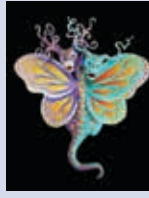


Take a Journey to the Dawn of Time



Teens Can Make Magical Creatures!



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Takoma Park News



January 2025

A newsletter published by the City of Takoma Park, Maryland

Volume 64, No. 1 ■ takomaparkmd.gov

Important Dates

New Year's Day

Wednesday, January 1

City offices and facilities are closed.

Wednesday's trash, recycling, and

food waste routes will be collected

on Thursday, January 2.

First City Council Session of 2025

Wednesday, January 8, 7:30 p.m.

Community Center Auditorium

7500 Maple Ave.

Mock Caldecott

Sunday, January 12, 3 p.m.

Takoma Park Maryland Library

7505 New Hampshire Ave.

More information on page 6.

Kid Night

Friday, January 17, 4:30-6:30 p.m.

Takoma Park Recreation Center

7315 New Hampshire Ave.

More information on page 8.

Martin Luther King Jr Holiday

Sunday, January 19

Monday, January 20

City offices and facilities are closed.

Yard waste collection is canceled.

Public Meeting: Traffic Calming and Sidewalk Requests

Thursday, January 23, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Community Center Auditorium

7500 Maple Ave.

Free Concert: Relic Ensemble

Friday, January 24, 7:30 p.m.

Community Center Auditorium

7500 Maple Ave.

Cat Adoption

Sunday, January 26, noon-3 p.m.

Takoma Park Maryland Library

7505 New Hampshire Ave.

More information on page 6.

Tight Budgets, Immigrant Rights, and Takoma Park as a "Democracy Hub"



Takoma Park City Council and Maryland District 20 Discuss Priorities for 2025

by Eric Bond

On Wednesday, December 11, 2024, the Takoma Park City Council was joined by members of the District 20 delegation to the Maryland General Assembly to discuss the city's priorities for the new year. It is common practice for the two bodies to meet ahead of the upcoming state legislative session, which runs for about 90 days. The new session begins on Wednesday, January 8.

Takoma Park falls within District 20, which is represented by Senator Will Smith and Delegates Lorig Charkoudian, Jheanelle Wilkins, and David Moon.

Takoma Park Mayor Talisha Searcy began by thanking the delegation for previous financial support, which included "\$425,000 in legislative bond funds for our library renovation [and] \$250,000 ... supporting our mental health pilot program," referring to a new public safety measure to provide a more nuanced approach to policing.

Mayor Searcy reminded the delegation that Takoma Park has set priorities to guide policy and budget decision-making. These include 1) advancing a community of belonging; 2) a fiscally sustainable government; 3) an environmentally sustainable community; 4) community development for an improved and equitable quality of life; and 5) engaged, responsive, service-oriented government.

Different members of the city council addressed these priorities, speaking in turn—



Maryland Senator Will Smith and the rest of the District 20 Delegation address the priorities of the Takoma Park City Council as they prepare for a new legislative session.

starting with Ward 5 Councilmember Cara Honzak who addressed community belonging as a current concern because of the xenophobic rhetoric of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump as well as the prediction that budgets will be tighter across all strata of government.

"Considering the current political climate and pending fiscal challenges ... we feel that it's more important than ever to support residents in need," said Honzak. "There

is fear that [because of] pending policies at the federal level ... many of our residents ... may face life altering changes like deportation, losing jobs, or discrimination."

She asked the delegation to affirm that Maryland law enforcement agencies will not participate in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) operations. Additionally, she asked that the general assembly fund support services for residents

PRIORITIES □ Page 4



Meet Councilmember Kurt Gilbert

by Sean Gossard

Newly sworn-in Ward 4 Councilmember Kurt Gilbert has some big shoes to fill, but he says he's excited for the challenge.

The longtime Takoma Park resident was elected in November to take over the seat held by Terry Seamens, who served Ward 4 as its councilmember for 23 years.

"Terry Seamens decided he wasn't going to run for re-election and he approached me and asked if I would take the reins," said Gilbert, who won his election against Tony Kyere by a vote of 464 to 215, with 15 write-ins. "You don't say no to Terry Seamens."

Gilbert moved to Takoma Park from Northeast D.C. when he was 6 years old. He later worked as a parking enforcement officer but after just year enrolled in the Takoma Park police academy. While working with the police, he and Lieutenant Joseph Butler helped start the city's annual Holiday Toy Drive. Gilbert retired from the Takoma Park Police Department in October 2020 but continued to work with the



Bladensburg, Md., police department for a few years.

Gilbert says he learned a lot from Seamens and says he hopes to continue the legacy he brought to Takoma Park.

"I want to pick up where Terry left off and make sure the programs and things he started live on," Gilbert said. "I've always appreciated his guidance and assistance. I try my best to give back to my community but the things he's done I'm so grateful for."

Gilbert says his top priorities include youth outreach, affordable housing, and diversifying the tax base.

"We're in a battle for affordable housing and I'm trying to learn as much as I can so we can mitigate the losing of affordable housing and build more housing for our growing community," he said. "Our population is growing and we need to grow with it."

But he wants to find more ways for the city to be able to afford increasing housing for everybody.

"In addition to finding ways to keep and increase affordable housing, we need to find creative ways to strengthen our tax base through economic development so that homeowners aren't inordinately should-

GILBERT □ Page 4

Mayor & Council
7500 Maple Ave.
Takoma Park, MD 20912

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On the DOCKET

CITY COUNCIL

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

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

Meeting start times and listed agenda items can change. Please check the agenda page on the city website to confirm the start time and final agenda. City council meetings are held at the Takoma Park Community Center Auditorium, 7500 Maple Ave., unless noted otherwise.

Wednesday, January 8: City Council Regular Meeting, 7:30 p.m. (CC Auditorium)

Presentation:

- ICF Consultants Presentation of City Fleet Transition Report

CITY COUNCIL Page 4

Engage with Your City Government

Takoma Park has a council/manager form of government. The city manager of Takoma Park oversees the day-to-day operation of the city, implements the policies set by the council, and prepares an annual budget for the council's consideration.

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 website (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, check the ward map and street directory, also available through the city council page.

Contact information for the mayor, city council and city manager

- Mayor **Talisha Searcy** talishas@takomaparkmd.gov
- Ward 1 Councilmember **Jessica Landman** jessical@takomaparkmd.gov
- Ward 2 Councilmember **Cindy Dyballa** cindydy@takomaparkmd.gov
- Ward 3 Councilmember **Roger Schlegel** rogers@takomaparkmd.gov
- Ward 4 Councilmember **Kurt Gilbert** kurtg@takomaparkmd.gov
- Ward 5 Councilmember **Cara Honzak** carah@takomaparkmd.gov
- Ward 6 Councilmember **Amy Wesolek** amyw@takomaparkmd.gov
- Takoma Park City Manager **Robert DiSpirito** robertd@takomaparkmd.gov

CityCouncilAction

Only negative votes and abstentions are noted here. All resolutions and ordinances are published after adoption.

November 18, 2024

- Proclamation Recognizing Departing City Councilmember Shana Fulcher
- Proclamation Recognizing Departing City Councilmember Randy Gibson
- Proclamation Recognizing Departing City Councilmember Terry Seamens
- Proclamation Recognizing

Departing City Councilmember Jason Small

- Proclamation Designating Cindy Dyballa as Mayor Pro Tempore

November 20, 2024

- Proclamation of November as Municipal Government Works Month

December 11, 2024

- Resolution 2024-40 establishing FY26 Budget Priorities
- Resolution 2024-41 setting the dates of the city council recess (December 12 through January 7)

Mid-Year Board and Committee Appointments to Fill Vacancies—Apply by January 10

The City Council is accepting applications to fill mid-year vacancies on boards and committees. Residents with all different types of experience and knowledge are welcome to apply. Your experience living in Takoma Park and interacting with our community on a daily basis and/or working in your chosen profession can give you what you need to participate.

- Board of Elections
- Commission on Landlord-Tenant Affairs
- Emergency Preparedness Committee
- Ethics Commission
- Grants Review Committee
- Recreation and Community Engagement
- Committee
- Sustainable Maryland Committee
- Tree Commission

Appointed board and committee members are eligible to receive \$40 for each meeting attended. To apply, go to takomaparkmd.gov and search for "boards and committees." Application deadline: January 10, 2025.

Questions? Contact Irma Nalvarte, assistant city clerk, irman@takomaparkmd.gov or 301-891-7214.

Include city council contact information from the previous edition.



Mayor Talisha Searcy



Jessica Landman (Ward 1)



Cindy Dyballa (Ward 2)



Roger Schlegel (Ward 3)



Kurt Gilbert (Ward 4)



Cara Honzak (Ward 5)



Amy Wesolek (Ward 6)

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." Many City boards and committees continue to meet virtually on Zoom. Some are holding hybrid meetings (both in-person and on Zoom)

BOARD OF ELECTIONS

Thursday, January 9, 7:30 p.m. (virtual)

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE

Thursday, January 16, 7 p.m. (Community Center, Hydrangea Room, with virtual option)

GRANTS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date TBA, 6:30 p.m. (virtual)

POLICE CHIEF'S ADVISORY BOARD

Monday, January 27, 7 p.m. (Community Center, Hydrangea Room with virtual option)

POLICE EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT PLAN COMMITTEE

Tuesday, January 14, 9:30 a.m. (virtual)

RECREATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Thursday, January 16, 7 p.m. (virtual)

SUSTAINABLE MARYLAND COMMITTEE

Monday, January 6, 7 p.m. (Community Center, Hydrangea Room with virtual option)

YOUTH COUNCIL

Thursday, January 2, 4 p.m. (Community Center, Hydrangea Room)

Thursday, January 15, 4 p.m. (Community Center, Hydrangea Room)

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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

New 2025 Assessed Real Property Values Effective January 1, 2025

This winter, property owners across the city will receive an updated assessed value for their properties. The State of Maryland conducts these assessments every three years, guiding the City and County's tax rates for residents and business owners.

The next reassessment will be effective January 1, 2025 for the 2025-2027 triennial cycle. Assessment notices will be mailed on December 30, 2024, and the owners will have 45 days from the notice date to appeal the assessments.

Two factors determine property taxes:

1. The total assessed value of the real property (land plus improvements) and;
2. The property tax rate that is established by each taxing jurisdiction. In Ta-

koma Park, taxing jurisdictions include the State of Maryland, Montgomery County, and the City of Takoma Park.

Assessments are based on the property's fair market value and are issued by the Department of Assessments and Taxation, a State government agency.

Any increase in assessments is phased-in over the 3 years of the assessment cycle. The phase-in assessments for each year of the cycle will be shown on the notice.

Appealing Your Assessment.

The notice contains an appeal form and instructions that must be filed with the local assessment office within the 45-day time limit for appeal.

City of Takoma Park Secures \$220,000 Grant to Enhance Road Safety and Mobility

Takoma Park has been selected as one of 354 communities nationwide to receive a significant grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Safe Streets and Roads for All Program. This \$220,000 planning and demonstration grant represents an exciting opportunity to reimagine our city's transportation infrastructure and prioritize safety for all road users.

Demonstration Projects

The grant will fund two innovative demonstration projects to immediately improve road safety:

1. Pedestrian Safety Improvement

- A new mid-block crosswalk with a pedestrian refuge island at a bus stop.

This will provide a safer crossing point for pedestrians, especially those using public transit

2. Intersection Safety Enhancements

- Hardening of left turn lanes at four intersections.
- Implementation of temporary curb extensions.

These measures will help reduce vehicular crashes and improve overall intersection safety.

How Does This Benefit Our City?

By investing in this comprehensive approach, we can expect the following:

- Reduced traffic accidents and potential fatalities.
- Improved mobility for all residents, including those with limited transportation options.
- Enhanced pedestrian and cyclist safety.
- More efficient and user-friendly transportation infrastructure.
- Potential long-term cost savings from reduced accident-related expenses.

This grant represents an exciting step towards creating a safer, more inclusive transportation network for our entire community. Stay tuned for more updates on these upcoming safety improvements. For more updates visit the Planning webpage at bit.ly/TKPKPlanning.

Understanding Complete Streets

Complete Streets is a progressive approach to road design that considers the needs of everyone who uses the street—not just drivers, but also pedestrians, cyclists, public transit users. People of all ages and abilities are considered. The core philosophy is to create a transportation network that is safe, accessible, and efficient for all.

Key Principles of Complete Streets

- Design streets with dedicated spaces for pedestrians, including wide sidewalks and safe crosswalks.
- Add bike lanes and protected cycling infrastructure.
- Ensure public transit stops are safe and easily accessible.
- Implement traffic calming measures to reduce vehicle speeds.
- Create intersections that minimize potential conflict points between different types of road users.

Comprehensive Safety Action Plan

The granted funds will enable our city to develop a Comprehensive Safety Action Plan that does the following:

- Analyzes current road safety data and identifies high-risk areas.
- Sets specific goals for reducing traffic-related injuries and fatalities.
- Proposes targeted infrastructure improvements.
- Outlines strategies for enhancing road user education and awareness.

A Safety Action Plan is an eligibility requirement to apply for safety specific transportation grants.

Notice of Final Action—Administrative Regulation to regulate the fees charged to tenants in the City of Takoma Park and setting a process for the addition of a fee or waiver from the allowed fee schedule

The December 2024 edition of the Takoma Park Newsletter included notice of the City's intention to adopt an administrative regulation regulating the fees charged to tenants and setting a process for the addition of a fee or waiver from the allowed fee schedule.

The notice of the City's intention to adopt an administrative regulation was published in accordance with the requirements of the "Administrative Regulations Ordinance" (Authority: Chapter 2.12, Administrative Regu-

lations, of the Takoma Park Code) to allow citizens the opportunity to comment on the proposal. The notice stated that the proposed regulation was available for inspection at the City Clerk's Office and online. No public comments have been received by the City Clerk's Office since the notice appeared. This notice is to inform residents that the final regulation will become effective on January 15, 2025.

Takoma Park News



Send submissions to: Editor: Eric Bond • editorbond@gmail.com | Assistant Editor: Sean Gossard • TPNewsEditor@takomaparkmd.gov
Questions: Ryan Kelly, acting communications manager • ryank@takomaparkmd.gov | Eric Bond • editorbond@gmail.com takomaparkmd.gov

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



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 icono 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:

ኮታቶ ያለውን ደህን ክፍ ይፈልጉ የዚህ መጽሔቶች አርአያ ራስዎ ናቸው በሌሎች ቋንቋዎች በመስመር ላይ ማንበብ ይቻላል ተርጉሙን በመጠቀም በኮታቶ ኮታቶ ውስጥ ያለውን ባህሪ የፓርክ ድር ጣቢያ ጠቀ ካደረጉን በኋላ ስድራት ክፍ ላይ ይመልከቱ በላይኛው ቀኝ ጥን ላይ ታንባሎች የአሰሳ ክፍሉን ይምረጡና ይምረጡ የሚጠቀሙበት ቋንቋ ተቀልቋይ ሳጥን.

Notice of Public Meeting—Traffic Calming and Sidewalk Requests

Thursday, January 23, 2025, 6:30–8:30 p.m. Community Center Auditorium 7500 Maple Ave.

This meeting will review requested traffic calming and sidewalk locations and collect residents feedback. This will help to

shape the presentation to the City Council for budget review. Translation and Interpretation will be provided.

Please follow the webpage for the agenda and more information: bit.ly/TKPKTrafficCalmingRegulations.

Correction: In the December 2024 edition of Takoma Park News, Takoma Park Police Lieutenant Joseph Butler was misidentified as Justin Butler in a page 1 profile.

City COUNCIL



Photo by Eric Bond

Kurt Gilbert was sworn in as the new Ward 4 city councilmember on Monday, November 18.

GILBERT

■ From page 1

dering the burden for our city services,” he said.

When it comes to youth outreach, Gilbert has a deep connection to the city’s storied list of mentors, including the late Lee Jordan, who has a field named for him and an honorary day.

“I want to help kids who don’t have the resources and just sit on the sidelines and don’t participate,” Gilbert said. “I remember being a kid growing up in Takoma Park

and Lee Jordan sent someone to my home and paid for my cleats and other gear and got me playing.”

Now, he’s carry on that legacy by helping mentor children in the city’s youth basketball program.

“I just started and the recreation department had been asking me to help them with their basketball programs, and I have background in youth advocacy. So I decided to help John Webster out with the basketball league. I’m enjoying it and want to do more youth outreach and find the kids who are not well represented and help them out.”



Photo by Eric Bond

(right to left) New Ward 4 Councilmember Kurt Gilbert poses with outgoing Councilmember Terry Seamens; Terry’s wife, Joyce Seamens; and Takoma Park Mayor Talisha Searcy.

CITY COUNCIL

■ From page 2

Work Session:

- Planning for Review of State Legislation and Establishment of a Bill Review Working Group
- Introduction to City Boards and Committees, Council Committee Liaisons, and Establishment of a Working Group to Review Applications

Wednesday, January 15: City Council Regular Meeting, 7:30 p.m. (CC Auditorium)

Legislative Update:

Work Session:

- Council Priorities

MONDAY, JANUARY 20 – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. City facilities are closed Sunday and Monday for the holiday

Wednesday, January 22: City Council Regular Meeting, 7:30 p.m. (CC Auditorium)

Legislative Update:

Work Session:

- Revenue Sources (Commercial, Railroad and Public Utility Taxes, and Vacant Property Tax or Fees
- (tentative) Board and Committee Appointment Recommendations

Saturday, January 25: City Council Retreat (Time and location to be determined.)

Wednesday, January 29: City Council Regular Meeting, 7:30 p.m. (CC Auditorium)

Legislative Update:

Voting Session:

- (tentative) Appointments to Boards and Committees

PRIORITIES

■ From page 1

facing deportation.

Ward 6 Councilmember Amy Wesolek then addressed the council’s position on equity, asking the District 20 delegation to affirm LGBTQ rights, “in particular, transgender rights for children and adults.”

Ward 1 Councilmember Jessica Landman brought up fiscal sustainability during a time of tighter budgets.

“We would like to encourage the D-20 delegation to collaboratively explore potential sources of new revenue streams for municipalities, such as the authority to collect a sales tax,” said Landman. She also mentioned her hope that the state tax code be updated “to benefit working families.”

Ward 2 Councilmember Cindy Dyballa focused on the environment, “asking for specific attention ... to support legislation that focuses on building out electric charging infrastructure throughout the state, including here in the city, and funds for electrifying municipal and the governmental fleets [and] advance energy efficiency in buildings.”

Dyballa also asked for support for stormwater mitigation with increased funding and technical assistance.

Ward 3 Councilmember Roger Schlegel asked the delegation to consider enhancing Takoma Park with community development that focuses on “an improved and equitable quality of life.”

He specifically referred to Vision Zero goals to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries on Takoma Park roads. He asked for help with legislation that includes lowering speed limits, installing stop-sign cameras, and established the roads around Montgomery College and Washington Adventist University as school zones.

Addressing a hot Ward 6 issue in 2024, Schlegel asked the delegation for legislation that would “prevent the concentration of liquor stores in marginalized communities.”

Ward 4 Councilmember Kurt Gilbert brought up housing policy, asking the state legislators “to enact good cause eviction laws [and] support budget and legislative initiatives to significantly increase the stock of affordable housing, including housing for the missing middle and for people with disabilities.”

“We would also like you to ... create a source of funds for multifamily building rehabilitation, including condominium rehabilitations,” requested Gilbert.

Mayor Searcy went last. She mentioned that some city staff does not have ideal work environments, especially those with Public Works. They lack critical infrastructure such as bathrooms and office space. The mayor asked for \$500,000 to be able to move forward with design work to meet these needs.

Senator Will Smith spoke first, in response to the council. He congratulated members of the community who participated in the democratic process in 2024 and addressed fears about the Trump administration.

“Nationally, obviously, we had a significant setback, which has been alluded to several times here,” said Smith, saying that it “fundamentally changed” the priorities to “being more of a protective and defensive posture.”

Smith said that Maryland faces a \$2.7 billion shortfall in 2025, which will hamper expansion of services. “Our budget deficit is going to be \$4. 7 billion by 2028 if we keep on the current track.”

He said that despite this, the delegation will work to achieve the mayor’s capital request, though it might not come all at once.

Delegate David Moon started by welcoming new Councilmembers Landman, Schlegel, Gilbert, and Wesolek and paying tribute to outgoing Ward 4 City Councilmember Terry Seamens. He reminded the council that he is a resident of Ward 4 and was well represented by Councilmember Seamens.

Delegate Moon then addressed the worries that community members would be harmed by policies of the Trump administration.

“There is some good news here from our years and years of work and our past experience with Trump on this,” he said. “This is not our first rodeo.”

During the previous Trump administration, “we decided to shut down all of the ... for-profit immigrant detention centers,” which theoretically inhibits the capacity of immigration enforcers to fill beds,” said Moon. He said that the general assembly helped fund legal services for people facing deportation—funding that continues.

On another matter, Delegate Moon thanked Takoma Park and Maryland residents generally for its help in “locking down reproductive rights at the ballot” and helping the legislative body expand access to health care services in the state.

He reassured the council that Governor Wes Moore is “racing forward with reg right now on reproductive rights and transgender health care records so that they will not be subject to some of the negative actions that we are concerned about.”

Delegate Moon spoke to the theme of tight budgets, saying that they would do what they could to protect revenue streams.

“But I just want to give you a word of caution” that many jurisdictions are asking for increased revenue from unique tax sources, such as restaurant and beverage. “And if you add all of these requests up, it’s a lot of stuff” being passed along to consumers.

“We do intend to put a little more rigor towards putting the state’s land to active use for solar siting for housing production and for other things,” said Moon, “but I do think it will start with some tough conversations about housing.”

Delegate Charkoudian spoke next, addressing first the expectation that energy prices will increase in 2025 due to closure of fossil-fuel power plants and lack of a sustainable source, with much of Maryland’s power coming from out of state. Charkoudian identified this situation as a “failure of planning” by regional transmission organizations.

Charkoudian affirmed her commitment to staying “on track for our climate goals in a way that protects ratepayers.” She said that she will support state efforts to support clean energy and create greater battery storage. She cautioned those who advocate turning to increased methane/natural gas to lower the expected increase in energy prices. This will be a setback for the environment and will strengthen an energy monopoly, she said.

Charkoudian said that she will continue to support stop-sign cameras in school zones and legislation to consider density and the public health and public safety” when it comes to decisions to grant new liquor licenses.

She also addressed issues related to the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) Purple Line, which is currently under construction along the western and northern borders of Takoma Park. She said that she is already monitoring the effect on traffic and will keep an eye on other issues such as equity among ridership as the proj-

The ARTS

More Poems Appear Underfoot in Takoma Park

In most places, sidewalks can't speak but concrete imprinted with poetry shares local stories in Takoma Park.

Fourteen poems by local children and adults have been stamped in city sidewalks, including three poems in new sidewalks on Belford Drive and Belford Place. Two more poems have been stamped outside the Takoma Park Community Center as part of the library renovations.

The City's Arts and Humanities Division organized the project and created an online map at bit.ly/3wuxH1F, with icons and photos of the poems to encourage walking and biking on a 4.5-mile looping route across the city.

More than 150 local residents submitted their original poems in a poetry contest in 2021, and a committee of local poets picked 10 children and 10 adults as the winners who ranged in age from 6-years-old to seniors. Each winner received a \$100 prize and an opportunity to have their original poem stamped in a local sidewalk, using a customized metal plate with raised letters that is pressed into wet concrete. You can read all of the poems at bit.ly/sidewalkpoetrywinners.

"This project has been a fun way to highlight the creativity of local residents and emphasize that anyone can be a poet," Arts and Humanities Coordinator Brendan Smith said.

Takoma Park has the only sidewalk poetry program in the D.C. area that was



Ash Hewchuck



Samantha Magrath

inspired by a project organized by artist Marcus Young with Public Art Saint Paul in St. Paul, Minn. Sidewalk poetry has since spread to other cities across the country from Key West, Florida, to Santa Clarita, California.

The sidewalk poetry project is part of the

Arts and Humanities Division's *Public Art Works* initiative, which incorporates public art into public works projects to locate public art more equitably throughout Takoma Park.

"It's rare to be able to add an artistic touch to basic concrete so we are happy to

participate," Public Works Director Daryl Braithwaite said. "The thoughtful and playful sentiments expressed in the poems will have a long life on our sidewalks."

Relic Ensemble Leads Journey to *the Dawn of Time*

Free Concert
Friday, January 24, 7:30 p.m.
Takoma Park Community Center
7500 Maple Ave.

Baroque chamber orchestra Relic will explore the beginning of time in five evocative chapters in a free concert at the Takoma Park Community Center.

The chapters include the emergence of the elements, separation of earth and the heavens, formation of storms and seas, creation of birds and beasts, and finally the birth of humankind. Inspired by ancient creation stories from across the world, this dramatic program features music by Rebel, Rameau, Biber, Vivaldi, and other composers.

Lauded as "stylish and innovative" by the *New York Classical Review*, Relic connects with audiences through intimate and imaginative representations of early music with the goal of reaching communities in all 50 states. Relic's innovative programming, which uses narrative "chapters" to unite a variety of repertoire, has captured the hearts of new and seasoned concertgoers alike.

Relic has performed in 12 states at various venues, including the Indianapolis Early Music Festival, Electric Earth Concerts, and the Gotham Early Music Scene.



Committed to sharing their passion for chamber music with students of all ages, Relic members also have led workshops, master classes and residencies at the University of Maryland, Washington International School, and Kalamazoo College.

This concert is part of the *Takoma Park Arts* series organized by the City's Arts and Humanities Division, including free concerts, theater, dance, film screenings, art exhibitions, and other events at the Takoma Park Community Center. No tickets

or reservations are required. You can find more info and sign up for our e-newsletter at takomaparkmd.gov/arts. Join us and celebrate the arts!



LIBRARY



**7505 New Hampshire Ave.,
Suite 205**

Library and Computer Center hours

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

There is plenty of parking as well as access to public transportation—not to mention free WiFi.

January closures: The library and computer center will be closed on Wednesday, January 1 for New Year’s Day, as well as on Sunday, January 19 and Monday, January 20 for observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

Internet Hotspots and Chromebooks to borrow: The library has a supply of Verizon JetPacks, and Chromebooks for patrons to borrow. The hotspots will permit up to 10 devices to connect to the internet. The Chromebooks are great for email and web browsing. These items will be available only to adult patrons and require a signed user agreement. You must have had a library card for a minimum of one month before checking either of these items out.

Books-to-Go (pick up at the library) and **Books-to-You** (delivered—for Takoma Park residents only) continues. Email librarytakomapark@gmail.com to order. Please note: if you are picking up a Books-to-Go order, please call the library’s main number, 301-891-7259.

Programs and Events

A note about program and event registration: Library events are always free and open to all. We do ask patrons to register for some programs. Registration provides the library and its partners with a headcount so that we can prepare accordingly. Registration, however, does not guarantee a seat, so participants are encouraged to arrive early.

Mock Caldecott wrap-up: Sunday, January 12, 3 p.m. Come vote for your favorite picture book of 2024. The Caldecott Medal is awarded by the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), part of the American Library Association. It’s given to an illustrated book published in the United States in the past year. The library has restarted the tradition of making our own choice for this prestigious award. Join Sylvie Shaffer and Dave Burbank for this intergenerational program. Our final meeting will be on Sunday, January 12 in the library at 3 p.m., and we will

vote on our final choice. Join us! We’ll have refreshments and lively discussion.

Cat Adoption Event: Sunday, January 26, noon–3 p.m. Join the library for a fun afternoon of kitty cuddles and cozy reads! Local rescue group, A Cat’s Life Rescue will bring some of their adoptable cats, ready for you to meet and to find forever homes. The library will have a selection of cat-themed books ready for you to peruse and check out, perfect for a cold winter day! Refreshments, too!

Crochet and Cozies—all ages welcome. Join us at 10:30 Monday mornings for crochet and cozy mysteries. We are now making many hats for those in need as the weather gets colder! 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 allows us to contact you if necessary. Register on our Events calendar at takomapark.info.

Neighborhood Circle Time. Join Ms. Verónica and friends every Tuesday at 10:30 a.m. for Circle Time. We sing, have fun with fingerplays and rhymes, dance, and do movement exercises. We read a book in the middle of the program. And we close with bubbles! No Circle Time on December 31!

Canta Juego: Spanish Circle Time every Thursday at 10:30 a.m. ¡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 the Friends of the Takoma Park Maryland Library. No Canta Juego on January 2!

Family Chess. Join us on Sundays at noon to play this ancient strategy game. Caregivers and kids are invited. We have plenty of chess boards and pieces. Players of all levels are welcome. There will be group instruction once a month. Please register if you want to receive updates.

Sundays: Board Games. Chess, LEGO, Marble Run, Arts & Crafts—Sundays in the library are a lot of fun.

Friends’ news

Upcoming Fundraiser Fun

Stay Tuned! The Friends of the Takoma Park Maryland Library (FTPML) will be sponsoring another fundraiser at the Local VFW, in Hells Bottom sometime in March. Enjoy music, dancing, pizza, and a raffle courtesy of local businesses. As the library prepares for reopening in its new space, FTPML is working closely with the library to support programs for

all ages!

We will be holding another book sale in the spring, but in the meantime, get out your dancing shoes. We’ll have more to report once we’ve locked in a date. And consider membership, either for the first time or renewal. Go to the Friends website (ftpml.org) to become a member!

Friends Book Group to Read Italian Magical Realism

by Tim Rahn

The FTPML Friends Book Group will discuss the award-winning novel, *Verdigris*, by the Italian short story writer and novelist Michele Mari on Thursday, January 9, 7:30–9 p.m. in the Hydrangea Room of the Community Center.

Originally published in Italy in 2007 as *Verderame*, the novel was translated into English in 2024 by Brian Robert Moore. Mari was awarded the Grinzane Cavour Prize for fiction for *Verdigris* in 2008. Moore has received PEN grants and awards for his translations.

Set on an estate in northern Italy in 1969, *Verdigris* is the story of 13-year-old Michelino and the family gardener, Felice. As Felice attends to his daily chores, Michelino observes the gardener and talks to him. It soon becomes apparent that the old man is losing his memory.



An older Michelino narrates the story from the vantage point of middle age. Mari soon reveals a darker side to the estate during World War II. While Michelino attempts to help Felice, he soon finds himself chasing ghosts and the wisps of Felice’s memory.

The writer Lee Langley, in his review of *Verdigris*, commented, “The English version of this novel is more than a translation. It is an Ovidian exercise, transforming what could have been baffling to Anglophone readers into a rich and captivating narrative with cultural references and jokes all recast to beguile us.”

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 the email list.

Copies of *Verdigris* can be borrowed from the library. It is not available as an ebook.

Friends Big Book Club Selects Classics

by Tim Rahn

The FTPML Big Book Club selected Charlotte Brontë’s *Villette* and Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* as its two discussion books for 2025. *Villette* will be read and discussed in the spring, *Invisible Man* in the fall. Details on the discussions will be announced in the coming months.

Brontë’s novel is the story of Lucy Snow, a young English woman who travels to the fictional town of Vilette, France, to work in a boarding school. Virginia Wolff considered *Villette* to be Brontë’s “finest novel.”

Saul Bellow wrote in his review of *Invisible Man*, when it was initially published in 1952, that it is, “a book of the very first order, a superb book ... it is tragi-comic, poetic, the tone of the very strongest sort of creative intelligence.” The novel touches on many of the issues and concerns that confronted African-



Americans in the 20th Century.

The Big Book Club discusses longer literary masterworks from the world canon in the spring and fall. After an initial lecture by an expert on the book, the club meets to discuss the work over three or four additional sessions.

If you are interested in joining the discussion and wish to receive Big Book Club announcements, write to ftpml-bookgroup@gmail.com.

Listen to this!

Last Day, with Stephanie Wittels Wachs, Lemonada Media.



by Jessica Jones

This whole series needs a big content warning, but I really think it's worth a listen. When Harris Wittels, writer and comedian, died from an accidental heroin overdose in 2015, his sister Stephanie was devastated.



Last Day was born from processing her grief, and the seasons are all themed around different issues, beginning with Season One and "addiction." *Last Day* explores difficult topics with nuance and sensitivity. A case in point is Season Three's first episode. To introduce the season's theme of "guns," the production team goes to Montana, where gun culture is mainstream culture. They interview families who have lost loved ones to guns through suicide and talk about how the families' relationships to guns has or has not been impacted, what stands in the way of gun culture changing, and how we can keep

our families safe when there is a gun in the home.

Last Day began as a discussion on tragedy without judgment, but the most recent season has pivoted to focus on individual stories of transformative life events. Listen with care, but it's worth a try. Available on lemonadamedia.com and all podcast platforms.

Veronica's column will return.
El rincón de Verónica volverá.

Director's column Controversial Topics at the Library

by Jessica Jones

When I agreed to facilitate a program series about climate change in very red suburban Texas several years ago, I knew that I was making my library a lightning rod. My director at the time basically said, "I trust you, just keep me in the loop."

What followed was many hours of planning, staff meetings, internal communications to reinforce a unified front, and of course, external communications to encourage the public to attend. We planned for every potential scenario. We prepared print materials and rehearsed our talking points. We got a grant so that we could

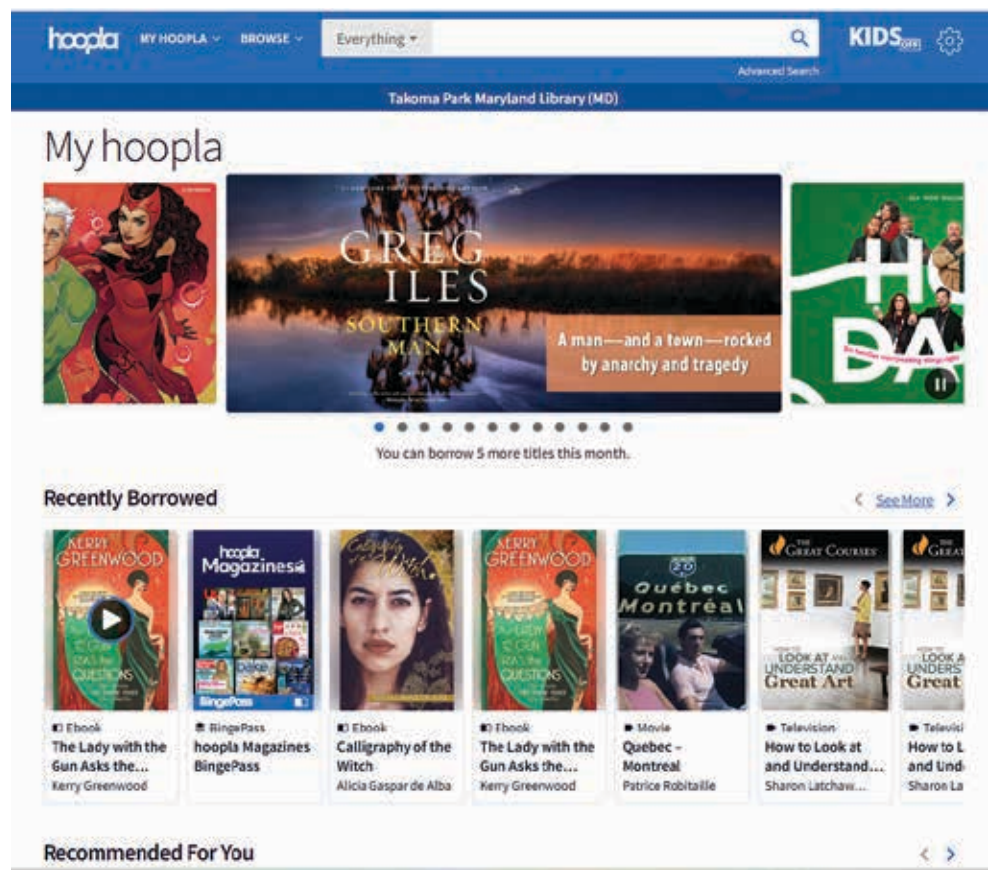
say we weren't using taxpayer dollars. We brought in a research scientist from the local university to be an authoritative source, and we made sure that he was ready for whatever the public might throw at him. Yes, they did ask him about contrails.

We also kept our local police department in the loop, just in case things got out of hand. Those concerns were not unfounded. A few months after our climate change program series ended, someone less than 100 miles away in Houston brought a gun to a Drag Queen Story Hour.

Most people who have talked to me about

TOPICS □ Page 12

78% of Americans feel that public libraries help them find information that is trustworthy and reliable. That trust is a hard-won honor that requires effort and conscience to maintain.



What's all the Hoopla about?

by Anne LeVeque

The Takoma Park Maryland Library has much more than books on paper. One of our favorite online offerings is an app called Hoopla. With Hoopla, you can get audiobooks, ebooks, comics, television shows, movies, magazines, and music. Each account gets five "borrows" per month, but those borrows can include binge passes and bonus borrows. With a binge pass, you can have unlimited views of certain types of offerings for a period of seven days. A bonus borrow is offered at the end of the month, and doesn't count toward your five borrows.

We'll take you through signing up and using all of Hoopla's various offerings. You can use Hoopla on any device—your computer, your phone, or your tablet, both Apple and Android app versions are available.

Signing up

You will need your library card and your PIN for this part, so have them handy. Remember, your PIN is your 4-digit birthday, without the year. Someone born on July 4 would have the PIN 0704. You also need an email address to use with your account. You can have only one account per email address, so if someone else in your household is signing up, they will have to have a separate email address for their account. You will also be asked to create a password.

Go to hoopladigital.com and click on "Get Started." Then you will click "Let's Go" which will take you to a box where you will search for your library. Just typing "Takoma" will bring up the Takoma Park Maryland Library. Click on the library name, then "Next," and it will ask for your library card number and PIN. Enter these and click "Next." If your card is expired or you have outstanding overdue items or you have fines in excess of \$25, you may not be able to complete this step. You can call or come in to clear these up.

Now you will enter your email, create a password, and then click "Complete Registration." You will see a button that says "Get started"—when you click on it, you will go to the Hoopla home page.

Using Hoopla

Now that you're all signed up, let's explore some of what Hoopla has to offer. One thing that distinguishes Hoopla from, say, Libby, which many of you have (it is an app offered by the Montgomery County Libraries and many other libraries) is that you do not have to wait for a book to become available. Books are ready to read when you are.

Both Libby and Hoopla have advantages—most of the library staff have both!

Ebooks and Comics

Let's look at ebooks first. From the Hoopla main page, you can scroll down and see what's popular and what they recommend. If you see something you like, you can go ahead and borrow it right away. If you want to look more systematically, click on "Browse" and choose "Ebooks." When you find a title you like, click "Borrow." You can download your book onto a mobile device—a phone or a tablet—and you can read your book online on a computer.

You can search for particular authors and titles if you have a specific book in mind. Click on "Advanced Search"—it's in very small print just below the search box—and input the specific information into the pop-up window. You will see that rather than "Author," it asks for "People," so author, illustrator, reader (in the case of audiobooks), and other artists are included.

Once you have borrowed a book, you may read it on the Hoopla app itself, or you can download it and read it on the ebook app of your choice.

Comics are read the same way as ebooks, but make sure you are not in dark mode, or the graphics will just not look right.

One thing I love about ebooks in general is that you can read them in dark mode at night with the lights out, and not disturb your sleeping partner. Like many ebook apps, Hoopla allows you to adjust the brightness and font size to best suit your needs.

Audiobooks

You borrow audiobooks the same way you borrow ebooks. Once you have borrowed a title, you can play it on any device where you've downloaded the app or have connected to Hoopla via the internet.

For ebooks, comics, and audiobooks, the borrowing period is three weeks.

All other formats

Music, movies, and television shows are borrowed the same way. With some TV shows, the series is included, and for others, each episode is a "borrow." Go into the Hoopla settings to enter your TV's code to watch a great assortment of movies and shows on the big screen! Look for "Link TV Device" in settings. One thing to note with movies and television is that the borrowing period is a brief three days, and for music it is just one week (all other formats are three weeks).

HOOPLA □ Page 10

RECREATION

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

TOTS

DANCE

Combo Tot Dance

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. This class is jam-packed with games and toys; your little ones won't even realize they are learning to dance. Instructor: Dance Solutions

Takoma Park Community Center
(Azalea Room)
7500 Maple Ave.

Ages 3–5
Sundays, 12:15–1 p.m.
January 12–March 2
Resident: \$125 / non-resident: \$145

SPORTS



Recess and Results

With only about 1-in-4 children meeting the daily recommendation of 60 minutes or more of physical activity per day, Recess and Results with Lynsey gives young children the opportunity to move their bodies in a way that is both fun and engaging. It combines age-appropriate strength, flexibility, and cardiovascular training through play. With Recess and Results, we're not just getting kids moving—we're helping them build a foundation for a healthy, active life, all while having fun along the way.

Takoma Park Recreation Center
(Gymnasium)
7315 New Hampshire Ave.
Ages 3–5
Saturdays, 10:30–11:30 a.m.
February 1–March 8
Resident: \$60 / non-resident: \$70

YOUTH

ART



Ceramics—Valentine's Day Gift Making Workshop

Create brightly colored heart-shaped ornaments, boxes, and other keepsakes for family and friends over two Saturday mornings. A \$5 materials fee is due to the instructor on the first day of the workshop. Instructor: Caroline MacKinnon

Takoma Park
7500 Maple Ave.
Ages 7 and up
Saturdays, 11 a.m.–noon
January 18 and 25
Resident: \$45 / non-resident: \$55
Materials fee: \$5

SPRING BREAK CAMPS

Fundamentally Sound Spring Break Basketball Camp

Fundamentally Sound Basketball 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.
April 14–April 18
Resident: \$220 / non-resident: \$250
Before Care: 7–9 a.m.
After Care: 4–6 p.m.
Resident: \$45 / non-resident: \$55

Spring Break Camp: Wonder in the Wild

Get ready for an exciting, animal-themed spring break at Takoma Park's Spring Break Camp: Wonder in the Wild! This weeklong camp invites young nature lovers to explore the wonders of the animal kingdom through engaging hands-on activities, interactive games, and creative crafts designed to inspire curiosity and foster respect for all creatures, great and small. Paperwork will need to be completed prior to the first day of camp. Please bring a non-perishable lunch every day. Camp sessions always fill—don't wait!

Takoma Park Community Center
7500 Maple Ave.
Ages 6–12
1-week session
Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.
April 14–April 18
Resident: \$150 / non-resident: \$170
Beforecare: 7–9 a.m.
Aftercare: 4–6 p.m.
Resident: \$45 / non-resident: \$55

DANCE

Ballet & Stretch

This 45-minute class focuses on the basics of ballet but also 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.
January 11–March 15
Resident: \$90 / non-resident: \$110

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 technique, 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.
January 11–March 15
Resident: \$90 / non-resident: \$110

DROP-IN

Kid Night

The Takoma Park Recreation Center provides affordable, safe, and FUN activities for kids on the first and third Friday nights of the month. Come out to a night of games, activities, and more. Bring your friends and meet new ones. Free with Recreation Center membership.

Takoma Park Recreation Center
(Gymnasium)
7315 New Hampshire Ave.
Ages 5–12
Fridays, 4:30–6:30 p.m.
January 17, February 7, February 21
Free with Membership

EXTENDED CARE

Fun Day

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. Must bring a lunch, snacks, and labeled water bottle. Activities and performers are subject to change. Registration is required. Paperwork will need to be completed prior to the first day of the program.

Meet at the Takoma Park Community Center
7500 Maple Ave.
Grades: K–5
Wednesday, January 29: Port Discovery
Monday, March 31: Monster Mini Golf
Resident: \$55 / non-resident: \$65

SPORTS

Basketball Skills Clinic

This class will teach the fundamentals of the sport. Good sportsmanship will be emphasized. Participants will learn proper dribbling, shooting, and defensive techniques. Instructor: Greg Harris

Takoma Park Recreation Center (Gymnasium)
7315 New Hampshire Ave.
Ages 6–12
Saturdays, noon–1 p.m.
January 18–March 18
Resident: \$100 / non-resident: \$110

TEENS

ART

CRAFT!

Welcome to CRAFT!—Creative Recreational Arts for Teens! In this class, teens will explore mixed media art projects that cater to a variety of interests. Participants will get to work on different art forms, including painting, collaging, illustration, and even sculpting! This class will scratch that creative itch and expose teens to the endless possibilities of art. All experience levels are welcome! There is a non-refundable \$20 materials fee due directly to the instructor on the first day. Instructed by: Kelsey Joyce

Takoma Park Community Center
(Art Studio)
7500 Maple Ave.
Grades 8–11
Mondays, 6:30–7:30 p.m.
January 27–March 24
Resident: \$50 / non-resident: \$60



See article on page 9!

DANCE

Kolor Me Dance: Hip Hop

Hip hop dance incorporates aspects of modern dance, tap, and swing—integrating music and complex movements to form artistry. Teens will have the opportunity to make their own routines and explore other types of dance such as ballet, jazz, and stepping. Instructor: Kokoe Divine

Takoma Park Recreation Center
7315 New Hampshire Ave.
Grades 6–12
Saturdays, 1–2:30 p.m.
January 11–March 1
Free

DROP-IN

Teen Night

The Takoma Park Recreation Center provides quality, affordable, safe, and FUN activities for teens. Nothing to do on Friday nights? Come on out to a night of games, activities, and more. Bring your friends for a night out of the house. Free with a Recreation Center Teen Membership.

Takoma Park Recreation Center
(Gymnasium)
7315 New Hampshire Ave.
Ages 12–16
Weekly on Fridays, 6:30–8:45 p.m.
Free with membership

TRIPS

Teen Trip: Bowlero College Park

Join us for some bowling fun at Bowlero, located at 9021 Baltimore Ave., College Park, Maryland, on this early release day! Teens will be able to enjoy some healthy competition while bowling and even play arcade games! Space is limited, so register today! Food will not be provided, but participants can bring money to purchase food at the venue.

Takoma Park Community Center
(Meet at Teen Lounge)
7500 Maple Ave.
Grades 6–12
Friday, February 28
1–5:30 p.m.
Resident: \$15 / non-resident: \$25

RECREATION

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

RECREATION

■ From page 8

ADULTS

FITNESS



Flow Yoga

Flow Yoga is a mixed-level hatha yoga class with flow sequences. Students who are new to yoga will learn what yoga is, get familiar with yoga poses and alignment, be introduced to basic breathing techniques, and become more grounded and mindful in their approach to yoga—both on and off the

mat. Students who have been practicing yoga for a while will also benefit from this class, as they will have the opportunity to deepen their practice and understanding of yoga and will learn more sequences, poses, and modifications. The class sessions are energizing, grounding, playful, and renewing. Instructor: Jenn Skillcorn

Takoma Park Recreation Center
(Back Room)
7315 New Hampshire Ave.
Ages 16 and up
Saturdays, 9–10 a.m.
January 11–February 15
Resident: \$60 / non-resident: \$70

Zumba New Ave.

Zumba is a total body workout, combining all elements of fitness with cardio, muscle conditioning, balance, and flexibility. Zumba 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.
January 18–February 22
Resident: \$60 / non-resident: \$70

Everyday QiGong

Simple gentle movements to improve health, mobility, flexibility, and general happiness and peace of mind. We will share exercises from many different classes, culling the ones that we practice regularly in the morning and throughout the day. You will find benefits quickly as these QiGong exercises invigorate energy systems, open up joints and relax our bodies, minds and spirits. Open to all—no experience needed. Your health is in your hands. Instructor: Patrick Smith

Virtual on Zoom
Ages 18 and up
Tuesdays, 7:30–8 p.m.
January 7–March 11
Resident: \$30 / non-resident: \$40



SPORTS

2025 Adult Kickball League Team Registration

Join our Adult Kickball League this spring! Put together your winning team and go against other area teams in order to win the league championship. Games are played at Belle Ziegler Field on Sundays. All games are double headers. Note: the fee is

Belle Ziegler Field
7350 Takoma and Albany Aves.
Ages 16 and up
8-week season
Sundays, games between 8:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.
April 6–June 15
(No games on April 20, May 11, and May 25)

Team Fee: Resident: \$200 / non-resident: \$300

RECREATION □ Page 10



Q&A with Kelsey Joyce

Kelsey Joyce was welcomed into the Recreation Department's family of instructors in the summer of 2024. She facilitated the Visual Arts Camp for ages 11–14 and is now teaching CRAFT!—Creative Recreational Arts for Teens, grades 8–10.

Tell us a bit about yourself and your background.

I grew up in University Park and loved to draw pictures from a young age, inspired by my favorite cartoons, the Powerpuff Girls and Dragon Tales. After dabbling in sculpture during an introductory class in college, I changed my major to art and graduated with a bachelors of Fine Arts from St. Mary's College of Maryland in 2019. Ever since, I have continued to create imaginary creature sculptures and work as an arts educator.

What started your interest in the arts? And what would you consider to be your specialty?

I am a Maryland-based artist who takes inspiration from my daydreams to create imaginary creatures, and I have coined the "Imji." My specialties include creating mixed media sculptures, using an array of techniques and materials such as papier mache, wall-paper paste, paint, welding, clay, and acrylic paint. Each "Imji" has its own story, personality, and name, nurtured into a series of folktales, art installations,



Kelsey among some of her Imji creations.

and public artworks. My art subjects are inspired by my love of color, animal hybrids, and alebrijes.*

How long have you been teaching art classes and what motivated you to start teaching art to youth?

I have been teaching art classes since 2016. My goal with art has been to transport the viewer into my fantasy, inspire optimism, and ignite their creativity.

What is your personal favorite concept to teach?

My favorite concept to teach is sculpture!

How do you keep your classes engaging and motivating for your students?

I listen to what my students are interested in and build classes based around their interests, while also integrating art history and new techniques.

Are there any artists that you look up to? Do you have a favorite visual artist?

Some of my favorite visual artists are Yayoi Kusama, Niki de Saint Phalle, Henri Matisse, Pedro Linares López, and Frida Kahlo, to name a few.

* Alebrije are fantastical creatures depicted in Mexican folk art.

RECREATION

■ From page 9

2025 Adult Kickball League— Free Agent Waitlist for Individuals

If you do not have a team, sign up for the waiting list. You will be contacted if space becomes available on a team, and you will be responsible to pay your registration and any other associated fees to that team. Spaces not guaranteed.

2025 Adult Softball League Team Registration

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. At least half of any team must be composed of Takoma Park residents to qualify for the resident team fee. Roster limit: 15. All games are double headers. Note: the fee is a team fee.

Various Local Fields

Ages 16 and up

6-week season

Sundays, 9:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m.

April 6–June 15

(No games on April 20, May 11, and May 25)

Resident: \$700 / non-resident: \$800

2025 Adult Softball League— Free Agent Waitlist for Individuals

If you do not have a team, sign up for the waiting list. You will be contacted if space becomes available on a team, and you will be responsible to pay your registration and any other associated fees to that team. Spaces not guaranteed.

Adult Drop In Pickleball

Join other “new” players for pickleball practice and play in the Gymnasium. This activity is geared toward beginners. Limited paddles are available. The entire magic and success of pickleball is the way it has been set up to be a welcoming sport in an informal setting. You can show up to the courts and pick up a game. It doesn’t matter what your age is. That is the beauty of DROP IN play.

Takoma Park Recreation Center
(Gymnasium)

7315 New Hampshire Ave.

Ages 18 and up

9-week session

Mondays, 6:30–8:30 p.m.

January 27–March 31

Resident: \$20 / non-resident: \$30

SPECIAL NOTICE

Library and Community Center Renovations

Due to the Library and Community Center Renovations, the Recreation Department is undergoing the following changes:

- The Game room and Dance studio will be closed to the public and will remain closed during the Library/Community Center renovations.
- Recreation Administrative offices will be located at the temporary Library at 7505 New Hampshire Ave., Suite 205.
- The Teen Lounge will remain open, and teens can enter and exit the space using the outside entrance near the basketball courts.
- To enter the Community Center, use the Grant Avenue doors.
- Beforecare and aftercare programs will remain as scheduled in the Azalea room.
- Parking at the Community Center is very limited; street parking is recommended.
- Please call the Recreation Department at 301-891-7290 for additional information regarding programs and services.

See takomaparkmd.gov for updates on the project.

55+ PROGRAMS

DANCE

Hip Hop Move N’ Groove

This dance class gives participants a beat to start their day! Easy-to-follow hip hop, jazz, and lyrical and modern choreography, focusing on balance, range of motion, and coordination. No equipment is needed. No experience required. Instructor: Kokoe Divine

Takoma Park Recreation Center
7315 New Hampshire Ave.

Back Activity Room

10-week session

Ages 55 and up

Thursdays, 11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

January 16–March 20

\$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. Choose which day of the week you would like to attend in-person class. If the option you would like is full, select the waiting list. Instructor: Yesika Young

Takoma Park Recreation Center
7315 New Hampshire Ave.



Gymnasium

Ages 55 and up

10 Week Sessions

Wednesdays, 11:45 a.m.–12:45 p.m.

January 15–March 19

Fridays, 10–11 a.m.

January 17–March 21

\$6

DROP-IN

Bingo

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

Takoma Park MD Library
7505 New Hampshire Ave.

Ages 55 and up

Fourth Tuesdays monthly, noon–2 p.m.

January 28, February 25, and March 25

Free

FITNESS

Qigong 55+

Qigong is meditation via movement, standing and/or seated, that can benefit participants by lowering stress and anxiety, increasing focus and improving balance and flexibility. It combines breathing, gentle movement, and meditation to improve good mental, physical, and spiritual health. Instructor: Anne Harrison

Takoma Park Recreation Center
7315 New Hampshire Ave.

Back Activity Room

Ages 55 and up

10-week session

Thursdays, 10–11 a.m.

January 16–March 20

\$6

SPORTS

Pickleball Open Play 55+

Join other “new” players for pickleball practice and play in the Gymnasium. This activity is geared toward beginners. Limited paddles available. This is a drop-in program; registration is not required. However, a free 55+ Recreation Center membership is needed. Sign up for a membership in person at 7315 New Hampshire Ave.

Takoma Park Recreation Center
7315 New Hampshire Ave.

Gymnasium

Ages 55 and up

10-week session

Thursdays, noon–2 p.m.

January 16–March 20

Free with membership

Ping Pong Open Play 55+

Ping pong (table tennis) Open play. Join other players for ping pong practice and play in the Gymnasium. Limited paddles available. This is a drop-in program; registration is not required. However, a free 55+ Recreation Center membership is required for this activity. Sign up for a membership in person at 7315 New Hampshire Ave.

Takoma Park Recreation Center
7315 New Hampshire Ave.

Gymnasium

Ages 55 and up

9-week session

Mondays, 10 a.m.–noon

January 13–March 24

(Closed on January 20 and February 17)

Free with membership

HOOPLA

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For all formats, you can stream content on your computer, but you can download only on mobile devices such as your phone or tablet. You can also stream on mobile devices, but it’s handy to download if you’re away from WiFi. I got to watch several shows while on an airplane recently, having downloaded them to my tablet.

Binge Passes

Look for the 30 Binge Pass collections, each of which has many items—ebooks, movies, etc.—available to borrow. You borrow a pass for the whole collection, and then you have unlimited access for one week. With your five borrows per month, you can keep the bingeing going forever!

One item included in the Binge Pass is the Great Courses. It offers over 450 topics with too many videos for my poor brain to count. These courses are presented by experts in many fields and cover just about any topic you can imagine.

Bonus borrows

Bonus borrows don’t count toward your five per month limit. They are available only during the last seven days of the calendar month, though. And the selection is much more limited than with the general catalog of items. If you’ve run out of borrows, you can dip your toe into something new.

Your History

In your settings, you can have Hoopla remember what you’ve borrowed in the past. You can also set it so that your history is not retained, which some patrons prefer. When I’m reading a series of mysteries, for example, I like to know which ones I’ve already read. The same goes for television shows. It can be hard to keep track of them in your head.

Troubleshooting

Overdue items and expired accounts are the cause of most issues with Hoopla. If you can’t borrow or log in, please call, email, or come in to the library to check on your account. You can log into your library account from home to see if you have overdue items or if your account has expired. Go to takomapark.info and log in. As always, call us and ask for a Computer Center staff member if you need help.

PRIORITIES

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ect continues toward completion.

“So please stay in touch with our offices,” she said. “It’s fine to keep harassing us because then we just keep harassing [MDOT].”

Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins reiterated her concern about the Purple Line and echoed Delegate Charkoudian’s call to residents to reach out with any concerns.

Wilkins said that she is working with Casa de Maryland on protections for immigrants in places where people gather, such as churches and hospitals. She said that all spaces should be safe spaces.

“As a state, we’re not able to deal with immigration law specifically,” she said. “What we can do is take every action possible to make sure that the state of Maryland and our various entities do not participate in any way or fuel ... any sort of actions that are negative when it comes to immigrant rights.”

Wilkins reminded the council that she is the vice chair of the Ways and Means Committee, which means that she will be

working specifically on how to fund state and jurisdictional services during lean times. She said that one solution may be to raise the state tax rate for high earners.

She then said that she has introduced legislation for the past seven years regarding “just cause or good cause eviction,” which protects tenants from unreasonable rent hikes and retaliatory or discriminatory evictions, and that she is confident that it will pass the Maryland Senate this year.

As this part of the council meeting moved toward closure, Councilmember Honzak asked about the possibility that Takoma Park become a “democracy hub” as the country moves into the second Trump administration.

Delegate Moon responded with the observation that Maryland and Montgomery County are currently losing population, in part because of the high cost of housing. But he added that he does see value in the proposition that “this is a welcoming community.” He said that he believes that “we are going to see folks moving to our region. And, hey, the more neighbors, the better as far as I’m concerned.”

At Your SERVICE

Community Police Academy

The Community Police Academy begins on Tuesday, March 4, 2025. Be on the lookout for an application to register.

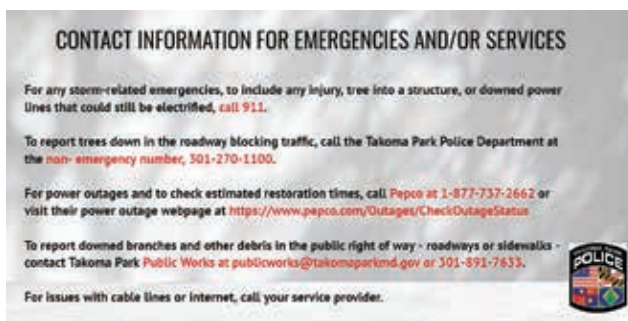
The Community Police Academy is a 12-week program consisting of one class a week on Tuesday evenings from 7 to 9:30 p.m. The classes cover patrol, traffic enforcement, use of force, criminal investigations, firearms, and crime analysis. There are multiple opportunities for hands-on learning through equipment demonstrations, practical scenarios, field trips, and ride-alongs with patrol officers.

The Takoma Park Police Department believes that educating the community will lead to understanding and support. The success of any law enforcement agency depends largely upon the amount of cooperation and support it receives from the community it serves.

The Community Police Academy is free to the public. Seats are limited to the first 25 students and are 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.

If you are interested in learning about the Takoma Park Police Department and local government, you are 16 or older and live or work in Takoma Park; you may apply. The applicants may not have any serious misdemeanor or felony offenses.

If you have any questions about the Community Police Academy, you can contact the Police Public Information Manager, Cathy Plevy, at 301-891-7142 or cathyp@takomaparkmd.gov.



Neighbors Helping Neighbors

If someone you know is elderly or dependent on life-sustaining or health-related equipment, such as a ventilator, respirator, or oxygen concentrator, you should make plans now to ensure their needs are met during severe winter weather and possible power outages.

- Help them stock a home disaster kit, including a flashlight and extra batteries, a battery-operated radio, bottled water, non-perishable foods, essential medicines, and extra blankets or sleeping bags.
- Check on them after a storm or power outage. Register them as a special needs customer with their utility companies so they will become a priority customer. Notify others who could provide help such as neighbors, relatives, nearby friends, and local emergency responders, such as the fire department.
- Have a list of emergency numbers readily available.
- Have a standby generator or an alternative source of power available. Be aware of the safety rules for use.

Out of Cold Shelter

For Montgomery County, if you need help or see someone who needs help, call the Homeless Info. Line, 240-907-2688; Montgomery County's 24-hour Crisis Center, 240-777-4000; Takoma Park Police non-emergency number, 301-270-1100; or Montgomery County Police non-emergency number, 301-279-8000.

Do Not Leave Your Car Running Unattended

Leaving your car running unattended poses a significant risk of theft, and it's important to prioritize safety by breaking this habit. While the convenience of having a warm car ready for your drive is appealing, it also creates an opportunity for criminals to strike. Criminals may observe neighborhoods, targeting individuals who leave their cars running while briefly going inside.

Parents, especially at daycares and schools, should be cautious not to leave their cars running when dropping off or picking up children. The rush to get kids inside may lead to overlooking the security of the vehicle. Car theft is a serious matter, and the ease with which a running, unattended car can be taken makes it a prime target for criminals.

Breaking the habit of leaving your car running unattended is crucial for personal safety. Criminals choose targets that provide them with the best opportunity for a quick and undetected crime. The more obstacles and time they encounter, the higher the likelihood of being caught. By maintaining good safety habits and avoiding the unnecessary risk of leaving your car running, you contribute to reducing the chances of becoming a victim of car theft.

Prioritize safety and protect your belongings by being vigilant and breaking the habit of leaving your car unattended while running.

Protect Your Pets

Winter requires special attention to the safety of our pets.

- If your pet goes outdoors, be aware of the temperature. Pets can get frostbite very easily on the ears, tail, and paws.
- When walking your dog, check the paws to make sure that ice is not building up between the toes and that salt from the road is not irritating the skin.
- If your dog is a swimmer, keep it on a leash around open water or unstable ice. Hypothermia can set in quickly and the dog may be unable to get out of the water.
- Before you start your car, you should honk the horn to make sure that a cat has not decided to nap in a warm spot under the hood of the vehicle, or underneath the vehicle.
- If you have left your holiday decorations up after Christmas, keep ornaments out of reach of your pets. Remember that poinsettias, holly, mistletoe, and other plants can be toxic if ingested.

What Is hypothermia in Pets?

A healthy pet's body temperature is normally much higher than a human's, ranging from 100 to 102.5 degrees. Changes in your pet's body temperature can cause hypothermia which is a medical condition that occurs when their body temperature drops below 100 degrees. Smaller pets and young and geriatric animals are at greater risk of developing this condition. Pets with chronic health problems, such as kidney or heart disease, also have an increased risk of developing hypothermia. Exposure to frigid temperatures or freezing cold water are the most common causes of hypothermia in pets.



How Will I Know If My Pet Has Hypothermia?

The quickest, most effective way to diagnose hypothermia is by measuring your pet's rectal temperature using a standard digital thermometer. Depending on the underlying cause of your pet's low body temperature, clinical signs may include

- Shivering
- Lethargy
- Muscle stiffness
- Shallow or difficulty breathing
- Pale skin
- Muscle stiffness
- Low heart rate
- Dilated pupils

How Is Hypothermia in Pets Treated?

If your pet has clinical signs consistent with hypothermia, bring it inside immediately and cover it with warm blankets or towels. To avoid injury or illness from warming them too quickly, never wrap your pet in a heating pad or submerge it in hot or warm water.

Occasionally, mild hypothermia can be treated at home by checking your pet's temperature every 10 minutes, and providing warm blankets until their body temperature reaches 100 degrees. However, bring your pet

to your family veterinarian or animal emergency clinic immediately if it is showing signs of severe hypothermia or has not improved after 30 minutes of home-warming treatment. The veterinarian will provide various treatments to safely raise their body temperature:

Treatment methods for your pet with hypothermia will ultimately depend on symptom severity or whether your pet has any underlying medical condition.

How Can Hypothermia in Pets Be Prevented?

Ensure your pet does not have prolonged exposure to extremely cold temperatures during the cold winter months. Generally, it is too cold for your pet if it is too cold for you. Consider a coat and protective boots to help your pet stay warm if your pet does need to go outside briefly. Additionally, ensure your pet's fur is dry before going outside to prevent their body temperature from dropping quickly and keep them away from bodies of water.

Call or visit your family veterinarian if you suspect mild hypothermia in your pet.

Essentials Drive for Montgomery County Animal Shelters

From Thursday, January 2 through Friday, February 7, Takoma Park Police will be collecting new/gently used bath towels, beach towels, bathroom rugs, hand towels, washcloths, and blankets to help the Montgomery County Animal Shelters. We are also collecting beds, toys, and unopened food. Please bring your donations to the Takoma Park Police Department lobby, 7500 Maple Ave., and will get them to the animal shelters. Thank you

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

Thank you for your generosity!

Resolve to Be Safe!

By Claudine Schweber, Takoma Park Emergency Preparedness Committee

It's a new year and another winter! Pay attention to your health and basic living this season. Here are several recommendations:

- Avoid illness due to spoiled foods: Throw away any food that has been exposed to temperatures 40 degrees or higher for

two hours or has an unusual odor, color or texture.

- Never turn on gas stove to heat the kitchen or areas nearby.
- Keep your mobiles phone active by charging it regularly—especially *before* a storm arrives.
- Install and test smoke alarms and carbon

monoxide detectors.

- Be prepared for power outages: Have extra batteries for radios and flashlights; Keep working flashlights nearby for easy access.
- Keep an emergency supply kit in your car, including a flashlight, warm clothes, blankets, bottled water, and non-perish-

able snacks.

- Keep the gas tank of your care filled.
- Sign up for Takoma Park alerts: takomaparkmd.gov/services/takomapark-alert/ Questions? Contact the Takoma Park Emergency Preparedness Committee: 301-891-7126, tpepc@takomaparkmd.gov.

Community ACTIVITIES

Historic Takoma's Reading Room

Sunday, January 5 and 19, 1–4 p.m.
Historic Takoma
7328 Carroll Ave.

The Reading Room contains Historic Takoma's reference collections and archives. Featured is the Maryland Reference Collection on loan from the Takoma Park Maryland Library. The local authors collection contains books by local writers, mainly from Takoma Park. Most of the issues of the Takoma Voice and City Newsletter are also available for reading, along with a collection of journals and magazines about Maryland history. More information at historictakoma.org.

Carroll Café: Cathy Fink and Marcy Marxer

Friday, January 17, 7:30 p.m.
Seekers Church
276 Carroll St. NW
Takoma D.C.

In this special concert, Cathy and Marcy will debut a handful of brand-new songs, never performed before, along with their multi-genre repertoire and versatile instrumentation on the banjo, cello banjo, guitar, and ukulele. A portion of the concert will also be dedicated to community singing. More information at carrollcafe.seekerschurch.org. Suggested donation \$25.



Takoma Park Honors Martin Luther King Jr.

Monday, January 20, 5–7 p.m.
Takoma Park Middle School
7611 Piney Branch Road

Mayor Talisha Searcy will emcee this potluck event, looking to Dr. King as a beacon for these times. Ward 4 Councilmember Kurt Gilbert will be our keynote speaker, addressing Martin Luther King Jr.'s life and legacy. A local Girl Scout troop will perform an excerpt from Dr. King's "I have a Dream Speech" and Blair's chorus will perform several songs in his honor. This is a potluck event,

so come early if you are bringing food. You are encouraged to volunteer in the community on this special day. Then come to the potluck for solidarity and hope for our present and future. If you would like to volunteer, reach out to Shana Fulcher: Fulcher@gmail.com.

An Evening with violinist Paul Huang

Saturday, February 1, 7:00 p.m.
Pre-concert talk at 6 p.m.
Takoma Park Seventh-day Adventist Church
6951 Carroll Ave.

Recipient of the prestigious 2015 Avery Fisher Career Grant and the 2017 Lincoln Center Award for Emerging Artists, violinist Paul Huang is considered to be one of the most distinctive artists of his generation. The Washington Post remarked that Mr. Huang "possesses a big, luscious tone, spot-on intonation and a technique that makes the most punishing string phrases feel as natural as breathing," and further proclaimed him as "an artist with the goods for a significant career" following his recital debut at the Kennedy Center. This concert is part of the Anna H. Wang series. More information at ahwconcerts.org Cost: \$35

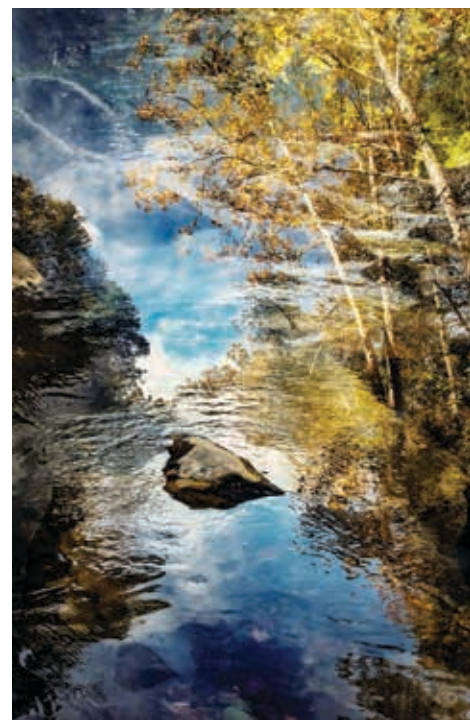


Photo by Keith Kozloff

Photo Exhibit Opening: "Rachel Carson—A Sense of Wonder"

Sunday, February 2, noon–2:30 p.m.,
artist-talk at 12:15

Seekers Church
276 Carroll St. NW
Takoma D.C.

This photography exhibit by Keith Kozloff is dedicated to Silver Spring environmentalist Rachel Carson—a pioneering advocate for the natural world. Takoma Park photographer Keith Kozloff explored Northwest Branch Trail and coastal Maine with a camera in hand to capture the sense of wonder that Carson described from both locations, which were places that she treasured. This exhibit will run through Sunday, April 6. The exhibit will be open to the public on February 2, noon–2:30. To see the exhibit at other time, check the hours of Seekers Church at seekerschurch.org or email sandra@seekerschurch.org.

15th Mid-Winter Play Day

Saturday, February 16, 1–4 p.m.
Piney Branch Elementary School
7510 Maple Ave.

Join Let's Play America and the Takoma Park Recreation Department for a Play Day. It's time for you to let your hair down, put on your comfy clothes and play! To see a full listing of activities and performances visit letsplayamerica.org. All ages, free.

ONGOING

Takoma Park Farmers Market

Sundays, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.
6931 Laurel Ave.

Come out every Sunday behind the shops on Laurel Ave. 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.

Parents of Special Needs Adult (POSNA) Support Group

First Thursdays, 7 p.m.
Via Zoom

We advocate for supportive housing, jobs with dignity, safety, and recreation for adults with special needs, including those with autism and/or chronic/severe mental illness. For information about the meeting or about POSNA, please contact infoPOSNA@gmail.com.

Vote for Where to Spend Community Dollars

The Takoma Foundation has partnered with a group of young people in Wards 4 and 5 to develop proposals and budgets for spending \$20,000 in the community. Now it is your turn to vote on the two final proposals. Voting will continue until January 15, 2025. The winning proposal will be announced in early 2025. To learn more and to vote, visit takomafoundation.org/stories/about-community-dollars.html.

If you'd like to support *Community Dollars* (either through a financial contribution or supplying project materials) please contact us.

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. Performance slots are two songs or 10 minutes. All musical and poetic genres. All abilities and ages welcome. No amps or drum kits. The evening is also livestreamed on Rob's Open Mics Facebook and YouTube channels. No refreshments on site, but you are welcome to bring in your own food and non-alcoholic beverages (please support our local restaurants!). For updates, follow Rob's Open Mics on Facebook or visit ilyaimy.com/robsopenmics.

Takoma Village Walking Group

Third Thursdays, 11 a.m.
gather at Takoma Park Community Center,
inside front entrance
7500 Maple Ave.

Join others for a one-hour walk on Sligo Creek. Pace to be determined by walkers. Walks will be cancelled when temperatures are below 35 degrees, or in case of inclement weather. No need to sign up in advance—just show up in walking shoes! Check the Village calendar for cancellation information. villageoftakomapark.com.

Takoma Jazz

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

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

TOPICS

■ From page 7

libraries for long enough will have heard my spiel about how libraries are not truly neutral institutions, because there are no truly neutral institutions. Neutrality may be something that a subatomic particle or pH level can achieve, but people ... not so much.

That doesn't necessarily mean, however, that the library issues public endorsements or opinions on every topic, controversial or otherwise. But, it *does* mean that we make educated choices about the materials in our library so that our community has access to quality materials that can help them develop their own understanding, opinions, and values based on the best available data and interpretation thereof.

Climate change is a fact. It is happening, and that's not up for debate. It's why you won't find materials in our collection that claim otherwise. We also have books about

trans people and issues for all ages, because trans people exist and their existence is not up for debate either. Pretending otherwise is both objectively false and harmful to trans people. We have books about abortion, because however you may feel about it personally, it exists, and people need access to quality, truthful information about it.

We have books about Palestine and Gaza, because those are real places with history and context and people who call it home, and it is, frankly, difficult in many settings to have a conversation about it that doesn't evoke an emotional response, which makes it even more difficult to really see and hear each other. Many of us want to believe that the facts are the most important part of an opinion, but in practice, our feelings so often win out, and controversial topics can elicit some really big feelings. I know, I feel them, too.

As I type this, I am drinking tea out of a mug from the Yiddish Book Center (YBC). After the climate change series, I decided

that the next topic I wanted to address was immigration, and the YBC was starting a pilot program to provide funding and training for public librarians to talk about immigration with a really interesting approach. They provided books translated from Yiddish into English where immigration is a central theme, along with comprehensive reading and discussion guides so that we could take those back to our respective communities and lead productive conversations.

I was selected for this program because in my application I had said that I wanted to reframe the discussion around immigration, to get residents out of the single, sensationalized narrative they were given constantly in the media that disparaged people crossing the border with Mexico.

It was important to me to disrupt that story—one that so many Americans have accepted as fact. The public library is in a unique position to do that as one of the most trusted institutions in this country. In 2020, the Pew Research Center cited that 78% of

Americans feel that public libraries help them find information that is trustworthy and reliable. That trust is a hard won honor that requires effort and conscience to maintain.

I am writing now in a place that has adopted the title of Sanctuary City for immigrants and refugees. We have a Sustainability Office that centers climate change in its initiatives. There is so much here to be proud of, *and* we can't be complacent.

As a library, we have a responsibility not to contribute to a climate of mis- and disinformation that is almost impossible to opt out of if you consume media on any platform. It is my hope, and part of my life's work, to protect spaces where we can come together as a community of lifelong learners. This will always be a place where you can indulge your curiosity—where it's encouraged to say "I don't know" or "help me understand."

That's why we're here.