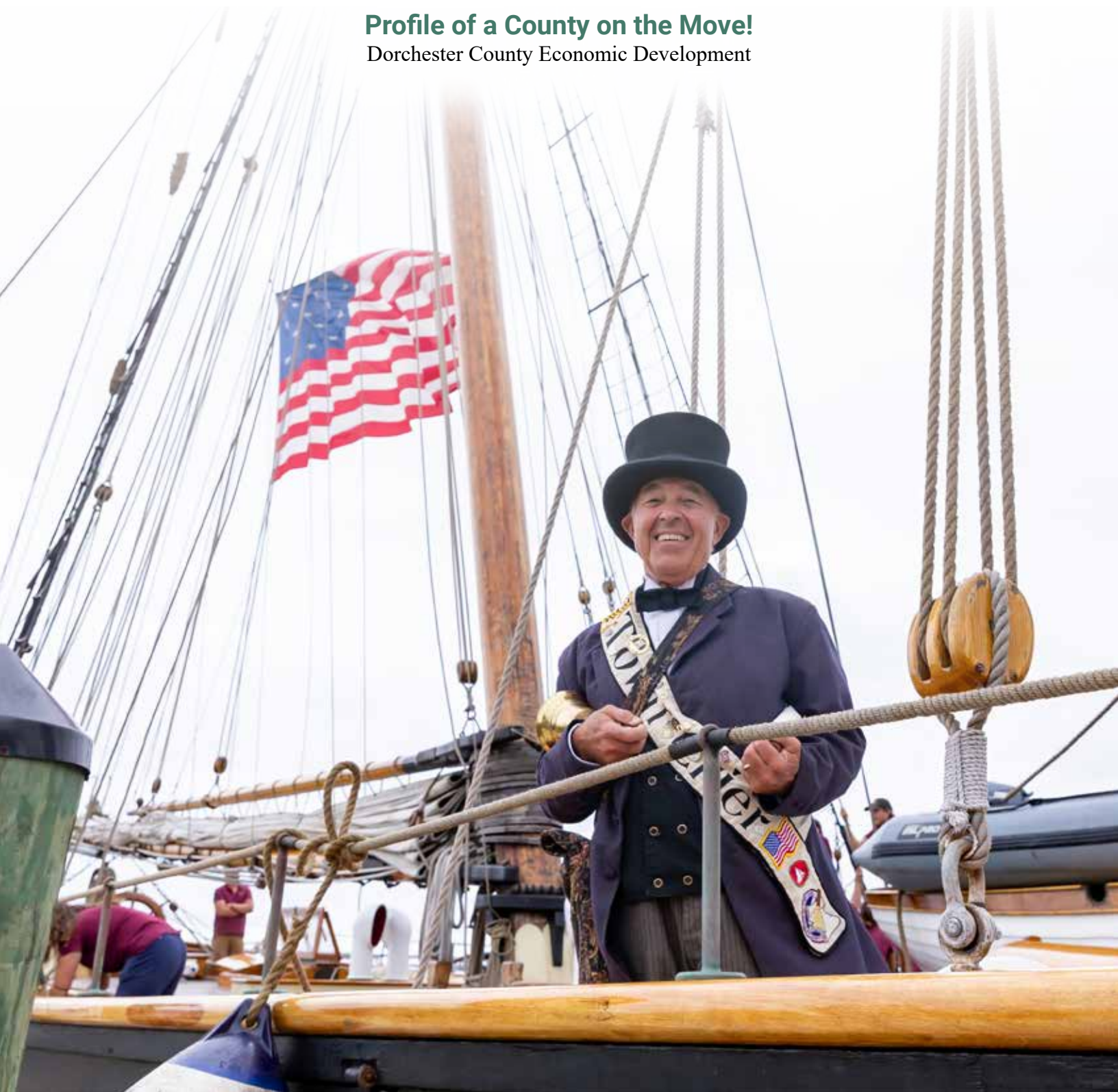


DORCHESTER

2026

water moves us

Profile of a County on the Move!
Dorchester County Economic Development





EGIDE Cambridge Celebrates 25 Years of Innovation and Community Impact

Cambridge, MD — For 25 years, EGIDE Cambridge has been a proud part of Maryland's Eastern Shore, delivering world-class hermetic solutions while staying deeply rooted in the local community. As part of the EGIDE Group, which will mark its 40th anniversary in 2026, the Cambridge facility reflects a legacy built on precision manufacturing, long-term partnerships, and hometown pride.

EGIDE Cambridge's expertise spans industries across the globe. The company is a leading supplier of specialized hermetic package housings and components supporting the world's largest corporations in the aerospace, defense, and communications industries using Glass-to-Metal and Ceramic-to-Metal sealing technologies. Every product undergoes rigorous testing to meet the highest standards of reliability. But beyond its technical achievements, EGIDE Cambridge has always been about people. Formerly Airpax Plant 2, the site joined the EGIDE Group in 2000 and has remained a cornerstone of the local economy ever since. Generations of families have worked within its walls, creating a strong bond between company and community.

As EGIDE Cambridge celebrates this milestone, it honors not only its history of innovation but also the dedication of the local workforce that has made it possible.

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INSIDE...

Welcome to Water Moves Us.....	6
Message from the Dorchester County Economic Development Director	
Dorchester County Elected Officials & Map	7
Dorchester celebrates America's 250th birthday.....	8
Fire & Risk Alliance brings research campus to Tech Park	10
Eastern Shore Innovation Center Celebrates 10 Years.....	12
Chamber's Bill Christopher says farewell	13
EGIDE Group North America celebrates 25 years.....	14
BEAMS: Support for businesses in Dorchester	15
Historic Handsell grows with 'Three Cultures Center'	16
Dorchester Education Foundation offers support to public schools.....	20
Communities in Dorchester County.....	22
Volunteers help Richardson Maritime Museum sail	25
Thomas Fine Jewelry celebrates 10 years.....	26
Mid-Bay project brings new life to Barren Island	27
Hurlock builds on sense of community	28
Shining a light on Dorchester's Latin community	29
Marinas in Dorchester County	30



ON THE COVER

American Guild of Town Criers member and past president David Rose, shown speaking at the tall ship Pride of Baltimore II visit to Cambridge, will be among the local stars of America's 250th celebrations. *Photo by Jill Jasuta.*

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Welcome to 'Water Moves Us' 2026

A Message from the Director of Economic Development, Dorchester County, Maryland

Welcome to Dorchester County. As we enter 2026, we join communities across the country in recognizing America's 250th anniversary, a milestone that offers an opportunity to reflect on our nation's history while focusing on continued progress at the local level.

Dorchester County has a long-standing role in Maryland's economic and cultural history, and today we remain committed to building a strong, stable future. Over the past year, the County has continued to support business growth, workforce development, and strategic investment that strengthen our local economy and improve quality of life for residents.

Our location on Maryland's Eastern Shore provides businesses and residents with access to major markets including Washington, D.C., Baltimore, and the



greater Chesapeake Bay region, while maintaining the advantages of a rural community.

This balance continues to support a

diverse mix of established and growing industries that include manufacturing, agriculture, seafood processing, tourism, healthcare and technology-related industries.

Dorchester values both established industries and emerging opportunities. We continue to support our traditional sectors while encouraging innovation and sustainable development. We are working to ensure we remain competitive and prepared for future growth.

I invite you to learn more about Dorchester—whether you are considering expanding a business, relocating, or visiting. We look forward to continuing our work to support a resilient and sustainable local economy—one that strengthens our communities, creates opportunities for all, and reflects the shared values of our county.

– Susan Banks
Director, Dorchester County
Economic Development Office



DORCHESTER COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

Director Susan Banks | **Incubator Manager** Tina Thompson | **Business Development Manager** Nicole Evans

The Dorchester County Economic Development Office is focused on developing and implementing strategic initiatives to assist businesses with growth and expansion projects and to attract new industry. The mission of the Economic Development Office is to create a business environment where local firms can compete and thrive in today's global economy.

If you are interested in starting or expanding your business in Dorchester County, we're here to help. For more information contact Dorchester Economic Development Office in Maryland at (410) 228-0155 or visit www.choosedorchester.org.

Dorchester County Elected Officials & Map



County Leaders



Rob Kramer Jr.
District 1



William Nichols
District 2



Ricky Travers
District 3



George "Lenny" Pfeffer Jr.
District 4



Mike Detmer
District 5

State Representatives



Governor Wes Moore



Lt. Governor Aruna Miller



Senator Johnny Mautz IV
District 37



Delegate Sheree Sample-Hughes
District 37A



Delegate Tom Hutchinson
District 37B



Delegate Christopher Adams
District 37B



MD TWO FIFTY

DORCHESTER'S STORY IS AMERICA'S STORY

Dorchester celebrates America's 250th birthday

By Debra R. Messick

In 2026, as America marks its Semiquincentennial, Dorchester County is a destination replete with events, artifacts, and experiences helping tell the story.

While major sites such as Philadelphia and Boston that were central to the events of 1776 might take center stage, they're not the only communities steeped in history from the era.

"We may not be the biggest place in the spotlight," said Dorchester County Historical Society Director Marco Salavarria. "But Dorchester County has a trove of historical links worthy of revisiting and reveling in."

Among them is the 1760 Georgian style brick Meredith House built by John Woolford, the focal point of the historical society's campus. Also known as the LaGrange Plantation, it is nestled near the Choptank River.

The mansion's interior is a time capsule with tributes to the county's ties to the Maryland governor's office and noteworthy national figures, including Lincoln advisor Anna Ella Carroll.

It also holds key pieces dating back to the Revolutionary period, highlighting not only Dorchester County life as it was then, but figures central to nation's larger story:

A highlight is an impressive heirloom and weapon, the Lake family sword, originally belonging to Henry Lake I (1659-1734). He was a second-generation member of family blacksmiths who acquired enough property to be regarded as "owner" of the Honga River.

The sword was passed down to his only son, Henry Jr. (1699-1760), who in turn gave the sword to his son, Henry III (1739-1804). Henry III continued the blacksmith trade and joined the Dorchester County Militia under General Henry Hooper and Col. Travers on May 1, 1776, just over one year after Lexington and Concord, becoming Captain of one of the county's 23



The Meredith House, circa 1760, houses numerous heirlooms and artifacts from the Revolutionary War and other notable historic eras. (WATER MOVES US/DEBRA R. MESSICK)

companies, consisting of 69 privates.

In February 1778, the company engaged in contesting a British ship's landing at Bishop's Head. At about the same time, according to a historian's oral history account verified by family members, Torie soldiers invaded Captain Lake's home in an attempt to arrest him.

Meeting with feisty resistance from wife Rhoda and daughter Lovey, the frustrated soldiers set fire to the home but never succeeded in their mission to capture the Captain.

Another important Meredith House period artifact is a porcelain punchbowl gifted to William Vans Murray, who from 1791 to 1797 served as a Federalist party member of Congress. Vans Murray was born in Cambridge.

In 1797 Murray was appointed U.S. Minister to the Netherlands, and in 1799, was sent to Paris to negotiate a treaty, which was signed September 30, 1800.

Meredith House visitors can also view a portrait of Ann Frances Tilghman, mother

of Col. Tench Tilghman, General George Washington's Aide-de-Camp. Col. Tilghman accepted the surrender of General Cornwallis at Yorktown.

Among evocative events scheduled to commemorate significant moments in the nation's history are live document readings by American Guild of Town Criers member and past president David Rose.

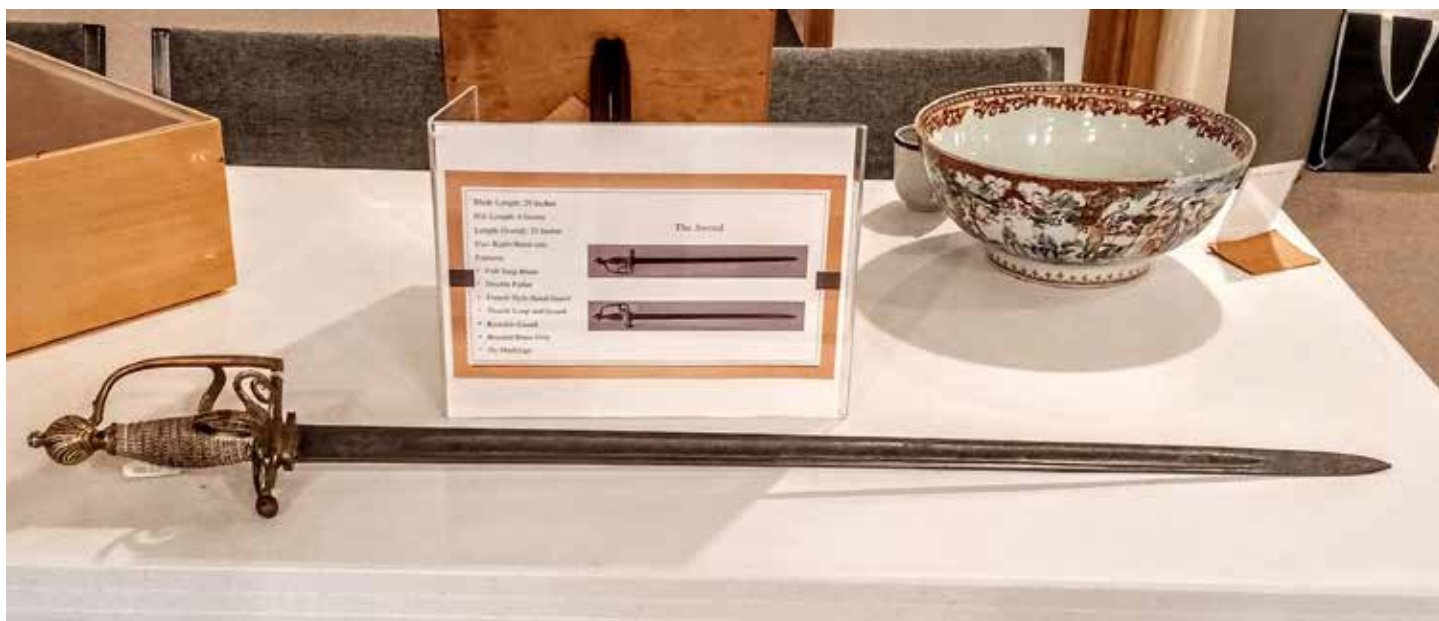
Rose, who has contributed his services to the county on many prior occasions, appears in 2026 as the Dorchester County Chamber of Commerce Town Crier. In full costume and with period flourish, he will present the Declaration of Independence on June 27, and the Gettysburg Address on November 19, both at the historical society.

Throughout 2026, additional commemorative celebrations are also scheduled:

March 13 – Tavern Night, featuring spirits laden punchbowl concoctions for imbibing and toasting to the 250th.

June 27 – Revolutionary Music program:

continued on page 9



The Lake family sword, passed down through the generations, is a featured piece at the Meredith House. (WATER MOVES US/DEBRA R. MESSICK)

continued from page 8

Invoking the spirit espoused by John Adams in his July 3, 1776, letter to wife Abigail, that the “great Anniversary festival ought to be commemorated...from one End of this Continent to the other ...from this Time forward forevermore.” In addition to the Declaration of Independence

reading, the program includes crafts and period music.

Sept 12 – Maritime reenactment: War of 1812 Shore Party and Living History, featuring launch of The Albatross, with historic crew, providing hands-on maritime demonstrations including cutlass drills.

Oct. 4 – Pirates and Privateers: “Gather around the fire for a snack and spooky

stories, enjoy a grog or two, and celebrate the season like a true ‘Sea Rat’ of the past, ages 21 + only.

Other Dorchester events include a Fourth of July “Voice of the Shore” concert in Hurlock, and the “Battle of Vienna” August 29 at the Handsell House Historic Site in partnership with the Vienna Heritage Museum.



A European 18th century pistol (top), 10-sided hunting scope (center) and Boarding Axe Head dating from the War of 1812 can be viewed at the Historical Society. (WATER MOVES US/DEBRA R. MESSICK)

'Engineering a safer future'

Company brings fire testing campus to Tech Park

By Richard Caines

A Maryland-based company plans to help shape the global future of fire science right here on Delmarva with an upcoming expansion in Dorchester County.

Fire & Risk Alliance, LLC (FRA) purchased three lots last year in the Dorchester Regional Technology Park to construct a state-of-the-art fire testing and research campus featuring 65-foot clear heights with large-scale calorimetry and fire suppression system testing capabilities. Founder & CEO Scott Bryant said they plan to be up and running first with limited operations by April 1.

Currently operated out of Rockville, Md., and founded at the start of 2012, the full-service fire engineering and fire science consulting company serves many industries including aerospace, defense, battery energy storage systems, data centers and industrial manufacturing.

Officials said the upcoming Dorchester County facility will serve as both a research center and training ground for first responders, with educational programs to support the next generation of fire safety professionals.

"We're building the most advanced fire science research facility in North America right here in Cambridge," Bryant said. "This facility will tackle the most complex, high-consequence fire challenges facing modern infrastructure and industry. As energy systems grow more sophisticated and energy demand increases, the potential for catastrophic fire events grows with them. Our mission is to understand fire behavior at a fundamental level and develop evidence-based mitigation strategies that protect lives, property, and critical infrastructure."

Fire & Risk Alliance's motto is "engineering a safer future," and with technology rapidly evolving across the globe, the company said its research focuses on hazard mitigation analysis and fire safety testing. Their testing is performed according to strict standards set by Underwriters Laboratories and the National Fire Protection Association.

"Much of fire testing still relies on dated standards," Bryant said. "But materials have changed dramatically recently. Our goal is simple: provide the rigorous fire science that helps industry design safer, more effective solutions. Better data leads to better decisions—and ultimately, saves lives."



FRA plans to open with limited operations by April 1. (WATER MOVES US/RICHARD CAINES)

Bryant pointed to tragic fires like the 2003 Station nightclub fire in Rhode Island, which killed 100 people and injured 230, and a New Year's Eve 2026 fire at a bar in Switzerland that killed 40 and injured 116, as stark reminders of why advancing fire science matters.

"These tragedies shouldn't be in vain," Bryant said. "Each one teaches us something critical about fire behavior, building design, or emergency response. Our responsibility is to learn from these events, conduct the research needed to prevent similar disasters, and share that knowledge across the industry. This work is deeply personal to us—every test we conduct, every solution we develop, is ultimately about protecting lives."

The facility will enable large-scale fire testing that replicates real-world conditions impossible to achieve in smaller laboratories.

"We deliberately test to failure in controlled environments to understand worst-case scenarios," Bryant said. "There's no facility operating at this scale in the U.S. right now. Modern materials and energy systems are creating fire risks we've never encountered before. We're building the research infrastructure to stay ahead of those

challenges and protect lives."

With any new business comes jobs, and Bryant said they hope to bring in 300 to 500 new positions within the next 10 years that run the gamut of cutting-edge tech roles to skilled trades.

The company has its own internal fire department, including an emergency response group, mostly made up of retired professionals from FDNY. They additionally plan to involve local fire departments anytime they are running a fire test.

"Our goal is to provide education and training that makes local fire departments the most advanced industrial fire response teams in the nation," Bryant said. "And it just so happens they're right here in our backyard."

Beyond research, Bryant envisions the campus as a premier training facility for firefighters across the region.

"We're committed to building strong relationships with local fire companies—they'll be active participants in our testing and training programs," Bryant said. "We can create industrial fire scenarios and training environments that simply don't

continued on page 11

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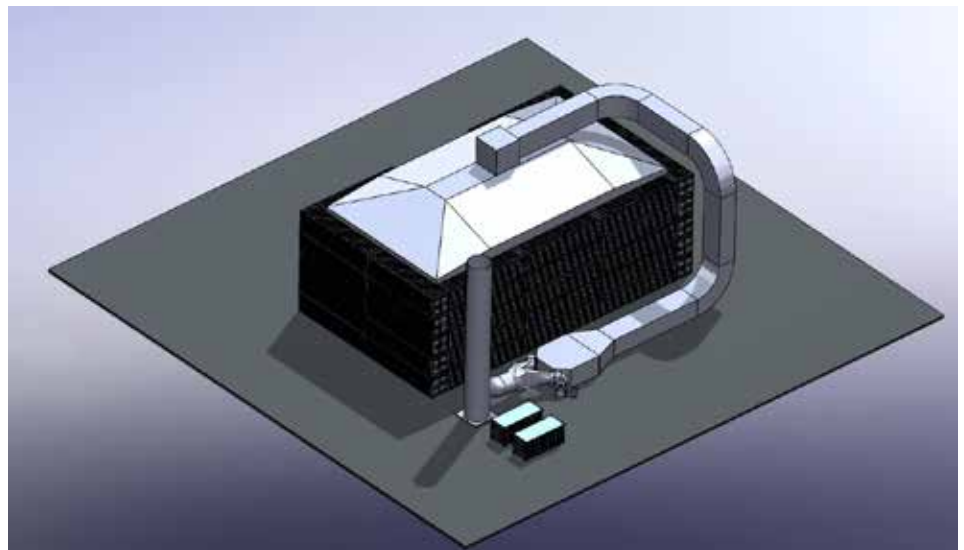
exist anywhere else. Firefighters will gain hands-on experience with the kinds of high-stakes situations they might encounter once or twice in their entire careers.”

The company said it is aware that a lot of the Eastern Shore population is somehow tied to the fire service industry, which makes it a great location to operate a campus from.

“A lot of our employees are all volunteer firefighters, EMTs or paramedics,” Bryant said. “That industry is kind of instilled in all of us. That’s what we want to give back. We want to make sure that our first responders are safe, that people are building things properly, and we’re advancing fire science, not just being complacent and making money.”

“It’s never about the money with us. It’s always about what’s the right thing to do.”

Bryant said they want to get the next generation involved in engineering, especially in the fire protection sector. They have an apprenticeship program set up with Montgomery County, approved by the state of Maryland for high school kids and a scholarship program with the University of Maryland, College Park. But in the future, they would like to link up with the University of Maryland Eastern Shore.



An artist rendering of the fire lab currently under construction in Cambridge. (SUBMITTED PHOTO)

“We’re establishing a scholarship and mentorship program at UMES to develop local talent for careers in fire protection engineering,” Bryant said. “This field combines science, problem-solving, and real-world impact in ways that genuinely excite people. We want to show students in our own community the opportunities that exist right here.”

Bryant explained that while FRA has built a strong reputation over the years, the Cambridge facility marks a pivotal mo-

ment.

“We’ve been intentional about our growth—building expertise and establishing who we are,” Bryant said. “This laboratory puts Cambridge on the map as a center for fire science innovation and positions FRA to lead the industry in advancing safety research.”

Visit fireriskalliance.com for additional information about their work in fire protection engineering and risk management.

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Eastern Shore Innovation Center Celebrates 10 Years



The Eastern Shore Innovation Center supports startups and small businesses through mentorships, workshops, networking opportunities, and affordable workspace. (SUBMITTED PHOTO)

The Eastern Shore Innovation Center (ESIC) is the Dorchester Regional Technology Park's flagship business incubator and home to the Dorchester County economic development team. Located at 104 Tech Park Drive, ESIC is just minutes away from local cafes, shops, and restaurants.

The Innovation Center supports startups and small businesses through mentorships, workshops, networking opportunities, and affordable workspace. The location has dedicated offices, Wi-Fi, large and small conference rooms, co-work space, web conferencing, and more. ESIC offers a flexible and professional work environment for startups and small businesses to thrive. ESIC fosters entrepreneurship and business innovation, serving as a hub for new and emerging businesses in Dorchester County and surrounding area.

Start-Up Support

ESIC offers a fully supportive environment to accelerate business growth and to help entrepreneurs develop the next generation of

technologies. Startups can join the Innovation Center as a co-working space member or with dedicated office space in the state-of-the-art facility. At ESIC, businesses have access to a wide range of business resources and are partnered with experienced business mentors, certified by SCORE, a Small Business Administration organization. Dedicated space is available for up to four years, at which time, the businesses have the option to purchase permanent space in the tech park.

Innovation Center Features

In addition to the incubation program at the Innovation Center, virtual office services, flexible co-working space, private offices, a welcoming co-working lounge, modern laboratory facilities, well-equipped meeting rooms. The research laboratory is the first facility of its kind on the Delmarva Peninsula. The 1,200-square foot commercial wet lab operated by SunXAnalytical and funded, in part, by Rural Maryland Council Prosperity Investment Funding. Dorchester County agencies and

private sector companies may host meetings and workshops at the Innovation Center during regular business hours, pending space availability. The state-of-the-art conference room accommodates up to 80 people, theater style, and 42 people, classroom style. Flat screen presentation monitors, video teleconferencing, Smart Board, whiteboard walls for ideation, Bluetooth speaker, and free Wi-Fi are key features of the facility. The dynamic atmosphere fosters creativity and collaboration.

For entrepreneurs and small businesses looking to start or expand entrepreneurial ventures, the Innovation Center offers membership at \$50 per month. Students may join at just \$12.50 per month.

Want to learn more? Discover the professional benefits of ESIC with a one-day complimentary co-working pass, available Monday-Friday, from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. Daily rates are also available. For an application and more information, including eligibility requirements, email tthompson@dorchestermd.gov or call (410) 228-0155.

Chamber's Bill Christopher says farewell

Bill Christopher has announced he is retiring from his role at the Dorchester Chamber of Commerce. He will be missed and we want to recognize his contribution to the community over the past decade.

Christopher's story is one of steadfast leadership, community commitment, and a deep belief in the people and potential of Dorchester County. He is a proud graduate of Cambridge-South Dorchester High School and was awarded the McCabe Scholarship to attend Swarthmore College. Christopher has spent his career building strong organizations and even stronger communities. His work has consistently reflected the values that define Dorchester — hard work, collaboration, and a genuine care for others.

In his role as President/CEO of the Dorchester Chamber of Commerce, Christopher has been instrumental in revitalizing local business engagement, fostering workforce development partnerships, and helping position Dorchester County as a region of opportunity and growth. His steady leadership has guided the Chamber through times of challenge and renewal, ensuring that local businesses, nonprofits, and educational partners work together toward a shared vision of economic vitality.

Before coming back to Dorchester to retire with his wife Candace, Christopher built a successful career spanning both the corporate



Candace and Bill Christopher will enjoy more sunsets in retirement. (SUBMITTED PHOTO)

and nonprofit sectors. He held senior leadership roles with Drexel University, Arthur Anderson, and as a Senior Vice President at McKesson Corporation, where he led major strategic initiatives that strengthened systems and services in the healthcare industry. His career reflects a rare blend of executive acumen and community-centered service. He does like to point out his career did start with a year of teaching algebra, geometry and calculus to high school students in Bethesda, Md. While teaching he was a football coach and the head coach of a 12-1 varsity lacrosse team.

In addition to his professional leadership, Christopher served on several regional boards that embody his commitment to collaboration and civic engagement. He currently sits on the boards for the Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board, Mid-Shore Region

Council, Junior Achievement of the Eastern Shore, and has served as the President of the Cambridge Rotary Club and on the Executive Committee for Mid-Shore Community Foundation. He also contributes to numerous local partnerships advancing education, entrepreneurship, and public service across the Eastern Shore.

Christopher's belief in the power of education and partnership has shaped his leadership approach. He has worked closely with schools, local government, and business leaders to create programs that prepare students for the workforce and connect them to opportunities right here in Dorchester County. His voice has been a consistent reminder that when we work together, we can move our community forward.

"I think it is important for folks to know that my wife, Candace, deserves as much thanks and recognition as I do. We come as a team and work together on any project either of us takes on and that includes my decade of work at the Chamber. We plan to continue with many of our community service activities and encourage all residents to find time to get engaged," says Christopher.

Christopher's vision, integrity, and service continue to strengthen the fabric of Dorchester County and inspire the next generation of leaders to give back to the place they call home. We wish him well in his next chapter.



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EGIDE Group North America celebrates 25 years

By Richard Caines

Businesses come and go, but one plant in Dorchester County continues to stand the test of time.

EGIDE Group North America, a developer and manufacturer of hermetic packaging for sensitive electronic components, celebrated its 25th anniversary in Cambridge in December.

Originally known as Airpax Plant 2, the Washington Street plant was acquired in 2000 by the French company.

On April 14 this year, EGIDE SA celebrates its 40th anniversary as a corporation. It is headquartered in Bollène, France with another facility in San Diego, California.

EGIDE's products can be found in aerospace, defense, medical, optoelectronics, infra-red, sensors, RF, communications and other global industries.

Jamie Girvin, a manager in the customer service and key account departments, said the EGIDE Cambridge plant still employs a lot of those who worked in the original Airpax plant.

"There are folks that work on our production floor who have been here longer than I've been alive," Girvin said. "So, that shows you that this is a good place to work and has been pretty integral to the community for a long time.

"A lot of people will tell you that they had a family member that worked at Airpax at one point in time, or they at least knew somebody who did. We've always remained, which I think is kind of a kudos to us."

Girvin said despite the company's longstanding Cambridge home, a lot of people still don't know what is made between the plant's walls.

"We have parts on the Mars rover," Girvin said. "We have parts on the F-35, also Stinger system missiles. Pretty much any defense program, there is the potential for our parts to be on it."

EGIDE played a role in NASA's 2020 Mars mission with parts on the



EGIDE's Cambridge plant is located at 4 Washington Street. (WATER MOVES US/RICHARD CAINES)

Perseverance rover, which coincided with an incident at the Cambridge plant. On July 1, 2020, a fire started within the plant's plating area. Despite the fire, EGIDE did not miss any customer commitments.

"The Perseverance rover name was really important to us as a factory because of the timing of that whole subject," Girvin said.

Historically, Cambridge's economy was dominated by the canning and packing industries, which declined by the 1960s. Area companies have been forced to adapt and evolve, and EGIDE is no different.

"We've adjusted to technology changes over the years," Girvin said. "The parts that we built 40 years ago when we first started, they're obsolete now. As the market changes, we adjust and adapt with the defense market."

Girvin noted the latest news suggests a

future uptick in defense spending, which will benefit the Cambridge plant.

"They're predicting additional defense funding going into 2027-28, so we're preparing for that," Girvin said. "We're ramping up in support of that because most of our business is in that sector. When they're spending money on defense, that usually means we do well."

EGIDE Group CEO Ignace Dupon said the company's success is "closely linked to the vitality" of the Cambridge community they call home.

"We're not just a business operating in this town; we're a partner with the community," Dupon said. "That means prioritizing local hiring and sourcing from nearby suppliers. A thriving community translates to a stronger workforce. For us, it's the engine that ensures Egide remains a valued part of this community."

BEAMS: Support for businesses in Dorchester

In 2025, Dorchester County Economic Development hosted the first cohort for a new program – the Business Expansion and Advancement for Minority & Small Businesses (BEAMS).

It is an intensive, 8-week course designed to help entrepreneurs grow their businesses and prepare for capital access.

Held virtually on Monday evenings, the program combined expert-led sessions with one-on-one mentorship in marketing, operations, human resources, law, and finance.

Participants developed financial projections and growth plans during the program. Final presentations allowed business owners the opportunity to showcase their newly developed business strategies and laid the groundwork for future growth.

“Dorchester County is proud to have hosted the first cohort of the BEAMS class which provided our local entrepreneurs with practical tools to grow and strengthen their businesses,” said Dorchester County Economic Development Director Susan Banks.

“We are grateful for the Mid-Shore Regional Council’s investment in our region and for the expertise Will Holmes Consulting brought to the program. Programs like this directly strengthen our local economy and showcase what strategic partnerships can achieve.”

Will Holmes Consulting (WHC) administers the Dorchester County Business Accelerator.

Founder Will Holmes, a seasoned business advisor with over 20 years of experience, authored the BEAMS curriculum and served as lead facilitator.

“WHC created the structured, 8-week, online program,” he said. “I taught the core concepts and organized Subject Matter Experts to contribute as panelists. The explicit goal of the program is to teach business owners how to scale and increase revenue so they can create jobs in Dorchester County.”

“The program is designed to deliver tangible outcomes and a positive economic impact for both the participating business owners and Dorchester County as a whole,” Holmes added. “Graduates will understand how and when to hire staff, how to build personal and business credit,



Will Holmes, administrator of the Dorchester County Business Accelerator, celebrates with BEAMS students. (SUBMITTED PHOTO)

how to access capital, how to use AI for marketing, and how to reach customers and increase sales.”

Financial Literacy and Planning

The curriculum has an intensive focus on cash flow projections. Introduced in the first week of the program, financial projections are a mandatory component of participants’ final presentation. “This foundational emphasis on financial literacy equips entrepreneurs with the critical skills needed to understand their numbers, plan strategic growth, and access capital by teaching them how to tell their story with numbers,” Holmes said.

Practical Skills for Growth

“Practical skills for growth are important for business owners, helping them move from being overwhelmed subject matter experts to strategic CEOs by providing practical, actionable information on essential business competencies,” according to Holmes.

Sustainable Infrastructure

Building a sustainable infrastructure is also critical for any business. The BEAMS curriculum addresses leadership, planning for growth, marketing and sales. Accounting, HR and legal best practices are also taught during the program. “Graduates from WHC programs report that they feel more confident in their decision-making and financial numbers, and they leave with a clear roadmap to profitability and a growth plan they can execute immediately,” Holmes said.

Benefits

The benefits for small business owners are clear. Katelin Frase, owner of Vintage Family Farms, was an enthusiastic participant in the first cohort of the BEAMS program.

“I had a great experience,” said Frase. “It was so informative. For someone who doesn’t have a background in business, it reaffirmed that we’re heading in the right direction. They connected us to professionals and mentors with legal, marketing and tax expertise. It really helped me think about our business in a well-rounded way.”

The benefits for Dorchester County are substantive. Strengthening small businesses results in job creation and increased revenue.

“The program’s core purpose is to help business owners scale and increase revenue, which directly leads to job creation in the county,” said Holmes. “Across WHC’s programs in Maryland, over 80% of graduates have increased revenue and added jobs. For the county, contracting with WHC provides a proven, turnkey solution that directly addresses economic development goals without the significant upfront investment and risk of creating a new program internally.”

Dorchester County’s second BEAMS cohort began in early 2026.

For more information about the program, visit choosedorchester.org/free-business-training.

Historic Handsell grows with ‘Three Cultures Center’



Chicone Village Day is celebrated annually at the Handsell property. (SUBMITTED PHOTO/JILL JASUTA)

By Debra R. Messick

The remnant of a stately brick, Georgian mansion rising along pastoral Indian-town Road in eastern Dorchester County first beckoned Midge Ingersoll's interest.

In 2005, Ingersoll and several volunteers formed the Nanticoke Historic Preservation Alliance (NHPA) to acquire the neglected edifice located just outside Vienna, on the Nanticoke River's banks, from members of the Webb family, the most recent landowners, who hoped to see it preserved.

The group's initial focus centered on restoring the colonial-era building. But the research involved in that process helped "peel back the layers," revealing a tapestry telling a rich, collaborative story, Ingersoll said.

The mansion represented just one component of a complex saga encompassing three cultures calling the two-acre site home—Native Americans, European colonists, and African American slaves, formerly enslaved people, and sharecroppers.

In 2008 the Handsell Historic Site earned National Historic Register status.

Over the years, additional features have been added. Notably, it features an authentic replica of a single-family Chicone Village abode known as a Longhouse, which was built with pre-1600s materials and techniques. A nearby waddle-fenced garden is planted each summer with varieties commonly grown by East Woodlands natives during that time period.

On October 9, 2021, an engraved 6.5-ton stone boulder designated as Memorial to the Enslaved was dedicated at Handsell, honoring more than 210 enslaved persons who labored at or near the site.

The guiding force behind the memorial was late NHPA Trustee Shirley S. Jackson, a descendant of Charles Jackson, one of those enslaved. She was born into the sharecropper community called Indian-town. Jackson's own memorial tree and marker now lie beside the boulder.

NHPA has also developed an Enslaved Community Database, a regularly updated, comprehensive list of enslaved people connected with the Rider-Billings-Steele families of Dorchester and 19th century

continued on page 18

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continued from page 16

owners of Handsell Plantation, according to the NHPA website.

In addition to hosting two annual outdoor historic living celebrations, The Nanticoke River Jamboree and Chicone Village Day, the site remains open all year during daylight hours, with six wayside exhibits and free cell phone audio tour guide access.

Now, after three years of research, planning, and fund sourcing, the Three Cultures Center will open this year.

Among the local contractors contributing to the effort are Boettger Woodworking LLC of Salisbury, which is building the barn and Camper and Son of Cambridge which did the foundation.

"Other in-kin reduced-price services are being provided by various area companies, and all will be recognized in the facility when it's completed," Ingersoll said.

Among the organizations and individuals, contributing \$3,000 or to help build the Center are Chesapeake Gateways Network National Park, Maryland State Arts Council, Maryland Humanities, and Maryland Heritage Area, Mid-Shore Community and France-Merrick Foundations, The Elks Care and Share Fund, and Trippe Family descendants, Alton Scavo, Jennifer Stanley, Patricia and Eric Sanner,



Late Nanticoke Historic Alliance Trustee Shirley Jackson is seen seated on a boulder she advocated for, commemorating the Enslaved who lived and worked on or near Handsell. Jackson was born into the sharecropper community there known Indiantown. (SUBMITTED PHOTO)

and Dr. Thomas Pinder.

With the site located within the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area, Handsell has also benefitted from partnership with the Maryland Department of Natural Re-

sources and Nature Conservancy to operate on a conservation easement of the initial two acres and to acquire three additional adjoining acres for the center.

The 2500-square-foot pole and beam barn building adds small staff office space for computers, providing room for additional genealogy and ancestry work, areas for display and storage, plus restrooms and temperature controls, with full ADA compliance throughout.

Built from a kit designed by Nebraska-based Legacy Post & Beam, the structure was tweaked to accommodate the 9½-foot ceilings of newly acquired rooms once belonging to Carthagen, the 18th century home built by landowner and political figure Henry Trippe in nearby Secretary. It will serve as the center's main meeting and event space.

Ingersoll envisions the Center becoming available for rental to accommodate family reunions. "The Trippe family has already expressed an interest in doing this," she said. The site could also be made available to other groups historically related to the area or interested in its education and research.

Once the Center is completed, the Chicone Village garden will be rebuilt and enlarged, and a permanent parking site will be added, Ingersoll said.

For more information or to contribute, visit storehandsell.org.

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Dorchester Education Foundation offers support to public schools

By Debra R. Messick

An old adage asserts that it takes a village to raise a child. Another proverb, attributed to Plato, holds that necessity is the mother of invention.

In 2026, both time-honored maxims might describe the mission of the Dorchester Education Foundation.

After several years of planning, the foundation's call for community involvement and innovative solutions is more than timely. County schools, whose pockets have never been deep, face ongoing expenditure rises associated with rigorous standards mandated by the State of Maryland's Blueprint for Education. At the same time, Federal government funding is being curtailed. The state's economic struggles also have local budgets stretched thin.

At this critical juncture, the foundation hopes to make an impact, awarding up to 10 inaugural \$1,000 grants to educators for funding innovative educational initiatives.

The foundation's stated mission is to build on the vision expressed through the newly-created Dorchester County Public Schools Strategic Plan, providing additional resources that empower and support students and educators.

While remaining independent of the Board of Education and school system leadership, the foundation plans to work closely with Dorchester County Public Schools, aiming to help it improve significantly from one of the lowest achieving to one of the highest quality school systems in Maryland, the group's introductory announcement said.

That focus aligns with Superintendent Dr. Jymil Thomas' pledge that the district would rise from 23rd out of 24 counties in state academic test rankings, reaching at least 15th.

Hopeful signs of positive trends are emerging. Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program tests administered in May of 2025 showed that Dorchester County students' English test scores showed among the biggest statewide increase, from 33.7 to 41.3 percent.

The Dorchester Education Foundation will operate as a component fund under the

continued on page 21



At the Dorchester Education Foundation's first Fall Gala in November 2025, community members contributing to student success were honored as Distinguished Alumni. Among them was Kevin Beverly, left, receiving the honor from Chris Wheedleton, DEF and DCPS Board member and liason. (SUBMITTED PHOTO)

Mid-Shore Community Foundation.

Several board members' names are well known for contributions to Dorchester County youngsters. They include All4Love founder Lucas Thorpe, Mid-Shore Meals Til Monday founder Leslie Bishop, and longtime local educator Denise Aldridge.

District 5 School Board Representative and Dorchester Education Foundation Board Member Chris Wheedleton serves as a Mid-Shore Community Foundation liaison.

"The Dorchester Education Foundation has reviewed the full strategic plan, directly meeting with (Dorchester County Public Schools Superintendent) Dr. Thompson, to ask questions and discuss in detail. Afterwards the board pledged full support for the plan and to work to ensure that where we decide to dig in and support is complementary to what the district is endeavoring to do," Wheedleton said.

The plan makes partnerships a priority, he said.

"At our Fall Gathering, 120-plus community members attended and many groups represented — including Dorchester Chamber of Commerce, County Council, Cambridge City Council, Dorchester Educators, and specific businesses like Farm Creek Insurance — not only contributed financially but are working with us to develop programs for employees to get involved in the community through the Foundation," Wheedleton said.

A service-learning scholarship program, proposed by the family of late Mid-Shore philanthropist John Wyatt, is also in the works.

"The Wyatt Family reached out to us, sharing that they would like to start a scholarship named for husband and father John Wyatt, a longtime generous supporter of multiple county efforts to further educational opportunities for students," he said. "He was also instrumental in getting resources in place to create the Campaign for Grade Level Reading in Dorchester, helping create collaborations between community nonprofits."

The scholarship will reward students who go above the state's required 75 Service-Learning hours prior to graduation.

Board President Dr. Donna Newcomer, who retired to Cambridge in 2018 from Hagerstown, brings a wealth of experience from her 40-year public school and higher education teaching and administrative career. Working in a school system area where a similar foundation had operated, Newcomer witnessed firsthand the types of resources and results it could help make possible.

While stressing that the Dorchester Education Foundation's grant proposals needed to be approved by teachers and administrators, similar programs to be funded could include those focused on wellbeing and emotional growth; life skill programs via after school activities and clubs fostering skill building, creativity, and real-world learning; music projects celebrating culture, creativity, and inclusion, supporting writing skills and empowering multilingual learners to succeed; providing essential technology support for students and staff, from troubleshooting, to enhancing technology use for learning and instruction; programs to support literacy, and more," Newcomer said.

For more information, visit dorchestereducation.org.

On Track Since 1892

Sixty-six cents was all it took in 1801 to purchase about one acre of land upon which the first significant building in the Hurlock area was built. The Washington Chapel was constructed in a grove of trees adjacent to town limits. After the Delaware Railroad built a station in 1867, in what is now Hurlock, and John M. Hurlock built a storehouse and his residence close by, the Washington Chapel congregation in 1888 combined with two others to erect a new church within the Hurlock community - The Washington Methodist Church. But it was not until 1890, when the Baltimore, Chesapeake and Atlantic (BC&A) Railroad intersected the Delaware Railroad in Hurlock, that the town really started to grow.

Because of its excellent railroad facilities that carried passengers and products to major destinations, Hurlock became the industrial and commercial hub of the northern part of Dorchester County. It still holds that distinction, which is reflected in the town's motto, "On track ... since 1892."

Hurlock is the home to several industries and businesses related to food and poultry products, trucking, and other manufacturing. In 1987 the fully serviced Industrial Park was established on ninety-seven acres owned by the town. The entire Industrial Park was designated as a State Enterprise Zone in 1989, providing substantial tax incentives to new industries meeting certain qualifying criteria.

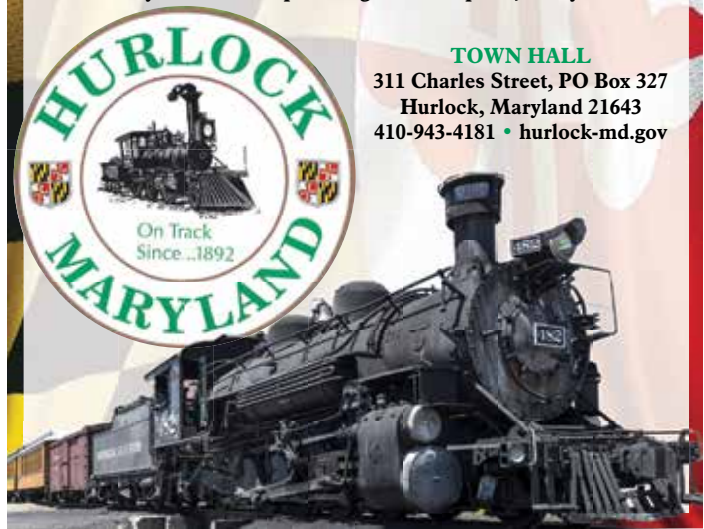
Hurlock has maintained not only the industrial and commercial significance bestowed by its railroad presence, but also the community spirit first exhibited with the construction of the Washington Chapel. Hurlock has numerous churches representing a variety of denominations. The Hurlock Free Library, which is the oldest library on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and the second oldest in the state, originated in the Hurlock home of Henry Walworth in 1900. The community honored World War I veterans with a marble statue financed through local fund-raising events.

Hurlock's community spirit is most evident at the Hurlock Fall Festival, now held on the first Saturday in October every year. Initiated during the town's Centennial celebration in 1992, the Fall Festival offers a full day of events - a kick-off parade, crafts, food, family activities, and train rides.

There is also a train station that serves as the central location of the Hurlock Fall Festival. The town owns the train station. The town refurbished it with public and private funds in a design based on that of the first station built in Hurlock in 1867. The town also owns two passenger cars that are used to provide train rides during the Fall Festival.

The next time you are out and about make it a point to stop in and visit the Town of Hurlock. Discover one of the best-kept secrets in the State of Maryland. The small town quality of life in this Eastern Shore town is unsurpassed anywhere else on earth that we know of.

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COMMUNITIES



The Dorchester County Welcome Center is located in Cambridge's Sailwinds Park on the Choptank River. (WATER MOVES US PHOTO)

BROOKVIEW & ELDORADO

Sister communities located on the northwest branch of the Nanticoke River. Brookview was originally called Crochet's Ferry, giving credit to the man who began the ferry from there to Eldorado. Crochet's Ferry enjoyed a brisk trade in lumber, grain and shipbuilding. The town was renamed Brookview around 1900. It has the distinction of being the smallest municipality in the state. Eldorado, a historic settlement, was formerly known as "The Ferry." The area was later given the name of the local farm, Eldorado, from where its post office originated. The road that serves Eldorado is marked Puckum Road, which has the motto, "You can't get there from here."

CAMBRIDGE

The seat of Dorchester County dating back to 1684, making it one of the oldest colonial cities in the state. Originally a seaport community along the Choptank River, its rich maritime heritage can be explored in museums, through the historic district and river cruises. In his epic novel, *Chesapeake*, author James Mi-

chener modeled the fictional city Patamoke after Cambridge. Many of the existing homes on High Street date from the 1700s and 1800s. Famed Underground Railroad conductor Harriet Tubman was born nearby, and the city honors her history. Numerous public murals depict the town's history: the Pine Street African-American community; Cambridge's working people through the centuries; the regional wildlife; and more. Museums and art galleries honor Chesapeake's maritime traditions: shipbuilding, sailing, fishing, crabbing and waterfowling. Stories are found at the historic courthouse; the Nathan of Dorchester skipjack; the Christ Episcopal Church with roots back to 1694; and its cemetery with final resting sites for four Maryland governor.

CHURCH CREEK

A small community settled along a creek of the same name; can trace its heritage to nearby Old Trinity Church, circa 1690. Several homes date back to the 18th century and are being preserved and maintained. It is located about seven miles southwest of Cambridge. Abundant with white oak and pine, the Church Creek area thrived on shipbuilding for many years.

COMMUNITIES

EAST NEW MARKET

Native Americans and European settlers traded here, near the North-South Choptank Indian trail. Today, the town's historic buildings represent a variety of 18th, 19th and 20th century architecture. At each of the four entrances to the town stands a church. In 1975 the entire town was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Follow a self-guided walking tour to see the district that contains almost all the residences of the original founders and offers excellent examples of colonial architecture. A guided brochure is available at the Visitor Center.

ELLIOTT ISLAND

Just 18 miles south of Vienna and U.S. Route 50. This quaint waterfront village on Fishing Bay is home to approximately 70 locals. Great views of the wetlands, wildlife and waterfront are found along this beautiful scenic drive.

GALESTOWN

Galestown is located in the northeast corner of Dorchester County around Gales Creek and Galestown Millpond. Prior to settlement, this land was Nanticoke Indian Territory. Then, the region was part of a deed called "Harpers Delight," dating back to 1714. It was later named Galestown after an early settler's family, Dr. Gale. The unspoiled natural resources of the pond, the creek and the river attract anglers year-round.

HOOPERS ISLAND

Hoopers Island actually comprises three islands with authentic working watermen villages. Some local properties have the earliest colonizer land grants in Dorchester, issued in 1659, 10 years before the county was officially established. The main island was allegedly "purchased" from the Native Americans in exchange for blankets. The bridge to the Lower Island was destroyed in the Great August Storm of 1933.

HURLOCK

Incorporated in 1892 and the second-largest municipality in Dorchester. The Delaware Railroad built a station here in 1867, and John M. Hurlock built a storehouse and his residence nearby. But it was not until 1890, when the Baltimore, Chesapeake and Atlantic (BC&A) Railroad intersected the Delaware Railroad in Hurlock, that the town really grew. Hurlock still holds the distinction of being the industrial and commercial hub of northern Dorchester, which is reflected in the town's motto, "On track ... since 1892." Hurlock houses several industries and businesses related to food and poultry products, trucking and other manufacturing. The Hurlock Free Library, which is the oldest library on the Eastern Shore and the second oldest in the state, originated in the home of Henry Walworth in 1900. With public and private funds, the Town refurbished the train station, based on the designs of the original 1867 structure. The Town also owns two passenger cars that provide train rides each October during the Hurlock Fall Festival.



LINKWOOD AND SALEM

Small communities that date back to the 1600s. Largely agricultural, they were centered around a Native American trail and chapel. Today, the busy Linkwood-Salem Volunteer Fire Company offers hot and tangy barbecue chicken as a popular roadside fundraiser.

THE NECK DISTRICT

The Neck District is a combination of small villages, filled with a population of farmers, watermen, retirees, locals and newcomers. Winding west on Route 343 beyond Cambridge, you'll pass through Lloyds, Hudson, Cornersville, James, Thomas and Hills Point. These villages command water views of the Choptank River's convergence with the Chesapeake Bay. One point of interest is the Neck District Grill, located in a historic former general store (the Lewis Country Store, which had been in operation since 1875 at the corner of Route 343 and Todd Point Road). Even former President Jimmy Carter has been known to drop in and swap a story or two.

continued on the following page



A Great Blue Heron dances along the edge of the water at Blackwater Wildlife Refuge. (WATER MOVES US/ANDREW WEST)

continued from the previous page

SECRETARY

Secretary was founded at the time of the proprietary governorships of Maryland in 1661. While in Maryland, Lord Sewell served as Secretary of the Province of Maryland. In his honor, the land he owned was named Secretary. He built a home called Lady Sewell's Manor with spacious rooms and enormous fireplaces. A section of that home remains and can be seen today.

SOUTH DORCHESTER

Filled with small villages. Driving in the Church Creek region, you can pass through Woolford and Madison, both rich in a history of shipbuilding and tobacco farming. Or, turn onto Route 336 and through the villages of Crapo, Wingate, Bishops Head, Toddlerville and Crocheron, where many still make their living working in the water and seafood processing plants.

TAYLORS ISLAND

Located on Route 16 in the southwest part of the county. Unique homes, schoolhouses, a museum and three churches are points of interest. Many sites on the island are listed on the National Historic Register. This large island, comprising 1,100 acres, is a classic illustration of Chesapeake Bay tidal marsh habitat.

VIENNA

Located on the eastern edge of Dorchester and explored by Captain John Smith in 1608, one of the oldest colonial settlements in the state. This small community is home to a 1768 Customs House, the Vienna Heritage Museum and a waterfront park, among many historic properties. The Nause-Waiwash Band of Indians hosts an annual powwow here each September. Near town, the Handsell historic site tells the story of slavery, settlers and native peoples.

Volunteers help Richardson Maritime Museum sail

In 2025, the Richardson Maritime Museum was recognized as the Organization of the Year, winning the Heart of Chesapeake Heritage Area Award, in recognition of their impact in Dorchester County and honoring their commitment.

The Museum was founded in memory of Capt. James B. Richardson, a prominent local boatbuilder.

"Mr. Jim's" dedication to the traditional wooden boatbuilding skills and to passing on those skills to new generations of boatwrights inspired the founders of the Museum to establish an organization dedicated not just to preserving his memory, but to continuing his efforts of keeping the art of boatbuilding alive.

The Richardson Maritime Museum highlights the history of Dorchester County on the waters of the Chesapeake.

"Our goals for 2025 were to get open, to get something open so that the public can come in and visit it, and to get our education programs running. And, and we've been able to meet those goals," said Debbie Usab, Executive Director.

The museum takes great pride in the volunteers who serve there.

"They have been working diligently for the past two years to get these programs up and running and to get our museum open, which opened in October," says Usab.

As the maritime museum is honored with organization of the year, they're turning their attention towards 2026.

"For 2026, what we want to do is build that educational program and make it even bigger and better," said Usab.

The Richardson Maritime Museum says that winning this Organization of the Year Award is a big step forward for them, especially as they're working to obtain more grants. They're also looking for people to become docents for the museum.

Currently, the historic Sequoia – a presidential yacht which celebrated its 100th anniversary last fall – is at the Richardson Museum under protective covering in anticipation of future renovations.



The Sequoia, a presidential yacht which is now 100 years old, will undergo renovations at the Richardson Museum.
(SUBMITTED PHOTO)

In an important moment in its history, on October 27, 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt sailed on the Sequoia for a dedication ceremony at the Choptank River Bridge.



Dorchester County Tourism Director Holly Gilpin was among those attending an April 2025 Sequoia Crew reunion fundraising dinner at Richardson who enjoyed an inside peek at the storied yacht. (SUBMITTED PHOTO)

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Thomas Fine Jewelry celebrates 10 years

By Debra R. Messick

On April 1, 2016, brother and sister Thomas and Amanda Robinson opened the doors to Thomas's Fine Jewelry at 525 Poplar Street in downtown Cambridge.

The historic brick building dates from 1899.

It had previously been home to Lednum's, the last of four local jewelers who had served the community simultaneously.

A glance around the shop reveals pictures customers drew, painted and photographed for the owners and their bulldogs, Thomas and Amanda.

Long time locals also regularly bring the Robinsons pieces of the shop's past—phones, ads, brochures, ring boxes, and news articles—which they've devoted an inner window to displaying.

Born and raised in Philadelphia, the siblings spent each summer on the banks of the Little Choptank River in Dorchester County, soaking in the joys of life along the water.

Growing into adulthood, Thomas, now 36 with two youngsters of his own, spent years training and apprenticing under a bench jeweler, dreaming of opening his own shop one day, in a city whose renowned Jewelers' Row could easily have beckoned.

But when the Robinsons' Realtor parents, who had first brought them to the area, learned about Lednum's shop becoming available, Thomas and Amanda,



Thomas Robinson, left, and sister Amanda, right, opened Thomas's Fine Jewelry in the former Lednum's Jewelers location at 525 Poplar Street, Cambridge, in April 2016. This year marks the brother and sister team's 10th anniversary. (WATER MOVES US/DEBRA R. MESSICK)

who also has a passion for small business, jewelry, and retail, decided the opportunity was too good to pass up.

The duo still marvels at the challenges and rewards of having undertaken "the novelty of starting a business out of nothing."

Amanda, 39, who welcomed baby Amelia to her family last year, likened their two-person operation to a restaurant operation.

"Thomas' role is similar to the chef, in the back being creative. I'm out front as the maitre d, interacting with the public, overseeing their requests and needs," she said.

From closing on the property in December 2015 through March 31, 2016, the two worked nonstop to spruce, refurbish, and add their own touches to a space that already was graced with "good bones," Thomas said.

Starting with little inventory at the outset, they gradually began to fill the built-in showcases with pearls and gemstones, watches and frames, and estate treasures.

Thomas was steadily creating shore-inspired wearable works of art, designs featuring all kinds of fish — rockfish to flounder to snakeheads, crabs, oysters, waterfowl, turkeys, and more, crafted directly from claws, shells, and other remnants washed ashore.

One popular necklace design called "the little dipper" features a tiny crab being collected in a net.

In addition to lending her own creative touch to the shop's magical window displays, Amanda has naturally taken to learning the names of each customer, their grandparents, and children, developing the kind of trusted relationships a community learns to treasure, and which the siblings admit has come to mean a great deal to them, as well.

"We never know who's going to walk through the door, or what they'll need, from a simple watch pin, which we can offer to get quickly, without a two-week wait, to seeking guidance about what's contained within a shoe box of inherited heirlooms," Thomas said.

To show how much their adopted community has come to mean, the Robinsons consider it an honor to contribute to groups like Cambridge Elks Lodge #1272, creating dozens and dozens of memorial brass plaques honoring departed members. They've also donated gift certificates to the annual Fun Dog Show benefiting Baywater Animal Rescue, and one valued at \$200 for the Ice and Oyster Festival to benefit the Dorchester Chamber of Commerce Scholarship Fund.

For more information, visit thomassfinejewelry.com.



Art adorns the shelves and walls of the jewelry shop. (SUBMITTED PHOTO)

Mid-Bay project brings new life to Barren Island

By Debra R. Messick

When first occupied by European settlers in 1664 and throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, it is estimated that Barren Island was nearly 1,000 acres in size. Located in Tar Bay off western Dorchester County, the area once contained 14 farms, a school, several stores and a church.

After the last inhabitants departed in 1916, the island became home to a hunting lodge, but it was gradually swallowed up by the rising water. Acquired by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the site represents critical habitat within increasingly disappearing land-masses within the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem.

Estimates show Barren Island losing 3-4 feet of shoreline each year due to erosion — about 40 acres — in the last two decades.

But now, according to Jeremy Todd, Public Information Specialist for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Baltimore District Office, Barren Island is in the process of getting a new lease on life, courtesy of The Mid-Chesapeake Bay Island Ecosystem Restoration project.

"It follows the successful model established at Poplar Island (in the Chesapeake Bay west of Talbot County) where the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Baltimore District has partnered with Maryland Department of



The Barren Island restoration process could be seen underway in October 2025 in drone photos
(SUBMITTED PHOTO)

Transportation, Maryland Port Administration, and other agencies to restore disappearing Chesapeake Bay islands using dredged material from Baltimore Harbor navigation projects," Todd said.

The Mid-Bay Restoration team said dredge material required to restore 72 acres of bird and animal habitat at Barren Island originates locally, about a mile away.

"Future wetland habitat will be created using approximately 335,000 cubic yards of material hydraulically dredged from the Honga River channel, which was last dredged by the corps in 2009, to its authorized depth of seven feet," team members stated.

By the end of 2026, all of the perimeter

rock work and bird island construction will likely be completed. Filling of the future wetland area with dredged Honga River material will be ongoing through early 2027.

After the Phase 2 contract concludes in fall of 2027, future contract phases will be needed to create and plant the wetland habitat.

The full Mid-Bay Project, which will also include a rebuilt James Island, is anticipated to be completed in 2067.

Surveys taken in 2020 identified 91 bird and 42 fish species in and around Barren Island.

Species expected to utilize the restored habitats include:

♦**Birds:** Brown pelican, semipalmated plover, sanderling, spotted sandpiper, willet, clapper rail, great blue heron, least sandpiper, great egret, bald eagle, osprey, eastern bluebird, saltmarsh sparrow, seaside sparrow, marsh wren, terns (common/Forster's, least, and royal), black skimmer, and American black duck;

♦**Fish:** Bay anchovy, Atlantic menhaden, Atlantic silverside, mummichog, red drum, summer flounder, striped killifish, spot, butterfish, weakfish, herring species;

♦**Others:** Blue crab, oysters, hooked mussels, barnacles, small bivalves and polychaete worms.

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Hurlock mayor builds on sense of community

By Debra R. Messick

The vibe in Hurlock these days is one of good, welcoming neighbors.

Earl H. Murphy, who became mayor in December 2025, presided over the town's inaugural Taste of Hurlock, featuring new eatery Cora Lee's and popular mainstay Hurlock Gas and Deli, as one of his first duties.

The event offered a sneak preview of his goals of highlighting Hurlock's rich past and heralding a future he sees as full of possibilities.

For years, Mayor Murphy – then as a councilman – and his wife Michelle welcomed hundreds of guests to “Marshmallows with the Murphys” in his backyard. It featured s'mores and hayrides.

“This past year, we hosted about a thousand people, serving 900 hot dogs,” Mayor Murphy said.

A new initiative in town was the arrival of a Salvation Army Red Kettle at Hurlock Gas and Deli. Bellringers, including Chesapeake Dawgs youth football players, turned out and helped raise \$75,000.

To replace the beloved Wheatley Christmas Tree in town, the mayor solic-

ited the help of fellow Lions Club member Tanya Harding of Harding Tree Expert to get a new one planted. He invited school children and residents to adorn it with meaningful ornaments.

If you're among the Hurlock citizens taking him up on his open invitation to schedule a “Mornings with the Mayor” meet up, and ask him, Murphy is likely to bring out the basket of inaugural ornaments kept safely tucked away in his office, along with his own treasured mementos. They include a photo from when he and his wife operated Norma Sue's Creations, a flower shop his mother started.

The photo shows Murphy in full character as “Bumbles” the Bee, beside a van painted yellow and black, and christened “The Pollenator” that had generated a huge, award-winning marketing buzz.

His latest attention-grabbing vehicle is



Earl H. Murphy enjoys sharing his plans for the future of Hurlock, and listening to concerns of its citizens, in his Town Hall office.
(WATER MOVES US/DEBRA R. MESSICK)

a trolley that will be used in parades and roadside displays to promote the Town of Hurlock.

A frequent traveler to Ocean City, Murphy recalled that they had once had such a vehicle, but after only being used for 25,000 miles of service, it had been sold to Delmarva Community Transit. The latter only put 1,500 miles on it.

For \$6,000, which included some private donations, the town bought it.

“Our goal would be to encourage travelers along Rt. 50 to turn left toward Hurlock and discover all that our town has to offer,” Murphy said. “Everywhere the trolley travels, it can function as a mobile billboard, proudly displaying the spirit, history, and hospitality of Hurlock.

“This project represents more than just a float; it's a chance to build pride, promote our businesses, and connect our community in meaningful ways.”



Hurlock Mayor Earl H. Murphy envisions a 30 seat vintage trolley style bus serving as a portable parade float and “mobile bill board” promoting the town's heritage and tourism. (SUBMITTED PHOTO)

Shining a light on Dorchester's Latin community



A fiesta of images honoring the Latin population of Dorchester County comprise the “Shine Your Light” Mural at 118 Cedar St., Cambridge, created by artist Miriam Moran and completed August, 2025. (WATER MOVES US/DEBRA R. MESSICK)

By Debra R. Messick

Since 2019, Artist Miriam Moran has pursued the goal of bringing a public mural honoring Dorchester's Latino community to her adopted hometown of Cambridge.

Despite challenges in funding and support, in August 2025 her vision became reality, transforming a blank wall on a drab corner of Cedar Street, one of the city's main thoroughfares, into a visual fiesta of vibrant color and life.

In December 2025, Moran learned that the mural had been named the prestigious Heart of the Chesapeake Heritage Project of the Year.

Moran has also been moved by simple but meaningful tributes, among them, a basket of sweetbreads left at the mural beneath the painting of a Mexican woman carrying the delicacy, and a grateful email from a Calvert High School student named Jazmyne, whose teacher had included the mural in his curriculum.

“Even before the grant money came through, my father and I were at the site, cleaning up trash and repairing the wall,” she said. “I bought and applied white primer, and sketched out the entire mural in two days.

“When I started working, I met many of those I call ‘my family’ — those left behind, unrepresented, living in the shadows,” Moran said.

Titled “Shine Your Light,” Moran's latest public art project emerged as the Eastern Shore's only mural honoring its Latin population.

Originally from New York City, Moran cites her Puerto Rican and Taino Indian heritage as key factors in her artistic journey.

Moran's art initially helped her navigate through healing from a traumatic car accident with serious injuries to her children and herself.

Even while battling the debilitating immune system illness, Lupus, raising a child on the spectrum, and facing back surgery, her purposeful painting has continued unabated despite roadblocks and challenges when support was sought.

Moran praised Barb Seese, former Executive Director of the Dorchester Center for the Arts, who helped her acquire a Maryland Arts Council grant and line up the use of the wall at 118 Cedar St. with the building's owners.

Cambridge residents may know her through recent public creations: the Black Lives Matter mural on Race St. from 2020-2025, the Just a Kid From Cambridge mural near the intersection of Greenwood Avenue and Washington Streets, the Cosby Road rendering of Coretta Scott King's image and words, and in areas honoring educators and youth, among them, Dr. Theresa Stafford's New Beginnings Learning Academy, and the Judy Center at Maple Elementary School.

It was crucial to Moran to feature a variety of Latin cultural representatives, from elders and grandparents to often uncelebrated small farmers and growers, and



Artist Miriam Moran created the Latin mural in Cambridge. (SUBMITTED PHOTO)

workforce members who silently contribute to and invest in society.

Amidst a bevy of imagery celebrating nature's beauty and bounty, Moran inserted several renderings of fauna, from a “very popular” rooster honoring the many practitioners of backyard chicken and egg production, to a “small but mighty” Coqui frog, native to Puerto Rico, whose quiet power reminded her of the local community.

In a personal tribute to this area's indigenous ancestors, Moran painted herself in as a tribal artist festooned with butterflies.

The mural also features an array of flags celebrating the area's expansive Latin heritage.

“During our community pop art day for Shine Your Light mural, we discussed various Latin heritages and traditions, making a significant impact on the unity of cultures, celebrating not just Latin roots but our shared humanity and family connections,” she said.

“In total, the mural celebrates 21 Latin American flags from North to Central America, and of course, the Caribbean. You'll find flags from Colombia, Chile, Guatemala, Panamá, and many more, painted by youth of all ages, along with parents and mentors who came to participate. One of my favorite moments was when a young Sandy Hill student was thrilled to paint the Brazilian flag, honoring her heritage — a heritage many were unaware she possessed,” Moran said.

“The ‘Shine Your Light’ mural represents the culmination of years of persistence, vision, and heart,” Seese said. “What emerged from our collaboration is far more than an extraordinary work of visual art. It is a catalyst for cultural connection, dialogue, and pride.”

For more information, visit artistmiriammoran.com.

MARINAS

CAMBRIDGE MUNICIPAL YACHT BASIN

2 Yacht Club Drive, Cambridge
(410) 228-4031
cambridgeyachtbasin.com

Located on the Choptank River near the mouth of Cambridge Creek. With a maximum depth of 13 feet, it is an ideal stop for boats large and small. Whether you are out for a day trip on a 20-foot boat or on a weekly excursion on a large 200-foot luxury yacht, the facility can accommodate a variety of guests near historical Cambridge.

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1 Mill Street, Cambridge
(410) 228-2141
www.cambridgeyachtclub.org

If you do travel as a club member, there is reciprocity with many other yacht clubs. Marina features deep-water slips, water and electric service at every slip, direct access to the Choptank River, shower facilities, dining for members, transient slips for cruisers and walking distance to nearby restaurants and retail.

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205 Cedar Street, Cambridge
(410) 228-2520
generation3marina.com

Generation III Marina is located at the head of Cambridge Creek. Overnight slips, showers, electric, pump out, marine supplies, full-service boatyard.

GOOTEE'S MARINE

1439 Hoopers Island Road, Church Creek
(410) 397-3122
gootees.com

Marina: In Golden Hill, on Wallace Creek off the Honga River. Overnight slips, electric, fuel, pump out, ice, groceries, marine supplies, repair and sales. Fishing Charters: Bait and tackle provided. Boat sales and service since 1955.

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The Dorothy Megan paddle wheel boat hosts lunch, dinner and sight-seeing cruises on the Choptank River. It launches from Suicide Bridge near Hurlock. (WATER MOVES US/ANDREW WEST)

(410) 397-3200

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100 Heron Boulevard, Cambridge
(410) 901-6380
hyatt.com

At Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay Resort, those who dock their boats at the 150-slip marina overnight will enjoy guest privileges throughout the resort. Slips range from 30-by-16 feet to 80-by-25 feet, and have electric, cable, wireless internet and water hookup available. The marina store offers boating accessories, apparel, liquor, soft drinks, ice and light snacks.

SLAUGHTER CREEK MARINA

638 Taylors Island Road, Taylors Island
(410) 221-5000
slaughtercreekmarina.com

Slaughter Creek Marina is located on Route 16 West, alongside the Slaughter Creek Bridge. It is open seven days a week and offers deep-water boat slips, a ship store, boat and bike rentals, a 25-ton travel lift, dry storage, fuel dock, marine pump out station, pool and bath house, and more. Located on protected Slaughter Creek, just 4 miles from the Chesapeake Bay off the Little Choptank River, the marina is convenient for crabbing, fishing and adventuring, with a 7-plus foot channel, plenty of parking, nearby golfing,

facilities for motor homes and extra lodging in the area.

SUICIDE BRIDGE RESTAURANT MARINA

6304 Suicide Bridge Road, Hurlock
(410) 943-4689
suicide-bridge-restaurant.com/suicide-bridge-marina

Located at Cabin Creek off the Choptank River (at Daymark #38), the marina offers water, electric, ice and pump-out facilities. year-round and transient boat slips. The restaurant has dockside dining, drinks, sandwiches, blue crabs, entrees and more.

TAYLORS ISLAND FAMILY CAMPGROUND MARINA

4362 Bay Shore Road, Taylors Island
(410) 397-3275
facebook.com/taylorsislandfamcamp

Located on Taylors Island off the Chesapeake Bay, the marina offers transient slips, a bathhouse, store and camping.

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