

Great Falls CONNECTION

Step One for Great Falls Grange Parkland Restoration

NEWS, PAGE 6

Kendall Snow, 15, and Audrey Snow, 13, are IMA volunteers, aka "Invasive Management Area volunteers" for the Fairfax County Park Authority. They volunteered to remove invasive plants in the Oak grove behind the Great Falls Grange, a Fairfax County Park Authority property.

Evictions Coming

NEWS, PAGE 3

Seeking Equity in Access to Required School Supplies

NEWS, PAGE 3

HOMELIFESTYLE

PAGE 8

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JULY 14-20, 2021

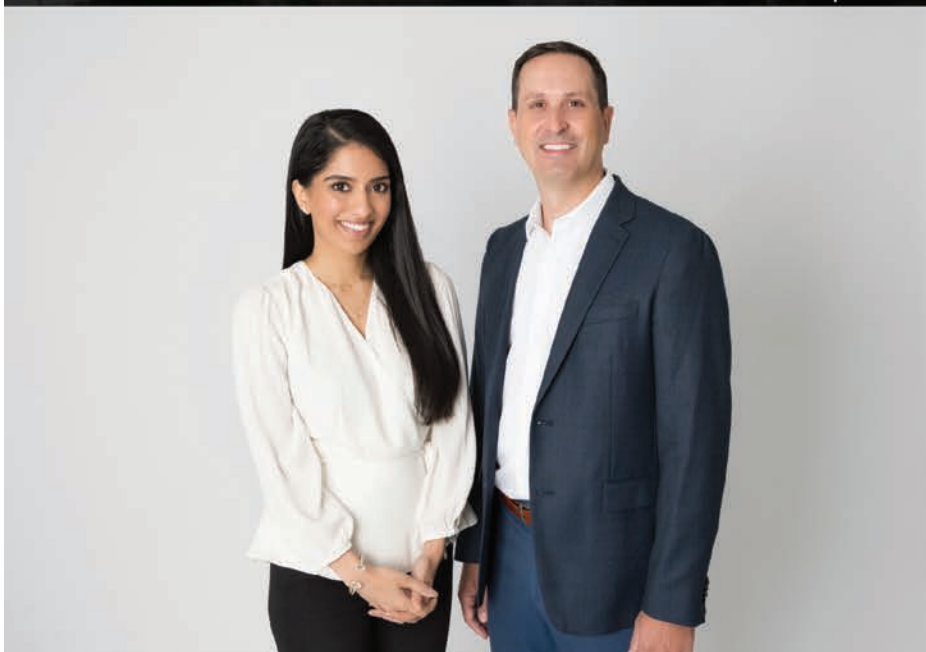
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Evictions Coming

More than 2,000 tenants are already involved with the courts on evictions with the end of CDC moratorium looming July 31.

BY KEN MOORE
THE CONNECTION

Landlords have prepared to start evicting tenants when the federal moratorium ends July 31, 2021. More than 2,000 tenants across Fairfax County are already involved in the court system.

In fact, 608 writs of eviction have been issued in the county. A writ of eviction is a court notice sent to the Sheriff's Office to remove a tenant's belongings from a property, according to county documents.

Writs of evictions have been issued throughout the county, including 164 in Alexandria, 73 in Falls Church, 59 in McLean, 54 in Fairfax, 50 in Herndon, 40 in Springfield, 34 in Vienna, 32 in Reston, 31 in Centreville and 31 in Annandale.

As of June 14, 2021, 1,432 unlawful detainers have also been issued. Unlawful detainers are issued when a landlord seeks court assistance in removing a tenant from

a property. These include 366 issued in Alexandria, 137 in Fairfax, 113 in Annandale, 103 in Herndon, 103 in Springfield, 89 in Reston, 79 in Centreville, 73 in McLean, and 73 in Vienna.

MORE THAN 10,000 households have needed emergency assistance for rent, utilities and food during the pandemic in Fairfax County.

"We're hearing from residents in the community that have never had to reach out before," said Keisha Dotson, division director, Neighborhood and Community Services.

The county is bracing to hear from more since the existing Centers for Disease Control moratorium on evictions is scheduled to end July 31, 2021.

Many families who have been unable to pay their rent because of the pandemic economic crisis could be facing eviction and homelessness when the eviction moratorium expires.

"We can anticipate that we're going to



"We're hearing from residents in the community that have never had to reach out before."

— Keisha Dotson,
Neighborhood
and Community
Services



"Rental assistance is one of the best ways we can prevent evictions."

— Tom Barnett,
Housing and Community
Development

have a huge call volume," said Chairman Jeff McKay. "I want to make certain we have the resources on the ground to respond to them quickly."

"Rental assistance is one of the best ways we can prevent evictions," said Tom Barnett, of Housing and Community Development.

The county has distributed more than \$31.5 million so far. "There has been an unprecedented demand for assistance," Dotson said on June 29 at the Board of Supervisors Health and Human Services committee meeting, chaired by Dalia Palchik (Providence).

The county will spend \$75 million more in federal assistance to help prevent evictions and homelessness.

The county is also reaching out to landlords.

Supervisor District	Court Involved
Braddock	110
Dranesville	116
Hunter Mill	219
Lee	285
Mason	394
Mount Vernon	295
Providence	360
Springfield	88
Sully	150

* As of June 29, 2021

Writs of Eviction, Top ZIP Codes

22306	54
20171	36
22312	34
22303	32

Unlawful Detainers, Top ZIP Codes

22003	113
22306	112
22042	108
22303	96
22030	70

"We're not just reaching out to our typical clients, tenants requesting this rental assistance, but also the landlords themselves, with our nonprofit partners based in the community, Cornerstones and FACETs," Barnett said. "They have actually been engaging the landlords so that they understand the programs available to help pay rental arrears and so they can help get their tenants through this process."

At the time of the June 29 committee meeting, 975 landlords had applied.

Communities hardest hit by COVID are also those hardest hit or anticipated to be hit by eviction proceedings, in particular communities of color, Barnett said. "Clearly some neighborhoods are getting impacted more than others."

Seeking Equity in Access to Required School Supplies

Leveling the learning field from binders to graphing calculators.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Summer vacation hits the halfway point for students enrolled at Fairfax County Public Schools on Monday, July 18. With the division reaching out to parents, encouraging them to send their children back to in-person learning this fall compared to the fall of 2020 and the economic fallout of the pandemic, the need is greater than ever for equitable access to required school supplies.

Approximately 31 percent of students in FCPS qualified for free and reduced-price meals as of Oct. 31, 2019, reported FCPS. These are families who earn less than 130 percent of the poverty level and those with incomes between 130 and 185 percent.

Each FCPS elementary school has school supply lists posted to their school's website. Middle and High schools often supply these lists on their websites or provide them to students on their return to school, according to FCPS. Costs to purchase school supply items as viewed on the individual FCPS websites can run upwards of over \$100 per student with individual teachers, especially at the higher grades requesting additional supplies, such as a TI-83 series graphing cal-



MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION
The first day of school for 2021-22 for Fairfax County Public Schools is Aug. 23.

culator at \$125, and the need to replenish items throughout the year.

Asked how many children would require donated supplies and backpacks for the school year 2021-22 opening on Aug. 23, Jennifer Sellers, media outreach specialist at FCPS said, "Around 60,000 FCPS students live at or near the poverty level."

OPPORTUNITIES are available to students in need of supplies. The Foundation for Fairfax County Public Schools offers Collect for Kids, described as a strategic team-- comprising businesses, government agencies, and community organizations working together to organize and plan a fundraising effort that helps provide kits of supplies

for students in need. The goal is to ensure all students have the tools necessary to be successful in the classroom. Schools can customize their kits to meet the needs of teachers and students best.

The Collect for Kids monetary campaign allows the Foundation to streamline the distribution of backpacks and supplies. "A donation of just \$50 provides five students in need with the basic supplies necessary for academic success," states the Foundation's website.

Kids R First is a regional non-profit program "dedicated to the education and helping kids (grades K-12) from families of limited financial means with school supplies to receive the same opportunities as their peers," states the charitable organization's website. In 2020, Kids R First provided custom orders for every grade level at every participating school, according to Susan Ungerer, founder/CEO. Volunteers supplied required core items to 25,100 students in need in Northern Virginia and Maryland.

This summer, Ungerer said, Kids R First is working with 38 schools (K-12) in the Fairfax County communities of Alexandria, Annandale, Centreville, Chantilly, Falls Church, Fort Belvoir, Herndon, Reston, and Springfield. "Each individual school order is put on a pallet, shrink-wrapped. Then the Fairfax County Schools warehouse group picks

them up and delivers them to the schools. All the supplies are given to students at the school with the hope they receive them before school begins," said Ungerer.

Some school districts nationwide have taken an initiative to increase educational equity among all their students, leveling the learning field. Schools provide the supplies students need for learning, the same as they do with books and other materials.

PROJECT Free Education at Bellingham Public Schools in the state of Washington provides supplies and opportunities to students at no cost. The budget priority attempted to close gaps. Since the program started in 2011, the division reported it eliminated the need for families to buy school supplies at elementary, middle, and high school; eliminated middle and high school course fees and supplied high school scientific and graphing calculators, and world language Advanced Placement (AP) workbooks.

Fairfax County Public Schools anticipates starting on the first day of school, Aug. 23, 2021, with bus routes and schedules back to normal with full activity, athletic program, and "academic excellence."

If students need assistance with school supplies, they can directly reach out to their local school.

Virginia's Largest Industry

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



COMMENTARY

Virginia's largest private industry is agriculture with an economic impact of \$70 billion annually and 334,000 jobs. Yet, according to Feeding America, one in eleven persons, or 766,620 people in Virginia, face hunger. One in nine children, or 214,270 children in the state, face hunger. The organization estimates that it would take \$433,605,000 to meet the challenge. At the same time the agriculture industry faces natural challenges of weather extremes, declining demand in some areas including dairy products, foreign competition, and expensive financing.

This week I am in Nashville, Tennessee attending the Southern Legislative Conference annual meeting. The agenda for the meeting includes the range of issues facing state governments with an emphasis on the southern states. Improving and expanding infrastructure including broadband will be discussed along with the impact of COVID-19 and changes in federal laws and administration. The meetings are

nonpartisan, but the differences in philosophy of governance are obvious as issues are discussed. Virginia is definitely an outlier among the southern states as to the role and responsibilities of state government.

The agenda also indicates the complexities of challenges facing agriculture in Virginia and throughout the South. I am

chairman of the House of Delegates Agriculture, Chesapeake, and Natural Resources Committee by virtue of my having served on that committee for all the years I have been in continuous membership in the House. Being from a suburban district has not disadvantaged me for my district and region are dramatically affected by what is happening in the agricultural sector. My constituents are the customers of the farmers that grow the crops and livestock that feed the population. I am an enthusiastic supporter of local farmers markets where producers and consumers come into contact at least weekly and where the freshest of farm products are available.

The people who live in my district are impacted by the environmental practices of the entire state. The health of the Chesapeake Bay is a barometer of how well the state is doing with its environmental stewardship. Most of the Shenandoah Valley is in the watershed of the Chesapeake Bay. The practices of the homeowners in fertilizing their lawns as well as the farmers fertilizing their crops have an impact on the health of the Bay and Virginia's seafood industry.

The states are referred to as "laboratories for democracy," and conferences such as the Southern Legislative Conference provide legislators an opportunity to compare notes to see what is working and not working in their states. Boundaries of states are defined in their history. There are no factors other than that history that determine where one state ends and another begins. Challenges such as a pandemic, severe weather conditions, availability of natural resources, and the condition of our air and water do not recognize state boundaries. We are all in this together, and it is to our advantage and maybe our survival to work together. No other sector better reflects these similarities, differences, and challenges than agriculture.

Eviction Prevention Is Not Housing Investment

BY MICHELLE KROCKER

America has a housing crisis - an affordability crisis, as well as a housing supply crisis. Recently, the National Association of Realtors released a report showing that over the last 20 years new housing starts fell 5.5 million units short of long-term historical levels. "The scale of the problem is so large," said David Bank, senior vice president of Rosen Consulting Group and one of the report's authors. "We need affordable, we need market-rate, we need single-family, we need multifamily."

Our region is also experiencing a housing crisis. To address our unmet housing needs, elected officials from the District, Maryland and Virginia unanimously adopted the Council of Governments' regional goal of producing 375,000 net new housing units between 2015 and 2030. Housing should be located in activity centers near transit, with one-third of the units serving low-income households and one-third for middle-income households. The regional goal translates into 25,000 net new housing units per year, so clearly we need to build more housing.

The eviction crisis created by the pandemic is unlike anything we have experienced in our lifetimes. Through multiple assistance programs, the federal government has responded with substantial tranches of funding to provide financial resources to prevent evictions by paying back rent, advancing rent for those impacted by COVID, and helping landlords remain solvent. However, the administrative process of getting that much money out the door has been daunting for state and local governments,

resulting in bottlenecks to deliver relief assistance. With the end to the CDC moratorium on July 31 — with little hope for further extension — strategies for mutually beneficial agreements between landlords and tenants, with the help of trusted community partners and continued rental assistance will be needed to stave off an eviction catastrophe.

Eviction Prevention Does Not Equal Housing Investment. It is imperative that this relief assistance not be construed as solving our pre-pandemic housing crisis. Eviction prevention does not solve the historic under-investment in housing production and preservation. We must have investments to end homelessness, provide permanent supportive housing for persons with disabilities, create housing that's affordable for low and moderate income households, young families wanting to buy their first home, and seniors on fixed incomes who want to remain in their communities.

Over the coming months, the Virginia General Assembly and localities throughout the Commonwealth will make consequential decisions on how to spend the largess from the American Rescue Plan funds. With accounts of Virginia's better-than-expected financial recovery from the pandemic, housing advocates should be bold in their recommendations for how Virginia allocates the \$4.3 billion in federal funds. Having secured historic gains for the state Housing Trust Fund, permanent supportive housing, and the new Virginia Opportunity Tax Credit, it's time to build a housing trust fund that closes the gap of only four affordable units for every 10 households eligible for housing that's affordable.

It is also the time for Northern Virginia advocates to press local governments for the funding needed to meet their share of the region's housing goals as defined by the COG pledge. This is housing's moment to imagine a region and a Commonwealth that is fair, equitable, inclusive and provides housing for all. Let's not squander this unique opportunity.

Michelle Krocker is the Executive Director of the Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance <https://nvaha.org/>

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Area Teen Shines on National Stage

Rising Westfield High freshman Akshita Balaji, 14, places 21st in National Spelling Contest.

Akshita Balaji, 14, rising Westfield High freshman, won her first spelling bee at age six while visiting family in India.

At the time, her father, Balaji Kannan, says while he and her mother were impressed, they had no idea what the future would hold for Akshita.

But on Sunday night, June 27, their daughter competed on live TV as a semifinalist in the Scripps National Spelling Bee.

"I mean we thought ok, she won a competition, we moved on and had no idea that she could make it big," he said. Akshita was one of 30 students from across the country who went head-to-head, virtually, in the annual competition, which aired on ESPN platforms at 7 p.m. EST.

After her first victory in India, Akshita went on to win her third grade class spelling bee at McNair Elementary School in Herndon. She said she went over classroom spelling prep sheets at the time, thought she'd give it a go and if she won, surprise her parents with the class honor. In fourth grade, she again won the class spelling bee and this time won the entire elementary school's competition, her father said.

"It was around then that we said, oh this is something she is doing consistently and enjoying it -- without much preparation," Kannan said. "So we started working with her on the dictionary."

AKSHITA made her way from A to Z in an elementary dictionary, learning every word, as well as the roots and origins of English language, her parents said. She developed a routine with her parents, where they'd pepper her with words early in the morning and late at night, working together to help her improve.

"My wife and I will pick out words that are in the news, like xenophobia, making sure she can both spell it and identify the correct meaning," Akshita's father said. "In spelling bees, you have to know what words mean too and in a dictionary a word can have three or four separately-listed meanings -- sometimes they ask a question that pertains to the second meaning so you really need to know them all."

Akshita, a rising freshman who just graduated from Carson Middle School, credits her Fairfax County Public School teachers as well with supporting her along the way.



PHOTO COURTESY OF FCPS
Rising Westfield High freshman Akshita Balaji sits on the steps of her school with a collection of spelling contest trophies.

"In sixth grade, the first time I made it to nationals, I was really tense, stressed out and my teacher picked up on it," she said, adding she'd love to give a "shout-out" to instructor Georgina Chin.

"She would quiz me during class, stopping a science lesson to drill me on words she'd come across in the textbook," Akshita said. "I remember the whole class going silent, and then everyone cheering for me when I'd get it right."

That year, 2019, Akshita was the Fairfax County Spelling Bee champion and ultimate-

ly tied for 51st at the national level. Akshita is sponsored by the Fairfax County Council PTA, which is the regional sponsor of the Scripps National Spelling Bee Program.

In 2020, the National Spelling Bee took a break amid the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, Akshita again took the title of Fairfax County Spelling Bee champion.

ON SUNDAY, she graced the national stage again, one of two Virginia public school students to make it this far. This is the first time in at least a decade that a Fairfax County student has been among the final 30 spellers in the national competition, according to the Fairfax County Council PTA.

From there, the field was narrowed to 11 spellers who will advance to the July 8 finals. Akshita tied for 21st place out of 209 national qualifiers.

Akshita says some of the hardest words she's come across are "random" ones of Polish origin, but that despite not speaking Polish she delights in being able to spell them anyhow.

"When somehow the rules of language come together, I can identify a hidden root or something in there and I'm able to do it, it is really satisfying to see a word is put together exactly how you'd imagine it."

— FCPS OFFICE OF COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

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PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

(From left) Navin Kariawasum, 14, of Chantilly and Hafil Niaz, 14, also of Chantilly toss their uprooted and black-bagged invasive plants into the collection pile at the Habitat Restoration at Great Falls Grange Park Sunday morning, July 11.



PHOTO BY CHRIS RICH

Petra Weisner harvests fruit from the invasive wineberry plant before pulling it out, roots and all for the Habitat Restoration at Great Falls Grange Park held Sunday morning, July 11. The berry is prized for its raspberry-like berries produced in large numbers mid-summer.

Step One for Great Falls Grange Parkland Restoration

Volunteers rip out prolific invaders.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Alien invaders lurk in the shadows of the 100-plus-year old white and chestnut Oak grove behind the Great Falls Grange. They are nuisance species, invasives - English Ivy, Mile-a-Minute vine, and thorny rose. They crawl and grow over native plants, smothering everything in their paths. Look the other way; they can kill trees and take down structures.

On July 11, Great Falls Citizens Association began its first workday of Habitat Restoration at Great Falls Grange Park under Fairfax County Park Authority's Invasive Management Area (IMA) Volunteer Program umbrella. According to Chris Rich, Great Falls Grange IMA Site Leader, 14 volunteers signed up for the two-hour community service opportunity.

Working toward long-term control and restoring areas bordering and within the 100-plus-year old white and chestnut Oak grove behind the Grange, volunteers hand-pulled weeds, invasives, and non-natives, placing them in large black plastic bags rather than paper landscape bags. Invasive plant species are more challenging to control on multiple fronts.

"Plastic [bags are used] to prevent the spread of these invasive plants and is part of the County program on invasive plant management," Rich said.

Whereas Fairfax County's 2019 policy is to bag brush, grass clippings, and leaves in paper bags or reusable bins, one exception is to keep invasive plants out of yard waste. "Dispose of invasive plants with your regular trash in plastic trash bags to prevent them from spreading in the environment," states



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

(From left bottom row to top right) Hafil Niaz, 14, of Chantilly, Chris Rich of Great Falls, Navin Kariawasum, 14, of Chantilly, Kara Larsen of Herndon, Prapti Ramalerishnan of Gainesville, and Susan Black of Great Falls are, except for Rich, the 14 volunteers who helped remove invasive plants from the Oak grove behind the Great Falls Grange.

the Fairfax County website.

"The County provided the tools, training, and help from IMA volunteers," Rich said regarding the Great Falls Grange Restoration. Kendall Snow, 15, of Great Falls, and Audrey Snow, 13, participated in the service project. They dragged their bags to the drop-off site and hoisted them over the split-rail fencing.

"I think it's a good cause, and I love helping the community," said Kendall. "I heard about it through Volunteer Fairfax," she added. Audrey held similar beliefs. "I'm here because I love nature, and I want to help the environment as much as I can," she said.

According to Rich, Fairfax County Park Authority "oversees 90 some sites of invasive

plant area projects". The Grange Project in Great Falls requires at least three more workdays this summer, he said, for which the County is soliciting volunteers. The dates are Wednesday, July 28, Wednesday, August 18, and Sunday, August 29.

After all invasive plants are removed, the soil will be conditioned since invasive species have the ability "to alter the natural functions of a plant community or an ecosystem by changing the soil conditions," according to the Park Authority's Management Program. After that, native plants will be introduced as part of the restoration prac-

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP



Remove invasive plants. Remove existing invasive plants in your yard and consider planting native trees and flowers instead of invasives.



Keep invasive plants out of yard waste. Dispose of invasive plants with your regular trash in plastic trash bags to prevent them from spreading in the environment.



Don't dump yard waste. Dumping yard waste in natural areas is harmful and spreads invasive species. It also smothers ecosystems, impacts floodwaters and causes nutrient overload in parks.



Know your plants. Not sure if a plant is native or invasive? Use our guide to identify and control invasive plants in your yard.



To get your guide to invasives visit: <https://bit.ly/2Maju5r>

A Fairfax County, Va. publication 8/19



Notice by Fairfax County and Fairfax County Park Authority on how to remove invasive plants.

"I'm here because I love nature, and I want to help the environment as much as I can."

— Audrey Snow, 13, Great Falls

tice managing the invaded land, followed by post-control monitoring of invasive species.

To get your guide to Fairfax County invasive plants, visit:

Non-Native Invasive ID and Control - Fairfax County.

To sign up as an IMA volunteer, visit *Invasive Management Area Program* | Park Authority.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

BULLETIN

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

SATURDAY/JULY 17

Multicultural Festival. 2 p.m.
Downtown Historic Church Street and the Vienna Town Green. A day-long bevy of performers, interactive activities, crafts, food, and vendors that celebrate the diverse cultures and communities represented across Northern Virginia. For more information on the schedule of events and activities, vienna.gov/liberty.

MPA SUMMER ART CAMP

MPA Summer Art Camps is now underway. If you haven't registered yet, there's still time to join for a summer of creativity and fun, both in-person and online. Sessions run June 28 - August 13, 2021. In-studio camps will take place at MPA's studios and galleries in the McLean Community Center. Weeks with spaces still available include:
Week 3: Abakadoodle (Afternoon)
Week 3: The Artist Within (Morning, Ages 9-12)
Week 4: Exploring Color (Morning, Ages 9-12)
Week 4: Camp Abakadoodle (Morning & Afternoon)
Week 5: Camp Abakadoodle (Afternoon)
Week 5: Hand-Building with Clay (Morning, Ages 9-12)
Virtual Camp (Morning)
Week 6: UnConventional Creations (Afternoon, Ages 9-12)
Week 6: Camp Abakadoodle (Afternoon)
Vosler Teen Studio

ONGOING

In-Person Worship Begins. 10:15 a.m.
The Church of the Good Shepherd

(United Methodist), 2351 Hunter Mill Road, Vienna. In-person worship services will resume with some restrictions. Details at: https://faithconnector.s3.amazonaws.com/goodshepherdva/files/revise2_in_person_worship_begins_june_13.pdf

GREAT FALLS SUMMER ART CAMP

WEEK 6 — July 19-23
Classical Drawing with Michela Mansuino Ages 8-12; Session 6a — 9:30am-12:30pm details/ register
TEEN Classical Drawing with Michela Mansuino Ages 12-18; Session 6b — 1:30- 4:30pm details/ register
WEEK 7 — July 26-30
Paper Mache Sculpture and Mask Painting with Michela Mansuino Ages 8-12; Session 7a — 9:30am-12:30pm details/ register
Paper Mache Sculpture and Mask Painting with Michela Mansuino Ages 10-18; Session 7b — 1:30-4:30pm details/ register
WEEK 8 — August 2-6
Cartooning with Bud Little Ages 8-14; Session 8a — 9:30am-12:30pm details/ register
New Theme Announced Soon
Session 8b — 1:30- 4:30pm
WEEK 9 — August 9-13
Color Study with Oil Paints with Michela Mansuino Ages 10-18; Session 9a — 9:30am-12:30pm details/ register
Color Study with Oil Paints with Michela Mansuino Ages 10-18; Session 9b — 1:30- 4:30pm details/ register
WEEK 10 — August 17-20
Week 10A: Manga [Japanese Anime]

with Michela Mansuino Ages 8-18; Session 10a: 9:30am-12:30pm details/ register
Week 10B: Manga [Japanese Anime] with Michela Mansuino Ages 8-18; Session 10b: 1:30-4:30pm details/ register.
Tuition is \$275 per session plus a supply fee payable to the instructor on the first day. Questions? Contact Director of School Julie Casso at school@greatfallsart.org

VIRGINIA ABC STORES TO RETURN TO REGULAR HOURS

After more than a year of reduced operating hours in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, all Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority (ABC) stores will return to pre-pandemic operating hours on May 14, 2021.
All stores will open by 10 a.m. every day, apart from some stores which regularly open later on Sundays. Store closing times, which returned to pre-pandemic hours in June 2020, will remain the same. Closing times vary by store.

TEXT FOR FOOD

No Kid Hungry Virginia encourages families to text FOOD or COMIDA to 877-877 to find free summer food sites organized by school districts and community organizations. Meal sites are offering a variety of distribution models to help safely connect students with meals and promote social distancing, including "Grab and Go" service and food delivery along bus routes while passing out multiple days' worth of meals at one-time.



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Raising the Bar

Ideas for bar cart design and cocktail party accessories.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

While last summer was noted with virtual happy hours and cocktail parties, in-person gatherings are becoming increasingly prevalent this year. Local design gurus say that it's time for hosts to update bar carts and cocktail party supplies.

"The key to an elevated home-bar is not only the liquid that it is served but the glassware that houses it," said designer Maxwell Eckert, who resides in Potomac. "Try minimalistic, statement pieces. They can really set carts apart from others. Use things like unique or geometric shaped bottles."

Available in a seemingly endless array of sizes, shapes and styles, pitchers are a smart and useful investment.



PHOTO COURTESY OF TINA ROSE-BAKER

As in-person entertaining reemerges this summer, accessories like silver serving trays and mint julep cups can make a chic style statement.

silver mint julep cups to serve in."

Display chic glassware that complements those vessels, says Hoffman. "Even though I love a pretty bar cart, I also believe everything on it should be functional so I always incorporate well-designed glassware that double as decorative objects," she said. "I group my glasses together on a pretty tray to eliminate any feeling of clutter and so that I have plenty of room to actually mix up a drink."

"Cocktail napkins, which are limitless in options, can make a big statement with little effort," added Rose-Baker.

No matter how chic, most bar carts offer limited storage space, says Hoffman. "Baskets and trays can turn an otherwise cluttered bar cart into a chic, organized one," she said. "Corral similar items like bar tools or glassware together in a low-profile basket. For summer, a chunky, woven texture feels really fresh."

Consider adding plants and greenery.

"A simple way to take a bar cart to the next level is adding greenery or flowers," said Hoffman. "I'm currently loving a few statement-making tropical leaves on my bar cart."

"Even though I love a pretty bar cart, I also believe everything on it should be functional."

— Caren Hoffman

"I am a big fan of mixing up a batch of cocktails before guests arrive," said Caren Hoffman, a party and events planner based in Alexandria. "It keeps things easy and lets everyone help themselves to a drink so the host can kick back and have fun."

Experiment with a variety of textures when curating a bar cart. "Try porcelain ice buckets or a silver ice bucket and tray set," said designer Tina Rose-Baker of Chantilly. "I also love to use

Great Falls Senior Center to Host Author's Talk

On Tuesday, July 20, 11 a.m.-12 noon, the Great Falls Senior Center will host Bethanne Patrick, a book critic, talk about her career.

Patrick -- writer, author and journalist -- is above all a reader, one who has built her career on talking and writing about books. Whether she's recommending a great book, interviewing a novelist or promoting reading online, Bethanne covers both the creative and digital side of the publishing industry. In 2009, she founded the popular #FridayReads hashtag under the Twitter handle @TheBookMaven. The weekly #FridayReads conversation, which peaks on Fridays but runs 24/7, attracts thousands of readers around the world. Patrick writes for the Washington Post on "10 Books to read in x month."

She is the author of two books, *An Uncommon History of Common Things* (co-authored with John Thompson) and *An Uncommon History of Common Courtesy*, both from National Geographic Books.

If you would like a link to the Tuesday, July 20, Event at 11 am via Zoom, please contact Mary Jo Fox, by July 16, at mjwfx1491@gmail.com. The link will be sent two days before the event.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Presentation of the recognition plaques.

Meadowlark Gardens Camp Grow honors the Garden Club of Fairfax

Friday, June 25, 2021, The Garden Club of Fairfax was recognized for their contribution to the success of Camp Grow at Meadowlark Botanical Gardens in Vienna.

The Garden Club of Fairfax donates funds to support Camp Grow through their Community Projects Committee. Camp Grow at Meadowlark Botanical Gardens is a day camp for children and teens to explore nature through hands-on activities, gardening, discovery walks, hikes, crafts, experiments, storytelling, woodworking and animal programs. Camp Grow is designed to engage, challenge, educate and encourage a sense of community.

The non-profit Garden Club of Fairfax, a member of the Garden Club of Virginia, consists

of members throughout Fairfax County who meet monthly from September to June. The club was established in 1926; and its objectives are to stimulate the knowledge and love of gardening and floral arranging; to share horticultural knowledge; to restore, improve and protect the quality of the environment; to encourage conservation of natural resources; and to aid in the restoration and preservation of historic gardens in Virginia.

For more information about the Garden Club of Fairfax google Garden club of Fairfax or email gardencluboffairfax@gmail.com.

For more information about Camp Grow visit <https://www.novaparks.com/things-to-do/camps/camp-grow>.

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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

Ten 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 pick up.

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.

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CALENDAR



The Preservation Hall Jazz Band will perform at Wolf Trap on July 17, 2021.

WOLF TRAP PERFORMANCES

<cal2>At Wolf Trap Farm Park, McLean.
 July 16 – Wolf Trap Opera: Viardot “Cinderella” (“Cendrillon”) | Holst “Savitri” in Concert, Wolf Trap Orchestra, Kelly Kuo (conductor)
 July 17 – Preservation Hall Jazz Band
 July 18 – Big Tony and Trouble Funk with Special Guest Sugar Bear, The Legendary DJ Kool
 July 20 – Inez Barlatier “Ayiti: Stories and Songs from Haiti” – Children’s Performance
 July 21 – Oran Etkin: Timbaloo “Finding Friends Far From Home” – Children’s Performance

NOW THRU JULY 29

Pathway Homes Art Exhibit. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Monday through Saturday). At Vienna Arts Society, 513 Maple Ave., West, Vienna. Pathway Homes, Inc. is hosting its 10th Annual Summer of the Arts Exhibit—both in studio and online, where Pathway Homes’ residents who have mental health challenges showcase and sell their own art, poetry, and crafts. Pathway Homes is a nonprofit providing mental health services—starting with safe, stable housing—to individuals marginalized by poverty and inequity. Art and creativity are an integral part of recovery for Pathway Homes’ residents. Visit www.sota.pathwayhomes.org

THURSDAY/JULY 15

Smokey Robinson Music. 5:30-7 p.m. At Fairfax County Government Center, 1200 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax. If you love R&B classics, come out for the tribute music of Smokey Robinson, featuring lead vocalist SIXX. His ability to mimic the soulful voice of Smokey is superb. Enjoy the free performance as part of the Evenings on the Ellipse Concert Series.

FRIDAY/JULY 16

Friday Night Live. 6:30 p.m. At Herndon Town Green, Herndon. Popular free outdoor concert series returns to regular performances. This will be the 27th season for the concert series which is produced by the Herndon Chamber of Commerce.

Schedule

July 16 -- The Rockets;
 July 23 -- Herr Metal + Dr FU;
 July 30 -- Kristen and the Noise;
 Aug 6 -- Social Call;
 Aug 13 -- It’s All Good;
 Aug 20 -- JunkFood;
 Aug 27 -- All-Star Band;
 Sept 3 -- Shake the Room;
 Sept 10 -- keeton + 8 Track Jones;
 Sept 17 -- The Reflex;
 Sept 24 -- Screaming Mönkeys.

SATURDAY/JULY 17

Vienna Multicultural Festival. 2-7:30 p.m. At Historic Church Street, Vienna. The 2021 Vienna Multicultural Festival will close out the Commonwealth of Virginia’s inaugural Liberty Amendment Month with a day-long bevy of performers, interactive activities, crafts, food, and vendors that celebrate the diverse cultures and communities represented across Northern Virginia. For a performer

schedule, go to vienna.gov/liberty and click on ‘Vienna Multicultural Festival’

SUNDAY/JULY 18

Inside the KGB. 2-3:30 p.m. Zoom event. Sponsored by The Cold War Museum, 1734 Farm Station Road, Warrenton. You Want Your Brightest People Guarding Your Secrets. But What If Those Secrets Show That Your System Is Corrupt? Your Brightest People Are Going to See That Best And Hate It the Most. Cost is \$20. Visit the website: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/tower-of-secrets-inside-the-kgb-and-how-we-escaped-to-the-west-tickets-146651144521>

SUNDAY/JULY 18

Summer Sunday Concerts in the Park. 5 p.m. At McLean Central Park Gazebo 1468 Dolley Madison Blvd., McLean. Sunday, July 18 -- The Sensational Soul Cruisers: A Tribute to Motown. Sunday, July 25 -- Nashville Girls Night Out.

TUESDAY/JULY 20

Talk with Bethanne Patrick. 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. A Great Falls Senior Center Zoom Event. Bethanne Patrick, writer, author and journalist, is above all a reader, one who has built her career on talking and writing about books. Whether she’s recommending a great book, interviewing a novelist or promoting reading online, Bethanne covers both the creative and digital side of the publishing industry. In 2009, she founded the popular #FridayReads hashtag under the Twitter handle @TheBookMaven. The weekly #FridayReads conversation, which peaks on Fridays but runs 24/7, attracts thousands of readers around the world. Bethanne writes for the Washington Post on “10 Books to read in x month”. If you would like a link to the event via Zoom, contact Mary Jo Fox, by July 16th, at mjwfx1491@gmail.com.

SUNDAY/JULY 25

Becoming a New Human. 2-4 p.m. Via Zoom. Humanity is in the middle of the biggest change in the history of the planet—a shift towards a new humanity and world. Futurist John Petersen will provide a detailed process for preparing oneself for this epic transition. Cost: \$11. Visit the website: <https://www.meetup.com/IANDS-Northern-Virginia/events/279013336/>

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Time to Kill



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

(Again, not a cancer column. Given the title, it would be a pretty gruesome reference to my life in the cancer world if it were.)

No. Not even close to a cancer column. But I am writing about a similar mind-numbing experience. However, this experience has nothing to do with disease/dying. Instead, it has to do with the effort, patience and excruciating lack of success in attempting to contact, meaning speaking to an actual person, at the Internal Revenue Service and/or at the Social Security Administration. The phone numbers you’re “googled” to call are the opposite of hot lines. They are frigid. Almost too cold to tolerate, but since your financial life expectancy may be at risk, somehow you have to hold on for dear life. Or else pay, or rather be unable to pay, the consequences.

So I’m on hold for 14 minutes and counting, sort of. More like listening to some unrecognizable instrumental between looped messages that say (A) You’re still on hold and (B) They haven’t forgotten you and your call will be answered in the order in which it was received. (Actually, you’re hoping they remember you.) Unfortunately, you have no choice but to hold on. The answers you seek are only found at these places/numbers and unless you go to the source, you’ll be barking up the wrong tree and/or not squeaking the right wheel. I’m fairly certain that if you don’t call them, they’re unlikely to call - back, or forward, especially if the reason for my two calls is to secure money coming to me instead of negotiating how I’m planning to pay them. So sit tight and be brave - and be near a bathroom to make sure nature’s call doesn’t interrupt your interminable wait on hold and/or be sure there are enough bars on your phone so a draining battery doesn’t end your pursuit.

However, presuming the time it will take to speak to someone to be hours, not minutes, it can be an opportunity to while away your wait by multi-tasking and have the music offered up for your listening pleasure to serve as a kind of white noise as you go about some other personal business. In short, you can get things done rather than become increasingly frustrated that you’re stuck by the phone accomplishing nothing. But you have to prepare and anticipate. This wait is not going to be a pleasurable experience. It’s a means to an end, hopefully a rewarding one, but hardly one that’s guaranteed.

If you can only talk yourself into realizing how good you’ll feel once this phone task is completed. Roloids has nothing on the relief you’ll feel when you’re finished with this day’s work (almost literally). Moreover, knowing you don’t have to call them back tomorrow is nearly motivation enough. Crossing this task off your to-do list free’s up not only time but mental space, as well. It’s almost as if you’ve given your life back, at least for a few hours, anyway.

As I sit and continue to write this column, it is 38 minutes since I began this exercise in time utilization. And it’s just now happened, a representative from the Social Security Administration has just interrupted the music loop and offered their assistance. Let me get my bearings and organize my thoughts so I’m clear in what I’m saying. I don’t want to have to make this call again. I already have once before. I have called previously and after telling my tale, was put on hold while the operator researched my claim only to be disconnected when the operator returned to address my question. But this time, there was no disconnect. I received my answer in a reasonably timely manner and off I now go into the rest of my day. Next up: the IRS. Do I dare test my limits and call them on the same day as I called Social Security or do I reward myself and take a well-deserved break? Either way, it’s one down and one to go. I think I’ll call tomorrow. I don’t feel like testing my patience yet again, and besides, I’m finished with this real-time column.

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



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