

# The Courier

December 22, 2021 Volume 22 Number 16

Merry Christmas!



# Thank You!

*The mission of The Worcester County Veterans Memorial at Ocean Pines Foundation is to create and maintain, in perpetuity, a suitable memorial to honor and preserve the unselfish contributions to the security and freedom of our country by the men and women of our military services.*

*The Memorial benefits greatly from the financial donations of individuals and businesses. Additionally many individuals volunteer countless hours throughout the year to assist in the numerous programs like student visitations and events such as the Memorial and Veterans day celebrations.*

*Our community is indebted to the men and women who have and are currently serving our country.*

*Our Memorial is indebted to our community and those it honors.*

*Thank you to the businesses and individuals that have supported the Memorial during this year.*

*May the blessings of the season touch all those who*



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purchase a brick or paver go to [www.OPVETS.org](http://www.OPVETS.org).***



# OPA survey shows high community satisfaction

Overall satisfaction, what is most important to property owners, core values, and feedback on key issues were top goals for a recent community survey, according to Strategic Planning Committee Co-Chairperson Bernie McGorry.

McGorry, in a presentation to the Ocean Pines Board on December 11, said the survey concluded in November and included 1,838 respondents. Of those, 1,127 or 61.3% were full-time resident homeowners, while 684 (37.2%) were part-time owners. A majority, 51.9%, were female.

He said the committee was thrilled with the engagement and response of the community, adding some national polls only include 1,000 responses. The Ocean Pines survey, he said, nearly doubled the goal for responses.

McGorry said roughly 65 of the surveys were paper copies and the rest were completed online.

He said most of the survey respondents were 51-80 years of age, which is likely similar to the median age of homeowners.

McGorry said those polled were happy with the community as a whole, with 95.2% either somewhat satisfied, very satisfied, or extremely satisfied being a property owner.

"You hear things on social media but, overall, Ocean Pines residents are very satisfied and they're very likely to recommend Ocean Pines to others," he said. "My overall takeaway is ... Ocean Pines residents are very happy, in general."

Additionally, he said 83% were likely to recommend Ocean Pines as a place to live.

McGorry said homeowners singled out three issues as most important to them. He said 95.2% percent said safety is either very important or extremely important, while 94.2% said the same about maintenance of infrastructure, and 89.8% said the same about community appearance and aesthetics.

As for how Ocean Pines is currently handling those issues, McGorry said safety rated "slightly above expectations" (3.83 out of 5), while maintenance of infrastructure (2.78) and community appearance (3.16) roughly met expectations.

"In general, we're doing pretty good," he said, adding maintenance of

infrastructure had the largest gap between importance and level of satisfaction.

"We have a 50-year-old community [and] there's a lot of work to be done with drainage and road maintenance, bridge maintenance [and] bulkheads," he said. "That was the biggest gap ... the difference between what was important and whether people were satisfied with how we're doing."

What that means going forward, McGorry said, is likely a committee recommendation that Ocean Pines "continue to invest heavily in infrastructure."

On core values, McGorry said all four core values listed in the survey rated highly. Integrity rated at the top (86.4% answering "very important" or "extremely important"), followed by accountability (82.2%), collaboration (76.3%) and sustainability (74%).

On top issues and challenges facing the community, the survey found transparency between the Association

*please see **survey** on page 6*

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# Yes, Virginia there is a Santa Claus

By **Chip Bertino**

During the 19th century, newspapers were the predominant news media. Newspapers published numerous editions each day that were sold by scores of newsboys hawking them on street corners. Newspapers played a critical role in forming public opinion. The power of newspapers across the United States was unsurpassed as they held sway over politicians and readers alike. So, it was in 1897, when the *New York Sun* received a rather unique letter from a young reader, Virginia O'Hanlon, wanting to know whether or not there was a Santa Claus.

The letter ended up on the desk of veteran editor, Francis P. Church. Mr. Church was the son of a Baptist minister. He had covered the Civil War for the *New York Times* and had worked for the *New York Sun* for 20 years be-

coming the paper's anonymous editorial writer. Mr. Church realized neither he nor the paper could ignore the child's question. He must answer it and answer it truthfully. His response became one of the most memorable editorials in newspaper history.

Again, this holiday season, *The Courier* thought it would be interesting to step back in time when things seemed a little simpler and the answer to a child's question could captivate and resonate through time.

**Editor:**

I am eight years old. Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says "If you see it in The Sun it's so." Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus?

*Virginia O'Hanlon.*

**Virginia,**

Your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except what they see. They think nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours, man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus.

He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have not enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The external light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies. You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if you did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see

fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived could tear apart. Only faith, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernatural beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus? Thank God he lives and lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay 10 times 10,000 years

from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!!!

Mr. Church's editorial was an immediate sensation and was published every year until the paper folded in 1949. Mr. Church married shortly after the editorial appeared. He died in April 1906, leaving no children.

Virginia O'Hanlon went on to graduate from Hunter College with a Bachelor of Arts Degree at the age of 21. The following year she received a Master's degree from Columbia. In 1912 she began teaching in the New York school system and later became a principal. After 47 years as an educator she retired. Throughout her life she received a steady stream of mail about her Santa Claus letter. Virginia O'Hanlon Douglass died in 1971 at the age of 81 in a nursing home in Valatie, NY.



## Courier Almanac

On December 22, 1956, a baby gorilla named Colo entered the world at the Columbus Zoo in Ohio, becoming the first-ever gorilla born in captivity. Weighing in at approximately 4 pounds, Colo, a western lowland gorilla whose name was a combination of Columbus and Ohio, was the daughter of Millie and Mac, two gorillas captured in French Cameroon, Africa, who were brought to the Columbus Zoo in 1951. Before Colo's birth, gorillas found at zoos were caught in the wild, often by brutal means. In order to capture a gorilla when it was young and therefore still small enough to handle, hunters frequently had to kill the gorilla's parents and other family members.



The first Christmas celebrated on American Land was in 1539 in Tallahassee, FL. There were no trees or presents, just a religious mass. The word "Merry" in Merry Christmas was not always accepted because being merry used to signify slight intoxication.

-Christmas Facts: 45 Interesting Things You Didn't Know ...

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# Santa's Sleigh or "Little Saint Nick" (according to the Beach Boys)

## Model/year:

unknown (as old as imagination)

**Units Produced:** one

**Base Price:** priceless

Santa's sleigh creates a quite a conundrum when trying to properly classify it. In its familiar form the sleigh is a terrestrial vehicle and has skids or runners instead of wheels. It definitely cannot be categorized as an "automobile" and its unique propulsion system excludes it from the category of a "motor vehicle." It is also obvious that Santa's sleigh is not equipped with wings or any other device normally associated with providing lift and facilitating flight, so it is not an "aircraft" as the term is generally defined.

As for the "eight tiny reindeer," a math whiz calculated the average reindeer would require a wingspan in excess of 30 feet in order to fly and no such appendages have been depicted on Santa's reindeer. It is suspected a flying reindeer is likely to expend significant energy and they may consume huge amounts of high octane organic fuels. Their emissions would be strictly classified. But then, perhaps in the end some substance akin to "Pixie Dust" is actually responsible for providing the ability to go airborne.

According to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game all of Santa's reindeer are likely female, since they retain their antlers during the Christmas season. Male reindeer usually shed their antlers at the beginning of winter (late November to mid-December).

While some of the names given Santa's reindeer;

Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner, Blitzen, and Rudolph may sound masculine, the facts of nature say the reindeer pulling Santa unerringly along his rounds are probably female. It is unknown if they ask for directions.

Speed is yet another factor. Based on the Earth's rotation it has been calculated Santa has about 31 hours (traveling east to west) to complete his mission in the allotted one day. Various sources indicate Santa's sleigh would be required to travel at more than 650 miles per second or 3000 times the speed of sound. While exact performance data are not available, based upon the best information avail-

able acceleration is required to be somewhere in the range of "beyond ballistic" and maximum speed is beyond human comprehension.

As for payload, the fact that the sled's cargo area is somewhat limited has given rise to the idea that Santa relies on pre-arranged, in flight re-supply from orbiting toy stockpiles to complete his mission. Another possibility is a "molecular transporter" device akin to the one in "Star Trek," where perhaps an elf (named Scotty?) beams up a new supply of presents as necessary.

With less than a millisecond to deliver toys to each child in the world

who believes in Santa, North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) analysts have concluded that Santa's Sleigh somehow functions in a different time and space continuum. That could help to explain why actual Santa sightings are rare; maybe he's just moving too fast for the human eye to see. Operating under such conditions would require tremendous energy, possibly explaining

the need to put out cookies and milk at households around the world to keep Santa going.

Records indicate Santa's sleigh has undergone some modifications since its introduction. Originally powered by eight tiny reindeer, a ninth was added during the mid 20th Century, primarily to provide enhanced guidance, while in addition serving as a warning beacon as required by Federal Aviation Administration guidelines. Tested on a particularly foggy Christmas Eve, the "Rudolph" modification became a permanent part of the team circa 1939. It is unknown if the sled's performance with regard to top speed was enhanced by the addition of one reindeer power.

Explaining Santa's Sleigh in terms that make complete sense to an adult is nearly impossible. Age and experience sometimes interfere with the ability to open the mind, imagine and accept things that defy logic. Perhaps it is best to look at this amazing vehicle through the eyes of a child and simply say it is "magical."

NORAD is now celebrating more than 50 seasons tracking Santa on his flight. The young and the young at heart can track Santa along with NORAD at [www.noradsanta.org](http://www.noradsanta.org).



## A special Christmas poem

By Bob Lassahn

*T'was the night before Christmas and the stockings weren't hung,  
The presents weren't wrapped and the cookies weren't done.  
The floor was all covered with paper and tape,  
A swath of destruction was left in the wake.*

*The lights weren't working and the tree took a lean,  
There was so much to do I just wanted to scream.  
Christmas was coming, of that I was sure,  
But I wondered if I'd have the strength to endure.*

*And just as my spirit had sunk to a low,  
The tree lights blinked on and it started to snow.*

*As I gazed through the window came a sight so serene,  
For out on the lawn was a small manger scene.*

*I came to my senses as I took in the sight,  
And I remembered the reason for this most holy night.  
Decorations and presents and turkeys and hams,  
Cannot hold a candle to God's gift to man.*

*I remembered the story of that first Christmas night,  
The birthday of Jesus and the star that shone bright.  
The gifts of the Magi, and a poor Shepherd boy,  
And instead of despair, my heart filled with joy.*

*I stood there a moment and gave it some thought,*

*That the meaning of Christmas is easily lost.  
How Santa and reindeer and presents of toys,  
Overpower the true reason for Christmas joy.*

*I knew at that moment that all was all right,  
I'd finish my chores and get through that night.  
My list was long; I knew that was true,  
But to it I added one more thing to do.*

*There was one more present I still had to send,  
A prayer for peace and good will to all men.  
And a special prayer on this Christmas day,  
For those who defend us in lands far away.*

This poem was originally published in *The Courier* in 2003.



# Santa Claus is as American as hot dogs and baseball

By **Bob Lassahn**

The holiday season turns the thoughts of youngsters to a visit by Santa Claus on Christmas Eve and lots of presents under the tree on Christmas morning. They carefully write their letters (addressed to the North Pole address that has become synonymous with Santa) to make their special requests, while many drop by the mall for a personal visit and perhaps a photograph with the white whiskered and red suited figure all children instantly recognize.

But in his earlier incarnations today's children might experience difficulty in recognizing the jolly gift-giver, for his appearance is now quite different. The image of Santa Claus familiar to current generations around the world actually dates to the 1930s and is as American as hot dogs and baseball. Santa has become as much an American icon as Uncle Sam.

No, the concept of Santa Claus and his spirit of generosity are not things Americans can claim as their own. It is widely accepted that Santa is the modern day persona of a real person, St. Nicholas, who lived about A.D. 300 in the area we know today as Turkey. Eventually St. Nicholas was changed

based upon local preferences and custom, becoming Pere Noel in France, Father Christmas in England, Weihnachtsmann (Christmas Man) in Germany and Grandfather Frost in Russia. To the Dutch he was Sinterklaas, the name that gave the basis for



the American name of Santa Claus. In 1809 Washington Irving wrote about Sinterklaas in his "History of New York," describing him as a rotund little man who traveled on horseback and dressing him in traditional Dutch cos-

tume with knee britches and a broad-brimmed hat. These early Santas came dressed in many styles and colors, but all shared a long white beard and carried gifts for children.

The American Santa of today had his beginnings in 1823 with Clement C. Moore's poem, "A Visit from St. Nicholas" (Twas the Night Before Christmas) in which he was described as "chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf." Moore also described Santa's mode of transport as a miniature sleigh pulled by eight tiny reindeer and he gave them the names by which we know them today. He even gave us the method that Santa uses to return up the chimney.

Forty years later American illustrator and caricaturist Thomas Nast began creating images of Santa for the cover of "Harper's Weekly" magazine. Nast may be familiar to many as the man who created the donkey and elephant images to depict the Democratic and Republican parties and who gave us the familiar image of Uncle Sam.

From 1860 until the late 1880s Nast provided a new drawing of Santa each year, adding more details to his version of the Santa legend, including the workshop at the North Pole and the "Naughty and Nice" list. Nast depicted Santa as a plump, jolly character with a long white beard dressed in a fur-trimmed suit with a wide leather belt, but he never settled on one size for his Santa figures. His drawings had Santa ranging in size from elf-like to normal man-sized. His 1881 "Merry Old Santa Claus" drawing is very close to the modern day image.

During the Civil War President Abraham Lincoln requested that Nast create a special illustration showing Santa visiting Union troops. Many historians relate that this was one of the most demoralizing moments for the Confederate army in seeing Santa side with the North.

In 1885 Nast sketched two children looking at a map and tracing Santa's journey from the North pole to the

United States, and the following year American writer George P. Webster expanded on the idea. Webster explained that Santa's toy factory and his house were hidden in the ice and snow of the North Pole.

By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Santa was becoming somewhat standardized, but his size (both height and build) and the color of his suit still varied. Then Louis Prang, a Boston printer, introduced the English custom of Christmas cards to America and in 1885 issued a card featuring a chubby Santa in a red suit. This version began to replace the multicolored renderings and by the 1920s was becoming the version of Santa we know today. The *New York Times* reported in November 1927 that a Santa Claus standardized in height, stature and outfit was appearing to children.

In the early 1930s the Coca-Cola Company was looking for ways to increase the sales of their product during the winter, a slow time for soft drink sales. In 1931 they commissioned Chicago illustrator Haddon Sundblom to develop the image of a human-like Santa Claus. The decision to change him from elf-like to full sized was based on positive public response to a magazine advertisement for Coca-Cola that appeared in 1930. The ad, created by artist Frank Mizen, showed a department store Santa in a crowd drinking a bottle of Coke.

For inspiration in creating his Santa Claus, Sundblom used Clement C. Moore's 1823 poem and obviously drew upon the earlier depiction by Nast and others. Since some of the earlier drawings depicted Santa with a red outfit it cannot not be inferred the sole reason for Sundblom decking his image in the red and white suit was promotion of Coca-Cola's company colors, but Coke certainly benefited from the association between red and Coke and Santa. It is interesting to think about the effect a change in color

*please see **santa** on page 16*

## survey

from page 3

and membership rated at the top (86.7% answering "very important" or "extremely important"), with infrastructure (84.5%) and the Board and GM working collaboratively (80%) rounding out the top three.

"The good news is, transparency and collaboration don't cost a lot of money," McGorry said. "It could be just increasing communication ... [there's] maybe slight things that could be done."

The survey also found that 62.5% either slightly or strongly agreed that traffic on Route 589 is a concern, while 64.7% either slightly or strongly supported electronic voting for future Board of Directors elections and referendums.

On electronic voting, McGorry said the average age of survey respondents – and the fact that almost all surveys were done online – suggests Association members are "pretty tech savvy." Still, he cautioned some are strongly opposed to changing ballot procedures.

"I would walk slowly on that and look at the whole [survey] numbers" he said. "Maybe it's a hybrid approach."

McGorry said there was only lukewarm support for new or improved amenities and services, with 36.2% slightly interested or extremely interested in improved walking and biking paths, 41.1% favoring a fitness center and 38.6% in support of improved street lighting.

"The next steps for the Strategic Planning Committee are to continue to dig further into the survey results and then share the detailed survey results with the community in a public town hall, likely in February," McGorry said on Monday. "The community input received in this survey and the planned town hall will be critical for us to finalizing our strategic plan recommendation."

To view the presentation, visit <https://youtu.be/is13uqslSEY?t=324>.

## NOTICE TO READERS

The Courier will be on hiatus until January 12.

Enjoy the holidays!!



# I believe because

Never have I glimpsed Santa's sleigh riding across a darkened sky. Yet, in this crazy, topsy-turvy world much can be gained if we allow ourselves to believe in the spirit embodied

well, becomes more vibrant in the presence of Santa Claus. The spirit embodied by the twinkle in his eye is more powerful than a skeptic's glance.

It's a spirit that soars upon the unfettered wings of who we'd like to be; it nourishes our souls, giving us strength to become our very best.

I believe much is gained when we unfurl our imaginations, let go of despair and allow a little "Ho, ho, ho" to resonate in our



***It's All About. . .***

By **Chip Bertino**

chipbertino@delmarvacourier.com

in a bright red suit and adorned with whiskers white as snow. Hope and warmth is found when we keep ourselves open to a presence that embraces the best of who we are. Simply,

hearts.

Santa Claus is alive and well. During this time of year he goes about his business as he has for centuries.

Trends and fads concern him not, be-

cause what he has to offer is pure and unadulterated for those willing to believe. For you see the passage of time cannot alter or dull that which is timeless: the pure, honest emotions we feel when we embrace the ones we love, when we toast the health of those around us and remember those who are not. Opening our hearts to what we don't fully understand but non-

etheless believe is a lasting gift.

The good cheer Santa spreads is worn handsomely by those who believe, like a comfortable warm sweater on a chilly December morning. Having faith protects the soul from sadness, heal scars of despair and dries tears of pain. The spirit of Santa Claus need not be a childhood memory. If we allow it, the spirit can envelop who we are now. It's there, we just need to look. We just need to believe.

When we allow ourselves to believe in the spirit of Santa Claus we reveal the part of our soul that glows most brilliantly, most warmly and most honestly. It's the very best gift we can give to ourselves and those around us.

I haven't seen a toy-laden sleigh dash across a blue-black sky but I believe!



I believe in Santa Claus and the spirit of Christmas. The older I get, the more I need to believe.

There's something wonderful about fairy tales, four leaf clovers and the magic of watching a child sit on Santa's knee for the first time. There's a lot of joy and happiness that can be shared by simply believing.

I believe in the attraction of mistletoe, the magic of a first snow and the whimsy of making a wish beside a well. I believe in these things and more, just because.

I believe in good cheer and good times and good friends. I believe in wonder and hope and fond memories yet to be held. And I believe in the charity of the man who rides in a red sleigh sharing joy.

I believe a child's smile, and ours as

*May the holiday season be all  
that you expect and the  
New Year be all that you hope.*



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## Frozen coming to Performing Arts Center

The highly acclaimed Ocean Pines Children's Theater is delighted to announce their upcoming production of the musical, "Disney's Frozen, Jr." Performances will be January 14 at 7 p.m., and January 15 at 3 p.m., at the Performing Arts Center, located in the Ocean City Convention Center.

Based on the Oscar-winning film, the stage adaptation of "Frozen" opened on Broadway in 2018, earning 3 Tony award nominations, including best musical. Unfortunately, in May 2020, after 825 performances, the painful decision was reached to suspend further Broadway performances of "Frozen" due to the Covid-19 pan-

demic. Since the beginning of 2021, the show has been on the road, again captivating audiences across the United States, Europe, Japan, and Australia. The OP Children's Theater is proud to offer audiences yet another opportunity to see this magical show.

Director / Choreographer, and President of the OP Children's Theater, Paulette DeRosa-Matrona, had this to say. "I am so proud of the 16 talented and hard-working young people in our cast, and of course incredibly grateful to our wonderful artistic directors and production crew. Everyone is so excited to be a part of this. I'm particularly honored to represent one of the theater groups performing this enchanting modern Disney classic, and I encourage all to come out and experience its magic. Help us truly celebrate Elsa and Anna's song, "For the First Time in Forever."

Tickets may be purchased through ticketmaster.com, or in person at the Ocean City Convention Center Box Office, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., at 40<sup>th</sup> St. Bayside.

### Notice to Readers

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*Happy Holidays!*



**Non-Profit of the Year** — The Grace Center for Maternal and Women's Health in Berlin was recently recognized by the Ocean Pines Chamber of Commerce as their Non-Profit of the Year for 2021. The center was recognized for the dedicated work of the staff and volunteers, many of whom were present for the ceremony, in service to women of the community. Lauren Nagy, a Junior Board Member at the center, who has personally experienced all the services provided, presented Geoff Failla, the Interim Executive Director and the Board Chair, with the award.

Pictured are **Kerrie Bunting**, executive director of the chamber, **Senator Mary Beth Carozza**, **Geoff Failla** and **Lauren Nagy**.

*Wishing everyone a  
blessed and Merry Christmas,  
a joyful Holiday Season  
and peace and happiness in the New Year.*

*The Republican Women of Worcester County*







# Open Enrollment for 2022 Health Plans

## November 1, 2021 – January 15, 2022

The Lower Shore Health Insurance Assistance Program is hosting **in-person** events to assist Somerset, Wicomico and Worcester County residents with enrollment into health & dental plans!

### **Somerset County** **Health Department**

8929 Sign Post Road, Westover, MD 21871

Friday, November 5<sup>th</sup>, 4:00pm-8:00pm  
Friday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4:00pm-8:00pm  
Friday, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 4:00pm-8:00pm

### **Lower Shore** **American Job Center**

31901 Tri-County Way  
Salisbury, MD 21804

Saturday, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 9:00am-2:00pm  
Saturday, January 8<sup>th</sup>, 9:00am-4:00pm



### **Berlin** **Health Department**

9730 Healthway Drive  
Berlin, MD 21811

Saturday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, 9:00am-2:00pm  
Saturday, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 9:00am-2:00pm  
Sunday, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 10:00am-3:00pm

Can't make it to one of our in-person events!?

Give us a call at **1(855)445-5540** and we can provide over-the-phone assistance with your enrollment!

Call Center Hours Nov. 1<sup>st</sup> – Jan. 15<sup>th</sup>

Monday-Friday: 8:00am-6:00pm  
Saturday: 8:00am-2:00pm

### Ready to enroll? For each person applying, you'll need:

- Photo ID
- Social Security number
- Immigration/citizenship documents (for some residents)
- Pay stubs or W-2 wage and tax statement (if employed)
- Policy numbers for any other health insurance



Enroll today at [MarylandHealthConnection.gov](https://MarylandHealthConnection.gov)



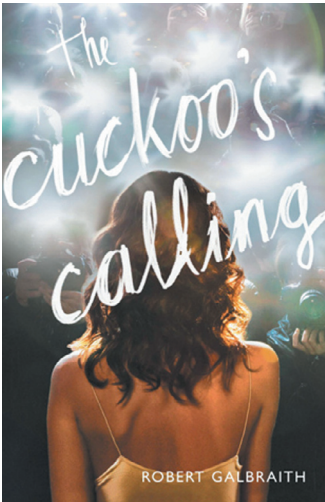
Review of

# The Cuckoo's Calling

By Jean Marx

You may have heard of this book's author. While the author's name is shown on the book cover as Robert Galbraith, it is a pseudonym for none other than J.K. Rowling, the renowned author of the *Harry Potter* series. This book called *The Cuckoo's Calling* is the author's first in a series featuring a private investigator named Cormoran Strike.

Strike is an unlikely hero, struggling mightily to keep his private investigation business afloat while his personal life is falling apart around him. His girlfriend has just broken up with him after 15 years, and it isn't long before he finds out she has gone back to her old boyfriend and he realizes through her casual indifference to him that his love for her was essentially unrequited. He is also a wounded war veteran, having lost one of his legs after stepping on a land mine in Afghanistan.



The prologue to the book starts with police trying to keep a swarm of paparazzi at bay as they begin their investigation into whether the death of supermodel Lula Landry was a suicide or an act of foul play. Her demise occurred one winter evening when she fell from the balcony of her penthouse apartment. Speculation was rampant among the paparazzi as she was wearing different clothing from when she had appeared at a nightclub that evening and was seen arguing with her boyfriend.

When Lula's brother, John Bris-tow, arrives in Strike's office to hire him to investigate the circumstances surrounding her death, Strike is happy to have a lifeline thrown at him. John had remembered what good friends Strike and his brother Charlie had been when they were kids, and John told Strike that he wanted someone to help investigate Lula's death that he could trust. Charlie had died as a teenager, and Lula had been adopted by John's parents a few years later to ease the parents' grief. Strike readily

agreed to help and to try to give the grieving family a semblance of privacy.

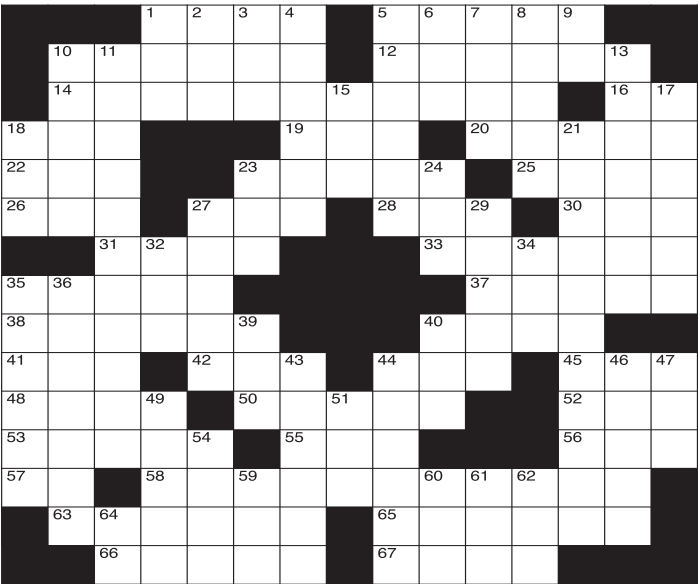
It was also true that Strike was desperate to have a paying client as the bill collectors were circling, and Strike already had to move whatever belongings he had remaining into his office. He could only afford to hire a secretarial assistant as a temp because he didn't know week to week whether he could afford to keep the temp on. The temp that the agency, Temporary Solutions, sends to Strike at the outset of his new case is Robin Ellacott. Robin is young and eager, and she comes to Strike's office radiant as her boyfriend

Matthew had just proposed to her in romantic fashion in Piccadilly Circus. As she climbs the stairs and nears the office door, she happens to catch the tail end of the final argument between Strike and his former girlfriend. When Strike first meets Robin, it is a greeting both of them will remember.

Strike comes into the investigation a couple months after Lula's death, so the story begins to unfold with Strike interviewing the police who had done the initial

investigation. Partly because he only has the one client, Strike proceeds to interview the same people the police did and to go back through the evidence they had collected including viewing security footage near the building that evening. Strike comes to see that while Lula had a boyfriend and a handful of girlfriends, both Lula's biological and adoptive families were extremely dysfunctional, and he sees that she had next to no one whom she was really close to. The book's title refers to Lula's nickname given to her by one of these so-called 'close' friends.

The list of potential suspects is large and unexpected plot twists occur throughout the author's cleverly written story. Galbraith does an excellent job of keeping the reader guessing until the very end of the story. The author also creates a highly enjoyable character in Cormoran Strike and continues to keep the reader in suspense as to whether he will be able to afford to keep Robin as his secretary and whether she will want to stay working for this very unconventional detective.

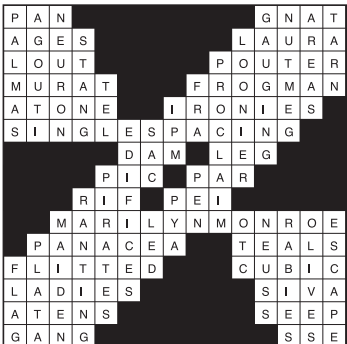


CLUES ACROSS

1. Chinese Muslim group  
 5. Alternative name  
 10. Resounds  
 12. Supporter  
 14. Furnishes anew  
 16. Beloved Hollywood alien  
 18. Supervises flying  
 19. Ballplayer's tool  
 20. Coarse edible red seaweed  
 22. Former CIA  
 23. Basketball player  
 25. Travel necessities  
 26. Honey producer  
 27. Military analysis (abbr.)  
 28. Diego, Francisco, Anselmo  
 30. Mental sharpness and inventiveness  
 31. Popular Easter meal  
 33. Man (Spanish)  
 35. \_\_ de la \_\_
37. Counterweights  
 38. Made a harsh, grating noise  
 40. Monetary unit  
 41. Commercials  
 42. Cool!  
 44. Partner to cheese  
 45. Expression of creative skill  
 48. Unit of angle  
 50. Transported  
 52. N. American people of Kansas  
 53. Computer game character Max  
 55. Moved swiftly  
 56. Everyone has one  
 57. Tin  
 58. A mole is one  
 63. Nocturnal hoofed animals  
 65. Oppositional to  
 66. Monetary units  
 67. Not on time

CLUES DOWN

1. Hoghead (abbr.)  
 2. Misery resulting from affliction  
 3. Defunction European group  
 4. Line on a map  
 5. Becomes less intense  
 6. Back muscle  
 7. Frosted  
 8. Ethiopian town  
 9. Midway between south and east  
 10. Wipe from the record  
 11. In a continuous way  
 13. Breathe  
 15. Cleaning device  
 17. Male organ  
 18. Tab on a key ring  
 21. Criminals  
 23. Taxi  
 24. Cheer of encouragement  
 27. Wartime American escort carrier
29. Polish river  
 32. Current unit  
 34. Life form  
 35. Painful contractions  
 36. Glowing  
 39. Press against lightly  
 40. Melancholic  
 43. Something you can be under  
 44. Of the mind  
 46. E. Indian cereal grass  
 47. Couple  
 49. Sharpshoot  
 51. A baglike structure in a plant or animal  
 54. \_\_ Blyton, children's author  
 59. Human gene  
 60. Data mining methodology (abbr.)  
 61. Examines animals  
 62. Mineral  
 64. Cools your home



Answers for December 15



# OPA holiday drive benefits Diakonia

Ocean Pines staff recently sent holiday meals for 10 local families to Diakonia, a 501(C)(3) nonprofit that has been supplying services to the homeless for nearly 50 years.

The staff collection sent 10 turkeys, plus instant mashed potatoes, stuffing, macaroni and cheese, gravy, green beans, corn, brownies, cake mix and other items to Diakonia as part of the Association's annual holiday giving initiative. The Matt Ortt Companies also contributed food items.

Diakonia Executive Director Bee Miller said the organization is always busy during the holiday season. The nonprofit serves about 200 local people each year through its shelter, plus an additional 200 families each month through its food pantry.

"Food drives this time of year are tremendous for us. We're getting loaded with food, which is great because nobody leaves without a full trunk of food," she said. "And the Ocean Pines donation made sure that 10 more families will go away with a full trunk of food."

Other needed items include peanut butter and jelly, Miller said, "because it stretches a long way."

"If we have street homeless, we try to make bag lunches or just peanut butter and jelly sandwiches that we can give out to people on the street," she said.

The nonprofit is also asking for twin bedsheets.

"Anybody who goes to our shelter, we allow them to take bedding with them when they move into their own place, so there's always a need," Miller said.

Miller said monetary donations are also helpful, because they help fill gaps in between services.

"What a lot of people don't know is,



all the financial donations we get are considered matching funds for the grants we go after as well," she said. "So, with every dollar that's given, we can double or triple it."

Diakonia programs include Supportive Services for veterans and their families serving Wicomico, Worcester, and Somerset counties; Homeless Solutions that helps with rent and utilities for eligible households serving Wicomico and Worcester counties; Rapid Rehousing serving Wicomico and Worcester counties; and Emergency Rental Assistance for those affected by COVID-19 in Worcester County.

To donate, call 410-213-0923, or donate online at [www.diakoniaoc.org](http://www.diakoniaoc.org).

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Merry Christmas and a peaceful  
and prosperous New Year!*



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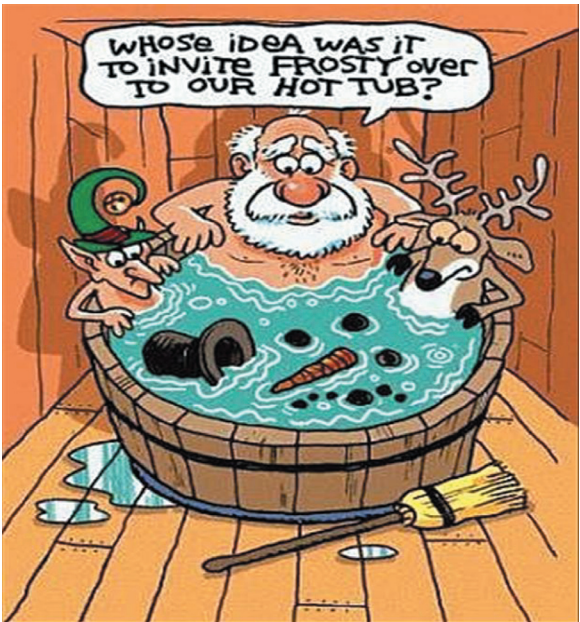
*The Courier* will be on hiatus  
until January 12.

**Enjoy the holidays!**

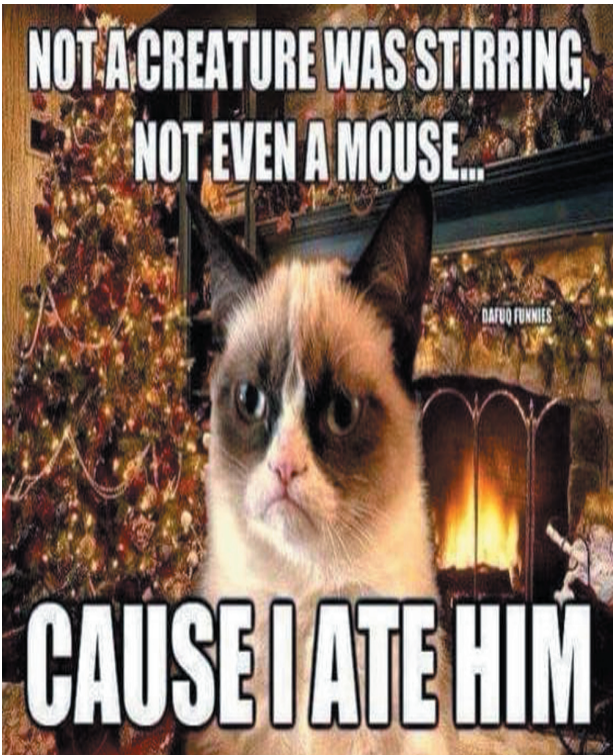


# Some things to think about

Gathered from the internet by Jack Barnes



When you just can't be bothered to put in the effort







**Food drive** - During December the Kiwanis Club of Greater Ocean City - Ocean Pines collected food in the Ocean Pines Community Center parking lot. Pictured are (L-R) Kiwanians **Carolyn Dryzga**, Food Drive Chair **Candy Foreman** and **Kitty Wrench** sorting some of the non-perishable goods to be taken to Diakonia for their pantry.

## GM update includes budget, North Gate Bridge and drainage

General Manager John Viola, during his monthly report during the recent board meeting, said the proposed budget process is currently his major focus.

To date, he said the Budget and Finance Committee has supplied guidance, and he has met and reviewed proposed budgets with each department head.

Agenda items and dates were prepared for public review in January, and the committee has vetted and signed off on the “DMA Lite” study of Ocean Pines reserves, Viola said.

He said budget binders would be sent to committee members before the holidays.

“There will be plenty of time for everybody to review [the proposed budget],” he said.

Viola said headwinds, or conditions that impede operating results, affecting the budget this year include inflation, mandatory minimum wage increases, mark to market wage adjustments needed to be competitive, proposed legislation on homeowner’s association reserves, and rising insurance costs.

“Inflation has raised its [ugly] head again and it certainly will affect our proposed budget,” Viola said.

Tailwinds, or favorable conditions, include the improved performance across amenities and efficiencies in the departments, and a current and prior year realized budget surplus.

Viola said state permitting was received on December 8 for new pickleball courts. Bid packages are being sent to prospective contractors and the goal is to finish the project by the end of May.

“I am excited about that,” Viola said. “This was something that was in the budget this year. We just needed [the] permit, which now we’ve received.”

Viola said the Association has looked at installing hybrid systems in the Clubhouse Meeting Room, to allow for both virtual and in-person meetings.

An estimate from Mid-South Audio, the company that installed similar equipment in the Administration Building Board Room, came back at

*please see **update** page 16*

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# New Year, new you

By **Billy Hamilton, Jr., DPT, CHT**

With the holidays and new year fast approaching, it is a good time to review Medicare coverages and rules. Each calendar year Medicare sets a monetary cap on physical therapy services that resets on January 1 of each year. This “cap” in recent years was modified from a

“hard” cap to a “soft” cap. As the new year approaches, it is also good to note that you have direct access to physical therapy services if you have an issue that can benefit from such treatments.

Basically, every year Medicare requires patients to pay a small deductible before they will begin to cover their portion of your medical bills. The current deductible is \$211 but will increase to \$233 on January 1. This is a small deductible compared to most commercial plans and increases minimally each year. If you need PT after January 1, you will be responsible for the first \$233 if your secondary plan does not cover the deductible. If you are unsure, I recommend calling your secondary insurance carrier and asking whether they cover the Medicare deductible. Once the deductible is met, Medicare then covers 80% of your medical bills and forwards the re-

maining 20% to your secondary (if you have one) or directly to you (if you do not have secondary coverage). If you do not have a secondary, it may sound like you will be responsible for a large sum (20%). However, typical physical therapy treatments in Maryland average \$85. This means you would be responsible, on average, for \$17 each session. In my experience, this \$17 is lower than most commercial insurance copays. In short, PT is an affordable means of treatment.

Medicare has also established a monetary annual cap on physical therapy services that is now considered a “soft” cap. The initial cap is set at \$2,110, however with most physical therapy diagnosis you can use up to \$3,000. Once you reach the \$3,000 cap, your PT must be able to show and document objective progress for you to continue. In years past the \$3,000 cap was a “hard” cap, meaning once you reached it your PT coverage was cut off. However, as I just mentioned, you are now allowed to “exceed” the cap if you are truly benefitting medically from treatment and objective documentation is provided.

The final point I would like to highlight is that most insurances, including Medicare, cover Direct Access to physical therapy. In simple terms this means that you can be evaluated and treated by a physical therapist without a referral from a physician. The best part of Direct Access is that this is covered by Medicare and most commercial payers. I have found over my 15 years in practice that this is the best kept secret, and we need to make a point to educate everyone about this incredible immediate access to physical therapy and getting rid of that recent or nagging pain.

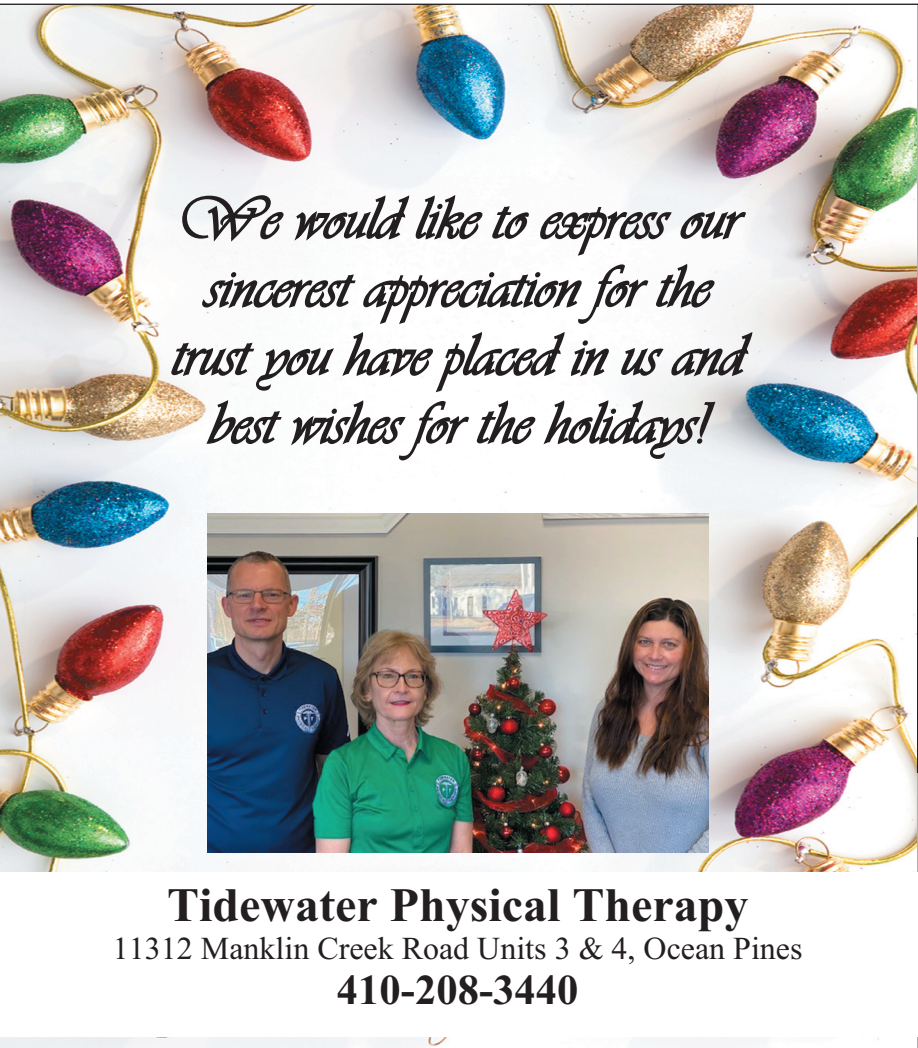


Billy Hamilton


## Reader Notice

*The Courier will be on hiatus through January 12.*

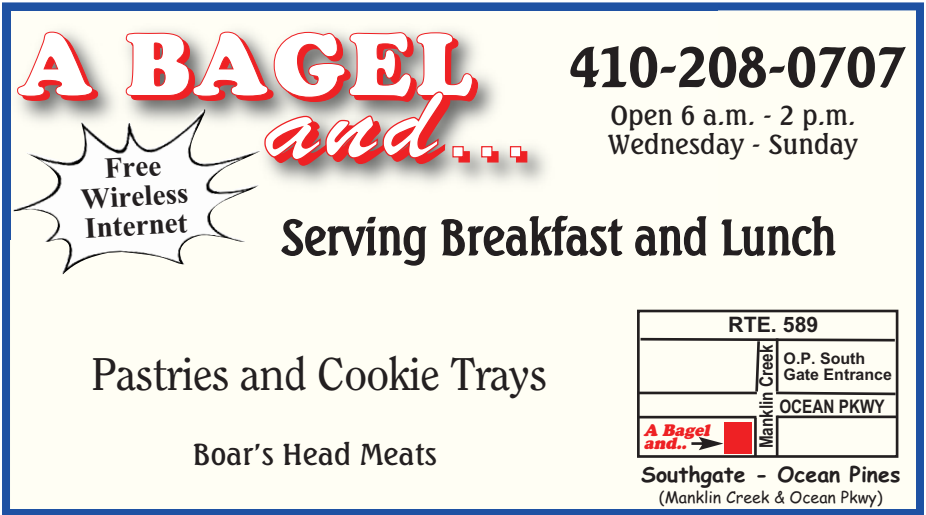
*Enjoy the holidays!*



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# The birth of Jesus is shared through the ages

Christmas traditions focus on several different aspects of family and spiritual life. While many stories are shared around Christmastime, perhaps none bears more significance than the origin of the Christmas celebration. Sharing the Christmas story is an integral part of holiday gatherings, reminding families that faith is foremost during this festive time of year.

## *The Conception of Jesus*

Mary was a woman living in the Galilee area of Nazareth. She was engaged to a Jewish carpenter named Joseph. An angel visited the Virgin Mary and told her that she would conceive a child, a son, by the power of the Holy Spirit. When the son was born, she would name him Jesus. Mary questioned the angel, who reassured her that anything was possible by God and that Jesus would be God's own son.

Joseph was troubled when he found out Mary was with child and even considered breaking their engagement, which was allowed under Jewish law. But God soon sent another angel, this time to Joseph, in a dream. The angel reassured Joseph that his

marriage to Mary and the birth of this child were His will. Joseph awoke from his dream and took Mary as his wife soon after, ready and willing to raise the child despite the public humiliation he may experience.

## *The Census*

During this time the Romans had control over many parts of the world, including where Joseph and Mary resided. Ruler Caesar Augustus decreed that every person living under Roman rule had to return to his town of origin to participate in a census so everyone could be taxed accordingly. Joseph, hailing from Bethlehem, had to return to this town with his very pregnant bride.

They traveled for many days and, upon arriving in Bethlehem, found that the inns were full and there was no available lodging. Mary and Joseph took shelter in a stable and prepared to welcome their son.

## *Jesus' Arrival*

According to the Gospel of Luke, Mary gave birth to her firstborn, a son, while in the stable. She wrapped him in cloth and placed him in a manger because there was no guest room

available for them.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."



So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. (Luke Chapter 2)

Many people visited the baby Jesus, including three wise men from the East who traveled by following a guiding star to bestow gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh on the baby king.

When Joseph and Mary had performed all the things necessary according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Nazareth with Jesus, who was growing strong in spirit and filled with wisdom and the grace of God.

# Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

from all of us at

# The Courier

*We will be on hiatus until January 12.*







**Indicators** - Students in Kelly Powell's fifth grade Enrichment Class at Berlin Intermediate School, created natural pH indicator ornaments with poinsettia dye. They then decorated their ornaments with different acids and bases. If they used an acid, the ornament turned hot pink. If they used a base, it turned dark green. At left is **Chloe Chen**.

**santa**  
from page 6

might have had, for Sundblom's Santa portraits, used in magazine advertising and posters, set the Santa Claus standard for the next 35 years.

Not to be denied as an influence on the image of Santa is the department store variety (actually the prototype for the Coke Santa) and Hollywood definitely factors into the equation. These two influences came together in the 1947 classic motion picture "Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street" and since then numerous films have further implanted

the image of Santa in American society. Coca-Cola, Hollywood and old-fashioned American capitalism have certainly exercised a pervasive influence on the way Americans and the world think of Santa.

In claiming Santa as an American icon it should be mentioned that just as America is a composite of all the nationalities that have come to her shores, so too Santa Claus embodies the Christmas traditions of all the various cultures that make up this nation. He is just a little bit English, French, Dutch, German and so many other cultures, further molded by the imagination of American writers and illustrators. What makes Santa truly American is the diversity of the people that have contributed to his image and his character.

# TidalHealth encourages blood donations

The holidays are a time of thinking of others and for a gift that could potentially save a life, TidalHealth encourages blood donation. The blood supply in the United States has reached one of its lowest levels in recent years, and the Delmarva Peninsula is no exception.

Blood centers across the country are reporting less than a one-day's supply of blood—a dangerously low level. If the nation's blood supply does not stabilize soon, life-saving blood may not be available for some patients when it is needed.

According to the Blood Bank of Delmarva, the need for blood has never been higher. The current status of the U.S. blood supply is particularly concerning amid the holiday season and winter months—a time in which blood donation rates typically decrease due to travel, inclement weather and seasonal illnesses.

"Our blood supply has been at critical level for weeks – certainly a concern for us going into the holidays when fewer people donate," said Robin Burns, TidalHealth Laboratory Senior Director. "We encourage everyone who can to donate blood. You could help save the life of a friend, neighbor or loved one."

Blood components have a short shelf life and the blood supply needs to be constantly replenished. Blood can take up to three days to be tested, processed and made available for patients, so it's the blood already on the shelves that helps save lives in an emergency. In the U.S., more than 16 million units of blood and blood products are transfused annually with more than 45,000 units needed daily.

Donors can schedule appointments by calling 1-888-8-BLOOD-8 or visiting [www.delmarvablood.org](http://www.delmarvablood.org).

## Christmas service announced

There will be a Christmas Eve Worship Service, Friday, December 24 at 7 p.m. at Bethany United Methodist Church located at 8648 Stephen Decatur Highway in Berlin. The service also will be lived streamed on Facebook, YouTube, and at [bethanyberlin.org](http://bethanyberlin.org). All are welcome. For more information call 410-641-2186



### Tides for Ocean City Inlet

Day	High /Low	Tide Time
Th 23	Low	3:52 AM
23	High	10:34 AM
23	Low	4:48 PM
23	High	10:53 PM
F 24	Low	4:38 AM
24	High	11:17 AM
24	Low	5:33 PM
24	High	11:39 PM
Sa 25	Low	5:30 AM
25	High	12:02 PM
25	Low	6:20 PM
Su 26	High	12:31 AM
26	Low	6:27 AM
26	High	12:52 PM
26	Low	7:08 PM
M 27	High	1:28 AM
27	Low	7:28 AM
27	High	1:48 PM
27	Low	7:58 PM
Tu 28	High	2:28 AM
28	Low	8:31 AM
28	High	2:47 PM
28	Low	8:50 PM
W 29	High	3:28 AM
29	Low	9:35 AM
29	High	3:46 PM
29	Low	9:44 PM

**update**  
from page 13

roughly \$15,000.

"We're at a high-level stage, but we've done this before," Viola said, adding that similar upgrades in the Assateague Room could cost an additional \$15,000. The Clubhouse estimate assumes the use of existing equipment, including a dropdown screen and projector.

Viola said the North Gate bridge was power washed and decorated for the holidays on December 9. Estimates to remove the guard shack came back at \$2,500, with estimates to repair and maintain the structure also at \$2,500, and a \$12,000 projected cost to move the structure to White Horse Park.

"My recommendation ... is to repair and maintain in the current position," he said.

On bridge lighting, Viola said he's in the process of obtaining op-

tions for the Board to replace the existing globe lights, which are no longer available for purchase.

In addition to that, he proposed adding four LED spotlights to help light up both the bridge and the approach. The bridge has historically been plagued by car accidents, including two recent crashes in nearly identical locations coming into the community.

Viola said bulkhead pricing for the next fiscal period is estimated at \$850,000, to include Pintail Park and several homes on the north side of Pintail Drive.

Public Works Office Manager Linda Martin said the Association continues to work on water quality and drainage improvements near Bainbridge Park.

"We've been coordinating with the Worcester County Department of Public Works to complete this phase of the project," she said, adding the Association received a

quote of just over \$76,000 to relocate utility lines in the area. The total project cost for this phase is just under \$300,000 and would include the installation of additional drainage pipes. Martin said work should finish by early spring.

"[The project] is well within our reserve budget of \$350,000," she said.

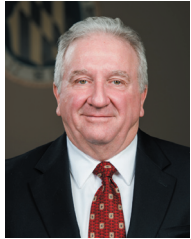
Martin also touched on the latest financial report, which showed the Association favorable to budget by \$72,000 in October and favorable year to date by \$1.373 million.

Major drivers of the year-to-date favorability to budget include Golf (favorable by \$271,000), Public Works (favorable by \$266,000), Aquatics (favorable by \$204,000), the Yacht Club (favorable by \$198,000), Administration, Finance, General Manager and Public Relations offices combined (favorable by \$112,000), and Police (favorable by \$91,000).



# Transition underway at county public works

A changing of the guard is underway at Worcester County Public Works as longtime Deputy Director



John Ross

John Ross prepares to hand off responsibilities to Christopher Clasing.

Ross brings to a close a 19-year career at the end of this month. "I look back on my career with Worcester County and all that we have accomplished over that time," Ross said. "I would single out former Public Works Director John Tustin, who most influenced me. Since I was coming from the private sector, John taught me how to



Chris Clasing

work in the public sector in general, and he always supported me during our time in Worcester County. I would also recognize the dedicated personnel in the Water and Wastewater Division, County Administration staff, finance team, environmental, and planning groups who were always available to help."

Ross played an integral role in the overall management of the Water and Wastewater Division of Public Works, where he planned, directed, and administered day-to-day operational activities, as well as water and wastewater treatment plant and pump station upgrades and expansions.

"John has been responsible for so many improvements, which have increased the resiliency of our water and

waste water systems," Public Works Director Dallas Baker said. "His knowledge and insight are going to be missed, but what will be missed more is the great person John is. I wish him and his wife a long and happy retirement."

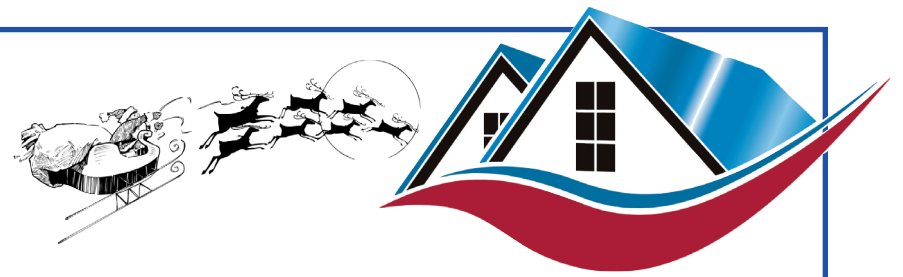
Ross played an instrumental role in numerous infrastructure projects, including the ongoing improvements to the Ocean Pines water system, the wastewater collection, and pumping systems, as well as the latest expansion of the wastewater treatment plant (WWTP). He also helped spearhead the construction of the new Mystic Harbour WWTP, pump station, and spray irrigation projects.

In November the Worcester County Commissioners named Christopher Clasing to succeed Ross as the new deputy director of Public Works. He stepped into his new role on December 1.

Clasing, a registered professional engineer in Maryland, earned a Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Delaware in 2015. He brings six years of experience to his new position. From 2018 to 2021, Clasing worked with the Wicomico County Department of Public Works where he rose from civil engineer to chief civil engineer. Prior to that time, he served as project engineer in the Department of Infrastructure and Development for the City of Salisbury.

"I'm truly appreciative to the commissioners for this opportunity," Clasing said. "I look forward to serving the citizens and visitors of Worcester County."

*please see public works page 18*



*Wishing you a joyous  
holiday season with peace  
& cheer in the New Year!*

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# Year of the tiger to begin

The lunar new year is celebrated in many cultures, but perhaps no celebration garners as much attention as China's.

The fanfare begins each year around the beginning of February. The



Chinese New Year is marked by 12 zodiac symbols, which are rotated on a 12-year cycle.

2022 is The Year of the Tiger, a zodiac sign last celebrated in 2010. The

tiger holds the third sign of the Chinese zodiac, based on the tenacity he showed in crossing the perilous river during the Chinese Zodiac Race. The Jade Emperor didn't know which big cat to include in the race, with the mighty lion garnering consideration. However, the lion's raging temper repelled the Emperor so the tiger was chosen instead.

The tiger has been a prominent symbol in Chinese culture. It is known as the king of all beasts, and is a symbol of strength, bravery and exorcising evils. People born during a Tiger year may live to seek adventure and have an insatiable thirst for knowledge. They also may be a little reckless and restless. Tigers have big energies and are fiercely independent, according to Chinese astrologer Tiffany Lin. Enterprising and risk-takers, Tigers may be natural born entrepreneurs.

The Year of the Tiger is cause for celebration, and this year's festivities begin on February 1.

**public works**  
from page 17

Clasing, an Eastern Shore resident, is an active member of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) Eastern Shore Branch, co-founder and past president of ASCE Eastern Shore Branch Younger Member Group, and an active member of the County Engineers Association of Maryland.

"Chris has served in multiple roles at other Public Works departments on Delmarva," Baker said. "I'm excited by his addition to the Worcester Public Works team and am looking forward to working with him."

Clasing will assist the director in fiscal and operational management of the Fleet, Maintenance, Roads, Solid Waste, and Water and Wastewater Divisions. His responsibilities include preparing bid specifications, reviewing and approving developers' construction plans for public infrastructure projects, coordinating inspection and acceptance for County maintenance of public facilities constructed by developers, providing engineering comments on proposed public infrastructure projects, and establishing departmental policies and procedures.

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**Gifts** - Continuing a Christmas tradition of charitable giving, Ocean City Lodge 2474 of the Sons and Daughters of Italy donated through the Saint Vincent DePaul Society (SVDP) a car-load of Christmas gifts to two area families that needed a little extra neighborly help this season. The gifts, collected from members of the lodge, were in addition to more than \$1,000 in gift cards to grocery stores, gas stations and specialty stores to be distributed to other area families through the Society.

Above: **David Melocik** of the SVDP (Center) takes delivery of the presents from SDOI members **Vincent Mollicone**, President, **Sal and Mary Castorina** and **Bob Ackerson**.



**Holidays and traditions** - Students in Shelby Matassa's kindergarten class at Ocean City Elementary School have been busy learning about different holidays and traditions. Mrs. Matassa was joined by English Language teacher, Alicia Wallace, to read "Twas Nochesbuena," a book that highlights Latino traditions. Students practiced saying phrases in both English and Spanish. After enjoying the read aloud, students created their very own "Flor de Nochebuena," better known in English as a Poinsettia. Pictured are (bottom) **Fernanda Pineda Espinoza**, **Dayana Barroso-Pichardo**, **Caleb Russo**, (middle) **Samantha Osorio Saldana**, **Teague Hammond**, **Ellie Smith**, (top) **Alicia Wallace** and **Shelby Matassa**.



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