

CONNECTION

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After heavy snow flakes, wood flakes were soon flying as park maintenance crews tackled clearing area trails and home owners cleared yards. Keeping Fairfax County park trails clear is a top priority, especially during the pandemic.



PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

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Cleaning Up
& More Snow
On the Way

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‘A Landmark Achievement for this Community’

The first eruv for Jews in Northern Virginia becomes a reality.

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



Rabbi Sholom Simon



Rabbi David Kalender



U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly



Rabbi Sholom Deitsch



Gil Preuss



Eliot Goldberg

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Many people in Fairfax County have never heard of an eruv, nor have any idea what it is. But to members of the Jewish faith, it's critical to their being able to live their lives more fully on the Sabbath.

According to Jewish law, it's forbidden for observant Jews to carry things in public on Shabbat. It makes no difference whether it's a baby, a book or a casserole to a sick friend.

However, they may do so if their area has an eruv, or symbolic boundary. That's why the new Fairfax eruv is cause for rejoicing – and on Dec. 19, its grand opening was celebrated at Congregation Olam Tikvah in Fairfax.

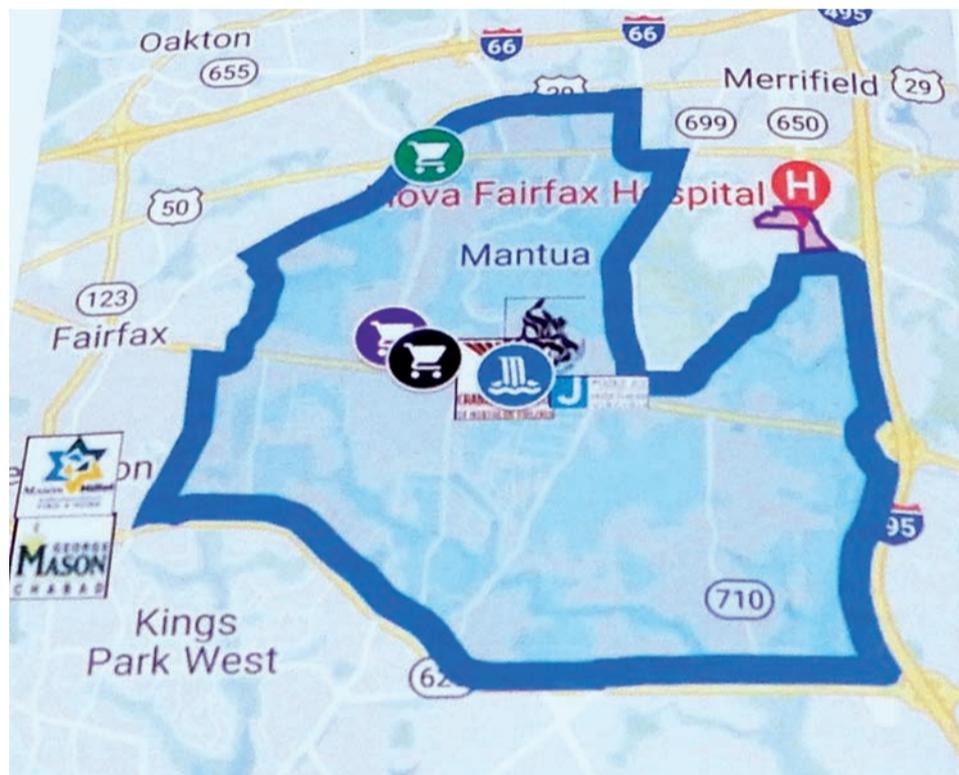
"It's been a pipedream of ours for so long," said Shana Simon, wife of Rabbi Sholom Simon, who headed the Fairfax Eruv Committee, whose untiring efforts made the eruv a reality. She then thanked its members for all their hard work.

"This is truly amazing," said Sholom Simon, of the Chabad Lubavitch Congregation. "We wished we had an eruv here for 20 years. It's the first eruv ever in Northern Virginia, and we're thrilled. It takes a village, and it makes a village. Everybody was so nice to us – and it still took us two years.

"Shabbat is a day of rest when we unplug, but we can't carry things in a place that's excessively public. So families with children too young to walk couldn't go anywhere on Shabbat because they weren't allowed to carry them. Some families even refused to move here because we didn't have an eruv."

But Simon and others realized they could change things if they created something similar to a fenced-in backyard with gates and doorways. And working with both Fairfax City and Fairfax County, they were able to use telephone poles with wires between them to build their eruv.

So, he said, "This is a really big deal." He thanked Fairfax Mayor David Meyer, county Sheriff Stacey Kincaid and Supervisor Dalia Palchik (D-Providence) for "renting" them the City and county land needed for the eruv. Simon then praised the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington and the congregations' other partners who also made this eruv possible.



The new Fairfax eruv has a 19-mile perimeter.

He thanked the county Board of Supervisors, plus Fairfax's City Council and Public Works department for allowing them to make changes to the City's telephone poles, helping them go through the permit process and approving this project unanimously. "Everyone said, 'If there's anything else we can do to help, just let us know,'" said Simon. "We've had the eruv for 10 weeks now, but we also hope to include the Fairfax Hospital Center in the eruv soon so we can bring things to patients there on Shabbat."

More than 500 poles were used to create the eruv's 19-mile perimeter, so Simon also expressed gratitude to Verizon and Dominion Virginia Power. "We had to work with VDOT and the Federal Highway Administration because part of the eruv is located where Little River Turnpike meets the Beltway," he said. "And I thank the congregations of Chabad Lubavitch and Olam Tikvah for all their help, in many ways. Two, different congregations and their rabbis worked together."

Next, Rabbi David Kalender of Olam Tikvah told the audience, "Judaism is about be-

ing in a safe, welcoming place to gather, and the eruv is a boundary for those who want to be together and share what life has to offer. Thank you all for being part of this incredibly sacred endeavor."

Noting that Palchik was the first to "rent" them the space, Simon then introduced Aryeh Kalender, Palchik's community outreach director, there on her behalf. "This was an incredible learning experience where we brought both political and religious leaders together," he said. "And the establishment of this eruv is a landmark achievement for this community. Now we can visit parks and the sick at the hospital on Shabbat, and it's the beginning of the growth of the Jewish community here in Northern Virginia."

Simon then read a message from Meyer, who was unable to attend the celebration. Meyer said he hoped "this eruv will bring more people into this ever-widening and welcoming Jewish community."

Del. Eileen Filler-Corn (D-41st) – the first woman and first Jew to become Virginia's Speaker of the House – also couldn't attend, but Tyler Javonillo read her message

saying. "An eruv brings families and friends together on the Sabbath." And Filler-Corn too, thanked everyone who made this one a reality.

The Fairfax eruv is in U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly's (D-11th) district. And in introducing him, Simon said, "He's been a great friend of the Jewish community and has always been supportive of us."

"Mantua is my neighborhood, and it's in this eruv," said Connolly. "I want an eruv in Congress – a safe zone where we could get bills passed. We live in a community that wants to be supportive – where, if it matters to you, it matters to me. And that's a model for America."

"This eruv is a building block of community," he continued. "Most people don't understand what an eruv is, but we respect your traditions and celebrate them. The voices of intolerance and hate can't drown out what we're celebrating today – and what I hope will be a microcosm of America for tomorrow."

Introducing Gil Preuss, CEO of the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington, Simon acknowledged the \$35,000 grant this organization gave toward the eruv's creation. "You received a Foundational Innovation grant, and I thank everyone here for all they've done to make this eruv possible," said Preuss. "It was a true honor to partner with you and continue to grow this Jewish community. It will grow stronger over the years, and we thank you for allowing us to be part of this."

The celebration's organizers, Shana Wallace and Beth Frame, then gave presents to the eruv committee members. They also honored Olam Tikvah's Eliot Goldberg, the eruv project director, for all his hard work. He started the effort, taught the committee members what to do, had them apply for the grant, mapped out the eruv's perimeter and worked with City and county officials.

Reiterating that an eruv makes a public space private, Rabbi Sholom Deitsch of Chabad Lubavitch said, "Jewish people have responsibility for each other, and the government and utility partners helped us become more observant in our religion. So mazel tov [congratulations] to everybody, and we'll continue to enjoy our new eruv."



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL LEE POPE/THE CONNECTION

Republicans are hoping to spend \$150 million to create 20 new charter schools, but they'll be facing opposition in the Senate Education Committee, which has nine Democrats and only six Republicans.

One issue where Democrats and Republicans might find common ground is banning political contributions from public utilities.

Era of Divided Government

Mask mandates, anti-racist curriculum and campaign finance on the agenda.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
THE CONNECTION

Virginia is under new management, and it's a sharp turn from how things have worked in the commonwealth for the last two years. Republicans are now in control of the Executive Mansion and the House of Delegates. But Democrats still control the state Senate, ushering in a new era of divided government. The 2022 General Assembly session has just started, and already Democrats and Republicans are fighting over everything from mask mandates and anti-racist curriculum to marijuana legalization and voting rights.

"It's quite dysfunctional from a policymaking standpoint," said Jennifer Victor, associate professor of political science at George Mason University's Schar School of Policy and Government. "It's a very antagonistic form of politicking that is unfortunately quite common across state legislatures, and it's one of the unfortunate consequences in the partisan and polarized era that we're living through."

On the campaign trail, Republican candidate Glenn Youngkin often talked about what he called his "day-one agenda," things like banning critical race theory from schools and getting rid of mask mandates. Shortly after his inauguration as governor, he signed executive orders to deliver on both of those campaign promises although the details of how that might actually work remain unclear. Critical



Gov. Glenn Youngkin began his day one agenda by issuing executive orders to ban critical race theory from public schools and allow parents to decide whether their children wear masks in schools.

race theory isn't actually taught in Virginia schools, and many local school board members reject the idea that a governor can dictate covid protocol to school divisions.

"Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) will continue to abide by the health and safety guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Alexandria Health Department (AHD) and continue to require all individuals to wear masks that cover the nose and mouth in ACPS schools, facilities and buses," wrote Superintendent Gregory Hutchings in an email to parents last weekend.

EDUCATION IS AT the top of the agenda for the new administration, although the new governor will likely hit a roadblock when

his initiatives face the cold hard reality of the Senate committee system. During a speech to a joint assembly earlier this week, Youngkin announced he wanted to spend \$150 million to create 20 new charter schools. But the Senate Education Committee has nine Democrats and only six Republicans. So getting a bill expanding charter schools to the Senate floor would require two Democrats on the committee to cross over and vote with the Republicans, which seems unlikely.

"If you look at some of the charter schools, you're going to find that some of them are mostly students who are African American," said Sen. Louise Lucas (D-18), chairwoman of the Senate Education Committee. "I don't like sepa-

rating students. I think there ought to be a blend, and I think students ought to be able to have interaction among students other than students who look just like them."

Although critical race theory is not taught in Virginia schools, Republicans have been critical of the anti-racist teacher training that emerged after the murder of George Floyd in May 2020. During his speech to the joint assembly this week, Youngkin said his executive order was intended to prohibit what he called "inherently divisive concepts in schools, including critical race theory." Members of the Legislative Black Caucus say they're skeptical that the new governor is interested in making sure students understand some of the more unsavory chapters of race relations in Virginia history.

"If you don't want the truth taught, just say that's what you don't want," said Sen. Mamie Locke (D-2). "If you are going to stand there and say you want to teach the good, the bad and the ugly of Virginia history and then sign an executive order saying we are going to ban critical race theory, you're being a hypocrite."

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM may be one issue where members of opposing parties can come to some kind of agreement. For example, Democrats and Republicans joined forces to reject a bill that would have put limits on campaign contributions. Currently, Virginia has no limits on the amount of money that donors can contrib-

ute. Some senators were interested in setting some kind of limit, and two separate bills would have set a ceiling of \$20,000 or \$25,000. A bipartisan coalition emerged to kill that idea.

"Contributions are speech," said Sen. Jill Vogel (R-27). "When you set up artificial barriers to speech people find ways around it."

Virginia and 10 other states had no limits on contributions from individuals in state races in 2019, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

On the campaign trail, Youngkin said he would disrupt entrenched interests in Richmond. He might have an opportunity to do that if lawmakers are able to put together a bipartisan coalition to prohibit campaign contributions from public utilities. Sen. Chap Petersen (D-34) is working with Del. Lee Ware (R-65) to ban campaign cash from public utilities, including Dominion Energy, which has long been a major force in Virginia politics and a generous donor. Petersen and Ware say it's a bad idea to have a utility that is regulated by the state to have so much influence over lawmakers.

"I can get a portion of my caucus. I can't get them all. I certainly can't get the ones who are more senior in leadership," said Petersen. "But I need -- we need, the commonwealth needs -- the new governor to take a firm stand on this issue and my hope is that will change the dynamic."

A spokeswoman for the governor said Youngkin will review all legislation that comes to his desk.

NEWS

'We're Happy to Bring Dogtopia To Fairfax'

City Council approves new, animal-care facility.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

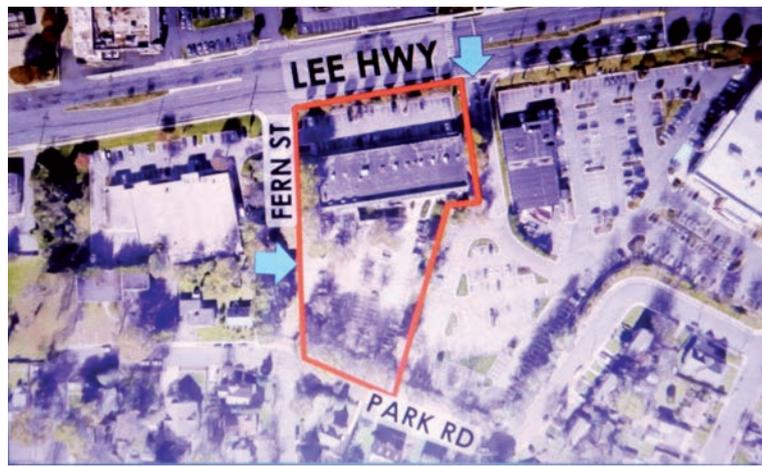
A new animal-care facility called Dogtopia is coming to the City of Fairfax. It'll go onto three, vacant, consolidated parcels in the lower level of the Westfair Center, at the intersection of Lee Highway and Fern Street.

Supriya Chewle, a City planner, presented the details during a public hearing, last Tuesday, Jan. 11, at Fairfax City Council. The applicant, Federal Realty, which owns that shopping center, requested a special-use permit to open such a business in Fairfax's commercial retail zoning district.

"It'll be a 24-hour facility with daycare and short-term, overnight boarding," said Chewle. "A 700-square-foot, outdoor play area will be to the rear of the building, with a 6-foot-high fence and landscaping. And it'll be at least 300 feet from the nearest residential use."

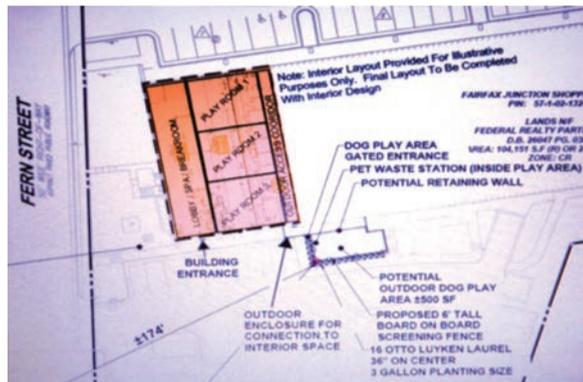
Dogtopia is designed to accommodate 92-125 dogs, with a maximum capacity of 145. The animals will be divided according to size, age and temperament in the outdoor play yard and in the three playrooms inside. Hours of operation will be 6 a.m.-7 p.m.

The main entrance to the 5,400-square-foot facility will be from the back of the building, on the lower level. Four to seven employees will be there at any one time, throughout the day from



The location of the shopping center where Dogtopia will go.

Conceptual floor plan of the new, animal-care facility.



5:30 a.m.-9:30 p.m. The dogs boarding there will be crated at night, and there'll be overnight monitoring for their safety.

"Fifty dogs at a time could be in the play area?" asked Councilmember So Lim. Chewle replied that it could be dependent on the size of the dogs. Lim also inquired how long the special-use permit would run, and Chewle said it could be revoked if there are noise complaints.

Councilmember Tom Ross said he wanted cleanup of both the site and the shopping center addressed. Melanie Novotny, an urban planner with Cooley LLC, representing the applicant, said Dogtopia employees will encourage people to pick up after their pets and will have trash bags and receptacles available. And the shopping-center owner will have an additional waste station in the Fern Street/Park Road right-of-way.

Novotny said Federal Realty wants to update the Westfair Center, and "Dogtopia is a national company that we're happy to bring to the City of Fairfax." There are

more than 150 Dogtopias in the U.S., including one in Falls Church. She said the employees are called "canine coaches" and noted that they only use dog-safe cleaning products. She also said the dogs must be spayed and neutered. Services include light grooming, such as nail trimming, baths and other spa-type activities.

As for the outdoor play yard, it will only be used from 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Novotny said an employee would remain outside with the dogs at all times. Ross asked how they'd handle the dogs' noise at night, and Novotny explained that, since the building is "underground, with concrete walls, it's the perfect location" and won't be noisy or disturb nearby neighbors.

Councilmember Janice Miller made the motion to approve Dogtopia's special-use permit, and Ross seconded. They and their colleagues then unanimously voted in favor of it. Fairfax Mayor David Meyer then told the applicant, "Congratulations; we look forward to Dogtopia being a part of the City business community."

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A New Day in Richmond and Many Challenges

BY SEN. SCOTT SUROVELL

As the Virginia General Assembly begins its 2022 session, my 13th, I look forward to working with Gov. Glenn Youngkin, the new House of Delegates leadership and other legislators to reach a consensus on the best direction for our state.

While I did not support them, I attended Governor Youngkin's inauguration and swearing in, along with the swearing in of Lieutenant Governor Winsome Sears and Attorney General Jason Miyares.

Budgets Reflect Priorities

No matter what happens with other bills, one thing we are required to accomplish this session is to pass a budget. Thanks to federal pandemic funds, Virginia has significant excess revenues in our two-year budget cycle that ends on June 30, 2022. A little over half of those revenues will be appropriated to the "Rainy Day Fund" and to mandatory water quality improvement.

In the last session, we also reserved about \$1.5 billion of \$4.5 billion from the American Rescue

Plan Act in case we had a pandemic resurgence. We are limited to spending these funds on five categories of expenditures including water and sewer infrastructure and maintenance of outdoor assets. I am proposing to spend some of these

funds to (1) eliminate our state parks' \$225 million maintenance backlog, (2) install a public water line at Pohick Bay Regional Park to replace well service and water and sewer infrastructure, and (3) to construct permanent, outdoor restrooms at all Fairfax County public high schools.

The new two-year budget also projects significant new revenues. The Governor is proposing a series of ill-advised tax cuts. First, he proposes to cut our current two percent grocery tax that is dedicated solely to education and would cost Fairfax County Public Schools about \$80 million per year. The Governor also reiterated his call to suspend the \$0.08 per gallon gas tax increase enacted in 2021. His proposal would save the average Virginia driver about \$4 a month,



Surovell

but interrupt dozens of transportation projects currently planned.

My Bills

I am carrying around 27 bills. One creates a joint study to review the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic across all levels of government so we can learn from our mistakes and improve our system going forward. I am also carrying legislation to study multi-family housing regulation to ensure that Virginia's inspection systems and condo association policies are sufficiently strong to avoid the types of collapse we saw in Florida or partial collapse that occurred at River Towers near Belleview in Fairfax County in 2016.

The Biden Administration recently signed an agreement at the Edinburgh, Scotland, global summit to reduce methane emissions in the U.S. by 75 percent. Methane is 85 times more potent than carbon dioxide in trapping energy. I have a bill to incentivize Virginia's natural gas companies to capture loose methane from landfills or waste composting operations and

sell it to consumers to remove it from the atmosphere and curtail these greenhouse gasses that are warming the planet.

Cycling and pedestrian deaths have been increasing across the country, Virginia and our local community. At one point in 2020, three pedestrians were killed in Fairfax County one day. One major cause of these problems is that the infrastructure in our part of Northern Virginia was designed for vehicles and not pedestrians. While the legislature has provided significant new funding for transportation infrastructure, the focus has traditionally largely been for vehicle projects, with pedestrian or cycling improvements considered secondarily. I have introduced a bill to require a fixed percentage of funds to be devoted to pedestrian and cycling infrastructure going forward.

Virginia's Supreme Court significantly revised state legislative districts including the district I currently represent. I will discuss this in a future column.

If you have any feedback, please contact me at scott@scottsuovell.org and follow my work on Facebook and Twitter. It is an honor to serve as your state senator.

First Week of Session

BY DEL. PAUL KRIZEK

We are one week into the 2022 General Assembly session down in Richmond, and much has happened already. On the first day of session, my colleagues and I finished introducing all of our legislation for the year. Please visit the Legislative Information System at lis.virginia.gov to view my legislative agenda, as well as all of the other hundreds of bills filed this session. I look forward to sharing more about my legislation, much of which comes from constituents, in the coming weeks as my bills go before the many subcommittees.

Each year, the memberships on each House committee can be shuffled. But with the change of leadership in the House, a new Speaker, and 17 new members, many new committee assignments were needed. After the Speaker announced the changes, I was pleased that I remain on the critical House Appropriations Committee, as well as the General Laws Committee, and Privileges and Elections. I will serve on two Appropri-



Krizek

ations Subcommittees: General Government and Capital Outlay, and Transportation and Public Safety (of which I previously served as Chairman). I will serve on Subcommittee #3 in Privileges and Elections, and we are still waiting on the announcement of

my subcommittee assignments in General Laws, but I expect to serve on two of them.

Another important deadline that has just passed was for filing budget amendments last Friday afternoon. Budget amendments are requests to amend the Governor's proposed budget (HB29 or HB30) to fund legislation that we pass during the session, but also to fulfill funding requests from state agencies, county governments, nonprofits, and other entities. To view the current proposed budget, please visit budget.lis.virginia.gov. I submitted eighteen amendments to the Governor's budget.

Several of my budget amendments will infuse funds back into our community here in Mount Vernon and Lee, as well as benefit the greater Northern Virginia region. For example, I have a

budget amendment to appropriate \$250,000 from the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families block grant (TANF) to benefit one of our local charities, Good Shepherd Housing. Good Shepherd Housing will use these funds to continue their work providing housing, emergency services, children's services, and budget counseling, among many other resources for low-income families in our area. Senators Ebbin and Surovell are

also requesting funds to benefit Good Shepherd Housing in the Senate budget package.

I am carrying an amendment to support George Mason University's efforts to construct a new building to house the Institute for Digital Innovation (IDIA) on the Arlington campus. George Mason is growing quickly; in fact, over the last 5 years, over 70 percent of enrollment growth in Virginia higher

SEE FIRST WEEK, PAGE 13

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NEWS

Springfield Mall's Riot Over Leif Garrett's Appearance

"Blast from the Past" hears from those who were there.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

It was Springfield, April 1978, and to promote a recent Leif Garrett album, record store officials invited Leif Garrett to the mall to sign a few records at the Harmony Hut in Springfield Mall. His latest hit "I Was Made for Dancing," was on the radio so all he had to do was show up, flash his pearly whites, sign a few records and go, what could it hurt?

Then the chaos ensued as thousands of screaming teen girls showed up, creating a riot scene. The event turned into legend for the Springfield Mall, now known as the town center.

Many remembered that day but without cellphones, there weren't many pictures.

"We skipped school that day to go," said Debbie Bowers who lived in the Hayfield area and heard about Leif coming. Bowers ventured through the gravel pits and across the railroad tracks with her sister Linda Cole, Mimi Smith and Carolyn Smith. "I do remember buying his record album so that I could get it autographed. The mall was a madhouse. It was so crazy, we were shoved and pushed, smashed against the window in the record store," she said.

Others recalled that day as well. "I was there!" said Jenny Galownia Grigsby on social media. "I was telling my teenage daughter about this not long ago. I didn't see him but I remember the store glass wall caving in and people hanging in the trees," she said.

"I was one of the people who got smashed into the glass doors," added Susan Hyde. "Got a few scars and an ambulance ride but not even a glimpse of Leif Garrett. ... bummer. Fun times," she said.

"Yes I remember," added Melanie Burner. "My Dad almost got in a fight in the parking lot trying to park. ... lol. ... It was crazy. ... People knocking doors off track trying to get in the store."

Ed Picarella was a Fairfax County Police officer at the time, and he was at the dispatch center handling the calls about the incident, which initially came across as a riot. Back then, radio communications weren't as good, so he had to relay everything from an officer in the parking lot at the mall.

"The crowd just got so out of hand," Picarella said. "Apparently they weren't expecting hundreds of people to show up."

Although the glass at the store didn't break, it came off the tracks. The place was hot and the crowd push caused some to pass out in the crush. According to news reports from the time, 15 people were taken to area hos-



There was a little bit of mayhem for Hollywood heart throb Keenan Allen in 2018, but it was more civilized than the Leif Garrett visit back in the late 1970s.

PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION



Mike Salmon



Blast from the Past

"Blast from the Past" is a new column that looks into people, places and events in Fairfax County from earlier times. Have an idea that I could look into? Email me at msalmon@connectionnewspapers.com.

— MIKE SALMON

pitals including a few to Dewitt Hospital on Fort Belvoir.

Lots of Leif Love

It was all about a teen throb that was famous in the 1970s named Leif Garrett. Garrett was a musician and actor, starring in movies of that time like the 1969 comedy "Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice," or the southern action drama "Walking Tall," in 1973. He was one of the children of Buford Pusser, lawman, who used a big stick on criminals.

Leif's big appearance was in Francis Ford Coppola's "The Outsiders," in 1983. Leif's pictures were plastered all over teen magazines in 1978, such as Tiger Beat, 16, and Teen Beat.

That day in 1978, his record was for sale at Harmony Hut, which was near the escalators in one part of the mall. Someone at the police dispatch center mentioned Leif Garrett's visit but no one at the fire department knew who he was. "We didn't either," said police dispatcher Picarella, but they finally got straight about the cause of all the mayhem. "One of the fire dispatchers had a teenage daughter that knew about Leif," Picarella said.

The town center still has celebrity events but things are a little more mellow. In 2018, teen girls came out to the Springfield Town Center for a book signing by Hollywood heart throb Keenan Allen but it was more civilized.

There were starry eyes and smiles all around, but no screaming and mayhem. Allen was the star of "Pretty Little Liars," a hit television series at that time.

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FCPS Superintendent Releases FY 2023 Proposed Budget



Fairfax County School Board in session on Jan. 13, 2022.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County Schools Superintendent Dr. Scott Brabrand released his Fiscal Year (FY) 2022-23 Proposed Budget on Thursday, Jan. 13, at the Fairfax County School Board Meeting. In total, 86 percent of the \$3.3 billion proposed operating budget for FY23 is allocated to instruction, according to the presentation.



Superintendent Scott Brabrand

“Tonight, I am delivering you a good news budget that will lead Fairfax County Public Schools out of this pandemic,” Brabrand said.

Brabrand described a budget that provides what its students need to learn, grow and flourish. He said FCPS will continue to pursue strong compensation for all of its 24,000 FCPS employees. The budget includes a 4 percent market scale adjustment for all employees and a step increase for eligible employees.

FCPS is one of the largest school divisions in the nation with a workforce of 24,392 full-time employees. With a projected enrollment of 177,570 students, FCPS serves students from 204 countries who speak more than 200 different languages at home. A total of 56,112 students are economically disadvantaged. FCPS also serves 26,828 special education students and 33,806 English learners.

Brabrand’s FY 2023 proposed budget’s expenditures and adjustments focus on three key areas, compensation, opportunity and access, and critical operational needs. Brabrand is requesting an additional \$112 million or about a 5.2 percent additional county transfer to equate to \$2.28 billion. State aid (\$621.4 million), sales tax (\$248.3 million), federal aid (47.1 million), beginning balance (\$21.9 million), City of Fairfax (\$51.2 million), and other (\$24.8 million) complete revenue sources.

Expenditures as itemized in the FY 2023 Proposed Operating Budget, compensation adjustments in the FY 2023 budget represent a net increase of over \$150 million. Over \$55 million is to provide an average step increase of 2.68 percent for eligible employees; \$8 million for health benefits; \$4.4 million for recurring substitute pay; and \$3.3 million for bus driver salaries. All FCPS transportation employees will receive a 2.3 percent increase at the beginning of the year.

Adjustments represent a decrease of \$300 million and 768 positions. The enrollment adjustments include savings of \$88.2 million and 917 positions. The

budget reflects the revised lower enrollment numbers.

Brabrand said that he had additional dollars to restore 33 positions to the staffing reserve and dollars for another 50 positions to the staffing reserve.

Opportunity and Access, the second main area of the budget, represented an increase of over \$68 million and 233 positions. Brabrand included funding in this budget of \$32 million to provide three additional professional development days.

“I have almost \$15 million to put a special education lead teacher full time in every single elementary school,” Brabrand said. “It is long overdue. This will ... allow our special education lead teachers to lead best practices and special education instruction and provide timely and tailored monitoring of special education in all of our elementary schools.”

There was also \$10 million for anticipated requirements from the Virginia General Assembly, given over 1,100 bills have been introduced. The county must monitor the unfunded mandates to be as prudent and fiscally responsible as possible.

The budget also provides, Brabrand said, nearly \$3 million and 26 positions to implement FCPS’ second of its third year plan for Advanced Academic Program Phase II.

It includes a full-time twice-exceptional (2e) specialist and 20 additional school-based positions so that 40 more elementary schools can have local level for advanced academic programs.

Critical Operational Needs is the third area which totaled \$13.6 million and 87 positions. Highlights include \$8 million for assistant principals and \$900,000 to extend high school assistant principal positions to 12 months. There is \$700,000 for 13 half middle school flexible office positions. They also have \$1.4 million to enhance the HR staffing support to respond to increased demands by the pandemic, \$0.9 million and five positions to provide cybersecurity upgrades, and \$300,000 for two additional planning positions to help with data analysis.

FCPS will continue to collaborate with the Board of Supervisors and County Executive during the county budget process.

A public hearing on the budget will be held on Jan. 24, and work sessions will be held in January and February by the Fairfax County School Board. On Feb. 24, the Board will vote on the FY23 Advertised Budget.

FCPS COST PER PUPIL

FY 2022 WABE Comparison to Other School Divisions^{1,2,3}

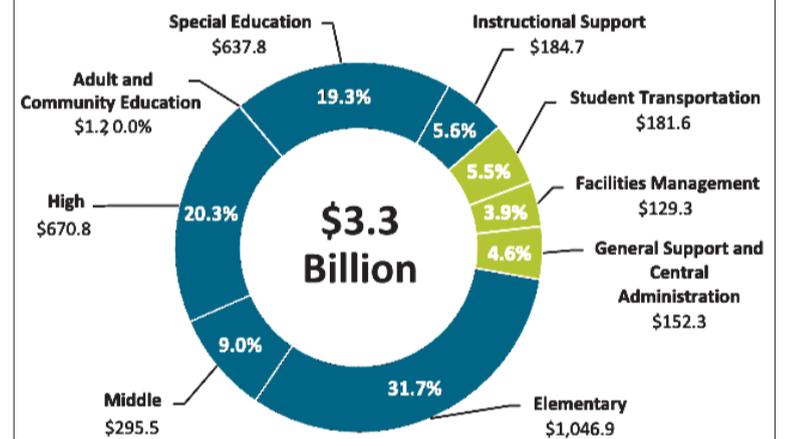


¹ Source: FY 2022 Washington Area Boards of Education (WABE) Guide.
² Uniform formulas were developed by the WABE committee for consistency area wide. These numbers are comparable; however, the cost per pupil reported here may differ from that reported in individual districts' budget documents or other reports.
³ Data not available at time of compilation for Prince George's County, Prince William County, and Manassas Park City.

FCPS Cost per Pupil.

Where It Goes—Expenditures by Program*

FY 2023 Proposed School Operating Fund (\$ in millions)

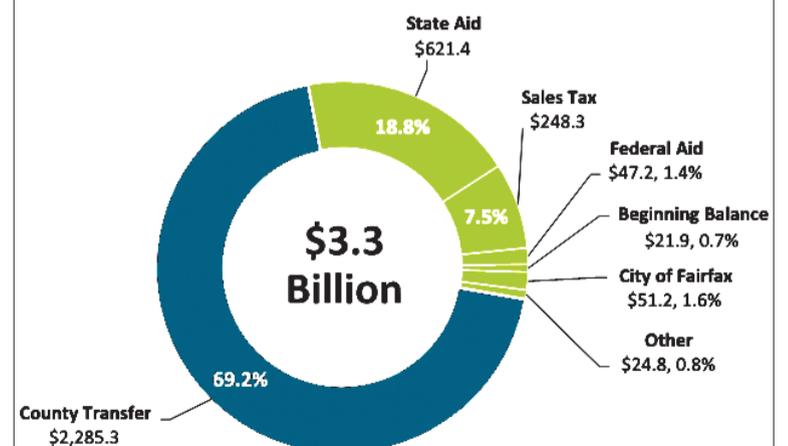


*Does not add due to rounding.

Expenditures by Program.

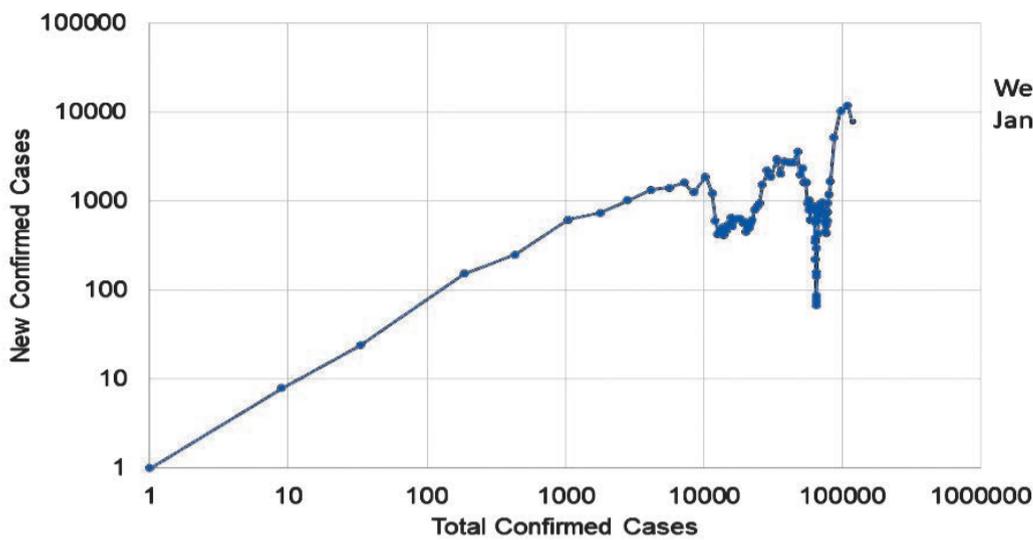
Where It Comes From—Revenue

FY 2023 Proposed School Operating Fund (\$ in millions)



Revenue Sources.

Current Week 2: (Jan 9 – Jan 15)



Week 1:
Jan 1 – Jan 8

SCREENSHOT FAIRFAX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Covid-19 Case Data for Fairfax Health District, Trajectory of Cases for Fairfax County.

New Governor Revokes Mask Mandate for Schools

FCPS says masks requirement remains in effect.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION



Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin (R)

Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin (R) signed Executive Order Number Two on his Inauguration Day, Saturday, Jan. 15, to fulfill his promise “to empower Virginia parents in their children’s education and upbringing by allowing parents to make decisions on whether their child wears a mask in school.” The Order states that masks are not the only method to reduce transmission of COVID-19. It lists mitigation measures, including improvements to indoor air quality in school facilities.

Fairfax County Public Schools issued a reminder that its policy on wearing masks has not changed. FCPS would continue to follow recommendations from local and national experts instead, requiring all students and staff to wear masks, except at times and on occasions already designated in (eating). Arlington Public Schools and Alexandria City Public Schools also announced masks would stay on.

FCPS Superintendent Scott Brabrand sent a message to parents: “As we return to school after the holiday weekend, we want to let you know that FCPS will continue universal masking for all students and staff ... in alignment with CDC guidance. Our layered prevention strategies have proven effective in keeping transmission rates low in our schools. We know our students are best served by in-person instruction. Adhering to our layered prevention strategies, especially universal masking, keeps our schools open and safe places for students to learn.”

According to Virginia Senate Bill (SB) 1303 effective July 1, 2021, each school board is to offer in-person instruction to students enrolled in the local school division “in a manner in which it adheres, to the maximum extent practicable, to any currently applicable mitigation strategies ... to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 that have been provided by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.”

Fairfax Sen. Chap Petersen, co-author and lead Democratic sponsor of the bill to reopen schools, said: “The law gives flexibility to local School Boards to open schools in a safe way while reflecting the practi-



Masked students enter the FCPS’ Great Falls Elementary School.

FILE PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

cal realities of educating children. It does not require School Boards to follow any certain COVID protocols, such as mandatory masking for all children, nor does it preclude it.”

But Petersen added that schools should have a plan to phase out mandatory masking in the “next few weeks or months. Mandatory masking should not be a permanent feature of public education.”

John Cook, former member of the Board of Supervisors, said on Twitter: “If we are concerned about parents’ rights, do I have the right as a parent not to have the government compel my child to sit next to a maskless person all day?”

FCPS as of Jan. 14, 2022, reported 620 cases of COVID-19 for the month of January. That number might be lower than actual cases because schools were closed from Dec. 20, 2021 to Jan. 10, 2022 for winter break and then winter weather, according to an FCPS spokesman.

The Fairfax County COVID-19 Case Data for Fairfax Health District reported on Sunday, Jan. 16, the highest number of new confirmed COVID-19 cases to date, slightly over 10,000 for Week 1: Jan. 1-8 according to its Trajectory of Cases in the county.

Library Staff Shortages Require Hours Change

Because of the current surge in COVID-19 cases and a high number of vacancies among Fairfax County Public Library staff, all regional and community Fairfax County Public Library branches will be closed every Sunday and Monday beginning Sunday, Jan. 16 through April 1. Branches will open in keeping with their regularly scheduled hours Tuesday through Saturday.

Regional libraries will be open Tuesday and Wednesday 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Thursday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Community libraries will be open Tuesday 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Wednesday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The Access Services branch located at the Fairfax County Government Center will maintain its usual hours Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/branch-locations-and-hours.

Fairfax County Public Libraries are always available online. Search digital offerings via Libby <https://research.fairfaxcounty.gov/c.php?g=756428&p=5423169>

Explore ten other ways to enjoy your local library from home. <https://research.fairfaxcounty.gov/unlimited/at-home>

Renew Dog License

Fairfax County asks: Did you get a pandemic pooch this past year? Then you should know that every dog four months or older must be licensed with Fairfax County.

Get your annual dog license or renew it by Tuesday, Feb. 1. The fee is \$10 per dog, except for service dogs which are given licenses for free. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/taxes/dog-license-information>

After you submit your license application or renewal, you’ll be mailed a tag for your dog’s collar.

If you are getting a license for the first time, you must provide a current rabies vaccination certificate. When renewing, proof of vaccination isn’t required unless the certificate has expired.

If your dog is already licensed, you should have received a renewal notice in the mail in November from the Department of Tax Administration.

You can renew and pay online. There is a third-party service fee for e-check, credit and debit card payments online. <https://ffxpayments.virginiainteractive.org/Payments/Doglicense>

Check your renewal notice to find your dog’s registration number and previous license number which you’ll need to renew online. If you don’t have this information handy or didn’t get a renewal notice, contact the Department of Tax Administration at 703-222-8234, TTY 711, on weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news/renew-or-get-your-2022-dog-license-feb-1>

County Hypothermia Prevention

For 15 years, the Hypothermia Prevention Program has provided shelter for our most vulnerable residents during the winter months. Each year the program serves over 1,000 individuals who are experiencing homelessness and are exposed to the harsh and dangerously cold weather. This year’s Hypothermia Prevention Program will operate from Dec. 1 through March 31.

If you see someone who is unsheltered and you think is at risk of hypothermia, please contact our non-emergency public safety phone number at 703-691-2131.

“The Hypothermia Prevention Program provides warm shelter, food and other supportive services to connect guests to a variety of basic needs to include clothing, employment, housing and more,” said Tom Barnett, deputy director of the Department of Housing and Community Development. “These services are made possible through the extraordinary assistance and contribution of local non-profits, houses of worship, and dozens of volunteers to work tirelessly to ensure that nobody should have to sleep outside during the winter.”

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/homeless/hypothermia-prevention-program>

SEE BRIEF NEWS, PAGE 11

Changes Coming to Workhouse Arts Center

Creative reuse of current vacant structures and new Ox Road streetscape on the way.

BY DAVID SIEGEL
THE CONNECTION

Taking additional actions to develop a lively campus, The Workhouse Arts Center Foundation, which operates the Workhouse Arts Center, has been collaborating with Fairfax County on the renovation of two prominently visible, long time unoccupied buildings. The two buildings; W13 and W15, front the busy Ox Road (Route 123).

“Fairfax County’s commitment to renovate these two buildings means so much to the Workhouse Arts Center,” said Leon Scioscia, President and CEO, Workhouse Arts Center Foundation. “Once the initial renovation is completed, then possible future tenants, such as a restaurant, or a brewery, or a coffee shop, can finish the renovation for their own particular needs.”

“Having these retail establishments located on our campus will allow our [visitors] to have dining options available to them without having to leave campus.”

The Workhouse campus buildings’ makeovers will also include Ox Road streetscape overhaul and creation of a public plaza in between the two buildings, according to Sharon North, Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services. The work is scheduled to begin in early 2022. The initial work is likely to include the interior building renovations followed by the exterior and landscaping work toward the fall 2022.

After renovation, the buildings can accommodate food and beverage tenants who will provide the tenant fit-out for their specific use. The plaza area between the two buildings will be equipped with outdoor dining areas including an activity boardwalk connecting the two buildings. The plaza will



COURTESY FAIRFAX COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Exterior of un-renovated Workhouse campus buildings W-13 and W-15



FILE PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON

Exterior of un-renovated Workhouse Arts Center campus building.

Where and when:

Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton, VA 22079. 703-584-2900. For information about Workhouse Arts Center’s artists who work and display their art here and its performing arts, visual arts, arts education, and history programming, visit www.workhousearts.org

be constructed with an area for storm-water management. Total project cost is estimated at \$6.3 million and funded by the county.

The Workhouse campus is a historically significant County-owned property, previously owned by the

federal government and operated by the District of Columbia as the Lorton Reformatory. Fairfax County acquired the 2,440-acre property which is on the National Historic Registry. The Workhouse Arts Foundation, Inc., has a license and lease agreement with the Fairfax County Government to operate the on-campus renovated buildings in an arts center capacity.

“The Workhouse Arts Foundation is so pleased to have such a great partner in Fairfax County – helping us realize the initial dream of the Workhouse Arts Center serving as a cultural anchor for South Fairfax County,” said Scioscia.



COURTESY WORKHOUSE ARTS CENTER

Leon Scioscia, President and CEO Workhouse Arts Center Foundation

BULLETIN BOARD

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

JAN. 25-APRIL 14

ESL Classes. 7-9 p.m. At Lord of Life Lutheran Church, 5114 Twinbrook Road, Fairfax. In-person and online ESL classes. Classes will meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7-9 p.m. Online registration

starts on December 15 at <http://www.lordoflifeva.org/esl> Cost is \$20.

THURSDAY/FEB. 10

AARP Webinar. 2-3 p.m. Virtual. At 10817 Windemere Lane, Fairfax Station. Learn how to recognize online relationship scams in this 30-minute webinar. Lots of people meet friends and potential love interests online through dating sites, social media, or mobile apps. It can be a great way to meet people, but recognize that not everyone is who

they say they are online. These scams aren’t just targeted at people who are looking for a relationship on a dating site or app. They can occur through social media and even through email. In this 30 minute webinar, they’ll discuss the red flags to be on the lookout for anyone engaging in online relationships. Free. Registration link: <https://aarp.cventevents.com/ORS02102022>

SUPPORT GROUPS

Parent Support Partners, a service

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

Shepherd’s Center of Fairfax-Burke

sponsors a monthly meeting on the 2nd Tuesday of each month, noon-1:30 p.m., for caregivers to learn and to share with others experiencing similar challenges. Before attending, contact the facilitator, Eileen Thompson at 703-451-8626 or eileen.thompson1@gmail.com. Haven of Northern Virginia provides support, compassion, information and resources to the bereaved and seriously ill. To become a Haven volun-

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 14

ENTERTAINMENT

NOW THRU JAN. 23

"The Mystery of Edwin Drood." At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, W3 Theater, Lorton. Based on Charles Dickens' final unfinished novel, this hilarious whodunit invites the audience to solve its mystery by choosing the identity of the murderer. The tale is presented as a show-within-a-show, as the Music Hall Royale - a delightfully loony Victorian theatre company - presents Dickens' brooding mystery. Tickets: \$20-\$30. Visit www.workhousearts.org.

JAN. 22-23

HO Model Trains Running. 12-4 p.m. At Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. The Potomac Module Crew will display and run HO Scale Model trains at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum on Saturday, January 22, 2022 from 12-4 p.m. and on Sunday, January 23 from 1-4 p.m. Admission: Museum members and ages 4 and under, free; ages 5-12, \$3; ages 13 and older, \$5, special events \$6; seniors and military, active and retired, \$4.

SATURDAY/JAN. 22

Camille A. Brown & Dancers. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. In this performance, the company

showcases both her choreography and artistic vision through a unique blend including modern, hip hop, African, ballet, and tap and the company's acclaimed Trilogy on race, culture, and identity including Mr. TOL E. RANcE; "Double This, Juba That!" from BLACK GIRL: Linguistic Play; "Turf" from ink; and the rousing tribute to New Orleans, New Second Line. Visit cfa.gmu.edu.

SUNDAY/JAN. 23

Keyboard Conversations with Jeffrey Siegel. 7 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Virtuoso pianist Jeffrey Siegel will guide you through the jaunty music of Bach, the improvisatory, unbound music of Mozart, Mendelssohn's "Last Rose of Summer", and Swedish composer Stenhammar's rhapsodic Fantasy, a work of stormy energy and passionate lyricism. Learn the compelling stories behind each piece and then enjoy each work played in its entirety. Visit cfa.gmu.edu.

SATURDAY/JAN. 29

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. A pre-performance discussion will take place in Monson Grand Tier, which is located on the third level of the Center for the Arts Lobby, 45 minutes prior to curtain.

Celebrate the diamond jubilee anniversary of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO) with a program featuring Kian Soltani. RPO is a vanguard of classical music performance and under the direction of its new Music Director, Vasily Petrenko, is being recognized as one of the world's most forward-thinking and boundary-pushing symphony orchestras. Tickets are \$75, \$60, \$45, half-price for youth through Grade 12.

MONDAY/JAN. 31

Funday Monday - My Gym. 10:30-11:15 a.m. At Sherwood Center, 3740 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax. Funday Monday programs open to children - preschoolers are particularly encouraged to attend. Programs may include music, movement, storytelling, performances, crafts, and more. Visit the website <https://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/cultural-arts>

SATURDAY/FEB. 12

Clifton Ping Pong Tournament. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. At Clifton Town Hall, 12641 Chapel Road, Clifton. Hosted by the Clifton Betterment Association (CBA). Questions? Call or email Steve Bittner at: 571-229-3493 or email stephen.n.bittner@gmail.com

BRIEF NEWS

FROM PAGE 9

Grant For Preservation of Historic Court Records

The Library of Virginia has awarded Fairfax Circuit Court Clerk John T. Frey a grant for local historic records preservation through the Circuit Court Records Preservation Program (CCRP). <https://www.lva.virginia.gov/agencies/ccrp/>

The funds totaling \$20,877 will be used to conserve: Fairfax Court Order Book, for cases from 1783-1788
Fairfax Court Order Book, for cases from 1791-1793
Sheriff's Docket Book 1799-1802
Rule Docket 1793-1795
Fairfax Record of Roads 1860-1904
Late 18th century Will Books E-1, F-1, and G-1

The process of preservation, described by Fairfax County, can vary. Preservation of the court records aims to prolong their life for continued access by the public. How they were originally bound, their storage conditions, and the amount of handling these documents have endured over 250 years affects the preservation approach. For example, prior to the invention of air conditioning, court records were generally stored in humid, moist conditions. Impurities collect over time, such as dirt from people handling the pages. Iron gall ink, used by the Clerks for writing in the 18th and 19th centuries, is naturally highly acidic and can eat through paper. The documents, like those that will be preserved with this grant funding, are placed in a chemical bath to remove impurities that have accumulated over time, and carefully dried flat. The dried pages are each placed in a neutral Mylar sleeve, so that today's researchers can easily flip the pages, without pulling the page from a fixed binding or touching the pages with bare hands. Once the documents are repaired, they will be digitized to be made available online to the public through the Court Public Access Network (CPAN) . <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/circuit/online-services/court-public-access-network>

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We are sincerely grateful and thankful to you for helping in 2021 to save one of America's oldest newspapers, the Alexandria Gazette Packet, publishing continuously since 1784

**Alexandria
Gazette Packet**
Publishing Since 1784

And affiliated newspapers

THE CONNECTION
Newspapers & Online

Mount Vernon Gazette
Potomac ALMANAC
CENTRE VIEW

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 Con-

nection 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.

Visit connectionnewspapers.com or
<https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-keep-your-newspaper-printing>
Connection Newspapers.... Alexandria Gazette Packet, Mount Vernon Gazette, Centre View, Potomac Almanac
1606 King Street • Alexandria, VA • 703-778-9431



Nature quickly added decoration to fencing added to deter white-tailed deer.

Contractors plant and mark 2,000 tree seedlings in early December.

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

PHOTO BY DARKO VELJKOVIC

Laurel Hill Park Gets Mass Tree Planting

Over 2,500 Seedlings Go Into Ground.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

A three year long reforestation project, undertaken by Fairfax County Park Authority's Natural Resources Branch, saw the final tree seedlings planted in the designated area within Laurel Hill Park on Dec. 16.

Selection of the reforestation area in 2019 began a project to bring under control the runaway growth of non-native invasive Kudzu vines (*Pueraria Montana*). The Kudzu covered an entire meadow area in the park and was beginning to spread into the tree lines. Labeled by Smithsonian Magazine as "America's most infamous weed" (September 2015), the invasive vine is infamous for its rapid spread and growth, killing plants and trees by blocking their access to sunlight. Dense tree coverage can turn the tables on Kudzu and other invasive plants, blocking them from receiving sun and nutrients.

A controlled burn on Nov. 9 to remove under-brush and further weaken any remaining treated plants followed two seasons of chemical treatment of the Kudzu with a herbicide. Following the burn, the area was prepared for new tree plantings by mowing and installing fencing to prevent the new seedlings from being eaten by White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) living in the park.

A contractor planted 2,000 seedlings the week of Dec. 6, followed the next week by a second planting of 515 seedlings from local native plant nursery, Earth Sangha, with

SEE LAUREL HILL, PAGE 13



Before: Laurel Hill Park meadow shown in 2019, engulfed by Kudzu vines.



Pots of seedlings await volunteer planting in mid-December: White Oak, Northern Red Oak, Mockernut and Sweet Pignut Hickories; joining species planted prior week: Black Oak, Northern Red Oak, White Swamp Oak, and Mockernut and Pignut Hickories; and Southern Red Oaks planted in September.



Controlled burn in November followed multiple herbicide treatments.



County ecologist Darko Veljkovic served as reforestation project manager at the site, assisted by other county staff, contractors, and a host of volunteers.

Storm Takes Down Many Trees

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

Home owners, busy clearing broken branches and downed trees after Jan. 3's heavy snow storm, may not have given thought to the amount of damage repeated over miles of area park trails. Evergreen trees, more susceptible to damage from the wet snow than their leafless deciduous counterparts, were especially prone to snow clumping on their bunched sprays of needles and to splitting branches due to added snow weight on softer wood than deciduous hardwoods.

Park Authority Maintenance Operations employees remain engaged in removing downed branches and trees well after the storm two weeks ago, spending hours covering miles of trails within the county. According to Park Authority division chief, Kurt Louis, crews begin trail maintenance after snow removal work, which prioritizes keeping facilities open and safe.

Resources then shift from regular operations, such as trash pick-up and playground and field maintenance to trail clearing. The forestry group assists with any larger, more hazardous tree damage situations.

Maintenance operations managers rely on community's help in notifying them of downed trees, which can be reported at 703 324-8594

Judith Pedersen, Park Authority public information officer, adds, "We realize trails have played an important role during the pandemic and we continue to see increased usage on them. Our trails were never closed. ... It is an ongoing challenge and of course, there is more snow in the forecast."



PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

After heavy snow flakes, wood flakes were soon flying as park maintenance crews tackled clearing area trails and home owners cleared yards.



Maintenance crews members Mike Williams and Jerry Parsell move branches off the trail as Christian Croke whittles a tree downed by heavy snow.



Park Authority employee and crew chief Christian Croke clears a trail in Laurel Hill Park with assistance from volunteer Mike Applegate.

Laurel Hill Park Gets Mass Tree Planting

FROM PAGE 12

the help of a couple dozen volunteers. Using more than one source allows the county "to increase plant diversity and enable a gene flow between the stock," explained lead project ecologist, Darko Veljkovic. Each planted seedling was marked by a pink flag for easier monitoring. Seedlings outside the deer fence area were staked and tubed for deer protection, and fitted with protective netting on the top of the tube to prevent birds from entering and being caught inside.

Multiple species of white and red oaks, and hickories, make up the new forest tree complement. With species growth rates of one to two feet per year, it will be some time until the area has the look of a forest. Although the species take 10 to 20 years to produce nuts, they will soon provide homes for many insects and other



PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

Retired Park Authority manager Ed Richardson back in the park joining a dozen other volunteers for mid-December planting.

small creatures, as well as later food for deer and small mammals at tree maturity. Living 200 years, they will improve the environment for living things in Laurel Hill Park for a long time to come.



PHOTO BY DARKO VELJKOVIC

Seedling outside the deer fence are protected by staked cages; flags mark young trees inside the protective fencing.

First Week of Session

FROM PAGE 6

education was attributable to Mason. Mason has committed to graduating an additional 7,600 computer science, computer engineering, and software engineering majors: over and above the 16,000 degrees the university is already on track to produce in these vital and rapidly expanding industries.

Regarding the critical area of

transportation to our region, I have filed an amendment to the caboose budget (HB29) to appropriate American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to support pay for Virginia transit workers. Transit organizations across the Commonwealth have faced unique challenges during the pandemic, most of all a shortage of qualified transit operators, who must be highly trained to safely transport our citizens.

At the request of Supervisor

Rodney Lusk in Lee District, I am requesting funding to support the purchasing of equipment and other infrastructure for outfitting the new Lee District Community and Workforce Development Center. This facility will be the first of its kind in the region, serving residents up and down Richmond Highway by providing recreational opportunities and childcare, as well as a classroom and workshop space that will be utilized to upskill

and train residents for employment in the trades and technology jobs of the future.

Finally, I have requested that 10% of funds allocated to the Virginia Housing Trust Fund be put towards enabling the acquisition, stabilization, and improvement of manufactured home parks, five of which are located here in the 44th district. Manufactured homes, especially those located in manufactured home parks, are

the only form of nonsubsidized affordable housing available for homeownership in Virginia. By providing a source of funding for nonprofit housing providers, the tenants, and others committed to housing affordability to purchase and maintain manufactured housing parks, this budget amendment will improve the lives of thousands of families living in these parks in Virginia.

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NEWS

Feb. 10 Business Breakfast Speed Networking

It may be February but we are still celebrating the New Year. Join the Mount Vernon Lee Chamber for speed networking with the Alexandria City Chamber and get ready to grow your contacts. Bring plenty of business cards for the new people you will meet.

There's the delicious breakfast buffet before networking begins on Thursday, Feb. 10, 8 – 9:30 am, at Belle Haven Country Club. For more information or to register please visit www.MtVernon-LeeChamber.org or call 703-360-6925.

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 10

teer, please call 703-941-7000 to request an orientation. Volunteers must complete a 30-hour training and commit to one year of service answering Haven phones (2.5 hours weekly). Next training is scheduled for fall 2017.

ONGOING

Assistance League of Northern Virginia is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that feeds, clothes and provides reading assistance and books to children in need. Assistance League's programs touch the lives of hundreds of children in Fairfax and Prince William Counties and the City of Alexandria. There are many volunteer opportunities for community members to contribute to helping those in need. To learn more, email info@alnv.org, or visit www.alnv.org.
STEM Professionals Needed. Volunteers are needed to assist K-12 STEM teachers in northern Virginia as part of the American Association for the Advancement of Science's STEM Volunteer Program, stemvolunteers.org, during the 2019-20 school year, beginning in September. Please contact Don Rea

at 571-551-2488 or donaldrea@aol.com.

Docents Needed. Sundays 1-4 p.m. at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road in Fairfax Station. Greet museum visitors and tell them about the exhibits, the museum and its railroad and Civil War history. Ideal for those interested in railroads, the Civil War and Northern Virginia history. Training and orientation provided. Other volunteer opportunities are gardening, publicity and exhibit planning. Call 703-945-7483.

Volunteer Adult Mentors Needed. Help assist the Department of Family Services' BeFriendA-Child mentoring program. The mentors provide opportunities for companionship, guidance and support to children who have been abused and neglected, or who are at risk of abuse and neglect. Contact Ibrahim Khalil at Ibrahim.khalil@fairfaxcounty.gov or 703-324-4547.

Volunteers needed at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. The Museum offers a variety of exciting volunteer opportunities in Museum events, programs and ad-

ministration. Contact volunteers@fairfax-station.org or 703-945-7483 to explore services that will fit your schedule and interests. Visit www.fairfax-station.org, or call 703-425-9225 for more.

RSVP, a volunteer network for seniors seeking service opportunities in and around Fairfax County, Arlington County and the City of Alexandria, offers a wide array of opportunities for volunteers 55 and older. RSVP volunteers enjoy flexible schedules, free accident and liability insurance while serving, optional mileage and meal reimbursement and are invited to volunteer group projects and social gatherings. To sign up for an upcoming orientation, email Carly Hubicki at chubicki@volunteerfairfax.org or call RSVP at 703-403-5360. To learn more about RSVP, visit www.rsvpnova.org.

Civil War Research scholarship to a public or private high school senior who resides in Fairfax, Fairfax City, Prince William County, Manassas City, or Manassas Park from the Bull Run Civil War Roundtable in Centreville, Va. Visit bullrunwrt.org for more.

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Earning College Credit with Work Experience and Training

Program expansions makes college degree accessible and affordable for many.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Now in the 17th year of his career in information technology (IT), Eric Hayes wants to work toward a college degree at Northern Virginia Community College. While he has taken a variety of on-the-job training courses, he believes that a formal education will lead to professional gains. Thanks to the expansion of a program in Virginia called Credits for Prior Learning Portal, Credits-2Careers program, he and other adults can turn life work experiences into college credit.

"The hours of course study will help me continue to grow in my career field," he said. "Course work, group collaboration, and lectures are a part of the responsibility of being an active IT professional," he said. "You can easily get left behind if you

do not keep your eyes and ears open. Constant change can be beneficial because it can quickly solve problems as well as streamline convoluted processes. With that being said, knowing about the change or even being a part of it is much more gratifying."

Adults who are interested in using work and life experience to earn credit at Northern Virginia Community College and other schools in the Virginia Community College System, can create an account on the Credits2Careers website (www.credits2careers.org) and list information such as work experience, prior training, certificates or standardized tests. This information is evaluated by the organization's career advisors who will then let the prospective student know how many college credits they are eligible to receive.

"This initiative is predicated on serving the needs of all students from various backgrounds who have a wealth of knowledge and experience," said Jenny Carter, Direc-

tor of Workforce Partnerships and Projects, Virginia Community College System. "Recognizing the expertise that is contained in a student's background is one way of honoring their past efforts and meeting them where they are in their educational journey, in the arc of their career, and most importantly, where they are in life."

A grant from the Lumina Foundation, as part of its All Learning Counts Initiative, provided the funding for the expansion. Professional development, workforce training,

professional certifications, exams and standardized test are examples of the types of experiences that students use to earn college credit while taking fewer classes, says Carter

"By awarding credit for prior learning, students are able to avoid any redundancy in training and save crucial time and money," she said. "Research has shown

that by awarding credit for prior learning, students are ultimately assisted in a meaningful, tangible way to accelerate their pathway to earning a degree or licensure leading directly to a well-paying career. Life is full of rich experiences that deserve to be recognized wherever they align to formal training outcomes."

This path to education is designed to create a level playing field for those who want to access to higher education. "Credit for prior learning is one tool to ensure education is available to all, from students with traditional backgrounds to those who have followed another path," said Emily Jones-Green, Virginia Community College System. "The greatest thing about education, knowledge, skills, and capabilities is that they are not confined to a formal classroom."

Having diverse life experiences enhances the classroom atmosphere and makes the fabric of our society and our workforce stronger."

"The greatest thing about education, knowledge, skills, and capabilities is that they are not confined to a formal classroom. Having diverse life experiences enhances the classroom atmosphere and makes the fabric of our society and our workforce stronger."

— Jenny Carter,
Director of Workforce Partnerships and
Projects, Virginia Community College System.

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Immuno-Confused



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

I wouldn't say, as a cancer patient, that I'm immuno-compromised, as a CNN news report today, Dec. 24th, described us similarly-diagnosed individuals, but my wife certainly would. Nevertheless, as a cancer patient undergoing treatment, I do realize that I need to be vigilant, especially since I have pre-existing breathing issues because the thyroid cancer I have had long ago moved into my lungs. Moreover, to complicate matters more, the main side effect of the medicine that I'm taking daily to treat my thyroid cancer has as its main side effect: shortness of breath. Having read what I've just written, it sounds likely that if anybody is immuno-compromised, it's someone who has cancerous tumors in their lungs and whose treatment for said tumors has as its primary side effect: shortness of breath. A trifecta of trouble when one considers that covid adversely impacts one's ability to breathe.

When covid first became a thing, my wife, Dina wouldn't let me out of the house. Even after we received our initial two vaccinations, Dina was still cautiously unoptimistic. I was allowed out of the house, but within very strict parameters. I wouldn't say I understand science/medicine, but even I could see the risks of exposure and the likely compounded problems it would present for a cancer patient like me whose lungs are already weakened by the presence of a dozen or more malignant papillary thyroid cancer tumors. And whose body has been negatively affected (I wouldn't say ravaged) by nearly 13 years of non-stop cancer treatment. Not exactly the most challenging host for a semi-incurable respiratory virus.

However, in the past three months or so since I've been boosted, I have returned to some of my pre-covid activities; in moderation, and always wearing a mask. I am out and about running errands as had been my area of responsibility previously. Now however, omicron has become the dominant variant/threat and presented a new level of concern even for fully vaccinated/boosted people like me. Though the side effects, hospitalizations and deaths seem statistically somewhat less than previous variants, still a cancer patient with pre-existing lung/breathing issues seems an attractive host. And not that the variant picks its targets, but its super transmissibility presents challenges/fears for those whose immune systems have already been weakened by years of toxic chemotherapy. As I describe myself, I think I might be the poster child for this disease. If anybody presents with the ideal/worst-case scenario, it's me. I can see the poster now: A picture of me with a black circle surrounding my chest with a black line diagonally across my torso.

Because, if there's anything I understand about my condition, it is that my weakest link is the area where the virus does its most initial damage: the lungs. And given that one's ability to breathe is kind of important, in whatever scheme of things/context one wants to consider, I should probably once again stay in the house and avoid all human contact (at least I would have five cats to keep me company). I mean, who's to say/know really, whether a lung cancer/thyroid patient like me could even survive the most modest of covid symptoms. Which, given my medical history, it's unlikely any symptoms I experienced could be described as moderate. I imagine if the virus found a home in my lungs, it might very well be, as they say in Boston: "Katie bar the door." There's probably no such thing as a moderate impact for a person with cancer/lung issues like me. In fact, if I want to be honest about my cancer/lung history, practically/prudently speaking, I should be disqualified from everything until further notice. I can't afford to take a chance/risk any exposure. I have very little margin for error. My life would be at stake, if I understand the warnings/susceptibility correctly concerning someone with my medical condition.

I suppose if I want to live my life moving forward, I'll have to utilize my sales background and pre-qualify any person with whom I'm possibly having contact/sharing space. I've survived/overcome an initial "terminal" diagnosis of stage IV non-small cell lung cancer with a "13 month to two-year" prognosis to be approaching my 13-year anniversary come the end of February 2022. Given all I've endured in the last 13 years since I felt pain in my left rib cage in late December 2008, it would be irresponsible and stupid for me to get careless and throw away all I've been gained. This is no time to throw caution to the wind. Quite the contrary.

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



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