

BELL TOWER

VOL 44.11 - NOVEMBER 2025

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



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- Chamber After Hours
- Leadership Allegany Rising
- Annual Meeting
- Ribbon Cutting
- And more...



FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO



Our newsletter is packed this month and we are working to round out the year!

Thank you to all of our sponsors, attendees, facilitators, and displayers who made UpNext a success! We had over fifty participants in the workshops, a great flow of students, faculty and staff, and with a variety of food trucks on campus, no one was hungry!

An important program that we hold each year is State of the County. This is free for our members to attend only \$10 for non-members. Given the challenges our community has faced this year, we will hear from Administrator Jason Bennett and Commissioner Dave Caporale on the current economic status of Allegany County. (Page 7)

We will host a public meeting on the River Park at Canal Place on November 25 (Page 8). The River Park is positioned as an opportunity for business growth in Cumberland and beyond and attendees will hear a progress report, benefits to the local outdoor recreation economy and examples of how it will directly benefit the community, an update on trail design, and technical attributes of the project.

The Chamber's Annual Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 4 at 12pm. Members will hear about 2026 strategies and an overview of 2025 accomplishments. New and returning Directors will be voted on, as well. (Pages 10-11)

Our annual Pre-Legislative Breakfast is on Friday, December 5 at Rocky Gap Casino Resort and we'll host our Delegation for an overview of what to expect going into the 2026 legislative session. If you have questions you'd like to submit in advance, please contact us.

We end the year in the best way with a Member Holiday Reception (Page 13) and this year's theme is fun, relaxed, and just what you need! See you there!





Up/next: A Business & Skills Exchange

2

THANK YOU SPONSORS



AT&T



UPMC
WESTERN
MARYLAND

M&T Bank



FSU/WCBC Student Salute



The CHAMBER
ALLEGANY COUNTY, MD

FROSTBURG
STATE UNIVERSITY

2025

WCBC
ALLEGANY COUNTY, MD

STUDENT SALUTE

Are you a high school senior? Sign up for the Student Salute and be recognized for your accomplishments on the WCBC morning radio show! Attending FSU and meet GPA requirements too? Be entered for a scholarship up to \$5,000!

Sign-up deadline is December 19th!

SPONSORED BY: **CHESSIE**
FEDERAL CREDIT UNION



**MEMBER
CHECK-IN**

Has the
Chamber
helped you?

[Click to tell us!](#)





New Members

3

Save the Westernport Library
P.O. Box 322
 Westernport, MD 21562
 Phone: 301-697-0966
 Contact: Trish Morgan Keating
 Email:
 tmorgan0305@gmail.com

In Between Cafe
 1262 Vocke Road, Ste 284
 LaVale, MD 21502
 Phone: 301-876-3492
 Contact: Brea Ishler
 Email:
 tothemaxmaryland@outlook.com

The Wills Hotel
69 Baltimore Street
 Cumberland, MD 21502
 Phone:
 Contact: Nadia Bloom
 Email:
 nbloom@rileyhg.com



Upcoming Events & Meetings

November 2025

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5 MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE 9 AM	6 RECOGNITION RECEPTION 6-8:30 PM	7 RURAL KING BIRDSHORN CUTTING 9 AM	8
9	10	11 CLOSED	12	13 EDUCATION COMMITTEE 8:30 AM	14	15
16	17	18 LEADERSHIP ALLEGANY STEERING 9 AM	19 CHAMBER AFTER HOURS 5:30 PM	20 BOARD OF DIRECTORS 12 PM	21 MEMBERSHIP 101 10 AM	22
23	24	25	26 THANKSGIVING CLOSED	27 THANKSGIVING CLOSED	28	29
30						

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3 MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE 9 AM	4 ANNUAL MEETING 12 PM	5 FRI LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST 9 AM	6
7	8	9	10 EDUCATION COMMITTEE 8:30 AM	11 HOLIDAY RECOGNITION 9 AM	12	13
14	15	16 LEADERSHIP ALLEGANY STEERING 9 AM	17 CHAMBER AFTER HOURS 5:30 PM	18	19 MEMBERSHIP 101 10 AM	20
21	22	23	24 CLOSED	25 CLOSED	26 CLOSED	27
28	29	30	31 CLOSED			

December 2025



GRAND OPENING

Ribbon Cutting

EST'D 1960
RURAL KING
 AMERICA'S FARM & HOME STORE

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 7TH
1262 VOCKE DRIVE
9AM

Light Refreshments & Tours



GRAND OPENING
MESSICK ROAD BRANCH

Ribbon Cutting



WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19TH
12401 MESSICK ROAD
10 AM

Light Refreshments



2025 Annual Recognition Reception

Please join us in honoring

Large Business of the Year

First Peoples Community Federal Credit Union

Small Business of the Year

Chew On This - Jerky

Entrepreneurial Spirit Award

Queen City Creamery

Community Service Award

Maryland Wellness

Non-Profit of the Year Finalists

Evergreen Heritage Center Foundation

The Children's League

Western Maryland Health System Foundation

Outstanding Young Professional

Katelyn Yoder, M&T Bank

Sponsored by



UPMC | WESTERN MARYLAND

M&T Bank



presents

CHAMBER AFTER HOURS

AT

UPMC WESTERN MARYLAND

with

THE MINERAL COUNTY CHAMBER

12500 WILLOWBROOK ROAD
CUMBERLAND, MD 21502

JOIN US FOR DRINKS,
REFRESHMENTS AND PRIZES

MUST BE PRE-REGISTERED AND PRESENT TO WIN!

NETWORK & WIN \$750!



Leadership Allegany
Classes of 2000 2010 & 2020

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2025

5:30-7:30PM

\$5.00 REGISTRATION FEE (MEMBERS)

\$15.00 REGISTRATION FEE (NON-MEMBERS)

MUST BE 21 OR OVER TO ATTEND



ALLEGANY COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
24 FREDERICK STREET | CUMBERLAND, MD 21502
301-722-2820 ANDREA@ALLEGANYCOUNTYCHAMBER.COM

ALLEGANY

COUNTY

MARYLAND

STATE OF THE COUNTY

**Pre-registration
is Required**

Members: Free
Non-Members: \$10.00

featuring

Jason Bennett
County Administrator

Dave Caporale
County Commissioner

Monday, November 17th @ 9am
Allegany College of Maryland
College Theatre

**Contact the
Chamber if you'd
like to submit a
question.**

24 Frederick St.
Cumberland, MD 21502
www.alleganycountychamber.com
info@alleganycountychamber.com
301-722-2820



The
CHAMBER

ALLEGANY COUNTY, MD



Public Meeting

Tuesday, November 25th at 6:00pm

Allegany Museum, 2nd Floor

Join us for a public meeting about the River Park at Canal Place project. Hear about progress that has been made on the project. Details about the land based amenities and updated timelines for completion.

Guest speakers will include;

Dee Dee Ritchie, CPPDA

Ashli Workman, Allegany County Government

Andrew Arnold, GD&F

Bobby Smith, City of Cumberland

Brought to you by:



ANNUAL MEETING



Cumberland Country Club
10200 Country Club Road NE
Cumberland, MD 21502



December 4, 2025
12PM

REGISTRATION REQUIRED \$25/PERSON

BOARD OF DIRECTOR CANDIDATES:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| ✓ Crystal Bender, ServiceMaster | ✓ S. Ramani Pillai, Buckel, Levasseur, Pillai & Beeman |
| ✓ Jeremy Irons, Carl Belt, Inc. | ✓ Brandi Rice, First United Bank & Trust |
| ✓ Julie McBee, State Farm Ins. | ✓ Lee Woodward, Vector Facility Group |

CANDIDATES FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CRYSTAL BENDER



Crystal, along with her husband Jeremy, own and operate ServiceMaster of Allegany County, located in Cumberland, MD. She holds an associate's degree in business accounting from Allegany College of Maryland and primarily handles the finances for the business, but as with any small business owner, is experienced in employee management, human resources, and customer service.

Crystal is currently serving in her 2nd term on the Allegany County Board of Education and has served as President for 3 of those years. She also currently serves on The Cumberland Housing Authority Board and The Chamber of Commerce Board. Crystal and Jeremy reside in Cumberland with their 2 sons and 2 bernedoodles.

JEREMY IRONS



Jeremy C. Irons is a Vice President for The Belt Group of Companies. He began his career with Carl Belt, Inc. as an accountant; performing payroll & job costing duties. In 2009, he transitioned from the accounting department to project management, eventually becoming a Vice President in the company. His experience includes work in commercial, education, health care, historical renovation, utilities & heavy highway.

Jeremy is a Past Chairman of the Allegany County Chamber of Commerce and is also a member and Chair of the Legislative Committee and Chair of the Crab Feast committee. He is a member of the Western Maryland Jaycees and received the 2016 Outstanding Young Professional Award. Jeremy is also the Co-Chair of the Mountain Maryland PACE Reception held annually in

Annapolis, serves on the Frostburg State University College of Business Advisory Board, and the Supervisory Board for the First Peoples Community Credit Union.

A lifelong Allegany County resident, he is actively involved in local athletics serving as an Executive Board member and coach for the Cumberland Dapper Dan Club and was the 2018 Dapper Dan Man of the Year. He also currently serves on the board of the Cumberland Adaptive Sports League CASL and previously served as the JV baseball coach at Allegany High School.

BRANDI RICE



Brandi L Rice is a Vice President and Regional Relationship Manager with First United Bank & Trust. Since starting her career in banking in 2008, Brandi has held many roles including Teller, Customer Service Officer, Senior Relationship Advisor, Community Relationship Manager and Commercial Relationship Manager. Brandi is also involved in several community organization including Potomac Highlands United Way as a board member and Co-Chair of the Annual Campaign Committee, and The Frostburg Cougar's youth football league, where her husband, Randy, is the head coach. Brandi is a 2020 graduate of Leadership Allegany and graduated from Maryland Banking School with honors in 2024. She attends Mountain City Church in Frostburg where she is on the finance team and works in the Children's Ministry. In her free time, she enjoys shopping at local boutiques, reading, and spending time with her husband,

their son Grayson, and bulldog, Dabo. She resides in Mt Savage, MD.

S. RAMANI PILLAI



Ramani Pillai is a partner at the law firm of Buckel, Levasseur, Pillai, & Beeman, LLC, in Cumberland, Maryland. He has practiced law in Cumberland and surrounding areas for approximately 20 years and has maintained a broad range legal practice in both Maryland and West Virginia. Mr. Pillai currently represents Allegany County Board of Zoning Appeals as well as the Allegany County Board of License Commissioners.

In addition to the Chamber Board of Directors, Ramani serves as Vice President to the Board for Tri State Community Health Center and has been on that board since approximately 2004 and is on the Board for the Children's Adaptive Sports League.

He received his Bachelor's Degree from Washington and Jefferson College in 1993, his Law Degree from Thomas M. Cooley School of Law in 1997 and then his Masters of Laws and Health Law from DePaul University in 1998.

Ramani was born and raised in Cumberland, Maryland and moved back in approximately 2001 where he currently resides with his wife, Kimberly, and their two children.

CANDIDATES FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

JULIE MCBEE



I am a graduate of Fort Hill High School and Frostburg State University. I majored in Spanish with a minor in French. I spent 17 years in public education as a classroom teacher, assistant principal and principal in middle and high school. I came to State Farm in January of 2023 when they offered me my very own agency! I now work for one of the best companies ever! I love my job! Helping people manage their insurance and investments is very rewarding! I love being active in the community rather than through our church, community sports, food drives, the food pantry or helping with the homeless.

I am married to my husband of 17 years and three children! My husband is a 20-year deputy of the ACSO and a local business owner of Creekside Trucking and Blue Line Design and Landscape Center. We love our communities and continue to find ways to build a better tomorrow!

LEE WOODWARD



Lee Woodward is the Founder and Principal of Vector Facility Group, a forward-thinking facility management firm recognized for operational excellence and strategic partnership. A U.S. Marine Corps veteran, Lee brings the discipline, precision, and leadership honed through service to every aspect of his work. With extensive experience across sales, operations, and engineering, he combines analytical insight with creative problem solving to deliver high-value results for clients. Lee's relationship-driven approach and vision for innovation have positioned Vector as a trusted partner, known for transforming complex challenges into measurable performance and long-term success.

A native of Washington County and long-time resident of the Cumberland area, Lee studied at Shepherd University and West Virginia University before launching a career defined by service and leadership. Deeply committed to his community, he takes pride in contributing to local growth and development—both through Vector's impact and his personal involvement in regional initiatives. Outside of work, Lee enjoys spending time outdoors with his wife, three Golden Retrievers, and three cats, often recharging with long walks, good company, and the occasional pumpkin spice latte—finding inspiration in the same balance of focus, creativity, and connection that drives his professional life.

Notice of Annual Meeting of the Allegany County Chamber of Commerce

**Thursday, December 4, 2025
Cumberland Country Club
Noon
\$25.00 per person**

The Board of Directors has approved the Nominating Committee's recommendation of the following candidates to serve a three-year term on the Board of Directors:

Crystal Bender, ServiceMaster
Jeremy Irons, Carl Belt, Inc.
Brandi Rice, First United Bank & Trust
S. Ramani Pillai, Buckel, Levasseur, Pillai & Beeman
Julie McBee, State Farm Insurance
Lee Woodward, Vector Facilities Group

The Allegany County Chamber of Commerce bylaws indicate that "additional names of candidates for directors can be nominated by petition bearing the genuine signature of at least five qualified members of the Chamber. Such petition shall be filed with the Nominating Committee after notice has been given of the names of those nominated. The determination of the Nominating Committee as to the legality of the petition(s) shall be final." The deadline for submitting write-in candidates is Monday, November 24.

Elections will be held at the beginning of the luncheon.

IMPORTANT!

Your vote is important to the candidates. For your company to cast its full share of votes, the correct names of your designated representatives must be on file at the Chamber office. If you are in doubt about who your voting representatives are, please contact the Chamber office - 301-722-2820.

PRE-LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2025
9:00AM

ROCKY GAP CASINO RESORT
\$25 PER PERSON

A PREVIEW OF THE
2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Featuring

SENATOR MIKE MCKAY

Delegates

**TERRY BAKER
JASON BUCKEL
JIM HINEBAUGH**



**ONLINE
REGISTRATION
REQUIRED**



Holiday Reception

FOR OUR MEMBERS & GUESTS

Come Join the Holiday Cheer!

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2025

4:00 TO 7:00PM



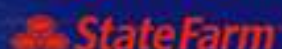
ALLEGANY MUSEUM
3 PERSHING STREET



COMPLIMENTARY



HORS D'OEUVRES & REFRESHMENTS



MUST BE 21 YEARS OF AGE TO ATTEND

RSVP ONLINE AT WWW.ALLEGANYCOUNTYCHAMBER.COM

GAMES & FUN
THEMED
PHOTO
BOOTH

The
CHAMBER
ALLEGANY COUNTY, MD

BE SURE TO
WEAR YOUR
UGLIEST
SWEATER!

CHRISTMAS VACATION