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EDITOR'S NOTE

We are entering this fall with a renewed outlook and this issue of *Shore* reflects the energy we are feeling and the activity we are seeing across our communities on the Mid-Shore. Nothing is more fitting this year than to introduce our Education issue, highlighting the many innovative programs and services that have evolved since and because of the pandemic. It's a silver linings edition that we hope will make you feel encouraged as we approach the new school year.

Our features highlight the exciting work going on in our communities around education. Caroline County Public Schools is using innovative new coding robots with kid-friendly names like Bee-Bots, Spheros, and Dashes as a learning portal for early elementary school learners and getting amazing results. Talbot County Public Schools Education Foundation raised over \$100,000 to address connectivity this year and is helping fund innovative teacher projects to provide enrichment and wrap-around services for county public school students. In the private school sector, Sts. Peter and Paul Parish has opened the doors to a new parish Family Life Center and high school on its 100-acre campus of sacred space of learning and faith formation in Easton.

And finally, we get a glimpse into the high-tech world of college placement with College Placement Consulting, a college planning firm using online tools to help guide students in their college search and test preparation.

We are also profiling some incredible Eastern Shore residents — Capt. Vera Meredith of Grasonville, a fifth-generation member of an African American waterman family who is carrying on her family's tradition. Also,



Maire McArdle and Amelia Blades Steward found a perfect backdrop: a field of sunflowers off Glebe Road in Easton

PHOTO BY STEPHEN WALKER

Easton High School Spanish teacher and *It's Academic* adviser Jeremy Hillyard is influencing the lives of many students through his teaching, mentoring, and extracurricular activities. A new author, Stacey Anderson of Oxford, takes us on the journey of writing her new book, *Cyrus the Virus*, which is helping young people cope with the recent coronavirus pandemic. Legendary guitarist Mike Elzey reminisces about his musical journey and 40 years of teaching on the Mid-Shore.

In our departments, we visit Luck & Love Homestead, whose downtown Denton storefront is selling roasted coffees, freshly made breads, soups, and individual quiches, and unique pantry offerings from local small-scale producers. Charlie and Shirley's "New Old" Barbershop in Stevensville makes people feel good with its \$10 haircuts and unique assortment of memorabilia and affable banter. We also celebrate with Critchlow Adkins Children's Centers as they celebrate 50 years of providing quality, affordable, educational childcare in Talbot County; introduce readers to all of the fun and educational outdoor activities happening at Adkins Arboretum in Ridgely this fall; and share photographer Jay Fleming's second book *Island Life*.

The Shore is full of interesting people and places!

Happy fall!

Amelia Blades Steward,
Editor-in-Chief
Maire McArdle,
Art Director

PICTURE THIS



TAKING WING

"I snapped an osprey carrying its catch one early morning from a pontoon on our farm near Cordova, Maryland."

PHOTO BY JEANNETTE C. HUTCHISON

Camera:Canon EOS R5 | Lens 100 - 500mm | Exposure:1.2500 Second at 5mm F 7.1



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Pictured: Beach Foam, 16"x20", oil (top)
Bargello Greens, 36"x36", oil (bottom) by B. Howell

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September 16-October 17
Paul E. Santori:
An Eastern Shore Retrospective
Award-winning Chestertown artist Paul E. Santori moved to the Eastern Shore of Maryland in 2017 establishing himself as a plein air painter and working in a variety of other approaches including surrealism and abstraction. This exhibition showcases major works from the last 4 years.



October 21-November 14
2nd Annual Fall Into Chesapeake Country
Tish's annual plein air event expands its to include Maryland's Cecil, Kent and Queen Anne's counties in a display of plein air painting by local, state and national artists. If you are interested in registering as a participating artist in the show, please go to tishfineart.com/calltoartists for sign-up info.



Tish Fine Art Plus is an art gallery which features paintings, sculpture, furniture, glassware, basketry and jewelry plus gift cards and a line of handcrafted beauty products. With a focus on local artists and craftsmen, Tish provides an opportunity to purchase unique items from up and coming creatives for both the seasoned and beginning collector.

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11409 Urieville Ln. Worton, MD
Custom built brick three bedroom, three bath Cape Cod with a multi use, 3 stall barn on 5+ acres. Master bedroom with oversized closet area and soaking tub, finished bonus room over garage and full basement with entry from outside. Kitchen with granite counters, tile backsplash and space for table or an island. Bamboo floors and pocket doors between living and family rooms. Plenty of room and options!
\$498,000 MDKE2000270

21082 Wyoming Ave. Chestertown, MD
Waterfront.. sunsets are gorgeous... and the house has hardwood flooring pretty much throughout. Two sided wrap screened porch, open porch facing the water, full basement, unfinished. Roof is six years old. All on one level living. There is an additional lot with sewer allocation on the property which makes the possibility of a family compound very feasible. Three bedrooms, 1 bath and beautiful mature landscaping. Just a gorgeous setting. Professional photographs to come.
\$675,000 MDKE118210

NEW LISTING

21060 Spring Cove Rd. Rock Hall, MD
Spring Cove Manor! This 7.99+/-acre waterfront property is operated as a country inn with daily/weekly rentals. The main house, built in 1890+/-, offers 5 bedrooms each with baths and separate heating and cooling, a dining area, breakfast area, kitchen and a peaceful front porch. Has a cottage with 3 bedrooms, 2 baths with an amazing view. Finally, there is a one bedroom, 1 bath flat with kitchen, bedroom and living room and a deck with water views located over the garage. **\$950,000 MDKE2000346**

315 Roosevelt Dr. Chestertown, MD
Cute rancher with wood floors throughout most of this home. Replacement windows and a family room addition make this an amazing value. Propane gas forced air heat and window a/c units to help heat and cool. Located near the end of a dead end street. Great backyard that backs to woods. Has a security system. Great community setting!
\$149,900 MDKE2000238

NEW LISTING

107 Rolling Rd. Chestertown, MD
This home has been renovated top to bottom in recent years. Gleaming wood floors on most of the main level. The kitchen/dining area combination has a slider to the rear deck. The lower level offers two very spacious rooms, bedroom and full bath. Lower level slider to the patio and nice semi-private backyard. Freshly painted and ready for you just to move right in! **\$337,500 MDKE2000200**

607 Forest Glen Rd. Silver Spring, MD
Charming brick colonial in sought after Close-In neighborhood of South Four Corners! Hardwood floors throughout and 4 season sunroom. Newer kitchen with SS appliances, maple cabinets and ceramic tile floors. Partially finished basement with outside entrance and one car attached garage. Extensive landscaping, fenced in yard and fresh paint. **\$590,000 MDMC2007906**

AGENTS

Retha Arrabal 410-708-2172	Bud Felty 410-708-5879	Helen McAdory 443-820-5621	Frances Miller 410-708-7804	Vince Raimond 410-708-9673
William Brockschmidt 240-505-4278	Rick King 410-708-1006	Michele Palmer 410-920-9435	Vinny Assante Di Cupillo 443-480-8668	Beth Ostrander 610-256-3704
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Children in pre-kindergarten to fifth grade enjoy creative time at Critchlow Adkins.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CRITCHLOW ADKINS CHILDREN'S CENTERS

A 50TH ANNIVERSARY

COMPILED BY CRISTY MORRELL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CRITCHLOW ADKINS CHILDREN'S CENTERS

CRITCHLOW ADKINS CHILDREN'S CENTERS is marking its 50th-anniversary milestone. Founders Happy Critchlow and Janice Adkins understood that providing reliable and affordable child care would allow parents to work and families to thrive in Talbot County. Today five sites serve more than 400 children annually, providing preschool, summer camp programs and before- and after-school care for kids in pre-kindergarten to fifth grade. The centers provide about \$100,000 in tuition assistance to families annually. The organization says dedicated teachers and accredited age-appropriate programs are at the heart of its success.

Here are some ideas that staff members say can help parents enhance their child's educational success as well as help them in spending quality time together:

READ: The most important thing parents can do with their children is to encourage reading. The beauty of this low-tech activity is that the benefits reach far beyond helping children prepare for school. With Maryland's public library system offering extended hours, the availability of Imagination Library, and Little Free Libraries popping up in neighborhoods, this is a perfect time for families to begin a reading routine.

WRITE AND DRAW: Have your child write and draw in their own journals about what they did this summer. Kids also can write letters to important people in their lives. Talking about different types of writing, such as the techniques used to make lists, write signs, and provide directions, helps children understand how we use writing in our daily lives.

PLAY: Encourage children to go outside and play. Backyards, parks, playgrounds and nature trails are perfect places for children to explore, use their imaginations and learn. Children can play board and card games, jump rope and play hopscotch. Turn chores like doing laundry into learning activities by asking your child to identify colors or count and sort the number of socks. When shopping, children can read the grocery list and count the money to be paid at checkout.

FOR MORE INFORMATION about Critchlow Adkins' programs, tuition assistance program and its 50th Celebration event, visit www.cacckids.org or call 410-822-8061.



An autumn trail at Adkins Arboretum

PHOTO COURTESY OF ADKINS ARBORETUM

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adkinsarboretum.org
Visitor's Center: Open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sundays, noon to 4 p.m. Grounds: Open daily from dawn to dusk. No admission fees in 2021

WALK IN THE WOODS

COMPILED BY AMELIA BLADES STEWARD

Adkins Arboretum in Ridgely, Maryland is a 400-acre native garden and preserve that promotes the appreciation and conservation of native plants to more than 26,000 visitors annually. By walking the Arboretum grounds, visitors can experience native plants in a natural setting, in ecological restoration projects, and in cultivated gardens. Children, families, nature lovers, gardeners, hikers, bikers, professional land planners, natural resource managers, and horticulturists experience its beauty through guided walks, lectures, demonstrations, children's programs, plant sales, art exhibitions, and seasonal community events.

ADKINS ARBORETUM FALL EVENTS

NATIVE PLANT SALE

Twice a year, the arboretum offers plants for sale that are native to the coastal plain and/or piedmont of Maryland and surrounding areas. Visit adkinsarboretum.org for information about ordering plants.

SMITHSONIAN MUSEUM DAY LIVE!

Saturday, Sept. 18

Celebrating culture, learning and knowledge, Museum Day reflects the free-admission policy of the Smithsonian Institution's museums in Washington, D.C.

A LITTLE TOUCH OF SHAKESPEARE

Saturday, Sept. 18, 2–4 p.m.

Sunday, Sept. 19, 2–4 p.m.

Fee: \$15 for adults; \$5 for children ages 3–18; free for children ages 2 and under.

Join Shore Shakespeare in the Pavilion to explore the Battle of the Sexes and the Bard's incomparable wit, wisdom and poetry. Bring a blanket or a chair and a picnic to enjoy an entertaining afternoon.

FOREST MUSIC

Saturday, Sept. 25, 2–4 p.m.

Free

Forest Music is presented in partnership with Chestertown's National Music Festival. Area musicians perform throughout the forest.

FAIRY FEST

Saturday, Oct. 9, 11 a.m.–3 p.m.

Fee: \$10 for adults and children 3 and older; free for children ages 2 and under

Follow a trail of fairy houses along enchanted forest paths, hunt for gnomes,

watch falconry demonstrations, ride a unicorn, or join in a meadow maypole dance. There will be live entertainment and food and drink for purchase. Advance registration is required — only 500 tickets will be sold.

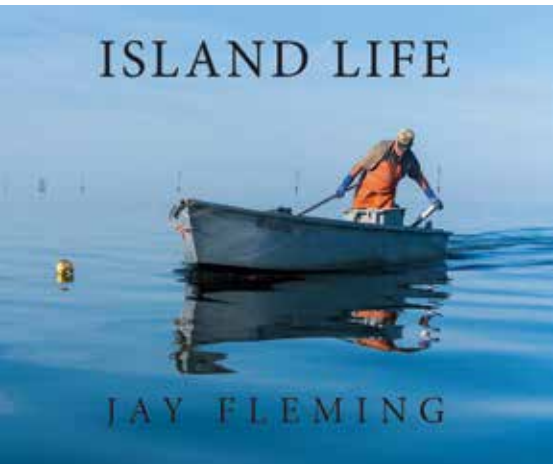
BEER GARDEN

Saturday, Oct. 23, 2–4 p.m.

Food trucks will be open at 1 p.m.

Fee: \$20 adults/\$5 children ages 3–18; free for children ages 2 and under

Get down with The Dirty Grass Players while sampling local craft beer from Bull and Goat Brewery and Ten Eyck Brewing Co., fare from local food trucks, and sweet treats from Nice Farms Creamery. Only 500 tickets will be sold. Seating is available but is limited — bringing chairs and/or a blanket is highly advised.



BOOK COVER COURTESY OF JAY FLEMING

THE BAY IN PHOTOS

Photographer Jay Fleming's second book, *Island Life*, is scheduled to be released in October. The 280-page book documents the complex and ever-changing environment, communities, and commercial fisheries of Smith and Tangier islands — the Chesapeake's last two inhabited offshore island communities. *Island Life* reveals the beauty and perils of a life dependent upon the harvests of the Bay and the rhythms of the tide. Signed copies available for pre-order are at JayFlemingPhotography.com/shop.



(Charlie and Shirley's "New Old" Barbershop)

NO APPOINTMENT NECESSARY

Welcome to a Stevensville barbershop that will never go out of style

Left: Charlie and Shirley's "New Old" Barbershop offers nostalgic ambiance and prices. Inset: A customer at the barbershop takes advantage of the shop's \$10 haircuts. Top right: Since 1992, owners Shirley Crook and Charlie Bronson have remained committed to their customers and the community.

BY REEN WATERMAN | PHOTOS BY CAROLINE J. PHILLIPS

My wife Linda and I love dining at Cracker Barrel Old Country Store restaurants for a comforting meal surrounded by a nostalgic ambiance. Customers experience the same charm and character at Charlie and Shirley's "New Old" Barbershop in Stevensville. The barbershop has operated in the same location since opening in October 1992, except for a three-year stint at another location.

The walls of the barbershop, which is owned by Charlie Bronson and Shirley Crook, are adorned with a variety



Above: Barber Jen Lasher, Crook's daughter-in-law, cuts Patrick Kirk's hair in the shop.
Below: The barbershop's memorabilia and old-fashioned décor adds to its neighborhood feel.



of memorabilia symbolizing their commitment to the community. It includes photographs of sponsored local youth sporting teams, certificates of appreciation, and even one of Charlie's most prized possessions — the framed front page of a newspaper the day Pearl Harbor was attacked. Affable banter harkens back to the small-town days of the 1950s. Charlie and Shirley's shop is a community hub, where people come from all over for a \$10 haircut and pay by cash or check only. The barbershop offers the same welcoming camaraderie as the 1980s sitcom *Cheers* did, "Where everyone knows your name."

"This is not our barbershop — it is the community's. They know and appreciate this. New customers find instant community," says Crook, who notes that customers who move way often keep in touch and send Christmas cards. "Customers are so invested in our shop that they donated all the mementos and bought the fish tank and chairs themselves."

Shirley and Charlie are a one-in-a-million-couple, but in 1994, two years after they got married and opened the business, they amicably divorced. "We realized we were better as friends than intimates," Bronson says. "I went to the courthouse and for \$300 we handled the divorce ourselves — and business continued as usual."


"We are business partners and best friends who would rather work with each other than anyone else. We trust each other," Crook adds.

The unusual name for their business grew out of the temporary relocation of the barbershop, Crook recalls. "From 2007 to early 2011,

we moved our business across the street to John Duty's building," she says. "Realizing we had lost a lot of customers because our location was hard to find, we moved back. And when we did, I told Charlie we needed a 'hook,' so the \$10 haircut was born. And one of our customers suggested the new name and it stuck."

When asked what she loves about her work, Crook points to how she was "deeply impacted" after reading *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran. "What most hit me was that work is 'love made visible.' If you love your work, it comes through," she says. "We really care how people feel about their hair. It is a real pleasure to make people feel good."

Crook's daughter-in-law, Jen Lasher, has joined the business. She's working on completing 2,200 hours of training in two years so she can be certified as a barber by The Maryland Board of Barbers. "Everyone loves coming to her," Crook remarks.

Bronson says the barbershop is different than corporate chains "where you are just a number" and "the employees have no vested interest." At the shop, "we have invested in the community. We are quick to sponsor a softball team or an Eagle Scout and support the Rotary," he says. "We show in many ways that we love being here and serving the community." 



CHARLIE AND SHIRLEY'S "NEW OLD" BARBERSHOP

237 Main St, Stevensville, Md. Hours: Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Closed: Sundays and Mondays Phone: 410-200-1583

Haircuts cost \$10. Wednesday is "Kid's Day" and haircuts for children are \$9 that day.

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(Luck & Love Homestead)

COMBINED PASSIONS

A couple’s curious culinary cooperative in Denton

BY TRACEY F. JOHNS
PHOTOS BY MAIRE MCARDLE AND STEPHEN WALKER

Leslie Grove and Taylor Hale are sharing their culinary passions through the Denton store that honors what brought the couple together — luck and love.

Luck and love also drive the couple’s culinary curiosities, which are apparent in every cup of roasted Night Kitchen Coffee, package of spice blend, and house-made dish created in the comfortable spaces of Luck & Love Homestead.

The delicious aromas of bread baking and roasting coffee greet those visiting the store on South Third Street, just off Market Street. An antique wooden door leads inside to bright pink floors and original tin ceilings in the 1917-era building. Large windows fill the space with morning light and there are cozy tables for dining in.

Customers can purchase roasted coffees, house-made grab-and-go meals and pantry offerings from small-scale producers. Those choosing to dine in will find a menu offering items including freshly made breads, soups and individual quiches. Locally raised meats and dairy, brewed Kombucha and



Top Left: Luck & Love Homestead on South Third Street in Denton.

Bottom Left: Taylor Hale sits amidst bags of Night Kitchen Coffee, a special small-batch, single-origin, direct-sourced coffee that he roasts.

This Page: Owner Leslie Grove enjoys a cup of coffee and a scone in the shop’s cozy seating.





Top: Leslie Grove and Taylor Hale, owners of Luck & Love Homestead, showcase their wares — roasted coffees, baked goods and pantry offerings from small-scale producers.



Left: Hale prepares an item from the menu that includes freshly made breads, soups and individual quiches.



Right: An antique wooden door reflects the shop's logo onto the bright pink floors of the 1917-era building.

artisan wares are also available for purchase.

Hale says the food products are provided by local farmers, producers and artisans that are within a 30-mile radius of the store. Luck & Love Homestead also serves as the retail outlet for its sister company, Night Kitchen Coffee, which offers small-batch, single-origin, direct-sourced coffee and house-made spice blends.

“Traceability to the farmer in what we eat and drink is more and more important,” Hale says. “Local food is important because you get the taste of the land through what you eat and

what you drink. Ultimately it’s about tasting what’s local.”

“Most of our friends work in the food chain,” Grove adds. “Farmers, growers, restaurants — it all starts with connecting our customers to the soil. We pass along many of our farmers’ stories to our customers to help them know more about where their food is sourced, for example, and who they are supporting with their purchases.”

Grove and Hale have lived in Preston for more than 15 years, after meeting and living on the western shore. Grove is from York County, Pennsylvania, and is the creator of many of the recipes used at Luck & Love. “Leslie reads cookbooks like novels,” Hale says.

A rocket scientist, Hale has worked for more than 30 years at NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt. He’s also a serious

foodie and his creation of the store’s spice blends is influenced by many of the places where he has lived, including Canada, Arizona, California, and Maryland’s Chestertown. “Taylor is the master at researching and creating our spice blends,” Grove says. “He researches an ethnic blend of spices, and then plays with it.”

Hale’s passion for engineering combined with his love of drinking coffee led to an interest in roasting coffee beans and so he established Night Kitchen Coffee in Cambridge in 2014. The couple moved Night Kitchen Coffee to the building on South Third Street in 2016 and then expanded to open Luck & Love Homestead during the summer of 2019.

Luck & Love Homestead also offers online ordering and ships dry goods to destinations throughout the U.S. Charcuterie trays, espresso

bread, and a mushroom and ginger confit are some of the local favorites available for pick-up in Denton, with the menu also featuring specials like the miso ginger chorizo stir-fry offered recently.

On Oct. 10, Luck & Love Homestead will hold a chili pepper festival at its Denton location from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Check the store’s website, luckandlovehomestead.com, for more information. 📍

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(Vera Meredith)

THE ADMIRAL'S DAUGHTER

A fifth-generation member of a waterman's family

TEXT BY NIAMBI DAVIS | PHOTO BY CAROLINE J. PHILLIPS

There's no mistaking the *Island Queen II* when the boat pulls out of the dock at Grasonville's Wells Cove. At 57 feet long, it's the largest head boat on the Kent Narrows waters. Onboard are siblings Capt. Tyrone Meredith and Vera Meredith. Vera Meredith is the area's only African American female first mate, and the daughter of the late Capt. Eldridge Meredith, commissioned in 2017 as the 101st Admiral of the Chesapeake Bay by Gov. Larry Hogan.

Eldridge Meredith purchased the boat in Deltaville, Virginia, five years before his death in 2017, naming it the *Island Queen II* so that his charter boat fishing customers would associate the vessel with his previously owned charter boat of the same name.

As a fifth-generation member of a waterman's family, Vera Meredith, along with her siblings, grew up in the close-knit community of Grasonville. After serving in the Navy, her father began to charter fishing parties. Vera's mother, Margaret Meredith, worked in a

local restaurant for 17 years before opening her own establishment. The Meredith children worked in their mother's business when they were young. "I would help in the kitchen, but I always wanted to be on the water," Vera recalls.

The Merediths have always lived by the ideals of family, community and service. "Everyone loved my mom and dad because they always gave back to the community," Vera says. "If there was someone without enough money to pay for food, my mother would see to it that they ate."

After moving away for a time, Vera returned to Queen Anne's County to work with the Department of Social Services and as an educator with the Board of Education. At the same time, she was often working on the boat with her father. "I had to come back to the water," she says. "I'd rather be there than anyplace else."

Vera had been working on the boat for more than 20 years before becoming licensed by the Coast Guard as a 100 Ton Master. "All of us learned a lot from Dad — how to work on the bilge pumps, the

engines, you name it," she says. "I'm short, so I was always the one who had to get down in the hull to clean before inspection." During that time, Eldridge Meredith urged his daughter to become licensed. "It was a challenge," she recalls. "It took two years of study at 3B's Captains School in Georgetown, Delaware."


Vera says she enjoys taking out young people on fishing charters. Recently, the *Island Queen II* hosted the Anne Arundel County Police Youth Group. One of her most memorable trips included two African American World War II veterans — a member of the famed Tuskegee Airmen and a veteran of

the U.S. Army's 761st Tank Battalion, an African American unit known as the "Black Panthers." "I learned so much that day," she says.

She recalls the earthquake of 2011 as her most frightening experience while on the boat. A huge wave came out of nowhere, accompanied by the sensation of something beating the underside of the boat. Her father knew it was an earthquake. "Pop, how did you know?" she asked. "Vera," he replied, "When you get to be as old as I am, you know everything."

From December to April, or when she's not on the boat during the fishing season, Vera operates

a catering and baking business. According to Vera, when she and, her brother, with whom she shares responsibilities for running the boat, are ready to turn over the steering wheel, her son Tyrell Jamerson will take over, preserving the family's treasured legacy. Bryson Jones, her brother's 7-year-old grandson, already loves the water and is being groomed to someday continue the family tradition.

Vera says she is not ready to give up the wheel just yet. Watching passengers of the *Island Queen II* disembark after a fishing trip, happy and with coolers full of fish, is the best reason to stay, she says. 

Vera Meredith is the area's only African American female first mate, and the daughter of the late Capt. Eldridge Meredith, commissioned in 2017 as the 101st Admiral of the Chesapeake Bay by Gov. Larry Hogan.

Inset: The *Island Queen II*, at 57 feet long, is the largest head boat on the Kent Narrows waters.



PHOTO COURTESY OF VERA MEREDITH

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE *ISLAND QUEEN II*: www.facebook.com/IslandQueenII

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT VERA'S CATERING AND BAKERY: www.facebook.com/VerasCateringandBakery

minding the GAP

Talbot County Public Schools Education Foundation engages the community in supporting excellence in public education.

BY AMELIA BLADES STEWARD



Teacher Samantha Johnson at White Marsh Elementary School gives her students virtual lessons during the COVID pandemic.

PHOTO COURTESY OF TALBOT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

When the pandemic forced Talbot County to close its public schools in March 2020 and start providing lessons virtually, administrators knew they needed to find a way to make sure all families could connect to the Internet. That's when the Talbot County Public Schools Education Foundation stepped in to help. Within months, the foundation had created its "Digital Divide Campaign" and begun raising funds from local businesses and individuals, joining the efforts of Easton Utilities to solve the problem. "Through the

Digital Divide Campaign with the education foundation and our amazing community partnerships, TCPS was able to level the playing field of connectivity so that everyone could access teaching and learning," TCPS Superintendent Dr. Kelly Griffith says. "I'm so grateful for this initiative and the powerful impact it had on keeping us all connected. That was a game-changer for our children and staff." In 2016, a group of Talbot County residents founded the foundation to engage the community in supporting excellence in public education and to



TCPS Education Foundation funds enrichment and innovative ideas to benefit the staff, the students and the community. Left to right: David Short, chair; Laura Heikes, past chair and founding member; Pamela Clay, secretary; and Mariana Leshner, treasurer (not pictured: Jo Ann Asparagus Murray, vice-chair).



TCPS Education Foundation members and staff of Easton Utilities, TCPS District Partners of the Year, worked together on the "Digital Divide Campaign." Left to right: Berenice Orellana, Kelly Griffith, Jeremy Hillyard, Mary Wheeler, Michael Garman, Barry Sabo, Claire Tyndall, David Short, Anderson Watson, Dr. Michael Fisher, and Laura Heikes.

PHOTO BY STEPHEN WALKER

provide resources to enhance the teaching and learning experience for all. Among its founding members were Richard Marks, Patrick Fitzgerald, Rebecca Firth, and Laura Heikes. The foundation was modeled after the Baltimore County Public Schools Education Foundation, which used a grant program to fund teacher needs that weren't supported by the annual school budget.

"Before the foundation, there were little means for doing things outside the box or addressing any unexpected needs that arise," Griffith says. "When we started

our strategic planning process, we realized we needed more than the sports boosters, band boosters, and [parent-teacher organizations] to help support some of the innovative ideas of our teachers. The purpose of the [foundation] was to fund more enrichment and innovative ideas to benefit the staff, the students and the community. To date, this has included funding field trips [and] innovative classroom projects, and increasing diversity in our literature."

The foundation was created within the Mid-Shore Community

Foundation, a public charity that connects private resources with public needs to enhance the quality of life throughout the Mid-Shore region. "We all know that teachers reach into their own pockets for projects they think are important to student learning," says Heikes, the foundation's outgoing board chair and a retired banker. "We needed the teachers to tell us their needs and our task was to build awareness of what we could do."

Teachers applying for grants from the foundation are required to explain how their proposed projects support the district's

curriculum and efforts to provide equity for all students. The district's curriculum team reviews the applications before they are submitted to the foundation.

Two annual events have raised a significant amount of funding for the grant requests, according to the foundation. In 2017, the organization hosted its first "Are You Smarter than a Fifth Grader?" event—a student- and family-oriented competition between six teams of TCPS fifth-grade students vying for the right to hang the champion banner at their school's front entrance. The second event,

"Mission Possible," is held annually in November and recognizes distinguished alumni from Easton High School, Moton High School and St. Michaels Middle High School. It includes a reverse auction to support approved grant requests.

"One of the purposes of the foundation is to find the passions in the community and the challenges in the school system and pair the two," Griffith says. "It's a great way to also find a challenge and to be able to funnel resources to it most efficiently and effectively. It also taps into a community that might have a passion for what we are doing."

Nothing brought the district's needs and the community's passions together more than when the public responded to help the district provide Internet connectivity for virtual learning.

"Initially when schools closed in March 2020, we were mailing 800 to 900 packets a week to



Top: Michelle Smith, teacher at White Marsh Elementary, and, above, Stephanie Stebbins, at St. Michaels Elementary, make virtual learning fun.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF TALBOT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

"One of our purposes of the foundation is to find the passions in the community and the challenges in the school system and pair the two."

— Dr. Kelly Griffith, Superintendent, Talbot County Public Schools Schools

students. I said, 'We need to get these kids connected virtually somehow someday by the end of June.' It was a lofty goal," Griffith says.

The district already had provided laptops to students in grades six through 12 and purchased iPads for students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade. "What we weren't thinking about was connectivity," Griffith says. "Two issues were surrounding TCPS

connectivity — one was that people couldn't afford it and the other, which was less obvious, was related to voids in the infrastructure of our community."


Heikes says that during the foundation's first virtual board meeting in May 2020, Griffith shared that many TCPS families and teachers did not have adequate Internet access for learning and teaching. "She asked that we consider a campaign to

raise \$60,000 to help 300 TCPS families connect," Heikes says. "We were inspired to help, but we were unsure how we would raise these funds, especially when we couldn't hold in-person events."

While Easton Utilities, which was already a partner with TCPS, was trying to help solve the infrastructure issue, Griffith also was concerned about families living in outlying areas who didn't have reliable connectivity. To




Left to right: TCPS Superintendent Kelly Griffith, and Steve Wilson with Easton Utilities staffers Ted Book, John Horner, and Hugh Grunden, along with Education Foundation Board members Rebecca Firth, Dr. Michael Fisher, and David Short.




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address some of the immediate needs, The Talbot Family Network facilitated a grant enabling TCPS to purchase some Internet "hot spot" devices to distribute to students and staff. Verizon also became a partner in the project.

Meanwhile, Easton Utilities developed a special subsidized service plan for families of students who qualify for free and reduced meals — approximately 50 percent of TCPS students. The foundation agreed to pay for the other half of the costs as long as funds are available.

In mid-June 2020, the foundation's board members began contacting friends and community members by phone, mail, email and social media to sound the alarm, and its "Digital Divide Campaign" was underway. By June 30, the foundation had raised \$3,000.

"We ended the fiscal year uncertain but hopeful, and more

dedicated and passionate than ever about supporting public education. We knew that with our generous community's help we would meet or exceed our goal, and in fact, by the end of the 2020 calendar year [we] had raised more than \$100,000 to help meet this critical need for TCPS students and staff — much of it through \$200 individual donations to support connectivity for a family for one year," Heikes says.

Local businesses contributed to the campaign. Paul and Joanne Prager, owners of BluePoint Hospitality, closed the gap to the initial \$60,000 goal with a significant leadership gift. Since the district also was able to use funds from the federal CARES Act to support the project, the remaining funds raised by the foundation will continue to be used to pay for connectivity for TCPS families in need.

With the district getting ready to unveil its *Strive for 25 Strategic*

Plan, Griffith sees the foundation continuing to play a role. Future issues that the foundation could support include early learning and readiness; wraparound services for mental health, tutoring or enrichment; and recruitment and retention of TCPS staff, she says.

"What has been the best moment for me was when we hit the \$500,000 mark with the foundation's overall fundraising this year," Heikes says. "My husband Ed and I believe in the importance of quality public education. It is supporting where we live. It's the backbone of our community." 📞

To donate to the TCPS Education Foundation, visit www.tcpsedfoundation.org or contact Debbie Gardner, TCPS coordinator of public relations and special programs for TCPS, at 410-822-0330, ext. 102.

(Jeremy Hillyard)

teacher, mentor
INSPIRACIÓN!

This Spanish educator gives lessons in language and life

BY NIAMBI DAVIS

Easton High School Spanish teacher Jeremy Hillyard is a self-described reader, lifelong learner and keen observer of the workings of the brain. When he was introduced to the Spanish language in middle school in Avis, Pennsylvania, he discovered an affinity for the language. “It made sense to my brain,” he recalls. Inspired by a great teacher and a trip to Mexico, where he could speak Spanish in an authentic setting, he decided to continue learning the language.

Even so, when he arrived at Susquehanna University, Hillyard had no plans to major in Spanish. After testing out of the requirements of a language placement test, he took one Spanish class, changed his mind, and decided to major in Spanish with a minor in psychology. “It sounds like a weird combination, but they’re both connected to the brain,” he explains. He stayed at Susquehanna University to pursue a Bachelor of Education in Secondary Education and Teaching.



Easton High School Spanish teacher Jeremy Hillyard enjoys watching his students learn.

His journey to Talbot County began during a Sunday conversation with a student he tutored while at Susquehanna University. That student was Jake Griffith, son of Talbot County Public Schools Superintendent Kelly Griffith. At the time Griffith was principal of Easton High School and was looking for a replacement for the school's retiring Spanish teacher. "You should email my mom," Jake urged Hillyard.

Eleven years later, Hillyard says, "I'm where I'm supposed to be." Being a teacher means more than providing instruction, he says. It also involves creating a connection with students by getting to know them and being authentic. "The kids will know if you're faking it," he says. "My students will tell you that I'm goofy, nutty, dorky and a little loopy."

In 2016, he was named Easton High School Teacher of the Year. Through the Talbot County Public Schools Education Foundation's Honor a Teacher Award, he also received the Desmond Fitzroy and Family Award which acknowledged his "tireless energy to bring out the best" in students.

Students say they can count on Hillyard to be there for them. "So much could be said about Mr. Hillyard — one of the best people I know," says Jedreck Cardoza Monroy, a student whom Hillyard mentored. "He's been there in the highs and lows, someone I hope to maintain in my life for a long time. An amazing and inspiring person to be around."

Hillyard's daily mantra is "to be the best version of yourself that you can be." He says he strives to



Top: Hillyard is the school's adviser for the *It's Academic* team. Middle: Hillyard brought The Pulsera Project to Easton, encouraging his students to support Central American artists by selling their colorful fair trade bracelets and purses. Bottom: Easton High School graduate Jedreck Cardoza Monroy left, looks up to his mentor, Jeremy Hillyard.



live by those words both inside and outside of the classroom. In addition to being the school's adviser for the *It's Academic* team, he is also a member of Talbot Mentors where he counsels Hispanic male students whom he strongly believes are an underserved population. During the pandemic, he has also volunteered for meal distribution at Easton Elementary School, where many Hispanic families were served. Volunteering "helped me as a human being to be a productive member of the community at a time when everything stopped," Hillyard says.

At the same time, he was concerned about how children were learning while schools were closed, many having to use public spaces for connectivity. "Having a student sit in the library parking lot to do schoolwork was beyond anything I could comprehend," he says.

Along with other members of the TCPS Education Foundation, Hillyard devoted his time to efforts that enabled qualified families to obtain Internet connectivity in the county during the pandemic. The

"Mr. Hillyard is **one of the best people I know**.
He's been there in the highs and lows, someone
I hope to maintain in my life for a long time. "

— Easton High School student Jedreck Cardoza Monroy

foundation and Easton Utilities were named "Partners of the Year" for their successful collaboration to help local families bridge the digital divide.

When he's not teaching, Hillyard enjoys cooking, photography,

trivia and improvisational comedy performances. "It's so much fun," he exclaims. "And in the classroom, improv teaches you how to be a better listener and communicator."

Hillyard says his positive

relationships with his students keep him coming back to the classroom each year. He says he feels blessed to be able to watch his students grow and to play a part in their success. "In the end," he says, "it's all to make the world a better place." 📍

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sacred SPACE

It's back to a brand new school for the students at Sts. Peter and Paul High School

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY TRACEY F. JOHNS

A

A new symbol of hope in the connection of mind, body, and spirit illuminates each day as the sun rises and sets over Sts. Peter & Paul's new high school in Easton. The high school, which officially opened to students in August, is part of a long-term vision and a result of a \$21.6 million Sacred Vision Campaign that has transformed the site of Sts. Peter & Paul Church into a 100-acre campus dedicated to learning and faith formation.

The church remains the centerpiece of this new campus. Its expanded ministries include the new parish Family Life Center that's adjacent to the church, and the high school and its athletic fields running parallel to Ocean Gateway. Future plans call for moving the church's elementary school from its original Easton location to the new campus, fulfilling a multigenerational vision to provide a centralized location for the church, its schools, and a place for families and the community to gather.

New lighting installed throughout the campus adds a presence to a space that for a long time was used as agricultural fields. The sounds of farm tractors have been replaced with student laughter, meaningful conversations, play rehearsals, and sports teams practicing while a new clock tower and the church's bells signal shifts of time throughout the day. On a recent weekday, parishioners greet each other as they head into church for daily mass, while the new Family Life

Center bustles with activity as preparations are underway for a weekend wedding reception.

High school Principal James Nemeth says the new facilities support the three main goals of the school's mission, which are providing young people with the skills and knowledge to be successful as they prepare for college; preparing diverse opportunities for student involvement; and giving students more opportunities to help them grow in their faith. Sts. Peter & Paul



Father James Nash reflects on the new high school and Family Life Center on Sts. Peter and Paul Church's 100-acre campus that is dedicated to learning and faith formation.



Opposite: Principal James Nemeth in a hallway of the new Sts. Peter and Paul High School that will feature hi-tech classrooms, a theater, athletic fields, & a sports stadium. Left: Vicki Cappa sits in the new Wilson Auditorium. Right: Peggy Wilson, board chairman, is excited to open the new doors for the students this fall.

High School is the only Catholic high school on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

"Moving from our current small facility to this extraordinary campus allows the school the space to grow, in enrollment and program," Nemeth says. The high school began in 1958 in the original elementary school building built in 1955 and transitioned to its high school space in 1990. The new school offers hi-tech classrooms, a theater, athletic fields, and a sports stadium.

He says the fundraising campaign for the high school and life center was one of the largest capital campaigns in Talbot County to promote education, community,

and faith-based activities. A newly formed Board of Specified Jurisdiction and its development committee led the multiyear fundraising — working with the church's pastor, Father James Nash.

"We would not be where we are now if not for the brilliance and dedication of the people on our school board," Nash says. "We are extremely grateful and blessed to have so many people that value Catholic education and what we do to prepare our students to be outstanding students, gifted athletes, and caring people in our community."

"It's quite an extraordinary moment

for the community — more broad than the parish," says Development and Fundraising Committee Co-Chair Wayne Hockmeyer, who worked along with his co-chair Jim Farrell, Board Chair Peggy Wilson and other committee members to help secure the funding for the project. "When you look at the demographics of our school, [pre-kindergarten through grade12], where they come from and their faith denominations, it really is about building a faith-based school that serves the entire community."

Hockmeyer says the project has been long overdue, noting that the former high school had been housed in a temporary building for more than 30 years. "The new high school symbolizes an important moment. When you think about the Sacred Vision Campaign, it's an amazing effort on the part of our donors."

Wilson credits Willow Construction, Lane Engineering, and Provident State Bank as key players in the building project,

*"It really is about **building a faith-based school** that serves the entire community."*

—Board Chair Peggy Wilson

with the hiring of local contractors an important part of the parish and school's commitment to the community.

"I'm especially proud for our firm to have been selected as the contractor for this project," says Michael Hiner, president of Willow Construction and an alumnus of Sts. Peter & Paul High School. "There's a sacred element involved when the underlying purpose for the facility

is to serve God in some capacity or another. The project is not just a gift to the Catholic community, but to the entire community as well."

Sts. Peter & Paul Campus Minister Vicki Cappa says that, as an alumna, faculty member and parishioner, she is excited to have students attending high school on the same campus where the church and Family Life Center are located.

"The students of Sts. Peter & Paul

High School are already so involved in the life of our parish and our community, but I believe being in such close proximity will allow our young people the opportunity to do even more," Cappa says. "Liturgy and prayer are so integral in our life as Catholics and being able to walk to the church will strengthen us to continue the mission of Christ. I am so grateful for all those who have worked so hard to bring this vision to

life and feel blessed to be sharing in this important moment in the life of Sts. Peter & Paul Church and School.”

Performing Arts Director Mark Ripka, who also teaches Latin, is looking forward to using the new auditorium for productions and having space to build sets. He says the Performing Arts Club had been limited to using classroom space in the past.

“Having a theater makes things so much easier,” he says. “Our new space encourages a sense of pride and allows students to rehearse on stage. And for our audiences, the theater is a great way to bring together the community and diverse citizens of Talbot County.” Ripka says the school’s Performing Arts Club will be using the auditorium for an original production of *Alice’s*

Adventures in Wonderland this school year.


Director of Athletics Patrick Tracy, who is beginning his fourth year at the school, says the new school is a huge positive for the community, with its athletic facilities serving as one of the top sports complexes on the Mid-Shore.

The new athletic complex provides ample space inside and out, with two lighted game fields wired for sound and live streaming capability, stadium seating, a press box, practice fields and tennis courts. A fitness center and training room are available in the Farrell Gymnasium. Future campus plans include building both a baseball and softball field.

Bermuda grass was planted on the playing fields earlier this year in

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preparation for fall’s field hockey and soccer games. Other school sports include cross-country, basketball, ice hockey, swimming, lacrosse, tennis, golf, sailing, and baseball.

Nemeth says the new campus allows the school to move forward with its strategic planning objectives of curriculum revision, increasing program and course offerings, improving Advanced Placement scores, and building a learning center to better support the needs of all students. 



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By: Ryan Helfenbein

Linda Stuart is a ‘celebrant,’ out of Toronto Canada. This is someone who assists individuals in creating a one of a kind celebration of life. A Tribute Specialist or Master of Ceremonies, some might even call them. In a recent article she shared a personal story of her friend, Judy, who had called regarding her mother who had just passed. Judy was distressed and confused how to best honor her mothers memory.

Judy came across a handwritten note from her mother that read “When I Die, Please do Nothing.” This was found shortly after Judy’s mom took her last breath. Stressed beyond belief, Judy called Linda asking how she could in fact do nothing to honor her mother’s life. She went on to share how doing nothing would suggest to the community that her mother’s life was not ‘special’ enough to warrant recognition.

It was at this point that Linda advised Judy to have a conversation with her mom as if she was right in front of her and share why she felt it is important to be given the opportunity to receive support, publicly declare their closeness and take the first of many steps towards the healing process. Linda’s approach with her friend enabled Judy to first gain the harsh reality that her mom had in fact passed and allow her to begin talking through personal feelings to gain an understanding of what she now needed in order to work through her grief.

It was explained in the article how Judy’s mother always wanted her daughter to be happy, above anything at all. She was so concerned about Judy’s well being that she thought it would be best for Judy to not spend time or money for a public gathering or memorial. When in fact, Judy explained to Linda, that if she was to share these feelings with her mom now, her mom would realize that she would be robbing Judy and the ones who love her most from the opportunity to start working through grief. It became apparent that a compromise needed to take place.

Judy and her family found that compromise and coordinated a

gathering time with their local undertaker. Together they created a public gathering that they believed their mother would have agreed to if they had that conversation while she was alive. As a result, Judy received in person hugs, not the virtual kind from social media. Instead of being ‘ambushed’ by well-meaning friends randomly while out in public, Judy was able to emotionally prepare to have meaningful and supportive conversations at a specially designated time. Judy listened to countless stories of how her mother positively impacted others and more wonderful memories were shared then she had ever imagined. The experience she had was so healing that Judy’s father, who also had a “do nothing” request, changed his mind regarding his final plans to in fact “do something”.

Linda shared that people often feel guilty when they are “made fuss of.” Many humbly feel that they are no more special than anyone else and often use the common statement of “My family should spend their time and money doing something fun instead of crying over me.” Linda writes “a funeral or gathering is not a gift we give ourselves. It is a gift that we give to those who enjoy being with us. It is a gift to those who wake every morning with the realization that your arms will never wrap around them again. It is a gift we give to those who go to bed every night with the hope that we will visit them as they sleep.”

It was shared that after her friend’s experience, Linda was motivated to preplan her own funeral. Her final wishes will be based on what her family and the ones who love her “need.” Ultimately, she writes, “I want them to make a fuss - not out of some ego-driven need to be the center of attention but because I know that a fuss is what’s necessary when we lose a loved one. I want red wine and pink roses and a chocolate buffet. I want my family to feel and hug and connect. I want an uplifting ceremony overflowing with tears and laughter and applause. I want them to look at me one last time as they simultaneously say goodbye and hello to their new life without me. When I die, I want them to do something.”



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The new early education pathway to learning computer science in Caroline County

BY DEBRA R. MESSICK

Like many career educators, Amy Shepler, Caroline County Public School (CCPS) supervisor of instruction, has worn several hats. Initially an art teacher, she earned a master's degree in Instructional Technology. For Shepler, such a leap made perfect sense.

"I always tell people, as crazy as it sounds, I think my art background helped me when it came to computer science. In art, you're constantly trying new things; if it works great, if not, you go back and try again. That's how I approach this whole computer science thing," she states.

Having been an Instructional Technology Coach for CCPS before her current position, Shepler's resourcefulness became a major asset when the state of Maryland essentially adopted the national standard requiring computer science instruction from grades K through 12.

"At the secondary level, we felt we were doing pretty well, we had classes providing a pathway for students to graduate with computer science coursework under their belts," Shepler recalls.

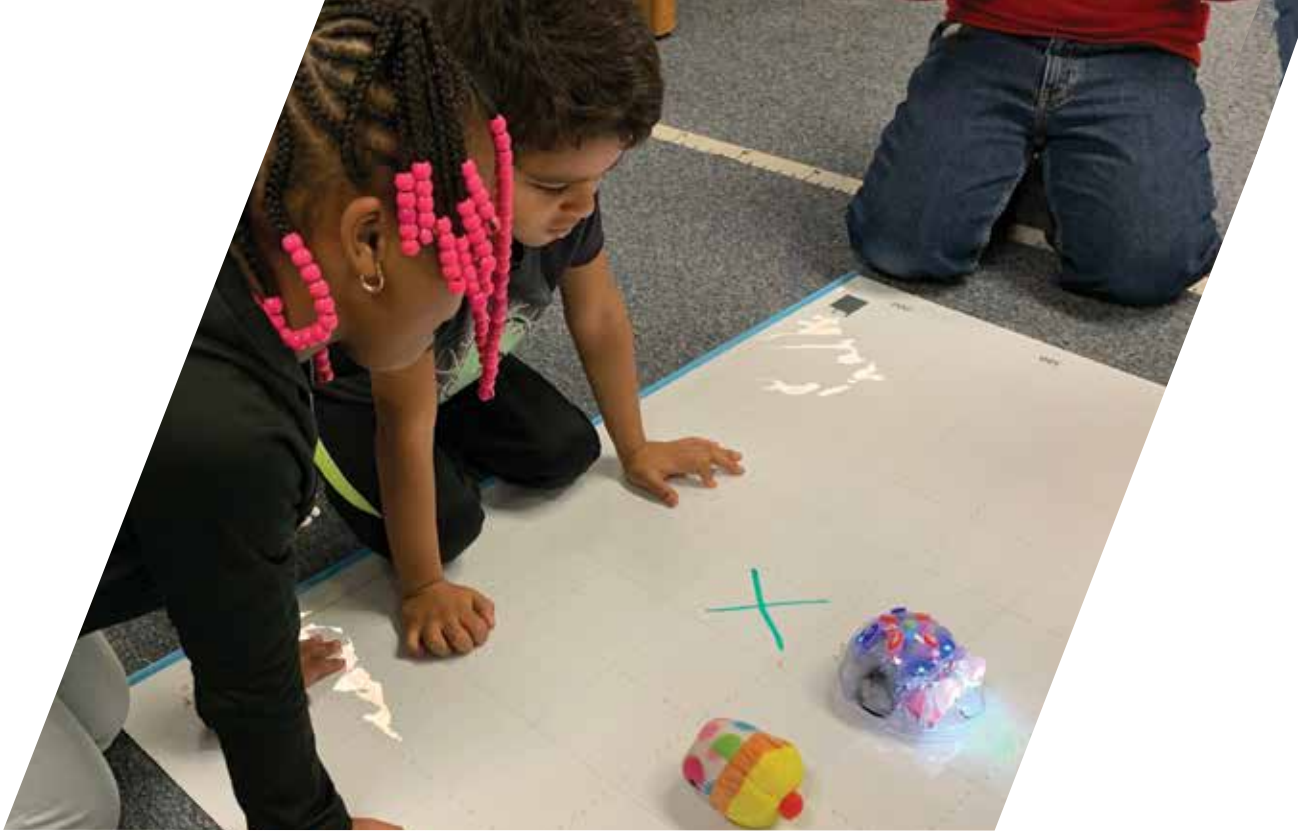


PHOTO COURTESY OF CAROLINE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Above: Students at Federalsburg Elementary School learn the foundation for computer coding through robots.

Left: Media Specialist Brittainy Simmons works with elementary school students on computer science at Federalsburg Elementary School.

Shepler learned that coding robots with kid-friendly names like Bee-Bots, Spheros, and Dashes provided a key portal to early learners.

“The real challenge began with elementary. How do you begin to teach a kindergartner, who is still learning their letters, about algorithms?” Shepler wondered. “Can they even say the word algorithm?”

With no clear blueprint for implementing the guidelines, Shepler reached out to her online community of instructional tech gurus and learned that coding robots with kid-friendly names like Bee-Bots, Spheros, and Dashes provided a key portal to early learners. Basically tactile, without letters or numbers, youngsters could push an arrow button two times to move a robot two blocks on a map, something even nonreaders could understand, she notes.

Her son and daughter got to “test drive” the robots, and Shepler gave several presentations to the Caroline County Board of Education, principals, and other supervisors, affording them a chance at hands-on robot engagement. They were a hit and were soon delighting and gently teaching classroom youngsters coding foundations.

“We found ways to incorporate the robots into core classes like English Language Arts, where they could be coded to go from one current sight word the kids were learning to another,” she explains.

Though offering a promising start, there weren’t enough robots to use in every classroom. Resuming her Internet search, Shepler accidentally stumbled on BootUp, a nonprofit program dedicated to providing elementary teachers with support

and resources for incorporating basic computer literacy into their curriculums.

Expecting a recording, Shepler was pleasantly surprised when BootUp’s Executive Director Clark Merkley answered her call and spoke with her for an hour answering her questions about the program. When BootUp Professional Development facilitator Brenda Bass conducted a workshop for Calvert and Charles counties educators on the western shore, Shepler and CCPS Director of Instruction Lindsey McCormick went to observe, but ended up fully participating in the platform’s hands-on coding experience.

McCormick experienced teaching kindergarten and first grade, but a coding beginner, joined Shepler in immediately recognizing that they had found what they needed — training user-friendly enough for instructors whatever their level of tech-savvy.

Both were pleased with the strong support from CCPS school board members, administrators, and the five elementary media specialists charged with introducing the computer literacy program to students. Shepler also credited the Maryland Centers for Computing Education with awarding several grants and offering to provide whatever they needed to get started. Responsible for the district’s Title IV federal funding, McCormick wrote the grant application. The group funded 100 percent of the robot purchase.

Originating in 2015 as a “give back” initiative of Emerald Data Solutions, which Merkley had headed as COO, BootUp’s mission has been to provide in-person professional development, coaching, and online resources to prepare elementary teachers to introduce interactive coding, computational thinking, and computer science instruction. The initiative is especially targeted to districts that have been underserved and underrepresented in tech education. According to the organization’s website, they have assisted almost 477 elementary schools impacting over 150,000 students. This past year, Amazon stepped in to underwrite professional development funding for over 1,000 more districts. Caroline County is the first Maryland district onboard, currently engaged in a two to a three-year partnership.

Bass, the personal development facilitator assigned to work directly with Caroline County since 2019, taught for over 30 years in several Texas school systems. Although originally a classroom teacher for seven years, she applied for a computer technology position, despite not knowing how to turn on the large Apple 2E she had relegated to her bedroom. Husband David provided a crash course in “everything Apple” helping her land the job she grew to love and believe in. Signing on with BootUp after retirement has helped her continue to channel that unwavering dedication.



Left to right: Amy Shepler, supervisor of instruction with CCPS, and Lindsey McCormick, director of instruction with CCPS are proponents of the new partnership between CCPS and BootUp, a nonprofit dedicated to incorporating basic computer literacy into school curriculums.

Summing up her role, Bass explains, “I’m not really a sage on a stage. I don’t say, ‘Okay everybody, we’re gonna learn algorithms (a sequence of specific directions given to a computer for solving a problem) today, what’s an algorithm?’ It just comes up while doing the first project. Then I say, ‘Look, you’ve just created your first algorithm.’”

Bass notes that providing time to individually create the project, with someone standing by to answer questions as they come up, enables people to customize the program for their unique curriculum. Among the questions she is most often

asked is, “How do I begin to teach these students, when I don’t know how to code?”

Assuring teachers they don’t need to be experts at the outset, Bass advises, “Don’t worry about not knowing everything, and don’t wait until you know it, just go ahead and introduce that coding to students. By saying, ‘We’re going to learn this together,’ you’re modeling how to be a life-long learner, and that’s very, very powerful.”

She explains that the goal of the program isn’t for every student to become a computer programmer — but rather honing

the skills and character-building strengths, such as problem solving, creativity, grit, and perseverance learned through coding, which will help carry them through school and beyond.

In her experiences with school districts large and small, she universally observes youngsters excited and eager to engage with the process. And she never fails to hear teachers tell her, “See that student over there? That student struggles with everything. They’re good with this coding, though.”

For Bass, that was the case with her youngest daughter, who

had difficulties with schoolwork and social skills — without much self-esteem or many friends. But when she began coding in middle school, where it was just between her and the computer, she excelled, impressing others, gaining confidence, and peer recognition.

In her own classrooms, Bass witnessed first-hand how two essentially nonverbal youngsters had coding-inspired breakthroughs. One was a violent kindergartener needing two teaching assistants, who hadn't spoken since starting school two months earlier. Preparing to lead the class in a coding exercise, Bass felt a tap on her leg then heard him say, "Ryan turn, Ryan turn." Everyone stopped because those had been the first words he had spoken. He stayed engaged on the

iPad program for 45 minutes. She also recalls a second-grade girl who hadn't talked all year long but had created a story using Scratch Jr., a version of a free MIT coding platform, Scratch, adapted for early learners. She entered her story into the STEMfest which required students to speak about their program.

"She was so shy, they put her in the library, and she whispered about her project, but that was, in fact, the first time her classmates had ever heard her talk," Bass notes. "Coding gives all students a voice."

Going forward, Caroline County's five elementary school libraries continue to be the focal points for meshing computer skills into a broader literacy model. Federalsburg Elementary School Media Specialist Brittainy

FOR MORE INFORMATION
check out these three websites:
bootuppd.org/about
medium.com/csforall-stories/big-computer-science-education-happenings-in-a-small-district-62b428580739
www.scratchjr.org

Simmons likens the overlapping creative and cognitive skills involved to popular "makerspace" or hands-on learning being used in many schools today. Initially, a coding novice, Simmons appreciated being able to learn Scratch Jr. by doing the lessons herself first. Buoyed by her students' enthusiasm, she is eager to create lessons that meld storytelling with problem-solving. 📌



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COLLEGE SEARCH

College Placement Consulting helps high school students find their best options

BY AMELIA BLADES STEWARD | PHOTOS BY MAIRE MCARDLE AND STEPHEN WALKER



College Placement Counseling students heading off to college, from left to right: Charlie Shifrin of Gunston who will study Aeronautical Engineering through ROTC; Tyler Redman of Easton High School, who will study global studies at Verto Change The World International Honors Program; Lexi Schwarz of Cambridge South Dorchester High School, who will study nursing at the University of South Carolina; and Lucy Morris of Easton High School who will study psychology at Miami University.



Betsy Greaney, owner of College Placement Consulting in Easton, relishes in the record number of students her firm has counseled this year who are traveling more than one hour from home for college.

Betsy Greaney studies the multicolored boxes filling the schedule on her computer screen, each denoting a 30-minute chat session with a student looking for help in the search for the right college.

“I love the fast pace,” says Greaney, owner of College Placement Consulting in Easton. “The purple boxes are the kids who didn’t show up or canceled, which is always going to be just part of being a teenager. Very few students don’t ‘get there’, though as we are always recruiting our lost lambs — shepherding them on Sundays for the next week. It’s what I love about my job.”

This past year, Greaney and her team of six instructors and planners assisted 95 high school seniors from across the Eastern Shore and the U.S. with college planning and test preparation. Sixty-five percent of the firm’s clientele live in the Mid-Shore region. The number of students served has more than tripled since Greaney took over the firm from founders Susan and Larry Patterson in 2017, she says.

Like many other businesses, the consulting firm moved its services mostly online during the pandemic, morphing from meeting with students and their parents in its offices to mostly virtual meetings. “Even before the pandemic, we found that students appreciated the flexibility of instruction on their terms and virtually — during study halls at school, lunchtime, or in the car on the way to athletic practice,”

College Planning Questions

What are your educational interests?

What key college criteria are most important to you?

Do you know how to research if a school is a good fit?

How does your academic profile benefit or hinder your options?

What tools do you have in your arsenal to make improvements now?

What financial options (need grants based on parent's financials and merit scholarships based on student's academics) can be leveraged to reduce the cost of attendance?

How can you showcase what makes you tick and what colleges will find compelling about you as a student, using all of the application's components?

Greaney says. "Students' lives are busy, and our ability to connect one to one by lifting a screen and working interactively is vital to their success. Doing our sessions virtually is much more efficient and we can keep the product affordable and accommodating — doing more with less."

Unlike Greaney's own college search years ago, which included looking at printed college guidebooks and talking to visiting college representatives, students now have access to videos, student interviews and virtual tours online for an inside view of colleges long before visiting a campus.

"Most students have great ambitions, and then life gets in the way. I am a firm believer in using the college planning process to help students build life skills that will aid them once they leave home," Greaney says. "Through our online portal, we help students learn to use calendars, keep a schedule, book and reschedule appointments, and take large projects and break them into small manageable pieces."

Greaney and her staff also teach students how to overcome obstacles that keep them from moving to the next stage of the process. "We break down the barriers," she says. "By and large, I think they realize their life is easier when I meet with them and they do what they're supposed to do because the task is not going away. It also takes away the strain on the relationship between a parent and a child when a parent is constantly having to nag his or her child about college tasks. I can teach students accountability and I think that's a huge benefit to parents."

The firm can provide text notifications to remind students of meetings and important to-do items; research links to simplify the college research process; images that compare a student's GPA and test scores to admission requirements of preferred colleges; self-assessments to help students identify their passions; and online test preparation to boost SAT scores and provide instructors with information to customize face-to-face study sessions. There also are worksheets, checklists and calendar

alerts to keep everyone on track and flexible online schedules so that students can self-advocate and select meeting times that synch with their busy lives. Counselors offer students actionable feedback in 30-minute chats and a learning management system designed to provide instruction and student accountability.

Gina Ellis, who attended Indian River High School in Dagsboro, Delaware, says that hiring the firm was the "best decision" she made during her college search. "I was provided with helpful tools that I wouldn't have access to anywhere else and the counselors made the process so easy. They pushed me to start the college search and application process early so I wouldn't be stressed later on," she says. "CPC helped me figure out what I was looking for in a college, which led me to compose a list of schools that were the right fit for me."

"Our online portal keeps everyone sane because parents can log in at three in the morning when worrying about whether a student is completing college tasks and [don't] have to ask their children questions that they won't answer anyway," Greaney says. "Secondly, it helps the students stay organized since doing work in the portal is highly visual. It is a great tool for visual and tactile learners. As I often tell families, like in sports, we call the audibles during coaching sessions as the students organize content, research schools, and actively drive the bus through our student portal."

Greaney says she talks frankly with parents about their financial situation, taking into account their retirement plans, future family vacations, and how they expect to pay for college for



Members of the counseling staff at College Placement Consulting, left to right, include Robyn Cronin, Karen McLaughlin, Betsy Greaney, and Katie Hertelendy. Absent from the photo are Katie Murphy, accounting, marketing, & events director and Karen Broujos, data coordinator.

their other children if they have any. She uses these discussions to determine what families can afford to pay and an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) calculator to see if students are eligible for grants. That helps students know whether they can afford their preferred colleges, she says. Greaney says she also has extensive knowledge of the "academic common market," which allows students who can't find a specific program of study in their home state to attend an out-of-state college for the cost of in-state tuition, potentially saving thousands of dollars.

Although the majority of the

firm's customers are from the Eastern Shore, CPC employs a referral program that has attracted students from other areas of the country. Its digital program sends personalized texts to the phones of students' parents so they can easily refer the consulting services to friends and family members. "And that's how we get a pocket in one high school somewhere across the country," Greaney says. "We pay parents and students \$50 for every referral that comes through."

Gail Easterling of Easton says Greaney's help was "invaluable" as her son navigated the college application process. "She is a wealth of knowledge about hundreds of schools, financial aid, scholarships, application essays and deadlines, and SAT/ACT prep," Easterling says. "She is working hard to help my son meet his academic and college-interest goals,

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact College Placement Consulting 8133 Elliott Road, Suite 102 Easton, Md. info@teamcpc.com 410-822-4500 collegeplacementconsulting.com.

while also sticking to our budget."

Greaney says the Eastern Shore is the firm's "primary passion," but counselors also try to get students to consider other regions of the country when searching for colleges. "One of my biggest rewards this year is we had a record number of our students traveling more than one hour from home for college. That is exciting to me," she says.

"I love puzzles and to me, every kid is a puzzle. Everybody's missing some corner piece and I have got to figure out how to find that corner piece — whether it is resources or finding that hidden gem on a college list."

CPC offers packaged programs so that students have access to all of the firm's services. 📍

(Stacey Anderson)

FEARS AND FEELINGS

Helping kids cope with the creepy Corona monster

BY DEBRA R. MESSICK | PHOTOS BY PAMELA L. COWART-RICKMAN

A few years before the coronavirus pandemic hit, Stacey Anderson retired from a rewarding career as a Talbot County elementary school guidance counselor. But as 2020 unfolded, she found that she wanted to use the sense of caring that fueled her career to help kids cope with their changing and challenging realities.

Anderson knew how scared she felt just going to the market during the pandemic. She sensed that children, who don't always have the words to express their feelings, must be dealing with similar anxieties, compounded by their isolation from teachers and friends and by living with parents struggling themselves to manage their instantly changed lives. She channeled her need to help into writing *Cyrus the Virus*, a book that would help alleviate many of these fears.

During Anderson's childhood in Oxford, traumatic health issues among her siblings kept her family of nine in a constant state of worry. Three of her four brothers suffered

from a chronic autoimmune illness that required frequent trips to The Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore; two died.

Influenced in part by that experience, but also by immense gratitude to the doctors and health care workers who had worked so hard to make life better for her family during those traumatic times, Anderson was galvanized to put her feelings down on paper. A lover of words from an early age, she wrote in journals and found sanctuary in poetry throughout her life.



Sketching kid-friendly pictures and jotting down rhyming verses were the impetus for Stacey Anderson's new book, *Cyrus the Virus*.

Around the time she retired, Anderson began writing pamphlets with pictures to empower the children of friends and family who struggled with their own fears and anxieties. Her pamphlet, *Bugs Be Gone*, helped her 4-year-old nephew learn simple strategies for coping with dreaded insects. The *No-Good Noodle* modeled positive self-talk and self-esteem building for a student struggling with his physical appearance.

When Anderson decided to write about the coronavirus, she recalls that she first thought of the book's title. By sketching kid-friendly pictures and jotting down rhyming verses, she found that the story of the dastardly bully Cyrus, who spread the illness without regard for where it landed.

In the book, Cyrus' friend Corona, aka "Rona," goes along with Cyrus's behavior until she hears about a heroic helper named Fauci. She rightly fears him because he knows how to foil the bully's plans by giving people the tools to stay safe. Fauci also reminds readers of the advice from Fred Rogers of the TV show *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* to focus on the love of helpers instead of the fear generated by uncertainty.

After some editing to reflect updated recommendations from

the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Cyrus the Virus* was published by Page Publishing in May 2021. Anderson says her first published book honors her late mother, who remained a consistent beacon radiating positivity. It also includes an acknowledgment of Dr. Fauci's consultations years before with her mother about her brothers' illness that reads: "This book was written in honor of Dr. Anthony Fauci and all the health care workers who dedicate their lives to educating, saving, and comforting each and every one of us."

Despite the hardships her parents endured, Anderson says they managed to be helpers worth emulating. "My mom and dad, Phil and Sally Greenhawk, volunteered time to assist in the founding of the Immune Deficiency Foundation in Towson, Maryland," she shares. The organization is dedicated to improving the diagnosis, treatment, and quality of life of people affected by primary immunodeficiency.

With schools reopening this fall, Anderson hopes *Cyrus the Virus* will help kids and their caregivers address the ongoing concerns raised by the pandemic and help alleviate lingering trepidation by bringing its consequences out into the open. Anderson believes the book is most appropriate for children in elementary school and that its overall message transcends the specific circumstances generated by the health crisis. **S**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

or to purchase *Cyrus the Virus*, visit www.pagepublishing.com/books/?book=cyrus-the-virus. Also available through Mystery Loves Company Booksellers in Oxford.



Stacey Anderson, a resident of Oxford, used her background as a retired Talbot County elementary school guidance counselor to guide her writing.



(Mike Elzey)

AMPED UP

Local guitar legend, performer, instructor and mentor

BY AMELIA BLADES STEWARD

PHOTOS BY CAROLINE J. PHILLIPS

Mike Elzey's eyes twinkle when the guitar teacher talks about the thousands of students he and his instructors have taught and mentored over the last 40 years. Among those who know his work, Elzey is an Eastern Shore legend.

Introduced initially to the electric guitar at age 8, Elzey didn't take to the instrument right away. A few years later, while visiting a cousin in New Jersey, he again picked up an electric guitar and started playing it.

"I could swear I heard music come out of it," recalls Elzey,

owner of Mike Elzey's Guitar Studio in Easton and Cambridge. "It happened again when as a Boy Scout I participated in a lip-sync performance for patients at the State Hospital in Cambridge. When I got a guitar hung around my neck that day, the same thing happened. I thought I was making music."

A few years later Elzey's family moved from downtown Cambridge to the country outside of town and he made a new friend who introduced him to a violin-shaped green bass that Elzey soon learned

Mike Elzey gives a lesson to Annabelle Meredith.

Below: The Eli Smith group, made up of Elzey's students, performs at a Mike Elzey's Showcase at the Caroline County Summerfest. Left to right: Eli Smith, Jeff Smith, Gina Eutsey, Ryan Widmaier, and Sam Banks.



to play. His mom then took him to the local music store where he bought a \$60 electric guitar and an amp. He found a classmate who was two years older to give him lessons.

"I didn't spend much time reading music and I still don't like to read today, although I do use tablature and theory," Elzey says. "My classmate was a Beatles fan and helped me learn more progressive chording. I was taught by ear — watching and learning and paying attention."

In later years, Elzey's peers called him "eagle eyes" because he could remember how to play a song he'd watched someone play once. In his junior year of high school, he joined a popular band LUKE as a rhythm guitarist. The band played almost every week for two years

in parish halls and fire halls and at teen dances across the Shore.

"Those were some of the best memories in my whole life. I found my identity by becoming the 'cool guy in the rock band,'" he quips.

Elzey got married young to his wife Charlotte and began a 24-year career working in sales, customer service and human resources while continuing to perform on weekends. He started giving guitar lessons which provided him the money to buy extra guitars. When he had the opportunity to leave the corporate world in 2003, he began to teach guitar full time. Within six months, he had 30 students.

"I learned tenacity from my business experience," Elzey says. "I liked the challenge of getting up every day and saying to myself, 'I

have to make something happen."

Over the 40 years of teaching, he has developed his own intuitive style, utilizing creativity and each student's own learning methods. He teaches children and adults, whose professions range from contractors to judges. Several times each year he hosts family-friendly showcases for students, as well as band camps, summer programs and workshops. "I saw the crowd and saw the kids' energy when playing in public at downtown music showcases and realized I was doing the work I was supposed to do," Elzey says.

His teaching success led him to hire more instructors and open other locations. Today, Mike Elzey's Guitar Studio teaches more than 400 lessons a month to students ranging from children to adults, at both its Cambridge and Easton locations, as well as virtually.

"One of the most rewarding things in my career, however, is seeing two of my students — Emma Bailey and Quinn Parsley — teaching for me," Elzey says. Bailey now provides the music therapy sessions that Elzey formerly ran at the Talbot Senior Center at Brookletts Place in Easton and Pleasant Day Medical Adult Day Care Center in Cambridge. "I hope my legacy is how I have helped kids like Emma and Quinn. They will carry my legacy forward." 📞

MIKE ELZEY'S GUITAR STUDIO

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Mike Elzey: lessons in guitar and bass

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Emma Bailey: lessons guitar, ukulele, and voice

Jordan Stanley: drums




GREEN ON GREEN

A female praying mantis posing for her portrait on a sunflower leaf near Cordova, Maryland.

PHOTO BY JEANNETTE C. HUTCHISON

Camera: Canon EOS R5 | Lens: 100 - 500mm | Exposure: 1.500 Second at 500mm F8.5








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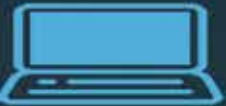
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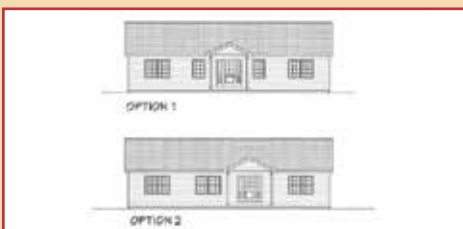
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