

Community

Maryland Independent ■ Friday, August 4, 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 seniors with dementia and Alzheimer's to relax and enjoy themselves. 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.

Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service will offer free foreclosure legal advice the first Wednesday of each month at Charles County Public Law Library, 200 Charles St., La Plata. These are one-on-one online sessions with an experienced attorney. The library is located in the basement of the Circuit Court for Charles County; entrance to the building is on Washington Ave. For more information or to make an appointment, call the Law Library at 301-932-3322.

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 pm. 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.

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 Thursday of each month through December at College of Southern Maryland, Regional Hughesville



STAFF PHOTOS BY SARA NEWMAN

Students from the Young Researchers Community Project, a program that's part of STEAM Onward Inc. meet at the Waldorf West library to discuss business concepts that can be applied to current projects and their future careers.

Growing their own geniuses

Group aims to increase minority participation

By SARA NEWMAN
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A group of a dozen high school students met at the Waldorf West library last week to discuss their future careers in business, medicine and law, among others. The group of motivated teens hope their participation will increase their chances of getting into college, thereby launching them into lucrative careers.

"Everyone here has the same mindset," Aqsa Siddique, 16, of Waldorf said of the Young Researchers Community Project, YRCP, group. "They all want to get involved and gain a better sense and knowledge of the world."

YRCP is a part of STEAM Onward Inc., a nonprofit group that aims to increase the number of minority and underserved youth pursuing higher education in STEM related fields, such as science, technology, engineering, mathematics, in addition to the arts.

The group began around 1989 when Bonita Adeeb, executive director, and Alland Leandre, board member, started having conversations about what local students could actively do to pursue their STEM interests and create effective change in their communities. They started a counter marketing strategy to encourage people to stop smoking which led to other campaigns geared towards environmental and other health issues.

"What could we do to help poorly achieving kids of color in Southern Maryland? How do you get them to see that school is useful and about them?" Adeeb said she asked at the beginning of the group's inception. "These are things kids can educate the community about."

Leandre said the group uses hands-on activities to convey concepts and encourage the students to be excited about learning.

"The time they have in the classroom is sufficient for some things, but not all things," Leandre said. "We're bringing back the use of tools and project based learning, literally putting their hands in the dirt if it's a gardening activity."

In addition to creating an anti-vaping public service announcement that has been shown in local movie theaters, the group is joining forces with the family of Kris "Romeo" Bishundat, a Thomas Stone High School alum and member of the United States Navy who was killed at the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001, to host the fifth annual 9-11 Memorial 5K Road Race and Fun Walk in Bishundat's memory.

Santesia Ababio, 17, of Waldorf and Siddique agreed that the community service opportunities available through



Alland Leandre, board member of STEAM Onward Inc. and CEO of Vyalex Management Solutions, a government contracting firm focusing on technology and acquisition management, talks to students about how business concepts can be applied to their future career endeavors.



Carmella Watkins, left, board member of STEAM Onward Inc. and Bonita Adeeb, executive director, listen to Santesia Ababio, 17, of Waldorf give a presentation about a project the group is working on.

the group have been enjoyable and beneficial to them in their future endeavors. "[STEAM Onward] is something good to do if you don't know how to spend your summer or if you don't know what you want to do for a career or haven't applied to any colleges yet," Ababio said.

The students are also plugged into internships with local businesses, such as law offices and doctor's offices, that correlate with their future career plans.

Migue Darcera, 16, of Waldorf hopes to pursue a career in medicine and is shadowing an orthopedic surgeon over the summer. Darcera said the experience has taught him how a doctor properly talks to patients and furthered his interest to work in cardiology and help others.

After working at her internship at the University of Maryland Charles Regional Medical Center, Ababio said she sees her future going a slightly different direction.

"When I started this program I wanted to be a nurse but now I'm more open to radiology and I want to open my own practice," Ababio said.

Ababio said she became interested in STEAM Onward after hearing about it in school and wanted to take advantage of the healthcare internship opportunities that were available.

Leandre said an internship with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration — an opportunity that he only applied for because his teacher told

him to — was what "set off lightbulbs" for him as to what his future career could be. A product of Washington D.C. public schools and parents who didn't go to college, Leandre is now the CEO of Vyalex Management Solutions, a government contracting firm focusing on technology and acquisition management.

Now, STEAM Onward partners with a number of businesses and organizations in the area that offer expertise and opportunity to determined students. Leandre said he hopes to start a new technology summit sponsored and designed by the corporate community "because they're the ones who are doing the work and see what the need is."

"The U.S. is losing the fight in global competitiveness and it's much easier to grow that talent here," Leandre said. "For years we were leading in every area ... we're not necessarily in a position where the next big thing would come from here. It's bad for us because our economy is based on our ability to innovate. Investing in these kids is ultimately what will sustain our economy and quality of life."

Leandre said the Southern Maryland area has the capacity to create something big and an effort to educate students in these careers and keep them working locally will create a nice place to live.

"Why not grow our own geniuses?" he said.

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