

# CONNECTION

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## Fairfax City Turns Red, White and Blue

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## Police Weapons Point At Black People

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Fairfax Rotary float in Fairfax City Independence Day Parade: A photo taken in the staging area near the courthouse with the planes flying overhead. Rotarian Lily Saffer and her baby are the only ones on the float at that point.

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PHOTO BY PAULA BROWN KELLEY



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## NEWS



PHOTO COURTESY OF ALNV

Hugs Pillows were a hit with kindergartners.

## Assistance League of Northern Virginia Keeps Serving Children

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, Assistance League of Northern Virginia (ALNV) was able to complete a banner year and touch the lives of thousands of local children and their families. With schools closed, the charity suspended its Weekend Food for Kids program, and instead provided a total of 4,834 \$20 grocery gift cards to needy families at 6 area schools. In addition, the program was expanded to include distribution of gift cards during the summer months. For its New Clothing for Kids efforts, the organization provided children with 1095 new clothing items and shoes. The chapter also distributed 690 toiletry kits and numerous other items, such as face masks and essential paper products, along with 86 child-sized, handmade quilts and blankets, most packaged with a new book. Assistance League could not conduct its usual tutoring services for first graders at two partner schools. However, through its Literacy for Kids program dedicated volunteers prepared and distributed 2917 books to students at each of its 11 partner schools. Two of the schools received a new book for every student, six schools received books for their summer

reading programs, and the other schools received books at various points during the school year. Through its Hugs Pillow Program, the charity distributed 914 pillows to several community agencies and many of its partner schools. The chapter added books to the pillows going to schools where teachers used them in classes for grades 2 and below to help the young children deal constructively with stress and build self-esteem.

For more information visit [www.alnv.org](http://www.alnv.org)

## New Board Members

In June, Assistance League installed its new board members for 2021-2022. The slate of officers for the coming year includes: Gina Glenn - President; Jerilyn Woelfel - Vice President for Membership; Kathy Jackson - Vice President for Resource Development; Nancy Treanor - Vice President for Philanthropy; Nannette Henderson - Treasurer; Mary Gronlund - Secretary; Nancy Spinosa - Education Chair; Lynn Barron - Public Relations Chair; and Judy Sutton, Strategic Planning Chair.

## Church to Host Drive Thru Food Distribution

The Evangelism and Missionary Ministry of Greater Little Zion Baptist Church, Fairfax, will be hosting a Drive Thru Food Distribution that will be open to the public. The prepared boxes will be distributed on a first come first served basis while supplies last.

To ensure the health safety of volunteers, community and other recipients, adhering to the CDC guidelines, this will be a contactless operation: remain in your vehicle and open the trunk when it is your turn in line.

Saturday, July 17, 10 a.m. – 12 noon at Greater Little Zion Baptist Church (Sanctuary Parking Area) 10185 Zion Drive, Fairfax.

Let us know about an upcoming event

[www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar](http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar)

The Jubilee Christian Center guides the giant American Flag Balloon.



PHOTOS BY JESS KIRBY/  
THE CONNECTION

## Fairfax City Turns Red, White and Blue

Area residents celebrate the city's 55th annual Independence Day Parade.

BY JESS KIRBY  
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax City once again turned red, white and blue for its 55th annual Independence Day Parade after being cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19. For an hour and a half on the warm morning of July 3, military service members, first responders, government officials and performers marched through the heart of Old Town Fairfax to celebrate the Fourth of July with the theme "One Flag. One Hand. One Heart."

Hundreds of people lined the streets, wearing patriotic colors and cheering on the parade participants.

Oral surgery assistant and Burke resident Kristin Kuch and her daughter Briana Leake attend the parade every year.

"We like just about everything, but we really like the little mini cars, the Shriners and the dancers," said Kuch. To her, the Fourth of July means "freedom, the fact that we can all get together again and



Performers from Falun Dafa of DC spread awareness for Falun Dafa, a spiritual practice of meditation and self-improvement.



Fairfax Mayor David L. Meyer rides through the streets as the City of Fairfax City Councilmembers follow.

do this after the year that we've had. It's nice to see everybody getting back out, celebrating our freedom and being together."



Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 8469 presents the flags of Veterans of Foreign Wars and POW/MIA.



Kristin Kuch and her daughter Briana Leake sit on University Drive to enjoy the parade

## Britepaths Seeks Donations of Food and Funds to Help Families in Need

Fairfax-based nonprofit Britepaths is seeking community support to help stock its emergency Food Pantry that was closed due to the pandemic, and to help purchase school supply kits for more than 4,000 students in need at Fairfax County schools.

Pantry donations will allow Britepaths to resume offering food and supplies to Fairfax County residents who are referred to the organization because they're experiencing a financial crisis. The organization has been mailing grocery store gift cards to clients during the pandemic, but the ability to provide pantry staples will allow it to serve more families.

Donations are accepted from Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Britepaths' office: 3959 Pender Drive, Suite 200, Fairfax, VA 22030. It is recommended to contact the organization in advance at 703-273-8829 or [info@britepaths.org](mailto:info@britepaths.org). Details about most-needed items and a link to an Amazon Wish List are available at: <https://britepaths.org/our-programs/food-bridge/food-donations>.

Britepaths' Collect for Kids Back to School Program typically provides school supplies to 2,500 students attending schools in Fairfax County Public Schools' Fairfax High School and Justice High School pyramids.

**THIS YEAR**, staff at its partner schools submitted requests to assist more than 4,000 students, and Britepaths needs to raise \$40,000 by August to purchase all the needed supply kits.

Community members are asked to donate funds via Britepaths' secure on-line donation page at: <https://britepaths.org/our-programs/back-school>, or mail a check to 3959 Pender Drive, Suite 200, Fairfax, VA 22030. Write "Back to School" in the memo line. For more information, phone 703-273-8829 or email [info@britepaths.org](mailto:info@britepaths.org). A list of schools whose stu-

dents are served through this program is below.

Britepaths is grateful to Northern Virginia Association of Realtors (NVAR) Cares, Twins Ace Hardware and Mara Hair and Mode Studio for sponsoring the Back to School program. Additional sponsorships are welcomed.

Lisa Whetzel, Britepaths' Executive Director, said, "We need to look no further than our Back to School program to see how the pandemic has affected families financially. We've been working with the same schools for years and the requests for school supply assistance have remained pretty stable at 2,500, but they nearly doubled this year. We decided to stretch and say, 'Yes' to all the requests because we know we have generous neighbors who want to help. We hope our community will help us come through for these kids who are already dealing with so much."

**WHETZEL** added, "We are excited to reopen our emergency Food Pantry so we can serve more families who are in crisis due to layoffs, illness and other factors that have impacted their income. Our office has been closed to the public for the past year, and we are looking forward to connecting with our clients and supporters again through the Food Pantry. We hope our neighbors will support our efforts to stock up so we can start distributing food again. Even a small donation can make a big difference."

Britepaths' Collect for Kids Back to School FCPS Partner Schools in

Fairfax High School Pyramid include:

- ❖ Daniels Run ES
  - ❖ Eagle View ES
  - ❖ Fairfax HS
  - ❖ Lanier MS
  - ❖ Providence ES
  - ❖ Willow Springs ES
  - Other
  - ❖ Fairfax Villa ES
- More information is available at: [britepaths.org](https://britepaths.org).

### BULLETIN BOARD

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

**SATURDAY/JULY 10**  
Konjur in Concert. 6-9 p.m. At Moe's Peyton Place. Benefit Show at 6516 Backlick Road, Springfield.

**SUNDAY/JULY 11**  
The Fairfax Station Railroad Museum is reopening on Sunday, July 11,

2021, with a "Welcome Back" event from noon - 3 p.m. with free admission, tours and refreshments. Docents will provide tours featuring new exhibits. Young visitors can enjoy puzzles and other attractions.

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 10

# Marijuana Is Now Legal in Virginia

The long strange trip from a failed war on drugs to social equity licenses.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE  
THE CONNECTION

**S**moke 'em if you've got 'em because pot is now legal in the commonwealth of Virginia.

For advocates who have been working in the trenches for years, the new law that goes into effect July 1 is the culmination of years of determination in the face of seemingly impossible odds. The tide began to turn after Democrats seized control of the General Assembly and lawmakers started taking a new look at police brutality after the murder of George Floyd. Now that law is signed, sealed, delivered and ready to light up.

"Virginians have long been calling for the end of prohibition," said Jenn Michelle Pedini, the executive director of Virginia NORML who led the fight for legalization. "In 2021, their voices are finally being heard."

Although marijuana is now legal in small amounts for adults, possession of more than an ounce can result in a civil penalty of \$25 and possession of more than one pound is a felony. This mirrors the way other states have eased into legalization, allowing small amounts before gradually increasing how much of the drug they can have on them at a given time. Many advocates applaud the new law legalizing pot in small amounts, but they say keeping the penalties for larger amounts is problematic.

"This is one step to eliminate the racist policing around simple possession," said Chelsea Higgs Wise, executive director of Marijuana Justice Virginia. "People are still incarcerated for larger amounts than one ounce, and Virginia is making a way to profit off of pounds of marijuana while really ignoring and neglecting a lot of folks who have lost their lives and their families to the enforcement of marijuana [prohibition] that has been disproportionately on Black Virginians."

**THE NEW LAW ALLOWS** each household to have four plants, although commercial sales won't begin until New Year's Day 2024. Smoking weed in public is not legal, although you can smoke it in the privacy of your home or anywhere on your property. In many ways, the new rules around pot mirror all the existing ones around alcohol. Having an open container of marijuana in a vehicle is not allowed, and driving under the influence remains illegal.

"The prohibition on marijuana has failed both in this commonwealth and in this country," said Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-30), who introduced the bill legalizing marijuana. "Cannabis does not have to be the boogeyman that some are making it out to be."

The journey from prohibition to legalization began after Democrats won control of the



As of July 1, possession of less than an ounce of marijuana is legal in Virginia.

**"The prohibition on marijuana has failed both in this commonwealth and in this country."**

— Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-30)

**"This is one step to eliminate the racist policing around simple possession."**

— Chelsea Higgs Wise, executive director of Marijuana Justice Virginia

House and Senate in 2019. The following year, they decriminalized marijuana and began setting the groundwork for legalization. The bill legalizing marijuana was a heavy lift for a General Assembly that was meeting mostly virtually, and it included everything from expunging old convictions in the failed war on drugs to the creation of a new Cannabis Control Authority. The effort almost fell apart in the Senate, where some conservative Democrats opposed legalization.

"People smoke marijuana to get high," said Sen. Chap Petersen (D-34). "The purpose of smoking it is to create an altered mental state, and that may be fine on your own time but once you legalize something people have the ability to pretty much use it anytime they want."

**THE DEBATE OVER LEGALIZATION** culminated in a moment of high drama in the Senate, which was meeting at the Science Museum of Virginia to allow for social distancing. Senators were tied 20 to 20, and Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax broke the vote in favor of legalization. As part of a compromise that secured the deal, lawmakers agreed to circle back around next year and

work out the specifics about how the new industry will work and how licenses are granted.

"It is quite rare for a new industry to just show up somewhat suddenly, but Virginia has had the opportunity to watch and learn from other jurisdictions," said Paul Seaborn, a professor at the McIntire School of Commerce at the University of Virginia. "The goals as they've been stated in Virginia is to make this new industry more equitable than most or maybe all of our other industries."

When the Cannabis Control Authority starts granting licenses, some applicants are likely to have priority over others. For example, people who have been convicted of possession of marijuana might end up receiving preferential treatment. Family members of people who have been convicted of possession could also get priority. Residents of neighborhoods that have been disproportionately policed could also end up

getting preferential treatment, although all the specifics of how those social equity licenses will work have yet to be approved by the General Assembly.

Some are opposed to that approach.

"You cannot provide preferential treatment lifting up one class or group of citizens without diminishing the rights of another," said Sen. Bill DeSteph (R-8), previewing the coming debate over the issue in 2022.

**THE CREATION OF A** new industry also allows Virginia to create new worker protections for employees in the marijuana business, including prohibiting worker misclassification and union busting. Gov. Ralph Northam and House Democrats want to prevent license holders from taking sides in union organizing efforts and require them to pay a prevailing wage. That's a proposal that's likely to receive opposition from Republicans and conservative Democrats who support Virginia's right-to-work law.

"These are state licensees, just like a contractor or a doctor or a lawyer or your plumber," said Stephen Haner, a senior fellow at the Thomas Jefferson Institute. "There's no other state licensee where the licensing requirements are tied into basically what I consider a very pro-union interpretation."

Labor leaders see this as an opportunity to protect workers before they are hired in an industry that won't even begin until 2024. As is the case with the social equity licenses, the rules about worker misclassification and union busting can be targeted to work against some of the damage created by the failed war on drugs. But that will only happen if lawmakers are able to get the legislation out of both chambers, which could be tricky.

"This is an industry that was specifically designed to combat some of the problems and failures that were caused by the war on drugs, and specifically the impact on certain communities especially Black communities and brown communities," said Michael Wilson, vice president at United Food and Commercial Workers Local 400.





PHOTO BY KAREN HALL

This house in Hayfield Farm was listed at \$649,900 and after multiple bids, sold for \$748,000.

## May Home Sales

- NVAR Stats for May Home Sales in Northern Virginia
- ❖ Inventory of houses on the market were 3,452 new listings in May 2021 compared to 2,174 in May 2020
  - ❖ City of Alexandria had 1,318 sales from Jan-May 2021 compared to 889 for the same period in 2020
  - ❖ Fairfax County, properties sold for 103.5% more than list price
  - ❖ A total of 2,656 homes sold in May 2021, a 63.8% increase above May 2020 home sales of 1,622
  - ❖ Average home price in May 2021 was \$745,323 compared to the average price in May 2020 of \$641,002

# Hot Summer Climate Flows into the Real Estate Market

**With the pandemic shrinking, bidding wars are part of the house buying process.**

BY MIKE SALMON  
THE CONNECTION

For Karen Hall, the agent-owner of @homerealestate in Fairfax County, the things buyers are doing to get a place to live has gone way above and beyond things she's experienced in the past. Sure, Northern Virginia is a hot market, but for buyers and sellers to stay in three different "air b & b's" while their house transactions are going through is unheard of. The air b & b's was one extreme action her clients have gone to.

"It hasn't been like this in 18 years," Hall said, "the market is just skyrocketing."

One house in Springfield that listed for \$895,000 had 16 offers, all over \$1 million, while another in Old Town, Alexandria, the buyer came with over \$1 million in cash, and another in Hayfield Farm had two offers down when there was only a "coming soon" sign in front and one cellphone picture on the listing. It went for \$75,000 over the listing price.

According to a comparison by the Northern Virginia Association of Realtors, sales in April 2021 to sales in April 2020, the average home price in Fairfax County was \$714,564, which was up 9.7 percent from last year. Then a bidding war, caused by the demand for housing in this area, would push the price up from there.

Although Hall said a good appearance and amenities makes a "pretty house," which are on the top

of the selling list, average houses go quickly too. "If it's pretty, forget it," said Hall.

Why the demand around here? The federal government, Pentagon and military bases around the beltway have always been a magnet for people relocating to this area. "This area offers, a proximity to the Washington, D.C. area, the ability to work from home, more affordable homes than in D.C., very good schools, and more square footage – especially for families with children," said Quinton Simmons from the National Association of Realtors. "My clients are all military," added Hall, who does a lot of business in the southeast part of Fairfax

County where she lives. At one time, she worked for Century 21 New Millennium in Kingstowne and then had her own office in Old Town, Alexandria.

Derrick Swaak, president of NVAR, said contributing factors include historically low mortgage rates, a strong stock market and a robust local economy. "That economy is driven by new arrivals in the corporate world too," said Swaak. "Amazon is looking to fill 1,900 jobs in and around HQ2. Currently there are 1,600 employed there. The region also continues to attract new businesses, such as Starkist moving its headquarters to Reston, Guidehouse establishing a global HQ in Fairfax County, with 900 new jobs," he said. The DC metro area is a popular place for new college graduates to move to when they are starting their careers, and many stay here.

Hall recommends that in a market like this, make sure you hire an agent who is excellent at negotiations and strategy (two different things), and hunting for off-market properties. She added that it's best for buyers to double check that they are making their strongest offer so they won't lose sleep, if they don't win.



MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION

**The red-hot real estate market in Northern Virginia is creating a lot of turnover for buyers and sellers.**

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# Police Weapons Point At

Long awaited report on Use of Force includes dozens of recommendations to guide the

BY KEN MOORE  
THE CONNECTION

**A**n independent study of Fairfax County Police Department use of force confirmed that Black people are overrepresented in use-of-force incidents by Fairfax police.

African-American people were also 1.8 times more likely to have a weapon pointed at them, and are more at risk of force being used against them during arrests, according to the report.

“What’s really concerning is when you have a consistent message or consistent story that the data tell you. And so, for African-Americans, you saw they were overrepresented across four of the six benchmarks, you saw they were overrepresented in four of the six multivariate severity models, and you saw they were overrepresented in the arrest model,” said Dr. Michael R. Smith, of the University of Texas at San Antonio, who is the co-author of the research project, “An Investigation of the Use of Force by the Fairfax County Police Department.” Smith is also a former Fairfax County police officer.

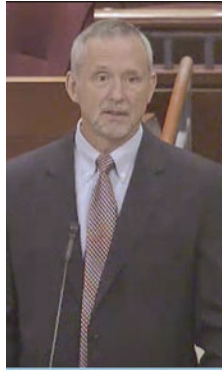
“That’s the kind of consistent story that I think is ripe for conversation and particularly for directed mechanisms to address,” Smith told the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors during a Public Safety Committee meeting on Tuesday, June 29, 2021.

The previous Board of Supervisors directed the study to better understand the influence of civilian race and ethnicity and other factors that impact use of force, said Rodney Lusk, chairman of the Board’s Public Safety Committee.

Smith and his colleagues Dr. Rob Tillyer, from the University of Texas at San Antonio, and Dr. Robin S. Engel from the University of Cincinnati, examined data from 1,360 encounters with civilians when force was used by Fairfax officers during 2016-2018.

“As we heard from advocates within our community and from our citizens at large across the county, there exists a sense that force is disproportionately applied against members of the African-American community and the Hispanic communities here in Fairfax County,” said Lusk. “I believe the data that this report lays out is a solid first step in understanding the underlying reasons for that sentiment and will act as a compass and guide us forward as we work to address inequities in our public safety and criminal justice infrastructure.”

According to the report, “Broken down by race and ethnicity, the Fairfax County Police Department used force against 576 Black persons (42 percent), 519 white persons (38 percent), 218 Hispanic persons (16 percent), and 45 Asian persons (three percent) that took place between Jan. 1, 2016 and Dec. 31, 2018. Average force levels were slightly higher for Blacks (2.4 on a 4.0 scale) than for other racial groups (2.1 for Whites, 2.2 of Hispanics, 2.0 for Asians), while resis-



Dr. Michael R. Smith, University of Texas at San Antonio



Dr. Rob Tillyer, University of Texas at San Antonio



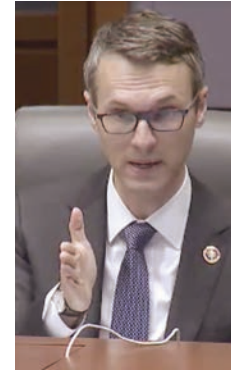
Dr. Robin S. Engel, University of Cincinnati



Mount Vernon Supervisor Daniel Storck



Hunter Mill Supervisor Walter Alcorn



Braddock Supervisor James Walkinshaw

tance levels were essentially equal across the racial and ethnic groups.”

**THE RESEARCH TEAM** condensed the 275-page report down to a 40-minute presentation.

Some key findings verbatim, included:

“Force used against Blacks exceeded all benchmarks and was disproportionate compared to whites in Mount Vernon. Blacks also experienced consistently higher rates of force compared to benchmarks in Franconia, McLean and West Springfield.

“Hispanics were overrepresented as subjects of force in Sully & Mason (3 of 6 benchmarks).

“Rates of force used against Asians exceeded benchmarks in Mount Vernon, Reston, West Springfield and Fair Oaks.

“Force used against minority civilians exceeded that of whites in Sully (Hispanics), Mount Vernon (Blacks & Asians), McLean (Blacks & Asians), Mason (Hispanics), Reston (Asians), Franconia (Blacks), West Springfield (Blacks & Asians), and Fair Oaks (Asians).”

Breaking down the data by district stations “revealed some differences from the countywide findings,” according to Smith, Tillyer and Engel. “For example, in Mount Vernon, the rates of force used against Black civilians exceeded all benchmarks, and force was used disproportionately against Blacks relative to whites in four of the six benchmarks examined. Blacks also experienced force at rates that consistently exceeded the benchmark comparisons in Franconia, McLean, and West Springfield.”

“In the end, data does matter. It does help us to see things as they are, maybe not as we wish they were, or even as we perceive they are,” said Mount Vernon Supervisor Daniel Storck.

“Obviously, Mount Vernon’s District Station’s results are very concerning, deeply concerning to me. We are actually served by three stations and all three of them have issues of overuse,” he said.

**DEMOGRAPHICS** were not considered by the scientists because they “are a very poor

indicator of risk of a particular group having force used against them. It’s common in the media and other outlets but it’s not appropriate from a scientific perspective,” said Tillyer.

For example, according to this, it would not make sense to note the disparity of Black people making up 42 percent of Fairfax police use of force while being just 10 percent of the population. Or that white people make up 50 percent of the population but just 38 percent of police use of force.

During the question and answer portion of the committee meeting, Springfield District Supervisor Pat Herrity (R) said he hoped the Board would make note of the research team’s opinion.

“We regularly publish that,” said Herrity. “I’ve been asking for a caveat to that.”

But Hunter Mill District Supervisor Walter Alcorn disagreed. “I realize that you’re saying social scientists don’t measure looking at population. I do,” he said.

“I think it’s very important for all our public services, particularly those related to law enforcement, that we do watch that. We have to. That’s speaking as an elected official, not as a social scientist,” said Alcorn.

The Connection reported that Black people made up 38.54 percent of the arrests in 2019, according to statistics provided by the police in 2020. Black people were targets of police use of force 45.63 percent of the time in the county. Black people make up approximately 10 percent of the population. Black people are arrested and the subject of police force disproportionately more.

**THE 275-PAGE REPORT** included 12 pages of recommendations the Board will discuss at its next Public Safety Committee meeting in September.

One recommendation included capturing all instances of force and resistance sequentially during each encounter involving the use of force.

“Capturing the uses of force and resistance sequentially, so what happened first, then what happened, then what happened next, is sort of state of the art,” said Smith. “It’s where the field is going and where the

police department’s data collection ought to go.

“That will provide us the ability to have a much more nuanced and greater understanding of how these events transpire. How do some escalate quickly, how do some not escalate quickly, or how do they escalate. That’s the kind of data you need to answer such important questions.”

Other recommendations:

- Substantially increase the amount of training hours provided annually for de-escalation skills and tactics.

- Adopt a single, clear standard for the use of deadly force – Deadly force is permissible only if the suspect poses an imminent risk of death or serious injury to the officer or others.

- Consider limiting canine bites only to certain types of crimes or other narrowly-defined conditions

- Utilize body-worn camera footage to evaluate racial/ethnic disparities in treatment by the FCPD, force escalation or de-escalation, and to improve training and accountability

Other recommendations included more extensive deescalation training; rotating officers from higher crime areas; improving the ability to “capture” medical and injury data for civilians and officers.

**POLICE CHIEF** Kevin Davis said “at least a third” of the examined uses of force involved the pointing of a firearm by a police officer.

“That’s loud and clear to us,” Davis told the Board. “Why is that happening and what can we do to reduce that number?”

Eyebrows raised when Smith said analysis was conducted again “after some preliminary discussions with senior leadership of the police department.”

In that reanalysis, pointing a weapon at a person was reclassified from use-of-force level three (on a scale of 1-4) to a use-of-force level one, the same level as soft-hand control.

“What’s important to understand is that the disparity in force versus African Americans in particular is largely located in the pointing of a weapon at someone,” said

# Black People

path forward.

FAIRFAX COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING



Springfield Supervisor Pat Herrity



Public Safety Chairman Rodney Lusk (Lee Supervisor)



Deputy County Executive David Rohrer with Fairfax County Police Chief Kevin Davis

Smith. The new “softer” analysis largely obscured the disparities.

“The firearms our officers carry are loaded, yes? We’re basically talking about pointing a loaded firearm at somebody,” said Alcorn. “Soft-hand control does not involve the potential of deadly force. I frankly would discount the analysis of putting that in L-1 [the least severe use of force category],” he said.

Herrity, on the other hand, said he’s been

on ride-alongs with narcotics units where pointing a weapon “changes the equation quickly.”

“They use the pointing of weapons to actually deescalate a situation,” said Herrity, the Board’s lone Republican.

Braddock Supervisor James Walkinshaw countered: “I don’t think the Police Executive Research Forum would view pointing a firearm as a deescalation technique. Necessary, effective maybe in some instances, but

not deescalation,” he said.

“I do have a frustration with that slide in that it’s not reflected in the report. I searched for reestimation and you kind of didn’t show your work on that slide,” he said. “I think the public would benefit more from hearing how you came to the conclusions that were on that slide.”

**THE PUBLIC** will have that opportunity, said Lusk.

**SEE THE PRESENTATION DECK:**  
<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/sites/boardofsupervisors/files/assets/meeting-materials/2021/june29-public-safety-police-department-use-of-force-presentation.pdf>

**SEE THE FULL STUDY**  
<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/sites/boardofsupervisors/files/assets/meeting-materials/2021/june29-public-safety-use-of-force-research-project-report-utsa.pdf>

“We will hold a public input meeting which will include the researchers ... as well as others in the community which includes advocates to have the same opportunity that we’ve had here today,” said Lusk.

In addition, Lusk said that he, along with Chairman Jeff McKay and Davis, would form a community group made up of advocates, community members, police staff and others who will review the study in detail and report back to the public safety committee with feedback on findings and recommendations, including a timeline for implementation.

All of the recommendations made by this study will be added to the Public Safety Committee’s Community Input Matrix.

This extensive list of police reform ideas and suggestions was compiled from input from public safety professionals, community members and advocacy organizations.

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/topics/sites/topics/files/assets/documents/police-reform/police-reform-suggestions.pdf>

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PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Coolers full of 7-day meal kits, planned by registered dietitian nutritionists and prepared daily by trained food service professionals pack a Fairfax County Public School bus for its Bus Route Meal Service, Summer 2021.



Hutchinson Principal Sarah Aiello takes part of a meal kit from an FCPS employee to give to a parent with little children in her car during the first day of the Bus Route Meal Distribution.

# School Buses and Sites Provide Free Grab and Go 7-day Meal Kits

**No questions asked, no IDs needed — County children under 18 and all FXCO students eligible.**

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

**T**en Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) buses began rolling Monday, June 28, on a mission to deliver their precious cargo, coolers full of nutritious breakfast and lunch items packed in seven-day, bulk meal kits, grab-and-go style. It is a lifeline for some children living in the county's 406 square miles, who depend on USDA's child nutrition programs for the nourishment they need to grow and thrive.

According to FCPS, nearly one-third of its students qualified for free and reduced-price meals in the fall of 2019. Families who earn less than 130 percent of the poverty level are eligible for free meals, and those with incomes between 130 and 185 percent of poverty level qualify for reduced-price meals. Fairfax County Summer Meal Program runs under the USDA Summer Food Service Program and enters its second week on July 5.

"The distribution of the meal kits fulfills an essential service to our community. The meals provide much-needed support to our most vulnerable students and families. Upon pickup, parents are not asked for any information other than the number of meals they require," said Dr. Ricardy Anderson, Fairfax County School Board Chair. "It is important to continue to spread the word that the distribution of meals is still available at FCPS schools and bus routes because the fami-

lies who have the greatest need may not be aware the service is continuing throughout the summer months."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced that school districts could continue serving free meals to all children regardless of family income and allow the meals served in a drive-thru or walk-up setting, offered as "grab-and-go" meals through June 2022 under its Summer Food Service Program.

The program is vital, particularly for communities hardest hit by COVID. According to FCPS, all county children under eighteen years of age, and all FCPS students, regardless of age, are eligible to receive the no-cost, weekly Meal Kits, which can be provided to parents or caretakers without the presence of a child.

FCPS made the free meal kits available in two ways. Parents, guardians, and students can access the kits at the weekly Bus Route Meal Service distributing throughout the county through Thursday, Aug. 5. The second option is to visit one of the Meal Kit Sites (every Monday) through Aug. 2.

**PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS** can let the FCPS employees know how many children need a meal kit. No other questions are asked, nor is identification required. Students may also pick up the meal kits.

On Tuesday, June 29, Delmay Sandoval of Herndon was first in line at Hutchinson Elementary school parking lot for that Bus Route Meal Service location. She sat in her

car with the windows rolled down with her two children and baby in the back seat. The temperature registered 95 degrees, and the sun was blazing. "I received this message last night from the school. It's in Spanish," Sandoval said. "I didn't know about the meals before that."

According to Sarah Aiello, Principal at Hutchinson, she texted the community multiple times the night before "to prep them because it's something new." She stood in the school parking lot as the bus arrived and called out to people, "Once a week, every Tuesday, 11:37."

Parents, caretakers, and students exited their cars to receive the meal kits off-loaded from the bus's rear. "I need it for three kids," one woman said. "Dos ninos," said a man.

Seeing small children in some vehicles, Aiello and other school staff hurried toward them with meal kits and loaded them into the trunks. Aiello later reported 80 meal kits distributed.

Registered dietitian nutritionists plan the meals and trained food service professionals prepare them daily using fresh high-quality ingredients. The grab-and-go meals "are tasty, well-balanced, and contain protein, whole grains, fruits and/or vegetables, and low-fat or fat-free milk," according to the Fairfax County Office of Food and Nutrition Services.

Ten FCPS buses run designated Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday routes to schools and other locations, once a week

## Monday Meal Kit Sites

June 28 - August 2 - 8:30 - 10:30 a.m.  
or until supplies are exhausted.

### Dates of distribution

- June 28
- July 6 (Tuesday, July 6 due to the Monday, July 5 holiday)
- July 12
- July 19
- July 26
- August 2

### Meal Kit sites

- Centreville HS- 6001 Union Mill Rd, Clifton
- Edison HS 5801 Franconia Rd, Alexandria
- Falls Church HS 7521 Jaguar Trail, Falls Church
- Hayfield SS 7630 Telegraph Rd, Alexandria, VA
- Marshall HS 7731 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church
- Mount Vernon HS 8515 Old Mt Vernon Rd, Alexandria begins 07/06
- South County HS 8700 Laurel Crest Drive, Lorton
- South Lakes HS 11400 South Lakes Dr, Reston
- West Springfield HS 6100 Rolling Rd, West Springfield
- Westfield HS 4700 Stonecroft Blvd, Chantilly
- Woodson HS 9525 Main St, Fairfax

A list of the Monday Meal Kit sites open for pickup.

with scheduled arrival and departure times for the Summer Meal Bus Routes. The routes stay the same for the 6-week program. The last day of the Summer Meal Bus Routes is Thursday, Aug. 5. Search Bus Route Meal Service- Summer 2021 | Fairfax County Public Schools for a list of the Monday through Thursday routes for the ten buses.

**THE MONDAY MORNING FCPS** Summer Meal Program Meal Kit Sites are open 8:30 - 10:30 a.m., for the remaining weeks in the season - July 12 through Aug. 2. Like the bus routes, meal kits containing seven days of breakfast and lunch items are packed in bulk. Adults may purchase kits for themselves and other adults for \$28 each at the Monday sites. Meal kits are not available off the buses for purchase by adults.

The Monday morning FCPS Summer Meal Program Meal Kit Sites are Centreville HS, Edison HS, Falls Church HS, Hayfield SS, Marshall HS, Mount Vernon HS, South County HS, South Lakes HS, West Springfield HS, Westfield HS, and Woodson HS.

Search Meal Kit Sites (Every Monday) June 28 through August 2 for more information.



## Principal Visits Students' Homes to Reconnect During Virtual Learning

Excitement is growing ahead of Fairfax County Public School (FCPS) students returning to five days a week of in-person learning this fall. Before school let out in June, West Springfield Elementary School principal Dr. Kelly Sheers visited the homes of dozens of families who have been in virtual learning since the pandemic began. Students were excited to see their principal for the first time in more than 15 months. They shared what they've learned in the past year and what they are most excited for this summer.

Kenneth Hays, father of third-grader Finnian and second-grader Alexandra, noted one payoff of virtual learning was watching his children's technology skills explode. "That is a huge difference actually, looking at how far they've come," Hays said. "I'm definitely better at typing," Finnian added. "It's been different. But I can't wait to go back."

Kenneth Hays also took a moment to thank Dr. Sheers for her hard work during this time. "No situation is perfect. I can only imagine everything going on behind the scenes," Hays said. "Whenever anything was less than optimal, we'd always think about everything you guys have been juggling."

At another visit, Aaron McDonald, father of fourth-grader Ava and second-grader Gabe, thanked Dr. Sheers for stopping by and acknowledged the work of teachers over the past year. "The teachers have been great, and we've done the best we can to support them," McDonald said. "Like they say, we're all in this together."

Dr. Sheers wanted to drive that message home during each visit. She says despite the distance the pandemic has forced on everyone, FCPS will always be "Stronger Together."

"I want to build that sense of community," Dr. Sheers said. "I haven't seen some of our virtual fami-



PHOTOS COURTESY FCPS

West Springfield Elementary School principal Dr. Kelly Sheers visits with a family outside their home.

lies for over a year and a half. So, this is just my way to show my appreciation to the families for supporting their children at home, and reconnect with them, and actually meet some of our new families for the first time."

For some new FCPS families, this fall will be their first time inside school buildings. During Dr. Sheers's visits, she assured those students they will get access to West Springfield Elementary before their first day, so they can get oriented and find their new classroom.

Dr. Sheers visited family homes over the span of a few weeks, hoping to garner excitement for the fall and help students feel welcome. During each visit, Dr. Sheers let students pick out their favorite color sunglasses and gave them a card that read "You Shine So Bright!" A much needed note of encouragement, as we look toward brighter days ahead.

— FCPS MEDIA OUTREACH OFFICE

## Irvin Receives Vision Award

Leading Age Virginia recently handed out awards at its 2021 annual conference. Anita Irvin, a professional at Insight Memory Care Center in Fairfax, won the Vision Award. The award recognizes an individual who has made an outstanding contribution in aging services and/or the association through inspirational leadership and vision throughout their career; and has a distinguished record of services in nonprofit leadership and dedication in achieving their community's specific goals and objectives.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Anita Irvin

At the beginning of the pandemic, Irvin empowered Insight's staff to respond to the closure of in-person programs in timely and innovative ways. Insight staff was able to immediately pivot to offering many services and programs virtually while communicating regularly with families to ensure that their needs at home were met.

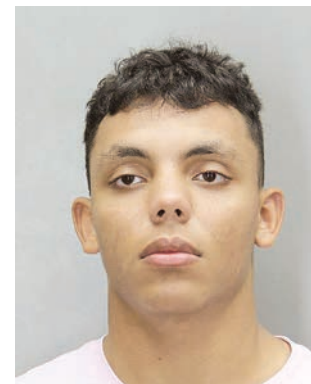
Phone consultations and check-ins with families were instituted, day center participants were provided virtual live and recorded video activities to keep them engaged and stimulated while at home, and support groups for caregivers went virtual. Irvin's leadership and support for staff to be able to perform their jobs safely

from home, and then safely on site according to public health best-practices was crucial to Insight's continued service to families in the Fairfax community. Irvin led with restraint and care during the pandemic, and as the organization returns to in-person programming, she has continued to help visualize the programs moving forward through a hybrid approach to care, education and support. Irvin's vision for community-based memory care support and programs will take Insight into the future.

## Taekwondo Instructor Arrested for Sexually Assaulting a Juvenile

Detectives from Major Crimes Bureau Child Abuse Squad have arrested a 22-year-old man for a sexual assault that occurred in 2019 at Kong's Taekwondo Learning Center, 7744 Gunston Plaza, in Lorton. The juvenile victim recently disclosed that while she attended an after-school program at the business instructor, Rochdi Tibta, of Springfield, had the victim sit on his lap where he unlawfully touched the victim on three occasions. Last Friday, detectives arrested and charged Tibta with three counts of aggravated sexual assault. He is currently being held at the County's Adult Detention Center without bond.

Detectives determined that Tibta worked at Kong's Taekwondo Learning Center from December 2018 to December 2019. In his role, Tibta was the sole caretaker at the business for the juveniles on several occasions. Detectives would like to hear from anyone who is concerned their child may



POLICE PHOTO

Rochdi Tibta of Springfield

have had inappropriate contact with Tibta.

Victim specialists from the Victim Services Division have been assigned to ensure that the identified victim receives appropriate resources and assistance.

Detectives are asking anyone with information about this case or believe Tibta had inappropriate contact with them or their child to call Major Crimes Bureau at 703-246-7800, option 3. Tips can also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by phone – 1-866-411-TIPS (866-411-8477), by text – Type "FCCS" plus tip to 847411, and by web – Click [HERE](#). Download our Mobile tip411 App "Fairfax Co Crime Solvers." Anonymous tipsters are eligible for cash rewards of \$100 to \$1,000 dollars if their information leads to an arrest. Those who wish for a detective to contact them, please leave contact information.

— FCPD PUBLIC AFFAIRS BUREAU



Dr. Sheers visits the McDonald family on their front porch.

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**BULLETIN**

FROM PAGE 3

Museum members will discuss volunteer opportunities for those interested. For more information on volunteer opportunities, visit [volunteers@fairfax-station.org](mailto:volunteers@fairfax-station.org) or 703-425-9225. For questions about the Museum, visit [information@fairfax-station.org](mailto:information@fairfax-station.org). The Museum is located at 11200 Fairfax Station Road in Fairfax Station. Visit [www.fairfax-station.org](http://www.fairfax-station.org), 703-425-9225.

**ENCORE EXPANDS SINGING PROGRAM FOR ADULTS WITH ALZHEIMER'S**

Encore Creativity for Older Adults, the nation's largest choral program for singers 55+, is expanding its "Sentimental Journey Singers" (SJS) program, a chorus for individuals who have been diagnosed with early or beginning moderate Alzheimer's and other memory impairments. Beginning in September, 2021, Encore will be offering its SJS programs at the following location: SJS Fairfax -- Wednesdays - 10-11:30 a.m. - beginning September 8. Community of Faith UMC, 13224 Franklin Farm Road, Herndon, VA. With 16 Encore Chorales and 6 Encore ROCKS (rock/pop choruses) in the DC/MD/VA and New York City area, serving over 1,250 singers ages 55+, Encore Creativity for Older Adults is perfectly positioned to deliver an excellent choral program for those with beginning or moderate memory impairment. Singers, along with their care partners, will delight in singing familiar and new songs in three-part harmony. Tuition for 15 weeks of rehearsals is \$190 and includes 15 rehearsals under a professional conductor, sheet music, rehearsal CD, and a December concert performance for family and friends that is free and open to the general public. Visit [encorecreativity.org](http://encorecreativity.org) to learn more.

**NEW WEBSITE FOR FAIRFAX STATION RAILROAD MUSEUM**

Fairfax Station Railroad Museum announces the official launch of its new website this month. Volunteer members of the Museum worked long hours over a period of seven months with local business, Intelligent Solutions of Springfield. That partnership has resulted in a new website that brings the Station, "On a level with other organizations our size in being able to reach our local and worldwide communities of interest in railroading history and the US Civil War period." said Jack Migliaccio, President. Visit the website, [www.fairfax-station.org](http://www.fairfax-station.org). The Museum is located at 11200 Fairfax Station Road in Fairfax Station. Call 703-425-9225. Visit [www.Facebook.com/FFXSRR](https://www.facebook.com/FFXSRR).

**FAIRFAX COUNTY ACTIVATES CORONAVIRUS INFO CENTER**

Fairfax County activated a Joint Information Center in response to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) on March 13. Fairfax County Health Department COVID-19 webpage – [www.fairfax-county.gov/health/novel-coronavirus](http://www.fairfax-county.gov/health/novel-coronavirus) Emergency Information Blog (you can subscribe by email or follow by RSS) – [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/blog](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/blog) Coronavirus (COVID-19) Call Center – The community may call 703-267-3511 with questions. The call center is open from 9 a.m. until 9 p.m. weekdays and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekends.

# CALENDAR

## WEDNESDAY/JULY 7

U.S. Army Blues Band. 7:30 p.m. At Lee District Park, 660 Telegraph Road, Franconia. This popular group began in 1942 as the U.S. Army Dance Band, created to entertain soldiers and civilians in the battle zone during World War II. Since then, it has evolved into the premier jazz ensemble of the United States Army. Call 703-324-SHOW (7469) before leaving home for inclement weather updates.

## SATURDAY/JULY 10

Cultural Heritage Nights are coming to Ossian Hall Park for free performances from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. on Saturdays in July and August. These performances are part of the Spotlight by Starlight Summer Entertainment Series at Ossian Hall Park that promotes awareness and appreciation of Fairfax County's cultural diversity. We've seen the makeup of our county change dramatically in the last decade, and this helps put out the welcome mat for neighbors and shared cultures. On July 10, 2021, enjoy Peru Cultural Heritage Night "Centro Cultural Peru" and celebrate Peru's cultural heritage with dance and music. Ossian Hall Park is located at 7900 Heritage Drive in Annandale. Call 703-324-SHOW (7469) for weather updates.

## SATURDAY/JULY 10

Mount Vernon Nights. 8 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton. Schedule, July 2021  
 July 10 - Marc Berger (American Roots Music)  
 July 17 - QuinTango (Tango Music)  
 July 24 - Los Texmaniacs (Conjunto band)  
 July 31 - Robin and Linda Williams (Folk)  
 August 7 - The Pietasters (Ska)  
 August 14 - Crys Matthews (Jazz, Blues, Funk)  
 August 21 - Dom Flemons (Acoustic Blues)  
 August 28 - The U.S. Army Field Band, Six String Soldiers (Americana, Folk, Bluegrass, Irish)

## MONDAY/JULY 12

Funday Monday- Story Time. 10:30-11:30 a.m. At Old Town Hall, 3999 University Dr., Fairfax. Funday Monday is open to children of all ages; however, those who haven't yet started school are particularly encouraged to attend. There will be music, movement, storytelling, performances, crafts, and more. Visit the web-

site: <https://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/cultural-arts>

## SATURDAY/JULY 17

Marsha and the Positrons. 10 a.m. At Wakefield Park, 8100 Braddock Road, Annandale. The children's band sings fun songs about science and how the world works with positive social messages! Sing and dance along to original songs and familiar favorites that inspire curiosity about science and bring smiles to all ages. Call 703-324-SHOW (7469) before leaving home for inclement weather updates.

## GOLF CAMPS

Join the nationwide resurgence of the lifelong game of golf. Laurel Hill Golf Club and Twin Lakes Golf Course are offering weeklong summer camps taught by professionals from The Eisman Golf Academy. Junior golfers ages 8-14 will learn and improve on golf fundamentals in a fun environment. Class sizes are limited for personalized instruction and camp includes on-course play. Also included are swag bags, hat, games and prizes. Camps will take place at Laurel Hill July 12-16, 2021; and at Twin Lakes on July 19-23, and Aug. 9-13, 2021. All camps run from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. To register, visit the Junior Golf Fairfax website.

Laurel Hill Golf Club is located at 8701 Laurel Hill Crest Drive in Lorton. Twin Lakes Golf Course is located at 6201 Union Mill Road in Clifton.

## FAIRFAX STATION RAILROAD MUSEUM REOPENS

The Fairfax Station Railroad Museum is re-opening on Sunday, July 11, 2021, with a "Welcome Back" event from noon - 3 p.m. with free admission, tours and refreshments. Docents will provide tours featuring new exhibits. Young visitors can enjoy puzzles and other attractions. Museum members will discuss volunteer opportunities for those interested. For more information on volunteer opportunities, visit [volunteers@fairfax-station.org](mailto:volunteers@fairfax-station.org) or 703-425-9225. For questions about the Museum, visit [information@fairfax-station.org](mailto:information@fairfax-station.org). The Museum is located at 11200 Fairfax Station Road in Fairfax Station. Visit [www.fairfax-station.org](http://www.fairfax-station.org); 703-425-9225.

# 2021 Fairfax County Redistricting Advisory Committee

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors appointed the 2021 Redistricting Advisory Committee at its June 22 meeting. The committee will recommend proposed new election districts to the Board which will ultimately determine the new districts that will be adopted. The committee will begin meetings in August.

The committee is composed of:  
 Representatives from each of the nine currently existing Board of Supervisors' districts.  
 Representatives for the county at-large.  
 Representatives from African-American, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander communities and Arab-American communities.  
 Representatives from the Federation of Citizens Associations; League of Women Voters; Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce and Northern Virginia Labor Federation.

The Virginia Division of Legislative Services is scheduled to deliver census data to Fairfax County between Aug. 16-20. The Redistricting Committee and the public will draw new proposed electoral boundaries for the Board of Supervisors and School Board. Aug. 30 - Sept. 17.

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Paul Berry, Chairman (At-Large)  
 Lisa Sales, At-Large  
 Bill Bouie, At-Large  
 Prashanth Rajan, Braddock District  
 Jimmy Bierman, Dranesville District  
 Richard Chew, Hunter Mill District  
 Bryon Garner, Lee District  
 Alis Wang, Mason District  
 Hon. Gerry Hyland, Mount Vernon District  
 Hon. Linda Smyth, Providence District  
 Paul Liberty, Springfield District  
 Sam Walker, Sully District  
 Tim Thompson, Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations  
 Anne Kanter, League of Women Voters  
 Karen Campblin, African-American Community  
 Maya Castillo, Hispanic Community  
 Silvia Patton, Asian/Pacific Islander Community  
 Saif Rahman, Arab-American Community  
 Scott Price, Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce  
 George Becerra, Northern Virginia Labor Federation

The Board of Supervisors will hold a public hearing in November, and is scheduled to approve a redistricting plan on Dec. 7. Virginia's congressional and state legislative lines will both be drawn in a separate process by a 16-member politician commission, in conversation with the state legislature.

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## I'm the Big Winner



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

(Not a cancer column.) For the past six months or so, I have been the email-recipient of \$50 gift cards to numerous to count/tally. They have run the gamut from Ace Hardware to Zappos.com and everything in between like CVS, Kohls, Walmart; you name it. I have rarely clicked on any of these "give-aways" because the one time I did, the answers required on the site - to claim my winnings, seemed a bit intrusive, as in what they were asking was none of their business. If they truly want to incentivize me to spend money at their store/site, they need to leave my personal business out of their equation. You don't need to know my mother's maiden name or the name of the city where I was born, to give me money, and you definitely are not getting my credit card number into which you'll make "the transfer." I've been down that rabbit hole before, and it's not good.

For a time, I was naively open and curious about these presumptive money/data grabs. I figured that in a pandemic world where millions of potential buyers are quarantining at home, and brick and mortar businesses are left fending for themselves, finding an alternate route to my wallet/credit cards while many of us were less inclined to go out and mix with the masses, a gift card teaser seemed prudent and reasonable. Moreover, given the very extenuating circumstances we've all endured these last 18 months, it was safe even; given our collective evolution in terms of purchasing goods and services online over the last decade to buy remotely. Throw in the same day service available with some vendors and there really is very little need to leave your house.

But after being nearly hooked and gutted by a phishing expedition once before, I've become extremely cautious about taking any bait/ tipping my toe in the figurative computer water, especially when the offers seem to be pulling at my heart's strings: free/easy money. Certainly I am mindful of the advisory: "If it sounds too good to be true, ..." yelled from the highest mountain tops in the past decade. However, the fraudulent pursuit of our almighty dollars are not being sent by idiots/ innocent target marketers. Hardly. These callers, with whom you eventually have to make verbal or online contact are quite proficient at answering your questions and/or allaying any fears that the about-to-be-extremely-unlucky mark is exhibiting. And once the caller/responder to your query has control of your computer - which you provided (it seemed like the logical thing to do to close/finalize the deal), the gift card party is officially over. The "free" money you had anticipated receiving is now going to cost you real money, as opposed to the offer you initially received which, as it happens, wasn't real/free at all.

Still, even with my previous near-death financial wipeout, I did click on a CVS offer. The site had all the CVS bells and whistles and colors which I've come to recognize and the offer seemed genuine: three choices to click on a box to win a \$50 gift card. And of course, it was the third and final red box on which I clicked that offered up my \$50. That was easy. Too easy.

As it soon became apparent, claiming the money was the problem. Once I answered a bunch of questions about my name, rank and serial number of where I live and so forth, I realized I was leading the caller down the garden path to my identity and all sorts of harrowing misadventures which I'd prefer not to experience first hand. Before it got too late/too personal on the sight, I politely backed out before any damage was done. As a result of this near calamity, I am no longer clicking on anything that seems the least bit enticing with unsolicited offers of direct payments/gift cards to me. If however, there are solicitations to me for gift cards to be mailed to my home without any preconditions or questions answered, I'd be happy to receive them. Otherwise, I won't bother. I've been shamed once, I can't afford, literally, to be shamed twice, then it is my fault (a fool and his money ...).

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

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