

LAUREL LIVING

The Official Newsletter for the City of Laurel



A Message from Mayor Keith R. Sydnor

Happy 155th Birthday, Laurel!

On April 4, 1870, the Maryland General Assembly passed an act officially incorporating the City of Laurel, granting our community the right to self-govern. Before incorporation, our city was known as Laurel Factory, a mill town built along the Patuxent River, rooted in industry and resilience.

In 1870, Laurel's population was approximately 500 residents, with an estimated budget ranging between \$1,000 and \$3,000. Just five years after the abolition of slavery in 1865, many formerly enslaved African Americans began building new lives here working, living, and laying the foundation for the diverse community we cherish today.

Laurel has always been a city of firsts and progress. In fact, the first high school in Prince George's County—Laurel High School—was established right here in our city.

Today, Laurel is home to over 30,000 residents across 4.5 square miles. With an annual budget of approximately \$40 million, we've grown to become one of the most diverse and inclusive municipalities in Prince George's County.

We proudly celebrate Juneteenth, Pride Month, Black History Month, Women's History Month, Hispanic Heritage Month, Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month, and more. Our strength lies in our diversity, unity, and shared commitment to lifting one another up.

As we celebrate Laurel's 155th birthday, let's continue honor our history, embrace our future, and celebrate each other.

Happy Birthday, Laurel! Here's to progress, purpose, and people!

 Mark Your Calendar:
2025 City Hall in the Park
Dates Announced

 City of Laurel Participates in
National Water Challenge.
Join Us. Take the pledge.

 Making Laurel Proud.
Local Athletes Win Big!



Proudly Serving You!



Council President
Kyla Clark
Ward 2



Council President Pro Tempore
Jeffrey Mills
Ward 2



Councilmember Christine Johnson
At-Large



Councilmember Adrian Simmons
Ward 1



Councilmember James Kole
Ward 1



Office of City Administrator
Christian L. Pulley, CPM
City Administrator
Ext. 2242



Office of the City Council
Sara Green, City Clerk
Ext. 2120



Budget and Personnel Services
Michele Saylor, Director
Ext. 2248



Communications
Natalie Williams, Director
Ext. 2208



Emergency Management
Christina Cornwell, Director
Ext. 2232



**Economic and Community
Development**
Monta Burrough, Director
Ext. 2301



**Fire Marshal and
Permit Services**
Danny Selby, Director
Ext. 2195



Information Technology
James Cornwell-Shiel, Director
Ext. 2240



Laurel Multiservice Center
Marchelle LeBlanc, Acting Director
Ext. 2723



Parks and Recreation
Bill Bailey, Director
Ext. 2233



Police Department
Russell Hamill, Chief
(301) 498-0092



Public Works
Thomas Helms, Acting Director
Ext. 3205



Where Laurel Comes Together

City Hall in the Park Returns: Dates Announced for 2025

Mayor Keith R. Sydnor is excited to announce the 2025 dates for City Hall in the Park, one of the City of Laurel's most anticipated community events. Designed to bring government closer to the people, this series of gatherings allows residents to connect directly with the Mayor, City Councilmembers, and department heads in an open, friendly, and engaging environment.

Held across five local parks, City Hall in the Park is more than just a public meeting—it's a celebration of civic pride, community spirit, and family fun. Residents of all ages are encouraged to attend, share their ideas, voice their concerns, and learn more about the City's services and upcoming initiatives.

"Community engagement is at the heart of everything we do," said Mayor Sydnor. "City Hall in the Park is about more than government—it's about building relationships, listening to residents, and celebrating all that makes Laurel a great place to live."

Each event will feature:

- Lively entertainment with a DJ spinning great tunes
- Face painting and bubble machines
- Community resources and handouts from the Laurel Police Department
- Free hot dogs and hamburgers for all attendees
- Sweet treats from a soft-serve ice cream truck

Whether you're there to ask questions, make your voice heard, or just enjoy a summer evening with neighbors, City Hall in the Park is your chance to be part of the conversation and the celebration. Mark your calendars, and we'll see you at the park.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Thursday, April 24 @ 6:30p
Granville Gude Park

Thursday, May 22 @ 6:30p
Discovery Community Park

Thursday, July 24 @ 6:30p
Marcus Colbert Community Field

Thursday, August 28 @6:30p
Greenvue Drive Pool & Park

Thursday, September 25 @ 6:30p
Emancipation Park

Power in Partnership **Enough Local Management Board (LMB) Capacity Building Grant Kickoff**



On Thursday, March 27, the City of Laurel launched the Laurel Multiservice Center (LMSC) Enough Local Management Board (LMB) Capacity Building Grant Initiative. The initiative is the first-of-its-kind state-led, place-based strategy to create poverty-fighting opportunities, bringing resources into neighborhoods disproportionately impacted by systems and policies that limit economic mobility.

The LMSC was selected to receive \$65,000 and prestigious recognition from Governor Wes Moore's "Enough" LMB Capacity Building Grant Initiative for its outstanding contributions to supporting vulnerable populations and strengthening community resilience. The award highlights the center's ongoing efforts in providing essential human services and promoting economic stability for City of Laurel residents and beyond.

Marchelle LeBlanc, the acting director of the newly formed Human Services Department, welcomed attendees and said this kickoff celebrated the power of collaboration and commitment uniting to strengthen the City of Laurel. "As we come together, we also recognize the pressing challenge of child poverty and the importance of addressing it," she said. "By working collaboratively, we can and will build a brighter future for all of our children in our community."

Mayor Keith R. Sydnor echoed LeBlanc's statements of teamwork and emphasized why the LMSC is a necessity in these trying times. "This isn't just another program; today's kickoff represents hope, partnership, and progress. We're standing at the beginning of a transformative journey that will deepen our impact on the work we do for our children, our family, and our community," he said.



Watch the launch of Laurel's newest community support initiative.

Happy Public Television Day

Honoring the Legacy of Community Media and Public Access

April 7, 2025, marks an important milestone in the history of television broadcasting—Public Television Day. This day commemorates the first successful long-distance public broadcast of television, which took place on April 7, 1927.

The historic transmission, made possible by AT&T, featured an image of Herbert Hoover, then Secretary of Commerce, and was sent from Washington, D.C., to New York City. This pioneering moment set the stage for the public broadcasting we know today, shaping the way we communicate, inform, and engage as communities.

“Public access television remains one of the most powerful tools we have to strengthen civic connection and community identity.” says Natalie Williams, Director of the Department of Communications for the City of Laurel. “At Laurel TV, we’re proud to give residents a platform to share their stories, highlight local achievements, and participate in their government. On Public Television Day, we celebrate the voices that make our city vibrant and the access that makes those voices heard, and reflect on the core values that have shaped public media for nearly a century.”



THE ROLE OF PUBLIC TELEVISION

Public television, by design, aims to serve all people. The most widely accepted model of public broadcasting includes principles like universal geographical accessibility, appeal to diverse audiences, and support for minority voices. It stands apart from commercial media through its commitment to content that contributes to national identity and community well-being, rather than focusing solely on profits or viewer numbers. Public broadcasters also maintain independence from vested interests, ensuring that programming is guided by the public good, not commercial or political agendas.

LAUREL TV: A MEMBER OF THE ALLIANCE FOR COMMUNITY MEDIA

Laurel TV is committed to enriching the community and is a proud member of the Alliance for Community Media (ACM), a national organization founded in 1976 that champions media training, production, and civic engagement through public, educational, and government (PEG) access.

Representing over 1,700 public access organizations nationwide, ACM supports local groups, schools, faith-based institutions, and government entities. Its mission: “All communities have the resources, ability, and right to express themselves, create community dialogue, and engage in civic life through local media,” according to Mike Wassenaar, president of the Alliance for Community Media. “The work of Laurel TV reflects the core mission of community television: helping residents understand local issues affecting their lives and reflecting the information needs of the community. It’s a noble mission and deserves to be protected.”

WHY PUBLIC TELEVISION MATTERS TODAY

- **Civic Education:** Helping citizens understand and engage in the political process
- **Local News and Information:** Providing in-depth reporting on local topics that are frequently overlooked by the national media.
- **Cultural Representation:** Promoting local musicians, artists, and performers while elevating the voices of underrepresented populations.
- **Public Engagement:** Allowing citizens of the City of Laurel to express their opinions through content creation or during City Council sessions.



Make Every Drop Count Laurel Joins National Water Conservation Challenge

This April, Mayor Keith R. Sydnor is joining mayors across the nation in challenging residents to make a long-term commitment to conserve water, reduce pollution, and manage natural resources more efficiently. By participating in the National Mayor's Challenge for Water Conservation, residents can contribute to the City of Laurel's sustainability goals while competing to win more than \$50,000 in eco-friendly prizes, including \$3,000 toward home utility bills, water-saving fixtures, and more.

This year, the campaign also includes opportunities for students from thousands of schools to make water conservation pledges that directly impact their city's standings.

Mayor Sydnor reinforces that "as a community we recognize the importance of protecting our natural resources as a part of our overall sustainability efforts in the City of Laurel. This competition emphasizes the importance of water conservation and how we can work together to create a more sustainable community."

The annual, non-profit community service campaign encourages residents to visit www.mywaterpledge.com between April 1-30 to make a series of simple, online pledges to conserve water, reduce pollution, and save energy. The initiative, started over a decade ago, was conceived by a group of mayors looking for innovative ways to engage their communities in addressing water challenges across the United States. Each year, residents from over 2,000 cities across the nation pledge to reduce their freshwater consumption by billions of gallons, cut millions of pounds of waste sent to landfills, and prevent thousands of pounds of hazardous waste from entering local watersheds.

Michele Blair, the city's sustainability manager, points out that "one of the many ways residents can conserve water at their homes is to use a rain barrel to capture rainwater to reuse for gardening, washing their cars, and watering their walkways and driveways. Recently the city was awarded a grant for the Prince George's County Stormwater Management design and rain barrel rebate to educate residents about water conservation efforts."

Residents can participate in the challenge by visiting www.mywaterpledge.com and making their pledges to conserve water on behalf of Laurel. Cities compete in five population categories based on size: 5,000–29,999 residents, 30,000–99,999 residents, 100,000–299,999 residents, 300,000–599,999 residents, and 600,000+ residents.

Cities with the highest percentage of residents taking the pledge in their category will win prizes, including \$3,000 toward home utility bills, Toro Irrigation Smart Controllers, home improvement gift cards, and more. Additionally, one school in each winning city will receive 100 pairs of Zenni Remakes™ eyeglasses, crafted from recycled plastics equivalent to three single-use water bottles, designed to protect against blue light exposure.

This year, the challenge introduces new features, such as an AI-driven impact insight tool that helps residents see how their pledges address local water issues, reduce utility costs, and enhance community health. City of Laurel residents can also participate in the MyVolunteer Water Project, a year-round platform that offers hands-on opportunities to support sustainability through home, community, and workplace projects. The more projects completed, the greater the chances of winning the challenge in April.



Residents are encouraged to pledge smart water use for a chance to win prizes and support their city's sustainability efforts. [Click here for details.](#)



Volunteering in Laurel Celebrating the Heart of Laurel's Community

April is National Volunteer Month, a time to honor the dedication and selflessness of volunteers across the United States who devote their time and skills to helping others. It also serves as a reminder of the significant impact that volunteerism has on communities, from supporting nonprofit organizations and mentoring youth to assisting in disaster relief efforts. According to a report by AmeriCorps—the federal agency for national service and volunteerism—and the US Census Bureau, between September 2022 and September 2023, more than 75.7 million Americans formally volunteered through organizations, contributing approximately 4.99 billion hours of service!

Volunteers have a significant impact on organizations and community events in the City of Laurel. You'll see them picking up litter out of the Patuxent River, helping Laurel Advocacy and Referral Services bring in groceries, or at a City of Laurel event getting ready to help put chairs and tables away. One of the people at the helm of organizing these volunteers is Carreen Koubek, who runs the organization Volunteer Laurel. We sat down and chatted with Carreen about Volunteer Laurel and the importance of volunteering.

Laurel Living: What is Volunteer Laurel, and how did you get involved?

Carreen Koubek: "Volunteer Laurel is the volunteer program for the City of Laurel. I was always kind of involved. It was in a couple of different departments before it fell into my lap, and I've been helping it grow ever since! What Volunteer Laurel does is attend different events and get the word out about all the opportunities that the City of Laurel has for future volunteers."

LL: In what ways have you seen volunteers make a difference in Laurel?

CK: "There is a value placed on a volunteer. The hourly rate in 2025 is a little over \$33. So, when you have a volunteer here for 3 hours, that's \$99 that they're helping an organization save. But it's not just about money; it's a sense of community. If you're new to the area, this is a great way to get to know people! If you've been here a long time, join and get to know your neighbors."

LL: Knowing those numbers, would you say Laurel would be different without volunteers?

CK: "Oh, definitely! Especially in the cleanups, there are a few organizations that do it, and they'll post it on social media. You can see in those photos that they have 3 or 4 trash bags worth. It's little things like that that help keep the community clean, together, connected, and that's what it's all about."

LL: What are some of the biggest needs in Laurel that volunteers help address?

CK: "One of the biggest needs on the city side of things is helping to break down events, which is great for our student volunteers. I just recently did Laurel Citizens

University last fall, and 1/3 of that class signed up to volunteer; 3 or 4 serve on boards or commissions, and several are now regular volunteers."

LL: What is the most common thing you hear from volunteers?

CK: "From one side, if you have someone looking to volunteer, the biggest thing I hear is 'I didn't know that was going on.' From the other side it's more of a feeling. You can see that they've given something, and they're happy about it."

LL: If you could give one message to the people of Laurel about the importance of volunteering, what would it be?

CK: "Just do it, because it's a necessity for community, it's a necessity for your soul, and it's a necessity for yourself. It's a positive impact on your community, and we're always looking for more people."

LL: Are there any upcoming volunteer events in Laurel that people should know about?

CK: "Definitely sign up for a cleanup event. They're great for community service hours, and you'll get to learn about our parks. We also have the Volunteer Laurel Fair on April 30th at the Multiservice Center from 6-8pm. We'll have organizations here so the community can learn about the volunteer opportunities available in the city. Not only will you be able to learn about opportunities, but we'll also need volunteers to help break down."

LL: How do people sign up for Volunteer Laurel?

CK: "You can reach me at 301-725-5300, extension 2109, or email me at laurelvolunteer@laurel.md.us. When you sign up, you'll go in a database, and every time we have an opportunity come up, I'll send out an email with all the information."

Excellence in Public Service

City Clerk Sara Green Earns Master Municipal Clerk Designation



Sara Green, MMC
City Clerk

The City of Laurel proudly announces that Sara Green, MMC, has been awarded the prestigious designation of Master Municipal Clerk (MMC) by the International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC).

The MMC designation is one of the highest honors bestowed by IIMC and is reserved for municipal clerks who have demonstrated an exceptional commitment to continuing education and who have made significant contributions to their local government, community, and state. Earning the MMC requires completion of rigorous educational requirements and a proven dedication to professional development in the field of municipal administration.

"This achievement is a testament to Sara's commitment, professionalism, and passion for public service," said Mayor Keith R. Sydnor. "Her leadership and institutional knowledge have been invaluable to our city. We are proud to have such a dedicated and accomplished public servant on our team."

The International Institute of Municipal Clerks, founded in 1947, serves over 14,000 members across the United States, Canada, and 15 other countries. As a global nonprofit organization, IIMC is dedicated to enhancing the professional development and educational opportunities of municipal clerks around the world.

"In light of the speed and drastic nature of change today, lifelong learning is not only desirable—it is essential," said the IIMC Board of Directors in a statement. "Sara Green's achievement of the MMC designation exemplifies this commitment to growth and excellence in service."

The City of Laurel extends its sincere congratulations to Sara Green on this well-deserved recognition and applauds her continued dedication to advancing the standards of local government.

COUNCIL Connections

The following ordinances were approved at the March 24th Mayor and City Council meeting.



ORDINANCE NO. 2039:

This ordinance amends the General Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for the fiscal year 2024–2025.

Key points include:

- Revisions to the FY2025 budget due to the dissolution of the Department of Community Resources and Emergency Management (effective March 18, 2025), and the creation of the Department of Emergency Management and the Department of Human Services.
- Adjustments to the budget to reflect these changes and the transfer of CIP street project funds to finance other street projects.
- Additional funding required for upgrading Council Chambers broadcast equipment and corrections needed for Employee Training and Tuition budgets.

ORDINANCE NO. 2040:

This ordinance amends the Laurel City Code to update the "Elderly and Veteran Tax Credit Program" under Chapter 16, Section 16-10.

The amendments include:

- The tax credit is 20% of the City property tax on the first \$500,000 of assessed value, with annual adjustments based on the Consumer Price Index or 3%.
- Removal of the five (5) year limit that homeowners can apply for the credit with continued eligibility based on the individual maintaining ownership and occupancy of the dwelling, as well as compliance with City property maintenance codes.



Champions Among Us State Champions Shine on the Court and the Mat

WATCH NOW



Outstanding athletes are not just found at the pro level; the City of Laurel proved there are some championship winners in our own backyard. The Laurel High School Spartans' Boys Basketball Team won the 4A State Championship, the Laurel Lions Wrestling Club are the 2025 Southern Maryland Junior Wrestling League Division A champions and Laurel High School's Alexandra Ford is a two-time state champion in the 140-pound wrestling division.

At the March 24th Mayor and City Council Meeting, Mayor Keith R. Sydnor praised each team for their dedication and teamwork. "You not only achieved remarkable success in competition but also serve as exemplary ambassadors for our city. A bright future lies ahead of you and each team member," he said.

The Laurel High School Boys Basketball Team brought their A-game to win the state championship title, their first in 45 years. The team showcased their ability to perform under pressure, with individual brilliance and cohesive teamwork that overwhelmed their opponents, the Walt Whitman Vikings.

Head Coach Eric Hines led the Spartans to the championship game in his second year as head coach. "I actually think that those guys really combined and connected with one another throughout the summer, throughout the off-season, and then through the entire season; they just got better, and they were really supportive of one another," he said.

The Spartans secured the win early in the first half of the game. The boys' teamwork, sportsmanship, and determination were on full display as they brought the title home to the City of Laurel. "Winning states is like the biggest thing possible for us, because we've wanted this since freshman year. We came close after every year, but this year, we felt way better," Laurel High School senior Christian Brown said.

The Laurel Lions Wrestling Club also had an unforgettable season, culminating in their division championship victory. The team displayed unparalleled skill, strategy, and grit throughout the competition. Head coach and executive director Stephen Overton praised the athletes for their hard work and academic excellence. "I'm extremely proud of our kids. We have kids coming out of our program going to state championships, as well as getting recruited to colleges, especially Division One schools," he said. Staying in the realm of wrestling, another Laurel High School student has reason to celebrate. Last year, senior Alexandra Ford won the Maryland Girls State Championship in wrestling, the first female from Laurel High School to do so. This year, she ended her scholastic wrestling career as a three-time regional champion and a two-time state champion.

However, Ford wants to leave more of a lasting impact after graduating. "I wanted to start a girl's wrestling team. Right now, we have a few girls on the co-ed team who, just to let y'all know, are beating up the boys. So, we expect to see a drastic change in women's wrestling in our area, but I think I did start off at a good step trying to set up the team itself, and I'm thinking about holding a clinic. Hopefully we'll promote it in our area," she said.

Congratulations to Ford, the Laurel Lions Wrestling Club, and the Laurel High School Boys Basketball team for their exceptional achievements and championship titles! This is a moment that will be remembered for years to come.



ATHLETE SPOTLIGHT: KAMIL AMUSA

Meet Kamil Amusa, an intern with the City of Laurel's Communications Department and a standout student-athlete. In addition to assisting with photography and behind-the-scenes technical work for the City's social media, Kamil is a junior at Chesapeake Math and IT Academy North High School and a dedicated member of the school's track team.

Kamil competes in the 400-meter, 500-meter, 800-meter, and one-mile run events. His favorite? The 500-meter. "I love the 500. I feel like that's the perfect race for me, especially because I'm fast. I get out strong, stay strong until the very end, and get a very fast time," he said. His personal best so far is a 54-second finish in the 400-meter dash—but he's aiming higher. "I may, hopefully, break the school record [of 49 seconds]. Actually, I think I'll do it this year," Kamil said confidently.



Growing Towards the Future

New Building, Same Great Support! Laurel Board of Trade Ribbon-Cutting

The Laurel Board of Trade (LBOT) is thrilled to announce the grand opening of their new location, marking a new chapter in supporting local businesses and strengthening the community. The ribbon-cutting ceremony, which took place on Friday, March 14, was a heartfelt celebration of this exciting milestone.

Local business leaders, members, and community supporters gathered at the new office, located at 13 C Street Suite A, just off Main Street, to witness the official ribbon-cutting event. The ceremony was a testament to the dedication and growth of LBOT, an organization that has been committed to fostering a strong, vibrant business environment in Laurel since 1980.

The decision to move to a new location comes at a time of dynamic growth for the Laurel business community. The new office offers enhanced space and updated amenities for their 155 members, all designed to better serve LBOT's members and the wider community. This move will provide a more efficient and welcoming environment for both business professionals and the residents they serve.

As the Laurel Board of Trade embarks on this exciting new phase, they are focused on continuing to offer valuable programs, events, and resources to local businesses. Their commitment to advocacy, education, and community engagement remains at the forefront of their efforts, and with the new location, LBOT is poised to make an even greater impact in the years ahead.



Come celebrate a fresh start with LBOT at their brand-new home!

Local Vibes, Tasty Bites Fresh Finds & Food Trucks at the Farmer's Market!

The 2025 Laurel Farmer's Market is shaping up to be better than ever! According to Michele Blair, the City of Laurel's Sustainability Manager, this year's market will feature an exciting new addition: food trucks! Returning favorites **Stony Man Coffee** and **Tu Casa Food**—a hit at the Winter Market - will be rolling in to serve up delicious options all season long.

You'll also see familiar faces like **Zahradka Family Farm**, **Windswept Farms**, **Ali Damara's Middle Eastern Food**, **Stone Hearth Bakery**, and **Bella Vita**, plus new vendors offering everything from ice cream and coffee to handmade soaps and crafts. In addition to shopping and snacking, enjoy live musical performances and cooking demonstrations on select days in the market's performance space. It's the perfect place to support local businesses, enjoy fresh flavors, and spend time with your neighbors. See you at the Market!



**Returns
May 1, 2025!**

See you then!

3pm - 7pm; Every Thursday

378 Main Street, Laurel, MD 20707





April is Earth Month

Our Community Unites for the 18th Annual Patuxent River Cleanup

On Saturday, April 5, approximately 30 dedicated volunteers gathered in Laurel for the 18th Annual Patuxent River Cleanup, rolling up their sleeves to help preserve one of Maryland's vital natural resources. The annual event brought together community members, local organizations, and environmental advocates to remove trash and debris from the shoreline and surrounding parkland along the Patuxent River.

Volunteers worked together to collect litter, plastics, and other waste that not only detracts from the beauty of the river but also poses a threat to wildlife and contributes to pollution downstream. The cleanup effort plays a crucial role in reducing the amount of debris that makes its way into the river system and helps prevent obstructions to the river's natural flow, especially during heavy rain events.

"The Patuxent River is a lifeline for our region," said one event organizer. "This cleanup is about more than just picking up trash — it's about protecting a valuable ecosystem and keeping our community healthy and resilient."

Now in its 18th year, the Patuxent River Cleanup has become a meaningful tradition in Laurel, serving as a reminder of the power of collective action and the importance of environmental stewardship. Many volunteers expressed their commitment to returning next year and encouraging more people to get involved.

For those interested in participating in future cleanups or learning more about how to support the Patuxent River, residents are encouraged to stay connected through community websites and environmental nonprofit bulletins.



Earth Day Lake Cleanup

Date: April 19, 2025

Time: 10:00 AM–12:00 PM

Location: Gude Park (starting at the Lakehouse)

Celebrate Earth Day by lending a hand at Gude Park. Volunteers will work together to clean up the lake and surrounding areas, making a positive impact on the local environment.

Electronics Recycling & Paper Shredding Event

Date: April 19, 2025

Time: 8:00 AM–12:00 PM

Location: Fairall Foundry

Dispose of unwanted electronics responsibly and securely shred personal documents at this community event. Recycling helps reduce waste and prevents harmful materials from ending up in landfills.



Watch the video to see the incredible efforts made by City Leaders and community volunteers.



APRIL 9TH NATIONAL LIBRARY OUTREACH DAY

Celebrates library outreach efforts and the dedicated professionals who bring library services to those who might not otherwise have access.

More than Books Honoring the Vital Role of Libraries in Our Community

Libraries are the backbone of education, community engagement, and lifelong learning. As we celebrate National Library Week from April 6-12, 2025, we reflect on the essential role libraries play in people's personal, academic, and professional lives. This year's theme, "Drawn to the Library," highlights the many reasons people visit libraries—whether for books, technology, educational programs, or simply a sense of belonging.

For students and educators, libraries serve as invaluable extensions of the classroom, offering homework assistance, quiet study spaces, and resources that supplement school curriculums. Their impact extends beyond academics, contributing to economic and workplace development by providing job-search assistance, resume workshops, and support for entrepreneurs and small businesses, strengthening local economies in the process.

The Laurel Branch of the Prince George's County Memorial Library System (PGCMLS) is an outstanding example, offering a diverse collection of print materials, eBooks, audiobooks, public access computers, online research tools, educational DVDs, and live homework help for students in grades 4-12. Additionally, the library hosts engaging programs such as summer reading initiatives, story times, and author events, ensuring there's something for everyone in the community.

"Libraries are more than just places for books; they serve as community and cultural hubs that host events, book clubs, and literacy programs," says Mayor Keith R. Sydnor. "These initiatives foster creativity, inclusion, and a sense of belonging, making libraries safe, welcoming spaces for all. Adequate funding ensures that these institutions can continue expanding resources, updating technology, and providing essential services to communities."

The importance of funding for libraries and education cannot be overstated. These institutions serve as pillars of knowledge, opportunity, and development, providing free access to books, technology, and educational resources that empower individuals of all ages. By bridging the educational gap, libraries foster early literacy, job training, and lifelong learning, ensuring that everyone, regardless of background—has access to the tools they need to succeed. In today's digital age, this access is more crucial than ever, as public libraries offer internet services, research materials, and digital literacy programs to help close the digital divide.



The City of Laurel joined the Laurel Library as they opened their C.R.A.B. Bag during National Library Week. See what's inside the bag!

"One of the reasons I enjoy working in the libraries is because every single day is a new activity," says Karin Luoma, North Area Director. "You learn something new, or you meet new people. It's an ever-changing environment and there's always something new to do."

"I personally love working in libraries because I love bringing resources to the community," says Candice Washington, an employee at the Laurel Branch Library. "I think it's one of the most beautiful ways we can touch people on a day-to-day basis."



Get Smart About Money It Starts With Financial Literacy



April is finally here. Do you know what that means? National Financial Literacy Month has officially begun. Many for-profit, non-profit, and even government organizations use this time to advertise programs that provide knowledge on personal financial education, even if there are no official flagship events. The main idea is to get people to become proactive in managing their personal finances.

In 2003, following Senate and House resolutions that urged President George W. Bush to designate April as Financial Literacy Month, the US Congress unanimously endorsed the initiative. In a worldwide sampling poll in terms of financial literacy, the United States came in ninth place out of the 18 participating nations. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) proctored the test. The average PISA score for American pupils was 492 points. The global average was 500, which was higher.

According to the National Financial Educators Council (2024), a lack of understanding of financial services and the basics of personal finance led to a perpetual cycle of poor financial decisions that restrict the social mobility of Americans. Worse yet, financial illiteracy in one individual can lead to chronic poverty, where generations of a family are born in poverty.

By the end of 2024, only 26 states required students to complete financial literacy courses in order to graduate from high school. The initiative's 26th state, California, ensures that its students will complete a full semester of independent personal finance coursework prior to graduating from high school.

Actionable steps for improving financial literacy start with creating a detailed and organized budget of monthly expenses, such as rent, auto insurance, etc. Continue to track your spending on a regular basis. As you compare spending, saving, and investment patterns over time, you will develop clear financial habits that will help you better prepare for future success. Since budgeting is a personal process, it should be updated according to changes in your income.

To empower themselves to make wise financial decisions for a secure future, everyone is encouraged to use the resources provided by National Financial Literacy Month to educate themselves on credit management, budgeting, saving, and investing.



[Click here to watch an in-depth report on financial literacy and its impact on everyday life in America.](#)

Game On, Laurel! New Pickleball Courts Are Here

The weather's warming up and that means longer days, sunshine, and spending more time outdoors! The City of Laurel's Department of Parks and Recreation has plenty of spaces for you to enjoy the outdoors, from beautiful parks and fun playgrounds to a variety of different fields and courts just waiting for you and a few friends to start up a game of basketball, soccer, or even pickleball!

That's right, pickleball, the game that's sweeping the nation! The City of Laurel's Department of Parks and Recreation recently opened 3 new, outdoor pickleball courts on Greenview Drive right next to the pool! In addition to the pickleball courts, this facility also has two, separated tennis courts and a tennis wall.

Grab some friends and play a few rounds at 14403 Greenview Drive!



Supporting Local Businesses



THE LAUREL BOARD OF TRADE
SMALL BUSINESS. BIG IDEAS.

13 C Street, Suite A
Laurel, MD 20707



3
8
3

Leda Rose Poduszka Agency
8773 Contee Road #102
Laurel, MD 20708
(301) 275-0767



Signarama of Laurel
14202 Cherry Lane Court
Laurel, MD 20707
(301) 604-8400

Seasonal Roots
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hello@seasonalroots.com
www.seasonalroots.com





JOIN US

HOUSING RESOURCE FAIR

EQUITABLE HOUSING FOR ALL: KNOW YOUR RIGHTS & RESOURCES

DATE & TIME

Saturday, April 19th
12NOON- 3PM

Light refreshments
will be available.

LOCATION

Craig A. Moe
Laurel Multiservice
Center

204 FORT MEADE ROAD
LAUREL, MD 20707

Vendors will be
available with
valuable housing
resources!

FOR MORE
INFORMATION,
CONTACT:

The City of Laurel's
Department of Economic
& Community Development

(301) 725-5300
EXT.2301