

NEIGHBORHOOD  
NEWS

VOLUME I  
ISSUE 16  
HOLD UNTIL  
JUNE 21, 2012

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This Week

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*Weekly Refresher*

"Weakness of attitude becomes weakness of character."

- Albert Einstein

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# Guilford Gazette

## Successful Embroidery Entrepreneur Serves Guilford Elementary School Community



Becky McKirahan is an advocate for Guilford Elementary School and a business owner. She granted an interview to discuss her business and volunteerism. She lives and works from her home in Guilford.

Becky McKirahan is an active member of the Guilford Elementary PTA. She said that she never wanted to be an officer in the organization. She did not want that responsibility. She provided her services on an as-needed basis. When her nine year old daughter, Kristina, became a student at the school, Ms. McKirahan became a volunteer. She helped in the classroom and did odd jobs when called upon. She lives in the Mission Road area of Guilford.

Ms. McKirahan also

served as the president of a bird club and the facilitator of Moms Inc. She is raising her nine year old daughter with her husband Ken. She is available to her daughter nearly every moment of every day.

Because the PTA is losing active members due to redistricting, Ms. McKirahan did the unthinkable. She volunteered to be the chairman of fundraising. The PTA has the task of raising \$10,000 this year.

Nine years ago she and her husband, Ken, made a big

decision. Becky (as we will refer to her occasionally) came home from work and they invested \$7,000 in equipment and software that would revolutionize their lives. They purchased a used embroidery machine.

Since that time, Becky has worked as a stay-at-home mom while running a small, custom embroidery business, called TacoBird. This year, Becky stepped away from the bird club and Moms Inc. She set new priorities.

Several months ago, when Becky discovered the Guilford Gazette, she seized the opportunity to get publicity for what seemed like a dying PTA. The PTA closed out the academic year with a full slate of officers despite the fact that some of the organization's key people are moving to other schools.

In a recent interview, Ms. McKirahan shared her outlook on business, community, and family. "The first year was very [financially] nominal. In the beginning I just did gifts." The business grew and so the McKirahans purchased a faster machine with more capabilities, and Becky expanded her inventory.

She says that she cannot compete with the larger companies. She doesn't take on large orders, but she is (Continued on Page 5)

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### Featured Neighborhoods

- ⇒ Monarch Mills
- ⇒ Carter's Cove
- ⇒ Guilford Mews
- ⇒ Mission Heights
- ⇒ Heritage Woods
- ⇒ Guilford Square
- ⇒ Oakhurst
- ⇒ Mary Lane
- ⇒ Glenshire Towne
- ⇒ Oak Ridge
- ⇒ Oakview Village

### Featured Schools

- ⇒ Hammond HS
- ⇒ Patuxent MS
- ⇒ Lake Elkhorn MS
- ⇒ Guilford ES

## The Publisher's Notes

Summertime is upon us. Truly this is the season for which nine months of endurance has paid off. This is the time for vacations from school and work. This is the lazy period of relaxation and fun. For youth and adults unstructured fun can be exceptionally unproductive, or worse, we can wreak havoc on our own lives by making bad choices.

Starting off the day with nothing planned can lead to nothing or it can lead to trouble. We simply do not know. Many of us look forward to "chillin" right up until the time when we discover that "chillin" is a tremendously boring and mundane activity. Some take to drinking and smoking funny tobacco to pass the time away. Others find interestingly exotic places to go that are not visible on the socially acceptable radar. Below radar activity can lead to all kinds of expected and unexpected trouble.

Planning to have fun may not seem as exciting as impromptu events; however, there is a measure of certainty that fun will be found when some thought is put into the process. Walking around the neighborhood in hopes of finding something to do may result in nothing more than a stroll. In such cases, we might retire to the safety of the television, computer, or game console. Boring. And again, I say, boring.

In our area there is so much to do. Many of the activities are free or pretty darn cheap. For those industrious folks with a few extra cents in their pockets, there's more adventure on the horizon. But let us consider that money is tight. Here are some suggestions for summertime fun:

1. Patapsco State Park – Avalon, located in Elkridge, Maryland. This haven is 12 minutes from Guilford. You have to drive there, but admission is only \$2.00 per car. Drive the van and pack it with seven of your best friends and enjoy the day tubing, bike riding, cooking out, walking scenic paths, reading history, swimming, bike riding, and more.
2. Guilford Park – It is free and located right on Guilford Road near Mission Road. There is a playground, tennis court, and basketball court, some park benches and grills too.
3. Ridgely Run Community Center – Located on Mission Road, this location has ample parking. Basketball and tennis are available. No fees for this park
4. Patuxent Branch Trail Park – Located on Guilford Road near Gerwig Lane. This is a scenic, shaded park with several miles of bike / walking trails. Visitors can follow the trail to Savage or Lake Elkhorn. A branch of the Patuxent River runs through the park. No fees for this park.
5. Brunswick Bowl at 7100 Carved Way at Snowden River Parkway is not free; however with their coupons and specials you can bowl for a good hour or more at a discount or completely free, depending on the coupons used.

At [www.GuilfordGazette.com](http://www.GuilfordGazette.com) we will update you on places to go and things to do. Check out the Calendar and watch our Spotlight feature. *Ricardo L. Whitaker*

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## Wegmans Opens Near Guilford on Sunday, June 17th



The new Wegmans grocery store will open June 17th in Columbia. Doors will open for the first time at 7 am.

Store Manager Wendy Webster radiates enthusiasm for the job. “Are you kidding?” she says. “It doesn’t get any better than this.” For the past year, she has overseen every aspect of the new Columbia store’s development, from combing over blueprints of the 135,000 square-foot building to hiring and training the 650 new Wegmans employees who will join 50 transfers from other stores. Wegmans Columbia store at the intersection of Snowden River Parkway and McGaw Road will open on June 17<sup>th</sup> at 7 a.m.

Especially important to her, Webster says, has been the time spent reaching deep into the community to find out how Wegmans can become a good neighbor and friend. “Our team has already participated in a number of great local events, including fundraisers for United Way and Special Olympics,” she says.

“Very meaningful is that we have established a strong connection with the Howard County Food Bank. In May, we donated 17,000 pounds of non-perishable food. One of our most important giving priorities for our company, and for me personally, is feeding the hungry.”

Hiring for Columbia began in January. “About 20 languages are spoken by our team,” says Webster. “The diversity truly reflects the local community. We

love the varied life experiences these people bring, and also how they will make everyone in Columbia and the surrounding county feel at home in the store.”

Webster recently celebrated her 21st anniversary at Wegmans. A Rochester, NY native, she worked her way up through the ranks, beginning as a deli manager trainee. In 2005, after a stint as store manager in Corning, New York, she moved to Maryland to open the Hunt Valley market, Wegmans’ first store in the state. “That was a real honor,” she says. “Being the new kids in town, we knew we had to work extra hard to show people what Wegmans is all about.”

The fact that Columbia will be Wegmans’ fifth store in Maryland has not cooled her quest to earn customers’ respect and loyalty. “We know we have to do our best every day,” she says. “Customers in this area have a lot of choices. We’re pulling out all the stops.”

Among the special features of Wegmans Columbia store are a pub-style café, with counter and table seating, an expanded prepared foods section, a fresh-cut-to-order veggie market in the produce section, locally (Continued on Page 6)

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**McKirahan from Page 1**

good at short runs and she adds the personal service that her repeat customers have come to enjoy. Every embroidered garment is pressed and decoratively packaged.

It is common for a family with multiple pressures to be stressed. Becky tells a story where Ken has supported her all through the business process. "Ken is an amazing man," she said.

When you come to the McKirahan house, you enter the business first and then you discover the home. What would have been the living room, is now the embroidery shop. The embroidery machine,

the computer with two monitors, the presser, a myriad of gadgets, storage areas, open closets for hanging shirts, and much more are on display. With the shop and a house to run, the home is still particularly meticulous and clean. No doubt, Ms. McKirahan is an organizer of the highest rank.

In the midst of business, she has her daughter, a dog, a rabbit, and birds. They are not all in one room, but they are there. Except by sight, you would not know that animals share the house. Outside, she has a fairly sophisticated garden complete with flowers, green plants, a miniature pond, and hard-

scaping. Sometimes the neighborhood kids drop by to visit. She juggles to separate the personal from business. The kids do not always cooperate in this effort, but she takes it in stride.

On the PTA front, Becky decided that she will not use children as door-to-door sales associates selling wrapping paper. She pointed out that \$7,000 in sales nets only \$3,000 for the PTA. She plans to emphasize other fund raisers instead. Her PTA job starts now. Over the summer she will be planning and conducting meetings.

The McKirahans have been in Guilford for 15 years. Becky said that she

met Ken in Pennsylvania. It was not long before they married. Ken led the reconnaissance missions on Guilford and other Maryland communities. He and Becky decided that Guilford was the right place.

"We moved down with 20 birds and three dogs," she said. "We love how our house backs to the woods, and we have a nice deck. No Columbia fees." Ms. McKirahan said of her neighborhood, "I have a wonderful village." She depends on her neighbors and they depend on her. "Across the street we had a couple our age and we became best of friends. Like sisters. But she moved and (Continued on Page 6)

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**Wegmans from Page 4** grown fruits and vegetables and 100 or more organic choices among 700 daily produce offerings, a cut-to-order Day Boat Station featuring fresh, seasonal seafood from the

Maryland, Virginia and New Jersey shores, and a Kosher deli with \$6 meals, rotisserie chicken and hand-carved salmon.

“Awesome is an over-used word,” says Webster. “But that’s how it feels to

open this beautiful new store. It represents the very latest evolution of Wegmans Food Markets, with all the bells and whistles. Wait until you see it. Even the parking garage is incredible, airy, bright and

easy to access, with colorful vegetable banners to help you remember where you parked. We can’t wait for opening day.”

The Wegmans article contributed by Wegmans

**McKirahan from Page ??** I was devastated.”

In the early days of her business, Ms. McKirahan sold her goods at church bazaars. She paid her fee and would spend the day to sell about five shirts. She accomplished a significant amount of work for a meager return. Her products were good, so word of mouth became her advertisement. As time and per-

severance continued, Becky began to receive more orders than she could handle. She subcontracted some of her work to a friend who was just as meticulous and professional as herself.

“During the holiday I am stitching seven days a week,” she said. Each year business grows 20 to 25 percent, according to Ms. McKirahan. She admits

that there were difficulties starting a business, but the sacrifice was worth it. She was able to raise Kristina at home until Kindergarten started. Kristina does not always like sharing her mother with customers, says Becky, but Kristina is taking pride in Becky’s work. She sees TacoBird products around the school.

Ms. McKirahan is big on

customer service. “I take pride in my customers,” she said. Running the shop and volunteering are important to Becky, but her primary concern is family. “I shut off the lights after six and I don’t answer the phones on Sunday,” she said.

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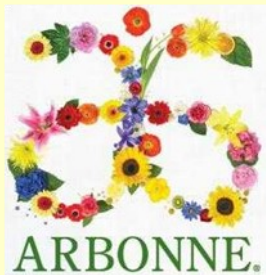
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