

CONNECTION

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Families & Pets: A Love Story

PET CONNECTION, PAGE 7

Justyn Jacewitz, 5, Springfield, and his kitten Lily, 1 year old, exercise together. He says Lily is "CRRRAZY." The Connection found pet families happily enjoying life together, kids and adults alike.

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PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

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NEWS

Virginia Is for Pet Lovers Too

Cosmetics testing, research dogs/cats, dangerous dogs, pet store employees come under scrutiny.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

The 2021 Virginia General Assembly had only six companion animal-related bills before it this session; a small number compared to the roughly two dozen during the 2020 session, and a dozen in 2019. Virginians love their pets and legislators are no different. Several frequently sponsor bills aimed to better the lives of animal companions, although the short session this year led to a restriction in the number of bills legislators were permitted to file.

Sen. Jennifer Boysko (D-33) and Del. Kaye Kory (D-38) sponsored bills in their respective legislative houses to restrict cosmetic testing on animals. The Humane Cosmetic Act (SB1379 and HB2250), which has passed both houses, will prohibit testing of cosmetics on animals in the Commonwealth, and prohibit the sale of any cosmetic that was developed or manufactured using animal testing by any cosmetics manufacturer. If signed by the Governor, the testing provision of the Act will go into effect on July 1, 2021, and the ban on sales on Jan. 1, 2022. Unsuccessful with similar bills last year, both legislators found success this time with accord from manufacturer associations.

Sen. William Stanley (R-20), a member of the Senate Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources Committee, sponsored two bills this session, SB1412 to keep those convicted of animal cruelty from working in the pet industry; and SB1417 to give research dogs and cats an opportunity for an adopted home when no longer needed at a research testing facility, including our institutes of higher education.

Stanley's SB1412 will mirror some restrictions for pet stores and dog breeders that public and private shelters and rescues have operated under for many years. Northern Virginia has had multiple examples of pet store manager convictions, where pet stores were closed, only to have the manager move and open at another location. The bill restricts those with animal cruelty, neglect or abandonment convictions from working as owners, managers, employees of pet store or breeders. The bill also requires pet stores to obtain a statement from purchasers or adopters, that the person has not had an animal related conviction, as shelters and rescues are now required to do.



Senator Jennifer Boysko, D-33, sponsor of Senate Humane Cosmetics Act.



Delegate Kaye Kory, D-38, House sponsor of the Humane Cosmetics Act.



Senator Dave Marsden, D-37, sponsor of dangerous dog legislation



COURTESY SENATOR STANLEY OFFICE

Senator Bill Stanley, R-20, sponsor of adoptions for research dogs and cat; with Marsy, his beagle rescued from a medical research dog breeding facility

The testing facility dog adoption bill (B1417), requires that a dog or cat, no longer needed for testing, be given an opportunity for adoption prior to euthanasia, providing that the animal does not pose a health or safety risk to the public. The testing facility may enter into an agreement with a shelter or rescue, or research arms of higher education research facilities, such as Virginia Technical College, may institute their own adoption programs. Senator Stanley himself adopted a beagle bred for research after visiting a Cumberland medical research breeder with Sen. Dave Marsden (D-37) to inspect the facility. The two Senators wanted to know more about the only medical research dog breeder located in Virginia after discussion of a 2020 General Assembly bill that would have restricted the business, but did not pass. Stanley named his adopted dog Marsy in commemoration of his trip with Sen. Marsden.

Senator Marsden, Chairman of the Senate Companion Animals subcommittee, sponsored a bill to restructure the procedure for adjudicating cases of dangerous dogs; SB1135. The bill provides for the speedy adjudication of such cases, within 30 days of the summons.

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Controlling Gun Violence

Despite other successes, lawmakers unable to limit assault weapons and high-capacity magazines.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
THE CONNECTION

Fulfilling their campaign promises to take action against gun violence, Democrats in the General Assembly are sending Gov. Ralph Northam several gun-violence prevention bills. Lawmakers are taking action to exclude guns at polling places and government buildings, creating new restrictions for people convicted of domestic violence and extending the time allowed for the State Police to conduct background checks. The bills this year come after several new laws were created last year, requiring universal background checks and allowing local governments to regulate firearms.

“Virginia is a leader now,” said Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Brian Moran, who formerly represented Alexandria in the House of Delegates. “We’ve gone from dead last to first in terms of responsible gun-control legislation.

One campaign promise Democrats have been unable to accomplish is limiting access to assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, deadly equipment that has been used to commit some of the worst mass shootings in American history. After Democrats seized control of the General Assembly last year, cracking down on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines was a top priority for the new majority. But Senate Democratic Leader Dick Saslaw ended up withdrawing his own bill on the issue, and Del. Mark Levine (D-45) was unable to get his bill through the Senate. This year, nobody even bothered introducing an assault-weapons bill.

“I don’t think it has enough votes to pass,” explained Levine. “It’s misunderstood because people overstate what it is because it’s really a high-capacity magazine ban more than an assault-weapons ban because we’re grandfathering in the assault weapons.”

SOME OF THE BILLS lawmakers are sending the governor are improvements to new laws that were passed last year. For example, one of the signature accomplishments of the 2020 General Assembly session was the law requiring universal background checks. This bill closed the gun-show loophole, but it also created a new problem. If the State Police did not complete a background check within three days, the sale was permitted to go through anyway. That’s why Del. Alfonso Lopez (D-49) introduced a bill to give the State Police five days to conduct a background check.

“If we keep expanding the time, you’re taking the pressure off the police to do it in a timely fashion,” said Phillip Van Cleve, president of the Virginia Citizens Defense League. “This whole system was sold to gun owners as an instant check, and the longer you stretch it the more that becomes a joke.”



PHOTO BY MICHAEL LEE POPE/THE CONNECTION

Signs like these went up across the city last year after the General Assembly gave local governments authority to regulate guns.

“Virginia is a leader now. We’ve gone from dead last to first in terms of responsible gun-control legislation.”

— Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Brian Moran

“Clearly there’s an appetite among the voters to regulate and ban semiautomatic assault-style rifles.”

— Lori Haas, Virginia director, Coalition to Stop Gun Violence

Lopez pointed to statistics from the State Police showing examples of how background checks taking longer than three days can lead to problems. Last year, the State Police logged 787 transactions that were denied in three days or less. However, he said, 235 background checks that were eventually rejected took longer than three days. The way the laws work now, that would be hundreds of purchases in 2020 that should have been denied but weren’t because of a process known as “default proceed.”

“So a purchase would have been allowed to go forward — 235 examples,” said Lopez. “To keep firearms out of the hands of dangerous individuals who pose a threat to themselves, their loved ones and the community at large, I believe that making this one word change is the best course of action for the commonwealth.”

LAWMAKERS ARE ALSO haunted by the specter of the ghost guns, which are firearms created by 3D printers or assembled at home

from kits. Because none of the new gun-violence measures passed last year would apply to these guns, some lawmakers are concerned that this is a class of firearms that would be able to evade all the laws designed to keep weapons out of the hands of people who shouldn’t have them. That’s why Del. Marcus Simon (D-53) introduced a bill to prohibit people buying kits and assembling ghost guns.

“It’s untraceable, and it really evades the entire system,” said Simon. “You build the gun yourself and it’s got no serial number. You require no background check. There was no age limit to purchase it.”

Although the original version of his bill outlawed all old guns without serial numbers, senators changed it to grandfather in all firearms that predated the new law. Advocates say they liked Simon’s original version better, but in the sausage-making factory of the General Assembly this is the kind of compromise that’s often needed to get bills to the governor’s desk.

Another bill that senators changed was one that allowed school boards to prohibit guns on school property, which senators amended to apply only to school administration buildings. Both of those changes were suggested by Sen. Chap Petersen (D-34).

“I have no problem that administrative buildings, if they want to designate it as gun-free zone just like we passed last year with city councils or county boards,” said Petersen. “I do have a little bit of an issue if a school board just buys a random property as a vacant lot and then passes an ordinance saying it’s a gun-free zone.”

THE ALEXANDRIA DELEGATION is sending two gun bills to the governor, one to prohibit firearms at polling places and another to prevent people from bringing them into Capitol Square or other state government buildings. Levine introduced the bill to prohibit guns at polling places and vote counting centers after two Virginia men were arrested after traveling to Pennsylvania to attack a vote-counting site. Gun enthusiasts dismissed the bill as creating yet another gun-free zone.

“This is to prevent intimidation?” asked firearms enthusiast Vincent Smith during a public hearing on Levine’s bill. “There are a large portion of this country who are intimidated by clowns, so much so that it has a name, it’s called ‘coulrophobia.’ So are you going to also outlaw clowns at polling places?”

Levine and state Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-30) both introduced bills prohibiting guns in Capitol Square, although the two bills are different enough to send them into a closed-door conference committee where lawmakers will resolve their differences in secret. Levine’s bill includes a larger geographic area, including major streets surrounding the Capitol, whereas the Ebbin version bans more weapons other than guns, including knives.

“People don’t need to arm themselves in Capitol Square,” said Ebbin. “They potentially risk more harm than good.”

ASSAULT WEAPONS remain a lingering concern for advocates of gun-violence prevention because of the prominent role they have played in so many of the mass shootings over the last 20 years. Levine says he would have introduced an assault weapons ban if lawmakers had not been limited to seven bills because of the limited duration of the session this year. Using one of those seven slots for a bill that would have not been successful would have been a mistake, he said, especially considering he’s sending two gun bills to the governor this year.

“It’s a conundrum why the House and the Senate didn’t want to take this up,” responded Lori Haas, Virginia director of the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence. “Clearly there’s an appetite among the voters to regulate and ban semiautomatic assault-style rifles. Polling as recent as October showed overwhelming support for doing something about these people-killers.”

Celebrating Black History

There are ample reasons to be celebrating Black history in Virginia this month and throughout the year.

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



One of the meaningful traditions that has evolved in the Virginia House of Delegates over the last couple of decades has been the celebration of Black History Month by having a speech each day on the House floor about famous Black persons and their struggles and accomplishments in the Commonwealth. According to History magazine, Black History Month is an annual celebration of achievements by African Americans and a time for recognizing their central role in U.S. history. Also known as African American History Month, the event grew out of "Negro History Week," the brainchild of noted historian Carter G. Woodson and other prominent African Americans. Since 1976 the month of February has been designated as Black History Month and is celebrated around the world, including in Canada and the United Kingdom.

Virginia has a unique role in Black history.

COMMENTARY

The first enslaved Blacks arrived in Virginia in 1619, and the labors of these persons were central to the growth of the Virginia colony and then state. It was Black laborers who built the grand plantations' homes and the institutions of higher education while themselves living in meager housing and refused entrance into public schools and colleges. It was Black slave labor that built the early Virginia tobacco economy while being denied all but the most limited income. Black persons supported the lifestyle of the most prominent Virginia families with no public recognition of their accomplishments. As significant as were Jefferson's words that "all men are created equal" in the Declaration of Independence, they did not apply to the slaves in his household nor to the Constitution that counted them as 3/5ths of a person.

The Emancipation Proclamation, the outcome of the Civil War and the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment did not result in equality under the law for Black citizens. Under the

federal Reconstruction government about one hundred Black citizens were elected to public office between 1869 and 1890 including a Black congressman, but a swift reaction by conservative whites led to Jim Crow laws and voting laws that quickly curtailed the power of Black voters. The 1902 Virginia Constitution that included a literacy test and poll tax for voting limited the number of Black voters to such a degree that they did not regain their numbers at the turn of the century until the 1990s.

The recent history of voting in Virginia offers reasons to celebrate. There are more Black members of the Virginia General Assembly today than at any time since Reconstruction. There are two Black congressmen from Virginia. The Lieutenant Governor, the President of the Virginia Senate, and the majority leader of the House of Delegates are Black. The General Assembly has made historic strides in repealing Jim Crow laws, expanding voter participation and reforming criminal justice laws and practices that discriminated against persons of color. Virginia was the first state to have a Black governor, and for the nominations to run this fall there are at least two Black women and one Black man running for governor, two or more Black men running for lieutenant governor and at least one Black man running for the attorney general nomination. There are ample reasons to be celebrating Black history in Virginia this month and throughout the year.

Bringing Virginia into the Light

Abolishing the death penalty, steps to end Jim-Crow era ban on felony voting and more recent ban on gay marriage.

BY SEN. SCOTT SUROVELL



The last week of the 2021 General Assembly Session has arrived and it will prove to be an exciting time with many big issues on the agenda.

In even years, the process of amending the Constitution of Virginia typically begins. Sen. Adam Ebbin and Del. Mark Sickles' legislation repealing the 2006 gay marriage ban from our constitution will have a final vote. We are also negotiating an amendment to remove Virginia's Jim Crow Era felony voting prohibition from the Constitution and replacing it with an affirmative right to vote.

We will also be taking up my legislation abolishing capital punishment on Monday.

This past week we announced our agreement on my legislation to reform Virginia's expungement and rules prohibiting the sealing of criminal convictions. Virginia is one of only nine states in America that do not allow people to seal misdemeanor convictions and one of only fourteen that do not allow the sealing of felony convictions.

My legislation creates a process for most misdemeanors and felonies, allows access to records for sensitive positions, and also reduces barriers to accessing the process by providing

court-appointed counsel. It reduces procedural hurdles, and creates a process for automatic expungement after seven years of good behavior of alcohol or marijuana possession, disorderly conduct, trespassing, and petit larceny. Importantly, the bill also creates a registry for private data brokers and liability for companies who continue to publish information relating to sealed convictions.

My proposal to provide all Virginians with a right of appeal in all civil and criminal cases was finally docketed and taken up in the House of Delegates. Virginia is the only state in America that does not provide this right and providing it will require seven new judges on the Court of Appeals. I am hopeful that the details will be resolved by the end of the week.

The House of Delegates passed my legislation to help give Fairfax County more authority to protect River Farm. My legislation makes it clear that the County can restrict subdivision and require public access as part of any historic zoning district over River Farm. I am hopeful that Chairman Jeff McKay and Supervisor Dan Storck can convince their colleagues to utilize this authority to help ensure River Farm remains preserved and open to the public in perpetuity.

The House rejected my legislation to allow

class action lawsuits in Virginia. Virginia and Mississippi are the only two states in America without this remedy which helps to level the playing field between large corporations and citizens, but some members refused to consider the bill.

A House Committee also killed my bill to allow local governments to request information about a company's history of arbitrating sexual harassment, racial discrimination and consumer complaints before entering into contracts with bidders. Companies are using these practices to hide shameful behavior from the public and companies who choose to allow their employees to litigate these matters in court are at a strategic disadvantage. I will try again next year.

The negotiations to work on marijuana legalization will start this week. Senator Adam Ebbin is carrying the legislation, Delegate Paul Krizek spent significant time vetting the legislation. The Senate has taken the position that we need more time to study the bill to get legalization done correctly while the House of Delegates would like to move forward this year. We have a large chasm to bridge.

Finally, our money committee leadership will work to resolve our competing budgets. Last week, Governor Northam announced that revenues were \$750 million higher than expected, but still \$3 billion lower when the budgets were originally built before the pandemic.

Please email me at scott@scotturovell.org if you have any difficulty obtaining a vaccine appointment, and complete my constituent survey at www.scotturovell.org/survey. It is an honor to serve as your state senator.



BULLETIN

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

FAIRFAX COUNTY ACTIVATES CORONAVIRUS INFO CENTER
Fairfax County activated a Joint Information Center in response to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) on March 13.

Fairfax County Health Department COVID-19 webpage – www.fairfaxcounty.gov/health/novel-coronavirus

Emergency Information Blog (you can subscribe by email or follow by RSS) – www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/blog

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Call Center – The community may call 703-267-3511 with questions. The call center is open from 9 a.m. until 9 p.m. weekdays and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekends.

Residents may also text FFXCOVID to 888777 to receive updates from Fairfax County about COVID-19.

Twitter – @fairfaxcounty and @fairfaxhealth

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MARCH 2 TO APRIL 13

Free Finance Classes. 7-8:15 p.m. Via Zoom. Sponsored by St. John's United Methodist Church, Springfield. Free Personal Finance Mgmt Classes, taught by accredited finance counselor. Classes deal with budgeting, credit/debt management, saving and investing, etc. These are individual classes taught once a week. Register at website www.saintjohnsumc.org to receive Zoom link from the instructor.

March 2 -- 7:00 - 8:15 p.m. Stretching Your Money

March 9 -- 7:00 - 8:15 p.m. Developing Your Spending Plan (AKA the Budget)

March 16 -- 7:00 - 8:15 p.m. Take Control of Your Finances: Managing Credit/Debt

March 23 -- 7:00 - 8:15 p.m. Saving and Investing

April 6 -- 7:00 - 8:15 p.m. Investing for Retirement

April 13 -- 7:00 - 8:15 p.m. Tax Efficient Charitable Giving

VIRTUAL TEEN JOB FAIRS

Supervisor Pat Herrity will be hosting two Virtual Teen Job Fairs on Saturday, March 13 from 2-5 p.m. and Saturday, March 20 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Normally, he hosts 5-6 fairs at local high schools. With the limitations of the pandemic, this year's fairs will be hosted virtually through Brazen, a professional virtual job fair platform. The fairs will be open to all teens in Fairfax County looking for employment, volunteer opportunities, or tips on building their resume. Free online booth space will be provided to businesses and organizations to advertise their available positions. They will also host resume and career building sessions with their Chamber of Commerce partners. Visit the website: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TeenJobFair-Registration>

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BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Britepaths client Alicia Salmon receives her new laptop from Anil Atyam, whose company is part of ITServe Alliance.



PHOTO COURTESY OF HEATHER WEBB

With some of the new computers are (from left) Shannon Bryant, Britepaths; Ashwin Puppala, TelligenTech; Jay Challa, Ace Info Solutions; Anil Atyam, Cloud Integrator; Lisa Whetzel, Britepaths executive director; Lax Chepuri, Technogen Inc.; Sudhakar Garlanka, Allwyn Corporation; Sateesh Gowrisetty, AdvanceSoft Inc.

‘This Gives Me the Opportunity to Follow My Dreams’

ITServe Alliance donates new laptops to Britepaths.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Valentine’s Day was Feb. 14, but a sweet treat came a few days earlier for Fairfax-based nonprofit, Britepaths. That’s because, on Feb. 10 and 12, the local chapter of ITServe Alliance donated 43 laptop computers to Britepaths for its clients to use.

Established in 2010, ITServe Alliance is a nationwide consortium of information technology services, staffing and consulting organizations. It has 16 local chapters across the U.S., and these laptops were from its DMV chapter, serving Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C.

“The laptops they gave us are new and were purchased through donations from ITServe’s members,” said Britepaths spokeswoman Heather Webb. “Most are for adults to use, and we’ll offer them to our clients who need them – particularly those in our Avenues to Career Training program.”

THIS PROGRAM provides skill-building support to Fairfax County residents interested in health-care careers to prepare them to seek the certifications and training they need to obtain a job in their desired field.

“Our training is via Zoom for the foreseeable future, and many of our clients don’t have laptops, so this will be a huge help for them,” said Webb. “Fifteen of the donated laptops are intended for K-12 students, so those will go to the children of our clients, as their needs are identified.”

ITServe Alliance’s DMV chapter comprises about 135 small and medium-sized businesses. All are primarily information-technology services and products companies.

“ITServe also has a CSR – corporate social responsibility – focus,” said Britepaths Development Director Shannon Bryant. “Each member defines what that means for their



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Alicia Salmon’s donated computer will enable her to receive training and connect with potential employers.

own company, and the DMV chapter decided to donate laptops as its project.”

He said the computers are particularly important to the people served by Fairfax-based nonprofit Britepaths. “Once schools closed [because of the pandemic] and everything went online, the conversation around racial equity and the digital divide was especially pronounced,” explained Bryant.

“People without computers at home couldn’t find jobs because they couldn’t write resumés or interview online. They also couldn’t attend classes at community college online or apply for services for food and rent assistance to prevent eviction.”

Therefore, said Bryant, “This donation keeps attention on the digital divide. And it sets an example for anyone wanting to know how they can look at their own skills and resources and reach out to bridge gaps to give everyone the same chance to achieve success. These IT professionals looked at what they had to offer, found a need to match it and contacted us.”

“We’re doing this effort as part of our CSR,”

said Anil Atyam, CIO of Cloud Integrator in Fairfax and president of ITServe Alliance’s DMV chapter. “We’re really privileged and humbled to support this initiative because we believe in giving back to the community.”

THE FIRST RECIPIENT of a laptop was Britepaths client Alicia Salmon, and she beamed as Atyam presented it to her on Feb. 12. “I’m so excited,” she said. “It’ll open up a world of absolute opportunities for me. I’ve been using my phone with a cracked screen to send out resumés, make phone calls and handle everything. And it’s just been so hard responding and keeping up with emails – it’s a lot.”

So, said Salmon, being able to have an actual computer of her own “lets me see everything that’s offered, communicate with people, apply for jobs and, hopefully, be in a better place. And I want to say thank you so much – I truly appreciate it.”

“This laptop gives me the opportunity to follow my dreams,” she continued. “I thank everyone for thinking of me. This opened up a new passion and inspiration inside of me

for a class I’ve taken during COVID-19 and for a new career.”

A mother of three children, ages 22, 20 and 9, she said the new laptop will also be a huge help to her youngest child. “He’ll be able to use it when he has to give back his temporary, school laptop to FCPS in the summer,” explained Salmon. “He’ll be able to keep learning.”

Pleased, Atyam said, “The primary objective is to promote and support STEM education. Lack of a laptop should not be a barrier to learning. And we want to help people wanting to pursue a job or learn something.”

All the computers donated are brand-new, fully loaded, HP laptops with 15.6-inch screens and AMD processors. Each is valued at about \$15,000. In addition, ITServe Alliance gave the recipients backpacks and mice for their computers.

“We also made a commitment to support any online training, internships and mentoring programs,” added Atyam. Identifying the need and seeing Britepaths’ and Salmon’s responses firsthand, he said, “gave me the encouragement and motivation to do even more.”

Indeed, Webb said Britepaths is looking forward to working with this group again in another capacity, as well. In the future, she said, “ITServe hopes to match professional IT mentors with Britepaths clients seeking employment in the IT field.”

ITServe’s members provide a highly skilled labor force to commercial and government clients across the country. They also partner with local schools and colleges to encourage STEM education. ITServe’s CSR helps local communities via various charitable programs aimed at educating the underprivileged and ending hunger through food drives.

Its leaders believe that developing skills and leadership abilities can contribute to lifting individuals out of poverty by improving access to jobs, increasing productivity and fostering sustainable, economic growth. Such development may occur in formal, informal and on-the-job settings, with the goal of reflecting the changing demands and opportunities of the community’s economy and labor market.

PET CONNECTION



PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

Life is on the up-beat when shared with a pet; Justyn Jacewitz and his kitten Lily share a life full of playtime in Springfield



PHOTO COURTESY KARIN DRINKHALL

Kayla Barger, 1, Annandale, with family dog Callie. Kayla enjoys a messy hand to mouth eating style. So Callie has stepped up to work doubly hard to keep the kitchen floor food free now that Kayla has joined her brother in eating solid foods, not all of which is actually eaten.



SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

Justyn Jacewitz, 5, Springfield, with his kitten Marigold, 1 year old, in a brief moment of quiet after using his bee wand to make Marigold magically appear.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



Lynette Stewart, Springfield, with her Basset Hounds, Willow, 8 years, and Darby, 4 months. Stewart says Darby has brought new energy into the house and has Willow playing with toys like a pup again.

Inseparable

The Madnick Family of Burke writes: "Rescue sisters. Safie (right) — an Indian Spitz whose name means "white"— rescued us in 2006 while we were living in India, and Bailey (left) — a Korean Jindo who reminds us of Irish cream— rescued us this January, with help from Homeward Trails in Fairfax. Bailey started off skittish & Safie wouldn't give her the time of day, but now they're pretty inseparable."



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PET CONNECTION

A Story About Toby & Molly

We moved to the USA from Europe in 2017 at which point dad promised me a dog once we got settled in our new home in the USA. Instead of getting a dog my mum came back from a work trip with a rescued cat from Houston at the end of Hurricane Harvey. Now, I really love Molly but she isn't a dog that I can play with & take on walks. Then as COVID was upon us and we were all feeling sad and anxious mum & dad agreed that we could finally adopt a dog. Yeah! So the search was on & mum & I would scour through the pet shelters' websites every night looking for the "right" dog. I think we must have applied for 1000 dogs (well maybe a slight exaggeration but you get the idea), before a kind lady at Hart Dog Rescue accepted our application and we were approved to pick up Toby who had been rescued from Alabama. We went to see him at the foster mum's house (Miss Hanifa) and I was more nervous than going to the Principal's office. When we got there the foster family were lovely and Toby really warmed to us. He has really helped me cope with anxiety in these COVID times and been a great addition to our family although he did get car sick on the trip to Blackwater Falls in the photo. Finally my brother and I have a pet that we can really play with and take on walks in our neighbourhood, dad has someone to sit beside him on the sofa and snore with and mum has Molly who likes to sit on her lap & watch TV. Everyone is happy.

— PADDY STEVENSON, II.
FAIRFAX STATION
APPROVED BY MUM: TRACEY STEVENSON

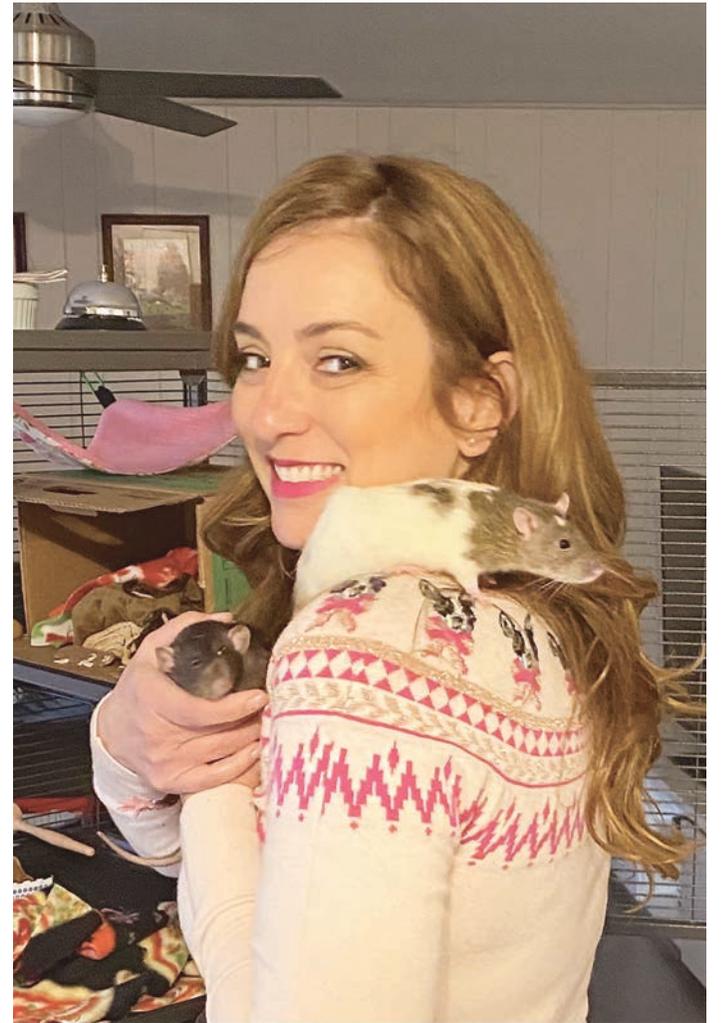


Who Rescued Who?

Lauren Beckett of Springfield submitted two photos of a family dog Brady: "This little guy was wandering the streets of Long Beach, Calif.. We found him at a rescue shelter and he stole our hearts. He's a friendly, fun loving furball of energy and has changed our family for the better! He truly fits the slogan, Who rescued who?!"



Ready for a Steelers football game! Let's Go!



Rats As Pets

Giovanna Di Biccari of Annandale contributed her story and photos for Pet Connection: "My story is that I've read that rats are smart animals so I started looking two years ago. Being a first timer rat mom, I knew I wanted babies, females, and specific colors. I could've purchased rats from the pet store but I get more satisfaction rescuing. I got Bindi and Remy from the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria. I hope to train them enough to be in commercials!"



The Value of Intergenerational Relationships

The lives of both youth and seniors are enhanced by meaningful connections.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Bringing seniors and youth together for meaningful relationships can be mutually beneficial. From structured and pleasurable programs that help foster such connections to regular telephone calls with a grandparent, the advantages that these interactions offer are many.

“Because of their life experiences, older adults can be a source of stability and emotional support and serve as mentors for children, particularly those who have a difficult home environment,” said Kenneth Bell, LCSW, a Burke, Va., therapist who specializes in gerontology. “Older adults can gain a sense of purpose and fulfillment in knowing that they’re impacting and nurturing those who will be adults in the future.”

“Intergenerational relationships are very important because they allow youth and seniors to appreciate the entire lifespan,” added Arlington marriage and family therapist Katie Ziskind. “Often-times, these intergenerational relationships need to be consciously constructed or well organized.”

Among the programs that offer opportunities for developing such relationships is The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at George Mason University. The organization regularly facilitates intergenerational programs between OLLI Members and traditional university students.

“These programs benefit both groups to create community, foster valued learning, and eliminate mutual stereotypes,” said Jennifer Disano, Executive Director, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at George Mason University. “Over the years, our organization has collaborated with several departments at the university for in-class projects, lectures, theatrical performances, research studies, mentoring, and career guidance.”

Youth Movement Against Alzheimer’s, (YMAA) a non-profit organization with a chapter at Thomas
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



PHOTOS COURTESY OF OLLI

One option for cultivating intergenerational relationships is through programs like those at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at George Mason University which include both OLLI members and traditional university students.

Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, is made up of high school and college students who visit and spend time with seniors who are living with Alzheimer’s. While the visits have been postponed due to Covid-19, students use video conferencing and telephone calls to share meals with the elderly.

“[This] provides youth and older adults with a platform to connect to other generations in this time of crisis,” said Katherine Rose, Chief Executive Officer, YMAA.

Even without being part of a formal organization, consider having a regular, set time to have Zoom or phone calls

with elderly friends and family members, suggests Stacie Isenberg, Psy.D., a psychologist based in Bethesda. “Most kids understand the value of their relationships with seniors, and that holds true for seniors as well,” she said. “Therefore, both feel a special competence and pride in the special role they fill for each other.

“Intergenerational relationships are very important because they allow youth and seniors to appreciate the entire lifespan.”

— Katie Ziskind



There were several cameras to capture the Mars landing.

Burke Has a Presence on Mars

Mars rover has a name from Lake Braddock student.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

Burke has a presence on Mars, in the form of the Mars rover named “Perseverance,” a name thought up by Alex Mather from Lake Braddock Secondary School. On Feb. 18, at 12:55 p.m., the rover was lowered to the surface of Mars, making history and reigniting the pride by Mather who was the winner of “Name the Rover” essay contest last summer, which received 28,000 entries from K-12 students from every U.S. state and territory. In an excerpt from Mather’s essay, he summed up the efforts to go to Mars in his winning essay, “We are a species of explorers, and we will meet many setbacks on the way to Mars. However, we can persevere. We, not as a nation but as humans, will not give up.”

After Mather got word that his essay was the winner, he was in front of TV cameras on more than one occasion and was the guest of NASA for the rocket launching that would carry the rover to Mars.

On Mars, the Perseverance’s drill will cut intact rock cores that are about the size of a piece of chalk and will place them in sample tubes that it will store until the rover reaches an appropriate drop-off location, NASA said. The Perseverance rover has 19 cameras that will deliver images of the landscape in detail. The other parts of the spacecraft involved in entry, descent and landing carry four additional cameras, potentially allowing engineers to put together a high-definition view of the landing process NASA said.

To watch the spacecraft, access the live feed here <https://www.nasa.gov/nasalive>



Last summer, Alex Mather got to witness the launch in Florida.

PHOTO BY NASA

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

Announcements

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Obituary

Herbert Lain Holt

March 25, 1934 - February 13, 2021



It is with great joy for the long and wonderful life he lived that we announce the passing of Herbert Lain Holt (86) on Saturday, February 13, 2021, at sundown in Carlsbad, California. Still on his feet until just 8 days prior to his passing, Herbert long battled Parkinson's Disease and never once complained. Our hero drew his last breath peacefully at home, surrounded by loved ones. We could not have asked for more for our beloved husband, father, grandfather, uncle, coach and friend.

Herbert was born in 1934 to Otis Eldridge Holt and Martha Louise Holt (nee McDaniel) in Gibson County, Tennessee. A proud son of Trenton, Herbert attended Trenton Elementary and Middle School, and played quarterback and was captain of the football team for Peabody High School. During his high school tenure, Herb won the distinction of being voted football captain of the "Big Ten" on all ten western Tennessee high school coaches' ballots. In basketball, Herb served as captain of the junior varsity and varsity basketball teams. Aside from sports, Herb exhibited leadership as the senior class president. Herb also played baseball for the Humboldt Tennessee American Legion. Because of Herb's outstanding sports performances, he was honored in 2006 to be inducted into the Gibson County Sports Hall of Fame. Known as Ol' Twinkletoes, he was honored in 2020 to be inducted into the Peabody High School Football Hall of Fame.

Herb graduated high school in 1952, and attended Murray State University in Kentucky on a football scholarship where he played quarterback for the Racers and was co-captain of the team. He was the student body vice president and president of the Methodist Student Union. At Murray, Herb met the love of his life, Celia Maurelle Kirksey of Paducah, Kentucky, and they married over the winter break of their senior year in 1955. They recently celebrated 65 years of happily ever after.

After graduating from Murray State in 1957, Herb then earned his Master's Degree in Secondary Education Administration over the summers while he worked as head football coach and head basketball coach for three years in McKenzie, Tennessee. Herb then accepted an offer to teach and coach in Alexandria, Northern Virginia. In Alexandria, Coach Holt drew out the best from students and players and touched the lives and hearts of hundreds of students and their parents for 40 years. Herb taught physical education and English at Francis C. Hammond High School in Alexandria, where he was also the assistant football coach and the junior varsity baseball coach. When T.C. Williams high school opened, he served as head football coach, and the junior varsity baseball coach. After three years, Herb was appointed athletic director, and later became assistant principal. Coach Holt was at T.C. Williams High School fostering goodness during the time of the story "Remember the Titans." Coach Holt also will be remembered for his dedication to students at George Washington Middle School. Upon retirement from T.C. Williams in 1997, he was named "MacDaddy of the Senior Class" by the seniors.

Herb and Maurelle raised their son and daughter in Springfield and West Springfield, Virginia. Herb continued to coach kids' baseball after retirement for the Springfield Babe Ruth League. He proudly served as the Membership Chairman, Vice President and President of the Northern Virginia Athletic Directors, Administrators, and Coaches Association (NVADACA).

A natural at sports, he turned his love of sports toward golf and enjoyed golf outings and trips with his son and friends. Herb never once met a stranger and was known for his get-up-and-go, tenacity and his fun-loving spirit. Genuinely interested in people, Herb never missed an opportunity to help someone or bring out the best in them, whether a family in need, or a kindred spirit hitchhiking a country lane. Herb also saved more than a few lives as a lifeguard on Kentucky Lake in his youth. He loved country music and dancing, and became a square dance caller in the 1970s. He gave his family lots of swim and beach days with bonfires and stories, trips to music festivals and county fairs, football and basketball games, amusement parks, long country drives and especially family and friends. He loved bluegrass, spaghetti Westerns, Burt Reynolds comedies, ice cream, and U.S. historical fiction novels in no particular order. He was cool, calm and collected and supported and loved us dearly, always encouraging our independence and best selves while also being available to catch us should we fall. Herb and Maurelle moved to Carlsbad, California to be with daughter and family and were able to enjoy lots of family celebrations together.

Predeceased by his parents and sister Charlotte Brown (Memphis, TN), Herbert is survived by his wife Celia Maurelle Holt, son John Lain Holt and daughter-in-law Martee Holt of Greensboro, NC, grandchildren Lauren Maurelle Holt (currently Poulsbo, WA, engaged to Darrin Crife) and Alexander Lain Holt of Charlotte, NC, (engaged to Claire Kane); daughter Kristen Walker, son-in-law Justin D. Walker of Carlsbad, CA, and grandchildren Scarlett, Stella, Katherine and Audrey Walker; nephews Mike Brown (Carla), Pat Brown (Bethany) and Tim Brown; the late John David Kirksey (brother-in-law), sister-in-law Alice Kirksey, niece Diane De La O, nephews Samuel Kirksey (Olga), and Matthew Kirksey, extended family and countless friends. He will be sadly missed by all who knew him and we are sure that over his 40 working years as tireless coach and teacher there will be many other stories to be shared about his kindness, support and generous spirit. Herbert made a difference in many lives and heaven is a better place for calling him home.

A celebration of life will be held when people can safely gather. Please sign the guest book and leave comments at www.accucarecremation.com/obituary. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to a scholarship fund in Herb's name for young college-bound athletes at Northern Virginia Athletic Directors, Administrators, and Coaches Association (NVADACA) at www.nvadaca.org or P.O. Box 305, Burke, VA 22009.

The family wishes to thank his amazing caregiver, Sandy S.

Obituary

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Fairfax Teen Is Killed; Death Ruled a Homicide

Fairfax County police are investigating last week's murder of a local teen. He was identified as Anthony Isai Benitez, 18, of Fairfax. Police say he died, Friday night, Feb. 19, following a shooting in an Annandale apartment complex. A juvenile was also injured during the incident.

Officers responded shortly before 11 p.m. to the 4100 block of Wadsworth Court in Annandale, after receiving a report of a person who'd been shot. When officers arrived, they discovered Benitez in the apartment complex parking lot.

According to police, he was suffering from gunshot wounds to his upper body. Life-saving measures were attempted, but Benitez was pronounced dead at the scene by fire-and-rescue personnel.

In a nearby apartment, officers also found a juvenile male who had sustained gunshot wounds to his lower body. He was taken to a local hospital, where he was treated for his injuries and later released.

Preliminarily, detectives have determined the two victims were outside an apartment

building when a group of people approached and then began shooting at them. Multiple cartridge casings were found in the parking lot, and several vehicles and a building were damaged as a result of the gunfire.

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner performed an autopsy on Benitez and, on Saturday, Feb. 20, ruled his death a homicide. This tragedy is still an active investigation, and detectives are continuing to conduct interviews and process evidence.

Police are urging anyone with information regarding this incident to call the Major Crimes Bureau at 703-246-7800, option 2. Tips may also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by phone, 1-866-411-TIPS (866-411-8477); by text, type FCCS plus the tip to 847411; and via the Web at <http://www.fairfaxcrimesolvers.org/>. Or download the mobile tip411 app, "Fairfax Co. Crime Solvers." Tipsters are eligible for cash rewards of \$100-\$1,000 for information leading to an arrest.

— BONNIE HOBBS

New Series Highlighting Fairfax City Businesses

Fairfax City's Economic Development Office last week launched a photo and interview series, "Faces of Fairfax City," to spotlight the City's business community. Its goal is to provide an up-close and authentic look at the businesses that help create the City's unique character, charm and sense of community.

"The 'Faces of Fairfax City' series allows us to show appreciation to our business community - not only for their vision - but also for their passion and drive," said Fairfax Mayor David Meyer. "Our City businesses help create a sense of place and are a source of our identity and pride. During this past year, they've shown their resiliency and that Fairfax City is a destination alive with opportunities and vibrant activity centers that are diverse, creative and welcoming."

Agreeing, Economic Development Director Chris Bruno stressed that "Fairfax

City is a destination for all in the center of Northern Virginia. It's a place where people can come together to shop, work, learn and play. This program pulls back the curtain on our City's business community to show why Fairfax City stands out and why it's poised for years of success."

The "Faces of Fairfax City" series began last Friday, Feb. 19, at noon, and will offer a new post each week on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn at @FairfaxCityEDA. It'll also be co-published on the Fairfax City Economic Development Authority's (EDA) Website, <https://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/economic-development/economic-development-authority>.

For more information about this new series, go to fairfaxcityconnected.com/faces.

— BONNIE HOBBS

CALENDAR

FRIDAY/FEB. 26

A Taste of California - Virtual Wine Tasting event with host, Vienna Vintner - 6:30-7:45 p.m. via Zoom. A benefit for Shepherd's Center serving Oakton-Vienna-Reston-Herndon. During the tasting, Vienna Vintner's owner, Victor Mendes, will be presenting a selection of 3 fine wines from his own winery in California's Paso Robles region. He will be showcasing wines from his VIX selection. To participate in this private tasting experience, contact Vienna Vintner by Feb. 25 at 703-242-9463, or viennavintner@gmail.com, or stop by Vienna Vintner, 320 Maple Ave E, Vienna, VA 22180 to register and purchase your wine. Visit www.scov.org/announcements

SATURDAY/FEB. 27

Burke Historical Society Meeting, 4 p.m. Via Zoom. The speaker will be Christine West, with a talk called "The Mayflower and Early New England Immigration." They will go beyond local history this month to recognize the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower's landing in November 1620. (OK, a few months late, but what's a few months versus 400 years?) The presentation, originally developed by the New England Genealogical Society, will summarize some of the major events leading up to—and following—the Mayflower voyage. Visit burkehistoricalsociety.org.

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Not That I Don't Understand But ...



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

... So this is what the process is like trying to schedule a covid-19 vaccination. If you're lucky though, you receive an email reminder - since you've pre-registered, advising you that the time to strike is now. You click on the link, and as I'm witnessing, you wait your turn. The site says there's "High Traffic," and they'll be with you momentarily. There's no calling. There's barely any responding. There's simply sitting and staring - and waiting. There's no indication of how long you'll be waiting. There's no guarantee that the site will even open. There's only instructions to refresh your computer every 30 seconds in the hopes that an interactive-type page will appear and you'll have reached the promised land: the page where you can actually schedule an appointment.

However, as I'm sitting and waiting, I'm getting frustrated. I seem to be getting nowhere, slowly. Though I'm refreshing as directed, nothing is changing on the screen I'm staring at. I've linked but nothing is really linking. So I keep repeating myself: stare, refresh, wait; stare, refresh, wait. It's a loop of nothingness. It seems an endless pursuit. It's almost like whack-a-mole, except in your attempts to get connected, the process is excruciatingly slow and there's nothing to whack. (At least it hasn't cost me anything, other than time, that is.)

I realize that the demand is way more than supply and according to experts, it won't be until June/July when "anyone who wants to get a shot will be able to get one." Nevertheless, I would have thought, given my comorbidity: cancer and age 66, that I'd be closer to the top than the bottom. Not that I'm particularly anxious about my circumstances, but my wife Dina is very concerned about them. (I'm staring steady at the site where this column began. As yet, despite my rigorous refreshing, I still haven't passed "Go.")

I understand that patience is a virtue. But today, while staring at and refreshing this site and seeing no sign of life as we know it, I am testing that virtue beyond its stress points. This process reminds of the days of buying concert tickets online. It was nearly impossible - for a popular show, to break through the internet logjam. That is not until you received a message that all the tickets had been sold. How people ever got through, I'll never know. It was always befuddling to me.

I know however, with respect to concerts, sporting events and the like, there would be a secondary/aftermarket availability. I knew an alternative existed. I also knew the cost would be black market-ish, somewhat over the original retail. Unfortunately, or fortunately, public health solutions cannot be left to the market. In its effort not to discriminate and be fair to all recipients, we're stuck with the present communication and distribution system.

Having endured these kinds of pursuits before when calling the IRS, Social Security, Medicare and The Veterans Administration, et cetera, I know a few precautions one should take before attempting to climb these mountains. First, clear your schedule. Next, go to the bathroom. Then, go to the kitchen and get some refreshments. Find someplace comfortable and cozy from which to call; you need to be prepared for the long haul. And finally, should another call come in while you're on hold, do not risk your spot in line by clicking on your call-waiting. Technology can sometimes break your spirit.

My wait is over. The site was just refreshed. It says the center is closed. Perfect timing. I just finished the column.

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

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