Sandra Musser and her daughter Caroline, tie small ribbons, noting their prayer intentions to the community Lenten Prayer Cross at United Methodist Church in Great Falls.

Breathing Life into a Community of Faith

County’s Budget Plan Faces ‘Robust Conversations’

Fairfax Readies for Public Employee Collective Bargaining

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Breathing Life into a Community of Faith

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Leaders at Great Falls United Methodist Church invite parishioners and visitors now through Easter Sunday, April 4, to share in their Community Lenten Prayer Cross at 10100 Georgetown Pike. Installed outdoors and backing to the sanctuary, the rough-hewn wood cross and a container of multi-colored ribbons are visible from the roadway. “You can select ribbons representing each of your prayers and tie them to the wire on the cross as you offer your personal prayers,” said church member Jesslyn Lumb.

Parishioners erected the cross in preparation for Ash Wednesday, which in 2021 was Feb. 17. Ash Wednesday marked the start of the 46-day Lenten journey leading to Easter Sunday, a moveable feast based on the moon’s cycles. Some Christian faiths, such as Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Lutherans, and Methodists observe Lent. Others do not.

That morning a small group gathered and prepared to tie their petition ribbons on the cross. Native Great Falls resident Sandra Musser brought one of her four children, daughter Caroline. “At a time when we cannot join in prayer inside our church sanctuary, the Prayer Cross is a welcome alternative way to bring concerns to the Lord,” she said. Musser added that as people stopped by to participate, they would breathe life into the community of faith.

“Lent has begun, and I believe this will be the most meaningful season as we journey toward Easter,” said Reverend Livingston S. Dore, Pastor of Great Falls United Methodist Church, in his newsletter. He also announced that the Church would resume in-person worship services on March 21, nearly a year since they were last together in-sanctuary worship. According to Dore, there would be a limit of 50 persons. A summary of the guidelines, along with a registration form, would be posted on the Great Falls UMC website.

A Prayer Cross welcomes all.

By Mercia Hobson
The Connection

Sandra Musser and her daughter, Caroline, tie small ribbons, noting their prayer intentions to the community Lenten Prayer Cross at United Methodist Church in Great Falls.

Breathing Life into a Community of Faith
**How to Provide Input on the FY 2022 Budget**

- To learn more about participating in the budget public hearings, call the Clerk to the Board’s Office at (703) 324-3151 (TTY 711) or to access the form at: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/bosclerk/speakers-form
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**County’s Budget Plan Faces ‘Robust Conversations’**

**By Mercia Hobson**
*The Connection*

**W**hat a difference a year makes,” said Fairfax County Executive Bryan Hill.

On Feb. 23, Hill presented his FY2022 Budget Plan to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. The fiscal year will run from July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022.

The FY2022 Advertised Budget is not a done deal; it is the county executive’s recommendation. The final FY2022 Adopted Budget will happen May 4 after what Chairman Jeff McKay called “robust conversations with the community in order to prioritize funding.”

Hill’s proposed plan builds on the County’s success to utilize federal stimulus funds, most notably the $200.2 million CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund.

“I THINK IT’S CLEAR that we won’t be able to do everything we want to, just like our residents and businesses can’t in these unprecedented times,” said Chairman McKay. “And obviously, we wish that we had better certainty about what the year ahead is going to look like, but clearly, nobody does… It’s prudent for us to plan for this year to continue to be spry and to be able to pivot and respond to what’s happening just as we have done through this last year in a really successful way.”

Hill’s recommendation includes reducing the Real Estate Tax rate by one cent, bringing the rate from $1.15 to $1.14 per $100 of assessed value. In Hill’s Message to the Chairman and Board, he said, “I recognize that many of our homeowners may be struggling. … Fairfax County’s unemployment rate stands at 4.4 percent – far greater than the 1.9 percent we saw one year ago.”

According to Hill, with the proposed reduction in the Real Estate Tax rate, additional revenue available to the County for FY 2022 is $42.23 million – an increase of only 1.51 percent over the current FY 2021 estimate.

Highlighting other Advertised Budget areas, it recommends a $20 million unappropriated reserve for economic recovery. It includes an overall increase for County and Schools of only 0.55 percent, excluding reserves.

The plan provides a $14.13 million increase over FY2021 for School Operating, far short of the School Board’s approved request on Feb. 18 of $104.40 million additional.

No funding is allocated for employee pay increases in FY22.

While the Budget does not make broad investments in pre-COVID goals proposed last year, resources are recommended to focus on more targeted areas. According to Hill, they are “modest investments” in Board and community priorities, such as expanding funding for criminal justice programs and mental health and addiction treatment. Examples are public safety staffing, Diversion First, opioid use prevention efforts, and environmental Initiatives. Previously approved initiatives, such as body-worn cameras and health department positions funded initially with stimulus funds, are proposed to include baseline funding. An increase of 109 positions is proposed primarily for the continuation of previous initiatives and new facilities.

Concurrent with the Budget’s release, Hill made available a revised draft of the Countywide Strategic Plan at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/strategicplan for consideration by the Board and our residents.

**I recognize that many of our homeowners may be struggling. ... Fairfax County’s unemployment rate stands at 4.4 percent – far greater than the 1.9 percent we saw one year ago.”**

— County Executive Bryan Hill

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**News**

**FY 2022 Budget Summary**

- **Real Estate Tax Rate:** $1.14
- **CARES Fund:** $200.2 million
- **Unemployment Rate:** 4.4 percent

**Adjustments included in FY 2022 General Fund Budget**

- **Revenue Increase:** $74.37 million
- **Net Impact of Changes:** $6.26 million

**How to Provide Input on the FY 2022 Budget Plan**

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**Slides displayed during the County Executive’s Presentation on the Budget and Countywide Strategic Plan, Advertised Budget Plan, February 23, 2021**

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A Progressive State if We Can Keep It

By Kenneth R. "Ken" Plum
STATE DELEGATE (D-35)

T o paraphrase Benjamin Franklin who when asked at the conclusion of the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia what kind of government had been formed replied, “a republic if we can keep it!” As the General As-
sembly concluded the work of its annual session this past weekend the same kind of question could be posed as the chang-
es in the Commonwealth’s laws and governance have been so profound. The answer I believe is a progressive state measured not by southern stan-
dards but by comparison to all the other states. At the ballot box the state over the last several years has gone from red to purple to blue. All statewide elected officials are Democrats, and both houses of the General Assembly have been controlled by Democrats since the elections in 2019. Far more meaningful than the partisan la-
bel of elected officials are the changes that have taken place in the laws of the Commonwealth.

In the regular and a special session of the General Assembly last year, historic legislation was passed including ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and lifting of barriers to abortion. Jim Crow era laws were repealed, and the Virginia Values Act prohibiting discrimination in hous-
ing and employment was passed. Bills to reduce gun violence were passed as were bills to reduce the school to prison pipeline. Criminal justice and policing reform bills were passed. And more.

In the session that just ended, criminal jus-
tice reform continued. The death penalty was abolished, and criminal defendants and civil litigants were granted an automatic right to ap-
peal that exists in every other state. My bill that ended excessive fines and prison time for petit larceny passed. Criminal records for many non-
violent offenses will be expunged under a new law. And more. Details for both sessions are at https://lis.virginia.gov.

All of these changes along with record lev-
els of funding for COVID-19 relief and pay raises for teachers, police and other essential workers have led to references about Virginia being the leader among states in progressive legislation. The first ever woman Speaker of the House of Delegates Eileen Filler-Corn said that the House Democratic majority elected in 2019 “has kept its promise to protect families, keep Virginia healthy and rebuild our economy stronger.”

As one who served during years when the news coming from Richmond was not so good, I am aware that these reforms passed with bare-
ly a majority of Democratic legislator votes and a rare and scant few of Republican legislator votes. Attention is already shifting to the fall when the governor, lieutenant governor and attorney general will be elected along with all 100 members of the House of Delegates. The progressive reforms will be on the ballot: do we build on them in the future or do we turn back the clock? Already a former governor, two Black women, and a self-avowed socialist are running for the Democratic nomination for governor and a self-proclaimed “Trump in high heels” and a staunch opponent of abortion rights are among those seeking the Republican nomina-
tion. There is likely to be a record number of candidates running for the House of Delegates. The voters in November will ultimately decide if we keep our progressive state!

Brain Injury Awareness: A Personal Story

By Katy Schnitger

I n 2007, my kids and I were at a fireworks show in Vienna that was so grand we were in awe of each burst. But then there was a misfire and a three-
inch mortar shot through the crowd and exploded on us.

The force of the explosion turned buttons from my shorts into projectiles that were surgi-
cally removed from my left thigh.

I spent 12 days in the burn unit at Washing-
ton Hospital Center. I was released from the hospital to recover at home with a nurse. I cried a lot and didn’t want to get out of bed, but my kids needed me.

I focused on taking care of my family. It soon became apparent that my own mental health and cognitive capabilities were suffering. I struggled to do things I used to do so easily as a stay at home mom. I could not manage our family’s schedule, grocery shopping was impos-
sible, and I could no longer do simple math. I was diagnosed with depression, but I knew I was struggling with more.

In December 2008, I met Dr. Gregory J. O’Shanick, President & Medical Director at the Center for Neurorehabilitation Services, PC in Richmond. After a 3-hour evaluation, he rec-
ognized that I had a blast Traumatic Brain In-
jury (TBI). My feelings were validated that my symptoms were beyond depression. But what did having a TBI mean going forward?

I met with Dr. O’Shanick’s team for physical and occupational therapy. I also discovered Brain Injury Services (BIS), a nonprofit based in Northern Virginia that serves adults and children with TBIs. BIS empowered me to feel whole again. I joined a monthly support group and did not feel so alone. I began public speaking with their Speakers Bureau. That gave me purpose, confidence and independence that opened the door to employ-
ment.

March is Brain Injury Awareness Month. I share my story to help others who have expe-
rienced trauma to the brain to help them and their caregivers recognize some of the signs of a TBI. According to Dr. O’Shanick, common in-
dications of a TBI are loss of balance, inability to track with the eyes, sensitivity to sound, and diffi-
culty with executive functions. All of these challenges can lead to frustration, anxiety, and isolation. But know you are not alone. There is a community at BIS who see you and support your transition to live your best life.

Katy Schnitger is the Office Manager and Out-
reach Specialist at Brain Injury Services. Katy has been involved with BIS since 2010 as a client and as a volunteer with the Speaker’s Bureau. She has been employed at Brain Injury Services since 2015. She has lived in Vienna, Virginia for over fifteen years.

Descano to Address AAUW Mclean Branch

The McLean Branch of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) will host a presentation by Steve T. Descano on Law Enforcement Reform and Equity in Virginia on Tuesday, March 16, 2021, 6:30 p.m. via Zoom.

Descano, Commonwealth’s Attorney for Fairfax City and Fairfax County, is a vet-
eran former federal prosecutor. He served as a federal prosecutor under the Obama Administration for six years specializing in complex financial crimes of both national and international scopes.

A West Point graduate, Descano was a helicopter pilot and U.S. Army Officer befor-
e putting himself through law school and becoming a federal prosecutor. After his work in the Justice Department, he went on to serve his community as a board member for NARAL Pro-Choice Virginia as well as the Fairfax County NAACP’s first nominee to the County’s Police Civilian Review Panel.

Since taking office in 2020, Descano has embarked on a groundbreaking reform agenda. He has implemented policies that make our community safer while address-
ing racial and socioeconomic inequities in our criminal justice system, stemming the tide of mass incarceration, and elevating a holistic, values-based approach to prose-
cution over a reflexively punitive one.

To join the program, visit http://mc-
lean-vaaww.net and send in a request for the link to the meeting, under Programs.
SUNDAY/MARCH 7
Pre-Passover Virtual Shopportunity. 5-6 p.m. At Temple Rodef Shalom, 2100 Westmoreland Street, Falls Church. Join in the launch of Treasures Judaica Gift Shop, the year-round online store offering a large selection of items for all occasions. Register to win door prizes. Visit https://templerodefshalom.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJckde6uqzkpGdIS-Lt9285d6Z27bwIFZvdy0.

MONDAY/MARCH 8
Volunteer for the Environment. 5-6:30 p.m. Online. Join the Sierra Club Great Falls Group for a free online event to learn and share ideas to protect the environment. Activists will hold short presentations about the threat of gold mining and pipelines in Virginia, then they will share information about the Student Environmental Action Showcase (SEAS) in NoVa and the work to ban polluting gas-powered leaf blowers. Visit the website: https://act.sierraclub.org/events/details?formcampaignid=7013p000001kJXptAAA.

THURSDAY/MARCH 11
Shape of the Region Conference. 12:30-2 p.m. Virtual. The Community Foundation for Northern Virginia is hosting its 2021 Shape of the Region Conference. The theme this year is: Co-Creating a New Northern Virginia: An Emerging Vision of a More Inclusive, Sustainable, and Equitable Region. This event will explore the collective efforts of Government, social, philanthropy, and private sector actors to bring more inclusivity, sustainability, and equity across our region. The event will feature brief stories and a panel discussion to highlight recent cross sector collaborations that have helped promote a more equitable and inclusive region. To register for this event, visit www.cfnova.org/shape-region.

YOUTH CONSERVATION CORPS ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS
Virginia State Parks is seeking qualified candidates to fill Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) summer residential service opportunities across the state. Two three-week programs will be offered this summer. YCC crews will assist Virginia State Parks staff with a range of operational projects including trail maintenance, habitat improvement, and campground construction and restoration. Room and board is provided to all YCC crew serving at Virginia State Parks. Those interested can visit https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/youth-conservation-corps to learn more and apply.

GIANT FOOD ADMINISTERS COVID-19 VACCINES
In collaboration with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) and the District of Columbia, Giant Food Pharmacies in D.C. have been selected to receive an initial supply of the COVID-19 vaccine (Moderna) to be administered to healthcare employees who work in senior group home settings covered under Phase 1a. The D.C. Department of Health will be determining eligibility and scheduling appointments for those healthcare workers at one of the new immunization clinics set up at Giant Pharmacies.

AAAS STEM VOLUNTEERS NEEDED
The AAAS STEM Volunteers Program, stemvolunteers.org, needs scientists, engineers and physicians to assist K-12 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) teachers in school districts in the D.C. metro area during the 2020-21 school year. Due to the pandemic, it is anticipated that instruction will be virtual. We will work with our school district partners and volunteers to determine the best ways to support STEM teachers in a virtual environment. If you care about K-12 STEM education and have time to share your knowledge with students and teachers, send a note to donaldrea@aol.com with your home address.

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

‘Rocky’ of Lift Me Up! in Great Falls - named Therapy Horse of the Year.

By Abigail Dawson

A therapeutic riding horse has a unique talent for taking care of their rider’s wellbeing while building trust, confidence, trust and independence. Lift Me Up! Therapeutic Riding in Great Falls is home to many of these hardworking therapy horses, including a very special horse named RockStar (a.k.a. “Rocky”), who was named the 2020 Therapy Horse of the Year by the Therapeutic Riding Association of Virginia (TRAV).

Rocky, a beautiful bay Thoroughbred-Clydesdale cross, is a horse whose journey from the hunt field to the therapeutic riding arena is truly inspiring. Rocky’s story begins with his bond with his owner Paula Michaels, who chose him to be her partner in the hunt field after seeing his calm and easy-going demeanor and his ability to size up any situation before him. In the hunt field, where other horses said “I don’t think so,” Rocky would say, “Let’s check it out!” and with each challenging obstacle they faced Paula’s trust in his horse grew stronger.

RockStar won countless prestigious hunt races, including being a finalist in the North American Field Hunter Championship and winner of the North American Point-to-Point Race on the Flat. “That is a funny story,” Paula remembers. “It was drizzling. I was wearing a borrowed helmet that kept dropping over my eyes. Neither one of us knew what we were doing. We started out at a trot. The other horses got way ahead of us at the get-go, but we picked up speed. From the first turn to the next, we were still behind, but at the final turn, I yelled at him ‘What do you want? To live forever!’ This was always his cue at paces that he could go as fast as he wanted. This fabulous horse found a sixth gear. I could feel the ground under my feet as he stretched out at the gallop to win the race.”

Beyond being brave and smart, Rocky has always had a kind soul. Even after a hard day out on the hunt field, he was never too tired to give rides to young children. That’s how Paula knew that Rocky could make a good therapy horse. After winning several major events, Paula realized that Rocky was starting to slow down. She knew that if they kept racing, her big hearted, brave boy could get injured. Paula decided to retire him, but Rocky had other plans, repeatedly jumping out of his paddock to visit the neighboring horses and get a change of scenery. It was clear to Paula that Rocky was not quite ready to be done with riding, and at that time she decided to bring him to Lift Me Up! to be a therapeutic riding horse.

During one of his first riding lessons at LMU!, Paula watched as Rocky’s usual huge, bouncy stride transformed into the smallest trot steps he could manage as he and his young rider, Jake, went around the ring for the first time. It was clear Rocky was taking care of him. The pair went on to win the Division Grand Champion at the TRAV show, and later starred together in the 2017 documentary Life in Strides, in which they competed in Jake’s first non-therapeutic riding competition.

To this day, Rocky has given many Lift Me Up! riders the gift of his bravery, kindness, heartedness, and sweet personality. He is the official greeter as you enter the barn and connects with so many people, from the smallest toddler to first responders and veterans. Rocky truly lives up to his name; he is in every way a Rock Star!

Abigail Dawson is the Director of Communications at Lift Me Up! in Great Falls.
Record-Setting Day at States for HHS Boys Swim Team

Hornets place as two champions.

By Mercia Hobson
The Connection

Members of the Herndon High School Boys Swim Team won two champion places and ranked eighth overall, with only four swimmers, at the Virginia High School League (VHSL) Class 6 State Championship at the Jeff Rouse Swim and Sport Center in Stafford, Va., on Thursday, Feb. 25. Even with the season’s disrupted training and the meet postponed twice due to inclement weather, the team arrived strong and ready to win.

Swimmers Noah Dyer (senior), Cooper Hill (senior), Will McClough (freshman), and Rian Graham (freshman) placed 1st in the 400 Free Relay becoming State Champions. Their time was an All American Consideration and just missed the Herndon High School record. Nonetheless, Dyer posted the top leadoff time of 45.50, which helped them win 1st place.

Dyer captured the top spot in the 200 Free and was the only swimmer to crack 1:40, posting a time of 1:38.82. In the process, Dyer became State Champion, set a new Herndon High School record and All American Consideration.

In the 100 Free, Dyer placed 2nd, setting another new Herndon High School record. He battled Aiken Do from Woodson to the finish, touching behind in 45.61 to 45.57. Dyer’s 200 Free and 100 Free were personal best times.

Graham placed 3rd in the 100 Fly, swimming a personal best time of 50.66.

Swimmers Dyer, McClough, Hill, and Graham placed 5th in the 200 Freestyle Relay. Dyer anchored and set another new Herndon High School record in the 50 Free in 21.31. His strong showing and racing skills broke one of the longest-standing records on the Herndon High School record board, one that Reinaldo Faberlle set and held since 1995.

“What a way to end the season,” said Kathy McLaughlin, Coach HHS Head Boys/Girls Swim and Dive team.

According to Jamie Graham, mother of Rian Graham, the boys were dedicated and trained hard. “We are thankful for the coaches and older swimmers, like Noah, who have taken Rian under the wings. We are excited about what this team can do in a ‘normal’ season next year,” she said.

The results of the 2021 VHSL Class 6 Meet 2/9/2021-2/25/2021 are available online.

Let us know about an upcoming event

www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar

Record-Setting Day at States for HHS Boys Swim Team

Sports

(From left) Herndon High School freshman William McClough, senior Cooper Hill, junior Justin Tyrell (alternate), freshman Rian Graham, and sophomore Noah Dyer

Adopt/Donate/Volunteer

www.lostdogandcatrescue.org

Helping Animals Find Their Way Since 2001

Volunteers needed for adoption events, fostering pets, transportation, data entry, adoption center caretaking and more.

Lost (adj): 1. unable to find the way. 2. not appreciated or understood. 3. no longer owned or known
Fairfax County Supervisor and Vice Chairman Penny Gross (D-Mason District), Co-Chair of the Fairfax County Collective Bargaining Workgroup

Fairfax County Professional Firefighters & Paramedics - Local 2608 President Ron Kuley

Brad Caruthers, Fairfax County Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 77

The Fairfax County Collective Bargaining Workgroup Session #2 in action.

**Fairfax County Readies for Public Employee Collective Bargaining**

Holds collaborative meetings with union reps to write rules.

By Mercia Hobson  
The Connection

Most Fairfax County public employees who provide vital services in education, safety, healthcare, and sanitation like others in counties, cities, and towns across the Commonwealth will gain a new right on May 1, 2021. It is the right to engage in collective bargaining. Passage of Virginia HB 582, introduced by House Delegate Elizabeth Guzmán (D-31), who represents parts of Fauquier and Prince William counties, opened the door to legislative action leading to the bill’s approval on April 22, 2020. The bill authorized collective bargaining with labor unions on behalf of public officers and employees. Governor Northam postponed the date on which HB 582 would become effective until May 2021 due to concerns over COVID-19.

Before the approval of HB 582, Virginia Code said no state, County, or municipality had the authority to recognize or collectively bargain with any public employees’ labor unions. HB 582 did not define, though, how public employees engage in collective bargaining. The state left that up to individual jurisdictions to write their own rules.

**ON FEB. 25,** Fairfax County Supervisor and Vice Chairman Penny Gross (D-Mason District), Chair of the Fairfax County Collective Bargaining Workgroup, opened the second meeting between Fairfax County leaders and union representatives. The meeting was meant to solicit input toward the writing of collaborative labor-management policies. School Board Chair Dr. Ricardy Anderson (Mason District), School Board Member Karen Corbett Sanders (Mount Vernon), and other County leaders attended the meeting.

“This is our day to hear from our employee groups as to what you think the key discussion points need to be,” Gross said. She asked one representative from each employee organization to share its perspective on four suggested decision points - the scope of collective bargaining, the number of bargaining units, the process for employees to collectively bargain, and the employee/labor administrative official/body to administer collective bargaining.

Dr. Anderson said she looked forward to hearing ideas and questions. “We probably will not have answers to these questions today, but it will help to determine how we move forward in this process that we’re developing together,” she said. Each group kept comments to three to five minutes.

Brad Caruthers, Fairfax County Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 77, maintained that the process should be slow. “We need to do it right; obviously, other jurisdictions are embarking in the same discussions; some too rapidly,” he said. The scope certainly needed to cover pay benefits and the grievance process. For the police department, what will the bargaining units look like for rank and file - one for supervisors and then a separate unit for command.

Becca Ferrick, of Association of Fairfax Professional Educators, said that the process must also be taken “logically.” It should allow direct input from many different perspectives in terms of the bargaining scope. “We prefer more limited scope, benefits and pay, perhaps safety and health,” she said. Ferrick added that the Association would like the lowest number of bargaining units and allow specific definitions either by wage labels or levels and types or by purpose and intent. Like many others, Ferrick urged that the process for employees to select exclusive bargaining should be done by secret ballot, and the administration should be an independent, non-political counsel. Fairfax County Professional Firefighters & Paramedics - Local 2608, President Ron Kuley echoed his “sisters and brothers” in labor. He stressed clarity on a couple of items in collective bargaining, saying it would enhance every family’s safety in the County, providing firefighters a real collective voice...for training professionals on the best way to meet the needs of residents in an emergency. Kuley reiterated that the law said they could negotiate on anything related to our employment. “We don’t want or need proposals that are so narrow and restrictive to the process of collaborative problem-solving. They would just be counterproductive,” Kuley said.

Tammi Wondong-Ware, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) 512, urged that Fairfax County adopts a collective bargaining ordinance that provides bargaining over wages, benefits, and working conditions, especially in light of COVID-19. She said that workers are concerned about workplace health and safety, workloads, career advancement, and equity.

“We need a real voice and a seat at the table,” she said.

Regarding the number of bargaining units, Wondong-Ware said one for general county employees, one for uniform Fire and Rescue employees, and one for police officers. She said they believed a separate ordinance would cover school board employees.

Wondong-Wares maintained that the County should adopt mail ballots, and once the bargaining representative is certified, the representative should have access to county employees for representation purposes.

**WHEN COMMENTS CONCLUDED,** Gross clarified that the law said they could not do anything until May 1. “But that doesn’t mean we have to have an ordinance in place by May 1,” she said.

Dr. Anderson said she saw a lot of common ground regarding the scope of bargaining and heartened by the consensus to take time, do this correctly rather than rushing, which may have negative consequences.

School Board member Karen Corbett Sanders said the natural resources of Fairfax County are its people. “We have gems everywhere we look because of the experience people bring to the table...It takes all of us to collectively develop and flesh out the way we are going to do this but also educate our colleagues.”

Gross said they would be in touch if a third meeting were deemed necessary, and she felt that a third meeting would be beneficial.
Wellbeing

A Schedule Can Anchor Your Day

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

By Marilyn Campbell
The Connection

Her days were overwhelmingly stressful. Holly Platt, a Bethesda mother of two, was preparing to sell her home and searching for a new one, homeschooling all while running her full time math tutoring business. She often ran late to appointments or missed them entirely. A friend suggested that she create a daily routine for herself that included blocking off specific time each day to complete tasks.

“Even morning, I pull up my daily calendar and enter yoga for 30 minutes, making and eating breakfast, and walking my dog Leo,” she said. “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.”

Platt is not alone in her strategy. Creating a routine – even for those who consider themselves to be whimsical and balk at the idea of strict scheduling – can benefit from setting aside a specific time to complete at least one or two activities each day.

“Creating a daily routine is fundamental in developing a healthy relationship with one’s own needs,” said Jennifer Ha, Ph.D., Visiting Professor of Counseling at Marymount University. “Without this regular and intentional mindful attention, your mood and overall mental health can deteriorate, sometimes without one even realizing it.”

Part of protecting mental health is having a sense of stability. “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 are facing a major global 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.”

From improving sleep quality to pledge to drinking 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 burn out.”

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.”

Treat a routine like a medical appointment that you schedule in advance and commit to keeping, suggest Fuchs. “No doubt most of us already have some form of routine when it comes to self-care, brushing teeth and taking a shower, for example,” she said. “Break down your day into smaller, manageable time frames. Ultimately you want to construct a time frame that works best for you.”
Feeling Stressed about COVID?
Virginia C.O.P.E.S. Warmline
877-349-MHAV (6428)
Monday - Friday 9am - 9pm
Saturday - Sunday 5pm - 9pm
OPEN TO ALL VIRGINIANS | YOU ARE NOT ALONE

TEXT FOR FOOD
No Kid Hungry Virginia encourages families to text FOOD or COMIDA to 877-877 to find free summer food sites organized by school districts and community organizations. Meal sites are offering a variety of distribution models to help safely connect students with meals and promote social distancing, including “Grab and Go” service and food delivery along bus routes while passing out multiple days’ worth of meals at once-time.

FRESHFARM MARKETS OPEN
Local FRESHFARM Markets are open. Residents are encouraged to pre-order as much as possible, but grab-and-go and prepackaged options will be available for purchase at all of the markets listed below.

Saturday Markets
Arlington, 8 a.m. - 12 p.m. -- N Courthouse Rd. and 14th St N, Arlington
Oakton, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. -- 2854 Hunter Mill Rd., Oakton
Sunday Market
Mosaic, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. -- 2910 District Ave., Fairfax

SUPPORT GROUPS
Parent Support Partners, a service of the Healthy Minds Fairfax initiative, are all parents who have received training and are qualified to offer education, support and assistance at no cost to families or caregivers. They provide reliable information that families can use in decision-making and are familiar with services and resources that can help families in distress. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/healthymindsfairfax or www.nami-northernvirginia.org/parent-peer-support.html.

Shepherd’s Center of Oakton Vienna Caregivers’ Support Group takes place first and third Thursday of each month, 10-11:30 a.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax (UUCF) - Program Building, 2709 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. For caregivers to adult family members with dementia. Visit www.shepherdcenterofoakton.org or contact facilitator Jack Truax at 703-821-6838.

Virginia Chronic Pain Support Group Meets from 1:30-3 p.m. the 2nd Wednesday of each month at Kaplan Center for Integrative Medicine, 6829 Elm St., Suite 300, McLean. Group leader, Jodi Brayton, LCSW . 703-532-4892.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED
STEM Professionals Needed. Volunteers are needed to assist K-12 STEM teachers in northern Virginia as part of the American Association for the Advancement of Science’s STEM Volunteer Program, stemvolunteers.org, during the 2019-20 school year, beginning in September. Please contact Don Rea at 571-551-2488 or donaldrea@aol.com.

Assistance League of Northern Virginia, a volunteer nonprofit, invites community members to join the organization to participate in its Reading Express program. Volunteers provide one-on-one tutoring to first grade students during the school year. To learn more contact VP Membership Mary Gronlund at 201-532-4892.

From Page 5

Bulletin Board
**MARCH 1-29**

“Life in Historic Virginia.” At Sully Historic Site, 3650 Historic Sully Way, Chantilly. Part of the Park Authority’s new series of “Field Trips for All” that are designed to supplement classroom and online lessons. Parks provide an experience not easily duplicated in the classroom, and these field trips offer parents a unique opportunity to provide their kids with real experiences while applying the concepts required in the Virginia Standards of Learning. This history program is designed for students in grades one through six. Life in Historic Virginia is offered on Mondays, March 1, 15, 22 and 29. The 45-minute programs at Sully Historic Site run at 11 a.m., 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m., and the cost is $40 per family. Call 703-437-1794.

**MARCH 13**

The Show Must Go On. The McLean Art Society in collaboration with The McLean Project For The Arts is presenting a juried painting exhibition in the Atrium Gallery at The McLean Community Center. (1234 Ingleside Avenue in Mclean, 703-790-0123). Original artwork on a wide variety of subject matter and painting styles will be available for viewing and purchase.

**MARCH 6-7**

Franchise Show Chantilly. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. At the Dulles Expo Center, 4320 Chantilly Shoppiing Center, Chantilly. The community is invited to The Franchise Show at the Dulles Expo Center from March 6 – 7, 2021. Full-time and part-time business opportunities from every industry, at every investment level. Visit the website: https://thebiznet.xex.com/virginia-franchise-show-march-2021/

**SUNDAY/MARCH 7**

Maple Syrup Boil Down. 11 a.m., noon, and 1 p.m. At Colvin Run Mill, 10017 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. It’s sugarin’ time at the mill, so bundle up, brave the weather and learn as sap is boiled down into a sweet syrup over an open fire. While supplies last, sample some of this delicious syrup over cornbread baked with corrnmeal ground at Colvin Run Mill. Call 703-759-2771.

**APRIL 2021**

**FIREARMS AND SELF-PROTECTION**

By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Well, those last two weeks were kind of fun (comparatively speaking), to the dozen or so previous weeks. ‘Far,’ when you’re a cancer patient experiencing effects, from fatigue to what I believe is a moderation, absence even of said effects. My recent two-week break from taking my thyroid medication was, if I may say so, a disservice to my potential survival. It was agreed that I should increase 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 infirmity/muscle weakness I was having was not due to the older age I have Become, it was the medication. During this past fortnight, I began to feel like myself again. I could get up and out of bed without palling myself. I could roll over in bed and pull up the covers without a fuss. And of course, I could walk and drive a straight line. It was wonderful. One is in the midst of a cancer diagnosis/existence, any indication that your bodily functions are performing “within normal parameters” to quote L. Conn. Dave 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 pretend that death/disability is not fast-approaching. Moreover, it’s 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: papillary thyroid cancer stage IV, to go along with my pre-existing non small lung cancer, also stage IV. One has to fight emotional-ly to keep from getting lost/growing down that rabbit hole. Any good news/scan unexpected reaction to your disease, like your mind and body returning to pre-cancer normalcy is about as good as it gets. So even though I’m back on the medication, I feel empowered, upbeat, hopeful even. To that end/continuation of life, I am not as good as it gets. So even though I am back on the medication, I feel empowered, upbeat, hopeful even. To that end/continuation of life, I am not...
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