

The Courier

December 14, 2016 Volume 17 Number 14

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Pines police to monitor homes over holiday

While some Ocean Pines residents are packing up and heading out of town for the holiday season, officers with the Ocean Pines police department are keeping a watchful eye on unoccupied homes. Residential security checks are provided by the police department on a weekly basis for homes that will be vacant for 30 days or longer. This security check program runs year-round, but it is in the winter when a large amount of homes are vacant in the area. 'Snowbirds' who fly south, to rid themselves of the frigid temperatures, are encouraged to request this service.

Officers, who are assigned to sectors, monitor the home at random. The property's perimeter will be surveyed by the Ocean Pines officer and any changes since their last visit will be reported to the home owner immediately.

Ocean Pines residents can apply for free residence checks by completing a Resident Check Form online.

Road work underway near North Gate

Ocean Pines residents will notice new traffic signage and a concrete road median along Route 589 near the north gate entrance. Drivers in the Ocean Pines area are urged to slow down and use caution while traveling through the construction site.

According to the Maryland State Highway Administration, the Delmarva Health Pavilion complex currently has right-in, right-out access to Route 589. At the completion of the road work, the complex will have right-in, right-out; left-in, but no left-out access to Route 589.

Weather permitting, crews will conduct road surface marking along Route 589 near the Ocean Pines north gate entrance next week. SHA expects the project to be completed within the next 30 days.

Maryland Route 589 (MD 589) is a state highway that runs 4.65 miles from Route 50 (US 50) at Grays Corner north to US 113 and MD 575 in Showell. MD 589 provides access to Ocean Pines and Ocean Downs, a harness racing venue with a slot machine casino. The first portion of the state highway was constructed through Showell in 1935. MD 589 was completed to US 50 in 1949 and 1950.



Special visit - Julie Vorsteg's kindergarten class at Ocean City Elementary School had many special visitors during American Education Week during November. OCES kindergartener, **Artemiy Klimins** works diligently for his special visitor, his mother, **Iryna Hancharova**.



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December

Community Calendar 2016

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Beef and Beer scheduled

On Friday, January 27 from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Star Charities will hold its Annual Beef & Beer at the Ocean Pines Community Center. Tickets are \$25 per person. This event supports wounded veterans in Maryland. There will be many items for auction as well as music for your listening and dancing pleasure. For tickets and information please contact Anna Foulz at 410-641-7667 or Larry Walton at 443-831-1791.



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2	3	4	5
6 <small>Hanukkah begins at sundown</small>	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21 <small>First day of winter</small>	22	23	24 <small>Christmas Eve</small>	25 <small>Christmas</small>	26 <small>Kwanzaa begins at sundown</small>
27	28	29	30	31 <small>New Year's Eve</small>		

Annual penguin swim approaching

It is almost time for the 23rd Annual Penguin Swim to be held on New Year's Day, Sunday, January 1. Once again, the swim will be held at the Princess Royale Hotel, Oceanfront and 91st Street in Ocean City.

The Atlantic General Hospital Foundation is inviting individuals and teams to join in the fundraising. Sixteen teams have already registered and more are joining every day!

This year, event day registration will begin at 10 a.m., ending promptly at 12:30 p.m., with the main event at 1 p.m. The time in between will be chock full of fun activities the whole family will enjoy: carnival games, face painting, mermaids and more.

Special recognition awards will be given to Oldest and Youngest Penguins. All Penguins will receive an official 2017 AGH Penguin Swim short-sleeve t-shirt for their \$25 registration fee. Additional incentive prizes can be earned based on individual fundraising efforts!

Individual and team participants can reg-

ister now to start collecting donations. For more information, to view this year's shirts and prizes, or to register, visit www.aghpenquinswim.org or text PENGUIN to 51555. Find the event on Facebook at www.facebook.com/penguinswim or call the Atlantic General Hospital Foundation office at 410-641-9671.

Church offers 'time out' event

Parents "Time Out," a free annual community outreach event held at Bethany United Methodist Church, will occur on Saturday, December 17 between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. Children participate in games and holiday crafts while parents take time out to handle holiday preparations or relax. Ages Pre-K through grade six are invited to spend the afternoon at Bethany UMC, located at 8648 Stephen Decatur Highway in Berlin (corner of Snug Harbor Road and Rte. 611). Bethany UMC offers this special event during what can be a hectic time of year to sup-

please see church on page 6

Monday

Ocean Pines Poker Club

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

Sweet Adelines

The Delmarva Sweet Adeline Chorus meets from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Ocean Pines Community Center. Call 410-641-6876.

Monday/Tuesday

Sanctioned Duplicate Bridge

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

Tuesday

Families Anonymous

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

Tuesday/Thursday

Poker Players

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

Wednesday

Kiwanis Club Meeting

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

Elks Bingo

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

Delmarva Hand Dancing

Dancing at The Fenwick Inn in Ocean City from 5:30 to 9 p.m. Contact 302-934-7951 or info@delmarvahand-dancing.com.

Rotary Club

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

Square Dancing

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

AL-Anon/OP-West OC-Berlin

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

Thursday

Story Time

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

Beach Singles

Beach Singles 45 for Happy Hour at Harpoon Hanna's at 4 p.m. Call Arlene at 302-436-9577, Kate at 410-524-0649 or Dianne at 302-541-4642.

Legion Bingo

American Legion in Ocean City opens doors at 5:30 p.m., games begin at 7. For information call 410-289-3166.

Gamblers Anonymous

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

Friday

Knights of Columbus Bingo

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

Gamblers Anonymous

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



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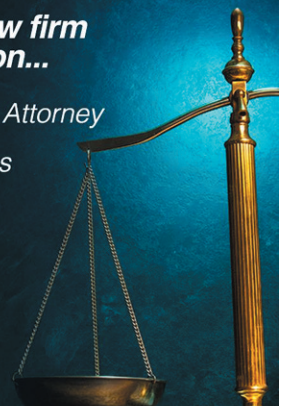
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FTS Fiber seeks Ocean Pines easement

On Monday December 5, FTS Fiber presented to the Ocean Pines Board of Directors a request for a non-exclusive public utility easement in order to support the expansion of Internet Service Provider, ThinkBig Networks, who participates in other parts of FTS' larger build for the Delmarva Peninsula. In consideration for this easement on the private roads of the Ocean Pines Association, FTS has offered to cover the cost to connect the Ocean Pines Police Department to the Worcester County Government, which exceeds \$750,000 in value based on the construction and monthly service fees FTS would be paying for this connection. There is no monetary exchange associated with the transaction.

While FTS Fiber's CEO, Brett Hill, is an Ocean Pines Board Member and acting general manager, Mr. Hill followed proper protocol by removing himself from the decision-making process. He also filed the necessary conflict of interest disclosure to all directors prior to any discussions.

This request falls in line with the FTS rights to public right-of-way granted as a utility operator in the State of Maryland. With Ocean Pines Association being private, and the request of Internet Service Provider, ThinkBig Networks, to provide services in the area, a separate, non-exclusive easement is required to serve area residents. This is similar to the easement of other utility providers who offer com-

petitive services in any marketplace.

Mark Wagner, CEO of ThinkBig Networks states, "Ocean Pines presents a great opportunity for us to expand our Fiber-To-The-Home internet services on the Delmarva Peninsula. We are excited about the opportunity to bring more reliable, high-speed internet for telecommuting, educational needs, video conferencing, and other computer related services expected by Ocean Pines homeowners. With 8,452 homes, we feel we can add great value to the community and continue our mission of bringing gigabit internet service to connect the Eastern Shore."

FTS Fiber looks forward to serving the needs of the residents of Worcester County, and specifically those in Ocean Pines. If you have any questions, please contact FTS Fiber's Marketing Director, Blake Hargest, at bhargest@ftsfiber.com or call 877-230-1260.

FTS Fiber is a dark fiber supplier providing carrier-class network infrastructure in both rural areas and major markets of the United States. Delivering the lowest attenuation and latency possible with state of the art fiber, FTS produces reliable and secure, neutral fiber paths for various network operators and business sectors, including content and internet providers, healthcare, education, government, and real estate developers. For more information about FTS Fiber, please visit ftsfiber.com.

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2012 Business of the Year

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According to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), 91 percent of long-distance holiday travel is by personal vehicle. And while many people may associate holiday travel with long lines at airport check-



in counters and security checkpoints, the BTS notes that just 5 to 6 percent of holiday

trips are taken by air. The remaining 2 to 3 percent are taken by bus, train, ship, or another mode of transportation. The average long-distance holiday trip for the Christmas/New Year's holiday is 275 miles, which is slightly longer than the average long-distance trip during the rest of the year, indicating that many travelers are willing to travel farther for the holiday season than they might be during the rest of the year. In addition, when traveling long distances for the Christmas/New Year's holiday, travelers spend roughly four nights away from home on average.

The optics are not good

Commentary by **Joe Reynolds**

Life is good in Ocean Pines. The election last August resulted in a seven-member OPA Board of Directors that could well be one of the best ever. Add in newly elected director Brett Hill assuming the task of acting General Manager, and doing so in a way that brings applause from nearly every corner of the Pines. What could go wrong?

Yogi Berra said, "When you come to the fork in the road, take it!" The board was presented with a fork in the road during their meeting of December 5.

The item on the board agenda was not especially clear. It was stated as "FTS Fiber Easement Request," and was presented by OPA president Tom Herrick.

In a quick intro, Herrick said something about director Brett Hill leaving the room during the discussion. Hill stood up and left. When Herrick was asked about why Hill was leaving the room, it turns out Director Hill is the CEO of FTS, and FTS is asking OPA for an easement throughout all OPA roads to install fiber optic cable. FTS would then sell access to the fiber optic cable to a company called Think Big Networks. Think Big would then sell very high speed fiber optic internet access to homes in Ocean Pines at an announced preliminary rate of \$99.00 a month for a "Gig of Internet," and presumably to OPA as well for some not mentioned rate.

The presentations made by representatives of both FTS and Think Big took on all the characteristics of the sales pitch residents were given when a former General Manager sold the

board on the idea of Java Bay Cafe. Instead of charts showing how many millions of cups of coffee are sold every year, this pitch told us 20 billion smart phones would be in use by 2020. We were told "94% of people consider broadband as the most important amenity." We were told a "real broadband connection can increase the value of a property up to 8%." There were other equally exciting statistics.

What's this all about? Why should association members care if a director's company is given access to OPA right of ways in the same way that the electric company or gas company or telephone company have access?

Is this a conflict of interest for Brett Hill? Maybe. Maybe not. He would recuse himself from any vote, and he had Herrick make the presentation.

Here's what Board Resolution B-05 says about conflicts of interest:

"No Director, officer, employee, or committee member of the Association shall recommend a course of action or make a decision on behalf of the Association with respect to any matter in which he has, or hopes to have, a direct or indirect financial interest or in which a family member or employer (other than the Association) has, or hopes to have, a financial interest. This policy shall not prohibit the furnishing of unbiased factual information for recommendation or action by others. Directors, officers, employees, and committee members shall be alert to, and sensitive to, any appearance of a conflict of interest and shall avoid such appearances.

"Any Director, officer, or committee member of the Association who has or may have a conflict of interest

or who has or may have the appearance of a conflict of interest shall notify the Board of Directors and shall refrain from making recommendations or taking action with respect to the matter."

Could asking Herrick to make the presentation be a violation of OPA's conflict of interest resolution? Herrick did not make a recommendation but does asking the board president to present the idea represent an implied recommendation to the board from Hill?

One can only wonder what is actually at stake here. What is the big picture in and out of Ocean Pines for Director Hill? Director Cheryl Jacobs openly raised the conflict of issue question, as well as asking about "value." The presentation stressed providing free fiber optic access to the OPA police department as a benefit to OPA - claimed to be worth \$800,000 over 20 years. Not even mentioned was how much OPA might be paying over 20 years for hooking up all our other departments to the new network.

What is the value of the OPA right-of-way access to Director Hill's business? That is difficult to say, and only important from the standpoint that OPA has something of value he wants. What is the value of what OPA has?

However, there must be much, much more behind this proposed deal than selling internet access to residents of Ocean Pines at \$100 a month when an existing company already offers more than adequate broadband internet service at \$50 or less. Surprisingly, the FTS representative seemed surprised when informed high speed internet access was already available in Ocean Pines. A business plan based on selling internet access in Ocean Pines at \$100 a month doesn't sound like a road to riches when the infrastructure cost could top \$15 million.

It appears the board has no intention of acting on Hill's request immediately. There will likely be much future discussion. Unfortunately, much of that discussion could take place behind closed doors.

However, this is the sort of issue that can impact board elections. Last August's election of a new board majority desired by so many association

Goodbye Sandyhook

Today December 14 is an anniversary but I mourn because it is not a happy one. Twenty precious children lost their lives four years ago today in Newtown, Ct. Happy, lively, dancing children anxiously awaiting Christmas. Can you imagine what Christmas is like for these mothers and fathers who lost their beautiful babies? Children frozen in time at ages six and seven. Their parents robbed of a whole lifetime of hugs and kisses and "I love you Mommy and Daddy." I mourn today because it is December 14 and six adults also lost their lives, denied living out lifetimes and reaching for their dreams. A troubled young man with an automatic rifle and a pistol fired 156 shots and made a horrible decision that ended the short lives of the children as well as their adult protectors. Does anyone remember these lost souls and others who shared a fate so similar?

Dolores E. Pike
 Ocean Pines

Highs and lows of the season

It's that time of year when children are aglow with anticipation, counting the days until Christmas break, making the final touches to their lists for

movies we watch this time of year. For instance while decorating the tree we watch the original "Miracle on 34th Street." On Christmas Eve we watch my all time favorite movie, "It's a Wonderful Life." And on Christmas day we watch the British version of, "A Christmas Carol," with Allister Sim. Also sprinkled into the mix leading up to Christmas day are viewings of the most recent version of "Miracle on 34th



It's All About. . .

By **Chip Bertino**

chipbertino@delmarvacourier.com

Santa and hoping for the first snowfall.

Parents too are aglow but for entirely different reasons. Mainly it's anxiety over what yet needs to be done before the big day and angst over how quickly time is slipping by. Probably the largest concern among parents is gift shopping: what to get for whom and how much to spend. Such considerations can tie people up in knots.

Most people, and I include myself in this category, don't have the financial resources to purchase the gifts really desired by the people on the gift list. In some instances, especially in large families, there are just so many people that it's impossible to get something special for everyone. Some families employ a lottery to determine who will buy gifts for whom. I must admit that the gifts I'm responsible for are those for my wife. She handles everyone else.

In addition to gift buying, there are so many other things necessary for Christmas preparation. There's decorating the house both inside and out, putting up the tree, writing and sending Christmas cards and preparing a Christmas Eve and Christmas day meal. About this time, some people are still deciding where they will spend Christmas. Will travel be involved?

But alas, not all is overwhelming. There are a number of things I look forward to during yuletide period. First, there's watching some favorite movies. My wife and I have, over the years, developed a list of special

Street," "Elf," and other remakes of "A Christmas Carol," starring Patrick Stewart and the Muppets respectively.

Another anticipated seasonal treat is hot buttered rum. Christmas wouldn't be Christmas for me without a mug of hot buttered rum or two or three.

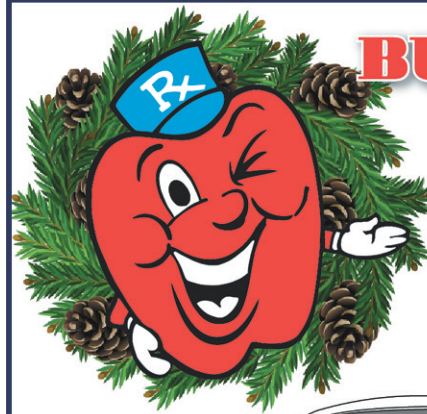
I do very little decorating around our house.

This endeavor is handled quite expertly by my wife who has a decorating system honed and refined by experience. Watching her decorate the house is like watching an artist at work. My role in this effort is usually confined to moving furniture and retrieving boxes from the attic. Other than that I stay out of sight and most importantly, out of the way.

The one area where I'm allowed to venture is decorating the outside of the house. Through the years my efforts in this regard have ebbed and flowed. Many years ago when I was young and eager to flex my decorating muscles, I ventured up on the roof with enough stringed lights to illuminate the Chrysler building. It was such a windy day that I nearly went aloft. Fortunately I was tethered to the light string. Since that experience I've been careful not to let my decorating prowess get ahead of my ability or the physics of gravity.

This time of year is what you make it. It can be a time of anxiety or it can be a time of enjoyment.

Hot buttered rum anyone?



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Pines police see spike in alcohol consumption levels

The Ocean Pines police department has issued a warning after seeing an increase in the blood-alcohol level of drivers who have been arrested for driving while intoxicated.

“Recently, in three arrests that were made, one was two-and-a-half times the legal limit; the other was two times the legal limit and a third was at the legal limit,” said David Massey, chief of Ocean Pines police department.



drive with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 percent or more. But officers in Ocean Pines are now seeing cases that involve a BAC of .15 percent, which is alarming. Drivers with a BAC of .15 percent suffer from gross motor impairment, lack of physical control, blurred vision and major loss of balance, police said.

“That’s not typical,” said Police Chief Massey. “We are seeing an uptick

Police Chief Massey believes holiday parties, this time of the year, are to blame. In every state, it’s illegal to

in the amount of blood-alcohol. So, I think we need to warn our citizens that when they are partying at Christmas time to have a designated driver or use a local cab service.”

Ocean Pines has a state certified, full service police agency that operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The department protects life and property, preserves the peace, and enforces all state and county laws, including traffic laws, in a fair and impartial manner. All sworn officers attend 23 weeks of intensive police training at the Eastern Shore Criminal Justice Academy in Salisbury, Maryland. Upon graduation, all officers are certified by the Maryland Police Training Commission.

optics
from page 4

members could be jeopardized next August. Certainly this entire issue would be different if it was presented by a company other than one whose CEO is a sitting member of the OPA Board of Directors and who is also the



From left: **Todd Ferrante**, chair of the Atlantic General Hospital Foundation; **Meshach Heenatigala, MD**; **Honorable Charlotte Cathell**; **Xin Zhong, MD**; **Michael Franklin**, president and CEO of Atlantic General Hospital; **Lou Taylor**, chair of the Atlantic General Hospital Board of Trustees; **Alae Zarif, MD**; **Angela Simmons, CRNP**; **Krystle Lewis**; **Cheryl Aydelotte**; **Amy Gehrig**; **Daniel Hakeem, PA-C**; and **Michael Cylc**, Atlantic General Hospital Foundation member.

AGH celebrates new location

Atlantic General Hospital and Health System held an open house at the new location for its Surgical Associates and Bariatric Center offices in the James G. Barrett Medical Office Building recently.

Atlantic General Surgical Associates and the Atlantic General Bariatric Center provide advanced minimally invasive surgical procedures performed by board certified doctors in-

cluding bariatric, oncology and vascular surgeries.

The bariatric center is led by Alae Zarif, MD, who performs gastric bypass and gastric sleeve procedures for Atlantic General Bariatric Center and general surgeries. Zarif is certified by the American Board of Surgery and performs multiple advanced laparoscopic procedures.

Xin Zhong, M.D. recently joined Atlantic General Surgical Associates and the staff of Atlantic General Bariatric Center from North Shore University Hospital in Manhasset, NY, where she completed a minimally invasive surgery fellowship in robotic and bariatric procedures. She is a fellow of the American College of Surgeons and specializes in advanced laparoscopic procedures, hiatal hernias, complex abdominal wall hernias, and bariatrics.

Meshach Heenatigala, M.D. re-

please see **agh** on page 8

church
from page 2

port parents who may be looking for a fun and exciting holiday opportunity for their children while they shop, wrap gifts or spend a few quiet hours away from the holiday hustle and bustle. Parents are encouraged to register children in advance for this event by calling Megan at 443-614-3870.



Monday

Chicken Parmesan over Pasta \$9.95
Lobster Tail \$14

Tuesday

Burger and French Fries \$6

Wednesday

Meatloaf with mashed potatoes and a vegetable \$6.95
Add a soup or a salad \$9.95

Thursday

Steak Night! \$13.95

Friday

Fried Shrimp with French Fries & cole slaw \$14.75

Saturday

Crabcake Platter with 2 sides and a choice of a soup or salad \$15

\$2.50 Bottles

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OPA names new network administrator, PR director

The Ocean Pines Association has announced the addition of a new network administrator and public relations director to its staff of full-time employees.

Paul Fazzalano has accepted the position of network administrator for Ocean Pines. He has over 16 years of experience in information technology activities. He has a proven record of achieving results through customer relationship building and completing programs ahead of schedule and under budget.

Fazzalano comes to Ocean Pines from the Tennessee Department of Children's Services, where he served as the deputy director of IT operations and was senior project manager. He oversaw telecommunications, network and management systems and provided application server and production control support.

A graduate of Star Technical Institute in Lakewood, N.J., Fazzalano is a Six Sigma Green Belt, a CSC-certified associate in project management, an ITIL expert and certified in CompTIA Security+.

The association has also named a new public relations director. Denise Sawyer, an award-winning journalist, will be responsible for overseeing the marketing of the community's amenities as well as acting as a liaison to property owners, visitors and the media.

Sawyer most recently worked at WRDE NBC Coast TV News, where she was an executive producer, franchise reporter and fill-in anchor. She brings with her extensive knowledge of local affairs and years of multimedia experience.

Sawyer graduated from Howard

University with degrees in broadcast news and political science. She interned at CBS News, Fox News Channel and NBC Washington and won a Meredith-Cronkite fellowship as one of the top 10 minority broadcast journalism students in the nation.

County in solid financial standing

Worcester County Treasurer's Office officials recently completed the County's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) for fiscal year 2016. This format, which adheres to the guidelines recommended by the Government Finance Officers Association, provides full accountability to Worcester County citizens and others with an interest in government finances. The CAFR outlines County finances and reflects a long-established history of prudent fiscal management practices.

Chris Hall of TGM Group, LLC,

*please see **standing** on page 8*



No shave for a cause

The month of November gave several faculty members at Stephen Decatur High School the opportunity to help a colleague. "No Shave November" allowed some of the male staff to abandon their razors for a month while raising over \$200 to help the family of long-time history teacher and coach Bob Knox, whose grandson is suffering from a life-threatening brain tumor.

Pictured are Stephen Decatur High School male faculty members participate in No Shave November to help their colleague, **Bob Knox**, whose grandson **Eli** is battling cancer. Back row: Assistant Principal **Ryan Cowder**, **Larry Ryan**, **Jason Pylypczuk**, **Tyler Riley**, Assistant Principal **Mark Flynn**, **Stan Griffin**, **Tom Hinkle**. Front row: **Fred Billings**, **Dale Krantz**, **Bob Knox**, Principal **Tom Zimmer**, **Dan Stearman**, and **Brian Phillips**.

Pup of the Pines winner announced

The winner of the Ocean Pines Recreation and Parks Department's second annual "Pup of the Pines" photo contest has been announced.

CJ, who is 7 months old, received the greatest number of votes from attendees at the Ocean Pines Halloween fall festival on October 29.



CJ

He was recognized as the winner at the community's "A Hometown Christmas" and tree lighting ceremony at White Horse Park on Saturday, November 26.

Pat and Robert Richardson, CJ's owners, said the pup loves meeting new people and visiting the Ocean Pines Yacht Club. The Richardsons

think his personality make him a good candidate for working as a therapy dog when he is older.

As "Pup of the Pines," CJ receives a free 2017 Ocean Pines Dog Park registration. He will also be the official face of the dog park and will be featured in the Ocean Pines Activity Guide and other postings throughout the year.

Money raised from the contest entry fees will be used for upgrades and improvements to the dog park.

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Commissioners elect new president, vice president

On Tuesday, December 6, Worcester County Commissioners reelected Commissioner Madison J. Bunting, Jr. as Commission President and elected Commissioner Diana Purnell as Vice President. Commissioner Bunting was elected county commissioner in 2010 to represent District Six, the Northern District. He has served as president since 2014. He is a licensed professional land surveyor and owned his own surveying and land planning business for 18 years.



Jim Bunting



Diana Purnell

Commissioner Bunting serves on the Commission for Aging and the Water and Sewer Advisory Committee. Prior to becoming a county commissioner, he served on

the Worcester County Board of Zoning Appeals for six years, leading the board as chair for four years. He served on the Worcester County Planning Commission for four years, leading the board as Chair for three years. He also served on the Ocean Pines Comprehensive Planning Committee and is a current member of the Bishopville-St. Martins Neck Association. Commissioner Bunting and his wife, Elisabeth, live in Bishopville. They have two grown children and one granddaughter.

Commissioner Purnell was elected as a county commissioner in 2014 to represent District Two, the Central District. She is an inventor who holds two patents, and she has owned and operated a successful business for the past 37 years. She is the former executive director of the Berlin Community Improvement Association and past president of the Worcester County Commission for Women. She is an active member of the Recognition Advisory Committee for the Maryland

please see **county** on page 11



Enjoying the season - Ocean Pines platform tennis celebrated the holiday season at the Yacht Club. Over sixty people attended the festivities. Above are members of the planning committee from left to right. **Sue Walters, Dawn Gallick, Ardell McNult, Jane Simcock, Audrey Wahl and Tracy Jones**

standing
from page 7

Certified Public Accountants met with the commissioners on December 6 to review Worcester County Government's annual financial report for the year ending June 30, 2016. He advised that the findings of TGM's Independent Audit Report reveal that Worcester County's financial statements are both complete and accurate due to the exercising of tight internal controls, assuring that this required information remains compliant with generally accepted accounting principles.

Worcester County Government remains compliant with the internal policy requiring that a reserve fund be maintained at a level equal to 10% of budgeted annual General Fund expenditures.

For more information about the CAFR, contact Finance Officer Phil Thompson or Assistant Finance Officer Jennifer Swanton at (410) 632-0686.

agh
from page 6

cently joined Atlantic General Surgical Associates from York Hospital in York, PA, where he completed a rural track surgical residency. Heenanigala is a member of the Society of American Gastrointestinal and Endoscopic Surgeons, the American College of Phlebology, and a fellow of the American College of Surgeons. He specializes in surgical procedures involving the head and neck, thoracic, breast, skin/melanoma, abdominal, colorectal, endoscopy, vascular/veins, carpal tunnel, anal incontinence.

Angela Simmons, CBN, CRNP is a seasoned nurse of 15 years. She is credentialed as a Family Nurse Practitioner through the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners and is a certified bariatric nurse. Angela has worked with surgical patients for the past six years and serves as the program coordinator for Atlantic General Bariatric Center.



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Courier Bookshelf

by Dolores E. Pike



Red Notice by Bill Browder

In November 2005 Bill Browder, a London businessman, was denied re-entry into Russia. For several years he had run a successful hedge fund out of his Moscow office. Why deny his visa now? The answer to this question lies in the record of shameful events that Mr. Browder details in his non-fiction book, "Red Notice."

Mr. Browder's nightmare began as his plane landed in Moscow and he was held in detention. After 15 hours with no food or water he was escorted onto a plane back to London. He had been returning to his business-base in Moscow after a weekend spent at his London home. Though born in America he had become a British citizen because of early financial interests in Europe.

Not only did Mr. Browder's company's investments do well but he went on to "name and shame the Russian oligarchs" who were stealing from the Russian people. That changed when Vladimir Putin became president because he set out to stand even higher than the oligarchs, no matter who had to be moved out of the way. Bill Browder now stood in Vladimir Putin's path, though Mr. Browder did not know that until much later.

In protest of his visa denial Mr. Browder retaliated by having his lawyers intercede. But the Russian police ransacked his offices and stole his files. The more his lawyers protested and filed legal actions, the more threatening the situation, until it became too dangerous for them to remain in Russia. Two of them managed

to escape to London but a third, Sergei Magnitsky, refused to leave his Russian home and family and continued the fight.

Sergei Magnitsky was eventually put in prison and told he would be released upon confession of Mr. Browder's illegal Russian activities. None existed and Sergei had nothing to confess. He was moved from prison to prison to confuse his family, systematically beaten, denied proper food and sanitary conditions. He became ill and was denied adequate medical help. Finally, too sick to deny any longer, he was moved to a hospital where he was again refused aid and instead beaten by riot guards. Sergei Magnitsky died on the floor in the hospital.

Some information about conditions in Russia during Sergei's ordeal filtered through to Mr. Browder by way of a well-positioned Russian spy.

That this informant should choose as his code name "Aslan" is a point which I ask you to consider. This, of course, was the name of the lion in C. S. Lewis's book "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe." Aslan is

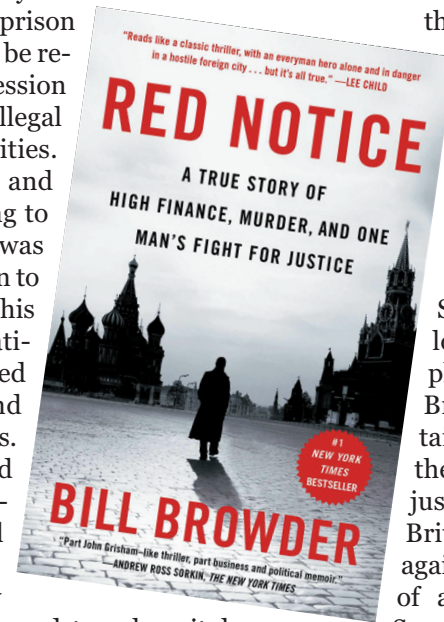
portrayed in that novel as the great lion and, ultimately, as savior. Aslan, a curious name for a Russian spy to embrace.

Through his ordeal Sergei kept a meticulous diary of people, places and events. Mr. Browder also maintained a log and with these two sources sought justice through the British legal system against all Russian figures of authority involved in Sergei's death. None was

forthcoming so in 2010 he turned to the US State Department which listened and began working on "Proclamation 7750, that bans corrupt foreign officials from coming to America."

With the help of Senators Ben Cardin,

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county
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Commission on Indian Affairs, Atlantic General Hospital Foundation Board, Worcester County Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and St. John's United Methodist Church. Purnell and her husband, Gabe, reside in Berlin. They have two daughters, two grandchildren, and four great grandchildren.

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For more information about the county commissioners, please contact Kim Moses, public information officer, at (410) 632-1194.

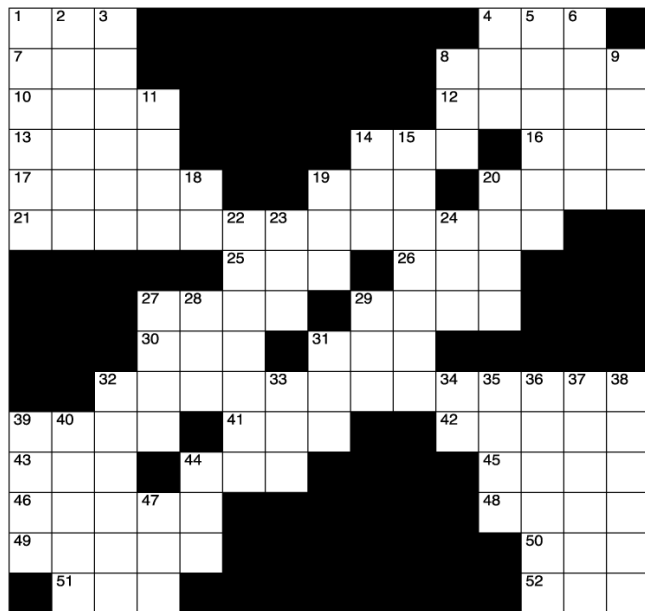
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CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Large primate
- 4. Annualized percentage rate
- 7. Frictional horsepower
- 8. Alternate name
- 10. Incursion
- 12. Metrical feet
- 13. Musician Ingram
- 14. Swiss river
- 16. Text speak for annoying
- 17. Squelch
- 19. Will Ferrell played one
- 20. Close violently
- 21. Arrogant
- 25. Goddess of the dawn
- 26. Today (Spanish)
- 27. Ethiopian town
- 29. Speed
- 30. Kids take it to school
- 31. Bowling ball's adversary
- 32. 1988 NFL MVP
- 39. Volcanic crater
- 41. Curved shape
- 42. Discover by investigation
- 43. Up in the air (abbr.)
- 44. A son who shares his dad's name
- 45. Assist in wrongdoing
- 46. Actress Lathan
- 48. Nonsense (slang)
- 49. Sharp and forthright
- 50. Midway between northeast and east
- 51. NAACP cofounder Wells
- 52. Soviet Socialist Republic

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Again
- 2. Erectile organs
- 3. Concluding speech
- 4. Pie ___ mode
- 5. With pustules
- 6. Muslim calendar month
- 8. Need it to live
- 9. Thailand
- 11. Container to serve food
- 14. Boxing great
- 15. Woolen blankets
- 18. Expresses surprise
- 19. Emergency medical services
- 20. Inflamed swelling of the eyelid
- 22. Reporter
- 23. Arrived extinct
- 24. Ad ___
- 27. Academic bill of rights
- 28. A pair
- 29. Pumpkin and apple are examples
- 31. China
- 32. Made illegal
- 33. Be mistaken
- 34. Stephen King's "Pennywise"
- 35. Semite
- 36. Martens with short tails
- 37. Large bodies of water
- 38. Lower in position
- 39. Dough used in Latin American cuisine
- 40. Calculating tools
- 44. Boxers do this
- 47. Macaw



Answers for Dec. 7

by Jean Marx

The Mason-Dixon Line has its own Wine

Last month, we did an online stroll of wine country in the Finger Lakes region of New York that encompasses over 100 wineries. This month, we are taking another such excursion but closer to home. The Mason-Dixon Wine Trail has 17 member wineries that span parts of Baltimore, Harford, and Carroll counties in Maryland and York, Dauphin, Adams, and Lancaster counties in Pennsylvania. Outside activities include hiking or kayaking along the nearby Susquehanna River, eating to your heart's content at family restaurants, farmers' markets, and sandwich shops – and of course, charting the tours you plan to take at some of these outstanding wineries.

I happened to learn about the Mason-Dixon Wine Trail from my daughter who recently participated in their "Just off the Vine" event that is held annually during the week before Thanksgiving. This year's event ran from November 12 - 20. She attended for two of these days and raved about it. If you choose, the \$20 cost of the entrance ticket allows you to participate in the tastings on both weekends during the event.

Throughout the year, there are festivals, concerts, and family-friendly hotel packages that promise a "perfect Sip & Stay Getaway." As you visit the restaurants scattered across the region, you will find many of the delicious wines that are offered at the winery tastings. It's a great way to decide on a few wines you may want to purchase or to perhaps sample a few more that you didn't get a chance to sip at your day's tour. Another example of a fun event during the year is the "Tour de Tanks" held on each weekend in March, consisting of exclusive tank or barrel tastings along with light refreshments.

Pennsylvania's York County offers another attraction that you may not be aware of – it is renowned as the "Factory Tour Capital of the World." For example, you can see a Harley-Davidson motorcycle assembled right in front of you, visit Hershey's Chocolate World (need I say more about this one?), and enjoy lots of tasty snack foods right off the line at such places as Martin's Potato Chips, Snyder's of Hanover, Utz, Revonah Pretzel,

and York City Pretzel Company. Apparently, if you're in the market for a divine pretzel or bowl of fresh potato chips, York County, Pennsylvania is the spot.

The five wineries in Maryland on the Mason-Dixon Wine Trail include some wines that our own Maryland Wine Bar in Berlin, Maryland also conveniently stocks. The Maryland wineries are the Boordy Vineyards and Dejon Vineyard in Hydes, the Fiore Winery in Pylesville, the Galloping Goose Vineyards in Hampstead, and the Harford Vineyard & Winery in Forest Hill. The Galloping Goose Vineyards may deserve a visit just based on its terrific name. Several choices of the Pennsylvania member wineries include the Four Springs Winery in Seven Valleys, the High Rock Winery in Hanover, the Maple Lawn Winery in New Park, and the CrossWinds Winery in Hummelstown. The CrossWinds Winery also happens to be located within 2 miles of Hershey Park. This also means that CrossWinds is very close to Hershey's Chocolate World. Once again I ask, need I say more?

My vote for the best winery name on the Pennsylvania list is the Moon Dancer Winery, Cider House, & Tap Room. Included in its tour are tastings, live music, and wood-fired pizzas served to you in a French chateau overlooking the Susquehanna River. If you're in the market for good shopping, you can visit Mount Hope Winery in Lancaster County, which in addition to hosting Hershey Park, also encompasses miles of shopping – at factory outlets and at an area called Central Market which boasts flea markets and stalls filled with fresh meats, produce, cheeses, and herbs.

The Mason-Dixon Wine Trail sounds like a very relaxing weekend getaway. More information on the trail and its plethora of area attractions can be found at these websites: www.yorkpa.org/things-to-do/mason-dixon-wine-trail/ and www.visitpa.com/pa-wineries/mason-dixon-wine-trail. In some of my upcoming articles, I will chronicle more beautiful wine country locations across the U.S., tout additional festive wine events, and offer specific wine recommendations I discover or hear about. Please join me in raising a glass to a very safe, happy, and healthy 2017!

The evolution and many faces of Christmas

Many people prepare for the arrival of Christmas months in advance. The first traces of wrapping paper and decorations arrive in stores as early as September, transforming the holiday into a much more secular celebration than its modest Christian beginnings.

Despite Christmas being an important date in the lives of today's Christians, the holiday failed to gain prominent status until relatively recently. Research indicates that as late as the 19th century, Christmas was not even a legal holiday requiring a day off from work. That's why 19th century readers of the classic Christmas tale, "A Christmas Carol," were not shocked at Bob Cratchit having to work on Christmas Day. The United States

Congress used to meet on Christmas Day because it was not a national holiday. In 1836, Alabama became the first state to officially recognize Christmas, but it did not become a legal holiday across the country until June 26, 1970.

Today's Christmas celebrations include traditions from around the world. Some ascertain that it was the church's doing to schedule Christmas at a similar time to the pagan festivals, such as Saturnalia, that took place during the winter months. But many biblical scholars argue that this was not the case. Some pagan influences, such as holly and mistletoe as well as the burning of a yule log, have long been a part of Christmas traditions.

Santa Claus is one of the more recognizable symbols of Christmas. He is based on St. Nikolas of Myrna, an area that is part of modern-day Turkey. St. Nikolas is the world's most popular non-Biblical saint and is one of the saints most portrayed by artists. Early depictions of St. Nikolas show him as a stern man who delivered his share of discipline. Eventually, those depictions changed to show a figure more associated with generosity. Throughout history there have been characters from around the globe, such as the Viking deity Odin, who were precursors to Santa Claus. Myth states that Odin rode his eight-legged flying horse in the winter. Odin gave out gifts to well-behaved children and punish-

ments to those who misbehaved. Children would fill boots or stockings with treats for the flying horse.

Regardless of the origins of Christmas, today it is hard to deny that Christmas is a commercialized success. It is a national holiday not only in the United States but also in other areas of the world, and it is best known for the tradition of giving presents to others. In fact, many people head to

*please see **christmas** on page 12*

review

from page 9

John McCain, Roger Wicker and Joe Lieberman the Magnitsky Act was passed in 2012.

Now in his early 50s Mr. Browder was, from a young boy, surrounded by controversy. His grandfather was the leader of the communist party in the

U.S. and made a bid for the presidency in 1936 and 1940 on that ticket. Moving from that background and the overwhelming bent of his family towards becoming mathematicians he sought an MBA and dove into the heady world of finance but in Europe not the U.S.

As he delves into the background of his schooling and early jobs, Mr.

Browder is ho-hum. And he doesn't hesitate to reveal his luxury vacations and sumptuous restaurant meals, all of which seem to occur at a time when the story is about to take another twist for the worst.

It is only when the Russian authorities begin their harassment that the book excites. That a sovereign government could sanction such heinous crimes is especially astounding to those of us who live in a democracy. To his credit Mr. Browder remains true to his friend, Sergei, as he continues an uphill battle against the forces of injustice in a country that has relegated justice to the gutter.

As of this writing Russia has given notice that it will stop honoring a unilateral agreement with the U.S. regulating the disposal of plutonium until America repeals the Magnitsky Act, ends sanctions and pays compensation for Russia's losses.

county

from page 8

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Tide and Sun Chart

* tide is for Ocean City Fishing Pier. Add two hours for Isle of Wight tide

DATE	HIGH TIDE	LOW TIDE	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Thur., December 15	8:08 a.m. 8:28 p.m.	1:43 a.m. 2:36 p.m.	7:10 a.m.	4:41 p.m.
Fri., December 16	8:59 a.m. 9:20 p.m.	2:34 a.m. 3:27 p.m.	7:11 a.m.	4:42 p.m.
Sat., December 17	9:50 a.m. 10:12 p.m.	3:27 a.m. 4:19 p.m.	7:12 a.m.	4:42 p.m.
Sun., December 18	10:40 a.m. 11:05 p.m.	4:21 a.m. 5:12 p.m.	7:12 a.m.	4:42 p.m.
Mon., December 19	11:30 a.m.	5:17 a.m. 6:05 p.m.	7:13 a.m.	4:43 p.m.
Tues., December 20	12:01 a.m. 12:23 p.m.	6:16 a.m. 6:57 p.m.	7:13 a.m.	4:43 p.m.
Wed., December 21	1:00 a.m. 1:18 p.m.	7:15 a.m. 7:46 p.m.	7:14 a.m.	4:44 p.m.

Free screenings at PRMC

Almost 20 percent of people leave their holiday shopping until December; it's clear by how packed the mall is right now. But more than double that number of people have a risk factor for heart disease – high blood pressure, high cholesterol and smoking are all significant risk factors. Peninsula Regional Medical Center would like to encourage everyone to consider giving themselves or someone they love the gift of good health. Best of all, it is a free gift.

The Guerrieri Heart & Vascular Institute offers a free heart disease risk assessment for women that includes a fasting lipid profile (total cholesterol, HDL, risk ratio and glucose), ankle/brachial index, resting 12-lead EKG, body fat/body mass index; blood pressure and pulse oximetry testing and more.

Women choosing to participate must not currently be under the care of a cardiologist or have a known history of heart disease. Because of the blood testing, an 8-hour fast is required beforehand. Appointments are available on Tuesdays

and Thursdays. Call 410-543-7026 to schedule your free Women's Heart Screening appointment.

There are also free vascular screenings available for both men and women. Twelve to 20 percent of Americans older than 65 have peripheral arterial disease, but only one-third show symptoms; many people mistake the symptoms of PAD for something else. People over 55 who are at higher risk for vascular disease should be screened to detect these vascular problems before they develop into something much more serious.

Those with risk factors such as smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, obesity, heart disease or family history of vascular disease; and people who have a symptom such as leg pain or numbness in the leg or foot, may be eligible for a free screening at Peninsula Regional Medical Center. If you are 55 or older, please call the Guerrieri Heart & Vascular Institute at 410-543-7123 to find out if you qualify for the free vascular screenings and to reserve a date and time. They are held on the second Thursday of every month.



Meeting - Debby Trummel of Ocean Pines met Gilly Fultz on November 28 while serving breakfast at the McDonald's, where she works. She was dressed for Christmas in her holiday sweater. Photo by Anna Fultz.

christmas
from page 11

the stores well in advance of the Christmas holiday to purchase the presents on their shopping lists. The shopping season tradition may be traced back to the time of World War II, when it was necessary to mail gifts early to the troops serving in Europe so that they would be able to open them in time. Merchants realized that this concept could be used when gifting troops as well as private citizens, reminding shoppers to make their holiday purchases early so they could mail them to relatives near or far. As a result, the advanced shopping season was born.

Although many people feel Christmas begins when the first bag of tinsel appears on a store shelf and ends when the last present is opened on December 25th, the true religious holiday does not coincide with merchant schedules. While most people are bustling to and from department stores and malls, Christians are participating in Advent, which was traditionally a solemn season of reflection and fasting. Christians are supposed to spend Advent preparing for the birth of Jesus Christ and the joy that ensues during the weeks leading up to December 25.

Similarly, the joyous time of Christ's birth is a day of celebration that does not end on December 26 but continues for 12 days until the Epiphany, also known as Little Christmas, when Magi were reported to have visited the infant Christ and give him gifts. Although the more traditional day for gift-giving would seem to be on the Epiphany, by the time that day arrives many people have already taken down their Christmas decorations.

Christmas is a holiday steeped in many different traditions, and many people have their own ways of celebrating all through the month of December.

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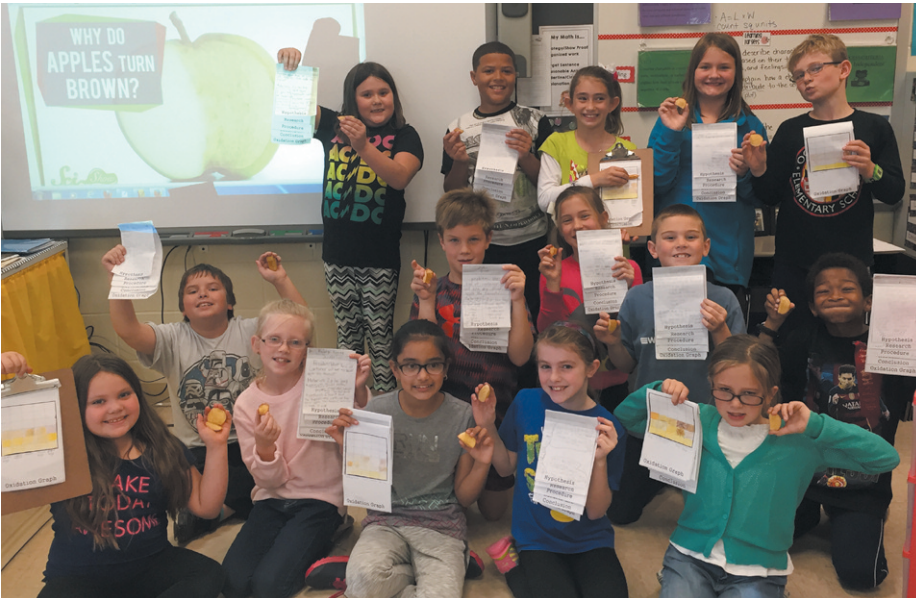
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Women celebrate the season

The Women's Club of Ocean Pines celebrates the holiday season at a luncheon held at Waterman's Restaurant in West Ocean City on December 1.



Discovery - The scientists in Abby Harrison's third grade class at Ocean City Elementary conducted an experiment to determine which type of container will keep their apples from browning. They learned oxygen is the culprit and keeping them in an airtight container will do the trick.



Kiwanis Clubs Ring the Bell

Every year since the WalMart store was built on Rte. 50 in Berlin, the Kiwanis Club of Greater Ocean Pines - Ocean City has rung the bell for the Salvation Army's Red Kettle Drive at Christmas time. The past several years the club's Key Club at Stephen Decatur High School (SDHS) has also participated. Pictured (L-R) are **Mackenzi Wagner** and **Caroline Kurtz**, both juniors at SDHS who rang the bell from on Friday December 2. Bell ringing will continue until Christmas Eve Day at 2 p.m.

Wor-Wic designated military friendly

Wor-Wic Community College was named as a gold-level Military Friendly School in the community college category for 2017 by Victory Media, a veteran-owned company whose mission is to assist military personnel transitioning into civilian life.

The Military Friendly Schools list honors the colleges, universities and trade schools nationwide that are doing the most to embrace America's military service members and veterans as students.

Wor-Wic recognizes and adheres to Veterans Affairs (VA) standards and strives to assist veterans as much as possible. Fred Howard, financial aid state scholarship and veterans coordinator, is available at Wor-Wic to help current and prospective students who are veterans or active military personnel.

"Wor-Wic's veteran and military student enrollment averages 300 students per year taking both credit and non-credit courses," said

Howard. "Veterans can use one of several VA GI Bill educational benefits while attending college. In addition to VA educational benefits, students can use their military tuition assistance while attending Wor-Wic. Wor-Wic has been selected as a Military Friendly School by Victory Media for seven consecutive years."

A U.S. Navy veteran, Howard serves as the advisor for the veterans and military association at Wor-Wic, a student club that is open to all students who have served any length of time in the U.S. armed forces. The club raises awareness of veteran issues and organizes events pertaining to veterans.

Visit www.militaryfriendly.com or the complete Military Friendly Schools list.

Veterans or active military personnel interested in enrolling at Wor-Wic can contact Howard at fhoward@worwic.edu or 410-334-2882.

Clinical pastoral education classes offered

The Pastoral Care Department at Peninsula Regional Medical Center is pleased to offer a Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) spring class beginning January 20.

CPE is clinical education for ministers, seminarians and lay pastoral leaders to develop pastoral care skills. Attention is given to meeting the spiritual needs of patients, families, staff and CPE members. The program requires a minimum of 400 hours of supervised learning per unit of training and 300 hours of clinical patient visitation time. The fall session will continue through June, with six hours of seminar per week.

The educational approach used in CPE is described as "action-reflection-action." Students provide pastoral care to patients, family members and staff, and then use their experiences for reflection and learning. Students participate in seminars that provide direct supervision, peer interaction and accountability for one's professional functioning. While seminary courses provide the basis for the

theology of pastoral care, CPE provides the clinical component of theological education by emphasizing learning by doing.

Peninsula Regional Medical Center is affiliated with Community Care Chaplains of Arizona, and is a satellite training center, under the direction of Training Supervisor Rev. Geoff Tio, and is accredited by the College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy (CPSP).

Additional information about Clinical Pastoral Education is available through the Pastoral Care Department at Peninsula Regional Medical Center by calling 410-543-7202 or emailing Joyce LeCates at joyce.lecates@peninsula.org.

Applications are now being accepted; the deadline to apply is December 30, and class size is limited to six participants. Tuition for the full-unit, 16-week class is \$400 plus the cost of classroom text materials. There is a non-refundable application fee of \$25 that will be applied to tuition if accepted into the program.

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Season's joy - Ocean Pines dads enjoying the holiday season Christmas tree lighting in White Horse Park in Ocean Pines. **Eddie Ouellet** with son **Chris** and **Bill Stern** with daughter **Christine**. Photo by Anna Fultz.

Holiday travel tips

The holiday season is rife with tradition, and traveling to visit family and friends is a tradition shared by many people. Holiday travel can be hectic, as millions of people take to the airways, highways and railroads in the days before and after Christmas.

But travelers whose patience is annually tried by airport security checkpoints and holiday traffic jams can employ several strategies to make holiday travel more palatable.

Let apps do your legwork. Technology has made life easier in many ways, and smartphone apps can even help travelers make holiday travel less stressful. A free app such as FlightView provides smartphone and tablet users with real-time flight information and even provides travelers with flight status alerts. Travelers or men and women trusted with picking up family and friends at the airport can check gate assignments, delays and cancellations and even follow the flight's progress while it is in the air.

And it is not just air travelers who can put their apps to work for them. Drivers who are on a budget can download the free GasBuddy app, which finds the cheapest gas in a given city or postal code. Traveling apps are quite popular, and many are free, saving travelers money while making holiday travel that much easier.

Bring along your own sustenance. Hunger pangs are sure to arise during your holiday travels. Airports and

roadside truck stops are not exactly known for their healthy fare, so pack your own nourishing foods that can help you maintain your energy and stay healthy. Packing your own meals and snacks also saves you money and, if you are driving, time.

Ship gifts. Shipping holiday gifts is another way to simplify holiday travel and save money. The lighter air travelers can pack, the more quickly they can make it through the airport. Shipping gifts saves you from paying excessive bag fees, and it also saves you the trouble of checking bags and waiting in baggage claim. Drivers also may benefit from shipping gifts, which can give everyone in the car more room to relax and also save the driver some money on gas.

Switch up your travel schedule. If possible, take an extra day or two off during the holidays so you are not forced to travel on the busiest travel days, which tend to be the days that immediately precede and follow the major holidays. If you must travel on busy holidays, hit the road or the friendly skies as early as possible. Book an early morning flight so you beat the crowds at security checkpoints or begin your drive an hour or so before sunrise when many of your fellow travelers are still asleep.

Travel is a holiday tradition for many people. While airports and highways are especially congested during the holiday season, there are many ways for travelers to make their trips less hectic this year.

Revisit lesser-known Christmas traditions

Christmas celebrants participate in many different traditions year after year, but some may not fully understand the meaning behind such activities. A Christmas holiday, Christmas did not originate



Night, is the traditional date for wassailing. Although wassailing has largely fallen by the wayside, increased interest in ales and craft brewing may help revitalize this Christmas tradition, which can inspire community spirit.

Gift-giving with fruit cake is another tradition that has been much maligned and does not enjoy the same popularity that it once did. Fruit cake is a cake made with chopped candied fruit, nuts and spices and is occasionally soaked in spirits. Fruit cakes have been enjoyed all over the world, but Americans may never have embraced the Christmas fruit cake tradition as much as those from other countries.

However, with the right recipe and an open mind, it may be possible to resurrect the fruit cake tradition once again.

Mummers plays are another British tradition that arrived in North America with settlers but has largely fallen by the wayside. Mummers plays involved miming folk dramas, and the plays were commonplace around the holiday season. Celebrants may want to research such dramas and include them in this year's festivities to liven up celebrations even more.

'Deck the Paws' kitten yoga offered

It is time to "Deck the Paws" at Zenna Wellness. A yoga class will be held on Saturday, December 17 from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. at Zenna Wellness Studio located at 10 South Main Street, Berlin. This class is unique because participants will practice yoga alongside adoptable, cuddly, playful kittens from Worcester County Humane Society.

This class, with Chrissy Ehrhart, is a donation based class with all proceeds going directly to the care of the many animals at the no kill shelter. The class is open to ages nine and older and no prior yoga experience is required. All minors must have a parent present. Participants are encouraged to bring their own yoga mats if they have one otherwise one will be provided.

Spaces are limited and this class will fill up quickly. Call Chrissy at 443-373-7069 to reserve your spot for this unique experience.

with all activities centralized to the church. In fact, many of the traditions people hold dear have pagan roots, which were adapted as Christmas celebrations evolved.

People who hang mistletoe in doorways may be surprised to learn that this tradition dates back to the ancient Druids. The Druids believed mistletoe possessed mystical powers that brought good luck to the household and warded off evil spirits.

Evergreen trees are now associated with Christmas trees, but evergreen boughs were once used to decorate homes during the winter solstice to help people envision the spring to come. Christians often look at evergreen trees as a sign of everlasting life and their relationship with God.

However, while many Christmas traditions continue to be an integral part of annual celebrations, there are some customs that have fallen out of favor. Although these traditions may no longer be widely practiced, anyone can revive them and make them part of their holiday celebrations.

Wassailing is a custom that has ancient origins and is not as popular today as it once was. "Wassail" comes from the Anglo-Saxon phrase "waes hael," which means, "good health." Wassail is a drink made of mulled ale, spices and other ingredients. To go wassailing meant to travel door-to-door singing and offering a drink from a wassail bowl in exchange for gifts. Wassailing has been mentioned in certain Christmas carols, including "We Wish You a Merry Christmas."

Largely an English tradition, wassailing was brought to America by British settlers. January 17, the old Twelfth



17th Annual Ocean Pines Community

Candlelight Christmas Eve Service

8:00 PM - December 24th
Ocean Pines Community Hall

Christmas Day and New Year's Day Worship Services at
Showell Elementary School at 9 a.m.



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