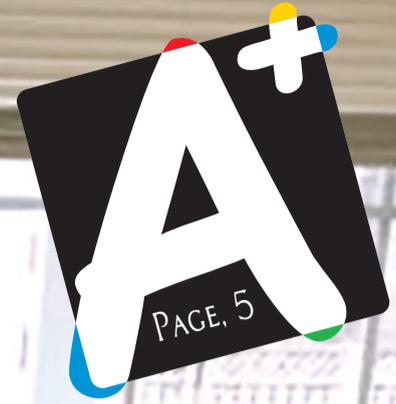


# Great Falls CONNECTION



## Senior Living Homes Adjust to New Normal

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Great Falls Assisted Living (GFAL) residents do a coloring activity. Seniors and their loved ones, aware of the high risk of COVID-19, have been devising ways to safely stay connected.

## Kamala Harris Speaks at Fairfax 9-11 Remembrance Ceremony

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(From left) U.S. Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.), Douglas Emhoff, Democratic Vice Presidential candidate, U.S. Sen. Kamala Harris (D-Calif.) and Fairfax County Fire Chief John S. Butler bow their heads in a moment of silence.



PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

A moment of silence at the Fairfax 9-11 Remembrance Ceremony, exactly 10:28 a.m. September 11, 2020, marking nineteen years to the moment when the North Tower at the World Trade Center collapsed on September 11, 2001, following a terrorist attack.

## Kamala Harris Speaks at Fairfax 9-11 Remembrance Ceremony

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

**A**t Fairfax County Public Safety Headquarters, County Fire Chief John S. Butler stepped to the podium at the 9-11 Remembrance Ceremony to commemorate lives lost on September 11, 2001. Democratic Vice Presidential candidate, Sen. Kamala Harris (D-Calif.), the senior senator from Virginia, Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.), and County leaders among them Chairman Jeffrey C. McKay (D), Supervisors Pat Herryty (R-Springfield) James R. Walkinshaw (D-Braddock District), Walter L. Alcorn (D-Hunter Mill District), Dalia A. Palchik (D-Providence District) and first responders of the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department joined Butler.

“We have some esteemed guests but today is really about those who went into buildings and never came back knowing they might not come back. Those who went to work, to do their normal jobs and never came back.” The ceremony began with a moment of silence at 10:28, when the North Tower at the World Trade Center collapsed. Sen. Warner said, “These last nineteen years, the commitment of those first responders, those who died in the tragedy, we still hold their memories and condolences to the families who still grieve. I know the Chief said there are six (first responders) still in current service who responded that day, and we can’t thank you enough for what you’ve done.”

In his introduction of United States Senator Kamala Harris, Sen. Warner said, “She understands the dangerous world that we live in, but she also understands the absolutely critical role first responders and our military play in keeping our country safe.”

Sen. Harris recalled where she was and what she was doing nineteen years ago. It was early morning in California, then the images started to come on the tv, and everyone stopped. She said they all stood around in utter disbelief, strangers hugging each other, understanding at their core without



Vice presidential candidate, U.S. Sen Kamala Harris, (D-Calif.) gives the keynote address at the 9-11 Remembrance Ceremony by Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department, Friday, September 11, 2020.

reflection, without thinking that they were all in this together.

She said: “In times of despair, in times of suffering and pain, we find our very nature as who we are. We stand together, understanding we are all in this together. So, as we honor them, let’s remember that today we honor those lost in New York, Pennsylvania, and right here in Virginia. We remember the passengers and crewmembers, the firefighters, law enforcement peace officers and military personnel. We remember that they were more than these victims of an unspeakable act. They were also parents and sons

and daughters and neighbors and friends.

And we know that they will never be defined by the story of those who stole them away. No, they will be defined by their humanity, by their story. I hear laughter that still echoes in the homes and hearts of those who love them.

What our attackers failed to understand is that the darkness they hoped would envelop us on 9-11, instead summoned our most radiant and kind human instinct - the instinct to care for one another, to transcend our division, and see ourselves as fellow citizens. To race towards danger and risk everything

to protect each other, the instinct to unite.

If we learned anything watching the heroes of 9-11 is that the strength of the human spirit knows no bounds. And that even the gravest threats against us only serve to reveal our true strength, and our capacity to act with love and courage in the face of immense challenge is what defines us as Americans.

I’m humbled to be here and to join in this moment. And I wish, and I pray that the cherished memories of those who served remind us of who they were as individuals, but also who we are as a nation.”



U.S. Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.), front, with Supervisor Pat Herryty left and Board of Supervisor Chairman Jeffrey C. McKay (D), right, at the 9-11 Remembrance Ceremony in Fairfax.

## The House at the Half

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



The House of Delegates is probably half-way through its virtual Special Session. At least the House has debated all the bills introduced by its members with the exception of the budget that is always last to be considered. Those bills have been sent to the Senate and await their consideration while the House will now begin deliberations on the bills the Senate has passed.

As I have indicated in recent columns this special session has been a busy one as special sessions go. Even more unusual, it has been conducted for the first time ever in a virtual environment.

The House has passed 37 bills, all of which are of considerable importance and consequence. These bills will fund safe and secure alternatives for Virginia voters to return absentee ballots during the upcoming 2020 general election, implement housing protections for Virginia families negatively impacted by COVID-19, ban the use of no-knock-warrants and neck restraints, require law enforcement officers to

intervene or report when they see wrongdoing from colleagues, and streamline the process for localities to remove, relocate, or alter Confederate statues and other war monuments on public property.

To understand fully what some of the bills, described here in generalities, will do, go to <https://lis.virginia.gov> to review the specific language and provisions. To make voting easier during the pandemic, HB5103 permits localities to establish ballot drop-off locations, supports pre-paid postage for absentee ballots, and makes it safer and easier to vote absentee.

HB5116 requires large employers to provide limited paid quarantine leave for Virginia workers. HB5028 establishes a presumption of worker compensation eligibility for first responders, teachers, and other high-risk essential workers who die or become disabled due to COVID-19. HB5047 combats price gouging for personal protective equipment. There were other COVID-related bills.

Some of the bills passed in the House in the area of police and criminal justice reform are far reaching. HB5013 eliminates qualified immunity for law enforcement officers. HB5043

created a statewide Marcus Alert system for those in a mental health crisis. HB5045 bans sexual relations between officers and arrestees. HB5058 eliminates certain pretextual police stops.

HB5049 demilitarizes police departments by prohibiting the acquisition and use of certain weapons by police departments. HB5090 expands disclosure of law enforcement criminal incidence information files for closed or cold cases under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. HB5148 increases earned sentence credits for incarcerated persons. HB5099 prohibits the use of no-knock warrants. HB5146 reforms state law related to expungement of police and court records. HB5069 bans the use of neck restraints by law enforcement. HB5098 expands the definition of hate crimes to include false 911 calls. HB5109 standardizes and enhances training by criminal justice academies and establishes required in-service training standards for law enforcement officers.

These are some of the bills that have passed the House at half-time. All have been subject to compromises of the legislative process and require a careful review of the current text to understand their implications. They are still subject to the scrutiny of the State Senate, possible conference committee action, and signature of the Governor.



### 19 Years Later, Lest We Forget

Each Sept. 11, the front lawn of West Centreville Fire Station 38 is adorned with 343 small American flags in honor of the 343 firefighters who died that day in New York.

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## What Problem is Ban Solving?

To the Editor:

To the members of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors who recently voted to move forward on a public hearing for a total ban on firearms in public places within Fairfax County, I ask a simple question: what problem is this solving? Does Fairfax County have a gun-crime problem in public places? Can you point to any facts, statistics or non-emotional anecdotes which justifies such a move?

Concealed carry permit holders are the most law-abiding demographic in the nation.

Over 420,000 Virginians are licensed to carry a concealed weapon, which means on average 1 out of every 20 Virginian passersby could be armed at any given moment except where firearms are foolishly prohibited.

One out of every 20 people you pass by is prepared to defend themselves, their families or the people around them, from violent crime.

Your decision to proceed down the path to ban guns in open spaces is nothing but divisive. Americans are passionate about the 2nd Amendment.

If you don't like it, there's a process to repeal it. America has enough divisional strife without needlessly adding to it through

emotional and fact-less legislation.

County spending and taxes have increased 25 percent over the past five years. I don't know anyone who's salary has increased 25 percent in five years and many of our residents are currently unemployed due to the COVID shutdown.

Stores are permanently closing and our future-years tax base is getting wiped out. We're trying to give our kids an education through remote learning, and their physical activity has decreased as sports leagues are shut down. Studies show depression and anxiety are on the rise.

Our roads need maintenance, the mass-transit system we partially fund is hemorrhaging money. There's homelessness and an opioid addiction crisis. The Board of Supervisors is needlessly kicking a hornet's nest when it should be concentrating on real, tangible problems that everyone can get behind.

Our county is not lacking in problems, and good, solid leadership would set out a rational, reasonable and affordable plan to solve them together, united as a community.

Matt Rising  
Springfield

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# Safe Spaces for Productive Racial Discussions

**Components that should be included in effective forums.**

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

As symbols of racial tension and injustice seemed ubiquitous this summer, a group of parishioners at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Alexandria began meeting virtually to engage in dialogues about the thorny issue of race. They began watching documentaries and reading lengthy passages on racial history in advance of their discussions. At one point this summer, members of the predominantly white and wealthy parish joined the Prayer Walk for Peace & Justice sponsored by Alfred Street Baptist Church, an African American congregation also located in Alexandria.

"It has been incredible ... but our people are so willing to spend time on it, and hungry not only to learn more but to be part of supporting real change in our society," said Reverend Elizabeth Rees, Senior Associate Rector at St. Paul's Episcopal Church. "We're using the Sacred Ground curriculum. Over the past months, we have heard parishioners talking about their eyes opening to their white privilege and their struggles to use that privilege to open their worlds up to different people and different voices."

From social media and the workplace to classrooms and places of worship, buzzwords like white privilege and micro-aggression and discussions around race were important after a summer of racial unrest. While open and honest conversations can improve race relations, researchers say that workshops, classes and group discussions and those who are establishing forums or simply seeking them must include certain basic components such as education and self reflection in order to lead to enhanced racial harmony and decrease the chance of members gaining misunderstanding, antagonism and defensiveness.

"For me the most important aspect of teaching about race is to foster a conversation that is self-referential," said Anita Chari, Ph.D., cofounder of 'Embodying Your Curriculum', a course that teaches educators how to navigate racism and social injustice. "I think that when we delve into issues of race, which can be highly charged, we need to begin from a basis of introspection and looking at each individual's own racial formation, and move from there."

As with the structure of the program of study at St. Paul's, a review of the past racial occurrences should be included in effective discussion about race, advises Chari. "I think understanding the nuances of racial history is one of the most fundamental aspects of coming to greater reconciliation and understanding about race within American society," she said. "This involves teaching students not only about the broader view of race in American history, for example ... the evolution of racial discourse through the brutal practice of chattel slavery, as well as the very local histories of race that inform the present."

Gatherings that encourage empathy and a deep understanding of other points of view can break down racial barriers on the road to racial justice, says David Trigaux, director of programs and fundraising, Washington Urban Debate League, an organization that creates debate teams for young adults and older students in Montgomery County and others parts of the Washington region. "Students prepare for debates by reading and trying to understand both sides of an argument," he said. "This process forces you to see an issue from the perspective of someone whose view is the opposite of your own. Any experience that forces you to be intellectually aware of another point of view and to walk in another person's shoes, causes empathy and brings people together in a way that can spur social awareness and awakening."

The topic for the league's current season is the criminal justice system, says Trigaux. "We get to think about the fact that some people might see a police officer as helpful while another person might see them as a threat," he said. "Switching sides forces you to think about where someone else is coming from."

Because of the controversial nature of discussions around race and the fear of being misunderstood or criticized, some might opt for silence, says Rees. "People in my generation and community were taught to be colorblind when we were children," said Rees. "We didn't consider ourselves racist, but we didn't talk about race because we didn't want to offend."

The goal now, says Rees, is to be color conscious. "Some might say 'this doesn't have anything to with me because I'm not racist,'" she said. "That's part of the problem. Racism and injustice is a community sin. Until we realize that we're part of the system that affects other people and unless we're addressing it, we're part of the problem."

Due to its popularity, Rees says that St. Paul's is planning for a second phase of the forum, which is open to anyone and not limited to parishioners.

"We will learn more particularly about racial injustice in Alexandria and Virginia and think about what injustice and antiracism might look like for us as a parish," she said. "It seems like we'll be spreading this learning and these ground-shaking conversations further into the parish. I am so glad to be doing this work, and so thrilled the parish is behind it, and eager to see where it leads us."

## PUBLIC NOTICE

### Virtual Public Hearing on the McLean Community Center's FY 2022 Budget

(July 1, 2021-June 30, 2022)

**McLean Community Center Governing Board  
Wednesday, Sept. 23, 7:30 p.m.**

Residents who wish to speak at the Public Hearing are asked to call **703-744-9348**, to be placed on the speakers list. The draft budget proposal is available on the Center's website. Copies will be available at the Public Hearing.

Written comments may be delivered to the McLean Community Center (see address below) marked "Attention: Executive Director," or sent by email to **george.sachs@fairfaxcounty.gov**. Written comments may be provided after the Public Hearing up through **Monday, Oct. 26**.

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The group works in the garage of Jason Chen, the student who founded Project Caelus, at his home in Herndon.

## TJ Students One Step Closer to Rocket Launch

By LAURA GERSONY  
THE CONNECTION

A group of 26 students at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJ) just came one step closer to launching a rocket to the edge of Earth's atmosphere. The group, which calls itself Project Caelus, successfully performed a "cold flow test" this Sunday afternoon, Sept. 13, running cold

air and water through their engine prototype to simulate flight conditions.

The final launch is planned for spring of 2023. If successful, the group's leadership says they will be the first high schoolers ever to accomplish this goal with a liquid-fueled rocket.

The cold flow test comes after nearly three years of largely theoretical work, during which the SEE ROCKET LAUNCH, PAGE 10



Several Project Caelus members perform a final systems check moments before the cold flow test.

PHOTOS BY LAURA GERSONY/THE CONNECTION

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# Izumi Sushi Reflects on Economic, Cultural Challenges of 2020

The restaurant, which serves Japanese and Chinese cuisine, is cautiously resuming its services.

BY LAURA GERSONY  
THE CONNECTION

Victoria Li, a senior at Langley High School, has grown up along with Izumi Sushi in Great Falls. When her mother co-founded the restaurant in 2010, the 6-year-old Li's job was to hold the curtain open for waiters leaving the kitchen.

Now, as a young adult, Li is one of the restaurant's few employees that speaks fluent English. This leaves her with a more consequential task: serving as the "voice of Izumi" during a turbulent few months for the Asian-American community.

The outbreak of COVID-19 in China caused an uptick in anti-Asian-American sentiment during the first few months of this year.

A report by Womply, a data subscription service that tracks revenue at local businesses, found that Chinese restaurants had the highest closure rate in the industry: nearly 60 percent of the country's Chinese restaurants had closed by April, as compared with 20 percent of all restaurants nationwide.

Public health experts have noted that the oft-cited reasons for avoiding Chinese restaurants are unfounded. Still, Li said that she and other Asian-Americans in the restaurant industry have witnessed this trend firsthand.

"The entire Asian-American community in the restaurant business has been affected since way before the stay-at-home orders started," Li said. "Sales have been going way down since January, when the pandemic was rolling around in Asia."

This compounded the already challenging task of navigating the pandemic as a small



The restaurant has not yet reopened its doors out of public health concerns, so it is relying exclusively on takeout orders.



Chefs, clad in masks and gloves, prepare meals at Izumi.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF VICTORIA LI

## Where & When

### Izumi Sushi

9861 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls, VA 22066

www.izumiva.com

703-759-7788

Hours: Break hours 3-4:30 p.m.; Monday-Thursday 11:30 a.m.-9:45 p.m.; Friday-Saturday 11:30 a.m.-10:15 p.m.; Sunday 4:30 p.m.-8:45 p.m.

business. Izumi closed completely for two weeks in late March, then opened for "half-day" takeout service in mid-April, and most recently, resumed full-day takeout service in early September.

The restaurant is still choosing not to open its doors, though it has been legally allowed to do so since mid-June. Manager Sandy Li said that this is because Izumi's narrow space would make it difficult to abide by social distancing guidelines.

"If there's just a little bit of risk, we won't reopen for dining in. We have a responsibility to our employees and to our customers," she said. "We're putting safety first."

Li said that sales at Izumi have fluctuated hugely throughout the pandemic, causing a sense of uncertainty to linger in the restaurant. Sometimes, they didn't know whether

Izumi would be able to open the following day.

Nonetheless, the restaurant has retained all of its employees throughout the pandemic, and Victoria Li says that sales are improving as the initial shock factor of the pandemic wears off.

"In the beginning, everyone was much more cautious, so less people were going out in general. Now, people see that pickup

is safe, delivery is safe; so we're seeing a lot of old voices again," she said. "The old customers are showing up again."

Though the restaurant is "cutting it close" financially, Li said, they have donated over 130 meals to hospital workers at Fairfax INOVA.

Amid the pandemic's uncertainty, Li said, there's one thing customers can be sure of: "Sushi night is not going away."

## AREA ROUNDUPS

### League of Women Voters to Host 10th District Candidate Forum

The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area invites you to join its U.S. House of Representatives - Virginia 10th District Candidate Forum, to be held online on Monday, Oct. 5 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. The following candidates certified for the Nov. 3 general election have been invited and are listed here as they appear on the Virginia Department of Elections' website: Jennifer T. Wexton (D); Aliscia N. Andrews (R) This event is free and open to the public. Register

at: [https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_bxtx0QCvTT-HbkyNah-qKTg](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_bxtx0QCvTT-HbkyNah-qKTg) Questions addressed to both candidates should be submitted in advance at: <https://forms.gle/byMSdmbZBY-bvHPYb7> LWV Candidate Forums are nonpartisan. The League never supports or opposes any party or candidate. We invite all certified candidates competing for office in their respective districts.

Please direct any questions about the event to: [pr@lwv-fairfax.org](mailto:pr@lwv-fairfax.org)

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# Library Board of Trustees Revisits July Controversy

**Trustee Rosenthal apologizes for 'wrong words' and retains board seat.**

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

**F**ran Millhouser, Chair of Fairfax County Library Board, said she received “many emails voicing public concern” for statements made by Trustees Phil Rosenthal (Springfield District) and Darren Ewing (Dranesville District) during the previous board meeting in late July. In response, Millhouser set up the Wednesday, Sept. 9 Board of Trustees meeting via Zoom and allowed ample time for the ten allowed three-minute public comments by Fairfax County residents, a presentation and discussion on demographics and the library’s curated collection, followed by other matters and Trustee comments. One of the last things Millhouser said as the Sept. 9 meeting prepared to adjourn and after Rosenthal commented and apologized for his use of inappropriate words at the July meeting was, “Thank you, Phil, and I want you to stay.”

In the weeks before the September meeting, thirty-one organizations, members of The Activated People, condemned Rosenthal’s statements. In a letter to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and Library Board of Trustees, they called the comments “racist, homophobic, anti-Semitic, and anti-Islamic” and said he criticized the County’s attempts to promote inclusion in its library catalog. Jeffrey McKay, Chair of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, said he hoped Rosenthal would resign. Rosenthal did not step down. He apologized for the disruption and offending anyone. On Aug. 25, Ewing tendered his resignation.

Before the public provided their comments during the Sept. 9 meeting, Millhouser said, “Everyone who uses the library is treated as

an individual. They choose what they want to read...We may recommend, but we do not promote or advocate.” Whitney Holchberg, 11, spoke first. She said, “White people have been the dominant voice, since before our country started. It’s time to give others the opportunity to be heard.” Matt Higgins found it ironic, “and frankly embarrassing” that Trustee Rosenthal had been unable to educate himself on systematic racism. “We have an obligation to educate ourselves... Phil, if you don’t understand what systematic racism is, I would encourage you to take advantage of the scary collection that you were denouncing.”

“I greatly respect the likes of Mr. Rosenthal and Mr. Ewing for speaking up and presenting, to generate some dialogue,” said Justin Hall. “What I fear is the calls for resignation whenever there’s a voice that we disagree with and that’s not right.” Lauren Kelly sent a message to Trustee Phil Rosenthal using the County contact form available as public record. “As a constituent in the Springfield district whose local

**“White people have been the dominant voice, since before our country started. It’s time to give others the opportunity to be heard.”**

—Whitney Holchberg, 11

library is Pohick, your claims about BLM, books with Muslim authors, and social justice books were not only tone deaf, but flat out incorrect...You should resign.”

**FOLLOWING PUBLIC COMMENTS,** Doug Miller, Strategic Planner and Customer Research Manager at Fairfax County Public Library Administration, and Dianne Coan, division director, Fairfax County Public Library technology operations, provided “Presentation: Library Demographics and Collection.” According to Miller, County demographics did not match use. “Our survey results tend to represent substantially more white users... slightly fewer Black or African American users... slightly fewer Asian or Pacific Islander users... and substantially fewer Hispanic users than the county population as a whole,”

said Miller.

During Cohen’s presentation, she said County demographics did not match the catalog’s content proportionally. The composition of the collection was extraordinarily white and cisgender. Cohen added, “The terminology that we use in applying cataloging metadata has some of its own natural limits as the search terminology that we use in its retrieval. For example, most people looking for books would use a search term of World War II. The National Standard heading, however, is World War, 1939 to 1945.

Cohen said the Library created lists because books by an author’s cultural background, such as Black or by identity, LGBTQ+, were near impossible to find without curated librarian help. “Even for librarians, it becomes really challenging to recall all the specific titles and authors...We keep lists... We adapted these lists after the web came around... We created virtual pathfinder carousels, social media posts... Lists help to show customers that the library has titles in the collection that are being talked about.. and lists are also a way to offer alternatives... They assist them to find books of interest for their entertainment, for their education, or in the words of Dr. (Regina Sims) Bishop for finding their mirrors, their windows, their sliding glass doors.”

During Board discussion about the catalogs, Trustee Priscille Dando (Fairfax County Public Schools) requested a look into a diversity audit process, including those beyond culture such as disabilities for the existing collection and new purchases. “To know what actually is there, and compare that to what is actually available,” she said.

Trustee Rosenthal said, “This COVID could be an opportunity for working through the schools. Get those underrepresented populations...into the library through music and computers, to read books and different things.”

**IN A RELATED ACTION,** Kofi Annan, CEO of NOVA Equity Agenda Coalition, released a statement on September 8, 2020, titled “Fairfax County on the Verge of Transformation.” According to Annan, Jef-

SEE TRUSTEE, PAGE 11



Whitney Holchberg, 11, speaks during public comment.



Matt Higgins speaks during public comment.



Justin Hall speaks during public comment.

PHOTOS BY FAIRFAX COUNTY

**Fran Millhouser, Chair (Mason District) Fairfax County Library Board: “Thank you, Phil, and I want you to stay.”**



**Jane Miscavage, Vice Chair (At-Large) Fairfax County Library Board: “We have the finest professionals in the country... But here we are. Two trustees during our last meeting, called out our staff publicly because they didn’t like the way a catalog page was arranged... Trustee Rosenthal’s comments not only damaged his own credibility, but it put the credibility of this board in question on all sides.”**



**Brian Engler, Trustee (Braddock District) Fairfax County Library Board: “I also want to thank... everybody who spoke, everybody who has written to me on both sides of the issue. I’ve tried to respond to many of them. I haven’t responded to all of them, quite a few.”**



**Miriam Smolen, Trustee (Providence District) Fairfax County Library Board: “The language that we use is so, so, so important, now, more than ever. That’s why I think it is appropriate to call out the language that was used in July.”**



**Liz Walker, Trustee (Sully District) Fairfax County Library Board: “I personally do not reflect those kinds of views that have been expressed in the July meeting.”**



# Senior Living Homes Adjust to New Normal

Seniors and their loved ones, aware of the high risk of COVID-19, have been devising ways to safely stay connected.

BY LAURA GERSONY  
THE CONNECTION

Tyler Przybylek's wife, Marilyn, is a resident of Great Falls Assisted Living (GFAL), a dementia-care senior living community. But Przybylek's regular visits to GFAL don't begin with a hug or kiss, like they used to. The couple now chats through a slightly opened window: his wife inside the building, Przybylek outside.

"Socially distanced visitation is very difficult," Przybylek wrote in an email to The Connection. "Marilyn and I have been married 47 years and not having the ability to hug her and touch her and walk with her hand in hand is hard. I cannot take her to lunch or dinner and cannot [take her to in-person] doctors' appointments."

Przybylek was worried that the social isolation necessitated by the COVID-19 outbreak would cause a precipitous decline in his wife's cognitive function. So far, he has noticed a small decline, though not as steep as he feared. Above all, he emphasized his gratitude to GFAL: both for its compassionate care and for its security amid the pandemic.

As the COVID-19 outbreak rages on, senior living homes have taken extraordinary measures to protect the vulnerable populations they house. Sheetal Patel, Executive Director of GFAL, described the building's current situation as a "lockdown."

"Visitors are not allowed in, vendors are not allowed in... We're doing constant disinfecting, and cleaning of high-traffic areas, every moment of the day," Patel said. "This is important to us, because for our residents, this is their home; and for our staff, this is where they work."

GFAL, which is managed by Artis Senior Living, has developed a meticulous cleaning regimen through weekly phone calls with doctors at Johns Hopkins University. Amy



GREAT FALLS ASSISTED LIVING FACEBOOK PAGE

Great Falls Assisted Living (GFAL) has resumed some of its usual activities, while striving to maintain social distancing among its residents.

DePreker, Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Artis, said that these measures go beyond the CDC's standard recommendations. All staff members wear face shields in addition to masks; they plan to conduct 'surveillance testing' for COVID-19 if the local incidence rate exceeds 15 percent; and the facility does weekly 'electrostatic disinfecting,' which according to GFAL leadership keeps all of the building's indoor surfaces disinfected for eight days.

So far, DePreker said, these measures appear to have been effective, as the residents of Artis' senior living homes currently have a less than 1 percent positive test rate for COVID-19.

Still, implementing certain measures has proven to be a challenge in the dementia care community. Initial public health guidance recommended that residents stay in their own bedrooms: a task that the GFAL staff found "impossible."

"They honestly believe this building is their home. And if this is their home, why are you keeping them in their bedroom?" Patel said, narrating a resident's thought process.

Some residents have also been resistant to wearing a face shield, finding the practice confusing or uncomfortable. As a result, staff members have put extra effort into maintaining social distancing among residents.

The initial social distancing measures also took a steep emotional toll on some residents, Patel said; some did not understand the situation, and many missed their usual social events and other comforts.

GFAL has in recent months resumed events that reduce this emotional strain. They now allow families to do either outdoor vis-

its or "window visits," where residents speak with their loved one on either side of a slightly opened window. Artis has also purchased iPads for residents to stay in touch with their loved ones via video communication services such as Zoom.

DePreker expressed dismay over how the restrictions of the pandemic, even if necessary, have limited residents' freedom.

"Our whole belief is, instead of saying 'no,' we say 'yes.' We say 'why not,' when other people are saying that they can't. And that shifted; it was a change to our whole philosophy as a company," she said.

"They have the freedom within our communities; and that freedom went out the window...It was for the safety of our residents, but trying to get them to understand that was impossible."

THANKFULLY, Patel said, residents have adopted a more positive frame of mind since GFAL resumed socially-distanced gatherings and family visitation.

"When it was the peak time for COVID in the county, it was really hard for them," she said. "But recently, they've been doing great. What we've been doing, and how we've been adding those outdoor visits with family members, they've perked back up. There are smiles on their faces now."

In fact, DePreker said, for all its difficulties, residents' memory impairment may have softened the blow of the pandemic.

"There's a curse and a blessing to dementia," she said. "For many of our residents, there's confusion as to time. I think that has helped them cope better, strangely enough."

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

## NEWS

# Rocket Launch Nears

FROM PAGE 6

group conceptualized, designed, and built the rocket's engine from scratch.

Ankit Khandelwal, a TJ senior from South Riding who serves as the Electronics Safety Officer for Project Caelus, said it was a joy to finally see the fruits of the group's labor.

"We've gone through three re-designs, we've gone through three years of setback after setback, and it's finally coming together," Khandelwal said. "It's nice to see that something that we've put in so much work is finally paying off."

With no faculty advisor, the students are almost entirely self-taught; Project Caelus founder

JASON CHEN, a TJ senior who lives in Herndon, said that the group has learned almost everything from textbooks and the discussion website Reddit. They currently work out of Chen's garage, at his home in Herndon.

Chen was inspired to start the project after watching the movie October Sky, in which a coal miner's son grows up to become a NASA engineer.

"I'd wanted to do something space-related for a while, but didn't really know what I wanted to do," Chen said. "[The movie] inspired me to think, you know, if these guys could do it, what's stopping us from doing something like that?"

The student group is divided into three primary teams. The propulsion team oversees issues related to the rocket's engine, design, and manufacturing;

the programming team oversees the ground software and response mechanisms built into the rocket; and a third team takes care of outreach and finance.

To finance the launch, the group ran an online, one-on-one tutoring program called "Caelus Computing," in which members of Project Caelus taught computer science and math skills to younger students.

Ron Nachum, a TJ junior and resident of Vienna, the group's propulsion lead, said that he views the cold flow test as just one step in a longer journey.

"To me, it's not so much a culmination as a step towards bigger things that I'm looking forward to," he said. "I'm a junior, so I'm hoping we can get to a rocket launch before I graduate."

AS UPPERCLASSMEN at TJ, many members of the group will have graduated before the rocket ever takes flight. Srikar Gouru, the group's software lead and a senior at TJ, says the experience of conceptualizing and building the rocket has been valuable in itself.

"I've definitely gotten more out of it than just getting to see a launch," he said. "Even if we do get the cold flow and static fire going, I think that's a pretty amazing thing."

After their successful cold flow test, the group's leadership is optimistic that they will launch by spring 2023.

And as compared with the theoretical heavy lifting they've done the past few years, Chen says, "building the rocket will be the easy part."

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# Trustee Apologizes For 'Wrong Words'

FROM PAGE 8

frey McKay, Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, will formally introduce these recommendations at the Sept. 15, 2020 Board of Supervisors meeting.

In the statement, Annan wrote: "The NOVA Equity Agenda Coalition urged the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to adopt the following recommendations and apply them to all current and future County boards, authorities, and commissions (BACs):



**Priscille Dando, Trustee (Fairfax County Public Schools) Fairfax County Library Board:** "Those remarks don't reflect the view of myself or the priorities of Fairfax County Public Schools."

**Phillip Rosenthal, Trustee (Springfield District) Fairfax County Library Board:** "I used very inappropriate words, and I apologize to you because it was not my intention. My intention, simply was that when maybe we feature books by Muslim people, we may be voting down in reference to another religion... So please let's try to have a balance...I used the wrong words."



Having BACs appointees sign a written commitment to support the One Fairfax policy.

Requiring BACs to annually review the One Fairfax policy as a group.

Requiring BACs to amend their bylaws to include a clause stating that "all policies enacted by the board will be in-keeping with values expressed in the One Fairfax Policy."

Undergo annual training about systemic racism and the importance of encouraging diversity and inclusion."



**Suzanne S. Levy, Trustee (City of Fairfax) Fairfax County Library Board:** "I wanted to say first, thank you to Darren Ewing, for his years of service on the board. He knew

the county budget process more than any of us...and we're going to miss him because he contributed so much."

**Gary G. Russell, Trustee (Mount Vernon District) Fairfax County Library Board:** "The list, it doesn't matter to me. If it's the right list or the wrong list. But if there are people who perceive it that way, then we need to address it. If we don't get this dialog working there's going to be another 57 years before Reverend King's dreams are fulfilled."



PHOTOS BY FAIRFAX COUNTY

## 'Ransomware Issue' with Schools' Technology Investigated

Fairfax County Public Schools has issued the following letter to the FCPS Community and Staff:

"FCPS continues to investigate the ransomware issue involving some of our technology systems. We are taking this matter and concerns about the personal information of students, staff and their families very seriously.

The ransomware issue did not disrupt the distance learning program during the first week of school. However, we are working diligently with the FBI and our cybersecurity consultants to investigate the nature, scope and extent of any possible data compromise.

If it is determined in the course of our investigation that personal information

has been compromised, we will take steps to notify affected individuals as appropriate. Please know that FCPS is working diligently to protect the information of our staff, students and their families.

At this time, we are not asking staff or students to make changes to their devices as a result of this issue. Our IT staff and cybersecurity experts are investigating the matter, and we will contact you if we determine your computer requires technical attention. Unless you are contacted by FCPS, please continue to use your device for school-related activities.

We deeply appreciate the patience and concern of our community and staff and will bring you further updates when they are available."

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## And So It Begins



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Eleven years, six months and two weeks, approximately, after being diagnosed with "terminal" cancer: stage IV non small cell lung cancer, I have begun my treatment for stage IV papillary thyroid cancer. I'll be taking three pills a day, all at once, same time every day. The list of possible side effects are as long and scary as it presumably gets (blood clots, arrhythmia, to highlight just a few). I doubt its bluster. Likely somewhere between it depends and probably. Every patient is different of course so what happens next - to me, can only be forewarned. It cannot be foretold - with any kind of certainty, that is.

What I've read about these straight-on effects so far is somewhere along the lines of the cancer untreated would be worse so pick your poison, I suppose. I didn't exactly pick, but the poison - euphemistically speaking

if not literally, which has been prescribed, arrived by mail at my home as of 1:30 this afternoon and I see no reason to wait. Gulp. Let us go forth in hope because there are no guarantees here. The guarantees left the building late Feb., 2009 with my initial diagnosis. Maintaining a positive attitude and a good sense of humor has to remain my not-to-so-secret weapon. Granted, wishing and thinking a thing doesn't make it so, but moaning and groaning about it will be neither productive nor prudent. It would simply reinforce a negative and as Brian Dennehy (a k a "Cobb") said in the movie "Silverado" about a completely different subject: "We can't be having none of that now, can we?"

I think the reason I'm meandering about here and in life is that I don't have a clear understanding of my prognosis yet, though I have asked. Moreover, since my new normal has only just begun, I don't have my routine down and as a result, the treatment process has not become second nature. And until it's no longer first nature, I'll be more preoccupied and cognizant of what I'm doing and why, and when I should be doing it. Primarily, this confusion/series of arrangements has to do with coordinating taking the three thyroid cancer pills with my current and pre-existing - going back 11-plus years, pill regimen which involves upwards of 60 pills daily. It's not overly complicated. It's just new and some pills shouldn't be taken together as is the case with the synthroid medication, the anti-nausea pill and additionally, not all pills can be taken with food, without food and so forth. I realize this isn't rocket science, but my life sort of depends on it, so it's kind of important that I pay attention to what and when I'm ingesting.

And it's this newness that is scary because it represents the great unknown - for me: Will the side effects be debilitating, life changing? Will they be treatable/manageable? Will my life expectancy once again be front and center as I wobble back and forth from lab work, diagnostic scans and follow-up appointments? Previously I sort of knew where I stood. Now, I don't really know anything. Oddly enough, having been there and done that is not as comforting as I would have anticipated.

Even though I've switched over - so to speak, from lung cancer to thyroid cancer, I can't really say I've experienced a "Serenity now-" type moment. I'm not nearly so confident in my outcome now as I sort of was when I

only had lung cancer. Being diagnosed with a 'new' cancer, 11-plus years in the presenting, hardly reassures that all is under control. I mean, what about my "incurable" lung cancer? We're not treating it anymore. Is it going to now grow and reassert itself and if it does, will we then stop the thyroid cancer treatment? It seems that there could be a return to sender situation here where I'll be back and forth between oncology and endocrinology. I'll figure it out. I'm not afraid to ask the tough questions. It's the answers that might scare me though.

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



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