For some young Arlington students, this week marked their “first” day of school, or at least their first day IN school, here at Carlin Springs Elementary.
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load up your backpack, wash your hands, complete your daily online symptom screener, put on your mask, and head for the school bus. It’s March 2, and it’s the first day of hybrid school for K-2 students in Arlington.

The timeline calls for five levels of return prioritized by students’ level of need and ability to access learning remotely. Grades 3-5, 6 and 9 and secondary special education students are scheduled to return for concurrent instruction March 9 and grades 7-8 and 10-12 to return for concurrent instruction March 16. Career and Technical Education Students returned Feb. 3.

Concurrent instruction involves teaching students who log in from home and students in the classroom getting the same instruction from the same teacher at the same time. Teachers will instruct both groups of students simultaneously, whether the teacher is in school in person or teaching remotely. This may mean that some students in school will receive input from a teacher who is remote; these students will be monitored and assisted in-person by classroom assistants.

Unless noted by specific requirements for schools or programs, will report two days a week on Tuesday and Wednesday and Thursday and Friday.

In Arlington 7,017 elementary students or 52 percent have chosen hybrid learning while 5,274 or 42 percent have chosen distance learning. Forty-six percent agreed they understand the mitigation strategies in place and know the health and safety procedures to follow. Forty-six percent agreed with the statement that the mitigation measures in place in their building are consistently adhered to by their colleagues.

The school experience will be different this year including new safety protocols and COVID tests, restructured transportation routes with reduced number of children on each school bus, distancing at meals and outdoor alternatives, to new rules for sports participation. A daily health screening will be required prior to arrival at bus stops and schools for all students attending in-person instruction. The daily screening and questions will be sent to every parent and guardian by text and email every morning at 5:30 a.m. The health screening tool will be available in English, Arabic, Amharic, Mongolian and Spanish.

School meals will feel different with new guidelines on breakfast and lunch with six-foot distancing and clear partitions for lunch in classrooms, 10-foot distancing in larger communal spaces like gymnasiums and outdoors where feasible with staff supervision.

Schools are urged to hold lunch outdoors with creative solutions where possible pending high winds, icy or wet conditions or a wind chill below 32 degrees. Schools are encouraged to use outdoor spaces to the extent possible. School bus routes are entirely new with drivers trained on the new routes the week before school started. They have completely changed in response to the new requirement of only 11 passengers per bus and buses moving quickly back and forth to schools. Pickups may be earlier and students will have only one bus stop.

Arlington County Police Department (ACPD) is joining the back to school effort by encouraging the public to re-familiarize themselves with the location of school zones, applicable traffic laws (including those pertaining to school buses) and tips to keep students safe. They have installed message boards along roadways to remind motorists to slow down, avoid distractions and watch for students as well as signs indicating temporary parking restrictions near schools.

The monitoring report released by APS indicates APS continues to follow a holistic mitigation approach recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Harvard School of Public Health. This includes strong mask requirement, de-densification, social distancing, good hand hygiene and improved ventilation including strong metrics for evaluation of air quality and ventilation. APS said 98 percent of the classrooms meet or exceed air quality requirements. APS requires all students and staff to wear a face covering during school and activities and will provide every student with two face coverings that meet guidelines.

Superintendent Dr. Francisco Duran’s Return-to-School Update of February 23 concluded, “We know every transition brings different emotions for all, and that many have looked forward to this transition for some time. We are looking forward to seeing more students in person soon and continuing to support all students.”

Multi-Kilogram Fentanyl Trafficker Sentenced

A n Arlington man was sentenced Feb. 24 to 151 months in prison for participating in a conspiracy to distribute over seven kilograms of fentanyl.

According to court documents, Corelius Frazier, 32, and others would press illicit pills containing fentanyl, among other substances, to resemble prescription pills such as Oxycodone, for illegal distribution and financial gain.

“As this case demonstrates, fentanyl is not only extremely dangerous because of its potency, but also because it may be hidden in counterfeit prescription pills,” said Raj Parekh, Acting U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia. “We are grateful to the numerous law enforcement agencies that worked with our office on this investigation and prevented kilograms of fentanyl from poisoning our communities and harming our loved ones.”

A June 1, 2020 court-authorized search of Frazier’s residence resulted in the seizure of a blender containing approximately one kilogram of a mixture and substance containing fentanyl. Law enforcement also seized paraphernalia associated with prescription drug trafficking, including a hydraulic jack, two dust collectors with a large amount of residue, an inductor motor, various cutting agents, and pill presses with several insets containing markings consistent with those found on controlled prescription painkillers such as Oxycodone.

In addition, law enforcement seized approximately $34,828 in U.S. currency and a loaded AK-47 with thirteen bullets in the magazine.

Additional ammunition for this semi-automatic weapon and other firearms was also found in the residence.

Additionally, a June 1, 2020 court-authorized search of one of Frazier’s vehicles resulted in the seizure of two brick-like packages weighing over 1.6 kilograms, which tested positive for the presence of fentanyl. The vehicle also contained 5,307 pills, which tested positive for fentanyl and weighed approximately 4.4 kilograms. In another vehicle owned by Frazier, two machines used to create kilogram packages of controlled substances were seized pursuant to a search warrant.
Father John Van de Paer died peacefully at the Capital Caring Health Halquist Hospice Center in Arlington on Feb. 9, 2021. He had enthusiastically celebrated his 100th birthday on Nov. 29, 2020 with a parade held at Missionhurst where a caravan of former parishioners and supporters from his former parishes in Parkersburg, Philadelphia and Arlington drove by with waves, honks and banners.

Father John was born to Karel and Jeanne Van de Paer on Nov. 29, 1920 in the city of Antwerp, Belgium. As a youth in Catholic School he focused his efforts on carpentry which became a lifelong passion. In addition, he raised money for the missions with a business baking and selling waffles, a skill which he was still exercising 73 years later at Missionhurst in Arlington in their annual cookout. This entrepreneurial spirit guided his lifelong efforts to raise money to improve the lives in the community around him.

He joined the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, a missionary order, and was ordained a priest on Jan. 27, 1947. He came to the United States and was ordained a priest on Jan. 27, 1947. He joined the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, a missionary order, and was ordained a priest on Jan. 27, 1947.

He came to the United States and in 1948 was appointed assistant to the Pastor of St. Cyprian Parish in Cleveland, Ohio. He served this Black parish until 1952 when he was appointed to St. Charles Borromeo in South Philadelphia, also a Black parish. He embraced his new community with an open heart and a dedication to social justice. He said, “The people were my teachers.”

Father John touched all in the community with his indomitable spirit and his deep belief in building independence in his parishioners. He initiated a youth program with field trips and camping, religious retreats and a roller skating rink. Underlying his efforts was his desire to create leadership opportunities and a spirit of self reliance. He said, “I can summarize my ministry as the ministry of presence.”

In 1996 Father John submitted his official resignation and went into semi-retirement in residence at Our Lady of Consolation in Parkersburg, Pennsylvania where he opened another skating rink and continued to use his carpentry skills to repair the facilities.

In September 2014, Father John retired again, this time at Missionhurst in Arlington, Virginia. His work continued to improve the grounds by building benches, repairing fences and refinishing doors. Members of his three communities came together each year to celebrate his birthdays, vocational milestones and the annual August cookout at Missionhurst where his famous waffles with whipped cream and berries were a highlight.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Jeanne and Karel Van de Paer and his brother, Herman Van de Paer. He is survived by his sister-in-law Annie Van de Paer; his three nieces and their spouses, his three nephews and their spouses, 18 great nieces and nephews, and 22 grand nieces and nephews.

Funeral services were scheduled at St. Charles Borromeo in Philadelphia on Sunday, Feb. 28 with a private mass at 6 p.m. streamed live on Youtube. A mass was held on Monday in Parkersburg Pennsylvania at 11 a.m. at Our Lady of Consolation. Arrangements for a service at Missionhurst in Arlington have not yet been announced.

**Welcome Relief: Food and Rental Assistance**

AHC Inc., a developer of more than 7,500 affordable-housing units in metro D.C., has been working to provide residents with needed relief since the start of the pandemic. Working with its Resident Services team and property management arm, AHC Management, AHC has established 18 new food distribution sites, provided grocery gift cards for over 3,000 families, and secured over $2.3 million dollars in rental assistance for their residents. AHC continues to offer extended payment plans.

In the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic, we had a 50 percent increase in requests for food assistance from our residents,” said Susan Davidson, AHC Resident Services Director. “To meet this increased need, AHC established 18 more food distribution sites for its residents in addition to the six sites we typically operate in Maryland and Virginia.”

To build its reach, Resident Services worked with 24 community partners, many of whom stepped up to help neighbors in need, including the Columbia Pike Rezilalization Organization and local farmers markets, Amazon, World Central Kitchen, and AFAC. The company has also distributed grocery gift cards to nearly 3,000 families in need thanks to generous individual donations and organizations such as the Arlington Community Foundation and Volunteer Arlington.

The relief initiatives are being implemented by AHC’s 32-member Resident Services department, which helps residents in four key areas: Education, Health & Wellness, Financial Wellness, and Community Building.

In addition to the COVID-19 Residents Relief efforts, AHC’s Resident Services team provides year-round resources, such as after-school programs, college and career readiness initiatives, summer camps, job readiness mentorship, eviction prevention, and social services assistance.
Bile why one of the chief objectives of the Endometriosis Foundation is to make people aware of the disease, because early diagnosis and treatment is an important part of managing the cruel chronic condition.

March is Endometriosis Awareness Month. There are about 176 million reproductive-age women worldwide who have the disease. Endometriosis occurs when the lining of the uterus (the endometrium) is found growing outside of the uterine cavity, in places where it doesn’t belong. The endometrium tissue forms cysts called implants that can be found on the ovaries, fallopian tubes, or else within the abdominal cavity and sometimes beyond. The tissue responds to the hormonal changes of the menstrual cycle, building up and breaking down like the uterine lining. Unlike the uterine lining, it has no place to go, and can lead to pain, swelling, irritation and adhesions.

This March, the Endometriosis Foundation is asking for support by encouraging men and women to engage in healthy lifestyle activities. Participants do what makes them feel good every day while tracking their progress. They can walk, do yoga, meditate, volunteer, journal, or any other healthy activity—all while fundraising for endometriosis advocacy and education. Each healthy activity earns points, and each participant attempts to get sponsors to help them earn money according to the points they earn. For more information about the two week challenge which starts March first, see: EndoFind Event Page

And for more information about Endometriosis, see: https://www.endofound.org

March is Endometriosis Awareness Month Women push for earlier diagnosis and treatment.
WelIbeing

A Schedule Can Anchor Your Day

How creating a daily routine can ease anxiety during times of uncertainty.

By Marilyn Campbell

Creating a routine gives us a sense of predictability, decreases anxiety related to uncertainty and provides a comfort that no matter how difficult the day might be, some things will be predictable and as we prefer them,” said Dr. Gail Saltz, Clinical Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the NY Presbyterian Hospital Weill-Cornell School of Medicine. “This may be especially true for people that find change anxiety-producing and find transitions difficult.”

From improving sleep quality to pledging to drink more water each day, a routine can improve one’s overall wellbeing. “An exercise routine is healthy physically, but also mentally by decreasing stress and improving mood,” said Saltz. “Having predictable work hours, separate from other hours, decreases likelihood of burnout.”

Though the end result might be similar for most people, creating a routine is a highly individualized process, said Fuchs. “It can be helpful to visualize our day by writing out our daily routine,” she said. “For example, ‘At 3pm I get to leave work and see my son. At 8pm, I get to snuggle up with a cup of tea and read a good book.’”

Finding a sense of stability is a sense of predictability and control, said Saltz. “As human beings we thrive with a degree of predictability and certainty,” added Diana Fuchs, Ph.D., a retired clinical psychologist based in Springfield. “We want to know that we have some control over our lives and what’s going on around us, especially when we have a major world pandemic that makes us feel as if the fabric of society is being unraveled.”

In fact, studies show that undertaking some activities on a schedule helps to reduce stress during negative life events, including one study found in the Occupational Therapy Journal of Research. “Daily routine gives us a sense of predictability, decreases anxiety related to uncertainty and provides a comfort that no matter how difficult the day might be, some things will be predictable and as we prefer them,” said Dr. Gail Saltz, Clinical Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the NY Presbyterian Hospital Weill-Cornell School of Medicine. “This may be especially true for people that find change anxiety-producing and find transitions difficult.”

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“Covid has been hard for everyone, but I hear a lot of people saying now that they are scheduling a specific time for daily activities to force them into a routine.”

— Holly Platt

Well, those last two weeks were kind of fun (comparatively speaking), to the dozen or so previous weeks. “Fun,” when you’re a cancer patient experiencing side effects from treatment is a moderation, absence even of said effects. My recent two-week break from taking my thyroid cancer medication was due to toxics side effects. Mentioned in a previous column, I was having balance and dizziness issues. In short, I couldn’t walk or drive— for that matter, in a straight line. After consulting with my oncologist who deferred to the oncology pharmacist who’s been monitoring/adapting my medication dosage; it was agreed that I should cease and desist until my symptoms subsided. As of this past Thursday, my symptoms had mostly disappeared so I have resumed my treatment, albeit at a lower dose. (This will be the second reduction in my dose since we’ve been trying to find the sweet spot where the tumors are stable and the side effects are manageable.)

Actually, these last two weeks of being side-effect free was more than just a break in the action. It was a revelation of sorts. The infertility/muscle weakness I was having was not due to the older age I have; it became the medication. Within this past fortnight, I began to feel like myself again. I could get in and out of chairs without pacing myself. I could roll over in bed and pull up the covers without pain. And of course, I could walk and drive a straight line. It was wonderful. Where one is in the midst of a cancer diagnosis/existence, any indication that your bodily functions are performing “within normal parameters,” to quote Lt. Comm. Data from “Star Trek: Next Generation” is somewhere between reassuring and life affirming.

Generally speaking, we all know that cancer doesn’t make its diagnoses big and strong. Realistically speaking, you’re happy with normal. Conversely, when ‘normal’ isn’t how you feel, it’s hard to portend that death/disability is not fast-approaching. Moreover, it’s an especially slippery slope when one has been given a “terminal” diagnosis originally and more recently had that diagnosis modified to include a second type of cancer. To paraphrase the lyrics of a song, I’m going to go along with my pre-existing non small lung cancer, also stage IV. I have that to fight emotional- ly to keep from getting bogged down by the bit- key thing. Any good news/an unexpected positive reaction with your disease, like your mind and body returning to pre-cancer normalcy is as good as it gets. So even though I’m back on the medicine, I feel empowered, upbeat, hopeful even. To that end, I am not going to worry yet that the reduced dose will allow the disease to grow. I’m just going to go on. What shall I find out? I’ll find out soon enough, a few days after my next CT scan in mid-March. Until then, I am going to bask in my semi return to glory.

Speaking of ‘glory,’ as a cancer patient, one has to grasp and hold on to anything of emotional, physical, psychological or spiritual value. In addition, what information you receive which is not particularly positive, in that it’s premature/unproven/not corroborated by science, has to be compartmentalized. As with Jerry Seinfeld, you have to put it in the ‘vaault and almost throw away the key. Allowing negative possibilities or unpalatable scenarios to take root in your brain really does a disservice to your potential surviv- al. Ever since I was diagnosed with a “terminal” form of cancer, I’ve tried not to put the cart in front of the horse, if you know what I mean? The diagnosis was bad enough on its own. I didn’t?/don’t need to make it worse by pilling on. If and when my medical nightmare of a cancer becomes more cancer centric than it is now, I’ll deal with it. I don’t need to bring it up any sooner than is absolutely necessary. I’ve had 12 years I wasn’t expecting since receiving an initial “13 month to two years” prognosis. Twelve years later, I don’t see any reason to change my approach.

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