



A Grassroots Effort



County Executive Ball Presents: The Ball Bulletin



August 17, 2026

Dear Friends,

This past week, I announced that Howard County Government was immediately providing \$260,000 in emergency funding to Grassroots Crisis Intervention to address an emergency budget gap resulting from the loss of federal government contract funding as a designated National Back-Up Center for the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (988 Lifeline).



Grassroots Crisis Intervention is a critical part of our county's behavioral health safety net, providing lifesaving crisis services to residents when they are at their most vulnerable. When federal contracting decisions undermine the resources available to organizations like Grassroots, the consequences are felt right here in our community, not just by the dedicated professionals who lose their jobs, but by the people who rely on 988 and other crisis services when they need help the most. This funding will ensure Grassroots' Crisis Center doors remain open by helping cover overhead costs, including rent, for the remainder of the fiscal year, while Grassroots develops a long-term stabilization plan.

To learn more about this announcement, check out our [news release online](#).

Sincerely,



Community Updates



Aging with Confidence

Join our Office on Aging and Independence (OAI) for its next Lunch & Learn event, "Aging with Confidence: The Complete Planning Road Map," on Tuesday, September 1st, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at our [Glenwood 50+ Center](#). Come enjoy a complimentary lunch, while listening to local community resource experts and a discussion panel on planning for the future. Subjects and panelists include:

- Elder Law/planning – Melissa Paddy, Estates & Trusts Attorney, Liberty Legacy Law Group
- Real Estate for Seniors – Donna Weaver, Wendy Slaughter Team
- Financial Planning – John Dove, Certified Financial Planner
- Senior Advocate expert – Andrea Bendig, Dementia & Aging Care, Wellness Strategies Group
- Right at Home – Dan Shaw, Right at Home
- Downsizing, Stress Free Solutions – Ryan Burns
- OAI – Kami Bennett

Come learn about available resources, supports, and practical strategies for aging with confidence. To sign-up to participate in this FREE event, visit the County's ["Aging with Confidence: Navigating Care, Planning, and Change" Active Network registration website](#).

Celebrating Black-Owned Innovation

This Black Business Month, we are proud to celebrate Howard County's own [TandT LLC](#), a Columbia-based cybersecurity and compliance company helping businesses protect sensitive information and compete in the federal and defense marketplace.

Founded and led by CEO Ijenna Aluko, TandT helps defense contractors and regulated businesses navigate complex cybersecurity requirements, including CMMC, NIST 800-171, and DFARS. Through cybersecurity assessments, compliance planning, process automation, and ongoing support, the TandT team is helping businesses strengthen their



security while remaining ready for new contracting opportunities.

TandT is also part of Cohort Two of our Cyber Howard Accelerator, joining a community of innovative companies building the next generation of cybersecurity solutions. The program connects entrepreneurs with mentorship, industry expertise, workspace, and opportunities to grow within Howard County's thriving technology ecosystem.

Cybersecurity is essential to our economy and our national security, and businesses like TandT demonstrate the innovation and entrepreneurship happening right here in Howard County. This Black Business Month, we celebrate Ijenna and the TandT team for helping businesses stay secure, competitive, and prepared for the future.



Navigating Behavioral Health

Since 2019, we have invested in Behavioral Health Navigators at both the Howard County Health Department and our local hospital, helping residents and families find their way through an often complex system of mental health and substance use services.

By FY22, our County support for Johns Hopkins Howard County Medical Center reached a record \$4 million over three years, including funding for Behavioral Health Navigators, Care Coordinators, and other programs designed to connect residents with the right care and resources.

Behavioral Health Navigators help people identify available services, address barriers such as insurance or language needs, connect with mental health and substance use treatment, and follow up to ensure that connection to care is made.

During National Wellness Month, we recognize that wellness is not only about physical health. It is also about making sure our residents have care, connection, and compassionate support when they need it most. We will continue investing in a behavioral health system that helps every Howard County resident find a path toward greater health and well-being.

The Trolley

A great way to explore Historic Ellicott City while beating the summer heat is aboard the Old Ellicott City Trolley, a convenient circulator connecting visitors with the shops, restaurants, history, and charm of Main Street.



Are You Eligible?

A significant increase in a home's assessment should not automatically result in the same increase in the amount of property taxes a resident must pay.

Maryland's Homestead Property Tax Credit helps protect homeowners from large increases in the taxable assessment of their principal residence. For eligible Howard County homeowners, the credit limits annual increases in the taxable assessment to 5% for the County portion of the property tax and 10% for the State portion.



The credit does not change the assessed market value of the home. Instead, it applies to the portion of an assessment increase that exceeds the applicable cap.

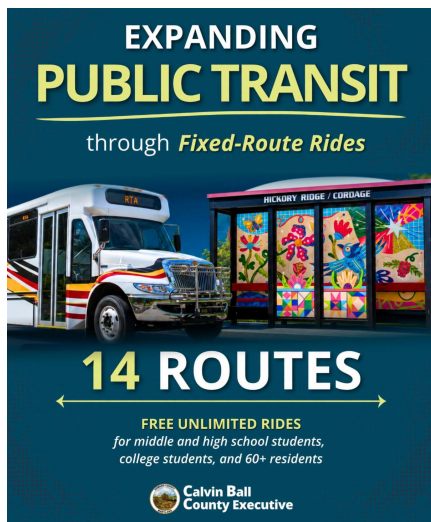
Homeowners seeking eligibility must submit a one-time application to the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation. Residents who are unsure whether they have already applied can look up their property through Maryland's Real Property database. A status of "Approved" or "Application Received" means no additional application is currently required.

This simple step could help protect your household from significant increases in future property tax bills. Learn more, check your status, and apply at the [Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation's "Maryland Homestead Property Tax Credit Program" website](#).

Let Me Ride

Our 14 local RTA routes now connect residents with employment, education, healthcare, shopping, recreation, and regional transportation throughout Howard County and neighboring communities.

In FY26, fixed-route ridership grew by more than 5 percent, reflecting the continued value of reliable bus service and stronger connections to MARC, Metrorail, MTA commuter buses, and other local transit systems.



We are also expanding those regional connections through our partnership with Montgomery County to bring Flash Bus Rapid Transit along US 29 to Downtown Columbia. The planned extension will provide a one-seat ride between Howard County and destinations along the US 29 corridor, supported by new BRT stations and four additional electric buses.

We also offer unlimited free rides on our fixed routes for middle and high school students, college students, and residents ages 60 and older. By reducing transportation costs while expanding regional connections, we are helping more of our residents reach school, work, appointments, and opportunities throughout Howard County and

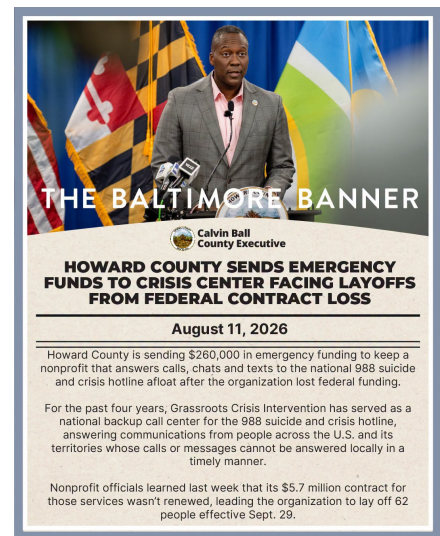
beyond.

A Crisis Response for a Crisis Center

Beyond 988, Grassroots provides 24-hour crisis services, mental health and substance use treatment, mobile crisis response, homeless services, and other essential support for residents in need.

That is why we are providing \$260,000 in emergency County funding following the loss of a major federal contract. Protecting Grassroots means protecting a critical network of care our community depends on.

Check out [**The Baltimore Banner's latest news article, "Howard County sends emergency funds to crisis center facing layoffs from federal contract loss", online**](#) to learn more.



Expanding Hospital Capacity

I joined Johns Hopkins Howard County Medical Center President Dr. Mohammed Shafeeq Ahmed for a walkthrough of the future 29-bed Observation Unit, the first expansion since 2009, which is expected to open in 2027 and help expand capacity and reduce emergency room wait times for our community.





NOT Homeless & Hopeless

Since 2019, we have made meaningful progress, here in Howard County, on preventing and combating homelessness.

Together, we have:

- Helped 2,513 households avoid eviction.
- Invested \$23.4 million to keep families safely housed.
- Assisted more than 550 households in securing permanent housing.
- Expanded street outreach by 129 percent.
- Supported more than 90 young people experiencing homelessness.
- Provided 2,500 hotel nights for families during the pandemic.
- Established Howard County's first Housing Trust Fund.
- Expanded affordable housing opportunities across our community.
- Launched The Path Toward Zero, our five-year plan to end homelessness.

None of this would be possible without our dedicated County staff and incredible partners, including Grassroots Crisis Intervention, Bridges to Housing Stability, Community Advisory Council Howard County, the Howard County Housing Commission, the Coalition to End Homelessness, our housing providers, landlords, advocates, volunteers, and everyone working every day to ensure more of our neighbors have a safe place to call home.

While there is still work to do, we're committed to building a Howard County where homelessness is increasingly rare, brief, and nonrecurring.

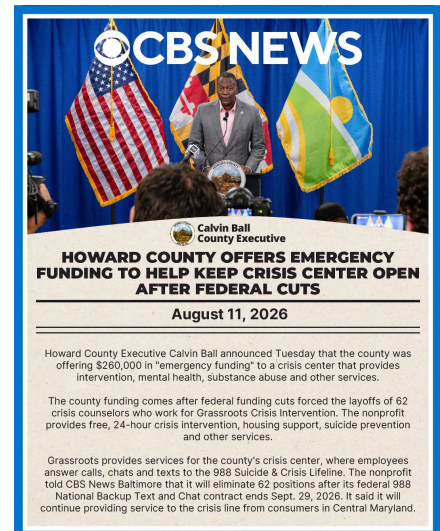
Providing Job Search Support

The loss of Grassroots Crisis Intervention's federal 988 backup contract will impact 62 dedicated employees, and WJZ-TV CBS Baltimore recently highlighted how Howard County is responding.

Along with allocating \$260,000 in emergency funding, our Office of Workforce Development is helping connect affected employees with resources and new opportunities.

These professionals have spent their careers helping people through some of life's hardest moments. As Grassroots navigates this transition, we will continue supporting both the organization and the people behind its lifesaving work.

Visit [CBS News Baltimore's "Howard County offers emergency funding to help keep crisis center open after federal cuts" news article online](#) to read the full story.





On Our OWN

Our commitment does not end when a family purchases a home. During the COVID-19 pandemic, federal shutdowns, and periods of economic uncertainty, many Howard County homeowners faced sudden income loss and the threat of foreclosure.

That's why since 2019, Howard County has helped 160 households remain safely in their homes.

Homeownership is one of the most important tools families have to build wealth. By helping residents avoid foreclosure, we are protecting their housing stability and the equity they have worked so hard to build. Learn more by visiting our [Department of Housing and Community Development's "OWN Initiatives" website](#).

Can Ya Keep Up?

We launched the transformational HoCo RapidRide in March 2025 to provide a flexible, low-cost transportation option along the Route One Corridor and improve connections to our existing transit network.

In its first full year of service, riders took more than 30,000 trips, demonstrating strong demand for convenient, on-demand transportation in eastern Howard County.



Through an innovative app-based system, HoCo RapidRide helps residents reach jobs, businesses, essential services, and nearby fixed-route stops without depending on a traditional bus stop or schedule.

This encouraging response shows how thoughtful innovation can expand access and provide transportation designed around the real needs of our community.



The One Stop Shop

This Black Business Month, we are proud to celebrate Howard County's own American Bully Manufacturing, an Annapolis Junction company helping entrepreneurs and businesses turn innovative ideas into finished products.

Led by co-founder Andrew Sherman, American Bully provides product development, custom and contract manufacturing, precision machining, metal fabrication, prototyping, assembly, and other services from its local machine shop. Its team brings experience across industries including automotive, marine, industrial, and

unmanned vehicles, helping clients move from an initial concept to production.

Their innovation has also served our community. During the COVID-19 pandemic, American Bully designed and manufactured reusable respirators in Howard County for frontline law enforcement, military, and healthcare professionals.

Manufacturing is an important and growing part of our local economy. Howard County is home to more than 200 manufacturing firms, and employment in the sector has grown 37% over the past decade. Supporting local manufacturers helps strengthen skilled career opportunities, encourages innovation, and keeps more of the products and solutions our businesses need being built right here in our community.

American Bully Manufacturing demonstrates the creativity, craftsmanship, and entrepreneurial spirit that continue to strengthen Howard County. This Black Business Month, we celebrate Andrew and his team for building products, possibilities, and opportunity right here at home.

Learn more by visiting the company's website at www.americanbullymanufacturing.com.

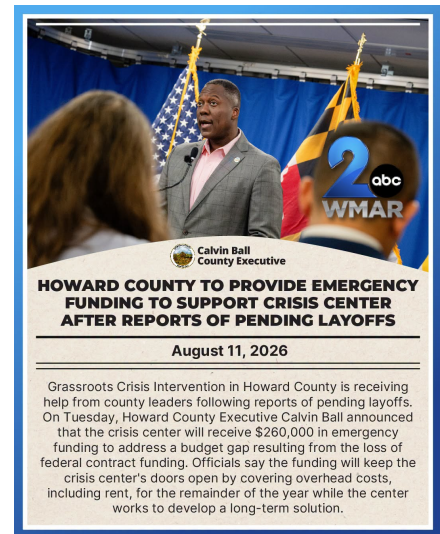
Assisting an Essential Community Partner

We are providing \$260,000 in emergency County funding to help cover critical operating costs while Grassroots develops a long-term stabilization plan and continues serving Howard County residents—our neighbors.

When an essential community partner faces an unexpected challenge, we step up. We lead with love! Grassroots has supported residents in crisis for decades, and we are committed to helping protect that critical safety net.

Thank you to WMAR-2 News Baltimore for highlighting this important effort.

Visit [WMAR-2 News Baltimore's "Howard County to provide emergency funding to support crisis center after reports of pending layoffs" news article online](#) to read the full story.



Don't be Shelf-ish, Design it!

This Black Business Month, we are celebrating Andrea Harvey, founder of [ASH Interiors & Design, LLC](#), and a trailblazing entrepreneur helping bring beautiful, functional spaces to life from the heart of Historic Ellicott City.

With more than 20 years of industry experience, Andrea specializes in kitchen, bath, and interior design for residential and

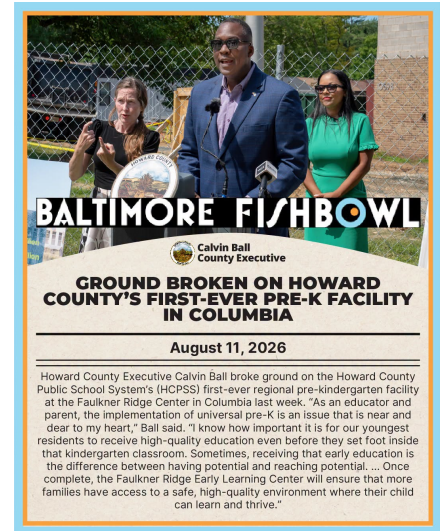
commercial clients. When she opened her studio in Historic Ellicott City, she became the first woman of color to open a brick-and-mortar design space in the area. Her work also extends beyond traditional design through Haven by ASH, which provides pro bono design services to women and families navigating major life transitions.

Andrea's success reflects creativity with a cause and entrepreneurship with impact. We are proud to have ASH Interiors and Design adding its talent, vision, and distinctive style to Howard County's small business community.

Howard County's First-Ever Regional Pre-K Facility

We are now transforming a building that sat vacant for 15 years into Howard County's first-ever regional pre-K facility, creating new opportunities for 260 of our youngest learners.

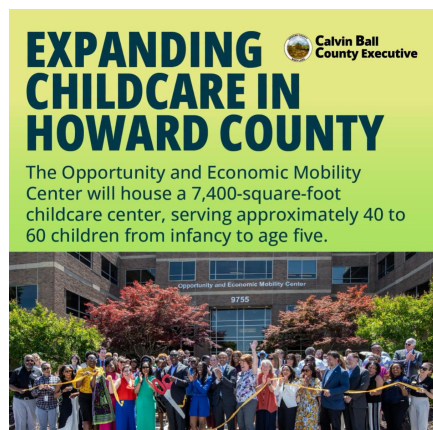
Through a \$29 million investment, the Faulkner Ridge Early Learning Center will receive comprehensive upgrades to its classrooms, accessibility, technology, roofing, and critical building systems. Construction is expected to be completed in August 2027, preparing the center to welcome students for the 2027–2028 school year.



Early education can be the difference between having potential and reaching it. By bringing this long-unused community asset back to life, we are expanding access to full-day pre-K, advancing the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, and helping more children enter kindergarten ready to learn and thrive.

Thank you to *Baltimore Fishbowl* for highlighting this impactful investment in our children, families, and future.

To read the full story, be sure to check out the [*Baltimore Fishbowl's* article "Ground broken on Howard County's first-ever pre-K facility in Columbia" online.](#)



Expanding Childcare Options

Howard County's childcare progress is continuing at the new Opportunity and Economic Mobility Center in Columbia.

The transformational Center now brings workforce, housing, state, and supportive services together under one roof so residents can more easily access the resources they need to build stability and move forward.

A future 7,400-square-foot childcare center will serve approximately 40 to 60 children from infancy to age five. Operated by our

Department of Recreation & Parks it will be the department's first childcare center and its first program to offer infant care.

The impactful center is expected to operate year-round from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and create approximately 20 new jobs. Families visiting the Center will also be able to connect with employment training, career coaching, housing assistance, homeownership resources, and other services within the same location.

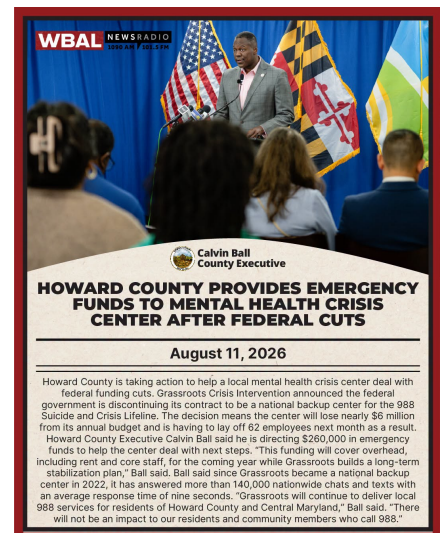
That is what economic mobility looks like: childcare that allows a parent to work, housing support that creates stability, and workforce services that open the door to new opportunities.

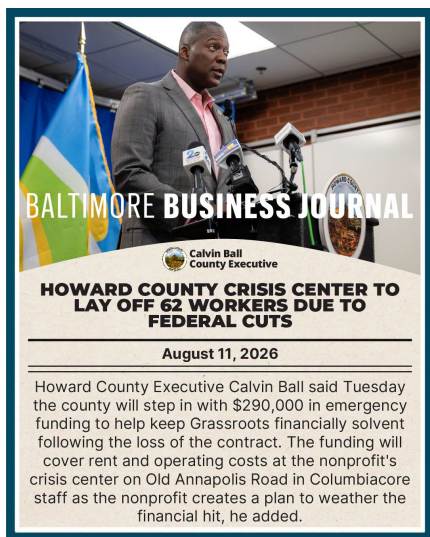
Since I became your County Executive, we have worked hard to build a childcare system that supports children, strengthens families, and helps our entire community thrive. Today, we're continuing to see that vision through. Learn more about the OEMC by checking out our [news release, "Howard County Executive Calvin Ball Officially Opens County's First Transformational Opportunity and Economic Mobility Center" online.](#)

Protecting a Critical Safety Net

WBAL NewsRadio 1090 and FM 101.5 magnified an important message for our community: despite the loss of a major federal contract at Grassroots Crisis Intervention, local 988 services will continue for residents of Howard County and Central Maryland.

We are directing \$260,000 in emergency County funding to cover critical overhead, including rent and core staffing, for the coming year while Grassroots develops a long-term stabilization plan. The federal decision will eliminate nearly \$6 million from the organization's annual budget and lead to 62 layoffs, but it will not interrupt the local crisis support our residents rely upon.





a national backup center for the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. The change will result in 62 layoffs this September, impacting an organization whose crisis professionals have responded to more than 140,000 people nationwide.

When an essential community partner faces an unexpected disruption of this scale, Howard County must be ready to respond. That is why we are directing \$260,000 in emergency County funding to help Grassroots stabilize its operations and build a sustainable path forward.

Behind every statistic are dedicated professionals who have spent their careers answering people during some of their most difficult moments. We value the tremendous service Grassroots and its

employees provide, and we remain committed to supporting this vital organization through this transition.

Thank you to the *Baltimore Business Journal* for highlighting this important issue and Howard County's commitment to standing with an essential community partner when support matters most.

Check out the [Baltimore Business Journal's news story "Howard County crisis center to lay off 62 workers due to federal cuts" online](#) to learn more.

Building a Kit, Make a Plan

Preparedness starts before an emergency happens. Our Office of Emergency Management is helping residents build the right kits, gather essential supplies, and make a plan to keep their families and pets safe when every second counts.



Growing Our Fleet

Since FY21, annual ridership across our transit network has increased by more than 775,000 rides, growing from approximately 334,000 to a record 1.1 million in FY26.

During that time, we expanded and adjusted service, added 28 vehicles to our transit fleet,

improved accessibility and amenities at bus stops, and invested in technology that makes riding more reliable and convenient.

These strategic investments are helping us serve more residents, strengthen connections across our community, and build a transit network prepared to carry this momentum forward.



A Journal Lovers Paradise

This Black Business Month, it's the perfect time to celebrate Howard County's own [Drama MaMa Bookshop](#)!

Owner and operator Alisa L. Brock turned a lifelong love of writing and journaling into a business rooted in creativity, reflection, and healing. What began with Brock binding journals by hand grew into a shop at Historic Savage Mill offering handmade and customizable journals, stationery, books, and experiences where customers can even build their own journal.

Drama Mama is a wonderful example of how a personal passion can become a purposeful business that inspires others to tell their stories, pursue their goals, and put their own ideas on the page. Stop by Savage Mill and support this creative Howard County entrepreneur during Black Business Month and throughout the year.

Life's Batter with Funnel Cake

This past week at the 80th Howard County Fair, I hope you had the chance to cool off with a snowball or funnel cakes from the West Friendship Volunteer Fire Department (VFD) and support an organization that has served our community for more than eight decades.



Established in 1944, West Friendship VFD provides fire, emergency medical, and rescue services as part of Howard County's public safety system. Its members have also maintained a longstanding presence at the Fair, providing first aid while conducting annual fundraising activities for the department.

Our volunteer first responders give their time and talents to protect their neighbors when they need them most.



Who Can Resist Deep Fried Oreos

A Howard County Fair favorite can also be a great way to support county students, and I hope this past week you had the chance to stop by Marriotts Ridge High School Boosters booth and enjoy their popular fried Oreos.

I've had the opportunity to visit our Mustangs' booth many times over the years, and it is always wonderful to see students, families, and volunteers working together in support of their school community. Proceeds from the Oreo Booth help the Boosters support extracurricular activities and enriching opportunities for students throughout Marriotts Ridge High School.

Together we celebrated the 80th Howard County Fair, grabbed something sweet and supported the dedicated volunteers helping our students explore their interests, build connections, and succeed beyond the classroom.

All Things Fried to Help our Gladiators Thrive

Over the years, I've enjoyed visiting our Glenelg Boosters at the Howard County Fair many times, and their french fries and fried dough have become a familiar part of this cherished community tradition.



The Boosters' annual Fair booths help raise funds that support Glenelg High School's athletic and academic communities, extending the impact of every purchase well beyond the Fairgrounds.

During this past week's 80th Howard County Fair continues, I hope you had the opportunity to stop by, enjoy a Fair favorite, and support our students, programs, teams, and activities that help our Glenelg Gladiators thrive.



A Signature Summer Tradition

For 80 years, the Howard County Fair has brought generations of families, farmers, young people, and neighbors together to celebrate the agricultural traditions that remain an important part of Howard County's identity.

I was proud to present a proclamation recognizing the 80th anniversary of the Howard County Fair, honoring a tradition that began in August 1946 at Brendel's Manor Park. What started as a showcase of the local harvest and friendly competition among neighbors traveled through several locations before finding its permanent home in West Friendship in 1953.

Eight decades later, the Fair has grown into one of Howard County's signature summer traditions, welcoming thousands of residents and visitors while keeping

agriculture at the heart of the celebration. With more than 40,000 acres of farmland and 330 farms in Howard County today, the Fair continues to connect new generations with the people, practices, and traditions that sustain our agricultural community.

This remarkable milestone would not be possible without the Fair Board, agricultural families, Howard County Extension, 4-H, FFA, volunteers, and community organizations whose dedication has kept this tradition thriving for generations.

Congratulations to everyone who has helped build and sustain the Howard County Fair across 80 years. I encourage our residents to join us in West Friendship through August 15 to celebrate its history, heritage, and bright future.

Howard County's Youngest Agricultural Enthusiasts

Nearly 70 of Howard County's youngest agricultural enthusiasts stepped into the show ring at the 80th Howard County Fair for Junior Showmanship, developing the skills, confidence, and connection to agriculture that will help carry our rural heritage forward.



Designed for children ages 5 through 8, Junior Showmanship teaches participants how to care for and show livestock through workshops and hands-on experience with dairy cattle, market swine, market goats, and market sheep. Older 4-H members help guide these young participants, many of whom will continue into 4-H and FFA as they become eligible.

With more than 40,000 acres of farmland and 330 farms across Howard County, introducing our young people to agriculture is essential to preserving the knowledge, commitment, and care that sustain this important part of our community.

It was wonderful to see our future agricultural leaders learning, competing, and supporting one another in the ring. Congratulations to every participant, and thank you to the Howard County Farm Bureau, 4-H leaders, families, farmers, and volunteers who are helping cultivate the future of agriculture in Howard County.



Celebrating Our Caribbean American Neighbors

We celebrated Caribbean American heritage at The Chrysalis, bringing residents together for an afternoon of culture, community, and connection that honored the history and contributions of Caribbean Americans throughout Howard County and beyond.

From steel pan music and Caribbean movement to traditional crafts, local vendors, health and wellness resources, and immigration support, the festival created a vibrant space for residents of all ages to learn, celebrate, and experience the

richness of Caribbean culture.

Caribbean Americans continue to strengthen our community through education, entrepreneurship, public service, the arts, and so much more. Celebrations like this help ensure those contributions are seen, valued, and shared with future generations while building a stronger sense of belonging across Howard County.

Thank you to our Office of Human Rights and Equity, the Caribbean American Heritage Month Advisory Group, our community partners, performers, exhibitors, vendors, and everyone who joined us for this meaningful celebration. Together, we are keeping culture alive by sharing its music, movement, traditions, and stories with the next generation.

Going Beyond Royalty

We celebrated the ribbon cutting for [Beyond Royalty Beauty Bar](#) in Columbia, marking an exciting milestone for a diverse, woman-owned luxury salon that is continuing to deepen its roots in Howard County. Founded in 2018 and led by owner Brittney Middleton, Beyond Royalty has built its brand around quality, care, and an elevated client experience.



As we celebrate Black Business Month, Beyond Royalty is a powerful example of the Black entrepreneurs whose talent, vision, and determination continue to strengthen Howard County's diverse business community. Supporting these businesses means supporting local jobs, building wealth, and creating more opportunities for entrepreneurs to grow and thrive.

This expansion represents more than a new space. Beyond Royalty is retaining existing jobs in Howard County and projects adding 10 new positions, with a goal of growing to a team of 13 professionals across styling, support, and management. That growth means more careers, more opportunity, and another local business investing in Howard County.

Congratulations to Brittney and the entire Beyond Royalty team on this meaningful milestone. During Black Business Month and throughout the year, we are proud to celebrate the businesses and entrepreneurs helping make Howard County a vibrant place to live, work, and grow.

Government Updates

Board and Commissions

Members Sought for Three Department of Planning and Zoning Boards

Our Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) is looking for passionate and committed leaders to join its [Cemetery Preservation Advisory Board](#), [Design Advisory Panel](#), and [Historic Preservation Commission](#). Members contribute professional insight and strategic vision, advise on key initiatives, policies, and

projects, collaborate with community partners and decision-makers, and help guide sustainable, innovative, and equitable development.

If you live in Howard County, have professional experience or training in fields such as civil engineering, planning, architecture, historic preservation, urban design, or history, and have a strong commitment to public service, this is your opportunity to make a meaningful impact. To submit your application and/or to learn more about this Panel, Commission, and Board, I encourage you to visit our [“Boards & Commissions” website](#).

To note, the deadline to apply for this Panel, Commission, and Board is next Friday, August 28th.

Department of Community Resources and Services

Learn How to Ensure Your Child's Success

Our Department of Community Resources and Service’s (DCRS) Office of Children and Families (OCF) supports Howard County families with opportunities to learn, grow and thrive through their family workshops, local resources, events, educational programs, and more all year long. It is especially reassuring to know OCF is here to help parents and caregivers successfully transition to a new school year, as Howard County Public School Systems students head back this coming Monday, August 24th.

In preparation, I encourage parents and caregivers to join OCF tonight, August 17th at 6:30 p.m., for its virtual “Routines for School Success” workshop. During this workshop, participants will explore routines, activities and learning experiences their children can expect in preschool or childcare, as well as learn how to create simple and effective routines at home that support independence, reduce stress, and help children feel prepared for each day. To participate in this FREE event, visit the [County’s Active Network “Routines for School Success” registration webpage](#) to sign-up. For questions about the workshop, please email lrhodes@howardcountymd.gov.

Additionally, next Wednesday, August 26th at 7:00 p.m., be sure to check out OCF’s “Helping Young Children Learn to Make Friends” virtual, interactive workshop. During this workshop, parents and caregivers will explore practical strategies to teach their children friendship skills from sharing to taking turns, communicating, showing kindness, solving conflicts, and building empathy. Participants will also discover simple ways to practice these skills through everyday routines, play, and conversations, as well as learn helpful tips to support their child’s social confidence and positive relationships at home, school, and in the community. To participate in this FREE event, visit the [County’s Active Network “Helping Young Children Learn to Make Friends” registration webpage](#) to sign-up. For questions about the workshop, please email lrhodes@howardcountymd.gov.

To learn more about the latest happenings, workshops, activities, and programs for children and families being offered by OCF each month, visit its [Parent Pages Sign-Up website](#) to subscribe to its latest [Parent Pages online newsletter](#). In addition to its *Parents Pages*, OCF’s [“Parent’s Guide to Howard County”](#) for 2026 is also a great resource for parents, caregivers, and others looking to learn more about and find services in our community to help children grow and thrive.

If you need individual assistance, such as finding childcare, guidance with

parenting issues, mental and emotional health support, special needs resources, food access, housing, and more, contact OCF's free CARE line at 410-313-CARE (2273) to learn more about what's available.



DCRS and Getting Ahead Suite of Programs Presents

Annual Fall Pre-Loved Event

DCRS's Pre-Loved Event is Back!

Howard County community members are invited to join DCRS this Saturday, August 22nd for the return of its annual fall "Pre-Loved Event." Stop by DCRS's headquarters at 9830 Patuxent Woods Drive in Columbia, anytime between 9:00 a.m. and noon on the 22nd, to browse an array of gently-used items, such as toys, books, kids and baby items, clothes for all sizes and ages, and much more to take home for FREE. Please keep in mind that items are available on a first come, first served basis.

Bags will be available, but only while supplies last, so participants are encouraged to bring their own reusable bags if they have them. Also, this is a walk-in event, so no pre-registration or ID is required to attend. For more information, check out the event flier (in [English](#) or in [Español](#)).

Finally, if you need accommodations to participate in this event or have questions, please contact Lee Jones at 410-313-0243 (voice/relay) or email lejones@howardcountymd.gov.

Summer Steps Challenge

Earlier this month, DCRS's Office on Aging and Independence (OAI) kicked off its [Summer Steps Challenge](#). Hosted through the FREE StepUp app, this challenge encourages participants to stay active and build healthy habits by tracking your daily steps through your phone's built-in sensors, as well as syncs with any wearables, including Apple Watch, FitBit, Garmin, Google Fit via Apple Health, or Android Health Connect.

To take part in this challenge, which runs now through Friday, September 25th, visit the [County's Active Network "Summer Steps Challenge" registration webpage](#) to sign-up. For questions about the challenge, contact Michelle Rosenfeld at 410-313-7394.

Stay Active & Build Healthy Habits!

THE 2026
HOWARD COUNTY

Summer Steps Challenge

Using the FREE
Step-Up App!

SIGN UP TODAY!



Howard County
Office on Aging and Independence
#HoCoAging



Older Adults Can Keep Learning Too

As our county youth head back to school, I encourage Howard County older adults to check out all the great lifelong learning opportunities offered by OAI at its [50+ centers](#). Whether your interests lean toward arts and culture or fitness and healthy aging activities, our 50+ centers offer a wide range of classes to spark your creativity and boost your health.

To learn more about the latest lifelong learning opportunities, be sure to check

OAI's [latest "News & Events for Howard County Older Adult" digital newsletter](#) or this [month's issue of its monthly publication, The 50+ Connection](#).

Office of Consumer Protection



What to Do About Data Breach Notices

If you have ever received a data breach notice from a business or organization, our Office of Consumer Protection (OCP) is reminding residents that these notices should NEVER be ignored. As outlined on the [National Association of Attorneys General's "Data Breaches" website](#), a data breach notice informs a consumer that their personal information may have been exposed by a security incident at a company with which they do or have done business. A notice can come from any organization that collects personal data, including health care providers, universities, insurance companies, banks, credit card issuers, and retailers. In fact, according to the [Identity Theft Resource Center's 2025 Annual Data Breach Report](#), 80 percent of consumers received at least one data breach notice during the past year, and almost 40 percent received three to five notices.

One important thing to keep in mind is that a notice does not necessarily mean your identity has been stolen, but it does mean you may be at an increased risk of fraud or identity theft. To protect yourself, here are some steps to take if you receive a data breach notice:

1. Change passwords of the impacted account, and any other account that uses the same password. Try switching to passkeys instead of passwords when possible.
2. Verify the notice by checking the company's website to make sure the data breach is real and not a scam. The [Maryland Office of the Attorney General \(OAG\) also maintains a "Security Breach Notices" searchable webpage](#) of data breach notices of notices sent to the OAG in the last three years affecting Maryland residents.
3. Monitor your account for follow-up attacks and be extra careful about unsolicited calls, texts, or emails. After a data breach, 88 percent of victims experience increased phishing or account takeover threats.
4. Sign up for credit monitoring. The company that issued the data breach notice may offer free credit or identity monitoring; signing up will provide early detection of any identity theft.

Ultimately, the best way to protect yourself and your personal information is by using complex passwords, multi-factor authentication, and consider freezing your credit with the major credit reporting agencies.

To stay in the know about the latest consumer and financial literacy topics and tips on how to avoid scams and make smart purchasing decisions, be sure to visit [OCP's "Newsletter" webpage to subscribe to receive its monthly newsletter](#).

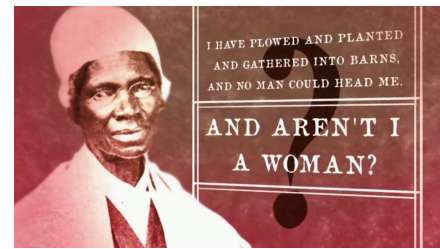
Office of Human Rights and Equity

Women's Equality Day

This Women's Equality Day, all are invited to join our Office of Human Rights and Equity (OHRE) on

Wednesday, August 26th at 6:00 p.m. at our [East Columbia 50+ Center](#) for a FREE screening and post-screening discussion of the documentary, *The 19th Amendment – A Woman's Right to Vote*. Presented as part of OHRE's "Reel Enlightenment Series," *The 19th Amendment – A Woman's Right to Vote* traces the decades long fight for women's suffrage, featuring key figures, legal milestones, and the historic ratification of the 19th amendment.

Attendees are invited to participate in a post-screening discussion exploring the connections between the abolitionist and suffrage movements, the inextricable relationship between race and gender in the history of women's rights, and the continued impact of this history on our modern voting landscape.



To reserve your spot to attend this FREE event, visit [OHRE's "Reel Enlightenment: Women's Equality Day" Eventbrite webpage](#) today.

For questions and/or more information about this event and/or OHRE's Reel Enlightenment Series, contact the office at 410-313-6430 or email ohreoutreach@howardcountymd.gov.

Department of Planning and Zoning



Planning Board Meeting

This Thursday, August 20th, the County's [Planning Board](#) will be hosting a hybrid meeting, in person at 3430 Court House Drive in Ellicott City and virtually via WebEx, starting at 7:00 p.m., to discuss the following [agenda](#) items:

- [SDP-26-033 WLR Investment Group Technical Staff Report](#) – A Site Development Plan (SDP-26-033) to construct a 4,145 square foot commercial car wash facility and related site improvements at 8121 Robinson Jefferson Drive in the Gateway Overlook shopping center.
- [FDP-45-IV Board of Education of Howard County Technical Staff Report](#) – Request to amend the FDP to revise the area of non-credited open space calculation for the expansion of a parking lot within the campus of Wilde Lake Middle School and Wilde Lake High School at 10481 Cross Fox Lane in Columbia.

To register to testify, visit the County's ["Planning Board" website](#). Registration must be completed prior to 7:00 p.m. the night (August 19, 2026) before the scheduled meeting to participate. If you do not wish to testify, but would simply like to watch the meeting, visit the [Howard County Council's "Watch Us" website](#).

A five-member board, the Planning Board makes recommendations to the Zoning Board or County Council on matters related to planning and zoning and renders a final decision on selected development proposals. To learn more about the Planning Board, including upcoming meeting dates and details about procedures for testifying at a meeting, visit the County's ["Planning Board" website](#).

Route 1 Tax Credit Program

DPZ continues to accept applications for its [Route 1 Tax Credit Program](#). If you own a commercial,

industrial, or mixed-use property along the Route 1 Corridor or Elkridge's Main Street area, you may be eligible to receive tax credits for qualified façade and landscape improvements visible from the roadway. Eligible improvements include building façade upgrades, new signage, exterior painting and lighting, screening and landscaping, and other options.

For more information about this program, to apply and/or to hear what others have to say who have benefited from the tax credit, visit [DPZ's "Route 1 Tax Credit Program" website](#).



Police Department



Now Hiring Crossing Guards

With the start of the 2026–2027 school year just one week away, Howard County Police Department (HCPD) continues to look for individuals interested in becoming a crossing guard. This is a part-time, contingent, non-benefitted position for 10 to 20 hours a week and paying \$18 an hour. No

experience needed and uniforms are provided.

Possible openings include (locations are subject to change):

- Mayfield Woods Middle
- Jeffers Hill Elementary
- Laurel Woods Elementary
- Bollman Bridge Elementary
- Centennial Lane Elementary
- Hollifield Station Elementary
- Pointers Run Elementary

If you would like to help HCPD keep our kids safe this school year, visit the [job listing on our "Career Pages"](#).

Keep Our Kids Safe this School Year, Drive Smart

As students and staff prepare to return to school on August 24th for the 2026–2027 school year, HCPD is working hard to ensure children, parents and teachers all arrive safely. Through its annual back-to-school initiative known as H.A.S.T.E. (Helping Arriving Students Through Enforcement), HCPD officers will focus on enforcing driver and pedestrian safety in school zones.

For the first few weeks of the school year, increased traffic patrols will be in place on roadways surrounding elementary, middle and high schools. Officers will focus on drivers who are speeding, failing to stop for pedestrians or driving distracted in those areas. They will also be checking for seat belt and child safety seat use to ensure

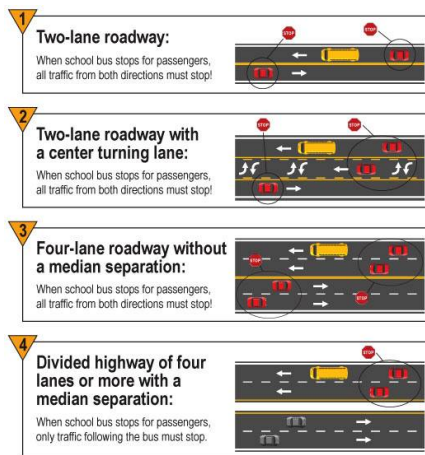


all occupants are properly restrained.

HCPD is also reminding all drivers that buses serving the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) are outfitted with external cameras. Launched in 2021, [HCPD's External School Bus Camera program](#) aims to ensure student safety by discouraging motorists from passing buses illegally. The state of Maryland's fine for illegally passing a school bus is \$250.

Finally, HCPD's Speed Camera program is designed to encourage drivers to slow down in school zones and has tiered fines ranging from \$40 to \$425 based on speed. The cameras are rotated among various school zones in the county, which are posted in advance and updated every week on the [department's "Speed Camera Program" website](#).

HCPD will continue to conduct traffic safety education and enforcement efforts throughout the school year.



When to Stop for the School Bus

Speaking of HCPD's External School Bus Camera program, here is a quick visual reminder about when you need to stop for a stopped school bus with flashing red lights and stop sign extended on a highway or multi-lane roadway.

All vehicles in all lanes on a multi-lane roadway must stop for a school bus with flashing red lights unless there is a raised median or curb. If there is a raised median or curb, then only vehicles traveling in the same direction of the bus must stop.

Since the installation of external cameras on HCPSS school buses, 9,792 citations were issued during the 2022–2023 school year, 9,554 during the 2023–2024 school year, and 8,285 during the 2024–2025 school year. Help be the difference in ensuring our students get to and from school safely each and every day by stopping for the stopped school bus.

To learn more about this program, visit the [department's "External School Bus Cameras" website](#) or call 410–313–7555.

Coffee with a Cop

Come meet face-to-face with HCPD's patrol and community outreach officers next Thursday, August 27th from 10:00 a.m. to noon at PJ's Coffee, located at 10300 Little Patuxent Parkway, Suite 2600 in Columbia, for its next Coffee with a Cop. Open to all, this FREE event provides community members the opportunity to discuss issues, ask questions, and build relationships one cup of coffee (or other beverage) at a time with HCPD officers.



To learn more, visit [HCPD's "August Coffee with a Cop" events webpage](#).

Department of Public Works

Bureau of Environmental Services

Curbside Collection Start Time Change

REMINDER: Now through Friday, September 4th, trash, recycling, food scraps, and yard trim curbside collections will begin an hour earlier at 5:00 a.m. in compliance with [Maryland's Heat Stress Standard](#). To ensure collection of your curbside collection items, our Department of Public Work's (DPW) Bureau of Environmental Services reminds residents to please make sure items are placed out either the night before your designated collection day or by 5:00 a.m. on the day of collection.

To stay in the know about curbside collections and any changes to the County's collection schedule, the Bureau encourages residents to visit its ["Recycling Newsletter Signup" webpage](#) to sign up at to receive its email notifications. We thank you in advance for your cooperation and understanding.

Clothing Doesn't Belong in the Landfill

Your child grew 12 inches and three sizes over the summer and now many of last year's clothes and shoes no longer fit. Instead of tossing those old clothes out in the trash – yes, the Bureau finds lots of clothing in its Landfill trash collection during its annual waste sort – consider donating them or utilizing one of these retail take-back programs:

- [H&M](#) – Drop items off at the store. They even accept half a pair of socks!
- [Madewell](#) – Print a free shipping label for ThredUp.
- [Levi's](#) – Drop your jeans off at any store.
- [Carter's](#) – Recycle your non-donatable baby and kid clothes. Find a location.
- [Gap](#) – Pick up a Clean Out Kit from a store or print out a shipping label.
- [Uniqlo](#) – Accepts Uniqlo items in store.
- [The North Face](#) – Trade-In items by mail or in store for credits.
- [American Eagle](#) – Members earn a \$10 credit for swapping jeans.
- [Soma](#) – #BraltForward distributes bras to shelters.
- [Timberland](#) – Bring Timberland products to a store and receive 20% off!
- [Helpsy](#) – Bring used clothing to the Landfill's Residents' Convenience Center.

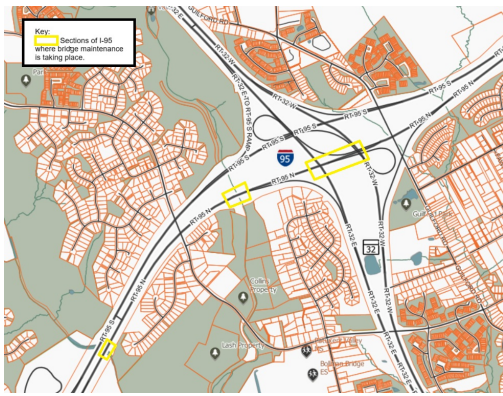
Keep in mind, while some garments may be soiled or torn, many donation locations partner with rag or scrap manufacturers to use those items too.

Construction Report

To learn about our DPW projects currently underway, check out [DPW's website](#). Searchable by project category and street name, from this site you'll find additional project details, including news releases about the project. You can also contact DPW's Customer Service Office at 410-313-3440 or email publicworks@howardcountymd.gov for further assistance.

If you have questions or are interested in finding out about a State road (numbered roadway) project in your area, visit the Maryland State Highway Administration's (SHA) ["Project Portal" website](#).

Maryland State Highway Administration



Northbound I-95 Bridge Resurfacing Maintenance Work

This past August 10th, the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) will begin maintenance work to improve the roadway surface on four bridges along northbound I-95 in the Columbia area. These four bridges include the bridges over the Middle Patuxent River, Little Patuxent River, eastbound MD 32, and westbound MD 32.

Motorists traveling along these sections of northbound I-95 can expect possible traffic delays during work hours, Sunday through Thursday, 9:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m., as double-lane closures are required in the work areas. Weather permitting, this work is expected to be completed by this October.

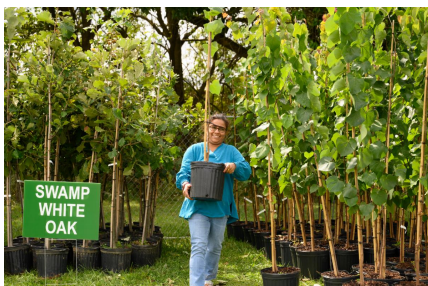
While SHA and its transportation partners work hard to maintain safe traffic mobility in work zones, drivers are reminded to stay alert and look for reduced speed limits, narrow driving lanes and highway workers. Please slow down and don't follow too closely when traveling through a work zone. Remember, work zone safety is in your hands.

For more information and/or questions about this work, check out [SHA's news release online announcing this work](#).

Department of Recreation and Parks

Fall Activity Guide Registration Now Open

Online, in-person, over-the-phone, and mail-in registration is **NOW OPEN** for Howard County and non-county residents for our Department of Recreation & Parks' [Fall 2026 Activity Guide](#)! From sport, dance and cooking classes, to a plethora of seasonal events and activities to do when school's out, there is something for everyone in this Activity Guide.



Annual Tree Giveaway Returns

Mark your calendars and set your alarms, as Recreation & Parks' ever-so-popular Annual Tree Giveaway returns next Tuesday, August 25th. This year, we have doubled the number of available native trees to 6,000 for Howard County residents to select from; residents may reserve up to two trees to plant on their property. These 6,000 trees

will be available in three batches on the 25th, with the first 2,000 up for grabs starting at 10:00 a.m., another 2,000 at 2:00 p.m., and the final 2,000 at 7:00 p.m.

For a list of available trees, instructions on how to plant a tree, and this fall's

pickup dates, times, and locations, visit [Recreation & Parks' Natural Resources Division's "Forestry" website](#). Once live, the link to reserve your tree(s) will be available from this website. Additionally, registration will stay open until all slots are filled.

Public Feedback Sought for 2027 Preserve + Play Plan



As Recreation & Parks continues to update its [Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan](#) (LPPRP), the department is looking for community input via its [short online "Howard County 2027 Preserve + Play Plan Community Survey"](#) to better understand how residents use County parks, facilities, and programs today and what residents would like to see in the future.

Updated every five years, this comprehensive plan guides the department on key issues, trends, and plans for managing and enhancing its preserved public lands, facilities, and programs. It's also the first step in the County receiving Program Open Space grants, which have funded many of our largest and most popular parks, including the one-acre, inclusive 'Play-for-All' playground at Blandair Regional Park and the new, two-indoor pool addition to the North Laurel Community Center.

To learn more about the LPPRP, visit the [department's "Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plans \(LPPRP\)" webpage](#).



Back to School Night

Recreation & Parks' [Harriet Tubman Cultural Center](#) (HTCC) staff encourage you to join them this Friday, August 21st for its ["Back to School Night"](#) event from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. The whole family is invited to come out for this family fun event featuring games, refreshments, and a chance for students to meet new friends and connect with

peers in a relaxed, social setting. Participants will also have an opportunity to tour the HTCC, learn more about the opportunities available to students at the facility, and get a glimpse of its upcoming programs and activities.

While this event is FREE to attend, pre-registration is requested. To sign your family up, visit [Recreation & Parks' "Back to School Night" Active Network registration website](#) today.

Last Chance for Teen Kick Backs

Calling all teens, aged 11 to 17 years old, this is your last call to join Recreation & Parks for this summer's [Teen Kick Backs](#). Don't miss the chance to enjoy free pizza and snacks, sports, video games, and a whole lot of fun at one of the following dates, times, and locations:



- Friday, August 21st, 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the [North Laurel Community Center](#)
- Friday, August 21st, 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the [Gary J. Arthur Community Center](#)
- Friday, August 21st, 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the [Harriet Tubman Cultural Center](#)
- Saturday, August 22nd, 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the [Roger Carter Community Center](#)
- Saturday, August 22nd, 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the [Harriet Tubman Cultural Center](#)
- Friday, August 28th, 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the [Harriet Tubman Cultural Center](#)
- Saturday, August 29th, 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the [Harriet Tubman Cultural Center](#)



Sensory-Friendly Sunday

Families with kids, teens, and adults with sensory-processing differences, autism spectrum disorder, or developmental disabilities, I invite you to join Recreation & Parks' [Robinson Nature Center](#) next Sunday, August 30th at 9:00 a.m. for its "[Sensory-Friendly Sunday Wonders of Water](#)" event. During this hour and a half long event, participants will enjoy self-paced activities including sensory bins and pathways, scavenger hunts, crafts, and games; the planetarium will also be open for the entirety of the program.

While general admission (\$5 for adults, \$3 for children, and children under three are free) to the Robinson Nature Center is due the day of your visit to participate, pre-registration is recommended. To sign your family up, visit [Recreation & Parks' "Sensory-Friendly Sunday – Wonders of Water" Active Network registration website](#) today.

Office of Transportation

Grow Your Commute, a Commuter Outreach Pop-up Event

If you are looking for new ways to grow your commuting options, I encourage you to stop by our Office of Transportation's (OoT) pop-up "Grow Your Commute" event this Thursday, August 20th from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. at the Merriweather Farmers Market on the plaza in front of 10490 Little Patuxent Parkway in Columbia. Whether you walk, bike, carpool, use public transit, or just want to learn more, come join OoT and its partners, Downtown Columbia Partnership, Commuter Choice Maryland, and Bike HoCo, to find out about the many ways you can get around town. Registration is not necessary to attend, and the event will also feature fun giveaways and tips for making your commute easier.





Flash Bus Rapid Transit Service Extension Launches September 8th!

Montgomery County's Flash Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Service extension to Howard County launches Tuesday, September 8th along the US 29 corridor. This pilot program aims to observe the service levels and demand needed to meet our goals of fully implementing a BRT system in Howard County and the region.

With service to Maple Lawn, Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory, and

Downtown Columbia, the route continues south from Maple Lawn to Burtonsville with stops transporting passengers on to the Silver Spring Transit Center and connections to multiple transit systems. The Flash BRT will run at "peak" periods of travel in the morning and evening, Monday through Friday, and will be fare-free. For a complete service timetable, check out [Montgomery County's "Flash Blue Route" schedule guide online](#).

In addition, Downtown Columbia Flash BRT riders will be able to connect to the [Regional Transportation Agency of Central Maryland bus stops](#) for transport to destinations in Anne Arundel, Howard, and Prince George's Counties and the City of Laurel, as well as the [Maryland Transit Administration commuter buses](#).

To learn more about this service extension, check out [OoT's "Flash Bus Rapid Transit" website](#).



Howard County Government | 3430 Court House Drive | Ellicott City, Maryland, MD 21043 US



Try email marketing for free today!