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Marika Tsombikos prepares a gift bag of items found in her newly opened shop, Vivid Chill, located at 752 Walker Road, Suite C in the Great Falls Village Centre.

Great Falls CONNECTION

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NEWS

Local Hospitals Rollout First COVID-19 Vaccines

Communities keep lights up for healthcare heroes.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

December 2020 held the darkest days yet during the pandemic but also lights of hope. COVID-19 case counts climbed, and the economic undertow of the worst health emergency in a century pulled small businesses down. Days stumbled onto the threshold of 2021 with Senate Republicans blocking a final request to get the chamber to take up the House-passed bill to increase the \$600 stimulus checks to Americans to \$2,000.

Good news came in the vials of hope offered by the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine and the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine. Todd McGovern, a spokesperson for Reston Hospital Center, said, "We started vaccinating doctors, nurses and care team members on Wednesday, Dec. 16." Inova Fairfax Hospital also received their initial distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine and began their immunization of frontline team members providing care and support to patients. According to its website, "Inova will be a core site for public administration of the COVID-19 vaccine when it is available to the local community."

LIFE across the state and in the local region continued under additional restrictions announced by Gov. Northam and implemented Dec. 14. In Reston Town Center, masked skaters moved over the ice gracefully and not so gracefully under a canopy of twinkling lights. The holidays came and went.

On Dec. 30, the Virginia Department of Health held a Tele-Press Conference on Virginia's Vaccine Rollout and Response Efforts. Christy Gray, VDH's Director of the Division of Immunization, said a successful vaccine rollout across the Commonwealth was critical to flattening the curve and stopping the spread of COVID-19. "As of this morning, Dec. 30, Virginia has received approximately 285,000 vaccine doses from two manufacturers. And has administered 54,295 doses



A home in McLean keeps its lights up in January.



A home in the Town of Herndon's Historic District keeps its lights up in January.

to people in the Commonwealth... Eighteen Virginia hospitals received the initial shipment of the Pfizer vaccine the week of Dec. 18 and began dispersing those shipments of 72,125 doses to our front line healthcare workers... I also wanted to update you on our vaccine dashboard that went live last week. There are two tabs. One is a vaccine summary, and one is a vaccine demographic. This new information will keep the public informed about the number of COVID-19 vaccines distributed and administered in Virginia," Gray said.

THE WEEKEND after New Year's, homes in McLean, Great Falls, Vienna, Reston, Herndon, and beyond appeared to have kept their holiday lights up. "We want healthcare heroes...to see the support and gratitude from our communities and our colleagues. As they drive to or from their shift, the holiday lights will express



Christine Knoell, RN (left), vaccinates Dr. Kathleen Sachse (right) during the first days of the Reston Hospital Center Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine effort for healthcare providers.

PHOTO COURTESY OF
RESTON HOSPITAL CENTER

support," stated a media advisory provided by Todd McGovern at Reston Hospital Center. According to the release, people can get involved by delaying taking down holiday lights until Jan. 31, spreading the message, sharing photos on social media with the hashtag #LightsUp4Heroes and a tag to their local healthcare facility; and if one knows a healthcare worker personally, thank them for their work.

Bill Canis, a long time resident of Great Falls, said, "We will be keeping some of our outdoor holiday lights up in January to salute the first responders and health care workers who are making a big difference in so many lives during this pandemic. I hope my friends and neighbors in Great Falls might do the same."

Sheila Olem, Mayor of the Town of Herndon, said she supported the effort. "I think it is something the Community can support. I already posted this on my Facebook page about a week ago. The town does not require us to take our lights down by a certain date (or put them up.) Some HOAs do have strict rules about lights." Olem said.

Mayor Linda J. Colbert, Town of Vienna said, "Thank you to all the local healthcare workers who are in the hearts and minds of residents of Vienna. I will encourage the Town of Vienna and all residents to support Lights Up for Healthcare Heroes and keep our holiday lights on through January 2021. It will be our small part in showing our love and giving hope to healthcare workers and caregivers during this time."

Fairfax County General Assembly Delegation to Hold Public Hearing

The Fairfax County delegation to the General Assembly will hold a public hearing on the 2021 session on Saturday, Jan. 9, from 9 a.m. to noon. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the hearing will be held virtually. County residents may provide testimony by phone or video submission. Fairfax County is assisting with logistics for the delegation's event.

County residents who want to speak at the hearing can register beginning Monday, Jan. 4 through the Clerk to the Board of Supervisors page under Related Resources, or contact the Department of Clerk Services at 703-324-3151, TTY 711, by 5 p.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 6.

There will be no sign ups on the day of the event. Speakers will be limited to 70 and must be Fairfax County residents. Assistance will be provided to speakers as needed.

Additional guidelines are as follows:

Each speaker will be given up to two minutes to address the delegation.

Speaking slots will be numbered based on a first come, first served basis.

County residents may register to speak as an individual or on behalf of an organization serving county residents.

Organizations are encouraged to limit their presentation to one speaker.

Requests for ADA accommodations should be made as soon as possible but no later

than 48 hours before the public hearing.

The Chair reserves the right to modify the guidelines on site for the smooth operation of the public forum.

The hearing will be televised live on Fairfax County Television Channel 16 (Channel 1016 in HD on Cox; Channel 16 on Verizon or Comcast), and can also be viewed on-line through the Channel 16 live stream.

Phone Testimony: If providing phone testimony, callers will receive a phone call, originating from 703-324-1000, just before their turn. For the best connection into the meeting, use a landline or, if using a cell phone, do not use the speaker function while testifying.

Video Testimony: Video testimony is subject to the same two-minute time limit as phone testimony and must be uploaded to, and playable from, YouTube.

Speakers may only testify once during the public hearing; speakers may not testify via video and phone.

Further information on the public hearing is available from members of the Fairfax County legislative delegation. Contact information for individual delegation members is available on the Virginia General Assembly web page.

For questions or requests for ADA accommodations contact Arielle McAloon, 703-324-2649, or Rebecca Chenette, 703-324-2683.

Oh, What A Night! in McLean Neighborhood

BY: ELIZABETH ENDE

Saturday evening, Dec. 19, Chesterbrook Woods was set ablaze with lights, music and happiness. The idea behind the illumination event, “Light Up Chesterbrook Woods,” was to join together to say Happy Diwali, Happy Hanukkah, Merry Christmas, Happy Kwanzaa, Welcome Winter, and GOODBYE 2020! That evening, more than 260 households decorated their yards, walkways, and driveways with 8,000 luminarias (votive candles in paper bags). With the backdrop of recently fallen snow and traditional holiday decorations, Chesterbrook Woods was transformed into a beautiful winter wonderland. Whether neighbors chose to enjoy the lights through the comfort of a car ride or as a household walking around, fun was had by people of every age.

The event was brought to life by four neighbors, Amanda Majkowski, Kara Stoll, Lori Boerner and Carla Post. Carla pitched the concept to her friends and they enthusiastically agreed it was a great idea. Carla managed ordering, payment processing and charitable donations for the team. She reported, “It was clear our annual caroling event, like so many traditional holiday mainstays, would not be possible, so we created ‘Light Up Chesterbrook Woods’ -- both to honor all that has been lost and to celebrate the joy of the season and community. We were blown away by the enthusiasm and participation which raised \$6,000 split between local food pantry, Share of McLean, and Get Us PPE, a non-profit which provides no cost PPE to frontline workers and under-resourced communities, and \$200 for the McLean Fire Department.

Behind the scenes, it took a village to bring “Light Up Chesterbrook Woods” to life. Over the course of a few weeks and many, many hours of work, the Luminaria Team advertised their idea on the neighborhood listserv, negotiated with vendors, took and placed orders, and assembled and delivered the kits to neighbors. The event was so popular it spilled over into nearby neighborhoods. Amanda Majkowski, who was in charge of organizing and delivering the luminaria to 240+ households, put out a plea to neighbors for large paper bags for transporting the kits and was rewarded with enough donated bags within a matter of 48 hours.



Whether neighbors chose to enjoy the lights through the comfort of a car ride or as a household walking around, fun was had by people of every age.

PHOTO BY MICHELLE JOSS



Light Up Chesterbrook Woods Team of four, from front to back Amanda Majkowski, Kara Stoll, Lori Boerner and Carla Post.

PHOTO BY PETE WALBY



The musical Juneau family played Carols by their bonfire.

PHOTO BY LORI BOERNER



The Guertin Family Trombone Concert.

There was also music to enhance the outdoor experience! Kara Stoll, who helped promote the event to the neighborhood, also helped manage luminaria kit assembly and was in charge of entertainment. Five households publicized ahead of time that they would provide outdoor music, including: music broadcast on a big screen, caroling, a trombone concert and beautiful music performed by professional musicians, Lynn Veronneau and Ken Avis of Veronneau. One household showed the Christmas Classic, “Home Alone,” on an outdoor screen.

Lori Boerner, who is well known in Chesterbrook Woods for her community spirit, organized the order taking, photo taking and promotion of the event. She created one of her trademark google maps so that neighbors could find participating houses on the route. She also created a google photo album so neighbors could upload photos to document the beauty and wonder of the night.

Afterwards, many Chesterbrook Woods residents expressed their thanks to Carla, Lori, Amanda and Kara for creating such a heartwarming event. Patty Freeman perfectly captured the neighborhood sentiment when she wrote, “Thank you to the organizers, and to all those that helped put it together and deliver the bags. It was such a beautiful evening all around. The weather was perfect for strolling thru the ‘Hood to see all the lights, listen to wonderful music, and view the scenes on the movie screens. We truly have a special neighborhood.”

There have been a lot of requests by neighbors to make this an annual event!

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Vivid Chill Opens in Great Falls

Shopping handcrafted, ethically produced, nontoxic products.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

It all started with the local artisan's handbags, the love of little boutique shops that featured brands with morals and values, and telling her mom that more than anything else, she wanted to open a store in the Great Falls Village Centre with a showroom for those bags and other ethically and sustainably produced items. Sadly, mom Kathleen Murphy passed away before seeing her daughter's vision come to life.

Nearly one year later, Murphy's daughter Marika Tsombikos is in her newly opened shop, Vivid Chill, located at 752 Walker Road, Suite C in the Great Falls Village Centre. Despite the economic impact of COVID-19 crushing many small businesses, Tsombikos forged ahead, committing to sustainable products.

Asked what moment or occurrence triggered her decision to "jump all in," Tsombikos, founder and CEO of Vivid Chill, said, "Thinking about how it would feel if I didn't do this ... It's so important, now more than ever, to support and encourage these smaller businesses and talented makers to make sure they're still around when all this is over."

According to Tsombikos, she closed on the retail space in August but had her second baby in October. "I opened in the middle of December... It was my dream to get all these amazing brands together and offer them in one place where you can shop a bit more thoughtfully," she said. Vivid Chill offers eco-friendly home décor and skincare products, jewelry, clothing, and accessories. The company's online statement reads in part: "We believe quality is the basis of sustainability-quality of goods, but also quality in relationships with producers, customers, and the planet. And that's our bottom-line."

Shopper Kim Abod said Vivid Chill is a welcome addition to Great Falls. "When we first walked in the store, my daughter Carah exclaimed, 'I feel like I am walking into my own Pinterest board, except in real life.'" There's no shopper's guilt. Every item is ethically produced, so even the most conscious consumer can feel great about their purchase. "Marika has carefully vetted every product, and part of the charm is hearing



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Offering choice, sustainably produced clothing, jewelry, accessories, skincare, and home decor products, newly opened boutique shop Vivid Chill in the Great Falls Village Centre has it all.

the excitement in her voice as she shares the touching stories behind each product, each maker," Abod said.

Fellow shopper Sarah Vogel of Great Falls agreed. "Vivid Chill is the store we've all been waiting for in Great Falls. I'm a local girl, born and raised, and can attest to the need this town has always had for a store with this level of quality, relevant and attractive products. When you shop at Vivid Chill, you are not only supporting a local mama and her family, but you are choosing better products and supporting the small businesses that created them. I prefer to support small businesses when I shop for myself and others, and Vivid Chill has been the answer for me. Every time I pop in for a gift for someone else, I can't help but snag something for myself as well. Thank you to Marika and her family for opening the doors to this one-of-a-kind shop in the heart of Great Falls."

Vivid Chill at 752 Walker Road, STE C is located in the heart of Great Falls at the Great Falls Village Centre, with the shop's entrance facing the grassy village green. It is open Tues.-Sat. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. with online shopping available 24/7. Free returns or exchanges provided within 30 days of purchase—call (571) 407-7093 or email info@vividchill.com for more information.

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Gentle and Subtle Resolutions for 2021

Try small, simple and achievable goals.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

For 2021, local mental health professionals advise being gentle with yourself when creating the daily schedules and resolutions that often come with the beginning of the New Year. As many are feeling drained and defeated after a tumultuous 2020, making tiny, downsized resolutions can offer reassurance and hope as we embark on a new year.

"The year 2020 really highlighted that we can't control what happens, but we can control how we respond," said therapist Marla Zometsky, manager of the Wellness, Health Promotion for Fairfax County. "We are resilient and we can learn how to adjust based on the changes that are presented to us. It is okay to grieve things that did not turn out how we wanted, we can grieve and move forward."

Create a routine by making a small change to one's day, advises Karina Guzman, Director of Wellness, Prevention and Education at Marymount University. "It might be helpful to create a simple daily routine or make uncomplicated new year resolutions focused on being present," she said. "Meditating, practicing gratitude and staying connected with our support networks like friends and family are some quick and free activities to incorporate. They can be done at your own pace and are easy to include into a daily routine long-term."

Simple daily routines are great for producing structure. "Most people thrive on having structure in their daily lives and find that it makes them feel more productive, which then helps their mood and feeling good about themselves," said Bethesda therapist Carol Barnaby, LCSW. "A great way to add structure is to think about what your goals and responsibilities for yourself are daily. Then make a plan for your day that includes these goals. Make sure the goals are small and specific."

Some have created broad and generalized goals like getting fit in 2021, but Zometsky suggests starting with a purposeful, meaningful and achievable goal. "Instead of focusing on a resolution, which is something that typically focuses on what is lacking, in 2021, perhaps set an intention," she said. "An intention helps us to focus and it is mindful that we are on a journey."

"2020 may have been the most challenging year many of us have experienced," said "As we plan for this brand new year, perhaps the best resolutions won't

generate additional stress, but help us focus on positive self-care, reducing stressors and nurturing human connections," said therapist Tara Wooldridge, LCSW of Arlington County Government. "Routines and rituals can provide comfort. Scheduled physical exercise, mindfulness, meditation, quiet, reflective moments, support groups, and sharing with others are all ways to foster well-being. Choose what feels right for you and follow through. Our mental and physical health must remain priorities as we battle the ongoing global pandemic."

What do you aim to do more of this year? Intentions can give you a sense of purpose, and focuses on what is motivating you. Maybe your intention is to slow down or to continue to form deeper and meaningful relationships? Maybe your intention is to be more present in certain situations, or be more holistic in your health and wellbeing. Setting an intention will help you...identify your actions and navigate your response when faced with adversity."

For those who've created broad and generalized goals like getting fit in 2021, Zometsky suggests replacing those with purposeful, meaningful and achievable goals. "Instead of focusing on a resolution, which is something that typically focuses on what is lacking, in 2021, perhaps set an intention," she said. "An intention helps us to focus and it is mindful

that we are on a journey. What do you aim to do more of this year? Intentions can give you a sense of purpose, and focuses on what is motivating you. Maybe your intention is to slow down or to continue to form deeper and meaningful relationships? Maybe your intention is to be more present in certain situations, or be more

holistic in your health and wellbeing. Setting an intention will help you...identify your actions and navigate your response when faced with adversity."

Practical resolutions might feel comforting in this year of uncertainty, says psychologist Jerome Short, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Psychology at George Mason University. "Try small changes, evaluate, adjust, and praise yourself for improvements, he said. "It may help to have a daily schedule, usual healthy meals and exercises, and specific times alone and with others."

Paring down ambitious resolutions to those that are practical can feel satisfying this year, suggests Short. "Declutter your house, wear a basic wardrobe, and eat simple meals. Share work and household tasks with others," he said. "Evaluate when you work most efficiently and what energizes you. Make sure you have time for breaks and enjoy your five senses with favorite sights, sounds, foods, and hugs".

"Instead of focusing on a resolution, which is something that typically focuses on what is lacking, in 2021, perhaps set an intention."

— Marla Zometsky,
Wellness, Health Team for Fairfax County

"Meditating, practicing gratitude and staying connected with our support networks like friends and family are quick and free activities."

— Karina Guzman, Director of
Wellness, Prevention and Education at Marymount University

Here's What's Happening at MCC!

MLK Day Celebration Virtual Book Discussion



"The Sound of Freedom: Marian Anderson, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Concert That Awakened America" by Raymond Arsenault
Wednesday, Jan. 13, 7 p.m.
Free; registration required by 1/12

MLK Day Celebration Podcast Discussion Group



"Seeing White"—Season Two of "Scene on Radio"
Thursdays Jan. 14-Feb. 18, 7 p.m.
Free; registration required by 5 p.m. the day before each session.

MLK Day Celebration Community Service Project

"Our Beloved Community: Uniting Through Stories"
Free. Preregistration required by 2/5.

Community Events



Live & Virtual: Be Fit McLean
Saturday, Jan. 23, 4 p.m.
Free admission; registration is required.

The Old Firehouse



Virtual Family Fun Trivia Night
Friday, Jan. 29, 7-9 p.m.
\$5 per family (per Zoom invite).
Registration is required.

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Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Monday, Jan. 18
Inauguration Day
Wednesday, Jan. 20



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REAL ESTATE

McLean & Great Falls Quarterly Market Analysis of Home Sales (Based on List Price):

2020 Sales Compared to 2019 and 2010						
2020 Total Sales: 1,249						
Zip Code	>\$3 Mil	\$2-3 Mil	\$1.25-2 Mil	\$1-\$1.25 Mil	\$750k-\$1 Mil	<\$750k
22101	25	58	189	78	152	14
22102	8	24	74	36	36	229
22066	9	27	116	75	84	15
	Total: 42	Total: 109	Total: 379	Total: 189	Total: 272	Total: 258
	Combined Total Upper Brackets: 530		Combined Total Lower Brackets: 719			
2019 Total Sales: 1,219						
Zip Code	>\$3 Mil	\$2-3 Mil	\$1.25-2 Mil	\$1-\$1.25 Mil	\$750k-\$1 Mil	<\$750k
22101	15	47	140	82	167	45
22102	13	17	54	51	48	260
22066	6	11	77	61	92	33
	Total: 34	Total: 75	Total: 271	Total: 194	Total: 307	Total: 338
	Combined Total Upper Brackets: 380		Combined Total Lower Brackets: 839			
2010 Total Sales: 896						
Zip Code	>\$3 Mil	\$2-3 Mil	\$1.25-2 Mil	\$1-\$1.25 Mil	\$750k-\$1 Mil	<\$750k
22101	8	10	55	52	102	150
22102	7	17	27	22	43	186
22066	2	10	69	42	58	36
	Total: 17	Total: 37	Total: 151	Total: 116	Total: 203	Total: 372
	Combined Total Upper Brackets: 205		Combined Total Lower Brackets: 691			

Home Sales Up in McLean, Great Falls

Marginal improvement in a year
and much higher in a decade

BY KAREN BRISCOE



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED
Karen Briscoe

The ball has dropped on 2020 and the calendar has flipped over to the new year of 2021. It is time for the McLean and Great Falls real estate market annual year in review. Year over year, there has been marginal improvement in the number of home sales with a total count of 1,249 in 2020 compared to 1,219 in 2019. Compared to one decade ago in 2010, there is significantly better news as sales are up 39 percent over that time frame.

There are buyers ready, willing and able to purchase a home in Northern Virginia and in 2020 have found that there is considerably less supply than in previous years. This is most likely attributed to the stay-at-home orders due to the global pandemic from March through June, which is the traditional spring selling season. During that time frame, homes were not going on the market at

the pace of a typical selling season. It was mostly vacant properties and sellers who were really motivated who listed their homes for sale. In conclusion the number of sales could have been significantly higher had there been more available homes for buyers to select from.

The greatest impact in 2020 occurred in the upper brackets, for this market that is homes priced over \$1.25 million. There were 530 total sales in the year compared to previous year of 380, that's an improvement of almost 40 percent. Upper bracket homes and properties commonly include estate type properties which offer the advantages of more physical space for interior living as well as outdoor areas. Homes in good show condition and priced correctly for the market are in low supply. With strong demand and lower supply, many segments are

SEE HOME SALES, PAGE 8

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GFSC to Host Amelia Earhart Story Event

Great Falls Senior Center (GFSC) will begin this year with a program on Jan. 19 at 11 a.m. via Zoom. GFSC will welcome back Mary Ann Jung's interactive shows. This award-winning actress and Smithsonian scholar has been recreating history's most fascinating women for more than 32 years. Jung researches and writes her own script and performs in authentic costumes, accents and attitudes for her characters' eras. The selection for this zoom event was a woman

who worked as a nurse during the Spanish Flu in 1918 and contracted it herself. She was also a photographer, truck driver, avid student and teacher, social worker and even a clothes designer. Whatever she did, she did with passion, commitment and a relaxed sense of humor that endeared her to the American public. This woman's nicknames were "Meelie," "Lady Lindy" and "Queen of the Air." She also was the first female to receive the Air Force Distinguished Flying

Cross. Her awards are numerous and created many records in female aviation and was a leading voice for promoting women pilots. In 1937, during an attempt to make a circumnavigational flight of the globe, she disappeared over the Pacific near Howland Island and was never seen again. There are numerous theories about her disappearance but it still remains a mystery. Amelia Earhart once said, "The most effective way to do it is to do it." And that "Adventure is

worthwhile in itself."

GFSC invites you to welcome Mary Ann Jung and "Amelia Earhart," the most famous female pilot in aviation history who not only inspired a generation of female aviators but served as a motivation for women to excel in their chosen profession. If you would like a link to the Tuesday, Jan. 19 event at 11 a.m via Zoom, contact Mary Jo Fox, by Jan. 15, at mjwfx1491@gmail.com. The link will be sent two days before the Event.

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

PLAY TO SPAY SCAVENGER HUNT

Fancy Cats & Dogs Rescue Team will present their inaugural Play to Spay Scavenger Hunt now thru Jan. 23, 2021. This scavenger hunt will be "social distance friendly" by allowing players from all over the area to submit photographs via Facebook. Players will be eligible to win a large variety of prizes, including a grand prize of \$100 cash. To be entered into a drawing to win prizes players must submit 5 out of 10 requested photographs, with bonus entries for submitting more photographs, participating in special bonus challenges, and patronizing local cat lounges such as Patriot Pawsabilities and Mount Purnon Cat Cafe + Wine Bar. Proceeds will go directly into the spay and neuter fund for animals

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 9

Home Sales

FROM PAGE 7

experiencing price appreciation for the first time in over a dozen years. These market conditions are advantageous for sellers considering a move.

The real estate community continues to serve customers and clients safely by following CDC guidelines. More than ever during the pandemic, people have sought the security of home as a safe haven. To meet this need, agents continue to list houses for sale, show houses to buyers, write contracts and settle on transactions. Technology is cutting edge in the real estate arena offering virtual tours, Zoom meetings, secure digital document execution as well as online notary cam and drive through closings. Traditional in person meetings are available following safety protocols.

Looking forward to the first quarter 2021 if the weather remains mild, the traditional spring selling season is likely to begin in January. There is still considerable pent-up buyer demand in many segments of McLean and Great Falls. Even more so now, home represents the place where people live, work, play, educate their children, as well as enjoy physical activity and entertainment. As our nation and world navigate the impact of COVID-19, people still find themselves in situations where they have a need to make a move!

Karen Briscoe and Lizzy Conroy with HBC Group at Keller Williams are active and experienced Realtors® in the Northern Virginia marketplace. Along with the team, they work with sellers, buyers, investors and builders in all price ranges. They are available to assist with your real estate needs. www.HBCGroupKW.com, 703-734-0192, Homes@HBC-GroupKW.com.

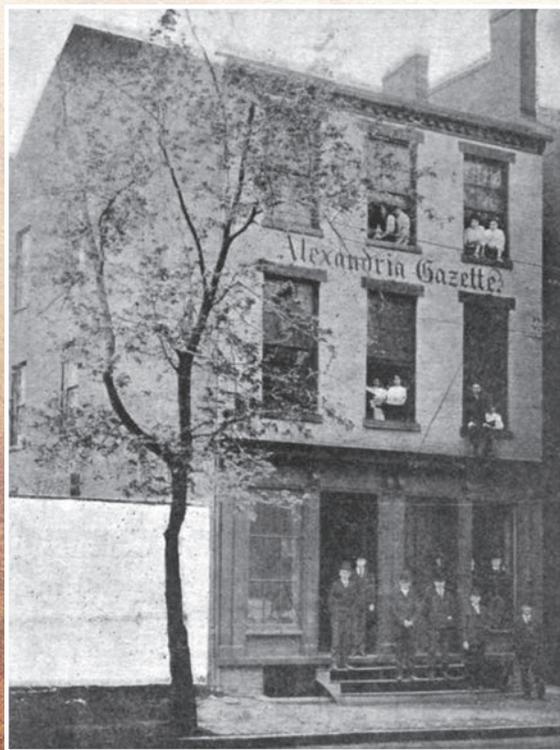
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And affiliated newspapers



Pictured: One of the several historical buildings that has housed the Alexandria Gazette Packet since its 1784 founding.

The pandemic has crushed many newspapers across the country, and one of America's oldest newspapers and its affiliated Connection Newspapers, websites and digital media is at risk. The Northern Virginia, DC, and MD area's best read and most trusted source for community news, which includes the Alexandria Gazette Packet, Mount Vernon Gazette and all Connection Newspapers in the metropolitan region. The pandemic has hit small businesses hard, which in turn has reduced advertising revenue that keeps these local newspapers alive to provide hyperlocal news to residents. Connection Newspapers has been offering these local newspapers to residents for over 200 years - countless residents have grown up with this local paper covering significant moments in the life of your family and children, news, sporting events,

school activities, and even pictures of your dogs and cars. Internet news and large national newspapers do not provide the local connection or historical connection that local papers like Connection Newspapers provide.

Help save these historical papers. If your child, dog, mother, father, neighborhood, school has been featured, you understand the value of a local community newspaper.

Thank you for helping to keep your community dialogue alive throughout Northern Virginia and Potomac, Md. All funds will be used to continue providing vital community dialogue and meeting obligations to our loyal and patient employees, contractors and suppliers due to continuing loss of advertising.



Visit connectionnewspapers.com or <https://www.gofundme.com/f/save-americas-oldest-newspaper>

Connection Newspapers.... Alexandria Gazette Packet, Mount Vernon Gazette, Centre View, Potomac Almanac
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PHOTOS COURTESY OF SHEPHERD'S CENTER

Erin O'Reilly, Volunteer Manager, Shepherd's Center; Café Renaissance owners Saeed and Soraya Abtahi; Jayne Young, Interim Executive Director, Shepherd's Center.

Holiday Meals Bring Cheer for Lonely Seniors

While this time of year may be festive for many, during these difficult days of COVID restrictions, the Shepherd's Center Serving Oakton-Vienna-Reston-Herndon (SC) wanted to reach out to their often lonely and isolated senior clients. This past Christmas week, SC was able to share holiday meals with local isolated senior clients. SC's Holiday dinner delivery initiative was welcomed by their clients. The following are three testimonials provided by these seniors:

One of SC's volunteer drivers, Lyn Black, showed kindness and the spirit of the season when delivering to two of Shepherd's Center clients in Reston. Ms. Black showed up for her deliveries wearing a red jacket with a jaunty Christmas hat on. She decided to dress up very festively with the cute hat, jingle bells necklace and bracelet. On her first delivery, one of SC's Reston clients noticed her jingle bell bracelet and said she really liked it, so Lyn gave it to her. The senior was jingling her newly acquired bracelet saying, "you

know, an angel gets its wings every time you hear a bell ring". The very next Reston meal recipient admired her cute little red hat. So, Lyn gave that to her as well.

The holiday dinners were prepared by Café Renaissance and Skorpios Maggio's Greek Family Restaurant. Hand-made greeting cards were provided to each client by the elementary school students at The Newton School in Sterling, under the leadership of Nicola Magley, Administrative Assistant.

This event was funded by Northrop Grumman and United Bank. Meal deliveries were made by board members Rich Deusterhaus, Patti Vaughn, Bill Farrell, Scott Schroth, Leigh Banducci and Scott Honiberg. In addition, volunteer delivery drivers included Matthew Humphrey, Executive VP, Head of Wealth & Investment Management, United Bank; Lyn Black, Matt Banducci and Claire Banducci.

To volunteer, donate or learn more about how you can help, or how we can help you, visit www.scov.org or, contact the office at 703-281-0538, office@scov.org.

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 8

rescued by FCDRT. Visit the link <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/play-to-spay-virtual-scamper-hunt-tickets-132726794415> Or visit www.fancycats.org.

JAN. 3-24, 2021

Money Vibe! 12:30-1:45 p.m. Online.

If you've ever struggled with money or want to do better with money, this class is for you. Money Vibe is a groundbreaking approach to financial mastery. (Four online classes on Sundays, from January 3 - January 24.) Cost is \$60 for four weeks. Visit the website: <https://www.connectionnewspapers.com>

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[money-vibe-2021-01.eventbrite.com/?aff=cnxnews](https://www.eventbrite.com/?aff=cnxnews)

NOVEC ACCEPTS USED XMAS TREES

Northern Virginia Electric Cooperative will accept used cut Christmas trees, garland, and holly and ivy sprigs that decked the halls, at its technical center at 5399 Wellington Branch Road in Gainesville, near I-66 and Route 29. Consumers should leave greens -- free of all decorations, ornament hooks, wire, and light strings -- in the parking lot area designated by orange safety cones from Dec. 26 to Jan. 10, 2021.

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

NEWS

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



Wish List Project Coordinator Christie Shumadine together with check in coordinator Avery Perez, received hundreds of gifts at the Buzz Aldrin drop-off location.



Wish List Project founder, Ginger Mahon, delivers gifts for Child #1 and Child #2, same as every year.

Wish List Giving Reaches Highs in a Covid Year

Coordinators Lissa Perez and Christie Shumadine didn't know how this covid year would affect the annual Wish List Project, but found the giving in 2020 to be overwhelmingly generous. While 100 fewer individuals submitted a wish list because of coordination restrictions, the 247 individuals on the list from local shelters and nearby elementary schools were showered with an estimated \$43,000 in gifts and gift cards.

A record \$9,400 in general/emergency use gift cards were received from Wish List Angels. Up from the highest level in prior years of \$6,000. The recipients of the gift cards and an estimated \$33,600 in wrapped gifts were Artemis House Women's Shelter, Fairfax County Foster Teens, Embry Rucker Shelter, and families in need from Buzz Aldrin, Hutchinson and Herndon Elementary Schools.

Staying covid safe and social distancing was no problem, thanks to the long-time drop-off procedure. Wish List Angels drive up, then wrapped gifts and gift cards are taken from vehicles by a crew of 23 volunteer "elves." The venue changed from the Perez home in Great Falls to larger spaces in the elementary schools in Reston and Herndon receiving the gifts. Volunteer elves were kept fed through the generous support of Deli Italiano in Great Falls.

In its 21st year, the Wish List Project was created and run by Ginger Mahon until 2015 when Shumadine, Perez and their families took the reins. All these years, the process has remained the same- the Wish



Volunteer elves organize gifts on The Wish List. Front to back: Belia Maxwell, Samantha Phillip, Taylor Kelso, Erin Cliff.

List is posted in mid-November. Donors, called Wish List Angels, choose a person, two or a whole family to buy, wrap and drop off the gifts specifically wished for. The gifts are picked up by staff of the recipient organizations.

In addition to the Holiday Wish List Project, other drives have been added in recent years- Winter Coat Drive, Spring Break Food Drive, Toiletry Collection, Snack Food Drive and Thanksgiving Meal Baskets. See all about this giving group and sign up to help throughout the next year at wishlistangels.org.

Announcements

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Let us know about an upcoming event

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CALENDAR

NOW THRU JAN. 11

Scavenger Hunt. The Fairfax County Park Authority is offering a free scavenger hunt with video clues in the Cub Run Stream Valley. Grandmother Frost has lost her gifts for the woodland animals, and it's your job to help her find the presents as you walk through the forest behind Cub Run RECenter. Videos at stops along the trail lead you to your goal and teach you about the animals in the woods. At Cub Run, visitors follow a trail of clues by scanning QR codes with a smart phone to learn the gifts the animals are receiving. Snowflake markers along the path guide you to each clue. Cub Run RECenter is at 4630 Stonecroft Blvd. in Chantilly. Call Cub Run at 703-817-9407.

THURSDAY/JAN. 7

Virtual Open House with Mathnasium of Reston and Centreville. 6-7 p.m. Online Zoom Classroom. Join the Mathnasium of Reston and the Mathnasium of Centreville for their Virtual Open House. They will be answering all of your questions and sharing more about the program. Parents, guardians, teachers, school representatives are all welcome. Visit the website: <https://mathnasiumopenhouse.eventbrite.com>

FRIDAY/JAN. 8

Teen Game Night. 7-9 p.m. At The Old Firehouse, McLean. Come play some of your favorite board and party games with some friends and the Old Firehouse staff. From giant Connect Four to hopscotch, OFC has a game for you. Challenge your friends and the staff for chances to win amazing prizes. To register for Old Firehouse events, visit: www.oldfirehouse.org or call 703-448-8336, TTY: 711.

SATURDAY/JAN. 9

Lesson Zero. 7:45 to 11 pm. At JV's Restaurant, 6666 Arlington Blvd., Falls Church. More information available on www.youtube.com/lessonzero or www.reverbNation.com/lessonzero

Make a Bird Feeder. 1-2 p.m. At Lake Fairfax Park, 1400 Lake Fairfax Drive, Reston. If you build it, they will come. Make a bird feeder and help take care of your feathered friends this winter. Discover how you can build a feeder from natural materials and learn about some of the different kinds of birds that may come to feast on your birdie buffet. Take the feeder home with you to hang in your yard. This program is designed for participants age 3 to adult. It runs from 1 to 2 p.m., and the cost is \$9 per person. Call 703-471-5414.

SUNDAY/JAN. 10

Intro to Hammock Camping. 10 a.m. to noon. At Burke Lake Park, 7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. Shake up your next woodland adventure with a night of hammock camping. Learn about this new trend for backpackers and campers with the "Intro to Hammock Camping" program at Burke Lake Park. Watch as an outdoor specialist demonstrates how its done. Get tips on how and where to hang your hammock and gain other important hammock camping information. This program is designed for campers age 12 to adult. Cost is \$22 per person. Don't forget to bring your own hammock. Call 703-323-6600.

SUNDAY/JAN. 10

Free Online Concert. 7 p.m. Enjoy an evening of robust sea chanteys with Forty Degrees South, coming to you live from Australia on Sunday, January 10 at 7 p.m. Forty Degrees South excels in performing full throated, gloriously gutsy harmony singing. Virtual Doors open at 7 p.m.; Concert begins at 7:30 p.m. Register at <https://fsgw.org/event-4082739>

JAN. 11, JAN. 25

Unmeltable Snowman Workshop. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Sully Historic Site, 3650 Historic Sully Way, Chantilly. It's always sad to watch a snowman melt away, so discover how you can create a four-season snowman that will still be with you when summer arrives. Sully Historic Site is hosting a series of "Unmeltable Snowman" workshops for families on three Mondays in January - Jan. 4, Jan. 11 and Jan. 25, 2021. At the workshop, you

will learn to use a felting process to make an unmeltable snowperson and decorate it with style. Keep your creation through winter, spring, summer and fall. This program is suitable for participants age 5 to adult and is being offered on the hour from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The workshop is designed for a family of up to four people, and the cost is \$20 per family. Call 703-437-1794.

WEDNESDAY/JAN. 13

MCC 2021 Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration. 7 p.m. Hosted by the Staff at The Alden, McLean. Virtual Book Discussion on "The Sound of Freedom: Marian Anderson, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Concert That Awakened America" by Raymond Arsenault. "The Sound of Freedom..." recounts the life of Black contralto Marian Anderson and her experience as a Black woman in the classical music field. Arsenault gives context to Anderson's historic 1939 concert at the Lincoln Memorial, drawing on her own words and those of scholars. They will discuss this book that celebrates civil rights and the performing arts. Register online at www.aldentheatre.org.

WEDNESDAY/JAN. 13

Interior Illustrations. 10 a.m. to noon. At Sully Historic Site, 3650 Historic Sully Way, Chantilly. Capture a moment in time with your artwork through the unique "Interior Illustrations" program at Sully Historic Site. During this program, you will have the chance to use graphite or pencils to relax and draw a historic interior at Sully. Focus on specific artifacts or capture the essence of life during the early 1800s. The program is designed for participants age 16 to adult. The cost is \$15 per person. Some supplies will be available. Social distancing and face coverings are required. Call 703-437-1794.

WEDNESDAY/JAN. 13

The Unruly Theatre Project's Virtual Improv Show. 7 p.m. Join (the) Unruly Theatre Project's virtual fall improv shows from the comfort of your couch! Register online and a Zoom link and password for the show will be emailed to you. Participants must register two hours in advance of showtime. Register online at www.aldentheatre.org.

JAN. 14 TO FEB. 18 (THURSDAYS)

MCC 2021 Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration. 7 p.m. Virtual Podcast Discussion Group on "Seeing White"—Season Two of "Scene on Radio" from the Center for Documentary Studies. Where did the notion of "whiteness" come from? Hosts Jon Biewen and weekly guest host, Dr. Chenjerai Kumanyika, delve into the historical origins of whiteness and racism in the U.S. The series looks at the history as well as the social constructs and emotional grappling that Americans engage in when discussing race and whiteness. Register online at www.aldentheatre.org.

SUNDAY/JAN. 17

Catching Atomic Spies. 2-3:30 p.m. At the Cold War Museum (100% Virtual in the Zoom Room, 1742 Lineweaver Rd., Warrenton. How an Astonishing Work of Decryption Led to the Atomic Spies, the Cambridge Five, and Much More. Presented by the Historian of the National Security Agency. Cost is \$20. Visit the website: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/venona-the-secret-tool-that-found-key-spies-in-the-early-cold-war-tickets-123765105763>

TUESDAY/JAN. 19

Waterfowl Program. At Burke Lake Park, 7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. While some birds may be wintering in the South, there are still plenty to see on local waterways. In fact, for some migratory birds, Fairfax County seems mighty balmy this time of year. Come to Burke Lake Park in January and learn about the birds that are making the lake their home for the cold season. Join the "Waterfowl" program on Tuesday, Jan. 5 or Tuesday, Jan. 19, 2021, to search for birds such as loons, lesser scaups and ring-necked ducks. Bring binoculars and dress for the weather. The program is designed for participants age 12 to adult and runs from 10 to 11 a.m. The cost is \$8 per person. Call 703-323-6600.

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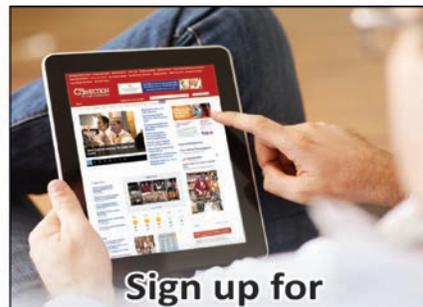
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New Year, Old Problem: Cancer



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

As I sit and write here, with too much time on my hands, I can't help but consider my lot in life. In a little less than two months: Feb. 20, I will celebrate (if that's even the right word), the 12-year anniversary of my original cancer diagnosis. On that date, I received a phone call at work from my internal medicine doctor advising me that the previous week's surgical biopsy indicated a malignancy in my lungs. The following week, Team Lourie was sitting in an oncologist's office waiting for the other shoe to drop. And boy, did it drop: non small cell lung cancer, stage IV. Accompanied by a "13 month to two year" prognosis with very little encouragement or statistical probability to give us much reason to hope. In answer to our predictable question, the soon-to-be my oncologist offered up a tantalizing prospect: "Could you be the one" (literally) that outlives your prognosis? It was hardly heartfelt, but his answer was "Yes."

So off I didn't fly into the wild blue yonder. Instead, I shuffled out his office and with my head down, exited the building and staggered into my car where my wife, Dina and I attempted to process the information we had just been given. I don't recall there being much discussion during the 30-minute drive home or even after we had arrived. To tell you the truth, besideS still processing the information we had just received, were pretty much in a daze (hence the overall name for my columns: "Daze of My Life") and were so blindsided by the seriousness of what we had just heard (no cancer history in my immediate family as well as my being a lifelong non-smoker), we almost couldn't talk, probably didn't talk and any talking we did was likely empty and hollow. Imagine being told, out of the blue, that you could be dead in less than a year, maybe even before your 55th birthday. Heck, both my parents lived past 85. That's what I've been anticipating. To think that 30 years yet of my future life had just been taken away was almost too much to believe. But since the oncologist was not the least bit in doubt about any of the results or how to proceed (we didn't feel the need, given the urgency and conviction with which the oncologist spoke, to even get a second opinion), we decided and committed that very day to starting chemotherapy the following week. It seemed clear that there was absolutely no time like the present.

Though the dozen or so tumors in my lungs "never acted" as my oncologist expected (growing and moving) it wasn't until Dec. '19 a year or so after a large tumor appeared below my Adam's apple that a new surgical biopsy was performed. The results of which indicated thyroid cancer which a few weeks later led to my having a thyroidectomy (thyroid removed) per the direction of my newest doctor, an endocrinologist (who has been treating me ever since). When the post-surgical biopsy confirmed yet again the existence of thyroid cancer, my reclassification as a thyroid cancer patient was official. Soon thereafter, my treatment for thyroid cancer began, first an overnight at the hospital and then daily levothyroxine pills. As a result, I am no longer being treated for lung cancer, just thyroid. The question has raised its ugly head in these last few months: Was I misdiagnosed or did I have two types of cancer? And if I do have two types of cancer and one/the lung cancer is not being treated, am I in reality a "dead man walking?" Ignoring/not treating lung cancer is generally speaking, not advisable. As my oncologist said to me many years ago about my having lung cancer: "I can treat you but I can't cure you." Not exactly words to live by.

It's on these anniversaries and the last few months leading up to them when I focus even more on my circumstances. How does that actually occur when my having cancer already consumes my conscience and subconscious? I can't really explain it other than to express the amazement and good fortune that I'm still alive. All I know is, I'm always happy when I wake up the next day and the anniversary has finally passed.

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



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