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Mount Vernon Gazette

WELLBEING
PAGE 6

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

JANUARY 7, 2021

Mount Vernon Scenes from 2020

With the pandemic dominating headlines, the community strived for normalcy.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

As the winter kicked off last January, there was optimism in the air early in the first part of the year. An election was coming up, the economy was rolling along and an inkling of promise was in the air.

As the weeks went on, word about COVID-19 picked up, and soon we were wearing masks and using hand sanitizer, and it snow-balled from there.

The death of George Floyd at

SEE MOUNT VERNON, PAGE 3



The American Horticultural Society announced its intention to raise cash by selling River Farm. Officials and community members have been working to stop that since. The future remains uncertain.



Socially-distanced concerts were held by local musicians in a Mount Vernon neighborhood.

PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION

County's Incident Alert System Helps Nab a Robbery Suspect

Phone calls and social media enable Fort Hunt residents to help in this case.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

On Jan. 4 in the middle of the afternoon, a call came into the Fairfax County Police Department about a robbery in the area of Paul Springs Parkway and Yorktown Drive in the Fort Hunt area.

The police responded by calling out the investigation team and sending out an alert to residents in the area. Their call had a description of the individual, and the fact that the "suspect may be armed with a gun. Please avoid the area," the police message said. This call and subsequent text/email message went to area residents, and "three hours later, officers have taken the suspect into custody and remain in the area as their investigation continues," the police said.

The police "incident alert," system assisted in keeping the



PHOTOS BY FAIRFAX COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT

In Fort Hunt, a fugitive was apprehended in a matter of hours.

residents safe in a situation like this, and ended with the apprehension of the suspect.

"I got a recorded call around 1:40 pm from the Fairfax County police saying to lock my doors and shelter in place. A helicopter has been flying over," one resident said, via email.

Others responded via social media. "Thanks for the quick action + heavy presence. Is there a resolution?" Jennifer Hanks responded, via Twitter. "One or two suspects

— neighbors would like to know?" asked "Kirsten," also on Twitter.

Following the arrest, the police sent out another message. "Thank you to all the community members who called in with information!" the police said.

This was the power of a computer-generated phone call and social media to spread the word. The FCPD uses this method on a regular basis to fight crime.

"The purpose of this messaging is to enhance community aware-



The web-based incident alert system is helpful to the county.

ness of officers' presence in the area," said 2nd Lt. James Curry, a FCPD spokesperson with the public affairs department. "Although we encourage community members to follow our social media platforms for ongoing events in the County, we recognize the need to use other means to reach community members who may not use social media," he said.

When the FCPD receives a call, they report it to the radio center at the main office in Fairfax who

then refer to a map of the caller's area. Then if the situation warrants, the alert goes out to the phones of residents in that area using a reverse dialing component of the Fairfax Alerts platform, said Paul Lupe, program manager in the Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management. "This reverse dialing is using home landline phones that fall within an area targeted from a shape drawn on a map by the alert sender," he said. "The amount of recipients varies depending on the size of the shape drawn, but typically between 2,000 – 10,000 recipients are selected with these types of alerts," Lupe said.

It's another tool in the FCPD toolbox to fight crime, and it could result in saving lives. "This tool can assist our officers in locating individuals we may be looking for, but the purpose of this messaging is to keep our community safe," added Officer Curry.

People Over Platform

A FEW OF MY 2020 CLIENT TESTIMONIALS



"Tracy was so much fun to work with... she has a bright, positive attitude... she gets the job done... what I mean by that is she is on top of everything... not to mention the utmost of professionalism... I would recommend Tracy Dunn to anyone looking for their forever home or selling their current home!"



"Tracy is hands-down the best Realtor in the DC metro area. My husband and I have bought and sold several homes over the last decade, and have never met a Realtor like Tracy. She has it all: she's exceptionally smart, knows the Northern Virginia market like no one else, has insights regarding schools all over the area, is an absolute pleasure to work with given her kindhearted nature, and she knows when to apply her strong 'velvet hammer' during contract negotiations. Tracy is truly tireless. Her positive energy is infectious, and she is relentless while pursuing the very best for her clients. Tracy found us our long-term dream home for us to raise our family in during one of the craziest markets the DC Metro Area has ever seen, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic."



"We had a wonderful experience with Tracy Dunn! She helped us buy our first home five years ago, and now helped us sell that same home. Tracy is very knowledgeable and answers or anticipates every question throughout the process. Our home was under contract in a couple days and sold above list price. We highly recommend Tracy!"



"In my 41 years I have never written a Yelp, Amazon or online review. There are not enough superlatives for the job Tracy did for me as a Realtor. There were a number of variables with my situation. Tracy understood them all and her goal was to find the best place for me and not just a sale or commission. Through her extensive network she was able to quickly find me a home that was not only perfect for me, but beyond my expectations. She is an incredibly professional and skillful Realtor, but more importantly, she is an absolutely amazing person. I can not recommend Tracy Dunn enough for any and all of your real estate needs. I have found my Realtor for life."



"Tracy was recommended to us by our close friends and we were so happy that they did. From our first meeting (over the phone due to COVID) until we closed on our home, Tracy was available 24/7. No matter the day or time, she would respond to any question/thought/concerns we had within minutes. Having lived in the Fort Hunt/Waynewood area her entire life, she knows the area and the market. Everytime we looked at a house she was there with us to show us the good and bad. She also understand the wild prices of this current market, always giving us spot on recommendations of what the house would go for. As VA homebuyers and the current "seller's market" we were worried about the chances of successfully getting our offer accepted on a home, but having Tracy on our side made ALL the difference. Bottom line, we have all the confidence in the world that Tracy is the perfect option for buying or selling a home in the Fort Hunt area."



"Tracy is a superstar! She is dedicated, hardworking, smart and honest with deep knowledge of her market. She worked seemingly around the clock on the sale of our home. Her recommendations on improvements and staging were key, and she managed it all seamlessly, making the process less stressful. On top of it all, she is a genuinely kind and thoughtful person with a great sense of humor who was a total pleasure to work with. I highly recommend Tracy to anyone selling their home in 22308 (or anywhere)!"



"Tracy truly listens to her clients. She is driven to make sure you are satisfied every step of the way from listing and selling to buying! Tracy found us the PERFECT home for our family!"



"Tracy helped us purchase our new home and sell our old home with amazing efficiency! We had huge success on both ends thanks to Tracy. We were so relaxed throughout everything because she had it all covered and was so proactive and communicative. What could have been a stressful experience was the exact opposite. Thank you Tracy!!"

Wishing Everyone a Happy and Healthy New Year!

If you are considering a move in 2021, call me to discuss your options.



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Mount Vernon Scenes from 2020

FROM PAGE 1

the hands of police led to political upheaval in many cities, including a protest march in Mount Vernon. Throw in a series of creative high school graduations, sparsely attended sporting events on tele-

vision, and phases of pandemic closings that fluctuated with the infection rate, and it's been one to remember. A year like no other, as they say.

Here's a look at events in Mount Vernon from last year.



A local soldier was recognized for his actions by the military.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED



A weekly catfish feast took place at a location along Richmond Highway.



Sometimes knowing the history of an item increases its value at local gift stores.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

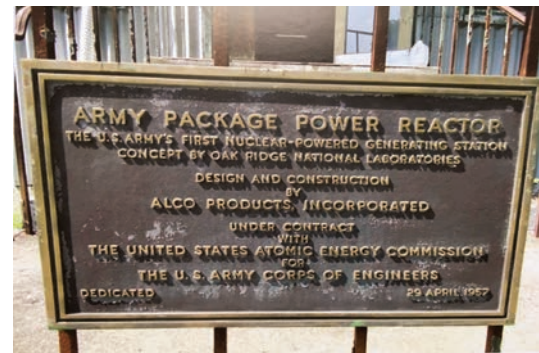


After police brutality claimed the life of George Floyd, a local Black Lives Matter march took place on Sherwood Hall Lane.

PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION



Mount Vernon once had its own electric trolley running to Old Town. There's not a track to be found, but there are a few old photos and a record of this rail line.



Plans were launched for removal of a lesser-known nuclear reactor at Fort Belvoir.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED



After schools were closed, the FCPS used them for food distribution as the pandemic ramped up early in the spring.



Army Museum opens on Veteran's Day at Fort Belvoir.



Further south in the Mount Vernon-Lorton area, a fatal shooting rattled a neighborhood.



The election in November had special features due to the pandemic, like ballots filled out from the driver's seat.

COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout

BY DELEGATE PAUL KRIZEK

Here is wishing you a happy New Year and hoping that 2021 brings an end to this terrible pandemic. Indeed, 2020 ended with some positive news on that front — the FDA approval of the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccinations and the beginning of distribution, albeit not as fast a distribution as we had hoped. However, three more vaccines are currently in the works with clinical trials in progress, and the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) is implementing a complex plan with many moving parts that is expected to get much quicker in the weeks ahead.

The vaccines are safe. Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines utilize new mRNA technology. Many vaccines function by introducing a weakened or inactivated germ into our systems to allow our bodies to learn how to fight off a future infection. However, mRNA vaccines work differently and do not contain live viruses within doses, so they do NOT infect you with COVID-19. Instead, mRNA vaccines contain instructions to teach our cells how to make a “spike protein” that is found on the surface of the COVID-19 virus. Once this

spike protein has been produced, our immune systems recognize that the protein does not belong in our bodies, so it begins to build an immune response by creating antibodies. When presented with the real COVID-19 virus, our bodies will already know how to fight off an infection. No safety tests were cut to get the vaccines quickly to market. The approved vaccines have undergone rigorous review by scientists to ensure that these vaccines are safe and effective in preventing COVID-19. The clinical trials performed included people of all ages, races, and ethnicities to ensure that the vaccine was tested for safety in all populations.

After a little over a year of research and tracking this virus, there is much we still don't know about COVID-19. However, what we do know is that COVID-19 is unpredictable. There is no way to know how COVID-19 will affect you. While some otherwise healthy people who have contracted COVID-19 have become seriously ill or have died, some only have mild symptoms. Much like the annual flu vaccinations, receiving the COVID-19 vaccine



Krizek

when you are eligible will greatly reduce your chances of being infected with COVID-19, and will allow your body to build immunity to ensure that if you become infected with the virus, you will have only mild symptoms or none at all.

Importantly, the vaccine will be offered to all Americans at no cost to you. The governor has included in his budget, for the upcoming session that starts next week, \$90 million to administer the vaccination process.

The first recipients of the vaccine, in what is being termed phase 1A, include healthcare workers and residents living in long-term care facilities. This includes those health care workers who are caring directly for known or suspected COVID-19 patients or regularly interact with higher risk populations. This number comes out to an estimated 440,000 Virginians, which the first round of vaccine doses received by the Commonwealth will cover. The VDH is closely following the guidelines issued by the CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices on which individuals should be in each prioritization category. Virginia is still awaiting

recommendations from Virginia Unified Command and the Virginia Disaster Medical Advisory Committee to make final recommendations on the next priority groups -- 1B and 1C. Those decisions are expected to come later this week. Phase 1B includes frontline essential workers and people ages 75 and older. Phase 1C includes people ages 16-74 with high-risk medical conditions, people aged 65-74, and other essential workers.

Phase 2 will cover the rest of the general public. It is important to note that neither vaccine has yet been approved for use in children under the age of 16. The vaccines will only be offered to children once the vaccine has been tested and approved for use in children.

Vaccine rollout as a whole has been described as a “fluid process” by the VDH, and we must remain flexible with some patience as we learn more and adjust our expectations due to real versus expected vaccine supply. While supplies are limited now, the VDH expects that once we have entered Phase 2, there will be ample supply of the vaccines, which will be readily available for distribution to the general public by late spring/early summer. At that time, Virginians can receive the COVID-19 vaccination.

SEE COVID-19, PAGE 10

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Virginia Progressive Prosecutors Call for Criminal Justice Reforms in Coming Legislative Session

Reforms advocated for by the group include expungement of criminal records, an end to mandatory minimum sentences, an end to cash bail, abolition of the death penalty, and an end to “three strikes” felony enhancement for larceny offenses.

Virginia Progressive Prosecutors for Justice (VPPFJ) is a group of Commonwealth's Attorneys representing over 40% of Virginia's population who support and advocate for commonsense criminal justice reforms to make their communities safer and the commonwealth's justice system more fair and equitable. On Jan. 4, 2021, they issued the following letter to leaders in the General Assembly regarding reforms they plan to advocate for in the coming legislative session.

Dear Speaker Filler-Corn, Leader Herring, Leader Saslaw, and Chair Edwards:

We are a group of reform-minded Commonwealth's Attorneys

who represent and are responsible for the safety of over 40% of Virginia's population. We supported many of the groundbreaking criminal justice

reforms that you and your colleagues in the General Assembly implemented in the August special session.

In the coming legislative session, we encourage you to build on these reforms and continue to make the Commonwealth a national leader in promoting justice. Specifically, we write to encourage the General Assembly to advance the following proposals, which we believe will help keep our communities safe while producing more equitable outcomes in our courts:

- ❖ Automated, automatic, and free expungement of criminal records for formerly system-involved community members: Our communities are safest when we more fully reintegrate those convicted of crimes into society, instead of forcing them down a path of recid-

ivism. Too often, a persistent

criminal record prevents those who have interacted with the criminal justice system from finding employment, securing housing, or attaining an education long after they have proven to no longer pose a safety risk to the community. Ensuring equal access to such second chances for those who

have achieved rehabilitative

benchmarks will improve safety outcomes while promoting equity across our criminal justice system. We can achieve this by automatically expunging certain criminal records free of charge after individuals have maintained a clean record for an amount of time that corresponds to the severity of their offense.

- ❖ End mandatory minimum sentences: We wrote in advance of the special session in support of the General Assembly striking mandatory minimums from state

SEE LETTER, PAGE 10

Let Us Know Your View

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

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A Connection Newspaper



Supervisor Dan Storck 2nd Saturday Office Hours

January 11, 2021

Mount Vernon District office 2511

Parkers Lane, Mount Vernon, VA 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Supervisor Storck is available for phone and video calls, as well as in-person meetings with proper social distancing, during his regular 2nd Saturday office hours.

Contact mtvernon@fairfaxcounty.gov or 703-780-7518 for more details and to schedule a meeting.

34th Annual Mount Vernon Town Meeting

When: Saturday, February 6, 2021

Where: Live Virtually on Channel 16, the County's Livestream and Facebook

Time: 9 a.m. – noon

Program: Speakers, Audience Q&A's and Virtual Tour

Meet your Supervisor and County, state and federal leaders. Have your questions answered, learn about

issues important to you and connect with County agencies and community service providers. The highlight of the morning will be taking a "virtual flying tour" of all that is happening in the District with your "pilot" Supervisor Storck.

Speakers: Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeff McKay, County Executive Bryan Hill, Mount Vernon District School Board Member Karen Corbett Sanders and other community leaders. More to be announced soon.

Watch live on Facebook and Channel 16. There will also be a live, interactive video link coming soon! You can even ask questions during the Q & A sessions by emailing us at mtvernon@fairfaxcounty.gov, commenting on Facebook or Tweeting us @DanStorck. Use #MVTM2021! Have plans for Saturday and want to watch it later? The video will remain on Facebook for viewing at your convenience and replay on Channel 16.

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.

TUESDAY/JAN. 19

Genealogy in Print. 1-2:30 p.m. Zoom online network -- Mount Vernon Genealogical Society monthly

meeting. Genealogist Sharon MacInnes will speak about how to find and download county and family history books, articles, newspapers, manuscripts, etc. Online access info to be emailed to Society members and registered nonmembers. Email registration by January 15 to contact-us@mvgenealogy.org. Visit the website: www.mvgenealogy.org/eventListing.php?nm=20

LIBRARY PARTNERS WITH WASHINGTON WIZARDS

The Washington Wizards, in partnership with the Alexandria Library, are hosting a Winter Reading Challenge dedicated to early readers, kids, and teens. The challenge is designed to build positive reading culture and improve literacy for

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 9

Models Now Open

We are here for you and your loved ones. Visit Sunrise of Old Town for a one-on-one tour of our brand new models. You'll get a sneak peek of our community's amenities, activities, and dining program. We look forward to sharing our personalized approach to assisted living and memory care, coming to Alexandria in the spring of 2021.

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OLD TOWN

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All our team members are following COVID-19 infection control protocols, including wearing a mask. Number of visitors allowed inside is limited, to maintain appropriate social distancing.



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UNDER CONTRACT



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

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

SOLD



Alex/Riverside Estates **\$736,000**
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Riverside Estates' largest split foyer model (Concord) w/2 car garage & lots of updates, i.e., roof 2001, HVAC 2012, baths 2010, furnace 2001, updated double pane windows 2019. Kitchen was opened to the dining & living rooms & is absolutely stunning: granite & quartz counters, large island w/seating capacity & beautiful hwd floors. Oversized MBR & MBA share a lovely gas FPL to add charm to the master suite. A large lower level offers a family rm which also has a gas FPL, a 4th BR & 3rd full bath. Plenty of storage behind the 2-car garage. Large lovely fenced bkyd, perfect for entertaining. 5-minute drive to Ft. Belvoir (S), 15 minutes to Alexandria, (N), 25 mins to National Airport (N) and 33 mins to the Pentagon (N).



Alex/Hybla Valley Farm **Lower 600s**
7720 Schelhorn Road

Are you tired of stairs and longing for 1 level living? A beautiful partially covered front porch that you can sit out & wave to your neighbors as they walk by? How about entertaining on a large deck that overlooks a large, fenced bkyd & watching your children/grandchildren congregate & play? We have that... plus 4BRs, 2BAs, beautiful refinished hwd floors & freshly painted interior. Throw in replacement double pane windows, 6 panel interior doors, a beautifully updated kitchen w/granite counters, SS appliances, that is open to the living & dining areas. Finally, an oversized 1 car garage w/a 12'x10' storage/workshop area on the end, & extensive parking available on a large driveway. Ideal location, less than 1 mile to Mt. Vernon Hospital & Sherwood Hall Library, 10 mins to Ft. Belvoir(S) & Old Town (N), 20 mins to Ntl Airport & 30 mins to D.C. & the Pentagon (N). Come take a look you won't be sorry.



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Gentle and Subtle Resolutions for 2021

Try small, simple and achievable goals.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
GAZETTE PACKET

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".



PHOTO BY GLENDA BOOTH

Friends of Dyke Marsh volunteers like Jim Gearing cut a "window" in the ivy at a tree's base.

English Ivy, Aggressive Invader

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH

Elite colleges and universities may prize the English ivy climbing up musty old walls, but in the environment, English ivy is a destructive invader.

All along the George Washington Memorial Parkway, many of the tree trunks and some limbs are covered with ever-climbing, green English ivy. The ivy vines especially stand out in the winter months along the parkway and, for example, in Mount Vernon Park next to the Belle View Boulevard hill just west of Fort Hunt Road. It's also strangling many trees along Fort Hunt Road and Paul Spring Parkway in the Paul Spring Stream Valley Park.

It's everywhere year-round and worsens every year if not controlled. English ivy occurs throughout the Eastern United States and many garden shops sell it.

Its Harm

English ivy (*Hedera helix*) is a perennial, aggressive, non-native, drought-tolerant

plant. When it climbs, its aerial rootlets attach to the object it climbs. When it matures, it flowers and sets fruit. Birds eat and disseminate the fruits.

English ivy can cover a tree's bark and block the sunlight the tree needs for photosynthesis. Ivy vines "that climb up trees slowly kill the tree from the base upwards by enveloping branches and twigs, blocking sunlight, causing branch and eventual tree death," says Plant Invaders of the Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas. Trees that are weighed down with vines are susceptible to blowing down during rain, snow and ice storms.

When it grows up buildings and walls, it can damage stucco, wood, mortar, siding and shingles. On and around trees, ivy competes for nutrients and water. It can accelerate tree rot by trapping moisture on and close to the tree trunk.

Friends of Dyke Marsh volunteers are tackling the English ivy growing up trees in the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve. They are cutting a 12-to-24-

SEE ENGLISH IVY, PAGE 7

JACKI SORENSEN'S FITNESS CLASSES

Jacki Sorensen's Aerobic Dance
Ongoing Online Classes

Check the Schedule
and Register here:

<https://thefitnessbreak.punchpass.com>

Email:
JackisDC@gmail.com



English Ivy, Aggressive Invader

FROM PAGE 6

inch “window” in the ivy, pulling vines away from the tree’s base and bagging the plants for disposal so they don’t re-root. Eventually, the remaining ivy will die. Experts recommend pulling up ivy from the ground at least two feet around the tree.

Ivy spreads, carpets the ground and smothers all the native vegetation under it by blocking the sunlight these plants need. Ivy can be hiding places for rodents and is a reservoir for bacterial leaf scorch, a harmful plant pathogen.

For ivy on the ground, some property owners mow it with a lawn mower or string trimmer and cover it with weed cloth or cardboard to starve it of sunlight. It usually takes at least a year to kill the ivy using this method. There are chemical controls as well, but many herbicides can harm valuable plants and insects. Some people use a white vinegar and dish soap mixture. Whatever control method is used, English ivy is persistent and it can return from small roots and stem segments.

Volunteer

To help in Dyke Marsh, email info@fodm.org and put English ivy in the subject box. The Friends of Dyke Marsh will hold socially-distanced volunteer sessions from 10 a.m. to 12 noon on Jan. 9 and Jan. 18 and Feb. 6 and Feb. 20, 2021. Meet at the Haul Road trail entrance just off the parkway. Park in Belle Haven Park’s south parking lot. Wear a mask and gloves, long



A tree in the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve covered with ivy.

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH

pants and sleeves and bring clippers and water.

The Fairfax County Park Authority needs volunteers to help with invasive plants. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/resources/ima/>.

Information

Tips on controlling English ivy: http://www.earthcorps.org/ftp/ECScience/Projects/Shoreline/Ivy_Herbicide_Study_2012.pdf; <https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/english-ivy-control/>

Local native plants, including native ground covers: Plant NOVA Natives, <https://www.plantnovanatives.org/> and the Virginia Native Plant Society at <https://vnps.org/>.

Invasive plants of the Mid-Atlantic: <https://www.invasive.org/eastern/midatlantic/>.



Ivy covers trees along Paul Spring Parkway in Hollin Hall and Paul Spring Stream Valley Park.

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Off the Menu: Restaurant News and Notes

BY HOPE NELSON
GAZETTE PACKET

Permanent restaurant closures, temporary shut-downs for renovations AND a winter showcase of local restaurants (and their take-out fare): It's been a busy week since the new year began.

Bilbo Baggins Restaurant Closes After 40 Years

After remaining shuttered throughout the covid-19 pandemic, it appears Old Town staple Bilbo Baggins is closed for good. Signs on the window point to the building's sale by Century 21 Commercial New Millennium.

Bilbo Baggins arrived on the Alexandria food scene in 1980 and has remained a mainstay in town ever since, bringing with it a Hobbit-themed flair throughout.

The restaurant even received permission from the Tolkien Foundation to use the Bilbo Baggins moniker. Both the dining room and the adjacent pub offered a comfortable, homey environment

while also dishing up quality food and drink. Old Town will certainly miss it.

Yunnan By Potomac Closing Temporarily for Renovations

Forget spring cleaning: Yunnan

by Potomac is shutting down for a bit to do some winter demolition.

In a social media post on Tuesday, the Yunnan-province Chinese restaurant announced the closure:

"Family & Friends, After a year's worth of uncertainty, planning, re-

vising plans, and constant obsession, we are excited to finally announce the beginning of our latest ambition ... complete renovation of our dining space and kitchen! We are saddened to close temporarily, but enlivened by the pursuit

of our vision to share the beauty and diversity of Yunnan and its people through the food culture of Southwest China."

The restaurant did not specify a timeframe for its reopening, but the post said updates would be announced via social media as the time got closer.

Winter Restaurant Week To-Go on the Horizon

Alexandria's Restaurant Week is back – and like last go-round, it's back in a socially distant way. For two weeks ranging from Jan. 22 to Feb. 7, more than 60 local restaurants will offer special deals on takeout meals.

Throughout Restaurant Week, a takeout dinner for two will run you \$49. Many restaurants are also offering a new feature this time around, a takeout dinner for one for \$25. <https://www.visitalexandriava.com/restaurants/restaurant-week/>

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. 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.

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

JAN. 4 TO MARCH 29 (MONDAYS)

Yoga for Gardeners I. 9:30-10:30 a.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. (Adults) This class features a gentle introduction to the Vinyasa method, which helps participants increase the strength, flexibility and endurance necessary for gardening. \$129 per person for 11 sessions. Class held indoors. Register online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes (code 6E6.JNLA) or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173.

JAN. 8-30

Hidden World Art Exhibit. Regular gallery hours are Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-6 p.m., and Saturdays 12-4 p.m. At Del Ray Artisans Gallery in the Colasanto Center, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. The "Hidden World" exhibit challenged artists to look deeply into the world, their emotions or imaginations to uncover something normally unseen. There will also be two workshops: Hidden World: Collage in a Box, with Susan Farrer on Sunday, January 10 from 1:30-4:30 p.m., and Hidden Layers: The Joys of Gel Printing, with Eileen O'Brien on Sunday, January 24 from 3-6 p.m. Visit www.DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits.

SATURDAY/JAN. 9

Floral Design Workshops. 1-2: 30 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. Bring some color and a touch of nature into your home all winter long with monthly floral design workshops at Green Spring Gardens. Certified floral designer Betty Ann Galway will lead seasonal workshops during the winter months with in-person and virtual options. Learn to create a winter floral arrangement that feels like a walk through nature. Attend in person or from the comfort of your home.

The programs are designed primarily for participants age 16 to adult. The cost of each session is \$39 per person, plus a \$30 supply fee, for those attending in person. Tables will be separated for social distancing and masks are required. For participants who choose to attend virtually, the cost is \$22 per person. A supply list and link to connect via Zoom will be emailed prior to the program. Virtual participants will have an opportunity to ask questions. Call 703-642-5173.

SUNDAY/JAN. 10

Free Online Concert. 7-10 p.m. Via Zoom. Enjoy an evening of robust sea chanteys with Forty Degrees South, coming to you live from Australia. Forty Degrees South excels in 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>. Visit the website: <https://fsgw.org/event-4082739>

JAN. 13 AND JAN. 24

Catch a Critter. Jan. 13 from noon to 1:30 p.m.; Jan. 24 from 1-2:30 p.m. At Huntley Meadows Park, 3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria. On these special days, program participants will have the chance to see, touch and study wetland creatures up close under the guidance of a park scientist. Grab a net to see what can be found in the wetland and use magnifying lenses to study the unique characteristics of these little animals. Discover what they can tell us about their home. This rare opportunity to dip-net in the wetland is possible through the guidance of the park naturalists, and the event is designed for nature lovers age 4 to adult. The cost is \$9 per person. Call 703-768-2525.

THURSDAY/JAN. 14

Carlyle House and the William Syphax FAN Club. 7 p.m. \$5 per link via Zoom. William Syphax rented space in an outbuilding adjacent to the historic Carlyle House in the early 19th century. He was one of the very few African-Americans in Alexandria who was able to free himself and many of his family members. Join Steve Hammond for a Zoom presentation that will share insights on William Syphax and those were a part of his FAN club.

SATURDAY/JAN. 16

Paint, Build, Create Event. 10 a.m. Virtual. Participants of all ages can experience 10 different activity videos focused on Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math. Most

activities use recycled or common household items so you can Learn, Grow, and Play in the comfort of your own home. Visit <https://parks.arlingtonva.us/paint-build-create/>

FEB. 5-27

In the "After Edward Hopper: Themes of Solitude and Isolation" exhibit, artists present their interpretations of what makes Hopper's imagery quintessentially American: perseverance, fortitude, diversity, and an egalitarian spirit in spite of adversity, impoverishment, and social injustice. This exhibit expresses the anthem of a new dawn: still we rise as one, stronger together. Runs February 5-27, 2021 at Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria VA. Details: www.DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

THE BIRCHMERE

The Birchmere in Alexandria is reopening with limited capacity. During the public health emergency, there will be a \$25 food and beverage minimum and a \$5 Covid fee. There will be no bar service and no gathering in the stage or bar areas. Customers will be escorted to their seats, and those without reserved seats will be seated by staff to ensure social distancing. The venue is located at 3701 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria. All shows at 7:30 p.m. in the Music Hall. Visit the Birchmere's website: <http://www.birchmere.com/>

Run, Walk & Roll Challenge

American Legion to host virtual 24-mile challenge.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

With the city's annual George Washington Birthday Parade on hold for this year, Alexandria's American Legion Post 24 is hosting a commemorative virtual event to honor the nation's first commander-in-chief.

"The 24-mile virtual challenge is intended to build community and enhance the physical, mental and emotional resiliency of participants—veterans and non veterans alike," said Post 24 organizer Mike Mixon.

The month long virtual event will be held during February and encourages participants to run, walk and/or roll on their own for at least 24 miles in increments and routes they choose.

"We designed this challenge to be all inclusive," Mixon said.

"Two thousand steps in your house equals a mile so if you are homebound or the weather is not cooperating, you can still participate. Bicycles, wheelchairs — all are welcome. We just want to encourage people to get active."

Registration is online only through Jan. 31 and is \$24 per participant. Registrants will receive a certificate of completion and a custom-designed George Washington Birthday commemorative coin.

All proceeds will support veterans and youth programs conducted by the Alexandria American Legion Post 24, Inc.—a tax exempt 501(c)(19) veterans' organization.

For more information or to register, visit www.valegionpost24.com/events-calendar.



Participants in the American Legion's 24-mile Run, Walk & Roll virtual challenge will receive a custom-designed commemorative coin.

"Two thousand steps in your house equals a mile so if you are homebound or the weather is not cooperating, you can still participate."

— American Legion Post 24 event organizer
Mike Mixon

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 5

the youth. Readers can earn prizes by completing activity challenges based on four main badges: Reading, Fitness Fun, Virtual Programs, and Connect & Share. The reading challenge will run virtually on Beanstack, a reading application that makes it easy for participants to register, track their reading and earn virtual badges for completion. Readers who complete the challenge will be entered into a raffle to win a variety of prizes. The Wizards

Winter Reading Challenge will run from January 1 – March 31. Prizes will be distributed in April. Sign up online through Beanstack.

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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—Werner Heisenberg

CALENDAR

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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, we 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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OPINION

COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout

FROM PAGE 4

tions in a similar way to the annual flu vaccine at their local pharmacies and primary care providers.

As of Monday, just over 89,000 first doses of the vaccine have been administered statewide during the last two weeks, with a total of 451,000 doses distributed to local health departments.

Here in Fairfax County 5,000 doses of the vaccine arrived on Dec. 23 and were administered to EMS, the Community Services Board, federally qualified health centers, and Health Department staff. Last week, the Health Department started vaccinating providers not affiliated with hospitals with a focus on health care providers at dialysis centers, urgent care, and free clinics. Nobody has been fully vaccinated yet — completed their scheduled second dose of the vaccine — because 3-4 weeks must elapse between the first and second doses. Many of the first people to receive the vaccine will be eligible for their second dose in the upcoming

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

FROM PAGE 4

law. We once again urge you and your colleagues to implement this critical reform. Mandatory minimums prevent judges from taking an individualized, holistic approach to each sentence based on the specific circumstances of a given case. They lead to the irrationally lengthy prison sentences that fuel mass incarceration while exacerbating the racial and socioeconomic inequities that have come to characterize our criminal justice system. Banning mandatory minimums will make our communities safer and stem the tide of mass incarceration.

❖ End cash bail: Cash bail leads to a two-tiered justice system — one for the rich and one for everyone else. Those who sit behind bars while awaiting trial are exposed to significant collateral consequences, like the loss of a job or even custody of their children. What's more, these impacts are disproportionately experienced by Virginians of color. If someone poses a significant safety or flight risk, no amount of money will change that, and that person should be held pretrial. Otherwise, we should rely on Virginia's comprehensive suite of pretrial services to help decision makers make informed determinations about the interventions and supervision that will

allow for pretrial release while keeping the community safe and incentivizing defendants to show up to court. The state should increase its investment in pretrial services, social services, and support networks to provide for universal access to resources like social workers that help mitigate recidivism. Ending cash bail is a vital step toward ensuring fair and equal access to justice in the Commonwealth.

❖ Abolish the death penalty: The death penalty is unjust, racially biased, and ineffective at deterring crime. We have more equitable and effective means of keeping our communities safe and addressing society's most heinous crimes. It is past time for Virginia to end this antiquated practice.

❖ End the "three strikes" felony enhancement for petty larceny offenses: The collat-

week. The County Health Department will continue to vaccinate by appointment at the Fairfax County government center a large number of health care workers over the next several weeks to ensure that they all get equitable access to the limited quantities of the vaccine received each week.

Across the country, we have seen surges of COVID-19 spread in the last several weeks, leading to dwindling ICU bed capacity in many states, leaving many patients without access to care. Here in Virginia, we are currently at 82% ICU capacity, with 3,307 beds currently available. This is not the time to back down from following COVID-19 guidelines. While experts continue to learn about the protection the COVID-19 vaccine provides, and because the vaccine requires several weeks to take full effect, the CDC still recommends wearing masks, washing hands, and practicing physical distancing even after vaccination.

You can find more information at <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/covid-19-vaccine/>.

eral consequences associated with felonies far exceed those of misdemeanors. State law currently saddles too many Virginians with these collateral consequences by transforming a misdemeanor larceny offense into a felony offense when an individual has previously been convicted of

misdemeanor larceny offenses. This senselessly punitive means of addressing a nonviolent property crime fuels mass incarceration and furthers recidivism. Ending this "three strikes" enhancement will make our communities safer and our criminal justice system more equitable.

Again, we applaud the recent progress of the General Assembly on criminal justice reform.

We believe that these policy changes constitute a natural extension of that progress. We stand ready to assist with the passage of these reforms in any manner you deem helpful.

Signed,

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and City of Manassas

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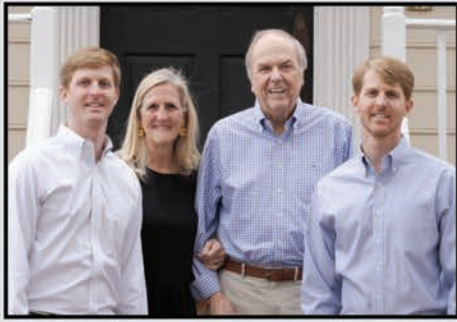
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★★★★★ Highly likely to recommend

Chris White and his team were absolutely superb in every aspect our recent home sale. We listed with Chris as he sold us the house back in 2009 and we knew then to use the Whites when the time came to sell.

Their acumen of the N. VA market and their marketing strategy was extremely successful; above and beyond our expectations. Their advice and counsel on how to prepare our home were spot on. Their network of contractors and the work they performed was superb. The team prepared an information marketing brochure that looked amazing & really highlighted the features & value of our home. Their open house produced multiple offers and their counsel around reviewing and selecting the offers was again extremely helpful. Additionally, they kept us informed, provided expert advice, and watched over the home during the period we moved out and began preparing for our closing.

In summary, we would highly recommend them to anyone buying or selling in N. VA.

- The Hansen Family



★★★★★ Highly likely to recommend

My wife Jamee and I, both transplants from other cities, recently purchased our first home in Alexandria after deciding to put down roots in the Northern Virginia area. Being that it was our first home buying experience we had a lot of questions and a level of anxiety about the whole process that the White family were not only able to answer but lay out a step by step plan that gave us a sense of comfort. What's more, the team was extremely easy to get along with and we felt as though we hadn't just found great realtors but friends that we could see being a part of our lives as we grow our family in this area. The level of care, attention, and patience they provided to meet all our needs and desires in a home was special and has lasted past our closing and settlement as we make the home ours. We cannot emphasize how extremely easy and most of all enjoyable they made this process. Jamee and I highly recommend the White family to assist you whether it be your first or second home purchase. It is evident they know the area better than anyone else and will make you feel extremely welcome.

-The Marquez Family

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