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# Great Falls CONNECTION

WELLBEING  
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Erin Lobato, President of the Great Falls Friends and Neighbors (GFFN) Woman's Club hosts the 2020 Annual Kick-Off Luncheon.

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# NEWS

## Racism's Impact

Great Falls neighbors recount experiences.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

Great Falls Citizens Association held a virtual town hall during which five neighbors of color provided short vignettes of their lives, sharing their personal experiences and commentaries on racism. A Q&A followed. The event was held Wednesday evening, Sept. 30, Rev. Livingstone Dore, Pastor, Great Falls United Methodist Church, Kimberly Greer, Principal, Langley High School, and residents Sujatha Hampton, Ph.D., Salima Singletary, and Matt Truong participated. Moderator Bill Canis, president of GFCA, said, "I know some of our panelists tonight are going to think are we crazy, why don't we know all this stuff already? But we don't and so I'm delighted that they're here to have this kind of conversation."

Seventy people turned into the Zoom webinar, which remains available on the GFCA YouTube Channel. According to Peter Falcone, Co-chairman of the GFCA Communications Committee, he saw the town hall as part of an ongoing process to look for helpful ways to bolster communications and facilitate public-spirited discussions. "Engaging the community is an essential strategy in driving decision makers towards solutions benefiting Great Falls and its neighbors," he said. "I would hope GFCA can contin-

ue efforts to bring interesting topics to our members and the community. In my view, a forum like this event promotes authentic community engagement and awareness and also supports our organization's chartered purposes by strengthening efforts to build effective coalitions in our neighborhoods—the core strength of any community organization."

### Highlights of the Q & A

**Q - Have you encountered systemic racism here in Great Falls?**

**A -** We would like to think that at Langley High School, we are immune from having to deal with issues of race...As principal, I needed to help our community be able to address this in a manner that was going to be constructive and positive, and so what we did was we actually did host two town halls, with a group of students serving as panelists...It brought to light, there's a lot of pain that has been experienced by students here at Langley High School who do not fit the mold, and the mold is based upon race. But it's also based upon... sexual orientation...(and) social-economic status... There is a group of children here that



Bill Canis

**"I know some of our panelists tonight are going to think are we crazy, why don't we know all this stuff already? But we don't and so I'm delighted that they're here to have this kind of conversation."**

— Bill Canis, President  
Great Falls Citizens Association

Langley is not a safe space.

— Greer

**Q - Are there microaggressions you regularly observe in Great Falls that the white community members might be committing unknowingly?**

**A -** Those are the ones I tend to really spend time talking with... (They) are interested in learning something different.

— Dore

**A -** If you're not quite sure, or you are uncertain, appeal to them... Ask. Clarify. Don't assume that they're saying something that they're racist toward you. If you're not quite sure, you want to verify because you don't want to make a judgment call and do the wrong thing.

— Truong

**Q - What other steps could be taken to increase understanding beyond this little program?**

**A -** For me, it's about making sure that we're raising young people who are good people and the academics in a lot of ways are secondary... Academics are important, but it's more important to really be someone who is looking out for the greater good of everyone.

— Greer

## Race Issues: Personal Experiences



Panelist and community member Rev. Livingstone Dore, Pastor, Great Falls United Methodist Church

Originally from St. Kitts, an island in the West Indies bordering the Caribbean Sea, Dore said before the bishop assigned him to Great Falls United Methodist Church as pastor, he served congregations in Virginia and Pennsylvania. "In all of my experiences in the church, my parishes have been predominantly white dem. My presentation will be coming from that perspective."

According to Dore, class status, not race, was the issue in the Caribbean. However, racism became a matter when he got to the

United States. In college, he was one of five Black students. He remembered walking down the street in an off-campus housing development. "A kid was walking by, and as I walked on the sidewalk... (he) was just yelling the most obscene thing at me for no reason other than he saw somebody who didn't look like him. I was suddenly that 'niger'; and I listened to that all the way to the college campus." Telling the admissions director, Dore said she had no idea how to address it; however, when he transferred to a larger, more diverse school, it was a different situation.

"I had professors who were open-minded and actually challenged me to many degrees on the whole issue of race and social justice." Racism added another level when he worked in the banking sector, he, a black man who sounded different, became a supervisor. Dore noted that Blacks did not see him as Black; they saw him as white. "My values were not theirs and that was an adjustment. That was an eye-opener."

Originally from a small town in South Carolina, Greer said the first time she felt isolated because of race was when she walked into her first Girl Scout camp as a child. "That was my introduction to people



Panelist and community member Kimberly Greer, Principal, Langley High School

having a different mindset and approach when it comes to interacting with people who may be traveling a different path and look a different way.

"It became very clear that I was the only person of color within the hundreds of girls who were camping...That was jarring enough but there was one girl who befriended me. In short order, she arrived back at her camp after a day of us being friends, and all of her things were sitting outside of the tent. Her tentmates had basically kicked her out and said because she was a nigger lover."

Greer said the first year of college presented challenges. Her white roommate said she did not know how to live with a black person. A contentious semester followed. After winter break, a new roommate arrived, a different experience. "That's why it's so important that you can't allow one negative experience with one person to influence how you may then perceive an entire group of people." When offered a job with Fairfax County Schools in 1992, Greer said she and her family spent a weekend here. "As my family was preparing to leave, my mother looked at me and said, Are you going to be okay? I said, why would you ask me that, and she said, I haven't seen anybody who looks like us."

Greer said that is similar to what she experiences in Great Falls. Days can go by without seeing someone who looks like her. "(I) had to be okay with that... to be okay with staying in this area." Greer's twenty-five-year professional career has been with Fairfax County Public Schools and while the school division became more diverse, she said that Langley, by far, is the school that has the least amount of diversity in which she has worked.

SEE PERSONAL EXPERIENCES, PAGE 5



Fairfax County School Board 2020

PHOTO COURTESY FAIRFAX COUNTY

## Life Hangs in the Box Checked

### HR for County Schools tells staff to make a decision.

MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

**T**ia Williams is an instructional assistant with diabetes and severe asthma at Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS). Choosing the box she checks Tuesday, Oct. 6, stating her intent whether to return to school for in-person learning or not, is an agonizing decision to make.. Williams comes from a family of people with diabetes and asthma. Six cousins and four uncles are dead from COVID. “I want to continue to work (and teach), but I also don’t want to bring (the) virus home to my family. When I talked to HR about my ADA application, they told me that I wasn’t approved because my principal said that none of the kids were going to be virtual, so I needed to return. I do not feel like I have a choice. It is either my health or my job.” Williams is one of 653 teachers and support staff who must decide whether to return to in-person work in the school system this October, take a leave of absence, or resign. She works with deaf and hard of hearing students.

Fairfax County School Board voted their approval at a September 22 Board Meeting to decouple school reopening plans from staffing decisions and bring small cohorts of students and their teachers to school sites for in-person instruction. The division’s Department of Human Resources, under the signature of Sean McDonald, Interim Assistant Superintendent, sent an email to those staff members on Sept. 30 asking their teaching intent.

**THE COHORTS** included career and technical education classes, preschool autism classes, English language learners and other special education students, such as deaf and hard of hearing students who Williams supports.

“These students represent 3.5 percent of the total student population and 653 teachers and other instructional staff... needed to provide instruction to these students,” said an FCPS spokesperson.

While the percentage appeared small, Becca Ferrick, President of the Association of Fairfax Professional Educators, said they were concerned for the future of FCPS. Based on the numbers FCPS shared, there were not enough employees prepared to return to in-person instruction to meet the staffing needs outlined. “By forcing the return, we may see that the issue becomes one of simply not having enough

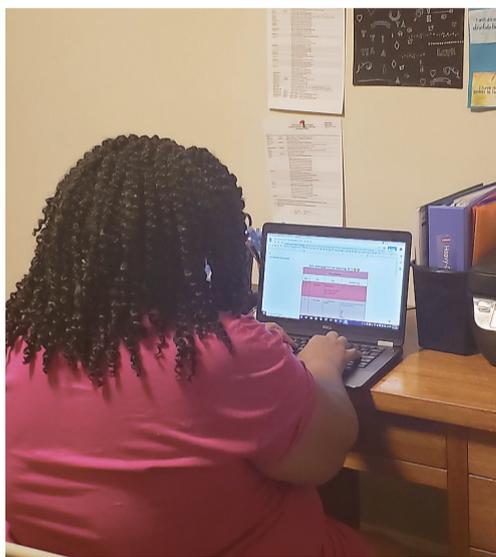


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**Tia Williams, an instructional assistant at Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), Woodson High School, must decide whether to return to school as in-person staff.**

employees on the payroll anymore in order to meet those staffing needs...These employees will almost certainly be asked to ignore both scientific advice and their own ethical principles,” she said.

A copy of an email signed by McDonald dated Sept. 30 and obtained by the Connection read in part: “As we plan for student cohort groups to return for in-person learning, you have been identified as a staff member who works with one of the groups identified...There is a possibility based on student need that you will be asked to return to in-person instruction by your principal.” In closing, the correspondence said, “Submit your response no later than 4:30 p.m. on Friday, October 2.”

Human Resources provided a five-option plan to staff:

- Return to support in-person instruction,
- Submit an accommodation request under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA),
- Take an unpaid Leave of Absence (LOA) for the school year’s balance if approved by the School Board,
- Access leave under the FFCRA for childcare reasons and then return to support in-person instruction and
- Resign or retire.

Upon learning of the email, Tina Williams, President, Fairfax County Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 2401, said in a statement to union members: “I was shocked to find out the FCPS gave hundreds of staff less than 48 hours to make a decision... This isn’t a decision that can be made lightly since the district has not been transparent in its safety mechanisms, and the plans they have shown fall short of what



FAIRFAX COUNTY  
**Sean McDonald, Interim Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources**

we need.” She urged members to mobilize and send a message to school board members, school leadership and Superintendent Scott Brabrand.

Tamara Derenak Kafax is the Lee District Representative on the Fairfax County School Board. She said, “The Board and I were unaware that the letter was sent. I became aware as I began receiving letters from concerned teachers. I have asked for an explanation from our Superintendent regarding the timeline...I will work with my colleagues, our Superintendent, and his team to ensure that future communication comes without surprises and is supportive of the caring culture that FCPS strives to maintain.”

**ACCORDING TO A SPOKESPERSON** for FCPS, due to feedback from some staff members about the short timeframe to declare their intent on returning to school buildings, recipients of the initial communication received a second one on Thursday, Oct. 1. It extended the timeframe to respond to Tuesday, Oct. 6, at 4:30 p.m. In his second email to staff, McDonald said that the survey data would help inform the next steps needed for staffing. “Your response to the survey is not binding; however, your principal and/or HR will follow up with you regarding your intention,” he said.

Melanie Meren, Fairfax County School Board, Hunter Mill District said on Facebook, “FCPS has received over 2,000 staff requests for accommodations under the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) – an 8,000 percent increase from last year. Meaning they seek to be on leave. Meaning they won’t be available to teach.”

A spokesperson for Fairfax County Public Schools said, “FCPS regrets anxiety felt by these staff members. This has been a tremendously difficult period, and our staff have all worked hard to remain connected to their students and schools. We realize the hardships and sacrifices made by our staff and sincerely empathize with them.”

Roza Qaradaghi is a Special Education Instructional Assistant at Westfield High School. “I just found that I’m pregnant. My doctor has advised against returning to in-person instruction given the ongoing pandemic. I need my wishes to be respected and to be given a virtual option.. My classes are going so well virtually I’m frankly confused why we have to return to in person instruction right now given the risks.”



# Race Issues: Personal Experiences

FROM PAGE 3



Panelist and Great Falls resident **Sujatha Hampton, Ph.D.**

A Great Falls resident since 2006, Hampton, an Indian, was born in the United States. At age three, she attended a child-care center. “They locked me in the bathroom with this Greek girl because I was the N-word...What I can remember from those times, is I was very afraid...I was afraid that someone was going to kill my dad, because he was brown... I felt that fear all the time... People didn’t love us; they didn’t love me the way they loved each other.”

Hampton moved to Fairfax County when she was seven and educated in the FCPS system. She later earned a doctorate in special education with a focus on serious emotional disturbance and learning disabilities. Hampton is the Fairfax NAACP education chair, an activist, and as she announced, the newly appointed Fairfax County Dranesville District Library Board Trustee.

Hampton said she wanted to leave people with a couple of thoughts about racism. “I don’t think people sometimes understand the trauma that happens to children, when they recognize that their world is not fair, not safe, not equal. That there’s something arbitrary that is happening you really just don’t have any control over it, and it has something to do with your color or something you don’t know what it is.

“There is no justice without economic justice...There’s environmental justice, racial justice, social justice, economic justice. There’s justice in all these fields, but really, the primary gravitational force of the universe is money. So, when you are not able to understand the economic impact of racism, you’ve got another issue, which is more of a systemic thing.”

An African American Muslim, Singletary grew up in Annapolis and attended mostly black elementary and junior high schools. As a child, she experienced racism, not because of race, but because she was from the north and had come to a small southern town. “I was different. I was Muslim. I had a scarf on.” She spoke of participating in Odyssey of the Mind, a creative problem-solving program ending in a competition. A local newspaper reporter covered the event. When it came time for the picture, Singletary was instructed to sit at the far end. When the paper came out, somebody had cropped her out of the picture and out of the article.

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Panelist and Great Falls resident **Salima Singletary**

Singletary’s husband is white. When they moved to Virginia, she said, people stared at them, but now people in Northern Virginia are subtle about staring because it is rude.

Asked about racism, Singletary said, “I’m not going to walk around with a Star Trek device trying to detect racism everywhere... Why would I miss out on opportunities to have relationships with people and just have a happier life by not always assuming malicious intent?” After working for University Press in the District of Columbia, Singletary is in Great Falls enjoying the scenery and nice people.



Panelist and Great Falls resident **Matt Truong**

As you can tell from my name, I’m not Black.” Truong is Vietnamese. His family settled in Elizabethtown, Pa. when he was young. When Truong arrived, he spoke two English words, yes and no. Growing up in Elizabethtown, Truong said he knew of only one other Asian family. He learned the culture of Elizabethtown quickly and assimilated. “I grew up driving trucks, listening to music, going hunting. I didn’t see myself as Asian at this age, just another boy in school in E-town...I never thought about race... because that’s the way it was,” he said.

According to Truong, it wasn’t until he entered college and the workforce; he encountered racism. His reaction was to pull individuals aside and ask, “Hey, are you treating me differently?” Truong said he experienced reverse racism where others thought since he was Asian, he must be smart and do well in math. “I see (racism) from both sides, and sometimes I sense it. Sometimes I feel it. Sometimes I walk away... But then in some cases, I do stand up for myself. In some cases, I even stand up for my friends as well...In my personal opinion, we need to tone it down a bit. We need to recognize each other.”

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## NEWS

# Great Falls Friends and Neighbors Support Local Charities

**Club hosts its annual kick-off luncheon, announces scholarship winners.**

**E**rin Lobato, President of the Great Falls Friends and Neighbors (GFFN) Woman's Club hosted its 2020 Annual Kick-Off Luncheon and Fundraiser on Sept. 18. This year had a different twist due to the pandemic: club members chose between participating virtually from home with a box lunch or dining alfresco at River Bend Golf Club. Great Falls Friends and Neighbors is a women's club that develops friendships and a sense of community among members through social, cultural, civic, and philanthropic activities. <https://gffnva.org/join-us>

June Kelly, Vice-President of the GFFN Philanthropy group, presented the 2020 White House holiday ornament featuring John F. Kennedy. The White House ornaments are sought after each year as collectibles as well as gifts for family and friends. These ornaments can be purchased at select Great Falls retailers including Great Dogs, Studio Hair, Toka Salon, Vintage Marketplace at Krop's Crops, and Burke Jewelers in Reston. All proceeds from the White House ornament sales will go to Artemis House.

The GFFN Philanthropy group holds events throughout the year that raise funds for each of its charities. The group selected three charities to support in 2020/21:

- Artemis House <https://shelterhouse.org>
- The GFFN Scholarship Fund <https://www.gffnsf.org> and
- Friends of Riverbend Park (FORB) <https://forb.wildapricot.org/page-1301759>

Artemis House is a division of Shelter House and a 501 (c) (3) organization. It is the only 24-hour emergency shelter serving victims of domestic and sexual violence, stalking, and human trafficking in Fairfax County. The Artemis House abuse hotline call volume has doubled since the pandemic and victims arrive at the shelter with more severe physical and mental injuries, due in part to the "safer-at-home" orders. Unfortunately for these victims home is not safe. To donate to Artemis House (Shelter House), visit: <https://shelterhouseinc.salsalabs.org/gffn/index.html>

The GFFN Scholarship Fund is a sister organization and 501 (c) (3) organization. Christie Lavin, GFFN Scholarship Fund Co-President, said

"the scholarships support women over the age of 25 who are furthering their education to better support themselves and their families." The GFFN Scholarship Awardees will be honored at the GFFN Scholarship Fund Spring Tea in 2021. To learn more about the GFFN Scholarship Fund, visit <https://www.gffnsf.org>.

This year, the GFFN Scholarship Fund awarded scholarships to four women:

Carolina Medrano, George Mason University, Masters in Education with a concentration in School Counseling, expected May 2022. Medrano grew up in Arlington, and is a first-generation Salvadoran American. She is a single mother, currently works in the Arlington Public Schools as the supervisor of an after-school program, and attends George Mason University full time. She is pursuing a career in Education and plans to give back to the Arlington community in which she grew up and loves through working in the Arlington County Public School system. She desires to create an environment where all students feel empowered and valued thereby

helping them to reach their potential in life.

Jennifer Vasquez, George Mason University, Masters in Social Work, expected May 2021. Vasquez is pursuing a Masters in Social Work because she desires to have a direct impact on the community and people's lives. Her volunteer work at the Loudoun County Jail impacted her so greatly that she decided to continue to work within that setting. Her goal after graduation is to work in a jail setting providing resources, referrals, and services to those incarcerated.

Sarah Haskell, George Mason University, Masters in Social Work, expected May 2021. Haskell's desire is to work with older adults with dementia and memory loss. She realized this passion when she was hired as a caregiver and Registered Medication Aide at an assisted living facility. She developed relationships with the residents and their families and became passionate about advocating for her residents. She works full time, attends school full time, and works as an unpaid intern part-time.

Cathy Yoo, George Mason University, Master's in Accounting, expected May 2021. She is the daughter of an immigrant family and had to put her education on hold to help her family through some financial difficulties. She took charge of the family business and was able to support her family and her siblings' education. She earned an associate degree while running the business and then worked at a CPA firm to pay off her tuition. All these experiences moved her toward a desire to obtain an Accounting degree. She attends school full time and works part-time. She plans to work at a consulting firm in their Accounting Department upon completion of her degree.

Friends of Riverbend Park (FORB) is the third organization that the GFFN Philanthropy group supports. FORB is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit citizens group dedicated to responsible stewardship and preservation of Riverbend Park on the Potomac River as a natural resource for the education, inspiration, and enjoyment of park visitors. FORB is particularly designed to acquaint children with the goals of protecting these natural resources by underwriting field trip scholarships for Title 1 schools. A large part of its goal is to teach future generations to be responsible stewards of the environment. To donate and learn more about FORB, visit <https://forb.wildapricot.org/page-1301759>

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



Erin Lobato, President of the Great Falls Friends and Neighbors (GFFN) Woman's Club hosts the 2020 Annual Kick-Off Luncheon.



Christie Lavin, GFFN Scholarship Fund Co-President speaks at the luncheon.



Members who joined luncheon virtually from home with a box lunch.

## WELLBEING

# Creating a Spooky and Safe Halloween in the Age of COVID-19

**Ideas for frightful revelry abound even amid coronavirus concerns.**

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

**C**artoon character Marshall from Paw Patrol will be searching for chocolate while a tiny pop star tracks down toys as Arlington mother and teacher Becky Beach and her family celebrate the spookiest day of the year. Forgoing trick-or-treating, she, her husband and young son will gather with other family members for a modified Halloween celebration.

"We are going to buy Halloween-themed party toys and candies for our children to hunt," said Beach. "It will be similar to an Easter egg hunt, but for Halloween. We are maintaining the joy by allowing our children to still wear their Halloween costumes, but we won't be going out."

Like other annual traditions, COVID-19 has transformed the way festive events are celebrated. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) officials are encouraging revelers to err on the side of caution this season. As Halloween approaches, some parents are faced with a quandary: allowing children to engage in the frightful fun of the day without compromising safety.

"Some Halloween activities pose higher risk than others," said Dr. Gloria Addo-Ayensu, MD, director, Fairfax County Health Department. "In general, the more closely you interact with others and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread."

The CDC has grouped activities into low-risk, moderate-risk and high-risk categories. The sugar-laden but beloved tradition of trick-or-treating is considered among the riskiest of ghoulish traditions while celebrations with family members are among the lowest.

There are parents who are comfortable with activities considered by the CDC to be moderate-risk, such as open-air, one-way, walk-through where appropriate mask use is enforced, like Markoff's Haunted Forest and Enchanted Forest at Calvea Farm in Potomac, says Dr. Bitu Nasser, MD. "Overall, the CDC guidelines make good sense. They are based on intelligent considerations broken down by how much you want to expose your children," she said. "The main takeaway is to not be in large crowds or crowded streets, as kids will inevitably remove masks. Going house to house and allowing people to hand out individual candies increases the risk of COVID exposure exponentially ... and should be avoided at all costs this year."

Creativity is the theme this season and traditions of holidays like Easter and Christmas are offering Halloween inspiration says Fairfax mother and blogger Alice Anderson. "We want to keep things as fun as possible for our kids so we are going all out on party



PHOTO COURTESY OF ALICE ANDERSON  
Alice Anderson and her family will wear costumes and celebrate Halloween with a family party due to COVID-19 safety concerns.

ideas this year," she said. "We usually go to a pumpkin farm with fun activities but have decided to make our own fun at home with that as well. Our kids are excited to help make decorations and get everything set up."

Starting new traditions and borrowing ideas from other holidays is the way that Alexandra Fung, a Mount Vernon mother, will deal with the disappointment that her children will feel when they aren't knocking on doors in anticipation of treats. "Egg hunts at Easter have long been a favorite activity at our house, so carrying the tradition over to Halloween has everyone excited, from our toddler to our teen," she said. "And, having it at night with flashlights, and the promise of some king-sized candy bars, makes it all the more fun for everyone."

From reading books filled with ghosts and goblins to creating a season-long calendar, reminiscent of those used for Advent, inspiration abounds, says psychologist Reena Patel. "Create a month of Halloween countdown," said "Why not? We do it for Christmas too. Make a countdown calendar and for each day and have a Halloween surprise, like a Halloween coloring sheet, candy corn puzzle, pencils, stickers. Anything small that represents and leads up to the big day."

"We have a bunch of activities planned for our party at home," added Anderson. "We are going to make decorations, play Halloween games, carve pumpkins, make a DIY (do-it-yourself) maze, eat yummy treats, and finish the night watching the new Scooby Doo movie. I think Halloween can be as fun as you make it and our kids will be happy spending quality time together as a family."

While independence-seeking teens and tweens might not be wowed by Halloween candy hunts and spooky-themed cartoons at home, they can still enjoy a frightful evening while maintaining safety. "They should have small get-togethers at their friends' houses for Halloween," said Beach. "Check for fevers if inviting teens to your home for Halloween before admitting them in your home. Make sure your teen social distances themselves and wears a mask and/or gloves to keep safe."

Perspectives on Halloween safety vary, acknowledges Karen Aronian, Ed.D. "Some door-to-door trick-or-treating will still happen, but some neighborhoods are doing the same 'pod' [small group] approach with Halloween that they have done with schooling, by going out in safe pods of kids predetermined by parents," she said. "Homes that do decide to give out candy should mark their house with a sign that says 'covid safe' meaning gloves, masks and social distancing will be observed."

# McLean Activist and County Leader Dies

Lilla Richards served as County Supervisor, 1988-91.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

Long-term McLean resident and two-term Dranesville District Supervisor (1988-91) Lilla McCutchen Richards, 81, died on Sept. 22 of congestive heart failure at The Jefferson, a retirement community in Arlington. Renowned for her activism, Richards joined the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors running as a Democrat in a close, contentious, three-way race in 1988. Richards defeated incumbent Nancy Falck (R) and challenger Robert Thoburn, winning 43 percent of the vote as a newcomer. She was re-elected for a second two-year term that ended Dec. 31, 1991, when the electorate turned on the slow-growth policies of the Democrats. Considered an authority on the County's zoning laws, Richards took on difficult land-use issues, challenging developers and supporting the slow-growth movement.

As a supervisor, Richards represented constituents in McLean, Tysons, Great Falls and Herndon and was a community leader. "She



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Lilla McCutchen Richards

was refreshingly outspoken in her opinions and always followed her conscience," said Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeffrey McKay. "While her service on the Board was short, her accomplishments continue to affect residents of McLean. The McLean Project for the Arts, established in 1962, spent many years looking for a permanent home. When she became Supervisor, Lilla worked with the MPA and the McLean Community Center. She forged the County's first public/private partnership. Today, MPA plays a huge role in McLean with three galleries and an art studio and offers classes to

children and adults in the McLean Community Center," he said.

According to a story published by INSIDE, at the 25th anniversary of the Old Firehouse Teen Center in McLean in 2015, Richards said she considered the Center to be among her proudest achievements while in office. At that time, she recalled the Center's first hurdle was to ensure that the Board of Supervisors did not sell off the former home of the McLean Volunteer Fire Department. She opposed moving the Teen Center to McLean Community Center, saying it would be a mistake. "Teens want to be where the action is. They want to be near the McDonalds, the drugstores and the coffee," she is quoted as saying in the Connection. Today, the Old Firehouse Teen Center is operated by the McLean Community Center and offers programs for McLean teens as well as for seniors.

Richards loved McLean and made many lasting contributions that improved the community's quality of life. "She was an effective, no-nonsense leader who was always willing to take political risks to do what she believed was right," said Supervisor John Foust (D-Dranesville). "No matter what Lilla did for our community, she did it competently, unselfishly and with passion," he said.

With a grant from the McLean Community Foundation, which Richards helped establish, community leaders compiled her

volumes of material into the Lilla Richards Collection, an archived collection at Fairfax Library's Virginia Room with its catalog accessible from Dolley Madison Library in McLean.

Born in the District, Richards grew up in Arlington but had roots at the University of South Carolina. She spent her childhood summers on the university campus visiting her grandparents, Lilla Johnstone McCutchen and George McCutchen, an economics professor at the university. They lived in what is now known as the McCutchen House. Richards returned to the University of South Carolina in Columbia, where she received a degree in English and history in 1961. She became a writer and editor with the Economic Research Service. In 1984, Richards and her sisters established The James Malcolm McCutchen Electrical Engineering Scholarship to honor their father. It remains in place today in the College of Engineering and Computing.

Richards gave freely of her time to civic and community affairs in McLean and Fairfax County. She served as past president of the County Federation of Citizens Associations and member of the National Capitol Region Transportation Planning Board.

She is preceded in death by her former husband, Stanley I. Richards. The couple had no children. Richards will be buried later at Pleasant Grove Church in McLean.



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McLean Community Center



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**Here's What's  
Happening at MCC  
in October!**

**The Old Firehouse**



**Virtual Family Fun Trivia Night**  
Friday, Oct. 23, 7-9 p.m.  
\$5 per family  
Registration is required

**The Old Firehouse**



**House of Terror and Family Trunk or Treat**  
Saturday, Oct. 24, 6-9 p.m.  
\$2 per person  
Registration is required

**Wine Down the Fall**



**Virtual: McLean Uncorked**  
Sunday, Oct. 25, 5-6 p.m.  
Free. Registration is required

**Sponsored by The Alden**



**The Unruly Theatre Project's Virtual Improv Show**  
Wednesday, Oct. 28, 7 p.m.  
Free. Registration is required

**MCC Governing Board**



**Monthly Board Meeting**  
Wednesday, Oct. 28, 7:30 p.m.  
All Governing Board meetings are open to the public

**The Old Firehouse**



**Spooky Virtual Family Bingo**  
Friday, Oct. 30, 7 p.m.  
\$5 per device  
Registration is required



The McLean Community Center  
[www.mcleancenter.org](http://www.mcleancenter.org)

Home of The Alden Theatre  
[www.aldentheatre.org](http://www.aldentheatre.org)

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**NEWS**

# Great Falls Resident Appointed to Library Board of Trustees

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors unanimously voted their approval and appointed Sujatha Hampton, Ph.D., as the Dranesville Representative on the Fairfax County Library Board of Trustees. Supervisor John W. Foust (D-Dranesville) brought the matter forward at the Sept. 15 regular board meeting. "With its resources and ability to reach so many residents, especially our youth, the County's Public Library is an important ally to the Board of Supervisors' efforts to advance social and economic equity in the county. As evidenced by her education and professional background, Dr. Hampton is passionate about teaching children how to read and how important it is to read," said Foust in a statement.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED  
**Sujatha Hampton Ph.D.**

According to Hampton, she grew up in Vienna and is a product of Fairfax County Schools. Hampton received her Doctorate in Special Education from the

University of Texas and has been a teacher, an educational administrator, an author, and now serves as the Education Chair of the Fairfax NAACP.

"(Dr. Hampton) is also a leading voice for creating a community that recognizes the importance of every individual, and that rejects racial and other forms of discrimination... (She) will bring diversity and passion to a Library Board that is already doing a good job of serving our community," Foust said.

The twelve-member volunteer Library Board of Trustees is responsible for library policies and making budget recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. Its next meeting is Wednesday, Oct. 14, from 7-9 p.m. A maximum of 10 people may speak during the public comment period. To sign up to speak, call 703-324-8324.

— MERCIA HOBSON

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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

## Discussing 'Modern Slavery and Huan Trafficking'

On Friday, Oct. 9 at 1 p.m. via Zoom Great Falls Senior Center will address "Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking." Guest speaker is April Russo, an Assistant United States Attorney in the Federal Major Crimes Unit in D.C. She will discuss the prevalence of human trafficking,

describe some of the warning signs, discuss cases she has worked on, and describe different ways the community can help. Email Mary Jo Fox at [mjwfx1491@gmail.com](mailto:mjwfx1491@gmail.com) to obtain a link to this Zoom presentation. Also let her know if you want a Great Decisions book.

**Obituary**

**MASTER CARPENTER & LONGTIME DC-AREA RESIDENT**



**James A. Cassell, 69**, originator of dad jokes and lover of the outdoors, passed away September 23, 2020 after a hard-fought battle with cancer. He was born in Grafton, WV on February 14, 1951 to Neva Virginia "Ginny" (Freeze) and the late James Albert Cassell. He spent his earliest years in Grafton until the family relocated to Mercersburg, PA. Jim graduated from Mercersburg Academy with the Class of 1969, capping off an impressive athletic career having earned varsity letters in football, wrestling, and baseball. During his formative years in Mercersburg, he made lifelong friends. Some of his most treasured moments throughout life were spent with those friends at Bear Trap Camp, their hunting cabin outside Renovo, PA, where more socializing than hunting typically occurred.

Jim played football at Shepherd University and earned a Bachelor's degree in Biology. After college, Jim pursued a career in construction, working at DC-area firms before starting several of his own companies, most recently Great Falls Design Build, Ltd. He was a master carpenter and completed an impressive range of projects, spanning from extensive renovations for heads of state and other prominent area residents to providing invaluable unpaid assistance to family and friends.

Beyond his athletic and professional accomplishments, he considered his family his greatest achievement. He is survived by his mother, Ginny Cassell of McLean, VA; his devoted wife, Susan of Ashburn, VA; his sons, Nick (Jessica) of Reston, VA, Seth (Jennifer) of Los Angeles, CA, and Michael of Ashburn, VA; grandchildren, Cooper James, Gavin James, Charlie Isabel, and Norah Reilly; as well as his sister, many cousins, and friends. He found perfect companionship with his wife Susan, with whom he was able to share his love of travel and adventure. He also enjoyed hiking and hunting, and was a fixture at his sons' sporting events and Boy Scout outings. His legacy as a contractor will live on as two of his sons have also pursued careers in the industry. He will be sorely missed by all.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation in his memory to the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society at [lls.org](http://lls.org). Condolences may be sent to [celebratejimcassell@gmail.com](mailto:celebratejimcassell@gmail.com) or The Cassell Family, 2245 Wheelwright Ct, Reston, VA 20191. For additional details, please visit [www.adamsgreen.com](http://www.adamsgreen.com).

**Obituary**

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# CALENDAR

## NOW THRU NOV. 1

Twilight Wagon Rides. 5:15 p.m. At Frying Pan Farm Park, 2709 West Ox Road, Herndon. Enjoy a journey through the forest and fields, taking in the changing fall colors. After your wagon ride, roast marshmallows and enjoy time by the light of a crackling campfire. These private family outings are being offered on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays through Nov 1, 2020. Tours begin at 5:15 p.m., and the cost is \$45 per family. Call 703-437-9101, or visit Frying Pan Farm Park.

## NOW THRU DEC. 7

MCC Fantastic Fall Scavenger Hunt. Join your friends, family and community for McLean Community Center's Fantastic Fall Scavenger Hunt. This exciting fall virtual event allows for you and your team to compete against others and win prizes. This is the perfect event to stay local and have fun with your friends and family. The Fantastic Fall Scavenger Hunt is a game played on a smart phone in which teams complete 75 missions (or challenges) both indoors and outdoors. Missions include answering questions, taking specific photos or videos, finding a specific item, geocaching or completing specific tasks as given in a list provided by the Game Master. The scavenger hunt will take place in and around McLean and from your own home. Participants work in small teams of 4-10 players. Team captains must be 16 years old or older. Visit the website [www.McLeancenter.org](http://www.McLeancenter.org).

## OCT. 4 TO NOV. 5

Haunted Wine Tours. 6:30 p.m.; 7:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. At The Winery at Bull Run, 15950 Lee Highway, Centerville. The Haunted Wine Tours are back for the fifth year in a row, in a new condensed version, so you can enjoy real ghost stories and award-winning wine all while staying safe. Due to the restrictive environment surrounding COVID, there are far less tickets available this year. Therefore priority access to tickets go to wine club members.

## WEDNESDAY/OCT. 7

The Unruly Theatre Project's Virtual Improv Show. 7 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Free; registration is required. Join (the) Unruly Theatre Project's virtual fall improv show from the comfort of your couch! Register here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/UTPFallShows>. A Zoom link and password for the show will only be emailed to those who register for it. Visit [www.mcleancenter.org](http://www.mcleancenter.org).

## FRIDAY/OCT. 9

Birthday Bingo Bash. 5-6:30 p.m. Via Zoom. A Virtual Bingo Night for the whole community, in honor of Jacob Kulman's 6th Birthday. This event is a fundraiser for the Children's Organ Transplant Association (COTA). Cost: \$5 per card to play. Contact Dave Mohel at email: [COTAForEandJ@gmail.com](mailto:COTAForEandJ@gmail.com). Visit the website: <https://cota.org/campaigns/COTAForEandJ/events/Jacobs-Birthday-Bingo-Bash>

## OCT. 9-18

Virtual Nature Center Walk or Run. Friends of Reston (FOR) announces its 17th annual run and walk fundraiser for the Walker Nature Center will begin Friday, October 9 and end on Sunday, October 18. This year's event is now the Virtual Nature Center Walk-or-Run, organized to allow for more participation of all ages and abilities. Runners and walkers can choose their selected route of 5K, or 10K, or just 1 mile, to complete the Virtual Nature Center Walk-or-Run at any time within the span of 10 days. Proceeds from registration fees, \$25 (13 years and older), and \$15 (12 years and younger), will support facility enhancements, programs and projects at the Walker Nature Center. Virtual Nature Center Walk-or-Run, direct link: <https://www.active.com/running/distance-running-virtual-events/virtual-nature-center-walk-or-run-2020?int=>

## SATURDAY/OCT. 10

A Designer's View -- The Challenges That Face Designers Who Identify as Female. 2 p.m. Part of the Virtual Round Table Discussion Series at 1st Stage in Tysons. Free. In these forums, they'll talk and share questions and thoughts with artists, actors, designers, musicians and directors about experiences they have faced as professional artists. Artists participating include Debra Kim Sivigny, Bob Barlett, Ron OJ Parsons, José Carrasquillo, Thambi Duncan, and more. Pre-registration is required and space is limited. Registration is available now at [www.1ststage.org](http://www.1ststage.org).

## SATURDAY/OCT. 10

Fall Sights Aboard a Kayak. 8-10 a.m. At Lake Accotink, Springfield. Spend a Saturday morning soaking in the fall sights aboard a kayak at Lake Accotink Park. Get a new perspective on the autumn colors this year with a "Fall Foliage Kayak Expedition." The expedition will take you to the northern part of Lake Accotink to see glorious natural tunnels of orange, yellow and red leaves. This event is designed for participants age 13 to adult, and previous kayak experience is necessary. The cost is \$42 per person. Lake Accotink Park is located at 7500 Accotink Park Road, Springfield, Virginia. Call 703-569-3464.

## SATURDAY/OCT. 10

"A Cockeyed Optimist: Songs that Make Me Smile." 7:30 p.m. At NextStop Theatre, 269 Sunset Park Drive, Herndon. Katherine Riddle's soaring rendition of "If I Loved You" was one of the highlights of 2017's "Rodgers and Hammerstein's Grand Night For Singing." An award-winning interpreter of Golden Age classics, Katherine returns to NextStop with a singular mission to offer the kind of familiar and beloved musical classics that have that unique ability to wrap around you like a warm blanket and make you smile. Visit [www.nextstoptheatre.org/the-parking-lot-concerts](http://www.nextstoptheatre.org/the-parking-lot-concerts).

## SUNDAY/OCT. 11

Search for Salamanders. 1:30-3:30 p.m. At Riverbend Park, Great Falls. Help a naturalist with a forest salamander survey and search for salamanders in the streams. During the "Salamanders Undercover" program, learn about the secret lives of these important amphibians through hands-on discoveries. The program is designed for children age 7 to 12. The cost is \$10 per child. Riverbend Park is located at 8700 Potomac Hills St., Great Falls, Virginia. Call 703-759-9018.

## NIGHTMARE ALLEY

The Workhouse Arts Center announces that "Nightmare Alley" Haunted Drive-Thru is coming to Lorton for this year's Halloween season. "Nightmare Alley" is the first immersive drive-thru Halloween experience in the region. Zombies, swamp creatures, creepy clowns, and scary dolls are among 13 different scary scenes taking up residence on the Workhouse campus. These new campus inhabitants will scare and entertain visitors experiencing the attraction from the safety of their cars. There will be 13 nights of fright, starting on now through Saturday, Oct. 31. Fridays and Saturdays will run from 7-11 p.m. each weekend in October, and the three Sundays in the middle of the month (October 11, 18, and the 25) will run from 7-10 p.m. Visit <https://www.workhousearts.org/nightmare-alley/>

## TUESDAY/OCT. 13

Birding on the Boat. 8 to 10 a.m. At Burke Lake Park, 7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. Set sail on a two-hour tour and go "Birding on the Boat" at Burke Lake Park. This voyage gives you a closer look at some of the birds and animals that call the lake their home. Bring binoculars for a closer look and be sure to dress for the weather. The program is designed for participants age 8 to adult. The cost is \$15 per person. Children age 12 and younger must be accompanied by a registered adult. Call 703-323-6600, or visit Burke Lake Park.

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## An Update About Some Down Time



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Not that I want to give you a blow-by-blow concerning my treatment switch over to thyroid cancer from lung cancer but the last two columns were written four weeks ago in the same week in expectation of a weekend away, so these observations will be new-ish in that they will be hot off the press, so to speak. Away with the kind of friends who are empathetic, sympathetic and who never make me feel pathetic in any of my struggles. In short, the best kind of friends. This is important because when one in the group goes above and beyond in the wrong direction, like heading from one's present cancer direction to a yet altogether new less desirable cancer direction: stable non small cell lung cancer stage 4 being treated with immunotherapy to stage 4 papillary thyroid cancer being treated with chemotherapy, is hardly a conversation that makes for fun even if I now have my own sort of "BOGO." And though the 'shopping 'buy' may be familiar, the cancer 'buy' is not nearly so familiar. Generally speaking a "BOBO offer is of interest, a cancer one not so much. In fact, it's not much of a bargain at all.

The worst of now being treated for papillary thyroid cancer is the array of side effects which are manifesting. They're not exactly debilitating, they're just one big nuisance broken into about eight different nuisances - and I will spare you the details. The net effect of all these side effects is that for the first time in approximately two years, and I feel extraordinarily lucky to be able to say this, once again I feel like I have cancer. And though it's unlikely it's simply side effects which are doing all the talking, rather than the cancer metastasizing, which it already has anyway since the thyroid cancer is now in the lungs, it's impossible not to consider the consequences. I mean cancer doesn't just travel around to make new friends and influence people. It sort of has a task: to damage and destroy. And I have to admit: feeling as if I didn't have cancer is much more preferred than how I feel now.

Nevertheless, it's not as if I feel at death's door (well, not the front door anyway). It's more a feeling of death being at the back door. Not a direct assault, mind you, more of an indirect one. And I'm sure they still count as much as all the others. Unfortunately, I fear an accumulation of these indirect assaults can cause as much cumulative damage as a direct hit. Ergo, I'm wondering if this rear-type assault/indirect-type hit is an indication of future/perhaps even present trouble? Moreover, I wonder if having to defend myself on two fronts (primary and secondary) will weaken the resistance. Because as many World War II movies as I've seen, the resistance rarely seemed to have enough supplies to carry out their mission.

Being in a new battle, even it involves familiar elements: blood pressure readings, EKGs, CT scans, lab and face-to-face appointments, doesn't totally regularize the experience. The reason being that this familiarity is breeding contempt because I have been there and done that. Yet, here here I am having to do it all over again and I find myself quoting Shakespeare or the Three Stooges: "something is rotten in Denmark."

Being a cancer patient is like being unable to send your legs out for a walk as Lt. Com. Henry Blake wanted to after a long period of surgery during a particularly high-casualty episode on the television series, M\*A\*S\*H. And as a previously diagnosed as "terminal" cancer patient, neither can I disconnect from my mortality thoughts any more than Henry could exercise his legs. So what I'm left with is either bucking up or venting to friends and family. I'm lucky to have an outlet. I imagine it is much more difficult for those who don't.

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



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