

Great Falls CONNECTION

Celebrating the Passion Of Music Making

NEWS, PAGE 6

Thomas Pandolfi,
virtuoso pianist plays
at Great Falls United
Methodist Church.



Questioning Racially-Biased Gang Database

NEWS, PAGE 3

SENIOR LIVING

PAGE 8

McLean, Langley High Boundaries to Change

NEWS, PAGE 9

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OPINION, PAGE 4 ❖ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 10

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Questioning Racially-Biased Gang Database

Activists: Residents can be entered into GangNet merely for living in neighborhoods where gang activity takes place.

Part one of a two-part series.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

With no recourse for review, a nebulous definition of gang membership led an activist, an immigration advocate, and a Virginia legislator to fight for change.

Kofi Annan, president of The Activated People, sent a letter to Jeffrey McKay, Chairman Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, Rodney Lusk (D-Lee District), Chairman of the County Public Safety Committee, James Walkinshaw (D-Braddock District), Vice-Chairman of the Public Safety Committee, and Col. Edwin Roessler, County Chief of Police. Annan detailed concerns about individuals wrongly labeled gang members and nominated by law enforcement at Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD) into the national database repository, GangNet, used by the Northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force, and accessible to its FCPD officers as a participating jurisdiction in the Task Force. According to Annan, the criteria were “highly questionable and potentially discriminatory.”

“Residents can be entered into GangNet merely for living in neighborhoods where gang activity takes place or for their style of dress, and they may not even be notified that they were entered into the database. An officer’s observation about attire, tattoos, activity or affiliation can set a life-altering legal process in motion,” said Annan.

GANG MEMBER categorization, Annan said, is “part of a longstanding campaign to stigmatize black and brown communities and expedite deportation of members of the Latinx community.” According to Annan, the campaign encourages FCPD officers to engage in racial profiling. It reinforces racial bias against mostly Black and brown men.

Annan said that the criteria, with the exceptions of “self-admission” or “in-custody classification,” were highly subjective and created “opportunities for law enforcement to inadvertently or erroneously mislabel individuals as gang members and violate their Constitutional rights and the rights of those around them.”

According to the Department of Justice, Privacy Impact Assessment for GangNet, GangNet is an off the shelf system “in support of A.T.F.’s missions in reducing violent crime and protecting the public.” It contains identifying data on alleged gang members, including but not limited to the individual’s photos, street names, addresses, date of birth, phone numbers, known associates, uses of gang hand signs and symbols, and images of their tattoos. Information on individuals is based on suspected criminal involvement or as witnesses or victims in

criminal case investigations and law enforcement concerns.

The information gathered and added to the system is within the Privacy Act exemption scope for law enforcement records outlined in 5 U.S.C. 552a (j) (2). GangNet purges subjects from the database after five years of inactivity.

“The ‘gang member’ label that federal authorities rely on is not based on a court’s determination, and therefore, no due process applied,” Annan said. “There is also no current mechanism by which to challenge one’s placement in GangNet.”

Annan added that being identified as a gang member emboldened “federal agents to selectively carry out deportation procedures” and allowed prosecutors to call for “sentence enhancements.”

Annan urged the Board of Supervisors to prohibit FCPD participation in the Northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force until the Task Force “adopted more stringent criteria” and improved “transparency by expanding residents’ right to receive a notification” when they were nominated to be entered.

“The ‘gang member’ label that federal authorities rely on is not based on a court’s determination, and therefore, no due process applied.”

— Kofi Annan,
president of The Activated People

“Anything less fails to uphold the principles of due process on which our immigration and criminal justice systems depend,” Annan said.

ANNAN did not hear back from the addressees named in his letter until Dec. 29. Chairman McKay emailed then, and two days later, on Dec. 31, Jay Lanham, Executive Director of the Gang Task Force, reached out. Annan provided copies of the correspondences.

McKay wrote that he confirmed with Chief Roessler “that the task force’s director (Jay Lanham) is working to suspend its use of GangNet.”

Lanham said, “I have suspended our use... We only have three senior detectives trained to use GangNet, and they have not used it for many years...The Task Force does not and has never maintained a Gang Database.”

Confused, Annan asked Lanham: “Wouldn’t GangNet be considered a gang



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Falsely labeled gang affiliation can ultimately lead to a person being wrongly detained.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Kofi Annan

database? ...Is there any other database besides GangNet that FCPD officers use to submit/nominate the names of individuals suspected of being involved in gangs?”

Lanham said GangNet was a database, operated and maintained by HIDTA (Baltimore/Washington High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area) “which falls within the Department of Justice.” “HIDTA makes it available to agencies that wish to access it. Those wishing to access it must be trained and approved to make entries in the system.” Lanham said, “I do not have knowledge of which agencies have access to GangNet, nor am I aware of any agencies that maintain such databases.”

On Jan. 7, 2021, Annan said, “I am glad that the Northern Virginia Regional Gang Task Force will formalize their practice of not using GangNet. I’m also proud that our County Police Department does not use this

flawed software.”

Supervisor Lusk echoed Annan’s statement. “I’m pleased that the Fairfax County Police Department does not currently use GangNet Software,” Lusk said.

Kelly White Senior is Program Director of the Detained Adult Program at Capital Area Immigrants’ Rights (CAIR) Coalition. White shared a copy of testimony by Jocelyn Cazares, Senior Attorney, Detained Adult Program (CAIR), to the Fairfax Delegation of the General Assembly Jan. 9, “In Support of Transparency in Policing: Overinclusion of People of Color in Gang Databases in Virginia.”

Cazares testified, “I regularly represent people who are detained by I.C.E. and are denied liberty or even credibility because of police over-inclusion in gang databases.” Cazares said “John,” a Fairfax County resident applied for asylum and while the application was pending, found “himself accused of gang membership in ways that still affect him today.”

According to Cazares’ testimony: “There was no evidence of John’s gang membership, yet the accusation of John’s gang activity was ultimately entered into evidence in John’s immigration case. John, therefore, found himself having to fight gang accusations with no basis.”

A copy of the interview transcript between “John” and CAIR, provided by White, “John” said he did not know he was in a gang database until arrested. “The first time was when I.C.E. arrested me... I learned from the local authorities and I.C.E. I didn’t realize, I was surprised.” Asked about the consequences “John” said, “Affects so much, and it is false information in that database.”

White said that according to the Center for Popular Democracy’s Access to Counsel Report, “Every year, nearly 4,000 people in Washington, D.C. metropolitan area courts, Arlington, Virginia, and Baltimore, Maryland, face deportation in civil immigration court without the assistance of a lawyer.”

A PROPOSED BILL relating to criminal street gang reporting; notice and process for contesting information into shared gang databases has reached the Virginia House of Delegates 2021 session for consideration.

On Tues. Jan. 11, Virginia House Delegate Kaye Kory (D-38) said, “I am the chief patron of legislation which eliminates the lack of transparency and due process in the criminal street gang database currently in use by law enforcement in Virginia. Names are entered into this database by law enforcement officers who have only an unverified ‘reasonable suspicion’ of an individual’s gang affiliation and without notifying the individual. This creates a database riddled with racial bias and inequities without the slightest opportunity for oversight or accountability, which can lead to selective actions by state and federal law enforcement against those in the database.”



We Still Need Your Help

Thank you to hundreds who have supported us financially, and with warm words of encouragement.

BY MARY KIMM

In 2009, I was diagnosed with breast cancer, and after a year-long journey of surgery, radiation and chemotherapy, I have been fine. Sometimes I will run into someone (well, I haven't actually been out to run into anyone since March) or talk to someone who will ask, "How are you?" with a tone of concern, and I realize they are wondering about my cancer. (Yes, I did go out for my mammogram. More than a decade cancer-free, thank you!).

2009 was also the onset of steep declines in newspaper advertising revenue, and that has been a pernicious and persistent problem.

Right now, when I hear that tone of concern (or something a little more ominous) with the "And how are the papers doing?" this person is asking about the GoFundMe, and whether we anticipate that we will survive the pandemic.

At the end of 2020, the Connection Newspapers shared a GoFundMe drive that would help all of our papers, including our flagship, the Alexandria Gazette Packet, publishing since 1784, the Mount Vernon Gazette, the Arlington Connection, Great Falls Connection, McLean-Vienna Connection, Centre View-Chantilly, Reston and Herndon Connection, and the Burke, Springfield, Fairfax, Fairfax Station, Clifton, Lorton Connection plus the Potomac Almanac.

We set a goal of \$50,000, and thanks to community support, in a month we have topped 50 percent of that. Thank you so much.

There is no deadline. <https://www.gofundme.com/f/save-america-oldest-newspaper>

How did we get here (I keep asking myself)? We are facing an existential threat in the combined crises of a long-running decline in newspaper advertising, plus the onset of the pandemic and the economic shutdown that has come with it. (Newspaper advertising revenue overall fell more than 60 percent from 2008 to 2018, well before the pandemic.)

In the first week of the shutdown in March, the drop in revenue for us, and everywhere, was breathtaking.

Fortunately, some long time advertisers have stayed the course and kept our revenues from moving actually to zero.

But many restaurants, retailers and others are also facing an economic crisis that could lead to extinction. We are not the only ones. Businesses, families and individuals floundered for months after early federal help, desperately in need of more help. Now we know more federal help is on the way, but is not here yet.

More than 160,000 businesses in the US closed just between March and August of last year due to the pandemic, and that number is

likely vastly underreported. While local newspapers were already suffering from advertising declines, the loss of thousands of local businesses as potential advertisers is a setback, and not just for The Connection. Event advertising, a mainstay, has disappeared.

Community support has come, through GoFundMe, and other means — many have mailed checks payable to their favorite newspaper, to 1606 King Street, Alexandria, Va. 22314, and others have purchased ads as a way to lend financial support. Words of encouragement and appreciation have also meant so much to all of us here.

So what is the plan? Our GoFundMe, as it continues to grow, will allow us to bridge the operational gaps between a deep valley and the arrival of the funds from the Paycheck Protection Program (through local banks). And that will give us time to grapple with the question of how to reinvent ourselves and create an organization and revenue stream that will sustain us. Our writers and others connected to us are full of ideas. I'm sure our readers, advertisers and supporters are also. Please let us know.

We are experts at cost-cutting, and that has been a painful, ongoing process.

Now we will embrace a combination of solutions, because just one source is unlikely to unravel the tough situation that we face.

More thoughts next week.

Changing Images of Virginia

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



On the east side of Capitol Square near the Executive Mansion in Richmond is the Virginia Civil Rights Memorial featuring 16-year-old Barbara Johns who led the student walkout that resulted in a civil rights case before the Supreme Court as part of Brown v. Board of Education that found racially-segregated schools to be unconstitutional. With her on the memorial are statues of attorneys Oliver Hill and Spotswood Robinson who argued the case and representations of persons who faced repression throughout Virginia's racist history.

On the west end of Capitol Square, near where the new General Assembly office building is being constructed, is a lone statue of Harry F. Byrd—Senator, VA (1933–1965), Governor of Virginia (1926–1930), and Virginia State Senator (1924–1926).

Barbara Johns is about to receive an additional recognition as a civil rights pioneer. A sculpture of her will join a copy of the Houdon sculpture of George Washington in the National Statuary Hall in the United States Capitol representing Virginia and replacing the one of Confederate General Robert E. Lee that has already been removed.

A resolution making its way through the cur-

rent session of the General Assembly directs that the Harry Byrd statue be removed. Byrd held political office for many years and dominated Virginia politics for nearly four decades as head of what was called the Byrd Organization that in any other state would be called the Byrd machine. He stayed in power through racist voter suppression laws that were some of the most effective in keeping Black voters from the polls and kept Virginia with the lowest voter participation among the states. He was known for his fiscal conservatism as governor and senator, and Virginia remained near the bottom of the states in funding for public schools and health and social services programs while he and his machine controlled state government. While states moved towards racial desegregation of their schools, a Byrd-devised "massive resistance" ploy delayed school desegregation in Virginia by more than a decade amid about forty or more lawsuits. In the process, some public schools were closed, and some children stayed home for as many as five years because of Byrd's resistance.

As a teenager I worked "up on the mountain" from my home in Page County at Skyland Lodge on the Skyline Drive. As a room clerk I was told not to rent the best room we had until after 6 p.m. in case Senator Byrd wanted to come for the night. He was extended this courtesy for the

pivotal role he played in establishing the Shenandoah National Park. His biographer Professor Ronald L. Heinemann in Harry Byrd of Virginia (University of Virginia Press, 1996) pointed out that while as governor he modernized state government for the time, his conservative economic and social policies held the state back. He was a product of the Jim Crow era, and he could never get beyond it.

Barbara Johns as a young woman took a big risk standing up for what she knew was right. She played a pivotal role in Virginia moving from a civil rights back-water to the progressive state it is now becoming. She reflects the image I want our state to have!

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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Reston Teen Named a Candidate in U.S. Presidential Scholars Program

Kaleena Roeva, 18, of Reston, a graduating senior at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, has been named a candidate in U.S. Presidential Scholars Program.

Kaleena is one of more than 4,500 candidates, selected from nearly 3.6 million students expected to graduate from U.S. high schools in the year 2021.

Inclusion in the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program is one of the highest honors bestowed upon graduating high school seniors. Scholars are selected on the basis of superior academic and artistic achievements, leadership qualities, strong character and involvement in community and school activities.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Kaleena Roeva

was established in 1964 by Executive Order of the President to recognize some of the nation's most distinguished graduating seniors for their accomplishments in many areas: academic success, leadership, and service to school and community. Annually, up to 161 U.S. Presidential Scholars are chosen from among that year's senior class, representing excellence in education and the promise of greatness in America's youth. If circumstances permit all Scholars are invited to Washington, DC in June for the National Recognition Program, featuring various events and enrichment activities and culminating in the presentation of the Presidential Scholars Medallion during a White House-sponsored ceremony.

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- Northern Virginia Building Industry Association
- Apartment and Office Building Association
- Virginia Self Storage Association
- Washington Area New Automobile Dealers Association
- And many more...



Celebrating the Passion of Music Making

Virtuoso pianist, sought after worldwide, finds a home at Great Falls United Methodist Church.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

There were particular moments in Thomas Pandolfi's earliest days of his existence, he said, when hearing music, particularly piano music, whether it was part of an orchestra, choral music, or opera, set him on a course of "tremendous work." "It is what one great artist described as 'sweet slavery'... a lot of sacrifices, but immensely rewarding," he said.

Pandolfi is the organist at Great Falls United Methodist Church. The young pianist virtuoso is sought after worldwide. On Jan. 22, 2021, seated comfortably in the small church where he plays liturgical music most Sunday mornings, Pandolfi said that music did something to him on the inside, even as a small child. "It's like I had goosebumps emotionally," he said.

Born into a musical family residing in Washington D.C., Pandolfi said his father was his "first inspiration." "He played piano, not professionally, but was an excellent amateur pianist, and very involved in the church in that aspect." According to Pandolfi, when he was four or five, his father instructed him on the piano but quickly sought out teachers. By the time he was 10, Pandolfi said he was already performing in public. At age 16, Pandolfi's teacher arranged a solo recital debut. "The reviewers came and predicted all these wonderful, wonderful things," Pandolfi said. Then it was off to The Juilliard School, where at age 21, Pandolfi made his debut at the Lincoln Center.

WITH EACH PASSING SEASON, Pandolfi excelled, performing passionate artistry and amazing techniques. He made appearances at the Kennedy Center, Strathmore, Kyiv Opera House in Ukraine, and the Romanian Athenaeum in Bucharest. Thomas Pandolfi, Piano Biography runs 45 lines on Instant Encore. It notes "performances with such European orchestras as The George Enescu Philharmonic, The Cluj Philharmonic, The Moravian Philharmonic, The National Philharmonic of the Republic of Moldova, and The Aberystwyth Symphony in Wales."

Yet, while Pandolfi values his concert pianist career, it is to Great Falls United Methodist Church, the Washingtonian returns every Sunday morning and Wednesday night when he is not in concert. "I think it's very charming. I love ...the architecture of the building...The people, very welcoming from the beginning, and quite frankly...the flexibility... There are often times where I have to go away for extended periods... Everybody here has been very understanding of that." Pandolfi added that it allowed him to balance his spiritual life with his concert



Thomas Pandolfi, virtuoso pianist plays at Great Falls United Methodist Church.

"We consider ourselves to be very fortunate to have Thomas in our small church. We feel like God was looking after all of us when He sent him to us..."

— Jesslyn Lumb, the Worship Coordinator at Great Falls United Methodist Church



(From left) Reverend Livingston S. Dore, Pastor Great Falls United Methodist Church, Thomas Pandolfi, Concert Pianist, and Jesslyn Lumb, Worship Coordinator Great Falls United Methodist Church.

career life.

Pandolfi does not believe in making the worship experience concert-like. "I think the focus of the service should be on worship... Not bringing attention to myself... I happen to love these great hymn melodies that I

grew up with quite a lot. They touch me on a deeper emotional level."

Asked what part of his life he would like to change, Pandolfi said, "Sometimes I wish I lived in a different century. Only because I would love to have witnessed in person these



PHOTOS BY
MERCIA HOBSON/
THE CONNECTION

great composers, met them, got a chance to speak with them. Listen to how Chopin seduced the audience, how Liszt's brilliance was hair-raising. Talk to Beethoven and Mozart about their compositions and all that sort of thing." With a quick smile, Pandolfi added, "But of course, I wouldn't want to forsake the modern conveniences. I'd probably want to come right back."

PANDOLFI reflected on how he would like people to remember him. "Thomas Pandolfi is music-making. It always touched me at the core of my heart, went deep into my soul, and inspired me as a listener in the most sincere way."

He said if a child feels that burning musical desire, feels it must be expressed somehow, it should never be suppressed. "Never be shy about it, because it will always be a regret later on. And if there's even a small flame, a spark that develops into a flame, that should be nurtured ... Never hold in what you want to do,"

Jesslyn Lumb is the Worship Coordinator at Great Falls United Methodist Church. "We consider ourselves to be very fortunate to have Thomas in our small church. We feel like God was looking after all of us when He sent him to us...The music is wonderful. Maybe you just have to tune in to streaming on Sunday to hear Pandolfi play."

Reverend Livingston S. Dore, Pastor at Great Falls Methodist Church, said, "One of the things I try to have us strive for here is music excellence. I feel sometimes people come to church more to hear the music than to hear me. And that's perfectly fine. I've always believed music enhances the worship service. So, if at any time the pastor just goes flat... I'd encourage the community if they have not yet, if just out of sheer curiosity, at least visit with us online."

Floyd Gaibler, 70, of Great Falls

Floyd Gaibler of Great Falls passed away on Jan. 21, 2021 after complications from heart surgery. He was born on Aug. 9, 1950 to farmers Lester and Laura Gaibler of Far-nam, Neb.

Floyd held a Masters and Bachelors degree in Agricultural Economics from the University of Nebraska. Floyd came to Washington, D.C. in 1975 as an Agricultural Economist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He was the Executive Director of the National Cheese Institute/American Butter Institute, Vice President of International Dairy Foods Association, Vice President of the Agricultural Retailers Association, Consultant for Leshner & Russell, Inc., Deputy (acting) Under Secretary Farm & Foreign Agricultural Services under the George W. Bush Administration. Floyd was a political appointee in the Reagan and Bush administration.

Floyd's service to the Agricultural sector spanned more than 30 years in both the Ex-



Floyd Gaibler

ecutive and Legislative branches of the U.S. Federal Government.

Upon his death, Floyd was the Director of Trade Policy and Biotechnology at the U.S. Grains Council for the past 10 years working with Government Officials and the White House to address trade policy to the export of U.S. feed grains.

Floyd leaves behind a loving wife, Salome Howard Gaibler, a daughter Stephanie Gaibler Sutton, a son in law Nicolas Sutton, a son Christian Gaibler, a father Lester Gaibler, a sister Gwen Kotschwar, a brother in law Rick Kotschwar, a niece Gretchin Heckenlively, her husband John and their two children Mason and Elle, a nephew Derek Kotschwar, his wife Amanda and their 2

children Reid and Riley.

Floyd was an active member of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Great Falls.

A memorial service will be held in Spring 2021.

BULLETIN BOARD

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

THURSDAY/JAN. 28

Encore Learning will host a Spring Course Preview of its classes on Thursday, Jan. 28 at 9 a.m. With 31 classes, including some old favorites and new additions, numerous special events and a variety of clubs, Encore Learning offers plenty of opportunities for people near and far to master interesting topics and socialize with others from the comfort of your couch. For an in-depth look at course offerings for the Spring 2021 semester, join them on Thursday, January 28 at 9:30 a.m. for our Spring Course Preview. <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85231610450> Spring 2021 Registration begins Monday, February 1 at 10 a.m. and membership is required in order to register for classes. Visit www.encorelearning.net.

TUESDAY/FEB. 2

The Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District will hold its Annual Seedling Sale starting on Tuesday, Feb. 2. The trees and shrubs are native to Virginia and are available at a low cost to Fairfax County residents. NVSWCD selected the seedlings with advice from the Fairfax County Urban Forestry Management Division and the Virginia Department of Forestry. This year, selected species will enhance the urban forestry understory and promote natives on smaller lots. Two packages are available: super shrubs and tiny trees, and space savers and bountiful berries. Packages are \$17 each. Go to NVSWCD's Native Seedling Sale website to order and for pickup information. Call 703-324-1420.

SEVEN CORNERS INTERCHANGE MEETINGS

The Fairfax County Department of Transportation will hold two virtual meetings next month to seek public input on planned transportation

improvements at the Seven Corners interchange and nearby roads. The meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 3, 7 p.m., will be held in English. The meeting on Thursday, Feb. 4, 7 p.m., will be held in Spanish. The goals of the project include enhancing bicycle, pedestrian and transit access and connectivity, while enhancing traffic flow. FCDOT has identified the following improvements and is seeking input to determine the order in which they will be implemented:

- Create a four-way intersection at Leesburg Pike and Wilson Boulevard/Sleepy Hollow Road with redesigned crossing.
- Build a new "ring" road that connects Route 7 (on the side with the bus transfer station) to the intersection of Wilson Boulevard and Roosevelt Boulevard crossing over Route 50 with overpasses.
- Widen Route 50 to six lanes from the Arlington/Fairfax County line, westward, close to South Street.
- Build new ramps that connect Route 50 to the new "ring" road on each side of the new four-way intersection of Route 7/Wilson Boulevard/Sleepy Hollow Road.
- Construct a new road that connects the Willston Multi-Cultural Center and Village Center to Route 7.
- Create better connected road network with redevelopment.

Comments will be accepted during the meetings and via an online survey that will be available after Feb. 3. Stakeholders may also submit feedback to the project team:

- Online via red feedback form link at the bottom of the project webpage
- In writing to: FCDOT, Attn: Seven Corners Study Feedback, 4050 Legato Road, Suite 400, Fairfax, VA 22033
- By phone: 703-877-5673; TTY 711

For more information, visit the project webpage at: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/study/seven-corners>, which also features a video introduction to the study and February meetings.

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Sorority Sisters Celebrate Vice President Kamala Harris

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Wearing their sorority's signature strand of pearls and clothing in shades of pink and green, Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) sorority members, Martha Coleman and Shirley Dickerson Taylor were filled with awe and jubilation as they watched their sorority sister and fellow Historically Black College and University (HBCU) alum Kamala Harris, sworn in as Vice President of the United States.

Both women are decades-long members of the sorority and are now part of the Zeta Chi Omega Chapter, which is made up of women from Arlington, Alexandria and Fairfax counties. Local members supported Harris' election and say their emotions include pride and optimism, for older members as well as younger.

"As someone who participated in the Civil Rights movement of the 60s, I get emotional just thinking about this huge accomplishment and how far we as a people have come," said Coleman, who has been a member for 53 years. "The idea that a woman of color, who attended an HBCU, and who was raised by a single parent is now our Vice President is mind boggling."

"I was overcome with joy and happiness to witness this historical day," added Taylor,



PHOTO BY
ROBIN MCCOY

Robin McCoy, is a 40-year member of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority and serves as the chapter's president.



PHOTO BY TIA SMITH

Tia Smith wore pink and green on election day to celebrate Vice-President Harris' victory. Both women are members of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority

who has been a member for 63 years. "The tears flowed as I watched Soror Kamala take the oath and become the Vice President of the United States."

"I witnessed something that I never thought I would witness in my lifetime, said 68-year old Linder Gibson who lives in Montgomery County. "I was overwhelmed. "This lets me know that my little granddaughter can grow up and become anything she wants to be, even President."

Those who joined AKA at Howard University felt a special connection.

"She has been an inspiration for many, said Linda Elaine Newman, who has been

an active member for 43 years. "I was doubly proud because I am also a graduate of Howard University. Her positive accomplishments have given good recognition to HBCUs and our beloved sisterhood."

"From the standpoint of being a black and Asian woman it was a monumental moment," added Patricia Wallace, who has been a member for 55 years. It was astounding since, in both these cultures, women were deemed to be on the bottom rung, thought of as property and second-class citizens. Now the glass ceiling has broken."

The Arlington/Alexandria chapter has been in existence for more than 60 years. "Tears of joy flowed down my face as I watched the first woman, the first woman of color and my sorority sister take the oath of office for the Vice President of the United States of America," said Robin McCoy, who is a 40-year member and serves as the chapter's president.

Many felt a sense of optimism about the possibilities that would be conveyed to the young women and girls in their families.

"The swearing in of my soror Kamala Harris filled me with sadness, joy and delight," said Margarette Peterson, who was initiated in 1959. "Joy came to my heart to know that my granddaughter would continue to grow up in a better world. ... I was filled with sadness because it has taken so long for a black woman with outstanding qualifications to

be recognized. I dried my tears and took a picture ... proudly in my Golden Soror tee shirt."

"I thought of my 10-year-old granddaughter's future in a country that has elected the first woman as Vice President, who happens to be Black, who happens to have been shaped by our founders at Howard University, and who happens to have been the recipient of the unflinching support from women all over America," said Tia Johnson. "My granddaughter's future was looking brighter. Vice President Harris' election provides the answer that all things are possible."

The Arlington/Alexandria chapter includes older members that range in age from 60 to 90. Many thanked a higher power for the victory.

"I was overcome with a flood of emotions and ... a tremendous feeling of gratitude that God allowed me to live long enough to witness this historic moment: the first woman, the first Black, the first Asian American, the first HBCU graduate and the first AKA to become Vice President of the United States of America, a heartbeat away from the most powerful office in the world," said Lula McLain Hicks who was initiated in 1968. "In that moment, Vice President Harris represented every member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated and our 113 years of service to humankind."

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The First Shots to Knock Out COVID-19

Fellowship Square's Seniors inoculated.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Lake Anne Fellowship House residents Steve McAvoy, 71, and Jin Liu, 84, of Reston were among the first of seven hundred anxious older adults at one of the three senior affordable housing communities operated by Fellowship House in Reston and Woodbridge who were inoculated last week against COVID-19. Vaccinations began Jan. 18.

"We are so happy and appreciate this so much," said Jin Liu of Reston, who lives with his wife, Geeta. "There are long waits, long lines, and it is so cold outside."

Following many weeks of planning with health departments and local pharmacies, Fellowship Square began bringing the vaccines directly to residents' doors.



PHOTO BY FELLOWSHIP HOUSE
Lake Anne Fellowship House resident Steve McAvoy, 71, receives his long-awaited COVID-19 vaccine from a mobile health team with CVS pharmacy.

"With an average age of 78, Fellowship Square residents are in the high-risk category for COVID," said Christy Zeitz, CEO of Fellowship Square. "Working with Walgreens and CVS teams, (we) are thrilled to be able to bring the vaccine to our residents' doorsteps."

McLean, Langley High Boundaries to Change

Next public hearing on Jan. 28, School Board vote on Feb. 4.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Fairfax County School Board held a hybrid regular meeting on Jan. 21. Jeffrey K. Platenberg, assistant superintendent, Facilities and Transportation Services, brought forward a new informational business item, a review of the McLean HS Boundary Adjustment Process.

“The purpose of the McLean High School Boundary Study and the recommended boundary adjustments is really to provide the capacity relief to McLean High School by using the available capacity of Langley High School. The study also includes the middle schools to provide continuity in the school feeder pattern from elementary onto middle and high schools, and any change made,” Platenberg said.

According to Platenberg, FCPS recommended that the School Board approve a boundary adjustment of a portion of the Spring Hill Elementary School split feeder area to feed from Longfellow Middle School (2000 Westmoreland Street, Falls Church) and McLean High School to Cooper Middle School (977 Balls Hill Road, McLean) and Langley High School. Any approved boundary adjustment would not change the elementary school boundary.

Platenberg’s presentation focused on the four options developed and provided at the Boundary Study Community Meeting held on Dec. 7.

- ❖ Option A considered reassigning students in the Colvin Run Elementary School split feeder area and a portion of Westbriar Elementary School.
- ❖ Option B considered reassigning students in the Colvin Run Elementary School split feeder area, a portion of the Spring Hill Elementary School split feeder area and a Westbriar Elementary School portion.
- ❖ Option C considered reassigning students in the Spring Hill Elementary School split feeder area.
- ❖ Option D was no change.

THE PRESENTATION noted that during the Dec. 7 meeting, the community reviewed the options, and staff continued to collect comments via email. Concerns about development in Tysons, split feeders, and the schools’ socioeconomic diversity were the major feedback themes. Given the accu-



Eileen Tholen, Dranesville District Fairfax County School Board Member



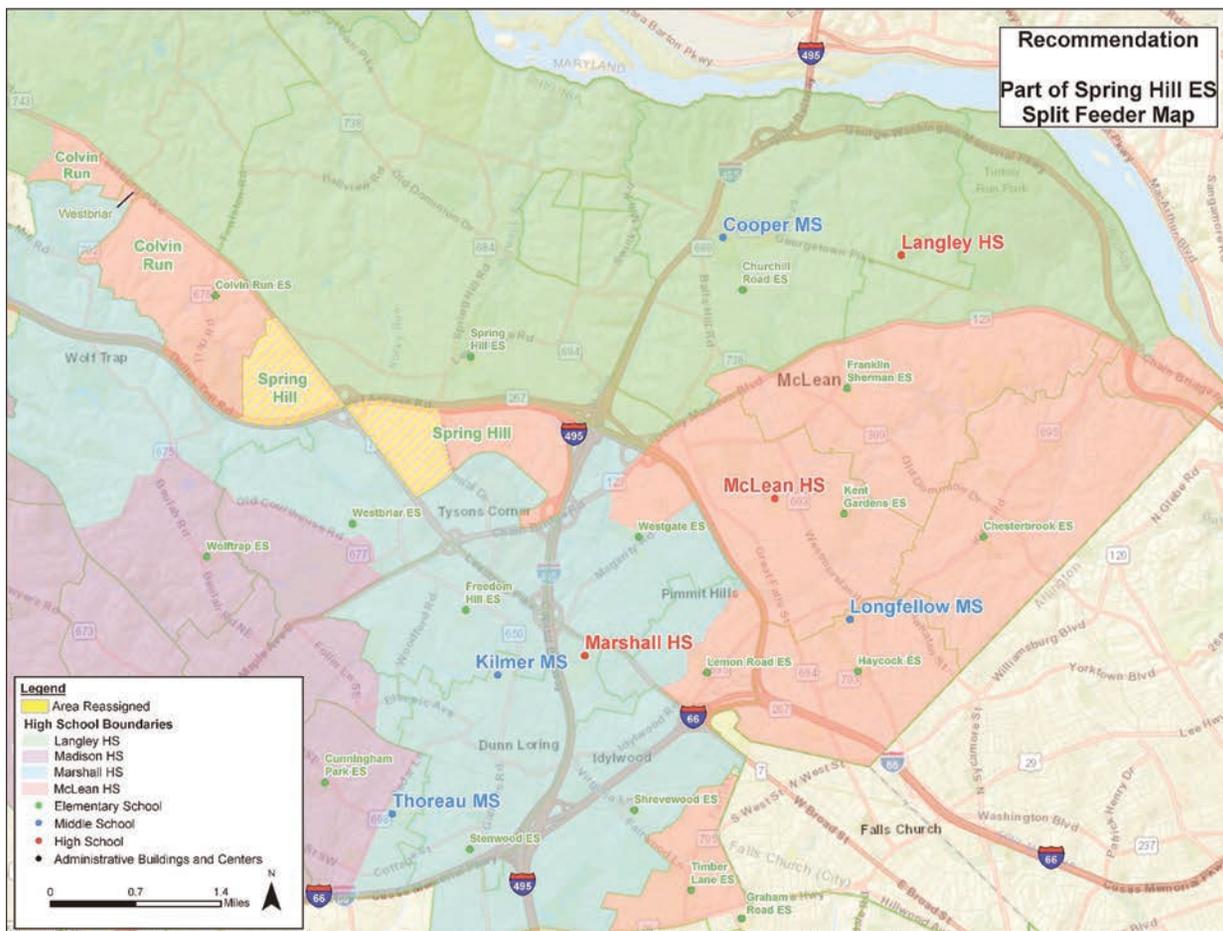
Jeffrey K. Platenberg, assistant superintendent, Facilities and Transportation Services Fairfax County Public Schools

“The purpose of the McLean High School Boundary Study and the recommended boundary adjustments is really to provide the capacity relief to McLean High School by using the available capacity of Langley High School.”

— Jeffrey K. Platenberg, assistant superintendent

resented by Elaine Tholen. She said, “We have a public hearing next week, and then a vote on how we will move forward with the boundary adjustment on Feb. 4. I encourage all of you to be part of this process... I’m committed to continue listening to you.”

Tholen said she was aware of the community feedback urging to keep numbers balanced moving forward with any uncertainties after COVID and area development. She understood the community’s request that the School Board not inadvertently overload Cooper MS and yet still provide some relief



The area in yellow shows the FCPS’ recommended proposed boundary adjustment areas to be reassigned.

mulated information, FCPS revised Option C as their recommendation. The suggested model addressed community feedback and concerns on existing housing and population growth and planned development. It allowed continued monitoring of growth at McLean HS and Langley HS.

Platenberg acknowledged the final numbers would vary, as shown on the slide presentation. Enrollment estimates did not address phasing, commonly referred to as “grandfathering.” Also, student adjustments were estimates that used SY 2019-20 numbers. These numbers would vary.

FCPS estimated that 159 students would be reassigned from McLean HS to Langley HS and 73 students reassigned from Longfellow MS to Cooper MS.

According to Policy 8130.7 Section XI. Phasing of Adjustments: “When possible, adjustments under this policy shall be implemented through attrition and phasing. The

School Board may approve a grade-by-grade phase-in of adjustments for students beginning with the incoming class at the middle or high school levels, when feasible. The School Board may adopt other phasing plans as appropriate to the individual boundary study. Parents of rising sixth (or fifth) graders, eighth graders, and twelfth graders affected by a boundary change may, at the discretion of the School Board, be provided the option of having their students remain in the school they attended prior to the change.”

Platenberg said that the next steps in the McLean/Langley Boundary Study are a School Board Meeting-Public Hearing on Thursday, Jan. 28, to obtain additional public comment and a School Board Meeting the next week, on Feb. 4, when the School Board is scheduled for a vote on the boundary adjustment.

THE AFFECTED SCHOOLS feed into the FCSB’s Dranesville magisterial district rep-

to McLean HS and Longfellow MS as well as attempt to reduce the impact to two different split feeders, “keeping students together through their elementary school pyramid up to high school.”

Rachna Sizemore Heizer, Fairfax County School Board Member At-Large, said she thought the community would be well served regardless of the final decision, “because all of these schools in Fairfax County are great schools.” “But the importance of the process is really valuable for transparency and community input,” Sizemore Heizer said.

A video of the FCPS School Board Meeting on Jan. 21, 2021, is available on YouTube via FCPS. For additional information about the options presented on Dec. 7, visit McLean HS Proposed Boundary Adjustment.

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Maria R, Micah C, Ashlynn C, Alexia K, and Sahasra R.

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



Girl Scouts Hold Pets Food, Toys Drive

In early December, seventh Grade Girl Scout Troop 51046, began a project supporting Wolf Trap Animal Rescue (WTAR) with help from local pet shop, Great Dogs of Great Falls (GDGF).

This project-of-the-month's purpose was to help animal rescues and pet stores care for animals through these difficult times by collecting pet supply donations such as pet food or toys.

The troop worked together virtually to complete the plan. The first step was to communicate with any interested animal rescues, completed by members Alexia K and Maria R, who emailed and cold-called potential partners. To spread the word and convince more people to donate, other girls like Sahasra R, Ashlynn C, and Ella Z focused on spreading the idea by creating posters and flyers.

On Dec. 19, the date set for accepting donations, Micah C, Sahasra R, Ashlynn C, Alexia K, and Maria R worked shifts in front of Great Dogs of Great Falls accepting the flood of donations that came pouring in.



Ashlynn C, Maria R and Alexia K.

Troop 51046's project successfully ended with two full SUVs worth of pet supply donations. All the proceeds were dropped off at WTAR, and most of the supplies were purchased at GDGF.

The head of Great Dogs of Great Falls reported that she was thrilled with the increased patronage at her shop and to see such an abundance of collected supplies. Moreover, after receiving the donations, Paola Gutierrez of Wolf Trap Animal Rescue stated, "We are still getting lots of puppies in covid, it's really hard to take care of the animals during these times, but this will help us get through."

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-Werner Heisenberg

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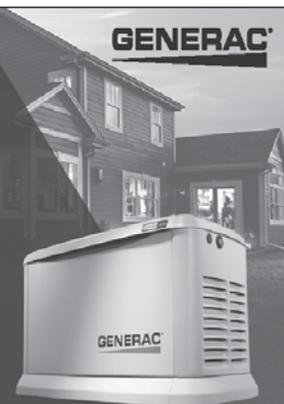
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NOW TO FEB. 7

"Winter's Tales." Torpedo Factory Artists @ Mosaic, 2905 District Avenue, #105, Fairfax. Winter can be many things---quiet, simple, elegant, cold, dark and hopeful. Winter's shadows are long and its daylight is precious. It is a season of white and blue, of cold and fire, of hibernation and regeneration. In "Winter's Tales" at the Torpedo Factory Artists @ Mosaic, the gallery's artists demonstrate in a variety of mediums how they respond to the coldest and darkest time of the year. The exhibit features beautiful paintings, fine art photography, ceramics, exquisite jewelry and fabric art.

WEDNESDAY/JAN. 27

Red Wolves in Virginia. 6:30-7:30 p.m. Online. Join the Sierra Club Great Falls Group for a free online event to learn about proposals to reintroduce critically endangered red wolves to Virginia. RSVP for link: <https://act.sierraclub.org/events/details?formcampaignid=7013q000001kYP6AAM>

FRIDAY/JAN. 29

Family Fun Trivia Night. 7-9 p.m. Virtual. At the Old Firehouse, McLean. Gather the whole family around the computer or tablet and get ready for some socially distant trivia. Prizes for winning teams. To register for Old Firehouse events, visit: www.oldfirehouse.org or call 703-448-8336, TTY: 711.

SATURDAY/JAN. 30

FACETS's Free Magic Show. 7-9 p.m. Virtual. FACETS will host a virtual free, family-friendly event that features a special performance by celebrity magician Joel Meyers. FACETS' Magic of Community event raises awareness and funds to combat poverty and homelessness in Fairfax County. The online event is free but donations are encouraged. Also during the event, several FACETS' clients will be sharing their courageous stories about homelessness and efforts to overcome it. Attendees will be inspired as they renew their commitment to a Fairfax County where everyone has a place to call home. Register at <http://facetscares.org/register-for-facets-virtual-magic-show-event/>

SUNDAY/JAN. 31

Ye Olde Tavern. 4-5 p.m. Virtual. Chase away the pandemic Winter blues and raise a glass and a song to health and happiness in "Ye Olde Tavern." Musical hosts Jennifer Cutting and Steve Winick, along with song leaders from the Washington Revels community, for rousing tunes and toasts to warm your heart. Cost is \$20. Visit the website: <https://revelsdc.org/2021/jan31-winter-pub-sing/>

SUNDAY/JAN. 31

Winter Stream Life. 1-2 p.m. At E.C. Lawrence Park, 5040 Walney Road, Chantilly. Explore Walney Creek with a naturalist to meet some of the small creek critters (macroinvertebrates) that call it home. Learn why so many different types of macroinvertebrates are active in winter streams. Your naturalist will demonstrate winter collecting, and you can help pick, sort and learn to identify these magnificent critters. This program is designed for participants age 8 to adult. Cost is \$8 per person. Call 703-631-0013.

MONDAY/FEB. 1

Making Rope. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Sully Historic Site, 3650 Historic Sully Way, Chantilly. Journey back to the 1800s at Sully Historic Site and experience the challenges people once faced in making a rope sturdy enough for their needs. Make a piece of

rope from plants found on the property at Sully and take it home to compare with today's ropes. The cost is \$30 per family. Social distancing and face coverings are required. Call 703-437-1794.

FEB. 1-13

Mardi Gras at the Workhouse. In-Person on Saturday, Feb. 13., 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. The Workhouse Arts Center is thrilled to present its first-ever Mardi Gras celebration. Join them for two weeks of family-friendly events that will engage, inspire, teach and make you laugh. This mini festival will include: Online workshops on festive mask making; Online Mixology sessions; Online demonstrations on how to make floats or yard decorations; In-person glass bead demonstrations; In-person cooking classes; Parade on the Workhouse Campus; and Drive In Comedy Shows.

TUESDAY/FEB. 2

Romance Scams. 12 p.m. Virtual event. Join AARP for a virtual webinar on Romance Scams. In a 30-minute webinar, they'll discuss the red flags to be on the lookout for anyone engaging in online relationships. Visit the website: <https://aarp.cvent.com/romancescams>

SATURDAY & MONDAY, FEB. 6 & 8

"The University of Wonder & Imagination." 11 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 12 p.m., 12:30 p.m., 1 p.m., 3 p.m., 3:30 p.m., 4 p.m., 4:30 p.m., and 5 p.m. The University of Wonder & Imagination is now enrolling students of all ages and magical abilities...and there's a place with your name on it! Assemble with your fellow students and journey to the most unusual of universities, where the mysterious Professor Bamberg will send you off to interact with the liveliest of lecturers, choose your subjects of study, enter themed rooms (such as Math, Science, and Art!) and encounter all kinds of problems and puzzles, unlocking your magical powers as you go. The decisions made by you during the event will shape your unique experience. Purchase tickets \$15/\$10 MCC district residents.

SUNDAY/FEB. 7

Worst Spy Ever. 2-3:30 p.m. Cold War Museum (100 % virtual). Most damaging spy ever? Robert Hanssen. Learn why from the Historian of the FBI. Visit the website: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/ultimate-betrayal-robert-hanssen-people-he-got-killed-and-the-lessons-tickets-123410242357>.

SATURDAY/FEB. 13

Monte Carlo Night. 6-8 p.m. Virtual event. Join in a two-hour Virtual Social on Saturday, Feb. 13, 6-8 p.m. Create your own Paint and Pour vase or heart-shaped cutting board. Cost is \$40. Visit the website: <https://www.jlnv.org/montecarlonight/>

SUNDAY/FEB. 21

The Alden in McLean has created a series of family friendly, live virtual theatrical events for families to experience together. The Winter Series performances are: Doktor Kaboom! "Look Out! Science is Coming!" Sunday, Feb 21, and Monday, Feb. 22, 4 p.m. \$15/\$10 MCC tax district residents (this fee is per device). "Look Out! Science is Coming!"

"The Joshua Show." Saturday, March, 13, 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. \$15/\$10 MCC tax district residents (this fee is per device). Joshua Holden is a modern-day Mr. Rogers with hipster appeal!

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Reoriented



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Or to quote my high school baseball coach: "Reorientated." A cancer diagnosis, especially a "terminal" one, can cause that. However, what I'm addressing this week is money: what to do with what you have when you didn't expect you'd still have it. And by 'have it,' I mean you're still alive and you still have some control over what to do with it.

What this previous paragraph questions is what to do with the money you've accumulated your whole life after you've outlived your original prognosis, which for my non small cell lung cancer, stage IV, was "13 months to two years." The timer began in late February, 2009. I was aged 54 and nearly a half. My widowed mother had just died the previous December after reaching her 86th birthday. My father had died almost exactly two years earlier, at the age 87. Given my parent's at death, I figured/planned on living into my mid-eighties. That all changed when Team Lourie met the oncologist who has now been treating me going on about 12 years.

All my life, pre-cancer and post-cancer, I've paid attention to money: working for it, saving it, spending it and financially-planning it. As I became older, my needs expanded and so too did the sum of money I needed: college, car, wedding, house and then retirement. Now at age 66, 42 as a husband and 12 as a cancer survivor, the future has unexpectedly, given my prognosis, become my present.

During the early years of my diagnosis, I didn't really know how to spend the money I had saved: on the here and now because I was diagnosed as terminal and saw no future in depriving myself or to simply continue living my life spending/saving money as I always had. I chose the former because to me choosing the latter would have been giving into my cancer diagnosis.

Well, almost 12 years have passed since late Feb., 2009. Much has happened. None more significantly as has been my re-diagnosis to papillary thyroid cancer, stage IV, from the previous non small lung cancer, also stage IV. Though my particular type of thyroid cancer is terminal (the sole effective medication has a three-year-ish effective window than there's nothing available), I do have less of a lung cancer diagnosis hanging over my bank account. And yet, the money issue has raised its ugly dilemma once again. Rather than living with death occurring at any time, I now have a bit of a timeline: three years, but with an indeterminate one to follow. Before I had a definite that turned into a maybe. Now I have a maybe that's sort of turned into a definite. As such, once again, do I spend like I'm dying or spend/save like I'm living? The further complication is I'm basically retired and now having to make decisions which have been a lifetime in the making that for many of those years didn't have to factor in cancer and an adjusted, shall we say, life expectancy. It's challenging to determine how much money you're going to need when you can't predict the future. I mean, I'm living proof.

Being the baby of the baby - of the family, I'm pretty much the end of the line dating back approximately 150 years to Russia. And since we have no children, there's no one to pick up my slack. I can't run out of money because I'm responsible for my own slack. I can't presume that I won't outlive my resources any more than I can predict my cancer-affected demise. A demise and a quality of life that could be enhanced if I were to spend a bit of the money I do have, mindful always of the consequences however.

I realize, more than most, that there's no time like the present. Nevertheless, I still want to believe I have a future. After all, it's worked (kept me alive) for nearly 12 years. Perhaps I still have another 12 left to live. If so, I'm going to try and treat myself a bit more often this time. I don't see any future in depriving myself.

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



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