A CHILDCARE DESERT

Tough on families but an oasis for nannies

By Susan Kim
Staff Writer

Laurel has been identified as a “job oasis” in a “childcare desert.” Many other communities could have the same description, too.

According to a study by the Center for American Progress, more than one in three Maryland residents live in a “childcare desert,” meaning the demand for childcare exceeds the capacity for care by a ratio of at least 3:1.

In turn, that means many parents opt for in-home care provided by independent childcare workers such as nannies and part-time babysitters.

For many businesses in a childcare desert, a lack of childcare can mean higher absenteeism.

In Maryland, the top three “job oasis” cities for independent childcare workers are Baltimore, where independent childcare workers earn an average of $16.36 per hour, Rockville ($16.20 per hour) and Laurel ($15.28 per hour).

For nannies looking for work, they potentially can find high demand for their services, higher pay rates and wage growth. But a childcare desert is hard on businesses and on economic development in general, said Connie Fong, a vice president at Care.com.

“For many businesses in a childcare desert, a lack of childcare can mean higher absenteeism, if parents use sick days to stay with their children when childcare options fall through,” she said. “It can even mean losing workers to become full-time stay-at-home parents due

Continued on page 8

CATS and DOGS
Our pets bring us joy and they drive business, too

ACTIVE SHOOTER
Is your office prepared for the unthinkable?

‘TIS THE SEASON
Lights, tinsel and parties make the season bright
The Howard County Conservancy, of Woodstock, is asking residents, students and businesses to “Take a Pass on Plastic” and rethink their use of single-use plastics such as straws, shopping bags, utensils and plastic water bottles.

“Our county alone produces 30,500 tons of recycling, but 11 percent still ends up as garbage in landfills,” said Meg Boyd, executive director of the Howard County Conservancy. “We’re trying to educate and encourage people to make small changes in their lives by taking a pass on plastic: saying no to plastic products every day that are not recyclable and the results are harmful to our environment.

The Conservancy campaign also provides information about how to get started at home. According to the Howard County Conservancy, some 33 percent of plastics are used once and thrown away. Just eight percent of the 30 million tons of plastic Americans discard every year are recycled. Many items such as plastic bags and eating utensils cannot be recycled in curbside collections.

Discarded plastic contaminates groundwater and oceans, and ultimately contaminates the food chain for many creatures, including humans. By consciously minimizing the use of single-use plastics such as plastic bags, eating utensils, straws and bottled water, health hazards to ourselves and the environment can be reduced.

Now in its 28th year, the Howard County Conservancy is a local nonprofit providing educational opportunities for students, preserving open space and connecting people to nature. The Conservancy offers environmental education programming at two nature centers, the 232-acre Mt. Pleasant Farm in Woodstock, MD and Belmont Manor and Historic Park in Elkridge.

For more information, visit www.hcconservancy.org or call 410-465-8877.

Gilchrist thanks the following sponsors and restaurants for supporting the 2018 Taste of Howard County
HCEDA Breaks Wall on Innovation

The Howard County Economic Development Authority (HCEDA) held a ceremonial wall breaking to kick off construction of the new Howard County Innovation Center at 6751 Columbia Gateway Drive.

HCEDA also announced that The MITRE Corporation has signed a MOU to support an innovative big data and software lab, called “The Viking Lab,” in the center.

“The Howard County Innovation Center is here to keep Howard County on the cutting edge and enable our community to continue growing; creating successful companies and high paying jobs,” said Lawrence Twele, CEO of the HCEDA. “For 25 years, our organization has grown and evolved with the business community in Howard County, finding new and innovative ways to provide the support they need. I am excited to see the next chapter of these services begin at the Innovation Center.”

The Center, which is scheduled to open spring 2019, will be a 50,000-sq. ft. full-service resource for local businesses and the entrepreneurship community.

MITRE’s Viking Lab, managed by Howard County based company Trimia, will provide private sector companies the opportunity to solve complex governmental problems.

The MITRE Corporation, a private non-profit corporation, operates federally funded research and development centers that help government agencies address critical challenges. This is MITRE’s first Viking Lab to focus on Intelligent Cities challenges and the goal is to create solutions that are of a public value and to foster technology job creation in the local area.

“The opening of this Innovation Center is our latest commitment to attracting high-tech and innovative businesses to Howard County,” said Howard County Executive Allan H. Kittleman. “This facility will help growing businesses develop as well as allow us to take the next steps in developing the Gateway Innovation District, the county’s next great economic center.”

Already committed to the Center will be the incubator and entrepreneur services of the Maryland Center for Entrepreneurship, the Howard Tech Council, MITRE Corporation, the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), SCORE, Franunhofer, Howard Community College, Procurement Technical Assistance Program (PTAP), and the HCEDA. More resources are expected to be added leading up to the opening.

DataTribe Move Signals Regional Benefits

By George Berkheimer
Senior Writer

DataTribe, a cybersecurity accelerator based in Maple Lawn, and Columbia’s Evergreen Advisors, an investment banking and corporate advisory firm, will relocate to Port Covington.

AllegisCyber, a Silicon Valley venture capital firm that focuses on cybersecurity, will join DataTribe in becoming the first tenants of the development’s planned cybersecurity hub.

“With Maryland’s highly talented workforce, cutting-edge research institutions, and more and more innovative companies locating here each year, no state is better equipped or better positioned to be the cyber and innovation capital of our nation,” said Governor Larry Hogan announcing plans for the new hub. “This new development ... will further spur development of cyber companies, bringing much-needed jobs, capital investment, and business opportunities to Baltimore City and our state.”

Under Armour CEO Kevin Plank’s plans for Port Covington already give it a strong identity, but the new cybersecurity hub will carry one of its own.

“We are announcing the creation of Cyber Town, USA – anchoring the technology ecosystem here at Port Covington,” said Mike Janke, co-founder of DataTribe, in the same release.

“All aspects of the technology life cycle will plant a flag at Port Covington,” added Marc Weller, partner of Weller Development Company and lead developer. “Port Covington will be a magnet for growing, innovative companies – an inclusive community for tech-forward companies to work together to bring ideas to reality, from development to full market maturity.”

DataTribe, which has a track record of mining startup talent from within the ranks of the CIA and NSA and has substantial ties to Silicon Valley through its partnership with AllegisCyber, will lead Cyber Town, USA’s recruiting effort.

What Competition?

For the past two years DataTribe has been a fixture at Maple Lawn in...
Howard’s Compost Program Expands

Alpha Ridge Gets More Funds

By Mark R. Smith
Senior Writer

The citizens of Howard County asked for increased composting resources. And, the heads of the Howard County Department of Public Works’ Bureau of Environmental Services listened.

In October, Howard County significantly expanded its composting facility at the Alpha Ridge Landfill in Marriottsville. The county added 10 concrete bunkers with state-of-the-art moisture and odor control systems for food scrap and yard trim collections.

The expansion more than doubles the facility’s capacity to collect the food scrap to produce HoCoGro organic products.

The new $6 million installation is part of the $11 million package that is slated to expand the program, after the $800,000 pilot in 2013. The new infusion of money will be spent on infrastructure in the coming years “while we minimize the ongoing financial impact of moving product,” said Jeff Dannis, operations division chief.

The expansion has increased capacity at Alpha Ridge. Seven of what are called “piles” (which contain the same volume as four bunkers of 625 cubic yards each) to 14 bunkers; today, about five bunkers are already full, with the fall foliage season in full swing.

By the end of this annual surge, Alpha Ridge will be at capacity. All collections division chief.

The design and approvals on the first expansion took place in 2011 with operation opening in 2013. “We took over the yard waste, too, and used it to make finished products from wood waste, grass, manure, food scrap and leaves,” he said. “All that’s biodegradable after we screen out the undesirables, like plastic pots, rotten boots, rocks and so on out of the mix.”

What’s key about composting is that it retains nutrients found in food, thus promoting growth from the soil. That’s important, because “food waste accounts for 20 percent of Municipal Salt Waste (MSW) or anything generated from residential properties, restaurants or general garbage,” said Anne Germain, vice president of technical and regulatory affairs for the Arlington, Va.-based National Waste & Recycling Association.

The biggest drawback to accepting food scrap, said Germain, is “that it comes in contaminated plates and cups that are labeled compostable, but aren’t, but still end up in the bins.” Odors are also an issue, she said. “If the pile has been left anaerobic (without oxygen), that activates bacteria; aerobic bacteria works 10 times as fast. So, to avoid methane gas buildup from anaerobic bacteria, the composter has to keep the pile damp and mix it often.”

But some amount of food scrap, like “orange peels, banana peels and onion skin, is unavoidable, especially if you’re eating fresh foods. We’re trying to avoid wasting it further,” said Germain, “so it’s combined with yard waste and turned into compost that can, in turn, be converted to a soil amendment.”

More Product, Please

“We have a Gore-Tex cover system designed to trap odor molecules and speed up the process,” said Birchfield, noting the 12 new bunkers at a 52-acre site, where yard trim products called LeafGro and LeafGro GOLD (which contains food scrap, thus more nutritional value) are manufactured. They’re sold at outlets such as Home Depot and Lowe’s.

“So the composting industry is very much on the upswing,” Birchfield said.

“More Product, Please

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‘The Big Melt’: Bigger Climate Picture

Environmentalist Uses Fiction to Reach Audience

By Mark R. Smith
Senior Writer

Local environmental businessman Ned Tillman had already written two books. But it’s the release of his third book that could represent a turning point in his literary career.

Tillman, of Columbia, recently published “The Big Melt,” a fictional work that delves into the lives of two idealistic high school graduates, Marley and Brianne, who get a quick lesson in reality the day after graduation—when “all hell breaks loose, as it did with the Ellicott City floods,” he said.

During their journey, the duo learn about climate change from five mentors, a creative license that allows Tillman to enhance his narrative in a way that wasn’t as easily done in his non-fiction works, “Saving the Places We Love: Paths to Environmental Stewardship” (2014) and “The Chesapeake Watershed: A Sense of Place and a Call to Action” (2009).

And while “The Big Melt” is intended to be accessible for young people, “It’s for everyone,” Tillman said. “It contains plenty of humor, but it also illustrates how to address the issue.”

Learning Options

Tillman was moved to write “The Big Melt” after the first Ellicott City flood in July 2016, “since it seemed that people were just reacting, instead of being proactive, to address the issue of climate change. I wanted to inspire people to live with a climate focus, then make the appropriate daily decisions.”

Throughout the book, Tillman weaves in advice for readers so they can better insulate their homes, and order electricity from wind and solar companies, instead of BGE, “which is also moving toward switching to solar and wind energy,” said Tillman. “I get mine from Inspire, and there are others like Green Mountain and Neighborhood Sun. It’s usually available for the same price or less,” he said. “Doing such things sends a signal to the marketplace.”

That’s just one example. “Certainly, we can all buy more fuel efficient cars. I’ve had a Toyota Prius for eight years, but there are lots of options. At one time, there were concerns about how long the batteries would last, but that hasn’t been much of a concern. I’ve known dozens of people who have owned hybrid vehicles and not one has had to replace the battery.”

There are many more options between the covers of the book that people can use. “Through one of the mentors in the book, named Jim, I give 10 steps concerning how people can address various environmental issues,” he said.

‘Cli-Fi’ Thriller

Tillman stressed that local governments need to be more proactive about climate change. “What’s been done by Howard County is based more on reaction than prevention,” he said. “The one thing I’ve done in the book is offer a tipping point where something happens and everyone involved wishes they had acted sooner to prevent what became the next disaster.”

Retired environmental diplomat Tim Lattimer, also of Columbia, offered praise for the book.

He said that “The Big Melt” is a fictional work that draws “on the genre of magical realism. ‘Cli-Fi’ (as in ‘Climate Fiction’) was a real departure for Ned. He took certain liberties to drive the story, but the characters are relatable and the scenario is plausible.”

He added, “The book brings a day-to-day reality regarding what has happened in Ellicott City and what could, happen. It also addresses economic, security, and public health and safety issues. That’s why it was so important that he wrote it.”

Get Movin’

Mark Sutherland, vice president of AKRF Consultants, Hanover, agreed with Lattimer, saying Tillman’s take on the climate crisis “makes it easy to digest. That’s important, because there are so many facts involved. But Ned did it by taking the fictional approach so everyone can find something in the book they can relate to.”

Sutherland is also hopeful that “The Big Melt” will gain traction and encourage news from the real world. “There are indicators that progress is being made on the climate change front.”

The author said, “I’m approaching the issue from various perspectives,” said Tillman, “so in addition to trying to get people to face the realities about climate change, I’m also addressing how we need to debate what the solutions should be.”

Tillman said momentum “starts with every individual and every county government taking action. Howard County could easily be proactive, because we know that Downtown Ellicott City, Savage and Valley Mede are all particularly vulnerable to the moods of Mother Nature.”

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Ned Tillman, the author and the cover of his new book.
Laurel Gets Main Street Designation

By George Berkheimer
Senior Writer

The state of Maryland culminated its 2018 Economic Development Week tour in Laurel on Oct. 24, announcing the city as one of two municipalities selected to join the Main Street Maryland program. The Town of New Market also received the designation.

Created in 1998 and managed by the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), the Main Street Maryland program builds partnerships with local governments, nonprofits, and businesses to strengthen the economic development potential in Maryland’s historic downtown districts and neighborhoods.

Similar programs exist in 42 states across the nation as part of Main Street America, a program of the nonprofit National Main Street Center, a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

“Main Street Maryland communities represent the very best of what our state has to offer,” said Governor Larry Hogan in a press release.

A total of 30 Maryland municipalities have received the designation so far, with the City of Laurel becoming the first Prince George’s County community to receive the distinction.

“The designation is effectively a seal of approval, recognizing that participating local governments and stakeholders are part of a statewide effort to improve the local economy, celebrate community character, preserve local history, and generate impressive economic returns,” said Maryland HCD Secretary Kenneth Holt.

Targeted Revitalization

Elected officials in the City of Laurel have employed a series of legislative actions and incentives in recent years to target revitalization on a number of fronts.

Among these incentives are a Main Street Relocation Grant, providing up to $10,000 for startup and relocation expenses; the Main Street Storefront Facade Grant, which provides up to $5,000 for lighting, signage and masonry work; and the Route 1 Commercial Corridor Program to provide incentives for redevelopment and revitalization along the Route 1 Corridor.

“We created our own Community Redevelopment Authority that works with businesses to support them and helps create economic development opportunities in the city by way of grants, loans, and purchases of property,” said Laurel Mayor Craig Moe.

According to Laurel Spokeswoman Audrey Barnes, the Main Street Economic Development Program Moe created in 2012 enticed a variety of businesses to locate on Main Street.

Moe said achieving the Main Street Maryland designation was one of the city’s economic goals for the year.

“This designation will help provide tremendous opportunities for revitalization and historic preservation efforts,” he said. “Being part of the program will allow us technical support and training for city staff, eligibility to apply for more state grants, and help in creating a Revitalization Plan.”

That plan will focus on design and historical preservation, Moe explained, in addition to organizational and community input, promotion and marketing, and continued sustainability of smart growth in the city.

“Think of the designation as a seal of approval, recognizing that participating local governments and stakeholders are part of a statewide effort to improve the local economy, celebrate community character, preserve history, and generate impressive economic returns.”

“The designation is a recognition that Laurel is looking to improve its downtown and attract outside investors as well as merchants,” said Moe.

To date, Maryland has awarded approximately $500 million from state and private sector capital leveraged through the Main Street Maryland program since it began in 1998.

“We believe that we have created about 10,000 jobs by supporting 2,800 businesses, both new as well as businesses looking to expand,” Holt said.

Moreover, the program has leveraged nearly $305 million in private investment for nearly 3,900 projects, as well as nearly $210 million in public investment for more than 1,200 projects, and sponsored almost 700,000 hours of volunteer work with a wage value of more than $19 million.

“I think the composite is that Maryland is seeing a resurgence both in rural and urban communities, and in the entire business sector as a result,” Holt said.
Howard law firm expands services

The law firm of Davis, Agnor, Rapaport & Skalny, LLC, has been joined by the attorneys and staff from Farrell & Gunderson, LLC, on Nov. 1.

The new organization will allow the firm to further expand its suite of legal services and better serve its clients, particularly ones who require strong representation in the area of health care law.

“The addition of Farrell & Gunderson not only enhances our commitment to serving the Baltimore-Washington community, it strengthens our litigation presence with a team of attorneys who are perfectly aligned with our strategic objectives. In addition, their attorneys will significantly expand our resources and the depth of services we already provide to our clientele,” said Paul G. Skalny, Esq., Managing Director of Davis, Agnor, Rapaport & Skalny.

Founded in 2003, Davis, Agnor, Rapaport & Skalny offers legal services from business and transactional law, to real estate transactions, to civil litigation, to estate planning, probate and trust administration and more.

Farrell & Gunderson, established in 2007, practiced health care law and commercial litigation matters, particularly ones pertaining to employment litigation.

The firm’s partners, Hugh W. Farrell, Esq. and Eric W. Gunderson, Esq., together with Associate Attorney G. Harrison Bliss, II and Legal Nurse Consultant, Margaret Meehan, all joined Davis, Agnor, Rapaport & Skalny.

Howard County Job Growth

1993
# of jobs – 82,642
# of Firms – 5,349

2018
# of jobs – 170,419
# of Firms – 10,101

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1993, legislation was passed that marked the origin of the Howard County Economic Authority (HCEDA) as a public-private entity in the county. Howard County’s diverse business base includes companies of all sizes that specialize in cyber advanced manufacturing, food processing and distribution, life sciences and retail among others. Over the course of 25 years, the HCEDA has contributed to the growth of our local firms and number of job opportunities.
Laurel is one of three Maryland “job oasis” for childcare

Continued from page 1

to a lack of care.”

Childcare is becoming an increasingly important issue for states and cities trying to attract the workforce of tomorrow, Fong said. “In fact, across the country we’re now seeing the business communities take the lead by talking about childcare shortages as an economic development issue. Without access to reliable childcare, families – especially women, who still shoulder the majority of child care duties – can’t afford to go to work.”

Who will pay?

Many families are paying as much for childcare as they do for a mortgage or college tuition, said Fong. “And in surveys,” she added, “parents have told us that they are willing to pay more for caregivers who have more education, such as an early-education degree, or safety certification, or are multilingual and can teach children a second language. And that’s good news for childcare workers who want to turn their job into a longer-term career.”

Yet even as parents seek highly-qualified caregivers, the sheer cost of childcare has become bad news for many families. According to a 2018 report from Child Care Aware of America, the annual cost of center-based childcare in Maryland is $14,970. The annual cost of home-based childcare is $10,009. These same costs for an infant and a 4-year-old are $24,980 and $18,152, respectively.

Families in Maryland are seeing some relief from these costs: in August, new eligibility requirements for Maryland’s Child Care Subsidy Program will allow more children to access child care and educational programs. The annual income eligibility limits for the program doubled from $35,702 to $71,525 for a family of four.

The effect on businesses

In 2018, the Maryland Family Network released “Counting Our Losses: The Hidden Cost to Marylanders of an Inadequate Child Care System,” which reported an estimated loss of $2.41 billion to Maryland businesses due to absences and turnover related to childcare breakdowns. Nearly 15 percent of respondents reported a long-term disruption – such as moving from full-time to part-time work – because of issues with child care.

Single mothers in the workforce are most affected by a lack of access to affordable and reliable childcare. Child Care Aware of America estimates that 25 percent of U.S. households with children are headed by women who are the sole providers for their children.

Increased access to childcare is a game-changer for businesses that have workers who are newly eligible for access to subsidized childcare, said Debbie Yare, program manager at Howard County Office of Children and Families. “It opens up a whole new world for families to be able to afford programs.”

The wage gap

If nannies are seeing a sort of “job oasis,” childcare workers at centers and preschools often aren’t making enough money to sustain their own families, said Yare. According to Indeed.com, an employment-related search engine for job listings, the average childcare provider salary in Maryland is $11.07 per hour.

“We have a pressing need for living wages and healthcare for our childcare workers,” said Yare. “There is a shortage of qualified staff. Currently the salaries of childcare workers are about equal to those of parking attendants. If you think about how childcare workers really shape the development of children, it’s kind of sad.”

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- Degree and certificate programs for in-demand careers
- Accounting and CPA exam candidacy
- Center for Hospitality and Culinary Studies
- English language training for professionals to improve English in the workplace and understand U.S. work culture
- Internships, career fairs, and job listings
Fulton, a Greenebaum Enterprises development that has acquired cachet as a premier location for defense contractors and cybersecurity startups.

Evergreen Advisors, formed in 2001, occupies an office-building suite on Bendix Road in Columbia. The promise of Port Covington becoming a leading national cybersecurity and technology hub is good news for Maryland, but DataTribe and Evergreen Advisors are obvious losses for Howard County.

Consider also the plans for Konterra Town Center, another large-scale mixed-use development waiting in the wings just southwest of Laurel. Once development begins there, it could also begin attracting high-visibility technology firms and startups looking for proximity to both the nation’s capital and the deep pockets of the intelligence community surrounding Fort Meade.

Yet even with all this competition, economic development experts and elected officials here say there’s no real cause for alarm in either case. “I really think we can all share the opportunity that’s out there,” said Howard County Executive Allan Kittleman when asked earlier this year about the prospect of Konterra competing with Maple Lawn. “Whether a company chooses to locate here or there, if they’re still in Maryland, that still helps us all with jobs and other benefits for the region.”

Paced with the same question about Port Covington, Howard County Economic Development Authority CEO Larry Twele echoed the same sentiments. “The more places we have to grow businesses in a region, the better we can compete as a region,” he said. “Maple Lawn is recognized as a great place to grow a company, and new startups that see DataTribe’s trajectory will recognize that, too. There’s more than enough talent and quantity here to go around, and allow us to compete nationally as a region.”

Tapping the Reservoir

Port Covington is one of the largest urban renewal efforts in America and is poised to pay off in thousands of new jobs, new businesses, and new opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship.

Adjacent to I-95, the East Coast’s most traveled highway, the project will feature several other key ecosystems focused on technology, life sciences, and education, in addition to retail and entertainment options, office buildings, hotels, residential, and waterfront parks.

“We are located in the midst of the country’s deepest and largest reservoir of cybersecurity engineering talent, including some of the fastest growing commercial cyber firms in the world,” Janke said. “DataTribe will continue to build on this rich ecosystem for commercial cybersecurity and data science companies at Port Covington.”

The core of the cybersecurity hub will be located within the first buildings to rise in Port Covington, known as Rye Street Market - a mixed-use property which will include three boutique loft-style creative office buildings totaling 180,000 square feet.

Additional office, retail, hospitality and residential spaces are currently in the planning stages and will be driven by lead tenant interest.

**Future Promise**

Expected to be delivered as soon as late 2020, Rye Street Market is planned to include a 13,000 square foot open air market and food hall, 40,000 square feet of pedestrian-oriented retail, a state-of-the-art meeting facility, and rooftop event space overlooking the water.

Future phases will bring more than 10 million square feet of additional office, residential, retail and hotel development with little restriction to build more, offering robust expansion and relocation opportunities for cybersecurity sector and other companies.

“As an organization committed to the health and vitality of the Baltimore region as well as a major employer of cybersecurity professionals, Port Covington’s announcement is something to celebrate," said Ed Nevin, Baltimore managing partner at Deloitte LLP. “Every day we see the increasing demand for cyber talent - within our own organization and our clients – so making Baltimore City a concentrated hub for cyber companies and top cyber professionals is what the business community and regional economy needs.”

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**DataTribe Moves to Cyber Town, USA**

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Q&A with Cailey Locklair Tolle

Retailer’s President Ready for Holiday Sales

By Mark R. Smith
Senior Writer

Thanks to a healthy economy and strong consumer confidence, there’s gold on the 2018 holiday retail horizon: the National Retail Federation expects sales in November and December (excluding automobiles, gasoline and restaurants) to rise from between 4.3% to 4.8% from 2017, for a total of $717.45 billion to $720.89 billion. That compares to the average annual increase was 3.9% during the past five years.

Cailey Locklair Tolle, president of the Maryland Retailers Association (MDRA), discussed with The Business Monthly what consumers will see at the end of the year and beyond.

What were your thoughts about the 2017 holiday retail season?

In the last two years, more consumers shopped online than at brick-and-mortar (B&M) locations. That was alarming since we’ve been hearing a “doom and gloom” forecast about B&M. However, brick and mortar is not dead and many B&M categories are booming.

Also, look at what Amazon has been investing in – B&M, and it has a location in College Park. So, there will always be a place for B&M. I believe we will reach a point where online sales even out.

What do you expect this season?

It’s been a good year in retail, especially given the incredible third quarter that saw retailers, large and small, post rising profits. More items than ever are being sold, so we know that consumers are spending. Overall, I’m expecting impressive returns.

How much is bought online?

The latest figure I have from Forbes, which is from earlier this year, is about 10 percent of total sales, so that’s up from about 8 percent a year or two ago. Everyone blames this supposed move to online shopping on millennials, but Retail Dive recently stated that two-thirds of them shop at least weekly at B&M locations.

Among investors, centers with large anchor stores are still popular. What’s your take?

It goes back to the model that works: when people can shop at big spaces with different types of stores, like the Annapolis Harbor Center and The Mall in Columbia, they’re inviting because consumers can shop, eat and take in a movie in one stop.

What’s the future of the department store concept?

They’re figuring out what they want to be as the market evolves. That has to do with the flattening out of online sales. They still have much to offer. Macy’s is a perfect example of the evolving future, because it offers so many options. However, shoppers also want something to hunt and be surprised. People shop wondering what they’ll find.

Aside from ecommerce, what other retail changes are happening?

The current focus is, “How can we pull business away from online?” We have partnerships with 36 Maryland Main Streets, which are historic retail areas where people have experiences that include music, tastings, sunny days, long walks. Many developers are building outdoor plazas, such as Annapolis Towne Centre and Waugh Chapel Towne Center.

More consumers want experiences. The Maryland Tourism Board has posted videos on YouTube about how to experience Maryland.

What are your thoughts about Amazon in Northern Virginia?

It is disappointing from the perspective of B&M companies (which employ 750,000 Marylanders, according to MDRA), because none of them have ever been offered a huge tax package like Amazon. When you divide the tax incentive by employees at the company, that’s not how you leverage money.

There are areas in Maryland that are desperate for access to groceries, fruits and vegetables, yet the state made an enormous offer to a huge corporation.

What are your thoughts about the Sears bankruptcy?

This change has been coming for some time. Stores close for numerous reasons, not just because of online competition, but also due to minimum wage hikes and benefit increases; and, despite the longevity of Sears, there’s no money tree retailers have access to.

Retail is highly competitive. In the case of Sears, there are many companies that sell similar merchandise. When there are so many options for consumers – more than we’ve even seen – change happens.

Where do you see reinvention?

Artificial Intelligence (or AI) is affecting trends. A recent study from Oxford University, of London, revealed how 50 percent of jobs in the U.S. are at risk of being eliminated due to automation. For example, Amazon has a store in Seattle where customers order on an app and customers stop by and pick up their orders, with no human involvement.

It alarms me when progressives push this type of approach without understanding the economic repercussions. Also, bear in mind that many shoppers want an experience that includes interaction with other people. Policymakers need to understand that while the economy is cyclical, policy has an immense impact on what happens.

What’s on your mind as we head into Session 2019?

The minimum wage, as well as other labor issues such as restrictive scheduling, which concerns setting up employee schedules weeks in advance.
Reigning Cats and Dogs

Pets make us happy but they aren’t cheap

Nearly 60 percent of Maryland households have a dog or a cat. In the see-saw battle of which pet is most popular, more than 30 percent of Maryland households own a dog, while slightly more own a cat, according to the latest data from the American Veterinary Medical Association. “By the Numbers” takes a glance at our pets, our would-be pets, the scrapes they get us into, the money we spend on them, and the people and businesses that help them thrive.

$438.14
Cost of an evening visit to the Emergency Animal Hospital of Ellicott City to have vomiting induced for Pippin, a lab mix who swallowed a miniature Swiss Army knife, whole and in the case.

52
Minutes for the entire ordeal to be over, not counting travel time.

$42
Cost of the Swiss Army knife at original purchase time, cleaned up and returned in perfect working order, along with the dog, by the veterinarian.

1994
The year Pet Barn was founded. “We are one of the few independent pet supply stores left in the area,” said Manager Kris Pierce.

$1,09
Cost of a popular mouse-shaped cat toy in Pet Barn, an independent store with locations in Maple Lawn and Annapolis.

$13.99
Cost of Pet Barn’s top-selling dog toy, a stuffed likeness of President Trump (the large size is $19.99).

$1.5 million
Funding via a coalition of organizations for the now-underway “DC Cat Count,” an ambitious cat census that will attempt to count every stray cat in Washington, D.C.

1,000+
Number of free-roaming cats in Laurel, according to Helen Woods, president of the Laurel Cat Club. Aren’t they called “feral” cats? Not in Maryland, said Woods. “In Maryland, we have unsocialized cats that are free-roaming. A feral cat is a cat that has reverted completely back to its wild state.”

Maryland doesn’t have the habitat to support feral cats, Woods said. “There is some level of feral behavior in a free-roaming cat. But they are still dependent on people who put out cat food. Or they dumpster-dive.”

The Laurel Cat Club catches free-roaming cats and takes them to a clinic, where they are spayed or neutered, then returns them to their roaming areas.

$5
Cost of a rabies vaccine for a dog or a cat at the SPCA of Anne Arundel County low-cost vaccine clinic.

$102,857
Average annual salary of an emergency veterinarian, according to ZipRecruiter.

$449
Cost of the Litter-Robot III Open Air automatic self-cleaning litter box that automatically sifts after each use, depositing waste into a drawer that the owner actually does have to empty.

Priceless
The owner’s estimate of the worth of having her dog home and healthy.
RUN, HIDE OR FIGHT?
Prepare your business for an active shooter

By Susan Kim
Staff Writer

On the morning of Nov. 8, nearly 100 businesspeople and church members gathered at Grace Community Church in Fulton for training on how to respond to an active shooter in the workplace or the sanctuary.

Their eagerness to learn was coupled with a sense of sadness: the night before, a gunman had opened fire at the Borderline Bar & Grill in Thousand Oaks, California, killing 12 people before turning the gun on himself.

By the time this story goes to press, there will likely be another high-profile incidence of public violence.

For many of us, it’s not a matter of if we will be somehow affected by an active shooter but when.

“That’s why training is imperative,” said Sgt. Adrienne Thomas, a community outreach officer with the Howard County Police Department (HCPD).

According to the FBI, there were 250 incidents involving active shooters between 2000 and 2017. Over the years 2016-17 alone, there were 50 such incidents.

“Through the years, these incidents are occurring, unfortunately, at a rapid rate,” said HCPD Officer Steven Mitzel. “And, unfortunately there will be another one down the line.”

The number of people killed or wounded in these incidents has been on the rise since 2013, when 86 people were killed or wounded in public violence. In subsequent years, the numbers are: 97, 134, 214, and 729 in the year 2017 when a gunman opened fire on concertgoers in Las Vegas.

Close to home

“We see it in our own communities in Maryland,” said Mitzel. In September, at a Rite-Aid warehouse in Harford County, a temporary Rite Aid employee shot six people, killing three, before turning the gun on herself.

“We also saw it at the Capital Gazette shooting,” said Mitzel, “and we had it in Ellicott City at St. Peter’s Church in 2012. These are happening in our area. Howard County is not excluded from this.”

What can businesses do?

First, consider what makes you vulnerable, suggested Mitzel. Often it’s the design of your building, particularly if you operate a retail or service business, and you want to be inviting to customers. “Typically your building or office is not designed to keep people out. You want to maintain that openness, but then security measures are frequently inadequate.”

Start by asking: ‘If an active shooter comes in here, what would we do?’

Then assume that the assailant wants to do the most amount of harm in the least amount of time.

“It’s not always a person with a gun,” noted Mitzel. “Someone with a knife or a combative subject can do a lot of damage as well.”

Who are they?

Who is committing these violent acts?

There’s really no consistent profile, said Mitzel, though they are primarily male; tend to have a focused, detached mindset; and may have previously broadcast their intentions on social media, in person, or to a friend or family members. The FBI sometimes identifies a trigger such as mental illness, financial strain, drug or alcohol abuse, death of a friend or relative, or hatred of a certain group.

When the FBI studied 64 incidents in which the duration of the incident could be ascertained, 44 of them ended in five minutes or less, with 23 ending in two minutes or less.

Three minutes is the average response time for law enforcement in an active shooter incident. “That’s really, really fast in our world,” said Mitzel, “but if you’re waiting for us, that’s the longest three minutes of your life. You are your own first responder.”

Run, hide or fight?

Your first response should be to get yourself out of denial, said Officer Bonita Alicea. “You might hear a popping sound, and say, ‘That couldn’t be what I think it is.’”

Next comes a deliberation phase, in which you have to put yourself in a position to survive. “You have to calm yourself down by doing what we call combat breathing – those are deep breaths, in and out. You can remember what you need to do, which is Run, Hide, Fight.”

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Continued on page 13
✓ Make a plan.
Using the training posted online by law enforcement, or sign up for a security survey, offered to places of business or houses or worship by the HCPD.
✓ Form an incident safety team.
Find out assets people may have. For example, if someone has a military background, use that to your advantage. “Help conduct drills, have the meetings, create your plan,” said Thomas. “Create responsibilities so that, if something does happen, people know what to do, where to go and what their role is.”
✓ Develop a system to communicate.
Use an intercom, text message or other means to tell your employees there is an active shooter. If you have deaf or blind employees, be sure your communications system is accessible to them. Puling a fire alarm isn’t always the answer, Thomas said, since active shooters might do that themselves to draw people into the hall or outside, where they are vulnerable.
✓ Create a “safe room.”
This space should have an adequate barricade, medical supplies, water, and a “go bag.” Don’t assume everybody can run. If you have someone who uses a wheelchair, they can’t easily go down the back staircase.
✓ Establish a lookout program.
Exercise your situational awareness. “Nobody is looking up anymore,” said Thomas. “They are sending that last text message. Use situational awareness not just for you but for other people.”
✓ Train your staff.
“Knowledge is power,” said Thomas. “If they don’t know it, they can’t follow it.”
✓ Practice.
Conduct drills so that your team innately knows what to do should an active shooter arrive. This is a partial list; for complete training and other resources, visit https://www.howardcountymd.gov/Departments/Police/Community-Outreach/Crime-Prevention

Preparing for a shooter

Continued from page 12

do to survive. Shift to a survivor mindset.”

This is when employees rely on a mental script, one they practice together the same way they might a fire drill. At this point, you must decide whether to run, hide or fight.

When possible, the best alternative is to run, said Alicea. That means part of employee training involves identifying emergency exits and escape routes. If you choose to hide, then lock the door, turn out the lights, stay close to the ground, and, if you’re able, call 911 – but also remember to silence your phone.

The best barricade for a door is a doorstop, so businesses may want to equip each office or room with one.

Whichever of these actions you choose, you must commit to your choice until circumstances force you to reevaluate. “Making the decision to hide does not prevent you from putting up a fight later,” pointed out Alicea. “Your actions are all that stand between you, your colleagues and great harm. Fight for your life. Collaborate with those around you.”

When the police arrive, they will immediately try to determine who is the victim versus the assailant. It’s not always obvious, said Alicea. “For example, what if the assailant is mixed in with the kids? We are going to need to see your hands. Don’t make any sudden movements. Avoid yelling. Follow our commands. We’re going to be barking them.”

Just remember, Alicea said: “We’re not going to be nice, you guys.”
The Blackwall Opens in Gambrills

Fit for a banquet

By Mark R. Smith
Senior Writer

James King, the long-time owner of venerable Gambrills eatery J. King’s Steak & Seafood, found himself in an odd spot in mid-2016.

While the restaurant was making money, his establishment – much of which was built in the mid-1980s, but dated back to its late 1930s founding as Kaufmann’s Tavern – had an outdated infrastructure. That meant, in recent years, the profits were directed more into operations than to heightening the customer experience.

“We were feeding the beast,” King said.

A new direction was needed, so King and his investors went bold and made a $6 million gamble. They knocked down the local institution and built a new destination, The Blackwall Barn & Lodge, which features a 200-person banquet room.

Two Visions

King said, “This is the most competitive restaurant environment of my 30-year career,” noting that there are three times as many seats in West County’s dining market as there were 15 years ago.

So, King and company surveyed a local landscape that includes growing Fort Meade as well as nearby Waugh Chapel shopping area and focused on how they could “do it differently.”

He said, “We had two visions for the Blackwall. The first was to offer a venue for private events; the other was to offer something different than what’s available at Waugh Chapel, since its food segment is mostly fast food, fast casual and chain restaurants. Taking that approach, we spent a year of due diligence on design and décor, down to the last detail.”

King said, “Customers pay attention to these things. We wanted to provide an experience and more than just a meal, while still offering that casual comfort level we offered as J. King’s.”

Customers seem to be taking notice: The Blackwall has booked 30 holiday parties, as well as 12 weddings for next year. Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County (VAAAC) has been intensively marketing the wedding and banquet market, and President and CEO Connie Del Signore said the VAAAC welcomes the new option.

“We can always use another great venue,” she said.

Cost Control

Joe Burdett, owner of Jessup-based accounting firm Burdett & Associates and a former restaurateur, expressed optimism about the Blackwall’s chance for success. One reason is that King and his partners own the real estate.

“That protects the equity. If it ever doesn’t pan out, he can always rent out the building,” Burdett said, “and I also like the banquet hall, because catering services are an avenue to greater profits. With events, [establissements] know how much food they need to serve a certain-sized crowd, so they know how much they will make. They control the direct costs and the overhead.”

But that’s not the case on the restaurant side. “You usually don’t know how big an evening’s crowd will be, especially with bad weather,” he said, “and remember, you’re dealing with perishables.”

Burdett even cited the timing of the debut. “With the fall wedding season leading into the holiday season,” he said, “and that will allow The Blackwall to get well set up for early 2019.”
THE GOODNESS AT TINO’S
Heaping portions of grassroots help

By Susan Kim
Staff Writer

Four months after they bought Tino’s Italian Bistro in 2015, Lance Cook and Nicole Giannini Cook were headed out to a movie. “The manager called and said ‘you gotta come in,’” Lance recalled. So they did: they waited tables, prepared homemade meatballs, recommended wines, and made their customers happy. And they’ve been doing it ever since.

They’re still behind on their movie-watching but they have bigger plans sprouting from the successful daily operation in Columbia. Tino’s will open a new location in Anne Arundel County, most likely Millersville.

In September, Nicole left her job as CEO of a government contracting firm to join Lance as a full-time partner. Not only does she have solid experience at the helm of a business, she’s actually Italian. “I am Italian on both sides,” she said, “and we think opening a new location is a great opportunity for folding together Lance’s beliefs and my heritage.”

Lance is also making plans to bottle Tino’s in-house salad dressings and sauces under the company name “Do-Goods.” Currently in the market study phase, Lance also wants to pair Tino’s in-house salad dressings and sauces under the company name “Do-Goods.” Currently in the market study phase, Lance also wants to pair Tino’s in-house salad dressings and sauces under the company name “Do-Goods.”

What the neighbors say

Ask nearly any nonprofit in the area, and you’ll hear about Lance’s beliefs. He grew up in the small farming community of Roland, Iowa, where neighbors helped neighbors, every day, all the time.

“It was a great place to be raised,” said Lance, and he seems determined to infuse that sense of close-knit community into every dish and every glass of wine at Tino’s.

Every Monday and Tuesday, Tino’s hosts “Foundation Nights” in which the restaurant donates 10 percent of the proceeds to an organization for the full day of the event. Foundation nights have become so popular that they’re booked through January 2019.

But how do you make any money being so nice all the time?

“The profit margins are very slim in the restaurant business,” Lance admitted. “You’re not making a lot of money. You wouldn’t whether you had Foundation Nights or not.”

In key ways, though, Foundation Nights have built a loyal customer base at Tino’s – one that comes back for the consistently good food. “On any given night, we get two to ten people who have never been in this restaurant before. After that first visit, some might show up once a year. Some then come in every six months. And you’ve got one person who might come in every month. It builds a clientele.”

When asked about himself, Lance tends to divert the conversation to the people he’s helping, such as the Children’s Cancer Foundation, Inc. (CCF), a Columbia-based nonprofit that raises funds to invest in research and programs to advance pediatric cancer treatment and cures.

“Tino’s is not only a donor, but a true partner,” said Tasha Museles, CCF executive director. “Lance generously hosts restaurant nights on behalf of CCF and has hosted our annual holiday party the past two years,” she said. “This generous offer enables CCF to invite many children who are currently in treatment and battling cancer an opportunity to come to enjoy an afternoon of celebration and gifts. Lance ‘gets’ the importance of that and provides the perfect venue for many local families to be with loved ones and enjoy themselves during difficult times for their kids.”

On the brink

From Lance’s perspective, he’s responding with a parent’s point of view: he and Nicole have two daughters, ages 12 and 9. “You look at these parents, their kids with cancer, and you wonder how they survive this,” he said.

Phil Lang, owner of Bullseye Running, echoes the words of many in the community: “Love Lance!” he said. “He supports events that we host like the Rudolph Run and the Mid-Maryland Ultra, and provides a discount at the restaurant to all Bullseye Running members. We are more than grateful to have a friend and partner like Lance in our community and I’m thankful Tino’s supports so many others in our community as well.”

Since September, Nicole has been present even more often inside Tino’s, observing that Lance’s primary focus remains customer happiness. “If somebody’s unhappy, he’s not happy,” she said.

Lance agreed that he believes it’s his responsibility to try to keep a smile on a customer’s face. “I think everybody should be in the restaurant business,” he added. “They would respect everybody more.”

Tino’s is on the brink of growing, a prospect that Lance and Nicole will face together, even if they never actually get to catch a movie. When asked about their roles in the business, they compliment each other. “She’ll be doing the COO higher-level stuff,” Lance said. “She’s so strong in that.”

From Nicole: “Lance is the visionary and I’m the implementor.”

Sitting across the table from one another at Tino’s, they are quiet for a moment as they contemplate the upcoming changes. “Scary,” Lance said, and Nicole holds up her hand, adding: “Let’s say cautiously optimistic.”

Nicole and Lance Cook with daughters outside Tino’s Italian Bistro in Columbia.

Cook received the 2018 Small Business of the Year from the Howard County Chamber at its October Signature Event.
WHY WE STILL SHOP AT THE MALL
Barbara Nicklas on keeping it relevant

By Susan Kim
Staff writer

Barbara Nicklas recalls going into the Hecht Company in Edmondson Village, Baltimore, as a young teenager. “I asked my mom: who bought all this? Who bought all these clothes? Who chose what?”

She remembers, “I have this distinct memory of all that I would not have chosen. I thought being a buyer would be a glamorous job and that I would travel the world.”

It is. And she has.

Born in Mount Washington, Nicklas grew up in Catonsville. After majoring in retail management and fashion at University of Delaware, she went on for an MBA in marketing at Drexel University.

One of her first big jobs was as a merchandiser for Montgomery Ward, before she joined The Rouse Company. She traveled across the country, including a 20-year stint in Chicago.

“My cell phone still has a Chicago area code,” she said.

Early on, she also spent seven months at The Mall in Columbia as the assistant marketing director in 1981. “At that time, Sears was just opening, and the mall was having its first expansion.”

In 2005, having worked for General Growth Properties (now Brookfield Properties) since 1995, she returned to the east coast and became the senior general manager at The Mall in February 2016.

Tradition and Progression

Looking back and looking forward is what Nicklas does every day, as The Mall is a dynamic mixture of tradition and progress.

The mall first opened in 1971, with two anchors – Hochschild-Kohn and Woodward & Lothrop – and about 100 stores. Now it has four anchors and more than 200 stores.

Although a 1998 renovation changed the flooring, and added handrails and decorative lighting, “the basic design of the inside of The Mall is the same,” said Nicklas, “with the space frame ceiling, its iconic pyramids and the clear story.”

Now, going into the holiday retail season, The Mall has added 150,000 square feet of new retail since June of 2017, with the latest being the grand opening of Barnes & Noble in September. Every space is occupied except two.

Every day, Nicklas thinks about two mantras for The Mall: relevance and customer responsiveness.

“Malls and shopping centers are evolving so fast that, to stay strong, thriving and relevant is a constant adventure,” she said. “That is reflected here in our merchandising, amenities and customer experiences.”

Dining customers are a big draw for The Mall with The Cheesecake Factory and PF Chang’s China Bistro - both opened prior to the installation of the outdoor plaza – still attracting crowds, along with the more recently added Shake Shack, Urban Plates, Walrus Oyster & Ale House and Uncle Julios.

Taking the Pulse of The Mall

If one wants to take the pulse of The Mall in Columbia on any given day, the app – searchable under GGP Malls – is a way to find out what’s happening, search for parking, check out the latest sales, choose a movie, find out when Santa is arriving and even look up when you can bring your dog or cat to see Santa (every Monday from 5-8 p.m. through Dec. 17).

In addition to online communication with customers, Nicklas engages in face-to-face conversations with customers and also pores over written customer comments – there are forms just outside the management office, on the first level beneath Starbucks.

“We really take customer feedback seriously,” she said.

The newest response to customer requests? Parking lot identification so it’s easier to find your car. “For the holidays, we’ll also have parking ambassadors in place to keep the flow of traffic moving.”

Her tip for finding parking during the busier holiday hours: “Go to the top levels of the garages. You can almost always find parking there.”

In the 30-plus years that Nicklas has been in the retail industry, no day has been typical. “The Mall is a microcosm of what’s going on in the world whether it’s reflecting a popular trend, a shopping trend, or an operations trend. The Mall is a world of its own. That’s how I see it: current, fresh and relevant.”

A Bit About Barbara

Grew Up In: Catonsville
Education: University of Delaware, Drexel University
Once Worked For: Montgomery Ward, merchandiser
Resides In: Frederick
The Mall’s Senior General Manager Since: February 2016
Finisher, Iron Girl Triathlon: Ten times
Not many retail entrepreneurs have found a formula to reach "squealing girls" and "browsing men" but an edgy pop up in Columbia Mall may be on the right track. According to Susannah Siger, she is attracting a diverse audience who want to be comfortable, warm and make a statement from the ground up at "Socks Appeal."

Among many creative offerings, Siger’s top selling item is llama slipper-socks. She is banking that her customers want to wear soft, fuzzy, cute-faced llamas on their feet. Many of them, it turns out, do.

Siger’s motto, “No Boring Socks,” is borne out in her inventory at Socks Appeal, which also offers boxer shorts, caramels, handbags, jackets, sweaters and other accessories.

Sock prices range from $10-$40, and feature everything from alien puppy love to jackalopes to sloths, including sleepy sloths and snacking sloths.

But what if they want something more tough, even a little bit in-your-face-on-your foot? She’s got that, too: Go for the unicorn-versus-narwhal sock, a walking portrayal of the mythical horned creature fighting its real counterpart, the narwhal, a medium-sized whale sporting a large tusk protruding from its canine tooth.

At Ma Petite Shoe and Socks Appeal, Siger showcases products from women entrepreneurs, such as Lily Trotters compression socks and Mouth Party caramels, both of which have their origins in Baltimore.

As customers streamed into Socks Appeal (“Now Hiring Sock Elves” reads a sign on the wall), Siger told The Business Monthly, “What I respect about The Mall in Columbia is that they embrace the independent retailer. The respect is mutual. They appreciate that we bring the excitement, the spice, to the mall experience."

So far, customer response to Socks Appeal has been positive, Siger added, from “squealing girls jumping up and down at the entrance” to men, looking to express their creativity literally on their feet.

Siger also has an added attachment to Columbia, having grown up there and graduated from Wilde Lake High School.

“I loved going to the Mall with my family,” she said. “It was, and still is, the community center of Columbia.”

POP-UP SOCKS?
Entrepreneur Plans to Pull Up Business at The Mall

By Susan Kim
Staff writer

Frances Motyca Dawson, Conductor
December 2, 2018, 7:30 PM - Handel: Messiah
Generously Sponsored by The Columbia Bank
Pre-Concert Lecture by Peabody Prof. Ernest Liotti
sponsored by Rotary of Columbia-Patuxent; Post-Concert Reception
Jim Rouse Theatre, 5460 Trumpeter Rd., Columbia 21044

Sunday, December 9, 2018, 7 PM - “A Christmas Noël”
CPC Chamber Singers, Sammy Marshall, piano, organ
Christ Episcopal Church, 6800 Oakland Mills Rd., Columbia 21045

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Food and cash bar. Proceeds benefit Columbia Pro Cantare.

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Entrepreneur Susannah Siger, with her bestselling llama slipper socks.
New Howard Executive Focused on Transition, Alignment and Introductions

By George Berkheimer
Senior Writer

Howard County Executive-elect Calvin Ball (D) spent much of the past year focused on his campaign. With just four weeks to spend on the transition to office, he’s now focused on aligning his administration’s priorities.

Ball tapped State Sen. Guy Guzzone to lead his Transition Steering Committee, which includes former County Executive Ken Ulman, Howard Community College President Kate Hetherington, and Tonya Kennon, president of the county’s library system, among other prominent county leaders.

The diversity apparent within the team and its subcommittees is meant to signal his approach to his new position, said Ball, who is the first African American to hold the office.

He said, “Having a place where government actually represents our community, where community members can see themselves in public servants, has always been important to me and will continue to be important.”

Ball has made no commitment yet to government reorganization or making personnel or department changes. “I will be assessing the team and continuing to have conversations with people I think are extremely talented and want to serve our community.”

Transportation, education, the budget and Ellicott City flooding will represent the top priorities for his administration, Ball said.

**Multimodal Approach**

For transportation, “we need to be thinking in decades and generations,” Ball said.

His short-term mass transit goals will focus on efficiencies: decreasing headway times, ensuring bus routes serve economic development, perhaps even using bus sensors to optimize traffic signal timing.

“Making sure we take a multimodal approach is also important,” Ball said, particularly in its ability to improve the commercial tax base.

“I think BikeHoward Express should have the investment it needs,” he said. “How we phase that in is something I’ll definitely take a closer look at.”

Ball has already had preliminary conversations with other county executives on inter-jurisdictional transportation and other priorities.

He expressed concern that, for years, the county’s revenue projections haven’t materialized.

He advocates a multipronged approach of growing the commercial tax base, lobbying more assertively for the county’s fair share of state funding, and holding the school system and other county entities accountable for their budgets.

“If we invest appropriately in proper maintenance, maybe we save significant dollars on utility bills and renegotiate with some of the utility companies to make sure we’re getting the best use of taxpayer dollars,” Ball said. “Then I think we need to have an immediate conversation about deferred [school] maintenance and how it’s going to be prioritized, those are some things I’d like to do immediately.”

**Controversial Issues**

As a councilman, Ball’s position on a number of controversial issues did not align with that of his predecessor, Allan Kittleman (R).

Ball’s concerns with new courthouse legislation centered on how large the new courthouse actually needed to be, the prudence of moving it away from Ellicott City, and committing the county to spending a half billion dollars over 30 years when the school system faced the same amount in deferred maintenance.

“Once I take office I would like to evaluate where we are in the process,” Ball said. “If the bonds have already been let, I would have concerns about business predictability in pulling those bonds back out of the market. If they haven’t been let, I’d like to evaluate the structure of the deals and how much taxpayer dollars have already been used.”

He added, “We need access to safe justice, but we want to make sure we’re investing in the quality of life and all the other things that are demands on our resources.”

As to the Ellicott City Flood Mitigation Plan, Ball said he will be introducing a new plan.

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He said he wants more investment in stormwater and flood mitigation projects above Ellicott City. “Demolishing buildings unnecessarily is something I don’t think we should do. If it won’t make people safer, it will make Ellicott City less attractive.”

Ball said he plans to have conversations with all staff members to better understand all of the options for Ellicott City that were reviewed and the pros and cons of each.

“Maybe there is a faster, more cost-effective way to have less flood water and still save the historic nature of Ellicott City,” he said. “This is a top priority for me.”

**Getting To Know You**

Regarding Downtown Columbia’s Tax Increment Financing deal, “It was my understanding that the only way to move the project forward was through the TIF,” Ball said. “If that’s not the case ... maybe we need to be leveraging taxpayer dollars in a more transparent, effective way. It needs to be clear that it is an investment and not a giveaway.”

Does Ball intend to revisit the sanctuary county legislation that Kittleman vetoed?

“Not at this time,” he said. “The issues as far as revenues and the budget picture will be some of the top priorities I’ll be working on.”

Understandably, Ball is well known in District 2, but not so much outside his constituency.

“There is an opportunity over the course of the next several months and years for everyone to recognize that I am the public servant for all of Howard County,” he said. “A lot of it will be issue based. I think the introduction through service and addressing the problems of today and tomorrow will be how people to get to know me.”
By Len Lazarick
Political Analyst

It came as quite a shock to the business community when Democrat Steuart Pittman and his campaign for Anne Arundel County executive highly critical of unmanaged growth and over-development won the day over incumbent Steve Schuh.

Pittman wanted to reassure them in a Nov. 14 interview with *The Business Monthly*.

“Toward they’re nervous about me and I think the message that I want to convey is that I’m here to listen and learn first from them,” Pittman said.

Noting the needs of development in the county, the new county executive added, “I have met with developers individually and in groups and learned a lot from them. I will certainly try to create that level playing field that they’re all looking for and a fair set of rules that they can live by.”

Pittman, 57, may have started his career as a community organizer in Chicago, but he has spent decades running the family’s 550-acre thoroughbred horse farm in South County where he grew up.

As president of the Maryland Horse Council, Pittman doubled revenues and tripled the number of members.

**Market-based solutions**

In 2010, he founded the nonprofit Retired Racehorse Project, which promotes “a market based approach to solving a problem that other people thought was a charity problem,” Pittman said.

“It was making it possible for people to make money retraining and reselling [horses] for second careers using incentives ... And that’s why it worked.”

He pointed out that “making agriculture commercially viable in this county is one of our priorities in our 2009 general development plan because it’s the most efficient way to keep and maintain open space. It’s a whole lot cheaper to have farmers making money than it is to go buy land with taxpayers’ dollars to preserve it, you know.”

Overall, Pittman says his focus on development and growth is “not in anti-business sentiment. I think I’ve been clear that I’m very pro-business and I don’t believe in regulations that don’t have a public benefit. And I fought against regulation as a farmer and won and feel strongly about those issues.”

**Winning issues**

He felt from the start of the campaign last December that the issues of growth, traffic, and infrastructure, including school crowding, were winning themes. “We had to give them a message, something to vote for when we didn’t have that at the top of the ticket,” Pittman said, referring to Ben Jealous, the Democratic nominee for governor.

“There was a sense that development interests had too much power in our county government,” he said. He was wants to ban political contributions from developers, but he also believes that those contributions resulted from a desire to influence county decisions that were neither fair nor predictable.

A major task as he takes over county government is finishing the general development plan next year. As part of his campaign, he held a series of 16 “Communities First Forums” to listen to concerns from communities that had produced planning documents years ago. The meetings attracted almost 700 residents.

Those community recommendations will be used to revise the general development plan, he said.

**More transparency**

“We’ll circle back to them. We won’t have time to do a two year process that they had back in the early 2000s,” Pittman said. “But we do have the technology to be able to do a lot of listening and get a lot of input in each of those communities with online surveys ... We’ll be doing a lot of that. It’s a tool that didn’t exist 20 years ago.”

“It was even more clear in the meetings than the reports that that so many things are linked to growth,” Pittman said.

He concedes that on the general development plan Schuh’s “direction wasn’t all that different from mine” based on what the incumbent said in the campaign, but “people believed I was consistent on the issue.”

He plans to use technology to make the county government more transparent so that everyone could get more information about permits, plans and many activities of county government. That’s one of the reasons he hired Ben Birge as the new county administrative officer, an Odenton resident who has run the CountyStat program in Prince George’s County.

He already hired a chief of staff, Jennifer Purcell, who he worked with as executive director at the Horse Council and he expects to make other changes in department heads after he sits down with them.

“Some will change and some will stay,” Pittman said. Asked if there are any departments that he’s particularly unhappy with, he answered “Yes,” laughing. “But I’m not ready to say which ones.”

**Taxes**

Based on reading reports of his community dialogues, Pittman faces a daunting task.

People want better county services, they want to pay teachers more — as Pittman has promised — they want more police — as Schuh had budgeted — and Pittman has promised. They want better roads with less traffic, and they want the infrastructure improved, but they really don’t want to pay more money to the government.

“It makes it a difficult county to govern,” Pittman admits. “No question about it. And you know people don’t want development and they don’t want to pay taxes, so I have to come up with revenue from somewhere. But I think that’s changing somewhat.”

He thinks Schuh’s no tax increase pledge was “not a winning message.”

“The fact that I did not sign his pledge did not hurt me at all,” Pittman said. “The polls showed clearly that people want teachers to get paid more and they know that costs money. They want services. At this point they want infrastructure badly.”

He added, “Every year we have a participatory budgeting process where we bring people together and we say, ‘OK here’s our revenue, here’s our projected expenses, What are we going to do to balance it? And what are our priorities going to be?’

“And if there’s a need that is so great that people want to pay for it, I don’t want to close the door to that. We don’t know what the economy is going to do. We don’t know what the next emergency is going to be.

“So, people care about public safety and education and they care about the environment — so we’ll see where that takes us.”
The “year of the woman” certainly came true for Anne Arundel County candidates this election, mainly for Democrats but for Republicans, too. Not only did substantially more women run for state and local office, but more women won.

The County Council, all male and majority Republican for eight years, will now be majority women and majority Democrats. The seven-member council will have three Democratic women and two Republican women.

In the Senate, where five men have represented the county for several terms, two Democratic women, including the soon-to-be youngest member of the Senate, replace two retiring Democrats. A female Democrat also picked up one seat of a retiring Republican, and another seems to have eked out a victory over a veteran Republican delegate in the county’s most Republican district.

And all this happened in Republican Gov. Larry Hogan’s home county where he won 69 percent of the vote, yet his endorsed candidates lost.

The biggest surprise was Anne Arundel County Executive Steve Schuh. He raised gobs of money — $2.5 million in the past four years and had $1 million to spend on the general election campaign. He raised gobs of money – $2.5 million in the past four years and had $1 million to spend on the general election campaign. Schuh not only trailed Hogan by 21 percentage points – he got 48 percent – and almost 50,000 votes, he got 1,000 fewer votes than he did in 2014 despite higher turnout by both Republicans and Democrats.

Youngest Dem beats veteran Republican

The Republican “Drive for Five” hoped to pick up at least five seats in the state Senate to prevent overrides of Hogan’s vetoes by the Democrat-dominated legislature. Districts 30 and 32 were prime targets as longtime moderate Democratic Sens. John Astle and Ed DeGrange retired.

Republicans considered District 30 covering the Annapolis area especially vulnerable because the young, progressive lobbyist Sarah Elfreth, 30, was up against the older, conservative former delegate Ron George, a longtime Main Street jeweler.

Elfreth raised over $245,000 — including $6,000 from Howard County Sen. Gay Guzzzone’s campaign committee — knocked on thousands of doors, and had a strong grassroots organization. She got 54 percent of the vote, losing to George by a couple hundred votes on Election Day but piling up a 4,200-vote margin in early voting plus 700 more with absentees. George was backed by Hogan, Schuh and the Republican establishment, but his conservative record and past politically incorrect comments on Facebook helped derail him.

Beidle clobbers Grasso

In a rare win for the conventional wisdom, no one in the pundit class expected County Councilman John Grasso to beat Del. Pam Beidle for Senate in District 32. Beidle had represented the northwest Anne Arundel area, including Jessup and BWI, for 20 years — three terms in the House of Delegates and two on the County Council before that.

Grasso had been a loose cannon on the council, and anti-Muslim remarks this year for which he apologized were consistent with how he had spouted off in the past. Beidle got 66 percent of the vote.

There were two delegate seats open in District 32, with the death of Ted Sophocleus and Beidle moving up. They were replaced by the county’s first two African American legislators, lawyer Sandy Bartlett, and Mike Rogers, a retired Army colonel. Incumbent Democratic Del. Mark Chang won reelection. They easily beat a slate of well-qualified Republicans by 6,000 to 10,000 votes.

In District 30, Democrat Alice Cain, vice president of an organization promoting teacher leadership, took the seat of retiring Republican Herb McMillan, who GOP leaders had discouraged from running for Senate.

In another stunner, District 33 incumbent Republican Del. Tony McConkey, who has had legal and ethical issues in the past, got knocked off by Democrat Heather Bagnall once provisional ballots were counted. The three-member district hasn’t had a Democrat in 20 years.

The Council

Anne Arundel County has a two-term limit on members, so four members had to leave and in June, two incumbents lost their primaries.

The only incumbent left on the seven-person council is educator Andrew Pruski, who easily won re-election in District 4 with 66 percent of the vote.

In District 1, Jessup newcomer Sarah Lacey defeated Councilman Pete Smith in the Democratic primary, and went on to beat fellow attorney, Republican Kim Burns, with 57 percent. In District 2, which had been represented by Grasso, Democrat Allison Pickard won with 54 percent against Tom Gardner, R.

In District 3, that has been represented by Republican Derek Fink, attorney Nathan Volke, a former GOP chairman, held the seat for the party against Debbie Ritchie with 63 percent of the vote; In District 4, media buyer Amanda Fiedler toppled Michael Peroutka, a constitutional conservative who riled Democrats, in the Republican primary, but held on to the seat against Democrat Dawn Myers with 55 percent of the vote.

In District 6, the Annapolis area that had been represented by Democrat Chris Trumbauer, teacher and attorney Lisa Rodvien, D, kept the seat for the party with 60 percent of the vote against Michael Christman, R. And in the South County’s District 7, Republican lawyer Jessica Haire narrowly beat James Kitchin, 52 percent to 48 percent.

The power of the Democratic wave was evident in the race for state’s attorney where Democrat Ann Colt Leitess won her rematch.

The County Council, all male and majority Republican for eight years, will now be majority women and majority Democrats. The seven-member council will have three Democratic women and two Republican women.
Civility was on display in Howard County on election night. Current County Executive Allan Kittleman (R) visited the Democratic Party’s watch party at Columbia’s Kahler Hall to concede his loss and congratulate County Executive-elect Calvin Ball on his election win in person.

“I thought it was the right thing to do,” Kittleman said, and the gesture went a long way, eliciting goodwill and shows of respect from many of the revelers celebrating Ball’s victory.

“Today – while it feels like an ending – is just a beginning,” Ball told his supporters. “This is the beginning of writing the next chapter in our shared community.”

In the county’s council races, Democrat Liz Walsh defeated Republican Raj Kathuria in District 1, and Democrat Opel Jones won in District 2, defeating Republican John Liao. Democrat Christiana Rigby won an uncontested race in District 3, while Democrat Debra Jung bested Republican Lisa Kim to take the District 4 seat. District 5 remained in Republican hands, with David Yungmann defeating Democrat challenger China Williams.

In the sheriff’s race, voters selected Democrat Marcus Harris, an African American, over Republican Bill McMahon, who had been nominated by Kittleman to replace disgraced Democrat James Fitzgerald. In an interesting footnote to that appointment, Fitzgerald resigned in the wake of allegations of racism and abuse of office.

And in the Board of Education contest, Vicky Citroneo, Jen Mallo, Sabina Taj and Chao Wu prevailed.

**Rapid Transit**

On Oct. 26, Kittleman attended a groundbreaking ceremony signifying the launch of FLASH, the Montgomery County bus rapid transit (BRT) line. FLASH will operate along MD 29 and is the first BRT project in the state of Maryland. Starting in 2020, the 14-mile, 11-station BRT will run between Burtonsville and downtown Silver Spring and is expected to serve about 20,000 riders per day.

The line will eventually extend to Columbia, and both Kittleman and County Executive-elect Ball said they would like to see it extend to Ellicott City.

“There are about 13,000 Howard County residents who use Route 29 going to Montgomery County and Washington, DC, every day,” Kittleman said. “We’ve had a lot of improvements on Route 29 in Howard County, but we can’t build our way out of [congestion].”

At the end of October, Kittleman and Department of Community Resources and Services Director Jacqueline Scott announced the appointments of Rose Burton as administrator of the Office of Community Partnerships and Jenna Crawley as administrator of the Office on Aging and Independence.

In the final legislative meeting of its term, the Howard County Council approved the Howard County Board of Education’s Capital Budget request for fiscal 2020 and Capital Improvement Program request for fiscal years 2021-2025.

The council also approved legislation sponsored by Councilwoman Jen Terrassa (D-Dist. 3) requiring infrastructure for electric vehicle charging stations in new townhome communities and requiring rough-in accommodations for new single-family home construction.

Councilman Greg Fox (R-Dist. 5) recused himself from the vote due to a conflict of interest.

**Equity Summit**

On Nov. 10, more than 500 community members and leaders gathered at the Wilde Lake Interfaith Center for the Horizon Foundation’s first Equity Summit, which highlighted racial health disparities and barriers to health care.

The summit featured presentations by national equity experts from the Association of Black Foundation Executives, interactive discussions and a keynote address by nationally acclaimed author and Baltimore native Ta-Nehisi Coates.

“Unfortunately, we see glaring disparities when we look at our county health data,” said Horizon Foundation President and CEO Nikki Highsmith Vernick. “We must confront and address these disparities to make a meaningful and lasting impact on health outcomes in Howard County.”

Among the disparities in Howard County are a disproportionate incidence of diabetes among African Americans and fewer Asian Americans thinking about end of life care planning.

“Last year we had 32 percent of Latina high school students, girls, considering attempting suicide, compared to nine percent of our white male counterparts,” Highsmith Vernick said. “Clearly, we have work to do.”

**Leveling Outcomes**

Coates, author of “Between the World and Me” and “The Beautiful Struggle,” is also the current author of Marvel Comics’ “Black Panther” and “Captain America.”

He spoke about the experience of growing up as a young black man in the Mondawmin neighborhood of Baltimore during the crack cocaine epidemic of the 1980s and how that experience shaped his worldview today.

“My parents were people who had come of age in the Civil Rights movement,” Coates said. “For a lot black folks that age there was this promise that we were going to go into this new unsegregated America, and that’s not what happened.”

The focus on equity is part of the Horizon Foundation’s new strategic plan to improve health and wellness for everybody living in Howard County, Highsmith Vernick said.

The Foundation’s strategy includes advancing policies and practices that promise more equitable health outcomes, supporting the voices of leaders from communities of color, and strengthening the abilities and resources of community organizations working to effect change.

“We believe we can address these challenges and make a concerted effort to create an equitable environment in Howard County by breaking down systems that caused these disparities,” she said. “We created them, and we can undo them.”

Howard County Executive Allan Kittleman (far left) and Montgomery County Executive Ike Legget (far right) were among the dignitaries breaking ground on Montgomery County’s new Bus Rapid Transit line in October.
As Republican Gov. Larry Hogan was cruising to victory with 56 percent of the vote across the state, Howard County Republicans were having their worst election night in 30 years.

But in the year of the woman, the majority of people representing Howard County in the legislature, county council and school board will be women.

There now will be just three elected Republicans from Howard County, two delegates and a County Council member.

Most stunning was the loss of County Executive Allan Kittleman, and the election of the county’s first African American chief executive, Democrat Calvin Ball, the County Council veteran.

Hogan and Kittleman were running together as a team, fundraising and advertising together. Both had distanced themselves from President Donald Trump. Yet Hogan got 56 percent of the Howard County vote, and Kittleman got 47 percent.

Not that Kittleman did worse than he did in his narrow victory over Courtney Watson four years ago. He actually got 13,000 more votes than he did in 2014. Hogan got 25,000 votes more.

Blue wave, purple surfboard

There were no Hogan coattails here or elsewhere in the face of the blue wave of Democrats who turned out in a greater percentage than they had since 2006.

An exuberant Hogan gave one of the great lines of the election. “Tonight, in this deep blue state, in this blue year, with a blue wave, it turns out I can surf and we had a purple surfboard.”

But it was a wipe out for his surfing buddies like Kittleman, Anne Arundel County Executive Steve Schuh and several candidates for state Senate who Hogan was hoping would provide a firewall against veto overrides by the Democratic legislature.

Not only did the GOP pick up only two seats in the Senate, but there was the equally stunning loss of conservative Sen. Gail Bates in District 9A, representing Mary Kay Sigaty’s West Columbia district. Opel Jones will represent Calvin Ball’s East Columbia district. Again, showing the breadth of the Democratic wave, China Williams waged a strong campaign against Republican David Yungman in the council’s traditionally Republican district 5, with Yungmann winning only 53 percent.

As has been true for several election cycles, the school board will remain six women and one man with the election of Vicky Cutroneo, Jen Mallo, Sabina Taj and Chao Wu.

All three Democratic women for the Orphans Court were running unopposed.

Courthouse

The force of the higher Democratic turnout was especially evident in two courthouse races. For state’s attorney, Democrat Rich Gibson, a prosecutor in Baltimore, beat Republican Kim Oldham, the current deputy to retiring State’s Attorney Dario Broccolino who had endorsed her. (Bizarrely, the Columbia Flier and Howard County Times put Broccolino, not Ball, on the cover following the election.)

Republican former police chief Bill McMahon lost the sheriff’s job to newcomer Marcus Harris, a former Baltimore County detective. McMahon, appointed to the job by Kittleman, had the endorsement of three police union. Harris had the endorsement of the Democratic clubs.

Both Gibson and Harris are African American, the first to hold their new positions.

Hogan Surfs as Republicans Wipe Out

STATE POLITICAL
by Len Lazarick

As has been true for several election cycles, the school board will remain six women and one man with the election of Vicky Cutroneo, Jen Mallo, Sabina Taj and Chao Wu.
2018, What a Year It Has Been

As 2018 comes to a close, this is a good time to reflect on what Columbia Association (CA) has achieved this year.

Among the most notable accomplishments:

CA formed a Millennials Work Group, which spent the year looking into how CA can better serve individuals ages 17-35. The work group is scheduled to deliver its report in January 2019.

Columbia formed its fifth sister city relationship, its first in Asia, with the city of Liyang, China. The relationship will lead to cultural, educational, and municipal exchanges, travel abroad programs, economic development, and tourism promotion.

Following six months of major renovations, we reopened Columbia Athletic Club, and we completed the third and final phase of renovations at Columbia Swim Center. Other projects enhanced Columbia Gym, Supreme Sports Club, and the clubhouse at Fairway Hills Golf Club.

CA also has been honored to receive special recognition for many of our programs.

Our Aquatics Division was recognized by the Howard County Autism Society as an autism-friendly business for efforts to create a sensory-friendly pool and train staff to be more aware and accepting of the autism community.

Led by Watershed Manager John McCoy, the Department of Open Space and Facility Services received a Lake Management Success Stories Award from the North American Lake Management Society for work to improve the water quality and habitat in the Middle Patuxent and Little Patuxent watersheds.

Our Tennis Division received two awards. The Mid-Atlantic Club Management Association (MACMA) recognized CA’s Tennis Whizz program, which teaches the game of tennis to the youngest of players, with an Excellence Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Field of Kids Programming.

And the brand new Long Reach Tennis Club was among 24 winners this year of the United States Tennis Association’s Facility Awards, which recognize excellence in the construction and/or renovation of tennis facilities throughout the country.

Led by Energy Manager Jeremy Scharfenberg, the Department of Open Space and Facility Services was twice recognized in 2018. The U.S. Department of Energy recognized CA for reducing energy consumption by 20 percent as part of the Better Buildings Challenge program.

Additionally, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency awarded Columbia Association with an ENERGY STAR Certificate of Recognition for integrating energy management practices into daily operations and promoting energy efficiency in the community.

At CA, our focus is on the quality of life in Columbia and beyond. Our efforts are continuous, and each team member at CA strives to excel each day in contributing to the successful operations of this multi-faceted organization.

In 2018, AARP named Columbia as the No. 8 most livable mid-sized community. Realtor.com identified Columbia as one of the hottest zip codes in the Baltimore area for millennial homebuyers. Wallet Hub included Columbia in multiple lists: one of the best cities to find a job (No. 15); one of the best cities for people with disabilities (No. 5); and one of the happiest cities in America (No. 12).

While these recognitions are meaningful, our true measure of success is how we benefit and add value to the Columbia community. This was indeed a good year. Our focus is now on how we can continue to serve our community in 2019 and beyond.

Milton Matthews is president and CEO of the Columbia Association.

Help For New or Expanding Business

I was bowled over by the talent and generosity of the pros participating in our recent Meet the Mentors event in Baltimore. The six-person panel offered perspective that no doubt will benefit at least a few of the business owners in the audience.

Since this is the season for giving, I thought I’d re-gift (or paraphrase) some of their advice. If you’re about to take the plunge as an entrepreneur, a first-time owner, or ready to grow your business, maybe you’ll find an answer to something that’s been on your mind, or see something that helps you avoid a common pitfall.

Before we get started, I want to thank Jim Bies, director of Business Development at Offit Kurman for moderating BBB’s panel. Thanks to Jim and BBB’s Strategic Partnership Director Joann Francavilla, the panelists covered a lot of information in a short period of time.

Leasing: Jamie Campbell, Leasing Agent, Merritt Properties

What do you need to know about choosing a lease?

“Landlords style leases in different formats,” cautioned Campbell. A net lease separates base rent from operating expenses.

To make an informed decision, owners need to understand what’s included in the operating costs. Campbell explained your business needs to be able to plan around monthly or annual operating expenses. For example, he asked, “Who handles snow removal?” Ask for the gross number and do your calculations around it to make sure you budget correctly.

Capital & Banking: Marc Czosnowski, Relationship Manager, Howard Bank

How does one’s personal credit score affect the business loan application process?

Czosnowski said, “That’s usually the first question I have either for startups or the business owner.” He added that banks know no one has perfect credit. Lenders also understand that credit score is a reflection of the past and they want to know what you did and are doing to correct it. “Your good banks will listen to the story you have to tell,” he said.

Accounting & Management Consulting: Chad Seifert, CGMA, Principal, KatzAbosch

What kind of business entity should you choose?

According to Seifert, this is one of the most common questions clients ask. And, his answer, “It depends.”

But, Seifert added, that starting out as an LLC offers flexibility and is easily converted to a S corporation or C corporation down the road. LLCS are easy to set-up, and, when partners are involved, allow distributions to be tailored to the individual. For example, if one partner is a hands-on operator and another is simply an investor, the partner working in the business can receive larger and/or more frequent payouts.

Can a new business owner handle payroll on his own?

Payroll, recommends Siefert, is one area where owners should hire a service. “I’ve seen too many times where business owners have to spend hours correcting a small problem,” he emphasized. Not only is a payroll provider a timesaver, according to Siefert, “Too many little things can go wrong.”

I hope you found something you could use to build your business. Watch next month for BBB’s Meet the Mentors expert advice in marketing, insurance, human relations, and cybersecurity.

Angie Barnett is president and CEO of the Better Business Bureau of Greater Maryland.
Join the Chamber’s Legislative Committee

The elections are finally over and there are significant changes coming to Annapolis. From the Paid Sick Mandate to Cyber Tax Credits, the decisions made by elected leaders in Annapolis can have major impacts on your business and how you run it. Accordingly, our business community needs an advocate and the Central Maryland Chamber (CMC) is here to do it!

With the start of 2019 legislative session quickly approaching, the CMC is gearing-up to engage our elected leaders in Annapolis on policy issues important to our regional economy. Creating an environment that is favorable to commerce does not happen on its own. It requires leadership to address complicated issues, which is why we want your help! As the CMC prepares for the upcoming session, we are looking for business leaders and subject-matter experts to serve on the chamber’s Legislative Committee.

Your contributions on the Legislative Committee will play a critical role in establishing the direction the CMC takes on crucial issues before the Central Maryland Chamber (CMC) is here to do it!

Apply for a Local Development Council Grant

The Central Maryland Chamber plays an active role on the Local Development Council (LDC), which this year awarded over $19 million in grants to worthy non-profits, associations, and government agencies.

Anne Arundel County receives 4.51 percent of total revenues generated by video lottery terminals at Maryland Live! Casino. These monies are distributed with the advice of the LDC in the form of local impact grants and must be used for improvements in the communities near the casino. Permitted uses are: infrastructure improvements; facilities; public safety; sanitation; economic and community development; and other public services and improvements.

A new round of grants will begin soon and applications are due Wednesday, Dec. 19. If you are interested in learning more or applying for a grant please contact Raj Kudchadkar, CMC President, at Raj@CentralMarylandChamber.org.

Annual Holiday Mixer & Silent Auction

Come join us for some holiday cheer, great networking, amazing food, open bar, and early holiday shopping!

The CMC will again be partnering with the BWCC Foundation on a silent auction to raise scholarship money for local high school students. The Foundation’s core scholarship program consists of awards to several area high schools: Hammond and Reservoir High Schools in Howard County; High Point and Pallotti High Schools in Prince George’s County; and Meade Senior High in Anne Arundel County. Come out to support a worthy cause and also get in some great networking.

The event will be hosted and catered by Putting on the Ritz in the Great Room at Historic Savage Mill (8600 Foundry Street Savage, MD 20763) from 5:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 5. You can get more information and register at: www.CentralMarylandChamber.org

Raj Kudchadkar is President and CEO of the Central Maryland Chamber.

Events, celebrations and more opportunities ahead

Chamber Members Meet with New Electeds

Howard County has a new County Executive and an entirely new County Council, so for the first time, the Chamber is offering members an opportunity to get to know the people who will govern our county in the coming years. The Chamber takes its role as the Voice of Business very seriously.

The New Elected Officials Breakfast is part of the Chamber’s continuing work to keep members informed and advocate for pro-business policies that will have a positive impact on the community. More information about the New Elected Officials Breakfast on Tuesday, Dec. 4 can be found at www/howardchamber.com.

New Events Manager

The Chamber has a packed calendar of amazing events already planned for 2019, so we are incredibly happy to announce that Lynn Song has joined the team as our new Events Manager.

Prior to joining the Chamber team, Song served as a Military Intelligence Officer for the U.S. Army. Her previous roles include Platoon Leader, Logistics Officer and Security and Intelligence Officer. Song planned and managed military functions including a Military Intelligence Ball, Changes of Command and holiday parties, so she is no stranger to executing large, complicated events.

Song lives in Ellicott City with her two children and husband, Camero. You can learn more about Lynn and our entire Chamber team at www/howardchamber.com/staff.

Jingle Mingle Holiday Party

It’s one of the Chamber’s favorite events each year, and 2018 is shaping up to be the best yet! The 2018 Jingle Mingle Holiday Party will be held Thursday, Dec. 13 at one of the Chamber’s newest members, The Maryland Jockey Club at Laurel Park. Laurel Park has recently completed a massive refresh and we can’t wait for everyone to see the beautiful result. Tickets are available at www/howardchamber.com.

50th Anniversary Begins in 2019

We can hardly believe it, but the Howard County Chamber will celebrate its 50th Anniversary year in 2019! The Chamber team and a group of dedicated volunteers are hard at work planning special events and other ways to mark the occasion. The 50th Anniversary Business Resource Guide & Membership Directory will hit mailboxes in January, but the special anniversary surprises will continue all year long.

Speakers Set for 2019 Women’s Conference

The Howard County Chamber is proud to announce that Rayna DuBose, a motivational speaker and Marriotts Ridge High School coach, and Sheela Murthy, founder of Murthy Law Firm, will be the keynote speakers for the 2019 Women’s Leadership Conference.

DuBose and Murthy were chosen because of their inspiring backgrounds that perfectly exemplify the 2019 Conference’s theme, “HERstory: The Power of Perseverance.” The 2019 Women’s Leadership Conference will be held Thursday, March 7 at Live! Casino & Hotel. More information about the conference and all of the dynamic speakers who have already signed on can be found at www/howardchamber.com.
Smile, AI Is Looking At You Right Now

Increasingly, talking about tech involves talking about business.

And this is not just because tech firms like Microsoft, Amazon and Google are some of the world's largest companies. They are also accelerating their spread into government functions at all levels.

Many of them have quite substantial Artificial Intelligence (AI) divisions that are not restricted to in-house use, but bid on outside work as well – furthering their entanglement with our lives.

Amazon's largest profit center is Amazon Web Services. It is, in fact, the largest cloud computing service worldwide, with Microsoft as number two.

So, no surprise that Amazon is actively seeking federal work. Probably one of the more controversial initiatives is facial recognition.

Facebook was a pioneer in facial recognition, using it to suggest "tagging" friends and building an enormous library of facial images.

The next step using AI is to refine facial characteristics into machine recognizable data. Facebook is not alone in doing this.

A recent story in the Washington Post detailed a June meeting of people from all walks of life who gather to give to those in need. Thousands of people will come together on Dec. 8 to take part in and/or watch the parade along the 1-mile swath the historic national road to enjoy watching beautiful horses and tractors (with lots of horse power) stroll down Frederick Road, Lisbon's "Main Street."

Now in its ninth year, the parade has brought in well over $65,000 in donations to the local food banks - Howard County Food Bank and Carroll County Food Sunday – plus Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry and the Lisbon Volunteer Fire Company (which is conducting a fundraising campaign to build a new facility to be completed in 2019).

More than $15,000 was raised at the 2017 Lisbon Christmas Parade through the generous support of parade participants, and sponsors and spectators! These funds were presented to the beneficiaries at the April 13 Howard County Farm Bureau’s Annual Legislative Dinner. Both food banks received $5,000, while $2,000 was presented to both LVFC and FHFH.

More Than a Parade

For some, the parade is a chance to showcase their tractors and horses; for the spectators, it's a chance to get out to Howard County's rural west to watch tractors make their way down the historic national road followed by hundreds of horses, to enjoy the day's fun-filled festivities.

But for those who often go hungry, it means so much more.

Food banks are essential; they play a central role during states of emergencies when demand can be tremendous.

As a spectator, you can also contribute to the Canned Food Drive that accompanies the parade by donating canned nonperishable foods within the bins placed along the parade route, at the fire hall, and at Days End Farm.

Lisbon Parade Feeds the Hungry

By Alice Settle-Raskin

The Great Lisbon Farmers Feed The Hungry Christmas Parade, led by festively-decorated tractors followed by 250 seasonally-adorned saddle and carriage horses, kicks off on Sat., Dec. 8 at noon.

Presented by the Howard County Farm Bureau, it's a day that promises holiday fun for everyone!

What started as way to put the historic town of Lisbon (a town tucked in the far corner of Howard County, Maryland’s rural west) back on the map is now an annual holiday tradition and one of the most attended small town Christmas parades in the state.

It is also when the local equine and agricultural communities gather to take part in one of Maryland's biggest fundraisers to feed the hungry.

The parade highlights the true meaning of community – the spirit of collaboration in doing this.

Moving On

In non-defense news, Ford has been working with Argo, a self-driving startup they helped fund, to map parts of Washington in advance of rolling out driverless cars in the district.

To me, it also represents the transfer of work to the consumer. A driverless car can bring pizza to your address but not to your door. Much like the self-checkout lanes at supermarkets, it can save the company money but at a loss of service to us. That may be what kills it.

Cliff Feldwick, cliff@feldwick.com, is owner of Riverside Computing, and offers PC troubleshooting, network setups and data retrieval for small businesses, when not ducking drones.
In working with hundreds of federal contracting sales, business development (BD), and capture teams over the last 20 years, there is a very common ritual of the regularly scheduled business development pipeline meeting. During this meeting, management expects the BD/capture team to report on the opportunities being tracked, the status of their efforts, the requests for proposals (RFPs) in progress, and the recently awarded contracts.

Management is keenly aware of not just the awarded contracts, which, of course, bring revenues to the company, but also the costs incurred during the business development lifecycle; the identification, capture, bid, and proposal development process required for all opportunities.

A complicating factor unique to the government marketplace is the very long sales cycle. The federal acquisition lifecycle often extends beyond 12 months (well into two years or longer), depending on the size and complexity of the anticipated contract, compliance issues and handling protests, and the associated process to select the final awardees.

Inevitably, during the company pipeline meeting, when the final contract awards are tallied and the return on investment of time, effort, and hard costs are measured, management laments, in the end, that the pipeline is just not large enough. More opportunities must be identified, run through the BD lifecycle and ultimately, won.

However, strategic, effective pipeline development is not just about the number of opportunities tracked or the total dollar volume pursued. While management may demand, developing a larger pipeline is not the one-size-fits-all answer to winning more contracts and adding to the company’s profitability.

A common mistake in developing the pipeline is the inclusion of opportunities in which the probability of winning (Pwin) is under 40 percent, or worse, has not yet been determined. Under that measure, the cost to pursue and submit a viable bid takes critical resources, to include people, money, and time away from those opportunities with a Pwin of 60 percent or more – the sweet spot for federal contractors.

The correct method to right-size a federal contracts pipeline begins with a critical evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the competitors compared with the company, the strength of relationships within the target customer, the available resources to market, pursue and bid, and, of course, a detailed pricing strategy.

The challenge in right-sizing is not only to have enough opportunities in the pipeline of sufficient dollar volume, but also to have enough different opportunities that span a long enough timeline to account for the unexpected. With agency mission priorities shifting, budgets and programs cut, sole source contracts awarded to other firms, or technology outsourcing one’s offering, it is critical to strategically plan for additional opportunities and targets to pursue and win in order to meet business goals.

Yes, generally, many pipelines are, in the end, inadequate to meet aggressive awarded contracts goals. Most companies waste precious resources by populating the pipeline with low Pwin opportunities, rather than taking the time to cultivate the appropriate primes, subcontractors, and teaming partners who can elevate the Pwin to an acceptable level, at least enough to justify the pursuit.

Two other pipeline measures include the range of size of pipeline and the length of time before the RFP is actually anticipated. Many companies only focus on large opportunities rather than engaging an effective approach to include a variety of dollar values. Winning a number of smaller opportunities can generate the same revenue, build past performance, and set the stage for larger longer-term opportunities.

Planning an effective pipeline strategy encompassing depth, breadth, and focus sets the stage for both near- and long-term growth in the federal marketplace.

Gloria Larkin is president and CEO of TagetGov and a national expert in business development in government markets.

The following information is regarding awarded contracts can be used to develop prime contractor, subcontractor and teaming partner relationships on these and other opportunities. The website for each awardee is also provided.

For more information, contact TargetGov: 410-579-1346 x 325

Navsys LLC, Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD, won a $10,514,449 contract to provide engineering requirements development, implementation management, logistics coordination, supply chain management, technical documentation, operational reporting, review resolution, site surveys, contract preparation, execution management and budgetary planning and execution from the U.S. Army Contracting Command. http://navsys.com/


Johnson Controls Government Systems LLC, Gaithersburg, MD, won a $30,419,226 contract to upgrade, improve, or replace cogen-

Blue Water Technologies, Inc., Annapolis, MD, won a $22,477,906 contract to provide Navy Facilities Engineering Command Central to provide the modification of a Sea Launch system. http://www.fedbiz.com/

John C. Grimberg Co., Inc., Rockville, MD, won a $9,532,186 contract to provide systems engineering and integration services in support of Trident II strategic weapons system, the SSGN attack weapon system, and strategic weapon surety. https://www.baesystems.com/en/home

AAI Corp., Hunt Valley, MD, won a $23,696,816 contract for non-developmental contractor-owned and contractor-operated unmanned aerial systems, intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance the Acquisition Management and Integration Center. https://www.tecno-systems.com/

BAE Systems Technology Solutions & Services Inc., Rockville, MD, won a $72,049,627 contract to provide Air Traffic Control and Landing Systems Operations Onboard Ship and Shore services for the Air Traffic Control and Landing Systems Division from the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division. https://www.baesystems.com/en/home

Boston Consulting Group, Bethesda, MD, won a $21,195,935 contract to provide the implementation of a Naval Sustainment System to include the development of governance, coordination, and accountability mechanisms across the Naval Aviation Enterprise from the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division. https://www.baesystems.com/

Sierra Nevada Corp., Hagerstown, MD, won a $23,813,528 contract from the Air Force Life Cycle Management Center to provide the modification of two King Air 350 extended range aircraft with intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance/synthetic aperture radar capability; one transportable ground station; one fixed ground station; and one mission system tester. https://www.sncorp.com/

The Whiting-Turner Contracting Co. Inc., Greenbelt, MD, won a $20,450,000 contract for the improvement of Fuller Road at Marine Corps Base Quantico from the Naval Facilities Engineering Command. http://www.whiting-turner.com/

Systems Application and Technologies Inc., Largo, MD, won a $20,489,591 contract for continued support services to include the design, development, procurement, building, installation, test, evaluation, calibration, modification, operation and maintenance on aircraft and engines from the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division. https://www.scta-techinc.com/
Vision Technologies Awarded Large Contracts by SEC

Glen Burnie-based Vision Technologies has announced two new deals that total more than $93 million. One deal is with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), which awarded the company a comprehensive information technology (IT) cabling and AV solution order under the General Services Administration (GSA) Connections II contract.

Vision was also awarded a complete IT support contract with a ceiling value of $33.6 million by Northampton County, Pa. Under this potential 13-year, IT-managed services contract, Vision will provide full-time staff to manage all IT services for the county leadership and all its departments.

Ciena Modernizes Portfolio

Hanover-based Ciena is bolstering its packet networking portfolio with new adaptive IP capabilities, coherent optics and purpose-built hardware platforms, arming service providers with the ability to capitalize on 5G, Next-Generation Cable MSO access associated with fiber deep, business devices and more. With these new capabilities, Ciena is bringing to market solutions that are open, cost-effective and disaggregated making them simpler to deploy, manage and maintain.

Authority Brands Acquires ASP

Authority Brands of Columbia, has purchased America’s Swimming Pool Co. (ASP). Terms of the transaction were not disclosed. ASP is the nation’s largest swimming pool service franchise, with more than 100 franchise owners operating in more than 350 cities across 21 states.

Authority Brands is a home services franchising platform and the parent company to The Cleaning Authority (TCA) and Homewatch CareGivers (HWCG). Authority Brands supports individual franchisee growth by providing market, technology and operational support.

Diversity Contracting Report Released by HHC

The Howard Hughes Corp. (HHC) recently submitted a Diversity and Inclusion report to Howard County government in compliance with the Downtown Columbia Development Memorandum of Understanding. The report includes the status of efforts to reach a 30 percent Minority, Women, Disabled, Veteran-Owned and Local Business Enterprise (MWDVOLBE) participation goal in tax increment funded public improvement projects in Downtown Columbia.

To date, two major infrastructure projects have been bid to achieve the 30 percent goal, resulting in approximately $2.6 million in contracts to 16 MWDVOLBE firms. Feedback was also provided to unsuccessful bidders to help improve their chances on future opportunities.

BIZ ROUNDUP

Merkle Honored in Marketing

Merkle-based Merkle, a technology-enabled, data-driven performance marketing agency, announced that Forrester Research, Inc., an independent research firm, ranked Merkle as a Leader in The Forrester Wave: Search Marketing Agencies, Q4 2017. The report assessed the state of the search marketing landscape by evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the top twelve search marketing agency vendors across 25 criteria. Merkle received the highest possible scores in the market research, media, collaboration and revenue criteria. In the paid search criterion and strategy category, Merkle scored among the highest of all the providers evaluated.

Orrstown to Acquire Hamilton

Orrstown Financial Services, of Shippensburg, Pa., and Towson-based Hamilton Bancorp, which operates seven branches including a location in Ellicott City, have signed a definitive agreement under which Hamilton will merge with and into Orrstown. Hamilton shareholders will receive a combination of stock and cash currently valued at $58.5 million.

Upon completion of the transaction, the combined company is expected to have approximately $2.5 billion in assets, $1.7 billion in loans and $2.1 billion in deposits. The transaction is expected to close in the second quarter of 2019.

AAMC Receives ‘A’ for Safety

Anne Arundel Medical Center (AAMC) has been awarded an ‘A’ from The Leapfrog Group’s Fall 2018 Hospital Safety Grade. The designation recognizes AAMC’s efforts in protecting patients from harm and meeting the highest safety standards in the U.S. The Leapfrog Hospital Survey reports on hospital performance to empower consumers to find the highest-value care and to make informed decisions.

The Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade uses 28 measures of publicly available hospital safety data to assign grades to more than 2,600 U.S. hospitals twice per year. AAMC was one of 855 hospitals across the U.S. awarded an A in the fall 2018 update of grades.

Vision Technologies Retained by Baltimore Ravens

Vision Technologies, of Glen Burnie, has been named the official audio-visual partner of the Baltimore Ravens for the second consecutive year. As a Ravens’ partner, Vision has delivered a series of upgrades at M&T Bank Stadium and recently completed an upgrade for the Ravens’ Training Center, also known as the Under Armour Performance Center, in Owings Mills. In addition, Vision’s security practice has helped to ensure the safety and security of M&T Bank Stadium.

Hunting Generates $401M in Spending in Maryland

A new organization, Hunting Works For Maryland, estimates that hunters in the state generate $401 million in economic activity, much of which is spent at locally-owned businesses throughout Maryland. More than 65 organizations have signed on to be part of the free initiative.

“More than 88,000 people hunt in Maryland each year. Each of these hunters spends, on average, $3,000 a year. This spending is felt throughout the economy of Maryland,” said Deb Carter, executive director of the Maryland Association of Campgrounds and a co-chair of Hunting Works For Maryland.

“In addition to generating tax revenue, hunting also supports thousands of jobs in the state of Maryland and draws as many as 19,000 out-of-state hunters each year as well,” said Ruth Toomey, a co-chair, and executive director of the Maryland Tourism Coalition. “Maryland hunters spend $50 million on trip-related expenses each year, and another $128 million per year on equipment.”

Vantage House Opens Memory Care Apartments

Residences at Vantage House, of Downtown Columbia, has opened Monterey Place, a dedicated memory care neighborhood, within its community, Vantage House recently underwent a multi-million-dollar renovation and expansion for residents to provide specialized memory care, additional dining venues, fitness and recreational spaces, as well as other enhancements. Also announced as part of the community’s overall evolution is a rebranding and renaming of the community to Residences at Vantage Point.

Monterey Place includes 24 private apartments and homelike shared spaces. Assistance is provided with daily living needs, such as bathing, dressing and meals, as well as medication management, with 24/7 staff availability. Monterey Place is a Hearthstone Institute Certified Center of Excellence, and follows an innovative evidence-based approach to improve quality of life and reduce common symptoms of memory loss.

Infogix Acquires DATUM

Infogix, a provider of data management tools, has acquired Annapolis-based DATUM, a provider of data governance software and strategic services. The deal allows Infogix to enhance its data governance framework with key elements of DATUM’s Information Value Management framework, as well as prepackaged, outcome-driven use cases to enhance value for customers. Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

The acquisition also expands Infogix’s footprint in new markets, including consumer products, chemicals, manufacturing, food and beverage, and pharmaceuticals, where data governance and metadata management are mission-critical capabilities.
Howard Holds Human Trafficking Meeting

Howard County Office of Human Trafficking Prevention recently held the county’s first conference to highlight efforts to identify, eliminate and prevent sexual and labor trafficking in the region.

Recent Howard County initiatives to combat human trafficking have included hiring a human trafficking prevention coordinator and adding a second full-time police detective to investigate cases; passing legislation allowing police officers to investigate massage parlors suspected as fronts for prostitution and human trafficking; creating a forfeiture fund to provide services for survivors; and establishing the Human Trafficking Prevention Coordinating Council.

State to Fund Route 3, Ritchie Highway Studies

Anne Arundel County has announced an agreement with the Maryland Department of Transportation to fund two congestion relief studies for Route 3 (Crain Highway), in the Crofton/Gambrills area; and Route 2 (Ritchie Highway), from the Baltimore City line south to Route 50/301 at the Broadneck Peninsula.

Earlier this year, the county announced a $30 million investment to improve more than 4,600 miles of local roads in Anne Arundel County.

Anne Arundel to Purchase Marley Neck Property

Anne Arundel County is in negotiations to purchase 8.3 acres of land off Marley Neck Boulevard, in Glen Burnie, for a future neighborhood elementary school site. The parcel would be within the planned Tanyard Cove South community, in Glen Burnie.

The county and Anne Arundel County Public Schools are in the early stages of exploring the viability of a public-private partnership (P3) proposal where the developer could potentially construct the school under the new P3 regulations/authority recently enacted by the state. This purchase would be the fourth major land acquisition announcement since late spring.

Howard to Renovate Carroll Baldwin Hall

Howard County has announced the beginning of a $600,000 project to restore deteriorated portions of historic Carroll Baldwin Hall in Savage. The project will restore the historic Foundry Street and Williams Street facades, while also making the facility more accessible to users with disabilities. It will also renovate the room that once served as the county’s Savage Branch library by replacing its aging flooring and HVAC system.

The project was initiated by the county’s Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) following the state’s designation of the North Laurel-Savage area as a Sustainable Community, a neighborhood revitalization program that provides funding opportunities for community enhancement projects.

Schuh Expands Mental Health Services in Anne Arundel

Anne Arundel County Executive Steve Schuh recently signed legislation to expand mental health services for residents. The $470,000 annual effort will fund two new Mental Health Agency Mobile Crisis Response Teams. The teams are designed to respond primarily to calls from police. County staff is then dispatched to assist in stabilizing the individual and connect them to the most appropriate services. During 2017, the teams were dispatched 1,912 times. The agency serves the entire county on a 24/7/365 basis.

One of the crisis response teams will help support the county’s Safe Stations Program, where any resident who is the victim of a heroin/opioid addiction can go to any Anne Arundel County or Annapolis City Fire Station and get connected to services. The second team will be assigned to the Anne Arundel County Public School system, and will help provide needed emergency mental health services to the students.

Kittleman Expands “Achieve 24/7” Initiative

Howard County Executive Allan Kittleman announced the expansion of the Achieve 24/7 initiative, building on the success of a pilot program held at Oakland Mills Middle School. Under the Achieve 24/7 program, the county’s Department of Community Resources and Services (DCRS) will offer small grants to county schools focused on closing the opportunity gap.

“We were excited by the results of our pilot program last summer,” said Kittleman. “Providing math instruction and enrichment activities, most of the children involved advanced a level in math when they returned to school this fall.”

State Backs Talbott Springs School Replacement

The designees for the Maryland Inter-agency Commission on School Construction (IAC) agreed to support the construction of a replacement school building for Talbott Springs Elementary School, in Columbia. The decision reverses an earlier IAC decision. The revised feasibility study plans for an 84,625-square-foot replacement facility with capacity for 631 students. The replacement school will be constructed on the current school site. The projected completion date is fall 2022.

Ambulance Coming to Howard

The Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services will receive a Horton model 603 Ambulance, which will be the first of its kind in the fleet. The ambulance will be on a Ford F550 4-by-4 chassis, which provides a shorter turning radius and 4-wheel drive to respond during weather emergencies. The vehicle is expected to be placed in service in late spring 2019.

The vehicle will also be equipped with a Zero-RPM idle mitigation system that shuts off the engine when it is idling while continuing to power the rest of the ambulance’s systems. Ambulances on average idle an estimated four hours during every eight-hour shift. By allowing the engine to shut off during idling, nearly 7,300 gallons of fuel will be saved during the life of the vehicle.
BIZ GIVING

Live! Casino Awards $19M
The Cordish Companies’ Live! Casino & Hotel and the Anne Arundel County Local Development Council (LDC) has awarded $19 million in local impact and community grants for 2019. This year’s grants bring the total funds in support of Anne Arundel County organizations to nearly $130 Million since Live! Casino opened in June 2012.

Local impact grant recipients include the Anne Arundel County Fire Department, $5,598,000; the county’s Police Department, $3,459,200; the county’s Office of Public Works/Department of Planning & Zoning, $2.9 million; Anne Arundel Community College, $1.7 million; and the BWI Business Partnership, $1,059,000.

Also allotted were $350,000 in community support grants. Recipients include MacArthur Middle School, $39,303, to add classroom projectors; Jessup Improvement Association, $30,625, to implement an oyster/bay education program for Meade Middle School; Maryland Blue Crabs baseball club, $13,072, to implement an oyster bay education program for Meade Middle School.

Community Foundation Funds Ellicott City Flood Relief
The Community Foundation of Howard County and Ellicott City Partnership distributed nearly $1.1 million in grants to those affected by the Ellicott City flood this year. Flood relief donations received to date fully funded eligible requests in the categories for individuals, heads of household, employees, business owners and residential property. The commercial property category only could be partially funded and fell short of meeting grant application requests by a total of $278,750.

Grace Selects La Force as CEO
Columbia-based W. R. Grace & Co. has announced that its board of directors has elected Hudson La Force as president and CEO, with Chairman and CEO Fred Festa moving to the role of non-executive chairman.

La Force joined Grace in 2008 as senior vice president and chief financial officer, and became president and chief operating officer in February 2016. He was elected to the Grace board in November 2017.

Stewart Named Leader of BWI Business Partnership
The BWI Business Partnership has named Gina Stewart as its new executive director. Stewart has been involved with the partnership for many years and once served as membership chair; she has most recently been employed as a senior business development representative by the State of Maryland Department of Commerce.

Keller Joins MMHA
The Maryland Multi-Housing Association (MMHA) has announced that Jessie Keller has joined its team as government and community affairs manager. Keller most recently served as district aide for outgoing Howard County Councilman Jon Weinstein.

Perry Joins Black Bears
Kristine Perry has joined the Maryland Black Bears of the North American Hockey League as the team’s director of game day operations at Piney Orchard Ice Arena. She was previously employed as marketing manager of the Southern Maryland Blue Crabs baseball club.

HCCEF New Board Members
The Howard Community College Educational Foundation (HCCEF) has added four members to its board of directors including, Alison Canning with Morgan Stanley in Baltimore; Vivian Moore Lawyer who earned a Juris Doctor degree from The Catholic University of America’s Columbus School of Law; Rosa Scharf with Howard Bank; and Sanjay Srivastava with Seto Holdings.

Commission Honors Mickler
The Anne Arundel County Commission on Disability Issues has chosen Adrienne Mickler, director of the Anne Arundel County Mental Health Agency, as the 2018 DisAbility Awareness Day Honoree. Under her leadership, the Crisis Response System has become a model for the state.

Howard Appoints Two Admins
Howard County has announced the appointments of Rose Burton as administrator of the Office of Community Partnerships and Jenna Crawley to the same position at Office on Aging and Independence.

Burton brings more than 20 years of expertise in nonprofit leadership, program development, resource development and finance to her new role; Crawley most recently led the Long-Term Care Administration’s Operations Division for the District of Columbia’s Department of Health Care Finance.

BGE CEO Honored by Governor
BGE CEO Calvin Butler, Jr., was awarded the 2018 Governor’s Champion of Service Award from the Governor’s Office of Service and Volunteerism. Butler was recognized for his commitment to volunteerism in Maryland.

PEOPLE IN BIZ

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ALL AROUND Town

Howard Chamber Honors Vets at Luncheon
The Howard County Chamber held its annual Salute to Veteran Luncheon on Nov. 15 at the Great Room a Savage Mill. Lt. Col. Allan Floyd, Deputy Garrison Commander for Transformation, center, the new Fort George G. Meade garrison commander, spoke about the impact of Ft. Meade on Howard County.

Neighbor Ride Volunteer Inducted into Hall of Fame
Clinton Edwards, along with friends and family members, celebrated his induction into the Maryland Senior Citizens Hall of Fame on Oct. 25. Edwards was recognized for his contributions to the community, including the 1,100 and counting rides he has provided for local seniors as a Neighbor Ride volunteer driver.

From the TEDCO Entrepreneur Expo
It was time to unwind toward the end of the eighth annual TEDCO Entrepreneur Expo & Stem Cell Symposium, which was held in late October at The Hotel at College Park. Pictured after a long and productive day are, from left, Brian Corbett, TEDCO; Phil Jung, Maryland Venture Fund (TEDCO); and Neil Davis, John Wasilisin, Stephen Auvil and George Davis, TEDCO.

CMC Hosts Tipton Airport Expansion Discussion
Central Maryland Chamber (CMC) hosted an update of Tipton Airport on Nov. 10. A panel of speakers presented the history of the airport and the upcoming proposed expansion including examples of how businesses are benefiting from Tipton.

MFIC Honors Kaseemeyer at Reel to Real Fundraiser
Sen. Ed Kaseemeyer, left, was honored by the Baltimore Film Office at the Maryland Film Industry Coalition’s (MFIC) Reel-to-Real Party, which was held in early November at the Baltimore Museum of Industry. He’s pictured with MFIC Vice Chair Debbie Donaldson Dorsey.

HCPSS Thanks Community Partners at Celebration
More than 400 attendees including community partners, Superintendent Michael J. Martirano, members of the Board of Education and school and system representatives attended the 32nd annual Howard County Public School System Educational Partnerships Celebration recognizing contributions of more than 1,000 businesses and other organizations that partner to benefit schools in the community.

BWI Partnership Gets a Lyft From Taylor
Steve Taylor, general manager of the mid-Atlantic for Lyft, was the featured speaker at the November meeting of the BWI Business Partnership. The event was held at the Hilton Baltimore BWI Airport.

Harper’s Choice Students Become Farm Hands for a Day
As part of the annual Farm-City Celebration, six students from Harper’s Choice Middle School participated in Howard County’s Student Day on the Farm. This year, the students visited Sharp’s at Waterford Farm, a family-operated farm in Howard County. The students learned how to do several jobs, including harvesting peanuts and potatoes.

From the TEDCO Entrepreneur Expo
BOH Beer, Bourbon and Bags Debut
More than 300 guests attended Blossoms of Hope (BOH) first annual Beer, Bourbon and Bags event on Nov. 8 at Two Merriweather. The new event incorporated the trend of beer and bourbon tasting with BOH’s popular Power of the Purse shopping experience as well as live music and appetizers from Cured/18th & 21.

Sen. Ben Cardin Visits SparkSoft and Howard Chamber
Mike Finkel, center, CEO of SparkSoft and the Howard County Chamber welcomed Sen. Ben Cardin, center, to discuss business in Howard County.

Dancing Room Only Debuts at Sonoma’s
A new pop-rock cover band led by Columbia’s Mike Robinson, left, Dancing Room Only, recently made its debut at Sonoma’s Bar & Grill. A music video of the group’s performance was shot that night by Greg Marsh, of The New Romance, front.

Schnorf Is 2018 Good Scout
Donning the Boy Scout apparel, Cole Schnorf (right), COO of Manekin, LLC was honored as the 2018 Good Scout at the Howard County Good Scout Breakfast in November at Turf Valley Resort. Schnorf’s family joined him on stage with Dick Story as emcee.

CMC Welcomes Foster at Forum
Chief Economist J.D. Foster of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce was the featured speaker for the second consecutive year at the Central Maryland Chamber’s (CMC) Economic Forecast Luncheon, held at the Event Center at Live! Hotel.

Army Navy Game and Tailgate Party Wins Award
Fort Meade recently won the Excellence in Army Recreation Award for its annual Army vs. Navy Flag Football Game and Tailgate. Shown is a Fort Meade representative awarding the Central Maryland Chamber’s (CMC) with an honorary plaque in recognition of the Military Affairs Committee’s critical role in supporting this initiative.

Veterans Elementary Salute to Veterans
Students from Veterans Elementary School and members of Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Yingling-Ridgely Post 7472, for whom the school is named, held its annual Salute to Veterans Day where students learned about the sacrifices veterans make and thanked them for their service.

The Jeff George Agency Partners With HCPSS
The Jeff George Agency, Insurance and Financial Services partnered with the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) Burleigh Manor Middle School (BMMS) and Centennial High School (CHS) to support innovative technology programs in the classroom. Shown, back row, from left, are: HCPSS Performance, Equity and Community Response Officer Ron Morris and Community Superintendent Pat Saunderson. Front row, from left, are: BMMS Principal Mikaela Lidgard; CHS Principal Cynthia Dillon; Howard County Board of Education member Sandra French; Jeff George; BMMS GT Resource Teacher Robyn Page; and BMMS Social Studies Teacher Geordie Paulus.

Bank Founder Donates $15,000 to Tersiguel’s
Jack Dwyer, CFG Community Bank (left), presents a $15,000 check to Angie Tersiguel, Michel Tersiguel, Fernand Tersiguel to help Tersiguel’s French Country Restaurant re-open in late August after it was destroyed by the May flooding in Ellicott City.
The annual birth of the poinsettia tree at The Mall in Columbia is actually in May. Vendors begin growing plants specially sized for the iconic blooming tower that has been a Columbia tradition since 1972.

Andrew Akard, senior operations manager at The Mall in Columbia, coordinates the towering tree. He said, many people don’t think to ask, “but it’s a consuming thing for our people and our industry.”

By late summer, as 840 red and cream-colored poinsettias of multiple heights and sizes are beginning to flourish, Akard coordinates with vendors on the timing of delivery, and begins testing and evaluating the custom-built, nine-level, 20-foot steel frame that holds the plants.

“The iteration we are now using is about ten years old,” Akard said. Stored on mall property, it is always constructed on a Sunday night into Monday morning.

Akard and his crew bolt together the frame, partially made of recycled hexagonal lamp posts from Baltimore. It’s centered on a long middle stem that splits into three pieces. Then: “four large I-beams are the base, while the stem holds arms with trays, which hold rings, which finally hold the plants,” said Akard. “It’s not like this is something that was in stock at Amazon.”

A custom-made drip irrigation system feeds each of the plants through thousands of little hoses that are also tested each year. “We had a clog in a hose last year,” said Akard, “and we had to hand water almost all the plants.”

The poinsettia tree will stay up for seven or eight weeks before it’s dismantled and, five months later, seeded again for the magic to reappear.

The Columbia mall tree has 840 red and cream-colored poinsettias of multiple heights and sizes on a nine-level, 20-foot steel frame that holds the plants.

Who plugs in the Symphony of Lights?

About four weeks before the Symphony of Lights opened this year, Brad Canfield, owner of Event Consulting and Management, and his crew were fastening the very first lights to metal frames at Merriweather Park in Symphony Woods.

Over those four weeks, it takes a crew of 15 people working eight-plus hours a day to install the entire display.

The crew begins with the biggest displays – including crowd favorites like Mother Goose and the Toy Factory – then follows with about 100 more animated and stationary holiday light creations, made up of approximately 300,000 bulbs.

The last lights to be installed are the pathfinding ones that guide your car, the same ones that have guided more than 2 million people through the Symphony of Lights over the last 22 years, raising more than $8 million to benefit Howard County General Hospital.

“Could they probably set it up blindfolded,” said Canfield. “We used to switch out displays with other light shows, but people would miss their favorites.”

Beginning last year, the Symphony of Lights transitioned from incandescent lighting to LED fixtures, and Canfield estimates that the entire display now uses 80 percent less power. “Also, we were replacing up to 30-40,000 lights a year,” he said. “Now, with the LEDs, hopefully it’ll be more like 100 a year.”

As for the off-season? The Symphony of Lights is stored in four semi-trailers on the property of Cistella Construction, and employees of Event Consulting and Management work at Merriweather Post in operations and concessions.

Ready, set…Santa!

In downtown Laurel, the seemingly effortless holiday decorations that grace everything from Main Street to the neighborhood centers actually require quite complex timing and coordination, explained Joanne Hall Barr, director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Laurel.

“Our facility and grounds crew handles exterior lighting, our recreation staff works on the interiors, and the Department of Public Works decorates the light poles,” she said, “and we all need to be ready to go at the same time on December 1.”

This year was even more challenging, given that the first Saturday in December – when the parade was held and Santa arrived at two different locations – was on Dec. 1.

“Santa always arrives for Breakfast With Santa at the Partnership Activity Hall then at the Armory for the parade,” said Barr.

With the goal of being even more inclusive over the years, the Laurel decorating team has added decorations for other holidays such as Hanukkah and Kwanza.

What’s the secret to setting up decorations all over town, at the same time, inside and outside? It’s being organized when you take everything down each year, said Barr. “If you don’t wrap up everything in an orderly fashion, it’s a complete mess!”