DogFest Goes Virtual

Moving Schools to Dismantle Systemic Racial Oppression

‘Lock Your Car; Leave No Valuables Inside’
Reston Pride Runs Deep, Water or Not

Coronavirus collides with Cardboard Boat Regatta.

By Mercia Hobson

Reston Historic Trust & Museum canceled its fourth annual Cardboard Boat Regatta due to the coronavirus pandemic. In its place, the organization presents the 2020 Cardboard Challenge during the entire month of August. Although mates won’t be squeezed in sinking cardboard creations, ferociously paddling back to the dock, community spirit and pride run deep in Reston, water or not. According to Alexandra Campbell, executive director of Reston Historic Trust & Museum, registered participants can create their favorite Reston places and landmarks mainly out of cardboard. Paint, duct tape and paper-mâché can be used. Participants can register for the event with a suggested donation of $25. They will have a chance to win a one-of-a-kind trophy from Nova Labs and have their work exhibited at Reston Museum in October. Registrants must email images of their works info@restonmuseum.org or tag @restonmuseum on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram. Visit https://www.restonmuseum.org/cardboardchallenge.
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 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.

As a solution, Brabrand said he was working with the Virginia Department of Health and County Health Department for guidance and metrics. They would establish department shared. They would establish de-

Percent of FCPS teacher hires by race/ethnicity

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

bran... Sean Perryman, president of the Fairfax County NAACP

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

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

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, “Doesn’t 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, “I (it) doesn’t mean you are going to pick diverse candidates out of that bigger pool…This is something I’d love your support on.”

See NAACP, Page 7

Oak Hill/Herndon / Reston / Chantilly Connection / Centre View ● August 12-18, 2020 ● 3
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)

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—it 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. "The arguments 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."

Please vote YES on November 3!

By John Lovaa
Reston Impact Producer/Host

“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 reflect 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 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 by more personnel in the departments responsible for and skilled in this area of concern.

The public servants 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

INDEPENDENT PROGRESSIVE

By John Lovaa
Reston Impact Producer/Host

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

By John Lovaa
Reston Impact Producer/Host

If you want to literally take all funding from the police it 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 reflect the complexities of the problem.

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Please vote YES on November 3!
DogFest Goes Virtual
COVID affects fundraising efforts, virtual platform spurs creative responses for the Sept. 20 event.

By Mercia Hobson
The Connection

The Cheshire family of Great Falls is raising its 14th Canine Companions for Independence® (CCI) service puppy. In between teaching their dog a reported 30 some commands, Jacqueline Cheshire, CCI’s Capital Chapter President, and dedicated volunteers are planning the chapter’s seventh annual fundraiser, “DogFest Washington DC [September 20-Virtual].” Previously anchored at Reston Town Center, the event relocated to Facebook amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

They hope for a healthy bottom line from event proceeds to help support the non-profit organization that provides highly trained assistance dogs free of charge to people with disabilities. Costs run $50,000 per dog, according to Cheshire.

While precautions related to coronavirus forced organizers to reimagine the charitable event, they also needed to factor into their business model diversified fundraising to counter lost revenue streams and creative event planning. Cheshire said, “We need to keep funding these dogs, raising these dogs, and getting them trained and into the hands of people with disabilities, even though there’s a pandemic... Revenue is down, 20 to 30 percent this year... We have very few sponsors because we’ve not been able

To participate, visit www.lostdogrescue.org

You Can Make a Difference
Cats benefit from being in a foster home. We need long- and short-term fosters for cats of all ages, mothers with litters and kittens on their own.

Consider Fostering
visit our website, click on Participate
Adopt/Donate/Volunteer at www.lostdogrescue.org

Home-field advantage.
I understand you work really hard for your home and car, and I’m here to help protect them
STOP IN OR CALL ME TODAY.
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

For a free digital subscription to one or all of the 15 Connection Newspapers, go to www.connectionnewspapers.com/subscribe

For New Life Christian Church, serving families during this crisis is about more than just feeding them. “It’s about being a light of hope in the community,” explained volunteer Christine Heath. “I’m so blessed to be able to deliver meals with my husband and be the hands and feet of Jesus to these families. Everyone should try it, and it was a great example for our two boys.”

The delivery program touched the volunteers, as well. “I was so thankful to help these families who needed a meal,” said Bobby Webster. “I was grateful [to participate] and was so excited that I baked banana bread for each family to add to their meal. It was a true blessing to see some people in need and how we can help them with just little things.”

The delivery program continues to grow, and more volunteers are needed. “It’s about more than just feeding these families, but also about being the hands and feet of Jesus to our community,” explained volunteer Rayni Bonchou. “My daughter and I were excited to help these families get a warm meal. It’s great for my daughter to see the smiles on their faces.”

Volunteers are welcome to help at any time, and they can make a difference in the lives of those in need. “Every little bit helps,” explained volunteer Stephanie Dagata. “It’s about giving and changing another’s life.”
Citizen’s Guide to Better Times

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

D

on’t sit at home with your worry heads 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 news forward? Try this simple test to evaluate how you are counted in bringing better times forward?

Can you find some stretch goals? Try this simple test to evaluate how you are counted in bringing better times forward?

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

90+ points – You rank as an active leader.
70+ points – Involved citizen.
50+ points – At least you’re in the game.

Congratulations!

Wear a mask (20 points)

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, “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.

Eileen Curtis
Great Falls
Police warn about scams and thefts from vehicles.

By Bonnie Hobbs
The Connection

Still holding the meetings of the Sully District Police Station’s Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) online, due to the pandemic, three of the officers recently updated the community about the latest trends in local crimes.

Crime Prevention Officer, MPO Sabrina Ruck, said vehicle tampering and larcenies from vehicles are continuing. So, she advised residents, “Before you go to bed at night, lock your car and be sure no valuables are left inside.”

She said criminals “will go through a neighborhood and try door handles to see which vehicles are open. And they’ve stolen everything from pocket change to a door handle to see which vehicles are open. And they’ve stolen everything from pocket change to a door handle.”

SCAMS are also still prevalent, virus or not. “A person calls a thief, just in case [they’re stolen].”

“We’re going to cut off your utilities at 5 p.m. if you don’t pay your bill now,” Stop, think and call us before doing anything.”

Community Outreach Officer, PFC Meg Hawkins, then expressed the station’s gratitude to everyone in the community who’s reached out to show their support of their local police officers. “Thank you all for your continued support – the lunches, dinners, messages, emails and letters – of our Sully District officers,” she said. “It really means a lot and the officers truly appreciate it.”

Next, Lt. Josh Laitinen, the station’s assistant commander, noted that all the Black Lives Matter protests in Fairfax County have been peaceful. And he echoed Hawkins’ words, saying, “We’ve gotten an incredible amount of support from the community, and we cannot thank you enough.”

He said body-worn camera tests in Fairfax County have been peaceful. He said body-worn cameras throughout the entire, county Police Department are being implemented and “We hope to have it done by this fall.” He said it also helps the police when residents are involved with their communities, homeowners’ associations and Neighborhood Watches. “You’re our eyes and ears,” said Laitinen. “And if there are some issues of concern, call us.”

He, too, noted the many thefts from vehicles in the Sully District.

“There’s especially been an uptick in them in the Union Mill Road and Compton Road areas, mainly between 1-5 a.m.,” he said. “Often, they’re done by kids in the neighborhood.”

Making things easier for these thieves, said Laitinen, is the fact that, “Often, keys are left in the vehicle. So don’t leave your car keys anywhere near your vehicle.” In addition, he said, “With everyone being cooped up at home, sadly, there’s been an increase in domestic violence incidents. But I don’t have any data handy.”

Hawkins said the station is still accepting items at the station for families in need via the Help from the Heart community drive. "You’re our eyes and ears," said Laitinen. “And if there are some issues of concern, call us.”

Area Roundups

Car Seat Inspections Resume
Car seat inspections at the Sully District Police Station are resuming and will be held Thursday, Aug. 13 and 27, from 5-8:30 p.m., at 4900 Stonecroft Blvd. in Chantilly. Participants will fill out questionnaires before car seat installations to comply with COVID-19 guidelines and safety precautions. To schedule an appointment, go to https://bit.ly/sulluyauges.

Free Food Available in Centreville
Sully District Supervisor Kathy Smith’s office, in partnership with the DeLane Corp., will host a free, food-distribution, next Tuesday, Aug. 18, starting at 2 p.m. It’s at Mount Olive Baptist Church, 6600 Old Centreville Road in Centreville. The food boxes include a week’s supply of fresh, dairy products. There are no eligibility requirements.

Teen Charged with Malicious Wounding
Fairfax County police have arrested a Centreville teenager in connection with a fight in which another man was wounded. Taken into custody was Sebastian Cruz Cobo, 19. On Aug. 4, at 4:48 p.m., officers from the Sully District Station responded to the 1400 block of Lotus Lane for a report of a fight.

There, they discovered a man had been assaulted. He was taken to a hospital for treatment of non-life-threatening injuries, and the alleged assailant, Cobo, was arrested and charged with malicious wounding.

WFCM Needs Food, Toiletries Donations
All year round, the nonprofit Western Fairfax Christian Ministries (WFCM) feeds local families in need via its food pantry. But with the demand so great, it needs donations from the community to help it do so.

The pantry is at 4511 Daly Drive, Suite J, in Chantilly. For more information, go to www.wfcma.org or call 703-988-6956.

The most-needed items in the pantry this month are: Instant mashed potatoes, diced tomatoes, canned corn, vegetable oil, 1-pound bags of sugar and flour, tomato sauce, boxed pasta and canned fruit, as well as shampoo/conditioner, soup, deodorant, feminine pads and toothpaste.

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