

inGaithersburg

Fall / Winter 2019

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Why Do I Count in Census 2020?

community

more funding



for housing, roads, schools, hospitals, Medicaid

more voices



determines how many Congressional representatives we have

better future



informs planning for housing, transportation, emergency response

more jobs



helps attract businesses and drive economic development

i am gaithersburg

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March 2020

Receive your virtual or physical invitation to respond online, by mail or phone



April 1, 2020

Census Day:
Complete your census!



May 2020

The U.S. Census Bureau follows up with households that have not responded



gaithersburgmd.gov
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Photo by City of Gaithersburg/Marleen Van den Neste

The editorial content of *in*Gaithersburg is produced
by the Gaithersburg Department of Community & Public Relations

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TRIUMPH OVER TRAGEDY: The Gemmell Family Playground

We Are Gaithersburg, We Come Together

BY AMY MCGUIRE, COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST

A tugboat for Devin. A sports themed plaque for Cole. And a nod to theatre for Marie. The Gemmell Family Playground at Griffith Park celebrates three precious and beautiful lives gone too soon, a living tribute in memory of a mother and her two sons. A place that celebrates how they lived. A place that pays it forward. A place “where angels play.”

On December 8, 2014, Marie, Cole and Devin Gemmell tragically lost their lives when a private plane crashed into their home. Father and husband, Ken Gemmell, and daughter Arabelle, have set out to keep the memory of their beloved family alive by giving back to the Gaithersburg community in a unique and special way.

“I was asking around for different ideas for a project to take on,” shares Ken. “Someone recommended doing a playground, and a few mutual contacts had volunteered in building playgrounds with the Where Angels Play Foundation in the past.”

“ We were looking for a way to honor the angels lost in these tragedies and create a movement that would provide healing and joy to families and communities in great need.



When Ken researched the Foundation and saw how many playgrounds it has built around the country, he knew he found the right people who had the right skills to help him make this happen. He also found the right place.

“What we always liked about Griffith Park was that it’s centrally located and right in the middle of everything in Gaithersburg,” says Ken. “I hope this playground can help foster a greater sense of community by being a place for kids to play and make great memories.”

Arabelle was just seven years old when the accident occurred. Now 12, she’s serving as the project chair alongside her dad. “It feels amazing to be a part of this tribute to my family,” shares Arabelle, who helped her father think of ways to pay homage to her mother and brothers.

Inspired to honor those lost to senseless violence and catastrophic events, the Where Angels Play Foundation was created in the wake of the devastation of Hurricane Sandy and the tragedy of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown, Connecticut. Its mission is to “triumph over tragedy” by building safe and fun places for children to play.

Meet Bill Lavin, a retired fire captain and former president of the New Jersey State Fire-fighter’s Mutual Benevolent Association. Bill is also the founder of Where Angels Play and author of “Where Angels Live, Work and Play.”



Arabelle and stepbrother, Bennett Randolph, break ground on the first day of the build.



“9/11 is where our story begins,” says Bill, who was a fire captain for the City of Elizabeth, right across the Hudson from the World Trade Center. “When the towers came down and we were navigating the worst day of my life and career, we received cards and letters from a 3rd grade class from Mississippi.”

It was only four and half years later that the same Mississippi school, whose students tried cheering up Bill and his colleagues during one of our nation’s worst tragedies, was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. In that moment, the Foundation’s “pay it forward” philosophy took form.

“We needed to reach out to these kids, and see what we could do,” says Bill. “About 40 New Jersey police and firefighters traveled down to the Gulf and built the first of three handicapped accessible playgrounds for the state of Mississippi.”

Seven years after Katrina, Hurricane Sandy hit the East Coast. The students from Mississippi reached back out to Bill and his colleagues in support. Then, in December of 2012, tragedy struck Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. Bill realized it was time to pay it forward again.

“We were looking for a way to honor the angels lost in these tragedies and create a movement that would provide healing and joy to families and communities in great need,” says Bill. “A playground that captured the personality of the angels being celebrated has brought communities together regardless of political ideology, beliefs or economic status.”

Bill’s idea was to build 26 playgrounds along the coast of New Jersey, New York and Connecticut in communities destroyed by Hurricane Sandy – each one in honor of a student or a teacher lost that tragic day in Newtown. “The Sandy Hook Project,” the Foundation’s first undertaking, was completed in just 18 months after raising three million dollars. It was a community effort – firefighters and police officers, teachers and administrators, family members and volunteers, all took part in building the legacy playgrounds.

“The idea was to remember them in a happy way, and not celebrate necessarily how they left us, but how they lived,” says Bill. “The families of the angels really embraced the concept, saying in effect they felt great healing and joy that their loved ones would be remembered and would continue to be responsible for bringing joy to their communities”

Giving back to the community was something Marie Gemmell was very familiar with. In the wake of Hurricane Sandy, she too was looking for ways to help the ravaged communities. “Marie was always quick to help out and give back,” shares Ken. “When she and her coworker organized a fundraiser for Hurricane Sandy, that was the most ambitious thing she had done.” Marie also helped organize a gala and fundraiser for pediatric cancer.

Marie’s giving nature lives on through Ken and Arabelle. “Being able to give back to the community and pay it forward has been something my daughter and I have tried to do a lot in the past five years,” shares Ken. “With all the support we got after the accident, we realized how important the community around us is, and we try to do what we can to help foster that sense of community.”

Ken and Arabelle worked with the playground’s designer, picking out the elements, layout and colors as well as special tributes for Marie, Cole and Devin. In-kind services were provided by the City of Gaithersburg, including demolishing the existing playground, prepping the site for drainage and equipment installation, and laying down wood carpet. The City also donated the use of heavy equipment and had staff onsite during the build. The total project cost was \$60,000. It’s the 54th project built by the Where Angels Play Foundation.

“When tragedy struck the Gemmells, it kind of felt like it struck all of us,” shares Mayor Jud Ashman. “Our whole community mourned for their family and you saw some truly touching expressions of that at the time. Now,

here we are a few years later, with an opportunity to turn that grief into joy.”

From as near as Gaithersburg to as far as Canada, volunteers, self-named the ‘Angels Army,’ came in support of the Gemmell Family. “This is an opportunity for the community to collectively wrap their arms around this wonderful family,” says Bill. “Some people call them heroes, we call them angels.”

“This project hits close to home for me,” says Ahmad Rifai. “Having a three year-old and eight month-old at home and living close to Montgomery County Airpark, I wanted to show up and support this project to honor Marie, Devin, and Cole. I am grateful that the Foundation allowed local volunteers to help with the project. It’s been an enlightening experience working next to such honorable people.”

One of those people is Carlos Soto, who lost his daughter Victoria six years ago in the violent shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Victoria, a teacher at Sandy Hook, gave her life to save many of her students that day, a true hero.

“She saved 17 kids,” shares Carlos. “When they built a playground for her it made it nice because from something ugly that happened something beautiful came out. And since that day, I started traveling with [the Where Angels Play Foundation] and trying to help parents out just like this, talking to them and sharing my experience with them.”

Paying it forward, Carlos travels with the Foundation as an ambassador sharing his story. “I know my daughter is very proud of me, because I was very shy, and now I can help others like she did in her classroom. Now it’s my turn to help others just like she did.”

Monique Colasuonno traveled from Tinton Falls, New Jersey with her two sons, Joseph and Nicholas. The family first got involved with Where Angels Play when they helped build a playground in memory of their dear friend Hannah Duffy, who lost her battle with brain cancer at the age of 14. Now they are in Gaithersburg, having volunteered on numerous builds since 2016, including projects in Ontario, Sarasota, Boston, and New Jersey.

“Once you start doing it you just want to keep on doing it and you just want to help as many people as you can, especially after hearing some of the tragedies that they’ve been through,” shares Monique. “At the end of the day, these people have suffered something that none of us will ever experience. So anything that you can do to help is just a good thing.”

Having built playgrounds in the US, Canada and Rwanda, the Where Angels Play Foundation carries on its mission of healing communities throughout the country and beyond. “If you care, love community and children, and being part of something bigger than yourself, this is exactly what this is,” shares Bill.

“When you have bad problems. Rough days. Come over here to the playground and sit. And watch the kids play. That’s the way I charge my battery. And I keep going forward that way. That’s what my daughter wants,” says Carlos. “The world is not perfect. This playground is a healing place. And that’s what I believe.”

PREVENTION & RECOVERY

—IT'S ALL ABOUT CHOICES

We Are Gaithersburg, We Lift Each Other Up

BY BRITTA MONACO, DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY & PUBLIC RELATIONS

On these pages we explore drug and alcohol use and prevention from two very different perspectives.

In the first story, Officer Holly Parke relates her efforts to provide middle school students with the decision-making skills necessary to identify risks and consequences, teaching them how to resist peer pressure and how to remove themselves from situations that could lead to substance abuse. Her story also emphasizes the importance of nurturing relationships between young people and law enforcement.

Our second story illustrates consequences through the lived experience of a former resident of Wells/Robertson House. Alicia's is a cautionary tale of the challenges she faced as a young woman and the decisions she made that ultimately led to homelessness. It's also a tale of courage, perseverance and hope as she takes us with her on her road to recovery.

I Am Gaithersburg. I Impacted Young Lives this Summer. *by Officer Holly Parke, Gaithersburg Police Department*

I knew I wanted to be a Police Officer since I was in kindergarten. Something about the opportunity to help people and keep them safe really appealed to me. I held tight to that dream, making it a reality when I joined the Gaithersburg Police Department eleven years ago.

This summer I had the amazing (and a bit daunting) opportunity to teach a weeklong D.A.R.E. program to 60 students at Gaithersburg Middle School. This was my first chance to teach D.A.R.E., but I was no stranger to it. I remember being exposed to D.A.R.E. when I was in fifth grade. I can't say that I remember my instructor's name or even what he looked like, but I do remember the excitement of participating in something so important. And having the class taught by a real life police officer only reinforced my desire to pursue law enforcement as a profession.

Back then, D.A.R.E. was really focused on drug prevention. And

while that is still the ultimate goal, the "how" of the program has evolved, so it's now more about decision making – how to make healthy choices to prevent drug and alcohol use, gang involvement, bullying, cyberbullying, and all of the other things kids have to navigate through these days.

Today's D.A.R.E. program centers on keeping it "REAL." With some group discussion and role-playing, the students I was working with learned how to Refuse, Explain, Avoid, and Leave. We talked about acceptance, norms and peer pressure. We talked about self-esteem. We talked about validation. We talked about risks and consequences.

Do I know if I got through to them? Hard to say. I certainly hope that some of the things we discussed made them think a little bit more about the choices they make and the tools they can use to make those tough decisions.



What I do know is that D.A.R.E. provides youth with an early, positive interaction with local police officers. And that is important. They get to see us as human beings, as adults who live and work in their community, as people who understand the issues they're dealing with, and who they can trust.

After the week was done, we held a graduation ceremony. It was great to see the kids cheer each other on as their names were called to receive their certificates. Many of them were dressed up, which signaled to me the respect they had for the

occasion. And then came the sack races (after they changed clothes, of course). I hadn't planned on participating – I thought I was just going to referee. But then one young lady came up to me and challenged me to a race. It wasn't so much that I couldn't back down (although my competitive side did come out a bit). What mattered to me most was that she wanted to share this experience with me – to have a little bit of fun after a week of serious discussion. I made a new friend. And with that, I knew I had made a difference. 🌱

I Am Gaithersburg. This Community Saved My Life. *by Gaithersburg Resident Alicia C.*

How did you start using?

I grew up in a very dysfunctional household. Coming up as the youngest child, mother was always at work. She had my siblings looking after me. They would tease me, so I started running away from home. I felt different and watched my oldest brother, who was 15, looking like he was always asleep. He was smoking weed, so I started to at school, through peer pressure. At first I did it for fun. I started dating a man six years older, who was a drug dealer. At the age of 20, I started sniffing cocaine, which turned to smoking crack, and led to using heroin, which I couldn't live without. I loved to feel good and self-medicate.

How many times were you in treatment?

The first time, I went to Mountain Manor and stayed clean for six months. Then I went around the same people and they gave me plenty of freebies. The second time, I used with my older brother. It was too much to handle and I went to the Turk House. I started treatment three times and could never get it right because I was not ready and then I was afraid of not using drugs because it

gave me the courage to socialize. Drugs were my life. Drugs also brought me down. Drugs caused me to go to jail, become homeless, and separate from my kids. I didn't spend quality time with them, my drug use was more important. I have finally come to realize that I was running from myself. I didn't love myself, and would self-sabotage everything and everybody who loved me unconditionally.

What do you think finally led you to a successful outcome?

After my last relapse, I went to Avery Road Treatment Center and prayed that I would get into Wells. There was always a long waiting list, and I always wanted to go. I wanted a new beginning. Wells/Robertson House is the best two-year program I have ever known. At Wells, I learned to take suggestions. Lee (Jansky) and Jimmy (Frazier-Bey) are both awesome. They believed in me when I didn't believe in myself. They encouraged me to get a job, budget and save money. I have a sponsor, and a network of good men and women.

Being in a 12-step program and going to therapy has allowed me to

get to know who I really am. I am a loving, caring, passionate person who likes helping others. I had to change people, places and things. That was scary at first. Now I am living, and not just existing. Going to the (Wells/Robertson House)

program gave me structure, and has made me a responsible, productive woman with integrity and moral values.

I used to run my own program. Today I listen, I share about my progress, which has made me a better person, who reaches out, and loves to give back what was so feely given to me. Recovery is Amazing! ■

Alicia was a resident of Wells/Robertson House from February, 2017 to May, 2019. She secured housing in Gaithersburg through Montgomery County's Rapid Rehousing Program. She has been employed by Goodwill Industries



since February of 2018, where twice she has been named Employee of the Month.

Wells/Robertson House has been owned and operated by the City of Gaithersburg since 1988. In its 30+ year history more than 700 men and women have stepped across the threshold, grasping the opportunity to make real change in their lives. The House is just one piece of the City's strategy to combat homelessness and foster recovery. Learn more on the Homeless Services Division webpage at gaithersburgmd.gov. 🌱

THE GAITHERSBURG LATITUDE OBSERVATORY

I am Gaithersburg, and I Measured the Stars – 120 Years Ago!

BY KAREN YAFFE LOTTES, PROGRAM COORDINATOR

November 1900



It is with great humility that I report the Latitude Observatory located in Gaithersburg, Maryland on the Fulks Farm or Summit Hall has been in operation for nearly a year. You may remember that the plan by the International Geodetic Association to study variations in latitude starting in June 1891 showed the value of this work and that more study was needed. Due to my experience with the Zenith telescope and the work I did in Rockville to add to this important endeavor, I made changes to the design of the observatory building for optimal scientific efficiency.

While working with the Zenith telescope during the 1891-92 study, I noted that the telescope, although extremely well designed for this work, was also particularly sensitive to changes in temperature and seismic activity. Therefore, the building I designed had to be carefully planned to minimize any external factors that could affect the accuracy of the readings.

The Latitude Observatory in Gaithersburg is essentially two buildings, a building within a building. The external building has slatted walls that allow for maximum airflow. This means the building is better able to maintain a constant temperature relative to the ambient air temperature. The inner building has a number of areas that can be opened or closed depending on temperature and wind. The building itself can have no heat or other device that can change the temperature. Even the heat from a lantern may affect the telescope tube and alter the readings. The telescope sits on a cement plinth that goes down to bedrock. It is also free standing as vibrations from the observer could affect readings. And finally, the roof is not attached, but rather glides on metal rods to open and close.

The design for this observatory is so advantageous to the work being done that it has been used at several of the other observatories participating in this project.

*Edwin Smith, Chair of the Instrument Division and Observer,
Gaithersburg Latitude Observatory, Coast and Geodetic Survey
(A report as interpreted by Karen Yaffe Lottes)*

Gaithersburg of 1899 was far different than the Gaithersburg of 2019. 120 years ago Gaithersburg was a bucolic town, a center of Montgomery County's farming community, and a commercial hub because of the railroad. Following the work done in 1891-92, the International Geodetic Association (IGA), realizing the value of the work in better understanding the Earth, found funding for six latitude observatories with distances as close to latitude 39° 18' as possible and at varying lines of longitude around the world. In the United States, observatories were built not only in Gaithersburg (which is at 39° 8'), but Cincinnati, Ohio and Ukiah, California. Management of the U.S. observatories was overseen by the Coast and Geodetic Survey (CGS).

Edwin Smith was tasked with building the observatory in Gaithersburg. The obvious choice for the job, he was Chief of the Instrument Division at CGS and had built the original observatory for the 1891-92 trial in the backyard of his Rockville house. His position at CGS came with a \$2,000 per year salary, a salary so generous that for the first trial it was determined that he could do the observing on his own time while still performing his regular job. During that year he did thousands of nighttime observations even while doing his day job in Washington, D.C.

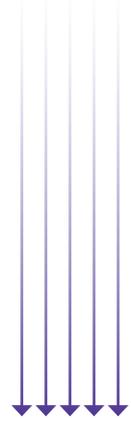
Smith was right about the sensitivity of the instrumentation. The seismic monitoring equipment at the observatory picked up readings from the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, the 1964 Alaska earthquake, and the 1965 Puget Sound earthquake. Later observers noted that they had to have special flashlights because heat from the bulbs could alter

the readings. It should come as no surprise then that the observatory was devoid of HVAC systems, as both heat in winter or air conditioning in summer would affect the telescope's accuracy.

Smith died in 1912. His role in understanding Earth's movements was invaluable to early studies that led to better tools for navigation, but he could never have imagined the work becoming the original database for GPS (Global Positioning System), something each of us uses on a daily basis. In the 1960s the IGA became the International Polar Motion Service, and it helped determine the orbital patterns for early satellites and manned space missions. The IGA eventually turned into to-

day's International Earth Rotation and Reference Systems (IERS).

The satellites that benefitted from the work done at the observatories eventually led to the observatories' demise. By 1982, satellite technology had advanced enough that there was no longer a need for a human observer to manually complete the nightly observations, and the Gaithersburg International Latitude Observatory, along with the other surviving observatories, closed. The property was turned over to the City of Gaithersburg in 1987. It has been restored and is the focal point for Observatory Park, an interpretive site with monthly public astronomy programs from May to October. 🌌



You'll find Observatory Park at 100 DeSellum Avenue. Its Skywatching programs are coordinated by staff from the Gaithersburg Community Museum.



GLOBAL MAP OF OBSERVATORIES

I Am Gaithersburg, AND I WENT TO SUMMER CAMP

BY BRITTA MONACO,
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNITY & PUBLIC RELATIONS

In the waning months of summer, this 50-something author joined thirty kids between the ages of 12 and 16 for G-Corps, a five-day creative summer camp that gave us a chance to give back to our community while we learned some important life lessons along the way. I spent three days with them.

G-Corps is just one of the many summer camp offerings from the City of Gaithersburg. All told, the summer of 2019 saw more than 2,500 campers of all ages and abilities participating in full and half-day programs in seven weeks of traditional camps and three weeks of specialty camps (like G-Corps). It's a monumental effort to coordinate, but oh-so-rewarding for both the campers and the more than 100 part-time seasonal employees, many of whom use this job to launch future careers.

The first hour of G-Corps, housed out of the Olde Towne Youth Center (OTYC), was drop-off time. Before the structured activities, the kids could play ping-pong, foosball, and video games (there are tons of fun things to do at the OTYC). What struck me was how even this "open time" could contain life lessons. While a camper was bemoaning the security protocols just to log on to a City computer, Counselor Joel Cruz took the opportunity to talk about online predators and why security measures are important. Life lesson #1.

"G-Corps is a student-grown camp. Members of Gaithersburg's Student Union wanted to get together and do something over the summer," says Community Facility Manager Maura Dinwiddie. "We ran with the idea, and fused it with the volunteer aspect that's so important to the Student Union to create G-Corps, a weeklong service camp for teens."

DAY 1

The camp was split into two groups – younger teens in Unit 1, older teens in Unit 2. I hung with Unit 2 (I am on the older side of things after all). On my first day of camp, Unit 2 was going to Morris Park to conduct a stream clean up. But I eavesdropped on Unit 1's briefing first. They would be preparing bag lunches for people in shelters operated by the Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless. In addition to learning about homelessness (life lesson #2), they were also briefed on safe food handling and taught proper knife skills (life lesson #3).

“

I LEARNED THAT
**ONE SMALL THING CAN
MAKE A DIFFERENCE.**

– DEANNA

THIS HELPED THE
**WATER STAY CLEAN SO
TRASH WOULDN'T GO
INTO THE OCEAN.**

– NEVE

Unit 2's stream clean up briefing also contained a discussion about homelessness. While the primary lesson was on the environment and why it's important to keep trash out of streambeds, we were cautioned about the possibility of encountering a homeless camp. "If you see a bag of clothes, don't pick it up. It might belong to someone living out there." "Don't approach a stranger, but do tell an adult." This provided a great opportunity to tell the kids about the work of the City's Homeless Services Division and its Street Outreach Team. Life lesson #4.

Probably the most common remark I heard on the trail was, "Oooh, a spider web!" Made me wonder if some of these kids had ever taken a hike. They picked up a lot of bottles and cans and plastics. I even found a wheel cover. But amongst all the "gross" and "yuk," I overheard a conversation about the fires in the Amazon rainforest, which led to a discussion about why it's important to protect trees. Life lesson #5.

About halfway through the morning, I witnessed life lesson #6. There was a large plastic sheet stubbornly wrapped around the base of a small tree, perched on the edge of a steep embankment. Ultimately six of the campers worked together with handmade tools (think broken tree limbs) to retrieve as much of the plastic as possible. It was a triumphant moment when it was freed (despite a few wet feet!).

Each day ends with "reflections." This is a chance for the campers to summarize what they did, why it was important, and what they learned from the experience. These essays are required for them to qualify for Student Service Learning hours.



DAY 2

In partnership with the Interages program of the Jewish Council for the Aging (JCA), Day 2 would be an intergenerational experience with residents of the Collingswood Rehabilitation & Healthcare Center. It started with an introduction by Janel Peters, JCA SHARE Program Coordinator. “Interages’ goal is to break down stereotypes, providing opportunities for personal, one-on-one interactions between generations,” Janel explained.

She asked us why it’s important for generations to interact. “Sharing wisdom” was one particularly touching response, while another camper said that he wanted to “learn what aging is like.” Life lesson #7. So that led to a discussion about what happens when we age, which led to a discussion about the interactions that were about to happen with the residents and what the campers could expect. Be patient. Talk loudly. Maintain eye contact. Be prepared to repeat yourself. Ask questions in different ways if you don’t get a response.

Collingswood has been around for 50 years and is home to about 160 residents. We were joined by Collingswood Director of Life Enrichment Susan Zanner, who talked about the importance of developing personalized plans to help residents live to their fullest potential, however that might be defined. We were fascinated by a story about a 105-year-old resident who loved horses. He was confined to his bed, but the Collingswood staff managed to bring a horse – an actual, full-sized horse – to his bedside so he could feed it. She had the pictures to prove it. I think the kids understood that life lesson #8 was about dignity.



Making birthday cards for Collingswood residents.

We broke into groups of three or four campers, each paired with one or two residents for the rest of the morning. We played a game called “Favorite Things” to help us identify our differences, and, perhaps more importantly, our similarities. We learned that Margaret, the resident paired with us, loves Moo Goo Gai Pan and her favorite singer is Willie Nelson. We all agreed that sleeping was one of our favorite things to do, and going to the beach was the unanimous vacation choice.

August is National Inventors Month, so Janel handed out pictures of things like cassette tapes, microwave ovens, remote controls, and frozen food. We had to describe the object, talk about what it changed, and who benefitted from the invention. Our object was a refrigerator. We determined that it kept food from spoiling and helped make people healthier. But then we dug a little deeper and thought about how saving time on housekeeping chores may have made it possible for women to enter the workforce in greater numbers. Life lesson #9.



IT’S REALLY NICE TO BE ABLE TO BRING JOY TO SOMEONE WHO MIGHT NOT HAVE AS MUCH COMPANIONSHIP. I’M GLAD I GOT TO DO THAT. – VICTORIA

I LEARNED THAT I WAS MUCH MORE SOCIAL THAN I THOUGHT I WAS WITH OLDER PEOPLE. – JAKE

DAY 3

Today we’d be making toys for shelter animals, then delivering them to the Montgomery County Animal Services & Adoption Center. This 150,000 square foot building has seen about 2,200 adoptions since it opened just over four years ago. During the

morning briefing, we were instructed to Google DIY toys and find out what we could make with the materials on hand – old t-shirts and tennis balls. Counselor Joel told us, “Dogs suffer from anxiety and depression just like humans. Toys can help make them happier.” Life lesson #10.

The tour of the shelter was eye opening and the dog area was deafening. But they were just barking to get our attention. We had been briefed ahead of time not to stare at the dogs (that’s



a sign of hostility), and not to tap on the glass to aggravate them. They have it hard enough. That day there were 119 dogs, 120 cats, plus assorted birds, rabbits and turtles for adoption. There was even a rooster and a horse. I found it really difficult to leave the shelter without taking one of these homeless pets with me.

So after three days with dozens of teenagers, what are my reflections? Gaithersburg’s young people are creative, thoughtful, and empathetic. They value collaboration. Our summer camp staffers are patient, insightful, and resourceful. They’re also pretty amazing role models. And what were my takeaways? You’re never too old to learn, there are so many ways to make a difference, and I have a really cool job. 🐾



LOTS OF ANIMALS ARE STUCK IN SHELTERS WITH NO FUN. CREATING TOYS FOR THEM MAY MAKE THEM FEEL HAPPIER WHILE THEY ARE STUCK IN THE CARE OF PEOPLE THEY’RE NOT USED TO. – VICTORIA

HIKING THE MUDDY BRANCH TRAIL

We are Gaithersburg, and We Connect Community to Nature

BY PATRICE PAYNE, PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE

Small but steady, the Muddy Branch Stream flows into the Potomac River, the source of Gaithersburg's drinking water and an important habitat for local fish and wildlife. Unbeknownst to many, there is a path that meanders alongside the stream. One day this past summer, guided by my colleague Michael Weyand, I hiked the Muddy Branch Trail with the hopes of reconnecting with nature and exploring the wild side of my community.

An unfamiliar path, I approached its beginnings with great anticipation and wonder. What would I encounter? What might I learn? Seemingly well acquainted with the journey ahead, Michael forged forward, calming any angst I had and providing me an opportunity for learning and exploration. He's the City's Watershed Restoration Specialist within the Department of Public Works, and it's his job to recommend and implement long-term strategies to preserve and enhance our open spaces, our natural resources, and the environmental infrastructure that can be found throughout Gaithersburg.

You can access the Muddy Branch Trail from an entrance located just behind the headquarters of the Izaak Walton League of America on Muddy Branch Road, but it's not all that easy to find. With no directional signs to lead the way, I had to rely on my colleague to get us there. I learned this portion of the trail was a two-mile extension of the original trail, added in 2016.

Guided by blue trail markers, we soon encountered a stand of towering trees, a welcome oasis of shade from the midsummer sun. Thanks to a combined community effort, dense lush shrubs and trees lined our path. "The Muddy Branch trail is not just a trail. It's what inspires people to care about their environment," Michael remarked. "It's about community. The trail is an important pathway for discovery — creating that special bond between people and nature."

Excitedly, I pointed out wildlife along the way. There were tiny frogs leaping along the path, groundhogs darting between trees, turtles floating in the stream, and a heron snagging its afternoon lunch on the banks

of the Potomac, all depending upon the health of the stream for survival.

To the untrained eye, the 20-mile stream appeared to be healthy, but the erosion along the banks and the absence of certain aquatic life told a different story. I became aware of the impacts of stormwater on the health of the stream. Michael explained how run-off pollutants make the stream intolerable for specific species. I wanted to be a part of the change and became interested in what I could do to help reduce pollutants. As we hiked, Michael told me about rain gardens and rain barrels, and explained how these, combined with the preservation of open space and the use of pervious surface materials, can help to decrease stormwater pollution and flood-induced erosion. I'm proud that my City has many initiatives in place to help residents help the environment.

After learning about the importance of the stream and all of the plants and animals that rely on it, I grew curious about who actually maintains the trail I was walking on. It's a team effort. The Muddy Branch Alliance, several community partners, and

the City of Gaithersburg work together to make the trail easily accessible and safe for people to hike.

The Alliance holds clean-up days with volunteers twice a year to address invasive species and trail-specific problems. "Alliance members monitor water quality and work with groups like Boy Scout Troop 291 to pick up trash and address erosion," says Paul Hlavinka, with a member of the Muddy Branch Alliance and the City's Environmental Affairs Committee. "Scouts, church groups, high school students — those who do this work with us are learning to be good stewards of our parks."

In 2019, scouts from Troop 291 used rocks to provide a new stream crossing, connecting the communities of Washingtonian Woods and the Woods at Muddy Branch to the Muddy Branch Trail. These strategically placed rocks certainly made crossing the stream easy for me that day. The Troop won a 2019 Environmental Stewardship Award from the City of Gaithersburg for its efforts.

Paul is passionate about the trail and its importance. The more I

walked, the more I understood its appeal. I asked Paul to share his passion in his own words:

“The trail traverses hills, crosses tributaries, provides breathtaking views of the stream, and in many places feels as remote as a trail in a national park. The more you use the trail, the more you appreciate the beauty of the stream and the parks that protect it.

We [the Muddy Branch Alliance members] continue to do this work with great interest and are encouraged with the results. We see many people out walking dogs, running, riding bikes, jumping in the stream. The path does appear to be that gateway we hoped it would be. In fact, one of our most recent projects

has involved monitoring use of the trails to determine how many folks use different sections, what type of wildlife is common, all in an effort to inform the City of Gaithersburg and Montgomery County on how important these parks are to humans as well as for protecting our water resources.”

Reaching the trail’s end, Michael and I stood near Pennyfield Lockhouse. From here you can float downstream under the C&O Canal and finally access the Potomac River.

“That’s what they call the Confluence” says Michael, pointing

to the spot where the Muddy Branch Stream meets the Potomac and flows past Great Falls to the Chesapeake Bay. He told me that 18 million people live in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. “The Confluence is symbolic to me,” says Weyand. “It is more than just the merging of two water sources. It represents our combined efforts as a community to maintain a balanced environment.”

A satisfyingly scenic walk down the Muddy Branch Trail brought me a welcomed sense of community and a renewed sense of obligation to protect the natural world around us. 🌿



WORKPLACE WELLNESS IS A TEAM EFFORT

We Are Gaithersburg, We Are Well

BY AMY MCGUIRE, COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST

140/90. Those dreaded numbers were becoming a bit too frequent in recent years. Usually doctors brush it off as “white coat” syndrome, but my doctor changed her tone during my last annual physical. It was time to lose weight, start eating right and commit to exercising. As I explored options to get fit and healthy, it turned out I didn’t need to look any further than my own workplace and my colleagues at the City of Gaithersburg.

As I began my mission to get fit, our City’s Wellness@Work (W@W) Team, made up of more than a dozen staff from all City departments, launched a weight loss challenge. The timing was perfect. I eagerly signed up, along with 50 other coworkers, for the 12-week contest. Our goal? Lose weight, exercise more and get healthy while supporting, and occasionally razzing, each other along the way. Over the next three months, we competed in mini-challenges that got us drinking more water, eating less sugar, and walking a lot more. Three of us ended up losing more than 18 pounds. I got rid of five, and it was the

perfect kick-start to my journey to a better me.

“It’s important for the City to place emphasis on the wellness of its staff, as a healthy workforce benefits everyone,” says Human Resources Director Kim Yocklin. “Healthy employees are more productive and tend to be happier and more engaged. The effort also helps keep the cost of healthcare down.”

“Chronic illness, fatigue and stress hamper staff’s ability to do their jobs at a high-quality level,” says Recreation Program Supervisor and W@W Team member Denise Mornini. “We strive to remind our colleagues to take time for themselves physically, mentally, and emotionally. Morale soars when we do.”

The W@W Team spearheads activities and events throughout the year, helping me and my fellow coworkers live better lifestyles while making it easier to balance work and home life.

“We meet regularly to plan programs and pop-up activities, such as complimentary back

massage and reflexology treatments and healthy cooking demos” says Adam Newhart, Human Resources Program Coordinator and W@W Team Chair. “A Client Engagement Specialist from Cigna, the City’s medical provider, joins us for our meetings and plays an integral role in the success of the initiatives we do throughout the year. She also provides direct assistance to staff when they have insurance related questions.”

What I love about the events the W@W Team puts together is that they make them fun and interactive. The “Soup-er Bowl” crockpot challenge comes to mind as the perfect example. I was able to taste yummy nutritious stews and soups made by 15 of my “chef” coworkers and got recipes so I could

recreate the tasty and wholesome dishes at home. Everyone came out a winner. The Team also pops in occasionally to surprise departments with fruit baskets so we can enjoy healthy and nutritious snacks during the workday.

Kevin Ethers, a Project Manager for the Department of Public Works, finds serving on the W@W Team a rewarding experience, helping his colleagues and learning from them as well.

“Wellness is vital to helping achieve a more enjoyable and satisfying life, both personally and professionally,” says Kevin. “I want to be involved to add my perspective to the conversation. I think it’s extremely valuable to gain insight from the viewpoint of other Team members, which I use to motivate myself to incorporate more wellness in my own life.”



Denise sees it as her duty to spread the word about the wide variety of fitness and leisure offerings the City provides to all of its residents, many of which come with free admission or a program discount for City employees.

“I have helped coworkers select a class that would be the right degree of challenge and safety for them, and watched as they stay and make progress toward better posture, weight loss, balance, flexibility, strength, and social bonds,” says Denise.

The Team also organizes the City’s annual Wellness Day, where it has become tradition for my colleagues and our families to participate in free health screenings, get our flu shots (and a massage!), and enjoy a nutritious lunch. The well-attended event draws about two-thirds of the City’s workforce every year and focuses on physical and mental wellbeing.

“We bring in about 40 outside vendors so staff can meet one-on-one with benefit providers and wellness organizations,” says Adam. “Employees and their families can also get biometric health screenings for same-day bloodwork results as well as BMI, hearing and vision testing.”

“Having everything all in one place, all on one day, makes it easy and convenient to get my flu shot and have some annual screenings done – and I don’t have to take off time from work,” says Jeffrey Baldwin, City Web Administrator. “And, well, hanging out with my coworkers and getting a free lunch and massage just makes getting the shot a little more enjoyable.”

In addition to the W@W Team’s initiatives, the City provides other motivational programs throughout the year. Each quarter, about 80 of my coworkers and I take advantage of a unique healthy lifestyle incentive program called “GFit.”

“The flexible program encourages employees to take an active role in preserving their good health and improving their overall quality of life by offering quarterly reimbursement for programs that best suit an individual’s needs,” says Kim. “Eligible expenses include gym memberships, exercise classes, sports league fees, and weight loss programs.”

The City also offers a comprehensive 12-week smoking cessation program, helping many of my colleagues address their emotional and physical addiction to nicotine. “Participants, which also include spouses and family members, receive replacement therapy and support from Cigna along the way, all at no cost,” says Adam.

“With a holistic approach in mind, many seminars throughout the year cover such subjects as mental health, stress management, and work/life balance issues,” says Kim. “We also provide sessions on financial and estate planning, retirement planning, caring for elderly parents, nutrition, and other topics dedicated to creating a culture of wellness.”

As a participant in the City’s medical coverage, I also have access to a health coach who works with me one-on-one and to regular seminars on a number of topics, from plan coverage to billing. There’s even an app that helps encourage me to

exercise more, eat smarter, and sleep better.

“Through Cigna, participating staff have access to a service that provides personal, confidential patient advocacy,” says Adam. “A nurse navigator helps employees understand test results and find the best doctors and treatment options, even personally accompanying them to medical appointments.”

“Most importantly, they provide compassionate assistance and offer emotional support in navigating the healthcare system while helping the employee make informed medical decisions,” says Kim.

There are also two free employee assistance programs my colleagues and I have access to that provide counseling on physical and mental health issues, legal and financial consultation, and many other referral services.

To make sure I don’t put off my annual physical, the City reimburses me for any deduct-

ibles that I’ve incurred as long as I complete the exam during the 12-month period prior to incurring the deductible. “By meeting with their physician, we hope that an employee can get a diagnosis and treatment if needed before any potential issue turns into a high dollar claim,” says Kim.

A person’s journey to better health is often a personal one, but I’ve discovered I’m not alone at the City of Gaithersburg. As I sit in on a W@W Team meeting, I’m empowered by my coworkers to continue on the path to a healthier and more productive me.

“I believe it is very important to encourage a healthy and active lifestyle for all of my colleagues,” says Kevin. “Life is busy and hectic for everyone in the fast paced society we live in today. It’s helpful to have motivation from the City, and each other, as we all invest so much time at work. Healthy employees are happier employees, and in turn are more productive employees.”



Celebrate **Fall** & **Winter** in Gaithersburg

For a complete list of performing arts, recreation classes, museum programs, gallery exhibits and other events and activities visit gaithersburgmd.gov.

Farmers Markets

Olde Towne - Fulks Corner Ave.
Thursday Afternoons thru Nov. 14
Kentlands - Main St.
Saturday Mornings Year Round

Oktoberfest

October 13, Noon - 5 p.m.
Kentlands Downtown & Village Green



Veterans Day Observance

November 11, 11 a.m.
City Hall Concert Pavilion

93rd Annual Tree Lighting

December 7, 6 p.m.
City Hall Concert Pavilion

Gaithersburg Chorus Winter Concert

December 3, 7:30 p.m., Asbury Methodist Village
December 6, 7:30 p.m., Gaithersburg
Presbyterian Church

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service

Monday, January 20
Seneca Creek Community Church

Young Artist Award Concert

February 1, 7:30 p.m.
Arts Barn

20th Annual St. Patrick's Day Parade

March 14, 10 a.m.
RIO/Washingtonian Center

Green Month Environmental Celebration

Throughout the Month of April
Locations Vary

Census Day - Make Sure You Count!

April 1
Online, By Phone, By Mail

Paws in the Park Dog Walk & Fest

April 26, Noon - 4 p.m.
Bohrer Park at Summit Hall Farm

Winter Lights

Seneca Creek State Park
11950 Clopper Rd., Gaithersburg, MD
November 29 - December 31
(Closed 12/25)

Enjoy a 3 1/2 mile drive through a winter wonderland featuring more than 400 magical displays and beautifully lit park trees.

Buy Tickets Online at gaithersburgmd.gov

Enchanted Evenings (no cars allowed)	Drive Thru Hours
S'more Lights & Trolley Rides November 22 ✨ 6 - 10 p.m.	6 - 9 p.m. Sun. - Thurs. Open Until 10 p.m. Fri. & Sat.
Wine Under the Lights November 24 ✨ 6 - 9:30 p.m.	 Gaithersburg 301-258-6350
Leashes 'n' Lights Dog Walk November 26 ✨ 6 - 9 p.m.	

City Resources & Facilities

gaithersburgmd.gov

A list of direct dial phone numbers and e-mail addresses for employees can be found under the "About Gaithersburg" tab on the City's website.

RESOURCES

GAITHERSBURG CITY HALL

31 S. Summit Ave. 20877-2038
301-258-6300

Fax: 301-948-6149
cityhall@gaithersburgmd.gov

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

301-258-6310
cityhall@gaithersburgmd.gov

OFFICE OF THE CITY ATTORNEY

301-258-6310
cityhall@gaithersburgmd.gov

PLANNING & CODE ADMINISTRATION

301-258-6330
plancode@gaithersburgmd.gov

Animal Control

301-258-6343

Commercial & Residential Inspections Automated Scheduling

301-258-6338

Commercial, Residential & Fire Systems Plan Review

301-258-6330

Environmental Services

301-258-6330

Housing & Community Development

301-258-6330

Neighborhood Services

301-258-6340

Passports

301-258-6330

Permits & Licenses

301-258-6330

Planning & Zoning

301-258-6330

Rental Housing & Landlord Tenant Affairs

301-258-6340

COMMUNITY & PUBLIC RELATIONS

cityhall@gaithersburgmd.gov

Public Information

301-258-6310

Community Services

1 Wells Ave. 20877-2071
301-258-6395

Homeless Services – Wells/Robertson House

1 Wells Ave. 20877-2071
301-258-6390

FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

301-258-6320
finance@gaithersburgmd.gov

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

301-258-6325
it@gaithersburgmd.gov

HUMAN RESOURCES

301-258-6327
hr@gaithersburgmd.gov

GAITHERSBURG POLICE

14 Fulks Corner Ave. 20877-2066
Non-emergencies: 301-258-6400
Emergencies: 911
police@gaithersburgmd.gov

PUBLIC WORKS

800 Rabbitt Rd. 20878-1600
301-258-6370
publicworks@gaithersburgmd.gov

PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURE

506 S. Frederick Ave. 20877-2325
301-258-6350
Fax: 301-948-8364
parksrec@gaithersburgmd.gov

FACILITIES

ACTIVITY CENTER AT BOHRER PARK, SUMMIT HALL FARM

506 S. Frederick Ave. 20877-2325
301-258-6350
parksrec@gaithersburgmd.gov

AQUATICS Gaithersburg Aquatic Center (indoor)

2 Teachers Way 20877-3423
301-258-6345
aquatics@gaithersburgmd.gov

Water Park (outdoor/seasonal)

512 S. Frederick Ave. 20877-2325
301-258-6445
waterpark@gaithersburgmd.gov

ARTS BARN

311 Kent Square Rd. 20878-5727
301-258-6394
artsbarn@gaithersburgmd.gov

BENJAMIN GAITHER CENTER

80A Bureau Dr. 20878-1430
301-258-6380
benjamingaithercenter@gaithersburgmd.gov

CASEY COMMUNITY CENTER

810 S. Frederick Ave. 20877-4102
301-258-6366
caseycomm@gaithersburgmd.gov

COMMUNITY MUSEUM

9 S. Summit Ave. 20877-2071
301-258-6160
museum@gaithersburgmd.gov

CONCERT PAVILION AT CITY HALL (seasonal)

31 S. Summit Ave. 20877-2038
301-258-6350

GAITHERSBURG YOUTH CENTERS

Olde Towne

301 Teachers Way 20877-3422
301-258-6440
yc-oldetowne@gaithersburgmd.gov

Robertson Park

801 Rabbitt Rd. 20878-1657
301-258-6166
yc-robertson@gaithersburgmd.gov

KENTLANDS MANSION

320 Kent Square Rd. 20878-5726
301-258-6425
kentlandsmansion@gaithersburgmd.gov

MINIATURE GOLF COURSE (seasonal)

514 S. Frederick Ave. 20877-2325
301-258-6420
minigolf@gaithersburgmd.gov

SKATE PARK (seasonal)

510 S. Frederick Ave. 20877-2325
301-258-6359
skatepark@gaithersburgmd.gov



@GburgMD



Many facilities may be rented for meetings & social events. See website for details.



Holiday Festivities

Winter Lights Festival (\$)

Nov. 29 – Dec. 31

Seneca Creek State Park

See ad on page 16 for details & special nights

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever (\$)

presented by Kensington Arts Theatre

Weekends Nov. 29 – Dec. 15

Arts Barn

Jingle Jubilee & Tree Lighting

Entertainment & Santa

Dec. 7 • 6 – 7:30 p.m.

City Hall Concert Pavilion

Gaithersburg Chorus Winter Concert

7:30 p.m.

Dec. 3 – Asbury Methodist Village

Dec. 6 – Gaithersburg Presbyterian Church

Cool Yule (\$)

Holiday Jazz with Rochelle Rice

Dec. 14 • 8 p.m.

Arts Barn

All Aboard with Santa (\$ - Advance Sales Only)

Dec. 15 • 4 – 6:30 p.m.

Community Museum

For many more listings and ticket information visit gaithersburgmd.gov



GAITHERSBURG Holiday Giving Program

Providing Food & Gifts to Local Families for the November and the December Holidays

- Donate money to help us buy gift cards and food
- Join our "Stuff a Gift Bag" project
- Donate new gloves, hat and scarf sets for children and older adults
- Volunteer

Donations can be made by check, cash and conveniently online with a credit card via the City's website. Search "Holiday Giving."

gaithersburgmd.gov

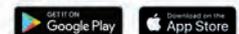
For information and donation forms contact
CommunityServices@gaithersburgmd.gov | 240-805-1828



Stay Up-to-Date with Recycling in Gaithersburg



1. Search for "Recycle Coach – Municipal Media Inc." in your app store



2. Download and then fill in your location
3. Sign up for notifications
4. Explore the app to learn what and how to recycle right
5. Sign up for alerts without the app and learn more at gaithersburgmd.gov



ARTS ON THE GREEN

KENTLANDS MANSION & ARTS BARN

NOVEMBER 2019 — APRIL 2020

IN CONCERT

Seán Heely

January 24

A fun evening of music & poetry celebrating the life of Scottish poet Robert Burns.

Steve Herberman & Lena Seikaly

February 29

Guitar and vocal jazz duo

Gretchen Peters

March 28

A singer-songwriter described as heartbreaking & heartwarming

The Minimalists

April 18

Music of America's popular modern composers.
In Partnership with New Orchestra of Washington.



JUST FOR FAMILIES

The Great Zucchini

January 26

Metropolitan Ballet Ensemble: *Stories of Dr. Seuss*

February 17

Peter and the Wolf

Maryland Classic Youth Orchestras

March 29

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone

With a Wand-making Workshop

April 5

Miss Nelson is Missing!

by Joan Cushing

In partnership with VF Dance Theatre

April 18 – 26



ON STAGE

Unforgettable —

A Tribute to Nat King Cole

Featuring Don Dillingham

January 10 – 19

Play Date

by John Morogiello

Presented by Best Medicine Rep

February 7 – 23

The Spitfire Grill

Music & Book by James Valcq with Lyrics
& Book by Fred Alley

In partnership with Rockville Little Theatre

March 6 – 22



ART NIGHT OUT

Kourosh Taie, Magician

November 15

Wine & Improv with Stephanie Phelan

November 16

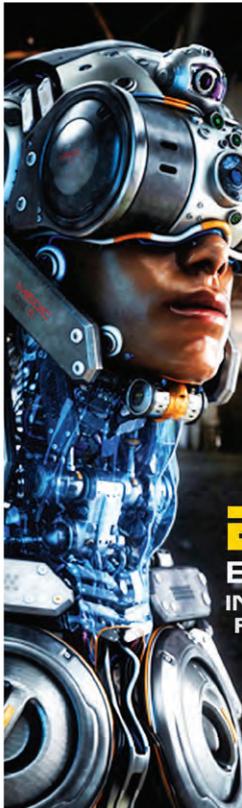
Valentine's Day in the Studio

February 14

Kinolife Sci-Fi Film Fest with Writers Workshop

featuring Bob Greenberger

April 24



301-258-6394 • Tickets and Information: gaithersburgmd.gov/AOTG
311 & 320 Kent Square Rd.



ArtsOnTheGreen



City of Gaithersburg
31 S. Summit Ave.
Gaithersburg, MD 20877

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STANDARD
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Permit No. 55

GAITHERSBURG CITY ELECTION 2019

FOR THREE CITY COUNCIL SEATS

**YOUR CHOICE • YOUR VOICE
IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE**



VOTE ON NOVEMBER 5
7 am - 8 pm

**EARLY VOTING AT
CITY HALL**

October 26 & 27
9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Gaithersbu **g**
CITY ELECTION 2019

gaithersburgmd.gov

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