



Awarded the Pulitzer Prize's Special Citation 2019

# Coronavirus bends another tradition in Annapolis: May Day flower baskets

OUR SAY

On May 1, 1956, there were 114 flower baskets placed outside homes in downtown Annapolis.

Navy wives had been handing out baskets full of flowers at their May luncheon for a number of years, according to The Evening Capital, but this was the first time a competition for bragging rights on the city's streets was recorded in the daily newspaper.

The society page gushed. It was an effort by the Garden Club of Old Annapolis Towne, and the three judges made their way from clubs in other parts of the street to pick the very best.

The winning entry was for a simple design at 114 Prince George's St. A basket of individual bouquets in a container and set off with the French words "servez vous si vous le voulez" — help yourself.

Judges told The Evening Capital they were particularly taken with the spirit of hospitality by Mrs. Timothy Kelleher. No first name; this was the 1950s.

The idea of May Baskets doesn't originate in Annapolis, of course. It descends, according to various sources, to the pagan holiday of Beltane in pre-Christian Europe. That was a raucous five-day festival in

honor of the Goddess Flora including flowers, dancing, ringing bells, May queens and dancing around the Maypole.

Some of that survives today if the tourist brochures are to be taken at face value. Baskets were the only part of the tradition that made it to this country. The idea died out in many places, but in Annapolis, ideas tend to linger.

No doubt many of those early Annapolis baskets were filled with blooms plucked from another tradition, one that stems from Tuesday morning, May 20, 1947. That was the year the Four Rivers Garden Club set up its flower mart around St. Anne's Church on Church Circle. Such a spectacle of color hadn't been seen in Annapolis since before World War II, according to The Evening Capital.

"The gaily painted parasolled (sic) tables, the green roofs of the open booths, circled the fence of old St. Anne's and customers thronged the walk carrying off nearly all the wares by noon," the newspaper reported.

Proceeds benefited the gardens at the historic Hammond Harwood House.

That's how traditions are born. Fast forward to today, and the history of flowers in Annapolis finds itself a little bit bent by the coronavirus pandemic but unbroken.

Members of the Garden Club of Old Annapolis Towne said no blue ribbons will be awarded this year, but residents and businesses are encouraged to put out flower baskets today anyway.

The Four Rivers Garden Club made the same decision a few days earlier, too. At some point in history, the flower mart moved into April so downtown homeowners and businesses could gather fresh blossoms for their baskets.

"Unfortunately, the April 2020 Flower Mart is canceled," the club said. "Flower Mart will return in 2021. Until then, we are enjoying our spring gardens and flowers from a safe distance."

Spring flowers are a sign of hope and fertility and new growth and have been part of the Annapolis cycle of the years for decades. Their colors and smells attract us just when we're hard-wired to appreciate them.

We're hopeful both events come back next year.

## The message is simple: 'Keep Maryland safe'

BY THORNELL JONES  
AND EMMA BUCHMAN  
Guest columnists

On March 30, Gov. Larry Hogan issued a stay-at-home order for the entire State of Maryland in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

On April 19, a group of individuals began a series of protests to voice their contempt for the on-going shut down and pressing the Governor for Maryland to be reopened. Dozens of cars circled Church Circle trying to reach the State House, blocking traffic and antagonizing passersby.

Our coalition of grassroots organizations is deeply concerned by these continuing demonstrations pressuring the State government to lift the stay-at-home order and reopen Maryland. The coalition, which includes the Anne Arundel County Branch NAACP, the Caucus of African American Leaders, Connecting the Dots, March On Maryland, and W.I.S.E., request that Hogan's office continue to keep Maryland safe by maintaining the stay-at-home order, as well as the state of emergency enacted on March 20.

We also request that the Governor allow scientists and medical experts to determine when and how Maryland will be re-opened.

Continuing the practice of physical distancing is essential to contain the rapid and unchecked rise in COVID-19 cases. This virus spreads rapidly and has a high death rate. Currently, Maryland has 21,742 confirmed cases and at least 1,047 deaths. The first three cases of COVID-19 in Maryland were only confirmed on March 5, and the current death rate for the United States is around 4.9% (compare this to the death rate of seasonal flu, which is only about 0.1%).

It is also critical to note that the rate of COVID-19 cases and deaths is highest among people of color. According to Jacqueline Boone Allsup, president of the Anne Arundel County Branch NAACP, this virus is disproportionately affecting communities of color, particularly African Americans, and we should continue to follow the governor's executive order.

We have some of the most renowned hospitals in the world, including the Johns Hopkins Hospital. All personnel at these hospitals are exposing and reexposing themselves every day to COVID-19, and they are already overwhelmed. Reopening Maryland now would expose more people to the virus and cause our hospitals to be completely overrun. There is too much suffering across the country to not take an overabundance of caution. Scientists and health care professionals have stated repeatedly that things cannot return to normal without a vaccine.

All of us would like to see Maryland return to normalcy and be able to see our friends and families without a computer screen in the way. But Maryland should not reopen until there is adequate and widespread testing available across the country.

It is for our friends and family that we must continue to self-isolate, and for the wellbeing of our community and our most vulnerable populations. Maryland cannot be reopened until the medical experts deem it wise to do so. We are asking citizens to join us in this position by calling Hogan's office at 410-974-3901 and passing on one simple message: "Keep Maryland safe."

It is essential in this time of crisis to remain calm, cautious, and, above all, informed. Things can and will return to normal, but we must all work together to make it happen.

We commend Hogan for stepping up and making this sacrifice for all residents of Maryland. We ask that the governor continue to protect residents by keeping the State of Maryland shut down for as long as necessary. We also thank the efforts of our first responders, health care professionals, scientists, janitors, delivery drivers, food service employees, grocery store clerks and others who are serving on the front lines of this pandemic.

We are all in this together. Thornell Jones is a member of the Caucus of African American Leaders, Connecting the Dots, and the Anne Arundel County Branch of the NAACP. Emma Buchman is deputy director of March On Maryland and a member of Connecting the Dots.

## OTHER VOICES

### Health care workers

In the coronavirus pandemic, nursing home health care workers are proving themselves not just as essential workers, but front-line heroes.

From managing a virus that can be spread without symptoms, to dealing with a shortage of adequate testing and PPE, to being forced because of this sinister virus to rightfully isolate residents from families and loved ones, the daily challenges these workers are facing are immense, unprecedented, and heart-breaking.

In my career as an industry state executive, an AARP leader, a leader in state government and the private sector, a focus on real people, transparency and context has been my driving force. My heart breaks for people impacted by the historic threat of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I see people of all ages fighting for their lives against a virus they knew nothing about four months ago.

And I see heroic health care heroes in hospitals and nursing homes fighting to save lives.

Nursing homes provide quality long-term and post-acute care to people with multiple chronic or preexisting health conditions.

A study published in the Journal of American Medicine (JAMA) reported that among people hospitalized with COVID-19 in New York, the majority had at least one chronic preexisting condition and 21 percent of those who were treated died.

One hundred percent of residents and patients in nursing homes have multiple preexisting or chronic medical conditions, and many of the staff providing care may have at least one condition — that's the battle our front-line heroes are up against for the people in their care. These facts are important.

Most importantly, let's not lose sight of the fact that residents, patients and staff are beginning to successfully recover from COVID-19.

Nursing home and assisted living health care heroes are truly working hard and doing all they can to save lives.

JOSEPH DeMATTO  
President and CEO, Health Facilities Association of Maryland  
Linthicum



### District 30A

What this latest appointment by the Anne Arundel County Central Committee reveals is the need to change the process. What we now have is someone representing District 30A that no one from our district voted for and no one I've talked to seems to know, Dana Jones.

Electability was touted by the central committee as one of key considerations in making their decision. Certainly, name recognition is an important factor. Many others who were in the running had been elected to office, had run for office or were supported by numerous district residents.

One hundred letters were sent in support of Loni Moyer and 80 Chrissy Holt. Obviously, 30A voters were ignored.  
ARLENE BERLIN  
Annapolis

### Reopen Maryland

It is time for Maryland to stop the order for "nonessential" businesses to close. These businesses should be allowed to decide whether or not to reopen. People should be allowed to determine the degree to which they wish to self-quarantine.

It is likely that at least 200,000 of us (one of every 30) in Maryland have already had it. The number of coronavirus cases means

that the idea of testing to trace individual coronavirus contacts, as has been proposed, is a ridiculous component of any reopening plan; imagine if we made an effort and spent funds to trace flu contacts.

Continuing some social distancing practices, for example, quarantining at-risk populations in assisted living facilities, and increasing hospital surge capacity is a warranted part of a staged reopening plan. This virus is a severe problem and should be combated but we need to do a better job of understanding the true risk level to the general public and acting accordingly.

Our societal risk-averse biases are pushing us into actions that are destroying our economy for little or no benefit. Based on reports from small businesses, it is clear that the government's small business relief plan is not working well.

Any more time spent trying to fix this government "assistance" plan is throwing good money after bad. We will be living with this virus for the long-term no matter how severely we decide to destroy our economy, we now know reasonably well what the costs will be and how to combat it. It is time to start the reopening now before the economic damage is irreversibly widespread.

PETER RICH  
Annapolis

**LETTERS POLICY** Send to: Letters to the Editor, *The Capital*, PO Box 6727, Annapolis, MD 21401. Fax: 410-268-4643. Email: capletts@capgaznews.com. No attachments please. *The Capital* does not publish letters that are libelous, in bad taste or part of an organized letter-writing campaign. We ask writers to limit themselves to one letter a month, of no more than 250 words. Include an address and daytime phone number, so that letters can be verified. Additional letters can be found at capitalgazette.com. All letters are subject to editing for length and clarity.

## WE REMEMBER JUNE 28, 2018



Gerald Fischman



Rob Hiaasen



John McNamara



Rebecca Smith



Wendi Winters

"Remember me in your heart, your thoughts, your memories of the times we loved, the times we cried, the times we fought, the times we laughed. For if you always think of me, I will never be gone."

An excerpt from "Remember Me" by Margaret Mead

Today and forever, we remember our colleagues who were murdered in the targeted attack on the *Capital Gazette* office.