

Maryland Independent ■ Wednesday, March 30, 2016



Calendar of events

A LOOK AT THE WEEK AHEAD

Send calendar events (at least two weeks in advance, if possible) to Community, 4475 Regency Place, Suite 301, White Plains, MD 20695. Email items to community@somdnews.com. Include a contact phone number or email on all submissions.

Wednesday, March 30

Family Yoga will be 10:30-11:15 a.m. March 30 at PD Brown Library, 50 Village St., Waldorf. Open to children ages 4-9 and their parents, grandparents and caregivers. Call 301-645-2864.

Tutorías de Computadoras en Español/ Computer Help in Spanish will be 2:30-3 p.m. March 30 at Waldorf West library, 10405 O'Donnell Place. Nuestras clases de computadoras están diseñadas para que usted aprenda en una forma rápida y cómoda como usar el internet, buscar o aplicar para trabajo, tener su cuenta de correo electrónico y otros. Todas las clases son gratis y no necesita registrarse. Para más información pregunta por Ivette. Ages 18 and older. Call 301-645-1395.

Waldorf West Crochet & Knitting Club will meet 6:30 p.m. March 30 at Waldorf West library, 10405 O'Donnell Place. Must bring your own supplies. Ages 16 and older. Call 301-645-1395.

Plant This, Not That will be 6:30 p.m. March 30 at La Plata library, 2 Garrett Ave. Master gardeners will discuss the importance of using native plants and show ways to incorporate them into your garden. Ages 16 and older. Call 301-934-9001.

Vconnections will hold a coffee break 9:10-9:30 a.m. Wednesday mornings at Chick-fil-A, 3365 Crain Highway, Waldorf. Meet and network with other veterans in the community. Sponsored by Chick-fil-A. For information, go to www.vconnections.org.

Tri-County Youth Services Bureau will hold parent workshops 6:30-7:30 p.m. every Wednesday at the office, 75 Industrial Park Drive, Waldorf. Parents and grandparents will increase their parenting skills and develop support networks. For more information, call 301-645-1837.

Tri-County Youth Services Bureau will hold anger management classes for middle and high school students 6:30-7:30 p.m. Wednesdays through March 30 at the office, 75 Industrial Park Drive, Waldorf. For more information, call 301-645-1837.

Thursday, March 31

Acoustic Eclectic Jam will be 6:30 p.m. March 31 at La Plata library, 2 Garrett Ave. Bring your own musical instrument. Ages 18 and older. Call 301-934-9001.

Life-Sized Games will be played 6:30 p.m. March 31 at Potomac library, 3225 Ruth B. Swann Drive, Indian Head. Participants play a different life-sized version of a popular board or computer game. This session Memory will be played. All ages. Call 301-375-7375.

Jazzy Yarns: Crochet and Knitting Class will be 6:30 p.m. March 31 at PD Brown library, 50 Village St., Waldorf. Bring your own supplies. For beginners, bring a skein of yarn and a "J" crochet hook or size 8 or 9 knitting needles. Ages 12 and older. Call 301-645-2864.

Charlotte Hall Veterans Home will hold a winter art show through June 15 at the home, 29449 Charlotte Hall Road. The gallery will be presented along the E-Wing Dining Hallway. For more information, call Charlotte Hall Veterans Home 301-884-8171 ext. 468 or email VeteransHomeArt@gmail.com.

American Legion Auxiliary Unit 82 will hold smoke-free bingo Thursdays at Harry White Wilmer American Legion Post 82, 6330 Crain Highway, La Plata. Doors open 6 p.m. Early birds begin 7 p.m. Call 301-934-8221.

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Growing green

STAFF PHOTOS BY SARA NEWMAN

During the colder months, Erica Elms uses a High Tunnel — a semi-circular tunnel made of polyethylene that locks heat from the sun inside — to grow fresh and organic produce year-round at EatWell Natural Farm in La Plata. The farm grows produce for four restaurants in Washington D.C.

La Plata farm grows produce for DC restaurants

Farm to table, or field to fork, dining means more to Erica Elms than your average food grower. Rather, Elms changed careers because of the worthwhile work she saw in growing food for others to enjoy.

"I like coming to work and feeling like I'm part of the solution," Elms, 34, said of her view of the country's love-hate relationship with food. "I feel good about the work I do. I feel healthy and enjoy being outside everyday."

Elms manages EatWell Natural Farm in La Plata, which is owned and operated by EatWell DC, a restaurant management company that operates four restaurants in Washington D.C. and receives about 10 percent of its fresh produce from the 13 acre farm, one of which is used for planting. Elms controls the day-to-day operations on the farm, including planting a multitude of fruits and vegetables without using chemical fertilizers or pesticides.

Before working the farm, Elms worked in theatre as a stage manager in Atlanta and toured the country as part of the crew of "Hairspray." While touring, Elms said she missed her garden in Atlanta and being able to grow fresh food.

"I tried to hunt down fresh food and I read about fresh food and I really missed that, so I decided to switch careers," Elms, now of Indian Head, said.

She apprenticed at two Georgia farms, Burge Organic Farm and Crystal Organic Farm, and found meaning in the process of growing organically.

Elms said she also enjoys collaborating with the restaurants' chefs and growing ingredients they'll use to create unique dishes, like chef Michael Bonk at The Pig restaurant on 14th St., who uses catnip in a salad dressing.

In addition to The Pig, the farm also grows produce for Grillfish, Logan Tavern and Commissary.

Currently, Elms is working on planting different leafy vegetables, including lettuce, spinach and arugula. Among them, the farm may be bursting at any time of the year with radishes,



Erica Elms grows leafy vegetables like lettuce, arugula, spinach and others in the green house at EatWell Natural Farm in La Plata. The farm is owned by EatWell DC and grows about 10 percent of the company's restaurant produce.

carrots, turnips, beets, peas, asparagus, herbs, eggs, and the list goes on and on. Everything is planned ahead of time to determine when and where an item should be grown on the farm. Elms makes weekly trips into DC to deliver produce once it is harvested and receives compost from two of the restaurants which she uses to help rebuild the soil. After decades of the farm being used to grow tobacco, Elms said the soil was stripped of its nutrients and through the use of crop rotation, cover crops and compost, she is in the process of restoring it.

With the help of a greenhouse and High Tunnel — a semi-circular tunnel made of polyethylene that locks heat from the sun inside — Elms is able to grow organically year-round.

In addition to the chickens, rooster and flock of guinea fowl — which provide chemical-free pest control — Elms is kept company by frequent visitors to the farm who rent the houses on the property through sites like Airbnb, Inc. on weekends and holidays. Through rentals and the Community Supported Agriculture, CSA, network, the farm manages to supplement itself.

With 20 members currently, the CSA is made up of individuals who buy a share of the farm and receive a share of the



Erica Elms, of Indian Head, manages EatWell Natural Farm in La Plata. The farm serves four D.C. restaurants with fresh, organic produce.

harvest.

"It's a way to get this food in the community," Elms said of the CSA. "I feel like because we're growing here and are part of this community it's good for them to benefit from what's being grown here."

The farm is hosting an open house April 23 to introduce

more locals to the farm's mission and get them involved in the process.

"It's a great way to reconnect with where your food comes from," Elms said.

For more information about the farm or to get involved with the CSA, go to eatwellnatural-farm.com.