

Mount Vernon Gazette

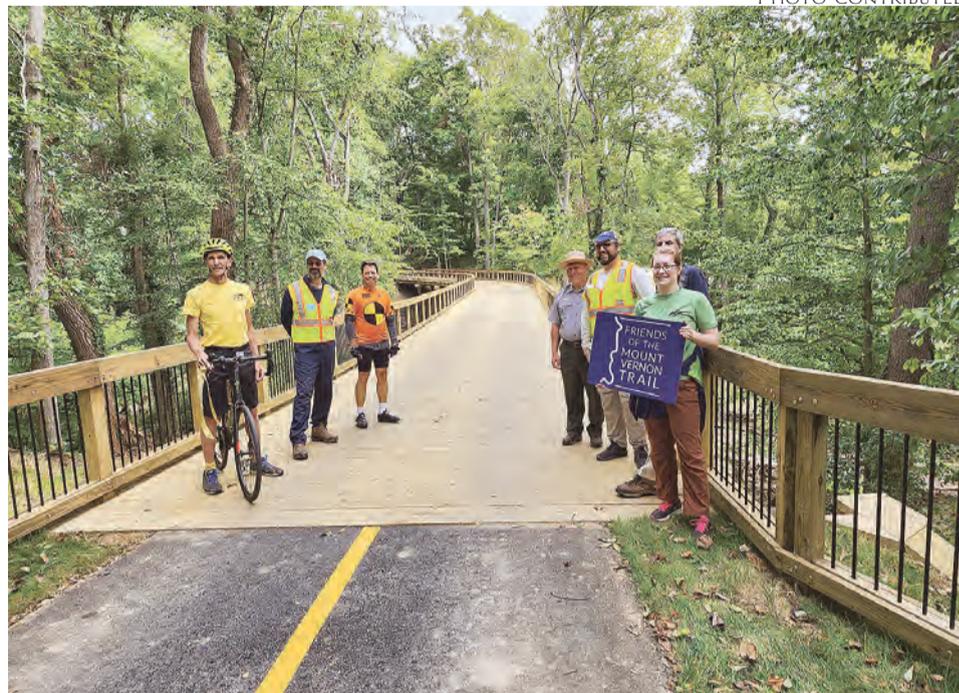
MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

SEPTEMBER 29, 2022

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED



Sen. Scott Surovell, Supervisor Dan Storck; Charles Cuvelier, Superintendent of the George Washington Memorial Parkway; Judd Isbell, president of the Friends of the Mount Vernon Trail; and volunteers from the Friends of the Mount Vernon Trail participate in a ribbon-cutting ceremony to re-open Bridge 12.



The new bridge will make this section of the Mount Vernon trail safer.

Ribbon Cut on New Mount Vernon Trail Feature

National Park Service improvement is one of a few along the parkway.

BY MIKE SALMON
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

Bicyclists on the Mount Vernon trail have an easier, safer route on a section in Fort Hunt with the recent opening of a new bridge over a gully at trail mile marker four. Although this section has been open to cyclists for a few weeks, the ribbon was cut on the trail on Saturday, Sept. 25 to make it official.

In the past, the path went closer to the GW Parkway, across bridge #12 just south of Collingwood Boulevard. This trail improvement was designed to make this portion safer and install a straighter alignment and made the trail less steep leading to and from the bridge. Included in the project was a paved section from Waynewood Boulevard to Fort Hunt Road.

The NPS started this bridge replacement project in February 2022. This is the first of

four planned major bridge improvement projects on the Mount Vernon Trail that the NPS plans to complete over the next five years.

South of this improvement, crews are building a new bridge across Dogue Creek and rehabilitating the trail along Mount Vernon Memorial Highway all the way from Richmond Highway to the Mount Vernon Plantation.

The Mount Vernon Trail (MVT) is an 18-mile paved, multi-use path that stretches from George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate to Theodore Roosevelt Island. The National Park Service is responsible for the

trail with help from partners including the Friends of Mount Vernon Trail and its volunteers. The trail is a hub for recreation and connects with regional and local parks and trails, including the Potomac Heritage, Rock Creek, Custis, Four Mile Run and the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Trails.

The National Park Service picked National Public Lands Day for this ribbon cutting, commemorating all the volunteers that help the NPS across the area. National Public Lands Day was established in 1994 and held annually on the fourth Saturday in September, the Park Service said.

Mount Vernon Fire Damages Apartments

No injuries reported in the top floor fire.

BY MIKE SALMON
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

Around 11 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 24 there was an apartment fire in the Mount Vernon Square apartments in the Hybla Valley area. According to the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department, units responded to a two-alarm apartment fire in the 7500 block of Republic Court, which is just off Arlington Drive. The fire was on the top floor with extension into the attic and through the roof. There were no reported injuries. Multiple residents were displaced, and are being assisted, the FCFRD reported.



PHOTOS VIA NEXTDOOR AND FCFRD
From the rear of the building, a firefighter put up a ladder which reached the top floor.



The fire appeared to be right at the peak of the rooftop of this Mount Vernon Square apartment.

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Malvern Hill | \$1,690,000

Located on a coveted cul-de-sac, this large home boasts 6 bedrooms, 3.5 baths, a stunning great room opening onto a gracious covered porch overlooking a lushly landscaped rear garden with stone fountain and magical playhouse. 1305 Chancel Place
Noel Kaupinen 703.200.1165
www.noelk.com



Old Town | \$1,495,000

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Lauren Bishop 202.361.5079
www.LaurenBishopHomes.com



OPEN SUN 10/2, 2-4PM

Del Ray | \$1,349,000

1927 Sears kit home – expanded Craftsman style! 4 bedrooms, 3 full baths, first-floor primary bedroom suite, updated kitchen & baths. Heart pine floors in the original part of the house. Off-street parking for 2 cars tandem. 2 porches, deck & hot tub. 19 W Wyatt Ave
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Olde Belhaven Towne | \$895,000

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www.RebeccaMcCullough.com



OPEN SAT 10/1, 1-3PM

Nethergate | \$799,900

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Jen Walker 703.675.1566
www.JenWalker.com



Warwick Village | \$660,000

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Julian Burke 703.867.4219
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Peter Crouch 703.244.4024
Katie Crouch 703.447.1345



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NEWS



PHOTOS VIA TWITTER



At West Potomac High School, 1,400 students walked out to protest revisions to transgender policies in public schools that some called “cruel and anti-trans.”

At West Potomac High School, 1,400 students were among as many as 12,000 state-wide who walked out of class to defend rights of transgender students.

‘Hateful, Ignorant, Wrong’

Thousands of students around the state protest Youngken revisions to 2022 VDOE policies.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

It’s not about bathrooms like it was never about water fountains. That is what a hand-made protest sign held by two Herndon High School students said the morning of Sept. 26 during a school-allowed protest activity. Approximately 300 students gathered in front of the school at 9:45 a.m. as part of a county and state-wide protest demonstration organized by Pride Liberation Project in response to revisions to transgender policies in public schools that some called “cruel and anti-trans.”

According to a communication from the principal of West Potomac High School to parents, 1,400 students walked out there.

“As a transgender student, I just want a safe and accepting environment where my peers and I can thrive,” said Beatrice Stotz, a student at Fairfax High School, where hundreds of students walked out of class. “These proposed regulations do not ‘protect students’ as they are touted but instead actively harm us and erase our existence for political gain. I’m fortunate enough to have a supportive community, but many of my friends and peers cannot say

the same, and these policies would put their lives at risk.”

On Friday, Sept. 16, the Virginia Department of Education released its revised 18-page 2022 Model Policies, a revision of the Model Policies for the Treatment of Transgender Students in Virginia’s Public Schools (the “2021 Model Policies”), adopted on March 4, 2021 under Gov. Ralph Northam (D).

“As a transgender student, I just want a safe and accepting environment where my peers and I can thrive.”

— Beatrice Stotz,
student at Fairfax High School

The VDOE’s revisions include banning transgender students from using restrooms that align with their gender identity, banning gender-neutral pronouns, and banning social transitioning and expressing their gender identity and require school districts to out students to parents. In addition, the revisions allow people to maliciously misgender students and allow parents to deny a student access to school counseling services,

regardless of the student’s wishes and mental health.

The revisions remove provisions requiring school districts to minimize gender segregation in extracurriculars and train school mental health professionals to support LGBTQIA+ students.

“On Tuesday, Sept. 27, over 12,000 students at 100 Virginia schools walked out to oppose Glenn Youngkin’s hateful LGBTQIA+ guidelines,” said the Pride Liberation Project in a release. “Students walking out called for the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to revoke these draft guidelines and for school boards to protect all students by rejecting the VDOE’s draft guidelines.” The organization describes itself as a 500+ member student-run group of Queer and allied students in Virginia who advocate for the rights of LGBTQIA+ students.

Natasha, a student who walked out at Oakton High School in Fairfax County, highlighted the political motivations of these attacks: “Governor Youngkin says that he cares about parental rights and Virginia, but he’s just attacking Queer students. If he truly cared about our students, he wouldn’t be putting us at risk for depression, harm, abuse, and harassment. Students know we have the potential to build schools that let everyone succeed, but we can’t do that with these policies.”

A tweet on Sept. 26 from U.S. Rep. Gerald E. Connolly (D-11) @GerryConnolly

“Students know we have the potential to build schools that let everyone succeed, but we can’t do that with these policies.”

said, “This policy is fundamentally wrong and its outcomes tragically unacceptable. It helps no one, but it harms many. There is no justification for such transparent cruelty in Virginia.”

Connolly and others said that what the VDOE proposed would have tragic consequences.

“There is one data point to keep in mind as this egregious new policy is debated and implemented: a young LGBTQ person attempts suicide every 45 seconds in America,” according to the Trevor Project. “Among trans or non-binary American youth, the outlook is darker still. Transgender and non-binary youth are more than twice as likely to seriously consider or attempt suicide compared to their other LGBTQ peers ... A peer-reviewed study published in 2021 found the transgender and non-binary youth who reported gender identity acceptance from at least one adult in their lives were 33 percent less likely to report a suicide attempt in the past year.”

Public Comment is open for comment concerning the new policy on trans students in Virginia by Governor Glenn Youngkin (R) at <https://townhall.virginia.gov/L/Comments.cfm?GDocForumID=1953>



Supervisor Storck on Richmond Highway



Cyclist and County resident Steve Steiner tells his harrowing story

Take A Moment to Save a Life

BY SUPERVISOR DAN STORCK

Whether you are a walker, runner, biker, driver or all of the above, each of us has the responsibility to ensure our streets are as safe as possible for all users. This past year that was not the case, as pedestrian and bicycle related fatalities and injuries continued to rise. To bring attention to this issue and the County's ongoing commitment to the safety of all residents, I was pleased to join other County leaders, state and County agencies and school leaders on Tuesday to launch a multifaceted county-wide campaign, "Take a Moment" to reduce traffic related deaths and injuries. There are no single solutions to this challenge, it takes all of us "Taking a Moment" to protect precious lives. You can watch the press conference and hear a moving story from a



self-described, safe cyclist, County resident Steve Steiner who was hit a few years ago by a car making a right turn on red and how if the driver that hit him had "Taken a Moment," he would have not had to be hospitalized and gone through an arduous recovery. <https://www.facebook.com/SupervisorDanStorck>

The County has committed \$100 million to pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements over the next six years, but we need your help, too. As part of the campaign, please keep these simple tips in mind each time you take to the roadway:

- ❖ Take a Moment to look both ways.
- ❖ Take a Moment to make eye contact with drivers.
- ❖ Take a Moment to obey speed limits and traffic signals.
- ❖ Take a Moment to wear reflective clothing.



Supervisor Storck with a cyclist at the Take a Moment Campaign Kick Off

- ❖ Take a Moment to put your phone down.
 - ❖ It only Takes a Moment to save a life.
- As the County continues to look for ways

to improve safety, we also launched a Streets Simplified Pilot Study last year to look at 37 intersections across the County, including several along the Richmond Highway Corridor. We anticipate the results and general conclusions from the study will be available soon.

Embark, the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system "The One" and the Richmond Highway widening will bring additional pedestrian and bike safety improvements through bike lanes and sidewalks along both sides of the roadway, new underpasses, as well as enhanced crosswalks and signals.

Whether you are walking, biking, or driving, keep in mind that safety is a two-way street and is everyone's job. For more information including tips for pedestrians, bicyclists, drivers, safety messages for every season, and additional safety resources, please visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/topics/pedestrian-bike-traffic-safety>. Take a Moment to look out for each other.

'Take a Moment' Pedestrian, bike, and safety campaign: will it be enough?

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Motor vehicle crashes, bicycle safety and pedestrian safety in Fairfax County; a new campaign called "Take a Moment," will attempt to address them all at once.

On Sept. 27, Chairman Jeffrey McKay (D); Walter Alcorn (D), Hunter Mill supervisor; Steve Steiner, Hunter Mill resident; Police Chief Kevin Davis; John Lynch, VDOT district engineer; Melanie Meren, school board member; and others gathered at the intersection of Wiehle Avenue and the W&OD Trail to introduce the "Take a Moment-Pedestrian, Bike, and Traffic Safety Campaign."

"This is not just a marketing campaign," McKay said. "We are putting our money where our mouth is."

According to Chief Davis, in a county of 1.2 million and 400 square miles, traffic fatalities today stand at 22. "That's two more than this time last year. Year-to-date, our pedestrian fatalities stand at 13. That is three more than the county had at the same time

last year," Davis said. He added that overall, throughout Fairfax County, crashes are down by 400, but the county still has a long way to go. Fairfax County Police issued 5,000 more traffic citations this year compared to the same time last year.

Davis added that while the number one traffic citation issued in Fairfax County is speeding, the number two traffic citation is failure to obey a traffic device or traffic sign.

McKay says Fairfax County will spend \$100 million on pedestrian safety over the next six years. That total includes \$25 million this year from the county's carry-over budget that the board will consider in the next few weeks.

The Take a Moment campaign is multifaceted. Disconnect while driving, walking, or cycling. Note that school zones and neighborhoods require extra caution. Stop for school buses and let the children board and disembark safely. Drive, walk, and bike with awareness. Make eye contact with pedestrians and cyclists. "All these things are so important and literally only 'take a moment' of our time," McKay said.

McKay described his recent near-miss,

pedestrian-vehicle crash that occurred as he was about to cross a street in Alexandria. A driver was looking in the opposite direction from where McKay stood. Before looking around to see if a pedestrian was nearby, the driver pressed the gas pedal and missed him by inches. "I'm one of the lucky ones who took a moment and looked at that car (and) knew that person wasn't making eye contact with me. ... I had to take action to protect myself," McKay said. "We must all take a moment as a community together to stop tragic accidents that are occurring throughout not just our county but really throughout the region and throughout the country."

Steve Steiner, 73, who is an experienced cyclist, talked about his crash with a car that left him with a concussion, internal injuries, broken ribs, \$100,000 in medical bills, and a \$36,000 airlift to Fairfax Hospital by medivac. It happened at the Fairfax County Parkway Trail intersection and Dulles Toll Road Exit 11. According to Steiner, he entered the intersection and saw an SUV coming toward him. He said the driver was not looking at him because she was preparing to turn on the Fairfax County Parkway. Steiner veered

right, but the car's bumper crushed his bike broadside. He hit the car's windshield, and landed in the southbound parkway lane. An off-duty federal officer behind the car that hit him turned his vehicle around and blocked him.

Steiner had plenty of time during his recovery to consider what else could have been done to prevent a similar crash. Jersey barriers, traffic signals, trail signs, and more were present where he was hit. According to Steiner, a driver's default behavior at this intersection and others like it is to prioritize the right turn and keep moving. "Their attention is focused left rather than right, where a cyclist or pedestrian may be attempting to cross the intersection," Steiner said, in his opinion, that significant safety improvements would result if authorities approved a modest financial investment to install signage prohibiting such right turns at locations where trails intersect.

"We need our residents to be part of this team, and that's what this campaign is all about," McKay said. "Take a moment and potentially save a life."

‘Is This the Fast I Desire?’

Reflections on Yom Kippur and the Fight for Workers Rights.

BY DAVID BRODER

Next week, my family will join Jews around the world in observing Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish year. Known as the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur is a time for prayer, reflection, repentance and fasting.

Every year, we read from the Book of Isaiah, in which God sends the prophet Isaiah to admonish those whose wicked acts undermine their fasting and prayers.

The people ask, “Why, when we fasted, did you not see? When we starved our bodies, did you pay no heed?”

Through Isaiah, God answers:

“Because on your fast day, you see to your business and oppress all your laborers! Because you fast in strife and contention, and you strike with a wicked fist! Your fasting today is not such as to make your voice heard on high.

“Is such the fast I desire, a day for men to starve their bodies? Is it bowing the head like a bullrush and lying in sackcloth and ashes? Do you call that a fast, a day when the Lord is favorable? No, this is the fast I desire: to unlock the fetters of wickedness, and untie the cords of the yoke. To let the oppressed go free, to break off every yoke.”

In selecting this text for Yom Kippur, the rabbis were clearly making two points: our prayers are meaningless if our actions undermine them, and how we treat workers is central to our faith.

These lessons are as critical today as they were in Isaiah’s time of the 8th century BCE.

In recent years, the pandemic has shone a spotlight on the inequities that have always existed in our economy. Frontline workers – disproportionately Black, Brown, API and immigrant – are called essential but not treated as essential.

However, in response, essential workers are rising up and demanding better. From Starbucks baristas to Amazon workers to Fairfax County employees, working people are now forming and joining unions in record numbers.

According to data from the National Labor Relations Board, workers across the country have won



80% more union elections in 2022 than the year before, with twice as many workers represented. Meanwhile, here in Virginia, tens of thousands of county and city workers – mental health workers, educators, sanitation workers, and first responders – have won collective bargaining rights for the first time in Fairfax, Arlington, Alexandria, Loudoun and Richmond.

The benefits of unionization are clear. Joining together with your co-workers to bargain a contract is the best way to improve your pay, benefits, and working conditions. While raising standards for all workers, collective bargaining also closes racial and gender pay gaps, ensuring a more equitable, resilient economy for all. By improving recruitment

and retention, collective bargaining enhances the quality of public services. So, it’s no wonder that 71% of Americans support labor unions, according to the latest Gallup poll.

Unfortunately, just as in the Book of Isaiah, we see those who “strike with a wicked fist” against working people. Rather than recognize their workers’ unions and sit down at the bargaining table, massive corporations like Starbucks and Amazon are attacking working people. Here in Virginia, many jurisdictions still refuse to pass union rights for their frontline employees.

Earlier this year, the NLRB accused Starbucks of 29 unfair labor practice charges, including over 200 violations of the National Labor Relations Act. The complaint accuses Starbucks of threatening and intimidating workers, firing workers, closing stores that voted to have a union, reducing workers’ pay, and more.

The lesson of Isaiah, central to the Yom Kippur holiday, is that for our prayers to be heard above, we must take action and live our values here on earth. It’s time for Starbucks, Amazon and all employers to live their supposed values and come to the bargaining table with their workers.

Doing so will mean a more just, more prosperous, and brighter future for us all. As the Book of Isaiah says: “If you banish the yoke from your midst, the menacing hand, and evil speech ... then shall your light shine in the darkness.”

David Broder is the President of SEIU Virginia 512, whose union members are county and city employees, and home care workers, dedicated to building an economy that works for everyone. He lives with his family in Oakton.

Written by
George Batson

SHOW DATES:
Oct., 15 - Nov. 5, 2022

Masks are still required for performances;
however, proof of vaccinations is not.

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A Hybrid Event

Refreshments will be served

Support Rising Hope, Learn about Food Insecurity in Fairfax County

Rising Hope United Methodist Church will engage the public in a talk about food insecurity on Saturday, Oct. 1 at 5 p.m., and serve delicious bowls of soup in handcrafted ceramic bowls.

Join Rising Hope for a hybrid online and in-person event to learn about food insecurity in Fairfax County and ways you can help, all while enjoying a delicious bowl of soup in a handcrafted ceramic bowl.

For a donation of \$50, you can join Rising Hope in-person at Mount Vernon United Methodist Church or online via Zoom. Your soup will be served in a one-of-a-kind ceramic

bowl - hot if you plan to join in person or in a take-away container that you can enjoy at home.

Donated by a variety of local artisans and ceramicists, these bowls are to keep.

The chef for the night is Sergeant First Class (SFC) John L. Densham Jr. He has served as the chef to the Secretary of Defense’s Executive Mess and was part of the gold-winning team at the 2016 Culinary Olympics.

In addition to his delicious creations, local leaders and members of the Rising Hope community will discuss food issues and what they are doing to ensure no one goes hungry.

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MountVernonLeeChamber.org

HAUNTED HOUSE



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

“There is nothing better to me than hearing guests laugh together after they just screamed their heads off in my section.”

— Levi Peterson

Levi Peterson coming out of the depths to scare at The Haunt at Workhouse Arts Center.

Working Up the Scares at The Haunt

Workhouse Arts Center’s Haunted House in Lorton is a work of theatrical proportions.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION



As far as haunted houses are considered, the haunted house at the Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton is one of the best, and this is due to the seasoned scare veterans that use their horror skills in a productive way.

Levi Peterson is one of those scare professionals. He was into the haunts of Halloween when he was a child, and now he dons a butcher’s outfit at the Workhouse, scaring everyone with his razor gloves similar to Edward Scissorhands.

“There is nothing better to me than hearing guests laugh together after they just screamed their heads off in my section,” Peterson said.

His horror skills came in handy years ago when he was in the Air Force, volunteering for the haunted hallway with his squadron. He learned to use power tools and sew when he was young, so these

skills come in handy at the Workhouse’s haunted house, where he enjoys the screams.

Last year, a couple was so scared, the boyfriend started running and tripped up his girlfriend. Peterson made sure the woman was okay, and

then chased the boyfriend through several rooms. “All in all, I think myself and my fellow actors chased him the equivalent of half a city block, and he was screaming the whole time,” he said.

Scare actress Rachael Norberg was in on that chase too. Armed with knives, hammers and pow-

er tools, she also remembers the guy shoving his girlfriend out of the way. “I see this guy sprinting out with my buddy chasing him screaming, so I grab one of my power tools and start chasing him with it, and we ended up with like four actors chasing this guy into the next section of the haunt,” she said.

Norberg is in her third year at the Workhouse Haunt and has a life-long obsession with Halloween and the horror genre. Like Peterson, she also works on both the creative team and as a scare actor.

Norberg worked in theater for many years and now has a “regular” job in Washington, D.C. but



The make-up has to be just right.



This time, it’s a meat tenderizer from the kitchen.



Two knives for the big chop-chop in Lorton.

PHOTOS BY BRAD BEHLES PHOTOGRAPHY AND JAY’S FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHY



PHOTO BY BRAD BEHLES PHOTOGRAPHY AND JAY’S FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHY
Rachael Norberg runs over 25 miles each night in the haunted house, scaring all those who dare.



The leaf blower is a favorite accessory for Rachael Norberg.

If You Go ...

**Workhouse Haunt 2022
Nightmare Harvest
Weekends from October 1st -
November 5th
Fridays and Saturdays, 7-11 p.m. and
Sundays, 7-10 p.m.
Rizer Pavilion, 9518 Workhouse Way,
Lorton, VA, 22079**

still manages to put in the hours at the Workhouse in October. “I was able to dabble in this as a teenager and during college, but I hadn’t really had the chance as an adult until the Workhouse,” she said.

It’s a lot of fun each night, but it’s a workout too. One time, Norberg tracked how much running with a pedometer, the meter recorded between 26-29 miles each night, which is marathon length, plus. “I used to be an avid runner and after the first few nights it felt similar to when I ran marathons,” she said.

Both Peterson and Norberg like volunteering at the haunted house because it raises money for the arts at Lorton. “Knowing that I have been able to give back in some way

to our local theater community has been an incredibly rewarding experience and has allowed other opportunities for many of us as creatives,” Norberg said.

Volunteering Is Easy

At the Workhouse well before Halloween, everyone is welcome to apply for a role. “It’s a very welcoming group,” said Joseph Wallen, Director of Performing Arts at the Workhouse Arts Foundation. He’s seen new castmates who didn’t know a soul at the beginning but quickly made friends when they bonded as a team. “Everyone is welcome to apply and learn more,” he added.

The hiring process is done over a period of a couple of weeks, starting in late summer. There’s a detailed application and an orientation process where they get to know one another. Some end up working for the season and get the option of choosing between

paid roles or receiving documented credit for volunteer service hours. Some schools in Fairfax County require service hours. “Others just join because they enjoy being involved with the team experience,” Wallen said. It’s an ongoing process. Safety protocols are the first part of training, followed by character and story elements.

Roll Call

“The Haunt” is intended to be experienced as a storyline that’s presented in media res, a technical term out of Theater 101 for the actors to begin in the middle of things, rather than at the very start of the story. It is important that the performers know each part of the story are as it unfolds, Wallen said. This fits the Workhouse, which started as a prison, where suffragists were jailed and tortured, and now is home for the arts.

As with all Halloween attractions, people are ready to get scared and each night is full of screaming and laughter. “Many on our team are returning performers and bring their friends and family that want to join the fun, so they have a good idea of what to expect,” Wallen said.

Rumor has it all the volunteers get rewarded just after Halloween with a big party, but each night there’s a mini party too, Wallen said. After a night of running and screaming, the crew is all fired up so they find ways to blow off the steam. “When the season is over, we do have a cast party where we share laughs and memories of experiences during this season and share informal ideas about next season’s ideas and theme,” said Wallen.

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Quiet Mowers and Free Fertilizer, the Lamb Mowers

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

Seventeen woolly lambs and sheep scampered out the back of the trailer, down a ramp, onto the front yard and immediately started chomping voraciously on grass, violets and other vegetation at Tony Bates's and Mary Thompson's house on a sunny, Sept. 21 morning.

They were the Lamb Mowers, a 17-head flock of heirloom, Babydoll Southdown sheep, owned by Cory Suter who founded the Fairfax County company in 2020. He takes his flock all over Northern Virginia to "mow lawns" and while at it, Suter yanks out homeowners' invasive plants, like Japanese stiltgrass and porcelain berry vines. His flock has grazed on over 100 Northern Virginia yards so far. The number of sheep he takes to each job depends on the nature and size of the property.

"I hate mowing," said Bates, as he watched his very focused "guests" munch about quietly. "Mowers use energy. These sheep leave free fertilizer and they are the quietest mowing service available." This was the Lamb Mowers' second visit to the Bates-Thompson, Mount Vernon-area yard, the first being in May this year.

English colonists brought the Babydoll Southdown breed to North America, said Suter. These sheep are gentle herd animals, ruminants that eat vegetation and then chew their cud, part of a multi-stage digestion process. After about two hours of grazing, their stomachs are usually full, the food works its way back up to the sheep's throat, they chew it again and then re-swallow it, Suter explained.

Sheep especially like fresh, sweet grass and while many customers and Suter are glad when the sheep chomp on invasive plants, he tries to prevent them from eating invasive English ivy because it could be harmful to their livers. He puts up temporary, plastic, fence netting to keep the sheep out of some areas and protect wanted plants.

A Win-Win

A self-described "chief shepherd," Suter calls sheep mowing a "win-win" for everyone. For him, "It saves on feed costs and gives the flock a healthy, biodiverse diet." He hopes it discourages people from spraying herbicides, insecticides and other chemicals on their properties. "I am trying to change the paradigm on weed control and help the environment," he maintains. As for sheep poop, he applauds the pellets they leave behind because they enrich the soil and sequester carbon.

Suter's lambs and sheep are ages five months to seven years. His two sons, six and ten years old, gave the sheep names, like Elf, Sunny, Clover and Monster Truck. Cinnamon, age seven, who weighs over 130 pounds, is the matriarch. Sheep can live to be six to eleven years old, Suter says, which is equivalent to a 70-year-old human. For breeding, Suter has one, err, rambunctious ram, that he does not take to customers' yards. All of his other rams are wethers, castrated male sheep.



The company trailer and its "passengers" are easy to identify.



The flock eagerly heads out for a meal.



The flock happily and quietly grazes on grass and other vegetation.



Suter carried one sheep to a hose to wash off his dirty wool.



Suter removes invasive plants as the sheep graze.



Mary Thompson and Tony Bates prefer these "eco-mowers" to traditional machine lawn mowers.

If they resist getting into the trailer, "I never force them to come," he comments.

Suter schedules two-hour grazing sessions and charges \$175 on weekdays and \$275 on weekends. After about 90 minutes, most of the sheep retreat to the shade to chew their cuds.

Under county regulations, for properties over two acres, the sheep can stay overnight,

a "sheepover," Suter quipped. Every May he shears the flock, gives away the wool and offers customers "three bags full," he jokes, referring to the classic children's nursery rhyme, "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep."

Before raising lawn-eating sheep, Suter had a green roofing company called Bi-neighborhoods in Philadelphia. He grew up in

Virginia's Rockingham County, attended James Madison University and has a master's degree in economics.

Today, he's gladly "the sheepman," a moniker coined by Providence District Supervisor Dalia Palchik.

For more information, visit www.LambMowers.com.

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As I Was Saying Last Week

By KENNETH B. LOURIE



I was venting about the difficulty I was having locating a specific Entenmann's cake: the "Marshmallow Devil's Food Iced Cake" for what seems like my lifetime. Whatever timeline actually applies, it minimizes the impossibility I was experiencing finding this staple of my diet. However, let me state for the record before you read and I write any further: I am not undernourished and, I am, generally speaking, able to satisfy my sweet teeth. Nevertheless, there was something definitely missing from my diet. I wouldn't say I was deprived, more that I was chronically disappointed; especially when I would walk by the Entenmann's display at my local Giant, and occasionally at Safeway or some other less conveniently located supermarkets (Aldi's, Magruder's, Food Lion, et cetera). Now that you're reminded of the context and of my perspective/need, let me set the scene as to how this cake (times two) made its way into my house in Maryland on September 10th, 2022. A date that will be long remembered in Burtonsville, Md. (If I was Klingon, we'd sing songs about it.)

My wife, Dina and I were day-tripping to Phoenixville, Pa., approximately 130 miles north, to visit some close friends, Shelley, and Fran. It was late afternoon on that Saturday as we sat in their living room after spending an enjoyable day together preparing to say our good-byes when I asked Fran (the husband) quite casually if there was a supermarket nearby. I then mumbled something in Dina's direction about looking for the cake since we were a few hours from home. I was thinking (hoping) that we were far enough away from Maryland that this cake might be available here somewhere. (After all, I'm a Red Sox fan; I know about hope.) When I mentioned cake/my need, Fran perked up and asked what kind of cake I was looking for. Shelley, his wife chimed in that Fran loves sweets. I didn't need to be asked twice: Entenmann's "Marshmallow Devil's Food Iced Cake," I said. To which Fran asked: "Is that a vanilla frosted cake?" Then I perked up. "Yeah," surprised by his familiarity, I again reiterated my desire for this cake. "I saw that cake in my local supermarket last week. It was a 'BOGO,' I almost bought it," Fran recalled. I immediately asked/insisted on directions to that store and/or asked Fran if he would mind driving us/driving ahead with us following him - so there would be zero chance that I'd get lost. (I was too close to take any chances now.) To which Fran responded with the following words which will endear him to me for the rest of my cake-eating life: "Don't bother. I'll just drive down there myself. It's only two miles away and see if they have any left." Incredibly hopeful, and appreciative, I said: "Sure, if you don't mind?" "Don't be silly." He says. "I'll be right back" Fran then happily grabbed his car keys and headed out to his car.

It couldn't have been more than 10 to 15 minutes before Fran came walking back into the living room smiling as he moved closer to where the three of us were still sitting on the living room couch and deposited two Entenmann's "Marshmallow Devil's Food Iced Cakes" on the coffee table right in front of me, almost like magic. (My over-the-top salivation for this cake had convinced Fran to buy one for himself, he offered.) I wasn't totally dumb founded by the cake's appearance; we're only talking about cake here, but I was nearly speechless nonetheless while gushing my gratitude and excitement over his effort, and his awareness even for noticing this cake in the store in the first place. It's not exactly my white whale but locating it has been the bane of my existence as well as a reoccurring void in my dessert selections.

Now I have a resource/outlet, at least, one place I know where I can, for the moment anyway, buy this cake. Unfortunately, its location is a two hours-plus drive from home and as for mailing it, it's an item that I don't think would travel very well, considering its packaging, if you know what I mean? Still, my future (cake wise) looks brighter than it has in years. I am finally going to have my cake and eat it, too; literally and figuratively; thanks to Fran in Pennsylvania, (my new favorite state).

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

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Please, help save these historical papers. Connection Newspapers has been offering these local newspapers to residents for over 200 years. Countless 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.

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 omicron clouds the horizon in so many ways. Revenue still remains short of expenses despite our greatly curtailed costs.

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APPETITE

5 Dates to Circle in October

By HOPE NELSON
GAZETTE PACKET



Get into the autumnal spirit with some freshly decorated cookies.

From goats in costumes to cookie decorating, from wine class to river cleanups to dog-friendly Halloween festivities, October is teeming with events for foodies. Here are some of the month's top picks.

Cookie Decorating at Sweet Relief, Oct. 2

Get into the autumnal spirit with some freshly decorated cookies. Your registration guarantees you five Braegs signature sugar cookies, icing, coffee to keep you on task, a discount on additional in-shop purchases and – most importantly – two hours of instruction. 1506 Mount Vernon Ave. 11 a.m.-1 p.m. \$65.

River Cleanup and Clean Water Act 50th Anniversary Celebration at Port City Brewing, Oct. 16

Spend the morning cleaning up our local waterways – then enjoy an afternoon of live music and cold beer to celebrate your achievement. From 10 a.m. to noon, join the folks from Potomac Riverkeeper and Port City at Ben Brenman Park to freshen up Holmes Run. Wear close-toed shoes and some clothes you don't mind getting dirty in – Potomac Riverkeeper's volunteers will have your cleanup supplies. After noon, head back to Port City to enjoy music, a raffle and plenty of refreshments. Pro tip: Cleanup participants also get a discount on beer. 3950 Wheeler Ave.

Virginia Wine Class at Sonoma Cellars, Oct. 19

Drink locally with a class focusing on Virginia wines. Walk through six different wines with Sonoma Cellars' sommeliers and learn more than you thought possible about

varietals coming from our own fair Commonwealth. Light bites will also be provided. 207 King St. 7-9:30 p.m. \$50.

Halloween Goat Social Hour at Lost Boy Cider, Oct. 22

Cider. Goats. Goats in Halloween costumes? Even better. The goats from Walnut Creek Farm are making a visit to Lost Boy for an adults-only social hour as well as the farm's owner, Dr. Maureen Roberts. Come ready to visit with the friendly farm animals and lift a glass of cider as a toast. 317 Hooffs Run Drive. 10-11 a.m. \$45.

Sleepy Howlow at Barkhaus, Oct. 27

In the face of Halloween, dog-friendly Barkhaus becomes a haunted forest for one night only. Bring your pup (one dog per person) to join the festivities – costumes are required! – and get into the spirit of Sleepy Howlow. Your entry fee includes five complimentary drinks, a selection candy and other snacks, a donation to the ASPCA and – of course! – puppuccinos for your favorite four-legged friends. 529 E. Howell Ave. 7:30-10 p.m. \$55.

Award-winning columnist Hope Nelson is author of "Classic Restaurants of Alexandria" and owns the Kitchen Recessionista blog, located at www.kitchenrecessionista.com. Email her any time at hope@kitchenrecessionista.com.

CALENDAR

AUG. 31 TO OCT. 5

Waterfront Wednesdays Music Series. 5-7 p.m. At Robinson Landing Promenade and Pier, 7 Pioneer Mill Way, Alexandria. Head to Robinson Landing for the Waterfront Wednesday Music Series presented by Yellow Door Music Concert Series featuring a range of music genres by local musicians. Bring a chair or simply stop by to enjoy some beautiful water-side beats.

SEPT. 2 TO OCT. 1

"The Big 3-0" Members Showcase. At Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Features artwork in a variety of media and celebrates Del Ray Artisans 30th Anniversary. Open Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays 12-6 p.m. (Closed October 2). Visit DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

SATURDAY/OCT. 1

Art on the Avenue. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. At Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria. Along Mount Vernon Avenue in Del Ray, a multicultural arts festival celebrating our community's diversity through the arts in Alexandria. Entertainment for all ages, art activities, food, and artists displaying and

selling their work. Website: <https://delrayartisans.org/calendar/#event=art-on-the-avenue-2022>

SATURDAY/OCT. 1

Used Book Sale: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. at Sherwood Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane, Alexandria. Selection of over 20,000 gently used children's books, fiction, history, biography, home and garden, cooking, crafts, sports, religion, travel, CDs, DVDs, and more. Unless specially priced, \$1 for hard backs, 50 cents for large paperbacks, and 25 cents for mass market paperbacks. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/friends-of-sherwood-regional>.

SATURDAY/OCT. 1

Mount Vernon Historic Plant and Garden Sale. 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. At George Washington's Mount Vernon, 3200 Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, Mount Vernon. Shop at Mount Vernon for plants, perennials, shrubs and trees grown in our greenhouses. The cooler fall weather makes it an ideal time for planting. The same plants grown at George Washington's estate can adorn your garden. The General's Choice plants are grown from seeds or cuttings collected from plants on the estate.

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