

Mai Kasim, Lily Mousa 4, Tamar Mousa, six months, Eman Hashish, Sama Amir Brakat, 8, and Sandy Amir Brakat, 4, could hardly wait to get their photo with the tallest Uncle Sam ever during the Town of Herndon 4th of July Celebration held at Bready Park.

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Thisanth Prabu, 2, of Oak Hill waits for the balloon man to make him a hat at the 2018 Town of Herndon 4th of July Celebration.



PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Fireworks explode over the Centennial Golf Course in Herndon during the Wednesday 4th of July display.

Light My Fire

Glitter, glory and patriotism spark at Herndon's 4th of July Celebration and Fireworks.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The line up of activities attracted thousands of people ready for a night of fun at Bready Park in the Town of Herndon on the 4th of July. There was live music, food trucks, Bingo, arts and crafts, yard games, and of course the mesmerizing lure of fireworks.

As dusk fell, families and friends spread out blankets and set up chairs on the grassy lawns in the park and along Ferndale Avenue. As advertised, right at 9:30, the first rocket whistled upwards and exploded into shimmering splatters of light. The display lasted more than 20 minutes and ended with the traditional shower of lights, crashing booms, and little children asking over and over, "Is that the end?"



Devin Jones, 4, Sophie Jones, 6, Preston Hundley, 6, and Ellison Hundley, 2, all of Greater Herndon are dressed in red, white and blue ready to explore the 4th of July Celebration produced by Herndon Parks and Recreation at Bready Park.



Jose Levia is one lucky dad as he enjoys the 4th of July at Bready Park in Herndon eating watermelon with his three children, Sofia, 6, Luis, 3, and Angla, 8.



Logan Ware 4, of Oak Hill dances with her dad, Ben as dusk falls during the 4th of July Celebration produced by the Town of Herndon Parks and Recreation Department.



Jae Lee, 10, gets a royal seat atop his dad's shoulders at the 2018 4th of July Celebration in the Town of Herndon.



Fireworks explode over the Centennial Golf Course in Herndon during the Wednesday 4th of July display.

Property Owners Appeal Downtown Redevelopment

Certificate of Appropriateness issued to Comstock Herndon Venture, LC is void.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Three written appeals were filed with the Town of Herndon Mon-day, July 2, by property owners aggrieved by the June 18, 2018, Heritage Preservation Review Board approval of Application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for New Construction, HPRB #18-17.

These individuals have a property interest in land abutting or across the street from the property, which is the subject of the Certificate of Appropriateness, the Downtown Redevelopment Project. The appeals reportedly address the construction of new structures and site features.

The Town of Herndon reports that at the Heritage Preservation Review Board (HPRB) Public Hearing on June 18, 2018, the proposed Redevelopment Project received the necessary certificate approvals, with conditions.

First, the approvals of the demolition of the existing buildings located at 770 Elden Street and 750 Center Street, and second the approval of the exterior architecture of the development.

PROPERTY OWNERS FILED their appeals with the Town of Herndon zoning administrator and specified therein grounds for the appeals within required 14 days of the final decision of the Heritage Preservation Review Board on the Certificate of Appropriateness. Those who filed appeals either own properties abutting or live across the street from the 4.675-acre redevelopment site.

As stated in Section 78-60.3 in the Heritage Preservation Overlay district, with appeals, the Certificate of Appropriateness issued by the HPRB on June 18, 2018, to the Applicant, Dave Bryant, PE, Comstock Herndon Venture, LC, is rendered void.

With the Certificate now void, the Town of Herndon Zoning Administrator must



Multiple appeals have been filed by people who have property interests in land abutting or across the street from the proposed Comstock Herndon Venture, LC, Herndon Downtown Redevelopment Project.

schedule a hearing at the earliest possible town council meeting during which the appellants or their agents can state grounds for their appeals and present materials to support them.

Town staff can respond or designate another person to do so. Each of the three appeals must be heard.

At the end of the hearing, as stated in Sec. 78-60.3, "the town council may affirm, modify, or reverse the decision of the HPRB, in whole or in part, or may remand the case to the HPRB. The decision shall be based on the standards in section 78-60(f), development within the Historic Preservation Overlay District."

The decision cannot be reversed or modified unless there is evidence in the record that the decision of the HPRB is not correct, based on the review standards for a

COA. In determining whether to remand the case back to HPRB, the town council must be guided by, as quoted in Sec. 78-60.3: "the completeness of the record; the appropriateness of further review by the HPRB of certain points or facts; and any amendments to the application after the decision of the HPRB."

In a partial recap of the HPRB June 18 Public Hearing during which the Town of Herndon Staff Report reviewed the Application for the Certificate of Appropriateness for New Construction, HPRB #18-17 to the board, who later voted to approve it in a vote of 6 to 1, the named Applicant is Dave Bryant, PE, Comstock Herndon Venture, LC. The Owner is the Town of Herndon. The Location is 724 Center Street, 726 Center Street, 750 Center Street, 731 Station

Street, 770 Elden Street, 782 Elden Street and Vine Street at Washington and Old Dominion (Trail).

During the Public Hearing, Raymond P. Ocel Jr., Development Program Planner/Deputy Zoning Administrator summarized the application to construct 274 residential units, 17,000 square feet of retail space, 18,000 square foot arts center and an approximately 761-space public/private-parking garage on the 4.675 acres. He described the Zoning of Site PD-TD, Planned Development Traditional Downtown and Building Status as Category 3 Contributing and Non-Contributing Proposed demolition.

In the Staff Report, issues such as conformance with the Herndon Heritage Preservation Handbook, the use of the Downtown Pattern Book to guide the development of the plans for the property and conformance with the Town of Herndon Zoning Ordinance [78-60.3.F.2] were presented by Ocel. He also noted in the report sixteen areas and details that require further refinement to comply with the documents and design drawings.

THE STAFF REPORT read: "Town staff recommends that the Board review the elevation plans, provide comments to the applicant and take into consideration the comments provided by staff prior to approval of this application."

"At this time staff is recommending the continuance of this item to the July 16, 2018, regularly scheduled public hearing," as stated in the Staff Report. HPRB voted 6 to 1 to approve the COA.

The Town of Herndon and Comstock Partners both declined to comment on the appeals.

To view a video of the June 18, 2018 Town of Herndon HPRB Public Hearing visit www.herndon-va.gov/online-services/agendas-minutes-webcast; search Archived Videos, Heritage Preservation Review Board Public Hearing 06/18/18, click on Video.

Herndon to Install 'Smart City' Technologies

The Herndon Town Council has approved a resolution whereby the town has entered an agreement with Vivacity DC, Inc., to install "smart city" technologies, including centrally-controlled LED lights, free WiFi, and Internet-of-Things (IoT) sensor equipment, in downtown Herndon. The pilot program runs from Dec. 31, 2018 to Dec. 31, 2020. The pilot project includes the replacement of approximately 10 existing street light poles with LED smart poles, with LED lighting upgrades

to approximately 30 additional street lights. These enhancements will enable remote monitoring and management of the lights. Additional elements of the program include a public Wi-Fi network downtown; installation of an electric vehicle charging station; and IoT sensors for other smart city services.

Through the pilot project, Vivacity and the town will evaluate

- ❖ Cost savings of LED lights and centrally-controlled management system;
- ❖ Potential reduction in carbon emissions;

❖ Impact of improved mobile coverage in the downtown;

❖ Public safety impacts from the lighting and blue button emergency calling feature;

❖ Data on bicycle and pedestrian flow on the W&OD trail; and

❖ Cost and usage of the electric vehicle charging station.

Vivacity will design, engineer, construct and manage the integrated fiber optic cable and wireless network capable of delivering the smart city services. The town will allow access to infrastructure including existing

street lights, conduit, power facilities and electrical services, as well as required authorization for Vivacity to sell services to third parties.

"We are excited to pilot this program with Vivacity and to explore how these cutting-edge technologies may benefit citizens, businesses and visitors to our downtown," said Mayor Lisa C. Merkel. "The metrics developed through this program will provide a baseline upon which we build, as we work toward our vision for Herndon's downtown."



PHOTO @ENEPALESE.COM

Husband and father, Resham Bajgain, 40, recently immigrated from Nepal and was working two jobs. He was murdered July 4 at the SUNOCO gas station in Herndon on Franklin Farms Road as he worked the overnight shift.

New Immigrant, Young Father Murdered at Herndon Gas Station

Community shocked, responds to gofundme request to support the family of Resham Bajgain.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

A suspect is in custody and charged with the murder of Resham Bajgain, 40 of Herndon, a gas station clerk working the night shift at the SUNOCO gas station in the 13300 block of Franklin Farm Road, according to Fairfax County police.

The police report states that after 1:15 a.m. on July 4, patrol officers responded to a call for a robbery at the gas station. Police arrived within three minutes and found Bajgain of Herndon with blunt force trauma to the upper body.

According to the department news release, officers observed a person matching a description of the suspect. They released 911 descriptions record saying, "subject is a black male wearing a black bandana, no shirt, black pants." Officers arrested 19-year-old Mohamed A. Abdullahi of Herndon in the parking lot.

Abdullahi is being held at the Adult Detention Center without bond and is charged with murder. No recent charges could be found for Mohamed Abdullahi in online court records.

Bajgain, a recent immigrant from Nepal worked two jobs, a full-time job at Wegmans and a part-time job at SUNOCO. Reports provided on a gofundme page to help complete final rites for Bajgain and support his family states that he arrived in the United



PHOTO COURTESY OF FCPD

Mug shot of July 4 murder suspect, Mohamed Abukar Abdullahi.

States in September of 2017 and lived with his wife and 5-year-old daughter.

The most recent update on the gofundme page, dated Sunday, July 8 thanked individuals for attending Bajgain's funeral that was held Saturday, July 7, and thanked all who had donated and shown support for the family. "We are very honored to have such a huge group of friends," posted the NRNA Virginia Chapter. As of Monday, July 6, gofundme reports \$66,812

of the \$50,000 online gofundme goal raised by 1,337 people. See www.gofundme.com/4wadxb4.

Detectives would like to hear from anyone with information, to include the driver of a Pontiac GTO who was near the Sunoco around the time of the murder. Abdullahi is being held at the Adult Detention Center without bond.

If anyone has information about this crime, contact Major Crimes Bureau at 703-246-7800 or contact Crime Solvers electronically by visiting <http://www.fairfaxcrimesolvers.org> or text-a-tip by texting "TIP187" plus your message to CRIMES (274637) or by calling 1-866-411-TIPS (8477), or call Fairfax County Police at 703-691-2131. For ongoing updates, read the FCPD blog and follow them on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram at @FairfaxCountyPD.

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Publishes: July 25, 2018 • Ads close: July 19, 2018

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THE CONNECTION
Newspapers & Online

SPECIAL PULLOUT TAB

Newcomers & Community Guide
August 22, 2018

The annual Newcomers and Community Guides for each of our 15 communities with inside facts on what makes each community special, their secret places, the real power players, how to get involved and more.

Including the history, schools, parks, libraries, local people, elected officials, county/city offices, how decisions are made, a calendar of events and other vital community information.

Due to the popularity and long shelf life of this issue, an overrun of the publication is made to meet demand. Extra copies are delivered to select Chambers of Commerce, Realtors, Citizens' Associations and local government.

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Low flower arrangements, like these from Patina Polished Living, add elegance to a table.



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PHOTOS COURTESY OF PATINA POLISHED LIVING

Designing a Midsummer Table

Using flowers and color to create a summer wonderland.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

Along with sunshine and longer days, summer offers an array of design opportunities. From backyard barbecues to brunch in the garden, the right decor can add a touch of flair to a midsummer gathering.

Designing a table with the vibrant colors of summer fruit creates an air of liveliness, says interior Bridget Francis of Colors by Bridget. "Watermelon, blueberries and strawberries are plentiful now, so if you're serving them you can use those colors as a base for your table," she said. "Think zinnias and red roses with white serveware."

Limiting a table to two or three colors lends simplicity to a design, advises Francis. "For example, I use light blue and white dishes with white table linens," she said. "I add floral arrangements with white and pale pink roses and blue hydrangeas, some white votives, and voila, a crisp, clean summer table."

When creating those dinner party arrangements, make sure the height of the flowers is low so that guests can see and talk to each other, advises Amanda Mertins of Patina Polished Living. "Flower arrangements are supposed to be a lovely addition to the table, not an irritant because they're blocking your view," she said. "I just love a beautiful arrangement that you can look down and see, and that everyone at the table can enjoy. Right now hydrangeas and roses are big. When we make arrangements we're adding rosemary and lavender for a touch of green."

"Etched glass hurricanes are a beautiful addition to a table setting," said Todd Martz, owner of Home on Cameron. "They create a lovely ambiance for an outdoor setting and let you stay outside longer to enjoy the stars and fireflies."

Be it a frosty margarita or a glass of tart lemonade, infusing summer drinks with summer foliage adds warm weather appeal to a gathering. "Think of a few rose petals floating in a pitcher of sangria or sprigs of lavender in a pitcher of lemonade," said Francis. "It not only looks and smells great, but the flowers can infuse the drink with a subtle hint of flavor."

In fact, Francis says that summer blooms can be

incorporated into meal prep. "I think that a cake with simple white icing, decorated with pink roses and blue hydrangeas is the epitome of summer elegance," she said. "I also use a pastry squeeze pen to make flower designs for cupcakes. You can use the pen to squeeze whipped cream to make flower toppings for ice cream. It's especially pretty when they are the same flowers that are in your centerpiece."

"For additional table accents, add a decorative shell or accessory to hold down napkins," said Martz. "Try placing a tray in the center of the table to keep all the dining essentials in one place, making it easier to bring them out and take them in."



A few scented candles, grouped in the center of the table, creates a festive look, says Todd Martz of Home on Cameron.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED



Limiting a table design to one or two colors of summer can create an elegant table.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

WEEK IN HERNDON

Boysko to Host Climate Reality Project Presentation

Del. Jennifer Boysko (D-86) will hold a Climate Reality Project presentation on July 17 at 7 p.m. in the Herndon Town Council Chambers. With seas rising, global heat records falling and more frequent and more devastating storms, the reality of climate change has never been clearer. With clean energy solutions like wind and solar becoming more affordable, batteries getting better and buildings becoming more efficient every year, we can see the way forward. However, we can only move forward together with a deep understanding of the current global situation and the science behind it. The event's speaker, Paula Clements, completed the Climate Reality Leadership training program under former Vice President and current chairman of the Climate Reality Project, Al Gore. The slideshow presentation depicts the urgency for climate action but is really a message of hope. Come learn what you can do to be a part of the so-

lution and help create a future we can all live with.

Herndon-Reston Indivisible to Host a Youth Forum

On July 17, The Education Committee of Herndon-Reston Indivisible (HRI) will host a Youth Forum where young activists will share their stories/experiences on current issues impacting their lives. These young millennials, recognized for their community involvement, will discuss how to tackle key issues facing younger generations. The 6:30 p.m. meeting will be held at the Sunset Hills Montessori School, 11180 Ridge Heights Road, Reston.

Following their presentations, there will be a round table discussion by the speakers, and an intergenerational exchange with the audience about the issues raised. The meeting is open to all local residents, elected leaders and the media.

Paul Walsh, leader of the Education Committee, said, "we are

excited to host this timely discussion and we invite the entire community to attend." For more information, email HRI4Education@gmail.com.

Jimmy's Event to Support Herndon Village Network

Residents enjoying the Third Thursday Arts Crawl on July 19,

are invited to stop by Jimmy's Old Town Tavern to support Herndon Village Network. There will be guest bartending, a raffle, prizes, and lots of community spirit. The fun begins at 6 p.m.

Herndon Village Network (HVN) is an integral part of the Herndon community. Through HVN, vetted volunteer drivers provide transportation for senior citizens who reside in the 20170 area. Transportation is available weekdays and weekends, and it includes rides to doctor offices, grocery stores, social engagements, and more. To learn how

you may volunteer with HVN, visit with a representative during one or more fun community events held in the heart of downtown Herndon this summer.

❖ July 19: Chalk the Town and Third Thursday Arts Crawl, 5-9 p.m. plus a Fun "Find Our Brick 50/50 Fundraiser" at Jimmy's Old Town Tavern

❖ Aug. 2: Near Farmer's Market, 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

❖ Aug. 16: Third Thursday Arts Crawl, 6-9 p.m.

For more information about Herndon Village Network, visit www.herndonvillagenetwork.org.

Herndon Town Council to Fill Vacancy on 2016-2018 Council

At its public hearing on Tuesday, July 10, the Herndon Town Council will vote on a resolution to appoint Richard B. Kaufman as a councilmember to fill a vacancy on the current council. The vacancy was created following the death of Councilmember Jeff Davidson in April 2018.

A longtime town resident, Kaufman served as Herndon's town attorney from 1994 until his retirement in 2015. During his tenure, Kaufman advised the Town Council on legislative issues; moved resolutions, ordinances, leases, franchise agreement and contracts through the town's legislative process; and provided consultation on issues before the Virginia General Assembly that impacted the town. His legal counsel on topics ranging from town boundaries



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE TOWN OF HERNDON

Herndon Town Council will vote on a resolution to appoint Richard B. Kaufman, as a councilmember to fill a vacancy on the current council.

to economic development guided the Town Councils under which he served, and he earned respect throughout his career from his legal peers throughout the Commonwealth. He was active in several organizations, including the Local Government Attorneys of Virginia, Inc. and the Virginia Municipal League.

Kaufman holds a Bachelor's degree from Washington and Jefferson College, a Master's of Arts degree from the University of Virginia and a Juris Doctorate from Washington and Lee University.

If Kaufman is appointed, his term on the council will begin at on July 11 and will conclude on Dec. 31, 2018, at the end of the current council's term. A new Town Council will take office on Jan. 1, 2018. Election Day in the Town of Herndon is Tuesday, Nov. 6, 2018.



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- **Sunday Brunch** – Noon to 2 pm each Sunday
- **Wednesday, July 18th** – Noon to 2 pm – District BBQ Company Food Truck will feature their best BBQ cuisine in our parking lot. Purchase your food and come in for a tour.
- **Saturday, July 21st** – Pancake Breakfast Open House – 8:30 am to 10 am. Enjoy a delicious breakfast and take a tour.
- **Saturday, August 4th** – 1 pm to 4 pm - Bingo with a Friend Open House – Bring a friend and enjoy several games of bingo for great prizes and refreshments. A special round of Bingo for those who bring a friend.
- **Saturday, August 11th** – 2 pm to 4 pm - Ice Cream Social Open House and enjoy the voices of "Just for Grins," a local Barbershop Quartet.





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Concrete Cornices Removed From the Stout & Teague Building

Business owners told they can open to the public Friday, July 20.

By MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Stout and Teague Building located at the corner of Station and Elden streets in Downtown Herndon has been closed since Saturday, June 8, when, for yet undetermined reasons, the entire length of concrete rooftop cornices fell off the three-story commercial building crashing into a popular outdoor dining area. No one was injured.

Due to structural safety concerns, the building which houses Sully's Pour House, Illusions Hair Salon, Herndon Nails and Spa, Soliloquy Bridal Salon, Edwards Jones and other business has been closed and barricaded to both owners and the public since the collapse.

On Thursday, July 5, KGS Construction Services arrived on site with a giant crane and prepared to hoist the remaining coping stones off the top edges of the building and place them in a dumpster.

On-site watching the first day's setup, stood Alfredo Vigil of Stout and Teague Property Management Services, the company that oversees the building. Vigil was pleased to be getting things back to normal. He explained that the coping stones would be lifted off the building; then bricks added to the roofline and surfaces sealed. Businesses were expected to open shortly after that, he said.

Reached for comment, Le Nguyen, owner of Herndon Nails said he was told he could reopen his salon on Friday, July 20. "I'm so glad we will be back," said Nguyen.

In a phone interview, Jenna Kuhn, co-owner of Sully's Pour House said that they are planning a big



KGS Construction Services begins to hoist the remaining concrete rooftop cornices off the Stout and Teague Building after an entire row of individual stones, each weighing 3000+ pounds, crashed into a popular dining site on Saturday, June 8.

reopening celebration. "We are going to open at 4 p.m. and we are going to have a Toga Party. The person with the best toga wins \$250, and we are giving away a big screen TV. It'll be good to be back," said Kuhn.



"Roomful of Blues" performs on July 7 in Herndon for the Fairfax County Park Authority Summer Entertainment Series 2018 Music at Arrowbrook Park.

Summer Entertainment Series Opens in Herndon

Concert series at Arrowbrook Park fosters a sense of community.

By MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

It was a "Roomful of Blues" at Arrowbrook Park in Herndon on Saturday evening, July 7 when Fairfax County Park Authority kicked off their free Summer Entertainment Series 2018. Located at 2351 Field Point Road, the park is one block off Centerville Road.

New this year were The Burger Shack and Pacific Twist food trucks and wine tastings and sales offered by Paradise Springs and the Win-

ery at Bull Run.

On Saturday, July 14, the featured musicians are "Dale Jeff and Hello Stranger", traditional country, and on July 21 get ready for the "Empire Strikes Brass," brass/funk/rock.

The Arrowbrook Centre, LLC and Arrowbrook Management Corporation sponsor The Ruth and Hal Launder's Charitable Trust Music Concert Series. Concerts are canceled due to inclement weather. Call 703-324-7469 one hour before the start of the show for updates.

Closet Awards College Scholarships

The Closet of the Greater Herndon Area, Inc. recently awarded \$25,000 in college scholarships to 18 deserving high school graduates in ceremonies at five local high schools. Closet Board President Gene Wiley stated, "We are so proud of these youth and their families and are happy to continue supporting this important educational need in our community." The 2018 scholarship recipients are:

Herndon High School: Hezha Faris Barzani, Jennifer Dayana Choque-Cruz, Isaiah Leigh Johnson, Minnie Suki Nguyen, and Ava Catherine Procopia

Mountain View High School: Brayon Geronimo Perez Brito, Jose Cantarero Ramos and Duc My Tran

Oakton High School: Mat-



Senior awards assembly at Mountain View High School: From left — Jose Cantarero Ramos, Laura Greenspan (Closet representative), Brayon Perez Brito, and Duc My Tran.

thew Chen, Anais Tshialemba Malangu and Naomi Michel Nero

Alondra Bonilla, Carlitos Martin Watley-Villanueva, Srey End Hai, David Alejandro Zinter and

Lisbeth Yamileth Ramirez Zelaya South Lakes High School: Ammar Faroun and Nelson Andres Moreno

Since 1974 The Closet has awarded nearly \$500,000 in college scholarships to more than 458 students. In this same 44 year period, The Closet has distributed nearly \$3 million in direct cash grants to local service groups, of which the scholarship program is an important part.

The Closet is a non-profit thrift shop founded and operated by a multiplicity of faith-based congregations. With a small dedicated staff and a very active volunteer cadre, The Closet provides shoppers low-cost, high quality used clothing, shoes, books and other household items. Donations of clothing and small household items are always needed, gra-

ciously accepted, and may be dropped off at the store Monday through Saturday from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Retail store hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday with evening hours on Monday and Thursday from 5 to 8 p.m.

The Closet welcomes new volunteers at any time Monday through Saturday between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Please see the store manager, Patricia Rhoads. The Closet also welcomes student volunteers fulfilling their community service requirements for school or who just want to serve their community. Go to <http://www.theclosetofgreaterherndon.org> for further information about The Closet. The Closet is located at 845 Station Street in Herndon.

ENTERTAINMENT

Submit entertainment announcements at www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar/. The deadline is noon on Friday. Photos or artwork welcome.

ONGOING

Art Exhibit: Paris Parks. Through July 14 at ArtSpace Herndon, 750 Center St., Herndon. In his exhibit, Michael Kolster, is partly inspired by the work of Eugene Atget, he photographed in four Parisian Parks: St. Cloud, Parc de Sceaux, Montsouris, and Bois de Boulogne. Visit www.artspaceherndon.org or call 703-956-6590.

Mr. Knick Knack! 10:30-11:15 a.m. May through October. At Reston Town Center Pavilion. Free performances of heart-centered music for children. No performances on Memorial Day, Labor Day, or Columbus Day. Visit www.restontowncenter.com/events.

Homegrown Yoga. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights at ArtSpace Herndon, 750 Center St., Herndon. Alison Adams is bringing Homegrown Yoga to ArtSpace Herndon. All levels welcome. Drop in and take a class. \$25 two week unlimited pass or drop-in available. Visit homegrownpoweryoga.com to sign up.

The Elden Street Tea Shop. Saturdays in ArtSpace Herndon, 750 Center St., Herndon. Sip tea and enjoy a variety of locally made snacks and pastries while enjoying the latest art installations in the gallery. Visit www.eldenstreettea.com.

All-comers' Group Fun Run. Thursdays, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at Potomac River Running, Reston Town Center, 11900 Market St., Reston. For beginners or competitive runners, come out for a fun, low-key run that is safe and social. Call 703-689-0999 or visit potomacriverrunning.com/reston/.

Over-40 Softball League. A Fairfax-based league is looking for enough players to form another team. Players must be at least 40 years of age to be eligible. All games are doubleheaders - played on Sundays at Bready Park in Herndon between 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. If interested, email skeduman@aol.com.

SUMMER CAMP

Reston Community Center is gearing up for an exciting 2018 summer camp season, with selections that offer something for everyone. Want to play chess, kick a soccer ball or practice tae kwon do? Want to make jewelry, play paintball or design a video game? Find all that and more through RCC. Registration is ongoing, but camps are filling quickly. Visit www.restoncommunitycenter.com or call 703-476-4500.

WEDNESDAY/JULY 11

Wednesday Morning Book Club. 10:30 a.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. This month's title is "All the Light We Cannot See" by Anthony Doerr. Visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703-689-2700.

Color Me Happy. 7 p.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Relax, unwind, and color your cares away in an adult coloring session. Invite a friend, date or mate to come along. Coloring pages, pens and pencils provided, or bring some along. Adults. Visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703-689-2700.

THURSDAY/JULY 12

Baby Lapsit. 10:30 a.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman



Towne Drive, Reston. Enjoy nursery rhymes and songs while building early literacy skills for children. Age birth to 11 months with adult. Registration now open. Visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703-689-2700.

Origami Workshop. 4 p.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Create colorful works of art using step-by-step paper folding techniques. Registration now open. Call 703-689-2700 or visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov.

FRIDAY/JULY 13

Hypnotizers. 2 p.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Create spinning, glowing light machines that hypnotize and amaze. All electrified projects go home. Registration now open. Call 703-689-2700 or visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov.

Summerbration Concerts. 7-9 p.m. at Reston Station, in the open-air plaza atop Wiehle-Reston East Metro. Reston Community Center's Summerbration featuring Oasis Island Sounds. Parking is free in the ParkX parking garage from 6:30-9:30 p.m. during the concerts. Visit www.restoncommunitycenter.com or call 703-390-6166.

MONDAY/JULY 16

Nose To Toes Yoga. 10:30 a.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Explore yoga movement while enjoying books and songs. Bring a towel or yoga mat. Registration now open. Visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703-689-2700.

Stress To Success or Teens. 7 p.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. This special yoga workshop helps teens learn tools to distress, boost self-esteem, and to develop strength, emotional balance and self-confidence. Bring a mat or towel. Cosponsored by FRRL. Age 13-18. Registration now open. Visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703-689-2700.

TUESDAY/JULY 17

Sing! Books with Miss Emily. 10:30 a.m. at Reston Regional Library,

11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Join Miss Emily for singing storytime with illustrated songs. Cosponsored by the FRRL. Age 2-5 with adult. No registration required. Call 703-689-2700 or visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov.

Stem Challenge. 3 p.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Five engineering challenges with clothespins, binder clips and craft sticks. Age 7-11. Registration now open. Call 703-689-2700 or visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov.

WEDNESDAY/JULY 18

The Wizard of Reading. 10:30 a.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Enjoy amazing tricks and reading fun with magician Dean Alan. Cosponsored by the FGMRL. Age 6-12. No registration required. Call 703-689-2700 or visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov.

FRIDAY/JULY 20

Gymboree Music I. 10:30 a.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Discover melody pitch and rhythm while building a repertoire of joyful songs. Cosponsored by the FRRL. Age 6-18 months with adult. Registration open July 6. Visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703-689-2700.

Gymboree Music II. 11:15 a.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Dance and sing to a new musical style each month, including Latin, Rock 'n' Roll and Classical. Cosponsored by the FRRL. Age 18-24 months with adult. Registration open July 6. Visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703-689-2700.

Instant 3D Prints. 3:30 p.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Explore the origins of 3D printing. Make professional grade models and molds of your own design to create things you can use. All projects go home. Cosponsored by FRRL. Age 13-18. Registration opens July 6. Visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703-689-2700.

Summerbration Concerts. 7-9 p.m. at Reston Station, in the open-air plaza atop Wiehle-Reston East Metro. Reston Community Center's

Paris Parks

In his exhibit, Michael Kolster, is partly inspired by the work of Eugene Atget, he photographed in four Parisian Parks: St. Cloud, Parc de Sceaux, Montsouris, and Bois de Boulogne. Parks and gardens are the embodiment of the paradoxical human desire to shape and commune with the natural world: to maintain the illusion that we can master our environment, and, conversely, to be reminded that we are only a part of the larger web of life. The exhibit runs through July 14 at ArtSpace Herndon, 750 Center St., Herndon. Visit www.artspaceherndon.org or call 703-956-6590.

Photographs in the Paris Parks Exhibit have been made with materials many consider to be outdated: rolls of 120 black-and-white silver gelatin film and an electronic strobe powered by a lead battery.

Summerbration featuring Jason Masi Band. Parking is free in the ParkX parking garage from 6:30-9:30 p.m. during the concerts. Visit www.restoncommunitycenter.com or call 703-390-6166.

Art Exhibit: Entry Deadline. The League of Reston Artists and the Reston Photographic Society invite artists and photographers to enter work in the upcoming show at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Reston. Paintings and photos will be on display from July 23-Aug. 26, 2018. Enter at www.leagueofrestonartists.org.

SATURDAY/JULY 14

Kiddie Academy - Storytime Live. 10 a.m.-noon at Kiddie Academy of Reston, 12320 Pinecrest Road, Suite 150, Reston. Reston-area children and their families are invited to a fun, free, interactive reading at their annual Storytime Live event. Pinkalicious and Curious George will jump off the page and meet attendees, young and old, up close and in person. Parents are encouraged to bring their cameras. Register online at www.kastorytime.com.

Rhythmaye. 10:30 a.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Indian dance and music for the whole family. Cosponsored by the FGMRL. All ages. No registration required. Visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703-689-2700.

CATmas in July. 1-3 p.m. at Aperture, 11410 Reston Station, Reston. NOVA Pets Alive celebrates CATmas in July with a cat and kitten adoption event. More than 30 cats and kittens will be available for adoption. Visit www.novapetsalive.org/adopt.

Stories Heard 'Round the World. 2 p.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Join this participation festival and celebration of children's folklore. Age 6-12. Registration now open. Call 703-689-2700 or visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov.

Concerts on the Town: Scythian. 7:30-10 p.m. (rain or shine) at Reston Town Center. These family-friendly concerts include a wide range of musical styles including Motown, swing, blues, jazz, Latin fusion, Celtic, bluegrass and zydeco and take place every Saturday night

through Aug. 25. Free. Visit www.restontowncenter.com.

SUNDAY/JULY 15

Sunday Art in the Park. 5:30-7:30 p.m. at Reston Town Square Park, 11900 Market St., Reston. Greater Reston Art Center, in partnership with the Reston Community Center, welcomes visitors to the Sunday Art in the Park series. Before attending the Sunday concert in Reston Town Square Park, come to the gallery to see the exhibition and drop in on an art making activity. Free and open to all ages. Visit restonarts.org.

THURSDAY/JULY 19

W.A.T.E.R. Safety Presentation. 10:30 a.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Learn the basics of water safety presented by the Goldfish Swim School. Age 3-5 with adult. Registration open July 5. Visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703-689-2700.

Geronimo Stilton Book Club. 2 p.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Read: "Field Trip to Niagara Falls." Age 8-11. Registration open July 6. Visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703-689-2700.

Fundraiser with Guest Bartenders. 6 p.m. at Jimmy's Old Town Tavern, 697 Spring St., Herndon. Benefits Herndon Village Network, a local nonprofit providing free transportation to senior citizens. Guest bartending party will feature raffles, prizes, and more. Visit herndonvillagenetwork.org.

Teen Advisory Board. 7 p.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Join the Teen Advisory Board to gain leadership and volunteer experience and share ideas about how to make the library a wonderful place for teens. Volunteer hours granted. Age 13-18. No registration required. Visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703-689-2700.

SATURDAY/JULY 21

Mercier School of Dance. 11 a.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. See a presentation of ballet, creative movement and Scottish Highlands Dance. Age 4-12 with adult. No registration required. Visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703-689-2700.

Art Exhibit: Building Worlds. Through Sept. 15 at GRACE, 12001 Market St., Suite 103, Reston. The artists in this exhibition create their own worlds, including cultural references and artifacts, to question the assumptions of history-making and truth-telling. Opening Reception and Curator's Talk: July 21, 5-7 p.m. Free and open to the public. Call 703-471-9242 or visit restonarts.org.

Concerts on the Town: Entrain. 7:30-10 p.m. (rain or shine) at Reston Town Center. These family-friendly concerts include a wide range of musical styles including Motown, swing, blues, jazz, Latin fusion, Celtic, bluegrass and zydeco and take place every Saturday night through Aug. 25. Free. Visit www.restontowncenter.com.

SUNDAY/JULY 22

Vegetable Plant Clinics. 4-6 p.m. at Baron Cameron Park, 11300 Baron Cameron Ave., Reston. Focus will be on planning a fall vegetable garden. Fairfax County Master Gardeners will add a focus on vegetable gardening to their Plant Clinic program. Sponsored by Virginia Cooperative Extension. Contact the VCE Fairfax County Master Gardener Help Desk at 703-324-8556.

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An expert is someone who knows some of the worst mistakes that can be made in his subject and how to avoid them.
-Werner Heisenberg

Announcements

SPORTS

Herndon Pole Vaulter Soars to National Heights

Austin Miller places eighth at the 2018 USA Track & Field Outdoor Championships.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Top athletes from across the nation, including Town of Herndon native Austin Miller, competed at the 2018 USA Track & Field Outdoor Championships held at the Drake Stadium in Des Moines, Iowa. Athletes faced off for national titles and spots on the team for the first Athletics World Cup to be held in London next month. The four-day competition took place June 21-24 and served as the national championships in track and field for the United States. A reported forty thousand visitors attended the event as the best of the best USA athletes challenged each other for national titles. The top two qualified for the North American Championship.

MILLER, who is 24 years-old and hails from the Town of Herndon, placed eighth, in men's pole vaulting, clearing 18 feet 2.5 inches. In an interview, Miller told how he vaulted as a student at Herndon High School where his record of 13 feet 6 inches stands unchallenged.

Asked to share a bit about pole vaulting, Miller described it as an all-encompassing event. He stressed that pole vaulting requires so many things, an amplified running speed, strength and coordination during the swing up, and the skills of a gymnast especially when the vaulter is turned upside down and must spin his torso to go over the bar "You have to be fast, and strong in the arms and back. You have to be strong in the legs to jump, and strong in your core because you have to swing yourself upside down like a gymnast."

Miller recalled his all-time best record. "The highest I've ever jumped was a few weeks ago at pole vault meet in Tennessee, 18 feet 6 inches. This was the Olympic trial qualifying standard in 2016." Miller explained national standing is determined by the gen-



PHOTO COURTESY OF ANITA MILLER

Pole vaulter Austin Miller at the Duke University Invitational Track Meet.

eral height one clears. "This is a good experience getting my name out. It helps with exposure."

Asked what is the appeal of pole vaulting, Miller responded. "Pole vaulting is my passion. First, it is a novelty. Ninety percent of people have never seen it.

"Next, it is a bit of a thrill. You are literally launching yourself over a giraffe," Miller explained referencing the fact that a giraffe can grow to 19 feet in height from its hoof to its crown. "And third, the longer I've been in it, vaulting is becoming my community of people, my social group. You meet all kinds of people from across the country, and we only meet up at competitions."

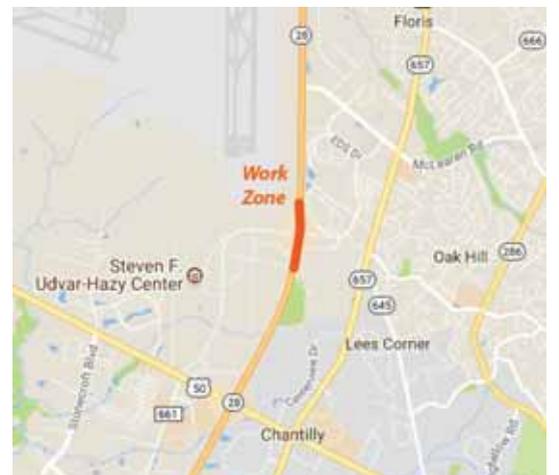
Miller told how on occasion he has missed the mat a few times. The secret to a good landing, Miller said, is to stay calm when up in the air. "Spot your landing. If you hold onto your pole, it can slow you down."

SAM KENDRICKS, the 2016 US National Champion who set the US Olympic Trials pole vault record and is the 2017 World Champion, won Gold at the 2018 USA Track & Field Outdoor Championships with a 19-foot 2.25-inch pole vault.

Route 28 Lane Closure July 16-30

Southbound right lane closure at Air and Space Museum Parkway for pavement reconstruction

The right lane of southbound Route 28 at Air and Space Museum Parkway will be closed (weather permitting) Monday, July 16 to Monday, July 30 for pavement reconstruction, according to the Virginia Department of Transportation. The closure will run from just north of the Air and Space Museum Parkway interchange to just south of the interchange. The southbound collector-distributor road (the barrier-separated lanes to the right of the southbound Route 28 lanes) will be used as a temporary through lane in order to maintain four through lanes of southbound Route 28. The exit from southbound Route 28 to Air and Space Museum Parkway will remain open. Drivers should expect delays, particularly during the morning and afternoon rushes, and are advised to use alternate routes.



Route 28 Air and Space Work Zone Map.

BULLETIN

Submit civic/community announcements at ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar. Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before event.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board's Merrifield Center offers a new stand-up information kiosk. Part of a pilot project, the new feature aims to improve the customer service experience and decrease wait times for individuals who are seeking mental (behavioral) health services. To check in, individuals respond to five simple questions, then the CSB's Patient Track software alerts staff. Based on clinicians' schedules and availability, as well as the needs of the client, individuals are triaged and seen by the next available staff member. For more information on available services, call the CSB at 703-383-8500 (Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.). In an emergency 24/7, call CSB Emergency Services at 703-573-5679 or the Fairfax Detox Center at 703-502-7000 (TTY 703-322-9080).

WEDNESDAY/JULY 11

Staying Focused and Finishing 2018 Strong. 8:30-10 a.m. at Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce, 886 Metro Center Drive, Suite 230, Reston. Gretchen Richards of Dynamic Business Capabilities will show participants how to improve productivity and stay focused on what's important to close out 2018 strong. Visit www.restonchamber.org for more.

THURSDAY/JULY 12

Lessons Learned from GovCon Deal Warriors. 8-10 a.m. at Reston Association Conference Center, 12001 Sunrise Valley Drive, Reston. Join Reston Chamber of Commerce's seasoned panel of "GovCon Deal Warriors" to discuss the current M&A landscape and learn what contractors need to do to ensure successful M&A execution. \$35, members; \$50, future members/guests; free, government agency representative; \$10 more at the door. Visit www.restonchamber.org for more.

Story Time: Perspective Taking. 10-11 a.m. at The Parent Resource Center Library, 2334 Gallows Road, Entrance 1 - Room 105, Dunn Loring. This Story Time will highlight books and activities to support perspective taking in young children. Perspective taking is an evidence-based executive functioning skill that forms the basis for children's understanding of their parents', teachers', and friends' intentions. Registration is limited and required for children ages 4-6 and their parents. Visit www.fcps.edu/resources/family-engagement/parent-resource-center for more.

TUESDAY/JULY 17

Story Time: Making Connections. 10-11 a.m. at The Parent Resource Center Library, 2334 Gallows Road, Entrance 1 - Room 105, Dunn Loring. Making Connections is at the heart of learning. This Story Time will highlight books and activities to support this evidence-based executive functioning skill in young children. Registration is limited and required for children ages 4-6 and their parents. Visit www.fcps.edu/resources/family-engagement/parent-resource-center for more.

Public Information Hearing. 5-8 p.m. at South Lakes High School Cafeteria, 11400 South Lakes Drive, Reston. The Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority is hosting a public hearing to inform and solicit comments from the community about proposed toll rate increases along the Dulles Toll Road. There will be informational exhibits related to the Dulles Toll Road and planned improvements that may be made, the Dulles Corridor Metrorail Silver Line Extension Project, the revenue projections associated with the proposed toll rate increases and how this additional revenue will be spent. Representatives from the Airports Authority will be present to discuss these items. Visit www.mwaa.com for more.

WEDNESDAY/JULY 18

Managing Your Personal Brand Online. 5-7 p.m. at Hilton Dulles, 13869 Park Center Road, Herndon.

Learn about social media best practices to develop and protect one's personal brand. Young Professionals program is open to all members and guests, and includes light refreshments including local beer.

\$25 for members; \$35 for future members/guests; \$10 more at door. Visit www.restonchamber.org for more.

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A Relative Unknown



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

I knew we had family in Argentina. I knew that one of my maternal grandfather's younger brothers, Simon, had immigrated from Eastern Europe to South America in the early 1900s.

I knew, or thought I knew, that someone from his family - removed or not, I never know, had visited my parents and first cousins a time or two in Florida in the '80s and '90s. But until recently, neither my brother Richard nor myself had ever met any of these distant - double entendre-intended - relations. Well, that ended on Wednesday, June 27, in Union Station at 5:55 p.m.

There outside Gate "G" my wife, Dina and I stood holding a sign with my cousin's name on it: Eduardo Blacher (my middle name is Blacker). He had flown into New York City from Buenos Aires earlier that morning and then boarded a south-bound Amtrak train to visit us in Washington, D.C.

My first cousin, Ronnie (formerly of Florida, now of Massachusetts) with whom Eduardo has corresponded and visited over the years, had emailed us a selfie Eduardo had taken so we had a pretty good idea of his general appearance. Along with our handwritten sign, we were pretty confident the familial connection would be made.

And so it happened a bit after 6 p.m. as he walked through the gate into the station looking around for someone he'd never seen. We cautiously saw one another and then immediately hugged and kissed and said: "Great to meet you!"

Eduardo's English was pretty good so we were able to coordinate our exit from the station where, once outside, we met my brother, Richard, who had been sitting in his car waiting for our appearance. As soon as he saw us, he got out of his car and quickly walked over to Eduardo and likewise gave him a hug and kiss: mishpocheh (Yiddish for family).

When my widowed mother died in 2008, Richard and I felt orphaned, so to speak. Our parents, as in most families, were the keepers of the family faith. Having both been born 10 years before "The Great Depression," they knew the family history dating back to before the turn of the century. When they died (in 2006 and 2008, respectively), their knowledge and memories died with them. It was a palpable loss that Richard and I still feel.

We are lucky though; my cousin Ronnie (my mother's niece) has lots of family information and has become our go-to resource for all things Blacher/Blacker. She facilitated this much-anticipated visit (Eduardo is seeing her next).

To try and put Eduardo's visit in some context; in the 10 years since my mother's passing, given the ages of the surviving family members in the United States with whom we're in touch, we've not really gained any family members, let alone connected with an entire line of cousins going back to before World War I.

Eduardo has three children, four grandchildren, a sister in Israel and parents, both of whom are their mid-80s still alive and well. In familial fact, his father is my grandfather's nephew and knows lots more about my grandfather than I ever did, and has knowledge of the Blacher/Blacker family going back over 125 years as well in and out of our respective countries.

Given the pogroms and the Holocaust, for many Jewish people my age, a treasure trove of family history/knowledge like this was thought to be lost forever. Now, I have found some of it. Talk about filling a void. In facts and feelings, it has - and is about to, fill everything.

For three days, until Eduardo's departure Sunday morning, we rarely left one another's side. In addition to touring Washington, D.C., we shared photos, exchanged email addresses, talked nearly non-stop about everything, downloaded WhatsApp which we'll enable us to message each other in the future, and together on Friday night lit the Shabbos candles and together prayed in Hebrew.

I can't really express how I feel other than to say I've been crying while I've been writing this column. And it's the best cry I've had in years.

Kenny Lourie is an Advertising Representative for The Potomac Almanac & The Connection Newspapers.

OPINION

Safe Virginia Initiative Looks 'Beyond Thoughts and Prayers'

The ADAMS Center event focuses on communities of faith's response to violence.

On July 5, the Safe Virginia Initiative (SVI) hosted its first Northern Virginia event, "Beyond Thoughts and Prayers," at the All Dulles Area Muslim Society Center in Sterling.

In keeping with the title, the event focused on communities of faith's response to gun violence, as well as violence in general. Representatives from Muslim, Jewish, Sikh, Catholic and Quaker communities addressed the assembled crowd, while a number of members of the House of Delegates listened to the varied concerns of those assembled. Attendees came from all sides of the firearms debate, from members of Moms Demand Action to members of the Virginia Citizen Defense League.

The program began with a number of faith leaders discussing how their faith dictates how to respond to violence and gun violence in



From right: Del. Eileen Filler-Corn (speaking) and Delegates Kathleen Murphy, Rip Sullivan, Wendy Gooditis, Danica Roem, Mark Levine, Jennifer Boysko, Kathy Tran, David Reid, Vivian Watts, Ken Plum and Karrie Delaney.

particular. Next, various questions were posed to the audience about how they would like to see officials respond to gun violence, what laws were sufficient and what should be changed.

Members of the crowd discussed "gun free zones," firearm carry in places of worship, and whether or not faith leaders should speak about methods to prevent gun violence from the pulpit. The event ended with an "open mic" for audience members to speak about what the General Assembly can do to reduce gun violence moving forward.

Just a few weeks following the Parkland tragedy in Florida, the

Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates announced the formation of a bipartisan Select Committee on School Safety. While the committee's formation was considered historic, it was announced that the select committee would not address gun violence nor discuss potential legislative solutions with regard to guns. Following this announcement, the House Democratic Caucus formed the Safe Virginia Initiative (SVI). The SVI is organizing events between May and October of this year related to gun safety. These events will continue to occur throughout Virginia and will include public input. Prior events have included a

town hall focusing on inner city violence in Richmond and a panel on the nexus of mental health and gun violence in Lexington.

The Safe Virginia Initiative is co-chaired by Del. Eileen Filler-Corn (D-41) and Del. Kathleen Murphy (D-34) and includes the following regional co-chairs: Del. John Bell (Northern Virginia), Del. Chris Hurst (Southwest), Del. Delores McQuinn (Metro Richmond) and Del. Marcia Price (Hampton Roads). The group will work with experts from the Office of the Governor, the Office of the Attorney General, local leaders from both parties and law enforcement to draft policy proposals for the next legislative session.

"I appreciated the opportunity to hear from a diverse group of people on how to best curb and combat gun violence," said Filler-Corn. "This is the whole point of the Safe Virginia Initiative, we want to hear from everyone, because only by finding common ground can we move forward in a substantive manner on these issues. I look forward to continuing this conversation across the Commonwealth over the next few months," she added.

Those interested in following the activities of this working group can like the "Safe Virginia Initiative" page on Facebook or follow @svi_va on Twitter.

Teenagers Organize 'Rally to Reunite'

To the Editor:

In light of the humanitarian crisis on the border, high school students were not able to sit back and watch people struggle and suffer. Virginia teenagers, Tarina Ahuja, Perrin McHugh, and Bee Hyland, organized a rally titled "Rally to Reunite" that took place in front of the ICE building in Fairfax.

The event was full of inspirational speakers and performers, loud chants, colorful signs, and a pervading message that the people are watching and refuse to stay silent. The speakers included Rajwant Singh, president of EcoSikh; Mansimran Kahlon, the vice chair of the 10th District Democratic Committee in Prince Williams County; and a musical performance by Gurl Music.

The enthusiasm was contagious. Cars, pedestrians, and cyclists would stop to cheer and show their support for the cause creat-

ing a larger sense of unity and solidarity with the separated families. Throughout the day, speakers and organizers emphasized the need for both adults and young people to vote.

According to these young people, civic engagement, no matter your age, is the key to creating a government that we can be proud of. The students emphasized that having young people involved is what will bring our country forward. They emphasized that youths have new ideas, new perspectives and also will be the ones with solutions in the future. Many people have told these students that young people do not belong in politics, but they hold strong in their belief that the voice of their generation is valuable and something that is necessary considering our current political climate.

Tarina Ahuja
Ashburn



Rally organizers, from left: Bee Hyland, 17, Leesburg; Tarina Ahuja, 16, Ashburn; and Perrin McHugh, 17, McLean.

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