

CONNECTION

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BIG MOMENTS JOURNEY

Olympic swimmer and gold medalist Tom Dolan in front of a mural showing how far children can swim as they progress through the various levels at the opening of Big Blue in Fairfax.



Olympic Swimmer Opens Big Blue

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180'

120'

Black Parents Teach Black History at Home

PAGE 11

A Plan for Climate Change

PAGE 4

Dave Grohl, Author

PAGE 9

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OPINION, PAGE 6. ♦ A+ BLACK HISTORY, PAGE 11 ♦ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGES 13

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NEWS

Police Shoot Armed Man in Lorton

Suspect was out on a warrant and in a van parked on a Newington area street; police say he pointed a gun at them.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

In the early morning hours of Tuesday, Feb. 15, Fairfax County Police officers from the Mount Vernon District shot a man with a gun on a sleepy street in Lorton, just off Telegraph Road near Fort Belvoir. The victim, who was a fugitive in Fairfax County, was taken to a local hospital with a gunshot wound.

According to the police, the residents on Fitt Court reported seeing a van parked on their street with the windows blocked and out of state license plates so they called 911. Officers say they arrived at Fitt Court and visually investigated the van when the door on the side opened and the suspect pointed a gun at the officers; that's when they shot him.

"He raised the carbine in the direction of the officers," said Chief Kevin Davis, who arrived on the scene in the mobile police laboratory shortly after the shooting. "I don't believe the two officers knew there was someone in the van," Davis said.



PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION

Fitt Court is in the Newington part of Lorton, where an officer from the Mount Vernon district shot a man who pointed a gun at officers on Tuesday while they were investigating an illegally parked van.

The shooting victim was a 34-year male who was out on a warrant for firearm and drug charges, Davis said. The day of the shooting, the police were not releasing his name or the body camera footage, but Davis said these would be released within a few days. "He certainly has ties to Fairfax County," Davis said.

After further investigation, police report that the North Carolina license plates on the van were stolen. "A thorough investigation will follow," Davis said. He praised the presence of police body cameras.



SCREENSHOT

Fairfax County Police Chief Kevin Davis on the scene in Lorton after the shooting.

'It's an Honor and a Privilege to Be Able to Open Here'

Big Blue Swim School is now in Fair City Mall.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Offering weekly swim lessons, all year 'round, for children three months to 12 years old, Big Blue Swim School is now open in Fairfax. It's at 9658 Main St., between the Burlington and T-Mobile stores in Fair City Mall, marking the company's fourth location in Northern Virginia.

"This is an exciting day – it launches the opening of our swim school here," said Tom Dolan, gold-medal Olympic swimmer and president of East Coast Operations for Big Blue Swim School. He was addressing local dignitaries attending the facility's Feb. 5 ribbon cutting.

The site is across the street from Woodson High, which is meaningful to him. "My daughters did dance recitals at Woodson," said the Arlington native. "So to be able to open in the City of Fairfax is near and dear to my heart."

Dolan took home back-to-back, Olympic gold medals in the 400-meter individual medley (IM). He won gold medals in that event in 1996 in Atlanta and in 2000 in Sydney. "I also got a silver medal in Sydney in



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Cutting the ribbon for Big Blue Swim School are (from left) Jennifer Rose; Tom Ross; Joe Harmon; Tom Dolan and daughters Nora, 6, and Hannah, 8; David Meyer and Sang Yi.

the 200 IM," he said. "I held the world record in the 400 IM for nine years, until Michael Phelps came along."

Following his Olympic career, he opened the Tom Dolan Swim School in 2012. It merged with Big Blue last September, and now Dolan plays an integral role in the brand's expansion and management in

Northern Virginia. The Fairfax location is Big Blue's 11th school overall, and he helped bring it here.

From the pool layout to the scheduling technology, Big Blue's goal is to provide a stress-free experience for children learning to swim and their families. For example, parents may schedule multiple children of vari-

ous skill levels and ages to swim during the same, 30-45-minute timeframe.

According to Chris DeJong, Big Blue's founder and president, "This is just one of the ways Big Blue sets itself apart from other swim schools. With 90-degree, ultra-clean water, a comfortable viewing area, free Wi-Fi and plenty of private changing areas, we make it easy to enjoy a weekly swimming-lesson routine."

Big Blue hires and trains only professional swim instructors and is open seven days a week. Classes in the Fairfax school are offered Monday-Friday, 3:30-8 p.m., plus Tuesday, 9 a.m.-noon; and Saturday-Sunday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. The pool is 3-1/2-feet deep at the edges and 4 feet deep in the middle, and children can get a free trial lesson. For more information, call (703) 552-5074 or visit www.bigblueswimschool.com.

There are four curriculums of instruction for different age groups, spanning 11 levels. And since lessons are offered all year, parents have the flexibility to start and stop their children's lessons at any time. Each child progresses to his or her next swim level as soon as they achieve the skills required, not when they complete a set number of classes.

"It's not every day a business opens that serves the community like ours does," said Dolan during the ribbon-cutting ceremony. "Our intent is to work with the communi-

SEE BIG BLUE, PAGE 8

Climate Change Study Warns of Coastal Flooding in 2050

County program called “Resilient Fairfax,” would provide prevention steps.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

The Climate Projections Report was recently released by Fairfax County, and the look ahead to the extreme heat, heavy precipitation and inland flooding was part of a potentially bleak future. Rising sea levels would impact the parts of the county right along the Potomac River, and the Mount Vernon District might be the first to experience this.

According to the report, there could be a water level rise by 2050, and by 2085, the higher scenario suggests that most days of the summer will reach temperatures of or above 90 degrees.

On Page 30 of the report, there is a map with colors representing surface temperatures from 2013-2021.

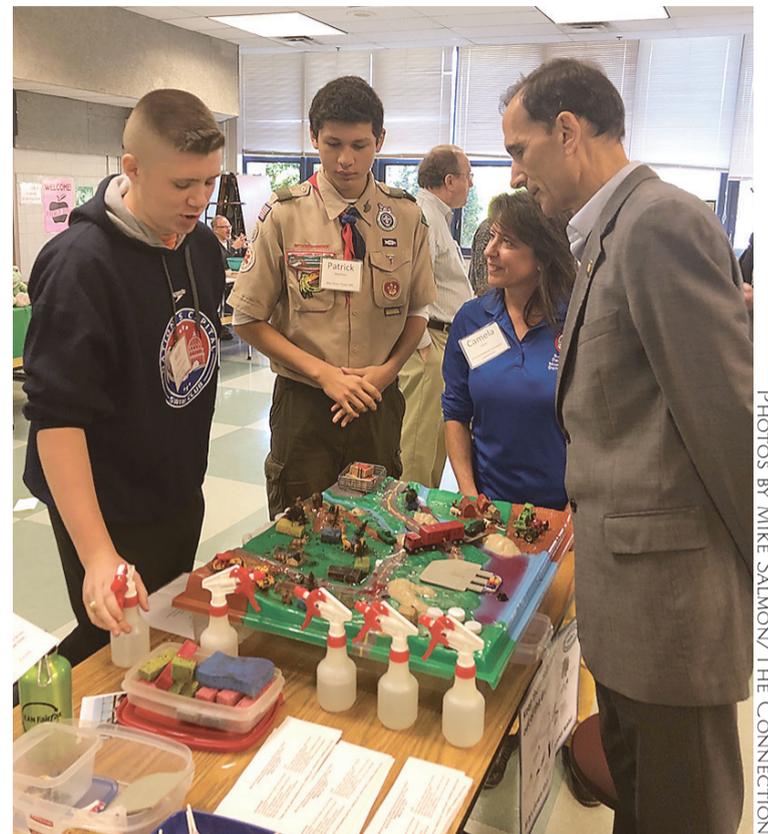
In the Mount Vernon area, for example, the path of Richmond Highway is dark orange where the daytime summer average surface temperature is 126.95 degrees. They call that an urban heat island. “This suggests those areas currently experiencing hotter temperatures are at particular risk over the coming century,” the report says. On the other end of the spectrum, the lower surface temperatures are in blue. On the map, the areas in Mount Vernon that are blue are the Huntley Meadows Park and Fort Belvoir area that are somewhat forested.

A county program called “Resilient Fairfax,” is geared toward climate change, and bouncing back. That effort is spearheaded by Supervisor Dan Storck (D-Mount Vernon) who is embracing Fairfax Green Initiatives. “I directed the county to create a resiliency plan to address all resiliency issues in the county, to include water levels rising on the Potomac River and the many streams and creeks in our area. This Climate Projections report is part of that process,” he said.

Residents near the water and throughout the district have already taken steps to safeguard their properties. “Some residents have begun installing natural shorelines and bulkheads to preserve their properties, but more will need to be done and the Resilient Fairfax plan is anticipated to make specific recommendations for future actions. In addition, the county is now requiring any new construction in New Alexandria to



At a past environmental expo in Mount Vernon, there are alternatives to the plastic bag.



Supervisor Storck discusses an exhibit with local scouts at a past environmental expo in Mount Vernon.

PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/THE CONNECTION



Figure 3. (Left) Tropical Storm Lee flooded Reston Park and Ride facility in Fairfax County (Source: weather.gov, courtesy of NBC Washington); (Right) Tropical Storm Lee damaged Lorton Road in Fairfax County (Source: Virginia Department of Transportation).

Recent rains have caused flooding problems.

be elevated,” Storck said.

Study Cites Particulars

One section of the county study called “Coastal Flooding,” and on their map, it is projected by 2050 some parts of Mount Vernon could be impacted, such as the Little Hunting Creek area and Dogue Creek. Communities in that area that are part of the maps highlighted areas include River Village and the Mount Vernon Yacht Club near Dogue Creek, and the communities along Stockton Parkway, Stratford Lane and Wagon Wheel Road. Further north, the Dyke Marsh and Belle Haven Marina could be in trouble.

It’s a concern in other jurisdictions in Fairfax County as well. The Fairfax County Office of Environmental & Energy Coordination, is working to address both the cause and the effects of climate change

by reducing contributions to global greenhouse gas emissions that collectively feed into climate change. Emissions reductions are a global group project, but the county is working to do its part, OEEC said. These efforts are detailed in the Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP) which includes recommendations such as transitioning to renewable energy and cleaner transportation.

In the report, they looked at four extreme events between 2010 to 2019 that were destructive and had big county-wide financial impacts:

- ❖ The North American Blizzard (2010) resulted in a \$2 million loss
- ❖ Tropical Storm Lee (2011) cost the county \$10 million in repairs to bridges and roads
- ❖ Hurricane Sandy (2012) cost the county more than \$1.5 million

❖ The July 2019 rainfall/flooding event led to costs of \$14.8 million, of which \$2 million were damages to Fairfax County Government property

Developing and implementing a plan allows the county to avoid economic, social, and environmental risks associated with climate change, the county said.

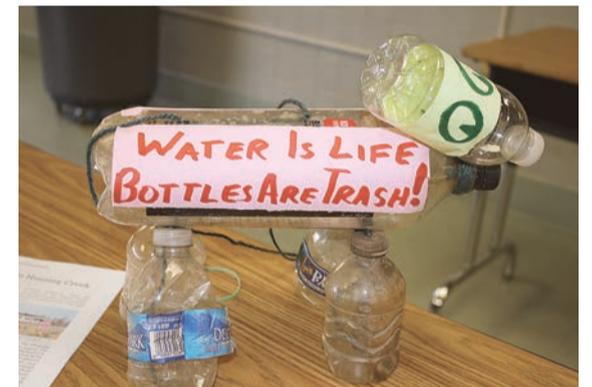
Fighting Climate Change at Home

According to the EPA, there are steps that residents can take to fight climate change, but some seem to have a dollar figure attached which are additional expenses to the daily budget. The EPA’s recommendations include Energy Star appliances, sealing windows, upgrading heating and cooling systems, including simple measures like smart thermostats,

the EPA said. For low-cost solutions, the EPA recommends adjusting thermostats and turning off lights when space is unoccupied, unplugging electronics when not in use, using Energy Star LED light bulbs, adjusting window shades to reduce heating and cooling requirements, and installing programmable thermostats.

Waste disposal is another area the EPA says will contribute to reducing global warming. Reducing food waste by shopping smart, plus reusing or repurposing items may reduce an individual’s impact, the EPA said.

In the transportation field, the EPA says to use greener transportation such as biking, walking, carpooling, and public transportation. “Cutting your shower time by even a minute can help save gallons of water,” the EPA said.



Environmentalists target plastic water bottles.

NEWS

Leesburg Man Fatally Shot, Woman Charged

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

A 39-year-old man died last Thursday, Feb. 10, after being shot in a parking lot of a Fairfax apartment complex. He was identified as Johnny Lee Robinson III of Leesburg. The next day, police arrested and charged a Harrisonburg woman with his murder.

Fairfax County police say officers responded at 8:12 p.m. to the 3300 block of Willow Crescent Drive in Fairfax for a report of man who'd been shot in the upper body. Community members heard a man and a woman arguing outside, followed by a single gunshot. They then reportedly saw a woman running from the scene.

Responding officers found Robinson suffering from a gunshot wound. He was taken to a nearby hospital where he was pronounced dead. The officers, along with K9 officers, the Fairfax City Police Department and the county police helicopter immediately began canvassing the area for the shooter and any possible evidence related to the crime.

"During the search, officers found a suitcase, as well as a firearm believed to be related to the

shooting," say police. "Surveillance footage was obtained from the apartment complex; and based on the video, detectives believed the man and woman appeared to be known to each other and the shooting was not a random act."

Detectives determined the pair left an apartment prior to the shooting. Neither lived in that apartment complex; however, witnesses were able to provide information about the identity of both the victim and the suspect, Kaitlynn Nicole Nicholas, 23. Later that evening, detectives obtained a warrant charging her with second-degree murder and use of a firearm in the commission of a felony.

Then on Friday afternoon, Feb. 11, detectives with Fairfax County's Fugitive Track and Apprehension Unit and officers from the Harrisonburg Police Department took Nicholas into custody. She was then held without bond in the Rockingham County Regional Jail.

Meanwhile, detectives are asking anyone with additional information about this crime to contact them at 703-246-7800, option 2. Tips may also be submitted anonymously via Crime Solvers by phoning 1-866-411-TIPS (866-411-8477),

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

NOW THRU 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.

TUESDAY/FEB. 22

Springfield Blood Drive. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Springfield Masonic Lodge, 7001 Backlick Road, Springfield. The Springfield Masonic Lodge and Springfield Volunteer Fire Department will host a blood drive. Drop-ins are welcome. Visit the website: <https://www.inovablood.org/contact-us/>

SEEKING SOFTBALL PLAYERS

The Golden Girls of Northern Virginia, a senior women's softball league, is looking for players. Any woman over the age of 40 is encouraged to join. All skill levels are welcome. They play on Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings in Vienna.

For more information, visit the website www.goldengirls.org or call Marilyn at 571-261-9163.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Parent Support Partners, a service of the Healthy Minds Fairfax initiative, are all parents who have received training and are qualified to offer education, support and assistance at no cost to families or caregivers. They provide reliable information that families can use in decision-making and are familiar with services and resources that can help families in distress. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/healthymindsfairfax or www.nami-northernvirginia.org/parent-peer-support.html. Shepherd's Center of Fairfax-Burke sponsors a monthly meeting on the 2nd Tuesday of each month, noon-1:30 p.m., for caregivers to learn and to share with others experiencing similar challenges. Before attending, contact the facilitator, Eileen Thompson at 703-451-8626 or eileen.thompson1@gmail.com.

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 13

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OPINION

Fixing the Virginia Employment Commission

BY SEN. ADAM P. EBBIN

An important role of any legislative office is that of constituent service. Before COVID19, we received a variety of requests regarding various state agencies or affiliates, including some regarding unemployment. The pandemic highlighted a dysfunctional system under immense stress at the Virginia Employment Commission like never before. The VEC has been underfunded for years because their main source of funding is based on a federal formula that provides funds based on our state's unemployment rate, which has been historically low. This impacted their ability to do long planned, much-needed system upgrades. During some months my office received nearly 100 requests for assistance with claims. As the pandemic continued, the situations of constituents grew more dire as the delay of their benefits created broad repercussions.

It quickly became clear that there were several recurring issues at the VEC. First was inconsistent communication. Constituents received emails from the VEC constituent service team stating that benefits may be denied if they did not call back within a specific time frame, however, the number provided by the VEC rarely connected to anyone. Some constituents received conflicting information from different VEC employees depending on who they spoke to. Constituents received emails from constituent service team members stating that benefits may be denied if they did not call back within a specific time frame, however, the number provided rarely connected to anyone. Some constituents received conflicting information from different constituent service members, resulting in confusion and time lost for constituents. Additionally, many constituents who come to us have been told that all their claim issues had



been resolved, only to wait weeks for benefits to arrive, and meanwhile are not able to contact anyone at the VEC through phone or email to determine why they are not receiving their benefits. We even heard from some constituents with concerns regarding fraud that occurred on their claims or that misused their identity. Some of these issues were prevalent enough that the VEC was sued in Federal Court April 2021 for delayed payments.

My staff and I have met with some of the hardworking team members at the VEC to get answers on specific cases and learn how their systems operate. There is much work to be done to get the VEC running smoothly and efficiently for Virginians.

I am the Vice-Chair of the Commission for Unemployment Compensation. Our official mandate is to monitor and evaluate Virginia's unemployment compensation system relative to the economic health of the Commonwealth. This past summer, I insisted on a meeting of the commission to probe on issues outside that regulatory purview, during which we heard from the then-VEC Commissioner and I asked pointed questions about the transparency of communications and payments to claimants. I was far from satisfied with the pace of response from the VEC to the clear need and obvious calls for changes. I've written to Commissioners of the VEC, Secretaries of Labor, and other officials on the issue over the past year requesting prompt changes and solutions. Most recently, newly-appointed Commissioner Carrie Roth provided in-depth answers to specific questions that will allow my office to better assist constituents coming to us with concerns regarding fraud. I'm glad to see that in this area, Governor Youngkin is on the right track. This is a bipartisan issue that requires pragmatic solutions.

To that end, there are several bills this session

based on recommendations made in a thorough study by the well respected Joint Audit and Legislative Review Commission (JLARC) on the VEC process. The final report offered comprehensive legislative and executive recommendations. I introduced legislation to expedite the process to bring employers filing forms with the VEC online and require the VEC to plan for a pilot program that aims to reduce the confusion and complexity of the separation reporting process. My office worked with JLARC and the VEC on this legislation, which aims to accomplish two specific recommendations from their report. I am co-sponsoring an even more comprehensive bill with Sen. Jeremy McPike (D-Woodbridge) that implements further JLARC recommendations regarding administrative reforms and reporting methods. The bill requires the VEC to calculate and report important metrics and maintain an unemployment insurance Resiliency Plan for future spikes in unemployment. The legislation also creates within the Commission on Unemployment Compensation, a subcommittee that will be responsible for monitoring the VEC's management of the unemployment insurance program. The bill would also clarify the appeals process and establish a workgroup on staffing. I am also co-sponsoring legislation with Senator Bryce Reeves (R-Spotsylvania) aiming to fight fraud. That bill would require certain verifications of identity for claimants, as well as an annual report from the VEC on fraudulent payments.

I take VEC complaints very seriously — there are constituents whose livelihoods depend on the status of their claims. Some constituents are at risk of losing their homes or are facing hunger. My Legislative Aide, Mollie Montague, has assisted hundreds of constituents with VEC cases. If you are struggling with an issue at the VEC, contact our office at district30@senate.virginia.gov and we will do our best to assist you.

It is my continued honor to serve the 30th District.

Last Week in Richmond: 25 Bills Moving

BY SEN. SCOTT SUROVELL

In the General Assembly, the first week of February is always the week we deal with difficult and controversial legislation and this year was no different.

I have introduced 27 bills and 25 appear headed for passage to the House of Delegates, one was tabled and referred for study at my request and one was killed. That bill was intended to make serving in the General Assembly more realistic for people whose employers



would not be supportive of service in a part-time legislature like ours.

On a 35 to five vote, the Senate approved a bill I am carrying with Del. Israel O'Quinn to reduce Virginia's methane emissions. Methane is a plan-

et-warming greenhouse gas that is 85 times more potent than another greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide. I am hopeful that the bill will incentivize utilities like Washington Gas to work with local sewage au-

SEE SUROVELL, PAGE 15

CONNECTION

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NEWS DEPARTMENT:
south@connectionnewspapers.com

Mary Kimm

Editor and Publisher

mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com

Bonnie Hobbs

Community Reporter, 703-778-9415
bhobbs@connectionnewspapers.com

Mercia Hobson

Community Reporter

mhobson@connectionnewspapers.com

Mike Salmon

Contributing Writer

msalmon@connectionnewspapers.com

Ken Moore

Contributing Writer

kmoore@connectionnewspapers.com

Susan Laume

Contributing Writer

ADVERTISING:

For advertising information

sales@connectionnewspapers.com
703-778-9431

Debbie Funk

Display Advertising/National Sales
703-778-9444

debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com

David Griffin

Marketing Assistant

703-778-9431

dgriffin@connectionnewspapers.com

Classified & Employment Advertising
703-778-9431

Editor & Publisher

Mary Kimm

mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com

@MaryKimm

Publisher

Jerry Vernon

703-549-0004

jvernon@connectionnewspapers.com

In Memoriam

Managing Editor

Kemal Kurspahic

Art/Design:

Laurence Foong

Production Manager:

Geovani Flores

CIRCULATION

Circulation Manager:

Ann Oliver

circulation@connectionnewspapers.com



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OPINION

Half time in the House of Delegates

BY DEL. PAUL KRIZEK



This week marks the halfway point of our 60-day legislative session in Richmond, or “crossover.” By Wednesday, the bills that originated in the House or the Senate must “cross over” to the other chamber for consideration. Monday and Tuesday of this week included long hours, tough votes, and impassioned debates on the House floor with my colleagues as we finished our chamber’s business. On Monday night, the House remained in session until after 10pm, and I was proud to vote to prevent rollbacks of many progressive laws passed by our Democratic majority during the last two years.

I am pleased to announce that as of this writing, twelve of my bills are now headed to the Senate to be heard, and six of these pieces of legislation passed the House unanimously.

After working hard all last Summer and Fall on a bipartisan and bicameral basis as the Chair of the Subcommittee on Charitable Gaming, I introduced eight bills regulating gambling in Virginia, to combat corruption and protect the many legitimate charities in this space. I am pleased that seven bills from my gaming reform package have passed over to the Senate and should have a good chance of final passage. The first one to pass over to the Senate was HB 571 which raises the minimum age to participate in historic horse racing from 18 to 21 to match Virginia age requirements for casinos, as well as every other state around the nation that has both casinos and historic horse racing. Electronic historic horse racing is a relatively new type of game, similar to slot machines, where players can bet on actual horse races from history. Some machines use real results to calibrate a player’s chances, while others are essentially random chance.

Another, HB 574, directs some of the tax money from these historic horse racing terminals to the Problem Gambling Treatment and Support Fund, as these games can be addictive and every form of gaming in Virginia should pay into this important fund.

HB 763 restricts charitable gaming on electronic devices to social organizations. There have been electronic gaming devices that were supposed to be used for an organization’s charitable gaming found in restaurants and bars. I am sure that you have seen them. The intent of allowing charitable gaming was not to let gaming proliferate in bar areas of restaurants, especially when children may be there. Charitable gaming traditionally was relegated to the so-

cial quarters where the members, all volunteers, of the organizations run their operations, like a Moose Lodge or VFW. The aim of this legislation is to protect the good that these charities are doing and to weed out the bad actors that have been taking advantage of a code section riddled with loopholes and weak enforcement.

HB 764, which has now passed the House, clarifies the intent of the laws written in 2020 about charitable gaming, particularly Texas Hold ‘Em tournaments. When SB 936 passed in 2020, allowing Texas Hold ‘Em tournaments to be held in the Commonwealth, certain individuals reinterpreted the law to include cash games. HB 764 clarifies that tournaments are the only type of Texas Hold ‘Em permitted under SB 936. Also, charities without venues have been allowed to rent space from landlords to host their events. The problem that has arisen is that these landlords are not required to be permitted and can’t be audited making it easy for them to charge exorbitant rents taking advantage of the charities. HB 764 will require landlords to obtain a permit, allowing the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) to monitor and audit them.

HB 765 changes the role of the Board from a policy board to an advisory board, and shifts regulatory power to the VDACS. This way the charitable gaming industry can be run without conflict of interest, while the industry experts on the board will still be able to give their input.

Our final charitable gaming bills, HB 766, will have the Superintendent of the State Police designate an Illegal Gaming Enforcement Coordinator, and establish a tip line to report instances of illegal gaming across the Commonwealth. The coordinator would organize the enforcement of illegal gaming laws by the state and local law enforcement agencies. To round it out, HB 767, provides penalties for organizations that hold charitable gaming activities without a permit.

Legal charitable gaming does much good across the state but we need proper regulation to ensure that everyone who wants to play can play fairly and legally. The Charitable Gaming Board currently has the power to set those regulations and holds regulatory power over the charitable gaming industry, while they have personal interests in charitable gaming themselves. The current Chairman and Vice-Chairman are both landlords. Landlords and operators are allowed to run games without a charity member being present. They handle the money and decide how much money from

SEE KRIZEK, PAGE 14

DR. GENE SWEETNAM DR. GRACE CHANG DR. KAREN JINYOUNG KIM OPTOMETRISTS



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David Bulova Named Legislator of the Year

He's honored by the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Del. David Bulova (D-37th) has just received the Legislator of the Year award from the Virginia Association of Planning District Commissions (VAPDC). This honor recognizes legislators who serve as ambassadors for the advancement of regional planning and cooperation.

Bulova's district includes the City of Fairfax and part of Fairfax County, and he's the ninth legislator to earn this award. Representatives from the VAPDC visited Bulova's legislative office in Richmond, on Feb. 3, to present the award to him.

VAPDC's leadership created it to acknowledge public officials who support regional teamwork and actively engage in public-policy efforts that advance economic prosperity in the Commonwealth. And Bulova was de-



PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID BULOVA

From left are VAPDC Secretary/Treasurer Kevin Byrd, VAPDC President Kim Callis, Del. David Bulova, NVRC Executive Director Bob Lazaro, and VAPDC Executive Director David Blount.

lighted to receive it.

"I appreciate being honored with the 2022 Legislator of the Year award from the Virgin-

ia Assn. of Planning District Commissions," said Delegate Bulova. "You are really unsung heroes in terms of helping foster that collab-

oration among localities. It makes for better policy and better decision-making."

The VAPDC initiated a funding request in the 2021 General Assembly to increase the state contribution to all planning district commissions (PDC)/regional councils by \$14,000 per year. Bulova heeded the call, and his efforts did not go unnoticed.

"Del. Bulova worked diligently on the VAPDC request," said Robert Lazaro, Executive Director of the Northern Virginia Regional Commission. "The funds help us to match against grants and other things that we otherwise may not be able to do."

VAPDC President Kim Callis agreed. "PDCs and local governments across the Commonwealth benefited from Del. Bulova's leadership in helping secure additional, state funding for PDCs," he said. "The \$14,000 especially goes a long way toward helping small PDCs. As the chairman of the Agriculture, Commerce and Natural Resources subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee last year, Del. Bulova worked to successfully steer the VAPDC request through the legislative process."

Besides serving on these committees and the General Laws Committee, Bulova is also an environmental planner who previously worked on the staff of the Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC).

Big Blue Swim School is now in Fair City Mall

FROM PAGE 3

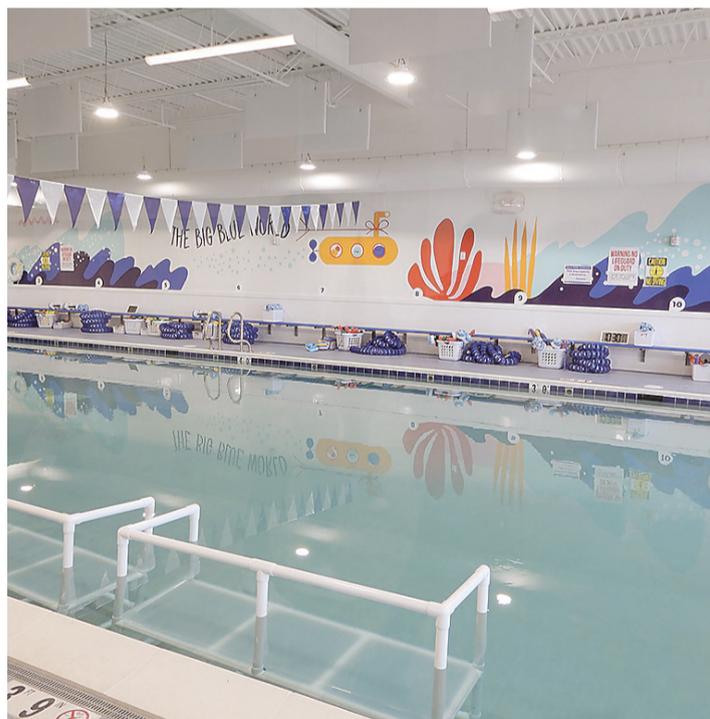
ty; and while we're teaching life skills, we're also teaching children great values, such as how to set goals and overcome adversity. It's an honor and a privilege to be able to open here."

Attendees included Fairfax City Mayor David Meyer, City Council members Tom Ross, Joe Harmon and Sang Yi, plus Fairfax Assistant Economic Development Director Danette Nguyen, and Central Fairfax Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Jennifer Rose. And they and Meyer all gave Dolan and Big Blue a warm welcome.

"Swimming is a critical life skill," said Meyer. "It could save a person's life or the lives of others. It's also the best exercise for the human body; and getting young children to swim has profound impacts."

Noting the value of the swimming culture and swimming on teams, he added, "You're swimming to do your very best, and the culture is mutually supportive and affirming. You congratulate each other when you achieve a milestone, and these skills can help you become the best person, professional and parent." Then, speaking directly to Dolan, Meyer said, "We're glad to have you here in our community, and thank you for representing our country so well."

Dolan then gave tours of the facility, while local residents brought their children inside to see it and signed them up for classes. The interior is spacious, bright, cheerful and full of light, and photos of Dolan's four children in the water adorn the walls. Explaining



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

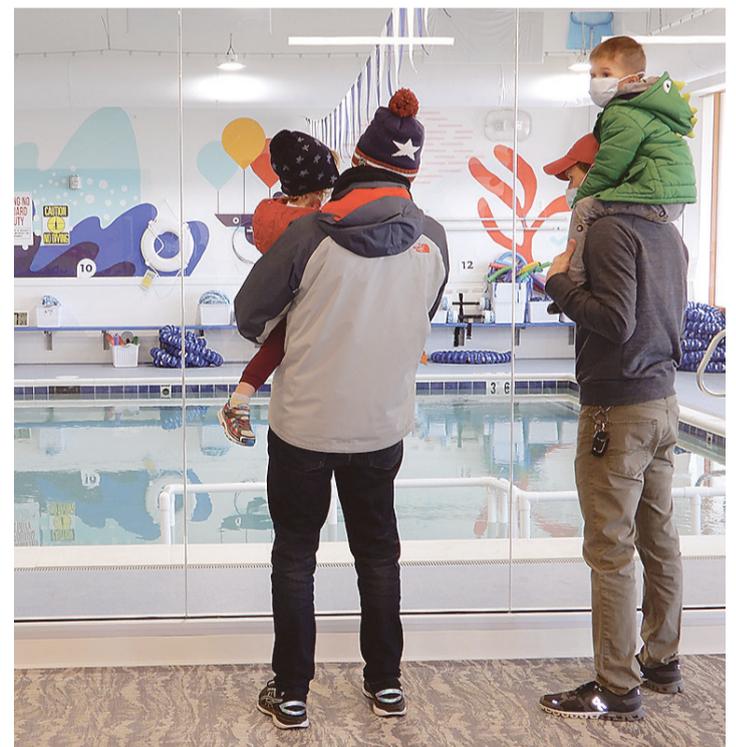
A view of the colorful, cheerfully painted pool behind a glass partition.

what the Big Blue name means, he said, "The world is a big place, and swimming gives you the skills to explore it."

Pleased with what she saw, Fairfax resident Monica Grover said, "It's nice to have this opportunity in our area. Swimming is also about safety and having this school in Fairfax is perfect for us. We just enrolled our 3-year-old son."

Fairfax's Katie Perrone agreed. "This is clean and bright, friendly and welcoming," she said. "And since I also have a 3-year-old, that's important because swimming can be scary. But this place is warm and cheerful. These will be his first, official, swim lessons, so I'm also glad they have such friendly and knowledgeable instructors."

Big Blue also opened in Chantilly, last



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

These two dads and their children check out the pool.

June, and plans its next school for Springfield. Founded in 2009, it also has schools in Chicago, Atlanta and Denver. And, said Dolan, "It will eventually be nationwide." But he's particularly pleased to have a swim school in Fairfax. "There are so many hometown ties," he said. "To be able to come into such an incredible location like this and be part of the community really means a lot."

Springfield's Past Resident Part of Rock Music History

Legendary Dave Grohl got his start here, and is now author, filmmaker and Foo Fighter.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

Former Springfield resident Dave Grohl stepped into the limelight as a rocker with the Foo Fighters in the 1990's and now, 31 years later, he's still topping lists. Grohl's most recent best seller "The Storyteller: Tales of Life and Music," joins his list of accomplishments alongside grunge rock, and several documentary films.

His book is currently a finalist for Audio-book of the Year.

"I've never really been one to collect stuff, I collect moments," said Grohl, in a video interview that's on his book site. He had plenty of time to think about those moments when the pandemic hit a couple of years ago, so he jotted these down and now has a best seller. "I suddenly had nothing to do," he said, but noted how satisfied he was to pull all those memories together for the book.

The long list of book reviews are positive. "Candid, humble and full of stories about big-time stars," said CNN. "Grohl, of Nirvana and Foo Fighters fame, demonstrates the good-naturedness he's known for in this heartfelt standout that explores everything from the loss of Kurt Cobain to the road to fatherhood," said Audible. "Paired with his sparkling wit, this humility is what makes Grohl's soulful story a cut above typical rock

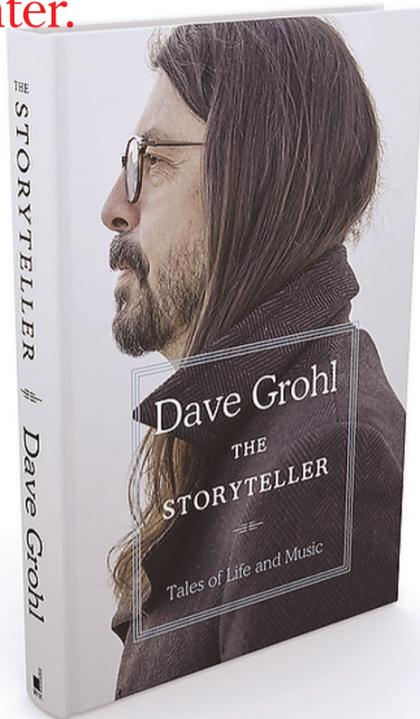


PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Rocker and writer Dave Grohl grew up in Springfield.

memoirs. There isn't a dull moment here," added Publishers Weekly.

The creativity spark may have hit him in Springfield though. As a child, Grohl lived in the part of Springfield inside the beltway near North Springfield Elementary School where he started school. When he got into

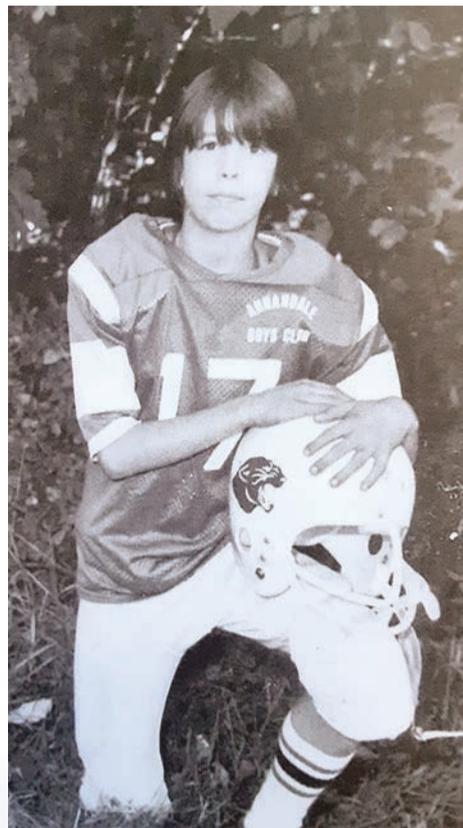


PHOTO FROM "DAVE GROHL THE STORYTELLER"

Here is Dave Grohl in his football uniform when he played for the Annandale Boys Club.

high school, he attended the Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, Annandale High School, and Bishop Ireton. He played in local bands like Freak Baby, Mission Impossible, Dain Bramage and Scream, at the Lake Braddock Community Center where some say he met Kurt Cobain.

Grohl dropped out of high school some time in the mid 1980s and went out to strike it big after that.

In the book, he does talk a lot about experiences while living in North Springfield. In 1982, he was going into eighth grade at Holmes Intermediate School when broke his ankle playing soccer at a field near Lake Accotink. There is also a chapter on a séance he held to bring back the spirit of John Bonham, the original drummer of Led Zeppelin who died in 1980 right before they had a show at the now-defunct Capital Centre in Maryland. They had it all set up with candles and such, in the carport of their house.

At a concert in the Capital One Arena a few years ago, Grohl mentioned playing video games at Timeout 1 and Timeout 2, arcades in Springfield Mall that were hangout spots when he was growing up.

While the 1990s was all about his sounds with Nirvana and Foo Fighters, it evolved into his work with film as well. In 2013, Grohl was the director/producer of the documentary "Sound City." This was about the Van Nuys CA studio where Nirvana recorded Nevermind in 1991, which sold millions "and transformed the modern musical landscape," the critics said.

Grohl also directed an eight-part HBO docuseries called "Foo Fighters: Sonic Highways," which premiered in October 2014 and went on to win two Emmys awards. The eight one-hour episodes were each recorded in a different American musical landmark -- Austin, Chicago, Los Angeles, Nashville, New Orleans, New York, Seattle, and Washington, D.C. One of his songs mentions "Arlandria," which is a real place where Alexandria hits Arlington, just north of Del Ray.

Mask Mandate Poised to Lift March 1

FCPS forges forward with mask requirement offramped tied to infection levels; legal battle could be ahead.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Even as Virginia will lift the mask mandate in schools March 1, Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) is forging a different path, it announced on Feb. 10. The eleventh largest school division in the nation and the largest in Virginia is developing a plan to lift the mask requirements, just not now. FCPS intends to make masks optional down the road and loosen other preventative strategies as COVID-19 cases decline after the Omicron spike.

Sen. Chap Petersen (D-34), who hosted a town hall on Saturday, Feb. 13 with Del. David Bulova (D-37), said, "I've talked with the governor directly. I've talked with his leadership team. The effective date (to lift the mask mandate) will most likely be March 1." Parents, teachers, and

administrators across the Commonwealth and the nation have been fighting over mask policies at town halls and school board public hearings.

A few days earlier, on Wednesday, Feb. 9, in a bipartisan vote, Virginia's Democrat-controlled Senate read for the third time and then approved Senate Bill 739, filed by Sen. Siobhan Dunnivant (R-12) and Petersen by a vote of 21 to 17. According to the language of Senate Bill 739, "The parent of any child enrolled in a public elementary or secondary school, or in any school-based early childhood care and education program, to elect for such child to not wear a mask while on school property."

The bill also states that no parent who chooses to do so "shall be required to provide a reason or any certification of the child's health or educational status." Neither shall the student "suffer any adverse disciplinary or academic consequences as a re-

sult of this parental election," according to the bill.

Nearly a month before, on Jan. 15, in one of his first acts as Virginia governor, Glenn Youngkin (R), signed Executive Order Number Two (2022), "which reaffirmed the right of parents in the upbringing, education, and care of their children." It granted parents the power to opt their children out of mask wearing in schools.

Petersen is among two other Democrats representing Fairfax County and nearby jurisdictions, Richard L. Saslaw (D-35) and Scott A. Surovell (D-36), who joined Republicans and voted yes on Senate Bill 739. Another Democrat senator, Jerry Scott McPike (D-29), did not vote on the bill, nor did Republican Mark Obenshain (R-26). Surovell voted against the final version of the bill.

On Saturday at the Town Hall meeting in Fairfax, Petersen said a couple of details need to be added to Senate Bill 739. He said, "The bill will go to the House floor next week and then go to the governor's office. The governor would most likely put what's

called an emergency clause on it, and then it would have to pass both bodies with the emergency clause."

Meanwhile, Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) has filed a legal challenge to the mask mandate and will continue to enforce it for the time being.

On Feb. 4, an Arlington Circuit Court judge blocked the enforcement of Gov. Youngkin's mask-optional order for schools and granted a temporary restraining order against Executive Order Number Two (2022) to seven school districts, including FCPS (2022).

The school boards contended that the Virginia Constitution gives authority to local school boards to administer their districts and make safety and health choices, including masking for their students. The case was brought by the school boards of Alexandria City, Arlington County, Fairfax County, Falls Church City, Hampton City, Prince William County, and Richmond City.

SEE MASK, PAGE 10



PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

Jai Cole, appointed September 2021, marks halfway point of park visit challenge.



COURTESY FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY

Jai Cole (second from left) digs up invasive plants at Laurel Hill Park with Roberta Longworth, and volunteers Susan Laume (author) and Blake Cambey, on her 10th county work day in September.

Cole Marks Park Milestone

By SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

A self-professed “kid at heart,” Fairfax County Park Authority’s new executive director, Jai Cole, is spending nearly every day with some time in at least one park. She recently marked a milestone toward her goal of visiting every one of the county’s 420 parks within one year of her September 2021 appointment. Her 210th park visit, the halfway point of her park journey, came with participation in the groundbreaking ceremony for the Stewardship Education Center within the Sully Woodlands, in Eleanor C. Lawrence Park, Chantilly.

Cole attributes the opportunity to play at Lake Fairfax Park, in her backyard as a child, and the “wonderful discoveries” she found there, with her later drive to become an ecologist; eventually leading her to head the large park system. Since pledging to visit all the system’s parks, Cole recently blogged, “I have had the opportunity to get a firsthand sense of what assets we have, the changes we should consider and the natural resour-



COURTESY FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY

Concept drawing of Sully Woodlands Stewardship Education Center, planned to open in late 2022, where ground breaking ceremony presented Cole’s milestone 210th park visit.

ces that are thriving and those in need of protection. I have also met many dedicated park employees, as well as residents who love their parks and are eager to see us make

them even better than they are.”

Along the way, she has been behind the lectern making presentations, digging in the dirt to assist in removal of invasive vines,



COURTESY FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY

Holding piglet at Frying Pan Park 60th anniversary in October.

and even holding a piglet at Frying Pan Farm’s 60th year anniversary celebration. With seven more months until the anniversary of her appointment, Cole is well on her way to completing her personal challenge. She plans to end her park trek at Lake Fairfax Park, her childhood park of wonders, as part of ceremonies for National Public Lands Day planned on Sept. 24.

The new Sully Woodlands education center groundbreaking ceremony, where Cole hit her halfway point, “will be a state-of-the-art interpretive center for the community to learn about animals, wildlife and preservation,” according to the Park Authority’s announcement. The education center is slated to open later this year

Mask Mandate Poised to Lift March 1

FROM PAGE 9

On Feb. 7, the Virginia Supreme Court dismissed a lawsuit brought by 13 Chesapeake parents against Executive Order Number Two (2022). According to a press release statement from Senator Dunnavant on the Supreme Court ruling, “No school district should feel obligated or bound by law to have a mask mandate. The CDC guidelines are just that — guidelines. ...The politics over masks in school has to stop,” concluded Dunnavant. “If a student, teacher, or staff member wants to wear a mask to school, they should be allowed to, but they should not be forced to.”

FCPS has joined other state and country school divisions to develop plans to eventually lift the mask requirement, make it optional, and loosen other preventative strategies tied to levels of COVID-19 cases. Unlike the governors of some states, such as Connecticut, Delaware, New Jersey, and Oregon, who were still leaving masking decisions up to local school boards, such was not the case in Virginia.

The FCPS Office of Communication and Community Relations notified families and staff on Feb. 10 that the division would implement a rollback plan to its current multilayer COVID prevention strategies when infection levels drop.

FCPS employees who are not fully vac-

nated or are unvaccinated will still be required to wear a mask indoors, regardless of transmission level. In an outbreak, specific students and staff may be “requested” to wear masks during mask-optional community transmission to protect public health. “We must continue to respect and serve all our students, including our most vulnerable,” stated the message.

The Virginia Department of Health ranks “moderate” as the second-lowest of its four community transmission levels. It defines “moderate” as 10 to 49 COVID-19 cases per 100,000 people in the past seven days, with a 5 to 8 percent positive rate. On Feb. 10, the day of the message, the VDH reported 293 cases per 100,000 people in Virginia

and an 8.5 percent positive rate.

FCPS will provide updates if the guidance changes. If there is a surge or widespread disease in the area, FCPS may need to modify its tiered preventative efforts to deliver in-person instruction to its students safely.

Lucy McBride, M.D., was one of the speakers at the Saturday, Feb. 13, town hall with Bulova and Petersen. She said that we have to push vaccination. “The vaccines work beautifully. They take the claws and the fangs away from the virus,” she said. “Once you’ve been vaccinated, once you’ve been boosted, you have taken the worst parts of it away, and you turn it into a more manageable disease.”

Black History Month: Filling in the Gaps

African American parents are giving their children accurate and comprehensive lessons on Black history.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

When Tracy Grant's fifth-grade son Hunter came home from school one day during Black History Month several years ago, she recalls his recounting of a lesson that he'd just learned. He said that his social studies teacher told the class that most slaves were treated well because their owners saw them as an expensive investment. Grant was speechless.

"I was baffled by that level of ignorance. Did that teacher not know that slaves could have their finger chopped off for knowing how to write or that some small slave children were fed slop in the same trough that were used to feed pigs on the plantation?" asked Grant, a registered nurse and Springfield mother of two. "That was when I decided that if I wanted my children to learn about Black history, I would have to teach them myself."

In the age of racial tension and restrictions around the teaching of African American history, black parents are serving as history tutors to ensure that their children receive a comprehensive and unbridled education on the atrocities, both past and present, faced by members of the African diaspora. A few local parents share their ideas.

"I don't focus on blaming or bad mouthing anyone, but I make sure my children know about the racist things that happened in the past," Anderson said. "They have to know our country's past actions so that they can understand what is going on today and why. Minimizing the realities of slavery does a disservice to not only Black students, but to society as a whole. How can we even begin to deal with racial problems in this country if children grow up with inaccurate views of the tragedies of our past?"

From slavery and lynching to the Jim Crow era and the Civil Rights

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PHOTO COURTESY OF VONETIA HARTLEY

African American parents and grandparents, like Vonetia Hartley, pictured here with three of her grandchildren, are giving their offspring in-depth lessons during Black History Month.

Movement, Grant uses trips to historical sites to give her children a lesson in Black history. "When I take my children and their friends to Mount Vernon, I don't go on the guided tour," she said. "I give them my own tour and explain our history. No matter how the media portrays us today, our children

"Most people think of Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks when they think of Black history, but there are so many more people of color who have made great contributions to this country,

— Tracy Anderson, mother of three

need to understand that we come from hardworking ancestors."

As an African American parent, Gloria Anderson, a Chevy Chase, Maryland mother of three, believes that it is her job to offer her children in-depth lessons rather than broad

overviews. "Most people think of Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks when they think of Black history, but there are so many more people of color who have made great contributions to this country," she said. "Everyone should visit the African American History Museum. Even though we've made strides, stereotypes and feelings of victimization have caused members of our race to have a sense of hopelessness."

"I have to make sure that my children know about Black heroes

like Dr. Charles Drew, continued Anderson, referring to an African American surgeon who was known for his lifesaving blood plasma research.

Many Post-Civil War periods in

SEE BLACK HISTORY, PAGE 13

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Yvette Schuler is a State Farm Insurance agent and owner of her own insurance agency on Telegraph Road.



Roberta Tinch leads the team at Inova Mount Vernon Hospital as the President and CEO with more than ten years of hospital administration experience.



Jube Shiver Jr. is the second generation to own and operate Shiver Management Group, a local property management company.



Dr. Cynthia Coy, Uncaged Solutions, helps leaders transform their thinking and serves on the Chamber Board of Directors.



Supervisor Rodney Lusk, the first African American male elected to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.



Ron Chase documents the history of Gum Springs at the Gum Springs Historical Society and Museum.

Black History Month: Business and Community Leaders

BY HOLLY DOUGHERTY
MOUNT VERNON
LEE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Black History month is a time to recognize and thank the many business and community leaders of African American heritage who contribute to the quality of life we all enjoy. The Mount Vernon Lee Chamber is pleased to introduce a few local business people and encourage you to support the businesses in our community.

Kenneth McLeon started planning The Skrimp Shack in Mount Vernon Plaza in 2020 and then the pandemic came. He and his wife Brenda persevered and navigated the difficulties of permits, a build-out, and inspections to open this amazing restaurant. Recognized by the Chamber as the 2020 New Business of the Year, The Skrimp Shack is a community gathering place for good food.

Yvette Schuler, owner of Schuler Insurance Agency Inc., is a local State Farm agent and a lifetime resident of the greater DC Metro area. Yvette has received numerous recognitions from State Farm Insurance including being a Silver Scroll winner, Legion of Honor recipient and Bronze National Convention Qualifier. Her most important recognition comes from the people who have been her clients for many years. She loves sports and serves as a volunteer coach with the Springfield Youth Club. Yvette's office is located at 5741 Telegraph Road.

Roberta Tinch is President and CEO of Inova Mount Vernon Hospital. She is an accomplished executive with more than a decade of experience leading hospital operations and we are fortunate to



Kenneth McLeon welcomes customers to his restaurant The Skrimp Shack in Mount Vernon Plaza.

have her at Inova Mount Vernon Hospital. She is a Fellow of American College of Healthcare Executives, a prestigious distinction that shows a professional in health management meets educational and professional requirements and is board certified and approved. She is a member of the Chamber's Board of Directors where she was recognized for her leadership at the hospital during the pandemic.

Jube Shiver Jr. is president of Shiver Management Group, a local property management firm, which manages two apartment complexes in Northern Virginia and has investments in single family homes, and other real estate from Costa Rica to Maryland. He is a member of the Mid-Atlantic Affordable

Housing Management Association and the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials. After a distinguished career in journalism that included work at the Washington Post, USA Today, radio and television, Jube became the second generation of leadership at family-owned Shiver Management Group.

Dr. Cynthia Coy is the Founder and CEO of Uncaged Solutions, LLC. She believes that everyone has purpose and untapped potential. The key lies in understanding how the way you think influences your life. "Your thoughts have the power to keep you caged in the self-limiting beliefs about who you are and where you are in the different areas of your life," said Cynthia.

She loves to teach leaders how to lead better, transforming the way they think by offering workshops, seminars, keynote speaking, and coaching. She is a John Maxwell certified coach, trainer and speaker. Cynthia has facilitated discussions at Leadership Mount Vernon Lee and serves on the Chamber's Board of Directors.

Sonja Caison is a CEO, an entrepreneur, lecturer and former chairman of the Mount Vernon Lee Chamber. After a stint on Wall Street, Sonja purchased the Alexandria territory of The Cleaning Authority franchise. With her superior customer service and strong business skills the company grew to more than 50 employees with 500 customers. This growth brought

recognition to her as one of the fastest growing businesses in the area. Since then, she has continued to grow the business with her bonded and insured professional cleaning crews serving more than 900 customers with reliable, environmentally friendly cleaning.

Rodney Lusk was elected as Lee District Supervisor in 2019 after a 31-year career serving the citizens of Fairfax County in human services, on the staff of Board of Supervisor members, and as the Director of the National Marketing Division for the Fairfax County EDA. It is difficult to find an aspect of Fairfax County government that Rodney has not influenced in some way during the past 35 years. Supervisor Lusk often mentions his grandparents, Eddie and Eleanor Dye, who called Alexandria City home for 60 years and taught him the importance of honoring commitments and giving back to the community. In honor of that legacy, Rodney is proud to be the first African American male ever elected to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.

Ron Chase is the Founder and CEO of the Gum Springs Historical Society and Museum and a treasure trove of knowledge on African-American history and culture in Fairfax County. The Gum Springs Museum is a collection of artifacts, portraits, and information on the founding of Gum Springs and its history as the oldest free African American community in Fairfax County. Chase is a descendant of at least one of the original 22 families in Gum Springs that included freed slaves such as his great-grandmother. The Museum and Historical Society document the struggles of the Gum Springs community for equality and inclusion since its founding in 1833.

CALENDAR

THURSDAY/FEB. 17

Our Time Machine. 7:30-9 p.m.
Via Zoom. Join filmmaker S. Leo Chiang as he discusses his latest documentary film, "Our Time Machine." This is a free online event offered as part of GMU's Visiting Filmmakers Series. To register: <https://vfs.gmu.edu/events/12390>

FRIDAY/FEB. 18

Guitarist Jason Vieaux. 8 p.m. At GMU's Harris Theatre, Fairfax. Grammy-winner Jason Vieaux, "among the elite of today's classical guitarists" (Gramophone), is described by NPR as "perhaps the most precise and soulful classical guitarist of his generation". The program includes: Adolphus Hailstork: Essay for Strings; Dvořák: Serenade for Wind Instruments; Arvo Pärt: Cantus in Memoriam Benjamin Britten; and Sylvie Bodorová: "Bruromano" for solo guitar, double-bass and strings. Visit the website: www.fairfaxsymphony.org.

SATURDAY/FEB. 19

Popovich Comedy Pet Theater. 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. The whole family will be awestruck by the juggling feats of Gregory Popovich along with the circus tricks of his adorable and spotlight-stealing furry and feathered friends. A fifth-generation circus performer, Popovich developed his skills and love of animals performing with the Moscow Circus, Ringling Brothers, and Barnum & Bailey Circus. Visit <https://cfa.gmu.edu/>.

SATURDAY/FEB. 19

Blood Drive. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Springfield Masonic Lodge, 7001 Backlick Road, Springfield. The Springfield Masonic Lodge is hosting a blood drive. Reserve an appointment online at <https://www.inovabloodsaves.org/>.

SATURDAY/FEB. 19

Fairfax Symphony Orchestra. 8 p.m. At GMU's Harris Theatre, Fairfax. Featuring Christopher Zimmerman, conductor. With Christopher Rouse: "Ku-Ka-Ilimoku"; Dvořák: Serenade for Wind Instruments; Adolphus Hailstork: Essay for Strings; Arvo Pärt: Cantus in Memoriam Benjamin Britten; and Sylvie Bodorová: "Bruromano" for solo guitar, double-bass and strings. Visit the website: www.fairfaxsymphony.org.

SATURDAY/FEB. 19

History in Kitchen. 10:30-11:15 a.m. Virtual. This free and virtual three-part series will illuminate what kinds of food were eaten by different people in colonial Virginia. Discover each week how to prepare a simple recipe. Visit the website: <https://gunstonhall.org/events/history-in-the-kitchen-2/>

SATURDAY/FEB. 19

AARP Webinar. 9-10 a.m. Virtual. Retirement Planning: Strategies for Today and Tomorrow. Take charge of your financial future. Retirement planning doesn't have to be daunting. Learn tips for determining if you are on track and learn practical strategies to help you achieve retirement peace of mind. It's never too late to take charge of your financial future. Registration link: <https://aarp.cventevents.com/VARetire02192022>

SUNDAY/FEB. 20

Pilobolus BIG FIVE-OH! 7 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Pilobolus is turning 50. The remarkable company that secured an iconic place in American culture in the early 1970s is still wowing audiences with its irresistible mix of wit, sensuality, and stunning physical acumen. 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. Tickets \$50, \$43, \$30, half-price for youth through Grade 12

FRIDAY/FEB. 25

QuinTango Argentina. 8-10 p.m. At Old Town Hall, 3999 University Drive, Fairfax. Hear the heartbeat of classical Argentinian tango channeled by a quintet of top-notch female chamber musicians and their crackerjack bandoneon player. This is tango like you've never imagined it. Visit the website: <https://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/cultural-arts>

SATURDAY/FEB. 26

Archaeology Symposium. 9:30-5 p.m. At Gunston Hall, 10709 Gunston Road, Lorton. Gunston Hall invite you to join the "Archaeology of the Garden." In this day-long symposium, they'll explore the buried history of 18th-century gardens. Visit the website: <https://www.tix.com/ticket-sales/gunstonhall/5996/event/1255903>

SATURDAY/FEB. 26

Mark Morris Dance Group. 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. The Mark Morris Dance Group returns with a medley of lively works. The performance opens on a playful note with Words, called "frisky and enigmatic" by The Washington Post. Following is the passionate duet work Jenn and Spencer with musical accompaniment by one of Morris's favorite composers, Henry Cowell. Suite for Violin and Piano provides a rich and turbulent musical landscape for the dancers. Pas de Poisson lightens the mood with a work for a trio of dancers set to music by Satie. Visit the website: <https://cfa.gmu.edu/>.



The Popovich Comedy Pet Theater will be performed on Saturday, Feb. 19 at GMU Center for the Arts in Fairfax.

SATURDAY/FEB. 26

School of Music Jazz Festival. 8 a.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. The Mason Jazz Festival is an invitational event open to middle school, high school, collegiate and community Jazz ensembles. Learn more about participating. Closing festival performance will be the United States Army Blues Jazz Ensemble at 7 p.m. in Harris Theatre. Visit <https://cfa.gmu.edu/>.

SUNDAY/FEB. 27

Ladysmith Black Mambazo. At 7 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, 4373

Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. Sharing a heartfelt message of love, peace, and harmony, Ladysmith Black Mambazo performs an uplifting concert showcasing traditional South African vocal styles. Already successful in their own right in South Africa, the group rose to worldwide prominence in 1986 when they collaborated with Paul Simon on his hit album Graceland. 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. Visit the website: <https://cfa.gmu.edu/>.

Black History Month: Filling in the Gaps

FROM PAGE 10

African American history, such as the forced sterilization of African American women, are omitted from mainstream teachings, says Anderson. "Reading historical fiction gives children a sense of the psychological damage that African Americans have endured throughout history," she said. "I make sure that all of my children read books like 'Like Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry' by Mildred Taylor. It paints a real picture of what life was like for sharecroppers.

There are some children who grow up thinking that sharecropping helped Black people get on their feet and create a better life for themselves after slavery ended. In reality, Whites used lynching, beatings and burnings to intimidate sharecroppers so they stayed chained to the land without the possibility of improving their lives."

Presenting Black history in a way that

young children can understand, preschool teacher Vonetia Hartley, Alexandria mother of three adult children and four grandchildren, uses the achievements of prominent African Americans figures to help her students and grandchildren realize that there are no limits to what they can achieve. "I want them to understand the importance of knowing who they are and how unique they are," she said. "I want them to know that there are so many options in their future. Whether they want to be president, governor, doctor, police officer, airplane pilot or inventor, they can become it."

Extending lessons on African American history beyond 28 days in February is what Grant encourages. "It should be woven into our everyday lives so that it's not seen as something special to think about in February," Grant said. "Our ancestors made contributions that affect us every day."

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 5

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

ONGOING

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 histo-

ry. 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' BeFriend-A-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 administration. 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.

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OPINION

Krizek

FROM PAGE 7

charitable gaming goes to charity. My bills to fix these issues have moved through the House with bipartisan support, while companion bills from my colleagues in the Senate, Senators Bryce Reeves and John Bell, are moving to the House.

Of our many non-gaming legislative initiatives, we introduced two bills on native plants this year. The successful one, HB 314, was our first bill to pass the House 70-30. As passed in the House, HB 314 directs the Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services to create a brochure on the value of native plants and the danger of invasives and noxious weeds. Plant retailers will be able to distribute these informational brochures in their stores.

Also, I worked extensively with Virginia's seven federally recognized Tribal Nations this year to introduce a number of pieces of legislation to support their interests and recognize their sovereignty. My bill HB 1136, which creates a code commission to review the Code of Virginia and recommend changes to the General Assembly that are needed to reflect the recent federal recognition of Tribal Nations that share territory with the Commonwealth passed the House unanimously.

It should always be easy for the public to report instances of judicial misconduct. The Judicial Inquiry and Review Commission was created by the Constitution of Virginia to investigate judicial misconduct charges by judges. My bill, HB 761, from a constituent, which also passed the House unanimously, would have required that the standard complaint form used by the Judicial Inquiry and Review Commission is made available in paper form at every clerk's office

in all courts in the Commonwealth. However, the bill needed to be amended in order to pass and now only requires a sign to be posted in courts to direct people to the website where the complaint forms can be downloaded.

Manufactured or mobile homes are an often overlooked affordable housing option. Unfortunately, manufactured home parks are disappearing and tenants face difficult and uncertain living conditions in the few that remain. Today, there are five manufactured home communities in my district: Harmony Place, Woodley Hills, Ray's Mobile Home Colony, Audubon Place, and Penn-Daw Terrace. I have worked with Supervisor Rodney Lusk and tenants in those manufactured home communities and introduced HB 1065, which directs the Department of Housing and Community Development to convene a working group, to bring those tenants and stakeholders across the Commonwealth together to gather information that the group will work on to draft new legislative ideas for next session.

Domestic violence survivors have had to pay for attorney fees and document reproduction costs on the behalf of the perpetrators. Many survivors are low income and having to deal with this extra burden exacerbates trauma. Another one of my bills that passed through the House unanimously, HB 1327, relieves victims of a crime from which a civil matter arose from paying the costs for document reproduction. This was also a bill brought to my attention by a constituent that suffered these outrageous costs.

So, the session is halfway through and my attention shifts now to the Senate where twelve of our bills will be heard and hopefully, make their way to the Governor's desk

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CALENDAR

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Let us know about an upcoming event

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CALENDAR

NOW THRU FEB. 28

Hunt for Washington. A fun and challenging game to uncover clues about Alexandria and George Washington. The hunt, which should take about 60-90 minutes to complete, will take individuals and families to places in Old Town Alexandria associated with the General. Start by printing a clue sheet from www.washingtonbirthday.com at home and bring it with you as you traverse the heart of Old Town and then use your sleuthing skills to find answers to the clues. Submit your findings to gwbirthdayevents@gmail.com any time before the end of the day on February 28. There are prizes and mementos associated with this event! Free.

NOW THRU FEB. 28

American Legion Post 24 Run, Walk, n' Roll. This George Washington Birthday Commemorative event is intended to build community and enhance the physical, mental, and emotional resiliency of participants—veterans and non-veterans alike. This month-long event during February 2022 encourages participants to run, walk and/or roll on their own for at least 24 miles in increments and routes they choose. Registration is \$24. Visit <https://runsignup.com/Race/VA/Alexandria/GW-B24RunWalkRoll> for more information.

NOW THRU MARCH 6

Artist's Exhibition: Oenone Hammersley and Darren Smith. At the Athenaeum Gallery, Alexandria. Artists Meet and Greet, Sunday March 6, 2 — 4 p.m. Oenone Hammersley's paintings depict abstract water patterns in mixed media on canvas and wooden panels. The panels are cut to resemble water cascading or waves

breaking. Darren Smith uses his creative vision while leading the foreign-language editions of National Geographic Magazine. He applies the same skills to making his handmade photo collages. The Athenaeum Gallery is open Thursday to Sunday 12 to 4 p.m.

SATURDAY/FEB. 19

Washington Revels Jubilee Voices in Concert. 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The Alexandria Black History Museum presents the Washington Revels Jubilee Voices in concert. Join the Revels as their members explore the rich history of African American music. Visit alexandria.gov/historic

SATURDAY/FEB. 19

Virtual Birthnight Banquet & Ball. 7 – 9 p.m. Join in the celebrations that have been ongoing for hundreds of years – General Washington's Birthnight Ball. Gather your bubble to honor our first President overZoom. Begin the evening with a video presentation about the history of this event and hear from those that have participated in it for years. Have conversations about your favorite Birthnight experience. Then the General will be available live for all your questions! Lastly, enjoy English Country Dancing called by an expert Dance Master from the historic Ballroom that you can do with 1, 2, 4, 6 or 8 people at home. Period costumes of the 1790s encouraged! One virtual dance class on February 17th is included. Tickets are \$15 per person. A dinner from Gadsby's Tavern Restaurant and traditional Birthnight Ball cake from Bittersweet are available for pickup with separate purchase of \$50. Visit AlexandriaVA.gov/Shop.

Surovell

FROM PAGE 6

thorities to recover methane generated at sewage plants and landfills so that it can be captured and used instead of generating more methane from hydraulic fracturing or “fracking” for natural gas to heat homes and power buses, stoves and water heaters.

We also considered legislation addressing in-person learning and masking in schools. In the last month, major medical journal articles have reported that this pandemic is moving into an endemic phase and will persevere in ways similar to the common cold or the flu. Last week, Dr. Anthony Fauci, an infectious disease expert, confirmed that we are moving into an endemic and Fairfax County Public Schools announced a new policy that will effectively end the mask mandate once Fairfax County achieves certain metrics. In addition, the Prince William County School Board Chairman Babur Lateef said the mandate needs to end. The governors of Oregon, California, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Delaware are moving away from universal masking mandates while the Biden administration is exploring adjustments to masking guidance.

Last week, we debated an amendment to one bill, SB 739, to standardize state masking optional policies. I voted for the amendment to include a mask policy in the bill that would be effective July 1, 2022. Several constituents have asked about my vote.

Unfortunately, our schools, school boards and communities are being torn apart because some are politicizing public health issues instead of respecting health experts. It is virtually impossible to have a rational discussion about the

effectiveness of masks, quarantines and even vaccines across party lines. Virginia school boards cannot even agree on what the Center for Disease Control guidance says. In many cases, Democratic-led school boards are concluding that mandatory masks are required and Republican-led school boards are saying that they are not.

Our school systems need clarity on this issue and we need to get school boards, teachers and children out of the political crossfire. As a state senator, I have to vote on policy for the entire state, not just Northern Virginia. I also want state legislators to be at the table in this discussion after our current masking law expires on Aug. 1, 2022, instead of creating more uncertainty by ceding the issue solely to Governor Youngkin, school boards and courts and perpetuating a climate in which school board members face death threats and citizens carrying firearms to local school board meetings.

I voted against the bill's final passage because it restricted school boards' ability to mitigate pandemic emergencies in perpetuity. Attacks on medical science have caused more Virginians than ever to doubt vaccines and challenge vaccine policy. No one knows when the next pandemic will arrive or whether we will start seeing localized breaks of measles or other viruses.

Unfortunately, Governor Youngkin added an emergency clause to the bill making it effective March 1 instead of July 1, refused to add a sunset provision to the bill, and three of my Democratic colleagues crossed over to support it. I remain opposed and expect litigation to ensue once again.

It is an honor to serve as your state senator. I hope you will share your views with me at scott@scottsurovell.org

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Date With Destiny – Or Not



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Despite having cancer and having been given a “terminal” diagnosis/“13 month to two years” prognosis in late February 2009, I rarely, believe or not, consider my own mortality. Well, occasionally in these columns, but day-to-day, hardly ever. Oddly enough, something occurred the other day which meant very little to me when I first heard about it until I read more about it today on the ESPN website. ‘It’ being that former Major League baseball player Jeremy Giambi had died. Mr. Giambi was 47, but initially no cause of death or any other particulars were provided. Today’s story, an Associated Press release filled in some of the gaps. His cause of death was suicide and listed his date of birth (finally the point of this column) as September 30, 1974.

Why should you care? Probably not for the same reason as I do. Jeremy Giambi and I share the same birthday: Sept. 30, though not the same birth year. Nevertheless, seeing a person you have heard of – which I have, or whom billions of others haven’t, die, and whose birthday is identical to yours is - sobering, and I don’t even drink. In an odd and complicated way, seeing/hearing/reading about someone dying with whom you share a birthday is unsettling somehow. To invoke a “Star Wars” reference, I feel something akin to a weakening of the force. And in this context, that feeling being whatever intangible/physical/spiritual ‘force’ keeps us alive. I don’t want to see anyone dying, especially anyone who has the same as birthday as I do. It’s as if any other person dying who has a September 30 birthday affects my mortality somehow, and that I’m at greater risk because of it, like we have some sort of connection. It’s like when another cancer patient succumbs to our shared disease. I don’t exactly feel their pain, but I feel the loss, as if I’ve lost a key member of Team Lourie. And as a cancer patient still undergoing treatment, I don’t need any negativity seeping in.

In fact, I can’t see how thinking about death in any context is helpful. Early on in my cancer life, I was told by multiple medical professionals how important – and helpful, maintaining a positive attitude would be – and has proved to be. Though there’s no real empirical evidence, anecdotal evidence suggests however, that there is a link between attitude and survival. As a longtime cancer patient who has remained positive about this incredible negative, I believe this to be way more than an abstract theory.

For me, and all of you, life goes on until it doesn’t, duh. Still, I don’t want or need to be reminded of my own mortality, in any context. Moreover, I realize I had already jumped to the head of the mortality class when I was diagnosed 13 years ago. Perhaps I’m overstating the significance of Mr. Giambi’s death to me? Perhaps, his having been a Major Leaguer who played his last season for the Boston Red Sox, my hometown team, and I’m a sports’ guy from Boston, intensifies the effect on me? Whatever it is, I don’t ever want to see my birthday associated with death.

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

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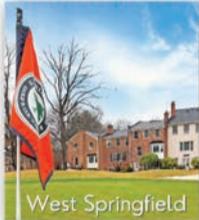


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