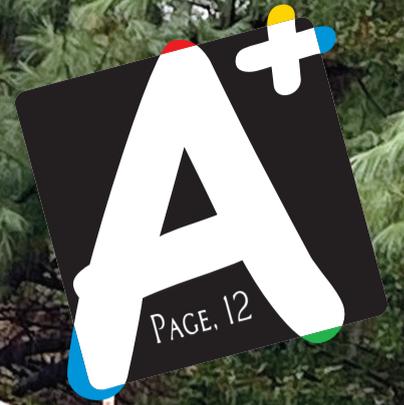


Great Falls CONNECTION



Veterans Day Observed With Caution

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(From left front) Executive officers of the Friends of the Great Falls Freedom Memorial, president Andy Wilson, retired Army Ranger officer and vice president Dr. John "Sandy" Pidgeon, retired Lt. Commander Navy SEAL, at a small, unofficial Veterans Day ceremony 2020 held at the Memorial.

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NEWS

Matrix, Sunlight Discussed at Public Safety Committee

Community, advocacy groups and police give more than 2,500 suggestions on police reform; Governor signs reform bills from special session.

BY KEN MOORE
THE CONNECTION

Police reform includes improving morale for police officers. “I’ve met with hundreds of Fairfax County police officers in recent months, in group settings and individually,” said Public Safety Chairman Rodney Lusk (Lee), “and to a person they have told me morale within the police department is the lowest that it has ever been.”

“This is a public safety issue that must be addressed in order to ensure that our officers are performing at the highest level possible, and that we are retaining the highly skilled law enforcement professionals that we have invested so much time and resources in training,” said Lusk.

“I’m glad to see that here, formally, as you know,” said Supervisor Pat Herrity (Springfield). “We’re already a little late.”

On Tuesday, Oct. 27, Lusk announced a Community Input Matrix, a database of 32-pages of policy suggestions from residents, advocacy groups and law enforcement on the topic of police reform. These are suggestions from the community and groups, not official positions of the Board of Supervisors.

Lusk received and sorted more than 2,500 submissions over the last three months.

At the Board’s Public Safety Committee meeting he shared the suggestions he has received with the greatest frequency and items the Board of Supervisors could address in the near term.

ACCURACY AND ACCESS to public safety data was highlighted, including the need for FCPD to ensure its technology vendor has the capability to meet current needs, including gathering ethnic and demographic data.

James Walkinshaw (Braddock) said immediate release of data is critical. “Sunlight is the best disinfectant,” he said. “My view on data is to put the data out there and let people discuss it.”

Some advocates suggested the quarterly release of arrest and use of force data rather than waiting for annual reports issued by police.

“It’s important for all of us to know that both sets [total arrests and arrests of Fairfax residents] show disproportionate numbers,” with Black and Latino people overrepresented, said Walkinshaw. “That doesn’t mean that all of our police officers are racists; the world isn’t quite that simple. But it does mean that there are structures in our society, including here in Fairfax County, that push us towards a justice system that is disproportionate and unequal.”

SOME SUGGESTIONS came from the Fairfax County Police Civilian Review Panel.

“I’ve met with hundreds of Fairfax County police officers in recent months, in group settings and individually, and to a person they have told me morale within the police department is the lowest that it has ever been.”

— Public Safety Chairman Rodney Lusk (Lee)



“There are structures in our society, including here in Fairfax County, that push us towards a justice system that is disproportionate and unequal.”

— James Walkinshaw (Braddock)

Newly passed legislation at the state level could allow the Board of Supervisors to give new authority to the Civilian Review Panel, including investigative power. Lusk said the Board could also authorize hiring of an Executive Director for the review panel.

“We have a pretty big grouping and a serious number of requests and recommendations that have come in, so the idea here is to figure out how do we start to disaggregate them and take steps to act on them,” said Lusk. “We’re going to have to make a decision pretty much on each of them and will have some sort of response.”

Some matrix items will be referred to existing working groups to report back to the Public Safety Committee, for example the Body Camera Working Group and the Chief’s Data Working Group.

Included are some of the other near term possibilities:

- ❖ Consider and discuss implementation of state legislation related to the decertification of law enforcement officers who have been terminated or resigned for misconduct.

- ❖ Review training, recruitment and retention standards

- ❖ Accelerate the expansion of crisis intervention training for first responders.

- ❖ Build upon existing department efforts to expand cultural sensitivity and implicit bias training.

- ❖ Review entry level pay and benefits standards that may be affecting recruitment.

- ❖ Conduct a joint review with the School Board of student diversion programs to address inequities.

- ❖ Direct staff to undertake a review and update of the Ad-Hoc Committee recommendations.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS Chairman Jeff McKay called the Matrix “a parking lot of ideas” that, in the future, “must be adjudicated by this Board based on data, input, conversation, and each of these would have to be acted on in some form.”

“Some of these will go off to other committees, some will go through this committee, but none of them will go anywhere before they come to the full Board for adoption,” said McKay.

View the draft “matrix” of community suggestions here: <https://www.fairfaxcountyt.gov/topics/sites/topics/files/assets/documents/police-reform/police-reform-suggestions.pdf>

AT THE STATE LEVEL, Gov. Ralph Northam signed new laws on Sunday, Nov. 1, 2020, including House Bill 5055 and Senate Bill 5035, which empower localities to create civilian law enforcement review boards. These new laws also permit civilian review boards the authority to issue subpoenas and make binding disciplinary decisions. Northam signed Senate Bill 5014, which mandates the creation of minimum crisis intervention training standards and requires law enforcement officers complete crisis intervention training.

Senate Bill 5030, omnibus police reform legislation, incorporates a number of critical reform measures passed by the House of Delegates including:

House Bill 5099 prohibits law enforcement officers from seeking or executing no-knock search warrants, making Virginia the third state to do so.

House Bill 5069 limits the circumstances in which law enforcement officers can use neck restraints.

House Bill 5029 requires law enforcement officers to intervene when they witness another officer engaging or attempting to engage in the use of excessive force.

House Bill 5049 reduces the militarization of police by prohibiting law enforcement from obtaining or using specified equipment, including grenades, weaponized aircraft, and high caliber firearms.

House Bill 5109 creates statewide minimum training standards for law enforcement officers, including training on awareness of racism, the potential for biased profiling, and de-escalation techniques.

House Bill 5104 mandates law enforcement agencies and jails request the prior employment and disciplinary history of new hires.

House Bill 5108 expands and diversifies the Criminal Justice Services Board, ensuring that the perspectives of social justice leaders, people of color, and mental health providers are represented in the state’s criminal justice policymaking.

House Bill 5051 strengthens the process by which law enforcement officers can be decertified and allows the Criminal Justice Services Board to initiate decertification proceedings.

House Bill 5045 makes it a Class 6 felony for law enforcement officers to “carnally know” an arrestee or detainee.

Governor Northam also signed Senate Bill 5018 which allows individuals serving a sentence for certain felony offenses who are terminally ill to petition the Parole Board for conditional release; and amended House Bill 5148 and Senate Bill 5034 which allow for increased earned sentencing credits. The Governor proposed a six-month delay to give the Department of Corrections sufficient time to implement this program.

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NEWS

Springvale Road Bridge Options Studied

GFCA to launch Survey on bridge in Great Falls.

A Working Group of residents chartered by the Great Falls Citizens Association (GFCA) has been reviewing proposals by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to replace a single lane bridge on Springvale Road over Piney Run. The bridge, believed to have been re-constructed in 1965, is one of several single lane bridges serving the Great Falls community. VDOT has prepared two options. Both increase bridge capacity by building a larger two lane bridge.

A SURVEY has been developed to evaluate the opinions of the communities located along Springvale Road between Rte. 7 and Georgetown Pike. It's believed that these residents will be directly impacted by the proposed bridge replacement. The survey will explore views on potential increases in traffic volume on Springvale and consequently, other local roads. Increased speeding, and the impact of raising the bridge weight capacity that would permit larger trucks not currently allowed on the existing bridge, and diminished safety are among other topics to be addressed.

Great Falls resident, John Halacy, coordinator of the GFCA Working Group, is concerned VDOT is not taking into account that the current single lane bridge performs a critical function as an essential traffic calming measure by restricting heavy through trucks and commuters who would use Springvale Road to circumvent traffic congestion associated with ongoing construction along the Route 7 corridor.

Halacy observed that: "The VDOT proposals do not reflect the foreseeable adverse traffic impact of expanded bridge capacity on Springvale. Plus, look at the timing of their plans—VDOT is proposing to begin construction on three, single lane, bridges in our area in the next year—Springvale Road, Walker Road, and Hunter Mill Road. Walker Road has already been approved by VDOT for replacement as a two lane bridge. The Hunter Mill Bridge is scheduled for widening to two lanes in Spring of 2021. Additionally, VDOT is proposing to begin work on the 495 HOT Lanes from the American Legion Bridge through Tysons while construction continues on the Route 7 corridor until 2024. This is a recipe for gridlock for our region, and a traffic nightmare for Great Falls roads, as commuters seek relief from jammed highways."

Many long-time Great Falls residents feel that the single lane bridges not only limit traffic and speeding, but also represent the disappearing rural nature of Great Falls.

GFCA sought an extension of the comment period on the Springvale Road project until May and requested VDOT Regional Engineer, Helen Cuervo, suspend the bridge project until completion of the Route 7 construction.

VDOT declined the GFCA request to postpone, but extended the comment period only to the end of November. Halacy noted "That's not enough time to get the word out on this process. It is being rushed. VDOT spent three years working with the community on the Hunter Mill Road Bridge. Now, we are talking about a period of less than seven months that VDOT wants to push this Great Falls bridge replacement process forward. That doesn't give the community sufficient time to determine what is going on, and explore other options VDOT has not offered. We are also dramatically constrained by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, doing everything online and virtually."



PHOTOS COURTESY OF GFCA
Rush hour traffic in Great Falls on Georgetown Pike



Springvale Road Bridge over Piney Run



Members of the GFCA Bridge Working Group inspect the Springvale Road Bridge recently, as GFCA President Bill Canis (foreground) looks on.

GFCA recognizes that COVID-19 has made public meetings difficult. Door to door outreach and other means of canvassing public opinion can't be done safely, so it is seeking more ways to collect public input prior to making any decisions about this major project.

The Working Group Survey will be distributed to nearby Homeowners Associations and affected neighborhoods first, and then expanded to capture as much of the community of Great Falls as can be reached digitally.

GFCA will be inviting representatives of the VDOT to address the community in forthcoming virtual meetings where project details can be described and the public can comment.

For further information, emails may be directed to communications@GFCA.org.

Food For Neighbors Receives \$5,000 Sprouts Grant to Fight Hunger

On Wednesday, Oct. 14, Bryan Daniell, Assistant Manager of Sprouts Farmers Market in Herndon, presented Food For Neighbors with a \$5,000 Neighborhood Grant from the Sprouts Healthy Communities Foundation. The healthy grocer's annual grant program supports nonprofits working to advance nutrition education and fresh food access.

During the presentation, Daniell reminded his employees of the many times that he and others have provided hands-on support to Food For Neighbors, and Food For Neighbors volunteer, Renee Maxwell, agreed, "I have seen many of you at our local Red Bag Program food collection and sorting events, and you are always doing the 'heavy lifting,' literally, in the heat and the cold, with enthusiasm. This is a testament to your work ethic and community spirit."

Maxwell of Herndon, with fellow Food For Neighbors volunteers Romy Nathan of Reston and Liz Campbell of Sterling, thanked the Sprouts team members for their partnership and for the generous donation.

Karen and Mark Joseph launched Food For Neighbors to address teen hunger at schools where many students had few re-

liable food sources other than their weekday school breakfasts and lunches. While various programs had recently begun to address this concern at the elementary school level, they were too limited to address the large middle and high school populations. In 2016, Food For Neighbors began filling this gap via its Red Bag Program, which allows individuals to shop for nonperishable items at their convenience and to set them on their doorsteps for collection approximately five times per year. Volunteers organized by neighborhoods then collect the food and bring it to one of five central locations, where it is sorted and then provided to approximately 1,200 students from 22 participating middle and high schools in Northern Virginia.

Since Nov 2016, Food For Neighbors has collected more than 112,300 pounds of food. The nonprofit now has more than 1,200 households donating red bags filled with shelf-stable foods plus more than 650 drivers and volunteers variously participating in the food collection and sorting events.

To learn more, visit <https://www.foodforneighbors.org/>.

OF LIZ CAMPBELL



Bryan Daniell (right), Assistant Manager of Sprouts Farmers Market in Herndon, presents Food For Neighbors volunteers Romy Nathan (middle) and Renee Maxwell (left) with \$5,000 to support Food For Neighbors in its grassroots effort to end child hunger.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LIZ CAMPBELL



PHOTO COURTESY OF JÜRIS KELLEY, CSM

Scouting for Food a Large Success

The annual Scouting For Food drive was a large success due to the generosity of Restonians. Reston's Troop 1970 from the United Christian Parish alone collected a record 5,340 pounds of food with an estimated value of \$8,650. Many other Scout Troops and Cub Scout Packs also participated with most donations going to Reston's Cornerstones.

Great Falls Senior Center Announces Upcoming Zoom Events

Great Falls Senior Center (GFSC) has announced monthly events scheduled for December through February inviting the members to Zoom sessions until they can see each other in person.

- ❖ Dec. 8 – Madrigal Singers – Holiday Selections;
- ❖ Jan. 19 – Mary Ann Jung Presents Amelia Earhart;
- ❖ Feb. 16 – Our Very Own Betsy Knabb will guide us around The National Portrait Gallery.

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No Great Decisions event is scheduled for December but there will be a January program – details to follow.

Information and details for each event will be sent by email in time for members to register and receive a link to the event.

If you need help and would like to learn how to Zoom to monthly events contact MaryJo Fox at mjwfx1491@gmail.com or by phone 571-236-9664

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Time for Being Thankful

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



COMMENTARY

Next week is the formal day set aside for thanksgiving. For many that means food, and I love the foods associated with the holiday of Thanksgiving. It is a time of generosity as many people and groups make sure that everyone has something to eat at least on that day. For others the meaning of Thanksgiving may be the sales that come with unique bargains that are offered on "Black Friday" although I do not know how those sales will be accommodated during a pandemic. Certainly the crowds pressed against the front doors of stores about to open would not be safe nor would the rush to the best bargains be a good idea.

Some believe that the first Thanksgiving occurred on December 4, 1619, when Captain John Woodlief and 35 Englishmen landed at what is now known as Berkeley Plantation. They immediately fell to their knees as the charter under which they were sailing required

giving thanks to the good Lord for their safe passage from what had been a rough voyage and for the thousands of acres of pristine lands on which they were going to settle. There was no mention of the indigenous people who had occupied the land for as many as 15,000 years before their arrival. More than a year later at Plymouth Settlement a festival occurred that included settlers and indigenous people in what is more often referred to as the first Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving as a holiday on the fourth Thursday of November dates to a proclamation issued by President Abraham Lincoln on October 3, 1863. Even in the midst of a civil war, Lincoln reminded the Nation of "the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies" under the "providence of Almighty God." Lincoln found that "a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity" had not "arrested the plough, the shuttle or the ship" and "the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of

years with large increase in freedom...the gracious gifts of the Most High God."

The spirit of Lincoln should be with us as we celebrate Thanksgiving this year. Our institutions of government have been tested over the last nearly four years as seldom before. The voters have largely dispersed those who showed little respect for our values and traditions. It will soon be less painful to read the morning newspaper or to listen to the evening news. There will be fewer times of looking at social media with disbelief at the actions of our national leaders. We will have lively debates as we always do in our democratic republic, but those debates can lead to greater freedoms from inequalities, hunger and health threats.

The pandemic is testing our patience as few other events in our lives have, but we can remind ourselves and others that face masks, social distancing, and no crowds will help to preserve our health as well as that of others. And we can remind ourselves and others that the blessings we ultimately enjoy are not simply of our own making but are as Lincoln reminded us "the gracious gifts of the Most High God"—by whatever name we may call that spirit!
Enjoy your Thanksgiving next week!

School Building Closed? Try a Park

BY PAUL GILBERT
NOVA PARKS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Families across Northern Virginia are challenged with online education. This is the most challenging for elementary school children with shorter attention spans.

For those parents looking for additional resources to help their young learners, your regional park may have some of the answers. Even during a pandemic, in-person learning can happen, particularly when that learning is taking place outside, with masks and socially distanced. That is exactly the formula that is being used at Potomac Overlook Regional Park in Arlington with their Schoolyard Explorers Series.

Schoolyard Explorers is a program of in-person classes taught by a naturalist that ties in with the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs). There are two one-hour sessions on each subject and appropriate for each grade:

- Weather – designed for 1st graders
- Forces and Motion – designed for 2nd graders
- Ecosystems – designed for 3rd graders
- Water – designed for 4th and 5th graders

This is a great way to supplement online learning with some in-person instruction in a fun park setting that reinforces the materials covered in the state curriculum for science.

"I have participated in several of the Schoolyard Explorers classes at Potomac Overlook with my 1st grader," remarked Arlington mother, Mary Sanders. "The topics and content of the programs are a great supplement to his distance learning, and the classes offer a fantastic opportunity to get outside and away from screens," she continued.



Paul Gilbert

PHOTO COURTESY OF NOVA PARKS

The Carlyle House in Alexandria recently had a program for 3rd – 6th graders called "Discoveries through Trash," which introduced children to archeology.

For those wanting a fully online or hybrid experience, the NOVAparks.com web site has a new interactive virtual tour of Aldie Mill. This innovative and interactive tool uses the 200-year-old mill to

teach both history and science. There are three educational experiences available: Simple Machines, History of Aldie Mill, and Eyewitness to the Civil War. After exploring this information-rich site, you can tour the mill in person on the weekends and see where it all happened.

The remarkable historic resources of our region provide many opportunities to learn for people of all ages. Carlyle House in Alexandria, Balls Bluff Battlefield in Leesburg, or Mt. Defiance Battlefield in Middleburg all offer a variety of tours on the weekends. Bring your face mask and hand sanitizer and explore a part of our areas that is new to you. You can find information on the schedule and registration information on the NOVAparks.com web site.

While fun and recreation is the first thing most people think about parks, they are also places of learning. With schools online and children struggling to learn, getting outdoor and learning is a win-win for everyone.

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A small group from McLean and Great Falls comes together informally at the Great Falls Freedom Memorial for Veterans Day 2020.



During an unofficial Veterans Day ceremony 2020 at the Great Falls Freedom Memorial, executive officer of the Friends of the Great Falls Freedom Memorial, president Andy Wilson, reads the invocation while another officer, vice president Dr. John "Sandy" Pidgeon, closes his eyes in prayer. Nancy Wilson stands beside her husband, Andy.

Veterans Day Observed with Caution

Cancellation of formal celebration could not stop informal ceremony in Great Falls.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Adozen or so hardy souls quietly gathered in the drenching rain at the Great Falls Freedom Memorial at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month to pay tribute to America's veterans in an unofficial ceremony. Even though the Great Falls Freedom Memorial website announced, "Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the 2020 Veterans Day Ceremony will not be held," the printed words did not stop them. According to Andy Wilson, president of the Friends of the Great Falls Freedom Memorial and a retired Army Ranger officer, he and his wife Nancy told a few friends they would meet informally regardless of the rain. "From there, it was word of mouth," he said.

So, it happened that one hundred and two years after hostilities on the Western Front of World War I ceased on Nov. 11, 1918, a small group, mostly adults from Great Falls and McLean, according to Wilson, returned to the memorial plaza despite the pandemic. The memorial's monument of local glacial rock and its granite curb, inscribed with words such as courage, patience and love, principles held by those who give of themselves for liberty and freedom, had been installed three years after 9-11.

It was a place of comfort and pride even though the citizens stood alone under umbrellas for a home-spun ceremony to commemorate Veterans Day 2020 and teach the young. There was no crowd of a hundred; no Langley High School Madrigals singing patriotic songs; no U.S. Marine Corps Color Guard Detachment presenting the color.

"We are meeting to honor veterans past



Indian American business consultant Puneet Ahluwalia of McLean, running for the Republican nomination for Lt. Governor of Virginia, stands beside Janet Tysse of McLean at the informal Veterans Day Ceremony 2020 at the Great Falls Freedom Memorial.

and present for their service," said vice president of the Friends of the Great Falls Freedom Memorial, retired Lt. Commander Dr. John "Sandy" Pidgeon, who served as a Navy SEAL. "If everybody pushes their umbrellas together, we can have a canopy," he suggested.

ANDY WILSON, president of the Friends of the Great Falls Freedom Memorial and retired Army Ranger, delivered the invocation. Wilson said he found it on the internet and thought it very interesting. "On the heels of a heated Presidential race, this is a day to unite, to remember and pray, to show our gratitude for so many who have fought for our country...Thank you for reminding us that there's incredible love and sacrifice displayed, when one is willing to stand strong, and fight for freedom."

Wilson said they typically hold three official events each year at the memori-



Nancy Wilson of Great Falls shares a few remarks during the grassroots Veterans Day 2020 ceremony at the Great Falls Freedom Memorial. Executive officers of the Friends of the Great Falls Freedom Memorial, (far left) vice president Dr. John "Sandy" Pidgeon, retired Lt. Commander Navy SEAL and president Andy Wilson, retired Army Ranger officer listen. The Wilsons' grandchildren, Samuel Cassidy, 4, and Austin Wilson, 3 1/2, play at their grandparents' feet.

al, Memorial Day Observance, a 9-11 Remembrance and Veterans Day Ceremony. Covid-19 forced all canceled in 2020. Asking veterans to raise their hands to be recognized, Wilson thanked them for their service and said, "I'm very happy a lot of you are out here. Bless you."

Pidgeon asked if anyone had family members who served, in what branches, and when. Wilson added, "That's why this Memorial is here. To keep that memory alive... for this community." Janet Tysse of McLean said, "My brother served in Vietnam, Army, helicopter pilot." "My father served in World War II, Army," said Rosie Oakley of McLean. "My father was in World War II, Army Air



Rosie Oakley of McLean attends the informal Veterans Day Ceremony 2020 at the Great Falls Freedom Memorial.

Corps," said Bill Denk of Great Falls.

With no invited key-note speaker, Wilson took on the role. He shared the story of an American hero of World War I, Sgt. Alvin York, who almost single-handedly captured 132 German troops. He returned home a hero, and when World War II broke out, he helped convince America it must fight again. Quoting York, Wilson said, "Liberty and freedom and democracy are so very precious that you do not fight to win them once and then stop. Liberty and freedom and democracy are prizes awarded only to those people who fight to win them and then keep fighting eternally to hold them."

ENDING THE CEREMONY, Pidgeon prayed, "(God) you know every veteran by name, you know their deeds, you know their hard work, you know their privations in the field, and you know their perseverance in the face of fear...Please draw each one closer to you today as we listen and rejoice in their lives." To view the story of the memorial, visit <https://youtu.be/8SmYgirs45Y>.

NEWS

McKay to Head VACo

Fairfax County board chairman elected president of statewide organization representing interests of Virginia's 95 counties.

Jeffrey McKay, Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors was elected to serve as 2021 President of the Virginia Association of Counties (VACo). VACo is a statewide group that advocates with the state legislature for the interests of the Commonwealth's 95 counties.

In a speech delivered to members this morning, Chairman McKay noted the importance of VACo during his career on the Fairfax County Board.

"I'm honored to serve as the next President of the Virginia Association of Counties. Throughout my many years with VACo, I have always considered us to be a large family," McKay said. "I treasure the many relationships I have built with my colleagues throughout Virginia. VACo is a great way to bring us all together to advance our communities."

Over the last several years, McKay has led efforts with VACo to dramatically increase state education funding, transportation funding, and ensure the perspective of counties — the level of leadership

that is closest to the community — is heard statewide.

For the upcoming year, McKay noted that he wants to lead VACo with the same equity lens that drives Fairfax County.

"As a kid riding my bike with friends, I didn't realize what this meant, but I saw firsthand that where you come from was an important factor for your future success and livelihood. When I got older, I understood that this was wrong," McKay said. "This was a driving force behind my decision to begin a career in local government and an inspiration behind the One Fairfax equity policy that I introduced in 2017. This policy has become central to all decision making in

Fairfax County by requiring us to look at all policies through a lens of equity. I want to apply that same lens toward our statewide efforts, so that all areas of the Commonwealth can grow and prosper together. We really are all in this together and our state can't advance if all of our counties aren't."

Chairman McKay began his tenure as president Nov. 11.



McKay



Public Meetings Funding the Right Transportation Projects

You are invited to share comments on transportation projects that have been recommended for funding in the FY2021-2026 Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP). Additionally, pursuant to §33.2-202, comments will be accepted for new projects valued in excess of \$25 million. The Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) will consider your comments as it develops the FY2021-2026 Six-Year Improvement Program. The program allocates public funds to highway, road, bridge, rail, bicycle, pedestrian, and public transportation projects. All federally eligible projects in the SYIP will be included in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program to document how Virginia will obligate its federal funds. Meeting materials were made available on Nov. 13, 2020 and continue to be at <http://www.ctb.virginia.gov/planning/fallmeetings/default.asp>.

The public is able to provide feedback on the FY2021-2026 Six-Year Improvement Program Update at the virtual fall meeting on Nov. 24, 2020, which is scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. and will be conducted using electronic communications in accordance with Item 4-0.01.g. of Chapter 1289 (2020 Acts of Assembly), as the COVID-19 emergency makes it impracticable or unsafe to assemble in a single location.

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss or transact the business statutorily required or necessary to continue operation of the CTB and the discharge of its

lawful purposes, duties and responsibilities. All board members will be participating remotely. The public may view the meeting via live stream by clicking the "View stream" button at the following link: http://www.ctb.virginia.gov/public_meetings/live_stream/default.asp.

There will be opportunity for public comment. When announced, public comment can be made by calling 470-285-4495, followed by PIN 392 182 855#. Callers will be placed on hold until others in queue ahead of them have had the opportunity to speak. In the event there is an interruption in the meeting broadcast, call 804-729-6495.

The public is invited to share feedback on transportation projects that have been recommended for funding through participation in this virtual public meeting or by submitting comments through the online form, by email, or by posted mail by Dec. 3, 2020.

For information on roads and highways projects: Six-YearProgram@VDOT.Virginia.gov, or InfrastructureInvestment Director, Virginia Department of Transportation, 1401 East Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23219 or online form found at <http://www.ctb.virginia.gov/planning/fallmeetings/default.asp>.

For information on rail and public transportation projects: DRPTPR@drpt.virginia.gov, Public Information Office, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, 600 East Main Street, Suite 2102, Richmond, VA 23219.

The Commonwealth is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of, its services on the basis of race, color, or national origin, as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need further information on these policies or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, please contact the Virginia Department of Transportation's Title VI Compliance Officer at 804-786-2730 or the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation's Title VI Compliance Officer at 804-786-4440 (TTY users call 711).

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PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Indoor and outdoor dining areas remain below capacity or empty as seen on Sunday, Nov. 15.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Customers return to the Old Brogue, an Irish Pub in Great Falls as temperatures head toward the high 60s on Sunday, Nov. 15. Still, with cold weather on its way, owner Mike Kearney worries about the restaurant operating below its socially distanced capacity.

At the Tipping Point and Winter is Coming

Beloved local restaurant needs customers to be with them now.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Proprietor Mike Kearney of The Old Brogue, an Irish Pub in Great Falls, made a live video of his restaurant on the evening of Friday, Nov. 13. With the County's and the Commonwealths' coronavirus infections trending upward and cold weather approaching, he wanted to show everyone how sad they were that night. "A lot of you know me. I've been here for 40 years. We've been taking COVID-19 very seriously since it began," Kearney says in his live clip. He holds up his cell phone camera and films an empty parking lot with picnic tables for people who want to socially distance and the entrance where customers arrive. He films the outdoor front patio where he invested in three fire pits, two sofas, three outdoor heaters, and "a lot of nice tables."

Then Kearney turns his cell phone camera to the 28 employees there for the evening shift standing beside General Manager James Monroe, who'd been at The Old Brogue for thirty-three years and chef Alex Murillo-Ortiz, eight years. "They're all standing here. You know why? Because there are no customers...What's going on?... It's a nice night, and there's nobody at this restaurant...We're truly trying our best, but obviously something else is going on that we cannot control. If you really want us to be here for you, we need you to be here for us," he says.

According to the Independent Restaurant Coalition, if the U.S. Senate does not pass a relief bill similar to the House's revised Heroes Act, it could lead to the closure of 85 percent of small restaurants by the end of the year. On Oct. 1, Congressman Earl Blumenauer, Oregon's 3rd congressional district, tweeted, "The House just passed



Proprietor Mike Kearney of The Old Brogue, an Irish Pub in Great Falls, makes a live video clip of his restaurant on the evening of Friday, Nov. 13.

our RESTAURANTS Act, a \$120 billion lifeline to help 500,000 independent restaurants and their 11 million employees survive the pandemic...The Senate must join us to #SaveRESTAURANTS.

IN AN INTERVIEW two days after Kearney made the video, he said that the rainy weekend before the dreaded Friday, business fell 40 percent with a drop of \$20,000 in sales because of the weather. The next week, it was beautiful in the 70s, and they went back up to \$20,000. "How are we supposed to prepare for this? It's just so difficult," he said.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Brian Daum and his wife Rosemary with Rambo, their dog, enjoy a drink on the front patio of The Old Brogue, an Irish Pub in Great Falls on Sunday, Nov. 15. "We were hiking in Great Falls and came to our favorite place. We were so impressed by how nice the patio looked, the lights, the firepit, the heaters," said Rosemary. "Thanks for staying open. We love it; we look forward to spending many more afternoons here," said Brian.

According to Kearney, while they had constantly, almost daily, been readapting since March 17, trying to keep the community happy, his number one thing about being a successful restaurant operator was how to

retain staff. Before COVID, he had 84 employees, now 60. According to Kearney, for some, it was time to move on, others couldn't do it anymore, and some had health risks. Fiscally, the remaining employees knew the weekly goal. Kearney said they weren't talking about making money anymore, but what they could afford to lose.

Kearney voiced his frustration at being concerned for several weeks now, knowing that winter was coming, and the weatherman had to be his best friend to maintain customers. Kearney said he had done everything he could to keep the business afloat and invest in best practices to mitigate COVID-19 concerns, protecting the health and safety of The Bogue's customers and workers.

THE BROGUE offered curbside and delivery services and five socially distant dining options. Kearney implemented temperature checks and required contact information from at least one person at each table. He directed all servers to wear masks and guests to wear theirs if leaving their table. Kearney installed traffic flow floor markers, practiced social distancing in table arrangements. He installed plastic shields around indoor booths and banned sitting at the bar. Kearney increased indoor ventilation by opening doors, and to give customers even more confidence for inside dining, installed medical air scrubbers and UV lights in all heating and air conditioning ducts. Soon a hydrogen peroxide generator, similar to those used in hospitals as an airborne disinfectant and infection control measure, would be installed. Finally, he trained staff on how to safely clear tables and disinfect them.

"It's been a very difficult year on so many levels...Then it came to this Friday night...I just said, I have to tell the world about this because this is the start of what my wife really says is the final rush. We've got to make it to spring...There will be a vaccine out."

CALENDAR

NOW THRU NOV. 23

Operation Christmas Child. More than 4,000 locations will now offer a curbside drop-off option for the Samaritan's Purse project, Operation Christmas Child. Volunteers are preparing to collect shoebox gifts during National Collection Week, Nov. 16 – 23. Operation Christmas Child has been collecting and delivering shoebox gifts—filled with school supplies, hygiene items and fun toys—to children worldwide for more than two decades. For the nearest drop-off location, visit samaritanaspurse.org/occ and clicking on “drop-off locations”.

NOW THRU THE HOLIDAYS

Santa at Springfield Town Center. Santa and his reindeer will be arriving at Springfield Town Center on Nov. 6 to kick-off the holiday season. In an effort to create touchless experiences and accommodate varying levels of visitor comfort, Santa will be available at Springfield Town Center via numerous experiences and offerings: Picture with Santa; Virtual Experience; Family Pet Photos on Mondays; Family Photos and Visits with Santa. Reservations are required for all Santa and photo offerings.

NOW THRU DEC. 6

Nature's Palette. At The Loft Gallery of Occoquan, 313 Mill Street, Occoquan. Featuring work by Patricia Hafkemeyer and wood artist, George Jones III. Gallery Hours: Tuesday-Friday, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.; Saturday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; and Sunday, Noon-5 p.m. Artist's Reception: See Facebook Live Reception on Saturday, November 7 at 3:30 p.m. at <https://www.facebook.com/loftgalleryoccoquan>

WEDNESDAY/NOV. 18

The Unruly Theatre Project's Virtual Improv Show. 7 p.m. Join us for (the) Unruly Theatre Project's virtual fall improv shows from the comfort of your couch! You can register for one show or as many as you like, but you need to register at least two hours in advance of a show to see it. A Zoom link and password for the show will only be emailed to participants. Visit the website, www.mcleancenter.org.

WEDNESDAY/NOV. 18

Nuts About Felting. 10 a.m., 11 a.m., 1:30 p.m., 2:30 p.m., and 3:30 p.m. At Sully Historic Site, 3650 Historic Sully Way, Chantilly. Register for the “Nuts About Felting” program at Sully Historic Site and learn to create acorns using the wet felt technique. No needles are involved in this technique, and you'll take home three or four felted acorns that will never spoil. Cost is \$30 per family. Call 703-437-1794.

FRIDAY/NOV. 20

Virtual Family Fun Trivia Night. 7-9 p.m. Gather the whole family around the computer or tablet and get ready for some socially distant trivia. Prizes for winning teams. \$5 per

family; preregistration is required. Visit the website, www.mcleancenter.org.

SATURDAY/NOV. 21

Scotch Whisky Tasting. At 10017 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. Colvin Run Mill hosts a “Scotch Whisky Tasting” on Saturday, Nov. 21, 2020. Enjoy a sampling of fine Scottish single malts from different whisky-producing regions. Budding connoisseurs will learn about the ancient history of Scotch whisky and the fine art of making and tasting it. Delicious Scottish accompaniments will be served as you assess the unique characteristics of the water of life of the Highlands. This program runs from 3 to 5 p.m. The cost is \$45 per person, and participants must be age 21 or older. Call 703-759-2771.

SATURDAY/NOV. 21

Snack and Paint. 1-3 p.m. At The Old Firehouse, McLean. Snack and Paint is an instructor-led painting class. This event is great if your teen has been painting for years or has never painted before. Painting is a great way to express your creativity! Snack and Paint gives your teen an opportunity to socialize safely. Participants will be painting a fall-themed picture. Visit www.mcleancenter.org.

SATURDAY/NOV. 21

Mystery Authors Extravaganza. 1-2:30 p.m. Reston Regional Library Zoom. Come to this Zoom event and hear authors from the Chesapeake Chapter of Sisters in Crime present their 2020 novels and short stories. See attachment below for a list of participating authors. Books are available for purchase through Scrawl Books. Visit the website: <https://librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/7216614>.

SATURDAY/NOV. 21

Vogue: Return to the 90s. The Congressional Chorus will premiere its very first, full-length virtual concert, Vogue: Return to the 90s, available to stream on YouTube channel beginning Saturday, November 21 at 8 p.m. In a 30-minute virtual cabaret of song and dance, the Congressional Chorus revisits the energetic decade that brought us Madonna's iconic “Vogue,” and other hits such as “Circle of Life” and “River of Dreams,” and more. Visit the Website: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/virtual-concert-congressional-chorus-presents-vogue-return-to-the-90s-tickets-128428512137>

SUNDAY/NOV. 22

Trout Fishing in America. 3 p.m. At Reston Community Center Hunters Woods, CenterStage, Reston. Cost is \$10 Reston/\$20 Non-Reston. This Grammy-nominated music act returns to Reston to entertain audiences of all ages. Part of the Professional Touring Artist Series. Visit the website www.restoncommunitycenter.com/ptas.



NOTICE OF WATER RATES AND BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING

December 10, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

At 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, December 10, 2020, Fairfax Water will conduct a public hearing on its Proposed Schedule of Rates, Fees, and Charges. The hearing will be held in Fairfax Water's offices at 8570 Executive Park Avenue, Fairfax, VA. The meeting will also be available online for remote attendance. For more information, visit fairfaxwater.org/meeting-schedule.

The proposed changes, to be effective April 1, 2021, include the following:

- An increase in the Availability Charge from \$4,320 to \$4,400[†].
- An increase in the Local Facilities Charge from \$18,030 to \$19,610.
- An increase in the Service Connection Charge from \$1,370 to \$1,430[†].
- An increase in the Quarterly Billing Service Charge from \$14.40 to \$14.85[†].
- An increase in the base Commodity Charge from \$3.20 to \$3.33 per 1,000 gallons of water.
- An increase in the Peak Use Charge from \$3.85 to \$3.90.
- An increase in the Turn Off / Turn On Charge from \$49 to \$50.
- An increase in the Fees for Use of Fairfax Water Fire Hydrants to include the increase in the Commodity Charge and the Peak Use Charge.
- A decrease in the Overhead Charge for Labor from 104% to 102%.
- An increase in the Installation of Sewer Use Meter Charge from \$39 to \$40.

[†]Charges reflect fees associated with a standard 5/8" residential meter. Changes in charges for larger residential and commercial meters are reflected in the Proposed Schedule of Rates, Fees, and Charges.

Fairfax Water is also proposing a \$196 million budget for calendar year 2021*. Water sales are expected to provide \$168.9 million and the remaining \$27.1 million is expected from connection charges, investment income and other sources.

The major areas of operation and maintenance expense are:

Category	-- \$1,000s --	
	2020	2021
Personal Services & Employee Benefits	\$59,083	\$61,352
Power and Utilities	10,730	10,815
Chemicals	7,869	7,928
Purchased Water	5,014	8,364
Supplies and Materials	5,507	5,784
Insurance	1,230	1,100
Fuel	535	700
Postage	586	620
Contractual Services	13,779	14,102
Professional Services	1,336	1,298
Other	2,296	2,452
Sub-Total	107,965	114,515
Transfer to Improvement Fund	(10,313)	(10,763)
Total	\$97,652	\$103,752

Net revenues are expected to be appropriated as follows:

Debt Payment	\$42,358,365
Improvement Fund	\$11,000,000
General Fund	\$38,409,000

* Fairfax Water's Board will continue to monitor economic factors and review revenues and expenditures at mid-year to determine if additional action is needed.

A copy of the proposed changes can be viewed on our website at fairfaxwater.org/rates.

Those wishing to speak at this hearing (in person or remotely) or desiring a copy of the proposed changes should call Ms. Karen Barnette at 703-289-6029. Interested parties may submit written comments to PublicHearingComments@fairfaxwater.org or mail written comments to:

Fairfax Water
Public Hearing Comments
8570 Executive Park Avenue
Fairfax, VA 22031

All written comments must be received by close of business on Wednesday, December 9, 2020, to be included in the record of the public hearing.

Cornerstones Thanksgiving Food Drive and Gifts for Kids Drive Need Volunteer Support

DISTRIBUTION AND COLLECTION SITE

St. John Neumann Catholic Church
11900 Lawyers Road, Reston VA 20191

FOOD DISTRIBUTORS

Thursday, Nov. 19 from 9:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Friday, Nov. 20 from 9:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Transporters will meet at St. John Neumann Catholic Church to help load boxes of donated food into our truck and then caravan to local neighborhoods to deliver boxes. All volunteers should wear comfortable, weather appropriate clothing and masks. Volunteers will be lifting and carrying numerous boxes. Please note: this effort may not take the full allotted time.

FOOD BOX PACKERS

Thursday, Nov. 19 and Friday, Nov. 20 from 10 a.m. - 12 noon

Food Box Packers are needed at St. John Neumann Catholic Church to pack boxes of Thanksgiving Food for distribution.

GENERAL VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

Saturday, Nov. 21 from 8 a.m. - 3 p.m. (multiple shifts)

Volunteers are needed to help direct parking lot traffic, deliver food boxes to shut-in residents, load vehicles with food boxes, and assist with sorting leftover boxes of food at St. John Neumann Catholic Church and satellite community locations at Cedar Ridge Apartments, Crescent Apartments, Stonegate Village Apartments, and the Westglade Apartments in Reston.

To volunteer, please contact Susan Alger, Director of Volunteer and Community Engagement at susan.alger@cornerstonesva.org or call 571-323-1383.

Addressing the Demands of Virtual University Classrooms

Marymount psychology professor offers solution to distance learning obstacles.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

For some students and professors, the loss of in-person contact has disrupted higher education and the experiences that often accompany it.

“I have found that distance learning is riddled with challenges,” said senior Sophia Jaimes, a psychology major at Marymount University. “Personally, I am very much a student who learns best when I am in a learning environment with a teacher who I can ask immediate questions to. When I have to use Zoom I find myself often being distracted or, at times, feeling awkward to talk on Zoom since I may not know my peers.”

As Marymount and other universities and colleges prepare for all-remote learning after Thanksgiving, students and professors are pondering the ways in which academics will be affected. Linda McKenna Gulyn, Ph.D., a professor of psychology at Marymount, has written a paper that addresses some of the problems that her colleagues and students might be experiencing in the uncharted territory of virtual campuses.

“Colleges and universities are faced with the need to adapt and evolve without a script,” said Linda Gulyn, Ph.D., professor of psychology at Marymount University in Arlington. “Hundreds of experienced and highly regarded professors feel like clunky beginners as they redesign and deliver their courses online.”

Some professors put undue expectations on students, says Jaimes. “An issue that I have seen recently is where professors and teachers voiced their demands that students have their cameras on during class,” she said. “However many students have voiced that they may be uncomfortable doing so and that having cameras on during class is violating their privacy. Professors have said that if students don’t respond to their questions, in addition to not having their cameras on, they will kick the student out of the Zoom call.”

Dealing with such an obstacle requires mutual trust and awareness, suggests Gulyn. “It’s easy to



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Marymount University will suspend all in-person classes after the Thanksgiving break, says University spokesman Nick Munson.

feel suspicious of our students, and I’m pretty sure they can feel the same way,” she said. “Pay attention to such messages, because we want our students to feel welcome, accepted and appreciated.”

“My virtual attendance this semester appears to be higher than my typical face-to-face attendance in previous semesters.”

— Alice E. Petillo, Ph.D.,
Marymount University

The sudden expectation that one be technologically savvy can cause instructional challenges, particularly in classes where visuals are essential, says Alice E. Petillo, Ph.D., professor of mathematics and Marymount University. “For one session my students could hear me but not see the visuals,” she said. “I was not able to hear them as they tried to let me know. Once I realized there was an issue, I apologized and let them know I would post a video recap after class.”

Accepting that the current level of distance learning requires an unprecedented set of skills can help quell angst around new expectations, Gulyn advises. “Model poise, problem-solving and self-regulation skills for students

to succeed in the workplace,” she said. “When I goofed-up my class technology for the 20th time, I gratefully received a solution from one of my freshmen.”

While college students might not need parental supervision in the way that an elementary or middle school student does, they can face challenges that are equally as daunting. “I think our students are finding it difficult because they are often juggling a lot of other concerns and commitments at the same time as our classes,” said Brian P. Flanagan, Ph.D., professor of theology and religious study at Marymount. “Many of my students are watching other siblings or helping them learn while they themselves are in class.”

As a result of distance learning, some students are facing new concerns about a lack of necessary resources. “[They] are struggling with access to technology and the internet,” said Michael Mills, Ph.D., Vice President, E-Learning, Innovation and Teaching Excellence at Montgomery College. “While the college has done an exceptional job meeting these needs in terms of financial and technological support, the issues are real for our students.”

The quality of instruction delivered by video conferencing platforms is not always equal to that of in-person classes. “I, along with many other friends, have discussed this and feel as though the education we are receiving is below what we could be getting,” said Jaimes.

PEOPLE

McLean High Student Wins Voice Competition, Advances to Division Finals

Tracy Waagner, a senior at McLean High School, will represent Virginia in the Division Finals of the Music Teachers National Association Southern Division Senior Vocal Competition. Waagner earned this opportunity after winning the MTNA Virginia statewide competition, singing classical art song repertoire in English, German, French, and Italian. The winner of the Southern Division competition will compete in the National Finals which will be a video round this year in mid-January.



MARION MEAKEM PHOTOGRAPHY

Tracy Waagner, McLean High School senior, wins the Virginia MTNA Senior Voice Competition.

Waagner, a soprano, has studied classical voice for five years with Peggy McNulty. Waagner has enjoyed opportunities to hone her craft at summer intensive programs for vocal performance at The Washington National Opera’s Opera Institute, Interlochen Center for the Arts, and University of Cincinnati-College Conservatory of Music. Locally, Waagner has performed with Choralis as a High School Singing Scholar.

At McLean High School, Waagner studies Theatre Tech and is Wig Master and Hair Designer for TheatreMcLean. She has served as Wig and Hair Stylist for the Sterling Playmakers Community Theatre. A longtime dancer at Perfect Pointe Music & Dance, she is rehearsing a tap solo “Bli Blip” with choreographer Philip Baraoidan.

Music Teachers National Association is a nonprofit organization comprised of 20,000 independent and collegiate music teachers committed to advancing the value of music study and music making to society and to supporting the professionalism of music teachers. Founded in 1876, Music Teachers National Association is the oldest professional music association in the United States.

To receive more information about the MTNA National Competitions, including competition rules and applications please contact MTNA national headquarters at (888) 512-5278, mtnanet@mtna.org or visit the website at www.mtna.org.

“I do want to emphasize, however, that this feeling isn’t due to the professors ability to teach, but the stress from having to learn online only without any real connection to your professors or peers.”

Such challenges can be addressed through collaboration, says Gulyn. “Pull groups of students together to brainstorm about staying satisfied at our colleges [and] listen to them,” she said. “Along the way, they can initiate critical friendships and loving relationships all while taking care to stay healthy.”

Instruction by video conference has had some unexpected advantages, notes Flanagan. “I’ve been really impressed by how committed many of my students have been this semester to their own learning in the face of so many challenges,” he said. “Another silver lining is that we’ve been able to invite colleagues and experts from around the country and world to join us in our [virtual] classroom in a way

that was harder to imagine before the pandemic.”

Distance learning offers the flexibility of location from which classes can be attended. “Some of my students are able to be more engaged because they don’t have to spend time commuting, said Petillo. “My virtual attendance this semester appears to be higher than my typical face-to-face attendance in previous semesters.”

Instructors have been forced to gain new skills as a result of distance learning, says Petillo. “I have had to learn new presentation and teaching skills in a compressed time frame,” she said. “I am growing in confidence and ability with teaching online. There is more of a personal connection with the class than I had expected.”

“I think when we return to our in-person classrooms, we’ll both appreciate how much we were able to do online, but also some of the advantages and joys of learning together in person,” added Flanagan.

In-Person Learning Delayed for Some FCPS Students

Superintendent and staff update school board on return to school plans.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

A surge in COVID-19 cases in Fairfax County forced Fairfax County Public Schools to delay its planned return of in-person instruction for an additional 6,800 students on Mon., Nov. 16. “The current health metrics for COVID-19 cases in our community now exceed the threshold to expand our in-person learning,” wrote Fairfax County Public Schools Superintendent Scott S. Brabrand. The Virginia Department of Health reported the total number of new Covid-19 cases per 100,000 during the past 14 days as 211.2.

Earlier that day, at an 11 a.m. news conference, Fairfax Education Association President Kimberly M. B. Adams, joined by presidents from the surrounding districts of Arlington, Loudoun and Prince William, urged Governor Northam to return to phases two or one and return to virtual learning. “The safest option is to remain virtual for our schools until cases remain in a downward trend... Yesterday Fairfax was at 191 cases per 100,000. Today we are at 211 per 100,000... It is unacceptable for our districts to continue to disregard scientists and medical experts,” she said.

Brabrand wrote they would pause and delay expanding in-person instruction to Group 5, Early Head Start, pre-K, kindergarten and some special education service students and any new pilot programs and classes that had been scheduled. According to Brabrand, the school system made this decision as soon as the metrics were made available, and they were communicating it immediately as promised. “We always anticipated the need to potentially adjust our return to school plans as necessary during this ongoing pandemic... We are monitoring health metrics daily, but Group 5 will remain virtual until at least Nov. 30. We will communicate additional updates closer to that time,” he wrote. For students in Group 5, Nov. 17 would have been their first day back to in-school instruction since FCPS canceled school eight months earlier on Friday, March 13.

BRABRAND WROTE that students and staff who had been attending in-person classes (Groups 1-4) and the existing pilots, would continue to do so. CDC Guidelines allowed the school division to keep small cohorts of students in schools. “If metrics change that impact in-person instruction for Groups 1-4, we will update you as soon as that information becomes available,” he said.

Tina Williams, president of Fairfax County Federation of Teachers, said, “This is a good step in the right direction and will help limit COVID-19 exposure in our schools and community. However, there are still staff and students in school buildings and COVID-19 is on the rise in Fairfax County. We are shocked that FCPS wants to bring addition-

al groups of students back on Nov. 30, directly following the Thanksgiving holiday. Experts have said this period will be a hotbed for new cases because of expected small group gatherings. We need real metrics from FCPS. We urge FCPS to transition all students and staff to virtual learning immediately until there is controlled community spread of COVID-19 and the district fully adopts our 11 Pillars of a Safe Re-opening”

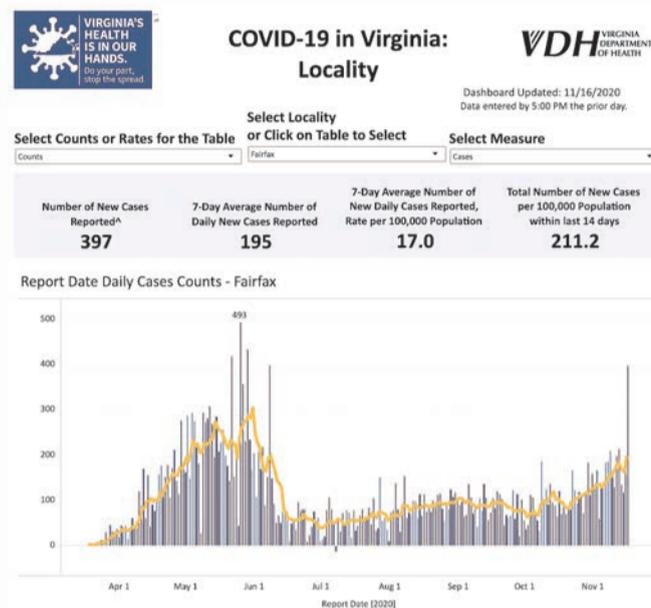
Two school days before pushing the pause button to bring the additional children back to in-person instruction, on Thursday evening, Nov. 12, the Fairfax County School Board received updates by Brabrand and County staff regarding the division’s health and operational metrics. Due to the COVID-19 emergency, all twelve School Board Members and thirty staff persons participated electronically, not in-person.

“Since the last presentation to the Board in October, we’ve been able to successfully return students to school, cohorts 2, 3 and 4, to two days a week of in-person learning,” Brabrand said. That represented approximately 8,340 children. Brabrand said health and staffing metrics supported the planned return of Group 5, totaling another 6,800 students on Nov. 17. Group 1, select specialized career prep classes, returned on Oct. 5. A spokesperson for FCPS later said, “We have had roughly 600 teachers working in our first four cohorts.”

Brabrand said FCPS projected a return for Group 6, approximately 13,500 students in grades 1 and 2, and some additional students with disabilities, on Dec. 8. Later during the discussion, Brabrand said there had been COVID outbreaks at two schools, “Justice and Woodson (high schools).” The Virginia Department of Health defined an outbreak as “the identification of two or more laboratory-confirmed cases of illness that are epidemiologically linked by person, place, and time.”

Dr. Michelle Boyd, assistant superintendent, Department of Special Services, provided an overview of FCPS’s revised recommended metrics for safe in-person learning. According to Boyd, the division planned to use a different model than risk in the community since “risk in schools” might not equate to “risk in the community.”

Boyd said when deciding to open, close, or reopen schools due to COVID, FCPS planned to use the CDC’s two “core indicators,” the measures of community burden and the implementation of mitigation strategies. Com-



The Virginia Department of Health reports the total number of new Covid-19 cases per 100,000 during the past 14 days as 211.2 exceeding the threshold to expand FCPS’ in-person learning.



Fairfax Education Association President Kimberly M. B. Adams says, “The safest option is to remain virtual for our schools until cases remain in a downward trend.”

munity burden was defined as the number of new COVID cases per 100,000 persons within the last 14 days, and the percentage of RT-PCR tests that are positive during the last 14 days.

THE IMPLEMENTATION of mitigation strategies meant measuring the school’s ability to adhere to masks, social distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, cleaning and disinfection, and contact tracing with Fairfax County Health Department. Boyd stressed vigilance to mitigation strategies within schools would reduce COVID’s introduction and transmission.

“The most important piece of our assessment of our mitigation measures, is the implementation of our audit teams. We will be implementing audit teams that will be going

and conducting weekly walk-throughs of our schools to ensure the implementation fidelity of that third CDC indicator, which has been recommended by the CDC and our Health Department is one of the most powerful pieces to keeping students and staff safe throughout our pandemic,” she said.

Out of an abundance of caution, FCPS would ground in-person instruction decisions for Groups 1-6 on community transmission until it fully implemented its audit process for mitigation measures.

Boyd said one of the lessons learned during the initial return to school pilots, was the need to enhance COVID communications and processes so stakeholders were informed promptly, within one school day, regarding COVID cases occurring in their child’s school

or workplace. “They (those who exhibit symptoms) will be required to submit a Return to School Form or Return to Work Form that is endorsed by their physician, for them to return to work and school,” she said. If there were a positive case, the Health Department would implement contact tracing, and staff/ families notified.

Interim assistant superintendent, Department of Human Resources, Sean McDonald, shared updates on teacher and classroom instructional support staff intent. The numbers indicated fewer employees submitted paperwork to resign, retire, or take a leave of absence than those who intended to do so. According to McDonald, two-thirds of all ADA accommodation requests had been resolved. The others were to be addressed by the employee’s anticipated return date relative to their student group.

McDonald said FCPS had sufficient staff to support Group 5 and shifted focus to Group 6. They were matching long-term substitutes in the classroom and hiring classroom monitors to support in-person instruction in situations where a teacher’s ADA accommodation necessitated a virtual teaching assignment. McDonald added that teachers who submitted a request to resign by the Nov. 11 deadline would be released from their position “without prejudice.”

The concurrent instructional model proved best after the division looked at all learning models. Sloan Presidio, assistant superintendent, Instructional Services Department, said, “This means that teachers are going to be working with students who are learning at school and students who are learning at home... We’re not expecting that every minute of a class is going to be synchronous or that teachers are going to be able to provide the same amount of interac-

SEE RETURN TO SCHOOL, PAGE 15

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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

COURTESY PHOTOS



The Other Side is premiering online Nov. 20.



Josh Leong, Director & Writer

McLean Filmmaker Presents 'The Other Side'

A short film inspired by a true story, raising awareness for the Ethiopian orphan crisis.

In 2018, 20-year old filmmaker Josh Leong of McLean traveled to Ethiopia on a mission trip with McLean Bible Church. During his time in the country, he created a documentary series on Ethiopia's abandoned children crisis with Olivia Fournier, another DMV peer. Due to poverty, HIV, chronic illness, and lack of female empowerment programs, there are 5 million vulnerable children in Ethiopia ranging from infancy to 18 years of age. Hundreds of private orphanages have closed due to lack of funding, resulting in millions of vulnerable children often living their entire lives on the streets.



McLean filmmaker Josh Leong with a 17-year old orphan boy Abel, whose life story inspired a short film on the Ethiopian orphan crisis, premiering online on Nov. 20.

DURING HIS STAY in a boys orphanage, Leong befriended a 17-year old orphan boy named Abel. He learned that Abel would have to leave the orphanage when he turned 18, leaving his younger brother behind. Deeply touched by Abel's story, Leong returned to the US and began his freshman year at the NYU Tisch School of the Arts. In February 2019, he decided to write a film about Abel's life. Alongside first-year classmates including Sofia Bara (producer) and Tom Ingwersen (cinematographer), Leong and team spent the next six months in pre-production for "The Other Side, a narrative short inspired by Abel's true story - all while 7000 miles away.

In early May, Ethan Herisse officially signed onto the project. Herisse was starring in "When They See Us," an Emmy-winning Netflix series directed by Ava DuVernay, set to release on May 31. Herisse was also nominated for Best Supporting Actor at the NAACP Image Awards, alongside Mahershala Ali and Idris Elba. His involvement ultimately paved the way for casting Wayna, a Grammy-nominated Ethiopian recording artist - also

based in the DMV.

In July 2019, a small student crew from the US travelled to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to film for 14 days. Collaborating with local Ethiopian cast and crew, including Ethiopian producer Bemnet Yemesgen, the team filmed in the same orphanages Leong visited in 2018 and even reunited with Abel again. The crew also worked alongside NGOs including DC-based Orphan Care Ethiopia and Great Commission Ministries, who work to support orphanages in the country. Returning from Ethiopia, the crew collaborated with Oscar-winning post production studio, The Mill, and Upper West Sound. The film was also co-scored by Sam Gryzwa and Gavin Brivik, composer of the Netflix series, "Living Undocumented," from producer Selena Gomez.

THE OTHER SIDE seeks to raise awareness for Ethiopia's abandoned children crisis through narrative film, and the team is currently seeking partners for the development of a feature-length version of the film. The film has

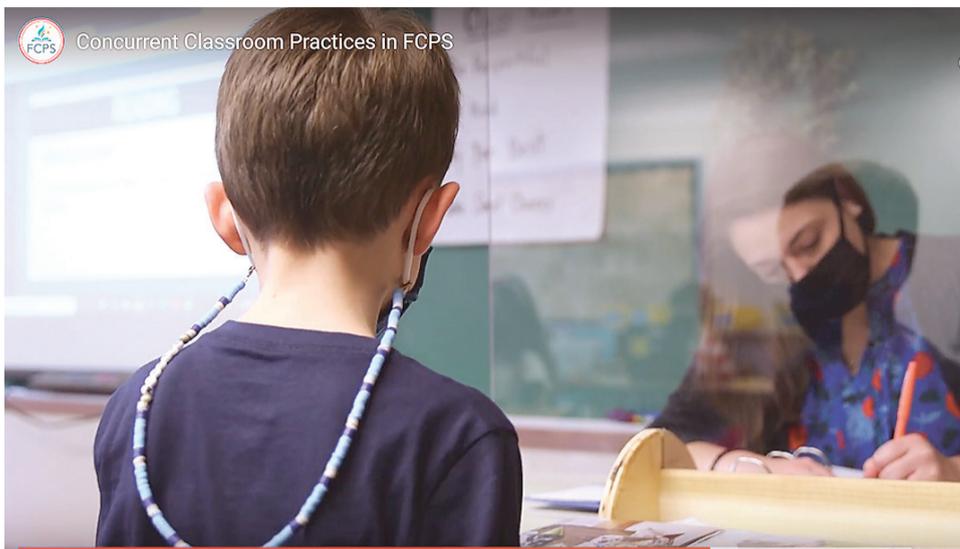
The Other Side

Premiering online Nov. 20. Details on social media and at: www.theothersideshortfilm.com

Official Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/445092137/129d295b4d>
Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/theothersidefilm2020/> Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/theothersidefilm2020> Josh Leong: <https://www.joshleongstudios.com>

reached the eyes of Ethiopian Ambassador Fitsum Arega, as well as the Ethiopian Embassy in Washington DC. The nation's capital is actually the second largest Ethiopian city in the world (by population), behind Addis Ababa.

The film has been accepted into 10 major festivals (4 Academy Award@-Qualifying), winning Best Short at the Greenwich International Festival. "The Other Side" enjoyed an NYC Premiere at the Urbanworld Film Festival and an LA Premiere at the Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival, in partnership with HBO and WarnerMedia. The film was also included at the 2020 Cannes Film Festival Court Metrage.



A teacher monitors student progress during concurrent instruction from behind a plexiglass screen.

Return to School Town Hall Nov 19

FROM PAGE 13

tion with their in-person students than their online students, as we begin to implement this model.”

ONE OF THE BIGGEST STRENGTHS of the pilot concurrent program, according to Principal Mary Duffy, Bush Hill Elementary School in Alexandria, was the availability of various technology tools- cameras, microphones, amplification equipment, monitors, projectors, and more. However, staffing and teacher workload concerns proved to be significant challenges. “They (teachers) have worked tirelessly to make this happen for our students. Duffy mentioned a second-grade teacher at her school, Ambler Goddin, who was logging 70-hour work weeks since the pilot began in October.

Tammy Derenak Kaufax, Fairfax County

School Board Member representing the Lee District said to the teachers present, “For those of you who are working 70 hours a week, and it is unsustainable, do you see an end in sight...Is this something that is going to continue in this concurrent model?” Goddin said that it had definitely been “pretty crazy” and while she was not going to let her students fail, she did not see an end to hours. “We’re thrown back in the deep end... every time we start to get our feet under us and that’s kind of the nature of COVID,” she said.

Visit <https://www.fcps.edu/return-school/person-instruction-update-small-groups> to view a video of concurrent instruction in action. FCPS will hold a Return to School Town Hall Thursday, Nov. 19, from, 6-7 p.m. Questions can be submitted in advance to returntoschool@fcps.edu or call in during the Town Hall at 1-800-231-6359.



View of concurrent instruction in progress as teacher uses her laptop as part of her facilitation station and projects in the back of the room to show students interacting at home bringing the two groups together.

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I'm Here to Report



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

As my brother, Richard, has often said: “If the oncologist is happy then I’m happy.” Let me update that sentiment slightly: If the endocrinologist is happy then I’m happy.” And so we should all be happy. Yesterday, I had my post CT scan telephone appointment with my endocrinologist to discuss the previous day’s lab work and the two days previous scan. She was “very encouraged.” “News,” as I told her, “with which I can live.” And more than just the words she spoke, it’s the manner in which she spoke them. Her tone was positive, uplifting; she was very pleased. I could almost see her smiling. After hearing it all, she didn’t need to tell me to have a nice weekend. I was well on my way. Oddly enough, I have learned to take good news in stride. It’s the bad news that has a tendency to knock me off my gait.

Prior to this Friday morning call, I had received, electronically, as I usually do, the automated releases of both my lab work and the radiologist’s report. Having been down this road for nearly 12 years now, I am not unaware of discouraging results. The words I read and the numbers I see always tell a story. And even though I’m somewhat experienced, the interpretation and meaning of it all doesn’t automatically jump out at me. Oh sure, I’m familiar enough and certainly know what lab results (levels) generally speaking are problematic (creatinine and bilirubin particularly). But there’s so much more that I don’t know. Moreover, there is no real breakdown-type summary to clarify beyond all my reasonable doubts as to what is happening in/to my body. I’m sort of left to my own devices. Devices which have proven to be unreliable - and certainly ones not very educated on the matter at hand. If this were about baseball, I wouldn’t be clueless at all. But it’s cancer and science and medicine; all the subjects I know very little about.

Released automatically, I receive the same document that the doctors do. That means what I’m reading is the actual report, written by a doctor for a doctor. The report is full of medical jargon. And though there are “impressions,” provided as well as an organ-by-organ characterization, until I speak with one of my doctors and have them review the report with me, I’m never quite sure if what I think I understand is wishful thinking or whether my worst nightmare is happening during the day.

As a result, there are lots of words and medical assessments that are lost on me. It’s not like reading a baseball box score when I know what everything means and its significance. Sure, there are many familiar words, but there are more that are not. Obviously “no new sites of metastatic disease I can understand and appreciate, literally. But “aortic atherosclerotic calcification” and intrathoracic and axillary lymphadenopathy” I don’t. Understand them? I can barely pronounce them, let alone spell them. And as much information is provided in these reports, I feel as if I need a scorecard to identify all the players and determine what it all means.

Now when I have that follow-up phone call with the endocrinologist/oncologist, the report is explained. However, the explanations are not chapter and verse, they are more like sentence and paragraph. They’re short and hopefully, as it was time, sweet. Of course, I could ask more questions but as the comedian Dennis Miller once joked on the radio: “I don’t care how the popcorn is popped, I just want it to pop.” So too am I less concerned with the popping (details). I want to know if I’m going to live or die. Unfortunately, the reports - and the conversations don’t really offer a glimpse into the future as much as they attempt to clarify the present - which apparently is as good as it is likely to get. If 11 years - and nine months as a cancer patient has taught me anything, it has taught me to be grateful for any good news, however indeterminate.

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



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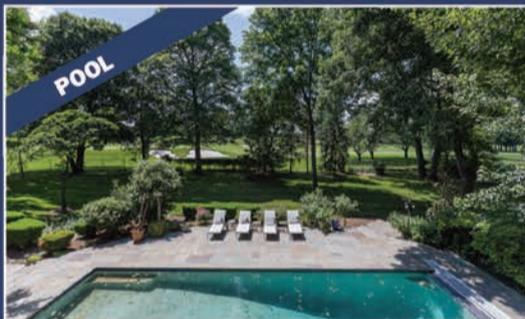
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