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Great Falls CONNECTION

To Italy, with Love

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Pia Agostini is Italian and the owner of Pots & Plants LLC on Georgetown Pike in Great Falls. At home, she checks the numbers of COVID-19 deaths and confirmed cases in Bergamo, one of Italy's hardest hit cities where residents have been on lockdown since March 8.

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NEWS

Global to Local: Coronavirus Defines Us

Week Two 03/15-03/21-feeding children is priority for FCPS.

By MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The week of March 8-14 ended with an outdoor sign at Pots & Plants on Georgetown Pike in Great Falls reading, "What a week this year has been." On March 15, the CDC provided "Interim Guidance for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)." It read: "Larger gatherings (for example, more than 250 people) offer more opportunities for person-to-person contact and therefore pose greater risk of COVID-19 transmission...Cancel gatherings of more than ten people for organizations that serve higher-risk populations."

On March 21, Johns Hopkins University of Medicine confirmed the United States now placed 3rd globally in the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases with China and Italy preceding.

Phrases such as "wash your hands," "social distancing," and "flatten the curve," became the norm. Locals changed how they lived, learned, worked, played and worshiped. Many, but not all took proactive measures protecting themselves, their families and the community.

Fairfax County Public Schools remained closed. Parents found themselves with an unexpected job description: educator. Social distancing meant working from home. Companies directed employees to pack up, go home and telework to limit person-to-person contact and risk of COVID-19 transmission. Workers set up impromptu workspaces in their residences. For some, it didn't always work out.

A second crisis, locally, spun off from the coronavirus pandemic — food insecurity for the 55,000 school-aged children in Fairfax County who are poor enough to qualify for subsidized meals during the school year.

While those in medical, safety and military professions had long been termed first responders, a new group of individuals took to the front lines. In grocery stores, cashiers such as the one at Safeway in Great Falls rung up purchases for his neighbors but with limited protection gear, not unlike most other cashiers and shelf stockers at other stores locally, including Giant and big-box retailer Costco. Management rationed items, a word used in times of war. Nonprofit organizations, including Cornerstones in Reston, told volunteers not to show up; staff took to the frontlines.

Monday, March 16 – Food is priority #1 for school-aged children in Fairfax County.

All Fairfax County Public school buildings close. The county cancels planned laptop distribution for students. The school system announces food distribution sites.

Financial markets crater. Both the Dow Jones and the S&P 500 have their most significant one-day falls since Black Monday 1987. S&P 500 drops 11.9 percent. Nasdaq drops 12.3 percent. All three indexes



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/ THE CONNECTION

Reston Town Center is deserted Wednesday, March 18, following action by V.A. Governor Ralph Northam to adopt federal government guidelines limiting gatherings to 10 people in a confined space.

are down more than 25 percent from their highs, according to Dow Jones.

Tuesday, March 17 - Virginia governor urges those over 65 to self-quarantine.

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors holds an Emergency Special Meeting and declares a local state of emergency. Gov. Ralph Northam, a pediatrician, adopts federal government guidelines of limiting gatherings to 10 people. However, he does not order restaurants and bars to close; instead, he says, "We're encouraging that they use takeout ordering so that people won't be inside the confined space."

Wednesday, March 18 - Amazon donates a local \$1 million for COVID-19 relief to four area nonprofit organizations, including the Community Foundation of Northern Virginia.

Thursday, March 19 - Evidence of community spread in NOVA

The number of positive tests among people tested for coronavirus in Fairfax County is 14. Fairfax County Health Department releases the words no one wants to read: "Today, public health officials noted evidence of community transmission of the COVID-19 coronavirus in parts of Northern Virginia." It urges, "vigilant social distancing," staying at least six feet from others in all situations. FCPS expands grab-and-go food distribution sites, begins pop-up sites and buses deliver grab-and-go meals along select bus routes.

Friday, March 20 - New first responders. Cornerstones in Reston, self-described as an "advocate for those struggling to make ends meet in northwestern Fairfax County and the Dulles corridor," requests shelter volunteers, including meal servers, front desk staffers, donations assistants, childcare providers and others refrain from coming in for the next two weeks. The staff performs the work.

Saturday, March 21 - U.S. ranks 4th worldwide
At 4:43 p.m., Johns Hopkins reports 156 confirmed cases of coronavirus COVID-19 for Virginia with two deaths: That afternoon, the United States ranks 4th worldwide - 24,148 confirmed cases. By evening, the United States skyrockets to 3rd place.

Locally, Pia Agostini of Italy and owner of Pots & Plants in Great Falls says, "Another sad day for Italy, 793 deaths... All around the D.C. metro area, we are still seeing outdoor gatherings, mostly of young adults, this must stop...If we follow distancing, we might be safe from a lockdown, and businesses might be safe from a shutdown."

VIEWPOINTS

Jim Scanlon, Manager of Pots & Plants LLC on Georgetown Pike in Great Falls: If we can help you, we will...People are looking to get out of the house...We'll deliver everything for free, trees, shrubs, annuals and perennials.

PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/
THE CONNECTION



Reflections on COVID-19 From Great Falls

The Connection asked two individuals in Great Falls to share their reflections on COVID-19 one through a local and the other through a global lens.

— MERCIA HOBSON



PHOTO BY ANARUBY HUDGENS

Pia Agostini is Italian and the owner of Pots & Plants LLC on Georgetown Pike in Great Falls.

At home, Pia Agostini checks the numbers of COVID-19 deaths and confirmed cases in Bergamo, one of Italy's hardest hit cities where residents have been on lockdown since March 8.

Friday, March 20 - I am heartbroken by watching my beautiful Italy during this tragic situation. Distance from my family and friends has never been more difficult and painful. Today, I am asking for your help to support the health workers and volunteers of the Italian Red Cross of Bergamo and San Donato Milanese, the epicenter of (the) COVID-19 outbreak in Italy, where only today, 475 people died. I am personally in contact with Mrs. Paola Pesenti Bolognini, the Development Area Delegate of the Red Cross of Bergamo. The resources will be used immediately to purchase medical equipment for health workers in the front line who are working around the clock to save lives. This effort is synergistic and complementary to the campaign by the Italian Cultural Society of Washington #WESTANDWITHITALY... Visit <https://www.cribergamo.it> and click on "DONAZIONE" on the

homepage banner. The donation will go directly to Croce Rossa Italiana of Bergamo, the Italian city, which was the hardest hit by the coronavirus where Mrs. Paola Pesenti Bolognini is working.

Saturday, March 21 - Here we are, another sad day for Italy, 793 deaths. About 2 hours ago, Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte announced the decision to stop all productions considered "not necessary," through April 1. Italy has not experienced something like this since the aftermath of WW2...Based on what I have learned by following the situation in Italy, I can strongly recommend to "Enforce Distancing" (here). All around the D.C. metro area, we are still seeing outdoor gatherings, mostly of young adults. This must stop. Do we need authorities to enforce it? Maybe! Distancing will help "flatten the curve," preventing overwhelming of the health care system and more. If we follow distancing, we might be safe from lockdown, and business might be safe from a shutdown.

Now, if we are too late for that option? Well, that's all another story.

OPINION

'Our Priority Is to Save Lives'

Governor Northam orders statewide closure of certain non-essential businesses: all public and private schools K-12 closed for the rest of the academic year.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

“COVID-19 is serious, and we must act. Unfortunately, the virus does not respect national borders or state borders. It is now everywhere, or it will be soon. That is what happens when a global pandemic hits a nation. With this pandemic, states have been left to figure out this on our own, and I’m acting to protect Virginians,” said Virginia Governor Ralph Northam who issued statewide Executive Order Number Fifty-Three (2020) in response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on Monday, March 23. It ordered the closure of certain non-essential businesses, bans all gatherings of more than 10 people, and closes all K-12 schools for the remainder of the academic year. The Order goes into effect at 11:59 p.m. on Tuesday, March 24, 2020. It remains in place until 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, April 23, 2020.

Northam said, “Nonessential retail establishments can remain open if they allow 10 or fewer patrons and adhere to social distancing and increase sanitizing procedures. Essential services like grocery stores, health services and businesses in our supply chain will remain open, but they must adhere to social distancing and increased sanitizing procedures. Gatherings of more than 10 are banned. We do not make these decisions lightly.” He stressed there would be expectations for essential businesses that remained open. Social distancing mattered, and businesses that remained open had a responsibility to adhere to social distancing recommendations. “You need to step up sanitizing practices on common service surfaces...Make no mistake. If you are essential and open, you have a special responsibility to do the right thing,” he said.

As for schools, Northam said that closures were necessary to minimize the speed at which COVID-19 spread and protect the capacity of the healthcare system. Northam said, “By tomorrow, our Department of Education will issue guidance to help school divisions think through those decisions and ensure that every student is served equitably. We’re already working on waivers to relieve testing requirements and ensure that our students who were on track to graduate can do so.” He added that according to a Yale study estimate, 80,000 of students statewide may be the children of health care workers and urged a public-private response. “Today I’m calling on our local communities, private daycare providers, community childcare partners, and public schools to rally together to provide childcare for the young children and school-aged children of essential personnel. Our childcare providers are also essential personnel,” Northam said.

Northam said individuals were moving into a period of sacrifice. “Most of us have already begun to experience this. Many businesses are closed already because their owners have done the responsible thing...Today, thousands, thousands of people are without work here in our Commonwealth. About 40,000 people have filed for unemployment just last week. That number will, unfortunately, go up. More families will be out of work that has serious health consequences too. It will lead to anxiety; it will lead to fear. It is difficult to live with uncertainty. We can expect to see more depression, alcoholism and domestic violence. But the sooner we all take these necessary steps to slow the spread, the sooner we will all get through this,” said Northam.

In closing, Northam acknowledged the health crisis and economic crisis and said that the sooner that we can get this health crisis under control, the sooner our economy will recover. “So I asked every Virginian to stand with me as we fight this battle. Do your part. Stay home, when you can, and social distance and wash your hands when you must go out for supplies. I know that the next several weeks, the next several months will be difficult. They will require everyone to change the way that we live and the way we interact with each other. We have not been called upon to sacrifice this in many, many years. But I am calling on you to do just that. We must put aside what we want and replace it with what we need... It will take time, but we can, and we will get through this together.”

According to the Executive Order, violation of paragraphs 1, 3, 4 and 6 of the Order shall be a Class 1 misdemeanor pursuant to § 44-146.17 of the Code of Virginia.

Paragraph 1-Effective 11:59 p.m., Tuesday, March 24, 2020 until 11:59 p.m., Thursday, April 23, 2020, all public and private in person gatherings of 10 or more individuals are prohibited.

Paragraph 3-Closure of all dining and congregation areas in restaurants, dining establishments, food courts, breweries, microbreweries, distilleries, wineries, tasting rooms, and farmers markets effective 11:59 p.m., Tuesday, March 24, 2020 until 11:59 p.m., Thursday, April 23, 2020. Restaurants, dining establishments, food courts, breweries, microbreweries, distilleries, wineries, tasting rooms, and farmers markets may continue to offer delivery and take-out services.

Paragraph 4-Closure of all public access to recreational and entertainment businesses, effective 11:59 p.m., Tuesday, March 24, 2020 until 11:59 p.m., Thursday, April 23, 2020 as set forth below:

❖ Theaters, performing arts centers, concert venues, museums, and other indoor entertain-

ment centers;

❖ Fitness centers, gymnasiums, recreation centers, indoor sports facilities, and indoor exercise facilities;

❖ Beauty salons, barbershops, spas, massage parlors, tanning salons, tattoo shops, and any other location where personal care or personal grooming services are performed that would not allow compliance with social distancing guidelines to remain six feet apart;

❖ Racetracks and historic horse racing facilities; and

❖ Bowling alleys, skating rinks, arcades, amusement parks, trampoline parks, fairs, arts and craft facilities, aquariums, zoos, escape rooms, indoor shooting ranges, public and private social clubs, and all other places of indoor public amusement.

Paragraph 6 Effective 11:59 p.m., Tuesday, March 24, 2020 until 11:59 p.m., Thursday, April 23, 2020, any brick and mortar retail business not listed in paragraph 5 may continue to operate but must limit all in-person shopping to no more than 10 patrons per establishment. If any such business cannot adhere to the 10 patron limit with proper social distancing requirements, it must close.

Paragraph 5

❖ Grocery stores, pharmacies, and other retailers that sell food and beverage products or pharmacy products, including dollar stores, and department stores with grocery or pharmacy operations;

❖ Medical, laboratory, and vision supply retailers;

❖ Electronic retailers that sell or service cell phones, computers, tablets, and other communications technology;

❖ Automotive parts, accessories, and tire retailers as well as automotive repair facilities;

❖ Home improvement, hardware, building material, and building supply retailers;

❖ Lawn and garden equipment retailers;

❖ Beer, wine, and liquor stores;

❖ Retail functions of gas stations and convenience stores;

❖ Retail located within healthcare facilities;

❖ Banks and other financial institutions with retail functions;

❖ Pet and feed stores;

❖ Printing and office supply stores; and

❖ Laundromats and dry cleaners.

To read Executive Order visit [https://www.governor.virginia.gov/media/governorviriniagov/executive-actions/EO-53-Temporary-Restrictions-Due-To-Novel-Coronavirus-\(COVID-19\).pdf](https://www.governor.virginia.gov/media/governorviriniagov/executive-actions/EO-53-Temporary-Restrictions-Due-To-Novel-Coronavirus-(COVID-19).pdf)

Worried about not being able to get food or unsure where your next meal will come from, text “food” or “comida” to 877-877 to connect with nearby resources & help.

Write The Connection welcomes views on any public issue. The deadline for all material is noon Friday. Letters must be signed. Include home address and home and business numbers. Letters are routinely edited for libel, grammar, good taste and factual errors. Send to:

Letters to the Editor
The Connection
1606 King St., Alexandria VA 22314
Call: 703-917-6444.

By e-mail: editors@connectionnewspapers.com

Great Falls
CONNECTION

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NEWS

Saturday in Great Falls in Time of Pandemic

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and resulting pandemic continue to affect life in Great Falls. Here are the photos taken in Great Falls last Saturday, March 21, as residents adjust to business closures and social distancing measures for an indefinite period of time.

PHOTOS BY JENNIFER FLANAGAN/
THE CONNECTION



On a Saturday, when the weekly Katie's Cars & Coffee event typically brings visitors from across the East Coast to Great Falls, parking lots were empty. The Old Brogue and Katie's Coffee House offer a drive thru service for now.



A woman turns the corner at the Great Falls Safeway into an aisle that is typically stocked with bread.



The shelves of Safeway that normally display paper towels and toilet paper for purchase are momentarily out of stock.



The playground at the Great Falls Grange park is clear of playing kids last Saturday.



The Great Falls Farmers Market is temporarily closed and the parking lot outside the Grange Hall, where the market is held in the winter, was empty on Saturday.



El Tio, like other restaurants in Great Falls, advertises its take out service amidst the widespread shutdown of on site dining.

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CALENDAR

Editor's Note: Be aware that many events could be cancelled as precaution to the spread of COVID-19. Please check before heading to events. Submit entertainment announcements at www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar/. The deadline is noon on Friday. Photos/artwork encouraged.

ONGOING

Peeps Diorama Contest. At Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. The contest is designed around a book, scene or theme from literature. Entries must be submitted in a standard shoebox, using only Peeps as characters (for examples, Google "Peep Diorama") and turned in with an entry form to the Great Falls Library between April 13-18. Entry is free, and each entrant will receive a coupon for a free book at the Great Falls Library Book Sale. The three prize categories are age 11 and under, ages 12-17, and over 18. The rules are few: no food other than Peeps in the entry, which must be appropriate for public viewing, centered on a literary theme, using Peep figures only, in a standard shoebox, with entry form required. The community will vote on the winners while they are on display in the Library April 20-May 6. Winners will be announced at the Book Sale at noon on May 9.

Vienna Time Machine. At Freeman Store & Museum, 131 Church Street, NE, Vienna. Welcoming visitors to HVI's newest exhibit is a U-2 pilot suit worn by Lt. Col. Sam Crouse. Other timepieces include iconic toys from the decade such as a GI Joe, Etch A Sketch, and Easy Bake oven. Posters commemorate some of the 1960s' most pivotal films, including 2001: A Space Odyssey and Rosemary's Baby. Other posters and images nod to the issues that rocked the 1960s: Vietnam, the Civil Rights Movement, and segregation/integration. HVI encourages visitors to add a personal - and local - touch to the exhibit by sharing their story. A message board accompanying the exhibit will feature anecdotes, historical moments, and personal stories about the decade. The Freeman Store & Museum is open from 12-4 p.m. Wednesday-Sunday.

Hogwart's Vacation Bible School Registration. At Holy Comforter Episcopal Church, 543 Beulah Road, NE, Vienna. The camp dates are June 22-26, 2020 for morning or afternoon sessions. Children 5 through 11 years old are invited to participate in this popular and unique summer camp experience

which explores the Christian themes and lessons in the Harry Potter stories. Holy Comforter Episcopal Church in Vienna is magically converted into Hogwarts School where children attend "classes" taught by favorite professors including Professors McGonagall, Snape, Hooch, and Binns. Teenage prefects lead age level groups to their activities and all students share a closing snack in the Great Hall. This year's theme will be based on book 2, Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets. Registration forms will be in the Church Office and online. More information: http://www.holycomforter.com/Children/Vacation_Bible_School/

an historic site. Visit www.HistoricPleasantGrove.org.

SUNDAY/MARCH 29

Winterfest Hamfest. At NVCC College, Wakefield Chapel Road, Annandale. Members of the Vienna Wireless Society will host their 44th annual "Winterfest" hamfest or amateur radio show along with the 2020 Virginia Section Convention. This event is open to the public. The Convention also features an outdoor "flea market" starting at 6 a.m., indoor vendor sales and radio demonstrations starting at 8 a.m., and conference and convention seminars and events beginning at 9 a.m. Cost of admission is \$10 and parking is free. Visit the website: www.viennawireless.net.

THURSDAY/APRIL 2

AWARE Art Show. 6 p.m. At ServiceSource Community Resource Center, 10467 White Granite Drive, Oakton. The AWARE Art Show began in 2018 to celebrate artists on the autism spectrum during national Autism Awareness month. Each year, this diverse group of artists showcases paintings, sculptures, photographs and more to over 100 community members at-large. During the event, they will have live art sales, raffles, refreshments and music. This event will be hosted by ServiceSource, a leading nonprofit for people with disabilities. Visit www.servicessource.org.

SATURDAY/APRIL 18

NVMR Model Train Open House. 1-5 p.m. At Vienna Historic Train Station, 231 Dominion Road, NE, Vienna. Stop by the Historic Vienna Train Station where you can see and hear HO scale model trolleys and trains including Thomas and some of his friends on display and in operation. Great family fun and activity for the young and young-at-heart. The museum and model train layout was included on Fox 5 "zip trip" must see in Vienna. Hosted by the Northern Virginia Model Railroaders. Free. Visit the website: www.nvmr.org.

MARCH 20 TO APRIL 12

Cherry Blossom Festival Central. At Tysons Corner Center, Second Level outside of Nordstrom, McLean. The public is invited to stop in for free souvenirs, festival schedules and the latest information on activities throughout the region. On March 28, the Center will host its annual National Cherry Blossom Festival Day with a special event from 1-3 p.m. with craft demonstrations, free gifts, and more. Visit <http://www.fxva.com/plan-your-trip/visitor-center>; or call 703-752-9500.

FRIDAY/MARCH 27

St. Salvator's Chapel Choir. 7:30-9 p.m. At St. Luke Catholic Church, 7001 Georgetown Pike, McLean. Music in McLean presents St. Salvator's Chapel Choir of the University of St Andrews, Scotland, conducted by Claire Innes-Hopkins. Freewill offerings will be accepted, reception to follow. Visit MusicInMcLean.org.

SATURDAY/MARCH 28

Free Black History Concert. 3 p.m. At Historic Pleasant Grove Church, 8641 Lewinsville Road, McLean. Featuring the Washington Revels Jubilee Voices in a free concert celebrating African American musical traditions. This event will take place in a quaint 1895 church setting, now

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.

COVID-19 CLOSURES

Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam this week announced a number of COVID-related actions that impact Fairfax County and the entire Commonwealth, including:

- ❖ All schools (public and private) to remain closed at least through the end of the academic year. Fairfax County Public Schools is still considering some form of continuity of learning for its students. The School Board will meet in an emergency session on March 23 to discuss further.
- ❖ Restaurants may only provide curbside, takeout or delivery service.
- ❖ Recreation and entertainment facilities like gyms, bowling alleys and theaters must close.
- ❖ Personal care services like spas, massage parlors and barber shops must close.
- ❖ Essential businesses such as grocery stores, pharmacies and banks may remain open while maintaining social distancing guidelines; grocery stores must increase sanitizing procedures.
- ❖ Non-essential brick and mortar

establishments can stay open if they can maintain the 10-person limit, otherwise, non-essential businesses must close.

- ❖ Gatherings of more than 10 people are still banned across Virginia.

FAIRFAX COUNTY ACTIVATES CORONAVIRUS INFO CENTER

Fairfax County activated a Joint Information Center in response to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) on March 13.

- ❖ **Fairfax County Health Department COVID-19 webpage** - www.fairfaxcounty.gov/health/novel-coronavirus
- ❖ **Emergency Information Blog** (you can subscribe by email or follow by RSS) - www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/blog
- ❖ **Coronavirus (COVID-19) Call Center** - The community may call 703-267-3511 with questions. The call center is open from 9 a.m. until 9 p.m. weekdays and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekends.
- ❖ Residents may also text FFXCOVID to 888777 to receive updates from Fairfax County about COVID-19.

- ❖ **Twitter** - @fairfaxcounty and @fairfaxhealth
- ❖ **Facebook** - www.facebook.com/fairfaxcounty and www.facebook.com/fairfaxcountyhealth

PARKS, LIBRARIES, MCC CLOSED

Effective Monday, March 16, all Fairfax County Park Authority (indoor) parks, libraries and community facilities are closed to the public until further notice. This includes recreation (RECenters), nature, community, resource and teen centers, golf courses, historic sites, athletic fields and picnic shelters. SACC will not offer any spring break services, as previously planned. In addition, the McLean Community Center (MCC), The Alden Theatre, the Old Firehouse Center and the McLean Project for the Arts will remain closed through Sunday, April 12. All classes, activities and performances are canceled.

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FACEBOOK PAGE FOR VIENNA BUSINESSES

The Vienna Business Association has created a Facebook page to share information to the business community, as well as information you will find helpful including what businesses are open, hours, etc. Visit the website: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ViennaVABusinessNews/>

GIANT FOOD SHOPPING HOURS FOR SENIORS

Giant Food Store will offer dedicated shopping hours for senior citizens 60-and-older and individuals with compromised immune systems, effective March 20. Every store in our operating areas will reserve 6-7 a.m., every day of the week for this vulnerable population to shop and practice social distancing. The stores will operate on regular hours of operation during all other times. We continue to work on restocking our shelves and will be ready to serve to the best of our ability.

SBA OFFERS DISASTER ASSISTANCE

The U.S. Small Business Administration is offering low-interest federal disaster loans for working capital to Virginia small businesses suffering substantial economic injury as a result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). The disaster declaration makes SBA assistance available in the entire state of Virginia. Applicants may apply online, receive additional disaster assistance information and download applications at <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela>. Applicants may also call SBA's Customer Service Center at (800) 659-2955 or email disastercustomerservice@sba.gov for more information on SBA disaster assistance. Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing may call (800) 877-8339. Completed applications should be mailed to U.S. Small Business Administration, Processing and Disbursement Center, 14925 Kingsport Road, Fort Worth, TX 76155. The deadline to apply for an Economic Injury Disaster Loan is Dec. 21, 2020. For more information about Coronavirus, visit: Coronavirus.gov. For more information about available SBA resources and services, visit: SBA.gov/coronavirus.

ORANGE LINE CLOSURES

Beginning this Memorial Day, the Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA) will be closing three Metrorail Orange Line stations for full platform reconstruction and major station improvements. To expedite construction and minimize customer inconvenience, Vienna, Dunn Loring and East Falls Church Metrorail stations will be closed from Saturday, May 23 through Monday, Sept. 7, 2020, to allow for around-the-clock work. The station closures are part of WMATA's three-year Platform Improvement Project that will completely reconstruct the outdoor platforms at 20 Metrorail stations, making them safer and more accessible for customers with disabilities, while also addressing safety concerns and longstanding structural issues.

During the shutdown, Metrorail service will be reduced between Ballston and West Falls Church on the Orange Line, and between Ballston and Wiehle-Reston East on the Silver Line, as trains will be required to single track through the work area:

- ❖ West Falls Church Station will serve as the western terminus of the Orange Line.
- ❖ Orange and Silver line trains will pass through East Falls Church station, which will be closed to customers, using a single track.
- ❖ Between West Falls Church and Ballston-MU on the Orange Line, and between Wiehle-Reston East and Largo Town Center on the Silver Line, trains will operate every 16 minutes throughout the day, and every 20 minutes during late night hours.
- ❖ Extra Orange Line trains will be deployed at Ballston-MU, so Orange Line service will increase to every 8 minutes between Ballston-MU and New Carrollton (Monday – Saturday only).
- ❖ Blue Line trains will operate every 8 minutes throughout the day to coordinate service (Monday – Saturday only).

WMATA will be providing free shuttle bus service in the impacted area partially replacing the trains along the Orange Line. Fairfax County commuters should also consider using Fairfax Connector express bus routes:

- ❖ Fairfax Connector Express Route 698 - Vienna Metrorail Station to the Pentagon

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Risking a Reward



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

In my 11-plus years as a lung cancer “diagnossee,” I’ve done a pretty good job of facing the facts and acting/planning accordingly. I’ve accepted my reality and somehow managed to live so long beyond the original “13 month to two year” prognosis I was given by my oncologist that he has introduced me to some of his students as his “third miracle.” Unfortunately, this characterization is not the end of the story.

In retrospect, dealing with/being treated for one type of cancer (non small cell lung cancer) seemed easy enough. Soon, I’ll be getting treated for two types of cancer: papillary thyroid cancer stage 2, in addition to my pre-existing stage 4 lung cancer. And since the treatments are not identical and cannot occur simultaneously, I’ll be receiving treatment for my thyroid cancer first and deferring treatment for my lung cancer until at least mid April. That’s when I have my next scheduled appointment with my oncologist when no doubt we’ll discuss strategy and all treating me forward.

In the interim, to address the thyroid cancer, I will be spending a night at the Washington Hospital Center. This will occur after I receive a dose of radioisotopes, a type of nuclear medicine designed to target and kill any remaining thyroid cancer in my body wherever it might be located. What happens after my “overnight” and subsequent follow-up appointment with my endocrinologist has yet to be discussed. What little I know is that I’ll need a pre- and post-procedure CT scans and that upon release from the hospital, I’ll need to be quarantined for a few days (away from children and pets primarily).

Hoping my body responds as anticipated, I’ll presume there will be some kind of maintenance-type of treatment for my thyroid cancer which will likely be combined with the restart of my lung cancer treatment. But I don’t really know. But what I really do know is that doctors, generally speaking, don’t want to consider scenarios about what might happen if such and such or so and so happens, or not. Though I’m sure there’s a reasonable expectation of something or other happening, my experience has been that doctors divulging what might happen (treatment/procedure etc.) next, since there are so many variables/results yet to be considered, is unlikely. Though I will still ask my fair share of questions about my future, ultimately, all I can do is wait and see.

Ordinarily, as in how I’ve managed since my diagnosis, being uncertain about the next medical step has been no problem. I realize that answer would likely be somewhere between a house of cards and definite maybe anyway, always depending. Now add to the mix of uncertainty, the coronavirus that has “pandemicked” the country. As a result of its spread, will I be prevented/rescheduled because the hospitals are overwhelmed? After all, I am the poster child for possible victims: male, over 60, weakened immune system with a severe underlying medical condition. I’m the exact person they don’t want to see at the hospital. Yet, if I don’t go/receive approval to go, I doubt I’ll get any better at home without treatment. In my case, I don’t believe leaving well enough alone is going to work very well.

Still, my choices feel almost counterintuitive. I have to risk my life (leave my home) in order to possibly save my life (cancer treatment) away from home. I can’t do one without the other. To receive treatment, I’ll have to expose myself, potentially, to the exact complication that my lung cancer diagnosis makes me most susceptible to: breathing issues. However, if I don’t/can’t, I’ll be worse off than if I hadn’t. Nor do I feel as if I can wait until the virus is more under control. Control which seems unlikely in the near term. And in every term (short, medium or long), the cancer is not going to wait. I sure hope I won’t have to either.

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

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