

Burke ♦ Fairfax ♦ Springfield ♦ Fairfax Station

'Slow Down' Campaign Has a New Life

NEWS, PAGE 8



These signs are so popular, the Braddock District supervisor ordered some more.

Spending Spree

NEWS, PAGE 4

Itching to Know Cause of Local Phenomenon

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Virginia Department of Transportation

Telegraph Road at Hayfield Road Fairfax County

Virtual Public Information Meeting

Wednesday, September 1, 2021, 7 p.m.
www.virginiadot.org/TelegraphatHayfield

Find out about planned improvements in the area of Telegraph Road (Route 611) and Hayfield Road (Route 635) to reduce congestion and improve safety and operations. The improvements include adding a second northbound through lane on Telegraph Road at the Hayfield Road intersection, reconfiguring southbound Telegraph Road just beyond Hayfield Road by converting the existing on-road parking to a second through lane, and converting the eastbound Hayfield Road through lane to a shared left-turn through lane.

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/TelegraphatHayfield. 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 accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement created pursuant to the Code of Virginia §10.1-1188(b), VDOT has determined the planned improvements are exempt from the State Environmental Review Process due to a minimal effect on the existing natural and historic resources. However, all required environmental clearances and regulatory approvals will be obtained prior to project construction.

Give your comments during the meeting, or by **September 13, 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 "Telegraph Road at Hayfield Road" in the subject line.

VDOT ensures nondiscrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need more information or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, contact VDOT Civil Rights at 703-259-1775.

State Project: 0611-029-467, P101, R201, C501
 UPC: 116086

In case an alternate date is needed, the meeting will be held Thursday, September 9, 2021 at the same time.

HOMELIFESTYLE



PHOTO CREDIT GREGORY S. MANALO
 A cozy throw can add an element of warmth to an interior space



PHOTO BY ANNE WALKER
 The warm colors in this room by Anne Walker evoke visions of autumn.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNE WALKER
 Candles in hurricane lanterns such as these by Farm and Feast are a simple way to transition home accessories from summer to fall.

Design Ideas to Welcome Fall

Small changes in home accessories can transform a space.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
 THE CONNECTION

When it comes to interior design, attention to even the smallest of details took on new importance over the past year. Spending more time indoors has allowed us to experience the ways in which minor embellishments can have a major impact on the mood and feel of a room. From throw pillows in a living room to doormats in a mud room, local designers unveil accessories that can help one transition from summer to autumn while maintaining serenity and style.

"Don't look at this as a major undertaking or you'll be overwhelmed," said Alexandria interior designer Allison Bohlke. "It doesn't have to be time consuming. As the weather begins to cool down, take an hour to look around your house for places where you remove things that scream summer and swap them out for cozy alternatives."

"I created a blue and white nautical theme in my family room for summer," continued Bohlke. "In a month or so, I will put away my linen throw pillows and cotton throws and bring out my cashmere throws and wool throw pillows in warm camel and rich cream for a cozy look."

One of the easiest ways to transition home decor from summer to fall is to add candlelight, advises Potomac interior designer Anne Walker of Anne Walker Interiors Design. "There's something about the warm glow of real candlelight that just can't be replaced. It's an instant mood lifter," she said. "Hurricane lanterns come in several sizes and in beautiful smoked glass or clear glass. We use six in assorted sizes on our patio all year round, and they never get old."

Kitchens and bathrooms can serve as a backdrop for cool weather inspiration. "If you've been using white hand towels and kitchen towels, try getting versions in bold colors or monogrammed hand towels using thread in warm, jewel tones," said Bohlke.

In fact, the power of color should not be underestimated. "Use color so that the spaces appeal to every-



PHOTO COURTESY OF SALLIE LORD

Designer Sallie Lord says the approach of Autumn is time to reorganize an office space to prepare for a new school year.

one, said Sherry Hope-Kennedy of Studio SHK. "Keep the main area more neutral while having more fun with private areas."

Seasonal blossoms in colors that herald the start of fall can add an air of chic serenity to any interior space. "Fresh flowers will always be in style, said Walker. "Like real candlelight, fresh flowers are a low-cost way to bring real joy into your home."

A wooden drink tray not only conjures up woody images of autumn, but it's versatile, functional and can be used year round, particularly as school begins. "Filled with flower vases, it can be a casual-chic centerpiece on your dining table, or you can use it to carry barware or beverages to your guests," said Walker. "In your mudroom, it could hold keys, phones and other things you need to drop in a central location."

"The [metal bin] has an outdoorsy, cool vibe with industrial chic décor," continued Walker. "Use [them] to corral office supplies on your desk, to hold television remote controls in your family room, or to serve snacks when you entertain. Fill them with rolled-up towels near your mudroom or guest room. Fill them with plants to make an herb garden on your patio. The possibilities are endless."

Whether one hour or one month, spending time on a home refresh is worth the effort, says Chantilly designer Sallie Lord of GHI Team. "This is a great time for a purge to clean out the desk drawers to prepare for a new school year ahead," she said. "We love a well organized space that you can walk in and feel the design and the function."

FCPS Priority One: Get Eligible Students Vaccinated

Expansion of school COVID-19 vaccination clinics underway.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The level of community transmission of COVID-19 in Fairfax County is increasing again. It entered the “substantial” category, the second to the highest level on Tuesday, Aug. 2, following an upward trend reported by the CDC. The same week, Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) continued vaccinating eligible students at school-based clinics under a public-private partnership.

During a media event on Wednesday, Aug. 3, while visiting one of the clinics, Superintendent Dr. Scott Brabrand announced that FCPS wants to be ready to roll to get eligible children vaccinated during the school day with parent permission. There are 83,000 students under the age of 12 entering school buildings for in-person learning on Aug. 23, according to Brabrand. Because of their ages, the students are not yet eligible for the vaccine.

Fairfax County Public Schools, in partnership with the County’s Health Department, hosted free school-based COVID-19 vaccination clinics for adolescents 12 years of age and older at three school clinic sites, Herndon Elementary on Wednesday, Aug. 4, Justice High School in Falls Church on Thursday, Aug. 5, and Liberty Middle School in Clifton on Friday, Aug. 6.

ON WEDNESDAY, Brabrand visited Herndon Elementary School to see firsthand the public health initiative underway. According to Brabrand, the division finished the last school year, getting almost 5,000 students their first COVID-19 vaccine dose. The division plans to have additional clinics up running this fall under a public-private partnership.

“[Currently], we are at 75 percent in Fairfax County Public Schools of 12 to 17-year-olds to have their first dose. Now, we want to get that number even higher, so we have school vaccination clinics this week at multiple schools, and we want to continue,” Brabrand said.

“The solution to this pandemic, to make sure all schools return in this county five days in person, is the vaccination of all of our eligible students. Right now, it’s all of our 12-years-olds and up. We are preparing and working very closely to have more school vaccination clinics this fall at, at least 40 locations,” Brabrand added.

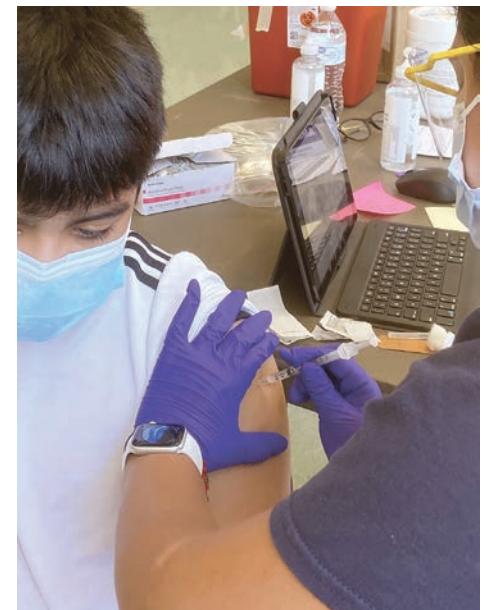
According to Brabrand, as the eligibility age for vaccination goes lower and lower, the division will be able to vaccinate thousands more children “to have a year that is as close to normal as possible.”

“Vaccination is part of the solution,” said Brabrand.

Students accompanied by their parents

(From left) Renee Gorman, Kimberlin Jimenez, 13, Scott Brabrand, Superintendent Fairfax County Public Schools, Hansel Molina, and Jeimmy Molina take a congratulatory photo after Kimberlin and Jeimmy receive their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

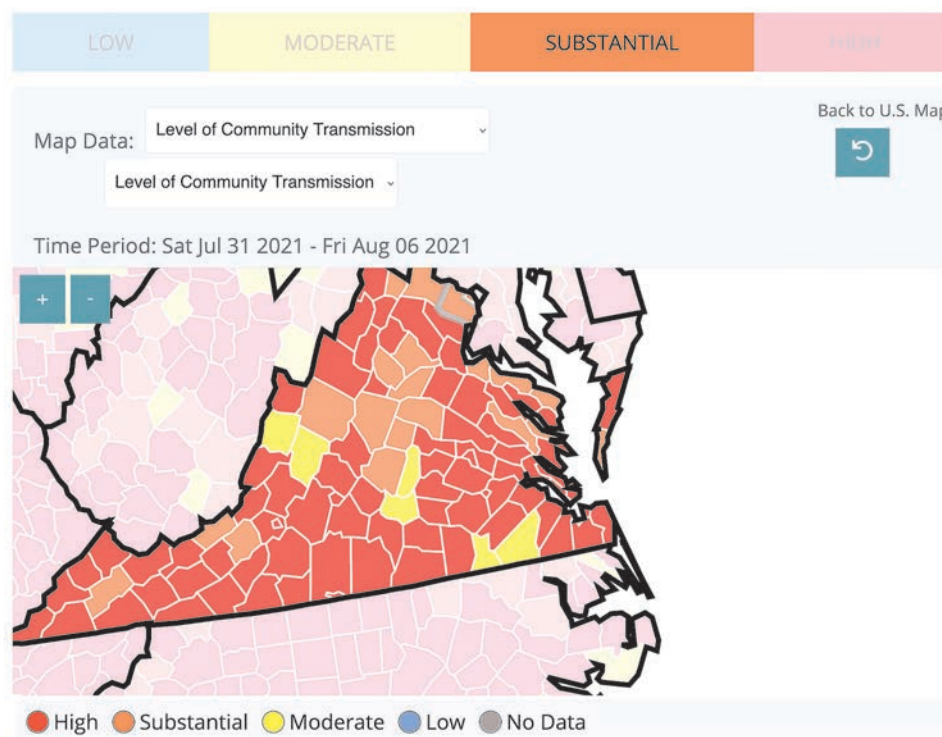
PHOTO BY
MERCIA HOBSON/
THE CONNECTION



MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Maycoll (last name withheld), 12, a Fairfax County student receives his COVID-19 vaccine at a school vaccination site.

Level of Community Transmission in Fairfax County, Virginia



The Level of Community Transmission in Fairfax County, Virginia escalates into ‘substantial.’

and guardians continued to enter the school to take advantage of the COVID-19 vaccine opportunity. Maycoll (last name withheld), 12, sat in the large room with others in the process of getting their vaccination. Maycoll said he would be attending Herndon Middle School in a couple of weeks. After receiving his immunization, Maycoll said, “It didn’t hurt, just a little pinch. I relaxed my arm.”

Rising freshman at Herndon High School, Kimberley Jimenez, 13, of Herndon, was about to exit the school clinic after receiving her vaccine. “I feel safe now because I got the vaccine [but], I will leave my mask on because others may not be vaccinated, and this is my first dose.”

According to Brabrand, like many other

schools in Northern Virginia, Fairfax County Public Schools is starting the school year 2021-22 with universal masking to counteract the Delta variant and reassure staff, students, parents, and the community that the division is committed to safe learning in school buildings.

BRABRAND said FCPS wanted to be very clear about social distancing. “Ninety-nine point five percent of our students are returning in person. Social distancing is not going to be possible in all of our schools and classrooms, and we’re not going to build a false expectation to our community.” He said where schools and classrooms could have additional capacity and additional distancing; social distancing would be possible.

Instead, schools are focused on layered mitigation strategies in line with the CDC—universal masking, upgrades to ventilation systems, and continued sanitation and hygiene efforts practiced well.

In addition, there would be professional monitoring sourced outside of FCPS. “We’ll continue to have safety teams coming in, an outside company similar to the one that Loudon County used, to continue to make sure that our staff is following all the safety procedures to keep schools safe,” said Brabrand.

He added that contact tracing would continue to be done because “the more contact tracing support we have, the quicker we can turn around having kids who may be paused at home, so they can get back in the classroom.”

Brabrand said to make immunization of their children easy for parents and guardians who give their permission; it will be provided within the confines of the school day, even for the youngest children. “So, we’re super excited about that. We really want to model for the rest of the country, vaccinate. We need to move away from the battles. Everybody needs to have kids back in school. Once they’re back in school, we’ve got to make it seamless and easy to get everyone vaccinated, including our students and including our youngest students in elementary school.”

According to Brabrand, FCPS is working on a protocol where parents can give permission and not physically be present with their children when the vaccine is given in school. However, FCPS knows some parents will want to be there, and they are working out the details.

Jeimmy Molina, 13, on her way to Herndon Middle School, received her vaccination. In an interview, Jeimmy answered what she would tell those with vaccine hesitancy. “To my friends and family, I’d say that I did it, and I encourage you to do it too.”

Spending Spree

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
THE CONNECTION

In the 1985 hit movie “Brewster’s Millions,” Richard Pryor is given the task of spending \$30 million in 30 days. Hijinks ensue. In some ways, that’s also the plot of the General Assembly session this week. But the stakes are bigger, and the jokes aren’t as funny.

Lawmakers are working their way through appropriating \$4.3 billion of stimulus cash from the American Rescue Plan. Most of the money was already earmarked

before lawmakers arrived in town as Gov. Ralph Northam made a series of announcements outlining his priorities. Each of those announcements indicated a tacit agreement between House Democrats and Senate Democrats and the governor’s office.

The biggest item on the list of spending items is a huge infusion of cash into the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund, pumping \$862 million into the fund in an effort to prevent tax increases on businesses in 2022. Because the trust fund is usually replenished by taxes levied on business, they would have been on the hook for restoring it. But the infusion of cash from Uncle Sam means taxes won’t go up for business owners.

“Shoring up the commonwealth’s unemployment insurance trust fund is a smart investment that will prevent Virginia businesses from paying higher taxes and allow our economy to continue surging,” said Northam in a written statement announcing the proposal. “Together with the General Assembly, we are taking important steps to ensure Virginia remains a place where businesses, workers, and families can all thrive.”

THE PROPOSAL was viewed by some critics as a gift to big business at a time when many people are struggling to make ends meet, yet another sign of how the new Democratic majority in the House and Senate are often business friendly to the detriment of working families. Some people said the dollar amount set aside to help business owners next year could have been better spent by helping people in need now.

“That’s the kind of thing that we think should be balanced against some of the immediate needs,” said Chris Wodicka, senior policy analyst at the Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis. “There are trade-offs involved and there are differences in terms of timing of when certain benefits would really affect whoever would be impacted by the proposal.”

Lawmakers are also spending \$700 million to expand access to broadband internet; \$312



PHOTO BY MICHAEL LEE POPE/THE CONNECTION

Senate Finance and Appropriations Chairwoman Janet Howell oversaw the massive spending bill in the Senate, where senators appropriated more than \$4 billion in federal stimulus money.

“With so many competing interests, the balancing act is never easy.”

— Sen. Janet Howell (D-32),
chairwoman of the Senate
Finance and Appropriations Committee

million to improve HVAC systems in public schools; \$250 million for Rebuild Virginia grants to help small businesses; \$125 million to modernize sewer systems that dump raw sewage into rivers and streams (including the one in Alexandria); \$20 million for bonuses to law enforcement officers; \$10 million for food banks; and \$10 million for substance abuse treatment services.

“With so many competing interests, the balancing act is never easy,” said Sen. Janet Howell (D-32), who is chairwoman of the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee.

The appropriations bill also allows lawmakers an opportunity to set some new policies as budget language, creating a new requirement for landlords to apply for rental assistance from the Virginia Rent Relief Program before evicting anyone. Sen. Chap Petersen (D-34) tried to create an exemption for small-scale landlords who have a handful of properties. When asked about his budget amendment, Petersen said landlords should not be forced to apply for rental assistance.

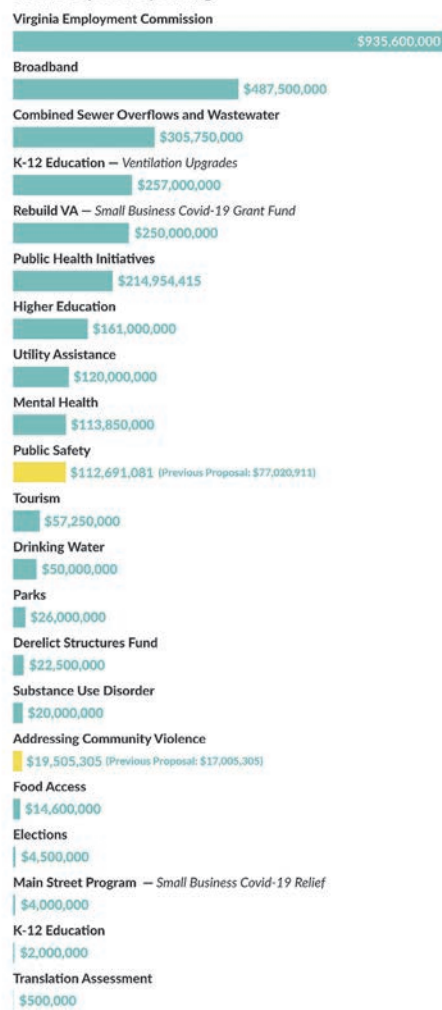
“You seem to think that applying to the federal government is no fuss no muss, and they’ll just open up your application and write you a check that day. It doesn’t work that way,” said Petersen. “The landlord oftentimes wants the property back because you’re dealing with a situation where you have someone who’s not paying rent. That’s not a healthy situation if you’re a landlord.”

Most Democrats don’t share that view.

“This should not be used as an opportunity to get rid of anyone,” said Del. Cia Price (D-95). “Get your money, and then let’s move forward.”

General Assembly returns to Richmond to appropriate federal stimulus cash.

FY22 Proposed Spending



REPUBLICANS tried and failed to make several amendments to the spending plan, offering a number of potential changes as the spending bills moved through the House and Senate. One of the Republican amendments was introduced by Del. Jason Miyares (R-82), who is also on the ballot for attorney general this fall. He introduced a budget amendment that would have given the attorney general authority to prosecute straw purchases of firearms.

“If you want to lower gun violence in Virginia, where well north of 80 percent of crime is done by repeat offenders, you get the repeat offenders off the streets,” said Miyares. “You go after those who are trying to traffic and buy guns illegally and you put them behind bars and off our streets.”

That amendment, along with every other proposal from House Republicans, was defeated by the Democratic majority. Many Democrats said that it was noteworthy that Miyares voted against all the gun-violence prevention measures last year but now wants to use the special session to crack down on straw purchases. Some questioned the need for creating new authority for the attorney general and the timing of the proposal.

“If Delegate Miyares wants to use the budget and this session as an opportunity to film a campaign commercial, it’s certainly his prerogative. He wouldn’t be the first one to do it,” said Del. Marcus Simon (D-53). “As far as I know this has not been an issue that is under-prosecuted or people get away with anything here.”

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Rebecca 'Becky' Super Appointed Lucy Burns Museum Director

The Workhouse Arts Foundation, Inc. has announced that Rebecca "Becky" Super has been appointed as the Lucy Burns Museum Director. She is an experienced museum professional, and she will begin her new role on Aug. 23, 2021.

Super has more than 20 years of experience in the museum field and has served as the director at multiple historic sites in Prince Williams County. She has significant experience with various interpretation and educational projects, as well as working on a variety of restoration and preservation projects. Most recently, she served as the Education Specialist (Adult Education) for the National Museum of the Marine Corps. In addition to this role, and her various roles with Prince Williams County, she has also worked with the Carlyle House, Green Springs Gardens, and the Fairfax County Public Schools. Super's educational credits include a BA (History), and a MA (Applied United States History) from George Mason University, as well as various Archeology, Landscaping and Horticulture certificates from the University of Virginia and the Northern Virginia Community College.

Leon Scioscia, President/CEO of the Workhouse Arts Foundation, said: "The Workhouse Arts Center, and the Lucy Burns Museum, is so pleased and honored to have Ms. Super join the team. She brings the right amount of skills and creativity to advance the Lucy Burns Museum in new and exciting ways. Ms. Super will build upon the solid Museum foundation as



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED
Rebecca 'Becky' Super

developed by Laura McKie, a member of the Workhouse Arts Foundation Board. We will forever be in Ms. McKie's debt for her vision, and dedicated 'behind the scenes' work, on the Lucy Burns Museum."

McKie commented on this appointment: "I'm delighted to welcome Rebecca Super to the Lucy Burns Museums. As director she will bring a wealth of experience gained from working in a variety of museums large and small in this region. Through her leadership the museum will participate actively in the future development of the Workhouse Arts Center."

The exterior construction of the Lucy Burns museum was completed in 2018 while the interior construction, and the installation of the exhibitions, were completed in 2020. The museum tells the story of the 91 years of prison history as well as the story of the suffragists who were imprisoned here in 1917 for picketing the White House for women's right to vote.

Becky Super said: "I love history and historic places. I've worked in small historic sites and large museums, but small sites will always be my first love. I am eager and excited to create programs and events that are part of the Lucy Burns Museum and the Workhouse and bring its message of arts, history and the revitalization of historic buildings to the public."

To stay up-to-date on the latest Workhouse news and events, follow the Workhouse on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube or sign-up for their E-newsletter.

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

BULLETIN BOARD

COMMUNITY MARKET ON SATURDAYS

Workhouse Arts Center hosts its Community Market Every Saturday from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. through October 30, 2021. Located at 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. August is Beach Days all month long. Fun Beachy activities for the kids:

- Fossil Finding;
- Pool Playing;
- Palm Tree Painting;
- Treasure Trade-In.

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>

Be sure to indicate in the drop down menu that your donation is for Back2School.

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

https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/Z9PSH1PP62AK?ref_=wl_share

3. Pledge to donate via the SignUp Genius page:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/5080c49aca62aa46-back2school9>

Questions? Reach out via Back2School@LortonAction.org.

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 9

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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State Project: 9999-029-457, C501, P101, R201
UPC: 117083

Federal: RSTP-5B01 (148)

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

COMMUNITIES OF WORSHIP



Worship Gathering - Sunday 8:45 & 11 AM
Sunday School 10:10 AM
Sun. Evening - Realtime Worship & Youth 6 PM
Family Night - Wednesday 7:15 PM
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Itching to Know Cause of Local Phenomenon

Possible invasion of the oak leaf itch mite.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

People in Northern Virginia may reconsider where they enjoy the outdoors. A mite so tiny the naked eye cannot see it may insert her tiny stylets and secrete saliva into residents and suck their fluids. Its bite packs such a punch for some its after-effects cause sleepless nights and visits to physicians.

Reports popped up in Northern Virginia in late July and early August, neighborhood social media posts seeking cause and relief for what appeared to be an outbreak of human pruritic dermatitis, itchy rashes, and lesions from bites, possibly from the oak leaf itch mite. How to get rid of the pests? The Arlington Facebook group, "Arlington Neighbors Helping Each Other Through COVID-19," recorded nearly 300 posts on the matter by Aug. 10. The discussion appeared in other local online groups as well.

Some entomologists and scientists say that the source of mysterious bites may be the anthropeid, the oak leaf itch mite, *Pyemotes herfsi*. The eight-legged parasite could be giving humans and pets a "mite shower" as the invisible pests fall from flagging pin oak tree branches or crawl onto them, sight unseen as they garden or sit in the grass.

Other Virginia entomologists and scientists say the cause has yet to be scientifically qualified. The biter's identity is not supported in the area by a sample, the gold confirmation standard. The oak leaf itch mite, *Pyemotes herfsi*, was confirmed when a sample was submitted to the Insect Diagnostic Lab at Kansas State University in 2014, after that region experienced similar experiences, according to ksal.com.

On Monday, Aug. 9, Eric Day, Department of Entomology, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, and State University said, "This is not a mite we have received in the lab...They [the oak leaf tree mite] are often associated with insect galls. Midge [any small two-winged fly] make the gall, a protective structure for them to live in." The mites feed on midge larva inside the galls.

"This is very interesting," wrote Lori Chamberlain, Virginia Department of Forestry, in an email to The Connection the same day. "Unfortunately...there has not been a sample submitted to the Virginia Tech Insect Identification Lab this year."

Photos of the apparent bites, like the ones taken Aug. 7 on the arms of two Herndon residents, John Pilcicki, a wildlife biologist at DOD, and Heather, showed areas approximately two centimeters in diameter, with a central vesicle, pustule- or blister-like swelling.

IN A RANDOM SAMPLE of ten individuals in Herndon over two days, six reported near word-for-word complaints. The bites, similar to scores of ones posted and described online, occurred mainly on the Herndon



MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Possible oak leaf itch mite bites on Fairfax County residents in the Town of Herndon.

residents' necks, shoulders, upper torsos, arms, and hands, although they were described elsewhere on the body as well.

Based on complaints, a pattern of similar descriptions emerged: extremely itchy, painful welts, and extended redness, with symptoms lasting 7 to 14 days. Some of Heather's bites were on her hand. She had been gardening and did not see or feel anything until the next day. According to the CDC, persons bitten by *Pyemotes herfsi*, the oak leaf itch mite, generally do not recall being bitten but feel an itchy discomfort (which can be intense) beginning 10 to 16 hours afterward, and lasting up to 14 days.

Kirsten Burls, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech Virginia State University, said, "I've never heard anybody suggest a way to obtain the actual insect identification. They're too small ... My advice to individuals about this phenomenon [is] to say, 'This too will pass.'"

People should just be vigilant and rule out other possibilities. She ran through other pests whose bites also cause raised red areas but noted the differences. "Ticks, there's generally a tip ... People are aware of when they are bitten by mosquitos ... Bed bugs are harder to spot but do result in finding evidence ... Chiggers are active this time of year, but it is not a big problem in a metropolitan area."

During the summer of 2007, a bite rash outbreak occurred in the western suburbs of Chicago, reported U.S. Pharmacist. They, too, were not only dealing with the mysterious bites but the return of swarms of cicadas, like Northern Virginia.

According to the Illinois Natural History



MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Possible oak leaf itch mite bites on Fairfax County residents in the Town of Herndon.

mites] to Illinois from neighboring states, such as Kansas and Nebraska," cited the report.

Dr. Raymond Cloyd, Department of Entomology Kansas State University said in Extension Entomology Oak Leaf Itch Mite that for "the first time in Kansas ... the oak leaf itch mite has been a problem in successive years (2015 and 2016), which is likely associated with the mild winters we have experienced."

Adria Bordas is the Unit Coordinator Senior Extension Agent-Horticulture Virginia Cooperative Extension Fairfax County Office. She said that although they had volunteers report bites, itching rash, "We don't have anyone who has submitted a sample because they [the suspected mites] are microscopic...No one can say for definite that this is what it is ... However, as far back as 2004, when we had the 17 year Brood X, there have been reports that these [mites] might tend to brew up a little bit more in population and nuisance."

While Northern Virginia has a large oak tree population, Bordas said the mites might not just be in oak trees. "I would say not just in oaks, though probably oaks in general."

If the culprit is verified in the region as the oak tree itch mite, it makes a sci-fi horror story. In-visible, fully mature male and female alien invaders emerge from an ovisac at the end of their mother's hugely swelling abdomen, then mate. The males die, but the fertilized females with 200 to 300 eggs are laser-focused to eat and seek out their prey. They enter their home sight unseen through minute openings. The female invaders inject their prey with a potent neurotoxin and saliva mixture capable of paralyzing victims 166,000 times their size. The saliva liquifies the prey's tissue, so the females can feed on their fluids, nourishing their progeny to adulthood in one week when they emerge. Dispersed via the wind, they can drop onto humans.

THE OAK LEAF ITCH MITE is a tiny reddish-tan parasite with a shiny exoskeleton and four pairs of legs. It is invisible to the naked eye. According to Raymond A. Cloyd, an entomology professor at Kansas State, "The oak leaf

itch mite has one of the highest rates of population increase ... Millions can be produced in a very short time."

Cloyd reported the oak leaf itch mite was first detected in the Midwest in 2004. It was responsible for the 2014 and 2017 widespread itching bites. "A single female can produce between 200 and 300 eggs," according to Cloyd in Oak Leaf Itch Mite. Cloyd said that the oak leaf itch mite is



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Oak trees with branch dieback, "flagging," possibly harboring oak leaf itch mites as they feed on cicada eggs and larvae.

Survey report, Entomologist Ed Zaborski deduced a connection between the bites and the cicadas' return. Zaborski believed the bites came from the *Pyemotes* (itch mites) appearing to feed on the cicada eggs. In 2004, Kansas reported a significant infestation of the oak leaf itch mite and Nebraska in 2005 when the mites fed on midge larva inside galls on pin oak trees.

"Weather associated with spring cold fronts or human or animal migration patterns may have carried the *Pyemotes* [itch

Invasion Suspected

FROM PAGE 6

thought to be exclusive to pin oak trees.

Although the oak leaf itch mite typically preys on midge eggs from the tiny two-winged flies commonly called “no-see-ums” that target pin oaks, the mites may not be as specific a feeder as previously thought. Instead of feeding solely on midge eggs in the pin oak trees, the mites might also be devouring the massive numbers of cicada eggs left behind by the region’s 2021 Brood X invasion, according to John Dudzinsky, Community Forester and Society of Municipal Arborists Virginia Liaison.

The bountiful cicada eggs deposited by the female Brood X cicadas over several weeks in May and June into slits of healthy and now flagging pin oak branches, among other trees, make easy feeding for the female mites to nourish their progeny.

Because of the vast, possibly unprecedented quantities of cicada eggs in Northern Virginia, the mites’ seven-day life cycle, and the number of offspring produced by each mite, the oak leaf itch mite population may be exploding this year.

“Of course, oak leaf itch mites don’t fly,” Dudzinsky said. “The wind will catch them. They can even fit through the mesh of screens. They’re extremely tiny, 1/125 of an inch,” he said.

“Whatever is happening right now seems to be the same year as the cicadas,” Day said, “I think it is a case



PHOTO BY ERIC ERBE/USDA AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE, BUGWOOD.ORG

A close-up of an itch mite.

of two and two together — make five.”

Prevention and Elimination

There are very few strategies to prevent oak leaf itch mite bites. Dudzinsky said to minimize exposure to oak trees, especially pin oaks. Do not sit under them. If you are picking up leaves or fallen flagging branches from the cicadas [or working near them], wear long rubber gloves, a long-sleeved shirt, hat, pants, and socks pulled up and over pant cuffs.

Bordas, who works outside in four to five-hour stretches, understands how hard it is to dress with mite-protection when temperatures soar. She recommended wearing a shirt pretreated with DEET at a 30 percent level, no higher, and wearing it over a regular shirt to avoid skin exposure. “I put that on over a lighter shirt,” Bordas said. She added not to spray the skin of older adults with DEET because their skin is thinner, likewise for children.

“Be cognizant of when you come indoors, immediately take a shower... and wash clothes in hot water,” Bordas said.

Controlling the mites at their source may be impossible. There is nothing to treat mites on the trees “because the mites themselves are inside the galls,” according to Bordas.

Back to School

If your child is entering 7th grade they must have the Meningitis, HPV, and Tdap vaccines in order to enroll. Talk to your doctor and vaccinate them now!

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NEWS

These signs are so popular, the Braddock District supervisor ordered some more.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Speeding Issue Outlasts the Yard Sign Supply

“Slow Down: You Live Here. We Live Here” campaign has a new life.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

On Roberts Road near the Kings Park West neighborhood in Fairfax, the traffic seems to speed up after dark, along with the loud mufflers, said resident Baitong Lau. At the intersection of Gainesborough Drive, there are two signs from a police program that remind people of the speed limits, and they are reminding drivers to go slow.

These signs were originally part of a 2014 campaign to combat speeding, but now they've seemed to regain popularity, and people are posting them again to slow the traffic. The campaign message, “Slow Down: You Live Here. We Live Here” aims to make people more alert of the dangers of neighborhood speeding.

“Interestingly enough, we recently have had a resurgence in the requests to participate in this program. You may start to see some of these signs pop up again,” said Second Lieutenant James Curry at the Fairfax County Police Department.

This program has also been successful in other places in the Braddock District. Supervisor James R. Walkinshaw (D-Braddock) has used various methods to address the problems of speeding on res-

idential streets through enforcement, design improvements like road diets, and increased awareness, like the signs. “In Braddock, we distributed all of our allotted “Slow Down” yard signs and are in the process of ordering more. When they're available, we'll share that information in our Braddock Beacon email newsletter,” Supervisor Walkinshaw said.

Recently a Braddock District resident returned one of the yard signs, and a short time later, another resident came in and took it for their yard, said Frank Anderson, the Chief of Staff in Supervisor Walkinshaw's office.

The comprehensive “Slow Down” campaign started with a community-wide speed perception survey, the county information said. Of the 2,185 responses, over 80 percent agreed that speed is a problem in their neighborhoods and 77 percent felt that people are driving too fast. 80 percent are worried about speeding cars striking neighborhood children.

Additionally, the Police Department launched roadway speed calculations at various spots on neighborhood roads across the county at that time, and results showed that there were portions of area roadways where well over 50 percent of motorists were traveling more than 10 mph over posted speed limits.

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lost (adj): 1. unable to find the way. 2. not appreciated or understood. 3. no longer owned or known

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This road in Kingstowne has been milled and awaits asphalt.

PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/
THE CONNECTION



The crews here are scraping the old pavement up, and sending it back to the plant where it gets remixed as recycled asphalt.

Paving and Warm Weather are in Tandem This Year

There is a map and system to where the paving goes.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

August is hot, and the drivers trying to get back to a normal routine have probably hit a pothole or two out on the roads, but VDOT is out there with the paving crews, putting down pavement on 1,145 lane miles throughout the paving season, which goes until November. There is \$133.8 million in the VDOT Northern Virginia budget to make that happen too.

In Northern Virginia, there is a wide assortment of roads to address so the VDOT uses a paving condition website with a multi-colored map that determines the level of need for each area. Blue stands for roads that are currently in excellent condition, and this

dominates the roads in Fairfax County closest to the Capital Beltway. The next most common color is red roads, which is labeled as “very poor,” and this seems to dominate the roads away from the beltway, but as the season goes on, those areas will become blue.

For example, the Fairfax County Parkway and the Springfield-Franconia Parkway are mostly light green, defined as “good,” while the neighborhoods in southern Springfield are red. Further north, a section between Braddock Road and Little River Turnpike is all blue, where the pavers must have hit earlier this summer, while there is lots of red in the neighborhoods north of Route 50.

VDOT negotiates with paving companies in the winter, and paving contracts start in the spring and go until late fall. The time of day for paving is dictated by traffic volumes,

and different proprietary asphalt mix designs, the procedure is basically the same for all the asphalt producers in Virginia. Bad road surfaces can also be reported to VDOT or the district supervisor and the road in question will be analyzed for repaving. Online, the site is known as the “VDOT customer service center,” and everything from road repairs, signs down or something removed from the road like a dead deer are things that can be reported here. Even a compliment to VDOT can be made through this site.

The paving operation basically follows a pattern. Tear the old pavement up, load into a dump truck, grade the surface, and put the new pavement down.

The asphalt removed from roadway surfaces can be recycled. Typically, this comprises about 30 percent of the new hot mix but in some cases this can be 100 percent in a relatively new process that is called cold central plant mix recycling.

The asphalt “millings” are brought back to the asphalt plants where they are stored, processed and incorporated back into new asphalt mixes. Although each plant has different ways of processing their materials

and different proprietary asphalt mix designs, the procedure is basically the same for all the asphalt producers in Virginia.

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There is a reminder that “VDOT does not maintain roads in cities, towns, or in Henrico and Arlington counties, except for interstates and major primary roads. VDOT does not maintain all sidewalks, or pedestrian or bike paths. Some may be maintained by localities. Please submit a separate report for each request,” it says.

West Springfield Students Soon to Get Safer Road Crossing

Construction on a Rolling Road crossing is underway.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

Students coming to West Springfield High School from the Cardinal Forest neighborhood across Rolling Road, will soon have a safer route when construction on a new crossing is finished in the coming months. Crews are currently working on a new 8-foot concrete sidewalk that will run on the northbound side of Rolling Road from Roxbury Avenue to Tuttle Road. It will offer pedestrians including students the opportunity to cross Rolling Road via the existing pedestrian signal at Tuttle Road to this new sidewalk rather than the currently-used shoulder of Rolling Road.

The county has encountered some delays due to a conflict with the new retaining wall and the existing water main; work related to the solution for this should be done by mid August. The project itself will be done by the end of the year.

Residents of Cardinal Forest questioned the project. One resident from a house right on Rolling Road thought it was going to be a new bus stop. “That’s what I heard,” he said. Another questioned the time it took. “It’s been taking a while,” he said.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED



Looking north, the construction crew has had issues with a retaining wall.



It’s right across from the Springfield supervisor’s office, but the project is officially in the Braddock District.

While Supervisor Herrity and staff have been watching construction on this project across the street from the office, the project is actually in Braddock District.

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 5

MOSAIC HOSTS PAINTING COMPETITION

The Torpedo Factory Artists at Mosaic hosts juried Regional Painting Competition now thru Aug. 22 featuring some of the region’s finest painters. The artists are working in watercolor, oil, ink, gouache, acrylic, encaustic and mixed media. Local companies and arts groups are offering generous prizes for the top artists selected by juror Phil Hutinet, publisher of East City Art. The best in show prize of \$750 has been donated by FrameMasters, a custom picture framing and framing supplies store in Merrifield, Virginia. Additional prizes have been provided by Rhonda Campbell Perry of Campbell Residential Group, the Capitol Hill Art League and the Potomac Valley Watercolorists. “Regional Painting Competition,” July 23 - August 22, Torpedo Factory Artists @ Mosaic, 2905 District Avenue, #105, Fairfax. Open Wednesday thru Sunday 11 – 7. Reception and juror’s talk: July 29, 6:30 – 8:30.

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 2021-22 school 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.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Parent Support Partners, a service of the Healthy Minds Fairfax initiative, are all parents who have received training and are qualified to offer education, support and assistance at no cost to families or caregivers. They provide reliable information that families can use in decision-making and are familiar with services and resources that can help families in distress. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/healthymindsfairfax or www.nami-northernvirginia.org/parent-peer-support.html.

Shepherd’s Center of Fairfax-Burke sponsors a monthly meeting on the 2nd Tuesday of each month, noon-1:30 p.m., for caregivers to learn and to share with others experiencing similar challenges. Before attending, contact the facilitator, Eileen Thompson at 703-451-8626 or eileen.thompson1@gmail.com.

Haven of Northern Virginia provides support, compassion, information and resources to the bereaved and seriously ill. To become a Haven volunteer, please call 703-941-7000 to request an orientation. Volunteers must complete a 30-hour training and commit to one year of service answering Haven phones (2.5 hours weekly). Next training is scheduled for fall 2017.

ONGOING

STEM Professionals Needed. Volunteers are needed to assist K-12 STEM teachers in northern Virginia as part of the American Association for the Advancement of Science’s STEM Volunteer Program, stemvolunteers.org, during the 2019-20 school year, beginning in September. Please contact Don Rea at 571-551-2488 or donaledge@aol.com.

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LETTER

Child Found Dead in Hot Car in Springfield

To the Editor:

Tragically, a child was found dead inside a hot car in Springfield, on Aug. 10. This is the 12th child to die in a hot car nationwide this year and the first in Virginia.

Virginia ranks #9 in the nation by a very large margin based on the number of child hot car deaths with 35 fatalities since 1990. Over 1,000 children have died in hot cars nationwide since 1990 with 2018 and 2019 being the two worst years in history.

The Hot Cars Act passed the U.S. House of Representatives as part of the INVEST in America Act on July 1, 2021. This bill would require all new passenger vehicles to be equipped with a system that would detect the presence of a child who is left or has entered an unattended vehicle independently and engage a warning. Hot car language was included in the Senate Surface Transportation Investment Act (S. 2016) which passed today, though the language of the hot cars provision needs to be upgraded to specify the requirement for the occupant detection feature, which is critical to the effectiveness of the technology.

"The language passed by the U.S. House of Representatives is truly what is needed to protect vulnerable children from hot car dangers. Sadly, the language moving forward in the Senate bill does not require occupant detection, which is absolutely necessary to save lives. Without occupant detection, children and pets will continue to die in hot cars. We urge House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) as well as Representatives Frank Pallone (D-NJ), Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill) and Tim Ryan (D-Ohio) to continue fighting for a requirement for effective technology as was included in the House-passed Invest in America Act. Since 1990, more than 1,000 children have died in hot cars. We have the chance to finally end these senseless deaths. How can we possibly stand by and let another 1,000 families bury a child when cost-effective solutions are readily available?"

With families getting back into the workplace and schedules continuing to shift, Kids and Car Safety is very concerned there could be a rise in the number of children who die in hot cars this summer.

Hot car deaths continue to take place because nobody believes this could happen to them. Please help us raise awareness about these predictable and preventable tragedies and the urgent need for the passage of the Hot Cars Act.

**Amber Rollins, Director
Janette Fennell, President & Founder
Kids and Car Safety**

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The new temporary span allows re-opening of Old Colchester Road, a link between Pohick and Gunston Roads.

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/
THE CONNECTION

Temporary Bridge Reopens Colchester Road

A temporary bridge reinforcement that allows the reopening of the bridge and Old Colchester Road was put into place on July 7. The metal bridge structure on concrete foundations will take the weight from the

old bridge, still in place below, until a permanent replacement solution can be undertaken. The new span passed final inspection on July 28; with the road due to re-open in early August, as soon as guard rail work is completed.

— SUSAN LAUME



The old bridge, photographed in May, showing signs of corrosion and wood rot, was deemed unsafe for vehicular traffic.

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. 11 Practically Einstein (Vintage Rock)
Aug. 18 The Colin Thompson Band (Blues Rock)
Aug. 25 Rescheduled show / TBD

WEDNESDAY/AUG. 11

Lee District Nights. 7:30 p.m. At Lee District Park, Leonadus K. Plenty Amphitheater, Franconia.
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. 14

Summer Saturdays. 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Gunston Hall, 10709 Gunston Road, Lorton. Summer Saturdays is back! Join them virtually or in-person for hands-on

history activities. Cost is \$0 to \$10. This program occurs at the same time every Saturday until August 28th. Visit the website: www.gunstonhall.org/event

SATURDAY/AUG. 14

Mount Vernon Nights. 8 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton.
Schedule
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)

SUNDAY/AUG. 15

Model Trains Running. 1-4 p.m. At the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road in Fairfax Station. T-TRAK (table top) model trains will be running. Admission: Children 4 and under and Museum members, free; Ages 5-12, \$3; ages 13 and older \$5, Special occasions \$6. Seniors and military (active and retired) \$4. Visit our new website, www.fairfax-station.org, www.Facebook.com/FFXSRR, 703-425-9225.

SATURDAY/AUG. 28

Kidz Korner -- Oh Susannah. 10:30-11:30 a.m. at Old Town Square, Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. Join in a fun morning with your family. 10:30 a.m. Saturdays at Old Town Square. Pre-registration is required. Visit the website: <https://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/cultural-arts>

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Sole Survivor



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

It's been nearly three weeks since "the burning," and I'm here to say - while sitting down with my left foot elevated, that I am approximately 75% the man I used to be pre-July 17 around 2 pm central standard time. I can now walk, mostly on my right foot, but always with the help and security of my new best friend: the walker. I am no longer housebound or bedridden. Though I still cannot drive for fear of ripping off the brand new skin which has appeared on the balls of my feet (especially the progress on my right/driving foot), healing from the inside out; I am free however to be a passenger, and load myself onto the backseat of our SUV and extend my legs across the entire seat to minimize any discomfort. The pain is very manageable, but on occasion I have taken a few of the percocets that had been prescribed for pain. The relief was hardly immediate and the pill size was moderate so I don't see myself getting addicted (percocet is OxyContin). In fact, the size pill I was prescribed barely dulled the pain; most of which has subsided anyway. (And when I was in severe pain in Texas, the physician's assistant prescribed tylenol with codeine. It did nothing. It wasn't even worth the co-pay. Perhaps a physician's assistant, without a doctor present, couldn't prescribe a narcotic, especially one that has addictive qualities. Presumably, it was for my own protection. At that point however, I didn't need protection. I needed pain relief.)

After seeing a physician's assistant in Galveston, an Emergency Room doctor in Gaithersburg, two Podiatrists in Kensington and my Internal Medicine doctor in Silver Spring, I have been set free-ish. None of these doctors felt the need to see me again. The healing of my feet has progressed far enough that the threat of infection has passed so I am now on my own, sort of. I (my wife, Dina, actually) am to continue dressing my wounds for one to two weeks (depending on which foot) and use our own judgment about when to discontinue the treatment. It appears as if I have survived the ordeal, mostly.

And though there were times at the beginning when the pain was excruciating, and times in the middle when the pain was bearable; at the end, in a week or two, I will be forever grateful that my condition did not deteriorate due to infection, blistering or nerve damage. As it happened, "the burning" was simply the unintended consequence of the damage 11-plus years of chemotherapy has done to my body, inside and out. Because of the neuropathy in my feet (thankfully, there isn't any neuropathy in my hands or other extremities), I can never, because physically I can't, walk barefoot. And because of that pre-existing condition, the bottoms of my feet are as soft as a baby's behind. With no calluses formed on my feet to protect me, I'm kind of a standing duck out there. I found out the soft way how hard it is for me to walk across hot pavement.

And the shoeless choice I made was a choice I, like millions of others who've gone to the beach, made quite casually. I was simply doing something - walking barefoot, that came naturally and historically, as in I've done it a hundred times, especially having walked across hot sand. Not anymore. As a long-time cancer patient, generally speaking, I'm aware of many of the dos and don'ts and what trouble to avoid, but never had I considered that my lung/thyroid cancer treatment might cause a problem potentially, on the soles of my feet if I walked barefoot at the beach. I know I'm supposed to avoid the sun (I'll be the one sitting under a beach umbrella with a hat on my head, sunglasses on my face and covered head to toe, with towels and a tearshirt), but nobody ever advised me that I shouldn't go to the beach. Before "the burning," I would have thought I was an experienced enough cancer patient that I knew what situations might be harmful to my health. Apparently not. It seems as if I haven't quite learned all my lessons, yet.

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



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