

The Arlington Connection

Darren Seah and his daughter, Natalie, clear Japanese knotweed at Long Beach, the heaviest infestation along the Potomac.

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Meet AWLA's Hollyleaf

After more than a year of offering only very limited access to the public, the Animal Welfare League of Arlington (AWLA) is now officially open for walk-in shelter visits. And while 2020 was a busy year for AWLA, with so many people seeking out pets as they quarantined, there are still so many fantastic animals who need permanent homes.

Currently, AWLA has more than 50 cats available for adoption. One of them is Hollyleaf – a sweet, independent domestic short-haired cat who has been with AWLA for more than four months, and with an AWLA foster family for two of those months.

“Hollyleaf is roughly five years old, and she’s a great mix of play, social, and sleep, which allows her to be independent but also happy to be around her humans when they are home,” Laura Fortner, Hollyleaf’s foster caretaker, said. “I work from home right now and I spend that time with her in our foster room, where she will sleep and sit right next to me for the entire workday and will often walk

onto my desk or get in my lap for attention.”

Hollyleaf’s life has not always been so easy or comfortable, though.

“We transferred Hollyleaf to AWLA from a shelter in Baltimore, and she was in very rough shape when she arrived,” Chelsea Jones, AWLA Senior Communications Specialist, said. “The Baltimore shelter discovered she was diabetic, and unfortunately, a diabetic cat was not something they had the resources for. So, she came to us, and we started her treatment for diabetes.”

Hollyleaf has rebounded since coming into the care of the AWLA network.

“We have had Hollyleaf for about two months and when she came into our care, she had a distrust of people and a fear of too much change at once,” Fortner said. “After several months of recovery and with lots of work at AWLA and in our foster home, she is completely over that wariness and happily welcomes any person into her space. She will always take cheek rubs and will stick her perfectly

round face right up to your hand so that you know where she wants the pets.”

The AWLA staff echoes these sentiments about Hollyleaf’s progress.

“Hollyleaf has turned into a completely different cat ... friendly, affectionate, and she has no problems taking her insulin,” Jones said. “Now that she’s with the Fortners, she is really letting her goofy side show, and while she’s still a little spicy, it’s easy to fall in love with her big personality.”

Hollyleaf would be the ideal companion for someone who does not have any other animals in their home, and who needs a little more daily conversation.

“She can be very chatty, especially when I leave the room and come back,” Fortner said. “She likes to tell me all about her day so far as I’m walking down the stairs. Then she flops onto the rug at the bottom of the stairs and looks up at me for head scratches and back rubs, possibly some playtime, and always is up for a treat.”

Those interested in Hollyleaf should not let her diabetes intim-



idate them, either. Hollyleaf has grown accustomed to the treatment, which amounts to just two quick, simple daily insulin injections at breakfast and dinner times.

“She is a great eater and very food motivated and is completely comfortable with someone pulling

at the nape of her neck a bit to give her the injection,” Fortner said. “It takes five seconds to provide the injection.”

To learn more about Hollyleaf, visit <https://www.awla.org/pet/hollyleaf>. Interested adopters can also email adoptions@awla.org.

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Spring Is Bursting Out All Over All Year Long

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Marta Hill Gray, Executive Director of Culpepper Garden, stands with mud on her boots as she supervises the planting of perennials in their new community garden. Culpepper Garden has just received a \$1,000 Green Grant from Keep America Beautiful which awards one grant each day through the month of June. This grant is for Culpepper's community beautification project.

Gray says, "With COVID we wanted to create something we could share with the community. "Gardens are part of our story, a postage stamp of what it was like 100 years ago. Culpepper Garden is really an extraordinary place."

Culpepper is Arlington's largest affordable senior community and the first low-income senior community in the U.S. to provide assisted living. Gray says some of their residents have only \$500 a month, and "we always make sure they are taken care of."

Charles Culpepper owned the land where the current Culpepper Garden is located and was well known for his prolific displays of hybridized daffodils. When he sold his land,



Volunteers from Sycamore School, McLean Bible Church and others help plant Virginia native plants for the new Culpepper Garden community garden on May 15.

he wanted his garden to continue. This eventually led to the current six-phase plan at Culpepper Garden, which began with the planting of 28,000 daffodils and this spring's

Garden Walk in late March.

"People were so enthusiastic this year. They were glad to get out. We had balloons and they came with their kids." Next year they plan to have a full-blown Garden Walk without assigned time slots and with the daffodils in full bloom once again.

Gray says the community garden will take over in the garden cycle after their spring daffodils have bloomed.

The community garden has shrubs and native Virginia plants, and one section is a pollinator garden. "Residents who live here can sit outside and enjoy the new environment with their families. It is remarkable how quickly it changes."

The 3-5 year project will continue with a walking trail, more pavilions, picnic tables, benches, bird feeders and a koi pond that will allow donors to name a part of the garden after a loved one.

"My selfish goal is to make this like the cherry blossom festival in our little part of Arlington," Gray says.

"When people come to enjoy the gardens, they learn about who we are at Culpepper Garden.

This garden feels like hope to me. It is a personal thing, and it is supporting the quality of the life of people who live here."

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Arlington Community Foundation Is Seeking Nominations for The 2021 William T. Newman Jr. Spirit of Community Award.

Nominations are open to those who have served Arlington in an extraordinary way during these extraordinary times, those who have served Arlington over a lifetime, and those who have done both. Nominations are due by Friday, July 2.

The 28th annual Spirit of Community Award, named in honor

of the Foundation's Founder and President Emeritus, the Honorable William T. Newman Jr., recognizes an individual, organization, group, or corporation that has demonstrated a tireless and unselfish commitment to improving the quality of life in Arlington.

In 2020, the award recognized Arlington's human service workers

who have continued to serve on the front line during the COVID-19 pandemic. These frontline workers joined a roster of exemplary honorees including Dr. Alfred Taylor Jr. (2019), Emma Violand-Sanchez (2018), John G. Milliken (2017), and many others who have made Arlington a more vibrant and equitable community for all.

The recipient will be awarded and honored at the 2021 Spirit of Community Virtual Event this fall: an annual celebration that brings together hundreds of Arlington's foremost civic, philanthropic, and business leaders for a look at what's impacting our community and what's being done to ensure all Arlingtonians can truly thrive.

Registration for the event will open in the summer.

If you are interested in nominating an individual, nonprofit organization, group, or corporation, please submit a nomination form by July 2. <https://form.jotform.com/211434173855152> If you have any questions, call 703-243-4785 or email info@arlc.org.

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.

FRIDAY/JUNE 25

Police Recognize Pride Month. 5-7 p.m. At Freddie's Beach Bar, 555 23rd St. S., Arlington. In recognition of Pride Month and the significant contributions of Arlington's LGBTQ+ communities, the Arlington County Police Department (ACPD) will host Pride with the Police with members of the department's LGBTQ+ Liaison Team and the Arlington Restaurant Initiative (ARI). Similar to our popular Coffee with a Cop series, this informal event is an opportunity for community members to

ask questions, discuss their public safety concerns, and get to know the officers who serve Arlington.

FRIDAY/JUNE 25

Vegetable Garden Pests and Diseases. 10 -- 11:30 a.m. Online. Join Kirsten Conrad, Extension Agent for Arlington and the City of Alexandria, for a class on recognizing common injurious insects and diseases in your vegetable garden. Learn how to attract and encourage beneficial insects to assist you in fighting off these pests. Kirsten will provide tips and tricks to limit and even prevent damage on your vegetable crops. Free. RSVP at <https://mgnv.org/events/> to receive link to participate.

DONATIONS

The Arlington Food Assistance Center

seeks local gardeners and farmers willing to grow and donate fresh produce to the AFAC food pantry for local families in need as part of the Plot Against Hunger program. Each week, approximately 2,400 client families visit AFAC to pick up supplemental groceries and fresh fruits and vegetables are in high demand. AFAC will provide free vegetable seeds to those who pledge to donate produce from community or personal gardens. Visit <https://afac.org/plot-against-hunger> or contact puwen.lee@afac.org or 703-845-8486. Seeds are available now at AFAC, 2708 S. Nelson St., during regular business hours: Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. and Saturdays 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Produce can also be donated at AFAC at the hours listed above or at:

❖ Arlington Courthouse Farmer's Mar-

ket, Saturdays 8 a.m.-noon (look for the AFAC cooler near the Master Gardener information table).

❖ Rock Springs UCC Church, 5010 Little Falls Road, Sundays 9 a.m.-noon only. (Look for the donation bin on the Rock Spring Drive side of the church).

Pet Food Bank. AWLA is establishing a Pet Food Bank to serve qualifying residents of Arlington County and the City of Falls Church. In consideration of the effect financial obstacles have on a pet owner's ability to afford pet care, the AWLA Pet Food Bank program's goal is to keep family pets out of shelters. If you are an Arlington County or City of Falls Church resident and are in need of assistance in feeding your pet, follow this link and fill out a pre-registration form. Visit goo.gl/forms/s2FuFdaYwDZm4t-Pw2.

GET MORE WITH SNAP

Arlington and Alexandria Farmers' Markets accept SNAP/ EBT (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) cards for purchases. SNAP/EBT customers can purchase farm fresh produce at local area farmers' markets and get matching bonus tokens to add to their purchases. Virginia Cooperative will be on-site at several local farmers' markets of Alexandria and Arlington to provide more information on SNAP and offer food tastings, prizes and more at the Arlington Farmers' Market, N. 14th and Courthouse Road (second Saturday of the month) and Columbia Pike Farmers' Market, 2820 Columbia Pike (third Sunday of the month).

Arlington Naturalists Unite in Common Cause

Japanese Knotweed crowds out native growth along the Potomac.

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

It is 6:15 a.m. as Kit Britton heads for the Donaldson Run trailhead where he will have a 45-minute hike to the Potomac River. A group of volunteers will join him throughout the day to remove invasive Japanese knotweed, which has taken over a stretch along the river.

Britton says the knotweed blankets the ground with plants 4-5 feet high. “Nothing can grow under it. It envelops trees and grows very fast.” Knotweed was introduced from eastern Asia and has acquired a reputation as one of the most tenacious invasive plants.

The task for the day is to eliminate the knotweed from a stretch up the riverside from Gulf Branch to Donaldson Run. It is tough going with eight or nine rock outcroppings interspersed with sandy beaches. “This means clamoring over rocks, difficult and high with a trail over it.”

The project had been delayed for a week due to high water on the Potomac and muddy trails, but enthusiasm runs high. Britton has brought together a group of naturalists with specific but overlapping interests in a Park Service-sponsored project. The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (ATC) volunteers are interested in clearing the trail, which has been overrun by the knotweed “so they were out in force.” The Park Naturalists are interested in removing the plants that are strangling the trees.

A group of neighborhood volunteers are helping clear the area where they normally take their walks. And a group of Mormon volunteers, who could not fulfill their normal missionary work out in the community due to the pandemic, volunteered with the parks instead.

Gary Shinnars, a park steward at two parks, works with the Mormon youth on park projects. He says, “They came last week and did prep work on the area to be cleared today. They are the most amazing young people.” Shinnars says he worked with them on a project at Jamestown Park where they transformed the area. Most trees had been strangled, starved for sunlight. “The volunteers absolutely tore out every single one of the vines and transformed a tropical jungle into a meadow area.”

Britton adds, “They are big strapping youth—motivated, young, strong, a basic fighting machine.”

Britton has arrived early at the river checkpoint to coordinate signing in the volunteers, providing them with gloves and tools and giving instructions. “This involves cutting artfully, piling it high on the rocks, or sweeping it up and putting in contractor bags.”

The volunteers gradually arrive, wearing long-sleeved shirts, pants and sturdy shoes. “The ticks are all over, and they love to hide in the knotweed.” Some volunteers have arrived with first aid kits and poison ivy lotion.

John Moreland, an Appalachian Trail Club volunteer there with his



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Kit Britton, coordinator of the Japanese knotweed clean-up, with three Mormon volunteers and Jill Barker, Park Steward at Upton Hill Regional Park, attack the Japanese knotweed along the Potomac River on Saturday, June 19.

group of seven says, “We had to carry the knotweed above the water line so it wouldn’t reroot and could die on the rocks. We put our arms around these big bundles, sometimes 8-foot high and carried it up.”

He says it was crowding out the native plants like bluebells and other bushes with berries that are a favorite for birds.

Moreland said because his group are hikers, they were assigned to the area closer to Gulf Branch down the way. Moreland has been volunteering with the Appalachian

Trail Club for many years. “I just love the idea that you can go down to the Potomac and it is pristine with no development, tranquil in the middle of a metropolis.”

Britton says along the river they had to rake up the debris so if the water rises, a fragment doesn’t get washed downstream and cause another infestation. “If even a fragment of a leaf drops, it will grow.”

Shinnars says, “I was the bag man. I arrived at 8 a.m. with most of the tools.” Moreland says they couldn’t use mechanical tools,

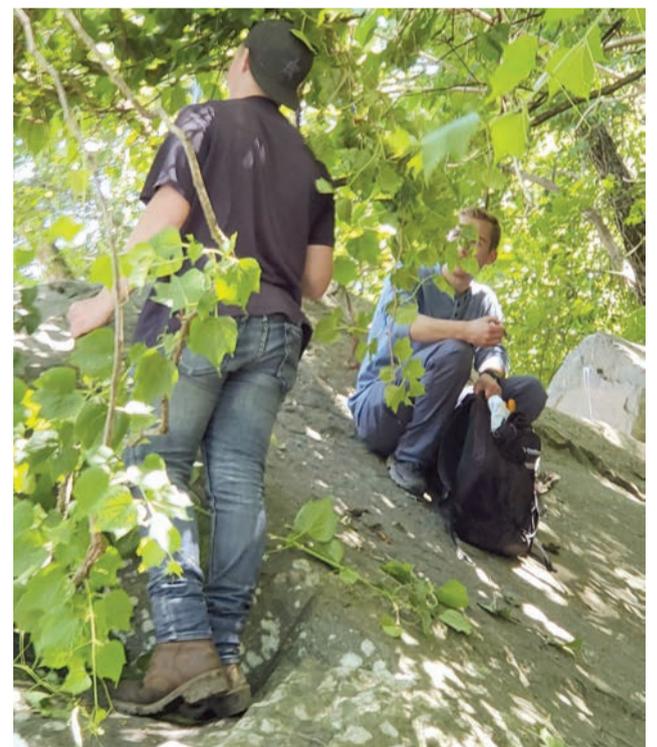
which spit out little pieces that could easily re-root. “So we used handheld wedge clippers and long and short handled loppers.”

At 2 p.m. most everyone has left. Shinnars says, “I was the last one there. I was little lonely the last hour, but I wanted to be sure we clipped every last one.”

Britton estimates they got about 80 percent of the knotweed and will have to return to finish the raking. After six weeks the Park Service will come in and spray where they cut. “With that one-two punch, we hope to get them.”



Before and after. Darren Seah and his daughter, Natalie, clear Japanese knotweed at Long Beach, the heaviest infestation along the Potomac.



Two Mormon youth volunteers work to load cut knotweed up the hill on the rock.

Why I Care About Palestinians

BY NAJLA DROOBY

In 1970, when I was 14, I volunteered at the American University hospital in Beirut. As a candy striper, I delivered food trays to the patients in their rooms. As I took a tray into one room, I saw a patient wrapped like a mummy. The only visible part was her face and her charcoal burnt lips. The nurse asked me to feed her. I will never forget her pain as I gave her a salad seasoned with lemons. I did not know what to do. I could neither wipe the lemon off her charred lips nor dilute the sting with water. She was a Palestinian refugee whose family had fled to Jordan when Israel was established and whose camp had been bombed by the Jordanian Army. Thus started my journey with Palestinians.

A couple of years later, I volunteered with the Lebanese Red Cross as a first-aider. We taught first-aid classes in the South of Lebanon where Israel regularly carried out air raids. The South was populated with poor Lebanese farmers whose main crop was tobacco. The government set the price of tobacco and by doing so, ensured that these farmers would remain poor. Palestinian refugees from Israel joined the local population. They all lived in the same miserable, unsafe conditions so they combined forces to build themselves bomb shelters. The Lebanese government destroyed the shelters under the pretext that they had no

permits to build them; they were unprotected - twice abandoned.

As a first aider, I was once called to pick up the wounded from a Palestinian camp in the South after an Israeli raid. We rushed to the camp, only to be stopped at the gate by Palestinians as it was not safe to enter the camps. We could not even get out of the ambulances as the area along the road was full of landmines. We returned to our base empty-handed; we did not save a single soul. These experiences introduced me to the plight of Palestinian refugees. "Refuge" was an elusive concept for them.

In 2012, I visited my son in Ramallah, Palestine. He was volunteering with KIVA approving micro-loans for Palestinians to start their businesses. He spoke of the Palestinians' hardships but also about their generosity, resilience, kindness, culture and hospitality. When I got there, we went to Israel and spent a few days in Jerusalem where I took a narrated tour of current and past Palestinian neighborhoods with ICAHD (Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions). It was a devastating tour as we saw Palestinians being deprived of basic human rights, dispossessed of their homes and lands, harassed daily and made to give up. When I asked what we could do to help as Americans,



Najla Drooby

the Israeli Jews giving the tour told us to convince our Congressmen to stop funding Israel. When I told them of the power of AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) they told me AIPAC is a tool in the hands of the Amer-

ican government that allows it to implement its policies. That comment was by Israeli Jews: my tour guides wanted our help to save not just the Palestinians, but the soul of Israel.

A few years later, after watching the premiere of the movie 'Omar' at the National Geographic Society in DC I realized Americans watching the movie didn't register the inhumane conditions of the Palestinians living under occupation in the West Bank. I came out of the movie sick to my stomach — I'd seen those conditions — and as I was walking through the reception that followed it, I overheard people saying how much they enjoyed themselves. They didn't know about the Separation Wall or how the social fabric of Palestinian Society was torn apart by the Israeli secret police. They thought the movie was just a work of fiction. I had to do something, so I joined Jewish Voice For Peace, an organization that was fighting for Palestinian rights and Jewish values.

A few weeks ago, when Israel started bombing Gaza yet again, I tried to offer refuge to a friend in

Gaza, who at first said no, he wanted to stay in Gaza as an act of resistance — the more Israel bombed the more he loved his country. But within days he agreed the situation was terrifying his two young girls and he would do anything not to see that look of fear in their eyes. Their building was shaking as we spoke.

But he didn't qualify for a visa to the U.S., nor did he qualify for political asylum or refugee status. He was stateless and his plight invisible to a country that accepts many other refugees escaping war, discrimination, and domestic violence.

We aren't innocent bystanders: these planes and weapons come from the U.S. and are bought with U.S. taxes. It's not just the soul of Israel that is in danger, it's our soul too. We can no longer look the other way.

Najla Drooby is an American born Lebanese who grew up in Lebanon and moved back to the US at age 21.

She is a computer scientist, retired IT project manager, peace activist, refugee resettlement volunteer, a member of Arlington-based We of Action (WOFA), a big fan of the Arlington public library, and an Encore Learning of Arlington student for the last 6 years. She raised two children in McLean and considers Arlington her "backyard" as she lived near the border of McLean and Arlington and identified with Arlington's liberal-minded outlook.

CALENDAR

ONGOING

National Museum of the U.S. Army to Reopen. The U.S. Army announced that the National Museum of the United States Army will reopen on June 14, the Army's 246th birthday. The museum, which is located at Fort Belvoir, officially opened in November 2020, but was closed temporarily due to the coronavirus pandemic. The Museum is the first comprehensive and truly national museum to capture, display and interpret the Army's history by telling stories through the eyes of Soldiers. Its displays and interactive-learning exhibits illustrate the Army's role in building and defending our nation, as well as Army humanitarian missions and technological and medical breakthroughs built on Army ingenuity. Visit <http://www.theNMUSA.org>.

MOVIES IN ARLINGTON

Join the Rosslyn BID this summer for the Cinema series to enjoy your favorite movies on the lawn in Gateway Park, 1300 Lee Hwy., Arlington on Fridays in June. Friday, June 25 – Cool Runnings. Attendees must register in advance of each showing via Eventbrite and check-in will begin at 7:15 p.m., with movies starting at sundown (approximately 8 p.m. in June).

JUNE 25-27

Shop the Hottest Summer Trends at the Summer Shop & Sale. At Westpost (formerly Pentagon Row), and the Village at Shirlington, Arlington. Visit your favorite local stores and restaurants. Whether in the stores, restaurants or along the sidewalk and on patios, enjoy sales and promotions throughout the Federal Realty's properties in Arlington.

ONGOING

The National Park Service has reopened Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial, following a complete rehabilitation of the site and transformation of the visitor experience. New exhibits and research allow the NPS to interpret the history of the Custis and Lee families alongside that of the more than 100 enslaved people who labored on the plantation. Together, their stories reveal a more complete picture of life at Arlington House and of the people and events that changed our nation. The rehabilitation, which began in 2018, was made possible through a \$12.35 million donation by philanthropist David M. Rubenstein to the National Park Foundation.

A today reveals a layered history that has often been untold—the

experience of the enslaved people of Arlington House. This historic place tells America's story from its founding through the Civil War, including the impacts of slavery on the lives of these families, and the site's conversion to a national cemetery. Today, it stands as a place of dialogue and reflection to create a deeper understanding of the American experience. Through this project, the NPS connected with

descendants of the Lee, Syphax, Parks, Gray, Branham and Burke families. Several descendants helped the NPS tell a more complete history of Arlington House. Arlington House is open daily from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. To enter the plantation house, visitors need to obtain a timed-ticket through recreation.gov. No tickets are required to visit the museum, north and south slave quarters, grounds and gardens.

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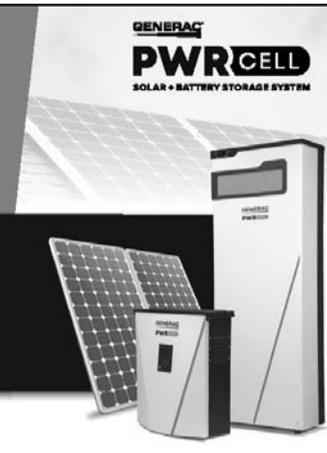
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VIRTUAL & OUTDOOR PROGRAMS

Sudoku games, beginners and pros welcome, Thursday, June 24, 2 p.m. Registration # 914601-04.

Paint along with a community arts programmer, Thursday, June 24, 10 a.m. Copy art from area museums. Registration # 914301-08.

Keeping cool and saving energy, Thursday, June 24, 1 p.m. Presented by Virginia Cooperative Extension energy master. Registration # 914400-32.

Basic drawing class for beginners and those who want to hone skills by keeping a sketchbook, Friday, June 25, 1:30 p.m. Presented by art instructor Ruth Kling. Registration # 914301-03.

Line dance in the park, easy for beginners, Friday, June 25, 10 a.m., Virginia Highlands Park, 1600 S. Hayes Street. Registration # 914100-02.

U.S. Mideast policy in transition, Monday, June 28, 1:30 p.m. Presented by Paul Sutphin, retired senior U.S. diplomat and consultant on Mideast issues. Registration # 914400-14.

Tai Chi practice with experienced volunteers, Monday, June 28, 10 a.m., Virginia Highlands Plaza, 1600 S. Hayes Street. Registration # 914105-16.

Monday morning coffee meet-up with fellow 55+ members, casual conversation, June 28, 10 a.m. Registration # 914801-04.

So you want to write a book, Tuesday, June 29, 11 a.m. Presented by author Carol Stricker. Registration # 914400-21.

Happiness 101, practices to enhance contentment and enjoyment, Tuesday, June 29, 2 p.m. Registration # 914500-04.

Appraising collectibles and who to call, Wednesday, June 30, 1:30 p.m. Presented by Jennifer Berman, professional organizer. Registration # 914400-15.

Acoustic hour in the park, live music from the 50s to the present, Wednesday, June 30, 1 p.m., Virginia Highlands Park, 1600 S. Hayes Street. Registration # 914802-10.

Afternoon hangout with fellow 55+ member, casual conversation, Thursday, July 1, 3 p.m. Registration # 914801-20.

Travel trivia with fellow 55+ members, Thursday, July 1, 11 a.m. Registration # 914601-02.

SENIOR LIVING

95 and Counting

Seniors who are 95 and older reflect on life and offer advice to younger people.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

95-year-old Howard Eisenberg says he was carded recently and asked to provide proof of his age as he boarded a train on his way to visit his 80-year-old girlfriend.

"Three different conductors carded me. I said, 'Look, isn't my gray hair enough?' The conductor said, 'Nope, that could have started at 40.'" They insisted on seeing my driver's license and \ boy, was I proud."

What's the secret to a long life? Three local seniors reflect on their lives and share their accomplishments and their advice to younger generations.

Born in Manhattan, Eisenberg, who now lives in Alexandria, began his lifelong career as a writer while doing a stint in the military.

"I started writing at 18. WWII had just ended and my captain learned that I'd had a couple of years of college. He said, 'PFC Eisenberg, the Nazis who were in this barracks left a mimeograph machine and a typewriter here. Write me a newspaper to improve morale.' You don't say no to your company commander, so I wrote 'The Rifleman.'"

Eisenberg, who recently completed the script for a musical, says he's been a writer ever since. "I've written for radio and television. I've written magazine articles, he said. "I shared magazine and book bylines with my amazing late wife, Arlene."

To him, age is just a number and he says he has no intention of retiring. "There is so much to write about that I don't plan to quit until my fingers break off in the computer keys," he said. "And then I'll try dictating."

He has three children, six grandchildren and three great grandchildren. "I have to do a bit of math to keep track of progeny," he jokes.

Eisenberg doesn't attribute his longevity to genetics. "My mom only reached 62 and my dad his mid-70s," he said. "But those were meat-and-potato days. You ate what tasted best, not what was good for you."

Instead, he attributes his good health to prioritizing nutrition and taking vitamins. A healthy diet and regular exercise are two habits that Eisenberg attributes to hitting the 95+ mark. "Down with sugar and white flour," he said. "The more colorful the food

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PHOTO COURTESY OF MIRIAM HALPRIN

103-year-old Miriam Halprin enjoys a deli sandwich during her first outing since the coronavirus pandemic began says that she credits her long life to positive mental outlook, good genes, a good laugh and an extremely high degree of vanity.

"Always keep a positive attitude and a sense of humor."

— Miriam Halprin



SMITH DAVIS PHOTOGRAPHY
Howard Eisenberg

the better."

Broccoli, spinach, asparagus, yams and low-fat, sugar-free ice cream are among the foods that he enjoys. "Of course, this is common sense, not prescription," he said.

Inquisitiveness is a trait that Eisenberg advises younger generations to acquire. One of his regrets is not being bold enough

to ask questions when he didn't understand something in his youth.

"I joined my outfit as an infantry replacement and they gave me a bazooka, which I'd only fired twice and that was in basic training, he said. "I didn't remember how to shoot it but was sadly too embarrassed to ask guidance from one of the Battle of the Bulge seasoned veterans. Big mistake."

"So when a machine gun nest stopped us and the captain shouted, 'Bazooka up front,' I was momentarily frozen in place," continued Eisenberg. "The GI carrying bazooka rockets saved me. He turned and ran to the rear with the ammo and I had to chase and tackle him. By the time I got back with the ammo the machine gun was kaput."

This experience taught him the value of seeking as much information as needed to gain the understanding necessary to complete a task.

"You may not carry a bazooka, but there will be many times at different stages in your life when you won't know how to do something. Don't be a shy guy or gal. Ask questions, ask questions, ask questions. Ask until you're sure you understand. Then do it."

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Wait. What?



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

After each individual appointment with my oncologist, either virtual or in person; all my prescription needs and my next round of appointments are scheduled while I wait. Typically, my oncologist will ask me which days and times are convenient. Our cycle for such responses is every three months, after my quarterly scans. Since it's a regular routine, we've come to know our schedules three months in advance so we can make suitable and available arrangements - both medically and socially so as to not upset any previously scheduled apple carts. It's not that often that any non-cancer activities might conflict with a Wednesday morning in Gaithersburg. Nevertheless, scheduling is preferable to rescheduling. And since time is a wastin', there's no time like the present to smooth out any potential blips on the calendar.

When we were scheduling this week's on-site day at the facility back in March, we knew we were going to Montana this month. The original Wednesday, June 16, when I should have been scheduled for my scans, was not totally inconvenient but it was the day before we were leaving town. No problem. My health comes first so I was ready to okay the 16th. Then my doctor suggested that I wait a week, until the 23rd, the day after I will have arrived home, because he said "Nobody wants to get bad news before a vacation." It seemed the lesser of two evils so I decided on the 23rd. Then it hit me: "What bad news?" Not that I have been particularly symptomatic of late or have emailed my oncologist every step of the way. Hardly. But I can't believe my oncologist's suggestion was totally innocent. Though he most definitely meant well (he's always talking about quality of life), it unfortunately ruffled my feathers and got me thinking about results and consequences - and of course, life expectancy. And since bad news travels fast, I didn't see a point in speeding it up. Whatever will be will be and there's nothing I can do about any of it before my vacation which somehow affects my results after. If I've learned anything during these 12-plus years in the cancer world, it is that there's no need to hurry things along. Cancer works at its own pace and being flexible in the face of such imminent danger is the only way to roll.

But that's the dilemma us seriously ill/diagnosed patients experience. Do we delay the inevitable or do we naively hope for the best. I mean, how much respect do we give cancer? Somehow, we have to live our lives and occasionally "damn the torpedoes." And if we're not able to find a break in this very serious action, I imagine our wherewithal living forward might be adversely affected. Cancer has a way of getting under your skin (no pun intended) and then seeping into your subconscious. Before you know it, "the cancer" as "Forrest, Forrest, Gump" said will likely make you a very dull boy or a "dismal Jimmy" as the Brits say.

I chose to throw caution to the wind and live my life with the usual weight and not compound an already heavy burden by having my scan results emailed to me while I'm on vacation. I'm pretty good at compartmentalizing but I saw/see no reason to test my credentials. As a cancer patient, if I'm being honest/realistic, something bad could happen to me. I don't see any advantage to making matters worse, potentially, by forcing the issue.

I think why I'm focusing - and possibly over-reacting, to this presumptive unpleasantness, is that it hadn't ever been suggested to me before by my oncologist in quite this context. Oh sure, he's talked about my health and various percentages of survival but this last meeting, its directness caught me off guard. Sure we all laughed, but for a moment it raised the stakes and reminded me how fragile our existence is. I'm a very positive person so I can usually fend off most emotional trauma. In fact, the title of one of my earlier columns was "Positive About the Negative." And though I've been quite able to keep my "terminal" diagnosis in perspective, hearing 'nobody wants to get bad news before a vacation' may be considerate to suggest, but some things are better left unsaid, especially to a cancer patient.

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

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