

Maryland Independent ■ Wednesday, December 25, 2019



Calendar of events

A LOOK AT THE WEEK AHEAD

Send calendar events (at least two weeks in advance, if possible) to *Community*, 204 Washington Ave., Suite 104, La Plata, MD 20646. Email items to community@somdnews.com. Include a contact phone number or email on all submissions.

Tri-County Youth Services Bureau invites youth ages 16 to 24 who are not in school or employed to meet with a youth mentor from 3:30 to 7:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday to develop goals for work, school and life. Call 301-645-1837 or visit www.ready4life.org.

The Historic Port Tobacco Village is open for free tours from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday and Monday by appointment, beginning at Stagg Hall, 8450 Commerce St. in Port Tobacco. Last tour begins at 3:30 p.m. For more information, call 301-392-3418.

The Charles County Department of Health will host an eight-week smoking cessation class at the start of 2020, to provide assistance and support in the process of quitting tobacco products, including vaping. For more information or to preregister, call 301-609-6932.

Thursday, Dec. 26

VConnections assists senior and elderly veterans and families 2 to 4 p.m. every Thursday at Clark Senior Center, at 1210 Charles St. in La Plata. By appointment only. For information, go to www.vconnections.org.

Friday, Dec. 27

Friday Fun Nights for children ages 5 to 17 are held at various community center locations. Each month is a different theme. For a list of dates, times and locations, go to www.charlescountyparks.com.

Friday Nighters Al-Anon Family Group meets at 8:30 p.m. Fridays at LifeStream Church of the Nazarene, at 5105 Leonardtown Road in Waldorf. No Alateen meeting. Go to www.maryland-dc-alanon.org or call 1-800-425-2666.

Sons of the American Legion Post 238 will hold a steamed or fried shrimp dinner from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at 6265 Brandywine Road in Hughesville. The cost is \$12. For more information, call 301-274-3522 or visit the post on Facebook.

Monday, Dec. 30

Tri-County Youth Services Bureau will host youth in need of community service hours from 3:30-5:30 p.m. and 6:30-7:30 p.m. on Mondays. Call 301-645-1837.

VConnections holds Veterans Coffee Breaks 9 to 10:30 a.m. Mondays at Chick-fil-A, located at 107 Drury Drive in La Plata. For more information, go to www.vconnections.org.

The 2N1 Senior Citizens Club meets every Monday from 10:15 to 11:30 a.m. at the Richard R. Clark Senior Center, at 1210 Charles St. in La Plata. All interested seniors are welcome.

Tuesday, Dec. 31

Metropolitan United Methodist Church will have a New Year's Eve watch day service at noon at 3385 Metropolitan Church Road in Indian Head. For more information, call 301-375-9088 or visit www.metroumcindianhead.com.

American Legion Post 82 will host a New Year's Eve party from 8:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. at 6330 Crain Highway in La Plata. There will be a DJ and Elvis impersonator and hors d'oeuvres will be served. The cost is \$30 per person. Open to the public. Must be age 21 or older. Tickets may be purchased at the post between 2 and 8 p.m. No refunds. For more information, call 301-934-8221.

The Knights Ball, a non-alcoholic event, will be held from 6:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. at Immaculate Conception Parish Hall, at 28297 Old Village Road in Mechanicsville. Dinner will be held from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. There will also be a 50/50 raffle and music by DJ Mean Gene. Dress to impress. Tickets are \$20 and will be available at the door until sold out. For more information, Call John and Rose Krznarich at 301-884-5526. For tickets, call Tim Steelman at tcsworkplace@gmail.com.

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Feeding the hungry for the holidays

‘Miracle on 301’ collaborates to provide Christmas meals, gifts to homeless

By **JOHNATHON CLINKSCALES**
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During her junior year of college, Victoria Chappell realized her purpose in life entailed listening to others and helping them with their hardships.

Helping young children was something Chappell initially dreamed of doing as a pediatrician, which is what she aspired to be from an early age. But then that desire shifted in eighth grade when Chappell developed a passion for law and wanted to help adults. So the Ohio native focused on becoming a defense attorney and eventually graduated with a degree in both criminal justice and family studies.

“I’ve always seemed to have people gravitate towards me. It could be a complete stranger but they would always feel comfortable for some reason; just opening up out of nowhere,” Chappell told the Maryland Independent during a phone interview last month. “That’s when I figured out that I really do enjoy talking to people and listening and trying to help them by giving advice, or finding solutions to whatever issues they are facing.”

Having had an opportunity to work with at-risk youth in a lockdown facility upon graduating, Chappell suddenly dealt with many life changes which included moving several times and growing a family. Not knowing how to live out her purpose while being a full-time mom and housewife became a struggle for about seven years, as Chappell had other goals that weren’t being reached.

After relocating to Maryland, the thought of becoming a real estate agent entered her mind and Chappell was reassured that she could have the best of both worlds. She wanted to grow her own business but most importantly, still have full control over how she chose to run it.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Miracle on 301 founder Victoria Chappell takes a selfie during a paint 'n brunch event she held on Nov. 30 at The Charles in La Plata. The event sold out at 50 tickets.

“Having a full-time job just wasn’t working, especially when [my family and I] were moving every two or three years,” said Chappell, who now has three children. “There was still this nagging feeling in me; kind of like I have a purpose but not really serving in it. ... Honestly, I was unfilled. I felt empty inside and was trying to figure out what it is that I was supposed to be doing.”

A wake-up call soon came for Chappell when she met privately with her broker, Bernadette Cole at Exit Landmark Realty, who had asked her, “What drives you?” As one would expect, Chappell replied that she loved giving back. But Chappell unveiled a vision that she had contemplated for a while, which was to provide a miracle to the homeless community on Christmas Day.

“I probably carried that vision for five to six years until last year when me and my family settled down,” Chappell said. “I was just trying to pretty much develop a business plan and how I wanted to run my business. That prompted me to tell her my vision of wanting

to give Christmas to the homeless.”

Cole suggested that she contact Sandy Washington — executive director of LifeStyles of Maryland Inc. which looks after and advocates for the homeless community — whom Chappell immediately contacted after leaving the meeting.

When the two women met, Chappell was surprised and saddened to learn that there was a large population of families, including children that attended local schools, living in wooded areas. Washington, however, admired what Chappell had in mind, especially her idea about providing a buffet-style breakfast for homeless individuals.

“I didn’t even know where it would be held at the moment as I was just trying to come up with a name before I met with Sandy,” said Chappell. “It’s so cliché but I kept coming up with ‘Miracle on 301.’ I actually liked it and said I’d stick with this for now.”

So, Washington advised Chappell that partnering with LifeStyle’s Safe Nights program, which provides beds and meals for the

homeless population during the cold months, would be a great way to start.

“When you think about what Victoria is doing, and you think about the children and the families that are going to experience that, that means a lot,” Washington told the Maryland Independent last year. “To sacrifice to that extent and recognize that when it’s special for everybody else it could be special for these families as well, that’s really something. It says a lot and it means a lot to see that happen.”

In 2018, Chappell found herself in La Plata where United Methodist Church was hosting Safe Nights for the first time ever during the week of Christmas. She was pleased that everything lined up perfectly after Washington sent her there to talk with program coordinator Kim Williams, who had mentioned that the church was a Safe Nights host since its inception more than 15 years ago.

Williams said Safe Nights, “is a chance to share the Christmas spirit and show

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Organizations donate tower garden to Matula

Waldorf-based business Worldwide Moving Systems, through its charitable contributions to the local non-profit Farming 4 Hunger, helped provide a tower garden to Mary H. Matula Elementary School to help students learn about plants and how they grow. A tower garden is a vertical hydroponic growing system. In no particular order, Jeff Rockenbaugh and Steven Frazier of Worldwide Moving Systems pose with Matula science teachers Leigh Ann Anderson and Stacy Ochoa and two Matula students in front of the donated tower garden.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

Rotary donates to Southern Md. Food Bank

On Nov. 20, the Rotary Club of Charles County presented a \$1,000 check to the Southern Maryland Food Bank. From left, Chris Zabriskie, Rotary Club of Charles County president, and Tony Jennigan, member, present an oversized check to Southern Maryland Food Bank director Brenda DiCarlo and regional distribution manager George Mattingly. The fund will go to help fund winter essentials for the food bank. The food bank is also initiating a virtual food drive. More information can be found at southernmarylandfoodbank.com/ by clicking on “Online Holiday Food Drive.” Every year, the Rotary Club of Charles County raises approximately \$70,000 to support local and international charities and projects. The majority of the donated funds come from the club’s annual lobster festival, held each fall the the Charles County Fairgrounds.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

