ROCKVILLE RENTERS UNITED

Renters United

JULY/AUGUST 2026

FREE. TAKE ONE!

Evicted Children: No one is keeping count

What we know and don't know says a lot about power and priorities.

For example, we know evictions seriously harm children's emotional health and academic performance.

But we don't know how many children are being evicted because no one counts them. No procedures exist to do that.

"We have no way of knowing," said Sgt. Michael Trigiani, of the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office Eviction Section. "There's nothing stating that landlords have to tell us."

"None of the data collected on evictions contains household size," said Rockville Housing Programs Manager Jane Lyons-Raeder. "We only get that information when families apply for assistance."

Without city or county data, Maryland can't count child evictions. No state can, nor can the federal government, according to Princeton University's Eviction Lab.

So, all we have are estimates. After cross-matching 10 years of court records and census data, Eviction Lab researchers estimated 3.9 million children are evicted in the U.S. each year. That's 325,000 children a month.

While estimates suggest the scope of the problem, they do *nothing* to help officials move swiftly to keep children in their homes or, at least, to mitigate the impacts of eviction.

We *do* know evictions harm children

Multiple studies document the trauma children experience when they lose their home and their familiar circle of friends, neighbors and teachers. The impacts are often long-lasting because childhood is when we acquire foundational life skills: our self-image, self-confidence and ability to empathize and interact well with others.

More than 30% of U.S. elementary students make multiple school changes between Grades 1 and 8 for reasons other than grade promotion, according to a study in *Academic Education Research*. For impoverished non-white students, the number is between 60% and 70%.

Studies strongly link frequent school changes to higher drop-out rates, lower grades, increased absenteeism, suspensions, impulsivity, aggressive and disruptive behavior, depression, anxiety, loneliness and sleep disturbances.

If a drug or maniac was doing such damage to children, there would be cries for investigations and immediate action. But when "the housing market" is doing it, no one even bothers to count the bodies.

Power and priorities.

The cutthroat world of commercial real estate

Why are the owners of King Farm Village Center evicting the **Fontina Grille**? A local favorite, the 25-year-old restaurant is packed every night of the week.

The reasons became clear in late fall when the landlord, Stirling Properties, went public by suing Fontina for more than $75,000 in damages and punitive damages plus interest, court and attorney fees.

Stirling claims the restaurant owners failed to pay required fees and spread lies and negative comments intended to hurt the landlord's reputation.

Fontina's owners responded in court with additional details. They said the fee dispute involved their refusal to pay $500 a month into a "promotional fund" after discovering Stirling was pocketing the fees "to enrich themselves" rather than using the fund to market their commercial tenants.

Now, if a company was worried about its reputation, why would it go to court and publicly broadcast the "lies" and negative comments (e.g. "predatory" and "unethical"), particularly when, according to Stirling, the damaging remarks were known to only a few people?

From the outside, this looks like a "SLAPP suit," filed to punish Fontina's owners and frighten other King Farm tenants into silence.

The **Rockville Science Center (RSC)** was evicted from Town Center in May after the Morguard Management Co. found a tenant willing to pay more rent. For six years, the nonprofit RSC had provided young people (and adults) with clubs, classes, camps and field trips on astronomy, robotics, 3-D printing, chess, math and more. Their Drone Team finished first in national competitions in 2024 and 2025. In April,

A cheerful, creative space for children will be replaced with a "Rage Room," where adults pay to smash TVs, computers and dishes with baseball bats and golf clubs.

their Science Day event drew 4,000 visitors and 134 exhibitors to Rockville Town Square.

A "rage room," where customers pay to smash TVs, computers and other items with bats and clubs, will move into RSC's old headquarters.

"It breaks my heart," said RSC trustee Robin Wiener. "This was such a joyous space."

NOTE: ***The RSC is working hard (and raising funds) to find a new home. For information or to donate, visit: rockvillesciencecenter.org***

Also, the RSC "Makers Club"—for adults using power tools—continues meeting at 33F Maryland Ave., across from RSC's old location. And full-day summer camps for children ages 7-12 are underway at 130 Rollins Ave, Suite H-1.

Who owns my building?

Housing shortage keeps ‘money machine’ alive

MAA Quick Stats:

- **Headquarters:** Tennessee
- **302 apartment buildings** with **102,000 total units** across US Sun Belt (70% are in FL, GA, NC, and TX)
- **$15B** Net Worth (total assets minus total liabilities)
- **#37** among the 100 largest U.S. U.S. Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs)
- Involved in ***RealPage* algorithmic rent-fixing scandal**; D.C. Attorney General recently charged MAA with false advertising and unlawful fees

Mid-America Apartment Communities owns and MAA Fallsgrove in Rockville and MAA Massachusetts in D.C.

Mid-America Apartment Communities, Inc. (MAA) is a high-power, real estate “money machine.” But high-power machinery can misfire when conditions aren’t exactly right. And so it is with MAA.

MAA is a real estate investment trust (REIT). It owns revenue-producing property and sells shares to investors who receive a portion of the revenue. *REITs must, by law, distribute 90% of their net income in dividends each year.*

And REITs pay *far higher* dividends than the DJ or S&P averages. If you had invested $1,000 in MAA when it was founded in 1994, you would have nearly $37,000 today. Consider what a 37-fold increase means to Vanguard, which has sunk billions into MAA. Huge “institutional investors” like Vanguard own 94% of MAA’s stock.

Because REITs can retain only 10% of their net annual income, they must borrow regularly to cover operating costs and, sometimes, to pay investors. This makes them highly sensitive to any decreases in revenue (from rents and fees) and increases in operating costs, including utilities, maintenance and repairs.

> **“For Wall Street, the housing market was never tight enough.”**

Pandemic was “ the perfect storm”

The pandemic delivered a one-two punch to MAA, and the company is still trying to recover. With “work from home,” millions of people no longer had to live near their employers and they moved, in record numbers, to low-cost cities in the South where MAA does business. At the same time, developers took advantage of low, pandemic-era interest rates to build apartments and houses for the flood of new residents.

Because more housing gave tenants more options,MAA had a harder time raising rents and fees whenever they liked. They even had to offer occasional concessions to attract or retain tenants. Revenue growth faltered even as MAA’s operating costs soared as pandemic-era “supply chain” snarls drove up prices economy-wide.

MAA’s net worth plunged 42% between 2021 and 2022, and its net income dropped from $634M in 2023 to $443.2M in 2025. Last fall, MAA borrowed more than $1.5B and now carries $5.5B in debt.

Several Wall Street companies have downgraded MAA stock, warning that the “oversupply” of housing in the South will continue to erode their bottom line.

But was there ever an “oversupply” of housing in the Sun Belt? If so, Southern renters aren’t feeling it. In the cities where MAA does most of its business, an average 53% of tenants spend more than 30% of their incomes on rent, and 28% spend more than half their incomes on rent. *The numbers have barely budged in the past three years.*

For Wall Street, the housing market was never tight enough, and nearly half-a-billion dollars in net income is too little.

MAA says their future is bright because “new apartment deliveries are decelerating sharply” and construction starts are well “below historical levels.”

Could they make it any clearer? The real estate “money machine” needs housing to be scarce and tenants to be easy prey.

Rockville Renters United marches in city’s Memorial Day Parade. People on sidewalks, tenants on balconies waved and cheered, “Stabilize Rents!” as RRU passed by.

Renters United is produced by Rockville tenants and published by Rockville Renters United (RRU). As a community publication, we need writers, artists, photographers and story ideas. To help, contact newsletter@rockvillerenters.org. To learn about RRU and how to form a tenants association where you live, visit rockvillerenters.org.

The following local businesses distribute ***Renters United*** and we appreciate their support. **King Farm:** King Craft Beer and Wine, Coffee Republic, King Farm Cleaners, Parcel Plus and Italiamo restaurant. **Town Center:** Bonchon, Little Miner Taco, BobaPop, Hair Design Zone and Dirty Dough. **Twinbrook:** Downtown Brews and Bubble Tea Cafe. **Woodley Gardens:** Z&Z Manoushe Bakery. **Surrounding Areas:** Clear Skies Meadery and Liora’s Whole Pet.