

CONNECTION

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WELLBEING
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Senior Olympics: Ready, Set, Go

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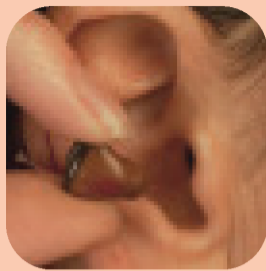
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PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Food trucks, raffles, and games make getting the COVID vaccine fun and allows people not to travel distances or find child/elderly care.

RECEIVED AT LEAST ONE COVID-19 VACCINE DOSE*

757,376

Count

76.1% of people 18 years and older

64.0% of all Fairfax Health District residents

* People vaccinated with one dose of a two-dose vaccine or one dose of a single dose vaccine.

FULLY VACCINATED**

686,784

Count

69.5% of people 18 years and older

58.0% of all Fairfax Health District residents

** People vaccinated with two doses of a two-dose vaccine or one dose of a single dose vaccine.

All vaccination data are from the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) - Virginia Immunization Information System. Numbers differ from the VDH vaccination dashboard, which reports data separately for Fairfax County and the cities of Fairfax and Falls Church.

As of Aug. 1, 2021. 64 percent of All Fairfax Health Districts residents received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose and 58 percent of all Fairfax Health District residents are fully vaccinated.

Delta Variant Has Room to Run Rampant

Removing invisible vaccine barriers for communities in Fairfax County.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Jump on a moon bounce, grab an empanada from a food truck and get a Covid vaccine. That's right. The Fairfax County community is scrambling on multiple fronts in a war against Covid's Delta variant as the County recorded 124 new Covid cases Sunday, Aug. 1. The County is doing whatever it takes to increase the number of vaccinated to reach the gold medal of herd immunity. Fairfax Health District reported on Aug. 1, 58 percent of all Fairfax County Health District residents were fully vaccinated; 64 percent received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose.

Some local agencies are easing the way for people to receive on-site vaccinations at places like their apartment complexes and holding vaccine and family fun days. Some individuals are masking up indoors to protect others and themselves. New data released on July 30 in the UVA COVID-19 Model provided by the University of Virginia Biocomplexity Institute and released by the Virginia Department of Health and the CDC's data made public the same day on the spread of the Delta variant are causing concern.

According to the UVA model, the key take-aways are that the Delta variant poses a "significant public health concern" based on the current course of the pandemic. The Delta variant is dominant in Virginia, seeing case growth with 10 of 35 Health Districts experiencing surges. One reason for the surge is

that the Delta variant has room to run primarily among unvaccinated people. Vaccination rates are still below herd immunity levels, and many Virginians are returning to normal.

ON FRIDAY, the CDC released evidence that the Delta variant was easily contagious and those vaccinated less protected than they may think. Vaccinated people infected with the Delta variant carry similar viral loads in their noses and throats as the unvaccinated. While they can spread the disease, they are rarely hospitalized.

Delta is here, though, in Fairfax County. The UVA model reports over 70 percent of all new COVID-19 cases in the Commonwealth as the Delta variant and predicts this figure will reach 90 percent by mid-August.

The Delta variant is considerably more transmissible and causes more severe cases than prior variants. Studies suggest that it may be nearly "twice as likely to cause illness requiring hospitalization compared to earlier variants...Delta is also more likely to cause reinfections in those who have previously had COVID-19 and recovered," according to the UVA COVID-19 Model Weekly update.

Vaccines remain the best defense against the Delta variant to reduce the risk of infection and severe disease. While the Delta variant is "more capable of causing breakthrough infections in fully vaccinated individuals than prior strains... confidence in the efficacy of these vaccines remains high," according to the UVA model. People who do get infected are less likely to experience severe illness requiring hospitalization. "The vaccinated individual may feel few or no symptoms of illness, but still be infectious to others," according to the UVA model.

On July 27, the CDC issued guidance if a person is fully vaccinated, "to reduce the risk of being infected with the Delta variant

and possibly spreading it to others, wear a mask indoors in public if you are in an area of substantial or high transmission." According to the CDC, new data shows that unlike other Covid variants, people vaccinated and infected with the Delta variant can still get high viral loads and could spread the virus.

"Unlike the Alpha variant that we had back in May, where we didn't believe that

if you were vaccinated, you could transmit further, this is different now with a Delta variant," CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said.

Jessica Gutierrez-Lugo is a Community Organizer with Opportunity Neighborhoods. On Saturday, July 31, Gutierrez-Lugo helped manage a Healthy Family Fun Day with a
SEE BARRIERS, PAGE 9

Fairfax County Holds County-wide Vaccine Equity Clinics

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Bringing the COVID-19 vaccine to the people rather than relying on them to find their way to a site is one option to get people vaccinated and slow the surging Delta variant.

In May 2021, the Fairfax County Health Department began to review vaccination data across the county regularly. "Using land parcel population estimates and vaccination data, our epidemiologists have identified some neighborhoods that are under-vaccinated," said Sharon D. Arndt, Director & ALOFR COVID19 Response High Risk Task Force Leader Community Health Development Division Fairfax County Health Department.

"Working with community partners and residential management companies, we have established pop-up clinics in many of these neighborhoods to offer the vaccine and to improve vaccination rates," Arndt said.

"We have recently begun to deploy vaccine navigation teams to neighbor-

hoods to help connect residents to nearby vaccine appointments that can be found on staywellnova.com," she added.

According to Arndt, their Vaccine Equity Clinics began in early February. They held clinics in FCPS schools, community centers, board offices, libraries, retail space, homeless shelters, houses of worship, and residential management companies.

"We work with different anchor vaccinators to deliver the vaccine - such as Safeway, Neighborhood Health FQHC [Federal Qualified Health Center], Mason and Partners Clinic, Healthworks FQHC [Federal Qualified Health Center], and the Health Department's own field vaccination team," said Arndt.

Specific for the in-the residential-neighborhood vaccine events, Arndt said they held neighborhood clinics in the Mt. Vernon area at the Audubon, Creekside, and Lafayette communities; Lincolnian area at Lerner Towers; Springfield area with Springfield Neighborhood Resource Center; Herndon area at Berkdale Apartments; and Chantilly area at Meadows of Chantilly.

OPINION

TJ Parents Welcome Most Diverse TJ Class in History

... and denounce the anti-CRT division.

We are parents of students and graduates of Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (TJ), and are greatly concerned about recent events and growing misinformation surrounding the changes to the admissions process and anti-racism discussions at the prestigious school we love and respect.

We, TJ parents, have a wide variety of opinions about the particulars of the TJ admissions policy and procedures; there are likely as many opinions on the “ideal” admissions policy for TJ as there are parents, students, and alumni, but we believe in working together, coming to a compromise, and finding resolution.

Most importantly, while some members of the community have spoken loudly and negatively, we here all agree that the members of the newly announced incoming Class of 2025 fully earned their acceptances to the school, and we look forward to welcoming them all into our community. Although some of us did not agree with how

the admissions changes were handled, we are pleased that this new class is the most diverse class in TJ history, with a majority of Asian American students and a substantial increase in the number of historically underrepresented minorities.

This is about TJ maintaining academic excellence while being more open and inclusive, promoting social emotional learning, and preparing our students for 21st century skills like teamwork and critical thinking. It’s also about including students from low-income families, which will represent 25 percent of the incoming class, as opposed to the usual 2 percent. We wholeheartedly believe that this increased diversity will enrich our school community even more and we welcome the Class of 2025 with open arms.

We also feel strongly that many of the actions and words of members of the “Coalition for TJ” have inflamed, distorted, and confused the issues, often alienating the community. The Coalition has for months now waged a divisive, false, and negative campaign, insisting that any changes are “anti-merit,” “racist,” and specifically designed to “purge Asians,” as one of its most outspoken members declared in a recent Washington Post Op-Ed.

The Coalition leaders’ many appearances in numerous me-

dia outlets have made them the public face of TJ parents—but they absolutely do not represent our community. They have used these platforms to make constant calls for the resignation or firing of the school’s principal and FCPS superintendent, and for the recall of members of the School Board. This spring, the Coalition became synonymous with the campaign against so-called “critical race theory,” and its proponents have even targeted our school’s PTSA and want it to be fully engaged in the “fight against CRT.” False and cruel attacks were launched against the new PTSA president — who notably was the first Chinese-American president of the TJ PTSA — because she wanted the PTSA to focus on its usual student-centered and welcoming activities for students, parents, teachers, and staff — regardless of anyone’s political views — rather than on CRT and admissions changes. Who would have imagined that that would become controversial? These toxic attacks finally led her to resign on July 28.

Why is this fight at TJ relevant to the rest of Fairfax County and perhaps the rest of our region? Because TJ is the proverbial canary in the coal mine. The demonization and manipulative weaponizing of “CRT” by Coalition leaders, conveyed in a manner which does not promote unity, and combined

with their bullying and censoring tactics, are clearly attempts to silence alternative views and crush efforts to promote diversity and belonging. This in turn threatens to tear our school community apart, which is the complete opposite mission of a school PTSA. That same toxic playbook is already happening in Loudoun County, with School Board meetings so contentious police have had to be called in. The attempted hijacking and perversion of an institution that historically has enabled volunteer parents of all political stripes to work together in support of our students and teachers — the PTSA — needs to be contested and reversed. We hope more parents in Northern Virginia will come to recognize and push back on the divisive tactics we are experiencing at TJ, because only together can we demand civility, and ensure the safe, tolerant, inclusive, and welcoming schools all our students deserve.

Brian Anderson, Caiyi Li, Justine Byun, Natalie Lorenz Anderson, Kate Carey, Elaine Maag, Steve Chang, Chaya Thyagaraja Merrill, Dana Cibulski, Sujatha Narayan, Julie Cox, Parvathi Rachakonda, Penny Dunlop, Yvette Soliz Rivers, Susan Essman, Dorian Rivers, Michelle Gilles, Chris Rodriguez, Brian Heller, Sanjita Sethi, Stacey Heller, Mae Ybanez-Uy, Khurram Khan and Yan Yuan.

COVID Relief

BY KENNETH R. “KENN” PLUM
STATE DELEGATE (D-36)

The General Assembly is meeting this week and possibly a few days next week to appropriate the federal COVID-Relief fund made available through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). It is somewhat ironic that these funds are being appropriated at the same time there is a surge in infections mainly from the Delta variant and almost totally among eligible persons who have refused to be vaccinated.

ARPA made \$9.0 billion in federal funds available to Virginia and similar amounts to other states based on the guidelines that accompanied the monies. Although these are federal monies they must be appropriated by the General



Plum

Assembly in a budget bill passed by a majority in both houses and signed by the governor. HB7001 as the budget bill is designated is available for review at lis.virginia.gov. You should know in advance that it is some heavy going that might be best as bedside reading.

Included in ARPA are monies for State and Local Fiscal Relief Funds (SLFR) that total \$4.3 billion for Virginia. Other federal funds that are provided for specific programs include Child Care Development, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Block Grants and federal unemployment benefits. There are no state general funds that are included in this budget bill as the General Assembly will meet again in five months at its regular session when surplus monies from state revenues will be appropriated. The budget bill is a consensus document worked on over many weeks among legislators and staff

and executive branch staff and is not likely to be amended.

Highlights of the budget bill, many of which have already been announced by the governor, include \$716 billion for broadband expansion. The pandemic demonstrated conclusively that broadband is essential to everyone in commerce and in education when children have to learn at home. Schools will receive \$250 million for ventilation improvements that became obvious during the pandemic.

Public health initiatives total \$120 million, and programs of public safety to reduce community violence will receive \$114.5 million. Mental health and substance abuse programs are proposed to receive \$238 million. The unemployment compensation program will be replenished with \$862 million eliminating the need to raise unemployment fund tax rates among employers. An additional \$73.6 is being provided to the Virginia Employment Commission to update their technology and increase their staff size as major

deficiencies were identified and citizens were poorly served during the pandemic.

Food access programs will receive \$25.6 million to ensure that Virginians do not go hungry during these challenging times. Small businesses including the tourism industry will be able to apply for relief from a fund totaling \$76.5 million. New data from the U.S. Treasury shows that Virginia leads all other states on the distribution of rent relief monies, and that program will continue.

While these new monies from the federal government will provide relief to many citizens and to many programs that respond to community needs, the ultimate in COVID relief rests with the broader community. I do not expect that the legislature will mandate vaccinations or the wearing of masks. Both, however, may be the best way to realize relief from the ravages of pandemic. Let’s work in our community to ensure that all know the importance of getting vaccinated and wearing masks in crowds.

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NEWS DEPARTMENT:
south@connectionnewspapers.com

Kemal Kurspahic
Editor ♦ 703-778-9414
kemal@connectionnewspapers.com

Bonnie Hobbs
Community Reporter, 703-778-9415
bhobbs@connectionnewspapers.com

Mercia Hobson
Community Reporter
mhobson@connectionnewspapers.com

Mike Salmon
Contributing Writer
msalmon@connectionnewspapers.com

Ken Moore
Contributing Writer
kmoore@connectionnewspapers.com

ADVERTISING:
For advertising information
sales@connectionnewspapers.com
703-778-9431

Debbie Funk
Display Advertising/National Sales
703-778-9444
debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com

David Griffin
Marketing Assistant
703-778-9431
dgriffin@connectionnewspapers.com

Classified & Employment
Advertising
703-778-9431

Editor & Publisher
Mary Kimm
mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com
@MaryKimm

Executive Vice President
Jerry Vernon
703-549-0004
jvernon@connectionnewspapers.com

Managing Editor
Kemal Kurspahic
Art/Design:
Laurence Foong, John Heinly,
Ali Khaligh
Production Manager:
Geovani Flores

CIRCULATION
Circulation Manager:
Ann Oliver
circulation@connectionnewspapers.com



Memorial Ride Highlights Need to Improve Safety

Cars need to share the roads with walkers and bikers.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

Bicyclists in Centreville are getting together next weekend to remember Raymond Gerard Buza, who was killed by a driver while riding his bike at Hidden Canyon Road and Bluemountain View Drive on May 21, in the Centreville section of Fairfax County. Buza's death is among a number of bicyclists and pedestrians killed in Fairfax County recently, signaling a need for additional infrastructure improvements and speed enforcement to make it safer to bike throughout Fairfax County.

In Buza's case, the cyclist had the right of way and the driver should have seen the approaching cyclist, said Bruce Wright, of FABB. The speed limit on that road is 25 mph and traffic volume is low, and the Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling noted that there's a lot of bike traffic in that area. "Most people would feel very safe riding there. I can only assume that the motorist was either distracted, or speeding, or both," Wright said, suggesting that police enforcing the speed limits would help.

Weeks following the fatal collision, the driver, a 55-year-old woman from Centreville, was charged with "infliction of injury on vulnerable road user" on June 3, the police said.

Following that crash, there were two more traffic fatalities in Tysons and in Lorton, each leaving a pedestrian dead. On Sunday, July 25 at 11:05 p.m. on Chain Bridge Road at the intersection of International Drive in Tysons, detectives determined Jose Matias Monjaras, 61, of Falls Church, was crossing Chain Bridge Road at the intersection of International Drive without the right of way. The driver of a 2015 Toyota Corolla was traveling north on Chain Bridge Road through a green light and struck Monjaras in the intersection. The driver remained at the scene. After life saving efforts, Monjaras succumbed to his injuries. Preliminarily, speed and alcohol do not appear to be factors for the driver, police said.

In Lorton, the Crash Reconstruction Unit continues to investigate a fatal crash that occurred Friday, July 30 at 9:15 p.m. in the 8100 block of Lorton Road. Preliminarily, detectives determined Marco Antonio Galeas Sr., 55, of Alexandria, was crossing mid-block on Lorton Road near the I-95 overpass, outside of a crosswalk. The driver of a 2010 Nissan Altima was traveling east on Lorton Road in the center lane and struck



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

The Raymond Gerard Buza ghost bike is a reminder to all that pass the site to be wary of bicyclists.

Galeas Sr. The driver remained at the scene. Galeas Sr. was taken to the hospital where he succumbed to his injuries.

Infrastructure Changes Coming

The Centreville driver was charged for Buza's death under a bill that FABB supported and Sen. Scott Surovell (D-36) sponsored, titled "§ 46.2-816.1. Careless driving and infliction of injury on vulnerable road users," which makes it a Class 1 misdemeanor to operate a motor vehicle in a careless or distracted manner such that the careless or distracted operation is the proximate cause of serious bodily injury as defined in § 18.2-51.4.

FABB is hoping the county and VDOT will work with police to investigate where bike crashes occur and develop ways to make the locations safer. They may be in luck this time due to the concentration on safety for the latest infrastructure bill in the U.S. Senate and House in early August.

Surovell is introducing legislation this session in Virginia to create a dedicated fund to pay for bike and pedestrian projects that are not connected to road widenings, he said. "We also need to continue to modernize our laws, invest in transit and transit oriented development, and raise awareness and continue to fight distracted driving," Surovell added. "Many drivers continue to have a sense of entitlement and active hostility to sharing the road with the vulnerable."

Post Forest Drive and Random Hills Road Shared-Use Paths Fairfax County

Virtual Public Information Meeting

Thursday, August 26, 2021, 7 p.m.
www.virginiadot.org/PostForest

Find out about planned improvements along Post Forest Drive from West Ox Road to Random Hills Road, and along Random Hills Road from Post Forest Drive to Monument Drive to improve bicyclist and pedestrian safety, accessibility and connectivity to the I-66 bicycle/pedestrian network. The sidewalk along the south side of Post Forest Drive will be upgraded to a ten-foot-wide shared-use path from just west of Black Ironwood Drive to Random Hills Road. In order to accommodate the ten-foot-wide shared-use path, Post Forest Drive will be restriped without bicycle lanes, and curb and gutter will be modified as needed. The existing sidewalk along the east side of Random Hills Road will be upgraded to a ten-foot-wide shared-use path from Post Forest Drive to the existing shared-use path just beyond the Monument Drive overpass. The project also includes pedestrian improvements at the West Ox Road/Post Forest Drive and Post Forest Drive/Random Hills Road intersections.

The meeting will be held as a **virtual/online meeting**. Information for accessing and participating in the virtual meeting is available at www.virginiadot.org/PostForest. The project team will make a short presentation beginning at 7 p.m. and answer questions for about an hour after the presentation.

Review project information and meeting details on the webpage above or during business hours at VDOT's Northern Virginia District Office, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030. Please call ahead at 703-259-2907 or TTY/TDD 711 to make an appointment with appropriate personnel.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and 23 CFR 771, a Programmatic Categorical Exclusion is being prepared under agreement with the Federal Highway Administration. Pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 and 36 CFR 800, information concerning the potential effects of the proposed improvements on properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places will be included in the environmental document.

Give your comments during the meeting, or by **September 7, 2021** via the comment form on the project website, by mail to Ms. Hong Ha, P.E., Virginia Department of Transportation, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030 or by email to meetingcomments@VDOT.virginia.gov. Please reference "Post Forest Drive and Random Hills Road Shared-Use Paths" in the subject line.

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In case an alternate date is needed, the meeting will be held Monday, August 30, 2021 at the same time.

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WELLBEING



PHOTO COURTESY OF SAMANTHA MCCORMICK

Alexis McCormick is hoping to earn a medal at this week's Junior Olympics.

Pressure for Athletic Success Can Lead to Stress

Balancing the need for athletic achievement with emotional wellbeing.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
 THE CONNECTION

Practicing with her club track team three days each week, training with a private coach on the other four days and balancing a challenging academic workload led to a stressful school year for Alexandria high school senior Alexis McCormick. This week, she is hoping that her training will pay off as she competes in the National Junior Olympics.

"We're living in such a hyper competitive environment and there is so much pressure on kids to succeed. All of the kids are so stressed," said Alexis's mother Samantha McCormick. "It would be stressful under any condition, but last year there was the added layer of distance learning. I think that when athletes like Naomi Osaka and Simone Biles speak out it causes parents to take a look at their own children."

Creating a balance between emotional wellbeing and meeting expectations for academic and athletic success can be challenging. Local mental health professionals explain some of the reasons behind the mental health issues that are connected to athletes and what parents can do.

"It's extremely difficult to culti-

vate a healthy sense of self in body and mind given the pressures of societal expectations and social media," said Herndon psychologist Janet Owens. "Peers are lauding athletic accomplishments on social media."

A need to succeed that is driven in part by parental pressure can lead to emotional fatigue and low self esteem, says Bethesda therapist, Katherine Harden. "It's how much passion a child has themselves that makes a difference in mental health issues," she said. "When a parent pushes a child to focus on a sport they don't love, whatever it is, the

"Parents can help prevent their children from experiencing anxiety and depression by providing support and unconditionally valuing their children regardless of athletic performance."

—Jerome Short, PhD

mental health issues begin to seep in. This is because the underlying thoughts are, 'I don't have a voice' or even 'I won't be loved if I don't perform in this job I don't even like.' That's an awful lot to ask a child of any age to carry, especially if they have a perfectionistic coach driving the same sentiments. It's too much for anyone."

Specializing in one sport puts a child at risk for anxiety and depression suggests Jerome Short, PhD,

professor of psychology at George Mason University. "Specialization leads to more of one's identity and self-worth coming from successful performance in a single sport," he said. "Perceived threats and worries increase if we are not accomplishing our goals and having fun playing sports. We may feel helpless and hopeless about improving our performance."

Support from loved ones can mitigate some of the mental health issues that are associated with the pressure to be high-achieving. "Parents can help prevent their children from experiencing anxiety and depression by providing support and unconditionally valuing their children regardless of athletic

performance," said Short. "It helps to have other sources of achievement outside of sports, or to participate in multiple sports."

As a high school student, Jason Gamble, PhD was a nationally ranked track and field runner. Today he is a child psychol-

ogist who specializes in anxiety and depression. "As athletes we only knew of one thing, the training to reach the goal. What happens when an adverse event happens such as injury, loss, or other significant bumps in the road?" he asks. "One thing to consider is teaching your child resilience skills, foundations of gratitude and how to stay focused on a growth mindset versus spiraling downward because of a setback."



The team works on a stream in Springfield.



Along one of the bike trails, non-native plants are the target.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF FAIRFAX COUNTY

Streams Get a Lift from a County Program 'Operation Stream Shield' is called a win-win-win.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

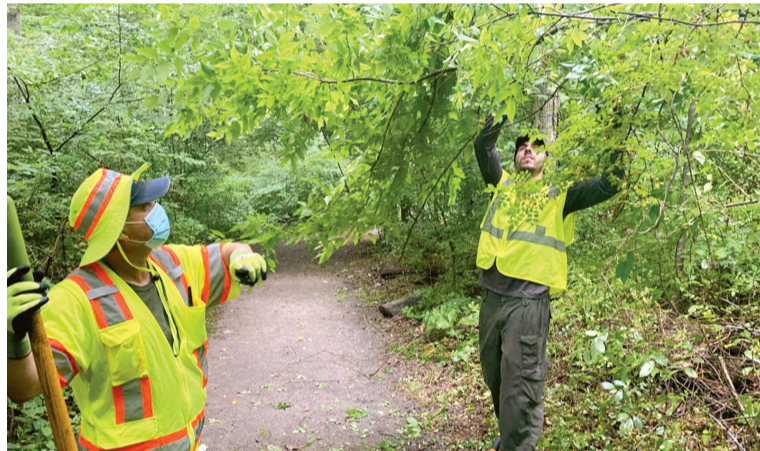
As storms continue to wash trash, construction debris, tree limbs and leaves into the suburban streams throughout Fairfax County, a program was developed by officials to clean up the streams while providing a paycheck to those in need.

This program, called "Operation Stream Shield," is a partnership was initiated between the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services and the Office to Prevent and End Homelessness to benefit the environment and provide assistance for individuals experiencing homelessness. "It's a win-win-win," said Sharon North, spokesperson for Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services.

The county teams up with people from the Eleanor U. Kennedy Community Shelter, Bailey's Crossroads Community Shelter, and The Lamb Center homeless shelter that go out to the streams a total of eight trips a week to clean the streams. The participants are then paid for their work, and on several occasions, it has led to a regular or seasonal job for those who needed it. "We have a lot of debris pulled from the streams," said Emily Burton of the Stormwater Planning Division at the Fairfax County Department of Public Works.

Burton said the program idea was initially gotten from a similar situation in Albuquerque, New Mexico. "We modeled it very closely with their program," she said. Fairfax County started their pilot program in October 2019, and kicked off the program in May 2020.

They also rely on contact with the various "Friends of ..." stream www.connectionnewspapers.com



The non-native plants get up in the trees and are not good for the native trees.

groups to work out the particulars. In the Mount Vernon area, they work with Friends of Little Hunting Creek and Friends of the Dyke Marsh, and in Springfield, they are working with the Friends of Accotink Creek group.

From the Friends of Accotink Creek, Philip Latasa has seen the benefits from working with the teams at Operation Stream Shield. "We as Friends of Accotink Creek greatly appreciate the effort Fairfax County is putting into removing unsightly and harmful trash from our streams as well as removing some of the ubiquitous noxious exotic invasive plant species that are overwhelming so many of our parks," Latasa said, via email. He noted that the work can be hard in difficult terrain and weather, but the participants are clearly motivated to get the job done. "It is a clear win for all parties that this program also gives dignity and income to shelter residents, helping many to return to self-supporting status over time," Latasa said.

The county has a "litter hotspots," map on the site as well to help teams locate places that need help. In Springfield, for ex-

ample, one hot spot for litter is in Lake Mercer along South Run, and another is on Accotink Creek just south of Fullerton Road. These spots are marked with an X on the map. Over in Mount Vernon, there are spots along Little Hunting Creek and Paul Spring Branch, west of Hollin Hills. On this map, there is also the ability to report litter spots that are encountered.

Non-Native Plant Removal

One part of the Operation Stream Shield deals with non-native plant species that are at the streams and causing problems for the trees and native plants that grow along the banks. The county has a video on their website created by the Fairfax County Park Authority to identify the non-native species that are encountered at the streams. Although kudzu and ivy seem to be the main culprits, the video helps identify others like Japanese Barberry, Porcelain Berry, Mile a Minute and Oriental Bittersweet to name a few. In the video, they describe how to identify the plants, how to cut and pull them down, and tools needed to accomplish this.

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

5080c49aca62aa46-back2school9
Questions? Reach out via Back2School@LortonAction.org.

SHEEHY AUTO STORES LAUNCH SCHOOL SUPPLY DRIVE

From now through Aug. 9, Sheehy Auto Stores throughout the area will collect new school supplies to benefit students in each community.

Needed supplies include:

- Paper: lined paper, copy paper, construction paper, spiral notebooks, composition books, index cards;
- Pencils & Pens: blue or black pens, #2 pencils, colored pencils, erasers, pencil sharpener, pencil case, colored markers, crayons, highlighters, dry-erase markers;
- General Supplies: dry-erase boards, paper clips, 3-ring 2" binders, pocket folders, report covers;
- Classroom staples: stapler, staples, rulers, protractors, glue sticks, scissors, tape, calculator;
- Basics: tissues, sanitizing wipes, hand sanitizer.

STEM NEEDS VOLUNTEERS

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 DC metro area during the 2021-22school year. If you care about K-12 STEM education and have time to share your knowledge with students and teachers, please send a note to bcalinge@aaas.org with your home address.

SATURDAY/AUG. 14

LCAC Back2School Outreach (Donation Drop-off). 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. At Lorton Community Action Center, 9518 Richmond Highway, Lorton. LCAC is starting to plan for Back2School. After so many months learning from home, computer screens are being replaced by backpacks and school supplies. The goal is to provide children with backpacks and the supplies needed to equip them for a bright school year and future. How You Can Help:

1. Make a donation. Cash donations can be delivered to LCAC (9518 Richmond Highway, Lorton, 22079; Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.) or mailed to P.O. Box 154 Lorton, VA 22199 (Specify that it is for the Back2School program).

Donate online by clicking here:

<https://donate.onecause.com/lcac/donate>

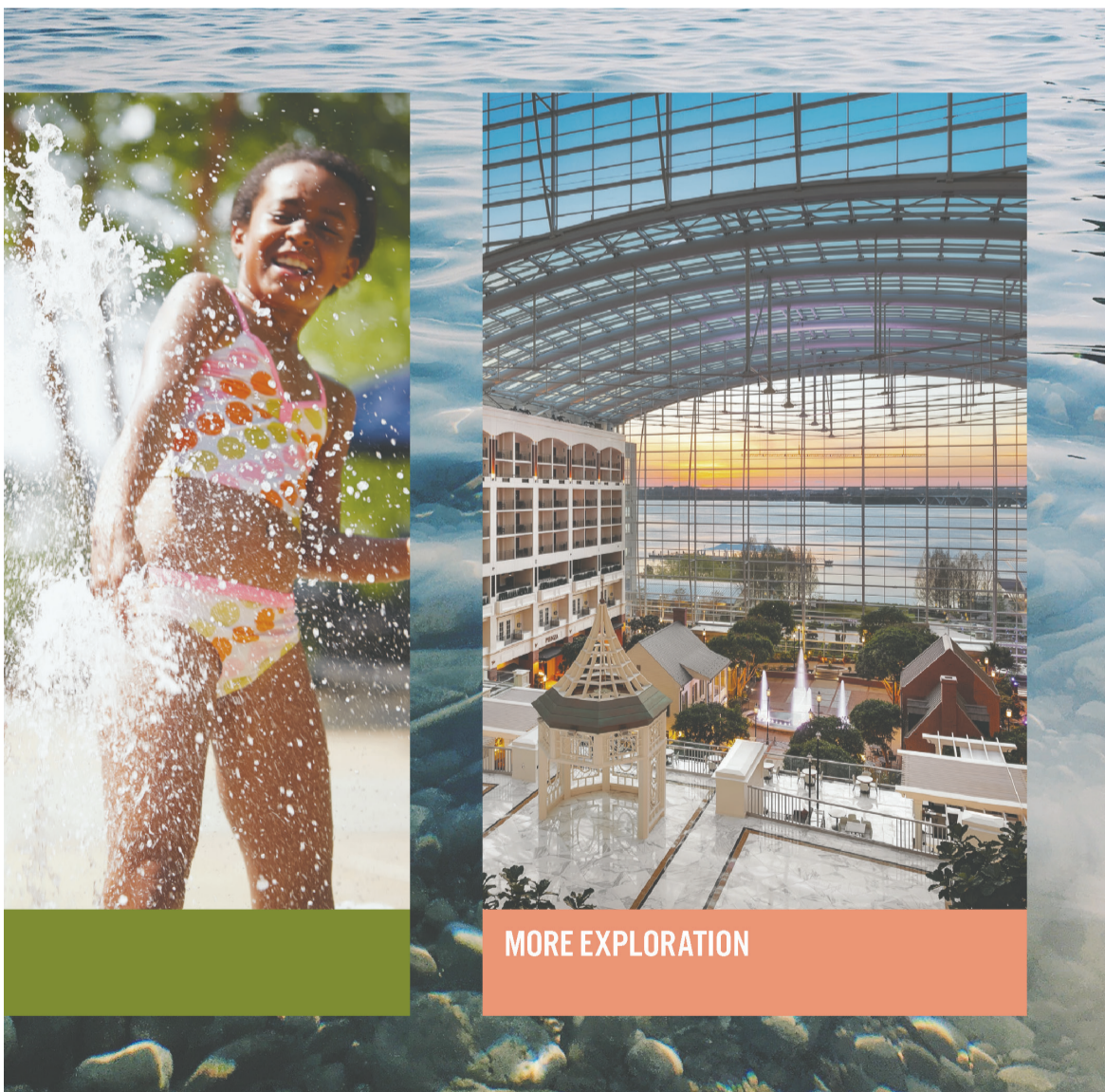
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2. Shop using the Amazon Wishlist. Pick out a few supplies from the wish list here:

https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/l/Z9PSH1PP62AK?ref=wl_share

3. Pledge to donate via the SignUp Genius page:

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Scooters Now Another Mode of Transportation in Fairfax County

County okays 600 of these “shared mobility devices.”

By Mike Salmon
The Connection

There are a couple of localities in Northern Virginia where scooters are running rampant, and soon Fairfax County will be included in that unofficial club. Recently 600 e-scooters are now approved to operate in Fairfax County and will soon hit local pavement. Like bicycles, e-scooters can be used on a highway, sidewalk, shared-use path, roadway, or crosswalk, but cannot operate above 10 mph, the county said.

Scooters actually fall under an ordinance regulating shared mobility devices, to include motorized scooters, that was approved in 2019 and went into effect Jan. 1, 2020. Operators are allowed an initial maximum fleet of 300 devices per operator permit that can be increased to 600 devices per operator based on usage, so the 600 in this first program are divided between two companies, Link and BIRD.

Scooters are a common site in Arlington, the City of Alexandria, and on George Mason University campus, and scooter parking in these locations has become somewhat of an issue. The rules seem to be bending in many cases in these locations. In Fairfax County, once riders reach their destination, they should leave the device parked in an area that does not impede normal car or foot traffic. If an e-scooter is parked in an inappropriate place or left on private property, it falls upon the random resident to contact the device operator listed on the e-scooter and the operator must remove it.

Some residents chimed in on social media about this when the county announced it. “Most riders just abandon scooters on sidewalks or park trails... So annoying...,” Facebook user slavagamol posted. “Do you have to take a safety and awareness test to rent these?” asked suzrejo.

“City of Fairfax has scooters left all over the sidewalks and a lack of safety toward pedestrians,” they said.

Fairfax County staff will create a process for complaints about e-scooters and SMDs related to improper use or abandonment. Staff will coordinate implementation of the complaint process with bordering jurisdictions and present a summary in the first year of SMDs in early 2021.

Fairfax County staff will also in-
www.connectionnewspapers.com



A scooter spot on campus at George Mason University.

take complaints about e-scooters and SMDs related to improper use or abandonment. In order to report any issues related to scooters and other shared devices, emails can be sent to consumer@fairfax-county.gov.

Scooter Mania

Scooters started out as basically a skateboard with a handlebar, but now it's moved into the electronic, high tech mode of transportation that does take some balance, skill and a set of nerves. A helmet is recommended when riding a scooter, but it's only a recommendation. The helmets may seem like a no-brainer but “Fairfax County does not have the authority to regulate helmets although many companies do that voluntarily,” they state on the website.

Bird is an international scooter company that claims the “Bird 3” is “the world’s most eco-conscious scooter,” but on the website, it takes a lot of digging to find out the details, like how to pay for it? An app and a credit card, of course.

The Washington Area Bicyclists Association has even chimed in, supporting this mode of transportation, saying “scooters provide a low-emission, affordable and on-demand travel option and an alternative to private or shared cars.” They also state that users “must not use any cellular telephone, text messaging device, portable music player, or other device that may distract You from operating the Vehicle safely.”

According to the Bird rules, riders must be at least 18, physically fit to ride it, assume all risks for injuries, and obey all helmet laws. At



At GMU, there is a list of rules but they seemed mostly focused on where to ride and park the scooters. No scooter etiquette on this list.



GMU alumna Thomas Lippincott likes the idea of scooters on campus.

GMU, their rules are posted at several scooter parking spots around campus, but any helmet rules are not stated on the posted sign.

Payment to use a Bird scooter is through “credit card, debit card, or another agreed payment method,” which limits the use to only card holders. This could limit county scooters to the upper end of the economically advantaged too.

Over at Link, it's much of the same although Link scooters go up to 15 miles per hour, and the rule in Fairfax County is 10 miles per hour.

According to Rebecca L. Makely, Consumer Services Division Director at Fairfax County Department of Cable and Consumer Services “permittees are encouraged to provide a cash-based or non-smartphone mechanism to access Shared Mobility Devices,” although it is not clear if Link or Bird have other payment methods.

For any issues related to scooters and other shared devices email consumer@fairfaxcounty.gov.



Masks are the norm.

Removing Vaccination Barriers

FROM PAGE 3

moon bounce, games, food trucks, and raffles at the Berkdale Apartments in the Town of Herndon. However, the event's purpose was an enticement, an intentional outreach to the community enabling adults and children 12 years and older with parental permission to get vaccinated. No barriers, no travel, no child care needed.

“We are providing the Pfizer vaccine. This is a collaboration with the Virginia Department of Health, Fairfax County Health Department, and Health Works for Northern Virginia,” Gutierrez-Lugo said. “In this area of Herndon, the numbers for adults to be vaccinated are very low. So, we are trying a more intentional outreach in these communities.”

According to Gutierrez-Lugo, what they did before didn't work, registering people to send them to sites on a particular day and time. Many of the people in this part of town worked two jobs while balancing childcare, eldercare, food-sourcing, and life. If something happened, that became their priority, not the vaccine.

“It's just not our culture. We are in survival mode,” Gutierrez-Lugo said.

In her role with Opportunity Neighborhood, Gutierrez-Lugo recalled that she had asked people if they were vaccinated in June. For most, the answer was no, but they were thinking about it. “I asked them if the vaccine was available to them at their apartment complex would they get it, their answer changed to yes,” Gutierrez-Lugo said. “That's when we decided something had to change... This is what we have to do so that we can get out of this pandemic.”

GUTIERREZ-LUGO said that the day before, a twelve-year-old agreed to get the vaccine. On Saturday, she stood in line, without her mother, paper in

hand, excited to get immunized because she was going to middle school. However, when told she needed her mother there for permission, she felt overwhelmed and ran back to Gutierrez-Lugo, saying, “It's too much. I can't do it. Mom needs to be with Grandma.” Gutierrez-Lugo arranged for one of the Opportunity Neighborhood ambassadors to stay with the grandmother. The mother arrived, and the young girl received her vaccination.

“It's barriers like that for our people, even little barriers. It's just overwhelming, and she's twelve. Maybe for you, maybe for me, we can overcome the barriers. But not for these people who have been through trauma more than once in their lives, and they are survivors. Little things like that, it's just overwhelming,” Gutierrez-Lopez said. “We have to carry these communities until they are self-sufficient until they are empowered. Just a little push, that's all they need.”

On the day after the event, Gutierrez-Lopez said, “Only 42 people vaccinated. We ran out of vaccines, sadly. At least 20 people didn't get the vaccine; they were referred to CVS.”

Town of Herndon Vice Mayor Cesar del Aguila stopped by the Berkdale Apartments. According to del Aguila, the event's intentional outreach to a community primarily under-served and struggling appeared a success. “Vaccinations are critical, and this population is at greater risk and therefore in much need of these services. Schools open in three weeks, and we must vaccinate as many residents as possible,” del Aguila said. “We need to bridge the cultural, economic, and income divide in our town,” he said.

A little over a mile in the sought-after historic district of the Town of Herndon, vehicles lined up throughout the morning, waiting for COVID-19 testing.

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THE CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

NEWS

Senior Olympics: Ready, Set, Go

Northern Virginia Senior Olympics opens 39th year in September.

By SHIRLEY RUHE
THE CONNECTION

Step up and claim your Olympic medal awarded after each event. There is something for everyone at the Northern Virginia Senior Olympics (NVSO), set to begin Sept. 18 with the opening ceremony at the Thomas Jefferson Community Center in Arlington at 9:30 a.m.

More than 50 events will be offered from swimming, tennis and the softball throw to jigsaw puzzle and bowling. Although some past events will no longer be offered this year, crossword and table tennis doubles have been added.

Herb Levitan, this year's event director, says NVSO eliminated events this year such as bridge and Mexican train dominoes where people had to sit close together. Levitan has been competing himself since around 2007. He says it's good to try new things and even though you see the other competitors once a year, you make friends for sure.

The events will be offered at 17 community centers, parks, schools and clubs from Sept. 18-30, beginning with the 1600 meter run and ending with bocce and horseshoes. Participants must be 50 years old by Dec. 31, 2021 and live in the counties of Fairfax, Arlington, Loudoun, Fauquier, Prince William and the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax and Falls Church.



PHOTO BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION

The horseshoe competition is held each year at the Fairfax City Senior Center, Green Acres. Register now for the Northern Virginia Senior Olympics at <https://nvso.us/>

This is the 39th season for Northern Virginia Senior Olympics, and a number of participants have been competing for years. Some have returned to a college sport while others have retired and taken on a new challenge. Some enter as many as 10-12 events and train most of the year while others join an event with a friend and just for fun.

Registration this year is online only with a \$15 registration fee which covers multiple events. Registration closes Monday, Sept. 6. It is expected that all participants will have been vaccinated against COVID-19 and will follow all protocols during the competition.

See <https://nvso.us/> to register and for a schedule of events.

CALENDAR

NOW THRU AUG. 29

Summer Table. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. At Building W-8, Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Ceramic Artists Pam Eisenmann and Joan Ulrich offer two takes on convivial dining. Celebrating summer gatherings with lively handmade tableware: serving pieces, vases, sippers and more. Meet the artists on August 14th, 2-4 p.m. Light refreshments will be served.

CONCERTS AT BURKE LAKE

Grab your friends, a picnic blanket, and meet at 7 p.m. at Burke Lake Park for the annual free concert series. Arrive early to get your spot on the lawn and grab a drink from 2 Silos.

SCHEDULE

Aug. 4 The Johnny Artis Band (Blues, Rock & Roll)
Aug. 11 Practically Einstein (Vintage Rock)
Aug. 18 The Colin Thompson Band (Blues Rock)
Aug. 25 Rescheduled show / TBD

WEDNESDAY/AUG. 4

Lee District Nights. 7:30 p.m. at Lee District Park, Leonadus K. Plenty Amphitheater, Franconia.
Aug. 4 - Junkyard Band (Go-Go, Funk)
Aug. 11 - The U.S. Navy - Cruisers (Pop/Rock)

Aug. 18 - Alt Washingtonia Schuhplattler Verein (Alpine Dance/Music)
Aug. 25 - Sharon Clark Quartet (Jazz)

SATURDAY/AUG. 7

Mount Vernon Nights. 8 p.m. at Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton.
Schedule
August 7 - The Pietasters (Ska)
August 14 - Crys Matthews (Jazz, Blues, Funk)
August 21 - Dom Flemons (Acoustic Blues)
August 28 - The U.S. Army Field Band, Six String Soldiers (Americana, Folk, Bluegrass, Irish)

GOLF CAMPS

Join the nationwide resurgence of the lifelong game of golf. Laurel Hill Golf Club and Twin Lakes Golf Course are offering weeklong summer camps taught by professionals from The Eisman Golf Academy. Junior golfers ages 8-14 will learn and improve on golf fundamentals in a fun environment. Class sizes are limited for personalized instruction and camp includes on-course play. Also included are swag bags, hat, games and prizes. Camp will take place at Twin Lakes on Aug. 9-13, 2021 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. To register, visit the Junior Golf Fairfax website. Twin Lakes Golf Course is located at 6201 Union Mill Road in Clifton.

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Still Bedridden in Burtonsville



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Though not nearly so much as last week. Improving for sure, but "slowly and painfully," as the Emergency Room doctor predicted. "Weeks, not months," she replied in response to our "How long?" question. Now back to Gate A17 in Houston:

"Would you mind if I said a healing prayer for you?" I looked over at Dina, and we both said "No, not at all." The lady, Solange was her name, motioned for a male companion standing a few feet away to come over to where she and I were sitting. She explained to him the reason and within a few seconds, they both began praying for me. Though their words were not identical, they both invoked "God, Jesus Christ, the father, his children, died on the cross" and so forth for about 15 seconds in a sincere attempt to heal my burns. After her companion walked away, I looked back over to her and said: "Actually, my feet are not the worst problem I have. I have cancer." Which prompted her, this time alone, to invoke similarly powerful references on my behalf. When she completed her healing, we both thanked her. She asked if we lived in Houston and told us of her church where healing, as I witnessed today, is a regular element and she assured me that some of her fellow parishioners have been healed. Who am I to question the power of God? Nobody, that's who. Praise the Lord and pass the perocet.

Now I'm sort of looking forward to my next recurring quarterly scan scheduled for mid-September to see what happens. My last few scans have been characterized as "stable." Shrinkage would be a change and a welcome one at that. However, after being given a terminal, stage IV non small cell lung cancer diagnosis in Feb. 2009 with a "13 month to two year" prognosis, 12 and one half years later, I have learned to embrace "stable." It may not cure, but neither will it kill. Nor is it ideal, but it's a living for which I'm extremely grateful.

Anyway, back to real-time. It's now a bit more than two weeks since "the burning." I am sort of ambulatory but only by using a "walker," and infrequently as possible. The more I stay off my feet, the less damage I will do to the skin as it heals from the inside out; the main reason the recovery is so slow and arduous. But I am able to "walker" now to my in-home office from my den where I've been laid up, literally, approximately 30 feet, where I can access my desktop computer and type this column, email and on-line bank, et cetera; a distance which would have been too painful to 'walker' even a few days ago. So yes, progress indeed.

In an odd confluence of circumstances, ever since I burned my two soles, I haven't really thought much about my underlying, overriding condition: cancer. "The burning" seems to have taken over my subconscious. Rather than compound the daily grind of living with cancer, the burns and subsequent at-home care have done just the opposite: they replaced whatever medical preoccupation I had/have about my cancer with the difficulties and challenges caused by these second degree burns. In a weird way, it's been an easier last few weeks, emotionally, as so much of my focus and treatment has been on this new/temporary problem instead of the existing permanent one: stage IV, papillary thyroid cancer. I wouldn't say it's been a relief and certainly not a reprieve, but it's definitely been a break in the action, if you know what I mean? Nevertheless, I'll be happy when I'm back to abnormal and can walk again without any assistance. And the next time I'm at the beach, I'll be the one wearing sneakers and socks all day. You can be sure I won't walk barefoot ever again.

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



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MON-FRI 6A-7P & SAT 7A-5P**

**BATTERY SPECIAL
FREE**

BATTERY CHECK-UP
INCLUDES: CHECK COLD CRANKING AMPS AND VISUAL INSPECTION OF BATTERY CONDITION. INCLUDES BATTERY CONDITION PRINT OUT.

TOYOTA VEHICLES ONLY. COUPON MUST BE PRESENTED AT TIME OF WRITE-UP. TAX AND SHOP SUPPLIES ADDITIONAL. VALID ONLY AT ALEXANDRIA TOYOTA. OFFER ENDS 08/31/21.

**LUBE, OIL & FILTER SPECIAL
\$39.95**

\$44.95 FOR SYNTHETIC OIL CHANGE
INCLUDES: CHANGE OIL (UP TO 5 QTS.), INSTALL GENUINE TOYOTA OIL FILTER, INSPECT & ADJUST ALL FLUID LEVELS AND COMPLIMENTARY MULTI-POINT INSPECTION WITH PRINT OUT.

NOT VALID WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR COUPON. TOYOTA VEHICLES ONLY. COUPON MUST BE PRESENTED AT TIME OF WRITE-UP. VALID ONLY AT ALEXANDRIA TOYOTA. TAX AND SHOP SUPPLIES ADDITIONAL. OFFER ENDS 08/31/21.

**ALIGNMENT SPECIAL
\$89.95**

4-WHEEL ALIGNMENT
INCLUDES: 4-WHEEL ALIGNMENT, INSPECT SUSPENSION, BALL JOINTS, STRUTS & SHOCKS, TIRE CONDITION AND SET TIRE PRESSURE.

TOYOTA VEHICLES ONLY. COUPON MUST BE PRESENTED AT TIME OF WRITE-UP. TAX AND SHOP SUPPLIES ADDITIONAL. VALID ONLY AT ALEXANDRIA TOYOTA. OFFER ENDS 08/31/21.

**BRAKE PAD SPECIAL
\$99.95**

BRAKE PAD REPLACEMENT
INCLUDES: INSTALL GENUINE TOYOTA FRONT BRAKE PADS, INSPECT FRONT & REAR ROTORS AND/OR DRUMS, CHECK TIRE CONDITION AND INSPECT ALL HARDWARE. TCMC PADS ONLY. MACHINE ROTORS AN ADDITIONAL \$199.95

NOT VALID WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR COUPON. TOYOTA VEHICLES ONLY. COUPON MUST BE PRESENTED AT TIME OF WRITE-UP. VALID ONLY AT ALEXANDRIA TOYOTA. TAX AND SHOP SUPPLIES ADDITIONAL. OFFER ENDS 08/31/21.

**TOYOTACARE PLUS
\$329.00
SPECIAL**

MAINTAIN PEACE OF MIND BY EXTENDING YOUR TOYOTACARE COMPLEMENTARY MAINTENANCE PLAN TO 4 YEARS/45,000 MILES!

TOYOTA VEHICLES ONLY. COUPON MUST BE PRESENTED AT TIME OF WRITE-UP. TAX AND SHOP SUPPLIES ADDITIONAL. VALID ONLY AT ALEXANDRIA TOYOTA. OFFER ENDS 08/31/21.

SERVICE VARIABLE DISCOUNT

THE MORE YOU SPEND, THE MORE YOU SAVE!
\$10 OFF... WHEN YOU SPEND \$50-\$99
\$15 OFF... WHEN YOU SPEND \$100-\$199
\$20 OFF... WHEN YOU SPEND \$200-\$499
\$50 OFF... WHEN YOU SPEND \$500+

TOYOTA VEHICLES ONLY. COUPON MUST BE PRESENTED AT TIME OF WRITE-UP. TAX AND SHOP SUPPLIES ADDITIONAL. VALID ONLY AT ALEXANDRIA TOYOTA. OFFER ENDS 08/31/21.



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Se habla español

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