

# The Monocacy

# MONOCLE

*Keeping an Eye on Local News*

A Biweekly Newspaper

December 10, 2021 • Volume XVII, Number 19

## Recently Hired Town Manager Resigns By Link Hoewing

In a sudden move after the December 6 commissioners' meeting ended, recently-hired town manager Tony Tomasello resigned from office. The resignation apparently came during a special executive session that was not open to the public.

At this juncture, the reasons for the resignation seem to be largely personal. In an interview for the *Monocle* in August, when Tomasello first took office, he did refer to very difficult family issues he'd had to confront during the early phases of the pandemic; furthermore, he had mentioned that he had had little experience with the operation of sewer and water facilities even though he'd been town manager for the city of Gaithersburg for a number of years before his retirement. Gaithersburg, unlike Poolesville, is supplied with sewer and water services by the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission and does not have full-time staff managing those services. In some ways, the job in Poolesville involved new and unfamiliar duties

for Tomasello—and he also took office at a time of sagging staff morale.

The resignation leaves the town in a difficult position. Before the resignation of the previous town manager, Seth Rivard, after less than a year of service, Wade Yost had served continuously as manager of the town for seventeen years. Tomasello has had only five months under his belt. As noted, he took office in the wake of serious personnel problems in town, many exacerbated by Rivard. The new town manager was expected to pursue improvements in the management structure of the town, develop modern and documented personnel policies, and revamp pay and benefit structures. All of that work had, in most cases, only just been started and is now up in the air. In fact, at the December 6 meeting, Tomasello had reported that the HR consulting firm hired by the town had just developed a first draft of a personnel manual that he characterized as "very rough." Clearly the work on many of these issues is in the very early stages.

In addition, major town projects are in the early stages right now and will require leadership in the months ahead. These include work to develop and approve a new master plan for the town, ongoing work on the town's streetscape plan, and implementation of a range of proposals, including the development of the Willard Property.

The search for a town manager, in both the cases of Rivard and Tomasello, took many months, so it is conceivable that the town will be without a manager again until mid-summer. Town clerk, Bobbi Evans, who has years of experience in town affairs and has taken over as "interim town manager" before, has said she will be retiring in June, so the town's management problem is very serious.

In a statement about the resignation, the commissioners explained that Tomasello had "let the commissioners know that he's leaving for family-related, personal reasons and that this

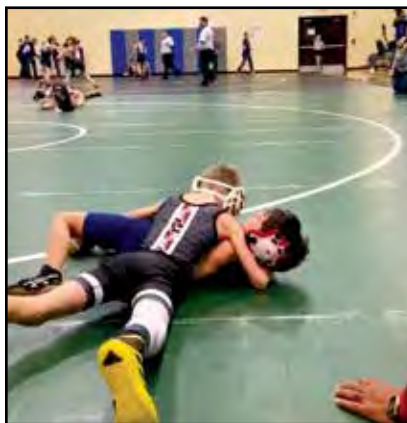
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The fall sports season at PHS ended with a parade of champions. See additional pictures on page 2.



Improvements at Seneca Lock. Details in Tidbits on page 9.



Youth wrestling in Poolesville is back! Check it out on page 12.



Santa Came to Town. See Holiday Lighting Festival photos on page 14.

## As Hope Garden Closes, A New Hope Emerges

By Rande Davis

Fran Ichijo, the beloved owner and director of the immensely admired and highly recognized Hope Garden Ballet Academy, announced in early October that she would be closing her dance studio.

Her program started in 1998 as a young children's dance studio located in the HealthWorks Athletic Club (in the same location now hosting Anytime Fitness). Hope Garden was very successful right from the beginning, and it quickly expanded within the facility, and in 2011 she moved to the current studio in the original location of CVS.

For Miss Fran, continuing the studio during the COVID-19 pandemic was extremely challenging with strict protocol and limitations in student

participation, but she persevered with a strong heart and sense of purpose. Then this past September, she came down simultaneously with the flu and COVID. The illness drained her strength, and she was forced to close the studio temporarily, but thoughts of retiring, which had been niggling ideas throughout the past two years, finally became a realization. In mid-October, she announced the plan to close the studio for the year and reopen after the new year under new management.

The news sent shockwaves within the local arts community, and after refunding fall tuition to all her students, she began to focus on how the studio might prosper.

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Fran Ichijo (right), creator and owner of Hope Garden Ballet Academy and Hope Garden Ballet Children's Theatre, has retired. Local resident and former student of Fran, Claire Jones, will carry the torch forward and will open her own studio in January.

## Remembrances

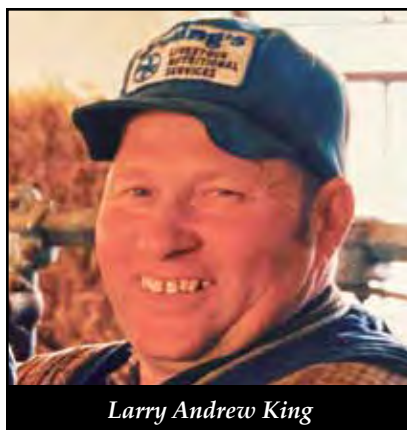
### Larry Andrew King

Larry Andrew King, 82, of Dickerson, passed away peacefully at his home on November 17, 2021. Larry was born to Andrew W. and Dorothy E. King in Laytonsville on May 18, 1939.

Larry worked proudly as a dairy farmer in Dickerson for sixty-one years, working fifty-five of those years for his dear friends, Harry and Fannie Ensor, of Maryland Hopewell Farms near Sugarloaf Mountain. Larry took great pride in caring for the herd and managing the dairy operations of the farm, demonstrating a level of compassion, commitment, and humility that served as an example to his community and all who knew him.

Left to cherish his memory are his wife of sixty-five years, Dorothy Anne King; two daughters, Linda A. Dean and her husband Bill of Virginia Beach, Virginia and Laurie A. McKinley and her husband Richard of Poolesville; two grandsons, Christopher A. Lewis and his wife Jennifer of Frederick and Aaron T. Dean of Chicago, Illinois; and one great-granddaughter, Lucy Lewis. Larry is also survived by two sisters, Elva Figuracion and Pat Spies of Colonial Beach, Virginia; and one brother, Thomas King and his wife Betty of Adamstown.

Gracious and generous to everyone, Larry established long-lasting and impactful relationships in his community and with his extended family. His values, influence, and compassion endure with all who grew up in his presence. While his family and friends mourn their loss, they are forever grateful for the impact of his life and the many "days to remember" he gave them.



Larry Andrew King

### Dr. Thomas E. Nightingale

Dr. Thomas E. Nightingale, 87, of Poolesville, passed away on November 26, 2021.

Born on August 20, 1934 in Omaha, Nebraska, he was the son of Homer and Kathryn Ellen (Condon) Nightingale. Tom was preceded in death by his wife, Maggie Nightingale.

Tom was survived by his children, Catherine Keller, Dennis Nightingale, and Tish Brownlee; two brothers, Joe Nightingale and Donn Nightingale; and eight grandchildren, Gillian, Madison, Cate, Hyatt, Lance, Lauren, Maggie, and Emily.

Tom was a proud veteran of the U.S. Army's 17th Infantry Regiment where he served as a combat medic in the Korean War. During his years of service, he earned the Silver Star and two Purple Hearts. After his service, Tom went on to earn his PhD from Kansas State University. He worked in the medical research industry and retired from the National Institutes of Health. He was also the owner of Nightingale Decorating, Inc.

Tom's final resting place will be Arlington National Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made in his memory to a charity of your choice.



Dr. Thomas E. Nightingale

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### As Hope Garden Closes, a New Hope Emerges

Claire Jones, a 2010 graduate of Poolesville High School and one of her more prominent students since she was just six years old, was high on her mind and, in Fran's opinion, the perfect replacement if she could only convince her to take over.

Claire danced and performed under Miss Fran throughout her academic years, leaving temporarily from the age of eleven to thirteen to train with the Maryland Youth Ballet, and she performed with the Joffrey Ballet and American Ballet Theatre at the Kennedy Center with its annual Nutcracker performances. She returned to Miss Fran and stayed until graduation from high school. From there, Claire attended Montgomery College, where she was the choreographic intern for MC's Summer Dinner Theatre. She then transferred to UMBC, graduating with a degree in dance and a minor in theater.

Regionally, she has also performed with Deep Vision Dance, ClancyWorks Dance, Bowen McCauley Dance, and the Olney Theatre Center, all while she was teaching and choreographing for Red Branch Theatre and Round House Theatre Education.

Whilst deeply versed in classical ballet, she has studied tap, contemporary, and modern dance, and stage management and lighting; she earned a dance degree from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. She has been teaching all age groups for fourteen years at multiple studios in Columbia, Germantown, Silver Spring, and currently in Frederick. "She has often taught for me from the time she was fifteen," enthused Ichijo, "including for my summer ballet camps, where she was very popular!"

With complete knowledge of Claire's talents and achievements over the years, and with a deep bond of friendship and mutual admiration, Fran decided to give Claire a call. The timing was impeccable and a major turning point in Claire's life as she had just recently changed her life's direction by choosing to work with Ken Mallow in construction. At the time she got the call, she was busy working on a screened-in porch. Fate had fully intervened.

When Fran called Claire, the two talked, cried, and laughed for over an hour and half, and in the end, the student and teacher—and dear friends for nearly all of Claire's life—agreed on the transition from Hope Garden Ballet to the newly-formed Essence Studios of Dance & Performing Arts. The fall season of illness and despair for Hope Garden Ballet had a new owner and new hope.

Fran could not be happier with the development. "She is a wonderful person whose knowledge and talent will ensure the high quality of the past with a renewed passionate energy for the future. Claire encapsulates the full traditions of Hope Garden Ballet."

In show business there is a very old adage: Always leave them wanting more. While Hope Garden Ballet departs the stage leaving the community desperately wanting more, Essence Studios of Dance & Performing Arts will more than fill the bill as a new star arises in the community in 2022.



Do you or someone you know have a special announcement or milestone you would like to share with our readers?

The Monocle welcomes your contribution.

Send to [editor@monocacymonocle.com](mailto:editor@monocacymonocle.com)

## Marketplace

**POOLESVILLE PHYSICAL THERAPY**  
**Pat Hess, P.T.**  
**301-349-5443**  
 19628 Fisher Ave. Poolesville

**Violinsanity**  
 Two Violins  
 Classical Elegance  
*Charm your Guests with Chamber Music*  
*We will work with you to achieve the musical effects you desire.*  
**Dominique Agnew 301-407-0001**  
<http://Violinsanity.peatandbarley.com>

**Hilary Schwab Photography**  
 Portraits and Event Photography  
 Poolesville, MD (301)349-2322  
 25 years' experience  
[hilary@hschwabphotography.com](mailto:hilary@hschwabphotography.com)  
[www.hschwabphotography.com](http://www.hschwabphotography.com)

**Sugarloaf Pet Gardens**  
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**301-972-8882**  
 Box 415  
 21511 PEACH TREE ROAD  
 BARNESVILLE, MARYLAND 20838

YOUR AD COULD BE RIGHT HERE. Call Rande Davis at 301-509-9232.