

Board approves GM contract extension

The Ocean Pines Board of Directors on Wednesday unanimously approved a two-and-a-half-year contract extension for General Manager John Viola.

Ocean Pines named Viola the temporary general manager in April and, in June, he signed a six-month agreement through December 1. He inked the new deal this week, which runs from December 1, 2019 to June 30, 2022.

The contract is similar to the agreement the Novak Consulting Group developed for the previous general manager, John Bailey, although Viola agreed to waive medical benefits in order to save the Association money.

Viola has been an Ocean Pines homeowner for nine years and before that had vacationed in community for three years.

A New York native, he has an MBA with a specialization in finance and tax management from Pace University in New York and earned an undergraduate degree at Manhattan College. He worked in the private sector as a certified public accountant, including 28 years with Avon, where he finished as the assistant global controller.

In Ocean Pines, Viola served as chairman of the Budget and Finance Advisory Committee for four years,

and also served on a volunteer basis as the Association's chief financial officer, prior to becoming general manager.

In just over six months as general manager, he led an effort that saw the Association turn a corner financially. The latest monthly financial report shows Ocean Pines more than \$550,000 ahead of budget for the fiscal year and more than \$400,000 ahead of the same period during the previous fiscal year.

Along with overseeing tighter financial controls, Viola has stressed teamwork and nurturing and developing talent among Ocean Pines employees. He has also taken advantage of expertise in the community in the form of more than a dozen workgroups on issues ranging from employee compensation, to construction of a new Golf clubhouse and expanded Police station.

"I enjoy working with the team and I feel we're getting a lot done," Viola said. "We hope to continue that mo-



John Viola

please see **contract** on page 15



Doing the math

The Worcester Preparatory School (WPS) Math Team placed third at the 36th Annual Eastern Shore H.S. Mathematics Competition hosted by Salisbury University Department of Mathematics and Computer Science. WPS Upper School math teacher Linda Bragg coached the three-person team consisting of seniors Max Huber, Eli Prushansky and junior Daniel Chen. The annual contest celebrates students who have an aptitude and enthusiasm for mathematics. The competition consists of open-ended questions and the individual competition consists of multiple-choice questions covering subjects such as algebra, geometry, functions and functional notation, exponents and logarithms, trigonometry, probability and statistics, logic and set theory, arithmetic sequences, geometric series, and number theory.

Above: (L-R) WPS math teacher **Linda Bragg** with her third Place WPS Math Team: **Eli Prushansky, Max Huber and Daniel Chen.**

Comcast hosts town hall, resident Q&A

Comcast officials during a public town hall on Tuesday night updated Ocean Pines residents on a service implementation timeline and answered questions from the roughly 50 people in attendance.

The company signed a 10-year right-of-access contract with Ocean Pines in September, and Association President Doug Parks said regular updates from Comcast were part of that agreement.

"One of the things we wanted to do is try to get information out to the community, so they know when the

services are going to be available in their particular section of Ocean Pines," Parks said.

Just prior to turning things over to Comcast, Parks took a moment to recognize former Association President Tom Terry for his efforts in crafting the contract.

Terry called the landmark agreement, which marks the first time Ocean Pines residents will see competition in cable TV and internet services, "a big deal."

He added there would be Ocean Pines oversight of Comcast during the

installation period.

"We have taken a look at their plan, their execution, their construction schedule [and] the methodologies they're going to use, and they're all very professional [and] very well planned," Terry said.

He cautioned that, with many months of infrastructure installation ahead, Ocean Pines "is going to be a construction site."

"This is going to have dirt dug up and things placed in people's yards in advance of construction," Terry said. "We'll try to make sure people know

what's going on and when, but please be aware that this is not going to be a pristine, finger-food effort. This is going to have machinery and shovels, and a lot of things going on which will be a construction site throughout all of Ocean Pines for approximately the next year and a half to two years."

Rachel Buckley, a residential development professional for Comcast who will act as liaison between the company and the Ocean Pines Board, said she would help oversee commu-

please see **comcast** on page 15

A Time To Remember

After ruling for less than one year, Edward VIII became the first English monarch to voluntarily abdicate the throne on this day in 1936. He chose to abdicate after the British government, public, and the Church of England condemned his decision to marry the American divorcée Wallis Warfield Simpson. On the evening of December 11, he gave a radio address in which he explained, "I have found it impossible to carry on the heavy burden of responsibility and to discharge the duties of king, as I would wish to do, without the help and support of the woman I love." On December 12, his younger brother, the duke of York, was proclaimed King George VI.



Openings available on county boards and commissions

Worcester County Government (WCG) is currently seeking interest from county residents to volunteer to fill open seats on 24 boards and commissions.

Volunteers are the heartbeat of Worcester County. In the event that WCG receives more individuals interested in volunteering for a particular committee than there are available seats, the Commissioners will maintain an interest list to help fill future vacancies."

There are current vacancies on the following boards and commissions: Adult Public Guardianship Board (4), Commission on Aging Board (4), Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board (2), Building Code Appeals Board (2), Drug and Alcohol Abuse Council (4), Economic Development Advisory Board (1), Board of Electrical Examiners (3), Ethics Board (1), Housing Review Board (2), Board of Library Trustees (2), Local Management Board/Initiative to Preserve Families Board (1), Local Development Council for the Ocean Downs Casino (4), Lower Shore Workforce Development Board (1), Planning Commission (2), Recreation Advisory Board (1),

Social Services Advisory Board (1), Solid Waste Advisory Committee (5), Tourism Advisory Committee (2), Water and Sewer Advisory Councils - in Mystic Harbor (2), Ocean Pines (1), and West Ocean City (2), Commission for Women (5), and Board of Zoning Appeals (2). Members of these boards and commissions are appointed by the Worcester County Commissioners.

There is currently one vacancy as an alternate on the Worcester County Property Tax Assessment Appeal Board. Members are nominated by the County Commissioners, with final appointment by the governor of Maryland.

Please send a letter of interest, along with a resume or cover letter outlining any pertinent experience, to admin@co.worcester.md.us or Worcester County Administration at One West Market Street, Room 1103, Snow Hill, Maryland 21863. Visit www.co.worcester.md.us and under Important Links click on County Boards and Commissions to learn about the duties and responsibilities for each board.



Community Calendar NOVEMBER

Monday

Ocean Pines Poker Club

Poker players wanted in Ocean Pines area for Monday evenings. Call 410-208-1928.

Delmarva Chorus

The Delmarva Chorus meets every Monday evening at 7PM at the Ocean Pines Community Center in Ocean Pines, Md. Women of all ages are invited to sing with us. Please contact CAROL at 410-641-6876.

Monday/Tuesday

Sanctioned Duplicate Bridge

Open bridge games Monday at 12 p.m., Tuesday at 10 a.m. at OP Community Center. Call Mary Stover 410-726-1795.

Tuesday

Families Anonymous

From 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at room 37 in the the Community Church at Ocean Pines on Rte. 589. For more information call Carol at 410-208-4515.

Tuesday/Thursday

Poker Players wanted for Gentlemen's Poker in North Gate area Ocean Pines. Game played every Tuesday & Thursday evening 5:45 p.m. to 10:45 p.m. on Pinehurst Rd. Ocean Pines. Call 410-208-0063 for more information.

Wednesday

Quilting Club

Quilters by the Sea meets most Wednesdays at the Ocean Pines Community Center. First Wednesday of the month is Volunteer Day, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., when the group sew or tie quilts for charity. The second and fourth Wednesdays are free sewing or workshops from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The third Wednesday of the month is the business meeting, followed by Show & Tell, from noon to 3 p.m. Open to the public.

Kiwanis Club Meeting

Weekly meetings at 8 a.m. on Wednesdays in the Ocean Pines Community Center. Doors open 7 a.m.

Elks Bingo

Ocean City Elks in Ocean City (behind Fenwick Inn) open at 5:30 p.m. Early birds at 6:30 and bingo at 7 p.m. Call 410-250-2645.

Rotary Club

Ocean City/Berlin Rotary Club meetings are held at 5:45 p.m. at the Captains Table in Ocean City. Contact Stan.Kahn@carouselhotel.com.

Square Dancing

The Pinestepers have introduction to square dancing at the OP Community Center at 7 p.m. Call Bruce Barrett at 410-208-6777.

AL-Anon/OP-West OC-Berlin

Wednesday Night Bayside Beginnings Al-Anon family meetings are held at the Ocean Pines Community Center at 7:30 p.m.

Second Wednesday

The Polish American Club of Delmarva meets at the Columbus Hall, behind St Luke's Church, 100th St & Coastal Hwy, Ocean City, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. the second Wednesday of the month. Come join us if you are of Polish or Slavic descent. No meetings.

June, July, August. Call Helen Sobkowiak 410-723-2639 or Maryann Lula 410-250-2548 for more information.

Thursday

Story Time

Stories, music and crafts at 10:30 a.m. for children ages 3-5 at Ocean Pines library. Call 410-208-4014.

Beach Singles

Beach Singles 45 for Happy Hour at Harpoon Hanna's at 4 p.m. Call Arlene at 302-436-9577 or Kate at 410-524-0649 for more activities. BeachSingles.org.

Gamblers Anonymous

Group meets at 8 p.m. at the Atlantic Club, 11827 Ocean Gateway, West Ocean City. Call 888-424-3577 for help.

Friday

Knights of Columbus Bingo

Bingo will be held behind St. Luke's Church, 100th St. in Ocean City. Doors open at 5 p.m. and games begin at 6:30 p.m. Refreshments available. Call 410-524-7994.

First Saturday

Creative Writing Forum

Every first Saturday of the month at 10 a.m. at the Berlin Library. Novice and established writers gather to share their fiction, non-fiction, and creative writing projects. Program includes critiques and appreciation, market leads, and writing exercises.

Anglers to meet

The Ocean Pines Anglers Club will meet on Saturday, December 14 at 9:30 a.m. in the Ocean Pines library. The speaker will be Mark Sampson, a full time Ocean City charter boat captain who specializes in shark fishing and assisting scientists with shark research. During the late winter and spring Mark works as a back-country fishing guide in the Florida Keys. Mark's subject for the meeting will be flats fishing in Ocean City's bay waters. All are welcome. Members are also asked to bring a non-perishable food item or donation for Diakona, the transitional housing center in West Ocean City.

SCHOOL	Points Earned	Total Possible Points	Total Earned Percent	Star Rating
Buckingham Elementary School	48.2	73	66%	4 Stars
Ocean City Elementary School	51.5	73	70%	4 Stars
Berlin Intermediate School	64.2	100	64%	4 Stars
Pocomoke Middle School	122.8	176.5	69%	4 Stars
Snow Hill Middle School	112.3	176.5	63%	4 Stars
Stephen Decatur Middle School	73.4	96.5	76%	5 Stars
Pocomoke High School	66.7	90	74%	4 Stars
Snow Hill High School	69.2	90	76%	5 Stars
Stephen Decatur High School	70.3	100	70%	4 Stars

Worcester school system tops state in rankings

The Maryland State Department of Education released the new Maryland Report Card website on December 3, containing performance data for every school in the State, including nine schools in Worcester County.

Worcester County has the highest concentration of four- or five-star schools in the state; the only county in Maryland to have 100 percent of schools achieving four- and five-star status. In this year's data release, two Worcester County Public Schools increased from four to five-star status: Stephen Decatur Middle School and Snow Hill High School.

The nine schools eligible to receive star ratings in Worcester County all scored highly in the State's accountability system. The breakdown of these ratings is shown in the accompanying chart.

To receive a star rating, a school must have 45 or more possible points. Some schools may not have possible points for every measure or indicator. In Worcester County, Pocomoke Elementary, Showell Elementary, and Snow Hill Elementary Schools did not reach this possible point threshold, which is why the schools were not issued a star rating. Additionally, Worcester Technical High School and Cedar Chapel Special Schools do not meet the qualifications for a star rating. Four stars are awarded when a school has at least 60% but less than 75% of total earned points percent. Five stars are awarded when a school has at least 75% of total earned points percent.

These scores reflect school performance on multiple components. For elementary and middle schools, the system includes academic achievement, academic progress, progress in achieving English language proficiency,

and measures of school quality and student success. For high schools, the system includes academic achievement, graduation rate, progress in English language proficiency, readiness for postsecondary success, and measures of school quality and student success. For the first time, this year's scores incorporate school composite scores on a statewide School Survey, which is based on input related to safety, community, environment, and relationships.

"I am very proud to report that our schools continue to perform well in Maryland's accountability system, and I am incredibly pleased that two of our schools crossed the five-star threshold in this year's release," said Superintendent of Schools Louis H. Taylor. "That we have the highest concentration of four- and five-star schools in the state is further validation of the great work going on in our schools every day."

Maryland introduced School Report Cards in 2018 for students, parents, educators and community members could better understand how their schools are performing, just as

please see stars on page 4

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Neighborhood Watch Crime Bulletin

By **Chief David C. Massey, Ed.D.**
Ocean Pines Police Department

Tis the Season

With the advent of quick package delivery, there are many times that holiday packages are left on front doorsteps. Unfortunately, this has given rise to the "Package Pirates" which are thieves who quickly run up and snatch packages off victim's front doorsteps. Often, they will ring a doorbell first to see if anyone is home before committing their crime. Some residents now are buying doorbells which activate video cameras as a crime prevention tool.

In Ocean Pines we had a recent case where a resident spotted an individual trying to take a package off a front porch. The video of this incident was utilized by us to identify the individual who attempted to steal a package.

Officers Assaulted

As a large residential community, police often deal with mental health issues, which sometimes can turn violent. Recently, our officers were

dispatched to a residence where an individual was having a violent mental health issue. In an effort to control the individual, two of our police officers were assaulted before they were successful in controlling the individual, who was quite large. Once in custody, the subject was transported to Peninsula Regional Medical Center where he was evaluated and sent to a mental health hospital in secure custody.

Every week in our community we deal with mental health issues in some form. As you see on television, sometimes these events turn violent.

First Degree Burglary Arrest

A 36-year-old female, believed to be homeless, entered several unlocked residences, taking minor articles from each residence. In one case, the resident was in the shower, and confronted the burglar, who fled the scene. Police were able to apprehend the suspect and charge her with several counts of burglary. Many homeless individuals have mental health issues which con-

tribute to their condition.

These cases once again point out the need for basic crime prevention in Ocean Pines. Although Ocean Pines has a relatively low crime rate, no community is immune from crime. Had these victims locked their doors, and not taken safety for granted, they may not have become victims.

Domestic Violence Arrests

Since our last Crime Bulletin, police made two arrests for domestic violence. In another case, our police officers served an arrest warrant for a suspect wanted in Salisbury for the attempted strangulation of his girlfriend. The suspect had re-located to Ocean Pines.

Drunk Driving Arrests:

Police made two driving while intoxicated arrests since our last Bulletin. With the holiday season in full swing, and parties to be attended, please use a designated driver or cab if you intend to drink to a level that affects your ability to safely drive. Police often hear the old, "I only had two drinks" when they stop an intoxicated driver.

Death Investigations

Every death that occurs in Ocean Pines requires a police investigation. While majority of these deaths are for natural health causes, other

stars
from page 3

report cards help parents understand how their kids are doing. The goal of the School Report Card is to bring together school data in an easy-to-understand and usable format to help us ask questions, find answers, make decisions, and act.

The School Report Cards can be found on the new Maryland Report Card website, as well as more information and data about schools and districts. This information can be found at: MdReportCard.org.

deaths require extensive investigation. Since our last report, police investigated a suicide death, by hanging. The victim appears to have had some mental health issues, with previous contact with the police. In addition to this tragic death, police also investigated two other deaths, which were determined to be by natural causes.

Disorderly Conduct Arrest:

Disorderly conduct involves more than a police officer's opinion. It requires a disturbance of the public peace, with one or more citizens as the victim of the disturbance. Police arrested a local individual who continually disturbed his neighborhood with intoxicated ranting that kept up the neighborhood.

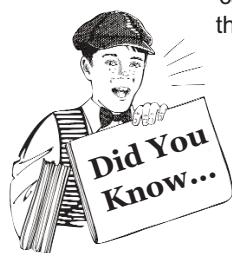
Special Events

The success that Ocean Pines has had in attracting more special community events often requires traffic control for vehicles and pedestrians to these events. Our Neighborhood Watch personnel, as well as our uniformed officers, are responsible for public safety at these events. These recent events required our presence: Ocean Pines Tree Lighting; Health Fair; Veteran's Memorial Veteran's Day Ceremony; and, Thanksgiving Day 2.5K fun/run.

Departmental Awards

Recently, PFC Jason Burns received the department's highest award, the Silver Star Award for bravery. He single-handedly disarmed a resident who was attempting to commit suicide with a knife. Police Officers can make split second decisions in life threatening situations, which are judged in the court of public opinion. In this case, PFC Burns risked his own safety to protect a resident. Great job Jason!

Take a bite out of crime. Join Neighborhood Watch. Call Jim Hamlin at 443-365-0601.



People often associate holiday imbibing with eggnog, but many other beverages can be enjoyed this time of year. Wassail is a hot, mulled cider that was traditionally consumed while wassailing, a ritual of Medieval English Christmas and Twelfth Night celebrations. A warm beverage and caroling go hand-in-hand.

Wassail can be made in many different ways, depending on one's tastes. But cider is an integral ingredient in most wassail recipes. Home cocktail creators can use this basic recipe and modify as they see fit.)

Wassail (Serves 8 to 10)

- 1/2 gallon apple cider
- 2 cups orange juice or pineapple juice
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 8 whole cloves
- 4 cinnamon sticks
- 1 cup orange juice
- Whiskey, if desired

Add all ingredients to a large pot over medium heat. Allow to boil. Reduce and simmer for 30 to 45 minutes. Strain out the cloves and cinnamon sticks. For an alcoholic drink, add whiskey to desired taste.

Wassail is traditionally served out of a communal punch bowl, but can also be presented in individual mugs garnished with cinnamon sticks.

**The
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It's beginning to look a lot like

Traditions abound this time of year as it begins to look a lot like Christmas. In truth, the Five and Ten has been glistening "with candy canes and silver

about that.

My wife loves "A Christmas Carol" and has accumulated different versions of the film with various actors in the lead: George C. Scott, Patrick Stewart and Kermit the Frog. She'll pop these movies in when I'm otherwise occupied. Me? I'm an Alistair Sim loyalist.

Until this year, I never watched "A Christmas Story," the movie about a young boy named Ralphie



It's All About. . .

By **Chip Bertino**

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lanes" since Halloween. But I digress.

It's a time to "haul out the holly" and "turn on the brightest string of lights you've ever seen." For me, as a kid, "Charlie Brown's Christmas," "Frosty the Snowman" and "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" heralded the arrival of the Christmas season, maybe not as much as the arrival of the baby Jesus on Christmas morning, but pretty darn close.

Through the years a tradition has developed for my wife and me. Beginning on Thanksgiving, we begin watching a series of Christmas movies we started collecting back in the days of VHS. I don't know how many we have now; some are still on VHS, some are on DVDs and others are on Blue Ray. There are core movies we screen each year and others we watch when time allows.

Although there's no particular order on what we watch, there is a routine that has emerged through the years. The kick-off movie is always "The Holiday" with Cameron Diaz and Jude Law. I don't know why this one has settled into the lead-off spot but it has. Year after year, we make the same comments about the same characters at the same point in the movie. That's also become tradition.

And then other movies including "Miracle on 34th Street" (the original with Natalie Wood and the 1994 remake), the Ron Howard film, "The Grinch," "Elf" with Will Farrell and "A Christmas Carol" with Alistair Sim fill in the roster. "A Christmas Carol" is usually watched Christmas Eve. And then finally on Christmas Day it's a double feature. We watch "It's a Wonderful Life," usually falling asleep half through, and then "A Walton Christmas," the original movie with Patricia Neal

We don't like colorized versions of black and white movies. We sticklers

whose ideal Christmas gift is a Red Ryder air rifle. Family and friends have through the years laughed about the "major award" or quoted repeatedly, "You'll put your eye out." I was not in on the joke until finally this year we bought a copy of the movie and watched it a couple days after Thanksgiving. Now I get it! What a God-awful lamp! And there's no way I would stick my tongue on a flag pole on a cold December morning no matter how many times I was "triple dared."

"White Christmas" with Bing Crosby is a sentimental favorite because my late father-in-law enjoyed this movie each season. I think he empathized with the veteran Army characters coming together to pay tribute to and assist their commanding general who is retired and trying to make a go of it as an inn keeper. One of the final scenes when the men come to attention for inspection always gets me because there is a sensation that my father-in-law is in the room watching with me.

A new movie, well not a new movie, an old movie new to us, is "The Bishop's Wife" with Cary Grant who plays an angel working to provide divine inspiration to Bishop Henry Brougham (David Niven). We watched it for the first time earlier this year and it is now on our Christmas viewing list.

It's an interesting phenomenon that as I've gotten older, I have no coherent answer when asked what I want for Christmas. There's really nothing I need, nothing I want. Often, I'll respond I want experiences, something I will remember. And now that our children are grown and out of the house the experience of me and my wife curling up on the sofa, maybe with mugs of hot chocolate dolloped with whipped cream, watching what for us are Christmas cinema classics is an experience I like to enjoy each year.



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Association ahead of budget

Once again, Ocean Pines General Manager John Viola had good financial news to report during a regular Board of Directors meeting.

Viola, on December 4, said the Association was ahead of budget more than \$550,000 after the first six months of fiscal 2019/2020.

That figure represents a more than \$433,000 improvement over the prior year. Year to date, revenues beat budget estimates by \$480,711, while expenses were lower than budget by \$70,664.

“Keep in mind, [in] the next six months we do utilize cash [and] we don’t have the revenue coming in that we normally do, so this number will come down,” Viola said. “We do have

an estimate. [Finance Director] Steve [Phillips] and I feel comfortable saying that we definitely will be favorable to budget for the year.”

Viola said the forecast for the end of the fiscal year is to retain roughly 70 percent of the \$550,000 positive budget surplus.

In October, the Association finished more than \$33,000 better than budget, a nearly \$11,000 improvement over the prior year.

Year to date, the Yacht Club, Beach Club, Marinas, Tern Grille and Aquatics all have exceeded numbers from the prior year, while Beach Parking and Racquet Sports were down slightly. Golf was positive nearly \$13,000, but that figure was roughly \$4,000 behind 2018 numbers. Viola

said there was a need for contract services at the course, which contributed to the decrease.

The Recreation and Parks, Public Works, Administration and Finance departments were also ahead of the previous year, while Fire/EMS/Police



Finance Director **Steve Phillips** supplies updates on the transition to new Northstar financial system.

and Public Relations posted worse than budgeted numbers. In both cases, Viola said timing was a factor and the departments should finish in the black.

He also said half a dozen major initiatives either remained on target or had already wrapped. The Sibson Group employee compensation study has finished, and construction of a new Golf cart barn and craft building are on track to finish next month. The new Golf clubhouse and Northstar software rollout should both finish by next May, Viola said.

Treasurer Larry Perrone said the impact to reserves was a projected \$4.4 million balance by April 30,

*please see **budget** on page 11*



Decorating - Students from Berlin Intermediate School (BIS) worked together to create decorations for the BIS Christmas Float. Students pictured above are: **Brody Olsen, Lily Fogle, Abby Bunting, Paxton Jack, Micah Hill, Jayden Garton and Brooke Warren.**

OPA board meeting briefs

The Ocean Pines Board on December 4 unanimously approved five capital purchase requests, extended General Manager John Viola’s contract, and held a first reading for an amendment to Resolution B-01 during a brief regular meeting that lasted just over an hour.

Approved during capital purchase requests were a top dresser and Pro Gator for Golf (\$31,444.90), a Golf cart path repair (\$39,980), Rubaroc replacement for the Mumford’s Landing Pool splash pad (\$31,805), bulk-head work at Wood Duck I (\$325,335) and Wood Duck II (\$140,535), and a

replacement community center audio system (\$16,788.15).

The Directors voted 7-0 to approve a new contract for Viola, without discussion or disclosing specifics of the terms.

Additionally, Director Colette Horn led a discussion on advisory committee orientation meetings, and Director Camilla Rogers introduced a first reading to amend Resolution B-01, the latter of which is a “Declaration of procedures for adoption and classification of board resolutions to establish and maintain a Book of Resolutions.”

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Kiwanis Toy Drive

December 4 marked the last day of the Kiwanis Annual Toy Drive. Toy Drive Chair Dave Landis and wife Rita who, while not a Kiwanis member, did lots of the work. After the last collection at the December 4 meeting, the toys were delivered to Worcester G.O.L.D. (Giving Other Lives Dignity) in Snow Hill for distribution. Pictured (L-R) are G.O.L.D. Executive Director **Sandy Sipes** with Rita and Dave Landis when they delivered the toys.

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TUESDAY, DEC. 31, 2019

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Youth winter wellness camp offered

The Worcester County Health Department will host a free, five-day long health and wellness camp for youth ages 14-17. It will be held December 23, 26, 27, and January 2 and 3. Campers will learn about the importance of health, fitness, setting personal goals and much more. The Winter Wellness Camp is part of Worcester Health's Promoting Health Among Teens program and will feature guest speakers, snacks and lunch, learning activities and field trips to locations around Worcester, plus a trip

to the Altitude Trampoline Park in Delmar, MD.

"Our Winter Wellness Camp is an opportunity for teens to learn about taking care of their personal health, physical and mental," said Mimi Dean, Director of Prevention Services for Worcester Health, "while also having a fun time, going on field trips, and enjoying winter on the shore."

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Knots & Knots by Dan Collins

Santa Baby

*'Twas the night before Christmas,
when all through the slips
Not a vessel was stirring, not even a
skiff.
The dock lines were hung by the pil-
ings with care,
In hopes that King Neptune soon
would be there.*

*The owners were nestled all snug in
their beds,
While visions of jet skiing danced in
their heads.
And Mama in her 'galley, and I on
the beam,
Had just settled our brains for a long
winter's dream.*

*When out on the dock there arose
such a clatter,*

*I sprang from my bunk to see what
was the matter.
Away to the porthole I flew like a
flash,
I turned on the light, and was com-
pletely a gash.*

Arrr, if only poet Clement Moore had been in love with the sea, St. Nicholas would have been a sailor, Dasher and Dancer would have been his crew and when Rudolph showed up 100 years later, he would have been the only guy on the boat who knew how to program the GPS/chart navigation system.

If Charles Dickens had been in love with the sea, then the ghost of Christmas Past would be mariner lore, Christmas present would be the practicalities of winterizing the boat and

Christmas Future would be a count-down to removing the shrink wrap.

Unfortunately, Dickens and Moore were land lubbers and we are forced to make way without their inspiration.

So, let's start with the Ghost of Christmas Past - a review of 2019 - before we "settle for a long winter's nap" watching the 150th year of college football and the 100th year of the NFL.

Although I don't believe there is any official count, it seemed there were more boats beached at both Asateague and the new popular place, the sandbar just north of Hoopers.

What was quantifiable was the continued growth of the White Marlin and our other fishing tournaments. Besides record prize money, this year's White Marlin Tournament got some additional notoriety, with superstar Michael Jordan participating. That was 'nice.'

What was 'naughty' were the storms. None of them were severe enough to knock down the OC Fishing Pier (this year), but we had some

beauts. Besides the high winds that blew during the air show on Father's Day, we had more gusts during the off shore boat races on 29 August that caused the event to be shortened and some gale force blows in October with the passing of a couple nor'easters.

As for Christmas Present, I always have a problem deciding when the season is really over. I like to wait to the very last minute in the optimistic hope that there is still one more day, one more splash of a wave over the bow - until you realize that those November



waves are really cold. Even the crabs know to hunker down. Then I got to scurry and put the baby to bed in the cold, damp, windy, cloudy short days

please see knots page 11



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How birds cope with winter cold

Each autumn as many birds begin epic journeys to warmer climates, there are always some species that stay put for the winter. These winter birds have a better chance of maintaining their territory year-round, and they avoid the hazards of migration. But in exchange they have to endure the cold.

Like us, birds are warm blooded, which means their bodies maintain a constant temperature, often around 106 degrees Fahrenheit. To make enough heat, and maintain it, they've evolved many different strategies, some similar to our own.

Sparrows, for example, seek out shelter in dense foliage or cavities to avoid the elements. They also huddle, bunching together to share warmth, and try to minimize their total surface area by tucking in their head and feet and sticking up their feathers. Cardinals, impossible to miss against the snow, and other smaller birds puff up into the shape of a little round beach ball to minimize heat loss.

"Big birds, like geese and grouse, do what we do," says physiologist David Swanson at the University of South Dakota. "They put on insulation." Their insulation often involves growing an extra set of insulating downy feathers.

Birds can also put on fat as both an insulator and energy source: More than 10 percent of winter body weight may be fat in certain species, including chickadees and finches. As a result, some birds spend the vast majority of their daylight hours seeking fatty food sources, making feeder food even more precious for surviving a frosty night.

When asked which birds are toughest winter survivors, Swanson points to little ones like chickadees. These small creatures can't put on too much bulk for aerodynamic reasons. Instead, explains Swanson, they are experts in shivering. This isn't the familiar tremble that mammals use to generate heat. Birds shiver by activating opposing muscle groups, cre-

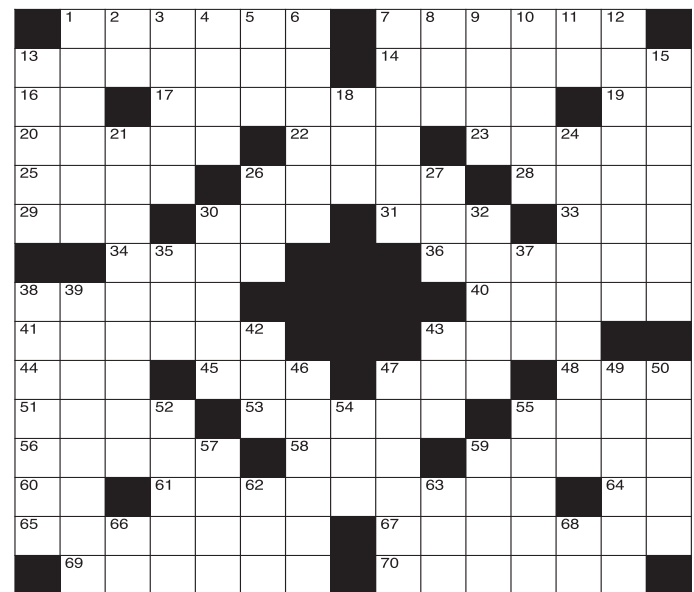
ating muscle contractions without all of the jiggling typical when humans shiver. This form of shaking is better at retaining the bird's heat.

Another adaptation shared by many species is the ability to keep warm blood circulating near vital organs while allowing extremities to cool down. Take gulls. They can stand on ice with feet at near-freezing temperatures while keeping their body's core nice and toasty.

Keeping warm when the sun is up is one thing, but few winter challenges are more daunting than nightfall, when temperatures drop and birds must rely on every adaptation they have to survive their sleep. Some birds save energy by allowing their internal thermostat to drop. Hummingbirds are a famous example of this, undergoing torpor nightly as their body temperature drops close to outside temperatures. But torpor is not too common in winter birds, because the morning warm up would take too much extra energy. Instead, black-capped chickadees and other species undergo a more moderate version of this, reducing their body temperature as much as 22 degrees Fahrenheit from their daytime level in a process called regulated hypothermia.

One simple way to help birds when the weather outside is frightful is to hang feeders. To attract a diversity of birds, select different feeder designs and a variety of foods. A tube feeder filled with black oil sunflower or mixed seeds, for example, will attract chickadees and finches. Woodpeckers devour suet feeders. And a safflower or sunflower-filled hopper feeder entices the usual visitors plus larger birds like cardinals and red-winged blackbirds. (Check out the Audubon Guide to Winter Bird-Feeding for tips.) The birds benefit from the backyard buffet, and you'll have a front-row seat to numerous species flocking to your plants and feeders.

-Audubon.org

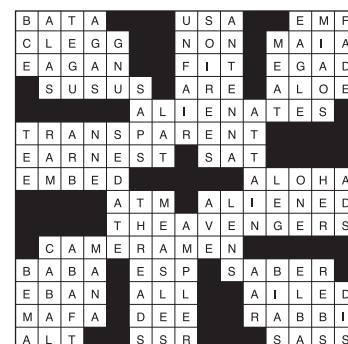


CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Rope used as a lasso
- 7. Lomb's partner
- 13. North African nation
- 14. Rounds up cattle
- 16. Densest naturally occurring element
- 17. Home of the Brewers
- 19. Atomic #44
- 20. Vetches
- 22. Moved earth with a tool
- 23. Cavalry sword
- 25. Supplements with difficulty
- 26. Encouraged
- 28. Speech defect
- 29. Periodical (abbr.)
- 30. Very cold
- 31. ___ Paulo, city
- 33. Former OSS
- 34. Approves food
- 36. Cars need them
- 38. Sweden's dominant phone company
- 40. Long lock of a woman's hair
- 41. North American natives
- 43. Fly high
- 44. One type is fire
- 45. Nocturnal bird
- 47. More than one male
- 48. LOTR actor McKellen
- 51. Employee stock ownership plan
- 53. Tony-winning actress Daisy
- 55. Tennis star Kournikova
- 56. Pulitzer-winning composer
- 58. The opposite to pro
- 59. Safecrackers
- 60. Denotes past
- 61. Parrots
- 64. One quintillion bytes (abbr.)
- 65. Reduce the importance of
- 67. Stiffly
- 69. In a sensible way
- 70. Signs

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Capital of Zambia
- 2. Article
- 3. Country star LeAnn
- 4. Egyptian goddess
- 5. Afflict in mind or body
- 6. Showy but cheap
- 7. Belgian urban center
- 8. Short-winged diving seabird
- 9. Deploys
- 10. Ballplayers can legally do it
- 11. Centiliter
- 12. Contrary beliefs
- 13. Type of pole
- 15. Distinguish oneself
- 18. 8th month of the year (abbr.)
- 21. One who monitors
- 24. Petty quarreling
- 26. Fiddler crabs
- 27. Touch lightly
- 30. American state
- 32. Pro wrestler Randy
- 35. Indicates spelling mistake
- 37. Macaws
- 38. Gradually narrowed
- 39. Installments
- 42. Female sheep
- 43. Politician
- 46. Servant
- 47. Said to facilitate concentration
- 49. California ballplayers
- 50. Once Toledo's tallest building
- 52. A type of pie
- 54. State of southwestern India
- 55. Principal member of Norse religion
- 57. Counterspy
- 59. Wellness practice
- 62. ___-de-sac: dead end street
- 63. Used to cook
- 66. Type of hospital
- 68. Direct message



Answers for December 4

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Bug science

Worcester Prep kindergarteners and third graders simultaneously studied the life cycle of butterflies and ladybugs for weeks this fall as part of their science units. Kelley Burton's and Heather Dennis' kindergarteners raised monarch butterflies while Lisa Good's and Abby Harrison's third graders raised ladybugs in their classrooms. The curious students observed their insects going through similar metamorphosis by recording and illustrating the life cycle changes they witnessed. Both the butterfly and ladybug go through four similar stages including: the egg, the larvae, the pupa and the adult stage.

Above: Third grader **Artemiy Klimins** releases his ladybug.

budget
from page 6

2020, a decrease from just over \$8.8 million at the start of the fiscal year. That includes almost \$2.8 million in replacement reserves, \$1.1 million in bulkheads and \$569,000 in roads.

"We're comfortable with those numbers, at this point," Perrone said.

The fiscal 2020/2021 budget, meanwhile, is well ahead of schedule. Viola plans to deliver his budget draft to the Board before Christmas.

"We are committed to handing over the binders and the proposed draft budget to [the Budget and Finance Committee] and the Board, December 23," he said.

Phillips provided additional detail on the Northstar software implemen-

tation, specifically that the new systems are now live for Administration, Recreation and Parks, Public Works and the Sports Core pool.

A landmark for the project was producing October numbers using the new software.

"We were able to close the financials a little bit late, [but] we appreciate the patience," he said. "We were able to get those out before Thanksgiving and produce them in the new system, so we are happy with that result."

Phillips said the Yacht Club should go live in February, followed by the Marina in April and the Beach Club and the rest of Aquatics by the end of April. He added total spending for the software transition forecasts to finish slightly over budget.

knots
from page 9

of late fall.

Besides winterizing the engine and topping the fuel tank with non-ethanol gasoline, you got to get everything off the boat that is not attached and even some of the stuff that is. The obvious loose duffle like lines, personal flotation devices – life jackets and throwables, charts, first aid kits are obvious; but you must also consider gear like the marine radio, ground tackle and covers that will just get stressed by the harsh winter weather.

I usually shrink wrap my boat but the first year I did, I left much of my gear on board because I overestimated the protection of shrink wrap and thought that everything would be ready to go in the spring. Not so. The winter took its toll. Now I strip everything. The garage gets pretty crowded with the batteries on trickle charge and the duffle piled up like an Egyptian pyramid but it keeps winter mildew down to a mild roar.

And finally, there are the Ghosts of Christmas Future. For me, it's the OC Seaside Boat Show in February where shiny new boats without a smudge or a fingerprint let alone a barnacle beckon the big fellow to answer my plea, "Santa baby, I wanna yacht, and really that's not a lot. Been an angel all year." Well, maybe that's a little stretch.

Anyway, in the words of Mr. Moore, "Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night!"

Dan Collins can be reached for comment at dancollins.oceanpines@gmail.com

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Christmas tree tips and tricks

Christmas trees are an iconic symbol of the holiday season. Whether they are personal trees nestled in the corner of a living room for families to enjoy or towering evergreens serving as the focal point of a town square, Christmas trees are a wonder to behold.

Many people have fond memories of time spent around the Christmas tree sharing gifts and family traditions. Live trees and their pine-like aroma can be especially nostalgic trees to include in holiday plans. The National Christmas Tree Association says that approximately 25 to 30 million real Christmas trees are sold in the United States every year. North American trees hail from all 50 states and areas of Canada.



While freshly cut trees can be particularly beautiful and aromatic additions to the season, they require a bit more work than artificial trees in order to remain beautiful and thrive throughout the holiday season. Maintenance can help keep Christmas trees as perfect as possible.

Even though it is tempting to buy a real tree as early as possible, their shelf life is limited even with the best care. Dural Christmas Tree Farm advises that, under the best conditions, a real tree

should last up to four weeks before drying out.

Consider the needles when looking for a real tree. Pull your hand toward your body along the branches. If many needles

fall off, the tree is past its peak.

Think about the room in which the tree will be located. Leave at least 6 inches between the tip of the tree and the ceiling, accounting for the height of the tree stand as well.

If needle retention is a goal, the Scotch pine variety has the best needle retention and a high survival rate, lending to its popularity, offers Precision Tree and Landscape. Douglas fir and balsam fir are other durable trees.

If possible, buy a freshly cut tree from a reputable nursery or tree farm, advises The Old Farmer's Almanac. Many pre-cut trees sold elsewhere were likely cut weeks before and may not be fresh.

Cut the bottom of the tree trunk before bringing it home to facilitate the uptake of fresh water daily. Trees can absorb as much as a gallon of water in a day, so make sure the tree gets fresh water every day.

Keep trees away from as many heat sources as possible and away from direct sunlight to prolong longevity.

According to Karabin Farms in Connecticut, to make a Christmas tree last longer, boil a gallon of water and then dissolve one cup of sugar in the water. Allow to cool. After freshly cutting the trunk, pour in the warm sugar water. Continue to add fresh, cool, plain water to the tree stand afterward.

Once needles begin to fall off with frequency, the tree is reaching its prime. Remove it so it does not become a fire hazard.



Kiwanis supports Builders Club

Another one of the six Kiwanis Student Leadership Programs at local schools received a \$500 check from the Kiwanis Club of Greater Ocean Pines-Ocean City. The Builders Club also held its induction of officers and members the same day. Pictured are the Builders Club members.



Creating - Mendy Fiori's 3rd Grade social studies class at Ocean City Elementary is learning about physical features, climate, and natural resources. They are working hard on creating brochures about Worcester County. Pictured are Alana Brittingham, Ella Conev, Jack Harkins and Colton Rhoad.

Salvation Army seeks donors

The Salvation Army of Lower Eastern Shore is looking for people to adopt a child or family through the Angel Tree Program. The Salvation Army of Lower Eastern Shore is assisting over 470 families and 1,200 children for the 2019 Christmas season and is reaching out to the community to easily help those in need.

Currently there are just over 150 angels left to be adopted. If you would like to sponsor (adopt) an angel, the Angel Trees can be found at the Walmart's in Fruitland, Pocomoke and

Salisbury, Macy's at the Center of Salisbury and at the Administrative Office at the Salvation Army. Each Angel Tree has printed angels that have the name, age, and gift suggestions for a child registered in the program. Angel Trees will be around the community now thru December 15.

Businesses and community organizations that would like to adopt angels or volunteer at the Christmas distribution warehouse can contact Capt. Cristina Trantham at 410-749-7771 ext. 102.

Tides for Ocean City Inlet			
Day	High /Low	Tide Time	Sunrise /Sunset
Th 12	Low	1:04 AM	7:08 AM
	High	7:43 AM	4:40 PM
	Low	1:54 PM	
	High	8:00 PM	
F 13	Low	1:47 AM	7:09 AM
	High	8:28 AM	4:41 PM
	Low	2:40 PM	
	High	8:46 PM	
Sa 14	Low	2:32 AM	7:09 AM
	High	9:14 AM	4:41 PM
	Low	3:27 PM	
	High	9:33 PM	
Su 15	Low	3:20 AM	7:10 AM
	High	10:02 AM	4:41 PM
	Low	4:17 PM	
	High	10:23 PM	
M 16	Low	4:13 AM	7:11 AM
	High	10:51 AM	4:41 PM
	Low	5:10 PM	
	High	11:16 PM	
Tu 17	Low	5:10 AM	7:11 AM
	High	11:44 AM	4:42 PM
	Low	6:05 PM	
W 18	High	12:13 AM	7:12 AM
	Low	6:12 AM	4:42 PM
	High	12:40 PM	
	Low	7:00 PM	

Pine Tones to perform

On Friday, December 13, at 7:30 p.m. the Pine Tones Chorus will present its Christmas Concert at Atlantic United Methodist Church in Ocean City, Baltimore Ave. and 4th Street.

The concert opens with its title song "Everywhere Christmas Tonight." Popular selections will include the all-time favorites: "Have Your Self a Merry Little Christmas" and "Happy Holiday" as sung by Frank Sinatra, Andy Williams and other artists. Cinema fans may recognize "Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas" from the show "Home Alone 2."

"Masters in This Hall" and "Here We Come a-Caroling" are some of the holiday carols in the program.

Classical selections will feature "Gesù Bambino" a song cherished by many stars including Pavaratti. The well know Christmas favorite "O Holy Night" will include a duet performed by Mary Price, soprano and Fr. Michael Moyer, tenor.

The Pine Tones Chorus includes

Children's Theater to perform musical

The Ocean Pines Children's Theater announced that their 2020 production will be Broadway's award-winning musical, "Legally Blonde Jr".

Performances will be hosted at the Ocean City Performing Arts Center (inside the Ocean City Convention Center) on 4001 Coastal Highway, on January 17, at 7 p.m. (doors open at 6:30 p.m.), and January 18, at 3 p.m. (doors open at 2:30 p.m.). Tickets are \$15 and are available online through Ticketmaster or, in-person at the Ocean City Convention Center Box Office during regular business hours. For directions call the Box Office at 410-289-2800. For other inquiries, contact opchildrenstheater@yahoo.com.

Dem committee to meet

The Democratic Central Committee Worcester County will meet Saturday, December 14 from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Berlin library.

All interested persons are welcome to attend. Phone 410-213-1956 for information.

about 55 singers from Ocean Pines, Ocean City, and nearby areas. June Todd is the Chorus Director, Jim Meckley is Assistant Director, and Jenny Anderson is the group's Accompanist. Guest musicians will include: Becca Doughty- percussion, Julie Barton-oboe, Kristilyn Friese-cello, Sally Hendon- flute and Tom Baione- string bass.

Admission is free and an offering will be received. After the concert, guests may enjoy refreshments in the church social hall.

The Pine Tones Chorus has been entertaining local audiences in the Ocean Pines and Ocean City areas since 1984. For additional information, call the Chorus President Dave Holloway, 410-641-5672, or June Todd, 410-289-7373.

Funding for Pine Tones Chorus activities has been from individual donations and patrons as well as the Worcester County Arts Council, Maryland State Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts. These organizations are dedicated to cultivating a vibrant cultural community where the arts thrive.

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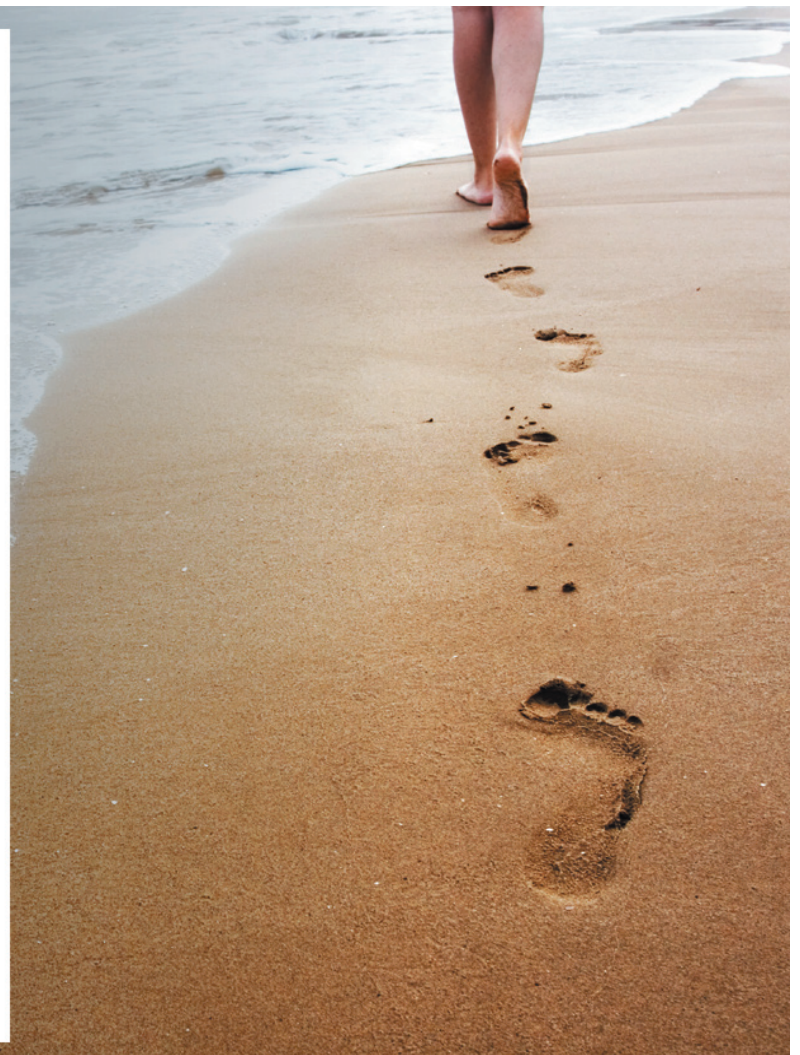
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Commissioners elect new president, vice president

On Tuesday, December 3, the Worcester County Commissioners elected Commissioner Joseph M. Mitrecic as commission president and elected Commissioner Theodore J. Elder as vice president.

Commissioner Mitrecic was elected County Commissioner in 2014 to represent District Seven, the Ocean City District, and is currently serving his second term in office. Prior to being elected president, he served as vice president in 2018 and 2019. He represents the County Commissioners as chair of the Board of Directors of the Tri-County Council (TCC) for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland and as a member of the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC). Commissioner Mitrecic is the owner and president of Mitrecic Builders, a family owned and operated business that has been providing quality construction in Ocean City, Maryland and the surrounding areas for over 30 years. Commissioner Mitrecic has resided in Ocean City for 38 years. He and his late wife, Sheryl, have two children, Jake and Madi.

Commissioner Elder was elected County Commissioner in 2014 to represent District Four, the Western Dis-

trict, and is currently serving his second term in office. He also served as vice president in 2017. Commissioner Elder represents the Commissioners as secretary for the Tri-County Council (TCC) for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland, and represents the Commissioners on the Health Planning Advisory Council. Commissioner Elder has been a successful business owner and operator since 1982, and he has served as a Worcester County bus contractor for over 30 years, where he acted as president of the Bus Contractor's Association for 20 years. He and his wife, Joyce, reside in Whaleyville. The couple has three children, six grandchildren, and three great grandchildren.

The Board of Worcester County Commissioners is the seven-member legislative and executive branch of county government. Each Commissioner is elected to serve a four-year term, and one representative is elected from each of the seven election districts. The current board was elected to serve the 2018-2022 term. The County Commissioners meet the first and third Tuesday of each month in the Worcester County Government Center in Snow Hill.



Visit - Liz Wist from Maryland Coastal Bays visited Ocean City Elementary School to teach second grade students about marine habitats in our area. Pictured with their special guest is Kristie Fogle's class.



Honor Society hosts faculty breakfast

To celebrate American Education Week, the Stephen Decatur High School National Honor Society sponsored its annual faculty breakfast, serving up goodies for over 150 staff members. Greeting the faculty were members **Macy Dietrich, Maxwell Ewancio, Prutha Patel, Richard Poist, Kiley Hamby, Caroline Gardner, Gabby Izzett, Zehra Mirza, Madison Birckett, Sydney Boger and Mikayla Denault.**

Reporting shows AGH as one top performing hospital

Among the state-based regulations that affect all 45 Maryland hospitals is their performance under the Quality-Based Reimbursement (QBR) program administered by the Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission (HSCRC).

In this evaluation, hospitals that achieve higher quality ratings benefit in the form of higher reimbursement rates for medical services according to the Global Budget Revenue (GBR) model.

In the most recent evaluation period covering quality and patient experience data from 2017 and 2018, Atlantic General Hospital was one of just seven Maryland hospitals to receive positive revenue adjustments. In the case of AGH, the calculation resulted in nearly \$200,000 of additional GBR rate adjustments.

Contributing to this outcome, AGH was ranked No. 1 in the entire state for patient experience and tied for No. 5 in patient safety measures.

"The HSCRC's most recent report supports our belief that a commitment to delivering a safe and caring healthcare environment will result in an uncommonly excellent experience for our patients," said Michael Franklin, president and CEO of Atlantic General Hospital.

"We are committed to staying in the top tier of Maryland hospitals in achieving high quality ratings that demonstrate our values and our unwavering commitment to meeting every patient's need," he continued.

Revenues received by Atlantic General Hospital, a not-for-profit organization, are reinvested in existing and new programs and services to support the healthcare needs of the community.

comcast
from page 1

nication with residents and homeowners.

"We are very excited to be here and really looking forward to bringing you our services," she said. "Hopefully, you all are sharing in that excitement as well."

Tom Yates, a senior director of construction at Comcast, said he broke the community into seven sectors and the company would supply a timeline for each sector.

"What we're building here is a hybrid fiber [and coaxial cable] network, so we'll deploy fiber and then that fiber will feed a specific node or a specific area of homes," he said. "Each node will feed approximately 60 homes."

He said there would be about 130 nodes throughout Ocean Pines, with connections directly to homes only occurring if a homeowner buys Comcast service.

"We actually just started construction the day before Thanksgiving," Yates said. "We'll need about a month to understand how much we can do in a given day and then sort of do the project planning off of

that."

At present, he said estimates were that the project would run through the first quarter of 2021, with perhaps the first two sectors receiving service by the second quarter of 2020. The sectors, as defined by Comcast, do not correspond with the sections of Ocean Pines.

Yates said the company would place door tags on homes a few days prior to construction in their area, to include a contact number in case there are any issues.

He added the "open trench construction" would generally include cable buried two-feet deep.

"This is, as you know, an old community [and] there's lots of utilities in the ground," he said. "We sort of work around the other utilities that are there. We do not cut driveways and we do not cut roads."

Yates said Comcast would offer regular construction updates for the Ocean Pines website and "This Week in the Pines" e-blast.

"Every two weeks, we'll upload that to the website and give you a view of exactly

where we're going to be working," he said.

Buckley added if anything else came up between the scheduled updates, Comcast officials would work with Ocean Pines Public Relations to distribute the information.

Along with the Ocean Pines website and e-blasts, Buckley said the Comcast Xfinity retail store on 8301 Coastal Highway in Ocean City could supply more information on Comcast services.

For more information on Comcast's channel lineup, visit www.xfinity.com/support/local-channel-lineup and search zip code 21811.

Comcast officials are working on a larger map of the construction sectors, with street names included, which will also post to www.OceanPines.org.

To view a video of the full town hall, including a question-and-answer session with residents, visit <https://youtu.be/WZj9oNCyMjM>.

The town hall will rebroadcast at 10 a.m. and again at 5 p.m. on Wednesday December 11 and Friday, December 13.

contract
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mentum and to continue to develop our talent from within, as well as cross train to help our employees both now and in the future.

"I'm looking forward to continue being a part of this team that's clearly producing for the Association across the board, as we work towards many needed projects and initiatives," Viola continued. "For Ocean Pines homeowners, we'll also strive to improve customer service and to keep the assessments reasonable."

Association President Doug Parks said it was an easy decision to retain Viola, based on his initial success in the general manager role.

"We've mutually agreed to terms and we're very, very happy to have John continue on in his role in Ocean Pines," Parks said. "We've already seen the success of the partnership he's forged with the Ocean Pines workforce and the Board and I are very anxious to continue that, and maintain not only the progress we've already made, but to continue our planning for the future."

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