

# CONNECTION

Reston ♦ Oak Hill ♦ Herndon ♦ Chantilly ♦ CENTRE VIEW

Gwyn Whittaker delivers 5,000 2-ply cotton masks sewed by contracted Makers for GreenFare Health and Wellness, to County of Fairfax, Logistics Center at 6800-A Industrial Road in Springfield. (From left) Jason Reinsburrow, Ronald Garner, County of Fairfax Procurement & Material Mgmt. and Gwyn Whittaker, CEO of GreenFare Health and Wellness.

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## Contracted Locally, Makers Sew 45,000 Face Masks

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PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

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## NEWS

### Welcome to Farmers Market

The Reston Farmers Market 2020 team of volunteer market managers. The masked ones are, from left: Fran Lovaas, John Lovaas, Melodie Stehling, Brian Pittack, Anne Strange, Keith Strange and Susan Ellis.



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## Reston Attorney Becomes Virginia State Bar Leader

Jay B. Myerson of Reston is the Virginia State Bar (VSB) president-elect for 2020-2021 and will serve as president for 2021-2022. Myerson, who assumes his VSB president-elect position July 1, will be the first attorney whose law firm is based in Reston to serve in this statewide capacity.

Myerson will succeed current president Brian L. Buniva of Richmond, who was sworn in as VSB president June 30. The state bar president leads a state agency that regulates and supports more than 50,000 Virginia lawyers. The VSB is an administrative agency of the Supreme Court of Virginia.

A graduate of Georgetown University and Georgetown University Law Center, he founded The Myerson Law Group, P.C. and supervises a six-attorney domestic, criminal and civil litigation practice in Fairfax County.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED  
**Jay B. Myerson**

"It will be a privilege to work with the many talented attorneys across the Commonwealth," Myerson said. "I'm especially looking forward to working with the wonderful VSB staff, the Chief Justice and other justices on Virginia's Supreme Court."

Myerson's many community and legal community activities include serving as a past president of the Fairfax Bar Association (FBA). He is a five-time recipient of the FBA's President's Award and was

the 2018 recipient of the Local Bar Leader of the Year Award from the VSB's Conference of Local and Specialty Bars.

Myerson and his wife Barbara are longtime Reston residents. They are the parents of three grown children – Josh, Jennifer Samuelson (Patrick) and Matthew (Annie Savage) — and have a young granddaughter.

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# NEWS

## Use of Force Rises in 2019

Disproportionate treatment of African Americans recorded in every police district in the county.

BY KEN MOORE  
THE CONNECTION

While Black people are less than 10 percent of the Fairfax County population (9.7 percent), they are the targets for use of force by police 46.53 percent of the time. Incidents of police use of force rose from 510 incidents in 2018 to 594 in 2019. Fairfax County Police released its published data on Monday, June 22.

This year, police published use of force data in each police district for the first time. Every police district reported disproportionate use of force against Black community members.

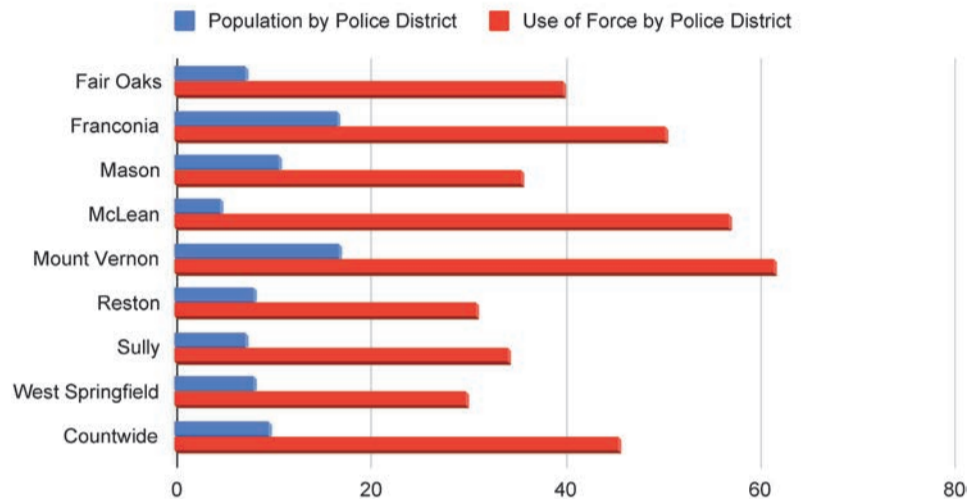
Mount Vernon, McLean and Franconia police districts had the most disproportionate statistics.

In the Mount Vernon District, police used force against Black people 61.72 percent of the time; the population of the Mount Vernon District is 16.94 Black. The Mount Vernon District is where Officer Tyler Timberlake used his taser multiple times on a Black man who did not appear to be a threat on June 5 in Gum Springs. Timberlake has been charged with three counts of assault.

In the McLean district, where African American community members account for fewer than one in 20 (4.69 percent), they were the subject of police force 57.02 percent of the time.

In the Franconia police district, force was

Black People as a Percentage of...



used against Black people more than half the time, 50.66 percent, even though Black people account for only 16.76 percent of the area population.

**ALL POLICE DISTRICTS**, alphabetically:

Fair Oaks, 40 percent use of force against Black people, who are 7.22 percent of the population;

Franconia, 50.55 percent use of force against Black people, who are 16.76 percent of the population;

Mason, 35.64 percent use of force against Black people, who are 10.80 percent of the population;

McLean, 57.02 percent use of force against Black people, who are 4.69 percent of the population;

Mount Vernon, 61.72 percent use of force against Black people, who are 16.94 percent of the population;

Reston, 31.03 percent use of force against Black people, who are 8.24 percent of the population;

Sully, 34.25 percent use of force against Black people, who are 7.3 percent of the population;

West Springfield, 30 percent use of force against Black people, who are 8.1 percent of the population.

THE MOST INCIDENTS of use of force, 87, were in each of the McLean and Mason police districts; police resorted to use of force in the Mount Vernon police district 86 times.

In the entire county, a pointed firearm accounted for 396 of the 1,632 times use of force was used (multiple kinds of force were used in the 594 cases), force to hold in 255 incidents, take down 229 times, and force to cuff 206 times. Use of force includes use of weapons, use of pepper spray, strikes with hands or feet, taser weapons, canine, and more.

In 2018, African American community members were targets of police force 48.6 percent of the time.

The implemented recommendations of the Ad Hoc Police Practices Review Commission, to which FCPD leadership agreed, call for collection and release of more detailed data than has been made available: "Collect data, and publish an annual statistical report, covering all stops, frisks, citations, arrests, and use-of force by district station and magisterial district - include the race, gender, and ethnicity of the individual involved and note whether the suspect is homeless and/or if a mental health crisis is a factor. Document the outcome of each incident and regularly report the collected data to the BOS and the public and post the data online."

"This data is troubling, and we certainly have work to do," said Chairman Jeff McKay. "I also asked the Police Chief to provide a timeline to the Board for the release and publication of all FCPD police stops (to include traffic citations, traffic stops, and arrests). ... Our goal must be increased transparency moving forward."

## Remote or In-School Learning

County families should respond by July 10.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

School reopens for Fairfax County Public Schools students in eight weeks. That means, families in the 10th largest school division in the United States, have until Friday, July 10, to respond with their enrollment choice for the entire 2020-21 school year. Their options are four-day remote learning or two-day socially distanced in-school learning. The deadline allows the County time to plan for the virtual and in-person class schedules. County teachers will also be surveyed for their return-to-school preferences.

At the June 23 Fairfax County School Board, Work Session, Superintendent Scott S. Brabrand said, "We have heard you. You have asked for additional flexibility for students and families, and we are providing that today. You asked for additional flexibility for our teachers,



Fairfax County Schools Superintendent Scott S. Brabrand.

and we are providing that today... We hope again to better accommodate our families because of this flexibility... The increased flexibility will allow more students online... Hopefully, as we get more kids to do virtual, we will be able to increase the number of days for face-for face interactions."

According to Fairfax County Public Schools, in Choice One, students participate in full-time remote learning for the academic year, regardless of any changes to the schools' operational status.

THE COUNTY would provide virtual interactive instruction four days per week and asynchronous education one day per week. To the extent possible, elementary and middle school students would be served by dedicated online Fairfax County School teachers in a cohort model with other students from their school, region, or the division. High school students would be served through Online Campus courses, Virtual Virginia courses and specialized course instruction from dedicated online Fairfax County School staff. However, families must understand the need to support their child's active participation in all online learning activities on the established schedule. According to the Fairfax County Public Schools website, parents would need to work with the division to

arrange for their students to participate in state assessments and other mandated educational activities.

Choice Two is at least two full days of in-school learning weekly with students engaged in independent study and work on the days they are not in the school building. This option aligns with the predominant model for instructional delivery under Phase 3 of state guidance. It allows for health and social distancing protocols to protect students and staff per current CDC and VDH guidance.

According to the Fairfax County School Board website: "When in the building, six-foot separation is maintained whenever possible, to apply to both staff and students, and efforts are in place to limit mixing groups of students. Buses will enact new capacity limits and seating guidelines, per health and safety expectations."

SEE BACK TO SCHOOL, PAGE 7

## Back to Work Without Delay

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



COMMENTARY

Back in March, a couple of weeks after the 2020 General Assembly session had adjourned, I wrote in my weekly column that while the annual meeting of the state legislature had been "historic, transformative, and consequential" there was also as I titled the column "More Work Left to be Done." At the time it was expected that many of the issues that had not been addressed would be taken up in future legislative sessions. There was no way to know the explosive nature of subsequent events that now make it clear that we must get back to work without delay.

The indelible photo of a policeman choking the life out of a black man without provocation or cause made it clear to me and others that there are injustices in our society that cannot wait to be addressed. The Black Lives Matter movement has made the need crystal clear. The stories of black persons who have come forth to tell what it is like to grow up black in this coun-

try make my heart weep. Fellow delegate Don Scott made the case clearly in an opinion piece he wrote last week: "The daily indignities of being black can be burdensome. If we respond to it all, we would have riots daily. Black people, for the most part, have always been tolerant. Even with all of our progress, President Barack Obama and all, we are reminded that George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery could have been any of us. That is why we are outraged and, truth be told, very afraid." We cannot have a just society when so many of our citizens live in very real fear.

I am pleased that leadership of the House of Delegates and Senate have announced that the special session of the General Assembly, expected to be held in late August to deal with budgetary adjustments that must be addressed with the current economic depression, will be expanded to include proposed legislation to address injustices in our criminal justice sys-

tem and in our policing. The Legislative Black Caucus of the General Assembly has proposed an extensive agenda that includes declaring racism a public health crisis, creating a civilian review board of policing action with subpoena power, ending qualified immunity for police officers, expanding the use of body cameras, defining and restricting excessive use of force including banning the use of chokeholds and restricting the use of tear gas and militarization tactics and weapons against civilians, passing "Breonna's Law" to end no-knock warrants, reducing police presence in schools and replacing them with mental health professionals, reinstating parole, passing cash bail reform, and more.

At the beginning of the session earlier this year the Speaker of the House of Delegates changed the name and mission of the Militia, Police and Public Safety Committee to be the Public Safety Committee. I am pleased to have been named a member of that committee. With the Courts of Justice Committee we will be having three virtual public hearings on a schedule to be announced. In the meantime, your suggestions on getting this work done would be appreciated. (kenplum@aol.com)

## Love & Unity Prayer Rally Held in Herndon

Not changing the narrative, changing the atmosphere.

By MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

In the Town of Herndon, population 23,000, faith-based organizations gathered with the Town's police force, "brothers and sisters," Lead Pastor Leah Coleman Baker called them. Baker is African American. "We need them, and we support them when they protect and serve us," she said in a prayer rally held Sunday, June 28 that attracted a reported 111 participants according to a police spokesperson.

Life Ticket Church hosted the Love & Unity Prayer Rally in the Town. Its purpose was for the congregation to join with other area faith leaders and the Town of Herndon Police Department in a demonstration of love, and to pray for unity for police departments and communities. Lead Pastors Dorian and Leah Coleman Baker met with invited marchers, including area faith leaders and their congregations as well as the Town's mayor, Lisa C. Merkel, manager Bill Ashton and Chief of Police Maggie DeBoard along with some of the department's officers at the Pines Shopping Center parking lot shortly before noon.

Marcher Branden Barragen conversed with Chief DeBoard. Afterward, he said, "It is important



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Participants in The Love & Unity Prayer Rally organized by Herndon-based Life Ticket Church march through the Town of Herndon as (center) Reverend Stephen Smith-Cobbs Trinity Presbyterian Church, (to his left) Town of Herndon Mayor Lisa C. Merkel, and (to his right) Town of Herndon Police Chief Maggie DeBoard join in solidarity carrying the church's banner to the Town Green.

to connect... not from a place of fear of authority but connect out of love." Chief DeBoard said that she was at the rally to support the community and help make it better. "We exist to keep the peace and safety... It's our sole reason why we exist," she said.

Derrick Jones of Herndon also attended the rally. Jones said that it was vital for him to be there because they were united and wanted to see God's love flow through the Town.

According to Lead Pastor Dorian Baker, people want to pass a bet-

ter life than they had onto the next generation. "We must have better legislation... We're not here to change the narrative. We are here to change the atmosphere. The narrative remains that Black lives are in danger at an alarming rate in communities across our nation. We are here to change the atmosphere from fear and division to an atmosphere of love and unity."

Mayor Merkel, Chief DeBoard, Reverend Stephen-Cobbs of Trinity Presbyterian Church in Herndon, and others led the march. They walked side-by-side, holding the

Life Ticket Church banner that read, "Prayer Rally Love & Unity."

Following a brief service on the Town Green, Leah Baker spoke to the racially mixed and multigenerational crowd. She said, "We are here today, joining with people from all walks of life coming together in love, and we are praying for police and our community. Racial injustice, police brutality and violence are only symptoms... While we applaud protesters raising their voices against injustice in a peaceful way, we know that protests alone will not heal the land... We simply cannot ignore the cries of our community or the prescribed cure. We stand in passionate support of our Herndon community and all other communities around the world that are outraged. We see that too many communities around this country feel that their voices are not being heard, and their complaints about racist treatment are unheeded... There are a lot of African Americans in our community today that are wounded and hurting from what has taken place in our country... We all must continue fighting for racial justice long after protest stories are no longer front-page news... We stand here together with our police and the community to release prayers of healing, forgiveness, peace, strength, (and) justice."



# 'The Pandemic Has Really Changed Everything'

## Kathy Smith discusses the 'State of Sully.'

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

What's happening in the Sully District, land-use cases and COVID-19's effects on Fairfax County's budget were discussed during Supervisor Kathy Smith's (D-Sully) "State of Sully" talk. She spoke last Wednesday, June 24, during an online meeting of the Sully District Council of Citizens Assns.

"The pandemic has really changed everything," she said. "The unknown is really hard."

Before this global virus took a wrecking ball to the county's proposed budget, said Smith, "We were going to add money to the schools, affordable housing and employee compensation. We were also adding \$25 million for more locations for preschool education and were expanding library hours."

"Then COVID-19 hit, and we're still seeing the effect it'll have on the economy," she continued. "We also planned to purchase [more] police, body-worn cameras. But staff is seeing if we can fund them with money we already have."

In these difficult times, said Smith, "The Board's focus has been on what can we do to help small businesses and people who've lost their jobs. And I'm so proud of the way our nonprofits have helped everyone. In the Sully District, Western Fairfax Christian Ministries [WFCM] has done a yeoman's job helping people, not just with food, but also with rent and electric bills."

Noting that the Board of Supervisors created a \$25 million grant program for small businesses, she said it's received "a lot of interest. Some 87 percent of Fairfax County businesses are small businesses, so it's critical that we help them. In addition, we provided \$20 million to community nonprofits."

On June 23, said Smith, the Board approved the bond-referendum items that county residents will vote on during the Nov. 3 election. Proposed are \$160 million



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION  
Sully District Supervisor Kathy Smith

for transportation; \$112 million, parks and park facilities; \$90 million, libraries; and \$79 million, community health and human services.

**REGARDING THE SULLY DISTRICT**, she said construction has begun on the new Sully District Community Center being built on 5 acres off Air and Space Museum Parkway in Chantilly. The facility will also contain a health clinic and a women's, infants' and children's center.

Smith acknowledged, as well, the many construction projects currently underway in Centreville, plus the progress being made on the Poplar Tree Bridge. Then came the touchy subject of land use – especially residential projects being considered for construction in Chantilly, directly under the flightpaths of departing and arriving flights at Dulles International Airport.

Many local residents and the land-use groups representing them have decried the Board's continuing to hear and act upon land-use cases during the pandemic, when

it's more difficult for citizens to comment on them. But, said Smith, "The Board and I feel we have a responsibility – for our county's economic viability – to keep moving forward."

Against the advice of the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) and two local land-use groups, the Supervisors recently approved construction of Elm Street Communities in the Westfields area of Chantilly. At the June 24 meeting, Smith said, "I'm happy the Board approved Elm Street because it will bring some much-needed, affordable housing."

However, it will also bring a tremendous amount of noise to anyone moving there because the 157 homes will all be built directly under an airport flightpath. Aircraft arrivals there are generally 30-60 seconds apart, and the flightpath is just 1,300 feet above this site.

The Board decided based on the airport's noise-contour map from 1993, even though it's known since last November that this map was updated in 2019 – and that airport use has intensified in the past 27 years.

The county's own Comprehensive Plan states that, as new noise-contours information becomes available, it should be included in that plan to more accurately reflect the most current and appropriate "delineation of the Dulles Airport Noise Impact Area to which land-use compatibility policies will be applied."

Yet the Supervisors have continued deciding land-use cases in the airport-noise area without including the updated noise-contour information in the Comprehensive Plan. And soon, they'll consider another residential development, Stonebrook, that'll be affected even more by the noise.

That's because jets there will fly just 950 feet above the houses. And all these homes are within the FAA's 65 DNL noise contour – meaning a day/night average decibel noise level of 65 decibels and above.

**THE BOARD** will also decide on another nearby application, Boulevards at Westfields, which seeks to provide homes for 442

families/individuals in an area between the 60-65 DNL noise contours.

Noting that Smith chairs the Board's Land Use Policy Committee, Sully Council member Sheila Dunheimer asked her last week why there's been "absolutely no sense of urgency" by that committee to adopt the updated contours – even though, in May 2019, Smith made a motion asking the Board to pursue doing so.

"Here we are now, 13 months later," said Dunheimer. "And the Land Use Policy Committee had no plans for this to be an agenda item until later this fall."

Smith replied it's been "a matter of scheduling" the meeting and that the Supervisors will discuss this issue during their July 21 work session. Yet Dunheimer countered that the Board only put it on its agenda "after concerned citizens started asking questions."

Furthermore, said Sully Council member Jay Johnston, "It seems the horse is already out of the barn, with three cases already being considered, [even though] two land-use committees took [opposing] positions."

But, said Smith, "We have a responsibility to do due diligence and also be concerned about the county's economic development – and not the airport, alone."

Sully Council 1st Vice President Jeff Parnes explained, "We felt that townhouses with backyards weren't the way to go because the residents won't be able to use their yards with a constant stream of noise overhead."

Smith said she considers each case individually and that the noise-level goal is for less than 65 DNL inside people's homes. But, said resident Michael Mann, "The noise-monitoring station off Willard Road [in Chantilly] is currently hitting 80 DNL as planes fly overhead. How loud is too loud for a community?"

Afterward, Dunheimer said Smith's "delay tactics will needlessly allow new residential housing to be built in inappropriate locations, intentionally exposing thousands of citizens to harmful noise levels. Who's really benefiting here? Certainly not the citizens."

## Westfield Grad Receives Sheriffs Institute Scholarship

Westfield High grad Michael Corwin has just received a Virginia Sheriffs Institute scholarship. It's given to students pursuing an education in criminal justice, and Fairfax County Sheriff Stacey Kincaid presented the scholarship to him.

The award is limited to students attending Virginia colleges and universities; and students are only eligible if they're in jurisdictions where sheriffs participate in fundraising for this scholarship.

Applicants must include a personal essay and a letter of recommendation from their county sheriff. "Before writing the letters, I meet with each applicant to learn more about their academic achievements, community activities and career goals," said Kincaid. "This year, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, we met via Zoom. I was inspired by their diverse interests and enthusiastic commitment to public service."

Corwin is in his first year at Northern Virginia Community College, majoring in Ad-

ministration of Justice, Homeland Security. While at Westfield, he participated in the two-year Criminal Justice program and graduated with a 3.06 GPA. He was also a member of his school's Marching Band, Wind Symphony, Jazz Ensemble and Indoor Drumline.

In addition, Corwin works as a range safety officer for the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority and volunteers on the security



Michael Corwin

team at Centreville Baptist Church. After graduation, he wants to follow in his parents' footsteps.

"I would like to enter the public safety field," he said. "My dad is a retired Fairfax County Fire and Rescue employee, and my mother currently works for the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office."

— BONNIE HOBBS

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An expert is someone who knows some of the worst mistakes that can be made in his subject and how to avoid them.  
**-Werner Heisenberg**

**NEWS**

On opening day, June 29, the water aerobics class is underway in the cool waters of Lake Newport pool operated by Reston Association.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/  
 THE CONNECTION

**Cool Clear Water Beckons**

**RA opens select pools, lifeguards needed.**

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
 THE CONNECTION

NO one knew if it would happen this summer, but it did. Following state and local Phase 2 safety guidelines, Reston Association (RA) opened four pools to Registered Pass holders on Monday, June 29. "We are excited to welcome summer," said Laura A. Kowalski, Director of Recreation and Environmental Education at Reston Association. "Our first four facilities are Glade, Lake Newport, Newbridge and Golf Course Island, one in each of the four districts," she said. To comply with state regulations, RA opened the pools only to lap swimmers and water walkers who reserved time and for individuals in instructional fitness programs. Visit <http://www.reston.org> to sign up for pool time and other information.

Kowalski said RA would move into a Phase 3 environment for their pools on July 6. Additional pools might also open based on guidance and safety measures. A post on the Fairfax County Emergency Information website with details about Phase 3, said pools might reopen at 75 percent capacity for free swim, instruction and exercise classes. Swimmers and divers must stay 10 feet apart.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Reston Association lifeguard, Abigail Spigarelli of Reston watches swimmers from her stand. "I've been a lifeguard for four years," she says.

Reston Association needs lifeguards to open pools. "We are hiring," said Kowalski. Applications and training opportunities are available at [www.reston.org](http://www.reston.org). If financial assistance is needed, the Water Safety Scholarship Fund Program through the Friends of Reston may help. Email [AQInformation@reston.org](mailto:AQInformation@reston.org) to learn more.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

It's back in the water at Lake Newport pool on Monday, June 29, opening day. Reston Association registered pass holder Darlene Gallaway of Reston finishes her laps in the Olympic length pool, one of four Reston Association pools that opened for the season that day under Phase 2 guidelines.



PHOTO BY RESTON ASSOCIATION

A Reston Association lifeguard swims laps. The association seeks lifeguards for the 2020 summer season with training available and need-based scholarship opportunities through Friends of Reston.

AREA ROUNDUPS



Ball Salim Ahmed Ball, 24, of Herndon

PHOTO COURTESY OF FCPD

## Arrest made in Reston Murder Case

A man has been arrested and charged with second degree murder after a woman was found dead last week inside of a house in Reston. Ball Salim Ahmed Ball, 24, of Herndon, is believed to have been involved in a relationship with the victim that began earlier this year. He is being held at the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center without bond.

Officers responded Monday evening, June 22, around 6:30 p.m. to the 11000 block of Great Owl Circle when a landlord located his tenant, 29-year-old Maryam Ali Mohammed Al Jaber, deceased in the basement of a home that she rented. Officers noticed suspected trauma to her upper body and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner ruled the death a homicide following an autopsy this morning.

This remains an active investigation and detectives are asking anyone with information to contact the Fairfax County Police Department Major Crimes Bureau at 703-246-7800, option 2.

This is the fifth homicide year to date in Fairfax County.

BY FCPD MEDIA RELATIONS BUREAU

## Back to School

FROM PAGE 3

"I'm trying to think of how we can manage some of the expectations and wanting to protect us from impossible asks... Time is what I'm more concerned about," said Fairfax County School Board Member At-Large Abrar Omeish during the June 23 work session.

IN BOTH CHOICES, one day would be set aside for teacher planning and intervention support for some students. Special Education students and English Language Learners would receive more in-person or synchronous instruction. "I think it's important to keep in mind our students with disabilities are served in very different settings across the district...There isn't going to be a one size fits all," said Teresa Johnson, Assistant Superintendent, Department of Special Services. Additional details about Reopening of School plans are available online.

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## Mourning, Afternoon and Evening



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

We had to euthanize Biscuit, our oldest cat on Saturday, June 20th. He would have been 14 on September 20th. Biscuit is survived by his half-brother, Andrew and his two half sisters, Sloane and Twinkle. Biscuit's litter mate and brother, "Chino" preceded him in death in November, 2019, after succumbing to diabetes. Biscuit had likewise been diagnosed with diabetes around the same time as "Chino." However, as occasionally happens, according to Biscuit's veterinarian, some cats "spontaneously" overcome the disease, as Biscuit miraculously did, and go on to live relatively normal lives. Biscuit lived approximately one year after his diabetes went into remission, which ended up being about seven months longer than "Chino." Not exactly 'relatively normal'; nonetheless, we were grateful for the extra seven months.

Biscuit was "the senior man," as we called him and we typically left him in charge of the other four cats when both Dina and I would be away from home. Of all five cats, Biscuit was the most present in our lives. He was also the most social, the most fearless and the most affable/tolerant of all our cats. An indoor cat like our entire herd, Biscuit was most likely to be around and to socialize. He would greet visitors within a few minutes of their arrival and invariably introduce himself by jumping up on the coffee table in front of the couch and staring at the newcomer. He was also the first in line for breakfast and dinner, first in line for treats, and whenever my wife, Dina, made a tuna fish sandwich for lunch, Biscuit was, you guessed it, first in line. Topping out at 15 pounds, somehow he managed to keep his weight down. He was a sweet, adoring and talkative cat and we loved him, and of course, we miss him terribly, especially Dina.

Over the last few years, particularly, Dina and Biscuit had formed a bond. He was her cat, just as "Chino" had been mine. Not that Biscuit ignored me, hardly. But when he made his requests, verbal or otherwise, Dina was almost always the intended requestee. Moreover, as Dina's schedule changed, she became Biscuit's primary caregiver, feeder, litter-box scooper and groomer and more interesting for Biscuit, became the one to let him outside to take in the sights, sounds and smells which enthrall cats. She was, on these special occasions, daily of late, his constant companion, which is how they spent his last Saturday morning, together, outside.

What has made Biscuit's passing so difficult is how quickly he declined, always a bad sign, our veterinarian said. Biscuit stopped eating on Friday after barely nibbling on Thursday. He even turned away from treats that I offered him and tuna fish that Dina placed in his bowl. Though still engaged with us, we could see his haunches, and feel his boney spine. He had lost two and half pounds in the last three months. That Friday night, Biscuit had trouble settling down and whimpered off and on through the night. I called the veterinarian first thing Saturday morning and we were fortunate to secure an appointment at 10 am that very morning. Biscuit was clearly struggling and probably even suffering as his zero interest in breakfast confirmed and his sounds not of silence continued.

We didn't want to be selfish this time as we had been with "Chino." We kept him at home far too long before taking him to the veterinarian and have regretted it ever since. We just couldn't let go. We weren't going to make the same mistake with Biscuit. That Saturday, we drove to the animal hospital and dropped Biscuit off to be examined while we waited in the car (per phase 2 rules). Ten minutes or so later, the veterinarian called with her grim assessment: Biscuit was failing and was not going to recover. Through our tears, we then made the decision to end Biscuit's suffering. We took his body home that day and buried him on Monday next to his brother "Chino."

It was a private service attended only by family members.

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

# Contracted Locally, Makers Sew 45,000 Face Masks

New jobs for unemployed and new revenue stream for nonprofit.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

Unthinkable scenarios happened in early March. The COVID-19 pandemic hurled itself into Northern Virginia; small and large businesses shuttered and unemployment rates escalated. At the same time, restaurateur and CEO Gwyn Whittaker, with a background in engineering and 35 years in technology fields, stepped into the mask sewing arena. Whittaker said, "It was a very intense period of time." She contracted individuals across the region, many unemployed, to sew an astounding 45,000, 2-ply cotton fabric masks to fill pending sale orders.

"We ended up getting the whole crew from Bloomingdale's. I think we had 50 people contracted at one point. Now we are down to 30 and pay \$2 a mask, which averages out to \$20 an hour," said Whittaker. She supplied, at no cost to the Makers, individual kits with enough pre-washed, pre-cut 6" x 9" fabric panels and elastic cord to make 100 two-ply masks.

Whittaker is the founder and CEO of two local businesses. The first is her for-profit, plant-based, educational restaurant in Herndon. The other is her IRS-certified nonprofit, GreenFare Health and Wellness (2019), focused on holistic health integrated with a practice of supporting health practitioners and medical professionals, according to Whittaker. On Wednesday afternoon, May 27, with three large boxes full of pre-packaged masks in her vehicle, Whittaker drove to the County of Fairfax Springfield Warehouse on Industrial Road. There she met employees Jason Reinsburrow and Ronald Garner, Procurement & Material Management, and turned delivery of the County's most recent order of masks, 5000, over to them. Whittaker said, "Fairfax County bought 39,200 (masks); police bought 4,500 and 800 were sold to the public." Total sewed and sold in seven weeks equaled 44,500.

There are specific business rules for specific threats, whether operating a business



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

(Right) Gwyn Whittaker delivers 5,000 2-ply cotton masks sewed by contracted Makers for GreenFare Health and Wellness, a 501(c) (3) organization to County of Fairfax, Logistics Center at 6800-A Industrial Road in Springfield. (From left) Jason Reinsburrow, Ronald Garner, County of Fairfax Procurement & Material Mgmt. and Gwyn Whittaker, CEO of GreenFare Health and Wellness.

for-profit or nonprofit business. However, there were no business rules for a pandemic. As COVID-19 swirled throughout Northern Virginia and beyond, Whittaker had reached out and creatively leveraged support beyond her current and past professional career experiences, recruiting and tapping individuals across professions for insight and mutual collaborative support. Early on, business associate, Keith Black of Clifton reached out with an idea.

ACCORDING TO WHITTAKER, Black said, "What do you think about making medical masks? They're easy to make, there's going to be a huge demand. And, you know, I think

we can do it." That one sentence propelled Whittaker to step into the mask-making arena under the umbrella and mission statement of her IRS-certified nonprofit, GreenFare Health and Wellness. Black recruited Dr. Yusuf H. Khan formerly of Ashburn for his insights into masks. "I think it quickly became apparent that medical masks were different than the cotton fabric ones now. The problem was that if people were mandated to wear masks, everybody would go after the medical masks," Whittaker said. Black also recruited business owner Melissa Mangelli of Manassas. The initial foursome became The GreenFare Health and Wellness 501(c) (3) fabric mask-making team. Mangelli and



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

From left, on behalf of the nonprofit organization, GreenFare Health and Wellness, Keith Black delivers a kit of precut masks and supplies to Reyna Diaz to sew. The nonprofit's project is a win-win for the newly employed seamstress and for individuals looking to purchase or receive contributed masks.

others who had sewing experience joined the effort and made prototypes. The project took off, beginning with orders from Fairfax County.

Whittaker said, "I am the Hunter Mill Commissioner on the Fairfax County Small Business Commission." Whittaker added she informed the Commission they were small, local nonprofit business, woman-owned and showed the prototypes. "They were interested and initially placed a 3000 mask order for their people," she said. After that, Whittaker received donated fabric from Michael's, and five volunteers showed up to work.

THE NEXT THING the team knew, unemployed people came looking for jobs while at the same time orders skyrocketed.

Faye Brown and Shafiq Halim are two of the contracted mask makers. Brown said that she was blessed to have the knowledge and equipment to sew. "I was glad to take part in helping the community. It was also a bit of financial help for my family and me. I am a realtor and work at a winery, and it has been a difficult time," she said. Halim was a tailor at Bloomingdale's and unemployed. "I just said yes... I have this tailoring talent. If I cannot be in the medical field to help, this is also one way to try to help others," he said. According to Whittaker, the project remains sustainable through sales and donations with contracted Makers producing 10,000 masks per week. She said, "We will continue the project as long as there is a need... (Also) we are collecting requests to donate now that we have built up production... at GreenFare.org."



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

John Simmons

## Centreville Troop 30 Promotes New Eagle Scout

Troop 30 of Centreville recently recognized John Simmons earning his Eagle Scout rank before aging out at age of 18 at the end of March. John earned a total of 31 merit badges and for his Eagle Scout Project he built four Wood Duck nest boxes for Bull Run Park which is part of Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority. The Wood Duck boxes required planning, design, construction, and installment, all with the hope of enticing the ducks to nest in the park. More than 8 people were engaged in the effort. Being a recent 2020 graduate of Westfields High School, John is actively

engaged in a summer apprenticeship with Air Masters Heating & Cooling and he will be attending the Woodbridge Campus of Northern Virginia Community College to pursue a career in that field. John joins his two older brothers, Eric and Evan, who also earned the rank of Eagle Scout from Troop 30, and where their father serves as the Committee Chair. Troop 30 is a mid-sized troop known for its home-town community feel. Its outstanding program has been molding boys into men prepared for life's challenges since 1999.