

'The Miracle of Lights' Hanukkah observed Dec. 10-18.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Menorahs are lit, dreidels are spun and latkes are served as Jewish families across the city celebrate Hanukkah, the eight-day Jewish festival that began Dec. 10 and runs through Dec. 18.

"Observing Hanukkah gives us the chance to learn about battles and the miracle of lights," said Madi Friedberg, 9, as her family celebrated the fifth night of Hanukkah on Dec. 14.

The Friedberg family observed Hanukkah with traditional latkes, playing the spinning dreidel game and lighting the candles of a hanukiah, similar to a menorah but with a ninth prong to hold the Shamash candle. The Shamash is used to light the other candles.

The Jewish festival, also known as the Festival of Lights, commemorates an early victory in the Maccabean revolt against the Seleucid Empire: the recapture of Jerusalem in the year 164 BC and subsequent rededication of the Second Temple.

Although a relatively minor holiday in religious terms, Hanukkah has cultural significance due to its occurrence around the same time as Christmas.

"We are lucky to celebrate both Christmas and Hanukkah," said Madi's brother Ollie. "We get to be with family and learn a lot of



PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Ollie and Madi Friedberg watch the spinning dreidel on the fifth night of the family Hanukkah celebration.

different things about different people."

The term Festival of Lights dates to the rebuilding of the altar of the Second Temple. Part of that rededication included relighting the menorahs. With only enough oil to light the menorah for a single night, the oil



Ollie Friedberg, 6, lights the first candle of a Hanukkah with the Shamash, the attendant candle used to light the other candles, as part of the fifth night of Hanukkah observance on Dec. 14. With Ollie are sister Madi, 9, twin brother Noah and parents Christine and Michael.

instead lasted for eight full nights, thus the Miracle of Hanukkah and why the celebration is observed for eight nights.

While Hanukkah is celebrating a miracle,

the sacred holidays in Judaism are the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), both observed in the fall.

Dropping Out of the Electoral College

Lawmakers to consider joining National Popular Vote Compact.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
GAZETTE PACKET

Virginia may be on the verge of dropping out of the Electoral College, joining a National Popular Vote Compact in an effort to ditch a presidential election system critics say is outdated and undemocratic. Once enough states have joined the compact to reach 270 electoral votes, Virginia and other states that have signed on to the agreement would award electoral votes to the winner of the national popular vote rather than the candidate who prevailed at the state level. So far, 15 states and the District of Columbia have joined the compact for a total of 196 electoral votes.

"If we truly believe in fairness and value democracy over partisanship, it is time to elect the president based on the people's will," said Ebbin. "This legislation affirms the core principle of American democracy — one person, one vote."

Earlier this year, Ebbin tried and failed to get the Virginia state Senate to agree to joining the compact. Since that time, Ebbin says, he has been able to persuade one Democrat on the Senate Privileges

and Elections Committee who was a "no" vote to flip. Meanwhile, Del. Mark Levine (D-45) has already been able to get a majority vote for the compact in the House, which voted 51 to 46 in favor of entering the interstate agreement.

"It would say that every Virginian's vote counts, whether you voted for Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton it would all go into the national count," said Levine. "People would know whether you voted for Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton, it would all go into the national count and people would know that even if you're in the reddest of red states or the bluest of blue states, your vote is always counted."

Republicans are united in their opposition to the bill. During deliberations in the Privileges and Elections Committee and on the House floor, Republicans argued that deciding the winner of the presidential election using a popular vote rather than the Electoral College would be a disadvantage to rural areas. They fear that changing how the election is decided would transform how presidential candidates wage campaigns in a way that would disadvantage rural parts of southwest Virginia.

"You'd be having all the resources of campaigns focused on the major metropolitan areas and ignoring the people who live in the rural areas," said Del. Chris Head (R-17). "Instead of Virginia's votes counting, it would really be California's votes counting."

Advocates for the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact say the current system already overlooks

SEE DROPPING OUT, PAGE 12



PHOTO BY NINA TISARA/TISARA PHOTOGRAPHY

Jim Henson, 84, Dies

Jim Henson, a 2019 Living Legend of Alexandria, died Dec. 13 after a brief battle with lung cancer. He was 84. See full obituary on page 3

People Over Platform

A FEW OF MY 2020 CLIENT TESTIMONIALS



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Wishing Everyone a Happy and Healthy New Year!

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Equal Housing Opportunity



'Too Blessed to be Stressed' Jim Henson dies of lung cancer at 84.

By JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Jim Henson was a man-about-town, known for his dapper dressing, infectious smile and engaging personality. But most notably he was known for the five words he uttered each time he greeted friends and strangers alike. To anyone who asked, Henson was always "too blessed to be stressed."

That signature phrase never left Henson, even after he was diagnosed with Stage IV lung cancer in September. His zest for life never dimmed, as evidenced by his enthusiastic greeting of well-wishers during a walk-by parade held in his honor Sept. 27.

"This is a wonderful outpouring of friendship and camaraderie," Henson said that day. "It means a lot to me."

That parade was organized by the Departmental Progressive Club, where Henson was a member, officer and board member since he first joined the organization in 1967.

"There are so many things I will miss about Jim," said Departmental Progressive Club president Merrick Malone. "We shared a love of history, of music, of sports history. But also a love of the DPC and its historical significance to the city. No one was looking forward to the club's 100th anniversary more than Jim. The best thing we can do to honor him is to keep this club and what it represents alive."

James E. Henson was born Oct. 23, 1936, to Catherine Henson and Clarence McGuire at the Alexandria Hospital. "The old one on South Washington Street," Henson would say proudly.

Raised in a single parent household, Henson joined the Air Force at the age of 17 and remained there for 20 years. He served in Vietnam and was awarded a Bronze Star for Merit in 1970. Henson served in the distinguished 89th Military Airlift Wing at Andrews Air Force Base.

After completing his military service, Henson earned a law degree from the University of Maryland and became a civil rights lawyer. He practiced law for 38 years, becoming the first African American Human Rights Administrator for the Howard County Executive and focused on eliminating discriminatory employment and housing laws.

In addition to the DPC, Henson joined the Jaycees in 1967 and served on its board of directors.

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Jim Henson, a 2019 Living Legend of Alexandria, died Dec. 13 after a brief battle with lung cancer. He was 84.



Elsie and Jim Henson, married Dec. 23, 1976, celebrate Valentine's Day earlier this year.



Jim Henson, seated center, holds his Living Legends portrait presented to him during a walk-by parade in his honor following his diagnosis of lung cancer in late September. With Henson are members of the Departmental Progressive Club and the Living Legends board of directors.

Through the Jaycees he helped found the city's Dribble and Shoot competition for boys that was eventually adopted on a national level in 1969.

Henson continued his interest in helping youth through his mentorship of minority boys at Lyles-Crouch Traditional Academy. He was also a founder of the Parker-Gray Alumni Association, whose mission is to provide scholarships for family members of Parker-Gray alumni.

From 2009-2013 Henson chaired the Charles Houston Ad Hoc Naming Committee to name the Charles Houston gym the Louis Johnson/Morris Siebert Gymnasium after two influential individu-

als in the African American community during segregation.

In 2013, Henson collaborated with noted genealogist and author Char McCargo Bah on the book "African Americans of Alexandria: Beacons of Light in the 20th Century."

"Mr. Henson took one of my genealogical classes in the 1990s," said Bah. "He was eager to learn more about his family so he could write a book about his great uncle, Matthew Henson, the North Pole explorer. From that moment, he became a genealogist friend and he became my mentor."

Bah and Henson formed a writer's subcommittee group in which Henson was chair. That group pro-

duced the 2013 book on prominent African Americans in Alexandria.

"Mr. Henson is connected to the Alexandria Contraband and Freedmen Cemetery," Bah added. "His paternal family members migrated to Alexandria during the Civil War. Many of his family members were buried at the Freedmen Cemetery and the names of his relatives are on the memorial wall there."

In 2019, Henson was selected as a Living Legend of Alexandria.

"Mr. Henson was excited about the nomination," Bah added. "For him, that accomplishment connected to the dream he had as a little boy -- to make his mother proud by achieving great things. To become a Living Legend, a de-



A sign presented to Jim Henson memorializing his trademark phrase "too blessed to be stressed."

scendant of the Freedmen Cemetery and an author have made his ancestors proud. Unique people like Mr. Henson are never forgotten. They will live on forever."

Survivors include his wife of 44 years, Elsie, who he married Dec. 23, 1976; and children Deborah Henson, Valerie Henson-Ford, James E. Henson Jr., Sharon Henson, Kayla Henson and Nicole Walker.

Visitation will be held Jan. 7, 2021, at Greene Funeral Home, 814 Franklin St., from 2-8 p.m. A private funeral will be held the following day. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Departmental Progressive Club Scholarship Fund, 411 Gibbon St., Alexandria, VA 22314.

"Jim always believed in the value the DPC adds to the community," Malone said. "We owe it to him to dedicate ourselves to make sure the Departmental Progressive Club is there for future generations."

Unusual and Quirky Items Sell at Area Gift Stores

Consignment shops and estate sale hubs in the Mount Vernon corridor.

BY MIKE SALMON
GAZETTE PACKET

Knowing the story behind the antiques and consignments at shops in Mount Vernon is a bonus for the sales pitch, especially since George Washington roamed the area at one time. Like Mike and Frank find on the reality show “American Pickers,” the story behind the antique is not only a conversation piece, it’s history around here.

This happened with Willow Wright at Urban Redeux when a man came in with a haunted chair a few years ago. He told her that “everybody in his family has seen a little boy in this rocking chair,” she said, so she bought it, remembering the story that went along with it. Another customer offered to sprinkle it with holy water, and then the next customer heard the boy ghost story and immediately bought the chair.

“Sometimes they want to know the history behind things so they can also share the story,” Wright said.

Urban Redeux started as a mother and daughter operation featuring Wright and her mother, Wendy Wells-Finn. They loved shopping in these special places that specialize in estate sales, and took over Urban Redeux in 2018; now the store is run entirely by Wright. She travels to estate sales and auctions to get her materials, and isn’t afraid to admit: “I have been dumpster diving as well,” she said.

“A little bit of everything is what we carry,” she added. “Anything that’s related to Mount Vernon or the Capitol sells quickly.”

The shoppers in Re-Design in a Day became the gift creators too, and now the store is full of local, handmade items that scream “one-of-a-kind.” The store is located in the Hollin Hall Shopping Center and features pottery by Sandra Dalal of Brown Fox Pottery; smocks/reusable gift bags by Sue O’Boyle; jewelry by Elizabeth Auld and Lucrecia DeLeon; cork wallets/wristlets by Michelle Ludwig and hand turned bar accessories by Maritza Maxwell of Hatch.

There are also soaps by TrulyLife, and soy candles by Ohhsoygoodness, both are located in Del Ray. “A combination of new and locally made, everything has a story,” said store owner Nicole Scott-Howe.

Evolution Home is a consignment gift store that features 24 individual stores inside, conjuring images of the old Thieves Market that was located down the street until a fire a few years ago.

“Something for everyone here,” said owner Susan Driscoll.

The evolution of Evolution Home takes as many turns as the gift selection inside. Years ago, it was a bowling alley with 10-pin lanes upstairs and duckpin lanes downstairs. Duckpins are lanes that use a small ball, about the same size as a softball, and small pins that scatter like a group of ducks when hit with the ball. There aren’t any duckpin lanes in this area anymore, and the number of 10-pin lanes is becoming a rarity too.

After the bowling alleys were removed,



In her home greenhouse, Ashley Greer with a holiday wreath.



It’s something blue in Ashley’s arrangement at her home in Alexandria.

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



Very unusual set of golf decanters from SALE by GALE Showroom.



Locally made gifts stock the shelves at Re-Design in a Day, located in Hollins Hall.



At Evolution Home consignment store, glassware keepsakes are a big seller.

Evolution was home to St. Claire Appliances before the consignment shop took over. “We do come up with some historic, rare items from time to time,” Driscoll said.

At SALE by GALE, the owner Gale Curcio specializes in estate sale items, and has a showroom off Edsall Road in Alexandria. Her quirky items include a Picasso-style round accent table, an Antique Chinese Traveling Basket, vintage toys like Tonka truck, Structo cement mixer, a B.O. Silver Mountain train, and an unusual set of golf decanters in the SALE by GALE Showroom.

At Atelier Ashley Flowers they have a

cult-favorite, “Lord Jones Limited Edition Holiday Hemp-Derived CBD Gumdrops,” that come in Sugarplum and Spiced Cranberry. “Whether you’re looking for a twist on a traditional stocking stuffer, a unique place setting at a socially distanced table scape or simply a reason to chill, our handmade Gumdrops offer a bite of holiday magic,” their selling text reads. Does it get you high? “They’re more like for relaxing,” said Ashley Greer, the Floral Artisan and CEO at Ashley Flowers.

Ashley Flowers started taking orders for holiday wreaths in August, and by mid-De-

Urban Redeux
8742 Cooper Road, Alexandria, VA 22309
703-780-4301
<https://www.urbanredux.com/>

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Re-Design in a Day
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cember, she’s swamped with orders. She’s running the on-line business out of her home in Alexandria and recently hired a driver, but relies on her mother to deliver when the orders expand. Holiday wreaths are sold out for the pre-order group, and they are taking phone orders, but they urge customers not to wait.



Aladdin

Sunday, Dec. 12 was a balmy, 60-degree day for camel watching. In 1787, George Washington paid 18 shillings to bring a camel to Mount Vernon for entertainment. Now, Aladdin the camel has come to Mount Vernon every holiday season since 2008.



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Giving for the Holidays

Now is the time not only to give generously to your favorite charities but also to give wisely and knowingly.

BY DELEGATE PAUL KRIZEK

The holidays are a time for sharing our blessings with those we love and those in need. It is by giving these blessings away that they grow and bear fruit for both giver and receiver. We've all seen this in action, when we give to others we are doubly blessed and feel even better.

In fact, studies show that those who give out of generosity live longer and happier lives. Usually, at this time of year, Delegate Mark Sickles, my colleague from the General Assembly, and I hold a toy drive along with an annual holiday cookie party. We end up with a car or two loaded with toys that are then distributed by United Community to vulnerable families unable to provide new toys for their children for the holidays. These toys are a testament to the generosity of the wonderful and caring community we live in. This year, due to the Covid virus, we are not holding a toy drive but are instead encouraging the public to donate locally to one of our many outstanding charities serving our community.

Indeed, this holiday will be a tough one for too many of our

neighbors and friends. Now is the time not only to give generously to your favorite charities but also to give wisely and knowingly. In Virginia, we have laws governing how a charity may solicit your support. Below are some holiday and end-of-year giving tips.

Research the charities you plan to support and know how your donations will be used. I encourage everyone to search the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) database http://cos.va-vdacs.com/cgi-bin/char_search.cgi and Guidestar.org to learn more about your favorite charities before making any donation.

To be able to solicit contributions in Virginia, charities are required to register with the VDACS and to disclose the organization's leadership, mission, financial statements, and any professional fundraisers they work with. They also must provide a copy of their governing documents.

When you are called at home, the solicitor must make disclosures that include stating affirmatively that they are a "paid solicitor" and



on whose behalf they are calling. You should ask for the charity's registration number as well as if they are a "paid solicitor," make a note of the caller's name and the percentage of the donation that will go to the charity, whether the donation is tax-deductible, and what charitable programs it will support. Copies of the charity's financial reports are available at the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, P.O. Box 1163, Richmond, VA 23218.

Unfortunately, some charities will use high-pressure tactics to solicit donations but fail to explain how the donation will be used. These groups tell potential donors that it is "critical" that they donate "immediately." Reputable charities will not use such 'sky is falling' tactics.

Here are other good tips to consider when giving:

1. Resist pressure to give on the spot, whether from a telemarketer or door-to-door solicitor, and beware if they thank you for making a pledge you don't remember making. If you feel uncomfortable, just say, "No, thank you."

2. Do not give cash. Donate by check made payable to the charity or use the charity's website to donate by credit card or download a form and mail it back.

3. Be wary if the charity fails to provide detailed information about its identity, mission, finances, and how the donation will be used. Reputable charities will gladly provide the information requested.

Also, this year, as part of the CARES Act, taxpayers who don't itemize may take a charitable donation of up to \$300 for cash contributions made in 2020 to qualifying charitable organizations.

Here Are Some Excellent Local Choices

And, remember especially to consider our many fine local nonprofits serving our community here in the 44th District: United Community (unitedcommunity.org), Good Shepherd Housing (goodhousing.org), New Hope Housing (newhopehousing.org), Mount Vernon at Home (mountvernonathome.org), and Alice's Kids (aliceskids.org), just to name a few. Be supportive of giving to those in need, many are counting on you, especially during this pandemic. But, always do thorough research on the charities you support.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Leave Christmas Decorations Up

To the Editor,

Christmas decorations around Alexandria look especially beautiful this year, with so many families at home this month. I hope, however, there will not be a rush to tear down the decorations until

well into January.

If Alexandrians are not familiar with the song, "The Twelve Days of Christmas," the holiday begins on Dec. 25, the first day of Christmas, taking us to the Epiphany on Jan. 6, when the three wise men arrived in Bethlehem after those 12 days following the birth of Jesus Christ. The four week period before Dec. 25 is called Advent, a time of preparation.

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Not in Alexandria

Upon seeing the photo of the Alexandria Adult Detention Center on the front page of last week's Alexandria Gazette, one could assume something newsworthy had recently occurred at the jail. But being the Sheriff, I knew that was not the case. The article ("Absurd Leverage," Dec. 10) did not men-

tion the Alexandria jail or our Sheriff's Office, and although the article never identified where or when this event occurred, I want it to be clear that it was not in Alexandria.

Dana Lawhorne,
Sheriff

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NEWS DEPARTMENT:
gazette@connectionnewspapers.com

Jeanne Theismann
jtheismann@connectionnewspapers.com
@TheismannMedia

Marcia Hobson
Community Reporter
mhobson@connectionnewspapers.com

Mike Salmon
Contributing Writer
msalmon@connectionnewspapers.com

Ken Moore
Contributing Writer
kmoore@connectionnewspapers.com

ADVERTISING:
For advertising information
sales@connectionnewspapers.com
703-778-9431

Debbie Funk
Display Advertising/National Sales
703-778-9444
debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com

Helen Walutes
Display Advertising, 703-778-9410
hwalutes@connectionnewspapers.com

David Griffin
Marketing Assistant
703-778-9431
dgriffin@connectionnewspapers.com

Classified & Employment
Advertising
703-778-9431

Publisher
Jerry Vernon
703-549-0004
jvernon@connectionnewspapers.com

Editor & Publisher
Mary Kimm
mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com
@MaryKimm

Art/Design:
Laurence Foong, John Heinly,
Ali Khaligh
Production Manager:
Geovani Flores

CIRCULATION
Circulation Manager:
Ann Oliver
circulation@connectionnewspapers.com

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PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

At Fort Hunt Road and I Street, this water seep brings wet shoes and questions for those walking the streets for a breath of fresh air.

Mount Vernon and Global Warming

Ground water seeping up regularly may be a sign.

BY MIKE SALMON
GAZETTE PACKET

With the Potomac River a few hundred yards away, residents of Fort Hunt are seeing ground water seeping up, running down the sidewalks and low lying street areas. To cope with this situation while still getting a breath of fresh air, a pair of waterproof walking shoes might be a quick answer.

Sea level rise will increase flooding in many regions. Does that include areas on the rivers and bays, such as Mount Vernon? Local inundation maps from the National Weather Service show the extent and depth of a freshwater flood on the Potomac River from near Fletcher's Cove in Northwest DC to just above the mouth of Broad Creek in Prince George's County, Md., a distance of approximately 14 miles, including Alexandria and Mount Vernon. Potential backwater flooding of tributaries by the Potomac is also represented within this reach, including on Cameron Run, Oxon Run, Four Mile Run, and the Anacostia River. <https://www.weather.gov/lwx/potomac-inundationmaps>

At the corner of Fort Hunt Road and I Street, the standing water at the corner persists. "Has been getting my walking shoes wet for more than a year and seems to be getting bigger," said Helen Walutes, a resident of the area who has been walking in the neighborhood for years.

According to NASA Global Climate Change website, sea level

rise is caused primarily by two factors related to global warming: the added water from melting ice sheets and glaciers and the expansion of seawater as it warms. One graph they use cites sea level rising by 3.3 millimeters per year, which would lead to increases in water level for all bodies of water, including the Potomac River.

NASA says 2016 was the warmest year on record, where the planet's average surface temperature has risen about 2.05 degrees Fahrenheit (1.14 degrees Celsius) since the late 19th century, a change driven largely by increased carbon dioxide and other human-made emissions into the atmosphere. Most of the warming occurred in the past 40 years, with the six warmest years on record taking place since 2014. Eight months out of that year — from January through September, with the exception of June — were the warmest on record for those respective months. In November, the Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions Joint Environmental Task Force submitted the following list of recommendations that will be integrated into an action plan for the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to slow the impacts of global warming. The list included:

The County Board, Park Authority, Regional Housing Authority, and School Board should commit to being energy carbon neutral by 2040.

Fairfax County government and schools should aspire to be at zero waste by 2030 and provide resources for students and adult learners to pursue green career paths.

The Connector bus fleet to transition to electric or other non-carbon emitting alternatives by 2030; the public school fleet should transition by 2035. All non-bus fleet vehicles that have electric alternatives should transition by 2025.

CALENDAR

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Completing Eagle Scout Projects



Pictured from left to right, Charlie Santangelo, Jeffrey Yates, and Matt McCaskill wheel a log to put down on the border of the trail.

Five scouts from St. Luke's Troop 654 have recently completed their eagle scout projects serving the local community. In August and September, Matt McCaskill completed four helmet boxes for the two baseball diamonds behind Hollin Hall Senior Center. In early October, Charlie Santangelo completed his eagle scout project by refinishing and regrading the meditation garden at Good Shepherd Catholic Church between the rectory and sanctuary. Also in early October, Griffin Keightley completed his eagle scout project by building a utility shed for Waynewood Elementary School. In early November, Massimo Messina completed his eagle scout project by mulching and laying borders for a path between Waynewood Elementary School and Heritage Presbiterian Church, as well as painting a three point line for the basketball hoop in the church parking lot. Most recently, Sammy Nelson completed his eagle scout project by repainting the West Potomac concessions stand and laying down pavers for the grilling area. During this holiday season, the scouts have enjoyed giving back to the wonderful Fort Hunt community in which they were raised.



Matt and Dave McCaskill share a special moment next to one of Matt's completed helmet cubbies at the baseball field behind Hollin Hall Senior center.



Pictured from left to right, Matt McCaskill, Sammy Nelson, Massimo Messina, Nicholas Cooper, and Rich Cooper repaint the concession stand at the West Potomac football stadium.



Charlie Santangelo with Miguel De Angel, Youth Group Minister at Good Shepherd Catholic Church, inspecting the refinshed gravels, borders, and benches in the meditation garden.

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



PHOTOS BY JANETT BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Fire Chief Corey Smedley, left, and Assistant Fire Chief Michael Cross, right, stand with members of the U.S. Marine Corps and Toys for Tots organizers after more than 2,000 toys were dropped off Dec. 10 at AFD headquarters for distribution to local families.

Toys for Tots

Thousands of toys donated for local families.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Alexandria Fire Chief Corey Smedley was on hand at AFD headquarters Dec. 10 to receive more than 2,000 toys collected as part of the U.S. Marine Corps' annual Toys for Tots campaign.

The toys were collected as part of a Seven Weeks of Giving campaign by the Alexandria-based AFCEA DC. The organization is part of AFCEA International, formerly known as the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association, which focuses on the Department of Defense, the federal intelligence community,

national security and military health related agencies.

COVID-19 restrictions prevented AFCEA DC from hosting their annual Winter Gala, which supports the U.S. Marines Toys for Tots Foundation program. Still committed to the program, they created a Seven Weeks of Giving campaign with a goal of distributing 5,000 toys for children around the region.

Donations surpassed last year's with AFCEA DC collecting more than \$60,000 worth of toys. More than 2,000 toys were dropped off at AFD headquarters, which will be distributing the presents to underserved children across the city.

www.afceadc.org



Fire Chief Corey Smedley, left, and Assistant Fire Chief Michael Cross help unload toys at AFD headquarters Dec. 10 as part of the annual U.S. Marine Corps Toys for Tots campaign. More than 2,000 toys were donated for distribution to local children and families.



ASO Shares Virtual Message Of Hope and Healing

Alexandria Symphony Orchestra releases 'Sure on This Shining Night'

The Alexandria Symphony Orchestra (ASO) in collaboration with the Alexandria Choral Society (ACS) has released its virtual winter concert featuring ASO musicians and a guest appearance by Alexandria Choral Society singers. The 34-minute video *Sure on This Shining Night: A Musical Message of Hope* will be available on YouTube until the end of December.

"The question for the Alexandria Symphony has been how music can contribute at this fraught moment to finding a more accepting and empathetic, less partisan, common ground," says ASO Music Director James Ross. "What can bring us together, even if apart? This project is our answer to that question."

Program highlights include harp melodies near the hearth, a Swedish holiday song with voice and guitar, Prokofiev's *Troika* (Sleigh Ride) with brass quintet, and the "Pastorale" from Handel's *Messiah*. The centerpiece is an appeal for kindness and healing: Morten Lauridsen's *Sure on This Shining Night* for chorus and strings produced with the Alexandria Choral Society.

"At a time when so many of us will not be with family and friends over the holidays, the ASO's musical message of hope is a poignant and meaningful alternative to a greeting card or stocking stuffer,"

says ASO Board President Melynda Wilcox.

Corporate and individual sponsors covered the production costs of the project and allowed them early access to the virtual concert. Through sharing with friends, family and clients, the virtual concert already has had over 1,000 views. ASO offers a special thank you to the presenting sponsor Harriett G. McCune, a member of the ASO Board of Trustees, and to Donnie Wintermute, the event chair.

From a viewer who received early access to the video from a sponsor, "I was overwhelmed by the beauty, the spirit and the message of the music. I dropped everything and listened to the end. This has to be my biggest blessing of the season."

"Music has the power to uplift and inspire both listeners and performers," says ASO Executive Director George Hanson. "We hope to bring this shared musical experience of hope and togetherness to the widest possible audience."

The ASO board, staff and musicians consider this our holiday gift to the community."

To access the video visit: https://youtu.be/nYpqzIz_5UU through December 31. More information about the program is posted on the ASO's dedicated webpage: www.alexsym.org/sure-on-this-shining-night/

BULLETIN BOARD

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

MT. VERNON FARMERS MARKET TO RUN THROUGH DEC. 23

The Mt. Vernon Farmers Market will be open for two more Wednesdays this year, on Dec. 16 and 23, from 8 a.m. to noon, at the Sherwood Regional Library on Sherwood Hall

Lane. Stock up on winter produce, fresh Chesapeake Bay seafood (crabcakes), local meats, fruit, dairy products and pies, breads and pastries from local bakeries. For the winter season, new vendors include The Traveling Shepherd Coffee Co., House of Empanadas, Family of Nuts, and Luke & Son (for Middle Eastern specialties).

The other vendors include: Arnest Seafood – crab cakes, scallops, shrimp, rockfish, oysters and more

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 11



Join us for Christmas Mass!

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4 Restaurants Ready With Your Christmas Meal

BY HOPE NELSON

Some years, the thrill in the kitchen is gone. The holidays may be approaching, but the constant kitchen duties for families nationwide over the past half-year have begun to lose their luster. Not to worry! The city's restaurants have you covered with a home-cooked meal that requires very little home cooking. From classic Christmas dinner to extensive plant-based menus, here are a few best bets this holiday season.

Magnolia's on King, 703 King St.

The go-to place for Southern staples is offering up a multicourse feast with all the trimmings for the holiday season – and plant-based diners won't be left hungry in the process. From Dec. 16 through New Year's Day, Magnolia's is offering menus for two, four or six diners, featuring some of the season's best eats – with a Southern twist. Stuffed turkey roulade, honey-glazed ham, gumbo, devilled eggs, cornbread, mashed



Magret de Canard dish at Bastille, seared Hudson Valley duck breast is served with quinoa and Medjool date jam.

potatoes, collard greens, mac and cheese and more await omnivores. For vegetarians, Magnolia's has a special menu: Fried "chicken" and

gravy, pan-seared "crab" cakes, Cajun black-eyed peas and rice, maple Brussels sprouts, barbecue "pork" and gouda cauliflower

grits and more will send a thrill to the stomach. Each feast comes with wine and dessert – and, most likely, built-in leftovers. Limited availability; order at least 24 hours ahead. <http://www.magnoliasonking.com/>

Bastille, 606 N. Fayette St.

Festoon your holiday with a French flair and let Bastille do the cooking this year. The three-course prix fixe menu offers the likes of lobster bisque, salmon rillettes or winter salad to start, followed by beef tenderloin or Atlantic halibut as the main event, both with all the trimmings. Finish out the meal with a cheese trio or – of course! – a buche de Noel. Order by Dec. 20 for a Dec. 24 pickup. <https://www.bastilleresaurant.com/>

Ramparts, 1700 Fern St.

In terms of both timing and selection, Ramparts' holiday meal offerings are plentiful. From a classic turkey dinner to short ribs to risotto, the menu accommodates a plethora of tastes.

For each three-course option,

choose an appetizer and dessert to go alongside, and nosh on a bevy of side items that accompany the main course.

Add on extras, such as focaccia or shrimp bisque, to round out the proceedings how you see fit, or pick up a kid's portion for younger diners. Order by Dec. 19; pick up Dec. 22, 23, 24, 31 or Jan. 1. <https://www.rampartstavern.com/holidaytakeout>

Northside 10, 10 E. Glebe Road.

Northside 10's menu is a family affair: The family-style offering feeds five to seven people with a classic holiday meal. With a centerpiece of Cajun fried turkey or spiral glazed ham, the menu is rounded out with mashed potatoes, gravy, cornbread stuffing, Brussels sprouts, green bean casserole, cranberry sauce and more. Order by Dec. 20. <https://www.northside10.com/>

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 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

NOW THRU DEC. 31

Christmas at Mount Vernon. From 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. At George Washington's Mount Vernon, 3200 Mount Vernon Memorial Hwy., Mount Vernon. Visit Mount Vernon this winter to participate in holiday activities and meet special guest Aladdin the camel. Learn about camels and George Washington's interest in exotic animals during Camel Talks, offered Friday through Sunday beginning on November 27. Specialty tours give guests a deeper look into the holidays at Mount Vernon. During the tour "Mrs. Washington's Mount Vernon," hear Martha Washing-

ton discuss the day-to-day planning needed for a busy holiday season. The "Holiday Dinner for the Washingtons" tour shares how food was grown, preserved and served during the holidays. Mount Vernon is open 365 days a year, including on Christmas Day. Admission: \$23 for adults; \$12 for youth (ages 6-11); free for children age 5 and below; extra cost for some activities. Visit mountvernon.org/christmas

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 handmade 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.artontheavenue.org.

DEC. 1-31

Small Works Show. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. At Gallery Underground, 2100 Crystal Drive, Arlington. "Small Works, Great Joy!" an all-member, all-media show of compelling

small-scale works by our artists, priced affordably for holiday shopping. Visit the website: <https://galleryunderground.org/>

STARTING DEC. 1

ArtWalk. At various locations along King Street (Union to Diagonal), and select side streets, Alexandria. Old Town Business Association is partnering with The Art League of Alexandria to offer a holiday themed ArtWalk in Old Town along King Street (Union to Diagonal) and select side streets. Each block will feature a work of art adorning a lamppost. Maps may be found at oldtownbusiness.org beginning December 1, 2020. Keep an eye out for holiday trees located on both upper and lower King Streets. Visit oldtownbusiness.org

NOW THRU JAN. 30

Winter Wonderland. At King & Rye's courtyard (480 King Street, Alexandria) is transforming into a Winter Wonderland. In addition to general courtyard seating with heat lamps and holiday décor, new this year, book an igloo for private dining for up to eight guests. This is ideal for social distancing as you are only in the space with your party, and the area is sanitized between parties. The igloos will each have heaters as well as the option to play your own music via a Bluetooth speaker. The igloos will be reservation required with a \$50 rental and \$100 food and beverage minimum. The rental will include a hot cocoa and cookie bar. For food and beverage, enjoy a tapas

style menu with a southern twist and, of course, festive cocktails. Reservations can be booked online or via info@kingandrye.com, available as of December 2, 2020. Visit kingandrye.com/event/winter-wonderland

NOW THRU DEC. 20

Del Ray Artisans Holiday Market offers unique handmade fine arts and crafts from local artists. Different artists each weekend. Choose from wall art, pottery, photography, jewelry, glass, and more. Plus FUNd-raising 2021 calendars, cookbooks, and upcycled tote bags. Free admission. Market is December 4-6, December 11-13, December 18-20. Fridays 6-9pm and Saturdays & Sundays 11am-6pm. Please wear a face mask and maintain 6' personal space. Located at 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria. Details: DelRayArtisans.org/event/holiday-market-2020

DEC. 5 THRU JAN. 8

Old Town Business Holiday Lamp Post Art Walk. Along King Street and select side streets, Old Town Alexandria. The arts are alive in Old Town this holiday season with the debut of its first-holiday art walk. Don't forget the exceptional shopping and dining Old Town Alexandria has to offer. Old Town Business collaborated with 25 artists from The Art League to create holiday-themed lamp post art pieces along King Street and select side streets. A map of the artwork will be created so folks can stroll the art walk at their own leisure.

Lamp Post Art will be located in the following areas.

FRIDAY/DEC. 18

Gadsby's Tavern Museum Society Trivia Night. 7- 8:30 p.m. Virtual. Five interactive Zoom rounds of trivia fun with prizes that will test your knowledge of history and Alexandria! Whether you're a single, a couple, or a couple of friends, this is perfect for your Friday night this holiday season. The questions are challenging and geared for adult players, but adult/child teams are welcome. Cost is \$20 per household, with all proceeds benefiting Gadsby's Tavern Museum. Tickets and details are available at <http://www.gadsbystavernmuseum.us/>.

DEC. 18-19

Christmas Illuminations at Mount Vernon. 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. At George Washington's Mount Vernon, 3200 Mount Vernon Memorial Hwy., Mount Vernon. Attend the evening event Christmas Illuminations, a festive fireworks show choreographed to holiday music. You'll visit with re-enactors throughout the estate and stay toasty warm by the bonfire. Tickets for Christmas Illuminations are available to purchase online. Learn about safety measures on the estate. Admission: Starting at \$20 for members; \$22 for non-members. Visit mountvernon.org/illuminations

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 10

CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 10

DEC. 19-20 AND 26-27

Mansion House Christmas at Carlyle House. 5 to 8 p.m. (tours on the half hour). At Carlyle House, 121 N. Fairfax St., Alexandria. Discover how Christmas was celebrated when the Green family lived at Carlyle House and the Mansion House Hotel was being used as a Civil War hospital. Stay tuned for updates about live music. Be sure to check out last minute deals in the Museum Shop. Tours offered of the first floor with timed entry on the hour and half hour. Space is limited and reservations are required. All COVID-19 safety procedures will be in place during this tour. Admission: \$10 per adult; \$3 per child; free for children under 6 years old. Tickets are available on Eventbrite. Visit novaparks.com.

BULLETIN BOARD

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- Grace's Pastries - cakes, pastries and breads, with a Caribbean touch
- Great Harvest Bread - breads and pastries
- Honey Brook Farms - meats and vegetables raised with no chemicals, gluten-free baked goods
- Honeycomb Heroes - honey and other products made with honey
- King Mushrooms - variety of locally grown mushrooms
- Locust Grove Farm - vegetables and herbs
- Misty Meadow Farm Creamery - milk, ice cream, cheese and eggs

SATURDAYS/DEC. 19

Holiday Candlelight Tours at Lee-Fendall House. 5 to 8 p.m. (tours on the half hour). At Lee-Fendall House, 614 Oronoco St., Alexandria. Celebrate the holiday season with evening candlelight tours of the Lee-Fendall House decked out in Victorian splendor. The antique toy exhibit will also be on view. Space is limited and reservations are required. Face masks and social distancing will be in place throughout the tour. Admission: \$8 per adult; \$3 per child; free for children under 6 years old. Visit leefendallhouse.org

SATURDAY/DEC. 19

Outdoor Choral Music: "Hallelujah!" Gospel and Choral Favorites for the Holidays. 2:30 p.m. At The Rectory, 711 Princess Street, Alexandria. Featuring a wide-ranging chamber

program by singers of the Camerata Baltimore performing excerpts from Handel's Messiah and Saint-Saëns' Christmas Oratorio and other gospel, spirituals and classical repertoire to celebrate Hannukah, Kwanzaa and Christmas, in a magical, festive, socially-distanced outdoor setting. Concerts at 1 and 2:30 p.m. More details and tickets on website: <https://www.classicalmovements.com/secretgardenconcerts-2/>

DEC. 20-JAN. 6

Winter Solstice Revels. 7-9 p.m. Online. Kindle the spirit of the season and comfort of "hearth and home" with Washington Revels and the virtual 2020 Winter Solstice Revels. This live participatory holiday event is fun for all ages, with carol sing-alongs, virtual performances, and more. Cost is \$35. Visit the website: <https://bit.ly/solstice-revels>

- No. 1 Sons - pickles, kimchi, sauerkraut and kombucha teas
- Ochoa Produce - vegetables, herbs and flowers
- Twin Springs Orchard - fruits, vegetables, cheese and more
- Valentine's Bakery & Meats - meats and baked goods.

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 necessary 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.

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Dropping Out of the Electoral College

FROM PAGE 1

rural voters in California, where Republican presidential candidates don't bother campaigning because Democrats have a deadlock on the state's electoral votes. Similarly, Republican candidates don't usually bother campaigning in states like Kansas because that state's electoral votes have essentially already been decided before the candidates have been chosen. Supporters of the interstate compact argue that the winner-take-all version of the Electoral College that's emerged over the years favors swing states to the exclusion of everybody else.

"The Electoral College, from my perspective, has racist origins," said Sen. Scott Surovell (D-36). "This is the best way to bring real democracy to this country because I think when most people vote for president they think they're voting for president and not for an elector to vote for president."

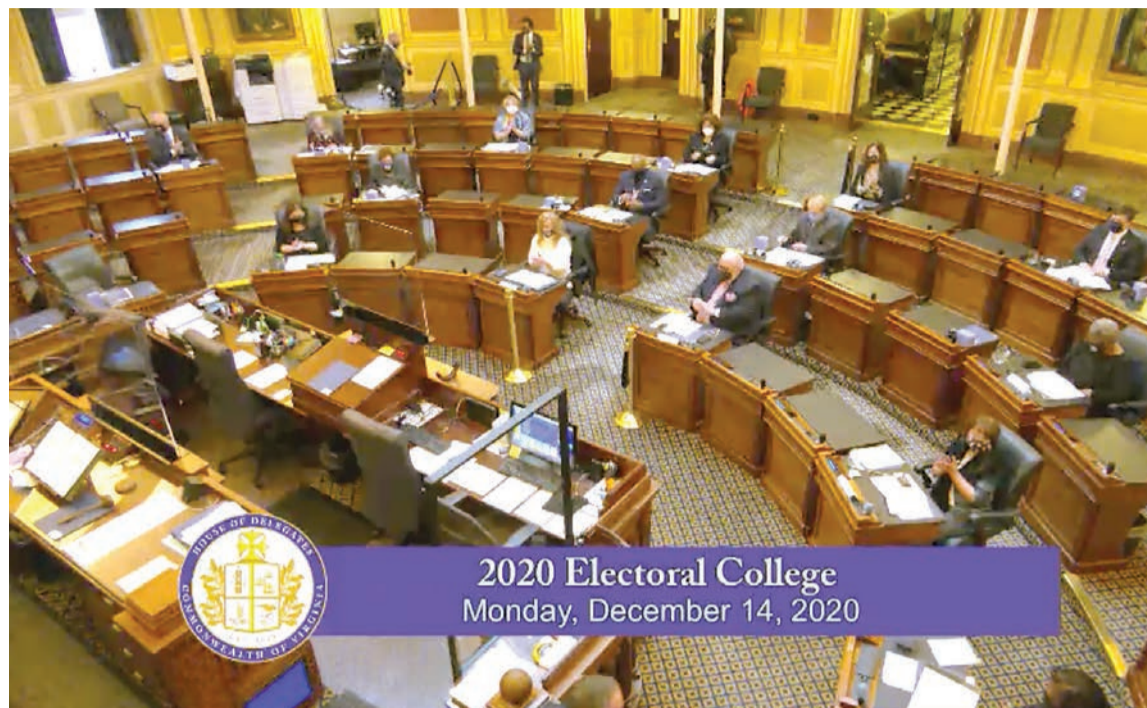
DITCHING THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE has been a goal of reformers for years, perhaps most notably after the 1968 election when a third-party challenge from Geroqe Wallace came close to denying a majority in the Electoral College and potentially deciding the election in the U.S. House of Representatives. House Judiciary Chairman Emanuel Celler (D-New York) introduced a constitutional amendment that would have replaced the Electoral College with a system based on the popular vote.

The House approved the amendment with bipartisan support in September 1969 by a vote of 339 to 70, and President Richard Nixon endorsed the proposal. But the movement was derailed in the Senate, where Sen. Strom Thurmond (R-South Carolina) led a filibuster of southern states.

Virginia Sens. Harry Byrd Jr. and William Spong, both Democrats, voted against cloture, essentially supporting the filibuster effort and killing the reform effort.

"As long as you have 39 senators opposed to this plan, it is evident this is not the plan the country needs," said Sen. Sam Ervin (D-N.C.) after the amendment was filibustered. "This kills it for the year."

The 1970 filibuster didn't just kill it for the year. Reformers have now essentially given up on the idea of passing an amendment to ditch the Electoral College and have moved on to other strategies, most notably the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact. Originally created in 2006, the interstate compact was designed in a way



The Electoral College meeting for Virginia took place in the chamber of the House of Delegates earlier this week. All 13 of Virginia's electoral votes were awarded to Joe Biden.

Unpopular Votes

❖ **1824:** Andrew Jackson won 42 percent of the popular vote, but John Quincy Adams prevailed in the Electoral College even though he had only 32 percent of the popular vote. Virginia (and what's now West Virginia) cast 24 electoral votes for William Crawford. Alexandria did not participate in the presidential election because it was in the District of Columbia at the time and had no electoral votes.

❖ **1876:** Democrat Samuel Tilden won 51 percent of the popular vote, but Republican Rutherford Hayes prevailed in the Electoral College even though he had only 48 percent of the popular vote. Virginia cast 11 electoral votes for Tilden, who also received a majority of votes in Alexandria. Democrats ended up conceding the election in the Compromise of 1877, which ended Reconstruction by withdrawing federal troops from the South.

❖ **1888:** Democrat Grover Cleveland won 49 percent of the popular vote, but Republican Benjamin Harrison prevailed in the Electoral College even though he had only 48 percent of the popular vote. Virginia cast 12 electoral votes for Cleveland, who also won a majority of voters in Alexandria.

❖ **2000:** Democrat Al Gore won 48.4 percent of the vote, but Republican George W. Bush prevailed in the Electoral College even though he had only 47.9 percent of the popular vote. Virginia cast 13 electoral votes for Bush, although Gore won 64 percent of the vote in Alexandria.

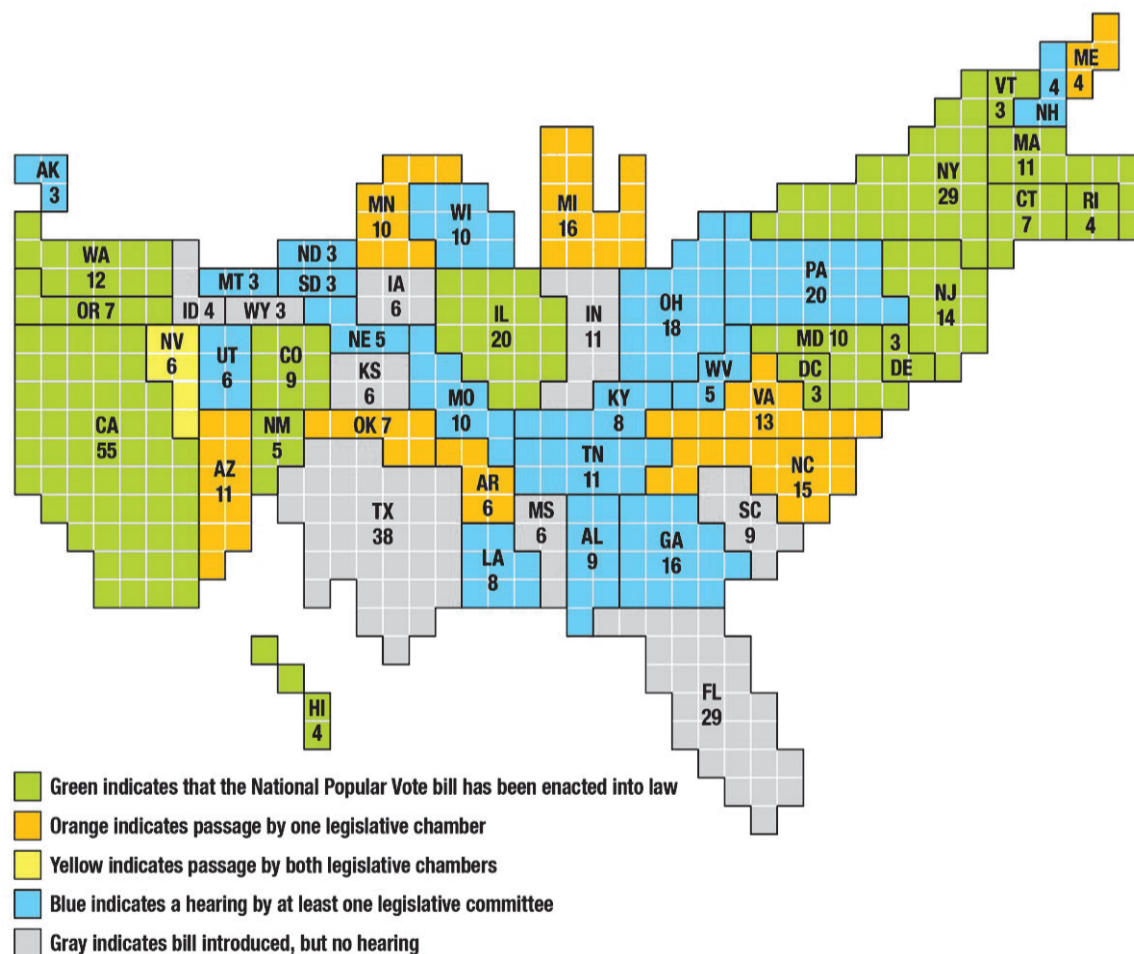
❖ **2016:** Democrat Hillary Clinton won 48 percent of the vote, but Republican Donald Trump prevailed in the Electoral College even though he had only 46 percent of the popular vote. Virginia cast 13 electoral votes for Clinton, who won 76 percent of the vote in Alexandria.

voted for the Democratic candidates," said Jamelle Bouie, a resident of Charlottesville and a New York Times columnist who testified in favor of the bill during the last General Assembly session.

"That was the case throughout the south, and the absence of any way to count those votes and have them really matter for the outcome effectively disenfranchised a large portion, and at one point a majority, of Black voters in the country."

Critics worry about what might happen if Virginia were forced to award its electoral votes to a candidate who did not win the commonwealth. If this system had been in place in 2000, for example, Virginia would have awarded its electoral votes to Al Gore even though George W. Bush won in Virginia.

"Seems like there's no point in having an election," said Del. Israel O'Quinn (R-5).



SOURCE: NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE INC.

similar to agreements between states to regulate things like water rights and nuclear waste.

"Today, we continue the fight to make sure that every vote matters when electing the president," said Pam Berg of the League of Women Voters. "The time has come for our president to be elected in this just and simple way. To pass this bill now is to be on the right side

of history."

The winner of the popular vote is usually also the winner of the Electoral College, although it doesn't always happen that way. Some of the most controversial presidential elections have concluded with the winner of the popular vote losing to the candidate who prevailed in the electoral college. That's happened five times. In four of those

elections, it was the Democrat who won the popular vote and the Republican who prevailed in the Electoral College. The fifth time was before the Democrats or the Republicans existed in their current form.

"Up until 2008, Republican Party presidential candidates won this state's electoral votes regardless of how many African Americans

LETTERS

FROM PAGE 6

While it was understandable to be particularly excited this autumn and put the Christmas trees and lights up even before Advent began, that should not be a reason to cut the Christmas celebration short. Christmas should properly be celebrated for a few weeks starting on Dec. 25.

Please, Alexandria neighbors, leave your Christmas decorations up during the first part of January. Let's remember the reason for the season.

Kenneth J. Wolfe
Old Town

It's Ingenious. Or Ingenuous?

The National Park Foundation honored U.S. Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.) for his leadership in dedicating \$9.5 billion to redress maintenance backlogs at our national parks. The article has no byline, so presumably it was based on issuances from the organization and/or the senator's office. What the article didn't address helps us understand how ingeniously our government works.

Legislation to redress maintenance backlogs at our national parks went nowhere until it was re-crafted to dedicate \$1.3 billion annually from onshore and offshore energy development on public space. Suddenly, Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.V.) from the country's second highest coal-producing state; Steve Daines (R-Mont.), the eastern half of whose state, loaded with oil and gas operations and coal mines, is twelfth in crude oil production; and Cory Gardner (R-Colo.) whose state has enough oil and gas production to warrant having its own state industry group hopped on as cosponsors and the legislation suddenly moved.

The bill's prospects also improved when the President, worried that the Obama-Biden Administration's fixation with climate change had stalled economic recovery, who will only believe climate change is true when rising sea levels reach Trump Tower's and Mar-a-Lago's doorsteps, backed it. Note also how the law lasts for five years, just long enough to get us through the Biden Administration whose proclivity for doing short-term damage to energy development to stanch climate change is well known.

Now, when those pesky environmental groups complain about energy leases on public lands and the Biden Administration tries to put a stop to issuing them, the counter will be that they're taking funding away from our national parks.

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Three Strikes ...



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

... and now I'm out - of the Handel's Messiah sweepstakes. The sweepstakes being to write in 50 words or less "Why do you love Handel's Messiah?" All I can answer is one word: Hallelujah, and I don't mean the chorus either. 'Three strikes' refers to the number of times I have now been subjected to this "holiday tradition." The first time I was an attendee - with thousands of other Washingtonians. in a jam-packed National Cathedral one Christmas season. The second time, while visiting my father-in-law in Manhattan during Christmas, he suggested going to Carnegie Hall to listen to Christmas music (not specified). I jumped at the chance to go to Carnegie Hall. Little did I know until I was handed the program that the Christmas music that night was Handel's Messiah. And most recently, I was sitting on my couch at home channel-surfing when I came across a "Handel's Messiah" rebroadcast from some famous venue in Salzburg, Austria featuring a lead singer, a mestro, an orchestra and choir, all of whom shall remain nameless to protect their stature. Whatever criticism/less than glowing reaction to hearing "Handel's Messiah" a third time should be a reflection on me, not the performers.

I freely admit my cultural deficiencies. I am not inclined to tolerate - too well, these intrusions into my rather mundane world. I have never been to the ballet, rarely have seen a play/musical, never attended a concert

featuring the Four Italian Seniors (as but one example) and am not so inclined to listen to the classics on WETA 90.9 FM in Washington, DC either, especially since Dennis Owens retired in 2005. In my defense, I am a card-carrying (Three Stooges Fan Club) member of the hoi polloi. And to be perfectly honest, I don't feel as if I'm any the worse for the wear of it - or the why. However, you all might disagree.

I am not a complete dunce though. I can appreciate the talent and discipline it takes to master the skills necessary to sing, dance, play an instrument, memorize pages of dialogue, et cetera. The closest I've ever got to enjoying this kind of entertainment occurred at Wolf Trap during the summer concert season. Twice, if I'm not mistaken, I attended the yearly July 4th concert when the National Symphony orchestra performed Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture with 105mm cannons. It's not exactly equivalent to the old Quaker Oats puffed wheat commercials of my youth but it was entertaining nonetheless. However, having now attended a few times, I'm not so inclined to attend again. And believe it or not, I don't feel at all diminished having said so.

I wouldn't say that the three experiences I've had listening to "Handel's Messiah" has thoroughly convinced me that such cultural forays never be considered again. On the contrary, there is a part of me, a small part, that feels as if I'm missing something. Still, I don't feel incomplete, uneducated or clueless somehow. Instead, I feel like one of the bad guys Clint Eastwood gave an advisory to in one of his "Dirty Harry" movies: "punk. A man has got to know his limitations." And I feel as if I know mine. Perhaps there are cultural areas where I could co-exist but I cannot co-exist with "Handel's Messiah." As I titled an earlier column I wrote for Connection Newspapers while actually attending/hearing "Handel's Messiah" - for the first time, at the National Cathedral one holiday season: "Can't Handel It Anymore."

Two more listens since the original, and I can say with certainty, I still can't "Handel" it. I thought that when I realized what I was listening to at home: "Handel's Messiah," having the freedom to get up, move around et cetera, might possibly enhance the experience. Well, it worked. I didn't feel the least bit trapped so after listening for 10 minutes or so, I got up, turned off the television, left the room, came into my home-office and wrote this column. Apparently, I found a way to "Handel" it after all: stop listening and start writing. I feel better already.

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

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A Holiday Season Reimagined

The pandemic leads to altered and new traditions.

By MARILYN CAMPBELL
GAZETTE PACKET

When schools adjourn for winter break the anticipation of a COVID-19 pandemic holiday season will become a reality. As festive gatherings are altered or cancelled to help prevent the spread of the disease, many families are faced with the loss of traditions and the challenge of getting into the holiday spirit.

"This year many families will be coping with not being able to spend the holidays with extended family or to travel in the way they usually would," said Stacie B. Isenberg, Psy.D. "Although some may appreciate a break from obligation many may be grieving the loss of time spent with loved ones, as well as missing their usual routines and traditions."

Creating new holiday rituals or adjusting old ones can help minimize feelings of longing and melancholy. "Families can work toward recapturing some of these traditions at home," said Isenberg. "Perhaps other traditions can continue in a modified way such as baking with Grandma in two separate kitchens connected by a video call during the activity. Maybe kids can do Mad Libs or other games with their cousins over a call."

For those accustomed to traveling during the holidays, a substitute might be driving, walking or biking around the neighborhood to look at Christmas lights. A hike through Rock Creek or Great Falls Park might appeal to families with children from toddlers to teens.

"To make hikes or walks engaging, adults or older children can think ahead about what they may see on the hike or walk," said Sonia Pruneda-Hernandez, College-Wide Chair, Early Childhood Education Program at Montgomery College. "Ask children to look for birds. 'How many birds can we find or hear during our hike or walk?' The next day, focus on animals. 'Can any animals be spotted during the hike?' The following day, collect leaves, have the children take a bag with them and find different leaves then return home and help the child identify the leaves and the type of trees each fell from."

In fact, time spent outdoors can improve overall mood if holiday weeks off from school turn sometimes glum or dull. "Physical exercise gives energy ... and helps regulate sleep," said Jerome Short.

When the weather or circumstances make venturing outside difficult, indoor activities like scavenger hunts can preserve holiday cheer without health and safety risks.

"Hide items throughout the house and give the children clues to find items," said Pruneda-Hernandez. "Items can be simple objects that are in the home like toothpaste, with clues like 'What do you use to brush your teeth?' You can do a different scavenger hunt every day.



PHOTO BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

Activities like biking or hiking can replace traditional holiday traditions.



PHOTO BY CHAD CONEWAY

Alexandria-based artist Kathryn Coneway is using the creative process to redefine how holidays are celebrated.

"Some fun ideas are reading stories together and then acting them out, creating a scene from the book in a shoebox or playing charades with topics related to the story," said Patty Howick, education instructor at Marymount University. "Writing a letter to a friend, asking an older relative to share a memorable moment in history or taking a walk to observe the changes in nature are some ways to stay connected. Be creative and have fun together."

Trade the hustle and bustle that often accompany the holidays for projects that offer opportunities for reflection and contemplation. "Many of us are used to school concerts or holiday parties and will be missing them this year," said Kathryn Coneway, an Alexandria, Virginia based artist, author, and educator. <https://www.kathryconeway.com> "This year, perhaps you can take a walk or spend time in nature, take photographs and share them with family or friends."

One idea that Coneway is trying with friends this holiday season is using daily drawing prompts inspired by artist Anna Brones <https://annabrones.com/>. The group uses one short phrase offered by Brones each day to awaken creativity which they use to create a sketch over the course of a day.

"The prompts offer a starting point for a drawing a day," Coneway said. "Families could do them at home together or share with family and friends at a distance and then share through texting or posting photos."

Creativity can help children and adults stay connected to family and customs, suggests Isenberg. "This unusual time is also an opportunity to create new traditions or just to have new experiences," she said.

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