

Election Day In Arlington

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PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION

**Arlingtonians
Cure Ballots in NC**

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Even the table rewarding voters with a sticker had a hand sanitizer ready if needed. Nearly two-thirds of Arlingtonian registered voters had already voted before Election Day.

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NEWS

Return to School Plans in Arlington

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Arlington will begin to provide in-person learning support for Level 1 students with disabilities beginning on Nov. 4. This includes 236 students with disabilities and 115 employees who will be returning to 33 buildings. This is an average of three students per classroom.

Arlington made this announcement Oct. 29 after reviewing their APS COVID-19 Dashboard data that analyzes risk and readiness. The Superintendent's update says, "We have taken every recommended precaution to mitigate risk and to ensure a safe return for our employees and students. Every school site has received the required cleaning and disinfecting supplies, face coverings and other equipment necessary."

De. Francisco Duran, Superintendent of Schools, indicates he

will be visiting the schools personally in November to welcome students and to ensure the staff has the support needed to serve the students effectively and safely.

Although the ParentVUE selection process for Level 2 for elementary and Career and Technical Education (CTE) students has concluded, the health and safety metrics are not where they need to be to proceed with Level 2, Phase 1 return which had been scheduled for Nov. 12. This Level includes PreK, kindergarten and career and technical education students.

Level 2 brings a significant larger group of staff and students into the buildings and classrooms necessitating a more rigorous standard. They will continue to monitor the data and consult with Public Health to make a final determination about the next steps for Level 2. In addition, the results of the family selection process will be posted soon.

BULLETIN BOARD

Submit civic/community announcements at ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar. Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before the event.

OCT. 26 TO JAN. 21, 2021

Mah Jongg Cards. 8 to 10 p.m. To order, click on the link below (or copy and paste it into your browser), download the form. Order by January 21, 2021: <http://bit.ly/2021MahJongg>. Cost: \$9 for small cards and \$10 for large cards. Email: iva.gresko@gmail.com. These official cards will be sent directly to you from the NMJL in late March/early April 2021.

FRIDAY/NOV. 13

Invasive Plants & Native Alternatives. 10-11:30 a.m. Online. Invasive plants in the home garden like English Ivy, Bamboo, Porcelain berry, and Mimosa, can spread from cultivation to our natural areas where they out-compete beneficial native plants. Learn how to rid your yard of some common invasive plants and substitute alternative native species that have similar ornamental qualities and which also support our local wildlife. Extension Master Gardener Elaine Mills, a creative force behind the resource Tried and True Native Plant Selections for the Mid-Atlantic, serves as a co-coordinator at the Glencarlyn Library Community Garden, a Virginia Cooperative Extension Demonstration Garden in Arlington. Free. RSVP at <https://mgnv.org/events/> to receive link to participate.

CHAMBER HONORS BEST BUSINESSES

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce last week celebrated the 34th

Annual Arlington Best Business Awards at the Crowne Plaza Crystal City-Washington, D.C., in a hybrid format that allowed attendees to join in person and virtually. The Best Business Awards are presented to area businesses that consistently deliver exceptional quality of service to their customers, are industry leaders or offer a unique approach to delivery of goods or services, achieve significant growth or stability over the lifetime of their business, display an interest and concern for the success of the Arlington community, and demonstrate a commitment to diversity and inclusion.

The 2020 Best Business Award winners are:
Design Powers - 2020 Home-Based Business of the Year
Arlington Strategy, TriVistaUSA Design + Build - 2020 Service Small Businesses of the Year
Casual Adventure - 2020 Retail Small Business of the Year
DTS - 2020 Technology Small Business of the Year
Arlington Free Clinic - 2020 Nonprofit of the Year
AT&T, Virginia Hospital Center - 2020 Large Businesses of the Year

DONATIONS

The Arlington Food Assistance Center seeks local gardeners and farmers willing to grow and donate fresh produce to the AFAC food pantry for local families in need as part of the Plot Against Hunger program. Each week, approximately 2,400 client families visit AFAC to pick up supplemental groceries and fresh fruits and vegetables are in high demand. AFAC will provide free vegetable seeds to those who pledge to donate produce from community or personal gardens.

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 6

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Chilly but Determined Most voters already voted before Election Day in Arlington.

Almost two-thirds of active registered voters in Arlington had voted either by mail or in person by Saturday when the in-person early voting closed in Virginia. On Election Day itself, a line of Arlingtonians waited to vote at the Central Library at 6 a.m. when the polls opened but by 7:30, it had slowed down to a steady flow of one-to-two voters at a time.

Virginia Board of Elections lists 166,415 active voters in Arlington as of Oct. 31. As of Nov. 1, Arlington reported 104,988 votes already cast, including 51,088 by mail and 59,880 in-person. Of the 51,088 mail ballots, 38,111 had been counted.

Virginia law allows mail ballots postmarked by Election Day to be counted as long as they arrive by Friday, Nov. 6 by noon.

— SHIRLEY RUHE



A line of Arlingtonians waited to vote at the Central Library at 6 am when the polls opened but by 7:30, it had slowed down to a steady flow of one-to-two voters at a time.

PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION



Voters were limited in number entering the polling room and poll workers were protected behind tall Plexiglass dividers.



Wire frames but no political banners as they sit empty on Williamsburg Blvd. leaving the voter wondering whose signs are missing. Other banners had been slashed along the same median strip several days earlier.



Arlington Volunteers Cure Ballots in North Carolina

Arlington activists canvassed in NC, and in Virginia's 5th District for Cameron Webb, among others.

BY EDEN BROWN
THE CONNECTION

Sandra Garcia opened the chained door of her apartment in a low-income area of Raleigh, North Carolina. She was high cheekboned, tan,

pretty, with an open countenance and good English. Her toddler played by her side. “No,” she said to the volunteer who had finally found her at home after three passes on three days, “I did not know my mailed ballot was rejected. No one told me.” She was anxious to

have her vote counted, and took down the address where she could vote early in person, the only sure way to get her ballot in by the time she had been reached. She was out the door, with her toddler, a few minutes later, walking to the nearest voting location a mile away.

Edith Perry, who lived out in the country on a dirt road in a small clapboard house that looked like it had been there for a while, said she had been contacted, but didn’t know what to do. “We don’t have internet out here,” she said, refer-

ring to the directions she had received to check a site. “What was wrong with the ballot?” she asked. “They said something about the witness signature... but you know, it’s odd. Who is choosing the ones that get rejected? There are rumors going around.” Asked what kind of rumors, she looks around, and then says almost reluctantly: “They say maybe they are looking at certain names and addresses for voters they don’t want to vote.”

Almost 20,000 ballots in North Carolina have had “deficiencies”

that require a “cure,” or fix, to ensure those ballots are counted in the election results. An army of volunteers, many from Arlington and other areas of Virginia, travelled to cities throughout North Carolina to help locate the voters whose votes would not be counted unless they were “cured.” Many voters could not be reached by telephone, and so canvassers donned PPE and headed out the door. According to the North

SEE ACTIVIST, PAGE 4

Activist Groups Formed After 2016 are Out in Force in the Commonwealth and Nearby States, Virtually and in Person

FROM PAGE 3

Carolina Democratic Party, as of early on Nov. 2, of 19,927 early votes rejected in NC, 15,569 were cured. But there were still 4,300 ballots to go, and that number was expected to keep rising right up to Nov. 3.

“I don’t know but something fishy goin’ on here. What was wrong with my ballot? Why it matter if the witness didn’t put down her zip code?” asked Lizzie Smith plaintively. She was grateful, however, to the volunteer who had stopped by to help her get it right. She was able to send in a fix, providing the full zip code, but her son had just learned of his ballot rejection and had to drive to vote in person as it was too late to mail.

Activists in North Carolina note the state makes it unnecessarily difficult for people to vote by mail, and this year, the election officials are disqualifying a large number of attempted mail-in ballots for “deficiencies.” Suspicions like Smith’s were born out in some counties, where government data indicated ballots cast by Black voters had been flagged for errors at a rate higher than those of White voters, according to the cure organizers.

Lynda Fiori, a middle-class voter in her 60s, was irate that she still didn’t know whether her ballot was “cured,” because she kept on getting her door knocked on even though she had sent in her affidavit. She suspected someone had made it harder for her to vote because they thought she was hispanic. (She isn’t.) She shook her head in dismay.

North Carolina Democrats were able to get the names of voters whose mail-in ballots had been disqualified and could be cured, and then set about trying to contact these voters. There is litigation about different ways to cure ballots, so canvassers were out to get as many voters as possible to “make a plan” to cure their ballot in the way that is indisputably the most effective: go to an early voting center, have the defective mail-in ballot cancelled, and vote early at the site. Otherwise, the process of signing and witnessing an affidavit, faxing it, or doing it on line, could end up with the ballot being rejected - again.

“Deficiencies” on mailed-in ballots included: ballots without a witness signature or assistant signature; ballots not signed by the voter or signed by the voter in the wrong place; and ballots that don’t include the address of the witness. And ballots where the witness



Rose Fabia, manning the volunteer desk in Warrenton last weekend. Fabia sent canvassers out to “get out the vote,” 40 houses at a time, in an area of farms and large housing developments. Along with other volunteers in Arlington, she had spent the last month phone banking for Dr. Cameron Webb, who is running for Congress in Virginia’s 5th District.

didn’t put down a zip code.

North Carolina’s ballot curing process had been put on hold since Oct. 4 due to ongoing litigation regarding the procedure for fixing problems in absentee ballots. That litigation was recently resolved. The new procedure allows voters to fix some, but not all, absentee-ballot problems by submitting an affidavit called a Cure Certification.

Ideally, the county board of elections would have sent the voter either a Cure Certification or a new ballot, depending on what the problem was with the original absentee ballot. The voter would receive this by mail, phone call, or email, and would have to quickly complete it and return it to the County Board of Elections.

But as of Oct. 28, some voters had not been notified, or new voters had been rejected, this time too close to the election to allow for turnaround time. The list of rejected ballots changed every Wednesday, with new lists adding to the workload. On Oct. 26, 1,000 new names were added to the list in Raleigh. The week before it had been different cities.

Some of those whose doors were knocked were irritated. “Am I allowed to vote early in person if my absentee ballot was rejected? Won’t I be accused of voting twice?” said one recent citizen from Africa. Even after being assured that this would not be the case, he just shrugged, turned

away from the door, and muttered that he would wait for the ballot cure certification to arrive in the mail; he was frustrated.

The North Carolina State Board of Elections says if the status of your ballot isn’t ‘Accepted’ or ‘Accepted - Cured,’ you can vote early in person -- even if you sent in a cure certification or a new ballot. North Carolina has electronic voting records. The poll worker would be able to look up that the ballot was not accepted and allow you to cast your ballot.

One of the organizers of the ballot-cure canvas urged canvassers to tell voters to vote early in person or on the day of the election because “with all the legal battles in play we don’t know whether a legal battle could happen after the election which would invalidate a ballot cured by affidavit or corrected on-line.”

That was fine, except for voters like 94-year-old Amanda Davies, who lived in an assisted living facility. “They won’t let me go out of here to vote because of the pandemic.”

Some of the rejected ballots were college students who couldn’t be reached, or get home to vote.

At a small house on a lonely back country road, Lucinda Packer opened the door with curiosity. She told the canvasser she had been notified, just the day before, by another canvasser, and understood what she had to do, but she hadn’t done it yet because she



Raleigh has a high proportion of Spanish-speaking voters, enough to warrant three local papers.

didn’t want to go out of the house by herself. She smoothed down her apron — she looked like someone who could cook — and her brows knitted in concern. She was spry, tidy, happy to connect, and while her teeth were gone, her eyes twinkled as she said, “I’m 85 see, and I don’t feel comfortable going out of the house alone.

I called for a ride from a friend, but I don’t know if that will happen. I was hoping you were my friend, stopping by. But I’ll be okay if I can’t vote. I’ll just accept it. I feel that there are things I just can’t change anymore. I can’t do things like I used to.” Packer had all but given up on fixing her vote. But the canvasser had a list of rides to early voting and said someone would make it happen. And two days later, Lucinda Packer cast her early vote.

The ballot cure team, many of them from immigrant families, working from their homes on zoom, were excited to see the contact rate for the canvass at an amazing 42 percent, much higher than normal. The canvass was getting results. Hundreds of people were coming off the list as they either cured their ballots by mail or voted in person early.

Arlington volunteer Annette Lang of Virginia Democracy Forward and 31st Street Swing Left, said the ballot cure was one of the most rewarding things she had done this year. Volunteers like Lang, Rose Fabia of Arlington, and

Jessica Clark of Vienna weren’t done. After the early voting closed on Oct. 31, there were still canvassers headed out the door to knock on doors where no vote had been registered, and telephone calls to those who could be reached that way. Clark, who was certified as a list cutter, said “As of Nov. 2, we have only 1,769 votes to cure.” But there were more coming.

After three days of canvassing, whether down gravel roads where share-croppers had built shacks in the early 1900s, or trailer parks, with dirt roads so rutted it was hard to drive a car on them, where the wooden entry steps were soft with rot; whether in crowded one bedroom “garden apartments” with children’s bicycles and toys out on the stairwell and a sign saying: “Please don’t knock. I work all night,” canvassers knew firsthand, these were the Americans who had been left behind, or kept down for generations. They were caregivers, nursing aids, field hands, lawn mowers, and cleaning staff. They were in welfare motels, or in neighborhoods with “checks cashed” and ‘Picasso Pawn’ shops instead of banks and malls. Some were in middle-class African-American enclaves where the American Dream had taken root ... but their votes still weren’t being counted. They were people who wanted to have a voice in the election, and who, thanks to the efforts of the North Carolina Cure Canvas, would get that voice.



Gary Huber sends candy or a stuffed animal down one of the two Halloween chutes he has built out of leftover heating pipe.



Elle Dipasquele catches her Halloween treat as it zips down the chute at 2702 O'Brien Street.

PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION

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Halloween Takes on a New Look

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Leftover heating pipe, plywood, bungee cords and a couple of hours and you have a couple of Halloween treat chutes. “Candy or stuffed animal?”

Gary Huber stands at the top of his steps on O'Brien Street and places a treat at the top of the long silver chute that he has constructed out of leftover heating pipe in order to minimize contact during the pandemic. Tiny hands clutching pumpkin buckets wait at the other end on the sidewalk. Eyes pop open each time a treat rockets down the chute. It is mid-afternoon on Halloween, and the small kids have started early.

Elle Dipasquele watches the chute with expectation as her stuffed animal zips down the silver tube and lands in her hands. She is lucky since she gets to catch

another treat for her baby sister nearby. Spiderman steps up next as his mom wishes everyone around a Happy Halloween.

Word spreads quickly, and a small crowd gathers like a magnet on the corner. “What a great idea. This is so much fun.” The decision is tough and each child lingers over the decision of candy or stuffed animal looking around as though a decision will come out of thin air. Huber says so far the stuffed animals have won out with the little ones.

The pandemic has made Arlingtonians rethink traditional Halloween trick or treat candy, often offered in bowls. Some have chosen to arrange stay-at-home activities and others are offering individually filled bags “socially distanced” on a card table in the front yard. This year everyone is wearing masks, from a small furry black cat to the parents nearby with the standard blue pandemic shields.

Pumpkin or Police Car?

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Sirens blare and lights flash from blocks away to announce the Arlington County Police Department (ACPD) “frightfully fun parade of costumed cruisers.” The cruisers weave their way through seven neighborhoods spread across Arlington on Saturday, Oct. 31 from 3-5 p.m.

Children, dressed up in their own costumes, fidget along Key Boulevard waiting for the arrival of the costumed police cars. The pace car leads the way to signal

the arrival of the first car with its grill covered with spider webs, followed by the bright pink police car and police tow truck featuring TOW MATER, one of the main characters of “Cars” and the animated sequels.

Due to the coronavirus this year the traditional trick-or-treat events in the neighborhoods organized by the ACPD Community Outreach team were replaced by the costume parade. Other routes included Bluemont/Westover, Buckingham, Arlington Mill, Green Valley, Aurora Hills and Shirlington/Fairlington.



Arlington County Police Department hosts a ghoulishly good time with their Halloween parade of costumed cruisers on Saturday, Oct. 31.

PHOTO BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION

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-Werner Heisenberg

BULLETIN

FROM PAGE 2

Visit <https://afac.org/plot-against-hunger> or contact puwen.lee@afac.org or 703-845-8486. Seeds are available now at AFAC, 2708 S. Nelson St., during regular business hours: Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. and Saturdays 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Produce can also be donated at AFAC at the hours listed above or at:

- ❖ Arlington Courthouse Farmer's Market, Saturdays 8 a.m.-noon (look for the AFAC cooler near the Master Gardener information table).
- ❖ Rock Springs UCC Church, 5010 Little Falls Road, Sundays 9 a.m.-noon only. (Look for the donation bin on the Rock Spring Drive side of the church).

Pet Food Bank. AWLA is establishing a Pet Food Bank to serve qualifying residents of Arlington County and the City of Falls Church. In consideration of the effect financial obstacles have on a pet owner's ability to afford pet care, the AWLA Pet Food Bank program's goal is to keep family pets out of shelters. If you are an Arlington County or City of Falls Church resident and are in need of assistance in feeding your pet, follow this link and fill out a pre-registration form. Visit goo.gl/forms/s2FuFdaYWdZm4tPw2.

GET MORE WITH SNAP

Arlington and Alexandria Farmers' Markets accept SNAP/EBT (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) cards for purchases. SNAP/EBT customers can purchase farm fresh produce at local area farmers' markets and get matching bonus tokens to add to their purchases.

Virginia Cooperative will be on-site at several local farmers' markets of Alexandria and Arlington to provide more information on SNAP and offer food tastings, prizes and more at the Arlington Farmers' Market, N. 14th and Courthouse Road (second Saturday of the month) and Columbia Pike Farmers' Market, 2820 Columbia Pike (third Sunday of the month).

SBA OFFERS

DISASTER ASSISTANCE

The U.S. Small Business Administration is offering low-interest federal disaster loans for working capital to Virginia small businesses suffering substantial economic injury as a result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). The disaster declaration makes SBA assistance available in the entire state of Virginia. Applicants may apply online, receive additional disaster assistance information and download applications at <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela>. Applicants may also call SBA's Customer Service Center at (800) 659-2955 or email disastercustomerservice@sba.gov for more information on SBA disaster assistance. Individuals who are deaf or hard-of-hearing may call (800) 877-8339. Completed applications should be mailed to U.S. Small Business Administration, Processing and Disbursement Center, 14925 Kingsport Road, Fort Worth, TX 76155. The deadline to apply for an Economic Injury Disaster Loan is Dec. 21, 2020. For more information about Coronavirus, visit: Coronavirus.gov. For more information about available SBA resources and services, visit:

SBA.gov/coronavirus.

ONGOING

Online Salary Negotiation Workshop. AAUW (American Association of University Women) Work Smart is free online for anyone looking to learn how to negotiate a salary increase or promotion. Why is negotiation so important? AAUW's research on the gender pay gap shows that, one year out of college, women are already paid significantly less than men. Visit salary.aauw.org.

Create a Wildlife Sanctuary. The Audubon at Home Wildlife Sanctuary certification program assists homeowners in restoring their home's natural habitat by providing information on sustainable gardening practices. These practices include using native plants, removing invasive species, reducing use of pesticides and fertilizers, and creating space for native flora and fauna. Visit audubonva.org/audubon-at-home-1/ for more.

Naloxone (Narcan) can save the life of someone who is overdosing, if given in time. Anyone who assists a person in need is protected from liability by the Good Samaritan Law. Naloxone (Narcan) is available without a prescription for a fee at all pharmacies. Obtain it for free by attending a REVIVE! training. Contact Emily Siqveland at 703-228-0913 or esiqveland@arlingtonva.us or visit health.arlingtonva.us/opioid-awareness/ for available training sessions.

The Chris Atwood Foundation also offers training to the public. Visit www.chrisatwoodfoundation.org/naloxone for details.

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Legals

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Legals

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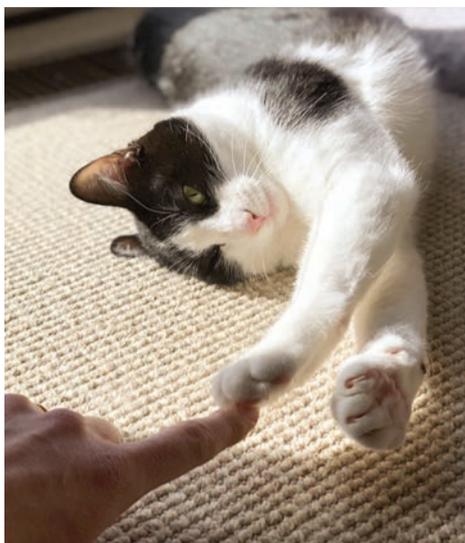
AT&T proposes to modify an existing facility (new tip heights 134') on the building at 1020 N Highland St, Arlington, VA (20201974). Interested parties may contact Scott Horn (856-809-1202) (1012 Industrial Dr., West Berlin, NJ 08091) with comments regarding potential effects on historic properties.

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AR PETS: MEET WOBBLE



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PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED BY KRISTIN MURPHY

The Much Loved Tripod Cat

BY JOAN BRADY
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

They were already running late. So Kristin Murphy wasn't thrilled when her daughter Mia dragged her to see a cat she had spotted in the Petsmart adoption aisle. They were not even in the market for another cat. But after seeing the 8-ish-month-old tuxedo kitty, Murphy just couldn't get him out of her head.

While the unplanned cat addition was discussed with her husband and son, there was truly going to be no talking Murphy and young Mia out of the sweet black-and-white rescue. That meant the only real question was whether the new cat would get along with Weezy, who'd enjoyed being an only cat-child for six years.

So all agreed: If the addition stressed out Weezy or the felines didn't get along, they would have no choice but to rehome the new kitty. But Murphy was sure it wouldn't come to that.

The new kitty hadn't gotten an awesome start in life. By the time he ended up at a kill shelter, his back right leg was paralyzed and he was in terrible pain. When members of a rescue found him there, they didn't see his injuries or his fear. Instead, what they saw was his potential. The vet recommended amputating the painful limb and the rescue paid for the surgery that would help make a happy life possible.

By the time Mia found the little guy at Petsmart, he was fully healed from surgery and ready to find his forever family. Kristin says that while he was a little skittish when she went back for a meet-and-greet, he was also playful and a big-time cuddler.

The Murphy's kicked around a few name ideas which all pretty much centered around the cat's three-legged status. Tripod or Trip for short was high on the list. One of the kids' friends suggested Threesy, to go with Weezy, their other cat. But Wobble is the name that stuck.

Bringing Wobble home meant developing a strategy to introduce him to princess, with a small "p," Weezy. The vet had advice which included adding pheromone diffusers around the house. The Murphy's also quarantined Wobble for a week, passing blankets and toys back and forth between the two cats, so they could get used to each others'



Grabbing a little shut-eye with Weezy.

scents. And, just in case, their first meeting was held from either side of a glass door. Murphy says that Weezy was definitely a bit skeptical about sharing the family's attention at first.

But two years later, Murphy says it's like Wobble has always been part of the family. The two cats often nap next to each other. And while Wobble is definitely the pesky little brother to Weezy's annoyed teenage sister, Murphy says, "it works."

Aside from taking the lid off of the litter box, the Murphy's didn't need to make any accommodations for Wobble who enjoys jumping on- and off- furniture and takes the stairs with the same enthusiasm as Weezy.

Wobble is happiest snuggling with one of his people, all of whom he adores equally, with temporary status elevation for anyone with a treat. Yup, that's one very happy ending for the three-legged rescue who, at one time, was destined for death at a kill shelter.

If Wobble's story has piqued your interest in adding a lovable tripod feline into your family, you are in luck! The folks at the Lost Dog and Cat Foundation have told me they have an adorable brown tabby Calliope, born with a limb abnormality, who is available for adoption. Email cats@lostdogrescue.org to learn more.

Joan is an award-winning Connection Newspapers columnist and local photographer specializing in pets, children and families and contemporary business portraits.

ArPets is a weekly feature for highlighting the well-loved pets of Arlington as well as animals who are available for adoption. If you or your dog, cat, iguana, bunny, rat or any other pet, has an interesting pet story to tell, send email to: joan@joanbradyphotography.com.

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Better Late Than Never ...



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

... to get a second opinion about one's first cancer; especially if there's now a second cancer to consider. For most of the nearly 12 years during which I've been a cancer patient, my diagnosis has been non small cell lung cancer stage IV. Within the past 10 months or so, it has become apparent and subsequently confirmed by a surgical biopsy of a tumor located in my lungs, that I have papillary thyroid cancer. The big question remains - and has not been agreed to by my endocrinologist and oncologist, is whether I have two types of cancer or just one. And moreover, whether I've always had two types or one primary - previously undiagnosed, that has now metastasized after 10-plus years from the thyroid into the lungs?

From my understanding - or actually what I've been told, it's possible, though hardly prudent to biopsy all the remaining tumors in my lungs to confirm exactly what type (types) of cancer I have. According to my doctors, the medical risks to me are too great. Therefore, the decision has been made to treat the thyroid cancer and to monitor - for lack of a better description, the lung cancer. And I can live with that (hope to live with that I should say). Nevertheless, it seemed an opportune time to get, for the first time in my cancer life, a second opinion. This week, after waiting out the transfer of medical records and a thyroid cancer specialist's evaluation, Team Lourie will be going to the Lombardi Cancer Center at Georgetown University Hospital for an independent assessment. To say we are extremely anxious is an understatement.

When I was initially diagnosed in late Feb., 2009, we did not get a second opinion. Perhaps we were naive, but at the moment the oncologist told us my diagnosis - and prognosis: non small cell lung cancer stage IV. he was not the least bit perplexed and the path forward seemed clear, and we didn't question him too much. A week later, I began chemotherapy. I have never wavered in this decision and I have no regrets about the path I chose. The fact that I have lived years beyond my prognosis has occasionally given me moments of curiosity as to why I was so amazingly lucky to have survived when so many others have not. Not wanting to look a gift oncologist in the mouth (if you know what I mean), I rarely thought to ask. I mean, I was doing so well.

Then about two years ago, a lump appeared under my Adams Apple. Upon examining me/it, my oncologist characterized it as a clone of my lung cancer and did nothing more than note its size and shape when he regularly examined me until the first of three biopsies (of a lymph node) was ultimately performed. It indicated thyroid cancer. This was new information to my oncologist. And so I was referred to an endocrinologist. She took one look at my "Adams Apple tumor" as I called it, and did a needle biopsy right then and there - in her office. She called me two days later with the results. Again, it confirmed thyroid cancer which subsequently led to the removal of my thyroid a month or so later. A few months after that, a hospitalization followed for radioiodine treatment to locate and kill any remaining thyroid cancer. Within another month I began chemotherapy treatment for thyroid cancer. Which is how I am presently being treated. Nothing more has changed. However, we wondered, what about my lung cancer? It was not being treated? As George Costanza asked after having sex with the cleaning lady on an old Seinfeld episode: "Was that a bad thing?"

And so we have taken steps to find out what it is we don't know that maybe the doctors know. Unfortunately, my original tissue sample is too degraded to re-biopsy, but all other relevant medical information has been transferred. I don't suppose we'll be able to go too far back in time, but given the future that I ended up having, there's no time like the present to review the past.

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

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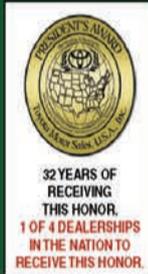
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