



The President's Corner

By Mavi Conner

I am so excited for the last Pinch edition of 2022! I'm so proud of the team that makes this newsletter possible and that allows this special connection with our readers!

Special events are happening in the next couple of months, our Children's Holiday Party, PX Gift Wrapping fundraiser, Holiday Dinner, Cookie Crunch and so much more! Let us know if you want to help or get any information about any of these.

With the holidays quickly approaching, I want to make sure you remember that being away

from home during this time of the year can be challenging. Know that you just have to say the word — if you need a hand to support you and your family during the holidays, don't hesitate to reach for ours. When we say we are here for you, we mean it!

It's the most wonderful time of the year, and during this season our thoughts turn with gratitude to the amazing people who have made our year memorable: You! We appreciate you being part of the FMSC. It is in the spirit of this beautiful season that we say thank you, may your holiday be warm, peaceful, and safe.

Member Snapshot

This month we are highlighting folks active in the Social Clubs



Marchonda Sanders

Current Neighborhood:
Meuse Forest

Favorite Sports Team:
There's only one team in the NFL and that's the PACKERS.

Ask Me About:
Whatever you want but be careful because I will really answer you

Why do you enjoy Social Clubs?:
When you find women that share the same interest, it makes going to your club enjoyable. This is why I enjoy bunco club. Also game nights remind me of being at home. In Chicago, my family plays games every Sunday.



September MMU
"Renaissance Fair"

Cont'd on Page 2



MISCHIEF IN MARYLAND **Bundling Up & Kicking Off the Holiday Season**

By *Laura O'Leary*



The cold weather is starting to roll in and with it comes chilly nights—a great time to be bundled in blankets, curled up by a fire, reading your favorite book or watching a movie snuggled up with the family!

If you're brave enough to venture out into the cold, there are some incredible events taking place all over Maryland. Walk down your favorite streets and shop with local vendors during the Midnight Madness events in Historic Ellicott City, St. Michaels, and Annapolis. Pop over to Solomons Island for their annual Christmas walk, complete with hot chocolate, local vendors, and a lighted boat parade.

While the boats are an incredible sight to see, check out local tree and monument lighting ceremonies around the state too! Leonardtown, Crisfield, and Frederick have tree and crab pot lighting ceremonies. Annapolis has a Festival of Lights at City Dock where a giant Menorah will be lit, and Chanukah gifts and kits will be given to those in attendance. Baltimore is hosting their 50th anniversary monument lighting ceremony at the Washington Monument, hosted by the Mount Vernon Place Conservatory.



Midnight Madness in Annapolis:
Dec 1 & 8 4pm-12am
Dec 15 4pm-11pm



Details on the Christmas Tree and Menorah lighting celebration in Annapolis on November 28th



Illuminated Washington Monument in Baltimore

This year's lighting ceremony will be December 1st 5-8pm



Elisabeth Granger
Director of Social Clubs

Current Neighborhood:
Bowie

What do you love about the Fall ?
The weather and changing of leaves. Being born and raised in Southern California I never had that growing up. Also, all the fall decor and cozy weather.

Why do you enjoy Social Clubs?:
There is literally something for everyone. No matter what you like there seems to be a club for someone.

Ask Me About:
Ask me any Southern California questions or about Disney!

Cont'd on Page 5



Director of Hospitality Bee Zoll-Johnson presents raffle winner Mindy Rodriguez with her prize at September's MMU





We're a GO for Gift Wrapping at the PX

By Meghan McDonald Carlson

For as far back as anyone on Joint Board can remember, the Fort Meade Spouses' Club (and its previous iteration The Enlisted Spouses' Club) has been bearing the organizational brunt of managing the Fort Meade Post Exchange (PX) Gift Wrapping. This year the season runs from Monday, December 5th to Saturday, December 24th.

How it Works

As holiday shoppers exit the department store within the PX, there is a handy table staffed with gift wrappers and their supplies, at the ready to ensure that shoppers can leave with wrapped gifts. Walking into one's home fully prepared to set them beneath a festive tree or store them safely—if you're like me with small, inevitably-destructive children, or nosy family members—is a game changer. The gift wrappers work for tips, and the project is an excellent fundraising event for various organizations connected to Fort Meade.



FMSC President Mavi Conner leads the annual Roll Off Event on October 25th, when organizations from around Fort Meade claim gift wrapping shifts

What an Opportunity!

By spearheading the logistics and managing the overall effort, the FMSC has been paving the way for the broader Fort Meade community to earn, as well.

And to be sure—we reap the financial benefits of participating for our own club. In 2021, we earned over \$1650 and the whole season secured over \$7860 for all organizations. While our pre-Covid profits were more in the \$2K range, judging by the number of participating organizations, the PX gift wrapping project is building itself back up. In years before the pandemic, more than 20 organizations would join, and this year we're up to 16. As you can see, gift wrapping is a huge opportunity for our Club!

Getting Busy

This year, we have 32 hours that we are responsible for staffing the table. (See table at right for the FMSC shifts!) Some shifts and days are busier than others, but being understaffed is always a detriment. When community members are queuing up, eager to tip for the valuable service, the more hands on deck, the better! And if you're working towards earning hours for the Club trip, you're gonna be aiming for 16. But don't worry—you can also earn gift wrapping hours by babysitting for someone who is gift wrapping. So check out the schedule, make a plan with some Club friends, and LET'S DO THIS!



FMSC Member Katie Christly happily wraps back in 2018

FMSC GIFT WRAPPING HOURS		
DAY	DATE	SHIFT
TUES	DEC 6	9-11AM
TUES	DEC 6	5-7PM
WEDS	DEC 7	3-5PM
FRI	DEC 9	9-11AM
TUES	DEC 13	9-11AM
WEDS	DEC 14	1-5PM
FRI	DEC 16	3-7PM
MON	DEC 19	9-1PM
TUES	DEC 20	1-3PM
WEDS	DEC 21	9-11AM
SAT	DEC 24	11-5PM



WILDERNESS WONDERS

Walking in a Woodsy Wonderland

By Jennifer Denton

It's getting breezy and cooler, leaves are changing and the winter holiday season is nearly upon us. If you're like me and appreciate this time of year, then you'll love some outdoor options to bring your decorations to life!

I am a huge fan of taking fall and winter walks to visit nature's best art gallery. Between the changing of leaves and the sparkling ice and snow that come later, the beauty of this season is undeniable. A great fall activity for all ages could be a leaf rubbing or collage and there are many ways to do this. For smaller family members a crayon and some paper over a flat surface can bring the veins of the leaf out to make beautiful pictures. If you're a bit older you can use white paper, a hammer and a sturdy surface to hit the leaf and leave the imprint of the color on the paper. If you choose to do this, pick freshly fallen leaves for the best results.

As we move further into fall and most of the leaves have dropped, I start hunting for pine cones. Pine cones are a beautiful winter holiday decoration and are very easy to decorate with. Check out the instructions!

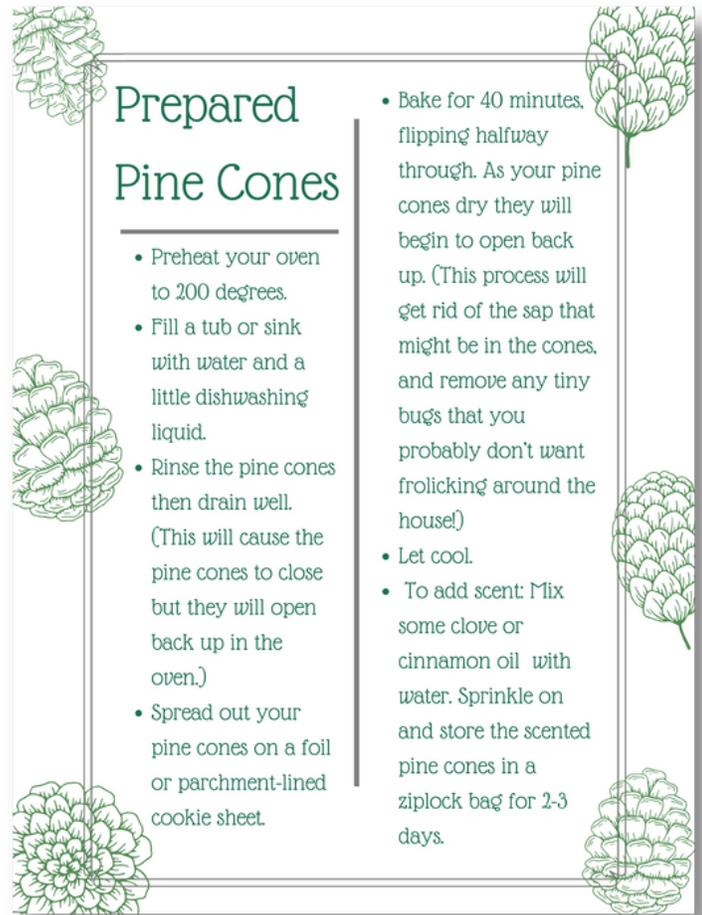
I like to place some on my mantle or in the fireplace hearth.

Of course you can always practice Leave No Trace and 'take only pictures, leave only footprints'. A fall photo collage or wintry pine cone scene are always beautiful options as well.

Whichever you choose, I hope your holidays are filled with hygge and joy!

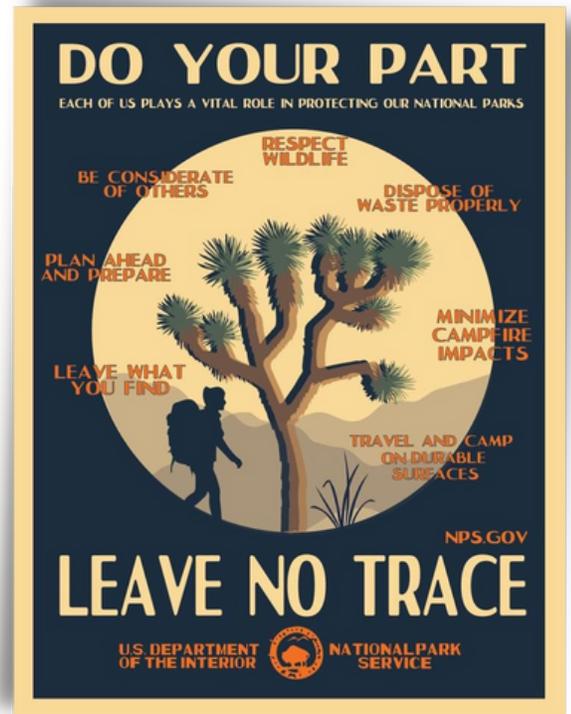


Sasha Hernandez-Ticali & Meredith Hixon pose by the "castle wall" for the September MMU



Prepared Pine Cones

- Preheat your oven to 200 degrees.
- Fill a tub or sink with water and a little dishwashing liquid.
- Rinse the pine cones then drain well. (This will cause the pine cones to close but they will open back up in the oven.)
- Spread out your pine cones on a foil or parchment-lined cookie sheet.
- Bake for 40 minutes, flipping halfway through. As your pine cones dry they will begin to open back up. (This process will get rid of the sap that might be in the cones, and remove any tiny bugs that you probably don't want frolicking around the house!)
- Let cool.
- To add scent: Mix some clove or cinnamon oil with water. Sprinkle on and store the scented pine cones in a ziplock bag for 2-3 days.





Reaching Out for the Holidays

By Dawne Lee

From October to January is a marathon of holiday tricks, treats, celebrations and fun. Families and friends gather to party, feast, and enjoy the camaraderie that is the holiday season. But during all this time of togetherness we can't forget about the single service members stationed here away from their families. Being away from loved ones can be especially hard during this time of year. This is why the Fort Meade Spouses' Club (FMSC) has partnered with Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers (BOSS) to create two very valuable outreach programs designed to show these service members that they are not alone. These are "Goodies for Goblins" and "Cookie Crunch."

"Goodies for Goblins" is held during October; this year, it was comprised of stuffing and delivering goody bags filled with treats to 1064 single service members across Fort Meade. Following that in December is our "Cookie Crunch" where the candy will be replaced by fresh holiday cookies and hot cocoa packets.



Mindy Rodriguez, Emily Prussia Gershey & Meredith Hixon tirelessly pop oodles of popcorn to fill 1,064 spooky rubber gloves



Katie Christly & Nima Vargas finalize the goody bags with cute tags

These small gifts of sugary goodness may not seem like a lot, but for the single service members stationed far away from friends and family it makes a HUGE difference. As stated by the Director of the FMSC Outreach Committee Jennifer Denton, "These programs are important because I feel that everyone should feel welcomed and part of the community that they live in. I worry that some of the single service members may feel lonely and even though this is a small gesture, I hope it makes them feel remembered and thought of." Very well put, Jennifer.

So as you enjoy your holiday festivities this season, maybe take some time and join the FMSC and BOSS in reaching out to our single service members. Spread the love and show everyone that we are in this together, and they are not alone.

Save the date!

**COOKIE CRUNCH PACKING
DECEMBER 12 @ 10AM**



Maria Ross

Current Neighborhood:
Glen Burnie

Favorite Sports Team: LA Dodgers

Ask Me About:
My passion of helping Soldiers & spouses through a variety of volunteer positions... it's so rewarding!

Why do you enjoy Social Clubs?
I love cooking club because I like to connect with people through different food around the world. It is like we all speak the food language. It also makes me feel so close to home even when I am not.



Dawne Lee staffs the FMSC table facilitating a membership drive at the USO Fall Fest



What I Want You to Know About Being Frazzled & Getting Stoic: A Holiday Piece

By Meghan McDonald Carlson

As this writing assignment fell squarely in my lap, I found myself vacillating between wanting to give a thoughtful sociological account of why we ache for a nostalgic holiday season that simply never existed* (which may or may not influence the very common experience of holiday blues—also worth discussing!) and a charge to cheerily embrace our military-shaped, pieced-together, chosen families. But we should also keep the holidays simple, right? Better put that in the article, too! Ha.

I really wanted to do all these things, too. Despite having only one spare chair and a small house with rowdy children, I extended a Thanksgiving Day invitation to my husband's single friend. I started and stopped paragraphs about my family's journey into the military and got bored (it's short & about computers). Instead I got distracted by Pinterest and the *Perfect Holiday Season*, cuing an unfolding plot on how I would quickly paint the bathroom, even as the gross-cold-everyone-had ricocheted around my house, including ensnaring my innocent mother-in-law visiting from Idaho. (Sorry again, Mom!).

As Thanksgiving crept closer (and I reminded my husband *again* to invite that darn single friend so I could make good on my virtuous deed), my Inner Uptight Warrior Princess reared her head. My tendency to over-plan & the ensuing anxiety were really going to ruin this multi-faceted article. How was I going to write authentically?

The truth is, I am frazzled and uptight. I want to do ALL THE THINGS. But, like all of you, I'm busy. And this special time of year is also complicated. I earnestly want to give my children and family the picture-perfect and cinnamon-scented holiday season I always longed for as a child. At the same time, there are limited funds and, like many military families, extended family will remain far away. And so, with all that said, where do we go from here?

There's an interesting Stoic meditation called "Last Time." It goes like this: there have likely been many experiences where—without realizing it—you were in the midst of the



last time you would do something. The last time you rode a school bus as a carefree teen. The last time you would play dominoes with Aunt Lilly. The last time you would talk about books with your father over a mug of hot tea. In the moment—as it goes in the hustle and bustle of daily life—you don't *realize* another one of these experiences won't follow. But what if you did? The Stoic practice calls us to contemplate how the experiences we're having *now* could indeed be the final ones. What would that look like? What if this is the last Pinch article I write? How would I conduct myself differently in this experience if I recognized the next was not, in fact, a given? And for you, then, this is my challenge: what would you do NOW, in THIS holiday season, if you knew it was your last?



For more on this Stoic practice of gratitude



For me and my family, we've laid out a few expectations for the year. Christmas Morning Surprise with some presents, decorations and cookies—yes! A hundred presents under a large Christmas tree? Probably not. My 6 year-old gamely suggested we decorate some of the newly-relocated young Ginkgo Biloba trees** now enjoying my dining room. My heart swelled. When I suggested we all choose one experience or element that we especially want, his instant response was singing Christmas carols together. At that point, my swollen heart melted. Hopefully this isn't my or my son's last holiday season, but if it is, we will sing carols together as a family, with twinkling lights and homemade Christmas cookies. And that will be the picture-perfect, cinnamon-scented holiday of my dreams.

And finally, because I adore pie, here's a lovely assortment of recipes from Sunday's newspaper.



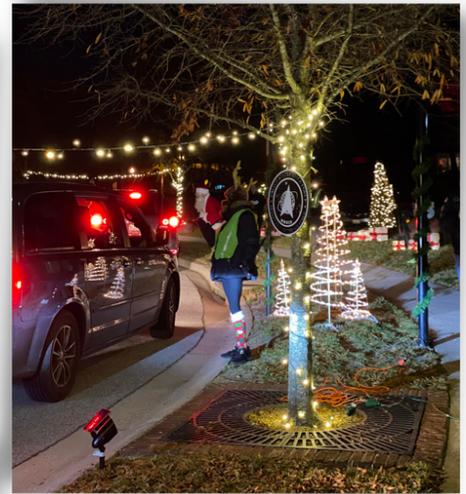
We've decided to only make one this year. It turns out the single friend will be in Montana.

Happy holidays!

*as I push up my glasses, of course

**especially now that the slugs have vacated the pots. (There were 2.) Does anyone want a young Ginkgo tree?

Scenes from 2021's "Light Up! Fort Meade"



We're back to an in-person Children's Holiday Party this year! It's all hands on deck to execute one of Fort Meade's biggest holiday events!

VOLUNTEER SIGN-UP



THE FORT MEADE SPOUSES' CLUB PRESENTS

Under The Sea

A Children's Holiday Party
Pershing Hill Elementary
Saturday, December 3, 2022

childrensholidayparty@fortmeadespousesclub.org

Holiday Dinner Requirements

FMSC Volunteer Hours - 8
Thrift Shop Volunteer Hours - 5
Fundraising Hours - 1

mad libs

In honor of National Novel Writing Month, fill in the blanks to complete this unfinished story!

Once upon a time, in a kingdom named _____, lived the most _____, a hero
First 3 letters of 1st name, last 3 letters of last name +ia adjective noun
 named _____ lived a _____ life, filled with _____ and _____.
name hero's name adjective favorite food favorite drink
 _____ was content, if not a bit lonesome, until one day a _____ into _____.
hero's name type of monster past tense verb kingdom's name
 This _____ creature wished to _____ the kingdom, and steal all of the _____ and
adjective villainous verb favorite food
 _____ for their own _____. _____ knew just what to do, and so, they _____ right
favorite drink celebration/holiday hero's name past tense verb
 up to the monster's _____ and _____ shouted, " _____ I heard you like _____ and
type of dwelling adverb ending in -ly greeting favorite food
 _____, those are my favorite too! Also, I think your _____ is _____. We should
favorite drink body part complimentary adjective
 _____ sometime. As it happens, they had a lot in common and liked each other very much.
date night activity
 The Monster was just lonely and a bit peckish. The two decided to live happily ever after, together.

The End

Some Upcoming Dates

- November 22nd - TS Volunteer Luncheon
- November 23rd - TS Open Night
- Dec. 3rd - Children's Holiday Party
- Dec. 6th - Gift Wrapping Begins!
- December 15th - MMU
- Dec 17th & 18th - Wreaths Across America
- December 20th - Holiday Dinner

Social Clubs:

- November 18th - Bunco Club
- November 19th - Cooking Club
- November 21st - Book Club
- December 9th - Breakfast Club

Contact Stephanie Oberbeck for access to the Google calendar

HAVING FUN WITH THE FMSC

Scenes from October's MMU "Halloween Movie Marathon"



The Pinch is the product of the FMSC's Photography & Publications Committee with Meghan McDonald Carlson at the helm as Director.

Join us!

photopublications@fortmeadespousesclub.org