

CONNECTION

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'Skill, Practice, Wits'

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Rising Fairfax High senior Jack Balderson practices his pitching at the new HammerZone.

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PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

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AUGUST 4-10, 2022

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NEWS

Man Dies of Injuries from Motorcycle Crash

Detectives from the Fairfax County Police Crash Reconstruction Unit continue to investigate a fatal crash that killed a Sterling man June 29 in Fairfax. They identified the victim as Brian Perry, 63.

According to police, Perry was driving a 2007 Kawasaki motorcycle east on Braddock Road, around 6:17 p.m., when the tragedy occurred. "He transitioned from the paved portion of the roadway to the milled section of asphalt, lost control and crashed," said police.

Perry was taken to a hospital where, on July 12, he succumbed to his injuries. Detectives believe neither speed nor alcohol were factors in the crash.

Anyone with information about this incident is asked to contact the Crash Reconstruction Unit at 703-280-0543. Tips may also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by calling 1-866-411-TIPS (866-411-8477).

Man Dies After July 16 Crash in Lorton

A 24-year-old man has died from injuries sustained in a crash that occurred at 5:14 a.m. on July 16 in Lorton. Officers responded to a single-vehicle crash on Richmond Highway near Woodside Lane. Santos Casco Sierra was the driver and sole occupant of a 2010 Ford Fusion. Detectives from our Crash Reconstruction Unit determined the Ford was traveling south on Richmond Highway when the vehicle left the roadway, struck a tree and caught on fire. Fire and Rescue personnel responded to extinguish the fire and extricate Casco Sierra. He was taken to the hospital with injuries that were considered life threatening. He died July 30. Speed and alcohol were factors in the crash.

Anyone with information about this crash is asked to contact our Crash Reconstruction Unit at 703-280-0543. Tips can also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by phone -1-866-411-TIPS (866-411-8477)

Cooling Assistance

The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) will provide cooling assistance to qualifying households this year through the Virginia Energy Assistance Program (EAP). Applications are currently being accepted and can be submitted until Monday, August 15.

To qualify, a household must have a child less than six years of age, an adult 60 years or older, or an individual with a disability living in the home. Income requirements, based on a household's gross monthly income (before taxes), can be found here. Individuals and families in need of Cooling Assistance are encouraged to apply even if they are unsure of their eligibility status. An example of maximum monthly income is \$2,879 for a family of three. https://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/bp/ea/intro_page/publications/032-03-0661-23_EAP_Information_Sheet_eng.pdf

Assistance is available for: payment of electric bills to operate cooling equipment; payment of security deposits for electricity to operate cooling equipment; repair of a central air conditioning system or heat pump; purchase of a whole-house fan, including ceiling or attic fans; purchase and installation of a window unit air conditioner

Households that previously received approval for Cooling Assistance in 2022 for a one-time benefit of \$600 for the payment of an electric bill do not need to submit additional applications for this type of assistance during the current application period.

Applications (available in English and Spanish) can be submitted to a local department of social services, online via CommonHelp <https://commonhelp.virginia.gov/access/> or by calling 1-855-635-4370. Eligibility is determined by the local department of social services. All applications must be submitted by Aug. 15.

The Energy Assistance Program is funded by the federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program block grant. Last year, VDSS served over 69,000 households with Cooling Assistance through the EAP. To learn more about Cooling Assistance and other assistance programs available, visit the VDSS Energy Assistance webpage <https://www.dss.virginia.gov/benefit/ea/index.cgi>

BULLETIN BOARD

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

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

GrandInvolve Seeks Volunteers. Would you like a unique and interesting volunteer experience to make a difference in a school, classroom, or in one child's life? GrandInvolve.org facilitates rewarding, flexible adult volunteer opportunities at Fairfax County Title I elementary schools, providing classroom assistance with math, reading, and other simple educational tasks. Visit www.GrandInvolve.org/volunteer-with-us for details and to complete an interest form. Or email info@grandinvolve.org.

CELEBRATE NATIONAL FARMERS MARKET WEEK, AUG. 7-13

Fairfax County Farmers Markets will join farmers markets across the nation in celebration of

National Farmers Market Week, August 7-13. Farmers Market Week highlights the role of farmers markets in supporting healthy communities, stimulating local economies, and supporting local farmers. The mission of the Fairfax County Farmers Markets is to provide residents access to locally grown products and create market opportunities for area farmers and food producers.

Visit each of the 10 farmers markets August 7-13 to support local farmers and businesses, learn how to prepare fresh ingredients at our cooking demonstrations, participate in fun & educational activities, listen to live music, and enjoy delicious foods from local producers. Farmers Market Week is also Bike to Market Week in

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 13

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NEWS

'Skill, Practice and Wits'

HammerZone Sports serves young athletes in Fairfax City.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

HammerZone Sports – a baseball, softball and fitness facility – has opened its first location in Virginia, at 9709 Fairfax Blvd. in Fairfax City. But the best way to find it is to head down Old Lee Highway and turn left into the shopping area behind Artie's.

"We're really glad they're here," said Chris Bruno, the City's economic development director. "We're very excited to bring this type of active use to the Fairfax Circle Shopping Center."

For HammerZone owner Marcus Davis, it's a perfect fit. "I'm a City resident; Rick Freeman, our baseball director, is the head baseball coach at Fairfax High School; and my sons played in Fairfax Little League," said Davis. "So I figured this would be a great location."

"We're also a spot for eight Stars travel baseball teams to practice now, and it'll grow to 12 teams in the fall," he continued. "We have six batting cages; two automatic pitching machines; Hit Trax, a baseball-simulation game; a multipurpose turf area; and a collegiate-style weight room with free weights, medicine balls, sleds and spot racks."

Taking a holistic approach to training, HammerZone focuses on educating, motivating and equipping athletes with a foundation for on and off the field. Its coaches are certified to provide sport-specific training, as well as to develop the speed, strength and conditioning needed to excel in competition.

The nearly 10,000-square-foot facility recently had its official ribbon-cutting, and attendees included Sen. Chap Petersen (D-34th); Fairfax Mayor David Meyer; City Council members Janice Miller, Sang Yi and Tom Ross; Assistant Economic Development Director Danette Nguyen; and Central Fairfax Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Jennifer Rose.

"Baseball is life and our national pastime," said Meyer. "It's always the quintessential American game. Baseball requires skill and practice and is often a battle of wits between who's on the mound and who's at the plate. Young people playing it have to consider all the possibilities and exercise their minds, as much as their bodies."

Furthermore, he said, "I appreciate HammerZone's investment in our community. And its climate-controlled environment enables young athletes to practice 12 months a year."

Petersen is also delighted that this business chose Fairfax City as its home. "Baseball's a sport where you have to think ahead and have a vision for where you're going with your team," Petersen said. "It's the same with a business, and HammerZone planned

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Fairfax Mayor David Meyer cuts the ribbon for HammerZone Sports in Fairfax Circle.



From left are Rick Freeman, Tom Ross, David Meyer, Marcus Davis, Eric Rhodes, Sang Yi, Janice Miller and Chap Petersen.



From left are Nick Gounaris, assistant fitness coach, and Eric Rhodes in the strength-training area.



Rising Fairfax High senior Jack Balderson practices his pitching.

ahead during the pandemic. I grew up with Ricky and have great respect for those who play baseball, and I know they're going to be successful here."

Eric Rhodes, co-owner and fitness director, is also an important part of HammerZone's equation. "I was a college strength coach for six years, so being able to team up with Marcus and Rick is a dream come true," said Rhodes. "You need to be strong to play the sport and getting kids here for the fitness part will help them have a more successful career."

As for Freeman, he said, "For Marcus and I, it's a dream we both shared to have some-

thing like this for the kids in the community, and for the community, as a whole. This is exactly what we hoped it would be. Thank you for supporting us, and we all look forward to making you proud."

HammerZone is open seven days a week. Current hours (while school is out) are Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-9 p.m.; and Saturday-Sunday, 10 a.m.-5p.m. It offers various camps, a membership hitting program, semi-private fitness training and a high-school membership program.

❖ For more information – including sign-ups for the fall-prep camps happening this month – go to HammerZoneSports.com.

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

‘Humans Need to Set an Example for the Future’

Fairfax City adopts 5-cent tax on plastic bags.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

In 2020, the Virginia General Assembly gave cities and counties within the commonwealth the authority to enact a tax on disposable, plastic bags. After extensive research, City staff then gave several, informational presentations to Fairfax City Council, beginning in October 2021.

There were two more in March of this year, plus another during the July 12 Council meeting. And after Sustainability Coordinator Stefanie Kupka answered the Council members’ questions at that meeting, Council adopted a 5-cent, plastic-bag tax, effective Jan. 1, 2023.

It’s expected to yield \$270,000 in City revenue during the first 12 months. But as Councilmember So Lim noted, this number would eventually decrease, because the whole purpose of this tax is to change people’s habits so that they’ll use reusable bags instead of plastic bags that end up littering streets and clogging waterways.

“Hopefully, that’s the goal – to bring in \$0 of revenue, if the program is successful,” said Kupka. “The revenue estimate is just to give Council a rough idea of what it could possibly be.”

The tax will apply to each disposable plastic bag provided to customers by any grocery store, convenience store or drugstore within the City. It’s due whether or not the bag is sold to the customer or is provided for free, and it will be collected, administered and enforced by the Virginia Tax Commissioner.

Retailers collecting the tax will keep 1 cent of it per bag, with the City receiving 4 cents. Fairfax will not have any responsibilities or powers to collect, administer or enforce this tax. It will receive its share monthly, after costs incurred by the Virginia Department of Taxation in connection with this tax are deducted. And, said City Commissioner of the Revenue Page Johnson, “Those administrative costs are very minor.”

Exempt from the tax are durable plastic bags (with handles) intended for multiple reuse, as well as plastic bags used solely to wrap, contain or package ice cream, meat, fish, poultry, produce, unwrapped bulk food items, or perishable food items to avoid damage or contamination. Also exempt are plastic bags used to carry dry cleaning or prescription drugs, plus multiple plastic bags sold in packages and intended to be used as garbage, pet waste or leaf-removal bags – although the latter are separately prohibited within the City.

According to the National Geographic Society, American consumers use one plastic bag a day, and their disposal after use is a major problem. While some bags are recycled, the majority are not.

“Plastic bags contain harmful chemicals and never truly decompose,” explained Kupka. “And they’re harmful to animals, marine life and the environment. A Duke University study showed that plastic-bag taxes have been shown to reduce plastic-bag usage by 64 percent and result in a significant reduc-



Stefanie Kupka

tion in litter and pollution.”

The City staff report noted that “Plastic pollution drastically threatens the Chesapeake Bay on a regional and global context. Broken down microplastics from plastic bags can never be taken out of the environment. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation found that 98 percent of all water samples in the Bay currently contain microplastics. [And] both large items of plastic debris and microplastics threaten oysters, fish and other marine life through ingestion or entanglement.”

The report also stressed that blocked storm drains from plastic bags and pollution create flooding hazards that hinder traffic flow through the City and are costly to clean up. In addition, it stated, “The manufacturing of plastic bags from fossil fuels – and their transportation to their end-use destination – contribute to greenhouse gas emissions and toxic air pollution. Leached chemicals and microplastics threaten our waterways and the longevity of the surrounding environment.”

Fairfax City’s plastic-bag tax would affect 39 City businesses. Most retailers here provide the optional use of single-use, plastic bags. Trader Joe’s, Aldi and Amazon Fresh do not offer disposable plastic bags at checkout. Trader Joe’s and Twin’s Ace Hardware both offer paper bags; and at Aldi, customers must use discarded cardboard boxes or their own reusable bags.

The tax revenue may only be used for specific purposes, including environmental cleanup, education programs designed to reduce environmental waste, mitigation of pollution and litter, and providing reusable bags to recipients of SNAP or WIC benefits.

To ease the transition to the new tax, said Kupka, “Staff will conduct educational outreach to residents and businesses, prior to its implementation.” Toward that end, it asked Council for \$8,000, which will include the costs of distributing these education and outreach materials, as well as a limited number of reusable bags to low-income residents.

Fairfax, Loudoun and Arlington counties have already enacted a plastic-bag tax, as



People participating in a stream cleanup.

have the cities of Alexandria, Falls Church, Fredericksburg and Roanoke. Councilmember Tom Ross asked if they’ve learned any lessons from it yet.

“The jurisdictions that enacted the tax Jan. 1 said it’s worked well and that prior education was really helpful,” replied Kupka. “It provides an economic disincentive to people – a nudge – to stop using plastic bags.”

“Why doesn’t it apply to restaurants, ABC stores, clothing and hardware stores?” asked Councilmember Sang Yi. Kupka answered that the City can only do what the state’s enabling legislation allows it to do. Yi also worried about the extra costs incurred by families when grocery shopping.

But Faiza Alam, an environmental science teacher at Katherine Johnson Middle School, told the Council, “I absolutely support this ordinance.” Speaking at the March 22 public hearing, she said, “Humans need to change their behavior and set an example for the future that plastic bags are not OK. I teach that to my students.”

At the July 12 meeting, Lim asked how the tax would affect plastic bags used for deliveries. “If the store is within the City’s boundaries, the tax would apply,” said Kupka.

Yi asked what the City’s current costs are to clean up its plastic-bag litter, and Kupka replied, “Staff time, plus materials and equipment used during our environmental cleanups.”

“The General Assembly passed a very narrow law that only addresses a piece of the problem,” said Yi. “Is the juice worth the squeeze?”

“In order for this tax to be a success, we have to reach out to the community to make sure they understand the importance of reducing plastic use and that they decide to use reusable bags in other stores, as well,” said Kupka. “Although we don’t have the authority to do more, it’s a step in the right direction. And by reducing a source of plastic bags in our waste stream, we’re really making a difference – and every little bit counts.”

Councilmember Joe Harmon asked if the City’s government has a plan to reduce its own plastic waste, and Kupka said it currently doesn’t.

“I’m delighted to support this measure because we do have a lot of public spaces which have lots of invasives,” said Councilmember Janice Miller. “And it would be nice to be able to support more than [the City’s present] two cleanups a year. So I’m pleased to know that monies from this source could be used for these types of activities.”

Ross agreed with her about the chance to rid Fairfax of plastic bags in its public areas and “hopefully, change behavior. And I’d like to get an update, after six months, to see how this is going, because I think it’ll have a huge impact. I walk through our parks and on our trails and constantly see plastic bags floating in places where they shouldn’t be. So I’m happy to support this.”

Councilmember Jon Stehle said he, too, approves of the tax. And he noted he’s become aware of his plastic-bag usage by grocery-store checkout screens asking how many bags he’s used.

PEOPLE

Poet Laureate of Alexandria Selected for \$50K Fellowship

KaNikki Jakarta, poet laureate of Alexandria, was awarded a 2022 American Academy of Poets Laureate Fellowship.

These \$50,000 awards are given to honor poets of literary merit who have been appointed to serve in civic positions, and enable them to undertake meaningful, impactful and innovative projects that engage their fellow residents, including youth, with poetry, helping to address issues important to their communities as well as create new work.

KaNikki Jakarta is a performance poet and the author of two poetry collections, including *Alabama Girl*, *Virginia Woman* (Great Publishing Company, LLC, 2021); three novels; and a memoir. Jakarta is the inaugural poet in residence for the Northern Virginia Fine Arts Association. She is the first African American poet laureate of Alexandria, where she hosts #KaNikkiHarmony and facilitates several workshops.

Jakarta will launch "How to Poet," an eight-week workshop/seminar offered virtually and in person. Spoken word poets will utilize their experiences to create a curriculum with step-by-step information. "How To Poet" will also offer performance mentorships to young poets ages sixteen to twenty-one. The workshops and seminars will assist with a wide variety of topics such as manuscripts, marketing, and booking profitable performance opportunities. Performance mentors will provide information to youth on stage presence, poem memorization, tone, pace, pitch, and more.

The Academy of American Poets is awarding a combined total of \$1.1 million to its 2022 Poet Laureate Fellows. These 22 individuals, each of whom will receive \$50,000, have been named poets laureate of states, cities, and counties, and have made positive contributions to their communities in these roles and beyond. Funds will support their respective public poetry programs in the year ahead as presented in their proposals to the Academy.

Holly Karapetkova, the Poet Laureate of Arlington County, has also been selected for a 2022 American



PHOTO BY LAKAYE MBAH

KaNikki Jakarta

Academy of Poets Laureate Fellowship. Karapetkova is a Professor of Literature and Languages at Marymount University.

The public position of poet laureate began in 1919 when Governor Oliver Shoup appointed Alice Polk Hill the Poet Laureate of Colorado. Fifteen other states followed suit, all establishing poet laureate positions by 1936. A similar national position was created when the Library of Congress named Joseph Auslander its first Consultant in Poetry in 1937. This position was renamed the Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry in 1985. On July 12, 2022, Ada Limón was named the 24th poet to serve in this capacity, succeeding Joy Harjo.

with Virginia Fresh Match, FRESH-FARM, Cornerstones, Arcadia and Britepaths, you can use your EBT card at the McCutcheon/Mount Vernon, Annandale, Reston and Lorton Farmers Markets.

Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/farmers-market-week for the Farmers Market Week schedule and list of activities.

SEPT. 13 TO NOV. 17
ESL Class. 7-9 p.m. At Lord of Life Lutheran Church, 5114 Twinbrook

Road, Fairfax. Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced level English classes. Classes will be in-person or online. Classes will meet twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7 to 9 p.m. Books are included in class cost. Email: Heather@andberg.org.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Parent Support Partners, a service of the Healthy Minds Fairfax initiative, are all parents who have

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 13

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 2

Fairfax County. We invite you to bike to your local Fairfax County farmers market. To find a safe route, see the Fairfax County Bicycle Map. While you're at the market, stop by the Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling (FABB) table to learn about safe biking strategies and more.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP) EBT cards can be used at select Fairfax County Farmers Markets. Thanks to partnerships

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OPINION

Virginia is Blowing in the Wind... with Clean Energy

BY DELEGATES MARK SICKLES
AND PAUL KRIZEK

What can we do in Virginia to reduce greenhouse gasses and slow the warming of the planet? Imagine almost two hundred structures each one-third taller than the Washington Monument so far from shore that you can only see them on a clear day with binoculars, and in water over a hundred feet deep, using the strong headwinds over the Atlantic Ocean to create enough energy to power as many homes as we have here in Fairfax County plus another 220,000 homes!

This will soon become reality because the General Assembly passed the Virginia Clean Economy Act (VCEA) in 2020 under Democratic leadership. The current initiative may be only the beginning as there are six more off-shore wind farm sites under review. It won't be long before wind is one of the biggest

producers of energy in the Commonwealth, and Hampton Roads could be the clean energy hub for the East Coast.

The two of us, your Mount Vernon and Franconia area Delegates, are committed to this major transition to renewable energy. The VCEA requires Dominion Energy Virginia and Appalachian Electric Power to completely transition from carbon-emitting carbon fuels to 100 percent renewable energy sources by 2045 and 2050, respectively.

Furthermore, in separate legislation, Virginia became a member of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), the first southern state to join. RGGI sets a carbon emissions cap for power companies and charges them for the carbon they emit. The revenue collected is used to address climate change through low-income energy efficiency programs and flood protection efforts, which are especially critical considering the recent horrific floods in Buchanan County in the far south-

west of Virginia. These recent General Assembly initiatives are major drivers for the transition to cleaner sources of energy, such as wind and solar. Though Governor Youngkin has threatened to leave RGGI, he has not identified an alternative source of funds to undertake these climate change mitigation investments. His recent anti-RGGI executive order is a statement of intent — he cannot act to dismantle the effort without legislation.

In addition to Dominion's plan to reach carbon neutrality in Virginia by 2045, the energy company has promised to reach net-zero carbon and methane emissions in all sixteen states it serves by 2050, meaning that much of it will be accomplished far sooner, which is essential to our survival due to the destruction wrought by climate change.

Currently, there are two smaller test-pilot wind turbines in place which consistently have surpassed capacity factor expectations and

can serve up to 3,000 homes at peak. Each turbine's height is 620 feet. The rest of the upcoming project includes 176 wind turbines in about a 113,000-acre matrix, located 27 miles east off the shore of Virginia Beach, far past where almost all birds fly and way beyond the view shed from Virginia Beach. The matrix location is cost-effective, avoids blocking major sea vessel routes, and minimizes damage to the turbines and the environment through lessons learned with Europe's robust off-shore program. This is an approach to protecting all the aquatic species and essential fish habitat. The plan calls for halting all work on the construction for five months to avoid interference with the migration of right whales. The turbine infrastructure will power up to 660,000 homes after completion providing power to almost 25% of the homes Dominion serves in Virginia. Dominion

SEE CLEAN ENERGY, PAGE 7

Pride, History for BRT

To the Editor—

What's in a location and name? Pride and History!

Now is the time for Fairfax County to switch locations and slightly rename two BRT stations: Hybla Valley and Gum Springs.

Gum Springs is at both entrances/exits for two proposed BRT stations.

❖ Hybla Valley BRT station is proposed at Richmond Highway & Fordson Road, which is the most recognized and used main entrance/exit into Gum Springs. Gum Springs was founded 189 years ago during 1833 by a freed slave named West Ford. Fordson Road is named after West Ford. This station should be slightly renamed Hybla Valley/Gum Springs and relocated at Richmond Highway & Sherwood Hall Lane.

❖ Gum Springs BRT station is proposed at Richmond Highway & Sherwood Hall Lane. Sherwood Hall Lane is named after a white family. This station should be slightly renamed Gum Springs/West Ford and relocated at Richmond Highway and Fordson Road.

The slight renaming of the BRT stations at Gum Springs two entrances/exits are not usual. For example, Falls Church has two stations on the Metro orange line: 1) East Falls Church and 2) West Falls Church.

The switching of locations and slightly renaming supports wayfinding navigation. For example, Fairfax County recently renamed an entire magisterial district from Lee to Franconia because that district's name was associated with the confederacy and slavery. Afterwards, the newest Franconia community center was renamed from Lee District Community Center to Hybla Valley Community for the same reasons.

Without the renaming and relocation, visiting the Hybla Valley Community Center, would create confusion for visitors by exiting the Hybla Valley BRT station that is currently proposed at Richmond Highway and Fordson Road and walking an extra mile only to learn that the better exit would have been the BRT station proposed at Richmond Highway & Sherwood Hall Lane, currently named Gum Springs.

Also, a planned marketing walking tour of Gum Springs begins at Richmond Highway and Fordson Road because its historical markers are along Fordson Road — not Sherwood Hall Lane. Current and proposed historic markers along Fordson Road include Annie Harper (approved by Virginia Department of Historic Resources but not yet erected), Woodlawn Methodist Church, Pride of Fairfax, Bethle-

hem Baptist Church and a newly approved DHR historical marker for West Ford.

The Hybla Valley and Gum Springs BRT station names, and locations are currently misplaced that affects Gum Springs history, cultural and wayfinding navigation.

Likewise, station names are tantamount to its community. So, why is Huntley House attached to the Hybla Valley BRT station, currently proposed at the entrance of the Gum Springs BRT station, when it is more in alignment with the Lockheed Boulevard BRT station that includes Huntley Meadows? Why should the cultural theme at

Hybla Valley BRT station, which is the currently proposed theme at the main entrance into Gum Springs about retail and not the history of Gum Springs?

There really should not be a survey on a theme for the BRT stations at the entrances/exits of Gum Springs. As the oldest African American community in Fairfax County, Gum Springs has an established history and its community has a theme!

Queenie Cox
President, NGSCA
www.ngsca.org
Alexandria

Let Us Know Your View

Connection Newspapers welcomes views on any public issue. Letters must be signed. Include home address and home and business numbers; we will only print your name and town name. Letters are routinely edited for length, libel, grammar, good taste, civility and factual errors.

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OPINION

Working for a Safer, More Efficient Transportation System

BY SEN. SCOTT SUROVELL

This is an update on several important transportation projects underway in our area, including the U.S. 1 Speed Study, undergrounding utilities on U.S. 1, the I-495 Southside Express Lanes Study, and the Youngkin Administration's reallocation of transit funds.

Since 2017, we have seen the following on U.S. 1 in Fairfax County:

- * 1,785 crashes
- * 1,185 injuries
- * 15 deaths

The per-lane-miles-traveled accident rate between Fort Belvoir and Hybla Valley is 70% higher than the Virginia and Fairfax County averages. From Hybla Valley to Alexandria it is 40% higher. These are troubling numbers. The \$800 million widening of U.S. 1 and construction of bus rapid transit will bring significant safety improvements and is being engineered with lane widths assuming a 35 MPH speed limit.

Last week, the Virginia Depart-

ment of Transportation (VDOT) held a public hearing to announce the preliminary results of its study to lower the speed limit on U.S. 1 during the eight years between today and the completion of U.S. 1 construction. VDOT's study showed that a 35 MPH speed limit would significantly improve safety and reduce a driver's travel time on the seven-mile stretch by only 90 seconds. VDOT is taking public comments on its website before finalizing its recommendation.

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors recently had their first public discussion on undergrounding utilities on U.S. 1 as part of the widening plans and examined a new utility fee to pay for the undergrounding, an outgrowth of legislation I carried in 2017 and 2019. Over 450 Mount Vernon residents signed the petition I circulated with Del. Paul Krizek requesting County action. County staff expressed concern that undergrounding utilities could jeopardize funding from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). It is

SEE SUROVELL, PAGE 15

Clean Energy

FROM PAGE 6

expects to receive approval for the project from the Virginia State Corporation Commission this month and finish construction by the end of 2026. The turbines are expected to have a 30-year life span, but with major advancements being made in the renewable energy field, the turbines will likely live for far longer.

Dominion is partnering with experienced companies to complete construction of the project as it makes this huge commitment toward renewable energy. An in-depth study of the Hampton Roads region took place and included holding various community meetings to gauge feedback for the project. The study found that the only sea life impacted by the construction are conch and black sea bass and they have already coordinated with commercial fishery stakeholders and environmental groups to address any issues that might occur. Once constructed, the wind turbines will be tethered underground to offshore substations. The offshore substation will then connect to an onshore switching

station which will transition cables above ground to connect to an onshore substation which delivers the electricity to the grid.

In addition to the tremendously positive impact on the environment, the project will also provide major benefits to the Virginia economy. During its construction, these windmills will create around 900 good jobs annually, many of which will be important union jobs, which will provide around \$143 million in economic output; during operation, the project will provide 1,100 jobs and \$210 million in economic output each year. VCEA requires Dominion Energy to prioritize hiring veterans, historically disenfranchised people, and Virginia residents for this historic initiative. The act kickstarts our clean energy future by eliminating nearly five million tons of carbon dioxide emissions a year, powering nearly 25% of our homes, and providing substantial job opportunities that will flow through the economy.

If you would like to learn more about the project, visit <https://coastalvawind.com/>.

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From those heights, she doesn't like to look down.



This is the mural in the early stages but there's more coming.

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Local Artist Takes on A Three-Story Mural

Wall of designs and bubbles adds to the portfolio of Marisela Rumberg.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax artist Marisela Rumberg is a painter, an art teacher, and fiber artist, but this summer, she found herself in a cherry-picker basket, painting a mural on the side of an apartment building nearly 40 feet over the streets of Culpeper in southwestern Virginia. That's what it takes to be an artist these days.

"This is the craziest thing I've done in my life," Rumberg said. "I can't look down because I panic," she said.

It all started earlier in summer when she was teaching a class in Culpeper, and at the end of the class, she asked if there was another project. An apartment owner stepped up and suggested a mural on the side of his three-story building. Rumberg was glad to accept the challenge and started thinking about the design immediately. What she didn't think about was being in a cherry-picker lift, where she ran the controls and there was nothing between the basket and the ground.

On day one, she looked at the basket and was a little apprehensive, but it all finally came together. "I'm loving it," she said. In the town of Culpeper, she's turned into a little bit of a celebrity. "The residents of the building, they come out a lot," she said, and

once she announced it on her social media, followers began to write back and visit. "A bunch of social media followers bring me snacks," she said.

Her design is basically a black and white picture of lines, bubbles and shapes but she promises to put a little bit of color in the middle. Her sons came out one day and helped paint some of the piece near the ground, but she is the only one in the cherry-picker basket.

Rumberg tries to get out there every day but it usually ends up being a few times a week because of weather and the equipment operator schedules. She's on schedule to finish the mural in about the second week of August if everything goes right. One time, she panicked though and froze up, and if it wasn't for one of the residents she calls "Super George," to help her out they might have had to get the fire department out there with their ladders.

From Mexico to Mural Artist

Rumberg was born and raised in Mexico and has a degree in International Economics and a job with Fairfax County as a Spanish-English interpreter. She owes her skills in art to her grandfather who was a chef and painter. Although her mother used to design clothes for her and her sister, Rumberg didn't become interested in fiber arts

until she married and moved to the U.S. Rumberg began taking a few quilting classes before moving on to the Workhouse Arts Center in 2015 and The Torpedo Factory Arts Center a year later.

She has become a Certified Zentangle Teacher and has developed her signature style of incorporating sophisticated fiber arts and mixed media techniques such as eco-printing, wet cyanotype, thread painting, fiber sculpting, abstract drawing and more recently abstract painting, into her work. There's a little "Zentangle," in her building mural design too.

Her quilting skills grew, and now she is an award-winning quilter whose work has been exhibited in five countries on three continents, several times at the Houston

International Quilt show, and published in several art-quilt books. Birds are a big topic she incorporates in her works, as well as historic Mexico.

The closest thing to a mural in her career is one of the LOVE statues that were being painted a few years ago. Rumberg painted the one in Occoquan, which she refers to as her first mural. "That was small compared to the giant building," she said.



Artist Marisela Rumberg back at the Torpedo Factory.



Marisela Rumberg in the cherry-picker.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HOLLY SEIBOLD

BRAWS founder Holly Seibold speaking to one of the many subcommittee meetings she's attended over the last six years.



The first year she tried to pass the Dignity Act, lawmakers stripped the word 'dignity' from the title and killed the bill. Later that afternoon she was asked to stand and be recognized from the gallery (upper left) of the House chamber.

Period of Advocacy Advocates for menstrual equity lost again and again. Until they won.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
THE CONNECTION

Schoolhouse Rock makes it sound so easy. But Holly Seibold knows the reality of getting an idea to become a law is a lot more complicated than the celebrated 1976 song. It took her six years to persuade lawmakers to ditch the sales tax on menstrual products. But finally — with a little luck and help from a Republican campaign promise — she was able to achieve her goal.

"It's important to never give up," said Seibold, who says her success offers an object lesson for anyone who has an idea for legislation. "Pivot. Tailor it to who is in the majority. Try to get what you can, and don't give up."

It all started back in 2015, she read an article in the Huffington Post about how a New York nonprofit organization provided suits to unemployed women for job interviews. It made her wonder about women who needed bras and menstrual supplies, especially in homeless shelters. So she looked around for an organization in Northern Virginia that could help offer supplies to women in need. She couldn't find one, so she created her own.

Before long, she had a nonprofit organization called Bringing Resources to Aid Women's Shelters. The name was a "backronym" designed so that BRAWS became the cheeky name of the organization. With the new organizational backing, she was able to scale up the operation receiving more donations and distributing more supplies.

Meanwhile, she started pressing lawmakers to eliminate the 6 percent sales tax on pads and tampons. In January 2017, she took her concerns to the legislative hearing of the Fairfax delegation.

"There was a moment during Seibold's allotted three-minute speech where both audience and delegation seemed a bit taken aback by a public discussion about women's menstrual cycles and the products they need during those days," wrote Andrea Worker in the Vienna Connection at the time. "Despite



Jennifer Boysko

any initial discomfort, at the conclusion of her remarks, Seibold returned to her seat to rousing applause."

AFTER THE APPLAUSE died down, Seibold confronted the stark reality of making legislation happen. She met with Del. Mark Keam (D-35), but he told her he had already tried and failed to eliminate the sales tax on menstrual products. Sen. Chap Petersen (D-34) told her he was sympathetic, but he added that he disagreed with the approach of eliminating the tax for all taxpayers without some sort of means test to identify people harmed by it. Eventually, she connected with state Sen. Jennifer Boysko (D-33), who was in the House of Delegates at the time.

Boysko and Seibold started strategizing about the best way to make an argument before Republicans who control the subcommittees they would need to win over. They determined that they would try to avoid discussion of menstruation by calling the bill the "Dignity Act." So finally the day arrived, and Seibold set out for Richmond before sunrise with a copy of her prepared remarks and a sense of hopefulness that lawmakers



The Vienna Connection helped Holly Seibold put pressure on lawmakers to take action, in this case in 2017.

"I was determined to keep fighting and not give up."
— Holly Seibold, founder of the nonprofit Bringing Resources to Aid Women's Shelters

would see the wisdom in ditching the tampon tax.

"There was one amendment made to that bill. It was to strip the name the Dignity Act from the bill," recalled Boysko. "And then they killed it."

Seibold was bitterly disappointed. But Boysko invited Seibold to the gallery of the House of Delegates, where members applauded as she stood to be recognized. Despite the setback, she was determined to keep pressing lawmakers, and the next year she was back at it. This time, she decided to take on an additional fight — making sure

pads and tampons are available at jails and prisons. Del. Kay Kory (D-38) introduced a bill that shined a spotlight on the lack of access, and the Department of Corrections announced it would start providing pads and tampons to women at no cost.

"Public shaming works sometimes," concluded Kory after the bill passed. "I'll have to do it more often."

Once again, Boysko's bill to eliminate the sales tax was blocked, But Seibold was determined to try again next year. When lawmakers convened for the next General Assembly session, she was also advocating for menstrual supplies to be in public school bathrooms so students wouldn't be forced to miss class because they are menstruating. To help make the case, she brought students to Richmond to testify in subcommittee meetings where lawmakers were considering the legislation.

"I got my period in the middle of a standardized test in ninth grade, and there wasn't anything I could do because there weren't any products in the bathroom for me to use," said Evie Garces-Foley, a high school student in Falls Church. "And I couldn't ask a friend because everyone was testing. So I kind of just sat there miserable."

The bill requiring school systems to take action was an unfunded mandate, which meant that lawmakers didn't set any money aside to make it happen. Nevertheless, it was yet another partial victory for the cause. And Seibold was determined to keep trying. And then she received help from an unexpected source. Republican candidate for governor Glenn Youngkin campaigned on a platform of eliminating the grocery tax. After the election, he was looking for a way to turn his campaign promise into a reality.

"We have seen the price of groceries go through the roof," said Youngkin during an event in Leesburg as lawmakers were meet-

SEE ADVOCACY, PAGE 14

Financing the Rampage

Economic toll of gun violence is more than \$14 billion a year for Virginia.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
THE CONNECTION

All those school security measures to harden your local elementary school add up. So do trips to the emergency room and the multiple surgeries needed to address gunshot wounds. While the human tragedy of gun violence often grabs headlines, the economic toll continues to mount with each mass shooting. According to Everytown for Gun Safety, the annual cost to Virginia is more than \$14 billion a year.

"We will pay this price tomorrow, the next day and every day thereafter until we, as a nation, decide to address this epidemic," said U.S. Rep. Don Beyer (D-8). "From health care to education, business development to housing, the toll of gun violence is borne by survivors, their families and our entire economy."

As chairman of the Joint Economic Committee, Beyer recently led a hearing titled the "Economic Toll of Gun Violence: How Our Nation Bears the Cost." The hearing examined how the increasing scourge of gun violence in America is a financial drain on school systems and emergency rooms, diverting money away from other priorities to respond to the immediate crisis posed by the increase of mass shootings.

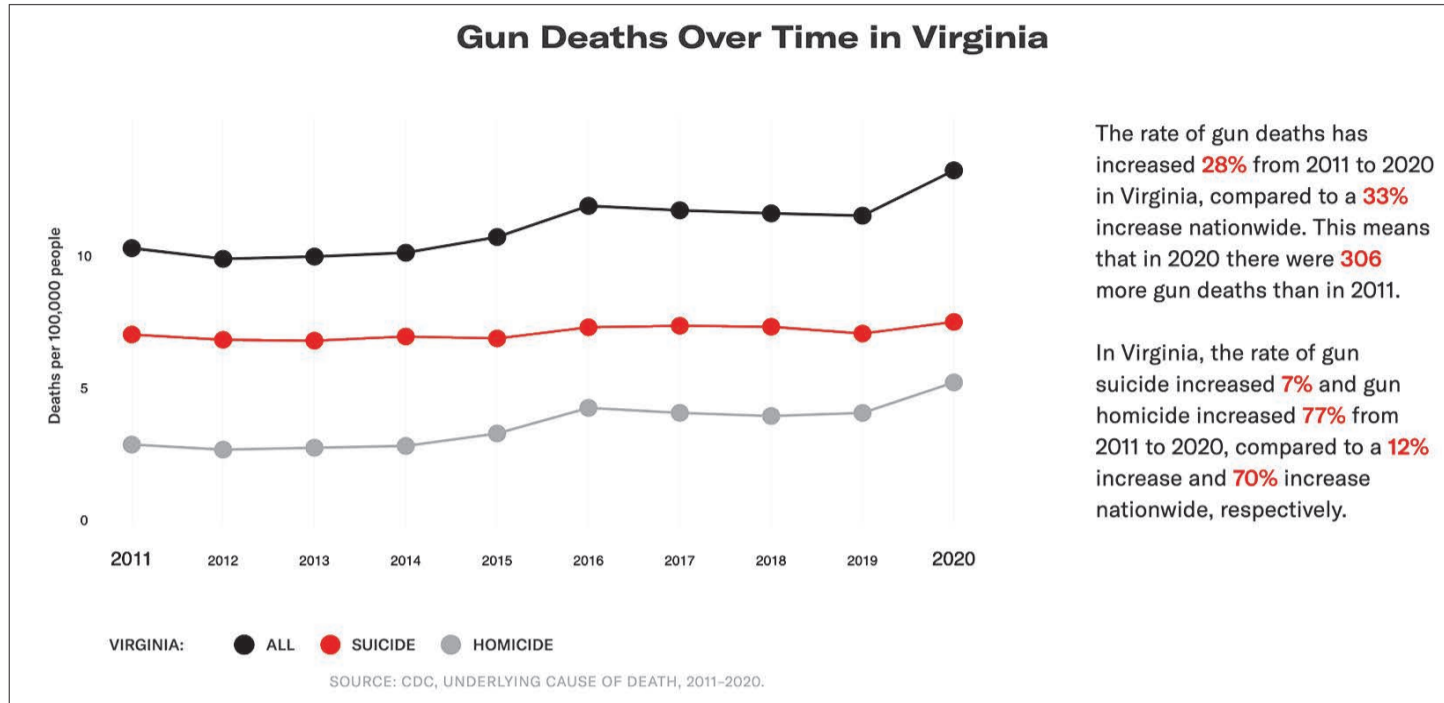


Beyer

"If you talk to any school superintendent, mayor or trauma surgeon in a town that has experienced a shooting, they can produce a long list of costs that extend far beyond the immediate items we are counting," said Sarah Burd-Sharps, senior director of research at Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund. "These include costs to address the trauma of children who don't want to return to school, costs to neighborhood businesses and home values."

GUNSHOT WOUNDS pose a significant challenge to emergency rooms, and the long term strain on health-care premiums is spread out across the system. A recent study from the Government Accountability Office found that firearm-related injuries account for 50,000 emergency room visits each year with an average cost of \$1,500 each. And that's just the initial visit. Those emergency room visits are followed by 30,000 more hospital stays at an average cost of \$31,000 each. Total cost: more than \$1 billion.

"Unsurprisingly, treating gunshot wounds is far more expensive than treating other kinds of violent injuries, such as stab wounds," said Dr. Chethan Sathya, director of the Center for Gun Violence Prevention at Northwell Health. "Patients who require long term care because of their firearm injuries see skyrocketing costs, and the cost is borne by both public and private insurers."



The rate of gun deaths has increased **28%** from 2011 to 2020 in Virginia, compared to a **33%** increase nationwide. This means that in 2020 there were **306** more gun deaths than in 2011.

In Virginia, the rate of gun suicide increased **7%** and gun homicide increased **77%** from 2011 to 2020, compared to a **12%** increase and **70%** increase nationwide, respectively.

In his testimony to the Joint Economic Committee, he pointed out that the initial costs of firearm injuries are three times more expensive than other injuries. He pointed to studies showing firearm injuries are five times more expensive than motor-vehicle injuries, and children with gunshot injuries are more likely to need expensive medical imaging than those with other injuries.

He also presented research showing that the cost of caring for serious gunshot wounds is increasing in part because fatalities after surgery are increasing while admissions for gunshot wounds are increasing. "As other parents are helping their kids get ready for school in the morning, picking them up from soccer practice in the afternoon, and cooking them dinner at night, my fellow doctors and I will still be here, rushing to meet ambulances," said Sathya. "We'll continue to do everything in our power to save as many children as possible, one surgery at a time."

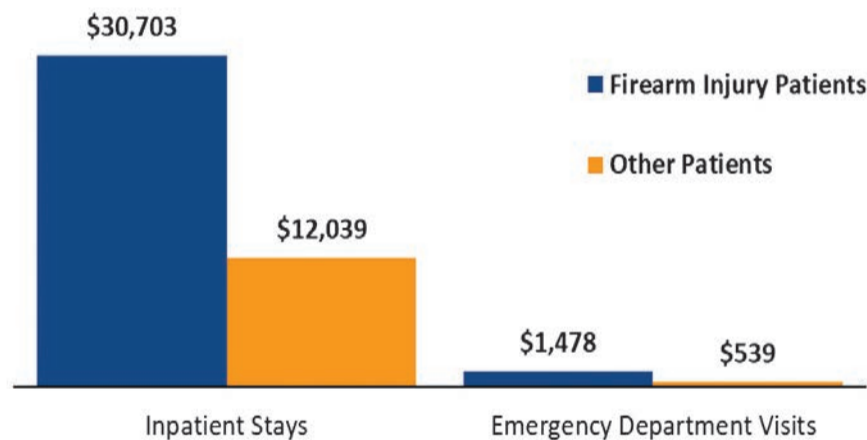
SCHOOL SYSTEMS across Virginia are also taking a financial hit as they spend increasing amounts of money to protect students from the threat of gun violence. Last year

"From health care to education, business development to housing, the toll of gun violence is borne by survivors, their families and our entire economy."

alone, the federal government spent more than \$3 billion to help schools upgrade security in anticipation of more gun violence.

Firearm Injuries Cost Over Two Times More Than Other Hospital Care

Average cost of initial hospital care by injury type, 2016-2017



Source: Government Accountability Office, *Firearm Injuries: Health Care Service Needs and Costs*



And that's a threat that is not expected to decline anytime soon. The total is expected to increase 8 percent each year indefinitely. The recent bipartisan legislation to address gun violence last month includes \$1 billion for schools to create "safe and healthy learning environments," as well as an additional \$300 million for training and equipment that can help during a threat of violence. "For children exposed to a fatal school shooting in their local area, antidepressant use increases significantly for years following an incident," said Beyer. "Students that experience these incidents experience more frequent school absences and have a greater chance of repeating a grade, and they are less likely to graduate from high school or attend college."

Although the Joint Economic Committee

compiled a massive amount of research and data for the hearing last week, Beyer also pointed out that the existing research probably underestimates the toll. Since 1996, federal funds have been prohibited from going toward advocating or promoting gun control.

He said that provision, known as the Dickey Amendment, prevents the Centers for Disease Control from using federal money to conduct gun violence research. As a result, he said, the true scope of the problem is unknown and probably much greater than estimated.

"We need a national health care fund for gun violence survivors that is paid for by taxes on gun and ammunition manufacturers and consumers," said Paul Friedman, founder of the gun-violence prevention group Safer Country. "It would cover all medical bills, both physical and mental, for survivors."



PHOTO COURTESY OF GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

George Mason and other local colleges and universities unite to address gun violence.

Local Colleges Address Gun Violence

Leaders at local colleges and universities will use research to recommend action to reduce gun violence.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Washington-area colleges and universities have united to find research-based strategies to reduce gun violence. The movement comes on the heels of several devastating mass shootings, most recently the school shooting in Uvalde, Texas. Called the “120 Initiative,” the name pays homage to the more than 120 people who die on average each day from gun violence.

“George Mason University originated the idea out of its own belief that no problem — not even America’s gun violence epidemic — is unsolvable,” said Paul Allvin, vice president of strategic communications and marketing at George Mason University. “Mason President Gregory Washington approached his friend University of Maryland President Darryll Pines to lead a new effort to bring faculty from DC-area schools together to find new ways to bring down gun violence in America.”



GMU President Gregory Washington

Faculty and researchers from disciplines that play a role in gun violence, including public health, public safety, mental health and civil rights will work collaboratively to offer recommendations. In addition to George Mason and the University of Maryland, Mary-

mount University, Montgomery College and Northern Virginia Community College are among the schools that will participate. The initiative will be coordinated by the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area.

“The 120 Initiative is a great opportunity for policy to be influenced by research,” said Stephanie Foster, Ph.D., Vice Provost for Academic Affairs at Marymount University. “My research focuses on violence in young adulthood. I’ve been interested in the factors that are likely to exacerbate violent behavior — more importantly, I’m interested in protective factors that insulate against the likelihood of violence.”

Erik Alda, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice at Marymount University added, “Part of my work examines the socioeconomic drivers of crime and violence, and this would include gun violence, too,” he said. “I have done a lot of this work in developing countries where gun violence is a perennial issue, and we can learn a lot from what those drivers are and how they manifest themselves in different contexts. Another stream of my research assesses the impacts of programs or interventions on violence, which would include gun violence.”

Marcus Rosano, Director, Media Relations and Public Relations at Montgomery College said, “We’re still in the process of identifying our experts for the workgroup. The conversation is going on at the academic affairs and presidential office level.”

The research and analysis phase is estimated to take six months to complete and will produce recommendations designed to curtail gun violence.

“Just as smoking deaths were not reduced by legislation alone, neither will gun deaths,” said Allvin. “We just need the help of faculty to recommend effective new strategies to try as we also wait for effective legislation.”

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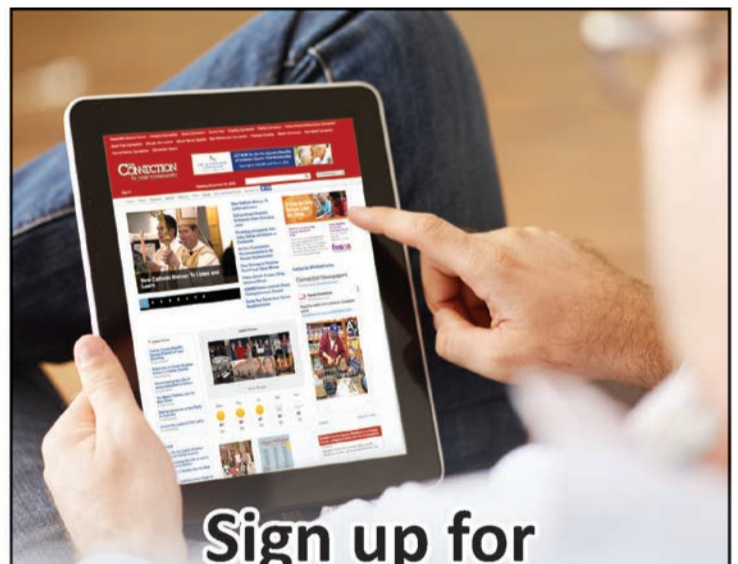


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PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION
Kristina Campbell with her daughter she adopted in 2019.

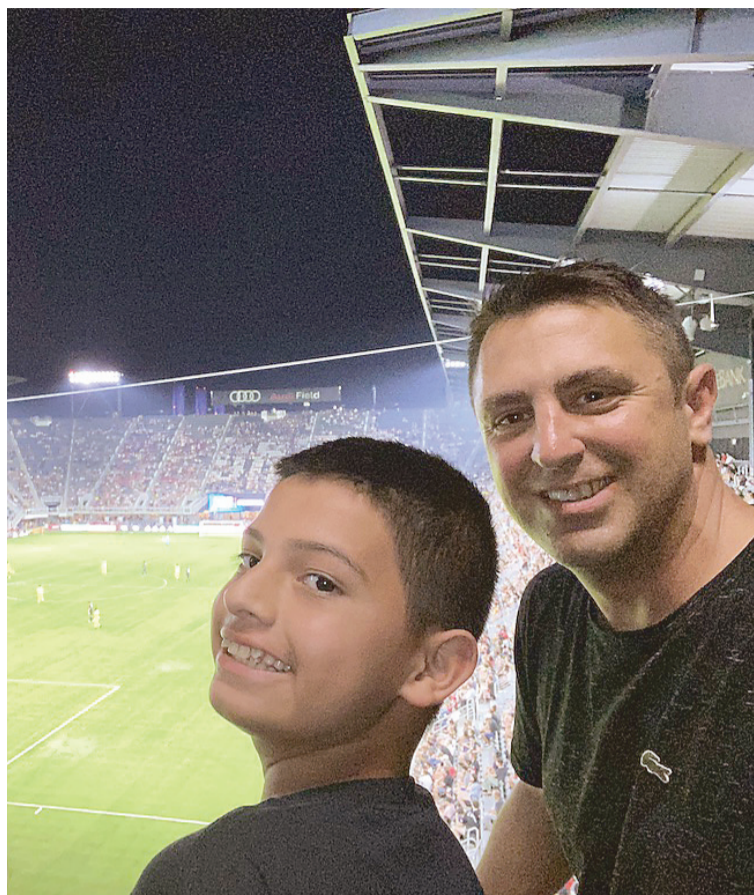


PHOTO CONTRIBUTED
Justin and Russell Barczyk at a game.



SCREENSHOT

Jean, 13, an active leader, says she's very proud of her sister and herself. She says, "I want to be a police officer." Krista, 11, a "girly girl" who "genuinely loves to learn," says, "I am calm, obedient, pretty, and chill." She wants to be a teacher. www.kidsave.org/kids-galleries/

These Children Need You

Colombian orphans vacation locally, dream of connections to their future families.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
 THE CONNECTION

Kidsave changed the names of the children eligible for adoption for security reasons.

Orphans from Colombia eight years old and over are frequently ignored and have little chance of growing up in a family. They need champions to change their lives or face aging out of care alone. This summer, eight families from Northern Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia, including Russell Barczyk and his wife Brigitte Miller of Alexandria, are hosting older orphans eligible for adoption from Colombia for five weeks, through Aug. 8.

They are part of the Kidsave Summer Miracles program. The youth and teens are experiencing life in a U.S. family. For some, it will be the connection to their lasting, caring family.

"My wife and I started looking into consultations with different adoption agencies and available options. We heard about Kidsave (and) the program they have with kids in Colombia," Barczyk said. He explained that 43 Colombian children are spending the summer in the United States, primarily in the Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, and Chicago areas. Eight families in the greater Washington, D.C. area care for nine children, including two sisters. The profiles of all 43 children are available on the Kidsave website.

Host families provide children eligible for adoption the opportunity to spend summer vacations in the United States. While some families will adopt the children they are hosting, other families will become lifelong advocates and others will help the children find their permanent, loving families. According to the nonprofit's website, approximately 80 percent of the children who have participated in the Summer Miracles program since its inception were matched for adoption.

The Kidsave DC Summer Miracles Cookie Decorating event was held at the Jane E. Lawton Community Rec Center in Chevy Chase, Md. on Sunday, July 31. Approximately 40 people, including families interested in adoption, future hosts, current hosts, and orphans from Colombia, were present. Most children engaged in the activity, with Spanish words and much laughter filling the room. For others, especially the hosts and families who adopted years ago, and others, it was an opportunity to talk and compare experiences.

Kristina Campbell was there with her teenage daughter from Colombia, who participated in the LA Kidsave program three years ago. When asked what she liked most about her mother, Kristina's daughter said, "It is the fact that she is my mom." According to Campbell, her daughter learned she would be adopted a few days after returning to Colombia from a Kidsave Los Angeles program. Campbell said the adoption process



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Summer gallery of the Summer Miracles' Kidsave photolistings of children currently available for adoption visiting the D.C. Metro area. www.kidsave.org/kids-galleries/

takes between nine and twelve months.

Beth Dresing is a 10-year Kidsave volunteer, co-chair of the D.C. Metro Summer Miracles board of trustees, a host, and, most importantly, the mother of a son she adopted in 2011. Dresing said he was short and unable to jump hurdles during high school track and field successfully, so he tried out for dance instead. Her son is now a senior in college, majoring in dance and excelling at it.

Barczyk said Justin, age 12, who he and his wife are hosting, enjoys drawing, read-

ing, cooking, watching movies, and listening to Colombian music. According to his online profile, "Justin loves soccer and dreams of traveling to Brazil, specifically to visit their soccer stadiums.... Until then, he's happy to play soccer with his friends—and potentially with his dream family."

Learn more about becoming a Kidsave Visiting Family this summer or view the Summer Miracles Adoption Gallery with profiles and videos of youth currently available for adoption or hosting at - <https://www.kidsave.org/kids-galleries/>.

ENTERTAINMENT

NOW THRU AUG. 27

Summer Saturdays. 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Gunston Hall, 10709 Gunston Road Lorton. Explore history in different ways with this drop-in summer program. Each Saturday will have a host of different activities around a different theme. Savor history, dig in the dirt, and play games as we learn about the 18th century at Gunston Hall. Visit the website: <https://gunstonhall.org/events/summer-saturdays-2/>

NOW THRU OCT. 17

Hummingbird Photo Exhibition. At Green Spring Gardens in Alexandria. For those who can't get enough of the beauty of hummingbirds, a group of local photographers are mounting an exhibition this summer at Green Spring Gardens in Alexandria. The title of the show is "A Bouquet of Hummingbirds," and it will feature works from more than 20 area artists and include hummingbirds from all over the Western Hemisphere. All profits from the sale of photos will be donated to the Friends of Green Spring, a non-profit organization devoted to maintaining the gardens and furthering public education and outreach. At the Historic House at Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria,

FILMS IN THE PARK

Thursdays at 7 p.m. At the Mosaic District's Strawberry Park, 2910 District Ave., Fairfax.
Aug 4 – Spider-Man: No Way Home
Aug 11 – Encanto
Aug 18 – Under the Stadium Lights
Aug 25 – F9 | The Fast & Furious Saga

AUG. 1-31

Point 50 Story Walk. 10 a.m.-10 p.m. At Point 50 Shopping Center, 10334 Fairfax Blvd., Fairfax. A StoryWalk is a free interactive way for students to combine physical activity and literacy while reading a book. Beginning Monday, August 1 through Wednesday, August 31, families can walk through Point 50 and read "Nugget and Fang Go to School" by Tammi Sauer and Michael Slack. The book was chosen to get children excited about returning to school, support the City of Fairfax Regional Library summer reading theme of Oceans of Possibilities, and create engagement opportunities with Fairfax City's business community. Visit the



©Jane Gamble

PHOTO BY JANE GAMBLE

"A Bouquet of Hummingbirds," features works from more than 20 area artists and includes hummingbirds from all over the Western Hemisphere. Through Oct. 17, 2022, free to the public, at the Historic House at Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria.

website: <http://fairfaxcityconnected.com/storywalk22>

RSVP at <https://www.jlnv.org/jlnv-recruiting-event-with-jlnv-moms-affinity-group-aug-6-830-10-a-m/>

FRIDAY/AUG. 5

Deborah Bond Performs. 7:30 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, W16 Rizer Pavilion, Lorton. An integral part of the fabric of the worldwide indie-soul scene, this artist grew up absorbing the golden age sounds of the 70s and 80s soul music, as well as intersecting with Anita Baker, Sade and Chaka Khan...thus forcing her to pursue a career as a recording artist.

SATURDAY/AUG. 6

LESSON ZERO. 7-10 p.m. The Austin Grill presents the music of Oasis recording artist LESSON ZERO for a free show at 8430 Old Keene Mill Rd., Springfield. For additional information, see: www.youtube.com/lessonzero and www.reverbnation.com/lessonzero

SATURDAY/AUG. 6

Community Market, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Workhouse Arts Center Quad. Come and enjoy local vendors, Workhouse Campus Artists, new exhibits, the Lucy Burns Museum and more. The Workhouse Arts Center is located at: 9518 Workhouse Way Lorton, VA 22079

SATURDAY/AUG. 6

JLNV Recruiting Event. 8:30-10 a.m. At Strawberry Park, Mosaic District, 2905 District Avenue, Fairfax. Learn more about becoming a member of the Junior League of Northern Virginia as a mom.

SUNDAY/AUG. 7

NoVA Metaphysical Market. 9:30-5:30 p.m. At Arlington/Fairfax Elks Lodge, 8421 Arlington Blvd., Fairfax. Featuring 17 vendors, besides Psychics and Mediums and Tarot card readings and Reiki Masters, there will also be vendors selling Crystals / Jewelry / Smudge Supplies / Gemstones / Soaps / Herbs / Artwork / Oils / Herbs/ Candles / Incense / Metaphysical Books and Crafts / Tarot Cards / etc. For your free tickets and/or to see info on the vendors go to: <https://nova-metaphysical-market-2022.eventbrite.com>

SUNDAY/AUG. 7

JChris Performs. 2 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, W16 McGuire Woods Gallery, Lorton. A singer-songwriter, pianist, and producer, Chris Ur-

quiaga, known as JChris, is lauded for his exciting performance energy and smooth voice. This Latin pop virtuoso is internationally recognized for his pop compositions which are laced with R&B melodies and Latin rhythms.

WEDNESDAY/AUG. 10

Free Concerts in the Park. 7 p.m. At Burke Lake Park, 7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. Mark your calendars and plan to come out to Burke Lake Park every Wednesday night starting July 13 through August 24 for an incredible line-up of bands, food trucks, 2 Silos beer, and Peterson's Ice Cream. The atmosphere is informal, so bring a blanket and lawn chairs, and relax with friends and family.

SCHEDULE

Aug. 10 – The Road Ducks (Southern Rock)
Aug. 17 – Speidel, Goodrich, Goggin & Lille (Rock)
Aug. 24 – The Colin Thompson Band (Blues Rock)

SATURDAY/AUG. 13

Community Market, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Workhouse Arts Center Quad. Come and enjoy local vendors, Workhouse Campus Artists, new exhibits, the Lucy Burns Museum and more. The Workhouse Arts Center is located at: 9518 Workhouse Way Lorton, VA 22079

SATURDAY/AUG. 13

Second Saturday Art Walk August 2022 6-9 p.m. Visit the Workhouse Monthly Featured Artists. All campus studio buildings will be open from 6-9 p.m. and the artists will be available to chat about their works and processes. The Workhouse Arts Center is located at: 9518 Workhouse Way Lorton, VA 22079

SUNDAY/AUG. 14

T-TRAK Model Train Show. 1-4 p.m. At the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. A display and running of the T-TRAK (tabletop) Model Train Show. Admission: Museum members and ages 4 and under, free; ages 5-12, \$3; ages 13 and older, \$5 (\$6 special events); seniors and military, active and retired, \$4. www.fairfax-station.org, www.facebook.com/FFXSRR, 703-425-9225.

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 5

received training and are qualified to offer education, support and assistance at no cost to families or caregivers. They provide reliable information that families can use in decision-making and are familiar with services and resources that can help families in distress. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/healthy-minds/fairfax or www.nami-northernvirginia.org/parent-peer-support.html.

The Shepherd's Center of Northern Virginia Caregivers' Support Group takes place the first and third Tuesdays of each month, 10-11:30 a.m. via Zoom. This group is for caregivers of family members with dementia. Meetings are gently facilitated. For more information and to get the Zoom link, contact

Jack Tarr at jtarr5@verizon.net or 703-821-6838.

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 donaledge@aol.com.

Docents Needed. Sundays 1-4 p.m. at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road

in Fairfax Station. Greet museum visitors and tell them about the exhibits, the museum and its railroad and Civil War history. Ideal for those interested in railroads, the Civil War and Northern Virginia history. Training and orientation provided. Other volunteer opportunities are gardening, publicity and exhibit planning. Call 703-945-7483.

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

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

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 15

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Plastic Bag Tax

FROM PAGE 4

"It's a laudable goal to reduce plastic-bag usage, but this tax doesn't solve the problem of encouraging the industry to create biodegradable plastics," said Harmon. "And I don't think this is the time to increase the cost of people buying groceries, so I'm going to vote no."

Likewise, Yi said, "It doesn't chip away much at the root of the problem. And adding that extra 5 cents to the cost of people's groceries is a big deal, so I'm not supporting it, either."

Fairfax Mayor David Meyer had the last say. "Putting this ordinance in place doesn't guarantee that we'll see a substantial reduction in the plastic waste in our environment," he said. "But not adopting it guarantees that the problem we have here will continue. Also, it's important that jurisdictions work together in their environmental-management efforts, and our surrounding jurisdictions are doing this."

"We're at the headwaters of the Accotink Creek, with four tributaries in the City, so we have a responsibility to make sure those tributaries are as clean and free from polymers, as much as we can achieve. So I encourage my colleagues to support this ordinance."

Council then voted and approved the new tax, 4-2, with Yi and Harmon voting no.

Period of Advocacy

FROM PAGE 9

ing in Richmond. "Inflation last year was as high as it's been for four years."

But Youngkin had a problem. He kept running into a brick wall: the Virginia state Senate. Democrats who control the chamber were reluctant to go along with the idea, although Boysko recognized that it might be the path needed to finally score a win on eliminating the sales tax for menstrual products. They struck a deal. The governor would get an elimination of the state grocery tax and advocates for menstrual equity would get an elimination for the sales tax on pads and tampons.

"I was determined to keep fighting and not give up," said Seibold. "After six years of effort, the tampon tax has finally been eliminated."

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OPINION

Surovell

FROM PAGE 7

not clear to me why that concern is only now being raised since this discussion has been ongoing for over five years, but I am hopeful that Congressman Don Beyer and Senators Mark Warner and Tim Kaine can work out a solution with the FTA.

VDOT has also begun a study of adding express toll lanes on I-495 from the Springfield "Mixing Bowl" to Prince George's County, Maryland. When the Woodrow Wilson Bridge expansion was finalized in 2005, the extra capacity on the bridge was expressly reserved for transit, including rail. I have serious concerns that toll lanes would permanently eliminate the possibility of rail on the bridge and cannot be accomplished without reducing the current toll-less access on the bridge's existing ten lanes. Additional vehicle capacity creates more vehicle-dependent, sprawling development and adds more vehicle commutes from Prince George's County to Tysons Corner. The Wilson Bridge, which carries heavy interstate traffic, is already clogged almost daily. Rail is a more prudent, forward-looking investment.

The National Park Service instituted traffic calming measures on the south George Washington Memorial Parkway, including a "traffic diet" last year. At the time, VDOT analyzed concerns by several constituents that the traffic diet would gridlock Fort Hunt

Road and predicted no impact. This spring, VDOT analyzed new traffic data at my request and found traffic volumes on Fort Hunt Road have not changed since the Parkway traffic diet was implemented.

Finally, many of us are concerned about the Metro system's lack of capital investment due to insufficient government support. The forthcoming closure of the Yellow Line Bridge over the Potomac River for eight months is the latest reminder. Last week, we discovered that the Youngkin Administration reallocated \$71 million of state transit assistance dollars into statewide road maintenance funds. First, this means that area localities will have to make up the difference with local funds (e.g., your real estate or property tax dollars). Second, it means that transit funds will be used to repave roads across the entire state instead of being spent here.

While road paving needs funding, I am shocked the Governor would take this action while simultaneously claiming we have \$2 billion of unanticipated transportation revenues that can support a \$500 million gas tax cut. Many of us view his action as a raid on Northern Virginia transit to benefit other parts of Virginia. We have asked staff to determine if this unilateral reallocation violates the state budget law.

It is an honor to serve as your state senator. Please email me at scott@scottsurovell.org with your suggestions and feedback.

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 13

- unteer 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.
- Shepherd's Center of Fairfax-Burke serves those 50 and older who no longer drive. Volunteer drivers are needed for trips (Monday-Friday) to medical appointments and companion shopping within the Fairfax/Burke area. Office workers are needed to answer phones in the SCFB office (Monday-Friday) to match drivers and those who need rides. Call 703-323-4788.
- Positive Parenting Strategies Course. At PHILLIPS, 7010 Braddock Road, Annandale. A series of classes and in home consultations taught by PHILLIPS' counselors. Open to all local families. Call Stacy Stryjewski at 703-658-9054.
- Thermal Camera Loan Program. Learn where the energy is leaking out of the home with a special attachment for the iPhone or Android. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/energy or call 703-324-5955 for more.
- Master Gardener Training. The Fairfax County Master Gardener Association offers plant clinics, home turf training or speakers for homeowner's meetings. Fees vary. Visit fairfaxgardening.org or call MG Help Desk at 703-324-8556 for more.
- Fairfax Rotary Club Meeting 12:15-1:30 p.m. Mondays. American Legion, 3939 Oak St., Fairfax. Meetings with luncheon and program. fairfaxrotary.org.
- Civil War Research scholarship to a public or private high school senior who resides in Fairfax, Fairfax City, Prince William County, Manassas City, or Manassas Park from the Bull Run Civil War Roundtable in Centreville, Va. Visit bullrunwrt.org for more.
- Fairfax-based non-profit Britepaths offers free Financial Education Classes Sessions at various locations in the Fairfax County area to low- and middle-income adults who reside throughout Northern Virginia. The offerings are free and open to the public, but reserva-

- tions are required. britepaths.org/news/get-financially-fit-new-year
- Volunteers Needed. PRS is looking for empathetic and caring volunteers to make phone calls to older adults who may be feeling socially isolated. The commitment is one 3-hour shift per week for one year. Located in Arlington. Ages 21 & up. Intensive training provided. Learn more and apply: prsinc.org/caring-volunteering. Questions? Email lpadgett@prsinc.org.
- Burke Lake Seniors Golf League seeks members. Interested golfers are invited to join the Burke Lake Seniors Golf League. Must be 55 and older, enjoy playing golf, meeting new people and having an all-around good time. Reserved tee times on Tuesday and Thursday mornings at the Par 3 Burke Lake Golf Course on Ox Road. Annual dues for the season - April 1 through Oct. 31 - are \$20 plus green fees. For more information, call Charlie Ryan 703-690-4227.
- The Northern Virginia Long Term Care Ombudsman Program needs volunteer advocates for residents in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Contact Lisa Callahan at 703-324-5861, TTY 711 or email Lisa.Callahan@fairfaxcounty.gov. Also visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/olderadultservices/ltoombudsman.
- Fairfax County needs volunteers to drive older adults to medical appointments and wellness programs. For these and other volunteer opportunities, call 703-324-5406, TTY 711 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults and click on Volunteer Solutions.
- Respite Care volunteers give family caregivers of a frail older adult a well-deserved break so they can go shopping, attend a doctor's appointment or just have coffee with a friend. Volunteers visit and oversee the safety of the older adult for a few hours each month. Support and training are provided. Contact 703-324-7577, TTY 711, or Kristin.Martin@fairfaxcounty.gov.
- Volunteer Fairfax provides opportunities for individuals, families, youth and corporate groups for service opportunities at a variety of nonprofit agencies. One-time special events or ongoing activities are available at www.volunteerfairfax.org or call 703-246-3460.

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

Please, help save these historical papers. All gifts will be used to fund our printed newspapers and websites and to meet obligations to our loyal and patient employees, writers, contractors and suppliers.

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

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

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Dispensing Wisdom, Or Not



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Having spent way too much time visiting in a hospital recently, I only have one question: Were there always this many Purell "healthy soap" and hand sanitizers dispensing their healthful cleanliness before the pandemic? If you hadn't noticed, let me be the one to assure you; whatever supply chain issues exist in the world, there appears to be no shortage of Purell soap and hand sanitizer. They are everywhere. On nearly every wall 'round every corner. Of course, there mounted in every bathroom as well. It seems whatever turn, in whatever direction, you'll find a Purell dispenser; on either side, in front of you and/or behind you. In fact, they're everywhere you can imagine and a few places you can't. So far, the only place I haven't seen a Purell dispenser is on the elevator. Though there's always one on the wall immediately outside the elevator's floor stop, barely a step or two to the side.

There are so many dispensers on walls throughout the hospital, I'm wondering if there's an employee specifically assigned to monitor their level and to refill their cartridges the moment their level falls below the Mendoza-type line (extremely low). Given how big this hospital is, and how long the corridors are, if the dispenser isn't replenished the moment its levels are low-ish, it might be days before the dedicated Purell-refill employee returns to that wall. It reminds me of the story I heard years ago while tour-boating in San Francisco Bay. As we floated under The Golden Gate Bridge, the guide said the bridge is constantly being painted. That's because the painting process take so long that by the time the painting is finished at one end, it's time to start painting beginning at the other end. Talk about job security. It's a never-ending brush with destiny, especially when you consider the risk, being so high above water and exposed to the elements. Tending to the Purell dispensers feels like that. As long as the hospital remains open, there will be a need for Purell "healthy soap" and hand sanitizer dispensers and the refills that are necessary.

For all the proper hygiene reasons, the nurses are constantly touching the dispensers; before they enter the patient's room and again when they leave the patient's room and everywhere in between. There's a seemingly non-stop whirl of the motorized apparatus that dispenses the Purell products. In the bathrooms, the "healthy soap" dispensed requires water to finish the task. Outside the bathrooms, the dispenser produces a foamy substance that one is directed to rub their hands until dry. No water required. It has been my observation that of all the things that happen in a hospital, nothing comes close, in its frequency of use or in its sheer numbers than the activity surrounding these Purell dispensers. In second place, a distant second in my opinion, would be the use of the nitrile (not latex) "clean" gloves. They are also mounted on the walls, rarely in the halls, mostly in patient rooms, three boxes: one for small, medium, and large hands. Other than maintenance and food delivery (they were their own gloves), whoever enters a patient's room must glove up. Of course, that only happens after they've waived their hand under the automated Purell dispenser. I certainly haven't been counting, but those boxes, 250 count, are regularly emptied as well, and replaced with new boxes. However, their numbers pale in comparison to the numbers of Purell dispensers and refills.

You'd be surprised what your mind conjures while sitting by yourself in a patient's room, and one who's unable to talk or even squeeze your hand. Comic relief is almost mandatory. And considering the circumstances, wondering is not far from hoping.

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

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