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Mayor Scott Celebrates Baltimore's Small Businesses



Mayor Brandon M. Scott kicked off Small Business Saturday 2025 with a citywide tour of Baltimore's Main Street corridors, highlighting nine local shops from Highlandtown to Hamilton-Lauraville. Joined by state and city leaders, the Mayor celebrated the entrepreneurs who fuel neighborhood vitality, jobs, and culture. (L-R) Jessica Dortch, Danae Stewart, Interim Regional Director, Howard University and PNC Mid-South Regional Center for Entrepreneurship, Morgan State University; Myra Blanchard, Marketing Development Manager, Mayor's Office of Small and Minority Business Advocacy & Development; and Cynthia Parker-Kirk, Department of Transportation. (See article on page 6)
Photo Credit: Mayor's Office of Small and Minority Business Advocacy & Development



Charm City Circulator Expands Green and Orange Routes to Boost Transit Access Across Baltimore

Submitted to The Baltimore Times

Baltimore residents will soon see expanded transit options as the Charm City Circulator prepares to roll out significant improvements to two of its busiest routes. Mayor Brandon M. Scott and Baltimore City Department of Transportation Director Veronica P. McBeth announced that beginning Sunday, December 7, 2025, both the Green and Orange Routes will extend service to connect more neighborhoods with jobs, schools, health care, and key destinations across the city.

The expansion marks a major step toward strengthening Baltimore's free transit network, with a focus on neighborhoods that have historically been underserved by reliable transportation.

Mayor Scott emphasized the city's commitment to equity. "We're focused on expanding transit access in every single neighborhood of our city, especially those that have been without reliable transit for far too long," he said. "The Green Route expansion will connect residents in Broadway East, Oliver, and East Baltimore Midway to greater job opportunities and essential services. This is about more than just moving buses; it's about providing fast, friendly, and free transit for all Baltimoreans."

Green Route: Direct, Expanded Access for East Baltimore

The Green Route will be extended deeper into East Baltimore, now serving Broadway East, Oliver, and East Baltimore Midway. Riders will continue to benefit from existing connections to downtown, multiple Metro stations, the Johns Hopkins Hospital campus, and major business and tourist districts.

The new alignment will introduce stops along the Inner Harbor, Orleans Street, North Broadway, and North

Avenue—key corridors that provide access to employment centers, retail, schools, and medical services. To make room for the expansion, Green Route buses will shift away from Fleet Street and the section of Broadway south of Fayette Street, redirecting service to areas currently lacking consistent transit options.

Once implemented, Green Route buses will operate every 20 minutes.

Orange Route: New Stop at Maritime Park

The Orange Route will also evolve as it maintains coverage in the Harbor Point area. The route will begin serving a new stop at Maritime Park along Caroline Street, offering increased access to workplaces, waterfront programming, and nearby residential communities.

With the update, Orange Route buses will run with approximately 10-minute headways, further supporting high-frequency, fare-free travel.

Shaped by Community Input and Planning

The updated routes stem directly from Baltimore's Transit Development Plan (TDP), completed in 2021–2022. The TDP laid out long-term strategies to enhance system equity and reliability without exceeding current fleet or budget constraints.

"These enhancements are just the beginning of smart, sustainable transit planning in action," said Director McBeth. "Our work does not stop



Charm City Circulator

Photo courtesy of Visit Baltimore

here. We are committed to a long-term, equitable roadmap for fare-free Circulator service."

The full Transit Development Plan, along with route maps and service details, can be viewed at: <https://transportation.baltimorecity.gov/charm-city-circulator>

Tools for Riders

To support a smooth transition, residents are encouraged to download the Passio Go! app, which provides real-time bus tracking and up-to-date route information.

The December 7 rollout represents a significant investment in mobility and opportunity—linking more Baltimoreans to the places they live, work, and thrive while reinforcing the city's commitment to equitable transportation for all.



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Yes Virginia, There is an “Out Clause”

By Karen Clay

Clay Technology and Multimedia, L.L.C.

Lately, I’ve noticed that I am receiving unsolicited phone calls and text messages at a frequency unparalleled from previous years. Maybe it’s because I answered a call that I thought was a return call I was expecting. Maybe it’s because I signed up to receive text messages from a candidate for office during the 2024 election. Given we are heading into the holiday season, I’m taking inspiration from the 1991 made-for-television Christmas movie, “Yes, Virginia, There is a Santa Claus” for the title/tone of this article. The impetus for the movie was an 1897 editorial by Francis Pharcellus Church of the New York Sun, written in response to a letter by Virginia, an eight-year-old, asking whether Santa Claus was real. Mr. Church’s response focused on the values embodied by the notion of Santa Claus such as love, joy, and hope, which represent the intangible but real values that make our lives meaningful. This article borrows the tone of Church’s editorial to serve as a hopeful, practical reminder that we don’t have to accept “peace” as the cost of having a phone.

So, what is the “out clause” for regaining our digital peace? What are the practical tools/habits that can help us reclaim our phones and bring joy back to that part of our digital lives? Well, try these steps to reclaim your digital peace.

Recognize the nature of robocalls/robotexts.

Unwanted calls and texts come in patterns, so learn the signals:

- Caller ID is not always proof of a legitimate call. Scammers often “spoof” numbers to look local, familiar, or official.
- Pressure is a red flag. “Act now,” “verify your account,” “you’ll be

arrested,” “claim your refund,” “your account is on hold” are all classic manipulation hooks. Be mindful of phishing emails and smishing texts that use alarming language and bogus links to lure you into action.

- Tax-season themes are common. Examples include illegal robocall campaigns pushing fake “National Tax Relief Programs,” designed to capture sensitive information like Social Security numbers.

Use the “Out Clause” immediately.

When the phone rings or you receive a text, your best defense is pretty boring.

- For robocalls:
 - o Don’t answer unknown numbers when you can avoid it. A left voicemail is a fairly good indicator that the call was real.
 - o If you answer and it’s a recording, **hang up**.
 - o Don’t press buttons to “opt out” unless you are 100% sure the caller is legitimate as doing so can confirm your number is active.
- For robotexts:
 - o Don’t click links in unexpected texts, even if they seem official or urgent.
 - o Don’t provide any personal information (e.g. DOB, SSN, passwords, bank details).
 - o Block and report such instances using your phone’s “Report Junk/Spam” feature if available.

Turn on call blocking and labeling.

A big part of the “Out Clause” is letting tools intercept the noise before it reaches your attention.

- Use your mobile carrier’s call-blocking tools and any built-in



Use the “out clause” to regain your digital peace.

Graphic Design by Karen Clay

spam-labeling options. The FCC website (<https://www.fcc.gov/>) provides consumer resources on call blocking and related tools.

- Use a reputable call-blocking app if you need stronger filtering because you’re getting hit frequently.
- Enable “Silence Unknown Callers” or spam filtering, if it is available on your phone, so unknown numbers don’t ring.

Know what “verified caller” really means and what it doesn’t.

- The FCC has championed caller ID authentication standards to reduce illegal spoofing and help carriers identify suspicious calls before they reach you.
- Although authentication can help confirm whether a number is spoofed, it doesn’t guarantee a call is legit. You still need to use your own judgment.

Reduce future spam by changing a few habits.

This is where your “digital joy” returns in the form of fewer future interruptions.

- Add your number to the National Do Not Call Registry to reduce legitimate telemarketing calls, which helps cut down lawful nuisance calls.



Karen Clay

Clay Technology and Multimedia

Courtesy, Karen Clay

- Don’t enter your number into random forms, giveaways, coupon sites, or sketchy “free trial” pages.
- Never “verify” your identity from an inbound call or text. If a bank, delivery company, or agency is involved, hang up and call them back using a number from their official website or your account statement. This is especially important with tax-related messages as scams happen year-round and often impersonate trusted tax entities.
- Don’t let embarrassment keep you silent! If you think a call/text was illegal, spoofed, or scammy, report it to the FCC at <https://consumercomplaints.fcc.gov/>. Doing so helps enforcement and blocking efforts improve.

Robocalls and robotexts can make our digital world dreary on purpose but we know there is an Out Clause. Used consistently, the “eternal light” of a peaceful ringtone can come back.

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Congratulations Mayor Scott!

NCIA to Honor Mayor Brandon Scott at Vocational Training Center Graduation Dec. 6, 2025

Submitted to The Baltimore Times

NCIA will honor Mayor Brandon M. Scott with its inaugural Baltimore Workforce Visionary Award during the organization's Vocational Training Center (VTC) graduation ceremony on Saturday, December 6, 2025, at 10 a.m. The public event will take place at Forest Park High School (3701 Eldorado Ave.) and celebrate 65 Baltimore-area residents who have completed industry-recognized workforce training.

Graduates have earned certifications in high-demand fields such as HVAC, CDL, and automotive repair through NCIA's free vocational programs. These training pathways strengthen Baltimore's workforce and provide residents—many of whom face significant barriers to employment—with practical skills that lead to stable, well-paying careers.

This year's ceremony will also highlight Mayor Scott's leadership in advancing equitable workforce development. The new Baltimore Workforce Visionary Award recognizes his ongoing commitment to creating opportunities for underserved communities. The honor follows national recognition for the mayor, who was recently featured on TIME's Most Influential Rising Stars list and the Ebony Power 100 for transformative urban leadership. Read The Baltimore Times' coverage of those accolades here: <https://baltimoretimes-online.com/latest-news/2025/11/26/mayor-brandon-m-scott-earns-dual-national-honors-from-time-and-ebony-for-transformative-urban-leadership/>

Under Mayor Scott's administration, Baltimore City has made direct investments in NCIA's Vocational Training Center through the Mayor's Office of Employment Development (MOED) and the Mayor's Office of



Mayor Brandon Scott

Photo: DPOB

Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE), helping sustain programs that connect historically underserved residents to meaningful career pathways.

"I am honored to receive the Baltimore Workforce Visionary Award," Mayor Scott said. "Workforce development is one of the most powerful tools we have to build safer, stronger communities in our city. NCIA's Vocational Training Center embodies the spirit of Baltimore: resilient and hardworking. I am proud to partner with them as we continue creating opportunities for every resident to reach their full potential."

Since its founding in 2017, NCIA's Baltimore VTC has enrolled more than 2,200 Marylanders, achieved a 76% completion rate, and maintained a 65% employment rate for graduates. Participants earn an average starting wage of \$21.36 per hour, with every 100 graduates who secure employment generating an estimated \$5 million in annual economic impact—a testament to the program's far-reaching influence on

both families and the city's economy.

"Mayor Scott has redefined what it means to invest in people," said NCIA CEO Carole Argo. "His approach reflects a deep commitment to creating pathways to economic mobility, reducing crime through opportunity, and building a stronger, more equitable Baltimore. Our graduates stand as living proof that access to vocational training changes lives, families, and communities."

NCIA's training programs operate at no cost to participants and are supported by public and private partners including the Maryland Department of Human Services, MOED, Grads to Career, the Department of Justice, and the Weinberg, Abell, and France-Merrick foundations.

As part of its annual giving campaign, NCIA's board of directors will match all donations up to \$50,000 made between November 19 and December 6, 2025. Funds raised will help expand access to training for individuals experiencing barriers such as incarceration, homelessness, or economic hardship.

Small Business Saturday Highlights

Mayor Scott Celebrates Baltimore's Small Businesses

Mayor Brandon M. Scott joined the Small & Minority Business Advisory Department (SMBA&D) and Baltimore Main Streets to kick off **Small Business Saturday 2025**. The celebration, announced earlier by the Mayor's Office, emphasized a simple but powerful truth: small businesses are the heartbeat of Baltimore's economy—fueling jobs, culture, and community pride.

Beginning in Highlandtown, the Mayor stepped into Harp Vision, a family-owned vegan self-care brand whose warm welcome set the tone for the day. After opening remarks from Director Charlyn Nater, Senate President Bill Ferguson, and Delegate Scott Philips, Mayor Scott presented a proclamation recognizing the vital role of small business owners across the city. Shoppers gathered inside the shop, exploring handmade items that reflected both artistry and entrepreneurship.

From there, the Mayor traveled throughout Baltimore's Main Street corridors—Fells Point, Federal Hill, Pigtown, Pennsylvania Avenue, Park Heights, Waverly, Belair-Edison, and Hamilton-Lauraville—visiting nine businesses in total. Each stop highlighted a unique corner of Baltimore: a beloved record store in Fells Point, a boutique market in Federal Hill, a global-flavored culinary shop in Pigtown, a neighborhood hardware store on Pennsylvania Avenue, a museum celebrating African culture in Park Heights, and Keppel & Kismet, a creative gift shop in Hamilton-Lauraville.

At every location, residents, council representatives, and community leaders greeted the Mayor with enthusiasm. Business owners shared that they connect neighbors to their local shops in ways no big-box store ever could.

The 2025 Small Business Saturday tour reaffirmed what the Mayor's Office and Main Streets partners emphasized in their announcement: when Baltimore shows up for small businesses, those businesses show up for Baltimore.



Mayor Scott Kicks-Off Small Business Saturday with Visits to Nine Main Street Businesses. The tour began at Harp Vision LLC (luxury vegan self-care products) with owners April and Tyrone who recently opened their retail location in the Highland Main Street District



DJ Larry Whaddup; Mayor Brandon Scott and Monesha Phillips, Owner, Pandora's Box. Pandora Box is located in the Federal Hill District and will celebrate its 25th year in business this year!



The Mayor takes a selfie with Esther Armstrong, founder of the Sankofa Children's Museum of African Cultures. The museum is located in the Park Heights Main Street District.



(L-R) Mayor Brandon Scott, Ginny Lawhorn Main Street Advocacy Officer; Tiffany Bethea, Executive Director, Baltimore City Chamber of Commerce; Nicole Sullivan, Founder & Chief Maker, Keppel & Kismet; Charlyn Nater, Director of the Baltimore Main Streets Program Photos: Mayor's Office of Small and Minority Business Advocacy & Development



April & Tyrone, Owners of Harp Vision LLC



Molly Gilmore of Mos Magic Creations and Mia Blom, Senior Director of Government & Community Affairs/Executive Director Visit Baltimore Education & Training Foundation



Crocheted Little Guys from Mos Magic Creations



Khadeeja Muhammad, Mayor's Office of Small & Minority Business Advocacy & Development; Charlyn Nater, Director of the Baltimore Main Streets Program; Ricky Herman, Herman Discount Store; Delegate Regina Boyce. Herman's is located in the Waverly Main Street District.

How to Identify, Cope with Holiday Grief

By Andrea Blackstone

Wendi Williams, Ph.D., founder and principal of WSW Consultation Services and President-elect of the American Psychological Association, stated that grief is a natural reaction to loss. As the holiday season progresses, Williams provides insight about a topic that can be familiar to many people—loss that stems from the death of a loved one, a breakup, or other reasons.

“However, grief can also arise from the loss of status, opportunity, or position, such as job loss. A particularly complex form of mourning is ambiguous loss, which occurs when a loved one is physically present but psychologically absent, often seen with degenerative diseases like dementia. In these cases, the person is no longer who they once were, yet they are still alive. This situation complicates the grieving process because there is no defined moment of death to initiate the typical stages of grief,” said the psychologist and educator.

Regardless of the cause, reactions to loss are emotional, but they can also manifest physically and socially as individuals struggle to adapt to profound change, according to Dr. Williams.

Grief can elevate during the holiday period.

“During the holidays, feelings of grief can be exacerbated as individuals, families, and communities come to grips with those who are absent from their lives,” Dr. Williams stated.

Although the holiday season often brings families and loved ones together at home, the perceived quality of these relationships, often influenced by idealized portrayals in holiday films and social media, may not align with reality.

“This contrast, especially when experiencing relationship discord, can be particularly triggering for those wishing for different, more harmonious circumstances in their own relationships,” Dr. Williams added.

Holiday grief can be worsened by economic pressures and expectations to purchase gifts.

“For many this season, the emotional weight of grief is compounded by financial strain, making the pressure of the holidays even worse. This is especially true for those facing unemployment, as over seven million Americans are currently out of work,” said Dr. Williams. “The impact has been particularly severe for Black women, with approximately 600,000 losing their jobs since February 2025.”

She further explained that for individuals who view providing for their families during the holidays as a sign of success or personal achievement, grappling with the need to “do more with much less” this season can feel like a profound and specific loss.

Know the signs of holiday grief.

Dr. Williams noted that grief during the holidays presents with typical symptoms that are amplified by the shared expectation and atmosphere of the season.

“Signs of holiday grief can manifest emotionally as sadness, irritability, and emotional numbness, alongside physical symptoms such as fatigue, changes in appetite, and disrupted sleep,” she said.

Four ways a person can cope with grief during the holiday season

1. Acknowledge Your Feelings

Allow yourself to have the space to feel your emotions without judgment.

2. Modify Expectations and Traditions

Set realistic goals for the holidays. Consider adapting certain activities, perhaps by creating new rituals to honor your loved one, such as lighting a candle or sharing a cherished memory.

3. Lean on Your Support System

Reach out to friends, family, or support groups for help.

4. Practice Self and Community Care

Prioritize activities that help you and others manage energy and emotional demands during this time of loss.

How Friends or Family Can Support a Grieving Loved One

Dr. Williams explained that individuals who have a friend or family member who is grieving should ask them directly what they need.

“Recognize that their needs may change over time and be prepared to respond in ways you are capable of, while also being mindful of your own boundaries during the holiday season. Grief is inherently a process. Therefore, it is vital to fully engage with it without demanding a specific end result, as that outcome may simply be unattainable,” she added.

Visit www.drwendwilliams.com for more information about Dr. Williams’ books, “Black Women at Work: On Refusal” and “Recovery and The Majestic Place: The Freedom Possible in Black Women’s Leadership”—both



Wendi S. Williams, Ph.D., founder and principal, WSW Consultation Services, and the President-elect of the American Psychological Association is a visionary psychologist and educator who bridges the worlds of psychology, education, and leadership with clarity, compassion, and transformative insight. Photo: Sylvia Lee

of which offer powerful frameworks for navigating complexity with clarity and courage. Her most personal and timely reflections could be found at The Well with Dr. Wendi—her Substack blog <https://wellwithdrwendi.substack.com> and community space. There, she shares essays, insights, and practices on leading through liminality, building liberatory strategies, and cultivating clarity in the midst of change. Follow Dr. Williams on Instagram.



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By Rosa Pryor

Hello everyone, I hope everything is well with you. Happy Holidays to you. I am very excited that I made it to my 81st birthday on Thanksgiving Day. I feel very blessed. Hey! It is not too late to help me celebrate. Those of you who sent me gift cards, birthday cards and monetary gifts, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. I will be celebrating until the end of December. You can send your cards to 214 Conewood Road, Reisterstown, Maryland. I will see you soon.

My dear friend and adopted brother, **Carlos Hutchins** is ready to retire his **"Home for the Holidays; Toy Drive Foundation"** after 10 years. So, my friend, let's make his last one the biggest one ever. Support him, as you will be supporting underprivileged children by attending this event and taking a **"TOY"** on Sunday, December 14 from 3-8 p.m. at the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Lodge of Maryland, located 1307 Eutaw Place. Your treat will be the best local live entertainment featuring **J'KAR, Shades of Darkness, Crosswind, Phyllies Intruders and DJ Jazz and DJ Shugg**. The event is BYOF or you can purchase your food from Chef Kokeeta and an open bar is included. For more information, call 443-963-5711. I will see you there.

"Great-Balls-of Kitty-kat"! Honey Child! December is busting loose! Live Shows all over the place! Check this one out! They are calling it **"Holiday Nights in Harlem Gala."** I am just loving this title! It is "dress to impress" in **your** fabulous attire. So, ladies and gentlemen, that means you should not go to this affair in jeans and tennis shoes.

Carlos Hutchins Finale Home For The Holidays Toy Drive



"Oldies but Goodies" Extravaganza with Robert Shahid every Saturday from 5 a.m.-10 a.m. on WEAA 88.9 FM radio. He plays oldies but goodies feature hits from the 50s, 60s, 70s and 80s. He has live interviews with musicians and club owners, and features listener call requests, birthday celebrations and special events.

It will be held at the Patapsco Arena, 3301 Annapolis Road in Baltimore, on Friday, December 12, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. This a daytime event- I love it! A hot meal will be served, and the live entertainment will include **Palovations, Crosswinds, J'KAR and Panama Band**. DJ Mike Jones will also be there doing his thing. For ticket information, contact **Tee Shirt Brian** at the Patapsco Flea Market.

Cityview Live presents live entertainment every Saturday throughout December. They are calling it **"Motown Saturdays"** from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. On December 6 will feature **"Crosswind"**; December 13th **"Style."** December 20 will feature **"Palovation"** and December 27th is **"J'KAR"**. So, mark your calendar, we will see you there.

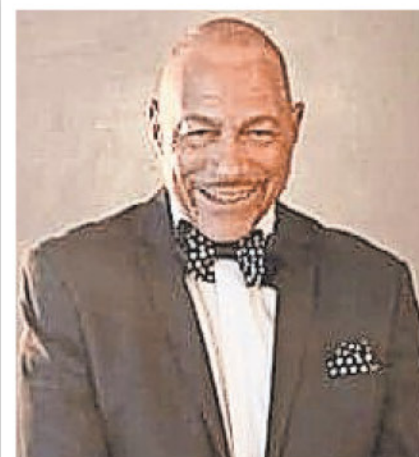
I am leaving you with a reminder that I have a few of my new books on hand,



"Moon-Man," long time radio personality and promoter of Old School Music is having his **Big Show at the Palladium Center, 2900 Liberty Heights Avenue with live recording artist on Saturday, December 13, 2025 at 4 p.m. featuring "The Ebonys", "Blue Magic", "BADD", "Cookie & The Shades of Darkness", "Ten Karat Gold", and many more. Get tickets online at Eventbrite.com.**

entitled **"Baltimore and Maryland Black History Stories; Who, What, When & Where."** It is my last Masterpiece, with over 1,000 photos of you and your family and friends from the old days, and a story to **ACCOMPANY** it. Guess what? You are in it. You can order my book on Amazon or FROM Barnes & Noble, or directly from me with my autograph. Call me at 410-833-9474 or stop by at 214 Conewood Avenue, Reisterstown, Maryland, 21136.

Well, my dear friend, I have to go. I am out of time and space. Feel free to call me anytime. Or email me at rosapryor@aol.com. **UNTIL THE NEXT TIME, I'M MUSICALLY YOURS.**



Carlos Hutchins Productions Annual and Finale "HOME for the HOLIDAYS" celebrates 10 years and the final year of his Toy Drive Foundation on Sunday, December 14, 3-8 p.m. at the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Lodge of Maryland, 1307 Eutaw Place. For ticket information, call 443-963-5711.



"Tee-Shirt Brian" is producing a "Holiday Nights in Harlem Gala," an Annual Holiday Celebration on Friday, December 12, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Patapsco Arena, 3301 Annapolis Road, featuring Acts such as Palovations, Crosswinds, J'KAR, Panama Band and of course, DJ Mike Jones. For tickets, call 443-955-8600.

Ursula V. Battle's DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES OF THE BIBLE: The OLD, The **Bold**, & The Beautiful



Ursula V. Battle
Playwright



Dr. Gregory Wm. Branch
Theatrical Director

FAQs: Saturday, Dec. 6th Show: One showtime at 2pm. Doors open at 1pm. VIP Seating includes photo with the writer, producer, and cast. Vendors in the marketplace and beverages available for purchase. General Seating is first-come first-served.

Sunday, Dec. 7th Dinner & Show: Doors open at 1pm. Dinner served until 3:30 p.m. Show begins at 4 p.m. You may reserve seats or tables upon purchasing your tickets. Performance starts on time and food is served from 1 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Menu: The Dinner show includes a full buffet consisting of Mouth-watering Baked Salmon, Delicious Fried Chicken, Succulent Green Beans, Homemade Mac N Cheese, and Cornbread/ Dinner rolls, Iced Tea, Lemonade, and assorted Desserts. Catered by 3 Jays Catering.

Sunday, Dec. 7th Show Only: One showtime at 4 pm. Doors open at 3 pm. VIP Seating includes photo with the writer, producer, and cast. Vendors in the marketplace and beverages available for purchase. General Seating is first-come first-served.

Parking: The facility offers free parking and handicap parking for those with permits. Parking is free and security is onsite.

Shows start on time. Please be punctual. Tickets are non-refundable.

If you are not able to purchase online, you may call for tickets at 410-766-0217 or 443-531-4787. We have ticket distribution centers that can accommodate you.



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