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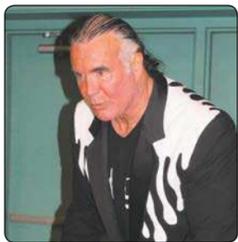Friday, October 7, 2016 · www.somdnews.com · Charles County, Maryland ■ 75¢

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Pumpkin fun at Potomac Library

Above, Cadence Truske, 4, of Waldorf decorates her styrofoam pumpkin to be entered into the second annual Pumpkin Decorating Palooza contest on Oct. 1 at the Potomac Library. Below left, White Plains resident Brandon Swain, 6, finished decorating his "scary" styrofoam pumpkin. Below right, Waldorf resident Gianna Cheng, 8, decorates her styrofoam pumpkin to be entered into the contest.

School system warns parents following 'creepy clown' reports

Initial photo purported to be fake

By JAMIE ANFENSON-COMEAU and ANDREW RICHARDSON
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A photograph of a purported "creepy clown" standing under a street light in the Gleneagles neighborhood caused somewhat of a public disturbance this week as the image took on a life on its own and rapidly circulated through the Charles County community on social media after one young man posted the image on Twitter. After many expressed concern over the image, Charles County Public Schools sent letters home to parents

DNA reportedly links man to 2010 gang rape

Accused is currently held without bond for unrelated alleged rape

By ANDREW RICHARDSON
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After investigators reportedly connected his DNA to evidence collected from a 2010 gang rape, a La Plata man, currently being held without bond for an unrelated alleged rape against a minor, was charged with first-degree rape on Wednesday.

Jaime Antonio Rivera, 26, who was arrested in June for the alleged rape of an 11-year-old girl, now faces an additional rape charge for the 2010 incident, court records indicate. He is accused of being one of four men who reportedly took

Local author, mother discuss living with degenerative neurological disorder

Freidreich's ataxia affects approximately 1 in 50,000

By JAMIE ANFENSON-COMEAU
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Over the course of 30 years, Freidreich's ataxia has robbed Jamie Cusick of her sight, her mobility and much of her hearing and speech. But it hasn't robbed her of her will or her voice — and the 37-year-old Hughesville resident is using both to spread awareness about the rare degenerative neurological disorder.

"FA sucks," Jamie Cusick said, during an interview alongside her mother, Cheryl Cusick, who helped interpret Jamie's slurred speech. "We're trying to find a cure and we need help doing it — donations to FARA."

FARA is the Freidreich's Ataxia Research Alliance, a national nonprofit "raising funds for research, promoting public awareness, and aligning scientists, patients, clinicians, government agencies, pharmaceutical companies and other organizations dedicated to curing FA and related diseases," according to its website.

For her 37th birthday, Cheryl Cusick said Jamie decided she wanted to spread awareness about the condition, which affects approximately one in every 50,000 individuals, according to FARA.

"We're reaching out to anybody to get the word out there a little bit, and let them know that this condition exists. We don't have a cure and we don't have a treatment, but we're looking," Cheryl Cusick said. "We're still hoping for a cure."

Freidreich's ataxia, or

County gathers resources to help the homeless, less fortunate

Community Resource Day offers free help, assistance

By TIFFANY WATSON
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On Oct. 5, the Charles County Homeless and Emergency Shelter Committee hosted its annual Community Resource Day at the Greater Waldorf Jaycees Community Center. Corae Young, LifeStyles Inc. assistant director and co-chair of the committee, said the event makes it possible to serve the community at one location for one day.

The event is sponsored each year to assist the homeless population in the community with a one-stop shop to access local services that are available to them. This year's event included more than 50 services provided by various local departments and organizations in the county. There were volunteers on hand to help navigate clients through the agencies participating that day.

"Anyone who is homeless, couch surfing, living in a tent, or is about to be evicted, can come in today and see how we can connect them with services," Young said. "This is not just about brochure shopping, it's about meeting each person's needs by connecting them with housing, education, health services, food and clothing. We also provide them transportation to those services if necessary."

Young said the committee has made some major