

CFTC Presents 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'

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Performers in CFTC's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" include (from left) Mel Gumina (Puck), Brittany Bolick (Puddle) and Rana Omeish (Moss).

Moving Schools to Dismantle Systemic Racial Oppression

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Fairfax City Is Offering School Age Child Care

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PHOTO COURTESY OF TIM AND SUSAN GIBSON

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Fairfax City Is Offering School Age Child Care

Will help working families, students, while FCPS is online.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

While COVID-19 has forced FCPS to offer distance learning until it's safe to do otherwise, Fairfax City is stepping up to provide working families with a School Age Child Care program for students in grades K-6. It'll be held at the Green Acres Community Center, 4401 Sideburn Road, in Fairfax.

It's offered by the City's Parks and Recreation Department, in partnership with the Fairfax City School Board/Superintendent and Fairfax City Human Services. Registration begins Aug. 17 at campdoc.com.

"The hours will be Tuesday-Friday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., but we'd evaluate it to see what would work best," said Recreation Manager Karen Lussier. "We know we'll have to be flexible. And this program would continue until there's 100-percent [FCPS] classroom participation."

She was speaking, during the Fairfax City Council's July 28, online work session. She said the goal is to have 80 students, with eight to 10 children, one lead staff member and one assistant per classroom. And, said Lussier, "Safety is our number-one priority."

The daily schedule will include a combination of assisted, virtual learning; health-and-safety monitoring; free play; organized activities; lunch; and socially distanced, group games. Staff will function as homework helpers, rather than teachers, and will also lead the students in both gym and outdoor play, crafts, and cleaning and sanitizing.

PROGRAM COST is estimated at \$731,200 and is to be funded by \$691,200 in child-care fees, plus \$40,000 from CARES Act money. Expenses include building updates to WiFi and security; building repairs; program supplies; adding a portable bathroom; and purchasing PPE, plus first-aid and cleaning supplies. Lussier said community members could also donate, if they'd like.



The former Green Acres Elementary School will host Fairfax City's new School Age Child Care program.

"The students will have their own desks and laptops," she said. "And they'll receive health-and-wellness checks when they arrive, each day." The Parks and Recreation Department will train the staff, and the Main Street Child Development Center's regular program will also be operating there, at the same time.

"We hope to have approval by the mayor and Council tonight so we can go ahead with it quickly," said Lussier. "Staff would begin work and training, Aug. 24, and the program would begin Sept. 8 – the first day of school."

Pleased, Councilmember Janice Miller said, "I'm proud [City] staff has been able to change quickly to meet this need, and I hope we can go forward with this."

Likewise, Councilmember Jon Stehle thanked the City for coming together to make it all possible "during this changing time. Keep up the great work; I'm looking forward to supporting this program."

"It's an incredible opportunity to show the public how well this City works and how creative we can be," added Councilmember Tom Ross. "It's nice to see this joint venture between Parks and Rec, the City and the school system. And we're lucky Green Acres can be adapted to meet the needs for learning, socialization and physical activity."

Councilmember So Lim asked how this

program would be separated from Main Street's program. "Green Acres has two wings that are beneficial to have the two, separate programs there," explained Parks and Recreation Director Cathy Salgado. "And they'll each have their drop-offs at different ends of the building. The students will have different gym and play times, and lunches will be in the classrooms. Teachers won't switch classrooms; they'll stay with the same students all week."

The cost is \$60/day per child – \$960/month – with financial assistance provided for those who qualify. "We'll be able to subsidize about 22 of the 80 children," said Lussier.

"Childcare isn't cheap, and this price is a great bargain for this area," said Councilmember Sang Yi, a parent of two young children. "And since it depends on what happens with FCPS, this program might go beyond the school year. But we need to tailor the wording to show that it can't go on forever." He also noted that parents should sign some liability waivers since "this is in-person schooling."

Salgado said they'll do monthly billing. And, she added, "If there's any change to the program, we have the flexibility to refund folks their money."

Yi asked if any of the instructors will be capable of handling special-needs children

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



Main Street Child Development and School Age Child Care will both be in the Green Acres Community Center.

who'll require particular resources. "We can have additional staff, as soon as we know who these students are and what kind of staff and resources they'll require," replied Salgado. "Once they register, we'll know what their needs are."

Regarding how the grade levels will be divided, she said first-graders will be grouped together, as much as possible. "But, depending on the numbers and grades of the students enrolled, there could be some overlap of first and second grades together, and second and third grades together," said Salgado. "But not, for example, first- and fourth-graders together."

"I like what I've seen, this evening, and I'm fully in support of this," said Councilmember Joe Harmon.

THE WHOLE COUNCIL then gave Salgado and Lussier a unanimous thumbs-up to move forward with this program. And it was noted that Miller and City Schools Superintendent Phyllis Pajardo also worked hard to help formulate it.

Mayor David Meyer asked Salgado and Lussier to provide updates between that evening and Labor Day weekend "to let Council know how things are going and if there are any problems. Well done by everyone."

BULLETIN BOARD

"A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"

The City of Fairfax Theatre Company will present "A Midsummer Night's Dream" from Thursday, Aug. 13 to Sunday, Aug. 16 at Veterans Amphitheater, 10455 Armstrong Street, Fairfax. Shows start at 7 p.m.

FRIDAY/AUG. 14

Cinemark Fairfax Corner Reopens. At 11900 Palace Way, Fairfax. Upon reopening, guests are invited to enjoy "Comeback Classic" films and their favorite traditional concessions at reduced "Welcome Back" prices, with \$5 tickets for adults and \$3 for children and seniors. Moviegoers looking for a more personal experience can

Submit civic/community announcements at ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar.

Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before the event.

book a Private Watch Party and host a private screening of a "Comeback Classic" film in a dedicated auditorium for up to 20 guests starting at \$125.

SUNDAY/AUG. 16

Facebook Virtual Tour. 1 p.m. Join the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum's live Facebook Virtual Tour with running T-TRAK Model Trains. Enjoy watching and interacting on the Station's Facebook site, www.facebook.com/FFXSRR. You can enjoy these exciting model trains from the comfort and safety of your own home. The virtual tour is free and open to the public. Visit the Station's website, www.fairfax-station.org.

TUESDAY/AUG. 18

Pink Elephant Thrift Shop Reopens. 9:30 a.m. At 6127 Backlick Road, Springfield. Open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Saturdays. 9:30-11 a.m. for consignors only -- no new consignors right now. No donations. 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. for customers. Visit the website: womansclubof-springfield.org

THURSDAY/AUG. 20

Evenings on the Ellipse: Junkyard Band. 7:30 p.m. Virtual event. The Junk Yard Band is a go-go band, founded in the early 1980s by children playing on improvised instruments. To view a livestream concert, go to the Fairfax County Park Authority's Summer Entertain-

ment Series main page at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/performances, select the date on the calendar for this performance, and click on the links for the livestream video.

SATURDAY/AUG. 22

Groundbreaking for Lorton Community Center and Library. 10 a.m. At the future site, 9520 Richmond Highway, Lorton. The ceremony will be televised on Fairfax County Government Channel 1016 (Cox), and Channel 16 (Verizon/Comcast) and will be streamed at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cable-consumer/channel-16/live-video-stream

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 5

Moving Schools to Dismantle Systemic Racism

NAACP holds virtual Town Hall.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County NAACP held a virtual Town Hall on Wednesday, Aug. 5. President Sean Perryman moderated discussion between Education Committee Chair Sujatha Hampton, Ph.D., Fairfax County Public Schools Superintendent Scott Brabrand Ed. D, and other staff. They focused on Fairfax County NAACP Education Committee Priorities 2020-2021 created to ensure educational equality of rights and eliminate race-based discrimination in the school district.

Throughout the 90-minute conversation, Hampton challenged Brabrand to live up to the school district's ideals, push for change and employ metrics and firm deadlines to goals.

"I'm watching you like a hawk," Hampton said.

Brabrand responded that in partnership, they should "watch together and learn together. ... I'm committed to doing the work ... I am serious as the leader of this system, about taking us where we need to go and I want to be a partner with the NAACP in doing that," Brabrand said.

The Town Hall began with a discussion on COVID-19 and how to protect vulnerable FCPS students, faculty and staff. Perryman said they couldn't talk about systemic racism without talking about COVID and the shutdown of schools. It was going to impact Black students as well as students of color disproportionately.

Brabrand said Covid exposed many inequities in the school system. "We are going to do everything we can to have a very strong virtual start and have all of our kids connected. And we will have metrics to begin the conversation with the community about how we can deliberately, carefully, safely ease back into school," he said.

Hampton said she and others in health and science fields were not comfortable with information the County's Health Department shared.

As a solution, Brabrand said he was working with the Virginia Department of Health and County Health Department for guidelines and metrics. They would establish decision-making policies on how to dial-up or, if necessary, dial-down students attending in-person school. The district would make certain health conditions were as low risk



Sean Perryman, president of the Fairfax County NAACP



Sujatha Hampton, Ph.D., Education Committee Chair of the Fairfax County NAACP



Scott Brabrand, Ed.D., Superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools

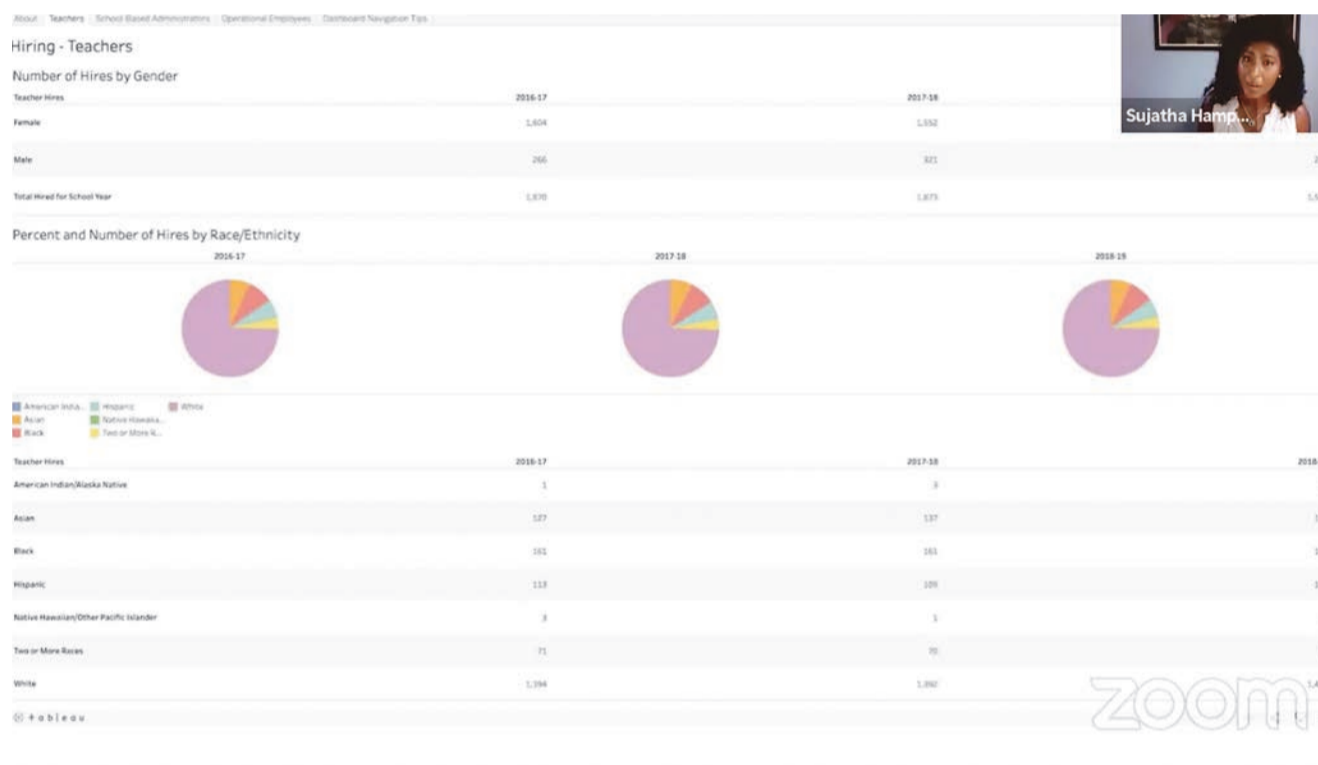
workers and restorative justice specialists, district data showed an over-representation of Black and brown children with behavior incidences.

According to Hampton, the mostly white teacher workforce "clearly have some issues because Black kids are not so bad." She said, "The problem is that when you only have teachers who are feeling threatened by their students to this degree, and nobody is reviewing whether the systems are put in place before they are disciplined, there's a problem...You should be able to look at the IEP for any child that's there and see their behavior intervention plan. You should be able to see all the things, all the steps the school took before they got there. There are ... just gigantic, gaping holes where people didn't do due diligence. And that is tragic." Hampton described differences between schools. "It's a culture thing," she said.

Brabrand said there would be new behavior codes for the school year. They would, as Brabrand said, "make teachers dive deeper before they're referring a kid to the office."

"And we're going to do a paper review of discipline data...Our issue is solving it systematically... Real-time data tracking for discipline; quarterly follow up with Doctor Ivy... If there's trends that are of concern around disproportionality, we're going to address it, just the same way that we would look at addressing attendance or

grades," he said. Dr. Frances Ivy added they had found all schools were not reporting on the same form. Perryman introduced the third Education Priority of Fairfax NAACP, to increase hiring and retention of Black and Latinx teachers, accessing it semi-annually in a public forum. Perryman asked, "Don't we have something like 26 schools that don't have anything but white teachers?" Brabrand confirmed the district had 25-26 schools that had no instructional staff of color. He added, "That is a problem, and that is not acceptable." Perryman questioned why the number of teachers of color had not changed in two years, even though there was a supply out there. Brabrand explained the district's decentralized hiring process had moved it to central. He said, "(It) doesn't mean you are going to pick diverse candidates out of that bigger pool...This is something I'd love your



Percent of FCPS teacher hires by race/ethnicity

as possible. Brabrand announced the public would see the "first draft at our August 18 Work Session."

HAMPTON voiced concern that the majority of County support staff who worked with vulnerable school populations had not been reached to participate in earlier district surveys. According to Hampton, unions represented only 30 percent of those individuals. "We need you to protect them," she said to Brabrand. Hampton added that the school district must commit "to gathering data, to reviewing the data, to analyzing the data with new metrics that are anti-racist (and) doing follow ups and having deadlines... Otherwise nothing happens, we just keep waiting," she said.

Hampton introduced the second Education Priority of Fairfax NAACP, to create an effective model for the Equity and Cultural Responsiveness Team by the end of the academic year. Brabrand said after hearing concerns voiced by members of NAACP and others regarding the new Chief Equity Academic Officer position, he changed course.

He intended to decouple the role and instead create two jobs. One would be Chief Equity Officer with a full range for the entire organization and the other Chief Academic Officer. "I would seek a national consultant to assist us in hiring both those key positions," Brabrand said.

Hampton said they were there to help and might have perspectives not yet considered. "You cannot achieve radical transformation, with exactly the same profile and exactly the same people at the table. It is not possible; and assuming anti-racism is a fairly new thing for systems to be considering, you have to be looking for somebody completely new, a totally different mindset," she said. Hampton offered Brabrand side-by-side "Traditional vs. Anti-Racist" job descriptions.

Brabrand and Hampton turned their attention to racial bias viewed through the lens of the disproportionate number of behavior incidents in the schools involving Black and brown children. Although the district provided School-based Intervention Programs for Behavior with a consulting system of counselors, psychologists, social

SEE NAACP, PAGE 11

Oversimplifying a Complex Issue

“Defund the Police” slogan in response to the real problems in policing may inhibit progress towards reform.

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

COMMENTARY

Communications experts advise that a message needs to be short and punchy to convey its intended meaning in a short period of time. Short and sweet can lead however to confusion, mixed meaning and unintended consequences.

Virginians have realized the fallout from simple, bumper-strip-sized messages in the past. “End parole” as a campaign slogan helped former Governor George Allen overcome a 20-point polling difference to be elected governor. For some people the slogan meant less crime and safer streets, but it also filled Virginia’s prisons to overflowing shifting huge sums of money from other programs to the Department of Corrections. More people were incarcerated and for longer lengths of time, but the crime rate stayed essentially the same. The campaign slogan “End the Car Tax” got Jim Gilmore elected governor, but the resulting policy costs Vir-

ginia schools nearly a billion dollars every year even until today.

I am not particularly good at campaign slogans, but I am fearful that the current “Defund the Police” slogan in response to the real problems in policing throughout the country may inhibit progress towards reform. The number of people who want to literally take all funding from the police is small, but the use of a simplistic phrase to describe the reform movement may turn off many moderates and completely scare away conservatives. There has to be a better way to describe the desired outcomes that reflects the complexities of the problem.

Policing desperately needs reform at all levels of government. The misuse of police power and tactics by the federal government in Portland is frightening, and the Congress must take steps to reign in the administration politicizing the use of police powers. At the state level Virginia

needs to increase—not defund—its funding of state police to ensure that its pay structure will attract the best trained and most professional persons to its ranks. It needs to be able to fill its open slots to reduce overtime and stress on its current force.

At the same time the Virginia General Assembly needs in its special session this month to enact the reforms proposed by the Legislative Black Caucus including eliminating the use of choke holds, using body cameras, and enhancing training.

The same reforms need to be applied to police at the county, city and town levels including sheriff departments in Virginia. The responsibilities that have befallen the police in the area of mental health need to be assumed more by personnel in the departments responsible for and skilled in this area of concern.

The public demands and legislators will ensure that the public is safe. At the same time we must demand and put into existence a system free of discrimination and inappropriate use of force. That means we need to redefine our expectations of policing and reimagine the role of public safety officers in our society. We must be willing to spend dollars appropriately to accomplish those objectives. It is over-simplifying a complex issue to suggest that we can “defund the police.”

Vote YES on Virginia Constitutional Amendment

BY JOHN LOVAAS
RESTON IMPACT PRODUCER/HOST

INDEPENDENT PROGRESSIVE

As one looks out over the public policy landscape in the midst of a seemingly out-of-control pandemic, it is easy to feel powerless and distressed at the direction of the country’s drift.

As the pandemic continues, it has not only been mismanaged into the worst and deadliest public health disaster in over a century but also has crippled the very spirit of the USA. With nearly 40 million unemployed we are in depression mode. American youth already lost a portion of the academic year 2019-20 with no apparent plan for making up the loss. Now, we head into academic year 2020-21 with the likelihood that students in grades K through college will lose at least a portion of the coming year as local governments, parents and teachers argue “safety” versus actual classroom instruction—be it in our vast unused brick and mortar buildings or yet unproven, part-time “virtual learning.” Our youth take the brunt of this publicly mismanaged disaster. How will we make it up to them? Now the White House is starting to dismantle one public service (besides defense) that has worked through the pandemic—the U.S. Postal Service, 500,000 men and women who keep on delivering mail to our doors.

Is there any ray of hope on this dismal horizon? Yes. The most obvious one is November 3, the day we get to change the incumbent in the White House, elect new Congressmen and

women and one third of our U.S. Senators. Another tremendous ray of hope, also on November 3—is the opportunity to vote on Virginia’s constitutional amendment to end the practice of gerrymandering. As Congressman Don Beyer says, “this amendment is an enormous improvement on the undemocratic system Virginia has had for centuries.”

A constitutional amendment cannot be easily undone by legislators tempted to return to their old ways of carving up districts by packing them with voters of their own party and persuasion. This amendment is the product of a great deal of work and public pressure to transfer the power to draw districts (Congressional and Virginia legislative ones) from an opaque one controlled by majority legislators to a redistricting commission composed of 8 bipartisan legislators (4 from each party) and 8 independently selected citizens operating openly in public.

The amendment was passed by both the Virginia Senate and House of Delegates twice, in two different legislative sessions. In 2019, the amendment sailed through the Senate by a vote of 40 to 0 and the House 83 to 15—at the time the Republicans held a slight majority in both houses. In 2020, now with Democratic majorities in both houses, the amendment passed 38 to 2 in the Senate and a closer 54 to 46 vote in the House. Also, during the 2020 legislative session, the House and Senate both

passed accompanying enabling legislation for the redistricting criteria to which both congressional and state legislative districts must adhere. The criteria include, inter alia, that districts be compact, composed of contiguous territory, preserve communities of interest, give racial and language minorities an equal opportunity to participate in the political process and ...not dilute or diminish their ability to elect candidates of choice either alone or in coalition with others, and several other vital protections.

This year, after the Democrats captured modest majorities in both houses, a group of Democrats in the House of Delegates seemed to get cold feet, suddenly deciding that maybe things should be left as they had been... i.e., now that they held the majority and would control the redistricting process. Still the House passed the amendment, although by a smaller margin. The Senate, however, again passed the amendment overwhelmingly, 38 to 2. Democratic Senate Majority Leader Dick Saslaw was quoted as saying, “The arguments against that [passage] were pure bullshit.”

Our own Delegate Ken Plum, the most senior delegate in the House, voted a firm YES both times and told me just a few days ago he still supports a YES vote on November 3, as does our longtime progressive Senator Janet Howell.

The time to bring down the curtain on gerrymandering and restore fairness in Virginia redistricting has finally come. Now it is up to us on November 3.

Please vote YES on November 3!

CONNECTION

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LETTERS

Helping Children Achieve Their Dreams

To the Editor:

As a community, it is safe to say that we value youth development and empowerment. By recognizing and supporting growth, we lay the foundation for prosperous future generations capable of bringing about change. Recently, we have celebrated Lake Braddock seventh-grader, Alexander Mather, who won a NASA contest and was awarded the privilege of naming a mars rover, which he named "Perseverance."

Perseverance in the face of hardship is an essential skill that can bring new ideas, innovations, and ways of thinking to the forefront. Perseverance is where one's passions can be seen. Today, around 250 million children in developing countries are at risk of not reaching their development potential due to poverty and stunting. To protect and care for children in adversity, I urge Senator Mark Warner to co-sponsor the Global Child Thrive Act. As a result, more children like Alexander can have better access to opportunities that help them achieve their Dreams.

Madison Chowdhury
Fairfax

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 2

The groundbreaking will also be viewable on Facebook at www.facebook.com/SupervisorDanStorck/. If you are attending the event in-person, the ceremony will be held observing appropriate social distancing. Attendees are asked to wear a mask or face covering, and do not attend if feeling ill or have been around someone who has been ill within the last 14 days.

HOPE FOR THE WARRIORS SCHOLARSHIPS

Now through Sept. 30, applications are being accepted for the Spring 2021

semester for the Hope For The Warriors Military Spouse and Caregiver Scholarship program. Since 2006, Hope For The Warriors has awarded Military Spouse and Caregiver Scholarships twice a year. The program recognizes and rewards post-9/11 spouses and caregivers for their strength, fidelity and resolve despite adversity as they assume critical roles in the financial well-being of their families. Scholarships vary from \$1,500 to \$2,500 and applied toward higher education at an U.S. accredited university, college or trade school. To receive an application to apply for the Spring 2021 semester, visit hopeforthewarriors.org and apply for services.

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CFTC Presents 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'

Shakespeare in the Park comes to Fairfax City.

By BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Deep in an enchanted forest, four young lovers are brawling over each other's affections while a troupe of actors prepares for the opportunity of a lifetime. Meanwhile, mischievous sprites play tricks on them all. It's all part of the City of Fairfax Theatre Co.'s production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

Magic, madness, mayhem and love all intertwine as William Shakespeare's raucous comedy comes to life in CFTC's first "Shakespeare in the City of Fairfax." The outdoor show will be presented this Thursday-Sunday, Aug. 13-16, at 7 p.m., at Veterans Amphitheater, beside Fairfax City Hall, 10455 Armstrong St.

It's being held outside because of the current pandemic, and every precaution possible is being taken to keep the actors and the audience safe. In fact, said CFTC's Artistic Director, Amanda Snellings, "Safety has been top of mind throughout the entire pro-



Actors rehearse a scene from City of Fairfax Theatre Co.'s "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

duction process.

"We began with auditions and rehearsals over a video-conference tool and then held just a handful of outdoor, in-person rehearsals," she explained. "And the way Director Adam Ressa has made distance between the actors a part of the story underscores how we're all adapting to this new world and new way of making connections with one another."

Furthermore, the audience will be seated by household in 10-foot-by-10-foot sections

of lawn space, with 10 feet between each space. People are welcome to bring blankets and lawn chairs. They may also enjoy picnic dinners with meals from one of four restaurants, The Auld Shebeen, Coyote Grille, Dolce Vita and High Side. Seating is available starting at 6:30 p.m.

All audience members, volunteers, cast and crew must wear masks, and temperatures will be taken at the check-in table. Hand sanitizer and masks will be provided for those who don't bring them. CFTC

suggests attendees bring their own sunscreen, bug spray and water. And when leaving, they must take their own trash with them.

Tickets are \$20, adults; and \$15, students, via <http://www.fairfaxcitytheatre.org/>. Subject to availability, they'll also be sold on site. Tickets must be purchased by section, with only one household seated in each section. The show runs about 80 minutes, with no intermission.



Fencing are Justin Winters (as Duke Theseus) and Isabelle Baucum (as Hippolyta).

Celebrate Women's Suffrage Month at Workhous

Drive-in movies, Girl Scout virtual event and Suffrage art exhibit planned for August

With the upcoming Centennial of the Ratification of the 19th Amendment guaranteeing women the right to vote in the United States, the Workhouse Arts Center is holding special Thursday evening Drive-In movies, a Girl Scout Gold Award Project virtual event and a suffrage-related art exhibit, all planned for the month of August.

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th amendment in 2020 the museum presents the story of the imprisonment of the 72 Suffragists at the Occoquan Workhouse in 1917, and an event on these grounds that marked a turning point in the Women's suffrage movement. The Lucy Burns Museum will honor 91 years of prison history on the site. The Workhouse Arts Center funded, designed, and renovated a new museum, restoring a decrepit prison building vacated in 2001. Peeling paint and rusting cell bars gave way to a space to tell the story of the women imprisoned at the Workhouse a century ago for demanding the right to vote. The sacrifices of these heroic suffragists are honored in the museum.

Thursday evening Drive-In Movies: Bold Women in History Film Series will be held every Thursday evening in August. This partnership between the Workhouse and the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission is just one of dozens of programs and virtual events throughout the month.

Anna Layman, Executive Director of the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission said, "This year during the 100th Anniversary of the Amendment, we remember these courageous suffragists who never gave up the fight for equality."

"We are honored that the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission approached us to feature movies about powerful and bold women in history at our Drive-In theater," said Workhouse Board Member Lura Bovee.

Movies begin on Thursday, Aug. 13 and include Harriet, Moana, Suffragette and A League of Their Own. Tickets and more information here <https://www.workhousearts.org/drive-in-movies/>.

In addition, South County High School student and Girl Scout, Emma Skog, will host a virtual Girl Scout Gold Award project called "100 Years Later: How Women Got the Right to Vote." For her project, she de-



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

The Lucy Burns Museum will commemorate 91 years of prison history on the site — the Workhouse Arts Center funded, designed, and renovated a new museum, restoring a decrepit prison building vacated in 2001.

veloped children's educational materials for the Lucy Burns Museum.

The event will take place on Aug. 18, 2020, the actual centennial of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, and will include an introduction to Lucy Burns, a time travel puppet show, an interview with Laura McKie, Lucy Burns Museum director, and a game about women's firsts. There will also be fun activities and prizes.

"I selected this project because I feel it's important to learn about injustices and understand our history, and many kids in my area don't know that a significant historic

event happened right near us. Many of us take our rights for granted, so it's important to see what efforts and struggles these women went through," said Emma Skog, creator of the project.

Treasure Hunt booklets created by Emma will be at the Lucy Burns Museum after Aug. 18.

To register for the event please visit <https://www.workhousearts.org/lucy-burnsmuseum/>

Workhouse Arches Gallery and award winning artist Julia Dzikiewicz is displaying her Suffrage related mixed media art in the Workhouse Muse Gallery in Building W-16. When Julia realized that she was creating art in the same place that suffragists engaged in protest that swayed national opinion and eventually won women the right to vote, she began a series of large and small paintings honoring the suffragists.

"The power of art is only partially held in what viewers see on the canvas. The true power is in changing how viewers see the rest of their lives. In my encaustic paintings, layering wax like the accumulation of history, I seek to remind women and girls of their potential to change the world," said artist Julia Dzikiewicz.

The Muse Gallery is open Friday through Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. and the Lucy Burns Museum is open Saturdays, Noon to 5 p.m.

FUN THINGS TO DO THIS SUMMER

DRIVE-IN THEATERS AT WORKHOUSE

The Workhouse Drive-In Movie Theatre is set up with a 40 foot screen on campus and is limited to 75 vehicles at \$30 per vehicle. All tickets will be purchased online and parking location will be on a first-come, first-served basis. Options to purchase a packaged snack box will also be available. Alternatively, movie goers may bring their own snacks or meals purchased from local restaurants. Showtime is 9 p.m. and gates open at 8:15 p.m. At 9601 Ox Road, Lorton. Visit the website: www.workhousearts.org.

Thursday, Aug. 13 -- "Moana"
 Friday, Aug. 14 -- "Despicable Me"
 Saturday, Aug. 15 -- "Clue"
 Thursday, Aug. 20 -- "Suffragette"
 Friday, Aug. 21 -- "How to Train Your Dragon"
 Saturday, Aug. 22 -- "Labyrinth (Encore)"
 Thursday, Aug. 27 -- "A League of their Own"

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. The movie begins at sunset and lineup for the summer is as follows:

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 Visit 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. 15 -- "Ready Player One"
 Aug. 22 -- "Coco"
 Aug. 29 -- "Mary Poppins Returns"

SUMMER ENTERTAINMENT SERIES

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/performances, select the date on the calendar for this performance, and click on the links for the livestream video.

Schedule
 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@upcyclecrc.org. To register, visit www.upcyclecrc.org/camps. Zoom link will be sent the day before the camp starts to access the virtual classes.

COMMUNITY MARKET AT WORKHOUSE

The Workhouse Arts Center announces a new Community Market initiative in partnership with the South Fairfax Chamber of Commerce every Saturday from 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. The Community Market is designed to help businesses rebuild during Virginia's Phase II reopening in a unique setting all while keeping local arts alive. Surrounded by historic buildings, the Workhouse offers a unique venue for Fairfax and Prince William businesses and organizations to market and sell goods and services. The outdoor environment provides greater exposure to traditional brick and mortar businesses as well as a way for the community to shop in a safer way during Phase I and Phase II of re-opening the local economy. Spaces and tents will adhere to social distancing guidelines and the Workhouse will monitor traffic and cleaning guidelines for optimal safety. Interested vendors should contact Elena Romanova at elenaromanova@workhousearts.org.



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GMU Prepares for Coming Year

George Mason University campus plans adjusted to deal with pandemic.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

As August rolls in and students get ready for classes at George Mason University, school officials grapple with decisions on classes, campus life and the pandemic. They've even set up a webpage full of directives for the students to stay well while getting their college degree.

"I've gone through parts of it," said Cindy Anderson, a sophomore who has checked out the GMU website. "They are doing what they can to make it safe," she said.

Charlie Hartman is a senior who works behind the bar at Fat Tuesday's across the street from George Mason, and lives in a townhouse with other students. "My roommates and I are all conscious of it," he said, noting that one of his statistics classes is online and one will be in a classroom setting this year. "They're hybrid, online classes," he said, but wouldn't be surprised if the other class gets switched to online also.

On the GMU pandemic webpage, which is called "Safe Return to Campus," there is a picture of a student working on a laptop with a mask on. "Mason's Safe Return to Campus Plan has been reviewed by the State Council of Higher Education and has been found to be compliant in containing the required components of the Higher Education Reopening Guidance, which was developed in consultation with the Virginia Department of Health," the website states. It has links to various pages that provide information on the coming year.

The plan is a 77-page document full of information on initiation and student activities, health and safety precautions, campus life and services, and recommendations on travel, transportation, dining and events. In March, they implemented a telework policy which stayed in place until June 11, when the Safe Return plan was implemented. It continues to evolve.

"The plan calls for starting the fall semester on time on Aug. 24, and bringing students back for a mix of in-person and hybrid instruction and expanded online classes, as well as the continued advancement of research. Mason's return to campus will be executed in stages to allow for adjustments as new information or revised guidance becomes available," it states. Mason's Safe Return to Campus Plan will evolve as circumstances develop and/or as new information or revised guidance becomes available from federal, state, and local officials and public health experts.

There are five stages of student assimilation, and Aug. 1-23 is Stage 4 where "student and employee support returns," the document states. Stage 5 goes from Aug. 24 through Dec. 19 where "instruction and operations resume under new normal conditions." There is a required Safe Return to Campus Training session listed too, and all faculty, staff, and students are required to complete Safe Return to Campus Training before returning to campus, it says. This includes screening, signage, occupancy restrictions, physical distancing requirements, face coverings, hand hygiene, and enhanced cleaning and disinfection protocols in keeping with Forward Virginia Guidelines for social gatherings, GMU said.



PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION

Signs everywhere around the campus remind students of the pandemic.



Fat Tuesday's is aware of the rules for gatherings of students.

Moving In

The students are allowed to have two guests help them move in, which could very well be mom and dad, but face coverings are required, it says. "Students and their guests will be required to wear a face covering while moving in, in accordance with University Policy 1415 COVID-19 Public Health and Safety Precautions – Face Coverings and the Safe Return to Campus Plan."

According to the guidelines, the university will provide two reusable cloth face coverings to each employee, faculty member, and student returning to campus; it will be the responsibility of the recipients to launder or hand-wash face coverings after every day of use. Reusable cloth face coverings should not be shared with other individuals. There is also a policy for face shield use as well.

If any student or staff member shows any signs of illness, the university document has various ways to approach it, overwhelmingly including the words "self-quarantine." For staff, anyone with a fever or other symptoms or who have been exposed to a COVID-19 positive case within the prior 14 days will stay home and follow instructions for reporting outlined in the Safe Return to Campus Plan, their guidelines state. Testing will be available for all and students showing any signs are requested to first use the university's "telehealth" facility before being tested.

Face Coverings Available

At the University Cleaners over in University Mall, there are reusable face shields available for purchase, and these can be embroidered with any design or message for a price. This includes the GMU logo, although none were pre-made, said the owner.

Fat Tuesday's is still serving beer. They have noticed the attendance at the bar is lower, but the full impact of the students returning is still a few weeks away. Nonetheless, steps have been taken to adapt to the new reality everyone is adapting to. "We stopped doing our college nights," said Hartman.

'Supporting as Many Businesses as Possible'

Fairfax City awards grants to all eligible applicants.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax City wants its small businesses to succeed, and it's showing it in a tangible way by putting its money where its mouth is. Via its Economic Development Authority (EDA), the City just awarded a total of \$1 million in grants to the more than 150 eligible businesses that applied for them.

Furthermore, in satisfying the EDA's goal of promoting equity and inclusivity throughout the City, some 70 percent of the recipient businesses are owned by minorities, women or veterans. Each business will receive a grant of at least \$5,000 to reimburse expenses incurred during the commonwealth's shutdown or to adapt their procedures and develop new products.

Called ReConnected Grants, they're funded by some of the CARES Act money Fairfax City received from Virginia. And the City is especially proud that every small business that applied for one of these grants, and met the minimum eligibility requirements, received it.

In addition, nearly a quarter of these businesses will receive an additional \$5,000 – for a total of \$10,000 – for establishing innovative or creative, new, best practices and techniques. These modifications enabled them to make the needed adjustments to conform to mandatory compliance measures. Those grantees will be announced next week.

"I'd like to thank our Mayor and City Council for their leadership in establishing this ReConnected Grant program for our City's small businesses during this time of uncertainty," said Economic Development Director Chris Bruno. "The City and EDA remain committed to supporting as many businesses as possible, and this program does just that. I also thank Governor



Chris Bruno

Northam's office for providing the City with this critical allocation of CARES funding."

After entering into a grant agreement, the businesses will be eligible to submit reimbursement requests for items and activities such as: Creating new innovative marketing campaigns, purchasing new protective equipment and cleaning supplies, hiring specialized sanitization services, reconfiguring space to comply with social-distancing guidelines, and supporting a portion of their employees' salaries. They may also seek reimbursement for eligible expenses occurred during the initial shutdown.

Michelle McCrady of BACINI Photography received one of the grants and couldn't be happier. "We're extremely thankful to Fairfax City's EDA and the ReConnected team," she said. "Our business has struggled immensely during COVID-19. This grant will help facilitate the process of rebuilding our business so we can effectively operate while doing our part to ensure the safety of our customers and employees."

She called the grant "an incredibly helpful resource that will give us and so many others in Fairfax City a fighting chance. We're deeply grateful for the program and for all who were involved in making sure it was easily accessible to so many of the City's small businesses."

HOME LIFE STYLE

Black Interior Designers on Industry's Lack of Inclusion and Diversity

Local tastemakers speak honestly about racial barriers within the profession.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

As recent racial injustice protests have brought issues of diversity and inclusion to the forefront of the nation's consciousness, local interior designers of color are voicing concerns about equity and underrepresentation within the industry. Four tastemakers from around the region share their experiences with systemic racism in the industry, the issues that make achieving success more difficult for black designers than their white counterparts and strategies for improvement.

"The prejudices in the design industry are very, very deep," said interior designer Sheryl McLean of McLean & Tircuit in Bethesda. "I don't let it hold me back, but I have to acknowledge that it's there. I often wonder if people think that I'm going to design a bedroom and use a dashiki bedspread."

The dearth of African American designers in the region often makes them an anomaly at trade shows and other professional events. "I've been in situations where I'm the only black person in a room or on site and no one wants to talk to me," said Quintece Hill-Mattauszek of Studio Q Designs in Alexandria.

This unfamiliarity can lead to reactions that range from blank stares to awkward conversations with their white counterparts. "You can see how uncomfortable and standoffish some designers are," says McLean. "They don't know what to say because they're afraid they might say something wrong, but they automatically assume that you're not on their level."

"I think that this is definitely true in the Washington area. It's like a sorority girls club in a way," said Jeanne Griffin of Jeanne Griffin Interior Design in Alexandria.

"There's a network of designers who belong to the same country clubs and have parents who know influential people who can help grow their business. I didn't have anyone helping me."

"Many black designers didn't go to school with, don't worship with, or don't live in the same neighborhood as the decision makers," added Lorna Gross-Bryant of Lorna Gross Interior Design in Bethesda, Maryland. "For example, a show house board might say they didn't select a designer to participate because they 'don't know them.'"

Despite their attempts to assimilate and overcome barriers within the industry, designers of color are often received with wariness and misconceptions. When Griffin casually inquired about the lack of diversity at a design event, her questions were met with perplexity. "I was told, 'I'm not a racist. I just don't know any black people.'"

The social dynamic in the Washington region, says Hill-Mattauszek feeds this systemic exclusion. "DC is defined by groups and if you're not in a certain group it's harder to be successful," she said. "For the longest time if you went to trade shows you'd hardly ever see any African American designers on a panel."

A lack of coverage by national design publications limits widespread visibility of their work, says McLean. "Mainstream magazines haven't felt the need to feature African American artists or our contributions," she said. "They're calling now and asking for quotes as a result of the Black Lives Matter movement, and that's great, but where have they been for the last 20 years? Not getting coverage hurts us."



PHOTO COURTESY OF JEANNE GRIFFIN INTERIOR DESIGN
Jeanne Griffin of Jeanne Griffin Interior Design in Alexandria created this airy kitchen.

Organizations like Black Artists + Designers Guild (BADG) and Black Interior Designers Network (BIDN), both of which McLean and Gross are members, have helped raise the profile of designers of color. "A lot of African American designers are also making their voices heard through social media," said Hill-Mattauszek. "There's been a change, but for a long time it was a struggle."

The industry's evaluation of its nearly homogenous make-up requires introspection and a shift in mindset, suggests Griffin. "Are majority white firms brave enough to put the work into diversifying their staff?" she asks. "Are people brave enough to be able to hire someone of a different race?"

Creating a new generation of up-and-coming interior designers who are driven and unafraid to push creative and social boundaries requires mentorship, education and confidence. "My advice to aspiring African American designers is to always strive for excellence," said Gross. "There is no substitute for hard work. This is what my parents instilled in me and I think the philosophy still holds true. And establishing a great network is critical."

While talent is essential to working in the industry, established Black designers say that the ability to create aesthetically appealing spaces is not enough. "As black designers, we always have to be better, being equal is not allowed," said Griffin. "For Blacks, being equally qualified is seen as being behind. We have to be 200% better to be seen as equal."

Established designers are paving the way for new talent and believe that education can offer that equanimity. Gross, Griffin, Hill-Mattauszek and McLean have graduate degrees and multiple certifications in design, and encourage those who want to join the industry to do the same.

"During my career, I've tried to balance the playing field by pursuing as many degrees and certifications as possible to alleviate any concern about my ability to execute a project at a high-level," said Gross. "I have been fortunate to have a healthy number of clientele who seek my work."

"The more education you have, the more opportunities you will have," added Griffin. "I also encourage students of color to take any opportunity to travel abroad. It builds so much self-confidence."



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-Werner Heisenberg

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NEWS



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Lorton Community Action Center

School Supply Drive in Two Phases This Year?

Home schooling may be the only way this year.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

The back to school drive at the Lorton Community Action Center has taken on a new twist this year due to the plans for the coming school year and the pandemic. Volunteers are out collecting school supplies, but for now, they are getting supplies for the students to home-school, and when the school officials make the decision to go back to the classroom, there will be another load of supplies for the classroom.

"These kits are to be utilized during home school and additional kits will be given to the school for when students are in the classroom," said Elizabeth Hankins at the Lorton Community Action Center.

Throughout August, they will be collecting supplies but have not made the decision of when and where to distribute the supplies. It's another unknown variable in the world of COVID-19. Anyone can sponsor a child for \$10 through the Back2School web page.

"Many of our families have experienced a deeper financial impact as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and need your help!" it said on the school drive webpage.

Working through the Fairfax County Public Schools, LCAC will be working directly with the county and a local vendor to purchase pre-packaged, sanitized school supply kits. These \$10 kits are designed with everything a student

will need for schooling at home and will help our students adapt to their new normal this school year.

This year, they are using pre-packed kits so all students the same age will have the same supplies, and donors, volunteers and staff are kept safe during this uncertain time.

To find out more about donating for the Back2School program, email questions to info@lortonaction.org; 703-339-5161; Address 9518 Richmond Hwy Lorton, VA 22199.

What \$10 Buys

K-6TH
Composition book (qty 2, wide rule, 100 sheets)
Crayons (qty 1 box, 24 count)
Eraser (qty 1, large pink)
Folders (qty 2, plastic, various colors, with 2 pockets, no prongs)
Glue sticks (qty 2, .21 oz)
Pencils #2 (qty 1 box, 10 count)
Colored Pencils (qty 1 package, 12 count)
Earbuds w/ mic (qty 1)
Pencil sharpener (qty 1)
Scissors (qty 1, 5" blunt tip stainless)
Pencil Pouch (qty 1, soft sided, not pencil box)
Dry Erase Marker (qty 1, black)
Dry Erase Board 8.5x 11 (qty 1)

MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL
Colored pencils (qty 1 package, 24 ct.)
Eraser (qty 1, large pink)
Folders (qty 2, plastic, various colors, with 2 pockets, no prongs)
Highlighter (qty 2, assorted colors)
Pens (qty 5, medium ballpoint, 2 black, 2 blue and 1 red)
Pencils #2 (qty 1 box, 8 count)
Pencil Sharpener (qty 1)
3-Ring Binder (qty 1, 1" size, assorted colors)
Filler Paper (qty 1, college rule)
5 Tab Dividers (qty 1, paper, insertable)
Earbuds w/ mic (qty 1)
Pencil pouch (qty 1, soft sided)
Sticky notes, 3x3 (qty 1)
Zip Bag for kit contents (12x18 clear plastic handle bag)

Citizen's Guide to Better Times

Things each of us can do to help our country right now.

Don't sit at home with your worry beads as you consume the news. Action is what is needed. And yes, Virginia, each of us has the power to contribute to a better future. Want to be counted in bringing better times forward? Try this simple test to evaluate how you are or will be making a difference.

- 50+ points – At least you're in the game. Can you find some stretch goals?
- 70+ points – Involved citizen.
- 90+ points – You rank as an active leader. Congratulations!

- Socially distance (10 points)
- Follow informed news sources, both sides! (20 points)
- Register your support/use of Post Office and mail-in voting (10) (\$, letters to Congress, newspaper, SM)
- Register your support for adequate number of voting stations (10) (ditto)
- Sign up as a census taker (5)
- Sign up to work at voting stations (5)
- Vote! (20 points)

Eileen Curtis
Great Falls

NAACP Holds Virtual Town Hall

FROM PAGE 3

help on... (and) how to create cohorts of support for new Black teachers and Latino teachers to say yes... We need folks to be able to be courageous enough when they are offered the job to take it with us in those schools... We are not going to have schools that continue not to hire teachers of color... There are some schools that have more work to do to create that environment, and we're going to get it addressed this year."

Discussion of the fourth priority goal keyed into the roles, limits, and domain of Principals and Regional Area Superintendents to ensure during the 2020-2021 school year a system of effective oversight on issues of equity. Hampton questioned outcome differences between schools, given their principals and respective atmosphere in their schools as related to equity. "Maybe you have to look at what has kept principals from running buildings... (You) have that responsibility to do that oversight of principals," she said.

Brabrand responded that in the past, some principals used the resources they had better than others. He said, "This year equity is part of every principal's goal... There shouldn't be any discipline disproportionality... There shouldn't be any academic gaps. We have coaches to help us do that... We need to do it at a deeper level and focus it around equity," Brabrand said. He added they would be held accountable. Hampton said, "You need to put the right people in those jobs. I think that you need to reward that sort of attitude."

NEARING THE END of the town hall, Hampton and Brabrand discussed the establishment of curriculum review committees to study current curricula for racial or cultural bias, especially in the areas of Social

Studies/History/English, and to identify resources and teaching practices that could promote a more inclusive worldview and a complete study of the United States and World History. Such would be completed by the end of the 2020-21 school year.

Colleen Eddy, Coordinator for Social Studies K-12 at FCPS, said they were auditing existing curriculum to remove biased, harmful and racist resources, creating a transformative curriculum. "That means partnering with the right people across the state, focusing on the design principles for culturally responsive pedagogy, and adopting anti-bias and the anti-racist outcomes for our curriculum... with a mindset to fidelity of doing good work that's responsible and has integrity to history."

Finally, Brabrand and Hampton reviewed the admissions process to Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJ).

"We want to see obviously that TJ reflects the population it serves," Hampton said. She questioned why Black teens chose not to go to TJ.

Brabrand said, "I expect a conversation about TJ with our school board in the coming months to address a lot of the questions and solutions, not 20 years of status quo where we have tried to do something, but we've settled around the edges, and it has not made a major change. I'm sitting with Karen Keys-Gamarra from the School Board, with Marty Smith, our Chief Operating Officer who oversees TJ admissions, myself and the principal of TJ on a Governor's Task Force led by the Secretary of Education... and the Board of Education Chair."

Due to time constraints, not all 2020-2021 priorities as developed by the Education Committee and part of its Advocacy and Legislative Agenda could be discussed at the town hall. A follow-up meeting is planned.

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"Extensive Metastatic Disease"



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Well I certainly don't like the sound of that and I especially didn't like reading it in the "impressions" part of the radiologist's report I received Friday summarizing the previous Wednesday's PET scan. Though hardly a surprise given a thoracic surgeon's description of my original PET scan 11 and 1/2 years ago: "You lit that thing up like a Christmas tree." Still, I would have rather read something a bit less ominous. But I don't suppose being diagnosed with two types of cancer (non small cell lung stage IV and papillary thyroid, stage II) lends itself to a 'bit less ominous.' Besides, 'less ominous' left the building in late February 2009 when I was first diagnosed with a "terminal" disease: non small cell lung cancer.

Not to make light of such a heavy dose of reality but, as Tom Sellick says on his recent television commercial for AAG: "This isn't my first rodeo." And neither is this statement of fact from the radiologist the first less-than-encouraging news I've heard and seen. To invoke Jack Palance (Curly) from "City Slickers" (1991): "I **** bigger than that." I've been living with a version of these words for 11 and 1/2 years. Tell me something I don't know.

Nevertheless, I'll find out what it all means soon enough. Though it might be a bit of a re-hash from a few columns ago stating that since all the tumors in my lungs can't be biopsied, practically proceeding, my oncologist will never know for certain exactly how much of what type of cancer I have. And since one medicine - from what I've been told, can't treat both cancers, life expectancy, treatment protocols, etc., are likely unclear at best. Presumably, we'll treat the cancer which is most prevalent, most aggressive and most treatable/curable? I can only hope that as I sit and write this column, two days before my surgical lung biopsy on Monday, seven days, approximately, until I hear from my oncologist, I'll be able to compartmentalize the worst case scenarios - all of which are out of my control anyway, and try to live life as normally as possible and avoid any rabbit holes of gloom and doom.

Right now, this is just another blip on the cancer radar that has been "blipping" for more than 11 years. Generally speaking, the medical feedback we receive almost always sounds mediocre (and I don't mean fair to middling either). And it never sounds worse than it did in February '09 when I initially was diagnosed and given a "13 month to two year" prognosis. Unfortunately, having outlived my oncologist's expectation by upwards of 10-plus years doesn't guarantee me any favorable news. That was yesterday (yesteryear, actually). This is today, 2020. However, much has changed/evolved in the cancer-treatment world. There have been more drugs approved for the treatment of lung cancer in the last few years than in previous multiple decades, including the introduction of an entire new class of medicine: immunotherapy. It's not exactly game and match but it is night and day.

Still, it's premature until I'm re-diagnosed and placed in a new protocol and see the results - in future CT scans. This pending biopsy may be the storm before the calm or vice versa, quite frankly. As I await results, my glass remains half full, as always. I just have to hope that while waiting for the cancer business to become clear, I don't get so thirsty/anxious that I empty my glass. That wouldn't help anybody, especially me.

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

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