

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

JANUARY 6, 2022



PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION

Beautiful but ...

Early on in the storm on Monday, cars slid off Newington Road in southern Fairfax County.

Desegregation Ruling in Bucknell Continues to Have National Impact



PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION

The Virginia Department of Historic Resources is placing a sign soon though the exact location has not been determined yet.

Historical marker approved to commemorate "Sullivan v. Little Hunting Park, Inc."

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

The swimming pool in Little Hunting Park is currently a vibrant part of the Bucknell Manor community but at one time, this park had unfair membership restrictions based on race.

One member challenged the rule, and the Supreme Court stepped in with a ruling that was a major civil rights achievement. The case, Sullivan v. Little Hunting Park, Inc., will soon be commemorated by a historic marker noting this event.

"Because of families like the Sullivans, the country changed its ways," said Sen. Scott Surovell, who proposed this historic marker before the Virginia General Assembly in 2021. "The Sullivans finally had their day in court," he said.

According to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, the pool came into focus in 1965, when Paul E. Sullivan rented one of his two nearby homes to Theodore R. Freeman Jr. When Sullivan attempted to transfer a pool membership to the Freeman family, the board of Little Hunting Park denied the request as the Freemans were Black. They



Sullivan v. Little Hunting Park ruling was a landmark in racial desegregation throughout the nation.

also terminated the Sullivans' membership for protesting. Both families filed a lawsuit in Fairfax County in 1966 and pursued the case through several appeals.

In December 1969, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in Sullivan v. Little Hunting Park, Inc., that the exclusion of an African

SEE DESEGREGATION, ON PAGE 5

Local Clothing Designer Behind Bathing Suit Line

In high school, fashion classes at the Fairfax Academy paid off for Kendall Barry.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION



PHOTO BY ISAMEL
Kendall Barry

Pursuing a career in fashion was always a goal of Kendall Barry, so she signed up for the Fairfax Academy while attending high school in Fairfax County.

She studied the fashion industry at the Academy, and now she's the owner of her own luxury swimwear business called ISAMEL, which has been on the premier beaches around the world.

The suits are made of material from recycled fishing nets, embellished with sequins of the same, and are available for women of all sizes. "Women with real bodies," she said, not unrealistic expectations that may be on the runway. "Things are changing a lot for the positive," she said.

These attitudes are something she stands behind since she launched the company in June 2020, during the early pandemic. With all the quarantine time back then, she had time to hash out the basics for her company and it's taken off.

She does remember the early inspirations she got while attending classes at Annandale High School and the Fairfax Academy at West Potomac High School. Friends at Annandale joined her in the program.

"We were actually passionate about studying something," Barry said. "In the middle of the day I'd go to West Potomac and then back to Annandale."

Landing a Job in Fashion

During her time taking classes at the academy, she got a part-time job at The Full Cup, lingerie store in Old Town Alexandria, her first professional opportunity. "I got to style the window exhibits and dress the mannequins," she said.

In the Fairfax Academy program, the county offers classes in the fashion industry; other academy programs include dance, game design, languages, theater, photography and more. Under the fashion umbrella, students are introduced to the field of fashion design, fabric technology and apparel-production techniques as well as skills in art, communication, mathematics, science

SEE LOCAL CLOTHING, ON PAGE 5



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Beaver Stay Busy in the Winter

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

“You have beavers here?” National Public Radio journalist Sabri Ben-Achour asked incredulously when he visited Dyke Marsh a few years ago, not expecting them in Northern Virginia’s suburbs. The answer is yes, and there are beavers around Mason Neck and in Huntley Meadows Park too. Beavers live in or around ponds, rivers, marshes and lakes.

Because much aquatic vegetation is dormant, beaver lodges are more visible in winter than in other times of the year. The lodges are typically rounded stacks of logs, sticks, mud and vegetation that protrude from the water. They have two underwater entrances. Freshly-gnawed trees are also sure signs of beavers. They cut down trees to build dams and lodges with their strong teeth.

As for spotting a beaver, they are mostly active at night so few people see them. The best time is at dusk or sunrise. They are active year-round and do not hibernate.

“Engineers”

North America’s largest rodents, beavers (*Castor canadensis*) are dark brown mammals with long incisors, short legs, webbed feet and a long, flat, scaly tail. They can dig and grasp tree limbs with their claws. They are three to four feet long including the tail and typically weigh 40 to 50 pounds. Some can weigh up to 80 pounds. They primarily eat herbaceous vegetation, woody and aquatic plants.

Beavers breed in the winter and live in family groups or colonies. Their young are born in May and June. They have a home range size of eight acres, according to state wildlife experts.

Known as “nature’s engineers,” beavers build dams and lodges with the trees they cut down. The result can be viewed positively or negatively, depending on how or whether people want to use the land. The ponds formed by beaver dams provide habitat for waterfowl, reptiles, amphibians and aquatic insects. Ponds can filter pollution and help control flooding. They can also flood crop and timberland, roads and backyards.

If there are leaks in the dams, they will patch them with mud, sticks and brush. Their industriousness in building and repairing dams may be the origin of the terms “busy as a beaver” and “eager beaver.”

“Local” Beavers

Most public land managers hesitate to estimate how many beavers or lodges are around.

At Huntley Meadows Park, “We do not know how many beavers or lodges are with-



A beaver eating the bark off a tree branch.



A beaver swimming.



A beaver lodge in Dyke Marsh.



Beaver can cut down trees with their strong teeth, this one in Dyke Marsh.



An unusually good look at a beaver’s tail.

in the park,” says Karen Sheffield, the park’s manager. “The largest and most visible lodge can be seen from the boardwalk during the winter months, if you know where to look.”

When the Fairfax County Park Authority acquired the park’s land in 1975, Barnyard Run was an intermittent stream. In 1977, beavers dammed the stream and created the

central, freshwater wetland. In the 1970s and 1980s, the park’s wetland was around half open water and half vegetated wetland, productive and diverse. Silt began coming in in stormwater runoff in the late 1980s and the beavers, nomadic animals, moved out. After many years of deliberation and public meetings, park managers decided to restore the marsh and artificially manage water levels, a project completed in 2014. The control system is a 500-foot-long, three-foot-high earthen berm with metal slide gates.

On Mason Neck, there is one large beaver lodge clearly visible at the state park on the Bay View Trail and likely others further inland and in Kane’s Creek. “Beavers have been active in the Little Marsh part of the Elizabeth Hartwell Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge for many years,” says Randy Streufert, a board member of the Friends of Mason Neck State Park.

A lodge is also visible from the Great Marsh Trail viewing platform.

For many years, beavers maintained a dam and lodge in the part of Dyke Marsh behind the River Towers Condominiums, but they moved on several years ago, as is their wont. Since the beavers left, more cattails and wild rice have moved in, plants that grow in shallow water.

The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources’ website says that beavers are likely present in every Virginia county. People have seen them in Alexandria and Arlington over the years.

By the mid-1800s, beavers were effectively extirpated from much of their eastern U.S. range because of the fur trade. People made their soft pelts into coats or hats, shipping many to Europe. Today, Virginia manages beavers as a game species.

“Beavers pose little threat to humans, their property or pets,” according to Fairfax County’s website.

For more information, visit <http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/information/?s=050069>

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/wildlife/beaver>

New Year, New Laws

On Jan. 1, the minimum wage was raised from \$9.50 per hour to \$11 per hour; and more.

BY DEL. PAUL KRIZEK

We have just welcomed the new year, giving us a fresh start and endless possibilities, though starting with a big snowstorm and loss of power for many of us may not be so auspicious. But in all seriousness, here's to a much better year for everyone in 2022!

Indeed, the moment the clock struck midnight on Jan. 1, some important laws that the General Assembly passed during last year's session became effective for the first time. As we gear up for the start of the 2022 General Assembly session in just one week, it would be remiss of me not to ensure that you are informed about the Commonwealth's new laws.

One of the most significant

changes in 2022 is the continuation of the increase in Virginia's minimum wage. On Jan. 1, the minimum wage was raised from \$9.50 per hour to \$11 per hour. Under Democratic leadership, Virginia's minimum wage has seen a 50% increase over the last two years and will have a lasting positive impact on Virginia's working families.

The minimum insurance coverage required for vehicles in Virginia increased for the first time since the 1970s. For all policies effective from Jan. 1, 2022, to January 1, 2025, the coverage requirements for liability insurance for crashes where one person is killed or injured increase from \$25,000 up to \$30,000. For cases involving two or more people, the amount rises from \$50,000 to \$60,000. Make sure to check with your insurance

provider to ensure that your policy meets this minimum.

A new five-cent tax on disposable plastic bags took effect in Fairfax County (along with Arlington County and the City of Alexandria — it is a local option) as a measure to reduce the impact of single-use plastics on our environment. This tax will be charged at grocery stores, drug stores, and convenience stores. The money raised will fund environmental cleanup, education, and reusable bags for recipients of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC).

Starting with this year's elections, May municipal elections for towns and cities will now be held in November along with the rest of the Commonwealth. The date for primary elections will also shift from the second to the third Tuesday in June.

Another law going into effect



Krizek

bans the use of animals for cosmetic testing in Virginia, which will be followed on July 1 with a ban on the sale of any cosmetics that were developed using animal testing. This law places Virginia as a forerunner in the fight against animal cruelty. Virginia was the fourth state to pass this law, and four more have followed suit since.

The DMV can now issue "identification privilege cards" to non-drivers in the undocumented community. Undocumented children will also now be able to receive an ID. In addition, persons 70 years of age or older may exchange a valid Virginia driver privilege card for an identification privilege card at no fee.

And finally, any section of U.S. Route 1 in Virginia that is still named "Jefferson Davis Highway," after the former president of the Confederacy, will be renamed to "Emancipation Highway"

My Elected Representative

BY DEL. KENNETH R. "KEN" PLUM

In the general election in 2021 through a constitutional amendment, Virginia voters decided to transfer the majority party responsibility of turning the census count of persons in the state into as much as practicable 100 House of Delegates districts, 40 Senate districts and 11 congressional districts to a nonpartisan election redistricting process. The outcome of the vote was not even close — 2.77 million in favor and 1.45 million opposed. The process to keep the outcome as independent as possible was clunky and inefficient but in the end produced a defensible result that will move Virginia into a leadership role of independent redistricting. A reform goal I had worked on for more than 40 years has become a reality.

A scan of the new maps as drawn by the Supreme Court when the commission could not come to a conclusion on a set of maps does not contain any salamander-shaped districts or any grotesque shapes designed to protect the interests of incumbents. The Washington Post described the outcome of the new redistricting procedure as "ending a contentious redistricting process that for the

first time gave no say to the state's elected officials."

There had been much criticism that the Supreme Court could not render an unbiased decision because they are political appointees proved to be misguided. As the Court Order stated, it has "fully complied with federal and state law in the following order of precedence:

- ❖ The United States Constitution, particularly Article I, Section 2, and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment;

- ❖ Applicable federal statutes, particularly the Voting Rights Act of 1965, 52 u.s.c. § 10301;

- ❖ The Constitution of Virginia, particularly Article II, Sections 6 to 6-A; and

- ❖ Applicable Virginia statutes, particularly Code §§ 30-399(E), 24.2-304.04, and any other relevant provision in Chapter 3 of Title 24.2 of the Code of Virginia.

Although it may have taken you a decade to learn the number of your delegate and senate districts, be aware that all those numbers have changed. My previously numbered 36th district is now the 7th House of Delegates district. Details of the new districts can be found at https://www.vacourts.gov/courts/scv/districting/2021_virginia_re

"A defensible result that will move Virginia into a leadership role of independent redistricting"

districting_memo.pdf. Discussion of the impact of the new maps is available at www.vpap.org.

Not everyone is happy with the new maps. Having witnessed the redistricting of the Virginia General Assembly over 40 years I can confirm that it is never a smooth and easy process because every incumbent argues for safe districts

for themselves and for their party. Every redistricting has been followed by a decade of court suits. That is not likely to occur this year. The legislature can get underway with the important tasks in front of it and spend less time on redistricting as the people indicated in their vote for the constitutional amendment.

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An independent, locally owned weekly newspaper delivered to homes and businesses.

Published by

Local Media Connection LLC

1606 King Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

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A Connection Newspaper



Desegregation Ruling in Bucknell Continues to Have National Impact

FROM PAGE 1
American family from membership in a community recreational association constituted illegal housing discrimination. The case led to the desegregation of neighborhood pool clubs across the U.S.

At the General Assembly, Surovell went through the chronology of the case, including unrest between neighbors. "Their mailbox got blown up a couple of times," he said. The case was initially thrown out for technicalities, and then finally heard by the Supreme Court in 1969. "Ultimately thousands of pools in the United States desegregated because of this lawsuit," Surovell said. It was a major point in the Fair Housing rules that are in place today.

"Wonderful story of bravery for racial equality right here in our neighborhood that made historic progress across America. We should all be proud and inspired to have the courage to follow the example of the Sullivan and Freeman families when we see injustice. Thank you Scott for sharing," said one person on Surovell's social media site.



The swimming pool is a major part of the Little Hunting Park.

The marker in Bucknell is one of 14 new state historical highway markers approved in December 2021. Others are in the counties of Albemarle, Botetourt, Buckingham, Clarke, Essex (2), Madison, Mecklenburg; and the cities of Hampton, Lynchburg, Martinsville, and Norfolk.

Virginia's historical highway marker program began in 1927 with installation of the first markers along U.S. 1. It is considered the oldest such program in the nation.

Currently there are more than 2,600 state markers, mostly maintained by the Virginia Department of Transportation.

PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION

Local Clothing Designer Behind Bathing Suit Line

FROM PAGE 1

and technology.

Tom Barry, Kendall's father, was happy to see this offered by the county, even though she had to travel to another school for this specialized curriculum. "Her professor at West Potomac recognized she was special and requested Kendall do some work for her outside of the school program," he said.

After graduating, she went on to Marymount University in Arlington, but their fashion program was not quite what she was looking for, so it was on to Savannah College in Georgia where she got a degree in fashion. Before long, she was working with J Crew, Avida Embroidery and Michael Kors Luxury, where she worked for six years.

Michael Kors was "a great experience where I met a lot of celebrities," she said. Then it was onto the runways of New York City's modeling world, and now she's at home in Philadelphia with her fiancée who works in tech sales.

Barry's design work has been featured in numerous magazines and on celebrities attending VIP red carpet events such as the Met Gala, the Emmys, the Tony's, and the Oscars. Her family was happy with this career choice. "Upon entering the fashion industry she seemed to quickly become a driven



PHOTOS BY ISAMEL



An ISAMEL bikini.

This model in an ISAMEL bathing suit was photographed on St. John in the USVI by professional photographer Sarah Swan.

and valued corporate player," her father noticed.

ISAMEL

The name ISAMEL is a sideways spelling of Melissa, Barry's friend from college. Melissa died in a plane crash in Kenya. Melissa was an inspiration for Barry. "I knew I wanted to have some sort of nod or tribute to her," she said.

Barry isn't just kicking back

though. She manages ISAMEL and is always looking for new trends in the swimsuit world. She freelances in design with Anthropologie, another fashion company.

For ISAMEL, she has her eye on new colors for suits, and is thinking about towels, jewelry and fragrances to go with it. But, "I need to take it slow," she said.

See <https://shopisamel.com/> On Instagram, @shopisamel



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UNDER CONTRACT



Alex/Riverside Estates \$704,900
3102 Battersea Lane

Make this Christmas special by visiting this incredible 3 level Colonial in popular Riverside Estates. This home has been updated & meticulously maintained: baths remodeled, interior painted, hwd floors refinished all in 2021. Basement remodeled in 2020-New chimney liners & DBL pane windows in 2019-Electric panel upgraded & HWH, siding & gutters replaced in 2018-Furnace 2012-Roof 2008-A/C 2004-MBA & Kitchen in 2012-Kitchen has granite counters, maple cabinets, SS appliances. Main level includes living rm, w/FPL, dining rm, kitchen & family rm w/access to carport & storage shed plus beautiful sliding glass doors to patio & gorgeous bkyd. Upper level has 4BRs, (2nd BR almost the same size as the spacious MBR), a MBA & 2nd half bath-the lower level has a 2nd FPL in the rec rm, a den/office area & rear door for access to the bkyd. Additional storage available in a 17x11 rm w/built-in shelving & 2 large cedar closets. Finally, a 13x12 utility rm complete w/built-in table for folding clothes. Fabulous location.

UNDER CONTRACT



Alex/ Mt. Zephyr \$679,900
8521 Richmond Avenue

Tired of dealing with the stairs in a 3-level Colonial? Come see this stunning 2 level Rambler w/walkout lower level to a large stone patio & beautiful backyard. The main level offers 3BRs, & 2BAs, large open kitchen remodeled in 2007, sparkling refinished hwd floors, a living room w/wood burning FPL, & finally a stunning 3 season screened porch off the dining room, a perfect place to unwind after a hard day at the office. The lower level has 4th, & 5th BRs, a third bath & a huge family room w/2nd FPL, & lovely bar/kitchenette. This is a perfect area for entertaining. Storage a concern, check out the 26 x 13 storage room & the added storage in the attic over the screened porch, accessed by pull down stairs. Throw in a large beautiful backyard & you have a total winner! Some additional updates: New Shed 2010-New Well McLain Boiler 2006 w/20-year warranty-New Roof 2012 w/25-year warranty- A/C 2015- Granite Countertop lower-level kitchenette 2016- Washer & Dryer 2016. 5 minutes to Ft. Belvoir (S), 15 minutes (N) to Old Town Alex, 27 minutes (N) to National Airport, all along the George Washington Parkway.

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8342 Wagon Wheel Road

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The lots are cleared for incoming students and staff, or for people to pick up food or devices to take class online.



The FCPS snow plan starts early in the morning.

Snow and Schools

The communication and snow removal system continues to evolve to keep all the boxes checked.

BY MIKE SALMON
GAZETTE PACKET

PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION

The freak storm of Jan. 3 took many by surprise, but in the parking lot of Hayfield Secondary School in Fairfax County, snow operations were in motion just after the first flakes hit the ground. It was that way all over the county.

Typically when snow is forecasted, the wheels go in motion at the school system at 2 a.m. the night before so the school day can go on as soon as possible. There are 35 plows in the school system's fleet, and 45 vendor plows to help out. Depending on the severity of the storm, there are "approximately 50 skid steers that assist as well," said school spokesperson Jennifer Sellers. Independent contractors available on top of that, and Sellers said this storm dumped enough snow that the contractors were called out the next day.

In addition to the parking lots, there are surrounding streets that need clearing as well, which are normally under the county and state systems, so the school system works with Fairfax County Department of Transportation and Virginia Department of Transportation as well.

"We coordinate with them and assist each other," Sellers added.

The school system has three-to-four salt sources located around Fairfax County, but depending on logistics of these sites, FCPS uses other salt sources at the county DOT sites.



At Hayfield Secondary, the plow was operating while flakes continued to come down.



The storm on Jan. 3 dumped more than was initially expected, as much as a foot of snow. Franconia had 11.8 inches; Rose Hill measured 10 inches; Fairfax Station measured 8.2 inches, according to the National Weather Service.

Go or No Go

At one time, families would gather around the radio and television to hear the status of schools for the coming day, but it's now online. The word goes out through social media and the FCPS website. The school system hashed out the snow day plan in October this year and posted it on the website. "The first five inclement weather days will be traditional inclement weather days.

These five days may occur consecutively due to a single weather event or may take place as several individual events," it reads. With virtual learning procedures from the pandemic, there have been questions about whether snow days could be virtual days on social media, but this plan is in place for the time being.

In the past, any days the schools were closed beyond the given number of snow days were added on to the end of the year,

or taken from the spring break days, but this may also be outdated. "Once these five days have been taken, FCPS will use the flexibility provided by the General Assembly to have unscheduled virtual learning days, wherever possible, to maintain continuity of learning," the website says.

To access virtual learning, students must have taken home the computers the night before, and since this storm came on a Monday after the holiday break, it may not

have happened.

The school system has a system to allow students to pick up their devices if that is needed, and get food if needed, so a clear parking lot is vital in these cases.

"Please be aware that the goal is to provide food to students wherever possible during inclement weather days," FCPS said. Weekly meal kit distribution will be done at the regular locations from 10:30 - 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, Jan. 6.

**MOUNT VERNON DISTRICT
POLICE REPORTS**

MISSILE INTO AN OCCUPIED DWELLING: 6800 block of Moon Rock Court, 12/24/21, 10:30 a.m. The victim was cleaning when they found damage and a bullet laying on the floor. Damage was found on the exterior of the home. The bullet appears to have traveled through the exterior of the home causing the damage inside. No injuries were reported.

STOLEN AUTO RECOVERY/POSSESSION OF NARCOTICS/ WARRANT SERVICE: 5900 block of Richmond Highway, 12/27/21, 1:18 a.m. An officer saw a 2016 Hyundai Sonata that was reported stolen from an out-of-state jurisdiction. The officer arrested the occupants of the vehicle, a 42-year-old female and a 35-year-old man, both from Washington D.C. The female was charged with possession of scheduled I or II drug, grand larceny, and false identification to law enforcement. The man was charged with possession of scheduled I or II drug, and grand larceny.

ROBBERY: 7800 block of Richmond Highway, 12/29/21, 11:58 a.m. The victim was selling merchandise out of the trunk of his vehicle when a man approached and inquired about an item he was selling. The man then assaulted the victim and took the merchandise with force. The man left the area in a vehicle. The victim reported injuries not considered life threatening.

**FRANCONIA DISTRICT STATION
SPEED TO ELUDE:** I-95 North at I-395, 12/23/21, 5:14 p.m. Officers responded to the area after a Virginia State Trooper's vehicle was struck by a 2014 black Chevy Malibu that fled the scene. While on their way, officers observed the suspect vehicle and assisted Virginia State Police in pursuit. Officers recognized an opportunity to stop the vehicle and utilized the Precision Immobilization Technique that ended the pursuit in the area of I-395 and Duke Street in the Alexandria section of Fairfax County. A 31-year-old Maryland man was arrested and charged with felony speed to elude. Virginia State Police charged the man with additional charges.

COMMERCIAL ROBBERY: 6225 Backlick Road (7-Eleven), 12/26/21, 3:31 a.m. A man entered the business, implied he had a weapon, and took merchandise. No injuries were reported.

ROBBERY: 6100 block of Brandon Avenue, 12/27/21, 6:15 p.m. The victim was walking home when approached by a man. The man implied he had a weapon, took the victim's property, and ran away. No injuries were reported.

CALENDAR

JAN. 7-29
Little Monsters Exhibit. At Del Ray Artisans Gallery in the Colasanto Center, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. The "Little Monsters" exhibit at Del Ray Artisans gallery features artists' interpretation of their own little monsters—from scary to funny. Check out related workshops. Gallery hours are Thursday 12-6 p.m., Friday 12-9 p.m., Saturday 12-6 p.m., and Sunday 12-6 p.m. Details at: <https://DelRayArtisans.org/event/little-monsters>

THE BIRCHMERE
At 3701 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. All shows are at 7:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted. Tickets available at Ticketmaster.com. Contact The Birchmere at 703-549-7500 or www.Birchmere.com.

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Newspapers & Online

Thank you to the hundreds of supporters who helped to keep all your Connection Newspapers alive throughout Alexandria, Fairfax County Arlington County and Potomac, Md. along with affiliated websites and digital media. Now we need help again in 2022.

Each local newspaper's mission aspires to provide greater community service, and we do know that our communities are better off if we continue to publish. Last year's financial support from readers and supporters like you bridged the shortfall before Federal PPP funding arrived, and both made our survival possible. We now await a decision for a grant from Rebuild Virginia in early February that we hope will help us in 2022 and beyond. But we need help to survive the first quarter, always a brutal time for cash flow in weekly newspapers. Thank you.

Please, help save these historical papers.

All gifts will be used to fund our printed newspapers and websites and to meet obligations to our loyal and patient employees, writers, contractors and suppliers.

The ongoing pandemic continues to crush many newspapers across the country, and our newspapers continue to be at risk. The Northern Virginia area's best read and most trusted source for community news includes the Alexandria Gazette Packet, Mount Vernon Gazette and all Connection Newspapers in the metropolitan region.

The pandemic has hit small businesses hard, which in turn has reduced advertising revenue that keeps these local newspapers alive to provide hyper local news to residents. It feels like no small miracle to be looking forward into 2022.

The pandemic has been a bear, financially and otherwise. Revenue plummeted at the beginning in 2020. Some beloved advertisers have stayed the course supporting us throughout, and many more have done what they can. In the fall of 2021 we saw the return of some advertising for events and Grand Openings, but now omicron clouds the horizon in so many ways. Revenue still remains short of expenses despite our greatly curtailed costs.

Connection Newspapers has been offering these local newspapers to residents for over 200 years. Countless residents have grown up with these papers covering significant moments in the lives of family and children, news, community events, school activities, and even pictures of your dogs and cats. Internet news and large national newspapers cannot provide the local connection or historical connection that local papers like Connection Newspapers and the Alexandria Gazette Packet provide. If your child, dog, mother, father, neighborhood, school has been featured, you understand the value of local community newspapers.

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Fire Department Staffing

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Due to an increase in the number of COVID cases among staff, the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department has implemented temporary staffing adjustments to maintain the highest level of service possible to our community while balancing personnel challenges. At the time of this announcement, 66 employees were positive for COVID. An additional 12 FCFRD staff were in quarantine.

Command Staff have reviewed data sets and options to determine the appropriate adjustments to achieve the safest balance of emergency response, including:

- ❖ Temporary cross staffing among six units, including a Hazardous Materials Unit, a Hazardous Materials Support Unit, and four tankers located throughout the county. Cross staffing allows apparatus to remain in service and available for response.

- ❖ Temporarily placing four units out of service. Tower Ladder 405 (Franconia), Medic 408B (Anandale), Medic 409B (Mount Vernon), Medic 410B (Bailey's Crossroads). It is important to note that the medic units are located at stations that have two EMS

units assigned to them. One EMS unit will remain in service at each station.

- ❖ Requesting our volunteer partners to assist with staffing transport units.

Adjustments and staffing are evaluated daily. Units will remain in-service if staffing permits.

"The recent rise in COVID cases has affected everyone including first responders. These temporary adjustments are the result of data-informed decisions made to minimize the impact of staffing changes on our communities and ensure that the men and women of FCFRD can continue providing the highest quality fire suppression and emergency medical services to the communities we serve.

We must balance the ability to carry out the mission of our department with the health, safety, wellness, and morale of our responders," said Fire Chief John Butler.

The FCFRD has 1,260 career staff. Currently, 85.4% of FCFRD personnel are vaccinated. Per county policy, all other personnel are required to be tested regularly.

Inova Opens Vehicle-Side Testing Site

In response to the increase in Omicron COVID-19 cases and high volume of emergency department and urgent care visits, Inova is opening a vehicle-side testing site for symptomatic individuals in the community.

ment only for individuals experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. Asymptomatic patients or individuals who have been exposed to COVID-19 will not be tested.

The testing site will open by appointment at 2990 Telestar Ct, Falls Church, Va. Monday – Friday,

8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Additional testing hours on weekends may be added depending on demand.

Appointments are required for COVID-19 testing and can be scheduled by calling 571-472-6843. Inova offers PCR testing only (no rapid tests) and results will be

SEE INOVA, PAGE 9

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Grocery Tax Change Proposed

Alternative revenue source not identified.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

Since the dumping of chests of tea in Boston Harbor by American colonists in 1773, American citizens have shown a distaste for taxes on food. The topic of eliminating Virginia's grocery tax was raised again during this year's gubernatorial race by then candidate, now Governor-elect, Glen Youngkin. This is not the first time elimination or reduction of the grocery tax has been proposed, by both Democratic and Republican politicians.

Today the grocery tax remains a major source of funding for education, transportation, and localities, according to the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, a total of \$341 million in revenue that could be lost if the tax were abolished.

Gov. Ralph Northam (D) has proposed elimination of the 1.5

SEE INOVA, PAGE 10

Inova Opens Vehicle-Side Testing Site

FROM PAGE 8
available within 1-2 days through Inova's MyChart Patient Portal

Inova continues to offer COVID-19 testing for our primary care patients with mild symptoms. Please contact your primary care office to schedule an appointment to receive an evaluation and testing as needed.

Individuals can also visit the Virginia Department of Health COVID-19 Testing Site for a list of other COVID-19 test sites.

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Obituary

Obituary



Frederick Alfred Dierksmeier

28 August 1922 – 15 December 2021

Frederick Alfred Dierksmeier, 99, died 15 December 2021, in Summerville, South Carolina. Fred was a kind and generous man who contributed greatly to this world before passing on. He was a loving and devoted husband and a caring and dedicated father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. He will be missed.

Fred was born and raised in Lake Mills, Wisconsin. Following service in the Army Air Corps in Italy during World War II, he worked as a professional photographer in Madison, WI where he met Betty L. Torgerson. They were married in 1950, shortly before Fred was called back to service in 1951. Fred served in the US Air Force, retiring in 1974 with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel after 30 years of service. His many duty stations included California, Texas, Washington, Nebraska, Spain, Virginia, and Hawaii. He also served in Vietnam. Among his many military honors were the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Bronze Star. Upon retirement in Northern Virginia, Fred practiced real estate for a short time, actively volunteered with Nativity Lutheran Church and Inova Mount Vernon Hospital and cared for Betty prior to her death in 2007. Fred relocated to Chesapeake, Virginia in 2015 to live with his daughter, Deb, and her husband, Chuck and moved with them to Summerville, South Carolina in 2020.

Survivors include daughter Debra Kay Anderson (Chuck), Summerville, SC; two sons Fred Eric Dierksmeier, Littleton, CO, and Douglas David Dierksmeier, Franklin, IN; four grandchildren Benjamin Oliver Dierksmeier, Erbil, Iraq; Christina Anderson Jettie (Josh), North Charleston, SC; Lara Catherine Ramos (Nelson), San Diego, CA; Matthew Douglas Dierksmeier (Dakota), Charlotte, NC; and one great grandchild Winter Kay Jettie. He was preceded in death by his parents, William and Martha Dierksmeier; brothers, Robert and William Dierksmeier; sister, Doris Bruenger; and daughter-in-law, Liz Dierksmeier.

Fred will be buried alongside his wife Betty at Arlington National Cemetery in a private ceremony. Memories and expressions of sympathy may be shared at www.DemaineFuneralHomes.com.

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No Car and No Computer



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Due to circumstances beyond my control, for two days after the deer accident, I had no car and as it happened, no computer either. The no-car situation you regular readers know about from the previous edition's column: "Oh Deer." The no-computer element just occurred as machines, technology, almost anything I guess, eventually succumbs to old age/extended use. As a result of this dual inconvenience, I can't get anywhere, literally, and figuratively. Moreover, with these two losses, temporary though they may be, I've sort of lost my way. To invoke author Robert A. Heinlein: I'm a "stranger in a strange land."

Though I now have a courtesy rental car, I don't yet have a computer. It's being delivered later in the week by Amazon. It won't be an expense as it is being paid for my part-time employer. When the computer arrives, my brother's IT guy will come over and set it up. That means I won't have that problem to solve. As for the car, in five days or so, I was told, I'll learn whether my car can be repaired or if it will be declared a total loss. Soon thereafter I imagine, if the car is "totaled," I'll be receiving a settlement check from the insurance company. Then the fun will begin.

If in fact, I receive a settlement check, since the car I was driving was a model year 2000 Honda Accord, unfortunately the amount will be nowhere near what I'll need to purchase a new car. The net effect will be an increase in my monthly car payment from zero dollars to likely multiple hundreds. Money, I don't really have and are not eager to spend. However, the new computer can't arrive quickly enough. And given the evolution in technology since I last bought a computer, 10 years ago at least, I can well imagine the improvement/benefit in my life it will provide. As for the improvement/benefits in my life a new car will provide? Not really important to me if it costs money, which it will. I am not looking to add another car with bells and whistles since I already have a new-ish car with all the bells and whistles already. I was not looking to whistle any more bells however. What I/we need is only one car payment. Which, for the past 13 years, since my mother passed away in 2008, and I inherited her car, I've had. And I've enjoyed every minute of it. Now, I'm afraid, the party is over.

Now this is where not having a working computer at home becomes a problem. I can't research a potential solution. Consequently, I'm stuck in a kind of limbo between the car I used to own and the car I'm about to own. Right now, I'm driving a rental car, a temporary solution. What I need is a permanent solution. Sure, I receive a daily newspaper and I do have a car to drive, but I'm not going to drive randomly around and/or trust the classified ads to direct me to a proper solution. What I need is a version of Indeed.

The conclusion: I need a computer before I need the car. In fact, it's very likely that if I'm told the Honda is totaled, having a new computer will provide me with the tools and information necessary to perhaps make an intelligent and acceptable decision. Acceptable meaning a moderate impact to our finances. For me, it's not so much about creature comforts as it is about this creature's comfort.

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

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WELLBEING

Making Decision During COVID

By MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

"Should I allow my 12-year-old daughter to go to the movies with a group of friends, two of whom haven't been vaccinated?" "Should I let my son play in games with the basketball team when players on both teams haven't been vaccinated?" These are the types of questions that Potomac parents Elaine and Brett Madden ask themselves almost daily. In the age of the coronavirus pandemic and omicron variant, the Maddens, like many others, face making decisions that have the potential to cause a major chain of events. This cycle often leads to stress that impacts one's overall health and wellbeing.

"It's like living with a low grade anxiety that is subtle, but builds up if we're not in tune with our body," said Elaine Madden, a licensed therapist who specializes in stress management. "Almost 99% of the clients I'm seeing are dealing with anxiety around making decisions that are related to COVID. If they make the wrong decision, will they catch the disease or spread it to others? Will their job be affected by COVID? Should they begin looking for a new job? With the spike in new cases, there's been a new wave of uncertainty."

Madden points to a recent study by the American Psychological Association, which showed that daily tasks and decision-making have become more difficult during the pandemic, particularly for parents.

"I've been telling my patients to take a step back, breathe and really think through the ramifications of each decision and write them down," she said. "This can work for decisions that range from small things like what to pack in your kids' lunches, to larger ones like whether to plan a vacation."

For larger decisions, like a career or job change, Madden suggests enlisting the help

of a few trusted advisors who can offer objective guidance.

"You need someone who has experience dealing with your issues, but won't be impacted by them," she said. "For example, a college student who is deciding whether or not to study abroad might get the opinion of an older adult who has actually spent a semester abroad rather than, or in addition to, a parent who would be paying for that semester. If you're deciding to change jobs, someone with a financial stake in your decision should not be the only person offering an opinion. But just know that these opinions are just advice. The final decision should be made jointly with those closest to you."

Some decisions are minor, but can feel monumental. "Many of us are on decision overload, so we start shutting down, and things like deciding what to wear or what to eat can feel paralyzing," said Great Falls psychologist Rachel Cohen. "Try planning ahead during a time when you're feeling relaxed. For example, my husband and I gather our kids on Saturday and we decide on a menu for the week for breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks. We create a chart and pre-make as much of those meals as we can. The same goes for our clothes for the week."

"Know your limits and boundaries and have a backup plan," said Alexandria-based therapist Lee Tripp, MSW. "If going into the office is mandatory for you, but your child has to quarantine and miss school unexpectedly, what is your childcare plan? At what point will you decide to have your child tested for COVID? When you hear snuffles? When they have a persistent cough? Having these guidelines in place can cut down on the number of last minute decisions."

"Try not to get stuck on over-analyzing," added Cohen. "At the end of the day, we just need to make a decision, take a chance and stop procrastinating."

Grocery Tax Change Proposed

FROM PAGE 5

percent state portion of the tax; however the one percent portion going to localities would remain under his budget proposal. The budget proposed by the outgoing governor is under a two year cycle that must be reviewed and agreed upon by the General Assembly and enacted by the incoming governor.

Virginia now enjoys an unprecedented \$2.6 billion surplus following record economic growth and federal subsidy under the American Rescue plan. The Northam budget adds \$1.1 billion in the Revenue Stabilization fund, raising reserves to \$3.8 Billion.

With the new Youngkin administration's lofty goals to "restore excellence in education ... rebuilding schools, raising teacher pay, and investing in special education," Youngkin has not said what funds would be put toward those goals if the grocery tax source is eliminated.

Originally enacted in 1966, the University of Virginia attributes adoption of the two percent state-wide retail sales and use tax and one percent local option sales tax, to a "public mood change to a desire for significant progress in public services and specifically to public education." The primary purpose of the tax was for upgrading public

education. The first year's revenue of \$109.6 million had grown to \$349.8 million five years later in 1972. Interest in public education remains high as evidenced in the recent Youngkin-McAuliffe race.

The grocery tax became a campaign issue in the 1973 campaign between incumbent Governor Mills E Godwin Jr., who had enacted the tax, and Democratic challenger Henry Howell, who was then the Lieutenant Governor. Godwin narrowly won election to his second term. Democratic Gov. Douglas Wilder (1990-1994) also ran on the populist message of "no new taxes" and sought to remove taxes on prescription drugs and groceries.

Such taxes are considered "regressive" meaning they have a greater impact on low income people than the wealthy. Because the tax is applied uniformly it has the effect of taking a greater percentage of income from low income earners than from high income earners; the average tax burden decreases with income.

Although 45 states have general sales taxes, only 13, including Virginia, still tax groceries; Virginia is one of ten that impose a lower rate on groceries than their general sales tax rate, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (April 2020).



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Looking forward, there are a few unknown factors such as interest rates, inventory, and national/international events that could impact the local market. However, we do know interest rates are still hovering at historic lows and buyer preferences have remained consistent. With the market momentum staying steady, it appears the start of 2022 will pick up right where 2021 left off. Our area is extremely unique in that every neighborhood, street, and house is highly nuanced. If you'd like a custom-tailored evaluation of what your home is worth in today's market, reach out any time!" - *Chris*



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