

HEART OF THE COMMUNITY

Havre de Grace Mayor Wayne Dougherty issued a proclamation Tuesday for **Foster Care Month** to recognize the contributions of foster care families at the Concord Point Lighthouse in Havre de Grace. One hundred blue ribbons lined the fence surrounding the lighthouse and the railing atop the lighthouse, symbolizing the 10,000 children in Maryland's foster care system. The Arc's family services director Dianne Ross and Jerry Reyerson, Department of Social Services director, also acknowledged foster families and the staff of their respective programs. Foster families from The Arc and DSS were also in attendance.



POLICE BLOTTER

Columbia man pleads guilty to having child porn

A Columbia man previously convicted of child sex abuse charges pleaded guilty Thursday to possessing more than 5,000 images of child pornography, according to Maryland U.S. Attorney Rod Rosenstein.

Federal prosecutors said Victor Kunst Jr., 57, bought a subscription in April 2006 to a child pornography Web site using his credit card.

Authorities searched his house in September 2007 and seized his computer, which contained more than 5,000 still images and 200 movies including images of prepubescent children involved in sexual acts.

Kunst was convicted in November 2002 for child sex abuse and was sentenced to three years in prison, all of which were suspended.

Kunst faces up to 20 years in federal prison followed by supervision for life at his sentencing July 24 in U.S. District Court in Baltimore.

He is on Maryland's Sex Offender Registry.



Kunst

Baltimore City pedestrian struck, killed in Glen Burnie

A Baltimore City woman was struck by a car and killed while crossing southbound Ritchie Highway in Glen Burnie, Anne Arundel County police said.

Melessia Johnson, 47, was crossing the highway near Arundel Corporation Road about 8:45 p.m. Wednesday when she was struck by a 1987 Plymouth driven by Dale Lindner, 47, of Glen Burnie, police said.

Johnson died at the scene, police said.

She was crossing the road in an area not designated for pedestrian crossings.

Lindner was transported to the Northern District station where he submitted to a chemical test, police said, but no charges have been filed.

Compiled by Carolyn Peirce

CORRECTION

Due to an editing error, a former police officer was misidentified in a story that ran on Page 4 Wednesday with the headline, "Lightning rod for trouble brewing in Columbia." The officer spoke on the condition of anonymity. *The Examiner* regrets the error.

CHESAPEAKE

Study: Warming could sink Bay beaches

Smith and Tangier islands could be submerged by 2100

By Sara Michael
Examiner Staff Writer

More than half of the Chesapeake Bay's beaches and the state's treasured Smith and Tangier islands could be submerged within the next hundred years if sea levels rise about 2 feet, a new study shows.

"Few places in America are as vulnerable as the Chesapeake Bay," said Patty Glick, senior global warming specialist and lead author of the study released Thursday by the National Wildlife

Federation.

Wiping out thousands of acres of undeveloped land and marshes also threatens the area's animals and plants, putting the region's ecology and economy in jeopardy, researchers said.

The National Wildlife Federation's study of the Chesapeake Bay region is the "most comprehensive and detailed analysis on how sea level rise could affect coastal habitats," Glick said.

Using the middle range of internationally accepted predictions of sea level rise from global warming — about 2 feet — researchers modeled wetland conversion, she said.

By 2100, more than 167,000 acres of undeveloped land and about 161,000 acres of brackish marsh would be replaced by open

On the Net

To view the National Wildlife Federation report, visit nwf.org/chesapeake.

water or salt marsh, the study found. Ocean beaches would decline by 58 percent and estuarine beaches by 69 percent.

In some places, the beaches might recede, but shoreline development and bulkheads would restrict that movement, Glick said.

Warming sea temperatures are affecting some underwater plants and animals, as evident in the destruction of huge areas of eel grass in 2005, said Emmett Duffy, a professor at

the Virginia Institute of Marine Science.

Global warming is one more threat to the Bay ecosystem under attack from pollutants such as nitrogen and phosphorus, said Beth McGee, senior regional water quality scientist at the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

Wetlands filter these pollutants, she added.

Researchers and activists pointed to the need to cut global warming pollution by 2 percent per year to meet an 80 percent reduction goal by 2050.

In Maryland, lawmakers recently mandated a 25 percent reduction in emissions by 2020. A more stringent requirement to reduce emissions by 90 percent by 2050 instead became a goal.

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Survey: 36 percent of Md. drivers text-message behind the wheel

By Taryn Luntz
Examiner Staff Writer

More than one-third of Maryland drivers admit they indulge in the dangerous habit of texting while driving.

Drivers in the state are some of the worst offenders in the nation, with 36 percent of Maryland drivers admitting they let their fingers do the talking when they're on the road, according to a new survey.

The state ranked fourth in the country for drivers taking their hands off the wheel to type messages to their friends, according to a survey by voice-recognition software company Vlingo.

Text messaging has been blamed for some high-profile car accidents in recent years, including a 2007 crash in western New York that killed five teenagers who had graduated from high school days before.

Investigators found that text messages had been sent back and forth from the 17-year-old driver's cell phone just before her car slammed into a truck head-on, killing her and all of her passengers. While the effects of cell phone use have been well-documented as hurting driving skills, research is just beginning into the specific effects of texting.

A study by University of Utah psychology professor Frank Drews

found drivers are 50 percent more likely to be in a crash when they are texting than when they are talking on a cell phone. A driver's chance of crashing increases fourfold when talking on the phone and sixfold when texting, according to the study, which tested college students in controlled driving environments.

"We found that their ability to respond to a car that was braking ahead of them was significantly impaired," Drews said. "They were much, much slower than people who were not text messaging."

Texters took 1.07 seconds to react to a braking vehicle in front of them, while non-texters took 0.88 seconds — a difference that Drews said can have a significant effect when traveling at high speeds. Nationally, 28 percent of all cell phone users said they send text messages while driving, but that number jumped significantly for younger drivers — 50 percent of teenagers and 52 percent of 20- to 29-year-olds said they partake.

Only Washington state and New Jersey have laws that explicitly ban text messaging while driving, while 16 states have similar laws pending, according to AAA. Maryland bans cell phone use for teen drivers, though the law can be enforced only if the teen is pulled over for another driving violation.

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SAYING "THANKS"

Mechanical engineering major Nicholas Savillo, 22, of Arbutus, wrote a thank you note to his parents on his graduation cap for the 50th University of Maryland, Baltimore County, commencement ceremony Thursday at the 1st Mariner Arena in Baltimore City. — Arianne Starnes/Examiner