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Great Falls CONNECTION



Nava Hosseini, right, of Great Falls with Keeyana Nejat last May at Langley High School's college t-shirt day. Hosseini, a rising sophomore at VCU majoring in biology, along with other area students discusses the challenges of returning to campus in a year of pandemic.

Area College Students Prepare for an Unusual Fall

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NEWS



PHOTOS BY MARIN HEBERLIG/THE CONNECTION

First time vendor Bob Andres (middle) and employees of The Big Brine at their booth.

McLean Farmers Market Open at Last

With new safety precautions
in place, the market aims to be
safer than grocery stores.

BY MARIN HEBERLIG
THE CONNECTION

All across the country, COVID-19 has been disrupting businesses. One of those businesses is the McLean Farmers Market, which had its opening delayed by six weeks because of the Virginia health restrictions implemented due to COVID-19. On Friday June 12, the McLean Farmers Market was finally ready to open with some new safety precautions in place. Upon entering the market, there is a one way path through the vendor stalls, and there is a waiting line to maintain social distancing. Additionally, customers are not allowed to touch the produce, and visits are limited to 30 minutes. Robert Andres, a first year vendor at the market, said that the safety precautions had changed the ambiance of the farmers market. Instead of being a place to socialize while browsing the stalls, he said the farmers market is now more business oriented because of new safety policies.

Although the pandemic has caused the McLean Farmers Market to open late, the manager, William Smith, and supervisor, Pam Smith, are optimistic that COVID-19 will boost their sales rather than hurt them. Because of the market's safety policies and outdoor location, Pam Smith believes that the McLean Farmers Market is "safer than grocery stores." In her view, many people who are worried about the health risks at grocery stores, will be more willing to come to the farmers market because it is less crowded, out in the open air, and a safe environment. The market has an older demo-



Feride Ozkan, owner and chef of Ozfeka Catering, working at her booth.

graphic, so the safety policies are appealing to the older customers that are more affected by the virus. As a result, attendance was high on Friday morning, and many shoppers were supporting their local vendors.

The McLean Farmers Market did not need to downsize due to COVID-19. According to manager, William Smith, there are the same number of vendors as there have been in past years. He explained that there are some new vendors, and others that have been at the market for decades.

Every Friday from 8 a.m. to Noon, until Nov. 13, the McLean Farmers Market is in full swing at Lewinsville Park, 1659 Chain Bridge Rd. The market has adapted and will continue to change to maintain safety during this unprecedented global pandemic.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

NEWS

COVID-19: Not a Fair Fight

Regional perspective: pandemic exposes health inequality leading up to discrepancies in life expectancy.

BY KEN MOORE
THE CONNECTION

The population of Fairfax County is 16.8 percent Hispanic but Latinx individuals account for 65.3 percent of positive COVID-19 cases in Fairfax County.

By Sunday, June 14, months into the pandemic, African Americans accounted for 1,154 deaths, more than 41 percent of the total, in Maryland even though they account for 30.9 percent of the overall population.

Arlington's Latinx community makes up 15.8 percent of the county's population, but accounts for 55.5 percent of the positive COVID cases. And Arlington's black population which makes up about 1 in 10 people (9.6 percent) in the county accounts for almost 1 in 4 deaths (24.1 percent).

In Alexandria, Latinx population, which comprises 16.8 percent of the City, has had 55.5 percent of Alexandria's positive cases.

Montgomery County's black population had the highest rate per 100,000 individuals (79). And the African-American population in Montgomery County was the only demographic that had a greater percentage of deaths than its demographic predicts.

THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA Regional Commission concluded that Latinos accounted for a disproportionate number of coronavirus cases in this area.

"The Hispanic or Latino share of cases in Northern Virginia is three-and-a-half times their overall share. All health districts in NOVA have significantly higher shares [for the Latino population]. This indicates significant ethnic disparities in COVID 19 cases."

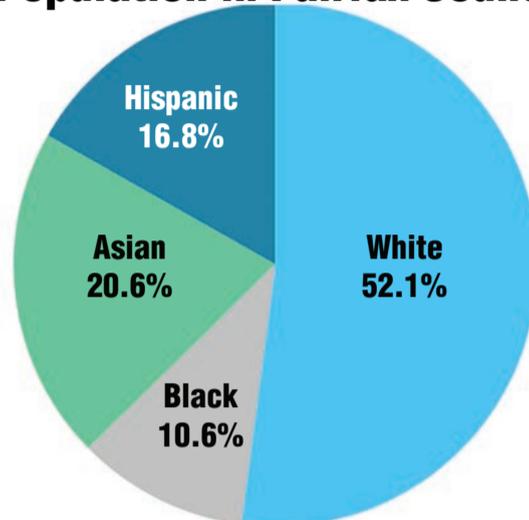
Coronavirus cases by zip code in Northern Virginia also revealed disparities by race, ethnicity and economic status. In the City of Alexandria, zip code 22305 stood out for 579 cases.

"Although viruses do not discriminate, the COVID-19 virus disproportionately impacts vulnerable populations just as other diseases and health conditions do," according to the Alexandria City Government, explaining some disparities.

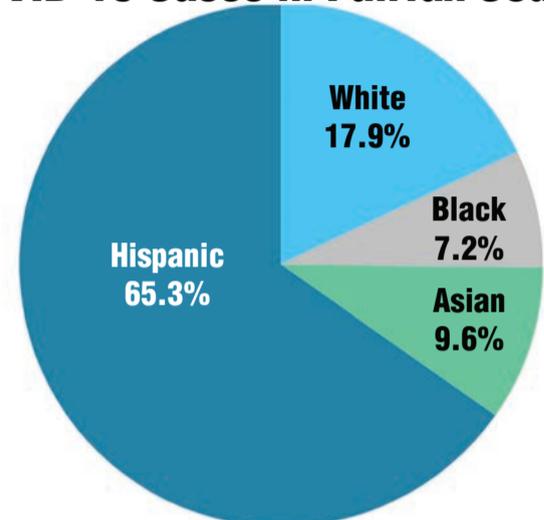
The zip codes with higher concentrations of poverty, lower education levels, and crowded housing conditions tend to have the highest rates of COVID. These people are more likely to work in jobs where they are underpaid, don't get paid sick leave, depend on public transit and don't have telework opportunities, bringing more risk of exposure to coronavirus.

"Inequitable conditions have created disproportionate rates of chronic health issues resulting in large differences in life expectancy across Alexandria. Now, these chronic health issues also make people more sus-

Population in Fairfax County



COVID-19 Cases in Fairfax County



SOURCE: FAIRFAX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

ceptible to severe disease from COVID-19 infection," the city report said.

"**AFFLUENCE** in Northern Virginia masks gaps in health and economic opportunity that have been exacerbated even further by the current coronavirus pandemic," according to the Northern Virginia Health Foundation.

"Although everyone is potentially susceptible to the virus, research shows that people of color and low-income families are especially vulnerable and have higher death rates from COVID-19," said Steven H. Woolf, of Virginia Commonwealth University and the Northern Virginia Health Foundation. "They have greater exposure to the virus, are more susceptible to complications, have greater barriers to health care, are more vulnerable economically, and suffer from deteriorating health caused by deepening economic adversity."

Northern Virginia is a "seemingly affluent area" with good health statistics in general, but life expectancy varies by 17 years within the region, he said. "Economically marginalized communities will face devastating wage losses, unemployment and food scarcity. Low income families will undoubtedly struggle the most to rebound."

THE PANDEMIC has magnified discrepancies that health offi-



Neighborhood Health, a local non-profit community health center serving primarily low-income and uninsured people in Fairfax County, Arlington and Alexandria held a COVID-19 testing day in the Arlandria neighborhood of Alexandria, where 236 residents received free COVID-19 tests on Saturday, May 16.

cials already knew were there.

According to the Arlington County Government, "Arlington rightfully celebrates being highly ranked in many areas, like employment, education and health. However, looking beyond aggregate data and drilling into results in different geographic, ethnic, racial and other often-marginalized groups reveals that health disparities exist among Arlingtonians in these groups. Not everyone is thriving."

According to the Fairfax County health department, "The data does underscore some of the existing disparities in Fairfax which make certain populations more susceptible to exposure and to greater risks from COVID-19 infection, just as they are for other diseases and health conditions."

"Simultaneously, COVID-19 continues to showcase and exacerbate the disparities that exist in our most vulnerable communities," said Fairfax County Chairman Jeff McKay.

"Now more than ever, we know it is the role of our local government to achieve true structural change in our communities. We in Fairfax County must honestly ask ourselves, 'What actions are we taking?; What voices are we lifting up?;' and for me as your Chairman, 'Are our policies affecting systemic change in our community?'"

Black Lives Matter

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



Black lives matter. Period. No further explanation or expansion of the phrase is needed. Do not try to switch the subject by wanting to suggest that all lives matter. For more than four centuries the lives of black people have been degraded. There have been numerous instances during that time when events would have suggested that there might finally be a recognition that black lives do matter. With the American Revolution and the Declaration of Independence proclaiming that all men are created equal one might have concluded that black Americans might finally achieve some semblance of equality, but they did not. With a constitution for the new country, blacks were counted as worth only three-fifths of a person. Virginia and the Southern states seceded from the Union and fought a civil war to be able to keep black people in bondage. After more than 250 years of slavery black people were given

COMMENTARY

a hollow promise with the Emancipation Proclamation. Jim Crow laws replaced slave codes. Many ingenious ways were contrived to keep black people from voting. Lynching was among the ways used to instill fear in black people to keep them "in their place." Police too often became less public safety protectors and more keepers of a divided society where black lives have less value than that of others.

With all this history and more, is there any wonder why leaders who are willing to take a stand are insistent that we keep the message clear: Black Lives Do Matter! Too much has happened to turn our backs on much-needed changes in so many aspects of our society and our governance. When a cop feels that he can grind his knee in the back of the neck of a black man until he dies while three other cops look on, we know that the time has arrived for change. No excuses. Enough is enough.

The General Assembly will take up significant

reforms to our policing and criminal justice system when it meets in August. I look forward to cosponsoring and voting for meaningful bills that will redefine policing, shift resources from policing to community and social services, and reform our criminal justice system. The needs are so extensive that one legislative session will not be adequate to deal with all the needed reforms, but there can be no delay in taking the first very big step forward.

Make no mistake thinking that all that is talked about will be popular. Some will think that if black lives matter their lives and their security will somehow be lessened. Politicians will jump on the divisions that exist in our society and suggest that everyone will somehow be less safe if changes are made. They will twist the meaning of the movement to reform policing, referred to as "defund police" by some, as leaving communities unsafe. The white supremacists among us, and they are more numerous than we might like to realize, will be marching and protesting any changes.

Black lives matter. We are on the verge of making the statement a reality. We cannot falter in our resolve to make it true!

Houses of Worship Will be Open, But Not Their Buildings

The State of Virginia and Fairfax County have told us that we can reopen our houses of worship at fifty percent capacity. We will not be doing so at this time.

Faith leaders bear a special duty. Whether at a mosque for Friday prayers, a synagogue for Shabbat, or services in churches or temples, worship spaces crowded with loving song and prayer present a dangerous risk. We urge everyone to follow the lead of public health officials, who overwhelmingly urge people to continue maintaining social distance. Faith institutions can demonstrate leadership and set an example of love and care for our communities.

As local clergy in Reston, Herndon, and Fairfax, we long to gather in our sacred spaces. We mourn the loss of in-person ritual, fellowship and music. But we are continuing to serve our congregations online. We are convinced that our faiths require us to protect each other's well-being by refraining from gathering in person at this time.

Rather than putting lives at risk, let us instead protect the health and the economic security of

everyone in our community. Each and every person is precious. The time has come to build a society that honors the call to justice and enables life to flourish. We must strongly advocate for economic recovery measures that extend to all -- including lower-wage workers, people who have lost jobs, immigrants, uninsured people, seniors, people who are incarcerated and small business owners. Exclusion is inexcusable.

Our faiths are bigger than any building. Drawing strength from that faith, we mourn our dead and commit to action. Acting in a spirit of love and an ethic of protecting the health of all is the true way to serve the divine and to love our neighbor.

Our buildings may be closed but our work as communities of faith goes on.

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NORTHERN VIRGINIA HEBREW CONGREGATION
Rev. Tim Ward,
RESTORATION CHURCH RESTON



Oakton Neighborhood Hosts a Black Lives Matter Rally

Miller Heights neighborhood of Oakton hosted a Black Lives Matter rally attended by more than 150 people. The speakers at the event included: NAACP Michele Leete, FCPS Board member Karen Keys-Gamarra, Providence Supervisor Dalia Palchik & U Pitt student Liam Bloom, who served as MC.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

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NEWS

ARTSFAIRFAX Provides Emergency Relief and Recovery Grants

By DAVID SIEGEL
THE CONNECTION

“As we move into Phase 2 of openings, the arts community is still suffering the economic impacts of COVID-19,” said Linda S. Sullivan, President & CEO of ARTSFAIRFAX. “We want to provide financial support to artists and art organizations through the newly created Emergency Relief and Recovery Grant.”



Linda S. Sullivan,
President & CEO,
ARTSFAIRFAX

“We hope this funding will meet the immediate needs of those impacted directly from the pandemic. The application is closing on June 29. We encourage artists and art organizations to apply because there is limited funding,” added Sullivan.

provide critical support to Fairfax County and the Cities of Fairfax and Falls Church arts organizations and Fairfax County individual artists most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Emergency Relief and Recovery Grant Program is in lieu of other long-standing grants programs for Fiscal Year 2021.

“The impact of COVID-19 on the Fairfax arts community continues with canceled arts performances, exhibits, festivals, classes, residencies, loss of ticket sales, loss of contract income, loss of arts employment, and closure of arts venues - creating a dire circumstance for the arts sector in Fairfax,” added Sullivan.

“We are committed to supporting the arts in our community,” said Sullivan urging eligible organizations and individuals to apply for the available funds.

WHERE AND WHEN:

ARTSFAIRFAX has announced Emergency Relief and Recovery Grant Program. Grants to organizations will range from \$1000-\$5000 depending upon the organization’s budget size, and individual artists may apply for \$500-\$1000. All eligible applications for the Emergency Relief and Recovery Grant Program will be evaluated by a panel review. To apply including details about eligibility and more visit www.artsfairfax.org

ARTSFAIRFAX aims to assist during COVID-19 pandemic.

Applications remain open for Emergency Relief and Recovery Grant Program until June 29.

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Area College Students Prepare for an Unusual Fall

BY MALLORY CULHANE
THE CONNECTION

Part five of a series.

As a new round of high school seniors are moving on to college in the fall and continuing students get back to campus, it's unclear how college campuses will look due to new precautions to ease the spread of COVID-19 and how it could affect college students' experience.

"I've been so eager to get to school since we've been cooped up at home for so long, I just can't wait to get there," said Anna Keating of Vienna, attending the University of Virginia in the fall as a computer science major. "I'm also kind of nervous to see how they handle the COVID situation and how they'll manage to keep everyone safe."

"I'm very excited to start on time, but I'm also interested to see what kind of precautions my school will take," said Colleen Ryan of Vienna, attending the Savannah College of Art and Design in the fall as a film and television production major. "I think it will take a lot of adjusting for the school and the students."

FOR RETURNING STUDENTS, many are eager to get back on campus to see college friends and have normal classes again, especially after the abrupt halt to in-person classes in March.

"I really love the on-campus life, so having to leave that behind was hard," said Lindsey Stirling of Falls Church, a rising sophomore at Christopher Newport University majoring in business management. "I have to say I'm excited to go back to campus and see all my friends again, but there's definitely a little part of me that's concerned that having all the students back on campus may cause another increase."

With cases rising in many states and the threat of a second wave in the fall, a normal return to campus may be difficult to achieve.

Schools have begun announcing their plans for fall semester, which have included a wide array of precautions. Some schools like Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) are offering hybrid courses, while others like California State University, will hold a majority of in-person courses online.

Regardless of new precautions, some students are still concerned about coming back to campus.

"I am concerned just because schools are packed with people everywhere super close to each other and you don't know where people have been or who they've had contact with," said Nava Hosseini of Great Falls, a rising sophomore at VCU majoring in biology.

Some first-year students are also concerned about how the pandemic could affect their first-year experience.

"I'm concerned about getting [coronavirus], especially since it's the first time I'll be living on my own," said Ryan. "It would be very stressful to handle alongside starting classes and learning to live away from home."



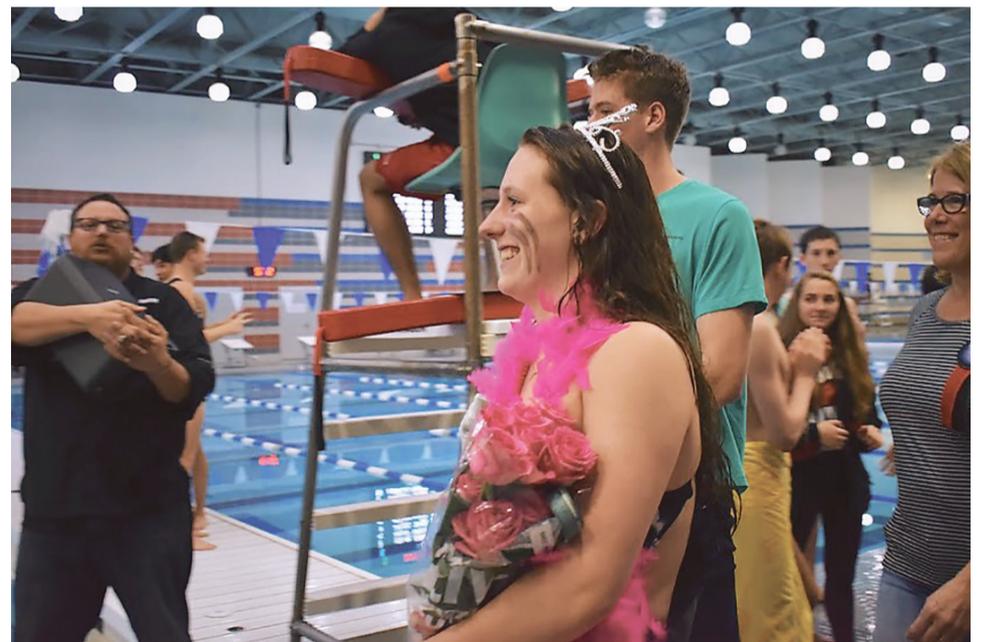
Lindsey Stirling (left) of Falls Church with Adrianna DeSantis (right) at Christopher Newport University's indoor track at the Freeman Center, after their track team won their conference meet in February.



Nava Hosseini (right) of Great Falls with Keeyana Nejat (left) last May at Langley High School's college t-shirt day.



Colleen Ryan of Vienna is attending the Savannah College of Art and Design in the fall as a freshman, and hopes that disruptions from the pandemic, "won't make too much of a negative impact on the starting experience as a whole."



Anna Keating of Vienna celebrating senior night for the James Madison High School swim team in January.

Students are mixed on what precautions would make them comfortable on campus, or prevent an outbreak at their schools.

"I would definitely like the school to encourage students to consistently wash their hands and stop the spread of germs," said Stirling, who also mentions social distancing in classrooms. "I think it's important to teach the students to take the precautions themselves and be conscious of their own health."

"I think they should have tests that are easily accessible to the students," said Keating.

"Everyone should get tested before they come on campus, and then if anyone has symptoms in the future they can go get tested."

SOME STUDENTS also spoke on the matter of tuition. Especially after students across the country spoke up about the difference in education quality with online courses, and also extra fees for services that couldn't be used when not in-person.

"For example, I paid tuition for summer classes which are online and I had to pay a

university fee, library fee, lab fee and a lot more things that the university offers in person that I can't even use," said Hosseini.

Still, many schools have yet to announce plans for fall semester, and with the pandemic changing every day, it's unclear how fall semester will turn out.

"I know that I will try to keep a safe distance and stay healthy but I'm worried about other people's efforts," said Keating. "I don't know how well others will do with maintaining healthy habits."

Discussing Racial Injustice with Children

Books and visual art can help begin difficult conversations.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

As horrific scenes of police brutality and images of passionate protesters fighting for racial justice are ubiquitous in a smartphone and social media obsessed society, parental control over information that children receive can be limited. Framing and discussing such issues can be equally as challenging.

Children pick up on racial injustice earlier than parents might think, so toddlers can begin to learn about injustice early in very basic terms, says Glenda Hernández Tittle, Ph.D. Montgomery College, School of Education. “I think it’s really important to start talking to children about racism and biases early and why it’s wrong that people are mistreated,” she said. “Ask how they would feel if they were treated that way themselves. Research shows that as early as two to three years old, children are quite aware of biases.”

Parents can create a safe environment in which children and young adults can express their thoughts. “Conversations about racial injustice can be difficult, but they are necessary,” said Karen Bentall, a librarian at Oakridge Elementary School in Arlington. “Books can help, [but] I must stress the importance of reading a wide variety of books where children can see themselves and others.”

Reading can give children an appreciation of the experiences of those whose lives are different from their own. “Books can be windows into the lives of others, mirrors to reflect our own experience, and sliding glass doors that allow us to step into other worlds,” said Bentall. “They help develop empathy.”

Literary classics such as Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* can offer a springboard for lively discussions on race, suggests Bentall. “Many parents feel a sense of nostalgia toward their childhood books, but looking at them through a social-justice lens can spark conversations about the insidious bias that has crept into our language, thoughts, and patterns,” she said.

Movies can also give children an opportunity to understand the lives of others. “You can ask questions about characters and why they did what they did,” said Tittle. “You can also ask children about their own peers and who sits with whom at school and how they feel about that.”

The types of characters that children see in books, movies, television and other types of media can have an impact on their cultural and racial understanding. “It’s important for children to see diverse characters in positions of leadership and power,” said Tittle. “Be cautious in selecting. Some classics often perpetuate biases and racists attitudes.”

Visual art is another medium by which children can see and absorb beliefs about the characteristics

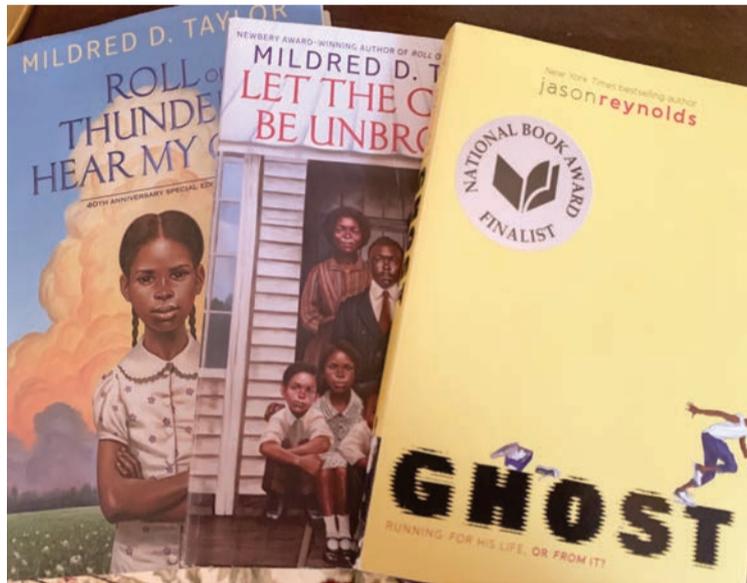


PHOTO BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

The types of characters that children see in books, movies, television and other types of media can have an impact on their cultural and racial understanding.

“Conversations about racial injustice can be difficult, but they are necessary.”

— Karen Bentall,
Oakridge Elementary School

of others. “Looking at art can also be a powerful part of raising awareness of racism and calling for needed change,” said Kathryn Horn Coneway.

One example, says Coneway, is the Four Freedoms Project co-founded by Hank Willis Thomas. “[It] includes multiple versions of images that focus on freedom from fear, freedom from want, freedom of worship, freedom of speech,” she said. “Families can view the original images created by [artist] Norman Rockwell 70 years ago and reflect on how the recreated versions made by the Four Freedoms Project both signify and call for change.”

Parents can encourage their children to be agents of change, suggests Tittle. “Such as, ‘What do you think we should do if we see something like that?’ These prompts go beyond what we’ve typically done and help to develop a culture beyond awareness but also of advocacy and activism,” she said.

Conversations around race should be ongoing, advises Tittle. “Parents will have different comfort levels about talking to kids about these topics and that’s okay, she said.”

An examination of the past can inform current conversations on racial justice. “Though parts of American history can be difficult and even heart wrenching, remain honest about our history, and that while we are proud of some of our history, there are things we didn’t do right and that we need to work to change,” said Tittle. “These conversations should be ongoing.”

lost (adj): 1. unable to find the way. 2. not appreciated or understood. 3. no longer owned or known



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Resilience and Recovery

Cornerstones holds 'A Virtual Town Hall with Fairfax County Officials.'

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Three words characterize Cornerstones' work - stability, empowerment and hope. On Monday, June 8, the nonprofit organization held a Virtual Town Hall with Fairfax County officials from the Dranesville and Hunter Mill districts. Board supervisors John Foust and Walter Alcorn, along with School Board representatives, Elaine Tholen and Melanie Meren, participated. "Our purpose of gathering here today is to give our panelists, an opportunity to talk about the hope that we have for our community and to focus on the practical way, local government can help achieve those goals of Cornerstones and our partners," said Greg White, Chief Operating Officer at Cornerstones.

Facilitators provided additional comments during the dialogue, including Casey Veatch, Principal at Veatch Commercial Real Estate, who moderated the Town Hall. Given their field of expertise, panelists examined topics. They began with an overview of changes and what next year would look like in Fairfax County and their district. Key issues included affordable housing, social programs, work, learning, and more.

FOUST said that when COVID struck, the Board dealt with reduced revenue. "A particular thing that hurt me the most as Chairman of the Housing Committee was we had originally planned to put an additional \$25 million into the housing fund...to help development of new housing units. We were unable to do that, but we have fallback plans... We made the commitment, and we will make the investment," Foust said.

According to Alcorn, he watched what kind of federal contracting money was going to come into the community. He said, "That's really driving a lot of our economy, and if that keeps coming, we'll be okay." Alcorn said the loss of the penny increase for the affordable housing initiative would not change the rebuild course of Embury Rucker Center, the library and needs at Reston Town Center North. The shutdown made visible though they had been warehousing many of the homeless population in the library system. "I think it's now convinced me it's something I want to work with Cornerstones going forward. We need to look at more daytime services, not just check-in but actually, services to provide

Fairfax Co Board of Supervisors



Walter Alcorn
Hunter Mill District

Fairfax Co Board of Supervisors



John Foust
Dranesville District

Fairfax County Public Schools, School Board



Melanie Meren
Hunter Mill District

Fairfax County Public Schools, School Board



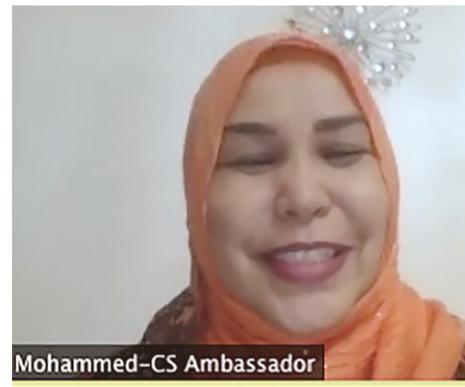
Elaine Tholen
Dranesville District

Panelists participating in 'Resilience and Recovery COVID-19 A Virtual Town Hall with Fairfax County Officials' presented by Cornerstones in Reston on Monday, June 8, 2020.

SCREENSHOTS VIA CORNERSTONES



Kerrie Wilson, CEO, Cornerstones



Mohammed-CS Ambassador

Town Hall Facilitator, Lubna Mohammed, Neighborhood Ambassador, ON-Reston.



Greg White, Chief Operating Officer of Cornerstones

"We know that what the pandemic has just brought home to each and every one of us, is what we see as the chronic nature of what so many in our community face every day. And we're all concerned what happens when the federal money runs out."

— Kerrie Wilson,
CEO, Cornerstones

real futures for our homeless population that they can take advantage of during the day. Not just housing people overnight, but actually ... (putting) people on a path to employment, to self-sufficiency and certainly into housing," said Alcorn.

Foust said that COVID-19 demonstrated the "unbelievable contribution" that low-income workers in the service industries and others made to the community, economy and society. "They deserve an affordable

place to live in that community. On the Silver Line, we have workforce housing that we're looking at now, trying to lower the income levels... for the workforce housing. There will be a very significant amount of that in the Reston and Tyson areas," he said.

According to Veatch, Meren and Tholen each had three Title One schools in their districts with many students from homes where English was not the first language. The representatives discussed how the school system was working with families and partner organizations to ensure students had the support and resources they needed. Meren said federal changes in Title One funding would impact students in the community, "not positively," forcing them to do more with less." One of the things that we looked at...was social-emotional support. Before any child can be ready to learn, if the child is scared or being abused, homeless, hungry, we know that kids can't learn... We are dipping forth in our budget to have additional special education resource teachers throughout the whole division that would assist with students who may have lagged..., and that's any student, not just our vulnerable population; then additionally, ten system-wide social workers," Meren said.

Tholen said that when COVID forced schools to close, food distribution expanded." So far, we've served over 1.2 million lunches and breakfasts... We've distributed over 22,000 laptops and over 2,500 devices

to students." Tholen said teachers formed teams who spoke multiple languages. They reached out to parent liaisons that contacted families to make sure "every student had actually been reached." "Individualized care is so important," she said.

ONE OF THE FINAL conversations centered on affordable, accessible health care and screening. Veatch said challenges due to the coronavirus disproportionately impacted seniors, immigrants, persons of color and other vulnerable members of the community. Foust said, "A lot of those areas involve Hispanic communities. We've got 17 percent of the population in Fairfax County, Hispanic, and over 60-65 percent of confirmed cases of COVID in that community...So we've been targeting testing." He also said the County was sending in nurses at senior housing programs, to train their staff on how to prevent the disease and monitoring them. "There's a lot more we need to do," Foust said.

Alcorn said the County was focusing on assistance to people who could not isolate themselves in their homes. "They may have a three-generation household with literally two bedrooms," he said. Addressing Supervisor Alcorn, Veatch said, "It's ironic here the people working the hardest out there, they're getting the hardest hit, right on the front lines for us... It is incumbent upon us to do exactly what you and Supervisor Foust just said."

Northern VA Family Service; More than a Safety Net for 100 Years

During the Great Depression, they handed out coal and coats. Now, it's an array of services.

BY EDEN BROWN
THE CONNECTION

Ninety-five years ago, Northern Virginia Family Service handed out coats and coal in Alexandria. Today, the organization has a much broader mission and geographic reach throughout Northern Virginia and – in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic – an increased need for its services. Those services include providing food to those experiencing hunger and shelter to those experiencing homelessness, offering mental health counseling to individuals and families including mothers with postpartum depression, offering legal services including to families separated at the border, helping young children get off to a good start, teaching job skills, connecting graduates to employers, and supporting foster care families.

NVFS has evolved over its nearly 100-year history, always remaining true to its mission of helping neighbors in need. That was true after 9/11 when it provided case management support to survivors of the Pentagon attack, it was true after Hurricane Katrina when residents of the gulf relocated to this region, it was true during the Great Recession and during last year's government shut down.

"The remarkable thing is, since the pandemic began, even as most of our staff transitioned to working from home and offering our services remotely, there was never an interruption in those services," said Kathleen McMahon, NVFS's executive vice president for development and communications. "This is what we do. We help individuals, families, and communities in crisis. So, when COVID-19 arrived, we had the infrastructure, the staff, the programs, and the expertise to jump in."

NVFS IS EVERYWHERE in the Northern Virginia area. With headquarters in Oakton, NVFS runs a Hunger Resource Center and SERVE family shelter in Manassas, a Multicultural Center and thrift shop in Falls Church, job skills center in Tysons Corner, and Early Head Start and Head Start programs at multiple locations from Arlington to Loudoun, for example.

During the pandemic, the Hunger Resource Center and SERVE shelter are open while other services are being offered virtually including tele-mental health. The largest food distribution center in the region, the Hunger Resource Center provides food on site and by food transportation trucks to more than 4,000 individuals, as well as to the 92-bed SERVE Family Shelter, annually. "As the HRC operations adjust to the pandemic, food distribution procedures have been modified to streamline the eligibility process, ensuring that our neighbors' needs will be met quickly, while preparing support for new clients to ensure families do not go hungry," said McMahon. "Additional food pick-up hours have been added to accommodate growing de-



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY NVFS

Volunteers distribute food at the NVFS food truck in Manassas.



Stephen Safoschnik and Claude DeHart, on the day in May that they moved out of the SERVE shelter in Manassas and into their own apartments.

mand, and designated hours for seniors have been implemented to lower risk for those more susceptible to the virus."

McMahon said they used to get more food donations, but current shortages are having an impact and the organization has had to purchase food. She is grateful for the support of the Capital Area Food Bank, and U.S. Foods, which donates excess food. Given the increase in new clients, NVFS is trying to balance the demand for food donations with the supply of food. Each family in need receives two weeks of food and hygiene supplies.

THE SERVE SHELTER is also still "client-facing," said McMahon. "While most of the country has been advised to stay home, SERVE shelter staff have remained on the front lines and client-facing to ensure the

shelter remains a safe, healthy, and stable environment for families. We work very closely with the Department of Health," McMahon said. "We've added a lot of protocols with PPE's [Personal Protective Equipment] and cleaning. Clients have been cooperative, and on the rare instance that someone tests positive with COVID-19, they are safely moved into a hotel, through a partnership with Prince William County. To date, there have only been a couple cases of people who needed to quarantine."

Beyond its food center and shelter, NVFS has moved to virtual services for many of its programs during the pandemic. "We have been able to serve 200 of our clients with tele-mental health that is HIPAA compliant, for instance," said McMahon. "We are transitioning our workforce programs to become virtual as well."

More people need emergency assistance right now, which is why NVFS set up a special fund at the start of the pandemic. Its emergency financial fund was created in response to residents struggling to cover rent, medical bills, and utility bills because they had lost their jobs, had their hours reduced or faced other challenging circumstances, and could not make their payments. NVFS is grateful to its partners who have contributed to the fund including, so far, the Community Foundation for Northern Virginia, the Arlington Community Foundation, and United Way of the National Capital Area.

At no time since the Depression has the need for NVFS been as great as it is under COVID-19. With the "can-do" attitude that appears to be a hallmark of NVFS staff, McMahon says: "Though we cancelled our in-person spring 'Road to Resilience' gala, our online campaign demonstrates how eager residents of our community are to help their neighbors in need."

Adds NVFS President and CEO Stephanie Berkowitz: "We have received overwhelming support from individual donors, corporate sponsors, and foundations. And while the online campaign has been very successful, we are still a long way from meeting the escalating need in our community."

NVFS's APPROACH is holistic. "We might see a client for one thing, but he or she may end up getting referred to another part of the organization because they need something else," McMahon said. For instance, families seeking asylum may benefit from legal services as well as mental health counseling. Or a family in need of food may also benefit from job training. NVFS won't abandon its clients midstream, either. As Bianca Molinari Anez says, (see adjacent story), "... we wrap up when we feel the client is at a healthy place."

Many of NVFS's clients are living with trauma, whether they have lost their job, experienced a mental or physical health challenge, or are facing deportation. Essential NVFS programs like family reunification or gang prevention lead to positive outcomes that are not only good for the individuals, but good for families and for the community.

In much of its work, NVFS uses a case management approach. They also frequently collaborate with other local nonprofits, government agencies and others to ensure clients have access to a broad range of resources. Donors appreciate these partnerships because it helps their donations go further.

"Our work never stops," said McMahon, "particularly since we are seeing the mental health of everyone exacerbated by the virus."

In addition to its dedicated staff of experts, NVFS depends heavily on thousands of volunteers who serve on the board and its committees, and in many other capacities. The organization currently has volunteers reading stories to young children virtually and cooking meals on weekends and dropping them off at the SERVE shelter. The website lists volunteer opportunities.

Jessica Clark, a Vienna resident who started out volunteering with NVFS and is now on the board of directors, said, "I started out working with them as a volunteer on the Marketing Committee, but they turned out to be such a great group of people doing such important work that I decided I wanted to make more of an impact and joined the board." This is an organization where the director of the Healthy Families program, Nanci Pedulla, gets out and does deliveries to families herself, and who regularly encourages her staff to take mental health days so they don't burn out.

NVFS sustains its operations with government grants and private contributions. It has received the Platinum Seal from Charity Navigator - which means it has the highest level of fiduciary responsibility and transparency. But with no gala this spring, and a full plate of COVID-19 crisis cases, it will lean heavily on the support of Northern Virginians who can afford to help. To learn more about NVFS, to volunteer, or to donate, see: www.nvfs.org.

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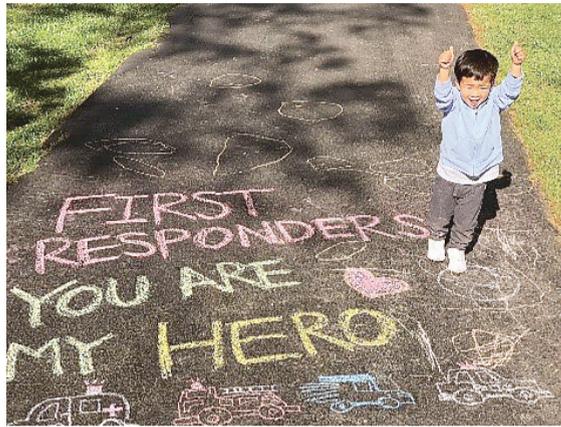
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NEWS



Creche students honored the pandemic's frontline and essential workers by creating driveway art as a show of support.



The Creche was one of the first preschools in the area to offer distance learning. PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Great Falls Preschool Responds to Pandemic

Just three days into Fairfax County Public Schools' decision to cancel classes during the coronavirus pandemic, St. Francis Creche Preschool teachers were using the digital communications platform "WhatsApp" to launch an experimental remote learning program for its young students.

The Creche was one of the first preschools in the area to offer distance learning. "Creche teachers provided a fun and quality program for their students and maintained a connection with them," said incoming Creche Director Cristi Leslie, "The children and parents remained engaged every week, and the education of the students has become a team effort between the teachers and the parents—a wonderful result of distance learning!" The distance learning program modeled the format of a typical Creche week, including movement and music classes, Spanish and German instruction, and science experiments. The program was so successful that the Creche extended it for an additional two weeks beyond the traditional end of the school year, ending June 5.

In early May, Creche students and their families

honored the pandemic's frontline and essential workers by decorating mailboxes and creating driveway art as a show of support for postal workers. "The 'Honoring Our Heroes' project was a tremendous opportunity to teach empathy and gratitude to our children," said Creche Director Jane Ruppe Keihn, retiring this year after 18 years of leading the preschool. At the end of May, Creche students painted "Kindness Rocks" to place in random spots around their community—in parks and other public spaces—to spread joy during this uncertain time. "The children could express themselves through their painting, and get excited about hiding their rocks in the hope of surprising someone and making them happy," explained Leslie.

Creche teachers concluded the 2019-2020 school year by personally delivering "Stay at Home Support Kits" to their families. The kits include "Family Play Plans for Summer," and bubbles, crayons, sidewalk chalk, stickers, playdough, and coloring books. "Our parents have been unwavering in supporting us, and we are here to support them as well," concluded Leslie.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Return to Normalcy at Greenberry's in McLean

Pictured Monday, June 15, at Greenberry's in McLean enjoying a return to normalcy, from left: Carole Herrick, Peggy Howard, KK Piper, Sue Christie, Pam Lucey and Dennis Lucey.

BULLETIN

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

MCLEAN FARMERS MARKET OPENS

The McLean Farmers Market opened on Friday, June 12, 2020, at 1659 Chain Bridge Rd., McLean, VA, 22101. The market will run from June 12 to November 13, 2020 from 8 a.m. to noon.

Directions:

Enter the market. There may be a waiting line. There will be a one-way path through the market.

Follow the one-way path to your vendor's stall. Pick up your paid pre-order, or give the vendor your name and payment.

Vendor will present you with your order.

BROADWAY KARAOKE ON INSTAGRAM

McLean Community Players presents Broadway Karaoke on Instagram on Thursday, June 18, at 7:30 p.m. The community is welcome to join the McLean Community Players on their first-ever Instagram Live Broadway Karaoke night. All you need to do is watch live at <https://www.instagram.com/mcleanplayers> on Thursday, June 18, at 7:30 p.m., and if you want to sing a song, simply request the host to share the screen, and you're the star. You must provide your own karaoke track.

300 BAGS OF LOVE

On Saturday, June 20 at 8:30 a.m., Belong! (a non-profit faith based organization in Vienna) will team with Food for Others, Vienna Presbyterian Church, Christ Church Vienna and Vienna Baptist Church to distribute 300 Bags of Love. This is a drive-through food distribution. Church members are packing the grocery bags with approx. \$35 - \$40 worth of non-perishables. Food for Other will provide 300 gallons of milk and 300 dozen eggs for the distribution as well. This is an add-on to the Vienna Student Food Initiative, which was a Belong! effort to supply grocery cards to families in need throughout the community. To date, the VSFI has accomplished the following:

Belong! continues to take a lead in providing food cards to 6 schools in Vienna. At the end of week 11, they've given out nearly 2,000 food cards for a total of \$49,575, supporting roughly 315 unique families units. Weekly, they support on average 225 families.

Total funds raised as of June 1 for VSFI is \$86,166. Funds remaining will cover an additional 6 weeks of distribution, taking us through mid-July. They will continue to fund-raise to cover families throughout the summer.

How to help: Sign up to pre-pack one or more bags with the prescribed list of grocery items. Try to provide healthy choices (e.g., low-salt, low-sugar, whole grains). Collection and distribution will be at Vienna Presbyterian Church, 124 Park Street, NE, Vienna, VA 22180

CAMP INVENTION JUNE 22-26

Camp Invention, a nationally recognized, non-profit summer enrichment camp program, is changing its in-person program at Colvin Run Elementary School to an all-new, at-home edition of the program called Camp Invention Connect the week of June 22 - June 26, 2020. Camp Invention Connect reaches far beyond what families have come to expect from virtual learning — balancing active, independent hands-on exploration with opportunities for socialization from home. A hybrid program featuring both offline activities and optional online sessions, Camp Invention Connect enables hands-on exploration by delivering a set of four activity kits, packed full of fun materials, directly to each participant. These themed kits, based on the 2020 Elevate curriculum from Camp Invention, are packed with materials that bring imagination, creative problem solving and fun to children's living rooms. The 2020 curriculum includes the modules Camp Invention Flight Lab, Design Thinking Project, Rescue Squad and Camp Invention Champions. Visit invent.org/camp.

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Taking the Results in Stride



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Apparently, I'm back in the lung cancer business. According to the video visit I had June 8 with my endocrinologist, my thyroid cancer has not moved into my lungs where my oncologist thought it might have - given the results of a previous biopsy and some surprising tumor inactivity in my lungs. The 'surprising inactivity' the tumors didn't kill me. Living, as they say is the best reward. And it sure beats the alternative.

Nevertheless, I can't say I'm thrilled with the outcome. All the tumors in my lungs still being non small cell lung cancer squashes my dream that those tumors were curable papillary thyroid cancer (as it had been suggested by my oncologist in a previous phone call) that had moved rather than the originally diagnosed incurable lung cancer which itself had metastasized. In fact, papillary thyroid cancer is called "the friendly cancer," according to one of my oncology nurses at the infusion center. There's nothing friendly about non small cell lung cancer, stage IV.

I was hoping that the diagnosis of thyroid cancer was going to change my life from being cancer-centric to being thyroid-cancer-are-you-kidding? You mean to tell me, after 11 years and four months living as, and being treated for, lung cancer, the actual diagnosis is thyroid cancer? But alas, poor Yorick, 'twas not to be. If what I've been told recently is the absolute-without-a-doubt truth/accurate diagnosis, than I am back on the emotional precipice waiting for the other shoe to drop or at the very least, have one of my socks fall down around my ankles and get all balled up in my sneakers. (Which I hate by the way; when socks get all rearranged like that. I like the heel of the sock to be lined up properly with my heel and the toe of my sock not twisted away from the toes and so forth.)

Once again, I suppose I'll have to pull myself up by my own boot straps, which I don't even own, and step lively, putting one foot ahead of the other and trying not to back up one step for every two I take. I've progressed too far for too long to backslide now. And even though my working thyroid-cancer-instead-of-lung-cancer narrative is now a thing of my medical past, it was sort of fun and uplifting - while it lasted. Now, I have to reconnect with my previous lung cancer reality and try to find some new approaches to living with a "terminal" disease.

It reminds me of what Cpl. Klinger (Jamie Farr) the cross-dresser from the television series M*A*S*H once did when he returned to camp after assisting the doctors off-site at an aid station. He was all business away from the 4077th, but upon his return, a few hundred yards outside "the upholstered toilet seat" as Trapper John (Wayne McIntyre) once called it, Klinger put his female nurses cap back on and reverted to his previous form as a skirt-wearing Section 8 wannabe, and life for him and all the other M*A*S*H personnel returned to their abnormal.

So too must I return to mine: as a stage IV, non small cell lung cancer patient who hasn't died and somehow has managed to keep under the reaper's radar. I mean, how else does one live so far beyond one's original "13 month to two year" prognosis? Granted, I have a good attitude and have made some changes to my diet and lifestyle, but hardly would I characterize my behavior as any kind of poster-boy status. Sure, I've tried to make light of an extraordinarily heavy burden and made lots of jokes in the face of what I was led to believe was certain premature death (what death isn't premature?), but that's more about personality than procedure. I was up for the challenge is all. Not everybody is. As Kenny Beatrice, a long time sports-talk-show host in the Washington DC area used to say: "You can't teach height." Lucky for me, as my late father often said, I was "born with broad shoulders."

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

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