The Little Farms Garden Club of Potomac continues a tradition started in 1978, decorating the Great Falls Tavern for the holidays. This season, the greens and bows went up on Dec. 7.
**September, 2021 Top Sales**

In September, 2021, 61 Potomac homes sold between $4,900,000-$357,500.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Address</th>
<th>BR</th>
<th>FB</th>
<th>HB</th>
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<th>Sold Price</th>
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<td>HERITAGE FARM</td>
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Welcome to our 2021 Children's Almanac sections. While submissions were still short of the pre-pandemic avalanche of children's and teens' art and writing, in 2021 students have delivered a delightful, sometimes unusual, panoply of expression. I've enjoyed the art and writing as we've downloaded it over many many hours in the last two weeks. And I hope you will also.

You can find digital copies of the papers, including the Children's and Teens' Almanac at http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/PDFs/. The papers should be posted by Thursday, Dec. 16. We deliver tens of thousands of papers to homes, businesses, public libraries and community centers, plus thousands more in email and digital. We will print extra copies, and restock at libraries and community centers. But also feel free to print our pages from the PDFs or take a digital copy to a photo center to print out larger, high resolution copies of your child's art if you desire many copies.

It feels like a small, or not so small, miracle to have made it to the end of 2021 and be looking forward into the New Year. The pandemic has been a bear, financially and otherwise. Revenue plummeted at the beginning in 2020. More recently we have seen the return of advertising for events and Grand Openings. Some beloved advertisers have stayed the course supporting us throughout, and many more have done what they can. Revenue is still short of our greatly curtailed costs.

At the end of 2020, we didn't have any idea how we would keep going. But our readers responded overwhelmingly to our Go Fund Me, bringing us within reach of our goal of $50,000. PPP funding, “forgivable loans,” made our survival possible. Now we are still hoping for a grant from Rebuild Virginia to help get us into 2022. We applied almost a year ago, but it seems possible that our application might be reviewed while there is still money in the fund.

I think we can be characterized as pathological optimists. While there are forces out there that could make it impossible for us to keep going, we continue to push forward. While I have said this a few times without keeping it happen, keep your eyes open for our membership drive, which would hope for readers, sources and community members who would be interested in supporting us on a monthly basis.

One of the magical elements that helped us get this far was the presence on our staff of an international journalism legend, Kemal Kurzspahic, who served as managing editor and guiding light for decades. Kemal died tragically and unexpectedly this fall, having a stroke after minor surgery. We miss him daily. Keeping everything going has been harder since. You can read Kemal's obituary here: http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2021/sep/22/courage-journalism/

We haven’t done everything we aspire to do, we always aspire to greater community service. But we do know that the community is better off for Local Media Connection continuing to publish.

Now that we’ve told you how we’re doing (hal!), let us know how you are doing, what you think about the state of our communities.

Thank you.
— Mary Kimm, kimm.mary@gmail.com

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**2021 Children's and Teens' Almanac**

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**HOOVER MIDDLE SCHOOL**

**By: MICHAEL DERDZAKYAN**

My dear friend,

Let me tell you of a country called Armenia.

With all it’s traditions,
With all its beliefs,
No one will believe what I’ll tell you right now.

Even though this country is the most religious of all,
It has had a genocide.
1.5 million people dead,
With my great-grandfather being one of the survivors.

Traveling from Van to Yerevan,
He lost his whole family except for a brother and two sisters.

Too harsh to imagine,
Too bad to think,
But after all this,
The country exists as ARMENIA.

**Korean Pride**

**By: GRACE KIM**

What does sharing who you are to a person without ears do?
Everyone's mouths are silenced, so we must write with fire.

The more we share, our pride grows higher.
It is a piece of us, like a beating heart, it is ironclad.

I have a Korean mom, and a Korean dad.
My life without my Korean heritage is like a wasteland.
A wasteland from fairytales from long, long ago.

A wasteland is my heart, so I demand,
For you to eat the seeds I will sow.
Each of the seeds are different.
One gives food, another dance.
A dance with feather rimmed fans, the significant.
As the beautiful designs in our rice cakes enhances,
People only know us by our pop star dances.

It is not true Korean heritage,
Yet, that is all many people think of Korea.

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**BULLETIN BOARD**

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

NOW THRU JAN. 9

“Dreamscapes” Exhibition. At Park View Gallery in Glen Echo Park, 7300 Macarthur Blvd., Glen Echo. Reception on Saturday, Dec. 11 from 4-6 p.m.

Artist Vian Borchert stated: “Every since I was a child I was a dreamer. I remember looking up at the sky and being fascinated by the clouds' movement and formations. The sky was always there for me to dream upon and provide me with joyful feelings. As an artist, contemplation and observation on the world around me is of utmost importance to my work. The world, nature and the environment move me like no other. The works presented in this collection titled “Dreamscapes” are an accumulation of my dreams, my journeys, and what caught my eyes at a specific moment in time. The art illustrates the snapshots of my visual voyages documenting my life through these paintings.”

<call>Dec. 17-19</call>
<call>Dec. 17-19</call>
The Christmas Revels at The Spanish Ballroom in Glen Echo Park, 7300 Glen Echo Drive, Glen Echo. Start your holidays with The Christmas Revels and timeless American traditions: joyful carols, heartfelt spirituals, and toe-tapping dances that will bring us closer. Cost is $20-$55. Different dates: Friday, December 17, 7:30-9:45 p.m.; Saturday, December 18, 2:00-4:15 p.m. & 7:30-9:45 p.m.; Sunday, December 19, 2:00-4:15 p.m.

See Bulletin, Page 5
Santa Is Coming

Every December Cabin John Park Volunteer Fire Department decorates the reserve engine, loads Santa and a few additional volunteers, and head out into the community to collect unwrapped holiday gifts for children up to the age of 14. Unopened, unwrapped presents can be brought out to Santa as he passes by, or dropped off at either Cabin John Park VFD Fire Station.

The toy drive supports the National Center for Children and Families in Bethesda and the Scotland Drive Community Association in conjunction.

The week before Christmas volunteers begin wrapping and labeling all of the gifts and on Christmas Eve they are delivered to children who otherwise may not have any gifts at all.

**Contactless Toy Drop-Off**
You can also drop toys off at Station 10, on River Road near Seven Locks Road, or Station 30, on Falls Road close to Oaklyn Drive from now until Dec. 23.

**Santa’s Schedule**

**Wednesday, December 15**
Congressional Country Club Estates
West Bethesda Park
Cohasset
Bradley Park
Burdling Tree Valley
Frenchmen’s Creek

**Thursday, December 16**
Locust Ridge
Oakhurst Knolls
Make up missed runs

**Friday, December 17**
Alvermar Woods
Potomac Hunt Acres
Merry Go Round Farms
Beallmount
Lake Potomac
Stoney Creek Farms
Saddle Ridge
Piney Meetinghouse/Glen Road

**Saturday, December 18**
Potomac Village
Camotop
Falconhurst
Bradley Farms
Mcauley Park
Kentdale Estates
Bradley Blvd Estates
Congressional Forest Estates

**Sunday, December 19**
Bannockburn
Bannockburn Estates
Al Marrah
Wilson Knolls (1st Due Only)

**Monday-Wednesday, December 20-22**
Make up missed runs

**Friday, December 24**
Toy delivery

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**HOOVER MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Mrs. Bryant’s Sixth Grade English Class students

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**In The Eye of the Beholder**

By Lena Berhane

“Mariam? Why weren’t you at school yesterday?”

I looked at my feet. Should I be embarrassed? It’s not like I chose to...

“I’m sorry… family event…” I mumbled. Kids looked at each other questioningly. My teacher, Mrs. Davis, smiled genuinely. She laughed and bent down a little to look me in the eye as I kicked my feet around in my chair.

“It’s okay. I understand! It’s not that deep, Mariam. Just make sure to come to school tomorrow for international day. Who is helping you with your trifold display?”

“My dad.”

“Sounds nice!”

“Yeah.”

After school, Mariam Tesfaye collapsed onto her bed. She didn’t know what to expect. She wanted to rock her habesha dress, but what will other kids say? She didn’t know.

And as a borderline shy girl, she definitely didn’t want to stand out.

“Mariam! Dinner is ready! Come down!”

Mariam’s little brother, Yonas, screeched from the bottom of the stairs.

“Okay! Coming!” she hopped off of her bed and ran downstairs.

“Hi, dad!” Mariam exclaimed when she saw her father standing at the bottom of the stairs as well. “You’re back from work!”

“Hi, Mariye. How was school?”

“Good, overall. But… I need your help with something…”

“Yes? What is it?” he looked down at her in curiosity. She grabbed the bottom of his sleeve and dragged him into the kitchen. He sat down in a chair and Mariam sat down across from him.

“So… Here’s the thing. International day is tomorrow. And I’ve just been wondering…”

Mariam’s little brother, Yonas, screeched from the bottom of the stairs.

“Okay! Coming!” she hopped off of her bed and ran downstairs.

“I see my habesha dress? I would love to, but other kids might just end up wearing their normal clothes.”

“Mariye, it’s okay. Wear what you want, it doesn’t matter what others are wearing, saying, or doing. Self-satisfaction is key,” he reminded me. I smiled, pleased to hear those reassuring words.

“Now, do you want to talk about it over some kitfo?”

My mouth watered slightly and I bolted upright, my chair almost falling. “Yes!”

He looked at me sternly. “Mariam, the chair almost fell.”

I smiled a “haha, yeah, I’m guilty” smile. “Okay it’s ready,” He dumped a few spoons of kitfo onto a plate of injera. Yonas ran into the kitchen and shouted “I smell kitfo! Where is it? You can’t hide it from me!” My dad got up and once after preparing a plate, sat back down. We said a prayer and then started eating.

He got up and started making the kitfo and I shuffled my hand around in the pocket of my lime-green hoodie. I didn’t find what I was looking for, so I put my hands in the pockets of my light blue jeans and felt for my phone. Once I found it, I pulled out my phone and texted my best friend, Akari.

Me: hi
Akari: hey!
Me: how is your trifold-presentation for international day going?
Akari: finished it yesterday! you?
Me: same :)
Akari: what are you gonna be wearing?
Akari: my grandmother sewed me a beautiful kimono
Me: Ooooh, send a pic! I wanna see!
Akari: nope / (-v-) / your gonna have to wait and be surprised~
Me: kk I don’t mind :)
Akari: Peace out bestie, I gotta eat dinner
Akari: lol k bye ~:

“Okay it’s ready,” He dumped a few spoons of kitfo onto a plate of injera. Yonas ran into the kitchen and shouted “I smell kitfo! Where is it? You can’t hide it from me!” My dad got up and once after preparing a plate, sat back down. We said a prayer and then started eating.

We enjoyed some nice kitfo: grilled meat, cooked and seasoned to make it extra spicy, onto a piece of cultural flatbread, known in Ethiopia as injera.

“Dad? Why did you keep me home from school yesterday? I mean, I know it was Ethiopian Christmas, but…” Mariam tapped the side of her plate, hoping he got the hint, because she wanted answers.

“Because this is our culture. As much as I value your education, it matters to me that you hold your culture dear to your heart,” he explained firmly.

“B-but kids were looking at each other weirdly! I was the only one out that day! If this is what ‘culture’ is gonna do to me, I don’t love it.”

“Mariam. We will not discuss this any further, I have said the most I could. This conversation is now done,” he calmly got up to put his dish in the sink and walked away. Mariam furrowed her brow in worry. She didn’t know what was to come.

~International Day~

The school gym had never felt so huge. All over the tables were trifold cardboard displays. There was loud instrumental-pop music playing in the background. She was in awe.

Mariam looked down at herself and smiled. She wore a long dress with long sleeves. On
A Cruise to Die For

By Ela Jalil

I took a deep breath of the fresh salty air. There’s nothing quite like the feeling of being at sea. I come alive when I feel the beating sun warm my skin, and watch the wake behind the yacht as it breaks through the water. Sea sickness has never been a problem for me, something that unfortunately cannot be said for my fellow passengers. The skin of eight of the 12 people on board has a greenish tinge, telling me they would rather have this excursion on land. Armed with sea sickness bracelets, apples, and the ever-helpful horizon trick, the captain was able to uplift the spirits onboard. A small grin settled on his face when I flashed him a quick smile and a wink as he passed by. Now with only slightly pale faces, most everyone was sitting and relaxed in deck chairs with a few playing shuffleboard in the long shadow cast by a basketball backboard.

This is one of the nicest yachts I’ve ever been on, but I should have expected that given the excessive wealth of the people on board. Eying the diamond necklace that the blonde sitting next to me was wearing, I pictured myself fingering those jewels as I wore them proudly. When she turned to smile at me, I quickly morphed my face into a grin, praying that she didn’t see me staring at her.

“Mira, you have just got to try this lobster,” Camila called from the opposite side of the deck.

Thankful to leave the awkward situation I had found myself in, I walked over to Camila who was holding court on the starboard side of the yacht. She truly was the queen bee, and the only reason I was there in the first place. Our friendship was sparked when I bumped into her at a café, causing her to drop her food all over the floor. After treating her to lunch to apologize for my blunder, we realized that we had a lot in common. We’ve been inseparable for the past couple of weeks. That’s how I think friendships work with Camila. Super intense in the beginning, and slowly petering out until she moves onto the next thing. I know that my time with her was running short, so I was enjoying the luxury while I could. I perched on the edge of her seat and stole a lobster claw from her plate while flashing her a smile. She looked at me above her sunglasses and smirked, then pulled me into a tight side hug.

“Today’s going to be so much fun,” she gushed. “This wouldn’t be possible without you. Thanks for recommending the captain.”

At the mention of his title the captain looked over at us, locking eye contact with me. I gave him an imperceptible nod and turned back to Camila to laugh at a joke she just told. As we sat there, surrounded by the extravagance of it all while soaking in the beauty of a bright summer day, I felt the boat picking up speed along with a change registering on the passengers faces. The green tinge was back. Most of the people tried to adjust, but not Camila. She rushed onto the bridge to complain to the captain. I couldn’t hear their heated discussion. When she returned, she was pacified, albeit still nauseous from the increased speed.

“We have to go faster because there’s a storm coming and we need to get ahead of it,” Camila whispered to me. “Don’t tell anyone else we don’t want to alarm them.”

“Got it,” I whispered back with a concerned look on my face.

One by one, everyone went below to try and ease the seasickness they were experiencing. Beforehand, two people vomited over the rail as the captain kept his relentless pace. In fact, I felt that he might be going faster. At that point there were only three people above deck, the captain, Camila, and me. Camila clutched her stomach and groaned but refused my offer to take her below. Nothing was going to stand in her way. Determined to enjoy the day at sea, she launched into a long-winded story of a gala she attended a couple of years ago. I turned her out as I stared out into the turbulent waters. In time, even Camila couldn’t stay above deck. She turned away from me and stumbled down the stairs to the lounge.

As soon as she was out of sight I rushed to the bridge. “How much longer is this going to take?” I hissed. “We can’t keep them below deck much longer!”

“We’re here,” the captain said, pointing to the jagged rocks ahead as water glistened off of their tips—a beautiful but deadly sight.

When I looked into the captain’s eyes, I realized the flood of emotions in him as he comprehended the oncoming danger. “What am I doing,” he yelled as he began to turn the wheel away from the rocks, impelling me to grab his arm and turn him towards me. Looking into his eyes, I cautioned him, “Deep breaths,” I said, taking exaggerated inhales until he calmed down. As his eyes clouded over, I braced myself for the impact. The captain increased the speed projecting the yacht towards the rocks, impairing the boat. Its steel hull exterior no match for the craggy reef, it was quickly pierced.

Upon impact, I could hear the screams from the people below. I smiled, knowing that there was no escape before I dove over the side of the once magnificent yacht. I willed my true self to come forward once I hit the water. When my legs fused together to create my tail, I propelled through the water calling my sisters out of hiding. They came in a swarm, eyes glinting, teeth flashing, and tails lashing through the water. Whipped into a frenzy, they sought out their victims—nicely picked below deck for easy pickings.

I tried not to think of Camila. Was she screaming in fear? Was she deathly silent and trying to hide? Or was she trying to fight the rising water and my sisters in a futile attempt to survive? I cast her out my mind with a shrug. I’ve known countless girls like her throughout the centuries who’ve all met the same grisly end. There’s nothing I could do when my sisters got their talons on her.

The one thing I grabbed during the attack was the shining diamond necklace, whose owner is no longer whole. I placed it around my neck and smiled.

This was my most successful endeavor yet, but I’m glad that I stayed hopeful even during the failures. Rebranding takes time, and the Sirens aren’t going anywhere.
The Seventh Call
By Aden Silverman

Prologue
Now you may know the feeling of release. After a long hard day, whether it’s at school or work. But for me, a couple of years ago, things were different. I was1.

I woke up in what looked like a living room-sized tent; I was sprawled out on a worn-out old cot; I could hear yapping and barking of a-a machine hooked up to me? What was happening?

I remembered all of it, I had fallen unconscious, but my mind had somehow remembered a bit. I could see old, torn clothed men and some young men covered in wounds. I heard the screeches of the tires; the bus was on the road, where am I now?

I returned to the present from a heavy shaking on my arm, looked up, and there was rain dripping through the tent. I saw it slowly come down, with a “plop” right onto my… White t-shirt? A nice cool breeze came through the tent flap as someone walked in. They were a big, broad man with a badge of some sort and a blood-stained plaid uniform, “Ekelhaftes Schwein aufstehen” He said to me, “Murtig von Ihnen anzunehmen, dass ich es nicht wusste,” I said back. “Eh, fair enough,” he responded. “Welcome to camp Auschwitz; well, you are not very welcomed, but we will carry on. Get up now,” he said. I got up and took off the series of items hooked up to me. I had no idea how long I was unconscious, didn’t know the time either, or what camp Auschwitz meant.

My best bet was to follow him to see what was going on. I was skeptical about who it was. Avigail and I exchanged a look, and she ushered the kids to the other room. I looked through the peephole and saw two tall men in black suits in the most excellent pair of shades I’ve ever seen. I opened the door to welcome them in, but instead of saying something to them, I opened my mouth, but nothing came out. My eyes became blurry on the sides, and I felt something searing in my stomach. By then, in the other room, my wife and kids had started playing a game. Then I realized what had happened; I’d been shot.

They dragged me out of my house, silently closing the door behind me. I struggled to break out of their tight grip, and they weren’t even working themselves, not even flinching as they dragged me to what looked like a bus. I managed to look back to the window. I saw Avigail looking in complete dish of disgust. “What do you want?” the big fellow said. “This guy’s new here. Are there any free cells yet?” “Cells!” I thought to myself, exclaiming, exasperated. “Yeah, Row C,” the security man said. My head felt heavy. I couldn’t breathe, couldn’t take a breath.

Water was from the river, filtered by a bunch of rocks... We continued to walk to a remote shack and some young men covered in wounds. I heard babies crying in what was heard to be a thing to help me get better and back on my feet. Or at least, that’s what I thought.

Every couple of seconds, the whole bus shook. Everyone was bouncing around in their seats, trying not to get tossed around as the entire road was filled with rocks, some big, some as tiny as pebbles. But it didn’t matter. The boss was 20 years old. A feather bed would stop the bus right in its tracks. It was also a very twisty road. Combined with people trying to latch onto their seats from the rocks, they also avoided smashing into the glass window. We were heading to the abandoned village that we found. A couple of years back, we wanted to create our own area. So that’s what we did.

After years of building, we were ready. We overthrew the government; Raid every governmental building. We got guns, ammo, and a lifetime supply of death, after two years. WE were the new government. We run this. Not those stupid, ignorant little “jews” igch, even the word disgusts me. After we took over almost every building that was even remotely associated with those government buildings, we knew what was right. They thought they knew everything. But the thing is, you’re not more intelligent than your ruling. You don’t command them; they command you.

Chapter 1: The Acclamation procedure
I woke up to the sound of some sort of clanging, a rock? No, too loud to be a rock, my eyes felt heavy- really heavy- so the only choice I had was to wake my body up with a jolt, alright. 3, 2,1 BANG! My head hit something- and hard. I forced myself to reopen my eyes, and I was on the bottom of what looked to be an old worn-out bunk bed. I think I woke the thing sleeping atop there because he rolled off the bed right onto the floor with a loud WHAM. HE lay there on the solid stone ground for a solid minute, I tell you. I guess he was a heavy sleeper because he didn’t budge after that. I looked past him, and I was in some sort of house-like area. There were dozens of people lying on the floor fast asleep, whom I didn’t even see. I heard babies crying in what was heard to be just the room over, thin walls apparently.

A loud voice echoed the hallways; it sounded like a gym, the reverber hurts my ears. “Get up” it bellowed. I opened the door from the room to find a ton of other people doing the same. Their eyes were weak, their bodies grim and tired. What IS this place? I thought to myself. I followed everyone else down a set of stairs and through a wide door. The people I was following didn’t even have the energy to stop at the door. But when I went to push it open, it backed up. I got shoved right back into the door, on the floor.

Someone opened the door from above me, and my head fell onto rough, cold dirt. I got up, brushed off my now brown-spotted white shirt and pants, and continued to follow the others.

Chapter 2: Lewis Winter
Two years ago, before I got into this wicked place, I was broke, no home, no family or friends, nothing. That disappeared when what had happened, hoping that it wasn’t what I thought it was- but I was wrong.

“YOU DO NOT, EVER DISRESPECT US. SAY ADONAI IS MY RULER, AND YOU WILL GO RIGHT WITH THE REST OF THEM, EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY. SAY WHAT YOU WANT, BUT WE CAN WE WILL KILL YOU. DO NOT. MESS. WITH. US. I am your god. I am your ruler. I command you.” Ty was right next to me. I didn’t even realize, but he was covered in blood from shirt to pants.

He made a little sound, but I quickly covered his mouth. Unfortunately, they heard and shouted “do you want to say something?” The crowd around was back into a circle formation. Just the 2 of us in the middle while he was standing on the stage. The guards drew their weapons. I looked at him. He looked frozen solid. “Well?” he shouted. Ty frantically shook his head. “Good, I wouldn’t want to have a problem to deal with right now. I have more important things to deal with, rather than you. Ty’s head was sweating so much. “Boys, lower your weapons.” He said. Ty, with all his strength, said, “Thank you, sir!” In which he responded, “It’s Adolf Hitler; to you.” The Seventh Call
Guaranteed Income Pilot Program

On Dec. 14, Montgomery County Council unanimously voted to approve a nearly $2 million special appropriation to the FY22 Operating Budget for a Guaranteed Income Pilot Program. The funding was introduced by lead sponsors Councilmember Will Jawando and Council President Gabe Albornoz. Council Vice President Evan Glass and Councilmembers Tom Hucker, Craig Rice, Hans Riemer and Nancy Navarro were cosponsors.

This special appropriation will provide the initial funding to implement a Montgomery County Guaranteed Income Pilot Program. The pilot program would enroll 300 households and provide $800 per month for 24 months.

This may include individuals or families with or without children. A collaborative planning effort is underway to determine how people will be enrolled into this pilot program. Efforts to address any impact from guaranteed income on other benefits, and the structure for the evaluation of outcomes for participating households are also underway.

“Guaranteed Income Programs are showing up in cities and counties across the U.S.” said Councilmember Will Jawando. “The belief that people have the ability to make the best choices to improve their economic position has shown to be true in case after case. We’re proud to be the first jurisdiction in Maryland to introduce a Guaranteed Income Pilot. As we continue through recovery from COVID-19, we look forward to helping many Montgomery County residents become more financially stable and improve their quality of life.”

Guaranteed income is a direct, recurring cash payment to a specific, targeted group of people without strings attached. The purpose of the program is to help alleviate poverty, provide a form of financial stability and give residents the ability to make their own choices to improve their economic position.

“The Guaranteed Income Pilot Program is a solution to assist families in permanently exiting poverty,” said Council President Albornoz. “The first of its kind in the State of Maryland, this program will help provide economic mobility to our most vulnerable residents and put an end to generational poverty.”

The pilot will be a public-private partnership with a $1 million grant from the Meyer Foundation to support this effort. Evaluation of the program will be built into the pilot as it is designed.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, data showed that 40 percent of Americans could not afford a $400 emergency. In 2018, it was estimated that 47 percent of Montgomery County’s renter households were rent burdened, paying more than 30 percent of their income for housing. COVID-19 has disproportionately had a negative financial impact on women and people of color. Guaranteed income is expected to be an effective component of helping households recover from the economic impacts of the health crisis.

COVID-19 Hospitalizations Are Up in County

Sean O’Donnell, the county’s public health emergency preparedness manager, said that as of Monday, Dec. 13, there were 141 COVID-related hospitalizations countywide, 106 in acute care beds and 35 in intensive care unit beds, which CDC considers “moderate utilization.” This is higher than in previous months.

Although the county currently has adequate bed capacity, county health officials have worked with local hospitals to develop plans for increased capacity in case of a surge. In addition, state health officials have directed hospitals throughout Maryland to provide updated emergency plans addressing a potential surge to the Maryland Department of Health, according to O’Donnell.

DEER MANAGEMENT AT ROCK CREEK PARK

Since 2013, when the National Park Service (NPS) began reducing the deer population in Rock Creek Park, the park’s tree seedling density has almost tripled. To continue to protect and restore native plants and promote healthy and diverse forests, Rock Creek Park will conduct deer management operations between Nov. 22, 2021, and March 31, 2022. During this period, the NPS plans to reduce deer populations in Rock Creek Park and other areas under Rock Creek Park’s management. These areas could include Melvin Hazen Park, Soapstone Valley Park, Pinehurst Parkway, Glover Archbold Park, Battery Kemble Park and Fort Totten Park, among others.
The Little Farms Garden Club of Potomac continues a holiday tradition decorating the Great Falls Tavern.

On Dec. 7, 2021 National Park Ranger Mark Myers continues his long tradition of helping the Little Farms Garden Club with the decorating of the Tavern. He’s been doing it as long he can remember.

The Little Farms Garden Club of Potomac decorates the Great Falls Tavern for the holidays every year in early December, although the tradition was canceled in 2020 due to the pandemic.

As reported in the Potomac Almanac in 2014:

“A tradition established in 1978 by the women of Potomac’s Little Farms Garden Club continued when over two dozen of its members enhanced the historic Great Falls Tavern with a bounty of verdant foliage. The lush and fragrant collection of shrubbery and botanicals included boughs of magnolia and white pine, Fraser Fir, holly, and nandina with berries. The spirit of the season filled the air as the women wired, tied, and draped greenery while they enjoyed the great outdoors on the unseasonably warm 72-degree day.

“Little Farms Garden Club formed the partnership with the rangers at the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park to meld their talents and resources to beautify the national landmark for the community during the holiday season. The tavern, built in 1828 as a lockhouse, had north and south wings added in 1831 as suggested by its first locktender, W.W. Fenlon. He aspired to establish an inn that would accommodate the growing numbers of travelers visiting the area to escape the city’s heat and hustle and bustle.

“The centerpiece of the overall design features a 40-foot long garland above the main portal hung by Park Ranger Mark Myers. “I’ve been helping them as long as I can remember. The garland was plenty heavy. It’s definitely an armful,” Myers said.”
Enjoying the Day in a Beautiful Place

It was just before Thanksgiving, and there were some beautiful warm days to enjoy out along the towpath and the Potomac River.

Photos by Debbie Stevens
Local Veterans Aid Afghan Evacuee Family

Support Crosses Three Continents.

By Susan Laume

This is the story of one family’s successful evacuation from Afghanistan to escape the brutal policies and actions of the Taliban. It’s also the story of how groups of northern Virginia residents made the evacuation possible in the face of shrinking hope and rising danger, and how they helped one family start their journey to freedom and safety.

There are many Afghan families whose stories are similar to this family’s and many neighbors who felt the call to help. Situated so close to the global seat of power that is Washington D.C., many residents in our area are among those involved in high profile events. What makes this story different is that local people took on the role that the government could not, making the ultimate difference in the lives of many who aided the U.S. in time of war.

MEET THE FOX-GREENS, both career Army veterans now residing in Alexandria. Ron Green served in Afghanistan in the 528th Special Operation Support Battalion from 2000-2003; his wife served in Kandahar in 2005-06. The Northern Virginia couple, together with others, organized a core group of veterans after a plea from friend and fellow veteran Thomas Koppen. Koppen’s Afghan translator, Javid, who served in support of U.S. troops through 2017, had called seeking assistance. Javid’s long period of application for a Special Immigrant Visa, begun in 2016, had not been finalized. Dangers and pressures were building in the final days of U.S. troop withdrawal. Javid was desperately worried for his safety and his family’s.

The Special Immigrant Visa program is available to people who worked with the U.S. Armed Forces or under Chief of Mission authority as a translator or interpreter in Iraq or Afghanistan.

When Green’s friends recognized there was no existing system within the State Department or Department of Defense that could coordinate with these allied families like Javid’s, the veterans organized. They took on the task of getting the interpreter and his family out of danger. In what Fox described as a “spider web” of contacts, including those from her service in Kandahar Province and Kuwait, several groups connected to help each other in their mission, including some still on active duty in Afghanistan. Communications in Afghanistan required encryption to avoid leading the Taliban to the hidden families.

Over several harrowing days and nights, the family, six girls under the age of ten, six women, and six men, reached the airport and were safely airlifted to Germany. Their escape included narrowly missing the suicide bombing at Kabul International Airport. Javid’s was not the only family aided by the group. “Our efforts to date have successfully rescued 12 translators and their families. This is great news, but the work continues,” according to the group’s Go Fund Me. “There are many others our group is working on getting out of Afghanistan including interpreters who directly supported Special Operations, Medical Professionals, and workers who supported an Afghan Orphanage all of whom are in fear for their lives for working with US Forces. Many more still in harm’s way, trying to get out of Afghanistan.”

MEANWHILE IN GERMANY, at U.S. Air Force, Ramstein Air Base, another northern Virginia couple, Colby and Linsey Wise were also heeding the call to help. The Wise family, formerly of Falls Church, had been in Germany for four years with Colby’s company, providing Defense Department support. Ramstein Air Base was designated to receive evacuees airlifted from Kabul as a point of departure to the U.S. and other countries.

The Ramstein Air Base newsletter told of the family, formerly of Falls Church, had been in Germany for four years with Colby’s company, providing Defense Department support. Ramstein Air Base was designated to receive evacuees airlifted from Kabul as a point of departure to the U.S. and other countries.

There are many Afghan families who must start again from nothing:

News

Give to Help Refugees

At a time of the year when many more area citizens will open their hearts to help others in need, these local charities are offering assistance to Afghan evacuees who must start again from nothing:

LUTHERAN SERVICES National Capital Area, www.lsnc.org

AFGHAN YOUTH RELIEF FOUNDATION Chantilly, www.ayrf.org


LOCAL VETERAN SPONSORED FUND https://gofund.me/b5cf1eb0

See Afghan Evacuee, Page 6

Cynthia Fox (center), of Alexandria, visits with members of Afghan refugee Javi and family at Quantico, bringing donations of clothing and other essentials.

Northern Virginian group organizer, veteran Ron Green (left), of Alexandria, stands with Afghan evacuee Javi on Quantico Marine Base after Javi’s escape from Kabul with his family.

Northern Virginians residing in Germany buy out the IKEA store inventory of blankets to contribute to evacuees arriving at Ramstein Air Base

A second sort of donations at Ramstein Air Base separated clothing by sex, age and size.
**News**

**Over 50 Years of Iconic Music Venue**

**Birchmere tell-all book by local writers published in time for the holidays.**

**By Mike Salmon**

**The Almanac**

For a band to play at the Birchmere in Alexandria, it was like almost making it to the big-time concert world of stadiums and arenas. Since opening in the mid 1960s, the Birchmere has been a launching ground for many musicians, showcasing songs and sounds that make it an important place to start a musicians tour. The festoon out front featured iconic musicians like Pete Seger, Arlo Guthrie, Johnny Cash, Ray Charles and Joan Baez to name a few.

An entertainment venue like that can’t go through 55 years of concerts without a few stories to tell, and those stories are the meat behind the newly released book “All Roads Lead to the Birchmere, America’s Legendary Music Hall,” that hit the shelves in early November. Authors Gary Oelze and Stephen Moore dipped into their memory banks, and the memory banks of many others that have been on stage there to come up with this 472-page document on paper.

“Many moments stand out as markers that built the reputation of this durable music venue,” Oelze wrote. Oelze lives in the Del Ray part of Alexandria, while Moore lives in Bethesda.

“We interviewed about 120 musicians, they viewed it as an intimate listening room,” Moore said. The sound is different in a small place like this, and Moore found that some of the musicians prefer being close to the audience. “Here they can really see the people, they love that,” Moore said.

“Intimate,” is a place with about 500 seats and an artistic neon sign that looks out to Mount Vernon Avenue in Del Ray. The current venue is the third place the Birchmere has been over the years. They were at another location in Del Ray, and a spot in Shirlington before that. It’s tough to survive with prime real estate like that on only concert revenue, so the food and drinks they serve are part of their financial picture.

People are there to see the shows though and hear the music of Vince Gill from the Pure Prairie League, and the Eagles, Richie Havens of Woodstock fame, Herb Alpert and Mary Chapin Carpenter to name a few. “Many of the musicians see the Birchmere as their first stop on tours,” Moore said.

Over the years, there are tales of musical discovery, but also tales of time and place.

For example, one of the stories involved the Grateful Dead’s Mickey Hart who arrived late, and the Dead Heads were camped out all over the place around the Birchmere. The place was filled and it “almost exploded,” said Moore.

Another story involved Ray Charles, a blind musician who took a time out unknowingly in one of the technician’s rooms.

In 1991, Woody Harrelson of the television series “Cheers,” hammered out a country set with his band “Three Cool Cats.” Movie producer John Waters does a Christmas Show every December that’s more comedy and commentary than music. Waters is coming again this year on December 15.

The book has 33 chapters on acts throughout the years, and thumbnail pictures of the musicians and the early days. Some are recognized at first sight, and some are not, at least not to the music fans of today’s Top 40. The book took two years to write and the cover was produced by Stilson Greene, an artist in Leesburg. An afterword was written by Newman Bob Schieffer, who had his own country band at one point.

The book is available on Booklocker.

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**HOOVER MIDDLE SCHOOL**

**In The Eye of the Beholder**

*From Page 4*

the cuffs of her sleeves and the hem of her skirt was a green and red pattern. She walked around in an attempt to find people to socialize with, until her eyes wandered around the gym enough for her to come to a horrifying discovery.

Her worst nightmare, in fact.

Everyone was wearing their casual clothes; hoodies, jeans, leggings, t-shirts, sweaters, etc. She stopped smiling at herself and panicked.

“Dad!” Mariam exclaimed.

She ran toward her father, who was standing behind the table that had the cardboard display on it. “It happened! I told you it would happen!”

“What is it?”

“All the other kids are wearing normal clothes! Dad, I told you this would be a disaster.”

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**Mrs. Bryant’s Sixth Grade English Class students**

“Hey, Akari. Woah, your kimono…! It’s amazing! It’s so purple! The pink cherry blossoms add such a pretty touch! It’s beautiful!” She looked her up and down in awe.

Mariam couldn’t take it anymore. She ran out of the gym and into the bathroom.

She sat under a sink, hugging her knees, and silent tears streamed down her face and onto her sleeves. She tried to wipe her face but the material of the sleeve irritated her skin, so she just left the tears to dry on her face.

“Mariam?”

A soft, kind voice uttered her name. God? She wondered for a silly moment, “How are you so chill?”

Because I love my culture and you should too! It’s beautiful! All cultures are beautiful in their own way. It just depends on who you talk to, beauty is always in the eye of the beholder. It’s an opinion. Now, we both look amazing. So let’s go do that Japanese-ethiopian dance we practiced,” she crawled out and stood, and Mariam did the same.

“Let’s make them jealous, yeah!”

“Mmh!”

They ran out of the bathroom and into the gym right on time.

“Thank you for that beautiful traditional Irish dance, Clara! Even though it used pop music… it was still quite creative! Now, we have a special event: A japanese-ethiopian dance! That’s right folks, a crossover!” The announcer, a girl that not much older than Mariam, perhaps an 8th grader, ran her fingers through her afro and then calmly walked backstage. Mariam and Akari ran backstage as the curtains closed. Then they emerged, traditional Ethiopian music booming from the speakers. They held pastel pink fans with pink cherry blossoms on them. They both started off with a traditional japanese dance during a slower part, and then and then, as the music got faster, got into a traditional ethiopian dance. The kids stared in awe; they were jealous, in fact. But even if they hadn’t been, Mariam felt so happy at that moment. She loved being able to dance like this. She loved being able to express her own culture (also encompassing her father’s culture). This is my culture. I love being able to say that about this. I love my culture.”

If I am the beholder, in my eyes, “This is beautiful…” And that is all that matters.
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Improvements Coming to Northern Section of GW Parkway

Contract awarded through the Great American Outdoors Act.

By Mike Salmon
The Almanac

Improvements are coming to the George Washington Memorial Parkway’s northern section, the busiest section of parkway serving about 26 million drivers annually.


The rehabilitation project is in the section from Spout Run to I-495. It includes replacing the asphalt pavement, redesigning of the Route 123 interchange, repairing storm-water management systems, reconstructing stone walls and roadside barriers, rehabilitating the historic overlooks and lengthening entrance and exit lanes at some interchanges.

The northern section of the parkway is the busiest section of parkway and serves about 26 million drivers annually. This section, which opened in 1962, has never undergone a major rehabilitation. The first phase of the project will be project design, and park visitors and drivers will experience little or no change to their routines for at least a year.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law contains over $30 billion in investments that fund Interior Department initiatives and benefit the communities it directly serves. In addition to historic funding for climate resiliency initiatives and legacy pollution clean-up, the law provides for a five-year reauthorization of the Federal Lands Transportation Program, which will help invest in repairing and upgrading National Park Service roads, bridges, trails and transit systems. The law also invests in projects that will help fund bridge replacements and resiliency, repair ferry boats and terminal facilities, and maintain wildlife crossings that keep people and surrounding wildlife safe, the NPS said.

Local Veterans Aid Afghan Evacuee Family

FROM PAGE 10

nation process to sustain the evacuee population from Afghanistan temporarily housed on Ramstein Air Base, Germany, during Operation Allies Welcome. … The team received donations valued at $1.3 million from local and international communities during the evacuation operations. The donation process began on the evening of Aug. 19, 2021, shortly after [the first] evacuees arrived at Ramstein. It dawned on us really quickly that we needed more space. Many of the donated items were not only from the Kaiserslautern Military Community, but they were from the United States, Belgium, France and other countries around the world. Volunteers collected more than 110 tons of donations.”

Linsey Wise described the donation center effort. “The first sort was general sorting (e.g., men’s clothes, kids shoes, baby food), the second sort was more specific (e.g., boys clothes size 2T, baby formula, women’s small pants). Once sorted, the donations went to a hardened shelter area on Ramstein AB where other volunteers pulled together clothing kits. These kits contained underwear, socks, pants, shirts, scarves, hats, coats, etc. and were handed out to evacuees once they got some essentials from the Red Cross. We tried to ensure that folks had a clean set of warm clothes right away since many people came with only the clothes on their backs.”

Linsey added, “Never have I felt the need to give back more than during ‘Operation Allies Welcome.’ Colby and I literally put our lives on pause [and hired babysitters] so we could volunteer, purchase essential items, and make purchases on behalf of friends, family, and coworkers back stateside. It was a very humbling and emotional experience, and I feel so lucky to have been a part of this effort and meet some amazing people along the way.”

Leaving Ramstein Air Base, Javid and his family were flown to Dulles International Airport, then transported to temporary housing at Quantico Marine Base. After many weeks, they are still at Quantico as they await completion of final processing for the assistance of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), part of the United Nations System, the leading international organization providing support for immigrants across the globe. IOM will assist the family in getting to Seattle, where they plan to settle near family members who have been in the U.S. for some time.

Meanwhile In Virginia, the Fox-Green group has continued to organize donations. Multiple visits to the evacuee family at Quantico included delivery of four truckloads of essentials from donors across the state and neighboring states.

Cynthia Fox brings toys, books and stickers, which the girls particularly enjoyed, to Javid’s daughters, Sahar, 5 years old, Kawaar, 3 years old, and Hila 7 years old.

Northern Virginia. Fox said that beyond clothing and shoes, they brought books to help entertain the girls and assist them in learning English. She commented that the family will once again be able to take only a limited amount of belongings with them on the final part of their journey as they fly to Seattle. Fox was complimentary of the work that charities such as Lutheran Social Services are doing to support refugees with transportation, housing, job assistance, mentoring, and other essential needs beyond what the small local group can manage. The Lutheran’s national capital group, with the help of 5,300 volunteers, has assisted 926 Afghan allies to date.

Apiary at Blue Lake Regional Park

The Almanac

Three year old Jackson Wise helps pack and load jackets and other warm clothing donated by friends and neighbors of his family for evacuees traveling through Germany.
Last week, the Montgomery County Council voted to enact Bill 41-21, Elections Council Districts – Boundaries, which is the enabling legislation that revises the boundaries of Council districts to create seven districts as required by the Montgomery County Charter that was amended by the voters in the 2020 general election. The vote was 8-1 with Councilmember Friedson opposed.

Before 2020, the Charter required that the County be divided into five Council districts. The new requirement for seven districts applies to the 2022 elections, and the Council will consist of eleven members in total in December 2022. Seven district Councilmembers will be elected by registered voters who live in each district and four at-large members will be elected by all voters across the County.

In addition to creating two new Council districts, the Charter requires that each district must be compact in form and composed of adjoining, contiguous territory. The populations of each district also must be substantially equal.

The Council enacted the recommendations from the Montgomery County Commission on Redistricting Report with amendments that do the following: the Kemp Mill community becomes part of District 6 which moves Precincts 13-020 and 13-033 from District 5 to District 6; the Northwest Park/Oakview neighborhood becomes part of District 5 with the rest of the Hill-andale community which moves Precinct 05-014 from District 4 to District 5; the Willows of Potomac/Traville Gardens neighborhood is combined with the rest of this community which places Precinct 04-024 in the same district as Precinct 04-035 in District 3 and moves Precinct 04-011 from District 3 to District 1; the Aurora Hills community becomes part of District 2 which moves Precincts 04-019, 04-034 and 04-036 from District 6 to District 7.

The Commission on Redistricting was charged with presenting a redistricting plan for Council districts and a report explaining their recommendations to the Council. The eleven-member volunteer commission included registered Democrats, Republicans, independents and those who are unaffiliated. Residents can learn more about the work of the Redistricting Commission here.

The Council received a briefing from the Commission on Redistricting and their report on Nov. 9, 2021 and held public hearings on Nov. 16 and Nov. 18. On Nov. 30, the Council met to review the Commission’s proposed map and several proposed changes to the map were reviewed prior to today’s final vote.

**Libraries To Expand Hours**

Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL) will expand hours of branch service to the community effective Jan. 2.

The hours of operation at all MCPL branches, except Maggie Nightingale (Poolesville) and Noyes Library for Young Children, will be:

- Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday: 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- Thursday: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Friday, Saturday, Sunday: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The hours and schedule for Maggie Nightingale (currently closed for refresh) and Noyes libraries will remain as they currently stand.

For more information on MCPL services, please visit https://montgomerycountymd.gov/library/

**Healthy Red Fox Napping in Potomac**

This fluffy, plump red fox was napping curled up in my Potomac yard this week, keeping its nose warm with its luxuriant tail. It was visible from my home office window.

The fox was still vigilant, picking up its head to look around now and then, and going back to napping shortly thereafter.
Inspiration for Holiday Décor

Ideas for understated designs in non-traditional colors.

By Marilyn Campbell
The Almanac

The halls in the Alexandria home of Penny Bell are not yet decked and her search for a Christmas tree has been futile. “Our home has always been decorated with beautiful red and green décor. Every year we usually have three trees that are about eight-to-ten feet high,” she said. “This year I’ll be lucky if I can find trees that are five feet high.”

A dearth of holiday décor lends itself to a minimalist theme and non-traditional colors, say some local designers. “If there’s one thing we’ve learned over the past year, it’s to simplify,” said Anne Walker of Anne Walker Design and Farm & Feast in Potomac, Maryland.

Begin with the entryway, which sets the tone for the entire house, said Sallie Lord of Grey Hunt Interiors in Chantilly. “Decorating the space at the front of your home starts and keeps the spirit flowing,” she said. “Pair whites, blacks and golds for a glamorous, yet modern look and feel. Who said Christmas can’t be chic?”

Even though they might be hard to find this year, “the Tannenbaum is still the star of the holiday show,” continued Lord. “A Christmas tree is the focal point of every living room during the holiday season,” she said. “You can achieve a sophisticated and elegant tree by wrapping it with delicate ribbon or gorgeous lights.”

From an elaborate dinner or simple lunch, hosting guests is often a part of seasonal festivities. A tablespace that incorporates natural elements can be both understated and elegant, advises Walker. “Whether candles are made from [materials like] reindeer antler and laser cut wood Christmas trees in soft shades of beige, the lack of embellishment allows each element to have a huge impact. Guests will want to linger in this peaceful, elegant space.”

“Make your table feel inviting by adding small touches of luxury like a velvet ribbon to serve as napkin rings,” added Lord. “Coziness should envelop the entire space. Have your guests feel right at home as soon as they sit down. They’ll be embracing the holiday spirit.”

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