

Keira (Carlstrom) D'Amato, a 37-year-old Oakton High School alumna, shattered the U.S. women's marathon record on Jan. 16 with a time of 2:19:12 at the 2022 Chevron Houston Marathon.

2:19:10

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Pedestrians and vehicles entering and exiting Great Falls Park. Parking on Georgetown Pike is no longer permitted.

## Asking Park Police for Help with Traffic

**Will funds come down the pike for traffic fix at Great Falls Park?**

MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

**T**raffic at the intersection of Georgetown Pike and Old Dominion Drive, leading to the Potomac River's Great Falls National Park can be challenging in good weather, with waits to enter the park of an hour or more. The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors on Jan. 25 unanimously approved a request for help from the feds to manage the traffic. According to Supervisor John W. Foust (D-Dranesville), who represents residents in the area, traffic congestion at the crossroads leading to the national park has caused severe safety concerns for years.

Foust, Board Chairman Jeffrey C. McKay (D-At Large), and Supervisor James Walkinshaw (D-Braddock) introduced the resolution through a Board Matter. Foust said that the Great Falls Citizens Association has been spearheading an effort to secure federal funding so that the United States Park Police can provide traffic control at the intersection.

"While we're glad so many people get to enjoy the beautiful park, serious problems persist, and annual visitation to the park continues to grow. Understandably, residents who need to use that intersection to get to and from their homes want to see some relief," Foust said.

National Park Service and Virginia Department of Transportation implemented several measures to assist traffic flow. Parking regulations changed in spring 2021, according to Pamela Grosvenor of GFCA, prohibiting parking along more of Georgetown Pike. Vehicles had previously lined the two-lane byway. With no sidewalks, visitors walked in the street to get to the entrance, increasing



MERCIA HOBSON/CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS  
Entrance sign leading to Great Falls Park.

traffic hazards. The U.S. Park Police currently direct traffic. Drivers who park on the Pike or Old Dominion near the park risk being ticketed by the police.

Congestion persists and may be so severe that if one is not at the park by 10 a.m. on a summer weekend or holiday, the wait time to enter could be an hour or more. The problem is not new. Over ten years ago, on April 7, 2013, an NPS traffic update post on Facebook stated: "It's an extremely busy day and the road is closed at the traffic light at Georgetown Pike due to the line. Parking is full."

That Great Falls Park draws people toward the thunderous roaring waters of the Potomac River as it builds up speed and tumbles spectacularly over the jagged rocks through the narrow Mather Gorge is unquestionable. The park is part of the George Washington Memorial Parkway which was the sixth most visited national park in 2019, according to National Park Planner. "One and a half million more people visited the George Washington Memorial Parkway than they did the



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Great Falls Park is a popular site for residents and tourists. It is a short walk from the visitor center with overlooks for seeing the falls.

**"No parking signs were installed further down Georgetown Pike in Spring 2021. Additional signs on Old Dominion Drive, south of the intersection with the Pike, were installed later."**

— Pamela Grosvenor of GFCA

Grand Canyon, and they are all trying to fit into 600 parking spaces."

Supervisors authorized sending a letter to U.S. Rep. Jennifer Wexton (D-10) and U.S. Sen. Mark Warner, requesting that the U.S. Park Police (USPP) allocate \$100,000 in its fiscal year 2023 budget for traffic control at Great Falls Park.

Additionally, the letter urged the legislators' offices to contact National Park Service (NPS) Director Charles F. "Chuck" Sams III and USPP Chief Pamela A. Smith to determine whether funds from the NPS's FY 2022

budget could be diverted to ensure traffic control at Great Falls Park this fiscal year. According to the Board, overtime expenses were not included in the USPP's FY 2022 budget proposal. The agency is thus unable to reprogram funds from its current budget plan to meet the traffic control request.

"Ultimately, the problem needs to be addressed and solved by the National Park Service. ... We are all very grateful for the support GFCA is receiving from Congresswoman Wexton and Senator Warner," Foust said. Georgetown Pike is used daily by approximately 18,000 drivers, many county residents, according to the letter to Warner and Wexton.

The Potomac River's Great Falls is one of Virginia's and the U.S. Department of Interior's most valuable resources and attractions. The falls engage all five

senses, the first being the sound of the water, drawing people toward the dynamic landscape sculpted with distinctive geological features.

Great Falls Park website says its 800-acres are home to rare and delicate plant communities, 150 species of birds, and native wildlife. The National Park Service acquired the land and began operating it as a portion of the George Washington Memorial Parkway in 1966. Visit their website for more information. <https://www.nps.gov/grfa/plan-yourvisit/basicinfo.htm>



Keira (Carlstrom) D'Amato pounds the pavement at the 2022 Chevron Houston Marathon.

**“I’m really proud of myself that I had the courage to start.”**

— Keira (Carlstrom) D'Amato

Keira (Carlstrom) D'Amato, a 37-year-old Oakton High School alumna, shattered the U.S. women’s marathon record on Jan. 16 with a time of 2:19:12 at the 2022 Chevron Houston Marathon.

# Oakton Alumna Breaks U.S. Marathon Record

**Discipline and courageous inner conversations fuel perseverance.**

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

**I**t took Keira (Carlstrom) D’Amato, a 37-year-old Oakton High School alumna, mother of two, and career woman, eight years to rediscover her love of running and put on her sneakers again. After she did, D’Amato shattered the U.S. women’s marathon record on Jan. 16 with a time of 2:19:12 at the 2022 Chevron Houston Marathon, running an average pace of 05:19 minutes a mile. The record stood since 2006 when American Deena Kastor won the London Marathon in 2:19:36.

As a young soccer player D’Amato (then Carlstrom) joined her high school freshman cross country team on a whim, only to discover that running was her genuine love. She raced competitively at American University in Washington D.C. only to be sidelined by an injury she thought would end her competitive running.

D’Amato shared the one thing she is most proud of about herself in an interview on Jan. 20, and it is not the win. “This whole journey



Keira (Carlstrom) D’Amato’s strong support team, her family, husband Anthony, and their children, Tommy, 7, and Quinn, 5, surround her with love.

has been intimidating for me; it’s scary. I didn’t quite know the path that I was on the whole time, but I’m really proud of myself that I had the courage to start,” D’Amato

said.

Because of her family, friends and community’s love and support, she persevered even when she felt “out of place” on a path full of ups

and downs. The ups, according to D’Amato, were simple, but she refused to allow the downs to drag her under.

“Stuff would go wrong, and I would write it off quickly,” she said.

D’Amato persuaded herself that these would be speed bumps in her rearview mirror. Going through hardships and disappointments, she said, is challenging because one can feel alone and believe that things will always be this way. “You just have to keep your head down and believe that the best is yet to come,” she said.

D’Amato remembers her most difficult running challenge. Her fitness had improved quickly as she aimed to compete in the United States Track and Field Olympic Trials in 2021. Then a hamstring issue threw everything into disarray, derailing the trial. “There is no way you are going to make it to the finish line if you do not make it to the starting line,” she observed. Her dream vanished.

D’Amato has been going to physical therapy twice a week since then. “And I’m doing exercises

almost every day to help create strength and balance. Getting old isn’t easy ... but the 2024 Olympics are still top of my mind,” she said. D’Amato will be 39 years old when the next Olympics take place.

One of the things that provides her the most encouragement and allows her to take risks is the support of her family, husband Anthony, and their two children, Tommy, 7, and Quinn, 5. It makes no difference to them whether D’Amato is first or last. “They are still going to love me.”

D’Amato admitted that running is a selfish sport because it takes a long time to train at her level. Sometimes she runs early in the morning before the children get to school. Other times, it is while they are at school, and on given weekends, she needs to hire a babysitter because her husband is in the Air National Guard.

“Our family had to get creative with how to make it all fit,” she said.

Throughout her recent record-breaking marathon run, she feared the win would not happen

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# Oakton Alumna Breaks U.S. Marathon Record

FROM PAGE 4

for her that day. The winds were blowing at 10 to 14 mph, making the temperature feel like it was in the twenties. But she convinced herself that she had to continue to push until she was absolutely broke.

“Go a little further, further,” D’Amato told herself. She asked inwardly why this is not feeling easy, only to respond, “You’re trying to go where no American woman has ever gone before. This isn’t going to feel easy,” she recalled saying to herself.

The mental discussions D’Amato had with herself during the marathon pushed her that day — she was going to do it to make “herself proud.” Running had given her the confidence and goal-setting abilities she needed to achieve. D’Amato said that she had worked hard on how she speaks to herself, especially when things are not going her way and that encouraging inner conversation made a difference.

“I know what it feels like to fail, and I know what it feels like to succeed. In a marathon, everything is hurting. You are exhausted; you can barely breathe; your legs are pounding, and you start feeling sorry for yourself. Your brain tries to convince you just to slow down. ... I’ve been to that point and felt disappointed after the race. Oh man, there was more in the tank,” D’Amato said.

“That happened in this race; everything was starting to shut down. I just didn’t want to come up short. Whatever I needed to push through to get there, I was



PHOTO BY KEVIN MORRIS (@KEVINOFOTO)

Keira (Carlstrom) D’Amato spurs herself forward in the marathon, carrying on a conversation with herself: “You’re trying to go where no American woman has ever gone before. This isn’t going to feel easy,”

willing to do,” she said.

Being kind to herself, being her own cheerleader, and ending up feeling proud is the message that D’Amato gives to the sport that has given her so much. She speaks in various settings and is passionate about helping others discover their passion for running from an early age.

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# Green Rollback May Hit Blue Wall

Republican efforts to undo environmental laws to face opposition in Democratic-led Senate.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE  
THE CONNECTION

The goal of dumping fossil fuels by 2050 may be on the chopping block. The mandate that 8 percent of all new car sales must be zero-emission vehicles may be hitting a speed bump. And the Air Pollution Control Board might soon find itself without the ability to regulate air pollution. Plus a former coal lobbyist might end up leading the state's environmental agency.

These are some of the environmental debates shaping up in the General Assembly this year as the new Republican majority is now in control of the House of Delegates.

"Some of them are really gunning for these laws," said Mike Town, executive director of the Virginia League of Conservation Voters "And we're going to have to do everything we can to defend them."

When the Democrats were in power, they passed a sweeping environmental law known as the Clean Economy Act that set a deadline to end carbon emissions from utilities by 2050. It was a major triumph for environmentalists, who praised the new law as putting Virginia ahead of most states. Now that law has become a target for Del. Nick Freitas (R-30), who has a bill that would repeal the Clean Economy Act. Environmentalists warn of the economic consequences to rolling back energy efficiency measures and efforts to develop renewable sources of energy.

"The average family in Dominion's service territory should save almost \$34 a year," said Harry Godfrey, executive director at Virginia Advanced Energy Economy. "So rolling back the VCEA would do economic harm to those ratepayers."

**THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL** of the new governor's appointments to fill out his Cabinet is his choice for Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources, Andrew Wheeler. A former coal lobbyist and Senate staffer, Wheeler led the rollback of Obama-era environmental regulations when he led the Environmental Protection Agency during the Trump administration. Appearing before members of the General Assembly this week, Wheeler presented himself as a champion for reducing air pollution and cleaning up superfund sites.

"The governor believes that with my unique background of having run the EPA and working in a senior leadership position in the U.S. Senate that I know how to access federal funding and assistance to make a difference for the state," said Wheeler in testimony to the Senate. "I have a long career in trying to bridge differences on these issues and protect the resources we all share."

Senate Democrats are hopeful they'll be able to deny Wheeler the nomination if it gets to the Senate floor, although they have no room for error. Democrats have a one-



Former EPA chief Andrew Wheeler testifies before a Senate panel.

vote majority, so they'll need every member of the Senate Democratic Caucus to vote together.

But when Wheeler appeared before the Senate Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources Committee, Sen. Joe Morrissey (D-16) signaled he would be open to voting in favor of the nomination. That alarmed advocates who are concerned about Wheeler's past actions.

"Andrew Wheeler has a record of undermining science and environmental protec-

**"Some of them are really gunning for these laws. And we're going to have to do everything we can to defend them."**

— Mike Town, executive director of the Virginia League of Conservation Voters

tions that are meant to keep people safe," said Tim Cywinski, communications manager for the Sierra Club of Virginia. "Virginia has made an awful lot of progress in environmental justice and climate action over the last two years, and Andrew Wheeler is a threat against the progress we've made."

**VIRGINIA IS CURRENTLY** a member of a multi-state compact known as the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, although Republicans are hoping to force a divorce. Opponents of the initiative warn of higher power bills, and one estimate pegs that amount at \$52 a year for the average customer. Ultimately, opponents say, participating in the initiative won't accomplish anything that wouldn't happen anyway considering recent trends in the energy sector.

"Power companies are moving in this direction anyway," said Stephen Haner, a senior fellow at the Thomas Jefferson Institute. "They are moving away from coal and they are reducing carbon emissions on their own. So I think it's virtue signaling to try and basically say well we made them do it even though they are doing it anyway."

Supporters of the initiative say it provides an important source of revenue. When power companies don't meet targets for reducing pollution, they have to pay.

That money is currently funding energy efficiency programs for low-income families and coastal resiliency projects. Gov. Glenn Youngkin issued an executive order to re-

view the commonwealth's participation in the initiative, ostensibly laying the groundwork to navigate a path for exiting the compact. Asked about how Virginia would fund coastal resiliency programs if Virginia leaves the initiative, Wheeler said he would find a way.

"I am committed to working with the legislature to make sure that we have the funding for that," said Wheeler. "Coastal resiliency is very important."

**SENATE DEMOCRATS** are hopeful they will serve as a "blue wall" to stop Republican efforts to roll back environmental laws that were approved when Democrats were in control.

The Senate committee that would consider that legislation includes Sen. Jennifer McClellan (D-9), who wrote the Clean Economy Act, and Sen. Lynwood Lewis (D-6), who wrote the bill that entered Virginia into the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. As long as Democrats remain in control of that committee, Republicans will have a hard time accomplishing efforts to roll back laws from McClellan and Lewis.

"As the chairman of this committee, I'm very protective of their accomplishments," noted Sen. Chap Petersen (D-34), chairman of the Senate Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources Committee.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL LEE POPE/THE CONNECTION

# Combatting the Toll of Racism on Mental Health

## Black Health and Wellness is the theme of Black History Month 2022.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

After walking into a hospital room to administer medicine, her patient told her to go find a nurse because he wanted his prescriptions to be administered by a professional, recalls Kezia, who has a master's degree in nursing and has practiced for more than 20 years.

"Since I'm black he probably thought that I was there to empty his garbage can. I had to explain to him that I was a nurse and I'm not even sure he believed me," she recalled from her home in Fairfax. "I have to let things like that roll off because I have to deal with all kinds of people all day."

The constancy of experiencing racism, even subtly, can have a negative impact on the mental health of those on the receiving end of such behaviors, say area mental health professionals. The theme of Black History Month 2022, "Black Health and Wellness," offers an opportunity to recognize and address the issue on a personal level.

The theme is set by Association for the Study of African American Life and History. <https://asalh.org/black-history-themes/>

"Constantly feeling the need to repress slights and other acts of racism is psychologically damaging," said Arlington psychotherapist Robyn Wright, Ph.D. "The unresolved pain of being a victim of racism is fertile ground for mental health problems like depression, anxiety and substance abuse."

Expressions of racism are often unconscious or subtle, and therefore are not addressed or recognized, advised family therapist Jaclyn Lewis who practices in Bethesda and Alexandria. "Most white people don't express overt racism like using racial slurs, so it's easy for us to overlook it, accept it and bury the anger and sad-

ness," she said. "We have to make ourselves aware of the toll that it's taking on our mental health."

"We have to find ways to take care of ourselves and give ourselves a mental health break," continued Lewis. "Sometimes this means getting out of our comfort zone and finding ways to practice relaxation every day. We can do it through meditation and even deep breathing to reduce the stress that we've become so accustomed to that we don't even recognize it."

Identifying a place that is filled with like-minded people can be empowering and stress-relieving, advises Wright. "It can be spending time with friends who you can let your guard down with," she said. "It can also be at church or another house of worship. The bottom line is that we need a reprieve from the feeling of constantly having our guard up or feeling like we have to look or behave a certain way to feel accepted."

Anger is often an automatic reaction to racism or bias. Using those feelings to take action in a way that brings about change can reduce the negative impact on one's mental health, suggests Lewis.

**"Most white people don't express overt racism like using racial slurs, so it's easy for us to overlook it, accept it and bury the anger and sadness."**

—Jaclyn Lewis

"Vote, register to vote, make sure your family and friends register and vote. Speak up calmly when you feel racism or bias. Protest and raise awareness but do it peacefully so that people will be able to hear and accept our views."

Resisting the urge to give up or succumb to feelings of hopelessness can help guard against depression, says Wright. "You don't have to experience racism firsthand to feel the effects of it," she said. "Even seeing it on television or reading about it in the newspaper can be painful. ... Learning about the rich history of African Americans and important contributions to society that are often overlooked, can give you a sense of pride instead of a sense of being inferior."

OPINION

# Getting Down to Work

BY DEL. KENNETH R. "KEN" PLUM

Many say that I have the best view of the Jefferson-designed State Capitol from the window in my office in the Pocahontas Building where members of the House of Delegates and State Senate have their Richmond offices. It is an awe-inspiring view. This past week workers have been busy dismantling the seating and stand where Governor Youngkin was inaugurated. While the formal structure of the Inaugural has been removed from the outside of the Capitol building, inside the structure of a new government dominated by a new Republican governor and a Republican-majority House of Delegates is quickly taking shape. Campaign rhetoric is being replaced by executive orders and draft legislation. Faces new to Virginia government including the new governor and most of his appointees are moving into their roles in the new administration.

Last week I expressed my concern about Executive Order One and its potential impact on education as it seeks to end "the use of inherently divisive concepts" in schools. My concern has been heightened as the governor has taken a further step in controlling the curriculum of the schools by establishing a "tip line for parents to report to the state any school officials behaving objectionably—including teaching divisive subjects." On a local radio show the governor said, "We're asking for folks to send us reports and observations...to help us be aware of their child being denied their rights that parents in Virginia have." The

announcement of the "snitch line" brought a strong reaction from teachers and parents who see this move as adding undue stress to teachers without clear direction.

The Constitution of Virginia puts responsibility for the public school system under the State Board of Education and local school boards. This arrangement has insulated the schools from undue political influence for the most part until the current governor came to realize that running against the schools was attractive to his political base.

Following through on one of his political promises the new governor, acting outside of advice from health experts and demonstrating his willingness to overcome educator objections, lifted the mask mandates that had been put in place as a way to keep the schools open and safe. Most large school divisions ignored his ban on mask mandates, and several districts have asked the courts to decide if the governor has the authority to do what he has done. A decision from the court should be forthcoming in the near future.

In the meantime, on the same radio program the governor justified to the host his ban on local mask mandates by saying that we should "love our neighbor." I could not agree more with the plea to love our neighbor, but in my mind in a pandemic we should love others as well as ourselves by wearing masks! The governor may have shown his true purpose by expressing to the host that his ban on masks was "moving against the left liberals." As one who is eternally optimistic, I hope to have a more positive report next week on our getting down to work.

### Let Us Know Your View

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we will only print your name and town name. Letters are routinely edited for length, libel, grammar, good taste, civility and factual errors.

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# Exhilarating, Crackling Evening of Orchestral Music

Fairfax Symphony includes a U.S premiere.

BY DAVID SIEGEL  
THE CONNECTION

Something singular is coming — a concert like no other from the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra. “We are thrilled to bring these orchestral works to life for our audience — art from the past through the present,” said Christopher Zimmerman, FSO Music Director and Conductor. “It’s not only a responsibility to help make new music happen, but a great joy to be part of this process.”

“This is first time that the FSO has highlighted its various components in one concert (strings, winds, and percussion) and a specific opportunity to highlight the richness and diversity of our expansive orchestral repertoire, from the masterpieces of the past to what’s being written now.” added Zimmerman.

Zimmerman selected a program that includes not only Dvorak but contemporary composers such as Adolphus Hailstork and Arov Part. The concert opens with “a bang with the highly energetic piece ‘Ku-Ka-Ilimoku’ by Pulitzer Prize recipient Christopher Rouse, bringing the fury and intensity of the Hawaiian god of war to the stage featuring more than 30 percussion instruments on stage together.”

The U.S. premiere is “Bruromano” by Sylvie Bodorová, a Czech composer whose compositions are performed internationally by renowned artists and orchestras. “I have known Sylvie Bodorova for 25 years. She has made an impact on the national and international stage and her music is direct, completely without pretension, beautiful, and sometimes very powerful.” said Zimmerman.

Written in 2019, “Bruromano” is “a rare work composed as a double concerto for Guitar and Double Bass and String Orchestra.” said Aaron Clay, FSO Principal Bassist, who also plays Principal Double Bass for the “The President’s Own” Marine Band. It is rare to hear this combination of instruments together because the bass has such a low voice and the guitar a higher voice “This combination works very well for this concerto. The colors of the two instruments mix well and produce different shades of musical expression throughout,” said Clay.

Soloist and Grammy-winner Jason Vieaux



FAIRFAX SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA  
Aaron Clay, Principal Bassist, Fairfax Symphony Orchestra who will perform the U.S. premier of “Bruromano.”



ARTS LAUREATE/COURTESY FAIRFAX SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA  
Christopher Zimmerman, Music Director and Conductor, Fairfax Symphony Orchestra



PHOTO BY TYLER BOYE, COURTESY FAIRFAX SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA  
Guest Soloist Guitarist Jason Vieaux who will perform the U.S. premiere of “Bruromano” with the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra.

performs “Bruromano” with Clay. Vieaux is among today’s elite classical guitarists. “I think the balancing of the ensemble writing with two relatively quiet solo instruments is handled very well, allowing for a robust

musical dialogue between the two soloists and orchestra. There are also moments of reflection and lyrical playing for both solo instruments.”

“Bruromano” premiered with the Slovak

**WHERE AND WHEN:** Fairfax Symphony Orchestra and Christopher Zimmerman, conductor present concert including “Bruromano” (U.S. premiere) at Harris Theatre, George Mason University, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax, Va. Performance on Feb 19, 2022 at 8 p.m. Tickets: \$40, \$55, \$65. Call 703-993-2787 or visit [www.cfa.gmu.edu](http://www.cfa.gmu.edu). Hear the stories behind the music with Christopher Zimmerman and guest artists before the concert at 7 p.m.

**PROGRAM:** Christopher Rouse: “Ku-Ka-Ilimoku;” Dvořák: “Serenade for Wind Instruments;” Adolphus Hailstork: “Essay for Strings;” Arvo Part: “Cantus in Memoriam Benjamin Britten;” Sylvie Bodorová: “Bruromano” for solo guitar, double-bass and strings (U.S. Premier) with Jason Vieaux, guitar and Aaron Clay, double bass

Chamber Orchestra in Bratislava in January 2020 before the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic were known. “For me, music is the best encouragement; it brings hope for a better future. I would like to share this spirit of this hope with all of you,” said Bodorova.

*Health Note: This concert follows safety protocols of George Mason University. Attendees must present proof of vaccination against COVID-19 or show a negative COVID-19 test result. Face coverings required indoors for patrons ages two and up. For details: <https://cfa.gmu.edu/plan-your-visit/what-expect>*

## Ode to Air Guitar: Let Go and Feel Music

BY SOFIA (SOFI) HEMMENS  
JUSTICE HIGH SCHOOL

Air guitar isn’t exactly the first thing that comes to mind at the phrase “abstract art.” But the cast of McLean High School’s production of *Airness* are gleefully singing a different tune.

*Airness* is a play first produced in Washington DC in 2019, just before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. It tells the story of Nina, a woman committed to succeeding in the

world of air guitar to get back at her ex-fiance, with whom she parted on less than the best of terms. However, as Nina (portrayed by Jackie Stoll) learns about air guitar and the people who play it, she learns about what makes it meaningful, and what “air-ness” really is. Her teachers are a motley bunch, comprised of Shreddy Eddie (Charlotte Carson), Golden Thunder (Arielle Else), Facebender (Jack Abba), and Cannibal Queen (Idil Erdogan). The five of them often cross paths with national air guitar champion, D

Vicious (Kate Fontaine), who has connections with both Cannibal Queen and Nina.

Each character had a strength in playing the air guitar, with Carson as Shreddy Eddie conveying his charisma beautifully, to Else putting on a brilliant show with Golden Thunder’s distinct originality, to Erdogan’s technical flawlessness as Cannibal Queen, to Abba as Facebender with the heart he puts into performing. The actors had a strong rapport that shows onstage, and their chemistry was intense. The explosive argument

scene at the end of Act I was a testament to the actors’ skill, to the point where it felt as though the audience was intruding on something private.

Other technical aspects also contributed to the intimate feel of the show. The play was performed in a Theatre in the Round style, where the audience was seated on all sides of the actors and had an up-close view of the events unfolding. The play was set in

SEE ODE TO AIR GUITAR, PAGE 10  
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# CALENDAR



Moch Pryderi, which performs traditional Celtic music, will perform at the Old Brogue Irish Pub in Great Falls on Feb. 13.

## NOW THRU FEB. 6

**"The Dinner Party."** Presented by Vienna Theatre Company. At Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry St., SE, Vienna. Performance Dates and Times: 8 p.m.: Fridays and Saturdays: January 28, 29; Feb 4, 5; 2 p.m.: Sundays: Jan 30, Feb 6. In Neil Simon's farcical take on love, marriage, divorce, and what comes after, six strangers are invited to a mysterious dinner party. They do not know who the other guests will be or why they have been invited. Tossed together in a private dining room, they have a sneaking suspicion that this unorthodox dinner party will forever change their lives. Visit [www.viennatheatrecompany.org](http://www.viennatheatrecompany.org) for more details or email [vtcshows@yahoo.com](mailto:vtcshows@yahoo.com).

## NOW THRU FEB. 13

**"Every Brilliant Thing."** At NextStop Theatre, 269 Sunset Park Drive, Herndon. Guided by an unnamed narrator, the audience is drawn into the story of a young boy who tries to cure his mother's depression by creating a list of all the most wonderful things in the world. Visit [www.NextStopTheatre.org](http://www.NextStopTheatre.org).

## NOW THRU FEB. 19

**New Art Exhibits.** At McLean Project for the Arts, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Give and Take: Building Form (Emerson Gallery) will feature abstract wood sculpture by Emilie Benes Brzezinski, Rachel Rotenberg, Foon Sham, and Norma Schwartz, while the Atrium Gallery will feature Intersectional Painting: Works by Sheila Crider. Both exhibitions run through Feb. 19, 2022. Visit [www.mpaart.org/](http://www.mpaart.org/) or call 703-790-1953 for gallery hours.

## NOW THRU FEB. 27

**"Winter Winds" Art Show.** 12-5 p.m. At Reston Art Gallery and Studios, 11400 Washington Plaza W. at Lake Anne, Reston. See the season's sentiments depicted in oil, acrylic, and watercolor paintings, mixed media collage, metal mobiles, and more, created by the eight artists of RAGS. Open weekends, 12-5 pm, through February 27, located at the "ART" sign on Lake Anne Plaza. Visit the website: [www.restonartgallery.com](http://www.restonartgallery.com).

## FRIDAY/FEB. 4

**"Traveling While Black" Panel Discussion.** 7:30 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. The "Talk Back, Look Forward" Panel Discussion

will feature Ben's Chili Bowl Founder and Owner Virginia Ali, D.C. Civil Right Veteran Courtland Cox, DC Legendary Musicians Chair Rev. Dr. Sandra Butler-Truesdale, Academy Award-winning director Roger Ross Williams and Tamir Rice Foundation Founder and CEO Samaria Rice, who is interviewed in the film. Williams and Rice will be participating remotely. Media Strategist Joshua Henry Jenkins will moderate the discussion. A catered, boxed meal from Ben's Chili Bowl will be available to participants starting at 6:30 p.m. Admission to the event is free; however, registration is required. Register at [www.mcleancenter.org](http://www.mcleancenter.org).

## FRIDAY/FEB. 4

**National Symphony Orchestra.** 8 p.m. At Capital One Hall in Tysons. Gemma New helms a program that opens with Ralph Vaughan Williams' Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis and closes with Jean Sibelius' Symphony No. 5. Jennifer Koh, a tireless advocate for new music, joins the orchestra as soloist for the world premiere of Missy Mazzoli's Violin Concerto (Procession), an NSO co-commission with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. Visit [CapitalOneHall.com](http://CapitalOneHall.com).

## FEB. 4-5

**"Broadway Night: Mixtape."** At South Lakes High School, Reston. Some 120 student performers will take to the stage in the South Lakes High School Chorus' Annual Broadway Night. There will be live stage shows on Friday, February 4 at 7 p.m. and on Saturday February 5 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. in the Little Theater. The show will also be live streamed online on February 5 at 7 p.m. Broadway Night: Mixtape features 20 Broadway-style numbers performed by students from South Lakes High School and feeder schools including Langston Hughes and Rachel Carson Middle Schools, Dogwood, Forest Edge, Fox Mill, Hunters Woods, Lake Anne, Terraset and Sunrise Valley Elementary Schools. Tickets are \$20 for adults, \$15 for students/seniors. There are two prices for the live stream, \$25 for an individual and \$45 for a family. Visit <https://southlakeschorus.org/tickets/>.

## SATURDAY/FEB. 5

**Lunar New Year.** 1-3 p.m. At Tysons Corner Center, Lower Level, Fashion Court near Nordstrom's, 1961 Chain Bridge Road, Tysons Corner. This year's Lunar New Year celebration in partnership with

the Asian American Chamber of Commerce. Some of the featured artists and performances include: Lion Dance by Choy Wun Dance Group; Ethnic Chinese Dances by the Red Royals; Chinese Instrumental Performance by Gu-Zheng, Alice Gu-Zheng Ensemble; Chinese Fusion Jazz and 'CPOP' Dances by WJ Dance; and Korean Dance by JUB Cultural Center. Visit the website: [www.Tysonscornercenter.com](http://www.Tysonscornercenter.com).

## SATURDAY, FEB. 5

**Family Fun Day.** 11 a.m. At Big Blue Swim School, 9650 Main Street, Fairfax. Get a first look at the new state-of-the-art swim school while enjoying live entertainment, kids' crafts, giveaways, a hot cocoa bar, and a bbq food truck. Visit the website:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/big-blue-family-fun-day-tickets-250574654537>

## SATURDAY/FEB. 5

**A Reading of American Moor.** 8 p.m. At Reston Community Theater's CenterStage. Keith Hamilton Cobb embarks on a poetic exploration that examines the experience and perspective of Black men in America through the metaphor of Shakespeare's character Othello, offering up a host of insights that are by turns introspective and indicting, difficult and deeply moving. Cost is \$15 Reston/\$20 Non-Reston. Visit [www.restoncommunitycenter.com](http://www.restoncommunitycenter.com).

## SUNDAY/FEB. 6

**Traditional Celtic Music.** 4:30 and 6:30 p.m. At the Old Brogue Irish Pub, 760-C Walker Road, Great Falls. Beth Patterson and champion Scottish fiddler and singer Seán Heely; an unexpected pairing of two major talents. Expect amazing instrumentals on fiddle, Celtic bouzouki, harp, electric bass, with stunning vocals. Visit [www.old-brogue.com](http://www.old-brogue.com) or call the Old Brogue at 703-759-3309.

## SUNDAYS, FEB. 6, 20

**Maple Syrup Boil Down.** Noon, 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. At Colvin Run Mill, 10017 Colvin Run Road, Great Falls. Bundle up, watch, and learn as sap is boiled down into sweet syrup over an outdoor, open fire. Sample the delicious combination of maple syrup served over cornbread made from Colvin Run Mill cornmeal. Cost is \$10 per person. Call 703-759-2771.

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 11

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## ENTERTAINMENT



PHOTO IS BY CLARE A'HEARN

From left to right: Arielle Else, Jackie Stoll, Charlotte Carson in "Airness" at McLean High School on Saturday, Jan. 29.

### Ode to Air Guitar

FROM PAGE 8

a detailed bar, designed and decorated by McLean's crews (lead by Vivian Kreeb, Haidyn Brockelman, and Chris Tillotson), where the characters interacted and played air guitar on the raised stage in the corner of the room. The lighting, executed by a crew lead by Scott Fulkerson, was beautiful. With bold, flashy colors spotlighting the characters, it felt as though they were each truly immersed in the world of rock and roll with each performance. Lights were used to emphasize different characters and their importance in the story.

The cast and crew at McLean High School created

a heartwarming ode to air guitar, while maintaining ties to rock and roll. Watching Nina find out more about the people she slowly started to consider her friends is a lovely thing. She learned to take air guitar more seriously and came to embrace it the way her companions showed her, able to play without worrying about looking foolish. As a play, Airness wasn't only about air guitar. It's about connection, to one's friends, to one's art, and to one's self.

Airness was a callback to days long past, to being a child who felt music deep in their bones, who could jump and dance without a care in the world. It's what draws people to air guitar, that ability to let go and feel music deep in their soul, and it's what Nina learned through the play. It's something we'd all benefit from every once in a while.

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# ENTERTAINMENT

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After a long absence, the Silver-Garburg Piano Duo makes a triumphant return with four rarely-heard works. Bach's concertos for two keyboards BWV 1061 and 1062—accompanied by a quartet of Amadeus musicians—are some of the earliest-known piano concertos written. Also on the program: Schubert's groundbreaking Divertissement on French themes and a bouquet of Brahms's multicolored Waltzes, Op. 39.

Tickets \$40; Active Military and 17 & under free  
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## Silver-Garburg Piano Duo with Amadeus Orchestra soloists

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## CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 9

### FEB. 7-MARCH 13

"The Phlebotomist." Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays at 8 p.m., Saturdays at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m., and Sundays at 2 p.m. At 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill Road in Tysons. Tickets can be purchased online at www.1ststage.org or by calling the 1st Stage box office at 703-854-1856.

### WEDNESDAY/FEB. 9

Ibram X. Kendi: Author of *How to Be an Antiracist*. 8 p.m. At Reston Community Theater's CenterStage. Ibram X. Kendi is one of America's foremost historians and leading antiracist voices. Cost is \$15 Reston/\$20 Non-Reston. Visit www.restoncommunitycenter.com.

### SUNDAY/FEB. 13

Traditional Celtic Music. 4:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. At The Old Brogue Irish Pub, 760-C Walker Road, Great Falls. Two consecutive concerts with Moch Pryderi in a pub atmosphere by the fireside. A full menu and drinks list are available. All patrons must present a vaccination certificate that includes boosters for a minimum of 2 weeks, or a negative covid test within

48 hours. Tickets must be purchased in advance at www.oldbrogue.com - \$21 general admission. A season ticket for all 6 concerts is available for \$110.

### SUNDAY/FEB. 13

Silver-Garburg Piano Duo. 4 p.m. At Saint Luke Catholic Church, 7001 Georgetown Pike, McLean. After a long absence, the Silver-Garburg Piano Duo makes a triumphant return with four rarely-heard works. Bach's concertos for two keyboards BWV 1061 and 1062—accompanied by a quartet of Amadeus musicians—are some of the earliest-known piano concertos written. Also on the program: Schubert's groundbreaking Divertissement on French themes and a bouquet of Brahms's multicolored Waltzes, Op. 39. Tickets \$40; Active Military and 17 & under free. Buy tickets online or at the door. Visit www.amadeusconcerts.com.

### THURSDAY/FEB. 17

Mardi Gras Celebration. 12-2 p.m. At the Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry Street SE, Vienna. Cajun cuisine lunch, Mardi Gras mask making, trivia and entertainment. Dressing up is part of the celebration so be sure to wear purple, green and gold. To register, call 703-281-0538.

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## The Time is Now



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

For the first time in nearly 13 years, I forgot I had cancer. More specifically, I nearly forgot I had quarterly scans next week. In fact, I only remembered them the Friday before the Wednesday, five days ahead. And I only remembered them because of a bone-strengthening injection I get every four weeks which requires lab work. Lab work which must be completed one to two days prior to the injection. Lab work which determines whether I receive treatment or not. If levels of any number of measures are too high (creatinine, magnesium, calcium, as but a few examples) or too low (potassium, white blood cells), I'm not treated and sent back home with a re-scheduled injection date weeks or even a month later. The logic for the delay, as best I understand it, is to allow one's body to rest and recuperate, sort of, from previous treatments and overall cumulative cancer wear and tear. Nevertheless, the protocol for these injections is every four weeks so it's recurring enough that the thought of it, the preparation for it, never leaves my mind. But the scans however, are something else entirely and easier to misplace, if you know what I mean? Three months doesn't come around nearly as regularly as monthly.

Over the course of months, one can get caught up in life and the miscellaneous responsibilities involved. And before you realize it - or before I realized it, my quarterly scans were a mere five days away, Wednesday, Feb. 2, the day this column publishes. Never in my cancer-patient history had I ever been this late to the party. Fortunately, these appointments are always made by my oncologist immediately after we discuss the results of the previous scans. It's never left to this patient's chance which I imagine is a good thing considering the likelihood of finding available appointments this close to my oncologist's timeline. (And it's been my experience that adhering to the doctor's timeline might be important for my diagnostic health.) And though typically I receive electronic and text reminders from my provider, it just so happened that I remembered I had forgot before I received any reminders. Fortunately, all is not lost and there's no actual harm done. However, for a cancer patient who takes great pride in navigating the entire cancer treatment/appointment process, this temporary oversight has been quite surprising.

As a cancer patient, I've kept the pedal to the metal thinking that letting off the gas might be harmful to my health. I've never stopped treatment or took a break - as my oncologist occasionally suggested, always worried that a delay might be bad for my health. I've always been aware of my appointments and responsibilities and have been "compliant," as my provider says, meaning I've done what they've told me to do and never missed an appointment (apparently some do). When I woke up this past Friday and it hit me that my lab work and scans were next week, I couldn't believe I had totally forgot about it.

The experience of nearly forgetting my cancer care has shaken my confidence a bit. I thought I was "Charles in charge" and on top of my cancer business. I knew who, what, where when and why. I didn't exactly take it all for granted but I had assimilated it all into my routine and thought I had a handle on it. Perhaps my subconscious was taking a much-needed break. I will readily admit that being a cancer patient is all it's cracked up to be. Sometimes, a brake in the action is exactly what the patient needs.

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



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