

# Community Forum

## Share memories of your best Christmas gift ever

When a handful of big-box stores were already displaying Christmas trees earlier this fall next to the Halloween candy, you could shake your head and walk on down the aisle.

But now that Thanksgiving's been reduced to leftovers, there's no denying it anymore. We're exactly a month away from Christmas Eve. The holidays are here. It's on.

And although Black Friday and Small Business Saturday are steering the weekend, this message is by no means another clarion call to go out and shop 'til you drop. Actually, it's an appeal to our readers to stop, remember and share.

What we're looking for are your Christmas memories of the best gift you ever received, to be compiled in an article we will publish on Friday, Dec. 22, just as we all — hopefully — start to

unwind for the season. Everyone has a holiday tale to tell, and we'd be pleased to hear yours. In years past, readers have told stories of forgiveness, reconciliation and redemption, as family members long estranged reconnected and solidified their bond. Readers have shared stories of their

parents, grandparents and great-grandparents, and how centuries-old traditions from elsewhere were honored and kept alive here. They have also told of new traditions. Readers have shared holiday tales of children's first Christmases, favorite toys and favorite foods. They've told us of the joys of holidays past, stories that have already been passed among family and friends.

So you get the idea. Your Christmas memories can be funny, sweet or poignant, but we want to hear from you.

What was the best gift you ever got? Tell us.

Here's how you can share your memories: Your best bet is to email your submissions to Jesse Yeatman at [jyeatman@somdnews.com](mailto:jyeatman@somdnews.com). You can also mail them to Best Christmas Gift Ever, c/o Jesse Yeatman, The Enterprise, 22685 Three Notch Road, Suite D, California, MD 20619. Tell your story as completely as possible, in your own words, but please try to keep it to about 300 words. Please include your telephone number (not for publication, but just in case we have any questions) and your town of residence.

Words are only part of the package, though. What's Christmas without pictures? We welcome your photographs to accompany your stories, either digitally or through the mail.

If you mail Christmas memory photos along with your submission, make sure

to include a return address so we can get them back to you after publication. And if your holiday photos from the past are impossible or impractical to publish, we could certainly come out and take a photograph of you to use with the article.

And since we're asking you to perform like newspaper reporters for a day, we'll introduce you to an aspect of the job we deal with all the time: a deadline. We'll need your submissions no later than the close of business on Friday, Dec. 15. That will allow us time to carefully prepare your memories of favorite Christmas gifts for publication.

Thank you in advance for helping the Maryland Independent continue what has already become a tradition of its own. We look forward to hearing from you, and we look forward to helping you share your holiday memories with our community.

### Letters to the editor

### Inside your county government

#### Get connected: Social media

The digital age is transforming the way we receive our daily news, and provides new opportunities for you to connect with your county government. Interacting and creating relationships with Charles County Government allows you to see the people behind the organization name. To create a space where you can ask questions, follow news, and engage with other residents, Charles County Government offers social media pages.

Charles County Government has a main Facebook page, and pages for the Tri-County Animal Shelter; Charles County Economic Development Department; Charles County Department of Emergency Services; Charles County Recreation, Parks and Tourism; and White Plains Golf Course.

The main Charles County Government Facebook page offers county news and events, emergency updates, road closures, safety reminders, and upcoming meetings. The page focuses on news and updates for all county departments. Search keyword: Charles County Government.

Job seekers, local businesses and those interested locating a county business can follow the Charles County Economic Development Department page for business updates and news. The page provides local job listings, upcoming meetings and events, business success stories, and event photos. Search keyword: Charles County Economic Development.

On the Charles County Department of Emergency Services page, you will find safety tips and reminders, emergency personnel service stories, and upcoming events. Get to know the people who can help you in an emergency and learn more about how to prepare for disasters before they happen. Search keyword: Charles County Department of Emergency Services.

Parents, nature enthusiasts, and those who are looking for ways to get fit will love the Charles County Recreation, Parks, and Tourism page. Like the page for upcoming child- and adult-friendly events and activities, park and pool closings or delays, and tourism events. Search keyword: Charles County Parks & Recreation.

The Tri-County Animal Shelter, which serves the Southern Maryland area, developed one of our newest pages with animal lovers in mind. Follow the page for a daily posts of adoptable animals, shelter success stories, and upcoming animal shelter promotions and events. Search keyword: Tri-County Animal Shelter SoMD.

Local golfers know the White Plains Golf Course is a hot spot in our county for a round or two. Golf enthusiasts will enjoy the White Plains Golf Course page for golf promotions, news, and other information for a great day on the course. Search keyword: White Plains Golf Course in MD.

There are two official county Twitter pages, including Charles County Government and the Department of Economic Development. Follow Charles County Government at @CharlesCoMD for safety preparedness, county news, and upcoming meetings. Follow Economic Development at @MeetCharlesCo for your latest business and economic development news and updates.

Visit [www.CharlesCountyMD.gov](http://www.CharlesCountyMD.gov) to learn more about how you can get connected with your County Government. Citizens with special needs, contact the Maryland Relay Service at 711, or Relay Service TDD: 800-735-2258. Whether it is a tweet, mention or message, we look forward to connecting with you.

**Michael D. Mallinoff** is the county administrator for Charles County Government.

### Fed up with poor customer service

I'm writing to address the lack of basic customer relations training among all retail, restaurant or any business for that matter in the Waldorf area.

I patronize many businesses throughout the week in Waldorf and more often than not am met by the most unpersonable, unhappy, disrespectful etc., etc., etc., employees. I'm starting to believe that the owners of said businesses don't care that their employ-

ees do not possess the communication skills required to do the job properly because this is not a few isolated incidents.

Everyone reading this letter knows it's the truth. I'm going to start calling out these employees right in their place of business in front of whoever is present. If it's at a restaurant, I'll wait until I've received my food as not to be poisoned or something worse. Waldorf businesses beware. I will be

ready to pounce. Teach your employees the basic communication techniques that businesses used to consider paramount to any successful, viable business. Do not think I will return because I have no choice. I might be taking video of your inept employee and contacting upper management or corporate. I may call management out in front of many other patrons. I'm fed up.

**John Ladd, Waldorf**

### Adequate libraries are essential to the community

An adequate library is not a luxury but one of the necessities of any community that prides itself on its high quality of life. Anyone who has visited the Charles County Public Library will not be surprised to learn that the demand for library services has increased significantly. Over the past two years there has been a 33 percent increase in the number of people attending children and adult learning classes, and there has been a 120 percent increase in the number of events offered at the La Plata library.

A general building assessment conducted by Providence Associates, LLC looked at library space in four peer library systems, Alexandria, Carroll, Frederick, and Wicomico. Of these libraries, CCPL has the least amount of total library space at 0.43 sf per capita. The high was 0.79 square feet per capita in Carroll, followed by 0.71 in Alexandria, 0.6 in Frederick, and 0.55 in Wicomico. The average for Maryland public libraries is 0.6 sf per capita. The recommendation is to replace the La Plata branch with a 30,000-35,000-square-foot building. A 33,000-square-foot building would bring our square footage per capita up to 0.55.

CCPL is an outstanding library system, but we have outgrown our main branch in La Plata. The current build-

ing does not have adequate parking, public meeting space, staff work space, and most importantly it is not handicap accessible which could be viewed as discriminatory. The sole meeting room is fully booked, yet the public has made it clear to us that we need more space.

The La Plata branch is the library system's oldest facility and is located in the seat of Charles County government. The 50-year-old, two-story facility serves as the branch library for the La Plata area and houses our mobile services department. The approved CIP, page 350, lists our current building at 12,889 square feet and provides for a 13,000-square-foot replacement building, just 111 square foot larger. For perspective, the proposed 13,000-square-foot building would be smaller than our P.D. Brown branch, which is 14,300 square feet. P.D. Brown has no meeting room and very little office space.

The size and age of the La Plata branch inhibits our ability to provide 21st century public library services. Charles County residents are looking to their library for meeting spaces of all sizes- from small tutoring and study groups to large economic development meetings and STEM programming spaces. By providing the community with the space and tools needed to train for jobs,

start businesses, and to learn new skills, the library serves as an important partner in the economic and educational development of the county. Investing in a suitably-sized replacement library is one of the most valuable investments and with the highest returns. For every dollar spent on public libraries residents receive an estimated \$5-\$8 in economic value.

Replacing the La Plata branch with adequate space will fulfill our mission to provide opportunities for our community to engage, discover, and learn. The proposed 13k-square-foot replacement will be overwhelmed before it is built and will leave Charles County in the dust of other peer communities. Instead, we urge the Charles County Commissioners and county residents to support a building that meets the needs described in the library's facilities master plan — a 30,000-35,000 square foot space that will serve the county well for years to come.

Please share your proposed library locations on social media, hashtag #35klaplalibrary or send to our Executive Director Janet Salazar at [jsalazar@ccplonline.org](mailto:jsalazar@ccplonline.org).

I close with this, whatever the cost to build an adequate library is cheap compared to that of an ill equipped community. Thank you for your support.

**Claudia Bellony-Atanga, Waldorf**

The writer is president of the Charles County Public Library Board of Trustees.

## Maryland Independent

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Phone 301-645-9480 • Fax 301-932-4059

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#### Letters and submissions

The Maryland Independent welcomes letters to the editor from our readers. Letters must include the writer's name, address and telephone number. The phone number will not be published; it is for verification purposes only. We reserve the right to edit or reject all letters and each submission has a 400-word limit. The opinions expressed in letters and submissions are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Maryland Independent. All rights reserved. Please email letters to [letters@themarylandindependent.com](mailto:letters@themarylandindependent.com) with "Letter to the Editor" in the subject line. Letters may also be mailed, faxed, or dropped off in person at our office (see below for details).

#### All other submissions

[community@somdnews.com](mailto:community@somdnews.com)

#### SUBSCRIBER AND DELIVERY SERVICES 301-645-8945 • SUBSCRIBE@CHESPub.COM

#### Management

President: **David Fike**  
[dfike@chespub.com](mailto:dfike@chespub.com)

Publisher: **Art Crofoot**  
[acrofoot@chespub.com](mailto:acrofoot@chespub.com) | 301-848-0175

Regional Plant & Production Director: **Mike Bowen**  
[mbowen@chespub.com](mailto:mbowen@chespub.com)

Regional IT & Pagination Director: **David Alltop**  
[dalltop@chespub.com](mailto:dalltop@chespub.com)

Regional HR Director: **Tom Cloutier**  
[tcloutier@chespub.com](mailto:tcloutier@chespub.com)

#### Editorial

Executive Editor: **Rob Perry**  
[rperry@somdnews.com](mailto:rperry@somdnews.com)  
240-561-1622

Deputy Editor:  
**Sara Newman**  
[snewman@somdnews.com](mailto:snewman@somdnews.com)  
240-561-0854

Sports Editor: **Paul Watson**  
[pwatson@somdnews.com](mailto:pwatson@somdnews.com)  
301-764-2861

Business Editor:  
**Carol Smith**  
[csmith@somdnews.com](mailto:csmith@somdnews.com)  
240-458-0016

#### Advertising

Publisher:  
**Art Crofoot**  
[acrofoot@chespub.com](mailto:acrofoot@chespub.com)  
301-848-0175

Classifieds  
[chesAds@chespub.com](mailto:chesAds@chespub.com)  
1-800-220-1230

Legal / Public Notices  
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