

# CONNECTION

Reston ♦ Oak Hill Herndon ♦ Chantilly ♦ CENTRE VIEW

Turtle Recall spends the summer night in performance at FNL! held July 9, 2021.

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## NEWS

### Food For Neighbors Celebrates Five Years of Partnership with Great Harvest Bread Company

One of Food For Neighbors' oldest partners, Great Harvest Bread Company is known for its scrumptious breads and sweets as well as for its commitment to community service. In celebration of this community spirit, Food For Neighbors presented owner Ken Marter with a plaque for display in his Herndon store. "I love having such a generous, long-term community partner," said Food For Neighbors Co-founder Karen Joseph, who said that the partnership began in early 2017.

At that time, then Herndon High School student Tiffany Nguyen, an avid Food For Neighbors volunteer, approached Marter about supporting the new nonprofit. Marter, who had just purchased Great Harvest, did not hesitate. Since then, the local favorite has been collecting monetary gifts for the nonprofit as well as donating a variety of breads for distribution to Herndon High School students when they receive their weekly supplemental food.

Marter has stores in Herndon, Vienna, and Ashburn. Great Harvest also participates in several farmers markets: Wednesdays at St. John Neumann Catholic Community in Reston, Thursdays at The Boro in Tysons Corner, Saturdays at the Vienna Community Center in Vienna as well as at One Loudoun in Ashburn, and Sundays at the Brambleton Town Center in Ashburn. <http://darngoodbread.com/farmer-s-markets>



PHOTO BY ROBERT MAXWELL

Karen Joseph, Cofounder of Food For Neighbors, presents Great Harvest Bread Company owner Ken Marter with a plaque in recognition of his company's support for the past five years.

Thanks to the generosity of Great Harvest Bread Company, other local organizations, and enthusiastic volunteers, Food For Neighbors now provides weekly nutrition to students in 23 middle and high schools in Fairfax and Loudoun counties. The five-year-old nonprofit has over 1,500 households donating food and over 1,000 volunteers collecting, sorting, packing, and distributing it. Food For Neighbors welcomes new food donors and business partners. To learn more, visit <https://www.foodforneighbors.org/> or contact Renee Maxwell at 703-475-4933.

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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 philoso-

phy 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.

## Returning to New Normal after the Covid-19 Pandemic

BY JOHN LOVAAS  
COMMUNITY ACTIVIST AND  
FOUNDER OF RESTON FARMERS MARKET

INDEPENDENT PROGRESSIVE

Sometimes I find it tough to come up with a column which brings good news. There is so much negativity out there right now, and some say that I tend to be pessimistic in any case, thus making my task more difficult. So, I've decided to look at the Covid 19 pandemic then and now, and the transition to a new normal.

Remember when we first got the news of a new virus, possibly arising from animals in an outdoor market in Wuhan, China? U.S. public health experts, like Dr. Anthony Fauci, warned the new virus, Covid 19, would become a pandemic. (Never mind that our President said no way, not to worry, and would proceed to politicize the pandemic until he was removed by the voters!) The CDC told us all not to congregate, to social distance from others to avoid catching the airborne virus, and to wash our hands frequently. Initially, CDC said masks weren't needed- which I found curious since the virus was transmitted as mist through the air. However, as the virus spread like wildfire, deaths soared worldwide, including right here, and scientists learned more, the guidance on masks changed sharply. Lockdowns became the order of the day. Toilet paper and hand sanitizers disappeared from store shelves, and were rationed. In an effort to keep people from close contact and breathing the same air, stores, restaurants and businesses in general closed, as did offices. Critically, schools also closed. Doing things virtually became the norm, including for schools

ill prepared for the change.

Shopping at stores was a chore. For example, Fran and I shopped at Trader Joe's weekly, arriving at 7:30 a.m. in order to stand in a special seniors' line to wait as others left the store before we could enter.

The Reston Farmers Market, sponsored by Fairfax County, was barely allowed to open, and then only with very strict Covid 19 protocols in place.

Most of us thought lockdowns would last weeks or perhaps a few months. Actually, they lasted many months and over a year in some places. Only in recent weeks has our region reopened. But what a liberating experience it has been!

Isn't it enjoyable to see people you've not seen for many months-- neighbors and even family members! At the Reston Farmers Market, we are now seeing many people whom we'd not seen in over a year. These are folks who stayed away from the Market fearing the presence of scores of people despite their being outdoors, socially distanced and masked (nearly 100 percent). When we opened on May 1, 2021 I was amazed at the turnout and joyous spirit of liberation, even though masks were required for a few weeks. There has been a lot of friendly banter about how people have changed since their faces were last seen! For better or worse!

It's been like starting over in some cases. We've also experienced sadness on several occasions when people we'd known as a husband or wife for years appeared alone at a Saturday



PHOTO BY JOHN LOVAAS

Saturday, July 10 was near perfect, temps in low-mid 70s with a gentle breeze. We're at the peak of our season, an amazing array of veggies, fruits, baked goodies, flowers, meats, dairy, seafood & more! The combination brought out a continual flow of happy shoppers, perhaps 2,500 or more, to the Reston Farmers Market.

market, explaining that their wives or husbands had died in the many months since last we saw them. In these cases, words have been inadequate to express our surprise and a great sadness for their loss and grief.

Then there is the one positive dimension of the Covid 19 pandemic period that I suspect we all miss. That is the dramatically reduced traffic on our roads, especially the main arteries which resembled parking lots during non-pandemic rush hours! Yet, even this transportation downside has a silver lining. Metrorail's Silver Line, also a casualty of the pandemic, is restoring full service to and from Reston this week!

Enjoy your liberation, but stay safe. See you at the Reston Farmers Market!



PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION



Friday Night Live! returns for its 29th season kick-off production on July 9, featuring the band Turtle Recall of Reston. The last time music from popular local bands and acts from the east coast rocked the Herndon Town Green was nearly two years ago, Aug. 23, 2019.



No words needed. FNL! returns to Herndon. Sitting tight and eating pizza - Brody, 8. Stretched out in the evening summer sun munching a breadstick and listening to the rock and roll covers mashed in a medley. - Finley, 4.

# Friday Night Live! Opens At Last

So missed and so glad it's back.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

Friday Night Live! prepared to open on the Herndon Town Green for its 29th season on Friday, July 9, ready to feature an evening of nonstop, party time medleys and mashups, a little something for everyone by Turtle Recall. The local band met at South Lakes High School in the late 90s and became, as musician John Currie-Hester of Reston said, a nonstop action variety.

"It's been a while since we've been here," said Doug Downer, introducing the evening event.

He reminded folks that FNL! collects tips that go to Herndon High School all-night grad party and after-prom events, as well as tips for other community organizations. "We're all really excited, and it has been way, way too long," Downer said. The 2021 season of Friday Night Live! will run through Sept. 24, presented from 6:30-10 p.m. every Friday, on the Herndon Town Green. The volunteer-run events are free and open to the public, produced by the Herndon Chamber of Commerce with the help of the Town of Herndon. The last time FNL! featured a performance on the Town Green was 2019.

Title Sponsor Volkswagen Group of America returned. "They've been a great supporter, and we are very happy to have them back this year," Downer said.



Barbara Saccente (left) and her husband Warren (center) pose with Herndon Town Councilmember Signe Friedrichs, the trio ready to hear Turtle Recall perform. "I'm so happy to be back to FNL!. We have so much fun here. I love live music," Barbara said.



(From left) "Summer is better with FNL!" - Natalie Evans; "We are so excited to be back for our first FNL! of the year"- Erin Evans; "My first time at a live event in Herndon, and it's a blast" - Reagan Harrison.



"Loving being back at Friday Night Live" - Connee Chandler with Chet Hall.



Baby Eliza Gray Thompson, 8 months at her first FNL! with her mom, Carrie, and dad Logan. "I've been coming to FNL! since going to Herndon High over fifteen years ago. Patiently waiting for FNL! to be back."- Carrie.

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



PHOTO COURTESY OF FCPS

# Area Teen Shines on National Stage

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

**A**kshita 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.

"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 ultimately 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."

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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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