

Takoma Park



News

Important Dates

City Manager Reception

Wednesday, January 31, 6:30 pm.

Community Center Atrium Lobby

7500 Maple Ave.

All residents encouraged to attend.

Presidents Day

Monday, February 19

Monday routes will be collected on

Tuesday.

FREE CITY EVENTS

LEGO Club

Sunday, February 4, 2–4 p.m.

Takoma Park Maryland Library

7505 New Hampshire Ave., Suite 205

Performance: Franglais

Friday, February 9, 7:30

Community Center Auditorium

7500 Maple Ave.

Kids Make Valentines

Sunday, February 11, 2 p.m.

Takoma Park Maryland Library

7505 New Hampshire Ave., Suite 205

Performance: Soul of Langston

Friday, February 23, 7:30

Community Center Auditorium

7500 Maple Ave.

Community Police Academy

Beginning March 5

Tuesdays, 7 p.m.–9:30 p.m.

Applications at takomaparkmd.gov

Takoma Park Egg Hunt

Saturday, March 30, 10 a.m.

Ed Wilhelm Field

FREE COMMUNITY EVENTS

Mid-Winter Play Day

Sunday, February 11, 1–4 p.m.

Piney Branch Elementary School

7510 Maple Ave.

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“I am a fan of Takoma Park.”

Meet Robert DiSpirito, the New City Manager

By Sean Gossard

For Takoma Park’s new city manager, Robert DiSpirito, his first day on the job last month started bright and early. Well, maybe not so bright, since the sun wouldn’t be rising for a couple of hours.

DiSpirito began his tenure at Takoma Park with a 5:30 a.m. trip to the city’s refuse and recycling garage, where he introduced himself to employees in the public works department.

“Those crews are the folks who are doing the hard work serving our residents,” DiSpirito said in an interview with the Takoma Park newsletter. “I wanted to have a feel very quickly for what they need and what can the administration do to fund and support those operations for the people who are literally out there putting their lives at risk to provide those services. Public works is a dangerous job. Working on those big rigs in the dark and on narrow streets and not knowing what you’ll encounter.”

From there, he caught the 8 a.m. shift change at the Takoma Park police station to speak with officers about public safety and policing in the community.



New City Manager Robert DiSpirito comes with a wealth of city administration experience and a mean eggplant parmesan.

“I wanted to stop by and say ‘Hey, this is my first day, but I recognize that I’m here to support you, and that begins with me getting to know you and coming out and seeing you where you are.’ And that’s to my benefit. I’ll learn, become acclimated soon-

er and get a perspective that the employees have on public services,” he says.

The Takoma Park City Council and Mayor Talisha Searcy announced last month that DiSpirito had been chosen as the city’s newest city manager after a nationwide search.

“Throughout the process, Mr. DiSpirito was a standout,” the city wrote in a statement announcing the hire. “He is a proven leader with the knowledge of the challenges and opportunities we have in Montgomery County, 28 years of experience as a City Manager, and the vision necessary to move our city forward.”

It turns out, the mayor and city council barely had to leave their backyards in picking DiSpirito, who was formerly the city manager for Rockville, the seat of Montgomery County.

“I would say there are more similarities than differences between the two cities,” DiSpirito says. “Rockville is obviously bigger, population wise, but both are very diverse, both have a high quality of life, and both have excellent parks and public services from their employees. I’d say it’s a question of scale.”

MANAGER □ Page 4

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Council Comments

Ward 3 Highlights

Editor’s note: Over the next several months, the Takoma Park newsletter will be featuring updates from members of the City Council. We start, this month, with Randy Gibson, Ward 3.

By Randy Gibson

Takoma Park needs you!

After more than a year on the job as Ward 3 Councilmember, I am humbled by the expertise, passion, and love of community that I have witnessed from you our residents. Yes, we have a dedicated city staff and council, but Takoma Park is a great place to live because of resident engagement, civic volunteerism, and service.

Until recently I took this for granted. I’ve lived here for more than 30 years working and raising a family, paying my taxes and enjoying city services (especially the parks and festivals). But like many residents, I invested little time on local issues. This changed dramatically after I was elected to council in November 2022 and began to weigh decisions on the budget, Minor Master Plan, and much more. I soon came to value the diverse opinions, wisdom, and service that my neigh-



Randy Gibson was elected as Ward 3 City Councilmember in 2022.

bors offer. People have thanked me for my council service but I thank you. For those who can, be involved, keep coming to council meetings, sending me emails, and serving our community.

A lot is happening this year, some highlighted below will have a significant

impact on Ward 3.

1. The Junction:

After years of uncertainty, the city has ended the lease relationship with the Neighborhood Development Center (NDC) for development of the parking lot and woods at the Junction. The TPSS Food Co-op is now leasing the space from the city rather than NDC. Along with other Junction businesses, a new restaurant, Cielo Rojo, has opened nearby, whose customers are regularly using the lot. I am hopeful the space will also continue to be used to host occasional city and civic events and that the woods continue to help reduce runoff. I am unaware of any imminent lot changes, but the role of this city-owned property will certainly be reviewed. At such time, I will strongly advocate for transparency, sustainable solutions, and civil resident engagement.

2. Laurel Avenue traffic study:

The city received a \$60,000 grant from the Metro Washington Council of Governments to study potential traffic impacts of various closure op-

WARD 3 □ Page 4

Mayor & Council

7500 Maple Ave.

Takoma Park, MD 20912

PRE-SORT STANDARD

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Docket 2

Building Community 3

Arts 5

Library 6

Recreation 8

At Your Service 10

On the DOCKET

Focus on the Recreation and Community Engagement Committee

At the Recreation and Community Engagement Committee we try to live up to our name. We work collaboratively with city staff to support recreation programs and events that bring our diverse community together.

Over the years we have been involved in the Winter Basketball league, MLK Jr. Day, Celebrate Takoma, Play Day, the Children's Garden, and other activities, including clean-ups of public spaces. A fun group, we meet once

a month, currently by Zoom. We are looking for Takoma Park residents who want to contribute ideas. No special expertise needed, just a desire to make Takoma Park an even better place to live.

Questions? Email City Clerk Jessie Carpenter (jessiec@takomaparkmd.gov) or Committee Chair Ellen Marcus (ellen@actsofpaint.com).

CITY COUNCIL

Individuals interested in receiving a weekly city council agenda and committee calendar update by email can sign up by sending an email to clerk@takomaparkmd.gov.

The public may comment at regular meetings of the city council in person or virtually, via Zoom. To comment over Zoom, you must register by 5 p.m. on the meeting. There is no need to register to comment in person.

CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

(Meeting start times can change. Please check the agenda page on the City website to confirm the time.)

- Wednesday, January 31—City Council Regular Meeting, 7:30 p.m. in the Community Center Auditorium
- Wednesday, February 7—City Council Regular Meeting, 7:30 p.m. in the Community Center Auditorium
- Wednesday, February 14—City Council Regular Meeting, 7:30 p.m. in the Community Center Auditorium
- Wednesday, February 21—City Council Regular Meeting, 7:30 p.m. in the Community Center Auditorium
- Wednesday, February 28—City Council Regular Meeting, 7:30 p.m. in the Community Center Auditorium
- Wednesday, March 6—City Council Regular Meeting, 7:30 p.m. in the Community Center Auditorium

CITY BOARD AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Check the calendar on the city website for the most up-to-date information on council and committee meetings, including links to access meetings and agendas. Visit takomaparkmd.gov and click on *Events and Meetings*. Most city boards and committees continue to meet on Zoom. Some are holding hybrid meetings (in-person and virtual, over Zoom).

BOARD OF ELECTIONS

Date and time to be announced (virtual)

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE

Thursday, February 22, 7 p.m. (Hydrangea Room, with virtual option)

GRANTS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Tuesday, February 13, 6:30 p.m. (virtual)

POLICE CHIEF'S ADVISORY BOARD

Date and time to be announced (hybrid: in-person and virtual)

RECREATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Thursday, February 22, 7 p.m. (virtual)

SUSTAINABLE MARYLAND CERTIFIED COMMITTEE

Monday, February 26, 7 p.m. (Hydrangea Room, with virtual option)

TREE COMMISSION

Wednesday, February 14, 6:30 p.m. (virtual)

YOUTH COUNCIL

Thursday, February 1, 4 p.m.
Thursday, February 15, 4 p.m.
Thursday, February 29, 4 p.m.
(Meetings are virtual.)

ADA NOTICE

The City of Takoma Park is committed to ensuring that individuals with disabilities are able to fully participate in public meetings. Anyone with a disability who wishes to receive auxiliary aids, services, or accommodations at a City of Takoma Park public meeting or public hearing is invited to contact Jessie Carpenter, city clerk, at jessiec@takomaparkmd.gov or 301-891-7267 as early as possible.

Takoma Park Election for Mayor and City Council: November 5, 2024

2024 is an election year for Takoma Park. Election Day is Tuesday, November 5. The Nominating Caucus will take place on Tuesday, September 10.

- Our election is *completely separate* from the presidential general election, which takes place on the same day.
- If you are already registered to vote at your current address, there is no need to register again.

- All residents ages 16 and above are eligible to register and vote for mayor and city council.
- Non-citizen residents may register with the city clerk to vote in elections for mayor and council.
- This election will be vote by mail. Every registered voter will receive a ballot in the mail. Ballots can be returned by mail or placed in a Takoma Park ballot drop box.

- The Community Center will be open on November 5 for residents who choose to vote in person.
- Candidates who wish to have their name placed on the ballot must be nominated at the City Nominating Caucus on September 10.

Questions? Contact Jessie Carpenter, city clerk, at 301-891-7267 or jessiec@takomaparkmd.gov.

Las Elecciones de la Ciudad de Takoma Park para Alcalde y Concejo: 5 de noviembre de 2024

2024 es un año electoral para la Ciudad de Takoma Park. El día de las elecciones es el martes 5 de noviembre. La Reunión Electoral de Nominaciones se llevará a cabo el martes 10 de septiembre.

- Nuestra elección *es completamente independiente* de la elección general presidencial, que se lleva a cabo el mismo día.
- Si ya está registrado para votar en su dirección actual, no es necesario que se registre nuevamente
- Todos los residentes mayores de 16 años son elegibles para

registrarse y votar por un alcalde y miembro del concejo.

- Los residentes no ciudadanos Americanos pueden registrarse ante la Secretaria Municipal para votar en las elecciones para alcalde y concejo.
- Estas elecciones se votará por correo. Cada votante registrado recibirá una papeleta por correo. Las papeletas pueden ser devueltas por correo o colocadas en una buzón electoral de Takoma Park.
- El Centro Comunitario estará

abierto el 5 de noviembre para los residentes que decidan votar en persona.

- Los candidatos que deseen que su nombre sea colocado en la papeleta electoral deben ser nominados en la Reunión Electoral de Nominación de la Ciudad el 10 de septiembre.

¿Preguntas? Para más información en español póngase en contacto con Irma Nalvarte, 301-891-7214 o IrmaN@takomaparkmd.gov.

Engage with Your City Government!

The Takoma Park City Council consists of seven members. Six of these members are elected by ward, and one is elected at-large and serves as the mayor. You can watch and participate in city council meetings at the community center or online. On the City Council page of the city web-

site (takomaparkmd.gov), you can find agendas, supplementary information, and links to videos of past meetings.

If you are unsure about which ward you are in,

GOVERNMENT ☐ Page 3



Mayor Talisha Searcy



Shana Fulcher (Ward 1)



Cindy Dyballa (Ward 2)



Randy Gibson (Ward 3)



Terry Seamens (Ward 4)



Cara Honzak (Ward 5)



Jason Small (Ward 6)

Building COMMUNITY

Project Updates

Takoma Park Planning Division

Additional information about all of these projects is available at takomaparkmd.gov. Drop the name of the project in the search engine to get to the project page.

Maple Avenue Connectivity Project

After an autumn community engagement effort that reached more than 200 residents, the project consultants shared a draft of the preliminary design at a January community meeting. A city council presentation is planned for February, and the draft designs can be viewed in detail on the city website.

Takoma Park Minor Master Plan

The Montgomery County Council's Planning, Housing, and Parks Committee will hold dedicated work sessions on the plan, scheduled for January 29, February 5, and February 12. These sessions will provide a platform for in-depth analysis, committee member discussion, and potential amendments to the plan.

For information about the work sessions, visit montgomerycountymd.gov/council.

Metropolitan Branch Trail Upgrade

This project was awarded \$465,000 to create construction-ready designs.

New Ave Bikeway—Section A

The consulting team continues to work on the final construction-ready designs;



This aerial shot shows the northeast leg of Maple Avenue. This thoroughfare is being studied to improve the experience of pedestrians and cyclists. This photo also shows much of the area of the Takoma Park Minor Master Plan, now being discussed by the Montgomery County Council. Photo by Sam Kittner

this project has suffered from delays due to negotiating permits with public utility companies.

New Ave Bikeway—Section B

The consulting team continues to work

on the final, construction-ready designs; this project has suffered from delays due to negotiating permits with public utility companies.

New Ave Bikeway—Section D

City staff is seeking funding opportunities to advance the existing preliminary designs to final, construction-ready designs.

GOVERNMENT

■ From page 2

check the ward map and street directory, also available through the city council page. Contact information for the mayor and city council:

- Mayor **Talisha Searcy**: talishas@takomaparkmd.gov
- Ward 1 Councilmember **Shana Fulcher**: shanaf@takomaparkmd.gov
- Ward 2 Councilmember **Cindy Dyballa**: cindydy@takomaparkmd.gov
- Ward 3 Councilmember **Randy Gibson**: randallg@takomaparkmd.gov
- Ward 4 Councilmember **Terry Seamens**: terrys@takomaparkmd.gov
- Ward 5 Councilmember **Cara Hon-**

zak: carah@takomaparkmd.gov

- Ward 6 Councilmember **Jason Small**: jasons@takomaparkmd.gov

You can follow news from the mayor and city staff on the city blog at takomaparkmd.gov. To receive news in your inbox, sign up for e-newsletters and alerts by going to the city website and searching for “sign up.” You can receive the Takoma Insider weekly e-newsletter, alerts for council agendas and committee meetings, police bulletins, and Takoma Arts updates.

In addition, several councilmembers maintain blogs or weekly e-newsletters with updates specific to council actions and their ward. Contact your councilmember to be added to their mailing list.

Made in Takoma Park



Photo by Eric Bond

Hatib Joof evokes home in his cozy restaurant on the corner of Flower and Erie Aves.

Feeling at Home at Mansa Kunda

By Eric Bond

For Hatib Joof, a restaurant is a home. His restaurant, Mansa Kunda, on Flower and Erie Aves., both evokes his childhood home in Gambia and creates a new home-space here in Takoma Park.

“I hope that the people who bring their kids here, 30 or 40 years from now they will say, ‘I used to go there when I was a kid.’ This will be a place that they come to,” says Joof.

In 2019, Joof opened Mansa Kunda—a king’s domain in Mandingo—with the notion that Takoma Park would be the ideal home for his West African cuisine. Over the previous 23 years, Joof had been the

manager of the Spring Mill Bread Company, which used to supply the Takoma Park Silver Spring Food Co-op with bread and pastries before opening a storefront in Takoma Junction. So Joof had a good understanding of the location.

“In the DMV area, Takoma Park was the only place that I know that has the diversity and the people who are curious enough to entertain the idea of having a cuisine that is unorthodox,” says Joof. “Gambian or Senegalese cuisine is not mainstream.

“People ask me, where is The Gambia? And I have to say, ‘Well, do you know West Africa?’ Yeah. Everybody knows Nigeria,

MANSA KUNDA □ Page 10

Editor's note

English:

Look for this icon next to newsletter articles that you can read online in other languages using the translation feature on the City of Takoma Park’s website. After clicking on the link for the article, look in the upper right hand corner of the web page next to the navigation bar, and select the language you want using the drop-down box.

French:

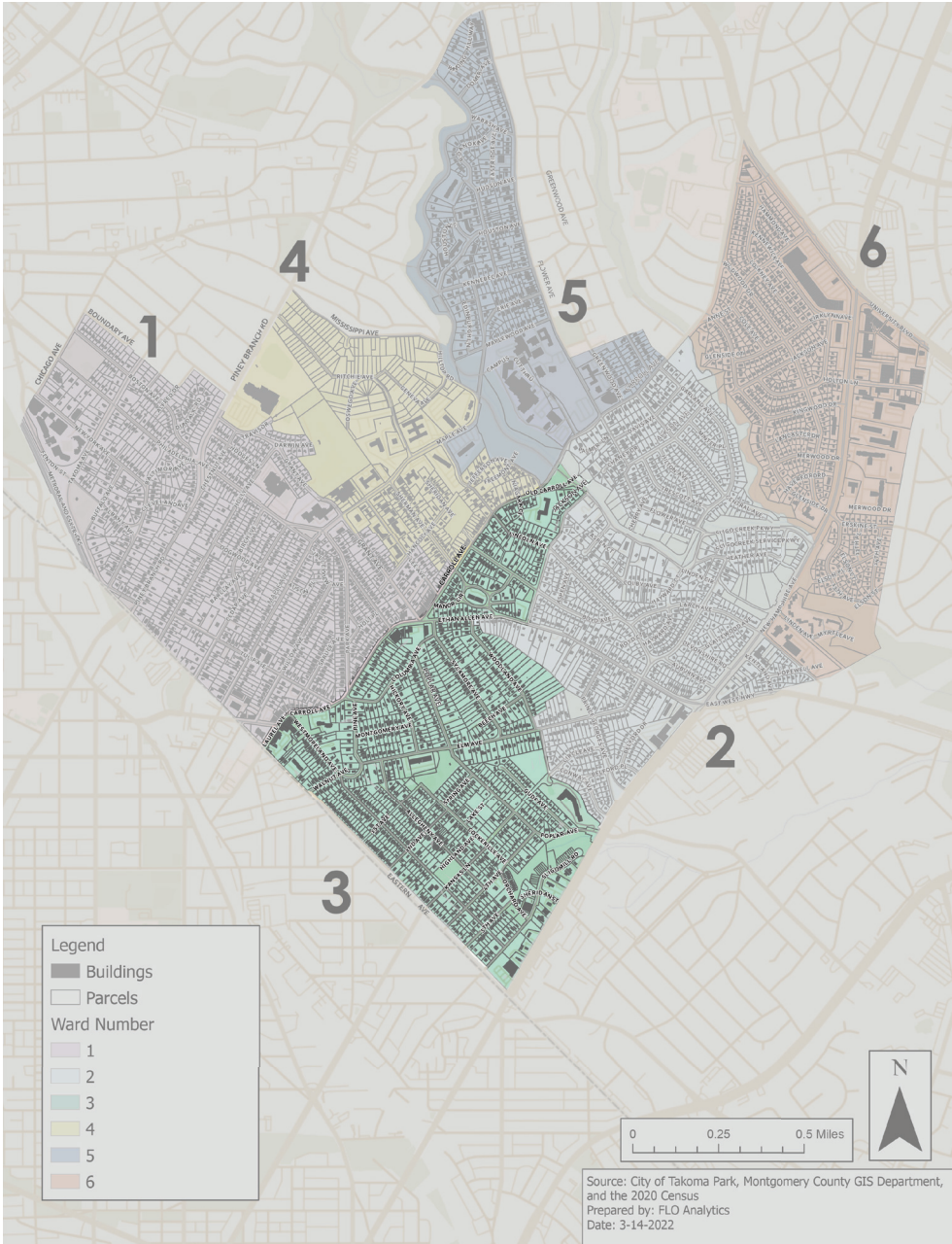
Recherchez cette icône à côté des articles du bulletin que vous pouvez lire en ligne dans d’autres langues à l’aide de la fonction de traduction disponible sur le site Web de la ville de Takoma Park. Après avoir cliqué sur le lien de l’article, regardez dans le coin supérieur droit de la page Web à côté de la barre de navigation, puis sélectionnez la langue souhaitée à l’aide du menu déroulant.

Spanish:

Busque este ícono junto a los artículos del boletín que puede leer en línea en otros idiomas usando la función de traducción en el sitio web de la Ciudad de Takoma Park. Después de hacer clic en el enlace del artículo, busque en la esquina superior derecha de la página web junto a la barra de navegación y seleccione el idioma que desee con el cuadro desplegable.

Amharic:

ኮታቸ ያለውን ደህን ክፉ ደረሰው የዚህ መጽሔት አርከም ራስዎ ፕፍው በኤሌንቶ ቋንቋዎች በመስመር ላይ ማንበብ ይቻላል ተርጉሙን በመጠቀም በታኩማ ከተማ ውስጥ ያለውን ባህሪ የፓርክ ድር ጣቢያ ጠቀ ካደረግን በኋላ ስጽሑፉ አገናኝ ላይ ይመልከቱ በላይኛው ቀኝ ጥግ ላይ ታንባሰች የአሰሳ አምሴን ይምረጡና ይምረጡ የሚጠቀሙበት ቋንቋ ተቀልቋይ ሳጥን.



Ward 3 (highlighted with green) extends from the southern tip of Takoma Park to the heart of the city.

WARD 3

■ From page 1

tions of the southbound lane of Laurel Avenue, across from the outdoor seating. Any projected benefits to closing this lane will need to weigh the potential traffic impacts on Wards 3 and 1. I will continue to involve the WACO neighborhood in particular when study results are likely to be released in June. Based on the report, the city will work with elected officials, residents and businesses to determine next steps.

3. Public Space Management Plan: The city council recently passed this revised plan (details on takomaparkmd.gov) as a framework to prioritize and manage public spaces (parks, rights of way, roads, etc.). I would like Ward 3 residents to examine the Plan criteria, such as sustainability, safety, and equity to identify “place-making” opportunities and needs in Ward 3. Look around. Where might we protect, enhance or restore our public environment for the public good? I’ll be in touch with Ward 3 residents later this year about this.

4. Budget: City staff are already working on a FY25 Budget, including release of some web-based modules for residents to learn about the budget process. In order to prepare for budget discussions, I have distributed a Ward 3 Budget survey to learn what programs Ward 3 residents are using and what your concerns and priorities are. Results are still pending at the time of this newsletter submission.

5. Citywide: The budget, traffic, crime, and the environment will remain important issues across the city for the attention of council and residents. The debate over the Minor Master Plan has been intense and has engaged the council for many months. Listening carefully to residents, experts, and staff, I have provided a voice and vote in criticism of the Plan. On this and all issues, I continue to listen, learn, and lead to the best of my ability. Takoma Park needs us all.

To contact me or to receive my *Ward 3 Council Updates* please email me at Randallg@Takomaparkmd.gov.



Photo by Carol Clayton

Ward 3 Councilmember Randy Gibson poses at the TPSS Food Co-op in Takoma Junction.

MANAGER

■ From page 1

But there was something alluring about helping the progressive bastion that is Takoma Park and DiSpirito decided to apply for the position that has been open since former city manager Jamal Fox resigned last February.

“For the seven years I’ve been in Montgomery County, I’ve been a fan of Takoma Park,” he says. “It’s a very progressive, complex city. Takoma Park is a thought leader. It’s relatively small compared to other cities, but looms large from a progressive standpoint and trying to thoughtfully address central issues for people.”

Prior to moving to Montgomery County with his wife, Evangelina, and two children, DiSpirito served as city manager of Oberlin, Ohio, for 11 years; and then moved on to Dunedin, Fla., for nearly 10 years; before serving Rockville for seven years.

“I’ve been blessed in my career to serve a number of dynamic and progressive communities,” he says. “I’ve been in Ohio, Florida, and Maryland and am very happy to have this opportunity to be in Takoma Park.”

Born in Bridgeport, Conn., and raised in Slippery Rock, Pa., DiSpirito got his undergraduate degree from Slippery Rock University before receiving his Masters in Public Administration from the University of Pittsburgh.

“I feel like I’ve learned a lot along the way from a lot of people smarter than me and from experts in their fields in multiple departments,” DiSpirito says. “Takoma Park is no exception. We have some brilliant people here and I know I’m going to learn a lot from them, but I also hope that I can impart some of what I’ve learned in my 28 years as a city manager and 35 years in the profession.”

Throughout his career, he’s dealt with both the lows and the highs of life in the public sector, including working for years in Dunedin, Fla., to create a 7-acre beachfront public park on the last undeveloped, waterfront property in the city.

“The new park establishes Dunedin as one of Pinellas County’s most environmentally conscious areas, drawing a stark contrast to the high-rises of Clearwater Beach visible on the horizon,” the Tampa Bay Times wrote of the park’s grand opening in 2011.

DiSpirito says the experience working with the city, county and state and with the property’s owner to acquire the land and open it for public use is something

that drives him in public service. “Those are the gemstones in the course of your career, when you work with a team to pull something off like that,” he says. “It was such a desire to see that happen. Sometimes the planets align.”

DiSpirito looks to bring that same sense of cooperation and success to Takoma Park, including working with the state and county.

“Being in the same county, I have access to the same network of resources with the [Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation] and various agencies at the county and Maryland,” he says. “I’ll be talking to a lot of the same people, just this time in the interest of Takoma Park instead of Rockville.”

He also hopes to engage with the city’s residents and hear from them directly on their concerns with Takoma Park, even if they may disagree with him.

“Part of what I’ve been blessed with in my career is that in the three previous cities that I’ve managed all had very great public engagement. I’m used to having folks be highly engaged and express their opinions,” he says. “People who make the effort to work with us, we need to respect that. We may not ultimately agree on the point, but I think what’s valuable in keeping a community close knit is a sense that their government respects them and cares when they speak. Those are things I hope to promote here and I think there’s a great tradition of that here.”

As for the future of Takoma Park and where he sees the city heading, DiSpirito says he wants to focus on the things that make the city strong, including housing and developmental issues and maintaining a high quality of life.

“Things like housing and sustainability, pedestrian safety, these are areas that most cities are involved in some degree, but this city is involved in them a great degree,” he says. “It aspires to do even more. It’s that aspiration that really attracted me and where this mayor and council want to go and how they expressed it in respect to their goals and priorities. They’ve talked about their dreams for the city and I’d like to achieve some of that for them along with this talented staff.”

DiSpirito says he’ll be introducing himself to businesses and residents around town and looks forward to meeting as many people as he can. If you need an icebreaker, maybe ask about the secret to his favorite recipe.

“I make a mean eggplant parmesan,” he says.

Please join the Mayor and City Council in welcoming Robert DiSpirito, the new city manager, with a reception on Wednesday, January 31 at 6:30 pm. Light refreshments will be served in the Community Center Atrium.

Introducing the Open for Business Grant Program

The city's newest grant program encourages businesses to locate within Takoma Park or to expand their current Takoma Park space.

Funding awards range from \$4–6 per square foot. The grants are capped at \$10,000.

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.

Learn more at takomaparkmd.gov

The ARTS



Franglais



Franglais Brings Gypsy Jazz to Takoma Park

Blending the rhythmic pulse of gypsy jazz and the improvised elegance of American jazz, Franglais will hold a free concert at the Takoma Park Community Center on February 9 as part of the *Takoma Park Arts* series.

Rhythm guitarist Ben Wood and vocalist Eve Seltzer formed Franglais in 2004 after being inspired by the Django Reinhardt jazz festival in France during their honeymoon. Based in New York City, the couple regularly plays with other musicians and has performed from Paris to Honolulu and cities in between.

Franglais will hold a free concert at **7:30 p.m. on Friday, February 9** in the Takoma Park Community Center auditorium at 7500 Maple Ave. No tickets or reservations are required, and donations will be accepted to support the band. You can learn more about Franglais and hear some of their music at franglaisjazz.com.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Wood

and Seltzer were stuck in their Brooklyn apartment and started recording some jazz duets to cope with their isolation. The songs became their latest album *Pairings* that was recorded and edited by Seltzer, who is a Grammy-nominated sound engineer. Each of the eight songs was paired with a drink in a nod to Wood's work as a sommelier which also was disrupted by the pandemic shutdowns.

"I grew up in the D.C. area so we're really looking forward to playing in Takoma Park again," Wood said.

The concert is part of the *Takoma Park Arts* series organized by the City of Takoma Park's Arts and Humanities Division, which includes free concerts, art exhibitions, film screenings, theater, dance, and other performances at the Takoma Park Community Center. Please sign up for our weekly e-newsletter at takomaparkmd.gov/arts for more information about all of our upcoming events.

Call for Public Art Installation

The Arts and Humanities Committee is pleased to announce this call for entries for a site-specific sculptural installation as part of the City of Takoma Park's ongoing efforts to further the creation of public art to build community, enhance public spaces, and celebrate the arts. Proposals should reflect a "welcome" or "crossroads" theme for a permanent sculptural installation outside the Takoma Park Recreation Center at 7315 New Hampshire Ave. The Recreation Center is located near a major entry point to the city, near several diverse, vibrant, and multicultural neighborhoods.

Deadline: March 3

The project guidelines and online submission form can be found at bit.ly/3NQsHhG. Questions: Contact Brendan Smith at brendans@takomaparkmd.gov.



One-Man Play Embodies the Legacy of Langston Hughes

O, let my land be a land where Liberty
Is crowned with no false patriotic wreath,
But opportunity is real, and life is free,
Equality is in the air we breathe.

(There's never been equality for me,
Nor freedom in this "homeland of the free.")

— From *Let America Be America Again* by Langston Hughes

In a one-man play written and performed by Daron P. Stewart, *Soul of Langston* reveals the bittersweet wit and wisdom of Langston Hughes' poetry, the triumphs and tragedies that shaped his life, and the worldwide impact of his literary career.

A free performance of *Soul of Langston* will be held at **7:30 p.m. on Friday, February 23** in the Takoma Park Community Center auditorium at 7500 Maple Ave. No tickets or reservations are required, and donations will be accepted.

In the play, Stewart wears a wide-lapelled suit and fedora while standing next to a desk with a vintage typewriter to explore the astounding arc of Hughes' life to become "Harlem's Wonder" who helped establish the Civil Rights movement through the Harlem Renaissance.

Fused with jazz and blues, the play explores Hughes' prodigious work as a poet, novelist, essayist, and playwright. Hughes worked as a busboy at the Wardman Park Hotel in Washington, D.C., in the 1920s before achieving fame as a poet, inspiring the name of the local Busboys and Poets restaurants.

Stewart has performed across the United States and abroad, including

many films and stage plays. He has performed *Soul of Langston* at festivals, schools, colleges, churches, and conferences. He also conducts an artist residency program and is the founder of the independent production company Norad Media. You can learn more about him and see a scene from the play at soulofLangston.com.

Born in 1901 in Joplin, Missouri, Hughes sketched an unvarnished view of the struggles of Black working class people living in a racist America but also their resounding strength and deep sense of community. In his famed essay *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain*, he wrote that "no great poet has ever been afraid of being himself."

"Most of my own poems are racial in theme and treatment, derived from the life I know. In many of them I try to grasp and hold some of the meanings and rhythms of jazz," Hughes wrote. "Jazz to me is one of the inherent expressions of Negro life in America: the eternal tom-tom beating in the Negro soul—the tom-tom of revolt against weariness in a white world, a world of subway trains, and work, work, work; the tom-tom of joy and laughter, and pain swallowed in a smile."



Daron Stewart in *Soul of Langston*.



Takoma Park News

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The Takoma Park Newsletter is published 12 times a year as the official publication of the City of Takoma Park, takomaparkmd.gov.



LIBRARY

Takoma Park Maryland Library 7505 New Hampshire Ave., Suite 205

This is the library's interim location during reconstruction of the library at Maple and Philadelphia Aves. There is plenty of parking as well as access to public transportation—not to mention free Wi-Fi.

Library and Computer Center Hours

Monday–Thursday 10 a.m.–8 p.m.
Friday–Sunday noon–6 p.m.

February Holidays

The library and computer center will be closed on February 18 and 19 in honor of President's Day.

Weather-related Closures

Please check the city website before venturing out in inclement weather!

To protect our most vulnerable patrons and staff, the library encourages everyone to continue to wear a mask while in the library; masks are optional in City facilities now.

You can borrow an internet hotspot.

The library has a supply of Verizon JetPacks for patrons to borrow. The hotspots will permit up to 10 devices to connect to the internet. These items will be available only to adult patrons and require a signed user agreement.

Books-to-Go and Books-to-You continue. Email librarytakomapark@gmail.com to order Books-to-Go or Books-to-You. Please note: if you are picking up a Books-to-Go order, please call the library's main number, 301-891-7259. The Books-to-You service is only available for Takoma Park residents.

Programs and Events

A Note about Program and Event

Registration: Library events are always free and open to all. We ask patrons to register for some programs. Registration provides the library and its partners with a headcount so we can prepare



accordingly. Registration, however, does not guarantee a seat, and participants are encouraged to arrive early.

Language Exchange! ¡Intercambio de Idiomas!

This Spanish and English conversation group meets on Thursday evenings.

English speakers will help people learning English and, in exchange, speakers of Spanish will help people learn their language—in a small, friendly, accepting group.

Esperamos que hablantes nativos de inglés ayuden a otros a aprender inglés y, a cambio, hablantes nativos de español ayuden a otros a aprender su idioma, en un grupo pequeño, amigable y receptivo.

No formal classes, just casual conversation. Lots of mistakes expected and encouraged. In person at the library's interim location. All levels—

language beginners are welcome. Every Thursday, from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Registration is encouraged, and you can drop in whenever you wish.

Crochet and Cozies (all-ages). Join us at 10:30 Monday mornings for crochet and cozy mysteries. Bring your hooks, needles, and yarn. Don't have any? We'll find some for you. A beginner? You'll find help. Knitters and loom knitters—please join us. Registration is optional, but it does allow us to contact you if necessary.

Neighborhood Circle Time. Join Ms. Kati and/or Ms. Verónica every Tuesday at 10:30 a.m. for Circle Time. We sing songs and have fun with fingerplays and rhymes. We dance and do movement exercises. We read a book in the middle of the program. And we close with bubbles. *Jumpstart With the Arts* joins us with live music for Circle Time on the

first Tuesday of each month—the next time they will be with us is February 6, with Anna Mwalagho. *Jumpstart With the Arts* is made possible by the generosity of the Friends of the Takoma Park Maryland Library.

Canta Juego: Spanish Circle Time every Thursday at 10:30am. ¡Canciones y juegos en español! Join the fun at our weekly Spanish Circle Time, led by Señora Geiza. In this 30-minute program, kids and adults can sing songs and do rhymes and movement exercises in Spanish. Sponsored by Friends of the Takoma Park Maryland Library.

Chess for Kids. New time: Sundays at noon! Caregivers and kids are invited to play. Bring a chessboard and pieces if you like, but we have plenty. Players of all levels are welcome; there will be group instruction once a month. Please register if you want to receive updates. No chess on February 18.

LEGO Club. Come in and play with LEGOs! Sunday, February 4, 2–4 p.m.

Kids' Art. Join us to make some Valentines on Sunday, February 11, 2 p.m.

Sketch Club. Afterschool art! Thursdays, 4 p.m.–5:30 p.m. Join Dave Burbank and stretch your imagination and drawing skills. Registration is encouraged so that you can be notified of any changes—but it is not required.

WinterQuest continues! A Knitting Adventure! WinterQuest is our annual reading adventure, with a gameboard and characters of your choosing. You read at your own pace and follow a storyline. This winter, join all your friends in knitting together a yarn, finding adventures on a shoestring, needling your nearest and dearest to read more books!



Friends News



Friends of the Takoma Park Maryland Library (FTPML) rocked out at the VFW on Friday, January 12 to raise funds for our city library. Friends raised \$1,400 at this swinging party. Pictured, the Airport 77s. The Magmatics also played. Photos by Maurice Belanger



Friends Book Group to read *Parable of the Talents*

by Tim Rahn

The novel *The Parable of the Talents* by Octavia Butler will be discussed by the Friends Book Group on Thursday, March 14 from 7:30 to 9 p.m. in the Hydrangea Room of the Community Center.

The Parable of the Talents continues the

story of Lauren Oya Olamina that began with *The Parable of the Sower*. Known as the Earthseed novels after the religion that Lauren founds, the two novels were the only ones completed in the series. Butler found writing the sequel to be difficult and

FRIENDS NEWS □ Page 10

Listen to This!

by Jessica Jones
Library Director

If Books Could Kill

"The airport bestsellers that captured our hearts and ruined our minds." With a tagline like this, I had to check it out, and I'm so glad I did. You may know Michael Hobbes from *Maintenance Phase*. He teams up with Peter Shamshiri, from the Supreme Court podcast 5-4, to give the debunking treatment to books you would expect to find in an airport bookstore. They have covered titles like *Rich Dad Poor Dad*; *The Secret*; *Hillbilly Elegy*; and *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, and they are still going strong. If you love fact checking as much as I do, this is a good listen. Available on all podcast platforms.

PODCAST



REVIEW





Photo by Eric Bond

Meet Gordiya Khademian

by Anne LeVeque

Gordiya Khademian joined the library staff in December to replace cataloger Janet Jendrzejczyk, who retired in June 2023. Gordiya comes to us from the Montgomery County Public Libraries.

Tell us about yourself.

I use she/her pronouns, and I was born in Madison, Wisconsin—but only lived there for a few weeks. My family moved around quite a bit throughout the Midwest and East Coast till we got to Chevy Chase, Maryland, where I mainly grew up. I lived in New York City, where I went to NYU for my B.A. in Political Science and M.A. in Near Eastern Studies. But probably the most interesting place I've lived in is Dushanbe, Tajikistan, where I spent the summer of 2017 studying Persian.

What was your favorite childhood book?

My favorite childhood book would have to be one of the classic yellow hardback Nancy Drew mysteries. I loved checking those books out from the library as a child. I was always hooked by the suspense and would need to try to solve the mystery as I read.

What is your favorite book now?

My favorite book now is Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*. It's a difficult read, but the way Octavia Butler shows how we can come together and take care of each other, even in the most dire circumstances, is moving and I love how she explores the creation of a new faith.

What are you reading right now?

Right now I'm reading *Bitter*, Akwaeke Emezi's prequel to *Pet*. I'm completely blown away by Emezi's prose. I've also realized the library has a really excellent Young Adult collection.

If you could meet any author, living or dead, whom would it be?

If I could meet any author, I would want to meet Ursula Le Guin. I want to talk to her about anarchism and hear her thoughts and insights on the current state of the world today.

This position has you handling pretty much every new book we buy. Do you want to read every single one? Do you see any gaps in the sorts of books we buy?

I love getting to look through the new books while I'm cataloging! I don't know if I have seen enough to know of any gaps yet, but Dave (Burbank) and I have talked about growing the Manga collection, which I'm very excited to help with!

What are you passionate about?

I am passionate about self-reflection and self-growth. I like to take time with myself to understand where I am mentally and emotionally through journaling and time alone.

Do you have any hobbies or other things you do in your down time?

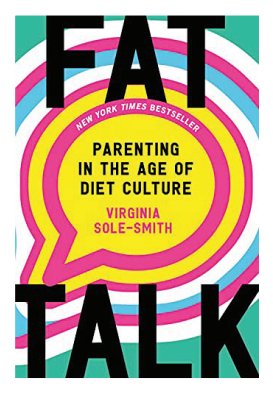
In my downtime I love watching all kinds of movies, horror, science fiction, old screwball romantic comedies. I also love talking about what I've watched or read, going for walks, and spending time with my partner, family, and friends.

Director's Desk

Readings for National Eating Disorders Awareness Week

by Jessica Jones
Library Director

Content warning: Eating disorders and diet culture.



After the conviviality and indulgence of the holiday season, it's not uncommon to hear a lot of talk about diet and weight loss in the New Year. I understand this pattern and the motivation behind it, and my hope is that when you read this in February the worst of it will be over.

For readers who have struggled with disordered eating, weight loss, and systemic issues of fatphobia, and you are far from alone. The last week of February is National Eating Disorders Awareness Week (February 26–March 1), and this seemed like a good time to talk about our relationships with our bodies and how the library can support health in a broader definition than a reductive metric like the body mass index (BMI) can render.

There is a stereotypical image of someone with an eating disorder, and it's usually a white woman who appears to be experiencing anorexia nervosa. The reality of eating disorders is far more expansive, and our understanding of them is constantly evolving.

For instance, it wasn't until 2013 that atypical anorexia nervosa (AAN) was recognized in the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, the publication on which most mental health clinicians and insurance companies recognize and define disorders). AAN describes someone experiences all of the symptoms of conventional anorexia nervosa without being underweight on the BMI scale. This means that a person can look *normal* and be at or above a so-called *normal* weight, and yet they may not be eating enough.

Orthorexia nervosa is a preoccupation with eating *healthfully* to the point that it can be disruptive to a person's relationships and daily functioning. Bulimia nervosa can present classically, or it can also be behaviors like exercising excessively to *undo* binge behaviors. The point is that disordered eating can look like all kinds of things, and it can also mask as dieting or *wellness*.

A while back, I wrote a short review for the *Maintenance Phase* podcast, and it remains a fantastic resource for critically evaluating wellness trends and practices. In lieu of getting into a long discussion about the BMI, I highly recommend the episode about the BMI,

which originally aired in August 2021.

The short version: the BMI was created in the 19th century by a Belgian astronomer and statistician who took large datasets about people's physical characteristics and used the patterns he saw to identify social *laws* that mimic the laws of physics. It was never meant to describe an individual's health. From there, it was co-opted by eugenicists and insurance companies, and then, by the medical profession. If you couldn't tell by the eugenics reference, the history of the BMI is also heavily laced with racism.

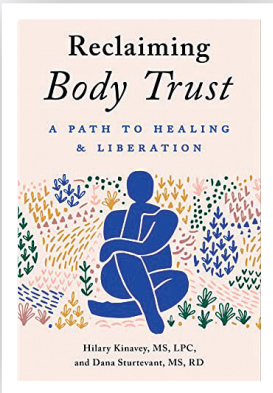
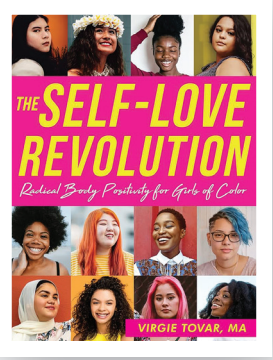
From someone who has taught information literacy best practices professionally, almost everything about the BMI reads as flawed. The methodology is not good, the implementation is worse ... it's not the best tool on which to base an internalized sense of self-worth.

A person experiencing an eating disorder can have any body shape, and they can also be in almost any age group. Children watch how we talk to and treat ourselves, and developing humans adopt the practices they observe around them. The kindness we show ourselves can have ripple effects, too.

There are a number of resources in our collection that can help support your relationship with your body and divest from the influences that can contribute to the development of eating disorders. Below are a few highlights.

For parents and families: *Fat talk: Parenting in the Age of Diet Culture*, by Virginia Sole-Smith, is a guide for families who want to challenge the public discourse around weight, health, and self-worth. Also for parents is Brooks and Severson's *How to Raise an Intuitive Eater: Raising the Next Generation with Food and Body Confidence* with practical tips for helping your kid feel confident about their bodies and food choices.

If you have a BIPOC (black, indigenous, and other people of color) child at home, Virgie Tovar's *The Self-Love Revolution: Radical Body Positivity for Girls of Color* may be an empowering resource for your tween or teen. For young people who love graphic novels and fiction, *Eat, and Love Yourself*, by Sweeney Boo, is the story of a young woman who



EATING DISORDERS □ Page 10

Note/Nota

Verónica's column will return next month.
La columna de Verónica Rivera-Negrón regresará el mes próximo.

Librarian Proves that CPR Works!

by Anne LeVeque

On January 10, librarian Dave Burbank was driving to work when he spotted a man who had collapsed at the side of the road. He immediately pulled over and discovered that the man was not responsive or breathing. Looking around for someone to help, Dave realized that that someone was he.

While on the phone to 911, he called upon his CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) training—offered every year to city staff, taught by Ron Hardy and John Webster—and began chest compressions, guided by the 911 operator. The rescue squad arrived quickly, in just seven minutes, but those seven minutes seemed an eternity.

"I don't know if he lived after they took over or whatever may have happened after I left," said Dave, "but I do know that he was not breathing when I started and was breathing when I left."

"I encourage everyone to learn CPR," said Ron Hardy, the City's Emergency Preparedness Manager. "You never know when you'll need it, whether it be family, friends, or a complete stranger. All city staff should take advantage of the free training offered to them."

Residents can get free CPR and first aid training through the Montgomery County CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) program. Go to montgomerycert.org for more information.

RECREATION

For a full list of our classes and to register visit bit.ly/TPRDActiveNet (case sensitive).

TOTS

DANCE

Combo Tot

Fun and energizing class for your little ones. This is the introductory foundational class consisting of rhythmic movements, into basic tumbling and various styles of dance. Jam-packed with games and toys your little ones won't even realize they are learning to dance.

Takoma Park Community Center
(Dance Studio)
7500 Maple Ave.
Ages 16 and up
10-week session
Sundays, 12:15–1 p.m.
April 7–May 19
Resident: \$125 / non-resident: \$145

YOUTH

CAMPS

Fundamentally Sound Spring Break Basketball Camp

This weeklong sports camp will focus on the skills needed to elevate your performance. By the end of the camp you will understand the fundamentals of the game and how to apply them in game situations. Prior basketball experience is not required, just a good attitude! Participants should bring a non-perishable lunch and water bottle. Additional paperwork required prior to the start of camp. *Beforecare and aftercare is provided for an additional fee.

Takoma Park Recreation Center
(Gymnasium)
7315 New Hampshire Ave.
Ages 6–12
1-week session
Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.
March 25–29
Resident: \$220 / non-resident: \$250



Spring Break Camp: LegoMANIA

Come join us and build your own creations in a fun and imaginative environment. Combining fun team building and memory making with discovery and innovation! Participants will meet at the Community Center, 7500 Maple Ave. Must bring a lunch, snacks, and labeled water bottle. Registration is required. Space is limited, sign up early. Paperwork will need to be completed prior to the first day of camp. *Beforecare and aftercare is provided for an additional fee.

Takoma Park Community Center
7500 Maple Ave.
Ages 6–12
March 25–29
9 a.m.–4 p.m.
Resident: \$150 / Non-resident: \$170

Extended Care for Spring Break Youth Camps

Beforecare: 7–9 a.m.
Resident: \$45 / non-resident: \$55
Aftercare: 4–6 p.m.
Resident: \$45 / non-resident: \$55

DANCE

Ballet & Stretch

This class focuses on the basics of ballet, but highlights advanced concepts including history, stage production, performance etiquette, and choreography. Students will explore the history of ballet and practice combinations from various ballet choreographers. Instructor: Charonne Butler

Takoma Park Community Center
(Auditorium)
7500 Maple Ave.
Ages 5–12
Saturdays, 12:30–1:15 p.m.
April 13–May 18
Resident: \$85 / non-resident: \$9

Hip-Hop Dance

This movement class focuses on the basics and culture of Hip-Hop. Students will learn basic b-boy and b-girl dance techniques, practice temporal and spatial awareness, and learn choreography. Instructor: Charonne Butler

Takoma Park Community Center
(Auditorium)
7500 Maple Ave.
Ages 5–12
Saturdays, 11:30 a.m.–12:15 p.m.
April 13–May 18
Resident: \$85 / non-resident: \$95

EXTENDED CARE



Fun Days

Fun Days are offered on specific days when Montgomery County Public Schools are not in session. The program is designed to provide recreational activities for children enrolled in kindergarten through fifth grade. Through structured, socially distanced activities, crafts and presenters, there are opportunities for socializing, unwinding, and releasing energy. Participants will meet at the Community Center, 7500 Maple Ave. Must bring a lunch, snacks, and labeled water bottle. Activities and trips are subject to change. **Registration is required. You can sign up for one day or all.** Space is limited—sign up early. Paperwork will need to be completed prior to the first day of the program.

Takoma Park Community Center
7500 Maple Ave.
Grades K-5
Wednesday, April 10: National Zoo
Monday, April 22: Rollingcrest Splash Pool
8:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m.
Resident: \$55 / non-resident: \$65

TEEN

DANCE

Afterschool Hip-Hop Dance @ TPMS

Hip-hop incorporates aspects of modern dance, tap, and swing, integrating music and complex movements to form artistry. Come and learn the fundamentals of hip-hop dance by learning fun routines! Teens will also have the opportunity to explore other types of dance, such as stepping. Instructor: Kokoe Abas

Takoma Park Middle School
7611 Piney Branch Rd.
Grades 6–8
Wednesdays, 3:30–4:30 p.m.
Through March 13
Free

EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT

Teen Money Management



Space is still available! Teen Money Management is all about learning fundamental financial skills to be prosperous in life! By learning the concepts listed below and putting them into practice, participants will be much better prepared when they begin building their own credit history and managing their own money. Concepts include long-term savings, credit, opening a bank account, debt and budgeting. Instructor: Tyronda Boone

Virtual
Grades 6–12
Mondays, 6–7 p.m.
Through March 11
Free

TRIPS



Teen Trip – Monster Mini Golf

School's out early!! Join the Teen Program for a trip to Monster Mini Golf in Gaithersburg (9116 Gaither Road, Gaithersburg, MD 20877). Featuring glow-in-the-dark golf courses, a laser maze, and arcade games, we are going to have a lot of fun! Food will not be provided—teens will need to pack a bagged lunch. There are also nearby restaurants if purchasing

lunch is preferred. Teens will meet in the Teen Lounge at 1 p.m.—the bus will be departing at 1:30pm sharp, so please be on time! Space is limited, register today. **MUST** be enrolled by Wednesday, February 28, no exceptions!

Takoma Park Community Center
(Meet at Teen Lounge)
7500 Maple Ave.
Grades 7–12
Friday, March 1
1–6 p.m.
Resident: \$20 / non-resident: \$30

DROP-IN

Teen Lounge

Welcome to the Teen Lounge! Where teens can get a quick snack, do their homework, participate in fun activities, or simply kick back with friends after school in a safe environment. Youth in grades 6-12 are encouraged to come to the Lounge after school! Various afterschool programs may be held in the lounge throughout the school year and will be announced accordingly. Enrollment on ActiveNet is **FREE** but required to visit the lounge. Students will need to register once every school year. Registration forms can be picked up from the Takoma Park Community Center or completed online via ActiveNet. The Teen Lounge is closed on non-school days, including holidays and weekends.

Takoma Park Community Center
(Teen Lounge)
7500 Maple Ave.
Grades 6–12
MCPS School Days
Monday–Friday, 3–6 p.m.
Free

ADULT



Zumba New Ave.

Zumba is a total body workout, combining all elements of fitness with cardio, muscle conditioning, balance, and flexibility. Zumba

TAKOMA PARK RECREATION DEPARTMENT

WE ARE HIRING

OPEN POSITIONS

- Recreation Program Leader I - Teens
- Recreation Program Leader II - Teens

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Weekday afternoons and occasional weekends
- Must be 21 or older to apply

Apply Now At:

takomaparkmd.gov/government/human-resources

RECREATION

RECREATION

■ From page 8

takes the work out of the workout, by mixing low- and high-intensity moves. The class will incorporate Latin music that will easily move you through your workout. Drop-ins are welcomed. Instructor: Yesika Flores
Takoma Park Recreation Center (Gymnasium)
7315 New Hampshire Ave.
Ages 16 and up
Saturdays, 9–10 a.m.
Through March 2
Resident: \$60 / non-resident: \$70
Drop-in: \$12

SPORTS

Adult Drop-in Pickleball

Join other *new* players for drop-in pickleball. This is a drop-in program. The entire magic and success of pickleball is the way it has been setup to be a welcoming sport in an informal setting. Meaning, you can show up to the courts and pick up a game. It doesn't matter what your age is; you can just play. That is the beauty of drop-in play.

Takoma Park Recreation Center (Gymnasium)
7315 New Hampshire Ave.
Ages 16 and up
Mondays, 6:30–8:30 p.m.
Through March 18
Resident: \$20 / non-resident: \$30

Adult Softball League

The Takoma Park Adult Softball League is a fun and exciting recreational program for competitive adults of all skill levels. Games will be played on Sundays. Team registrations must contain 50% of Takoma Park residents to qualify for Resident Team fee. Roster limit: 15. All games are double headers (8 weeks).

Site TBD
Ages 16 and up
8 Week Season
Sundays, April 7–June 9
(No Games May 12 and May 26)
Team Fees - Resident: \$700 / non-resident: \$800

55+ ACTIVITIES

DANCE

Line Dance

Line Dancing is great physical and mental exercise. Strengthening of bones and muscles, weight loss, increased stamina and flexibility, and stress reduction are just some of the benefits of dancing. Learn how exercise can be fun with music. No experience necessary. Instructor: Barbara Brown
Takoma Park Recreation Center (Gymnasium)
7315 New Hampshire Ave.
Ages 55 and up
Tuesdays, 10:30–11:30 a.m.
Through March 12
\$6

Zumba Gold

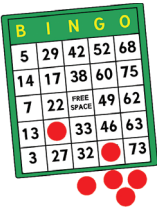
Active older adults who are looking for a modified Zumba class that recreates the original moves you love at a lower intensity. The design of the class introduces easy-to-follow Zumba choreography that focuses on balance, range of motion and coordination. Instructor: Yesika Flores
Takoma Park Recreation Center (Gymnasium)
7315 New Hampshire Ave.
Ages 55 and up
Fridays, 10–11 a.m.
Through March 15
\$6

DROP-IN

Bingo

Come try your luck and win a prize! This is a drop-in activity; no registration is required. Host: Paula Lisowski

Takoma Park Library
7505 New Hampshire Ave.
Ages 55 and up
Tuesdays, noon–2 p.m.
February 27 and March 26
Free



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

SUMMER CAMP REGISTRATION

Opens at noon, online & in person on the following dates

Those with 2024 scholarship: 2/14

TP Residents: 2/21

Non-residents: 2/28

SPRING & SUMMER CLASS REGISTRATION

Opens at noon, online & in person on the following dates

Those with 2024 scholarship: 3/8

TP Residents: 3/15

Non-residents: 3/22

FITNESS

Rhythmic Drumming

Cardio Fitness Drumming lets the rhythmic beat move you through tapping and drumstick clapping while standing and/or sitting to exercise your mind and body. No drumming experience required. Instructor: Dance Solutions
Takoma Park Recreation Center (Back Activity Room)
7315 New Hampshire Ave.
Ages 55 and up
Tuesdays, 1:15–2:15 p.m.
Through March 12
\$6

SPORTS

Pickleball Open Play

Join other new players for pickleball practice and play in the Gymnasium. This activity is geared toward beginners. Two courts and limited paddles available. Drop-in, though a free Recreation Center Membership is needed.
Takoma Park Recreation Center (Gymnasium)
7315 New Hampshire Ave.
Ages 55 & up
Thursdays, 12–2 p.m.
Through March 14
Free with membership

LEGO—Not Just for Children Anymore

Have you noticed recently that LEGOs are very popular with adults? Everything from television shows with competitive teams to famous artists such as Nathan Sawaya, Sean Kenney, and Ekow Nimako who have their extraordinary and very valuable Lego creations displayed in art galleries and museums.

Now there is another reason to play with LEGOs: using the unique properties of the colorful pieces to enhance creativity, dexterity, and problem/puzzle-solving as good mental exercise for the brain. And, of course, it's just plain fun!

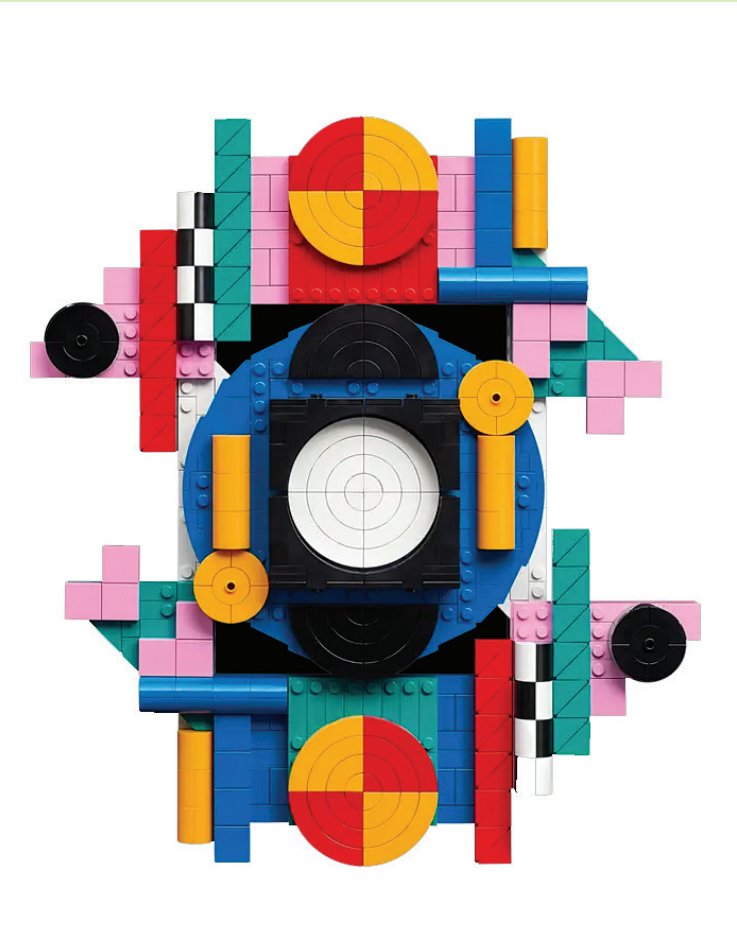
On Tuesday, January 11, Loretta Veney addressed an audience of program planners at the 2024 Senior Summit, sponsored by the Maryland Recreation and Parks Association (MRPA). Veney related her experience incorporating LEGOs in art therapy for persons with dementia—including her own mother. LEGOs provide older adults with joyful experiences and beneficial connections with family, friends, and caregivers.

Veney spoke about her advocacy for this brand

of art therapy through speaking engagements around the country, writing books on the subject, and appearing on Good Morning America, with Robin Roberts. In addition, Veney has led many art sessions using LEGOs with adults of all ages. Summit attendees were given small LEGO kits to try their hand at it. This speaker's enthusiasm was so infectious that summit participants were ready to bring this activity to adults at their recreation and senior centers.

Look for a 55+ LEGOs Adult Art Workshop coming in Spring 2024—more details to come. And don't forget about the Takoma Park Recreation Department's Youth Spring Break Camp, LEGO-mania, March 25–29. The Takoma Park Library also hosts LEGO Fun on Sunday, February 4, 2–4. Check with the library for details. Let's get creative!

At right: LEGO bricks can build art and stronger memories.



■ From page 9

Annual Egg Hunt

Get your baskets ready and join the Takoma Park Recreation Department for an egg-citing time! There are four age categories: 2 & under, 3-4, 5-6, and 7-8. Games will begin at 10 a.m. and the hunt will begin at 11 a.m. SHARP—don't miss out! Don't forget to bring your basket to Ed Wilhelm Field (behind Piney Branch Elementary School) for a morning of fun. We will be collecting the plastic eggs at the end of the event to reuse next year.

Ed Wilhem Field
Ages 2–8
Saturday, March 30
Starting at 10 a.m.
Free

Fitness Expo

Come join us for an exciting day that will include demonstrations from our fitness classes as well as presentations from our local community health and wellness organizations. The expo will kick off at 10 a.m. For additional information or if

you would like to volunteer for this event,
please contact Vincent Cain at 301-891-
7289 or Vincentc@takomaparkmd.gov

Takoma Park Recreation Center
7315 New Hampshire Ave.

All ages
Saturday, April 6
10 a.m.–2 p.m.
Free

Family Outdoor Movie Night

Our outdoor movie will begin at dusk on Ed Wilhelm Field (behind Piney Branch Elementary School). Bring your lawn chair or blanket and enjoy a movie under the stars with your family! The Recreation Department will provide one small bag of popcorn per person and water. Due to limited parking, walking to the event is encouraged. The movie will be a family friendly hit, vote on the City website ahead of the event!

Ed Wilhelm Field
2 Darwin Ave.
All ages
Saturday, April 6
Movie starts at dusk
Free

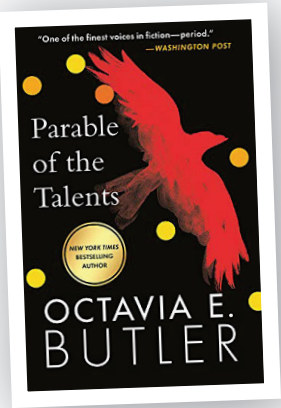
■ From page 6

she dropped it to write what was to be her last novel, *Fledgling*.

In *The Parable of the Talents*, the story picks up in 2032. Lauren's enclave continues to live in a community called Acorn in Northern California. Although Acorn manages to survive, both it and Lauren are imperiled by the election of a new conservative president with fascist tendencies.

Butler weaves Lauren's journal writings with writings from Lauren's daughter, Asha Vere, to tell the story of the outcome of Acorn and her mother's life. Asha Vere can only know her mother through Lauren's journals and other writings. Asha Vere fights to understand, through her mother's writings, her mother's behavior as the leader of Acorn and founder of Earthseed.

In the *New York Times* article, “The Essential Octavia Butler,” Stephen Kears



writes of the two Earthseed novels, “*The Parable of the Talents* is the masterpiece. The sequel retains the brutal atmosphere of its predecessor—severe economic inequality, climate disaster, lawless mayhem—without sacrificing momentum or texture.”

The Parable of the Talents is the third novel by Octavia Butler to be read by the Friends Book Group. The group read *The Parable of the Sower* as part of its Cli-Fi series in 2022. *Kindred*, a novel of time travel between Los Angeles in 1976 and a slave-holding plantation in pre-Civil War Maryland, was read in 2017.

If you are interested in joining the discussion and you do not receive Friends Book Group announcements, write to ftpmlbookgroup@gmail.com for details on joining.

Copies of *The Parable of the Talents* can be borrowed from the library and is available as an audiobook on Hoopla.

■ From page 3

Ghana. And then I say, 'Do you know Senegal?' Oh yes. 'Well, Gambia is inside of Senegal.'

Although Joof is, himself, a vegetarian, he recommends the seafood peanut butter *achu*, a dish that celebrates the coastal culture of The Gambia.

"Chu is like a gumbo," says Joof. "So it does have shrimp, it does have crabs, it does have smoked catfish, it does have white fish. And it is very thick because it does have yuca in the broth in it. That's why we don't serve it with a side of starch—because it has starch in the dish. And it's very, very filling, also."

According to the Mansa Kunda menu, “Chu was invented by Mandingo farmers who needed to use up peanuts that the government didn’t purchase for export.” At Mansa Kunda, the chu can be altered to accommodate diners who prefer beef, chicken, or vegetarian versions of the historic stew.

"In this restaurant, almost 90% of the dishes are cooked to order," says Joof. "So nothing is spicy unless you say I want it to be spicy ... or you want less salt in it ... or you want chicken—because we are cooking for you. I wanted to make sure that menu is very vegetarian- and vegan-friendly, and that has added a lot to the little popularity that we've gained in the neighborhood."

Jollof also points to the ebbe, a Gambian street food, as a favorite. Ebbeh combines cassava, smoked catfish, crab, shrimp, habanero, tamarind, and lime into a stew. Another popular dish is grilled fish, beef, or chicken, with a side order of jollof rice—long-grain rice, tomatoes, chilies, onions, and spices. Tofu is featured on the menu with yassa, a tangy, spicy onion and vegetable dish.

Joof says that although “cooking is in my DNA,” he did not prepare food when he was growing up. “I came from a country where men don’t cook,” he explains. But at Spring Mill, Joof learned to bake and loved the experience of transforming raw ingredients into nourishment. As he was preparing to open Mansa Kunda, he leaned heavily on his mother, Nancy, who comes to visit every year to provide guidance.

"She spent all her life as a home economist—first working for the Department of Education back home," says Joof. "And then, she had a job working for the UN at the Food and Agriculture Organization. Her job was mainly to make sure that every student in the rural areas of Gambia have a well-balanced diet before they go home."



■ From page 7

buys a chocolate bar called “Eat and Love Yourself,” with each bite, protagonist Mindy learns to love herself a little more.

For adults: Hilary Kinavey's *Reclaiming Body Trust: A Path to Healing & Liberation* is a comprehensive look at how external systems of power are internalized to the detriment of our relationships with our bodies, as well as thoughtful passages about how we can divest and reclaim trust and self-worth. For more about the actual systemic issues themselves and how they can impact individuals of size, Aubrey Gordon's *What We Don't Talk About When We Talk About Fat* breaks these big and complicated concepts into essay-length narratives that are easy to read (and share!).

If you connect more with personal stories, there are two memoirs in this area

that I found to be important reads. Roxane Gay's *Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body* and Kiese Laymon's *Heavy: An American Memoir* both tell the stories of existing in bodies that do not conform to arbitrary social ideals. What makes them especially powerful is the emphasis on how intersectional our personal experiences are. Yes, size is part of it, but so are color and gender and sexual orientation and ethnicity and geography and family background ... the facets are endless.

One of my favorite Carrie Fisher quotes comes from a tweet she posted in 2015: “My body is my brain bag; it hauls me around to those places and in front of faces where there’s something to say or see.” I hope 2024 brings you a peaceful relationship with your body and lots of visits to the library.

At Your SERVICE

Takoma Park Police Department Announcements

Join the Community Police Academy

The Community Police Academy is a 12-week long program, starting on March 5. It will meet on Tuesdays, 7 p.m.–9:30 p.m. Through the Police Academy, the community will gain new insight into how law enforcement officers perform their duties. The classes cover patrol, traffic enforcement, use of force, criminal investigations, firearms, and community policing. The presentations will be presented by officers, detectives, and civilians of the Takoma Park Police Department. There will also be multiple opportunities for hands-on learning through equipment demonstrations, practical scenarios, field trips, and ride-a-longs with patrol officers.

The Community Police Academy is free to the public. Seats are limited to the first 25 students and will be filled on a first-come-first-served basis. The Takoma Park Police Department encourages all applicants to be able to commit to the full 12-weeks to get the most out of the program.

If you are age 16 or older and live or work in Takoma Park, you may apply. The applicants must not have any serious misdemeanor or felony offenses. Applications for the Community Police Academy are available at the Takoma Park Police Department, 7500 Maple Ave., and online at takomaparkmd.gov/government/police.

The deadline to turn in a completed application and background waiver form is Friday, February 16.

Any questions about the Community Police Academy can be directed to Public Information Manager Cathy Plevy at 301-891-7142 or cathyp@takomaparkmd.gov.

Don't Leave People Out in the Cold

For Montgomery County, if you need or see someone who needs help, call the County's Homeless Info Line, 240-907-2688; the County's 24-hour Crisis



Center, 240-777-4000; the Takoma Park Police non-emergency number, 301-270-1100; or the Montgomery County Police non-emergency number, 301-279-8000.

Contact Information for Emergencies During Bad Weather

Call 911 for any storm-related emergencies that include injury, tree fallen into a structure, or downed power lines that could still be electrified.

Call the Takoma Park Police Department at the non-emergency number, 301-270-1100 to report trees down in the roadway blocking traffic,

Call Pepco at 1-877-737-2662 for power outages and to check estimated restoration times. Or visit the power outage page at pepco.com/outages.

Contact Takoma Park Public Works at publicworks@takomaparkmd.gov or 301-891-7633 to report branches and other debris in the public right of way, roadways, or sidewalks.

We Plunge on February 2!

Once again, the Takoma Park Police Department has teamed up with the Takoma Park Volunteer Fire Department to take the Polar Bear Plunge to raise money for the Maryland Special Olympics. You can support these frigid plungers by visiting support.somd/team/549921.

Support Potential Pets

Takoma Park Police is collecting new or gently used bath towels, beach towels, bathroom rugs, hand towels, washcloths, blankets, beds, toys and unopened food to help the Montgomery County Animal Shelters. We will be collecting through Friday, February 2. Please bring your donations to the Takoma Park Police Department lobby, 7500 Maple Ave.

Note: For the safety of the animals, do not donate fitted sheets, items with zippers or snaps, or fabrics with rips or frayed edges.

I Am Takoma



Gayle Fisher-Stewart serves as chaplain for the Takoma Park Police Department. She is a retired captain of the Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Police and is the assistant pastor at Calvary Episcopal Church.

Rev. Dr. Gayle Fisher-Stewart: "I Tend to Be a Thorn"

By Eric Bond

As a rookie police officer in the District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department in the early 1970s, Gayle Fisher-Stewart responded to a call for service in Georgetown. When she rang the bell, the homeowner came to the door and, seeing that Fisher-Stewart is Black, asked her to come around to the back door.

"I said, 'Obviously, you don't want police service today.'" She returned to her patrol car and notified the dispatcher that no service was needed. Throughout her police career, Fisher-Stewart paid attention to how she was received as a Black woman in her various ranks and roles and in different districts around the city.

Fisher-Stewart started out serving warrants. She also worked on the emergency response barricade team (then known simply as the barricade team) and in communications. She retired in 1992 as a captain, a rank that was unusual for a woman at that time. Fisher-Stewart remarks on how much things have changed, even as barriers and prejudices persist that hold people back in professional life—not to mention civic life. She's proud of her work training officers coming into the police department to change their mindsets about policing and about the communities they serve.

After retiring from the police force, Fisher-Stewart focused on raising her son, David (here in Takoma Park); teaching criminal justice at the University of Maryland; and consulting—always thinking about issues of justice, community need, and spirituality. Her area of special interest, as a professor, is the history of policing as it intersects with race in the United States.

With church as a vital—and sometimes problematic—aspect of her life, Fisher-Stewart decided to go to seminary in 2007. That path eventually led to ordination as a priest in the Episcopal Church in 2015. Now retired from active parish ministry, she currently assists churches determine their role in eliminating guns and understanding how to

focus on mission. And on occasion, she still preaches. While serving as assisting pastor at Calvary Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C., she founded the Center for the Study of Faith in Justice, which conducts research and creates a safe space for the discussion of vexing issues. She is also the president for the Washington, D.C., chapter of the Union of Black Episcopalians.

In 2019, Fisher-Stewart accepted the position of chaplain for the Takoma Park Police Department.

"I am engaged in a ministry of presence," says Fisher-Stewart about her role as chaplain. "I don't try to convert anybody. If you don't want me to pray, I don't pray for or with you. I don't make those assumptions. I'm an extra set of ears for department personnel who need somebody who's not affiliated with the government, not affiliated with the police, even. I'm just there to listen and to ask questions."

"What is interesting about Takoma Park, particularly under the leadership of Chief [Tony] DeVaul is that we don't have problems other departments face. The department is not under a consent decree. Our officers are not involved in abuse issues. Shootings are [virtually] nonexistent, so my role is primarily to be a support to personnel—when they want it. And if there is a *Coffee with a Cop* event or other community activities, I'll be there."

Fisher-Stewart points out that activities like the *National Faith and Blue* event in October are valuable for building bridges and fostering better relationships between the police and their community.

"We had a *LEGO Serious Play* session next to Sligo Creek Parkway for *Faith and Blue*. You see the police and the kids playing together, and the kids had to interview the police. So I said, 'Well, at least when these officers see these kids, they will remember having built LEGO bridges with them in the park. It's making a connection, and that connection is important because if we have a relation-

CHAPLAIN □ Page 12

Pirates Without Ships

By Claudine Schweber,
Takoma Park Emergency Preparedness Committee

Have you seen police reports about how packages have been stolen from porches? Have you ever waited for a package that never arrived to your porch or mailbox?

Porch pirates are folks who steal packages from a porch or other area near the main entrance of a residence or inside an apartment building before the recipient can retrieve it.

The increase in online purchases for groceries, gifts, and home products has increased package theft. Only 10% of stolen package cases result in an arrest by the police.

Protect Yourself from Pirates

Track packages. Shippers offer the opportunity to track the package on its way to the final destination. Sign up for this service, so you can follow the path and be ready when it's delivered (or immediately contact the sender if it's not there).

Set up signature required function, so an authorized person has to personally accept/sign for the package.

Set up delivery to a package locker, a secure place to hold your items.

For folks living in apartment/condo buildings, **check with the building staff to learn the safety procedures.** Advise them when you are expecting a package. In many cases, entrance for outsiders is not possible without tenant's approval. Let's stop those pirates!

Community ACTIVITIES

Lumina Theatre Presents David Copperfield

Friday, February 2 and Saturday, February 3, 7 p.m.
Silver Spring Black Box Theatre
8641 Colesville, Road

When pretty widow Clara Copperfield marries the tyrannous and sadistic Edward Murdstone, life takes a grim turn for her little son, David. With its mix of comedy and tragedy, memorable characters and vividly drawn settings, it is plain to see why Charles Dickens called this novel his “favourite child.” For tickets and information, visit silverspringblackbox.com.

Morris & Friends: An Evening of Opera and Gospel

Saturday, February 3, 8 p.m.
Takoma Park Seventh-day Adventist Church
6951 Carroll Ave.

World-renowned bass Morris Robinson hosts and curates a one-night-only concert of opera and gospel, featuring guest soloists, audience favorites, and star singers. This is presented through the Anna H. Wang Concert Series. More information and tickets at ahwconcerts.org.

Takoma Park Middle School PTSA Book Sale

Saturday, February 3, 10 a.m.–1 p.m.
Takoma Park Middle School
7611 Piney Branch Road

Join us to peruse the book selections and buy goodies at the bake sale—all to support the PTSA.

Historic Takoma Reading Room

Sunday, February 4 and Sunday, February 18, 1–4 p.m.
Historic Takoma
7328 Carroll Ave.

Visitors will have access to reference

books on Takoma and Maryland history, the collection of *Takoma Voices* and City newsletters, historical journals, and more. Historic Takoma is also hosting the Maryland Reference Collection of the Takoma Park Maryland Library during the library’s renovation. Historic Takoma volunteers will be available to answer questions about the collections and Historic Takoma. Find out more at historictakoma.org

Civil War Heroines: Female Re-Enactors of Distinction (FREED)

Friday, February 9, 5:15 p.m.–6 p.m.
Silver Spring Civic Building
1 Veterans Plaza, Silver Spring

[FREED](#) focuses on resurrecting characters from the middle of the 19th century often overlooked in textbooks: black women. Join FREED at the Around the World Bazaar in Silver Spring to find out more about these amazing women.

Mid-Winter Play Day

Sunday, Feb. 11, 1 – 4 p.m.

Come out for a day of play. There will be face painting, giant chess, indoor bocce, dress-up, cookie decorations and much more. Visit letsplayamerica.org for more.

They Called Him “Mister Lee”

Sunday, February 18, 3 p.m.
Takoma Park Presbyterian Church
310 Tulip Ave.

This 32-minute documentary draws on oral history interviews with older people who grew up in Takoma Park’s Black community during the 1940s and 1950s. Community members reflect on the legacy of Lee Jordan, the school custodian who had such a strong influence on Takoma Park youth, both Black and white, as mentor and coach—including breaking racial barriers by founding the city’s Boys and Girls Club, the first integrated sports programs in Montgomery County. The video sheds light on the challenges faced

by the Black community during segregation and the decades that followed. Produced by Historic Takoma’s African American Oral History Project. More information at historictakoma.org.

Doing Oral History: An Introduction

Thursday, February 22, 7 p.m.
Historic Takoma
7328 Carroll Ave.

The tools of oral history can help you record and preserve stories and memories of family members, friends, and community members. This video shows how oral histories are collected and why they are important, capturing—through the voices of ordinary people—unwritten details and experiences of daily life, narratives that are seldom found in conventional historical accounts. Stories shared in this introductory video were collected for the Takoma Park African American Oral History Project. Ali Kahn, who conducted the oral history interviews, will share supplemental materials developed for students, teachers, and others. More information at historictakoma.org.

Disco Biblioteca: Music, Books & Listening Party with Madonna

Friday, February 23, 7 p.m.
People’s Book
7014-A Westmoreland Ave.

This club is an opportunity for folks who love music and books to read, chat, and listen to curated playlists inspired by the book selection. Facilitated by Takoma Radio’s own Night Nurse. Books and music: just like chocolate and peanut butter; so happy together. Check out peoplesbooktakoma.com/book-clubs to see the month’s selection. Free.

Ongoing

Takoma Park Farmers Market

Every Sunday, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.
6931 Laurel Ave.

Come out every Sunday behind the shops on Laurel Avenue for a mix of 25 vendors with seasonal produce, pasture raised meat and eggs, artisan cheese, grains, bread, baked goods, and more. Find breakfast and lunch at the market, including empanadas, egg sandwiches, burgers, pastries and more.

Takoma Spark Open Mic

Tuesdays, 7– 9:30 p.m.
School of Musical Traditions
7112 Willow Ave.

Hosted by Rob Hinkal of ilyAIMY and sponsored by Institute of Musical Traditions. Signup starts at 6 p.m. All musical genres and poetry and all abilities/ages welcome. No amps or drum kits. For updates, follow Rob’s Open Mics on Facebook or visit ilyaimy.com/robsopenmics. Free.

Correspond with Incarcerated Artists

The 1st and 3rd Monday of each month, 6 - 8 p.m.
7112 Willow Ave.

Join The Justice Arts Coalition in gathering bi-monthly to respond to recently received art and mail from incarcerated artists in JAC’s network. All materials, directions for the letters, and music will be provided. Pre-registration encouraged. Reach out to ava@thejusticeartscoalition.org with any questions.

Takoma Jazz

Saturdays, 7– 10 p.m.
Takoma Station Tavern
6914 4th St NW
Takoma DC

Weekly jazz at Takoma Station Tavern hosted by Jazz Kitchen Productions. For the schedule, check the website: jkproductions.org.

CHAPLAIN

■ From page 11

ship, then [a police officer is] less likely to ascribe negative motives to a kid. And the young people are less likely to see the police as enemy. The more we can establish relationship between the police and the community, the easier everybody’s job is.”

Fisher-Stewart points out that as a retired police captain, as a scholar, and as a mother, she brings understanding from multiple perspectives to her role as chaplain.

“Policing as we have it now, was created to maintain and control Black folks,” says Fisher-Stewart. “We’ve been trying to reform policing since the 1930s, but what happens is that it resets itself. We reform and then it comes back to what it was designed to do [control Black people]. So in order to have the policing that we need for today, we need to abolish it as it was created and recreate it to what we want it to be.”

She points to Police Chief DeVaul, who grew up in Takoma Park, as a driver of a community-focused policing, which was in vogue during a recent reformation effort.

“I tell him that he’s a blast out of the past because he’s saying, ‘If you want to take care of some of these problems, you have to go to root causes.’ It’s easy to arrest and lock people up, as opposed to figuring out why this is occurring. The figuring out takes money. It takes time. It takes effort—and people don’t want to do that. But that is at the foundation of community policing.

“And so when you talk about defunding

policing, [you’re saying that] the police cannot do everything. They **should not** do everything. People want the police to be social workers, teachers, parents, priests, everything. And they can’t be—because they’re not trained for that.

“So what we can do, for example, is have mental health practitioners embedded with the police. When we find out the percentage of calls that go for mental health issues, we take that money and put it in a program that provides mental health services.”

Along with police reform, Fisher-Stewart is passionate about church reform.

“A lot of times, churches are about maintaining the institution as opposed to being more like Jesus. We tend to do charity as opposed to following the mission of Jesus,” says Fisher-Stewart. Charity keeps people dependent on the giver. Mission fixes things so people do not have to rely on charity. True ministry and community policing are similar. You fix the problems that negatively affect people.

“So how do we take all these half-empty buildings we call churches that are closed during the week and turn them into something that can help the unhoused? How do we figure out why people come to us every Monday for this brown bag lunch? How do we stop people from having to come to the church to get this bologna sandwich?



As a police officer, Gayle Fisher-Stewart patrolled districts throughout Washington, D.C.

Charity is handing out 150 meals a day—it is about the giver. Ministry is about the person. How do we work together so that all people thrive in this world?

“Being ordained, you get to the under-side of the church and what it does and does not do. You can get frustrated with the church and leave, or you could be like the thorn in Paul’s side and say to the church, ‘You all are not doing what you’re supposed to do. You’re not showing people Jesus.’”

“I tend to be a thorn,” says Fisher-Stewart, pointing to her two published books and her most recent book, which is in the publication process.

Preaching Black Lives [Matter] is a series of essays that examine the role of the church in ending systems of injustice. In *Black and Episcopalian: The Struggle for Inclusion*, Fisher-Stewart argues that whiteness is embedded in every aspect of religious life and that inclusivity needs to be more than a superficial pose. It needs to be authentic to each person.

Her newest book is *Church Hurt: Who Will Pay Reparations on My Soul?*

“How can the church become trauma-informed,” asks Fisher-Stewart. “How do we really help people heal? We say want to eradicate anti-Black racism, and white supremacy. The Episcopal Church has admitted white supremacy and anti-Black racism is at the

foundation of the church, and since we know that, how do we eradicate it? How do we deal with the racialized trauma people bring to the church and the trauma caused by the church?”

Fisher-Stewart says that whether in the home, on the street, in a patrol car, or in a pew, we need to recognize that people in our community are dealing with difficult issues, and we need to be there for each other.

“Coming from my perspective where everything belongs to God, and God created enough for everybody, there’s no reason for there to be want—except that we allow it.”