

The

BELLTOWER



VOL 44.12 - DECEMBER 2025

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



IN THIS ISSUE

- Upcoming Events
- Chamber After Hours
- Pre-Legislative Breakfast
- Annual Meeting
- Ribbon Cutting
- And more...



FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO



As we approach the end of another busy and successful year, our Annual Membership Meeting is just days away, scheduled for Thursday, December 4. We hope you will plan to attend to hear about the work in 2025 that is going to make 2026 one for the books! The Pre-Legislative Breakfast will follow on Friday, December 5 at 9am, and Holiday Reception is going to be the fun we need to wrap up on December 11.

I want to express deep gratitude to every member. It has not been an easy year for business. Despite increased fees and expenses from newly passed legislation and policies, workforce challenges, and more, your ongoing support, participation, and dedication are what make our chamber vibrant and effective.

I also offer a special thank you to **Rob Collette**, who led the Board this year, always bearing in mind the Chamber's mission to serve its members. As we say farewell to **Parika Andreassen**, **Hampton Inn of Frostburg**, and **Molly Beeman, Boggs & Company**, it's a reminder that our community has tremendous leaders and we are always sad to let them move on, but know they will continue to make a positive impact. We are fortunate to also have a dedicated staff and my appreciation for **Andrea Kraft** and **Alex Mitchell** is immeasurable. Andrea continues to lead our marketing and communications in a way that inspires others, and Alex has brought a level of attention to detail and steady focus that allows me to concentrate on strengthening our programs, partnerships, and member support. Their commitment to our mission shows in everything we are able to deliver.

Thank you for another year of inspiration. It is a joy to know so many amazing people who make our community what it is. I wish you and your families a joyful, peaceful holiday season and a 2026 filled with growth, connection, and success.



Holiday Reception Sponsors Needed



HOLIDAY RECEPTION SPONSORS NEEDED THE EVENT WILL BE HELD ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12TH FROM 4:00 PM TO 7:00 PM AT THE ALLEGANY MUSEUM. THE RECEPTION IS ALWAYS WELL ATTENDED AND PROVIDES A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO GAIN EXPOSURE FOR YOUR BUSINESS. THERE WILL BE FOOD, DRINK,

AND UNLIMITED NETWORKING! SPONSORSHIPS ARE \$500 AND ARE LIMITED TO JUST 3 MORE. PLEASE CONTACT THE CHAMBER OFFICE IF YOU HAVE AN INTEREST OR WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION. 301-722-2820



FSU/WCBC Student Salute

The CHAMBER
ALLEGANY COUNTY, MD

FROSTBURG
STATE UNIVERSITY

2026

WCBC
AM 1070 WJZL 107.7 FM 107.7

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:

KEEP IN MIND...

Your investment in the Chamber is not only an investment in your business - it supports opportunities for new businesses, too! Thank you for choosing to make the Chamber part of your work!



New Members

Longhorn Steakhouse

1268 Vocke Road
 LaVale, MD 21502
 Phone: 240-609-3200
 Contact: Bob Volkert
 Email: trvolkertiii@loho.com

December 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 GOLF COMMITTEE 9 AM	2	3 EDWARD JONES RIBBON CUTTING 11 AM	4 ANNUAL MEETING 12P	5 PRE-LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST 9 AM	6
7	8 LONGHORN RIBBON CUTTING 2PM	9 MARKETING COMMITTEE 10 AM	10	11 HOLIDAY RECEPTION 4PM EDUCATION COMMITTEE 8:30AM	12	13
14	15	16 LEADERSHIP ALLEGANY STEERING 9 AM	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24 CLOSED	25 CLOSED	26 CLOSED	27
28	29	30	31 CLOSED			



Ribbon Cutting



GRAND OPENING

Ribbon Cutting



**MONDAY,
DECEMBER 8TH
1268 VOCKE DRIVE
2PM**



International Travel

CI Destinations presents
Sunny Portugal
with the Allegheny County Chamber of Commerce
Departing October 14, 2026



HIGHLIGHTS:

- ◆ 7 Nights at 4 star hotel
- ◆ Fatima
- ◆ Lisbon
- ◆ Sintra
- ◆ Cabo Da Roca
- ◆ Cascais
- ◆ Obidos
- ◆ Batalha
- ◆ Porto
- ◆ Douro Valley
- ◆ Aveiro
- ◆ Coimbra

**Only
\$3999 if booked by
March 31, 2026*

*Please contact
the Chamber for
more information at
(301) 722-2820.*



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 G. 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



BE SURE TO
WEAR YOUR
UGLIEST
SWEATER!

CHRISTMAS VACATION



The CHAMBER
ALLEGANY COUNTY, MD

presents

**CHAMBER
AFTER HOURS**



WESTERN MARYLAND
WORKS

at ALLEGANY COLLEGE of MARYLAND

12 LANE AVENUE | LAVALE, MD 21502

Join us for drinks, refreshments, and prizes

Must be pre-registered and present to win | Register online

NETWORK & WIN \$1,000



Leadership Allegany Classes
of 2001, 2011, 2021

Wednesday, January 14 | 5:30-7:30 PM

\$5.00 registration fee (members)
\$15.00 registration fee (non-members)
Must be 21+ to attend.

RSVP BY JANUARY 8

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