

Woodsboro - Walkersville NEWS-JOURNAL

VOLUME 4, NO. 4

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

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Reappointment of Planning Chair fails again

For the second time, Planning Commission Chairman David Ennis failed to win reappointment to the Planning Commission from the Town Council. Ennis, whose term ended in November, was initially recommended for reappointment at the Town Council's December meeting, but failed to receive the necessary votes for the reappointment at that meeting.

First appointed to the Planning Commission in 2013, Ennis received the unanimous endorsement of his fellow commission members in 2020 to chair the Commission and has done so ever since.

In December, Commissioner Mike McNiesh said he was against Ennis's reappointment, as Ennis is the husband of current Town Council member Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis. McNiesh justified his stance, stating, "back in the day it may have been necessary to have husbands and wives serve due to lack of interest; however, nowadays with so many interested people, it's not appropriate to have both in office."

[Editor's Note: In October 2022,

Ennis's wife, Mary Ann, joined Commissioners Baker and Gilbert in removing McNiesh from the Town Council for failing to attend Town Council meetings. In February of 2023, McNiesh won his seat back in a special election.]

Commissioner Brannen stated that she agreed with McNiesh, noting that it looks like an "oligarchy in Town," and that there were plenty of people interested in positions on the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Baker, however, said he was not concerned about Ennis serving on the Planning Commission while his wife sat on the Town Council. Baker backed Ennis because of his involvement with the Comprehensive Plan update over the past three years, fearing that if the Planning Commission lost him, any momentum with the Plan's update would be lost. Commissioner Gilbert joined Baker in supporting Ennis's reappointment.

The December vote ended in a 2-2 tie, with Ennis's wife, Commissioner Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis, abstaining. Unsure at the time if



As Planning Commission members serve until their successor takes office, Ennis (center) will continue to serve as Chair until a successor is appointed.

Burgess Chad Weddle was allowed to break the tie, the commissioners opted to hold another vote at February's meeting once Weddle's ability to break the tie was verified.

At the February Council meeting, Commissioner Gilbert again made the initial motion to reappoint Ennis, with Baker once again seconding the motion. Brannen, again, voted against his reappointment, voicing the same concerns she voiced at the November meeting. Ennis's wife, Mary Ann, abstained as she had in December.

To the surprise of everyone, McNiesh used a procedural option to ensure Ennis's reappointment failed — he simply abstained — and

as a result, the motion to reappoint Ennis failed, as the Council did not have the required minimum of three votes to form a quorum to pass the motion.

McNiesh stated his reason for abstaining was strategic; he didn't want Weddle to be able to break the tie in favor of Ennis, which he believed Weddle would have done had he voted against the reappointment as he did in December.

Weddle said that he would be seeking legal counsel on how to move forward since the vote has now failed twice and until then, would not be putting another person up for an appointment to fill Ennis's position.

Woodsboro vexed by inspection for lead pipes

Woodsboro Commissioner Bill Rittelmeyer, never one to pass up an opportunity to bring residents up to date on emerging issues, used its March monthly Meeting to brief his fellow Council members on the mandate from the State of Maryland's Department of the Environment (MDE) requiring all municipalities to inspect all water connections in the Town for lead piping.

The requirement, Rittelmeyer said, is an outgrowth of the 1986 Safe Drinking Water Act, which charged the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to mandate public water systems to test for lead and copper in drinking water at customers' taps at high risk sites located throughout their water distribution system.

In 2021, the EPA published the Lead and Copper Rule Revisions, which require municipal water systems to submit an inventory of the types of pipes connecting all homes to a Town's water systems to MDE by October 16.

Specifically, Rittelmeyer said, Woodsboro must identify the composition of the lines to every house in the Town's water service lines and categorize the service line materials as "Lead", "Galvanized Requiring Replacement (GRR)", "Non-lead", or "Lead

Status Unknown".

The Town must notify the homeowner if they discover that their connection to the Town's water system is through lead pipes, with a recommendation to replace the pipes. Replacement, however, will be at the expense of the home owner.

The inventory must include all water supply lines to each home or building regardless of ownership or current use of the house; meaning even if a house is vacant or abandoned, it must be inspected.

Per the 1986 Safe Drinking Water Act, lead water pipes were banned for use in drinking water and distribution. Maryland however, had prohibited the use of lead water pipes in 1972, a prohibition that was subsequently enacted in Frederick County building codes by the prohibition of lead water pipes in homes.

"Fortunately," said Rittelmeyer, "most of the homes in Woodsboro are in developments that were built after 1972 and long after the state had banned the use of lead water pipes; however, almost all the homes on Main Street, 2nd Street, and Creagerstown Road — the old town portion of the Town — were built long before the new codes went into effect, and we have no idea what types of pipes



Many owners of old homes may be surprised to discover that they are connected to the town's water system via old lead pipes.

are in use to connect homes to our water system."

"I know for a fact," Commissioner Cutshall said, "that I have a lead pipe connecting my house to the Town's water system and I suspect many of my neighbors do as well."

Up until 1952, when the Town built the present water and sewer system, each house and building in the Town was on its own well and septic system. Between 1900 and 1950, a majority of homes installed lead water pipes—with some Towns even man-

dating them for their durability — because lead pipes lasted 75 to 100 years. "While I don't know what the originally town's water pipes were made of, I do know that all the original pipes in the Town's portion of the water system had to be replaced to accommodate growth over the years and are probably made of copper and our current system was inspected and accepted by the MDE in 1977, long after the prohibition on use of lead pipes.

continued on page 2

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WOODSBORO / UNION BRIDGE NEWS

Woodsboro vexed by inspection for lead pipes

continued from page 1

When the Town built the present water distribution system, they simply connected all the homes then in the Town to their existing water lines, which usually were made of lead, since the piping from their old wells was already connected to the interior of the house through an existing penetration. "So the portion of the piping in question for the older houses is from the water main connection to the interior of the house," Rittelmeyer said. "we just have to verify what the pipes are made of from the water main to the water meters in the houses."

Because Maryland banned the use of lead water pipes in 1972, the MDE Lead Pipe Inventory criteria calls for Towns to prioritize the inspection of water pipe connections for homes built before 1972. However, the inventory still requires a certification for all homes, which will require the Town to document that homes built after 1972 were built to the updated code.

For homes built before 1972, "Town staff will have to enter every home, locate the pipe connecting the house's water system to the Town's water system, and then verify that it is not made of lead, or galvanized metal.

"Given the pushback the Town received by some in the Town to allow access to their homes for the installation of updated water meters

last year, I fear we will be met with a fair amount of pushback by residents who will not understand that we are not doing this for the fun of it, but because we've been directed to do it," intoned Rittelmeyer.

While the focus of the inspection will be on identifying lead pipes, Town staff also has to identify if any galvanized pipes are in the line connecting the house to the water system. The concern being that unless the Town can document that there has never been a lead pipe upstream of the galvanized pipe, the pipe may in fact be contaminated with lead particles and will be classified by the MDE as pipes containing lead and subject to replacement at the homeowner's expense.

"We have until October 16th of this year to complete the inventory. There is no grace period. We have to get it done," Rittelmeyer said. "This will be a monumental task. And I don't think we have the resources to do it. We have no idea how much time this inventory is going to take or how much it's going to cost us, or for that matter, what procedures we are going to use.

"All we know right now is that we are under the gun to get it done. And if that is not bad enough, the forms we are supposed to use to fill in the data have been taken down by the MDE because they found errors in them, so we are not even sure exactly what information,

other than the noting of lead and galvanized pipes, MDE wants."

"It's going to be disruptive enough going into all the homes once to do this inventory, I can't imagine the public response of discovering we have to go back in again because MDE made additions to the list of items they want noted."

Unlike Woodsboro, other Towns are already working on the inventory. Walkersville incorporated their inventory into their water meter upgrade program begun in 2022. Similar to the recently completed Woodsboro meter replacement effort, Walkersville is replacing all their existing water meters. "Every time we went into a home, we inspected the piping the water meter was connected to," said Walkersville Town Manager Sean Williams, "as a result, Walkersville will meet the deadline."

Thurmont Town Manager Jim Humerick said Thurmont began working on the inventory when the mandate was issued in 2021. "We've narrowed down the houses that we need to inspect and Town staff is now actively doing the inspections."

Taneytown, like Thurmont, began work on their inventory when the mandate was issued in 2021. "We recently replaced a major water line in the old part of Town," Taneytown Manager Jim Wieprecht said, "and

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in the process of re-hooking up the water lines, we actually got a chance to inspect the pipes to the houses at their connection to the shut off valves, so we didn't

actually need to go into people's homes. Because of that, the number of homes we need to actually go into and verify is now much smaller."

Woodsboro street sweeper goes AWOL

Following a comment from a resident about debris in Town gutters, Town staff informed the Council that the street sweeping service that the Town had contracted with in 2021 to sweep the streets three times a year had stopped coming last spring, with no prior notification to the Town or reason given.

"They didn't even bother to send us a bill for the last time they came," Town staff said, they just up and disappeared.

In November 2021, the Town Council voted unanimously to approve having the Town's streets swept by a professional street sweeping company at least three times a year.

At that time, Barnes informed the Council that the Town had reached out to the company that Walkersville uses and had received

an estimate for \$1,440 to \$1,920 per sweep. As the sweeper will be rented by the Town by the hour, the difference in final cost per sweep will be based upon the condition of the streets at the time. Using the estimate provided, the Town had budgeted for between \$4,500 and \$6,000 for three sweeps. "We can add another [sweep] if three ends up not being enough," Barnes said at the time.

When asked if the Town's gutters could be cleaned by the Town's "walk behind" one man sweeper, the staff said no. "We no longer have anyone to operate it."

Commissioner Cutshall shook his head in disbelief about only now learning that the Town had lost not only the commercial street sweeping service, but the ability for the Town to sweep the streets itself, and said that he hopes the situation can be resolved quickly.

Union Bridge News-Briefs...

Plans to Broadcast Council Meetings Moves Forward

The long-discussed plan to begin taping and broadcasting of the Town Council Meetings took a big step forward at the March 11th Mayor and Town Council Public Workshop when the Council approved working with the Carroll Media Center to install video recording equipment in the Council Meeting room.

The Carroll Media Center, a Carroll County public, education, and government media organization, operates a public access television production facility and among its many responsibilities is to assist local communities, like Union Bridge, to set up the infrastructure to capture Town Meetings.

According to Bob Blubaugh of the Carroll Media Center, its IT support staff will visit the Town offices and establish exactly what is currently in place to support video recording and, once done, will install all necessary remaining equipment. Blubaugh said that initial efforts will be placed on recording video of the Meetings and then taking it to the Center and placed both on-line and retransmitted over its public access channel.

"The goal, however, will be to transmit the Meetings in real time to the community," said Blubaugh, "but that will depend upon the installation of a dedicated line from the Center to the Union Bridge Town Hall, and, as that will require

state money, it may take a while."

"But hopefully, within three to four months, residents will be able to begin to watch recordings on the Meetings within a day of the actual Meeting."

Plans For New Waste Water Treatment Facility Begin To Take Shape

Several key cogs in the wheel necessary for the construction of the Town's new waste water treatment plant were put on the table for the Council's consideration at their March workshop.

First up was the recommendation to purchase the remaining 6.1 acres of the 12-acre lot opposite the Town office, east of the current wastewater treatment facility, and north of the UB Solar farm. The Town currently has three years left on its option to purchase the 6.1 acres for \$27,000. The Town completed the purchase the first half last year.

If approved, the Council was told that the full 12 acres would give the Town more flexibility in the setting of the new facility.

The second cog involved the design recommendations for the new facility to replace the current 60 year old facility, which the state has mandated be replaced.

Commissioner Bret Grossnickle recommended that the Town move forward with a design utilizing an oxidation ditch, a modified activated sludge biological treatment process that utilizes long solids retention times

to remove biodegradable organics.

Unlike the classic sequencing batch reactor (SBR) system, which is a fill-and-draw activated sludge system for wastewater treatment where wastewater is added to a single "batch" reactor, treated to remove undesirable components, and then discharged, an oxidation ditch is oval shaped like a racetrack, it's easy to maintain and operate and also requires less energy for operation, but requires a large area for construction, which is where purchasing the full 12 acres comes in. "An oxidation ditch system will cost about \$1 to 1.5 million more to build, but we'll more than make that back by reducing operating costs over its lifetime."

"The disadvantages of an SBR system is that it requires a higher level of sophistication of controls and higher levels of annual maintenance. We could possibly run an oxidation ditch system without on-site staff, but if we went with a SBR system, we would have to hire staff to run the facility," Grossnickle said.

The current price tag of the new facility is estimated to be \$13.8 million. "Once we get the State Department of the Environment's ok and all the Federal permits lined up, we can start applying for grants," said Grossnickle. "Without grants, there is no way we can afford to do this," he said. Mayor Perry Jones seconded that opinion, "we can't ask the residents to pay for it, if we did, we would be run out of Town."

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WALKERSVILLE NEWS

Renewal of special water assessment under review

With the Town on the hook for repaying \$286,886 this year for the State loan used to help fund the new water plant, Town Staff asked the Council what they wanted to do with the special water assessment fee since it expired at the end of 2023 with nothing to replace it.

The fee was first applied to water bills in 2020 when the new water treatment plant was opened. The revenue from the assessment was used to pay down the principle of the 30-year loan of \$7.3 million that the Town received from the State for the plant's construction.

The fee also allowed the Town to see what the new plant's expenses would look like without incurring more debt. At that time, the \$50 fee was based on dividing the yearly loan repayment amount by 3,000 (the

approximate number of water customers at the time). In 2021, the fee was increased to \$100 per account.

The benefit of the assessment fee was clearly seen when looking at the actual FY-23 revenue, which was \$1,599,614 and expenses were \$1,632,533, leaving a difference of negative \$32,919. If the assessment fee was not used, the Town's revenue would have been \$1,295,714, the expenses \$1,632,533 and the difference a whopping negative \$336,819.

Town Manager Sean Williams said, "The concern is if nothing is done, the bills going out in May will not have the special assessment fee, allowing the bills to average around \$75. If the decision to add it again is decided at a later date or to raise the water rates, the next bill will jump dramatically and that is what we are trying to avoid."

Williams referenced the recent public uproar in Emmitsburg when the Town was forced to implement a series of yearly 33% rate increases after failing to address the deficit created by the actual costs of water in that Town for years. Walkersville has not raised its rates since 2016 other than the special assessment fee.

Williams mentioned several options to be considered as possible solutions to this dilemma. They included continuing the assessment fee and increasing the water rates or lumping the assessment fee into a flat-water rate increase per billing cycle and then also having additional billing for the special assessment moving forward. "The reality is we have to factor in the expenses when we potentially increase the water billing to customers which I know no one wants to hear," he said.

Additionally, Commissioner Tom Gilbert pointed out that the fee doesn't cover increased staff salaries or replacement parts. "It's shortsighted if we don't do both the fee and raise water fees. Everything goes up, that's just a cost of living, we won't always have 2016 rates here and be able to manage repairs. It's not sustainable."

Williams agreed, explaining that either the assessment fee must stay or it must become a set fee and even then the Town would need to have a set rate increase every few years until it needs to be reassessed.

The Council debated reinstating the fee until the end of 2024 to allow them time to consider their options. The concern was that the same thing could happen in December and the fee would be extended again without any changes.

Commissioner Gary Baker ques-

tioned whether applying a "sunset" or cease date was necessary. "If we put the fee in place and just let it go until it's decided to repeal it, then whoever is on the Board in the Fall won't need to make any decisions under a time crunch." Williams said a long-term fee without an end date was an option, but that would not force a decision to be made about the future of the special fee or water rates, so the cycle would continue.

"It's been three years, and we still have people coming in to pay their water bill, upset with the fee being there," said Williams. "We are doing our residents a disservice if we don't deal with this now."

Weddle ended the discussion saying he would be presenting a draft ordinance at the next meeting for the Council to review and make changes.

News Briefs...

Heritage Park Playground Takes Another Step Forward

The replacement of the smaller playground near the frisbee golf course at Heritage Farm Park has been in the works since early last year. The old equipment was 23 years old and needed to be removed because some of the parts to repair it are no longer available, leading to safety issues.

\$120,000 of Project Open Space grant money will be used for the project and Commissioner Liaison Mary Ann Brodie-Ennis who has been instrumental in the design of the new play space asked what types of equipment the Parks Commission would like to see in the new play area.

One of Commissioner Ennis's suggestions is to have a spinner which is a modern style of merry go round, "Community Park has one and it's very popular," she said. She also suggested more traditional equipment such as climbing walls, slides, and a quad seesaw where four children can play at the same time.

Other suggestions included music pieces, a sensory wall, and possibly a scavenger hunt. They are planning on installing ramps instead of stairs to allow wheelchair access and will have a poured in place surface that is also wheelchair friendly. The swing set is the only piece of the old equipment that will remain.

According to Ennis two companies have made bids to construct the playground; Miracle Play and Playground Specialist. Kelly Woods of the Parks Maintenance staff asked the Commission to consider not using Miracle Play for this playground because of the work they did with the Community Park playground.

"Stuff that was supposed to be covered wasn't and the representatives are a challenge to deal with," he said. He was a fan of Playground Specialist because the equipment has a track record of lasting a long time even though it may cost more initially. The next step involves Ennis reaching out to bidding companies to get quotes with the suggested equipment.

Council Supports Route 194 Project

Burgess Weddle read a letter of support of the Route 194 project written at the request of Frederick County. The letter, signed by Weddle was sent to the Secretary of the Department of Transportation to help the project gain additional funding from the state for the design and construction of the project as there is no current funding available. If funding can be obtained the project will be a State Highways project, not a county project.

The improvement project is being considered to resolve and improve safety issues as well as capacity concerns in both directions of Route 194 from MD 26 to Devilbiss Bridge Road. The road will be widened by adding a lane in both north and south directions with a divided median as well as turn lanes. Also planned are

six-foot bike lanes, ADA compliant sidewalks and pedestrian crossings. Some utility lines will need to be relocated and drainage will be improved.

Transportation Engineering Supervisor Mark Mishler of the Division of Planning and Permitting in Frederick said the project isn't something to expect this year due to the lack of funding.

Girl Scouts Slingshot Course Shot Down

Two members of a local Girl Scout troop presented the idea of installing a slingshot range in Community Park for their Silver Award. The girls said they usually visit Brighton Woods for their slingshot trips, which is about 45 minutes away and would like a closer location to practice.

The target would be an eight-by-eight sheet of plywood facing the train tracks in the open field to the left of the playground and basketball hoops. The girl scouts would use biodegrad-

able clay pellets and bring their slingshots with them on each visit.

Ennis said she spoke with the Town Manager and the town's insurance provider, and they had concerns specifically regarding safety and liability at a busy community park. Besides the chance of hitting a person or damaging property, the target would be stationary and leaving it up could be a liability. The insurance company mentioned any groups

using the targets would need to provide their own insurance.

Ennis also suggested the watershed as a location for the range, but the town already has an agreement with the Boy Scouts who maintain the area they use, and they may or may not allow the targets there. After discussion the Commission determined the project needs more discussion with the Town Planner, Staff and Burgess and Commissioners.

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WALKERSVILLE INFO

Tues., Apr 2 - 7 p.m. - Charter Review Committee Meeting
Wed., Apr. 3 - 7 p.m. - Parks Meeting
Tues., April 9 - 7 p.m. - Planning Workshop
Wed., Apr. 10 - 7 p.m. - Town Meeting
Mon., Apr. 22 - 7 p.m. - EDC Meeting
Tues., Apr. 23 - 7 p.m. - Planning Meeting
Wed., Apr. 24 - 7 p.m. - Town Meeting

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Walkersville: Our Town

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The Walkersville Economic Development Commission (EDC) is hosting their inaugural local business pop-up shop event, "Pop Up on Penn".

We would like to invite any businesses, artisans, and non-profits, in the 21793 zip code to join us!

This event coincides with the opening day of the Walkersville Southern Railroad, and will be a great promotional opportunity with our community, and the visitors for the railroad.

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FROM THE DESK OF...

Congressman David Trone

Throughout April, we celebrate Second Chance Month. It's an opportunity for us to celebrate and recognize the values that make our democracy work. Without redemption, recovery, and an understanding of the challenges people across our country face, our nation wouldn't be what it is today. And truthfully, without second chances, I wouldn't be where I am today either.

Most often, we equate second chances with our criminal justice system. It is abundantly clear that this system is built on a racist foundation. We can draw a straight line from slavery to Jim Crow to the mass incarceration we are witnessing today. My first experience with our criminal justice system came not as a public

servant but as a business owner.

When I was first growing my former company, a corrupt Attorney General in Pennsylvania didn't like that I was disrupting the status quo. So he had me, my wife, and my brother arrested. I was offered a plea deal that I knew I shouldn't take. It would've prohibited me from operating my business any longer. I beat those false allegations because of a good education, a good lawyer, and the color of my skin. To this day, generations of Black Americans face a much more dire outcome.

Overcoming that challenge gave me a second chance at success. But as I reflect on my life, I realize that this wasn't the first — or last — "second chance" that has impacted my life.

When I was 11 years old, my father moved our family to a working farm just north of the Mason-Dixon Line. We grew up cleaning hog pens and selling eggs. But my Dad's alcoholism caught up to him. And when I was 28, we lost everything — our home, our jobs, and the very beds we slept in.

I started my business to keep my family afloat and help make ends meet. The business gave me a second chance to succeed. It was at that moment that I realized my Dad needed a second chance, too. I worked with him tirelessly to get him through 30-day programs and stay sober. Once he recovered, he came back to work with me for the rest of his life.

Many years later, I decided to enter public service. I did it

because I had the opportunity to live my dream — and realized that millions of Americans weren't able to do the same because our government has consistently failed to take action on the issues that impact them and their families.

Shortly before the primary election in 2018, I was diagnosed with cancer. Of all of the challenges I'd faced, this was one that felt particularly out of my control. I turned to the experts at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore. Today, I am 6 years cancer-free. Because of the care from my incredible team of nurses and physicians, I was given a second chance at life. Trust me when I say that I don't take it for granted.

Throughout my time in public service, I've worked to make second chances more attainable for every Marylander. I'm incredibly proud that we were able to pass a

bill providing Pell Grants to incarcerated individuals — strengthening their chances of getting a good education, a good job, and staying out of prison. I'm proud that we passed 26 bills into law last Congress tackling the challenges of addiction and mental health. And I'm proud to be an advocate for medical research to prevent the illnesses that take the lives of our friends, family and neighbors year after year.

I believe that nobody should be defined by their worst moments. And that's why I believe in second chances — for those who make mistakes and face our criminal justice system, for those who fall victim to the disease of addiction, for those who face life-threatening illnesses, and more. If more of our public servants recognized the power of redemption and recovery, all of us would be better off.

County Council President Brad Young

The Frederick County Council meets regularly on Tuesday evenings at 5:30 p.m. at Winchester Hall, located at 12 East Church Street in downtown Frederick. All meetings are open to the public, and we welcome participation.

County Executive Jessica Fitzwater will be presenting the County's Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2025 in the coming weeks, no later than April 15. On April 23, the Council will hold a Public Hearing for the FY2025 Board of Education and Frederick County Government Bud-

get. Following this Public Hearing, the Council will hold three days of Budget workshops on April 24, April 25, and April 26 from 10 am to 4 pm.

During these workshops, the Council Members will meet with leaders from the Departments within the Frederick County Government to discuss Budget needs and priorities. The Council will begin to discuss possible Budget Amendments on April 30. The Amendment proposal and approval process will continue after April 30. The Public Hearing for the County's Property Tax Rate will

be held on May 7. The Final Budget with any possible approved Amendments must be approved by the Council by May 31.

Currently, the Council has three Bills advancing through our legislative process. This includes Bill 24-01. This Bill, sponsored by myself on behalf of the County Executive, makes Updates and Additions to the Historic Preservation Ordinance. Bill 24-02, also sponsored by me on behalf of the County Executive, amends certain provisions of the Frederick County Code related to membership on the

Sustainable Monocacy Commission.

Bill 24-03, that I have sponsored on behalf of the County Executive, will Revise the Braddock Heights, Libertytown, and New Addition Electric Lighting District tax rates so that projected revenue covers projected costs. Documentation and text for all Bills will be linked to our agendas. All documentation can be found on our website.

The Frederick County Council encourages public involvement at every stage of the legislative process. We welcome public comment

at every Council meeting on Tuesday evenings. Members of the public are welcome to attend and give comment in person, leave a voicemail to be forwarded to each Council Member, or email us any time at councilmembers@frederickcountymd.gov. Please visit our website at www.frederickcountymd.gov/councilmembers to view our latest agendas, legislation, and upcoming calendar of events.

And as always, if there is ever anything I can do for you, please feel free to reach out to me and my office. You can contact me via email at: BYoung@FrederickCountyMD.gov, or you can call my office at 301-600-1108.

Woodsboro Burgess Heath Barnes

Happy Spring warmer weather has arrived and hopefully, all winter weather is now gone until next winter.

Our annual Easter Egg Hunt in town was quite successful again. The Woodsboro Volunteer Fire Depart-

ment along with the town of Woodsboro outdid themselves again. The weather is always challenging, especially with Easter being so early this year, but we made it work.

The March 12th meeting was quiet. Unfortunately, due to an unforeseen situation, I was not able to attend, but the meeting was in good hands and was run by the President of the Council Bud Eckenrode. Thank you, Councilman Eckenrode, for stepping up last minute.

The main discussion was about the new building development that is coming to town. The nine townhouses that were approved several years ago that are to be built on Second Street are starting

to take place. The builders will begin the construction of them before too much longer. This will bring at least nine more families and homes to town.

It was also brought up that the town has stopped electronic payments for water bills. Electronic payments have been stopped at this time due to the revision of the fees that the processor is charging the town along with the low utilization of this program. With those added fees the council decided to stop them for now. We will research other options that the town can afford without taking a large loss each quarter.

As always, I encourage everyone to support Glade Valley Community Services (GVCS) if you have clothes or food donations as they are always in

need of items for members of the community. For more information, please contact GVCS by email at gvcs.inc@verizon.net, or call 301-845-0213.

If you have any questions, concerns, complaints, or compliments please feel free to reach out to me at hbarnes@woodsboro.org or by phone at 301-401-7164.

Woodsboro Town meetings are held on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 7. In addition, Planning and Zoning meetings are at 6 on the First Monday of the month as needed. If you have an item for the agenda, it needs to be submitted 14 days before the P&Z meeting. The current location for meetings is the St. Johns United Church of Christ located at 8 N 2nd Street. The public is always invited to attend.



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GOVERNMENT

County Executive Jessica Fitzwater

Springtime is here, bringing beautiful blossoms and difficult budget decisions.

On April 15th, I will release my budget for Fiscal Year 2025. It has been a challenging process this year, with slower revenue growth, fewer new housing permits, and escalating costs. Fortunately, Frederick County's diverse economy puts us in a better position than some of our neighboring counties. But tough choices will still need to be made.

So far, I've received requests for \$84 million in new funding. Nearly three-quarters of that is from Frederick County Public Schools, which asked for an additional \$62 million above the legally required maintenance of effort funding. All the other agencies and departments requested a combined \$22 million.

I personally met with every division director to make sure existing programs were re-evaluated. Programs we no longer need were cut from the base budget. And every new request had to align with the goals set in our Livable Frederick master plan.

The most important part of developing a budget each year is hearing from the people who live and work in our community. Your feedback is crucial. If you spoke at a public meeting, wrote into my office, or took a survey using our Balancing Act tool, thank you! Your input helped to shape the budget I'll soon present.

A few weeks ago, I presented some early highlights of what the budget will include. The Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) lays out our big construction projects for the next six years. It includes renovated and replacement schools, roads, bridge, libraries, and fire stations.

We have the fastest growing school district in Maryland. Since

2014, the County has completed 12 school projects: additions, limited renovations (like Thurmont Elementary School), and replacements, like Brunswick Elementary School. There are another eight school projects in process, including a replacement of Valley Elementary School.

Some of the other big projects in the works include bikeways and trails, including several in the Emmitsburg and Thurmont areas, new fire stations in Carroll Manor and Green Valley, an upgrade to the Point of Rocks Wastewater Treatment Plant, and bridges on Hessong Bridge and Biggs Ford Roads. There are also sewer line and pavement projects to help keep our community safe.

Child Care Study

Childcare is essential for our county to thrive. Parents rely on childcare so they can join the workforce as reliable, healthy employees. Access to high-quality, affordable childcare affects families' job options, finances, and children's development.

That's why the County's Office for Children and Families recently conducted a market study to understand the state of child care in Frederick County. The study was paid for from our American Rescue Plan Act funding. We heard from more than 1,600 people, through surveys, focus groups, interviews, and community input sessions. What we found probably won't surprise parents of young children, especially those in this newspaper's readership areas.

Demand outstrips supply. The number of licensed childcare slots in Frederick County is not keeping pace with the need. In the northern and southeastern parts of the county, we are seeing crisis-level childcare shortages. Countywide, three out of four

providers reported a six-month waitlist. Providers struggle with licensing regulations and other business challenges that make it difficult to meet the demand.

The social impact is real. Families miss out on wages. Collectively, Frederick County's families miss out on \$1 million a year in lost wages due to childcare problems. Women, in particular, lose out on career development. In Maryland, women are returning to the post-pandemic workforce at half the national rate, with childcare being one of the biggest reasons. Children are not ready to learn when they arrive at kindergarten. Latino English learners and low-income students show the biggest boost in readiness

from formal childcare.

There is good news to share, too. The study found we can expect to produce \$3-\$4 in economic benefits for every \$1 invested in childcare. Our next step is to gather community input on how to move forward. There are a few opportunities for you to weigh in. Starting April 1, there will be a survey available online. You can find it at PublicInput.com/childcareforfrederickcounty. You are also invited to attend an in-person meeting for families and childcare providers on Saturday, April 20, from 9:30 to 11. at the Family Partnership office at 8420 Gas House Pike, Suite EE, in Frederick. We'd love to hear from you!

Upcoming

April is packed with great pro-

gramming at our libraries. On the 8th, join a solar eclipse viewing party at the Emmitsburg Branch Library. The Brunswick Branch will host a bird walk for beginners on April 14th. The Thurmont Regional Library holds musical storytime every Thursday in April. And in honor of Earth Day, learn about edible native plants on April 21st at the Walkersville Branch.

Also this month, we will be announcing recipients of our Rural Historic Preservation Grants. The program helps fund rehabilitation, restoration, and preservation of historic properties. Grants from the program are designed to preserve, protect, and enhance rural historic properties outside of our cities and towns. Stay tuned for details on the projects receiving funding this year.

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FROM THE DESK OF CONGRESSIONAL CANDIDATE

Chris Hyser (D)

I am a decorated retired Maryland State Trooper, medal of Valor recipient. After retiring I continued by serving our great nation with 7 tours in Iraq and 3 tours in Afghanistan as a military contractor, tasked with protecting our Generals throughout these war-torn nations. Upon returning to the US, I completed my master's degree in Chaplaincy. I now serve as a volunteer Chaplain at the Veterans Service center of Frederick, Family Rights for religious Freedom in Montgomery County and the Homelessness Task force for both Frederick City and Frederick County. I would like to share my

vision of district 6 as your next congressman.

Imagine a community where parents have the power to choose the education that best suits their children's needs, where the phrase "school choice" isn't just a buzzword but a reality. Picture a town where the brave men and women in blue are not just valued but supported wholeheartedly. This is the vision I bring to you tonight.

Now, let's delve into the heart of my commitment. Beyond my extensive background and commitment to community service, I stand for three core initiatives that will redefine the land-

scape of District 6. First and foremost, I advocate for parental choice in education – empowering parents to decide what's best for their children's academic journey. As a parent myself, I understand the importance of having a say in your child's future.

Secondly, I am a staunch supporter of school choice. Every child deserves access to a quality education tailored to their unique needs. By championing school choice, we can ensure that our educational system meets the diverse needs of our students, preparing them for success in an ever-changing world.

And finally, let's talk about "Back the Blue." I've walked the thin blue line, and I understand the sacrifices

our law enforcement officers make to keep our communities safe. It's not just about supporting the police; it's about recognizing the vital role they play and providing them with the resources and backing they need to carry out their duties effectively.

District 6, our home, faces unique challenges and opportunities. From education to law enforcement, these issues directly impact our lives. It's not just about grand ideals; it's about addressing the real issues that matter to you, the residents of District 6.

Feel the passion in my words, not just as a candidate, but as a father who wants the best for his children, as a veteran police officer who understands the importance of

security, and as a community member who values the well-being of our neighbors.

Now, I invite you to be a part of this conversation. What are your thoughts on parental and school choice? How do you envision supporting our law enforcement officers? This isn't just my campaign; it's our campaign. Let's make it a dialogue, not just a monologue.

In conclusion, remember that the future of District 6 is in our hands. Together, let's build a community that values education, supports our law enforcement, and empowers parents. Visit my website, at www.chrishyserforcongress.com and look at my detailed action plan.

Adrian Petrus (D)

In a bid to champion democracy, environmental protection, and the defense of individual rights, Adrian Petrus has announced his candidacy for the United States Congress in Maryland's 6th District. With a profound commitment to ensuring fairness and equality for all, Petrus aims to address critical issues ranging from workplace discrimination to climate change and beyond.

Petrus's journey into politics stems from a personal experience of facing workplace discrimination and forced arbitration, witnessing collusion between unions and employers. Determined to eradicate such injustices, he

pledges to put an end to forced arbitration in the workplace and tackle workplace discrimination head-on. As a disabled US veteran, Petrus is particularly passionate about advocating for fellow veterans, striving to improve access to healthcare, disability services, and mental health support.

One of Petrus's key priorities is to enhance transportation infrastructure, connecting western Maryland, including Deep Creek Lake, to Washington, D.C., to stimulate economic growth and prosperity across the entire district. Recognizing the urgency of combating climate change, Petrus proposes a groundbreaking solution: mining the

moon for helium-3 to develop clean nuclear fusion reactors by 2030. This innovative approach not only promises to mitigate the impact of global warming but also propel technological advancement by centuries.

Petrus asserts that while the nation is projected to spend trillions combating climate change, harnessing helium-3 could achieve the same goal at a fraction of the cost, revolutionizing energy production and environmental sustainability. Furthermore, his platform resonates with a broad spectrum of voters, including independents and some Republicans in western Maryland, positioning him as the strongest Democratic candidate capable of winning the general election.

Addressing pressing local issues, Petrus emphasizes the need to combat the opioid epidemic plaguing the 6th District and advocate for homeowners' rights. He proposes policies to facilitate the removal of private mortgage insurance (PMI) based on home value or loan percentage, without penalizing homeowners for imperfect payment histories. Additionally, he advocates for foreclosure prevention measures to safeguard homeownership and promote financial stability.

Petrus advocates for equal access to education and healthcare, emphasizing the importance of affordable housing and comprehensive healthcare coverage for all residents. With a vision for an inclusive and equitable society, he

seeks to uplift marginalized communities and ensure equal rights and opportunities for every individual.

Adrian Petrus's candidacy for US Congress in Maryland's 6th District offers a bold and comprehensive vision for progress and prosperity. With a unique blend of experience, dedication, and innovative thinking, Petrus aims to lead the district towards a brighter future, grounded in principles of democracy, environmental stewardship, and social justice. As the only candidate capable of bridging partisan divides and securing victory in the general election, Petrus represents the best hope for meaningful change and progress in the 6th District and beyond.

Lesley Lopez (D)

My boys have always seemed to have impeccable timing. My oldest was born only a few months after I was elected as a state delegate, and my second was born two weeks before the final year of that term. I've loved every minute of being their mom, but it certainly hasn't been easy. From trying to find a place to nurse while voting on legislation to trying to find affordable childcare, the obstacles have seemed insurmountable at times.

Any parent will tell you that having a child changes your life and having our two boys was no different. Being a mother also shapes the way I approach my job as a lawmaker.

After having his first child, a male colleague confided in me

that he had no idea how hard it was to find childcare, especially with the long and irregular hours of working in the state legislature. But parents in Frederick County certainly know. A recent report from the county government revealed the lack of childcare spots in north Frederick are at near crisis levels.

Many lawmakers are unaware of these struggles, but I know firsthand the juggling act of last-minute childcare arrangements and rushing home to tuck in kids after long days. Our family was lucky to simply find a daycare that could take our boys, even if the cost did eat up my entire legislative salary.

I'm sure every working parent knows the feeling of being

pulled in a thousand directions. But these common challenges shouldn't be the norm, and I've spent my years in Annapolis trying to make that the case.

Last year, I was proud to support paid family leave in Maryland, allowing parents and caretakers to be there for their loved ones, and to allow parents to take the time they need after the birth of their children. As President of Maryland's Women's Caucus, I fought to expand access to childcare, support the expansion of the child tax credit, and protect reproductive rights so women can make their own healthcare decisions.

My first bill that I ever passed made the penalty fine permanent when someone drives past a stopped school bus with its stop sign out. In Annapolis, I even lobbied leadership for a lactation room in the complex to support breastfeeding parents, whether

they be elected officials, staff, or members of the public. Part of supporting working parents is ensuring every space—from the workplace to the halls of Congress—is accessible for parents.

If we want to support working moms, we need a Congress that includes them. Right now, less than 7% of members of Congress are moms of kids under 18. We need to change that. Our country is at a turning point and working moms, who are juggling jobs and the heavy responsibility of raising kids, need additional support. If we want Congress to take action to help working moms, we need representatives who know what's at stake. Who have lived or are living those same challenges.

As someone who has breastfed on the job while writing laws that affect millions of other women, I'm ready to take my experience to Congress and get to work on the big problems that families

across the country are facing. My own ability to handle those challenges and tough calls has shaped me into the legislator and candidate I am today.

Moms have been leading the way on many issues: whether it be childcare, family leave, or gun violence prevention. And I am so proud that my boys are growing up seeing their mom take on the big challenges and not shying away from any fight.

They inspire me every day to keep working for a better future, and I am excited to show them what their mom can do in Congress.

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FROM THE DESK OF CONGRESSIONAL CANDIDATE

David Trone for U.S. Senate

There are times that being an Editor of a paper is a thankless job, but every once and a while a task, or opportunity, comes along that reminds not only why it's important, but why I do it.

Using the pages of this paper to elevate one candidate over another in hopes that our readers will take a closer look at them, draw the same conclusion about them as I have, and cast their vote for them, is probably one of the most important decisions I make.

But in some cases, the endorsement is a 'no-brainer' – as in the case of supporting David Trone for United States Senate.

I've been a resident of Maryland now for 33 years, and in all that time, with the exception of David Trone, only once have I met my Congressman, and never any of my Senators.

In the last four years I've 'bumped into' – yes, 'bumped into' – David Trone no less than six times as he was touring our area. I fondly recall walking down Church Street in Thurmont

and seeing him talking to a business owner. He recognized me and when done with the business owner, struck up a conversation with me! He was my U.S. Congressman and he wanted to know how I was doing!

Being a tad bit of a political wonk, I pressed him on some policy issues. Unlike most politicians who need to turn to staffers for answers, David answered directly. He had a solid basis for his positions on a wide range of subjects – not a party only basis, but a logical, thought-

ful, bipartisan basis, the type of basis that allow one to get something done in Washington.

David's a rarity in Washington: someone who's only beholden to his constituents; someone who makes promises and keeps them; someone who stays engaged in the community even when it's not election time; and someone who puts progress for people ahead of partisan politics.

David Trone's refusal to take special interest money isn't a small thing-it gives him the independence to do big things.

There's a long list of things we

need to get done in the country — we need someone who will put country first and recognizes that before we are Democrats or Republicans, we are Americans.

I sincerely hate to lose him as our Congressman, but he has made a convincing case that he can do even more for communities like ours if he takes his talents and drive to the Senate.

For his honesty, independence, and ability to get things done, this paper wholeheartedly endorses David Trone for U.S. Senate in the Democratic primary.

Brenda Thiam (R)

We are seven weeks (and a few days) from Maryland's primary election day on Tuesday, May 14th. If you're planning to vote early, you can do so starting Thursday, May 2nd to Thursday, May 9th. I hope you are as excited as I am to cast your vote for our future political leaders who will represent us in various levels of government; local and federal. As you know, I'm running for U.S. Congress in Maryland's sixth district. The campaign trail has been exciting, and it has allowed me to meet and talk to so many wonderful citizens who live in the district.

I went door-knocking in Thurmont a couple of weeks ago and talked to several voters. The common thread when talking to voters has been very similar: the chaos at the border, the economy, and edu-

cation for our school-aged children. These things are high on the radar and in the minds of voters because of the bad policies being pushed by the Biden-Harris administration. Policies should be written to achieve the greatest good possible with the least amount of harm to the public. As your representative when I'm elected, I will always seek good solutions to the problems we face in our district and the country. I will listen to you and partner with you to determine what policies are necessary for you and your families.

At the top of the three concerns among voters is the border. The mayhem at the border is at an all-time high. In fiscal year 2023, encounters at the southern border have increased by over 40% since fiscal year 2021. Encounters at the

northern border are worse. In September 2023, encounters increased by 409% compared to September 2021. These numbers are dangerous since known terrorists whose names are on watchlists have entered our country illegally. This should be alarming to every American citizen, Democrats and Republicans.

With the recent passing of the budget in the House, funding is allocated for twenty-two thousand more border agents. The passing of another 1 trillion dollars that is added to our country's deficit is an even greater travesty. We would not be in this crisis if President Biden had not proceeded in an overzealous manner to overturn all of President Trump's immigration policies. We need policies that will protect American citizens and do more good than harm. We need to return to the policy of migrants remaining in Mexico until the person's asylum case is heard. Mexican authorities

agreed with this decision with President Trump, and it worked to curtail migrants abusing the asylum system and avoid deportation and detention. The immigration system is badly broken and must be fixed expeditiously.

I will support policies to improve the immigration system that will help people legally become American citizens, but the system must be free from loopholes and those attempting to come must be vetted thoroughly. I support immigrants coming to America, but they must come to America legally and safely. My husband, who is from Guinea West Africa but is now a naturalized American citizen, legally came to America many years ago. He works hard every day to provide for our family. He often tells me and our daughter what a great country America is, and no other country grants such freedoms to its citizens like America. We must remember

we are blessed to be born in this country and to never take it for granted.

When I am elected to represent you in Congress, I will champion common-sense policies for our district and America. I will work alongside other Republicans and levelheaded Democrats to sponsor and support policies that will help us be a better country. I will not be a representative who will sit in my office and create policies that I think are good for you. I need your help to develop policies that will eventually become the law of the land. Join me in the work to get us across the first finish line (primary election), then we'll advance to go toe-to-toe with the Democrat nominee in the general election in November. With the help of the almighty God, we will be victorious in November and declared the winner. See you out on the campaign trail!



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COMMENTARY

The Bulwark

The courage of Mike Pence

Jonathan V. Last

I have been ringing the Mike Pence bell since 2022 (here and here and here, for starters). Why? Because when democracy was on the line, the main body of his party demanded he commit a high crime, and an armed mob came to murder him, Pence jumped on the grenade.

Mike Pence didn't just fulfill his Constitutional duty on January 6—though if he had, that would have been enough to earn the nation's gratitude.

Pence refused to leave the Capitol. When the Secret Service tried to get him into a vehicle, Pence realized that once he left the premises, he would have no control over his freedom of movement, which could prevent him from counting the Electoral College votes and completing the election.

During the January 6 attack, Pence was in frequent communication with Speaker Nancy Pelosi—both trying to assure her safety and working with her to move aggressively forward with the final certification of the Electoral Votes.

On January 6, for the span of several hours, Pence became America's indispensable man. And he answered the call.

On January 20, 2021, Pence was on the steps of the Capitol to greet

the incoming president and vice president. His presence testified to their legitimacy. It seems like a small thing now, but had both the sitting president and his vice president refused to attend the inauguration, Biden's legitimacy would have been crippled beyond repair.

Instead, Pence was gracious and proper and in so doing made it clear that the breach in the peaceful transfer of power should belong to Donald Trump alone and that this dishonor need not spread to the Republican party itself.

By attending the inauguration, Pence gave the Republican party a choice. That the party has since chosen to stand in strict opposition to the rule of law is on the men and women who make up the body of the party itself. Trump didn't drag them. They chose it.

Pence tried to save his party one final time by running for president and testifying about Trump's actions on January 6.

And finally, with Trump having secured the delegates necessary to hold the Republican nomination, Pence went on Fox News to announce that he would not endorse Trump.

What more does America want from this man?

Well let me tell you what *I* want: I want Pence's heroism to be recognized by the media, by elected politicians, and by our fellow citizens for the big forkin' deal that it is.

I understand that Joe Biden is old

and I agree that his age is a relevant and legitimate concern. But also, I have read approximately 87,236 stories in the New York Times alone on this subject.

But Donald Trump's own vice president refuses to endorse his candidacy because he believes Trump is a traitor to the Constitution and a danger to America.

How many times as the NYT mentioned this enormously significant fact? So far: Twice.

For context: Since March 15, three NYT stories have mentioned concerns about Biden's age.

No American vice president has ever said that his former boss is unfit to serve. It is the most devastating possible observation from the most credible source in existence. Pence's refusal to endorse Trump should be part of the context of every single story about this campaign.

Especially because it's not just Pence.

Trump's Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of staff called him "a wannabe dictator."

Trump's Secretary of Defense called him "a threat to democracy."

Trump's National Security Advisor called him "a danger to the United States."

Trump's chief of staff observed that he is: "A person who admires autocrats and murderous dictators. A person that has nothing but contempt for our democratic institutions, our Constitution and the rule of law."

These are not hysterical Resistance Libs or Democrats looking for partisan advantage. These are

serious people—Republicans who worked for Trump at the highest levels and saw him up close—who are testifying not that Trump is sub-optimal, or is in favor of policies with which they disagree, but is a clear and present danger to liberal democracy itself.

Again I say: The fact that Mike Pence, Mark Milley, Mark Esper, John Kelly, and so many of the men and women who worked for Trump believe he is a threat to democracy ought to be the first and last pieces of context in Every. Single. Story.

Try to imagine Kamala Harris saying that Joe Biden was unfit for office, or Biden saying that about Barack Obama, or Dick Cheney saying it about George W. Bush, or Al Gore about Bill Clinton, or Dan Quayle about George H.W. Bush, or George H.W. Bush about Reagan.

Reminder: We are not talking about personality conflicts or jealousies. We are not talking about policy differences or verdicts on the competence of the administration.

We are talking about a flat declaration by the vice president that his/her boss and former running mate is manifestly unfit for service.

There is no precedent. It should be the biggest story in American politics from here to November.

I have one wish - that Vice President Harris gets on the horn to Pence right now and thank him for his service and his integrity. She should invite Mr. and Mrs. Pence to the residence for dinner. President Biden should do the same. In a perfect world, Pence would

endorse Biden at the Democratic convention in Chicago. That probably won't happen. But Biden and Harris should make it clear to Pence that they respect the hell out of him and that they intend to try to earn his endorsement by matching his integrity and patriotism.

They should also make it clear that their vision for the near-term future of the Democratic party is that it should be inclusive to all patriots, regardless of their politics. Because for the time being, the Democratic party is—first and foremost—the rule-of-law party and the only party dedicated to preserving liberal democracy.

Right now, Pence refusing to endorse Trump is just one more floating piece of chaos in the whirlwind.

The media should not let go of the Pence disavowal. Include it relentlessly in all coverage of the presidential campaign. Make it part of the scenery in the same way that Trump's 2020 loss and subsequent attempted coup are.

Will Pence's refusal to endorse Trump change the minds of any voters? I don't know. But I'd like to give them the chance. If America is going to freely choose to elect Donald Trump again, then the media's job is to make sure they do so with their eyes wide open.

I want the media to give the American voters the same chance Mike Pence gave the Republican party.

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

The Liberal Patriot

Democrats should be a "pro-normal" party

Lauren Harper

The year 2022 was supposed to be an election year where Democrats faced a reckoning with mainstream Americans. Instead, they only narrowly lost the House and held on to the Senate. So far, 2024 is full of hot takes on the likely outcome of November's election—particularly as to whether or not Biden can defeat Trump a second time.

But the question no one seems to be asking is: What will it actually take to win—and what happens if we do?

Now that former South Carolina governor Nikki Haley has officially dropped out of the race—creating a moderate coalition of more than 3 million voters in the process—and both party leaders have clinched their nominations, the head-to-head of Biden vs. Trump has officially commenced.

Several months ahead of November's Election Day, I sincerely hope that we Democrats can avoid the pitfalls of our party's past and learn not to make the same mistakes.

What were those mistakes?

(1) Saddling the Democratic Party brand with unpopular rather than popular policies. Between 2021 and 2023, America made it through a global pandemic while Democrats passed the American Rescue Plan, Bipartisan Infrastructure Plan, and both the CHIPS and Inflation Reduction Acts.

These impressive pieces of legislation weren't well-communicated with the general public, and they were coupled with unpopular progressive policies and rhetoric that people did actually hear about, negatively impacting the Democratic Party's national brand.

What's more, average Americans need more tangible improvements—like lowering the cost of groceries or federal interest rate cuts—to point toward rather than legislative accomplishments they may deem simply as "government actually doing their jobs."

(2) Allowing activist groups and progressive staffers to define what it means to be a Democrat—rather than more moderate party officials and candidates. As Democrats look to build upon and share our wins as a party, it's time we ask ourselves what our party's infrastructure looks like moving forward. Are we going to allow the same progressive staffers and organizations that have corrupted the party, burned bridges with independents and moderate Republicans, and raised hell for moderate Democratic officeholders to keep doing what they've been doing?

Thanks to them, the Biden administration has failed to offer shelter to moderate Republican refugees—and expand the tent in a way that would make this election a relative cruise instead of the nail-biter everyone expects.

Take the crucial swing state of Michigan: some 300,000 Republican primary voters cast their ballots for Nikki

Haley rather than Donald Trump. In a close general election contest, a small but significant chunk of those voters could make the difference between a Biden victory and a second Trump presidency.

One could argue that President Biden welcomed Nikki Haley voters with open arms after she dropped out of the GOP nomination race shortly after Super Tuesday. And while the nod was important and necessary, actions speak much louder than words—and the Biden administration has had four years to do just that.

We can't let Democrats let these voters slip through their fingers a second time, even if Trump isn't running for president again in 2028 after a loss this November.

(3) Going out of the way to antagonize opposition voters rather than offering a welcoming hand. The fact of the matter is if Americans are begrudgingly re-electing President Biden, they are also begrudgingly re-electing "the Democrats." If we want to maintain public rapport and support for Democrats, we must supply what voters are demanding—even if that means both welcoming in Republicans and recalibrating what it means to be a Democrat in 2024.

Take these three propositions as a starting point: Rhetoric that paints all Republicans as villains is bad; Snarkiness from Democrats that paints their own party as rude and lacking compassion is bad; and, Building a coalition in the center that meets voters of all ages and backgrounds is... good.

This fall, there will be millions of

moderate Republicans who either vote for Joe Biden or choose not to vote at all. If we don't start widening the Democratic tent now to welcome them into our coalition, President Biden's odds grow longer this November. And if President Biden does manage to win, these voters will be politically homeless come 2025 and in need of some friendly outreach.

We must be honest about the polling that shows plenty of Americans—particularly independent voters—believe Democrats are as extreme as Republicans and instead offer them a party brand and elected leadership that matches the center-left, pragmatic ideology the majority of them hold.

(4) Forcing purity tests on candidates rather than permitting ideological nuance to help create a big tent—and fight ideological extremism. Building up the "Pro-Normal Party," as Adam Frisch likes to put it, will mean an end to the purity tests of the past few cycles. And as a bonus, cultivating a strong center-left faction institutionally at the federal level will help us cultivate a strong center-left faction culturally and politically at the state level.

For example, we need more Blue Dog caucuses in state legislatures full of members who build a strong sense of community as pragmatic Democrats in the same fashion the extremists in the Freedom Caucus have—just with a true sense of progressive populism and patriotism instead of chaotic inflections upon our democracy. These would be particularly helpful to Democratic state and local officials as we nurture a better national brand in Washington.

Biden moving to the center and building a big tent will only help us with what has historically been our base—not hurt us. There are plenty of Democrats, particularly Black Democrats, who consider themselves on the conservative end and don't intend to ever become Republicans—but that doesn't mean they can or will support every policy that many repping the current Democratic brand espouse in 2024.

Brands matter. You know what to expect when you drive up to a Chick-Fil-A window. Brands breed identity, affiliation, and community. But they can also prove as deterrents to those things, particularly when striking the wrong tone or failing to recognize the actual desires of those in the communities they are seeking to build.

If we actually want to address critical issues like climate change, prescription drug costs, voter protection, and K-12 education, we have to position the party and its brand as a champion for ordinary Americans.

Electorally, we can't regain a majority in the House and keep a majority in the Senate without making the Democratic brand more normal. And we can't govern and advance policy in a Congress that simply doesn't function.

Let's build the big tent that not only helps Democrats win but builds the infrastructure the future of our politics demands—before November's election.

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

Words from Winterbilt

Is our President a likable elderly person?

Shannon Bohrer

When Robert Hur, a special counsel investigating President Biden's criminal exposure for having classified documents, submitted his report, it was front-page news. As with our normal divisive political environment, Mr. Hur's report did not disappoint but added to the contentious hostility. The report was released on February 7.

The report stated that President Biden would not be charged, which was not unlike the investigation and report of former Vice-President Pence's possession of classified documents. However, there were a few additions. After stating that no charges would be filed, Special Counsel Hur expressed concerns about President Biden's mental skills and capabilities.

The report asserted that President Biden had memory issues, that he could not remember when his son died, or when he served as vice-president. Hur described him as a "Well-meaning elderly man with a poor memory." The report also explained why prosecution was not recommended. The explanation included a "lack of evidence," which sounds logical, we tend not to charge people with crimes when there is a lack of evidence.

The report continued by saying, "The special counsel's assessment that a jury would not have found that Biden acted with criminal intent given his 'diminished faculties in advancing age.'" This last sentence seemed unusual, especially since it was written by the special counsel. A lack of "crim-

inal intent," with or without any testimony, goes to the lack of evidence, and the "lack of evidence," is the reason for not recommending prosecution. Furthermore, why would the special counsel believe that the Vice-President would testify?

The report made a lot of news, which immediately resulted in some news sources vilifying the "old man" and others defending the "elderly statesman." I found the news on the topic was lacking. When I say lacking, there was nothing reported about memory ability. I never saw or listened to any news with memory experts, or medical experts on human cognitive abilities. It appeared that the news reporters, often repeating unflattering parts in the report, were satisfied with their own expertise on aging and memory.

It is fair to say that most of us have memory issues, maybe not to the extent referenced in the report, but the human mind is not a recorder. How many times have you forgotten what you had for lunch the previous day? When reporting on the special counsel's report, the news outlets would have had some credibility if they had employed medical and cognitive experts on memory, but they did not.

As the reporting continued for days, we began hearing of Trump's memory issues. In a speech at the Pray Vote Stand Summit, the former President confused Barack Obama with Joe Biden. It did not get much attention since he has often confused the two. During another speech, he even said his opponent in 2015 was Barack Obama.

Trump has also confused Nancy Pelosi with Nikki Haley on multiple

occasions. His confusion with names, places, and events is so frequent that the news outlets seem to expect it, with truly little comment. While Biden has a reputation for gaffs, Trump has a reputation for confusion with names, places, and facts. In a court case where he was being sued by E. Jane Carroll, he was asked to identify individuals in a photograph. He pointed to E. Jean Carroll and identified her as his ex-wife, Marla Maples. He once asked if Russia owned Finland and wanted to buy Greenland. Lately, he predicted that Biden would get us into "World War II." I thought it was over.

Last year, Trump repeated words attributed to President Orban, the President of Hungary, in a campaign event on Veterans Day. Accordingly, he said that "the Hungarian leader had been asked what advice he would give to "President Obama" about how to proceed in a world that "seems to be exploding and imploding." Trump said that Orban's response was that "Obama should immediately resign, and they should replace him with President Trump, who kept the world safe." See, even Orban can confuse names.

President Orban has ruled Hungary for 12 years. The government has been accused of eliminating media freedom unless the media praises the President. It has been widely reported that the elections have been rigged since they resemble those in Russia, and minority rights have been under attack. Trump considers President Orban a friend. On the world stage, Orban is regarded as an autocrat and a close friend of President Putin. When President Biden gave the State of The Union address in Congress last month, President Orban was visiting Trump at Mar-A-Lago.



Reporting about the mental lapses of both candidates and their ages often infers that someone with lapses in memory would be incapable of running the county. Since President Biden is in office, maybe we should examine his record. Then again, the same reporters commenting on age and memory issues may have forgotten Biden's record.

President Biden's first term has been successful. He got us out of the COVID-19 pandemic and guided us out of stagnation and the expected inflation. All the experts predicted a recession, and it never happened. Instead, our economy grew, and fears of inflation have been rescinded. The United States has the best economy of any industrialized country. Inflation in January 2024 was 3.1 percent, and wages were growing at 5 percent, meaning wages were exceeding growth rates. Unemployment for Black workers fell to 5.9 percent, the lowest since 1972 when they began keeping records. In under four years, 14.3 million jobs were added since Biden took office.

Under President Trump, unemployment increased to 6.3 percent, and the economy lost 2.9 million jobs. The

greatest job lost since Herbert Hoover. The international trade deficit that Trump railed against increased 40.5 percent while he was in office. Three million individuals lost their health insurance, and financially, the federal debt skyrocketed "from 14.4 trillion to 21.6 trillion." The added seven trillion debt was the largest in our history over a four-year period.

The reporting of mental lapses by both Biden and Trump and inferences that because of their ages, both should be incapable of running the county is blatantly false, at least for one candidate. Comparisons of the records of both candidates suggest that one candidate, Biden, is well suited to continue in the office. While Trump's record is not good, many continue to say they would like him to return.

The best argument for President Biden is his record during his first term. If a likable older person with a few memory issues has the record that President Biden has, has he not demonstrated that his age and experiences are valuable assets?

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

Good Day Neighbor

Make a plan to vote

Dorothea Mordan

Stories help us make sense of our world, especially when deluged by input from every direction. Alice went to Wonderland under duress and confusion. She only wanted to find solutions. How do I make sense of this place, how do I get home? She was offered random information — "Drink Me!", and random threats — "Off with her head!"

Life usually feels pretty normal compared to Alice's. Maybe not this year.

We want to make the best decision with our vote. An election comes down to a job application. In this primary election, my starting point is identifying the best solution finder. It's great to have leadership in budgeting for public safety, interstate highways, et. al. True leadership includes seeing how to connect people to solutions using what is already in place. Managing people in our society by enacting laws about what books are available and who can't control their own body, is not leadership.

The Board of Education is the elected body mandated to establish educational and safety guidelines for our schools, staff and students. Across our country, debates about these guidelines have gotten to a fever pitch. One of the widest ranging issues of our modern school system

is safety for our at-risk kids. Classroom safety for special education students, their neurotypical peers, and their teachers, along with addressing plain old-fashioned bullying, are all on the minds of voters. We constituents have the job of paying attention to the elected body we put in charge.

Bullying is a feature of the human condition, but that doesn't mean we have to tolerate it. We don't want our kids at the receiving end of a bully's cruel words. We don't have to tolerate it from would-be members of our Board of Education who would ban books or deny our children the ability to be themselves.

Our legislative bodies at the Federal level are routinely hamstrung by a small group that clings to messages shared with a selective group of constituents. Bullies are doing their best to deny full body autonomy to women, and shame anyone they pronounce "different".

In the Primary Election on May 14, I support these candidates:

Board of Education:
Jerry Alexandratos Ph.D.

Full disclosure, I have known Jerry for twenty years, and we are cofounding board members of Kitsune, Inc 501(c)3. Jerry, a Frederick resident for over 30 years, shared the following

"I've been in schools for a long time, not only as a student, but also as a par-

ent of a special needs child. He is now a nonbinary adult, a graduate of Frederick County Public Schools, and in college in Portland, Oregon. My stepson inspired me to help start a nonprofit in Frederick called Kitsune, to help other people with developmental disabilities. I have seen how FCPS helped my son, also how they did not, and how they can be improved. Schools need more special education teachers, allocated based upon need and not just school size, as well as more mental health counselors. We need them to protect kids from bullying, not exclude them based upon irrational fears about gender or orientation.

As a scientist, I would like to help bring a more scientific and data-driven approach to the education curriculum to help all students, such as improving early childhood reading methods using more up to date textbooks and training. I think teachers need more support in general, especially by reducing the student to teacher ratio so teachers can spend more time with each student."

For more information about Jerry, visit his campaign website at jerryalexandratos.com.

There are six Primary Election openings for BOE. On my list are Jerry Alexandratos, Allison Medrano, Justin L. Smith, Angie Vigliotti, Chad Wilson, Cecilia Reidler. They all are committed to watching out for our kids in all their glorious individuality.

Congressional District 6:
Del. Lesley Lopez

Leadership is about understanding the scope of a problem. Offering a solution I can implement myself is leadership that empowers me, a constituent. Lesley listens, following up with solutions. Lesley spent time at a meeting for Kitsune, our nonprofit focused on independent living for adults with developmental disabilities. We have an idea for a resource database—the one we wish we had when we were raising our kids. Lesley understood the purpose and scope of our project. Within 48 hours she connected me with two coders who have now, in a month and a half, built our database platform. It is functional and expected to be online for the public to use by the time I write my Good Day Neighbor column for May. Not a penny of tax payer money was spent.

Lesley cosponsored bill HB 328 Simplifying hospital financial assistance.

As President of the Women's Caucus, Lesley helped lead on advocating for HB 376, ending copayments for breast cancer screenings and mammograms in Maryland.

For more information about Lesley, visit her campaign website at lopezformaryland.com.

US Senate: David Trone

David Trone found a transportation solution for Maryland in securing a combined \$268,615,000 to com-

plete work on U.S. 15, I-68 Viaduct, U.S. 220 and U.S. 219 North, completing the Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS) through Trone's "Finish the ADHS Act" included in the IJA.

During Rep. Trone's tenure, the House passed the Restoring Hope for Mental Health and Well-Being Act. Eight of the thirty bills in this legislative package were led or co-led by Trone. Along with the mental health bills, were Community funded projects in Frederick County, The City of Frederick and throughout Western Maryland.

My vote in the primary goes to candidates who understand that solutions impact people differently, requiring flexibility, not a one-size-fits-all decree. As members of our county, state, and national communities, we have common needs that true solution finders can address.

We are individuals with different needs, but we are one in this nation of free will, free thought, and the right to vote. Our elected officials need to know where constituents stand, regardless your choice winning. For more information about David visit his website at davidtrone.com.

2024 is the year of the vote. Please make yours count.

To read prior editions of *Good Day Neighbor*, visit the *Authors* section of *Walkersville.net*.

PASTOR'S DESK

The Lamb of God

Pastor Ben Hays
Life and Liberty Baptist Church

*"Church like it used to be.
 Church like it should be."*

As we consider spring and the Easter season, we are reminded of the Lamb of God. Allow me encourage you to consider the Lamb every day of your life, not just during the Easter season. The Lamb of God is very much the central theme of the entire Bible. Let's take a brief walk through the Bible and we will see that this Lamb is the only way to obtain eternal life.

First, The Lamb in the Garden

Genesis 4:3,4 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering;

Hebrews 11:4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. The first two men born into this world heard what was accept-

able to God. One believed and the other did not. Their Father taught them that they would have to come to God by the blood of the Lamb.

Second, the Lamb on the Mountain Many years after Able's offering, we read of Abraham and Isaac.

Genesis 22:6, 7 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

Abraham and Isaac did not have a Bible to read. Somehow, from Adam to Isaac they knew they needed a Lamb. Isaac acknowledged that they could not worship God without a Lamb.

Verse 8: And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

Nearly 2,000 years later, God did just that. He provided Himself and The Lamb.

Third, the Lamb in Egypt

Exodus 12:1-4 tells the story of the first Passover, when Israel would leave Egypt. Everyone was required to have a Lamb so the death angel would not stop by and kill the firstborn in the house. It does not say you should bring what you deem adequate. You must have a Lamb. Verses 5-7 tell us God wants a Lamb with no blemish!

God's command is not for you to merely follow its example, hang a picture of it in your house, hang an image around your neck, or only talk about it. He wants you to take the blood and apply it. Anything more or less will not be sufficient.

The Bible says that good works are not sufficient to forgive you of your sins. Church membership, tithing, baptism, and being kind are all good, but you must apply the blood to your personal life. Many I speak with say they believe in God, and that they believe Jesus died and rose again, but have never trusted Him as their personal Lord and Saviour. Has there been a specific time in your life that you have repented of your sins and trusted Jesus alone to forgive you of all your sins?



Applying the blood in Exodus 12 is very specific. This reminds us that all roads do NOT lead to Heaven. Jesus is the only way!

Fourth, the Lamb in Bethlehem

As we continue to observe the central theme of the Bible, we again see the Lamb of God in Luke 2.

Luke 2:7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger. Did you see that? He was born in a manger. That should be no surprise because He is the Lamb of God. Luke 2:8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. Why did the angels not go to

fisherman? Why not carpenters or religious leaders? Why Shepherds? Could it be that this was the Lamb of God?

Luke 2:16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

After Jesus is born in a manger, we do not read much more about Him until 30 years later.

Fifth, the Lamb of God

John 1:29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

Jesus is kind, merciful, longsuffering, and even performs miracles, but none of these save lost sinners. It is the blood of the Lamb! Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

Jesus was brought "as a lamb to the slaughter." They ripped his beard out. They hit him, telling Him to say who smote Him. They put the crown on his head and beat it down. They said, "If thou be the Son of God come down off that cross." These are awful acts, yet, Jesus endured these things for my sin and for your sin. He paid the penalty so that I would not have to.

Lastly, the Lamb in Heaven

In Heaven all the saved are gathered around one person doing one thing. In Revelation 5:9-12 the saints are singing a new song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." The Bible concludes where it began, with the Lamb of God!

(All Scripture quotes are taken from the King James Bible, The Word of God).

To learn more about Walkersville's Life and Liberty Baptist Church visit them on-line at lifeandliberty-baptist.org or better yet, join them for Sunday service at 30 W. Frederick Street, Walkersville.

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 (Take 194 N. or S., turn onto Rt. 550 at Woodsboro to Creagerstown.)

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THE BOOK OF DAYS

Things by their right names



April 25

The sportsmen of the middle ages invented a peculiar kind of language, with which it was necessary to be acquainted when speaking of things belonging to the chase. Different kinds of beasts, when going together in companies, were distinguished each by their own particular epithet, which was in some way descriptive of the nature or habits of the animal to which it was applied; and to have made a wrong use of one of these would have subjected him who made the mistake to undisguised ridicule; indeed, such is still the case, and to use the word dog, when sporting language would have that animal called a hound, would be an offence which the ears of a sportsman would not tolerate, and of which it would be no palliation to argue that, though every dog is not a hound, still, every hound is a dog.

Of the epithets applied to companies of beasts in past times several are in use at the present day, though the greater

part have passed away from us; or if they have not entirely done so, they are not all universally employed, though perhaps every one of them might still be found in existence if sought in the different counties of England. Of those which we daily apply we are at a loss to account for the origin in many cases, though no doubt when first employed the application seemed natural and descriptive enough; but as words are continually undergoing change in their spelling, or are subject

to become obsolete or repudiated because old fashioned, we come, in time, no longer to recognize their source.

The following list will show what were those invented in the Middle Ages and what we retain. There was said to be a pride of lions; a lepe of leopards; a herde of harts, of bucks, and of all sorts of deer; a bevy of roes; a sloth, of bears; a singular of boars; a sounder of wild swine; a doyft of tame swine; a route of wolves; a harms of hoses; a rag of colts; a stud of

mares; a pace of asses; a baren of mules; a team of oxen; a drove of kine; a flock of sheep; a tribe of goats; a skulk of foxes; a cete of badgers; a richesse of martins; a fesynes of ferrets; a huske, or down of hares; a nest of rabbits; a clowder of cats, and a kindle of young cats; a shrewdness of apes, and a labour of moles. Also, of animals when they retired to rest, a hart was said to be harbored, a buck lodged, a roebuck bedded, a hare formed, a rabbit set. Two greyhounds were called a brace, and three a leash, but two harriers or spaniels were called a couple. We have also a mute of hounds for a number, a kennel of raches, a litter of whelps, and a cowardice of curs.

This kind of descriptive phraseology was not confined to birds and beasts and other of the brute creation, but extended to the human species and their various natures, propensities, and callings, as shown in the list below, in which the meaning of the epithets is more obvious than in many of the foregoing.

Here we have: a state of princes; a skulk of friars; a skulk of thieves; an observance of hermits; a subtiltie of sergeants; a safeguard of porters; a stalk of foresters; a blast of hunters; a draught of butlers; a temperance of cooks; a melody of harpers; a poverty of pipers; a

drunkenship of cobblers; a disguising of tailors; a wandering of tinkers; a fighting of beggars; a ragful (a netful) of knaves; a blush of boys; a bevy of ladies; a nonpatience of wives; a gagle of women and a gagle of geese. As applied to inanimate things, there was a cluster of grapes, a cluster of nuts, a caste of bread, &c.

The cluster of grapes and of nuts we are well acquainted with, but the caste of bread is quite gone, probably because bread is no longer baked in the same way as formerly, for by the word caste is meant that whole quantity of bread which was baked in a tin with divisions in it, or in a set of moulds all run together, and in that way the word is used as of something cast in a mould, as we say of metal. No doubt there was as much reason in all the terms when they were invented, and, as to the use of them, we are as rigorous as ever where we have them at all. Who would dare to call two horses anything but a pair when they are harnessed to a carriage, though they may be two in any other situation, and although four horses are four, let them be where they will. Then, two pheasants are a brace, two fowls are a pair, and two ducks are a couple, and so we might go on with an endless number.

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ECOLOGY

Never stop learning

Anne Gageby
 Director of Environmental Education
 Strawberry Hill Foundation

When I was a kid, I assumed that learning would stop once I finished school. At ten years old, I figured I would know everything I would ever need to know by the time I was done school. I'm not sure why I held this belief, though. Looking back, I don't recall anyone ever explicitly stating such. It's funny to think about it because the older I became, the more I discovered that learning never stops. It takes a variety of forms – reading books, watching online tutorials, listening to podcasts, attending lectures, catching up on the latest information in your professional career field, and so on. Learning doesn't look the same across the board and that's okay. It doesn't have to, especially in this era of technology.

For me, education is a thread woven into the fabric of my daily life. I frequent Penn State Extension's online programs, catch up on industry blogs and podcasts, read books recommended to me by others in my field, and I attend programs at Strawberry Hill for the fun of it. After all, why not? I can always find little golden nuggets of information to go home with and being exposed to a variety of teaching styles helps me be a better teacher. Plus, it's fun going to classes with old friends and meeting new people.

In March, I attended a class at Strawberry Hill called The Lan-

guage of the Land: Communicating with the Spaces Around Us. This program was taught by Rev. Monika Coyote, a shamanic healer and educator with a master's degree in forensic psychology and 20 years of experience working in the health and human services field. The class I attended focused on how people and spaces communicate with each other. It was a fascinating blend of scientific methods and metaphysical discussion.

From this discussion, I discovered that hikers, gardeners, and caretakers of natural spaces can build a relationship with spaces through regular acts of service, offerings, or simply saying hello. I'm not one to walk around talking out loud to trees but this class piqued my interest in acts of service as a communication concept. It made me wonder if picking up trash while I'm out on the trails could help me build a relationship with the space I'm protecting. Am I creating a bond with the land if I pick up a wind-blown granola bar wrapper I found while hiking? Is it possible that the land appreciates when I take a small trash bag with me on outings? Perhaps. Or perhaps it simply gives me a sense of pride and ownership over a small but impactful act. Either way, the end result is something positive.

Litter has a tremendous effect on wildlife and ecosystems. As litter degrades it releases chemicals and microparticles that affect waterways, plants, and animals. Wildlife become trapped in or ingest lit-



IN THE FIGHT AGAINST LITTER AND POLLUTION, WE STILL HAVE SO FAR TO GO.



Founded in 1953, Keep America Beautiful is the largest community improvement organization in the United States, with more than 700 state and community-based affiliate organizations and more than 1,000 partner organizations.

ter. And most litter takes decades to hundreds of years to decompose. According to Keep America Beautiful, a national non-partisan non-profit dedicated to educating the public about recycling and cleaning green spaces, there are 152 pieces of litter for each U.S. resident. On the bright side, Keep America Beautiful also reports that overall roadside litter is down 54% since 2009. That's good news for people and animals alike.

Leftover food that is tossed out car windows draws rodents and where there are rodents, there are predators like owls, hawks, and more. One of the greatest threats to these birds of prey is people driving, especially at night. It's a potentially deadly mix when an animal hunting for food encounters blinding headlights around a sharp turn. Clean roads make for enjoyable drives and provide protection for birds of prey. It's a win all the way around.

I recently had a conversation about litter with our WILDlife kids. We were out on the trails when we found a gum wrapper followed by an old soda can tab and then later some broken glass. We were discussing what trash does to an area and before I knew it, the kids issued a challenge to me – how many pieces of litter could I hold in both hands as we hiked back to the pond. It was a fun way to engage in dialogue about responsible hiking and they thoroughly enjoyed watching me struggle to hold every small piece they could find. I had a foraging bag with me, but the kids were having a good time watching me balance items large and small in my hands. It was a struggle, for sure.

In the end, though, it was totally worth it. Kids love beating adults at games and a little struggle on my part fed great discussions about

respect for nature and respect for others. All the while, Rev. Monika's lesson kept echoing in my ears. Were the trees watching as we traveled down the long-worn paths? Did the mountain understand that our game helps cultivate social responsibility and collective love of nature? Perhaps.

I think a better question to ask is: do our small actions make a measurable impact? I believe they do. Children learn by example, and they value that which is valued. It could be the trees, the watershed, a local hiking spot, or just spending time in nature with friends. Either way, the lessons learned will carry on.

Looking ahead at our spring schedule, I'm hoping to attend more of our classes and programs if

only to engage that part of myself that loves learning. I made myself a promise years ago to never grow still, never become stagnant. Education – especially environmental education – is a living, breathing thing, no puns intended. I'm always looking for new ways to connect to the natural world and bring knowledge back to my programs. I believe the programs I teach reflect what I value. So, if you sign up for some upcoming programs, don't be surprised to see me sitting there with you. After all, you never stop learning. Who knows, maybe you'll teach me something this spring!

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THE RETIRED ECOLOGIST

A runcible season

Bill Meredith

"They dined on mince, and slices of quince, which they ate with a runcible spoon."

...Edward Lear, "The Owl and the Pussycat."

"When I use a word, it means whatever I want it to mean, neither more nor less."

...Humpty Dumpty, in Through the Looking Glass, by Lewis Carroll.

The coming of spring has strange effects on those who inhabit the natural world. I recently read a local news article that reported that a couple of tom turkeys have started expressing their testosterone-induced territorial instincts by trying to chase people away from a local church. The article in the paper did not make clear whether the turkeys were atheists who were trying to prevent people from attending, or if they wanted to join the church themselves, but it certainly seemed to be a unique and fascinating event.

In fact, as I reflected on it, my imagination took over, and before long it conjured up images of the old church I attended as a child, with a herd of angry turkeys chasing elderly ladies dressed in their Sunday best off through the cemetery and into the woods. Words like "unique" and "fascinating" were clearly not adequate to describe a scene like that; something better was called for. From somewhere in the depths of my memory, the word "runcible" volunteered to accept the challenge.

"Runcible" was introduced into the English language in the mid-19th Century by Edward Lear. He was an artist, and as a young man in those days before photography, he was hired by the London Zoological Society to illustrate a book about parrots. While working there he was befriended by the Earl of Derby, and wrote his first book, a collection of illustrated limericks and nonsense poems, for the Earl's grandchildren. Later, he traveled about Europe painting landscapes and wrote several more volumes of poetry, one of which included "The Owl and the Pussycat." It became one of the stories

and nursery rhymes that were read to children of my generation at bedtime.

My contemporaries will recall that the unlikely couple sailed off to sea in a beautiful pea-green boat, fell in love, and after sailing around for a year and a day they were married. The marriage ceremony was performed by a turkey, and for their wedding feast, "they dined on mince, with slices of quince, which they ate with a runcible spoon."

To a child of four, a story like that did not seem preposterous at all. Primed by tales about Uncle Wiggly the Rabbit Gentleman and his companion, Nurse Jane the Muskrat Lady, or the song about Mr. Froggy who went a-courting Miss Mousie, and unaware of the complications that would arise from such unions, it did not seem remarkable to me that an owl and a cat should get married. But it did bother me that no one seemed to know what "runcible" meant. It was not until several years later that I read about Alice's trip through the Looking Glass and her conversation with Humpty Dumpty, that "runcible" suddenly made sense. However, by that time I had learned about sex, so the matter of owls and cats getting married had become a moot question, and I was left with a new and potentially useful word in my vocabulary.

So, back to the present. It is spring, and all sorts of things are starting to happen. The days are getting longer by about 17 minutes each week. It was a mild winter, but it did get cold enough for the ground to freeze, and it turned

my yard to mud when it thawed, just as it always has done. Down in the mud, the shriveled roots of last year's grass detected the lengthening days and started sending up new green sprouts. Dormant crocus bulbs responded to the light in a similar manner, as did daffodils and tulips.

All over the garden, seeds too small for the unaided eye to see germinated and sent up sprouts that covered the area with tiny blue Veronica blossoms. The goldfinches that come to my feeder each morning are starting to turn yellow, and the white-throated sparrows are beginning to sing "Old Sam Peabody," their courting song. A friend just told me the mourning doves already have a nest with eggs in it by his porch. Of course we will still have cold nights and even possibly snow for a while; but spring is coming... just as it always has.

When I was a child, my grandmother taught me to call these things miracles, and since by definition miracles are unexplainable, she was right. In those days no one understood how they happened. But science has progressed with amazing speed in the past 75 years, and long before I retired I was routinely explaining the phenomena of spring to students in my introductory classes. Of course, there are details we still don't fully understand about the changes spring brings to animals and plants, but we know too much about them to call them miracles any more. This bothers some people; but to me, being able to explain things does not make them any less amazing or wonderful than they were when I was four.

I have reached the age when,



Edward Lear was an English artist, illustrator, musician, author, and poet, who is known mostly for his literary nonsense in poetry, prose, and especially his limericks - a form he popularized.

if I was ever going to attain wisdom, it should have happened by now. But it appears that either it didn't happen, or if it did, no one noticed. My mental facilities are teetering precariously between obsolescence and senility. So to make the best of it, perhaps I may be allowed to invent words to describe events that are not miracles but are nevertheless amazing, beautiful, or delightful to the spirit. So I've decided to call them Runcible Events. It is not original on my part; years ago, John Richards, who became my mentor when I was young and in need of such an influence, delighted me by referring to the song of the first house wren as a Runcible Melody.

So when the first hummingbird arrives, even though physiologists have measured the number of calories in its body fat and proved that it does indeed have the capacity to fly all the way across the Caribbean without stopping, it will still be a Runcible Journey. Let the critics complain if they wish; Lewis Carroll said I could do it if I want to, and the English language needs some new words that were not invented by teenagers in California. Edward Lear would be delighted.

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IN THE COUNTRY

Creature court

Tim Iverson
Naturalist

On the first day of April we humans have a rich history of playing practical jokes on one another in a light hearted jest of making each other appear a fool. As it turns out we humans need little help in this department when it comes to our understanding of the animal kingdom. We are a very gullible species. We often believe what we are told or initially observe without further investigation, and as a result have a very misinformed and skewed understanding of our surroundings. This is where science and some of our more skeptical brethren have done some heavy lifting to shine light on concepts we think we understand. You can be sure that as you're reading this there is probably some adult imparting hearsay wisdom to some child and the misinformation chain begins anew. Let's take some of these myths to creature court and see what the verdict is. Hopefully we can take a crack at some of the more predominate animal myths you may have encountered and set the record straight.

Think back to a point in your childhood where you were outside playing. There you were minding your own business getting grass stains in your jeans, knocking over ant hills, meticulously pulling petals off flowers to see if were in fact loved by that special someone then – BAM! A baby bird was lying on the ground, perhaps at the base of a tree, and then you reach, as the valiant hero you are, to return this helpless bird to its' rightful nest. Only just as you're about to cement your nine year old Nobel Peace Prize an adult steps in and tells you "Leave it alone! If you touch it the mother bird will abandon it." They, in due course, explain that it has something to do with smelling human scent on it. While it is good practice not to interfere with wildlife, the premise is unfounded. Most birds have an underdeveloped sense of smell (if any at all), so human scent has absolutely no bearing on a mother bird helping her young. Chances are this bird is learning to fly or the mother is only away temporarily. Housing, feeding, or caring for any baby wildlife will more than likely kill it or make it

dependant on humans and never be able to care for itself. Picking up the baby bird could be detrimental to its long term ability in learning to fly, but won't stop a mother bird from caring for her child. Consider this myth busted as false.

In hindsight this next myth seems rather a sadistic experiment that many have probably tried or at the very least heard of. The accusation is that cutting an earthworm in half will create two worms. If you've been witness to a worm being severed you'll have astutely seen that both sections continue to wiggle. Some adult may have even happened along in this instance and said something encouraging like "You know eventually both ends will grow back and then you'll have two worms!" This myth probably arose from a simple misunderstanding. Worms, like many other invertebrates, do have some regenerative ability. The ability to re-grow body parts differs enormously between them, although tails are generally easier to re-grow. So if you cut part of an earthworm's tail off, it might be able to regrow a stunted replacement. However, it is highly likely that the worm will lose the tail section permanently, or even perish. In reality it makes about as much sense as cutting a raccoon in half and expecting it to regenerate a head and hind section for the remaining halves. So the wiggling you see is really only a result of the final moments of agony the poor creature will endure until it suffers no more. Do our annelid (worm) friends a favor and leave them in one intact piece because verdict for this myth has been ruled false.

Next up on the docket is that touching a frog or toad will give you warts. A lot of frogs and toads have bumps on their skin that some people think are contagious. Some think that coming in contact with these bumps will cause you to have warts. The ruling on the bench is that this myth is false. Dermatologist Jerry Litt says, "Warts are caused by a human virus, not frogs or toads." These bumps, or parotid glands,



It's a myth that parent birds will abandon young that have been touched by humans—most birds have a poor sense of smell, and birds in general identify their young using the same cues we humans do—appearance and sound. It's perfectly safe to pick up a fallen nestling and put it back in the nest, or to carry a fledgling out of danger and place it in a tree or shrub.

contain a toxic poison that can cause irritation of the skin to predators and humans if touched. If a predator tries to make a snack out of these little critters they will often experience a foul unpleasant taste, may begin to foam at the mouth, or even die. While it may not transmit warts to people, depending on the species it may just be best to leave well enough alone and not touch them.

Justice may be blind, but the next accusation is that bats are too. It's often said that when someone can't see they are "as blind as bat." This myth may have arisen because of the sonar used by bats to hunt prey. However, contrary to popular belief bats are not blind. Bats can see, and some rely solely on their vision to hunt and travel. Bats are broken down into two categories – mega (they eat fruit) and micro (they eat insects). "Mega" bats rely solely on vision, and while "micro" do have poorly developed eyes they can still see and will use sight for long distance navigation. Some bats can even see in ultraviolet light, which helps them hunt and navigate. The scales of justice have tipped in favor of not guilty for this myth because it is untrue.

The next defendant is hungry for justice, because Praying Mantises have had enough of scandalous rumors about their copulative behavior. The female Praying Mantis is known for devouring the head of the male after the act is complete. However, this is not

necessarily always the case. After much research entomologist realized that this only occurs about a third of the time. Researchers still are unsure of the reasoning behind this behavior, but it is likely to provide nutrition for the newly expecting mother. Others think it's simply because the female gets confused and mistakes the male for prey. Either way, females will usually only perform sexual cannibalism when starving. This practice mostly occurs in captivity. Researchers usually don't see the same behavior in the wild, so there could be other underlying causes as well. Consider the Praying Mantis only acquitted from this myth.

Hopefully our little creature court has been able to clarify some common myths and justice has prevailed. With even a little more understanding our natural world can become an even more wonderful and miraculous place. Now that the weather is beginning to become more favorable I encourage everyone to get out into their public lands or even their very own yards and explore their surroundings and soak up some sun. These myths aren't the only things that can make us fools, so do a little sleuthing for yourself and see if you can witness some of our newly exonerated friends in action.

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SCIENCE MATTERS

Tracing DNA links at Catoctin Furnace

Boyce Rensberger

Sometime between 1776 and 1840, a three-year-old girl died at the Catoctin Furnace near Thurmont. Today the furnace is preserved as a historic site, but back then it was a booming industrial complex, refining iron from ore and making various cast-iron products.

The little girl was the child of enslaved Africans who operated the blast furnace and made the products. What is remarkable today about that toddler is that we now know that she has several relatives currently living in Hagerstown. DNA revealed the connection.

Here's how: First, the girl's skeleton was one of 35 exhumed in 1970 for the widening of highway US-15. The road work cut through an overgrown cemetery used by Blacks more than a century earlier at the furnace. The skeletons then were housed at the Smithsonian. About five years ago DNA was extracted from the bones. The child's DNA proved to be purely African, suggesting that she or her parents had been brought directly from West Africa to America. (Africans, incidentally, were valued for their iron-making skills, derived from a technology practiced in Africa for more than 2,500 years.)

The bones' genetic markers were then compared with those of some nine million people who had given their DNA samples (cheek cells in saliva) to 23andMe, a California company that does the analysis and maintains a database.

The analysis found nearly 42,000 living Americans who are related one way or another to that little girl. The evidence also revealed that 15 of the skeletons could be grouped genetically as members of five different families.

Of the living relatives of the little girl, one was Agnes Jackson, an 86-year-old resident of Hagerstown who had contributed her DNA to the database in 2022. And the toddler was, of course, also related to Jackson's three daughters. The four of them came to Catoctin Furnace last summer to learn more about the research project and to see where their family had lived and worked.

"It's so exciting to see my tree ... to know more about our ancestors," Ms. Jackson told a reporter from Science magazine. "It's always good to know where we came from."

Sharon Green, one of Jackson's daughters, was struck by seeing the nails that were found with the child's bones. They once fastened the wooden coffin that had long since deteriorated. "Seeing the nails that were buried with her, and hearing how much my ancestors were sold for, was amazing," she told Science. "It's so overwhelming to know we contributed to this country and know who we were."

The DNA comparisons to the 23andMe database found thousands of other living relatives around the country, but the company feels that since those people haven't given permission in advance to be linked to people who lived long ago, they are not at liberty to name them.

Seven other people buried in the cemetery had no detectable European ancestry, indicating that they were captives recently imported from Africa or immediate descendants of Africans. All the other skeletons contained DNA with some mixture of European ancestry.

Ms. Jackson and her daughters were not, of course, descendants of the three-year-old child. A geneticist from 23andMe, Éadaoin Harney, met the Jacksons at Catoctin Furnace and told them that long stretches of the girl's DNA were identical to those in Agnes Jackson. There was enough overlap to conclude that Ms. Jackson was likely a third cousin, or a second cousin twice removed.

"What DNA does for the first time is connect a living, 21st century family not just to Catoctin, but to the actual cemetery," says Catoctin Furnace Historical Society archaeologist Elizabeth Comer. She is the one who in 2015 asked the Smithsonian's Doug Owsley, a biological anthropologist, to see if new genetic testing methods could be tried on bones from the Catoctin cemetery. That led to DNA being extracted from the bones and submitted to 23andMe for comparison.

Comer's actions and the DNA work were done in consultation with the African American Resources Cultural and Heritage Society, an organization dedicated to promoting knowledge of the history of African Americans in Frederick County.

Comer has also been instrumental in bringing attention more broadly to the slave cemetery and in finding ways to help people today



Sharon Green, Agnes Jackson, Vicki Winston, and Barbara Hart at the ruins of the Catoctin Furnace last summer.

connect with the ones long ago who lived and worked in our area. A few years back she persuaded the Smithsonian to allow two skulls, that of a woman and a teen-age boy, to be "fleshed out" in clay to create some idea of what those two looked like in life. The sculptures can be seen at the Museum of the Ironworker, a part of the Catoctin Furnace site.

Prior to the DNA work, Jackson's family was already connected to the furnace through historical records. She knew that her great-great-grandfather was an ironworker named Henson Summers. His distinctive name helped genealogists trace his family. Born around 1820, Summers was enslaved by the owners of the ironworks and later sold to another furnace near Hagerstown, where Jackson and her daughters live today.

Without DNA analysis the little girl's connection to anyone alive today would have remained unknown. "We can do genealogy research till the cows come home, but without DNA, we would never know that information," Comer says. "This closes the loop."

Three of the people buried at

Catoctin Furnace had DNA associated with sickle-cell disease. Four had variants of a gene associated with another blood disorder called G6PD deficiency, which causes fevers, abdominal and back pain, and fatigue. Both diseases disproportionately affect people descended from sub-Saharan Africa.

"This study is an example of deploying scientific tools to address questions of long-standing interest to African Americans, at the community's request," says Dr. Henry Louis Gates Jr., a professor and director of the Hutchins Center for African and African-American Research at Harvard. Referring to the ability of DNA studies to link Blacks to ancestors who lived before their names and dates were written into records, Gates told Science, "It is a tool for empowerment

of African Americans, rather than exploitation of a vulnerable population. I think it is a model of engagement to be emulated."

Boyce Rensberger retired to New Midway after more than 40 years as a science writer and editor, mostly for *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. Write to him at boycerensberger@gmail.com.

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

Learn about the North County Recovering Identity Project, the study that changed how northern Frederick County's African American history is perceived and studied. April 27 at the Thurmont Regional Library.



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THE MASTER GARDENER

Frederick County Master Gardener's annual plant sale

Maritta Perry Grau
Frederick County
Master Gardener

After the muted colors of winter, the delicate shades of spring flowers are emerging to give us a welcome sign that it's time to plan our summer gardens. And to help with this endeavor, the Frederick County Master Gardeners will hold its annual plant sale on Saturday, April 27, from 9 to 1 at the Frederick Fairgrounds as part of the Fiber Fest.

Master Gardeners will be showcasing more than 150 varieties of plants, both old favorites and new varieties, including annuals, perennials, vegetables, and herbs. Importantly, all plants are well suited to Frederick growing conditions. Master Gardeners will be ready to help you select the right plant for your particular growing conditions and offer you advice about the plant's care for best performance.

Here are some plants to consider in planning your summer garden.

Annuals

For a burst of color in the garden, lasting from spring through late fall, annuals offer flowers and foliage that perform magnificently with a bit of care. Planted in drifts, in containers, or as a focal point, annuals provide a wide array of choices for any garden spot. You can find annuals that can thrive in

a number of light and soil conditions; resist rabbit and deer; and provide nutrients for butterflies, bees, and other pollinators. Some noteworthy plants in our sale:

Gomphrena (*Gomphrena globosa*), the lollipop plant. A new selection for us this year, gomphrenas showcase bright lollipop-shaped blooms all summer long. We've chosen "Pinata," which provides rose-colored interest and, with its unusual rounded shape, will add contrast to other flower blooms. It's a sun lover that is both drought-tolerant and heat-resistant. It grows 12 to 24 feet tall.

Iresine (*Iresine*; yes, the Latin and common names are the same), or bloodleaf plant. Remember to add foliage plants to your flowerbeds, to better accent the lushness of your garden's blossoms. With its glossy red leaves, Iresine is one selection that will add both foliage and color interest to the garden. A versatile plant, it grows well in both sun and shade, reaching a height of 18 to 30 inches. It also thrives as a houseplant.

Torenia (*Torenia* species), the wishbone plant. This is a wonderfully prolific, bushy vine that does well in shady areas. It is a long-blooming plant that will provide color into the fall. While torenias will not yet be in bloom at the plant sale, they will soon provide an impressive quantity of lovely blue, trumpet-shaped flowers.



Not sure what to plant this year? Then come talk to a Frederick County Master Gardeners at their annual plant sale on Saturday, April 27 at the Frederick Fairgrounds and get some knowledgeable tips and yes, plants at the same time.

Perennials

Are you interested in creating an easy-to-care-for garden that will benefit the environment? Perennial plants return to the garden year after year, increasing over time to form large clumps that crowd out weeds and improve the soil. We expect to have 50 different species of perennial plants at this year's sale.

Some must-haves you'll want to consider:

- Penstemon, or beardtongue, forms spikes of bell-shaped flowers in late spring; the white variety is often about three feet tall; lavender about 18 inches. It loves the sun and, once established, will tolerate both dry conditions and occasional flooding.
- Mountain Mint, a must for a pollinator garden, has tiny pink flowers that attract a wide variety of insects. The foliage, which reaches a height of about 3 feet at maturity, appears to have been dusted with powdered sugar and has a minty fragrance.

- Phlox is a remarkably versatile garden plant, with varieties that bloom in spring or summer, are short or tall, and can prefer either sun or partial shade. We expect to have white, blue, purple, and pink shades available.

We will also have a limited number of ferns, sedges, and ornamental grasses. Most of the perennial plants at the sale are native to our area. They have adapted to our climate and soil, and as a result will require little supplemental watering once established.

Herbs

Small seed-bearing plants, herbs have leaves that are typically used for culinary, medicinal, aromatic and sometimes-spiritual purposes. These plants, easily grown in containers or garden plots, add beauty and fragrance to any location you choose. In our region, many herbs are annuals, surviving only one season. A few herbs, such as bay, rosemary, thyme, lavender, and sage,

are usually hardy enough to survive our winters if sheltered or brought inside.

This year's plant sale features more than 50 varieties of herbs, offering both traditional herb favorites, as well as new and exciting varieties. Some of the all-time favorites to be featured at the plant sale include:

- Basil (*Ocimum basilicum*)
- Lavender (*Lanvandula*)
- Oregano (*Origanum vulgare*)
- Rosemary (*Salvia rosmarinus*)
- Sage (*Salvia officinalis*)
- Thyme (*Thymus*)

For more information about growing, preserving, and enjoying herbs, visit www.extension.umd.edu/resources.

Vegetables

In addition to a large assortment of both spring and summer crop seedlings in various sizes, our sale will feature a variety of heirloom tomatoes. Heirloom tomatoes refer to "older, open-pollinated cultivars" grown for unique eating quality, color, and shape, and genetic preservation. Some have "potato leaf" foliage. They can be found through seed exchanges and most seed catalogs, according to the University of Maryland extension service Home and Garden web site. Other experts note that to be considered "heirloom" quality, generations of plants must have been unchanged for at least 40 years.

We will also have another relatively new grape tomato variety—Valentine Tomato. This variety provides high yields, sweet fruit, and is an early producer! Please note that several of the heirloom and patio varieties of tomatoes and peppers sold out in the first 90 minutes of the sale last year, so it's good to be an early bird. Our seedlings will be available in various sizes, including six-packs, 4-inch pots, and 1-gallon pots.

Our wide assortment of vegetables will include:

- Spring crops—Lettuce, kale, cabbage, and spinach. April is a great time to plant all of these seedlings outside in your

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THE MASTER GARDENER

Small Town Gardener

Nobody does spring like bluebells

Marianne Willburn

The signs of spring right now are real, but can feel illusory when the wind begins to gust or the sun is covered by a passing cloud.

But assuming that the earth has not fundamentally changed its course, we should be standing at the beginning of something wonderful in the Northern Hemisphere. And that is something to be grateful for in the midst of other worries.

Remember that the outside world can have a transformative effect on our mood. Whether you have a tiny patio or a large back garden, I urge you to take your paperwork outside - take a drink outside - take your spouse outside --- and enjoy it. Even in a tiny apartment or townhome you can sit near the window and observe the season unfolding below.

With increased sunlight, warmth and day length, April is traditionally the month when non-gardeners start thinking about gardening. The majority stop thinking about it some-

where in July, but a there are always a few that discover a pastime that will stay with them the rest of their lives.

This year, with the world extremely concerned about war, inflation, and the economy in general, there is even more interest in growing food and being outdoors; in the past four years, tens of millions of new gardeners have been welcomed into the green fold.

There's a ton of advice out there for them -- and for us -- from social media influencers to youtube sensations, but such diversions are often so diverting, we end up doing more scrolling and watching than actually gardening.

If you're new and feeling overwhelmed by all the advice, not to mention device-addicted, and don't know where to start, my top two tips are:

- 1) Grow vegetables and herbs that you enjoy; and,
- 2) Do yourself a very big favor and start small. You will get the most from a garden that doesn't exhaust you.

However, if you've moved on from establishing a veg plot and are feeling comfortable with your workload and ready to expand -- how about

giving your garden some early spring elegance and trying one of our glorious native ephemeral plants, the Virginia bluebell (*Mertensia virginica*)?

April is a great time to plant them, particularly right after seeing them in the woods or on a riverside walk (or on Instagram), when your jealousy can fuel your desire to get outside and plant in the cold April winds.

Like epimedium, this is a plant which is unlikely to ever be featured in the Big Box stores. When you see it in your independent garden center, grab it, and add a little bit of ephemeral beauty to your woodland or shade garden for next spring.

You are much more likely to find it from reputable online sources that specialize in native plants however. If planting from an online source, make sure that you get them into the soil as quickly as possible, as they do not take kindly to drying out.

The common name "Bluebell" refers to many species all over the world (which is why botanical names are so useful); but English, Spanish or Texas bluebells have nothing on these silky sophisticates. Our bluebell pushes up through woodland leaf litter in mid-to-late March in my garden, blooming in late March to early April (depending on the weather), and slowly forms large clumps that will in turn, seed into the soil nearby.

The nodding, light blue clusters of flowers held above the ovate leaves begin by budding pink, and have an iridescence about them which is captivating. Sometimes you'll come across a rogue all-pink "blue"bell. The blooms are not harmed by freezes, but if Mother Nature turns the heat up high, you're likely to fry those ephemeral blooms.

After blooming, *Mertensia* foliage extends a little taller, and then slowly dies back to the woodland floor, storing that energy into a tuber.

Virginia bluebells appreciate a soft, fertile soil in deciduous woodlands or winter sunny garden beds with average moisture. Use lots of leaf compost when planting if your soil is heavy. The tubers can be planted about 2 inches below the soil in late winter or early spring (or any time you find them at a garden center!)

They are a seasonal treat, and to be cherished. But then, so is so much of what we are experiencing at this glorious time of year. Enjoy!

Marianne is the author of *Big Dreams, Small Garden*. You can read more at www.smalltowngardener.com.

spring garden. They are cool weather crops that will thrive this time of year.

- Vines—Zucchini, cucumber, and squash. Zucchini came from Mesoamerica, while cucumber was first cultivated in India. Squash is one of the original North American foods. Vining crops can be eaten raw, roasted, steamed, baked, and in soups or stews.
- Summer crops—Tomatoes, peppers, and melons. Although Mayan in origin, tomatoes can now be found in recipes around the world. Chili peppers are also a New World crop, originating in South America. Melons were first cultivated in Southwest

Asia but are now enjoyed around the world.

Flea Market

Come see what treasures we have for you at one of the most popular booths at our plant sale—our garden-themed flea market. Who doesn't love finding a good bargain at a yard sale? What will you spot—a big wicker picnic basket, vases, a brand-new garden tool belt, or a stainless steel countertop compost collector? Add whimsy to your garden with a unique array of pots, sculpture and other decorative items, including bees and butterflies, and even a ladybug in our jewelry section.

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

Frederick County Master Gardeners April Seminars

April 13: "Keystone Plants in a Pollinator Garden" Find out what native plants help our native birds, butterflies and other pollinators. Discover native alternatives that are beneficial and beautiful.

April 20: "Planting the Spring Vegetable Garden" Growing potatoes, broccoli, onions, and peas requires early planning. Learn what to plant and when to start planting spring vegetables, including what techniques work best in small

or limited spaces. Find out how row covers and mulching can increase your success.

All seminars are free unless otherwise stated. Seminars are held at the University of Maryland Extension office at 330 Montevue Lane, (off Rosemont Avenue) in Frederick, from 10 to noon.

For more information and sign-up links, visit the Events section of the Frederick County Master Gardeners website or call the extension office at 301-600-1595.

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PETS

I see you. Yes, you.

Jennifer Vanderau
Cumberland Valley Animal Shelter

The person who puts the food out for me every night. The person who somehow, through human wizardry, makes that water dish never freeze, even when the temperature gets cold. It still amazes me what those of you who walk on two legs are capable of doing.

It almost makes me believe in magic. Almost.

As a cat who's been roaming the neighborhood since I was a kitten, it's kind of tough to believe in anything, but you make me wonder.

I know you're the one who trapped me a year ago and took me to get neutered and shots. I didn't forgive you for a long while after that, but I mean, I am a dude. Come on. And those shots hurt! Plus, I was pretty scared.

But I realize what you did for me. I've seen a lot of cats in my daily wanderings that are sick and getting sicker. I somehow seem to not really catch anything and I know it's because you gave me vaccinations. I'm also not one to chase the ladies, as I've heard it described.

That has helped keep me safe, too. I watch you in your house at the kitchen sink. I see when you get the food together for those of us outside.

I know there are other cats in your house and you pick them up and snuggle them and it looks like it's an amazing moment.

I'll never be that. I've been on the streets too long. I've seen too much, experienced too much hatred at the hands of humans.

You are somehow different from the others, but I just can't be sure. I've known too many cats who took the chance on someone, only to find out the incredibly hard way that they shouldn't have. Trust is a commodity I don't have the strength to embrace.

I appreciate the box you put out for me. How does that blanket stay warm? I noticed it's plugged into the wall with a cord. That must have something to do with it.

Again, you two-legged folks really are pretty smart when you want to be. That warmth really helps when the nights get cold.

I know I'll never be the kind of cat that you enjoy – the ones who

purr and feel confident in your arms. Sometimes it makes me sad, but over the years I've learned the hard way to own who I am.

I'll never really be enough. I've kind of known this since I was born. I'm not all that pretty. My fur won't grace the cover of a magazine and my eyes aren't all that piercing or memorable. I'm just a brown tabby and there are a lot of us in this world. I'm nothing special and never will be.

I know this.

But I also see you. I see the kindness in your face when I take the chance to make eye contact. I see how every night you put food out – no matter the weather. You have that coat you wear when it's raining and the boots that keep your feet dry.

I see you. I know you want to help us, the cats that live outside. I know you want to help the cats that get to live inside, too, and that's what makes you different from the others. It's me who can't make that step to trust.

It's me who's lacking because I never get close enough for you to touch me. It's really not you. I just can't let my guard down. I can't do it.

Somehow I sense that you're okay with that.

Because through all my days and nights of worry and cold and never being sure if a mean person or out of control animal will hurt me, I see you.

I see your smiles. I see your slow movements. I see your understanding.

And when it's lonely, I take a deep breath and know in my heart that I have one friend.

Because I see you. And you make me want to believe...

Jennifer Vanderau is the Publications and Promotions Consultant 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 a thrift store in Chambersburg. Help support the animals at the shelter by donating to or shopping at the store.



Mr. Jones is a 4-year-old, happy guy with a gorgeous coat. Just look at that face! Because of his longer hair, he will need to be regularly brushed to keep from getting matted. Mr. Jones is going to make someone a wonderful companion. Could that be you?



Lt. Dan was brought into the shelter after being sighted running around the area for about a week. Lt. Dan is a sweet guy that loves attention and enjoys being with people. He does have a high chase drive with cats, so a home without cats would be best for Dan. He knows sit and lie down. Dan tested positive for Lyme Disease and is currently on antibiotics. He will have to meet all family members in the home. Do you have the right spot for this cute boy?



Sky is a 7-year-old terrier mix who came into the shelter as a stray, so we don't have a lot of information about her, but we do know that she is one loving girl! Sky loves attention and enjoys getting all the pets and rubs she can! She is the sweetest girl you will ever meet! Sky did test positive for Lyme and Anaplasmosis which are both tick borne diseases and is currently on medication to treat them. She also had a mammary tumor removed during her spay surgery, which was found to be benign. Because we don't have any past history on Sky, an age restriction for children may apply. Be sure to discuss this with shelter staff. Sky would love to find her forever home!



Mouse came into the shelter as a stray and she is a petite and sweet girl who is around 2 years old. She's a terrier mix who loves attention and being around people. She would do best in a home without other dogs or cats. Mouse is a happy girl that does sometimes jump up when she is excited. Because of that, she may be too much for small children, so an age restriction for children in the home may apply. Please discuss this with shelter staff. Do you have the right spot for Mouse?

For more information about Mr Jones, Lt. Dan, Sky, or Mouse 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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Before humans die, they write their last Will & Testament, give their home & all they have, to those they leave behind. If, with my paws, I could do the same, this is what I'd ask...

To a poor and lonely stray I'd give:

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

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

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

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

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

-- Author Unknown

petco foundation

Helen

Bethany Davidson
Frederick County Animal Shelter



With the arrival of Spring, Frederick County Animal Control's cat floor is beginning to fill with new residents. There are cats with black coats and grey coats. We've got torties and tabbies. But there's one cat that stands out in this crowd, Helen. With her snow-white coat, pink nose and of course those sparkling eyes (one blue and one green) gazing back at you, Helen is quite the looker. And all these things that make Helen so beautiful are also indicators of her most special quality. Helen is deaf.

Having two different colored eyes is a condition called heterochromia which occurs in humans and a few other animal species in addition to cats. Heterochromia is most common in cats with white coats and cats with both traits are likely deaf. In fact, according to the Cornell Feline Health Center, researchers have found that up to 40% of cats with one blue eye are deaf.

While there may be potential adopters out there worried that Helen may

require more care than they can give, the reality is that caring for a deaf cat is essentially the same as caring for their hearing counterparts with a few easy to manage differences. First, and most importantly, deaf cats must be indoor only. They cannot hear potential dangers such as traffic or other animals. Second, these guys can startle more easily so we want to make sure they are aware of us humans before we engage.

This means using visual cues and vibrations to get their attention before going in for those pets. If a cat is awake, light can be a great tool to get their attention. Flashing a light will cause

them to look around and allow them to see you. Some organizations even recommend using a laser pointer to help move your cat around so they can see you. Here at FCAC, we encourage everyone to make sure Helen sees you and is tracking you before opening the cage and interacting. When cats are asleep, vibrations might be a better way to alert them to your presence. Try stomping your feet or clapping your hands loudly. Because she is more likely to be startled, we have recommended Helen for homes without small children.

Initially, Helen gives a little hiss when people approach, but you'll notice when you visit the cat floor that staff and volunteers aren't deterred by that. She is a favorite. Given her history a deaf stray is understandable that she's a little hyper vigilant at first, but once you start interacting with Helen, you'll quickly forgive her for that first impression. Helen is an incredibly affectionate senior at 7-8 years old. Once you start petting her, she can't get enough. She leans in and shows you all her favorite places and purrs loudly letting you know how happy she is.

But Helen isn't just about cuddles. She's no couch potato. She really likes to play. Toy mice and strings are her go to but put a little cat nip on anything and that'll be her favorite toy for the moment. As she's becoming more comfortable in her surroundings, she's also becoming more curious.

If you think Helen might be a great addition your home and family, but have questions about caring for a deaf feline our staff will be happy to discuss it with you. Call us at 301-600-1546 and we can set up a time for you to talk to our staff veterinarian or another member of our medical team.



Funyun was brought to the shelter by a Good Samaritan and found as a stray on Thomas Johnson Dr. He was not wearing a collar, nor was he microchipped. Funyun is friendly, doesn't mind being picked up and enjoys sitting in a lap. The shelter offers pet microchipping every Wednesday from 10am-3pm, the fee is \$20.



Prior to arriving at the shelter, Demi was being trained to be a service dog. She is extremely intelligent and knows approximately ten different commands. So why is she at the shelter? Demi has anxiety; therefore, she was unable to complete the training to become a certified service dog. She hopes to find a family that can help her work through her anxiety and provide her daily exercise as well as mental stimulation.



Rex needs your help! He is heartworm positive and needs an adopter that is willing to see his treatment through until the end. Found as stray on February 5, not much is known about his past. For information on heartworms in pets, please visit www.heartworm-society.org.



Luna was adopted from the shelter in May 2023 but returned in February because her new owner was moving and could not take her along. At four-years-old, Luna has so much to offer. Young kids startle Luna, so her ideal home has teenagers or older.

For more information about Funyun, Demi, Rex, or Luna, 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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DEMOCRAT FOR U.S. SENATE
DAVID TRONE

In April, we celebrate Second Chance Month. It's an opportunity to recognize the values that make our democracy work. Without second chances, I wouldn't be where I am today.

My Business, A Second Chance

When I was first growing my former company, a corrupt Attorney General in Pennsylvania didn't like that I was disrupting the status quo. So he had me, my wife, and my brother arrested. It would have prohibited me from operating my business. I beat those false allegations because of a good education, a good lawyer, and the color of my skin. But today, people of color or of less means and education don't get second chances, and that's a tragedy.

My Family, A Second Chance

When I was young, my father moved our family to a farm. We grew up cleaning hog pens and selling eggs. But my Dad's alcoholism caught up to him. And when I was 28, we lost everything. I started my business to keep my family afloat and help make ends meet. The business gave me a second chance to succeed. It was at that moment I realized my Dad needed a second chance, too. I worked with him tirelessly to get him through 30-day programs and to stay sober — and he got a second chance to work.

Beating Cancer, A Second Chance

When I decided to enter public service, I did it because our government has failed so many Marylanders by not acting on issues that would allow people to live healthy and successful lives. Shortly before the primary election in 2018, I was diagnosed with cancer. Of all the challenges I've faced, this one felt out of my control. I turned to the experts at Johns Hopkins. Today, I am 6 years cancer free. Because of my incredible team of nurses and physicians, I was given a second chance at life. I don't take it for granted.

Giving Marylanders Who Need It A Second Chance

Throughout my time in public service, I've worked to make second chances more attainable for every Marylander. I'm incredibly proud that we were able to pass a bill providing Pell Grants to incarcerated individuals — strengthening their chances of getting a good education, a good job, and staying out of prison. I'm proud that we passed 26 bills into law last Congress tackling the challenges of addiction and mental health. And I'm proud to be an advocate for medical research to prevent the illnesses that take the lives of our friends, family and neighbors year after year. I believe that nobody should be defined by their worst moments, and everyone deserves a second chance. It's one of the reasons I'm running to represent you in the U.S. Senate.



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Woodsboro-Walkersville NEWS-JOURNAL SECTION 2

Rachael Sheehan Namdar – making a difference...

Claire Doll
Class of 2024

One edit at a time...

You're reading the local paper. It's the first of the month and you hold the pages in between your fingers, thumbing through columns of gardening and animals, when you spot it. It's unmistakable, clear as day, frozen in the ink printed before you: a typo. A misspelled word, or a comma splice, or an uncapitalized proper noun. You think to yourself: What do I do?

Meet Rachael Sheehan Namdar, the Woodsboro-Walkersville News-Journal's very own (and new) grammarian! Rachael became involved in the News-Journal when she spotted grammar mistakes in our paper. "When I initially saw those first typos, I kind of thought like most people I presume, which is to notice but not take action," says Rachael. "I also thought twice about reaching out, because how random and rude am I to contact this paper wagging my finger trying to correct them?" However, after kindly emailing Executive Editor Mike Hillman and offering corrections, Rachael was recruited to proofread more articles. "I ended up being part of this cool group of community members that produces our town journal," she says. Rachael now reviews articles for grammar errors before the paper gets published and possesses the role of English Editor for both publications.

"I have a technical mind, and I'm a stickler for detail," says Rachael, who lives in Walkersville and receives the Woodsboro-Walkersville News-Journal monthly. For a month and a half, she has been the proofreader behind articles, correcting common mistakes—when should "town" be considered a proper noun? Is an organization referred to as "it" or "they?" Rachael fits into our staff beautifully and provides an extra set of eyes to catch errors that commonly go unseen.

Rachael's grammatical mind most definitely comes from her background in, not English or writing, but STEM. "I used to work in vaccine research," she says. Rachael graduated from the University of Maryland with a degree in Microbiology and focused her work on combating bio-terrorism and vaccine development. She sways towards math and logistics over creativity and refers to herself as a "visual learner."

She enjoys the "crossovers" that occur when math and English overlap. Rachael thinks in "black and white" and notes that her background in technical research and science helps her abide by the precise rules of English and writing; she easily navigates the "right" and "wrong" with words and sentences.

"My grandma was very well-spoken and would always correct me,"

says Rachael, who used to read a lot when she was younger and would even read the dictionary in daycare. Her grandmother would often correct her on the difference of "lay" versus "lie"; "lay" is used when placing an object down, and "lie" is to be in a flat position.

Rachael also feels that it is important to contribute to her town's paper. The locally run Woodsboro-Walkersville News-Journal is "nostalgic and all in one place," she says. "It builds a sense of community." Compared to getting news online where everything is at your fingertips, local journalism promotes person-to-person interaction and allows for opportunities like Rachael's to occur.

Our staff is full of editors who, in some way or another, contribute to our surrounding communities. Katie Wherley, our 'Does It Make Sense' Editor (her actual title!), is also a horse trainer/riding instructor and knows Mike Hillman from their days riding horses together. Her involvement as Mike's current coach—yes, after 45 years of competing, he still takes lessons—eventually led to her role as an editor for the News-Journal.

Mike Hillman says, "As the story goes, I got my initial exposure to writing 30 years ago by doing a monthly 'eventing' column for a Maryland equine publication called The Equiry." While Mike and Katie never knew each other, they passed by one another. "I wanted to write about kids who earned their first 5th place ribbon—and as Katie was always taking home blue ribbons, I never paid any attention to her," he says.

Producing one paper a month was challenging enough, but two papers forced Mike almost have to choose between his love of riding and the papers—fortunately he had Katie to turn to—someone he could trust implicitly. They got to talking during a lesson about how Mike hadn't had time to ride due to his commitment to the papers and Katie offered to help.

"At first, I mostly proofread, catching the typos, missed words, and repeated words," she says. "My job [now] is to read the articles and to not only make sure they flow from beginning to end, but to make sure an outsider can understand their purpose and the stories being told." Katie strives to make the information in the articles communicate clearly to the readers. Katie lives in southern Frederick County, just outside the communities and towns covered by the papers, so she can provide a unique perspective to the clarity of each article.

Another one of our top-notch staff members is Jamie Kahl, who serves as the news-reporter for Walkersville, Woodsboro and Taneytown. Jamie is another equine connection to Mike but in this case Mike was the teacher. Jamie struggled with her horse and

lacked support from instructors, "it wasn't until Mike Hillman (and his perfect horse, Worf), were willing to take me back to the basics and make sure I was solid before progressing further, that I was able to blossom," says Jamie.

Writing has been a similar journey for Jamie as well. When Mike needed a reliable individual to watch, report, and write about what was going on in local planning commission meetings, "it meant Mike had to teach me everything from the beginning again, just like the 15-year-old me," she says. Jamie's job with the News-Journal allows her to not only provide financially for her family, but also dedicate herself to a meaningful community cause.

One opportunity leads to another, it seems, as Rachael's readiness to help edit the paper led to an unexpected bond between her daughter, Abby, and our paper's own, Editor Mike Hillman. Abby loves horseback riding and wanted to resume taking lessons, but it was too costly for her parents to continue. While Mike is our Editor, but he is also an Olympic trained rider who just happens to have a fully functional stable. After a quick conversation between Rachael and Mike, an unlikely pairing was made, and he has begun teaching Abby on a weekly basis.

Mike compares the editing process of the papers to preparing for a horse-riding event. "You work your butt off to get ready, then you have one day to get it right, then you start it all



One of the unplanned benefits of Rachael speaking up about grammatical errors is that her daughter, Abby, now has a new best friend named Wesley.

over again for the next event," he says. With each article, Katie looks at it first for readability, our Mount St. Mary's staff checks it for English, and Rachael finally reviews the article for grammar. Mount students meet with Mike once a month to generate prompts, discuss articles, and refine skills. All edits are done via email and during the latter half of the month in preparation for the first of each new month. Meanwhile, our reporters like Jamie attend town meetings and planning commissions to find the material worth reporting. Our strategic and precise process depends on the hard work and abilities of each staff member.

"To be honest, it's that bond we have that allows me to trust them implicitly," says Mike Hillman.

Regardless of your level of riding, the horse world breeds hard work and pride of accomplishment, so it's no surprise to Mike that the majority of his staff have a connection to horses.

Rachael Sheehan Namdar's story is just one that shows how the communities of Woodsboro, Walkersville, Thurmont & Emmitsburg are tight-knit and willing to commit to important matters. We are super thankful for Rachel, Katie, Jamie, Michael, and the rest of our staff for being so willing to better our publication and contribute to the communities! To learn more about how you can serve and contribute to the Woodsboro-Walkersville News-Journal, email Editor Mike Hillman at editor@emmitsburg.com.



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HISTORY

Woodsboro Remembers

Francis Meehan Smith

Reminiscences Changes

Through the past two hundred years the buildings in Woodsboro have often times changed hands frequently. As a consequence, few structures remain in their original state. New occupants inevitably sought to convert the premises to meet family and business needs, adding or removing as deemed necessary or convenient.

Originally each home no doubt had a business housed on the property as the early residents sought out a trade, craft, or service for their livelihood. The village was mainly self sufficient in goods and services, with the exception of some raw materials such as metals, salt, sugar, and molasses. All other products were produced and crafted locally.

Two of the town's older citizens recall some of the former occupants and businesses of many locations in town.

Raleigh Winebrenner remembers the mill operated by Albert Ecker near the Railroad Station. Next to the mill the Holbrunner brothers made flour barrels. On the town

side of the station was the printing establishment of the Banner of Liberty operated by Harry Lewis who employed Charlotte Donsife and Marion Eichelberger. Later the business moved to a new building down the alley from the Lutheran Church. Mr Lewis later committed suicide by hanging himself near the canning factory. The paper was then published by Augustus Clem.

On the top of Statlon Hill, on the north, was the stone building used first by the Methodist Church and later as a schoolhouse. Also there were lime burning kilns on the eastern slope of the hill

At the foot of the hill in the fork of the road was a large stone building (Slagle's Inn), which was destroyed by fire in the early 1900's.

Across the road on the east side of Main Street was the tombstone business of John Lough. Charles Anders operated the National Hotel in the building now owned by Dan the Barber (Lot Number 2).

On down the street, west side. George and Marshall Stimmel operated a confectionery store. Next was the Drug Store of Dr. George Smith.

The Bank Building was the site of a wooden structure where John New-

man had a store. Jacob Adams had an undertaker's establishment on Lot Number 19.

At the corner of Libertytown and Frederick Road (Routes 550 and 194) stood an old log house which was torn down when Otho Donsife and Son. Robert built their blacksmith shop.

A dry goods store was run by Kate Stimmel on Lot Number 33 and an undertaker's business by Mr. and Mrs. Sharets on Lot Number 32.

Dr. Wager and later Dr. Kable had offices in the brick building on the northeast corner of Elizabeth and Frederick Streets, now the home of Mrs. Lillian Bair.

Dr. G.F. Smith built a new home where three homes once stood: one a bakery operated by Mr. Wisotzky, one a barbershop, and one an ice cream parlor.

Joseph Shank's residence was on the northeast corner of Frederick and Dorcus (First) Alley where he owned and operated a general store. The Albert's had a coach shop on the southwest corner of Parsonage Alley and Second Street.

Mr. Winebrenner also remembers the old Universalist Church building, later Methodist, which was later used as an entertainment hall before it was torn down.

The graveyard back of the school originally belonged to the Universalist

Church and until the mid-Twentieth Century was kept in good condition by Melvin Anders, a descendant of Joseph Wood through the Harlan family.

John William Eyer, aged ninety-eight, recalls the names of the residents of Woodsboro. Some of the homes are known to him by the name of people who lived there about 1950.

At the north end of town . . .

Glenn Stoilemeyer's stone house was built by Jessie Giselman.

Slagle's Inn and Livery Stables where George Washington stayed at night stood where the Memorial stands.

Mr. Highhouse's residence was built in 1912 by Dr. C. A. Stultz.

The Parsonage was built by Fipps and was sold to the Woodsboro Lutheran Church.

Mrs. Geisber's residence was built by Mr. C. M. Anders.

Mrs. Winebrenner's residence belonged to Mr. George Winebrenner, a tinner.

The National Hotel was owned by Moses Anders. The brick end was built out of the bricks from the Universalist Church when it was torn down.

The Stimmel residence was the old Stimmel saloon, the place where a man rode his horse up to the bar to get a drink of whiskey.

The Lee Winebrenner residence was owned by James Wood who operated a tailor shop.

The Ward Smith residence was owned by Dr. Hammond: the middle part was used as a saloon operated by Gibson Smith. It later became a drug store.

The H.C. Dorcus store was owned by E.M. Gilbert, coach maker.

The Barber Long residence was owned by the Bakers: it was used as a post office and barber shop.

The W.R. Smith residence was owned by George Shank and was a general merchandise and tinner shop.

The Bank Building replaced one owned by J.M. Newman, which was used as a general store.

The Allen and Ward Smith residence and store was owned by Frank Saylor, Aaron Beck used painter, and part of the building for a saddlery shop.

The Mabel Smith property was owned by Caroline Saylor.

The vacant lot was the old stone blacksmith shop operated by J. McCoskrey in 1860 and later by the Donsife brothers.

The Carroll Wickless residence was owned by Hull Bowen: it was a log

house, weather boarded and used as a saddlery shop. The dwelling was rebuilt by William Smith.

The Allen Smith residence was built by Allen Smith.

The J. W. Eyer residence was owned by the Flemmings. It is a log house weather boarded, and a large tinner shop which stood in the yard burned down in 1898.

The Lamar Barrick residence was owned by George Shank; it is a log house weather boarded.

The William Schwarber home was built by Elmer Birely.

The Lutheran Church was built in 1860 and rebuilt in 1914.

The Charles Lutz residence was a log house weather boarded. It was torn down and the lot belongs to the Lutheran Church and is used as a lawn. Miss.

Grace Stull, who lived there for many years, was a seamstress.

The Charles Hahn residence was owned by Oliver Harmis.

The Cramer Powell residence was owned by Jacob Adams, undertaker and cabinetmaker.

The Paul Douglas residence was owned by William Smith.

The Robert Donsife residence was owned by Wilson Carmack.

Mrs. Boller's home was the farmhouse of Mrs. Eva Shank.

The William Adams residence is built on the ground where the old tanning yard stood.

On east Main Street at the north end of town . . .

Jacob Feiser's residence was owned by Slagle's Inn; one of the Inn's livery stables stood there. The last slave in Woodsboro lived with the Slagles.

The Dorcus residence was built by Sammy Ports for a bakery shop.

Miriam Bowers residence was built by the M.P. Church and then sold to the Church of God.

Louise Kline's residence was built by John Lough who ran a stone cutting shop and made memorials.

Amos Arnold's residence was owned by William Gilbert who had a blacksmith shop in the rear.

The Dorcus residence was owned by George Gilbert who was a shoemaker.

Edgar Hahn's residence was owned by Mrs. Peter Fogle.

Mrs. Wile's residence was owned by J.M. Holbrunner who ran a cooper shop.

continued next month

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FREDERICK COUNTY HISTORY

From John Ashbury's... And All Our Yesterdays: A Chronicle of Frederick County

April 4

On April 4, 1992, officials in the Town of Walkersville re-enacted the signing of the town's charter by Governor Frank Brown on the 100th anniversary of that action.

In the second year of President James Buchanan's term in office, the son of Francis Scott Key was murdered on the street in front of the White House.

Like his father, Francis, Philip Barton Key was the United States Attorney for the District of Columbia. Having just become a widower, Key was a dashing man about town when, at the Inaugural Ball for President Buchanan in 1857, New York Congressman Daniel Sickles introduced Key to his young wife Teresa.

During most of the next year, Key and Teresa Sickles developed a "close" relationship. Sickles was frequently busy with government business and Key escorted his wife to numerous social functions.

The pair became the talk of Washington, and when confronted by Sickles, Key denied everything.

Sickles accepted the disavowal. But Key had rented a large house just two blocks from the Sickles residence on Lafayette Square, for his liaisons with Mrs. Sickles.

Sickles himself was finally convinced that indeed his wife was having an affair with Key. On February 27, 1859, the morning after Sickles forced Teresa to write a full confession, Key made the mistake of being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

As was his usual custom, he signaled Mrs. Sickles from across Lafayette Square with a white handkerchief. Sickles saw him and dashed out of the house with gun in hand.

"Key, you scoundrel," he yelled. "You have dishonored my bed - you must die." The first shot missed. The second struck home and Key fell into the street. Sickles fired at least twice more, according to witnesses, and Key died.

On April 4, 1859, Sickles' trial for the murder began. However, the jury

returned a not guilty verdict. Sickles was the first defendant in the history of American jurisprudence to use the temporary insanity plea.

Sickles later became a Civil War general and was wounded at Gettysburg. His presidential ambition, however, were dashed forever because of the indiscretions of his wife and his own violent temper.

April 11

Newspapermen seldom reach the pinnacle of their ambition, but Louis Baughman, who was born in Frederick on April 11, 1845, came as close as any.

He was the son of the editor of The Citizen, one of Frederick's most influential newspapers for many years. His father purchased the paper in 1844, espousing the Southern cause. His newspaper was suppressed by the Union military and was even banned from the mail. He and his family were arrested and sent beyond Federal lines. He escaped to Richmond where he remained until after the war.

When he died in 1872, he left the newspaper to his three sons, William, Victor and Charles. Victor agreed with his father as to the righteousness of the Southern cause and when The Civil War broke out he immediately joined the Confederate Army and rose to the rank of General.

After the war, he went to New York to study law, but upon his father's death he returned to Frederick for good. He became involved in Democratic politics and was elected State Comptroller in 1887 and served two terms in that post.

In national politics he was quite popular and often entertained national figures at his home "Poplar Terrace," on Shookstown Road, just west of Baughman's Lane.

Perhaps one of his greatest assets as far as Frederick Countians were concerned was his insistence in every speech he made, no matter where it was, of the beauty, fertility, worth of its people and the sterling quality of the Democrats in Frederick County.

In his newspaper columns he sought civic improvement, including better country roads, the introduction of electricity into the county's almshouse, and public works to assist men in supporting their families. He raised thoroughbred horses and was quite an expert "four-in-hand driver."

His death on November 30, 1906, a scant 18 months after he announced that he would be a candidate for Maryland governor, brought praise for his life from The Sun, which said: "Few men in Maryland were better known socially, both within and outside the state, and few men of his generation of Marylanders have been so cordially liked by so great a circle of political friends."

April 18

On April 18, 1964, William Delaplaine, publisher of The Frederick News-Post, died suddenly at his home.

He was born January 22, 1891, the son of the founder of Frederick's first daily newspaper The News, William Delaplaine. In 1906 he graduated from Boys' High School and went on to get a degree from Washington and Lee University. While there he received numerous academic honors and was elected president of the student government association.

Upon graduation, he immediately he went to work for The Great Southern Printing and Manufacturing Company, which published The News. When his older brother Robert died in 1955, he took over and instituted many innovations that remain a primary feature of the newspaper.

Just a year after he joined the Great Southern, competition for the only daily newspaper in the county surfaced. The Frederick Post began publishing in direct contention as an afternoon paper. Within three years, The Post switched to being a morning publication. But the competition was still fierce.

On February 1, 1916, The Great Southern bought The Frederick Post and combined operations. In 1917.

"Mr. Will," as he was affectionately known throughout Frederick County, was also very interested in civic affairs. He was involved in numerous campaigns to raise funds for the Frederick City Hospital, The Y.M.C.A., and the two World War efforts. He was secretary and president of The Kiwanis Club of Frederick, and was a member of the Board of Trustees of Hood College.

Mr. Will was quiet and soft-spoken. He presented an imposing figure, tall and slender. He possessed a warm smile and was equally friendly with all he chanced to meet.

When he died unexpectedly on April 18, 1964, Frederick lost an exemplary citizen.

His only son, William Delaplaine III, was killed during World War II in a flying accident. The airport terminal at Frederick Municipal Airport is named in his son's honor.

April 25

On April 25, 1971, Frederick City Police Private Landis Wolfe shot and killed Charles Brown after Brown attempted to shot him several times on the parking lot behind the first block of East Patrick St.

It had been a routine shift for Wolfe in the early morning hours of April 25, 1971, when he was dispatched to the parking lot behind the first block of East Patrick St.

Officers in a squad car had observed someone in that area going from door to door at the rear of businesses attempting to gain entry. Their observation point did not give them vehicular access to the area, so they called Wolfe on his walkie-talkie and asked him to "check it out."

Wolfe immediately spotted the man and informed headquarters that he was approaching the individual who was seated in a car. When he got to the car, he asked for identification and the man got out of the car, pulled a gun and stuck it in Wolfe's stomach, saying "You better back off."

The man - later identified as Brown, a Frederick native who was living at the time in Baltimore - then pulled the trigger. The old Smith and Wesson pistol misfired.

Brown continued to threaten Wolfe and pulled the trigger again. Again the weapon misfired. Brown pulled the trigger a third time as he backed away from the officer. He then began running toward East Patrick Street.

Wolfe ordered him to halt and Brown turned toward Wolfe and pulled the trigger for a fourth time. Wolfe then threw his walkie-talkie at Brown. Brown's gun then actually fired, but the bullet missed Wolfe.

The policeman pulled his service revolver and fired at the fleeing Brown. Wolfe told his superior officers later that he thought he had missed Brown because Brown kept running up an alley to Patrick Street.

A few minutes later other officers found Brown slumped against the entrance to a store on North Market Street, bleeding from a wound in his chest. The United Fire Company ambulance was called and took Brown to Frederick Memorial Hospital where he died following several hours of surgery.

The investigation of the incident revealed that at least three cars parked on the lot had been entered by Brown. Brown was, at the time of his death on parole from an arson conviction.

To read past editions of Frederick County History, visit the History section of Walkersville.net.

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100 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH

April 4

April Fools Snow

There surely was an April Fool for everyone on Tuesday morning, April 1, when they open their doors and found snow.

The snow broke all local records for snow in April, it was also the heaviest fall of the season. Starting about 3:30 in the morning the snow fell steadily until nearly 6 o'clock in the evening, registering a depth of 9 and 3/4 inches. At times a slight wind blew, but not enough to drift roads or interfere with highways or railroad traffic. No damage was reported to telegraph or telephone lines.

The snow was a genuine April Fool's joke. It crept up from the Gulf States undercover of Spring like weather, but the temperature changed suddenly, white clouds covering the sky, and then the snow sit in. At 3:15 stars were shining and a 3:20 snow was blowing in every direction. It melted at first almost as fast as it fell, but after an hour or two a foundation was laid upon which nearly 10 inches of white finally rested. It was reported that from 10 to 12 inches of snow fell in the northern part of the county.

Unlike the snow and sleet of two weeks ago, which resulted in widespread damage, the snow this time was light and fluffy. In some sections the wind blew, however only a few county roads, which were in bad conditions before the storm, or interfered with

Treatment Of Horses

The farmer works with his horses, they are his partners, his faithful helpers in all work. With them, day after day, and year after year, he goes out to tend the fields, or to bring home the fruits of his labors, and so working with them season after season, he and they grow close to each other and come after a while to work together with a confidence and an understanding the few human partnerships ever know. The good farmer, and the good horse, come not only to understand, and to appreciate each other, but even to love each other.

I have seen big mares in the pastures, pick up their ears at the sound of their owners voice, and come up to be petted and then to wait contently around, grazing near him until he left the field.

I have seen the faithful and dependable old buggy horse with children all over his back, and two or three about and under his feet, walking with unwonted slowness and carefulness under and among them, and accepting with patient gentleness to all their pullings and poundings.

I have seen the heavy-loaded team, take the wagons up to long steep hill while the farmer walked behind, speaking, never a word to them, but leaving them stop and start it as they wished. I have seen the farmer, at the top of the hill, take time to lift the collars and rub the noses and stroke the necks of his sturdy helpers, while they took deep breaths, and waited for him to climb on the wagon that they might go again.

I have seen the strong farmer with tears in his eyes, bending over the horse he had raised from a colt, when that horse, grown aged and feeble, was waiting the end that must come to all that live.

Remembering these things I have seen, and remembering the days, when as a barefooted boy, I rode and drove and clamored about the big, fat, steady, mares with clear eyes and glossy coat, full of confidence that they would do what I ask, and yield to the slightest turning of my hand. I have known that there was a very real affection in all these relations, and that the partnership between the farmer and his horses is a partnership not only a fellow workers, but also a friends.

Anti-Japanese Immigration Bill Passes

The Senate is face-to-face with a momentous decisions - whether the Japanese exclusion policy passed by the House should be written in law. The house bill would exclude immigration of Japanese into the United States do to 'negative' effect they have in western states.

A protest by the Japanese government had no effect upon the vote of the house, which passed the immigration bill with its exclusion provision by a margin of more than 4 to 1.

The Senate answered Japanese Ambassador's protest against Japanese exclusion legislation today by voting 76 to 6 against recognition of a gentleman agreement with Japan on limiting immigration of all Asiatic peoples.

Republican leaders regarded the Japa-

nese letter as of veiled threat, and declare that in the face of that threat. They were blunt and outspoken in their declaration that immigration is a domestic question and outside power should have any effect on our decision to allow, or disallow, immigrants into the country.

April 11

Wet Weather

The continuous wet weather is greatly against the growing of wheat, especially in low or very low fields. It is feared that already some spots have been drowned out.

If there is to be a "dry spell", later, to equalize the present "wet spell", then we can look ahead for something to be concerned about; but, it never pays to invite worry.

Some remarkable stories are being told of mud holes in the unimproved roads. "Axle deep" is a common expression, while some hold that horses going in far that only their "ears stick out."

Walkersville Home Damaged By Fire

The large frame house on the Oyster Farm, near Walkersville, was badly damaged by fire Monday afternoon. A considerable portion of the furniture was also damaged. The loss is estimated at \$2,500, fully covered by insurance.

The fire was discovered by Mr. Palister about 2:30. He was near the barn when he noticed smoke issuing from the second floor. An investigation revealed that the flames were in the partition, having been started, it is thought, by defective electrical wiring. In a short time the fire spread from one room to another, and while the furniture was being removed an alarm of fire was sounded.

The alarm brought out the Walkersville Fire Department, which rendered good service, and soon had the fire under control. Water to douse the fire was drawn from a pond on the property. One end of a fire hose was placed in the pond, and the Walkersville engine pumper pumped the water to a hose truck near the house, which then sprayed the water onto the fire.

It was necessary to flood the home with water and both floors were badly damaged. Persons who arrived on scene early removed most of the furniture. The blaze attracted a large number of persons to the scene.

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Petition Filed For New Creagerstown Road

Frank Gaver has filed a petition to meet with County Commissioners on April 21, for the opening of a public road at least 30 feet wide in Creagerstown, beginning from the point where the lane leading from the building now occupied by Charles Kolo intersects the public road leading from Creagerstown to Rocky Ridge and running then in a westerly direction through the lands of Isaac Hankey, Frank Garver and Russell Hockensmith, connecting with the old Woodsboro and Creagerstown Pike at a point a short distance north of the lane used as an outlet from the John Ahalt farm and others.

April 18

Residents Disagree Over Proposed Creagerstown Road

As an aftermath of a long-standing dispute concerning A right away in Creagerstown a large delegation, consisting of two factions, appeared Monday afternoon before the Board of County Commissioners, relative to the establishing of a road, the necessity of which was disputed.

One faction presented a petition to the Commissioners asking that a road be built from the road leading from Creagerstown towards the Rocky Ridge Road. The opposing faction presented a petition opposing the construction of the road

The entire proceedings was the aftermath of lengthy on-going disputes concerning the right away through the property of Russell Hockensmith. It is understood that Frank Gaver has been having a dispute with Hockensmith concerning the right of way, and the road such as it was, was desired by one faction to settle the dispute it was stated. The Commissioners, however, made no promises, but suggest Garvey and Hockensmith get together and settle the dispute in their own way.

One Commissioner suggested the two 'duke it out' in public, with the winner getting his way. "Given how much trouble you've cause the community, I'm sure alot of your neighbors would enjoy seeing you 'knock the lights' out of each other."

Walkersville Church Dedication

The dedication of the enlarged and beautiful Walkersville Lutheran Church,

Spring has Spring!

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In the next five years we must put in 925,000 new telephones, gross, to meet the demands of the people of Pennsylvania for service.

Here is the point!

Telephone rates made in 1920, when the investment was \$177 per telephone in service, do not provide an adequate return today, when the investment is \$177 per telephone in service, and constantly increasing.

A reasonable increase in telephone rates is necessary in order to attract the tremendous amounts of new capital now required, not only to meet the demands for expansion, but also to keep up the existing service.

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Several of a series of advertisements regarding the present telephone rate program in Pennsylvania.

jail. While no charges have been placed against him he will be held for a few days to investigate his case.

It is stated that the man was observed walking up and down Woodsboro Pike aimlessly. Word was sent to the Sheriff who sent a Deputy Sheriff out to arrest the man and bring him to jail. At times he acted in a manner that indicated that his mind was impaired. He had very little to say except that he was from Boston.

He said he had been sleeping in barns at night and roaming about during the day. His clothing was filled with vermin and his condition and general appearance was very much uncapped. He did not say what brought him to Woodsboro, or how he got there. The Sheriff said he will keep him until the medical authorities can evaluate his mental state. In the meantime, they will get him cleaned up and fed.

Man Lays Down Plow And Kills Himself

Leaving his home early Wednesday morning, ostensibly to plow, William Shuff, about 51, of Johnsville, was found lying dead in a field about 9 o'clock, having committed suicide by shooting himself through the head.

When he left home Shuff left his family under the impression that he was going to a field to plow. He then borrowed a 12-gauge shotgun from a neighbor, telling him that he wanted to shoot a hog.

Shortly there after, Eugene Stottlemeyer, a son-in-law of Shuff, who farms a property adjacent to that of Shuff, heard a shot. Fearing that something was wrong, Stottlemeyer, investigated and found Shuff lying dead under an apple tree. A fork stick was lying beside the gun and as the load of shock tore its way through Shuff's chin and came out the top of his head, it was evident that Shuff had placed his chin on the muscle of the gun and used the fork stick to press the trigger.

According to reports, Shuff had been depressed. There was no idea, however, that he had contemplated suicide, it was stated. Shuff is survived by his wife and eight children, the youngest of which is about five or six years old.

Birth Control Loses At Women's Conference

Birth control, as a subject of study for the National League Of Women Voters was defeated by a vote of two-to-one on the floor of the convention after a spirited debate.

April 25

Father Drinking, Son Driving

Dr. John Winnfield, of Fairfield, was arrested last Sunday afternoon charge with allowing his son, James, age 13 years old, to drive his car without a license. They were brought to Woodsboro and taken before the Justice of the Peace, who fined the son \$10 for driving a car without an operators license.

The arrest was made after the police were informed that an automobile, driven in a reckless manner was headed towards Thumont. As the machine approach Creagerstown it was stopped. After being placed under arrest, Dr. Winnfield omitted that he had taken a few drinks and that was why the youngster was driving the car. Dr. Winfield and his son spent the night in the Woodsboro lockup before proceeding home to Fairfield.

For Public Playgrounds

An important meeting of the New Midway playground improvement association will be held in the New Midway Public School building on Friday evening. At this meeting Navin Smith, Principal of the school, will outline the program and tell what has been accomplished. A literary a musical program has been prepared for the occasion.

The playground movement was launched last Fall and considerable money has been raised for these purposes. The fact that public playgrounds have been an operation in Walkersville for some years and has been growing steadily in popularity has added stimulus to the movement at New Midway.

Firemen Save Home From Destruction

Fireman made a quick run of eight miles to Lewistown Monday afternoon, and saved the house, barn, garage and other buildings of Maxine Hill from destruction by fire. A bucket brigade, made up of neighbors, worked heroically and held the fire partly in check until the firemen arrive. By the use of chemicals and a line of hoses stretching from a fishpond in a field, the firemen soon extinguished the flames.

The fire was discovered shortly before 3:30 in the afternoon in the home by Mrs. Hill, who detected the odor of smoke. When she made an investigation she found the summer kitchen in flames and the fire quickly spread to the rear of the frame house. An alarm was sounded, which brought neighbors to the scene, who formed a bucket brigade.

At the same time word was telephoned to the Fire Company for help and the fireman immediately responded. When they arrive they found the bucket brigade at work on the burning building. Chemicals were soon applied and at the same time a line of hoses was laid from the fishpond, and in a short time a powerful stream was directed on the flames and the fire extinguished.

The barn, garage, several chicken houses, and other out buildings, group within 15 to 20 feet of the house and had the flames made much more progress the fire would have spread to the other buildings.

A fee of \$60 is charge by the fire company for responding to county fires. This money is used to pay the firemen for their service and if any remains is placed in a fund for repairs of the company's apparatus.

To read other articles related to 100 Years Ago this Month, visit the History section of

will be held Sunday, May 11 at a morning and evening service. A fine program is being arranged preliminary to the dedication and including the dedication itself. It will include some of the outstanding leaders, preachers, and educators in the Lutheran Church.

The old original church has undergone a complete renovation. To the east side of the church there has been added a Sunday school room, a new vestry room, a deeper chapel, and a new organ room. An entirely new front has been added, including a 50-foot bell tower. The new and enlarger building so artistically design makes a beautiful appearance and is a real credit to this community.

Latest Weather Forecast

The necessity of obtaining the latest weather forecast cannot be too strongly emphasized. In a climate where weather changes are as rapid as in Maryland, the entire outlook may change in a few hours. Forecasts are issued by the Weather Bureau every 12 hours. The morning forecast, issued about 10 a.m., is broadcast by many radio stations at noon or even before that hour. This is the forecast that appears in the afternoon edition of the newspapers. The evening forecast, issued at about 9:30 p.m., is broadcast about 10 p.m. on the same date.

Radio is an excellent way for farmers, fruit growers, and others living in rural districts to obtain the forecast, although it may be necessary for you to bring this matter to your nearest broadcast station, requesting that the weather forecast be sent out at stated intervals.

In Maryland nearly every County Agent, receives the morning forecast at about 10:30 a.m. and it may be obtained from his office by telephone immediately after that hour. In some towns the postmaster also receives the morning forecast soon after 10 and sends it out by the mail carrier. If, however, rule carriers leave the post office before 11 o'clock, this service cannot be arranged.

And some such service as this is not already established in your section, why not take the matter up with your County Agent or postmaster. A petition

to him from a number of farmers may bring results.

Serious Fire Adverted in Johnsville

What might have been a very serious fire occurred Wednesday afternoon when the two large engines of Thomas, Bennett & Hunter of Westminster, passed the farm of Vernon Grossnickle, near Johnsville. One of the engines threw sparks on a straw stack, setting it on fire.

Owing to the fact that Mr. Grossnickle was home and the crew of the engine being right on hand no doubt save the farm buildings from a total loss. Prompt service and water being in the barnyard saved Mr. Grossnickle from any damage to his house, as the fire was soon under control. A number of people gathered in a short time to help control the flames.

Vagrant Held At County Jail

A man, who gave his name as George Hailey, 74 years old, claiming to be from Boston, was arrested Wednesday afternoon by the Deputy Sheriff near Woodsboro and brought to the

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SCHOOL AND LIBRARY NEWS

April at the Walkersville Library

Bring on the sunshine, spring-time is here! If the April showers or seasonal allergies have you staying inside, you can still have a good time with your friends at the Walkersville Branch Library. There are always new things to learn, programs for the whole family, and of course, lots of good books to keep you entertained! Don't forget about all the wonderful online resources that you have free access to when you have a Frederick County Public Library card—thousands of streamable movies, TV shows and more.

Start your week off with a free yoga class on Monday, April 8 and 22 at 6. Led by instructors from Sol Yoga and designed for all agility levels, this is a great way to wind down and practice self-care on a Monday evening. Another gentle and adaptable form of exercise is Senior Fit Chair Yoga, which will take place on April 16 at 10am. Maybe you're looking for a group class that will really get you going on a weekend! If so, step into a free exercise program like Freedom BANG, a pre-choreographed fusion of boxing, HIIT, hip hop, world dance, optional weighted gloves and just a touch of attitude. There will be a wide range of intensity options to help you customize your work-

out to fit your needs. Freedom BANG classes will run on Saturday mornings at 10 in April.

Self-care takes all forms, one of which is Reiki, a healing art for the improvement of body, mind, and spirit, and used for promoting natural health on all levels. Come learn even more about Reiki from a Master Teacher and Practitioner on Sunday, April 7 from 1 to 2.

The much-anticipated solar eclipse will take place on Monday, April 8, and the Walkersville Branch Library yard is a great place to observe the partial eclipse! From 1:30 to 2, you can join us for fun eclipse themed activities to celebrate the celestial event. To learn more about the eclipse read the Astronomy column on page 32.

On Wednesdays at 10am in April, programs designed specifically for adults with intellectual disabilities and their caregivers will take place at the Walkersville Branch Library. Come by on April 3 to have tons of fun with LEGO! If you like music or want to know about jobs in the music industry, stop by on April 10 to meet DJ Jeremy Macrum from Epic Events LLC. Get ready to move your body in a chair fitness class on April 17. Back by popular demand, karaoke will be at the Walkersville Branch Library again on April 24!

Head over to the library for Senior Café, a great time to meet new friends and have a warm cup of coffee while enjoying informational programs. On Thursday, April 11 at 10, the Frederick County Division of Fire and Rescue Services will sponsor a presentation of the Red Folder Program. Learn how and why to store important medical information, including your goals of care. Whether you are a novice or an expert in fiber arts like crochet, knitting or needlepoint, join us on Thursday, April 25 at 10 to learn, share your skills or swap materials!

Starting a business is a daunting task, but with the right guidance, you'll have things up and running in no time! Hummingbird Wealth Management will be at the library to help aspiring business owners with a "small business boot camp" on Thursday, April 25 from noon to 4.

Do you need help expunging your record from a past conviction? An attorney from Maryland Legal Aid will be at the Walkersville Branch Library on April 11 from 4 to 7. They will meet with you for free to discuss your options and begin the process.

Bring the whole family to the library to enjoy a performance by the Frederick Children's Chorus: Little Music Makers on Sunday, April 14 at 1:30. During the performance, you'll have the chance to learn a song and sing along!

Celebrate Earth Day a little early on April 21 with a presentation about ramps and other native edibles of Maryland. At 1, Master Gardener Tiger Waddell will discuss the elusive Appalachian vegetable along with other plants that can be foraged in the area. Following the presentation there will be a plant

and seed swap! Bring your seeds, plants, or bulbs to swap. Leave what you don't need while you get new specimens for your garden. If you don't have anything to share or are unsure of how to begin gardening, don't worry! You can still take seeds or plants home, and a Master Gardener will be available to answer questions. The swap will take place from 1:30 to 40.

The Literacy Council of Frederick County will host a guided conversation class for high beginners of ESL from 6:30 to 7:45 on Mondays this spring, starting April 22. Students will practice their speaking and listening skills with conversations guided by an instructor. The Literacy Council requests that interested participants register, which can be done via the FCPL Calendar Event for this program, by calling the Walkersville Branch Library at 301-600-8200, or contact The Literacy Council at info@frederickliteracy.org if you have questions regarding the classes.

Take some time and 'Paws 2 Read' with the Go Team Therapy Dogs on Thursday, April 11 from 6:30 -7:30. Kids (and adults!) of all ages are invited to share their favorite story and make a new four-legged friend at the library.

Spring is the perfect time to get outside and explore the environment! If you have an elementary school student, join us for Earth Investigators at the Walkersville Branch Library for lots of nature inspired fun! April 5 is all about furs and skulls, study and learn to identify trees on April 12, and learn the basics of wilderness survival on April 19. Each program will start at 1.

If you're a dog enthusiast, check out the 4H Tailwaggers Club as they show off their amazing dog tricks! This program will be held rain or shine, so bring the whole family out to see what they can do on Saturday, April 27 at 11.

Each week at the Walkersville Branch Library, there are after-school programs for teens to connect with peers, learn new skills, and create while being social. Join us on Tuesdays at 3:30 for Teen Innovation Hour, where you'll explore the world of technology, science and more. Think you can protect an egg from splattering on the ground? Put your engineering skills to the test on April 9 during the Egg Drop Challenge! If crafts and art are more your jam, join us on April 16 and 23 to design and create a giant number marquee and backdrop for prom 2024 photos! You'll earn service hours for helping with this special project for the community.

Teen Connect happens on Fridays at 3:30; this is a great opportunity to engage with friends, peer mentors and learn about teen-oriented community resources. Join Chief Instructor Jeff Chavez from Frederick Martial Arts on Friday, April 12. Learn how to combine physical movement and mental focus for the ultimate experience. It's a bird...it's a plane...it's a drone! On Friday, April 19 from 3:30 to 4:30 Frederick County GIS will be at the Walkersville Branch Library to fly their drones and talk about how they're used to create maps and 3D images.

"Let's Get Ready for Kindergarten" is a program on Wednesdays from 11:00-11:45am where preschoolers and their caregivers can build school ready skills like counting, literacy and exploring their social-emotional selves with peers.

Our weekly Fri-YAY Program will continue into the spring from 11 to 11:45 on Fridays. Start the month out on April 5 and Get Green with our friends from the Frederick County Division of Solid Waste and Recycling. Learn what happens to our trash and recycling and see one of the big trucks up close!

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SCHOOL AND LIBRARY NEWS

Frederick County Public Schools

Karen Yoho
Frederick County
Board of Education

Spring break began on March 29 and runs the first week of April. Students and staff will return to school on April 8, just in time for the solar eclipse.

Speaking of the eclipse, the Earth & Space Science Lab (ESSL), in conjunction with Frederick County Public Libraries, will host an Eclipse Day on April 8. Planetarium shows will run on the hour from 11 to 2. An eclipse viewing in the upper fields behind the ESSL building will begin around 2. For more information on the eclipse, please read the Astronomy column on page 32.

The ESSL will also be the host of an Arbor Day celebration on April 26. It will take place in the South Frederick Arboretum (beside the ESSL) at 10 am and will commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Arboretum.

The Board of Education will hold an in-person meeting on April 10 at Frederick Community College. Please check the FCPS website for the exact location. The audio/visual upgrades to the Board Room are still ongoing and on schedule. If you are signed up for Find Out First (FOF) announcements, you will get the information on that meeting on April 4th. If you are not signed up for FOF, please go to www.fcps.org/fof and sign up for notifications based on your interests within FCPS.

If everything stays on schedule, the Board will hold its final virtual meeting on May 1 and be back in the Board Room for the May 15 meeting.

The FCPS budget will be one of the Board's biggest topics of conversation through the next few months. The County Executive will present the county budget on April 15. The County Council will then adopt their final budget by May 31. At this time, every indication is that the school system and Board of Education will have to make cuts from our requests to achieve a balanced budget. Although the Board already held its public hearing on the budget, members of the community can always email us or provide testimony during public comment times during our regular Board meetings. Directions for how to sign up are on the FCPS website, Board of Education tab, then scroll to Board of Education Meetings.

System recognitions for April include Month of the Young Child, School Library Media Month, and National Autism Acceptance Month. National Assistant Principal Week is April 4-8, Paraprofessional Appreciation Day is April 5, and Administrative Professional Day is April 26.

Forty-one FCPS teachers earned their National Board for Professional Standards certification for the first time and eight teachers became recertified. We congratulate all these professionals for

going through the rigorous process. The newly certified National Board Certified Educators will be celebrated at an event on April 22.

The Academy for the Fine Arts, located at Governor Thomas Johnson High School, is in need of repairs and upgrades to the Auditorium. There is currently an online fundraiser through the program's website. You can also contact Jonathan.Kurtz@fcps.org for more information.

The Primary Election is scheduled for Tuesday, May 14. The deadline to register to vote and update registration information is Tuesday, April 23. There are 17 candidates running for Board of Education to fill three seats. Did you know that in Maryland, BoE is the only office unaffiliated voters can vote for in the Primary because it is the only non-partisan race? In 2022, about 7% of unaffiliated voters voted in the Primary. If you do not let your voice be heard with your vote for the Primary, the candidate you hoped to vote for in November might be off the ballot. The Board of Elections website has all the voting information you need. www.elections.maryland.gov

The Maryland State Department of Education is conducting its annual Special Education Parent Involvement Survey. It is linked on the FCPS website main screen and is open until May 24. This is your chance to have input on how to improve the special education process.

Glade Valley Trade/Technical Scholarships

The Peg and Orley Bourland Educational Assistance Fund is awarded year-round through Glade Valley Community Services and The Community Foundation of Frederick

This scholarship is to provide need-based funds for educational purposes in trade or technical fields (such as nursing, HVAC, CDL training, cosmetology, driver's education, GED, etc.) to help defray the costs associated with tuition, fees, testing, tutoring, trade tools, supplies, etc.

Applicants must be a resident of Walkersville feeder school pattern area and the applicant must describe financial need, career goals and specify how the funds will be used.

The award is given to applicants who are pursuing technical and skilled trade fields (not 4 year degrees), including previous recipients.

The award(s) can be up to approximately \$1,200, based on applicant's needs. Applications are due a minimum of 60 days prior to when funds are needed

Applications are available at: Glade Valley Food Bank, Walkersville High School, Career and Technology Center, Walkersville Public Library, Walkersville Town Hall, Woodsboro Town Hall, FCC and The Community Foundation of Frederick. Applications are available online at www.GladeValley.org. For more information call the GVCS Office at 301-845-0213.

Happy Easter, chag Pesach samech, and Eid Mubarak to those who celebrate. And happy Spring to all from the BoE.

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FOUR YEARS AT THE MOUNT

This month, we asked our writers to choose a topic and respond to it in 500 words. Then, we asked Chat GPT to do the same thing to compare our human writing abilities to A.I.

Freshman

Why was the Battle of Gettysburg significant?

Gracie Smith
MSMU Class of 2027

Chat GPT's response

The Battle of Gettysburg, fought from July 1 to July 3, 1863, is often regarded as the turning point of the American Civil War, crucial to the Union's eventual victory. Its significance lies in several key aspects that tilted the balance in favor of the Union:

Firstly, strategically, Gettysburg was vital. General Robert E. Lee's Confederate Army of Northern Virginia had been on the offensive, aiming to invade the North and deliver a decisive blow that would demoralize the Union and potentially secure foreign recognition and support for the Confederacy. However, Lee's invasion culminated in the Battle of Gettysburg. The Union's victory at Gettysburg not only halted Lee's advance but also forced him to retreat southward into Virginia. This effectively ended the Confederate invasion of the North and thwarted their hopes for a decisive victory on Northern soil.

Secondly, the Battle of Gettysburg showcased the prowess of the Union Army under the leadership of General George G. Meade. Despite initial setbacks, the Union forces, bolstered by

defensive advantages and strategic positioning, managed to repel repeated Confederate assaults. The defense of key positions like Cemetery Hill, Little Round Top, and Culp's Hill demonstrated the Union's resilience and determination, turning what could have been a Confederate victory into a Union triumph.

Thirdly, the high casualties sustained by the Confederate Army at Gettysburg were a severe blow to their military strength. Lee's forces suffered heavy losses, with estimates suggesting around 28,000 Confederate casualties compared to approximately 23,000 Union casualties. The Confederate Army, already facing challenges in terms of manpower and resources, could ill-afford such losses. Conversely, although the Union also suffered significant casualties, its larger population and industrial capacity allowed for more effective replenishment of troops and resources.

Moreover, the Battle of Gettysburg had profound political ramifications. The Union victory at Gettysburg bolstered Northern morale and determination to see the war through to victory. It also dashed any hopes the Confederacy had of securing European recognition and intervention, as foreign powers were less inclined to support a losing cause. President Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, delivered months after the battle, further solidified the Union's commitment to the

principles of liberty and equality, rallying support for the war effort.

Additionally, Gettysburg marked a shift in the Union's military strategy. Following the battle, Union forces became more aggressive and began to exert greater pressure on the Confederate Army, leading to a series of victories that eventually culminated in the defeat of the Confederacy.

In conclusion, the Battle of Gettysburg was significant to the Union victory in the Civil War due to its strategic importance, the demonstration of Union military prowess, the heavy losses inflicted upon the Confederate Army, its political impact on Northern morale and international relations, and its role in shaping subsequent Union military strategy. This pivotal engagement altered the course of the war and ultimately contributed to the preservation of the Union and the abolition of slavery in the United States.

Gracie's Response

It's incredible how three days could change the history of America. Truth be told, the Union was not doing well in terms of victories when the Battle of Gettysburg occurred in the summer of 1863. General Robert E. Lee of the Confederate Army had just won an unexpected victory at Chancellorsville against Major General Joseph Hooker's Army

of the Potomac. The Confederate Army had half the men that the Army of the Potomac had, which makes this Confederate victory at Chancellorsville so significant, and ultimately important to why Gettysburg occurred and is so significant to the Union Army.

Lee, and the rest of the Confederate Army, were on a victory high so to speak after winning such an unforeseen battle. With that being said, Lee acted boldly when he decided to invade Union territory for the first time. This act alone said a lot. By this, I mean it's clear that the Confederates were taking a risk; however, they expected fully to win given that they won last time with such slim odds. During the Confederate invasion of the North, a lot was happening with the Union Army after the defeat at Chancellorsville. The new Major General George Meade, promoted by Abraham Lincoln, became head of the Army of the Potomac just 3 days before the Battle of Gettysburg on June 28th, 1863. The change of Union command was the first strike against the Confederates. Lee, still under the assumption that invading the North would be easy, quickly realized that his army's efforts would have to be much greater than anticipated given General Meade was the new commander of the Union Army.

On the first day of the battle, the Confederates suffered a major blow when George Bufford's Cal-

vary claimed the higher ground at Seminary Ridge. Although they did fight for it, General Reynold's First Corps of the Union Army arrived to reinforce Bufford's Cavalry and take the high ground. This ultimately set up the Union to have better ground for the remainder of the battle, leaving the Confederates at another disadvantage.

The Union's efforts on the second and third days of the battle helped to further push back the Confederates through their strategic positions that we know as the Union Line. The use of interior lines established a strong enough defense system during that battle that the Confederates could not break, as demonstrated in Pickett's charge. From these interior lines, the Confederates had to constantly work harder to weaken the Union—which was proven pointless.

From the Confederate's defeat at Gettysburg, Lee never invaded the North again for the remainder of the war. Furthermore, the morale of the Union Army spiked after defeating the Confederates and leaving them with thousands of casualties. With these two key things, the significance of Gettysburg remains the turning point in the war. In 3 days, the Confederates went from almost winning the war to retreating South in defeat.

To read other articles by Gracie Smith, visit the Authors section of Walkersville.net.

Sophomore

Write about the song "You're Gonna Go Far" and a feeling it invoked in you

Devin Owen
MSMU Class of 2026

The song "You're Gonna Go Far" by Noah Kahan seems to resonate with themes of departure, change, and the passage of time, evoking a mix of emotions ranging from nostalgia to acceptance. As I delve into the lyrics, I can't help but feel a sense of bittersweet reflection intertwined with a tinge of melancholy.

The opening lines set the stage for a journey, both literal and metaphorical. The mention of praying for a red light, usually an inconvenience, speaks to the desire to delay the inevitable, to prolong a moment before facing a destination that looms like a deadline. This sense of urgency and impending departure sets a somber tone, tinged with resignation.

As the song progresses, the narrator reflects on the changing landscape around them. They observe the passing of time, the

encroachment of youth, and the shifting dynamics of their surroundings. The imagery of college kids correcting graffiti and the weariness of driving after nightfall paints a picture of a world evolving beyond recognition, leaving the narrator feeling out of place.

Yet amidst the uncertainty and upheaval, there's a glimmer of hope, a recognition that life goes on despite farewells and separations. The chorus speaks of acceptance and resilience, acknowledging that while one may be leaving, life for those left behind will continue, albeit altered by the absence.

The repeated refrain of "we ain't angry at you, love" suggests a sense of understanding and forgiveness, even amidst the pain of departure. It's a poignant reminder that love transcends distance and time, and that parting doesn't diminish the bond shared between individuals.

The song's bridge delves into themes of regret and missed opportunities, acknowledging the complexities of human relationships. The narrator grapples with the realization that they may have contributed to the departure of a loved one, haunted by the knowledge that they shut

them down when they expressed a desire to make a difference.

Yet despite the weight of these regrets, there's a sense of resilience and determination to carry on. The closing lines of the song offer a message of encouragement, urging the departing individual to embrace the journey ahead and reassuring them that they will always be welcomed back with open arms.

Overall, the song evokes a complex array of emotions, from nostalgia and longing to acceptance and hope. It's a poignant meditation on the inevitability of change and the enduring nature of love, leaving the listener with a sense of introspection and a reminder to cherish the connections that make life meaningful.

The song "You're Gonna Go Far" by Noah Kahan is one that touches a deep part of my heart in the absolute best way possible. For me, it has served as a reminder that the world will still go on if I leave home and focus on what is best for me rather than what is best for everyone else around me. The chorus of this song has the ability to either make me cry on my drive home from work or feel uplifted and relieved. It starts with the following: "So, pack up your car,

put a hand on your heart. Say whatever you feel, be wherever you are. We ain't angry at you, love. You're the greatest thing we've lost," it feels as though the song is speaking specifically to me with these lines. Growing up, I was stuck in the middle of my parents fighting, divorce, and four yearlong custody battle—and in-between all of this there were quite a bit of things that went unsaid by me to them. It was hard, and it was a rough experience; I had to grow up much quicker than the other kids my age, and I was faced with challenges from both of my parents that put me in some very uncomfortable situations. When choosing where to go to college, I took into consideration the fact that it was close enough to home that I could go back on occasion, yet far away enough that I couldn't go back at every beck and call of my family needing a mediator. These lyrics served as a reminder that even though I left home, that doesn't mean I left my family behind completely—they still love me, and me leaving provides both sides with opportunity to grow and thrive. The next part of the chorus goes: "The birds will still

sing, your folks will still fight. The boards will still creak, the leaves will still die. We ain't angry at you, love. We'll be waiting for you, love." I always found it comforting to hear that life will go on if I choose to leave. I always worry about my family—my siblings the most—because they are my lifeline, and it was really hard leaving them. Hearing someone else speak on the experience of leaving home like this is both comforting and relieving—I'm not left feeling as guilty as I once was. I have often been told that I don't see my own worth and that I believe in myself much less than I should, so when hearing the lyric "you're the greatest thing we've lost," it makes me feel valued and seen as a person worthy of love and good things.

Overall, this song invoked many feelings in me because it spoke to me in a way that touched my soul. It allowed me to take the feelings of guilt that I held on to so tightly and let them loose—which, in turn, helped me to let myself loose too.

To read other articles by Devin Owen, visit the Authors section of Walkersville.net.

A.I. vs HUMAN - YOU DECIDE

Junior

What is it like to be in a big family?

Dolores Hans
MSMU class of 2025

Chat GPT's response

Growing up in a big family is akin to living in a bustling community within the confines of one's home. With siblings aplenty and relatives always around the corner, there's never a dull moment. From the early morning chaos of getting ready for school to the late-night conversations echoing through the halls, the energy of a big family is palpable and invigorating.

One of the most remarkable aspects of being part of a large family is the constant companionship it provides. Whether it's playing games, sharing meals, or simply lounging around, there's always someone to share the moment with. This abundance of company fosters a deep sense of camaraderie and support, creating lifelong bonds that withstand the test of time.

However, living in close quarters with so many personalities inevitably leads to its fair share of conflicts and

disagreements. From petty squabbles over trivial matters to more serious disputes, navigating the dynamics of a big family requires patience, compromise, and a healthy dose of humor. Yet, it is precisely these challenges that contribute to personal growth and resilience, teaching valuable lessons about communication, empathy, and conflict resolution.

Despite the occasional chaos and commotion, being in a big family is a source of warmth, love, and belonging. Shared traditions, inside jokes, and cherished memories weave a tapestry of shared experiences that form the foundation of familial identity. Whether it's celebrating holidays, milestones, or simply the everyday moments of life, the presence of a big family transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary, creating a lifetime of cherished moments and treasured relationships.

Dolores' response

I am one of eight kids. I am the third oldest child, but the oldest daughter. I have two older brothers, four younger brothers, and a younger sister who is eight years old. The ages of us siblings range from twenty-three to six and a half. Being a part of a big family is something I have always

been proud to say, mostly because it is something a lot of people can't begin to imagine for themselves, and usually because when I follow it up with "I have six brothers," I get a lot of sympathy. I loved it when my family could make up a whole soccer team, or when we would take up an entire pew at church (sometimes two depending on the size of the pew). I loved having big Thanksgivings and barbecues, and all of us piling into a fifteen-passenger van to go on trips. But the older I get, the more aware I become of just how hard it can be to be a part of a big family. My siblings and I are all getting along well now that most of us are older, and we live more separate lives from one another, but when we were kids, there was times when my mom would worry that we would never talk to each other after we moved out. We fought so much. At times I hated my brothers. There are a lot of scars within me from my childhood that may not have been there if there weren't so many of us. Now as an adult, I worry about money, insurance, taxes, credit, and all the things that would scare me away from having too many kids myself, out of fear that they would struggle. However, I have also taken

on a big role of responsibility in my family, and I am grateful for it every day. The experience I have in caring for babies and children is something I will never regret. One of the greatest joys of my life is the opportunities I was given to be a sister and sort-of-mother to my siblings. I would do anything for them. Because of my big family, I have grown in patience, understanding, generosity, and responsibility from a very young age. I would want my kids to know what its like to take care of a baby, or to go shopping for the family because I simply do not have the time, or have a wonderfully intimidating group of siblings ready to scare off anyone that tried to hurt them. Are the struggles worth the goodness?

There are things about being a part of a big family that even now I struggle with. The three youngest of my siblings are all under the age of ten, and there is a large gap between us. In age, in distance, and in experience. With this, comes a lot of sadness and guilt. When my sister needs hugs from me, or someone to watch princess movies with, or teach her how to handle the drama in her friend group, I'm not there. Right now, I can still go home over breaks, but I am bur-

dened by the knowledge that soon I won't have opportunities to go home to her as often as I wish I could. When my brother needs someone to understand him and defend him, and make him feel special, I can't be there. I still haven't processed seeing my family dynamic changed so much now that half of us are moved out and my parents aren't burdened by us financially. I find myself jealous of my six-year-old brother because he gets fun snacks for school and to grow up in a house with a working septic system and the ability to get dental work done because now, we can afford insurance. But I know that they struggle too. I can't imagine what it is like when you're just a child and half your siblings are not living at home and are beginning their own families far away. My sister had to go to the ER recently and has been in a lot of pain, and I simply cannot stand that I am not by her side, holding her hand and kissing her and telling her it's going to be okay. These are struggles that I have yet to cope with, but at the end of the day I am grateful to have so many people to love.

To read other articles by Dolores Hans, visit the Authors section of Walkersville.net.

Senior

What is love?

Claire Doll
MSMU Class of 2024

Love, a concept as timeless as humanity itself, transcends mere words and definitions, encompassing a spectrum of emotions, actions, and connections. Attempting to encapsulate its essence within the confines of a single definition is akin to confining the vastness of the universe to a mere speck. Yet, through introspection and observation, we can begin to unravel the intricate tapestry of love.

At its core, love is a profound and intense feeling of affection and attachment towards someone or something. It is a force that binds individuals together, forging deep connections that withstand the trials of time and adversity. Love exists in myriad forms - romantic love, familial love, platonic love, and self-love, each unique in its expression yet united in its essence.

Romantic love, perhaps the most celebrated form, ignites passions and kindles flames within the hearts of those enamored. It is a dance of vulnerability and intimacy, where two souls intertwine in a symphony of emotions. Romantic love embodies devotion, understanding, and acceptance, fostering an unbreakable bond between partners.

Familial love, rooted in blood and kinship, is a steadfast beacon of support and belonging. It is the love between parents and children, siblings, and extended family members, built on a foundation of shared experiences and unconditional acceptance. Familial love embodies sacrifice, nurturing, and the innate desire to see loved ones thrive.

Platonic love, often overlooked yet equally profound, is the bond shared between friends and kindred spirits. It

is a love born out of companionship, mutual respect, and shared interests. Platonic love celebrates the beauty of friendship, offering solace and companionship in times of joy and sorrow.

Self-love, the cornerstone of emotional well-being, is the unconditional acceptance and appreciation of oneself. It is a journey of self-discovery and self-care, where individuals learn to embrace their flaws and celebrate their strengths. Self-love fosters resilience, confidence, and a deep sense of inner peace.

Beyond these delineated forms, love permeates every aspect of human existence, shaping our interactions, decisions, and perceptions. It is the driving force behind acts of kindness, compassion, and altruism, transcending boundaries of race, religion, and culture. Love is the foundation upon which societies are built, fostering empathy, cooperation, and collective flourishing.

Yet, love is not without its complexities and challenges. It is a paradoxical force, capable of bringing both ecstasy and heartache, joy and sorrow. Love requires vulnerability, courage, and a willingness to embrace the uncertainties of human connection. It demands patience, understanding, and a commitment to growth and compromise.

In its purest form, love is a transformative power, capable of transcending the bounds of the individual self and uniting humanity in a shared experience of interconnectedness. It is the guiding light that illuminates the darkest of nights, the balm that soothes the deepest of wounds. Love is not merely an emotion; it is the very essence of what it means to be human, binding us together in a tapestry of empathy, compassion, and understanding.

Love is a Friday in December.

The sun sinking beneath the horizon, and branches of birch trees holding a thin sheet of snow, and a dusty pink sky. It's watching from the window, drinking hot chocolate and scooping balls

of cookie dough. It's having a sleepover and playing Hannah Montana music because my little cousin learned from the best (me) and baking cookies, so many kinds that we forget, and then playing Barbies, because at heart I'm still nine, like her. It's painting nails and laughing about third-grade gossip when I'm really twenty-one and it's the three days before Christmas, what did you ask Santa for, and falling asleep on the big couch while she takes the little one, wrapped in a light blue blanket.

Love is the summer farmers market, a rising sun painting the Baltimore highways a sparkling gold, and Mommom's Honda Accord parallel parked nearby. It's the flowers that a man hands my grandmother, and the chocolate croissants for two dollars, and fresh coffee from a local shop. It's the sky before everyone wakes up, the hum of a city before it grows too loud, the morning being written into my young mind as a memory I'll always remember. It's the drive back, falling asleep in the car, and church, July sunlight caught in the stained-glass windows.

Love is my father in his uniform, the sound of the front door closing behind him, his twenty-four-hour shifts, his crimson station wagon. It's my childhood swimming pool, and he lifts me over his shoulders, the sky stretching above me, a loud splash and I'm deep in the water. It's laughter. It's smores under a setting sun and my mother's denim apron and burgers on the grill.

Love is a first date in an orchard. It's picking apples off trees and talking about his childhood of living in the suburbs and the pieces of someone you collect as you meet eyes and smile. It's him paying for your flowers, and ice cream on a hot summer's night, and watching movies that you already know the ending to.

Love is a glass of wine and a friend from home, a letter tucked in a mailbox,

pancakes for breakfast rather than the usual eggs. It's a dance, a tango between lovers. Long naps on the couch, or drawing the curtains, or staying up late. The sunset at airports, the smell of bonfires, or the smile you wear when you pass yourself in the mirror. It's human, the most human thing possible, scarred and battered but irresistibly tethered to us the way this earth will never get rid of the sun, the way we'll always have ground beneath us and sky above. How

can it possibly be robbed from us? The memories etched into our minds, the fluttering butterflies in the pit of your stomach. The stars that dot the sky on a Friday in December. A twinkle in your eye and hushed breaths under the covers and three words, dancing at the tip of your tongue.

To read other articles by Claire Doll, visit the Authors section of Walkersville.net.



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FOUR YEARS AT THE MOUNT

A.I. vs. Humans

Sophi Toth
MSMU Class of 2027

The short answer is, not exactly. AI, while helpful, is an algorithm. It's an advanced algorithm, able to act human in conversation and give answers to questions that are almost humanlike. But as of right now, it's not a whole lot more. It can list facts, gather information, give definitions, solve what it perceives a problem to be. It can identify major themes, medium, and styles of art, replicating it to the brushstroke. But does this make AI an artist?

A better question might be if AI can create a piece without relying on human authors for material. Inspiration and material are two different things: inspiration for Van Gogh was the night sky, what motivated him to show his perception of it. Material is copy-and-paste and a form of plagiarism, one of the reasons why AI platforms such as Chat GPT are banned or regulated in school settings.

This month, we asked our Four Years at the Mount writers to have AI write the answer to a prompt, then write their own responses to the same prompt.

The open-ended questions of Dolores Hans and Claire Doll, when run through the AI writing program ChatGPT, tended to give very definitional answers to the questions, "What is love?" and "What is it like to be in a big family?" It defines the prompts in a very detached way, describing love as "a transformative power," and having a big family as full of "cherished moments," but without any experiences or examples to back its responses up. It wrote a lot of pretty, fluffy words in order to try and capture these experiences, utiliz-



ing a tell-not-show method, which is shunned by professional authors and essayists and used almost primarily by inexperienced writers.

AI's reflection on Devin Owen's choice of prompt, the song "You're Gonna Go Far," by Noah Kahan, was nonexistent at first, as ChatGPT hadn't been updated since before the song's release in January 2022. But even after seeing the lyrics, the AI writer focused on the song's themes, narrator's point of view, and basic meaning of the lyrics while going through them line by line. It took only meaning, again, in a very detached way that didn't truly convey the meaning in an emotional way.

For Gracie Smith's historical prompt, different problems arose. Detachment is somewhat necessary for a historical essay, making the AI response better technically. However, the AI writer summarized the historical importance of the battle of Gettysburg point by point, like a middle schooler's five paragraph essay. It answered the question, but in a very uninteresting way.

Our human writers' responses, however, differed vastly from the AI writer. Claire Doll, Dolores Hans, and Devin Owen used spe-

cific human experiences from their own lives to help demonstrate what love is, to show the trying and thriving consequences of having a big family, to explain how a song's meaning goes beyond the sum of its parts. The language used is more interesting than AI's insipid rationalizations of emotion-based questions: Doll's essay was peppered with romantic phrases like "a Friday in December," or "Love is my father in his uniform," as opposed to AI's definition of love "encompassing a spectrum of emotions, actions, and connections."

Hans writes about the emotional conflict she has when thinking of having her own family later in life, wondering if "the struggles are worth the goodness?" while AI hem-haws around the cliché that in a big family, "there's never a dull moment." While AI starts grandly and stereotypically, "amongst the uncertainty and upheaval," Owen speaks from the heart about her "parents fighting, divorce, and a four yearlong custody battle." Leaving the reader in catharsis and relating to the people they just read about, these writers garner awe, admiration, pity; anything other than indifference.

Gracie Smith's historical prompt, although more devoid of emotion, still put the AI's essay to shame. Instead of organizing the importance of the battle of Gettysburg point by point, Smith organized her essay by what happened the day of the battle and how specific strategic moves resulted in the North's win of the battle. AI did add more reasons for Gettysburg's importance, but it was much less interesting to read than Smith's paper. The stratagems and effects were more integrated and flowed better, as opposed to AI's five paragraph essay format.

With this evidence, it seems that AI, while useful, is better used in factual, algorithmic fields. In creative areas, it is useful in gathering research or information, but it's not yet reliable to produce satisfactory pieces to be used in place of creative professionals. AI can copy human work very well, but it cannot create its own. And until a learning AI model is produced, it's up to humans to dream of things that don't yet exist.

To read other articles by Sophi Toth, visit the Authors section of Walkersville.net.

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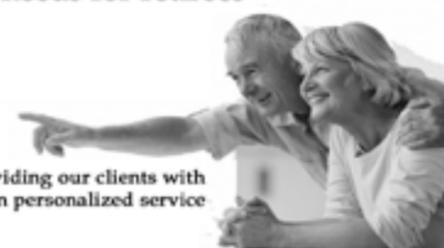
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Springtime taste

Sonya Verlaque

As temperatures get warmer and the sun stays out for us later, it is fun to look forward to fresh produce and springtime flavors. This article may be a little “carb heavy” with pasta and baking, but I hope they are enjoyable and a harbinger of bright days ahead.

Asparagus Pesto

Be sure to you use raw unsalted pistachios, or you can use pine nuts or cashews. This pesto is great hot and cold pasta or also can be used in soups, or on sandwiches. The pesto can also be stored in the fridge in a mason jar or airtight container for up to 3 days.

Ingredients

- 1 lb asparagus
- ½ cup pistachio nuts - (see note 1)
- 2 tbs lemon juice
- 1 tsp lemon zest - (from 1 lemon)
- 1/2 cup fresh parsley leaves
- 2 tbs extra virgin olive oil
- 1 garlic clove - small, optional
- salt & pepper
- 12 oz pasta of choice - farfalle, penne, spaghetti, rigatoni, linguine

Cooking Instructions : Bring a small pot of salted water to a boil. Chop the asparagus into small bits, making sure to remove and discard the fibrous ends if needed. Wash them, and blanch them in the boiling water for about 5 minutes until slightly tender. Drain the asparagus and rinse them under cold water to stop them from cooking. Set the asparagus tips aside as we will use them for decoration.

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the pasta and cook according to the package instruction. Reserve about 1 cup of the pasta cooking water. Add the pistachios (or nut of your choice) to your blender or food processor and blitz. Then add the cooked asparagus, garlic, lemon juice, parsley leaves, olive oil, a pinch of salt and pepper. Puree until smooth. Taste and adjust seasoning. Once the pasta is cooked, drain it and mix it with the aspara-

gus pesto. Toss well until combined. Add some of the cooking water to the pasta to make the pasta silky and saucy. Plate the pasta, add the asparagus tips you kept on the side, sprinkle with lemon zest, and serve while hot.

Strawberry Cream Tart

Ingredients:

- 1 sheet frozen puff pastry, thawed
- 1 egg, beaten
- raw coarse sugar, for sprinkling (optional)
- 6 ounces creme fraiche, mascarpone, or cream cheese
- ½ cup plain greek yogurt
- 1 tbs Meyer lemon juice + 1-2 tsp zest, to your taste
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 ½ tbs honey, plus more for serving
- 12 oz sliced strawberries

Preparation: Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F. On a lightly floured surface, roll the puff pastry out into a rectangle about 1/4 inch thick. Place the pastry on a parchment lined baking sheet. Using a sharp knife, score a 1 inch border around the edge. Brush the pastry with egg, sprinkle the sugar around the edges. Transfer to the oven and bake for 10-15 minutes or until golden brown. It's OK if the edges get dark.

Let cool, before assembling. Meanwhile, make the whipped yogurt. Using an electric mixer, whip the creme fraiche (or cream cheese), yogurt, and lemon juice together until smooth and soft peaks form. Add the vanilla, honey, and lemon zest. Whip to combined. Spread the whipped cream over the tart. Arrange the strawberry slices over the cream. Serve with additional honey, if desired.

Grapefruit Scones

Ingredients:

For the scones:

- 1¾ cup all purpose flour
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- 2½ tsp baking powder
- ¼ tsp kosher salt
- zest from one grapefruit
- 5 tbs cold butter cut into small cubes
- ½ cup fresh grapefruit juice

- ¼ cup plain yogurt
- 1 egg
- 1tbs milk

For the glaze:

- 1 to 2 tbs fresh grapefruit juice
- ½ cup powdered sugar

Cooking instructions Preheat the oven 400°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Place flour, sugar, baking powder, salt and zest in a food processor and pulse a few times. Add the butter and pulse until the butter is in pea size crumbles (about 8 quick pulses). Dump the contents into a large bowl and add juice and yogurt. Mix with a spatula until just combined. Absolutely no over mixing here otherwise you will have tough scones. Dump dough onto the prepared baking sheet.

Form into an disc, about 1” in thick (it will be anywhere from 6” to 8” in diameter). If dough is really sticky flour your hands a little for better handling. Cut into 8 wedges and separate evenly on the baking sheet. Whisk egg and milk vigorously together. Brush the top of each scone with egg mixture. Place in oven for 10 to 12 minutes or until bottoms begin to brown and tops are just starting to turn golden.

Allow to cool on sheet. While the scones are baking make glaze but combining the powdered sugar and juice...1 tsp at a time. If glaze seems too thick add more juice. Too thin add more sugar. When scones are completely cooled drizzle glaze over the top one.



Chocolate Chip Zucchini Bread

This easy recipe makes 2 loaves of moist chocolate chip zucchini bread. Includes step-by-step photos and tips to help you make perfect chocolate chip zucchini bread.

Ingredients

- 3 cups grated fresh zucchini about 3-4 medium zucchini
- 1 ½ cup granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- ¼ tsp kosher salt
- ¾ cup butter melted
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 ½ cups mini semisweet chocolate chips

Cooking instructions: Preheat the oven to 350F. Grease two 8x4-inch loaf pans. I like to use

nonstick spray with flour. Set aside. Place the grated zucchini in colander in the sink while you continue. Don't wring or squeeze the zucchini. Whisk together sugar, eggs, vanilla, salt, and butter in a large bowl. Add flour, baking soda, and cinnamon. Whisk in until just combined. Batter will be very thick at this point. Stir in grated zucchini until just incorporated. Add chocolate chips, and stir in until just combined. Divide batter between prepared loaf pans.

Bake for 40-60 minutes, or until a wooden toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Cool in pans for 10 minutes. Run a thin knife around the edges, and remove zucchini bread out onto wire cooling racks to finish cooling.

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



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ASTRONOMY

The night sky of April

Professor Wayne Wooten

For April 2024, the last quarter moon occurs on April 1st. It is a week until the best total solar eclipse of most of our lives with the new moon on April 8th. On April 6th, the moon passes just below Mars (on top) and Saturn in the dawn sky, a great photo opp. Then two days later, the moon's umbral shadow crosses the center of these United States for the last time in 21 years!

Having seen two totalities and one even more exciting broken annularity in May 1984, I assure you the three-four minutes of totality in the umbra is the greatest sky show you will ever see...so dark, cold, eerie, and with the chance to see a Comet as well as Venus (lower right) and Jupiter (upper left) of the eclipsed sun during the totality, which since the moon is closer and larger now than in August 2017, means this eclipse will last twice as long and give us a much darker sky.

If you are lucky enough to be in the umbra, remember that through out the partial phases, the bright photosphere is still partly visible, and safe viewers are mandatory! But once the moon completely covers the Sun, for those glorious minutes, whip off the glasses and enjoy the black disk of the moon in front of the sun, with red prominences all along its edge, and the glorious solar corona.

Of course, the partially eclipsed crescent sun (over half gone by maximum coverage around 2:30 locally) is also dramatic, especially if your telescope captures an erupting prominence on the cusp of the solar and lunar limbs. If past weeks are to be a judge, we expect large, complex sunspots to be rotating across the solar disk on April 8th, and they will help us track the progress of the Moon across the face of our star.

And what about that comet that



On April 8th, a total eclipse will be visible across North America. During this eclipse, the moon will pass in front of the sun, causing the sun to be blocked entirely and creating a period of total darkness.

might flare brightly enough to be seen in the sky of totality, between Jupiter and the Sun? Its name is Comet Pons-Brooks, and it has flare brightly in the last several months, and last week developed a tail that I photographed with my 50mm See Star digital telescope. By April it may become visible with the naked eyes below Jupiter in the western twilight. Check the www.spaceweather.com daily post for updates on its progress, and also more tips on capturing the eclipse and sharing your best shots in their gallery.

Because the moon will be about as close to Earth as it can get, and we are also near aphelion, most distant from the Sun, making it appear smaller, note how much broader the umbra will be in 21 years! Something to live for!

After this climax on April 8th, the month goes on. On March 11th, the waning crescent passes just north of Jupiter in twilight, and reaches first quarter on April 15th. The Full Moon, the Worm Moon, will be on April 23rd, but the last quarter moon will wait until May 1st.

Mercury and Venus are too close to the Sun to observe, except during totality when Venus will be

15 degrees west of the Sun, and Mercury just above it. Mars overtakes slower moving, more distant Saturn in the dawn sky on April 11th, only the diameter of the moon apart, a striking view with the naked eyes and a fine photo opp. Jupiter also overtakes much smaller, more distant Uranus on April 20th. Here is the telescope view of the giant, his four moons, and Uranus.

Jupiter vanishes into the Sun's glare in early May, and Saturn and Mars are both in the dawn, so not a great month for telescopic observations on the planets. But Comet Pons-Brooks will be nice in binoculars, and perhaps visible low in the west with the naked eye, if it has another of the several outbursts it has shown us in the last several months, but this is entirely unpredictable!

Yellow Capella, a giant star the same temperature and color as our much smaller Sun, dominates the northwestern sky. It is part of

the pentagon on stars making up Auriga, the Charioteer (think Ben Hur). 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. South of Gemini, Orion is the most familiar winter constellation, dominating the southern 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. The bright diamond of four stars that light it up are the trapezium cluster, one of the finest sights in a telescope. In the east are 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. At 8 light years, Sirius is the closest star we can easily see here.

To the northeast, look for the Big Dipper rising, with the top two stars of the bowl, the pointers, giving you a line to find Polaris, the Pole Star. Look for Mizar-Alcor, a nice naked eye double star, in the bend of the big dipper's handle. Take the pointers at the front of the dipper's bowl south instead to the head of Leo, looking much like the profile of the famed Sphinx. The bright star at the Lion's heart is Regulus, the "regal star".

Now take the curved handle of the Big Dipper, and follow the arc SE to bright orange Arcturus, the brightest star of the spring sky. Studies of its motion link it to the

Sagittarius Dwarf Galaxy, a companion of our Milky Way being tidally disrupted and spilling its stars above and below the plane of the Milky Way, much like dust falling away from a decomposing comet nucleus. So this brightest star of Bootes the Bear Driver is apparently a refugee from another galaxy, but now trapped by our Galaxy's gravity.

Now spike south to Spica, the blue-white gem in Virgo rising in the SE. Virgo is home to many galaxies, as we look away from the obscuring gas and dust in the plane of the Milky Way into deep space. To the southwest of Spica is the four sided Crow, Corvus. To the ancient Greeks, Spica was associated with Persephone, daughter of Ceres, goddess of the harvest. She was abducted by her suitor Pluto, carried down to Hades (going to Hell for a honeymoon!) and when Jupiter worked out a compromise between the newlyweds and the angry mother-in-law, the agreement dictated Persephone come back to the earth's surface for six months of the year, and Mama Ceres was again placated, and the crops could grow again.

As you see Spica rising in the SE, it is time to "plant your peas", and six months from now, when Spica again disappears in the sun's glare in the SW, you need to "get your corn in the crib"...so was set our calendar of planting and harvesting in antiquity. There is indeed a rich harvest in Virgo, of galaxies. The supercluster that lies in the arms of Virgo has more than a thousand members visible in our telescopes, and actually gravitationally bonds our own Milky Way and Local Group of Galaxies to it.

Farmers' Almanac

*"God bless my bit of garden
And make its flowers grow
That it may give some pleasure
To all the folks I know"*
—John Gruber (1768–1857)

Mid-Atlantic Weather Watch: Showers, then turning seasonably warm and dry (1, 2, 3, 4, 5); dry, then very warm with showers and severe thunderstorms (6, 7, 8, 9, 10); dry, then a quick round of gusty showers, falling temperatures and flurries (11, 12, 13, 14, 15); dry, sunny and much colder with a morning hard freeze (16, 17, 18, 19, 20); turning very warm with isolated afternoon showers (21, 22, 23, 24, 25); dry and quite mild, then showers to end the month (26, 26, 28, 29, 30).

Severe Weather Watch: The Town and Country Almanack sees severe thunderstorms in the Mid-Atlantic Region (7, 8) and the possibility of a hard freeze (19, 20).

Full Moon: April's Full Moon occurs on April 23rd. Many Native American tribes referred to April's full moon as Pink Moon because of the many pretty flowers that begin to display their bright pink hues as they bloom through-

out the month. It also has been called Fish Moon because the fishing starts to improve as the weather warms up.

Special Notes: April Fool's Day falls on Monday, April 1st in 2024 (which also happens to be Easter Monday!). Watch out for practical jokes and pranks that may be coming your way from family, co-workers, and friends! Tax Day is Monday, April 15th. Earth Day is observed on Monday, April 22nd. Check out The Earth Day Network at www.earthday.net offers some interesting, fun, and easy activities that you and your family can do that will help promote a healthier relationship with our fragile Mother Earth! Arbor Day falls on Tuesday, April 30th. Go to www.arborday.org for more on The Arbor Day Foundation's mission, which focuses on helping others understand and use trees as a solution to the many global issues we face today that include air quality, water quality, a rapidly changing climate, deforestation, poverty, and hunger.

The Garden: A good test of "soil readiness" is to take a handful of soil and squeeze it. If it remains in a ball, it's too moist and should be allowed to dry further. If it crumbles, start planting! Set out

annuals and other perennials now. Cool season vegetables, such as spinach, lettuce. Water new plantings and blooming shrubs (such as azaleas & rhododendron) regularly. Don't forget to water plants under overhangs. Don't forget to do an all-points check on the old lawn mower. Sharpen or replace dull, worn blades, install new spark plug, clean or replace the air filter, and change the oil. Fill it up with gas and be sure to check the pull cord (if manual start) for any undue wear. Replace it immediately if frayed.

The Farm: Best days for planting root crops (1, 2); weeding and stirring the soil (12, 13); planting above-ground crops (14, 15); harvesting all crops (26, 27); to set hens and incubators (1, 2, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30); the slaughtering and butchering of meats (8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14); transplanting (8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 1, 3, 14); harvesting and storing of grain (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7); weaning of animals and livestock (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30).

J. Gruber's Thought For Today's Living

Gardens are for all ages: the young for hope of the future, the elderly for fond memories of the past, and for those in between, the rewards of a good life, now.



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Tips for parents on newborn sleep

**Lauren Heckhaus, PA
Frederick Primary Care
Associates-Walkersville**

A topic that we tackle as family practice providers with every newborn parent is sleep - when do the parents get any? Here's our tips and tricks as well as advice when it comes to newborn sleep.

Day/Night confusion is typical for newborns. Your baby has been cozy in the womb for 9-10 months and they're in a big and scary world. For some babies this confusion may be more significant and in others more subtle. The question is what should you do as the parent?

There are 4 things to consider to help baby figure out when is play time versus sleep time - starting your day at a regular time, offering full feedings during the day, being intentional with your wake hours, and using light/dark to your advantage:

- When starting your day at a regular time, your baby is learning their external cues from you. This will create a routine for your baby, so that they begin to differentiate daytime versus night time. Getting up at the same reasonable time in the morning may seem hard after you've been up all night, but remember this is the cycle we are trying to change and it will pay off in the end.
- Encourage full feedings now during the day, as opposed to snacks. This will allow for

the baby to get the majority of needed calories during the day to help with growth and development, but it also may rouse them to be more awake during the day. Remember, babies have small stomachs, so you will still feed during the night about every 2-3 hours as well. Eventually as they grow this time will spread itself out.

- Be intentional with your baby's wake hours, which are short at first and then become longer. Noticing sleepy cues will help you establish a rhythm. At 0-4 weeks baby's wake window should be about 35-60 minutes and then gradually lengthen. At around 4-12 weeks, the wake window will be 60-90 minutes.
- Use light and dark to your advantage. Use daylight to encourage wakefulness - open your curtains, flip the lights on and spend time outside, if the weather permits. At night time, maintain a dark room and use the safest amount of low light during feeds and changing, whether that's a small night light or open blinds.

And of course let's also discuss safe sleep. The recommended position for your baby is on their back in a bassinet in the parent's room. This allows for easier night feeds as well. At around 4-6 months the baby can be transitioned to their own room in a crib. Swaddling is also encouraged but should be.



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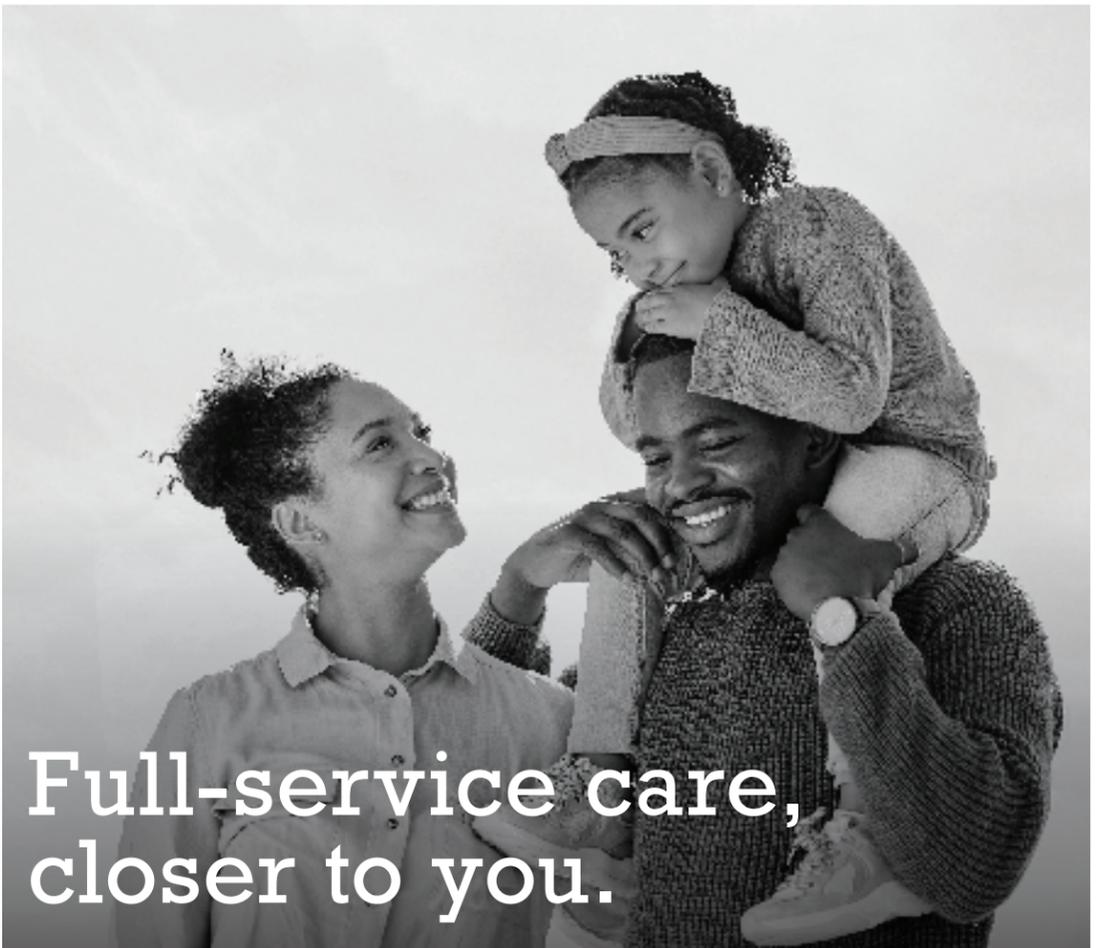


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ARTS

Mike Kuster: Walkersville own rising country star

Claire Doll
MSMU Class of 2024

It's the thing you hear about in movies: an aspiring performer sharing his music with the world, only to be discovered by a producer who recognizes his talent and potential. A path to stardom and fame. The chance to turn dreams of singing and performing country into a blazing reality.

Only, this isn't a movie for country singer Mike Kuster of Walkersville. Independent Music Network (IMN) recently announced Mike Kuster as Favorite Male Country Artists of 2023. This accolade not only demonstrates Kuster's talent, prestige, and dedication, but also is the result of years of hard work and love for country music. Kuster has released two successful albums in 2023, including *Country So Fresh You Have To Check Your Boots* and *Mountain Monsters of Maryland*, and his song, "Daddy's Blue Jean Jacket," was named IMN's Country Song of the Year for 2021. Kuster was also named IMN's Country Impact Artist of 2022.

"Growing up, I hadn't heard anything other than country music," Kuster says. His love for the genre is heavily influenced by his childhood and family life. Kuster's grandparents were big country fans, listening to old classic country from the 40s and 50s; Kuster can even recall listening to the music in his grandfather's garage. He was also raised on a farm and is constantly returning to these roots.

Kuster set his eyes on performing when he was around four or five. "My father had a friend who had a band, Benny Dean and the Blackjack's. Benny played at

my dad's best friend's wedding. I remember just standing there and watching, specifically playing the fiddle player, and thinking, "I want to do that." Kuster later learned to play the violin and guitar with his father's help. He was briefly in a band, married his high school sweetheart, worked, and played music on the side.

All this changed, however, during the COVID-19 lockdown. Kuster would sit at home, write songs, and play them for his teenage children. His kids encouraged him to "do something" with his talent, to pursue more than "on-the-side" music. Kuster's wife was a nurse at Frederick Memorial Hospital at the time, and he decided to write a song about the experience. "I started doing a YouTube show on lockdown, playing one song a night," says Kuster. One of those nights, a producer in Nashville contacted Kuster, saying, "I think we could work together."

Kuster began recording songs from home and even travelled to Nashville to meet and work with his producer. One of the most fulfilling moments for Kuster, however, was when Michael Cleveland—American bluegrass fiddle player and Grammy winner for Best Bluegrass Album—recorded his own musical track and sent it to Kuster's producer, where his lyrics and words were mixed with Cleveland's tunes. "It's magic," Kuster says. Kuster also remembers watching and listening to Chris Condon—session guitarist in Nashville who previously played for Billy Ray Cyrus—playing one of his songs. "I was holding back tears," he remarks at watching his own musical legacy

unfold before him.

Kuster's music is inspired by "life, in general." While his own songs range from being true stories about someone he knows, or autobiographical, or completely fictional, Kuster's music shares the same magnetic, soulful appeal. He pulls inspiration from Randy Travis, Willie Nelson, Johnny Cash, and Merle Haggard, while crafting his own authentic voice that continues to make lasting impacts.

His Halloween-inspired album, *Mountain Monsters of Maryland*, is based on folktales and stories centered around Frederick. "One of them is based on The Blair Witch Project," he says. "The Witch" is a song that begins with a cheerful violin intro, telling the tale that the famous movie portrays with his own, country twist. "Black Beast of Lewistown" was written in twenty minutes after inspiration from a TikTok. *Mountain Monsters of Maryland* has even been nominated for a Wammie Music Award. As part of the Musicianship's Acquisition of the Washington Area Music Association, the Wammie Music Awards "celebrate, honor, and uplift local artists for the merit and impact of their work on DC culture." Kuster will be notified if he is winner of the prestigious award in April.

Mike Kuster and his band—The Catocin Cowboys—are even available to be booked for private and public events. From backyard gatherings and solo acoustic sets to weddings and birthdays, Kuster's versatile repertoire "showcases a blend of his original compositions and timeless hits from country legends like Randy Travis, Johnny Cash, Merle Haggard, and Ala-



bama." Kuster's past performances has been proven to deliver a lively, exciting experience.

Some of Kuster's upcoming performances are at Beans in the Belfry in Brunswick on April 27th, as well as at Tenth Ward Distillery in Frederick on June 14th. To check out more performances, book your own show, and learn more about Kuster, be sure to visit his website: mikekuster.net. You can also listen to his songs on Spotify, Youtube, and other streaming services!

The Independent Music Network, focused on featuring and lifting independent artists and bands, promises "to help 'level the playing

field' by getting the best independent artists, bands, and their product out to the entire music world." In an industry where major record labels and radios are nearly impossible to break through, the IMN provides amazing and powerful opportunities for independent artists, like Kuster, to make a mark in the music world.

"I just hope lots of people request my music on radio stations," he says. Mike Kuster lives in Walkersville with his wife and three kids. Kuster is just beginning to break into the country world, and his music is worth more than a listen—it's worth going to a whole concert and seeing the show.

Way Off Broadway Theatre's summer theatre camp

Registration has begun at The Theatre for its 2024 Summer Theatre Camp which will begin on

July 22nd.

For over 20 years, Way Off Broadway has been offering budding young actors and actresses the opportunity to hone their craft during the theatre's annual summer camp. These camps focus on all aspects of musical theatre through vocal music, acting exercises, and basic choreography as students rehearse for a full musical production at the end of the session.

This year's camp will be held

July 22nd – August 1st from 10 to 4 p.m., Monday – Thursday. Camp is open to students ages 9 and older. Registration is \$500 per student. Instructors for Way Off Broadway's 2024 Summer Theatre camp will once again be Bill Kiska, the theatre's Executive Producer, and Megan Elizabeth West, one of Way Off Broadway's performers and music directors.

For its theatrical production this summer, the camp will be presenting *Legally Blonde, JR.*

Adapted from the hit movie and award-winning Broadway musical, Harvard's beloved blonde takes the stage by glittery pink storm in this fun and upbeat stage show. *Legally Blonde, JR.* follows the transformation of Elle Woods as she tackles stereotypes, snobbery and scandal in pursuit of her dreams. When Elle's boyfriend, Warner, dumps her and heads to Harvard, claiming she's not "serious" enough, Elle takes matters into her own hands, crafting a showy song-and-dance personal essay and charming her way into law school. Befriending classmate, Emmett, and spunky hairdresser, Paulette, along the way, Elle finds that books and looks aren't mutually exclusive. As Elle begins outsmarting her peers, she realizes that law may be her natural calling after all.

Registration is limited and being done on a first-come, first-serve basis. For complete details about this year's camp, including registration information, visit the theatre's website at www.wayoffbroadway.com.

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Colt Black

As a father I've witnessed firsthand the struggles of my children, their friends, and students overall. The frustrations they feel when struggling to grasp basic English and math concepts. The lack of knowledge of world and U.S. history that teaches important generational lessons of where we come from and the shaping of where we are headed to as a society. The complete lack of lessons in civics and understanding of our foundational documents and individual rights. And the absolute failure to teach basic life skills such as basic financial literacy and home making which enables all students to be prepared to become productive and independent members of society.

Students who are frustrated, often act out creating disciplinary issues for staff and teachers making it more difficult for all to learn. Parents are becoming equally frustrated with the lack of communication from schools regarding everything from student's disciplinary and developmental issues to the possible need for special educational intervention.

Parents are having to make decisions to seek diagnosis and treatment of learning disabilities outside of school because FCPS is unwilling to provide the proper services to these students even though the law says they must. And once a diagnosis of a learning disability is received, getting cooperation from school officials to implement IEP's or 504 plans often comes with getting attorneys involved. This is beyond atrocious.

Parents who once were treated as a partner in their students' education have now been left in the dark. Not because of teachers, guidance counselors, or even principals but the administration of FCPS. They have effectively tied the hands of staff who interact with our children every day in favor of policy which stifles cooperation and creates unnecessary burden on all involved.

As a taxpayer, it is shocking to the core to see FCPS's budget approaching \$1 billion dollars. Currently for

this year the 2024 approved budget was \$910,180,476. When one reviews the public documents available, they paint a picture of concealment. Sure, expenditures and revenues are outlaid; there are nice pie charts showing percentages and categories of expenditures which are broad in nature leaving much to be desired with respect to understanding where the money goes. We've all seen every year since at least 2014 in the letters from the superintendent of FCPS to the County Executive request for funding to build new schools. Yet interestingly only one new school has been built in that time. So, one must ask where's the money?

As a citizen, it is presumptive that the vast majority of our friends and neighbors see value in assuring that children are educated so they have the opportunity to become productive, independent, successful members of our community. Yet when we examine what is going on in our schools it doesn't take long to realize that something isn't right.

When we hear about schools in such a state of disrepair so bad that teachers are walking through water in classrooms from leaking pipes and the roof and plywood is covering doors we must ask why? Is the money entrusted to the Board of Education being spent where it's supposed to? So often we talk about raising the salary of teachers and staff but regardless of the salary would you want to work in a building like this? Of course not. It would be no wonder FCPS had recruitment problems; lack of care in our facilities would make any future staff ask themselves, "If they don't take care of their schools, are they really going to have my or my students' best interests at heart?"

We must ensure that schools are safe, welcoming places if we ever wish to recruit the best teachers and staff possible.

This is true for bus drivers as well. If their buses are not comfortable to ride in, no one is going to enjoy traveling to an also crumbling down school. I went on a field trip with one of my children to the Naval Academy and

not only were most of the bus windows stuck open, but the heater also didn't work. And it was not a warm day. Not one student, parent, teacher, or the driver himself was happy. This was not the first time a bus ride had been chilly or uncomfortable either, sometimes the windows are stuck closed instead! My own children have told me examples of buses breaking down, having to turn back to the school because the bus was having a mechanical problem or problems with windows, heating, or air conditioning. We all know vehicles fail. It happens. But it should not be a consistent problem for drivers or students.

It is also important to consider that in civil society not every career requires a college education. For years

the measure of success and financial mobility has been regarded as one that is only accomplished by attending college. Look around our county, does every career require a degree to be a success? What about our restaurant owners and staff? Or local landscaping companies? Does every business owner in downtown Frederick have a degree? What about our farmers, tradesmen like plumbers, masons, or electricians? The answer is no, students who plan to go directly into the workforce after graduation need to be shown how proud we as a community are of them. Often, they are simply overlooked and even seen as "less than", than their college bound counterparts. Our education system needs to take into consideration the

skills needed to become a productive citizen, no matter where your career pathway leads.

In closing, whether you have children in the school system or not in Frederick County, the members of the school board who you elect are important to every citizen. Why? Because the elected members of the school board control about half of the county's budget. This impacts every resident of the County because no one like higher taxes. And as your next elected member of the Frederick County Board of Education I pledge not to raise your taxes or your children. To find out more about our campaign, volunteer, or donate to support our efforts please visit colt-black.com.

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No Bingo Friday, April 26!

BROWNIE'S AUTO REPAIR



Serving Walkersville For Over 70 Years

All Major & Minor Repairs
 Emission Based Repairs
 Approved MD Inspection Facility
 Pick-Up & Delivery Available

42 Frederick Street, Walkersville
301-845-8400
BrowniesAutoService@gmail.com

Monday - Friday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
 Saturday by Appointment




Thurmont Community Ambulance Service
Proudly serving northern Frederick Co. for over half a century

THE AMISH OUTLAWS



Big Money CASH BASH Saturday, May 18
 Gates open at 10 a.m.
 Drawings Begin at 11:45 a.m.
 Food, Can Beer, Wine Coolers & Soda Included
 Bring your own canopy & lawn chairs
 Must be off premises by 8 p.m.

\$20 Per Person
 No patrons under 18 - ID required
MUST PRESENT TICKET TO ENTER GATE
 No pets except service dogs
NO CARRYOUTS ALLOWED
 Photo ID required to claim prizes!
TICKET HOLDER CAN WIN MULTIPLE TIMES!
Cash Prizes Drawn Every 5 Minutes.

Saturday, April 6
\$10 Per Person
 At the door or Friday night bingo
 Doors open 6 p.m. • DJ Fire - 7-9:30 p.m.
Music 9:30 p.m. - Midnight
 Food & Cash Bar Available
 Must be 18 - Photo ID required
 Tip Jars

Thurmont Event Complex
 13716 Strafford Dr., Thurmont **301-271-7550** www.thurmonteventcomplex.com
 Both events will benefit the Thurmont Community Ambulance Service

CHILDREN'S WORLD EARLY LEARNING CENTERS

Give Your Child the Best Beginning
in the School Year!

Year-Round Child Care

Pre-School ages 18 months – 5 years

School-Age ages 5 – 12 years

*Before & After School Care with
Transportation!*

*Child Care Scholarships/Vouchers
Readily Accepted!*



Guarantee your
spot now...

**ENROLL &
GET 1 WEEK
FREE!**

Call for
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Open
Mon. - Fri.
6:30 a.m. - 6 p.m.

**CHILDREN'S WORLD
EARLY LEARNING CENTERS**

8402 Discovery Blvd., 419 Burck St.,
Walkersville Frederick
301-845-4984 301-662-3004
Ages 18 months - 12 years

LEARNING TREE EARLY LEARNING CENTERS

607 East D St., Before & After School Program
Brunswick of Brunswick Elementary,
301-834-7577 Brunswick
Ages 2 - 5 years 301-834-7577
Ages 5 - 12 years

301-845-4000

or email

earlylearning4@verizon.net

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