

How Safe Are Older Buildings in Fairfax County?

Supervisors address construction and maintenance concerns in the wake of the Surfside Condominium collapse in Florida.

BY KEN MOORE
THE CONNECTION

A recertification program for older buildings does not currently exist under the Virginia Uniform State-wide Building Code, said Chairman Jeff McKay. And the June 24 tragedy in Surfside, Fla. involving a collapsing condominium building has heightened concern.

"This hit incredibly close to home for me. Many of you may remember about five and a half years ago, River Towers potentially was another Surfside," said Mount Vernon Supervisor Dan Storck at the Board of Supervisors meeting last Tuesday, July 13, 2021.

Storck described pillars of the Mount Vernon condominium moving two to three inches, possibly due to rusting of supports of the building close to the Potomac River.

"When the column slipped about two or three inches, if it had kept going, you clearly would have had something similar," said Storck. "Fortunately, it held or we would have had, I would say potentially 40 to 50 deaths, because there were people in those rooms at the time and clearly were impacted by what had occurred."

Fairfax County firefighters evacuated 400 residents from one of three River Towers condo buildings that shook on a Sunday afternoon in October 2016. Approximately 180 condos were damaged and 32 had "severe damage" that Fire and Rescue Services called "uninhabitable."

"You can imagine what the fallout was from that and the meetings that occurred in the community and the HOA," said Storck. "They were very difficult meetings."



River Towers.

"It was a very expensive process," he said.

THE BOARD requested county staff "investigate what current resources and capabilities exist for voluntary inspections of aging buildings to enhance safety, and what is possible for the county to do should more resources in the future be identified."

The Board unanimously approved the motion, raised by McKay and Sully Supervisor Kathy Smith.

In Virginia, "during construction and prior to occupancy, the inspections process is thorough and conducted with the utmost caution. After occupancy, in accordance with the Virginia Maintenance Code, buildings must be proactively maintained by the property owners to ensure their continued safety for our residents," according to Smith and McKay.

"This is not something theoretical, it's not something that we should think about, this is something we absolutely need to address and move forward," said Storck.

"With a nationwide turn to the importance of well-maintained infrastructure, we have an opportunity to highlight the importance of routine building maintenance and verification of the structural integrity of our aging buildings," said McKay.

MCKAY DIRECTED county staff to what options exist locally and at the state level under the existing Virginia Maintenance Code to ensure buildings are maintained.

"I request that County staff report back to a Land Use Policy Committee meeting in the last quarter of 2021," said McKay.

SEE HOW SAFE, ON PAGE 12

Blazing a Trail Aces' Hammond lone female Ripken League coach.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Jennifer Hammond may be the new kid on the block when it comes to the coaching staff of the Alexandria Aces but she is no stranger to a baseball field. The Alexandria native is well known as a player and coach throughout the region and as the Cal Ripken Collegiate Baseball League begins its playoffs, she is blazing a trail as the league's lone female baseball coach.

"Unfortunately, it is still a rarity to see females coaching baseball," said Hammond during the team's July 14 practice at Frank Mann Field. "I think that some of the players were a little unsure at first but they have been very respectful and have come to recognize that I've been around the game and have some knowledge of the sport."

In her first season with the Aces, Ham-



Alexandria Aces pitching coach Jennifer Hammond, the only female coach in the Cal Ripken Collegiate Baseball League, has helped lead the team into second place in the standings. Playoffs run July 24-31.

JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

mond has helped lead the team to second place in the standings as they head into the playoffs, which run July 24-31.

Hammond grew up playing fastpitch softball in the Northern Virginia area but baseball was her first love. After planning to play softball in college, she instead jumped at the chance to play baseball after discovering the Eastern Women's Baseball Conference, an all-women's baseball league. She spent her summers playing with their DC Thunder tournament team, traveling around the country playing with and against the best women's players in the United States and Canada.

"I grew up playing softball," Hammond said. "I was a girl, therefore there was no choice — girls played softball, boys played baseball. It's just what you did. But the EWBC changed everything. For the first time in my life I actually got to play baseball and

I loved it."

Hammond continues to participate as a player/coach with the EWBC/DC Thunder and with several area men's leagues. She recently completed her seventh season as a high school baseball coach in Fairfax County. After spending five years at Falls Church High School as the Junior Varsity Associate Head Coach and a member of the Varsity Staff, she moved on to Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology where she took on the role of Varsity Associate Head Coach and Catching Specialist.

"Jen has exceeded expectations," said Aces head coach Chris Berset. "You never know how it's going to be with a woman going into a male world, especially with college kids. Are they going to accept her? Will she have a voice that is listened to? She was able to capture that and the boys respect her. It's

SEE BLAZING A TRAIL, ON PAGE 12



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Reporter's Notebook

Acting On a Tip Leads Deep in the Woods.

BY MIKE SALMON
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

In today's fast-paced communications world, a news tip shouldn't be ignored, especially when it comes to something in Mount Vernon that's remained a question. This was the case with any remaining traces of the old electric trolley that ran between Old Town and the Mount Vernon Plantation over 125 years ago.

This trolley line was built in 1892 and operated on the land that is now the George Washington Memorial Parkway, and ran between Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. and Old Town from 1892 to 1932. There is no sign of the trolley left, and when the investigative story was run in the Mount Vernon Gazette last year, this reporter wore out his gumshoes trying to find an old rail, station remnants or a resident along this corridor that dug some-

thing up in the backyard vegetable garden, but no luck.

Then the tip came in.

According to the source, there were the remnants of a station in the woods off the Mount Vernon Bike Trail just south of Morningside Lane, which empties into the parkway about four miles north of the plantation, north of Fort Hunt. Just get on the trail at Morningside Lane, walk a bit south, he said, and look in the woods and you'll see these cement pillars that held up a platform – easy enough, it seemed.

Once on site, it was a different story. For one, the trail is on the east side of the parkway at Morningside Lane. There was a patch of woods here, so a hidden location for this structure was possible, but it was not to be found. Most of the residents along Ridgcrest Drive and West Boulevard Drive in this area had never heard of the trolley, and they were open to hearing about the story, but only at a distance.

After rummaging through the bushes and poison ivy, battling the underbrush for snakes, it was obvious it would take a stroke of extreme luck to find anything.



The supports have a mounting on top that seems like it would hold a rail in place.

Defeated, I jumped back on the southbound lanes of the parkway but decided at the last minute stop at Fort Hunt Park. Maybe one of the park police officers who ride around on horseback knew about it.



Outside one backyard is a property marker put in by the National Park Service.



Inside Fort Hunt Park, there are rail-like supports in a wooded area.

At first, the answer was no, check the website, and then talk to a local historian about it, but nothing here at the park. Then a light bulb went on – there's a weird, cement thing in the woods near the last parking lot, he said, and it might be what you are looking for.

So the gum shoes were put back on, and off I went.

Those woods were full of more poison ivy and snake hiding spots, but there they were four concrete pedestals with rail brackets that were bent over to secure a train rail, or so it seemed. So the train remnants are a reality. I snapped a few pictures, looked around for snakes, and forged on to the next one-hundred-year-old mystery.

Fairfax County Commits to Carbon Neutral Energy Use By 2040

Fairfax County committed July 13 to become carbon neutral by 2040 in its energy use for government operations, including buildings, facilities and transportation.

As pledged, the county will remove as much carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide from the atmosphere as emitted from its operations. Carbon dioxide accounts for about 80 percent of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions while methane and nitrous oxide collectively make up another 17 percent, according to the EPA.

To achieve this transformative goal, the Board of Supervisors adopted an updated Operational Energy Strategy on Tuesday. In concert, they issued a formal declaration, dubbed "Carbon Neutral Counties," that also encourages other local governments to take action to halt climate change.

TO BECOME CARBON NEUTRAL, the county pledged to meet specific targets to reduce energy use, generate or buy green energy and shift its fleet to non-carbon emitting buses and vehicles. These targets include:

Decrease total energy use from all existing county facilities by 25 percent by 2030 and 50 percent by 2040, as compared to the FY 2018 baseline.

Produce 25 percent of electricity use from renewable energy generation by 2030, and 50 percent by 2040, using FY 2018 as the baseline.

Achieve net-zero energy standards for all new buildings and major renovation projects greater than 10,000 occupied square feet, beginning planning and design in 2021 and beyond.

Transition Fairfax Connector's diesel buses, along with other county vehicles, to electric or other non-carbon emitting alternatives by 2035. By 2035, 99 percent of Connector bus fleet miles traveled will be made with non-carbon emitting vehicles.

End the purchase of diesel Fairfax Connector buses after FY2024 unless approved by the Board of Supervisors.

"This commitment to carbon neutrality is a critical step to slow



Dan Storck, Mt. Vernon District

climate change, and it extends our long-standing commitment to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions," said Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeff McKay. "As we confront this existential challenge, we all must act

with a true sense of urgency, and this is just one of the steps that the county is taking to meet this global crisis head on."

The carbon neutrality declaration commits signatories to the following three actions:

Being energy carbon neutral by 2040 while significantly reducing operational greenhouse gas emissions in the building and energy, transportation and solid waste sectors.

Urge federal and state lawmakers to provide incentives, requirements or other such measures to meet the carbon neutral goal.

Ensure equitable implementation of the goal so that no communities are disproportionately impacted by the transition to a carbon neutral economy, and all have access to the incentives that

may arise.

The declaration was jointly introduced at Tuesday's meeting by Mount Vernon District Supervisor Dan Storck, Mason District Supervisor Penny Gross and Chairman Jeff McKay.

"Climate change is a global concern, but it must be addressed at the local level if we are going to make real progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions," said Supervisor Dan Storck. "The Carbon Neutral Counties declaration formalizes our commitment to responsible, sustainable county operations, and encourages other counties to do the same. The power of this declaration lies in its potential to serve as a roadmap for others, to create real forward momentum."

Currently, there is no organized alliance for U.S. counties dedicated to carbon neutrality, although some have independently made their own public pledges. The new declaration creates an opportunity for counties to formally join together in this goal.

FAIRFAX COUNTY'S MOVE to carbon neutrality resulted from the work by its Joint Environmental

Task Force which was created by the Board of Supervisors and School Board. The group's final report laid out the transformational goal to become carbon neutral by 2040, along with supporting recommendations on energy, transportation, waste management and recycling and workforce development.

The School Board is anticipated to consider these carbon neutrality goals at its July 15 meeting.

"The actions adopted today are additional steps forward in our joint effort with the School Board to reach the goals supported by the community," said Mason District Supervisor Penny Gross who sat on the task force's executive board.

While the task force included two representatives each from the Board of Supervisors and School Board, the majority of the group's 13 members were county residents. It was created to engage the community on how the county and schools can work collaboratively to take on climate change and environmental sustainability.

For more information, visit the Fairfax County Office of Energy and Environmental Coordination's webpages.

FCPS Superintendent to Depart at End of Next School Year

BY MERCIA HOBSON
GAZETTE PACKET

Dr. Scott Brabrand, Superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools, announced on a YouTube video released Thursday, July 15, 2021, that he is leaving FCPS at the end of the next year, consistent with his contract. Brabrand gave no reason why he was stepping down after almost 30 years intermittently with the division. He said that through “caring connections, we make a lasting impact on our students, our community, and each other.”

During its Thursday, July 15 Meeting, the School Board considered authorizing the Request for Proposal for the Superintendent Search Firm to be released no later than 5 p.m. on July 19, 2021. Vice-Chair Rachna Sizemore Heizer thanked Dr. Brabrand for his service. “I thank you for your big heart and your hard work and your love for our system. And for your grace. We are going to miss you,” Sizemore Heizer said.

School Board representative Karen Corbett-Sanders (Mount Vernon) provided insight into the process. She said that it takes quite a long time to hire a superintendent, and the Board would obtain the services of an executive search firm. She added that the Board was “casting a wider net” in its search, expanding it to professionals in K-12 and college environments. In addition, the Board would be asking for specific skills, including being able to engage in multiple languages with the community. There would be a “robust community engagement process” as the Board developed the Profile of a Superintendent. The Board would engage the community in how best to vet potential candidates.

“So, this is really the beginning of the process,” Corbett-Sanders said.

The Board unanimously approved the resolution.

The Fairfax County School Board appointed Brabrand as Superintendent of Schools on June 8, 2017. Brabrand changed careers to become a teacher after being inspired by volunteer work in the schools. He began his career in FCPS as a social studies teacher in 1994. He served as an assistant principal at Herndon High and an associate principal at Lake Braddock Secondary School before being named principal at Fairfax High School in 2005. In 2009, Brabrand was promoted to Cluster Assistant Superintendent. Brabrand spent five years as Superintendent of Lynchburg City Schools before returning to head FCPS.

School Board Elects New Chair and Vice-Chair

Fairfax County School Board unanimously elected Stella Pekarsky (Sully) as Board Chair. Before the vote, Megan McLaughlin (Braddock) said Pekarsky would be “stellar” in the role because of her willingness to “always presume positive intentions, to always think broadly ... [and] to make [the Board] a safe place ... to share points of view.” Following the vote, Chair Pekarsky said she hoped the Board would collectively center its efforts on “building community over chaos on the board.”

The Board unanimously elected Rachna



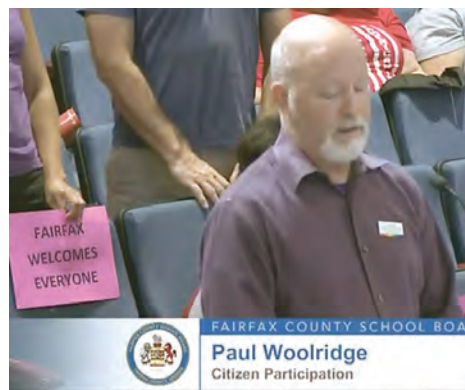
Fairfax County School Board Meeting in session 07-15-2021.



Scott Brabrand
Division Superintendent
Fairfax County School Board Superintendent Dr. Scott Brabrand announces he is leaving at the end of the next year.



Rachna Sizemore Heizer
Vice-Chair, Member-at-Large
Fairfax County School Board Vice-Chair Rachna Sizemore Heizer (Member-at-Large).



Paul Woolridge
Citizen Participation
Speaker Paul Woodbridge, proud of the FCSB's progress in promoting affirmative support and the rights of LGBTQ individuals.

Sizemore Heizer (at-Large) as Vice-Chair. Elaine Tholen (Dranesville) said Sizemore Heizer's expertise in special education would be helpful as the Board continued its audit of special education services.

School Board Adopts 2021-22 Student Rights and Responsibilities, Redefined

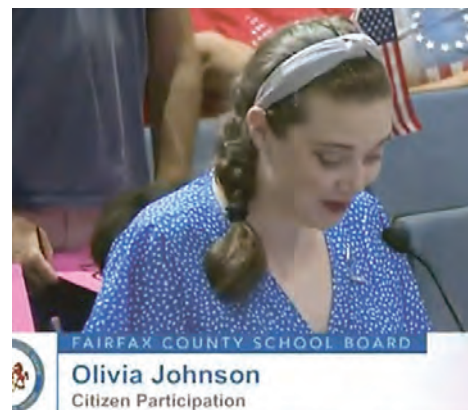
With the board poised to take recommend-



Stella Pekarsky
Sully District
Fairfax County School Board Chair, Stella Pekarsky (Sully District).



Karl Frisch
Providence District
Fairfax County School Board Member Karl Frisch (Providence District)



Olivia Johnson
Citizen Participation
Speaker Olivia Johnson, parent of a gender-diverse child.

ed action to adopt Regulation 2601.34P, Student Rights and Responsibilities, Paul Woodbridge provided comment. Woodbridge said he is the parent of two FCPS graduates, gay and trans, and proud of the school board's progress in promoting affirmative support and the rights of LGBTQ individuals. He especially commended the progress the board

made on updating non-discrimination policies and adopting the state-mandated guidelines for supporting transgender and non-binary students.

Woodbridge said his son was denied bathroom access and was asked inappropriate questions about his anatomy. His son took it upon himself to educate school administrators on how to support him and his needs. “No kid should have to play that role,” said Woodbridge.

Speaker Olivia Johnson, a parent of a gender-diverse child, said, “I have watched in horror as hate groups gather around Virginia to attack their gender-diverse kids and families.” She said transgender children are in danger of self-harm and suicide. “The best way to support them and ... prevent suicide in these kids is to affirm them. ... The only thing we are doing is affirming our children's pronouns, their names and allowing them to dress and express in a way that feels authentic.”

School Board Member Karl Frisch, the Board's Providence District representative and first openly LGBTQ member, sponsored the motion. He said like the school division, the changes to Student Rights and Responsibilities were a work in progress when it came to increasing equity and achieving the strategic objective “of seeing every child by name and by need.”

“In the face of alarming discipline disparities experienced by students of color and with special needs,” work had been done to make Student Rights and Responsibilities “less biased and punitive and more focused on restorative justice.”

“That spirit of progress continues in this revised document,” Frisch said.

The document identifies several rights for gender-expansive and transgender students. “Tonight's vote will not sweep away the pain and hurt you have experienced at the hands of careless peers or adults who should know better, but the changes we approve in this new Student Rights and Responsibilities document demonstrates our commitment to your success and safety in Fairfax County Public Schools,” Frisch said. “They are long overdue.”

The Fairfax County School Board unanimously adopted the 68-page updated School Rights and Responsibilities, Regulation 2601.35P [https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/fairfax/Board.nsf/files/C4XRBV6CB97B/\\$-file/R2601.34P%20CLEAN_WS_CHANGES_MADE%20JULY%2015%20%202021.3.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/fairfax/Board.nsf/files/C4XRBV6CB97B/$-file/R2601.34P%20CLEAN_WS_CHANGES_MADE%20JULY%2015%20%202021.3.pdf) The regulation explains expectations for student behavior, parent engagement, and adult responses.

Highlighting some changes as stated in the regulation: “[It] expanded language regarding School Resource Officers (SROs) and included specific examples of behaviors of concern... added language regarding School Resource Officers that further defined safety concern and harm [and] replaced “should” with “shall” regarding FCPS administrators questioning students for the purpose of student discipline.”

Arlington and Alexandria public schools, as well as Montgomery County, Md., have removed police from schools and defunded the School Resource Officer programs.

POLICE BRIEFS

Fairfax Officer Critically Wounds Woman in Group Home

On Monday, July 19, officers were called to a home in the 8000 block of Gosport Lane, in Springfield, a group home close to Ravensworth Elementary School.

Shortly before 5:30 p.m. on Monday, a 911 call describing someone acting erratically, throwing things and threatening to harm herself and the other occupants of the group home, Chief Kevin Davis said in a briefing.

This group home in Springfield is known to the Fairfax County Police Department, he said, who have responded to other 911 calls there.

The two officers arrived to a chaotic scene, and entered through the back door. "They were confronted and advanced upon by a woman with a large knife," Davis said.

"One of the two Fairfax County officers discharged his firearm and struck the suspect in the abdomen," Davis said. "The suspect was given immediate first aid by the two Fairfax County officers, and is being treated at a local hospital in critical condition right now."

Both police officers had their body cameras activated. The woman who was shot was 30 years old. There were four people in the house at the time, including a caregiver who was the one who called 911 looking for help. No police officers were injured, nor were other occupants of the group home.

In an update on Wednesday, police said the 30-year-old Springfield woman is in custody and remains hospitalized.

Davis answered a question from a reporter at the scene about whether the police had less lethal weapons at the time by repeating the assertion that the woman was advancing with the large knife and refusing to stop.

Davis declined to name the officers involved; he said the officer who shot the woman was a veteran officer. He said the body camera footage would be released in "due time." Police said in a Wednesday update that the name of the officer will be released within 10 days, unless the Chief of Police determines there is a credible threat to the safety of those involved or if additional time is required to thoroughly complete the risk assessment process.

In the Wednesday update, police said the officer involved



FCPD Police Chief Kevin Davis near the group home where an officer shot and critically wounded a resident.

is a 14-year veteran who is assigned to the Special Operations Division. The officer has been placed on a restricted duty status pending the outcome of the criminal and administrative investigation.

A criminal investigation into the use of force is being conducted by the Major Crimes Bureau. Police will release footage from the Body-Worn Camera and the 911 call for service "when it no longer jeopardizes the integrity of the investigation."

The Internal Affairs Bureau will conduct an administrative investigation, along with an independent review by the Independent Police Auditor.

All information provided in this release is based on preliminary investigative findings and may be subject to revision as the investigation progresses.

National Night Out Is Aug. 3

On Tuesday, Aug. 3, is National Night Out. This annual event brings neighborhoods and law enforcement together to send the message that we are all working together to prevent crime and keep com-

SEE FAIRFAX OFFICER, PAGE 12



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Alex/Engleside Village **\$404,900**
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If you are looking for a beautifully maintained Cape Cod just bursting w/charm & perfect for a starter home, here it is!! 3BR, 1BA, double pane windows, high quality wall to wall carpet & a lovely, & well-maintained kitchen & bath. If you have small children, you can walk them next door to Woodlawn Elementary. You can sit out on your swing on your covered porch & imagine how your Great Grand Parents spent a good portion of their evenings years ago. Location- Lot- Charm & well maintained, will all come to mind as you tour this property. Shopping & restaurants are readily available up & down Route 1-Old Town Alexandria is 15 minutes (N), Ft. Belvoir 5 minutes (S), National Airport 25-28 minutes (N) & the Pentagon/D.C. 30 minutes (N). A large .32A lot w/mature trees & a beautiful backyard w/an original stone exterior FPL & a 3-person swing are inviting you to relax or entertain. The garage is detached & offers plenty of room for your car & tools. A 12x12 shed will handle your lawn equipment. Very few homes left in Mt. Vernon for <\$450K. This is ONE!



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Redistricting Hearing at GMU

Virginia Redistricting Commission will hold an in-person public hearing to solicit public comment on the drawing of state and congressional legislative districts for the Northern Virginia Region on Tuesday, July 27, 2021, at p.m. in Dewberry Hall at George Mason University in Fairfax. Note that Dewberry Hall is inside the Johnson Center.

These hearings are a vital part of this historic redistricting process. Public input could have a real impact on the legislative maps Virginians will be living under for the next decade. <https://virginiaredistricting.org/PageReader.aspx?page=Hearings>

To speak in person, you'll need to register on-site between 3 - 5 pm on July 27.

To speak remotely, you'll need to register online 24 hours in advance. Registration closes July 26 at 4 p.m. Comments will be limited to three minutes. <https://virginiaredistricting.org>

Click here to view the VRC's Public Participation Guidelines.

Not sure which region you're in? Check this map to be sure. <https://demographics.coopercenter.org/virginia-regions>

To see the sharable hearing flyer, click <https://virginiaredistricting.org/2021/Data/public%20hearings/072721HearingFlyer.pdf?emci=f4af0c05-72e6-eb11-a7ad-501ac57b8fa7&emdi=da24c7cd-77e6-eb11-a7ad-501ac57b8fa7&ceid=2310554>

For those who are unable to attend, the hearing will be live streamed and archived online. To watch the livestream see <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCm3rp8xB4H2zWbasznvZ5Fw>

There will also be virtual hearings to provide opportunities for those unable to attend in person.

For more information, go to <https://virginiaredistricting.org>

Closing the Digital Divide

Federal funds make this possible by 2024.

BY DEL. PAUL KRIZEK

Last Friday, Governor Northam announced good news for Virginia: \$700 million in American Rescue Plan Funding will be invested to achieve universal broadband in the Commonwealth by 2024! This brings us full broadband access four years ahead of the schedule set by Northam's previous goal: universal broadband by 2028. With this announcement, Virginia is now poised to become one of the first states in the nation to achieve universal broadband service.

What is broadband and why is it so critical?

Broadband is defined as high-speed internet access. It is different from dial-up internet in that it provides a higher speed of data transmission, allowing for higher quality transmissions like video conferencing. Broadband also does not block phone lines, and there is no need to reconnect each time you need to use the internet. Broadband provides high-speed internet access through multiple types of technologies including fiber optics, wireless, cable, DSL

(Digital Subscriber Line), and satellite.

In Virginia, there are an estimated 233,500 unconnected homes and businesses. In our modern world, having access to the internet is as much a necessity as utilities like electricity, water, and sewage; and, without it rural communities are being left behind. Frankly, it is as stark as this -- that the absence of broadband in a community means the absence of jobs.

Access to broadband allows communities to flourish. Communities are better able to retain and attract jobs. Students have better educational opportunities. Residents gain better access to health-care with telemedicine options. Overall, opportunity can be equally distributed regardless of where someone lives. We cannot continue to allow rural communities to be left behind. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, it became even more clear how disadvantaged rural communities were compared to those with adequate broadband access.



Krizek

Not just looking at this situation through an equity lens, the economic gains of universal broadband would be significant. A 2019 study done by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Amazon showed that universal broadband access would increase Virginia's annual sales by \$2.24 billion and add over 9,000 jobs. A 2019 USDA study revealed that universal broadband would increase total agriculture production by 18%, or \$16.3 billion in Virginia's agriculture and forestry output. Agriculture is our number one industry in Virginia with an economic impact of over \$91 billion dollars and 334,000 jobs!

Thankfully, because the Governor has diligently worked with us in the General Assembly and service providers over the last several years to prioritize this issue through the very successful Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI), it will not take long to get Virginia over the finish line with this dramatic injection of federal funds. In 2019, the Governor and

the General Assembly established a pilot program that promotes collaboration between localities, electric utilities, and internet service providers to connect unserved areas to high-speed internet. In just two years of this pilot program, Virginia's utility companies have helped connect more than 13,000 homes and businesses across the Commonwealth. Earlier this year, Governor Northam signed bipartisan legislation that makes the pilot program permanent. Since 2018, when the VATI program got going, we have seen the digital divide cut in half with 140,000 Virginia homes and businesses connected across 44 localities.

In the upcoming special session beginning on Aug. 2, as we decide how to spend the \$4.3 billion in federal funds available to the Commonwealth, I look forward to doing my part as an Appropriator, and member of the Broadband Advisory Council, to ensure that the General Assembly approves and fully funds the Governor's proposal for universal broadband in order to close the digital divide. Our fellow Virginians should not wait any longer to get online.

Investments in Human Services Safety Net Make Us Stronger

Dear Editors,

As a once-in-a-century pandemic, the COVID pandemic produced impacts way beyond just its serious health impacts. We are still feeling the effects of the loss of jobs, supply bottlenecks, school shutdowns, and a surge in mental and physical health illnesses.

As a staff member of Good Shepherd Housing — a 47-year-old affordable housing and homeless services provider based along Richmond Highway — I watched these effects unfold in our community last spring. The effects

of the pandemic were swift and acute in many low-income neighborhoods along the Highway, where we provide our affordable housing and services.

Also, households impacted by the pandemic felt its effects in multiple and overlapping ways. When heads of households lost their jobs or work hours, their families were made more vulnerable in their housing. For renter families, they faced a greater chance of eviction for failing to pay rent.

At the same time, these families experienced unexpected health-

care and childcare expenses (e.g. while their children were doing at-home virtual learning), food shortages, and stress-related mental health issues, too. The pandemic had cascading impacts on the families.

What mattered was that the community and local government stepped up to help. In particular, Fairfax County human services agencies coordinated a strong response. Since March 2020, the County has secured six federal and other funding sources and disbursed \$100 million-plus to residents with federal COVID-related relief funds. The County assisted 10,000 households with emergency rental assistance.

At Good Shepherd Housing, we joined with other Fairfax County community-based organizations and nonprofits to help distribute these funds. We estimate that we helped over 600 households stay in their housing through the pandemic. It made a world of difference to so many struggling and at-risk households.

For years before the pandemic, Fairfax County had invested

in a strong human services safety net and its network of community-based providers (like Good Shepherd Housing). When the pandemic was upon us, the safety net was in place and functional. It made a difference in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable households and neighborhoods—and doing so quickly.

Also, Fairfax County has always

taken a coordinated intake approach for its residents. Through the County's Coordinated Services Planning ("CSP") agency, the County will assess the full needs of residents in crisis, whether their needs are for food, housing, utilities, rent, healthcare, or other community services (domestic violence support, etc). As I men-

SEE OPINION, PAGE 7

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A Connection Newspaper



OPINION

Investments in Human Services

FROM PAGE 6

tioned, the needs of residents impacted by COVID were deep and overlapping.

Finally, the County has built a network of stakeholders, providers and community-based organizations. This network is critical in reaching vulnerable residents most in need of assistance. Today, with the CDC eviction moratorium soon to be lifted, the County is reaching out to struggling households facing imminent eviction once the moratorium ends.

As we move toward reopening our economy, workplaces, schools and services, I hope we keep in mind some of the lessons of the pandemic. Above all, the year-over-year investments in our human services safety net matter. The investments strengthen the capacity of the County to respond to a crisis.

The investments will make sure that we can weather the next pandemic.

David Levine

President, Good Shepherd
Housing and Family Services



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Can Our Yards Save the Planet?

Plant native plants for pollinators, food for birds and more.

By Glenda C. Booth
Gazette Packet

When Tami Entabi moved into her Mount Vernon-area home in 2006, the backyard was a thick mass of intertwined English ivy. Today, to her delight, purple violets are spreading and the garden is abuzz with birds, bees, butterflies, moths and other insects from spring through fall.

Entabi removed most of the English ivy, an invasive plant, and wants the violets to take over. They support the great spangled fritillary butterfly and provide nectar plants for other pollinators. She's striving for blooms most of the year. She leaves the leaves and dead wood in her garden beds. Her goal is a woodland garden of native plants that supports native insects, birds and other wildlife.

Entabi and many others are trying to eliminate plants not native to the area. Non-native or invasive plants are plants introduced to an area intentionally or accidentally. Many spread rapidly and lack natural controls. They usually outcompete native plants, alter biological communities and degrade natural ecosystems. Some can cause economic harm.

Trouble Signs

The Earth is losing one to two percent of its insects every year, reported University of Connecticut entomologist David Wagner in January, a trend some call "the insect apocalypse." NatureServe scientists estimate that about one third of all U.S. species of animals and vascular plants are at risk of extinction. A 2020 World Wildlife Fund study found that of nearly 4,400 mammals, amphibians, birds, fish and reptile populations have dropped by 68 percent since 1970.

These studies are signaling that the way we are managing or failing to manage our natural resources is having serious consequences. Experts point to habitat loss and fragmentation, monocultures, invasive species, pesticides, herbicides, insecticides, climate change, light pollution and disease as contributing factors.

In suburbia, lawns and sprawling development have replaced most native biodiversity. Lawns cover 40 to 50 million acres of land in the United States, almost equivalent to all of the country's national parks, wrote Tik Root in the July 1 Washington Post. Lawns and turfgrass



Tami Entabi next to coral honeysuckle, a favorite of hummingbirds.

are the largest "crop" grown in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. And while the perfect green lawn may be an American icon, ecologically, it has very little habitat value.

To reverse the declines in insects, birds and other wildlife and to be better stewards of the environment, many gardeners today are turning to more natural landscaping approaches and native plants.

University of Delaware entomologist Dr. Doug Tallamy offers this: "We have allowed alien plants to replace natives all over the country. Our native animals and plants cannot adapt to this gross and completely unnatural manipulation of their environment in time to negate the consequences."

With his initiative called "Homegrown National Park," Dr. Tallamy argues that our national parks are too small and spread apart to preserve species to the levels needed, that people can restore habitat and the ecological health of our communities.

Examples: Mount Vernon Supervisor Dan Storck and volunteers converted part of the landscape around the Mount Vernon Government Center to native plants. He led an effort started in 2018 and adopted unanimously by the Board of Supervisors in 2020 to apply natural landscaping practices to county properties. Belle View Elementary School teachers created a native garden, outdoor classroom.

Pollinator Gardening

Pollinators include bees, beetles, butterflies, moths, other insects, birds and bats. When a pollinator carries pollen grains from the male anther of a flower to the female stigma of flowers of the same species and fertilizes it, pollination

results and the plant can produce seeds. Around 75 percent of all flowering plants depend on pollinators for fertilization, but many pollinator species are declining. "The main threat facing wild pollinators is loss of habitats," wrote Kathy Reshetiloff for the Bay Journal.

Some pollinators are generalists and can pollinate a variety of plant species, but others are highly specialized. Many pollinators evolved to emerge when their plants are flowering. If the plants are not available, the pollinators cannot survive.

In Entabi's backyard, coreopsis plants attract skipper and fritillary butterflies. Hummingbirds probe coral honeysuckle blossoms. Luna moths visit the pignut hickory trees. Zebra swallowtail butterflies visit the pawpaw trees. Their caterpillars feed at night and spend the day in the leaf litter. Bees love the St. Johnswort. Many insects feed on the goldenrod. Woodpeckers excavate dead wood. Skinks hide out in brush piles. Where a big tree that came down left a big hole, Entabi's making a frog pond. "The soft bottom will be good for hibernating and the trunk will be part of pond and offer places to hide," she says.

Butterfly Gardening

Some people are planting native plants to support butterflies. "Selecting plants that will feed butterflies while also encouraging them to stick around for a while, laying eggs and creating a new generation of butterflies is your goal," advises the North American Butterfly Association's website. "To do this, you will need to choose plants that fall into two groups: nectar plants that will provide adult butterflies with



Tami Entabi explains that bees like the false indigo plant.



Violets now carpet her backyard.

energy and caterpillar food plants that will feed caterpillars. With careful selection from these two groups, your garden will provide for the entire life cycle of butterflies."

Some people are planting to specifically help monarch butterflies and support their migration to and



Bumblebee on an obedient plant

from Mexico. These orange and black butterflies, weighing one-fifth the weight of a penny, are the only butterfly species to regularly undertake a two-way migration, for some, a 3,000-mile trip over three generations. "This is one of the most extraordinary annual migrations on our planet," said monarch expert, the late Dr. Lincoln

Brower of Sweet Briar College.

Most butterfly caterpillars feed on specific plant species, called their host plant. Monarch butterfly caterpillars feed exclusively on milkweed leaves. Host plants generally are the plants on which butterflies lay eggs and their cat-



Monarch caterpillar on milkweed.



Eastern tiger swallowtail butterfly on fall phlox.



Buckeye butterfly on hyssop

terpillars eat. Without milkweed, monarch butterflies cannot complete their life cycle.

The American Horticultural Society's River Farm, Fort Belvoir and Burgundy Farm Country Day School have monarch butterfly gardens. The Martha Washington Library has a milkweed garden.

Tallamy urges people to "re-create" nature. For species in decline, he says, "Their only hope for a sustainable future is for us to inter-



Wasp on gray dogwood.



Bumblebee carrying pollen and feeding on milkweed blossoms.



Milkweed garden at the Martha Washington Library on Fort Hunt Road. Bellevue Elementary School is in the background, across the street.

Resources

Pollinator Gardening, www.pollinator.org; www.xerces.org/bringbackthepollinators
Butterfly Gardening, <http://nababutterfly.com/basics-of-butterfly-gardening/>
Guide to Native Plants for Northern Virginia, <https://www.plantnovanatives.org/>
Wildlife Habitat Gardens: Audubon at Home, www.audubonva.org,
<https://www.nwf.org/CertifiedWildlifeHabitat>;
Habitat at Home, <https://dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/habitat/>
"Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard," book By Douglas W. Tallamy

vene to right the wrongs that we have perpetrated. In order to let nature take its course, we must first

re-create nature."

Tami Entabi's backyard is a good example.

"On your own property you can make a difference," Entabi says. "It's exciting."



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NEWS

Combating Online Exploitation

Raj Parekh, Acting U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia (EDVA), launched “UnMasked,” a community-based educational outreach and prevention program in Virginia dedicated to raising awareness about the prevalence of online sexual exploitation involving children and young adults.

“Online predators target some of the most vulnerable members of our society and can cause a devastating impact on our communities and loved ones,” said Acting U.S. Attorney Raj Parekh. “The first step to fighting back is awareness — educating our youth and parents with information on how to prevent these crimes from happening.”

UnMasked is a multi-disciplinary partnership of local, state, federal, and non-profit stakeholders committed to raising awareness of threats and resources through education. The initiative provides a platform to educate middle school, high school, and college students, along with parents, teachers, and the broader community, about the potential dangers of the internet. UnMasked presentations will use real-life case examples of online sexual exploitation, as illustrated by law enforcement agents, prosecutors, and survivors of these crimes.

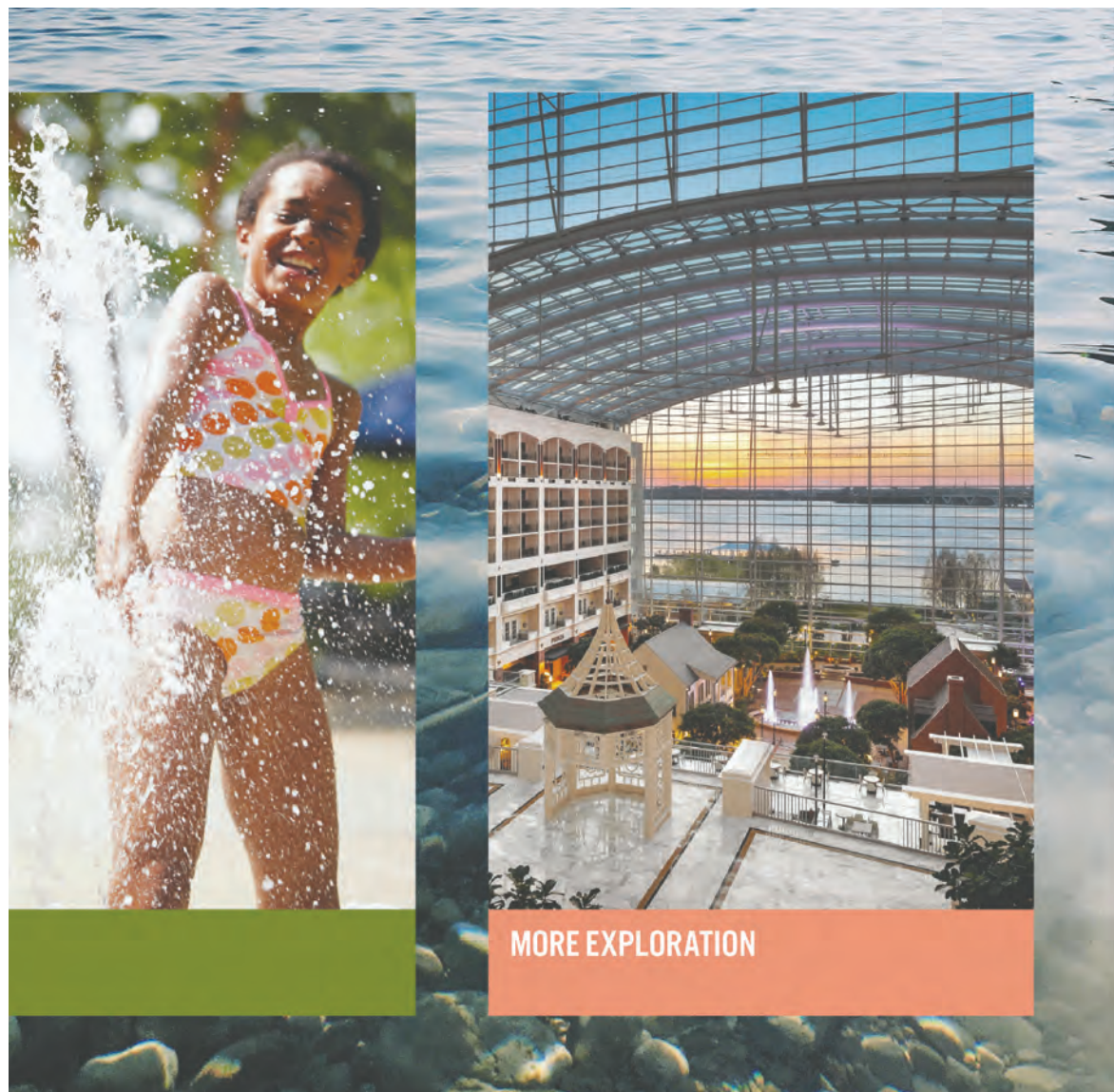
The UnMasked initiative will involve educational presentations at schools, colleges, and universities throughout the Eastern District of Virginia. The core curriculum is provided by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children’s (NCMEC) NetSmartz program. Participants and others in the audience will hear personal stories by real survivors, along with presentations from experts in the investigative, forensic,

and mental health fields. These events are set to begin during the 2021–2022 school year.

According to NCMEC, online exploitation exploded in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic as social isolation and online activity increased. NCMEC’s “CyberTipline” received more than 21.4 million reports of child sexual exploitation from electronic service providers in 2020, as well as over 303,000 reports of online sexual exploitation. This represents a 27% annual increase in reporting from electronic service providers, as well as a more than doubling in reports from the public.

According to NCMEC, online exploitation encompasses a broad range of offenses, including: online enticement of children for sexual acts, child sexual molestation, child sexual abuse material, child sex tourism, child sex trafficking, unsolicited obscene materials sent to a child, misleading domain names, and misleading words or digital images on the internet. Cyber exploitation often begins with perpetrators contacting potential victims through social media applications, video games, and websites, typically using false online profiles, and such conduct can involve both online sexual exploitation and in-person sexual abuse.

To report an incident involving online sexual exploitation, call 1-800-843-5678 or submit a report at report.cybertip.org. The CyberTipline is operated by NCMEC in partnership with the FBI and other law enforcement agencies. To request an UnMasked event at your school or organization, please contact EDVA’s Community Outreach Coordinator at USAVAE-UnMasked@usdoj.gov



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Summer Camp in Age of Climate Change

Increased safety protocols result from climate change-induced, extreme temperatures.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Some of the area's youngest aspiring thespians are spending part of their summer honing their craft at Arlington's Encore Stage & Studio's camps. Noticeably different this year than in past are new safety precautions that include mask mandates and protection from the heat.

"We've spent more time outdoors this summer because that is what parents requested," said Sara Duke, Executive Director, Encore Stage & Studio. "We've provided special training for our staff on heat safety and recognizing heat-related illnesses."

Heat safety protocols at Encore and other local camps have been revised to address not only a gradual reopening as the pandemic abates, but also the gradual increase in average temperatures partly the result of climate change.

"For sure it's causing huge extremes in weather," said Susan H.B. Agolini, Ph.D., Clare Boothe Luce Assistant Professor of Biology at Marymount University. Agolini just completed a heat mapping study as part of a team created by the Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges. "Camps have to remember hydration and be aware that extreme heat can exacerbate health issues like asthma."

Employees of camps run by the Fairfax County Park Authority are given daily reminders and video training. "We send out poster reminders for signs of heat-related illnesses and the need for frequent rest/shade breaks," said Judy Pedersen, Fairfax County Park Authority. "We send out YouTube clips for supervisors to use with staff as toolbox safety talks. We also send out reminders for camps to schedule air conditioning breaks indoors throughout the day whenever possible."

A traditional summer camp experience, which includes long days spent outdoors while slathered in sunscreen and armed with insect repellent, has been curtailed for some as a result of a hike in safety warnings for children. "As extreme heat is increasing in many regions throughout the United States, it's important to know how to prevent heat illness, and to identify and treat children who are affected," said Dr. Benjamin Schwartz, M.D. Director of Epidemiology and Population Health with the Fairfax County Health Department.

Training such as that given to camp workers at Encore and Fairfax County camps include information on how to recognize the signs of heat illnesses.

"Symptoms of heat exhaustion that campers and staff should recognize include an elevated body temperature, goose bumps, dizziness or weakness, headache, increased thirst, irritability, muscle cramps, or nausea and vomiting," said Schwartz. "If any of these symptoms occur, it's important to move to a cool place, loosen clothing, put cool, wet cloth on the skin and sip water. Call



PHOTO BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

As temperatures rise, so does camp counselor heat safety training and a focus on sun protection supplies like hats and sunscreen.



CINDY KANE PHOTOGRAPHY

New summer camp safety precautions are combining heat safety with COVID-19 safety.



PHOTO: SAM REGARDIE

Safety measures, such as those put in place at Encore Stage & Studio in Arlington, are a response to rising temperatures and COVID-19.

"We've provided special training for our staff on heat safety and recognizing heat-related illnesses."

— Sara Duke, Executive Director, Encore Stage & Studio

911 right away if symptoms get worse, last longer than 1 hour or if the individual begins vomiting. Always follow up with your child's pediatrician or health care provider following an instance of heat illness."

As the reality of increased temperatures and subsequent danger, safety protocols become more critical.

"Due to the pandemic, most camps are spending extra time outside this year," said Kurt Larrick, Assistant Director, Arlington County Department of Human Services. "Parents and guardians can talk to camp operators about what sort of mitigation measures they have in place for hot days, and let them know if your camper has any health issues that might be triggered by the heat."

NEWS

Dr. Douthard R. Butler

Dr. Douthard R. Butler, former Mount Vernon-Lee Chamber board member and well-known community personality died on July 10. Dr. Butler was well loved and respected by all who knew him.

Funeral services for Dr. Butler will be Saturday, July 24, noon, at Harvest Assembly Baptist Church, 8008 Fordson Road, Alexandria, VA 22306.

He is survived by his wife, Jo Butler; daughters, Carolyn Butler, Barbara Marshall, Katherine Jourdan (Donald); his grandchildren, Jason Marshall, Nina Jourdan and a host of other relatives and many friends. The family will receive friends at the Harvest Assembly Baptist Church beginning at 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. with the funeral service at noon. There will be an Omega Psi Phi, memorial service at 10:30 a.m.

Dr. Butler was an Adjunct Professor at George Mason University in the School of Policy, Public and International Affairs and the Associate Athletic Director for Community Relations at George Mason University.

He retired from the US Army in 1985 as a Colonel with a wide range of experience in executive



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Dr. Douthard R. Butler

planning, management, and general administration. He was a past president of the Mount Vernon Rotary Club and has held various leadership responsibilities with the District and Rotary Foundation.

He was involved with the A & M University Alumni Association, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc., American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Military Officers Association of America, Association of US Army, Boy Scouts of America, Optimist Club, Mount Vernon Lee Chamber, and served on the Board of the Northern Virginia Black Chamber of Commerce.

His recognitions and awards are too numerous to list and reflect a lifetime of service and commitment.

\$18.7 Million Available for Affordable Housing Projects

Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (FCRHA) announced the availability of local, state, and federal funds to support the development and preservation of affordable housing in Fairfax County. More than \$18.7 million is currently appropriated and is now available for multifamily affordable housing development projects; an additional \$15 million in federal funding has been preliminarily identified for this purpose; and additional state funding will be announced in the very near future. Current and anticipated funding includes resources from the county's Housing Blueprint Fund, the Tysons Housing Trust Fund, the Federal American Rescue Plan Act, and the Virginia Housing Amazon Impact REACH Fund.

The Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority is a separate political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia and possesses specific powers granted by state code – including the ability to make loans. As such the FCRHA acts as Fairfax County's local housing finance agency. The FCRHA's tax-exempt financing

program began in the late 1970s and provides a vehicle for private developers to obtain below-market rate mortgages to acquire, construct and rehabilitate multi-family affordable housing developments.

Funds are awarded through a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process based on the eligibility and use requirements designated by the originating fund. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis through June 30, 2022, or until the fiscal year 2022 funding has been committed.

For complete program details, supporting documents and application instructions, please visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/housing/development/fundingavailability.

The Fairfax County Department of Housing and Community Development will host a Pre-Application Conference on Aug. 12, 2021. It is anticipated that this conference will be available virtually through Microsoft Teams with a potential in-person option. Details will be provided once they are finalized. You must register to attend. Please send an email to rha@fairfaxcounty.gov to register for the conference by Aug. 6, 2021

Blazing a Trail

FROM PAGE 1

a win-win for everyone and we are lucky to have her.”

Aces pitcher Adam Schwartz agrees.

“Coach Jen is so encouraging to our bullpen,” Schwartz said. “She always has something positive to say after each outing but also gives us great constructive criticism. She is especially great at pitch sequencing -- telling us when and how to use our pitches.”

Hammond also serves as a Head Coach with DC Girls Baseball, a nonprofit program dedicated to developing opportunities for girls to play baseball. In the five years she has been with the program, Hammond has grown the program to provide a welcoming arena for girls to play baseball; to help them develop solid fundamental skill sets and baseball knowledge; and to provide competitive opportunities for more advanced players who wish to play at the high school level and beyond.

“Many of the players in the DC Girls Baseball program are one of only a few girls on their little league, travel or school teams,” Hammond added. “When they play with us they find community. No longer are they sticking out or drawing a lot of attention as the only girl. It’s been amazing to see



Coach Jennifer Hammond, left, demonstrates a pitching grip to the Alexandria Aces bullpen July 14 at Frank Mann Field.

the girls as they grow into confident and capable young women and I am hopeful that they will be exposed to many more opportunities in the baseball world than existed when I was their age.”

Hammond credits Berset and the other Aces coaches for making her feel welcome and valued as part of the team.

“I am looking forward to the day when women are seen simply as ‘coach,’ when this is less of a novelty that sticks out,” Hammond said. “I hope there comes a time when

we don’t have to worry that every move we make or the outcome of a game is a reflection on our gender’s ability to be successful in this field.”

The Aces will take on the league-leading Bethesda Big Train in their final regular season home game July 22 at Frank Mann Field at 6:30 p.m. Playoffs run July 24-31.

“Baseball is a great vehicle to learn life skills,” Hammond said. “It is a game full of failure and helping players learn to confront



PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/CAZETTE PACKET

Alexandria Aces coach Jennifer Hammond hits fly balls to players during a practice July 14 at Frank Mann Field.

that, to handle disappointment and learn from it and go right back at it is one of my favorite parts of coaching. That resiliency, that mental

strength, that ability to reset and grind — these are all skills that translate to life outside the lines.”
www.calripenleague.org

How Safe Are Older Buildings in Fairfax County?

FROM PAGE 1

“If we have folks who are concerned in the county about things that they see or things that they have been neglected in their own buildings, we want them to be able to come forward, and to provide them some technical assistance and support,” he said.

“I know the state is going to be looking at this as well.”

Hunter Mill Supervisor Walter Alcorn said even though Surfside is the most extreme example, “deteriorating infrastructure of these older condominiums is real and it is something that is a private matter for residents, [condo] associations and members.”

“I would just note that when something is a private matter and it happens enough, somehow often it be-

comes a public matter,” said Alcorn. Alcorn asked that staff also report back on related legislative priorities.

“The vast, vast majority of these situations that do involve deteriorating infrastructure are not any threat to the safety of the residents,” Alcorn said.

Braddock Supervisor James Walkinshaw asked for the work to be incorporated into the county’s

climate change resilience work. “These findings are relevant to that work as well: stronger storms, extreme heat, aging buildings, flooding in some instances.”

Mason District Supervisor Penny Gross recalled March 1973, when a 26-story Skyline Plaza condominium building under construction in Bailey’s Crossroads collapsed, killing 14 construction workers and

injuring 35. “That was an entirely different situation, it was a matter of the construction not allowing enough time for the concrete to set on each floor,” she said.

“But there were changes to the Building code, not just here in the county but overall. This may be another opportunity to enhance and change some of these building codes,” said Gross.

Fairfax Officer Critically Wounds Woman in Group Home

FROM PAGE 5

munities safe. Officers will stop by to meet members of the community and build police-community partnerships. Families can spend the evening outdoors with food, music and activities to promote neighborhood comradery.

MOUNT VERNON DISTRICT STATION Weekly FCPD Update

UPDATE: MALICIOUS WOUNDING/ ACCIDENT HIT AND RUN: 7900 block of Janna Lee Avenue, 7/5/21, 5:05 a.m. Af-

ter a dispute, a woman drove into a man and pinned him against a car before driving away. The man was taken to a hospital with injuries that were life threatening. Tennida Ferguson, 45, of Alexandria, was arrested on July 12 and charged with malicious wounding.

ROBBERY: 6300 block of South Kings Highway, 7/11/21, 11:23 p.m. Two men approached the victim as he exited a store, assaulted him and took property. The victim was treated at a hospital for injuries

that were not considered life threatening.

COMMERCIAL ROBBERY: 5834 North Kinds Highway (7-Eleven), 7/12/21, 1:04 a.m. A man entered the business, implied he had a weapon and took property.

STOLEN AUTO/MALICIOUS WOUNDING: 7900 block of Central Park Circle, 7/13/2021, 3:21 p.m. Officers located a stolen white BMW X3 parked in the neighborhood. As officers pulled in behind the car, the driver drove the car in reverse,

striking the officer’s car. Three men ran from the car and the driver, Jonathan Santos Ayala, 19, of Falls Church, was taken into custody after a short foot pursuit. Santos Ayala was charged with malicious wounding and receiving stolen goods. No injuries were reported.

ROBBERY: 8700 block of Sacramento Drive, 7/14/2021, 6:13 p.m. A man assaulted an acquaintance on the sidewalk, forcefully removed his property and ran away.

Employment

Admin Pohick Church, Lorton - 4 days, 28hrs/week Good communication/ clerical skills. Format/print MS Word, Excel/Powerpt, import graphics. Word Press, Constant Contact a plus & ideally some graphic design, publishing & Web site updates. Weekly deadlines, ordering supplies, maintain church calendar/building users/keys. Process membership Baptisms Confirmations Weddings. 5% pension & up to 4% match/2 weeks vacation. Submit resume/references to The Rev. Dr. Lynn Ronaldi at info@pohick.org by Aug 13

Employment

Youth Minister Pohick Church, Lorton - 20hrs/week. Experience working with youth, ideally in the Episcopal Church. Recruit/train youth advisors to assist & oversee 3 age groups, 5th & 6th, Jr & Sr High, with year round programs and summer mission trip. Plan Lenten Series and summer retreat activities for youth and family. Involve youth in church activities & fundraising activities. 5% pension & 2 weeks vacation. Submit resume/references to: The Rev. Dr. Lynn Ronaldi at info@pohick.org by Aug 13

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NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE PROPOSED DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY (DIA) HEADQUARTERS (HQ) ANNEX FORT BELVOIR, VIRGINIA

The U.S. Army Garrison Fort Belvoir hereby gives Notice of the Availability (NOA) for the Environmental Assessment (EA) and Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) for the proposed construction of the DIA HQ Annex within the vicinity of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) complex on Fort Belvoir's North Area, Fairfax County, Virginia. The purpose of this project is to build and operate an approximately 77,000 net square foot/116,080 gross square foot administrative building with an associated parking structure on Fort Belvoir to consolidate administrative facilities for approximately 650 personnel from DIA HQ to address safety, security, and operational concerns specific to the administrative functions of the agency. The proposed HQ Annex building would include a multi-story administrative building with offices, cubicles/workstations, publications rooms, conference rooms, break rooms, server rooms, a multi-purpose auditorium, a café/cafeteria, a gym/fitness center, a utility plant, visitor control center, visitor parking, a secured employee parking structure, and a perimeter security fence.

The EA has been prepared in accordance with the regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), (Public Law 91-190, 42 USC 4321-4347 January 1, 1970), amendments, and the Army's Implementing Regulations (32 CFR Part 651, Environmental Analysis of Army Actions). The EA is available to view in printed form at the Lorton Branch, Kingstowne Branch, and Sherwood Regional Branch of the Fairfax County Public Library system, or to view/download electronically at <https://home.army.mil/belvoir/index.php/about/Garrison/directorate-public-works/environmental-division>. Click the "Programs and Documents" tab, then "National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Program." Information about the EA and links to download the various documents are provided under the "Open for Public/Agency Review & Comment" heading.

Comments or questions on the EA and Draft FNSI may be directed in writing to: Environmental Division, Directorate of Public Works, Building 1442, 9430 Jackson Loop, Fort Belvoir, VA 22060, or by email to: usarmy.belvoir.incom-atlantic.mbx.enrd@mail.mil. Comments must be received no later than 30 days after publication of this NOA.

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Definitely on My List

By KENNETH B. LOURIE



As the month of May was swept away with the last of the network-season's original programming, those of us still in lockdown and quarantining had our own reality to embrace: there was nothing new on network television. Cable became the obvious choice. In particular, "Netflix" and "Prime." Whether it was "Victoria," "The Crown," "Bridgerton," "The Kominsky Method" or "The Queen's Gambit," many of us left the networks behind and found a new home. However, even that didn't last forever. Soon we were back perusing the all-too-familiar weekly television viewing guide.

And in returning, I discovered a program that has been on for eight years, and never once had I seen any snippet other than a brief - and bland reference about something or other: The program is called "The Blacklist." I knew that James Spader was the star, but I knew nothing about the storyline or any other actors involved. James Spader I knew from "Boston Legal," a legal drama from the early 2000s which featured among other story lines, a lawyer, Alan Shore (James Spader) offering up impassioned closing arguments for whatever wrong the firm was trying to right. I can't remember much substance but I can sure remember the feeling and conviction expressed by Spader's character. He was mesmerizing.

And so, having exhausted "Prime" and "Netflix" and a few other cable channels, we reverted back to the networks. This time though to search for a show that we had overlooked during its initial previous network programming life. We discovered or rather took a chance and selected "The Blacklist" to see what we could see. Not so much my wife, Dina, but ever since I began watching episode one, I have been entranced. To say I've been binge-watching makes light of all those who have previously binge-watched. I have watched approximately 80 episodes, not at one sitting (to be fair, I have watched multiple episodes multiple times) and am presently halfway through season five. They have been renewed for a ninth season starting in the fall of '21 so if I were planning on being current by then, I would need to have watched 22 episodes per year times seven years plus half of season eight: that's about 175 shows, each one running 42 minutes give or take without commercials. That adds up to over 122+ hours of television. That would test any committed viewer's patience and schedule. Presuming I have a life other than my couch and television, the prospect seems a bit daunting and to be honest, perhaps a bit foolish. I mean, life goes on doesn't it? James Spader gets paid whether I watch him or not, doesn't he? As for the networks, I'm pretty sure they're getting paid as well whether I'm in front of the television or not. Now if I were getting paid for my viewership, I would definitely hop on the couch. However, that's not happening - not in my wildest dreams so I'm afraid I'll have to fend for myself. Still, in spite of calculating the hours necessary to get current with the show and considering the life I would need to live to reach this nirvana, I am not put off by the arithmetic or the challenge. I don't intend to commit every waking hour to fulfilling this goal, especially if one were to consider how the return of the fall shows in September would adversely impact my viewing flexibility. More shows to watch would create less opportunity to focus on any one show.

Nevertheless, there are approximately three months-ish until original programming returns to the networks in the fall. I don't have to have completed my pursuit by then. It's not as if I'm fulfilling some kind of contract. Hardly. All I'm fulfilling is a cockeyed plan to binge-watch more than eight seasons of a show that up until now, I barely knew existed. Now, not only does it exist, it's sort of the focus of my life (cancer notwithstanding). Granted, it's not very exciting, but it is sure predictable. And for a cancer patient recently re-diagnosed, predictable is good. I just hope the show ends before I do.

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

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NEWS

Ripe Red Tomatoes, Juicy Peaches Highlight Area's Farmers Markets

County's markets are hopping as they go into National Farmers Market Week in early August.

By MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

It might be the fresh produce, the comradery or satisfaction of eating straight from the vine; Fairfax County has plenty to highlight for National Farmers Market Week at the 10 farmer's markets across the county.

"Peaches are in," said Pamela H. Smith, the Community Horticulture Supervisor at Green Spring Gardens where the markets are based. In late July, she also pointed out that the bulk of the tomato, squash, cucumber, corn and peppers are being harvested now so "visit the markets when produce is plentiful and always fresh from our local farms," she added.

Fresh fish is also available at the two Saturday markets, Burke and Reston, and McCutcheon/Mt. Vernon market at Sherwood Hall Library on Wednesdays. Fish and shellfish are direct from the Chesapeake and surrounding waters.

The Saturday markets are the most popular, at Reston in the Lake Anne parking lot and Burke VRE station. There are no county farmer's markets open on Monday or Tuesday, and this is due to the attendance in the past, and farmer participation. Farmers need time on the farm for planting, harvesting, taking care of crops, and preparing for upcoming markets.

This year, the county is experimenting with table scrap recycling (composting) at three of the markets, Herndon, McCutcheon and Burke. "Composting your food waste has just become easier. If you want to compost but can't do it at home, you can now bring your scraps to several different county farmers markets. A win-win for you and the environment," the county said.

National Farmer's Market Week is Coming

The Farmers Market Coalition is a non-profit whose mission is strengthening farmers markets across the country so they can serve the community while providing income opportunities for farmers. The coalition is organizing the 22nd annual National Farmers Market Week Aug. 1 - 7. It's a weeklong celebration declared by the U.S. Department of Agriculture that highlights the role farmers markets play in the nation's food system. The coalition represents markets in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and Canada, said Ben Feldman of the Coalition.

In addition to providing a source of fresh produce for consumers, the farmers get something out of it too. "It's typically their



Strawberries come in from all over, such as Medina and Sons farm in Montross, Va.



The Master Gardeners are at markets, sharing tips on growing plants and setting up the home garden.

top source of income," Feldman said. He said the research shows that the farmers that participate in the farmers market program have done better business-wise and it helps overcome challenges in the growing season.

This year, Farmers Market Coalition's National Farmers Market campaign will focus on three key messages that illustrate the vital role farmers markets play in communities, specifically in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and renewed calls for social justice reform across the country. Market operators are encouraged to share how their market has 1) provided essential services during the pandemic, 2) served as a community hub for unity and stability during challenging times, and 3) what efforts have been taken to improve social equity at farmers markets across the country to make markets more safe, inviting, and accessible spaces for all.

"It has been a challenging year for farmers markets, but market operators have truly risen to the occasion to ensure communities could continue to access fresh food produced by local farmers," said Feldman. "Nothing has emphasized the intrinsic role farmers markets play in our food system quite like the Covid-19 pandemic, but market operators quickly adapted to implement innovative safety practices, keeping their communities both healthy and fed, and their market thriving."

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