

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

NOVEMBER 19, 2020



American Legion Department of Virginia Commander Bill Feasenmyer, center, is joined by Post 24 Commander Henry Dorton, left, as District 17 Commander Jim Glassman makes a Veterans Day presentation Nov. 11.



PHOTOS BY JOHN BORDNER/GAZETTE PACKET

American Legion Department of Virginia Commander Bill Feasenmyer, center back, celebrates the members of American Legion Post 24 who completed the 100 Miles for Hope Challenge in support of the Veterans & Children Foundation.

100 Miles for Hope American Legion marks Veterans Day, celebrates virtual challenge.

Members of American Legion Post 24 gathered Nov. 11 to mark Veterans Day and celebrate the completion of the 100 Miles for Hope challenge, a virtual 100-mile walk/run/ride that began Aug. 3 and ran through Veterans Day.

American Legion Department of Virginia Commander Bill Feasenmyer attended the ceremony and congratulated those who completed the challenge, which served to raise awareness and support for the Veterans & Children Foundation as well as encourage American Legion family members to be ac-

tive during a time of social distancing.

The foundation provides grants for military and veteran parents in unexpected financial crises and supports service officers in their efforts to obtain care, benefits and opportunities for disabled veterans and families. The American Legion's 3,000 accredited

service officers provide free assistance for any veteran in need. To contact Post 24 Service Officer Kelly Niernberger, email vsoPost24@outlook.com or call 703-395-9660.

-JEANNE THEISMANN

'Honoring Those Who Have Served' Commonwealth Academy honors veterans.

Students at Commonwealth Academy paid tribute to veterans Nov. 11 by placing American flags outside the school in Del Ray. "Veterans Day to me means honoring all those who have served and who have not been recognized for their crucial roles in past military operations," said

Ethan Rostker, an 11th grade student at the school. "We do this to both recognize veterans and help direct people to thinking about how it affects them and what Veterans Day truly means to them." www.commonwealthacademy.org

- JEANNE THEISMANN

Students at Commonwealth Academy place American flags outside the school Nov. 11 in honor of Veterans Day.



PHOTO BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

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Old Town

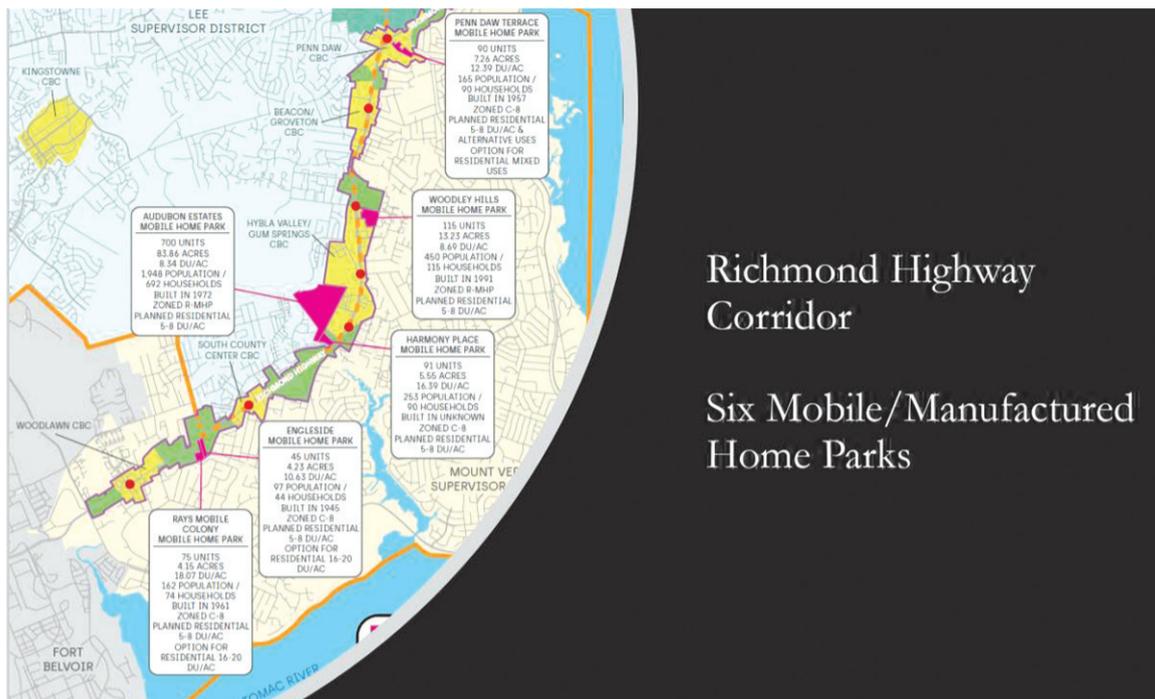
\$1,295,000

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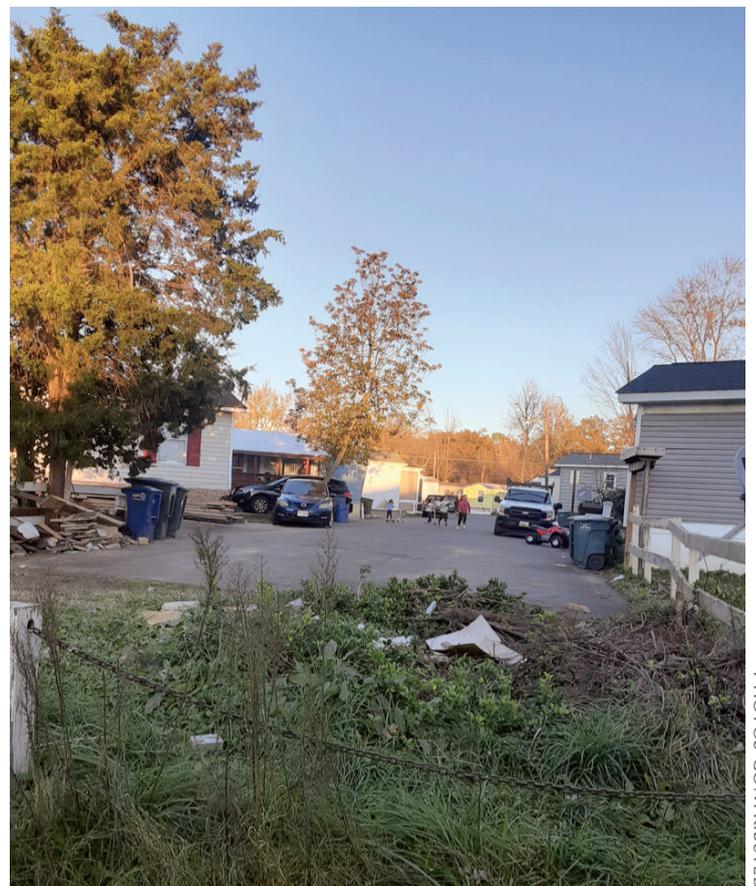
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Along Richmond Highway in Mount Vernon, there are six mobile home parks.



This mobile home park in Mount Vernon is home to many families.

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Options Examined for Mobile Home Parks

County officials may look to upgrade these communities.

By Mike Salmon
Gazette Packet

At the latest meeting to save the Engleside and Rays mobile home parks on Richmond Highway, one of the participants introduced a slide of a trailer park rebuild, where the prefabricated houses were built differently and the neighborhood was set up in a way that did not look like the typical mobile home park. If this could be done in southern Alexandria, it might help the homeowners and planners in this part of Fairfax County.

The upgrades shown here happened to the Sunrise neighborhood in Charlottesville, and they redesigned it without uprooting the residents. Dan Rosensweig, president and CEO at Habitat for Humanity of Greater Charlottesville, called it “The Habitat Model.”

This was one idea being looked at by designers and mobile homeowners at the meeting on Nov. 13, but a few questions remained. For one, the land is not owned by the residents even though they own the homes. Another question is money.

Residents mentioned putting their hard work and money into the homes, but the amount they mentioned was \$30,000, and when talking real estate in Northern Virginia, that amount might be a down payment, but it is short of what is needed. Some recent sales in the same area reflect the pricey



Innovative mobile home ideas brought in by the Manufactured Home Community Coalition of Virginia may be a way to upgrade without displacing homeowners.

nature of real estate in southern Alexandria. A condo recently went for \$212,000 while single family home sales ranged from \$464,000 to \$930,000.

“Major challenges,” Supervisor Dan Storck said of the situation, saying that he is ready to seek all sources, which includes Federal and State funding. “Money is one of the core parts for that,” he

said. With the Richmond Highway transformation in the plans with EMBARK, “moving us forward in the 21st century, we will leave no one behind,” he said.

Del. Paul Krizek (D-44) was looking to improve conditions at Engleside and Rays as well. “I’m open to introducing whatever bill it takes,” he said, supporting relocation assistance as well.

A few residents that lived in the parks weren’t so sure. They had been there for years, raised children there and created a community. One woman told a story about when her husband was sick and she called on neighbors at 2 a.m. to help, they were there to help her. “It’s a community where we feel safe,” she said.

Another resident of 14 years

talked about the struggles they went through to own the mobile homes, although they do not own the land they are on. “It has not been easy,” she said. “We are asking for you to reconsider relocating,” she said.

Comprehensive Plan

In the Fairfax County comprehensive plan, “Appendix 10: Guidelines for Mobile Home Retention,” is there to preserve some affordable housing in the county. For example, if the land is sold by the owner every effort should be made by the property owner to accommodate the displaced units (pads) on adjacent property if such property exists and can be developed in a manner that does not thwart the achievement of sound land use planning objectives. The land owner would also need to provide funding towards the relocation of displaced residents, it says.

All sides discussed the need to keep housing near employment and transportation, and Storck looked at other options around Fairfax County. “We have a huge need to disperse affordable housing throughout the county,” he said. Elsewhere in Fairfax County, there are two mobile home parks in Lee District, one in Braddock District, and one in Sully District.

The next step for the Engleside and Rays mobile home parks future is the Planning Commission Public hearing on Wednesday, Nov. 18, and then to the Board of Supervisors in December.

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:

-- \$1,000s --		
Category	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.



PHOTOS OF TURKEYS TAKEN AT THE OCCOQUAN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE.

PHOTO BY RANDY STREUFERT

Tom turkey displaying

Talking Turkey, 'Respectable' Birds

Virginia has around 180,000 turkeys, elusive in the woods and fields.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

Alan Warburton did a double take when he spotted a wild turkey ambling across his Mount Vernon yard in the Tauxemont community in April. In late May, Leila Saldanha snapped photos of a turkey, *Meleagris gallopavo*, in Dyke Marsh. And Larry Cartwright, while surveying breeding birds nearby, reported,

"A hen wild turkey strolled down the path near the Haul Road entrance. The turkey was icing on the cake."

Wild turkeys are not those big white gobblers in children's books or the 20-pounders destined for Thanksgiving feasts. Virginia's wild turkeys weigh around 17-19 pounds. Males are dark brown with iridescent, bronze highlights, have an unfeathered red and blue head and neck, dangling red wattle.

SEE TALKING TURKEY, PAGE 5

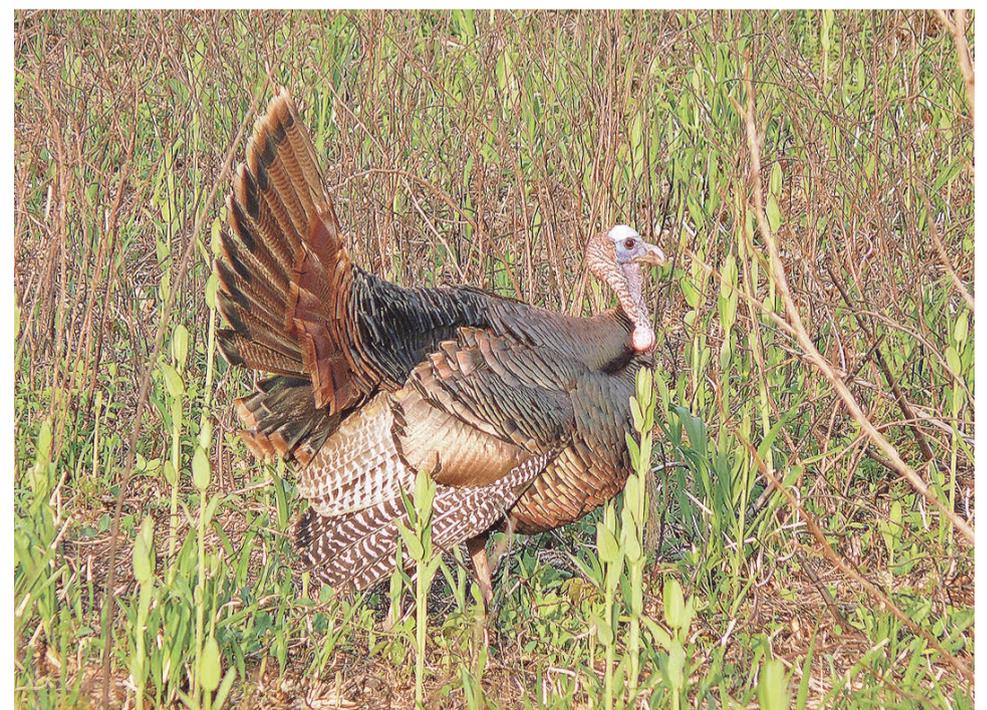


PHOTO BY LARRY MEADE

A tom turkey in full display.

PHOTOS OF TURKEYS TAKEN AT THE OCCOQUAN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE.



Hen with three juvenile turkeys.



Two toms and two hen turkeys.

PHOTOS BY RANDY STREUFERT

Talking Turkey

FROM PAGE 4

...tles and a hairy beard hanging from their breast. Females are smaller, darker in color, have smaller wattles and less colorful feathers and heads than males.

Where to See Turkeys

Wild turkeys may show up occasionally in parks, cemeteries and backyards, but they prefer woodlands and open clearings where they can feed on acorns, seeds, berries, grass blades and sometimes frogs and snakes. When foraging, they scratch in the leaf litter.

Larry Meade, president of the Northern Virginia Bird Club, recommends Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge for turkey sightings. "I have seen them there four different times this year. They usually just cross the trail and disappear into the woods," he said. People also report seeing them in Mason Neck State Park, Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge and at River Farm.

Huntley Meadows Park visitors "saw plenty over the summer," eating in the meadows or woods, reports David Lawlor, Natural Resources Manager. They are more visible – and noisy -- during the spring mating season when amorous males, toms, are looking for hens. During mating season, toms puff up into feathery balls, strut around with flared, fan-shaped tails, swell up their wattles, rattle their wing feathers and gobble exuberantly, incessantly. Hens lay from four to 17 eggs.

Lawlor advises, "To see wild turkeys, be patient and spend a lot of time in woods." Turkeys are very wary and have excellent eyesight. "Turkeys disappear rapidly for the size of the bird that they are. When they run, they can run like the wind when they put their mind to it."

Adds Alonso Abugattas, author of the Capital Naturalist "Your best chance is right before dusk as they fly up to roost."

Virginia has around 180,000 turkeys, reports Virginia's Department of Wildlife Resources. In the 1920s, North American wild turkey populations hit historic lows and came close to extinction because of hunting, lumbering and forests converted to farmlands. Wildlife managers enhanced turkey habitats and transplanted turkeys to favorable habitats to help them survive. Virginia counties with "high" populations have 0.92 turkeys per square mile of turkey habitat. Today, Fairfax County is on the low end with 0.25 turkey per square mile of turkey habitat.

Bowlers love turkeys, a term for bowling three strikes in a row. Among some people, however, the word "turkey" is a slang term meaning "jerk" or "idiot." Merriam-Webster's thesaurus lists as synonyms for "turkey," words like "airhead," "birdbrain" and "bubblehead."

Benjamin Franklin, a turkey fan, had a different view, who, when comparing this bird to the bald eagle, saw turkeys as potential allies against the Brits: "... the Turkey is in Comparison a much more respectable Bird, and withal a true original Native of America



Rex Reiley

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OPEN SUNDAY 2-4



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NEW PRICE OPEN SUNDAY 1-4



Alex/Riverside Estates \$587,500
8402 Bound Brook

Come check out this beautiful "Virginia" model, offering a 5BR, 3BA Split w/large 2 car garage & a lovely deck off the kitchen overlooking a private & fully fenced bkyd. Many updates including roof 2020, vinyl siding, & double pane replacement windows in '04, furnace & A/C replaced in '19, HWH in '12. Beautiful refinished hdwd floors on the main level which offers 4 spacious BRs, & 2 full BAs. The lower level offers a 5th BR, 3rd full bath & spacious family room w/a cozy gas FPL & walkout to the bkyd, all perfect for an in-law suite. This wonderful community is a short walk to Mt. Vernon Estate, 5 min drive (S) to Ft. Belvoir, 15 mins (N) to Old Town, 25 mins (N) to Reagan National Airport, 30-35 mins to D.C. and the Pentagon.

UNDER CONTRACT



Alex/ Riverside Estates \$724,900
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CALENDAR

			1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31		

Let us know about an upcoming event

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MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE ❖ NOVEMBER 19-25, 2020 ❖ 5

Time for Being Thankful

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

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



COMMENTARY

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 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.

Let Us Know Your View

Connection Newspapers welcomes views on any public issue. Letters must be signed. Include home address and home and business numbers; we will only print your name and town name. Letters are routinely edited for length, libel, grammar, good taste, civility and factual errors.

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A Connection Newspaper



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

FRIDAY/NOV. 20

Save the Parkway's Trees: Tackle Ivy. 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Meet at Dyke Marsh Haul Road Trail Entrance, Marina Road, Alexandria. Join the Friends of Dyke Marsh and the National Park Service to learn how to remove English ivy from trees. Participants will practice covid-19, social distancing protocols and require advance registration. Wear a mask, sturdy shoes, long pants and sleeves, gloves and sun protection. Bring water. They will provide bags and some tools and train volunteers to identify the target plants. Visit the website: www.fodm.org. To sign up, email info@fodm.org and put English ivy control in the subject box.

NOV. 16-23

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 samaritanpurse.org/occ and clicking on "drop-off locations".

DRIVERS NEEDED TO HELP SENIORS

Mount Vernon At Home is a nonprofit organization serving senior citizens in the Mount Vernon and Alexandria areas of Fairfax County. They are in critical need for volunteers to assist members with driving to medical appointments and grocery shopping. Mount Vernon At Home will supply you with neces-

sary personal protective equipment (PPE), and can provide a donation receipt for your mileage. Volunteers can sign up for driving assignments through the online system which makes it easy to see and accept assignments. Give what time you can, there is no minimum or maximum number of hours. If you have some time to give to the community and can spare several hours a month, visit info@mountvernonathome.org, or call 703-303-4060.

WORKHOUSE ARTS CENTER

AFTER-SCHOOL CAMPS

After-school visual arts camps at Workhouse Arts Center have begun. After-school camps are offered from 4:30-6:30 p.m. every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday in two week sessions. Camps are for students Grades 1-3 and 4-6, with a limit of 9 students per session. Session E - December 7 to December 18. Email JoshStout@workhousearts.org or call 703-584-2934.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Assistance League of Northern Virginia, a volunteer nonprofit, invites community members to join the organization to participate in its Reading Express program. Volunteers provide one-on-one tutoring to first grade students during the school year. To learn more contact VP Membership Mary Gronlund at gronbiz@aol.com or Program Coordinator Lynn Barron at lynnieb517@verizon.net. United Community (formerly UCM), 7511 Fordson Road, Alexandria, seeks volunteers for Food Pantry assistance, Early Learning Center teacher aides, basic needs counselors, youth tutors and mentors, office administration/data entry, and community outreach. Flexible hours and schedules. Opportunities for all ages to serve, including community service hours. More info at ucmagency.org/volunteer-opportunities or email volunteer@ucmagency.org.



ALEXANDRIA SHOP SMALL WEEK

NOV 27 - DEC 6

NOV 27	NOV 28	NOV 29	NOV 30
<b style="color: red;">PLAID FRIDAY Alexandria's Small Business Black Friday	<b style="color: red;">SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY Free parking, prizes & discounts	<b style="color: red;">MUSEUM STORE SUNDAY Save 20% at participating museum stores	<b style="color: red;">CYBER MONDAY Online offers & free shipping from participating stores
<b style="color: white;">DEC 1 <b style="color: red;">GIVING TUESDAY A percentage of your purchases will be donated	<b style="color: white;">DEC 4-6 <b style="color: red;">INSTAGRAM GIFT CARD GIVEAWAYS Follow @VisitAlexVA for a chance to win	<b style="color: white;">NOV 9-DEC 20 <b style="color: red;">ALEXANDRIA SANTA-GRAM GIVEAWAY Win a personalized video greeting from the region's most beloved Santa.	

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4 Restaurant Options for a Socially Distant Thanksgiving

BY HOPE NELSON
GAZETTE PACKET

It's been an oft-repeated refrain this autumn: Thanksgiving is going to look a little different this year. One of the great understatements of 2020? Maybe. But it's true, as well. While large holiday gatherings may not be on the docket for many Alexandrians this time around, the city's restaurants are pitching in to make the day a little more delicious.

To be sure, many restaurants (including the ones listed below) continue to offer dine-in options for Thanksgiving, but in this era of social distancing and curbside pickup, eateries are offering a wider variety of options for takeout and delivery. Here are four options from across the city to help spice up your holiday plans.

**Lena's Wood-Fired Pizza and Tap,
401 E. Braddock Road**

Lena's is straying from their usual Italian-American fare to serve up a Thanksgiving dinner with all the fixings. While the restaurant is offering a dine-in option as well, their to-go Thanksgiving meal is teeming with delights, from oven-roasted turkey and turkey gravy to garlic sauteed green beans, focaccia stuffing, cranberry sauce and pumpkin cheesecake with caramel sauce. The cherry on top? The restaurant is donating \$9 to ALIVE for every meal purchased. Reserve by Nov. 22. \$69.

**City Kitchen,
330 S. Pickett St.**

No cooking AND no washing the pots and pans? City Kitchen's got you covered.



Choose a three-course dinner for \$35 or order your meal a la carte for carry-out either before Thursday or with limited time slots on the holiday itself. Start off with some honey herb goat cheese with crostini, move to a crab and wild mushroom bisque, go traditional with roasted turkey or more veg-heavy with a pumpkin, spinach and wild mushroom risotto, and by all means don't forget the sides. Or, for that matter, the dessert – pumpkin and pecan pies come in full or half sizes. Order by Nov. 23.

**Bastille,
606 N. Fayette St.**

Give your all-American holiday a French twist over at Bastille. The restaurant's carry-out menu offers a three-course affair beginning with a starter – choose a Caesar salad or pumpkin-maple bisque followed by a main course option of turkey or beef rib roast. (All entrees come with mashed potato and roasted vegetable.) Finally, choose between pumpkin pie with crème Chantilly or apple pie with browned butter streusel. Reserve by Nov. 22. \$89 for two; \$169 for four.



**Union Street Public House,
121 S. Union St.**

Herb-roasted turkey breast is the star of the show over at Union Street, but the main course is only the beginning. Butternut squash soup, a seasonal salad, a duo of casseroles, apple-sage dressing, mashed potatoes, gravy and more are also on the menu,

followed by a choice of fresh-baked pies – apple, pumpkin or pecan. Order by Nov. 22. \$89 for two.

Hope Nelson is the author of "Classic Restaurants of Alexandria" and owns the Kitchen Recessionista blog, located at www.kitchenrecessionista.com. Email her any time at hope@kitchenrecessionista.com.

CALENDAR

NOW THRU THE HOLIDAYS

Art on the Avenue. The 25th Annual Art on the Avenue festival will move to a virtual format for 2020, running through the holidays. Over 150 artists will be featured, offering hand-made items in a wide range of mediums, including wheel-thrown vases and bowls, tiles, sculpture, tote bags and purses, drawings and pastels, knitted and crocheted hats and gloves, woven scarves and shawls, gourmet food, fused and blown glass, jewelry, paintings, photography, and much more. Traditionally held each fall on Mount Vernon Avenue, Art on the Avenue is a multicultural arts festival that strives to reflect the vibrant mix of the Del Ray community through the artists and their work, and draws an estimated 75,000 visitors each year. Visit www.artonthavenue.org.

NOW THRU NOV. 27

"Gratitude" Art Show. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. At Gallery Underground, 2120 Crystal Drive/Crystal City Shops, Arlington.

Gallery Underground in November presents Gratitude: Representing Thankfulness in Artwork, an all-member all-media show. The year 2020 has presented us with multiple physical, moral, spiritual and emotional challenges. Member artists have created work in the season's spirit of giving thanks, representing images of those things for which they are still grateful, despite the current world we face. In our Main Gallery are new works by our members on all themes, in media including oil, acrylic, pastel, watermedia, sculpture, glass, ceramics, wood and metalwork. Visit the website: <https://galleryunderground.org/>

NOW THRU NOV. 28

"Women's Right to Vote: 100 Years Since the 19th Amendment" exhibit (November 6-28) features artwork by Del Ray Artisans, local high school students and 2020 graduates; and celebrates the achievements of women over the past 100 years. The movement towards equality in America continues today. Lift your voice and vote. Opening Day Appointments: Friday, November 6, 12-8 p.m.

View exhibit at Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria. Details: www.DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

NOW THRU DEC. 9

Forty+ Project II. 3-4 p.m. Via Zoom. Forty+ celebrates the collective creativity of people past the age of 40. Fall Project 2 is directed by choreographer Kelsey Rohr through weekly sessions on Zoom (with outdoor or in-person meetings as conditions allow). The project is open to people of all physical abilities. Cost is \$100. Visit the website: <https://www.janefranklin.com/adult-dance/forty-plus>

FRIDAYS AND SATURDAYS,

NOW THRU DEC. 5

Alexandria Drive-In Movie Encore Series. At the Alexandria Drive-In Theatre, 5001 Eisenhower Ave, Alexandria. Potomac Fiber Arts Gallery announces the opening of its juried show "Holiday Spirit." This is the annual holiday show, and the artists go all out to create gifts that will get you into the holiday mood. Hours: 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

NOV. 18 AND 19

Tab Benoit Concert. 7:30-9:30 p.m. At The Birchmere, 3701 Mt. Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Renowned Louisiana blues guitarist Tab Benoit is on tour, with socially-distanced, in-concert performances on two upcoming nights at The Birchmere. Tickets: \$39.50. All ages event. Info: (703) 549-7500 or visit <https://www.birchmere.com>.

NOV. 20 TO JAN. 3

Ice & Lights: The Winter Village at Cameron Run. At Cameron Run Regional Park, 4001 Eisenhower Ave., Alexandria. Opens nightly 5 to 10 p.m. Ice and Lights: The Winter Village at Cameron Run will return this year, featuring an ice rink, more than a dozen holiday light displays perfect for Instagramming, retail area, food, music and more. The Ice and Lights Village is a short drive from Old Town. Masks are required in all areas of Ice & Lights except when eating or drinking in the concession areas. Admission: \$8.16 for general admission to Village; \$20.68 for admission with skating; starting January 9, 2021, \$12.19 for skating. Visit novaparks.com/events/ice-lights

SATURDAY/NOV. 21

The Ken & Brad Kolodner Trio. 2 p.m. Featuring Ken Kolodner, hammered dulcimer | Brad Kolodner, banjo | Alex Lacquement, upright bass. Welcome Thanksgiving with a uniquely American program that celebrates the traditions of American music and crosses the boundaries of Old-Time, Bluegrass and American Roots music. At The Rectory on Princess St, 711 Princess St, Alexandria. Visit <https://www.classicalmovements.com/secretgardenconcerts-2/>

SATURDAY/NOV. 21

The Enchanted Forest. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Virtual event. Presented by the Junior League of Northern Virginia. The Enchanted Forest is a one-day holiday festival featuring whimsical holiday trees available for silent auction, live entertainment, visits with Santa, activities for children, and much more. Additional premium virtual events are also available. Visit the website: <https://www.jlrv.org/tef/>

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RESTAURANT OF THE WEEK



The Daily Dish is a new flexible lunch program for your team to enjoy a delicious, affordable and nutritious meal safely without leaving the office or their home if working remotely.

La Prima Catering

La Prima Catering is your source for safely prepared fresh food. Locally owned and operated for more than 34 years, La Prima Catering, www.laprimacatering.com, now offers a variety of options for businesses and families to enjoy delicious meals.

As the coronavirus pandemic forced the cancellation or postponement of many events, La Prima Catering has pivoted and is now providing Family Bundle and Individually Boxed Meals with reduced minimums. They can also provide no-contact delivery or curbside pick-up.

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Executive Chef Kyle creates delicious fare inspired by fresh ingredients and International flavors. Browse the menu at <https://www.laprimacatering.com/#-jumpto-menu>. The menu features a number of seasonal and locally-grown items from Groundworks Farm, all at no extra charge to you.

Your holiday meal, Thanksgiving, Christmas, business or family gathering, in person or virtually, can be fully catered by La Prima Catering. A successful event is not just the food! La Prima Catering can provide everything you need, including service personnel, to make your next event or celebration memorable. The menu offers a selection of seasonal appetizers, soups, salads along with turkey and all the fixings. Complete your meal with any of their many homemade dessert options.

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The Daily Dish by La Prima Catering, is a new flexible lunch program for your team to enjoy a delicious, affordable and nutritious meal safely without leaving the office or their home if working remotely. Different menu options are available daily, just check out their website or contact Karla at kazachi@laprimacatering.com to discuss how this innovative program can fit your office's needs safely.

Family meals are available with packages for five guests starting from \$59.99. Choose from the weekly specials like chicken provençal, pulled turkey bbq with rolls, fajitas, grilled skewers and Cajun chicken.

Or stock up your freezer with fresh meals options made from local ingredients, like cheese pinwheel lasagna, chicken chorizo taquitos, egg strata, classic baked ziti and special side dishes. These meals are fully cooked and delivered cold, with reheating instructions so you can reheat at the convenience of your busy family's schedule.

La Prima Catering will work with you to design menus accommodating dietary needs including gluten free, nut allergies, vegetarian, plant-based meals and other dietary restrictions.

La Prima Catering continues to offer a superior catered experience for their clients through teamwork, integrity and commitment to quality and excellence. They will always deliver a top quality, fresh, delicious and sustainable catered experience with each order.

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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 Infrastructure Investment 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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Hometown Heroes

Veterans Day ceremony honors veterans, Gold Star families.

By JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

It was the war to end all wars. After four years of fighting, hostilities formally ended between the Allies and Germany at the "11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month" in 1918. On Nov. 11, the Friends of Rocky Versace commemorated the 102nd anniversary of the armistice to end World War I with a Veterans Day ceremony at Blessed Sacrament School Hall, a change from its usual location at Mount Vernon Recreation Center due to COVID-19 restrictions.

"Because of the ongoing virus threat and the unavailability of the Mount Vernon Recreation Center, the ceremony was held at an alternate venue with a limited audience," said Kevin Rue, a retired Army officer and 21-year member of the Friends of Rocky Versace who served as Master of Ceremonies.

The ceremony included a reading of the 68 names of Alexan-



PHOTO BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Saint Rita's American Heritage Girls Troop 1381 opens the Veterans Day Ceremony with the Pledge of Allegiance.

drians who were killed or reported missing in action during the Vietnam War and recognized four

Gold Star Family members in attendance.

"It was inspiring to see active

duty servicemen and women in full uniform with their children

SEE HOMETOWN, PAGE 11

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FROM PAGE 10

honoring our nation's veterans and teaching the next generation about service and sacrifice," said 17-year-old Chiara Luepke, granddaughter of Lt. Col. Anthony C. Shine, an Air Force fighter pilot listed as Missing in Action on Dec. 2, 1972, on his second tour of duty in Vietnam. "I was proud to honor the stories of men like Rocky Versace and my grandfather, who stood for something greater than themselves, and hope that today's active duty personnel know that their service will also be remembered."

Clare Ericson Barkovic, Gold Star Widow of Army 1LT William Ericson, also attended the ceremony.

"Having my husband's name announced and remembered is a tribute that I can't thank the Alexandria community enough for," said Barkovic, whose husband was killed in action July 15, 1969. "Veterans Day is my birthday and it's a gift to share this day honoring the man, the soldier, that I was married to and shared hopes and dreams with as well remembering the many other men who sacrificed themselves so that others could live on in peace with their loved ones."

In his remarks, Rue noted that Capt. Rocky Versace, along with six of the 68 Fallen Heroes recognized on the Captain Rocky Versace Plaza and Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Del Ray, are still Missing in Action in Southeast Asia from the Vietnam War.

"The National League of POW/MIA Families is deeply grateful to the Friends of Rocky Versace and Kevin Rue for all they do throughout the year to honor our veterans and to encourage the fullest possible accounting for the 1,585 men still missing from the Vietnam War," said Luepke's mother Colleen Shine, daughter of Anthony Shine, whose remains were repatriated for burial at Arlington National Cemetery in October 1996. "These are our nation's unreturned veterans and that flag is a powerful symbol of our nation's commitment to the resolution of this important issue."

Participating in the ceremony were the St. Rita American Heritage Girls Troop 1381, who opened the ceremony with the Pledge of Allegiance. The Historical Trumpets and Flutes of the United States Army Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps performed musical interludes for the attendees of the private program.

Lilchy Huffman, Ms. Virginia Senior America, performed the National Anthem and Stephen Tracy of Bugles Across America offered Taps as the ceremony concluded.

Following the formal portion of the ceremony, Rue presented a

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PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Veterans line up in preparation of the recognition of Alexandria's fallen service members and Gold Star families at the Friends of Rocky Versace Veterans Day ceremony Nov. 11 at Blessed Sacrament School Hall.



Members of the Special Forces Association Chapter XI stand during the Friends of Rocky Versace Veterans Day Ceremony Nov. 11 at Blessed Sacrament School Hall.



Veterans of the Army's 1st Cavalry Division present a wreath during the Friends of Rocky Versace Veterans Day ceremony Nov. 11 at Blessed Sacrament School Hall.

Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pin to retired Navy Captain Fred Reese, recognizing his active-duty military service during the 1955-1975 Vietnam era.

"The ceremony was special in so many ways," said Susan Lilly Harvey, Gold Star daughter of MIA 1LT Larry Lilly. "What a reverent, meaningful event."

Added Barkovic: "To the Friends of Rocky Versace, thank you for the moments that 1LT Bill Ericson is respected and remembered for his great sacrifice."

For more information or to become a member of the Capt. Versace Memorial Association, contact the Friends of Rocky Versace at FoRV59@gmail.com

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In-Person Learning Delayed for Some FCPS Students

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

BY MERCIA HOBSON
GAZETTE PACKET

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 Reopening”

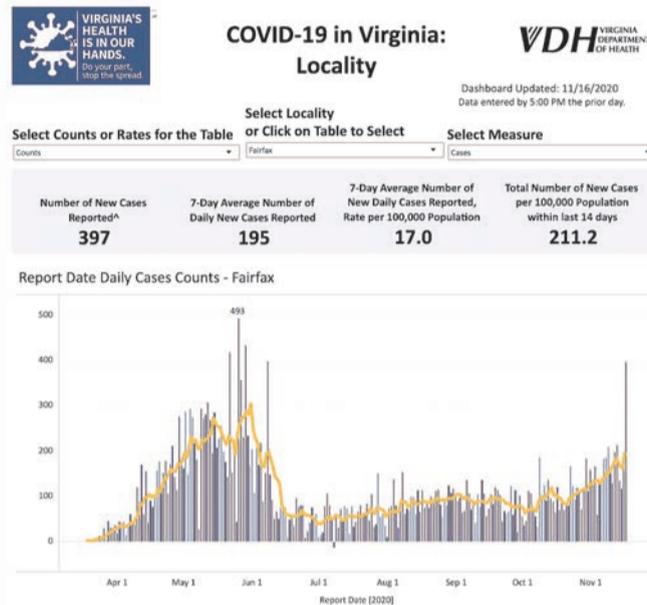
Two school days before pushing the pause button to bring the additional children back to in-person instruction, on Thursday evening, Nov. 12, the Fairfax County School Board received updates by Brabrand and County staff regarding the division’s health and operational metrics. Due to the COVID-19 emergency, 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 interaction with their in-person students than their

SEE RETURN TO SCHOOL, PAGE 14
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Addressing the Demands of Virtual University Classrooms

Marymount psychology professor offers solution to distance learning obstacles.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
GAZETTE PACKET

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 Guly, 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 Guly, 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 Guly. "It's easy to 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."

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, Guly advises. "Model poise, problem-solving and self-regulation skills for students to succeed in the workplace," she said.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

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

"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. "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 Guly. "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

SEE ADDRESSING THE DEMANDS, PAGE 14

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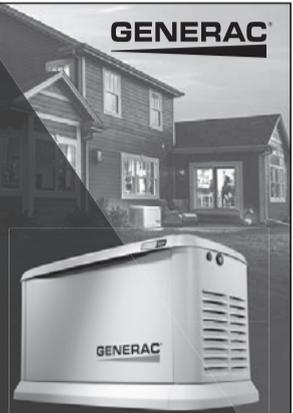
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An expert is someone who knows some of the worst mistakes that can be made in his subject and how to avoid them.
-Werner Heisenberg

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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NEWS



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

Return to School Town Hall Nov 19

FROM PAGE 12

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 returertoschool@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.

Addressing the Demands of Virtual Classrooms

FROM PAGE 13

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.

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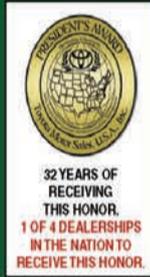
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