

Mount Vernon Gazette

25 CENTS

VOL. XX, No. 24

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION PAPER

JUNE 25, 2009



A Week of Graduations

The audience cheers as West Potomac High School Principal Rima Vesilind presents the Class of 2009.

MORE PHOTOS, SEE PAGE 3

Mount Vernon District Supervisor Gerry Hyland, Michael M. Skinner, FCPS Board Chair Dan Storck, state Del. Kris Amundsen and other guests applaud Mount Vernon High School's honor graduates.

MORE PHOTOS, SEE PAGE 6

New Seniors Group Ready To Deliver Services

Mount Vernon At Home hires full-time executive director.

BY GERALD A. FILL
THE GAZETTE

Former AARP executive Jeff Reed has been hired by Mount Vernon At Home (MVAH) as a full-time executive director. Reed will begin to expand membership, recruit volunteers, and look for additional sources of funding from local, state, and private resources to finance the anticipated heavy demand for

service by seniors in need of caring, professional advice and assistance.

According to volunteers surveyed at the Hollin Hall Senior Center and those contacted in the Fort Hunt community, seniors are now having an especially tough time coping with rising property taxes, increases in health care costs, and declining property values. Concerned advocates for expanded

SEE GROUP, PAGE 5

How MVAH Would Help

MVAH services are projected to include the following:

TRANSPORTATION:

- ❖ Rides to medical appointments
- ❖ Rides to shop for food and other needs
- ❖ Car pools to recreation activities

EDUCATIONAL & CULTURAL:

- ❖ Lectures and discussion groups on current events and special interests to seniors
- ❖ Group visits to museums, musical and theater performances

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES:

- ❖ Restaurant outings
- ❖ Dances
- ❖ Organize support groups as needed

HEALTH SERVICES:

- ❖ Advice about medical visits
- ❖ Advice about health insurance claims
- ❖ Information about reliable home health care, respite care, rehabilitation services, hospice care, etc.

HOME AND ADMINISTRATIVE ADVICE:

- ❖ Referrals for reliable home repair, maintenance, and safety contractors
- ❖ Advice on paying bills and preparing tax submissions
- ❖ Legal advice.
- ❖ An easily accessible and regularly updated calendar of activities, and a phone and email contact person to request help, counseling, etc., on any matter of concern to the member.

The Speed Remains the Same

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
THE CONNECTION

Not so fast. That's what elected officials and Mount Vernon residents told the Virginia Department of Transportation, which planned to lower the speed limit on a congested stretch Richmond Highway from 45 to 35 miles an hour. Several legislators said they hadn't been informed of the plan, and that they read about new speed-

limit signs being installed in the Mount Vernon Gazette.

"The least they could have done was informed the local elected officials of what they were going to do so we knew what was happening when we started getting angry phone calls about this," said state Sen. Toddy Puller (D-36). "That's just common courtesy."

The press coverage led to several community meetings in which residents voiced their overwhelming opposition to the reduced

speed limits. Mounting opposition led to a formal letter opposing the new speed limits Puller wrote along with Del. Kristen Amundson (D-44) and Del. Mark Sickles (D-43) to Transportation Secretary Pierce Homer. Last week, Homer relented in the face of sustained opposition — ending the yearlong drama.

"We understand that many residents, community associations, and the local law enforcement agency staff are opposed to this

change," wrote Homer in a response dated June 17. "Based on this and your recommendations ... we do not plan to proceed with the change to the speed limit on the

Route One corridor at this time."

THE STORY OF HOW the speed limit change was defeated shows SEE PUBLIC, PAGE 24





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NEWS

Budget Cuts Hit Minority Students

Effort to close achievement gap “abandoned?”

BY JULIA O'DONOGHUE
THE GAZETTE

All 20 members of the Fairfax County School Board's Minority Student Achievement Oversight Committee endorsed a report that openly questioned whether the school system had “abandoned” its commitment to close the achievement gap between its white and Asian students and their black and Hispanic peers.

“I say we will have the traffic problem solved around here before we close the achievement gap,” said Ralph Cooper, the oversight committee's chair, at a meeting with school board members June 1.

“I say we will have the traffic problem solved around here before we close the achievement gap.”

—Ralph Cooper

“With all due respect to you and the Board, we are still waiting for a comprehensive plan,” wrote Cooper in a letter to school board chairman Dan Storck (Mount Vernon).

Cooper was particularly incensed that programs his committee believes help narrow the achievement gap between white/Asian students and black/Hispanic students had been eliminated and merged with others during the past two years.

For example, the school board voted to merge the local College Partnership Program — which helps students who are the first people in their family to consider going on to high education — with a similar program called AVID, thereby reducing the overall amount of funds devoted to these types

of efforts.

Fairfax County has also reduced funding for the QUEST program, which provides at-risk populations with academic enrichment and preparation for the entrance exam at Thomas Jefferson School for Science and Technology.

“The community gets upset because we have very few programs and every one of them was targets for cuts. ... It doesn't seem like the same types of programs for [gifted and talented] students are getting the same level of scrutiny,” said Cooper.

SCHOOL BOARD members disputed the oversight committee's claims and said Fairfax County has made strides in closing the achievement gap.

Over the past four years, the gap between white students and black students on the state reading exam has shrunk approximately 24 percent, from 21 points to 16 points on a 100 point scale. In the same time

period, the gap between white students and Hispanic students had shrunk approximately 33 percent, from 18 points to 12 points.

“Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) has not ‘effectively abandoned’ our initiatives for closing the achievement gap. I cannot ever imagine doing so until it is eliminated,” wrote Storck in a letter to Cooper.

“We are performing as a school system at the highest level we have ever performed. We are doing tremendous work,” said former school board member Phil Niedzielski-Eichner (Providence).

In his letter, Storck wrote that many of the schools' specialty programs had to be cut because the school system saw a general growth in its operating expenses but no increase in its funding from Fairfax County.

“As a school board and staff, we are focused on achieving results rather than maintaining existing programs,” wrote Storck in the letter.

THOUGH positive results have been seen in overall test scores, students who are black and Hispanic are still underrepresented in Fairfax County's advanced academic programs.

SEE BOARD, PAGE 6



Senior Class Officers:
President Mariya Ilyas, **Vice President** Courtney Walker, **Treasurer** Rashida Moore, **Secretary** Tina Svalina, **Class Representative** Abderrahmen and **Senior Class Sponsor** Denise Oseni.

West Potomac Students Graduate



Garry Relton performed as soloist with the members of the WPHS Music Department singing “You Raise Me Up” by Simon and Garfunkel, arranged by Kirby Shaw.



Retiring WPHS Principal Rima Vesiland.



Class Vice President Courtney Walker congratulates Class President Mariya Ilyas. Ilyas received the 2009 Outstanding Student Award.



Guest speaker Tina Svalina.



Class Vice President Courtney Walker presents the 2009 Faculty Award to Jeffrey Feinstein.

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 Carlene Bahler 703-338-6636



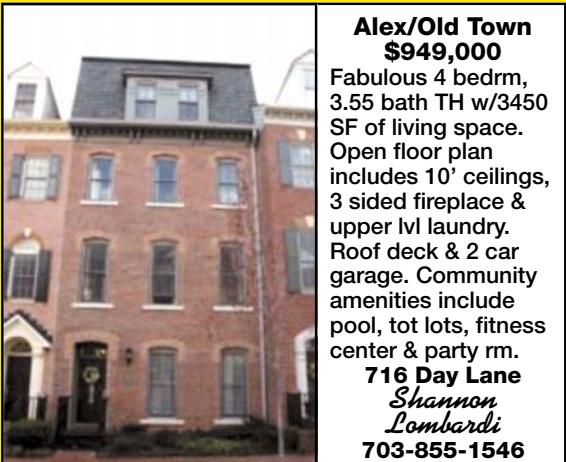
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Alex/Old Town \$775,000
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 Diann Hicks 703-628-2440



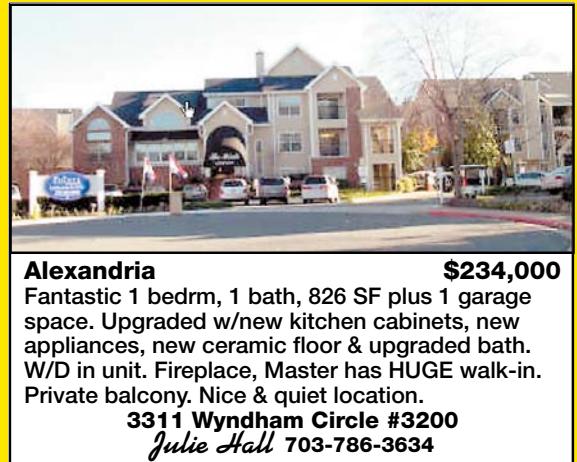
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 Gary Chute 703-371-9925



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 Bobi Bomar 703-927-2213



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NEWS

Group Hires Executive Director

FROM PAGE 1

services for seniors say that the appointment of a full-time executive by the new service organization is very good news. After two years of planning and fund-raising, MVAH is ready to open its doors and begin helping needy senior citizens who wish to continue to live at home and within the community.

Reed is characterized by President of MVAH Mary-Carroll Potter as someone with "marketing and strategic planning experience that will be tremendous assets" to the organization. According to Potter, Reed's first priority will be to "focus on reaching our membership targets through an area-wide membership campaign." His background includes award-winning accomplishments with AARP and work in marketing and business development.

WHEN FULLY OPERATIONAL — projected to be next October, — the MVAH will partner with existing governmental and private resources to provide its paying members with volunteer assistance, supportive services, and a variety of cultural and educational events.

MVAH is modeled after similar grass-roots "villages" performing services for senior populations in Boston, Mass. (Beacon Hill Village), Connecticut, and in Washington, D.C. As part of their research and planning, MVAH leadership visited each of the senior "village" type organizations operating in these cities.

The Hollin Hall Senior Center currently has 1,800 senior registrants according to Director Julie Ellis — one indicator of the demand for senior support services in the Mt. Vernon area. Potter points to estimates that there are approximately 9,000 people living in the Mt. Vernon area over 65, and many "boomers" — 55 and over — who may soon be planning on retiring. Referring to an AARP report, Potter said that fully 89 percent of seniors surveyed do not want to move into retirement homes but prefer to stay in their own homes and communities as long as possible. The 2000 Census revealed that there is a larger per-capita population of seniors living in Mt. Vernon than other jurisdictions in Fairfax County.

More

CONTACT INFORMATION:

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Email: info@mountvernonathome.org
Mail: MVAH, P. O. Box 7493, Alexandria VA 22307

Telephone: 703-768-6590

The MVAH Service Area by Zip Codes includes 22306, 22307, 22308 and 22309 — a 14-square-mile area in eastern Fairfax County. MVAH is bounded on the north by the Alexandria city boundary line; on the south by Mt. Vernon and Dogue Creek; on the east by the Potomac river; on the west by U.S. Route 1. The Montebello apartment complex on Mt. Eagle drive west of U.S. Route 1 is also included in the service area.

MVAH is recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)3 organization. Donations to Mount Vernon At Home are tax exempt.



PHOTOS BY LOUISE KRAFT/CAGAZETTE

Mary-Carroll Potter and Hollin Hall Senior Center director Julie Ellis at the Senior Center on Shenandoah Road in Hollin Hall.

RECOGNIZING this demographic trend, Fairfax County has contributed to the ever-expanding needs of seniors by funding various community and recreational programs and staffing for the county community center on Route 1 and the Gum Springs Community Center, in addition to the Hollin Hall Senior Center.

Despite these efforts the founders of MVAH nevertheless believed that if seniors were to remain safely and comfortably in their homes for a sustained period of time, a new neighbor-to-neighbor type volunteer-based organization was needed to partner with and complement existing county and private

resources. Whereas in years past the extended family was available to provide this help, this is no longer always available and county and private services are moving to fill the gap if seniors are going to realize their desire for independence.

Potter pointed out that it was the goal of MVAH to "help seniors live full and active lives We will support a culture of volunteerism, and I am sure we will find that many members will enjoy sharing their knowledge, skills, and abilities with each other. I personally have lived in a huge family and that is what we are doing with this effort; to build

SEE HELP, PAGE 5

Q&A

In a wide-ranging interview, President Mary-Carroll Potter had this to say about MVAH:

Question: What do you believe will initially be the most widely used services of your members?

Answer: We expect that the social programs and transportation services will be of most interest, though MVAH will respond to every request the member makes.

Q: During this past year what were the key issues you had to overcome to get to this point in the development of MVAH?

A: Although we worked on many policy and procedural issues, the key issue was to raise sufficient funds to hire the executive director.



Mary-Carroll Potter

Q: What will it cost annually to be a member and eligible for a full range of services?

A: Membership dues have been set at the annual fee of \$550 (approximately \$45 per month) for a single person, and \$800 (approx-

mately \$66 per month) for a household of two or more.

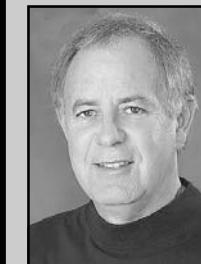
Q: What kind of assistance has Fairfax County provided during the development of MVAH?

A: Julie Ellis, the director of the County's Hollin Hall Senior Center, has on numerous occasions provided space

for meetings and seminars, and is a source of valuable information. The Fairfax Area Agency on Aging has provided us with opportunities to speak at their conferences and has provided invaluable information. Supervisor Gerry Hyland has been very supportive and has spoken at our area-wide meetings in 2007 and 2008.

Q: What else would you like to say about MVAH?

A: As a president of another similar private non-profit organization wisely said, "This is about helping ourselves. It means, don't feel sorry for yourself getting old! Get off your duff and do something about it." We don't want to sit back and complain. We want to do something about it — which translates into helping seniors live safely, happily, and independently in their neighborhood homes as long as they desire.



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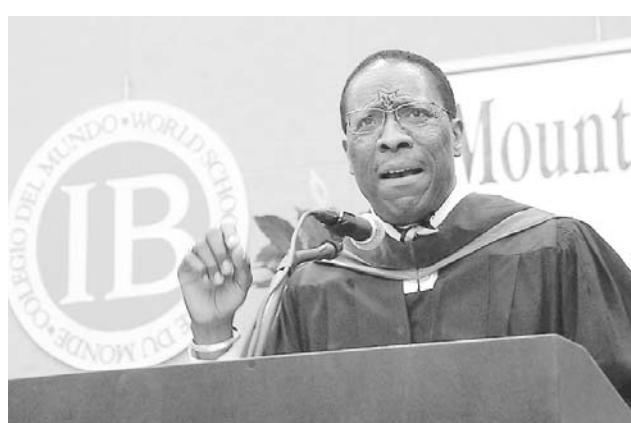
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NEWS



Wyatt Carpenter proceeds to the stage to receive his diploma. Wyatt is the generation in his family to graduate from Mt. Vernon High School preceded by his dad, Larry and his grandmother. Wyatt's mother also graduated from Mount Vernon.



U.S. District Judge Gerald Bruce Lee delivers the commencement address to the graduates.



Chelsea Lynn Anderson and Mary June Ruth Arcand cheer on their classmates as the names are called.



Class salutatorian gets a warm greeting from Principal Nardos King on receiving his diploma.



Jordan DePriest and Elizabeth Badley show off the leis that Badley, who is from Hawaii, made for graduation.

PHOTOS BY KRISTEN McCARTHY/GAZETTE



Sisters Zsazsa Valdez, graduate Hylene Valdez, Paula Valdez and Venus Valdez gather outside after the ceremony.

A Major Graduation

356 receive their diplomas.

BY KRISTEN McCARTHY
THE GAZETTE

A range of emotions filled the Michael M. Skinner field house at Mount Vernon High School's graduation. Cameras were flashing and smiles were beaming on the graduates' faces.

Three-hundred and fifty-six students received their diplomas. In his speech, Jared Cunningham, the class president, compared graduation to a Will Smith movie, "Graduation is just like a Will Smith movie. You know exactly what's going to happen, but you're still going to cry." He reminisced about the good times he experienced while attending Mount Vernon, from practicing for the school talent show to just spending time with his friends. Cunningham ended his speech with, "Some of you I have never met, but we can change that, thanks to the brilliance of facebook.com."

Ten Honor Graduates were then recognized for their outstanding academic achievements and were presented with a medal. They were Stefanie Lynn Bannon, Maggie Chaing, the valedictorian, Jared Burrell Cunningham, Chadwick Edward Eason, the salutatorian, Nimrah Abad Khan, Priyen Jayantibhai Patel, Evan Matthew Pearce, Nola Marie Savage, Emma Kate Stotz and Amanda Leah Swithenbank.

Chaing delivered the valedictorian speech, noting how this day was filled with mixed emotions along the idea of moving past high school and beginning a new chapter. "To most, this day is bittersweet," said Chaing. "We've been preparing for this moment for 13 years. We're ready!"

Judge Gerald Bruce Lee, a member of the U.S. Dis-

trict Court of the Eastern District of Virginia, gave the commencement address. He spoke about his time growing up in southeast Washington D.C. and his determination to work to the place where he is today. He attended American University where he received a degree in communications; he was the first person in his family to go to college. Lee then pursued a degree in law. He was elected to the Fairfax Circuit Court in 1992. Passion, persistence and determination were the three elements of success, he said. "Define your own commitments," said Lee. He also spoke about the importance of defining a sense of self to help one determine the path that they will take: "What really matters is that you know who you are and whose you are." Lee also focused on the importance of helping one another and giving back to society. "Nobody can do everything, but everyone can do something," he said.

After the ceremony, the graduates, their families and friends gathered outside of the school for pictures. "It's amazing. I feel so relieved. It's pretty good for the next few weeks until I have to go to college orientation," said 2009 graduate Anna Krashevski, when asked how it felt to now be a graduate.

Faculty members waited outside to congratulate the students and to send them off on their way to their future endeavors. "I think they [the class of 2009] are a dynamic group and like the speaker said, I know there will be many everyday heroes," said Kimberly Culp, a member of Mount Vernon's faculty who teaches ESOL and is the co-sponsor of Its Academic.

Board Effort To Close Achievement Gap 'Abandoned?'

FROM PAGE 3

According to the committee's report, 596 students, about 2.7 percent, of students who are Hispanic participated in "school-based" gifted and talented programs. Among students who are black, 466, or 3.8 percent, participated in "school-based" gifted and talented programs.

Currently, Fairfax County Public Schools population is about 48 percent white, 18 percent Asian, 17 percent Hispanic and 11 percent black. In 1999, the school system was 59 percent white, 15 percent Asian, 12 percent Hispanic and 11 percent black.

The percentage of black and Hispanic students who are enrolled in these gifted and talented programs has actually doubled over the past four years. However, the over-

all growth of these programs — and therefore the growth of white and Asian student enrollment — has significantly outpaced that of black and Hispanic students, increasing 159 percent during the same time period.

When it comes to enrollment at Thomas Jefferson, the county's premiere magnet program, students who are black and Hispanic have actually lost ground.

Only 14 black and Hispanic students were offered a spot at Thomas Jefferson this year, compared to 31 in 2004 and 51 in 1991.

This is in spite of the fact that students who are Hispanic represent a larger share of the population now than they have in the past. Over the past decade, the percentage of students who are black has remained relatively the same.

NEWS

Help for Seniors

FROM PAGE 5

and sustain the concept of compassionate and caring family support for Mt. Vernon seniors."

According to Barbara Sullivan, assistant director of the Paul Spring Retirement Community, "The MVAH senior village concept — including partnering with governmental and private organizations and individuals — has the potential to provide the kind of

peace of mind that comes with the assurance that someone is out there looking after you or your loved one I welcome working with MVAH to help provide essential services to our senior population in Mt. Vernon."

Similarly, Ellis, the county's long-time senior director of the Hollin Hall Center, is an enthusiastic advocate for partnering with MVAH.

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Waynewood

1105 Potomac Lane \$ 699,995

This 3,400 sq ft home w/garage boasts a large, level, landscaped backyard. A fireplace distinguishes the remodeled country kitchen in this 5-6BR/3BA home.



Waynewood

8614 Cyrus Place
\$ 599,000

Expanded "Haddon" model w/4BR & 2.5BA with the potential to finish the attic for a 5th BR. Beautiful family room faces backyard & brick patio.

Kirkside
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\$ 532,000

5BR/3BA home offers beautiful landscaping, lge deck off the DR to view the lush mature trees. Granite, SS & eat-in area completes the Kit. Hwd on main. FR w/FP on LL.



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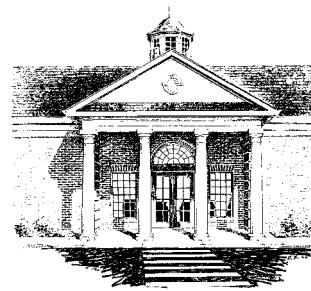
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OPINION

Top Ten Secrets

This is a month filled with graduations and graduation messages. Last month the speech for graduates at my daughter's Earlham College struck me as one of the best. Here, squeezed to less than 20 percent of its original, are excerpts from the Baccalaureate address by Chuck Yates, professor of history.

—MARY KIMM

NUMBER TEN: Figure out what you like to do and then find someone who'll pay you to do it. But don't go where the money is good; go where the work is good, where the good comes from the difference the work makes in your life and the lives of others.

NUMBER NINE: Get to know the locals. Remember: they live here; they know how the system works here; they know who the movers and shakers are. The locals are your neighbors. The locals are your community. The locals are your lifeline.

NUMBER EIGHT: Ask for directions. You might as well get used to the idea that you're going to get lost now and then. So ask for directions. There's no shame in not knowing the way.

NUMBER SEVEN: "To thine own self be true." ... And when you mess things up, be the first one to step up, and own up, and do what you can to fix what you broke.

And forgive — always forgive. Forgiveness is not about letting the other person off the

hook; it's not about the other person at all. It's about you, about the kind of person you want to be, about how you define yourself as a moral agent. And forgive yourself when you trip over your own feet and fall flat on your face.

NUMBER SIX: Know what you think, but more important, know why you think it. What you believe is nobody's business but your own, but the rub is that belief guides behavior, so knowing why you think what you think is a precondition for knowing why you do what you do.

NUMBER FIVE: Remember that other people want you to take them just as seriously as you want them to take you. If you don't understand your opponent's position well enough to make your own persuasive defense of it, at a minimum that probably means you haven't been paying attention.

NUMBER FOUR: Take care of yourself. Hold it in your heart that taking care of yourself is not the same thing as being selfish. ... And there's this one other thing that's absolutely essential if you want to do your best job of taking care of yourself: never take yourself too seriously.

NUMBER THREE: Remember that most of the time, most of it isn't going to make much sense to you. But that doesn't mean it doesn't make sense. Most of us spend a lot of time and

energy trying to make the math come out even. The trouble is, the only place where the math comes out even is in math.

NUMBER TWO: Keep your scriptures handy. We all need scriptures. What's good about scriptures is that they put us in touch with the wisdom of others who've gone a lot farther down the road than we have. The scripture I rely on most frequently is very simple, and goes like this: "God, grant me serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference."

NUMBER ONE: Love. Paul told the Corinthians, there are three things that last forever. They work together — faith, hope, and love — each one woven through the other two into a fabric that never tears, never wears out, and always gives warmth and shelter. But love, Paul said, love is the main thing.

So here I am, telling you to love. Love yourselves. Love each other. Love this magical mysterious heart-breaker of a world we live in. Love it for what it can become. But love it for what it is too. If you choose love, you create a center of gravity for yourself that will help you stay balanced no matter what happens.

Yate's address ended with a crowd-pleasing round of the Beatles' "All You Need Is Love." For the full address, see www.earlham.edu/documents/pdf/baccalaureate/2009address.pdf

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Update on Road Improvements

BY KRISTEN J. AMUNDSON
DELEGATE (D-44)

We have good news to report. On May 28, we sent a letter to Virginia Secretary of Transportation Pierce Homer asking him not to proceed with VDOT's planned reduction of the speed limit on Route One.

In that letter, we shared with Secretary Homer the results of many conversations with constituents, civic associations, and businesses along the highway. "Our conversations have left us with one overwhelming impression," we wrote. "Our citizens do not want the speed limit lowered."

Today, we are pleased to announce that VDOT will respect the wishes of the people who live and work here. The speed limit will remain where it has been, at 45 mph.

Thanks to everyone who played an active role in this issue — from Supervisors Hyland and McKay, who convened town meetings, to Captain David Moyer, commander of the Mt. Vernon District Station, who backed up our argument that lowering the speed limit would not make the roadway safer, to the citizens and businesses who also made their voices heard.

We also want to update you on the progress that has been made and is being planned along Richmond Highway. The County Department of Trans-

portation has released a two-page list of intersection and walkway improvements that are either completed, underway, or on the schedule in the next five years. Here is just a short listing:

Projects completed:

- ❖ Route One widened to 6 lanes from Telegraph Road/Old Colchester Road to Lorton Road.
- ❖ Intersection improvements at Route One and Mt. Vernon Memorial Hwy.
- ❖ Intersection improvements at Route One and Engleside Post Office
- ❖ Constructed sidewalk on the northbound side of Route One from south of Sherwood Hall Lane to Gum Springs Center
- ❖ Constructed sidewalk along the northbound side of Route One south and north of Quander Road.
- ❖ Completed the upgrade of all Route One pedestrian signals to countdown signals.
- ❖ Completed the interchange of Route One and I-495 (a \$770 million project).

Many more safety improvements are in the works. Over the next five years, here is a partial listing of the improvements that are planned:

- ❖ Intersection improvements at Route One at Mt. Vernon Memorial Hwy./Old Mill Road-Mulligan Road.
- ❖ New traffic signal and pedestrian intersection improvements at Route One and Janna Lee

SEE UPDATE, PAGE 19

LETTERS

Pedestrian Awareness

To the Editor:

A few days ago I was almost hit by a car when crossing Fordson Road at Piper Lane, a quiet side street just a few blocks from my apartment in Alexandria. It was a weekday around 9 a.m. I had crossed at that corner many times. I bypassed the intersection of Fordson Road and Lockheed Boulevard even though it has a traffic light and a pedestrian crosswalk, because I've come close to being hit there many times by turning vehicles. I also didn't cross there because there is no sidewalk on the other side of that segment of the road, and the trees and bushes would force me to walk alongside the curb right next to the flowing traffic.

So that morning I crossed at my usual corner, but not before I looked both right and left. One car passed on the right with no traffic behind it. When I looked to the left I saw a white car that just passed the Fordson and Lockheed intersection a block down.

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LETTERS

FROM PAGE 8

Admittedly it was a short block, but based on my experience with judging speed, time, and distance I felt it was safe to cross and proceeded. Within seconds I heard a blasting horn, and out of the corner of my eye I saw a white car bearing down on me. I was thinking, "Why is the driver leaning on the horn but not stopping?"

I froze like a deer in the headlights. That was uncharacteristic. I'm quite agile and responsive. I've dodged my way out of numerous near-hit situations which I anticipated. This time I was caught off-guard. I stared at the approaching vehicle as if in a time-warp experiencing it in slow-motion nanosecond segments. I was certain I was going to be hit. I felt doomed. The shrillness of screeching brakes cracked the cocoonish fog in which I found myself encased. I looked down and saw the car a foot away from me. One foot—it's the closest I've come to thinking I was about to die.

I looked through the windshield and saw a shaken driver who looked more bewildered than I. As I walked over to the driver, I was elated to be alive. When the window rolled down I said, "You al-



PHOTO BY LOUISE KRAFFT/GAZETTE

Snapshot June 22, 1:34 p.m.: Professional musician Dale Jarrett performs an afternoon concert at the Hollin Hall Senior Center.

most killed me. Didn't you see me?" The driver responded incoherently. But what the driver said next angered me. "You didn't look." I realized such a statement was a natural, reflexive response shifting, if not denying, responsibility.

The driver's statement was inherently contradictory. If the driver knew I wasn't looking when I crossed the street, that would mean the driver was observing me from the moment I stepped off the

curb, in which case the driver would have seen me earlier and stopped sooner. How the driver got to where I was crossing so quickly without seeing me until at the point of panic is something only the driver can answer.

The next day I stood at the same corner and timed vehicles that just passed the intersection a block down. Vehicles that appeared to be abiding by the speed limit took on

SEE LETTERS, PAGE 19

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Independence Day at George Washington's Mount Vernon Home



The First Virginia Regiment readies a cannon on the Bowling Green.



General Washington bows to a young visitor on Independence Day at Mount Vernon.

BY ANSLEY LABARRE
THE GAZETTE

The Mount Vernon Estate hosts the annual Independence Day celebration this Fourth of July with the mindset there is no better place to celebrate the birth of a nation than on the founder's doorstep.

THE CELEBRATION begins at 8 a.m. and runs through the afternoon. Mount Vernon does not want participants to be discouraged from this daytime celebration for fear of missing traditional evening fireworks.

"Because Mount Vernon is in so many backyards, locals often don't think of it," said Emily Coleman Dibella, Mount Vernon's director of public affairs. The schedule allows participants to come and go as they please while making the Fourth celebration a daylong event.

The agenda includes revolutionary reenactments, a reading from the Declaration of Independence and visits from George and Martha Washington. "When George and Martha are here together, which doesn't happen often throughout the year, they are rock stars. We have top actors who know all about George and Martha and the founding of the country," said Dibella.

Also new to the agenda this year are the daytime fireworks, visible through colored smoke, and a naturalization ceremony of 100 immigrants performed by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Dibella describes all the events of the Fourth's celebration "moving" in their own ways, a function of their occurrence in the historical setting.

The list of activities has appeal for all ages and Mount Vernon's intent for the celebration is to simply wish the country a "happy birthday." Mount Vernon provides an outlet to express gratitude for being American while observing the importance of the founding of the country. They are even providing birthday cake.

"This is such a perfect place to celebrate the birth of our country," said Dibella.

Saturday, July 4 from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Historic Mount Vernon, the home of George Washington, salutes the country's first commander-in-chief with a display of daytime fireworks during its annual Independence Day event. For the first time ever, visitors will be treated to smoke fireworks in patriotic colors fired during the finale of the National Concert Band of America's performance. The event also includes a naturalization ceremony for 100 new citizens (also new this year), military reenactments, a special wreath-laying ceremony, free birthday cake for all (while supplies last), and a visit from the "first" first couple, "General and Mrs. Washington." All events are included in regular Estate admission: adults, \$15; children ages 6-11, \$7; and children under 5 are admitted free. Go to Visit.MountVernon.org for more information.



Soldiers marching at Mount Vernon on Independence Day.

SCHEDULE

❖ **All day:** "General and Mrs. Washington" will be on hand to greet and take photographs with visitors. In the Donald W. Reynolds Education Center, visitors can cool down in the Revolutionary War Theater where "snow" falls on the audience as Washington is crossing the Delaware River.

❖ **9:30 a.m.:** Re-enactors from the First Virginia Regiment assemble for inspection by "General Washington" on the Bowling Green, where the Declaration of Independence will be read by the First Virginia Regiment.

❖ **10 a.m.:** Visitors may join the George Washington Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) in a procession to George Washington's Tomb for a special wreath-laying ceremony.

❖ **11 a.m.:** A special Independence Day naturalization ceremony for America's 100 newest citizens with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.

❖ **12 p.m.:** The annual "Red, White and Blue Concert" takes place featuring patriotic favorites by the National Concert Band of America, an 80-mem-

ber company of retired musicians from each of the United States Armed Services' bands.

❖ **12:45 p.m. – 12:50 p.m.:** A pyrotechnic salute to America from the home of George Washington! Watch as a colorful display of smoke fireworks are fired over the Potomac river.

❖ **1 p.m.:** Mount Vernon's all-American birthday cake will be offered to visitors (while supplies last).

❖ **1:30 p.m.:** Fife and drum corps will perform military music and drills.

❖ **2:30 p.m.:** Revolutionary War military demonstrations by the First Virginia Regiment take place on the Bowling Green.

Summer Farm Life: July has always been a time of celebration at George Washington's farm as it marks the beginning of the wheat harvest season. To celebrate Washington the farmer, field hands will kick-off the season on Independence Day with wheat-treading demonstrations at the George Washington: Pioneer Farmer site. Costumed staff will lead Mount Vernon's horses as they tread wheat in the 16-sided barn at 10:30 a.m., 11 a.m., 1 p.m., and 3 p.m.

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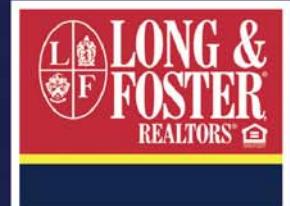


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BRIGHT & SUNNY! 3rd floor renovated 4BR/2BA condo. New AC, SS appliances, granite counters, paint, & Laundry & extra storage in basement. Adjacent to Lee Center for pool & fitness room & home of Port City Playhouse. Walking dist to METRO, shops & restaurants.

Sheryl Lambson 703.217.7012



106 COLVILLE DRIVE
Manassas - \$577,900

STUNNING 4 lvl, 3BR + loft you can use as an office or 4th bedroom. New SS refrigerator & range, paint, landscaping & carpeting. Enjoy special touches of floor to ceiling bookcases in loft, hwd, corian counters, FP in rec room & a walk-out fully fenced flagstone patio.

Sheryl Lambson 703.217.7012



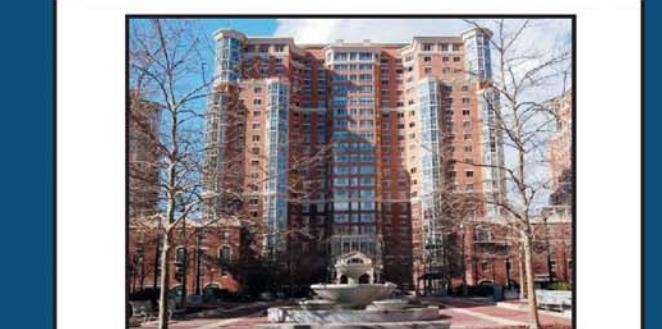
1707 NORTH-CLIFF STREET
Alexandria - \$425,000

DIR: from OT, N on Mt Vernon Ave, L on Bellefonte, L on Cliff, property on L

OPEN SUN. 1-4

D E L R A Y ' S FINEST! Fabulous 3 level, 2BR/2BA and den in heart of Del Ray. Recent updates include remodeled Kit, BA, A/C, and more. Off street parking and only 2 blocks to shops and restaurants on Mt Vernon Avenue.

*Glenn Witucki 703.518.8708
Pat Wilson 703.598.7279*



2151 JAMIESON AVENUE #1104
City of Alexandria - \$449,900

CARLYLE TOWERS! 2BR/2BA corner unit w/ enclosed balcony. Open fl pl. Eat-in kit upgrades incl granite, s/c & lighting. Mstr suite w/priv BA/ walk-in closet. Gar pkg & extra storage. Walk dist to METRO. Private showing call . . .

Pat Wilson 703.598.7279



8443 PORTER LN
Stratford Landing - \$534,900

Bright & sunny 2Br/2Ba up, 2Br/1Ba lower w/FR, hwd flrs, large foyer, Euro kit cabs, ext MstrBr, large lot w/ mature trees, screened porch, brick patio, pond in front, tandem 2-car gar.

www.brianandjerry.com
Brian Hong & Jerry Beamer 703.929.5764



8315 MAGIC LEAF RD
Springfield - \$482,800

Move in condition for this 4Br/2.5Ba 2-car gar Colonial in serene wooded setting. Huge unfin w/out base, beautiful deck off FR w/ Sunsetter retractable

www.brianandjerry.com
Brian Hong & Jerry Beamer 703.929.5764



1107 CAMERON ROAD
Alexandria - \$525,000

MOVE IN READY! Sparkling split level w/sunroom addition. Newly refinished hwd, freshly painted inside & out. 2 fireplaces, built-in bookshelves. Whole house fan. Large yard, carport. Near Potomac, jog/bike trails, shopping. EZ commutes.

Martha Deal 703.622.6797



1105 POTOMAC LANE
Alexandria - \$699,995

GREAT VALUE IN WAYNEWOOD! This 3,400 sq ft home w/gar boasts a large, level, landscaped backyard. A fireplace distinguishes the remodeled country kit in this 5-6BR/3BA home. 2 more fpl, hwd, lg FR make this home a real value!

*Catherine.Foltz@longandfoster.com
Catherine Foltz 703.626.6914*



8311 MOUNT VERNON HIGHWAY
Alexandria / Mt Vernon - \$899,000

New Homes - New Prices - This fabulous, lushly appointed 4Br/3.5Ba model home can be upgraded to 5Br/5.5Ba. Preview the numerous new Wakefield homes now being offered in the Alexandria area. Too many options to list. Visit our model home & choose yours today!

Mary Rice Prosser 703.625.4461



LOFTY OAKS
Mount Vernon - upper \$700,000's

PREVIEW the newest Wakefield Homes community. Several models available and waiting for your personal touch. Model located at 8311 Mount Vernon Highway, Alexandria, VA 22309.

Mary Rice Prosser 703.625.4461



7022 FIELD-HURST COURT
Alexandria - \$458,900

THE MEWS! Large townhome ready & waiting w/brand new carpet, much new paint, fully finished basement w/fireplace. Patio on lower level. French doors to large deck off eat-in Kit. Large Master BR w/ shower & soaker tub. Amenities incl: pool basketball, tennis, tot lot. Close to shops of Kingstown & METRO.

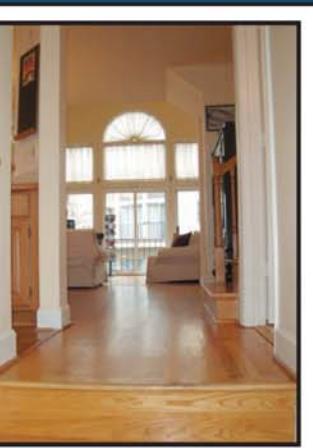
Stephen Kindrick 703.683.8709



1111c I STREET
New Alexandria - \$799,000

CLOSE TO POTOMAC - new construction. Spacious upscale new TH w/front porch & ample pkg. Features include hwd flrs, FP, granite SS, spa style Ba. 3 fin lvs above ground approx. 3,500 sq ft w/roof top deck. Minutes to METRO & more!

www.marylousage.com
Marylou Sage 703.851.5441



3803 COURTLAND CIRCLE
Alexandria - \$540,000

Inderjeet Jumani 703.472.8804



2 TOWNHOUSES with COURTYARD LOCATIONS!
Alexandria - \$540,000

LUXURY townhouses, both 3BR/2.55BA, 4 lvs, 2,540 sq ft. Marble entries, soaring ceilings, Palladian windows, 2 lvl loft style MBR suites, 2 fireplaces, balconies, upgrades and more. DIR: from OT, Rte 1 North, L on E Glebe, R on Charles, bear L on Charles, R on Courtland. Call either agent for details. Pictures: www.ijumani.com



3903 COURTLAND CIRCLE
Alexandria - \$540,000

Brandy Buzinski 202.277.5478



RENTALS

906 So Washington Street \$1,125
Bearings South Garden Efficiency/1Bba
Pat Garrity 703.298.2287

3926 El Camino Place \$1,200
Sequoyah Patios Home 2Br/1.5Ba
Susan Batchelder 703.919.8359

4623 South 31st Street \$1,600
Fairlington Village Garden 2Br/1Ba
Renee Reymond 703.507.5330

12610 Victoria Station Court \$2,250 1Pkg
Fair Lakes Condo 3Br/3.5Ba
Mary Taylor 703.785.5619

1250 South Washington Street #319 \$2,350*
Porto Vecchio Mid-rise 1Br/1.5Ba 1 Pkg
*for details on 1 mos free rent CALL
Patricia Tierney 703.805.5630



RENTALS

2024 Franklin Street \$2,350
Franklin Forest Cape Cod 2Br/1.5Ba 1Pkg
David Okonsky 703.585.5268

399 Pickett Street #48 \$2,400
Townes of Hillwood Townhouse 3Br/3.5Ba 1Pkg
Pat Wilson 703.598.7279

1250 South Washington Street #201 \$2,500
Porto Vecchio Mid-rise 2BR/2BA 1 Pkg
Patricia Tierney 703.805.5630

27 Spring Street \$2,800
Temple Park Detached 3Br/1Ba 1Pkg
David Okonsky 703.585.5268

5902 Mount Eagle Drive #1608 \$3,000
Montebello Penthouse 4Br/3Ba 1Pkg
Norma Stratton 703.966.0756



712 WOLFE ST
Old Town - \$649,500

WOLFE STREET GEM Magnificent circa 1820 historic plaque 2 BR/1.5BA end unit TH in heart of Old Town. Upgraded kitchen with period Hutch, Old Pine Floors, Crown moulding, large "6 over 6" windows, back rooms in warm glows. Fabulously deep garden. 4 blocks to King Street.

To view home call . . .
Philip G. Matyas 703.518.8727



318 PRINCE STREET #7
In the Heart of OT Alexandria - \$739,000

Former model is "I" of a kind, 20' ceilings in LR/DR, custom built-ins, Corinthian column detail. Huge eat-in kit w/brkfst bar leads to patio & access to Royal St. Renovated/expanded MBR w/custom closet, original pine flrs, new maple vanity in BA w/granite in shower. LL BR w/atrium window offers privacy. Access to pkg from unit.

Suzanne Backus 703.338.3594



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COLDWELL BANKER RESIDENTIAL BROKERAGE

 OPEN SUNDAY 1-4!	 OPEN SUNDAY 1-4!	 OPEN SUNDAY 1-4!	 JUST LISTED
1250 Dartmouth Court \$1,200,000 I Alexandria City, Quaker Hill Elegant five bedroom home located near Old Town is exquisitely appointed and combines open space with the ultimate in interior and exterior detailing. Featuring renovated kitchen awash in natural light. A great room with walls of windows opens to spacious deck. Master suite with super bath and expansive walk-in closets.	6 Keith's Lane \$1,495,000 I Old Town Alexandria Bright and spacious Royal model with striking waterfront views! Gourmet eat-in kitchen with exit to deck, granite counters and breakfast bar, private master suite with walk-in closets, upper level bedroom and loft area with private bathroom. Hardwood flooring, elegant moldings, exceptional location near shopping, dining and Potomac River.	1203 Essex Manor Court \$1,340,000 I Wellington New hardwood floors, carpet, paint. Over 6000 sq ft, 5 bedrooms, study, library, 4.5 baths 2 car garage, almost 1/2 acre, kitchen with granite, island, breakfast room. Sun and music room overlooking deck and yard. Finished lower level suite, rec room, hobby room, storage. Dir: S on GW Pkwy, R Morningside Lane, L Admiral, L Essex Manor.	3449 South Stafford Street \$539,500 I Fairlington Highly sought-after Dominion, the largest floor plan in Fairlington! This 3 bedroom plus 2 bath end unit boasts hardwood floors, plaster walls, plantation shutters and a renovated kitchen with granite counters. The fabulous lower level offers a family room with built-ins plus a guest suite. A large TV screen and surround system convey! The home is a gem!
Frann Orr 703.623.4070	Cathy D'Antuono 703.819.3077	Phyllis Patterson 703.518.6158	Donnan C. Winternute 703.518.6156
 OPEN SUNDAY 1-4	 OPEN SUNDAY 1-4!	 TWO HOMES - OPEN SUNDAY 1-4!	 JUST LISTED
2310 Wilkinson Place \$579,900 I Kirkside Charming 4 bedroom dream home, perfect for family and entertaining. Updated eat-in kitchen with new appliances, countertops and flooring. Living room with fireplace, formal dining room. Spacious lower level rec room with built-in bookcase and fireplace. Large patio and backyard.	125 North Payne Street \$699,000 I Old Town Alexandria A charming, sunny house with long garden, 2 bedrooms, new eat-in kitchen with granite counters and breakfast bar, trendy exposed brick walls, cathedral ceilings and skylights! 1.5 bathrooms. Close to King Street metro and shops. For information, more photos or floor plan please visit www.125NorthPayneSt.com . MLM1606@aol.com.	2151 Jamieson Ave #607 - \$795,000 2121 Jamieson Ave #1603 - \$668,500 Two great 3 bedroom Carlyle units with striking views and bright, open floor plans. Enjoy garage parking, sunny glass enclosed balcony, hardwood floors and designer upgrades. Close to restaurants, movies, Dash bus, and 2 Metro stops. www.CarlyleTowers2-607.com . www.CarlyleTowers1-1603.com . MLM1606@aol.com.	5901 Bush Hill Drive \$496,900 I Bush Hill Woods Completely renovated home with gleaming hardwood floors, decorator paint, new kitchen with ceramic floors and stainless steel appliances, gracious LR with fireplace, formal dining room, finished LL with large recreation room, chair rail, 4th bedroom and 3rd full bath. 4 bedroom, 3 bath plus garage.
Frann Orr 703.623.4070	Marie Louise Meyer 703.836.2080	Marie Louise Meyer 703.836.2080	Liz Bucuvalas 703.626.8400
 OPEN SUNDAY 1-4!	 JUST LISTED!	 OPEN SUNDAY 1-4!	 OPEN SUNDAY 1-4!
8708 Bradgate Road \$619,000 I Stratford Landing 4 bedroom, 3 bath home – updated top to bottom! Stunning multi-level deck! Move in ready with new Energy Smart appliances, new flooring and more! Take GW Pkwy South; right on Stratford, left on Camden, left on Londonderry, right on Highgate, left on Waterford, right on Bradgate. www.8708Bradgate.com .	3108 Cunningham Drive \$649,000 I Wessynton 4 bedroom, 3 bath home located just off the GW Parkway near Mt. Vernon. Community pool, tennis courts and water access! Recent renovations include new windows, roof and HVAC, remodeled kitchen with Corian counters and stainless steel appliances, hardwood and cork flooring, and idyllic tree views from the spacious rear deck.	519 Alfred Street \$630,000 I Old Town Alexandria Very special 2 bedroom, 2 bath home in historic Old Town, with wood burning fireplace! Perfectly renovated in the past 3 years including EIK, baths, hard woods, exterior and delightful outdoor space. Convenient to all Old Town has to offer. Just 6 blocks to metro! N. on GW Pkwy into Old Town. Rt. on Pendleton, Lt on N. Alfred St. to 519 on left.	1503 Alexandria Avenue \$564,900 I Hollin Hall Village Situated on corner lot across from parkland, this 3 level, 4 bedroom, 3 bath home is a jewel! Living room with fireplace, dining area and updated kitchen with granite and stainless steel. Lower level with bath and spacious family room with fireplace, and entrance to the outside deck and fenced rear garden.
Bob Kuletz 703.615.2626	Mark Souder 703.856.5538	Linda Wolf 703.518.6165	Boots Howland Leavitt 703.582.5665



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COMMUNITY

HOT Lanes Work Suspended Contractor cited for environmental violations.

BY JULIA O'DONOGHUE
THE GAZETTE

The Virginia Department of Transportation halted construction in three out of four "areas" of the Capital Beltway High Occupancy Toll [HOT] Lanes project June 22 after a contractor failed to comply with environmental regulations.

Residents and environmental advocates have documented the failure of fences that are supposed to prevent sediment from running into Accotink Creek and other water-sheds after rainfall.

Contractor Capital Beltway Express LLC is responsible for ensuring sediment control precautions are in place, according to a June 19 letter written by Larry Cloyd, senior project manager for the state transportation department.

Photographs taken by environmentalists show that many of the existing fences have been overwhelmed consistently during rainstorms over the last nine months.

A Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation inspection also determined that "[Capital Beltway Express] had not taken the necessary action to ensure environmental compliance," according to Cloyd's letter.

"When visiting these sites, I saw the sediment structures were failing consistently. They will get washed out and water and soil end up getting washed into the local tributary and washed into Accotink Creek," said Kris Unger, an Arlington County resident who works with several local environmental groups. Unger took many of the pic-

tures that document the fence failures.

The presence of additional run off raises the water temperature and "kills off critters" in Accotink Creek. It also further erodes the creek banks, which can cause trees around the creek to topple, said Duane Murphy, a Burke resident and coordinator of Friends of Accotink.

"The reason the Chesapeake Bay is not doing well is because of actions like this," said Murphy.

The additional sediment from the construction project could also end up costing Fairfax County taxpayers money.

Lake Accotink has to be dredged approximately once every 10 years because a large amount of silt — the equivalent of a busload — runs into the lake every month normally. The last dredging, which took place recently, cost the county about \$8 million, said Murphy. If the appropriate sediment controls are not put in place around the HOT lanes project, even more sediment will flow into Lake Accotink and it will have to be dredged sooner than normal, said Murphy.

On June 12, the Virginia transportation department warned Capital Beltway Express that it needed to take care of the environmental violations by June 17, when the state performed another inspection of the construction site. The company did not comply so the commonwealth decided to suspend work on the project, wrote Cloyd in the letter to the contractor.

Capital Beltway Express will be able to resume work when they put appropriate environmental measures in place and pass a state inspection scheduled for two weeks from June 22, wrote Cloyd.

Amundson: No to Re-election

Del. Kris Amundson (D-44) announced this week that she will not seek re-election to the General Assembly this November because of the personal financial constraints the economic recession has placed on her.

Amundson is president of her KJA Communications, where she develops and writes educational materials for school administrators, school board members, parents, teachers and students, according to her campaign Web site.

In a letter to constituents dated June 24, Amundson wrote that she was leaving public office because of a drop off in the consulting services and freelance writing jobs she uses to support herself. Since campaigning is a full-time job, Amundson did not think she would be able to focus on the election and her business at the same time, she wrote.

"My situation is not unlike the situation of many other Virginia families. I know they face choices much more challenging than mine," wrote Amundson in the letter.

Amundson has represented the Mount Vernon area in the Virginia House of Delegates since 2000 and is the body's current minority whip. Before joining the General

Assembly, she served on the Fairfax County School Board for 10 years and was president of the Virginia School Boards Association in 1999.

Along with Arlington County Del. Bob Brink (D-48), Amundson also writes the blog 7 West, which is popular with Northern Virginia political insiders. The Web site can be found at www.7-west.org.

Republican James McConville and Independent Green Glenda Parker remain candidates in the 44th delegate district race. Former Fairfax County Democratic Chair Scott Surovell has replaced Amundson as the Democratic nominee.

To run for Amundson's seat, Surovell resigned from his position as leader of the local Democratic Party at midnight June 24. He lives on the same street as both of his parents and owns a house on the property where his grandparents first built a home in 1941.

"I have lived in Mount Vernon for all but four years of my life. ... I think I know the district pretty well," said Surovell, who was in one of the first classes to graduate from West Potomac High School.

— JULIA O'DONOGHUE

Don't Forget Water Quality

To the Editor:

Response to Jay McConville: "It's About Priorities" (Letter to the Editor, June 11).

I find it refreshing to hear a candidate for public office acknowledge the truth about the longstanding infrastructure neglect to Richmond Highway between the

beltway and Fort Belvoir.

This issue resonates with LETTERS the voters and will hopefully create the kind of debate that in turn resonates with VDOT, the State Assembly and the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.

Jay McConville saying it is time to move beyond improved signs and signals by citing the need for additional improvements emphasizing pedestrian safety has merit but fails to address the equally important improvements needed to replace the archaic storm water infrastructure system linked to the Richmond Highway corridor that results in impaired and degraded streams flowing to the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay watershed. It is time for conservatives to be concerned about conservation.

Currently there is a Fairfax County Watershed Advisory Group or WAG that covers the Dogue Creek and Belle Haven watersheds both of which are impaired as a consequence of countless acres of concrete and asphalt that are undeniably evident throughout the Richmond Highway corridor. The majority of this cumulative impervious surface is under the control of VDOT and business owners fronting the highway. The storm water leaving these surfaces drains into inadequate storm water facilities thus eroding and degrading the local watersheds.

Clearly VDOT and Richmond Highway business owners are stakeholders yet they are essentially absent from the Watershed Advisory Group process. Citizen homeowners also have a role in that their residences create impermeable surfaces that add to the damaging storm water runoff problems in their communities. They make up the bulk of the non-government stakeholders present at the WAG meetings. Any action plan for stream restoration which is the goal of the WAG without engaging all of the stakeholders will result in a shortsighted and inadequate plan that punts the problem to future generations to pay for and fix.

I wrote members of the Virginia delegation about the lack of direct involvement of other key stakeholders in this process. Delegate Amundson's office responded back last winter with a call from an aide stating they will look into the expressed concerns. To date there has been no additional response to the say what if anything can be done to engage these absent stakeholders. The WAG continues to meet without direct dialogue from either VDOT or business interests who many citizens see as major contributors to the storm water pollution issue.

Nearly 26 years ago the governors of three states and the mayor of D.C. signed the first Chesapeake Bay Agreement. Despite the pledge of efforts under voluntary programs, the bay is worse off today than when the efforts began. In 1987 the federal government and the states committed to reduce nitrogen and phosphorous, two key pollutants by 40 percent by 2000. When the goals were not reached there were no consequences. Recently the state leaders meeting at the Mount Vernon Estate, when confronted with the failures agreed to postpone the actions needed to reach the 2000 goals. Instead a new deadline of 2025 to enact measures that might restore the bay and pollution reduction goals that in some instances are weaker than former goals were agreed upon and of course they did not include sanctions for failing to meet their new targets.

Once again, the states are failing to institute statewide land use controls governing development or mandatory statutes for farm pollution. The lack of tough decisions statewide and on close to home issues such as how to fix and revitalize Richmond Highway dooms local watersheds and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay. It is time to stop postponing definitive goals for the restoration of our watersheds.

I think both Delegate Amundson of the 44th House District and challenger McConville understand the problems of the Richmond Highway corridor traffic and safety, the need for revitalization and the impact of the highway on the local watersheds and the bay. I believe they know equally well the initiatives that are necessary at the local and state level to truly begin restoration improvements and revitalization of both the highway corridor and the adjoining watershed environments.

I agree with Mr. McConville that Mount Vernon deserves the same attention as other parts of the state. We need no more studies, promises or delays on what to do to make Richmond Highway a better place for citizens and businesses but let's not forget the environment. It makes far more sense to address the entire scope of improvements necessary to fix Richmond Highway than just traffic and pedestrian issues.

It's time to hear from both candidates the specifics of what each proposes to do to address these issues over the next several years. I don't believe the voters want to hear yet again about postponing definitive goals to a time in the future when funding might be available or long after the candidates will be out of office. Mr. McConville says, "Only by working together ... will we succeed." I wish VDOT and Richmond Highway businesses felt the same way about working together with the community and the Watershed Advisory Groups for Dogue Creek and Belle Haven Watersheds. They too are part of the watershed.

Martin Tillett
Alexandria

CALENDAR

E-mail announcements to the *Gazette*, gazette@connectionnewspapers.com. Photos and artwork are encouraged. Deadline is Thursday at noon for the following week's paper. Call Steve Hibbard at 703-917-6407 with questions.

ONGOING

The Third Annual Alexandria Film Festival is soliciting entries from U.S. and international filmmakers. The festival will be held Sept. 24-27 at the George Washington Memorial Masonic Temple. This year, the Film Festival is partnering with Withoutabox, the film industry's premier online service platform. To submit your film online, visit www.withoutabox.com/login/7816. All entries submitted through Withoutabox will receive an additional discount. For more information or to obtain entry forms and submission guidelines, visit www.alexandriafilm.org. Call 703-838-6348.

THURSDAY/JUNE 25

Music at Twilight Concert. 7:30 p.m. Features Annie Sidley duo (Original Pop/R & B). At Fort Ward Park (4301 W. Braddock Rd.). Call the Special Events Hotline at 703-883-4686 or visit www.alexandriava.gov/recreation.

Paying It Forward Day. 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Free food, free chair massages, a Red Cross blood drive, entertainment, face painting, raffles and more to help raise awareness for Catholic Charities' Christ House of Alexandria. At 6295 Edsall Road in Alexandria. Call 703-778-4444.

FRIDAY/JUNE 26

Cardinal Brass Band. 7:30-8:30 p.m. Their musical style has been described as a mixture of classical to jazz and Broadway to blues. At Grist Mill Park as part of the Mt. Vernon Nights summer concert series. At 4710 Mt. Vernon Memorial Hwy., Alexandria. Call 703-324-SHOW (7469) after 6 p.m. for cancellation updates. Go to www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/performances/.

Lantern Tours. 7-10 p.m. Tour Gadsby's Tavern Museum (134 N. Royal St.) by candlelight with a

costumed guide and see how guests experienced the historic tavern and hotel before electricity. \$5 per person, ages 5 and up. The museum may be closed on some occasions; call 703-838-4242.

Choralis Sings. 7 p.m. Bach's Mass in B Minor, with orchestra. At Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center, with Gretchen Kuhrmann, Conductor/Artistic Director. At 3001 N. Beauregard St., Northern Virginia Community College, Alexandria. Tickets \$25-35; students w/ ID - \$5; age 12 and under - free. Info/tickets: www.choralis.org or 703-237-2499.

Special Workshop for Teachers. 9:30-11:30 a.m. Archaeologists and museum educators will present a two-hour program, "Cactus Hill & Werowocomoco: Everything You Ever Needed to Know," especially for teachers. At the Lyceum, Alexandria's History Museum, at 201 South Washington Street in Old Town Alexandria.

SATURDAY/JUNE 27

Benefit Shopping Night. 7-9 p.m. Twenty percent of the sales will go to the Presbytery of Eastern Virginia's children's feeding program in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo. At Ten Thousand Villages, 915 King Street, Old Town Alexandria. Call 703-684-1435.

Huntington Community Festival. Noon to 6 p.m. Free. Children's rides, games, vendors, giveaways, food and live entertainment. Live Performances from Pasaporte Latino, Watusi, Spice Hayes, O.U.O. (Of Unknown Origin), Blacksun, The Alan Palmer Group, Black L.I.O.N., B the B-Boy, Vocalz, Maryae, Mike the Ripper, Von (V for Vendetta Mix Tape), Disorderly Conduct Band, DJ Misterman, plus more to be announced. Contact 703-960-1917, TTY 711. At Huntington Community Center, 5751 Liberty Drive, Alexandria.

Community Yard Sale. 7 a.m.-2 p.m. at Anthony T. Lane Elementary School, 7137 Beulah St. Hosted by the Alexandria Jaycees. Free. Visit www.alexjaycees.org for more.

Del Ray Music Festival. 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Jazz, blues, swing, folk, country, Celtic, and rock. The majority of the musicians that will take the stage are residents of the neighborhood as well. The



SATURDAY/JUNE 27

Burning Desires. 3-6 p.m. Presented by Empowered Women International. A mixed media exhibition and performing program featuring 11 immigrant, refugee and American-born women artists, all graduates of EWI's Art Entrepreneur Training for Success. Stained glass Silk, Handmade silk paper. At Convergence Gallery, 1801 N. Quaker Lane, Alexandria. From June 4 through July 30.

National Capital Area Affiliate of Guitars Not Guns will be raffling off a Brazen Fantasy Standard guitar valued at \$750. On the fields of Mount Vernon Recreation Center, 2701 Commonwealth Avenue.

Volunteer Training. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Volunteers wanted at Gadsby's Tavern Museum. At 134 North Royal Street. Contact Michele Longo at 703-838-4242.

Community Concert Band Festival. Noon. Free. The National Community Concert Band Sousa Festival will highlight three bands, at noon, 1 p.m. and 2 p.m.: Auburn Community Band (IN); Chatham Community Band (NJ); and Middlesex Concert Band (MA). Each band performs a concert featuring music of "The March King," John Philip Sousa, original works for concert band, featured soloists, American music, poplar and patriotic favorites, and a variety and upbeat music. At the Schlesinger Concert Hall, 3001 N. Beauregard St., Alexandria. Go to www.musiccelebrations.com.

SUNDAY/JUNE 28

Pet Fun. 4-6 p.m. At Chateau Animaux, 101-A St. Saint Asaph Street, Alexandria. Artist Eric Ginsburg's artwork will be on display. Special on Zanadoo Treats, pet goodies. All dogs will get a treat on the house. Visit www.chateau-animaux.com or call 703-518-5188.

Summer Chamber Music Series. 3 p.m. Free. Violinist Marlisa Woody and pianist. Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic Association. At The Lyceum, 201 S. Washington St., Alexandria.

Jazz Jam. 7 p.m. Featuring Rick Whitehead trio. Musicians are encouraged to attend to either just listen or to perform. At the Episcopal church of the Resurrection, 2280 N. Beauregard St., Alexandria. \$10. A reception follows. Call 703-768-5821.

TUESDAY/JUNE 30

Hands-on-History Tent Event. 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Explore life for children in the 1700s, both rich and poor, slave and free at Carlyle House's Hands-on-History Tent Event. Free. Designed for children ages 3-12 and their parents. At Carlyle House in Alexandria. Call 703-549-2997.

SATURDAY/JULY 4

Organ Fireworks Concert. 10:10:45 a.m. Free. Organist-Choirmaster Douglas A. Beck. At St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 228 South Pitt Street, Alexandria. Call 703-549-3312.

Handbell Choir Festival Concert. 7 p.m. Douglas A. Beck. St. Paul's Organist-Choirmaster presents songs, audience participation and a dramatic reading of the Declaration of Independence. At St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 228 South Pitt Street, Alexandria. Call 703-549-3312.

SUNDAY/JULY 5

1759 Conversations: Establishing Gunston Hall. 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. Learn about the early days of the historic plantation. Talk with a costumed interpreter about George Mason's new house and how it was built. Included in site admission: \$9, \$8 seniors, \$5 ages 6 to 18, younger free. Gunston Hall Plantation, 10709 Gunston Rd., Mason Neck. 703-550-9220 or <http://www.gunstonhall.org>.

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Price per person for a family of 5 with our "Family Ticket". Price does not include a \$1/person processing fee. Family Ticket is \$105. Discount bus/boat packages also available for individuals. Not valid July 4th. See www.city-sightseeing.com for details/expiration.

ENTERTAINMENT

Del Ray Music Festival Saturday

Celebrate the diversity and talent of the community at the Third annual Del Ray Music Festival on Saturday, June 27. Scheduled from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. on the Mt. Vernon Recreation Center Fields, 2701 Commonwealth Ave., the Del Ray Music Festival will include music, food, games, and a chance to ring in the summer with friends and neighbors. The festival will

feature a variety of music including jazz, blues, swing, folk, country, Celtic, and rock. The majority of the musicians that will take the stage are residents of the neighborhood as well — something that makes this an extra special show for the performers. Visit the Web site at www.delraymusicfestival.com or email info@delraymusicfestival.com.

Main Stage

10 a.m. Swing Command (Swing Dance Band)
11 a.m. Sioban Quinn and Michael Bowers (Blues/Folk)
12 p.m. Ampersand (Rock)
1 p.m. Subtle Madness (Rock)
2 p.m. Chicken Fried Swing with Karl Straub (Swing/Rockabilly)
3 p.m. 50 Man Machine (Celtic Caribbean Rock)
4 p.m. Brad Linde Ensemble (Jazz)
5 p.m. Kate Moran Band (Pop/Rock)
6 p.m. Gulley Jimson Quartet (Rockabilly)
7 p.m. David Dodd and his band Shiner (Rock)
8 p.m. Naked Flames (Rock)
9 p.m. Dagmar and the Seductones (Rockabilly)

15-Minute Stage

10:45 a.m. CSA (Bluegrass)
11:45 a.m. Youth Fife and Drum Group
12:45 p.m. TC Williams Jazz Band
1:45 p.m. Steven Selman
2:45 p.m. 24-7 Band (Rock)
3:45 p.m. 24-7 Band (Rock)
4:45 p.m. Celtic Society of Southern Maryland
5:45 p.m. Celeste Starchild
6:45 p.m. Tim Parks
7:45 p.m. Jeff Stapleton
8:45 p.m. Paul Caffrey

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The Mount Vernon High School Class of 2009

Parent Council would like to thank the following individuals and local businesses and organizations for supporting the Class of 2009 All Night Grad Party.

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Wednesday - All American Night

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Thursday - Italian Night

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Friday - Fish Night

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Saturday - Steak and Chop Night

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Sunday

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SPORTS

School's Out, NVSL Now in Session

Despite rainy weather, opening weekend brings enthusiasm, excitement about new season.

BY ANSLEY LABARRE
THE GAZETTE

Green swim caps were barely visible under the mounting wave in the center of Mount Vernon Park's lap pool. The entire summer swim team gathered in the center of the lane lines to yell one last cheer before the final event of the meet. The continual displays of spirit not only got the summer swim season off to an enthusiastic start, it also pushed Mount Vernon Park to an opening weekend victory over Ravensworth Farm, 227.5-174.5.

While the rainy weather may have been less than ideal Saturday morning at Mount Vernon area pools, nothing could dampen the spirit of swimmers celebrating the start of the Northern Virginia Swim League season. Parents sported umbrellas and ponchos as swimmers, inevitably wet with or without the rain, raced on.

Now in its 43rd year of existence, the NVSL provides an outlet each summer for the area's youth to compete in the pool.

"Meets are my favorite part because I see a lot of friends," said nine-year-old Willie Nye of Mount Vernon Park. "And you show how fast and hard you worked, and hopefully win."

The competitive swimming circuits of the winter may be top notch around here — Maryland-based programs Rockville Montgomery Swim Club and Curl Burke are the No. 1 and 2 ranked club teams, respectively, in the entire country — but ask any swimmer and they'll say their love for the sport was born in the summer, in less-pressurized atmospheres like the NVSL.

Because most importantly, summer swim season reunites a family of sorts, the kind

that has been built on a ritual of fast swimming, encouragement, and fun each weekend over many years.

"I love cheering for the team because we all come together and it's the spirit of swimming in you," said Cameron McNutt of the Hollin Meadows team.

Although Hollin Meadows lost their first meet to opponent Riverside Gardens, 204-163, swimmers like six-year veteran Zoe Riviere sat through the rain to show her support. Old and young alike kept meet officials busy as they jumped up and down on the pool deck to cheer on their fellow Barracudas.

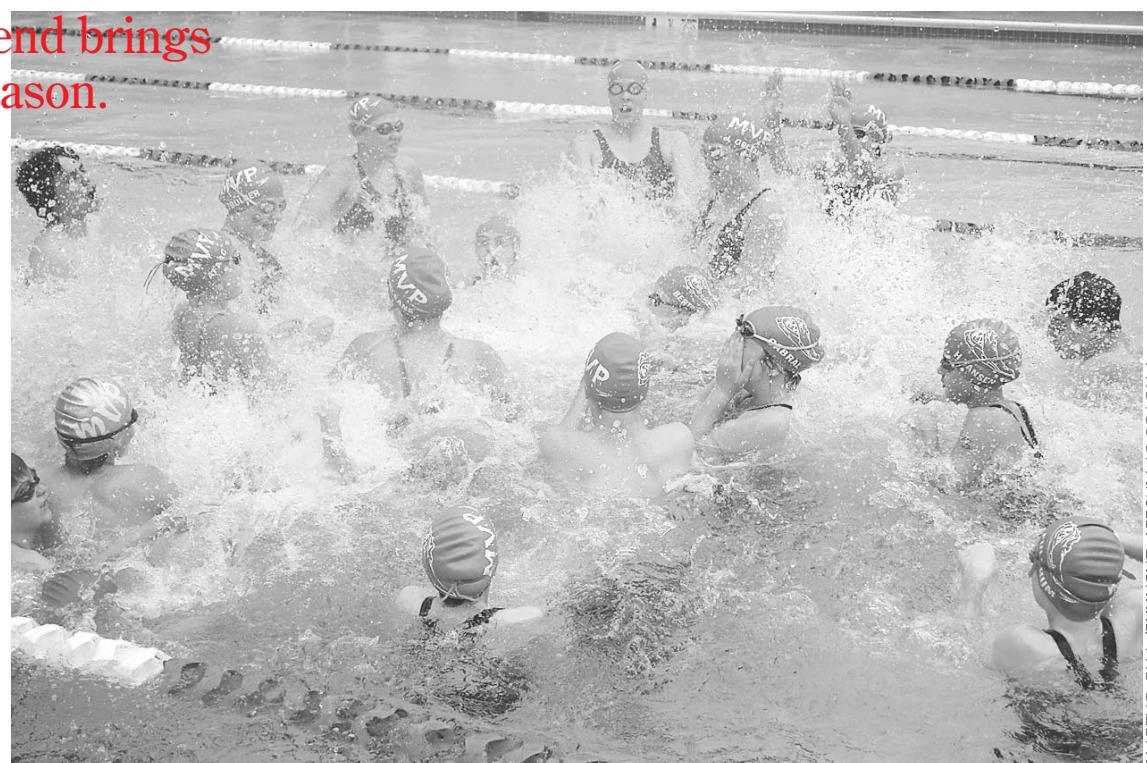
Lauren Crow, an assistant coach at Hollin Meadows, acknowledges the social importance of the team to its members.

"It keeps them busy, it keeps them out of trouble," said Crow. The 19-year-old coach notices how her swimmers make new friends outside of the school environment, a reason many join the league to begin with and keep coming back.

"I always get to see new people during the summer," said eight-year-old Alex Innis of Hollin Meadows after swimming her two events of the day.

Coaches like Crow will balance this social aspect with competition through various events during the season. Weekly Friday pep rallies allow team members to get

MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE SPORTS EDITOR MARK GIANNOTTO
703-917-6409 OR MGIANNOTTO@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



PHOTOS BY ANSLEY LABARRE/THE GAZETTE

Mount Vernon Park swimmers gather in the center of their pool for a team cheer before the final relay events of Saturday's meet against Ravensworth Farm.

a little wild with demonstrations of team spirit. Even in the height of a meet's competition, face paint and costumes like Crow's tribal headdress decorate the pool decks in a demonstration of team loyalty.

The coaches' social efforts make an impact on their swimmers. Maddy Howe, an eight-year-old swimmer for Mount Vernon Park said, "I love the practices because they are always really fun with the coaches."

Children ranging in ages from eight to 18 competed in last Saturday's meets, but some are as young as five when they join the team. No matter what age, though, swimmers like Riverside Garden's Gen Kobayashi will continue to look forward to Saturday meets, a tradition that is alive and kicking in this area.

"I keep coming back with my team, I grew up with it," said Kobayashi, an 18-year-old.



Coaches play an important role during the summer swim season by integrated fun with competition. "Coach Ron" of Hollin Meadows tracks his swimmers' events while displaying his own team spirit.



John Stout, 11, of the Hollin Meadows swim team competes in the men's 50 meter breaststroke in Saturday's meet against Riverside Gardens.

LETTERS

FROM PAGE 9

average 10 seconds to reach the point where I had crossed the day before. Ten seconds was ample time for me to step off the curb, cross the first lane, proceed across the second lane, and arrive safely on the sidewalk.

Later I thought had I been killed the driver probably would have suffered no legal or financial consequences. I imagined the driver saying to the police, "He just walked out into the street without looking. I didn't have time to stop." There were no witnesses. It would have been the driver's word against the eternal silence of a dead man. I would have left this world a defenseless victim shrouded in a lie.

I hope the driver has nightmares about this incident not because I'm vindictive, but because it may sear into the driver's memory the makings of a near-fatal accident. I suspect the driver will now be more attentive while at the wheel, hopefully more aware of pedestrians. But I must also fault myself. Just days before I had thought about developing a routine when crossing a street. I would not only look right and left when proceeding to cross, but I would continue to scan back and forth as I crossed the street until I reached the other side. Had I done so that morning I would have seen the car before the driver saw me and avoided a near-death experience.

What I learned from this frightful encounter is that I was too confident and carefree. Long ago I realized that crossing even at a pedestrian crosswalk with the walk light in my favor is no guarantee that an errant driver won't hit me. It's all about being a defensive pedestrian just like the safety campaign I remember about being a defensive driver. While Metro has a campaign aimed at pedestrians to avoid being hit by

vehicles, I haven't seen a counterpart campaign aimed at drivers to increase their awareness of pedestrians.

It's been my experience that nine out of 10 drivers are not "pedestrian aware." One of the best examples is crossing an intersection while a vehicle is positioned to turn right on red. Invariably the driver is totally focused on the traffic coming from the left, so much so that the driver doesn't look right as the turn is executed. I've come so close to being run over in such situations that now I cross behind, not in front of, such vehicles.

I've discovered that drivers generally are not looking for pedestrians, not thinking about pedestrians, not expecting to see pedestrians; and when they do they are surprised, shocked, and sometimes angered. Just a half-hour after almost being killed that morning, I crossed an intersection in front of a shopping center. There were three lanes of traffic. The first two were at a standstill because they faced a red light. The third lane was the right turn on red lane. As I walked across the broad white bars of the pedestrian crosswalk, I looked to the right and saw a white pickup truck barreling down the empty lane. I was sure the driver expected to breeze through the intersection, tap the break, and turn right. So I stopped. Just then the driver saw me and slammed on the brakes with a look of surprise and chagrin.

Over the years I've had drivers yell at me for showing up in inconvenient places for them. I've had drivers about to turn right snarl at me because I proceeded to walk when I had the walk light which meant they had to wait. I've had drivers scream out the window, "Stay on the sidewalk," when I was crossing intersections that had signage commanding drivers to yield to pedestrians at the risk of a \$300 fine.

I suspect that a lot of drivers approach driving too routinely, too casually. Their mindset is not one of anticipating problems, so they drive along with an "everything is OK attitude" and when confronted with a problem they can't respond well which results in an accident. I also suspect, and in my case know, that pedestrians also can be too routinely casual in maneuvering through vehicular traffic forgetting that as a pedestrian you can never be too careful.

My recent brush with death was a wakeup call for me to be a more defensive pedestrian, but I also hope it was a siren blast for the driver that almost ended my life because that morning the driver was daydreaming, distracted, or just so laidback in handling what could be a lethal weapon that the seriousness of the situation was strategically diminished to the point where a drive to work and a walk to McDonald's was on a collision course that could have proved fatal for me and life-altering for the driver.

James M. Mataya
Alexandria

Costly Summer

To the Editor:

I am a student at a local high school that has been wondering about the current summer school program. In the past years the summer school program was free to those who passed the SOL but failed the class. Now the program is costing the student's family's hundreds of dollars. I think that the change is not beneficial to those who don't have the money necessary to pay for said summer school. Even in the economic times we are in now I believe that making a change back to the way it was done the last few years would

SEE LETTERS, PAGE 22

Update on Road Improvements

FROM PAGE 8

Avenue.

- ❖ Pedestrian intersection and bus stop improvements at Route One and North/South Kings Hwy.
- ❖ Pedestrian intersection and bus stop improvements at Route One and Belford Drive South.
- ❖ Pedestrian intersection and bus stop improvements at Route One and Ladson Lane.
- ❖ Pedestrian intersection and bus stop improvements at Route One and Mohawk Lane.
- ❖ Pedestrian intersection and bus stop improvements at Route One and Frye Road.
- ❖ Pedestrian intersection and bus stop improvements at Route One and Lukens Lane.
- ❖ Pedestrian intersection and bus stop improve-

ments at Route One and Mt. Vernon Hwy.

You can see the full listing of Route One transportation projects completed and planned on our Web sites (www.amundson.org, www.marksickles.com, and www.toddy.org). It is significant that these Route One improvements are taking place in these difficult budget times — the Virginia Department of Transportation has cut its budget by \$3.7 billion since 2007. VDOT is in the process of laying off up to 1,000 employees, shutting down local field offices and closing 19 rest areas next week (on July 1).

It is political gridlock that has prevented funds for a longer term fix. We need to make sure Route One is ready to go when the General Assembly passes a transportation bill.

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21 Announcements

Public Notice Pursuant to the Voluntary Remediation Program

At 4109-4125 Mt. Vernon Avenue (VRP00472)

Property Address: 4109, 4115, 4121 & 4125 Mt. Vernon Avenue

Alexandria, VA 22305

Tax Map Numbers: 007.01-02-19, 007.01-02-20, 007.01-02-21, 007.01-02-22

VRP Applicant/Owner: City of Alexandria

The City of Alexandria enrolled the Site in the Virginia Voluntary Remediation Program (VRP) administered by the Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ). This notice is to fulfill the public participation requirement (9 VAC 20-160-120 (A) (3)) of that program. Remediation has been implemented and the participant is in the process of submitting the results to the VRP. Any questions or comments about the remediation of the Site are welcome during the 30 day public comment period.

Description of Remediation/Nature of Release/Proposed Land Use Control: The environmental impact on the properties is presumed to be a result of releases from the Site's historic uses in combination with fill material imported in the 1950's. Former Site uses include a retail paint store, gas station and dry cleaner. Site investigations found reportable concentrations of lead, petroleum hydrocarbons and chlorinated solvents in the groundwater and reportable levels of arsenic in the soil. A total of 55 tons of impacted soil was excavated and disposed of off-site. Air testing at 4109 Mt. Vernon Avenue confirmed no adverse impacts to indoor air quality. A groundwater deed restriction will be placed on the properties to prohibit use of groundwater.

Contact for Additional Information or to Submit Comments: To comment or request additional information regarding this Site contact Daniel Imig at The City of Alexandria, Office of Environmental Quality, City Hall, 301 King Street, Room 3000, Alexandria, VA 22314, 703-746-4070, daniel.imig@alexandriava.gov

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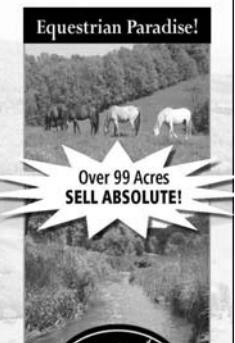
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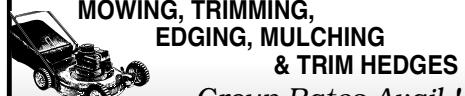
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LETTERS

FROM PAGE 19

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Daniel Carricker

Alexandria

Why Lack Of Respect?

To the Editor:

My wife and I attended the 2009 Mount Vernon High School graduation ceremony and it was an incredible event. As a 1978 graduate of Mount Vernon High and with my oldest daughter in the MVHS class of 2010 it was an experience that brought back many fond memories of my years at Mount Vernon. One of the administrators was in attendance for the ceremony who was at Mount Vernon when I was a student and that added to the event for me on even a more personal level.

The one thing that sticks in my mind, however, was something that occurred during the opening part of the graduation ceremony. The Mount Vernon Field House was filled to capacity and when it came time for the presentation of the United States Flag, a recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance and a singing of the National Anthem, I was saddened to the core during this portion of the program. Throughout this portion of the ceremony, there was hooting, hollering, whistling and otherwise a disgraceful display of utter disrespect on the part of many in the audience. You could not hear the singing of our National Anthem by the Mount Vernon Madrigals and the noise was overpowering during the Pledge of Allegiance. What truly saddened me was that the absolute majority of this disrespect came from the young people in the audience. I could not help but ask myself if this is an isolated event or has our society become so loath to display any sort of patriotism or respect for our country as was so demonstrated by our young citizens?

Normally, I would not feel so bad about something that I would write about it, but this really bothered me. I feel that our country is changing and not for the better. For such a disrespectful display represents to me where we are as a society and where we are headed as a nation.

When our young people become so desensitized to what living in this country represents and that of the sacrifices of our fathers before us to make is so is even more disturbing. We now have a society who ex-

pects everything to be handed to them and they care nothing about who pays the bill. We have a government that is slowly degrading our liberties and many of us celebrate and support this erosion. We have a government who is more concerned with taxing anything and everything in order to maintain their power base that is a growing block of consumers and not producers.

We have a President who travels the world blaming America for the ills of the world, when I blame America for the ills of our government and the President who now heads it.

When a group of young people cannot even maintain decorum long enough to salute the country that they now expect will hand them everything from cradle to grave, it shows the level to which the arrogant ignorance of our society has grown. Well, there are a few of us who still revere this country and the foundation upon which it was built. We do not blame the United States for the ills of the world, but give thanks to God for the United States where we can live and not suffer the ills of the world.

You have elected leaders who are going to tax us all into poverty using excuses like the global warming myth, free healthcare, free retirement and on and on and on. What would President Kennedy say? Did he not remind us to "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country?"

America, you voted for change, but you had no clue what change you voted for. The events at the Mount Vernon High School graduation ceremony were inspiring except for the part I described. I have to wonder what United States is the class of 2009 inheriting. One of the American Dream of making it big, or one of making it big but just not too big because that won't be fair and the government will have to step in and take some of it away from you and "spread the wealth" around. In a way I fear what my daughters will face as a result of all the "change" going on, but one thing I have tried to instill in them both is that the United States of America is a blessing and to be thankful for each and every day you live here. At least they have something that seems to be a rarity today: Respect for their country and those who fought and died for the flag that went almost unnoticed last week at their graduation ceremony.

Garry A. Scutt
Alexandria

Me & My Dad

Jay McConville of Mount Vernon with his three children (from left): Colin McConville, 17, West Potomac; Jake McConville, 19, Radford University; and Katelyn McConville, 13, Carl Sandburg Middle School.



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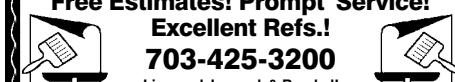
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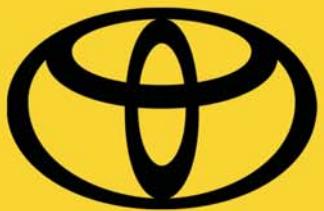
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NEWS

Public Wins Hold on Speed Limit Change

FROM PAGE 1

and safety issues, it is the professional opinion of our traffic engineering staff and consultants, based on available research, a lower speed limit will result in a more orderly flow of traffic," wrote Salehi.

"Things started to change when there was pushback from the community."

— Supervisor Gerald Hyland

"Traffic accidents have decreased in recent years, which is not attributable to a reduction in the speed limit," wrote Fairfax County Supervisors Gerald Hyland and Jeffrey McKay in a joint board matter dated February 2008. "An analysis of accidents on Richmond Highway done by the Fairfax County Police Department shows the primary cause of crashes are due to failures to yield the right of way followed by a failure to maintain proper control of the vehicle."

Nevertheless, VDOT decided to move forward with its recommendation to lower the speed limit even though officials had not consulted with local elected officials, civic groups or community residents. For many in Mount Vernon, this development was interpreted as an attempt on the part of VDOT to abrogate its responsibility to engineer and invest in the infrastructure improvements necessary to fix Richmond Highway.

"I'm not going to let VDOT wash their hands of making the necessary improvements to Route One by making a few sign changes," said McKay in a January 2009 interview. "They haven't made the necessary contacts with all the interested parties."

BUT TRANSPORTATION officials held their ground, defending the change as necessary to improve public safety. In late January, District Administrator Morteza Salehi sent a letter to Hyland and McKay citing an analysis that showed a nine-mile stretch of Richmond Highway from Beltway to Belvoir experienced an average of 95 injury or fatal crashes per mile during a recent three-year period. Lowering the speed limit, he said, was a responsible reaction to the analysis.

"While we can not guarantee that reducing the speed limit would solve all the operational

Meanwhile, opposition to the change continued to mount. When the General Assembly session ended, Puller summoned VDOT officials and several elected leaders to her house to determine the best course of action. The politicians were adamant that if VDOT insisted on moving forward with the speed-limit change, the department must conduct public meetings to hear from community members. The outreach effort culminated in a May 28 meeting at the Mount Vernon Governmental Center in which opposition was virtually unanimous.

"Things started to change when there was pushback from the community," said Hyland. "The bottom line is that speed is not the predominant factor is causing those accidents."

WHEN THE COMMUNITY was allowed to provide input, speaker after speaker opposed the plan. Many said congestion on this stretch of the highway was so bad that motorists couldn't even speed if they wanted to. One study showed that the average speed for the area in question was 37 miles an hour. When the Mount Vernon police captain in charge of patrolling Richmond Highway publicly opposed the planned speed-limit change, momentum began moving against VDOT.

"I would have been willing to consider this," said Sickles. "But VDOT was never able to produce convincing evidence that this would help anything."