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FUNERAL HOME, P.A.
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By: Ryan Helfenbein

Here we are again at the start of a new year. With a new year comes new goals and resolutions. According to US News & World Report, 60% of us will in fact make resolutions for this new year. Exercise more, lose weight and even eat healthier are in the top five of the most common resolutions. All of these good intentions revolve around the topic of living a fuller, longer life. While these are incredible achievements to strive for, it is found that 80% of us fail by the second week of February. What do we do? Easy, we table it for the 2021 resolution list! Perhaps this year consider putting something on that list that can be completed and crossed off your list – planning your own funeral and cremation.

A research study was done by NFDA (National Funeral Directors Association) in 2017 that revealed nearly two-thirds of Americans acknowledge the importance of making their own funeral and cremation plans known and over fifty percent feel it is important to gather stories from older generations. To bring this a little closer to home, my family's funeral business finds that just over 25% of the families we assist have plans made in advance. This has grown tremendously over the past 20 years as more and more of the members of our community feel the importance of planning ahead of time with us.

When planning ahead, we need to be cautious of both how and with whom the plans are being made. First, understand that only a licensed mortician in the state of Maryland can provide you the pricing of services and merchandise that you would need included in a funeral/cremation plan. In addition, the industry also provides a certification, though a series of testing, that gives the licensed funeral director a Certified Planning Counselor title. You should ask the funeral home questions before you begin planning. How long have they been making advance plans? Who within their organization developed their advance plan program? And, most importantly, what will you receive as proof that all of the decisions are made and the details are in order? Your everyday funeral home may not be able to provide this style of planning. Be sure that the funeral home of choice has an experienced licensed preplanning counselor dedicated to seeing your plans are guaranteed to be carried out in the future.



Ask the Undertaker

Another question you should ask is where the funeral home will be placing your money. In the state of Maryland, a funeral home must place an individual's money with a third party. The choices are in a bank, with that funeral home's name attached to it, or in a prepaid insurance plan. Allowing a funeral home to put your money into a bank account ties you to that funeral home in the future. Even though another firm can access the money if you were to relocate, the original funeral home will still need to be involved. Way too messy. So, the better choice of the two is what is called Pre paid Funeral Insurance. This is exclusively offered through the funeral industry under the supervision of a certified, licensed funeral director who also holds a Maryland life insurance license. The company highly recommended to be used in our industry is called Global Atlantic which offers a program called Forethought. It is a company that provides 66 billion in asset protection to ensure that your funeral/cremation money will in fact be there upon your passing. In comparison, other providers in this arena have less than 10 billion in asset protection. Many funeral homes today are encouraging financial arrangements which benefit themselves, but with pre-paid funeral insurance, you control what firm is to carry out your plan and you are never tied to that firm. The questions you'll want to ask are: where is your money going to be held, how are you guaranteed that the money paid today will in fact be there to pay the future expenses and if you are to move, will that money go with you?

The biggest benefit in planning ahead is the fact that it is done. The financial obligation is eliminated from your family and the emotional planning process is limited to a simple phone call whenever and wherever death is to occur. Although 60% of us make new year resolutions and 80% of us fail to achieve them, we all have a 100% chance of a final day here on earth. By taking the time now to make your plans in advance, you will eliminate your family's concern for the future and more importantly give you the time to now concentrate on the resolutions to live longer and prolong the time before the plan will be used!!



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PHOTO BY
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Darlene and Howard Dixon at Oxford Park for the feature "We Go Together" on page 31

PHOTO BY Stephen Walker

Above: Naturally dried flowers and herbs make a posey bouquet.

PHOTO BY Caroline J. Philips



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editors' NOTE

Anyone who has stepped foot across the Bay Bridge or breathed in the invigorating air would agree that the Shore is a magical place.

It's not simply the enchanting draw of the natural surroundings — water, land and wildlife — but also the stories of captivating people who live here that create such a charming sense of place. Whether we are natives or have just arrived, Eastern Shoremen are drawn to its lifestyle, pace and particular ways. With this issue of *Shore Monthly*, we are excited to tell new stories of some of the inspirational and iconic people who we encounter every day in our jobs, our volunteer work and through our hobbies and recreation on the Mid-Shore.

In "We Go Together," the cover story of our first issue as editors, we showcase the relationships of several pairs who live amongst us — those who work, create and contribute to our community. We are also excited to share the efforts of three amazing men who have joined the Cambridge community to improve the quality of life through their community radio station WHCP. In Easton, we profile a visionary woman who empowers young women to succeed at Easton Middle School.

The issue also features some novel ideas for a Valentine's Day celebration, with unusual takes on flowers and non-traditional bubbly. We visit sacred



From left to right: Manning Lee, editor; Maire McArdle, design consultant; and Amy Steward, editor

spaces that help us grow spiritually and share what's new on the local music scene. To persevere through the winter doldrums, we have added new sections packed with fun facts about the Shore. As we look to spring and summer, we will be celebrating our pets, Earth Day, Maryland's equine industry and fun summer recreational opportunities.

Taking on the editorial leadership of this magazine means filling big shoes. Both Sarah Ensor and her predecessor Katie Willis created such an engaging folio that we hope to both continue and expand upon, bringing even more stories of the people of this region to life, as well as a fresh new design.

We hope you will join us in this storytelling by introducing us to people you know and love who make this region special. And, of course, by enjoying your *Shore Monthly*.

**Manning Lee and
Amelia Blades Steward**
Co-editors

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PHOTO BY STEPHEN WALKER

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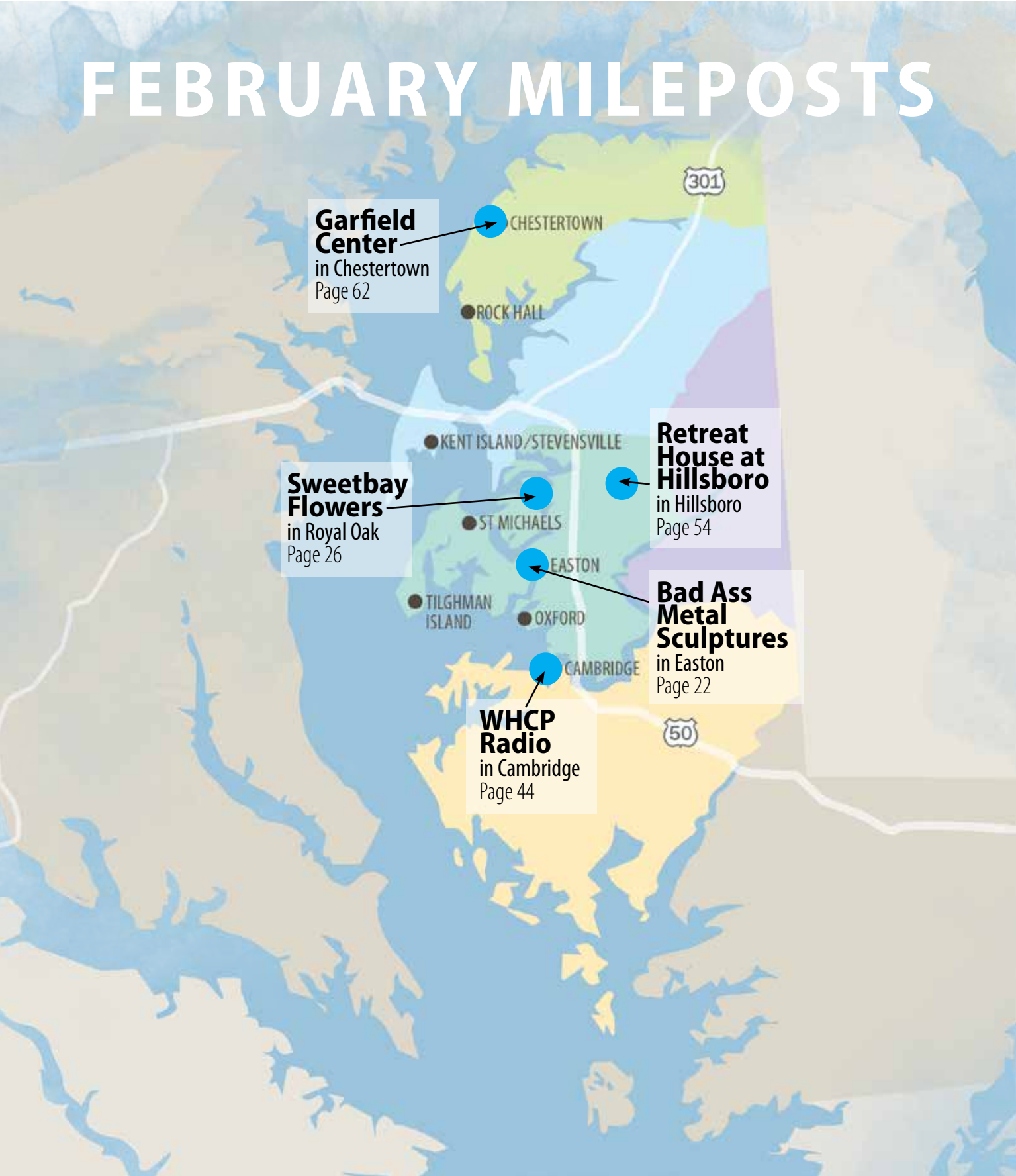
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MAP ILLUSTRATION BY LAURA GOODE

A poster for the Chesapeake Fire & Ice Festival. At the top is a stylized ice sculpture logo. Below it, the text 'CHESAPEAKE FIRE & ICE FESTIVAL' is prominently displayed. Underneath, it says 'PRESENTED BY PRESTON Automotive Group' and 'SAFEHOUSE LLC'. The dates 'February 14-16, 2020' and location 'Downtown Easton, MD' are listed. The website 'www.fireandicefest.com' is provided. A list of activities includes: ICE SCULPTURES & DEMOS, OUTDOOR ICE SKATING, FAMILY FUN CENTER, LIVE MUSIC, ICE BLOCK PARTY, ICE BREAKER, FIRE ARTISTS, and STEWS & BREWS. A circular badge on the left says 'DISCOVER EASTON SIGNATURE EVENT'. At the bottom are logos for The Country School, Ice Lab, What's Up? Media, Tidewater Inn, and Anne Arundel Medical Center.



Early morning fog creates a moody winterscape along Highway 16 near the Maryland/Delaware border.
PHOTO BY MAIRE McARDLE



PHOTO BY DUSTIN HOLT

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Dorchester County is known for its rich history and cultural attractions, and boasts a special connection to Harriet Tubman

HARRIET TUBMAN UNDERGROUND RAILROAD STATE PARK & VISITOR CENTER, offers a way to discover Harriet Tubman's early years in the region and her role in the Underground Railroad. Gain insight into Tubman's legacy as a leader, liberator, and humanitarian. Enjoy family-friendly programming every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday in February. Open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Free.

BUCKTOWN GENERAL STORE, where Harriet Tubman experienced a life-changing event

STANLEY INSTITUTE, historic one-room schoolhouse for African-American children

PINE STREET NEIGHBORHOOD, site of civil rights unrest in Cambridge. Download the Pine Street Walking Tour

HARRIET TUBMAN MUSEUM & EDUCATIONAL CENTER, founded 30+ years ago by dedicated volunteers to honor Tubman. A mural highlights the area's local African-American history, culture, and heritage, including Harriet Tubman and civil rights pioneer Gloria Richardson

For a complete list: VISITDORCHESTER.ORG/BLACK-HISTORY-HEART-CHESAPEAKE/

SHORE MONTHLY

WHAT'S COMING IN THE MARCH ISSUE

- WHAT WE LOVE ABOUT OUR PETS
- SOUTHERN COMFORT FOOD AT MINTY'S PLACE
- BAAM OPENS NEW DOORS IN THE COMMUNITY

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A LOOK BACK AT LIGHTHOUSES

1827

CONCORD POINT LIGHTHOUSE in Havre de Grace towers over the Susquehanna River where it meets the tidal flow of the Chesapeake Bay. Constructed of granite from nearby Port Deposit, it was originally lit with whale oil lamps. The lighthouse was automated in 1920 and is still an active navigational aid. Both the lighthouse and the keeper's house have been fully restored and are open to the public on weekends from April to October. A popular spot for weddings and special events.



SHARPS ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE sits on an island that is now under water. Named for early Quaker doctor Peter Sharp, the light sits 3 miles south-southeast of Tilghman Island and can be spotted from Black Walnut Point. The caisson-style structure is easy to identify—it tilts 15 degrees, having been knocked askew by an ice floe in the winter of 1976-1977.

TRIVIA QUESTION
Which lighthouse can be seen from the Bay Bridge?



1879

HOOPER STRAIT LIGHTHOUSE once helped mariners navigate the dangerous shoals at the mouth of Tangier Sound, but it now stands on the grounds of the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum in St. Michaels. A screwpile-style lighthouse, it's built on special iron pilings that feature large corkscrew shaped tips that could be screwed into the muddy bottom of the Bay.

1882

BLOODY POINT BAR LIGHTHOUSE can be found at the edge of the shipping channel, east-southeast of Kent Island. Stories abound regarding the origin of the name, but the truth behind the chilling moniker has been lost to time. A 1960 fire gutted the interior including the keeper's quarters. The light was automated soon after and still guides boats today.

1883

SANDY POINT SHOAL LIGHTHOUSE is located just half a mile from shore at Sandy Point State Park and is visible from the westbound span of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. The first lighthouse was on the point itself. The current three-story structure has been privately owned since 2006. The Coast Guard abandoned efforts to maintain the light in 2019.



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Mark Twain

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WELCOME TO EDDIE’S WORLD

Easton sculptor creates huge works with reclaimed metals

BY TRACEY F. JOHNS | PHOTOS BY STEPHEN WALKER



Above: Ford leans on his sculpture, “Six Point Stag.”
Opposite: “Crust,” a welded steel orb.

When metal speaks to Eddie Ford of Easton, he listens.

Ford’s strong connection to metal began early in life — welding found him out of necessity for clam rigs and truck bodies. Now, metal speaks to Ford in a different way, as he transforms recycled metal into the striking sculptures he’s been creating at his Dover Street studio in Easton.

In the early morning hours, you’ll find him alone, listening to opera as he fires and fuses reclaimed metal into spectacular realistic and abstract sculptures, ranging from roosters and swans to figures and garden art. A native Eastern Shoreman, Ford has been listening to opera throughout his life while working as a Chesapeake Bay waterman, conching and clamming on the ocean, raising pigs, and running a lawn business and tree company. Now, opera helps him focus on the creative process of sculpting metal.

His experiences with the natural environment provide inspiration for his sculptures. One such sculpture — a painted

steel blue marlin entitled “Hemingway” — is located on Dover Street outside of his studio, just close enough to smell Rise Up Coffee roasting nearby.

Ford is a maverick — always working independently. His individualism translates well in the details of each his sculptures. The name of his business, Bad Ass Metal Sculptures, expresses the edginess of style and form contained in each of his creations.

“Art is to be interpreted,” he said. “It is what it is for each individual person.”

As you move in closer to study the raw materials used to create the sculpture, each piece clearly has its own story. Metal spoons might be used as rooster feathers, and he’s made a bust made out of washers, and garden art out of saw blades. Ford’s first sculpture was a small heart made of painted bicycle chain. He hopes to create a 16-foot metal tree sculpture, which will be as wide as it is tall.





Right: “Happy Times,” oversized metal flowers that can be seen in Ford’s backyard. Below: “Orange Man,” a bright whimsical metal sculpture.

Many of Ford’s installations can be found at “Happy House,” just around the corner from his studio on Park Street. Ford recently renovated a home for Viola Stekel of Colorado. The house was named by Viola’s daughter, local breast surgeon Roberta Lilly.

Viola passed away before her planned move to the home. Her legacy lives on, however, as Ford carries out her steadfast motto: “Do something creative every day.”

You can clearly see this in the metal sculptures filling his studio and the large corner lot of “Happy House.” Ford says Roberta and Viola provided the encouragement needed to translate his skills into art. Before meeting them, Ford had focused his life on making a living, and saw art as something other people did.

Salvaging raw materials begins the creative process while Ford and Lilly envision and plan each piece. Lilly helps fulfill her creativity by naming each sculpture. She is particularly drawn to Ford’s figure work and “Touch Me” series, and a metal rooster entitled “Cock of Consequence.”

Studded with fierce, red-painted nails, Ford’s “Touch Me” series evokes a compulsion to touch in a juxtaposed way and are reminiscent in shape and form of seeded dandelions.

Other metal sculptors’ work speaks to Ford, including pieces at the National Gallery of Art Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C., Grounds for Sculpture in Princeton, New Jersey, and the New Orleans Museum of Art. A recent trip to Santa Fe with 97 miles of sculptures and other art provided him with inspiration.

A Happy Place on Easton’s Washington Street is currently displaying Ford’s sculptures, with more at badassmetalsculpture.com.

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THE MEANING OF FLOWERS

Local florist Nancy Beatty has just the right touch when creating a gift of love

BY AMELIA BLADES STEWARD | PHOTOS BY CAROLINE J. PHILLIPS

Elizabeth Barrett Browning said that love’s language could be expressed through flowers. While Valentine’s Day is often the perfect day for giving flowers as an expression of our love, there are alternatives to red roses in making your intentions known to a loved one.

Nancy Beatty of Sweetbay Flowers in Royal Oak always looks for different ways to pair flowers, herbs, native plants, and shrubs to create unusual arrangements with lasting charm for her customers. “The floral industry relies heavily on the sale of roses and other flowers for this special occasion and that is good for business,” Beatty said. “But sometimes it’s fun to come up with something a little different to promote for Valentine’s Day.”

She encourages customers and DIYers to think outside the box. “Red roses are beautiful. They represent love and that isn’t going to change, but other herbs and flowers signify endearing qualities — such as lavender

for devotion, violets for loyalty and rosemary for remembrance.” Beatty enjoys making tussie-mussies or talking poesies — small bundles of flowers and greenery tied with ribbon, twine or even wire for special occasions. She often uses them in wedding work for mothers of brides and grooms. They also make sweet Valentine gifts.

Small wreaths of rosemary or lavender with a floral accent, special containers for arrangements, dried bundles of flowers and lavender wands also make fine Valentine gifts. For the DIYer, she believes people make flower arranging harder than it needs to be. “I always ask people what they are growing in their own yards that can be used in their own arrangements,” she said.

Beatty explains that flowers can be paired with just about anything natural outside, including greens and herbs like rosemary, sage, and lavender, as well as boxwood, pine, and nandina; seed



Nancy Beatty of Sweetbay Flowers creates floral arrangements for all occasions, but she particularly enjoys working with dried flowers and herbs to create elegant yet tiny bundles.



Tussie-mussies, clockwise from top left: Red rose, lavender and hypericum; red spray rose in a rosemary ring; red spray rose posey; gloriosas, mums, pink spray roses, pink carnation, and wax flower.



THE MEANING OF VALENTINE’S DAY FLOWERS AND HERBS

According to “The Old Farmer’s Almanac,” plants, herbs, and flowers have had special meaning for centuries, but they had a resurgence in the late 1800s during the Victorian era. Color is an important part of a flower’s meaning and its use in conveying messages from the giver to the recipient.

- Red Roses – Love**

Red Carnation - Admiration

Rosemary – Remembrance

Lavender – Devotion

Fern – Bonds of love

Gardenia – Secret love
- Forget-me-not – True love memories**

Calla Lily – Beauty

Sage – Wisdom

Red Tulip – Passion

Yarrow – Everlasting love

pod from plants such as wisteria and poppies; pinecones; feathers; native plants; succulents; and even driftwood.

“Everyone loves flowers, and some customers are really looking for something different,” she quipped. “I like using things in my arrangements that you don’t see every day. It’s a little more complicated and takes a little more time, but it’s much more fun and worth it in the end.”

Although she has been gardening for over 30 years, Beatty didn’t start growing flowers and selling them until 2000. She grew a following of customers by selling at the Easton Farmers Market. She then became a Master Gardener and began volunteering as a docent at Adkins Arboretum. Eventually, Beatty took classes at Longwood Gardens, after which things began to fit together for her business plan. She comments, “I learned things at Longwood that you couldn’t learn in a book.”

Her flower shop grew out of her landscape design business, Sweetbay Design. She started doing a few weddings, and in 2013 became serious about full-time flowers, moving permanently away from landscape design.

Thus, Sweetbay Flowers was born. Her popularity grew through Wedding Wire and My Eastern Shore Wedding, and now weddings make up a large percentage of her business. Beatty named her business after the beautiful Sweetbay Magnolia tree, her favorite tree that grows throughout the Eastern Shore.

Something’s always growing or blooming year-round in her garden. Peonies in the spring, annuals fill up the summer months, glorious dahlias for the fall and an extensive array of greenery throughout the winter months — all of which accent her many floral designs.

Beatty also hosts workshops in her shop in Royal Oak, where she has operated her business for the past five years. Additionally, she has offered workshops at Adkins Arboretum in Ridgely for the past 15 years. For further information about Sweetbay Flowers, visit sweetbayflowers.com.

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BEYOND BEER...

SPARKLE AND FIZZ

Tastes, toasts and purveyors of the Shore

BY AMELIA BLADES STEWARD | PHOTO BY CAROLINE J. PHILLIPS

Are you watching your calories and interested in an alternative to champagne or light beer this Valentine's Day? A flavor explosion of hard seltzers is rocking the beverage industry and local tastebuds. Spiked seltzers, flavor-infused beers and canned cocktails now boast delectable flavor profiles of fruits such as black cherry, mango, mixed berry, blood orange, lime, pineapple and grapefruit.

"If you thought the California coolers, boxed wines and light beers of the early 1980s were big, these beverages are taking the nation by storm," says local spirits expert Bobby Kelly of Kelly Distributors in Easton.

Kelly Distributors has a portfolio of 25 local craft breweries from Maryland, Delaware, Virginia and Pennsylvania, and has supported innovations in the craft beer industry since its inception. Craft breweries have been experimenting with flavoring beer and special brew releases in recent years, which have enjoyed a warm reception among enthusiasts.

"Lately, the trend shifted into several small breweries like Devil's Backbone creating distilleries," Kelly adds.

"The large beverage companies like Anheuser-Busch and Mike's Hard Lemonade are also in the act in a big way. Hard seltzers have penetrated the market. What initially appealed to mainly females, now appeals to everyone."

Why is this new trend bubbling up? Health-conscious millennials enjoy trying new products that feature novelty, convenience and taste. Several of the hard seltzers come in at 100 calories or fewer — less than most beers. These new brews are lower in carbohydrates and offer a gluten-free alternative to traditional beers crafted with barley and wheat.

With the Eastern Shore's love of boating and swimming, the hard seltzers join ready-to-drink cocktails in providing convenience in a can perfect for lovely days on the water and more.

Mitchell Andrew, owner of Love Point Deli in Stevensville, said his customers

are drinking in the new concoctions.

"Not many items become a whole category and have this kind of popularity. It's also appealing to millennials, as they enjoy sampling these deliciously innovative products," he said.

According to *Beer Business Daily*, companies like Mike's Hard Lemonade — which produces the most popular low-calorie hard seltzer, White Claw — are ramping up production in anticipation of increased demand for the products in 2020. But having a moment doesn't always mean dominating the market. *CNBC* recently reported that hard seltzer sales represent less than 3 percent of the total market share for beers, alcoholic ciders and flavored malt beverages.

"Local craft beer is still big — five years ago it was IPAs. Now the lagers are popular. There is such a variety now," Kelly concurs.

"Retailers just rotate their shelves because people are always interested in trying something new. I don't think that will ever change." ☺

A White Claw seltzer with a handful of berries is an effervescent alternative to champagne and beer for Valentine's Day and beyond.

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WE

GO

TOGETHER

*Short conversations with
five local pairs who share why
they love to be together*

INTERVIEWS BY MANNING LEE | PHOTOS BY STEPHEN WALKER



Darlene and Howard Dixon share a private moment near the shoreline in Oxford on a clear winter afternoon.

DARLENE AND HOWARD DIXON

THROUGH THE YEARS

How did you meet and fall in love?

Darlene: We're high school sweethearts. We met while we were employees at McDonalds and flirted from across the grill. Our relationship progressed rather quickly. We just celebrated our 40th anniversary.

Howard, smiling ear to ear: I knew she was the one.

What keeps you together?

Howard: First, God kept us full of love and helped us keep our commitment. Every marriage goes through ups and downs. We have been determined to make it through bad times. She's my best friend.

Darlene: Not one thing, but a culmination of things holds us together. Working through the hard times, we witnessed the power of both love and commitment that other couples miss when they give up. Also, the grandchildren solidify our relationship, too. Since Howard and I are together still, we enjoy them together.

What drives you crazy about each other?

Darlene: Things that drove us crazy don't even bother us anymore. Don't sweat the small stuff. Too many substantial things come along that you have to deal with. We fought through so many things together that no one else understands what we mean to each other.

Howard: One hundred percent.

What storms have you weathered?

Darlene: We got married young . . . a challenge for us. We defied others' wishes to get married. Then we started careers after we married. He worked with McDonalds traveling all over. For me, finishing college then attending seminary for four years. When Howard's mother passed away from breast cancer, I'd already battled it. I helped him in that moment. He learned to help me, too. We learned to complement each other. Where I'm weak, he's strong. He sees things I don't, and I see things he doesn't — unifying us and making our bond that much stronger.

SHELLEY AND ANITA ABBOTT

STILL THE ONE

When did you realize you were in love and wanted to be married?

Shelley: Anita was a nurse working at a nursing home where I performed. She'd been married 29 years when she and her husband parted ways. We were friends, and liked all the same foods and same places. It was almost like we had the same genes. Together we found comfort we'd never known. We were friends for 26 years, and we got married four years ago.

Anita: When we were just friends, I planned my daughter's wedding. I tried cutting corners. I asked her to play for the wedding. Afterward, I handed her the money. She gave it back to me and said, "Nope, you're my friend." That's just how generous and kind she is to people.

Shelley: When I was a kid, I pictured who I wanted to be with forever. When I met Anita, I knew she was the one. She asks, "Am I still the one?" I tell her, "You'll always be the one... until the end." There'll never be anybody else for me.

What similarities and differences you have?

Shelley: She's a planner! She plans vacations a year ahead of time. She books the plane, hotel, and everything's done in January when the trip isn't until December.

Anita: Shelley is artistic and can decorate. She has an eye for decorating that I just don't have. She owned the store in St. Michaels called Dragonfly that recently closed. She's a wonderful musician and performs in nursing homes.

Shelley: That's why we get along. We both know our strengths and we make it work.

Anita: We're not Ward and June Cleaver.

Shelley: We've never been outward about our relationship. We're not activists. We don't try to make anyone else happy. We're happy together and that is all that matters.



Shelley (left) and Anita Abbott affectionately pose at Long Wharf Park in Cambridge.



Officer Joey Schinault admires his K9 partner Murph at Idlewild Park in Easton.

PFC. JOSEPH SCHINAULT AND “MURPH”

EASTON'S FINEST PARTNERS

What does it take to be involved with the K9 unit?

It was a long process, which included an application, a paper detailing what I brought to the K9 unit, and a fitness test. I attended the Montgomery County K9 School that taught how to handle the K9s, how to track, and search buildings, and other skills.

How did you meet Murph?

In March of last year, the trainer at the K9 school and I travelled to Connecticut, where a group imports dogs from Slovakia. Murph was the one we felt best-represented Easton Police Department as a patrol dog. He's a German Shepherd Belgium Malinois mix. They breed shepherds for their clear-headedness and the Belgium Malinois' for their really high drive. I named him “Murph” after a Navy Seal in Afghanistan portrayed in the movie Lone Survivor who was shot and killed, and his sacrifice saved his men. I wrote Lt. Murphy's family to tell them that I'd named Murph after their son. I hope it means something to them. It does to me.

What is special about Murph and your relationship?

Police dogs have a high drive, but even when Murph gets exhausted, he's ready to go 100 mph towards whatever goal we have to accomplish. He's so loyal. He always watches me like, “What are we gonna do now?” He's got incredible drive and motivation . . . he does anything I tell him to do. He loves to heel when he walks next to me. He and I are still in training. Since we are both new to this job, our partnership is still building. Our bond grows stronger every day. My intention when he retires is for him to stay with me. One day he's going to be the laziest, happiest dog in the world. For now, he loves to work because it's all he knows.

TWINS CORINNE TAYLOR AND CAROLE LANE

SPEAKING
THEIR OWN
LANGUAGE

What's it like being a twin? What are your first memories of being together?

Corinne: It was elementary school before I realized there was always a Carole who was always with me.

Carole: When we were very little, we had our own language. All twins do. Corinne didn't talk, and the doctor said if I didn't stop talking for her that she wouldn't learn to talk.

Carole: I have a connection to Corinne. When she's sick, I know she's sick. When she gave birth, I woke up in the middle of the night with labor pains. When she got a foot operation, I was at work and had to put my foot up because it hurt so bad that I couldn't walk.

What are your similarities and your differences?

Corinne: Carole is more outgoing than I am. She can go to a big party and if there are 70 people in the room, she meets them all.

Carole: At church the other day, someone we've both known since the seventh grade came up to me and gave me a hug and asked me when Carole was coming to town. She never confused us before.

Corinne: We both love knitting.

What is your best switcheroo story?

Carole: Corinne doesn't remember this, but we used to switch for taking tests sometimes.

Corinne: In middle school, we drove the principal crazy. I had him in business practice class, but Carole didn't. I remember once I was out sick for the day. He must have seen Carole walking around school in the afternoon. He called our mother and told her that I'd skipped his class that morning.

What do you want the world to know about what its like to be a twin?

Corinne: Carole is a grandmother, but I am not. Her grandchildren call her Grammy and they call me Aunt Grammy.

Corinne: Carole and I are close. We talk on the phone every day, sometimes two times a day. It's nice just knowing I'll always have someone who will stand by me no matter what.

Corinne Taylor and her twin sister Carole Lane share laughs while crocheting and knitting. Butler, the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, snuggles beside.





Sophie Molloy (left) and Phoebe Fisher meet at Rise Up Coffee in Easton to share stories about their first semesters of college.

BEST FRIENDS SOPHIE MOLLOY AND PHOEBE FISHER

A YIN-YANG KIND OF THING

How did the two of you meet?

Phoebe: This is funny, but when we were five, she left her pink softball mitt at practice. Mom and I kept it until the next practice. We became friends when I gave it back to her, and we just never stopped being friends.

When did you realize that you were best friends?

Sophie: There was no defining moment, but I think it was in elementary when we were old enough to understand the concept.

Phoebe: I realized I didn't like anyone as much as I liked Sophie. I was like, "we can be best friends."

How are you alike and how are you different?

Phoebe: It's weird because we are so opposite. She's a lot more outgoing and confident.

Sophie: I feel like we talk about how different we are all the time, but we are the same.

Phoebe: It's like a yin and yang kind of thing. We are literally the opposite, but at the same time we are the same person. It's super cliché, but we finish each other's sentences and say the same things all the time.

Do you think you'll be friends forever?

Phoebe: Sophie can't get rid of me now.

Sophie: You're like a fungus.

Phoebe: No matter how many antibiotics you take you can't get rid of me. Oh wait; you can't get rid of a fungus with antibiotics. I know this because I took a class on health and disease, so I am basically a doctor.

Sophie: Years ago, my mom told me if you're friends for seven years then you're likely to be friends forever. It's been 14 years now. I don't see how we could ever 'not' be friends.

Phoebe: You could go to prison and I would go to see you there.

Sophie: I am the one who would most likely go to prison. ☺



Jim Brady, Doug Schuetz and Mike Starling gather in their WHCP radio station studio to go over the day's programming.

RADIO HEADS

Local FM station WHCP has put Cambridge on the broadcasting map with lively programming led by a band of master-level volunteers

BY AMELIA BLADES STEWARD
PHOTOS BY STEPHEN WALKER

On the surface, WHCP in Cambridge seems like a mom and pop local radio station. There are three recording studios buzzing with local residents conducting interviews or hosting their own shows, while volunteers earnestly adjust equipment and casually eat their lunch at the mixing consoles scattered throughout the station.

But, behind this flurry of homespun activity is something seemingly unlikely — an impressive caliber of broadcast credentials hailing from places like *NPR*, *Good Morning America*, and *The Oprah Show*.

Mike Starling, who worked as an engineering manager for *NPR* for 25 years, helped found Cambridge Community Radio—the nonprofit organization that launched local community radio station WHCP 101.5 FM on July 4, 2015.

“In quick order, an incredibly talented and generous group of volunteers and board members emerged to build the station,” he said.

Starling and his wife picked Cambridge for retirement for all the reasons most do—its affordable waterfront housing, authentic charm, unique architecture, sense of history and approachable people. “We felt like it was a community where we could make a difference,” he added.

“We have more friends here than anywhere we ever lived. It’s a great place to be.”

The station hadn’t been running long when Starling met Doug Schuetz, a lead engineer at *ABC’s Good Morning America (GMA)*, at a WHCP fundraiser. At the time, Schuetz was living as a weekender in Cambridge.

The station, originally located on Poplar Street, had a great deal of work to be done, and Schuetz brought a sense of further organization to the equipment. After he retired in 2017 from *GMA*, the two worked together to move the station to its new, more spacious location at the Cambridge Community Media Center on Race Street. They managed to keep the station on the air during the move — something they had both done before in their jobs at *NPR* and *GMA*. Starling reflected, “We started to stabilize the tech side of things and moved toward making the sound better.”

In 2018, both Starling and Schuetz met Jim Brady who had been executive producer of *Oprah.com*. “I got involved in the radio station in July 2018 after showing up at the station’s Boot Camp that offered community members the chance to produce and edit a radio show,” said Brady.

“I learned how to make and edit recordings and



ship them out. On *The Oprah Show*, I never had my hand on equipment. Here, it’s hands-on the controls.”

The decentralized model means WHCP is truly a community-led undertaking and assures a hyperlocal character to the station that’s all its own. “With mom and pop radio, there is no one stopping you in the chain of command,” Starling said.

“It’s like old tagline for Outback Steakhouse: ‘No rules, just right.’ At Thanksgiving, we brought in different programming from many sources with no editorial selection committees to consult. We never could have done that in our previous jobs.”

While Starling and Schuetz got their starts in radio, Brady comes from a newspaper background. He worked for *The Washington Post*, as well as newspapers in North Carolina and in Texas before being recruited as an associate producer for *The Oprah Show* in Chicago.

“I like doing bigger stories and telling them locally,” he said. “We recently did a story with Eastern Shore Land Conservancy about sea-level rise here on the Shore. Each day we try and put out something that is high quality.”

Volunteers are at the heart of WHCP and the station is proud to have an intergenerational corps. Retired

and pseudo-retired people work right alongside interns and young people. The station’s internship program is offered to students attending Cambridge-South Dorchester High School, North Dorchester High School, and Chesapeake College. Students work approximately nine hours a week editing interviews and doing some of their own programs.

In the station’s Electronics Technical Assembly Program (ETAP), area students build Firefly Radios as a fundraiser for WHCP. The radios, which cost \$35 each, are hand-crafted and housed in a mason jar. Though they are set to tune into WHCP, the radios can be tuned to other frequencies as well. Students earn

.....
Jim Brady and Doug Schuetz discuss the next scheduled recording.



Starling, Schuetz, and Brady show off the Firefly Radios, built by area students as a fundraiser for WHCP. Right: A closeup shot of this unique radio in a jar.

stipends and learn valuable vocational skills through these programs. Starling knows the inherent value of the program.

“It’s like grandparents working with their grandchildren,” he said. “We enjoy the interactions with these high schoolers.”

Every volunteer who comes to the station becomes self-sufficient in a short time. “We have the time and ability to guide people through the recording process,” Scheutz explained. “Some of our program contributors have never even been to the studio. They record and edit their shows on a laptop at home with new software programs available today.”

Brady, who uses his on-air coaching techniques from *The Oprah Show*, likes to do interviews with “regular people” coming in for the first time.

“It takes you a while to realize the stories we do are really people stories,” said Starling. “We are doing our best

work when we get to the people side of the story in the studio. That is the most positive aspect of having a microphone.”

WHCP has been growing the station’s listening audience through an expanding cadre of on-air hosts, eclectic music programming, and special program offerings. The station’s Radio Reading Service delivers a special audio subcarrier for the blind and print-disabled in Dorchester County and offers the only radio reading service on the Shore.

As the station grows, it’s exciting for listeners to wonder what’s next.

“We talk that we are going to go digital one day,” commented Starling. “Our current equipment is quality analog equipment, but it is used and can be challenging. We also would like bigger studios where we could bring small musical groups into the interview studios.”

Some regular listeners get the programming through the Sound Cloud, online via whcp.org or through the station’s WHCP app on mobile phones, but about 90 percent of its listeners come in from straight over the airwaves of Dorchester and south Talbot counties.

Starling quipped about his wish list, “And of course, we would like a bigger signal to cover the entire Shore.”

Nothing is impossible with this active group of volunteers. Starling and Schuetz joke that they have their sleeping bags at the station, while Brady actually gets his work done the same day and goes home at night. When asked what their wives say about their retirements and how they are spending their time, Starling sums it up.

“I met my wife Linda at another radio station 40 years ago, so she understands the commitment,” he said. “She was incredulous about me doing this and asked, ‘What about our retirement?’ But she understands I need to do this for myself, and she supports the positive impact on the community.”

The station’s slogan is “WHCP 101.5 FM Cambridge—a great place to be!” The call letters were chosen to stand for Historic Cambridge Paradise, which Starling said sums up the sentiment of those lucky enough to live in Cambridge. ☺



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Dinesha and Steve
Panduwawala in their
home in Cordova

THE CHANCES She Took

*She never thought it would be easy, but she had to
take a chance — Dinesha Panduwawala's journey
from Sri Lanka to her home on the Shore*

BY MANNING LEE | PHOTO BY STEPHEN WALKER

Recently married, Dinesha Panduwawala immigrated to Easton in 1999 from Sri Lanka with her new husband, Steve. He was already established in Easton, and he had dreams to fulfill. Now, those have materialized for both of them as the successful local car dealership Ceylon Auto Traders, Inc. Their love story spans the globe and deftly straddles tradition and modernity.

Steve showed great ingenuity when Dinesha caught his eye at a family wedding in Sri Lanka the year prior. He was drawn to her beauty and brains, knowing he wanted such a wife. But he also knew she would be an invaluable partner in business. How could he convince her that he was the one?

Gender roles in Sri Lanka have historically been more strict than those in America, and women have not been encouraged to pursue careers. In Panduwawala's world of arranged marriages, womens' futures were not their own, and rested solely in

the eyes of their fathers and the potential earning power of their husbands.

Her mother, Mureen Baduraliya, grew up highly privileged, and was sheltered from the harsh realities of life. She attended Catholic schools and had servants who attended to her needs. As Baduraliya reached the traditional age of marriage, her father gave her no choice in her groom. In fact, Panduwawala's grandfather had only one criterion.

"If this groom has earning potential, then he can feed a family," she said.

Her father, Michael, came from a middle class family, and secured a good job as an electrical engineer. On paper, he looked fine. But reality proved sorely out of balance with expectation. "My grandfather's judgment was wrong," Panduwawala said. "He only saw it from one perspective. 'He makes good money, so he will be able to feed my daughter. It must be a good match.' He should've asked so many more questions about my father."



Several years into the marriage, Panduwawala's father secured work in Oman, and was supposed to send money home every month. But, again, expectations and reality were different.

"Sometimes he didn't send my mother enough money even to take care of us," she said. "She wasn't equipped to run a household and had no clue how to manage money. Every time he came home from abroad, they fought. He shamed her for how poorly she ran the household finances. He never taught her what to do, and he so easily could have. My father's resentment devalued my mother, but traditions dictated my mother stay with him and take his rage."

This strife throughout Panduwawala's Sri Lankan childhood caused a paradigm shift in her approach to her career and marriage. She was determined not to live a life where a father or a husband's power could devalue her or rob her of her independence.

"At age 14, I knew their fighting had to stop," she recalled. "I couldn't take mother's crying so I told him, 'You want numbers? I'll show you the numbers!'"

From then on, Panduwawala managed the family's finances. "A little job," she said humbly. "But suddenly a peace fell over our family." Her father's tune changed, and he urged the teenager to pursue

her own career — and provided the tools for her to get there.

"That was the one good thing he did for me," she said. "Neither of us wanted me to be like her. I loved her so much, but I wanted so much more. I wanted a degree. A job would give me independence and the value my mother never got."

Panduwawala attended college, majored in accounting, and worked for a firm in downtown Colombo, Sri Lanka. In keeping with Sri Lankan customs, she agreed to start seeing grooms so that she could marry, which started by placing an ad in local newspapers. But in August of 1998, as a bridesmaid at her cousin's wedding, Dinesha met her future husband, Steve.

Having immigrated to Easton in 1983, he was 31, and Steve faced an unspoken but understood marriage deadline. Lucky for him, Dinesha caught his eye. She saw through him.

"I know you're interested in me, but you're not looking for a wife," she scolded him. "You want a girlfriend. I'm looking for a husband. I'm advertised in the paper. I can't fool around. In fact, I'm seeing a groom this weekend."

After her childhood, Panduwawala determined if she were to marry, she would maintain her own job, independence, and finances. As a candidate for

.....

Above: Dinesha, (pictured on right in red saree), met her future husband Steve, (pictured at far left), for the first time at her cousin's wedding; Opposite page (left) Dinesha and her family on her wedding day: her father Michael Baduraliya, her mother, Mureen Baduraliya, and her brother Nirosh Baduraliya; Right: Dinesha's graduation photo and below, a favorite photo of the couple.

COURTESY PHOTOS



marriage seeing grooms, she set strict criteria for any potential suitors.

"I found them disappointing," she said. "One potential groom told me I'd need to give up my job and another groom's mother talked more than he did. I didn't like any of my choices."

Meanwhile, Steve inserted himself wherever he could into Dinesha's world, and finally asked her to consider him as a potential groom. He had developed a genuine interest in her — she wasn't like other young women.

"I felt like he wasn't looking just for someone to make babies, nor was he just looking to feed them," she explained. "I felt he was looking for someone to stand by him. He told me, 'I have a lot of dreams. I need someone to help me. I want you not for your beauty, but for your brains.'"

That's when she knew she would take a chance — on Steve, on America, and on advancing her career with him by her side.

Soon after their wedding in summer of 1999, the pair moved to Easton where he had worked at Fast Stop for years. Still not completely convinced of his motives, she'd secretly purchased a one-way ticket home should she need a way out. But by May of 2000, the couple finished construction on Ceylon Auto Traders, Inc. She worked the financials



for Ceylon while finishing an associate's degree in business administration from Chesapeake College in 2002 — a chance she took while pregnant. She finished her bachelor's at Salisbury University in 2008.

After graduating, she worked for an accounting firm in Annapolis. She later worked as the assistant to the comptroller at Sea Watch International for several years and then moved to the Maryland Department of Transportation as an accountant. During this time, she mothered the couple's children Natasha, who is 19, and Nathan, now 10, and managed the accounting for Ceylon Auto Traders.

The Panduwawalas recently celebrated their first business anniversary at the newly purchased multi-million-dollar convenience market where Steve first got his start in Easton. Fast Stop, more affectionately known as "The 6-12," is located on U.S. Route 50 across from the airport. Dinesha does the accounting for both businesses.

When they're not working, Dinesha supports Steve's love of hiking famous trails around the world, and he encourages Dinesha's love of ballroom dancing. From an unconventional beginning and many chances taken, the two are undoubtedly a perfect fit, and their success shines a bright light on the strength of the American Dream that's alive and well on the Shore. ☺

sacred space

*Unraveling the mystery of
spirituality at the
Retreat House
at Hillsboro*

French philosopher and Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin said, “We are spiritual beings having a human experience.”

The Retreat House at Hillsboro, tucked away in the trees and gardens at the end of a secluded drive, is helping people stay spiritually grounded in the midst of a fast-paced, tightly scheduled world. “The spirit-filled center creates a space for a time of slowing down, sharing about things that make up the days, and noticing the movement of God in those things,” said Francie Thayer, director of the Retreat House.

Most people coming to the Retreat House are tending to a longing they have felt for some time. Younger guests are drawn to the grounds and nature, spending a day or part of a day in the quiet and stillness of the property, which includes a traditional Chartres-style walking labyrinth and the historic St. Paul’s sanctuary and cemetery, which was built in the years before 1860.

The property’s open spaces beckon seekers to sit in quiet reflection, reading or meeting with others. It is the special spiritual programming, however, that has become the hallmark of the center.

St. Paul’s Episcopal Church and Parish Hall sat empty for nearly 20 years, but Bishop Bud Shand of the Episcopal Diocese of Easton committed \$20,000 to finish the Parish/Community Hall in 2014. Today, the building is known as the Retreat House. Shand soon invited Thayer, who had recently finished a degree in theology from the Virginia Theological Seminary, to be its first volunteer director and to establish programming at the Retreat House, opening its doors to the community at large.

“Early on, we formed an advisory board whose members met once a month,” she said. The board walked around the grounds, prayed and talked.

“They imagined doing church differently here.”

The Retreat House has grown to include two part-time employees, manager Meg Gallagher and Rodney Dean, who oversees community engagement. Several spiritual directors guide the growing offerings of workshops, trainings, and retreats. The diocese supports the insurance for the building,



BY AMELIA BLADES STEWARD

PHOTOS BY
CAROLINE J. PHILLIPS

Historic St. Paul's Sanctuary



but does not provide funds for operational or programming costs.

“People in their twenties and thirties don’t understand the difference between church and sacred space,” said spiritual director Heather Hall.

“We are bringing ‘community’ into a sacred space here at the Retreat House.”

The sacred space of the Retreat House is open to all denominations and non-denominations, secular and non-secular, as well as to businesses and nonprofits that hold leadership retreats on the property. Four 12-step groups, as well as yoga, meditation, and prayer groups regularly meet there.

“I have a church community, but I think of the Retreat House as my spiritual community,” said spiritual director Linda Mastro. “It is a place where I can

discuss spirituality and raise my questions with other members of the community. It is a hospitable place where everyone is welcome. It doesn’t have the institutional look and feel of a church, but has the sacredness of space, the hospitality, and unique programming.”

According to Gallagher, most visitors note a spiritual feeling at the Retreat House and feel as if they belong somehow.

“The Bishop thought this piece of land was a sacred space — there is something really lovely about it,” Thayer said.

Another way to “do church” for today’s generation is to go where the people are, by taking the spirit of the Retreat House on the road. This type of spiritual guidance is one of the Retreat House’s growing ministries. In particular, the center now offers Wisdom Circles seasonally in locations across the Shore and in Annapolis.

Wisdom Circles emulate what humans did long ago — gather in circles around a fire to tell stories, solve problems, seek common good and celebrate the joys of life. The circles echo the heart of the Retreat House, which is being in relationship both with God and others. Trained spiritual directors lead the circles weekly over four to six weeks. They designed these Wisdom Circles to appeal to anyone who seeks a deeper and more meaningful spiritual experience.

“We want the Retreat House to be a platform for spiritual directors to launch their circles. We can help them promote their offerings to the community,” Thayer said.

Among the Wisdom Circles offered this winter are “Cultivating Peace in Small Community,” led by Heather Strang in Annapolis and “Sounds of Silence,” led by Julia Morris-Meyers in Centreville. Participants bring their questions to these circles and the trained spiritual directors provide the space and direction for the discussion.

“Everything I do is a spiritual direction. I make a frame and then they come and meet God,” spiritual director Debra Donnelly-Barton said.



According to Mastro, the Wisdom Circles are places to make courageous inquiries in a welcoming environment with no judgment.

The Retreat House has also created workshops and trainings that can be customized specifically for the community or other churches. Last summer, the Retreat House engaged with the program “Sacred Ground,” a curriculum offered by the national Episcopal Church to help white people have challenging and meaningful conversations with other white people about racism — seen as a first step to the dialogues necessary for traveling toward racial reconciliation. Last fall, The Retreat House hosted a day of retreat for people in their twenties and thirties seeking contemplative prayer including silence and time in nature, as well as a women’s weekend spiritual retreat at the Foehliage Retreat Center in Galena.

Through innovative programming, the Retreat House is finding new ways to foster people’s relationships both with God and with others, both onsite and in communities around the Shore. ☪

As a ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Easton, the Retreat House supports the work of all faith communities and denominations. Donations are tax-deductible. The Retreat House is located at 22005 Church Street in Hillsboro, MD. For further information, visit retreathousehillsboro.org or call 410-364-7069.

Opposite page (top): The entrance to The Retreat House; (below): a Chartres-style walking labyrinth on the grounds. This page: Manager Meg Gallagher (left) and Director Francie Thayer work closely at The Retreat House.



Lelani Brooks, Imani Turner, Tasha Groce, and Sa'Mauria Ennals display inspirational words during their meeting.

GIRL EMPOWER

Local businesswoman helps girls find their own potential

BY MANNING LEE | PHOTOS BY STEPHEN WALKER

Mentors are invaluable, and many wish they had a special person who championed them in their youth. Didn't our adolescent years seem tough enough keeping up with homework and managing teenage social lives? What foresight did we have to navigate our futures — even under the best circumstances? Imagine young middle school girls, teeming with potential, who encounter economic or behavioral adversities. How are they supposed to break through and reach new heights? How can we reach

into their world and cast off the chains of imperfect circumstance? Who can we send to help them? As Keasha Haythe pondered these types of questions, she saw a gaping hole in the community. From this exercise came her Foundation of HOPE — Foundation of Helping Others Prosper and Excel. Like many successful mid-career professionals, Haythe had overcome much. Her early in life adversities included navigating teen pregnancy and becoming a



Keasha Haythe, with two of her cohorts, Lelani Brooks and Sa'Mauria Ennals, gearing up for the 2020 program kick off.



.....
Middle school participants, left to right: Sa'Mauria Ennals, Imani Turner, Lelani Brooks and Tasha Groce. The girls meet at the school library once a week from January to May.

young mother. Her lived experience now an advantage, she knew she was uniquely qualified to serve as a special mentor.

Who wouldn't see her success story and want to share in her hope?

"It started out with my work in economic development, when I listened to different businesspeople detailing the lack of soft skills with our young adults," Haythe said. "All I could think was, 'What if we could train people at an earlier age? Wouldn't they make better employees?'"

For the next several months, she kept a notebook beside her bed taking notes on everything young girls needed and how to get it done. Before she knew it, she'd created a full-fledged program. Next was obtaining 501(c)3 status, a board of directors, and community-wide fundraisers. By 2017, the Foundation of HOPE started offering classes.

Each year, in coordination with Easton Middle School's faculty, the foundation identifies several girls in the sixth grade who demonstrate behaviors classified as "yellow," as in the yellow caution light on a stoplight. This could mean mild attitude issues and challenges in managing emotions. The foundation's hope is to provide mentorship and guidance to each girl, empowering them to increase their self-esteem and executive functioning behaviors. Through this loving guidance, many in the "yellow" become girls in "green."

The comprehensive program runs weekly after school, and students, called cohorts, attend for 16 weeks. Classes are offered in areas such as bullying, public speaking, self-esteem, social media etiquette, and entrepreneurship. One of the curriculum's most important components is financial literacy. It includes

learning to manage their own money and form checking accounts, as well as an introduction to stock markets and savings avenues such as CDs.

The workforce development curriculum includes how to complete job applications, and teaches interview protocol and proficiency. A popular portion of this for the girls is conducting their own mock job interviews.



At the end of the term, the students present their entrepreneurship projects and business plans at a certificate ceremony. Once they've "graduated," all that's left is their annual field trip to a local theme park for a day of celebration.

"I want to see every one of our cohorts graduate from high school," said Haythe. "If our work prevents one teenage pregnancy, my job is done. If our work encourages even just one cohort to pursue college, then our work has been worth it. The biggest goal of all is that when every single one of our cohorts enter the workforce that they will have the skills to be excellent employees."

While the foundation thrives, Haythe has been able to focus on new initiatives, such as a new scholarship fund for former cohorts. Foundation of HOPE is also contemplating the creation of a curriculum workbook, so they can expand their program to surrounding counties and beyond. No one who knows Haythe is surprised by her mission-driven success.

"Hopefully everything our cohorts learn sticks with them and they'll remember they can plan their lives out and be prosperous," she said.

"If we can keep just one girl from going down the wrong path, then I'll know we've done our due diligence." ●




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STORIES TO TELL

The High & Wides release second album

BY KRISTINA GADDY | PHOTOS BY MARC SHAPIRO

Making The High & Wides' first album wasn't easy. For starters, *Lifted* came with surprises. Guitarist and singer Marc Dykeman said he thinks of the first album as "throwing a lot of stuff at the wall" to see what sticks. Bassist Mike Buccino admits the band experienced a lot of trial and error. Even worse, the computer with the only copy of their finished mixes was stolen, making it necessary to re-record everything.

Released in December, their second album, *Seven True Stories*, wasn't nearly as dramatic in its making. But the 11 tracks adeptly showcase their technical skill, storytelling ability, and the genre reimagining they're known for.

The High & Wides are a bluegrass band with fiddle, banjo, guitar, bass, and harmony vocals and are showcasing their unique blend of experience and increased synergy on their sophomore album. All of the songs are originals, except the Sally Ann section of *Place No Stone on Me* — a new song that feels like an old ballad until it breaks into the familiar instrumental tune.

Being known for only covers didn't suit their creative style. The band draws on moods and sounds they identify with from a bygone era.

"Our approach has been going to different sets of sources, stuff that appeals to us

viscerally," said Dykeman. "We like to go back to a time when bluegrass was a little more loud and obnoxious."

But loud and obnoxious they aren't — their new set of tunes infuses the genre with new imaginings such as ballads, new wave, and hot club jazz. Almost undetectable at first, as the tracks play on, the funkiness builds. The opening track, *Reverie*, feels fairly straightforward. But by the time they sing about a scaffold being constructed on the side of I-68 west of Cumberland in Noah's Ark, the repetitive fiddle line and chucking guitar evoke feelings of Sufi mysticism and Whirling Dervishes. The slightly dissonant melodies match the rising tide, sweeping the listener away.

As the title of the album suggests, The High & Wides tells stories with its lyrics. In creating this album, the band took the time to discover those stories for themselves. Dykeman and Buccino said that the songs are all centered in place and influenced by their Maryland roots.

Like their first album, they took a do-it-yourself approach and recorded it themselves, this time in an empty house friends were selling on the Eastern Shore. This allowed them months with equipment already set up and uninterrupted time to figure out arrangements as they went.

"It came together right together in front of live mics," said Buccino.

"We took a lot of songs we'd had in the works and made them work for the band," added Dykeman.

In addition to figurative creative space, Buccino says it was a special experience to create the album in an old boarding house with lots of stories of its own. During breaks, the band would relax on the porch and soak in the natural beauty around them. "It really helped put us in a good mental space to be creative and even informed some of our choices for the album," he added.

The High & Wides performs at festivals and shows on the Eastern Shore as well as in the Baltimore and Washington metropolitan areas. With the launch of its new album, the band plans to grow a wider following by doing festivals and shows up and down the East Coast, while still managing to play locally for their fans. ●



Above: The High & Wides perform at their second album release; Opposite page (top): The band poses with the audience at the Garfield Center in Chestertown; (bottom): Marquee of the event.



BACKYARD BIRDING

BY MARY HELEN GILLEN | PHOTO BY NICO SARBANES

While many birds migrate south for the winter in search of warmth and food, there are plenty of species that stick around. Bare tree branches provide easy-to-spot perches for birds like chickadees, eagles and woodpeckers. Waterfowl gather along the creeks and wetlands to look for food. Backyard bird feeders provide an enjoyable way to get a close look at our winter residents and provide food for them during the coldest months.

If you have never ventured out in search of the resident birds of the Eastern Shore, consider joining in the Great Backyard Bird Count at Pickering Creek Audubon Center on Saturday, February 15. Birders of all experience levels walk the sanctuary’s forests, fields and wetlands and contribute their findings to a nationwide effort sponsored by National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Check out their website to learn how you can get involved. pickering.audubon.org/programs/upcoming-events

If you can’t make the Great Backyard Bird Count, the Center is open daily from dawn to dusk. There are four miles of trails through mature woodlands, 90 acres of shallow water wetlands with two viewing platforms and beautiful views of unspoiled Pickering Creek. ●

From top left (clockwise):
Winter wren, Dark-eyed Juncos, Towhee, Woodland duck.

How to help local birds through the winter:
For advice, education, bird food and feeders, check out the Wild Birds Unlimited Nature Shop located at 8223 Elliott Road in Easton. easton.wbu.com



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PHOTO BY KRISTEN GREENAWAY

“This photo was taken on the evening of December 8, 2019, looking from behind our property in Rio Vista, St. Michaels, on Spencer Creek, off the Miles River. We’ve lived in St. Michaels for 5 1/2 years and the beauty of this part of the world never ceases to astound me.”

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