

CONNECTION

Reston ♦ Herndon ♦ ^{Oak Hill} Chantilly ♦ CENTRE VIEW



Frying Pan Park Manager Retires

NEWS, PAGE 8

For Yvonne Johnson, former Manager of Frying Pan Farm Park, retirement means she has all the time in the world to volunteer at the park and play with the animals.

Sully Woodlands Stewardship Education Center Planned

NEWS, PAGE 3

Students Shine in Art, Talent Show

NEWS, PAGE 8

OPINION, PAGE 4 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 6

PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

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Heritage Lost Reclaimed in Chapter Book Series

Interview with author Terry Catasús Jennings of Reston

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Terry Catasús Jennings of Reston is the author of the newly released children's chapter book series, "Definitely Dominguita," published by Simon & Schuster. It is available in English and Spanish.

"I knew from the moment that Terry sent 'Definitely Dominguita' to me that it was a special and important book. Seeing a Cuban-American girl as the center and hero of not just one, but a series of stories, fills my heart with joy. It's so important that the books our children are reading reflect and open windows and doors for everyone in America. And Terry's writing is just spectacular," said Natalie M. Lakosil, Bradford Literary Agency and Jennings' agent.

The series for reading age 6-9 years features a young Cuban American girl, an avid reader, who finds adventures based on classics she reads with her Abuela, Grandmother. As a child in Cuba, Jennings said she loved to read classic novels. Forced to leave Cuba after her father was imprisoned, Jennings said they immigrated to the United States, and she left her "skin behind." It is only through writing this acclaimed series



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED
Author Terry Catasús Jennings of Reston, at work on her next book.

Jennings rediscovered her heritage.

AS A CUBAN IMMIGRANT arriving at age 12, Jennings said her goal was to assimilate. "I wanted to be the same as everybody else because sometimes being Cuban meant being uncomfortable and sometimes meant

being hurt." Jennings said she tried to learn English "really, really well."

When Jennings started to write in 2000, her characters were blond and blue-eyed or red-headed and freckled, not Cuban characters. "I didn't think that story was worth telling." It wasn't until 2008 when at a workshop, an editor told Jennings that she needed to write her own stories; she worked on one. However, it never got published.

As time passed and Jennings saw everybody else writing Latinx characters, she told herself, "By golly, this is the right time." The main character of her new series, "Definitely Dominguita," came to her one day as a little guy dressed in a cape. At first, the boy was named Don Quixote. "He just lent himself to being a Cuban American kid," Jennings said. Fortunately, Jennings' "very pushy daughter" told her she couldn't write the story with a boy character. It had to be a strong girl, hence Dominguita.

For Jennings, the characters she creates steal her heart. Jennings said she had forced herself as a young Cuban in America to leave "her skin behind." While she's very grateful that the United States took them because they didn't have anywhere else to go, be a family, and be safe. Still, while she is grateful to be an American citizen, she gave up her

heritage by becoming so much American.

"A lot of the richness I'm discovering, I'm reclaiming now...I'm not as much . a Cuban as I should be," Jennings said. According to Jennings, the series is close to her heart because it goes back to her childhood, and it gives validity to who she is. Jennings is glad things have changed for little kids, like her character, Dominguita. They are accepted. Jennings said, "The whole point of the book is so little kids like Dominguita can see themselves in her. And little kids who are blond and blue-eyed or read-headed and freckled can also see what Dominguita is like, see she is no different than they are."

JENNINGS said she loves her characters; they are just fun. Writing a book series allows her to finish one manuscript and then start another with her friends. "I like the way these little guys are, the way they act, and how they bring each other down to reality, but then they also support each other. I'm really enjoying the three of them," Jennings said.

"Definitely Dominguita" by Terry Catasús Jennings (Author), Fatima Anaya (Illustrator) is a four-book series by publisher Simon & Schuster: Knight of the Cape and Captain Dom's Treasure, Books 1 and 2, previous books in the series, Book 3, All for One, on sale Aug. 17, 21, and Book four, Sherlock Dom, on sale Nov. 16, 21. The series is available on Amazon.



The Closet thanks the shoppers, donors, volunteers, and staff who make it possible to continue to give back to the local community even during this pandemic period!

In 2020, The Closet gave over \$64,000 in grants to local non-profits:

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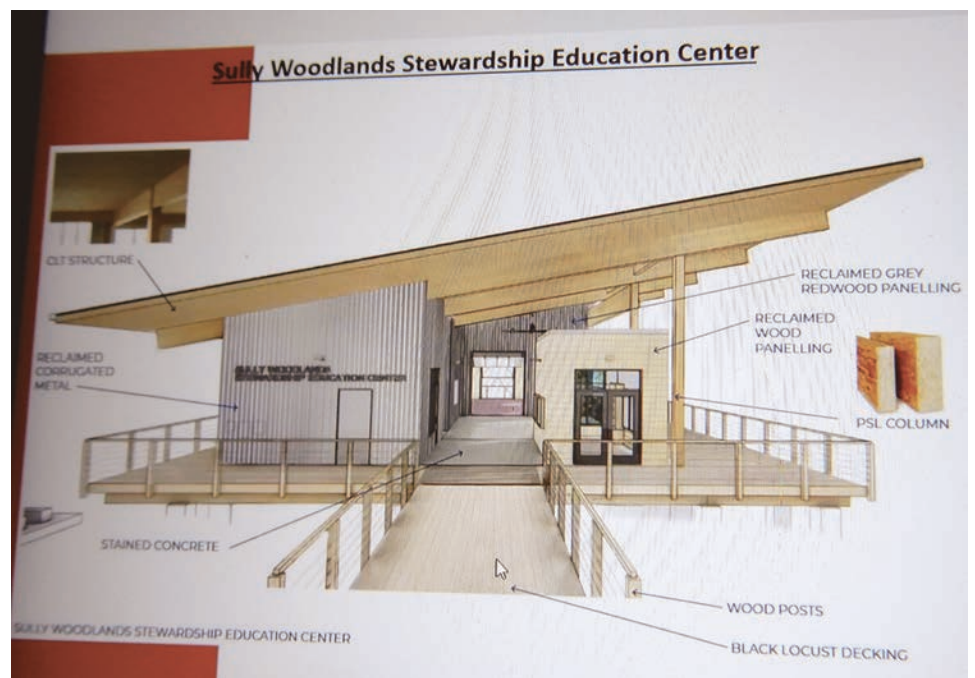
Park View High School

Mountain View High School

South Lake High School



The energy-efficient building will be constructed of reclaimed wood to reduce its carbon footprint.



An interior view of the education building planned for Chantilly's E.C. Lawrence Park.

Sully Woodlands Stewardship Education Center Planned

State-of-the-art building slated for E.C. Lawrence Park.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

The Fairfax County Park Authority plans to construct a groundbreaking and innovative new building in Chantilly's Ellanor C. Lawrence Park. It will be called the Sully Woodlands Stewardship Education Center, and details were presented during a recent meeting of the Sully District Council of Citizens Assns.

"It's to educate the public about how to preserve wildlife and nature and let them know what's in the Sully Woodlands," said Sully District Park Authority representative Maggie Godbold. "We're very excited about it."

Sully Woodlands is a collection of parks – including E.C. Lawrence – in western Fairfax

County. And this structure will be built according to the rigorous, sustainable-design standards of the Living Building Challenge. It's an international certification to create carbon-negative buildings that generate more energy and usable water than they consume.

"It will be the first building like this in Fairfax County—and one of only three or four on the whole, East Coast – and 50 in the entire world," said Godbold. "And we'll educate people about it, as well."

The building will be 7,000 square feet, with two multipurpose spaces – one enclosed and one open – plus an education kiosk and kitchen. There'll be learning pods for STEAM education and nature play, an animal enclosure, a solar picnic table and a

future amphitheater. And the floor will have a map of Sully

Woodlands so visitors may see how all the parks connect.

Solar panels will power the building and produce 105 percent of its energy needs. Other, green features include a rainwater-reuse system, radiant heating, passive cooling (large doors, fans and transom vents), and a wastewater-treatment system. Any extra water will be treated on site and returned to the natural, water cycle.

Envisioned as a gateway to the greater Sully Woodlands, the building, itself, will be constructed of reclaimed wood, cast concrete and corrugated metal to reduce its carbon footprint. And it will rely solely on renewable energy and will operate pollution-free.

"We're working with the Fairfax County

DEQ [Department of Environmental Quality], and the boiler room will be open so people can see what's going on [to save energy]," said Godbold. "We'll also have charging stations there for electronic bikes."

She said the structure will be "nestled in the woods and will have a lovely, shaded, porch area. There are trails and places where kids can get outside and get some exercise, and the facility will be available to school groups to visit – and it's all free." But in the evenings, she added, the building may be rented for events.

Eager to see this whole project take shape, Godbold said, "We're working on getting our permits and construction documents now. We hope to have construction start in mid- to late spring, and we'll have a virtual groundbreaking." It's estimated to take a year to complete and be ready to open in spring 2022.

Limited Engagement: DMV Connect Coming to Herndon

Service outreach program processes REAL IDs and other DMV transactions.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Virginia Department of Motor Vehicle's service outreach program called DMV Connect is coming to the Town of Herndon thanks to the combined efforts of the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles, the Town of Herndon and Herndon Town Councilmember Naila Alam. DMV employee(s) will offer services by appointment only from Tuesday, March 22 through Friday, March 25, in Room 1 at the Herndon Community Center, 814 Ferndale Avenue in Herndon.

The effort to stand up the temporary program is the brainchild of first-term Councilmember Alam, who began serving on Council on Jan. 1, 2021. "I wanted to do something for my community...

to help those where help is most needed," Alam said. She mentioned seniors and others who might be unable to travel to sites located a greater distance away.

"Hopefully, a lot of work needed by community members can be done," Alam said. DMV Connect offers 11 transactions, among them REAL ID, driver's licenses, ID cards (adult and children), disabled parking placards, vehicle titles, and hunting and fishing licenses. More than 40 transactions are available online.

Alam explained her idea to bring DMV Connect to Herndon, with services available to Town residents and others came about because of her experience when she attempted to get a DMV appointment for a REAL ID. Alam said she found nearby locations backed up for appointments due to COVID-19 and was forced to travel to Purcellville to get her REAL ID compliant license.



MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Herndon Town Councilmember Naila Alam stands outside the Herndon Community Center, where DMV Connect will offer limited services inside by appointment March 22-25.

"Councilmember Naila Alam has made it her personal mission to help our citizens tap into essential resources," said Mayor Sheila Olem. "She has hit the ground running, by attaining a DMV Connect site in the town. She is working hard and tapping into her connections to bring this needed resource to our residents."

According to Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), beginning on Oct. 1, 2021,

the federal government will require all domestic air travelers to present a REAL ID compliant driver's license or ID card or another federally approved form of identification. Holders of licenses and ID cards that meet federal requirements will also use their Virginia DMV-issued credentials as identification to access federal buildings, including military installations.

Currently, the Department of Homeland Security has not released an approved documents list for federal facilities entrance. "Many federal facilities may have control over acceptable identification documents for entrance. If you are looking to enter a specific facility, DMV suggests contacting that facility directly. Effective immediately, some military bases may no longer accept non-REAL ID compliant credentials which display "Federal Limits Apply." Please verify identification requirements prior to your visit," states DMV Now.

"This is their only scheduled visit, but I will...invite them to come here more often," said Alam.

Law and Order and Justice

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



COMMENTARY

There is no more important function of government than ensuring public safety. The challenge in a constitutional form of government is achieving safety for the public without jeopardizing the rights and freedom of some to protect others. Public safety has been like a political football with some raising fears about crime and perceived threats to the community. Few is the number of politicians who until recently have been willing to suggest that our laws and institutions of justice require a review of the balance of public safety, the application of laws, and justice.

Over the last several decades there have been many political campaigns built around a suggestion of increasing crime rates and simplistic solutions to keep everyone safe. California started the trend with legislation with the slogan "Three Strikes and You're Out" that increased penalties for repeated offenses. A governor's race in Virginia was won by an underdog candidate with a slogan of "no more pa-

role." Legislative sessions during an election year would see more ideas about expanding the list of crimes for which the state could put someone to death, and the list lengthened of crimes for which mandatory minimum sentences were prescribed. At the same time guns became easier to purchase and own, and every mass shooting was followed by more gun purchases.

Capital punishment, extending the time prisoners were held, and arming more citizens resulted in Virginia being the number one state in putting people to death (first with an electric chair and more recently with lethal injections), increased prison construction, severe over-crowding of prisons, and protests at the state capitol in Richmond of more than 22,000 armed persons.

The disproportionate impact on people of color and in minority communities has become glaringly clear as the videos of body-cam and other devices show us the unfair way some laws have been administered. The slogan "Black

Lives Matter" hit a responsive chord as the inequities in administering laws became obvious.

With the outcome of the elections of 2019 and the election of more progressive members in the House of Delegates, Virginia has become more realistic in its dealing with criminal justice and law and order issues. Abolishing the death penalty was one of the first among many reforms taken. A recognition of the connection between Jim Crow laws of the past and current policing resulted in the repeal of laws that were most strongly felt in the Black community. No-knock warrants were eliminated as were minor offenses that resulted in Black persons being stopped regularly by the police. A bill for the expungement of records of convictions for several misdemeanor crimes passed as did a bill to establish a process for seeking expungement through the courts for other crimes. Major progress was made in the discussion of eliminating mandatory minimum sentences with the likelihood that a bill will be passed in future sessions.

Some will call the actions of the legislature being soft on crime. I believe that a more realistic view is that the state has become less political and more balanced on ways to keep the community safe and to realize justice for more of our citizens. You will hear more of these opposing views in the campaigns coming up this fall.

Celebrate International Women's Month. And then Keep Going

BY KATE VIGGIANO JANICH

If nothing else, the past few years have taught us this: It's International Women's Month 2021 — and we still have a lot of work to do to achieve equality for women in our country.

Only last year in 2020 did Virginia become the 38th state to ratify the long-contested Equal Rights Amendment (the ERA). The ERA is an addition to the US Constitution that would prohibit discrimination based on sex.

Only last year did we elect our first woman Vice President — a leadership position higher than any woman ever before her. Yet, while we celebrated this incredible achievement, we wonder — why is this incredible at all? Should it not be the norm?

And, as we watched Vice President Kamala Harris step up on this platform, the women on the ground around us took significant steps down. Women's progress in the workplace rolled back with alarming speed. Because when

the chips fell and families were forced to make tough choices due to COVID, the women were the ones who took a step back. They left their jobs (that still paid less than men's roles), cut their time down, or put aside their fledgling businesses to care for their families.

Let us be clear.

We are thankful for the women who helped us get where we are today. Our ancestors fought for our right to speak up with a vote. For protecting our bodies, for using our brains and creativity in new ways, for exploring the world's possibilities.

We are thankful for the groups of women and advocacy coalitions who remind us every day the importance and power of #womensupportingwomen.

And yet. We have a lot to do so all the work doesn't go to waste. We must keep moving so that when a woman steps into power, it's considered part of the norm. So that working mothers aren't the ones who step down in their

careers by default.

For our part at Rowan Tree, we are committing to supporting women business owners. We are fighting on behalf of minority groups to achieve equity. We are fostering collaboration and learning opportunities, because we all know that we are #strongertogether. Let's keep going.

Kate Viggiano Janich, Co-Founder, Rowan Tree, a coworking + cogrowth community focused on women, open to all.
www.workrowan.com

Let Us Know Your View

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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.

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Trail Improvements at Random Hills Park

The trail in Random Hills Park will be improved, and the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) is seeking public input on its design. The park is located off Random Hills Road in Fair Oaks.

The Park Authority is planning to upgrade about 1,000 linear feet of asphalt trail in this park as part of the I-66 Trail/Transform I-66 project. The goal is to connect VDOT's proposed trail along I-66 with the existing trail network within Random Hills Park to Random Hills Road.

Construction access will be from Random Hills Road and Route 50. The trail will be built entirely on Park Authority property and will extend through the park on the eastern side of Difficult Run. It'll be designed and constructed to ADA standards, so it'll serve both pedestrians and cyclists of all abilities.



Some 1,000 feet of asphalt trail within Random Hills Park will be upgraded.

To limit the trail's impact to natural resources, it will follow the path of the existing trail, as much as possible. All relevant county, state and federal permits will be obtained for any potential impact. Furthermore, the Park Authority will perform an archeological investigation of the area to make sure that no cultural resources are affected.

FCPA welcomes residents' suggestions and concerns about this project before the design is finalized. The public-comment period will close March 25.

For more information, contact Park Authority Project Manager Amy Linderman at 703-324-8629 or Amy.Linderman@fairfaxcounty.gov. Comments may be emailed to

Parkmail@fairfaxcounty.gov.

— BONNIE HOBBS



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BBQ Chicken Reston LLC trading as BBQ Chicken & Beer, 1432 Northpoint Village Ctr, Reston, Virginia 20194-1190. The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) for a Wine and Beer On Premises license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages. Young Kim, Member. NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or 800-552-3200.

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ABC LICENSE

Glory Venture II LLC trading as Gaboja Restaurant II, 14245 H Centreville Sq, Centreville, Fairfax County, Virginia 20121-2368. The above establishment is applying to the VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL (ABC) for a Wine and Beer On Premises Mixed Beverage Restaurant license to sell or manufacture alcoholic beverages. Evelyn Ahn, Member. NOTE: Objections to the issuance of this license must be submitted to ABC no later than 30 days from the publishing date of the first of two required newspaper legal notices. Objections should be registered at www.abc.virginia.gov or 800-552-3200.

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Man Fatally Shot in Reston Apartment Community

Detectives from Major Crimes Bureau continue to investigate a fatal shooting that occurred March 11 in the 2200 block of Winterthur Court in Reston. Officers were initially dispatched for the report of gunshots at 5:28 p.m. They found Santos Antonio Trejos, 40, of Reston, suffering from apparent gunshot wounds in the entryway of an apartment building. Rescue personnel pronounced him deceased at the scene. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner will conduct an autopsy to determine the manner and cause of death. A second victim, an adult woman, reported injuries that were not life threatening. Detectives are still investigating whether those injuries are the result of shrapnel or from fragments of building material from the gunfire.

Preliminarily, detectives believe Trejos was outside of the apartment building when a man began shooting at him. Detectives are still working to confirm further descriptive

information and whether the suspect left on foot or by car.

Anyone who may have witnessed the shooting or may have seen the suspect flee the scene is asked to call Major Crimes Bureau at 703-246-7800, option 2. Tips can also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by phone – 1-866-411-TIPS (866-411-8477), by text – Type “FCCS” plus tip to 847411, and by web – Click [HERE](#). Download Mobile tip411 App “Fairfax Co Crime Solvers,” Anonymous tipsters are eligible for cash rewards of \$100 to \$1,000 dollars if their information leads to an arrest.

Victim specialists from Major Crimes Bureau’s Victim Services Division have been assigned to ensure that the victim’s family is receiving appropriate resources and assistance.

This is being investigated as the third homicide year to date in Fairfax County - as reported by FCPD Public Affairs Bureau

AREA ROUNDUPS

Document Shred, this Saturday

A paper-shredding event will be held, this Saturday, March 20, from 7-11 a.m., at the Sully District Governmental Center, 4900 Stonecroft Blvd. in Chantilly. Area residents may bring documents to be securely shredded by Fairfax County Solid Waste Management.

BULLETIN BOARD

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

SATURDAY/MARCH 27

Running for Beer. At Rocket Frog Brewing Co., 22560 Glenn Drive, Sterling. Part of the Virginia Brewing Running Series. The casual 5K walk/jog/run course starts and ends at the brewery. Participants enjoy great, local libations and leave with fun merchandise to commemorate their finish-line victory. Event includes health tips, food trucks, and live music. The \$30-\$45 registration fee includes a craft beer, a choice of a collector’s swag item, raffle entry and an array of giveaways and goodies from community partners and sponsors. Visit <https://breweryrunningseries.com/virginia/>

MARCH INTO PARKS

The Herndon Parks and Recreation Department invites you, your family, and friends to March Into Parks. There are 11 parks and 3 trails to explore in the Town of Herndon. Every home in Herndon is a ¼-mile from a town park. Staff has put together physically distanced activities to help you explore and embrace our natural resources. A growing body of research points to the beneficial effects that exposure to the natural world has on health, reducing stress and promoting healing.

Here are a few activities to consider and some special highlights:

Can you visit a town park or a trail you haven’t explored?

Can you visit two parks (two playgrounds) & one trail in one day without driving?

Start at Trailside Park, walk or bike on the W & OD Trail, and be at Bready Park in no time flat.

Can you compose a tune at the Cuttermill Park playground? Record your song and share!

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Child Car Seat Inspections

Police officers will inspect car seats, Thursday, March 25, from 5-8:30 p.m., at the Sully District Station, 4900 Stonecroft Blvd. in Chantilly. Seats should already be installed so they’re ready to be inspected and properly re-installed, if necessary. Parents will also learn how to properly install the seats, themselves. Inspections are done first-come, first-served. Wear a mask and adhere to social distancing.

Can you take a photo with the purple dinosaur at Harding Park?

On March 17, can you find the shamrocks in all shapes and placed in Bready, Haley Smith, Trailside, or Chandon Parks?

The week of March 22-28, will you feed the birds by making and hanging a handmade birdfeeder at Spring Street Park? The Herndon Parks and Recreation Department will provide kits to make the birdfeeders. Happy spring.

March 29-31, can you find 6 oversized and small colorful eggs in our parks?

Check out the Facebook page www.facebook.com/HerndonParks for tips from our Town Urban Forester.

If you need more information or have any questions, email parksandrec@herndon-va.gov or call 703-787-7300.

SUPPORT DULLES SOUTH FOOD PANTRY

Help Support Dulles South Food Pantry. They need potatoes, sweet potatoes, onions, garlic, cucumbers, squash, apples and oranges. Drop off items on Mondays from now to April 12, from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. (except for March 29) at Arcola Fire Department Annex, 24300 Stone Springs Blvd., Dulles

Or give: <https://www.dsfp.org/donate-money/>

HERNDON ACCEPTING ARTS GRANT PROPOSALS

The Town of Herndon is accepting grant proposals up to \$4,500 through the Virginia Commission for the Arts (VCA) for projects to be implemented in FY 2022. For information on the Creative Communities Partnership Grant, review the FY2022 Guidelines for Funding which are available at http://www.arts.virginia.gov/grants_guidelines.html.

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A Shot in the Arm



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Literally and figuratively. After a year or so living the pandemic life; staying at home/quarantining, wearing a mask, social distancing, washing my hands and watching the death toll from covid-19 top 500,000 - in the United States alone, I recently became of the lucky ones to have been injected with a vaccine. I have to wait another two weeks to get my second shot. No worries. I have some protection now, but according to Dr. Fauci, the second/follow up shot increases one’s protection “tenfold.” It wouldn’t exactly be foolish to throw caution to the wind - and reintegrate back into society (depending upon where you live), but it seems premature and irresponsible to risk being stupid when in another two weeks, I could be smart.

My wife, Dina, also recently shot, has been very smart all along, especially as it concerns my actual standing in the world. (Moreover, she has no plans to step out until she receives her second shot.) Belonging in the special comorbidity group; presumably, a 66-year old with cancer/weakened immune system, I presented a very appealing target for the virus. I mean, my immune system is already compromised and with occasional breathing problems side-effected by my thyroid cancer medication, I was potentially easy pickins. As such, Dina refused to give me passage out of our house. Victor Laszlow had a better chance of leaving Casablanca than I did of leaving Burtonsville.

But soon it appears I will have my own “letters of transit.” However, Dina has already informed me that I won’t be returning to my former errand-running ways. She intends to continue ordering food online from the grocery store - and then drive to pick it up contact-less in their parking lot. Actually, I might be allowed to go that far since I’d be remaining in the car and still wearing a mask while popping the trunk and keeping my distance as the groceries are loaded into the boot. We’ll see; we’re still negotiating. But definitely not until I receive my second shot. In the interim, I imagine our lives will change very little. Thanks to the vaccine though, there is hope that once again, I’ll be able to interact with people, places and things.

But return I shall and relieved I will be. However, having lung cancer, and/or thyroid cancer which has metastasized to the lungs, in the midst of a pandemic with a virus that often locates in the lungs and creates breathing/pulmonary problems - even with the two shots, is still as scary and risky as it gets, especially if you’re of a certain age as I am. In two weeks, I’ll have received my booster shot, and I’ll have a lot less to worry about, thankfully. And for a cancer patient still undergoing treatment with a less than a “normal” life expectancy anticipated, being fully vaccinated is as good as it gets. And I suppose I can live with that, live being the operative word.

Having cancer, irrespective of the type, your diagnosis/prognosis, is pretty damn difficult. It impacts every facet of your life. The thought (your reality) is never far from your conscious mind. And once you become a member of this less than exclusive club (more every day, unfortunately), a club that nobody wants to join, there are more risks to your life than you ever imagined, and many more for which you have absolutely no awareness. Having an external complication, like a virus, with variants that seem to spread rapidly; which have now infected over 30,000,000 Americans, and an infection for which there’s no specific cure, and seems to have its greatest negative impact on people exactly like me (age and disease) is about as foreboding as it could possibly be. And with no place to hide, other than in your own home - with no visitors allowed, a precaution most recommended (to invoke the syntax of Hercule Poirot, “the greatest detective in the world”) has made many of us impatient and perhaps a bit tense. I can, as many healthcare professionals have said, almost see the light. Hopefully, it will be July 4th of this year as the President has suggested and not July 4th of next year.

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

Frying Pan Park Manager Retires

Three-decades of stories to tell.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

On Tuesday, March 2, and after more than 31 years of public service, Yvonne Johnson, Manager of Frying Pan Farm Park, had only a few hours left to tie up loose ends before retiring, and something was bothering her. “I’m concerned about what I forget to do or get done, or handoff, that kind of stuff.” Asked what the worst that could happen was, Johnson said, “A customer is disappointed with the service the park is delivering.”

During Johnson’s tenure, many changes occurred at Frying Pan Farm, causing it to label “a premier park.” Located in Herndon, amenities include a 1930s working farm, wedding/rental venue, equestrian facility, pre-school, and natural and cultural resources. “We are preserving an agricultural process...the actual work of running a farm. That is why people love to come here,” Johnson said. The 135-acre site attracts more than 700,000 visits annually.

JOHNSON served as part of a dynamic trifecta-team. Fairfax County Government and Fairfax Park Authority partnered under a Memorandum of Understanding, and Friends of Frying Pan Farm Park owned the animals. “All the land that the Park Authority owns has their protection,” she said. According to Johnson, Fairfax County provided significant financial support, covering almost all staff costs. However, it was unrealistic for a working farm to go through the multi-month formal Fairfax County procurement processes, so the Friends take care of that. “We can’t wait three months ... if we need a new cow,” she said.

As part of Johnson’s position, she worked behind the scenes assigning projects and staff schedules. She developed and maintained community and cooperative partnerships and served as a contact for donations and fundraising activities while optimizing revenue production and customer satisfaction. Johnson described herself as a duck sitting on the top of the pond, peaceful and quiet. “What you don’t realize is underneath there is paddling like crazy,” she said.

Johnson’s idea of wagon rides proved to be her “best give,” a viable revenue source for the park. “If we don’t earn revenue, we can’t deliver our mission... to preserve and interpret... And by doing things like wagon rides and then later the carousel ... (Those things) give us the ability to keep the farm open for free.”

The wagon rides also provided a means to showcase the park’s nature, history, agriculture, and farming stories. Before then, people would come and only walk around Kidwell Farm located within the park. They’d meet the chickens, rabbits, goats, and sheep; see the farmhouse, outbuildings, barns, and machine shed and think that was it. But with the wagon rides, park volunteers and staff could tell the bigger story of farming of the 1930s. People could ride out a quarter of a mile and see the cattle grazing in the pastures and the 15-acre crop fields and the woods where nature abounds.

As a bonus, the wagon rides delivered different ex-



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Former Manager of Frying Pan Farm Park, Yvonne Johnson, comes back to the park on her second day of retirement and as a volunteer.

periences to different ages simultaneously. The rides entertain the children, and the moms get to talk and be grownups. “Everybody’s happy getting what they need,” said Johnson.

Asked about her saddest day at the park, Johnson did not hesitate. It was 9-11—no cars in the lot, and everything dead silent. “The only thing I saw was a fighter plane going across the sky,” she said. The next day, when Johnson returned, she said there were so many people, but it was so quiet, everyone speaking in soft voices. Johnson took out a chicken, held it, and let people pet it. “I think they wanted a place to come, to know it would be okay. For 9-11, (we) supplied that... Now we’re doing that again during COVID. We’re the place you come to, to know it will be okay.”

LOOKING BACK on her 31 years at the park, Johnson said she was blessed to serve as the manager and have the opportunity for the County to buy the 4.5 acres to add to the park and open a visitors center with spaces for indoor gatherings and a museum exhibit. She felt fortunate to work with the group that did the Floris Historic District that encompasses Frying Pan.

Johnson is also pleased the park remains a place where families build memories. She told the story of her favorite moment captured only in her mind when the carousel was riding. Johnson said it was like watching little vignettes of families. An elderly gentleman and young girl, both with very dark skin, sat on the bench looking at each other being very happy. A mom and dad with their children on separate horses chit-chatted, having fun. Another mom held her tiny baby going up and down on a carousel horse.

“Just watching that, the snippets of those people going by over and over again, how much they were enjoying it and that memory they were building,” Johnson said.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PATTI BOERGER



Ellie Greaves



Elizabeth Hipp

Students Shine in Art, Talent Show

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Students in the Upper School of Ad Fontes Academy in Centreville got to display their creative expertise during the school’s recent art and talent show. Called the Ferae Artium, it featured student sketches, paintings, sculptures and photographs, plus a talent show with musical and dramatic performances, including original compositions.

“The Ferae Artium is an opportunity for our creative students to show off their gifts in crafting beautiful art, prose and poetry, mixed media, music, comedy, and so much more,” said teacher Zach Rallo. “For our students to exercise their artistic capacities so well, in such a challenging year, was a joy to witness.”

Two of the many, outstanding performers were Ellie Greaves and Elizabeth Hipp. During the show, Greaves, a freshman, performed her original music and lyrics to the song, “Fallen Soldier.” Her inspiration stemmed from worries about her brother.

“I’m close with my older brother, and he wants to be in the Navy,” she explained. “This song came from that place of fear that I may one day get a call saying my brother was killed in action. Every mom, dad, brother, sister or friend worries when someone they love goes overseas.”

A unique aspect of Greaves’s song is that each verse tells the same story, but from a different perspective. And taken together, they deliver the heart-wrenching and real feelings about losing a loved one in a war.

To see a video clip of her performance, go to: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1x0N-lzGugLNuFK0QSnDe7WLM-EpuuinK7X/view?usp=sharing>.

drive.google.com/file/d/1x0N-lzGugLNuFK0QSnDe7WLM-EpuuinK7X/view?usp=sharing.

Hipp, a junior, composed a song for piano after realizing that life’s trials don’t last forever. “I named the song ‘Field of Flowers’ because those flowers are not luscious forever, nor are they gone forever,” she said. “There are seasons of joy and happiness, and of sadness and despair. Both these seasons make us better human beings.”

Hipp likes composing pieces with legato, meaning that the notes and chords are quite drawn out and emphasized. She said composing has also been a good stress-reliever for her during the pandemic.

“For our students to exercise their artistic capacities so well, in such a challenging year, was a joy to witness.”

— Zach Rallo, Teacher,
Ad Fontes Academy in Centreville

“Finding things in life that stay consistent, no matter what, is very important – especially during these times,” she said. “With piano, I always find new ways to play different chords and styles with music, and that’s one of the key things that draws me to composing piano pieces.”

A video of her performance may be viewed at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1t-FrQgWkEhrQSB3BxbTm-9vBhUJkBJeBRt/view?usp=sharing>.

— PATTI BOERGER CONTRIBUTED TO THIS STORY