

# CONNECTION McLean ♦ Vienna and Oakton

Kilmer MS Principal Amy Miller and her dogs, Rosie and Pepper.



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Vienna Unveils  
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# PUBLIC NOTICE

## In-Person Public Hearing on the McLean Community Center's FY2024 Budget (July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024)

McLean Community Center Governing Board  
Wednesday, Sept. 28, 6:30 p.m.

Small District 1A-Dranesville residents who wish to speak at the Public Hearing are asked to call 703-790-0123, TTY: 711, to be placed on the speakers list. The draft budget proposal is available on the Center's website. Copies will be available at the Public Hearing.

Written comments may be delivered to the McLean Community Center (see address below) marked "Attention: Executive Director," or sent by email to [holly.novak@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:holly.novak@fairfaxcounty.gov). Written comments may be provided after the Public Hearing up through Monday, Oct. 24.



**McLean Community Center**  
1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean VA 22101  
703-790-0123, TTY: 711  
[www.mcleancenter.org](http://www.mcleancenter.org)

## NEWS

# Military Appreciation Mondays Are Back

First dinner in the series supports Semper Fi and America's Fund.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

**M**ilitary Appreciation Mondays (MAM) returns on Sept. 12 at 5:30 and 7:30 p.m. in Great Falls. For more than 12 years, Bob Nelson Sr. and the Bob Nelson Real Estate Team have been holding MAM dinners at The Old Brogue in Great Falls, located at 760 Walker Road. The annual series raises funds for military causes. The dinner on Sept. 12 will benefit Semper Fi and America's Fund. The nonprofit organization's website states it is "dedicated to providing individual and tailored case management to help service members from every branch of the U.S. Armed Forces navigate complex medical and emotional recovery after an injury or illness."

Nelson established the Military Appreciation Mondays dinners in memory of Sgt. 1st Class Nathan R.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

A Military Appreciation Monday held in 2019 helps support Semper Fi & America's Fund (File Photo 2016)

Chapman. He was a Special Forces Communications Sergeant assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), when he was killed in action during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan on Jan. 4, 2002. He is survived by his wife, daughter, and son.

The way it works is that diners order to buy dinner from the Old Brogue menu. The Brogue, the Bob Nelson Team, and cosponsors each contribute 10 percent of the dinner bill. Usually, the donations end up being one hundred percent of the bill. Reservations are strongly advised. Contact The Old Brogue at (703) 759-3309.

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## 2022-2023 NEWCOMERS & COMMUNITY GUIDE

THE CONNECTION  
Newspapers & Online  
Alexandria Gazette Packet  
Mount Vernon Gazette  
Potomac ALMANAC



Publishes: Sep 14, 2022 | Advertising Due: Sep 8, 2022

Our annual Newcomer's and Community Guides, for each of our 8 communities, provides inside facts on what makes each community special, their secret places, their real power players, how to get involved and more. Inside you'll find information about local history, schools, parks, libraries, local people, elected officials, county/city offices, how decisions are made, and other vital community information.

This year's guide will also include a SENIOR LIVING section. We'll cover topics like local senior services, senior villages, cultural and social activities like Senior Olympics, education, jobs and volunteering.

For Advertising: Call 703.778.9431 or Email  
[sales@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:sales@connectionnewspapers.com)

# NEWS

## Town of Vienna Police Department Headquarters to Open

**Ribbon-cutting ceremony and tours planned for Friday.**

MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

The Vienna Police Department is opening the doors on Friday, Sept. 2, to its new \$14 million police headquarters with a ribbon-cutting celebration and dignitary remarks, followed by a sneak peek tour for locals. The 25-year-old former police building was demolished, and the existing site was redeveloped.

The new facility will benefit the community in many ways, according to Vienna Police Chief James (“Jim”) Morris, who started his position with the town on March 25.

“From the community room to a modern public-safety facility that comes with body



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

The new headquarters for the Town of Vienna Police Department

cameras, new radios, and new in-car video, Vienna will be a prime choice for people looking for a career in law enforcement.”

The building includes a large multipurpose room that can be used by the community and by the department for training and an emergency operations center. There is a sally port, a controlled entry for suspect transfers, a training firing range, a crime scene processing facility, dedicated computer server space, a secure town archive and evidence storage space, a dispatch center, and enough administrative and office space for all sworn and civilian personnel in the building.

“The bike team will relocate from the Bowman House basement, detectives from the Town Hall basement, and property and evidence from two secure storage lockers on Mill Street, making all police operations more efficient. Furniture delivery is expected in mid-September with officers moving into the new facility. It will be nice to have everyone under one roof for the first time since 2007,” Morris said.

## Annual Middle Eastern Food Festival Is Labor Day Weekend

**Church’s legendary hospitality welcomes the community.**

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

The Middle Eastern Food Festival, hosted by Holy Transfiguration Melkite Greek-Catholic Church, returns for its 29th year this Saturday, Sept. 3, 11 a.m.–10 p.m. and Sunday, Sept. 4, 12:30–5 p.m. Located at 8501 Lewinsville Road, the admission-free festival with vendors on church grounds celebrates culture and faith while featuring authentic Middle Eastern foods, with many selections cooked on outdoor grills.

Members of the parish take great pride in the event. At the church’s 25th annual event in 2018, the McLean Connection reported that Protodeacon David Barood said, “It is really about showing hospitality to our neighbors, our friends, and people who just want to learn a little bit about who we are. We pride ourselves on this love of Christ and love of one another that we then want to share with everyone that comes.”

The festival will offer kibbeh, chicken kebabs, falafel, fattoush, hummus, roasted lamb, and other dishes. There is a special roasted lamb dinner on Saturday starting at 6 p.m. For dessert, choose among the baklawa, maamoul, namoura, ghraybeh, and atayef, a pancake-like dessert stuffed with a pistachio mixture and rose-water simple syrup. “It is our largest fundraiser,” said Sonia McCormick, festival publicity.

Families with children can enjoy the moon



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Assad the grill master (File photo)



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Lani selling sweets (File photo)



PHOTO BY CARLYN KRANKING/THE CONNECTION

People line up to purchase food at a past festival. (File photo 2018)

bounce, face painting, pony rides, the petting zoo, and games. A highlight of the event is Saturday night’s 6 p.m. Hafli, a celebration with live music and dancing. Join the Dabke, a traditional rhythmical folk line dance



PHOTO BY CARLYN KRANKING/THE CONNECTION

Shawarma prepares a specialty.

taught by instructors, or take a church tour.

Holy Transfiguration Melkite Greek-Catholic Church is the local parish of the Melkite Eparchy of Newton (Massachusetts). “Mel-

kite” refers to those Catholics whose ancestry is Middle Eastern and who follow the Byzantine Tradition in worship, theology, and spirituality.

FCPS PRINCIPALS AND PUPS

# FCPS Principals and Pups

SEE MORE, PAGE 5



Mount Vernon: Quander Road School Principal Frank Tranfa Jr.- “This is me, Frank Tranfa, principal at Quander Road School, and my Boston Terrier, Ike. Ike’s favorite thing to do is sunbathe and play with his friend Ozzie, the French bulldog.



Vienna: Kilmer MS Principal Amy Miller and her dogs, Rosie and Pepper.

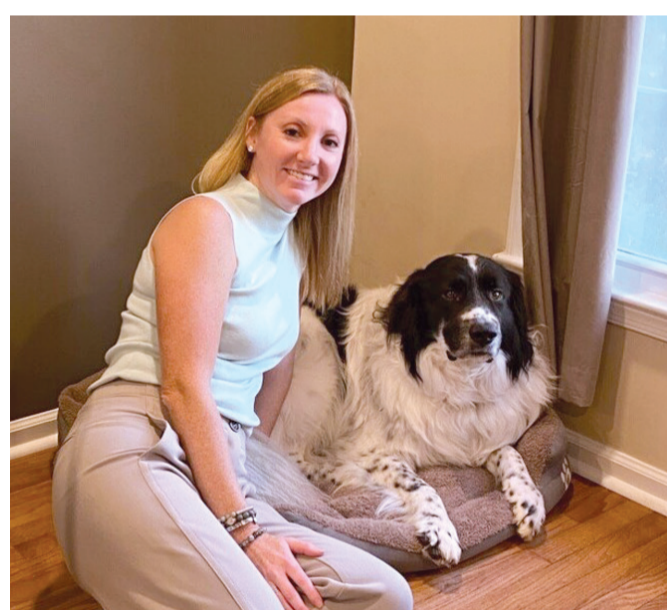


New FCPS Superintendent Dr. Michelle Reid and her dogs Nita, Zeus, and Rufus. All three pups made the cross-country road trip with Dr. Reid from Oregon.

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED



Springfield: Garfield ES Principal April Cage and her dog Beaux, who loves “Frosty Paws.” It’s ice cream for dogs, and he loves to do zoomies around the yard and inside the house. He’s so fast!



Oakton HS Principal Jamie Lane and her dog, Zeus. “Zeus is a three-year-old Great Pyrenees Mountain Dog. Zeus always wants to be in the lead and loves hiking and playing in any rivers or creeks he can find.”



Mount Vernon: Wayneswood ES Principal Katie Cachine with her yellow lab, Wilson, when he was a pup. He’s a Caps fan.



Mount Vernon: Woodlawn ES Principal Laura Elliott and her pup, Milo – “Road trip. Milo enjoys sniffing everything on his walks and cuddles on the couch,” Principal Elliott says.



Mount Vernon: Bucknell ES Principal Rashida Green enjoys kisses and snuggles from her Mini Goldendoodle, Willow Wiggles, as a form of self-care.



Mount Vernon: Bucknell ES Principal Rashida Green – “This is me and my three daughters and Willow Wiggles.”

Thanks to Kathleen Miller, FCPS, who helped gather the snapshots and captions for the “FCPS Principals and Pups” feature in our Pet Connection.

# FCPS PRINCIPALS AND PUPS

FROM PAGE 4



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Ft. Belvoir Upper Elementary School Principal Jamey Chianetta and “Beau” (center) are ready for fall football season! Jamey’s husband, James (left), is also FCPS. “Beau is a ‘mutt’ that our son adopted while he was in the Army, while he was stationed at Fort Drum, NY. We don’t know what kind he is, but we suspect he has some Australian Cattle Dog. We’d love to do a doggie DNA kit. Beau LOVES to be outside to catch frisbees, go for long walks, and play in the snow. He loves his treats too, and according to his vet, he needs fewer of them because he’s in a family who loves to treat him. Beau is a snuggler and will kick you off the couch for his favorite spot. He’s the best pup in the world.”

Franconia Elementary Principal Andrew Smith and Lola Jane. “Lola Jane is a 20-month-old Pitbull-Terrier and Beagle mix. She loves finding the squeaker inside her toys, snuggling with family on the couch, and playing tag with her best friends Arlo and Murphy.”



McLean High School Principal Ellen Reilly and her dog Joy Ful, who passed away last year- Principal Reilly had Joy Ful, a mixed breed rescue, for 13.5 years. Joy Ful was the social butterfly of their cul-de-sac. Every afternoon she visited with neighbors to get treats, take a nap at their house, or just stop by for a visit. She sometimes got lucky and stayed for dinner.



Thanks to Kathleen Miller, FCPS, who helped gather the snapshots and captions for the “FCPS Principals and Pups” feature in our Pet Connection.

## 8th Annual Paint Great Falls

**Plein Air Competition from Sept. 7-11**

Artists will paint “en plein air” (outside) without the assistance of photography anywhere in Great Falls, Virginia from Wednesday, September 7th through Sunday, September 11th. The community is welcome to watch artists paint throughout Great Falls as they move between locations.

Everyone is invited to attend the popular Quick Paint competition on Friday September 9th from 5:30-7:30pm while the light holds out at Great Falls Village Green. Watch the artists paint under the pressure of time and change of light. One artist

will be awarded as the Peoples’ Choice.

On Sunday September 11th from 6:30pm to 8pm join us for the Awards Ceremony & Collectors Reception. All paintings will be available for sale.

## Friday Art Walk

**Friday Sept. 9 from 6-8pm**

Make an evening of it. Enjoy dinner in the Village Centre then stop by Friday Art Walk to see the latest artwork by 14 artists, paintings, mixed media, fiber art, jewelry, and photography.

The Artists’ Atelier & Artists’ Loft  
756 Walker Road  
Great Falls, VA 22066

## 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.

### FY 2024 BUDGET IS THE TOPIC OF MCC GOVERNING BOARD SEPTEMBER COMMITTEE MEETING AND PUBLIC HEARING

The McLean Community Center Governing Board will discuss the center’s FY2024 budget at two upcoming meetings in September. Residents of Dranesville Small District 1A, who support the center, are invited to attend the meetings to share their ideas and suggestions by mail or email. All MCC Governing Board meetings are open to the public. MCC is located at 1234 Ingleside Ave.

The FY2024 budget year begins July 1, 2023, and ends June 30, 2024. The first meeting, the Finance Committee Meeting of the Whole, will be held at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 7. MCC Finance Committee Chair Shivani Saboo and the full board have worked to develop the proposed FY2024 budget. The departmental and consolidated budget proposals will include a review of FY2022 year-end actuals, the current year’s budget (FY2023) and new proposals for FY2024. The preliminary consolidated budget will be posted on MCC’s website, [www.mcleancenter.org](http://www.mcleancenter.org), and will be available at the center’s welcome center a week prior to the public hearing.

The FY2024 Budget Public Hearing, which will be held at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 28, gives residents an opportunity to review and comment on the budget proposal. Residents of Small District 1A-Dranesville who wish to speak at the hearing are asked to call 703-790-0123, TTY:711, to have their names placed on a speakers list. For those who cannot attend the hearing, written comments can be sent to the MCC Governing Board by mail (address to McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean VA 22101), or email to MCC Acting Executive Director Evan Braff at [evan.braff@fairfax-county.gov](mailto:evan.braff@fairfax-county.gov).

Residents may continue to submit written comments after the public hearing through Monday, Oct. 24. The Board will approve the FY2024 budget when it meets at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 26. The final draft budget proposal will be approved by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors in spring 2023.

For more information, call MCC at

703-790-0123, TTY: 711, or visit the Center’s website, [www.mclean-center.org](http://www.mclean-center.org).

### SUPERINTENDENT COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Dr. Michelle Reid is hosting Community Conversations across the division to get to know our communities. Events will be held at the high school in each pyramid through November, unless otherwise noted below. Each Community Conversation will be held in person, allowing Dr. Reid an opportunity to better connect with participants. If you are unable to attend your pyramid’s event, please consider attending another one. Schools will share registration information with families and employees. We look forward to seeing you soon! All events will be held from 6:30-7:30 p.m. Interpretation services, child care, and light refreshments will be provided. Please contact [OCCR@fcps.edu](mailto:OCCR@fcps.edu) with any questions.

### WEGMANS OFFERING VACCINE FOR FLU SEASON

The most important step to protecting yourself during the upcoming 2022-2023 flu season is getting the influenza vaccine, which is now available at all Wegmans Pharmacy locations. Getting your family ready for flu season is easy – just stop by your Wegmans Pharmacy during normal business hours or schedule an appointment online. There is no need for a prescription, and in most cases, the fee is covered in full by insurance.

### THURSDAY/SEPT. 22

Car Free Day 2022. Car Free Day is a free event recognized internationally every year on September 22. Residents and commuters across the region are encouraged to take the free pledge to get around without driving alone in cars, and instead use transit, rideshare, bike, walk, scooter, or telework. Participants who take the pledge are automatically entered for a chance to win raffle prizes. Car Free Day is open to all residents in the Washington, DC metropolitan region. To participate, fill out the free pledge form at <https://www.carfreemetrodc.org>, and go car free or car-lite (carpool, vanpool) on Thursday, September 22, 2022. Take the pledge, even if you’re already car free!

### HILTON EXPANDS GLOBAL HEADQUARTERS

Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin announced that Hilton will retain its headquarters in Fairfax County, including significant upgrades to its facility at 7930 Jones Branch Drive in McLean. Hilton will re-imagine its space to create an even more vibrant place to convene and collaborate, fully integrating technology into the office experience to meet the needs of today’s workforce. Hilton located its global headquarters in Virginia in 2009 and plans to create 350 net new headquarters jobs over the next five years. Founded in 1919, Hilton is a leading global hospitality company with a portfolio of 18 world-class brands comprising 7,000 properties and 1.1 million rooms, in 122 countries and territories.

### UNITEDHEALTHCARE DONATES \$1 MILLION TO NONPROFITS

UnitedHealthcare, a UnitedHealth Group company, is awarding \$1 million in Empowering Health grants to six community-based organizations in Virginia to expand access to care and address the social determinants of health for uninsured individuals and underserved communities.

In total, UnitedHealthcare is donating \$11 million in grants through its Empowering Health program across 11 states. The grants will assist individuals and families experiencing challenges from food insecurity, social isolation and behavioral health issues, and support local health promotion and health literacy efforts.

Grant recipients in Virginia include: Korean Community Service Center of Greater Washington, Northern Virginia – \$200,000 to expand Project SHINE (Staying Healthy through Improved Nutrition and Exercise), which delivers culturally and linguistically appropriate diabetes management, chronic disease management, healthy living cohort classes and health promotion information.

Capital Area Food Bank, Northern Virginia – \$160,000 to incorporate medically tailored food options and information about chronic medical conditions, such as diabetes and hypertension, into the online ordering system for food pantry network partners.

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# CALENDAR



The 29th Middle Eastern Food Festival will take place Sept. 3-4 at Holy Transfiguration Church in McLean.

## REGISTRATION OPEN

2022 Northern Virginia Senior Olympics. Sept. 10-24. Register online by Aug. 31 at [www.nvso.us](http://www.nvso.us), \$20 for unlimited events. Go to the website for events, rules, eligibility, photos, past results. For information, email [nvso1982@gmail.com](mailto:nvso1982@gmail.com).

## SEPT. 3-4

Middle Eastern Food Festival. At Holy Transfiguration Church, 8501 Lewinsville Road, McLean. Holy Transfiguration Melkite Greek-Catholic Church will host its 29th annual Middle Eastern Food Festival, September 3 and 4, on the church grounds -- 8501 Lewinsville Road, McLean, Virginia. The festival will feature authentic Middle Eastern food, pastries, music and dancing, as well as vendors, church tours, and activities for both children and adults.

Join in the fun from 11 a.m. – 10 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 3 and 12:30 – 5 p.m., Sunday, Sept. 4. Smell the aromas from the outdoor grills, partake of Kibbee, Chicken Shish Kebab, Roast Lamb, Falafel, Fattoush, Hummus, and Stuffed Grape Leaves, or any number of other delicious menu choices. Be sure to save room for dessert and coffee. Some of the mouth-watering Arabic pastries include Baklava, Maamoul, Namoura and Ghaybeh. There also is Atayef, a pancake-like dessert stuffed with a delicious pistachio mixture and rose-water simple syrup. Once you've satisfied your appetite, visit the vendors or go on a church tour. Children, meanwhile, can enjoy the moon bounce, face painting, pony rides and the petting zoo, as well as participate in some of the many games going on throughout the festival. A highlight of the event is the Saturday night, 6:00 p.m. "Hafli" ("party" in Arabic) that will feature live music and dancing. Join us and learn to dance the "Dabke," a traditional folk line dance. The festival will be held rain or shine. Admission and parking are free. To learn more, visit [www.MiddleEasternFoodFestival.com](http://www.MiddleEasternFoodFestival.com).

## SUNDAY/SEPT. 4

Concerts on the Green. 6-8 p.m. At the Village Centre Green, Great Falls. Featuring Hello Cleveland – Variety of rock music from the '60s to today. Hosted by Cornerstone Building Services. Come relax at the Village Centre Green and enjoy laid-back evenings of good music and good times with your neighbors.

## THURSDAY/SEPT. 8

Blood Drives Return This Fall. Noon to 5 p.m. 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 us and support the community with your lifesaving blood donation. All donors will receive a \$10 Amazon Gift Card via email. For an appointment, click here or visit [www.redcrossblood.com](http://www.redcrossblood.com).

org and enter sponsor word: HEARTOFGOLD, or call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) Eligibility Questions: Call 1-866-236-3276.

## FRIDAY/SEPT. 23

Wheel of Fortune Live! At Capital One Hall, Tysons Corner. Guests can audition to go on stage and feel like they stepped into the game show itself. They will have the chance to spin a replica of the Wheel and solve the puzzles on the tour's puzzle-board to win fantastic prizes including \$10,000, a trip to Paris, Hawaii and more. Tickets start at \$51. For tickets, visit [www.WheelofFortuneLive.com](http://www.WheelofFortuneLive.com). Call (800) 514-ETIX (3849).

## SATURDAY/OCT. 1

Oktoberfest Vienna. 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. At Church Street in Vienna. 3 Stages of Entertainment, Two Beer and Wine Gardens, Great International Food, Free Kids Activities and Games, Car Show, Business Expo, Vendor Market, Handcrafters. Visit the website: [ViennaOktoberfest.org](http://ViennaOktoberfest.org).

## SATURDAY MORNINGS

Summer Programming for Kids. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. At Reston Museum, 1639 Washington Plaza, Reston. Reston Museum is launching new summer programming for kids! Visit the Reston Museum to participate in fun and creative activities inspired by Reston's history. Program is free and everyone will receive an Explore Reston packet.

## NOW THRU DEC. 31

Crafts for Kids. 10 a.m. to 12 noon. At Reston Art Gallery and Studios, 11400 Washington Plaza W at Lake Anne, Reston. Free, themed art projects for children (with guardian) are offered at Reston Art Gallery and Studios every Saturday from 10 a.m. until 12 p.m. Visit the website: [www.restonartgallery.com](http://www.restonartgallery.com)

## SATURDAYS UNTIL DECEMBER

The Reston Farmers Market (sponsored by the Fairfax Co. Park Authority) will take place at Lake Anne Village in Reston from 8 a.m.-noon. SNAP beneficiaries receive up to \$20 match. Visit <http://restonfarmersmarket.com/>

## MCLEAN FARMERS MARKET

The McLean Farmers Market opened for the 2022 season on May 6th, at Lewinsville Park, 1659 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. The market will run every Friday from 8 a.m. to noon through November 11. Local farmers and producers will sell fresh produce and fruits; breads and pastries; prepared foods; meats; herbs; flowers, and more. All products are grown or produced by the vendors and come from within 125 miles of Fairfax County. For more information, see: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/>

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Thank you to the hundreds of supporters who helped to keep all your Connection Newspapers alive throughout Alexandria, Fairfax County, Arlington County and Potomac, Md. along with affiliated websites and digital media. Now we need help again in 2022.

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

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

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

The pandemic has hit small businesses hard, which in turn has reduced advertising revenue that keeps these local newspapers alive to provide hyper local news to residents. It feels like no small miracle to be looking forward into 2022.

Connection Newspapers has been offering these local newspapers to residents for over 200 years. Countless residents have grown up with these papers covering significant moments in the lives of family and children, news, community events, school activities, and even pictures of your dogs and cats. Internet news and large national newspapers cannot provide the local connection or historical connection that local papers like Connection Newspapers and the Alexandria Gazette Packet provide. If your child, dog, mother, father, neighborhood, school has been featured, you understand the value of local community newspapers.

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## What a Difference Five Weeks Makes



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

The first call I received from my sister-in-law, Vanessa, from the hospital that Sunday, nearly six weeks ago, was to tell me that my brother, Richard (her husband) had been ambulated to the hospital earlier that day due to pain in his leg which prevented him from walking. The second call from Vanessa a few hours later was to say that the pain in his leg was so severe the doctors were considering amputating it. The third call, even later, was Vanessa crying and saying the doctors didn't think my brother was going to survive the night. With that news, my wife, Dina, and I were on our way to the hospital, Covid rules be damned. (Vanessa had suggested on an earlier call that we wait until further notice. This was officially 'further notice.')

What we saw when we arrived in SICU (Surgical Intensive Care) was my brother lying in a hospital bed, completely sedated in front of a phalanx of IV pumps (eight total) infusing him with everything necessary to sustain his organs, all of which had shut down because of the septic shock which ensued when an infection in his leg shot through him unabated. This occurred because his white blood cell count - after two chemotherapy infusions, was barely measurable, one of the attending physicians told us and left him vulnerable. In addition, he was hooked up to a 24-7 dialysis machine, a ventilator (with a tube inserted in his mouth), a heart monitor, electrodes, a blood pressure cup on his left upper arm, an EEG machine monitoring brain activity, a wound V.A.C. to vacuum out any miscellaneous debris/infected tissue still in-and-around his infected leg, all managed by a full-time nurse. Typically, in the SICU, a nurse covers two patients. However, my brother was so sick that his nurse was not assigned any other patients. Her entire focus was on my brother. As I wrote in a previous column, and it bears repeating, one of the attending critical care physicians characterized my brother as "the sickest patient in the hospital," a hospital whose number of beds exceeds 900. Unable to make any significant progress (get the patient to wake up/respond to instructions) with my brother's condition, he said he had one option left: "a hail Mary," as he called it. It was some sort of infused drug that he said could only be used once. He was out of ideas, otherwise. I certainly can't recall its name, but I believe its color was red.

Well, it worked. Not immediately mind you, but very slowly and occasionally surely; Richard got better. Three weeks later, he was finally transferred from SICU to a regular bed on the wards. Unfortunately, 12 hours or so later, a bleeding event got him transferred back to an ICU, this time it was Medical Intensive Care. After a few days of rest and recovery there, his doctors thought it safe to move him back to the ward, where has remained for the past 10 days or so. And it has been within this private room where his remarkable recovery has really sped up. To the point where there's discussion about transferring him to a rehabilitation facility because he no longer requires the type of hands-on care provided in a regular hospital ward, and it's now considered time/appropriate to rehab his entire body.

Disconnected from nearly every medicine and machine now, and with his trach tube replaced with a plug sort of a thing, he's still not able to walk, but he can sure talk, according to Vanessa who visited him yesterday, as she has every day - and some nights, too. I skipped my visit today because, according to Vanessa, as Richard has been weaned off the ventilator, breathing on his own has been exhausting so all he wants to do is sleep. And he doesn't want me sitting at his side just to hear him snore.

I'll see him tomorrow for sure. It will be the first conversation we'll have had in over a month. I can't wait. I will congratulate and encourage him on a recovery well done, and we'll have a few laughs, but unfortunately, we may not be through the worst of it, oddly enough. Surgery looms (as he's no longer a candidate for chemotherapy, he "failed it" they said), and it's risky, his surgeon said. But due to his amazing recovery, it is possible he is now a candidate for surgery. Who would have thought? A month ago: nobody.

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



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