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# The Frederick News-Post

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Maryellen Pessagno hugs a fellow graduate after Saint John's Catholic Prep's commencement exercises Thursday afternoon.

*Staff photo by Graham Cullen*

## ‘A great spirit’

As 66 graduate from Saint John's Catholic Prep, one student overcomes bullying

By **STEVE BOHNEL**  
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Before James McKane transferred to Saint John's Catholic Prep High School in Buckeystown his sophomore year, he was often the target of bullying.

At one point, the bullying got so

bad at St. Maria Goretti Catholic High School in Hagerstown that McKane considered taking his own life.

But that didn't happen — instead, McKane, 18, was one of 66 graduates of Saint John's on Thursday afternoon, a group that received their diplomas in front of hundreds of parents, siblings, other relatives and

friends in the gymnasium of that school.

McKane was awarded the Peace Award of Frederick County for his anti-bullying work in 2017. He said he was inspired by Kirk Smalley, president of Stand for the Silent, an anti-bullying nonprofit. Smalley gave a speech at the school in October 2016, right after McKane arrived.

“That kind of motivated me to start my own anti-bullying stuff and

(See **SAINT JOHN'S** A3)

## Community rallying to support China Garden

Long-standing Frederick restaurant caught fire

By **ALLEN ETZLER**  
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Sarah Wedl has dined at China Garden since before she was born.

Her mom and grandparents visited the restaurant with her mother was pregnant with Wedl.

After Wedl was born, her family went to the long-standing Frederick restaurant most Sundays after church. They sat in the back corner, a cozy spot for a casual fam-

ily gathering. She ate there after she graduated from Hood College in 2018.

China Garden is the first place she ever tried sushi.

“I knew I was in good hands and that the fish would be the freshest, because of how meticulous the staff is,” she said.

Between the family gatherings and attentive staff, the restaurant carved a special place in

(See **CHINA GARDEN** A3)



*Staff photo by Bill Green*

Firefighters put out a fire at China Garden on West Patrick Street in Frederick late Wednesday night.

## Baltimore ransomware recovery going slowly

By **IAN DUNCAN**  
The Baltimore Sun (TNS)

Baltimore's IT team will only slowly bring computer systems back online so that it can ensure they're more secure after the ransomware attack that hobbled city services, a senior aide to Mayor Bernard C. “Jack” Young said Wednesday.

Sheryl Goldstein, a deputy chief of staff given the job of overseeing the response to the cyberattack, said staff

are split into a forensic team and a recovery team.

The first is focused on hunting the malicious computer code that allowed hackers to lock city files.

“Every machine that was potentially impacted and every server that was potentially impacted has to be assessed,” Goldstein said.

Meanwhile, the recovery group is working to bring back systems such as email and databases. That team is

proceeding cautiously.

“The first step is to create a safe environment in which you can slowly start bringing things back online, making sure there's nothing in there that's problematic,” Goldstein said.

Goldstein's comments are the most extensive by a city official since the ransomware was discovered May 7. Officials have been reluctant to share much

(See **BALTIMORE** A3)

## County Fire Chief Tom Owens retires after 50 years of service

By **STEVE BOHNEL**  
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Frederick County Fire Chief Tom Owens announced his retirement Thursday afternoon.

Owens' last day will be June 30, County Executive Jan Gardner (D) said. Deputy Chief Tom Coe will start as acting fire chief on July 1.

Gardner commended Owens for his commitment to fire safety and rescue, and for keeping the county's citizens safe.

“Chief Owens' impact will be felt for many years. ... He has really laid the foundation

for our Division of Fire and Rescue Services,” Gardner said.

Owens, 66, started his career in fire services about 50 years ago as a volunteer firefighter in Loudoun County, Virginia. He's worked around the region since then, including stops in Frederick County, Virginia, and Fairfax, Virginia.

He worked as chief of Frederick County, Maryland, from 2010 to 2013, and then from 2015 to now.

Owens said his main accomplishment is bolstering



Owens

the division's emergency medical services during Gardner's first term as county executive from 2014 to 2018.

“We now have 24/7 ambulance service staffing in every location in Frederick [County], Maryland, that provides ambulance service. ... That's a huge accomplishment for our citizens,” Owens said. “If we were not able to get anything else in these four years, that impact

(See **OWENS** A3)

**Good morning!** What we learn with pleasure we never forget. — Alfred Mercier

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Owens

(Continued from A1)

on life safety to our citizens is huge.”

He added that while Frederick County has grown — creating an increased demand for fire and rescue services — it has maintained its agricultural landscape and identity.

“The agricultural side of this community is critically important,” Owens said. “But at the same time, with the hub of the city of Frederick and how robust that is ... the vitality is through the roof right now.”

One of the challenges for Coe and other leadership moving forward is dealing with that growing population and increased calls for service, Owens said. Volunteer fire companies are increasingly in need of career firefighters and other staff.

China Garden

(Continued from A1)

Wedl’s heart. That’s why she was so disheartened to hear the restaurant sustained extensive damage in a fire late Wednesday night.

“I mean, accidents happen, but it’s not normally something that’s top of mind. ... To see it suddenly damaged is heartbreaking,” she said.

The restaurant, at 506 W. Patrick St., caught fire around 10:45 p.m. Wednesday and took about 60 firefighters approximately 25 minutes to extinguish, according to Frederick County Division of Fire and Rescue Services Deputy Chief Steve Leatherman.

First responders found heavy fire in the rear kitchen area and fire through the roof, Leatherman said. No one was injured, he added. The fire marshal’s office had not announced a cause of the fire as of Thursday afternoon. The fire marshal’s office had not reported a damage estimate either.

But even before that information had been released, the community began rallying to support the Chiang family, which owns and operates the restaurant.

Wedl started a GoFundMe page with the hopes to raise \$10,000 to help the restaurant cover any damage not covered by insurance.

“I chose to start a GoFundMe for the restaurant because it’s just been a large part of my family’s history,” Wedl said. “But anyone who’s ever had health, vision, or any insurance knows that they never cover everything in its entirety. It’s not only fire damage that they have to deal with. It’s also replacing dry goods, any equipment, any furniture, and also their employees are without work until the restaurant is back in business. Everyone needs a little extra help, and I wanted to give back to [the Chiang family] for all the years [they’ve] been feeding mine.”

As of Thursday afternoon, the GoFundMe page had raised nearly \$1,000. Wedl said she was still trying to get in touch with the owners of the restaurant to verify where to send the money. The family declined

“How do we continue to address current system staffing needs with things like leave impact staffing, to better manage the current workforce that we have?” he said. “And at the same time, grow the system where and when it’s necessary in order to meet the service demand ... those are some wicked problems.”

Stephen Jones, president of the Career Firefighters Association of Frederick County Local 3666, said in a prepared statement that Owens has served the county well.

“Chief Owens has a long record of public service and we are thankful for that,” Jones said. “We are grateful for the time he spent to move Frederick County’s fire service forward, such as finalizing the Frederick County Fire and Rescue Service Delivery Plan.”

Follow Steve Bohnel on Twitter: @Steve\_Bohnel.

How to help

To donate money to help the Chiang family get China Garden back on its feet, visit <https://www.gofundme.com/help-china-garden-rebuild>.

to comment for this story.

The Chinese restaurant opened in 1984 and is one of the longest-operating restaurants in Frederick. It will remain closed for the foreseeable future, according to an announcement on its Facebook page.

As news of the fire made the rounds, longtime customers expressed their condolences for the restaurant and praised the family for their service over the years.

“The staff and owners have always been great and deserve love from the community,” said Nick Vattimo, who has eaten at the restaurant for the last six years, since his daughter was born.

Each year since, Vattimo and his family have celebrated Christmas by dining at China Garden. They visit family in Pittsburgh on Christmas Eve and drive home Christmas Day. After the traveling, they don’t feel like cooking, so they celebrate at the restaurant.

Vattimo added that he hopes the family rebuilds and the community pitches in to help the restaurant get back on its feet.

For Wedl, the restaurant has long provided a sense of nostalgia that will now be lost. The interior hadn’t changed much over the last 20 years, Wedl said. It made her feel at home and took her back to her childhood. She’s carried her family tradition of dining at the restaurant on with her boyfriend, who she said is surprised her family has been dining at the same place for 30 years.

“He comes from a military family and kind of bounced around during his childhood,” she said.

But regardless of the loss of nostalgia, if and when the restaurant reopens, she’ll be in line.

It’s the feeling of comfort, and home (and the food) that will keep her coming back.

Follow Allen Etzler on Twitter: @AllenWETzler.

Baltimore

(Continued from A1)

information about the attack or the city’s recovery, not wanting to impede a federal investigation or to share information that hackers could use to target the city again.

Ransomware involves hackers encrypting the victims’ data and demanding payment for the keys to unlock them. In Baltimore’s case the attackers wanted the equivalent of \$76,000 in bitcoin, but Young has repeatedly said the city won’t pay.

The attack knocked out email for city employees and took down the city’s ability to accept card payments for services. Most dramatically, it halted the city’s real estate market because the finance department could not verify that outstanding debts lodged against properties had been

cleared.

But some city employees have been able to use laptops — their own or those issued by the city — and public Wi-Fi to do work. Other jobs are being done by hand.

On Monday, the city launched a workaround to get property sales moving again and Goldstein said after a slow start that paperwork is being processed about as fast as it was on computers before the attack.

“We’re getting back to a place where operations while different are at normal levels of service,” she said.

Officials want residents to contact 311 if they find there’s a service they can’t access during the outage.

Goldstein declined to say when computer systems might begin coming back online. But she pointed to Atlanta, which suffered a similar attack last year, saying it was about six months until services were restored to something like full capacity and

Saint John’s

(Continued from A1)

I did two years of tennis rallies for Stand for the Silent,” McKane said. “I just decided to basically take my love for tennis and my thing I hated most, bullying, and I just put two and two together.”

Thursday’s ceremonies marked the 186th year of commencement exercises at Saint John’s. Principal Will Knotek, in his first year at the school, lauded the student body’s commitment to service: In total, they’ve tallied more than 12,800 hours of community service.

“It’s their cohesiveness as a group, and they have great spirit for the school,” Knotek said.

During the exercises, co-valedictorians Emily German and Julie Brisbane addressed the class, urging them to take their experiences at Saint John’s and be successful after high school.

German thanked the Class of 2019 for being supportive in her four years there.

“No matter the situation, you can count on these people to help,” German said. “You can count on these people to have your back on whatever you want to pursue.”

The 66 graduates will attend 44 colleges or universities in 17 states.

School President Thomas Powell also thanked the school’s faculty for mentoring the senior class. The students voted for the most inspirational faculty member of 2019, which was awarded to Robert Krajewski, the chair of the Department of Theology.

But every faculty member got a vote, Powell said.



Staff photo by Graham Cullen

Victoria Geitner hugs a fellow graduate after Saint John’s Catholic Prep’s commencement exercises Thursday.

“This faculty gets it,” he said. “They know their job is to not only pass on that knowledge that they have, but really be a mentor to our students.”

Both German and Brisbane said in their speeches the small class of graduates created a tight-knit community and memories they will remember for the rest of their lives.

McKane agreed with that — and said it helped him pursue his anti-bullying efforts.

“I was kind of shy at the time [I transferred], but over time I started to open up to the kids more, and they started to treat me more like family,” McKane said. “And that’s the best part about Saint John’s. You actually feel like a family, and there’s never a moment where you feel isolated and alone.”

Follow Steve Bohnel on Twitter: @Steve\_Bohnel.

Five Questions with a Saint John’s graduate

Julie Brisbane, 17, co-valedictorian

**Who was your favorite teacher?**

[Science teacher] Mr. [Brian] Nogay. He’s like a good teacher, but he also teaches a lot about life. ... He always makes classes fun.

**What was your favorite subject?**

Math, because I’m good at math. It’s just what I’m strong in.

**What was your favorite memory?**

Just spending time with my friends. I’m just really close with them, since our school is so small, we formed a really close bond.

**What was the most challenging part of high school?**

Probably the schoolwork, just the amount and not knowing what you’re going to do in the future, before we pick colleges and stuff, like applying.

**What are you doing post-graduation?**

I’m leaving at the end of June to go to Connecticut [to attend the U.S. Coast Guard Academy]. I’m going to be playing basketball there, so we have to swap summer and the summer, which is like basic training and the academic year. And then after I finish my four years there, I’ll be stationed somewhere for five years in the Coast Guard. It just fits me really well, the structure. And they’re focused on other sciences, like STEM and math, and just to serve my country.



How to prevent your tomatoes from splitting

Do your tomatoes split just as they’re becoming ripe enough to eat? Tomato splitting occurs because of fluctuations in how much water the plants receive. If there’s a heavy rainstorm right after a dry spell, the insides of the tomatoes start to expand more rapidly than the fragile outer skin can handle.

Here are a few ways to prevent your tomatoes from splitting this summer:

- 1. Use mulch.** Applying mulch around the base of your tomato plants helps with maintaining regular soil moisture levels. You can use straw, pine needles, shredded bark or a store-bought blend.
- 2. Water regularly.** Water your tomatoes at regular intervals, making sure to provide them with about one to two inches of water each week. Watering them regularly helps prevent them from absorbing too much liquid following a heavy rainstorm.
- 3. Choose resistant varieties.** Some hybrid tomato plants are bred to have tougher skins on the fruit. Ask at a nursery or gardening store about varieties most resistant to cracking.

For more tips on how to grow high-quality tomatoes, visit your local garden center.

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