

# THE BALTIMORE TIMES

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## Annapolitan leaves lasting legacy City recognizes Carlester Smith with special day



A celebration of Carlester “Buckweat” Smith’s life was held on March 6, 2021 at Pinkey’s Liquors, located on West Street in Annapolis. Mayor Gavin Buckley also proclaimed March 6, 2021 as Carlester Smith Day, in the City of Annapolis. Smith was known for keeping Annapolis litter-free and exhibiting kindness. Flowers, expressions of love scribbled in chalk, balloons, plastic bags, and even Smith’s favorite candy were left near a colorful mural in front of the store depicting Annapolis’s “Walking Man.” (See article on page 7). Photos by Andrea Blackstone



# Need help with food, utilities and tax prep? 2-1-1 is only a call away

By *Quinton Askew*  
President, 211 Maryland

There are so many challenges facing Baltimore residents right now—questions about COVID-19 testing sites and vaccine distribution, how they can access housing and utility assistance, where can they turn to get their tax questions answered and some may be struggling with depression, substance misuse and thoughts of suicide.

There is a statewide nonprofit that can help connect Marylanders to critical health and human services in their area as well as resource and crisis specialists who can lend a listening ear and real-time help...it's 211 Maryland. The organization's professionally trained resource specialists link Marylanders to food, housing, utility assistance and other essential services 24/7/365 to help people navigate the sometimes-confusing maze of assistance program websites and phone numbers.

Last year, Baltimore City residents called on 211 Maryland for access to food pantries, utility assistance, tax preparation help, COVID-19-related information, and more.

**Food Pantries**— The pandemic year of 2020 proved to be one of the most financially difficult years with many



Baltimore City residents experiencing unemployment, and food access became a top concern. More than 19,500 Baltimore City residents called 211 Maryland to connect to emergency food assistance, like St. Veronica's Food Bank, the Salvation Army of Central Maryland, Paul's Place and more.

**Utility Assistance**— If you need help paying your utility bills, energy assistance is available to help income-eligible residents pay their utility bills, and avoid termination notices. More than 100,000 Maryland households benefit from energy assistance from the Maryland Office of Home Energy

Programs (OHEP) each year. Getting energy assistance will not reduce other public assistance that you might receive, including (but not limited to) food stamps or Social Security benefits, and the utility assistance does not have to be paid back.

211 Maryland call center specialists will explain how to apply, the verification documents you'll need to have on hand and best practices for applying.

**Tax Preparation**— With tax season upon us, there are lots of bad actors, or fraudulent tax preparation services, that prey on older adults during this time of year, so it's critical for Marylanders to identify credible tax prep services. A trustworthy place to start is by calling 2-1-1 to be referred to free (and credible) tax preparation programs, like VITA, AARP or MyFreeTaxes.com, which is powered by the United Way.

In the past two years, more than 7,400

Baltimore City residents turned to 211 Maryland to help them identify free and trustworthy tax preparation programs that can help them navigate the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) tax system. This number is expected to rise in 2021 as more people have questions about the Maryland Relief Act of 2021 and missing stimulant checks.

**COVID-19 Related Info**— 211 Maryland partners with the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) to keep an open line of communication about the latest testing and vaccine availability in the state. Through 211 Maryland's texting platform, you can text MDReady to 898-211 to opt-in to the latest COVID-19 updates.

**Mental Health and Substance Misuse**— Along with all of the pressures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in needs related to mental health and substance misuse throughout Maryland and in Baltimore City. 211 Maryland offers confidential crisis response for substance abuse, mental health, and suicide emergencies by calling 2-1-1, Press 1. A live person is at the other end of the phone to listen and help. For ongoing supportive messaging, anyone can text MDMindHealth or MDSaludMental to 898-211 and subscribe.

The list of resources and information available to Marylanders is endless through 211 Maryland – dial 2-1-1 – or access its suicide prevention and substance misuse hotline by dialing 2-1-1, Press 1 and visit its website at [www.211md.org](http://www.211md.org).

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# Guest Editorials/Commentary

## NFL hires first Black woman referee

By Stacy M. Brown

NNPA Newswire Senior National Correspondent

@StacyBrownMedia

Maia Chaka knows well that Women's History Month is all about commemorating, observing and celebrating the vital role of the fairer sex in American folklore. She just didn't know she would become a part of that history.

After years of officiating games in the Pac-12, Conference USA, and the NFL's Officiating Development Program, Chaka will head to the NFL in the fall.

When she takes the field in September, the Norfolk State University graduate and health and physical education teacher will do so as the first Black woman to work as a referee in the NFL. She'll also be just the second woman to wear the zebra stripes. Sarah Thomas, who worked last month's Super Bowl, is the other.

"This is a funny thing. I was actually at home, and I was playing NBA2K with my nephew online because that's what I like to do at night," Chaka told NNPA Newswire just hours after an appearance on NBC's "Today" show. "Then, I received a phone call at around 9:15 p.m. [March 4], and I just dropped everything I was doing. The next thing I know, I'm getting told 'welcome to the National Football League.'"

Did she think it was for real?

"I just jumped up and threw everything off my lap. I thought I was being punked because I didn't believe it at the time. But it was true," she remarked.

Troy Vincent, an African American and the NFL's second-in-command behind Commissioner Roger Goodell, celebrated Chaka's appointment.

"Maia's years of hard work, dedication, and perseverance—including as par to the NFL Officiating Development Program—have earned her a position as an NFL official," Vincent said. "As we celebrate Women's History Month, Maia is a trailblazer as the first Black female official and inspires us toward normalizing women on the football field."

Chaka told NNPA Newswire that she expects coaches and players to treat her the same as any other official.

"I think the coaches just want a good official who is going to get the play right," Chaka said. "And I think they just want consistency. I hope they do not hold us to a different standard [than men] because we are all officials at the end of the day. It does not matter what gender we are. We are all wearing the same uniform."

The importance of her historic promotion isn't lost on Chaka.

"It's an honor to join the National Football League," commented Chaka, who works with at-risk girls in Virginia. "I just want young girls of color— young women—to know that if you have a drive for something, don't let anything hold you back just because you think something may give you some limitations. Work hard and follow your dreams."

Her promotion to the big league also demonstrates to women of color that they can work and succeed in a male-dominated field, according to Chaka.

"As long as you put in the work and you are fundamentally sound in anything that you do, you know you will reach your goal," Chaka said. "I think it's important that they see the representation in these fields."

Asked if she would switch from playing NBA2K with her nephew and challenge him to Madden Football, Chaka demurred. "No, he couldn't handle me on Madden," she retorted.

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## Community Affairs

### Governor Hogan issues emergency order preventing garnishment of new federal stimulus payments

Annapolis— Governor Larry Hogan issued an emergency order prohibiting garnishment of Economic Impact Payments provided under H.R. 1319, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

"For more than a year now, COVID-19 has caused incredible hardships for the people of our nation and our state," said Governor Hogan. "This funding is intended to support working families

and struggling Marylanders, and we are committed to doing everything possible to protect this much-needed relief for those who need it most."

The governor's order provides that (1) American Rescue Plan Act Economic Impact Payments are exempt from, and shall not be subject to, garnishment; and (2) all financial institutions are ordered to consider these payments as protected and cannot be subject to a court-ordered garnishment.

Last April, the Governor Hogan also issued an emergency order prohibiting garnishments of CARES Act Recovery Rebates.

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## Energy policies and potential impacts on household budgets

**By R. Dean Foreman, Ph.D.**  
**Chief Economist**  
**American Petroleum Institute**

Most people are concerned when energy costs rise, especially prices at the pump. It's understandable since the average household spent nearly \$4,100 on energy in 2019, per the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' (BLS) Consumer Expenditure Survey.

For more than a decade, expanded U.S. energy production helped lower energy costs, giving consumers more disposable income to afford other essentials like food, education and healthcare, which rose by 27 percent, 38 percent, and 75 percent, respectively, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

However, with U.S. natural gas and oil production down recently, energy costs have been on the rise. The price of crude oil, historically the biggest factor in the cost of gasoline, has risen nearly 30 percent year over year (y/y), and consequently gasoline prices were up 14

percent y/y as of March 8, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA). Electricity and natural gas bills also have increased faster than overall consumer price inflation so far in 2021.

Further energy cost increases could result from the Biden administration's

While spending on energy since 2009 fell 10 percent to 15 percent across every income bracket, Americans' non-energy spending on housing, vehicles, maintenance and insurance rose the fastest among those who could least afford increases. Real housing expenditures (excluding energy) by the

which the auto industry suggested in January would cost more than \$1 billion annually; plus incentives and/or state requirements like California's which mandate residential solar panels on new construction, estimated to add \$8,400 to the cost of a single-family home. Each of these would add up-front costs that disproportionately impact the 60 percent of U.S. households earning \$53,123 or less in 2019, per BLS.

To be clear, the industry supports higher energy efficiency where it is cost effective. However, policies that undermine domestic energy production and blanket regulations that favor certain technologies over others for vehicles or homes could harm consumers.

Higher costs for housing, vehicles and energy could ultimately require making sacrifices in the American way of life. Energy policies that could raise these costs should be discussed clearly and in the context of what is affordable to American households.

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***“While spending on energy since 2009 fell 10 percent to 15 percent across every income bracket, Americans’ non-energy spending on housing, vehicles, maintenance and insurance rose the fastest among those who could least afford increases. Real housing expenditures (excluding energy) by the lowest 40 percent of U.S. households by income increased about 10 percent between 2009 and 2019—roughly three times the rate among wealthy households.”***

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decision to halt new federal natural gas and oil leasing, potentially reducing domestic production, as well as other possible actions that could limit drilling or hydraulic fracturing. These could put upward pressure on energy costs that then could ripple across the broader economy.

Yet, energy policy choices could affect far more than just what you pay for a gallon of gasoline or your monthly electricity bill.

For example, imagine trying to make ends meet if U.S. energy policies raised the costs of housing and vehicles, in addition to the energy they require. Housing, vehicles and energy represent more than half of a typical household's expenditures.

lowest 40 percent of U.S. households by income increased about 10 percent between 2009 and 2019—roughly three times the rate among wealthy households. Over the same period, real household spending on vehicles, insurance and public transit rose 35 percent among the lowest 20 percent of households by income, more than twice the rate of wealthier households.

These concerns loom over an economy where vehicles and housing have recently become even more expensive for some.

Now consider the potential costs of electric vehicles and charging infrastructure, which the administration is signaling it wants the nation to transition to and build; the ratcheting up of fuel economy standards,

*Dr. R. Dean Foreman is API's chief economist and an expert in the economics and markets for oil, natural gas and power with more than two decades of industry experience including ExxonMobil, Talisman Energy, Sasol, and Saudi Aramco in forecasting & market analysis, corporate strategic planning, and finance/risk management. He is known for knowledge of energy markets, applying advanced analytics to assess risk in these markets, and clearly and effectively communicating with management, policy makers and the media.*

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# Baltimore Times Writer Ursula Battle Honored for Her Work in the Arts

By Stacy M. Brown

There is not much Ursula V. Battle hasn't accomplished in her career.

The playwright and Baltimore native has repeatedly guided her Battle Stage Plays to new heights while inspiring, educating, and encouraging her audiences with riveting drama, powerful song, and even belly-hurting laughter.

A one-time "Playwright of the Year" recipient, Battle has added another honor to her long list of awards.

In recognition of National Women's History Month, the Patapsco River (MD) Chapter of The Links, Inc. honored Battle and others during its 18th Annual Women in the Arts Talent Showcase.

The organization honored Battle with this year's national theme: "Valiant Women of Freedom: Refusing to Be Silent."

According to the Links, the theme honors the brave women who fought to win suffrage rights for women and the "she-ros" who continue to fight for others' civil and human rights.

"What an incredible event!" Battle exclaimed.

"It was humbling to be honored among so many talented women who are all exceptional in their own right. Kudos to the Patapsco River (MD) Chapter of The Links for all of their hard work in bringing this outstanding event to fruition."

Battle continued:

"I can still recall the disappointment we all collectively felt after the event was postponed last March due to COVID-19.

"But in the true spirit of this event, which honors those who refuse to be silent, this group of incredible women pressed on, refusing to let even COVID stop them. I am forever grateful for this prestigious honor and the Chapter's efforts in showcasing the talents of African-American women in the Arts."

The annual event celebrates African American women's artistic talents and achievements. Those who have made tremendous contributions to the community through their magnificent expressions of visual, literary, and performing arts.



**Ursula V. Battle, playwright**  
Courtesy photo

A graduate of the Broadcasting Institute of Maryland, an award-winning journalist and public relations professional, Battle is a Magna Cum Laude graduate of Coppin State University, where she earned her bachelor's degree in English and a minor in Journalism.

She earned her master's degree from the University of Baltimore (UB), where she majored in Publications Design.

Battle, who writes for the Baltimore Times, also is the recipient of numerous journalistic, creative writing, and other awards, including the Maryland, DC Press Association and Society of Professional Journalist Award, the NAACP's Thurgood Marshall Community Leadership Award; The Baltimore Marketing Association's Scholarship Award; and the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO) Alumni Award.

She earned induction into the Broadcasting Institute of Maryland's Hall of Fame and has authored winning essays chosen by Fox 45/WNUV and The Maryland Daily Record.

"The Links, Incorporated focuses our service in five areas, one of which is the Arts," said attorney Kimberly Y. Robinson, president of the Patapsco River (MD) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated

"Through Women in the Arts, the Patapsco River (MD) Chapter celebrates the talent of African-American women artists. The event honors these incredible creative spirits while bringing their performances to the Baltimore County community," Robinson added.

Exposing the community and youth to various artistic formats is important because, throughout history, the African American community has contributed to American culture through art, Robinson noted further.

"Women in the Arts celebrates this ongoing legacy of uplifting and bettering our community through artistic expression," she said.

"Each year, Women in the Arts falls near the intersection of Black History Month and Women's History Month. Like the themes of these two months, the women we honor live inter-sectional lives. As an organization of African American women, we are proud to take the opportunity to highlight and elevate the voices of women of color as a hallmark of this event."

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## Annapolitan leaves lasting legacy City recognizes Carlester Smith with special day

By Andrea Blackstone

Almost everyone who grew up in Annapolis is familiar with the popular name, Carlester “Buckwheat” Smith. He was known for walking with pep in his step, moving his arms swiftly donning a contagious smile. According to the Facebook page entitled, “Carlester Smith: The Walking Man’s Mural,” Smith passed away early this month.

A celebration of Smith’s life was held on March 6, 2021 at Pinkey’s Liquors on West Street thanks to owner, Paul Malley. Expressions of love scribbled in chalk, flowers, balloons, plastic bags, and even Smith’s favorite candy were left near the colorful mural in front of the store depicting Annapolis’s “Walking Man.” The mural scene reminds onlookers that Smith was known for carrying plastic bags in his hands, eagerly picking up trash and cleaning up his beloved city just the way he loved to do.

Annapolis Mayor Gavin Buckley proclaimed March 6, as Carlester Smith Day, in the City of Annapolis. The proclamation mentioned Smith’s daily walks on West Street in Parole, while picking up trash. It also stated that Smith was born in 1957, grew up in the Obery Court community in the City of Annapolis, and died on March 1, 2021. He reportedly played basketball at Stanton Center and became an honorary member of Tommy-Tom Marching Band. Although illness prevented Smith from continuing to pick up trash, clean parking lots, and wash windows immediately before his passing, the proclamation reminded the community that “Carlester Smith: The Walking Man’s Mural’s Facebook page” has gained 13,000 followers where city residents celebrate Smith with affection and admiration in the online space.

“We were sad to hear the news about Carlester’s passing, but we are grateful for the legacy of kindness he has left our city. We are working with community partners on a citywide cleanup day that we hope to announce later in the spring. He will be missed,” Mayor Buckley said in an email.



*A team of artists painted the mural of Carlester “Buckwheat” Smith in July 2020 at Pinkey’s West Street Liquors located 1100 West Street, which was documented by photographers and a film crew. File Photo/Christian Smooth*



During the summer of 2020, Comacell Brown, Jr. and other artists completed the mural in Smith’s honor. Brown was among many who had childhood memories of seeing Smith. Many years later, the talented artist had an opportunity to help to honor a man who planted seeds of pride and kindness in the hearts of people of all ages.

Brown says the campaign to raise money to create the mural and to donate to Smith’s care was hosted by local

**Photo: Andrea Blackstone**

musician Kevin Lebling and Annapolis’s City leaders, as well as other area musicians.

“I felt honored to participate in creating the concept for the Carlester mural, as a lead artist with the help of several artist friends of mine who either knew his story or adopted it through the stories we shared [about] him. We took pride in giving him flowers while he was alive to receive them. We need a lot more



**Photo: Andrea Blackstone**

of that in my community,” Brown said. “Carlester wasn’t able to see the mural, but he was aware of it by his sisters. It empowered me as an artist to know that I can serve as an artistic vanguard to the City of Annapolis while memorializing our legends.”

Even after the celebration on March 6, passersby continued to trickle onto the scene reflecting on “The Walking Man’s” legacy. Others snapped photographs of the mural or signed a guest book from the community event. When Smith appeared up and down West Street, no one could argue that one man made a difference by instilling pride in Annapolitans of all ages, and promoting a sense of community. Smith’s enduring legacy to keep Annapolis litter-free is a powerful testament of his influence.

“Mr. Smith was a true class act. He strived to make Annapolis a better place, and he did just that. We are grateful we were given the opportunity to show our gratitude to Carlester and his family,” the Facebook page team said in a message. “His smile and spirit will always remain firmly rooted on West Street.”



## Celebrate Women's History Month with Destinii Williams' debut book 'Birthing A New'

By Alanah Nichole Davis

Destinii Williams is a classic Baltimore woman. A proud Baltimore City College graduate, she is birthed of her experiences at two powerful HBCUs— Bowie State and Coppin State Universities— where she obtained her Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies with concentrations in early childhood and elementary education.

Like many young people in a city like Baltimore where drugs, crime and poverty are pervasive in Black communities— block-to-block— Destinii and her siblings were raised by her Grandmother in Park Heights.

“My Grandmother had my two older brothers who would run the streets; myself, my younger brother and two sisters to look after. In total there were seven of us and she still managed to have me in dance classes, sports and beauty pageants,” Williams said.

Luckily, her matriarch wasn't alone in raising them. There were folks in the neighborhood who helped greatly, like her Godmother who lived across the street from them on Rosalind Avenue, according to Williams.

Williams says her inspiration to write initially came from an opportunity she had to play the role of Harriet Tubman in a school play in the second grade.

“Something about Harriet Tubman's legacy just really inspired me to really take ownership over who I wanted to be when I grew up, even at an age where there was no way that I could control it,” Williams said.

Girded with the advice to journal through everything by one her cousins, Williams persevered; and over twenty years later has written out much of what she experienced then and now in her debut book, *Birthing A New*.

“Even with everything in my environment, I'd affirm to myself that I was going to be something great,” she said.

A fierce young Black woman, Williams is also an author, editor, full-figured model, social media personality, administrative professional for a prestigious organization, and now the mother of two after a pregnancy during the pandemic.



**Baltimore native Destinii Williams is the author of "Birthing A New," where she explores the life she has built for herself and her husband and children right here in the city.** Courtesy Photo

Much of her work broadly displays the true meaning of creating the life you may want to live as a multi-hyphenated and very busy woman in this modern world.

In “Birthing A New,” Williams explores the life she has created for herself in Baltimore alongside her partner Rickie, daughter Kayli, stepson Aiden, and their newly born son Asé. Illustrations by Maryland Institute College of Art Alum and Faculty Mikea

Hugley are laced throughout the book and are all in the theme of transformation.

“Like a butterfly in its chrysalis,” Williams said.

To churn out the book mid-pandemic, Williams partnered with Silent Books Publishing a new Black Women Led publishing house in Baltimore founded by writer and adjunct professor at Baltimore City Community College, Angel Wilson, author of *Am I Doing This Right*.

Within the pages of *Birthing A New*, this breakout author expresses some very relatable narratives of women's experiences.

“I wanted to have a tangible example of my story and I hoped for it to be an example of what us women go through collectively when it comes to all of the many things we experience in this life with regard to love, child-rearing, and being in the work world,” said Williams.

Williams says that she is inspired by the collective work of Toni Morrison— especially her book “Home.”

“Reading *Home* was an assignment in an African American literature class that I was taking years ago. It inspired me to take myself seriously as a writer and as an author. Toni's work touched on the idea of home as a concept being something you can carry with you and not something that is always tangible,” Williams said.

Like many of us over the last year, Williams found time during what she says was a stillness, caused by the pandemic that sometimes felt lonely because she didn't have her girls, her friends, her godmother and her grandmother like she did on Rosalind Avenue in Park Heights.

“I have a very loving partner, Rickie who while our relationship has been fulfilling and truly a dream come true but he's just not a girl or a woman,” she chuckled.

Sometimes as women, we need sisterhood and camaraderie and that's what Williams hopes she delivers in her book, *Birthing A New*.

“Birthing A New” is available from Charm City Books, Greedy Reads, Normals Bookshop and Red Emma's Bookstore Coffeehouse. It's also available online at: [destiniiwilliams.com](http://destiniiwilliams.com)

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## Dr. Kerri Moseley-Hobbs' speaks at Bay to Ocean Writers Conference

Eastern Shore, Md.— On Saturday, March 20, 2021 in the Chincoteague Bay Breakout Room, author and historian, lecturer Dr. Kerri Moseley-Hobbs will speak at the 2021 "Bay to Ocean Writers Conference," (BTO) at 11:45 a.m. via Zoom.

The writers' conference is an annual event hosted by the Eastern Shore Writers Association (ESWA), which serves the writing community in Delmarva Peninsula and has been voted the best writers' conference by *The Writers Magazine*.

Dr. Moseley-Hobbs is the author of the creative non-fiction book "More Than a Fraction: Based on a True Story."

Thirty sessions will be offered at the BTO Writers Conference under the following topics: fiction for beginning writers; fiction for advanced writers; poetry, craft of writing; publications, promotions and social media, and memoir and other non-fictions. Dr. Kerri Moseley-Hobbs' session is under memoir and nonfiction titled "Writing Historical to Bay Context for Modern Relevancy." The session will talk about ways to approach writing historical events and figures in a way that modern readers can see themselves; tips on writing history in a way that individuals are humanized rather than as a list of facts, stereotypical habits, rhetoric or actions.

Dr. Moseley-Hobbs is CEO of the



**Dr. Kerri Moseley-Hobbs**  
Courtesy Photo

More Than a Fraction Foundation and is over 30 years into a career in education (administration, research and program development). She is one of the leading speakers on the history of Africans in America and African-Americans of the Appalachian region. Dr. Kerri Moseley-Hobbs has guest lectured for such educational institutions as Virginia Tech. She is a fifth-generation descendant of John Fraction, the subject of her book "More Than a Fraction."

For more information about the Eastern re Writers Association, visit: [www.EasternShoreWriters.org](http://www.EasternShoreWriters.org) and for more information about Dr. Kerri Moseley Hobbs, visit: [www.MoreThanaFraction.org](http://www.MoreThanaFraction.org)

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## March is National Pet Poison Prevention Month:

# Keep your pets safe with tips from Best Friends Animal Society

Watching your dog or cat get sick from toxic items or poison is a nightmare for any pet owner. Symptoms of poisoning can be especially traumatic, ranging from seizures and vomiting to nosebleeds and diarrhea.

“Nobody wants to see their pets suffer in such a painful way or, worst-case scenario, have a fatal incident. That’s why it’s important to make sure your home environment keeps dogs and cats as safe as possible,” said Dr. Erin Katribe, veterinarian and medical director for Best Friends Animal Society.

As March is Pet Poison Prevention Month, Best Friends encourages pet owners to protect their pets from potential ingestion of any of the following: Antifreeze; Bait for rodents; Batteries (which can contain corrosive fluid); Car care products, such as cleaners or oils; Fertilizer; Gorilla Glue (or similar products); Household cleaners; Ice-melting products; Medications – prescribed and over-the-counter; Nicotine products; Pesticides for insects; Pool or pond products

“Pets can be very inquisitive, so it’s always best to keep these items in a sealed cabinet area that your pets cannot have access to, whether that’s in the home, in a shed, or in a garage,” said Katribe said. “If you use any of these products, always make sure to clean up any spillage immediately and thoroughly so ingestion can’t happen that way, either.”

Food can be toxic to pets, so it’s always important to remember to never give or allow your pets to have access to any of the following: Alcoholic beverages; Substances



***Pets can be very inquisitive, so Best Friends Animal Society encourages pet owners to protect their pets from potential ingestion of poisonous and dangerous products. It is always best to keep these items in a sealed cabinet that your pets are unable to access. Should your pet show any signs of poisoning, contact your veterinarian immediately.***

**Photo Credit: ClipArt.com**

containing caffeine, such as coffee; Chocolate; Fatty foods, especially drippings and grease from cooking Chicken and turkey bones; Grapes and raisins; Onions and garlic; Macadamia nuts; Salt and sugar; and Yeast or bread dough.

“Plants can also be toxic and poisonous to pets,” Katribe said. “These plants include English ivy or holly, lilies, Chinaberry, iris, poinsettia, pokeweed and daphne. For cats, even contact with the pollen of some lilies can be severely toxic.”

Should your pet show any signs of poisoning, which include vomiting, diarrhea; seizures; blood in stool; paralysis; loss of appetite; bruising; nosebleeds; irregular heartbeat or inability to urinate; a veterinary consult is in immediate order.

Call your veterinary office or an emergency clinic as soon as possible to let them know of your pet’s symptoms and what they could have possibly ingested. The veterinary staff may be able to provide instructions on how to help decrease the severity of the

situation prior to coming in or they may advise that you come in immediately,” Katribe said. “Time is of the essence when it comes to minimizing the dangerous effects of any poison, so every second counts.”

Founded in 1984, Best Friends is a pioneer in the no-kill movement and has helped reduce the number of animals killed in shelters from an estimated 17 million per year to around 625,000. For more information, visit [bestfriends.org](http://bestfriends.org).

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