

The Arlington Connection



Six-year-old Tormi Kallakas and his 2-1/2 year old brother, Jorge, peer intently through the fence at the newly-hatched tadpoles swimming in the pond at Gulf Branch Nature Center on Saturday, April 17.

Opening Up To Nature

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Arlington Reopens Two Nature Centers



Two Maillard ducks are the center of this little girl's attention as they pop upside down to search for food in the pond at Gulf Branch.



Arlington County's Gulf Branch Nature Center and Long Branch Nature Center reopened the week of April 13 with limited hours. Gulf Branch's indoor hours are Thursday-Saturday from 10 a.m.-5 p.m., and Long Branch's hours are on Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Gulf Branch is located at 3608 Military Road and Long Branch at 625 S. Carlin Springs Rd.



Six-year-old Tormi Kallakas and his 2-1/2 year old brother, Jorge, peer intently through the fence at the newly-hatched tadpoles swimming in the pond at Gulf Branch Nature Center on Saturday, April 17. They have been frequenting Arlington nature centers every weekend but this is the first time they have been able to go inside the nature center since they closed due to COVID.



Animal exhibits are open inside at both Gulf Branch and Long Branch Nature Centers including a popular hands on (or feet on) dugout canoe at Gulf Branch. But a number of outdoor experiences are available including a pond with ducks and croaking spring frogs as well as a pollinator garden at Gulf Branch. Trails run through the park with an occasional migrating warbler making an appearance high in the trees. Likewise Long Branch offers a viewing pond and a wooded stream valley with a diverse population of wildlife including flying squirrels, raccoons, salamanders and foxes.

Arlington Chamber Notes

Small Business Tax Credits for Vaccine Paid Time Off

Businesses with 500 employees or fewer can claim a refundable federal tax credit for giving their employees paid time off to get the COVID vaccine or to recover from side effects. The American Rescue Plan extended the paid COVID leave tax credit to cover time off for vaccination.

According to the U.S. Treasury, small businesses may claim the employee's regular wage, up to \$511 per day, for time taken off due to the employee being sick, quarantining, awaiting COVID test results, receiving the COVID vaccine, or recovering from vaccine effects.

Small businesses will claim the credit on their Form 941 quarterly employment federal tax return. Businesses may keep the tax they expect to be credited back to them in advance of filing the Form 941. In the event that the credit exceeds the businesses' employment tax liability, the additional value will be refunded to the business by the U.S. Government.

Expanded Capacity, Social Gathering Limits Go Into Effect on May 15

Governor Ralph Northam announced sports and entertainment venue and social gathering capacities will increase beginning Saturday, May 15:

Social gathering limits will increase to 100 people indoors and 250 people outdoors (currently, 50 and 100, respectively).

Indoor entertainment and public amusement venues will be able to operate at 50% capacity or 1,000 people, up from previous 30% capacity or 500 people. Outdoor venues will be able to operate at 50% capacity with no specific cap on attendees, up from previous 30%.

The number of spectators allowed at indoor recreational sporting events will increase to 250 spectators or 50% capacity, whichever is fewer. Outdoor recreational sporting events will increase to 1,000 people or 50% capacity, whichever is fewer.

Restaurants will be able to return to selling alcohol after midnight. Restaurants will no longer be required to close their dining rooms from midnight to 5 a.m.

PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUIHE/THE CONNECTION

The Cicadas Are Coming! The Cicadas Are Coming!

Hold off planting young trees or watch them carefully.

BY EDEN BROWN
THE CONNECTION

There's a buzz going around in the tree loving circles, pun intended, that the emergence of cicadas could be an issue for trees, especially recently planted young saplings. Natural Resources Manager for Arlington County Parks, Alonso Abugattas, has provided some guidance that was sent out to Tree Stewards of Arlington and Alexandria last week: "The egg laying inside these slender twigs causes many to die off. They often wilt and hang down, while others may break off. The wilted and hanging branches are referred to as flagging. Cicadas are picky as to which tree (they don't disturb plants or ferns) they choose to insert their eggs in. They are usually six feet or more tall, mostly at the edge of mature woods, where there's some

sun, and usually have pencil-sized stems to oviposit in. They tend to avoid lawn areas with small shrubs unless they're near mature woods. For those people who were around the last time cicadas emerged, they normally use the same places to lay eggs again. They don't like to use evergreens, sumacs, pawpaws, many viburnums, euonymus, or Osage orange. Studies have shown that healthy trees don't show long term ill effects. Think of it as natural pruning that has been going on for millennia. If you do want to be cautious, leave your tree planting until the fall. Or protect your trees with 1.0 cm netting, but be-

With characteristic red eyes, Brood X cicada exits from exoskeleton moving from nymph to adult stage



PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

ware that this may trap birds and snakes. One thing that did not help was the use of pesticides. Studies have shown that this did not make a difference in egg laying. The young nymphs hatch out after 6-10 weeks and burrow underground to feed on tree roots for 17 years."

Nora Palmatier of Tree Stewards also notes, "A lot depends on how many bugs were in your yard 17 years ago as they emerge generally in the same areas. My yard hardly had any but I did put the netting around some young trees I'd planted -- never noticed more than a few in the yard and none on any plants. It also depends on whether you'll be around when they emerge in April - May so that if there were a bunch on your saplings, you could hose them off. The Tree Canopy Fund is going to keep planting anyway."

The Fall is another good time to plant if you can wait.

Arlington's Tree Canopy in Need of Another Study?

Tree canopy planning is integral to county environmental issues.

BY EDEN BROWN
THE CONNECTION

Arlington's Civic Federation, also known as CIVFED or the ACCF, wants the County Board to fund a new tree canopy study. The County says it already did that, back in 2017, with the Davey Resource Group. Why is there an issue?

The CivFed comprises about 100 civic associations, including local groups like the Tree Stewards, the NAACP, Arlington Branch 7047, and the Arlington Education Association. It is a cross section of the county. Its members are interested in what's important to the actual citizen and it has gotten more active in the past year or so, according to Mary Glass, of the Arlington Tree Action Group (ATAG), examining the bigger problems in Arlington. Maintaining tree canopy is one of them.

Glass, who is chairman of the Environmental Affairs Committee, said the group had a series of three virtual meetings, brought in subject-matter experts, and made a number of recommendations for improving the environment in Arlington. One recommendation was to update the tree canopy survey. Environmentalists did not like the way the former study in 2017 by



PHOTO BY EDEN BROWN/THE CONNECTION

Construction sites like this one either impinge on tree roots in a way that will kill trees in a few years, or tear the trees down because they are in the way. There is no apparent effort to make sure the trees get replanted and most owners opt for small dogwoods or Crepe Myrtles, if anything.

the Davey Resource Group was done. ATAG registered its concern in 2018. University of Vermont analysts called it only 94 percent accurate.

Urban tree canopy — measuring tree canopy percentage from overhead imagery — is a specific technique to measure tree canopy. Tree canopy is important because large trees improve water quality, conserve energy, lower city temperatures, reduce air pollution, prevent flooding, enhance property values, provide wildlife habitat, facilitate social and educational opportunities, and are good for the aesthetics of the neighborhood. Tree canopy studies are usually performed using high-resolution satellite photography, and involve significant analysis by Geographic Information Systems technicians.

The problem, according to the ATAG and some urban forestry experts, is inconsistent quality of the studies. The tree canopy study in 2011 indicated a drop in tree canopy to 40 percent down from 43 percent in 2008. The 2017 study, using 2016 data, indicates a tree canopy of 41 percent. A small gain. A detailed briefing by Karen Firehock, who is head of the Green Infrastructure Center in Richmond, Va., disputed the conclusion that the tree canopy was holding steady,

contending it had declined. Firehock gave a briefing to the CivFed in March 2021, laying out the logic for a new tree canopy study. A resolution was drafted at the March meeting and was approved and sent to the county board in March, but has not been acted upon. "The thing that did it for me," said Glass, who believes the political will for a new tree study is lacking on the county board, "is that Arlington recently did a deer survey which cost \$48,000. Tree canopy studies are relatively inexpensive, costing about \$20,000."

Takis Karantonis, a relatively new member of the Arlington County Board, and an urban planner, said "We know some advocates have suggested more scientific data on tree canopy in Arlington. Of course we want to do it, the more data we have, the more we know. What we don't know is how much of that data we already have. We asked for detailed briefings about improvements on the data acquisition." He continued: "It is also important we have open access to the information, not just get data for a nonpublic planning process. This is critical. The more we make our environmental data available, the better. It's about open government."

SEE ARLINGTON'S, PAGE 7

Two-Front Primary

Self-styled 'aggressive progressive' wages statewide campaign while defending House seat.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
THE CONNECTION

Northern Virginia has one of the most competitive Democratic primaries for the House of Delegates this year, a race that's complicated by an incumbent who's seeking reelection while also seeking a statewide office. Del. Mark Levine (D-45) will be appearing twice on the ballot, once toward the top of the ticket for lieutenant governor and then again for reelection to the House seat that he's held since his first election in 2017. Double filing is extremely rare in Virginia politics, and nobody in living memory has ever attempted to pull off what Levine is hoping to accomplish on June 8.

"He's adopted a very risky strategy in being on the ballot twice because that may send a signal to many of the voters in his district that he's got his eyes on something bigger," said Mark Rozell, dean of the Schar School of Policy and Government at George Mason University. "I think that's a real problem for him, especially if the vice mayor can get any traction outside of her electoral constituency."

Levine is one of three candidates who are hoping to win reelection to their House seats while also seeking a statewide office. Del. Lee Carter (D-50) has two primary opponents for his seat in Manassas while also running for governor. Del. Jay Jones (D-89) is facing a primary opponent for his House seat in Norfolk while also running for attorney general. Del. Elizabeth Guzman (D-31) recently dropped out of the primary for lieutenant governor after campaign finance records revealed that one of her opponents in the House primary raised a significant amount of money and she was in danger of losing both races.

"This is something that's always been allowed, but it's just not something that people have done," said Ben Tribbett, Democratic political consultant. "It's why you see state senators run for statewide office usually, not House of Delegates members, because their elections don't coincide with the statewide races."

BENNETT-PARKER EMERGED on the scene three years ago during her first campaign for office. Although she was a first-time candidate, she received more votes than any other Alexandria City Council candidate -- a distinction that landed her the title of vice mayor. In 2014, she founded a social

enterprise known as Fruitycycle to fight food waste and hunger. That organization later merged with the nonprofit organization Together We Bake, which provides workforce training and personal development to women in need.

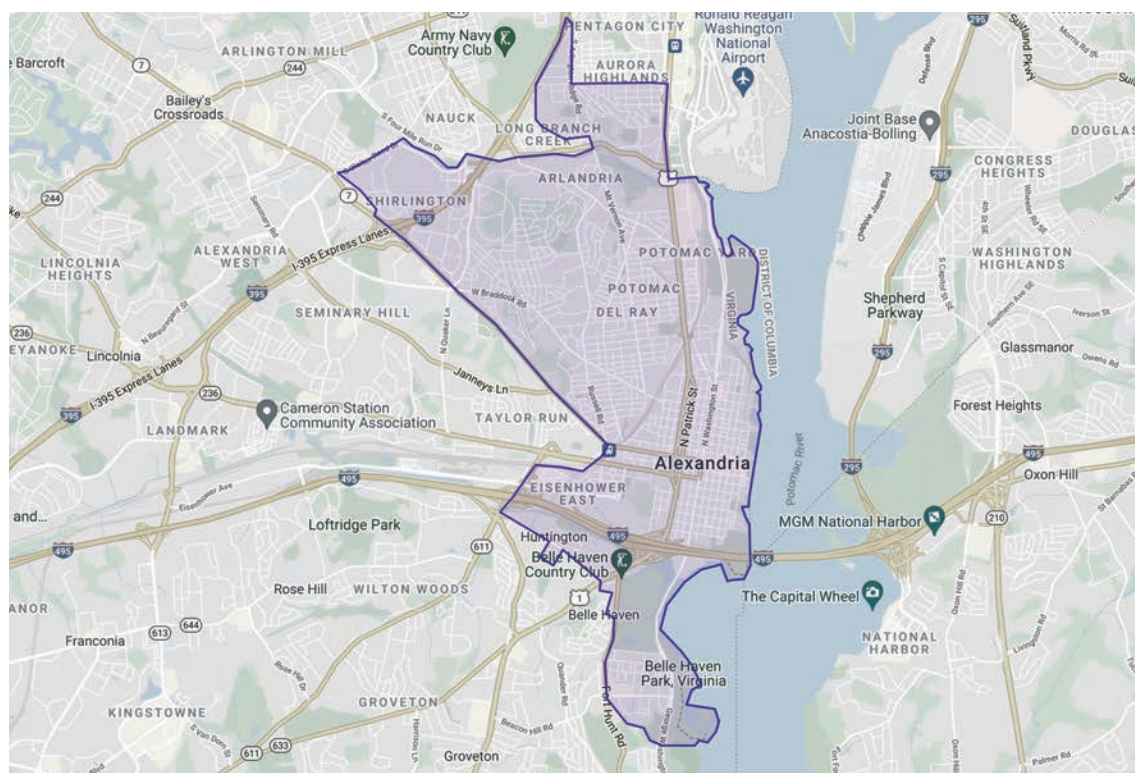
"My mom always taught me if you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem," said Bennett-Parker. "My experience on City Council has taught me a lot about the issues that are important to my community and how we need changes and more authority from Richmond in order to better serve our residents."

As a member of City Council, she used her food-manager's license to lead meal production for students who live in poverty during spring break last year at the beginning of the pandemic. She worked with small-business owners to install a mural known as the "Butterfly Effect" on Upper King Street, and she suggested an amendment to the city's environmental policy to make sure that all future public buildings are net-zero for carbon emissions. She says Levine's track record of bills that have been signed by the governor is well below average.

"It was surprising to see that Delegate Levine has always been at the bottom since he's been in office, including the last two years when Democrats have been in power," said Bennett-Parker. "I think that's disappointing for our community, layered on top of the fact that he's simultaneously running for two offices and treating this district as a backup plan."

In terms of votes she would cast in the House, there's no discernible daylight between Levine and Bennett-Parker. She's in favor of limiting campaign contribution and banning contributions from corporate donors, particularly public utilities like Dominion. She supports banning assault weapons and joining the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact, and she says she would vote in favor of eliminating mandatory minimum sentences for non-violent crimes. Even on a controversial issue like universal firearm registration, Bennett-Parker is in alignment with Levine in favor.

As a result, the choice for voters is



The 45th House District: Arlington is 17.41 percent of the 45th District, 12,101 voters.



Levine

"I tend to take the bills that other people think are too hard to pass."

— Del. Mark Levine (D-45)

"My mom always taught me if you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem."

— Elizabeth Bennett-Parker



Bennett-Parker

doing that."

LEVINE FIRST ran for office in 2014, when longtime U.S. Rep. Jim Moran (D-8) retired. He came in fifth place in a field of seven candidates with 7 percent of the vote. The following year, when Del. Rob Krupicka (D-45) declined to run for reelection, Levine scored a surprise victory with 28 percent of the vote. Since that time, he's built a reputation in the Democratic caucus as someone who is willing to speak in a frank and direct manner — sometimes to the discomfort of other House Democrats who view that approach as counterproductive. Levine dismisses criticism that he's too harsh by pointing to former U.S. Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) and the late U.S. Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.)

"Did they ruffle some feathers? I think both did. But they were effective," said Levine. "I think my constituents would rather have someone who fights hard for their values than someone who quits when the going gets tough so as not to upset people."

Levine dismisses the "batting average" calculations posted to the

Virginia Public Access Project as a misleading indicator. Comparing the number of bills introduced to the number of bills signed by the governor, he says, overlooks other ways a lawmaker can influence the process. He says he routinely lets other lawmakers carry bills that were his ideas, including legislation expanding marriage equality, rejecting voter identification and cracking down on predatory lending. "Some people really care about having their names on the bills. I care about getting the language right," said Levine. "The batting average is silly. If the bill I wrote become law, I'm claiming it."

If he loses the primary for lieutenant governor and wins another term in the House, Levine says, he would continue his service as chairman of the public safety subcommittee and the constitutional amendment subcommittee — seniority positions that the district would lose if voters reject the incumbent for a newcomer. He says he would continue working for constituents on everything from getting vaccines to dealing with the Department of Motor Vehicles. And, he says, he would lead the fight in the House for things like banning assault weapons and joining the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact.

"It's easy to put forward bills that do nothing or do little and everyone agrees on that are not controversial. Anyone can do that," said Levine. "I tend to take the bills that other people think are too hard to pass."

House District 45 Profile

- ❖ median age: 37.5
- ❖ median household income: \$125,000
- ❖ poverty : 7 percent
- ❖ married population: 50 percent
- ❖ median home price: \$624,000
- ❖ bachelor's degree or higher: 76 percent
- ❖ foreign-born population: 15 percent

plan," said Bennett-Parker.

"I'm running because I'm completely focussed on this community and delivering real results for our community and want to keep

NEWS

Second Chances Benefit The Whole Community

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
THE CONNECTION

Toby Pendergrass opens the 13th Second Chance virtual fundraising breakfast on Thursday, April 22.

"Wake up everybody. No more sleeping in bed. We got to change it, you and me. Just you and me. Yeah."

Elizabeth Jones Valderrama, Executive Director of OAR of Arlington and Alexandria, said that the goal of OAR in 50 years is to "not exist, not to be connected forever but to dismantle." She explained that OAR has downstream services that provide alternate sentencing through community service and works with formerly incarcerated prisoners to help them reintegrate into the community and to allow them to lift up their voices.

But she added that OAR also focuses on upstream services to abolish racism, to move forward in a caring, loving way and lift up the individual. "We need them to come back to the community or we're missing out on a valuable resource." She says folks we are connecting with are just individuals like us, moms and dads. We need everybody to support our work here until nobody needs us anymore."

Board member Skakir Cannon-Moye, who served as guide for the online presentation, said the system is designed to fail people of color. "Anti-racism isn't enough; we have to be pro-Black."

Jones Valderrama adds, "OAR is known by its downstream work pre- and post-release but we need to do work upstream to look at the root cause so we don't need the downstream." This means understanding individual internal racism. "No, no, no people say. Let's not say the bad word. But we drink the water of white supremacy so look at ourselves." She says you don't get it until you experience it.

She explains OAR has developed cohorts within OAR to put a whole team on this.

They offer a 10-week course for people who come into contact with OAR clients such as law enforcement, sheriffs, probation officers, judges, to work on changing the system of individual internal racism.

An anonymous voice (to protect privacy) fills the screen. "I love walking in the evening to stretch my legs and to remember a time when I was powerless and didn't

see what I had to offer." The OAR client continues to explain that when he was released OAR didn't just give him a backpack and bus token, "or I would have been back in prison. They helped me re-enter the world and encouraged me to connect with my family." He adds, "They helped me find my place so I could see my contributions, could turn on my own light and let it shine."

Another testimonial came from 32-year-old David who said the last time he was incarcerated at Arlington Detention Center he discovered OAR. First he met Charlie, who he explained was the fluffy therapy dog. He says when he was released "they were ready for me. I had classes, therapy. It was incredible." He was able to return to his wife and family.

"I don't know what it was. They asked me a lot of questions. What brings me joy." And he realized it was his wife and five-year-old daughter that bring him joy. "I missed them so much." He says he feels grateful for OAR. "They were with me every step of the way."

Cannon-Moye says last year during the pandemic they were able to keep the OAR office open. "We had staff there every day to meet the critical need."

But OAR had to make some hard choices that other non-profits made during the pandemic. "We had to let one half of the staff go in July. It wasn't easy. We had to figure out how to best meet the needs of those most affected."

He said two projects of particular importance this last year were Project Connection to provide monthly year round support to families while prisoners are incarcerated and a project with commonwealth attorneys and public defenders to pay court fees and bailout costs for returning formerly incarcerated prisoners.

Cannon-Moye adds a gift to OAR is a gift to the whole community.

Offender Aid and Restoration (OAR) is a private, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that serves Arlington County and the cities of Alexandria and Falls Church. OAR's mission is to provide community-managed programs aimed at restoring the individual offender as a responsible member of the community by providing alternatives to incarceration, programs to inmates and services to ex-offenders.

For more information contact info@oaronline.org.

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Mother's Day is Sunday, May 9. This year we will continue to publish submissions through the May 5th and 6th editions. Photo submissions are due by Sunday, May 2, 2021.

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Sudoku games, beginners and pros, Thursday, April 29, 2 p.m.
 Registration # 913601-02.

Cancer care during COVID-19, Wednesday, Apr. 28, 11 a.m. Presented by Patient Navigators from Virginia Hospital Center's Cancer Research Center. Registration # 913500-11.

"Shocking Mistakes that Altered History," presented by author Charles N. Toftoy, Wednesday, April 28, 1:30 p.m. Hear what really happened, the cover-ups and more. Registration # 913400-15.

Copy artworks seen at museums, Thursday, April 29, 10 a.m. Facilitated by community arts programmers. Registration # 913301-16.

Movie trivia games, Friday, April 30, 3 p.m. Registration # 913601-07.

Fast paced walking group, Fast Forwards, two to three mile loop with some hills, Friday, April 30, 9 a.m., Leaves from Aurora Hills 55+ Center, 735 S. 18th Street. Registration # 913201-06.

Just beneath the surface of famous artists, presentation by community arts programmer, Jim Halloran, Friday, April 30, 10 a.m. Plus short demonstration of an artist's specific process with Q&A to follow. Registration # 913302-05.

Healthy feet talk by Podiatrist Dr. Gregory Cardinal, Monday, May 3, 2 p.m. Discuss common foot Ailments and treatments. Registration # 913500-09.

Step-by-step painting demonstration with community arts programmers, Monday, May 3, 10:30 a.m. Registration # 913301-13.

Needle crafters knit and crochet together at Virginia Highlands Park, 1600 S. Hayes St., Monday, May 3, 10 a.m. Registration # 913703-10.

Monday morning meet-up with fellow 55+ members for casual conversation, Monday, May 3, 10 a.m. Registration # 913801-16.

Lee Book Club members to discuss, "My Brilliant Friend," by Elena Ferrante, Tuesday, May 4, 11 a.m. Registration # 913402-22.

Arlington's Tree Canopy In Need of Another Study?

FROM PAGE 3

Will the county board agree to fund the new canopy study? "It's critical to see what Arlington Forestry and Natural Resources Commission says," said Tarantonis. "In the budget, ... we have added a second urban forester to double the capacity of our urban forestry commission. It was really overdue. We also added \$200,000 for preventive pruning and tree care. It's not just about whether we have trees, it's whether they are healthy. It's also why the data proposal is interesting, so I suspect we will come to a conclusion... Remote sensing has evolved a lot and gotten cheaper. There is an acceptable benefit to cost ratio. And before we might have talked about tree canopy as just a beautiful 'nice to have' thing. But now we know there are systemic aspects of the tree canopy. One thing relates to another. The data collection will go way beyond whether we have enough trees. It will ask what potential threats are out there, like the bouts of beetles we have had in the past three years, or Dutch Elm disease — so we need to plan an eco system-wide action."

Karantonis went on: "Take, for example, water management - we can easily spend \$190 million over the next few years on an engineering response to the problem — or we can understand better the geomorphology of Arlington. How pervious our soil is, how much erosion we have, all that needs to be factored into flooding. Every new construction needs a land disturbance permit, but up to now we haven't talked about what to do with the clay dug out from lower level and then added back, so we may be telling future developers to take it away. It's a system where nothing exists by itself. This realization is across the board and the County Board understands that. We may have differences in what the appropriate solution to the problem is but the discussion is taking on more importance for us. I'm very reluctant to vote for asphalt paving anywhere in this county; and I feel the same way about, surface parking lots — for systemic reasons."

Two other county board members did not comment.

The issue of tree canopy is an equity issue for the NAACP. There are fewer canopy trees in certain parts of Arlington which also tend to be the Ozone nonattainment areas of Arlington (located near areas of pollution like highways.) It's an issue for the Eco-action Arlington group, which is raising money for the Tree Canopy Fund.

Glass says we need to get up to date on the satellite studies. We need to analyze the data with a technique that separates out what are trees, grass and bushes. If done right, she says, it's an incredible tool for looking at natural resources. And step 3 is to use the data — for storm water, for environmental equity, for planning where trees need to be planted.

Nora Palmatier of Tree Stewards, another group interested in canopy, said the Forestry and Natural Resources Commission wrote a letter encouraging funding for such a study come out of the Stimulus/Pandemic funding



Montgomery County publicizes the benefits of trees with tags noting how many gallons of water they filtered and how many cubic feet of air cleaned. Montgomery County has programs that address a wide range of opportunities to expand their forest — both public and private.

the county expects to get. She supports prioritizing tree canopy but notes "These issues are usually much more complicated than a soundbite." The new Lubber Run Community Center cut down trees and put up a parking lot, but it was an underground parking, with trees on top, and the new plantings replaced trees which were in bad shape, using newer planting styles.

The bottom line for tree advocates, an increasingly popular and political pursuit, is to use the most current data — possibly 2020 data from the USDA's National Conservation Imagery Program — to incorporate into the Forestry and Natural Resources Plan that is under development. "They should be thinking strategically about the role of trees not narrowly looking at what they feel they can handle operationally," Glass said.

To read the resolution put forward by the CivFed, see:

<http://www.civfed.org/newContent/2021-03/2021-03%20EnvAff%20Resolution%20Collaboratives%20Preserving%20Tree%20Canopy%20APPROVED.pdf>

To learn more about the CivFed see: <http://www.civfed.org/about-us/>

To learn more about ATAG, see: <https://arlingtontreeactiongroup.org/>; to learn more about Tree Stewards, see: <https://treestewards.org/>; to learn more about Eco-Arlington, see: <https://www.ecoactionarlington.org> and to review one of the County websites on this, see: <https://environment.arlingtonva.us/trees/tree-canopy/>

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"My Thoughts to Your Thoughts"



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

You know the expression: "Can't walk and chew gum at the same time;" a disparaging characterization of a person, company or municipality unable to multi-task or even task at all? Fortunately, I've not had much interaction in any of these categories (myself included). I do however, have a similar description of yours truly: I can't write a column and eat at the same time. I can drink (not alcohol) and write. And back in college - in the 70s, while writing a weekly column for "the diamondback" (the college newspaper) at The University of Maryland, I could partake, recreationally, and still write my column. In fact, I still remember what I thought was one of the funniest lines in a column I wrote about my inability to use tools (while under said influence) : "The only power tool I ever used was a hammer." Ah, the good old daze.

Fast forward and I mean fast, to 2021, approximately 45 years, since I was a weekly columnist for the campus newspaper. Time hasn't merely flown by, it has broken all former land speed records. In fictional fact, it hasn't been mach, it has been at "warp" speed, for those of you regular readers who are still trying to "Live long and prosper" while watching cable channel "H&I" Sunday through Friday, off and on between 8pm and 1am. For us "Star Trek" fans, these five hours of nightly programming fill a void that no replicator can match.

Spock could certainly multi-task. How else could he master three-dimensional chess? Perhaps some of his skill set had its origins in the "Vulcan mind-meld" which enabled him to read other's thoughts and gain unique insights into previously unshared experiences. As I think back over the years of previous "Star Trek" viewing (and my current re-infatuation), I can't recall ever seeing Spock eat, or even drink for that matter. Maybe he couldn't eat and be First Officer/second in command at the same time? Not that I'm equating myself with Spock, he was way more intelligent and accomplished than me. But maybe we did share a common affliction: an inability to eat and simultaneously perform other tasks?

And though Spock never seemed any the worse for the wear and tear he endured while rarely eating, I, as a red-blooded human, need to eat. I just can't eat while I'm writing. It seems to take away from my focus and blunt the creative process. Maybe if I were able to "narrow the confinement beam," I could put more of my thoughts down on paper before they're lost in my head. Thoughts which occasionally are fleeting, but usually are pertinent to the column I'm writing. Unlike Spock however, my thoughts are not always logical and though I try to embrace his Vulcan philosophy: "The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few," I think I'm too needy to do so. (My nephew bought me Star Trek pajamas for Christmas. It didn't exactly fill a need but it sure has made me happy to wear them. If you're at all curious they are Spock's rank and color: blue top with black pants, with proper Star Trek insignia.)

As is the case with my weekly column. I deprive myself of nourishment in order to write in a semi-coherent way. Sometimes I fail (perhaps the proof is right here in the words which you are reading), but it's never because I ate while I wrote, it's because the "inertial dampeners" (whatever they are) were not functioning within normal parameters. I just have to hope that my communicator doesn't malfunction or that an ion storm doesn't develop locally and knocks out the power to my house. I don't have a "Scotty" around to transfer power from one system to another. All I have is that hammer. And I know from limited experience, that a hammer is not going to solve my problem. I need a whole crew with all their own tools.

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



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