

Green Summer Alexandria delegation works with the governor to legalize marijuana on July 1.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
GAZETTE PACKET

Alexandria is about to become the capital of marijuana in Virginia. The city's legislative delegation is at the center of an effort poised to legalize weed this summer, years ahead of an agreement that was struck behind closed doors at the end of the General Assembly session in February.

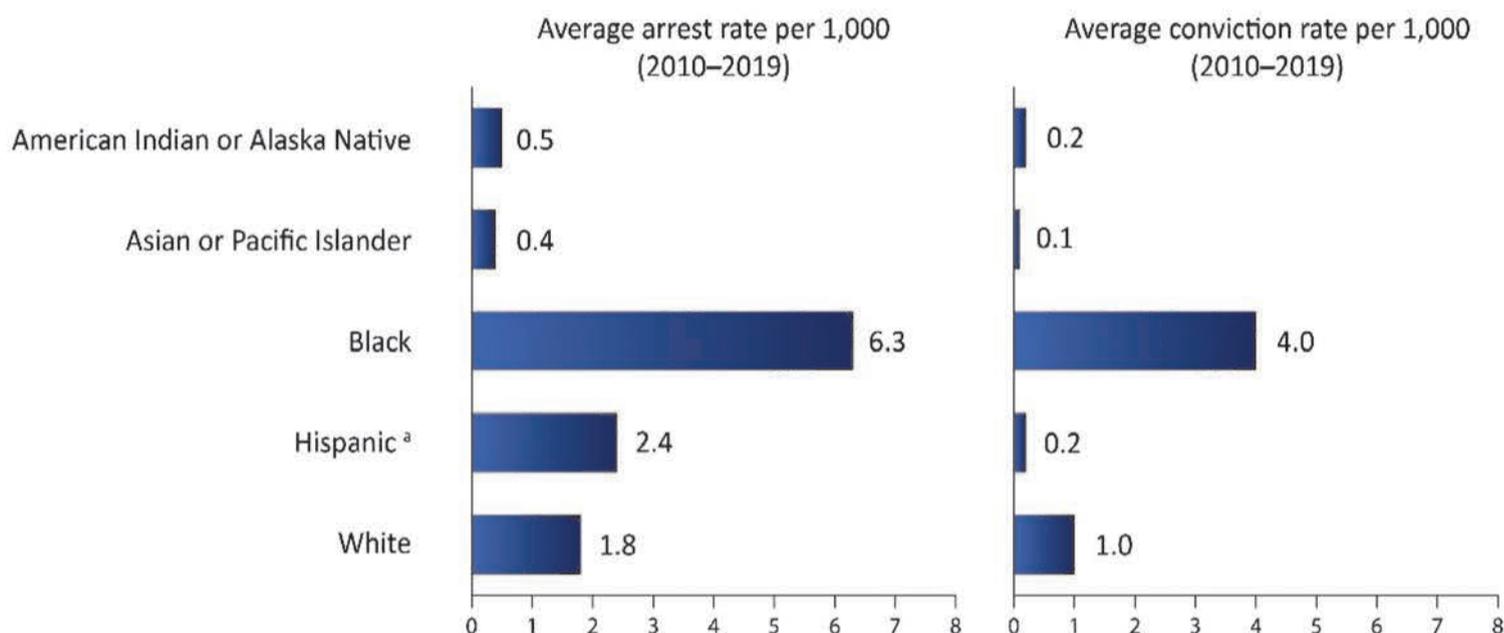
This week, Gov. Ralph Northam issued amendments to legislation introduced by House Majority Leader Charniele Herring (D-46) of Alexandria and state Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-30) that would have legalized marijuana on New Years Day 2024. After receiving tremendous pressure from an unprecedented lobbying campaign, the governor changed his position and amended the legislation to legalize pot on July 1 of this year.

"It really is an extraordinary victory," said Jenn Michelle Pedini, executive director of Virginia NORML. "We're really thrilled to see that Governor Northam agrees with NORML and with Virginians that legalization ought to take effect on July first of this year."

When the General Assembly session began, the governor called for the date of legalization to be tied to the date commercial sales could begin. Northam originally wanted the Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority to regulate marijuana when sales begin in 2023. But lawmakers rejected that idea and instead created the Cannabis Control Authority, which pushed the start of commercial sales back to 2024. Senators wanted to separate the date of legalization from the date of commercial sales, but they were outnumbered during the closed-door conference committee discussions.

"Thankfully people have evolved and come to the Senate position, which we're happy to see," said Ebbin. "I think you're going to see a bipartisan recognition that the prohibition on cannabis has failed and if we're going to legalize it we might as well just get that done

Marijuana possession arrest and conviction rates are higher for Black Virginians



SOURCE: JLARC staff analysis using arrest data from the Virginia State Police and conviction data from the Office of the Executive Secretary of the Virginia Supreme Court.

and eliminate all penalties for possessing a small amount of marijuana."

During the conference committee negotiations, which happened in secret and were not open to the public, senators pressed for a re-enactment clause that would force lawmakers to reconsider the legislation again next year. House members didn't like the reenactment clause, but they ended up agreeing to it if the Senate agreed to delay legalization until 2024 to allow for time to stand up the Cannabis Control Authority.

Now the governor's amendments are forging a new compromise, moving up the date of legalization while also allowing people to grow marijuana plants in their home as of July 1.

"If you're going to legalize simple possession, you also have to have a legal way to obtain it," said Herring. "Unfortunately, the Senate put a reenactment clause on the regulatory part of the bill so there was no way for us to speed up the process so we could have retail."

NOW LAWMAKERS will be considering a new compromise, one crafted by the governor and his staff behind closed doors at the Executive Mansion. The version lawmakers will be voting on when they reconvene on April 7 would legalize possession of marijuana this summer while also allowing for people to grow marijuana plants at home. That solves the problem of legalizing a product that was unavailable through legal channels. Meanwhile, lawmakers will still need to reenact all the language standing up the new Cannabis Control Authority, a massive undertaking that includes social-equity licenses and vertical integration allowing companies to grow a product it also sells.



Charniele Herring



Adam Ebbin

"Our commonwealth is committed to legalizing marijuana in an equitable way."

— Gov. Ralph Northam

"Our commonwealth is committed to legalizing marijuana in an equitable way," said Northam in a written statement

after issuing his amendments. "Virginia will become the 15th state to legalize marijuana, and these changes will ensure we do it with a focus on public safety, public health and social justice."

Now members of the General Assembly will have the final say. During their April 7 session, they'll get an up or down vote on the amendments. Either they approve them or re-

ject them, and they won't have an opportunity to make amendments or disrupt the careful second negotiation that the governor crafted over the last month. Democrats in the House are expected to approve

the marijuana amendments with overwhelming support, although the margins are a little tighter in the Senate. At least one Democratic senator has already announced his opposition.

"People smoke marijuana to get high," said Sen. Chap Petersen (D-34), who says he remains opposed to creating a new legal industry for marijuana. "The purpose of smoking it is to create an altered mental state, and once you legalize it people will be able to use it pretty much any time they want."

Other Senate Democrats disagree, even some of the more conservative members that might have otherwise raised objections. Sen. Creigh Deeds (D-25) said he would have preferred the final version of the bill to have a statewide referendum, allowing voters to weigh in on whether they want to move forward with legalizing marijuana. But even though the amended version of the legislation does not have a referendum, he says he'll support legalizing marijuana this summer.

"I expect it to pass," said Deeds. "The thing that cost us the bipartisan majority and cost us one Democratic vote is when we took the referendum out. The referendum is still out, so it's going to be

SEE GREEN. ON PAGE 8

To Dye For Athenaeum holds Easter egg decorating workshop.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

The Athenaeum used the upcoming Easter holiday to teach children the art of color transfer during its Easter Eggs @ The Athenaeum March 28 workshop.

“Today we are tie-dyeing and using mosaics to decorate Easter eggs,” said Executive Director Veronica Szalus. “I am teaching how to use food coloring, paper towels and vinegar to transfer dye to an egg to give it a tie-dye look.”

For the mosaic portion, Szalus used plastic eggs and transfer vinyl.

“Generally, with mosaics you use stone or glass but these are eggs and it’s Easter so we’re using transfer vinyl for a mosaic,” Szalus said. “This way you learn a little bit about building artwork with little irregular pieces.”

Kaylee Kenner attended the workshop with her father Bradley Kenner.

“We are doing some Easter egg decorating,” Kaylee said, “and it is very, very, very fun.”



Evan Moh unveils his tie-dye Easter egg at the egg decorating workshop March 28 at the Athenaeum.



Volunteer Wuiping Yap, left, helps Bradley and Kaylee Kenner show off their decorated eggs at the March 28 decorating workshop at the Athenaeum.



PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

The Moh family decorates Easter eggs using tie-dye and mosaic art forms March 28 at the Athenaeum.

“We are doing some Easter egg decorating and it is very, very, very fun.”

— Kaylee Kenner on the Athenaeum Easter Egg decorating workshop

Easter Services Go Virtual

Online services lead to attendance growth.

As Christian churches across the city prepare for one of the most significant Sunday worship services of the year, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to some unexpected positive consequences.

“When COVID hit last year we were in the process of planning to go into the live streaming world of sharing our services beyond everyone having to attend in person,” said Rev. Dr. Larry Hayward of Westminster Presbyterian Church. “Since we closed last March, we have live streamed every Sunday and received an anonymous donation to help make this permanent.”

Hayward noted that online attendance has increased 60 percent from pre-COVID services with the children’s church school attendance now tripled.

“We are drawing around 20 percent of people who are non-members and living in other parts of the country.”

Wayward added. “Live streaming has allowed our members to follow their instincts and be truly safe.”

—JEANNE THEISMANN

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Rev. Dr. Larry Hayward of Westminster Presbyterian Church prepares for Easter Sunday services.

“Live streaming has allowed our members to follow their instincts and be truly safe.”

—Rev. Dr. Larry Hayward of Westminster Presbyterian Church

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.

MARCH 29 TO MAY 23

Get Active Challenge. 6-8 p.m. At Alexandria Moves. During the 8-week Get Active Challenge, they’ll have new activities each week that you can do to Move for Your Body and Move for Your Brain. The activities have all been developed by Alexandria Moves’ partner organizations. There’s something for everyone: urban and wildlife walks, jogging (a combo of jogging and picking up litter), biking and more. Visit the website: <https://www.facebook.com/ALXMoves/>

APRIL 1-30

Alexandria Earth Day 2021 (Virtual). The City of Alexandria and Alex Renew will celebrate Earth Day 2021 with a number of virtual activities, including announcing the winner of the Ellen Pickering Environmental Excellence Award on April 22. Other topics to be posted on the website will engage the community in projects for restoring different facets of the Earth, such as Water Quality, Air Quality and the Climate. Free. Visit alexandriava.gov/EarthDay.

WEDNESDAY/APRIL 7

Legacy of the Green Cabinetmakers

(Virtual). 12 p.m. Join Kerry Mitchell, Curator at Carlyle House Historic Park, who will give a presentation about James Green and his family’s life in Alexandria. Registration required. In the early 19th Century, William Green started the Green Furniture factory in Alexandria and by 1823 his son, James, would take over. James expanded his father’s factory and established himself as a prominent Alexandrian through building and operating Green’s Mansion House Hotel. Join Kerry Mitchell, Curator at Carlyle House Historic Park, for a presentation about James Green and his family’s life in Alexandria. Register: <https://alexlibraryva.org/event/4883363>

SUMMER RECREATION CLASSES, CAMPS

The Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities will offer a variety of summer classes and camps in Sports, Enrichment, Nature, Creative and Performing Arts, Exercise and Fitness, and Aquatics, in addition to the Out of School Time (OSTP) Modified Summer Camp. Summer classes for youth and adults will be offered with indoor, outdoor and virtual options and will be available for review online beginning Wednesday, March 24. Registration will begin at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, April 7 for City residents, and Friday, April 9 for nonresidents.

JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

The Women Who Sparked His Career - Dr. Michael D. Casey

BY CHAR McCARGO BAH
GAZETTE PACKET

There is a common saying that a woman is always behind a successful man. Dr. Michael D. Casey is one of those men who attributes his success to six women. They saw his potential early on before he himself realized it.

THE OTHER ALEXANDRIA Michael Casey grew up in the Seminary Community at 1600 West Braddock Road.

His family owned one of the most beautiful houses in their neighborhood. As a child, Michael was an adventurous boy. He remembered his initiation in the Mudtown Seminary community by going through an underground tunnel from Oakland Baptist Church to where T.C. Williams stands today.

He grew up during the time of the Civil Rights Movement's greatest achievements. He participated in the desegregation of schools by being one of the first students to integrate Minnie Howard Elementary School. After that integration, his parents moved in 1963 from the big house on West Braddock Road to an air-conditioned house at 623 South Fayette Street.

While Michael was at T.C. Williams High School, he played basketball and became a member of the Northern Virginia AAA Regional District team. Before his high school graduation in 1971, Michael's mother Addie had two "gifts" for him. She told her son that he will graduate from high school, and that he will leave home to go to college. His mother



Dr. Michael D. Casey

was the first woman in his life to motivate him.

He attended the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore (UMES) and graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration. While he was at UMES, he was part of the basketball team that won the Mid-Eastern Atlantic Conference Championship. As a result, he played in the National Invitational Tournament (NIT) in New York City where his team led the scoring, and made their team the first Historically Black College to be listed in the top 20 Associated Press poll. In 1975, Michael played professional basketball in the South American League in Venezuela.

The second woman to encourage Michael Casey was his cousin, Joyce Casey Sanchez. She advised him to pursue a higher degree and to consider getting a degree in education to give back to his community. With the support of his wife,



Darlene Casey and Dr. Michael Casey presenting a scholarship award to Kai Taylor-Deak.

Darlene, who became the third woman in Michael's life also encouraged and supported him.

He received his Master of Science degree in Special Education. With continued support and encouragement from his wife and cousin, Michael entered Nova Southeastern University and received his Doctorate degree of Education Administration and Supervision in 2007. The support and encouragement did not stop after he had his doctorate.

Three other women will play a crucial role in his career: Beth Lovain, Executive Director, Scholarship Fund of Alexandria; Priscilla Goodwin, Chair, Board of Scholarship Fund of Alexandria; and, Kenetra Wood, Executive Director, Equity and Alternative Programs. These six women made a profound impact on Michael.

Today, Dr. Casey is the Lead Teacher/Administrator of the Al-

exandria City Public School Sheltercare Home School Educational Program in Alexandria, Va.

Dr. Michael D. Casey was born in 1952 to George H. Casey and Addie Bell Casey. Michael is one of seven children. His siblings are Sandra, George H. Jr, Clyde, Pamela, Beverly and Charles. Michael is married to Darlene and they have three children.

Six women saw Michael's potential and they became actively involved in his life by giving him advice, support and encouragement. For Women's History month, Dr. Michael Casey recognizes these women for the many contributions they made in his career.

Char McCargo Bah is a published author, freelance writer, independent historian, genealogist and a Living Legend of Alexandria. She maintains two blogs, <http://www.theotheralexandria.com> and <http://www.findingthingsforu.com>.

successfully fought for legislation to improve the lives of working families, from raising the minimum wage to securing a pay raise for our teachers. Jennifer Carrol

Foy voted to deliver \$25 million to Alexandria to update its sewer system. As Governor, she'll fight every day for a more equitable and just

SEE LETTERS, PAGE 9

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Seifeldein Endorses Jennifer Carroll Foy for Governor

As Virginia works to recover from the COVID-19 crisis that robbed us of loved ones, shuttered businesses, and hurt countless Virginian families across our Commonwealth, we face two distinct choices: do we look forward, or do we look back?

To me the choice is obvious: we need to reject the politics and policies of the past. In the Democratic primary for governor, Terry McAuliffe wants to be Governor for a second time, but let's be clear: he had his opportunity to bring change to Virginia, but could not close the deal.

Why should we give him a second shot, when other leaders have a proven track record of getting things done?

Since McAuliffe left office, we've turned Virginia into a model for progressive politics. We passed Medicaid expansion, expanded voting rights, made progress on criminal justice reform, and improved our education system. Now, I'm looking forward to the brighter future when we can build on our progress by electing a visionary, inspirational leader in Jennifer Carroll Foy.

In the General Assembly, she

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Neighborhood Health Increasing Vaccine Equity



COVID-19 Vaccine partnership leaders pose with Neighborhood Health Welcome Sign at Macedonia Baptist Church in Arlington. Left to Right: Rev. Craig Harcum from the church; Neighborhood Health staff Martha Welman, M.D., Basim Khan, M.D., Cynthia Sturdevant, Mary Hill, Amanda Hirsch, and Jessica McKee; and Lamont West, Trustee of the Macedonia Baptist Church.

When Amanda Hirsch looks out at the vaccine clinic running very smoothly, a sense of satisfaction comes over her – a feeling that Neighborhood Health’s efforts are helping to bring an end to the pandemic, especially within the communities hardest hit by it. Hirsch works for Neighborhood Health, serving the City of Alexandria, and Arlington and Fairfax counties. Since the start of the pandemic, the health center has been on the front lines providing health care to their low-income, mostly uninsured, and ethnically and racially diverse patients.

While the pace of Virginia COVID-19 vaccine rollout has been picking up in recent weeks, racial and ethnic disparities persist. According to the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), Black and Latino individuals have been vaccinated at the rate of approximately 11,000 per 100,000 people compared to 17,000 per 100,000 to White individuals.

Neighborhood Health has provided more than 15,000 vaccines with 85% going to people of color. It has set up seven community-based vaccine clinic sites located in churches, community centers, and other venues. These are located in target areas such as the Richmond Highway corridor in Mount Vernon, in Arlandria/Chirilagua, and in Bailey’s Crossroads. Organizations that have provided space include the Alfred Street Baptist Church, Virginia Theological Seminary, Knights of Columbus, and the Macedonia Baptist Church.



Neighborhood Health COVID-19 Vaccine Site.

In addition to vaccinating their own patients and their household members, Neighborhood Health -- following Virginia Department of Health guidelines -- is working to target the underserved more broadly. It is working with almost 100 community organizations, including non-profits, faith organizations, and local agencies to vaccinate their clients. Staff from community organizations conduct individualized outreach through phone, text, or email to sign their clients up for the vaccine.

Neighborhood Health schedulers follow up to get the client an appointment time at a convenient location, usually within a week of the initial referral. Some of the larger nonprofits and local government agencies are given a certain number of appointment slots at Neighborhood Health vaccine clinics that they can fill with their clients so

that a scheduling call from Neighborhood Health is not needed.

Dr Basim Khan, Neighborhood Health’s Executive Director, talks about the heroic efforts throughout the community to get people in need vaccinated. “We are excited that faith-organizations, nonprofits and local government agency partners are conducting outreach and connecting their clients to us -- people who currently qualify under the VDH guidelines but who might have difficulty accessing the vaccines due to technology, literacy, language, or other barriers.” So, in addition to its own qualifying patients, Neighborhood Health is able to reach underserved communities more broadly by partnering with African American churches, Latino and Asian American organizations and nonprofits in food assistance, legal and affordable housing, tenant rights and social services, and more. Neighborhood Health’s own bilingual outreach team is going directly to local small businesses such as ethnic grocery stores and restaurants to help schedule their staff for vaccines. The enthusiasm is palpable.

Dr Martha Welman, Neighborhood Health’s Medical Director says that when vaccines first became available, the big goal was to offer 2,000 vaccinations per week. “But now, with our recent access to additional vaccine supply directly from the federal government, we anticipate administering up to 5,000 per week by early April. It is such a rewarding feeling to know we are meeting the needs of the community.”

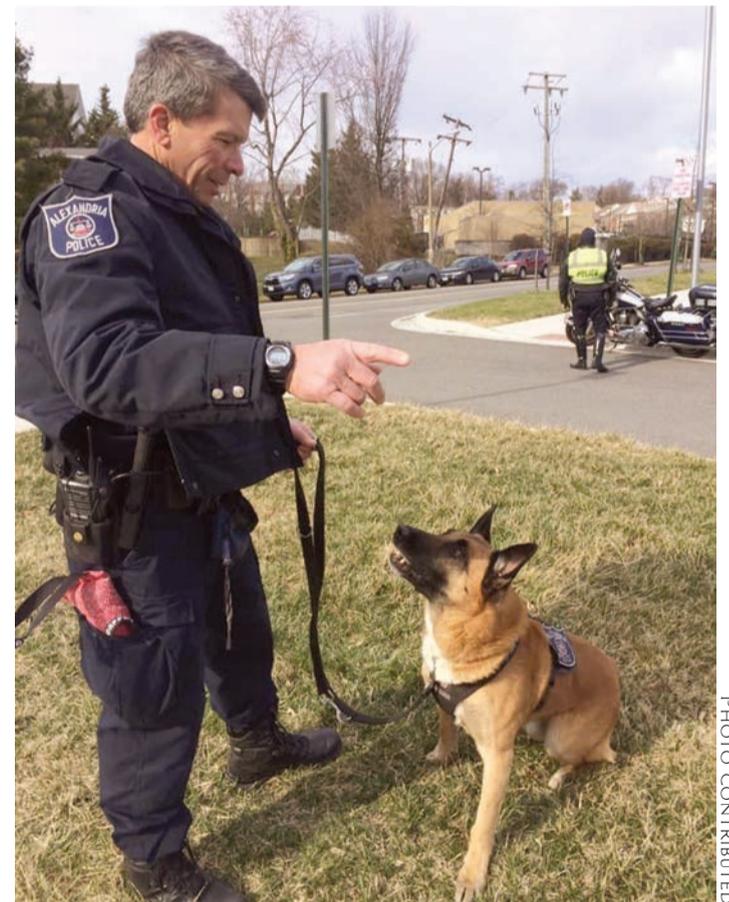


Neighborhood Health vaccination clinics are helping bring an end to the pandemic, especially in communities hardest hit.

Most people arriving at the vaccine sites are excited, if a little nervous. But the overwhelming emotion seems to be gratitude.

Hopkins House, a local nonprofit that offers early childhood education and career development programs has referred multiple qualifying clients and staff for vac-

ination. J. Glenn Hopkins, President and CEO, says that one of their referrals who got vaccinated “is extremely grateful. She tells me it has relieved a great deal of personal stress, given the burden of her other health issues. She asked that I thank you ‘from the bottom of my heart.’”



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE – Retired K-9 Rocco, shown with partner Officer Mark Wuckovich, has died. Rocco was the Alexandria Police Department’s oldest K-9 at 13 1/2 years old. Rocco served the city with distinction from 2011 until he and Wuckovich retired in 2018. Together the two earned Triple Crowns in K-9 competitions over the last three years of Rocco’s service.

Stones Tribute Band Won't Leave The Piggy Bank "Shattered, Shattered"

Tribute bands have the look and the sound but not the price.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

There's only one rock god that struts around on stage, wrapped in the Union Jack, singing about girls named Angie, or Ruby Tuesday. And then there's Christopher LeGrand, the singer in the Rolling Stones tribute band "Satisfaction," who takes on the persona of Mick Jagger when they play at Birchmere on April 8.

To get the Mick Jagger look down, LeGrand spent six months watching videos, long before YouTube, and worked on the songs and singing mannerisms. "Having the looks or moves wouldn't mean a thing if I couldn't nail that down first," LeGrand said.

Their full name is "Satisfaction/The International Rolling Stones Tribute Show." LeGrand is the engine behind the band, and he has a business degree. LeGrand is joined by Dom Lanzo as Keith Richards,



Rolling Stones tribute band "Satisfaction," is coming to the Birchmere April 8.

Satisfaction

April 8, 7:30 at the Birchmere.

3701 Mt Vernon Ave, Alexandria, VA 22305

For tickets, go to <http://birchmere.musichall-va.org> or call (703) 549-7500

Jimmy Babu as Ron Wood, John Wade as Bill Wyman and Joe Rondo as Charlie Watts. The band performs 150 shows a year. To be in a tribute band of the Rolling Stones, a musician can't



On stage with his tribute band, Christopher LeGrand is Mick Jagger.

just learn the licks on any one guitar or drum set. According to LeGrand, "our key for any joining member has always been authenticity with all details studied and

covered. Look, sound and attitude." He seems to have it all covered.

They do three different versions of a Stone's show, including the competition-like show with the Beatles, a show called "Sympathy for the Devil," where they are accompanied by an orchestra, and "Gimme Abbey," a play on the 1969 period where the Stone's and the Beatles rocked the world.

Their song list is long, like the Rolling Stones, who have been around since the early 1960s, challenging the Beatles along the way for the title of the "world's greatest rock and roll band." Satisfaction delves into that Beatles competition with their own challenge called the "Beatles vs the Stones from 1965." In the showdown, they're up against a Beatles tribute band "Abbey Road." Although the real bands never performed on stage together back in the day, this dabbles with "what if." Satisfaction describes it as "A one night show

SEE HELPING, PAGE 7

ESP Tea and Coffee Brings New Faces and Focus to King Street

BY HOPE NELSON
ALEXANDRIA GAZETTE

About two months ago, King Street saw the re-birth of a familiar coffee shop with a renewed name, all set to rise from the ashes. ESP Tea and Coffee at 1012 King Street is the phoenix in question, back on the scene with new ownership, some familiar faces in day-to-day operations and the same comfortable surroundings that had drawn so many customers in years ago.

Let's address the elephant in the room straight-away: ESP's new owner, Erik Muendel, has no ties to Killer ESP's former owner, Rob Shelton.

Muendel has rescued ESP because he enjoyed going there so much.

"I very selfishly interjected myself... because I didn't want (ESP) to go away," he said.

"I don't blame people for being skeptical. It's very natural," Muendel said, adding that he only knew Shelton from brief conversations inside the café.



"I've never even seen him outside of our block."

Shelton drew controversy last year in the wake of allegations of harassment by former employees and some politically charged posts from the shop's Twitter account. But he is no longer involved in ESP. Muendel says that other than occasionally seeing one another in the coffee shop, there is no relationship between the two.

WITH THAT out of the way: It's time for tea.

Whereas most cafes in Alexandria are coffee-forward, Muendel is looking to flip the script a bit at ESP to give tea top billing. He's starting with Puerh tea, sourced from one vendor in Yunnan Province, China, and served largely in cakes rather than loose-leaf. Selections range in flavor from citrusy orange peel, to a bitterness that is almost like a cooking chocolate, to a smooth variety, to an earthy tone.

"It's a really good product for the shop and a really unique offering," he said.

For Muendel, the entire concept of owning a coffee and tea shop is a new endeavor. The founder of Brightline Interactive <https://brightlineinteractive.com/>, this is his first time in the food and beverage industry. Thanks to both his business experience and some reliable hands-on help, he's learning quickly.

"It's been great. I've never run a restaurant or retail shop, but I've been in business for myself since I was in college. I have a lot of friends in the restaurant industry who are owners, and I've also been a part of CEO groups, and there's been a lot of restaurateurs in those groups," he said.

And he also has Maggie Maido on the team as general manager. Maido worked at Killer ESP before the COVID-19 pandemic and is back working with Muendel, handling the daily operations, from running the shop to hiring the staff to training the team.

"It would not be working if Maggie wasn't in place," Muendel said.

WHILE THE biggest menu difference in the new shop is the focus on high-end tea (coffee lovers, take heart: There's plenty on the menu

for you as well), customers will also notice some changes within the building itself.

"I took a lot out and I put a lot of new artwork in. I have a passion for photography, I do a lot of band photography, and something I always thought was great about the space was the music. So there's a lot of new photography, a lot of accent lighting I've put in," Muendel said.

He's also removed about half of the interior furniture to keep the area spaced-out in the face of the pandemic.

As locals find their way back in, Muendel says he's looking forward to getting more entrenched in the community — with tea, with coffee and with some charitable events, including the upcoming Spring2Action citywide drive.

"I've enjoyed it, I've really enjoyed it so far," he said.

Hope Nelson is the author of "Classic Restaurants of Alexandria" and owns the Kitchen Recessionista blog, located at www.kitchenrecessionista.com. Email her any time at hope@kitchenrecessionista.com.

2021 Alexandria Film Festival Call for Entries

The Alexandria Film Festival kicks off its 15th year with its annual call for entries opening on April 1. Filmmakers from all over the world are invited to enter short and feature-length films of any genre on the digital platform filmfreeway.com. Festival judges will evaluate hundreds of films before selecting the best to bring to the city, for the four-day event Nov. 11-14, 2021. The program will ultimately feature more than 50 free and ticketed films—including many premieres—to delight, entertain, and inform area film enthusiasts.

“Over the past 15 years, the Alexandria Film Festival has grown in stature and reputation because of the caliber of the submissions we receive, and the quality of our curated films, including from Oscar winning filmmakers,” said Dara Sanders, Chair of the Alexan-

dria Film Festival. “We are proud to bring the Alexandria community this annual celebration of creativity and artistry.”

Last year, the festival hosted a virtual program that included films by 45 filmmakers from all over the world, including Academy Award winners and nominees — most of whom took part via Zoom. This year, the festival is being planned as a hybrid event that will include both virtual and in-person screenings and panel discussions.

For submission rules and information, please visit AlexFilmFest.com and follow us on Facebook for the latest festival news.

Entries will be considered on a rolling basis until August, but “early bird” period (lowest fees) ends on May 7.

Stones Tribute Band Won't Leave

FROM PAGE 6

featuring the two biggest rock & roll bands of all time on stage together.”

Out on Tour

Touring in a Rolling Stones tribute band is bound to have its moments too. According to LeGrand, they've seen some interesting people. “We had one guy tell us he took the fall for Keith back in the day and went to prison for 10 years on a drug charge,” LeGrand said. “Claims he gets tickets

to shows for life,” he added.

And then there's things he puts in the ‘interesting,’ category. “We get shown all the tattoos people have with some in very private places,” LeGrand said.

They are just one of the tribute bands that frequent the Birchmere each year, and Michael Jaworek of the Birchmere, noted why the tribute bands do so well. “Folks can see the music of their life at an affordable price and an urban environment,” he said. The Birchmere has a Tom Petty band play

periodically, a Queen tribute band and a band that plays the Eagles music. “Many of the tribute bands are very good,” Jaworek said.

Satisfaction has been all over the country and world, collecting rave reviews along the way. In Las Vegas, they “Shined just like the real Stones on the strip,” one review said. Showbiz Magazine said, “They have you in the aisles like Jumping Jack Flash.” After their Birchmere show, they are performing in Virginia Beach, Oklahoma, Texas and Arkansas.

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Virginia Governor Ralph Northam, center, holds up the signed legislation known as “G3” March 29 at the Alexandria Campus of Northern Virginia Community College. The program will provide tuition-free community college to low- and middle-income students who pursue jobs in high-demand fields.

‘Get Skilled, Get a Job, Give Back’

Northam signs tuition-free community college initiative at NOVA.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Virginia Governor Ralph Northam visited the Alexandria campus of Northern Virginia Community

College March 29 to sign the “Get Skilled, Get a Job, Give Back” initiative that will provide tuition-free community college to low- and middle-income students who pursue jobs in high-demand fields.

“This wouldn’t have happened without a tremendous amount of teamwork,” Northam said. “The business community has been a large part of this as well knowing that we need to train a large workforce.

This is a win-win. It’s a win for our community colleges, our businesses and for the Commonwealth.”

Known as G3, House Bill 2204, carried by Speaker of the House of Delegates Eileen Filler-Corn, and Senate Bill 1405, carried by Senator Majority Leader Richard Saslaw, establishes a program that

includes \$36 million to cover tuition, fees and books and provide wraparound support for eligible students at the Commonwealth’s two-year public institutions, including Northern Virginia Community College.

“Building an equitable and inclusive economy is more important than ever as we emerge from the pandemic,” Northam said. “The G3 program will connect thousands of Virginians with the skills, training and resources they need to secure jobs in high-demand fields and support themselves and their families — all without being forced to shoulder mountains of student

receive student-support incentive grants on a semester basis. These grants will be in an amount up to \$900 per semester and up to \$450 per summer term.

“For NOVA, G3 puts a college degree that leads to a meaningful career within reach of the full diversity of the Commonwealth,” said Dr. Anne M. Kress, president of NOVA Community College. “An investment in community college students is an investment in Virginia, one that will help families find economic security while helping the state achieve economic growth.”

Northam’s tuition-free community college initiative targets key industries, including health care, information technology and computer science, manufacturing and skilled trades, public safety and early childhood education.

“The Governor’s G3 initiative will make earning the necessary skills to fully participate in our 21st century economy affordable for more Virginians,” said Glenn Dubois, Chancellor of the Virginia Community College System. “Virginia’s 23 community colleges are ready to help students prepare for and succeed in the high-demand jobs of today and tomorrow.”

For more information about how to enroll in the G3 program, individuals should contact their local community college.

“The G3 program will connect thousands of Virginians with the skills, training and resources they need to secure jobs in high-demand fields.”

— Governor Ralph Northam

debt.”

The G3 program is one of the first in the nation to provide wrap-around financial assistance to help students at the lowest income levels with expenses such as food, transportation and childcare. Students who qualify for a full federal Pell grant and enroll full-time will



Peter Buttigieg, U.S. Secretary of Transportation talks with U.S. Rep. Don Beyer in Alexandria on Tuesday, March 30

Transformative Rail Agreement

On Tuesday, March 30, Governor Ralph Northam announced the Commonwealth finalized agreements with Amtrak, CSX, and Virginia Railway Express, launching a \$3.7 billion investment to expand and improve passenger, commuter, and freight rail in Virginia and create a vital connection in America’s national rail network between the Northeast and Southeast corridors. U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg joined the event at Alexandria’s Amtrak/Virginia Railway Express (VRE) station, highlighting the American Rescue Plan recently passed by Congress, which includes \$1.7 billion to get Amtrak employees back to work, restore daily long-distance service, and help states cover lost revenue in state-supported routes. It also includes critical funding for transit and rail networks.

“Northern Virginia is at the crossroads of the Mid-Atlantic rail

network, where the existing Long Bridge is the only rail bridge connecting Virginia to Washington, D.C., creating a choke point for rail traffic between the Southeast and Northeast,” said U.S. Rep. Don Beyer (D-8). “I worked with a coalition of my colleagues in Congress to authorize and fund a new Long Bridge, an effort that also helped the Commonwealth secure access to the federal land needed for construction of the new Long Bridge. This project is estimated to bring nearly \$6 billion annually in benefits to the region by 2040 and is a key component of Transforming Rail in Virginia.” The partnering agreements support the construction of a \$1.9 billion bridge over the Potomac River dedicated to passenger rail, acquisition of 386 miles of railroad right-of-way and 223 miles of track from CSX, and an investment of more than \$1 billion in additional infrastructure improvements by the Commonwealth.

Green Summer

FROM PAGE 1
a close vote.”

THE WILD CARD in the Senate is Sen. Joe Morrissey (D-16). He’s pressing senators to withhold their votes legalizing marijuana until the governor agrees to call a special session on eliminating mandatory minimum sentences. Lawmakers were close to an agreement on eliminating mandatory minimums, but the effort fell apart at the last minute. Advocates for criminal justice reform say the failure to take action on mandatory minimums was a major setback, and now Morrissey wants to use the vote on marijuana as leverage to force a special session of mandatory minimums.

“I have the greatest opportunity to get it done when I couple them

together,” said Morrissey. “We’re talking about a \$25 fine for marijuana versus mandatory minimums that cause people to go to prison for decades and destroy not just the defendant’s life but generations.”

The governor’s press release includes quotes from two Republicans, Sen. Jill Vogel (R-27) and Sen. Richard Stuart (R-28). Some viewed that as an indication that the governor has already lined up all the votes he needs in the Senate.

But Morrissey says he’s hoping to persuade his colleagues that the vote on marijuana is an opportunity to force consideration of a major criminal-justice reform.

“We’ll see if they’ve got the votes,” said Morrissey.

LETTERS

FROM PAGE 4

Virginia for us all because she has walked in our shoes. She'll stand shoulder to shoulder with working families because she has known what it is like to not be able to afford healthcare, and the pain of going hungry.

It's time to leave those challenges in the past. With Jennifer Carroll Foy as Governor, let's build a better, brighter, and more just future where every Virginia has the opportunity to truly thrive.

Mo Seifeldein
Alexandria

Republican Women's Club Hosts The Virginia Project

Submitted by the Commonwealth Republican Women's Club:

The Commonwealth Republican Women's Club (CRWC) March meeting focused on upcoming elections with news on recent local Republican candidate announcements and efforts of the locally-based organization, The Virginia Project (TVP - VirginiaProject.com).

Susie Miller, CRWC VP for Programs, read a statement from David Gordon, TVP Executive Director, as she introduced the night's topic and featured organization. "The Virginia Project is a full-service Republican support organization dedicated to building a robust party that can compete effectively against its well-organized, well-funded opposition." TVP's presentation included information on its successful efforts to recruit Republican candidates in the 2021 elections for the House of Delegates, as well as to encourage and organize Republicans throughout Virginia.

TVP's Election Integrity Project is led by Ned Jones, who provided the club with information on a review and analysis of data and FOIA information related to the 2020 Presidential Election. It included voter rolls data, voting machine testing results, funding sources of non-profit grant money used by localities (including Alexandria for over \$200,000), and comments on the recent Virginia Risk-Limiting Audit. Looking forward, Jones said Republicans have to adapt to the new laws which weakened election integrity and that they should aim to have an equal number of Republican volunteers as poll watchers and poll workers, particularly for early voting in the Absentee precinct.

Miller provided election news
SEE LETTERS, PAGE 10

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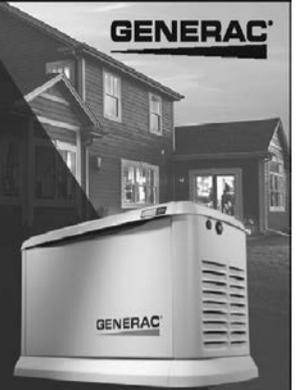
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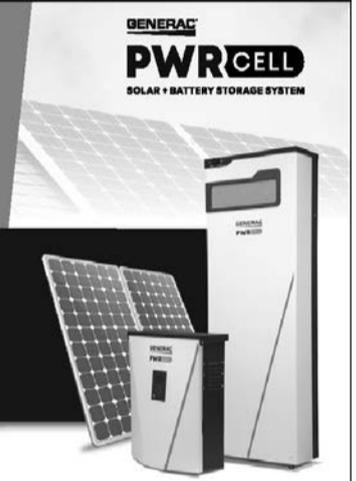
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Good News Travels Slowly



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Sure enough, the email from my oncologist didn't arrive in my inbox before we left for the weekend away on Friday. It wasn't ideal, but as a long time cancer patient, I've learned to make the best of a bad/potentially bad situation. As it turned out, the time away was invigorating, and there was very little mention of the elephant in the room: Kenny's cancer. Friends can be good like that. Once we got home on Sunday, after a two-hour wait at Six Flags to get my second covid-19 shot, I was rewarded. The email from the radiologist had arrived and the news was good, or so it seemed.

What it is that I typically receive is an automated release of the radiologist's report which is likewise forwarded to my oncologist. Granted, I can only understand half of the words, and those are generally the prepositions; much of the report is written by a doctor for a doctor, not for the doctor's patient. Nevertheless, the process is what it is. It's rare anymore that one receives a call from their doctor with scan-type results. Usually, my oncologist amends this first email with a simplified interpretation of the report: "scan looks good," as a hopeful example. So far, and this is Tuesday afternoon after the Wednesday scan, I've not yet received an amended report, the one where the oncologist offers his summary/opinion. We do have a follow-up video appointment with him on Thursday so perhaps he's saving himself/his comments until that meeting. Perhaps not. Regardless, I should have heard something more definitive by now. Presuming I can figure out the true meaning of the radiologist's report is a bit presumptuous. As a cancer patient, I don't want to have to figure anything out. I want to be told. I shouldn't have to live with any unnecessary uncertainty. I have more than enough uncertainty already. And in case anybody can't guess: uncertainty does not improve my quality of life, one that's already fragile. A "terminal" diagnosis will do that and tends to put a patient ill at ease, morning, noon and night. That's what I call a "post-diagnosis existing condition."

That reaction/disappointment being expressed, from what few words and meanings I could grasp from the report: "no new lesions," "no significant change," "stable disease," I can say with all the limited knowledge at my disposal, that I'm probably OKAY. In fact, I would say that my warranty has been extended for another three months, until we wash, rinse and repeat in another three months, per the cycle I've mostly been on since 2009 when I was first diagnosed.

However, I'd be foolish to fuss too much because if my interpretation of the radiologist's report is correct, I really can't complain about good news. I mean, what goes around, comes around, and I'm not about to tempt fate and ruffle karma's feathers. These reports, which typically are the first and surest indication that the patient is in trouble - or not, are a lifeline our patients cling to. A good/stable disease report is sort of like a "life preserver" until you actually talk with the oncologist and get a more official interpretation. Of course, to receive good news earlier would be a lot better. But when the news is good, as this report was, anytime you receive it: "it's all good," as so many say.

Naturally, I'd rather hear it directly from the oncologist. Moreover, given that not all the words written in this report are familiar/known to me, especially in the context in which they're written ("medicalese"); obviously, I'd rather hear the assessment of the scan from the oncologist in person/so to speak, and not leave anything to chance - or misinterpretation by yours truly. In spite of these irregularities, which I can't do anything about (I've tried), my modus has been to roll with the punches and take the good, bad and ugly in stride. So I'm not mad. I'm glad. Life goes on. Thank God!

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

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NEWS



Old Town Alexandria Historic Garden Tour, Saturday, April 17, 2021

On Saturday, April 17, 2021, Old Town Alexandria will welcome visitors to enjoy a walking tour of beautifully decorated exteriors and gardens as part of Historic Garden Week in Virginia. This self-guided tour, envisioned as "A Springtime Stroll: Doorways of Our Past and Future," features historic sites and homes nestled along the tree-lined streets of the Historic District of Old Town.

This easy walking tour offers exterior views of more than a dozen homes with notable history and is anchored by four historical properties: the Lee-Fendall House garden, the Ramsay House garden, the Athenaeum garden and St. Paul's Episcopal Church. Along the route, homes will be adorned with blue-ribbon worthy wreaths, planters and window boxes created by members of the Garden Club of Alexandria and the Hunting Creek Garden Club.

On April 17, ticket holders will have exclusive access to the Lee-Fendall House gar-

den, where experts will be on hand to discuss native and medicinal plants and which will be the site of a special plant sale for ticket holders.

Ticket holders also will have access to the garden at the Athenaeum, which will be decorated for an afternoon luncheon.

The week of April 17-24, ticket holders will have free admission to the grounds of Mount Vernon and discounted pricing for reserving interior tours of the Mount Vernon estate. Gunston Hall also is offering ticket holders discounted pricing to tour the Gunston Hall mansion, grounds and museum for the week of April 17-24.

Tickets must be purchased in advance for \$25 at VAGardenWeek.org. Tickets are timed for morning entry (10 a.m.) and afternoon entry (1 p.m.). A limited number of tickets will be sold for each entry time. Ticket sales end on April 16 or when the tour reaches capacity.

www.vagardenweek.org

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FROM PAGE 9

about the upcoming Republican Party Convention on May 8. She also informed the club that two local Republicans announced their candidacy this week: Annetta Catchings for Alexandria Mayor; and J.D. Maddox for House of Delegates, District 45 which encompasses parts of Alexandria, Arlington, and Fairfax. At press time, these are the only two local Republicans who have announced their campaigns. Catchings is a CRWC member.

CRWC President Linda App said, "The 2021 election year will be exciting. We have at least two first-time local candidates running, and I expect more to be announced

soon. The local Republican party (www.AlexGOP.org) has been actively recruiting and training potential candidates and the efforts are paying off."

CRWC is the Alexandria chapter of both the Virginia and the National Federation of Republican Women (VFRW and NFRW). CRWC encourages local Republican women of all ages to become more politically involved by helping support and elect GOP candidates to public office at the local, state, and national levels. The club also has a conservative book club and organizes activities to support charitable organizations. More information is available at www.AlexandriaCRWC.org.

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