



PHOTOS BY MARK MOGIE/GAZETTE PACKET

Scottish Christmas Walk Parade

The Kiltie Band of York passes by the reviewing stand in the 48th annual Scottish Christmas Walk Parade Dec. 1 in Old Town. The parade is part of the Scottish Walk Weekend of events benefitting the Campagna Center. More photos, page 4.

Drum Major Konstantin Gojnycz leads the City of Alexandria Pipes and Drums.



Goal: Improve Public Service

City government aims to squeeze more effective, cost-efficient services out of its real estate.

BY DAN BRENDEL
GAZETTE PACKET

City Council expressed cautious optimism on Tuesday, Nov. 27 about a plan to help optimize decision-making about delivering public services and addressing costly deferred maintenance of public facilities.

The city's Strategic Facilities Plan could shape a forthcoming joint planning process with the public schools.

The city government and school system manage a lot of real estate. Nearly 166 properties, 97 percent of them owned rather than leased, include an array of facilities — fire and police stations, schools, libraries, offices, parking, etc. — plus numerous vacant lots. Many facilities are slated for major overhauls or replacement.

A condition assessment study of 109 city-owned facilities, not including school division facilities, reported an average building age of 62 years. About two-thirds re-

ceived letter grades of C, D or F. The new plan estimates the city must invest \$201 million over 10 years to maintain current conditions; \$286 million to attain B-grades; \$351 to attain A-grades.

The school division is currently assessing its facilities using a comparable system, so that council can make apples-to-apples decisions about relative priorities, said Jeremy McPike, the city's general services director. Though the division doesn't expect the results until around springtime, similarly assessments are likely.

The schools' work will "augment" the city's, said McPike. Eventually they'd mesh together in a long-term Joint Facilities Master Plan. A joint plan would, based on development and population forecasts and targets, help determine where core services and facilities should be best located to serve Alexandrians over the next 20-30 years. It would help identify "opportunities to bundle projects for efficiency in execution" and use of

'Largest Return on Investment'

Virginia's First Lady visits preschool, says early development a priority.

BY DAN BRENDEL
GAZETTE PACKET

While in town for the Scottish Christmas Walk Parade, Pamela Northam, Virginia's First Lady, visited local preschool children and reinforced her priority of childcare and education before age 5.

The Campagna Center administers the program for three- and four-year olds that Northam visited. The classroom resides in the Jackson Crossing affordable housing development. Northam was greeted with flowers and read with the children.

During her weekend visit, Northam also "had a roundtable

discussion with local early childhood stakeholders," said David Cary, her chief of staff.

Gov. Ralph Northam, who took office in January, established a Children's Cabinet, an interagency collaborative and advisory body, which his wife Pamela chairs.

Asked what are some of the most decisive priorities for early child-

hood care and education, she said greater "recognition and respect" for professionals in that field. A childcare worker or preschool teacher is "not just a glorified babysitter." Early brain development sets a foundation for education for the rest of a person's life, and so society can realize the

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PHOTO BY NAKU MAYO

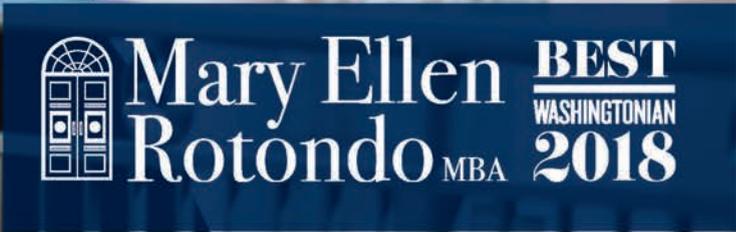
Virginia's First Lady Pamela Northam talks with children at a preschool program administered by the Campagna Center.

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Nauti and Nice

Holiday boats light up the Potomac.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Despite less than ideal weather conditions, thousands of spectators gathered at sundown along the Alexandria waterfront Dec. 1 to watch as more than 50 boats participated in the 19th annual Holiday Boat Parade of Lights.

Led by Alexandria's fireboat, Vigilant, and Washington D.C.'s fireboat, John Glenn, the illuminated boats cruised the Potomac River as they competed for prizes in categories ranging from Best in Show to Best Try.

Media personality Tommy McFly of 94.7 Fresh FM and NBC4 served as announcer of the mile-long parade, which featured a mixture of powerboats and sailboats.

Best of Alexandria Show was awarded to Letter of Marque, led by Captain Walter Weiss, with the theme "Hanukkah, the Festival of

Lights." Best Powerboat went to Iechyd Da! and Captain Larry Chandler for "A Bohemian Rhapsody Holiday." Best Sailboat was awarded to Dark Star and Captain Doug Savage who presented "Little Drummer Boy and Friends."

Other notable entries include Most Holiday Cheer winner Reva D, led by Captain Rich Hart, for "The Griswalds" theme including a station wagon in lights, and Thinking Outside the Christmas Box winner Firefly, led by Captain Dave Easter, for their "Jingle Bones"-themed sailboat.

The 2018 winners include: Best of Alexandria Show — Letter of Marque, Captain Walter Weiss, "Hanukkah, the festival of lights;" Best Powerboat — Iechyd Da!, Captain Larry Chandler, "A Bohemian Rhapsody Holiday;" Best Sailboat — Dark Star, Captain Doug Savage, "Little Drummer Boy and Friends;" Best Spirit of America — Mental Recession, Captain Seth Frankel, "Caps Caps



PHOTOS BY EVAN MICHIO/VISIT ALEXANDRIA

Captain Doug Savage and Dark Star won Best Sailboat honors with "Little Drummer Boy and Friends."

Caps" celebrating Stanley Cup champions the Washington Capitals; Thinking Outside the Christmas Box — Firefly, Captain Dave Easter, "Jingle Bones;" Most Animated — Kairos, Captains Michael Bradford and Tipper Williams

Bradford, "Kairos Christmas on the Potomac;" Most Holiday Cheer — Reva D, Captain Rich Hart, "The Griswalds;" Most Spirited Crew — Blown Away, Captain Mike Moreau, "Nightmare Before Christmas;" Best Theme — Fuelin'

Around, Captain Jack Stoddard, "Christmas Cheer;" Hardest Soul — O'Sea Dee, Captain Wil Neubauer, "A Blue Christmas" with Elvis impersonator; and Best Try — Nelson, Captain Hank Hart, "Starry Night, Winter Lights."



Best of Alexandria Show honors went to Captain Walter Weiss and Letter of Marque for the display "Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights" at the 2018 Holiday Boat Parade of Lights Dec. 1 along the Potomac River.



Kairos, with Captains Michael Bradford and Tipper Williams Bradford, took home the Most Animated prize with "Kairos Christmas on the Potomac" at the 19th annual Holiday Boat Parade of Lights Dec. 1 along the Potomac River.



Thinking Outside the Christmas Box honors went to Captain Dave Easter and Firefly for "Jingle Bones" at the 2018 Holiday Boat Parade of Lights Dec. 1 along the Alexandria waterfront.



Most Spirited Crew honors went to Blown Away Blown Away and Captain Mike Moreau with "Nightmare Before Christmas."



Captain Larry Chandler and Iechyd Da! won Best Powerboat with "A Bohemian Rhapsody Holiday."



Members of the T.C. Williams High School JROTC march in the 2018 Scottish Christmas Walk Parade.



Four-legged friends were popular parade participants.

PHOTOS BY MARK MOGLE/GAZETTE PACKET

Plaid Tidings

The 48th annual Scottish Walk Parade.

Dreary skies couldn't dampen the spirits at the 48th annual Scottish Christmas Walk Parade, the signature event of the Scottish Walk Weekend of events benefitting the Campagna Center. Scottish clans sported their tartans as the sound of bagpipes filled the air from traditional pipes and drums marching units. Scottish dancers, reenactment groups, Scottie dogs, dignitaries, classic cars and Santa Claus braved the rain to carry on the parade tradition and support the early childhood programs of the Campagna Center. See www.campagnacenter.org

— JEANNE THEISMANN



Former U.S. Senator and Secretary of the Navy John Warner on the reviewing stand.



A member of the Auld Aleance in the Scottish Christmas Walk parade.



Burke and Herbert's Joe Collum wears his trademark holiday suit in the Scottish Christmas Walk parade.



A member of the MacGregor clan waves to the crowd.



Mayor Allison Silberberg waves to the crowd.



U.S. Rep. Don Beyer (D-8) and his wife Megan participate in the 2018 Scottish Christmas Walk Parade.



Campagna Center CEO Tammy Mann watches the Scottish Christmas Walk Parade from the reviewing stand.



PHOTO BY "MANGO" MIKE ANDERSON

'Tis the Season

The Del Ray Business Association kicked off the holiday season Dec. 2 with its annual Christmas tree and Menorah lighting at the Pat Miller Neighborhood Square. The event featured an appearance by Santa, who led the crowd in carols and posed for photos with children. As is tradition, Mount Vernon Avenue was illuminated by thousands of luminarias in honor of the late Nancy Dunning. For more information on holiday happenings in Del Ray, visit www.visitdelray.com.



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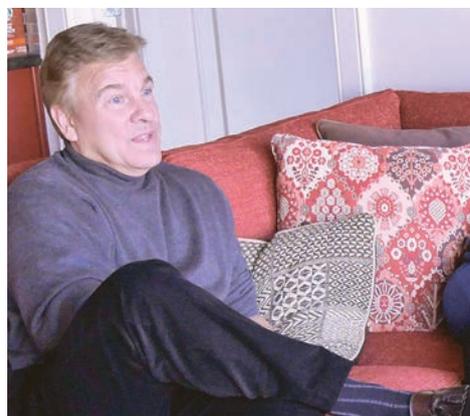
Synergy HomeCare designs individual plans.

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
GAZETTE PACKET

Jillian Poole sits on her couch in her high rise Rosslyn apartment awaiting her visit from the Synergy Home Care providers. Mitchell Opalski, owner of Synergy, and Corrie Cyre, Director of Nursing, have come to check in on Poole who is ready to be released soon to resume her independent life.

Poole had a fall some weeks ago and after rehab she needed some assistance and didn't want to miss out on her social life. **PEOPLE AT WORK** Cyre says she is proud of Poole who has made great progress. Opalski says, "She got stronger and we consider that a success story if she doesn't need assistance anymore."

"Oh, I didn't offer you anything," Poole says as her visitors take a seat in front of the wall of windows overlooking the river far below. Sculptures dot the room with giraffes perched on the kitchen counter beside a bowl of fresh fruit. "My mother," she answers. "She was a sculptor. She has several things in the National Portrait Gallery, and my son is also an accomplished artist." Poole says, "We have traveled the world. "Each one of these tells a story, and you reconnect when you return home."



Mitchell Opalski, owner of Synergy HomeCare, explains Synergy HomeCare "provides what each person needs and wants."



Corrie Cyre, director of Nursing at Synergy HomeCare, checks in with Jillian Poole who is about to be released to resume her independent life.

Cyre says that Synergy provides what people need and want. Some people just need a bit of bathing, grooming or they don't drive anymore. In the case of Poole, Cyre says, "I sat down with her and we developed a plan together and then spoke to her caregiver." In the beginning she had a caregiver 24 hours a day but a couple of weeks ago Poole released the night care. "Now," Poole says, "My daytime caregiver Kendra goes to the gym with me and supervises my bike riding, walking and arm exercises."

Kendra also takes Poole to MOM's Organic Market nearby and to doctor's appointments as well as social engagements. "I had lunch at the Cosmos Club today," she says. "Kendra takes me a-n-y-where."

Poole adds, "I give Kendra a nice bedroom and a parking space. I take care of her and

she takes care of me. Kendra knows me all too well."

Opalski says, "She may write a book." Poole comments with a smile, "She may already have." This check-up visit is just one of the services offered by Synergy as part of each person's individualized plan. Cyre says, "We have customized service for people who have chosen to die in their homes. It depends on what people need and want. They say 'I want it my way.'"

Cyre had started the day having breakfast with a client with dementia in Alexandria. "He can get violent, not on purpose, and it can be a challenge to meet his needs. I wanted to check up on the safety and well being of the new caregiver to be sure she was comfortable with the client." Then Cyre spoke to the nurse about some medication that could decrease the client's repetitive

behavior at certain times of the day.

Opalski says he started to see a shift to home care about the time he bought his Synergy franchise 12 years ago. He says, "I started with one employee who was doing many tasks." Now he has 110 caregivers and 60-80 clients at a time serving Alexandria, Arlington and other local areas. Opalski explains the company offers both long-term and short-term care. He estimates about 60-70 percent of his clients are aging in place and 30 percent are recovering.

Opalski says he first got interested in this area when he was COO of the National Association for Homecare & Hospice. "I knew it was what I wanted to do."

Poole confides, "I have had other home care people, not like these people. They have been a very good provider, not perfect but damn close."



Delman, Vliet Engaged

Danae and Eric Delman of Mount Vernon announce the engagement of their daughter, Erika Caroline Delman to Jeffrey Alan Vliet. Erika grew up in Alexandria and is a graduate of Virginia Tech. She is currently working at a financial consulting firm in Tysons Corner, Va. Jeff is the son of Susan and Alan Vliet of Falls Church, Va. He is a veteran of the Air Force and currently works for the FAA. A wedding is planned for the fall of 2019.



Serving Those Less Fortunate

Deacon Earl Brown and Alfred Street Baptist Church members box food Nov. 17 at the church. More than 700 Thanksgiving baskets were distributed by the church.



Deacon Carlton Willis



Church member and activist Geri Baldwin with John McCauley, Jr.



Deacon Earnestine Easter

PHOTOS BY VALORIE "YANA" FOGLE



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Potential Public Facilities Consolidations/Collocations = Better Services, Savings?



A city staff-proposed Strategic Facilities Plan looks toward streamlining adjacent city and public school system operations in the “Witter/Wheeler Campus” along Duke Street.

Proposing Ways to Improve City Services

FROM PAGE 1
scarce land, according to an advisory task force’s report.

Aiming to take a step in this direction, the city is considering how to redeploy its assets, rather than fixing or replacing ailing facilities. Redeployment could entail collocation or consolidation of services, both within and between departments, and shifting facilities to fill service gaps in the West End.

The city’s Department of Community and Human Services, currently spread across seven sites, would prefer a consolidated facility in the West End. Because it offers related services, the Alexandria Health Department, currently located at two sites, would prefer co-location with DCHS. Authorization for this consolidation is all but

a done deal, though the specific site isn’t yet publicly disclosed, said Mayor Allison Silberberg.

What the plan calls the “Witter/Wheeler Campus” along Duke Street is home to 15 city and schools properties. As the single largest, contiguous publicly-owned area, it’s long been considered a golden opportunity for what the plan calls “space synergies.” For example, various vehicle fleets, like city and school buses, could share parking areas and maintenance facilities under an alternating work schedule.

City and school officials generally support co-locating or jointly acquiring other properties as well, though details still need ironing out. For example, Ferdinand T. Day Elementary School occupies the first four floors of a six-story converted office build-

ing. City staff considered though ultimately rejected various options of what it might put on the top two floors. They couldn’t determine how adequately to separate children from the comings and goings of another public use, said Mignon Anthony, the schools’ COO.

In a separate study, staff will recommend how to reconfigure city hall’s interior layout and department location to streamline citizens’ customer service experience. Council members generally agree that core political activities — council meetings and offices, the city manager’s office — would remain at city hall. But other services, like finance and code administration, might relocate elsewhere, perhaps through satellites. “I want to make sure that we’re not viewing these departments as monoliths,”

said Vice Mayor Justin Wilson. For instance, “we can be a lot more deliberate about how we approach” the use of libraries and recreation centers as “portals for a lot of those other services.”

“I’m very interested to see the creativity [in terms of public-private partnerships] that can come from the private sector being a part of the conversation,” said Councilman John Chapman.

Councilman Paul Smedberg expressed doubt about the new plan’s usefulness, since it lacks a definite plan about city hall’s future.

“We have to start somewhere,” though it’s a “living document,” replied McPike.

Council will vote on the strategic plan’s final iteration at its legislative meeting on Tuesday, Dec. 11.

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LETTERS

What Steps To Fix Traffic?

To the Editor:

Upon reading the city manager's remarks on the new traffic, oops returning traffic (pre-fifth round military base realignment), with the announcement of Amazon's coming to the area, I found myself remembering the first 18 months of life in Alexandria having arrived the evening on July 3, 1994 having moved to the 400 block of Henry St.

What was that like? Rush hour traffic that often took three or more traffic light cycles just to go one block and car after car overheating on a hot summer day. Since this time, developers were handed height and density zoning variances like candy on Halloween.

Amazon's arrival will bring new traffic and the question becomes what will the city manager and T&ES [Transportation and Environmental Services] do to prepare for it?

We already have people using the left lane on Cameron at Columbus as a thru lane and car after car using the right lane on Gibbon at Route 1 as a left turn lane. Left-turning traffic on southbound Mt. Vernon Avenue at Braddock often ignore pedestrians. Cameron, Pendleton, and Wythe streets often get blocked during evening rush hour traffic from Henry Street. I have seen more and more cars turn right on to Gibbon from the center lane of southbound Washington Street. Even the Arlington Ridge Road/Mt. Vernon Avenue corridor has seen an increase in evening rush hour traffic.

Of course our police often use the excuse of the shift change that occurs during evening rush hour traffic, so again what will the city manager, T&ES, and our newly elected mayor going to do to keep traffic from coming to a standstill? For the record, I personally think the Amazon announcement is a good thing for the local economy.

Ruben "Bill" Duran
Alexandria

In Recognition Of Mason

To the Editor:

Alexandrian George Mason is among the most important of our Founding Fathers, but few people – even in our city and at his home, Gunston Hall, celebrate his Dec. 11, 1752, birthday because they do not know and therefore honor his contributions to our federal republic – nor do most celebrate



PHOTO BY JEANNE THEISMANN/GAZETTE PACKET

Rabbi Mordechai Newman, right, the director Chabad Lubavitch of Alexandria-Arlington, assists Mayor Allison Silberberg in lighting the Menorah at the Lyceum on Dec. 4.

Let There Be Light

Menorah lighting dedicated to Pittsburgh synagogue victims.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

A community Chanukah celebration was held Dec. 4 at the Lyceum with Mayor Allison Silberberg and Rabbi Mordechai Newman lighting the city's largest Menorah to celebrate the Festival of Lights.

"We dedicate this evening to the 11 souls that were lost in Pittsburgh," said Newman in reference to the Oct. 27 shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue. "We are doing what they would want us to do — to not be afraid and to spread love and light."

Newman presided over the ceremony, which was hosted by Chabad Lubavitch of Alexandria-Arlington, where he is director. The Festival of Lights celebration included a public kindling of a 6-foot Menorah followed by the singing of traditional songs. Hot potato pancakes and doughnuts, the traditional foods of Chanukah, were served to the crowd.

"We want people to 'taste' the tradition," said Newman, who will preside over ceremonies cul-



PHOTO BY JAMES CULLUM/GAZETTE PACKET

City Councilman John Chapman with Rabbi Mordechai Newman, the director Chabad Lubavitch of Alexandria-Arlington and Mayor-elect Justin Wilson in back.

minating Dec. 6 with Chanukah on ICE in Pentagon City.

Newman shared the history and tradition of Chanukah and the Festival of Lights.

"In ancient times our ancestors rededicated the Temple in Jerusalem with the Menorah," Newman said. "Today, we rededicate ourselves to making this world a better and brighter place. Chanukah propagates the universal message that ultimately good will prevail over evil, freedom over oppression and light over darkness."

See www.chabadAA.org.

Bill of Rights Day, Dec. 15 (1791), although it is by far the best known section of the Constitution. Mason's insistence on its inclusion cost him Washington's friendship and his rightful place in our history books written by the general's Federalist partisans. Mason also provided Jefferson with the most famous claims in our Declaration of Independence.

Jefferson used the thesis of his mentor Mason, whom he deemed the most intelligent man of his day, when he wrote the Declaration of Independence. He had copies of Mason's first and final drafts of the Virginia Declaration of Rights, adopted by the General Assembly

on June 12, 1776, and admirably edited its language to some of the most stirring words ever written. Mason's lines, "That all men are born equally free and independent, and have certain inherent natural Rights ... among which are the Enjoyment of Life and Liberty, with the Means of acquiring and possessing Property, and pursuing and obtaining Happiness and Safety" became in Jefferson's words "... all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Inspired by the English Enlight-

enment philosopher John Locke (1632-1704), Mason had the then radical insight: a republic needed a legally binding commitment that individuals have inalienable rights superior to any government. Also, it is necessary for those rights to be written so they would be clear to both government officials and the people. Therefore, he created the first written statement of those individual rights which he believed must be included to restrain all levels of government.

Mason also wrote Virginia's (and the colonies') first Constitution, which included a Bill of Rights, and was used until the 1970s. That

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‘Not Always Laudable’

City government aims to identify, correct racial and other prejudices.

BY DAN BRENDEL
GAZETTE PACKET

The city government is evaluating how local public policies and government processes may contribute to racial inequity, senior staff told City Council on Tuesday, Nov. 27. “Governments have historically created structural and institutional racism through public policy decisions. Alexandria has a very rich history, ... but not always laudable,” said Jean Kelleher, the city government’s human rights director. “We need to focus as we move forward and develop the city economically, how we plan to built environment, and how we allocate resources to avoid disparate impacts on certain communities.”

To that end, an intergovernmental working group — including the public school and library systems, health department and juvenile justice agency — have begun reviewing the city’s policies and practices. They’ve focused mainly on racial inequity, with the expectation that improving racial disparities will tangentially improve the lots of other “marginalized groups” as well, said Kelleher.

So far, remedial activities have consisted largely of enhanced staff training.

Some 300 city employees have received training “on structural and institutional racism and privilege and implicit bias,” said City Manager Mark Jinks. The goal is to improve staff consideration of multiple perspectives and ripple effects regarding complex issues like land use and housing.

“Our staff makes decisions about whether or not children will remain with their families, ... [whether] people will have funds for food, ... [whether] people will be detained,” said Kate Garvey, who heads up the city’s department of community and human services. “So our understanding of our own bias, our understanding of how we make decisions, is absolutely critical.”

All police department staff has completed “implicit bias training,” said Michael Brown, Alexandria’s chief of police.

The department also implemented a Racial Equity Plan which aims to implement former President Barack Obama’s 21st Cen-

ture Policing Task Force Recommendations. Among other things, the department expanded its Community Oriented Policing Unit. Officers assigned to this unit focus on building relationships within specific neighborhoods.

City Council praised the effort to date. Councilman Tim Lovain appreciated shifting focus away from individual attitudes. Racism isn’t primarily “a matter of, if only all white people could purify their hearts, then everything would be fine,” he said. “The practice of racism in our country over the centuries has become institutionalized in ways that we don’t even recognize, whether it’s cultural bias or old boy networks in hiring. People of good hearts and good intentions still are implementing these practices, which have these racist outcomes. ... The cycle of poverty, for example, might be the most insidious form of institutionalized racism”

Vice Mayor Justin Wilson said: “Where we put density, what types of housing we approved — I think we have to view those decisions through the lens of equity.”

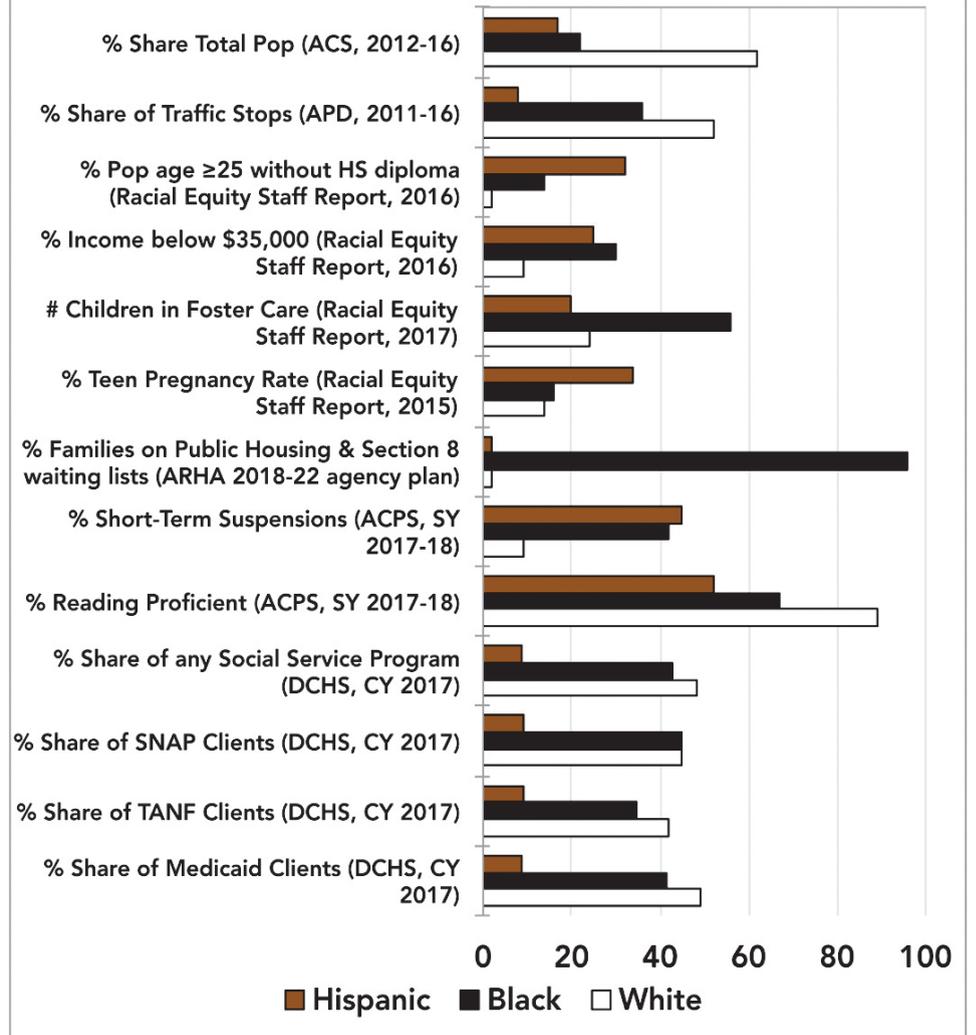
Councilman John Chapman suggested that equity should be part of where the city locates services and facilities in connection with its long list of capital improvements. In a discussion with Mayor Allison Silberberg about the relative importance of city hall as a historic artifact, he said: “What needs to change is how the residents of the West End feel about their connectedness to the city government, how they feel that they can get services I don’t think any of us has not heard from West End residents about their feeling that they do not get served by this government because, in part, of where we are located, where our services are located.”

Other than Arlandria, the West End includes the city’s only census tracts with majority black or Hispanic populations.

Asked later if Silberberg thinks city hall’s location adequately ensures equitable access for all citizens to their city’s services, she said it does. She says she proactively supports locating certain services elsewhere in the city — for example, consolidating the

SEE DISPARITIES, PAGE 13

Alexandria Racial Comparisons Selected Measures



Because sources vary, comparisons within a given measure above are better than comparisons between measures. Many reporting agencies follow the Census Bureau’s convention, according to which “Hispanic” / “Latino” isn’t a race, but an ethnic category that can apply to any race. This doesn’t necessarily reflect colloquial convention, according to which “Hispanic” / “Latino” may often mean a de facto racial category of “brown,” distinct from “white” and “black.” Agencies also don’t necessarily apply the formal convention uniformly. Sometimes they report overlapping figures such that, e.g., a Hispanic white would count both as “white” and “Hispanic” (e.g., ACS total population, DCHS above). Other times agencies differentiate Hispanics from non-Hispanic whites and blacks, in which case there’s no overlap (e.g., APD above). Sometimes public documents don’t clarify the convention used (e.g., ARHA above).

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Getting Credit for Good Credit Annual report indicates city government's strong fiscal health, especially debt health.

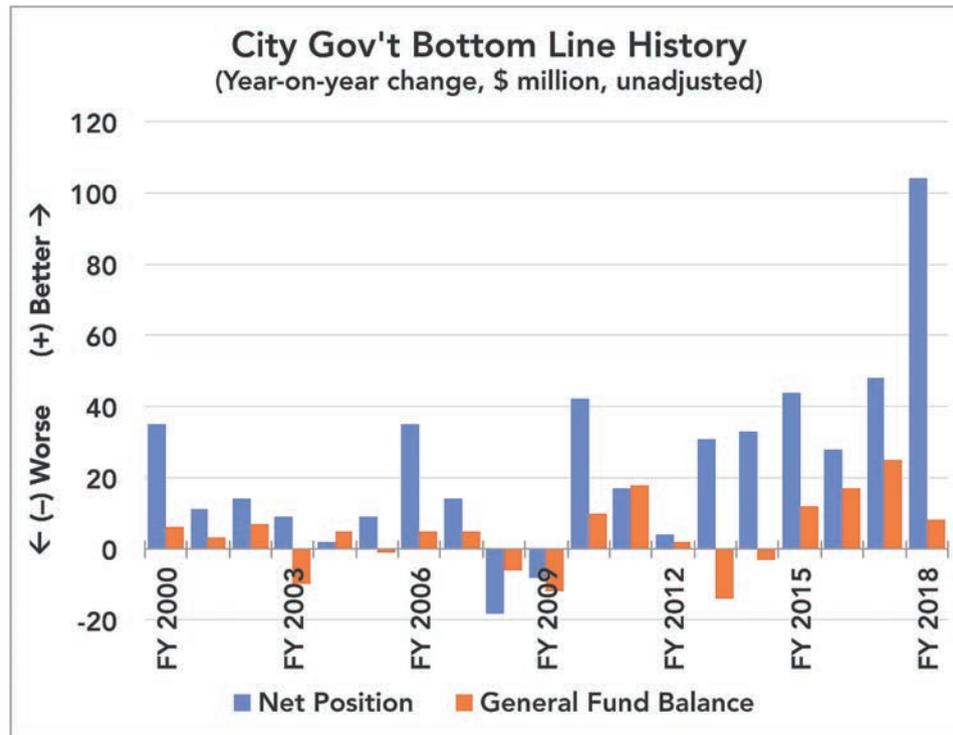
BY DAN BRENDEL
GAZETTE PACKET

The city government's recently released annual financial evaluation, including financial statements and an independent auditor's report, describes a clean bill of fiscal health, especially regarding the city's conservative debt posture.

The financial report — the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report — serves as a kind of companion to the budget. Each year, whereas the budget looks forward to the next fiscal year, the financial report evaluates the prior fiscal year.

Reviewing FY 2018, which ended June 30, independent auditors offered an "unmodified" opinion, the best possible, of the city's financial statements. That's after obtaining "reasonable assurance" that the statements "are free of material misstatement," according to the audit report. Material misstatements include errors, omissions and fraud, which in the auditor's "professional judgment" might, among other things, "influence the economic decisions of users," according to the American Institute of CPAs, a professional association.

In addition to the audit, the report includes analysis of various metrics that describe fiscal health, a few of which are de-



scribed below.

BOTTOM LINE

The city's net position and General Fund balance have exhibited upward trends over the past decade, notwithstanding changes

in calculation methods over the years that can complicate historical comparison.

The city's "net position" is its bottom line. Specifically, it's "the difference between assets and deferred outflows, on the one hand, and liabilities and deferred inflows, on the other," according to the Governmental Accounting Standards Board, a standards-setting organization. Non-monetary capital assets (land, buildings, etc.) and long-term bond and/or pension liabilities are included. "Over time, increases or decreases in the City's net position are indicators of whether its financial health is improving or deteriorating," according to the report.

Fund balance is similar to net position, though narrower and shorter-term in scope, indicating only the net of financial assets and liabilities of specific funds, such as the general or capital projects funds. This measure is of "central importance to the credit

reviews performed by municipal bond analysts;" it serves "to identify the available liquid resources that can be used to repay long-term debt," according to the Governmental Accounting Standards Board. The government can also draw on fund balance to address emergencies.

Director of Finance Kendel Taylor cited New York's Westchester County as a cautionary tale: "We have actively increased fund balance reserves over the past 5-plus years to go from 10 percent to more than 15 percent. Also, ... we were within one percent of [our budgeted revenue] target," she said. By contrast, "Westchester was downgraded [from its AAA rating] for not maintaining a healthy reserve and for revenue forecasts that were somewhat risky."

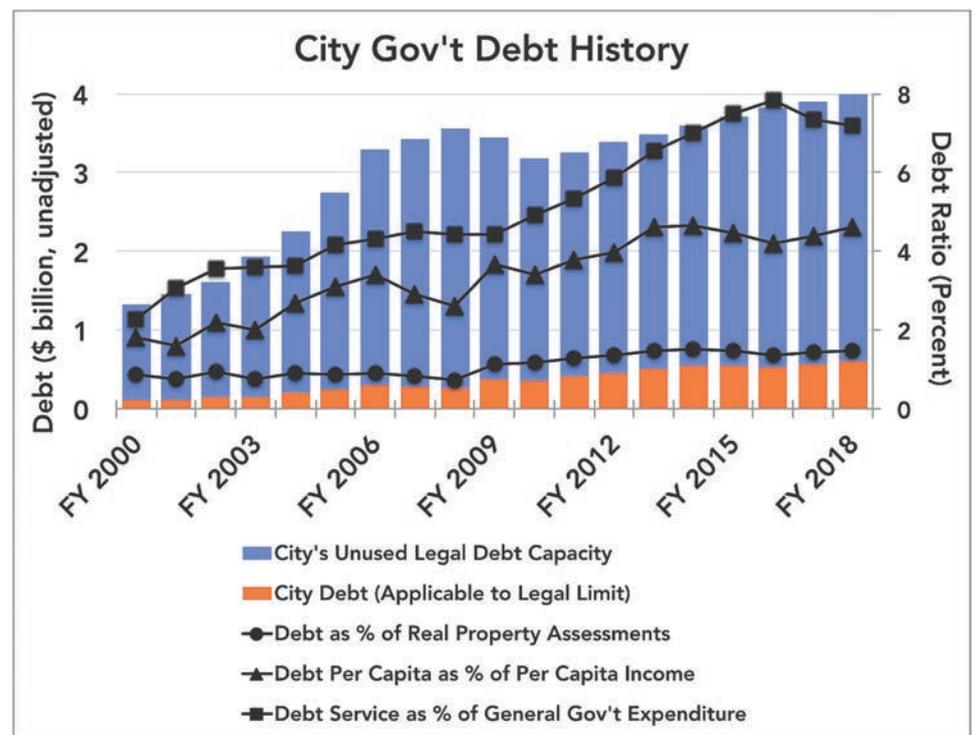
DEBT

Three debt ratios that the city tracks have all increased over the past decade: debt as a percentage of the assessed value of real property; debt per capita as a percentage of per capita income; debt service as a percentage of general government expenditure. But all measures remain within their state-mandated and self-imposed limits.

In the first case, while the state constitution would allow the city to carry debt equal to 10 percent of total fair market value, the city carried only 1.49 percent in FY 2018. On the one hand, Taylor cited a recent review from Moody's, a credit rating agency, which lauded Alexandria's "conservative debt issuance guidelines" and "manageable" long-term debt, "despite an extensive capital plan." On the other hand, keeping the debt ratio low left \$3.4 billion in untapped legal debt capacity.

Asked why the city doesn't issue more bonds in light of its looming list of capital projects, Taylor said: "It is important that debt service payments in relationship to the rest of the budget do not become disproportionate. ... If debt service were to be-

SEE GETTING CREDIT, PAGE 21



OBITUARIES

Vivian Louise Brent-Caple

Vivian Louise Brent-Caple, a woman of God, love and wisdom, born to Charlie and Sarah Brent in Alexandria. Vivian's life spanned from Feb. 17, 1928 to Nov. 25, 2018. She was the oldest girl from a family of 12 children.



Vivian was preceded in death by her parents Charlie Brent and Sarah Brent-Smith; brothers: Edward, Robert, Charles, and Willbert Brent, Donald and Alvin Smith; sisters: Doris Brent, Shirley Tyree, Bernice Majors, Maxine Hackley, and Arelia Douglas; daughter Rebecca "Toots" Caple.

She is survived by her sister-in-law Gwendolyn "Peggy" Menefee-Smith; daughter: Sarah Wiggins (Keith); grandsons: William Blake (Selethia) and Howard Eaves, Jr. (Veronica); granddaughters: Tonya Eaves and Nydia Latson; 12 great grandchildren; 15 great great grandchildren, and a host of nieces, nephews, and friends. Vivian attended Lyles Crouch and Parker Gray High School. She also attended an all business machine school in the Opportunity Industrial Center. She was employed with 1st American Bank which later merged with Union Trust, Union First and 1st Union. Vivian retired in 1989 and began working part-time for Montessori School in Alexandria.

Funeral services for Vivian Caple were held on Wednesday, Dec. 5 at Robert's Memorial United Methodist Church at 606 S Washington St, Alexandria.

Maudy Walker Mays

Maudy Walker Mays died Nov. 27, 2018. She was the widow of Dr. Gilbert Mays. She leaves behind her beloved children: Daughter, Blanche Delores Mays Maness; Granddaughter, Tamika Nicole Hutchinson; and Great Grandson, Brandon Olliver Hutchinson. In addition, she leaves nieces, nephews, and a cadre of close friends.

Born Aug. 16, 1919, to Benjamin Wert and Nealie Short Walker whom brought forth 16 children. At 99 years old, Maudy was the last living of the siblings to pass. At an early age it was instilled by her parents: to have a relationship with God deeply rooted in faith and the fulfillment of his will. She carried this trait and a missionary mindset throughout her entire life.

Maudy received her bachelor's degree from Saint Paul's College in Lawrenceville, Va. and later received her Master's Degree from Virginia State College, now Virginia State University. At the age of 12, after urging from her father, Maudy began teaching children in Sunday School; little did she know this would eventually plant the seed to a 40-plus year career in education, specifically teaching reading and grammar. After teaching in Brunswick County, she moved on to Richmond City Public Schools and finished her career in Alex-

andria City Public Schools. All of the aforementioned roles gave her the opportunity to change numerous young children's lives with her kindhearted gentle way of teaching reading.

Maudy was active in Lawrenceville, Va. with church and support of civic groups; and, in Richmond, Va., member of Moore Street Baptist Church. Later she became president of Alpha Kappa Sorority, Inc., Upsilon Omega Chapter.

In Alexandria City, Maudy affiliated with organizations which supported young children and others in her community. She was an active member of The Reading is Fundamental Board, Hopkins House, Shiloh Baptist Church, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Zeta Chi Omega Chapter, Alexandria Beautification Commission, Alexandria Mental Health Commission, Alexandria Chapter of the NAACP, Alexandria Afro-American Festival Committee, Alexandria Democratic Party Committee, George Mason University, Phi Delta Kappa Charter member, Alfred Street Baptist Church, and an Alexandria Election Officer. Maudy delighted in being a beacon of light, support, and encouragement for all she knew - she never expected accolades, simply God's grace. Viewing and visitation is scheduled for Thursday, Dec. 6, 2018 at 9:30 a.m., 10 a.m., Ivy Beyond the Wall Ceremony (AKA),

10:15-11 a.m., Viewing and Visitation; 11 a.m. Eulogy; Repast immediately following at Alfred Street Baptist Church, 301 South Alfred St., Alexandria. The Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley, officiating. Interment, Monday, Dec. 10, 2018, 11 a.m., at Quantico National Cemetery, Quantico, Va.

Arrangements entrusted to: J.M. Wilkerson Establishment, Inc., 102 Church Avenue, Petersburg, Va., Shelton M. Smith, manager and funeral director.

Disparities

FROM PAGE 11

department of community and human services in the West End. But she says city hall is Alexandria's historic seat of government and an important part of the city's heritage. For these reasons, certain core government activities — City Council meetings, council offices, the city manager's office — should remain located there. She says the city is small enough, there are sufficient modes of transportation and remote and electronic venues for citizen input, that city hall's location doesn't inhibit political participation. Moreover, "the vast majority of publicly subsidized housing is located in the eastern half of our city," she said.

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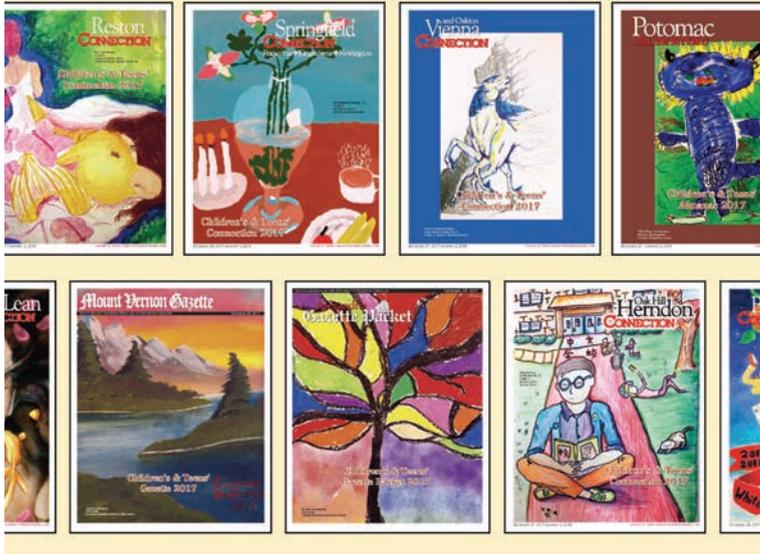
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WELLBEING

Habits that Stick

**Key to making
changing old habits
and making new ones.**

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

Standing outside the glass doors of the studio, lit harshly by fluorescent bulbs, Annabelle VanLandingham admits that she is intimidated by a group of women standing in front of her — all model-thin and wearing cropped tank tops that reveal finely toned abs.

"I always feel like I don't fit it and everybody is staring at me, but this time, I'm really going to stick with it," she said, acknowledging her failed attempts to make regular exercise part of her daily life.

Vows to change habits are easy to make, but keeping them can seem nearly impossible. Commitments to cooking healthy weeknight dinners give way to the reality of packed schedules, while a morning meditation practice is overtaken by an inability to resist checking email right after getting out of bed. Local human behaviorists say that when it comes to creating habits, understanding how they develop is a first step.

**"If you want develop a
meditation practice to relieve
stress at work, set an alert on
your phone for a time that
know you'll definitely be free."**

— Lauren Puglisi, LCSW

"Essentially, a habit is turning a new behavior into something that is done automatically," said Lauren Puglisi, LCSW. "For example, grabbing a cigarette after dinner or putting on your seatbelt when you get in the car are automatic. You don't have to talk yourself into doing those things, you do them without even thinking."

For those who want to make activities like exercising or meditating life-long habits, the key is to begin with realistic and attainable steps. "New habits are best formed in small, manageable increments," said Jessica McLaughlin, Ph.D. assistant professor of psychology at Montgomery College. "For instance, if you want to develop the habit of exercising, start by taking 10-minute walks instead of promising to exercise for an hour every day. It is easier to form habits if the changes are similar to what you are already doing, as opposed to something that drastically alters your current day-to-day schedule."

Develop a list specific actions to take, advises Puglisi. "For example, swapping out potato chips and a soda for hummus and whole wheat pita bread for an afternoon snack or taking a 30-minute walk three days each week can be attainable ways to get started," she said. "Otherwise, you might get overwhelmed and give up."

"Research supports that it can take approximately two months of daily repetition to develop a habit, but keep in mind that some habits aren't as easy to make automatic, and may require more time," added Joanne Bagshaw, Ph.D., professor of psychology at Montgomery College. "For instance, developing a habit of walking 15 minutes every day may take eight to 10 weeks to become an automatic behavior, but running five miles every day could take much longer."

**"Plan on creating your
daily walk or running
habit with a friend, or
coach, or group who
will be a role model for
self-control."**

— Joanne Bagshaw, Ph.D.,
Montgomery College

Find ways to increase accountability. "Write down your goals and keep [the list] in a visible place where you have a constant reminder and can check off your accomplishments each day," said McLaughlin. "Tell someone else what you are doing or, better yet, make the change with someone else, such as practicing mindfulness together or eliminating sugary drinks as a team."

Setting up reminders can help one avoid backsliding, especially when habit formation is in its early stages," said Puglisi. "If you want develop a meditation practice to relieve stress at work, set an alert on your phone for a time that know you'll definitely be free," she said. "Set a realistic amount of time to spend meditating, and select a specific mediation. This will make it easy to do quickly and easily, so you'll have fewer excuses not to do it."

The company one keeps also plays a role in habit formation. "You're likely to boost your willpower if you choose to spend time with someone who has strong willpower," said Bagshaw. "Plan on creating your daily walk or running habit with a friend, or coach, or group who will be a role model for self-control."

Assess your progress regularly. "Self-monitoring adds to success," said psychologist Stacie Isenberg, Psy.D. "Writing down what you've eaten each day can help you stay honest with yourself. That said, be realistic with your time frames and don't cause yourself extra stress. If thinking about how you ate during the week on a Friday is less stressful than writing it every day, do that. But do choose a regular time to consider progress and impediments or you'll be at 2020 without your new habit."

"It helps to set up the environment to remind you to do the behavior and make it easy to follow through," said Jerome Short, Ph.D., associate professor of psychology at George Mason University. "For example, put vegetables and fruits on the first shelf you see when you open the refrigerator. You are more likely to eat what you see than what you do not see."

Don't forget rewards, says McLaughlin. "Change won't happen unless you are motivated to make the change," she said. "This means you have to find what is rewarding for you. You might find that what you are doing is intrinsically rewarding, such as increasing your energy levels or seeing your scale number go down. Other times, you might need to create your own reward, such as getting a manicure when you've gone a week without biting your nails."

HOLIDAY ENTERTAINMENT

LTA Presents 'A Christmas Carol'

Story by Charles Dickens shows Scrooge's transformation into a kinder spirit.

BY STEVE HIBBARD

The Little Theatre of Alexandria is ringing in the holiday season with Charles Dickens' classic, "A Christmas Carol," from now through Dec. 16. The show stars Ebenezer Scrooge, a miserable, bitter old miser who travels with ghostly guides through Christmas past, present, and future to find the true meaning of the holidays. The show, based on the novella first published in 1843, is produced by Brooke Angel and is complete with special effects, Victorian carols, and Tiny Tim.

Director Shelagh Roberts said she was looking for a new challenge, and she certainly got it. "Along with so many others, the story has always had a special place in my heart. Dickens' genius provides a perfectly balanced story with its contrast of the harsh conditions of Victorian London with the joy and goodness of Christmas. Because everyone knows the plot and characters, it's one of those shows that brings the audience's expectations into the theatre with it," she said. "The show has everything: realism, romance, fantasy, and characters that are bigger than life. And the production is a lot of fun with the colorful costumes and lighting, beautiful Christmas carols, and special effects."

She added: "We want to keep faithful to the narrative and spirit of Dickens' novella. This adaptation by Donna Farragut was first produced at LTA in 2006. Through the years, everyone puts a different spin on the tale and it's always a lot of fun. We wanted to produce it as close as possible to Dickens' original words and intentions while keeping it at a family-friendly length, since there is no intermission. The Victorian carols interspersed throughout the production have always been one of my favorite parts, and Linda Wells' beautiful piano work and underscoring really adds texture to the production."

Brian Lyons-Burke is playing the role of Ebenezer Scrooge, a miserly, bitter man who has shut himself off from all close human

contact in his pursuit of wealth. "In particular, he scorns Christmas and the 'idiots' who celebrate it. Through the course of 'A Christmas Carol,' he is reminded of his past, made to see the reality of his present, and shown the bleak nature of the future if he does not change his ways," he said.

"He experiences an incredible range of emotions as he is transformed from a bitter misanthrope to a joyful benefactor of his fellow man. It is extremely challenging to honestly portray not only each of these emotions, but to manage the transitions as he is forced to recognize his place in the world, the effect of his choices, the price those choices demanded from him, and his chance to live a better life," he said. "Scrooge is an iconic, well-known character; the audience will already have expectations of what they will see. My goal is to give them something real, something new, while not disappointing those expectations. And it is a definite challenge living up to the level of talent of the veritable army of artists that all work together to create this production."

Colin Davies is playing the dual roles of Charles Dickens and the Ghost of Christmas Present. "People imagine Dickens to have been a kind and thoughtful man who loved children, but there was a very negative side to him as well. He probably had affairs with both his wife's sisters and also with the actor Ellen Ternan. He abandoned his wife after 20 years, blaming her for having so many children. He was certainly charming, but also vain, and by all accounts was very strict with his children," he said. "The other character I play — the Ghost of Christmas Present — is a very jolly and likable fellow, often portrayed as a kind of Father Christmas."

He said he's one of two British-born actors in the show and also the British accent coach. "There are some major pronunciation differences between the two accents: UK English uses the long 'a' in words like 'past' and 'afternoon'. There's also the different way of pronouncing words like 'new': Americans pronounce it 'noo', Brits add a



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

In the past, Scrooge (Brian Lyons-Burke) sees the younger version of himself (Alex Eskew) in LTA's production of "A Christmas Carol," which runs through Dec. 16.

'y' sound to make it 'nyoo'. And Americans pronounce the 'r' in words like 'paper', whereas Brits say 'pay-pa'. So, we've been all been working on our accents," he said.

Larry Grey is playing the dual roles of Jacob Marley/Mr. Fezziwig. "Dickens begins his story with, 'To begin with Marley was dead' 'This must be distinctly understood or nothing can come of the story I am about to relate.' The only true ghost; the rest are spirits — they represent Scrooge's past, present, and future; Marley sets things in motion for Scrooge's redemption. He represents what lies in store for Scrooge if he does not change his heart. His is an eternity of trying to make amends for a life spent in selfish misery and is tortured by the fact that he cannot do so. He is repentant and yet willing to go to great lengths to give his surviving partner 'a chance and a hope' before it is too late. He represents death's eternal judgement on the unrepentant heart," he said.

He added: "In contrast is the other character I play — Old Fezziwig — Scrooge's mentor from his distant past. A jovial man with an open, generous heart who truly lived the spirit of Christmas all year round. He understood the joy in giving and he

embraced all the happiness and love life has to offer; money was secondary to him. 'With but a few pounds he had the power to make us happy or miserable;' he chose to use his wealth to make people happier and lives better. He represents what Scrooge had closed his heart to in pursuit of wealth and having been hurt by life."

Christine Tankersley plays the role of Mrs. Cratchit, the wife of Bob Cratchit and the mother of six children. "She's kind, loving, and wants the best for her family, but not afraid to tell Bob what she really thinks," she said.

She said the challenge for her was memorizing the lines. "But beyond memorization, imagining the loss of a child has been difficult — to be incredibly sad and heartbroken, but know that you must have a positive attitude for the rest of your family who is also suffering," she said.

The Little Theatre of Alexandria presents "A Christmas Carol" through Dec. 16. Show times are Wednesdays through Fridays at 8 p.m.; Saturdays at 3 p.m. and 6 p.m.; and Sundays at 3 p.m. The venue is located at 600 Wolfe St., Alexandria. \$20. Call 703-683-0496 or visit www.thelittletheatre.com.

CALENDAR

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

ONGOING

"Adventures with Mr. Bear."

Through Dec. 15, at The Lab at Convergence, 1819 N. Quaker Lane, Alexandria. One winter afternoon, a young girl and her favorite stuffed animal, Mr. Bear, play a game of hide and seek which evolves into a series of exciting adventures. \$10. Performance Schedule: (Thursday, Dec. 6 at 10:30 a.m.; Friday, Dec. 7 at 10:30 a.m.; Saturday, Dec. 8 at 10 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.; Thursday, Dec. 13 at 10:30 a.m.; Friday, Dec. 14 at 10:30 a.m.; Saturday, Dec. 15 at 10

and 11:30 a.m. Purchase tickets at www.artsonthehorizon.org/mr-bear-2018.html.

Christmas Tree Sale. Through Dec. 16, at Belle View Shopping Center, 1632 Belle View Blvd., Alexandria. Mount Vernon Kiwanis will hold its annual Christmas Tree Sale featuring Frasier Fir trees and garland and wreaths. 100 percent of profits go to scholarships and local charities.

Christmas Tree Sale. 10 a.m.-8 p.m. At 110 Callahan Drive, in the Amtrak Parking Lot, Alexandria. The Alexandria Police Youth Camp Christmas tree sale begins. The lot will be open daily until they run out of trees. The youth camp has been operating for more than 70 years and this fundraiser is the largest, helping

to cover approximately 50 percent of the summer camp operation. The tree sale runs from Mon.-Fri., 4-8 p.m.; and Sat. and Sun., 10 a.m.-8 p.m.

Mount Vernon Farmers Market.

Wednesdays, 8 a.m.-noon at Sherwood Hall Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane, Alexandria. Every Wednesday (through Dec. 19), 15 local farmers and producers will sell fresh produce and fruits; meats; breads and pastries; honey, jams and jellies; dairy products and eggs; herbs; and more. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets.

DEC. 5-JAN. 6

Milton Shinberg Exhibit. At The

Torpedo Factory Art Center (Studio 21), 105 North Union St., Alexandria. From unique vantage points and unexpected perspectives, painter and architect Milton Shinberg invites viewers to rediscover Washington in watercolor, through his limber brushstroke and clear, glassy palette. Shinberg captures fragments of Washington in luminous watercolor, lingering on details that captivate the mind of an architect and beguile the hand of an artist. Visit www.theartleague.org or call 703-683-1780.

THURSDAY/DEC. 6

Shops of Del Ray's Ladies' Night
Out. 5:30-8:30 p.m. Throughout

Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria. Shop local and enjoy special promotions while sipping Virginia wine. Call 703-683-2570 or visit www.VisitDelRay.com.

Holiday Open House. 5:30-7:30 p.m. at Mount Vernon Governmental Center, 2511 Parkers Lane. Join Supervisor Storck, his staff and members of the Mount Vernon District Boards, Authorities and Commissions for a holiday open house. RSVP by Dec. 1, appreciated but not required. Call 703-780-7518.

Community Shopping Event. 7-9 p.m. at Ten Thousand Villages, 519 King St. Every gift purchased will provide special needs assistance to an Alexandrian — a child, teen, adult, or older adult — of limited means who is

HOLIDAY ENTERTAINMENT

striving for recovery and wellbeing with help from the City's mental health services. Enjoy light refreshments, music, free gift-wrapping, and a great selection of handcrafted items made by artisans from over 38 countries. The more items purchased, the greater the help to those in need. Email FriendsOfTheAMHC@gmail.com.

FRIDAY/DEC. 7

A Season of Celebrations. 6-9 p.m. At Durant Arts Center, 1605 Cameron St., Alexandria. Come hear the Russkie Musikanti Ensemble performing music from Russia, Ukraine and Eastern European countries on traditional instruments and in costume as part of "A Season of Celebrations." They will be joining Roumana, who will be performing Middle Eastern music primarily. Visit the Pop-up Holiday Fair with items from around the world for purchase for last minute holiday gifts. \$9, children 5 years and under are free. Children must be accompanied by at least one adult. Visit alexandriava.gov/Arts.

FRIDAY-SATURDAY/DEC. 7-8

Art League Holiday Ceramics Sale. Hours are Friday from 12-9 p.m.; Saturday from 10 a.m.-8 p.m. At 305 Madison St., Alexandria (inside Montgomery Center). From ceramic bowls to holiday ornaments, give the gift of artisan craftsmanship by purchasing a creative gift for your loved one from The Art League Holiday Ceramics Sale. Features one-of-a-kind ceramic vessels and sculptures created by Art League artists and students. Visit www.theartleague.org or 703-683-

1780.

Mount Vernon by Candlelight. 5-8 p.m. At George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate. Join Mount Vernon's residents and visitors for a festive evening tour. \$25, adult; \$17, youth (ages 6-11). Visit mountvernon.org/candlelight.

Believe: A Holiday Pops Concert.

Dec. 7 and 8, at 7:30 p.m.; and 2 p.m. on Saturday. At Convergence, 1801 N. Quaker Lane, Alexandria. Join the Alexandria Singers for its annual holiday pops concert weekend as they weave pop and jazz arrangements of traditional holiday classics with new tunes that will instantly become your holiday favorites. Admission: \$25 premium reserved seating; \$20 general admission; \$15 groups of 10+, free children 5 and under. Visit www.AlexandriaSingers.com.

FRIDAY-SUNDAY/DEC. 7-9

Del Ray Artisans Holiday Market. Friday, 6-9 p.m.; Saturday-Sunday, 11 a.m.-6 p.m. at 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Offers handmade fine arts and crafts from local artists. Different artists each weekend. Choose from wall art, pottery, photography, jewelry, glass, and more. Plus FUNdraising 2019 wall calendars, cookbooks, and upcycled tote bags to support Del Ray Artisans. Free admission. Visit DelRayArtisans.org/event/holiday-market-2018.

SATURDAY/DEC. 8

Kwanzaa Workshop. 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. At The Alexandria Black History Museum, 902 Wythe St., Alexandria. Kwanzaa, celebrated Dec. 26 - Jan. 1, is one of three inherently African

American celebrations, along with Juneteenth and Watch Night. This interactive workshop will teach participants about Kwanzaa and how to do it. Included will be history, principles, symbols, activities, and decorating ideas to aid in planning a Kwanzaa Celebration. The program will be entertaining and educational for children, youth, and adults. \$5. Call 703-746-4356.

Civil War Christmas in Camp.

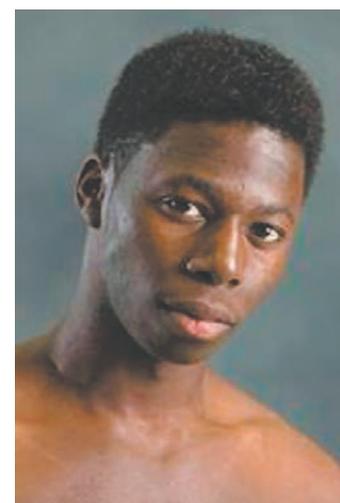
12-4 p.m. At Fort Ward Museum & Historic Site, 4301 West Braddock Road, Alexandria. This family-oriented event features a patriotic Civil War Santa Claus, reenactors in winter camp settings, period decorations, fort tours, and kids activities. The program features a Civil War-era Union Santa Claus, based on an 1863 cover of Harper's Weekly by artist Thomas Nast, who will interact with the public, present readings of "The Night Before Christmas," and visit soldiers in camp. The suggested donation is \$2 per person, and \$5 for families. Call 703-746-4848, or visit www.fortward.org.

Photos with Santa.

12 p.m.-3 p.m. At Hooray for Books, 1555 King St., Alexandria. Hooray for Books! and Visit Alexandria will present photos with Santa and Mrs. Claus. Advance reservation is required. To reserve a 10-minute slot for a child to meet with Santa, make any size donation to the bookstore's special Santa account, which will be used to provide books, toys and games for the Alexandria Domestic Violence Program's Holiday Party. Visit www.Hooray4Books.com.

Touch a Truck.

4-5 p.m. At First Christian Church of Alexandria, 2723 King St., Alexandria. Touch a truck including fire and police vehicles.



Metropolitan School of the Arts Nutcracker Ballet

The Metropolitan School of the Arts Nutcracker Ballet showcases a world-class, international principle guest dancer, Brooklyn Mack, who performs the role of Cavalier. Saturday-Sunday, Dec. 8-9, 1 and 5 p.m. at the Rachel M. Schlesinger Center, NOVA Alexandria campus. Tickets are \$26-\$28 at www.metropolitanarts.org.

PHOTO BY
ERIK SAWAYA

Brooklyn Mack

Learn about car seat safety. Enjoy snacks and hot chocolate. Donate an unwrapped toy (no weapon type toys). Visit www.fccealexandria.com.

Historic Alexandria Candlelight Tours.

4-9 p.m. At the following locations: Gadsby's Tavern Museum, 134 N. Royal St.; Carlyle House, 121 N. Fairfax St.; Lee-Fendall House, 614 Oronoco St. Travel through centuries of local history and learn more about Alexandria during the holiday season at Carlyle House, Gadsby's Tavern Museum and the Lee-Fendall House. Enjoy each site by candlelight, smell seasonal greenery, sip on drinks and taste period inspired food. Seasonal libations will be available for purchase. Admission: \$25 adults; \$20 seniors (65 years and older) and active military; \$5 children (ages 6-17). Call 703-746-

4242 or visit Shop.AlexandriaVA.gov.

Del Ray Candy Cane Bar Crawl.

4 p.m. Throughout Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria. Take a break from the bustle of holiday preparations and enjoy specialty cocktails, beer and food specials at select Del Ray restaurants during a neighborhood bar crawl to benefit local nonprofits. Admission: \$10 for advanced tickets; \$15 at the door. Call 703-683-2570 or visit www.VisitDelRay.com.

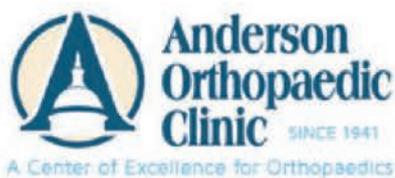
"Peace, Peace, Peace."

7 p.m. At Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 6219 Villa St., Alexandria. Featuring the Mount Vernon Virginia Stake's annual Christmas program, "Peace, Peace, Peace - A Musical Celebration of the Season." This concert will highlight local musicians as well as the spoken word by Church

Rotary Club of Alexandria's 2018 Taste for Giving Raises more than \$70,000

Special thanks to all the sponsors and attendees who made this year's 11th Annual Taste for Giving successful
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HOLIDAY ENTERTAINMENT

leaders. It will also highlight the Stake's handbell choir. This program is open to the public and is free to attend. Visit www.facebook.com/MountVernonVAStake/ for more.

"Chips for Charity" Fundraiser. 7 p.m. at The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, in the Madison Auditorium, 600 Dulaney St. The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office Military Association is hosting a "Chips for Charity" to raise funds for Serve Our Willing Warriors (SOWW). SOWW is a local non-profit charity in Haymarket that provides no-cost retreats and other programs that positively impact the lives of wounded, ill, or injured military service members and disabled veterans. Open to the public. \$30 for players, \$20 for non-players. Tickets can be purchased at ptomilitaryassociation.org/chips-for-charity.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY/DEC. 8-9

Christmas Tree and Wreath Sale. 9 a.m.-6 p.m. At St. Aidan's Episcopal Church, 8531 Riverside Road, Alexandria. Fraser Fir trees and wreaths will arrive fresh from Pennsylvania and be ready to sell the day after Thanksgiving. The tree lot is a festive atmosphere, complete with hot cocoa and cookies. Visit www.staidanepiscopal.com.

Metropolitan School of the Arts Nutcracker Ballet. 1 and 5 p.m. at the Rachel M. Schlesinger Center, NOVA Alexandria campus, 4915 East Campus Drive, Alexandria. The Metropolitan School of the Arts Nutcracker Ballet showcases a world-class, international principle guest dancer, Brooklyn Mack, who performs the role of Cavalier. Tickets are \$26-\$28 at www.metropolitanarts.org.

SUNDAY/DEC. 9

Holiday Centrepiece Workshop. 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. At George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate. Construct a homemade holiday wreath during this two-hour workshop. Mount Vernon's greenhouse manager instructs participants how to construct the wreath using greens, preserved pomegranates, and dried seed heads from Mount Vernon's gardens. \$75 per person. Visit mountvernon.org/christmas.

Discussion on Recent Fires. 12:30 p.m. At Mount Vernon Unitarian Church, 1909 Windmill Lane, Alexandria. Doug MacCleery, retired U.S. Forest Service policy analyst, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, and former California wildland firefighter, will give an illustrated presentation on the real backstory and history behind the California fires, which is seldom properly covered in the news media. Visit mvuc.org for more.

Facetime with History. 1-5 p.m. At Gadsby's Tavern Museum, 134 N. Royal St., Alexandria. Featuring Mr. and Mrs. William Bates – guests stranded at the City Tavern after dancing the night before. On the 2nd Sunday of every month, guests will be greeted by a person from the past while journeying through the museum. Included in admission fee. Sponsored by the Gadsby's Tavern Museum Society. Visit www.alexandriava.gov.

The Mount Vernon Flutes. 2 p.m. At The Athenaeum, 201 Prince St., Alexandria. Free. The Mount Vernon Flutes have been an Athenaeum favorite for many years. This small ensemble from the Mount Vernon Concert Band will perform holiday songs in the gallery. Visit www.nvfaa.org.

Music Concert. 3 p.m. At George Washington Masonic Memorial, 201 S. Washington St., Alexandria. The



PHOTO BY C. STANLEY PHOTOGRAPHY

Albert Coia, Brian O'Connor, Sherri L. Edelen, Katherine Riddle and Jimmy Mavrikes in MetroStage's production of "Christmas at the Old Bull & Bush."

Christmas at the Old Bull & Bush

The Old Bull and Bush Public House is alive with British music hall songs and carols, corny jokes and funny sketches, tuneful melodies, sing-a-longs and sausage rolls. Celebrate the holidays with Florrie Forde, the most famous music hall star of the era, and her troupe of British performers. Through Dec. 23, at MetroStage, 1201 N. Royal St., Alexandria. Admission is \$55. Call 703-548-9044 or visit www.MetroStage.org.

Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic continues its season spotlighting women composers with Joan Towers' "Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman" and "Made in America," plus Jennifer Higdon's "All Things Majestic." The WMP will also feature Robert Tindle's "Concerto for Bass Trombone and Orchestra" with soloist Adam Stokes. \$25, general admission; children are free. Visit www.wmpmusic.org.

Holiday Concert. 3-4 p.m. At Carl Sandburg Middle School, 8428 Fort Hunt Road, Alexandria. The National Concert Band of America presents a free concert that celebrates the holiday season and salutes America's Armed Forces. Visit www.nationalconcertband.org.

Concert at Saint Luke's. 5 p.m. At St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 8009 Fort Hunt Road, Alexandria. A candlelight concert with the return of "Words & Music," titled 'Star of the Morning' including the seasonal music of Advent, Hanukkah, the Solstice, Christmas and the coming of the New Year. Offering four voices, piano and pipe organ. A reception will follow. \$20, adults; \$15, seniors; free for children under 18 years. Visit www.saintlukeschurch.net/events.

Christmas with the Annie Moses Band. 6 p.m. At First Baptist Church, 2932 King St., Alexandria. From the spirited renditions of 'God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen,' 'Deck the Halls' and 'The Sussex Carol' to the beauty of 'O Holy Night,' this evening of music is invigorating, reverential, and transporting. Tickets at AnnieMosesBand.com/tour.

The Christmas Reading. 7 p.m. At the Old Presbyterian Meeting House, Heritage Hall, 323 South Fairfax St., Alexandria. For 28 years, The Christmas Reading and Carols presents the sacred and secular stories, poetry, essays and amusements by well-known and lesser-known writers. Free. Visit www.opmh.org.

MONDAY/DEC. 10

Ballroom Dance Classes. 7-9 p.m. at The Athenaeum, 201 Prince St.

Instructor Gary Stephans offers techniques that will help all levels become a relaxed and confident social dancer in these small, personalized dance classes. Beginners and experienced dancers welcomed – no partner needed. Two hours of dance lessons, practice dancing and refreshments. \$30 per-person or \$55 per couple. Visit www.artofballroomdance.com or call 703-505-5998. Visit www.nvfaa.org or call 703-548-0035.

MONDAY-SUNDAY/DEC. 10-16

Holiday Door Decorating Contest. Sponsored by Alexandria's Old Town Walled Garden Club, the contest recognizes holiday door decorations in the Historic District. Except for festive bows and ribbons the door decorations should feature only natural materials and be made by the homeowners themselves. Professionally-made decorations are not eligible. Judging will take place Dec. 10-16. Contact the Old Town Walled Garden Club at OTWGClub@gmail.com.

TUESDAY/DEC. 11

Del Ray Artisans Benefit. Reception, 6:30 p.m.; performance, 8 p.m. at Little Theatre of Alexandria, 600 Wolfe St. Little Theatre of Alexandria performance of "A Christmas Carol" to benefit Del Ray Artisans. \$45. Visit DelRayArtisans.org/event/christmas-carol.

FRIDAY/DEC. 14

Holiday After Work Concert. 6-8 p.m. At The Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum, 201 S. Washington St., Alexandria. This month features a holiday concert with Meridian, which weaves together beautiful music and themes of Christmas with much older Winter Solstice traditions. Meridian is Colin de la Barre and Olivia Gale. Cost is \$5; free for members of the Folklore Society of Greater Washington. Light refreshments and a cash bar will be available. No ticket required. Visit

www.fsgw.org.

Holiday Sing-Along. 7:30-8:30 p.m. At Del Ray United Methodist Church, 100 East Windsor Ave., Alexandria. Join the Alexandria Citizens Band for the fun and popular Alexandria Holiday Sing-Along. They'll play musical favorites, and the audience is invited to sing along. Wear holiday sweaters and Santa hats. Bring family and friends. Email AlexandriaCitizensBand@gmail.com. Visit www.facebook.com/events/174884993456719/.

FRIDAY-SATURDAY/DEC. 14-15

Christmas Illuminations at Mount Vernon. 5:30-8:45 p.m. At George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate. Kick off the holidays with an evening of family-friendly fun and fireworks choreographed to holiday music, with fireworks beginning around 8:30 p.m. Take a stroll through the estate while being serenaded by local choirs, visit with re-enactors from the First Virginia Regiment, and learn 18th-century dance moves from costumed guides. George and Martha Washington will also be on site to greet Mount Vernon's holiday guests. Tickets: \$35 adult/\$25 youth with Mansion tour, \$30 adult/\$20 youth. Visit mountvernon.org/illuminations.

FRIDAY-SUNDAY/DEC. 14-16

Del Ray Artisans Holiday Market. Friday, 6-9 p.m.; Saturday-Sunday, 11 a.m.-6 p.m. at 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Offers handmade fine arts and crafts from local artists. Different artists each weekend. Choose from wall art, pottery, photography, jewelry, glass, and more. Plus FUNdraising 2019 wall calendars, cookbooks, and upcycled tote bags to support Del Ray Artisans. Free admission. Visit DelRayArtisans.org/event/holiday-market-2018.

SATURDAY/DEC. 15

Cookie Decorating. 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. At George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate. Visit the cozy

greenhouse and receive a box of cookies and decorations to adorn them. Create beautiful gingerbread cookies with the guidance of a Mount Vernon staff member. \$5 per person in addition to general admission. Visit www.mountvernon.org/christmas.

A Victorian Christmas. 11 a.m., 12:30 p.m. and 2 p.m. At Lee-Fendall House, 614 Oronoco St., Alexandria. Experience a Victorian Christmas at the Lee-Fendall House. The house will be beautifully decorated for the season and there will be holiday crafts, photographs with Santa, seasonal treats, story time, an antique toy exhibit and more. Admission: \$10; free to members. Call 703-548-1789 or visit www.LeeFendallHouse.org.

Photos with Santa. 12 p.m.-3 p.m. At Hooray for Books, 1555 King St., Alexandria. Hooray for Books! and Visit Alexandria will present photos with Santa and Mrs. Claus. Advance reservation is required. To reserve a 10-minute slot for a child to meet with Santa, make any size donation to the bookstore's special Santa account, which will be used to provide books, toys and games for the Alexandria Domestic Violence Program's Holiday Party. Visit www.Hooray4Books.com.

Portside Holidays: Storytime with Santa. 3 to 4 p.m. At Alexandria Waterfront Marina at the foot of Cameron Street near the Torpedo Factory, 105 N. Union St., Alexandria. Free. Join Santa for a special storytime that includes a reading of holiday stories like "Twas the Night Before Christmas." Take part in the Penny Post pop-up to write a letter to Santa that he will take back with him to the North Pole, enjoy a gourmet giant s'more from The Capital Candy Jar, and warm up with a cup of hot cocoa from Dolci Gelati's hot chocolate bar. Get in the holiday spirit with a musical performance by the Cantamos children's ensemble. Visit www.PortsideInOldTown.com.

Carols of the World. 3-4:30 p.m. At Convergence, 1801 N. Quaker Lane, Alexandria. Sopranessence rings in the holiday season with music that will take you on a trip around the world. Celebrate the season while globetrotting with the Divas through Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas – all without needing a passport. Tickets are \$10-\$20 presale; \$25 at the door. Visit www.sopranessence.org.

Stroll the Boardwalk. 5-7 p.m. At Huntley Meadows Park, 3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria. Join park naturalists to take a tour of constellations, comets and other celestial happenings. Find out what's new in the night sky. \$9 per person. Canceled if there's rain or other severe weather. Call 703-768-2525 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/huntley-meadows.

Country-Western Dance. Lessons, 6-7 p.m.; open dancing, 7-9:30 p.m. at Lincolnia Senior Center, 4710 North Chambliss St., Alexandria. The Northern Virginia Country-Western Dance Association will hold a dance. A DJ provides music. Couples and singles of all ages welcome. Admission for NVCWDA members \$10; non-members \$12; children under 18 accompanied by a paying adult \$5. Smoke-free, alcohol-free. BYO refreshments. Visit www.nvcwda.org.

Little Tree. 7:30-9:30 p.m. at Trinity United Methodist Church, 2911 Cameron Mills Road, Alexandria. Join Alexandria Choral Society for its holiday concert, featuring the Del Ray Kinderchoir. The performance will include Julian Wachner's "Hark! The Herald Sing!" and "Angels We Have Heard on High" and Stephen Heitzeg's "little tree," a tender setting of the e.e. cummings poem of the

HOLIDAY ENTERTAINMENT

3 Ways to Feed a Holiday Crowd

Maybe you're throwing a holiday party this weekend. Maybe you're having some friends over for the Army-Navy game and they'll be hungry. Or maybe a quiet "fireside chat" for four has become a festivity for 14. Regardless, Alexandria eateries have you covered. Check out these ideas for a no-muss, no-fuss menu and get back to mingling with your guests.

District Taco, 701 S. Washington St.

Give your fiesta a Mexican flair with some food from District Taco. Whether you're hosting a dozen guests or 40, the local taco franchise comes packed with all the fixings. Choose between a straight-up taco bar, which comes complete with a choice of proteins as well as tortillas and a slew of toppings, or go with a premade approach, where tacos arrive already piled high with protein and with toppings on the side.

Another perk of District Taco's menu: Its wide array of proteins for a plethora of palates. From carnivore-friendly barbacoa and carne asada to vegetarian-accessible black beans and the company's new veggie protein, Itza, the menu meets a growing list of standards for guests.

Sugar Shack, 804 N. Henry St.

Who says one cannot live on doughnuts alone? With Sugar Shack providing the sweets, it's time to try. And the doughnut purveyor makes it easy — some

might argue a little too easy — to bring dozens of confections to the comfort of your home with little advance notice. From family favorites such as salted caramel and maple bacon to holiday specials such as peppermint and red-and-green sprinkles, there's a flavor for all palates.

Ordering fewer than 100 doughnuts? That can be accommodated online, scheduled in advance and delivered to your party via UberEats. Order more and you'll need to call Sugar Shack's catering services (703-577-9023) to set something up.

The Italian Place, 621 Wythe St.

When it comes to entertaining a large group, sandwiches are the name of the game. The Italian Place makes it easy to feed a crowd. With nearly two dozen sandwiches to choose from, plus paninis and salads, all your guests can have a taste of the Italian life. Select individual sandwiches for a smaller group. The Giorgio comes in hot with prosciutto, soppressata, salami, provolone and a slew of vegetables to top things off. The Godfather is the eatery's take on an eggplant parmesan sub, garnished with marinara and provolone.

The Italian Place also offers a more traditional catering experience with its party samplers. Dubbed "super foot-long subs," the five options are sliced into 22 mini-sandwiches that make for easy eating.

Hope Nelson owns and operates the Kitchen Recessionista blog, located at www.kitchenrecessionista.com. Email her any time at hope@kitchenrecessionista.com.

same name. Cost is \$20 adults, \$15 senior/military/student, 13 and under free. Visit www.alexandriachoralsociety.org.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY/DEC. 15-16

Christmas Tree and Wreath Sale. 9 a.m.-6 p.m. At St. Aidan's Episcopal Church, 8531 Riverside Road, Alexandria. Fraser Fir trees and wreaths will arrive fresh from Pennsylvania and be ready to sell the day after Thanksgiving. The tree lot is a festive atmosphere, complete with hot cocoa and cookies. Visit www.staidanepiscopal.com.

SUNDAY/DEC. 16

Colonial Handbell Ringers Concert. 2 and 4 p.m. At The Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum, 201 S. Washington St., Alexandria. The ringers will perform children's classics, timeless holiday tunes, and original show-stoppers.

Audience participation in the sing-along encouraged. Free. No reservations accepted in advance and seating capacity is limited.

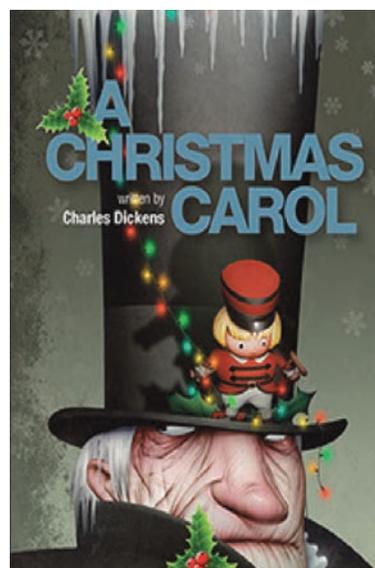
Christmas Traditions at Historic Huntley. 4:30-6 p.m. At Historic Huntley, 6918 Harrison Lane, Alexandria. Get a glimpse at holiday celebrations of past generations. Share a glass of hot cider and shortbread cookies, and make a small gift for a loved one. Cost is \$10 per person. Call 703-768-2525 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/historic-huntley.

18th Century Christmas. 5-8 p.m. At George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate. The experience begins in the Ford Orientation Center, where visitors can enjoy the sounds of the holiday season and view Christmas trees highlighting the lives of the Washingtons and their home. Visitors will be guided into the 18th century for a lantern-lit tour of the historic area. Inside the Mansion, Martha Washington and other Mount Vernon

residents will welcome guests. \$25 adult, \$17 youth (ages 6-11). Visit mountvernon.org/candlelight.
Holiday Performance with The Capital Hearings. 7 p.m. The Athenaeum, 201 Prince St. The Capital Hearings, Washington, DC's versatile vocal ensemble, performs an a capella selection of pop, classical, and jazz music for the season. Reception immediately following the concert, with wine and dessert at 8 p.m. \$30. Visit www.nvfaa.org or call 703-548-0035.

MONDAY/DEC. 17

Teen Poetry Circle Reading. 7-8:30 p.m. At Durant Arts Center, 1605 Cameron St., Alexandria. Come celebrate the creative voices of Alexandria teens at the Teen Poetry Circle Reading. Light refreshments will be provided from 7-7:30 p.m., The Poetry Circles are free from 7:30-8:30 p.m. To register, RSVP at poet@alexandriava.gov.

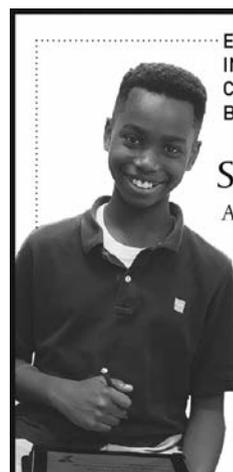


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WEEKEND 2
December 7th through December 9th

WEEKEND 3
December 14th through December 16th



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NEWS

State Police Investigate Shooting

At the request of the Alexandria Police, the Virginia State Police Bureau of Criminal Investigation's Fairfax Field Office continues to pursue leads and examine evidence related to the Sunday, Dec. 2 shooting of a 28-year-old male by an Alexandria Police Officer. The male subject is being treated at George Washington University Hospital in Washington, D.C., for serious, but non-life threatening, injuries. The male subject has no fixed address, but most regularly stays in Alexandria, Va., and Prince George's County, Md.

The incident began Sunday at approximately 4:21 p.m., when Alexandria Police responded to multiple

"shots fired" calls in the 900 block of N. Patrick Street. Upon arriving at N. Patrick Street, an officer located an adult male armed with a handgun.

The male subject was subsequently shot and wounded. The suspect's handgun was recovered at the scene.

The officer involved in the shooting was not injured during the encounter. There were no reports of injuries related to the initial shots fired calls.

Anyone with information related to this investigation is encouraged to contact the Virginia State Police at 703-803-2676, by dialing #77 on a cell phone or by email to questions@vsp.virginia.gov.

Preschool

FROM PAGE 1

"largest return on investment" by focusing on pre-kindergarten, she said.

She said the administration is considering ways to increase teacher compensation and avenues for professional development; incentives to businesses to provide childcare; and ways to promote childcare as a business, in order to attract more people into the profession.

The governor's budget proposal, which will be released the week after next, will include more details, she said.

Another priority is to build up the capacity of the array of existing local providers, said Jenna Conway, the state's recently appointed Chief School Readiness Officer, who accompanied Northam's visit. This includes both out-of-home "center-based" providers which skew eastward in Alexandria, and in-a-private-home "family-based" providers, which skew westward.

It'd be difficult to serve the highest-risk children without "meeting them where they are," in terms of provider type, she said. This stands in contrast to another school of thought, which holds that center-based settings deliver more quality than family-based settings. Dr. Tammy Mann, Campagna's executive director, says she appreciates the administration's broader approach.

A third priority is to systematize program quality evaluation. Virginia Quality, the state's scoring system in which participation is voluntary, captures only 17 percent of programs receiving public resources, according to Conway. So "we don't know" how the majority fare, she said.

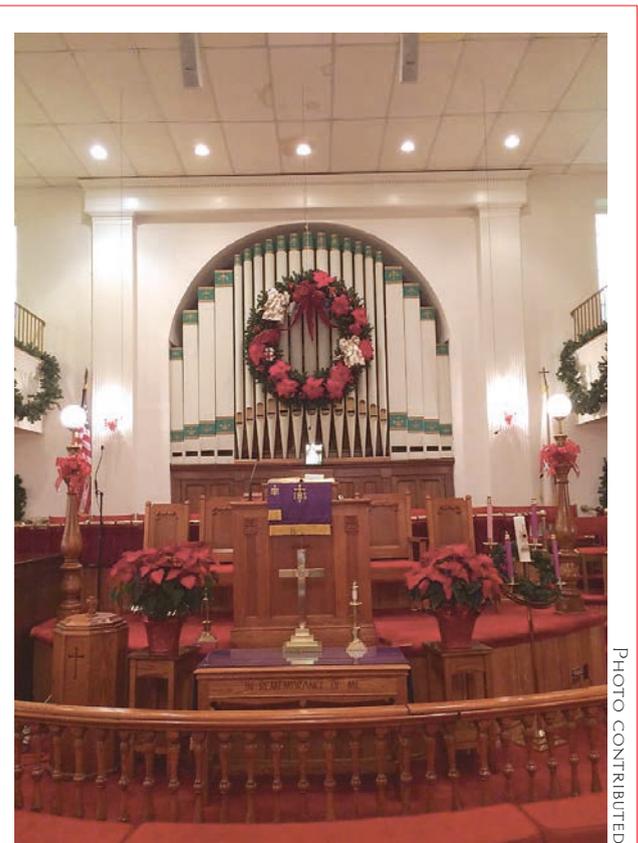


PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Historic House of Worship

Roberts Memorial United Methodist Church, one of the oldest traditionally African American congregations in Virginia, is decorated for the holiday season. Located on South Washington Street, the church was organized in 1832 as a worship space for free and enslaved blacks that was free of the indignities of life for persons of African ancestry. Visit www.robertsumc.org

BULLETIN BOARD

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

HOLIDAY DONATIONS

Toys for Tots Drive. Through Dec. 10. Area Sheehy Auto Stores will collect new and unwrapped toys to benefit the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program, which will distribute those toys as gifts to less fortunate children in the community in which the campaign is conducted. Sheehy's Toys for Tots drop-off locations include:
* Sheehy Honda of Alexandria, 2434 Richmond Highway, Alexandria
Children's Holiday Party. The Alexandria Domestic Violence Program (DVP) organizes a Holiday

Party for children and mothers who have been recently served by the program on Dec. 13. At the party, the families reunite with past shelter friends and staff, eat and take pictures with Santa Claus, among other activities. Each mother and child receives a bag of gifts to wrap and place under their own tree on Christmas Day. If you wish to donate children's toys or other gifts, provide newly purchased, unwrapped items. DVP will provide each mother with wrapping paper to personalize each child's gift. DVP is requesting gift certificates to local stores in denominations of \$25. For help deciding what to purchase, or questions about donating, call Magdalia or Hewan at 703-746-4911 for assistance. For more information about Domestic Violence visit alexandriava.gov/DomesticViolence.

Toy Drive. Through Friday, Dec. 14 at local Weichert, Realtors offices. Members of the community are invited to drop off new, unwrapped toys at the company's sales offices. The toys will be delivered throughout the holidays in conjunction with local charities that assist financially and physically disadvantaged children. To find your local office, go to www.weichert.com/offices/.
Sponsors and Volunteers for Holiday Sharing Needed. The City of Alexandria invites the public to help make the 2018 holiday season brighter for the most vulnerable members of our community, including low-income families, foster children, seniors and residents with disabilities. 400 registered families are still in need of assistance. Residents can sign up to

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 21

Getting Credit for Good Credit

FROM PAGE 12 come a greater share of the pie, either programs or services would need to be reduced or eliminated or the tax rate would need to go up." Furthermore, "Issuing significantly more debt than is planned would definitely cause concerns with our rating agencies. ... A sudden, significant increase in debt would be contradictory to our long time practice for which we receive positive feedback from the rating analysts," and which allow the city to borrow more cheaply.

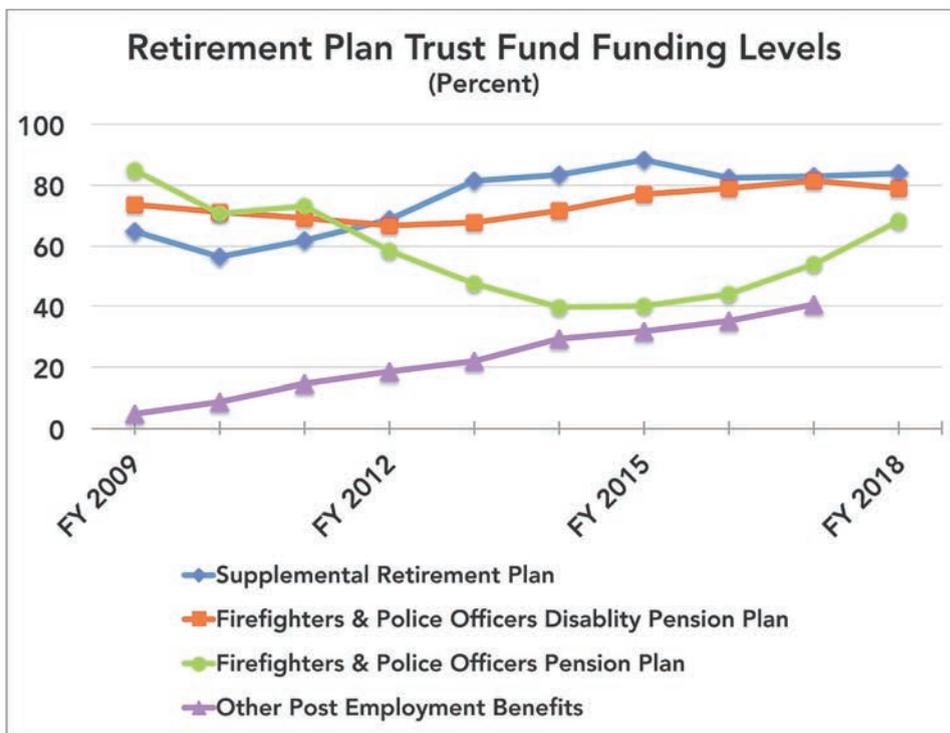
PENSION FUNDING

"Long-term pension liability funding is critical. The [credit] rating agencies are looking for it" as "a very strong criterion," Taylor told City Council earlier this year.

"Funding status is a measure that captures a government's ongoing effort at one point in time to prefund its future pension liability, generally expressed as the ratio of assets to liabilities (also referred to as the funded ratio)," according to a 2007 report from the U.S. Government Accountability Office. An 80 percent funding level is "generally viewed

as being acceptable to support future pension costs. However, funding levels across the different plans [surveyed at the time] ranged from about 32 to 113 percent. Those state and local governments with plans that are funded below acceptable levels may face tough choices in the future between the need to raise taxes, cut spending, or reduce benefits in order to meet their obligations."

Kendel concurs that "a pension that is 80 percent funded is definitely in great shape. However, we don't shoot for 80 percent. We do shoot for 100 percent, but rarely get there. Changes in investment performance, changes in assumed rates of return, and other actuarial analysis and assumptions can quickly change a pension's funded levels." For more, visit www.alexandriava.gov/FinancialReports.



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Sealed proposals for the City of Alexandria per specifications will be received in the Office of the Purchasing Division until the date and time designated as follows:

RFP No. 802, Security Guard Services
 Non-mandatory Pre-proposal Conference: December 17, 2018; 9:30 a.m. prevailing local time, 100 North Pitt Street, Alexandria, VA 22314, Suite 301
 Closing Date and Time: January 15, 2019, 4 p.m., prevailing local time

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Legals

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Opening of Early Childhood Center

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr. was joined by Mayor Allison Silberberg and ACPS' Early Care and Education Workgroup partners to formally open the new Early Childhood Center on Friday, Nov. 30. The group, accompanied by 12 preschool students, cut a ribbon at the newest ACPS school before taking a tour to see teachers and students at work in classrooms. The center is co-located at John Adams Elementary School.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 20
 sponsor or to volunteer. Monetary donations can be made by credit card

online or donation checks can be made payable to The Fund for Alexandria's Child or to the DCHS

Senior Fund and mailed to Holiday Sharing Program, 2525 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria, VA 22301.

Scared to ...



By **KENNETH B. LOURIE**

And that's what worries me. There's a part of me (too big a part, I'll admit), that rationalizes not going to the doctor as a means of preventing an untimely death.

Oh, don't get me wrong. I go to the doctor as often as needed. In fact, I've been commended as being a very "compliant" patient, meaning I show up for my appointments (apparently some patients don't). And I will continue to do so.

However, this column is not about the appointments I do make, it's about the ones I don't make.

Huh?

Let me clarify. I am referring to the voluntary-type appointments that I schedule myself – at my discretion, when some symptom or other, relating to cancer or not, manifests itself. The symptom which forces me to consider my own mortality because it's "presenting" at a time and place at which my oncologist is unaware.

The kind of symptom which, were I not a cancer patient, I wouldn't give a second thought (let alone a first thought). But since I am a cancer patient, whatever the symptom is – and I mean any and all symptoms: small, medium or large, it must be "the cancer" as "Forrest, Forrest Gump" characterized his mother's cause of death, and therefore, can't be minimized. In point of alternative fact, it must be maximized, and in that maximization comes anxiety and fear and every other stress-related emotion you can imagine.

Nevertheless, just as George advised Jerry in a long-ago "Seinfeld" episode on how to beat a lie detector test: "It's not a lie if you believe it," so too do I employ a similar strategy: if I don't go to the doctor and get evaluated then the symptoms I'm experiencing can't be confirmed as cancer. And if my symptoms can't be confirmed as cancer then I have much to less to worry about than if they were. The symptoms are simply the same kind and frequency as non-cancer patients experience and do not represent a slippery slope for yours truly.

I suppose there's a part of me (the irrational, unreasonable and illogical part) that believes if I don't make any extra-curricular-type visits to any of my doctors then my cancer can't get worse and I can continue to go on living as if I've not been diagnosed with a terminal disease: non-small cell lung cancer, stage IV.

It reminds me of my late father's philosophy concerning automobile maintenance. If he never takes the car in for service, the mechanics will never find anything wrong with it. It's a version of what you don't know can't hurt you.

Well, in the cancer world in which I live 24/7, it all can hurt you and it can do so on its own timetable; when you least expect it and when you most fear it.

As yet another attempt to explain why this column has been written. For the past three weeks I've had persistent cold symptoms.

Since the symptoms never got any worse (though my fear did), I went along, tissue in hand, until my voice got so hoarse and weak that my wife, Dina – to her credit – insisted that I visit my internal medicine doctor and email my status as well to my oncologist. All of which I've done.

So far, nothing conclusive to report.

I've been prescribed some pre-pneumonia pills, have had a CT scan of the neck (per my oncologist's direction), results for which have not YET been received, am seeing an ENT doctor next week and am puffing Flonase into each nostril twice a day. My symptoms have not totally subsided but neither have they gotten worse – unlike my anxiety.

I really don't think there's anything wrong with me medically; mentally however, is another matter.

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

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LETTERS

FROM PAGE 10
 constitution was a model for our national Constitution.

Mason was the first delegate at the Constitutional Convention to urge including a Bill of Rights with our Constitution; indeed, he thought it should begin with a statement of rights. His proposal was voted down unanimously (Washington vigorously opposed it), but when the states ratified the Constitution, almost all required a Bill of Rights be added. Mason was one of three delegates present for the entire Constitutional Convention to vote against its adoption. His 16 objections listed its failure to end slavery and include a Bill of Rights. In the Virginia General Assembly's ratification debate, Mason, Edmund Randolph and Patrick Henry argued vigorously against adopting the Constitution; if five men had voted the other way, it would have failed. Washington was furious at Mason's failure to support his higher priority: creation of a strong national government — with the Bill of Rights to come later if it were necessary, which he doubted.

Fortunately for us, Mason's argument prevailed.

Ellen Latane Tabb/Alexandria

Responsible Measures

To the Editor:

The open letter ["Lost Our Humanity," Gazette Packet, Nov. 29] to U.S. Rep. Don Beyer and Sens. Mark Warner and Tim Kaine characterizes President Trump's border protection measures as "appalling hate crimes" when in fact they are merely measures to protect our border from a mob attempting illegal entry.

The amount of non-lethal force used was proportionate to the risk and necessary to deter breaching existing border barriers and forcing illegal entry (a misdemeanor crime).

Demonstrations in U.S. cities in which police use tear gas, for example, sometimes only generate "disorderly conduct" misdemeanor convictions. The fact that those attempting illegal entry brought children with them, functioning as de facto "human shields", or for that matter subjected children to a harrowing thousand mile journey might easily be construed as child abuse were it done inside the country by U.S. residents.

The Trump Administration is processing the caravan members' asylum claims deliberately to assure they are bona fide which many, likely most, will not be because applicants must show that their government (not miscellaneous thugs) is directly responsible for the harms they allege. The fact that Mexico offered them asylum and most caravan members rejected Mexico's offer strongly suggests that applying for U.S. asylum is a strategy to game the system to gain entry the U.S. when their real motivation is economic or otherwise does not qualify as asylum.

Far from "appalling hate crimes", our government is merely exercising due diligence and attempting to maintain civic order and due process.

Dino Drudi/Alexandria

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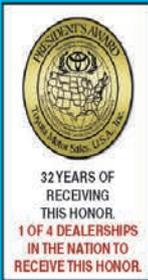
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