authority is that is theoretically allowing the use of the borough waste and sewer services outside the borough's municipal boundaries without regulations, while a water and sewer system run by the borough it would be required by regulations to seek outside approve form the State's Public Utility Commission (PUC) to support customers outside of the Borough limits.

But as noted by Hazlett, the

amount of sewer and water customers outside the borough has "diminished" over the years and he doesn't foresee new ones coming in, thereby reducing the need to ever interact with the Public Utility Commission.

Many other municipal sewer authorities don't intertwine with their

local municipalities like we do, where municipal staff does all the work. "Ours is a very unique case in that regard," he said.

Before taking any action, the he council asked Hazlett for a follow-up briefing and has asked for input from the sewer and water authority.



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THURMONT NEWS

Rail/truck terminal set to begin operations

On December 2, Thurmont will become home to a new rail/truck transfer facility serving the high traffic areas of Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, all the way to New England. The aim of the facility is to combine cost effective rail transport with the ease of truck delivery.

Transloading is a shipping term that refers to the unique process of transferring a shipment from one mode of transportation to another while en-route to the ultimate destination. Prime locations near major routes and highways ensures customers' items are off loaded from rail

and delivered to their destinations by truck quickly and conveniently.

The Thurmont Transloading station has been over eight years in the making, according to Maryland Transload Logistics General Manager Eric Welch. The transit station "will promote jobs and growth within the area and will have a huge economic impact for the town" according to Welch.

The new Thurmont terminal is located on over 20 acres in the town's industrial park close to Maryland Midland rail lines, providing easy access to the CSX rail system. The

facility includes a new rail connector to the Maryland Midland rail line. Trucks driving too and from Route 15 to the transfer depot will use the same route as the trucks from NVR, Structural, LLC, &c. - Carroll St. to Woodside Ave. to North Church St..

As the initial use of the facility will be to support Structural LLC operations, the new facility will result in a net decrease in incoming truck traffic to town, as the current inbound loads to Structural LLC are transferred off of trucks and onto train cars.

The Thurmont draft comprehensive plan, which is scheduled for a

public hearing at the Planning & Zoning Commission meeting on December 2, includes an industrial bypass in the transportation plan. According to Thurmont Town Manager Jim Humerick, if this route is approved and comes to fruition, it would eliminate a great deal of the truck traffic that currently uses the town's streets.

Countless products can be transloaded including construction materials, bulk products, household appliances and more. As a single rail car can carry between three to four truckloads of goods and ship larger

and heavier loads, transloading leads to lower environmental emissions and transportation costs, lowering the cost of products that eventually results in saving to consumers.

The ribbon cutting event, to be held at the facility, located at 201 Poplar Ave, will be hosted by Maryland Transload Logistics. Thurmont Mayor John Kinnaird, as well as representatives of Frederick County, and the Maryland Chamber of Commerce will be speaking. Senior officers from Genessee Wyoming Railroad, CSX Railroad, and Georgia Pacific Lumber will also be in attendance to speak about the project.

Thurmont passes financial audit

The Town of Thurmont's Fiscal Year 2021 audit was presented at the Council's November 16 meeting without disparities. The audit was performed in accordance with national and governmental standards and no reportable findings to the fiscal year budget.

The town's total revenues for the fiscal year 2021 equaled \$4,516,093 and expenditures totaled 4,375,759. The town's total liabilities and fund balance equaled \$5,293,145.

Total general fund revenues of \$4,516,093 in 2021 were derived primarily from tax revenues representing 66% of the total and intergovernmental revenue at 30%. The town's mil-

lion-dollar capital reserve is the same as the prior year.

This coming year will mark the final payment of approximately \$172,000 on the new police department building dedicated in 2008. The previous year paid \$168,000, according to Chief Financial Officer Linda Joyce.

The council praised the hard work of the auditors as well as the financial department and the entire town staff for their diligence.

"I also want to thank the town staff and department heads for keeping everything within their budgets. It's always tough to craft a budget at the beginning of every year, but it's just as difficult to keep yourself within that

budget as the year travels through," Mayor John Kinnaird said.

Joyce credited collaborative communication between the departments as a contribution to the strong budget process. "There's never a question that's a dumb question," she said. "It's my personal belief that we're financially very secure in the town of Thurmont with our fund balances. I'm very proud to say that's something that's been carried on now for many, many years," Mayor said.

Decades of Thurmont history include commissioners and mayors ensuing a fund balance available for rainy days. This 'rainy day' fund totals \$459,000, which is approximately

12% of expenditures, as per the town's fund balance policy.

"You have a healthy fund balance for the general fund," Sampson said.

"A lot of communities aren't as fortunate as we are and are very slim on any kind of fund balances," Kinnaird said. Chief Administrative Officer James Humerick recognized town staff for their work on the audit, saying that it is not typical for a municipality to receive a clear audit so many years in a row, but it has become typical for Thurmont. "Once again, we get an audit this year with no finding no recommendations... and it's

important that we keep moving in that direction."

It is not typical for municipal audits to return without any findings and the fact "that we get that year after year says a lot about everyone that is involved in this process," he said.

"Revenues are staying relatively flat, so the fact that we can put together an audit report like this with no recommendations, no findings, and still provide the level of services that we provide day in and day out, I don't want to gloss over how important that is," Humerick said.

News Briefs . . .

Council honors George Bolling

At the November 16 meeting, the Town Council honored the sudden passing of prominent resident George Bolling.

Bolling was a regular host of the town's election candidate forum as well as was involved in every aspect of the part of the Lions Club, according to Mayor John Kinnaird said. "Just an amazing all-around guy. George was a gentleman and a gentle man."

No aspect of community involvement was too small, and Bolling could be regularly spotted making the town a tidier place to be. "He would take long walks in the morning to pick up trash because he felt someone had to do that," Commis-

sioner Bill Blakeslee said.

Bolling was a retired United States Army colonel who served in the Intelligence department and met with leaders during the Vietnam era, according to Blakeslee. "It is hard to imagine someone as humble as George was," he said.

Commission Board Members Appointed

The Town Council reappointed Frankie Thornton, Viktor Kraenbring and Jim Robbins to 3-year terms on the Police Commission Board.

The Police Commission acts as an advocacy for the town's police department, assisting with budgeting and acquiring additional resources

and public outreach events. There are currently six members on the Police Commission.

The Council also approved the appointment of Kraenbring to a second 5-year term on the Planning and Zoning Commission.

The Planning and Zoning is a legislative body that handles planning and subdivision review, as well as commercial and residential developments. The Planning Commission currently has five full time members and one alternative.

"They are a very busy legislative body," Humerick said.

"I just wanted to say a quick thank you to all the volunteers we have on our commissions, you perform a very important job for us, and we appreciate it," Kinnaird said.

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TANEYTOWN NEWS

Sewell property annexation takes next steps

At its November meeting, the City Council approved an agreement to consider bringing the Sewell properties on Harney Road into the corporate boundaries of the city.

The agreement states the Council is "willing to receive their request," and pursue it with the county, Mayor Bradley Wantz said. "It's not guaranteeing anything whatsoever," he said.

The two parcels of land totaling approximately 126 acres lay adjacent and contiguous to the boundaries of the city. The annexation will allow for development of the properties, currently proposed for no more than 340 homes - approximately 85

semi-detached units and 170 single family detached units. The new homes would have access to the city's public water and sewer services.

The Sewell's are proposing that the properties be zoned as R-10,000 for Community Village designation. R-10,000 zoned districts require lot sizes to be a minimum of 10,000 square feet for single and two-family dwellings.

However, the proposed R-10,000 zoning runs contrary to the city's comprehensive plan, which anticipates development under R-20,000 regulations. If not changed, the number of houses that the developer,

NVR, could build on the properties would be cut in half.

In addition, because the Sewell's are asking for a zoning change to a higher density, the ability of their developer, NVR, to commence building, could be delayed up to 5 years unless the Sewell's obtain a waiver to the County's 'Five-Year Rule,' Wantz said.

The purpose of the 'Five-Year Rule' is to de-incentivize developers from requesting changes to current zoning by allowing the County to delay development of any property for up to five years that is undergoing changes in the density of a property's

zoning. This insures that new developments do not overload county systems like schools. Had the Sewell's applied for annexation under the currently assigned R-20,000, they would be allowed to begin development upon actual annexation and approval of all necessary permits.

The request to also annex the property under the Community Village designation, if approved, will allow other types of dwellings other than traditional single or duplex family homes, such as retirement home facilities, according to City Manager James Wieprecht. The Community Village designation gives the city the

ability to review and give approval to aesthetics as well as outlines greenspace requirements, Wantz said.

By indicating their desire to be brought into the City under Community Village designation, the developer was letting the council know right up front their intentions to build more than homes once the parcels have been incorporated into the city, according to City Attorney Jay Gullo.

The proposal to change the zoning still needs approval from the City's Planning Commission. Once approved, the proposed change will be placed before the county where it will be the subject of a public hearing.

Council tackles wastewater and sewer issues

Requests For Proposals (RFP) where issued by the City Council to clean and televise 25,000 linear feet of terracotta sewer piping.

As part of the ongoing sewer survey, the City engineering firm CDM Smith discovered more terracotta piping in the system than initially estimated and recommend cleaning and televising the newly identified terracotta pipes to evaluate their condition. Televising incorporates cameras to inspect and detail the piping as well as identify any obstruction allowing staff to see the root causes of sewer issues without needing to

conduct more invasive methods like digging. Once the evaluation is completed, plans will be developed to replace or line the piping, depending on their condition.

The City paid about three dollars per linear foot for televising and cleaning of the Meadowbrook Sewer Interceptor, he said. "This will not be an inexpensive proposition, but it's going to give us the information we need to better understand what is entering the sewer systems, such as 'wild water' so we can address it" Wireprecht said.

The Council also approved the

purchase of a set of wastewater treatment pump drive shafts, one to replace a broken one that has left the wastewater treatment plant operating on only three of the four pumps, one to be held in reserve.

The shaft that broke is a two-piece drive shaft that connects the electric motor to the pump. The upper and lower shafts are connected to each other by a universal joint. The shafts where damaged when the universal joint failed and broke, allowing the upper and lower shafts to spin in an uncontrolled manner and hit supporting structures. While the upper

portion can be repaired, the lower shaft requires replacement.

Historically, the plant staff said, once one pump component fails, it is not long before another similar piece in the general proximity fails as well, so having another shaft on hand is imperative. According to Wieprecht. "We really can't afford to have more than one of these pumps go down at any given time."

The Public Works Department and the city engineer are working to identify what extra parts need to be on hand to handle future breakdowns so when equipment

does break down, it can be quickly repaired and placed back into service. "As we know, for us to meet the state wastewater permits for our treatment plant, everything needs to work perfectly," Wieprecht said.

Repairing the damaged shaft, replacing the destroyed one, and acquiring a new set of shafts will total \$25,670 and the shafts are expected to take 22 to 24 weeks to arrive.

Although the expenditure falls under the operation and maintenance budget, the expense to replace the shafts was not budgeted, "so we may see fallout from that further along the budget year," said Wieprecht.

News Briefs . . .

Council Allows Off-Season Pavilion Reservation

Starting in January, park enthusiasts will be able to reserve a seat at Taneytown's park pavilions during the off-season for a reduced fee.

The city has recently been approached by groups expressing interest in reserving park pavilions in the off seasons, according to Wieprecht.

Traditionally, pavilion reservations at Memorial Park and Roberts Mill Park were available May through September and only available "first come first serve," during the colder months.

"We don't anticipate the same level of need as we would have in the warmer months when we're out there having to empty a lot of trash," he said.

Prices for reserving a pavilion are \$75 April through October and \$35 during November through March. (so the warm-season \$75 rental window has been extended)

To deter vandals, the City Council also approved the demolition of a farmhouse located on the Festival Park property.

Despite boarding up the farmhouse and posting no trespassing signs, individuals continue to enter the farmhouse. Demolition of the property removes the possibility of someone getting injured at the location, Wieprecht commented.

The building was already unusable when the park property was purchased by the city, Mayor Wantz said. "It's just become more unusable," he said.

A price estimate of \$20,000 was received for the demolition of the

farmhouse. The city is still waiting on estimates to close the property's well and septic system.

Taneytown readies for Christmas

Taneytown's Parks and Recreation Department will kick off the winter yuletide season December 4 with its annual Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony at Memorial Park. Festivities will start at 3:30 and feature a candy cane hunt as well as holiday hayrides. Local church choirs will lead the community in Christmas carols and Santa Claus will arrive at 5:30 p.m. to assist the Mayor with lighting the tree. Non-perishable

food donations will go far to ensure local food pantries are well stocked this holiday season.

The annual holiday home decorating contest will run from December 14 through December 26. Registered addresses should be sent to lvaccare@taneytown.org by Dec. 10. Judges will visit each address entered to determine their top three choices. Prizes are winner's choice gift cards from local businesses in the amounts of \$100 for first place, \$75 for second place and \$50 for third place respectively.

The Parks and Recreation Department is also seeking volunteers to fill the role of helper elves to help decorate Memorial Park for Christmas. Weekday, afternoon, and weekend hours

are available, and any type of help will gladly be accepted. Assistance is a great opportunity for students to get service hours. For more information, call the city office at 410-751-1100.

Police To Get Tasers

The City Council has approved equipping city police officers with tasers through a five-year contract. The total cost of the contract, which includes the tasers themselves as well as accessories such as cartridges and hostlers, will cost \$41,400 over a five-year period.

Chief of Police Jason Etzler told the council there was money in the police budget to cover the first year, but according to Mayor Bradley Wantz, the police depart-

ment will be seeking additional funds to cover the next four years.

Two of Taneytown police department officers are authorized in taser instruction, "Which means we'll be able to do the training itself in-house rather than having to pay to do it somewhere else," Mayor Pro Tem Joe Vigliotti said.

Wantz considered the tasers, "Long overdue. It offers a less lethal options for officers." Wantz said he think it's important that the city finally equip its officers with better options than having to go 'lethal' in extremis, although he noted, that "lethal force is rare thanks to the fact "we have great officers, and great residents."



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FROM THE DESK OF...

County Councilman Michael Blue

This past spring during the FY-2022 budget meetings, there were discussions to reduce the County real property tax rate to the Constant Yield Rate. This was a decrease of approximately \$0.023 to \$0.0267 and was due to a substantial fund balance being projected from FY 2021. This approximately \$74M surplus fund balance was projected to result from higher than budgeted income tax revenue.

Over the summer, I thought about this surplus and how we could help the people of Frederick get back some of their hard earned money. With the support of the administration, I pro-

posed a potential one-time tax rebate to homeowners on their owner-occupied property which would align with the one-time fund balance available. I thought this rebate could take the form of a check payment.

On October 5th, I introduced Bill 21-11, an act to grant a \$175 County real property tax credit to homeowners on their owner-occupied property with an assessed value of \$328,512 or less. The real property tax credit would be issued to 43,503 owners of record as of July 1, 2021, with approximately 9,768 owners residing in my district. I am very happy to report that on Tuesday, November 16th, the Freder-

ick County Council passed Bill 21-11 with a 6-1 vote. The total for this refund is \$7.6M. Therefore, beginning in mid-January, some Frederick County residents will receive a cash refund of \$175.00 on the property tax they paid earlier this year.

As I wrote in my November submission to this journal, a great opportunity came our way in the form of a building located at 800 Oak Street in Frederick City. This building, that was used years ago by State Farm, will consolidate many County government departments that are currently scattered around Frederick County. The amount of \$32M of the fund bal-

ance is being used for the purchase and renovation of this building that has so much potential. Approximately \$34M remains.

So what else is proposed to happen with the remaining \$34M? According to a message that the Council received recently from County Executive Jan Gardner, many wonderful things! The County Executive plans to advance initiatives relating to energy and the environment as well as accelerate school construction to alleviate overcrowding.

Through the Built to Learn Act, the County will be able to take advantage of new State funds that are the result of the advocacy of our County Executive. This legislation allocated \$95M to

Frederick County and we are required to provide a match. The County will add one-time money to support needed school construction. This is an outstanding opportunity! Some of the school projects that are in the queue for my district include a new or renovated Walkersville High School and a continuation of a limited renovation of Thurmont Elementary School.

As 2021 comes to a close, great things are on the horizon! I want to take this opportunity to wish you a warm and wonderful holiday season and a happy and healthy new year!

If anyone has any questions or comments please contact me at MBlue@FrederickCountyMD.gov or 301-600-1034.

County Councilman Phil Dacey

I hope everyone is having a wonderful Holiday Season. I bring you Christmas greetings from the Frederick County Council. We have been discussing important issues on the Council over the past month including tax cuts, mask mandates, and redistricting.

On the first issue of tax cuts, the County Council took up the issue of what to do with the \$74 million surplus the county has this year due to larger than anticipated income tax and property tax receipts. I proposed returning \$15 million of that to taxpayers in the form of a \$175 tax rebate to all homeowners in Frederick County. Unfortunately, only Council Member Blue voted in support of

that effort. Instead, the County Council voted to provide \$175 to people who owned a home that was assessed at less than \$328,000 (about half of homes in the county). This means that most homeowners in the county will not receive any tax refund as a result of the surplus. Checks to those who are eligible should start going out within the next month or two. Additionally, we began discussions on expanding the eligibility for the veteran tax credit for those that have served in our military. Given the proximity of Frederick County to a number of military facilities, it is my hope that providing a tax credit to spouses and other retired members of the community

will help make Frederick County a destination for these heroes to retire.

On redistricting, we had a presentation from our non-partisan redistricting committee that was appointed to redraw the council districts based on the census count. All council districts experienced growth over the past decade, however the southern and eastern portion of the county grew much faster than the rest of the county. The redistricting committee looked to balance the districts by population and put forward a proposal to make each district hold between 52,000 and 56,000 people. This only required moving two precincts near Libertown from District 2 (currently repre-

sented by Council Member McKay) to District 5 (currently represented by Council Member Blue). This is a good solution that would provide continuity for constituents and balanced representation. It is my hope and anticipation that the County Council will shortly approve this map.

Finally, the County Council met in November as the Board of Health for the County to consider re-instituting a mask mandate. Mask mandates have become polarizing, confusing, and difficult to enforce. It is my belief that the time for mask mandates has passed. We are in a very different place than in Spring of 2020. We now have a host of vaccines to protect those that seek them and provide strong immunity against

hospitalization and death. We also are starting to bring effective treatments on board including monoclonal antibodies which are now offered at both Frederick Health Hospital and in Hagerstown. More antiviral prescriptions are being approved and in the pipeline that look very promising and effective in keeping patients out of the hospital. The Board of Health did not support a mask mandate at our meeting in November.

With the vaccine available to everyone over 5 years old, it is time to allow people to make their own personal choices with regard to their own health with regard to this virus.

I hope that everyone can stay safe and healthy through the Holiday season.

Emmitsburg Mayor Don Briggs

As if queued with the changing colors of fall, and a wink from a reluctant fall, all permits in hand, the long-awaited start of construction of the Rutters store has finally begun. Many months after getting town approvals, site work has started and moving at a rapid pace to capture the benevolent to development weather.

Another solemn and appropriate Veterans Day observance by the VFW Honor Guard with a 21-gun salute tributes at the American Legion, the Dough Boy, and five area cemeteries. The commemoration is cele-

brated on the anniversary of the end of World War I, Armistice Day, when hostilities with Germany ended at the "11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918". The honor guard holds the salute ceremony on only two occasions every year, Memorial Day and Veterans Day. It has been an honor to stand with them over the last eleven years on these occasions and I look forward to doing the same next year.

Irishtown Road upgrades will be delayed now until late December to early January 2022. The contractor hit rock. Again, the completion

of upgrades will include leveling out a crest on Irishtown Road and to enhance safer conditions for driver visibility, accommodate the opening of Brookfield Drive onto Irishtown Road to two-way traffic, and bring Ryan Homes building nineteen single family homes on the last remaining lots in the Brookfield subdivision. Thank you for your patience.

The Seton Center and local churches are seeking our charity to contribute gift cards from local grocery stores to share our blessings with our neighbors for holidays meals. Please contact your

church or the Seton Center. They have a sizable list of those in need.

Please join us, Monday, December 5th at 6 pm for the town Christmas tree lighting in front of the Community Center. From there walk to the Carriage House Inn for Christmas music, free hot dogs, cookies, hot chocolate, hayrides, and meeting Santa.

On Saturday, December 11th the Lions Club will host meeting Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus at Vigilant Hose Company Activities Building on Creamery Road. Open to all, no cost, photos with Claus with hot dogs and hot chocolate from 10 am - 1 pm.

Later that day the American Legion will hold a ham and turkey raffle from 6 pm - 9 pm.

Heads up, the town has been awarded a grant for (license) tag readers. The readers will be positioned along thoroughfares around town.

Our Town has been blessed over the last year with grants, building restorations around town and on the square, four new businesses and more on the way, getting Ryan Homes back building, upgrades to Irishtown Road, welcoming new families.

Don't want to forget, from Lib and I, Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year!

Thurmont Mayor John Kinnaird

As you see in this paper's front-page story, the Thurmont's Annual Gateway to The Cure was a great success this year with over \$18,500 being raised. I want to thank each and every resident of the Town of Thurmont for helping us realize another banner year for this great annual event. Those that participated in the many events should be very proud for helping with this year's effort.

The Town of Thurmont recently held elections and I am pleased to have been reelected as Mayor. I want to congratulate Commissioner Wayne Hooper on his reelection and Bill Blakeslee on his election as a new Commissioner. I look forward to serving the residents of Thurmont for this four-year term and I will be working closely with the Board of Commissioners to continue the work we have at hand.

Funding from the American Recovery Act and the recent infrastructure funds will be put to good use in Thurmont. Our plan is to invest the majority of the Recovery Act funding in our water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure. One of the first projects we will be working on is the upgrade of water and wastewater lines on North Church Street. Important upgrades to many of our stormwater management facilities will also be completed. It is my hope that the recent infrastructure funding will help us with much-needed street repairs.

I will also keep pushing for the reinstatement of 100% of the important Highway User Revenue so we can apply those funds to our streets. Thurmont and all other Maryland communities saw drastic cuts in our HUR funding several years ago and our

streets have suffered from these cuts. HUR funds come directly from gas taxes, user fees, license, and registration fees. We continue to pay these fees and yet the HUR funds are still not back to the level they were 12 years ago.

With Christmas and winter upon us I encourage everyone to support our local Food Bank and Clothes Closet. Many of our neighbors are not as fortunate as we are and would benefit greatly from your generosity during this season. The Thurmont Food Bank depends on community donations and would appreciate donations of nonperishable food, toiletries, baby products or cash. The Clothes Closet would appreciate your donation of warm winter clothing for both adults and children, winter is especially hard on families and warm clothing is a must. Your dona-

tions can help bring much-needed joy and comfort to local families.

Christmas in Thurmont is well underway and I hope everyone has had a chance to participate in some of the festivities. The Frederick County Society of Model Engineers is hosting an amazing model train display at 21 East Main Street. There are also pop-up shops offering great gift ideas at 21 East Main Street. I want to wish everyone good luck in the Christmas Decoration Contest, they always put a lot of effort into it! I think that Santa, the Grinch, Frosty the Snowman and hopefully Buddy the Elf and Jovie will be making appearances at the Square in Thurmont so girls and boys can drive past and wave to their friends. A big thank you to Thurmont Businesses, organizations, and volunteers for helping make Christmas in Thurmont a success.

I want to remind everyone that free Covid-19 vaccinations and testing are

available at the Thurmont Town Office every Friday evening from 5 to 7 p.m. All three current vaccinations are available as are the boosters. Members of the 104th Area Support Medical Company of the Maryland Army National Guard stationed at Camp Frederick, Reisterstown have been assisting with the vaccinations, and I want to thank them for helping our community. Appointments or Doctor's orders are not required for the vaccinations or testing. This service is made possible through the Frederick County Health Department and the Town of Thurmont.

Karen and I hope everyone has a Very Merry Christmas and the Happiest of New Year's. We look forward to what the New Year will bring, see you in 2022!

Please contact me at 301-606-9458 or via email at jkinnaird@thurmont.com with any comments, questions, or concerns.

GOVERNMENT—SOUTH OF THE BORDER

County Executive Jan Gardner

Lots of exciting things are happening in Northern Frederick County as 2021 draws to a close! In the past month, we have celebrated the grand openings of a new skate park and a nature trail in Thurmont, as well as the ground breaking for a new health center in Emmitsburg. All of these projects are examples of people in the community working together to make life better for others.

Skate Park

It was wonderful to see so many people turn out for the opening of the skate park at East End Park in Thurmont. I'm certain the skate park will see quite a bit of use before winter weather arrives. Young adults took the lead on this project, raising \$17,000 from the community in just five months to turn their vision into reality.

The remainder of the funding came from a longstanding program known as Program Open Space. The County distributes half of our Program Open Space funds to municipalities, like Thurmont, to help with specific projects like this one. Together, we have been able to build playgrounds, add water and sewer service to parks, create ball fields, replace bleachers, pave trails, and even add amenities to dog parks. In just the past three years, Thurmont has received more than \$190,000 in Open Space funds. The skate park is another great example of the things we can accomplish when we work together.

Library Loop

Visitors to the Thurmont Regional Library can enjoy a stroll along a

nature trail that officially opened in November. The trail loops around to connect the library with the Trolley Trail.

One of the things I love the most about this new trail is that the entire community worked together to bring this project to life. Students from Frederick County Public Schools' SUCCESS Program, the Thurmont Green Team, the Catoctin Forest Alliance, the Lions Club, and the amazing staff at Frederick County Public Libraries all played a role. They were supported by so many in the community, including the Catoctin Foundation, the Civitan Club, the Town of Thurmont, and several private businesses, including Baker Tree Service and Frederick County Paving.

Health Center

Whether you prefer to walk or skate board, keeping active is essential to good health. We know that good health is fundamental to a high quality of life, and that access to health care that is convenient and high quality is essential.

That is why it was cause for celebration when Mount St. Mary's University and Frederick Health broke ground for a new health center that will provide a wide array of services to both students and local residents. It just makes sense to bring health care to people where they are and where they need it. Building a new state-of-the-art facility on the campus of Mount St. Mary's is a smart solution. This strong community partnership will make life even better for

the people who live, work, and study in North County.

Vaccinations

Another step toward healthy living is ensuring more of our residents are vaccinated against Covid-19. Hospitalizations remain stubbornly high in our community. In the days leading up to Thanksgiving, Frederick Health Hospital had 36 COVID patients in the hospital, with as many as 8 people in intensive care at one time. If you haven't gotten vaccinated yet, or you are uncertain about whether to get a booster shot, please talk to your primary care physician. Vaccines help to keep the virus from becoming severe, or sadly even fatal.

Maryland is allowing all adults who want them to receive booster shots. If your first shot was Pfizer or Moderna, you can receive a booster 6 months after your second shot. If you received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, you only need to wait 2 months. Many pharmacies and physicians have vaccine available. You can find the closest provider online at covidvax.maryland.gov.

Children as young as 5 years old are also eligible to be vaccinated now. Frederick County Public Schools is hosting vaccination clinics at schools all around the county, including one at Thurmont Primary School on Dec. 3. Children do not need to attend the school to make an appointment at that location. The Frederick County Health Department is also hosting vaccination clinics for children between 5 and 11.

County facilities to remain open by appointment only until January 1

Community transmission of COVID-19 remains high in Frederick County, leading to 11 deaths in October and stressing local health-care systems. There have been more than 250 new cases diagnosed every week in Frederick County for each of the past 11 weeks. Frederick County Executive Jan Gardner encourages eligible residents to get their vaccine booster shots and wear

masks in indoor public places, following CDC guidelines.

"Our healthcare workers are exhausted," Executive Gardner said. "We need to stay vigilant to protect our entire community. Please get your vaccine or booster shot, and continue to wear a mask in indoor public spaces."

Frederick County's positivity rate has been higher than the state as a whole since Sept. 8. As of this November 25, the local positiv-

ity rate stands at 6.22%, 1% higher than at the start of the month, while the statewide rate is 3.9%.

Because Frederick County is experiencing high rates of community transmission, County facilities will remain open by appointment only until Jan. 1, 2022. Masks must continue to be worn in all County buildings, including Frederick County Public Libraries.

Mask Use

In consultation with the Frederick County Board of Health, the Health Department re-affirms the CDC guidelines that masks are recommended to be worn indoors by everyone over the age of two years, including people who are fully vaccinated.

This recommendation is for areas of substantial or high community transmission of COVID-19, where the rates have remained

substantial or high for seven (7) consecutive days. Frederick County has been in substantial and high community transmission since the beginning of August 2021. This recommendation from the Frederick County Board of Health remains in effect until the community transmission rate drops below substantial for seven (7) consecutive days.

The next one is slated for December 6th from 4-7 p.m. You can schedule an appointment at frederickcountymd.gov/covidvaccine.

Stay healthy this winter by getting vaccinated!

FCG FixIt

Residents have a new, easier way to report concerns to Frederick County Government. We recently launched an app called FCG FixIt. The app is a one-stop location to reach any County division, from Animal Control to Public Works. You can request services, report concerns, and ask questions at any time of day from anywhere. It's another way that the County can deliver outstanding customer service.

You can take photos, note specific

locations on a map, and provide other details in your app. When a request is submitted, staff is immediately notified. They can view your photos and maps, and if you choose to provide contact information, they can respond to you by email or phone.

FCG FixIt is available to download from the app stores for Android and iPhone users. You can also report a concern at FrederickCountyMD.gov/FCG-FixIt. If you'd rather talk directly to a person, you can still call divisions during their regular office hours. And of course, if you have an emergency, call 9-1-1 instead.

No matter what winter holiday you celebrate, I hope the season is filled with joy. Happy Hanukkah, Merry Christmas, and Happy Kwanzaa!



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FROM THE DESK OF...

Carroll Valley Mayor Ron Harris

The 2022 proposed budget for the Carroll Valley Borough has been tentatively adopted with no tax increase for 2022. The final adoption of the proposed budget and tax resolutions is scheduled for the regular Borough Council meeting on December 14th at 7 pm. If interested, the proposed budget is available for inspection at the Borough Office on weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. until December 14th. The distribution of the total tax paid approximately breaks down as follows: Carroll Valley is 13.60%, Fire Tax is 1.39%, Adams County is 23.25%, and Fairfield School District is 61.77%. You also can review the document online by visiting the Carroll Valley website – www.carrollvalley.org.

Hope you and your family had a wonderful Thanksgiving. The holiday season is definitely upon us. Life speeds up – trying to rush to the next store to get the best buy on a gift. This is positively true if you are not purchasing online or have waited until now to start looking for gifts. Do you know where I'm going with this – if you are

using the car, don't rush, and the most crucial advice for all of us is to buckle up. You may not be rushing, but the other driver may. The safety program executed by state and local police officers this past November called "Click it or Ticket" is still good advice anytime traveling in the car. Whether you're on a municipal road/trail or the interstate, in a minivan or an SUV, whether traveling cross country or just somewhere in the borough, buckle your seat belt every trip, every time.

Winter officially starts Tuesday, December 21st. This day also is known as "winter solstice" and is the shortest day of the year. Hanukkah is celebrated from Sunday, November 28th to Monday, December 6th. Christmas is on Saturday, December 25th, and the first day of Kwanzaa falls on Sunday, December 26th, and ends January 1st. During this holiday season, please consider helping other families in need.

The Borough of Carroll Valley's Parks and Recreation Committee along with the Council, Committees,

and Staff are collecting the following items to make Holiday Meal Kits for local families in need: Turkeys, Roasting Chicken, Instant Mashed Potatoes, Canned Yams/Sweet Potatoes, Canned Vegetables (corn, green beans), Canned Cranberry Sauce, Stuffing Mix, Desserts (non-perishable or mixes), and Dinner Rolls. Drop off donations at the Borough Office, 5685 Fairfield Road, or cash donations are accepted as well. Please make checks payable to the Borough of Carroll Valley. Pick-up will be on December 19th at 3 p.m.

Ruth's Harvest program is about feeding hungry children. It is a volunteer program that provides hungry children with a backpack of food to eat when they are not getting school lunches. They receive individually packed servings of food to cover seven meals and two snacks for Friday evening, Saturday, and Sunday. There are three ways to help: donate food, make a monetary contribution, and/or volunteer your time in distributing the food packages. A Ruth's Harvest collection box in the Borough's lobby

contains a brochure that describes all food items needed, where a check can be sent, and the point of contact person for volunteering.

Interested in knowing where will be traveling in our communities. Families, please mark your calendars for Sunday, December 5th, and Sunday, December 12th. Three events are scheduled in which Santa plans to visit. On December 5th, children are invited to have Milk & Cookies with Santa at the Liberty Worship Center on 29 Carroll Tract Road in Hamiltonban Township. The event starts at 12:30.

The Tree Lighting Program will be held from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. on December 5th in Carroll Valley Borough. The program will begin with making crafts then story reading by Miss Crystal from Carroll Valley Library, followed by a visit by Santa. Finally, those in attendance will gather around the Christmas Tree, sing several holiday carols, and then light the Christmas Tree. On December 5th, when our local young residents visit the Carroll Valley Borough building, they will be excited to see life-size red Santa Mail Postal Box in the lobby. Santa letters dropped in this special mailbox are guaranteed to

be delivered directly to Santa. There will be no weather delays. On Sunday, December 12th, noon to 2 the Fairfield Fire & EMS will hold a Lunch with Santa event. Cost is \$5 while children ten and under are free. Look forward to seeing you and your family at these community events.

I wish to congratulate our local candidates on their re-election to the council (David Lillard, Richard Mathews, Robert Verderaime), the tax collector (Phyllis Doyle), and the constable position (Stephen Bean). I also would like to thank you for re-electing me as your mayor. Having been re-elected for a fourth term has never been a more humbling moment in my life. Based on your faith in me, I hope to continue to serve you as I have in these past 12 years. I promise to work on your behalf to ensure your needs and concerns are voiced and considered. Thank you for your trust in me. I am honored to serve you. Wishing you and your family "Happy and Safe Holidays"! You can always contact me at 301-606-2021 or email me at May-RonHarris@comcast.net.

Be careful driving on the trails during the winter weather events.

Liberty Township Supervisor Walter Barlow

A Big Thank You to the Emmitsburg Journal for the opportunity to bring this monthly newsletter to our Liberty Township residents. I would like to welcome incoming Supervisor Brandon Lowe who will begin his term in January. Jessica Ilko will remain the township Tax Collector, and Sue Hek will continue serving as an elected Auditor. I would like to acknowledge Supervisor Bob Jackson and Zoning Hearing Board Member Bart Hogan for their many years of service to Liberty Township as they end their terms. Bob Jackson previously served as a Township Auditor and Bart Hogan served on the Planning Commission before joining the Zoning Hearing Board. Our new Zoning Hearing Board held an organization meeting in November appointing Cindy Arentz as the Chair, Jim Holler as the Co-Chair, and Donna

Powers as the Secretary. We also added new members to the Planning Commission earlier this year.

The tree canopy project was completed in a timely manner. I would like to thank Hamiltonban Township for their assistance with the project and splitting the cost. Sometimes, it takes small municipalities to work together and share resources to accomplish a task. I would like to praise Ray Herr, Jim Eyer, and Randy Pritt for working with our road crew to get the job completed. Our trucks are prepped for the winter weather, and we are stockpiled on anti-skid and salt.

A new police contract was signed with Highland Township for police services. The contract is for one year with 25 hours per month of service starting January 1. We renewed our contract with Freedom Township for 25

hours of police service for 2022. We appreciate both townships putting their confidence and trust in our police department to provide police services to their residents. We would like to welcome two new police officers that we added to support the combined needs of Freedom, Highland, and Liberty Township. You will see them both working the streets in January. Liberty Township's Police force is doing an excellent job servicing our Township and we look forward to them working in Freedom and Highland Township.

The Police Department needs two new taser guns. The current ones in use are obsolete and they are not functioning properly at times. We are looking for donation contributions to help offset the \$4,000 cost of the tasers. Please contact Chief Sherri Hansen if you are interested in donating.

A Click It or Ticket Program ran November 15 through November 28. If you get into an accident the likelihood of your survival increases with your seat belt on. Most fatal accidents happen within a 25-mile radius of your home. Remember seat belts save lives. I want to remind the Liberty Township residents that we have an ordinance stating that your home must have a visible reflective address sign to assist Police, Fire, and other emergency services. People tend to have more medical emergencies during the winter months than the summer months. Please remember the importance of a reflective address sign. As with any emergency, seconds count.

A Friendly reminder to all township residents: Second notices for those who have not pumped their septic system will be mailed in December. A

deadline of February 11, has been set by the Board of Supervisors before violations will occur for non-pumping compliance. Please be advised that a fine of up to \$1,000 per day may be issued for pumping non-compliance. A one-year extension was granted for all township residents during the pandemic, and that deadline has passed. Please pump your septic system as required.

Municipal and County Tax second notices went out in early November. Those taxes can be collected until December 31. We are in penalty phase for school tax collection. Second notices for school taxes will be sent in early January. A drop box is located by the front door of the Township Municipal Building for tax payments and all municipal mail collection.

Thanks again for the opportunity to serve as a Supervisor of Liberty Township. Merry Christmas! Have a safe and Happy New Year! God Bless!

State Representative Dan Moul

School Masking Update

This week, Commonwealth Court ruled the Wolf administration's school mask mandate invalid after finding the acting secretary of Health did not follow proper protocols in issuing the order. This is not surprising. On Sept. 13, I told the Conewago Valley School Board and about 200 parents at the school board meeting that neither the Secretary of Health, nor the governor, had the authority to impose the mandate as they did, and I pleaded with the board to leave the masking deci-

sion up to the parents. After the meeting, school board president Ed Groft was quoted by The Gettysburg Times as saying I had "spoken out of line." When asked by the Times how much of what I said was inaccurate, Groft responded, "pretty well all of it." Obviously, he was wrong. The court's bipartisan decision came while considering a legal case challenging the mask mandate and whether the administration had the authority to impose one. The court ruled that a valid school masking mandate did not exist, making

the challenge unnecessary. The Wolf administration is appealing the court's decision. In the meantime, the ques-

tion of masking is up to schools and parents, as it should be.

State Government Committee Advances Election Reform Bills

The House State Government

Committee continued its efforts to modernize and secure Pennsylvania's elections with passage of three key reform measures this week. House

continued on next page

GOVERNMENT—NORTH OF THE BORDER

County Commissioner Marty Qually

This year's County Commissioner Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) Fall conference was held in Hershey at the Hershey Hotel from November 21-23. For this month's column I will give you a "day in the life" accounting of this conference. I tried to write this as the entire conference, but it just got too long, so for this article it is only the first day of the conference. CCAP hosts two conferences a year, the Fall conference is the smaller of the two. Beyond the educational and networking opportunities, this conference is about setting the next year's priorities for CCAP. I believe that all counties sent at least one commissioner with many having all of their commissioners in attendance.

Saturday November 20, 1 - 3 p.m., Community and Economic Development Committee meeting

Many commissioners serve on at least one CCAP committee. There were about six of us in attendance. I say about because some Commissioners chose to be on multiple committees, even though all of the committees meet at the same time. This means a few arrive an hour or two late. In my humble opinion it is better to focus on one committee and maximize your effort, than to be poorly involved in a few.

Our main purpose today was to rec-

ommend priority areas for CCAP to focus on in 2022. Each committee votes on a few priorities and they are forwarded to the entire association of commissioners to vote on which will be the top priorities and thus garner the most staff focus in 2022.

We spent a good deal of time discussing Broadband, especially HB 1075. This bill will create a state broadband authority to oversee state broadband projects. Their first task will be to create a state broadband plan, so that the state can access federal funds. Without a plan the state would not have access to the \$1.6B funds from PA for broadband from the federal infrastructure bill. This could mean over \$20M for each county in PA. The state better get a move on! This broadband authority would serve as a one-stop shop for broadband. The two critical levels of service for broadband are: 1. Unserved. This means that a household or business has download speeds less than 25 Mbs and upload speeds of less than 3Mbs. 2. Underserved is download speeds less than 100Mbs and upload speeds less than 20Mbs. Some areas of Adams County are unserved, but many areas are underserved.

Second major priority was transportation funding. With new infrastructure funds counties must lobby the state for our fair share. We need to prioritize working with municipalities

on repairing local and county bridges. Push for counties to have greater input into state long-range transportation plan. We felt that by focusing on local roads and bridges, that we could work with the township and boroughs associations to magnify a local voice, otherwise the lion's share of the federal money might just fund state roads.

Other priorities: blight and hotel tax/tourism. Both will be back burnered. They are important, but we felt that in 2022 broadband and transportation must be the top priorities. I learned about Act 152 that allowed counties to add a \$15 transfer fee to set funding aside into a county demolition fund exclusively for blight removal. Adams County does not do this and it may be a good investment for properties such as the old foundry by the Allstar Complex or the of Maytag building in Biglerville. I need to look into that.

Also of note, being in a room of other commissioners hashing out ideas is fun, but as a whole we talk a lot.

3:30 - 5 p.m. General Policy Session with all Commissioners to discuss and set the CCAP top priorities for 2022. After presentations we each voted via on-line survey on the priorities. The 2021 priorities were

1. Election reform: pre-cavass and mail in ballot application deadlines, 2. Broadband Expansion, 3. Emergency

Medical Services Crisis, 4. Human Service funding protection, and 5. Increase funds for community based mental health services. (Spoiler alert: The 2022 priorities are very similar.)

Committee chairs gave reports on top priorities for each committee (Ag committee, community and economic development, Assessment and Taxation, county governance, courts and corrections, election reform, energy environment and land use, Human Services, Emergency Management and Veterans Affairs). For the record some committees did a great job of focusing on a few achievable goals, others wasted time putting forth clearly unachievable, unrealistic, and mostly illegal goals. Of all of those brought forward my favorite named one was from the governance committee to end Right To Know Law -Vexatious Requestors (governance). This is when a person just floods the county with petty requests simply intended to slow down government or are simply absurd requests. It's a thing. If you know me, you know my top priority is broadband.

After the final presentations we all voted and ended the official business of the day. But wait, there's more. Then you have all of the hospitality rooms that vendors set up to ply commissioners with food and alcohol, while they educate them on their products. These

range from election equipment (I now have a nice beer cozy that says "I voted") to architectural, financial, or medical services. Mostly I stick to the vendors that we already use. Two of the things I hate about being an elected is people sucking up to me and me being expected to suck up to others. I excel at neither, so I mostly just watched football, chit chatted, and ate food until I got bored and the Dallas Cowboys disappointed me. Some people love this part of the conference, for me after the "meat" of the conference I mostly just miss my wife, dogs, and recliner back at home.

I wish I had more space to share with you the other days of the conference. The second and third days are filled with educational sessions on various county topics, updates from state officials and our national association, and being entertained by vendors that want counties to buy their products. The State updates were great, we had updates from Elections, State Prisons, and the PA Attorney General on the opioid crisis and a federal litigation update. If you want any more details or just want to get more information on how county government is working for you, let me know. I am always available at mqually@adamscounty.us. Until then, rest assured my brain is always running over ideas on how to improve our community and occasionally I get the support to put them into action. Be well. Wear your mask. And Get that booster. Winter in Coming.

continued from previous page

Bill 1482 would establish a Bureau of Election Audits within the Office of Auditor General and require the Commonwealth and each county to implement post-election audits using an approved auditing method. House Bill 2044 would end private funding, such as that awarded last fall through the Center for Tech and Civic Life, for the administration of elections in the Commonwealth. Senate Bill 738 would require the PA Department of State to post to its website a tracker for the public to monitor every step and action item the department is taking to ensure proper compliance to carry out a proposed constitutional amendment.

Supporting Our Veterans

In recognition of Veterans Day, the House advanced several bills this week in support of the dedicated men and women of the Commonwealth who have served in our nation's armed forces.

House Bill 1868, which would help veterans seeking to return to civilian life by requiring expedited professional licensure for veterans and their spouses, and consideration of prior military experience. House Bill 1220, which would increase payments through the blind and paralyzed veteran pension programs. House Bill 1055, which I co-sponsored, would enhance life

insurance for PA National Guard personnel and increase protections for military discharge records to prevent fraud. Senate Bill 550 would boost care of veteran's graves. Senate Bill 248 would create a day of recognition for veterans of the Persian Gulf War and the Global War on Terrorism. House Resolution 153 to commemorate Veterans Day 2021 in Pennsylvania.

To learn about services available to Pennsylvania veterans, visit dmva.pa.gov.

House Adopts Bills to Support Mental, Physical Health

Recognizing the strong connection between good mental health and good physical health, the state House this week approved two bills aimed at improving Pennsylvanians' overall health outcomes. House Bills 1561 and 1563 would amend the Mental Health Procedures Act and the Drug and Alcohol Abuse Control Act to allow for sharing of patient information among providers, facilities and insurers. The changes would also meet existing patient confidentiality requirements.

House Advances Bill to Give Families More Education Options

This week, the House advanced legislation that would give parents and students the ability to design a more individualized educational model.

House Bill 1041 would permit students who are home schooled to attend up to four academic classes during a school day, participate in co-curricular activities, such as marching band, and to have access to programs offered at career and technical education centers. Enabling parents to supplement their children's home education courses with classes offered by their local public school and co-curricular activities, would maximize the academic potential for those children. The bill now goes to the Senate for consideration.

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COMMENTARY

Words From Winterbilt

The more things change...

Shannon Bohrer

... the more they stay the same.

As a former police officer, I am sometimes questioned about the news regarding policing in today's environment. I retired in 2010 after 42 years of service. After the 2001 attack on the World Trade Center, people started thanking me for my service. The thanking process seemed to wane with time and then picked up again in 2020, with the pandemic. Our emergency services were being stretched, and citizens started thanking doctors, nurses, and first responders, including the police.

Thanking our emergency service workers, including the police, seems well-intentioned, but I sometimes wonder about other motives or perspectives. When I am thanked for my service, there is often a follow-up comment, where the person says something like, I bet you are glad that you are not in uniform today. The follow-up comment puzzles me, and I usually respond that if I were younger, I would still be in uniform. My response - seems unexpected to many people.

I do not see the significant differences between 1968, when I began my law enforcement career, and today's environment. I understand there are some differences, but the job is the same. The police are

sworn to protect the public, and they take an oath to support and defend the constitution, and that has not changed—apparently, many view today's world as different from our past and not for the better. I do not see the changes; in fact, from my perspective, the world has gotten older, but history just keeps repeating itself.

In 1968, the year I began my career, there was civil unrest, most of it dealing with the Vietnam war and civil rights. One large protesting group, the SDS (Students for a Democratic Society), was constantly in the news. The group was organized in the sixties and eventually grew into a nationwide movement. Splinter groups within the movement worked toward policies that included struggles for equality, women's rights, standing against racism, and police brutality. Do these issues sound familiar?

A minor faction that splintered from the SDS encouraged a revolution, believing it would force "the establishment" to change. That group was the "Weather Underground." They were labeled as terrorists and for a good reason. They took credit for twenty-five bombings around the country, which included the U. S. Capitol and the Pentagon. Yes, in 1971, the capital was attacked with a bomb from domestic terrorists.

The "Weathermen," as they were called, were responsible for killing two police officers and a Brinks truck

driver during a failed robbery attempt. They also bombed a New York City police station. Yes, we had individuals and groups that hated the police and plotted to kill them. And the "Weathermen" was just one of several. The hatred of police is not new.

A considerable number of protests in the late '60s and early '70s was over the Vietnam war. After the war ended, we learned that propping up an unpopular government with military force does not work. The U. S. Military is exceptionally good at what they do, but there are problems that cannot be solved with military force.

In 1965, the Voting Rights Act was enacted. The act ensured voting rights for minorities because of a history of voter discrimination. There were demonstrations and riots in the late '60s over widespread discrimination practices. While the voting discrimination was addressed, it was not eliminated, and other discriminatory practices continued. Does that sound familiar?

The white supremacists that marched in Charlottesville, Virginia, is another example of a right-wing extremist group that existed when I began my career. While many of today's groups have different names, they are not new; they have just evolved and transformed with different identities, with the same beliefs. In the 1960s and 70s, these groups wanted to start a holy war against black and other minorities. The holy war was called Rahowa, the acronym

for Racial HOly WA. Some of these groups then and now are inspired by the "Turner Diaries," written in 1978, a book about a revolution and overthrowing the government of the United States.

Today, we have the same hate groups that existed in the '60s; while the names have changed, their intent is the same. Revolution and holy war against minorities and hatred of government still exists. Many of these groups participated in the January 6 insurrection. To them, a failed insurrection is called - practice.

We just ended a 20-year, controversial war. The controversy was because of 911; the war was justified; however, nation-building was not possible. Afghanistan, in not united and reflects tribalism, and military force will not change that. Not unlike Vietnam, a military solution cannot address every problem.

As to the civil rights issues, today, they exist because the issues addressed in the 1960s were never completed. Equity is a strong motivation, and until equity exists, civil rights will continue to be an issue. In numerous ways, we always understood that our government did not treat the citizens in an equitable manner. George Floyd's death punctuated the inequity that existed; thus, we have a long road ahead.

The more things change, the more they do not. Civil unrest over discrimination issues, including voting rights and equality, with protest and rioting. Dissatisfaction over a long war and how it ended. Hate groups

with goals of racial war, overthrowing our government, and in some cases, eliminating the government-including the police. Will these issues be repeated in the future?

The similarities between my time in law enforcement and today are not that different, but there are distinctions. During my first ten years, from 1969 to 1978, an average of 121 officers died each year from assaults and gunfire. The late sixties and seventies were high years for officers being killed from felonious assaults. Since the year 2000, about fifty-five officers have died each year from gunfire. So, being a police officer today is less dangerous, except for COVID. Since the pandemic started, officer deaths from COVID are five times greater than deaths from felonious assaults. (When this was written)

From my perspective, there is one significant difference today. We have the majority of one political party that appears to support the insurrectionists, the racists, and the separatists that attacked the capitol on January 6, 2021. While most are silent, and the silence is taken as tacit approval. The silence was recently displayed when fifty senators voted against having a hearing on voting rights. Just a hearing - on voting rights.

In 1968 I never feared losing our democracy, but the possibility exists today, and from my perspective, the probability continues to grow.

To read past editions of Words From Winterbilt, visit the Authors section of Walkersville.net.

American Mind

United States vs Unified States

Mark Greathouse

An American conservative is a person who desires to preserve and conserve our founding ideals and way of life. Conservatives believe in a nation comprised of separate states united by the glue represented in its governing Constitution. That's "united," not "unified." The difference is huge; not unlike the difference between equality and equity.

"United States of America" versus "Unified States of America" offers a provocative thought. The difference is not the least bit nuanced. United is a joining of disparate parts into a single entity while maintaining the distinct identities of those parts, while unified is a uniting into a non-disparate whole with a single identity. The inference here is that our Constitution, based on federalism, created a republic that united disparate states into a nation while those several states retained certain self-governing rights. Notably, we're separate but not divided. There are folks among us who would have us unified under a massive central government that controls every aspect of our lives. Unification is a euphemism for and facilitates socialism. To be clear, socialism has never been implemented successfully yet its proponents insist that is because of mistakes made by implementers rather than recognizing that it is simply morally, factually, economically, and logically impossible for it to succeed.

I compared the difference between united and unified to equality versus equity, terms deemed interchangeable by the political left. Equality means that individuals or groups of people are given the same resources or opportunities to freely do with as they may. Equity, on the other hand, allocates to each person or group the precise resources and opportunities necessary for them to reach a fully equal outcome. Just as equality doesn't aim to achieve equity, so united doesn't aim to achieve unification. Under unified equity, a large central government ensures that everyone will share equally in misery with no opportunity to rise above their life condition. Exceptionalism is prohibited...except among the controlling elite.

Our Bill of Rights was created to ensure that each of the original 13 states retained their separate identities, to protect themselves from encroachments by the other states and by a metastasizing central government. Folks in South Carolina didn't want to have their way of life determined by folks in Massachusetts and vice versa.

I've always been struck by the separateness of our nation's people. Sioux were quite separate from Comanche, blacks from indigenous folks, Italians from Irish, slave from free, rich from poor, educated from uneducated, and so on. These separate and competing elements framed under the structure of a republic are what have made the United States so exceptional that

everyone seems to want to immigrate here. Each and every citizen is indeed endowed with the unalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. No matter your race, ethnic background, or other circumstances, our nation was founded on that premise, and it has served us well.

Folks have given their lives to preserve our nation as our founders intended. A great war was fought nearly 160 years ago on our own soil and hundreds of thousands died to hold the nation together. Untold thousands more have given their lives in far-off lands in defense of our founding principles. For whatever reason, there are folks among us who would change us into a mere shell of the republic most of us envision and enjoy. Our founders purposely designed a government whereby no single ideology supported by more populous states could hold sway over others.

Why would anyone want a "Unified" States of America? Why would anyone want to so radically restructure a nation that has grown to become the envy of the world? I suggest that it's about power and control. Unification facilitates control by a single ideology, a single political party, a single power structure to the exclusion of dissent. When there's only one voice making the rules, all opposition is squashed. How do they achieve this? Recall the words of the ancient Chinese sage Lao Tzu who advised that government power over citizens can be easily sustained by keeping their minds empty and bellies full. Hmmm. The unifiers apply a perverse version of creative

destruction. Minds empty? Reduce education standards to the lowest common denominator, eliminate excellence, silence debate, cancel history, and more. Bellies full? Citizens quickly discover that it's ever-easier to belly up to the public money trough to seemingly have their every need met. They never ask where the money is coming from nor challenge whatever rules are attached with accepting it. Then, they're surprised when a loaf of bread costs \$3,000,000 (check out Venezuela). Soon private life, private property, and privacy are abolished in a wave of mutually-assured failure. The government money trough is like an addictive drug. Folks will do anything to get their fix, including silencing anyone who gets in the way.

Most academic elitists minds, wed as they are to a rationalized well-ordered socialist economy, comfortable in their protected cocoons of tenure, and feeding ravenously from the philosophies of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and Karl Marx, are blown away by the entropy, the uncertainty, of free and open macro-economic dynamics embodied in catallactics, Adam Smith's "invisible hand" at work. The debate inherent in freedom is anathema to the elitists, so silencing of opposition through unification is their solution.

To build the unified nation, all vestiges of a republic must be destroyed. The unified nation is to be built from the resulting rubble. Ironically, the plan is to break down the existing culture by creating division while stifling dissent. We see inflammatory divisive

language constantly spewed forth by leftist "wokists." The latest divisive slogan is critical theory. (Recognize it's theory, not fact.) Critical gender theory...critical race theory...critical economic theory...critical education theory...critical environmental theory...critical justice theory... Good grief! Where does it all end? We need to unite to fight the stains on our nation but we dare not unify. We must recall Alexis de Tocqueville's observation that the United States was uniquely designed as a republic, enabling the several states to right any moral wrongs in its midst.

We are at war! It's an expensive war, as the legal tender is the hearts, minds, and futures of our citizens. Beware unity, beware equity, as these charlatans are the seeds that spawn failed nations. If we expect to sustain our dominant role in the world, we must stave off unification. We must hold to the original intent of our founders in creating a limited national government.

We are individuals, and it's our individualism, ownership of property, and adherence to family that unites us in delivering the fatal blow to the unifiers. What do we do? To begin, we must shrink the federal government and rein in its massive debt by electing patriots who will. Otherwise, if you're not close enough to the problem to care, you're not close enough to make a difference. As for me, I'm for the United States of America.

To read past editions of American Mind, visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net.

The Bulwark

Lee was no hero

Mona Charen

Robert E. Lee Doesn't Deserve a Statue, But Thomas Jefferson Does.

In New York City, a statue of Thomas Jefferson has graced the City Council chamber for 100 years. In October, the Public Design Commission voted unanimously to remove it. “Jefferson embodies some of the most shameful parts of our country’s history,” explained Adrienne Adams, a councilwoman from Queens. Assemblyman

When iconoclasts topple Jefferson, they seem to validate the argument advanced by defenders of Confederate monuments that there is no escape from the slippery slope. “First they come for Nathan Bedford Forrest, and then for Robert E. Lee. Where does it end? Is Jefferson next? Is George Washington?”

No historical figure is without blemish, they protest. And it’s unfair to condemn our ancestors using today’s standards. If owning slaves is the discrediting fact about Lee, how then can we excuse George Washington?

There is an answer—a reason why it’s right to remove Robert E. Lee from his pedestal in Richmond, Virginia, yet wrong to exile Thomas Jefferson from a place of honor in American life. It requires grappling with the full complexity of human beings and the mixed legacy of history. We must, as Shakespeare said “Take them for all in all,” that is, judge them for their entire lives, not just a part.

No nation can endure without heroes. They are part of what creates our national story and links us through generations. They are the

inspiration for natives and immigrants alike. America in particular, as a creedal nation, needs unifying figures to provide the glue that other nations derive from ethnicity or religion. Fortunately for us, our founders can withstand scrutiny. But before turning to the defense of Jefferson and Washington, we need some clarity about the Confederacy.

People who defend monuments to Lee on the grounds that he played an important role in our history are confusing significance with honor. Lee surely played a huge role in our history, but as the leader of an army whose aim was to destroy the union. That made him a textbook traitor. As Ulysses Grant put it in his memoir, recalling his feelings upon accepting Lee’s surrender at Appomattox Courthouse:

“I felt like anything rather than rejoicing at the downfall of a foe who had fought so long and valiantly, and had suffered so much for a cause, though that cause was, I believe, one of the worst for which a people ever fought, and one for which there was the least excuse.”

Is it fair to judge Lee by our modern standards? Perhaps not, but even by the standards of his own day, he is wanting. Much has been made of Lee’s supposedly agonizing decision to resign his U.S. Army commission because he could not “raise my hand against my birthplace, my home, my children. Save in defense of my native state, I hope I may never be called on to draw my sword.” But others, including Gen. Winfield Scott, who offered Lee command of the Union army in 1861, also hailed from Virginia, yet remained loyal, as did Virginian

General George Henry Thomas, the “Rock of Chickamauga.”

Lee’s image has been sanitized and even beatified by purveyors of the “Lost Cause” narrative about the Confederacy. They’ve depicted Lee as an upright, chivalrous defender of tradition, a moral man, and a Christian. But, as Adam Serwer reminds us, this is a fable. Lee was a cruel slave master. In the words of Wesley Norris, one of his slaves who attempted to escape and was whipped, “not satisfied with simply lacerating our naked flesh, Gen. Lee then ordered the overseer to thoroughly wash our backs with brine, which was done.” As the leader of the Army of Northern Virginia, Lee enslaved all of the black Union soldiers he captured as well as free black Pennsylvanians his army encountered.

Lee strove to destroy the country and thus deserves to be remembered in infamy, not as a hero.

As the author of the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson enshrined the ideals that made this nation. Those words gave courage to thousands of bondmen, indeed, they were quoted by the revolutionaries in Haiti (though Jefferson’s administration did not recognize the revolutionary government there). Jefferson’s words formed our national identity as free people and marked a departure in human affairs. As the British statesman Edmund Burke remarked at the time: “It has made as great a change in all the relations, and balances, and gravitation of power, as the appearance of a new planet would in the system of the solar world.” Historian David Armitage estimates that at least half of the world’s nations today boast a document that can be called a declaration of independence. A 19th-century Hungarian nationalist, Lajos Kossuth, called the American Declaration of Indepen-



dence “the noblest, happiest page in mankind’s history.”

Was Jefferson a hypocrite? Oh yes. One of history’s most flamboyant. He owned slaves and almost certainly fathered children with his dead wife’s half sister, Sally Hemmings, an enslaved woman. But he never defended the institution (as Lee did), quite the contrary. He wrote, “I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just.”

Jefferson instructed that three things be mentioned on his tombstone: “Here was buried Thomas Jefferson, Author of the Declaration of Independence, of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom & Father of the University of Virginia.” Religious liberty is a cornerstone of American life and he was rightly proud of the legislation that paved the way for the First Amendment. Virginia’s law disestablished the Church of England and provided freedom of worship for all Christian denominations as well as for Muslims, Hindus, and Jews.

In other words, if God, who is omnipotent, chose not to coerce humans into any particular belief, we humans should likewise refrain.

Do we overlook Jefferson’s shameful private behavior? No, but we take him in full. His contribution to human liberty, despite his personal behavior, entitles him to a place of honor. There will always be an asterisk, but to say that statues honoring him “shouldn’t exist” as the New York City assemblyman did, is to dismiss the Declaration, the American anthem. As Abraham Lincoln wrote in 1859 to a gathering celebrating Jefferson’s birthday:

All honor to Jefferson—to the man who, in the concrete pressure of a struggle for national independence by a single people, had the coolness, forecast, and capacity to introduce into a merely revolutionary document, an abstract truth, applicable to all men and all times, and so to embalm it there, that to-day, and in all coming days, it shall be a rebuke and a stumbling-block to the very harbingers of re-appearing tyranny and oppression.

Mona Charen is Policy Editor of The Bulwark.

To read past editions of The Bulwark, visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net.

Down Under

A time for others

Submitted by Lindsay Melbourne, Australia

But What is Freedom? Rightly understood, a universal license to be good. - Hartley Coolidge, 1833

Some Christmas presents come from unexpected givers with unexpected presents inside.

I doubt that anyone, six months ago, would have predicted that a President and a Chairman would look at each other and talk for some thirty minutes about matters of considerable importance. And to agree that they would continue to talk. Not since President Nixon went to China has such diplomacy been seen. That visit prompted an opera, a film, and a huge number of books.

The new one will not do that, but it has reduced the temperature of foreign relations by a degree or so, and made ‘Merry Christmas’ a distinct possibility, and instead of Christmas crackers we may be making Christmas pudding.

But it was also strange, because it showed the many differences, and the one great similarity. The differences are in the freedom, the voting, and the diversity of people - which America

encourages and China suppresses – and the collective communist system versus the democratic, free-market system.

But it is the one great similarity that I want to mention here: Both countries are dictatorships. China is one because that is the communist system, and everything is, in theory, controlled by the state. America is also one because (nearly) everything is controlled by business. Yes, I know Democracy is supposed to be run by the representatives that the people chosen, but the rich and powerful found they could convince some presidents – Reagan and the Bushes among them – that they could not only regulate their own businesses, but that they would see that some of their profit would trickle down to the populace.

As the world-wide-trade machine got going, they banded together to make fewer and fewer companies that have more and more clout, until today the likes of Amazon, Google, and Facebook control much of the commerce, most of the information and a good deal of the economy.

Certainly, Trump gave them the green light, knowing that he would benefit, and many Republicans knew the same. Not so strangely, they do not want to give up any part of their power, and very lit-

tle of their wealth. They have lost sight of what democracy means, and, because they are powerful, they also have to be clever, and they thus know they cannot be wrong.

That too is a funny thing. Power turns the empathy button off, the ivory tower is the penthouse of bias, the bonus is the main goal, and all is well – provided the yokels have enough dough to buy their largely worthless products.

In other words, they are a dictatorship with not one, but three or four in charge. For many people, the so-called ‘workers’ of the land, they control your wage, your conditions, your hours; they control the laws that matter, which has led to the enormous disparity and the highest incarceration rate in the world.

We know that China is the ultimate dictatorship, where one group make the laws and controls the structure. They aim to make China a country of uniformity, where everyone believes the same thing – that the leader is god, the government is supreme. Yet, from all reports, very few of the citizens are unhappy. Many of the poor have become middle-class; most of the people seem happy, and are free, provided they fall into line. Their education, though highly competitive, is vibrant, and commerce is still growing. There are no reported gun deaths, the rate of incarceration is relatively low – providing you don’t count the ‘re-education’ camps.

By comparison, are most Americans happy? How many poor have been lifted to middle class? Do you know a family that has been affected by the gun lobby? OK, only you can answer that, but you have one thing over the Chinese: The appearance of freedom. To do what you want when you want to.

And that freedom is to celebrate Christmas, where there will be presents, rejoicing, gifts and smiles. Where friendships are bright, the departed remembered, and spirits raised. That is something no dictatorship can ever allow. It’s remarkable that this day, the (nominal) birthday of the saviour’s birth, is the glue of the Christian faith. Yes, Good Friday is a time of remembrance for the more religious among you, that the season is a commercial icon, but that does not diminish the importance of the fact.

It is also amazing that the history of this comes from many cultures and places, beginning with the Egyptian Akhenaten in the 14th century B.C. who declared that there was only one God in all the universe. Not just declared, but imposed on his subjects and those who were from other tribes in the area, including a race that became the Jewish, then the Muslims in the 7th century A.D. All these monotheistic movements had their God as the supreme ruler, whose voice and laws had to be obeyed. ‘I am the Lord thy

God; thou shall no other gods before me.’ His name could, and did, command that the Israelites should ‘March around the city, blowing rams horns... and the walls shall fall. Then the city shall be sacked.

This God had no mercy for his enemies, no quarter for dissenters, and those who were thought to question were consigned to hell when they died. The very model of an ancient dictator. That God also had no place for women, which is still true today, no matter the protests from the Muslims.

When Jesus arrived, the old commands were forgotten, and a message of ‘love thy neighbor’ was put in their place. And that is the essential message of Christmas.

In spite of everything that works to defeat that message, I wonder if many people totally forget it today. It’s the hardest thing to do, but the great majority of people in the world are kind hearted, generous, and well meaning.

Except for those people who think militia is the way to go, and the courts who now make murder legal. The outcome of this will be more chaos, more hatred, and less love and kindness.

Even so, I really hope you have a generous, kind hearted and happy time this festive season.

To read past editions of the Down Under, visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net.

THE PASTOR'S DESK

Christmas is for-giving

Pastor John Talcott
Christ Community Church

If you've got little kids or remember being a little kid, you know the excitement of approaching the holiday season, because kids love Christmas. They just can't wait to sit on Santa Claus' lap, or going to grandma's house, getting those new presents, and having all kinds of Christmas fun. And so, for children, Christmas is generally the best time of year, and yet unfortunately as we grow up, we often experience the complications of a life filled with relationships. And whether it's relationships with family, friends, coworkers, or neighbors, for many people Christmas is gradually transformed from being the best time of the year to a very difficult time.

This year, as we approach Christmas, that one great day where we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, it's a big time of the year for families, but there can be wins and losses. For those who have put their trust in Jesus, this is the perfect time of the year spiritually, because as we go into the holidays we'll reflect on the past, remembering what God has done to prepare us for the future. But no matter how you celebrate Christmas spiritually, socially, materially, or economically, it's actually a time where a lot of pain can come to the sur-

face in our lives. For many this can be a season of disappointment because of sin, broken families, loss, hurt, and regret, and so I want to encourage you to celebrate the true meaning of this season, because Christmas is for-giving.

My prayer is that you would be able to seize the opportunity this season to forgive others, to forgive yourself, and to move beyond the hurt that you've experienced in your life. That was the intent of the Gospel according to Matthew, who records these wonderfully amazing words, speaking of the story of Jesus' birth. An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph who was about to take Mary as his wife, and he said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:20-21). And so, this is why God sent his Son Jesus, not to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. He died and rose again on the third day so that everyone who calls on his name would be saved" (Romans 10:13).

"You are to give him the name Jesus," the angel said, because the name "Jesus" means the Lord saves. "He will save his

people from their sins," in fact, there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). And so, down through the centuries the prophets have testified that everyone who believes in Jesus receives the forgiveness of sins through his name, in accordance with the riches of God's grace. This is the great theme of Christmas and my prayer for you and your loved ones is that each one of you would know the forgiveness of sins through Jesus. And that by faith in his name, you would receive him as the gift of God, because Christmas is for-giving, and the promise of God is that all who receive him, who believe in his name, he gives the right to become children of God (John 1:12).

Now, some of you may be struggling, just hoping that you can make it through the holidays, but my prayer is that you would have a very real encounter with the One who is the reason for the holiday. This is so important because to know Christ's forgiveness is to give his forgiveness. In fact, Jesus said it very clearly, "If you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matthew 6:14-15). And so, forgiveness is not an option, if you don't forgive those who sin against you, you yourself are forfeiting the grace of God.



Now, with that being said, how in the world do you forgive when you've been hurt and betrayed? You know, the pain is still there and you know they don't deserve it, but how do you get to the place where you're able to forgive? Well, we're simply going to have to ignore our feelings, living by faith, and doing what the word of God says to do. "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:13). And so, here's what I do, I reflect on how I have hurt others, betrayed them, and let them down. And as I begin to think about sin after sin after sin and how God has forgiven me over and over and over again, suddenly it becomes so much easier to do what the Bible says and forgive as the Lord forgave me.

I wonder what would happen this Christmas if more people who identify themselves as Christians started acting like followers of Christ. You know, if more people actually loved God and loved others like we're commanded (Matthew 22:37-39). You know, what if we actually practiced the principles of God's word in all of our relationships? When people hurt you or betray you, you acknowledge that it's out of your control, and you make a choice to forgive as the Lord forgave you. Spiritually you release the burden of bitterness, the guilt and regret, giving it to God so that you can move forward into the New Year, focusing on what God has

for you in the future, instead of what you've lost in the past. The Lord said it this way, "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past... (Isaiah 43:18). And the apostle Paul said, "One thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead" (Philippians 3:14). This is so important because we must understand that the past cannot be changed, only the meaning of the past can be changed. In other words, we cannot change what happened, but if we allow him, God can change the meaning of the past.

As we prepare to celebrate Christmas in our homes, our churches, and in our community, I pray that each one of us may remember why Jesus came. As the angel said, "You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). In other words, God so loved the world that he gave, God gave his Son so that we could be forgiven, because Christmas is for-giving. And so, Jesus didn't come into the world to condemn it, but to save it. And my prayer is that as Christmas and the New Year approaches, that you would step into it with a new perspective, with new spiritual eyes, recognizing the love of God who forgives sins and gives second chances.

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THE BOOK OF DAYS

Christmas Day



The festival of Christmas is regarded as the greatest celebration throughout the ecclesiastical year, and so important and joyous a solemnity is it deemed, that a special exception is made in its favour, whereby, in the event of the anniversary falling on a Friday, that day of the week, under all other circumstances a fast, is transformed to a festival.

That the birth of Jesus Christ, the deliverer of the human race, and the mysterious link connecting the transcendent and incomprehensible attributes of Deity with human sympathies and affections, should be considered as the most glorious event that ever happened, and the most worthy of being reverently and joyously commemorated, is a proposition which must commend itself to the heart and reason of every one of His followers, who aspires to walk in His footsteps, and share in the ineffable benefits which His death has secured to mankind. And so though at one period denounced by the Puritans as superstitious, and to the present day disregarded by Calvinistic Protestants, as unwarranted by Scripture, there are few who will seriously dispute the propriety of observing the anniversary of Christ's birth by a religious service.

A question, however, which has been long and eagerly agitated, is here brought forward. Is the 25th of December really the day on which our Saviour first shewed himself in human form in the manger at Bethlehem? The evi-

dence which we possess regarding the date is not only traditional, but likewise conflicting and confused.

In the earliest periods at which we have any record of the observance of Christmas, we find that some communities of Christians celebrated the festival on the 1st or 6th of January; others on the 29th of March, the time of the Jewish Passover; while others, it is said, observed it on the 29th of September, or Feast of Tabernacles. There can be no doubt, however, that long before the reign of Constantine, in the fourth century, the season of the New Year had been adopted as the period for celebrating the Nativity, though a difference in this respect existed in the practice of the Eastern and Western Churches, the former observing the 6th of January, and the latter the 25th of December. The custom of the Western Church at last prevailed, and both of the ecclesiastical bodies agreed to hold the anniversary on the same day. The fixing of the date appears to have been the act of Julius I, who presided as pope or bishop of Rome, from 337 to 352 A.D. The circumstance is doubted by Mosheim, but is confirmed by St. Chrysostom, who died in the beginning of the fifth century.

This celebrated father of the church informs us, in one of his epistles, that Julius, on the solicitation of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, caused strict inquiries to be made on the subject, and thereafter, following what seemed to

be the best authenticated tradition, settled authoritatively the 25th of December as the anniversary of Christ's birth, the 'Festorum omnium metropolis,' as it is styled by Chrysostom. It is true, indeed, that some have represented this fixing of the day to have been accomplished by St. Telesphorus, who was bishop of Rome 128-139 A. D., but the authority for the assertion is very doubtful.

Towards the close of the second century, we find a notice of the observance of Christmas in the reign of the Emperor Commodus; and about a hundred years afterwards, in the time of Diocletian an atrocious act of cruelty is recorded of the last named emperor, who caused a church in Nicomedia, where the Christians were celebrating the Nativity, to be set on fire, and by barring every means of egress from the building, made all the worshippers perish in the flames. Since the end of the fourth century at least, the 25th of December has been uniformly observed as the anniversary of the Nativity by all the nations of Christendom.

Thus far for ancient usage, but it will be readily comprehended that insurmountable difficulties yet exist with respect to the real date of the momentous event under notice. Sir Isaac Newton, indeed, remarks in his Commentary on the Prophecies of Daniel, that the feast of the Nativity, and most of the other ecclesiastical anniversaries, were originally fixed at cardinal points of the year, without any reference to the dates of the incidents which they commemorated, dates which, by the lapse of time, had become impossible to be ascertained.

But no such precision of date can be adduced as regards Christmas, respecting which the generally received view now is, that it does not correspond with the actual date of the nativity of our Saviour. One objection, in particular, has been made, that the incident recorded in Scripture, of shepherds keeping watch by night on the plains of Bethlehem, could not have taken place in the month of December, a period generally of great inclemency in the region of Judea.

Though Christian nations have thus, from an early period in the

history of the church, celebrated Christmas about the period of the winter-solstice or the shortest day, it is well known that many, and, indeed, the greater number of the popular festive observances by which it is characterized, are referable to a much more ancient origin.

Amid all the pagan nations of antiquity, there seems to have been a universal tendency to worship the sun as the giver of life and light, and the visible manifestation of the Deity. Various as were the names bestowed by different peoples on this object of their worship, he was still the same divinity. Thus, at Rome, he appears to have been worshipped under one of the characters attributed to Saturn, the father of the gods; among the Scandinavians he was known under the epithet of Odin or Woden, the father of Thor, and with the Phoenicians or Carthaginians it was Baal.

There was a no less remarkable uniformity in the period of the year at which these different nations celebrated a grand festival in his honour. The time chosen appears to have been universally the winter-solstice, from which the new year was frequently reckoned. This is to be ascribed to the general feeling of joy which all of us experience when the gradual shortening of the day reaches its utmost limit on the 21st of December, and the sun, recommencing his upward course, announces that mid-winter is past, and spring and summer are approaching.

By the Romans, this anniversary was celebrated under the title of Saturnalia, or the festival of Saturn, and was marked by the prevalence of a universal license and merrymaking. The slaves were permitted to enjoy for a time a thorough freedom in speech and behavior, and it is even said that their masters waited on them as servants. Every one feasted and rejoiced, work and business were for a season entirely suspended, the houses were decked with laurels and evergreens, presents were made by parents and friends, and all sorts of games and amusements were indulged in by the citizens.

In the bleak north, the same rejoicings had place, but in a ruder and more barbarous form. Fires were extensively kindled, both in


and out of doors, blocks of wood blazed in honour of Odin and Thor, the sacred mistletoe was gathered by the Druids, and sacrifices, both of men and cattle, were made to the savage divinities.

In the early ages of Christianity, its ministers frequently experienced the utmost difficulty in inducing the converts to refrain from indulging in the popular amusements which were so largely participated in by their pagan countrymen. Among others, the revelry and license which characterized the Saturnalia called for special animadversion. But at last, convinced partly of the inefficacy of such denunciations, and partly influenced by the idea that the spread of Christianity might thereby be advanced, the church endeavored to amalgamate, as it were, the old and new religious, and sought, by transferring the heathen ceremonies to the solemnities of the Christian festivals, to make them subservient to the cause of religion and piety.


Ingrafted thus on the Romani Saturnalia, the Christmas festivities received in Britain further changes and modifications, by having superadded to them, first, the Druidical rites and superstitions, and then, after the arrival of the Saxons, the various ceremonies practiced by the ancient Germans and Scandinavians. The result has been the strange medley of Christian and pagan rites which contribute to make up the festivities of the modern Christmas. Of these, the burning of the Yule log, and the superstitions connected with the mistletoe.

The name given by the ancient Goths and Saxons to the festival of the winter-solstice was Jul or Yule, the latter term forming, to the present day, the designation in the Scottish dialect of Christmas, and preserved also in the phrase of the 'Yule log.' The Yule festival received its name from its being the turning-point of the year, or the period at which the fiery orb of day made a revolution in his annual circuit, and entered on his northern journey.

To read other selections from Robert Chambers' *The Book of Days* visit www.thebookofdays.com.



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ECOLOGY

Encounters with owls

Amanda Markle
Strawberry Hill Nature Preserve

Strawberry Hill is currently home to six different species that make up our Animal Ambassador program, and from toad to turtle (and even cockroach), each has its charms. The Animal Ambassador program supports our mission of inspiring stewardship of the natural world by allowing audiences to meet up-close animals that we share our community with.

Research shows that educational animal programs connect with audiences on an emotional level, and that educating people about these animals can create a lasting sense of connection with nature. That connection and understanding of the natural world, in turn, inspires attitudes and behaviors that support conservation and responsible use of natural spaces. All the animals in our program are an important part of the story of our local ecosystem, but the animal that most often inspires a true sense of awe is our barred owl, Strix.

It's not hard to understand why seeing an owl up close is a thrill for many people. Being mostly nocturnal, with very effective camouflage, seeing an owl in the wild is a rare occurrence. Physically, there are so many striking elements that make up an owl; the enormous eyes, the powerful talons, the dense coat of feathers. Strix came to Strawberry Hill after

being found injured in Michaux State Forest, presumably after being hit by a car. Strix was cared for by a rehabber, but his injuries caused permanent feather damage to one of his wings. He can fly, but not far enough to hunt effectively and survive in the wild, and was deemed non-releasable.

Strix is allowed to live at Strawberry Hill under an educational use permit, meaning that our staff is required to include him in a certain number of educational programs each year. Of all the animals that are a part of our ambassador program, Strix requires the most specialized care, the most training to handle safely, and the most expensive food (almost 1,000 mice a year!), but the investment of time and resources is worthwhile. Owls are a fascinating and unique part of our ecosystem and tell us a great deal about the health of our environment. Holding a spot at the top of the food chain, they act as an indicator species; declining owl populations can indicate chemicals or other pollutants entering the system lower down.

Some owl species only thrive in specific habitats, the loss of which due to foresting or development can quickly decimate a population. Maintaining a robust local owl population is beneficial not only because they are a fascinating species to share our community with; they are great pest control as well. A single family of barn owls can eat over 3,000 mice

a year. Having an owl as part of our Animal Ambassadors program leaves a lasting impression on our audiences, allowing us to educate people about these amazing creatures, and what we can do to protect them in the spaces we share.

Strix is a barred owl, one of the most common owl species seen in our area, but there are seven other species keen observers might have a chance to see locally. The smallest is the northern saw-whet owl; a shy and tiny species only standing around 6 inches tall. Another small owl, the eastern screech, can be found in our area in both reddish and gray color morphs. Their name is misleading; a screech owl call sounds much more like a whinny than a screech. Long and short-eared owls measure in around the size of a crow, and are also somewhat poorly named; the tufts of feathers on the tops of some owls' heads are not ears, but rather protrusions of feathers that they can move to help them blend in amongst tree branches.

Barred and barn owls can both be found in our area, though barn owls are seen far less frequently and, due to habitat loss, local populations are declining. Barred owls are seen and heard far more often, with their distinctive call sounding like an inquiry of "who cooks for who?" Barred owl populations are rapidly growing in more western areas of the country where they are considered an invasive species out-competing the northern spotted owl. Some areas have even enacted controversial culling programs to slow their spread. The largest owls one might find



Owls are a fascinating and unique part of our ecosystem and tell us a great deal about the health of our environment. Holding a spot at the top of the food chain, they act as an indicator species; declining owl populations can indicate whether chemicals or other pollutants are entering the system.

in our area are the great horned, whose call is closest to the classic "hoot" most expect from owls, and the snowy owl, who are generally found in the tundra areas of the north and around the Great Lakes, but can very occasionally be spotted further south.

For those seeking an owl encounter in the wild, learning owl calls can be the most effective way to locate them. Except for the snowy owl, owls in our area are most active during the dark of night when visual identification is challenging, and they camouflage and hide incredibly well during the day. There are ways to find an owl's favorite haunts during daylight hours. The first is to know what sort of habitat to look in. While each species has its specific preferences, many owls prefer to live in areas with dense forests for nesting and open fields for hunting. Barn owls do indeed frequent old barns, as well as hollow trees; barred owls love forested areas near a water source where they can find amphibians to hunt. Once you've identified a potential habitat, look for signs of owls; feathers, pellets, and owl "whitewash" - thick, white owl dropping that collect on tree trunks like melted wax.

Once you've identified an area with owls present, you can return at dusk to start looking for active birds. Many species of owl breed in the winter and will be much more vocal during this time. Owling can be a rewarding and adventuresome hobby, but there are several ethical considerations

to keep in mind. Always give owls space, and only visit nesting spots once every few weeks - any more frequently and the owl may feel threatened and abandon its nest. Use calls sparingly, especially during mating and nesting seasons, when owls need to focus their energy on finding a mate and protecting their young (and never use calls in national parks, where playing recorded calls is considered harassment of wildlife and can incur hefty fines).

Spotting an owl in the wild is a thrilling experience, and there are things we can do to help protect populations in our area. Build nesting boxes on your property, especially if you live near open areas where owls like to hunt. Whenever possible, use traps to deal with rodent problems instead of poison, which kills owls due to bioaccumulation. Never throw food out the window of your car, where it will attract rodents, and subsequently owls to roads where they all too often get hit by cars. If you don't have luck finding owls in your neighborhood, we invite you to join us at Strawberry Hill for one of our nighttime Owl Prowl Hikes, or an Animal Ambassador program. Owls are some of the most amazing creatures with which we share our environment, and the more we learn about and understand them, the better we can protect their populations.

To read other Ecology articles, visit the Authors section of emmitsburg.net.



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IN THE COUNTRY

Dreaming of a green Christmas

Tim Iverson, Naturalist

Despite being nestled within the coldest months of the year, Christmas brings with it a sense of warmth and vitality. Pay no mind to the blustery marshmallow world outside. Nevermind that we're months away from verdant green grasses and the sultry summer sun. Christmas provides an internal jingle that rings with silver bells and is wrapped in wreaths and garlands of evergreens.

Evergreens, as the name implies, are trees that remain green year round. They will keep their "leaves" or needles in almost all cases, all year, while deciduous trees will shed their leaves in the colder winter months. Evergreens are usually conifer trees, plants, or shrubs, and in some rare cases leafy trees.

Historically speaking evergreens have been a part of the winter season for millennia. These plants were brought in and adorned the homes of many ancient peoples across cultures and continents. December 21st and 22nd typically has the fewest daylight hours of the year, and is marked as the winter solstice. Most ancient cultures worshipped the sun as a god, and this solstice symbolized the triumph of life over death as the days would begin to grow longer from this point forward.

Evergreens were a symbol of health and virility, and reminded them that green plants would grow and farms and fields would once again produce food. Ancient Egyptians, Romans, Celtic druids, Vikings, and Germanic barbarians all had similar traditions.

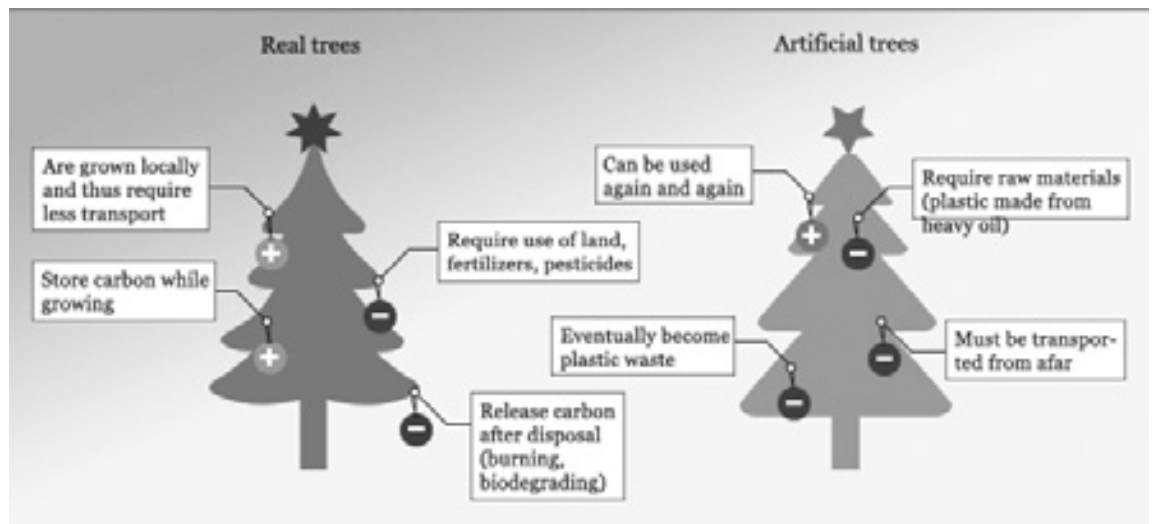
The contemporary custom of the Christmas tree can be traced back to 16th century Germany. During this period Germans would bring small trees into their home to decorate. Devout Christians adopted this from prior pagan ritual and Christianized it by selecting Christian symbols to place upon the tree.

Early decorations were traditionally food items, such as apples or nuts. Apples represented the apple from the Adam and Eve creation story. The top of the tree is usually festooned with either an angel, representing the angel Gabriel, or a star, which represents the star of Bethlehem.

The tradition of decorating Christmas trees spread, and was fairly common by the 1800's. In early America things had progressed slower due to heavy puritan influence. In 1659 the state of Massachusetts banned any form of celebrating the Christmas holiday, with the exception a church service, and provided strict penalties for violation of this law. By the mid 19th century there had been a huge influx of German and Irish immigrants and the political and cultural influence of puritans waned.

Many Americans were still unsure or uninterested in this Christmas custom, but in 1846 the English Queen Victoria and her husband Prince Albert (of Germany) were pictured in an English newspaper surrounded by their children standing next to a Christmas tree. This picture made the custom highly fashionable with English and American political elites and upper class citizens. It wasn't long until the Christmas tree became commonplace in nearly every English and American home and town square.

The modern Christmas tree has its roots planted squarely in these traditions. However, contemporary cultural concerns have roiled a debate among more environmentally conscious consumers. This has left some discrepancy between what is the most ethical choice between tree purchasers - natural or artificial? There are certainly merits to both choices, but environmental agencies and universities have come down squarely on the side of natural or



If you are worried about killing a fresh tree for Christmas, consider this—artificial trees are only better for the environment if used for at least four years, but possibly not until having been used for 20 years.

real trees as being the most environmentally sound choice.

Most Christmas trees are commercially farmed, harvested, and shipped regionally to surrounding areas and states. While a real tree is essentially carbon neutral, it is estimated that it is responsible for approximately 7lbs of carbon dioxide per tree via transit activities. It also worth considering that a tree takes about 7 to 10 years or more from planting to harvesting. During that time it stores carbon, provides oxygen, habitat and food sources to wildlife, and maintains soil and water quality.

Whereas, an artificial tree is responsible for approximately 106lbs of carbon per tree, but can be used over many years. Artificial trees are typically made of PVC, but have often been found to be coated in paint with traces of lead in it (usually originating from China). After 9 years these lead based paints have been shown to break down and can cause health risks to vulnerable populations, such as the elderly or small children, due to lead contamination.

One research study showed that a consumer would have to use an artificial tree for up to 20 years before it had a smaller environmental impact than a natural tree. Most manufacturers recom-

mended a shelf life of 10 years. After which these trees should be replaced. Once trashed they either end up in a landfill taking centuries to decompose or being burned in an incinerator releasing carbon and other carcinogenic chemicals into the atmosphere.

Better ways to reduce impact while celebrating the Christmas season is to ensure that you properly recycle your tree. Many localities provide tree recycling services which will turn trees into mulch for parks, gardens, public space, and trails. Living Christmas trees are increasingly becoming an alternative for an even greener Christmas option. These trees are harvested by balling the roots and transplanted into a pot or mesh container. After the Christmas holiday is over you can plant your tree in your yard or another location and it can con-

tinue to provide habitat and other positive environmental contributions to the ecosystem.

By considering how to reduce our Christmas carbon footprints we can help ensure that future Christmases will be white enough to leave actual footprints in the snow. Using LED lighting for trees and home decorations significantly cuts down on energy, and by using the lighting less in general will affect the amount of impact we have. Upcycle old newspaper into wrapping paper, ensure batteries for new and old toys alike get properly recycled and not just trashed, and employing similar solutions helps to turn a white Christmas into a green holiday.

To read other articles by Tim Iverson, visit the Authors' section of Emmitsburg.net



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REAL SCIENCE

School science education

Michael Rosenthal

The Mother Seton School STEM Fair was held, and overcoming the problems of the pandemic, it was, as always, a wonderful presentation of student science work. The presentations, as in previous years, consisted of a hypothesis, the materials utilized in the experimental work, the procedures undertaken, the observations, the data obtained, and the conclusions derived from the study. A journal is kept which is also presented illustrating the results obtained. The projects are judged by community members with scientific background, including some Mother Seton graduates.

The winners and the titles of the projects are listed as follows:

6th Grade: First place was won by Ellie Rajaski who studied water resistance in fabrics. Second place was won by Grady Abruzzese who explored soil testing. Third place was won by Gwyneth Yanike and Jordan Wright who explored the watering of plants with different liquids. Honorable mention went to Noah Riling who studied guinea pigs in a maze, to determine whether treats help them learn. What an amazing start I find it to be for 6th graders to study experimental science in such a professional way. Each year I am amazed all over again at the professionalism of the presentations.

7th Grade: First place was won by Emma and Sarah Simmons for an Equine Nebulizer Invention. Second place was won by Abigail Field and Vivian Lewis for their

Solar Oven Invention. Third place was awarded to Ruby Bodner for a newly designed six-pack holder which is eco-friendly, in contrast to the plastic holders commonly in use which remain a serious source of landfill pollution. Honorable Mention was awarded to Catherine Griffin and Vivienne Storch for a study of dog treats.

8th Grade: First place was won by Maryn Rajaski and Catarina Hatch for the development of water testing using daphnia. (daphnia is a genus of small planktonic crustaceans sometimes known as water fleas). Second place was won by Sophia Erdman for a study of chicken egg fertilization. Third place was won by Grace and Mason Hewitt for a study of the best substances for killing germs and by Maggie Rabaiotti for a study of worm composting.

Now for the big news: the Best in Show winners! The Best in Show-Experiment went to Maryn Rajaski and Catarina Hatc, while the Best in Show-Invention was awarded to Emma and Sarah Simmons.

As I've written in prior years, I've never see this level of scientific sophistication at these educational levels. I have no memory whatsoever of my science studies in grades 1-6, though I had kind and efficient teachers in 1950's Youngstown, Ohio (also known as Crimetown, USA!). Though my junior high and high school science teachers were generally friendly and competent, I was not really inspired to a career in science until I studied chemistry in my high school senior year under

Mr. Robert Gillespie. He literally changed my life, leading me eventually to earn a chemistry PhD at the University of Illinois, and to engage in a 50 year career teaching college chemistry. The science education at Mother Seton School will have a similar impact, I'm sure, on the scientific knowledge and the careers of its graduates.

Science education, particularly the ability and willingness to seek the best and most accurate information possible cannot be more strongly emphasized that we see daily in the COVID outbreak. It is one thing to make a decision not to be vaccinated, but it is critically important to understand the dangers that decision brings to you, your family, and the people around you. It has always amazed me to see how many people ignore scientific facts to pursue the path that they would hope would be safe and fruitful. The COVID outbreak and the anti-vaxers are the latest example of people ignoring scientific fact, endangering themselves, their families, and the people around them. No one (not even me!) is right all the time, but I have great faith in the honesty, wisdom, and suggestions of Dr. Anthony Fauci.

My stimulation for writing in Real Science comes from browsing a variety of sources, including newspapers as well as the Internet and elsewhere. Both the New York Times and the Washington Post have now stopped overnight home delivering to my mailbox here in Emmitsburg, making both stimulation for Real



Science education, particularly the ability and willingness to seek the best and most accurate information possible, is critical to our nation's future.

Science and pleasure browsing hard for me to do. Now, one of my favorite columnists, Gene Weingarten, is no longer writing his Sunday Washington Post articles, entitled Below the Beltway, in the Washington Post. Perhaps he'll write on online. We increasingly have to adjust to change in our world, but thank goodness, the Laws of Thermodynamics do not change.

I am a fan of producing energy by wind power. This is a fine example of renewable energy with virtually no negative impact on the surrounding environment. Of course one has to be in a windy area to use this form of energy generation. As I have written earlier, it is a natural to generate power by wind along the east coast, but many people who live along the coast find the sight of the windmills unpleasing. As I have said before in this column, I like the sight of windmills, but I don't live along the coast to support them locally.

The governor of Virginia and executives from Dominion Energy and Siemens Gamesa Renewable Energy announced in late October a \$200 million plan to finish building turbine blades that would supply offshore wind activity on 80 acres of the Portsmouth Marine Terminal. This project would be the largest wind power production facility in the United States, putting Virginia at the forefront of development of wind energy. Unlike offshore drilling, the operation of offshore wind generation has no significant negative impact on the environment.

In addition to the energy generated, this project will create 310 new jobs, including 50 service positions to support Dominion Energy's Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind Project, 27 miles off the coast. Dominion says the wind farm will generate enough electricity to power up to 660,000 (!) homes at peak performance, and it will avoid as much as five million tons of carbon dioxide from annually entering the atmosphere. As we have written before and is well known, carbon dioxide is one of the prime drivers of global temperature rise. This project has the strong support of United States Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm, and she described it as symbolic of a new economy based on clean energy.

President Biden has pledged to cut the country's fossil fuel emissions 50 percent from 2005 levels by the year 2030. Producing energy by wind and solar is a large part of fulfillment of this promise. It will also produce jobs, adding the economy. Virginia legislation commits the state to carbon-free energy production by 2045. The facility at the port of Virginia is very well suited to offshore wind generation. The port has deep water access, some 55 feet, which will allow the proposed 472 foot wind turbine installation to use it as a home port. Dominion Energy is building a ship, named Charybdis, to begin service in 2023. A blade factory now in operation in Hampton Roads, Virginia is a key step in supporting the supply chain for the installation. Will the change in governors in Virginia affect the plan for this project? I certainly hope that the Governor's Office support will vigorously continue.

To read past articles by Michael Rosenthal visit the Authors Section of Emmitsburg.net.

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THE VILLAGE IDIOT

Sophisticated palate

Jack Deatherage

“I’m amazed by your sophisticated palate.” Mocks the Texas Homesteader.”

I laugh and quickly Google “sophisticated palate”. It means you can taste slight nuances in food and detect one flavor from another.

Hmm. Is one who churns up a patch of yard to plant specific cultivars of tomatoes, cabbages, peppers, beans, taters and garlic- each with known flavors, fragrances and texture profiles actually unsophisticated?

Ignoring another of the Texan’s accurate remarks, “But you eat very little of what you grow”, I continue wondering, does kitchen experimenting with said home-grown produce lend some credibility to my having a sophisticated palate? Probably not. The Texan, like the Mad American-Bulgarian, is known to spend much of a day preparing elaborate, multicourse meals selected from the world’s cuisines. I’m more likely to spend less than an hour fixin’ my vittles.

The Texan once chidingly remarked something along the line of, “So you turn up your nose at beans, rice and corn? Billions of people around the world survive on little more than those foods and you’re too good to bother with them even as side dishes?”

I remember carping one evening- before Dad took most of the family to Florida -that I was tired of eating beans and fatback after seeing it served for supper several days straight. Dad, in a rare moment of magnanimity, allowed I hadn’t reason to complain until I’d eaten beans eight days a week. I asked someone to pass me the corn bread. To this day I’m fond of neither corn bread, or beans and fatback.

Currently, as inflation eats into our grocery money- just as it had the family’s budget back in the mid to late 1970s -I find myself less interested in meats, especially given how flavorless most of them are these days. I begin eyeing dry beans. Not that inflation hasn’t hit the supermarket bean shelves as hard as it has the meat counters! However, a 30% increase in the price of a pound of dried pintos is less jaw dropping than the same percentage increase in price per pound of New York strip steak!

With the trees gone from the yard the DW jumps up on the

Princess Tree stump and says, “Boy. Let me tell you what. This yard’s a mess, and you’re gonna help clean it up. Or you’ll get you-know-what!”

Putting her favored clematis vines between us, I “Yes dear” her and manage to ask what she wants me to help her plant before she can fire up old Balor. Sometimes I’m clever, sometimes.

“Flowers! Lots of flowers.” She smolders. Which brings to mind *Dictamnus albus*. A large clump of which planted in the yard would be entertaining when people foolishly visit. I could aggravate the DW (how could I not?) and as she glares at me I’d be all, “No. No! Don’t unleash Balor of the evil eye on me!” I’d strike a match near the plants which give off a vaporous oil that ignites in a brief flame. Or, maybe not.

I suggest we build an culinary herb garden.

“Flowers.” Still glaring.

“I want at least a ten by ten garlic bed.” I mumble.

“Flowers.”

Hmm. I think I need to distract her.

We recently bought a pound of cranberry beans- first time. I used them to make a pork stew (dry rubbed picnic shoulder, no fatback). The DW and I both liked it well enough. Perhaps enough to justify stocking up on the beans to help extend our grocery money? I make that suggestion.

Her “flowers” retort halts. “Those were good beans. They’d taste even better homegrown?”

“Doesn’t most everything else we’ve grown?”

“Okay. Beans. And flowers.”

Cool! I start searching online catalogs for cranberry beans. I’m hoping they’s a short season bush bean ‘cause our current favorite dried bean is Rio Zape, a pole variety out of the southwest.

Rio Zape beans (I’ve got a quart of them put away for eating and some more for growing out next summer) hint of chocolate and coffee- who knew dry beans could have actual flavor? Given the few vines I grew this year, and how I grew them (3-gallon cloth buckets, Summer Creek Farm potting mix, overly crowded fencing in a part of the yard that didn’t get full sun and most of the pods not dry when the first frost hit) I’m impressed with the harvest. I hope to shell out a gallon’s worth of these next year.

As with most stuff garden

related, trying to track down anything specifically can be a challenge. Wikipedia reports the cranberry bean- a common bean (*Phaseolus vulgaris*), as heralding from Colombia, South America and reaching North America via Italy where it is called *Borlotta Lingua di Fuoco* (Tongue of Fire). This would likely have been the bean we found in the supermarket.

Territorial Seed Company (TSC) says their cranberry bean arrived from England and is “the pinnacle of quality in a horticultural bean”. Near as I can tell, the English got horticultural beans from the French? Where they got them I haven’t a clue. The TSC bean isn’t the cranberry bean we bought locally.

Supposedly, horticultural beans have a mild, nutty flavor. I’m cool with that. I’ll add them to my growing list of bean varieties I’m thinking I’ll trial next year. At least they’re bush varieties that mature in 90 days. The Rio Zape pole beans that still weren’t ready for harvest when the first frost showed up two weeks late this year took 150+ days?

I turn to ransacking all my usual bean sources: Vermont Bean Seed Company, Adaptive Seeds, Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Company, Victory Seeds, Annie’s Heirloom Seeds, Johnny’s Selected Seeds, Southern Exposure Seed Exchange



She’s cute when giving orders I’ll likely ignore.

and Seed Savers Exchange. All have some dry bean variety that catches my eye- I like pretty beans as much as I do the culinary use of them. But I know how my “want” list ends up being drastically pared down to a “need” list, then to a “can afford” list and eventually it becomes a “what I’ll actually plant” list. Heck, I’m looking at the 2021 catalogs, so all my wants are likely to change by February when the 2022 catalogs are all out! “What about my flowers?” The room gets noticeably warmer. Drat. Is she spying on my web searches? Nope. She just knows how I get when planning a garden.

“Umm... *Clitoria ternatea*?”

Wow. That raises the temperature a bit! (Which is good for the Russian hybrid gloxinia seeds I’m

trying to sprout.)

“Clitoria? Just what is that?”

“Urr... the common name is ‘blue butterfly pea’, but the scientific name is more interesting. You know those 18th century scientists were practical men who-”

“We’ll refer to it as ‘blue butterfly pea’, because you’re probably mispronouncing it anyhow.”

“Yes dear.”

Clitor- umm... ‘blue butterfly pea’ is said to have sedative properties as well as it’s being used as a dye. I know some bread builders who use it to color their crumb. Maybe I can use it to color egg noodles? Or make a tea to calm the DW down a bit?

Oops. That’s gonna leave a scar.

To read past articles by Jack Deatherage, visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net.

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THE MASTER GARDENER

Christmas tree selection

Mary Ann Ryan
Adams County Master Gardener

It's time to buy a Christmas tree! What kind of tree will you buy? What is best for your home and family schedule?

Selection of a Christmas tree is an annual tradition for some families. Many families, like mine, like the experience of going to a tree farm, tromping around in the cold – and if it's snowy, that's even better. We usually bring some kind of ribbon with us so we can go back to a tree and re-evaluate the shape and size before making the final decision. Before you know it, an hour or so has passed, we've jumped through snow, or trampled through water puddles (you can never pick out a tree on a warm, dry afternoon) and agreed on the perfect tree to cut and drag home. These cut your own trees will be the freshest you can get!

However, this is not always the

best way for you to choose a Christmas tree. The length of time you wish your tree to be in the house will determine what kind of tree you will buy. If, for instance, you keep your tree up for more than three weeks, an artificial tree is for you! Many sizes, shapes and varieties are available at your local retail stores or garden centers.

If you keep your tree in your house for less than three weeks, a fresh cut tree may be your choice. Many times, especially during the holiday season, time is limited. Taking a day to cut your own tree may not be the way you wish to spend valuable time. However a cut, fresh tree purchased from a tree lot may be the way to go. Many garden and retail centers sell cut trees. Boy Scouts, civic clubs or school/church groups often sell trees as fundraisers for their organizations. This is a great way to support these groups.

Remember when choosing from a retail lot to check the tree for freshness.

Smell the tree for its fragrance, as the fresher the tree, the more fragrant it is. Also shake the tree to determine how many needles have dropped. If the weather is warm, and the tree has been cut for some time, many, many needles will drop – a good indication of a not-so-fresh tree.

Another option is a live tree. A living Christmas tree should be in the house for no more than 7 - 10 days. Before entering the house, it should be conditioned first. Keep the tree in an unheated, protected location, like a garage, for a few days before bringing it inside. During this conditioning period, be sure the root ball is watered. If the ball dries out, roots will die, lessening the survival rate of that tree.

When bringing your tree inside, place it in a large bucket or pan to prevent the soil and water from staining the floor. Again, keep the root ball moistened at all times. Locate the tree in the coolest room of your home, away from any heat sources, just as you would a cut tree. You don't want the tree to break its dormancy, which will cause tips to grow, and then die when exposed to the cold weather again.

After you are finished with the tree indoors – and remember, no more than 10 days so it does not break dormancy – you'll need to re-condition it to the outdoors. Place the tree in an unheated, protected location for a few days, and then it should be ready to plant.

Hopefully, the ground won't be



Purchasing a Christmas tree is full of decisions! Kids and adults can share in the fun of tree shopping! Don't stress, make educated decisions, and enjoy the holidays.

frozen when you're ready to plant the tree. You can prepare for this possibility ahead of time by digging the hole before the holidays and storing the soil in an unheated garage or storage shed. That way, when you're ready to plant, the hole is already there, and you won't have frozen ground to use as backfill. If, however, the hole is not dug, and the ground is frozen, place your tree in a sheltered area and mulch the root ball heavily. Keep the soil ball moist until the ground is workable.

After planting the tree, water it well and mulch it. This will protect the root ball through the rest of the winter months. The tree should remain dormant until the spring when it will start growing with all other vegetation.

Tree selection becomes a bit easier if you know the difference between the tree types. Christmas trees can be broken down into three basic groupings: firs, spruce and pines. Firs and spruce needles are attached to twigs individually, while the pines have

clusters of needles attached to the twigs. The following are some of the most commonly grown Christmas trees in our area.

The Fraser Fir is native to the high elevations of the southern Appalachian Mountains. It has easily adapted to our climate, if you're considering a living tree. It has excellent needle retention with wonderful fragrance. It has dark green foliage with silver on the underside of the needles, and the twigs are relatively firm for an easy to decorate tree.

Douglas Fir is a very popular Christmas tree. This tree is native to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, and has also adapted well to our weather conditions. It has a natural pyramidal shape, fragrant, with somewhat drooping branches. The needles are a medium green color about 1 – 1 1/2" long. This tree has good needle retention and relatively easy to decorate. In the landscape, it serves as a great screen planting when mixed with other evergreen trees.

Balsam Fir is a long lasting, fragrant fir. This evergreen is native to northeastern US and Canada. It likes cold winter temperatures and cool summer temperatures. It has nice, dark green foliage and one of the common Christmas trees in the US. It has good needle retention and strong twigs for an easy to decorate tree. This tree resembles the Fraser fir in looks and endurance, but may not be the best choice for a live tree as our summers are too hot.

Concolor Fir has longer needles than the other common fir trees, getting up to 1 1/2" in length. It has a good fragrance and needle retention. The blue-green foliage makes it an interesting and attractive color for a Christmas tree. It is native to the west coast, but has adapted to our environment quite well.

Colorado Blue Spruce is a nicely shaped tree with silvery-blue color. The needles are pointy, making it rather prickly to decorate, but it does have good needle retention if kept watered. These trees are symmetrical by nature, and have strong limbs for heavy ornaments. The blue spruce works well in the landscape as a screen planting.

White Spruce has short, stiff needles with a blunt tip, making them less prickly than the blue spruce. The branches are stiff as well, making it a good choice for heavy ornaments. Needle retention is good, probably better than other spruce trees. However, when the needles are crushed, they have an unpleasant odor.

Norway Spruce has a nice dark green color but poor needle retention. It is conical by nature, and open

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THE MASTER GARDENER

Small Town Gardener

On roots

Marianne Willburn

It's hard to gauge what the winter will bring, but it's safe to guess that in the early part of this month, many of my gardening friends will still be feverishly planting within the boundaries of our [some-what] newly appointed Zone 7 climate – just as long as the ground is not frozen solid and the nights are less than fierce. It is not extraordinary to see the dedicated and delusional down on their knees digging holes and mulching with fury, even as snow flurries fly.

I am usually among them. Time seems to race from October through December and I am only coming to my senses again in January and looking around at what never made it into the ground and might benefit from the insulating effects of soil. Though it's not ideal, we rarely do 'ideal' around here, preferring to rely on 'Will it work?' instead. Barring your zone marginal plants such as camellia and crepe myrtle, it usually does.

Consequently, it occurred to me that the topic of planting invites discussion on the topic of roots. And even if you're not a hard-core, gird-your-loins gardener, the spring will be here before we blink, and choices will need to be made when staring at the girdled mess of a pot-bound plant.

After gardening for a fair amount of time, one starts to realize that roots can be as distinctive as the plants they support. Most would never confuse the rhizome of an iris for that of a canna—but would they recognize the thin, fleshy fingers of clematis or the shallow, thread-like network of rhododendron roots? With time, this knowledge becomes instinctive, not to mention extremely useful. It stops the trowel mid-thrust during the desolate anonymity

of the winter garden and prevents accidental death by stupidity. A dead looking plant is usually thriving down below.

But in order to thrive, its roots must be given a fighting chance, and whether it's through a misguided effort to be gentle or a hurried effort to get on with other chores in the garden, they rarely are. Heed my words – the mistakes made during the crucial time of planting will not go unpunished.

When we moved into our last house, there wasn't much in the way of landscape. Among the three plants that stood in the front yard was a golden euonymus planted near an old stump and about the size of a respectable three-gallon nursery specimen.

I had great plans for that area. Brick patios would eventually be constructed so that al fresco meals could be enjoyed as we watched the sun setting over the Virginia ridge-line. The euonymus – golden or otherwise – simply had to go. But I did not sign its death warrant. We were too strapped for cash to throw out a perfectly good shrub, and there were beds to be filled. I prepared a new site in the front border and dug it up.

To my surprise, the roots looked as if they had come out of a nursery pot that very week (though I was later informed that it had been planted four years before). They were bound and twisted upon each other, and judging from the soil around them, the merest sliver of a hole had been dug into the soil to wedge this poor specimen 'twixt rock and clay. Due to years in a plastic pot, then further years in an earthen one, its growth had stagnated. Had it not been one of the world's most obstinate plants, no doubt it would have died a quiet death, resigned to its fate. I pulled the roots apart, cut some of the larger, girdled specimens and gave it a new home.

One year later, with a large hole, a good mix of compost and subsoil, and a generous hose, it had doubled in size. Five years later, it was a perfect six-foot specimen. Before we left that house, its roots were not only happy, they were rapturous – not merely wrapped around each other for comfort.

For centuries, farmers and fish-wives have been saying (with subtle variations in currency) "Don't dig a dollar hole for a five-dollar plant." It's so tempting to disregard this advice when the soil you are hewing is made of concrete and the mercury is plunging. But you disregard it to your peril.

Dig a hole twice the width of your plant. I have also heard whispers of setting it on undisturbed earth to prevent sinking later, but I usually add at least a couple inches of something friable mixed with native soil. However, let's discuss that idea of "something friable."

Filling that hole with a straight mix of gorgeous, black crumbly compost is the equivalent of doing your child's laundry during his teen years then expecting him to find a Laundromat when he's eighteen. Trust me he won't bother and neither will the plant. Instead, give it a hefty amount of the soil with which it will be faced in a year's time mixed with some good compost and a bit of bone meal. Moving beyond that mix won't be as much of a shock for it.

And one last thing about the roots themselves. Most of the time they need a good rough hand at planting time, but it is hard to go wrong if you remember the following: if they are fleshy, be fastidious; if they are fibrous, be firm. Using a hose to tease roots away from soil and each other can often help the process, just make sure that they are well-watered after planting to remove any air pockets you might have inadvertently created. I like to half-fill the hole, water deeply, and when the water has disappeared, fill it up with soil and water again.

If you are particularly rough on the roots, don't expect them to then support the original size of the plant. Some judicious pruning on the top will limit the amount of foliage those newly tousled roots must try to support. Pay now or pay later - the choice is yours.

Marianne is a Master Gardener and the author of Tropical Plants and How To Love Them and Big Dreams, Small Garden. You can read more at www.smalltowngardener.com.

in appearance if not sheared heavily. It has good stiff branches, making it easy to decorate. If choosing this variety, be sure to keep it well watered in a cool room and do not keep it in the house for more than two weeks.

Scotch Pine is a common Christmas tree in the US. It was imported from Europe by the early European settlers. It has longer needles, about 1"-3" in length. The needles are in clusters and a medium green color. It has fairly good needle retention when it is kept watered. It also is a very easy tree to transplant if you are considering a living tree.

White Pine is a native evergreen. It has long, clustered needles and good needle retention. It is very soft to the touch and has flexible branches, making it a tree that cannot handle heavy ornaments. It has little fragrance, but nice blue green color.

After getting your cut tree home, proper care should be taken for a safe holiday. Make a fresh cut about one inch above the already cut base. Put your tree in water right away, even if you will not be bringing it into the house immediately. Don't let the tree dry out. You don't want it to turn into a fire hazard. Treat it as you would a fresh bouquet of flowers.

Locate the tree by a wall or corner where it's not going to be knocked over. Keep the tree away from heat sources, such as fireplaces, wood stoves and heat ducts.

Just purchasing a Christmas tree is full of decisions! Kids and adults can share in the fun of tree shopping! Don't stress, make educated decisions, and enjoy the holidays!

To read other gardening articles visit the Gardening section of Emmitsburg.net.

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PETS

These people are going to care for us no matter what

Jennifer Vanderau
Cumberland Valley Animal Shelter

Humans are funny creatures. Hard to predict. Tough to understand sometimes. For the most part, though, the ones I've gotten to know at the animal shelter are really good ones.

I came from the street and trust me, there were some not nice humans out there. Especially for a rough-looking tom cat. I had a lot of water tossed on me and brooms aimed at me and words that I can't print here yelled at me.

But once I made it to the Cumberland Valley Animal shelter, things changed. A lot.

I was warm. I had a bowl of food every day. Clean water to drink. My own bathroom and someone to clean it. People were nice to me. They hugged me and played with me and snuggled me.

It's been nice.

But I've noticed something recently. If I'm being honest, I've noticed something for a while now with humans. They're acting kind of funnier than usual.

I've been around humans for five years. Born on the streets and lived there for the first four years. It wasn't until recently that I made it to the shelter. It was almost two years ago when the humans started acting really

strange. They didn't go out much. They wore masks. They seemed on edge. Worried.

And it hasn't really changed that much.

At the shelter, you could tell the people were concerned. They work every day and love us every day, but sometimes you could just sense they were anxious. It's gotten worse recently. Some of them got sick. There were a few of my favorite helpers in the morning that I haven't seen for a week or two.

We were open for visitors for a while, but then we closed again because more people got sick.

The cats and I talk about it at night time when no one else is here. Some of the new ones have said they heard talk on the outside of some kind of virus in the human world that's been around for almost two years now and it's affected pretty much everything and everybody.

They say we're lucky being at the shelter because these people are going to care for us no matter what.

I can see it's taking a toll on the people, though. Just the other day I heard some of the staff talking about not being able to have a real Christmas celebration again this year because of not having enough people to work and everybody being sick. They didn't want to endanger the

public by opening the shelter again, even though it's Christmas.

They said they hope the donors and supporters will still help us, though, because Christmas is always a tough time of year for animals who don't have homes.

I guess that means us.

I know the people at the shelter work so hard for us. I know some of them come in even though they're tired and they're worried, but they do it because they love us. All of us.

I sure hope they get their wish this Christmas and can find the help they need.

I know it would make all of us happy to see them be able to find a little peace.

Hi folks. It's Jen. I wanted to let the old tom cat talk to you for a while about what's been happening at the shelter, but I had to drop in for a bit to give it to you straight. In some ways, the final few sentences up there are more true than I'd like to really say. It sometimes feels like the animals are taking care of us now just as much as we are them.

These last two years have been some of the most difficult we've ever seen at CVAS. And the last two to three months have been even worse. We are feeling the strain of the employment crisis and our staff and volunteers are contracting COVID.



Bard came into the shelter as a stray after being found living in a Rubbermaid container. He's a 1-year-old brown tabby boy who loves attention and getting treats. He also enjoys a good cuddle. If you think you could give Bard what he's looking for in life, fill out an application today!

For more information about Bard call the Cumberland Valley Animal Shelter at 717-263-5791 or visit them online at www.cvaspets.org or better yet, visit them in person at the shelter.

We are existing with an incredibly limited staff at the moment because we can't find anyone to work and some days it's all we can do to get our animals cared for. I've never seen some of our most senior staff members this stressed out.

We've had to cancel our Christmas Open House because there's just no way we would be able to do it and we wouldn't want to risk bringing the public into the shelter where we know we've had a COVID outbreak.

I'm sincerely hoping that doesn't affect our donations. Our Christmas Open House is the biggest fundraiser we do every year and I know having another virtual one may upset some people, but we've really been feeling the strain.

I wanted to echo the words of our tom cat above by saying I sure hope people can continue to find it in their hearts to give this year and help us help the animals.

I know our exhausted staff will keep going. And it's not for me. It's not for you. It's not for our board members. It's certainly not for the money.

It's because each and every one of them love the almost 200 animals in our care right now and even though

they're tired and even though they leave at 6 p.m. and return the following day at 6 a.m., they keep doing it despite the dark circles under their eyes for the animals.

At CVAS, it's always been for the animals and no human virus is going to stop that.

I hope our supporters and donors understand our decision to remain closed to visitors during the holidays. I assure you we are still doing adoptions with every safety protocol in place and we are finding homes for our animals.

With your help we can continue to do so no matter what might happen with COVID 19.

As always to all of our faithful readers in the Emmitsburg News Journal: thank you so very much and I wish you and your family a wonderful holiday.

Cumberland Valley Animal Shelter accepts both monetary and pet supply donations. For more information, call the shelter at 717-263-5791 or visit the website www.cvas-pets.org. CVAS also operates a thrift store in Chambersburg. Help support the animals at the shelter by donating to or shopping at the store.

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Before humans die, they write their last Will & Testament, give their home & all they have, to those they leave behind. If, with my paws, I could do the same, this is what I'd ask...

To a poor and lonely stray I'd give:

- My happy home.
- My bowl & cozy bed, soft pillows and all my toys.
- The lap, which I loved so much.
- The hand that stroked my fur & the sweet voice which spoke my name.

I'd Will to the sad, scared shelter dog, the place I had in my human's loving heart, of which there seemed no bounds.

So, when I die, please do not say, "I will never have a pet again, for the loss and pain is more than I can stand."

Instead, go find an unloved dog, one whose life has held no joy or hope and give MY place to HIM.

This is the only thing I can give...
The love I left behind.

-- Author Unknown

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Lemmy tell you . . .



Bethany Davidson

Zooming this way and that, 1-year-old Lemmy is the designated bug catcher in her home. She stalks any crawling or flying insect that dares enter her territory until that perfect moment ... the pounce! While this behavior is instinctual for felines, for Lemmy it is something to celebrate because when her owner, Sergeant Maggie Hill, first met the young cat in August 2020, the question wasn't, will she rid the home of all those pesky stinkbugs?

It was, will she live? On August 18, 2020, Frederick County Animal Control received a call for service regarding an injured kitten. Sergeant Hill, an animal control officer with FCAC, responded. "An elderly couple reported that they had recently returned home and found the injured kitten in the driveway near their vehicle shortly afterwards," says Hill. The animal was suffering from extensive burns to multiple areas of her body.

"The probable cause of the injury," says Hill, "was being trapped in their car engine while it was driving." At first glance, the injuries seemed insurmountable, but FCAC's kennel supervisor agreed to try veterinary intervention, and the injured kitten was immediately taken to a local animal hospital for treatment.

Fortunately, FCAC only takes in 5 to 10 animals per year like Lemmy who have sustained and survived extensive trauma. Several criteria are used to determine whether to treat such animals. "We don't want animals to suffer ... ever," says Linda Shea, FCAC's director. If the animal can be sustained without suffering, shelter staff then consider the animal's temperament and its prognosis.

By the 21st, hospital staff reported that Lemmy was very active and vocal with a great appetite, so the tiny patient was transferred to foster care with a veterinarian for continued treatment. Things were looking up for the lucky kitten, but after a few weeks it became apparent that the injuries to her front leg were not healing. The decision was made to amputate, and the surgery was scheduled.

"Knowing they could not adopt the kitten, the veterinarian asked for a different foster home to care for the kitten after surgery, and that's when Lemmy entered my life for the second time," recalls Hill. The ACO was asked to care for the recovering kitten since she had previous experience with three-legged cats. "I was hesitant," says Hill, "knowing that a front leg amputation can be much more difficult for an animal to adjust to, and I wanted to make sure that the kitten could move around the house with comfort and ease."

On day one, however, Lemmy



Precious is a 7-year-old lab mix who came into the shelter as a stray, so we don't know a lot about her. Precious will need an adopter that understands they will have to work with their veterinarian on future care to keep her hair, coat and skin looking healthy. She is a happy girl who loves treats and taking walks outside.

For more information about Precious call the Cumberland Valley Animal Shelter at 717-263-5791 or visit them online at www.cvaspets.org or better yet, visit them in person at the shelter.

proved that her new foster mom's fears were unfounded. With a long row of staples where her leg once was and wearing the dreaded cone of shame, the resilient youngster quickly settled in. She confidently learned the layout of the house, made new friends, and snuggled with people and animals alike. Her recovery was swift and complete and by the end of October, Sergeant Hill and her family had adopted the kitten.

Now 1 year old, Lemmy has no idea she is disabled. "Lemmy can run, jump, crawl, and climb just like any four-legged counterpart," says Hill. The family has made some accommodations for their special needs kitty, such as moving furniture around to make it easier for Lemmy to climb. According to Hill, though, all of these adjustments have been well worth the minimal effort.

It can take more time to find

'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the barn

'Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the barn,
All the creatures were sleeping, all safe, snug and warm.
The feed pails were hung by the stall doors with care,
In the hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there.

The ponies were nestled all warm in their beds,
While visions of carrot cakes danced through their heads.
The Arabs, the Thoroughbreds and even the Apps,
The jumpers and hunters were all taking naps.

When out in the paddock there arose such a clatter
I awoke in my stall to see what was the matter.
I moved to the window quick as I could
To see where the noise came from, if I could.

The sight I beheld as I gazed out that night
Was a beautiful horse all whiter than white.
He wore a red blanket so nice to behold,
His hooves how they sparkled all glittery-gold.

With swift certain motions to our barn he came,
and silvery moonlight danced from his mane.
More rapid than racers his hoof beats they came,
And he neighed and he snorted and called us by name.

He was our Christmas, a ghost-horse of white,
Who has come to all horses, since that one special night.
A gallant example who served man so well,
Especially those with whom A baby did dwell.

For those special horses who shared stable and stall,
To give comfort and warmth to the Savior of us all.
Now thinking of them, he entered the door,
To distribute among us his gifts and more.

Down the aisle he came, his hoof beats so light,
And he stopped by each stall in our stable that night.
Gifts he did give to all in our barn,
More heart or more courage, or to be free from harm.

He spoke not a word but went straight to his work,
And he filled all the feed pails then turned with a jerk.
And nickering softly on gold hooves so bright,
And giving a nod he went into the night.

and I heard him neigh as he went out of sight,
Merry Christmas to all, and to all a Good Ni-i-i-ight!

adoptive families for pets with special needs. "Caring for a special needs animal is very rewarding, but it can be financially and emotionally exhausting," says Director Shea. She advises all those considering adopting such a pet to give thoughtful consideration to the level of commitment and resources that may be needed. "My best advice," adds Hill,

"is to manage realistic expectations and be open to change to provide the best environment for your animal. After all, they have no idea that they have special needs and are just looking for love."

Bethany Davidson is the humane educator at Frederick County Animal Control.



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CREATIVE WRITING

A howling good Christmas

Chelsea Baranoski
MSMU Class of 2010

Howls and meows bounced off the beige, stained concrete walls of Purr's Pound. Basset Hounds, Labradors, Chihuahuas, mutts, Siamese cats, tabbies, and Persians paced in their cages. It was Christmas Eve and the pound was open late in the hopes of giving as many animals as possible a chance to be adopted. All of the animals in the pound were starting to worry. Would anyone ever adopt them? Would they be able to spend Christmas by the fireside in a house that smelled like freshly baked sugar cookies and peppermint sticks? Would they be able to cuddle against the feet of proud owners while yuletide carols played in the background? The animals were crossing their paws and praying for a miracle.

Two of the animals at the pound, Toby the Jack Russell and Tabitha the tabby cat, had been locked in the pound's cages for as long as they could remember. They were both brought there when they were young. Their owners did not have room in their houses for Toby and Tabitha, so they placed ads in the Pennysaver and let all of their friends, family, and co-workers know that they were looking for a caring home for

their pets. Unfortunately, no one answered their ads. They brought Toby and Tabitha to the pound in the hopes that they would find owners with big hearts and warm, comfortable homes. One year later, Toby and Tabitha were still at the pound, waiting for someone to care for them. They were afraid of what awaited them if they were not adopted before Christmas.

Toby rubbed his wet brown nose against his wire cage. His sad big brown eyes stared at a frosted window in the corner of the room. He saw large, glittering white snowflakes falling from the midnight blue sky. Toby wished he could go outside and play in the snow, even though he knew he would probably freeze his tail off. He dreamt of chasing after sleighs and sleeping in snow forts. He longed to breathe in the fresh December air and the smell of Christmas firs.

Toby glanced over at Tabitha. She was curled up in a ball in the cage next to him. Her pale blue eyes met Toby's. She let out a faint meow. Toby knew Tabitha was also dreaming of a Christmas far away from the pound. After spending one year together, Toby could read Tabitha's every thought by a twitch of a whisker or a flick of her tail.

Indeed, Tabitha was praying that she would get a new home for her Christmas present. She had heard

stories about St. Nick from the Yorkshire Terrier twins, but the twins told her that he never visited the pound. She prayed that he would stop this year and bring some folks to adopt her and her pound-mates. She believed in miracles and told herself that she would never stop believing in a home for Christmas.

Tabitha's stomach grumbled under her striped amber fur. She never seemed to be full during her time at the pound. She longed for Fancy Feast meals, fresh milk, and albacore tuna. She licked her lips at the thought of such a tantalizing meal. The only food Tabitha had eaten lately seemed like it tasted like sour smelling milk and fishy smelling leftovers. Tabitha did not care if her new owners were not master chefs like Curtis Stone, but she figured that anything would be better than the unappetizing pound food.

Tabitha and Toby paced back and forth in their cages. They had been pacing for two hours and if they continued much longer, they felt sure that they would be the faces of a new animal weight loss commercial. They looked at each other, cocked their furry little heads, and peered up at the clock. The clock struck 8:00 P.M. Toby and Tabitha were starting to give up hope. It looked as though Christmas morning would be spent laying on the cold floor of

their cages instead of the plush carpet of a country cottage. Toby closed his large brown eyes. It was no use. He might as well get a good night's rest. Tabitha, on the other hand, started pacing around her cage again. She was in the middle of devising a masterful plan to escape the cramped confines of the pound when she heard a noise that sounded like a creaking door.

Sure enough, the door to the pound swung open and an elderly couple walked inside. Snow fell off of their wool pea coats and onto the floor. The elderly man and woman each shook the hand of the owner of the pound, Mr. Monroe. Tabitha felt the fur on her back stand on end. She purred loudly to wake up Toby. Toby yawned and pawed at his eyes. He couldn't believe it. Why was this couple spending their Christmas Eve at the pound? Toby watched the couple glance at the many wire cages. Most of the other animals were asleep. If they knew that the elderly man and woman were at the pound, there surely would have been a noisy ruckus that could have been heard two towns over.

Toby and Tabitha pressed their noses to their cages and listened to the elderly couple talk to Mr. Monroe.

"My name is Nick and this is my wife, Natalie," the elderly man told Mr. Monroe. We were on our way back from Christmas Eve services and we figured we would stop

by and take a look around. You see, we just lost our beloved cat, Calico three months ago and we have been lonely ever since." A single tear slid down Nick's flushed cheeks. He took out a crisp white handkerchief from his back pants pocket and blew his nose.

"Calico was a wonderful cat," Natalie piped in. "She was like the child we never had. I miss her curling up against my feet and meowing when she wanted another saucer of milk. When Nick was at work in the toy factory, Calico kept me company. When Nick went to Florida to visit his sick aunt Louisa, Calico kept me company. She was the friendliest cat and she was the best listener. When Nick didn't want to listen to my stories about Bingo and the Ladies' Club at church, I told them to Calico. And you know what? I think she understood every word I said."

"As you see mister..." Nick trailed off.

"Mister Monroe," the owner said, flashing a toothy smile.

"Yes, Mr. Monroe," Nick echoed. "We are looking for a new pet to make our family whole again."

"I see. Well, feel free to look around and let me know if any of the animals catch your eye."

"Will do, Mr. Monroe," Nick said, with a friendly twinkle in his eye.

A surge of panic rushed through Toby's furry body. Did he hear cor-

continued on next page



Christmas In Thurmont



Events

Saturdays,
Nov. 27 - Dec. 18, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
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Our annual adult map stamping tradition will continue by visiting participating businesses and getting your map stamped. Return your completely stamped map to the Thurmont Town Office to be entered in our prize drawings! You can pick up your map at Cousins Ace Hardware, Hobbs Lumber & Hardware and the Thurmont Town Office.

Pick up your maps now and return the completed maps by December 16

Prize Drawings on December 17

CREATIVE WRITING

continued from previous page

rectly? Was this couple only looking for one pet? What if the couple picked Tabitha and he was left without his best friend? He figured that Nick and Natalie must be cat lovers, since they obviously adored their cat, Calico. They would never find room in their hearts for a little Jack Russell with big brown eyes.

Nick and Natalie stopped at Tabitha's cage. Tabitha meowed softly. She thought Nick looked a lot like the Yorkshire twins' description of St. Nick. He had a white beard, twinkling eyes, and rosy cheeks. He looked like he belonged on the front of a Christmas card. Natalie poked her skinny fingers through the cage to pet Tabitha. Tabitha closed her eyes and purred in contentment. Natalie smiled and looked at Nick. "Isn't she beautiful?" Natalie asked Nick. Tabitha smiled. St. Nick might give her the Christmas present she wished for!

"She's definitely a sweetheart," Nick said, putting his arm around Natalie's shoulder. "But why don't we keep looking around? There are so many pets here that need good homes."

Natalie let out a loud sigh. "Ok, hon. Let's keep looking."

Nick stopped in front of Toby's cage. Toby wagged his tail wildly when he saw Nick and Natalie. Nick's eyes lit up. "You know what, Natalie? I've heard Jack Russels are great ho-ho-ho-en-

ergizer bunny dogs and I could really use a active pup to liven the house up."

"Liven the house up? Nick all you want to do is sleep all day!" Natalie teased. Natalie grabbed Nick's hand and they continued walking through the pound. They saw the poodles, the retrievers, Himalayan cats, and American shorthair cats.

After what seemed like years of waiting, Nick and Natalie returned to Toby and Tabitha's cages. Toby heard a click. He looked up to see Mr. Monroe unlocking Tabitha's cage. Toby sunk down on the ground and covered his eyes with his floppy ears. He didn't want Tabitha to see him so upset. Then, Toby heard another click. He flopped his ears back. This lock was the lock to his cage! He and Tabitha were going to stay together after all! Toby skidded out of the cage and jumped up on Nick and Natalie, licking their hands in gratitude.

To Toby and Tabitha's surprise, they were not the only pets Nick and Natalie took home that day. They also adopted Chico the Chihuahua and Callie the Calico cat. Nick and Natalie knew that the old animals could teach the younger animals the ways of the world. Toby and Tabitha had heard stories about Chico and Callie. They were sent to the pound after their owner died. Chico and Callie had given up hope of spending Christmas in a warm, loving home. Their gray fur-lined

eyes widened in disbelief when they saw Nick and Natalie coming near them. When Nick and Natalie petted Chico and Callie's old, matted-down fur, relief filtered through their bodies. They knew they were going to be ok. They would never need to set foot in the pound again.

When Toby, Tabitha, Chico, and Callie stepped into Nick and Natalie's house on 100 North Pole Lane, their eyes grew wide. The air smelled of Christmas firs mixed with sugar cookies and peppermint sticks. A bright green wreath hung above the red brick fireplace and a tall Douglas fir tree stood in front of the window, lit with tiny white lights. The soft sound of "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus" bounced from wall to wall.

Nick and Natalie sat beside each other on the mint green couch. Toby, Tabitha, Chico, and Callie cuddled against their feet.

"I guess you better get going, Nick," Natalie said, nudging Nick's pudgy arm. "All of the kids are waiting."

"Ok, dear," Nick said, getting up from the sofa and trying not to step on any tails. He pulled on a red coat and grabbed a velvety red bag.

Toby, Tabitha, Chico, and Callie looked at each other. All of their Christmas wishes came true.

Chelsea was the 2010 recipient of the Moun't's William Heath Creative Writing Award.



Pammy came into the shelter because her owner could no longer care for her because of their health. Pammy is 13 years old and a super sweet girl. She doesn't mind being brushed, which is a good thing as she does have longer fur and will need regular brushing to keep her from matting. Pammy has had a senior blood panel done and everything was perfect for her! Could you give this girl a place to live out her golden years?



Axe lived in a Rubbermaid container for a while before he came into the shelter as a stray. He's 5 years old, and is orange and white. When he arrived he was covered in urine and had some urine scalding. Axe is so sweet, though, and wants to find a place where he can forget about his past and only know love. Do you have a place like that?

For more information about Pammy and Axe, call the Cumberland Valley Animal Shelter at 717-263-5791 or visit them online at www.cvspets.org or better yet, visit them in person at the shelter.

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* and good health & *
prosperity for the new year!

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HEALTH NOTES

Frederick Health to adjust COVID-19 testing requirements

Josh Faust
Frederick Health

Frederick Health, the largest healthcare provider in Frederick County, has recently adjusted the requirements at their large scale, drive-through COVID-19 testing site located at the Frederick Health Village. These new changes went into effect on November 8.

As part of the new COVID-19 testing protocols, Frederick Health will now require a COVID-19 test order from a provider for all COVID-19 testing at the Frederick Health Village location. Testing at this location will be available from 8 a.m. noon, seven days a week. This change in protocol was necessitated by the State of Maryland declaring an end to the state of emergency in September that had been in place since early 2020 at

the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of the emergency statutes, the federal and state governments had been assisting healthcare systems with the cost of COVID-19 testing.

Across the nation, nearly 725 million COVID-19 tests had been administered since the start of the pandemic. Over 14.6 million tests have been administered in Maryland alone. Frederick Health is not the only entity making adjustments to their established practices and protocols. Healthcare systems across the state are making similar changes due to changes in regulations and, in some part, to successful vaccination campaigns.

As vaccination efforts show dividends and the amount of Americans needing a COVID-19 test have begun to decline, numerous states have made adjustments to their testing policy. However, the

healthcare system will still continue to offer testing at the Frederick Health Village location said Sara Littleton, Director of Community Health with Frederick Health.

“While this is a change in process, Frederick Health will continue to offer COVID-19 testing to our community and do our part to help end this pandemic,” stated Littleton.

Frederick Health began to offer COVID-19 testing at various locations across the county as soon as the pandemic began. However, the large scale, drive-through testing site at the Frederick Health Village opened in June of 2020 as experts within the organization were quick to realize the need for a larger, more streamlined site. The Frederick Health Village testing facility has remained the single largest COVID-19 testing location in

Frederick County throughout much of the pandemic.

Since opening, the site has performed nearly 150,000 tests for Frederick County residents and people from other jurisdictions; the site continues to attract individuals from neighboring counties and states wishing to obtain a COVID-19 test. On any given day, the site administers hundreds of COVID-19 tests.

While Frederick Health is confident that this new procedure will help to assist individuals wishing to obtain a COVID-19 test, Littleton said that she understand that this change in protocol may come as a shock for some residents.

“We understand the residents concern. They’ve grown accustomed to having this facility readily available to them throughout the pandemic. However, this testing facility has been and will

continue to be a critical asset in our fight against COVID-19. I’m proud of what our team has accomplished,” Littleton added.

Individuals without a Primary Care provider or individuals wishing to obtain a COVID-19 test for work, travel, or other non-emergency reasons may contact 240-316-4970 between 8 AM and 5 PM, seven days a week and in advance of their test. Individuals who arrive at the testing site without a test order will be directed to a designated area where they can call and request a COVID-19 test order. This phone number will route individuals directly to a live representative that will talk them through the process. At the end of the phone call, they are provided with a testing order.

In addition to the drive-through testing location at the Frederick Health Village, residents experiencing COVID-19 like symptoms can still access testing through their Primary Care providers or Frederick Health Urgent Care locations. There are two Urgent Care facilities run by Frederick Health – one in Urbana and one in the City of Frederick. A third Urgent Care facility will be opening in the middle of 2022 as part of the ongoing partnership between Frederick Health and Mount St. Mary’s University. The two organizations are jointly constructing a new, cutting-edge medical facility at the Emmitsburg university.

In addition to the drive-through testing sites, Frederick Health also offers a unique option for businesses requiring their employees or staff obtain a COVID-19 test. Employers may contact Frederick Health Employer Solutions at 240-566-3001 from 7 AM – 5 PM Monday through Friday to inquire about testing for their staff. This service has helped keep employers and employees remain healthy during the pandemic.

“Employer Solutions has remained consistently available as a critical asset throughout the pandemic. Making sure that people can work safely and healthily during the last two years has been paramount,” Lisa Degitz, Operations Manager with Frederick Health Employer Solutions.

Employer Solutions, which handles testing, drug screens, and other occupational health needs is located 490 Prospect Drive in the City of Frederick.

“Employers from across the area have used Employer Solutions for COVID-19 testing and we will continue to offer those services as needed. Your employees are our only business,” added Degitz.

For more information on Frederick Health’s COVID-19 response, please visit www.frederickhealth.org/vaccine.



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**Frederick
Health**

Camp Eder's 11th annual Christmas Tree Festival

Be sure to deck the halls this the holiday season as Camp Eder celebrates its 11th annual Christmas Tree Festival Dec. 10th and 11th.

The Camp Eder Christmas Tree Festival offers a wholesome place for families and individuals to experience an evening of refuge from the many things that pull our attention away from the true reason for the season. Camp Eder, located on Mt. Hope Road in Fairfield, invites neighbors, friends, and families to join in the festivities December 10th and 11th from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

The annual festivities are a time of reflection, giving thanks, and hearts all aglow at the Christian camp and retreat center this time of year. Keeping with the yuletide traditions utilized by the camp for over a decade, patrons can expect returning festive atmosphere awaiting them in the park under the illumination of thousands of lights. Joyous festivities throughout the night will include Christmas carols, children's activities including holiday hayrides Saturday.

Camp Eder will also hold its annual tree decorating contest during the merry and bright festivities. Each tree is sponsored by a group, or individual, who can decorate and display the tree however they choose. Attendees can vote on their favorite tree during the two-day event. Warm holiday cookies and drinks will be provided. A bake sale, hot soup and delicious turkey dinners are also all available per donation.

The festive celebration began in 2011 as a way to truly reach out to the community and come together into the holiday spirit underneath dazzling lights and towering festive trees, according to Mike Kovacs, Director of Operations. The two-day festival takes over the main area of the camp and stands out as one of the community's brightest tributes to the holiday season.

"It's my favorite thing we do, it's very laid back and everyone loves it," Kovacs said.

In addition to the warm surrounding of traditional holiday decorations, a luminary garden will be aglow in honor of loved ones.

Everyone is invited to take in the natural beauty of Camp Eder's crisp mountain air, reminisce with friends, and recall the birth of Christ, the true meaning of Christmas.

The festival is a fantastic opportunity to get involved with Camp Eder and the surrounding community as you enjoy a cup of hot cocoa and take a seat by the fireplace. Donations for the Fairfield Mennonite Church Food Pantry are always welcome especially rice, oatmeal, applesauce, cereal, and holiday canned goods to ensure all families have a blissful season.

Undeterred by the unprecedented times, Camp Eder is more committed than ever to provide a warm and loving celebration to bring light to the lives of the community. Camp Eder, Christian Camp and Retreat Center is supported by the Southern Pennsylvania District Church of the Brethren and seeks to offer an outdoor gathering place for Bible based ministry. For more information, call the Camp Eder office at 717-642-8256 or visit www.campedder.org.



One can never be too young or too old to enjoy Camp Eder's Christmas Tree Festival.

Christmas Tree Trivia

Christmas trees have been sold commercially in the United States since about 1850.

In 1979, the National Christmas Tree was not lighted except for the top ornament. This was done in honor of the American hostages in Iran.

Between 1887-1933 a fishing schooner called the Christmas Ship would tie up at the Clark Street bridge and sell spruce trees from Michigan to Chicagoans.

The tallest living Christmas tree is believed to be the 122-foot, 91-year-old Douglas fir in the town of Woodinville, Washington.

The Rockefeller Center Christmas tree tradition began in 1933. Franklin Pierce, the 14th president, brought the Christmas tree tradition to the White House.

In 1923, President Calvin Coolidge started the National Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony now held every year on the White House lawn.

Since 1966, the National Christmas Tree Association has given a Christmas tree to the President and first family.

Most Christmas trees are cut weeks before they get to a retail outlet.

In 1912, the first community Christmas tree in the United States was erected in New York City.

Christmas trees are grown in all 50 states including Hawaii and Alaska.

100,000 people are employed in the Christmas tree industry.

98 percent of all Christmas trees are grown on farms.

More than 1,000,000 acres of land have been planted with Christmas trees.

77 million Christmas trees are planted each year.

On average, over 2,000 Christmas trees are planted per acre.

You should never burn your Christmas tree in the fireplace. It can contribute to creosote buildup.

Thomas Edison's assistants came up with the idea of electric lights for Christmas trees.

In 1963, the National Christmas Tree was not lit until December 22nd because of a national 30-day period of mourning following the assassination of President Kennedy.

Wantz Chevrolet hosts 'Christmas for Community Kids'

Wantz Chevrolet's 'Christmas for Community Kids,' an annual tradition to roll out the Christmas cheer in Taneytown, is seeking community donations for those in need this Christmas Season.

"Stuff the Trunk" events to load vehicles with as many donated goodies as possible during the holiday season are nothing new. But for Wantz, it's a way to support our community and surrounding areas.

Once again Wantz Chevrolet is collaborating with the community and Christmas for Community Kids which is a part of the Mission of Mercy program.

"We appreciate everyone's support to help us brighten Christmas for those in our community," Scott Wantz, said.

For years, the local family-owned dealership has been collecting toys for their annual "Christmas for Community Kids," by overflowing a showroom pickup truck with holiday cheer, including new unwrapped toys for all ages, nonperishable foods, and Clothing.

Working together to make the community a better place has always been at the forefront of Wantz Chevrolet and engaging with other local businesses is an important aspect.

Donations may be dropped off from now until December 15th, at Wantz Chevrolet, Thunderhead Bowl & Grill, Taneytown Liquor Barn, Kennies Market in Taneytown, or Carroll Vista Clubhouse.

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HISTORY

100 years of the Fairfield Fire Company

Claire Doll
MSMU Class of 2024

In the small town of Fairfield, among the landscape of the Catoctin Mountains and off of the borough's main road, is the Fairfield Fire Company, with a beautifully rich history that has yet to be told. In October, the department celebrated its 100th anniversary.

Organized in 1921 the Fairfield Fire Company has been known all throughout history for its dedication to the community; among all the changes in technology, resources, and society in this past century, one core value of the fire company has remained standing, and that is the value of service to the Fairfield community.

Two members who have previously served in the fire company, Edward Hartzell, who joined in 1957 and was also once the company's chief, and Charlie Dearthoff, who joined in 1972, offered their rich insight on the history of the company.

Dearthoff collected and organized all the minute books from past meetings dating back to 1922. The first ever logged minutes of a fire company meeting start in May of 1922. In 1923, the school board granted permission for the fire company to use the cellar of the schoolhouse, where the members would begin meeting until the location on Centennial Avenue (now known as Centennial Street), was purchased for \$900.

In the late 1940's, the firehouse was moved to the present-day location on Steelman Street. Meetings would be held to pass bylaws, plan social events, and discuss finances. Members would vote on decisions using a method called blackballing; in this form of secret ballot, if a member voted with a white ball it indicated "yes," while a black ball represented "no." One of the original ballot boxes is kept showcased at the fire company today.

The company's very first vehicle was a man-pulled chemical cart, used around 1921 to travel around the town and respond to emergencies. "I don't know of any company that had

a chemical wagon...that was really on the top end of firefighting at the time," says Chief Jacobs. The company also had the only compressed air foam engine in the county. In March 1926, there was a motion to order a LaFrance Brockway Chemical Fire Fighting apparatus; a first payment of \$1,350 was spent on this vehicle, followed by a final payment of \$1,595 to LaFrance Co.

Several members of the company were soon appointed to operate the truck, working as operators of tanks, nozzles, ladders, chemicals, and brackets. In September of 1928, the committee reported to buy a Chevrolet Chassis for \$567. Members took equipment off of the Brockway and put it on the Chevrolet, installing the pump and placing chemical tanks on the new vehicle. Today, the restored 1928 Fairfield Fire Engine is on display at the fire company's hall.

Along with the change in transportation technology is the change in how the Fairfield community was notified and had responded to fire emergencies in town. Hanging in front of the fire department today is a large, red, metal ring that was once the rim off an old locomotive. Dearthoff says that this ring was used as a gong to alarm citizens of nearby fires. There were three in Fairfield—one located on Water Street, on Main Street, and on the eastern end of town. It is stated in the fire company's minute book that in May of 1923, the owner of Fairfield's hardware store, Reindollar, was instructed to order three 8-pound hammers to hit the gong alarm. S.L. Allison, owner of Fairfield's funeral home at the time, was told to go to the mountain and make hickory handles for these hammers. Dearthoff presumes that the sound of the hammer hitting the gong could be heard from a mile away, notifying members of the fire company of an emergency.

The history of alarming citizens of fire continues with the story of the Kane Sisters. Around the late 40's, the sister's contributed to alarming citizens of a fire. The sisters lived with their parents just next to the firehouse. Before there were radios in the firetrucks, the Kane sisters—Donna Weikert, Lorraine Welcomer,



Fairfield Fire Company Chief Bill Jacob sits in the seat of Fairfield's first engine, which is on currently on display at the fire company building.

and Margaret Orner – would receive the call of a fire, flip a switch in their dining room that turned the sirens on, record where the fire was on a chalkboard, and get ahold of one of their neighbors or a nearby farmer to call for a dispatcher in Gettysburg, demonstrating how the company would respond to emergencies in the absence of technology.

One thing that Chief Jacobs has noticed in his time serving with the company is the drastic change in technology as society advances. Along with the pager systems, the fire company now uses an app to ensure instant notification of fires. However, one thing remains the same: the purpose of these alarm systems. Whether it is the ringing of a gong which echoes through the town or the developed, instant technology of pagers and software, the company holds true to the purpose of ensuring safety in the Fairfield community.

The environmental cause of fires has greatly changed, and with it, the technology that Fairfield has used. The main types of fires earlier in the century were wood and paper-caused, while now, the fire company is seeing more and more fires generated by petroleum-based products. Because of this increase in chemically caused fires, the cancer rate of firefighters has increased greatly as well. This change in environment is

reflected in the gear of firefighters. In the 70's and even through the 80's, Fairfield firefighters would wear jackets that hooked together and boots that would pull up, while today, the gear is more substantial and protective. Additionally, the air packs that the fire company uses now are lighter and more effective than before.

Located in the company's historical room is the first self-contained breathing apparatus, which was a canister that provided oxygen for firefighters to breathe into. Firefighters would keep this box on top of the firetruck and would have to crawl up to retrieve their breathing tanks. This then developed into a steel-cylindrical air pack, and now, the fire company has composite cylinders, which are half the weight as they were before and are strapped in the seats, easily accessible to firefighters in event of an emergency.

Current Fairfield community member Bill Newman, who will be 94 on Christmas 2021, can recall his early years of volunteering with the fire company, including the technology used to fight the certain type of fire. When recounting his experience of fighting a mountain fire in Iron Springs, Newman says, "There was fire the whole way around us. We carried Indian tanks, and they were very heavy." Newman, along with other community members, would serve

with the fire company. Ensuring the safety of firefighters has always been important to the Fairfield Fire Company. Chief Jacobs says, "You can get deep into a fire and don't realize how bad it is until you're there." The gear today is updated and assures that the volunteers are protected when fighting fires.

Much has changed over the past century, especially with regard to the town of Fairfield, but the company would not be where it is today without the continuous support of community members. In the beginning of the company's history, the fire company was the social club of the area. "Members of the fire company were, at the time, the owners of businesses here in Fairfield," says Dearthoff, who recorded information from the minute books. Prominent citizens of Fairfield were also members and offered their services to the company. For example, current member of Fairfield Bill Newman was owner of the local grocery store with his brothers in the early years of the fire company.

The community would also demonstrate their support in the fire company by fundraising. In efforts to raise money, the fire department would put on plays, sponsor musical group performances, and hold the annual 4th of July carnival, which was the event of the year. "The carni-

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HISTORY

val was big – especially in the beginning,” said Newman.

In fact, people would come to Fairfield just for the fire company’s festivals. It is stated in the minute books dating back to May 1933 that “the various committees of the annual carnivals are shown to accent the importance of the carnivals to support the fire company as well as the entertainment and involvement of the community.” Committees included dinner, finances, purchasing, bingo, and so on, and these groups would meet to plan the iconic carnival. In fact, on July 18th, 1933, it was reported that the carnival made a gross profit of \$1,662, proving how important it was to the fire company and the town of Fairfield.

In an interview with the Kane sisters, Donna Weikert recalls a game at the carnival where she would throw hoops over canes to win a prize, a game that she and her sisters would

help run. Bill Newman also recalls the carnivals, both helping out at and attending them. There was always something going on at the firehouse, especially in the 20’s and 30’s, where dances and festivals served as general entertainment.

These fundraising events were necessary to support the volunteers who served, and they encompassed the core values of not only the fire company, but also the town of Fairfield itself. “The Fairfield community has responded and supported the fire company over the years,” Deardorff says. Hartzell also adds, “One thing that hasn’t changed about the fire company is bingo. We started out with it, and we still have it today.” Bingo is now held monthly in the fire hall.

Today, Chief Jacobs reflects on the community involvement of the fire company, noting that the social aspect has decreased since he joined

in 1996, but the fundraising efforts are still very present. The Fairfield Fire Company holds weekly bingo games, gun-drawings, and even drive-thru dinners that were especially prominent during the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic. “The fundraisers are just as important as the firefighting,” says Jacobs when reflecting on the significance of community involvement in supporting the company.

The most important thing, however, is to acknowledge the rich history of volunteers that have served Fairfield and continue to serve today. Teamwork is especially significant as well, and it remains as a very crucial value of the company. Fairfield often relies on surrounding fire departments to respond to larger emergencies. “Years ago, the company would fight their own fires and wouldn’t call for any help. Now, everyone asks, ‘why are there ten firetrucks coming to a little fire?’”

Jacobs acknowledges the importance of teamwork when fighting a

fire, no matter how seemingly small the emergency is. The surrounding fire departments of Emmitsburg, Gettysburg, Fountaindale, and Greenmount work together with Fairfield as a team to respond to major emergencies if needed. “We’ve done so much better throughout the years, and we always come up with a plan to take care of things,” he says.

Jacobs emphasizes the importance of supporting family members of volunteers in the fire department. Many do not understand the sacrifices that are involved when joining the company. “People need to realize that if the volunteer system were to leave, they’d have a tremendous cost to bear.” The purpose of the company. “It’s not for glory, it’s not for your name in the paper... it’s for the community.” The volunteers do not work on shift system, but rather they are always on call, always prepared for an emergency, always placing the community of Fairfield first.

Much has changed within the past century, but it is always

Mary Grace Stouter

Mary Grace Stouter, 76, of Emmitsburg, passed away peacefully, Monday, November 22. She was born July 28, 1945, in Gettysburg and was the wife of the late Wilbur Richard ‘Bud’ Stouter; mother of Brett Richard Stouter; and grandmother of 1. She was predeceased by 2 sisters.

The family will receive friend 10 a.m., December 2, at the Friends Creek Church of God, 7650 Friends Creek Road, Emmitsburg, where the funeral service will follow at 11 a.m. Interment will be in the Friends Creek Cemetery. Arrangements by the Myers-Durboraw Funeral Home, P.A. of Emmitsburg.

important to reflect on the past, especially for the beautiful history of the Fairfield Fire Company, which is founded on values of dedication, commitment, and willingness to serve. On preserving the history of any organization, in order to look forward, one must have a solid understanding of the past. In the small town of Fairfield, this notion is no different.

Jacobs hopes to reflect on the past even more and says that the fire company is looking for old stories and pictures of old apparatus and the firehouse on Steelman Street. “The story is important to tell,” he says. “You have to know where you came from to know where you’re going.”

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Both Justin and James remained in contact over the years and in 2021 an opportunity came that would help benefit them both. A relocation for Justin and his wife, Anne, drew their family out-of-state to North Platte, Nebraska. With this move and by the grace of God, it became a priority for Justin to transfer ownership of the funeral home to an experienced professional. He had just the right trusted friend in mind.


James and his wife, Michele, had a lifelong goal to own a funeral home right here in Carroll County. They are life-long residents who have graduated from local high schools and are currently residing in Eldersburg. It was a perfect match and in June of 2021, the formal process of transferring the business ownership took place.

James, Michele and the entire staff of Myers-Durboraw look forward to serving the families of Carroll and Frederick counties and continuing the extraordinary service folks have come to know and expect from the Myers-Durboraw Funeral Home. We are always available for any questions or concerns.

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TANEYTOWN HISTORY

Bruceville

David Buie

Those of you who recognize the name Bruceville may have traveled down Bruceville Road, near Taneytown. In the past, Bruceville Rd was the bustling village founded by Norman (a.k.a. Normand, Normon) Bruce. A vital element of the town's significance stems from its association with two highly influential Carroll County families, the Bruce's and the Key's.

These families were instrumental in founding the community. In addition, these families contributed significantly to county, state, and national histories. This article contains much information from two pieces. One was published in The Carroll Record during its inaugural months in 1894 by E.H. Sharretts concerning Bruceville's history and another published by the Carroll County Historical Society, "The Carroll Record Histories of Northwestern Carroll County Communities."

Norman Bruce, the founder of Bruceville, built Myrtle Hill. It is significant for its architectural components - the large stone and frame house, the stone

meat house, and the remains of the single large span stone arch bridge that connected it to "Good Intent" on the north side of Big Pipe Creek from within the town of Bruceville.

There are many important links between Bruceville and Keymar, which feature the original settlers and founders of Bruceville. Early records indicate that Bruce immigrated to the United States from Scotland in 1762 and settled on Pipe Creek. In 1763, Bruce and Diggs received five thousand, three hundred and one acres, extending from Keysville along Big Pipe Creek north of Bruceville. The region was known as "Bedford."

The land south of the creek belonged to John Ross Key (1754-1821). Bruce desired the Key property for erecting a mill on the Big Pipe Creek; thus, he entered negotiations with Key, resulting in their estates' exchange.

In 1758, Norman Bruce married Susanna Gardner Key (1742-1811), the daughter of Philip Barton Key (1757-1815). Phillip Key had six children, the third; John Ross Key was the father of Francis Scott Key (1779-1843). Susanne received 1,400 acres of land, one-third of "Terra

Rubra." Bruce would acquire land throughout his life, accumulating 14,089 acres in total. In the late 1800s, Norman Bruce built "Myrtle Hill" as the centerpiece of a large estate, including at least one mill, housing many additional structures.

Norman and Susanna had five children: Betsy, who was born before 1761 and possibly died in infancy, Andrew (1761-1814), Upton Scott (1762-1829), who settled near Cumberland on land called the Glades; Charles Key (1764-1826) who according to Mimi Ashcraft of the Historical Society of Carroll County, "went to Scotland and studied medicine, sailed to India where he spent many years as a newspaper editor.

When Normand died in the early 1800s, in order to lay claim to his share of the property, Charles returned from India and lived the rest of his life on Long Island"; Elizabeth Key (1772-1862), a beautiful girl who attended the assembly balls when her father represented his county in the Legislature in 1778. The dresses she wore are still preserved, together with china bearing the Bruce coat of arms. She married John Scott, the nephew of Dr. Upton Scott of Annapolis.

After John Scott married Norman Bruce's daughter, Elizabeth Bruce, John Scott built the large stone house on the Hill naming it, "Good Intent. "Good Intent" was made about the year 1812 and cost ten thousand dollars. John and Elizabeth had five children. Upton Scott, Susanna, who died in infancy, Mrs. John Brooke Boyle of Westminster, Mrs. Daniel Swope,



The Norman Bruce home, located at 1340 Bruceville Road, Keymar, is privately owned and visible today, though substantially rebuilt after a fire in the 1800s.

and Dr. Norman B. Scott still survive. John Scott died of sciatic rheumatism, February 28, 1841. Elizabeth Bruce Scott, his wife, died in 1864 in Westminster, aged 84 years. After Bruce exchanged property with Key, he built a dwelling house passed and occupied by Frederick Mehring and his sisters. He also erected a large stone mill, owned later by George Mehring, which stood until 1881 when it was destroyed by fire.

It is clear from his diverse interests and skills as a farmer, miller, Revolutionary War officer, sheriff, and judge that he had the knowledge and skills required by early colonists. However, Bruce's finan-

cial condition became problematic toward the end of his life due to the country's economic conditions. In the aftermath of his death, the "Myrtle Hill" became a tavern. Eventually, it was owned by the Mehring family, which transformed it into a centralized mining town.

Today, a look at "Myrtle Hill" reveals that its architectural form and individual features represent a historical resource for learning about life and culture during the Revolutionary War.

David Buie is a Taneytown resident who has a passion for Carroll County and its place in history.

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100 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH

December 2

Bank Robbers Foiled at Taneytown

An attempt was made Monday night by crackmen to rob the Taneytown Savings Bank. First the iron bars of the rear window were attacked for entrance, a pipe cutter being used to clip the stout bars, but this was given up as too hard a job, the cutter being left on the ground. Entry into the building was eventually made throughout the window into the furnace cellar. The wall of the vault was then attacked and a large amount of plaster and brick removed by a pick and crow bar, until the double frame work of railroad rails was reached, when the job was given up.

For some reason the telephone wires were cut, possibly with the idea that they might be alarm wires. No attempt was made on the vault doors. Evidently, the vault is such that a great deal of time and use of powerful explosives would be required to crack it. No one heard the crackmen, or saw them, even though both the building and the street were brilliantly lit all night. A yellow and red striped horse blanket with two holes in it, and black and a dark green lab robe, were left with the tools.

Oyster Plants

Several Thurmonters have made preparation to grow oyster plants on an ambitious scale next season, judging by the number of non-edible oysters, which were purchased from a journeyman vendor last week when the market price of the invalid bivalves was tempted in the low. How about it?

Meanwhile, the work of drilling for oil on the land of Caleb Mettitt, in Thurmont, is going steadily forward. They have already drilled down to a depth of 550 feet, but have yet to strike no oil. There has been nothing so far however too damp in their enthusiasm or to lead them to doubt that they will eventually strike oil.

December 9

Hit By Train And Killed

Miss Sarah Appold, 68, of Detour, was struck by a Western Maryland passenger train shortly before 6 o'clock last Friday evening. She died 15 minutes after.

Her body was dragged for some distance and badly mangled. Her skull was fractured, both arms broken, one leg broken, and one cut off.

Mrs. Appold made her home with her sister and brother-in-law, residing a short distance below the railroad station. The sister went to Baltimore and was returning on the evening train. Miss Appold had started to walk to the station to meet her upon return, and had cross the siding, stepping from behind a freight car. The engineer saw her first, and a little later she was on the fireman side of the track. It is supposed she thought she was on the siding and when she realized her mistake tried to get back to the station side of the track. Immediately after the train stopped members of the crew hurried to the spot and found her unconscious. She was laid upon a car door and carried to her home. But she died without regaining consciousness. Mrs. Appold was well known and held in high esteem by all in the community.

Struck by Automobile

Mrs. Sefton was struck and knocked down by an automobile last Thursday on Carroll Street, Thurmont. Mrs. Sefton, who was busy, applying cheek powder, stepped, from behind one machine in front of one driven by Ernst Warner. Mr. Warner applied the emergency brake but was unable to stop in time to avoid hitting her. He did, however succeed and bringing his machine to a stop in time to prevent it passing over her body. While Mrs. Stephen sustained a few bruises, fortunately Mr. Warner's autocar was not damaged.

Manhattan Players**Coming to Thurmont**

Three nights, commencing Thursday, December 15, Thurmont playgoers will have the opportunity of seeing a really worthwhile theatrical performance - the Manhattan Players. The splendid company comes direct from a week at City Opera House, Frederick. Never has such a sterling attraction appeared outside the larger towns. The company brings a special baggage car loaded with magnificent special scenery. The opening play, "The still he wanted," is a charm. There will be a slight charge of \$.25.

December 16

Fairfield To Have Christmas Tree

Arrangements have been completed for a community Christmas tree and service in the Borough of Fairfield on Christmas Eve, December 24, at 6 o'clock. According to the plan, a large Christmas tree will be erected in front of the post office and will be fully decorated and lighted with electric lights. A resident Fairfield have been secured to play the part of Santa Claus for the festivities. A gift package will be given every child present at the time. Members of the Dramatic Club will sing Christmas carols on the streets of the town at midnight.

Six Hundred Checks Mailed

The members of the Emmitsburg Savings Bank Christmas club were made happy on receiving their checks which will add greatly to the Christmas shopping. 600 persons were mailed checks totaling \$13,446. The distribution of the sum of money at this time means a great deal in a business way and the merchants of the community are bound to feel the effects of this money being in circulation. The local stores are reporting a nice holiday business and it is expected that trading will be very brisk for the next week or so.

Meets With Tragic Death

Edward Wentz, 40, a prosperous young farmer near Harney, died after wagon load of cordwood passed over his body, near Emmitsburg. Mr. Wentz and Mildred Hess who was employed by Wentz left home early last Saturday morning to bring a cord and a half of timber from a sawmill near Emmitsburg. After loading the wagon to its capacity, the pair started home. Hess was driving the team and Mr. Wentz was riding on a board on the side applying the brakes when necessary. On the long hill near the Emmitsburg reservoir, Mr. Wentz slipped when the rubber level broke throwing him under a rear wheel of the wagon. The wheel passed over his back and shoulders and life was crushed out almost instantly. Mr. Hess, who was riding one of the horses at the time, was unable to stop the team to help the injured man and the wagon continued on down the grade until the foot of the hill. After the wagon came to a stop Mr. Hess rushed up the hill and found Mr. Wentz still alive, but he died before medical assistance could be secured. His back was crushed and several ribs forced out through the skin. He leaves behind a wife and an baby daughter.



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December 23

Fall From Ladder Fatal

Ray Hummer, 54, of near Detour, died last week from a hemorrhage caused by a fracture in the spinal column. He sustained the injury in a fall from the top of a 15-foot ladder in his barn. He had placed a ladder against the fodder stack and was at the top when the ladder slipped, throwing him against the cement curb about the stable. He was paralyzed from the shoulder down, but retain consciousness. He was removed to the Frederick City Hospital, but grew steadily worse until death ensued. Mr. hummer is survived by his wife and three small children.

Collision in Square

That the Thurmont public square, is a dangerous point for traffic was again demonstrated on Saturday afternoon. Mr. Williams Snorr of Graceham was going west on Main Street and Mr. Zentz of Zentz's Mill was going south on Church Street. The cars collided at the Square. Mr. Zentz's car had gone far enough that the rear fender caught the left front wheel of Mr. Snorr's car, and the force of the impact bent the axle of Mr. Snorr's car, throwing the front wheels out-of-line. Mr. Zentz lost his license tag and tail light. State Road Officer Trooper was riding just behind Mr. Zentz and saw the accident. He made all adjustments necessary, with Mr. Snorr apparently was in the wrong.

December 30

Pipes Burst

Last Thursday morning the water

pipes, which passed through the pantry in the Reform parsonage, froze and burst. The force of the water was turned directly on the shelves and swept the contents to the floor in a conglomerate mess of broken glass, jellies, preserve and fruits.

Poor Roads Cause Accident

On last Thursday night, while Milton Sprangler was driving from Taneytown to Harney, over our almost impossible road, his horse fell near Piney Creek Church, and threw Mr. Sprangler with great force from the buggy. His head struck something - and he does not know why. He was rendered unconscious; when he became conscious again he says that he was lying on his back in the road. He got up but was very dizzy. It was dark and he began to look for his horse and found it lying in the road.

With the aid of his buggy lamp, he managed to get the horse up and get the harness fixed up and get home but felt the effects of the shock for several days. His horse, which is a perfectly quiet one, was slightly hurt and has been lame from the effects of the fall. While the accident was not fatal, it might have been a very serious one, and all on account of the bad condition of the road. We earnestly hope that those in authority would take action before something more serious happens. Rural communities should benefit from the money they pay for road maintenance.

To read past editions of 100 Year Ago this Month, visit the History section of Emmitsburg.net.

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We wish you all a
Merry Christmas
and hope you have a prosperous &
Happy New Year!

COOKING

Christmas cookies!

Carol Cogliano

My daughter's favorite part of Christmas is spending time baking cookies together, and she has made me VOW that we will take time for that in the weeks to come. I hope that you enjoy the following recipes with your families and have a healthy, happy holiday celebration! Merry Christmas!

Candy Cane Cookies

Soft buttery cookies coated in crushed candy canes & drizzled in white chocolate. Candy Cane Cookies are the perfect complement to hot chocolate, by a warm fire. Also, a colorful addition to Santa's plate!

Ingredients:

1½ cups sugar
½ cup butter softened
½ cup shortening
2 eggs
2¾ cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons cream of tartar
1 teaspoon baking soda
¼ teaspoon salt

Topping

¼ cup crushed candy cane crumbs
¼ cup melted white chocolate

Preparation Instructions: Heat oven to 400°F. Line baking trays with parchment paper, set aside. Place crushed candy canes in a small bowl & set aside. Cream together 1½ cups sugar, the butter, shortening and eggs in large bowl. Mix together dry ingredients. Stir into wet ingredients. Shape dough into 1¼-inch balls. Dip 1/2 of

each ball in the crushed candy canes. Place 2 inches apart on baking sheets. Bake 8 to 10 minutes or until set. Cool 2-3 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack. Drizzle each cooled cookie with the melted white chocolate & then sprinkle with additional candy cane crumbs

Kris Kringle Crinkles

Festively-colored sugar cookies, with a touch of mint. Rolled in powdered sugar, these cookies will remind you of the snowflakes that are blowing outside as you enjoy these delicious treats, warm and cozy inside!

Ingredients

1 cup Butter (softened)
1½ cups Granulated Sugar
2 Eggs
1 teaspoon Vanilla
1 teaspoon Peppermint Extract (or Almond, Lemon or Mint)
½ teaspoons Baking Soda
3 cups Flour (all-purpose)
Powdered Sugar

Preparation Instructions: Cream the butter and sugar until completely combined. Add in eggs, vanilla and peppermint extract and mix until the dough is fluffy. Add in the Baking Soda. Mix in the flour, a third at a time. Split into two portions and color one red and one green. Refrigerate the dough for 2 hours. Roll dough into balls then roll in powdered sugar. Bake in a 350-degree oven for 9-10 minutes.

Oatmeal Lace Cookies Recipe

Oatmeal Lace Cookies are thin, crisp, delicate and buttery cookies.

This lace cookies recipe is a family favorite. Makes 5-6 dozen cookies!

Ingredients

1 cup (2 sticks) butter
2¼ cups light brown sugar, packed
2¼ cups rolled oats
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
1 egg, lightly beaten
1 teaspoon vanilla

Instructions

Preheat oven to 375° F. Line baking sheets with parchment paper or silicon baking mats. Set aside. Heat butter and brown sugar in a 2-quart saucepan over medium heat, stirring frequently with a wooden or silicon spoon, until butter has melted and mixture is smooth. Stir in oats, flour, salt, egg, and vanilla. Drop cookie batter by the teaspoon onto prepared baking sheets, leaving about 2 inches between each cookie to allow them to spread. Bake for 5 -7 minutes, watching closely to prevent them from over-baking. The lace cookies should be golden brown. Allow to cool on the cookie sheet for 30 seconds and remove onto racks to cool completely. Store in an airtight container.

No Bake Coffee Cookies

Ingredients

2 cups crushed vanilla wafers
1 1¼ cups powdered sugar
1 cup finely chopped pecans
2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
1 1/2 teaspoons instant coffee crystals
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
4-5 tablespoons brewed espresso or strong coffee
1/2 cup powdered sugar

Preparation Instructions: Combine crushed cookies, the 1 1/4 cups powdered sugar, nuts, cocoa, coffee crystals, and cinnamon. Add brewed coffee using just enough to moisten. Form mixture into 1 1/4" balls. Roll balls generously in the 1/2 cup powdered sugar. Place balls on sheet of waxed paper and let stand until dry (about an hour). Before serving, roll balls again in powdered sugar if desired.

Cinnamon Cream Cheese Cookies

Ingredients

1/2 cup unsalted butter (1 stick) softened
4 ounces cream cheese softened
1 & 1/2 cup powdered sugar
1 egg



1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon vanilla bean paste or extract
pinch kosher salt
1 & 3/4 cup all-purpose flour
1/4 cup granulated sugar
1 tablespoon ground cinnamon

Preparation Instructions: In a large bowl, cream together the butter and cream cheese with a hand mixer until smooth. Slowly add the powdered sugar until combined. Add egg, baking powder, vanilla, and salt. Mix to combine. Add flour in slowly until fully incorporated, scraping the sides as needed. Place in fridge for one hour to rest. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. In a small bowl, mix together the cinnamon and sugar. Set aside. Roll dough into 1 inch sized balls, about 2 teaspoons worth of dough. Roll until coated in the cinnamon sugar mixture. Place on a parchment lined cookie sheet about 2 inches apart. Bake for 8-9 minutes, until just set. Do not overbake, it is hard to tell when these cookies are ready, they will puff up but won't get golden brown. Let cool on baking sheet for 10 minutes. Transfer cookies to a wire rack and let cool completely.

Pecan Delights

I'll start this recipe with a disclaimer. It works best if you have a 2nd set of hands to help as you have to move very fast when mixture comes to temperature!

Ingredients

2 ¼ C. Brown Sugar
1 C. Butter
1 C. Corn Syrup
1/8 Tsp. Salt

1 14 Oz. Can Sweetened Condensed Milk
1 Tsp. Vanilla
1.5 Lb. pecans (24 ounces)
1 C. Semi-Sweet Chocolate Morsels
1 C. Milk Chocolate Morsels
2 T. Shortening

Cooking Directions: Combine 1st four ingredients. Cook over medium heat until sugar is dissolved. Add milk and mix well. Continue cooking until candy thermometer reads 245 degrees (firm ball stage). This takes anywhere from 30 to 60 minutes. Although your candy thermometer says firm ball stage is 248 - it works best if you take off the heat at 245. Remove from the heat and stir in vanilla. Pour over pecans. This mixture is very thick. Drop by tsp. on 3 cookie sheets, covered with parchment paper. Don't make the balls too large - bite-size is best! This is the period of time you need to move very quickly as the mixture just continues to thicken - making it impossible to form into balls! Chill till firm. Melt chocolate chips and shortening. Drizzle over clusters and cool. Enjoy!

Apple Peanut Butter Fudge

Ingredients

1 six-ounce package of Semi-Sweet Chocolate Chips
½ of a 9 or 10 oz. jar of Marshmallow Crème
½ C. Peanut Butter
1 Tsp. Vanilla
2 C. Sugar
2/3 C. Apple Juice

Cooking Directions: Combine chocolate, marshmallow, peanut butter and vanilla in a mixing bowl. Set aside. In a Pam-sprayed 2 qt. saucepan, add sugar and apple juice. Cook over medium heat until sugar dissolves and mixture boils. Continue cooking and stirring to soft-ball stage - 240 degrees. Remove from heat and quickly add mixture in bowl. Mix well. Pour into buttered 9" square pan. Cool. Cut into squares and store in a tight container.

To read other cooking articles, visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net.

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MOMS' TIME OUT

'Tis the season to forgive yourself

Mary Angel

Whether it be falling down the steps while holding one of my infants or trying to avoid getting peed on when I changed my first son's diaper or muddling through parenting a teenage girl, some days I have to wonder why the hospital allowed me to bring my babies home. Most of all I wondered whether I was qualified to be a mom for "The Infamous Case of the Missing 3-Year-Old".

The day started out like any other. The kids got up way too early and filed into my room to wake me. First the oldest, then the second son, followed by my sweet little toddling girl. Luckily the baby was still asleep, maybe because she had gotten me up three times during the night. After a few hugs and some kisses and sweet good mornings, I got three sweet requests for breakfast. Breakfast consisted of "homemade" cereal and milk and some Disney Junior.

While I was cleaning up and doing the dishes the kids started playing in the living room. It may sound like a cliché but it was a morning like any other. While the kids were watching cartoons and playing, the baby woke up; I changed her diaper, and fed her. As the morning progressed we all played games and had a morning snack. A few more hours and it was lunch time and time for sandwiches and salads. I have always been lucky that my kids love almost every vegetable. After lunch, and many more diaper changes, I put the baby down for a nap. The kids sat down to play with Little People and I asked the boys to keep an eye on their sister while I was upstairs (and to holler if she needed to use the potty).

The next half hour went by so slowly; it felt like we were in slow motion in a bad movie. When I came downstairs from putting the baby to bed, my boys were still watching cartoons. I went to the kitchen to do the dishes and asked the boys and my daughter to bring me all of the dirties from the table. The boys jumped to it and started bringing me dirty dishes. I quickly realized that the boys weren't getting any help from their sister. When I asked why she wasn't helping they stated in unison, "I don't know". I went to the living room to interrogate the suspect, only to find that she wasn't there. The boys both insisted she was there when they were playing with her, but they didn't notice when she specifically disappeared.

I didn't immediately panic. First, I started calling her name and looked in the bathroom, dining room and sitting room. At this point I may have started to worry just a little bit. Next, I asked the boys to search all of the bedrooms on the second floor and I headed for the basement (even though I didn't hear any doors open or close). Needless to say, my panic and stress was beginning to boil like a tea pot just before the whistle blows. I truly had run out of ideas and places to look.

At this point I went into panic mode, which involved looking in crazy places. The truth is she couldn't have been missing long enough to make it far at all. It also would have been impossible for someone to snatch her from our living room without the boys

noticing. This doesn't mean I didn't consider that as a possibility. Every minute that passed my theories grew crazier and crazier. The insanity led me to send the boys to the closest neighbors and check to see if she had simply wandered. This brought several phone calls from concerned neighbors, who had to leave a message because I was frantically checking all the nooks and crannies of the house.

After looking in every closet, double checking the backyard and basement, and searching the garage I truly believed I had looked everywhere. I then turned to the ridiculous and looked in the pantry (which was too small for her to fit in) and the fridge (which she would have emptied to have any chance of squeezing into). Although the search had only taken about fifteen minutes, I was completely hysterical. This was not a proud mommy moment.

In a moment of clarity I dropped to my knees sobbing and began to pray. In the silence I heard a strange crackling sound. Very quietly I began to search again. Up until now all of the searching was done frantically and with quite a bit of noise. As I tracked down the noise I became more and more hopeful (and confused) with every step. I couldn't for the life of me figure out what that sound was.

As I listened, I pictured cellophane

crinkling, or someone crumbling old dry leaves. Nothing I thought of made any sense. As I came into the living room, I could tell the sound was getting louder. The problem was every time I stopped, so did the sound. Finally I walked over to my husband's oversized brown leather chair that was positioned caddy corner against the half wall that ran between the living room and the eat-in kitchen. I slowly approached the chair and could hear the crinkling get louder. As I leaned over the back of the chair I was overwhelmed by a feeling of relief and frustration. There, sitting huddled in the corner was my daughter and a large pile of candy. Apparently she had been smuggling small batches of Halloween candy behind the chair so that she could feast at will and not have to ask permission.

This was one of those times as a mom that I felt like a failure. How could I have misplaced my child? How could I not have known she was sneaking candy? How could I have gone into such a ridiculous panic? The fact is that we are all going to have failures as parents; but are they really? If we accept that we aren't perfect and that neither are our children, then maybe these are just opportunities to educate our children and ourselves, to humble ourselves, and to remember that our children and our life are gifts



and that we should appreciate every moment and forgive yourself because parenting is hard work! *To read past editions of Mom's Time Out, visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net.*

Santa will visit the Emmitsburg VFW Post 6658, December 18, from 1 to 4 p.m. Snacks and light refreshments provided.

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SCHOOL & LIBRARY NEWS

FASD faces staffing shortages

Proving that school districts are no exception to the staffing shortages faced across the country, October's Fairfield Area School District (FASD) school board discussed hiring challenges.

Over a period of two weeks FASD has seen multiple vacancies opened including two classroom aids, a library aide, and a cafeteria worker, according to Building and Grounds Supervisor William Mooney.

"We're working together to explain how we're going to cover the classroom while we're trying to find that help," Special Education Supervisor Danial Watkins.

"It's some difficult times for us finding help," he said.

Of the school district's five second shift custodial positions, four

are vacant right now, Mooney said.

The school district is actively hiring, although one application was over before it started as the prospective employee never showed up to interview, he said.

"Its competitive right now what's out there," Watkins said, noting other offer incentives including better pay and benefits can entice potential workers.

Mooney praised employees willing to step up and help where needed, including a maintenance worker who jumped in to help the short-staffed cafeteria.

"Which is way beyond his duties as a maintenance worker, but he did what he had to do cheerfully to keep the district open," Mooney said.

A potential group of people to

help fill staffing gaps are kindergarten parents, according to Watkins, noting it has worked for the district once before.

As it is their first time their child is in public school, "They might find themselves at home, wondering what they're going to do now," he said.

Along with the general staffing shortage, the district's wrestling program finds itself without a coach and low student involvement, leaving many to question the possibility of the wrestling team continuing this year.

Athletic Director Andrew Kuhn expressed plans for the wrestling team including promoting and connecting students with the program and interviews lined up for potential coaches.

There are always options for the wrestling team, including partnering with another school district if the program cannot continue, he said.

At its November meeting, the School Board discussed the need to configure make-up days into the district calendar. "The issue that has come to light however is that when the calendar was developed and approved, there were no days listed as makeup," Interim Superintendent Larry Redding said.

One of the tasks before the board's December meeting and possibility in January is to identify what days currently listed as vacation days can be converted into "snow days" as well as to complete a final draft of the 2022-2023 school calendar by February, according to Redding.

School board members whose terms were ending were recognized with certificates of appreciation for their service to the community including Travis Jones, David Millstein, and Earl Shutt. "On behalf of the school district, I would like to thank you for your service and provide you with a certificate of appreciation," Redding said.

Board President Marcy Van Metre was also recognized for her final meeting and given a certificate of appreciation from the Pennsylvania School Boards Association honoring her 12 years on the board. "I would also like to extend my district-thank you for the work you have done and moving the district forward in the last 12 years," Redding said.

A School Board reorganization meeting is scheduled for Dec. 6.

Library events

Blue Ridge Summit Free Library

While the Blue Ridge Summit Free Library's doors are open, they have less hours but may be available to bring out materials to your car during closed hours. Please call to make arrangements. The library's new hours are Tuesdays & Thursdays 3 - 6 p.m., Wednesday 4 - 7 p.m., 2nd & 4 Saturday of the month 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. The Library is closed on Monday and Friday.

Adult Story Time with Joan - Mondays and Wednesdays starting at 7 p.m. Joan will be sharing short sto-

ries from several books virtually.

In the Kitchen - Wednesday, 1 p.m. Weekly program of recipes that are delicious and easy to prepare. Prior programs are also available.

Musical Thursday with Dave - Thursdays, 3 p.m.. Join Dave and his friends and listen to music from many different styles and genres.

Family Friendly Friday Night Fun - Friday, starting at 7 p.m.. Family Friendly Friday Night Fun can be a little bit of everything. Poetry, Music, or something else.

Saturday Story & Craft - starting

at 11 a.m. Listen to a good book and make a really fun craft. Then spend some quality time with Wee Build Imagineering, there are no limits to your creativity!

To join these events live, on line, or learn more about them, visit the Franklin County Library System's website at www.fclspa.org/events, or you can call the library at 717-74-2240.

Carroll Valley Library

The Carroll Valley Library Branch of Adams County Library System is offering several programs in December.

Monday, December 6th at 6:30 pm is KPets - Reading to a therapy dog helps build confidence in new or reluctant readers. You are asked to bring your child to the library to read to Danny, the favorite pup.

Thursday, December 16th at 6:30 pm is Teen Tied Pillow - You can make a fleece winter-tied pillow and use it as a great homemade gift for friends or family. This program is open to teens and tweens (it is a child between the ages of 9 and 12). Registration is required.

On Monday, December 20th at 6:30 pm is Christmas Bingo & Craft Night - Join the library group for a Christmas bingo and make a Christmas craft! This event is open to elementary and middle school-age children. Registration is required.

Frederick County Public Library

December is a month of celebrations and a time to reflect on the past year! The Thurmont Regional Library and the Emmitsburg Branch Library, as well as all of FCPL, have had many reasons to celebrate this year! Welcoming the public back into our buildings and going fine free were huge reasons to celebrate this year!

As we welcome December in, we also look forward to sharing our new catalog with you! While it will look different, it will offer great features to enhance your library experience. You can opt in for text notifications to let you know when your materials are ready for pick up or are coming due. The new catalog will show all available copies and formats in one record - whether you are interested in large print, an e-book, or audiobook, it can all be found in one place! Pin

numbers are a thing of the past with our new catalog; you will be able to set up an EZ username and password to allow easier access to the catalog without having to remember your library card number. Searching for materials will be easier too, with recommendations provided by the catalog similar to the recommendations that Netflix provides. We are excited about our new catalog and all of the features and options it will provide, and appreciate your patience as we all adapt and learn the new system.

Come out December 6 for the Emmitsburg Tree Lighting, and make and take a clay ornament to enjoy at home. Meet in front of the library from 5:30 - 6 p.m. Explore Art on the deck and Nature Trail with your toddlers and preschoolers every Wednesday at Thurmont Regional Library from 11 - 11:30 a.m. Teens can enjoy hot chocolate on the deck on December 9 while creating a Gingerbread House; come back on December 16 for Nintendo Switch on the deck (provided by the library!) and bring a friend to compete against. Both programs start at 6 p.m. Be on the lookout for Grab and Go Storytime Bundles for parents and caregivers to enjoy story time at home.

Cold weather and shorter days invites opportunities for leisurely lounging and cozy reading! Take time to visit the library and check out a new title or an old movie (or a new one!) to enjoy the winter evenings and weekends. All the staff at Emmitsburg Branch and Thurmont Regional Library wish you a very safe, and happy holiday season and we look forward to seeing you in the library!



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Frederick County Schools

Karen Yoho
Frederick County Board of Education

November saw a number of ceremonies in the school system celebrating Veterans Day. We appreciate all Veterans, especially those that work for FCPS. The Board of Education also wishes best of luck to all of the high school fall sports teams as they head into the playoffs and hopes that everyone was able to enjoy Thanksgiving with loved ones.

At our September 8 meeting, the Board followed Dr. Alban's recommendation and gave conditional approval to the proposed charter school from the Sabillasville community. Additionally, we needed to gather more information on which entity had the power to grant conversion charter status, at the request of the new charter school committee. In the past, a conversion charter had only been used to convert a poor performing regular public school into a public charter school.

These schools often become what is called operator run, which put the administration in the hands of formal business groups, as opposed to community or parent groups as is the case with the Sabillasville school. Once we learned that low performance was no longer a necessary criterion and that

our Board had the authority to confer conversion status, it paved the way for us to put it on our agenda. The process would allow the new charter school to simply occupy its current building. Otherwise, they would have to find a new location since having a facility was one of the conditions of its approval.

At our meeting on November 22, we did approve the Sabillasville Environmental School as a conversion charter. In December they will appear before the Board to go through their charter plan and negotiate the details. The other major condition for approval was reaching an enrollment of 161 students its first year to make the school financially viable. Currently, they have 191 interested.

This may require a lottery to determine which students will attend. Current students will automatically be a part of the new charter school if they wish. Going forth, founders' children and siblings of current attendees will be a part of the school community if they elect this option. As we do for all the schools in our system, the Board looks forward to the success of this new and unique charter.

Also at our November 22 meeting, our Board spent several hours problem solving and making motions to address workload and staffing issues. Previously, we had become acutely

aware of major issues affecting school systems and businesses everywhere, and at our November 10 meeting we voted to hold an emergency meeting on November 15 to try to find some solutions. On the day after our regular meeting, staff put out surveys to eleven different job titles in our system. They then compiled the results from thousands of responses over the weekend so we would have data and information directly from some of the affected employees. The issues were sorted into three main categories: time, resources, and money. Staff prepared a PowerPoint for the meeting with suggestions and dollar amounts based on the surveys.

Some of the highlights of the motions passed by the Board are listed below. Under time we voted to close offices to the public over winter and spring breaks to help clerical and other 12-month staff work without interruptions. We added in three 2-hour early or late student arrivals for school staff on January 13, February 22, and March 25 to give teachers extra time for planning and grading. The system had sent out a message to all teachers dialing back much of the current professional development for teachers as well as system initiatives. The Board reaffirmed these steps by assuring all professional development (PD) and

extra meetings will be limited, with the exceptions of teacher requested PD or those necessary to meet state requirements such as the Accelerated Learning Process (ALP), which will be capped at twice a month.

In the area of resources, we voted to create a centralized volunteer coordinator so the system can tap into the benevolence of our Frederick County citizens without adding work to already stressed school staff. The plan is to recruit a retired administrator. The cost for this was minimal.

Finally, items that required spending was, not surprisingly, the area with the most motions passed. While we did rack up quite a total of dollars committed, the system has realized a large sum of money due to salary savings. Normally, positions of employees that retire at a higher rate are filled by new employees at beginning rates. This year there are so many unfilled positions, those funds are just sitting there. We voted for the following allocations: retention incentives for bus drivers and food nutrition service workers; cease charging applicants for fingerprinting; \$15 minimum wage (up from \$13.47); teachers and administrators who substitute during the school day will be paid at per diem rate; all substitutes (regular, long-term, and resident) will increase \$3 per hour. Regular subs were at \$17 and will now be at \$20.

Overall, we tried to create time and recruit personnel. Staff is being pulled to substitute, which doesn't allow them the time to do their regular job. Many areas are short-staffed, which puts an additional burden on current employees. Everyone needs the chance to be able to do their job and catch their breath once in a while. It was a hopeful beginning, but we are not finished.

We still have many parents attending our meetings to give public comment on masks, vaccinations, and COVID testing. The State Board of Education held a special meeting on Tuesday, November 16 to hear testimony from a variety of stakeholders on their mask mandate. That mandate runs out on February 25, but they had promised to revisit the matter before then. During the four plus hour meeting, the State Board heard from parents, school board members, state health officials, the president of MSEA, the president of Free State PTA, and other interested parties on the topic. They declared up front that no decision would be made that day. The next time they meet is Wednesday, December 1. Their website is Marylandpublicschools.org and click on the State Board tab. You will see their 2021 Meeting Schedule. We will all be standing by for what the State Board decides.

The Board of Education wishes happy holidays to all as we look forward to an improved 2022.

Librarians bring smiles to children's vaccine clinics

Frederick County Public Libraries (FCPL) has partnered with Frederick County Health Department (FCHD) to help take the "ouch" out of the children's COVID vaccine clinics. Children's librarians are bringing costumes, stories, and their diversional expertise to help entertain and distract children as they receive their shot.

"We wanted to make the clinic environment a kinder, gentler place," said Heather Hart, Children's Services Supervisor at Walkersville Branch Library. "Shots are never fun for kids, but we thought we could

help ease the stress of the experience with jokes and stories."

When library staff first heard that the children's clinics would be opening, they contacted FCHD to see if they could be of assistance and a very unique partnership was born. FCPL children's librarians will be at upcoming Saturday clinics, armed with storytimes, puppets, costumes, and jokes.

"The library has been a great partner for us throughout the pandemic," said Frederick County Health Officer Dr. Barbara Brookmyer. "They were some of the first volunteers at

our mass vaccination clinics and when they reached out about helping again, we were thrilled. It's this type of partnership that makes Frederick County such a great community."

For more information about COVID-19 vaccinations for children, parents can visit COVID-19 Vaccines for Children and Teens for general vaccine information and to

learn what to expect, including links to specific tips on how to support your children before, during, and after their vaccination.

Appointments can be found in a variety of places. Health department clinics are posted here. Check with your pediatrician, or online at covidvax.maryland.gov or vaccines.gov for pharmacies and other

clinics. Frederick County Public Schools is also holding vaccination clinics in schools, and is sending out details through Find Out First. For help scheduling an appointment, call 855-MDGoVax or 855-634-6829 between 8am and 8pm, seven days a week. Local help is also available at 301-600-7900 or 301-600-7505 for local help in Spanish.

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FOUR YEARS AT THE MOUNT

This month, we asked our writers to consider the significance of the Mount's place: its topography, geography, and relation to other local landmarks.

Freshman

The mountain cocoon

Jack Daly
MSMU Class of 2025

At the beginning of the school year, our Vice President Dr. Bernard Franklin asked the student body gathered at the convocation to consider the university to be our cocoon. During their college careers, it is hoped that every student will undergo a metamorphosis, in which they will shake off the last vestiges of adolescence and emerge as a responsible citizen ready for their role in the world. Mount St. Mary's is just that, a cocoon hidden in the forested hills of Maryland. A university found in any other setting would invite the dangers of the broader society to adulterate its ability to accomplish its mission: to form good men and women.

The campus has long been watched over by the great, golden statue of Our Lady. Her two arms were outstretched, gesturing down the mountainside to the activity taking place below her. It seemed as if all of the buildings of the school had sprouted from the wake of the grace she broadcast with her hands, like the roses that fell from St. Juan Diego's tilma. While her image is

currently down for repairs, we, her children, know that we are never truly without our Holy Mother, and we await the return of her delightful likeness.

Just beside that wonderful monument is, of course, the renowned Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes, and it is truly a treasure. It is full of many beautiful pictures and statues of Our Lord, Our Lady, and the saints; works of art made with such exquisite skill and style, that it would take pages to adequately reflect their beauty and ability to move. The site is always busy with pilgrims, many from foreign homes. Where my words fail, let their pious hearts stand as a testament to the location's magnetic spiritual quality. It is truly a privilege that so many young people are allowed the chance to spend their college years close to such a beautiful place.

While the campus itself is full of visual reminders honoring salvation history, not an hour away students can find some of the most impressive reminders of human history. Anyone with proficient knowledge of the nation's history is assuredly aware of the Battle of Gettysburg, but few get to see for themselves the amazing monuments of the destruction and bloodshed that the coun-

try was witness to just over one and a half centuries ago. The battlefield is, and shall remain, one of the favorite spots for students to visit. It is a place for us to remember the sacrifices of our forefathers, which allow us to live in the country we do today.

In addition to the battlefield, the town of Gettysburg is also noteworthy. Visitors to the area can see many of the buildings that have been preserved from the time of the Civil War, a great contrast to the newer kind of town that we call home to today.

In the opposite direction, the city of Frederick can be found South of the University. Like Gettysburg, Frederick continues to be blessed with many old and awe-inspiring buildings. These houses were built mainly from brick and lend a wonderful nineteenth century charm to the town. This is not to say that Frederick is stuck in the past; any one with the chance to see the place for themselves will find a vibrant and modern community, but one that has not forgotten the origins of its identity.

While these larger towns are perfectly good spots for students to drop by on occasion, the real honor is our school's location within Emmitsburg. Since many students after graduation are likely to find them-

selves living in one of the nation's cramped, busy, and noisy cities, they will surely look back fondly upon their days in quiet Emmitsburg. The town is a snapshot of rural, small-town America, the memory of which will likely gain a Romantic, pastoral appeal when we look fondly back on our time here.

One cannot stress enough the beauty of the countryside within this region. During early fall, in the evenings, when half the sun is obscured by the hills, the green fields that we can see just across the way are tinted gold by the light of the dusk, so that the whole area looks like a landscape painting.

Among the most defining features of this rural beauty are the many farms around us. When coming or going from the University, one will see countless fields of crops and pastures of animals. Farms like Good Soil, run by Professor Stephen McGinley, serve as sites where students can find an authentic, direct connection to the world through meaningful, tangible work.

There is also an important spiritual aspect to our school's location on a mountainside. Mountains have been associated with a closeness to the divine since time in memorial. Sinai, Zion, Calvary are a few mountains

that are within the Judeo-Christian religions, and the ancient Greeks had Mount Olympus and the Athenian Acropolis. It is fitting, then, that we should spend our years studying the higher things on a place that is itself elevated. Here we are able to survey the many subjects of the world just as easily as we can survey our physical surroundings.

Another famous mountain that we can compare our university to is Mount Purgatory, the setting, and subject of Dante Alighieri's Purgatorio. On the mountain, the souls of those guilty of venial sins purify themselves in order to reach Heaven above. The mountain is separated into levels where souls are freed of specific vices, with the most severe at the bottom, and the less so towards the top.

As one of the souls newly arrived to this mountain, it is my hope that I will undergo a similar purgation and perfection here, that I will find my path forward growing easier as I let go of old vices that have handicapped me, so that I can at last move higher up the mountain. May this cocoon within the countryside really be the place where all of us can see a metamorphosis in ourselves.

To read other articles by Jack Daly, visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net.

Sophomore

Liveliness in the balance

McKenna Snow
MSMU Class of 2024

I am from the South; I was born in Texas, lived in Tennessee, and am currently stationed in Kentucky. There's always been something I've loved about the openness of the southern landscape. Skies I can see, that aren't obscured by city skyscrapers—though beautiful in their own way—are something I truly love. I love open space, long stretches of road that give a wide view of the plots of land local farmers own, and towns that are spaced out enough from each other that the twenty-minute drive to get to them feel like fun road trips.

But I don't just like a flat landscape; I like the rolling mountains of West Virginia that display magnificent collections of trees all changing color in the autumn, too. And I like the cities, but I like my distance from them.

So, when I was in my senior year of high school, these were all things I liked in surrounding areas of where I lived, and they were things I did consider in my search for the right college. Was a place like University of Louisville, which is in the heart of the city, the place I wanted to reside in? The school is laced throughout the streets of downtown, and I'm sure students who flourish in the urban lifestyle consider it perfect—but not for me.

And what about a place like the school I considered out in Kansas? I liked this school's remoteness, and its location in the big open skies out there—but it was

too removed from surrounding towns. So where was the balance?

I found the balance in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Though far from home, and though geographically more northern than my southern roots expected me to gravitate to, this little town where the Mount resides has a balance I really love.

The campus is about five minutes from the town of Emmitsburg, and yet it remains individual and unique, with the special ability to call the mountainside its home. The campus is also right by the highway which runs by the foot of the mountain, and I like it because the highway poses the opportunity for that twenty-minute road trip with friends into town. Actually, not just one town; depending on the direction you take, you'll be whisked to Gettysburg, a beautiful rustic town with a rich history, or to Frederick, a more modern experience with tons of little stores and restaurants that entrepreneurs have brought to its center. There are lots of things to do within short driving distances, but the Mount's location isn't overwhelmed by it. It retains its beauty, its rural charm, its connection to the Catoctin mountains, and its ability to offer its students wide open skies.

If the Mount were in an urban setting, I think its uniqueness would feel stifled. The sight of the historic chapel is interwoven with the backdrop of the mountain trees. The science building's classical architecture deserves its standalone plot of land on the flatter part of campus, with its several iconic trees adorning its perimeter. The rugby field is wide and stoutly at a more elevated part of campus' edge, making it condu-

cive for the Astronomy club's stargazing events when light pollution needs to be at a minimum. Yet, it is not so far removed from the campus that it feels too unsafely far from the buildings—in fact, almost everything on the Mount's campus is within a five to fifteen-minute walking distance.

Does this make the campus feel too small, if I can be almost anywhere on campus in a matter of minutes? Certainly not. It's helpful on cold days, when I have places to be and not much of a desire to freeze on my way. It's also a highly conducive campus for solid community-building. Everyone's classes are close to one another's. Everyone seeking food obtains it from either the café, the food truck, or the cafeteria. You become comfortable with the regulars you see every day, even if you don't know their names. You recognize them, see them in the class halls, or in the elevator up to your dorm. Once in a while, someone who you see often finally breaks the ice, and they introduce themselves—just so you can put a name to the familiar face. Yet, it can be the start of some of the best friendships. You find that the person also knows your friend, and you agree that you should all get lunch together sometime.

The longer the semester goes on, the more it starts to resemble the feel of a broken-in Birkenstock shoe. It's sturdy, dependable, well-made, and worn in. All the corners of campus, being as close as they are, become familiar—in one corner, there's the mailroom, and in the other are the rugby field and cafeteria.

Something I really love about the experience of campus life on a moun-

tain is going beyond the perimeters of campus as you ascend the mountain, discovering the hiking trails students have been utilizing for years. I've taken many beautiful hikes up to Indian lookout with my friends, making joyful memories with them in the forest.

I will say that I think my college experience would have been different if it had been in a more urban setting. Perhaps an urban setting would have been livelier, in a certain sense, with a higher student body and more immediate, literal connection to the city. But the Mount has shown me its own sort of liveliness, in the rustle of the colorful trees, and in the busy highway inviting me to explore the surrounding towns. It's shown me the liveliness in the stars, in the gather-

ing of friends at the Astronomy club who look for planets through the science department's telescopes. The liveliness is in the small details you become attached to in the everyday experience; it's even in the sidewalks everybody uses. It's in the café when the regulars swing by to grab coffee ordered before class, and your friends stopping by the booth at which you're doing homework. The liveliness is in the potential of it all and where you decide to find it—and in this balance of mountain air and local communities, I've embraced all the little moments of it.

To read other articles by McKenna Snow visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net.

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THE PLACE OF THE MOUNT

Junior

Rainy days and Mondays

Emmy Jansen
MSMU Class of 2023

I sat down to write this article on one of the worst days to be reflecting on the scenery surrounding us. Wafting over the mountains and through the color-changing trees was the pungent odor of fresh manure being laid. At some points during the year, you can smell the surrounding farms while walking through campus. Sometimes we become so immune to it that we stop recognizing the smell; it wasn't until my mom remarked on the scent during a visit last year that I started to understand what it was.

When I think about the area we live in, I don't want to focus on only the beauty. Nature is not always beautiful: leaves can poison, algae growth turns water murky and dark, and mud gets caked onto everything it touches. Even the prettiest rose decomposes and the leaves that color the horizon now will be bare and dead in a few weeks.

When I think about how ugly nature can be, I think about the floods from the remnants of Hur-

ricane Ida back in September. Massive amounts of rainfall on top of saturated soil from earlier storms caused flash flooding down the side of the mountain through campus, which eventually breached all the storm barriers the university had put in place. I live in Bradley Hall, the main administrative building of the university with one floor of female students at the very top. The river of flooding came down from the Grotto past Bradley until it hit the roads and lower dorm buildings. We were put into shelter in place because there were no safe walkways around Bradley, and everyone inside would just have to wait. From my fourth-floor view, I watched rainwater not cascade but rush down the mountainside, moving rocks, debris, and even parked cars. The heavy rain and wind leaked through our windows, as it always does, and the humidity soaked the rooms even more.

I do not tell you this to simply display how nature can become destructive and to pride the university on preventing a small disaster from becoming a much larger one. I reflect on this moment because staring out of the dorm windows, watching water and floods drown the campus and leave destruction in

its wake, I cannot describe it as anything less than beautiful.

The common connotation of rain is that it pours sadness along down with it. People hate rainy days, and I have never understood this sentiment. One rainy day last spring, I was having a tremendously hard time and that day was bringing a lot of challenges. When getting counseled by a staff member, she apologized that this already-hard day would be made worse by the clouds and rainy weather. I was very quick to assure her that I loved rain and that the dampness would not add any more weight. Her response has stuck with me ever since: "Well, I guess the sky is raining for you then!"

Rain promises growth, as the flowers we find so beautiful would shrivel without water soaking into their roots. We're thankful for rain when pollen cakes onto our cars in the spring or when August humidity is getting too much to bear. Little kids love jumping in puddles, and I'll be remiss if I don't mention that college students love it too, only when no one is watching. I love getting my hair soaked with rainwater, making pictures with droplets on my window, and the feeling of being compressed inside buildings with the rest of humanity as we all

seek shelter. I do not undermine the grace of a sunny day, but if we can love rain only when we see how it benefits us, I believe we should love rain all the time. I also think adults should jump in more puddles, even when others are watching.

No one can argue that Mount St. Mary's is anything less than beautiful. Coming around the bend on Route 15 and seeing Mary's arms open to welcome you back is one of a Mount student's favorite views. Looking down from the mountaintop at the fields and trees down below is a close second. It's what draws many students to study here and spiritually enriches the seminarians next door. I think the reason this has been an institution of higher learning and faith for more than two hundred years is because of the scenery it is built into. If preserved, it will be what keeps us open for the next two hundred years.

There are six chapels spread all throughout campus for students, staff, and seminarians to reflect and be in the presence of God. But my favorite is none of these; I feel a much deeper spiritual connection while walking through the Grotto. If I could put my finger onto why, although there are a multitude of reasons, I think it has to do with the unchanging nature of

nature. Seasons come and go, which see plants and trees through various cycles and changes. But when Winter ends, you know Spring will come. There is something to be expected from nature and how even if it doesn't look the same, it will always be the same in its essence. The forest I walk through around the Grotto is the same forest St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and Fr. John Dubois walked through hundreds of years ago. Nature does not change, but nature changes us.

This scenery has real significance for all who study here. I could've gotten a similar education at a big state school in a large college town or a downtown city university. But I would not be the same person I am today, and I credit that not only to the university but to the community and scenery in which it is embedded. I would not want to go to college anywhere else but on the side of a mountain, where I can see the world of potential I will enter into after graduation. The impact of the environment surrounding the Mount cannot be understated. I love nature, especially this nature, even when manure stinks, rivers flood, and cicada carcasses cover the sidewalks.

To read other articles by Emmy Jansen, visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net.

Senior

A land of gift

Harry Scherer
MSMU Class of 2022

Snuggled on the eastern slope of the Catocin Mountain sits a small university. For anyone who has stepped foot on the Mount's campus, it is clear that there is something different about this place. But what makes the place distinct for the university, and what makes the university distinct for the place?

From my perspective, the notion that this difference is "clear" is often shrouded in the realm of an imprecise but sustained feeling. This feeling is sustained because my presence at this place is sustained. If the feeling were but transitory, I could be charged with not being present with and for and in my place, and therefore not really being present with myself. If there is anything that I have learned and have become so surely convinced of through my years in university, it is that there are few stations so miserable as not being present in one's place. There is a sure interrelation between a disconnection with one's place, a disconnection with oneself, and a disconnection with others; hopefully the inverse is the case as well.

Of all places to be with oneself and to be with others, the mountain campus is surely a delightful one. As Jack suggests so eloquently in his piece this month, the mountain bears a spiritual, geographical, and eschatological significance. The act of rising up onto, against, and with the mountain is one of fortitude and determination. There is a perpetual struggle in a mountainous place between reality as perceived and reality as such.

This year's flood, as Emmy men-

tions, is one such example. Through that event, our community was simultaneously reminded of the privilege of typicality and the demands of responding to and engaging with the natural world. While these irregular occurrences burden the university with certain constraints of time and finances, there is a certain blessing imbedded in their manifestations. Our daily routines are ripped of their relative sterility and are thrown into the domain of uncertainty. The technological age in which we find ourselves assures us that our lives are in our control, that we can customize, amplify, and regulate to our exact specifications; the suggestion of specifications implies that we know what we want in the first place, which shouldn't necessarily be taken for granted.

A mountainous place allows for this sort of engagement with reality that is not necessarily allowed for in a different kind of place. This is not to say that this engagement with reality is demanded on those who live on a mountain; some can choose to avoid it, to pretend that it does not exist for the sake of some convenience. To cover both those who choose to engage and those who choose to evade, the mountain provides a sort of physical protection from the elements. The university is hidden from the west, and from some angles, the north and the south. As a concession for this protection, it is completely exposed when viewed from the east. In this way, we are pleasantly hidden from most of the world, but are put under the spotlight for that sliver of the world that is graced with a view toward our land.

One practical ramification of this orientation is that those who live on campus can view a sunrise every morning, but never a sunset. We are repeatedly gifted with a view of the rising sun, with the opportunity

to greet new days. These frequent opportunities are yet further reasons to appreciate the gift of living on a mountain, especially during college. While college students are frequently tempted by the lure of "new and exciting opportunities," it is good to be able to regularly welcome the most natural opportunity, namely, the gift of a new day.

As a response to these regular gifts, the historical placement of this university institution must have contributed something to its land over the centuries. Thousands of students, faculty, administration, and staff have invested their bodies and souls into work at this mountain campus since 1808. Surely, the land over the centuries has been abused by our people in ways that we cannot imagine. This abuse might have manifested itself in an obvious waste of our natural resources, or in some of the institutional sins like slavery. Is it possible that this work and presence altered the character of the mountain itself? If so, did they alter it for the good or ill?

I would argue that the mountain is better from our being on it. Imagine no architecture on this part of the Catocin Mountain. Imagine no people travelling from place to place at all hours of the day and night. It seems that our presence here on this mountain vivifies the land itself. If we were absent, would all of the aesthetic benefits of this place still be present?

Granted, the campus architecture varies in its respect for the land on which it sits. It would be foolish to suggest that the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception, or the Terrace, or Bradley Hall can be compared to the PAC, the pavilion behind Delaplaine, or the apartment towers. The former demand permanence and respect and suggest that thought and intentionality preceded

the laying of each stone. By both a quick glance and thorough review, the latter do not demand the same permanence or respect.

This is all to say that the things that we put on this mountain, and the actions that we complete on and for it should serve as a response to all that the mountain has given its people. Architecture and action, in this way, can be thought of as evidence of gratitude. The IC Chapel, the statue of Our Lady at the

Grotto, and the Grotto cave itself are all proper and eminently grateful responses to the land which has been given to us as a gift.

As this year draws to a close, I am overwhelmed with a sense of gratitude for the land that has welcomed me and hope to cherish the short time that I have left with it.

To read other articles by Harry Scherer, visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net.

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HOME DECOR

Why on Earth should you buy used furniture?

Jessica Crawford
Owner, Cotton & Co

We are in the full Christmas spirit over at the shop right now. Sleigh bells are ringing, holiday music is playing over the speakers, there are trees of every shape and size in every nook and cranny. And glitter. So much glitter. The store looks like a winter wonderland. And I would be lying if I didn't say that retail Christmas is my favorite time of the year at Cotton & Co. It's just all around lovely.

And while this season in retail is generally the season of smalls; small items, décor, gifts, etc... it's also a great time of year to make an excuse to spruce up your home in general. During the holiday season, we tend to host guests and company more. And if you're like me, you like to make sure your home is a representation of you and your style, for not just you but also your guests. Sometimes you just need a fresh piece of furniture to change up or update a space in your home.

We are also approaching the winter season, where we are inside much

more than other times of the year. And your indoor environment affects your mindset greatly. Especially when the days are darker and longer. So you want to make sure that your home is in good spirits, so that you are also, during the long winter months.

Which leads me to the topic of this month's article. We hear it occasionally from customers or friends and family. "Why would you buy 'used furniture' when you can buy it new?!" Well, let's talk about that. First, given the way that the world turns right now. Or more so, is grinding gears or at a screeching halt altogether, in terms of production. What you see on our sales floor and our social media posts, is actually in stock. It's ready to take home that day and grace your home. You may have heard that it is taking upwards of a year, a whole year, to receive furniture ordered from the big box shops and furniture stores. Production and freight are so inconsistent at the moment and still recovering worldwide from the pandemic. So production and shipping times are drastically delayed. But when you

shop furniture from small shops, what you see, is ready to take home immediately.

Vintage and antique furniture was also craftsman designed and built. It was built to last and stand the test of time. I always say, you'll likely never have to replace a piece of vintage furniture, unless you want to. Unlike the mass produced furniture, that's made of laminate veneers, composite wood and glue, vintage furniture was built with art and skill. Vintage pieces took time to build, with their dovetailing, solid wood and attention to detail, as well as years of trade skill and training. New and contemporary furniture is designed to fail within a few years, so that it requires replacing regularly. It also tends to show wear and tear and age rapidly, especially if you have cute little kids running around like I do. They can wreak havoc on a poorly or cheaply constructed piece.

Vintage pieces are also one of a kind! As they were hand-built versus factory-made, each piece is an individual work of art and craftsmanship. Each piece has its own personality and design. And if you were to purchase a piece of vintage or antique furniture that's been refinished, no one else is going to have that same piece. You now own a completely one-of-a-kind piece as no one else is going to have that piece of furniture in that same color with that same technique. You are preserving and saving a little chunk of history, while also owning something completely individual and unique.



A few of my favorite vintage pieces in my personal collection.

We also are living in a world right now where we are really embracing and appreciating our impact and influence, both positive and negative on our Earth. We recognize the things that we can do to help our planet and also the things that we are doing that are leaving it worse for future generations. We are living within a Green Revolution. And one of my personal favorite aspects of buying vintage pieces, is that it is one of the greatest forms of recycling. Reduce, reuse, recycle. By purchasing or refinishing your own vintage pieces, you are lessening the waste in landfills. At the same time, you are also lessening factory production of new furniture, which is in effect lessening worldwide pollution. And did you also know, that a lot of the glues and solvents used in the laminate veneer and composite style furniture, slowly and consistently emit harmful toxins into your home? So yeah, there's also that.

By purchasing from small mom and pop shops, you are stimulating

and growing your local community and economy. You are keeping your hard earned salaries in your neighborhood, rather than submitting them to a large corporation that doesn't need, care about or appreciate your purchase. Every small business owner does a small little happy dance with every purchase. Your support and business mean the world. You're helping buy karate and ballet lesson for little ones in your community. You're helping support and house and feed your local families. It's just a beautiful, symbiotic relationship to shop small and local. And it never goes unappreciated or unseen.

So, have I convinced you that there's a lot of value in buying 'used furniture?' As I see it, it's a way to support and grow your local community, while helping our our Mother Earth. And not only that, you're purchasing and appreciating pieces of history. Probably hand-built by someone who is long gone, preserving their legacies and life's work. You're keeping waste and pollutants at a lower capacity too.

While the shop is filled to the gills with holiday décor, gifts and inspiration, the vendors also keep it stocked with an abundance of original and refinished vintage pieces. Stop by and see what's going on, there's always something new weekly. Cotton & Co Vintage Boutique 900 FSK Hwy Keymar, MD, Open weekly Friday-Sunday. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram for updates!

To read past Home Decor articles, visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net.

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COMMUNITY NOTES

History of the fire companies of Frederick County



Members of the United Steam Fire Company pose before "Lily of the Swamp," the 1878 Clapp and Jones Steam Pumper.

Clarence "Chip" Jewell
Frederick County Fire
& Rescue Museum

Organized fire protection in Frederick County, Maryland existed before the adoption of the Constitution of the United States of America. This new book is the third local fire service history book by firefighter Clarence "Chip" Jewell. The book highlights the colorful history of the fire companies of Frederick County from the first fire engine in 1764 and several fire companies long since faded into history. Stories are included of the fire company militia units that were summoned to Harper's Ferry and fire halls used during the Civil War. The book covers the formation of the most recent fire companies back to the local tradition of fire engines "throwing water over the town clock", sometimes to test performance, other times just for bragging rights.

The earliest apparatus in Frederick is highlighted including a newly found picture of the 1838 John Rod-

gers "Junior" pumper that was the first engine purchased by the Junior Fire Co. No. 2 of Frederick. Also noted are three engines that were owned by volunteer fire companies in Baltimore City that made their way to Frederick County. The advent of the steam fire engine pumper began in 1876 with vivid stories of the steamers of each of the three companies in Frederick.

The evolution of the hook-and-ladder in Frederick is a fascinating story of ladder units organized in smaller towns as well as in the city of Frederick. The continued efforts to convince town fathers of the critical need for an aerial ladder that ultimately gave rise to the Citizens Truck Company. The history of the fire companies throwing water over the "Town Clock", sometimes to test an engine, sometimes just for bragging rights, blends the history of the Clustered Spires of Frederick with the fire companies in Frederick.

Two complete chapters are written about little known history of the volunteer firefighters in Frederick

serving as militia and soldiers. The actions of the fire company militia units in Harper's Ferry and the early organized fighting units in Frederick provide a glimpse of a divided community during the Civil War. The use of fire halls as hospitals and prisons reach far outside the normal functions of a fire department.

A detailed history of the Maryland State Firemen's Association begins in 1892 a full year before the was organized in Frederick in 1893. Many major fires are highlighted in Point of Rocks, Creagerstown, New Market and Myersville as well as three major fires that nearly destroyed the town of Mt. Airy in 1903, 1914 and 1925. Information regarding the 1885 fire at St. Joseph's College provides an interesting look into the history of the campus of the National Fire Academy.

A brief history of all twenty five fire and rescue companies in Frederick County is provided to provide an excellent overview of the evolution of the fire and rescue service. The book provides information of very early fire companies that existed prior to 1818 and the Independent Hose Company as well as the early fire companies that were organized outside of the town of Frederick including the Vigilant Hose Company and Middletown Volunteer Fire Company.

The History of Fire Companies of Frederick County, Maryland is a must read book for anyone in the fire service or with an appreciation of history.

The fire service history of Frederick County, Maryland is a microcosm of our national fire service illustrious past. The book is published by Arcadia Publishing in The History Press series. The book will be available at the Frederick County Fire &

Rescue Museum, Barnes and Noble and Curious Iguana in Frederick. The book is available online at Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble.com and arcadiapublishing.com. All proceeds benefit the Frederick County Fire & Rescue Museum.

Vigilant Hose pays off over \$1.3 million debt

At the October monthly meeting of the Vigilant Hose Company, the membership voted upon a recommendation from the organization's Board of Directors to pay off the remaining mortgage on the Fire Station located at 25 W. Main Street and the balance remaining on the loan for our recently purchased Engine 61. The total debt removed from our books was over \$1.3 million dollars.

The ability to achieve this reduction in service debt is directly related to the unbelievable support of the community we service on a daily basis and the excellent planning and fiscal stewardship managed by our Board of Directors through our Planning Committee members. It also illustrates the hard work and dedication of the membership in support of the fundraising efforts of our organization.

During this pandemic, the organization has had to come up with some unique and "outside the box" fundraising ideas, several of which have become substantial money making projects for us. We also understand how the community

enjoys our many feeds and social events. While these type of events have declined because of the pandemic, our fundraising committee is working towards increasing those events so that we can provide an activity that allows members of our community to attend and interact with individuals they might not have seen in quite a while.

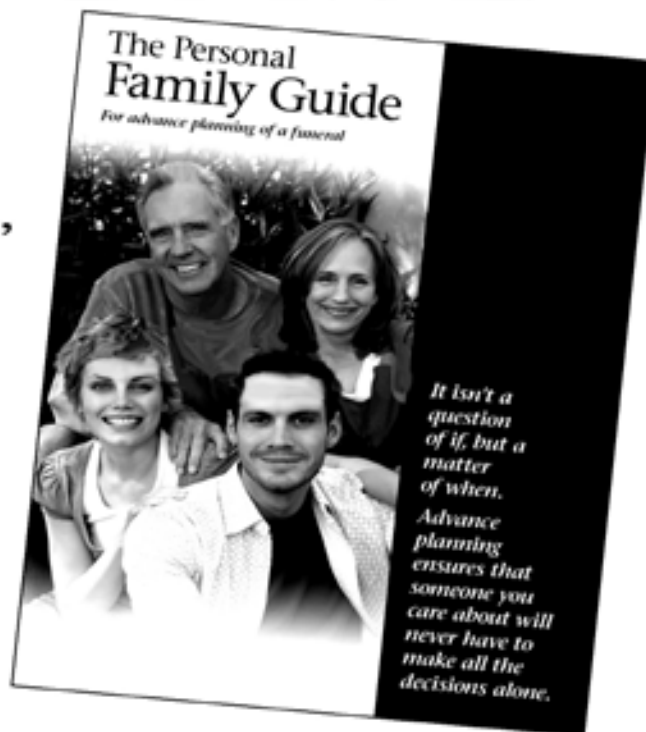
President Tom Ward comments: "It has been nothing but amazing to witness the outpouring of support we have received from our community in support of our fundraising efforts. Without a doubt, our ability to sustain a top of the line fire and ambulance service for the community, with modern equipment and top notch personnel, could not have occurred nor maintained without our strong community support. For that, I am eternally grateful and appreciative of on a daily basis. On behalf of the men and women of the Vigilant Hose Company, I say thank you to everyone that supports us both monetarily and operationally. You inspire us to continue our daily effort to achieve excellence."

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LOCAL ARTS

Irish Christmas in America comes to Frederick

Laura Hawk

Beloved holiday show and tradition Irish Christmas in America is coming to New Spire Arts in Frederick on December 16th at 7:30p! This hugely popular show brings a fascinating performance of music, song, dance and stories of seasonal Irish traditions. Produced by Sligo fiddler Oisín Mac Diarmada, the hugely popular Irish Christmas in America show features top Irish music, song and dance in an engaging performance rich in humor and boundless energy.

The holiday show was first conceived in 2005 with past tours featuring such stellar guest vocalists as Séamus & Méabh Begley, Teresa Horgan, Lumiere (Pauline Scanlon & Eilis Kennedy), Karan Casey, Cara Dillon, Muireann Nic Amhlaibh, Cathie Ryan and

Michael Londra. Mac Diarmada enthuses about the program as a way to bring traditional and often unknown Irish customs to the States. "One of the most heartfelt themes of Irish Christmas is emigration," says Mac Diarmada. "Music was a way that people stayed close to home."

In the following 17 years of performing, Irish Christmas in America has traveled all over the United States including Arizona, California, Utah, and now here in Frederick. Their performances have been described as "Full of exceptional music and dance, relaxed good humor, and interesting historical commentary, "Irish Christmas in America is one of the few standouts. It was as relaxed and enjoyable as any Irish Christmas-themed concert I've ever attended." by Irish Echo and "Lively and reflective...a pow-

erful evocation of the season" by Folk Wax.

The 2021 tour, features special guest singer Niamh Farrell, a Sligo vocalist who has toured with UK singer/songwriting star David Gray. Niamh teams up with legendary West Kerry singer Séamus Begley, famous for his charming wit and stunning voice.

This family-friendly performance features lively instrumental tunes on fiddle, flute, uilleann pipes and harp, along with thrilling Irish old-style dancing from Samantha Harvey. In addition, evocative photographic images provide a backdrop to some of the rich historical traditions of Ireland. Take a memorable glimpse into the enchanting spirit of Christmas, as the finest traditional artists from Ireland, bring you on a fun-filled start to the holiday season.

Please be advised, New Spire



Arts is requiring all patrons to show proof of vaccination or a negative covid test within the 72 hours prior to the event. The wearing of masks is required for all patrons. Children

under 12 are not required to be vaccinated but must wear a mask.

Tickets are available at newspiarts.org.

12th Annual Gingerbread celebration

The Adams County Arts Council is hosting the 12th annual Gingerbread Celebration, runs December 2 through 11 with vendors, viewing/voting and bidding of famous Gingerbread Houses,

and raffle baskets at the Arts Education Center located 125 S. Washington Street. Added to the event this year is a full schedule of activities, entertainment, and holiday fun for all ages during select

times on the Gettysburg Square Art Oasis and a special ticketed preview event to kick off the festivities. The preview event provides a first chance to shop with our vendors, preview the 40+ baskets and

gingerbread houses with early bidding, enjoy live music from Pomona's Trio, and complimentary light refreshments.

All are welcome to enter the gingerbread competition in cate-

gories for businesses, who compete for the coveted Ginger Trophy, and cash prizes for school/non-profit organizations, or family/individual/amateur bakers. \$1 equals 1 vote, and the highest bidders take their favorite house home at the end of the celebration!

There will also be over forty raffle baskets to bid on and filled with beautiful items donated by community volunteers and vary from art, handmade pottery, stained glass, home décor, games, books and more. Voting and bidding for houses and baskets begins for the public on December 3 and ends on December 11 at noon. Voting will be hosted through Bidding Owl and easily accessible online. Links can be found on our website and during in-person visits to the ACAC Arts Education Center, using a QR code.

In partnership with the YWCA and Mainstreet Gettysburg, the Gettysburg Square Art Oasis on Lincoln Square will host live music for all, with special games and crafts for children with an opportunity to decorate the Community Gingerbread House. Tickets are needed for select activities and proceeds benefit the ACAC and the YWCA.

Entertainment and music will include a preview of A Christmas Carol, presented by Totem Pole Playhouse, the Hanover Barbershop Chorus, small group ensembles from Gettysburg High School and New Oxford High School, and voice students from Carrie Conklin's vocal studio. A full schedule will be listed on our website and updated with any changes and additions.

The mission of the Adams County Arts Council is to cultivate an arts-rich community. For more information on the schedule, hours, tickets, bidding/voting please visit our website at www.adamsarts.org/events email aa@adamsarts.org or call 717-334-5006.

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MOUNT ARTS

A musical December

Joseph Carlson
MSMU Class of 2025

This season at the Mount has produced some terrific fine art. The events have been manifold and are still ongoing.

The choir took part in a major production of the opera, *La Boheme*, featuring notable tenor Nicholas Simpson and our own Francesca Aguado-Murray as the lead soprano, with the accomplished chorale director at the Mount, Dr. Andrew Rosenfeld, serving as director. In Dr. Rosenfeld's words, "What an honor working with this group of amazing musicians—singers and instrumentalists alike were absolutely brilliant. Sellout audience—we had to turn people away at the door. This was the first step toward establishing an opera company in Frederick!" Since the opera was such a success, the community of Emmitsburg can look forward to events like it in the future.

The St. Cecilia Concert on Nov. 22nd was a success and was a great foretaste of the upcoming Advent Concert on Dec. 9th. The Mount's theatre department had their first mainstage production in two years, *The Wolves*, a finalist for the 2017 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. The play focuses on a high school girls' soccer team during their pregame warmups. It is essentially a series of still-lives. It does a terrific job representing a girl's locker room; that being said, there is no plot and no resolution. It is not a traditional drama, and it wasn't intended to be. The viewer simply lives the lives of the characters for a short while. The acting was quite terrific, and I'm excited at the Mount's dramatic prospects. However, the play too accurately portrays a girl's locker room—the only thing special about it is that it does what it was meant to do. The piece left the viewer with no additional hope or contentment, no satisfaction; there was no narrative, just like there is no narrative in a girl's locker room. Along these lines, this is not an event to bring children to: there are some quite vulgar jokes and explicit references. It is a unique piece of artistic dialogue; just don't expect what is proper to a drama.

Students taking individual lessons had the opportunity to showcase what they've been working on at a program on Nov. 6th—the first performance in Knott Auditorium since before the pandemic. On the 13th of Nov., the Wind Ensemble, along with the lab band, performed the music of Michael Giacchino, a performance chock-full of beauty and artistic character. Listeners would have recognized several works from this exhibition. The concert opened soft and soothing, with *Bundle of Joy* from "Inside Out", followed by an upbeat and refreshing rendition of *Remember Me* from "Coco". *Le Festin*, from "Ratatouille", featured Angelica Arroyo as soloist, and there were some extraordinary works from "The Incredibles", "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story", "Jurassic World", and "Star Trek".

If you missed these performances, worry not; the best is yet to come.

On Dec. 4th, there will be a faculty recital featuring James Tung, violin, and John Wickelgren, piano, at 7:30 in Homing Theatre. It will be a sonata dual between Brahms and Prokofiev,

two powerful composers. If you wish to develop a taste in classical music or develop one in your children, this is the event to attend.

The Flute Ensemble will be playing Christmas carols at the Emmitsburg Library on Dec. 6th at 5:30. They are lovely musicians, and it would be a sweet experience for the Holidays.

There is a Student Art Exhibition through Dec. 10th, featuring art from Dr. Holtry's environmental art class, made entirely of natural materials from the Mount's Campus and the local community. The event is in the Williams Gallery, which is located in the Delaplaine Fine Arts Center on campus.

There will be a recital on the 8th in Homing theatre at 7:30, where private lessons students will perform everything they have been practicing this semester. "There are a lot of great up-and-coming musicians this year at the Mount. We want to highlight their skills and showcase what they've been working on," says Dr. Aguado Murray, the vocal instructor at the Mount. There will be staged duets and trios performed from Mozart's opera, *The Magic Flute*, by her vocal students, as well as pieces that reflect the Mount musicians' dedication in their private lessons for various instruments. Because there are so many good musicians coming in, the Mount Fine Arts department will be looking to grow in the coming semesters, with more recitals and performances throughout the semester, rather than only the traditional semesterly concerts. This is wonderful news for the Emmitsburg community because it means more

collegiate-level performances to attend throughout the year.

On Dec. 9th, the Chorale and Wind Ensemble will be performing an Advent Concert in Immaculate Conception Chapel at 7:30. Dr. Aguado invites you to participate in this event: "The past two years we've been unable to make music together, and now is the time to showcase the music that we've been working on at the Mount. We're really hoping to foster a sense of community with this concert, and to get into the Christmas spirit!" This concert will be about an hour-long and will include music from the Wind Ensemble and Chorale along with Christmas carols for attendees to sing along to. This is the perfect event to bring your family to in order to get them into the Christmas spirit, not to mention that it's not too long for children's attention spans.

These recitals will be wonderful culminating events for the semester and welcomingly bright after two years of sad artistic silence. They are entirely worth attending and would be lovely family events for the holidays. As Dr. Aguado-Murray puts it, "There is no reason to be bored on December 8th and 9th."

Now is a fitting time to be doing all of this music-making. It's getting colder, and there's this idea that the world is dying, and will be nearing rebirth in the Spring. In the meantime, we have the coldest and darkest months of the year. The lovely thing about Christmas is that we hope and have joy and light in a time where the natural world lacks so much of it. The world is still scary coming out of the pandemic, and it is therefore fitting that now is when the Mount produces her finest works. It would be a sad thing if the community wasn't involved in the artistic process—you all



are an audience for which the Mount so desires to produce beautiful music.

As the semester comes to a close, students are beginning to submit their pieces for publication in *Lighted Corners*, the annual literary and arts magazine that publishes poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, fine art, and photography created by students of Mount St. Mary's. The publication is accomplished and will be rolling its 2022 edition out in the Spring Semester.

Looking forward, there will be a new Opera Workshop class offered at the

Mount in the spring. This will come with more performances in various languages from our talented Mount singers—stay tuned for more information.

Mount Arts are looking up, with new talent and big plans! The Emmitsburg community continues to be an important audience in all the Mount's artistic ventures, and the Mount welcomes your support.

To read other articles by Joseph Carlson, visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net.



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CATOCTIN SPORTS

Catoctin fall sports playoffs



The CHS field hockey team finished the postseason with a record of 6-7.

Mia Ferraro
CHS Class of 2022

Catoctin High School has officially swung into the winter sports preseason, but not without first bringing home some playoff victories to finish the fall season off strong. Having concluded their regular season in late October, CHS fall sports teams proceeded to carry their momentum into the postseason in early November. A few playoff-winning teams making CHS proud are the field hockey, volleyball, and cross-country teams.

The CHS field hockey team entered the postseason on Nov. 1 when they competed at home in the regional semifinals. There they defeated Brunswick High School 2-0 when CHS senior Cheyenne Van Echo and sophomore Meghan Gray had one goal each, and freshman Annie Abruzzese had one assist.

This victory took them to the regional finals on Nov. 3, where they lost 1-0 to host Frederick Scott Key High School. The CHS field hockey team steadily improved since last season's record of 1-9, finishing the 2021-2022 season off with an overall record of 6-7. The team consisted of 19 players this season, including 10 juniors, and loses just three seniors next season. Consequently, the team will have plenty of players returning for another hopeful season next year.

The volleyball team secured a regular season record of 10-4 after the last game on Oct. 28 at CHS where they defeated Tuscarora High School 3-0. The Gambrell Division champions moved on to the regional quarterfinals on Nov. 4 where they hosted Brunswick High School. CHS senior Danielle Baker had nine aces, senior Rylee Curtis had 12 kills, senior Paige Romeril had 11 digs, and senior Paige Smith had

16 assists. CHS won 3-0 with sets of 25-15, 25-11, and 25-11. They then advanced to the regional semifinals at CHS on Nov. 8. They faced off against Smithsburg High School and lost 3-0 with sets of 25-22, 25-21, and 25-19. The team says goodbye to seven valuable seniors graduating this year, but are sure to enter the 2022-2023 season with promising newcomers, some returning players, and the same winning attitude.

The Cougars took to Linganore High School on Oct. 28 for the Frederick County cross-country tournament. Junior Alex Contreras took eighth place out of 70 runners in the men's 5,000 meter race with 17 minutes and 40.63 seconds. Sophomore Jenna Conley placed 16th of 64 runners in the women's race with a time of 21:55.64.

The regional championships for cross-country were held on Nov. 4 at Smithsburg High School. The CHS boys cross-country team placed fourth of nine schools competing on the men's three mile course with an average time of 18 minutes and 34 seconds. Contreras took first place out of 63 participants with 16 minutes and 54.5 seconds. Sophomore Santiago Canadas Fraga (18:41.9) took 17th place, sophomore Gabriel Riling (18:47.4) took 18th, and junior Nikolas Contreras (18:55.1) finished 20th. The CHS girls team placed seventh of nine schools in the women's race with an average time of 24 minutes and three seconds. Conley (20:25.1) took fourth place out of

Polar Bear Plunge

Plans for the annual Polar Bear Plunge are already underway; jump in to support our unified athletes! The Plunge is a Maryland tradition held by Special Olympics for the past 26 years where people all over the state jump into the Chesapeake Bay to raise money for unified sports. Last year was the first year that the event was entirely virtual; participants would send in videos of themselves plunging into ponds and lakes, dunking icy water on themselves, or even spraying themselves with fire hoses. This year Special Olympics Maryland will hold the in-person plunge at the bay as usual, but also continues to offer the opportunity to participate virtually again.

The fundraiser consists of a number of events including the Cool Schools Plunge, which Catoctin High School students and staff will be participating in by jumping into the Chesapeake Bay alongside each other

on Feb. 3 at Sandy Point State Park. If you'd prefer to show support from the comfort of your home, you are welcome to donate without registering, or contribute virtually by sending in a video of you participating at home.

Participation is secured by donating or collecting pledges from family and friends. \$646,000 was raised for the last Polar Bear Plunge. As of late November, Marylanders have raised \$55,400 of the \$1.3 million goal for the upcoming plunge. The funds are put towards providing year-long sports training, competition, and leadership programs for the state's thousands of unified athletes. As Special Olympics states on their website, "Your contribution and involvement helps athletes achieve their goals, live healthier lives, and have a sense of inclusion in the community."

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65 participants, and sophomore Keira Taylor (23:42.8) finished 28th.

Their results at the regional championship qualified the CHS boys cross-country team for the states tournament, for which Conley also qualified to represent the girls team. CHS finished in sixth place out of 15 competing schools in the men's three mile course with an average time of 19 minutes and 28 seconds. Alex Contreras (18:01.3) took sixth place out of 117 total runners. Conley (21:16.21) finished in fourth place out of 104 total runners in the women's race.

Despite falling behind this season, the CHS varsity football team maintained a winning attitude at their last game of the regular season. The team (1-9) finished off strong on Oct. 30 at home against No. 2 seed Brunswick High School. CHS scored a touchdown in the first quarter between junior quarterback Connor Crum and senior Lane Stull, followed by a two-point conversion by sophomore Charlie Dougherty. The Cougars

led 8-0 into the fourth quarter when Brunswick scored a touchdown with seven minutes and forty seconds left. CHS then scored a 52-yard touchdown pass between Crum and senior Brendan Ott with five minutes and thirty seconds left. Dougherty forced a fumble during the last two minutes.

This secured the team's redeeming win after the eight regular season losses. Back in September, the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) Executive Council announced a new policy that allows each high school football team to compete in the first round of playoffs. As a result, the Cougars were able to face off against the Brunswick Railroaders once again as they visited the opponent on Nov. 5 for the regional quarterfinals, resulting in a final loss of 13-0. The team of 32 consists of seven seniors that will be graduating in the spring. There's plenty of potential among upcoming players for next season, especially considering the promise shown by the junior varsity team this year. The JV team had an overall record of 4-1-2, scoring a minimum of 20 points each victory.

The winter sports preseason began on Nov. 15 when try-outs started and practices immediately followed. Scrimmages also commenced on Nov. 22. CHS welcomes two new coaches: Rick Reeder who is coaching wrestling, and Justin Wantz who is coaching girls swimming and diving. Last winter sports season was interrupted by a lockdown on sports and shortened by safety policies due to the pandemic. This caused many roadblocks in the season, including the limited practices, cancellation of competitions, and the inability to have playoff tournaments. Even so, CHS teams made impressive strides and held their heads high despite the complications. With winter competitions beginning Dec. 6, it will be interesting to watch our athletes make up for lost time.

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Mount St. Mary's basketball faces tough test

Sam Barber
MSMU Class of 2022

This past March was a joyous occasion for both basketball programs at Mount St. Mary's University. It was the first season in which both teams had won the conference championship in the same season since 1995. Like any other defending champion before them, both squads are eager to keep the hardware and title of champion in Emmitsburg. However, unlike last year, competition is elevated across the Northeast Conference (NEC). So, what are the realistic chances of the Mount sweeping the 2022 conference tournament? Not so likely.

The Mount's men's basketball program is nearly a month into the 2021-22 season and sitting at 2-4 in the process. Led by Dan Engelstad, who is now in his fourth season at the helm of the Mountaineers, they are missing two key components that drove them to the NCAA Tournament a season ago. First, the prolific scoring of Damian Chong Qui is no longer in the program, as he transferred out to Purdue-Fort Wayne. If that was not bad enough, second is the loss of reliable big man Jalen Gibbs, who put his name in the new-era transfer portal and found a new home at Jacksonville State in Alabama. Both players averaged 16.5 and 15.1 points per game (PPG), respectively.

Losing players to the transfer portal is never an easy pill to swallow, especially for the Mount since Chong Qui and Gibbs played such a crucial role in building success within the program. However, the beauty of the transfer portal is that schools can bring talent onto their team as well. Coach Engelstad picked up two key transfers during the offseason, Jalen Benjamin (via UAB) and Elijah Elliott (via Oklahoma Christian). The former hails from a school out of Conference USA, which is a considerably more competitive conference, and has quickly become one of the most reliable players on the team. In a Nov. 22 matchup against Ohio, Benjamin poured in a season-high 23 points.

A season ago the heavyweight moniker belonged to the likes of Bryant and Wagner, while Mount St. Mary's and Sacred Heart played a

more secondary role in the conference. Fans of the NEC can expect the same throughout this season. In the early portions of the season, the conference is struggling immensely across the board, with a combined record of 12-30. Despite the flawed record, Bryant and Wagner have put themselves in the driver's seat offensively. The latter team is currently on a COVID-19 pause and has not played since Nov. 13. This pause is the first of its kind this season.

As for Bryant, this team holds a larger connection to Mount St. Mary's than any other team in the conference. The Bulldogs were defeated by the Mount in the championship game of last season's conference tournament. A rivalry between the two schools could certainly brew as the first meeting of the two teams is tabbed for Jan. 15, 2022. Bryant should be a formidable challenge to the Mount's chances to repeat, especially being equipped with Charles Pride and Peter Kiss. Both players are a dominant force in the NEC.

Sizing up the rest of the conference, usual powerhouse programs Fairleigh Dickinson and Long Island University (LIU), are both off to winless starts at 0-3, respectively. The slow start from LIU comes as a surprise because of the stronghold they have had on the conference over the past decade, making four NCAA Tournament appearances during that span. Outside of Fairleigh Dickinson and LIU, no team appears to be a formidable threat to the Mount.

Merrimack, who currently sits at 3-3 on the season, would pose a threat to the Mount; however, the Warriors are ineligible for the conference tournament until 2023 due to their transition from Division-II.

On the women's side of the hardwood, there was plenty of turnover within the program during the offseason. This turnover was seen on the coaching staff as well as from a player's perspective. Most notably, former coach Maria Marchesano left the program to coach at the same program Damian Chong Qui left for, Purdue-Fort Wayne. From a player standpoint, the losses of Bridget Birkehead (transfer to Radford) and Rebecca Lee (graduation) have been felt in the early portions of the season, especially Lee. The loss of Lee, who

stood at 6'4, has left a size difference in the paint area and underneath the basket.

Much like the men's program taking advantage of the transfer portal, so has the women's side of the program. Newly crowned head coach Antoine White, the former assistant, picked up Tess Borgosz, a grad transfer from Towson. The height of Borgosz should match up evenly and offset the loss of Lee.

There is a feature that Coach White's ball club has that most other teams in the NEC do not have: that would be depth on the bench. Spearheading the offense are the likes of Aryna Taylor, Kendall Breese, and Michaela Harrison. Harrison and Taylor have been absolute money for the Mount in the early portions of the season. Taylor leads the scoring trio at 15.3 PPG while Breese and Harrison are putting up 14.8 and 12.3 PPG, respectively.

Isabella Hunt, the sophomore post-player, and Jessica Tomasetti, the sophomore guard, have elevated their games from a season ago. Tomasetti has seen herself become a formidable threat from beyond the 3-point line. As for Hunt, she is bringing in close to 9.0 PPG, which for a post-player is a tremendous accomplishment. The sophomore class has been a crucial steppingstone in the building of a successful program with longevity.

Scheduling big-time matchups has been at the forefront for Coach White. The Mount has played a slew of top-tier teams, most notably Seton Hall and nationally ranked University of Maryland. The slate does not get any easier, as the Mount will travel to the likes of Clemson and Ohio State, two Power Five programs. The loaded non-conference portion of the schedule is certainly going to pay off when it comes to conference play.

Formatting a tougher schedule is a new component to this team. This has been the toughest schedule for the Mount in recent memory. That is a refreshing feature that Coach White is certain he will continue moving forward in the rest of his tenure.

In the preseason, Mount St. Mary's was tabbed as a unanimous favorite for the NEC. Outside of Fairleigh Dickinson, which is a longshot challenge at best, the Mount has a clear-cut path to the conference crown.



Completing the conference sweep, a regular-season and conference tournament championship, will not be a walk in the park, however, since all the pressure has been placed on the Mount from their conference peers.

The men's team has just seven non-conference tilts remaining on the schedule before NEC play comes full swing. Mount St. Mary's will see two conference foes before the new year, Fairleigh Dickinson (Dec. 29)

and Wagner (Dec. 31). As for the women's team, six non-conference games are left on the slate. Then, the Mount will travel to Fairleigh Dickinson (Dec. 29) and Wagner (Dec. 31). The Mount's first home conference game is set for Jan. 6 against the Long Island University Sharks from Knott Arena.

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COMPLEMENTARY CORNER

Health: a way through

Jefferson Brand

Health is a funny thing and serious as a heart attack.

As we know, health is not 'Ha Ha' funny; it is, though, perhaps one of the most curious and misunderstood aspects of being alive. What exactly is health? A dictionary definition says health is "the state of being free from illness or injury." Illness is defined as a disease or period of sickness affecting the body or mind. Another definition of health is "a person's mental or physical condition." This second definition says nothing about feeling good or bad.

Generally speaking, many of us take "health" for granted until we notice something different in our bodies that causes us to say, "Hey! Something is wrong." Health is invisible until it isn't. It is curious that our bodies work constantly to create a balanced and harmonious life within us and we generally have no clue what is happening. We can't feel most of the millions and millions of processes that are happening every moment of every day of our life.

The action of health can be equated with the action of standing on one leg. You don't really lift one leg up, find the balance point and you are done balancing. You keep balancing yourself until you put your foot down. Come to think of it, we need to balance when we use two feet, too.

Balancing anything is on ongoing activity. It is dynamic, not static. Health is the same way. You don't one day reach "health" and then you are healthy forever. Health is a blend of you consciously and your body

unconsciously balancing the necessary processes of your body's systems to have some level or degree of health.

Often, a patient will say, "I was fine, then out of nowhere, I got this pain..." or some other symptom. Chances are that the journey of this "sudden" symptom started years before and according to Traditional Chinese Medicine, (TCM), more often than not, the root cause is an emotion that created an imbalance in the body.

Every moment of every day our body, mind, and spirit interact with the world around us, even while we sleep. These interactions produce emotions that produce neuropeptides that course through our body and have an effect on the functions of our body down to our cellular level. Sometimes these effects are noticeable and mostly they are not. Over time, if certain interactions with the "outside world" and their accompanying negative emotions are repeated, there will be a cumulative effect in our body until it has a profound effect on our well-being.

Most emotions, in and of themselves, are not harmful. According to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), they become harmful when they are not expressed in a healthy way and our Qi (pronounced "Chee"), our body's vital energy, gets stuck or creates an energetic imbalance in us.

There are parallels to this idea in Western medicine. The field of Epigenetics is the study of lifestyle on health. It is the study of the effect of diet, stress, aging, drugs, environmental factors such as pollution, etc. on genetic expression- how certain

genes are turned-on or turned-off.

This is why epigenetics can be a powerful tool in understanding that our genetics are not "written in stone." Just because our family members got a disease doesn't mean we are going to get it too. Our DNA contains both the potential for health as well as disease. When we focus our intention on healthier choices in our life, we can begin to tip the balance toward healthier genetic expression.

This is why I have been beating a drum about the ideas of "necessary suffering" and "unnecessary suffering." In particular I have been writing about the effect of "unnecessary suffering" on our health. Our lives and its accompanying "lifestyle" are all based on our beliefs of what life is.

Generally speaking, unnecessary suffering is caused by a belief that something/someone should be different than it is/they are. This can be an expectation that isn't met. It can be letting someone's words get under our skin. It can be the weather. It can be the person in the car in front of you driving slower than you think they should. Basically, it can be any experience that triggers an emotional response.

Over time, these emotional responses, big or small, can effect our genetic expression and manifest as disease or reduce our immunity if they are not allowed to express themselves in a natural way. Many times it is societal beliefs that interrupt this natural expression. "Boys don't cry," "girls don't yell," "wives shouldn't question their husbands," "children are meant to be seen, not heard" are examples of beliefs that limit emotional expression.

My mother's life and health are clear examples of the effects of neces-

sary as well as unnecessary suffering. As I mentioned in August's column, she had some profound challenges in her life. She was grief stricken by the death of her daughter, my sister Kathleen. My mother did not know how to express or process or acknowledge this grief. According to TCM, grief affects the function of the Lung. So it makes sense to me that she developed asthma, had chronic bronchitis, and episodes of pneumonia.

Kathleen's death is an example of "necessary suffering." My mother did not have the means, the tools or beliefs, to help her navigate such an extreme example like a daughter's death. Do these means end the grief? I hope not, because grief, in my understanding, exists because of the love we have and I will never stop loving Kathleen. And yes, I had respiratory issues for years until I didn't. I still weep about her death and miss her deeply. I believe I helped myself by focusing on living my life fully, the love we had for each other, and honoring her life.

An example of unnecessary suffering created by my mother was her frustration about society's beliefs on the role of women. She was frustrated by certain aspects of her marriage. According to TCM, anger and frustration affect the Liver and Gall Bladder. So it makes sense to me that in her late 80s, she experienced digestive issues and had surgery to remove 200 gall stones.

While she couldn't change a long-held societal belief during her lifetime, she might have changed her relationship to the frustration in order to decrease its effects on her. As for her husband, my father, she might have communicated more effectively, asked him to communicate more effectively, designed her relationship with him differently, or focused more on her dreams and aspirations. She might have shifted her expectations.

I am not blaming her for her own

suffering. Who knows what might have helped. What I do know is that she didn't know she had a choice about changing her relationship to her beliefs about her marriage, hence, the gallstones. The energy or Qi of unexpressed emotions can become denser and denser and take physical form. This can be seen in other conditions such as cancer.

When we realize we have a choice about how to relate to any person or situation, we can make decisions to reduce that suffering by making changes in our ways of doing, being, and speaking. When we make these changes we can begin to change our neurochemistry and reverse the genetic expressions that lead to disease.

It may seem like semantics or a "Jedi mind-trick" to say that if we change way we look at the world, the world will change. It is well-known in the scientific community that intention and conscious or unconscious bias shape studies and therefore influence results. Intention also effects the world on the level of quantum physics. Our thoughts do not exist in a vacuum. Thoughts have a direct effect on our body's energy which effects our biology down to the genetic level.

So why not reduce your "unnecessary suffering" in order to have more balanced emotional life. Why not choose to participate in your health? Why not choose to consciously help your body, mind, spirit be more peaceful? These are ways to help you through this life with more health and happiness. There is no downside, only upside.

Jefferson Breland is a board-certified acupuncturist licensed in Pennsylvania and Maryland with offices in Gettysburg and Towson. If you would like to know more about how Jefferson helps people please call him at 410-336-5876, email him at jeffersonacupuncture@gmail.com, or visit his website www.jeffersonbrelandacupuncture.org.



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HEALTH AND FITNESS

Christmas dinner

Linda Stultz
Certified Fitness Trainer

Turkey or ham is still the main part of the meal but you can add so many vegetables and fruits to spice things up for Christmas Dinner.

Dressing, mashed potatoes, gravy, warm bread and dessert are also part of the traditional meal. I'm not saying don't have these favorites; just alter the way they are prepared. Try mashed sweet potatoes or mashed cauliflower this year. The cauliflower trend has really taken off. There are so many recipes out there for traditional dishes that use cauliflower instead of pasta or potatoes. Try whole grain bread for the dressing. Whole grains are much healthier than processed white bread and supply added fiber. You can also sprinkle flaxseed meal or wheat germ to add a bit of nutty flavor and nobody will be the wiser. Gravy is one of the most important parts of this meal. Let your broth set for a while till it forms a solid skim on top. Remove this and you will have broth with much less fat. The gravy still tastes the same, without the fat. Gravy can even be made a day or two early to save you time on the big day. The warm bread can be a variety of different whole grain buns. This way, everybody gets their favorite kind such as wheat, rye, pumpernickel and now even whole grain white. Add a veggie tray with low fat dip. Cooked seasoned veggies such as squash, carrots and cauliflower are also a great combination if you prefer hot vegetables. One half of your plate should be filled with veggies. Raw vegetables give you the most nutritional value. Have them on the table or the kitchen counter for your family and guests to nibble while the main meal is being prepared. They will fill up on these and maybe not eat as much later. Supply a variety of vegetables to pick from. Hopefully, you will have at least one

kind that the kids like.

Gluten is something that will give people a problem. There are many new gluten free products on the market today. Check the frozen section of the grocery store and you may be pleasantly surprised at what you find. I now use vegetable pasta instead of the traditional pasta and I can't tell the difference. I also use zucchini noodles and spaghetti squash and my whole family likes it. We avoid some of the carbs and still have the great flavor.

Dessert! Some people live for the dessert table. That's OK. Give yourself a treat. Just look over everything carefully, and decide what you really want. Maybe even sample a few different kinds. Try cutting the slices in half. That way you can try a bigger variety. Watch out for the pumpkin pie, you know who you are! Preparing a small plate of dessert for your guests to take home is also a thoughtful way to let them sample everything, just not all at one time. They can take a little piece of Christmas home to remember for the rest of the holiday. This way you do not have all of that dessert leftover and tempting you. Your waistline will thank you later. Check into some small changes in the recipe that will make a big difference in the fat and sugar content of the dessert. Pumpkin is a great way to add that creamy texture to your cakes and cookies and even a good thickener for other recipes, while lowering the fat and raising the protein. Flaxseed meal can also be added to pies and cakes to give your family that added health benefit without them even knowing it is there. Applesauce in place of oil is another helpful, healthy hint. Sugar is a big ingredient that packs on the pounds. Add a little less sugar to your recipes and you may just discover you didn't need all that the recipe called for anyway. Check out your grocery store's healthy cooking aisle for alternatives to sugar. Coco-



nut sugar is lower in glycemic index and still tastes great. Artificial sweeteners can leave an after taste. I wish someone could come up with a way to sweeten food without the calories, bad taste and harmful effects of sugar. Maybe someday someone will. Remember, fresh seasonal fruit also makes a great dessert. Fruit has natural sugar but has much less calories than desserts made with sugar.

Start a new tradition this year that will continue for years and

hopefully make you feel better because you are doing something healthy for yourself and your family. Taking a walk after your meal is a great idea. I know how everybody feels after eating a big meal, all the more reason to get moving. Take the whole family for a walk in the brisk air. Share this time and walk off some of those extra pounds you just consumed. If you can't get the whole family involved, pick a friend or family member that you would like to spend a lit-

tle extra time with. Share conversation, ideas and just time with them. Maybe after all day together preparing the big Christmas feast you may want to escape by yourself for a nice, quiet, peaceful walk of your own. If you can't get outside for a walk use the treadmill or an exercise tape. Don't have a machine or tape, turn on the music and just dance. You will have fun and bring the family together. These tips work for any holiday gatherings.

Merry Christmas to everyone!



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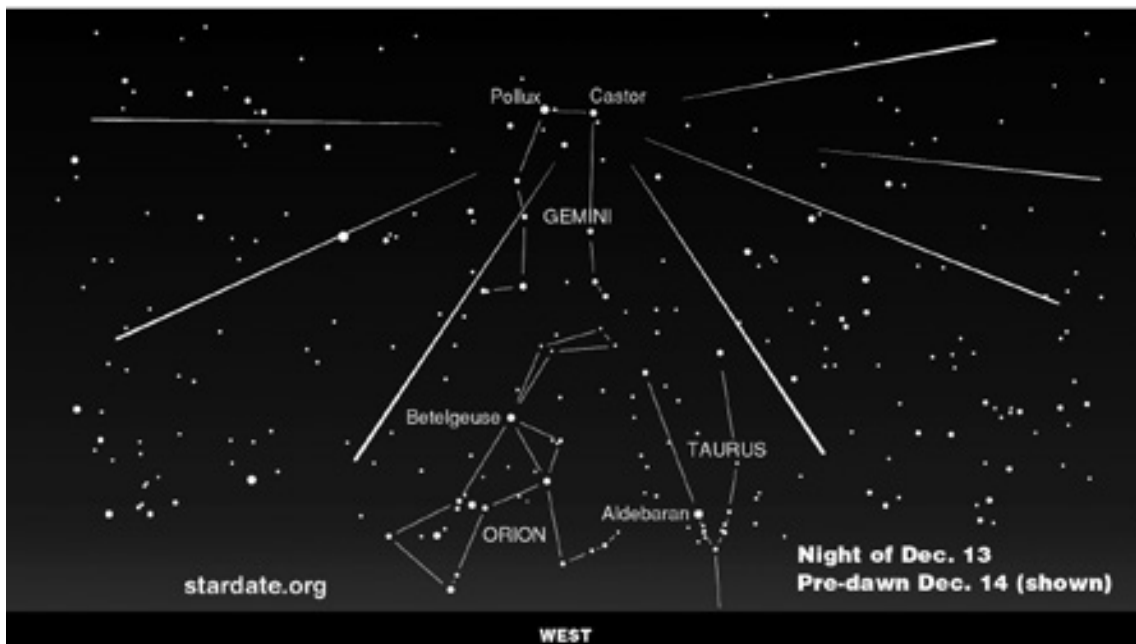
The night sky of December

Professor Wayne Wooten

The waning crescent moon is just above Mars in the dawn on December 2nd, and is new on December 4th. The waxing crescent moon is just below Venus in the dusk on December 6th. Compare their phases that evening in low power telescopes. The moon passes beneath Saturn on December 7th, and below Jupiter on December 8th. It is first quarter on December 10th.

The best meteor shower of the year, the Geminid meteor shower, peaks on the morning of December 14, with best observing after moonset about 3 AM. Look for a meteor a minute coming out of the NE. The full moon, the Yule or Long Night Moon, occurs on December 18th. The winter solstice, our shortest day, begins at 10:59 a.m.. The last quarter moon is on December 26th, and on News Eve, the waning crescent moon again returns to the right of Mars.

Prime time of planetary observing is fast ending. All three bright planets now in the west will soon vanish behind the Sun. This is most true of Venus, which overtakes earth this month and gets much larger in the telescope and even binoculars. The phase is 30% lit on December 1st, down to 15% by midmonth, down to 10% at Winter Solstice, and down to a mere 5% sliver by New Years. But she has grown to over an arc minute in size, the biggest any planet



The best meteor shower of the year, the Geminid meteor shower, peaks on the morning of December 14, with best observing after moonset about 3 a.m. Look for a meteor a minute coming out of the north-east.

can appear from Earth. She will be low in the twilight then, and beside Mercury in dusk on December 30th about 40 minutes after sunset, a fitting ending to the year!

Saturn will be the next to vanish in the Sun's glare, in January, and Jupiter by Valentine's Day. As they are low in the SW, stay to low powers to see the 4 moons around Jupiter and Saturn's rings while you can in the telescope.

The square of Pegasus dominates the western sky. South of it are the watery constellations of Pisces (the fish), Capricorn (Sea Goat), Aquarius (the Water Bearer), and Cetus (the Whale). Below Aquarius is Fomalhaut, the only first magnitude star of the southern fall

sky. It is the mouth of Pisces Australis, the Southern Fish.

The constellation Cassiopeia makes a striking W in the NW. She contains many nice star clusters for binocular users in her outer arm of our Milky Way, extending to the NE now. Her daughter, Andromeda, starts with the NE corner star of Pegasus' Square, and goes NE with two more bright stars in a row. It is from the middle star, beta Andromeda, that we proceed about a quarter the way to the top star in the W of Cassiopeia, and look for a faint blur with the naked eye. M-31, the Andromeda Galaxy, is the most distant object visible with the naked eye, lying about 2.5 million light years distant.

Overhead is Andromeda's hero, Perseus, rises. Perseus contains the famed eclipsing binary star Algol, where the Arabs imagined the eye

of the gorgon Medusa would lie. It fades to a third its normal brightness for six out of every 70 hours, as a larger but cooler orange giant covers about 80% of the smaller but hotter and thus brighter companion as seen from Earth.

Look at Perseus' feet for the famed Pleiades cluster; they lie about 400 light years distant, and over 250 stars are members of this fine group. East of the seven sisters is the V of stars marking the face of Taurus the Bull, with bright orange Aldebaran as his eye. The V of stars is the Hyades cluster, older than the blue Pleiades, but about half their distance. Their appearance in November in classical times was associated with the stormy season, when frail sailing ships stayed in port. Aldebaran is not a member of the Hyades, but about twice as close as the Hyades; distances in astronomy can be deceiving.

Yellow Capella, a giant star the same temperature and color as our much smaller Sun, dominates the overhead sky. It is part of the pentagon on stars making up Auriga, the Charioteer. Several nice binocular Messier open clusters are found in the winter milky way here. East of Auriga, the twins, Castor and Pollux highlight the Gemini. History buffs associate the pair with Jason and the Golden Fleece legend, for they were the first two Argonauts to sign up on his crew of adventurers.

South of Gemini, Orion is the most familiar winter constellation, dominating the eastern sky at dusk. The reddish supergiant Betelgeuse marks his eastern shoulder, while blue-white supergiant Rigel stands opposite on his west knee. Just south of the belt, hanging like a sword downward, is M-42, the Great Nebula of Orion, an outstanding binocular and telescopic stellar nursery. It is part of a huge spiral arm gas cloud, with active starbirth all over the place.

Last but certainly not least, in the east rise the hunter's two faithful companions, Canis major and minor. Procyon is the bright star in the little dog, and rises minutes before Sirius, the brightest star in the sky. Sirius dominates the SE sky by 7 PM, and as it rises, the turbulent winter air causes it to sparkle with shafts of spectral fire. Beautiful as the twinkling appears to the naked eye, for astronomers this means the image is blurry; only in space can we truly see "clearly now". At 8 light years distance, Sirius is the closest star we can easily see with the naked eye. Below Sirius in binoculars is another fine open cluster, M-41, a fitting desert for New Year's sky feast.

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Farmers' Almanac

"But I heard him exclaim 'ere he drove out of sight,

'Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night!'"

—Clement Clarke Moore (1779-1863)

Mid-Atlantic Weather Watch:

Fair, turning milder (1, 2, 3); snow, rain east (3, 4, 5); windy at first, then dry but cold (6, 7); rain, light snow central and west (8, 9, 10, 11); fair, cool (12, 13, 14, 15, 16); 17-19 rain, snow central and west (17, 18, 19); fair, breezy, colder (20, 21); fair, milder (22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29); rain, breezy (30, 31). Severe Weather Watch: Possible heavy snow (4, 5); high winds (6, 7, 8); more heavy snow possible (17, 18, 19).

Full Moon: December's full moon falls on the 18th and because of the lower temperatures during the month, has been called Cold Moon by many Native American tribes. Other tribes noticed the Beavers scurrying to finish building their dams and lodges before the lakes and ponds begin to ice over, called it Ice-Forming Moon and Beaver Moon.

Special Notes: Winter Solstice will occur on Tuesday, December 21st.

Holidays: Christmas is celebrated on Saturday, December 25th, and Kwanzaa begins on Sunday, December 26th. Enjoy family and friends during these festive times and keep that joyful and giving spirit alive throughout the coming year. Everyone at The Hagerstown Town & Country Almanack wishes everyone the happiest of holidays and again, pledges to its loyal readers (and followers on social media!) to continue to inform, inspire, and entertain as it has done for the past 226 years! New Year's Eve falls on Friday, December 31st. Plan and enjoy a safe, family-oriented evening of fun, food, and entertainment on the very first night of the year. Look online at www.first-night.com/cities to find a First Night Celebration nearest you.

The Garden: Live Christmas trees are still a tradition in some homes. Check its freshness by tapping the branches. Very few needles should fall. Stroke the branches to make sure the needles are resil-

ient and not brittle, have an aromatic fragrance, and good green color for the species. Before bringing the tree indoors, cut 1-inch off the bottom before placing in the water receptacle, and fill it with ½ cup regular 7-up plus 1 quart water or tree. And if you need holiday greenery, grab your shears and head for the back yard. If you are lucky, you will have a variety of boxwoods, yew, fir, or a variety of pine trees to choose from. If you are really lucky, you may even have a holly tree!

The Farm: Best for planting root crops (27, 28); weeding and stirring the soil (22, 23); planting above-ground crops (10, 11, 19, 20); harvesting all crops (12, 13); the best days for setting hens and incubators (11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 9, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27); the slaughtering and butchering of meat (4, 5); transplanting (4, 5, 16, 7, 8, 9); the weaning of all small animals and livestock (4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11); harvesting and storing grains (31).

J. Gruber's Thought For Today's Living

"To give the gift of yourself is perhaps the most precious gift of all"

COMPUTER Q&A

Holiday gadget buying guide

Ayse Stenabaugh
Jester's Computer Services

Holidays are stressful enough without having to worry about getting the right gift so we have put together a few tips and tricks to make buying this holiday easier. Don't know what to get the techie that has everything? – We have a few ideas for buying for those who have virtually everything!

Computers

When purchasing a computer this holiday you will want to determine the habits of the person you are seeking a gift for. Are they a gamer? Microsoft Office user? Or just a basic web browser? Determining the gift receiver's needs will help you to choose a computer that will do more than just get them by. Gamers are going to require a higher end video card while Office users are going to need access to their software (Microsoft Office does not come with new computers – and must be purchased separately!).

Those who are basic browsers won't need much in the way of extras but it's important to be mindful of the processor speed and the amount of memory on any new computer. Be wary of budget computers with Celeron or Atom processors else you may leave your gift recipient wishing that they unwrapped socks instead!

Tablets

When considering purchasing a tablet as a gift ensure that it will meet the needs you are trying to fulfill. Unless you are purchasing a Windows tablet such as a Microsoft Surface it's unlikely that it will perform all of the same functions as a computer. Many budget tablets are available today that lack quality so it's recommended to refer to reviews to determine if the price is worth the potential sacrifice. Another thing to consider is what operating system the tablet should run on.

If the gift is for an iPhone user, you will probably want to stick with an iPad so that they can sync their apps and data seamlessly. The same holds true for Android users who will likely appreciate an Android tablet. Windows tablets and Amazon's Kindle are a great option for those who aren't familiar with iOS or Android devices. Ensure that whatever device you choose has enough storage capacity, some devices have the ability to expand with external storage such as SD cards, other devices don't allow you to increase storage space so choose wisely!

Smartphones

Similar to tablets you should try to identify whether the user will find an iPhone, Android or Windows Phone more useful. In fact, its recommend that you determine

exactly which phone the user will want prior to purchasing or setting up a new phone since many companies have semi-strict return policies on new devices. There are lots of new devices on the market all with varying features and storage capacities. Ensure that you are choosing a data plan to go with the phone that will provide enough data to cover the gift receiver's usage!

Tech gift ideas for the person who has everything

So what do you get for the person who seems to have everything? There are lots of new and innovative tech gifts emerging so check out some of the unique gift ideas below.

For the iPad Artist check out Pencil by Fifty Three. This unique stylus works great with the free paper app and many others and is a necessity for any aspiring iPad artist!

For the fitness lover investigate Fitbit or one of the many wearable watches that feature heart rate monitors and sleep trackers!



What about the person who constantly misplaces their gadgets? Checkout Bluetooth tracking devices such as Tile so they can find their devices with ease!

The media lover will enjoy Roku or Amazon Fire Stick which allows users stream internet content to their TV without needing to connect their computer!

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HUMOR

Who started Christmas?

A woman who was out Christmas shopping with her two children. After many hours of looking at row after row of toys and everything else imaginable, and after hours of hearing both her children asking for everything they saw on those many shelves, she finally made it to the elevator with her two kids.

She was feeling what so many of us feel during the holiday season time of the year. Overwhelming pressure to go to every

party, every housewarming, taste all the holiday food and treats, getting that perfect gift for every single person on our shopping list, making sure we don't forget anyone on our card list, and the pressure of making sure we respond to everyone who sent us a card.

Finally the elevator doors opened and there was already a crowd in the car. She pushed her way into the car and dragged her two kids in with her and all the bags of stuff. When the doors closed she couldn't take it anymore and stated, "Whoever

started this whole Christmas thing should be found, strung up and shot."

From the back of the car everyone heard a quiet calm voice respond, "Don't worry, we already crucified him."

For the rest of the trip down the elevator it was so quiet you could have heard a pin drop.

Don't forget this year to keep the One who started this whole Christmas thing in your every thought, deed, purchase, and word. If we all did it, just think of how different this whole world would be.

The History of the Christmas Carol

What in the world do leaping lords, French hens, swimming swans, and especially that partridge who won't come out of the pear tree have to do with Christmas?

From 1558 until 1829, Roman Catholics in England were not allowed to practice their faith openly. Someone during that era wrote this carol as a catechism song for young Catholics. It has two levels of meaning; the surface meaning, plus a hidden meaning known only to members of their church. Each element in the carol has a code word for a religious reality, which the children could remember.

1. The partridge in a pear tree was Jesus Christ.
2. Two turtledoves were the Old and New Testaments.
3. Three French hens stood for faith, hope and love.
4. The four calling birds were the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.
5. The Five golden rings recalled the Torah or Law, the first five books of the Old Testament.
7. The six geese a-laying stood for the six days of creation.
8. Seven swans a-swimming represented the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit: Prophesy, Serving, Teaching, Exhortation, Contribution, Leadership, and Mercy.
9. The eight maids a-milking were the eight beatitudes.
10. Nine ladies dancing were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-control.
11. The ten lords a-leaping were the Ten Commandments.
12. Eleven pipers piping stood for the eleven faithful disciples.
13. Twelve drummers drumming symbolized the twelve points of belief in the Apostles' Creed.

So there is your history lesson for today and now you know how that strange song became a Christmas Carol!

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HUMOR

It was the day after Christmas.

The pastor of the church was looking over the cradle when he noticed that the baby Jesus was missing from among the figures. Immediately he turned and went outside and saw a little boy with a red wagon, and in the wagon was the figure of the little infant, Jesus.

So he walked up to the boy and said, "Well, where did you get Him, my fine friend?"

The little boy replied, "I got him from the church."

"And why did you take him?"

The boy said, "Well, about a week before Christmas I prayed to the little Lord Jesus and I told him if he would bring me a red wagon for Christmas I would give him a ride around the block in it."

One particular Christmas season, a long, long time ago, Santa was getting ready for his annual trip. . . . But there were problems everywhere.

Four of the elves were sick, and the trainee elves did not produce toys nearly as quickly as the regular elves, so Santa was beginning to feel the pressure of falling behind schedule.

Next, Mrs. Claus told Santa that her mother was coming to visit. This stressed Santa out even more.

When he went to harness the reindeer for the big flight, he found that three of them were about to give birth, and two had jumped the fence and were out, Heaven knows where. More STRESS.

Then, Santa began to load the sleigh, but one of the boards cracked! The toy bag fell through to the ground, scattering toys everywhere.

So, frustrated, Santa went into the house to have a cup of coffee and a shot of whiskey. When he got to the cupboard, Santa realized that the elves had hidden all of the liquor, and there was nothing to drink. In his frustration, Santa accidentally dropped the coffee pot and sent it shattering to the floor. It broke into hundreds of tiny pieces.

Santa went to the closet to get the broom, but discovered that mice had eaten all of the straw, leaving only the handle.

Just at that very moment, the doorbell rang. Santa cursed all the way to the door. He opened the door, and standing there in front of him was a little angel with a big Christmas tree.

Very Cheerfully, the angel said, "Merry Christmas Santa! Isn't it just a wonderful day? I have a beautiful Christmas tree here, just for you. Don't you think it's just a lovely tree? Where would you like me to stick it?"

. . . . And, thus began our tradition of the little angel atop the Christmas tree.

Santa Claus, like all pilots, gets regular visits from the Federal Aviation Administration . . .

. . . and the FAA examiner arrived last week for the pre-Christmas flight check.

In preparation, Santa had the elves wash the sled and bathe all the reindeer. Santa got his logbook out and made sure all his paperwork was in order. He knew they would examine all his equipment and truly put his flying skills to the test.

The examiner walked slowly around the sled. He checked the reindeer harnesses, the landing gear, and even Rudolph's nose. He painstakingly reviewed Santa's weight and balance calculations for sled's enormous payload.

Finally, they were ready for the check ride. Santa got in and fastened his seat belt and shoulder harness and checked the compass. Then the examiner hopped in carrying, to Santa's surprise, a shotgun.

"What's that for?!" asked Santa incredulously.

The examiner winked and said, "I'm not supposed to tell you this ahead of time," as he leaned over to whisper in Santa's ear, "but you're going to lose an engine on takeoff."

Gift Wrapping Tips for Men

This is the time of year when we think back to the very first Christmas, when the Three Wise Men -- Gaspar, Balthazar, & Herb -- went to see the baby Jesus &, according to the Book of Matthew, "presented unto Him gifts; gold, frankincense, & myrrh."

These are simple words, but if we analyze them carefully, we discover an important, yet often overlooked, theological fact: there is no mention of wrapping paper.

If there had been wrapping paper, Matthew would have said so: "And lo, the gifts were inside 600 square cubits of paper. And the paper was festooned with pictures of Frosty the Snowman. And Joseph was going to throweth it away, but Mary saideth unto him, she saideth, 'Holdeth it! That is nice paper! Saveth it for next year!' And Joseph did rolleth his eyeballs. And the baby Jesus was more interested in the paper than the frankincense."

But these words do not appear in the Bible, which means that the very first Christmas gifts were not wrapped. This is because the people giving those gifts had two important characteristics: 1 - they were wise and 2 - they were men.

Men are not big gift wrappers. Men do not understand the point of putting paper on a gift just so somebody else can tear it off. This is not just my opinion, this is a scientific fact based on a statistical survey of two guys I know. One is Rob, who said

the only time he ever wraps a gift is "if it's such a poor gift that I don't want to be there when the person opens it." The other is Gene, who told me he does wrap gifts, but as a matter of principle never takes more than 15 seconds per gift. "No one ever had to wonder which presents daddy wrapped at Christmas," Gene said. "They were the ones that looked like enormous spitballs."

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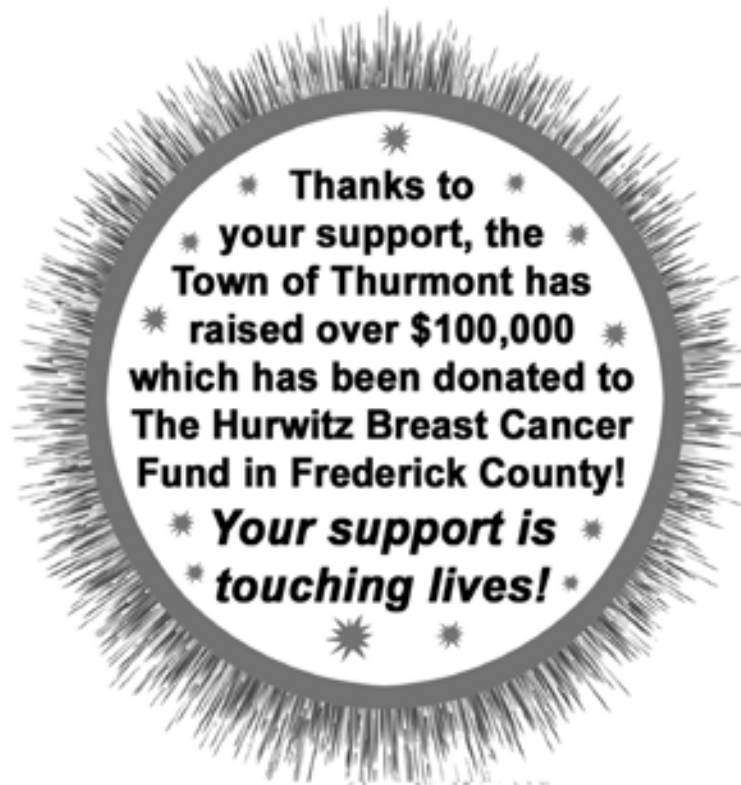
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