Herndon ReStore Opens

New homeowner, thanks to Habitat NOVA that operates the local ReStores, Yishak Sabore (third from left) stands between his two children, Eldana Shanka, 12 and Amanuel Shanka, 18. Joining them are (left) Herndon Councilmember Jennifer Baker, Supervisor John Foust (D-Dranesville), Herndon Vice Mayor Sheila Olem and Jon Smoot, Executive Director of Habitat NOVA.
Herndon ReStore Opens

Purchases and contributions help local affordable housing challenges.

By Mercia Hobson
The Connection

Alexandria has one. Chantilly has one. Now the Town of Herndon has one too. On Saturday, April 27, Rev. Dr. Jon F. Smoot, Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity NOVA (Habitat NOVA) stood outside the nonprofit organization’s third home improvement store and donation center, Herndon ReStore located at 311 Spring Street. In his hands, Smoot held a large pair of scissors. Beside him, Supervisor John Foust (D-Dranesville), Town of Herndon Vice Mayor Sheila Olem, Councilmember Jennifer Baker, ReStore staff members and supporters gathered. They were there to celebrate the official opening of Herndon ReStore with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

During remarks, Smoot said when individuals and businesses support Habitat NOVA ReStores, they help build strong and stable families and communities investing in the future. “Everyone wins when shopping at ReStore. The customer saves money by purchasing (new and gently used items) at 50 percent - 90 percent off retail prices, Habitat for Humanity receives 100 percent of the proceeds for building new homes for local families in need and we all benefit when items are recycled, rather than ending up in the landfill,” he said.

Foust, whose district encompasses Herndon, McLean, Great Falls, and portions of Vienna and Falls Church, said, “I feel the greatest challenge is delivery of housing that is affordable throughout the region.”

In the crowd, Yishak Sabore of Herndon and his children, Eldana Shanka, 12, and Amanuel Shanka, 18, watched and listened. Sabore’s wife Sosena could not attend. Last year, the dual-income family could not escape the stresses of rent increases, overcrowding and being shut out of affordable market options. The four shared a one-bedroom/one bath apartment with no dedicated study space or private sleeping areas according to Habitat NOVA. However, because of the family’s commitment to work with Habitat NOVA and other volunteers as build participants and learn about finances, mortgages and maintenance, the family received an affordable mortgage and a new home. Last year, the family moved into their own four bedroom, two and a half bath home in Herndon complete with energy-saving mechanicals. Smoot said the family would only pay the principal on the mortgage. “Tomorrow is the first anniversary of owning our home. It is a big difference to own,” said Sabore.

Herndon ReStore is located at 311 Spring Street, Herndon. For more information visit www.habitatnova.org/restore/restore-locations or call 571-306-0908.
Meal Tax Increase Is on the Menu

Herndon Town Council votes down opposition.

By Mercia Hobson
The Connection

Come July 1 of this year, Town of Herndon residents and visitors to the town will pay an increased meals tax of three-and-three-quarters percent total. That’s on top of the 6 percent state sales tax.

Residents in neighboring Fairfax and Loudoun counties voted down referendums for meals taxes when they appeared on local ballots.

At the April 23 Herndon Town Council Public Session, in a vote of 5-2, the seven-member council increased the meals tax percentage rate to three and three-quarters percent from two and one-half percent effective July 1, 2019. According to the town, revenue generated by the tax would fund ongoing capital improvements, Herndon Police Department operations, a pedestrian walkways project, an assistant town attorney position and restoration of Parks & Recreation programs. Councilmembers Baker and William “Bill” McKenna voted against the amendment. “Raising a tax rate is never an easy decision,” said Merkel.

OPPONENTS of the meals tax increase included John Boylan, President and CEO of the Dulles Regional Chamber of Commerce; its members are in the Town of Herndon and surrounding areas and Kristen Murphy, General Manager of the Washington Dulles Airport Marriott Suites Hotel in the Town of Herndon. During the public comments portion of the public hearing, they and others argued the tax unfairly singled out the food, beverage and hotel industries in the town as a revenue source, and even at the current rate of 2.5 percent, it negatively affected town businesses compared to similar businesses outside the town where there was no meals tax. “We need to think about how this affects businesses...The restaurants are the places we want to support,” said Boylan. “By being located in the Town of Herndon, I am in a significant disadvantage against other large hotels in the area,” said Murphy. “My customers already have to pay an additional 6.5 percent in taxes for occupancy tax and meals tax, which currently exists.”

According to town records, in 2011, the council increased the meals tax from 1.5 to 2.5 percent. At that time, the town told restaurateurs partial funds generated by the increase in the meals tax would be used to promote the town’s restaurants and dineONHerndon campaign.

“There was no increase in my business, as a result,” said Murphy. “On this occasion, you are saying it is being used for ongoing capital improvements, which will certainly not directly increase my business either,” she said.

By approving the ordinance, the town would not need to raise additional revenue, source funding elsewhere or reduce proposed expenditures to support certain suggested items on the FY2020 Budget. Dave Richardson of the Town of Herndon said, “Town residents are still paying some of it...I ask that you, please look harder at this.”

Merkel explained funding through the meals tax increase would offset revenue dependence on the “volatile” Business, Professional and Occupational License (BPOL) tax.

Merkel recounted a day this spring, during the budget season when Town Manager Bill Ashton said the town was “about a million dollars in the hole for BPOL. And this traffic project was going to be two million dollars more than they thought. That was a really terrible day,” Merkel said.

Ashton said in a statement that the reasons why BPOL fluctuates, in addition to businesses coming into the town or leaving, is that the way the tax is structured under the law creates different assessment levels based on how the business activity is categorized. “A shift in the business category may affect the BPOL tax receipts. Also, when a business moves to Herndon, they are required to estimate and pay BPOL against their projected first two years of gross receipts.

After two years, their gross receipts actually are compared against the estimate, and their payment is adjusted accordingly,” Ashton said. If the business can prove they miscalculated their gross receipts or were paying in the wrong category, Ashton said that they were entitled to a rebate, which the town had to pay.

SUPPORTERS for the meals tax increase argued the meals tax increase would give the town a new and reliable source of revenue and reduce its dependence on the unpredictable BPOL rate. Also, as a revenue stream, the meals tax would not rest solely on residents as an increase in personal property taxes would. Businesses and visitors to the town benefitted from town services such as its police force, roads, water, and sewer and would support some of the weight of additional funding for town projects and needs. “You do benefit by the sewer, the water, everything in this town like everybody else does,” said Councilmember Signe Friedrichs.

Councilmember Pradip Dhakal added: “We also understand our citizens deserve a better quality of life, better infrastructures and we must move forward to better position ourselves. ... Another thing is we looked at many other options like real estate taxes, meals taxes, cutting expenses or increasing the revenues and what we found and agreed is this impacts our taxpayers’ money less because Herndon is 44 percent business.”
Black or Blue: Lessons Learned from How Virginia DemocratsHandled the Ralph Northam Debacle

Let’s get something straight, this is not a blackface controversy, this is a KKK controversy.

By Kofi Annan
President, Fairfax County NAACP

During a 1960 speech to a mixed audience in New York City, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “There is a pressing need for a liberalism in the North which is truly liberal.” While Virginia is a southern state, it gets bluer with each election, therefore we should not need to MKLX’s words, which essentially challenges liberals to fight the gravitational pull to the right on issues of civil rights and equality. It is difficult to see both the legacy of Ralph Northam, his subsequent actions, and the actions of the party to protect him as anything but the party signaling to the center-right that they have their back and are willing to sacrifice a few black voters if need be.

Liberals have long sought to convince African Americans that they alone can shield us from conservative’s intent on rolling back the hands of time. And African Americans normally respond to that message, having never wavered in our loyalty for the last half century. Every election cycle we make or break elections in favor of the Democratic Party, even though for the most part we get marginal improvement in our quality of life overall, and in many measurable ways we actually regress. Our average collective net worth remains a fraction of whites, our employment rate remains half that of whites, our neighborhoods are still gentrified in the name of progress, predominantly black public schools are still underfunded, we still make up 40 percent of the nations’ incarcerated, and school administrators still consistently dole out harsher punishments to our kids compared to their white counterparts, even in districts dominated by Democratic Party leadership. A report from the Institute for Policy Studies, released to coincide with what would have been MLK’s 90th birthday, demonstrated that over the past few decades, black wealth actually fell by 50%.

On the other hand, Republicans haven’t presented a particularly appealing message to African Americans voters at any point during this time period either, and even less so during the Trump Administration, which uses racism and xenophobia to collect votes as effectively as by minorities. This certainly appears to be the case in Virginia. Most of us are familiar with the controversy surrounding Governor Northam and his possible Ku Klux Klan (KKK) affiliation by now, right? Perhaps I shouldn’t assume. Maybe you were one of those that ignored the Klan member in the photograph, and instead saw this incident as a [less harmful] ‘blackface’ controversy that could be explained by innocent cultural insensitivity. But let’s get something straight, this is not a blackface controversy, this is a KKK controversy. A lot of people – including the Governor – rather focus on the person in blackface because it’s a slightly more tolerant form of white supremacy, and conveniently ignore the terrorist next to the individual in blackface. But the governor should not be let off the hook that easily. The KKK is America’s original domestic terrorist group (despite what the laws say), having killed well over 4,000 Americans that we know of, and our governor either is or was associated with them. Let that sink in, particularly as we still mourn the loss of another group of innocent lives at the hands of other terrorist groups in New Zealand a few weeks ago, Pittsburgh, Charlottesville, and most recently Sri Lanka. The leader of the Democratic Party in Virginia has yet to offer a sensible explanation for why a terrorist was in his yearbook, and the Democratic Party is okay enough with this that they’re now openly not only defending him but trotting him out at political fundraisers.

To most the case against Northam seemed open and shut, and his resignation seemed inevitable. One would imagine that an elected official who represents the party which prides itself on its diversity, that routinely secures over 90% of the African American vote, and counts on that constituency to win key battleground territories in a purple state that was red just a few elections ago, would certainly recognize that defending the governor is not a hill worth dying on and step aside as quickly and as gracefully as possible.

Well we’re now approaching May and not only has Northam refused to step aside, but even more unfortunate the Democratic Party has begun to rally around him in a show of solidarity. First came the slow drip of messages of appreciation from members of the General Assembly for one bill after the other on social media. Then the ridiculous Michael Jackson impersonation story that once seemed straight out of a bad SNL skit became the official party line. As for the “Gooman” nickname in his VMI yearbook that never received a formal explanation from the governor? Well even the most ignorant and clueless of us has learned enough from the US military to know to check their e-mail inbox on Wednesdays for a new “Gooman” related story. stonecoldstaycommitted

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From the fact that he had a lot of black friends due to his love of basketball.

As if insulting our intelligence wasn’t bad enough, many within the Democratic Party felt it necessary to go after those amplifying the call for the governor’s resignation. Following a protest led the Fairfax County National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) at a Democratic fundraiser where the governor was scheduled to attend, Democratic Party loyalists and leaders alike attacked the NAACP for doing the very thing the organization was founded for - standing up against racism. Its members were described as “troublemakers” and “bullies”; and the nation’s oldest and most successful civil rights organization is described as a “fringe element” by one party leader.

One of the talking points coming from Virginia’s Democrats is that “the governor isn’t going anywhere, so we might as well work with him.” This intentionally alleviates the burden of responsibility from the rest of the party leadership, because it makes them seem powerless, when in reality they really don’t want to challenge him anyway. As the reaction to the protests demonstrated, real challenges to the governor will not be looked upon favorably by the Democratic Party. If they’ll publicly assassinate the NAACP one could only imagine what private pressure is being placed on African American legislators who dare break ranks. This likely explains the deafening silence and acquiescence from most black elected officials on this issue.

Not enough black leaders (elected and community leaders alike) stand with the black community on principle when it matters most; and if they can’t stand on principle when it comes to the KKK, when will they? If they can’t break ranks with the party now, when will they? Black leaders stood next to Hillary Clinton when she called our youth “super predators”, and they stood next to Bill when he doubled down on Reagan’s mass incarceration policies. We’re often told that the solution is electing more African American to office; but if this is the best they can do when faced with a such a clear-cut choice in a time of crisis, then their true value to the African American community is questionable.

If these officials don’t have what it takes to tackle overt headline-grabbing racism within their own ranks, how can they be trusted to tackle systemic racism that doesn’t make headlines. The numbers highlighting African American wealth decline speak for themselves. They can’t.
SATURDAY/MAY 4

Dementia Care Support. 10-11 a.m. at Hunters Woods at Trails Edge Showroom, 2254B Nunters Woods Plaza, Reston. Dementia Care Support Group – 1st Saturday of the month. Distinguish between normal aging and dementia, understand different types of dementia, the impact of changes to the brain and how family caregivers can best cope with these changes. Free. Call 703-708-4404 or visit www.integracare.com.

Peripheral Neuropathy Support Group. 11:30 a.m. at Mason District Governmental Center, Providence District, and Sully District. Free. RSVP at www.eventbrite.com/s/naacp-fairfax-county-12397167937.

SUNDAY/MAY 5

Low Cost Rabies Vaccine Clinic. Noon-2 p.m. at Mount Vernon Governmental Center, 2511 Parkers Lane, Alexandria. Cost is $15 per pet, cash and check only. Dogs, cats, and ferrets may be vaccinated at the clinic. Dogs must be on leashes; cats and ferrets must be in carriers. All pets will receive a 1-year rabies vaccination. To obtain a 3-year rabies vaccine, bring pet’s rabies certificate (dog only) showing the current rabies vaccination expiration date. 2019 county dog licenses will be sold for an additional $10 license. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/animalhealth/communityassistance/rabiesclinics for more.

WEDNESDAY/MAY 8

Workshop: Google Ads. 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. at Bleevit Interactive, 12110 Sunset Hills Road, Suite 600, Reston. Bleevit Interactive is hosting a workshop to provide small businesses with an improved understanding of Google Ads and the importance of measuring and reporting digital marketing initiatives. Free, with complimentary lunch and beverages. Space is limited. See bulletin, Page 11.

FRIDAY/MAY 10

Nomination Deadline. The Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce is seeking nominations for their annual Awards for Chamber Excellence (ACE). These awards are given to members who demonstrate excellence in their business practices, are leaders in their industry, and support the mission of the Chamber. Visit www.restonchamber.org.

Grant Application Deadline. Audubon Society of Northern Virginia has funds available to help make an idea to improve habitat for birds and other wildlife come true. Applicants See Bulletin, Page 11.

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The Inova Health System will usher in a new level of medical treatment and patient care when the Inova Schar Cancer Institute opens to patients May 13 on its Merrifield campus.

“The Schar Cancer Center raises the already-high level of health-care facilities in Fairfax County,” said Catherine W. Riley, interim president and CEO of the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority. “As part of the Inova Center for Personalized Health it can make Fairfax County a destination for world-class research and clinical work.”

Dedication ceremonies took place Wednesday, April 24, for the $150 million center for care and research that is anchoring the 117-acre Inova campus, fulfilling a vision that began with the acquisition of the former Exxon Mobil site. The institute was made possible, in part, by a $50 million contribution from Dwight Schar and wife Martha, whose legacy will extend beyond Fairfax County-based NVR home builders.

MEMBERS OF THE SCHAR FAMILY were joined by others, including U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy and wife Marcelle, political commentator Cokie Roberts, and Lara Hopewell, a local hockey mom-turned-crusader for cancer research — all cancer survivors. Also participating in the ceremonies were U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova and Inova CEO Dr. Stephen Jones. The ceremonies featured more than 100 cancer patients and their family members, who became the first to walk through the front door of the newly-dedicated facility.

“We are so fortunate in Fairfax County to have access to such world class medical care and treatment,” said Bulova, who presented a proclamation from the Board of Supervisors congratulating Inova. “We have amazing facilities, doctors and cutting-edge technologies that are right here, literally in our own backyard, and that is so incredibly valuable.”

Riley echoed the importance of having a first-class cancer facility in the county, offering residents the highest quality care without requiring them to travel, often hundreds of miles for treatment. She also emphasized the importance of the research that will take place at the facility, creating a new horizon in the diversification of Fairfax County’s workforce.

“We’re very excited about the research and development aspect of the Schar Institute and the ways in which it will help diversify our local economy,” Riley said. “It will attract new doctors and scientists. In partnership with facilities like the University of Virginia Medical School, those researchers will be applying for new grants and developing the kinds of programs that will make Fairfax County known as a medical research and development center.”

DURING THE DEDICATION, Jones announced that Dr. John Deeken, who had been serving as acting president of the Inova Schar Cancer Institute, is named permanently to the president’s role. Deeken said the institute would continue stress its “patient-first” philosophy, building on its ability to provide one-stop care through teams of doctors, nurses, therapists, researchers and specialized counselors.

“The vision and the spirit is that the patient is at the center of everything we do,” said Deeken, who previously served as COO of the Inova Translational Medicine Institute. “Fundamentally, that’s the difference in the model of care at Inova. This is the culmination of years of effort in planning and design and recruiting — to make real what we’d hoped to have for all the patients in Northern Virginia, which is expert care close to home. Nobody in Northern Virginia should think they need to go to Houston, New York or Baltimore to get world-class cancer care. We have it right here.”

Schar Cancer Institute Opens to Patients May 13
Institute becomes a landmark for health care and research in Fairfax County
Herndon Farmers Market Opens

By Mercia Hobson
The Connection

The magic of the ten Fairfax County Farmers Markets and the USDA’s encouragement to, “Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food,” is that the middleman is missing. If market shoppers want to know if the strawberries are pesticide and chemical free, grown in the field rather than a hothouse or certified organic they ask the farmer standing in front of them for a first-hand account.

On Thursday, April 18, the 2019 Herndon Farmers Market operated under Fairfax County Park Authority opened. The Connection reached out to Hala Elbarmil, Program Assistant Fairfax County Farmers Market and John Dudzinsky, Herndon Farmers Market Manager to learn more about the markets and to the market vendors to learn about their farming practices such as pest and disease control, fertility systems, seed sources and environmental and social impacts.

The Herndon Farmers Market is located in the 700 block of Lynn Street. It runs weekly every Thursday now through Nov. 14, 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

According to the county, the market aims to improve the health of citizens, support local food producers and protect the environment. Like the nine other county markets, the one in Herndon is strictly producer-only.

That means farmers and producers must come from within 125 miles of Fairfax County and may only sell what they raise on their farms or make from scratch.

Shoppers using their Virginia EBT card at the Herndon market will receive up to $20 in matching funds through the SNAP Double Dollar Program.

Vendors, Customers and Managers Reflect on Herndon Farmers Market

Grace O. Banahene, Grace’s Pastries, Herndon, baked goods and savory treats.

“I’m thankful to be here since the beginning of the market in 1989. Children who came here in 1989, are returning with their children. God is good.”

Customer Charles Fullilove Senior on customer etiquette:

“Be kind, considerate, inquire gently, ask questions and take the vendors recommendations and listen. Always have the spirit that you can learn something. Enjoy the moment.”

Emmanuel Ahoussou, sales director Arnaud Curaud Artisan Bakery, Metropolitan Bakery, D.C.; offering rustic, old-style French bread and pastries.

“Buying is what we want to see in a customer and smiling. Since we’re new here, some of the loaves of bread are momentarily exposed so shoppers can see and smell them.”

Manny Medina, J & W Valley View Farm; Westmoreland County, Va.; offering fruits and vegetables.

“We use best practices in farming. We only spray fungicide, not pesticide and that is only for corn. We don’t worry about the pests since we plant so much if you lose 500 plants, it won’t hurt anything, but there are thousands and thousands of plants, 10,000 tomato plants. We use 8/8/16 as fertilizer. We never plant the same thing in the same spot the next year. If you plant the same thing, it will soak up the nutrients. We start in the heated greenhouse in January and then transfer the seedlings to the black-mulched fields. We put in 9,000 feet this year.”

Photos by Mercia Hobson
The Connection

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**THURSDAY/MAY 2**

**Millennials Book Club.** 7 p.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Title is “American Psycho” by Bret Easton Ellis. Check out a library copy or buy a copy to own. Adults from early 20s to early 30s. Call 703-689-2700 or visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov.

**Big Truck Days**

Kids and kids-at-heart can see some of the town’s big trucks and heavy equipment up close and learn more about how they are used. Different vehicles will be available and souvenirs will be provided to children. Attendants are asked to bring non-perishable food items to donate to a local food pantry.

Thursday, May 2, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Friday, May 3, 9 a.m.-7 p.m. at Public Works Complex, 1479 Sterling Road, Herndon. No children’s books at this sale. Call 703-689-2700 or visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov.

**FLORIDA-SATURDAY/MAY 4**

**The Sound of Music.** Friday-Saturday, May 3-4, 7:30 p.m. at Traveller’s Rest, 13320 Traveller’s Rest Rd., Great Falls. A special Happy experience. Sunday, May 5, noon-5 p.m. at South Lakes High School, 4001 Lakeview Ridge Dr., Reston. Join a fun Tai Chi fitness class led by Tania Ebrahimian. Help us make fun and interesting sounds. Learn about different musical instruments, sing songs and make instruments from recycled materials on the farm. For participants age 7-adult. Call 703-437-9101 or visit www.eventbrite.com.

**SUNDAY/MAY 5**

**Visit Colvin Run Mill.** 11 a.m.-4 p.m. at Colvin Run Mill, 10017 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. Don’t miss the chance to see, hear and taste history with a Sunday visit to Colvin Run Mill. Stop by the mill for a grinding demonstration from noon-3 p.m. For 100th century technology at work as the miller grinds wheat or corn into flour and meal that can be purchased at the park’s General Store. Call the site to confirm attendance. Call 703-759-2771 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/colvin-run-mill.

**Home & Garden Marketplace**

Throughout the event all can enjoy presentations on music, a variety of vendors with decor, plants and more for sale, plus educational groups with information about keeping things natural and beautiful in the garden. On stage, gardening expert Mike McGrath will present two 1-hour shows including time for Q&A and book signings, and Mina Fins will talk about the Renovate Happy experience. All ages. No registration required. Call 703-689-2700 or visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov.

**TUESDAY/MAY 7**

**Bike to School Day.** 7 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) will participate in Bike to School Day to promote physical activity and reduce traffic congestion and pollution near schools. Not only does biking to school help foster lifelong healthy habits, but it can also encourage active transportation from the first to the last mile. Starting the school day with a bike ride, walk, or roll will give these students a wake-up and ready to learn. Parents are encouraged to accompany their children to school, and to work with their PTA or PTO to assemble bike trails or walking groups for the event. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/bikecarnival.

**JEWELRY MAKING.** 7 p.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Tania Ebrahimian will teach the basics of jewelry making and participants will create an original piece in this hands-on craft workshop. The library will provide the materials. Registration begins April 24. Call 703-689-2700 or visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov.

**THURSDAY/MAY 9**

**T’ai Chi Fitness Class.** 6:30 p.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Join a fun T’ai Chi fitness class led by local instructor Susan Shen. No experience necessary. $7 per class. Registration begins April 25. Call 703-689-2700 or visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov.

**World Migratory Bird Day Workshop.** 7-9 p.m. at National Wildlife Federation, 11100 Wildlife Center Drive, Reston. Join the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia (ASNV) for a workshop to prepare for the longest running annual spring bird count in this area. The class will include the history of the event, the Lower Potomac River Important Bird Area (LPR-IBA), key species, and techniques (RBin) used to count these birds, but registration is required at www.eventbrite.com/e/audobona.

**FRIDAY/MAY 10**

**Gymnastics.** 10:30 a.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Discover melody pitch and rhythm while building agility and repertoire of joyous skills. Cosponsored by the Friends of the Reston Regional Library, age 5-adult. Registration opens April 26. Call 703-689-2700 or visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov.

**6th Annual Casino Night.** 6-10 p.m. at Volkswagen of America, 2200 Ferdinand Porsche Drive, Herndon. 16th Annual Casino Night fundraiser supporting the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington/Fairfax County Region. Hosted By LaVe’ Arrington with special guest “Secretary of Defense” Dexter Manley. Visit one.bidpal.net/casino2019 for tickets.

**FRIDAY/MAY 10, 17, 24 AND 28**

**Discover New Garden Genres.** 9:45-10:45 a.m. at Frying Pan Farm Park, 2709 West Ox Road, Herndon. Visit www.walkbiketoschool.org/.

**SATURDAY/MAY 11**

**“Love Your Baby Day.”** 10 a.m.-5 p.m. at Belvedere Yoga, 11109 Sunset Hills Road, Reston. Learn how to keep your child healthy and infant health. Meet local providers who are passionate to support the journey through pregnancy, birth, and beyond. Free. Visit www.BelvedereYoga.com for more.

**SING! Books With Miss Emily.** 10 a.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Join Miss Emily for singing storytime with illustrated songs. Cosponsored by the Friends of Reston Regional Library. All ages. No registration required. Call 703-689-2700 or visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov.

**TOP GUN 30th Anniversary.** 10:30 a.m. at Colvin Run Mill, 10017 Colvin Run Rd., Great Falls. See May 4, above.

**Kindred Spirits.** 7-9 p.m. at Lake Anne High School - Auditorium, 14100 South Lakes Drive, Reston. A concert benefiting Canines Partners for Life, presented by Sopranessence. Help us raise $30K to honor CPL3’s 30 years of providing service dogs for those with disabilities. $20. Call 571-348-4644 or www.sopranessence.org.

**SUNDAY/MAY 12**

**Mountain Stories and Songs with the Dulcimer.** 3 p.m. at Reston Regional Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. Local musicians Ralph Lee Smith and Madeline Machuch will record songs and share stories of the dulcimer. They will have dulcimers on display, and books and music for sale. All ages. Call 703-689-2700 or visit librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov.
Herndon Embraces Diversity

To the Editor:
It wasn’t always good news when the Town of Herndon and the topic of diversity appeared in headlines. But that, happily, is the past. Today this vibrant, third-largest township in the Commonwealth is defining itself with inclusion and progressive citizen participation — and finding joy in being a diverse community.

As an expanded Metro encourages new growth and our downtown is on the precipice of redevelopment, the Town of Herndon is grappling to find the right balance of economic growth with the commitment to retain the spirit of a small-town community. Conversations about our shared future are taking place across town from the bike trail to the beer garden, and kitchen tables and offices in between. Happily, these conversations have often been about challenging traditional ways of thinking so that Herndon can fully embrace its future inclusive of everyone who is in our community — and in preparation for those who join us in the future.

Simply looking at the numbers shows Herndon’s diversity. The Town’s population is now majority-minority with a broad diversity of ages and ethnicities. Economically, the average resident’s income is higher than the state median. The makeup of our council mirrors the Town’s current demographics. Both our mayor and police chief are female.

But data only begins to tell the story. The heart and soul of what has become the new face of Herndon is the people. Herndonians are engaged and vocal, showing up at public meetings and community forums, serving on planning and developing committees, creating clubs and groups, and starting the successful small businesses that comprise more than 70 percent of businesses in the Town.

Town government has responded and encouraged this growing spirit of civic responsibility, renewing efforts to involve all residents, building bridges to the community through listening events that bring concerns to light and ideas to fruition. You only have to walk through the Town Green to see this is a real community. You only have to speak up to become a meaningful part of it.

Increasing civic involvement and a desire for diversity was obvious in the seemingly endless, rapid fire trips to the polls last year. Herndonians turned out to cast their ballots in historically high numbers; even lining up to cast a primary vote in the rain and cold — and those voters cast a vote for more diversity; electing the first ever Latinx council member in Cesar del Aguila and the first Nepali council member in the country in Pradeep Dhalik. They also voted for Herndon-born Palestinian-American Dr. Ibraheem Samirah, sending the second-ever Muslim to the General Assembly with 59 percent of the vote. After the election, Samirah attributed his win to the involvement of grassroots volunteers.

On Friday our community gathered to learn more about one another at a celebration hosted by our Nepali neighbors. When the Mayor Lisa Merkel and Herndon Town Council proclaimed the first Nepalese American Heritage Day in America, council chambers were packed.

The Nepali responded with “a joyous celebration!” with food and entertainment and an invitation, in all caps, “ALL ARE WELCOME!!” That is how people who live next door become neighbors — and it’s through good neighbors that towns become strong communities.

Town of Herndon is a microcosm of the change in this country. There is still work to do, but the warm welcome of inclusivity is swelling here.

I can hear languages other than my own and ethnic music softly playing in the background; there is a warm welcome of inclusivity that is expanding here.

Donielle Scherff
Herndon
Virginia Trails Nation in Placing Foster Children with Relatives

By Caitlin Morris
CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

Only 7 percent of Virginia's foster children are placed with relatives, according to a new study — well below the national average of 32 percent.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation tracked changes in foster care in each state from 2007 to 2017. For Virginia, the data snapshot contained some good news: There were fewer children in foster care, and fewer foster children were placed in group homes.

But many experts say that ideally, foster children should be placed with relatives — and on that measure, Virginia did not make any progress over the 10 years.

"We want for children to have a family that is their family forever — whether it's their family of origin or if their foster family turns into an adoptive home," said Allison Gilbreath, a policy analyst at Voices for Virginia's Children, a nonprofit advocacy program.

Over the 10-year period, Virginia was successful in decreasing the percentage of foster children in group homes from 23 percent to 17 percent. That means more children have been fostered in family settings — but just not with their own relatives. The data also shows that older youth are more likely to be in group homes.

Virginia was also successful in reducing the number of children entering foster care. In 2007, there were 7,665, compared with 4,795 in 2017.

"We really need to spend some time and energy in the state and figure out what we can do that will specifically get at the racial inequities in the foster care system." — Allison Gilbreath, Policy Analyst, Voices for Virginia's Children

Virginia's new law also aims to increase the number of children placed with family members by notifying relatives when a child enters foster care.

Virginia has already started to take advantage of these funds but could adopt the programs statewide," Voices for Virginia's Children stated in a press release.

The organizations contend that the support system for other foster children and caregivers should also be available to relatives who take in children. This includes financial support and access to mental health support. Often, family members take in a child through what is known as kinship diversion, meaning they take in a child without using the foster system and don't receive the same support as caregivers in the foster program.

The children's advocacy groups also called for expansion of kinship navigator programs.

"The organization and the Annie E. Casey Foundation also asked for greater access to services that would help stabilize families. By aligning legislation with the Family First Prevention Services Act, funds will be accessible for family support services to prevent at-risk children from entering the foster system. "If we were able to step in and provide that family support — we'd be able to make that family successful," Gilbreath said.

Free Cinco de Mayo Lyft Rides Offered to Prevent Drunk Driving

Fee Cinco de Mayo Lyft rides will be offered to deter impaired driving throughout the Washington metropolitan area beginning Sunday, May 5, 2019.

Offered by the nonprofit Washington Regional Alcoholic Program (WRAP), the 2019 Cinco de Mayo SoberRide program will be in operation for 12 hours beginning at 4 pm on Sunday, May 5th (Cinco de Mayo) and continue until 4 am on Monday, May 6th. The program is open to local roads safe from impaired drivers during this traditionally high-risk holiday.

During this twelve-hour period, area residents age 21 and older celebrating with alcohol may download Lyft to their phones, then enter a SoberRide code in the app’s "Promo" section to receive their no cost (up to $15) safe transportation home. WRAP’s Cinco de Mayo SoberRide promo code will be posted at 3 pm on Sunday, May 5 on www.SoberRide.com.

Last year, a record 897 persons in the Washington metropolitan area used WRAP’s Cinco de Mayo SoberRide program rather than possibly driving home impaired. The charity also offers its SoberRide program on St. Patrick’s Day, Independence Day, Halloween and the winter holidays.

More information about WRAP’s SoberRide® initiative can be found at www.SoberRide.com.
Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive. Letter carriers will pick up donated food. Leave donations before your typical mail delivery time. All food stays in the local community. The top requested non-perishable food items are: cereal, pasta, pasta sauce or spaghetti sauce, rice, canned fruits and vegetables (with no added sugar), pasta (100 percent juice, peanut butter, macaroni & cheese, canned protein (tuna, chicken and turkey), and canned or dried beans. Specific questions regarding the Food Drive should be directed to 202-662-2489.

Family Caregiver Expo. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Richard J. Ems Community Cultural Center at Northern Virginia Community College, Annandale Campus. Capital Caring will host its first Caregiver Expo in partnership with AARP and Virginia Hospital Center. The expo is free and will feature information highlighting resources and support programs available to family caregivers, including home care services, financial and estate planning, elder law, and information sessions on such topics as Alzheimer's and Dementia, Preservation of Assets, and Caring for the Caregiver. Contact Any Shields at ashields@capitalcaring.org or call 703-513-6035 for more.

Fairfax Board of Supervisors Candidate Forum. 3-5 p.m. at Heritage Fellowship Church, 2501 Fox Mill Road, Reston. Join the Fairfax NAACP for an engaging, moderated panel discussion with candidates for Fairfax County Board of Supervisor’s Chair. Candidates are Alicia Fletherjoe, Tim Chapman, Ryan McElveen and Jeff McKay. Free. RSVP at www.eventbrite.com/o/naacp-fairfax-county-12397167937.

Performers Wanted. The NVFAF is once again prepared to its residents with disabilities to inclusion by spreading the message of life — and I’m stuck with it (as the old saying goes). The artist is looking for men and women 18 and older to participate. No formal dance experience is required, and diversity and the most inclusive range of ability are welcome. The movement installations will involve focus, stillness and structured improvisation. The events will take place Sat., May 18 at 7 p.m. and Sunday, May 19 at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Email Kevin Danaher at FairfaxCounty@fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703-390-6466 for more.

Emergency Preparedness for Parents. 10 a.m.-noon at Dunn Loring YMCA, 2334 Gallows Road, Entrance 1 – Room 100, Dunn Loring. For the millions of Americans with disabilities, natural and human-made disasters present a substantial challenge. Fairfax County’s Office of Emergency Management is committed to inclusion by spreading the message of preparedness to its residents with disabilities and access and functional needs. Free to parents, educators and community members. Call 703-204-3941 or visit www.fcps.edu/resources/family-engagement/parent-resource-center for more or to register.

As Luck Has Had It

By KENNETH H. LOURIE

Aside from the fatigue I experienced a few columns ago, this immunotherapy infusion is, and has been, quite manageable.

Boy was I wrong! I still remember — and laugh when I recall — the phone conversation I had with my thoracic surgeon after he had received the results of my PET scan: “You lit that thing up like a Christmas tree,” he said. Presuming that wasn’t good news, I replied: “I hear there are false positives all the time.” I’d be diagnosed with a “terminal” disease, non-small cell lung cancer, sine I figured, to the extent I figured at all, that the process would result in much having been done about nothing.

Boy was I wrong! I can’t say it’s been fun, but it’s funny how well, 10-plus years later, things have turned out: alive and reasonably well. The movement installations will involve focus, stillness and structured improvisation. The events will take place Sat., May 18 at 7 p.m. and Sunday, May 19 at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.

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Not Just Another Car Wash
Raising money for local charities.

By Mercia Hobson
The Connection

Enjoy a spring community festival, get a car wash and help benefit community charities, PTAs and PTOs. That was what it was all about on Saturday, April 27, at Clocktower Car Wash located at 2501 Centreville Road, Herndon. After new owners Gus Kearney and Tim Ferraro installed premium tunnel wash and state of the art equipment and re-opened the full-service car wash summer of 2018, the pair want to support the community that supports them.

"Many great causes are helping to make our community better, and we thought this festival would be a great way to bring some attention, and a little money, to them," said Kearney. By donating 25 percent of the day’s proceeds as directed by patrons to Link, Inc., Herndon Village Network, Fairfax County Animal Shelter, PTAs and PTOs, Clocktower Car Wash raised money for local charities and organizations.

Virginia Sen. Jennifer Boysko, (D-33) and Virginia House Delegate Ken Plum (D-36) joined Kearney, Ferraro and others for the check presentation totaling $1000.

For hours, information and to request another charity is added for future fundraising events, email info@clocktowerwash.com.

Everybody Loves a Birthday
Herndon Village Network turns four.

It was birthday cake and party time for support- ers, members and board members of Herndon Village Network. On Sunday, April 28, the grassroots, neighbor-to-neighbor, non-profit initiative celebrated its 4th birthday at ArtSpace Herndon. Sen. Jennifer Boysko (D-33) and Supervisor John Foust (D- Dranesville) stopped by to offer their congratulations to Penny Helpern, President of Herndon Village Network and thank the organization’s volunteers for their support.

“Herndon Village Network celebrates four years of community service geared toward providing free transportation for our non- driving senior members living in zip code 20170.

In 2019, Herndon Village Network provided 917 round-trip rides.

We hope to expand our service area,” said Helpern.

For more information, visit herndonvillagenetwork.org.

—Mercia Hobson

Impressive ‘Sound of Music’

By Josh Lee
Freedom High School

Through the hills and the abbey, comforting songs could be heard throughout the theater, like raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens, Herndon High School’s production of “The Sound of Music” was, as they say in Austria, unglaublich (incredible!).

“The Sound of Music,” music by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein and book by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse, first premiered at New Haven’s Shubert Theatre in 1959. That same year, it opened on Broadway in the Lunts-Fontanne Theater before moving to the Mark Hellinger Theater in 1962 and went on to win five Tony awards. In 1965, a movie version was made starring Julie Andrews and won 5 Academy awards. “The Sound of Music” was also Rodgers and Hammerstein’s last musical they wrote together before the death of Oscar Hammerstein.

This musical follows a care- free yet troublesome soon-to-be nun named Maria Rainer who gets sent to be a governess for the von Trapp children. Their father is the hardened Captain Georg von Trapp who eventually falls in love with and marries Maria. But when he is com- missioned to be in the German navy under Nazi control, he, Maria, and his children flee from Austria. This story is actually based on the memoir of Maria von Trapp called “The Story of the Trapp Family Singers”.

Leading the show at Herndon was Erin Maxwell who played Maria Rainer with not only an immaculate innocence, but also maturity. Her voice was beautiful in every song she sang and was easily one of the audience’s favorite things. Her movements and hand gestures were very graceful and were almost like that of a dancer. A very impres- sive aspect of her performance was her ability to switch maturity based on her situation, feeling like she was the youngest among the nuns, but becoming more of a mother figure with the von Trapp children.

A standout group in this perfor- mance were the von Trapp children who consisted of Liesl played by Cara Ainge, Friedrich played by Ankit Poudel, Louisa played by Emma Harris, Kurt played by Genaro Mejia, Brigitta played by Hannah Clements, Marta played by Claire Callaway, and last, but definitely not least, Gretl played by Alyssa Ruark. Each child had a very specific dy- namic with every other child and their singing was good enough to win a festival. Their energy was consistent and was especially good in Hannah Clements’ Brigitta who had perfect comedic timing and played a well balanced innocent, yet frank child.

One of the most impressive parts of this show were some of the technical aspects. The set was very large and detailed and used to its fullest poten- tial. The grand staircase was versatile and could change from the von Trapp house to the abbey just by pulling the curtains closed a bit. Their lighting was thoughtful and ef- fective, creating the inside of an abbey just with a light on the grand drape. The cues were impressively well timed. Another noteworthy aspect were costumes, specifically the sheer amount of costume changes with almost all of the costume changes being insanely quick.

This was all to create the world of Austria and the von Trapp house, which they suc- ceeded tenfold.

And so, with a so long, farewell, well, auf wiedersehen, and goodbye, Herndon High School’s committed and ener- getic actors and very intelligent use of technical aspects all amounted to “The Sound of Music” being do-re-mi-fa-so-great!