

CONNECTION

Reston ♦ Herndon ♦ ^{Oak Hill} Chantilly ♦ CENTRE VIEW



Tanya, Donna and Rosie form the girl band 'Donna and the Dynamos' and perform in 'Mamma Mia!' at Westfield High. From left: Isabella McDonald, 15, a Haymarket resident and rising sophomore at Colgan High School, Lili Williams, 18, a Leesburg resident and graduate of Heritage High School, and Alison Brown, 18, a recent graduate of Westfield High School.

'Mamma Mia!' At Westfield High

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NEWS

Charges Filed After Fatal Domestic-related Stabbing in Clifton

Carter Setti-Camfiord, 21, of Clifton was charged late Tuesday, July 13, with second degree murder following a deadly stabbing in Clifton. Officers initially responded at 12:07 p.m. to the 13000 block of Compton Road for a pedestrian struck by a car. Preliminarily,



FCPD

Carter Setti-Camfiord

detectives believe Setti-Camfiord intentionally jumped in front of a car then reported to the driver that he stabbed someone inside a nearby home. Setti-Camfiord was immediately detained by officers and taken to a hospital for treatment of injuries resulting from the crash. Officers entered the home and discovered Jason Camfiord, 50, of Clifton, suffering from trauma to his upper body. Rescue personnel pronounced Camfiord deceased at the scene. The father and son lived at the home together. Another family member was present during the incident but was not injured. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner conducted an autopsy and ruled it a

homicide. Setti-Camfiord is being held at the Adult Detention Center without bond.

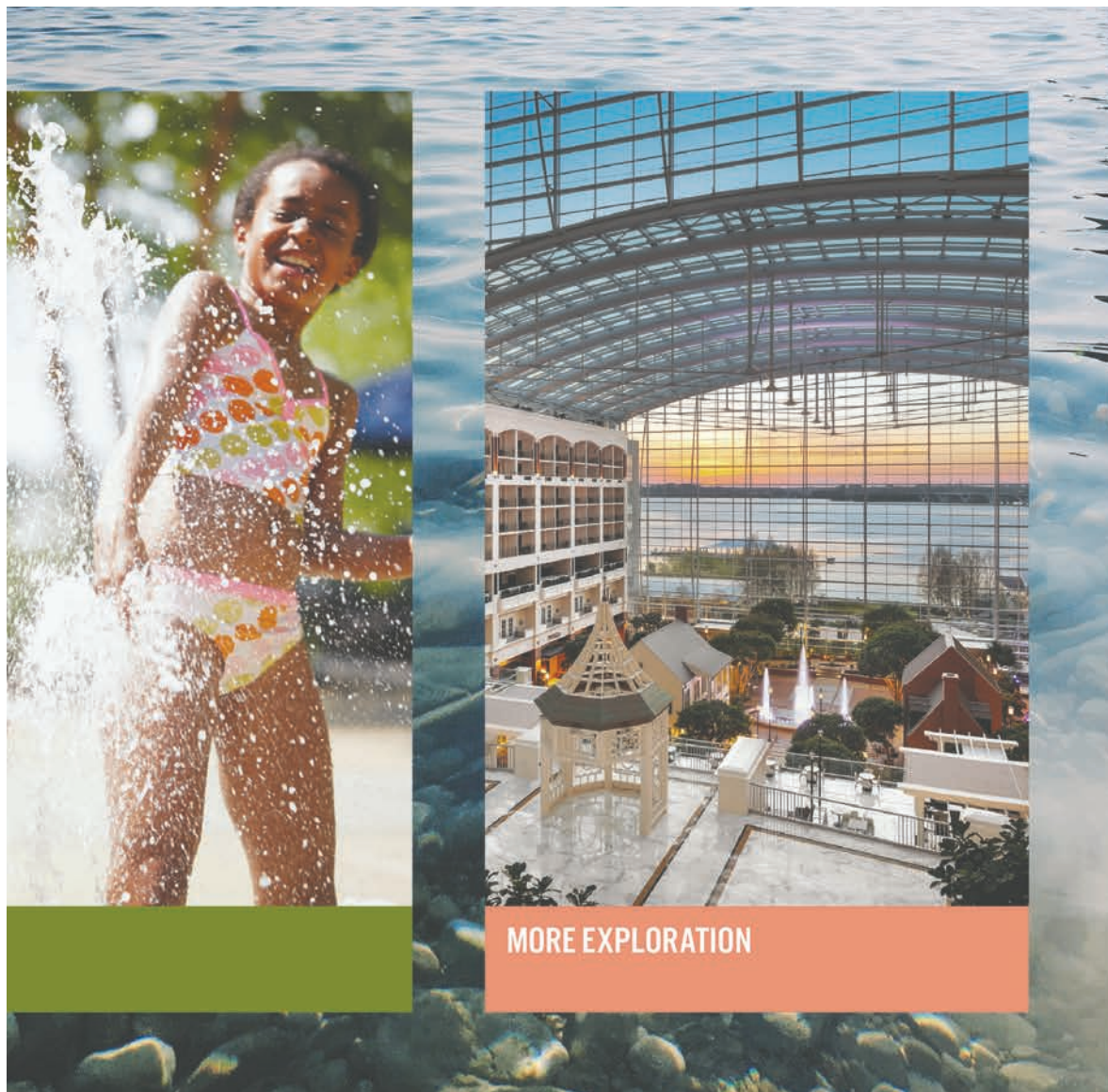
Anyone with information about this case is asked to call Major Crimes Bureau at 703-246-7800, option 2. Tips can also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by phone - 1-866-411-

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Victim specialists from our Major Crimes Bureau's Victim Services Division have been assigned to ensure that the victim's family is receiving appropriate resources and assistance.

This is being investigated as the 12th homicide year to date in Fairfax County.

— FCPD PUBLIC AFFAIRS BUREAU



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Felling is generally reserved for trees that cannot recover. During a pause in the process, the arborists allowed three children, (from left) Ashton Kooy, 9, with siblings Grant, 7, and Eve, 4, to hug the witness tree and give perspective to its girth, measured by the town forester at 10 feet 3 inches.



Professional arborists use a bucket truck to fell the nearly 200-year-old Overcup Oak tree. It is probably the oldest witness tree of its kind, telling the town's development from a handful of people in 1823 to a town poised for the Silver Line of the Washington Metro system.



The tree removal as part of the Elden-Center Streets Intersection Improvements will assist with the current and future-use residential development on Center Street, which places greater traffic volumes in this project area according to the Town of Herndon.

Historic Herndon Oak Tree Removed

Nearly 200-year-old witness tree 'struggled' and obstructed sight triangle quadrant to the intersection.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

In 1823, an acorn from an Overcup Oak tree sent up a shoot at what is now the corner of Elden and Center Streets in the Town of Herndon. In Washington D.C., James Monroe, the 5th President of the United States, declared the "Monroe Doctrine," opposing European colonialism in the Americas. Overseas, classical composer Ludwig van Beethoven turned 52 years old. The sapling grew. More than likely, the handful of residents living in the area did not take notice.

On Monday, July 12, 2021, a professional crew felled the oak tree well-known for its harvest gold color in the fall for part of the \$1,830,000 Elden-Center Streets Intersection Improvements project. This project supports the reconstruction and signalization of the Elden Street/Center Street intersection and other improvements. The estimated completion date is 2023. Some residents in the town took notice and voiced immediate outcry to local officials.

THE OVERCUP OAK TREE had stood as a witness to the town's history, from an unnamed village to its rise with a steam sawmill in the 1850s and the coming of the railroad and depot. The tree lived as cars replaced horses plodding on Elden Street and when a sign for the future redevelopment of the downtown was installed feet from its branches in 2020.

"I know there was a lot of surprise to see the tree...be taken down as part of this larger improvement project," said Town Manager Bill Ashton at the scheduled Town Council Meeting the day after the tree was removed.

"It is sad to lose a tree that has been there for that long period."

According to Ashton, early in 2015, the Town Council was presented with roadway design options to correct sight distance issues at the four-legged intersection. Following a public meeting and public hearing in October of 2015, Council adopted the design option. It would remove the obstructing tree in the approach sight triangle quadrant. Additional designs included signalization and other improvements to enhance vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycling safety.

According to arborday.org, the Overcup Oak tree is a native found in the swampland of the Atlantic coast. It is so named for its acorn cap that covers almost the entire fruit. Being a bottomland species, the Overcup Oak sapling did well near the spring that ran through the area, and it tolerated flooding and soil conditions.

The day after the tree fell, its stump and two trunk slices remained. John Dudzinsky, the town's Community Forester, stood onsite with Elden-Center Street Project Manager Victor Lopes. Looking at a cross-section of the tree trunk, Dudzinsky said that the oak had been declining in health. "It was just struggling," he said.

"You can see signs of disease inside the trunk; there's the discoloration," said Dudzinsky. Asked if the tree had posed a safety hazard, he said no. "There weren't any major branches that had come down. It was just starting to die back, and there were dead limbs in it." Dudzinsky said he had measured the tree's girth at 10 feet 3 inches.

Dudzinsky and Lopes prepared to date the tree by studying the annual growth increments of tree rings on the stump. Each year a tree adds to its growth a new tree ring.

The oldest rings, the sapling rings, were very narrow and near the center of the trunk, according to Dudzinsky. They would be challenging to count being so close and tightly packed. He added that arborists generally count those as a total of ten.

THE YEARLY RINGS radiating outward proved somewhat easier to spot. Tree growth leading from spring to summer showed as the wide part with its distinct light color. As the summer progressed and it got drier, an adjacent darker band ring occurred as the tree's growth slowed. The combined two-colored set of each ring reconstructed peculiarities in the tree's annual life and the local climate history. The rings interpreted insect and bacteria attacks, droughts, and floods and could accurately determine the tree's health and age.

Dudzinsky and Lopes sprayed water on the tree trunk to darken the wood and make counting the rings easier. Using the lead tip of mechanical pencils as place counters, they inched them slowly outward, lips moving in the silent count. Minutes passed, a brief discussion, and Dudzinsky announced, "One hundred and ninety-eight years old [1823-2021]. Dudzinsky said that the tree was probably the oldest and largest Overcup Oak in the town.

According to Dudzinsky, the two trunk sections left on the ground were going to the town shop on Sterling Road. While it was not in his purview to decide what to do with them, Dudzinsky said staff could consider making a couple of tables out of the cuts or wafers as they are called.

Lopes said it took about five hours to take down the tree due to challenges with the electric wires and traffic. "The job was a lit-

PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION



(From left) Victor Lopes, Elden-Center Streets Intersection Improvements Project manager and John Dudzinsky, Herndon Town Forester, begin counting the growth rings on the Overcup Oak Tree that was struggling as evidenced by signs of disease. It obstructed the approach sight triangle quadrant to the four-legged intersection, causing a vehicular, pedestrian, and cycling safety concern.

tle tricky. That's the reason we had a bucket truck... We had to stop traffic for it [the aerial platform] to go under the wires and go around. You have to be very careful so as not to hit the wires with either the chainsaw or falling limbs."

Lopes said that homeowners should not attempt to take down trees this size. "It's very, very dangerous," he said. Several things could go wrong, from electrocution to the tree or a branch falling on someone or property. "For all the right reasons, you should always seek a professional to take a tree this big down."

Awash in Cash?

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



With the news reports of the cash coming to state and local governments from the federal government to provide relief from the effects of the COVID pandemic and the announcement that Virginia will have a sizable cash balance at the end of this fiscal year, one could conclude that government is awash in cash! The General Assembly will meet in a Special Session called by Governor Ralph Northam to decide how some of the new monies coming to the Commonwealth will be spent. The Governor will propose a spending plan for those funds that are allocated directly to state government within the "strings attached" from the federal government as to how the money can be spent. The total American Rescue Plan approved by the Congress so far amounts to \$1.9 trillion, and that is above the Cares Act monies approved earlier. As you know from daily press reports,

the President and members of Congress are working on a compromise for additional funding to ensure the economy recovers and that many infrastructure and program needs that have not been met in the past can be addressed.

Spending the amount of cash that is coming available will not be difficult. In fact, for every dollar coming available there are about five dollars in legitimate spending needs that could be addressed. Be sure that the House of Delegates is not going to spend dollars just because they come available. Strict justification will be required before an expenditure is made. The experiences of the pandemic made many needs obvious. While technology offered many solutions to schools and businesses through digital means, the need made clear the disparities in many places throughout the state in internet access. Certainly teaching by online instruction is a viable alternative to teach and to enforce learning,

SEE PLUM, PAGE 7

Remembering Paul Myers of Reston

A community treasure, helped produce the Reston Town Center Holiday Parade.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Paul Taylor Myers of Reston died at the age of 69, on July 10, 2021, surrounded by the family he loved. "Tall, strong, ready, and willing to take on every task, Paul was one of those people that you'd think would be around forever. Our community has lost a treasure," said Carol Nahorniak. Paul is survived by his wife of 40 years, Marion, their three children Katie, Megan, Chris, siblings Chikk Myers, Sheri Myers, Karen Harman, and grandchildren Addy and Merrick Johnson. Paul was a master of many things. He left his handprint in Reston and beyond.

As a young adult, Paul attended Ohio Wesleyan University, where he met Marion Cannon. He joined the OWU men's lacrosse team coached by his father, Fred. A "fierce competitor" on the team, Paul's skill and love of lacrosse continued for nearly fifty years. He annually played Grand and Super Grand Masters Lacrosse with the OWL alumni team, the Legends, immensely enjoying the camaraderie of his teammates.

After graduating from OWU in 1974, Paul received his MBA from Ohio State. He and Marion married in 1981 and moved to Reston. Paul owned Bar Trax Solutions, a Reston data processing service, and worked as a government contractor through his business.

"A lot of people in the business community might not feel like they knew Paul well because Marion was the Myers who was always out front and center," said Karen Cleveland. "But don't be fooled by that. Paul was thoughtful, super smart, and the backbone of the family and the company. He was immensely talented and had an incredible ability to balance 20 things at once, effortlessly keeping all the trains running on time."

After retiring, Paul joined Marion's company, Myers Public Relations, LLC. He became a proficient project-event coordinator, including the Reston Town Center Holiday Parade production voted as one of USA Today's "10 Best" for the third year in a row in 2019.

Nahorniak said that Paul was their "techie, accountant, and known for his MacGyver skills over his years at Myers PR." "He took on larger roles on our team as an event-producer extraordinaire - from mastering the construction of hay mazes to the logistics of the Reston Holiday Parade."

Robert Goudie, Executive Director of Reston Town Center Association said that while they have



Paul Taylor Myers, coordinator of the annual Reston Town Center's Holiday Parade production.

worked with Myers PR regularly over the years, and Paul contributed in important ways, "it went beyond his professional contributions." "Paul was good people and will be missed."

According to Cleveland, "Paul's love for his family [including his dog] was evident every day and in everything he did." At home, Paul could be found in the kitchen cooking for his family and his dog, Honey. He spent his childhood summers at freshwater Lake JoSylvia in Contoocook, New Hampshire. It was his favorite place, and he shared its summer joys with his children and grandchildren.

Nahorniak said that in Paul's devotion to his family and the many friendships he enjoyed, all were enriched by his hospitable nature. "He would gamely don his tuxedo to attend many black tie events with his beloved Marion, enjoying the bidding, and winning at silent auctions."

"The parade will go on," Nahorniak said. "And all who knew Paul will be thinking of him every step of the way."

A celebration of Paul's life will be held at a later date. Donations in his name can be made to the American Cancer Society donate3.cancer.org.

Christopher 'Chris' Adams, Funeral Home Owner, Dies

Remembering a kind and gentle man.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION



Christopher "Chris" Jon Adams [1965-2021]

Christopher "Chris" Jon Adams, owner and funeral director at Adams-Green Funeral Home & Crematory in the Town of Herndon died unexpectedly on July 14, 2021, at the age of 56. He is survived by his wife of 26 years Kathryn and their three children, Jack, 20, Susanna, 18, and Daley, 14.

Born March 24, 1965, in Battle Creek, Michigan, Chris grew up in Herndon and graduated from Herndon High in 1983. Diane Griffin Goldberg knew Chris as a youth through his sister Traci. "From the time I met Chris, he was unflappable. Nothing seemed to bother him. When Chris purchased the funeral home, I thought he had the perfect temperament to help families in their time of need."

A longtime member of the Rotary Club of Herndon, Chris's fellow Rotarians expressed sympathy to his family. They reflected on Chris's calm, compassionate demeanor; love of family, and community involvement.

"Chris offered so much comfort to so many. My heart goes out to his family and the many people he supported in their time of sorrow as a funeral director. What a devastating loss for the whole community," said Signe Friedrichs, Rotarian and Town Councilmember.

Mary Drum, like many Rotarians and community members, said she was still in shock. "He was the kindest, most gentle of men."

According to Kurt Rose, he met Chris more than 25 years ago when they, as young entrepreneurs, were trying to make their way with new businesses. "What I quickly learned about Chris was that he was not just a good businessman, but a devoted family man and dedicated community volunteer. He was a fellow Rotarian and never hesitated to volunteer his time or

"He loved his community, and his community loved him."

— Kurt Rose

money to help people in need throughout his hometown. He loved his community, and his community loved him."

Rotarian Dee Cacio agreed with Rose that family came first to Chris. Several years ago, she asked Chris if he would like to become Rotary president for the coming year. He thought about it; briefly, Cacio said. Quoting him, she said, "I would love to serve as president, but right now, my kids are at a stage in their lives where they really need me to be involved in their lives and activities. My family comes first. Maybe another time."

The family plans to receive friends from 1 to 4 p.m. and 6 to 8 p.m. Thursday, July 22, 2021, at Adams-Green Funeral Home & Crematory at 721 Elden St. in Herndon. The funeral service is Friday, July 23, at McLean Bible Church, Vienna, with the time yet to be determined.

Instead of flowers, memorial donations may be made to Foundation Fighting Blindness donate.fightingblindness.org, American Tinnitus Association www.ata.org, and Selamta Family Project.

Reston Included in Continent-wide Butterfly Count Program

Data used to study weather and habitat change effects.

By **MERCIA HOBSON**
THE CONNECTION



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

(Far right) Summer Chambers of Reston holds her Identification Key to Common Summer Butterflies as Katie Shaw, RA's Walker Nature Center manager, Samarth Kishor of Arlington, Ilene McNeal of Reston, and Elise Larsen of Falls Church scan the garden plot for a sighting.

Is it a monarch butterfly or an imitator, a white moth, or a cabbage white butterfly? These possible questions and the interest in being part of something continent-wide may have led eleven citizens-- science volunteers and two Reston Association (RA) staff members to participate in the North American Butterfly Association (NABA) 2021 Butterfly Count Program for the United States. Called the 2021 4th of July Count (U.S.), it extends from June 1 through July 31 and consists of a compilation of all butterflies observed in one day at sites within a 15-mile diameter of designated Count Circles. According to NABA, the 4th of July Count (U.S.) is one of the three continent-wide counts in NABA's program started in 1993. Canada and Mexico's counts are on different dates.

Since almost all butterflies are active exclusively during the day, Katie Shaw, RA's Walker Nature Center manager and registered compiler for the Reston Count Center scheduled its Count Day for Saturday morning, July 10. Participants met at Walker Nature Center in Reston. According to NABA, Butterfly Counts require a minimum of four observers and six-party hours.

Shaw provided historical data and information about the Count to the attendees. She said that typically they count between 200-300 butterflies of about 20 species at the Reston Butterfly Count each year. "Last year, we had 22 species seen on our account... and 213 individual butterflies," she said.

"Fifty-five species [of butterflies] are known to occur in Reston... Some are very big, very showy, and colorful like the swallowtails, and some are teeny tiny. Many people mistake them for moths, but they're the type of butterfly called skippers... We can't count moths; this [Count] is exclusively for butterflies. We

submit our data to the North American Butterfly Association," said Shaw.

According to Shaw, three of the most abundant butterflies in the Reston Count have been the cabbage white, the eastern tiger swallowtail (the state insect of Virginia), and silver-spotted skipper. Out of all the butterflies RA hoped to see Saturday, the monarch butterfly, *Danaus Plexippus Plexippus*, the iconic large orange and black pollinator, topped RA's list. It is eligible for the federal endangered and threatened species list. Over the past 20 years, nationwide, the monarch population has declined by 90 percent.

"So, we're at that critical tipping point with that species. Last year we saw four, Shaw said. One of the threats to monarchs is the use of herbicides used by farmers and homeowners. It kills milkweed, the only plant source for monarch larvae.

ANOTHER THREAT, according to the USDA Forest Service, is that an alien plant in North America "is

SEE BUTTERFLY, PAGE 5

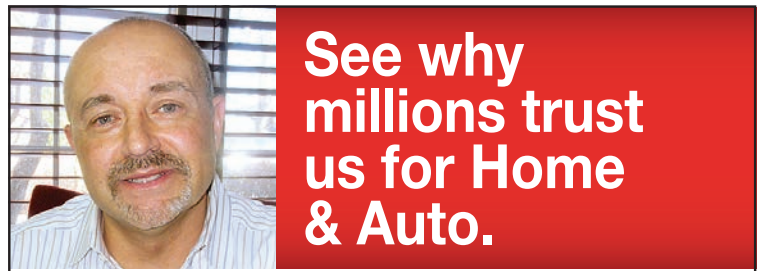


MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION
Citizens--science volunteers and counters (from left) Samarth Kishor of Arlington, Summer Chambers of Reston, Ilene McNeal of Reston, and Elise Larsen of Falls Church gaze over the pollinators hoping to sight a butterfly.



PHOTO BY DON CORAM

A viceroy butterfly lands near Lake Audubon during the 4th of July North American Butterfly Association Butterfly Count held June 1 through July 31. The Count consists of a compilation of all butterflies observed in one day at sites within a 15-mile diameter of designated Count Circles.



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Butterfly Count Program

FROM PAGE 5

confounding female monarchs during the egg-laying process." Black swallow-wort and pale swallow-wort are members of the milkweed family native to Europe, yet they are a dead-end host. "Swallow-worts may act as a 'sink' for monarchs; caterpillars from eggs laid on these invasive plants will not survive," stated the USDA Forest Service website.

Shaw said that people need to enjoy all butterflies and do their part to conserve and protect them by planting native plants, their nectar sources, and resisting the urge to spray for mosquitoes. "They don't realize that it is not a targeted pesticide. If you like butterflies and fireflies, don't spray your yard for mosquitoes. Look for standing water sources and eliminate them," Shaw said.

Staff and citizens-science volunteers broke into two groups and counted for three hours until 1 p.m. They divided given locations which proved in other years to be suitable for butterfly populations, such as the garden plots around Hunter Woods because they have great nectar sources, Sunrise Valley wetlands with its diversity of butter-

flies seen in the grasses, and Hunter Woods School because they have a butterfly garden. Shaw directed participants to all walk in the same direction and together to not double count butterflies.

THAT EVENING Shaw shared a photo taken by a citizen-science volunteer during the NABA Reston Count. The image showed a Mullerian mimic, the viceroy butterfly, similar in color and pattern but markedly smaller with an extra black stripe across each hindwing.

Shaw said, "While final results are still being compiled, approximately 443 butterflies of 27 species were counted. This data indicates a strong count year. A lot of times, when the large, showy butterflies like swallowtails are not very plentiful, people perceive that it's a bad year for butterflies...But when you look closer at the smaller species or less colorful ones, you realize that there is more butterfly activity than at first glance."

To take part in future NABA Counts and for more information about the NABA Butterfly Count Program 4th of July Count (U.S.), visit North American Butterfly Association Home Page.

Plum

FROM PAGE 4

but it is of little value to children who live in communities without broadband access. Governor Northam has already signaled that he will propose a significant amount of money to expand broadband in the state. It will serve an educational purpose and an economic development purpose as well.

The demands on first responders, medical personnel, and teachers made clear that they are not adequately compensated for what they do. The demand to fill vacancies in these areas has become critical in many communities because of the demand in the jobs and the lack of adequate pay. The use of monies to make critical adjustments in pay for these workers will be top priority, but the

response to the need must be more than a one-time bonus and must be an increase in the pay scale.

Monies from the American Rescue Plan can go to private businesses that have been particularly hard hit by the pandemic. Hotels and restaurants and small businesses may receive assistance even if they received loans under the earlier Cares Act funding.

Following its historic pattern as a triple-A rated state for the management of its financial affairs and its recent recognition for the second time as the best state in which to do business, the Commonwealth will retain its rainy day fund and reserves to rescue itself when the next economic downturn comes our way. It is wonderful that funding is coming available to meet critical needs; we must be responsible in the way we spend our cash!

Community Car Show at Chantilly Shopping Center

Cops & Cars Community Car Show will be held on Friday, July 23 from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Chantilly Walmart (4368 Chantilly Shopping Center). Come see some cool cars, Star Wars characters, and

more. Of course, there will be some police cruisers and motorcycles to enjoy. If you plan on hanging out with us, please register here: <https://bit.ly/copsncars>

If you are interested in showing off your car, email to Megan.Hawkins@fairfaxcounty.gov

BULLETIN BOARD

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

THURSDAY/JULY 22

Auditions for Play. 6:30-8:30 p.m. At Sterling Community Center, 150 Enterprise Street, Sterling. Sterling Playmakers open auditions for the comedy play "The Social Secretary." Auditions for all ages and ethnicities including 3 children. Auditions include monologues on website and cold readings from original script by Director, Ellen Price. Performances will be October 15, 16, 17, 22, 23 and 24, 2021 in Sterling. Visit www.sterlingplaymakers.org for materials and more details.

STEM VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The AAAS STEM Volunteers Program, stemvolunteers.org, needs STEM professionals to assist K-12 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) teachers in school districts in the D.C. metro area during the 2021-22 school year. If you care about K-12 STEM education and have time to share your knowledge with students and teachers, send a note to bcalinge@aaas.org with your home address.

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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 sure is 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.

'Mamma Mia!' at Westfield High

BY JESS KIRBY
THE CONNECTION

This summer, high school thespians from all over Northern Virginia are working to perform "Mamma Mia!" through the annual Westfield Summer Stage program. Six days a week for five weeks, these actors rehearse at Westfield High School until their opening night on July 23.

Summer Stage is Westfield Theatre's biggest fundraiser, and the proceeds go to scholarships for graduating seniors, according to Lisa Brown, the president of Westfield Theatre Boosters. Their performance of "Mamma Mia!" will feature flashy costumes and live music from an eight piece orchestra.

"MAMMA MIA!" came out on Broadway in 2001. It features a girl, Sophie, who has been raised by single mom Donna. By reading her mother's diary, Sophie finds three possible men that could be her father.

"She invites the three dads to the island for the wedding; they do not know why they're there and the mother does not know," said Greg Stowers, a Fairfax resident and director of the show. "It's all kind of an exploration of family and the definition of what a family is and this girl's quest to find out who her dad is so that he can walk her down the aisle at her wedding."

Lili Williams, 18, a Leesburg resident and recent graduate of Heritage High School, is playing the role of Donna.

"Donna is very determined," said Williams. "She is, above all else, the epitome of girl power. She has gone through so much throughout her life and... when the musical starts she is truly just putting up so many walls in order to be the strongest person she can be despite being completely broken on the inside. But, above all else, she is the do-it-herself kind of girl, she's going to get the job done even if no one else is going to help her."

Matthew Foltz, 17, a Fairfax resident and rising senior at Oakton High School, will be playing the role of Bill Austin, one of Sophie's possible dads.

"[Bill] is an adventurer, he's been living out of his backpack all his life, kind of living on the fly and just going about the world as he pleases, and now he's stuck in this little Greek town from 20 years ago," said Foltz.

Beyond the actors, there are many people behind the scenes that organize the production.

Herndon resident Cait Kelley, 24, is the show's choreographer. She attended Westfield High School and was part of the theatre program throughout her four years.

"I'm excited to see all the pieces come together," said Kelley. "As a choreographer, you see the stage where there's no set, there's no costumes, there's no lights and you see these pieces start to build up."

SYDNEY SCHNEIDER, 17, is a rising senior at Chantilly High School and a Dance Captain for the show.

"As a dance captain, I'm in charge of knowing all the choreography so if anybody has any questions, I'm the



Matthew Foltz, 17, Fairfax, rising senior at Oakton High School, playing Bill Austin.



Lili Williams, 18, Leesburg, recent graduate of Heritage High School, playing Donna Sheridan.



Greg Stowers, Fairfax, Director



Sydney Schneider, 17, rising senior at Chantilly High School, dance captain.

PHOTOS BY JESS KIRBY/THE CONNECTION



PHOTO COURTESY OF LISA BROWN

The set is being assembled and painted in the weeks before the show.

one to help them," she said.

Schneider's school was set to perform "Mamma Mia!" two years ago, but COVID-19 had other plans.

"For our spring musical two years ago, we were going to do it," she said. "We got super excited, we started choreographing it, it was almost put together, and then it got nixed. Still a little sore, but at least there's this to cushion the fall."

After graduating from James Madison University for musical theatre, Stowers was in a different production of "Mamma Mia!" and played Sky, Sophie's fiancé.

"I was lucky enough to be in several national tours of shows, and I've actually been in 'Mamma Mia!' before," Stowers said. "I'm really taking advantage of this being a cast of high schoolers and to use the energy that they have."

"Mamma Mia!" will take place at Westfield High School on July 23, 24, 30 and 31 at 7 p.m. and on July 25 at 2 p.m.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Free family-friendly movies are being screened every Saturday night in August at 5860 Trinity Parkway in Centreville.

Drive-In Movie Saturdays at Centreville

Watch a movie under the stars this summer at the Fairfax County Park Authority's Starlight Drive-In Cinema. Free family-friendly movies are being screened every Saturday night in August at 5860 Trinity Parkway in Centreville.

Gates open at 7 p.m. and the movies begin at dark. Bring coolers, blankets and lawn chairs to enjoy a picnic dinner or snacks before or during the movie. Leave your car and sit under the stars to watch the show.

The lineup of PG-rated movies includes:

- ❖ Aug. 7, 2021 – "Trolls World Tour" -- Hard Rock Trolls try to take over all the Troll kingdoms, and Queen Poppy and her friends attempt different ways to save all the Trolls.

- ❖ Aug. 14, 2021 – "The Croods: A New Age" -- Searching for a safer habitat, the prehistoric Crood family discovers an idyllic, walled-in paradise that meets all their needs. Unfortunately, they must also learn to live with the Bettermans -- a

family that's a couple of steps above the Croods on the evolutionary ladder.

- ❖ Aug. 21, 2021 – "Onward" -- Two teenage elf brothers living in a post-magical world stumble upon a spell that can bring their father back to life. They embark on an epic, heart-warming adventure to see the spell through when it initially only brings back part of their father.

- ❖ Aug. 28, 2021 – "Raya and the Last Dragon" -- When monsters threaten her home, it's up to a lone warrior, Raya, to track down the last dragon to stop them. However, along her journey, she will learn that it will take more than dragon magic to save the world.

These drive-in movies will be canceled in the event of inclement weather. Call 703-324-SHOW (7469) before leaving home for inclement weather updates. For details on all the Park Authority's free Summer Entertainment Series performances, go to the Summer Entertainment Series website.

SUMMER CONCERTS

FRIDAY/JULY 23

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

Schedule

July 23 -- Herr Metal + Dr FU;

July 30 -- Kristen and the Noise;

Aug 6 -- Social Call;

Aug 13 -- It's All Good;

Aug 20 -- JunkFood;

Aug 27 -- All-Star Band;

Sept 3 -- Shake the Room;

Sept 10 -- keeton + 8 Track Jones;

Sept 17 -- The Reflex;

Sept 24 -- Screaming Mönkeys.

FREE SUMMER CONCERTS IN RESTON

Reston Community Center is pleased to announce that free summer concerts will return to venues around Reston.

Luncheon with the Arts at Mason – Thursdays, Reston Town Square Park. 12:30-1:30 p.m.

Take a Break – Thursdays, 7 p.m. – 9 p.m., Lake Anne Plaza

Summerbration Fab Fridays – 7 – 9 p.m., Reston Station

Family Fun Entertainment Series – Saturdays, 10 a.m. – 10:45 a.m., Reston Town Square Park

Sunday Art in the Park with the Shenandoah Conservatory – Sundays, 7 p.m. – 8 p.m., Reston Town Square Park