

Blue Crabs clinch Freedom Division first-half title

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Local business donates paper for teachers' classrooms

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Above, the Town of La Plata rock nestled in a hiding spot. Below, the Indian Head rock waiting to be discovered.



## Residents rock the community with kindness

Charles County joins rock-painting craze

By CHARLIE WRIGHT  
cwright@somdnews.com

Local residents have joined in the recent social media phenomenon of painting rocks with uplifting phrases and placing them

Every day can't be perfect, so those who find themselves in need of a kind word or encouraging message, look no further than the surrounding Charles County landscape.

See **ROCKS**  
Page A9

## Maryland Commission on Civil Rights visits library

Representatives discuss basic services, protections

By CHARLIE WRIGHT  
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Representatives from the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR) visited the Waldorf West Library on Wednesday to give a presentation on the department and share their mission with the community.

A quick poll of the audience revealed only about a third of the room knew the commission existed before the presentation, underscoring the importance of outreach. The Baltimore-based organization offers these talks to public institutions as well as courses for businesses and offices free of charge, in order to increase awareness about all types of discrimination services.

The commission protects Maryland residents in the areas of employment, housing, public

See **RIGHTS**  
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## Archaeologist retraces steps of Underground Railroad pioneer

Henson site reveals 'strategies of resistance, adaptation and survival'

By PAUL LAGASSE  
plagasse@somdnews.com

Dr. Julie King has become the "go-to" expert on the archaeological evidence documenting the early life of Charles County native and pioneer abolitionist Josiah Henson. But according to King, the story of how that came about had to do with timing, persistence and a little luck.

King had recently joined the faculty of St. Mary's College of Maryland as an associate professor of anthropology when she was contacted by Michael J. Sullivan, a local developer with a passionate interest in Charles County history.

"I was looking for opportunities for my students, and

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## Indian Head hosts quarterly COMREL meeting

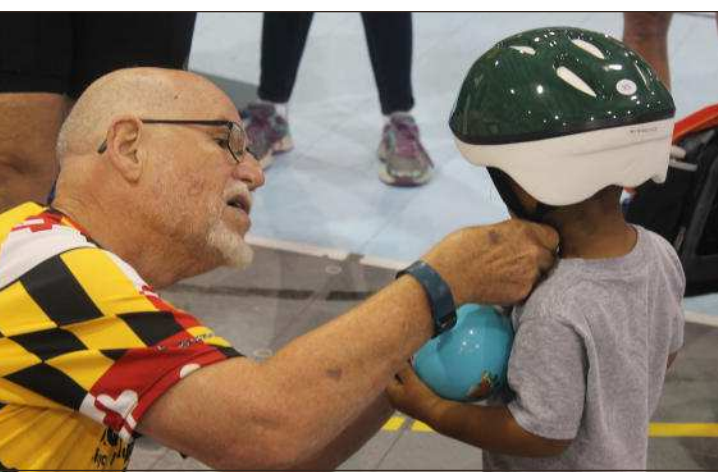
Civilian, military leaders come together to discuss local projects

By CHARLIE WRIGHT  
cwright@somdnews.com

Indian Head hosted the third Naval Support Activity South Potomac (NSASP) Community Relations (COMREL) Council meeting of 2017 on Tuesday, as local government officials and naval officers gathered to share the progress of various military entities.

Councilman Curtis Smith represented the Indian Head Town Council in Mayor Brandon Paulin's stead, and acutely described the

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Dan Donahue of the Oxon Hill Bicycle and Trail Club adjusts a helmet for 21-month-old Lance Adair at the Charles County Early Childhood Education Day Saturday.

## Hundreds come out for Early Childhood Day

Event provides a good time, resources for the 5-and-younger crowd


By JAMIE ANFENSON-COMEAU  
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Clubhouse Recreation Center in Waldorf on Saturday.

More than 40 vendors and hundreds of attendees came out for the ninth annual Charles County Early Childhood Day held at the Capital

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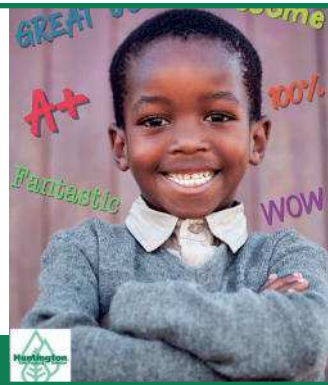
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PHOTOS COURTESY OF ST. MARY'S COLLEGE OF MARYLAND  
St. Mary's College of Maryland archaeologist Max Sickler screens soil in search of artifacts at the Josiah Henson birthplace site. Right, St. Mary's College of Maryland archaeologist Demilade Adebayo ran the laboratory, which involved washing, packaging, and cataloging artifacts found at the Josiah Henson birthplace site. Far right, archaeologist Morgan Jenkins-Houk holds a wrought nail and a piece of glazed earthenware called pearlware, clues pointing to Josiah Henson's birthplace. In the background are Jiahn Liu and Lydia Roca.

HENSON

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he wanted to find Charles County's first courthouse," King recalled. "At the time, there was an assumption in historical circles that no one was ever going to find it. But he was insistent, and he wanted to meet."

King met Sullivan at Casey Jones restaurant in La Plata to hear him out. "He told me that he had hired a surveyor to do all this research and he had narrowed it down to 150 acres. After talking to him, I realized he understood the costs involved in archaeology because he's a businessman and a land developer. He had an archaeological mind."

King agreed to undertake the research and, to her surprise and delight, within three weeks she and five students had found the remains of the courthouse under a soy-

bean field along Springhill Newtown Road, in time for Charles County's 350th anniversary in 2008.

"I thought that was the end of it," said King. "But Mike said, 'Oh no, we have other sites to find.'"

Next on Sullivan's list was Zekiah Fort, which Lord Calvert had constructed in 1680 alongside Zekiah Swamp for the local Piscataway people to protect them from raids by neighboring bands. Researchers had been looking for the site since the 1930s without success.

"I told him that in archaeology, there is a lot of sadness because you don't find stuff," King said. "He never blinked."

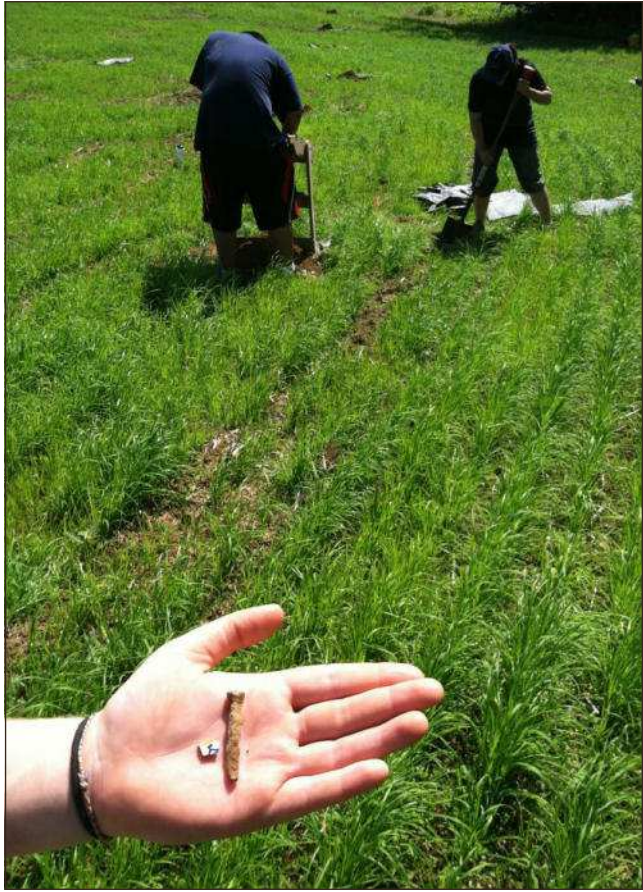
Sullivan funded the research out of his own pocket. And three years later, King and her students found the fort.

When Sullivan pitched his next quest to King, she knew better than to try and manage his expectations this time.

King recalled that third



Above left, Julia King, professor of archaeology at St. Mary's College of Maryland, has been working to uncover the history of 18th-century slave life at the Josiah Henson Birthplace in La Plata. "We have a very important black landscape that we don't talk about, and we need to," she said at a presentation on Thursday at the Indian Head Pavilion. Above right, Curtis Smith, councilman of the Town of Indian Head, introduced Julie King at Thursday's presentation.



STAFF PHOTO BY PAUL LAGASSE

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that had once been owned by Francis Newman.

The farm, then called Moore's Ditch, was located just west of modern-day La Plata. It was here that Josiah Henson was born in 1789 (though there is evidence to suggest he was actually born in 1796). The future abolitionist icon was named after Josiah Henson McPherson, the owner of his mother.

In 1830, after working his way up to supervisor of Newman's farm in Montgomery County, Henson, tricked out of being able to purchase his freedom, fled with his wife and children to Kentucky and then Ontario, Canada. There, he and other abolitionists purchased land for a vocational institute and settlement for refugee slaves. Henson's Dawn Settlement was one of the terminals along the Underground Railroad.

King and her students began their research at Moore's Ditch by analyzing documentary evidence found in maps and Newman's own records as well as architectural evidence obtained from photographs, paintings and surviving buildings on the site. They then used the tree line to help identify the likely locations of the slave quarters.

As they began excavating the targeted areas, they quickly began uncovering wrought nails, glazed earthenware shards, brick, clay pipes and rows of large stones that had likely been used to help shore up sagging walls.

By analyzing the shapes and positions of the debris fields, they were even able to hypothesize where the doors to the various quarters would have been. King surmised that many of the fragments had likely been swept out of the buildings during cleaning and gradually accumulated into small piles.

By comparing the locations of the slave quarters and the tree line with Henson's autobiographical account, King thinks they have even been able to pinpoint where Henson's father had hidden in the forest after being punished with 100 lashes and having his ear cut off for defending Henson's mother against an overseer's sexual advances.

Some of the most intriguing discoveries were fragments of decorated pottery that suggests Newman's slaves were making their own intricately patterned cups and plates, perhaps in an attempt to beautify their surroundings. "It gives you a sense of how people were trying to make their lives in an unlivable system," King explained.

The remains of ornate shoe buckles and buttons near the slave quarters suggested that the slaves also engaged in commerce that allowed them to purchase at least some finery.

"I'm not at all suggesting that it wasn't that bad," King pointed out. "What I am saying is that we are finding stories of strategies of resistance, adaptation and survival in the archaeological record."

The site has not been fully excavated, King said. Continued excavation would almost certainly fine-tune the understanding of life on an 18th-century Charles County farm, she said.

"As we delve more and more into it, I think we're going to find even more stories, and we're going to be able to write and rewrite them better," King said. "This is a very exciting time for American history."

And should Sullivan call with another historical mystery for her to solve, King said she will be ready.

**Twitter: @PaulIndyNews**

RIGHTS

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accommodations and commercial non-discrimination. The categories may seem narrow, but are expanded to include all aspects of each process. So discrimination regarding a job application or interview process would fall under employment and be within MCCR jurisdiction, even though the victim isn't actually employed yet.

The complaint process begins with intake, followed by investigation, litigation and outreach. Andrews is part of the investigation team, working with complainants and defendants to assess situations and judge whether legal action should take place. Complaints can be filed by

mail, phone, fax, e-mail or through the MCCR website. Victims have between 180 days and four years to register a grievance, depending on the classification of discrimination. The MCCR typically resolves cases within 180 days, and pending cases age at less than one-third the national average, said Andrews.

"We're pushed hard to really focus on the time and process that it takes to conduct the investigation to keep the time and process down," Andrews said.

In fiscal year 2016, the commission processed 932 complaints, with 83 percent of received complaints falling under employment. The MCCR brought in over \$1.3 million in benefits to victims this past year.

The majority of MCCR

funding comes at the federal level, and officers have to meet an individual yearly quota of cases. The commission works closely with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and Housing and Urban Development, both of whom contract with the MCCR.

Although the commission does not receive a lot of state funding, Maryland itself has a large number of laws in place against discrimination, said Oliver. Unfortunately, many residents are unaware of these protections, so the primary goal of the MCCR is to inform the people.

"We try to be present," Oliver said. "We believe if we educate, hopefully we're proactive in reducing the complaints we get."

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