

Emmitsburg NEWS-JOURNAL

VOLUME 16, NO. 12

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

DECEMBER 2024

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Christmas is the season when heart calleth unto heart. “Amidst the general call to happiness, the bustle of the spirits, and stir of the affections, which prevail; at the period, what bosom can remain insensible?” said the poet.

It is one day, at least when suspicions, hate, and gloom find, but little space for judgment in human breasts; when people forget the things that worry, and fix their mind upon the many things for which they may be thankful; when the spirit of cheer exists in sufficient bounty to reach us all.

Any unhappiness, any sense of the thorns of life, may be sunk in compilation of joy, which today brings to so large part of the world, especially to the children of our immediate world; for the day was born with Christ Child, and has remained largely a festival of the young, it's sanctified ideals, strengthened by childish, purity, re-creating, faith, hope and charity in their elders.

Then, let us make this Christmas purposeful; a season of regenerated feelings, of love, peace, and goodwill. Let us hang the holly and the evergreen; let us promote the surge of joy. In this spirit, we wish you all a...

Merry Christmas



Merry Christmas from the staff of the Emmitsburg News-Journal: Devin, Dolores, Gracie, Cameron, Steve, Emelie, Richelle, Anne, Tim, Boyce, Jack, Mary Ann, Marianne, Jennifer, Shawn, Dave, Claire, Sonya, Michele, Jefferson, Linda, Wayne, Ayse, Katie, Jamie, Tara, Alex, Sharon, Brian & Mike

The Amish are coming

Sooner rather than later, the sound of hoof beats on the roads will be a common occurrence as Amish families born and raised in Lancaster County descend upon northern Frederick and northwest Carroll Counties.

Over the past 36 months, at least 30 farms have been purchased in the northern part of these counties and, according to one newly transplanted Amish resident, “There are a lot more coming, and the rate that they are coming is going to get a lot faster.”

On a recent Sunday morning, Jonathan Kabula of Motter Station, midway between Taneytown, Rocky Ridge and Emmitsburg, said he counted “at least 16 Amish carriages” passing his home on the way to a traditional Amish day of rest and fellowship at a newly acquired Amish farm near him.

Amish families are moving into this area because of abundance and cheapness of farmland in this area when compared to the increasing costs and the declining amount of farmland that can be divided upon family members in their native Lancaster. The Amish have been increasingly priced out of any farm-

land that does come up for sale in Lancaster County by the adjoining wealthy Chester County equestrian community who are seeking to expand their riding territory west.

The growing presence of Amish in the area has been received favorably, for the most part. One neighbor of a farm recently purchased by the Amish was thrilled to see them come.

“At one time the farm was a showcase, but when the parents died, the kid that got it didn't value it as much and it started to get run down. When their kids got it, they let it turn into a dump. Frederick County makes a lot of noise about the importance of supporting family farms, but in reality, most of them are now nothing more than places where the grandchildren can make a quick buck by allowing city sludge to be dumped on their fields.

“Don't get me wrong, there are some exceptional farmers around here, but their numbers have been declining over the years. At least the Amish take pride in their farms, not to mention it would be nice to have some nice kids around here again that are willing to work.”

While many are happy to see the Amish, some have expressed



Coming upon an Amish horse and buggy is now routine for many residents living in the surrounding countryside.

concern at the manure left on the road. The occasional manure pile never bothered anyone, but now it's not uncommon to come across a manure pile every 200 feet.

In 2022, following complaints by residents, Taneytown began enforcing an ordinance requiring manure piles be picked up by the horse's owners. But currently there is no ordinance requiring the Amish, or anyone using a horse for transportation, to pick up

after their animal on County roads, however that may change if residents start to complain.

Manure aside, the one real vexing issue that is emerging from the sky rocketing price (up to \$20,000 an acre) the Amish are paying for farmland is that it is pricing local kids, who are not currently part of an established farm family, out of the market from being able to purchase farmland and live their dream life as farmers.

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EMMITSBURG NEWS

“Envision Emmitsburg” takes shape

Work on the 2025 Comprehensive Plan titled “Envision Emmitsburg” continues moving forward with a goal to “encapsulate the idea of looking ahead to imagine a better Emmitsburg,” said Town Planner Najila Ahsan. The Plan is reviewed and updated every 10 years and is designed to set forth the Town’s policies in the areas of land use and community development, natural resources, transportation, utilities, recreation, and housing.

Chapter two of the Plan documents community input and vision gained from public workshops and surveys. Chapter three covers population and housing demographic trends and addresses affordable housing concerns. Chapter four analyzes the local economy and fiscal health to generate ways to increase revenue in the Town. Chapter five focuses on the environment and natural resources to preserve waterways, vegetative buffers and unique landscapes like the Catocin Mountains. Chapter six details land use and community design and introduces the growth boundary area (GBA) and the growth opportunity area (GOA).

The biggest change to the 2025 Plan is in the GOA. In order to maintain the Town’s “small town character” yet carefully balanced expansion, a growth opportunity area was designed. This area extends a quarter to a third

of a mile past the GBA. The new map shows a collection of properties in the northwest of town, along Track Road and Route 140 that have been suggested for inclusion to address fragmented water and sewer service issues. Some of these properties are already connected to the Town’s utilities (reasons as to how were not discussed), however the Town’s Code prohibits utility connections outside of its limits, so these properties are not able to have public service until they are annexed into the Town.

The GOA is a flexible way to allow growth for beneficial reasons such as economic or residential development or infrastructure projects without needing to change the Comprehensive Plan repeatedly.

Ahsan pointed out the main differences between the 2015 Plan and the 2025 Plan. The 2015 plan emphasized structured land use, transportation concerns and environmental resource preservation, with a lesser focus on community engagement. The 2025 Plan puts more emphasis on community driven goals, economic development, environmental sustainability and inclusivity.

The old Plan supported local business and tourism plans, which were further expanded with additional details in the newer Plan. The old Plan focused on single-family home devel-

opment and the new Plan builds on this by expanding housing needs by addressing the affordable housing shortage with mixed-use, medium density options.

The new Plan places a large emphasis on ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) households, as there is a significant portion of Emmitsburg’s population that falls under this category. It also addresses infrastructure improvements, better parking and accessibility, childcare needs, recreation facilities and programs for businesses and families.

The community survey showed a high demand for childcare sources and more diverse retail opportunities. Residents showed interest in partnerships to create stable jobs that include research and development laboratories and distribution centers.

One key takeaway from the community surveys was the growing desire for Emmitsburg to bring the downtown historic area into the Main Street Program. The Maryland Main Street Program was started in 1998 by the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development to improve the economic vitality and appearance of downtown business districts. Joining the Program would be a boost to the economic development in town.

Emmitsburg
NEWS-JOURNAL

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The Council decided to hold another public workshop to discuss the Plan further before hopefully finalizing

it in the next couple of months. The Planning Commission hopes to go to public comment by March 2025.

Council explores fee structure for non-profits

After trying for a reduction in water and sewer tap fees in September, Pastor John Talcott of Christ Community Church asked the Town Council for a payment plan instead, which would allow the church to begin their building process while the Council debates the fees for all non-profits, not just churches.

These fees were found to be considerably higher than in other local municipalities. This discovery encouraged the Council to begin discussing how the fees

are determined for commercial as well as non-profit organizations.

However, Commissioner Amy Pollitt stressed that there were really two very different requests from the church: one for the payment plan request and one to modify the amount they would pay if and when the rates are changed.

The church will need to pay \$164,160 for a 10,500 square foot addition, which will add 198 seats to the sanctuary and additional classrooms. These fees are 8% of their total construction budget and must

be paid before they can get a building permit. As a non-profit, the church will be using donations and loans to build the addition.

Town Attorney Leslie Powell said the current ordinance allows for payment plans, however they only apply to commercial businesses that create employment opportunities. Since other non-profit organizations have raised this same issue before, in her opinion, “It wouldn’t be fair to treat one type of non-profit differently than another.” Thus, she suggested the Council consider creating a

resolution to the ordinance that includes all non-profits, not just churches.

She also asked the Council to consider the impact of reducing the fees on the Town’s budget, as the recent 36% increase still proves to be a sore topic for town residents. Since the increase is designed to bring the Town’s water budget out of the red, a reduction in the church’s fees would prove detrimental to that goal.

Another item to consider is even though the church intends to use the building only eight to ten hours a week,

that could change. Many churches host meetings for emotional support as well as preschools and other community programs, which would increase the use of the buildings’ water sources (toilets, hand washing etc.).

After much back and forth, the Council was unable to grant Talcott his request for the payment plan. There was still forward movement though, as the Council did ask Town staff to create a mock resolution to the existing ordinance that would describe the requirements for the payment plan and they intend to discuss the fees themselves at a later date.

Council debates lowering water rates

The future of the Town’s water rates was a priority topic at November’s Town Council meeting. The 36% hike in water rates approved last year has been a source of frustration and malcontent with residents.

The drastic increase in rates was a response to the Town’s water fund’s

inability to afford its day-to-day operational costs, carry out necessary improvements or fix failures in treatment and distribution systems. This discrepancy and the lack of any rate increases for 14 years have depleted the cash reserves that allow the Town to apply for grants from the USDA. The Town must show that they have

adequate cash to cover operating expenses for 90 days in order to qualify for these grants.

The original plan called for a 36% increase in rates every year for the next five years and an annual increase of 3% thereafter. Commissioner Jim Hoover explained that before the increase in FY23, \$435,000 in water rate fees were collected. After the first increase in FY24, \$628,000 was collected. Assuming the Town continues to collect 36% higher rates for the rest of this FY, an estimated \$855,000, which is nearly double, can be expected.

The commissioners discussed keeping the current water rate for the rest of this fiscal year (to end in June), then reduce the rate to something more manageable for residents. They would then create a plan that requires the Council to revisit the water rates every year to determine if they should be raised or lowered. Town Manager Cathy Willets said doing so would put the

Town in a better position.”

Willets also discussed the Town’s future potential development and its impact on the water fund with tap fees, a one-time fee for connecting a property to a water or sewer system. These include, as of now, the Christ Community Church expansion and a whiskey distillery in the Town’s East Industrial Park. Emmitt Ridge is another subdivision with the potential to provide the Town with tap fees, however it is early in its development so it could be years before any financial benefit is seen.

With these limited development opportunities currently on the horizon for the Town, staff will need to look for alternative funding to support the several Town projects that are desperately needed. Specifically, funding will need for the West Main Street and Waynesboro Pike water main replacements, both of which have been repaired many times.

Willets pointed out to the Council that, “The bottom line is you need

growth and tap fees to continue to grow or you can continue wasting money by putting band aids on the issues.” She said, “You can’t raise the rates high enough to cover the projects that need done.”

Of the many projects, Willets said that some were “wants, not needs.” Of these projects is the Water Meter Upgrade Project. “It will help us with water loss and managing leaks and allow people to know when they have high usage, but it’s a want,” she said.

Commissioner Amy Pollitt mentioned that historically the Town has made a lot of concessions for businesses coming into Town, including lower taps fees and not raising impact fees. “I don’t think we should be making concessions that hurt our bottom line and put the burden back onto the residents,” she stated. Pollitt suggested looking into changing these practices in the future.

With the commissioners all in agreement to make changes to the water rates, a workshop was scheduled for mid-January.

8th Annual Emmitsburg Holiday House & Business Decorating Contest



To participate, have the exterior of your home or business decorated by December 8. Judging will occur Dec. 9 thru Dec. 16.

Three Categories:	1st Prize - \$75
Most Traditional	2nd Prize - \$50
Most Decorative	3rd Prize - \$25
Best Business	

Winners will be announced by December 20 on the Town’s website and Facebook page.

FAIRFIELD/CARROLL VALLEY NEWS

Carroll Valley avoids 2025 tax increase

Carroll Valley Borough Council's budget does not include a tax increase, but council members still spent a significant portion of their November meeting discussing line items.

The council voted 4-2 to advertise its 2025 budget with the intention to adopt at its Dec. 10 meeting. Richard Mathews, Michael Wight, Bruce Carr, and David Lillard voted in favor. John Schubring and Catherine Schubring opposed. Cody Gilbert was absent.

John Schubring questioned the need to allocate \$25,000 for part-time police

officers since the borough hired a fourth full-time officer in April 2024. Police Chief Clifford Weikert explained part-time officers are needed to cover shifts when full-time staff are on vacation.

"It's up to you guys and what kind of coverage you are looking for," Weikert said.

John Schubring has openly questioned the police department's operations several times this year. He said he would prefer to reallocate the \$25,000 to a fund that would help disabled veterans pay their water and sewer bills.

Sewer bills in the borough increased significantly this year to fund the borough's new \$5.315 million sewage treatment plant.

Without passing judgment on the police department budget, Borough Manager David Hazlett expressed support for John Schubring's proposal.

"I feel somewhat passionate as you are with trying to help our warriors," Hazlett said.

Hazlett directed the borough's solicitor to explore the legalities of such a program. He also asked council to consider

a program that would give volunteer firefighters property tax relief. The State of Pennsylvania passed a law in 2016 that gives municipalities the opportunity to offer tax relief to active volunteer firefighters and nonprofit emergency medical service agency members. Adams County and Gettysburg Borough enacted similar programs in recent years.

"I think it is important to recognize the people who are volunteering in our fire companies," Hazlett said. "They save our taxpayers millions annually."

John Schubring also questioned the need to spend \$33,000 of the \$49,000 allocated to special expenditures on the borough's July 4 Celebration. He suggested the borough explore ways to reduce the event's costs, such as hiring a DJ instead of a live band. Mathews became visibly frustrated with John Schubring and ended the conversation.

"This idea of nitpicking the different committee expenditures at this time is out of place," Mathews said.

John Schubring attempted to keep talking, but Mathews shut him down and moved on with the evening's agenda.

Borough receives grant for park upgrades

Carroll Valley's expansive public recreation facilities are about to receive yet another enhancement. The borough was recently awarded a \$276,000 Statewide Local Share Account grant to increase ADA accessibility and security and install two pickleball courts and a butterfly garden at Carroll Commons Park.

Borough Manager Dave Hazlett commended Sen. Doug Mastriano, R-33, and Rep. Dan Moul, R-91, for championing the grant application.

"We are very appreciative of the continued support from our state

elected officials," Hazlett said. "We value Sen. Mastriano and Rep. Moul's commitment to ensuring we can provide various recreational opportunities to our residents."

Hazlett said Carroll Commons, located near the borough office on Fairfield Road, is one of the borough's most visited outdoor spaces. He said this grant helps the borough fulfill requests from residents and officials to have more amenities in the park. He predicts citizens will volunteer to build the butterfly garden.

"We really are looking to build someplace in the park that can provide people with an opportunity for a little bit of reflection," Hazlett said.

Moul commended the borough for advocating for citizens' wishes.

"This is a great project that will directly support the expansion of the existing park in the borough," Moul said. "I was excited to advocate for this park project, which will provide the borough the ability to improve the park's safety while providing additional recreational and environmental opportunities in a manner

consistent with the wishes of its residents for all to enjoy."

Mastriano concurred with his colleague.

"I am happy to support this project, which is a priority of Carroll Valley Borough as they seek to provide additional recreational offerings and safety for their community," Mastriano said. "These improvements directly respond to residents' desires and will establish Carroll Commons Park as a core community gathering place for the region." Hazlett said the borough's partner-

ship with GMS Funding Solutions has resulted in half a million dollars in grant funding in 2024. The borough continues to work towards creating a new park along Route 16, near Frontier BBQ.

When Hazlett announced the grant on the borough's Facebook page, many residents expressed excitement. However, as expected, there were some naysayers. Hazlett said the most popular request was for a dog park, which could be in the borough's future plans.

"One thing at a time," Hazlett said. "We are trying to do lots of things for the community."

Liberty advances tax increase proposal

The Liberty Township Board of Supervisors is likely to raise taxes for the second time in 15 years. During the board's November meeting, supervisors unanimously approved a 2025 budget proposal with a half-mill tax increase.

"We have been pretty frugal in a lot of ways," Supervisor Vice Chairman Bobby Keilhotz said. "I am certainly not for increases; I don't know who would be. The prices of things certainly are not going to get cheaper."

The supervisors cited the need to rebuild the township's reserves while maintaining roads and keeping pace with increased costs.

If approved in December, the proposal will cost Liberty Township residents about \$50 per \$100,000 of assessed property. The increase will allow the township to add \$84,173 to its reserve account.

The 2025 budget proposal totals about \$500,000. Supervisor Chair

Walter "Mickey" Barlow warned that \$250,000 is left in the allocated reserve account, or about six months of township operating expenses. The township's unallocated reserve account, which covers unexpected expenses, will be down to \$50,000.

"We can't continue to pull money from reserve accounts," he said.

Supervisors also discussed the importance of continuing to maintain township roads. In 2024, the

township spent about \$225,000 on Bullfrog Road. Supervisors expect to finish the project in 2025 at an estimated cost of \$175,000. The township is completely reconstructing Bullfrog Road, Barlow said. In the past, crews used tar and chips for an inexpensive fix that had longterm financial implications.

Liberty Township supervisors plan to reconstruct one road every year, Barlow said. Pecher and Orchard roads are on the

schedule after Bullfrog is complete. Supervisors lauded the township road crew's willingness to work for relatively low rates. Hill noted that the township needs to prepare to replace the staff at a higher rate when the current crew decides to resign.

Septic tanks

Liberty Township residents who have not yet had their septic tanks pumped must do so soon.

Barlow reported that the township sent letters to about 600 township residents earlier this fall that the tanks must be pumped by Oct. 31.

As of the first week of November, about half of the residents had not reported that they complied, Barlow said. The supervisors decided to send a second notice to those in arrears stating that they must comply by Dec. 1. The supervisors will discuss during their December meeting how to proceed with those still not in compliance.

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THURMONT NEWS

Planning Commission revisits ADUs

Last year the Planning and Zoning Commission considered amending the Town Code to allow accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in town. Although Commission members were interested in the topic, it was left for discussion at a later date and was subsequently forgotten. This November, the Commission re-introduced the topic after a resident approached the mayor and town council requesting the Town consider allowing more ADU options.

ADUs are secondary housing units on a single-family residential lot. Examples include tiny homes, basement apartments, coach or carriage houses, in-law suites

and guest houses. Thurmont does currently allow single-family dwellings to be converted into two-family dwellings in specific zones but does not allow stand-alone accessory dwellings.

One reason for writing ADUs into the Town's Code is because of the affordable housing issue. The Thurmont Master Plan recommends providing affordable housing to accommodate the Town's changing housing needs as a long-term goal. Chair Meredith Wivell questioned the definition of affordable housing as she had last year. "There is no clear definition of what affordable housing is and there are no metrics to measure it either," she said. It is a question

the Commission must find an answer to in order to proceed.

Town Planner Kelly Duty explained that ADUs allow Thurmont to answer the affordable housing question without losing the "small town" feel. They allow homeowners to benefit financially when renting them and the additional tax that the Town would receive when the ADU is added to a home increases the home's value. Duty promoted the benefits of decreased isolation and depression by allowing a person to live in town close to family and friends instead of being forced to move away in the search for affordable housing.

When looking at other munic-

ipalities, Duty found that Frederick City, Frederick County, Myersville, New Market and Walkersville all allow some form of ADU in their code. While all only allow them in specific zoning districts, most limited their size to 800 square feet, with Frederick County allowing 1,000 square feet. They also limit one ADU to each lot.

Wivell also pointed out the importance of the ADUs being built out of material harmonious with the existing property structure. "We don't want things that look like they don't belong there," she said. They also don't want to cause owners to spend copious amounts of money to make the

ADU look the same as the original structure, which could negate the "affordable" concept.

Another consideration for the Commission was whether the ADUs should be limited to "owner occupancy," if direct family would be allowed as residents or if an ADU could be rented out to a non-relative. Duty also asked the Commission to consider if usage as short-term rentals would be allowed.

Duty will be working on a mock ordinance for the Commission to review at a future meeting. The write-up will address the previously mentioned concerns as well as other questions directed to the Commission. Commission members will continue to research ADUs with other municipalities as well.

Weather station being tentatively installed in Thurmont

The Town tentatively approved a new weather station in Eyler Park courtesy of Maryland Mesonet, part of a partnership between the Maryland Department of Emergency Management and the University of Maryland's Department of Atmospheric and Oceanic Science.

The new weather station will be maintained by Mesonet, with quarterly check-ins as well as any as-needed care, according to Town Planner Kelly Duty. Because it will be powered by a solar panel, there are no utility fees and will be completely free to use by Thurmont. The station will cover about 33 square feet and will be fenced in for safety purposes.

According to Mesonet Manager James Hyde, the purpose of the 75 planned stations is to improve weather monitoring across the state. The MD Department of Emergency Management is providing four million dollars in funding to create this system, of which there are currently 19 statewide.

"The goal of the Mesonet is to get information to decision makers who need it," Hyde said, going on to explain that decision makers could be anyone from parents getting their children ready for school in the morning to the governor's office. When Mayor John Kinnaird brought up the often inaccurate

weather forecasts in Thurmont, Hyde explained this new system would improve the forecasts for residents. Furthermore, while Mesonet is still in development, there is a plan to create a phone app, according to Hyde.

In addition to typical weather, the system will measure soil temperatures at various depths, which will help farmers and gardeners with their crops and plants as well as warn against flash flooding. It will also measure snow and rainfall.

Town Attorney Leslie Powell will be discussing questions regarding the license agreement and other necessities with the legal team at the University of Maryland in order for the Town to move for-

ward with the contract. According to Powell, the Town requires a certificate of insurance for any entity building on their property. There were also some necessary clarifications, including exact coordinates where Maryland Mesonet plans to place the weather system.

The Board and town attorney were also concerned about land use in the agreement, wanting to ensure it was clear when the Town could regain use of the land and if they were allowed to cancel the agreement early or ask Mesonet to move the system early. The agreement will last for 10 years, and according to the town attorney, only the University of Maryland can cancel it. Commissioner

Marty Burns wanted to make sure the Board was aware of the ramifications of the terms and its potential impact on the Town. "I think it's worth the risk and investment for 10 years and, if we think we're going to do something up there in 10 years where they are going to site it, then we probably should change it," Burns said. "But I don't see that we're even thinking about doing anything up there in 10 years." The remaining commissioners and mayor agreed, allowing the agreement to be approved, pending the clarifications from the University of Maryland.

"I look forward to this," Kinnaird said, referring to the weather system.

Bid approved for stormwater runoff upgrades

The Thurmont Town Council approved a bid from S-Works Construction Corporation for the stormwater Best Management Practice (BMP) upgrades utilizing the Gordian Contract. The Town will

pay for the project partially from the remaining American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, which need to be obligated by the end of 2024.

The Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS-4) permit issued

by the State of Maryland for municipalities is to protect and improve water quality in their local streams. Thurmont has been involved since 2022. "This program is to make improvements to several stormwater management facilities around Town and bring them up to modern standards as part of the MS-4 requirements from the State of Maryland for our [Chesapeake] Bay protection," Mayor John Kinnaird said.

The MS-4 permit creates guidelines for the municipalities involved but requires ongoing, continued reporting and documentation by towns and municipalities in order to remain in compliance with the permit. MS-4

permits operate as a point-based system. The first phase of the program includes the documentation of activities implemented by the Town that fall into the following categories: Public Education and Outreach, Public Involvement and Participation, Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination, Construction Site Storm Water Runoff Control, Post Construction Management, Pollution and Good Housekeeping.

At the start of the Town's permit, the Town had identified five storm water basins to be retrofitted by 2025; however, the Frederick County Soil Conservation District notified the Town this past summer that the cur-

rent projects may not be approved. Town staff met with the agencies involved and decided to change their plans to control storm water runoff from micropool basins to submerged gravel wetlands.

A submerged gravel wetland is a small-scale filter using wetland plants and rocks to provide quality water treatment. Runoff drains into the wetland into the submerged gravel and is distributed throughout the system. Pollutant removal is achieved through biological uptake from algae and bacteria growing within the rocks. Wetland plants provide additional nutrient uptake. This type of practice can work well in areas that have poorly draining soils or a high water table. A submerged gravel wetland differs from micropool basins. A micropool is a small, wet pool placed in front of the outlet structure, installed at a stormwater extended detention basin. The outlet structure is often composed of a vertical perforated plate and a top horizontal grate to release the water in the basin over a long period of time.

"This is a project that we've been talking about for a long time, and it's nice to see it coming into fruition and that we know it's going to move forward," Kinnaird said. Residents can find more ways to get involved or more information on the Town website's MS4 webpage.

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TANEYTOWN NEWS

Main Street recommendations revealed

Former Main Street Manager and current Economics Director Jay Meashey introduced a list of 21 recommendations regarding the future of the Main Street Program to the City Council in November. The list was created by Meashey and City Manager Jim Wieprecht, with Wieprecht describing the endeavor as one where, “We proceeded with the assumption that Main Street Taneytown as an organization would grow and flourish to potentially one day achieve standalone status as its own 501c3 with diverse and robust funding sources.”

Meashey said they reviewed the Department of Housing and Community Development’s (DHCD) suggested format for the Main Street Program as well as staff surveys, conversations with Main Street business owners and examples from other Main Street Towns, including Berlin, Frostburg, Middletown and Havre De Grace, because those Towns have similar characteristics as Taneytown.

The survey was sent to 25 businesses in the Main Street district and, according to Meashey, 22 were opened, 3 were unopened and 14 were clicked through but not completed, with 10 overall being completed. The intention of the survey was to create a starting point designed to understand where local businesses felt they were and where they wished to go.

To format the recommendations, staff utilized the annual “Letter of Agreement” that DHCD has implemented to guide the Main Street Program. Meashey described the first four recommendations

as straightforward and directly responding to the Letter of Agreement model.

The first recommendation states for an ordinance to be adopted in the City’s Code, it needs to explicitly outline the relationship between the Main Street Program and the City. The recommendation also allows for any changes to board membership and other critical components to be made by resolution to save time and money in the process.

Recommendation two allows the Council to appropriate operating funds for Main Street in the annual budgeting process. The third recommendation asks the Council to review the Letter of Agreement annually and evaluate the City’s commitment to meeting the standards and the suitability of the Main Street Board to meet those standards.

Recommendation four asks for the mayor and board chair to both sign the Letter of Agreement, even though the mayor’s signature is the only one required. The addition to this recommendation was based on the belief that, “We think that including the Board and Committees in the Letter of Agreement signing keeps the agreement and the relationship with DHCD high on their list of priorities,” explained Meashey.

According to Meashey, recommendation five is when the evidence from City staff’s research and discussion points for the Council really begin to matter. Number five encourages the Council to enhance the historic preservation tools at the City and the Main Street Board’s

disposal. “At its core, the Program is about preserving historic places through successful economic development,” said Meashey. Half of the survey respondents voted historic preservation as their top priority, with emphasis on improving the appearance of the downtown area and promoting tourism.

Recommendation six suggests creating subcommittees that are managed by the Main Street Board. Previously, the Board had six subcommittees: design, promotion, economic vitality, organization, arts and entertainment, and clean-green and safe. The same subcommittees may be used or new ones may be created. According to Meashey, results from the surveys showed that 88% of business owners would be willing to participate in a committee. He also encouraged the Council to consider the focus of each committee.

Number seven further ensures that each committee understand their responsibilities by outlining their responsibilities and considering their long-term and short-term objectives. Meashey pointed out that DHCD encourages 80% of the Main Street framework be in place before the City hands control over to the Board, making this recommendation extremely important.

The eighth recommendation expands the Main Street map to Westview Drive from Riffles Lane to the railroad tracks and moves the boundary inward onto West Baltimore up to Church Street. Meashey explained that these “missteps” were recognized when the Main Street designation was originally created as goals for the previous board.

Doing so would allow two long-time locally owned businesses the benefits and support of being Main Street businesses. Mayor Pro Tem James McCarron and Councilman Christopher Tillman agreed that this expansion should be a priority; however, Tillman had personal issues with expanding it the whole way into Church Street.

Number nine evaluates ways to improve pedestrian experiences within the Main Street map. Walkability is a large component of a historic district and improving it can allow “spill over shopping and dining” from those visiting the area for a single destination. This includes benches, trees for shade, and artwork to promote the concept of staying awhile and enjoying what the area has to offer.

Recommendation ten establishes a local community identity that can be used as a guide to plan projects and activities. This recommendation can benefit from the City’s Comprehensive Plan Survey to identify what residents want to see from their city, thus allowing the Main Street Project to develop itself in a way that pleases the community.

Recommendation 11 expands on the first recommendation to codify the program via ordinance, and recommendation 12 expands on recommendation number two concerning how funding would be found and utilized.

Number 13 explores revenue sources, specifically from county hotel tax and short-term rentals. Taneytown’s Antrim 1884 currently generates hotel tax revenue that could benefit the City. Airbnb

and Vrbo rentals could also potentially provide additional funding from tax revenue. Thurmont, as an example, receives a portion of Frederick County hotel tax on the condition that the money is used on tourism marketing to audiences outside of a certain radius.

Recommendation 14 asks the Council to explore what kind of fundraising they do or do not want to see from Main Street. Number 15 asks to continue (for now) funding the position of Main Street manager and economic development director as a combined role until such time as is possible to separate them. Recommendation 16 creates the framework that will lead to a full time Main Street manager in the future.

Number 17 identifies strategies for the Program to include administrative systems and tools to effectively manage the program. Recommendation 18 suggests the Council mandate using DHCD workplans, or a form of them, to aid the Board in achieving clear goals in a sanctioned method.

Recommendation 19 provides a way to strengthen the framework of Main Street to ensure program success. Number 20 ensures compliance with national and DHCD training requirements. And lastly, recommendation 21 ensures the Council meets its obligations to DHCD.

According to Wieprecht, DHCD has reviewed the list of recommendations and offered comments regarding them; however, staff has not had time to follow up on their input.

The Council will hold a dedicated workshop to address the suggested recommendations in December.

Comprehensive plan survey deemed a success

The community survey is an integral part of the Comprehensive Plan, a 10-year document that reviews the current condition of the City and discusses future goals and aspirations.

The survey was created by Senior Planner Craig Kologie and Assistant Project Designer Emily Yatron of Arro Consulting, who have been hired by the City to aid in the development of the Plan. The survey will provide key information as to what the residents want to see in their city for the next 10 years.

The survey period ended mid-November and was considered successful, according to Yatron. A total of 537 households’ responses were received and amongst those households live 1,742 residents. “That is 24% of the population,” said Yatron. Kologie pointed out how encouraging the community’s participation was, as he stated, “A lot of times people who are satisfied with the situation don’t reply to these things and we see a lot of negative responses.” He continued, “I think that’s a good sign that people are engaged and they care.”

Of the total responses, 85%

were Taneytown residents, 76% of those owning their home and 49% of that number having lived there for over 15 years. Those living in the City for one to five years outnumbered those in the six-to-fifteen-year range. Over 51% of residents were between the ages of 30 and 54 and the average household has 3.5 people living in it.

An overwhelming 83% of those living in Taneytown agreed that restoration of historic houses and revitalization of the Main Street District were priorities for the City. Only 10% of residents thought the quality of life in Taneytown is excellent, with the majority calling it “good.” Pros of the City included recreational opportunities, quality of education, traffic congestion and safety, protection of drinking water and police service. Traffic issues were the number one con for the City, noting a request for a bypass to alleviate traffic issues at major intersections, specifically 140 and 194 where a left turning lane was asked for the most.

As for why people wanted to move to Taneytown, affordable housing was rated at the top, fol-

lowed by being near family or wanting to raise a family here. Safety and low crime were mentioned, as well as a desire to live specifically in the Carroll Vista subdivision. Yatron pointed out that with affordable housing being a concern for the entire state, “It was surprising how many people indicated that, despite moving to Taneytown for affordable housing, they did not want low income or rental assisted housing.” Despite the need for affordable housing, many asked for less development and to retain farmland and that “small town feel.”

Recreational services were noted as high value for the residents, focusing on the parks and library and the events held at both locations. Requests were made for a newspaper or a written event list for more awareness. Schools, museums, historic homes and the historic district were also considered valuable by the residents as well.

One major desire for Taneytown residents is a mid-priced family restaurant and not another fast food or pizza joint. They also asked for more in the arts depart-

ment, such as a theatre for plays and movies. A desire for more meeting places like bars and cafes was mentioned, as well as recreational walking and biking paths, a pool and a community center.

One of the biggest concerns from commission members was whether the survey answers could be separated and generated into trends based on age and location. This would allow them to see who is asking for what and how that would affect the next 10 years. Kologie affirmed that it could be done and reminded the commission that 51% of respondents

were between the ages of 30 to 54, a range considered as a driving force in the future of the City.

As for the 15 key person interviews, which are more substantial and directed at key City personnel, the final decision was made to pick a few dates for the in-person interviews and if anyone can’t make one of those days, they can do their interview via zoom. Kologie said they would be finished by the Christmas holidays.

The next meeting will be dedicated to goals and objectives for the Plan and is scheduled for late January.

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FROM THE DESK OF...

County Councilwoman Renee Knapp

Last month, the Frederick County Council voted against a bill introduced by Council Member Jerry Donald (District 1) to update regulations associated with the growing agritourism industry in the County. Many of the updates in the bill came from recommendations from the Agritourism Workgroup, formed by County Executive Fitzwater in June of 2023 to address this topic. Council Member Mason Carter (District 5) served on this workgroup along with Council Member Donald and other stakeholders.

Currently agritourism is allowed as an accessory use on a farm in the county. It's understandable that many farmers are looking for ways to diversify their operations to create reliable additional revenue. There are many farms to enjoy the beautiful fall season with a trip to a pumpkin patch for

a hay ride or a fun time in a corn maze with family and friends. We have many opportunities for residents and visitors to the county to enjoy "pick-your-own" strawberries, blueberries, apples, and fresh flowers. I've visited several of these farms and they are big part of what makes agriculture such an important part of the economy and traditions in Frederick County.

Since we don't have a lot of state law to regulate how much of a farm's activity can and should be dedicated to agritourism, this bill was trying to provide clarity to local farmers and surrounding residents. Activities like fireworks and firepits are fun, but they create smoke and noise that negatively affect neighboring properties for weeks, and it's important to recognize that those residents have a right to peacefully use their property, just as farmers have a right to use their property to

make a living for themselves and their families. Although many admitted the bill was not perfect, and it ended up being controversial, I voted for it because I saw for myself the amount of smoke and disruption these more intense activities can create for nearby residents.

It's a matter of finding the right balance, and appreciating the position your neighbor might be in. I'm confident that with more input and understanding from all stakeholders, this issue can be revisited, and more acceptable regulations can be adopted.

Frederick County Compensation Review Commission

The Frederick County Council is soliciting letters of interest and resumes from individuals to volunteer their time to serve

on the Frederick County Compensation Review Commission. The Compensation Review Commission will review the current compensation structure for the Frederick County Executive and County Council Members to provide a target of fair compensation to individuals entering into elected public service. They will also consider what level of compensation is needed to attract and retain valuable, qualified persons for office. All meetings will be televised and open to the public. Additionally, the Council is seeking individuals who will not be a candidate for the Office of County Executive or County Council in 2026.

The Compensation Review Commission will have eight weeks to meet and prepare recommendations for the County Council.

It will be comprised of seven registered voters who have lived in Frederick County for a minimum of four years. The names of all interested applicants will be made available to the public, and resumes will only be shared with the Council. If you are interested in serving, please send a letter of interest highlighting your relevant experience, including past local community involvement and knowledge of Frederick County Government by regular mail or e-mail to RCherney@FrederickCountyMD.gov

Letters of interest and resumes must be received by Friday, December 13. If you have questions about the Compensation Review Commission or any other topic, please feel free to contact me at rknapp@frederickcountymd.gov.

Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a peaceful holiday season!

Emmitsburg Mayor Frank Davis

I hope everyone enjoyed the Thanksgiving holiday and I hope you had the opportunity to spend time with your family and friends. This time of year, we should take the time to be thankful for all the good things that we have and sometimes take for granted. As crazy as the world can be, we are still extremely fortunate for the opportunities that we enjoy daily.

For the first time I had the

opportunity to assist with preparing over one hundred Thanksgiving Day meals for the less fortunate in our area. This event was spearheaded by Deb Bisenieks, the Executive Director of Seton Center and Shelby Maly, the Director of Marketing and Communications for the Frederick County Chamber of Commerce. Over thirty volunteers participated in the days leading up to the event, as well as served

the meals on Thanksgiving Day. As always, the business community in Emmitsburg and Thurmont stepped up to make this a successful event.

We have several projects that are currently in the construction phase and some that are in the planning stage, so I want to give you an update.

- The Rainbow Lake parking lot and walkway should be completed this month.
- North Seton Ave. street and waterline upgrade design/construction bids are due in January.
- The Eugene Myers park restroom/concession stand building should be completed in January.
- The Creamery Road sewage lift station and the DePaul Street waterline replacement are scheduled for completion in April.
- The Multi-use Trail upgrades are scheduled for completion in April.
- The water plant clarifier installation is scheduled for completion in October.
- Last but not least, the design for West Main Street /Waynesboro Pike waterline replacement is underway.

We have a lot going on and are excited for all the much-needed upgrades and new construction projects to be completed. Please bear with us for any inconvenience you might experience during the construction phase of these projects.

Finally, during the holiday season please go out and enjoy the many activities that will be happening this month. Support our local businesses and enjoy the holiday season with your family and friends. 2024 has been a great year for our Town and I look forward to a successful 2025.



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GOVERNMENT—SOUTH OF THE BORDER

County Executive Jessica Fitzwater

December is a time of celebration, gratitude, and anticipation for the future. It's an opportunity to take stock of what we have achieved and set our sights on new goals we aspire to reach in the coming year. As 2024 draws to a close, I find myself reflecting on the year and all we have accomplished as a community.

While Frederick County faces challenges, we have also seen countless examples of resilience, compassion, and progress. Together, we have strengthened the bonds that make our county a place where people can thrive.

As we gather to celebrate the holiday season, let us also remember those in our community who are in need of support. The spirit of service and kindness defines this season, and I encourage everyone to look for ways to lift up those around us.

Part of our preparation for the upcoming year includes setting priorities for the Fiscal Year 2026 budget. In this important work, I will be holding six town hall meetings in the coming weeks where members of the public are invited to attend and share feedback on budget priorities and concerns.

There will be one meeting in each of the County Council Districts and one

general hearing. The District 5 meeting will be held January 25 at 1 p.m. at Walkersville Middle School with Council Member Carter. The general public hearing will be held December 4 at 7 p.m. at the Prospect Center in Frederick.

All meetings are open to the public. Those interested in attending are welcome to join whichever meeting is most convenient. Attendees are not limited to the meeting in their home district.

Those who cannot attend in person may submit comments online at www.FrederickCountyMD.gov/BudgetPublicHearing. Additionally, each town hall will be recorded and posted online for later viewing on FCG TV.

I am looking forward to hosting these events, along with the County Council, so we can hear from and continue to meet the needs of our residents.

Another way Frederick is County working to meet the needs of its residents is through the newly revitalized Business and Industry Cabinet (BIC). The BIC will serve as an advisory board on matters related to sustainable and inclusive economic and workforce

development, including strategic planning, marketing, and business recruitment, retention, and expansion.

The BIC also will provide a forum for business leaders and government officials to share ideas, solutions, and creative approaches to business and workforce topics and issues facing Frederick County.

Membership of the board will reflect the diversity of Frederick County, including representatives of our key sectors like agriculture, life science and biotech, and manufacturing, as well as associated sectors like banking, law, and nonprofits.

Restoring the advisory board was a recommendation of the community-led Transition Team. I look forward to hearing regularly from small businesses and major employers about economic trends and workforce opportunities they see in our County. Learn more about the BIC at www.FrederickCountyMD.gov/Boards.

In the upcoming year, I am also looking forward to continuing to partner with local nonprofits to serve residents more effectively. These types of collaborations leverage our strengths, which results in improved services and stronger communities.

I recently announced the opening of the Fiscal Year 2026 Community Partnership Grant Program. This program awards competitive grants to local nonprofit organizations that serve the

needs of Frederick County residents.

The application period for this year's grant program will be open from Monday, November 25 until Wednesday, January 8.

Applications should focus on the areas of addressing homelessness and housing solutions, quality of life, public health, and supporting the arts. These areas are crucial for fostering a strong, thriving community where everyone has the opportunity to succeed.

Last year, we awarded \$1.2 million through this program. We saw firsthand the incredible impact that these organizations made. From providing stable housing to promoting health and wellness to enriching our lives with arts and culture, these programs foster resilience, bridge gaps, and bring innovative solutions that help our County thrive.

For example, in Emmitsburg, the Seton Center's DePaul Dental Program used grant funds to work with local dentists and oral surgeons to provide adult dental services at reduced rates.

I encourage all interested non-profit organizations to apply. For more details on the application process, please visit www.FrederickCountyMD.gov/CPG.

Together, through our shared efforts, we can continue to build a stronger, more vibrant community and make Frederick County a place where everyone can thrive. I am proud of what we have accomplished so far and am optimistic about the possibilities that lie before us. As we close out this year, I wish everyone a joyous holiday season and new year filled with promise and success.



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FROM THE DESK OF...

Carroll Valley Mayor Ron Harris

The Carroll Valley “Trunk or Treat – Halloween Spooktacular” was a tremendous success with over 550 children in attendance, of which 125 children participated in the Halloween costume contest, and 30 trunks were elaborately decorated for children to challenge the costumed proprietor with the words “Trick or Treat”? The Carroll Valley Council, Recreation Committee, Borough staff, and maintenance crew were involved in planning and managing this special occasion.

The Best Decorated Trunk was the Lynzie Zeller Family (Monsters Inc.); Best Costume: Drew Kober (Little Mermaid); Most Original: Ayana and Nori Young (bee w/ beehive) and Ellie Goodno (Clifford) Scariest: Axel Boger (wolf) and Nova Palmer (zombie); Silliest: Christine Fitz (rock) Daniel Fetter (Fred Flintstone); Cutest: Sophia Amspacher (Little Red Riding Hood) and Madox McLeroy (fireman) & Aedine McLeroy (dalmation). The costume judges were Miss Kaas, Miss Kapfhammer, Dr. Kane, Mrs. Gibbon, Mrs. Goetz, and Miss Temple. Lyla Putt won the Halloween quilt that Laura Mathews created and graciously donated. To see the pictures, go to ron-

pictures.net.

Cliff Weikert, Chief of Carroll Valley Police Department, reported that on October 26, 2024, the Drug Take Back program brought in 14 boxes weighing 279 pounds of drugs. Liberty Township Police and Collaboration for Youth assisted the Carroll Valley Police Department. The drugs were taken to Harrisburg and are scheduled for incineration.

Thanksgiving is behind us, and now on to December. The start of winter, also known as the “winter solstice,” is December 21. Winter solstice is the shortest day of the year. Hanukkah starts at nightfall on December 25, and ends at nightfall on January 2. National Chocolate Covered Anything Day is celebrated on December 16. I had to include this one for those chocolate lovers (me, me, me) who need an excuse to have a piece of you know what. Christmas is on Monday, December 25; the first day of Kwanzaa falls on December 26 and ends on January 1.

Neighbors Helping Neighbors will continue with the tradition of a little gift bag of toiletries, etc., to help brighten the day for residents of local nursing homes, Meals on Wheels, and students. If you want to donate to our neigh-

bors, click the link: www.signup.com/go/oEeGqj and mark your donations. Thank you in advance for your continued support of our community. If you have any questions, you can call Robin at 717-253-7507. If you have glass bottles you want to get rid of, then you might be interested in dumping them off at the new Glass Recycling Center at the Department of Emergency Services building site, 230 Greenmyer Lane, Straban Township. The center is open the first Saturday of each month through the winter.

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 chickens, 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 also accepted. Please make checks payable to the Borough of Carroll Valley.

Ruth's Harvest program is about feeding hungry children. It is a volunteer

program that provides hungry children with a backpack for food 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 to distribute 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. If you have any questions, contact Gayle Marthers at 717-752-0063.

On November 28th, when our local young residents visit the Carroll Valley Borough building, they will be excited to see a 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. The last day to drop a letter and expect a reply written by Santa is noon, December 21st. On December 7th, at 11 you can have cookies with Santa at the Liberty Worship Center. On December 9th at 7 you can see the Traveling Santa.

The Fairfield Community Fire Company will transport Santa Claus from the Fairfield Post Office parking

lot through Main Street – Fairfield to the Carroll Valley parking lot. Breakfast with Santa Claus will be held at the Fairfield Community Fire Company on Saturday, December 14th. The doors open at 8 and close at 11. Santa arrives at 9. All meals (adults & children) are \$5 per person. For more information, call 717-642-8842 – No reservations needed! Mark your calendar for Sunday, December 22nd; the Fountaine-dale Volunteer Fire Department plans to chauffeur Santa through Foundaine-dale and portions of Carroll Valley. Check their website for the latest route and time information.

I wish you all a Happy Holidays. Be careful driving in the evening, especially in our neighborhood. We are not surprised if we see a deer on the trail or standing in our driveway when we get home. Understanding when you're most likely to see deer on the road can help keep you and them – safe. Deer are most active at dawn, dusk, and for a few hours after the sun sets. They are more prevalent during mating season, which runs from October to January. If you see a killed deer on the side of the road, slow down. Deer travel in groups – others could be nearby. If you have any questions, please email MayorRonHarris@comcast.net.

Liberty Township Supervisor Walter Barlow

Thank you to everyone who voted in November. We had 917 ballots cast, an 86% turnout. A huge thank you to MaryAnn Gardner for serving as an election official for Liberty Township for many years. Due to a recent move out of the Township, she has stepped down from her position. We appreciate her service and dedication to the township and its residents as well as so many others who serve Liberty in a public service role.

The 2025 General Fund budget was balanced at \$659,312. After proper advertising, it is scheduled for

adoption at the December meeting. The proposed budget includes a .5 mil tax increase. After careful consideration, the Board of Supervisors felt it necessary to increase the millage on property taxes. Unfortunately, the cost of all goods has increased across the board. Raising taxes is not something we wanted to do, but we felt it was unavoidable. We will continue to apply for grant funds and seek donations to outfit the township with the necessary equipment for operations with a goal to offset direct taxpayer costs as much as possible. We did not receive a grant award for our sub-

mission in 2023, but after our recent meeting with State Representative Dan Moul, we are hopeful that funding will be available to us in 2025 as we apply for funds to cover costs of new equipment with his support of our 2024 LSA grant application.

At the November meeting, it was reported that we still had not received septic inspection forms for over one third of the township. The deadline for inspections was set for October 31, but forms were still being received daily. The board voted to grant an extension for report submission until December 14 and to send

a reminder notice to those who were still outstanding. There is a daily fine penalty for non-compliance with this DEP program. We thank those who have taken the initiative and completed the task on time.

The township joined with Freedom and Highland Townships to purchase movable electronic speed signs. The collaboration of townships allowed us to purchase signs at a discounted rate. We expect to have the new electronic speed signs on the roadways by January. Please be mindful that you maintain a safe speed while driving.

During the holiday season the Liberty Township Police Department will be engaged in the ‘Click it or Ticket Campaign’ and DUI roving patrols throughout Liberty, Freedom, and Highland Townships. Officer Terry Dewitt attended a DUI conference in November for updated DUI training and administrative training for grant funding. He was also approved to attend the JNET & PCPA training in December. We are in support of educating our township employees and giving them the tools they need to be successful. We would

like to thank Ryan Morris from Tripwire South for his generous donations to the Liberty Township Police Department. Ryan is currently one of our part-time officers. Over the last several months, he has donated many items including but not limited to a 2025 Ford SUV, patrol rifles, vests, CAD laptop, and body cameras.

Alpha Space Control has completed scheduled line painting on Gladhill, Pecher, Steelman Marker, Sanders and Topper Roads. We plan to complete line painting for the remaining township roadways next year. We are in the process of building new material storage bays. We plan to store salt and salt mix in those bay areas and convert the current salt shed into an equipment storage shed. This is necessary as we plan to remove the original block building along the roadway that is currently used to store equipment. The building was in need of repair, and this new configuration was determined to be the best way to utilize the limited space on the one-acre lot that Township facilities are housed.

PennDOT announced a bridge replacement project on Route 116 (Fairfield Road) near Gettysburg,

continued on next page

*Our most sincere wishes
for a Merry Christmas,
a warm Holiday Season,
and a New Year of
Peace, Prosperity & Happiness!*



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GOVERNMENT—NORTH OF THE BORDER

County Commissioner Jim Martin

During the final weeks of the presidential campaign I made a concerted effort to listen to man-on-street interviews to probe their knowledge of American History and terminology related to the campaigns. It was very disappointing to hear so many incorrect answers and the inability to define various terms surrounding the election campaigns. This lack of knowledge and basic voter information was something our forefathers felt uncomfortable about. They were concerned about the quality of candidates that would be elected by a mass of voters that were not very knowledgeable. To mitigate this situation, our nation's constitutional framers advocated for the Electoral College, a group of well-educated and knowledgeable individuals that could decipher among the candidates those that would make the best leaders.

So, rather than voters voting directly for their candidate of choice, they would vote for their representatives that formed the Electoral College. The Electoral College members receiving the most votes would in turn cast their vote for whom they determined to be the best candidate. Because of the limited means of communicating and informing the public until mid-1800, the framers of the constitution determined that the Electoral College would serve the nation well in this regard. However, this was not the sole purpose of the Electoral College, but it was also created for another very necessary reason.

The Electoral College serves to provide equity among regions and/or states regarding the power of voting. The Electoral College is designed to keep heavily populated areas from perpetually dominating less populated areas. If not for the Electoral College, Adams County and simi-

lar counties would be dominated by the voting power of Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Erie, and Allentown. The Electoral College allows electoral votes to be cast for their candidate by state in proportion to its number of US Senators and US House of Representatives. This allows rural America to have concentrated voting power against the heavily populated cities of our costal and Great Lakes areas.

You may be asking yourself, "How is the Electoral College created?" This group of individuals is determined by each state's political parties. It is a temporary body and only formed every four years for the purpose of the presidential/vice presidential election. No elected officials are allowed to be a member of the Electoral College due to possible conflicts of interest.

There are critics of the Electoral College. The Bar Association of America is one that claims that the Electoral College is antiquated and ambiguous and it should be abandoned. Why? What is wrong with facilitating equity across our nation? Perhaps the Bar Association finds great benefit from its legal powerhouses located in our major metropolitan areas. For whatever the reason for their criticism, it has to stand against nearly 250 years of our national success aided by the Electoral College.

This year's election was given the title Democracy 2024. The word "Democracy" during this year's election seemed to be used often, but the manner of use did not always seem congruent with its meaning.

Democracy does not mean government but a type of government. In the United States we have three branches of government, not three branches of democracy. According to Webster's dictionary, the principles of democracy are to be exemplified in the operation of our government through equality of rights, opportunity, and treatment. Democracy allows people to hold the ruling power either directly or through elected representation.

Those who are elected to office have sworn to use their power to ensure equality of rights, opportunity, and treatment. These actions and examples should also be followed by those that shout the loudest to defend democracy, but in practice these shouters systematically violate these principles by harassing people trying to eat a meal in public or intimidating those while leaving an event. Sadly there are those in media that take pleasure in these manners of behavior and are complicit to their continuance.

Those that violate the principles of democracy also fail to facilitate discussions that are civil and represent more than one view. The forum in which we need to approach differences of opinion is an approach often used by our PA Secretary of Agriculture, Russell Redding. When a controversial issue in agricultural arises, Secretary Redding generally begins addressing the situation by saying to his audience (which I, at times, have been a part of), "we need to have a conver-

sation before we can move forward". Many times this was the path to bring about an acceptable solution to an issue rather than hateful shouting that accepts only one position.

Dedication Day, held on November 19 at the Gettysburg National Cemetery, memorializes Lincoln's Gettysburg Address which is rich with the principles of democracy. Speaker after speaker at the Dedication defined democracy through the eloquent content of the Gettysburg Address; not one of the speakers defined democracy as the rule by the body that could intimidate others the best. All speakers agreed that the essence of democracy was exemplified by the phrase "the government of the people, by the people, and for the people".

To sustain this power of government we must exercise the right to vote. That was so evident in the General Election on November 5th when more than 80% of registered voters in Adams County exercised their right to vote. It was a beautiful thing to see that level of commitment from Adams County voters. Yes, it was the presidential election which draws the greatest interest and motivation to vote. Please remember that there

Change of Name Notice

Notice is hereby given that on October 1, 2024, a petition for name change was filed in the Court of Common Pleas of Adams County, Pa. requesting a decree to change the name of Petitioner, Sophia Fisher. The Court has affixed the January 17, 2025 at 2:30 in courtroom #2, third floor of the Adams County Courthouse as the time and place for the hearing of said petition, when and where all persons interested may appear and show cause, if any they have, why the Petitioner should not be granted.

are elections every year in PA. The non-presidential years include local officials, state and federal legislators, judges and school board members. These are very important positions because they are the closest government to you and often have the most impact on your life. Prepare yourself for the next election (the Primary) in May 2025.

continued from previous page

which is scheduled to begin Monday, December 2. The bridge spans a tributary to Marsh Creek between Knoxlyn Road and Knoxlyn Orrtanna in Highland Township. A detour will be in place using Knoxlyn Orrtanna and Carrolls Tract Road. The project consists of bridge replacement, milling and paving. All work is expected to be completed by June 24.

The Board of Supervisors will hold the Annual Organization meeting on Monday January 6, at 6 p.m. with the regular January monthly Board of Supervisors meeting immediately following. The annual Auditors Organization meeting will be held on Tuesday January 7, at 6 p.m.. All meetings will be held in the Township Building 39 Topper Road, FairfieldA and are available on our YouTube channel.

A friendly reminder that Municipal/County taxes will be collected until December 31. Tax Collector office hours are by appointment only.

It's a joyful time of year to celebrate the Christmas season and to acknowledge that there is still good left in our world. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

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Operating under new bingo committee!
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* Food Available

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COMMENTARY

Words from Winterbilt

Where are we going?

Shannon Bohrer

"In matters of truth and justice, there is no difference between large and small problems, for issues concerning the treatment of people are all the same."

—Albert Einstein

December is upon us; the election is over, and the election promises may have some unexpected consequences. While we know what was promised, what happens when the promises are kept? Thanksgiving was a time to be thankful, as it should be for most of us who live in a free country. Now we have Christmas, just around the corner, which is a time to celebrate Christian values and see our friends and families. The election, Thanksgiving, and Christmas all seem separate and distinct, yet they can also be related. It appears that everything, if not directly related to the election, has been influenced or affected by the outcome.

Was our Thanksgiving a reminder of everything we must be thankful for or an omen of what we can lose? Will we just talk about the Christmas values of kindness to strangers and the less fortunate, or will our actions match our

words? We are a divided nation, and while half of the nation is still celebrating, the other half is apprehensive. How and when our differences can be lessened or diminished is unknown. Half see a bright future, and the other half see a future with hardships and tribulations.

News media outlets continue to discuss the future under the new administration, questioning our future. Will the new administration stop the wars/conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, as promised? Or, without our support, will some of the disputes expand? If the new administration institutes a 20 percent tariff on all imports, will we experience a return of inflation? If we deport eleven million undocumented immigrants, "Operation Aurora," what will the cost include? Will the price include the loss of labor, and if so, what happens to the economy? The new president also said, "I want to drill, drill, drill," talking about oil. Of course, currently the oil companies produce the most oil they have ever made.

While the winner was elected with both the electoral college and the popular vote in a fair election, there is considerable consternation about our future related to the previously mentioned promises and a few others.

Many citizens who voted for the president-elect have expressed the view that not everything that was promised will be delivered. Others see his promises as a road map to be followed and look forward to the enactment of his policies. A fair argument could be made that many politicians' promises are never realized.

The president-elect made numerous additional promises, one of which greatly bothers me. He repeatedly said he would pardon the "people who were arrested for their role in the riot at the capital in Jan. 6, 2021..." His party created a choir group of insurrections that attended and performed at many of his rallies. The chorus released a single that includes a recording from the former president. The charged and convicted have been labeled as both patriots and political prisoners, not just by him but also by members of his party.

I have strong beliefs in the criminal justice system. I was in law enforcement for 42 years, full-time and 10 years part-time. The criminal justice system is supposed to represent fairness to the citizenry, with no one above the law and with equitable enforcement. Being treated equally in the eyes of the law is foundational to a democracy. I understand that we have problems in our criminal justice system; I even wrote a book about these issues. Our system of justice is not perfect, but pardoning persons convicted of assault-

ing police officers sends a message of inequality and corruption.

Ty Cobb, a lawyer who worked for the future president, said that there is a high probability that Trump "will go forward with these pardons." He further added that when done, the pardons would be viewed around the world, and not in a positive manner. He said, "I mean, this is the type of conduct that, when viewed internally, makes it impossible to distinguish the United States from a third-world country... This is lawlessness of the highest order and there's no principal basis for it."

Why would anyone believe that pardoning people convicted of assaulting police is the correct path to take? It was reported that 114 officers were injured on January 6th, and that is just physical injuries. Since the insurrection, four officers committed suicide, and the number of officers with mental health issues is unknown. We do know that retirements are up, and hiring is down. We also know that many officers received permanent injuries and have retired on disability. One officer was temporarily blinded with bear spray, and her assailant is to be pardoned!

If there is another insurrection, what motivation would the officers have to perform their duties? If the currently accused and convicted insurrectionists are pardoned, will they return to the capital and have another insurrection — as a celebration? If so, will the capi-

tal police officers perform their duties or allow the entry? What happens if there are more disruptions and additional destruction of property? What happens if one of the pardon subjects assaults another officer?

Throughout my life, I believed that the citizenry of this nation believed in the rule of law. I now question my beliefs in that over half the citizenry voted against the rule of law by voting for an individual who labels persons who attacked police officers as "Patriots" and "Political Prisoners" and intends to pardon them.

Lady Justice is blind, as she is supposed to be, so justice should be applied with facts and not favor. If associates of the president-elect commit crimes, should officers arrest them or just turn a blind eye? With no real justice that applies to everyone, how does the criminal justice system function? When we have a justice system that is not blind and favors the individuals in a ruling party, we no longer have justice. The next step is authoritarian rule.

"At his best, man is the noblest of all animals; separated from law and justice he is the worst."

—Aristotle

To read prior editions of Words From Winterbilt, visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net.

The Bulwark

Let Trump be Trump

Jonathan Last

Everything you need to know about the state of our political parties can be found in the following two stories.

Last spring, Arizona Republicans were in a pickle. The conservative Arizona Supreme Court issued a ruling saying that an obscure 1864 law criminalizing nearly all abortions was valid. Republicans controlled the Arizona legislature and so public pressure fell to them to repeal the 160-year-old law. Yet Republicans in the legislature declined to do so.

Arizona already had a ballot initiative scheduled for November. This referendum was sure to pass and when it did, it would invalidate the 1864 law. Republicans did not want to take a vote that would put them at odds with their pro-life base.

But in the six months between then and November, women in Arizona would suffer from the effects of this Draconian law. So Democrats in the legislature and the Democratic governor, stepped in. They provided the votes to repeal the law that Republicans had pushed for—thus saving their constituents—but also saving Republicans from the political consequences of their actions.

Democrats fixed the problem the GOP majority had made, instead of letting the unpopular law hang there, like a millstone around the necks of Republican candidates.

At roughly the same time, President Biden and the Democratic Senate majority approached Senate Republican leader Mitch McCon-

nell about negotiating an immigration bill. McConnell tapped the conservative Oklahoma Republican Sen. James Lankford to write a border hawk's dream, and that's exactly what he did. The Lankford bill was easily the toughest immigration law in generations—Democrats gave away the store and asked for nothing in return. Republicans got everything they ever said they wanted.

And then, after the Republicans' designated negotiator declared victory, the rest of the Republican party in Congress balked. They chose to abandon their own bill because instead of solving the problems at the border, they wanted to be able to use immigration as an issue to help Donald Trump's presidential campaign.

Voters rewarded one of these parties and punished the other. What should Democrats learn from that outcome? One simple thing: Do not expend political capital trying to protect voters from Trump.

Americans listened to everything Trump said over the last two years. They heard him talk about abandoning Ukraine, imposing massive tariffs, putting RFK Jr. in charge of healthcare policy, and rounding up millions of immigrants and either deporting them or putting them into camps.

A majority of voters affirmatively chose those policies. So let Trump implement them. Let's walk through what that would mean, one policy at a time.

Ukraine

President Trump is likely to abandon Ukraine to Russia. Pulling back American support of Ukraine will have a number of bad outcomes.

It will reward Putin's aggression, endangering the Baltic states and Eastern Europe.

It will strain NATO; or perhaps even break it. All of which will spook global markets.

It will signal to China that they have a free hand with Taiwan. Which would also cause a massive disruption to the global economy. And—not that American voters care about this—it would also mean the death or enslavement of large numbers of Ukrainians.

Because they are silly, the great and good American people have asked for these outcomes. Democrats should not get in the way of them. If Republicans want to fight Trump over Ukraine, they can have at it. But they should do so with zero Democratic support.

Democrats should sit on the sidelines and point out all of the dangers. When things go sideways in Europe they should relentlessly highlight the bad outcomes and heap blame on Trump. They should score an endless number of political points and use the outcome chaos and bloodshed in Ukraine to damage Trump politically. But under no circumstances should they extend themselves politically to stop Trump from doing what he promised to do.

Tariffs

President Trump has promised to impose a massive tariff regime. The result will be rising prices for consumers. Rather than trying to stop it, Democrats should welcome this development.

The only way in which Democrats should fight back against tariffs is by exposing the crony capitalist loopholes Trump carves out for his allies. Democrats should relentlessly high-

light the ways in which Trump uses his tariff scheme to help his billionaire friends and they should never shut up about the prices of everything. But they should not attempt to stop the imposition of the tariffs themselves.

RFK and vaccines

President Trump wants to appoint RFK to head the Department of Health & Human Services. Democrats should let him.

RFK wants to do away with vaccine mandates? Okay. Democratic governors can support state and local mandates for childhood vaccinations and can run campaigns to encourage their constituents to protect themselves with free vaccinations. But if Cletus in Alabama wants to abandon polio and MMR vaccines? Let him. No more saving people from themselves. And then, when dangerous childhood diseases reappear, Democrats can demonize both Republicans and the slack-jawed yokels who made it possible.

Will some innocent people die as a result? Perhaps. But elections have consequences. And Americans have demonstrated, over and over, that they don't give a political party any credit for preventing harms.

Deportations

It's unclear exactly how serious Trump is about his deportation promises. Is he really going to round up 15 million immigrants and deport them? But he may try to arrest some thousands of immigrants and either deport them or warehouse them in camps.

Either way, why should Democrats do anything to obstruct Trump if he tries to institute a regime of mass deportation or incarceration?

Because one of two things is possible. Either: Trump has no intention of following through on his promise—in which case he should not be given an excuse that Democrats somehow prevented him from doing it; or Trump really will try to arrest 15 million people. In which case it will be a logistical, legal, moral, and economic catastrophe. Either way, let him do it. Give him no way to blame Democrats for obstructing the glorious immigrant round-up of 2025—whether because it happens or because it does not happen.

Because either way—and this is the key—Trump's deportation policy isn't going to disproportionately affect Democratic voters. And Democrats can no longer afford to spend political capital protecting anyone who can't support them electorally, just because it's nice or the right thing to do.

At the end of the day, that should be the precept that guides Democrats' decisions about when and how to spend capital trying to obstruct Trump during the next two years.

If Trump is trying to break the rule of law, then yes, Democrats should attempt to stop him. But for everything else? Democrats should stand back and stand by. And then, when the fit hits the shan, they should demagogue the ever-living-crap out of Trump for any bad outcome that occurs, anywhere.

Make him own it. All of it.

The American people have chosen. They should not be insulated from the consequences of their choice.

To read other articles from the Bulwark, visit www.thebulwark.com.

The Liberal Patriot

The Democrats' long goodbye to the working class

Michael Baharaeen

As we continue to sort through the wreckage of the election, one thing has become very clear: Donald Trump gained ground relative to 2020 in almost every state and with almost every demographic group. Even the most reliably Democratic constituencies, including racial minorities, shifted in his direction, an ominous sign that their coalition may not be as solid as they once thought. Indeed, these results shone a spotlight on long-festering problems in the Democrats' coalition, which have left them a shell of their former selves—as the party not of the multiracial working class but of society's elites.

Though it may be hard to believe this fate has befallen the party of FDR, these changes didn't happen overnight. Democrats were long considered by many Americans to be the party of the common man and woman. Mark Brewer, of the University of Maine, has found that in every presidential election between 1952 and 2004, the trait voters said they most liked about the Democrats was that they were "the party of the working class." By contrast, the biggest mark against the Republicans was that they were viewed as the party of big business and the upper class.

These perceptions created a clear divide between the parties' coalitions during that period: Democrats were likelier to win lower-educated and lower-income voters while Republicans were the favored party of many college-edu-

cated and affluent Americans.

By the 1990s, the country was growing more diverse and better educated. Bill Clinton was a beneficiary of this new reality, as he made sweeping gains with women, young people, voters of color (specifically, Hispanics), and college-educated voters. Importantly, he also retained significant support from white Americans and lower-educated voters, who made up the vast majority of the electorate. As Clinton rode this coalition to victory twice—marking the first time since FDR that a Democrat had won two full terms as president—some political observers saw the emergence of a new majority, one that could consistently win elections using the formula Clinton had used.

In 2008, Barack Obama built on the Clinton coalition, bringing in even higher levels of support from almost every major party constituency, including blacks, Hispanics, Asians, young people, and women. But that year saw the rise of another trend as well: Obama became the first Democratic nominee since at least 1988 to decisively win voters who held a bachelor's degree. He also fared far better with high-income earners than past Democrats had. These were the first signs of a growing professional class whose cultural values had aligned many of them with Team Blue—a departure from the past.

Obama's two wins led Democrats and Republicans alike to believe in the "emerging Democratic majority" thesis. Gone were the days when Democrats needed to win a majority of white voters, a feat they had found nearly impossible to achieve since the 1960s. Now, the party that represented

America's demographic future stood to lead it as well.

But no sooner did that consensus emerge than Donald Trump arrived on the scene. Trump disrupted the Democrats' plans for building a dominant coalition and, in the process, helped precipitate a dramatic realignment between the two parties—one rooted in economic and social class. This change has tipped the demographic advantage in favor of Republicans and left Democrats at very real risk of losing many of the voters who not long ago were expected to deliver them a permanent majority.

In 2016, non-college-educated voters, a group that had backed Obama by four points in 2012, swung to Trump, who won them by six. This was a core driver of Trump's win, as these voters made up a whopping 63 percent of the electorate that year. Meanwhile, Hillary Clinton gained substantial ground with college graduates, who went from also backing Obama by four points to supporting her by 15. This was an early sign that Democrats would struggle to win without a critical mass of working-class voters behind them.

Four years later, as Joe Biden defeated Trump, the education gap grew even wider.

It seems plausible that because Democrats found success in 2020 and unexpectedly did so again in the 2022 midterms, they overlooked real problems under the hood of their coalition. Now, these problems finally caught up with them.

Initial data from the 2024 AP VoteCast survey shows that Kamala Harris matched Biden's margin with white voters, but Trump made historic gains with non-white voters. He earned the highest share of Asian support since 2004, the highest share of black support since 1976, and the second-high-



est share of Hispanic support ever (he even nearly won Hispanic men outright). All this points to an American electorate that is becoming less polarized along racial and ethnic lines. While that may be a welcome development for society, it comes at the obvious expense of the Democrats, who had hoped these voting blocs would help them build a demographically dominant coalition for years to come.

Meanwhile, the transformation of the parties along class lines appears to be moving full steam ahead. Harris came close to matching Biden's level of support among college-educated voters, winning them by 14 points. But perhaps just as telling: she carried voters earning at least \$100,000 by seven points—by far the largest margin for a Democratic nominee in the modern era. On the other side, Trump became the first Republican nominee on record to win low-income voters, narrowly carrying them by three points. He also continued growing his advantage with non-college voters, winning them by 13 points—the largest margin for the GOP since at least 1988. And his 44 percent support from union households marked the greatest share for a Republican since Ronald Reagan.

Looking at this picture, it's hard not to see that the Democrats have now become the party of the very thing they have long fought against: the elites. This stands in sharp contrast to their longtime image as the party of the working class, which is further and further in the rearview mirror. According to political scientist Matt Grossmann, college-educated white voters this year became a plurality of the Democratic coalition for the first time ever, surpassing both non-college whites as well as voters of color.

On a more practical note, this new coalition also risks putting the Democrats on electorally unsound footing. Although college graduates are more reliable voters than their non-college peers, they also constitute a much smaller share of the population. Without a meaningful share of working-class voters in the mix, the party will struggle to be competitive.

Strategists and pundits will argue in the months ahead about the best path forward for the Democrats, but suffice it to say: from both an electoral and moral standpoint, the party's aim should be to return to its roots as the party of the people.

To read other articles from the Liberal Patriot, visit www.liberalpatriot.com.

Good Day Neighbor

Fiscal responsibility, Repudiation Day

Dorothea Mordan

Frederick, Maryland has a long history of calling out leaders, and speaking truth to power.

On November 23, 1765, twelve judges in Frederick County, Maryland, refused to enforce the newly passed Stamp Act. This act of defiance, eight years before the Boston Tea Party, was an early step towards the American Revolution.

The Stamp Act required a tax on various printed materials, including legal documents, newspapers, and playing cards. The colonists, had no representation in the British Parliament, and declared this Taxation without Representation. Those Frederick County judges agreed and took a stand by refusing to use or require the use of stamped paper.

This act of defiance became a line in the sand, and once crossed, led to the Colonies' Revolution

against the British government. Repudiation of the Stamp Act inspired other colonists to resist the King. While the Stamp Act was eventually repealed, the line was crossed and the newly minted Americans created a strong, flexible form of government. Our government, from local all the way up to Federal, functions on participation of the public.

After our contemporary election a couple of weeks ago, it's a good time to remember how it all started. We have a new list of elected officials to hold accountable, from local to national offices.

Several months ago there was a communication that Maryland was directing municipalities around the state to conduct assessment of pipes in public water systems that bring water to residences. Towns, large and small, including Woodsboro would be conducting such an assessment. It is our responsibility as residents, to follow up on what that means when using the

water from the town's water and sewer treatment plant. Updates should be found at the town website - www.woodsboro.org.

In the last couple of weeks, every resident should have received the letter from the Corporation of Woodsboro. "Public Notice Letter: unknown Material Service Line, Subject: Important Information Regarding Your Water Service Line." This raised more questions than it answered.

It's not enough to recognize a problem and expect someone else to fix it. We have a government system that is founded on citizen participation. Right here in Woodsboro we have monthly town meetings that are open to the public. We need to help them help us. A good example of an issue that calls for public awareness is the water and sewer treatment facility we have in Woodsboro.

The Woodsboro Council meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every month at 7 p.m. at the meeting room behind St. Johns Church, 8. N. Second St. Bring your questions to the next Town Council. Their next meeting is

scheduled for December 9th.

Get up to speed on the ongoing discussions of water by reading some the articles published by this paper from the last several months by visiting www.woodsboro.net and clicking on the Current Events tab. Once there scroll down to the bottom of the page to see the list of all the news articles related to Woodsboro published by this paper since its inception in 2020.

Specifically, I recommend you read the following news articles titled:

- Woodsboro vexed by mandate to inspect for lead pipes
- Path forward on lead pipe inspection uncertain
- Woodsboro hires contractor for lead pipe survey
- Woodsboro to raise water rates by 25%
- Water and sewer plant costs increase
- July Woodsboro News-Briefs (this article has multiple issues of concern related to the operation of the water and sewer plants)
- Commissioners do double take on Town Hall bids

- Council votes to move forward on Town Hall
- Town signs contract to build Town Hall
- Concerns raised over Town's debt
- Town cancels loan to itself
- FY-23 budget approved with no tax increase

The paper has done a good job documenting the discussions and decisions of the Town Council. As I already said, It's not enough to recognize a problem and expect someone else to fix it. We need to help them help us.

So did you vote? Or are you on the Naughty List. Let's not have another Repudiation Day, or be the cause of one.

We have a responsibility to ourselves and each other, to our home and country.

It's always a good day to remember how this all started, and it is always the Year of the Vote.

To read prior editions of Good Day Neighbor, visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net, or visit her website: ChandlerDesignsLimited.com

THE PASTOR'S DESK

Advent

Pastor Richard Baker
Trinity United Methodist Church

I want to wish all my Christian friends a Happy New Year. You may say that I'm a month early but I am talking about the Christian year which begins with the first Sunday after Thanksgiving. The Christian church uses something called the "Lectionary." The Lectionary provides four scripture choices for each Sunday, with the idea being that if all the scriptures were read, believers would hear the majority of the Bible read to them over a three-year period. We break down each year to an A, B, or C. We are currently in Year B but we will begin Year C on the first Sunday of Advent. That means our New Year will begin on December 1.

The Lectionary has its roots in the fourth century and has been revised, most recently in 1981. As I said, if all four scriptures are read, the reader or listener would hear the majority of the Bible over a three-year period. Going back to the fourth century, many Christians could not read or write. Typically, only the local church owned a Bible, and the priest would read those passages every week and explain them. This same thinking was used in the visual depiction of the Stations of the

Cross. People may not have had access to a Bible, but the images portrayed a vivid picture for believers.

There are over four hundred and fifty known versions of the Bible, with it being translated into seven hundred and thirty-six languages. My sister-in-law worked at Borders Book Store and told me that the Bible is the most stolen book in their stores. We have all these translations and yet so many people do not know what is in it.

Some people heard harsh words of condemnation when they were children and left the church before they had the ability to properly understand it. Some people do not like the truths that are contained in it, but it is given to us as the inspired word of God, and we come to know the Lord through the written word.

In the movie, Princess Bride, a grandfather stops by to read a book to his grandson, who is less than enthralled with the idea of reading a book and asks if there is anything good in it. The grandfather tells him, "Are you kidding? Fencing, Fighting, Torture, Revenge, Giants, Monsters, Chases, Escapes, True love, Miracles." There is all of that and so much more, in our Bibles. We start off with the story of our Creation. We see God create us, and bless us and give us boundaries to live by, but as we all know, we could not abide by those boundaries. That caused us to lose our place in paradise but it revealed

a truth about God. God, even though we angered him could not stop loving us. And even as we were put out of paradise, God provided another path.

The first five books in our Bibles show how God continued to provide and how we kept God at arm's length. There were some success stories, as in the story of Abraham, who God referred to as a friend. We all remember the story of Joseph and how his brothers sold him into slavery and how God used those circumstances to save the young nation of Israel.

We can read about Moses' birth and how God protected him and placed him in the home of Pharaoh's daughter, who raised him as a prince. Moses sinned by killing an Egyptian and fled into the desert, but again God stepped in and used that time to prepare Moses to lead the people of Israel to safety.

We have the story of the Judges who led Israel and how they continued to fall into sin, and time and time again, God delivered them. We are given the history of Israel with their faults on display for us to see. We can read the Prophets who faithfully attempted to lead Israel to following God.

For four hundred years, God was silent, but then the New Testament opens with God's greatest plan yet. God would come to us in the person of Jesus



to show us what a God-centered life could look like. And when we still failed to understand the depths of his love, God died for our sins so we could be made right with him.

All of these events are chronicled in a book that many dismiss as outdated or out-of-touch. If we believe in God, and if we desire to join him in eternity, this book is a must read. To paraphrase the Apostle Paul in Romans 7, we would not know what sin is and how it separated us from God apart from his word. John expressed his gratitude in his first Epistle saying, "How great is the love that the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God."

I am a student of history. I can tell you

all kinds of interesting facts about the Founding Fathers, but I do not know any of them personally. Even their own biographies fail to provide what they were thinking as they built our nation. But I come to know God through his written word. And as I come to know the person of God, I am introduced to someone I want to devote my life to following. I come to know the person of God as he speaks through his written word. I come to understand his intent, his perfect will, for my life. The Prophet Micah said it best. "God has shown us what is good. And what does the Lord require of us, to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with the Lord." We keep looking for the answers to life's biggest issues and here God explained his will for us.

Ask people about heaven and they'll talk about it like it's the best retirement community in the world. Ask them how they get to heaven and they'll say they hope to go there based on their own good works. Neither idea is scriptural. Heaven is not a first-class country club. Heaven is not a place filled with good people. Heaven is a place where people who realized their own moral bankruptcies, called out to God, and asked for the gift of salvation.

It's almost humorous to think that sixteen hundred years ago, people needed the scriptures read to them because they could not read or afford a Bible, and now with the word so readily available we seem to know even less than we knew then. We continue to look for ways to get the word out to newcomers, and perhaps the best way to do that is by believers sharing their stories of how God's word delivered them during their darkest moments. I will state, without hesitation that the Bible is the inspired word of God. It is a love letter from God, declaring his love for us. It is the story of how we continued to fumble our relationship with our Creator and how God refused to give up. Every day, I can find a fresh nugget to hold onto.

One I would like to leave you with comes from Peter's second Epistle letter. Peter, like so many of us, struggled to understand the depths of God's love, but he finally got it and wrote for us: "God is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish but for everyone to come to repentance." We all fit in because all of us are somewhere between anyone and everyone. I invite you as we approach the New Year to recommit to reading the greatest story ever told. Remember, it's got "Fencing, Fighting, Torture, Revenge, Giants, Monsters, Chases, Escapes, True love, Miracles." Knowing this, how could possibly resist?

To learn more about Trinity UMC visit them online at www.thetrinityumc.org or better yet, join them this Advent.

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8619 Blacks Mill Rd., Creagerstown
301-898-5290

~ Frederick Chorale Concert ~
Sunday, December 1 at 3 p.m.
St. John's Union Building - light refreshments following concert

~ Emmitsburg Community Chorus ~
Christmas Concert
Sunday, December 15 at 4 p.m.
Followed by a dinner in the parish hall featuring fried chicken, ham, succotash, Harvard beets, sweet potato casserole, macaroni & cheese, cheese platter, cranberry relish, coffee, tea and baked goods

~ Candlelight Christmas Eve Service ~
Tuesday, December 24 at 7 p.m.
In the main 1908 sanctuary - light refreshments & hot chocolate following concert in the parish hall

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

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"the best kept secret in Thurmont"

Sunday, Dec. 22nd - Diane Flickinger - The Christmas Story & carols
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(Check our website for online streaming)

Wednesday Prayer & Bible Study - 7 p.m.

DR. WILLIAM BURCHER, SENIOR PASTOR
110 Mt. Hope Road, Fairfield
admin@fbc-pa.org www.fbc-pa.org

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Christmas Eve - Dec. 24
Candlelight Service
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Served With Grace Free Dinner
December 2 from 5:30 to 7 p.m.

Regular Sunday Service at 10:30 a.m.
Sunday School 9:15 a.m.

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301-271-2379 / www.gracehammoravian.org

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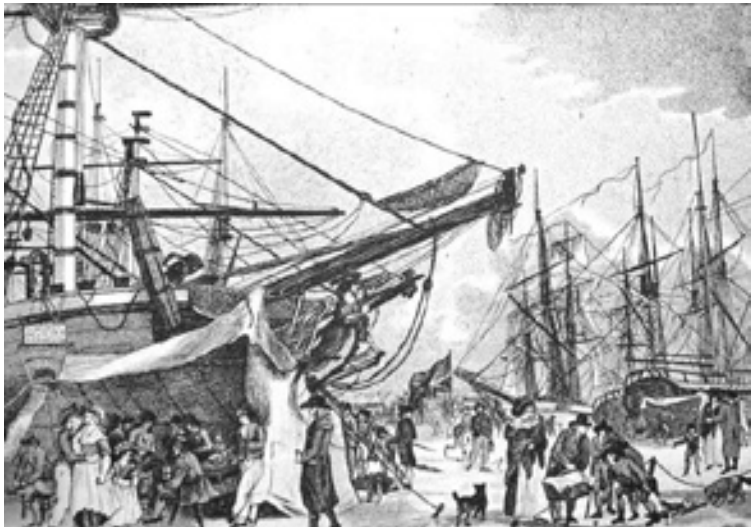
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at Thurmont Elementary

Admission is free! All ages invited!
For Info: www.fbcthurmont.org

THE BOOK OF DAYS

The severe Christmas of 1860



On November 25th, 1788, a great freeze swept over England, lasting seven weeks. The Thames River in London was completely frozen over, allowing Londoners to walk between the frozen in ships.

The Christmas of 1860 is believed to have been the severest ever experienced in Britain. At nine o'clock in the morning of Christmas-day in that year, the thermometer, at the Royal Humane Society's Receiving House, in London, marked 15° Fahrenheit, or 17° below the freezing-point, but this was a mild temperature compared with what was prevalent in many parts of the country during the preceding night.

Other observations recorded throughout England correspond with this account of the intensity of the cold, by which, at a nearly uniform rate, the three days from the 24th to the 26th December were characterized. The severity of that time must still be fresh in the memory of our readers. In the letter of Mr. Lowe speaks of having: 'just seen a horse pass with icicles at his nose three inches in length, and as thick as three fingers.'

Those who then wore mustaches must remember how that appendage to the upper-lip became, through the congelation of the vapour of the breath, almost instantaneously stiff and matted together, as soon as the wearer put his head out of doors.

What made this severity of cold the more remarkable, was the circumstance that for many years previously the inhabitants of the British Islands had experienced a succession of generally mild winters, and the present generation had almost come to regard as legendary the accounts which their fathers related to them of the hard frosts and terrible winters of former times. Here, therefore, was an instance of a reduction of temperature unparalleled, not only in the recollection

of the oldest person living, but likewise in any trustworthy record of the past.

During the three days referred to, the damage inflicted on vegetation of all kinds was enormous. The following account of the effects of the frost in a single garden, in a well-wooded part of the county of Suffolk, may serve as a specimen of the general damage occasioned throughout England.

The garden referred to is bounded on the west by a box-hedge, and on the south by a low wall, within which was a strip of shrubbery consisting of laurels, Portugal laurels, laurustinus, red cedar, arbor vitae, phillyrea, &c. Besides these, there stood in the garden some evergreen oaks, five healthy trees of some forty years' growth, two yews (which were of unknown age, but had been large trees beyond the memory of man), and a few younger ones between thirty and forty years old. All these, with the exception of the young yew-trees, the red cedars, the box, some of the arbor vitae and some little evergreen oaks, were either killed outright, or else so injured that it became necessary to cut them down.

Nor was this done hastily without waiting to see whether they would recover themselves; ample time was given for discovering whether it was only a temporary check from which the trees and shrubs were suffering, or whether it was an utter destruction of that part of them which was above ground. In some cases, it was found that the root was still alive, and this afterwards sent forth fresh shoots, but in other cases it turned out to be a destruction literally 'root and branch.' Some of the trees, indeed, after having been cut down level with the ground, made a desperate attempt to revive, and sent up apparently healthy shoots; but the attempt was unsuccessful, and the shoots withered.

Nor was the damage confined to the evergreens: fruit-trees suffered also; for instance, apple-trees put forth leaves and flowers, which looked well enough for a time, but, before the summer was over, these withered, as if they had been burned; while one large walnut-tree, half a century old, not only had its young last year's shoots killed, but lost some of its largest branches.

Beyond the limits of the garden referred to, the effects of this frost were no less remarkable. Elm-trees were great sufferers; they, along with the very oaks, had many of their outer twigs killed; and a magnificent, perhaps unique, avenue of cedars of Lebanon, which must have been among the oldest of their kind in the kingdom was almost entirely ruined.

Intense cold and its effects

Notwithstanding this unexampled descent of temperature, the nadir, as it may be termed, of cold yet experienced in Britain, the period during which it continued to prevail was of such short duration that there was no time for it to effect those wonderful results which we

read of in former times as occasioned by a severe and unusually protracted frost. From a periodical work we extract the following notice of similar instances which occurred chiefly on the continent of Europe in past ages.

In the winter of 1848-1849, the public journals recorded that the mercury, on one occasion, froze in the thermometers at Aggershuus, in Sweden. Now, as mercury freezes at 39° below zero, marked scientifically as -39°, that is, 71° below the freezing-point, we know that the temperature must have been at least as low as this—perhaps several degrees lower.

Such narratives excite a curiosity to know how such intense cold can be borne by the human frame. All the accounts obtainable tend to shew that food, clothing, activity, and cheerfulness, are the four chief requisites.

Dr. E. D. Clarke, the celebrated traveler, told Dr. Whiting that he was once nearly frozen to death—not in any remote polar region, but in the very matter-of-fact county of Cambridge. After performing divine service at a church near Cambridge, one cold Sunday afternoon in 1818, he mounted his horse to return home. Sleepiness came upon him, and he dismounted, walking by the head of his horse; the torpor increased, the reins dropped from his hand, and he was just about sinking probably never again to rise—when a passing traveler rescued him. This torpor is one of the most perilous accompaniments of extreme cold.

In reference to the torpor produced by extreme cold, Dr. Kane further remarks:


'Sleepiness is not the sensation. Have you ever received the shocks of a magneto-electric machine, and had the peculiar benumbing sensation of "Can't let go," extending up to your elbow joints? Deprive this of its paroxysmal character; subdue, but diffuse it over every part of the system—and you have the so-called pleasurable feelings of incipient freezing.' One day he walked himself into 'a comfortable perspiration, 'with the thermometer seventy degrees below the freezing-point. A breeze sprang up, and instantly the sensation of cold was intense. His beard, coated before with icicles, seemed to bristle with increased stiffness; and an unfortunate hole in the back of his mitten 'stung like a burning coal. 'On the next day, while walking, his beard and moustache became one solid mass of ice. 'I inadvertently put out my tongue, and it instantly froze fast to my lip. This being nothing new, costing only a smart pull and a bleeding afterwards, I put up my mitted hands to "blow hot," and thaw the unruly member from its imprisonment. Instead of succeeding, my mitten was itself a mass of ice in a moment; it fastened on the upper side of my tongue, and flattened it out like a batter-cake between the two disks of a hot griddle. It required all my care with the bare hands to release it, and then not without laceration.'

To read other selections from Robert Chamber's 1864 *The Book of Days*, visit the bookofdays.com.

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Becky Jones

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rwb1.pastor@yahoo.com or 443-375-9556

Christmas Eve Service with candlelight & communion December 24th at 4:30



ECOLOGY

More nature oddities: Tardigrades

Anne Gageby
Director of Environmental Education
Strawberry Hill Foundation

I was scrolling through Instagram recently and a suggested video popped up on my feed. Normally, I'd keep scrolling without giving it a second thought. This time, something caught my eye. The video was of a creature I'd never heard of before: a tardigrade. It wiggled and danced to ABBA's Dancing Queen. I sat, mesmerized, by this microscopic creature moving along to a fun beat. What was this thing I was watching and why was it so fascinating?

I immediately went to Google to find out all I could. It turns out tardigrades are even cooler than I imagined. First, they have two nicknames, and both are as cute as can be: water bear and moss piglet. Water bear is an appropriate moniker for a creature that truly resembles a microscopic bear and looks almost huggable. The nickname Wasserbär was first used by Protestant pastor, Johann August Ephraim Goeze in 1773. The word Wasserbär means "water bear" in German. The nickname moss piglet comes from the fact that these miraculous creatures can be found clinging to droplets of water within mosses and lichens.

But what are they exactly? Tardigrades are small invertebrate animals that live in a variety of habitats including freshwater, terrestrial, and marine environments.

Invertebrates are creatures that lack spinal columns. Invertebrates make up more than 90 percent of all living things and include earthworms, crabs, insects, spiders, jellyfish, and more. Interestingly, tardigrades appear plump and squishy under a microscope. But they are covered in a tough exoskeleton made of chitin similar to the exoskeletons of insects. Like their insect cousins, tardigrades shed their exoskeletons to grow.

The name tardigrade comes from Latin for "slow walker", and they're known for having a bear-like gait, hence the name. Their bodies are made up of five sections including a defined head and four body segments. Each segment has a pair of legs with four to six claws on each foot. Depending on the species, the claws can be anything from truly bear-like to more akin to paddles. With about 1,300 known species in the world, there is a lot of room for variation. One of the strangest adaptations, however, is the tardigrade's hindmost legs' configuration. These legs are attached backwards and drag behind the tardigrade unless used specifically for grasping or switching direction.

Another adaptation that's quite odd is their mouth structure. Yes, water bears have mouths. They're round and miniscule and are connected to muscles inside the head that act like cheeks, creating a suction action to pull food into the body. Unlike many other creatures, they don't have

teeth. Instead, they have spear-like pinchers called stylets, which pierce cell walls and allow tardigrades to suck out the nutrients of whatever meal they find. Not all tardigrades share the same diet, however. Some are plant-eaters that consume algae while others feast on smaller creatures and single-celled organisms. Some species of tardigrades are cannibalistic and will consume other tardigrades. Cute, adorable, and sometimes blood thirsty. Nature is odd.

These tiny powerhouses also have a secret weapon: they are nearly indestructible. Terrestrial tardigrades need only the smallest amount of water to stay alive. Without water they go into a protective mode called a tun state which allows them to stay dormant for extended periods of time. In this tun state they pull their arms and legs into themselves and curl into a ball. They essentially shrivel up but don't die. Water is essential to life on earth, but tardigrades can exist without water for years at a time. But how?

It's believed that tardigrades synthesize special molecules that replace lost water within their cells. These molecules create a matrix which protects things like DNA and other sensitive pieces of their complex puzzle. This protection allows their bodies to completely dry out without harming their metabolic system. When they're reintroduced to water, these special molecules dissolve



An enhanced, microscopic image of a Tardigrade in a moss habitat.

and leave behind undamaged cells. It's an incredible adaptation that not only protects tardigrades but allows them to thrive no matter the condition.

Tardigrades can tolerate more extreme conditions than just desiccation. They can survive cold as low as -328 °F and heat all the way up to 304 °F. They have survived in the vacuum of space, extreme pressure, radiation a thousand times stronger than humans can handle, and chemical treatments. Water bears are the definition of beauty and brawn. They're adorable and built to last.

Tardigrades are considered microfauna, complex multi-cellular animals just like any we see in our backyards, only tinier. Much, much tinier. Tardigrades clock in at between .002 and 0.06 inches when fully grown. Big enough to be seen with the naked eye but just barely. The easiest way to spot them is with a low-powered microscope. Or, if you have a keen eye, a decent magnifying glass will suffice.

But where should you look to find them? You can find water bears just about anywhere - leaf litter, soil, creeks and streams, and of course moss and lichen.

These cuties need only a small amount of water to survive so if there's water, there's tardigrades. Searching for water bears could be a fun weekend activity especially if you're looking for something science-y to do with your kids or grandkids. Head out back to a tree covered in lichen or moss. Gather a few samples in a paper bag to allow them to dry out a bit. Soak the moss or lichen in distilled water overnight to give the tardigrades a chance to rehydrate. Squeeze out the water into a petri dish or another flat-bottomed glass dish under a microscope and start looking.

It might take a few samples from different areas of your property to find some tardigrades. They are abundant but elusive. Don't let that stop you from searching. Or, look for videos online of our littlest friends. There are wonderful resources out there with videos of live water bears in action. Try to spot different species and make a note of which ones live in your area. Either way, when you spot one, put on Dancing Queen and enjoy the party.

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



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IN THE COUNTRY

Oh, Christmas tree?

Tim Iverson, Naturalist

Christmas is just around the corner and soon sleigh bells will be jingling, Jack Frost will be nipping at your nose, Santa will have a quick layover in town, and the whole world may resemble a marshmallow. Boughs of holly, garlands, and wreaths will deck the halls, but the true centerpiece is the Christmas tree. As we have ourselves a merry little Christmas, silver bells and all, nothing quite captures the essence of the season as evergreens do.

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.

In broad general terms trees are broken down into two main categories: coniferous and deciduous. Coniferous trees have needles, and produce cones. Deciduous trees have broad leaves, which die off in cooler temperatures in a process called abscission. Deciduous means "to die off", which is where the name comes from and this usually, coincides with winter and cooler temperatures. During the summer the broad leaves are essential for survival, but in the winter those leaves become a lethal liability. The leaves are a costly source of water loss and consumption, and during the winter months water is hard to come by. To prepare for this deciduous trees will shed their leaves. Conifer needles have less surface area and retain water better than leaves because of a waxy coating and smaller pores, which can allow for year round photosynthesis.

Conifer, or evergreen, trees have a higher density of foliage, which during winter means snow and ice accumulates faster on them. This makes them more susceptible to breakage, especially with the addition of high winds. To offset this problem conifers tend to be more flexible and the cone shape of the tree helps to shed snow easier. The dense foliage also makes them more attractive to animals. Birds, deer, mice, and more eat the foliage and fruit that these trees produce during the winter months.

Mice, rabbits, and a few others chew bark for the nutrients stored within.

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.

Christmas trees have proven to be a huge market, as well. There are approximately 15,000 farms that produce 33 million trees in America every year. Americans spend on average 1.5 billion on Christmas trees every year. Despite the economic benefit, some have argued against the ecological impact this industry takes. Most Christmas trees are commercially farmed, harvested, and shipped off across hundreds of miles to surrounding areas and states. While a real tree is carbon neutral, it is estimated that it is responsible for approximately 7lbs of carbon dioxide per tree via transit activities. 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.

Natural trees take about 7 years of growing before they reach maturity and are ready to be harvested. During this time they produce oxygen and provide great habitat for wildlife. After Christmas however they are often thrown away. Better ways to reduce impact while celebrating the Christmas season is to ensure that you properly recycle your tree. Many counties, including Frederick, have designated drop off locations and will turn trees into mulch for parks, gardens, public space, and trails. A new idea rising in popularity is to use living trees as a Christmas tree.



Select or purchase a small tree, ball the roots, and then set it in a pot inside. After the Christmas holiday is over you can plant your tree in your yard or another location and it can still provide habitat and other positive environmental contributions to the ecosystem.

When the lights on the tree glow as bright as Rudolph's nose remember you're witnessing a tra-

dition long held and venerated by our ancestors. We remind ourselves of all the good things of that have come to pass or have not yet. Roast some chestnuts, dream of a white Christmas, and baby, when it's cold outside rock around that Christmas tree.

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

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SCIENCE MATTERS

The biggest brain ever mapped—a fruit fly's

Boyce Rensberger

What you see in the picture above is the wiring diagram of the brain of a fruit fly. Creating it was a landmark event in neuroscience. This is, in fact, the largest and most complete map of any animal brain to date.

Each dot is a brain cell, or neuron, and each line represents a communication link from cell to cell. These links are extensions from each neuron called axons and dendrites. Actually, the lines are links between each neuron and a great many others. As in the human brain, each neuron "talks to" many others. And, in turn, each one receives messages from many others.

As you may be able to make out, we are looking at a three-dimensional structure with the neurons in front obscuring our view of many, many more neurons behind. The bug's brain is made up of about 139,000 neurons which connect to one another through 34 million synapses (points where one brain cell talks to another).

This brain map is the product of hundreds of scientists at nearly 50 laboratories around the world. Each lab worked on a tiny portion of the tiny insect's tiny brain.

Neuroscientists call this kind of diagram a connectome, following the wording pattern of "genome," the complete list of genes in an organism.

Keep in mind how small a fruit fly is—small enough to fit inside this O, wings and all. You may have seen them around bananas that have been on the counter too long. Fruit flies have been a favorite research subject for more than a century. If you'd like to look deeper into this, I recommend the scientists' website at flywire.ai. Anyone can use their online tools to examine the little brain.

What neuroscientists would

love to have is the connectome of the human brain, but creating that will be the work of many decades, if not a century.

Earlier this year, for example, an international team of 31 researchers published the connectome of one cubic millimeter of a human brain. It contained 57,000 neurons that made 150 million connections among themselves. The little cube also contained an astounding nine inches of capillaries.

The scientists found all this by using a special type of electron microscope to examine a bit of human brain cortex that was removed during surgery needed in a deeper part of the brain to treat epilepsy. The cortex includes the outer layers of neurons, where much of intelligent thinking takes place. (The patient is fine.)

The technique is something like that of a CT scan, producing a series of stacked slices, each with millions of voxels (the three-dimensional counterparts to pixels). A computer examines each slice and fills in connections to the slices above and below. In total, the analysis produced 1.4 petabytes of data. That's 1.4 quadrillion bytes or 1400 terabytes. Still not impressed? That's enough data to play high-definition movies continuously for more than 11 years.

Needless to say, it took some major computing power to analyze the data and create a three-dimensional reconstruction of that one bit of brain. Figure that the average human brain has a volume 1.4 million times as much as that tiny bit, and you get a sense of the task ahead.

A Monster Centipede

Imagine a centipede as big as an adult alligator. Had you been around during the Carboniferous period, 300 million years ago,



The brain of a fruit fly is the largest mapped to date.

you would not have had to imagine. Just such animals roamed Earth, the largest land-dwelling arthropod discovered to date. (Arthropods are the group with no internal skeleton that includes insects, spiders, crabs and the many-legged wormy animals we call centipedes and millipedes.)

Paleontologists (the two-legged creatures who study prehistoric life) discovered these giants three years ago, but they had only fragmentary fossils. Just recently a French-British group has analyzed nearly complete specimens and discovered that this species, called *Arthrop-leura*, looks like a hybrid of centipedes and millipedes. Their report is in the latest issue of *Science Advances*.

The difference between the two groups, by the way, is not that one has a hundred legs and the other a thousand, though the names falsely imply that. Centipedes have one leg on each side of a body segment, and millipedes have two on each side.

The analysis revealed that these

giant critters are something like hybrids, having two legs on each side of each segment (like millipedes) but a head and mouth parts typical of centipedes. The mouth part differences are too detailed for me to follow; suffice it to say that the experts know the differences. The researchers also note that recent DNA studies show the two groups to be much more closely related than was once supposed. So, if you get the two confused, you're really not so far off base.

The point is that this prehistoric beast would be pretty scary if it had survived to our time.

Breast Feeding Mystery

When a new mother breast feeds, she needs to pack her milk with enough calcium to build the child's growing skeleton. Where does she get the mineral? Some will be in her diet, but also her body pulls calcium out of her bones.

That's been known for a long time, but it has posed a mystery. Why don't such young mothers develop osteoporosis. Osteoporosis

typically affects older women whose bodies normally make less estrogen, a hormone that helps maintain strong bones. Furthermore, a new mother's estrogen level normally drops after giving birth. The combination of factors suggested that something else must be happening to keep those women's bones strong.

A predominantly female team of scientists has now found the answer, and they say it may lead to a new treatment for people with osteoporosis. It may also help broken bones heal faster in anyone.

Researchers at the University of California at both the San Francisco and Davis campuses have discovered that once a woman gives birth, her brain makes a previously unknown hormone that takes the place of the reduced estrogen. It keeps the mother's bones from losing too much calcium. Also, it probably extracts more of the element from the mother's food to supply her and the baby.

The U.C. researchers tested those hypotheses by giving doses of the hormone, which they call Maternal Brain Hormone (CCN3), to mice with broken bones. (Yes, the scientists deliberately snapped the animals' bones, but they gave a local anesthetic first.) It turned out that the bones healed much faster than without the hormone.

Scientists also experimented on lactating mouse mothers whose bodies had been blocked from making the hormone. Those mice rapidly lost bone mass and their babies began to lose weight. But when the researchers injected the mothers with CCN3, mothers and babies returned to normal.

Boyce Rensberger retired to Frederick County after some 40 years as a science writer and editor, primarily at *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*. He welcomes feedback at boycerensberger@gmail.com.

To read other articles by Boyce Rensberger, visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net.

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THE VILLAGE IDIOT

Planning...

Jack Deatherage

I preordered "The Maryland Master Gardener's Handbook (2025 edition). The tome cost me \$100. I'm hoping the handbook will promote sustainability as that seems to be the current watchword.

Having been two years building a garden without a concrete plan other than setting aside an area for the library's use, a couple raised beds for the town staff's use, what are supposed to be mostly formal flowerbeds along the sidewalk side of the garden, and several raised beds for growing garlic and shallots for my own amusement, it would be nice to know where we're taking the garden. Not that most people wandering in the garden seem to mind the chaos we've created. With no guidance we've been experimenting with different methods of teasing plants out of the ground. Should enlightenment arrive via the handbook, we'll continue our experiments while working sustainability into them.

As is often the case, when I'm paying attention, the universe steps up with suggestions. Suggestions I tend to ignore and the universe keeps offering anyhow. A week or three after ordering the gardening handbook I get an email from the Town Manager, Cathy Willets, informing me there may be grant money - \$20K for the community garden. Grants Administrator Madeline Shaw also emails with questions about what we're doing at the Cedar Avenue Community Garden. Both Town staffers warn me the grant from Sustainable Maryland is very competitive because it requires no matching funds on the applicant's part. I won't likely see any moneys from it this coming year. However, acquiring some of that grant money might be possible in the future if we bring the garden into compliance.

Compliance? With as Gallic a shrug as I can managed I email back a few wants I don't expect to get, but plan to purchase myself as the community garden expands. A rototiller the DW could operate, metal raised beds, cattle panels, T-posts, a Rubbermaid wheel barrow, straw and hay bales, a couple vermicomposters, and a garden shed. The shed is going to

be a bear to raise money for. I figure I mightn't live long enough to acquire some of my wants. Grant money could get those items for me quicker so I wander off on the World Wide Webs looking for Sustainable Maryland and community gardens in particular.

The universe gives me another nudge. The mayor recently gathered some of the local churches and charities to discuss, among other things, a bi-weekly soup kitchen to provide hot meals and fellowship for those in the community experiencing financial difficulties. No surprise that grant money is available to community gardens focused on feeding those in need. Though I don't see our little community garden being of much use to a soup kitchen it might occasionally provide a few vegetables grown in excess?

Educating the public on sustainable gardening practices is another step toward receiving grant moneys, as is setting aside areas of a garden for native plants and wildlife- things we're already working on with the children's librarians.

Sustainable Maryland grant moneys aside, I think we'll focus more on Western Hemisphere plants this coming year?

Beyond corn, beans and squash -easily stored through a long winter- we can get into sunflowers, sunchokes, peppers, potatoes, tomatoes, tomatillo, passion fruit, blueberry, raspberry, sweet potatoes, peanuts and amaranth to name a few. All of which could help support a soup kitchen as well as some native pollinators and wildlife.

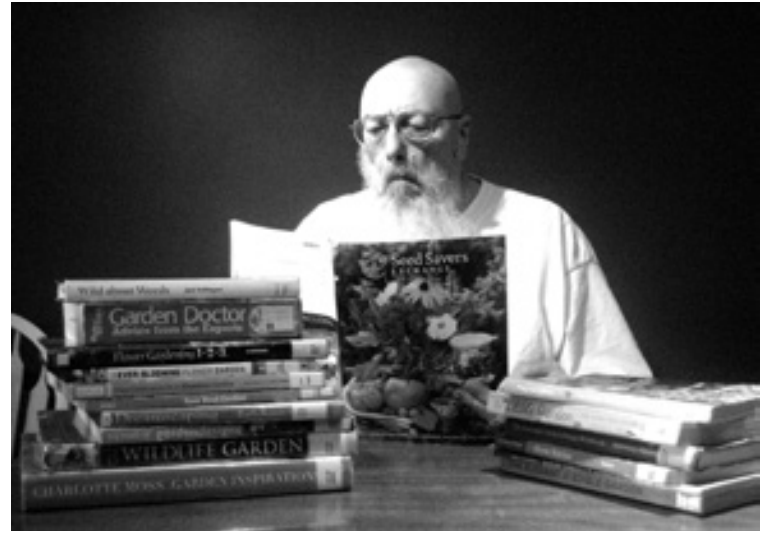
More in line with Sustainable Maryland's goals, there's also a plethora of flowers native to Maryland we could grow in sections of the garden- a point I think I saw mentioned in the grant application I found online. However, more than a few of the flowers I've looked at require moister soils than we can currently provide at the community garden.

Education is also mentioned in the grant application. I still want to use melons, which were introduced to the Americas in the sixteen hundreds, in a STEM program about pollination. I think the kids would enjoy sampling the melons and possibly creating a landrace specific to Emmitsburg even if the melons aren't native. Besides, most of the "native" veg-

etables I can find seed for have been selected for human wants over generations to the point the average human wouldn't recognize a wild ancestor of sweet corn. Hmm... I saw seed for what scientists believe is the plant corn (maize) evolved from. Maybe I should add that to the growing list of seeds wants?

A supposedly healthy, long-term storing, nonnative grain I've been talking myself out of trialing for several years now is sorghum. If grown to maturity here, the grain can easily be stored for at least a year and in many places around this rock is a primary grain for human consumption- a gluten free wheat substitute for those with a gluten issue.

An Oklahoman homesteader has convinced me, after about 25 years of haranguing me, to begin growing and eating some of the many types of squash (pumpkins be squash) that are available. Whether said homesteader ever gets me to grow and eat the other two mainstay foods native to the Americas- beans and corn -remains to be seen. Why doesn't she (of course the homesteader is a she, no guy would spend 25 years trying to educate an idiot) include tomatoes among the native mainstays? As she's pointed out, tomatoes do not store well unless they are dried, canned or frozen. Nor do maters provide the nutrients, protein and energy the other three crops can provide throughout a long winter without a great deal of processing.



Jack was surprised to learn that the Seed Savers Exchange featured seeds grown in Emmitsburg of 'extraterrestrial' origin. A result of UFO visits in the 1950s which he said would explain a lot of things.

I'd add potatoes to the short list of native mainstays, but I haven't figured out how to keep more than a few pounds of them past mid October. The DW does share the taters she grows if the library kids happen to be on hand when she takes it into her head to fork a row up. A few of the kids were amazed to learn that potatoes come from under ground. I on the other hand was stunned at how much things have changed around here since I followed the potato plow as one of my uncles opened the rows. First Sister and I picked up the taters, putting them in baskets which would be taken into one of the farm sheds to "cure" before going into the root cellar.

Ah well. Times change, sometimes for the better. Hopefully not for the worse.

About the only aspect of the community garden I'm certain of

is it needs to be as sustainable as is possible. If rain isn't falling from the sky the garden's primary water source is supplied by the town. Treated water is NOT ideal, but it does get the garden through our usual droughts. Getting the garden soils to retain as much natural water as is possible by working leaves and compost into it and mulching moves the garden in that direction. Planting drought tolerant, native crops also helps.

With an idiot and a loon (not sure who is which most days) currently being the driving forces behind creating the garden space I figure we might get within spitting distance of sustainability before the idiot turns 80 (I'm 70 now, the loon is a puppy).

To read past editions of *The Village Idiot*, visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net.

THE MASTER GARDENER

Caring for holiday plants

Mary Ann Ryan
Adams County Master Gardener

So many plant choices to brighten up your home for the holidays! What may work for you, may not work for someone else. It's always a good idea to learn about the plant before purchasing it for yourself or as a gift, so everyone is successful.

One of the first things to remember is that the pot cover that often is on the pot to make it look festive should come off. This doesn't allow for proper drainage for the plant. If giving a plant as a gift, put it in a more decorative pot. No need to plant it, just place it in a pot with drainage and a saucer under it for best care. Or, once the holidays are over, and the flowers have faded, consider planting them in another pot with drainage.

A few common flowering houseplants that are found around the holidays include cyclamen, Christ-

mas (or holiday) cactus, amaryllis, Norfolk Island pine, and the poinsettia. Here are some tips on keeping these plants healthy during and after the holidays.

Cyclamen is a winter flowering plant and not the easiest to grow, but certainly is rewarding to see bloom all through the winter months. It's important to remember that a cyclamen grows best in cool temperatures and likes plenty of indirect sunlight. A cool sunny window (like an east facing window) in a cool room is best. Temperatures should be between 60° - 68° F during the day. And, if possible, about 10° lower at night. Watering the cyclamen can be tricky. Be careful not to over water; this will cause roots to rot. Water when the soil is dry to the touch. Be sure to discard the excess water that drains into the saucer about 15 minutes after watering.

The cyclamen will bloom from October through April. When

the temperatures become warmer, the plant stops producing flower buds. As the summer progresses, often times cyclamen will go into a state of dormancy. The plant will stop growing leaves, and often appear to be dying. Continue to water the plant as needed through the summer months, keeping it as cool as you can, and giving it plenty of sunlight inside. When the fall months approach and the nighttime temperatures begin to drop, you will see an improvement in your plant's behavior. Its leaves will perk up and it will begin to produce flower buds again. Before you know it, the plant will be back to its old self and ready to perform during the winter months!

Christmas cactus, also referred to as holiday cactus or Thanksgiving cactus, is enjoyed by many over the holiday season. It also prefers a good sunny and cool location. It requires a dryer soil than many houseplants. In order to get this plant to re-bloom, it requires a cold period in the fall. The plant can be set outside during the summer in a shady location. After a few cool nights (temperatures dropping to 40° - 50°F) in the fall, bring it back inside and put it in a sunny location. It needs the cool temperatures to trigger the flower buds to set. Before you know it, the Christmas cactus will be blooming for you again and again!

Amaryllis is another popular holiday plant. There are different ways you can receive this bulb. Sometimes it's just the bulb, other times it's in a pot. It could be in a pot with soil, and it could be dipped in wax. The container that you choose should be large enough to support the root system and the bulb. Be sure the container has good drainage and uses an average houseplant potting soil.

When planting the bulb, allow for about 1/3 of the top to be above the soil level. Water the bulb after it is planted and continue to water



The Christmas cactus is a popular houseplant that blooms indoor in the winter, so it's popular during the holiday time and makes a great gift too. Unlike regular cacti however, this is not a plant from a dry, hot, desert location. Instead, they are native to tropical rainforests so it's important you water them regularly. Plants should be kept in bright, indirect light; an east-facing window or a bright-bathroom is ideal for these conditions.

as you would any other houseplant. Give it a sunny window, and the cooler the location, the less top heavy the plant will get. Before you know it, you'll see a flower spike, buds, then blooms!

After it's finished blooming, cut the flower stem back to the top of the bulb. Continue watering. Leaves will grow quite long. Don't cut them. After blooming, fertilize these bulbs as they are heavy feeders. Use a slow-release complete fertilizer that lasts a few months or a complete liquid fertilizer a few times per month.

Continue to care for the bulb as you would any other houseplant. After the danger of frost is over in the spring, the bulb can be planted outside or continue growing it in a container. When the leaves begin to yellow, when nighttime temperatures drop in the fall, it's time to give the bulb a rest. Cut off the leaves. Dig up the bulb if you planted it outside, brush off the dirt and store it in a cool, dry place for about 6 weeks. If you keep it in its container, let the soil dry out, and store it in a cool, dry location.

After about six weeks, repot the bulb and begin to water again. Before you know it, you'll be enjoying the flowers of the ama-

ryllis for another holiday season!

If you have a bulb that was dipped in wax, just set it in a sunny window and watch it bloom. After it's finished flowering, you'll find that the bulb decreases in size after flowering. To keep the bulb, peel off the wax and any dead material that would be under the wax, plant the bulb in a pot as you would any other amaryllis bulb, water and fertilize it. It may take a few years to get it to blooming size again, but with proper care, you'll be able to enjoy the flower again.

Norfolk Island pine is a tropical plant that is often affiliated with the holidays. When I worked in a retail garden center, we always got lots of these plants in all sizes for the holidays. We would decorate them for customers to pick up and take as gifts.

The Norfolk pine is an easy plant to grow. It tolerates most temperatures, if it's above 40°F. Keep it in a south or east window and away from any heating source. Water it regularly, keeping soil evenly moist.

If you decide to decorate the plant for the holidays, the little battery powered lights look great on them, add some small ornaments, and you're good to go. Be careful not to injure the branches while decorating.

And, of course, the most common holiday plant is the poinsettia. When returning home with your new plant, be sure to place it away from cold and drafty places. Hot spots, such as by a fireplace, near a heater, or above appliances are areas that should be avoided. Poinsettias like the sun, so lots of light is a must for the plant's health and survival. Near a window that is not drafty is the best location for your plant. Water your plant well when the soil is dry to the touch. Be sure not to over-water the plants. If there is any water in the saucer 15 minutes after watering, empty the saucer as the excess water can cause rotting of the roots.

These are just five of the common holiday plants seen in garden centers and box stores. Just remember to research the care of whatever plant you choose and enjoy the colors of the holidays!

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THE MASTER GARDENER



Amaryllis come in many colors and shapes - here are three types in full bloom

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The Word did not become a philosophy, a theory, or a concept to be discussed, debated, or pondered. The Word became a person to be followed, enjoyed and loved!

“The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory.”
John 1:14

*Christmas Blessings to all
 and a Happy & Prosperous New Year!*

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Small Town Gardener

Nailing the holiday wreath: do's and don'ts

Marianne Willburn

As holiday projects go, making a wreath is a safe one. For one, there's no royal icing involved. Two, it's intended to look rustic. That's extremely encouraging for those of us who routinely create an island of misfit toys while aiming for perfectly iced cookies in shades of wild juniper.

And yet, there can exist a gap between 'respectable effort' and 'elegant showstopper.'

No problem. Once you understand three easy dos and their corresponding don'ts, you too can create a sophisticated holiday wreath, confidently yell "Nailed it!" and decorate your front door this year with a DIY project you can be proud of.

Tools & materials needed for your holiday wreath

Tools: gloves, lightweight florist's wire, sharp pruners and a wire wreath frame.

Materials: Split into three categories – Assorted Greenery, Assorted Luxury and Assorted Bling.

Assorted greenery – Think in terms of one main actor and two to three supporting roles. Use your strongest greenery in the main role – such as spruce or fir – and use sprigs of pine, juniper and cedar to complete the cast. Don't forget about the extras – accent greens that bring unusual color and texture: holly, boxwood, magnolia etc... Many of these you can find in your garden or the gardens of friends.

Assorted luxury – Everything from pinecones to pomegranates. Let your imagination run wild – raiding your fridge and cupboards just as much as your backyard. Tiny artichokes, wrapped bundles of cinnamon sticks, clove-studded clementines, holly berries and the seed heads of favorites such as teasel or grasses.

Assorted bling – Battery operated lights, ribbons, raffia, small ornaments, and if you can find a tasteful one – a garland.

Set out the materials you've gathered on a protected surface.

Nailed It! Making a Holiday Wreath Tip #1

Don't: Bend individual straight branches and attach them.

Do: Create small 'bouquets' in your hand with greenery, then wire those to your wreath form, overlapping them as you go.

Attach the end of the florist's wire to any part of the wreath form and set aside.

Use your pruners to cut five or six ten-inch tips from the greens and arrange them in one



hand – start with one or two stems of the spruce or fir and back them with supporting greenery.

Fan the bunch in your hand and place it against the wreath form. Wire only the ends to the form, wrapping the wire around the form and bunch ends several times. Do not cut your wire.

Repeat the bouquet-making, and this time, overlap the display ends of the current bunch over the cut ends of the first one, making sure to overlap them generously.

Continue this process until you reach the beginning of the circle. With your last spray of foliage, tuck the cut ends under the display ends of your first one, wiring tightly in place. Twist the wire to secure it and cut.

Hang up your wreath and look for rogue branches that need trimming or areas that could use extra foliage. Don't be too much of a perfectionist – messy bed head is endearing if the wreath is full enough. Tuck in accent greens to create yet another layer of wonderful.

If you've been generous with your bouquets and miserly with your spacing, you're currently looking at a wreath ten times better than anything you've attempted before. And we're not done.

Time to add a bit of luxury.

Nailed It! Making a Holiday Wreath Tip #2

Don't: Empty the contents of your craft box onto your wreath.

Do: Pick a few luxury items in varying size for maximum impact.

It is very easy to gild the lily, taking your wreath from Kate Middleton-sophisticated to Clark Griswold-tacky in the space of five minutes.

Think about the theme you are working towards. Natural? Exciting? Minimalist? Pick out things that go together and that are in scale with the size of the wreath itself, and use an easy hand in applying them. If you've been drinking alcohol during

any part of the process (no judgement here – I was), stop at once, have a cup of coffee, and apply your clearest head to the proceedings.

Nailed It! Making a Holiday Wreath Tip #3

Don't: Add materials in circular patterns to create a big eyeball on your doorstep.

Do: Think in terms of grouping, triangles, odd numbers and a bit of asymmetry.

Objects grouped together create more impact than when they are separated and at regular intervals. For even better placement, think in terms of triangles superimposed on your circular wreath, and add objects at the apex of each angle. Odd amounts work best – 1, 3, 5, &c.

Now for a bow and other assorted bling. But resist the temptation to place them on the absolute bottom of the wreath. Instead, place them slightly off-center and group them with a few smaller objects.

As for a garland, the best ones are made of natural materials – and made by hand. Use an evening of binge-watching to string together cranberries, wooden beads or seed heads from the garden. Drape the garland on your holiday wreath like you were icing an elegant cake – in swirls and flourishes – allowing it to hang free of the wreath in places and give it an authentic sophistication.

It's your holiday wreath – have a blast with it; but remember that less is often more.

Marianne is a columnist for The American Gardener and GardenRant, and the author of Tropical Plants and How To Love Them and Big Dreams Small Garden. She writes from her home in Lovettsville, VA.

PETS

A kitten's first Christmas



Auto is a 3-year-old brown tabby boy who came into the shelter as a stray. He is one happy fellow who just loves getting his ears rubbed. Could you show him what a loving, forever home is all about?

Jennifer Vanderau
Cumberland Valley Animal Shelter

I like the Christmas tree. Like, I really like it. The branches are wide enough that my paws fit perfectly and thankfully, I'm small enough to slide right up the trunk. I can't really make it all the way up because things get a little less sturdy the higher I go, but I'm just about at eye-level with the humans.

The people don't ever know I'm here and the dog can't find me either. I never would have guessed when my new family started talking about Christmas it could be this much fun.

They adopted me a few months ago from the animal shelter. I'm still kind of little – not a year old yet – and I had to say goodbye to my brothers and sisters at the shelter. We came in with mom and still lived together in the cat adoption area. I was sad to think about not having them in my life anymore, but something happened the day the family brought me into the bonding room.

I just knew when I looked in the lady's eyes and how careful her kids were with me that I'd be okay. I was right. I pretty much rule this house, if you want the honest truth. Even the dog, Charlie, gives me space if I side-eye him a little.

He's a Lab mix, though. Those guys can be pushovers. That's what one of the cats at the shelter told me on the day I got adopted.

So far since I moved into the house, I've slept in the dog's bed, tried a little of his kibble, walked across the bookshelf (which is pretty high up there, if I do say so myself), knocked over everything on the coffee table more than once, changed the channel on the TV right in the middle of that show they all like and did something to Dad's computer when I walked across the keys that took them a whole day to figure out how to fix.

Oh, and I climb the curtains. What? They're the perfect material for my claws. Sometimes you just

have to see if you can make it to the top. That's all I'm saying.

And you know what? Still, at night time, the nice lady lets me curl up next to her head on her pillow and I purr and she kisses me.

Can you believe it? After all that, she still kisses me! Seriously, I am the king around here. No joke.

The little boy walks through the living room and points at my hiding place in the tree and hollers, "Mom! Simba's in the tree again!"

Time to go! I turn around on the branch and kick through the limbs and ornaments and tinsel and I guess I miscalculated something – the angle or my own strength or the general sturdiness of the tree or something – because just as I make my jump I sense the tree going the other direction.

By the time I land on the floor and turn around, I get to watch the whole thing fall right into the middle of the living room. I'm pretty sure the sound I hear is the water from the tree stand spilling onto the carpet.

The boy screams and his sister races into the room to see what's happened and she screeches, "Simba! Oh my God!"

Charlie even barks at me. I try not to roll my eyes, but come on. Is he serious? What's he going to do?

It's maybe five seconds later that the man and woman are in the hallway staring at the mess on the floor and I know maybe a moment of real worry. I'd heard stories from the other cats in the shelter about reasons people surrender animals. A couple of the stories weren't even close to what I'd just done.

I crouch low on the floor. Maybe if they don't see me I could figure out a way to blame Charlie.

Mom inhales slowly and looks right at me. Uh oh. This is probably it. I'm in for it. I'll be back in the shelter by tomorrow, which would be a shame because these are really nice people. I really do like it here.

Mom looks to the girl and says,

"Ashley, get Charlie out of here. There's broken ornaments and I don't want him to tramp on them." She says to the boy, "Gabe, grab the vacuum cleaner from the closet for me, would you, please?"

The Dad reaches down and rights the tree – ornaments and lights and tinsel twinkling. Probably not in the way the humans meant it to, though.

There are some sighs and a question of how could something that little make this big of a mess? and a general sense of awe and confusion, but none of them – not one – does a thing to me. They don't scream at me or hit me or even pretend they're going to punish me.

I slink under one of the chairs and watch the clean-up and part of me really thinks the cat carrier will come out when they're done and we'll be heading back to the shelter. They can't possibly be okay with this.

The Dad who watches DVDs of an old show called MacGyver says he thinks he can figure out a way to anchor the tree to the wall so this won't happen again. The Mom says that would probably be a good idea. Gabe says, "Simba's really bad, Mom."

And Mom says, "He doesn't mean it, Gabe. He's just a kitten."

Huh. Is this for real? Just to be sure, I stay under the chair even after the vacuuming and the clean-up is finished. I don't even go into the kitchen when everyone eats dinner. It's only when dessert comes out that I sneak around the corner and give Mom a quick glance.

Mom laughs when she sees me and points for the rest of the family to turn and look. "It's okay, Simba. You're a little stinker, but we knew that when we met. Just try not to hurt yourself or anything, okay?"

I slip around the chair legs and move over to Charlie's bowl and take a couple of bites because apparently I can.

Wow. Did I hit the jackpot here or what? These people are awesome.

It's a few hours later and I'm taking a bath in Charlie's bed when the family turns on Christmas carols and sits around the tree that's only a little worse for wear. I glance up with my paw still near my mouth and Mom actually smiles at me.

I sigh a little to myself. I may actually understand what humans mean by the Christmas spirit. Looks like I found it with these people.

And also a little something called unconditional love. Best present ever if you ask me. Merry Christmas, everyone!

Jennifer Vanderau is the Director of Communications for the Cumberland Valley Animal Shelter and can be reached at cvascomm@cvas-pets.org. The 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 thrift stores in Chambersburg and Shippensburg. Help support the animals at the shelter by donating to or shopping at the stores.



Gracie was brought into the shelter when her owner sadly passed away. She is a sweet 1-year-old girl but can be on the shy side at first. Gracie was much loved by her owner and is a good looking girl who would love a second chance.



Sebastin came into the shelter as a stray. He is a 2-year-old German Shepherd who can be pretty reserved. He does have a high chase drive so a home without cats would be best. Sebastin also does not care for other dogs. So being the only animal in the home would be best for him. Due to his size and no past history, an age restriction for children in the home may apply, please discuss this with shelter staff. Sebastin does need time to trust you but once you are his friend, you have a very loyal guy! He may take several visits with his potential adopters to establish a bond before going home with them. He loves going for walks and loves going to the play yard to enjoy the sunshine! Sebastin is always watching what is going on around him. Do you have the right spot for this gorgeous boy?



Daisy is a 2-year-old Rottweiler who was returned to the shelter when she needed surgery on her CCL after injuring herself and could no longer go through with service dog training. Daisy was evaluated by a specialist veterinarian, and it was determined that she needed a Tibial Plateau Leveling Osteotomy, or TPLO surgery, on not one leg but both of her back legs. A foster home was found so that Daisy could have her surgeries and recover in a home instead of at the shelter. Her foster home did a wonderful job over the past several months of recovery from two surgeries and making sure that she had the best of care to heal and get a lot of TLC. Daisy has now been fully recovered and ready to find her forever home! She is a super sweet girl that has been a trooper throughout her surgeries and recovery.

For more information about Auto, Gracie, Sebastin, or Daisy 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.



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Holiday thoughts

Bethany Davidson
Frederick County Animal Shelter

As we approach the holiday season at the Frederick County Division of Animal Control and Pet Adoption Center has much to be thankful for. What comes to mind first is the consistent, ongoing support of our community. Each day we witness multiple votes of confidence through animal adoptions, donations in the form of goods as well as financial, and positive comments on creative enrichment and how content the animals seem to be.

We are fortunate to have previous adopters return to the shelter when they are looking for an additional furry, finned, or feathered member for their family. All of these things serve as inspiration for us even when the shelter population exceeds 165 animals, when there is a significant disparity between our workload and our staffing, and when we take care of longer-term residents like Rosie. After being adopted from FCAC as a kitten in January of 2018, the now senior cat found herself back at our facility in June.

While Rosie is a sweet and gentle cat, the addition of several children in the household proved too overwhelming for her. This



Rosie

beautiful dilute tortie enjoys naps in cozy beds, sitting by the window and playing with her toys. Rosie can be a bit shy at first but she has definitely won over our

volunteers who love spending extra time with the longtime resident. To ensure she feels comfortable in her new home, FCAC is recommending that Rosie go to a family without young children and that she be the only pet.

In addition to Rosie, we still have over 40 adoptable cats that include Opossum, an 11-month-old male that's now available after a four-month stint in foster care as well as Brooklyn and Khloe, our bonded senior Siamese mixes.

If you favor pets that bark over ones that meow, there are still ten adoptable dogs searching for forever homes including Evan and Harley who have been shelter residents for over a year.

We are grateful for the opportunity to serve the residents and pet-owners of Frederick County. We are thankful for the ongoing support from the community that enables us to provide excellent care to the animals in our shelter.



At ten years old, these two golden girls are looking for a nice, quiet retirement home. Brooklyn and Khloe are Siamese mixes, and this is not only evident by their appearance but also by their ability to hold up their end of a conversation. Both girls are very friendly, however, they would prefer a home without small children since they are slightly arthritic and prefer a quiet, slower paced home.



Opossum arrived at the shelter in April as a stray and no one stopped by to reclaim him. He lived in a foster home for a few months, and this is what his foster mom had to say: "Opossum is wonderful. He is attentive and always happy to see me. He entertained himself with cat toys and likes to relax on his cat bed. He's very friendly and wants to be a part of his person's life."



Hanging out with Evan is always a good time. He enjoys hiking, dressing up, playing in a yard, belly rubs and cuddle time at the end of a long day. What he doesn't prefer is other dogs, when you don't trade him for his toys, or quick or startling movements due to his limited vision. Evan has all the makings of a great companion; he just needs someone to give him a chance.



Harley is a familiar face around the shelter since she has been with us for over three hundred days. Admittedly, she is not a good fit for any family, but we do know there is someone out there for her. What does her ideal home look like? Harley enjoys agility training and/or daily exercise. She is smart, so she needs to be stimulated mentally. Lastly, Harley prefers not to share your love with another dog, so she needs to be an only dog. Do you have what it takes to make Harley your new best friend?

For more information about Rosie, Brooklyn and Khloe, Opossum, Evan or Harley, call the Frederick County Animal Shelter at 301-600-1319 or visit them online at www.frederickcountymd.gov/fcac or better yet, visit them in person at the shelter!

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Train display is back again this year and brought to you by the Frederick County Society of Model Engineers and the Thurmont Main Street. A Bonus! Vernon and his family who make those delicious crepes will also be on hand in the same building and with the same schedule as the train display!

Annual Map Stamping

Thru December 7



Pick up your map at Cousins Ace Hardware, The Dirty Dawg, Mountain Gate Restaurant and the Town Office.

Return completed maps to the Guardian Hose Company on December 7 between 10 a.m. & 2 p.m. Prize drawings for Kids at 2 p.m. & then prize drawing for adult maps. Must be present to receive prize if called.

21st Annual

Christmas in Thurmont

Saturday, December 7

10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Enter children up to age 17 for prize drawings.

Free photos with Santa 10-1 & 2-3 p.m.
Christmas Craft tables & make and take a craft from 10 a.m. to noon.

Horse & Carriage Rides

Saturday, December 7

11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Make your reservations by November 30. All carriage rides

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COMMUNITY NOTES

Agricultural Discovery Center to locate in Adams County

Adams Economic Alliance officials are partnering with the newly-formed nonprofit Pennsylvania Agricultural Discovery Center, a \$26 million project envisioned as an agritourism attraction coming to Adams County, enhancing the world-class collection of museums and facilities near Gettysburg, “the most famous small town in America.”

The center’s plans include a large “State of Agriculture” interactive table where visitors can see where their food and fiber comes from, a 4D theater to immerse visitors in the unique and vital story of the Keystone State’s agriculture and an ag-themed outdoor playground for children, for which the Alliance secured the project’s first grant—\$658,150 from the Commonwealth Financing Authority.

“The Alliance deeply believes in forging long-lasting relationships with community partners such as the PA Ag Discovery Center,” said Robin Fitzpatrick, Alliance President. “Similarly, like a seed, planted and growing, the center will not only positively impact Adams County’s economy and community for years to come, but it’s designed to educate the American public and elevate the ag industry for generations to come.”

Powering the center’s vision is a 10-member Board of Directors representing a wide variety of agricultural organizations and interests across Pennsylvania, led by Chairman David Smith of the PA Dairy-men’s Association.

“It’s cliché, but every generation is further removed from agriculture,” Smith said, “and the PA Ag Discovery Center will help bridge that gap. Our mission is to engage visitors by promoting and celebrating the journey of agriculture, while empower-

ing future generations to explore its essential role in their lives—including a multitude of diverse, innovative career opportunities on the horizon.”

The PA Ag Discovery Center’s Board named Tom O’Connor of Camp Hill as its first Executive Director in April, building on his 13-year track record leading and growing York County’s Leg Up Farm, a one-of-a-kind facility providing a variety of therapies to individuals and families with special needs.

“Much like the opportunity to be part of a new organization at Leg Up Farm, growing and expanding the project from the infant stage into a vital entity serving the community, the PA Ag Discovery Center will be a one-of-a-kind agricultural facility within the greater Mid-Atlantic region and beyond,” said O’Connor.

Working from an office housed within the Alliance’s Adams Commerce Center, O’Connor and his board are in the final stage of site selection for the 25,000-square-foot facility’s Adams County location. Thanks to seed money, the nonprofit is concluding a feasibility study and preparing for a 2025 capital campaign, buoyed by public response thus far.

“People are constantly amazed that there’s nothing like this anywhere along the East Coast already,” O’Connor said, “that educates and celebrates the world of agriculture from all sides, from innovative careers, crops and food production, manufacturing and processing, to grocery stores and consumers’ homes and tables.”

“Within the agriculture-rich South Central Pennsylvania region, Adams County’s agricultural roots were planted long before the Civil War’s Battle of Gettysburg put our county on the map,” said Fitzpatrick.

“Adams County agriculture continues to flourish in unique ways today, including our fruit belt soils which yield more apples than any other county in the state, and the infinite ways agriculture enriches Adams County’s quality of life.”

The project would further diversify Adams County’s tourism industry: The most recent National Park Service data shows 840,000 visitors came to Gettysburg National Military Park and Eisenhower National Historic Site in 2023, spending \$61.4 million dollars. Those num-

bers are rebounding from pandemic dips, moving closer to longtime averages between 1 and 2-million visitors annually. In 2024, Gettysburg was named the friendliest city in America by Booking.com.

PA Ag Discovery founders visited and evaluated four Pennsylvania counties, including Adams, as potential locations, during a years-long evaluation process. Fitzpatrick attributes “the strength of Team Adams” as the reason Adams County attained the project, citing the Board of Commissioners, Destination Gettysburg,

Adams County Planning and Development, Adams County Technical Institute, leadership within private industry and many other partners.

“This project has been in the dream stage for more than 10 years,” said Smith, “and what it came down to is this: The Adams County Commissioners and Team Adams were 100% behind this project—they bought into our dream and embraced it.”

For more information on the Pennsylvania Agricultural Discovery Center, see discoverpaag.org.

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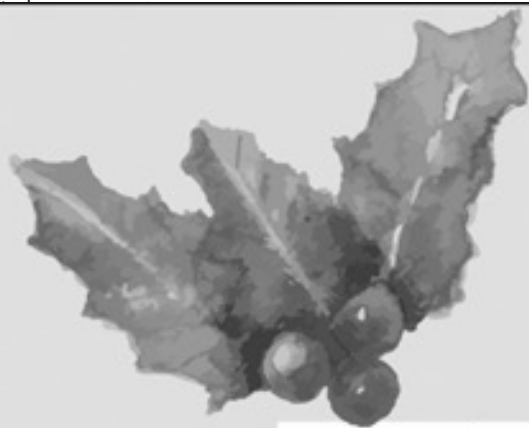


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Catoctin Forest Alliance's Artist in Residence Program

Linda Sundergill

Art has been part of the history of national parks since the 1860's when Hudson River School painters captured the majestic Western landscapes that became our first iconic national parks. Their awe-inspiring works spurred Americans to preserve those lands for future generations. Artist George Catlin, during an 1832 trip to the Dakotas, was perhaps the first to suggest the idea of a national park. Catlin traveled extensively and noted that Indian civilization, wildlife and the wilderness were in danger unless they could be preserved "by some great protecting policy of government ... in a magnificent park ... a Nation's Park, containing man and beast, in all the wild[ness] and freshness of their nature's beauty!"

Today, there are Artist in Residence (AIR) programs in more than 50 National Park Service units which preserve the connection between arts and the parks. Catoctin Forest Alliance (CFA) manages the local Artist in Residence program jointly with Catoctin Mountain Park and Cunningham Falls State Park. Artist selections for the program are made by a panel that includes local literary and art professionals.

The criteria that are used to do the selection include: technique, originality, and creativity; essence of the work complements area and would draw visitors to nature; work is appropriate for adults and children; work supports CFA goals (enhance education and appreciation of nature) and candidate shows willingness to work with the public and share talents.

CFA was established in 2009 as a partner organization to Catoctin Mountain Park NPS and Cunningham Falls State Park MSP. One of the CFA founders was artist Elizabeth Prongas, who began the local AIR program here in 2010 to bring a new and diverse voice and constituency to the parks. Since the inception of the AIR program CFA has welcomed 34 artists to the Catoctin Mountains. They have come from California, Washington, DC, Kentucky, Tennessee, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, North Carolina and Virginia.

The artists include painters, photographers, poets, a writer, a videographer, cast metal artist, a wool felter, a journaling artist and, a fabric artist/quilter. The artists stay in an historic cabin in Catoctin Mountain Park or a campsite at Cunningham Falls State Park for two to three weeks and produce art influenced by the mountain setting. After the residency, each artist donates one piece of the art they created during their stay to the CFA AIR collection.

The AIR art collection has been on exhibit at the Delaplaine Arts Center in Frederick, the Thurmont Library, the Emmitsburg Library and the Visitor Center in the Manor Area of Cunningham Falls State Park. The collection is permanently housed in Catoctin Mountain Park.

The Artist in Residence program not only strengthens the bond between nature, art and the outdoors but the sale of the art produces funds to bring children to the parks for outdoor learning experiences.

This fall we were privileged to have two artists doing residencies in our parks—Rachel Wojnar and Reagan Herndon.

Rachel Wojnar is a multimedia artist and educator from Cumberland, Md. Rachel's practice is focused on themes of ecological entanglement, biology and naturalism as they relate to human experiences of community, transformation, and healing. Using both traditional media and raw natural material, Rachel highlights ecological anecdotes as tools for understanding—specifically recognizing parallels between systemic abuse of the environment and of women, trans and queer bodies. Rachel holds a BA in Art and Art History from McDaniel College and an Interdisciplinary MFA from Hartford Art School. Rachel has studied art and ecology through place-based experiences across the U.S., Mexico and Ireland, and has exhibited in the U.S. and Ireland.

While in residency in Cunningham Falls State Park in September, Rachel presented a program at the park—"Hand-Bound Nature Books". Each participant made a nature journal book, hand-sewed the binding and decorated the cover with pictures cut from magazine or hand drawn artwork.

Reagan Herndon is a visual artist currently living in Raleigh, NC. She works mainly with acrylic paint, but enjoys exploring other mediums such as wood, mixed media, and digital techniques. After graduating from East Carolina University in Greenville, NC with a BFA in painting and drawing, she started working as a concept artist designing environments for previously unheard-of worlds. This passion has continued in her personal works as she focuses on themes of life

and nature and blends them with surreal imagination. She takes the realistic natural elements around us and exaggerates their color and shape to create fascinating compositions to give the audience new but familiar worlds to explore. She uses her work to get the viewers' attention and inspire them to look at the unique life and landscapes we have all around us in a new way.

During her residency at Catoctin Mountain Park, Reagan presented a program at the Thurmont Regional Library—Visual Storytelling: An Exploration of Color". The participants did a short nature walk around the library. They then used elements that they had seen on the walk to tell a story with a drawing and explore the ways that color can help to relay the message of the story.

CFA Artist in Residence 2023, Cindy Stockton Moore, returned to Cunningham Falls State Park exactly one year after she completed her residency and presented a free outdoor screening of short videos by international artists working with a wide range of animation techniques and exploring the complexities of our relationship to nature. The video included her work that was inspired by her residency. Her color palettes were created using ink made from invasive and native plants while she was here in 2023. In the words of Claudia Padilla, Lead Park Ranger at Cunningham Falls and Gambrill State Parks, "Cindy's art reminds me of the beauty of the world and this park."

CFA Artist in Residence 2020/2021, Nancy Arbuthnot, presented an exhibit entitled Maryland: From the Mountains to the Sea at the Hood College Hodson Gallery August 19 through September 13. The exhibit included the works that were inspired by her residency at Catoctin Mountain Park as well as those inspired by Annapolis, where she was a professor of English at the US Naval Academy. Nancy is a poet and a watercolor artist. During her residency she produced an



Artists-in-Residence Rachel Wojnar and Reagan Herndon

A Catoctin Mountain Alphabet with haiku poems and watercolor painting for each letter of the alphabet.

For more information on CFA and the AIR program, please visit www.catoctin-forestalliance.org.

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HISTORY

The Contralto

Rev. Charles Maloy, C. M.
St. Joseph's Parish, Emmitsburg
Published in 1912

Chapter 7
continued from last month

The silence in the editorial department was broken by the entrance of Father Flynn, President of the Mount. He was a man of large proportions with a flowing red beard which, though no ornament in itself, served to hide a weak mouth and very bad teeth. He and the Professor had met on several occasions at the parsonage, both, from an unfathomable antipathy, fighting shy of each other. One or two arguments precipitated by the Rector had not tended to narrow the breach. He saluted Harry gruffly in his deep voice, which, from the first, had caused the latter to summarize him as *Vox et praeterea nihil*.

His address to the Editor was more diffuse, the congratulation he offered on the brightness and up-to-date appearance of the *Chronicle*, tinged with flattery. Everyone at the college was reading it, enjoying very much the articles, especially those attacking the *W. M.* This was a move which had the hearty approval of the faculty as each member found it very inconvenient waiting for delayed trains to and from the city. Mr. Galt thanked the Doctor, offering the columns of the paper for the expression of any views the college might wish to publish, and:

"By the way, Doctor," he continued, "a letter from you will help in our trouble with the *Western Maryland*"

"Oh no, sir, we make it a rule never to enter the public prints," hastening to ask for some job-work which was the excuse for his call. While the Editor went in search of Higbee, Flynn turned his attention to the Professor, who had taken no part in the conversa-

tion, endeavoring to act as a casual caller himself.

"Rather progressive paper for a country village, don't you think?"

"Very, Mr. Galt has advanced views of journalism."

"Quite Addisonian in certain lines, that essay on 'Love and Humor, Wit and Hatred,' for example?"

"His motto seems to be, 'Lift the people to your level,'" looking Father Flynn straight in the eyes.

Here entered Higbee with the printed matter, which he proceeded to wrap. The President, after one contemptuous glance at his soiled overalls, asked:

"How are things in the printing department, young man?"

"Everything lovely," the end of the string between his teeth, "our new press is running like a charm, job-work and subscriptions are piling up giving us all that we can carry, and with a few more improvements we shall have—"

"Here, here, young man, my time is valuable, wrap up that package."

The insult was almost too great for Higbee to bear but further than going white he did nothing but look at Harry. He had dared to enter into converse with the potentate, he a mere man in overalls. The Professor was not in the least daunted, however, and asked with a drawl:

"Didn't we beat you at football the year you graduated from Frankly & Marshall M., Louis?"

"I think you did," readily accepting the cue. "By the way, Doctor, do you have games with the U. of P.?"

"I am not interested in athletics," taking his package and stamping out of the office.

Higbee indulged in some strong language, then shook the Professor's hand, "Gad! I would give a good deal to be as quick as you in handling that upstart."

"Forget it, old man, we shall

deliver a few stronger ones than that before we're through."

The foreman went back to work somewhat mollified though the wound still rankled, causing him to excogitate plans of revenge. The editors worked for half an hour longer, then Harry asked:

"Why doesn't Father Flynn wish to attack the *Western Maryland*?" "Favors in the matter of coal delivery," without looking up.

"Thought as much, how does he stand in politics?" "Hand and glove with Gerry, the Judge is a graduate of the Mount, you know."

"An honor to his alma mater from what I can hear, they say a more venal rascal never decided a case."

"A slick article, has the church men with him from Genesis to Revelations. Before the last election he was on every religious platform throughout the county, the clergy are with him to a man. You know the sequel."

"Why don't you go after him?"

"No use, he's elected for ten years, and we have no recall."

Declaring he had worked enough for one afternoon, the Professor walked out into the early evening air. Looking up and down there was nothing in the sleepy street with its dead level of unchangeableness to attract his attention, so he decided to walk east (Miss Tyson lived in that direction).

Passing the Dental Parlor, the proprietor hailed him: "Just a moment, Professor, wait 'til I put the finishing touches on Roy Strong's Sunday teeth, I want to talk to you."

"Sunday teeth?"

"Oh yes, they are ail the rage in Emmitsburg."

"In what do they differ from everyday teeth?"

"All who wear what they call store teeth hereabouts, and can afford it, have two sets, a plain one for week days and one decorated with gold fillings for Sundays."

"They are surely slaves of fashion in these parts. Mrs. Hoppe told me all the boys and girls have store teeth. Why don't you instruct them in the matter of preserving their natural ones?"

"Most of them are too poor, they think it cheaper to let the natural teeth decay, then get false which will last them the remainder of their lives."

Dr. Forman ground and polished while Harry sat and thought of the refinements of systematic pauperism which were meeting him every hour he spent in this territory. Yet people who visited for a day or two went away under the impression that the village was an Arcadia maintained by the generosity of the educational institutions to the southward. It was heartrending to behold the living lie. He was on the point of requesting the dentist for more details but thought better of it. The teeth finished, their price carefully noted in the account book, Forman seated himself backward on a chair opposite



The old Emmitsburg Chronicle building on Main Street - today it forms the west side of the Vigilant House Company complex.

the Professor. We dare not insert the various expletives and punctuations he made use of, for the reader, who hears them every day on the street, would be offended with their appearance in print.

"Hear you're starting a dramatic society." "I plead guilty."

"Just the thing this burg needs, what are you going to begin with?"

"We haven't fully determined as yet, but I think it will be an operetta by Mr. Halm. I believe you are in the prospective cast as basso."

"Good Lord! I can't sing for sour pickles, and don't let Halm run things, he'd break up a nigger funeral."

"Isn't he popular?"

"Popular! why the girls all think him a joke." "We do not intend to have the ladies do the thinking for us," dryly.

"Why not start with a play? 'A Night Off' or 'Esmeralda,' or something of that sort?" The dentist had studied for his profession in the city.

"The inception of the idea was wholly Mr. Halm's, he suggesting the operetta, I could not be ungracious enough to make a change. If we carry through the first venture we can easily follow with others."

"Is Marion Tyson to have the lead?"

"I understand Miss Tyson is to have that part according to Halm's present programme," wincing a little at hearing her first name taken so freely.

"She can do it all right, but I'll bet you'll have to fish for a soprano, Mae Lansinger won't sing."

"Why should Miss Lansinger object?"

"In the first place, she will not risk comparison with Marion, and, for another reason, she's got to be the whole works or she won't play."

"I presume Halm shall find someone to take the part should it be necessary to clash with her." "There's Vinny Siebold if she would only do it." "Perhaps she will."

"I don't know, Vinny's a peculiar girl, doesn't go in much for society, old man's a lawyer whose local reputation isn't very good."

"I am afraid there are few reputations which will bear scrutiny if the local estimate be accepted, but as far as I am concerned everyone is unimpeachable and we shall accept any and all at that rating."

He had just delivered himself of this last when Doctor Brawler stuck his head in the door. The physician was tall, round-shouldered, of a pasty complexion, with shifting eyes and tawny moustache. He was not handsome to look at, grouchy in disposition, but honest withal, charitable to a fault and the shift in his eyes came more from nervousness than chicanery. Seeing the Professor, he would have withdrawn but was prevented by a hasty:

"Come in, Doc, come in, sit down and rest your hands and face, you've met the Professor."

"Yes, yes; just been out to the Mount, new fellows homesick, got the blues. Give 'em a dose of calomel and a few days' loaf in the infirmary, then they're all right."

"We were just talking about forming a dramatic club, Doc, what do you think of it?"

"Can't do it, haven't the talent, can't draw crowd enough to meet expenses."

"I don't know about the talent, Doc, don't see why our boys and girls aren't just as intelligent as the next."

"It isn't that, you couldn't stand the criticism of the Mount and St. Joes."

Dr. Forman consigned the Mount and St. Joes to a much warmer cli-

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HISTORY/OBITUARY NOTICES



If you thought shoveling your driveway was hard work, try shoveling a road by hand!

mate than Emmitsburg enjoyed, and Dr. Brawner excused himself saying he must put up his horse. When he had gone the dentist continued:

“That old fool is like the rest of them around here, they think the world would cease to revolve were the Mount and St. Joes to withdraw their permission. Ye gods!

it would be an awful shock were they to awake and discover the sun rose with-out leave of Father Flynn and the Lady President.”

“Did no one try ever to waken them?”

“Yes, they tried it, but—well, you see with what result. A former pastor began a crusade against what he called the bucket-brigade,

the children going to the kitchens for cold scraps, started a little factory to furnish work and fair wages and—he is on the foreign mission now, I believe.”

For some minutes they sat each engrossed with his own thoughts, an unusual silence prevailing in the dental parlor. The Professor seriously contemplated the foregoing of all the works that were crowding in upon him and the giving himself entirely to the matter of his personal redemption. The town’s problem seemed too great for his weak efforts, and besides what was Emmitsburg to him? Might it not be better to leave the people in their pauperism than to introduce the element of discontent, which once it had petered out would leave their last state worse than the first? He had come to seek his own reform not to effect reform in the village. This led him back to the battle with his besetting sin and he began to realize that during the past few days, or since he had occupied himself with external matters, the struggle with the demon was not half so acute. He had gone to sleep each night with less difficulty, was eating better, the blood seemed to course through his veins with more vigor. The burning sensation at his wrists and the base of his skull had entirely disappeared while the pleasure of a cool drink of mountain water surpassed the most seductive mixed drink. The dentist broke in on his reverie:

“When do you have the first meeting?”

“As soon as we can make it known to those who might care to take part.”

“They all know it now, call your meeting for this evening. They will all be there.”

“This evening at seven-thirty, then.”

continued next month

Patricia Alice Topper



Patricia Alice Topper, 97, of Emmitsburg, departed this life on Wednesday, November 6. A woman of noble character, a mighty force of independence and strength, she lived her life guided by her steadfast commitment to God, family, and community.

Born on December 28, 1926, in Chicago, Pat was the daughter of the late Francis Topper and Shirley (Goss) Topper. She is reunited with them and her beloved brothers: Francis, John and Michael Topper. She leaves to cherish her memory ten nieces and nephews: Pam, John, Diane (Dave Schmecht), Steve (Kara Alvarez), Susan (Ward Wheeler), Matthew (Cindi), Paul (Ingrid Miller), Christine (John Kalinich), Frank (Chandelle), and Laura (Joseph Costanzo).

A gifted portrait artist and illustrator, Pat used her talents to capture the essence of people, animals, landscapes, and historic moments through various art mediums, favoring oil paint, watercolor, and pastels. Her most celebrated works adorn the walls of Bradley Hall at Mount St. Mary’s and enrich the pages and covers of books published by the National Geographic Society.

Pat completed high school in 1945 at Glenbard Township High School. She studied painting at L’École de Beaux Art and the Art Institute of Chicago. She earned a BA from Mount St. Mary’s in 1975 and an MS in Library Science from Shippensburg University. Throughout her career, she contributed her skills at Fort Detrick, the Gettysburg Times, the National Geographic Society, and Mount St. Mary’s. However, her most notable calling was as the devoted caregiver for her parents who she adored.

The perpetual artist, Pat observed life through a hand glass to capture details for enjoyment and remembrance. A voracious reader, she continuously studied and acted to better her life and the lives of others. A lover of classical music and a talented pianist and organist, she listened to and played music to raise her mood and the spirits of others. She cherished her dogs and cats as her children, blessing their lives as they blessed hers. Her neighbors and community became an extended family, embodying the sense of mutual care she held dear. She treasured her family with fierce devotion, conveying her life stories to entertain, support and encourage them. Her enduring faith shined brightly for all to witness and unwaveringly carried her to her final breath.

Her written last words convey her life message: I’ve loved, been loved, and am looking forward to the Greatest Love. All else fades in Love’s shadow. – P.A.T. 2024.

The family will be interring Pat’s remains at a future time. Online condolences may be made at monahanfuneralhome.com.

Stephen Francis Ryder



Stephen Francis Ryder, 72, of Emmitsburg passed away suddenly at his home on Tuesday, October 29. Born March 29, 1952, in Gettysburg, he was the son of the late Gerald Francis and Agnes Merlene Ryder, nee Rightnour; devoted brother of Michael G., David L. and his wife Valerie; Dennis P. and James B. Ryder; also survived by numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins. He was predeceased by his sister Sharon Allis.

He was in the graduating class of 1971 from St. Joseph High School in Emmitsburg. He was a carpenter for Taney Corporation, and in his spare time he was an avid Baltimore Orioles fan, loved watching old westerns, especially Gun Smoke, and he enjoyed camping and canoeing. Steve took many trips across the country with his brothers and friends in his younger years. He also loved his yearly trips to the Outer Banks in NC.

Steve always had a way to make people laugh and was so much fun to be around. He will be missed by family and friends. He will be interred in Emmitsburg Memorial Cemetery.

Online condolences may be offered at www.myersdurborawfh.com. Arrangements and inquiries may be directed to Myers-Durboraw Funeral Home, P.A. of Emmitsburg.

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100 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH

December 5

Shop Early Mail Early

Last year, through the generous cooperation of the press, the movies and other advertising mediums, Christmas mailers were induced to dispatch their Yule Tide presents earlier in the month than ever before in the history of the institution of gift, exchanging in the holiday season.

As a result, the spectacle of the last-minute rush of former years, with the attendant heartbreaking labor on the part of wearied and nerve worn store clerks and post office employees, was avoided.

This year, Postmaster General New and First Assistant Postmaster General John Bartlett have determined to make an even better record and to banish from all time the suffering undergone in past years by those engaging in the sale or transportation of gifts. They hope to make "shop early" and "mail early" a habit with the American people.

Mailing early does not mean December 1 or before, but if everyone could get their holiday tokens in the mail between December 10 and December 20, the post office could not ask for more.

Particular attention this year will be paid to greeting cards. Despite the success last year, it was noted that the last minute mail consisted largely of cards. Possibly many of them were returned greetings to friends, heard from on a previous mail, but overlooked on the original Christmas list. Like parcels and letters containing money, orders, cards cannot be marked "do not open until Christmas." Therefore, it is possible that the mailers hold them until the last to ensure delivery on Christmas Eve. This class of mailers this year, however, may find their cards undelivered until after Christmas Day.

Believing that the energies of postal employees should not be sapped to the last degree for any avoidable reason, and, intent upon securing for them the same Christmas privileges enjoyed by others, the Postmaster General has asked for the cooperation of the public. The last minute, or zero hour has been moved up, so that all postal employees may eat their Christmas dinners at home. Rural carriers will deliver no mail at all on Christmas Day, and clerks and carriers in the city offices will stop work promptly at noon.

Adams County Increases Tax Rate

The Adams County tax rate has been increased from 4 to 9 mills by the County Commissioners. The reasons given are: the building of new roads, a decrease in horse and mules on farms that has increased the basis, and that the former rate was too low. The bond tax rate was reduced from 1.5 mills to 1 mill.

During the year, further increased expenses may be made on account of road work and bridges. It has also been found necessary to charge off a large sum of book assets of the County, on the account of "Unpaid Taxes", as much of this has been found to be uncollectible.

New Auto License Tags

The Maryland auto license tags for 1925 are now being sent out

to those who have made application for.

Tags this year will start with the number 100,000 as all numbers between 30,000 and that mark have been reserved for Baltimore City. In confining certain numbers to certain sections, the State's Motor Vehicle Commissioner said that it is the hope of his department that theft of cars will be minimized. It is also the intention of the Motor Vehicle Commissioner to facilitate locating the owners of machines in case of accidents.

The Motor Vehicle Commissioner also said that it is the intention of his office to stage a campaign against motorist who cover the license plate with isinglass, a practice that renders it difficult for officers to distinguish the numbers and often results in mistakes and identification.

The new tags this year are especially distinctive, having white numbers against the green background. The price per horsepower this year is \$.32. In calculating the amount payable to the commissioner's office, the applicant should multiply the number of horsepower by price per horsepower and add \$.10 for postage. The application sent out by the Motor Vehicle Commission office should be filled out properly and sent in immediately.

Plans For Three New Schools

Plans and specifications for three new school buildings in the county were submitted and discussed at a meeting of the County's Board Of Education Wednesday. The new school buildings are being considered for Sabillasville, Lewistown and Creagerstown. According to present plans, a three-room structure will be erected at Sabillasville, and two room buildings at Lewistown and Creagerstown. It is the object of the Board to have work on the erection of the buildings started as soon as possible. It is expected that bids will be asked for in the near future. Rural schools are being consolidated as much as possible, pupils, thereby, obtaining more advantage than would otherwise get, it was pointed out.

Fire In Farm Home

Fire of an unknown origin, which broke out at 2 o'clock in the Charles Bowers' home, near Virginia Mills, destroyed a section of the house, to the extent of \$300 damage.

The blaze was discovered by Mr. Bowers shortly before 2 o'clock when he was awakened by the smell of smoke in the bedroom. Rising, he discovered flames leaping from the floor of a room on the second floor. Hunters from the Hanover Hunting Camp also noticed the flames as they leap through the roof of the dwelling and went to the assistance of the Bowers. The Fairfield Fire Company was called, but the fire was practically extinguished when the department arrived.

Several little children of Mr. and Mrs. Bowers were taken from the burning dwelling and housed in a nearby farm. When the flames were extinguished, the Bowers return to the home, and are now residing there, while repairs are being made to the burnt section.

December 12

Donations To Frederick Hospital

Emmitsburg contributed most generously last week to the appeal for donations to the Frederick City Hospital. Folks in this section are never found wanting when asked to assist a worthy cause and as this well-known county institution has done wonderful work, the good people in this section were more than willing to help towards its continued success.

Every year the donation sent in by Emmitsburg has been more liberal and the generous offerings of last week surpass that of previous years and it is to be doubted if any town in the county was more liberal.

The cash contributed received by Mrs. Andrew Annan amounted to \$330, which was more than was contributed last year. A carload of produce was sent by the members of the community while Mount St. Mary's College sent in a truckload of selected vegetables from their farm.

The Hospital Board and Mrs. Annan, who is the local member of the Board, very much appreciated the kindness of the people of this section, and also the people of Thurmont and Taneytown, for their liberal and most generous offerings to this well-known institution.

Accidents

Last Monday, while Joseph Snyder was looking at his traps, he had the misfortune to slip and fall, striking the hammer of a rifle he was carrying, on a rock, causing it to go off. The bullet passed through his arm, between the shoulder and elbow. Fortunately, he was near Flen Hoffman's home, who saw him fall, and heard the shot.

Sander's waded across creek to get over to the house, to get his wound bandaged, but he fainted and fell before reaching the house. If the Hoffman's had not seen him, he would have died from loss of blood: but being somewhat used to bad accidents, they bandaged the arm very tightly to stop the flow of blood, and took him to his home. A doctor was hastily summoned to examine and dressed the wound. Fortunately, the bone was not injured.

William Myers, of New Midway met with a serious accident on Thursday, while hauling a load of corn. In jumping off the wagon, he fell, the



wagon passing over his ankle, breaking it. He was immediately removed to the hospital where he remains for treatment.

Change Story Results In Perjury Charge

The repudiation of testimony given by Robert Mitchell, about 35, colored of near Emmitsburg at a session of the state court resulted in the State's Attorney being instructed to have an indictment of perjury returned against the witness.

Mitchell was the state's sole witness in a liquor charge brought against Charles Springer of near Emmitsburg. At the September grand jury, Mitchell declared that he had brought one pint of liquor from Springer, on the strength of this testimony, Springer was held for trial.

However when Mitchell was called to the stand he denied absolutely that he had made any purchase of this kind from Springer with the result that the Judge adversely reacted to the statement of the witness and instructed the State's Attorney to have an indictment of perjury returned against him.

When Mitchell was called to the stand, he was asked the usual perfunctory questions, growing out

of statements he presumably made while testifying before the grand jury. To the evident surprise of the State's Attorney, Mitchell made a denial of his previous allegations, which resulted in Springer be in held for trial. When questioned concerning this, Mitchell squirmed in the seat in the witness box, and the judge became impatient, admonishing him to answer the questions put to him. Continued denial from the witnesses led the Judge instructing the State's Attorney to bring the perjury charge against the witness. The court declared that under the circumstances Springer was acquitted.

Many Dogs Still Without '25 Tags

Between now and January 15, more than 4,200 dog owners in Adams County must get dog licenses, or forfeit their animals. This was the warning issued by the office of Harry Troxell, County Treasurer.

Mr. Troxell announced that up to noon today only 79 licenses for 1925 have been issued, as compared with almost 500 at the same time last year. In 1924, 4,200 dogs were licensed in Adams County, and the number to be tagged next year is not expected to fall



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and Ganard failed to peer, the judge asked the reason why. Leslie, Coblenz, attorney for Ganard, stated that Ganard had gone to Pennsylvania, and had not returned, and ask for a continuation. But the judge declared that he did not consider a continuation justified. The judge also pointed out that considerable expense was involved in having the jury come in, especially as the case was only one set for that day and ordered Ganard to pay Palmer and the court costs.

White Christmas Predicted

Those unfortunate mortals of Frederick, who are unable to bask in the sunshine of the sunny south, may as will make up their minds to endure more winter weather, and from all indications a winter that will be more severe than any in recent years.

While the weather for Christmas day is yet a little uncertain, except that another drop in temperatures is then due, all sorts of disagreeable elements are promised for Christmas Eve, the day before the greatest holiday of the year begins.

Christmas Eve is expected to be the coldest of the present winter with the mercury slipping to the 12° mark and snow falling across the County. The snow will possibly change to sleet or rain on Christmas but will be followed by colder weather again, Thursday.

The present month is the coldest December on record, perhaps since 1917. January 6, 1924 was the coldest day this year when the mercury registered a low mark of 6° above zero. The present winter will see this mark beaten, said the local observer, giving as one reason the fact that winter this year said in about a month earlier than a year ago.

stories, and jingles, and for once, it is literally true that "Christmas is in the air".

All the churches have presented the same story, some more elaborately than others, but the one predominating over all messages have been "Peace On Earth Good, Will Towards Men", and "Glory To God In The Highest" – that brings happiness to the children and the real Christmas spirit to the older folks.

Fatal Accident At Bridgeport

A fatal accident occurred at the dangerous curve on the State road at New Midway, on Wednesday night, about 7:30, at the exact spot that has seen multiple former wrecks – the telephone Paul at the curve near the blacksmith shop. A car, driven by William Eckert, of Littlestown, with three companions, was driving towards Taneytown, and at the curve crashed into a new pole that had just been erected in place of one broken off by an auto two weeks ago. The car may have skidded on the icy road, or may have been going too rapidly to make the turn safely. The car was badly wrecked, and turned over.

All four men in the car were knocked unconscious by the crash. John Shadell, who was in the back seat, recovered consciousness first. He was bleeding from the nose, but had no apparent injuries. Shadell aroused Frank King, who was sitting next to him, and who was bleeding from the ears, but was otherwise unhurt.

Charles Boose, who was in the front seat, was unable to move because of his broken leg. Shadell and King found Eckert pinned beneath the wreckage of his machine. He was still breathing, although unconscious. They carried him to a farmhouse across the road, and a doctor in Taneytown was notified. Upon the arrival of the physician, the removal of Eckert and Boose to the hospital was advised.

William Marker, who lives near the scene of the accident, offered his machine to take the intro to the hospital. Eckert was placed in the rear seat, with his head pillowed in Cell's arms. When 2 miles west of Taneytown on the Emmitsburg Road, Marker's car slid off the road and the axel on his car snapped.

The Taneytown Garage Company was notified of the accident to Marker's machine and sent a service car to tow

in the disabled vehicle. When the car arrived at Taneytown, Dr. Benner was notified, and upon viewing Eckert, pronounced him dead.

Meanwhile, another machine was hurrying Boose to the Warner hospital. He suffered considerable pain from his broken leg, but is reported to resting easier.

Dr. Brawner Dead

Dr. John Brawner, prominent physician of Emmitsburg and surrounding mountain villages for more than a half a century, died at his home in Emmitsburg on Sunday morning.

Dr. Brawner was known throughout Western Maryland as the last remaining member of the old school country doctors. Until the last year or so, when his health began to fail, and his practice became limited, he could be seeing driving his horse and quant old-fashioned buggy along the pike, and around the back mountain roads for his daily calls to his scattered patients. He scorned autos.

Even when he was stricken with paralysis more than a year ago, people of the countryside refused to consult any other physician, and came to his bedside for medical advice, which he never refused them.

Dr. Brawner will be buried Tuesday morning in the Saint Joseph Catholic Church cemetery.

Thurmont Motor Company To Be Sold

Lloyd Fisher will sell at public auction on the premises of the Thurmont Motor Company on January 3, a lot of ground, new garage, and all of the personal property of the said Thurmont Motor Company. The garage is situated on a direct road from Washington, Baltimore and Frederick to Gettysburg, and is in the center of a rich and thriving community. The gross business done by this garage during the year ending June 30, 1924 was approximately \$200,000.

This property will be first offered as a business, to wit: garage, office equipment, shop equipment, new Ford, tractor parts, new Ford, parts, and accessories, new and used cars.

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

below that mark, and possibly will be much higher.

The State Department Of Agricultural allows until January 15 for dog licenses to be renewed. After that no extension will be given and prosecution of owners whose dogs are bearing 1924 licenses or unlicensed, will be prosecuted, Mr. Troxell stated.

Application for the 1925 dog licenses may be made by mail, providing the treasurers fee and return postage is enclosed with the register's license information.

Milton Reaver has purchased the John Henson Farm on the outskirts of Harney. The purchase price is not definitively known, but we have good reasons for believing that it was reasonable. Mr. Reaver has been a tenant on the farm for 17 years, which speaks well for him as a good farmer. As a citizen of the community, he was highly respected, and as a neighbor, he could always be depended upon to do a favor, whenever called upon, if it was possible for him to do it. We were all glad to learn that he will be remaining in the community.

December 19

Old Harney Mill Being Upgraded

David Sentz is having his mill put in shape for making flour. Several carpenters and an expert millwright have been at work for sometime, and when the job is completed, the mill will be in first class shape. The people of this community are greatly pleased at the prospect of having a first class mill in this place. The mill was an old landmark, and was known for many miles around for making a good grade a flower, and all who know Mr. Sentz know that he is a miller of the first class and can depend on having their wheat ground at home.

Appellant Fails To Appear, Judge Scores Tardiness

"Trifling with a court" was excoriated in no uncertain terms when Joseph Ganard of near Thurmont, defendant in a civil case, failed to appear in court. The case was the only one set for the day, and the jury was called to hear it. The trial was to hear a suit instituted against Ganard by Elmer Palmer of Frederick, as a result of a collision between a cow, owned and driven along a public highway near Thurmont at night by Ganard and an automobile driven by Palmer. Palmer filled suit against Ganard for \$100.

The case was set for trial on Monday and word was sent to Ganard to appear for the trial. When the court convened

December 26

Christmas In The Air

Radio listeners have been rather over-fed, since last Sunday, with Christmas carols, "Santa Claus" talks, solos and choruses producing old standbys, and Christmas programs. Generally, all demonstrating that Christmas is much the same everywhere, and there is no substitute for the simple story of the birth of the Christ child, what it has meant, and still means, for the world.

From dozens of broadcasting stations, far east to far west, and south, have come strains of "Silent Night", "Hark, The Herald Angels Sing", "Adeste Fedelis", and like hymns, together with nursery

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TANEYTOWN HISTORY

The life and legacy of Harry Clabaugh

Harry MClabaugh, who was born on December 13, 1856, in Cumberland, Maryland, left a legacy with his remarkable contributions to American jurisprudence and his deep ties to Taneytown. His distinguished career as Chief Justice of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia is part of a broader legacy encompassing public service, legal brilliance, and local leadership. As the owner of the historic Antrim estate, Clabaugh's life and work have left a lasting impact on both the nation and the heritage of Taneytown.

Clabaugh's rise to prominence began with a solid educational foundation and a commitment to the law. After completing his legal studies at the University of the Maryland School of Law in 1878, he quickly distinguished himself. Early on, people recognized Clabaugh for his sharp intellect, sound judgment, and unwavering dedication to justice, qualities that would define his career. His early professional work began in his hometown of Cumberland, where he served as the city attorney, a role that brought him to the attention of the broader legal community. His skill and reputation earned him further appointments in Baltimore, where his career gained momentum.

It wasn't long before Clabaugh was called to Washington, D.C., where his legal talents would make an indelible mark. The late 19th and early 20th centuries were a period of significant transformation in the United States, with the federal judiciary playing an increasingly important role

in shaping the nation's laws. Clabaugh's expertise and principled approach to the law made him a prime candidate for leadership in this evolving judicial landscape.

In 1899, President William McKinley nominated Clabaugh as an Associate Justice on the District of Columbia Supreme Court, marking the beginning of his high-profile federal judicial career. The United States Senate confirmed his nomination on March 2, 1899, and Clabaugh's impact on the court was immediate. His keen legal mind and commitment to impartiality allowed him to navigate the nation's complex issues during this time, including the rise of progressive reforms and the growing influence of labor movements.

In 1903, Clabaugh's career reached new heights a few years later when President Theodore Roosevelt gave him a recess appointment as Chief Justice of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia. This elevation to one of the most significant judicial roles in the federal system was a testament to Clabaugh's legal understanding and ability to balance the competing interests of individual rights and governmental authority. The Senate officially confirmed his nomination on November 16, 1903, and he continued to serve as Chief Justice until he died in 1914.

As Chief Justice, Clabaugh presided over a wide range of significant cases that shaped the legal and political landscape of the early 20th century. His tenure occurred during a pivotal era of American history, with the country grappling with issues such as economic inequality, labor



Antrim, as it appears today, looks significantly different from when Harry Clabaugh lived there, from 1880 until his death in 1914.

unrest, and the shifting balance between state and federal powers. A dedication to fairness and an unwavering belief in the rule of law characterized Clabaugh's decisions. His ability to carefully evaluate complex legal arguments with wisdom and restraint, ensuring the fair and impartial administration of justice, earned him widespread respect.

While Clabaugh's judicial career brought him national recognition, his connection to Taneytown, and the historic Antrim estate is another significant aspect of his life and legacy. Built in 1844, the Antrim estate was one of the most prominent properties in Taneytown and a key part of the region's historical identity. The estate had been in the Clabaugh family for years. Clabaugh inherited the property upon his father's death, transforming it into a personal

retreat from his demanding legal duties in Washington, D.C.

Antrim was more than just a home for Clabaugh—it was a place where he could reconnect with the local community and contribute significantly to the preservation of Taneytown's rich heritage. Under his stewardship, the estate became a social hub, hosting events and gatherings that brought together members of the local and regional elite. Clabaugh's presence in Taneytown reminded him of his deep roots in Maryland, and his ownership of Antrim helped solidify the estate's place in the town's cultural history.

Today, Antrim remains a vital part of Taneytown's heritage. Now operating as Antrim 1844 the estate continues to honor its historical legacy while offering modern amenities to visitors. Guests at Antrim 1844 can walk the same halls that Clabaugh once did, experiencing firsthand the beauty and history of a place that played a significant role in his life. The estate is a testament to Clabaugh's legacy as a prominent American law figure and a local history custodian.

Clabaugh passed away on March 6, 1914, while still serv-

ing as Chief Justice, marking the end of a career defined by integrity, fairness, and public service. His contributions to the American legal system, particularly his role in shaping the course of federal jurisprudence during a critical period in the nation's history, are of significant historical importance. His connection to Taneytown and the Antrim estate ensured that his legacy would also endure locally.

In remembering Clabaugh, one must consider the breadth of his impact. As a jurist, he guided the legal system through change and uncertainty. As a local leader and property owner, he played a key role in preserving the cultural fabric of Taneytown. His life serves as a reminder that the legacy of a public figure often extends far beyond their official duties, reaching into the communities and places that shaped them. For Taneytown, Clabaugh remains a figure of pride, symbolizing how national influence and local heritage can intersect in meaningful ways.

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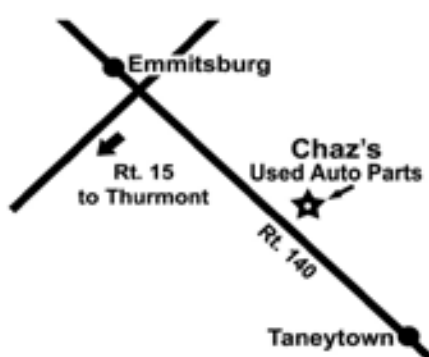
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TEACHER TALK!

Traditions

Claire Doll
MSMU Class of 2024

Three months into teaching, and daylight savings has made every day feel warped, like a constant night with bits of day in between. I drive to school with the sunrise in my rearview, and I drive into the sunset on my way home. It is beautiful, I will admit, to watch the sky change from my dashboard, to watch the colors swim into one another while the world darkens. Other times, I find it quite depressing. I don't have the shortest commute, and the occasional school bus or tractor trailer can make my mornings ever so slow. Sometimes, I feel like the days are piling up behind me and in front of me, and I am in the middle, turning the page each time I go to sleep. I feel like each day is a ritual, a pattern that must be followed.

It's like a tradition, almost. And in honor of December, the month of Christmas and coming home and being with family, I thought I would write about the little traditions I have started in my classroom, and the little traditions I have picked up from student teaching or from being in school myself. Although regularly defined as "the transmission of customs or beliefs from generation to generation," I like to think of traditions as special pieces of ordinary that we repeat. We repeat these even in the ordinary, or in the extraordinary. We grow accustomed to traditions, reliable on them even.

So, what does tradition look like in the classroom? It begins with grammar. Every day, my students walk into my

classroom, amongst the dimmed fluorescent lights and twinkling LEDs from my dorm room, and they settle into their seats, pull out their warmup sheets. Today, my students reviewed apostrophes. Last week, they learned all about capitalization. Since the first week of school, I have committed myself to teaching my students all about grammar. For ten minutes a day, we learn new concepts, practice, and participate in drills that truly nail down comprehension. Today, as we reviewed the plural possessive forms of words, my students mumbled and groaned at how complicated the English language was. I wanted to laugh—they had no idea what the Emmitsburg News-Journal staff went through every month!

I have also made my students accustomed to incorporating these grammar concepts into their writing. While I strongly believe in the teaching and reviewing of grammar topics, I also ensure that my students apply their knowledge to their writing. Otherwise, what good is that ten minutes a day of grammar? Because of this, I make my students write every day. We journal about how the quarter is going, or we reflect on how we feel about classes. We might write creatively, or we might analyze a text. Routine exposure to writing is crucial, and ELA would not exist without it.

What I believe is more important, however, is reading. I recently asked my students, "When was the last time you read a book for fun?" My seventh-grade students answered back: "First grade. Third grade. Fourth grade." For some, they had never.

I wanted to cry for my students. How could they not have



read for fun? When I revealed that I had read a whopping 38 books just this year, their jaws dropped, as if such an act could never be possible. It was in this moment I realized that reading—true, independent, self-selected reading—is so important. I can assign all the text passages I'd like, but if students don't have a natural love and desire to read, then getting them to succeed in ELA is impossible.

To tackle this, I have established the "tradition" of going to the media center every two weeks. Students have the ability to browse the school library and select up to three books to take home or keep in my classroom. Students can then read their books when they have nothing else to do. This has worked beautifully in my classroom so far, as students have grown accustomed to grabbing their book as soon as they finish work. Later in the year, my students will have book reports where they will choose a format of presenting their book. My hope is that this tradition evolves into a routine, and that my students will eventually grow to love reading.

There are smaller traditions within these. Traditions of finding important vocabulary in a text prior to reading. Traditions of being quiet and staying quiet as soon as I begin talking. Traditions born out of mutual respect, of a classroom community. I am proud of my students, and they have already settled into the daily traditions of ELA class.

In December, my students will begin reading "A Christmas Carol: The Play." We will begin by learning about historical context of the novel, as well as a breakout room to "chase Dickens around Victorian England" (if there is any way to make ELA fun, I try!). After reading the play, students will attend a dramatic production of "A Christmas Carol" and will have the opportunity to express their own thoughts and depictions of the story through writing. My students have only had one essay for me so far, and I made sure to keep it very structured and precise. This time around, I will challenge my students to explore their own

thoughts and not rely so much on sentence starters. Students will have to summarize the play themselves and compose a completely original essay. Some traditions simply don't stick around!

Despite the darkening days and the colder weather, every day feels exciting. Every day feels new. One of my college friends asked me, "Are you happy?" And the truth is, I am. While I am exhausted every day—an exhaustion I have never, ever experienced, not even in college—I am also so excited to teach. I actually like coming to work! It doesn't feel like a job, and it doesn't feel like I'm under too much pressure. After all, nearly three months of building tradition in my classroom has paid off. Let's see if it can last the rest of the year!

And lastly, I wish everyone a Merry Christmas! I am still so thankful for the Emmitsburg community and hopeful that I can visit again soon.

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COOKING

The cookie edition

Sonya Verlaque
FCC Culinary Program

My husband loves chocolate and orange together. And with the orange zest in this cookie, you can get a little vitamin C for the winter cold season. These are cookies you need to chill, and then slice and bake. So, you can prep them a day or so ahead of time and then bake them when you need them.

Ingredients

1 cup plus 2 tbs. (2 1/4 sticks) cold salted butter, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1/4 cup packed brown sugar
1 tsp. vanilla
2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
12 ounces semisweet chocolate, coarsely chopped, divided
Zest of 1 medium orange (about 2 tbs.)
Flaky sea salt and more orange zest, for topping (optional, but highly recommended)

Preparation: In a large bowl using an electric hand mixer or in the bowl of a stand mixer with the paddle attachment, beat butter, sugars and vanilla on medium-high speed until light and fluffy, about 3 to 5 minutes. Scrape down sides of the bowl, then stir in flour on low speed until just combined. Stir in 6 ounces chocolate chunks and 2 tbs. orange zest until just incorporated. Divide dough in half. Place each half on a large sheet of plastic wrap. Fold over plastic wrap to cover dough, then use your hands to roll each piece of dough into a log about 2-2 1/4 inches in diameter.

Wrap dough in plastic wrap to cover completely and chill at least 2 hours until firm (can be chilled up to 1 week). Heat oven to 350 degrees. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper. Uncover one log and, using a sharp serrated knife, gently slice log into 1/2-inch-thick rounds (use a sawing motion to cut through chocolate chunks). Place cut side-up on prepared cookie sheet about 1 inch apart. Sprinkle with sea salt, if desired.

Bake 13 to 15 minutes or until edges of cookies are just beginning to brown. Cool 1 minute on cookie sheet, then transfer to cooling rack to cool completely. Repeat with second log of dough. Melt remaining 6 ounces semisweet chocolate in microwave or in a double boiler according to package directions. Dip one end of each fully cooled cookie into melted chocolate; let excess chocolate drip off, then place cookie on cooling rack. Sprinkle with more sea salt and orange zest, if desired. Chill dipped cookies in fridge 30 minutes until chocolate is set.

Lemon Ginger Cookies

My friend's mother has cancer, and I wanted to make her a little treat but also stay away from refined sugars and have some additional nutrition snuck in while she is undergoing treatment. Almond flour adds Vitamin E, riboflavin, zinc and other nutrients as well as being lower than wheat flour in carbohydrates. This recipe is from my friend and nutritionist, Tina Brockett the owner and founder of Encompass Integrative Wellness, who I appreciate so much.

Ingredients:

2 1/2 cups almond meal/flour
1 tsp. baking soda
2 tbs. ground ginger (+optional 1 tsp fresh grated ginger)
1/4 cup grape seed oil or melted coconut oil
1/2 cup maple syrup
2 tbs. lemon zest or more for a more robust flavor

Preparation: Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a Silpat. In a large bowl, combine the almond meal, baking soda and ginger. In a medium bowl, combine the oil, syrup and zest. Add to the dry ingredients and mix until well blended. Scoop 1 Tbsp. of the dough onto a parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake for 8-10 minutes, or until the tops start to crack! This is an excellent vegan cookie that keeps well for more than a week if it lasts that long, very easy to make with only a few ingredients.

Italian Nut Roll Cookies "Nocatole"

I remember eating these cookies when we visited West Virginia for Christmas. They are one of my dad's favorites that his sister, who is now 95 years old, used to make. Maybe the walnuts provides longevity. But we will be making them again this holiday season.

Ingredients

For the Dough:
4 cups all-purpose flour
1 cup granulated sugar
1 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp. salt
1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, cold and cubed
3 large eggs
1/2 cup sour cream
1 tsp vanilla extract



Italian Nut Roll Cookies "Nocatole".

For the Filling:

2 cups finely ground walnuts (or pecans if you prefer)
1 cup granulated sugar
1/4 cup honey
1 tsp. cinnamon
1 tsp. vanilla extract
1 large egg white (for binding)

For the Glaze (Optional):

1 cup powdered sugar
1-2 tbs. milk
1/2 tsp. vanilla extract

Preparation: Prepare the Dough: In a large bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt. Cut in the cold butter until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs. In another bowl, whisk together eggs, sour cream, and vanilla. Add this mixture to the flour mixture, stirring until it forms a dough. If it's too sticky, add a bit more flour. Divide the dough into two portions, wrap in plastic wrap, and chill in the refrigerator for at least 1 hour. Prepare the Filling: In a

mixing bowl, combine the ground walnuts, sugar, honey, cinnamon, vanilla extract, and egg white. Mix well to create a thick paste. Assemble the Rolls: Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C) and line baking sheets with parchment paper. Roll out one portion of dough into a thin rectangle on a lightly floured surface. Spread half the filling evenly over the dough, then carefully roll it up lengthwise, like a jelly roll. Repeat with the second portion of dough.

Slice each roll into about 2-inch pieces and place on the prepared baking sheets, cut side down. Bake: Bake for 15-20 minutes or until the rolls are lightly golden. Allow to cool on a wire rack. Optional Glaze: Mix powdered sugar, milk, and vanilla extract until smooth. Drizzle over cooled rolls for extra sweetness.

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MOMS' TIME OUT

Flexible traditions

Mary Angel

I absolutely love traditions. I talk about them all the time. Whether I'm describing our family staycation favorites, black Friday shopping, or Christmas craft day, everyone knows I love traditions. I have come to a tradition's crossroads, and I have to learn to let go. The question in my mind is, "Will I survive?"

I know you are thinking, "how dramatic", but that is how much I love my traditions. This year we celebrated our 10th and final anniversary of the family staycation. The kids, 3 of which are in their twenties, have aged out of family staycation. It would probably be more accurate to say they are working and too busy for staycation. This was an amazing staycation, but a little bittersweet knowing that it would be our last.

As much as I understand that most of my family has jobs and it can be difficult to schedule any time when we can all get off work, I still struggled with this being the end. That is why I decided it was time to pivot and start a new tradition. The idea I came up with was to schedule day trips throughout the year and let the kids know ahead of time. If they choose to use vacation, they are welcome to come along, but if not, that is alright as well.

As much as I love my traditions, I had to accept the fact that some of them will have to change as life happens. How many of us when we got married had to adjust how we did Thanksgiving, Christmas, or Easter dinner. You suddenly had two families you had to accommodate. This is all part of life. This year it just seems I have a lot more adjusting to do.

Besides staycation, my oldest daughter is in a serious relationship, and she informed us that she would be leaving at some point on Thanksgiving and Christmas to spend time at her boyfriend's house. My initial reaction was one of utter surprise, but when I thought about it, it made total sense. Another change I had to face this year was that one of the busiest days of the year for that same daughter is Black Friday. This is not because she works retail, but because she works for an oral surgeon and this is an extremely busy day for wisdom teeth extractions, because the kids have off school Friday.

This of course brings me to my annual kid's craft day. For years I have made craft stations for my kids and their friends to make holiday gifts and ornaments. This began because I wanted the parents to have a Christmas shopping/date day, but ended up being something my kids and their friends would ask for every year. As challenging as it was to come up with new crafts each year, I loved it! We would play a Christmas movie or two, bake cookies, and craft for hours.

Gradually each of my kids has outgrown this tradition. I actually thought it was a thing of the past last year, but my youngest had a new friend who had never experienced our craft day. They had a blast, but I learned pretty quick that I didn't need to put too much effort into variety. They made a couple of the melting beads and then went straight to painting and never looked back. As much fun as I had researching and coming up with new craft stations each year, my daughter reminded me that all I needed was a few items for each of them to paint and they would be happy.

Christmas is right around the corner, and I know my traditions are for the most part a thing of the past. Every year we would decorate the tree, as a family, on Black Friday. This year, as I have said, my oldest daughter has to work, and most likely so will my oldest son.

So, we are postponing the tree decorating until the weekend. This change isn't a big deal, I just hope they can all set aside time to do it together. The days of going to Toys 'r Us after the kids are in bed and waiting for the store to open at 2am on Black Friday is one tradition I don't miss. I will, however, miss the sheer joy on Christmas morning when they opened those presents and could



Christmas traditions come in all shapes and sizes, many stay the same from generation to generation, others morph over time.

not contain the smiles and laughter. They are still very grateful, but the childhood surprise and anticipation aren't the same.

My kids are to the age where they give me very short lists. They no longer look through every toy catalog that comes in the mail and dog-ear pages and break out magic markers to circle something on every other page. Now the lists are short, expensive, and at least a portion can be fund on TicTok. I have to get very creative with my gifts. I cannot stand to get only what is on the list, actually all year long I listen for "that's cool" or "I wouldn't mind having that" or "that cooks" (which is apparently a good thing).

My newest tradition is trying to make up a basket, for each child, of things they didn't necessarily have on their list, but I think they

would like. I also try to theme the basket. Sometimes that may mean a topical theme, like animals, flavors, or electronics. Sometimes I make the basket color themed when I can't come up with a topical one. This year both my girls are into books, so I can think of a bunch of fun stuff for a book basket, and my oldest has always loved movies, so done and dusted there. My second son, well, I have no clue, but I will.

When it comes to my traditions, I just need to remind myself to be flexible. Sometimes I get so caught up in the tradition, I lose sight of living in the moment and I miss the joy. Only when I am flexible and enjoying the ride and time with my family do I get the most out of a tradition. Changing staycation to once a month, or

once every other month, doesn't change the fun and family memories we are making. Changing the Christmas craft day to only include melting beads and painting, only means less work for me, and just as much fun for them (we will still bake cookies and watch a movie, of course).

These are all just minor changes, and with each change to a tradition we have the opportunity to start new ones. Each of our traditions has had a beginning and an ending and led to amazing new experiences and memories. I hope your family traditions are a blessing, but remember changing them can be even better!

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FOUR YEARS AT THE MOUNT

This month we asked our Four Years At The Mount writers to reflect on their Christmas and holiday traditions in a way that allows readers to fully immerse themselves in each writer's experience of the holidays.

Freshman

How holidays happen

Cameron Madden
MSMU Class of 2028

We find ourselves in the kitchen, with plates stacked up containing remnants of gravy, bits of corn, and cranberry sauce someone couldn't stomach this time around. Alone sits the person who insisted upon to clean up the dishes for this Thanksgiving dinner. Let's just say I am the one alone with the dishes, probably falling asleep from the food intake and revelry coming from a family get-together. As the last of the dishes finally begin to wrap up and I head upstairs quietly with intent to fall fast asleep, I catch glimpses of a changing time. Autumn turning to winter of course, but also something in the mood of those around me; all sleeping with a sort of relaxed mood, excited for the days to come despite no real change. As I drift off to sleep, and the cold finally begins to come in full effect, I feel nothing but warmth. The holiday season is here; Christmas is on the horizon and there is now nobody in my ear to tell me to

wait until after Thanksgiving!

In the slow beginning days of December, animals begin to hibernate, the color of tree bark begins to blend and form a wall of gray and the leaves have disappeared. It feels perhaps lifeless. It's funny though, in the transition from November to December there is green prevalent all around us. I certainly notice it in my own home, as the first couple days of the month involve my mother busting out the boxes of Christmas decorum she has been mulling over since last December. While I usually would be busy drowning in schoolwork, I instead am sat with my siblings, helping and conversing with one another over whether the lights should go here or there, or if the newest decoration my mother had bought can fit on the dining room table.

I come home to a lot more pastries and sweets than usual, filling the house with either a fresh smell of chocolate-chip cookies, or of fresh bread bought from the local bakery. It usually will be gobbled up in the span of a day, and with the sufficient supplies of egg-nog and other warm beverages, it was an inadvertent but expected outcome. It's always been funny, when younger plugging in the decoration lights and watching them light up the rooms of

the house was a huge deal. We would turn off the main lights and gaze upon yellow string lights in wreaths or long strings of fake foliage. Always a week or two into the month, we would finally go and pick out a tree. We would usually go to the local fire station and sit by barrels of fire, eating candy canes as either my mom or dad would pick out a tree. They would hand out some cheap, but filling hot chocolate, which paired well with the aromas of peppermint and evergreen, and the feel of the cold air. As the month went on and the house gradually filled with more decorations—and of course, louder Christmas music—the spot of the tree would finally be picked out and set up.

After days of waiting for the tree to settle, the big box of old ornaments would be brought out, and we would all take turns putting whatever we wanted on the tree. There were a few specific to each person, making it all the more special. Some music or a holiday movie was put on as we did this, and the family has fun and laughs all the way through the process.

Throughout this time, we had some pretty normal traditions: like Christmas lists and visits to Santa Claus at the mall, eating candy canes the whole way to really cement pep-

permint as the flavor of the season. In the few days leading up to Christmas, I would be conflicted on which parent I would spend the first half of Christmas Day due to their split, but regardless of the unease, the principles and experiences were the close to the same: love, laughter, joy and connection. We would spend Christmas Eve excited with what usually turned out to be a big dinner, as we tend to have larger dinners on the Eve rather than on Christmas Day. Afterwards, my siblings and I would usually spend the rest of the night eager for the presents but, also in appreciation and revelation of the peace and love surrounding us. Partially due to the youngest sibling's wishes, we would all sleep in one room. Overtime though, it just became the standard, and we would all find a space to sleep in my brother and I's room.

On Christmas Day, my family partakes in traditions that may be similar to those of other people in the world. We awake in the cold morning to take a picture of all of the children, myself included, waiting to be let loose on the unsuspecting and innocent Christmas tree. Once the photo is snapped, it is off to the races to get to those presents! Coming from a family that did not have too much money to spend,

gifts were either a collection of smaller items of varying expense or one big item with many lesser ones. All of which were usually determined by what was specified on a Christmas list, yet all were loved and cherished. From that point on, the same thing would repeat at the other parent's house and the rest of the day would be spent with bonding over candies, presents, and probably a Charlie Brown movie. As I said before, a big dinner would usually be held on the day before, but dinner on Christmas would always be like a smaller Thanksgiving in terms of food like ham and turkey, mashed potatoes and such.

The next few days usually are quiet; we all relax with our gifts and take appreciation of the Christmas feel up until New Year's Eve. Aside from the occasional party filled with plenty of snack/food platters, the most memorable tradition we carry out on New Years is banging wooden spoons on pots and pans, being an annoying neighbor by enjoying life in the easiest way: showing the love you hold, for and with, those closest to you through making noise and exerting laughter in a moment of complete togetherness.

To read other articles by Cameron Madden, visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net.

Sophomore

Christmas Eve

Gracie Smith
MSMU Class of 2027

Christmas Eve is one of the most memorable nights for children around the world. As for my family, Christmas Eve is not only the most memorable night, but the most traditional. Since before I was born, my family would host a big Christmas Eve party. Everyone would gather at my grandparent's house and celebrate the night before Christmas. There would be food and appetizers galore, drinks for everyone's fancy, and sweets to satisfy even the pickiest eater. Let's just say, no one ever left hungry. The house is filled with the brightest spirits, the warmest smiles, and the happiest of hearts.

This tradition goes as far back as my grandparents hosting Christmas Eve when my mother was little. My mother always says how she would watch Rudolf and other Christmas entertainment all day just to stay out of my grandmother's way, and to attempt to make the time go by faster. Several years later when my mother had grown up, on Christmas Eve of 2003, my parents had announced their engagement; my father had proposed the day before so they could share in the excitement with their family. Little did everyone know that that was going to be one of the last Christmas Eves at my grandparent's house before my mother took over the tradition upon welcoming me into the world.

Christmas Eve of 2005, my first Christmas, and my parent's first time hosting the infamous Christmas Eve

party, with a baby nonetheless, was certainly one for the books. Despite my lack of attention to it all, I do believe it was a success; surely I would've heard otherwise by either my mother or grandmother. Christmas Eve of 2007 was my little brother's first Christmas and our first Christmas in our newly built home. With tons of new space for decorations and food, my mother did not miss out on the opportunity to be festive.

Over the years my parents really began to hold our Christmas Eve tradition close to their hearts. So much so, that we have special dishes we use strictly on Christmas Eve. This might not sound so abnormal for some but I do find it amusing. The Christmas Eve plates are used one time a year and remain in our basement for the other 364 days of the year. However, my mom has been very particular about what she likes for Christmas Eve, it all has to be perfect. So much so, that one of my mother's Christmas presents one year was a hotplate for some of the appetizers we have on Christmas Eve. Add that to the list of things that are seen once a year on Christmas Eve.

As my brother Jack and I grew older, we became easily more restless on Christmas Eve. Watching our parents run around the house cleaning and cooking, we learned quickly that it was best to stay out of the way; as my mother did when she was a child. Then, at 6 o'clock sharp our friends and family would arrive. As the night goes on, the more excited each of us gets.

I remember one year that my dad absolutely blew my mind. Since we do have picky eaters in our family, my parents always go to McDonald's and get 40 nuggets for the kids. I have to admit, I was one of those picky eat-

ers who ate McDonald's on Christmas Eve and I was perfectly okay with that. However, a few years ago I caught my dad putting my mom's homemade crab dip on a McDonald's nugget and he replied simply, "I made Chicken Chesapeake". He continues to enjoy his "Chicken Chesapeake" every Christmas Eve now.

Another more recent story of Christmas Eve takes place in 2019. My cousin Sabrina, a United States Marine, was not supposed to be home for Christmas. That year, my aunt, uncle, and cousin joined us for Christmas Eve. My mother, continuing to work her Christmas magic, was able to help Sabrina surprise her family and be home for Christmas. That year we actually had our biggest turnout, that is, before COVID-19 hit in 2020.

Christmas Eve of 2020 was certainly very different. The only people in attendance were my family of 4, my grandparents, and my uncle's family from my mom's side. Instead of mingling with people we didn't have the opportunity to see very often, we played Christmas games. Off the top of my head, the only two I remember playing are Christmas charades and Christmas trivia. Despite not having nearly as many people there, my parents still had all their usual dishes; ham, crab dip, meatballs, nuggets, chips and dip, cookies, chocolates, fudge, black bottoms, and more that I know I'm forgetting (sorry, Mom).

At the end of the evening, me, my brother, and all of our cousins sit on our couch, and my grandfather sits in the middle to read us all Twas the Night Before Christmas. This is sort of a tradition inside of a tradition if you will, and this tradition goes way back to when my great-grand-

father would read to my mother on Christmas Eve. At one point, all of us could fit on the couch because we were so little, but now we're sitting on top of each other for the sake of tradition. Nevertheless, my grandfather puts on his Santa hat and his Santa beard I made him when I was little, and reads to us all. As the years go by, I find myself not listening to the story anymore and instead listening to my grandfather; his passion, his excitement, and his pure love for

our family are some things that get me emotional every year. When he reads the story, everyone goes silent and listens; hearing not his words, but him. One day, it will be me who hosts Christmas Eve, and it will be my father who reads the story to my kids and my brother's kids. But, for now, I cherish every Christmas Eve when my poppy reads to us.

To read other articles by Gracie Smith, visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net.

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CHRISTMAS AND HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

Junior

The Owen family Christmas

Devin Owen
MSMU Class of 2026

Growing up, I was always told that Christmas should be my favorite time of year because I got to have 'two Christmases' due to my parents' divorce. Personally, I thought it was unnecessarily tense and not as "holly jolly" as it was supposed to be. As I got older though, I managed to reignite my love for the holiday season with new traditions and better ways of carrying out the older ones.

One of my favorite holiday traditions is Christmas Morning Breakfast, which has been a tradition from my mom's side of the family since before I was born, with my sisters experiencing it long before I came along. Each year, we spend Christmas Eve prepping a casserole that my mom calls "Christmas Morning Breakfast," it's made of egg, sausage, cheese, and bacon. I've had other people make it for me before when our holiday custody agreements would change, but I don't think anybody makes it as good as my mom does. Come Christmas morning, mom gets up and cooks the casserole

while we all gather and wait for her in the living room to open presents.

In recent years though, the tradition of Christmas morning has changed a little bit. In September of 2020 my niece, River, was born and a year and a half later, my nephew, Wilder, came along changing the trajectory of how the day was spent. Since then, we have spent Christmas morning over at my sister's house. Now, we still prep the casserole the night prior, but we bring it over with us to cook there instead while the kids are hollering out to anyone who will listen about opening their presents. In addition to the casserole, my sister makes homemade cinnamon rolls and preps coffee and orange juice for anyone who might want it. We spend the morning watching the kids ripping through wrapping paper and hearing the sounds of laughter and love flow through the house with the delicious scent of sweet cinnamon and vanilla wafting through the air. I sit on the floor with the two human embodiments of my heart as they climb all over me, giving hugs and kisses, helping me open my own presents, fighting over who gets to sit next to me for breakfast and asking me to play with them and the toys that they got. Moments like these are my favorite, holiday or not.

From Christmas morning I move on to time with my dad and his side of the family. Around 1 o'clock my brother and I will head over to my grandparents' house to give them their presents from us. My absolute favorite part of this is giving my grandfather his gift: chocolate-covered cherries. For some reason, he's obsessed with them and without us even realizing it, gifting him the sweet treats became a tradition right under our noses. He knows what he's getting each year without me even having to give him the gift. Giving my family their gifts might just be my favorite part of the holiday each year. I try to make or buy more thoughtful gifts for everyone in my family because, sentimentality, is one of the most important values in our home. I think the best gift I ever gave was to my Uncle Charlie; I made him a collage of our pictures together with a note saying just how important to me that he was. It made him cry, which of course made me cry too.

The holiday here has felt a little different as of late though. In my freshman year of college, my uncle passed away from cancer. For the last few Christmas holidays I got to have with him, I would make homemade raspberry turnovers. He always said that they were his favorite treat. Unfortun-

nately, after he passed, I couldn't find it in me to make them for our first holiday season without him. However, I plan on making it a tradition to have them at every holiday get-together we have in order to keep him with us in spirit.

It's no secret that as you get older things in your life begin to change. Since coming to college, the holidays feel different. I drown myself in work during finals week and then go home for a month to celebrate the holidays with my family. We jump from house to house, with plans of gift giving and receiving, breakfast, lunch and dinner plans set up well in advance, and the goal of spreading Christmas joy. Something I have found myself cherishing about Christmas as a college student is making new traditions with my friends and roommates here at the Mount. Since freshman year, we always have a night where we do something fun and holiday themed. Freshman year my roommate and I got matching pajamas, made gingerbread houses, and played games like Uno and Exploding Kittens on the floor of our dorm. Last year, since there were four of us instead of two, we exchanged gifts for 'secret Santa' and played games while wearing light-up reindeer antler headbands. This year, we are exchanging gifts again and having a hot choco-

late bar to make fancy hot chocolates for one another while watching holiday movies!

This Christmas, I was offered the opportunity to spend the holidays in Switzerland with my boyfriend and his family. Talk about a Christmas present! I've never been out of the country before, in fact, I just recently (last month) got my passport. I've been grappling with the decision on going or staying with my family in Delaware. I have always spent the holidays with my family—we have our traditions and I'm not sure that I'm ready to part from them just yet.

But that's a part of growing up. Our traditions change over the years, our families grow as we get into relationships, have kids, and go off on our own as adults. Changing traditions doesn't change the love we have for our families, nor does it mean that we're giving up on what we grew up with. Instead, it means that we're in a position to make new traditions with our bonus family members and spread our traditions amongst new people. Personally, I'm looking forward to everyone knowing the Owen family traditions and keeping them alive.

To read other articles by Devin Owen, visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net.

Senior

Cozy do-nothingness of Christmas

Dolores Hans
MSMU class of 2025

My restful slumber is interrupted when I awaken at the remembrance that it is almost Christmas. From beneath the covers, I shift my feet back and forth, carefully feeling the foot of the bed for something that doesn't typically belong. When my foot arrives at the heavy object at the end of my bed, I am filled with excitement and fall back to sleep with a smile on my face. When I awaken again, it is morning. The icy breeze drifts through the thin slits that surround my windows, and the warmth that I had built up beneath my blanket is disturbed as I frantically search the foot of the bed once again. The first exciting moment of Christmas Day is the discovery of the stocking full of gifts at the end of my bed. I take a quick glimpse, the first thing I lay my eyes on always being toothpaste or shampoo, and hastily, silently, make my way to the bathroom to brush my hair and teeth before the festivities begin. As I walk through the hallway to my little sibling's bedroom, stocking in hand, I take a quick peak at the tree in the living room. The lights glisten on the tree, creating a warm glow throughout the room. The multitude of Santa statues that have been collected by my parents throughout their marriage are scattered around the room. Baby Jesus is present in the Nativity as it is now the day of his birth. Presents line the space beneath the tree's branches, and there is a handwritten note beside a plate of crumbs that used to hold our iconic Italian cookies. I take a deep breath, taking it all in, and then qui-

etly, I approach the bedroom door of my little sibling's room. I open it gently and sit beside my baby sister, gently stroking her back. I beg her softly to wake up because it's Christmas. She sits up, her disheveled hair standing up in all directions, and she groggily wraps her arms around me, still mostly asleep. Once she has finally processed what I said, she bounces up full of energy and says, "It's Christmas?!" She finds her stocking at the foot of her own bed, and begins to pull out the trinkets within as I go to wake my baby brothers in the same way.

Once all the children are awake, one by one, each of the rest of my siblings enter the bedroom and go through their stockings. We all compare gifts, sometimes even trading, and delight in the gifts we got, even the toothpaste and shampoo. This is my favorite time. Just me and my siblings, hanging out in our matching pjs, waiting for our parents to wake up so we can all go to the living room. My dad finally enters the bedroom that we all have congregated in, classically wearing a robe and a Santa hat. He wishes us a 'Merry Christmas' and gives us all hugs. Then he goes back to his room, probably to tell my mom that all us heathens are awake and ready to open presents. Once she is up, we all go to the living room, dad blasts some classical Christmas music, and mom plops herself down on the couch with a massive cup of tea. My siblings and I all claim a spot around the room and await the commencement of gift giving.

Every year, my family and I do a secret Santa, only we are required to make the gift. This is also my favorite part. Getting to see how each of my family members made something that is specifically for another person. I can recall all the best gifts that were given, but the absolute best was

when my parents had picked each other in the secret Santa. My mom created a wooden manger to go on the front lawn, something my dad had been wanting for years, and my dad really broke out the carpentry skills by hand-making a bench that is a replica of one that they call "our bench" which rests at a botanical garden they used to frequent in their relationship. After this, we get to open our gifts from Santa. After all presents have been opened, we spend the rest of the day sitting around in our pajamas, and just doing whatever; ranging from crafts, watching movies, eating, playing outside, and more. I spend the day reminiscing about Christmas Eve, which for my family, is bigger and more festive than Christmas Day. We spend the morning making Italian Christmas Cookies with my grandma, we get dressed up and go to mass, and then my family, including all of my aunts, uncles and cousins, all meet up at my grandma's house. We have a wonderful dinner, spend an agonizing time taking photos, and then we open our first gift. It is always from my grandma, and it is always matching pajamas. My siblings and cousins and I all call dibs on the bathrooms and bedrooms to get out of our fancy clothes as soon as possible. We all emerge in the wackiest Christmas pajamas you can imagine, and plop down in the living room to continue with the gift giving with a secret Santa. The best part is waiting to see who my grandpa had, because he always 'conveniently' forgets that there is a \$25 limit. Then, we sing happy birthday to my grandma (and Jesus) because both were born on December 25th. At the end of the night we gather by the front door, grandma reads a classic Christmas book to the youngest kids, and the rest of us women regret not bringing a change of shoes while we stuff

our feet back into our heels, which are the perfect fashion statement with our Christmas pjs. Christmas Eve is one of my favorite days. But Christmas Day is its own kind of wonderful. After the cozy do-nothingness of Christmas Day, the night ends with a massive

order of the most delicious Chinese food you've ever tasted, brought right to our door.

To read other articles by Dolores Hans, visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net.



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LIBRARY

Blue Ridge Summit Free Library

Regular Daily Events

The Blue Ridge Summit Free Library will hold its annual Yuletide Celebration from 4 to 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 14, on the library grounds. Admission is free and all are welcome.

Activities during the family-friendly event include fire truck rides by the Blue Ridge Summit Volunteer Fire Company; an appearance by Santa, who will hand out candy canes; and a children's craft to create a bird feeder to take home.

"In addition, we'll have live music by Rich Fehle, and holiday goodies including cookies and hot or cold cider," said Mary Anne Stanley, president of the library's board. The library will be open during the event and decorated for Christmas.

"A special highlight is a tree decorated with Brandywine Critters ornaments, created by Blue Ridge Summit resident, the late Roberta (Bert) Domenick," Stanley said.

Brandywine Critter ornaments are made of natural materials such

as seeds, pods, grasses and leaves. Some of them have been displayed on a Christmas tree in the White House. The ornaments featured on the library's tree are from Domenick's personal collection.

There will be a memorial tree lighting at 6:30 p.m. in memory of Steve Burdette, artist, teacher, pastor and all long-time supporter of the library.

Just in time for the holidays, the Blue Ridge Summit Stitchers will draw the winner for their annual quilt raffle. Parking is available in the plaza lot across from the library, off Monterey Lane and in other adjacent lots. For more information, email to: brsmtn-board@gmail.com.

Regular Daily Events at the Library

Mondays – Children's Story Time from 4 to 5. Children and parents can join us for a weekly story, craft or coloring sheet, or play time. We will be running two identical 30 to minute sessions in an attempt to accommodate busy schedules.

Wednesdays – Coffee Club from 3 to 4, mingle with the gang for coffee, tea, puzzles, board games, coloring books, &c.

Thursdays – Teen's Night. The community room is reserved for teen use from 4:30 to 6, just hang out or play Wii, play board games, do puzzles, eat snacks, watch movies, make movies, etc.!

Saturdays - Join us at 10:30 for an hour of Story Time and all of its festivities! What could be better than a great book and a fun craft?

Blue Ridge Summit Book Club – December 16 from 5 to 6. This month, we are reading and discussing the horror short story, *The Grownup* by Gillian Flynn. Copies of the book will be available in the library for you to check out.

The Summit Stitchers Quilt Club meets at 5:30 on December 17. If you have always wanted to learn how to quilt, now is the perfect time to start! The group is currently working on this year's gorgeous raffle quilt.

For more information on the Blue Ridge Summit Free Library visit www.fclspa.org or call 717-792-2240.

Frederick County Public Library

Get the kids out of the house during holiday break with 3 special programs all at 2 – Welcome Winter Celebration (12/23) to make a mason jar snowman, create and experiment with a snowball catapult; Wild Robot Party (12/26) to watch the movie and make your own "wild" robot out of recycled materials; De-Stress December (12/30) Play with kinetic sand, Play-Doh and other wonderfully tactile substances as we relax and wind down after the excitement of the holidays.

We have a special party to ring in the new year - Mew-Year's Eve Party Ring in 2025 with a special kids' cat-centered celebration to welcome the New Year from 11:30 to 12:30 on 12/31.

The Seton Center will host Chair Yoga at the Library on Mondays and Wednesdays this month! Check out the schedule below!

Visit the library website at FCPL.org to discover so much more. Any questions, call Emmitsburg Library at 301 600-6329 or Thurmont Regional Library at 301 600-7212.

Thursday, Dec. 12: Tween Fiber Arts Workshop, Trivia Night at 5:30.

Thursday, Dec. 12: WAGS For Hope, Read to a Dog at 6.

Saturday, Dec. 14: Museums By Candlelight – all day celebration with a craft.

Thursday, Dec. 19: Maryland Writer's Association Teen Writer Club, 5:30 to 7.

Monday, Dec. 23: School's Out: Welcome Winter Celebration, 2 to 3.

Thursday, Dec. 26: School's Out: Wild Robot Party, movie and robot building at 2.

Monday, Dec. 30: School's Out: De-Stress December Sensory Play, 2 to 3.

Tuesday, Dec. 31: Mew-Year's Eve Party for Kids! 11:30 to 12:30.

Thurmont Regional Library

Mondays, Baby Storytime at 10:30.

Tuesdays, Preschool Storytime at 10:30.

Tuesdays, Let's Get Ready for Kindergarten at 11:15.

Wednesdays, Toddler Storytime at 10:30.

Thursdays, Musical Storytime at 10:30.

Thursdays, Elementary Explorers at 4.

Saturdays, Family Storytime at 11.

Mondays, Dec. 2, 16, 30: Tween/Teen Intro to Crochet Series with Liz!, at 6.

Wednesday, Dec. 4: Healthy Living for Your Brain and Body at 2.

Thursdays, Dec. 5, 12, 19: Elementary Explorers at 4.

Saturday, Dec. 7: Christmas in Thurmont at the Library – all day.

Monday, Dec. 9: Teen Reindeer Cocoa Bags at 4.

Wednesday, Dec. 11: A Conversation on International Affairs with Shaun Donnelly at 7.

Emmitsburg Branch Library

Mondays, Family Storytime, 10:30 & Little Adventurers at 11.

Monday, Dec. 2, 9, 16 & Wednesdays, Dec. 4, 11, 18: Chair Yoga with the Seton Center, 1:30 to 2:30.

Monday, Dec. 2: Hello Holiday's Party Gingerbread BINGO and Photos with Mrs. Claus at 4:45.

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Mt. Rushmore • Crazy Horse	2 train rides with minimal time on motor-coach	7 night inside passage Celebrity Cruise. Beverage pkg. & wi-fi pkg. included.	2 train rides with min. motor-coach	Pueblo Cultural Center
Black Hills Natl. Forest	7 night Holland cruise with beverage + wi-fi + speciality dining + shore excursion credit + gratuities		7 night Holland cruise beverage + wi-fi + dining + excursion credit + gratuities	1 hotel in Santa Fe
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LIBRARY & SCHOOL NEWS

FASD explores future of sports

Fairfield Area School District administrators are asking the board to decide whether to continue with a junior varsity football schedule or allow some athletes to play for another school district.

Athletic Director Keith Bruck told several dozen people gathered in the high school auditorium in early November that he and High School Principal Brian McDowell do not believe the district has enough students to support football, wrestling, or field hockey teams. Alternatively, the

district could enter into co-op agreements with nearby Gettysburg or Waynesboro.

Fairfield Area High School's current enrollment is 277 students, Bruck said. The district offers 16 sports. Enrollment has decreased annually for 20 years, Bruck said. This fall, Superintendent Thomas Haupt canceled the varsity football season because the team did not have enough players to field a team safely.

Bruck told the crowd that co-oping with Gettysburg or Waynesboro is what he and

McDowell believe is the best of four options.

The district could, Bruck said, continue to have 16 teams competing in the York Adams Interscholastic Athletic Association (YAIAA). However, Bruck said, that scenario is likely not sustainable.

If Fairfield students play for Gettysburg or Waynesboro teams, the district must transport them to those schools. The district will not permit students to leave school early to ensure they arrive to practice on time.

The school district that accepts Fairfield students will likely charge Fairfield Area School District. Bruck said those costs could be less than the cost of hosting sporting events or running its own program.

Bruck said co-oping does not guarantee a Fairfield student will make a team that requires tryouts or that a Fairfield student will get play time if they are on the team.

The board must decide in December if it wants to seek a co-op agreement for the 2025 football season. The other school's board of directors would also need to vote to accept Fair-

field's players. Bruck said he has had positive conversations with Gettysburg and Waynesboro's athletic directors but stressed that they do not speak on behalf of their board members. If Fairfield schedules a JV-only season, it would need to seek permission from YAIAA to have senior students play.

"I strongly encourage the co-op. It gives our student-athletes opportunities at the appropriate level," he said.

The board will then need to decide in March if it wants to co-op for field hockey and in April if it wants to co-op for wrestling.

YMCA expands early childhood education

Fawn Modrosky

The YMCA of Frederick County is excited to announce the expansion of its Head Start program to include Early Head Start services, offering crucial educational and developmental support for our community's youngest children and their families. This fall, six new Early Head Start classrooms will open across Frederick and Emmitsburg, creating an engaging, safe environment for children ages 0-3. With the capacity to enroll more than 36 infants and toddlers in Frederick County, this expansion brings vital resources and opportunities to local families and underscores the YMCA's commitment to building brighter futures from the earliest stages of life.

In Emmitsburg, two classrooms will open at 300 South Seton Avenue, featuring extended care options to better support families with flexible schedules.

Early Head Start focuses on nurturing children's cognitive, social, and emotional development in a safe, caring, and enriching environment. In addition to early childhood education, the program offers health screenings, nutritional guidance, and support for families, helping children and parents thrive together.

"Our goal is to make sure every child in our community has the

chance to thrive," said Stacey Wantz, Director of Head Start Programs at the YMCA of Frederick County. "Expanding our services with Early Head Start helps us reach more families and provide critical support during these foundational years of a child's life. We are excited to bring this impactful program to families in Emmitsburg."

Now Enrolling: Applications Open for Early Head Start Children, Ages 0-3

Families interested in enrolling their children in the Early Head Start program are invited to apply now. This expansion allows us to serve more than 36 infants and toddlers across the county, connecting each child to a nurturing, enriching environment and linking families to resources that foster early learning and growth.

To apply, visit our website at frederickymca.org/head-start-pre-application or contact our Early Head Start enrollment team at 301-663-5131 x1278.

Now Hiring: Infant/Toddler Teachers, Teachers Aides and Cook

As we prepare to open these new classrooms, the YMCA of Frederick County is also seeking caring and enthusiastic individuals to join our team. Current open positions include:

- **Infant/Toddler Teachers (Frederick & Emmitsburg):** We're looking for dedicated educators with experience in early childhood development to create meaningful, age-appropriate learning experiences for infants and toddlers. Tuition Assistance Available.
- **Infant/Toddler Teacher's Aides (Frederick & Emmitsburg):** This role supports teachers in providing a nurturing, engaging environment that fosters each child's development.
- **Cook:** This role supports our nutrition program by helping prepare healthy meals and snacks for the children in our care.
- **Bus Driver:** This position requires previous experience and a commitment to safety and reliability in transporting children to and

from our Early Head Start classrooms.

These positions offer a unique opportunity to make a lasting impact on the lives of young children and their families. Joining the YMCA means becoming part of a dedicated team committed to strengthening the foundations of community through youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. For more information on applying for available positions, please visit our website at frederickymca.org/about-us/careers or email your resume to humanresources@frederickymca.org.

The YMCA of Frederick County is honored to bring Early Head Start to Frederick and Emmitsburg and looks forward to empowering

our community's children and families, ensuring every child has the chance to reach their full potential.

To support recruitment efforts and provide information about enrollment, the YMCA will host two Open House/Job Fairs:

- Tuesday, December 3: YMCA/Head Start Administrative Offices, 801 N. East Street (entrance on 8th Street), Frederick, from 3-6 p.m.
- Thursday, December 5: Emmitsburg Early Head Start Center, 300 South Seton Avenue (around the back), Emmitsburg from 3-6 p.m.

These Open House/Job Fairs offer an opportunity for interested families to learn more about Early Head Start, tour the facilities, and meet YMCA staff. Job seekers can learn about available positions, ask questions, and apply on-site.



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As we prepare to open these new classrooms, the YMCA of Frederick County is hiring:

- Infant/Toddler Teachers
- Infant/Toddler Teacher's Aides
- Cook
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Visit frederickymca.org for more information.

OPEN HOUSE/ JOB FAIR
Thurs., Dec. 5
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Emmitsburg

ARTS

Totem Pole Playhouse's "A Christmas Carol"

Totem Pole Playhouse, America's summer theatre located in Caledonia State Park, is excited to announce the return of its beloved holiday classic, A Christmas Carol, at the historic Majestic Theater in downtown Gettysburg. This cherished adaptation by Carl Schurr and Wil Love will run for eight performances, from December 6th through 15th, as part of the Gettysburg Christmas Festival. Totem Pole Playhouse is honored to welcome back Ray Ficca, a true institution at the Playhouse, who will step into the role of Ebenezer Scrooge for the first time in this production. Ficca's ties to Totem Pole run deep—he served as a

resident actor (2005–2013) and Artistic Director (2008–2013), during which time he produced 38 summer shows. His recent performance in On Golden Pond (2023) marked his 25th show at Totem Pole. Joining Ficca is a cast of nearly 40 local artists, including 16 talented young performers. This year's company includes professional actors with over fifty productions under their belts, as well as young people stepping onto the stage for the very first time. Entire families are involved in the production, with some cast members returning for their fifth year in the show. Notable cast members include Ariabella Davison (Ghost of

Christmas Past), Sam Little (Ghost of Christmas Present and Fezziwig), Richard Sautter (Jacob Marley), Bailey Hovermale (Belle), Adam Wennick (Fred), Catherine Blaine (Old Joe) and Christopher Kauffman and Taylor Whidden as Bob and Emily Cratchit. Larkin Bucher and Liam Spang will alternate in the role of Tiny Tim alongside many fresh and new faces! The production is directed by Ryan Gibbs, making his directorial debut for this piece. The creative team is led by Scenic Designer James Fouchard and Lighting Designer Jonathan Stiles, both of whom worked on the original Totem Pole production in 1988. Bailey Hov-

ermale serves as Music Director, with choreography by Jenn Reed. Additional team members include Costume Coordinator Juls Buehrer, who maintains Patricia M. Risser's original designs, and Sound Designer Kate Wecker, featuring original music by Terrence Sherman and Darren Server. Production management is by Kia Armstrong, with stage management by Mickey Acton. Gibbs shared his excitement about working with Ficca, saying, "Everyone in our community knows, admires, and loves Ray. Having him with us is the best holiday gift any of us could ask for. We hope you will join us to

witness him play this role for the first time at Totem Pole. Treat your family to this dynamic, fast-paced spectacle that is packed with magic, Christmas spirit, and warm feelings!" Tickets are on sale now by calling the Majestic Theatre Box Office at 717-337-8200 or visiting totempoleplayhouse.org or gettysburgmajestic.org. A Christmas Carol has public performances on December 6, 7, 8, 13, 14 and 15. Totem Pole Playhouse will celebrate its 75th anniversary in 2025, with subscriptions going on sale this December. Tickets for A Christmas Carol are available now by calling the box office at 717-352-2164 or visiting www.totempoleplayhouse.org.

Way Off Broadway's "Christmas Chronicles"

As The Way Off Broadway Dinner Theatre prepares to close out its blockbuster 30th Anniversary Season, the theatre will celebrate the holidays this year with the 'Christmas Chronicles.' In the show, following a boisterous family Thanksgiving dinner, Pap Pap McCallister heads up to the attic to start bringing down the Christmas decorations, having not been allowed to start putting them up until after Thanksgiving—a rule set by Grammie McCallister. As he's sorting through the collection of decorations, family members begin joining him as they reminisce about past Christmases and talk about their hopes

for the year to come. A heartwarming and fun filled evening with the McCallisters will have audiences in the holiday spirit as they leave the theatre. Always the most popular show of the year, Way Off Broadway's Christmas production blends songs and music from Christmases past and present and is always a show perfect for the entire family. Christmas Chronicles stars some of the most recognizable faces to appear on the WOB stage over the years, with Steve Steele leading the cast at Pap Pap McCallister. He's joined by Jessica Billones, Betsey Whitmore Brannen, Melissa Ann Martin, Sarah Melinda,

Ari Messaca, Randy Stull, Megan Elizabeth West, and Caleb Whitcomb. The production is directed by Justin Kiska, who also wrote the show, with music direction by Tina Marie Bruley. Christmas Chronicles is the fourteenth Mainstage Christmas show Kiska has written for the theatre. Christmas Chronicles will run through December 22nd with performances every Friday and Saturday evening, and matinees every Sunday in December. Ticket prices vary by performance date and may be purchased by contacting the Box Office at 301-662-6600. To learn more about the show, or any

of Way Off Broadway's productions or events, including its upcoming 2025 Season which includes Agatha Christie's The Mousetrap, A Second Help – The Church Basement Ladies Sequel, Rodgers + Hammerstein's Cinderella: The Broadway Musical, Company, and Once Upon a Christmas Night, visit the theatre's website at www.wayoffbroadway.com. The Way Off Broadway Dinner Theatre, under the direction of the Kiska family since 2002, is currently celebrating its 30th Season of producing live theatre. Since it first opened in 1995, the theatre has been a leader in the area's theatre community, proudly

bringing both classic musicals, as well as regional and area premieres to the Frederick stage. In addition to its regular Mainstage season, Way Off Broadway produces a number of special events throughout the year, including family theatre productions and an annual Breakfast with Santa (and Mrs. Claus). Through its outside producing brand, WOB LIVE! Entertainment, Way Off Broadway also presents Marquee Mysteries - an interactive murder mystery series where the audience helps solve the case - not only at the theatre, but regularly on the Walkersville Southern Railroad and other venues through the area for private functions. www.wayoffbroadway.com

Music, Gettysburg's Christmas concert

Music, Gettysburg! presents the Minstrumental and vocal music of the Christmas season in concert Sunday evening, December 15th, at 7 p.m. in the chapel of the United

Lutheran Seminary. The concert is free and open to the public. This festive concert, one of the most popular in the Music, Gettysburg! season, will feature Jonathan Noel on the

organ and the Gettysburg Children's Choir under the leadership of director Kyle J. Weary. Also performing in the concert will be Teresa Bowers, James Day, Wayne Hill, Susan Hochmiller, and Steven Marx. This year's theme focuses on Mary, the mother of Jesus, and performances will include songs sung by her and about her, as well as

Christmas favorites old and new. The evening will also feature opportunities for the audience to sing some familiar carols. Come and spend an enjoyable hour at this Sunday evening holiday concert which is free and open to the public. Music, Gettysburg! is a premier concert series featuring international,

national, regional and local musical artists for the greater south central Pennsylvania region. The United Lutheran Seminary Chapel is at 147 Seminary Ridge on the west edge of Gettysburg. For more information about this and other concerts in the Music, Gettysburg! schedule, please call 717-339-1334 or visit the Music, Gettysburg! website: www.musicgettysburg.org or email to info@musicgettysburg.org.

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MOUNT ARTS

The Mount's "A Christmas Carol"

Emelie Beckman
MSMU Class of 2026

The Mount's theatre Professor Anthony Brooks, joined by his student crew of over 40 people, put on a live musical performance of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol. As winter weather starts spreading across Maryland, the show ran for three consecutive nights, treating the Mount and Emmitsburg community to a show of true Christmas spirit to brighten up these darker and colder times.

A Christmas Carol was written and published in London on the 19th of December of 1843. It recounts the story of the elderly banker Ebenezer Scrooge, who, like a walking thunder cloud, contradicts all that the Christmas spirit should be. At the beginning of the novel, Scrooge is depicted as a mean and sinful man, with little to no compassion for other people.

As a businessman, he drives poor people into more poverty, shows little understanding and no mercy, as well as treats his workers and companions as expendables. Scrooge also despises Christmas and feels no shame in spreading his negativity to gleeful celebrators. However, on the night before Christmas, Scrooge gets visited by the ghost of his former partner Jacob Marley and three spirits: the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Yet to Come. During his travels through time, Scrooge transforms into a kinder, gentler and more virtuous man.

Dickens himself, even in early childhood, faced many difficulties in life. Many of which have come to shape his writing. At the age of 12, Dickens had to pick up dirty labour in a shoe-blackening factory when his father was committed to the Marshalsea, a debtor's prison. A Christmas Carol, along with other famous Dickens' stories, does bring in aspects of the poorer London from his upbringing.

After its publication, A Christmas Carol was almost immediately put on as a theatrical performance. In the year 1844, only one-year after the publication of the novel, eight rivaling productions of the same story were being performed on the stages of London. Once technology evolved, the story was adapted to television as well and has been more than any other of Dickens' works.

The first film adaptation of A Christmas Carol was at the beginning of the 20th century. It was a silent, black and white film titled either Scrooge or Marley's Ghost, and is believed to be the first-ever adaptation of any Charles Dickens story. The film was impressive for its time; however, likely due to lack of technology, it attempted to fit the entire 80-page novel into a five-minute long format, which has been argued to have not done the story justice.

Through further development of filmmaking, the story has been retold by various people and in various formats, ranging from the 1984

live-action A Christmas Carol retelling to the Muppet's more modern version.

The Mount's A Christmas Carol from this school year was the reproduction of a musical originally presented by Radio City Entertainment at the Theatre at Madison Square Garden. Professor Brooks and the student crowd delighted the audience with a magical Christmas performance. Besides being exposed to talented acting and beautiful singing, the audience got transported into Dickens' world of a chilly 19th-century London, with costume and set design that was unlike anything I, a junior at the Mount, had ever seen before. Upon entering the familiar Delphine stage, I was immediately baffled by the fact that the entire stage and bleacher set-up had been rotated 90 degrees, opting for a longer stage situated much closer to the audience. The set-up made for a more intimate and personal experience, where performers and audience felt like one-and-the-same. When asked about performing on such a uniquely arranged stage, Alec Ramer, the lead actor portraying Scrooge, said: "It felt wonderful! And a little intimidating. It was so much fun to perform in such an intimate setting where the audience's reactions play a direct role in an actor's performance!"

Additionally, the set design consisted of a huge street landscape, made up of townhouse exteriors with working doors and lights. The

main set background was then able to fold open in the middle to create other sets, such as Scrooge's bedroom. The design was fascinatingly clever and such a smart use of space! Even the costumes were incredibly impressive and did remarkably at resembling the ones worn in any 19th-century period drama.

The students, however, were the main impressers during the performance. Beyond being talented actors, singers and dancers, the student ensemble displayed impressive range as all were able to play multiple parts during the performance. The only person who had one stable role was the lead.

The audience on the other hand, did not comprise of many Mount students. Instead, most of the people I observed were surrounding community members, many with kids and grandparents. This is the perfect event for such an audience: in the cold winter times, the family gathers to rejoice in Christmas spirit and what better way to do so than to attend a local performance of A Christmas Carol—a Christmas classic. Mr. Ramer thinks so too.

Once asked what he believes such a performance does for the communities surrounding Mount St. Mary's he said, "Performances like these promote the skills and talents of both Mount students and those outside the Mount community. It brings members both off and on campus together in a more wholesome way that truly builds a community that Emmitsburg can be proud of!" Bringing people



Looking to see "A Christmas Carol"? Then we encourage you to watch Totem Pole Playhouse's version!

together, the true feeling of community, and joy all are true elements of the Christmas spirit.

Until Next Time

As one might be able to tell, a lot is going on in the Mount's Fine Arts Department and I look forward to reporting back to you readers about all the exciting things that will happen this upcoming winter. Colder and darker days are coming, but the Mount's campus will uphold a warmth and lively spirit! I further invite, and encourage, you to come visit the upcoming events but in the meantime, I wish all the readers a Merry Christmas and a happy holiday season!

Upcoming Events on Campus:

This semester at the Mount is nearing an end, and while I am sure

many students look forward to winter break and the simultaneous ability to recharge for next semester, the Fine Arts Department still have some things for us before we leave for break.

On December 4th at 7, there will be a Department Recital held in Delaplaine's Horning Theatre. Be sure to check out the great talents of the Mount's Fine Arts Department!

Later that week, on the 6th of December, the Fine Arts Department will hold a performance called "Lessons and Carols" at IC Chapel starting at 7.

The schedule for the spring semester is still in the works so stay tuned to see what exciting things The Mount will offer in the spring!

To read other articles by Emelie Beckman, visit the Authors section of Emmitsburg.net.

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CATOCTIN SPORTS

Looking back on the cross-country season

Richelle Zheng
CHS Class of 2025

As the holidays come around the corner and everyone is off to spend time with their loved ones, Catoctin's winter sports teams are starting to train for the new season, and some members of the cross-country team are continuing their journey into the winter season. In addition, as new incoming student-athletes begin to try out for their sports, senior Abagayle Shives, who is on the girl's varsity basketball team, has a few words of wisdom for the underclassmen.

Cross-Country Recap

The girl's cross-country team ran at the Frank Keyser Invitational, which was held at Boonsboro High School, on October 5th. In the three-mile small school's varsity category, freshman Caroline Hoyt and sophomore Isabel Brodsky went to represent Catoctin. Hoyt placed 13th out of 65 runners with a time of 21:42.4 minutes. Following closely, Brodsky finished in 22:11.7 minutes in 16th.

On October 9th, the boy's cross-country team competed at the Crossfire Invite held at Liberty High School. Catoctin's top three runners in the men's 5,000-meter small varsity category were freshman Noah Riling, Logan Holden, and sophomore Sean Hoyle. Riling placed 8th out of 51 total runners in 19:12.3 minutes! Holden placed 21st with a time of 21:04.2 minutes and Hoyle was right behind in 22nd with a time of 21:13.0 minutes.

Both the boy's and girl's cross-country teams participated at the CMC Championships on October 18th, which took place at Boonsboro High School. Riling led the boy's team in the three-mile Gambrill varsity category with a time of 16:41.5 minutes, putting him in 7th place. Holden ran a time of 18:38.3 minutes, Hoyle finished in 18:56.4 minutes, and sophomore Conner DeBoer in 20:32.4 minutes. Brodsky and Hoyt ran in the women's three-mile Gambrill varsity event. Hoyt placed 6th with an incredible time of 20:49.8 minutes, marking her new personal best! Not far behind, Brodsky came in 9th place with a time of 21:26.9 minutes, which was a new personal record for her as well.

The Frederick County Championships occurred on October 24th at Ballenger Creek Park. In the men's three-mile varsity event Riling finished in 16:59.7 minutes, putting him in 13th place out of 64 total runners. Holden completed the course in 19:40.7 minutes, Hoyle in 19:50.6 minutes, sophomore Liam Werner finished in 20:42.1 minutes, and DeBoer in 20:54.2 minutes. In the women's three-mile varsity Hoyt placed 26th out of more than fifty competitors at 21:58.9 minutes and Brodsky followed behind her in 31st at 22:21.8 minutes.

The next event, the MPSSAA 1A West Region Championships, took place on Halloween at Clear Spring High School. Instead of running around the neighborhoods for candy, these dedicated runners ran for a place in the state championships instead.

Riling finished in 7th place in 17:36.80 minutes and Hoyle finished with a time of 19:58.10 minutes in the men's three-mile varsity category. Both boys qualified for state championships due to their incredible speed! Additionally, Brodsky was the only runner from Catoctin for the women's three-mile varsity event and placed 18th with a time of 24:19.80 minutes, which unfortunately did not qualify her to move on to state championships.

On Saturday, November 9th at Hereford High School, Riling competed in the MPSSAA 1A State Championships. He placed 26th out of more than 100 runners in 17:49.72 minutes as a freshman! Riling's outstanding talent for running resulted in him being invited to participate in the NXR Southeast Regional Championships at WakeMed Soccer Park in North Carolina which happened on November 23rd. Riling was one of 280 runners in the 5,000-meter Rising Stars category. He finished in 96th place in 17:38.86 minutes!

Senior Advice to Incoming Student Athletes

As the quiet gyms start to fill with sounds of sneakers squeaking on the wood floors and the dribbling of basketball, Senior Abagayle Shives from the girl's varsity basketball team wanted to share a few insights of her high school basketball career, with this one being her last.

Shives has grown up playing basketball since she was in third grade. This season she is looking forward to playing her last basketball season with her friends and teammates she has shared her childhood with. When Shives was asked about what goals she has for this season she exclaimed, "Goals? Obviously, win states! Everyone has that goal." Additionally, she mentioned, "That's what you work for throughout the season, but first, you have to start small: just make it to playoffs." Moreover, Shives has great confidence in this year's girl's basketball team as they have a good mix of veteran players and younger Lady Cougars. Shives adds, "We are going



Freshman Noah Riling showcases his incredible speed at a meet.

to have so much depth going off the bench. I believe everyone will play a decent amount and be able to contribute to the game." With a pretty equal mix of players of different experience levels, she has high hopes for this season.

On another note, Shives has some advice that she would like to give to new athletes coming into basketball or planning on trying out: "There will be good days and there will be bad days. The good days overrule the bad 100 times out of 10. You're also not just going to be able to pick up the ball and just immediately be good at it. You have to work for it. Everyone who has played a sport or is currently playing a sport knows it."

As we all know, balancing time between academics, extracurriculars, sports, jobs, and more is one of the most difficult skills we all have to learn throughout high school and Shives wanted to provide some input on how she combats the stress of managing all of her commitments in addition to basketball. Shives is one of the few seniors who attend school for

all seven hours and she mentions that once she gets home she only has four hours left to take care of her necessary tasks such as homework, walking her dogs, chores, and taking care of herself before she winds down for bed. However, she is able to manage her academic and sports lives by "Working hard during school hours to eliminate the time needed when I get home for homework." Furthermore, she advises getting a planner as it is something that helps her and many other students as well, "If you do struggle with time management, I recommend getting a daily planner and start planning out your week day by day." Lastly, Shives acknowledges the hardships of being a student-athlete but only if you make it hard by not managing your time wisely. She urges student-athletes that they have to put the time and work into themselves because "It is something only you can do for yourself as others can't do it for you."

To read past Catoctin Sports articles, visit the Current Events section of Emmitsburg.net.

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MOUNT SPORTS

Women's flagged football added as 26th varsity sport

Steve Morano
MSMU Class of 2024

As most of America celebrates Saturday college football across the country on most fall weekends, Emmitsburg and the greater Frederick County area is almost left out of the fervor of college gameday. The Mount dissolved their own football program in 1951 and shifted their focus to basketball instead, finding success eleven years later with a College Division National Championship. But there may be a return to America's beloved fall sport on Saturdays at Echo Field come November 7th, as Mount St. Mary's announced the addition of women's flag football as the 26th varsity sport sponsored by the university. They became only the second NCAA Division I school to sponsor the sport and the only school in the Mid-Atlantic to sponsor it at that level.

The origin of flag football as a modified version of the game known as Gridiron Football, or just football to the majority of Americans, is hazy to say the least. Many accounts have the origin of the game starting on military bases across the U.S. in the period between the end of World War II and the start of the Cold War. Others have listed the game as a simple school yard game that had evolved from children emanating their football heroes while not wanting to get hurt as they would have in the full contact aspect of the professional game. But with the formation of the National Touch Football League in the 1960's, the game became legitimized with formal rules and regulations that brought it into the mainstream of the American zeitgeist.

In recent history, the sport has been further legitimized by organizations such as USA Flag and NFL Flag. Specifically in the National Football League's embracing of the game, further coverage, sponsorship, and exposure has come to youth football leagues around the country and has truly expanded the sport from a gym class pastime to a legitimate endeavor. The sponsorship of flag football has also provided venues for youths to play the game on bigger stages as many teams often hold games during half time at actual, regular season NFL games.

From the formation of organizations like NFL Flag and USA Flag, many state and county school athletics associations have added girls flag football to their sporting resume and have succeeded in growing the sport at this respective level. For instance, in Frederick County every public school has an organized varsity girls flag football program that is fully funded and staffed to accommodate its players. This has not only raised the level of publicity for the sport but has provided ample opportunity to girls and young women who have been traditionally locked out of the men's game in the United States at large.

However, one of the biggest, if not the biggest move the sport has taken in the last decade has been the announcement that the sport will be included, for both men and women, at the 2028 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles. The announcement of the inclusion

of flag football has provoked many at the collegiate level to add the sport. Yet as it currently stands, many schools at the Division I level have yet to add it. NAIA schools have embraced the sport as a whole as 22 schools have added the sport in recent years. Along with the addition of the sport at that level, the Division III conference, the Atlantic East, became the first NCAA affiliate to sponsor the sport, with Centenary, Immaculata, Marymount, and Neumann fielding teams in last years conference championships.

With the embracing of the game at the lower levels of collegiate and NCAA athletics, it is no wonder the Mount has set about on this endeavor to bring organized football back to Echo Field. Not to mention, they have the backing of some major sponsors to help in this process as the Baltimore Ravens, Under Armour and RCX Sports have all pledged their help to the program. "We are excited to witness the expansion of girls' and women's flag football throughout the state of Maryland. We launched the high school program in Frederick County in 2023, our goals were to experience year-over-year growth and increase athletic opportunities for young women in our region. With the sport now reaching student-athletes at the Division I collegiate level, those goals are becoming more of a reality." Said Brad Downs, the Senior Vice President of Marketing for the Baltimore Ravens.

There has also been the backing of the sponsorship of the game at the Mount by some experienced

NFL veterans. Todd Bowles, the head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and a Mount St. Mary's alumni said, "Adding women's flag football is a major move for Mount St. Mary's University. Flag football is exploding across the country, providing new opportunities for women and girls at the youth and high school levels. As an alum of the Mount, I applaud my alma mater for their commitment to providing opportunities at the Division I collegiate level for this emerging sport!"

Troy Vincent, the Executive Vice President of Football Operations at the NFL, as well as a member of the College Football Hall of Fame and the 2002 recipient of the Walter Payton Man of the Year Award said, "It's exciting to welcome Mount St. Mary's as part of the tremendous flag movement that is sweeping across the country and around the world. Mount St. Mary's is demonstrating visionary leadership in giving young women the opportunity to compete at the highest level and experience the values and benefits offered by the great game of football."

The addition of women's flag football positions the Mount to have a hold on the sport as a whole, as bigger schools have failed to sponsor the sport as of yet. Along with this comes an excellent opportunity for the school to put the right foot forward in what may soon be a NCAA sponsored sport with the game's future inclusion at the summer Olympics. No matter how a person can spin it, the Mount has truly made a step



With the addition of women's flag football, the Mount has positioned itself in front of countless bigger institutions who have yet to add the sport at a varsity level.

forward in a space that has not been previously occupied by a bigger institution.

To read past Mount Sports articles, visit the Author's section of Emmitsburg.net.

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COMPLEMENTARY CORNER

Change and happiness

Jefferson Breland

Last month I wrote about gratitude as a gateway to inner peace. I wrote, "At its most profound, gratitude is a statement that we are all in this life together and we that we are not alone."

I recently came across another wonderful quote about gratitude. It is by the American writer, William Arthur Ward. "Gratitude can transform common days into thanksgivings, turn routine jobs into joy, and change ordinary opportunities into blessings."

I wrote about gratitude as means of relating to everything and everyone around us.

One quality of gratitude I did not mention explicitly is that it begins as an internal, personal feeling. You create your gratitude in the presence of someone or something. No one else creates it for you. It is yours and yours alone. You don't need to share your gratitude with anyone for it to exist or for you to get the benefit from it. And, yes, sharing your gratitude with its source helps them feel better, too.

Michael J. Fox said "With gratitude, optimism is sustainable. If you find something to be grateful for, then you can find something to look forward to, and you carry on."

Optimism is an internal mechanism, a mind-set, which affords you the opportunity to continue

to make meaning of your life and participate more fully in the world. When you participate in the world, you can continue to create opportunities to be grateful for.

This time of year has a distinct association with the act of with giving, receiving, and many things to be grateful for. Of course, I am speaking of giving and receiving presents and good tidings during the holidays in December. The more obvious holidays being Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and New Year's Eve.

By the way, there are many more holidays in December. Did you know there is a National Pastry Day? A National Llama Day? A National App Day? A Wear Brown Shoes Day? Who knew brown shoes needed more love?

This time of year offers a host of opportunities for you to spend time with friends and family. With all this giving, receiving, and visiting going on, how do you prepare for the surge of activity with friends and family. You do it by making space in your life materially, emotionally, and spiritually.

It is a fundamental law of nature, that in order to receive, you must let go of someone or something. One way of beginning to let go is to acknowledge who or what has purpose in your life.

On one level you can look at material goods in your life and ask, "Do I love it?" Is it broken?"

"Have I used it in the past 12 months?"

Do I need more stuff? You only have so much room in your home for ugly Christmas sweaters, Ugg boots, Cabbage Patch Kids, tacky ties, stinky candles, and gizmos that never get used or break within the first week of use.

If you love something and it brings joy into your life, acknowledge the joy and keep it. If something is broken, let it go. If you haven't used something or worn a piece of clothing in a year, let it go.

These concepts come from the ancient Chinese practice of Feng Shui (pronounced "feng shway"). It is a way of organizing our physical environment, the interior and exterior areas of our homes, to create smooth flow of Qi (pronounced "chee").

I believe you can apply these same ideas to relationships in your life. Admittedly, this is trickier. Humans are not things. You have family members, friends, business associates, members of your church congregation, and members of your community with a wide range of relationships to consider.

Let's try this.

If you love someone and they bring joy and happiness into your life, continue to love them. Acknowledge them for bringing joy and love into your life. Tell them to their face the specific details of the joy and happiness you experience in your relationship with them.

If the relationship is challenging or hurtful, acknowledge this to yourself. Next, shift how you think about them. Shift the story you tell about the person or persons in question. Understand they are doing the best they know how just as you are doing the best you know how. Don't assume they know what you know. Let that stuff go. What is a more kind and loving story you can tell about them?

When you shift your story about someone, you shift, too. You will feel more compassionate towards them. You may understand your role in the relationship better. You may even become more compassionate to yourself.

In this scenario, there is no need to talk to the other person right away, or perhaps ever. See how the relationship with this person shifts when you change your story about them.

Do they change? Do you change? When you change the way you look at things/people, the things/people you look at change. See if there is more peace and ease in your life. Now what about a person you haven't seen or interacted within a year?

This is a great time to check in with your old stories about them. Are they the same person? Are you the same person? Do your old stories about them still apply? What if you let go of those old stories and see them with fresh eyes?

Several years ago, I was at a high school reunion and talked with one of my teachers who I hadn't seen in 40 years. Based on our conversation, I got the impression he still thought of me as the seventeen-year-old me. That made sense as he had no new information or stories about me. I also realized I had my old story about him.

I do not know if he had a new story about me after we talked. And quite frankly, that's none of my business. I have no control over what other people think or say about me.

The same can be said about any of our relationships. We have no control over what people think or say about us. Fine. That is their busi-

ness. Letting go of caring about others' opinions about you is the path of emotional freedom.

Another level of letting go is to acknowledge the stories we tell about ourselves.

This is not about judging ourselves. It isn't helpful to say, "This is good and this is bad." It is about examining the stories we tell ourselves. I love the expression, "When the map no longer matches the landscape, it is time to get a new map." The stories we tell ourselves are a map of our life. They can help us on our journey or take us in the wrong direction.

Are they even our stories about us? Or are they stories that we received from our parents, our siblings, our friends, our teachers, or anyone in our life we respected and didn't know we had a choice whether to believe them or not.

It is interesting (and potentially frightening) to examine our beliefs about ourselves. Am I really stupid? Am I really too short? Am I really a clutz? Do I really have cooties? Am I really not good enough? Am I unlovable?

It is helpful to ask, "What is a story I can tell about myself that is big enough to live into?" "What story is big enough that expands my possibilities?" "What story can I tell about myself that is joyful?" "What is a more kind and loving story I tell about myself?"

How will you know it is a more helpful story about yourself? Your body will tell you. If the story serves, you may notice you begin to breathe more deeply. You may notice your body relaxing. You may feel calmer.

Or not. In the presence of this new story you may feel uncomfortable. You may question whether you have a right to feel good about yourself. Hang in there. Profound change is not necessarily easy even when we know it is the right thing for us.

A very wise woman once said, "This is just scary enough to do." This woman is my wife, Stacey. Life is worth the risk.

Jefferson Breland is a board-certified acupuncturist licensed in Pennsylvania and Maryland with offices in Gettysburg. He can be reached at 410-336-5876.



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HEALTH AND FITNESS

A few ways to ease Christmas stress!

Linda Stultz
Certified Fitness Trainer

The holidays are upon us and so is the overwhelming list of things to do. For so many this list can cause stress which can lead to emotional and even physical issues. The holidays are suppose to be a time of joy, happiness, love and togetherness but for some trying to achieve what people see as holiday bliss can cause just the opposite. We put so much pressure on ourselves to plan, put together and present a perfect holiday that we forget the real meaning, to gather and share with family and friends.

I know there are so many extra things to do to prepare for the special day. Buying gifts, wrapping them, baking cookies and special treats, mailing cards and sometimes preparing our house for visitors. All these things can and should be fun but sometimes they turn into overwhelming chores. Maybe this year you can choose one or two things that you use to do and either alter them to be less time consuming or you could delegate a few of the traditions or events to a member of your family or a friend. I have found that as the kids or grand kids get older some of the traditions we had are more important to us than to the kids. People grow and change and some of the things we always did, thinking it is so important to our family, can be altered a bit. Talking to the family and friends may be a good way to see how important the holiday events are to them and see how you can make things a little easier on yourself. I know it's hard because they may be important to you and a bit upsetting when you find out you were putting a lot of time and work into something you thought they really liked only to find out they have outgrown the event. I'm certainly not saying give up treasured family traditions, just see if you can ease the work on

yourself or maybe let someone else take over the chore.

No matter if we change and lessen our workload during the holidays or not we still need to take a little time for ourselves. I know to most people this sounds impossible but is very important for our health. While you are making your list of things to do be sure to include a little time to sit and have a cup of tea, take a short walk, do some kind of exercise. Taking this time to recharge yourself can be beneficial to both mind and body. You can turn some of the extra jobs during the holidays into a way to relieve your stress. Turn on the Christmas music or whatever music you enjoy while wrapping the gifts. Get together with a friend to bake the cookies and share them. This way you lessen your workload and socialize at the same time. Let the kids decorate the tree, they will have a great time doing it and will take one less thing off your list.

Some ways to ease the stress during the holidays is meditation, listening to music, taking a walk, yoga or whatever you enjoy. Don't think you don't have the time. Take the time and you will get everything done and still take time for yourself. I have found that some things I thought were so important and things I had been doing for years can be altered, eliminated and nobody misses them. Planning ahead and preparing whatever food you can a few days early is a great way to give you time to enjoy the day with your loved ones. Sometimes you can even make a few dishes and freeze them. As I mentioned before delegate some of the food preparation or chores to others. They will like helping you and they will feel more a part of the celebration.

The most important gift you can give yourself and your loved ones is you being healthy and happy. That means taking care of yourself and taking time

for yourself. The holidays will always be a busy time of year and probably a bit stressful but making time for yourself will always be beneficial.

Exercise, meditation, yoga and doing what you enjoy are the best gifts you can give yourself and you deserve it!

Remember to keep moving, you'll be glad you did when all the celebrating is over.





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ASTRONOMY

The night sky of December

Professor Wayne Wooten

The new moon is December 1st. The waxing crescent moon is below Venus on December 4th. The waxing crescent passes Saturn in the south on December 7th, and is first quarter on December 8th. The full moon, the Yule moon, is north of Jupiter on December 15th. The moon just misses Mars, passing its own 1/2 degree diameter north of it at 3 a.m. on December 18th. The Winter Solstice, the shortest day, occurs at 4:21 a.m. on December 21st. The last quarter moon is on December 22nd. The waning crescent moon makes a spectacular triangle with Antares and Mercury in the dawn of December 28th. The new moon is December 30th.

Mercury will become visible in the dawn at the end of the month. Venus dominates the SW evening sky, at magnitude -4.2 bright enough to be seen now in broad daylight. Mars is in the morning sky in Cancer, and has a very close encounter with the moon on the morning of December 18th. Jupiter is at its best, reaching opposition on December 7th, rising at sunset and up all night.

Saturn is well up in the south now at sunset, in Aquarius. Here Freddy Bowles captures its rings, now tilted 5 degrees to our line of sight, on October 25th. By January 7th, they will narrow to 4 degrees, and just 3 degrees by January 28th. The rings will be edge on from Earth between March 23rd and May 6th, but it will be lost then in the Sun's glare or just reappearing in the dawn.

While the naked eye, dark adapted by several minutes away from any bright lights, is a wonderful instrument to stare up into deep space, far beyond our own Milky Way, binoculars are better for spotting specific



Galaxy NGC 7741 can be found with a good telescope within the Great Square of Pegasus.

deep sky objects. For a detailed map of northern hemisphere skies, about November 30th visit the www.sky-maps.com site and download the map for December 2024; it will have a more extensive calendar, and list of best objects for the naked eyes, binoculars, and scopes on the back of the map. Also notable is wonderful video exploring the sky, available from Hubble Space Telescope website at: www.hubblesite.org/explore_astronomy/tonights_sky.

Sky & Telescope magazine has breaking news and highlights of the best events for each week at www.sky-andtelescope.com/observing/astronomy-podcasts/.

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) with Saturn now, and Cetus (the Whale). Below Aquarius is Fomalhaut, the only first magnitude star of the southern fall sky. It marks the mouth of Pisces

Australius, the Southern Fish. If you want an ideal app for learning the constellations, download "Nocturne" for Apple phones, and mount it on a tripod for 2' exposures of the sky, which you can then annotate with star names, constellation lines, and even the mythological figures. Makes the sky come alive.

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. Usually the brighter objects are closer, but exceptionally luminous objects, like Rigel in Orion, may be over 2,000 light years distant yet still first magnitude.

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. UWF alumni can 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. This wide angle shot, with my Dwarf Labs scope (\$450) also captures a geosynchronous satellite just above the nebulae. While it appears the satellite is moving, relative to US, it is stationary. Our own rotation is carrying the nebula westward during this five-minute exposure. The scope is tracking the stars!

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 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 dessert for New Year's sky feast.

Farmers' Almanac

"I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year."

—Charles Dickens(1812-1870)

Mid-Atlantic Weather Watch: Mild and dry (1, 2, 3, 4, 5); rain, then turning seasonably cold (6, 7, 8, 9, 10); dry and seasonably cold (11, 12, 13, 14, 15); seasonable with a few flurries and sprinkles (16, 17, 18, 19, 20); dry then breezy with a heavy rain/snow mix (21, 22, 23, 24, 25); seasonably cold with periods of light snow (26, 27, 28, 29, 30).

Severe Weather Watch: The Town and Country Almanack sees heavy snow and high winds in December's forecast (24, 25).

Full Moon: December's full moon falls on the 15th. Because many Native American tribes noticed beavers scurrying to finish their dams and lodges before the lakes and ponds begin to ice over, it has been called Ice-Forming Moon and Beaver Moon. It also has been referred to as Cold Moon by other tribes because of the lower temperatures during the month.

Special Notes: The Winter Solstice, signaling the beginning of winter, will occur on Saturday,

December 21st. Remember that The Almanac makes a great gift, one that keeps giving throughout the entire year! Go to www.almanack.com/order and order a holiday copy or two (or three or four!).

Holidays: In 2024, Advent Sunday is December 1st. The first day of Hanukkah is the same as Christmas this year, Friday, December 25th, and Kwanzaa begins on Saturday, the 26th. Enjoy the holiday festivities with family and friends day and try to keep the that joyful and giving spirit alive throughout the coming year! Everyone at the Town & Country Almanac wishes all its readers (and followers on social media!) the happiest of holidays and again, pledges to continue to inform, inspire, and entertain as it has done for the past 229 years! New Year's Eve falls on Tuesday, December 31st. For a safe, family-oriented evening of fun, food, and entertainment on the very first night of the year, go to www.firstnight.com/cities to find a First Night Celebration nearest you.

The Garden: Utilize this time to do any major last-minute cleanup projects around the garden area. Haul away any debris that is too large or woody for the compost, build paths, turn the compost pile to keep

it warm, and generally make the garden space tidy before it is under heavy use again in the spring. Turn your gardening attentions to those houseplants (and other plants you have moved inside for the winter). Remember that warmer indoor temperatures can quickly dry out most plants and they will need a bit more than usual. Consider a garden shop gift card, garden tools, or offering to clean or refurbish and sharpen garden equipment for the gardener in your life. Books on their favorite type of plants, or a gift card to a popular gardening catalog are also welcomed gifts.

The Farm: Best for planting root crops (23, 24); weeding and stirring the soil (18, 19); planting above-ground crops (7, 8, 9); harvesting all crops (10, 11); the best days for setting hens and incubators (8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23); the slaughtering and butchering of meat (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 30, 31); transplanting (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 30, 31); the weaning of all small animals and livestock (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 28, 29, 30, 31); harvesting and storing grains (22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29).

J. Gruber's Thought For Today's Living:

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COMPUTER Q&A

Computers for the holidays - buying tips

Aysè Stenabaugh

For many users purchasing a new computer whether for yourself or someone special can be an overwhelming and confusing experience. Without an in-depth understanding of what your needs are and how that relates to the technology to support it you could end up either disappointed by not having enough power to support your needs or overspending for technology you won't need or use. While there's no cut and dry answer to a users needs without more information, we've put together several important considerations to take into account when shopping for a new computer.

Type of Computer

Before making a decision on which computer you want to purchase its best to first consider how the device will be used and whether or not you'll need the portability of a tablet or laptop. The performance and reliability of a desktop computer will almost always be better than a laptop or all-in-one PC but if saving space or portability is something that's important to the user It should be a major consideration.

Operating System

When purchasing a new device its important to know the different operating systems available and the limitations of each. Knowing how the intended user plans to use their device and what OS they are currently using can help determine which devices are the best fit. Apple computers will support MacOS while mobile Apple devices such as iPhones or iPads will have iOS. Only Apple computers support features like Facetime which are proprietary to Apple. If Windows is needed Apple devices can load software called Bootcamp or Parallels Desktop can be installed and allow you to use a Windows based program like word of Excel within the MacOS.

The most widely used Operating System, Windows is offered on most computers. With Windows 11 being the latest version and support for Windows 10 ending next year, many users are upgrading or replacing their incompatible devices to meet stricter hardware requirements aimed to increase system security.

For the best support options and widest range compatible hardware and software, a Windows PC is the best fit. Chrome OS is a web based operating system made by Google which offers basic functionality such as web browsing, email and web based word processing. These devices often have limited storage capacity and are best suited for users with very limited needs.

Features

Any specific features that you might want integrated in your device should be a factor into your decision especially for laptops and all-in-one devices that can't be easily upgraded (if at all). Some features that you might want to consider include screen size, backlit keyboard, fingerprint reader, cd/dvd drive, webcam and available ports such as USB and USB-C.

Performance

When purchasing a new computer always take into consideration the needs of the intended user. If the device will primarily be used for web browsing, email, printing and word processing you won't need as much power as someone who is using the computer for business, gaming, graphic design or video editing.

Technology has changed so much in the past few years, which can make understanding the capabilities of specific hardware more difficult. Most recently Intel has changed the way they market their latest processors by moving away from the i3, i5, i7, i9 numbering system. If the intended user plans to use specific software with the device, we recommend reviewing the software recommended requirements or consider seeking the help of a technical support specialist to ensure your investment is capable of the productivity you expect.

Memory & Storage

A new computer doesn't automatically mean that the device meets what we

would consider to be the minimum usable specifications. Today many laptops come with integrated memory (RAM) meaning that you may not be able to upgrade your device. While we recommend at least 8GB or 16GB of memory there are still many new devices available that don't meet this recommendation.

When it comes to your hard drive you'll want to know whether you're devices has slower mechanical hard drive or a faster performing solid state hard drive. As for storage capacity, we recommend to make sure the device your considering has enough storage space to hold your current data and projected future data. In most cases your storage can be upgraded in the future with the cost varying depending on installation fees and the cost of the replacement drive.

Cost vs Life Expectancy

Spending more or less on a computer can give some indication as to how long you can expect your device to last, but only to a certain extent. In general the average life of a laptop is 3-5



If you or someone you know has a computer like this, it's probably time to consider an upgrade.

years with desktops ranging from 5-10 years. The actual life expectancy of your device can depend on the quality of the parts installed, how you use the device, whether or not the device receives routine maintenance and proper device care. For example gaming is better suited for desktop computers vs. laptops since heat is a major factor in device performance and potential failures.

If you're shopping for a computer this holiday season or in the future, stop by Jester's Computers in Fairfield. We're now open at our new location: 105 West Main Street, Suite 1, Monday through Friday, 9 to 5. Explore our range of new tablets, laptops, and desktop computers, and let us help you find the perfect device to meet your needs.

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Frederick Health’s Annual Community Impact Report

Frederick Health, the largest healthcare provider in Frederick County, has published its FY23 Community Impact Report. This annual report provides a snapshot of Frederick Health’s positive health outcomes and intangible contributions to improving wellness. The report, covering July 2022 – June 2023, highlights Frederick Health’s mission to positively impact the well-being of every individual in our community.

With nearly 4,000 dedicated, compassionate, and talented team members, Frederick Health accomplishes its mission through thoughtful programs, helpful community services, continued education, financial assistance, and more. The 2023 Community Impact Report explores the innovative ways Frederick Health improves access to excellent healthcare services regardless of

age, demographic, or gender.

As an independent, not-for-profit healthcare system, Frederick Health differs from larger corporate healthcare entities in that it is flexible enough to respond dynamically to community needs. New programs, services, and locations can be established quickly and effectively.

“We work to provide the resources needed to establish healthy behaviors and engage all members of our community in their wellness,” said Tom Kleinhanzl, President and CEO of Frederick Health.

The recent report covers a wide range of topics.

From free in-home visits for newborns and their families as part of the Family Connects Frederick County program to assisting the growing senior population with navigating everyday healthcare needs by partnering with

the Frederick County government, Kleinhanzl says the healthcare system aims to improve access and reduce barriers to provide the resources needed to establish healthy behaviors and expert care.

“Our team is dedicated to providing the community with quality services, innovative programs, and seamless access to care,” he stated.

The report also includes stories about how the Comprehensive Care Center, Dental Clinic, and Breast Center play a role in caring for patients when it matters the most.

A common thread throughout the Community Impact Report is how Frederick Health consistently seeks to expand access to critical care and reduce emergency department volume and readmission rates. This last point has become the focus of attention across the nation.

For example, 13% of patients discharged from the Frederick Health Hospital emergency department returned for a second visit before the Comprehensive Care Center was developed. After monitoring the number of patients who were referred to the Center, only 1% of ED patients were readmitted.

These proactive steps have helped ease the hospital’s emergency department volume.

According to recent data, Frederick Health has the fourth busiest emergency department in the state, with nearly 76,000 visits last year. Statewide, Maryland saw emergency departments had almost 1.7 million visits. When the new Critical Care expansion opened, Frederick Health was able to increase its emergency department treatment capacity to 70 beds. These physical enhancements are partnered with proac-

tive programs and services that help to reduce emergency department volume. This is essential as it allows the healthcare system to allocate resources for patients arriving at the emergency department with critical issues like heart attacks or strokes while steering patients into services where they can continue their care.

But caring for the community’s wellness extends beyond the doors of just Frederick Health facilities. As the saying goes, it takes a village. The healthcare system has undertaken expansive efforts that often reach beyond the traditional healthcare setting and include partnerships with many community groups and organizations.

“We’ve always benefited from a generous community,” said Kleinhanzl. “We all succeed when we work together and develop very successful partnerships with our local nonprofit groups and organizations.”

While the healthcare system partners with numerous groups to collaborate on projects and programs, one such relationship highlighted in the report is that with the Coalition for a Healthier Frederick County. Frederick Health and the Coalition for a Healthier Frederick County work together on essential programs that improve the community’s health and well-being. Based on the identified priorities, a multi-year plan is created to spread awareness and develop ways to address those priorities. One notable program that has emerged from this process is the Family Connects Frederick County program, mentioned earlier, and the Data Equity Maryland program.

The Data Equity Maryland program reviews population insights through data analysis of criteria such as race, ethnicity, gender, and income to provide a clear picture of healthcare disparities. The findings are then leveraged to give community stakeholders a deeper understanding of systemic inequalities and advocate for programs and actionable steps that create positive change for our community.

Finally, the report captures Frederick Health’s financial investments in the community. In FY23, the healthcare system provided \$54.7 million back into the community through community health services, clinical research, services, financial assistance, donations, and various community benefit operations. This represents a significant investment in Frederick County’s health.

“Frederick County is a growing community, and Frederick Health is honored to play a role in ensuring that we all have the opportunity to thrive,” said Kleinhanzl.



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