

Community

Maryland Independent ■ Wednesday, June 28, 2017



Calendar of events

A LOOK AT THE WEEK AHEAD

Send calendar events (at least two weeks in advance, if possible) to Community, 4475 Regency Place, Suite 301, White Plains, MD 20695. Email items to community@somdnews.com. Include a contact phone number or email on all submissions.

Ongoing

Platinum Senior Care Assisted Living, LLC will host Reminiscing Cafe 6-9 p.m. Mondays-Fridays and 8-11 a.m. Saturdays-Sundays at the facility, 4018 Blackbird Court, Waldorf. For information, call 301-638-3194.

Vconnections will hold Veterans Coffee Break 9-10:30 a.m. Mondays at Chick-fil-A, 107 Drury Drive, La Plata. For information, go to www.vconnections.org.

Pomfret Way-of-Life Al-Anon Family Group and Alateen will meet 8 p.m. Tuesdays at St. Joseph Church, 4950 Saint Joseph Way, Pomfret. For information, go to www.marylanddc-alanon.org or call 1-800-425-2666.

Kiwanis of Waldorf meets Wednesdays 7:30-8:30 a.m. at Comfort Suites, 11765 Business Park Drive, Waldorf. For information, contact Carol Cox, 301-758-3082 or carol.cox@gmail.com.

Vconnections will hold Veterans Coffee Break 9-10:30 a.m. Wednesdays at Chick-fil-A, 3365 Crain Highway, Waldorf. For information, go to www.vconnections.org.

Charles County Professional Civitan Club will meet 11:45 a.m.-1 p.m. Wednesdays at Golden Corral, 2800 Crain Highway, Waldorf. For information, contact George Hawley, 240-367-6489 or planit4ueventplanning@gmail.com.

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 82 will hold bingo on Thursdays at Harry White Wilmer American Legion Post 82, 6330 Crain Highway, La Plata. Early birds begin 7 p.m. Doors open 6 p.m. For information, call 301-934-8221.

Hope Cancer Support and Prayer Group will meet 7 p.m. the first and third Thursdays of each month at South Potomac Church, 4915 Crain Highway, White Plains. For information, contact Angela Dion at angeladionwriter@gmail.com, or call 301-645-9427.

Southern Maryland Brain Injury Support Group will meet 6-7:30 p.m. the second Thursday of each month at Spring Dell Center, 6040 Radio Station Road, La Plata. For information, call Jerry, 301-753-6335, or Debbie, 301-932-4920.

Point of Change Jail and Street Ministry Family Ties Support Group will meet 7 p.m. the second Thursday of each month at New Hope AME Church, 12310 Washington Square, Waldorf. For information, contact Jerald or Kimberly Graham at 443-532-0090 or 301-609-9492, or email pointofchange@hotmail.com.

DAV Chapter 36 will hold its monthly membership meeting 7 p.m. the third Thursday of each month at Waldorf Jaycees Community Center, 3090 Crain Highway. No meetings will be held during July and August. For information, call Elton Stokes, 301-335-4105.

Friday Nighters Al-Anon Family Group will meet 8:30 p.m. Fridays at Lifestream Church Of The Nazarene, 5105 Leonardtown Road, Waldorf. No Alateen meeting. For information, go to www.marylanddc-alanon.org or call 1-800-425-2666.

Vconnections will host Veteran Women and Family Coffee Break 9-10:30 a.m. Fridays at Chick-fil-A, 107 Drury Drive, La Plata. For information, go to www.vconnections.org.

Vconnections will host Veterans Coffee Break 10:30-11:30 a.m. the second Friday of each month at Burger King, 30004 Three Notch Road, Charlotte Hall. For information, go to www.vconnections.org.

CSM Open House at Center for Trades and Energy Training will be 10 a.m.-2 p.m. the third Saturday of each month through December at College of Southern Maryland, Regional Hughesville Campus, Center for Trades and Energy Training (CT Building), 6170 Hughesville Station Place. Free. For information, call 301-539-4730 or go to www.csmd.edu/about/locations/center-for-trades-and-energy-training/.

Mount-Aventine Manor House will be open for tours 1-4 p.m. Sundays through

See **CALENDAR** Page B6

Library embarks on country's first public living room project



PHOTO COURTESY OF TISHA TYLER

Bonita Adeeb and Carmella Watkins of STEAM Onward used the public living room space this week at the La Plata library to meet others.

Space to be a source of comfort for all in need

By **SARA NEWMAN**
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A plush, floral fabric love seat sits at the Charles County Public Library's La Plata branch, beckoning guests to relax and unwind. As part of a larger mission, the furniture is a step for the library to begin something first of its kind in the country: the public living room.

The public living room was created by Maff Potts, the director of a U.K.-based nonprofit called Camerados. After working with the homeless for 22 years, Potts said he realized there were two factors people needed, besides housing and money, to transform their lives: friends and purpose. He sought to create a space that would foster those connections.

"I was running the biggest homeless provider in the U.K. and a television reporter asked me what I was doing for people who had lost everything in the economic crash," Potts wrote in an email from a taxi while visiting the U.S. "I realized in that moment that I was doing nothing because I couldn't help people until they had lost everything, gained an addiction, had a criminal record or perhaps had a mental health problem."

The idea spread and now the U.K. boasts four public living rooms — in Blackpool, Camden, Oxford and Sheffield — and one opened weekly in Brooklyn. Charles County aims to house the first permanent public living room in the country.

"When a person is isolated, for whatever reason, he or she may not be able to see the possibilities around them," said Janet Salazar, executive director of Charles County Public Library. "The library is here to help by offering a comfortable place to sit, a small project to work on, a cup of coffee or tea, and most important of all, a friendly face."

A living room is currently set up at the La Plata branch on Garrett Avenue and if the idea takes off, there is a possibility for more to be added to other branches in the county.

Thanks to a donated couch and Keurig machine, the space is on its way to looking like a cozy and comfortable room found in a home. Tisha Tyler, marketing and development manager for Charles County Public Library, said more donations are still needed such as another couch, some comfortable chairs, an area rug, end tables, puzzles or games as well as mugs, coffee and creamer to complement the Keurig.

Tyler said she has seen an increase in people coming through the library's doors and discovering what they have to offer. The desire to have a community center and resource is there, she said, and the library is open to everyone.

With the La Plata branch sitting adjacent to the University of Maryland Charles Regional Medical Center, the space can offer solace to anyone seeking refuge from possible bad news.

"We have people come into the



STAFF PHOTOS BY SARA NEWMAN

The La Plata branch of the Charles County Library has begun the first permanent public living room project in the country. The idea began in the U.K. and is spreading across the world as a place for those in need of a peaceful space.



The public living room space at the La Plata library features a donated couch, table and chairs, plants and activity pages for people to take their mind off their troubles.

library who have loved ones at the hospital and the living room can be a comfortable place for them to wait for and process news, good or bad," said Lloyd Jansen, La Plata branch manager. "We thought those people may be going through a difficult time with loved ones in the hospital and having a place for them to relax and collect their thoughts may be a good thing. But it's also for anyone who's feeling isolated for any reason and wants a quiet place they can just be or interact with others who may be in a similar situation."

Al Leandre, a board member for the youth-based nonprofit STEAM Onward, and Bonita Adeeb, executive director of the organization, used the space this week to meet with their Young Researchers Community Project group.

"It's a welcoming and inviting space," Adeeb said of the living room.

"It automatically gives the library a different perspective. You gravitate towards it. Libraries, in general to me, are built to allow people to connect. This is a comfortable space you can just melt into and talk and share with others," Leandre said.

"We have so many stories of very vulnerable people coming in and find-

ing confidence from the very simple fact that nobody was trying to fix them but instead just give them some good company, play a board game or drink tea with [them]," Potts said of the space. "One woman who had been badly beaten by her husband came in one of our living rooms very upset. We gave her a cup of tea and asked her to talk to an old man who was very lonely that day. Within a short time they were laughing and by the end of the day she was running the living room."

Seeing his idea spread to other countries makes Potts feel "very inspired," he said, adding that he is meeting someone in Melbourne, Australia next month to talk about the project and has received inquiries from around the globe.

"I have always found Americans to be curious and more positive about new ideas. Janet Salazar at Charles County Library epitomizes that," Potts wrote.

"I truly feel that public libraries exist to serve their communities and that we help people every day," Salazar said of the library's mission. "I don't know that the public really understand that that's what we do. We're here to help you and we're here to connect you to what you need."

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