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 PAGE 6

Students submitted photos in spirit gear to the staff of Chesterbrook Elementary School to spread love and support. After a month-long break from in-person schooling, FCPS schools were set to begin distance learning on Tuesday, April 14.

Back to School Through Distance Learning

Life in McLean in Time of COVID-19

VIEWPOINTS, PAGE 3

Vienna Police Highlights

NEWS, PAGE 5

NEWS, PAGE 3

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED
 OPINION, PAGE 4 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 6

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WEEK IN McLEAN

Vinson Hall Resident, Three Staff Members Positive for COVID-19

On Friday, April 10, Vinson Hall Retirement Community (VHRC) announced that three staff members have confirmed cases of COVID-19. On Saturday, they announced that a resident has tested positive for COVID-19. Libby Bush, VHRC CEO, in a letter sent on April 10 to VHRC residents, staff, and families, said:

"It is with a heavy heart that I share with you that a VHRC resident, who lives in Arleigh Burke Pavilion Assisted Living, has a confirmed case of COVID-19.

Our team alerted the Fairfax County Health Department, who has been exceptionally helpful and supportive. We will continue to work with them closely to do all we can for this resident and all others.

As our team continues to work tirelessly and endlessly to fight this infectious disease, our top priority remains the same – the safety and well-being of all residents and our dedicated staff."

Earlier this year, VHRC expanded existing infection protocols to include preparing for the emerging COVID-19 situation. VHRC senior leadership and other relevant staff, led


by a Registered Nurse (RN) Infection Preventionist, have communicated regularly to review existing VHRC infection control procedures and to create new procedures specially crafted to the COVID-19 situation. Major steps of this process include, but are not limited to:

- ❖ In February, they started sharing focused COVID-19 educational information with residents and staff.
- ❖ Starting in early March, they established a COVID-19 Emergency Operations Team, which has taken progressive and responsive strides to enhance infection control measures, including:
- ❖ Starting March 8, all visitors and staff, upon entry into VHRC, are screened regarding travel and health.
- ❖ Starting March 13, visitors are restricted campus-wide.
- ❖ Starting March 28, actions were taken to mask all direct care and dining staff members.

"Our team has been preparing for several weeks for this probability of our first case, and immediately transitioned from our COVID-19 preparedness plan to our containment plan," said Bush.



Dr. Motesharrei



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Students submitted photos in spirit gear to the staff of Chesterbrook Elementary School to spread love and



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Back to School Through Distance Learning

FCPS students, educators explore new ways of learning.

BY JESSICA FENG
THE CONNECTION

After a month-long break from in-person schooling, FCPS schools are set to begin distance learning on Tuesday, April 14. Over this break, educators have been working to develop systems that enable all students to participate and learn. Although some teachers have experience guiding online classes, a completely digitized school network is a new experience for all.

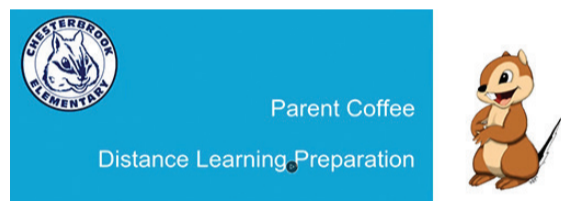
The addition of the FCPSON program for high school students ensures all students have a county-issued laptop. A problem, however, arises if students don't have WiFi at home. History and Social Studies teacher Rachel Baxter of McLean High School recognizes the importance of teacher-student communication in solving such problems.

"The county worked to ensure that all students have access to WiFi at home. While this is going to close many gaps for our high school students, we must also recognize that it can't fix all issues of equity. Therefore, teachers will have to approach distance learning with immense flexibility and be sure to support our students however we can."

DISTANCE LEARNING is not only a major change for students but teachers as well. Stacy Kirkpatrick, a principal at Springhill Elementary School, shares the team effort the school staff undertook to make distance learning possible.

"Teachers received training in multiple tools for distance learning during the week of March 30. While we are teaching in a way that no one ever anticipated, our teachers, aides, and office staff embraced learning new tools that would allow us to engage with our students and bring lessons to them through distance learning. Our staff has worked together, shared ideas, set up practice sessions and spent a lot of time redeveloping curriculum so it would be accessible for our students on April 14."

Although online school cannot replace the experience of in-person teaching, the addition of the online classes will provide the best-structured remote school



Mrs. Stacy Kirkpatrick, Principal
Dr. Liz Bealy, Assistant Principal
Mrs. Kathleen Fugle, Instructional Technology Specialist



day possible. Kirkpatrick comments on the sudden changes caused by the shutdown.

"Across Northern Virginia, we are all so used to a heavily structured school day that may follow with sports, music lessons and homework. On March 13, the structure we all knew was suddenly gone and I hope that distance learning will bring back a sense of normalcy and support that our students are used to."

THROUGHOUT THIS TRANSITION, there are bound to be obstacles in this unconventional teaching method. Baxter encourages everyone to accept the changes and work to the best of their abilities.

"I hope that everyone keeps in mind that this isn't normal and that we all approach this with grace. This is new for teachers, and many teachers are now trying to juggle online teaching with all of their responsibilities at home. Students are also struggling and trying to handle a loss of their normal lives for several months. We are all going to do the very best we can, but the most important thing we can focus on right now is the health (both mental and physical) and safety of students."

Even with all the accommodations put in place by educators, a different level of understanding is anticipated with the curriculum. Kirkpatrick affirms there will be adaptations in the next school year's educational planning.

"We do anticipate there to be learning loss to a greater degree than a typical summer break. We have a strong system in place to understand where students are performing. When they return in August, we will assess students as we usually do and if there are standards of the curriculum in which they need more support, it will be provided. We will weave in lessons that all students need, provide small group interventions for some and make individual accommodations that may be needed to help students continue to grow academically, socially and emotionally."

VIEWPOINTS

Life in McLean in Time of COVID-19

— JESSICA FENG

Melanie Chuh, student, Mclean:

The pandemic has somewhat made my days more productive in that the hours I spend on the road each day are now used for other things. However, the pandemic has made me lazier in that I haven't really done anything school-related



George Sachs, Director, Mclean Community Center:

My daily routine hasn't changed except for making sure I have a mask when going out of my house. I come into work daily first thing in the morning, log on and follow up on email messages. Then I start communicating with staff on what they are working on. The main difference is that staff are not here at the Community Center because we are closed and most are teleworking from their homes.



Rohan Mani, student, Mclean:

The pandemic has caused me to learn new hobbies and try to fill out my time productively with the resources I have. It has also caused me to have a greater appreciation for what I had before the quarantine.



Deb Bissen, director of communications, McLean Project for the Arts:

This crisis has certainly changed the way we're working, now all in our own spaces connecting virtually through ZOOM and phone and email, but our mission remains the same. All of us at McLean Project for the Arts are challenging ourselves to stay connected to our community of art lovers and supporters by using this "pause" in our daily lives to explore new, virtual ways to share the contemporary art we've exhibited over the years, to convert our visual art classes to online offerings, and to utilize our community partnerships to continue to share ArtReach visual art activities.



Marnette Myers, director of tax administration, Mclean:

As a CPA in charge of the tax practice of the Washington Metro office of Prager Metis CPAs LLC, my professional life has been turned upside down. For us tax season generally means 7 days a week for 3 months, constantly meeting with clients and colleagues as we strive to meet the tax filing deadlines. The COVID-19 crisis has changed so much of what we do, and not just because the tax filing deadlines have been extended. There are no more face-to-face meetings with clients or colleagues. Our meetings are now done online or by telephone while we primarily telework.



No Good Choices

BY KENNETH R. "KEN" PLUM
STATE DELEGATE (D-36)



My columns written over the couple of weeks after the ending of the annual General Assembly session this year as you may remember were filled with excitement and superlatives about the great work that had been accomplished this year. I even described the budget that was passed for the next two years as being the best on which I had voted over my legislative career.

COMMENTARY Many goals including to better fund education, mental health, homeless prevention, environment and other areas were not only met but were funded at historic levels.

Then suddenly, "poof," the good news ended as the world sank into the COVID-19 crisis and the resulting economic collapse. Monies that had been projected to be received to support the very real needs of the Commonwealth as reflected in the budget we passed evaporated. The General Assembly is scheduled to meet on

April 22 in a reconvened session to consider the Governor's recommendations on legislation we passed including amendments that are needed to keep the budget in balance. Extra precautions are being taken for the meeting because of the coronavirus pandemic, but the meeting will be very painful for the decisions that must be made on the budget. There are no good choices.

Virginia has an all-time high in rainy-day reserve funds of about two billion dollars. Those funds are built up in the good times to serve as a cushion in challenging times like now. Ideally reserve funds would be drawn on over the duration of the recession rather than being fully exhausted at the beginning, but the unknown is the length of the economic recession. Virginia has historically taken a very conservative approach to dipping into its reserves and is likely to once again with the high level of uncertainty about the future of the economy. While federal funds are expected to be made available to the states, the amount and timeline for assistance may be even more unpredictable than the fu-

ture strength of the economy.

The tendency in budgeting is often to make reductions in those items last added to the budget and to protect more established programs. Such an approach at this time would put in jeopardy an increase in the minimum wage that affects state employees as well as those in the private sector. We are way past time to increase the measly \$7.25 minimum wage that we had approved to go to \$9.50 in January. I agree with the argument of advocates who insist that increasing the minimum wage would help with economic recovery because that increase would go immediately back into the economy as it is spent on groceries, rent, transportation and other necessities. The same argument applies to salary increases for teachers and state employees. These workers with the lowest of incomes should not bear the brunt of the declining economy. More difficult decisions face us in a budget that proposes increases to programs that help the homeless, increase funding for preschool education, expand programs for persons with special needs, and expand environmental protection among others. There are no good choices!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Rep. Wexton Shows Leadership on Coronavirus Legislation

To the Editor:

I am impressed by Rep. Jennifer Weston's (D-VA-10) leadership role in combating the Coronavirus and her communications to constituents about the challenges we face. In her first term representing the 10th District of Virginia in the U.S House of Representatives she has tackled important issues impacting her constituents. If you haven't yet seen it, go to her congressional website (Wexton.house.gov) and

click on the link for COVID-19. You will find a Coronavirus Constituent Guide and links to important state and local resources. The information she gives us is straightforward and based on CDC guidelines. Her words of encouragement give me hope. She championed The Families First Coronavirus Response Act and its emergency paid sick leave, free coronavirus testing, extension of unemployment benefits, and special funding for critical safety

net programs. And she led the effort to include protection of retirement savings in the act. Previously, she was on board with \$8.3 billion in emergency funding to support our state and local needs, light a fire under the development of a vaccine, and fund treatment options for people who contract the virus.

There is nothing partisan about her. She says she is driven by facts and science and her voting record

bears that out. She represents real people with real needs and she is not afraid to speak out on our behalf. She respects federal workers who work each day to do the people's business and she wants to do right by them.

She has the right stuff for the VA-10th and has a promising future as a national leader in the Congress.

J. Jay Volkert, Ph.D.
Vienna

Maintain Distancing and Respect Quarantining

To the Editor:

There is no way to ignore the impact that covid-19 is having on the world although some still seem to be "ostriches" (homework: research the reference) of their communities. The infection is happening "over there" and will not impact my family or friends. I have used Facebook to lighten the mood and share funny memes because no matter how scary the world can be we need a place to laugh and to breathe.

Isolation is tough on many and certainly my extroverted self yearns for that contact. But helplessness is another.

I write this post as a close family member struggles in ICU with covid-19. We do not know his prognosis, but he is a fighter. This post is not for thoughts or prayers (although those are certainly welcome) but rather to recognize the

impact the terrible virus is having on people around you. I write this so people know that it is directly impacting those they know; not some distant disease in another part of the world or even the USA.

This helplessness comes from not being able to comfort him or his family beyond a telephone call. It is not being able to be with a mother whose son is currently extremely ill and she is alone. It comes from not being able to help the spouse who is also showing symptoms.

Helplessness is not hopelessness though and hope is not gone.

With this post I hope that you will maintain social distancing and respect quarantining. As far as we know this relative caught it at a Walgreen's by someone who was carrier. Repeat at a pharmacy. He was not trying to sneak into a hospital or avoid parameters. He was

not at a bar or the beach. I still see posts that state well we should be able to get back to normal soon because "normal" allows us to reduce stress and is a way to cope with the unexpected. Everything is unexpected now and that could be the new normal. This means young and old alike need to respect the disease and while you may have a slight cough your carelessness could be debilitating or deadly for another.

This post is not about a list of do's and don't's as there are plenty of those around (read them). It is about making this situation real for some who see it as faceless victims or numbers in some distant war. It is for those who do not acknowledge the severity by saying let's celebrate the ones who have survived. That fact is important too, but should not be separated from the damage and long impacts

this terrible virus will have on our own humanity.

Richard A. Stevens, Jr., Ph.D.
Herndon

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VIENNA POLICE HIGHLIGHTS

The following summary contains various incidents of general interest as well as vehicular crashes handled by the Town of Vienna, Virginia Police Department from April 3 – April 9, 2020.

INCIDENTS

Domestic Assault -- Maple Avenue, West Between March 1 at 12:01 a.m. and March 24 at 12:01 a.m. A resident reported ongoing physical abuse by her boyfriend. The resident did not wish to pursue charges at this time.

Suspicious Event -- 200 Block Cedar Lane, SE March 15, 12 p.m. A resident reported that she recently met a man over social media. She has since been receiving multiple harassing calls from unknown people. She believes the man has been giving her number out to others.

Emotionally Disturbed Person -- Beulah Road, NE March 25, 3 p.m. Officers responded to the report of a juvenile who was upset and was threatening to harm himself. The juvenile calmed down while speaking to officers, and he agreed to speak with healthcare professionals who were responding to the home to assist him.

Destruction of Property -- 200 Block Berry Street, SE Between March 29 at 1 a.m. and March 30

at 9 a.m. A resident reported that someone broke one of the windows to his home. No entry was made to the residence.

Arrest – Noise Ordinance Violation -- 465 Maple Avenue, West April 4, 7:45 a.m. An officer responded to the report of a noise complaint coming from the Wawa construction site. The officer observed a work crew performing various tasks and spoke to the supervisor. The supervisor, who was aware of the Town Noise Ordinance, was issued a summons. Ofc. Longerbeam charged the 49-year-old man from Fredericksburg, Va, with Construction Noise Violation and released him on his signature.

Arrest – Drunk In Public -- Wolftrap Hotel 430 Maple Avenue, West April 4, 1 p.m. An employee reported a man who was intoxicated in the parking lot. The officers located the man in the parking lot and, upon the officers' interaction with the man, they detected signs of impairment. Ofc. Longerbeam arrested the 25-year-old man from Tyson Oaks Circle in Vienna. He was transported to the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center and charged with Drunk In Public.

Domestic Dispute -- Fairway Drive, NE April 4, 10:46 p.m. Officers responded to the report of an

argument between a resident and his parents.

Arrest – Trespassing -- Glyndon Park 300 Glyndon Street, NE April 5, 3:40 p.m. The Director of the Town's Parks and Recreation Department requested assistance with two men who were trespassing on the tennis courts. The tennis courts were recently closed to the public, and the men climbed the fence to enter the courts. When the director spoke to the men, they became disorderly with her and refused to leave. Ofc. Gucwa charged the two men, a 32-year-old man from Orrin Street, SE in Vienna, and a 33-year-old man from North Edgewood Street in Arlington, with Trespassing. Both men were notified that they are trespassed from all Town parks, and they were released on their signatures.

Open Door -- 500 Block Kingsley Road, SW April 5, 11:14 p.m. A citizen reported suspicious noises coming from a house under construction. Officers found an unsecured door and searched the residence. No one was found in the house, and nothing appeared to have been disturbed.

Police Service -- 1000 Block Cottage Street, SW April 6, 8:44 a.m. A resident turned in ammunition for destruction.

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Delight in our **HomeLifeStyle** sections, the second week of every month. Peek at the top real estate sales, glimpse over-the-top remodeling projects, get practical suggestions for your home.

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Working from Home with Children

Juggling the role of parent and employee.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

It's been nearly one month since the coronavirus pandemic led to school closures and teleworking. With most schools closed for the remainder of the academic year, parents are left with the dual responsibility of teacher and employee.

"Times have greatly changed and now everyone is trying to adjust to a new reality," said Bethesda therapist Carol Barnaby, MSW, LCSW. "I have heard from many patients who feel that they are currently a bad parent, worker, and spouse."

"Couples are fighting daily about whose career is more important in regards to who will watch the children during conflicting conference calls," continued Barnaby. "Others feel bad that their children are on their own all day while they are locked in a room working."

For those who are struggling with this balancing act, reality testing your self-expectations can offer relief, suggests Barnaby.

"Is it realistic to expect that you are going to be able to conduct business as usual while you have toddlers needing constant entertainment, school children who need school help or are fighting over devices or teens who want to sleep all day and stay up all night?" Barnaby asks. "The answer is no, it is not realistic. In normal times we would not expect someone to watch their toddler while trying to conduct business meetings. We would think that it was an absurd expectation."

Distance learning with children while simultaneously working from home is a new experience for most. Parents cannot work, teach and parent all at once. "Parents and children should develop a flexible schedule

and specify locations for each to do their work," said Jerome Short, Ph.D. Associate Professor of Psychology, George Mason University. "Parents should discuss with their work colleagues the specific times each day they can do work-related communications."

Since the usual boundaries that separate settings and activities throughout the day are absent, it's important to create them, advises psychologist Stacie B. Isenberg, Psy.D. "Set hours for school or work and hours for leisure and family time," she said. "This allows for quality time and experiences in each camp. Of course the ability to do this will depend upon the age of your children and the type of work you do."

"Communicate about times when quiet and lack of



PHOTO BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

Working from home in the age of coronavirus is stressful for parents.

interruption is essential, and clearly distinguish from times when you are available for questions and helping your child," continued Isenberg. "Identify specific activities that your kids can do on their own [such as] drawing, reading and throwing a tennis ball against outdoor steps."

Once a routine or schedule is established, writing and posting can create organization, says Barnaby. "This will allow children to interrupt parents less and to know when it is a good time to seek help," she said. "It will also give them a plan for their days."

If possible, designate a workspace for each family member, suggests Isenberg. "In order to stay organized and feel in control of your work, it is important to have your own work area in which to keep your belongings," she said. Scheduling time for physical activity can help minimize the impact of not having access to playgrounds, movie theaters and museums. "Have exercise time every day," said Isenberg. "Not only is it good for your overall health, but it helps with mood and we all need a little extra moving

and stretching from all of the sitting in front of computer screens. "Even if you don't have much space, getting outside every day is therapeutic. The sunshine, fresh air, and change of scenery will help everyone decompress and improve their moods."

and stretching from all of the sitting in front of computer screens. "Even if you don't have much space, getting outside every day is therapeutic. The sunshine, fresh air, and change of scenery will help everyone decompress and improve their moods."

"Is it realistic to expect that you are going to be able to conduct business as usual while you have toddlers needing constant entertainment, school children who need school help or are fighting over devices or teens who want to sleep all day and stay up all night?"

— Bethesda therapist Carol Barnaby

"Getting outside every day is therapeutic. The sunshine, fresh air, and change of scenery will help everyone decompress and improve their moods."

— Stacie B. Isenberg, Psy.D.

McLean & Great Falls Quarterly Market Analysis of Home Sales (Based on List Price):

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2020 1st Qtr Total Sales: 241						
Zip Code	>\$3 Mil	\$2-3 Mil	\$1.25-2 Mil	\$1-\$1.25 Mil	\$750k-\$1 Mil	<\$750k
22101	6	9	37	11	31	2
22102	1	1	12	10	8	53
22066	1	2	18	13	24	2
Total:	8	12	67	34	63	57
Combined Total Upper Brackets:			87			
			Combined Total Lower Brackets: 154			
2019 1st Qtr Total Sales: 197						
Zip Code	>\$3 Mil	\$2-3 Mil	\$1.25-2 Mil	\$1-\$1.25 Mil	\$750k-\$1 Mil	<\$750k
22101	3	9	17	11	31	10
22102	0	2	7	10	11	45
22066	0	2	17	8	7	7
Total:	3	13	41	29	49	62
Combined Total Upper Brackets:			57			
			Combined Total Lower Brackets: 140			
2010 1st Qtr Total Sales: 169						
Zip Code	>\$3 Mil	\$2-3 Mil	\$1.25-2 Mil	\$1-\$1.25 Mil	\$750k-\$1 Mil	<\$750k
22101	2	3	11	9	20	29
22102	0	1	3	7	14	44
22066	0	1	6	5	11	3
Total:	2	5	20	21	45	76
Combined Total Upper Brackets:			27			
			Combined Total Lower Brackets: 142			

Good News on Home Sales

McLean and Great Falls Market: First quarter comparison 2020 to 2019 to 2010.

The first quarter of 2020 has come to a close. January showed the signs of an early spring, February a robust market and March experienced the initial impact of COVID-19. The statistics for real estate transactions in McLean and Great Falls have been tallied. The number of sales are up 22 percent year over year, with 241 total transactions in first quarter 2020 compared to 197 in 2019. The even better news is the market is considerably improved over 2010 which came in at only 169. That represents an increase in sales of 42.6 percent over the last decade. The improvement in the early months of 2020 in the market is likely due to several reasons.

The weather in January and February was more springlike than is typical for the Northern Virginia winter season. There was considerable pent up demand in many segments of McLean and Great Falls. The emergence of COVID-19 later in the quarter led to volatility in the stock market and many

people sought the security of a home as a safe haven. Further many view real estate as a more stable investment.

In light of Governor Northam's Temporary Stay At Home Order effective March 30, 2020, many may wonder how this affects real estate activity in our market area. The good news is that the US Department of Homeland Security Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security (CISA) updated the list of essential services during the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis and expressly included residential real estate. Housing is a basic human need.

The real estate community continues to serve all of our clients in almost all capacities. As professionals we have responded quickly to the current market to provide the best and safest service to all of our clients. Agents continue to list houses for sale, show houses to buyers, write contracts and settle on transactions. With the powerful and nimble technology available to agents today in the

SEE REAL ESTATE, PAGE 7

BULLETIN

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

MONDAY/APRIL 27

Community Conversations: Transportation. 7:30-9 p.m. The General Assembly passed momentous legislation for transportation and transit in 2020. Mark your calendars for this webinar that discusses the impact of the legislation and opportunities to move clean transportation forward in northern Virginia. Webinar address: bit.ly/NOVA-Transportation.

GOVERNOR REQUESTS MOVING MAY ELECTION

Gov. Ralph Northam requested the General Assembly move the May General Election and all special elections scheduled for May 5, 2020 to the November 3, 2020 General Election date to further mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The Governor is also exercising his statutory authority (§ 24.2-603.1 of the Code of Virginia) to move the June primary elections from June 9, 2020 to June 23, 2020. Moving the upcoming May elections requires action by the General Assembly. The plan the Governor is proposing includes the following measures:

There will be one ballot in November. Voters who are qualified in November will be able to vote in November. An individual who was not qualified in May but is qualified in November will be able to vote. All absentee ballots already cast will be discarded. Virginians will have an opportunity to vote for local elected officials in November. Those officials whose terms are to expire as of June 30, 2020 will continue in office until their successors have been elected on the November 3, 2020 and have been qualified to serve.

REAL ESTATE

Good News on Home Sales

FROM PAGE 6

real estate arena, many of these functions have moved to virtual platforms which includes virtual showings and open houses, Zoom meetings, eSigning, and online notary cam closings. And, when activities must be conducted in person, real estate professionals follow CDC guidelines to take necessary precautions for the safety of all parties, which includes maintaining a 6 feet distance from others, sanitizing surfaces and washing hands.

Many people have asked how the market is doing and I am pleased to say that 82 properties in McLean and Great Falls have gone Under Contract since March 1, 2020 and there are 408 in Active/Coming Soon status as of April 1, 2020. Even as we as a nation and world navigate the impact of COVID-19, people still are in situations where they have a need to move!

Karen Briscoe with HBC Group at Keller Williams is an active and experienced Realtor® in the Northern Virginia marketplace. Karen, alongside her business partner Lizzy Conroy and team, works with sellers, buyers, investors and builders in all price ranges. www.HBCGroupKW.com, 703-734-0192, HBCGroupKW.com.

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Money For What, Exactly?



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

I don't know, really. Money comes in. Money goes out. But since I stay in and don't go out, cash is no longer king. Credit reigns supreme and since the accounting/budget system for the Lourie family business is rarely written down/planned for, I don't know from one expenditure to the next, where the money goes, unlike John Prine knew when he sang about "Sam Stone" when he came home.

As the spouse responsible for the business side of the marriage, it has been my job to financially plan what the family can and cannot afford. And since both earners were commission/tip recipients, the task of managing that cash flow, unpredictable as it occasionally was, took some emotional wherewithal. Nevertheless, we survived the ordeal, mostly, and now, as it has happened that all of us are consumed by pandemic-related pressures/procedures, our compensation history/experience has prepared us to ebb and flow with the times. But instead of spending money when we may have it, now we're spending money when the goods and services we need are available, which is similarly unpredictable as our dual incomes used to be.

The result of this inconsistent and 'unpredictable' availability is that when any of the goods and services are available one must buy immediately regardless of cash on hand/in-wallet or credit balance in tow or risk being shut out completely: "No soup for you," from a long-ago Seinfeld episode, so to speak (although my wife, Dina does like soup and therefore it is a regular item on our shopping list.) Accordingly, during these pandemic days, one must strike (buy) when the iron is hot, cash on hand be damned, and worrying about your credit card balance also be damned. We all need what we need in our homes/for our families and lack of paper money is not going to stop any of us from purchasing what staples and peace of mind a piece of plastic can offer. And thank God for those pieces of plastic with the magnetic strip. They're certainly getting a work out these days providing aid and comfort - of a sort, to all of us non-essential people staying at home.

And while we're staying/consuming at home, we're no longer letting our fingers do the walking through our local Yellow Pages. Instead, we're Googling our way instead, pointing and clicking, and then entering our credit card information while trying to keep our respective family business afloat. The evolving problem for me however is accounting for all these purchases and wondering if we're ever going to receive them, how much was actually charged and was the purchase even worth it, given the wait. Still, since we're all housebound, there are so many more purchases that have to be made over the phone/online that what control I used to have when in-person, spending the cash in my wallet, I no longer have. Now, I have to charge almost everything and then wait for the monthly credit card statement for an accounting of what financial damage I may have done. And by that time, 30 days or so later, I likely can't undo any of the damage because the customer-service operators are not available like they were during the pre-pandemic days or in some cases, not even taking calls. Resolution, clarification, compensation? Heck no. All you're likely to get is frustration, and that's after "extended waiting times."

And that previous paragraph's presumption is that I even know what I'm talking about (what I bought, where, when, how much, etc.). But the real point of this column, which concerns me more, is accounting for the purchases that I don't know about/haven't received. It reminds of a joke I once heard, David Brenner, a comedian from Philadelphia and a regular on The Johnny Carson Show tell: "It's not the mosquitoes I hear that I worry about, it's the ones I don't hear."

Three months plus into this pandemic and our new normal has become fairly familiar. The problem is that familiarity has bred some contempt.

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



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1870 Kirby Road, McLean

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Offered for...\$1,539,000

1506 Hardwood Lane, McLean

***AMAZING* 5BR/4.5BA colonial** home in sought-after **Chesterbrook Woods!** This beautiful home features updated kitchen with breakfast bar island, granite counter tops, new appliances, and sunny breakfast nook with bay window. Kit opens to fam rm w/ stone hearth frpl; lovely sun room; main level office with built-ins; gorgeous owner's suite with tray ceiling and luxury bath; expansive walkout lower level with recreation room, wet bar, and French doors leading to sprawling backyard!

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