

# Great Falls CONNECTION

A group of participants out training for the bike section of the triathlon along Route 7. In the morning of Sunday, July 26, four Great Falls families took part in their own little community triathlon: a multisport race complete with swimming, cycling, and running.

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# NEWS

## Gap Between Relief Funds, Eviction Moratorium Could Cause Mass Evictions

**Slow: 12,000 eviction cases in courts statewide while only 300 tenant households had received federal funds.**

BY MARY PADEN  
GAZETTE

**T**he expiration of the state eviction moratorium and the refusal of the Fairfax District Court to extend it locally past July 10 has sent Fairfax County legal aid attorneys and Health and Human Services Department staff into a flurry of action to try to get federal assistance to the 500 tenants currently on the docket for eviction proceedings. Less than a quarter of households seeking rent assistance from the county have gotten it so far, with most still in processing.

The situation is worse throughout the state. At a press conference July 17, VOICE, a faith-based community action group, said there were 12,000 eviction cases in courts statewide while only 300 tenant households had received federal funds.

Ironically, low-income tenants — those most affected by the pandemic and shutdown — may face eviction while federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds sit in the bank.

The Fairfax NAACP and the South County Task Force called on Gov. Ralph Northam today to extend the moratorium until CARES rent relief funds can be distributed to tenants. VOICE called for a moratorium through Aug. 31. Other statewide groups have also recommended a new moratorium.

Meanwhile, last week the federal eviction moratorium for landlords with federally backed loans expired (on July 25), as did the extension on unemployment insurance. The federal forbearance program applied to only 30-40 percent of rental properties, according to the National Low Income Housing Coalition. Many housing groups are calling on Congress to provide more rent relief and housing funding as part of the HERO Act which is before the Senate, because the pandemic and economic slowdown are dragging out much longer than anticipated in the original CARES Act. Virginia Senators Mark Warner and Tim Kaine have co-sponsored some of the housing bills.

### Eviction Tsunami Predicted Since April

A summer eviction tsunami was predicted last April by national housing think tanks and advocates such as the Urban Institute and Enterprise, and the Urban League. The \$2 trillion federal CARES Act signed March 27, plus various state eviction moratoria, were designed to shore up out-of-work low and moderate income renters. But funds were slow to get out and eviction moratoria are expiring nationwide before the payments can be distributed.



GAZETTE FILE PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT

### An eviction protest in Alexandria earlier in July.

Fairfax County received CARES funds in early May and designated \$20 million for housing stability, utilities, and food support in mid-May. Gov. Northam announced a \$50 million CARES rent relief fund on June 25 and asked Circuit Courts to extend eviction moratoria so the state could get the funds out. The state Supreme Court moratorium ended June 28 and circuit courts did not renew it.

### Some Tenants Self-evict to Keep Record Clean

The state moratorium did not prevent landlords from sending threatening letters to tenants in the meantime. About 50 percent of renters “self-evict” after receiving such letters from landlords, according to VOICE, because an eviction on their record can prevent them from being able to rent another apartment. Most tenants in eviction court have no legal representation and those without it face nearly 100 percent chance of eviction, whereas those with an attorney face about a 50 percent chance of eviction, according to Northern Virginia legal aid attorneys.

Legislation passed at the 2020 session allows a 60-day postponement of an eviction if the tenant can show proof of being laid off because of the pandemic. But most tenants don’t know about this and don’t have an attorney to tell them. Many very-low-income tenants worked jobs that did not provide documentation of a Covid layoff.

### Scrambling to Help in Fairfax District Court

In Fairfax County, Northern Virginia Legal Aid attorney Dipti Pidikiti-Smith and others are going all out to identify clients and connect them with rent relief assistance at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Dean Klein, former head of the Office



to Prevent and End Homelessness, heads a task force that includes members from legal aid, HHS, the Department of Housing, and the Sheriff’s office to alert tenants and landlords to the possibility of paying rent with CARES funds.

To get CARES funds out quickly, the county gave grants to various nonprofits throughout the county with which it has relationships. It designed a system whereby people in need must call the county’s emergency hotline for an intake process after which they are directed to a nonprofit in their area that cuts a check to their landlords or utilities.

However, the hotline was overwhelmed with calls, especially after the number was advertised widely, and callers faced a long wait — over an hour in some cases. As of the end of June, the hotline had received 4,885 calls requesting rent relief alone, up about 300 percent over the previous year, and with over 3,000 first-time callers. Calls spiked the week of July 15, with 5,654 calls (up 600 percent) after the number appeared in the media. But so far, just over 1,000 tenants have received CARES rent relief (of up to 4 months’ rent) according to county staff. It is not clear what is causing the bottleneck, but HHS is bringing in additional intake operators and has promised to give the Board of Supervisors a plan to streamline the hotline system.

Meanwhile, Klein’s task force is trying to help tenants on the brink of eviction. Legal aid is trying to get in touch with landlords to let them know rent relief funds are available through the county and giving them guidance on how to get mortgage forbearance. Earlier the county had sent letters to landlords with information about the moratorium and forthcoming CARES funds, but the follow up was unclear.

“We have a huge battle ahead of us with

the moratorium ending,” Klein said. Some people have not been able to pay rent for three to four months and they usually struggle to pay one month’s rent.”

**AT THE END OF MAY**, the South County Task Force and 37 other organizations in Northern Virginia — including the Fairfax NAACP, the Equity Agenda Coalition, SIEU, and two teachers unions — plus 14 Fairfax County legislators, sent a letter to Northam asking for an extension of the moratorium through Aug. 31. The Southern Poverty Law Center in Richmond asked for the same.

The South County Task Force letter noted that “In an analysis of eviction moratoria in 50 states, Princeton’s Eviction Lab’s interactive Policy Scorecard rated Virginia’s Supreme Court ordered moratorium only a half-star out of five stars, because it lacked most of the provisions that would alleviate a rent crisis when the moratorium lifts” and that “Governors in 30 states have issued executive orders to halt evictions.”

Northam has insisted that he doesn’t have the authority to order an eviction moratorium, but a July 15 letter from Attorney General Mark Herring in response to a query from several legislators says, “The Governor has both the executive and statutory authority to issue emergency orders.... Whether any particular executive order is an appropriate exercise of emergency power depends on the scope of the executive order and the facts and circumstances.”

Herring also said the “General Assembly can pass legislation placing limitations on evictions” as well as “pass legislation allowing localities to place limitations on evictions.”

The General Assembly starts a special session Aug. 18 that is restricted to dealing with the budget and police reform, but an eviction moratorium might be appropriate if the Governor does not act by then.

# OPINION

## Creating More Equitable Admissions Policies for Magnet Schools

BY SEN. SCOTT SUROVELL

**W**e need more equitable admissions practices in what are called “Governor’s Schools.” Earlier this month, Gov. Ralph Northam appointed me to a task force with about 20 other individuals including Secretary of Education Atif Qarni to examine equity within our Governor’s Schools System. Governor’s Schools were created in 1973 to provide an intense, summer academic experience to high-achieving students and were later expanded to full-year programs, including Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJHSST) in Fairfax County which also also serves Prince William and Arlington Counties.

I have often expressed concerns about TJHSST’s admissions practices. Very few children from eastern Fairfax or Prince William Counties are admitted. When I reviewed data a few years ago, fewer than five children had been admitted out of 125 applicants from Walt Whitman Intermediate School. In the most recent freshman class, there were none or there were so few African American students admitted that Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) was prohibited from releasing the actual number.

This history means that the student population in these schools is very unrepresentative of Northern Virginia, a region with a very diverse population. TJHSST’s current student population has less than 2% “economically disadvantaged” students as measured by students that receive free and reduced lunches. The feeder,



non-Fairfax County jurisdictions all are 27.3% economically disadvantaged. TJHSST’s current student population is now 70% Asian, 25% White and less than 2% Black and Hispanic, while its feeder jurisdictions are 18% Asian, 39% White, 11% Black, and 27% Hispanic.

Over 25% of each class’s admissions come from two middle schools – Rachel Carson in McLean and Longfellow in Falls Church. Most of

the middle schools that are in eastern Fairfax and Prince William counties have fewer than five students – often zero – admitted students.

The problems leading to these results start in elementary school. There is well-documented research indicating that minority children are often not identified or encouraged to participate in elementary gifted and talented programs. There is also a strong correlation between recommendations and the race of the teacher. In other words, low numbers or the absence of minority teachers is associated with fewer minority children recommended for gifted programs. Economically disadvantaged families are not aware of such programs and do not advocate for their children to enroll in them. Schools with large economically disadvantaged student populations have fewer gifted programs.

We also heard some surprising testimony. First, gifted and talented programs arose during the 1960s in response to school desegregation efforts, and also have their roots in eugenics research. Admissions to gifted programs are also keyed solely to intelligence testing instead of other variables such as creativity, problem-solv-

ing ability or other talents.

TJHSST’s principal pointed out that TJHSST’s success – measured by standardized test performance -- has brought international acclaim which has encouraged “Thomas” branded prep elementary schools to arise in foreign countries that feed students into specific Fairfax County middle schools for admissions after families obtain visas. She said that private test preparation programs pay students to remember certain questions and report them back so they can prepare students in \$14,000/year TJHSST preparation programs that meet regularly with their own homework and curriculum.

Many have been aware of these facts for over a decade and little action has been taken, which is why the General Assembly needs to act.

There are multiple admissions approaches that could be used. TJHSST currently uses an admissions test and an essay. According to the research, this type of admissions program is the most likely of any to favor family wealth over any other admissions factor, like a child’s ability.

Let me be clear: We are not considering a racial quota system. That is unconstitutional.

We will consider recommending alternate admissions processes that cannot be gamed by wealthy or advantaged families such as a lottery system with equitable scoring systems, middle school admissions minimums or caps, offering admission to top students of each middle school and allowing competition for remaining spots or other processes. We will also consider eliminating Governor’s Schools if they are unable to adopt more equitable admissions policies.

I hope you will share your views with me. Please send me an email at [scott@scottsuovell.org](mailto:scott@scottsuovell.org). It is an honor to serve as your State Senator.

## Lifetime of Learning

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

**M**y mom and dad had little or no formal education which was not that unusual for children in large families growing up in rural Virginia in the 1920s. What they lacked in schooling they made up in basic values of honesty and hard work. Their ambition for their three sons of which I was the youngest was to finish school which for them meant high school. Mom’s advice to me for I had obvious interests in doing more than graduating high school and working a local job was captured in the words of the country music song of Earl Scruggs and later Ricky Skaggs, “Don’t Get Above Your Raisin.”

Going off to college as the first in my family to do so was a frightening experience but one that soon became a labor of love. I could not learn enough about the world around me and most especially about history and politics. I was a product of a public school system in Virginia, and even as a youngster I knew that



the story of the state was much more complex and involved than the glorification of its history presented in the state-approved textbooks. My love of learning led me to finish an undergraduate degree in history and political history at the then Old Dominion College. I went on to the University of Virginia where I received a master’s degree in teaching the social studies in 1967. That program had an internship experience that led to me being placed in Fairfax County Public Schools from which I retired thirty years later.

I refused to use the state-approved textbook on Virginia history in my classroom because of the distortions and misinformation it contained. My school administrator supported me, and a few years later I consulted with FCPS when it produced its own edition of a more-accurate Virginia history textbook. Also about the same time, I announced my candidacy for the House of Delegates and was elected on my third try. My interest was not to change school textbooks but to help alter the course of the state’s history

to remedy the many wrongs of its past and to make it a state where all people had equal opportunity. I knew about the inequality of opportunity in the state by my volunteer work with the Community Action Agency.

Setting aside challenges related to the pandemic and the craziness of the current federal administration, I feel a greater sense of hope for the Commonwealth than I believe I have ever had. I have written often about the transformative General Assembly session this year and the passage of much-needed legislation on fairness and equality that had been debated and never passed for years. This month the General Assembly will take another important step in reforming our criminal justice system.

As my friend and historian Bent Tarter wrote recently in a column “Black Lives and Confederate Monuments,” ([www.virginiaforum.org](http://www.virginiaforum.org)) “We all have much to learn, or we will continue to repeat the sorry sequences of violence that exacerbate rather than solve problems. Learning, one of my college teachers explained, should involve a change in behavior.” As a native Virginian I sense that now more than ever we will at long last be seeing changes in behavior in the Commonwealth.

Great Falls  
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## SHEPHERD'S CENTER TRANSPORTATION SERVICE RETURNS

The Board of Directors of Shepherd's Center serving Oakton-Vienna-Reston-Herndon (SC) has announced that their face-to-face medical and companion transportation service are now being offered. Due to virus safety concerns for their clients and volunteers, SC had put that service temporarily on hold. If you are a current client and you live in Oakton, Vienna, Reston or Herndon, SC is available to, once again, provide this service for seniors. The agency requires they receive four business days' notice before an appointment date. All arrangements for transportation are to be made through the Shepherd's Center by calling 703-281-0538 to schedule a ride or to request a new client application. Office hours are M-F, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. SC will continue to offer their Food Delivery Drivers service for grocery shopping and delivery to the front door. Visit [www.scov.org](http://www.scov.org) or contact the office at 703-281-0538, [office@scov.org](mailto:office@scov.org).

## FOOD LION STARTS INSTACART DELIVERY SERVICE

Food Lion, in partnership with Instacart, is making shopping as easy as opening an app. The availability of its grocery delivery service is expanding to 302 stores beginning this week. Customers can use Food Lion's To-Go website or the Food Lion To-Go app to confirm availability and place orders. To use the service, visit [shop.foodlion.com](http://shop.foodlion.com) or open the Food Lion To-Go app. Enter your zip code and select delivery. Food Lion grocery delivery via Instacart is available seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.

## TARGET ADDS FRESH GROCERY PICKUP

Target Stores have added Fresh Grocery Pickup service to more than 1,000 locations. Customers can get fresh and frozen grocery items to the Order Pickup and Drive Up assortment at even more stores. The Fresh Grocery Pickup service is available at these Target locations. 12197 Sunset Hills Rd, Reston. 14391 Chantilly Crossing Ln, Chantilly. 2905 District Ave S., Fairfax.

## TEXT FOR FOOD

No Kid Hungry Virginia encourages families to text FOOD or COMIDA to 877-877 to find free summer food sites organized by school districts and community organizations. Meal sites are offering a variety of distribution models to help safely connect students with meals and promote social distancing, including "Grab and Go" service and food delivery along bus routes while passing out multiple days' worth of meals at one-time.

## SUMMER CAMPS, REC-PAC, SACC CANCELED

The Fairfax County Park Authority and the Department of Neighborhood and Community Services are announcing the cancellation of 2020 summer camp programs due to the COVID-19 crisis. Included in these cancellations are all FCPA sponsored summer camp programs, REC-Pac programs held at local schools, summer camp programs sponsored by NCS and SACC programs. Collectively, these programs represent childcare and recreational opportunities for thousands of families across Fairfax County. Impacted NCS programs include RECQuest, SACC summer programs, Therapeutic Recreation Camp, Value in Prevention Camp (V.I.P) and Teens in Action. Senior Centers and Adult Day Health Care Centers remain closed to all participants until further notice. Additionally, community centers, neighborhood centers, resource centers and teen centers are closed.

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## NEWS

# AAUW of Virginia Holds Summer Leadership Meeting

A record number of Virginia members of the American Association of University Women, a national advocate for women's equity, attended their annual Summer Leadership Meeting on July 25, 26, and 27. In ZOOM sessions over the three days, members attended virtual meetings to hone their leadership skills, strategize Federal and state advocacy efforts, and most importantly, stand in solidarity against racism.

Keynote speaker Mark Bowers, Founder and Executive Director of the Professional Development Consortium of Hampton Roads (PDCHR), kicked off the meeting by sharing practical advice on how to enhance the value of the organization to its members, identify target members, and engage members by using "Lead Smarter, Not Harder" methods.

Day 2 shined a spotlight on AAUW's advocacy. Kate Nielson, AAUW Director of Public Policy and Legal Advocacy, spoke about plans for public policy and legal advocacy at AAUW, and the leadership role branches play in promoting AAUW's public policy priorities. Madison Roberts, a recent UVA Master of Public Policy graduate, briefed the group on her gender-pay equity wage gap research, making significant recommendations for state legislation.

State Co-Vice Presidents for Public Policy, Susan Burk and Denise Murden, followed

with a blueprint for AAUW-VA public policy activities for the coming year, including a major focus on nonpartisan Get Out The Vote activities.

Day 3 was headlined by Dr. Janice Underwood, who was appointed by Governor Ralph Northam as the Commonwealth of Virginia's first cabinet-level Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer. This position is the first of its kind in the nation. Dr. Underwood challenged AAUW of Virginia to have the hard conversations about race and implement the One Virginia Statewide Strategic Plan for Inclusive Excellence as a model.

A stirring presentation was delivered by Dr. Angela Hattery and Dr. Earl Smith modeled on their book "Policing Black Bodies: How Black Lives are Surveilled and How to Work for Change." Their presentation closed with a "call for action," prescribing what AAUW could contribute to dismantling systemic racism. The meeting closed with the inspiring words of the late Congressman John R. Lewis--an American hero whose words should live on in the actions that we each take. From his book, "Across That Bridge: A Vision for Change and the Future of America," Rep. Lewis wrote: "Freedom is the continuous action we all must take, and each generation must do its part to create an even more fair, more just society."

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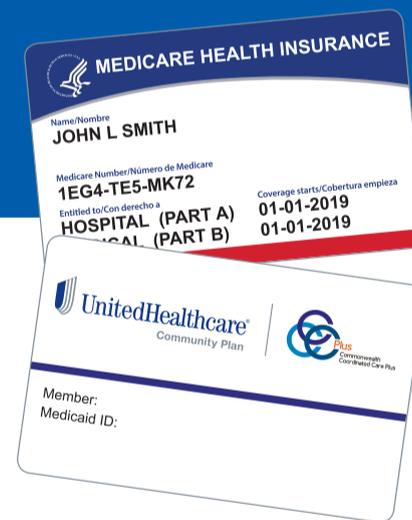
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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Kennetra Smith, rising senior at Thomas Edison High School and first-generation Ghanaian-American, has high hopes and expectations for her college admissions process. But she worries that her circumstances and the pandemic might inhibit her from achieving her dreams of attending a top college.

## Senior Year Unlike Any Other

Recent high school grads, Class of 2021 face college uncertainty amid pandemic.

BY BRIDGETTE ADU-WADIER  
THE CONNECTION

Senior year, 2020 T.C. Williams graduate Mikaela Pozo applied to 17 colleges. Despite the copious essays and application fees, she needed to cast a wide net. An immigrant and first-generation college student, Pozo depended on scholarships to realize her college dreams. So she applied to pricier private universities that could give her more grants as an international student.

But as college decisions came, Pozo had few options. Her top choice rejected her. Most of the colleges that accepted her such as George Washington University and the University of Richmond gave her no financial aid.

She did receive a full-ride to George Mason University, which she will be attending in the fall.

"It's definitely not the school I thought I would be attending," said Pozo. "It was not a part of

the plan. The reason why I chose George Mason was because it was the most financially feasible option."

She's just one student whose college plans differed from initial expectations. Several other recent high school grads are re-evaluating college options amid the pandemic and financial crisis. The students behind them, the Class of 2021, are navigating a new college admissions landscape.

"Because of COVID-19, I had to think about what was the best option financially," said Pozo. "Hypothetically, if I did take out a loan and go to the University of Richmond while we have COVID-19 happening, my mom loses her job and can't help me pay for school. Would there be any opportunities for me to pay off the loan? I would be taking a risk."

Reopening plans for colleges don't make the decision making any easier. George Mason University

SEE SENIOR YEAR, PAGE 11

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All triathlon participants, including 10 children aged 6-14, two moms, and Coach Charan Alemlaseril, pictured at the finish line the day of their race.



As Naya Arbid, races to the finish line, several other participants – including her father Fouad Arbid on his bike – stay alongside her to cheer her on.

# Great Falls Families Compete in Triathlon

Raising the fitness in COVID-19 time.

By MALLORY CULHANE  
THE CONNECTION

Everyone in quarantine spent their “extra time” differently. Some explored local parks or searched for the best hidden swimming holes, some binge-watched Netflix shows or started a new hobby like drawing or journaling, while others trained for a triathlon.

In the morning of Sunday, July 26, four Great Falls families took part in their own little community triathlon: a multisport race complete with swimming, cycling, and running.

The training began two months ago at the onset of quarantine, when the Alemlaseril, Arbid, Olumee, and Shoehiber families decided to create their own “community bubble” since their 10 kids aged 6-14 are friends and classmates.

“At the time of social distancing and isolation from the rest of the world, they brought us together as one family,” said Nuria Gabitova, one of the moms in the small community.

Charan Alemlaseril, Gabitova’s husband, has participated in several triathlons in the past, so he took on training the kids as their coach. Since everyone was at varying levels of fitness, the activities for the race were tailored to fit everyone’s abilities.

There were two levels split between participants: level one consisted of swimming 14 laps, biking four miles, and running one and a half miles. Level two involved swimming 20 laps, biking six miles, and running two miles.

Alemlaseril created a training schedule that consisted of a certain activity for each day, six days a week, with Mondays designated as a rest and meeting day. Each week totaled 40 swimming laps, 13 miles biked and five miles of running.

**EVERYONE KEPT TRACK** of their progress as they built on their fitness level. On Mon-



Safin Olumee crossing Wiehle Avenue Reston for the biking section of the triathlon, with Roy Arbid and Bryanne Shoehiber trailing behind.

days, they held meetings for each athlete to report on their training progress and talk about how they’re doing and what they’re struggling with. Not only did these meetings keep the kids accountable, but it also helped Alemlaseril keep everyone motivated and excited to see through to the end.

“With COVID, we had a choice to either lay around or [with the] extra time and energy that the kids have being cooped up, use that and turn it into a positive thing,” said Alemlaseril. “When I realized that most of them didn’t get a chance to experience running, I figured: let’s bring the training to us and let’s make it happen.”

Everyone trained in certain groups going on runs and bike rides together to maintain accountability, and also make it a fun team effort. Much of the training was done in the neighborhood and surrounding trails, and some along Georgetown Pike and Reston parkways.

Although the idea was centered around giving the kids something to work towards, some of the parents also started working alongside the kids; especially with everyone

training together, the families started spending more time with one another and sharing meals.

“Even though the parents weren’t active, they started getting active because the kids were in it, so they had no choice: everybody had to participate,” said Gabitova. Although Gabitova and Romance Olumee were the only parents besides Coach Alemlaseril who participated in the triathlon, all parents helped out with the logistics, setting up the race, and the success of the training process.

Still, training for several weeks, nearly every day, definitely came with its challenges for everyone. Some kids didn’t know how to swim, never ran more than 100 yards, and were still biking on training wheels when they started. In those struggles, however, many of the kids found a way to navigate them and push through.

“[A triathlon] will wear you out really quickly because you’re going so fast,” said Maya Alemlaseril, 11-year-old participant. “You have to push yourself, and pace yourself, and not stop otherwise you kind of tell yourself that you can’t do it, [but] when you



Coach Charan Alemlaseril working with two participants, Carlo Arbid (left) and Safin Olumee (right), during their training.

cross the finish line you’ll be so proud of yourself.”

**EVERY PARTICIPANT** came out successful the day of the race due to the community effort from everyone involved. Kids and parents helped decorate the finish line with balloons and signs, create medals for participants, even setting up mile markers and water stations along the way. The families even got help from the Reston District of the Fairfax County Police Department to help the kids cross Route 7 and Reston Ave during the race.

Gabitova also says the kids have grown – both physically and mentally – and learned the value of teamwork, sportsmanship, “and above all, what they’re capable of.”

“The most difficult thing in a triathlon is to push yourself - a lot of us here, we’ve come a long way from where we’ve started,” said Naya Arbid, 13-year-old participant. “When you push yourself, you realize that you can do much more and we’ve done much more than we expected to do.”

## WELLBEING

# Back-to-School Vaccinations Required, Even with Distance Learning

**Free vaccine clinics are designed to help ensure that all children are vaccinated.**

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

**W**hile there's a cloud of uncertainty over what the back-to school season will look like this year, one thing is certain: children still need to be vaccinated. Pandemic-induced online learning might lead some parents to believe that vaccinations are not mandatory, however, the form in which academics are offered this school year won't alter immunization requirements.

"It is important for parents to know that school required immunizations are mandatory ... even if students attend school virtually in the fall," said Shauna Severo, Director of Health Services with the Fairfax County Health Department.

"Vaccinations are required by the Department of Education, a requirement that applies to all school systems in the state, not just Arlington," added Cara O'Donnell, Acting Public Information Officer, Public Health Division, Arlington Department of Human Services. "This vaccinating is critical to preventing outbreaks of common vaccine-preventable illnesses when schools eventually reopen. We are offering appointments for kids who require catch up vaccinations to be in compliance with ... vaccination requirements for school entry."

This requirement also applies to students in the State of Maryland. "At a time when our healthcare system is already overwhelmed with COVID19, it is important that we avoid outbreaks of preventable deadly diseases," said Cindy Edwards, Senior Administrator for Communicable Disease and Epidemiology. "That is why we encourage Montgomery County families to reach out to your doctor and make a plan for staying up to date with recommended vaccines."

Concerns over the COVID-19 pandemic, however, have discouraged some parents from seeking vaccines for their children. "We are offering these community based vaccination clinics and Tdap (tetanus (T), diphtheria (D), and pertussis) clinics in our offices because we've seen a decrease in the number of vaccination appointments this year," said Tina Dale, Communications Specialist, Fairfax County Health Department.

As in years past, Arlington, Alexandria, Fairfax and Montgomery counties are offering free vaccines to families who could not afford them, but this year, appointments are required and counties are taking necessary precautions to ease the minds of parents who fear exposure to COVID. "To minimize exposure risk, the health department will adhere to strict safety protocols, including limiting the number of appointments per site, requiring the wearing of face coverings, and ensuring appropriate social distancing measures are in place," said Dale.

Pediatricians reported a 30-76 percent decrease in administering routine childhood immunizations earlier this spring, in part because well-child visits were being conducted virtually. To avoid compounding the coronavirus pandemic, the CDC emphasized the importance of routine immunizations, a cornerstone of public health.



COURTESY OF FAIRFAX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

**Even though the start of the school year will mean distance learning at home this year, children are still required to be vaccinated to enroll.**

## Clinics Offering Free Vaccines

Immunization Records and Appointments are Required

### ARLINGTON COUNTY

Arlington County Immunization Clinic  
2100 Washington Blvd., 2nd floor (Sequoia Plaza)  
For more information or to make an appointment: 703-228-1200

### MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Dennis Avenue Health Center Immunization Clinic  
For more information and to schedule an appointment:  
240-777-1050

### FAIRFAX COUNTY

- ❖ Aug. 8, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 5800 Backlick Rd., Springfield
  - ❖ Aug. 15, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., St. Anthony Catholic, 3305 Glen Carlyn Rd., Bailey's Crossroads
  - ❖ Aug. 17, 2 p.m. - 6 p.m., London Towne Elementary, 6100 Stone Rd. Centreville
  - ❖ Aug. 20, 2 p.m. - 6 p.m., Annandale District Office, 7611 Little River Tnpk, #400E, Annandale
  - ❖ Aug. 29, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., Mt. Vernon District Office, 8350 Richmond Hwy, #233, Alexandria
  - ❖ Sept. 3, 2 p.m. - 6 p.m., First Baptist Church of Springfield, 7300 Gary St., Springfield
  - ❖ Sept. 5, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., Location to be Determined
- For more information and to schedule an appointment:  
703-246-6010

### CITY OF ALEXANDRIA

Immunization Services  
4480 King Street, Second Floor  
For more information or to make an appointment: 703-746-4888

It's important to prevent outbreaks of communicable diseases like pertussis (also known as whooping cough), meningitis, rotavirus, measles, and others. Reach out to your pediatrician to find out what accommodations they are making, whether your children are up to date on their vaccinations, and to schedule their inoculations. Remember, vaccines are critical to protecting the health and welfare of our children and our community. We don't want to precipitate a second public health crisis.



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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

## FUN THINGS TO DO THIS SUMMER

### SUMMER ENTERTAINMENT SERIES

Beginning July 30, the Fairfax County Park Authority will livestream 25 free summer concert events featuring a mix of nationally known performers and singer-songwriters. These virtual events provide a new way to enjoy great performances from the safety of your home. To view a livestream concert, go to the Fairfax County Park Authority's Summer Entertainment Series main page at

[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/performance](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/performance), select the date on the calendar for this performance, and click on the links for the livestream video.

#### Schedule

Thursday, Aug. 6 -- Willow Hill (Country), 7:30 p.m.

Friday, Aug. 7 -- The Jakob's Ferry Stragglers, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 8 -- Ordinary Elephant, 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, Aug. 13 -- John McCutcheon, 7:30 p.m.

Friday, Aug. 14 -- Alice Howe with Freebo, 7:30 p.m.

Friday, Aug. 21 -- Lee District Nights: Frank Solivan, 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, Aug. 23 -- Starlight Cinema: Oshima Brothers, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 27 -- The End of America, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 27 -- Mount Vernon Nights:: Los Texmaniacs, 7:30 p.m.

### AUG. 17-21

Summer Virtual Camp. 9 - 10 a.m. Virtual presentation. At 1605 Cameron Street, Alexandria. Art That Takes You Places. Ages 10 - 12. You may be staying close to home this summer, but while you are in this class you will be whisked away -- make some art that takes you places. Virtual camp fees are \$75 per screen for each week with an additional \$10 fee if you wish to purchase a material kit. Email: [info@upcyclecerc.org](mailto:info@upcyclecerc.org). To register, visit [www.upcyclecerc.org/camps](http://www.upcyclecerc.org/camps). Zoom link will be sent the day before the camp starts to access the virtual classes.

### AUG. 25 -- ACT ONE

"Saltwater Farm" by Ann Timmons. 7:15- 9 p.m. Presented by Pipeline Playwrights in association with MetroStage, a two-part reading of the complete script-in-progress. Aug. 25: Act One and Sept. 1: Act Two. As an old Maine family's wealth is disappearing, siblings face hard choices while confronting their own past in a changing world. Can't make both nights? Watch

live when you can, then catch up on YouTube. Link of YouTube will be posted on Pipeline Playwrights' website ([www.pipelineplaywrights.org](http://www.pipelineplaywrights.org)) when available. Register at <https://forms.gle/4ptA5Y2B-tUGX5u519>

### ONLINE CODING CLASSES FOR KIDS

CodeWizardsHQ is offering online after school coding classes for kids and summer coding classes for kids with a structured curriculum that is comprehensive, developmental, challenging, and fun. Students get to code a project in every class. Expect the most fun and effective live, teacher-led coding classes for kids with support, including live office hours and 24/7 access to their proprietary coding platform. Their teachers take a students-first approach to teaching Python, Java, HTML/CSS, and JavaScript that guarantees students will reach their potential. New summer classes are starting on August 3. Visit [www.CodeWizardsHQ.com](http://www.CodeWizardsHQ.com).

### TYSONS CORNER DRIVE-IN MOVIES

Tyson's Corner Center is hosting Drive-In Movie Nights, in partnership with the Hyatt Regency Tysons Corner Center, on the second weekend of each month. Located along Fashion Blvd. between Nordstrom and Bloomingdale's, will open for parking, be sure to bring your ticket. Show starts at 8:30 p.m.

Friday, Aug. 14 -- "Aladdin"  
Saturday, Sept. 12 -- "Mrs. Doubtfire"  
Reserve your spot - space is limited. Reservation and movie details are located at <https://www.tysonscornercenter.com/Events>

### DRIVE-IN MOVIES AT SOUTH RIDING

South Riding Town Center in Chantilly will host a free Summer Drive-In Movie Series each Tuesday evening now through August 18. Attendance is limited to South Riding residents and advanced registration is required. Spectators must remain in their car during the movie but may roll down their windows. South Riding Inn and Dominos will be available for delivery to vehicles and other food options are available for takeout. No alcohol. Registration is available on the events page at [www.southriding.net](http://www.southriding.net). The movie begins at sunset and lineup for the

summer is as follows:  
Aug. 11 -- "Aladdin"  
Aug. 18 -- "The Lego Movie"

### MOSAIC DEBUTS OUTDOOR DRIVE-IN MOVIES

EDENS Mosaic has launched a new outdoor drive-in movie series this summer. Located on the top level (7) of Market Garage across from Mom's Organic Market and Hyatt House. Check-in is on level 6. Address: 8295 Glass Alley, Fairfax. The films begin at 8 p.m. The lineup includes:  
Friday Aug. 28: "Sonic the Hedgehog" at 5:15 p.m.  
There is a \$28 fee to reserve a designated spot in accordance with the new social distancing guidelines. Tickets can be purchased at [https://mosaicdistrict.com/events/event/drive-in-at-mosaic/?event\\_id=8599](https://mosaicdistrict.com/events/event/drive-in-at-mosaic/?event_id=8599) Visit [www.mosaicdistrict.com](http://www.mosaicdistrict.com).

### COLUMBIA PIKE DRIVE-IN

Pull up to the Columbia Pike Drive-In Movie Nights at the Arlington Career Center for some free retro-style family fun. All movies start at sunset (between 8 and 8:30 p.m.) and are shown in English with Spanish subtitles. Space is limited and new protocols are in place to keep everyone safe. Address: 816 S Walter Reed Dr, Arlington, VA 22204. Visit the website: <https://www.columbia-pike.org/movienights/>  
Aug. 8 -- "Apollo 13"  
Aug. 15 -- "Ready Player One"  
Aug. 22 -- "Coco"  
Aug. 29 -- "Mary Poppins Returns"

### THE BIRCHMERE REOPENS

The Birchmere in Alexandria is reopening with limited capacity. During the public health emergency, there will be a \$25 food and beverage minimum and a \$5 Covid fee. There will be no bar service and no gathering in the stage or bar areas. Customers will be escorted to their seats, and those without reserved seats will be seated by staff to ensure social distancing. Schedule of Shows:  
Friday, Aug. 7 -- The Ron Holloway Band  
Saturday, Aug. 8 -- Motown & More: The Legacy Lives  
Friday, Aug. 14 -- Eli Cook Band  
Friday, Aug. 21 -- Michael Clem (of Eddie From Ohio) and Rusty Spidel (of SGGL)  
The venue is located at 3701 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria. Visit the Birchmere's website: <http://www.birchmere.com/>

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# Senior Year Unlike Any Other

FROM PAGE 7

ty plans to start its fall semester on schedule with a hybrid plan including both online and in-person classes, but final decisions have yet to be made. Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) will continue most of its classes online.

For some students, the first year of college done remotely is anything but ideal.

María Areyán, a 2019 T.C. Williams graduate who took a gap year, is excited to start her first year of college at NOVA. However, she's not happy about the Zoom lectures.

"I'm not very good at online learning, which is something that I'm scared about," said Areyán. "I'm more functional in a classroom than I am in my room."

College plans aren't the only thing that's changed. Commonly regarded as a rite of passage, the traditional senior year experience is now anything but. The Class of 2020 had their senior year upended with a virtual graduation ceremony, no prom, and a pandemic crashing it all.

"There was so much going on in the world, it was difficult to think about college when there were so many other things I had to think about and process," said Pozo.

The Class of 2021 will have to deal with the same thing, all on top of college applications, possible first days of school over Zoom and rising uncertainty as the pandemic continues.

"We know how hard it is, doing college apps, doing schoolwork and balancing everything," said Areyán. "But I think it's going to be harder now with the pandemic."

Fairfax and Loudoun counties have announced a complete virtual fall reopening for its public school students. Alexandria is still deliberating, hosting public hearings to develop a plan that will be publicized by mid-August.

Kennetra Smith, a rising senior at Thomas Edison High School, feels uncertain about a new online school year. As a low-income student living in a small apartment with five other people, she struggled to balance family responsibilities on top of schoolwork and scholarship applications.

"It's going to be really hard to make those connections with my new teachers this year," said Smith. "How do I put myself out there for my teachers and how do I engage?"

Fairfax had a rocky start to online learning earlier in the spring. A security breach and technical issues with the distance learning platform Blackboard led to the district pressing pause on online learning for several days. Despite the issues being fixed, students will start a new school year with continuing struggles with online learning.

"NOT EVERYONE has the same learning environment," said Smith. "Not everyone has a place where they can be respected. Not everyone has a specific space for this stuff. ... We all know virtual learning isn't working. If anything, we're taking a step backwards."

The pandemic is also causing a shakeup in college admissions. Several Northern Virginia schools have adopted pass/fail grading and taking college admissions tests like the SAT and ACT have become nearly impossible. In response, many Virginia universities



SCHOLARSHIP FUND OF ALEXANDRIA (SFA) **Yulisa Morales, 2020 T.C. Williams graduate and SFA Scholarship Recipient. She's heading to Virginia State University in the fall to pursue social work.**

such as University of Virginia and Virginia Tech have made test scores optional for admission.

Smith is anxious to get standardized testing over with. She registered to take the SAT in August but her testing location in D.C. canceled. She's now scheduled to take the exam in October at a school in Maryland, an hour and a half away from home.

Even with recent policy changes, a good test score can still bring scholarships and college affordability.

"Schools say they're 'test-optional,' but to what extent are they actually test-optional?" said Smith.

She's not the only one who might have to apply to college without test scores. T.C. Williams rising senior Fina Osei-Owusu is banking on taking her SAT in August after having her first one canceled in April. But like many things, there's no guarantee that it will happen.

"Everybody is in the same boat," said Beth Lovain of the Scholarship Fund of Alexandria. "Whatever challenges that they have, every student has."

**DESPITE THE PANDEMIC**, Pozo argues the barriers many disadvantaged students face when applying to college will persist.

"A lot of low-income people and undocumented people experience the college process a little bit differently," said Pozo. "The college process itself shows how inaccessible college education is."

"We're very worried about the students," said Lovain. "But at some point, it all will go back to normal."

But Smith is starting to accept that her senior year probably won't go as anticipated.

"I think '21 thought we were safe, that maybe we'd miss some schoolwork," said Smith. "But prom is non-negotiable. As we are going into the year, I'm starting to realize that maybe we won't have prom....It is what it is."

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## Safeguarding My Future



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Whether or not I'm certain about my attitude toward being a dual cancer threat (non small cell lung and papillary thyroid, cancer), only my subconscious knows for sure. This was recently made clear to when I provided my supermarket shopping preferences to my wife, Dina, who for reasons she takes very seriously: my health, won't let me go into stores to buy anything. Ergo, my list. And I may add, there is much adieu about those preferences. It's like a negotiation. Though not exactly partisan, the debates rage on and I'm lucky, if I see more than a handful of requests honored from my list. In effect, Dina is my gatekeeper (you'll note I didn't say jailor).

There are some requests which are rarely obstructed: health and fitness, fruits and vegetables, meat and potatoes and any other non-desert/snack-type item. I'm not going to bore you readers by saying how long it's been since I've had a Hostess cupcake or an Entenmann's cake or a TastyKake anything; I wouldn't want you to feel sorry for me. In spite of this food censorship, I'm hardly wasting away. Though I've lost some weight, mostly due to my low iodine diet a few months back (as part of my thyroid cancer treatment), it was weight I could certainly afford to lose.

Now that I've lost it, Dina doesn't want me to gain it all back. Which I can understand and appreciate. Overweight often leads to any number of problems: hypertension, diabetes and even heart disease, to name a few possible complications. Still, I have my food requirements (OKAY, needs) and unless I get them, Kenny will become even more of a dull boy than he already is. So far, Dina is not budging. I wouldn't quite say she's the immovable object, but she definitely remains an obstacle to my caloric happiness.

And the 'caloric happiness' to which I refer are basically Kenny's four food groups: cake, cookies, candy and ice cream, which also explains my presumptive epitaph: "He never met a carbohydrate he didn't eat." But when the conversation moves to other less controversial items, the conversation is much less problematic and maybe even indicative of who I am, what I've become and how I assess my future prospects (life expectancy).

When one receives a cancer diagnosis, your brain gets rewired (figuratively speaking) and your choices become sort of a window to your soul. Things you want/ don't want become tells of what's being debated in your brain. Initially, after hearing your cancer diagnosis, it's unnatural almost to want what you used to want. It feels trivial. Your frame of reference - and context, narrow and shorten. When the future you anticipated is snatched away, it's not only time which is taken. Hopes, dreams and normalcy are snatched away as well. And sometimes, without even realizing it, a request is made which inadvertently illuminates the route to the light at the end of the tunnel.

That moment occurred for me during last week's supermarket list discussion. Aside from the usual stuff that likely would need to be re-ordered, I ordered something new, without it being considered in the context of cancer (basically an abbreviated timeline). I asked Dina to order me an eight-pack of soap bars, an amount of soap that would probably last a few months, at a minimum. A 'minimum' which you don't necessarily anticipate. Not that a cancer diagnosis automatically shortens your life, but generally speaking, it is bad for business, if you know what I mean? A business which, apparently, I'm now willing to invest in. Maybe time is on my side after all.

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



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