

# CONNECTION

Reston ♦ Herndon ♦ <sup>Oak Hill</sup> Chantilly ♦ CENTRE VIEW

## Housing for All?

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PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

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## Remembering Erin and Reema 15 Years Later

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The skyline of Reston Town Center gleams just outside tents of people experiencing homelessness.

# Housing Challenges Visible at North County Government Center

PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

Housing for all, one of founder Robert E. Simon Jr.'s seven guiding principles.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

Late on April 4, brightly-colored dome camping tents, red, blue, green, and yellow, began going up on the front lawn of North County Governmental Center, 1801 Cameron Glen Drive in Reston. First one tent, then two, then three. Someone driving by might have thought it was a Scouting Troop setting up a campout for spring break.

It was not. Members of the nonprofit organization Reston Strong pitched the small water-resistant tents outside the office of Fairfax County Supervisor Walter Alcorn (D-Hunter Mill) and the Reston Police Station as temporary shelters for homeless adults, according to Sarah Selvaraj-D'souza, one of the Reston Strong founders.

The North County Hypothermia Prevention Program (NCHP) at the Embry Rucker Community Shelter, a hypothermia preven-

tion site in Fairfax County, was shut down and turned unhoused adults away.

"If temps drop to 32 or below, then hypothermia kicks in," Selvaraj-D'souza said later. Not 34. Has to be exactly 32."

Fairfax County's hypothermia program operates from Dec. 1 through March 31. Contact the Office to Prevent and End Homelessness at 703-324-9492, TTY 711, or OPEHGeneralMail@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Members of Reston Strong and volunteers stayed with the tent residents throughout the day and through the night. Shortly after midnight, on April 5, at 12:24 a.m. Selvaraj-D'souza goes live in a video.

"Every single person we put in a tent is quiet and sleeping. The only sounds are airplanes, and I've got these three flags that keep whacking in the wind. ... It's 50 degrees, but it feels like it's insanely cold. ... I'm so freezing, and I can't imagine others who do this every single night," Selvaraj-D'souza says that this is not what Reston Strong set out to do when organizers



Outside of North County Governmental Center in Reston, two hands of the welded stainless steel sculpture by m.l. duffy titled Mutual Understanding/Mutual Respect reach out to each other in a welcoming gesture.



A tent resident opens the tent flap but pauses. He goes to a puddle to wash off his muddy boots. Inside, his possessions are neatly arranged.

started the organization. "It breaks my heart; it has come to this, and we're here tonight." Selvaraj-D'souza says she'd rather not be anywhere else that cold night. "Because just

the fact that they're all sleeping, knowing we're out here to take care of them; knowing that no one's going to kick them out, that they can get one good night's sleep, I think means so much."

SEE HOUSING, PAGE 3



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The skyline of Reston Town Center gleams outside their tent doors.



Another tent "city" in Reston.

# Housing For All

FROM PAGE 2

It rained Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, saturating the tent grounds, mud everywhere. But the temperature never touched 32 degrees keeping the hypothermia shelter closed.

Compounding the weather conditions, Embry Rucker Shelter staff/volunteers turned away tent residents coming in to use the restroom facilities due to an apparent miscommunication.

At the Government Center, 50 steps from the tents, Reston Strong volunteers were given the key to the restroom said Jess Glaser of Reston Strong, but the tent residents were denied the key.

"Although access was eventually granted for unhoused neighbors, it was disheartening to see the disparity in treatment between those who are housed and those who are not," said Selvaraj-D'souza in statement.

Supervisor Walter Alcorn (D- Hunter Mill) was unable to visit the site, at least initially. A spokesperson for his office said Alcorn had tested positive for COVID. In a statement, Alcorn noted that he appreciated Reston Strong's help to bring renewed public attention to Reston's unhoused needs and a renewed sense of urgency. Yet, he did not support allowing the creation of a new tent city, referencing the biohazards and assaults experienced by the community several years ago. Alcorn added that the county needed to move forward with a badly needed new homeless shelter, permanent supportive housing, and affordable housing for working families.

Alcorn noted that the ending of the winter hypothermia shelter program during the past decade had been a challenge for the community's unhoused needing overnight shelter.

"The end of the two-year hoteling program last month made this year much more



Within eyesight of North County Governmental Center is an unoccupied building that could be considered a temporary shelter, according to Sarah Selvaraj-D'souza, who has an online petition at [change.org](https://change.org).

difficult. While I pushed to extend the hoteling program later into the spring, the lack of trained staff to manage this program caused the program to end," he said.

Some of Reston Strong's tent residents had been placed in shelter beds by late Thursday evening. Reston Strong volunteers drove several people to a Fort Belvoir shelter with space. A few are at Embry Rucker and at other shelters, according to Selvaraj-D'souza. "Most shelters in the area are full and did not have room to take those who were staying in hypothermia," she said. "The difference between a shelter bed and hypothermia is that they do not need to leave until they have found housing, or they have a case manager taking care of them."

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman McKay (D) said that ensuring county residents have access to safe, permanent housing is a top priority. He said that he heard the concerns that Reston Strong and former guests of the Embry Rucker Shelter had brought forward.

"Emergency shelters are not a solution to eradicating homelessness in our area,



The former temporary Reston Fire Station within view of North County Governmental Center- could it be used for temporary shelter?

but they do provide an essential role as we work to transition our residents experiencing homelessness into permanency," McKay said.

McKay added that Reston Strong's partnership in the efforts to prevent and end homelessness in Fairfax County is essential as they collectively work to improve the shelter experience for county residents in need.

Benjamin T. Boxer is the public information officer for the Office to Prevent and End Homelessness in Fairfax County. He said that the county is fortunate to have a broad range of volunteers representing nonprofits, faith communities, and other civic and service organizations joining to engage individuals experiencing homelessness wherever they are located, including Reston.

According to Boxer, staff and partners have reached out to those residing at the North County Government Center.

"Our staff is reaching out to individuals who are experiencing homelessness, wherever they may be, to connect them with services and develop housing plans based on their individual preferences and needs," Boxer said.



SCREENSHOT

Sarah Selvaraj-D'souza, one of the founders of Reston Strong, videos her night watching over tent residents. She says she is freezing, but there is nowhere else she

**"No one wants to live in a tent."**

— Sarah Selvaraj-D'souza

On Tuesday morning, April 12, three tent residents, all older women, remained camped at North County Government Center, safely protected by Reston Strong volunteers. According to a list documented by Jess Glaser of Reston Strong, of the 17 tent clients at North County Government Center plus another couple, by Saturday, April 9, their reported housing status was that three remained tented at North County; three went to Embry Rucker; three to Bailey's shelter; three to Kennedy Shelter; one possibly at Kennedy Shelter or roaming; one possibly at a relative's home; two at "Hill Tent," one of four tent communities in Reston, and last three are roaming.

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## OPINION

# A Basic Foundation

DELEGATE KENNETH R. "KEN" PLUM

Last week was spring break for my two elementary school-age grandchildren. When they visited us mid-week and learned that I would be away for the last two days of the week to attend the Virginia Forum, they wondered aloud why I would want to attend something that sounded like school when it was supposed to be vacation time. I explained that I like learning new things and that I always learn something new about Virginia's history when I attend the Forum. It is like school, graduate school that is, when historians and scholars present papers and discussions are held on the latest research on Virginia's past. The critical discussions would never meet the standards of the censors that occupy the State Department of Education who with the approval of the governor are about getting controversy and divisive theories out of the classroom.

The other reason I attend the Virginia Forum every year that I did not take the time to explain to my young grandchildren is that I believe a basic and sound foundation for our future can only be accomplished to the degree to which we honestly examine and understand our past. Certainly the history of the Commonwealth is filled with the glorification of events, a Lost Cause movement to cover up the reasons for and consequences of major events, and political movements that tell the stories that will keep certain interests in power. Nonpartisan and essentially nonpolitical historians, researchers, and scholars at Virginia Forum examine in astonishing detail the events of our past with a close examination of documented facts. So much of the state's



written history is totally male-dominated and whitewashed. At the Forum we learned of the incredible research and writing of Suzanne Lebsock who helps us understand the important role that women who we have not heard from previously played in the building of our state and country. Others presented papers on white supremacy that prevailed during most of our history.

Knowing factually what happened in the past can help us from making the same mistakes again. A governor was elected with the promise of getting rid of parole in our justice system and thereby lowering crime. He succeeded in effectively eliminating parole, and we have prisons stuffed with people who with little or no risk could be returned to society as productive citizens. The legislature is now attempting to have honest debate about the impact of a no-parole policy, but that easy-answer political slogan still resonates with people who are not well informed. Parole needs very much to be reformed, not eliminated, in order that it can be part of a criminal justice system that is restorative. Nonpartisan history of the problem can help us understand how it can be a positive part of our criminal justice system.

Another governor got elected on a simple slogan of "End the car tax." He was successful in getting nearly a billion dollars — which continues to be appropriated even today — that the state uses for paying the local car tax. It was a very unpopular tax, but the political answer denies the education budget a million dollars every year.

To the extent to which we can honestly understand the past, we can build a strong basic foundation for the future.

# Despite Challenging Start Alcorn Doubles Down

JOHN LOVAAS

Barely halfway through his term as Hunter Mill District Supervisor, Walter Alcorn has announced plans to seek re-election in November 2023 to a second 4-year term. It's a demanding job which pays \$95,000/year for theoretically part time work. Having known him for 25 years, back to when I briefly considered running for Supervisor, I was curious and talked with him about his decision.

His start as Supervisor was hardly auspicious. It coincided with the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic. Building chemistry for an effective Board of Supervisors, four of whom were newcomers, proved difficult in part due to all-virtual work. Still, he feels he's been able to get some things done. Looking around Reston, I agree. I see tangible improvements, e.g., gaps filled with sidewalks so needed in Reston, improvements in bike safety with added lanes, and intersection signals and crosswalks. He proudly notes a joint initiative with Supervisor John Foust to get the County to commit \$100 million to pedestrian and bicycle safety over the next five years.



THE INDEPENDENT PROGRESSIVE

A priority Alcorn goal was creating a "community-driven" process to prepare an update of the Reston Comprehensive Plan to guide land-use decisions for a generation — to a time when our still unincorporated settlement's population is likely to surpass 100,000. Good progress to report here. A first draft plan is in hand, written largely by reps of community organizations with a notably small-

er developer role than in the last plan. The Task Force is likely to reduce some densities further from transit stations and to establish an ultimate target Reston population in the 110,000-120,000 range. Equity, a current County buzzword is assured throughout with little explanation of how it is assured. Natural open space will shrink relatively but we are assured that there will always be two fully 18-hole golf courses!

**New plan ETA-Fall 2022.**

Alcorn pledged to continue to make affordable housing a priority. Homelessness, a perennial prob-

SEE LOVAAS, PAGE 5

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# OPINION

## Lovaas

FROM PAGE 4

lem in wealthy Fairfax, has been the subject of grand initiatives with mixed results. Most eligible beneficiaries have incomes up to the county median level, \$100,000. People earning Virginia's minimum wage, \$11/hour, even with two in a household, are not served by such programs, and need much lower cost units. Mr. Alcorn has an innovative idea for addressing them. He suggests repurposing long-vacant commercial space into basic home units for transitional housing for lower income homeless people. As I write this column, tents occupied by homeless people have sprung up outside his office. Yet, to date he has found no traction for his common-sense idea, nor any compelling reason not to try it, he tells me.

Sometimes private business groups pose difficult challenges. For example, he's been unable to engage Reston Town Center ownership on questions about their puzzling public parking policies which have kept Restonians away and discouraged formerly popular businesses, many of which have left. Most recent examples are Chicos, Clyde's and Bowtie Theatre.

In Lake Anne, the Supervisor has been forthcoming, conditionally offering county assistance for Reston's original village center to address critical aging infrastructure. Dealing with feuding groups in the Condo association has not been easy. Unfortunately, in one case he may have fueled tensions

by appearing to put his hand on the scale to tilt a Board election in favor of one side in the voting, and in another he's commissioned consultants to recommend a "sustainable" model for the village center, mentioning, e.g., becoming an arts center. The scope of work was discussed with neither the Condo Board nor the merchants potentially most affected. Some fence mending seems in order to successfully move forward.

What, I asked, made him decide to run again. His main reason is that he wants to see initiatives that he has worked on actually implemented, and it was taking more time and effort than anticipated to get things done on the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.

I asked him if he had a re-election fundraising goal and to outline his approach to fundraising. It's too early to have a goal, not knowing what opposition he might have, and he plans no changes in approach from what he used the first time around. I was pleasantly surprised that he had raised a lot in small, non-special interest money and almost nothing from land development interests for his first campaign.

Mr. Alcorn clearly has learned the political game. For example, he hired one of his stronger primary opponents on his staff, likely neutralizing her. Another of his staffers was recently elected Chair of the local Democratic Party, discouraging competition from that area. He is ready for another campaign.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Request: Lower Tax Rate by 10 Cents to \$1.04

My wife and I have been homeowners and taxpayers in Fairfax County since 1968. We are retired and living on a fixed income. Therefore, I wish to protest the increases in the Fairfax County budget and real estate taxes. From the year 2000 to 2020, real estate taxes have increased approximately three times the inflation rate and household income. This year my assessment increased 12.84%. The County Board wants to keep the real estate tax rate at \$1.14 per \$100 of assessed value which means that the average tax bill would increase by \$666. Based on the tax rate of \$1.14, my tax bill will be \$1,142 greater than last year which is outrageous. I understand that overall tax assessments increased an average of 9.5% countywide. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Consumer Price Index (inflation rate) for the year 2021 was 4.7%. So,

for many years I have seen the real estate taxes usually increase two to three times the inflation rate, year after year and decade after decade.

I request that you lower the tax rate by 10 cents to \$1.04.

Last year in FY22, the Adopted Budget Plan of General Funds Disbursements was \$4,527,325,441 and for FY2023 the General Funds Disbursements is \$4,776,728,869, an increase of \$249,403,428. or 5.2% over FY 2022 Adopted Budget Plan. This increase is greater than the inflation rate of 4.7% for calendar year 2021. For many years, I have seen the County and Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) budgets usually increase two to three times the inflation rate, however this year is an exception. Nevertheless, in an overall \$9 billion budget, you should be able to reduce it.

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## CONNECTION

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VDOT Virginia Department of Transportation

## Fox Mill Road and Pinecrest Road Intersection Improvements Fairfax County

### Virtual Design Public Hearing

Wednesday, May 18, 2022, 7 p.m.  
<https://www.virginiadot.org/FoxMillPinecrest>

Find out about planned improvements at the intersection of Fox Mill Road (Route 665) and Pinecrest Road to relieve congestion and improve safety and traffic operations. The improvements include installing a permanent traffic signal, constructing left-turn lanes on northbound and southbound Fox Mill Road, adding four crosswalks and reconstructing sidewalks and curb ramps. The project also includes constructing an eight-foot-wide walkway and curb ramp at the southeast corner of the intersection.

The public hearing will be held as a **virtual/online meeting**. Information for accessing and participating in the virtual meeting is available at <https://www.virginiadot.org/FoxMillPinecrest>. The project team will make a short presentation beginning at 7 p.m. and answer questions for about an hour after the presentation.

Review project information and meeting details on the webpage above or during business hours at VDOT's Northern Virginia District Office, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030. Please call ahead at 703-691-6710 or TTY/TDD 711 to make an appointment with appropriate personnel.

In accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement created pursuant to Code of Virginia § 10.1-1188(b), VDOT has determined this project is within a list of project/activities to qualify for an exemption from the State Environmental Review Process. However, all required environmental clearances, regulatory approvals and permits will be obtained prior to project construction.

Give your comments during the meeting, or by **May 31, 2022** via the comment form on the project website, by mail to Mr. Sitaram Kodali, P.E., Virginia Department of Transportation, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030 or by email to [meetingcomments@VDOT.virginia.gov](mailto:meetingcomments@VDOT.virginia.gov). Please reference "Fox Mill Road and Pinecrest Road Intersection Improvements" in the subject line.

VDOT ensures nondiscrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need more information or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, contact VDOT Civil Rights at 703-259-1775.

State Project: 0665-029-428, C501, P101, R201  
UPC: 118460

In case an alternate date is needed, the meeting will be held  
Tuesday, May 31, 2022 at the same time.

## REMEMBERING

# 'You Can't Imagine Living Without Your Daughter'

Remembering Reema and Erin, 15 years after VT tragedy.

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

**T**his Saturday, April 16, will mark 15 years since the worst day in the lives of the Samaha and Peterson families of Centreville. That's when they each lost a child in the Virginia Tech massacre that took 32 lives.

Both Reema Samaha and Erin Peterson were 2006 Westfield High grads, and each was just 18. In high school, Reema was active in theater productions and was also an accomplished dancer. Erin was a standout player and senior-year captain on the Bulldogs girls' basketball team.

As college freshmen, Erin was majoring in International Studies; Reema was majoring in international relations and urban planning and minoring in French. Futures filled with bright possibilities stretched ahead of them. But a mentally troubled young man with automatic weapons stole it all and left their shocked, grieving families devastated.

It was a seemingly normal Monday morning in 2007, and Reema and Erin were in French class together in Norris Hall. When Reema's father learned about the shootings there, but didn't hear from her afterward, he called the school.

Joe Samaha asked if French classes were held in Norris Hall. When he found out they were, "My heart dropped." He and wife Mona and their two other children then headed to VT – where they learned Reema was, indeed, among the victims.

Erin's parents panicked, too, when they didn't hear from their daughter, so they drove to Blacksburg and were told she was in surgery. But the patient turned out to be another girl – and the next morning, Celeste and Grafton Peterson learned their only child had died the day before.

Since the tragedy, each parent has coped in their own ways. And although time may have dulled somewhat the sharp edges of the pain they feel, it's always with them – as are the memories of their children.

"Grief isn't something you ever put down," said Celeste Peterson. "It's just the way your life is now. You never forget and you never recover. Everything in my life is marked before Erin died and after Erin died."

"Reema guides us and is always in our prayers," said Mona Samaha, "I'm living hopefully and strongly, because that's how she would want me to. But it's a daily, inner workout to make a good day out of every day."

Her husband is still a Realtor, but she retired last summer from her job as a French Immersion teacher at Herndon Elementary. Daughter Randa is married, with three children, and son Omar is married, with two children.

Mona Samaha admitted she's had some "very bad times," over the years, but Reema's spirit and God help her calm down and feel better. At first, though, she said, "You can't



Reema Samaha



Reema Samaha before a Westfield High prom.

imagine living your life without your daughter. It was a total loss of my compass. Every time I was walking with Joe, I'd think, 'Why am I living? If my daughter is gone, what's the point of it?'"

The first 10 years, she said, "I tried to be strong for my other children, the community and my students, to honor Reema." And even therapy only helped so much. So the past four years, Mona "did a lot of personal effort, prayers, meditation and walks in the woods, talking to God. And every day was like a little curtain opening."

"Finally, thank God – and also with the



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOE SAMAHA

From left, are Joe, Omar, Reema, Randa and Mona Samaha during a family vacation in July 2006.

birth of my grandchildren – it all helped me get my feet on the ground, bring me back to earth and appreciate life again. I'd been in my head for so long, but now I acknowledge the care people give each other and the beauty and miracles in life that are given to us. We just have to see and appreciate them."

Signs from Reema have also played a big part. A year ago, Mona wasn't feeling well, and Reema's friend, Ashley Dillard, called and shared a dream she'd had about Reema in heaven. She said Reema was happy, funny, witty and joking, like she always was. Dillard then told Mona stories about Reema's life that no one had ever told her (Dillard) and she'd have had no way of knowing.

"She said Reema told her, 'Many of my friends ask me for help, and I'm always happy to help them,'" said Mona. "Ashley also said Reema told her to tell me she's there for me, too, because I especially needed her help. Hearing that brought me back to my faith. When I give up, I ask Reema, the Virgin Mary and Jesus for help."

"Reema also told Ashley, 'I'm so happy there are so many babies and that they're naming them after me,' but this hadn't happened, yet," said Mona. "A week later, Randa called and told me she's pregnant with twins – but Reema already knew about them."

Omar's wife was also expecting a girl then; and two months later, Reema's closest cousin learned she was having a girl, too. Randa named her firstborn, a son, Beau Ameer ("Reema" spelled backwards and "prince" in Arabic). Omar's daughter is named Ellie Reema, and the cousin's daughter is Eva Reema.

"It's very touching and honoring," said Mona. "I'm happy Reema is still remembered and loved, and that this new generation will know about her. During Randa's high-risk pregnancy with her twin girls, I was so worried, and I asked Reema for help.

She then appeared to me in my mind and winked, like, 'C'mon, everything's going to be OK' – and it was."

Likewise, Joe said Reema's always by his side. "I have no doubt her spirit is never far," he said. "She's my inspiration for my work with the Virginia Tech Victims Family Outreach Foundation [see sidebar] and daily life, affirming that she's OK, we're OK and she's watching over us."

That work gave him a purpose that helped him in the aftermath of the tragedy. Yet for many years, he couldn't admit that something inside him was still amiss. "We call this a life journey," he said. "But the first eight years of my journey, I wasn't OK, and I needed help. I'd say, 'I'm fine,' but Mona realized something was wrong."

"Once I got help, a door opened, and I was able to do more in an easier and less stressful way," said Joe. "What helps me most is – not only having Reema on my shoulder, inspiring me – but accomplishing goals that are actionable and practical, and reaching out to others to make sure they're OK."

Reema wanted to learn Arabic as a second language, but it wasn't available at Virginia Tech; so, after her death, her parents created an Arabic Language and Cultural Center there. "It was my language in Lebanon and was what Joe's father spoke," explained Mona. "We also wanted to promote more understanding of Arabic culture." The university now offers an Arabic language major and minor with a tenured professor.

As the tragedy's 15th anniversary approaches, the Samahas will go to Virginia Tech for all the memorial events. "There's a candlelight vigil, interfaith prayer, family lunch and 5K," said Mona. "And the library has stories and displays about each victim. That day is always hard, but it's good that people still remember Reema."

## REMEMBERING



Erin Peterson



Erin and her dad, Grafton Peterson, in August 2006.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CELESTE PETERSON

# Doing Good in Her Name

## Celeste Peterson honors her child by serving her neighbors.

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

Celeste Peterson's story is one of immeasurable loss. First, her only child died in the tragedy at Virginia Tech. In 2016, her husband, Grafton, succumbed to a heart attack. Then during the pandemic, she lost both her parents within nine months of each other. But through the Erin Peterson Foundation honoring her daughter, she's turned her heartache into a catalyst to help others.

"I could have broken down and felt sorry for myself, but my family built strong roots and I learned to bend," she said. "And I didn't have time; I had to keep moving, take care of things and clean out my parents' house. Since Erin passed away, I've had to deal with the affairs of my elderly family members who died. And when I was writing my mom's obituary, I thought to myself, 'I'm so tired of writing obituaries.'"

Peterson has developed tools to help her cope, day to day, and she said therapy has also helped. "My life is nothing like I thought it would be at this time," she said. "But you just acclimate the grief into it. I speak to and think about Erin and Grafton every day – they're embedded in me. I couldn't live in this house or do what I do if it wasn't for them."

"I take time to let off steam because I'm human," she continued. "Some days, I just don't feel like doing anything, so I allow myself that time to just be kind to myself. When I'm having a hard day, I can hear Erin and Grafton, plain as day, telling me it'll be all right and to pull it together. They give me strength, every single day."

"I'm also a spiritual person; I believe in God and pray every day. My grandmother told me, 'You can either decide to live or decide to die' – and I choose to live. My parents and family made me who I am, and [when I need guidance], I think about what Erin and Grafton would do and how they'd react."

After Erin's death, the last thing on Peterson's mind was starting a scholarship. "But

the community was so supportive and wanted to do something," she said. "And that summer, Pat Deegan, Erin's basketball coach at Westfield, and Greg Richter – whose daughter, Anna, went to school with Erin – approached me about it."

So she and her husband established the Erin Peterson Fund to continue their daughter's dedication to education and to helping those less fortunate. And each year, it's awarded two scholarships to deserving Westfield High seniors. So far, it's given away more than \$260,000 in scholarships and grants in Erin's memory. Celeste Peterson also began the Young Men's Leadership Group at the school.

"The fund helps them find their way," she explained. "It's a bridge between the school and where they're going in the world. And I'm standing in the middle, telling them I'm going to help them cross over, no matter what. Sometimes, they just need a little help and to know that someone cares about them. We all need that, and I've been extremely blessed to have it in my life."

The group isn't a club; students have to be recommended by Westfield's administrators, counselors and/or teachers. And those who've been in it for a while are allowed to recommend friends who'd also benefit from the program. They currently meet twice a month and plan to eventually return to weekly meetings. The staff includes the director of student services, subschool principals and teachers.

"We discuss current events, they learn proper etiquette and how to shake hands," said Peterson. "We also have speakers talk to them about, for example, finances, nutrition, what it means to be a man, taking care of themselves, etc. Right now, we're focusing on being polite, because the world is so mean. So we talk about what that looks like and how to react."

"We also do assessments of what they need," she continued. "And after every meeting, the staff and I debrief and discuss what to talk about next time. We decide if we need to pivot and talk about something



Athletic Erin Peterson, all dressed up.

else, based on what's going on in the school and in their lives that's causing them some angst."

Working with the principal of Stone Middle School, Peterson started a girls' group there. "I like to start at middle school, so the students' expectations are set about how they'll talk, dress and act when they get to high school," she said. "I also have a girls' group at Westfield. There are a total of 30 or more students in all three groups."

"I address the same things I did with Erin, when I was preparing to launch her into society," said Peterson. "I'd tell her, 'I want you to be a good kid and a good citizen and adult who contributes to society.' In a world of so many choices, kids really want parameters and want you to tell them what to do." She also takes the groups on field trips, such as college tours or visits to the Museum of African American History in Washington, D.C.

In addition, Peterson runs a Coats for Kids program. "I ask the Centreville Elementary social worker to tell me how many children need coats, what sizes, and if they're for boys or girls," she said. "The money comes from the fund; last year, we gave away 25 coats."

She looks out for older people, as well. For many years now, she's been bringing snack packs to the residents of the Forest Glen Se-

## Helping Others to Honor Those Who Were Killed

The Virginia Tech Victims Family Outreach Foundation (VTV) was established 12 years ago by the victims' families to address campus safety and security issues that helped lead to the 2007 tragedy in which 32 people were killed; 24, injured; and many more traumatized. Initially, the state funded it.

Joe Samaha, whose daughter Reema died, became the nonprofit's president. And Centreville's LuAnn McNabb, a close family friend, was its first director and was instrumental in getting legislation dealing with mental health and campus safety passed in Virginia's General Assembly.

As a result, colleges and universities must designate a point of contact to be notified should a student be involuntarily committed or discharged from a mental-health facility. This person would also facilitate the screening and referral of students with urgent mental-health needs and provide for expansion of services for them.

In addition, faculty and staff must report a student's threatening or aberrant behavior that may represent a physical threat to the community. They must also notify family members or guardians. And in grades K-12, school divisions must establish procedures for creating threat-assessment teams.

Over the years, VTV continued to help get new laws passed; and now, it's the leading independent advocacy group for campus safety in the U.S. Some of these state laws, plus amended federal law, are the first of their kind in the country and have become best practices nationwide.

"What we did was unique," said Samaha. "Then, two years ago, we started VTVCare – our program initiative to help victims of mass shootings, and their families, throughout the country, with their long-term care needs."

"We funded an endowment for this program and invested these funds in the stock market with a professional advisor," he said. "And the gains from the investment are what we donate to these victims." (To contribute, go to [www.vtvcare.org](http://www.vtvcare.org)).

This perpetual fund helps pay for the

SEE HELPING OTHERS, PAGE 9

nior Apartments in Centreville. "Erin was all about the community, and I am, too – especially helping people in need in the neighborhood," said Peterson. "During the pandemic, the Erin Peterson Fund gave away Walmart gift cards so people could buy food. Local school administrators or counselors would tell me how many people needed them, and I'd give the cards to the schools."

The fund also started the Fuel Station – a food pantry at Westfield for food-insecure students. (After the pandemic, Western Fairfax Christian Ministries and the school PTA took it over).

"The need is right here in our own community, and I grew up in a family that always took care of other people," explained Peterson. "But you get so much out of helping others. And this is the way for me to honor Erin and Grafton. I'm thankful to God that He blessed me with being Erin's mother for 18 years, and I'm serious about putting good into the community in her name."

To contribute to the Erin Peterson Fund, go to [www.erinpetersonfund.org](http://www.erinpetersonfund.org).

# CALENDAR

## NOW THRU APRIL 28

A collection of paintings by Layla Gray and Coty Dickson entitled "The Four Seasons" is on display at the Great Falls Library, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls, VA 22066. The public can view this collection of favorite seasonal paintings in the library's large meeting room from now through Thursday, April 28, 2022 during regular library hours. Contact Coty Dickson at cotyandickson@gmail.com for additional information.

## NOW THRU APRIL 16

Photos with the Easter Bunny. At Tysons Corner Center, McLean, Fashion Court, Level 1 near Nordstrom. Tysons Corner Center welcomes the Easter Bunny back on March 18th. Visit the Bunny for an unforgettable family photo experience. The option to pre-book your appointment is available and recommended to reduce wait time. The Bunny will be available Monday - Saturday from 11 a.m. - 7 p.m. and Sunday from 12 p.m. - 6 p.m.

## NOW THRU APRIL 30

The Friends of Frying Pan Farm Park invite the public to participate in its 2022 photo contest. Help celebrate all that is special about the farm with the second "Focus on the Farm" fundraiser. Open to photographers of all ages and abilities, capture the beauty and farm life at Frying Pan Farm Park. The categories include nature, landscape and scenery, and farm animals. Photos must be taken, and entries submitted between March 1 and April 30, 2022. You can enter up to 10 photos. The fee is \$7 per entry for adults, and \$5 per entry for children up to age 16. Go to the Friends of Frying Pan Farm Park website for information; or email the Friends of Frying Pan Farm Park at friends@fryingpanpark.org. Frying Pan Park is located at 2709 West Ox Road, Herndon. Call 703-437-9101.

## APRIL 1-17

"Nat Turner in Jerusalem." Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m., Sunday at 2 p.m. At NextStop Theatre Company, 269 Sunset Park Drive, Herndon. This powerful play delves into an important moment in American history, which has continued to shake the conscience of the nation for almost two centuries. Through powerful performances, audiences are invited to take part in a deep exploration of human morality and the grim reality of the past. Visit the website: <https://www.nextstoptheatre.org/nat-turner-in-jerusalem>

## APRIL 14-MAY 8

"The Mamalogues." Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays at 8 p.m., Saturdays at 2 and 8 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m. At 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill Road, Tysons. In this satirical comedy, three friends share the joys, challenges, and anxieties of being middle class single Black mothers in predominantly white suburbs. The story celebrates motherhood and community while exploring racial profiling on the playground and supporting your kid who is perpetually the Only Black Child (OBC). Follow their journey as they lean in and steer their children from pampers to college while navigating their own road toward retirement. Visit [www.1ststage.org](http://www.1ststage.org).



In rehearsal for VTC's "Death of a Salesman," opening April 22, are actors Patrick Killoran as Biff, Tom Flatt as Will Loman, Gayle Nichols-Grimes portraying Linda and Michael Angeloni as Happy.

## SATURDAY/APRIL 23

Clifton Lions Club Family Pancake Breakfast. 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. At Clifton Presbyterian Church, 12748 Richards Lane, Clifton. Cost is \$10 per adult; \$5 per child. Proceeds go to charity.

## FRIDAY/APRIL 15

Blood Drive. 1-6 p.m. At McLean Community Center, McLean. McLean Community Center is helping the American Red Cross with Diverse Blood Donations! It is urgent for donors of all ethnicities to support patients in need. Join MCC and support the community with your lifesaving blood donation. All donors will receive a \$10 Amazon Gift Card via email. For an appointment, call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

## SATURDAY/APRIL 16

Model Train Open House. 1-5 p.m. At Vienna Train Station, 231 Dominion Road, NE, Vienna. Stop by the Historic Vienna Train Station where you can see and hear HO scale model trolleys and trains including Thomas and some of his friends on display and in operation. Great family fun and activity for the young and young-at-heart. Hosted by the Northern Virginia Model Railroaders. See [www.nvmr.org](http://www.nvmr.org).

## SATURDAY/APRIL 16

Hoppy Egg Hunting. 9:30-11:30 a.m. At Bready Park, 814 Ferndale Ave., Herndon. Egg Hunt Times: Age 5-7 at 9:45 a.m.; Age 3-4 at 10:30 a.m., and walking-2 at 11:15 a.m. Activities include an egg hunt, craft projects, story time, a petting zoo, coloring mural, potting station, and photos with the Easter bunny. Bring a basket or bag to collect eggs. Pre-registration is highly encouraged. Visit [herndon-va.gov/recreation](https://www.herndon-va.gov/recreation) or call 703-787-7300.

## SATURDAY/APRIL 16

Green Reston. 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. At the plaza in front of RCC Hunters Woods. Join in a fun and eco-friendly family event to mark Earth Day. Come learn about sustainable living and eco-friendly alternatives for household items. Kids' events include decorating a birdhouse to take home, face painting and making a container garden. Free; registration required. To register, visit [myRCC.com](http://myRCC.com).

## SATURDAY/APRIL 16

MCC Adult Board Candidate Meet & Greet. 10-11:45 a.m. Come meet the candidates for our upcoming board elections in the McLean Room at McLean Community Center, McLean. We have nine adult

candidates running for three board seats. This is an opportunity for you to chat with our candidates, ask them any questions you have regarding their candidacy, share your feedback on what you love about MCC, as well as what you'd like to see improved.

## APRIL 16-17

Easter Eggstravaganza. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. At Roer's Zoofari, 1228 Hunter Mill Road, Vienna. Roer's Zoofari invites the Reston community to its annual Easter Eggstravaganza. Adult Admission - \$30, Child Admission - \$20, Member Adult - \$5, Member Child - \$5. Visit the website: <https://www.roerszoofari.com/easter-2022/>

## APRIL 22 TO MAY 7

"Death of a Salesman." Presented by Vienna Theatre Company. At 120 Cherry Street, SE, Vienna. Show times are: 8 p.m.: Fridays and Saturdays: April 22, 23, 29, 30; May 6, 7, 2022; 2 p.m.: Sundays: May 1, May 8, 2022. Arthur Miller's 1949 Pulitzer Prize-winning drama about the tragic shortcomings of an American dreamer, is widely considered to be one of the greatest plays of the 20th century. Purchase tickets at [viennava.gov/webtrac](http://viennava.gov/webtrac), in person at the Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry St. SE during open hours, or before each performance if available. Visit [www.viennatheatrecompany.org](http://www.viennatheatrecompany.org).

## APRIL 22-24

ValeArts Show. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. At Old Vale Schoolhouse, 3124 Fox Mill Road, Oakton. The exhibit, Colorful Journeys, will be bursting in springtime colors at this historic venue. Admirers of all ages are welcome to view paintings in oil, watercolor, mixed media, encaustic, and acrylic to delight the eye and stir the senses. All paintings are for sale. Visit <https://www.valearts.com> for more information.

## SATURDAY/APRIL 23

Earth Day McLean—Act Locally. 9 a.m.—noon. At McLean Community Center, McLean. Free admission for MCC district residents; registration is required. This drive-through, outdoor, environmental action event provides a convenient way for McLean residents to better the planet. Several local community businesses and organizations will provide four key facets of environmental health in the spirit of shredding, reusing, recycling and planting.

## SATURDAY/APRIL 23

Parks and Sugarland Run Cleanup Day. 9 a.m. to noon. At Runnymede Park, 195 Herndon Parkway,

Herndon. Join your fellow community members and help cleanup parks, Sugarland Run watershed, and stream locations. Meet at Runnymede Park for supplies and assignments, then work on your own to help care for one of the eleven parks or three trails in Herndon. They'll be picking up litter, removing non-native invasive plants, and otherwise refreshing our parks as we head into spring. Visit [herndon-va.gov/recreation](https://herndon-va.gov/recreation), or call 703-787-7300.

## SATURDAY/APRIL 23

Roomful of Blues. 8 p.m. At Jammin' Java, 227 Maple Ave. E, Vienna. A Roomful Of Blues is filled with soaring blues, zydeco twists, late-night ballads, Latin-tinged funk and a touch of vintage, fifth-gear rock 'n' roll. Tickets are \$25-\$35. Website: [www.jamminjava.com](http://www.jamminjava.com).

## SATURDAY/APRIL 23

Doodle POP 4 p.m. At McLean Community Center, McLean. A mischievous duo starts to doodle... and ends up creating a whole imaginative world! They invite the audience along on their sea adventure with a tiny little turtle. What will happen as we follow their vivid drawings into this beautiful watery world, and will they return the turtle to the sea safely? Doodle POP is a touching and playful nonverbal show that uses live musicians to perform the accompanying score and sound effects. Created by BRUSH Theatre of South Korea.

## APRIL 23-24

Yard Sale and Giveaway Day. Gate Post Estates is will be coupling a Giveaway Day with their annual yard sale. The yard sale will take place on Saturday, April 23, beginning at 8 a.m., and the Giveaway Day will be the following day, on Sunday, April 24, beginning at 10 a.m. For the Giveaway Day, residents will place any items they wish to donate to the community in front of their homes and mark them with a "Giveaway" or "Free" sign. Gate Post Estates is located off of Route 29, across from the Centreville Baptist Church.

## APRIL 23-24

Spring Book Sale. At Centreville Regional Library, 14200 St. Germain Dr., Centreville. Saturday, April 23 and Sunday, April 24, 10 a.m. - 5

p.m. Children's books, teen and adult fiction, classics, poetry & literature, nonfiction, DVDs, audio books and CDs. No scanners or other electronic price-checking allowed. Cash, check and credit cards accepted.

## SUNDAY/APRIL 24

Vocal Quartet Concert. 4-5:30 p.m. At Church of the Holy Comforter, 543 Beulah Road, NE, Vienna. Concert by the vocal quartet Third Practice, featuring the Hermit Songs of Samuel Barber and other works from the Renaissance to the present day that express longing for both solitude and connection. Visit the website: <https://holyccomforter.com/music/>

## SUNDAY/APRIL 24

10th Annual McLean Chocolate Festival. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. At the McLean Community Center, McLean. Taste the specialties of area chocolatiers and enjoy fun for the whole family. The youngest attendees can enjoy a children's game room. The McLean Chocolate Festival is a fundraiser for the McLean Rotary, with proceeds benefiting many local organizations. Cost: \$2 admission. Visit: [www.mcleanchocolatefestival.com](http://www.mcleanchocolatefestival.com).

## SATURDAY/MAY 7

Celebrate Pilates Day. At RTR Pilates, 9849 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Register for one of three free trial reformer classes at RTRPilates.com/PilatesDay. Check out the studio, shop great retail, sip champagne and meet our community.

## MAY 21-22

Girls on the Run Spring Registration. GOTR NOVA will be offering an in-person, 10-week curriculum for the Spring 2022 season. Two in-person 5Ks presented by Cigna will be held on May 21st and 22nd in Sterling and Ballston, respectively. Teams will continue to be school and community-based to further our outreach efforts in being accessible to every girl across Northern Virginia. Currently, 105 teams throughout Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax, Falls Church, Loudoun, Manassas, Manassas Park, and Prince William are open for Spring 2022 registration through March 1, 2022. For more information about spring registration and sites for Girls on the Run of NOVA, visit [www.gotrnova.org](http://www.gotrnova.org).

## BULLETIN BOARD

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

## SUNDAY/APRIL 24

Hunger Conversation Project. 5-6:30 p.m. At Andrew Chapel United Methodist Church, 1301 Trap Road, Vienna. Conversation with Ramona Carroll from the Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood/Community Services about hunger in Vienna and the surrounding community. Stay to pack care bags for those in need. Free. Visit the website: [andrewchapelumc.org](http://andrewchapelumc.org)

## SHEPHERD'S CENTER SPRING CLASSES

The Shepherd's Center of Northern Virginia will hold Spring classes

from April 21 to June 9, 2022. All Classes will be held virtually on Zoom and in person at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, 2709 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton. Registration: April 4-19, 2022. The Spring 2022 semester schedule includes 40-plus classes with a wide range of subjects -- from a Health and Wellness series to National and World Affairs. The following classes are but a few of the classes to choose from:

❖ April 28 - "Sorting Fact from Fiction" - Larry Lipman, AARP

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 9



# Helping Others to Honor Those Who Were Killed

FROM PAGE 7

long-term, physical and psychological trauma-related care needs of mass-shooting survivors nationwide that insurance doesn't cover. Anyone who's been affected by a mass shooting – including family members of deceased individuals, injured or traumatized survivors, and those who were physically present during an event – is eligible.

“What we've learned is that the first two years after a tragedy, people are donating to help the victims and grants come into the various municipalities to establish resiliency centers,” said Samaha. “But typically, in year three, there are no funds left to help people on their lifetime journey. Their ongoing needs include physical injuries and mental trauma, like PTSD, that may arise years later. They

need therapy, but their insurance doesn't cover all of it – and that's where our fund comes in.”

Now, in a new role as VTV's Vice President of Development and Victim-Survivor Advocacy, Samaha helped spearhead the idea of a Virginia Mass Violence Care Fund to benefit all victims of mass violence in Virginia, including those injured or traumatized by the May 31, 2019 shooting in Virginia Beach.

If approved by the governor, it would pay for their out-of-pocket expenses not covered by insurance, begin three years after the mass-violence event and remain in perpetuity. Expenditures and disbursements from the fund would be made by the state treasurer. The first year's appropriation would be \$10,000,000 taken from the Commonwealth's

SEE HELPING OTHERS, PAGE 11

## BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 8

- ❖ May 5 – “Monarch Butterflies – Life Cycle and Migration” – Scott Schroth
  - ❖ May 19 – “Whale Watching in Baja” – Paul Wormeli
  - ❖ May 26 – “Vienna African American Trailblazers and Liberty Amendments – Gloria Runyon/Sylvia/DeeDee
- Students may attend one or all of the all spring classes for a \$55

fee and are encouraged to create their own schedule – attend classes all day or attend only one class. For a complete listing of classes or to register, visit the AIL page on the SCNOVA website at SCNOVA Adventures in Learning Spring 2022 or call the office at 703-281-0538. Visit [www.scnova.org](http://www.scnova.org) or contact the Office at 703-281-0538.



## Public Notice

### Updated weight limits on Virginia bridges and culverts

In accord with state and federal law, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has imposed new or changed existing weight restrictions and installed new signage indicating the updated weight restrictions on the following bridges and culverts (structures) in Virginia within the last 30 days.

Jurisdiction	Fed Struc Id	Route #	Route Name	Crossing	Posted Date
SCOTT	16685	619	BIG STONY CREEK ROAD	BRANCH	3/30/2022
BLAND	3048	604	WALKERS CREEK ROAD	BIG WALKER CREEK #3	3/28/2022
WASHINGTON	19036	616	WALNUT GROVE ROAD	NORDYKE CREEK	3/28/2022
SMYTH	17394	16	B.F. BUCHANAN HIGHWAY	WHITE OAK BRANCH	3/23/2022
WASHINGTON	18891	58	GATE CITY HIGHWAY	BRANCH	3/23/2022
CRAIG	5503	615	CRAIGS CREEK ROAD	MILL CREEK	3/11/2022

The list above is not a comprehensive list of all structures with weight restrictions in the Commonwealth, but shows only structures that have new or changed weight restrictions within the last 30 days. The list contains only basic structure identification and location information and the date the new or changed weight restriction and signage became effective.

For a full listing of all bridge and culvert weight restrictions with detailed information about specific structures, including location data and actual weight limits, visit <https://www.virginiadot.org> and navigate to Info Center/Trucking Resources. This page references a posted structures report and a GIS map tool that contain detailed information about restricted structures in Virginia. To receive email notifications regarding new or updated weight restrictions for structures statewide, complete the sign-up form on the web page.

Notices regarding bridges and culverts with new or updated weight restrictions are published monthly by VDOT. For additional information or questions, please contact, [haulingpermits@vdot.virginia.gov](mailto:haulingpermits@vdot.virginia.gov).

*The Virginia Department of Transportation is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any of its programs or activities on the basis of race, color, or national origin, as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need further information on VDOT's Title VI Program or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, please contact the Virginia Department of Transportation's Title VI Program Specialist at 804-786-2730.*



## Special Connections Calendar 2022

Advertising Deadlines are the previous Thursdays unless noted.

### MARCH

- 3/2/2022.....Wellbeing
- 3/9/2022.....HomeLifeStyle
- 3/16/2022.....A+ Camps & Schools
- 3/23/2022.....Senior Living
- 3/30/2022.....Spring Family Fun

### APRIL

- 4/6/2022.....Wellbeing
- 4/13/2022.....HomeLifeStyle
- 4/20/2022.....A+ Camps & Schools
- 4/27/2022.....Senior Living

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**Employment**

VeriSign Inc. has a job opening in Reston and Dulles, VA: Engineer – Computer Operations Support (Req #V1114) Provide complex technical support to internal VeriSign employees and contractors to resolve IT issues, candidate will split his/her time between the company's offices located in Dulles and Reston, VA. Mail resume to Attn: Dave Carney, 12061 Bluemont Way, Reston, VA 20190. Must include Req # to be considered.

**Be a part of our:**

**Wellbeing** pages, the first week of every month.

Delight in our **HomeLifeStyle** sections, the second week of every month. Peek at the top real estate sales, glimpse over-the-top remodeling projects, get practical suggestions for your home.

Celebrate students, camps, schools, enrichment programs, colleges and more in our **A-plus: Education, Learning, Fun** pages, the third week of every month.

**Senior Living**, fourth week of every month.

**Questions?**

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# Helping Others to Honor Those Who Were Killed

FROM PAGE 9

General Fund and deposited into the Virginia Mass Violence Care Fund. There, it would gain interest – potentially, \$400,000/year – to help with victims’ needs, just like VTVCare does.

“Healing isn’t linear, but perpetual, and lasts a lifetime,” said VTV Co-Presidents Jody McQuade and Jennifer Herbstritt. “Our needs as survivors will wax and wane. Today many of us are still seeing therapists and seeking medical treatment for conditions related to the events of April 16, 2007.”

By the end of 2021, the 177 people defined by VTVCare as “VT families and injured survivors” had been reimbursed by the Virginia Tech victims’ 2009 settlement with the Commonwealth a total of \$645,000 for costs insurance wouldn’t cover. The funds came from court costs and fees, not taxpayer dollars. So, wrote McQuade and Herbstritt in their message to VTVCare members last Friday, “Long-term care assistance is crucial for survivors of mass shootings.”

They and Samaha are now awaiting the budget to see if it’ll make this mass-violence fund a reality and provide the money for it. Sen. Chap Petersen (D-34th) and Del. Kelly Convirs-Fowler (D-Virginia Beach) submitted it as a budget amendment request.

“This statewide fund will be the first of its kind in the nation,” said Samaha. “It’s practical, actionable, proactive, sustainable and perpetual. And the governor has indicated he’ll help create this fund. There’s no definition of mass violence in Virginia law. It could be a terrorist attack, like driving into a crowd, so we’re saying, ‘mass violence,’ not ‘mass shooting.’”

“It’s the 32 that were killed and 17, injured, that inspired this work, not just Re-ema,” continued Samaha. “You can’t heal in isolation, so we’re also reaching out to other groups across the country. What’s gotten me through is having a purpose – to keep honoring and remembering those who were killed and to do this work in their name.”

— BONNIE HOBBS

## ROUNDUPS

### Hidden in Plain Sight, April 20

Hidden in Plain Sight is a community-awareness program to educate parents on the signs of risky behavior in their children and teens. It’s a hands-on learning event enabling parents to experience current trends so they may look out for and keep their children safe.

It’s run by the Fairfax County Police Department, and the next program is set for Wednesday, April 20, at 7 p.m., at the Sully District Governmental Center, 4900 Stonecroft Blvd. in Chantilly. Register at <https://bit.ly/fcpdhips>. For more information, email [FCPDHIPS@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:FCPDHIPS@fairfaxcounty.gov).

### Car Seat Inspections, April 21

Parents may get their children’s car seats inspected on Thursday, April 21, from 5-8:30 p.m., outside the Sully District Police Station. It’s at 4900 Stonecroft Blvd. in Chantilly. Inspections are done on a first-come, first-served basis. Participants are asked to wear a mask and adhere to social-distancing and safety precautions.

They should also install the child safety seat themselves, so the inspection can be performed. The seat will be properly re-installed, if necessary, and parents will be taught how to install the seat properly, in the future. Another car-seat inspection is scheduled for May 5, at the same place and time.

### Casey’s Car Show & Spring Fest: April 24

The fifth annual Casey’s Automotive Car Show & Spring Fest is Sunday, April 24, from 12:30-3:30 p.m., at 4260 Entre Court (off Walney Road) in Chantilly. Admission is free. The fun includes a vehicle contest – with cars and trucks ranging from classic to modern, a silent auction, food and ice cream trucks, and a moon-bounce and children’s activities.

All proceeds from this family-friendly event go to local nonprofit, Ellie’s Hats, which provides hats to children with cancer. (Rain date: May 1). For more information, email [carshow@caseysautomotive.com](mailto:carshow@caseysautomotive.com). To display a vehicle in the show, register it at <https://caseysautomotive.com/about-caseys-automotive/car-show-spring-fest/>.

## LETTERS

FROM PAGE 5

The County is proposing to issue more bonds in 2023 and future years. For FY 2023, the County debt for bond interest is \$43.9 million or 2.8% of the county budget. In the good times as the economy booms, why does the County feel they must keep issuing bonds? I have read that Fairfax County wants taxpayers to approve a \$180 million bond issue for WMATA this November but has so far failed to respond on how these

funds will be used. Is this true?

The FCPS has had reductions in students over the past two years and is now down to approximately 178,000 students. As I understand, the FCPS has had a reduction of around 10,000 students and yet the FCPS budget continues to rise. Why is that?

**Charles McAndrew**  
Oak Hill  
Board Member of the Fairfax County  
Taxpayers Alliance

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# Going, Going, I Wish They Were Gone

By KENNETH B. LOURIE



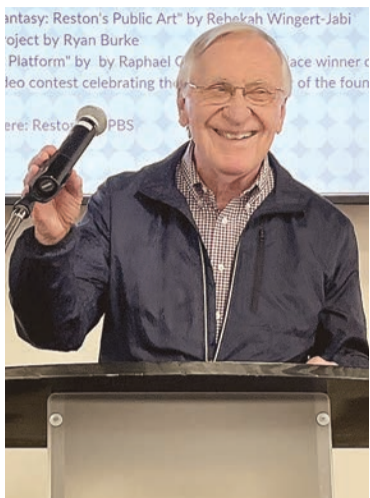
All those Charmin and Cottonelle television commercials for “the go”/“down there care.” As my late mother used to say about so many nauseating subjects: “It’s enough already.” I realize toilet paper is a staple, especially during a pandemic, but is it necessary that there are so many television advertisements? They’re appearing so often that I’ve even seen these competing companies/products advertise during the same commercial break. Not exactly back-to-back, but very nearly so. Talk about overkill. If these brands aren’t careful, they’re going to kill the goose that laid ply at their doorstep.

I mean, how much prodding/encouragement do I need every day to assist me with my toilet paper decisions? Not nearly as much as I’m getting, that’s for sure. How many more times must I see that adolescent bear wiggle his butt? And how many more times must I hear about treating “the skin that I don’t see as well as I treat the skin that I do see?” No more, please? I have enough visuals of forearms being wiped to last me a lifetime. I know that toilet paper sales are a huge business with endless repeat customer buys, but I’ve reached my point of no return. As in there’s no more return on their advertising investment in my household. We have been saturated with toilet paper problems/solutions so much so that if I never see another television commercial, funny or not, it will be soon enough for me.

Besides, I’m a grown man. I know what works for me – and what doesn’t. And that awareness most definitely includes toilet paper and all its features and benefits – and innuendos. I may be stubborn or a creature of consumer habit – or merely protective of my privacy, but all this recurring toilet paper market penetration/saturation is becoming too much to bear. I’m not a prude in the least, but I do feel as if there are certain subjects/descriptions which are off limits – or rather should be. However, the recent spate of toilet paper verbal and visual manipulation has crossed the line I never thought needed to be drawn because it was clear to everybody that it already existed. Apparently, the rules of advertising aren’t aware of these lines.

I understand that market share and profit are crucial to a commercial ventures’ success/viability. But to invoke a famous question from the 1954 McCarthy hearings: “Where’s your decency?” Gone. That’s where if the frequency and substance of these toilet paper advertisements are allowed to continue. Enough is enough, which for Scott brands is 1000 sheets. For me however, it’s really none of anybody’s business what I do in the privacy of my own bathroom. Whether I use an off-brand, single, double, or triple ply or paper infused with aloe. I’m happy to be left to my own devices. I’ll figure it out and the less the advertisers have to do with it, the better.

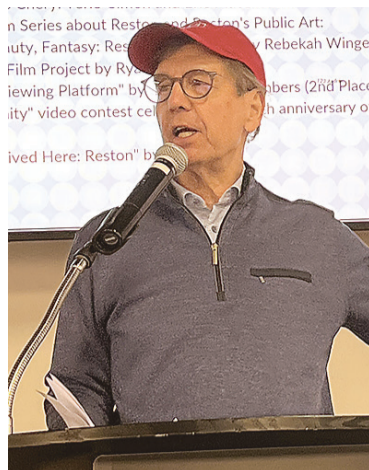
*Kenny Lourie is an Advertising Representative for The Potomac Almanac & The Connection Newspapers.*



Del. Ken Plum (D-36).



Robert Goudie, executive director Reston Town Center Association.



Reston Museum board representative Chuck Veatch.



Reston's newest author, Cheryl Terio-Simon. "Community is what it is all about an ode to lake anne"



Amir Abu-El-Hawa, a staff member in Chairman Jeffrey McKay's office.

# Founder's Day 2022, Lake Anne Reston

Celebration evolves to more than Robert E. Simon Jr.'s birthday anniversary.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

On Saturday, April 9, as part of Founder's Day 2022, the Reston Museum and Reston Community Center commemorated the 108th anniversary of April 10, 1914, birthday of Reston's founder, Robert Edward Simon Jr. (1914-2015).

Sponsored by Public Art Reston and hosted by Lake Anne Plaza, the event also served to commemorate the upcoming birth anniversary of Reston's first public artist, Uruguayan sculptor-painter Gonzalo Fonseca (1922-1997), who was born on July 2, 1922.

During the event's opening remarks, Del. Ken Plum (D-36) said the idea that someone would build a new community in 1964 and advertise that Black people could come out and live in the suburbs was radical. "It was also a radical idea that you'd have public art that did not include a Confederate soldier," Plum said.

Robert Goudie is the executive director of the Reston Town Center Association. He said no less than two of Simon's founding principles gestured to the arts as important to creating a "complete community." Goudie described how Simon "famously" stated in one of those principles that "art is a necessity of the good."

Beyond celebrating Founder's Day 2022 by honoring the legacy of Robert E. Simon on his birthday, the second reason for the celebration was to commemorate the centennial birth year of sculptor Fonseca. Goudie said it was "a brilliant choice" of Reston to deliberately select Fonseca to create the significant artwork at Lake Anne. He thanked Carolyn Flitcroft, chair of the Reston Historic Trust & Museum board, for putting the two

themes together.

Founder's Day also marked the launch of one of Reston's latest books, "Community is what it is all about an ode to lake anne," by author Cheryl Terio-Simon and contributor Eric Mac Dicken. Terio-Simon is the widow of Reston's founder, Robert E. Simon Jr. "Buy a copy of the book," said event moderator Chuck Veatch.

The book is sold at the Reston Museum. "Proceeds from sales of this book will go towards the repair and maintenance of the Gonzalo Fonseca sculptures on the plaza and in the Fonseca Underpass.

Fonseca's 1965 concrete sculpture, "Sun Boat," is strategically located beside Lake Anne. It serves as a sculpture for adults and a fun playground for children — two of the site's primary objectives for planners and architects. According to Public Art Reston.org (Sun Boat | Public Art Reston), "This (Sun Boat), along with the "Look-out Tower" and the lake beyond, provides the recreational opportunities so important to Robert E. Simon Jr. in his plans for Reston.

Fonseca's sculptures on Lake Anne are threatened. The "red brick sea" of his concrete sculptures is being lifted by the roots of adjacent towering sycamore trees. Cracks are appearing.

During the program remarks, Amir Abu-El-Hawa, aide to Chairman Jeffrey McKay, read a proclamation on behalf of county residents issued by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. Reston was Virginia's first open community, and it thrives today with a diverse range of housing, business, cultural, religious, educational, and recreational opportunities.

Reston's birthplace, Lake Anne Plaza, is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Beverly Cosham, chairperson of the Reston Community Center,



The early crowd attending Founder's Day 2022 appears smaller than during its pre-pandemic celebrations. The Foley Irish Academy of Dance performs.



The early crowd attending Founder's Day 2022.



It's birthday cake for all at Founder's Day 2022.

said that Simon's vision for Reston was underscored by his belief in the value of each human being. "We gather to remember the past and Reston's founding values, as well as recommit to those values well into the future," Cosham said. In 1964, there was no integrated

housing in Virginia, except in Reston. "(It) should remain central to all that we do to make a future that embraces diversity and sustains our capacity to make room. We're here for people at all stages of their lives," Cosham said.

Plum closed by saying, "I re-



Beverly Cosham, chair of the Reston Community Center.

member the first time I came to Reston; I didn't think I was ever going to get here. It seemed like it was so far away. But with a vision and with a purpose and an understanding of our past, we can take what we've accomplished here to new heights, into new areas. We can build on what we have here. Happy Founder's Day, everyone."

Visit [www.restonmuseum.org](http://www.restonmuseum.org) to reserve a copy of "Community is what it is all about an ode to lake anne."

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