

BY LISA KENNEY



MARYLAND — In January 2021, Howard Community College in Howard County will welcome the first class to its new electrical apprenticeship program, run in partnership with Independent Electrical Contractors Chesapeake. The four-year program will include on-the-job and classroom training; upon completion, students will be eligible to become nationally credentialed journeyman electricians. The annual mean wage for electricians in Maryland in 2019 was \$58,700.



NORTH CAROLINA — The increase in remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic has meant good news for the real estate industry in the Outer Banks, which stretches from Corolla in the north to Ocracoke Island in the south. According to the Outer Banks Association of Realtors, there were \$1.18 billion in home and lot sales through October. Sales were on pace to break the previous record of \$1.5 billion set in 2005. The number of units sold in October, 456, was more than twice the number sold in October 2019.



SOUTH CAROLINA — In November, Richland County announced one of its largest economic investments ever — a \$400 million brewery and production facility of Mark Anthony Brewing, the fourth-largest brewer in the United States. The more than one-million-square-foot Columbia facility is expected to open in summer 2021; it will include warehousing and distribution operations. The project is expected to create 300 new jobs. The Coordinating Council for Economic Development awarded job development credits and infrastructure grants for the project.



VIRGINIA — The University of Richmond and Richmond Public Schools announced a joint No Loan Program in November. The program will award grants to cover the full cost of attendance for Richmond Public Schools graduates who qualify to attend the University of Richmond. The university's total estimated costs for students in the 2020-2021 school year, including tuition, room, and board, are \$72,450. According to the university, the program will be funded by reallocating existing university funds and there is no cap on the number of recipients.



WASHINGTON, D.C. — In mid-November, Mayor Muriel Bowser announced the launch of the Bridge Fund, a \$100 million grant fund for D.C. businesses that were hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Bridge Fund will be distributed through four programs — one each for restaurants, hotels, retail, and the entertainment sector — with an aim to sustain these industries during the pandemic. The fund is financed with \$20 million that D.C. received from the federal CARES Act and the remaining \$80 million from a local contingency reserve.



WEST VIRGINIA — A large broadband expansion is set to make Huntington the state's first "Gigabit City" — a city connected to fiber-optic cable internet that has speeds of over 1 gigabit per second. In October, the local nonprofit Thundercloud received two grants totaling \$4.6 million for the project, one through the WV CARES Act Broadband Fund and one through the Appalachian Regional Commission. The project will include laying 25 miles of underground fiber and building a fiber ring that will connect over 500 Huntington businesses to the gigabit infrastructure.