

THE CONNECTION

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Westfield High Puts on 'The Lightning Thief'

PAGE 12

Elections, Part 1 of Many

PAGES 3, 5

Back, Teresa Seraphin (as Grover Underwood), (middle row, from left) Graci Vlattas (Percy Jackson) and Scarlett Anthony (Annabeth Chase) continue on a killer quest with help from (in front) Elias Collier (as Ares, God of War), in "The Lightning Thief: The Percy Jackson Musical." Show times are Thursday-Friday, May 4-5, at 7 p.m.; and Saturday, May 6, at 2 and 7 p.m.

Joyous End to Ramadan

PAGES 8-10

New Standards For Nursing Homes

PAGE 18

Walk in the Parks

PAGE 16

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OPINION, PAGE 14 ♦ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 20 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 22

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APRIL 26 - MAY 2, 2023

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NEWS

Democratic Primary June 20; Early Voting Starts May 5

Could new faces, new districts alter the political landscape?

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

In-person early voting for the June 20, 2023, Democratic Primary Election in Fairfax County is sooner than you think. It begins on Friday, May 5, and runs through June 17 under a political landscape that has shifted.

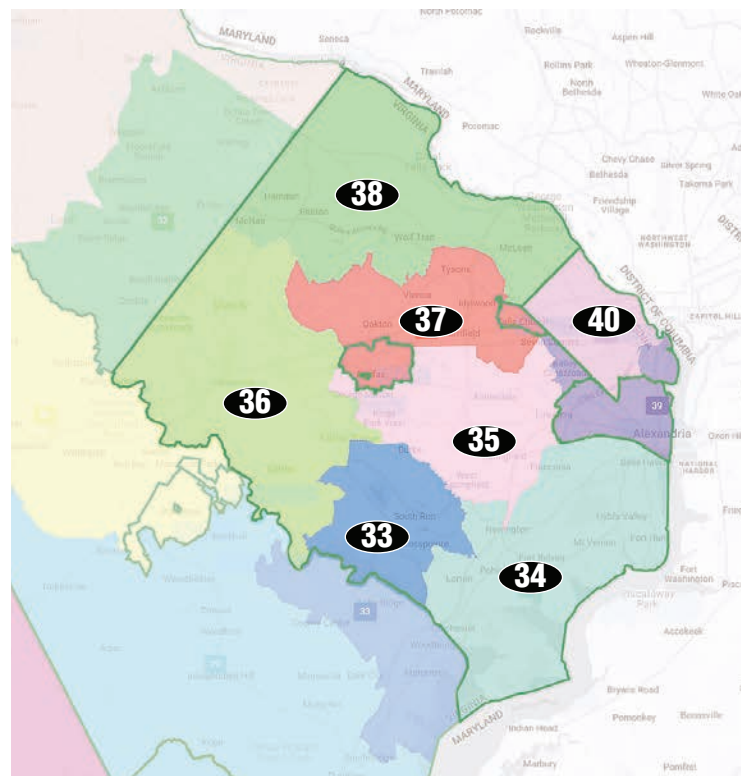
Retirements by some of the county's heavy-hitting Democratic legislators in the General Assembly, such as Senate Majority Leader Dick Saslaw, who served 48 years, and Del. Ken Plum, who served 44 years, opened the ballot box to challengers who otherwise might not have filed as candidates.

New districts for Virginia's House and Senate drawn by court-appointed special masters moved some incumbents into other districts. Del. Eileen Filler-Corn is the first woman ever elected speaker of the House, but redistricted into the same district as Del. Kathy Tran. Del. Kathleen Murphy was drawn into a district with Del. Rip Sullivan. Filler-Corn and Murphy are retiring.

Another potential shakeup scenario looms in the June 20 primary, depending on whether generational change or financial advantages sway voters. Sen. George L. Baker (D-36), age 71, who won his first State Senate District regular primary in 2007, is facing primary challenger Democrat Stella Pekarsky, age 42, who began her first term as the Sully District representative on the Fairfax County School Board in 2020. As of March 31, Barker raised \$490,493 and Pekarsky \$219,468, according to VPAP. Losing Barker's seniority would diminish Northern Virginia's clout in the Senate.

Democrats will nominate their candidates for Senate Districts 33, 35, 36, and 37 and House Districts 7, 15, and 19 (see lists). No primary is held for an office if only one candidate qualifies in that district, such as District 34, where Democratic incumbent Scott Surovell (D) runs unopposed.

There are 19 primary candidates, including the incumbents running for the nomination of seven offices at the June 20 Democratic primary in Fairfax County. No new candidates can file for the June 20 Democratic primary as the filing deadline was April 6, 2023. The filing deadline for par-



Candidates for Virginia Senate will run under new districts.

ties was April 11, per section 24.2-527 of the Virginia Code.

District numbers from previous elections across the Commonwealth do not correlate with the current district numbers. Each precinct is now, as required, entirely contained within a single congressional, state senate, delegate, and magisterial district.

VA State Senate races in Fairfax County on the Democratic Primary Ballot, Tuesday, June 20, 2023,

SD33 is an open seat, partially in Fairfax County (31.17 percent) and Prince William County (60.83 percent). Hala Ayala and Jennifer Carroll Foy compete for the nomination. From 2018 to 2021, Ayala served in the House of Delegates (HD-51). She advocates for a transportation system that works for each community, a strong education system, and affordable quality healthcare.

Foy was a House of Delegates (HD2) member from 2018 to 2022, where she supported immigrant communities and veterans and fought for criminal justice reform. See map.

SD35 is 100 percent in Fairfax County. Incumbent Dave Marsden and challenger Heidi Drauschak compete for the nomination at the primary. Marsden has served in the State Senate since 2010 and the House

of Delegates from 2006-2010. He says he will continue to hold regular town halls and is pro-choice, pro-gun safety, pro-union, pro-voting rights and pro-environment. Drauschak is a small business owner and non-profit leader. She will work to ensure every child has access to world-class education, champion workers' rights, and says that mental health professionals must be part of the criminal justice solution.

In **SD36**, current Fairfax County School Board member Stella Pekarsky is challenging incumbent George Barker, who has served in the State Senate since 2008 (SD39). She is a first-generation American running to invest in teachers and schools, fight Youngkin's attacks on schools, prevent gun violence, and protect abortion rights and reproductive health. Over the last several years, Barker's legislation included a bill that set minimum staffing standards for certified nursing facilities and administrative sanctions and required Virginia colleges to notify parents and proactively handle suicide risks on campus.

SD37 is in Fairfax County with a share of 80.07 percent, Fairfax City 12.23 percent, and Falls Church City 7.7 percent. Incumbent Chap Petersen faces opposition from

Saddam Salim and Erika Milena Yalowitz. Petersen goes door-to-door to meet his constituents. He led the fight in 2021 to reopen K-12 public schools for in-person instruction during the pandemic, and protected small businesses by sponsoring bills to target tax relief during the pandemic. Salim focuses on a clean energy economy, respect for diverse communities, LGBTQ+ rights, strong schools, and forward-thinking leadership. Yalowitz is committed to defending women's and LGBTQ+ rights, improving healthcare, housing affordability, and protecting children from firearms and drugs.

VA House of Delegate races in Fairfax County on the Democratic Primary Ballot, Tuesday, June 20, 2023

HD7 is in Fairfax County. As a result of Del. Ken Plum's retirement, the seat for House District 7 is vacant in the new district. Paul Berry is a teacher and former policy advisor to Gov. Northam. Shyamali Hauth is a ten-year Air Force veteran and community organizer. Mary Barthelson is committed to community service and human rights. Karen Keys-Gamarra is an attorney who has served as an At-large Member of the Fairfax

SEE DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY, PAGE 5

Early Voting for June 20, 2023

Democratic Party Primary Election-What You Need to Know (Source: Fairfax County.gov)

If you received a ballot in the mail, you must bring it with you and surrender it to vote in person

Curbside voting is available for eligible voters

Dropboxes are available during satellite operating hours

Email earlyvoting@fairfaxcounty.gov with questions about early voting.

MAY 5 – JUNE 17

Note: No voting on Memorial Day, May 29, 2023

HOURS OF OPERATION:
Weekdays: 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Two Saturdays (June 10, June 17): 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

LOCATION	ADDRESS
Fairfax County Government Center Conference Rooms 2/3	12000 Government Center Pkwy Fairfax 22035

HOURS OF OPERATION:
Weekdays: 1 p.m. - 7 p.m.
Two Saturdays (June 10, June 17): 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

LOCATION	ADDRESS
Mt. Vernon Governmental Center	2511 Parkers Lane Alexandria, 22306
North County Governmental Center	1801 Cameron Glen Drive Reston, 20190

SCREENSHOT VIA FXCO

Early Voting May 5-June 7, 2023

SENATE CANDIDATES

Q1 Money Raised (top number) and Cash on Hand (second number)

DISTRICT 34

Scott Surovell (D) unopposed	Dave Marsden (D) incumbent
\$83,318	\$48,265
\$665,322	\$280,829

DISTRICT 35

Heidi Drauschak (D)	Mark B Vafiades (R) Republican challenger
\$229,743	\$1,534
\$140,595	\$1,000

DISTRICT 36

George Barker (D) incumbent
\$64,370
\$372,249

Stella Pekarsky (D)
\$219,469
\$184,517

Julie Perry (R) Republican challenger
\$3,377
\$1,079

DISTRICT 37

Chap Petersen (D) incumbent
\$158,554
\$554,192

Saddam Salim (D)
\$87,069
\$54,765

Erika Milena Yalowitz (D)
\$42,487
\$27,336

Ken Reid (R) Republican challenger
\$750
\$153

DISTRICT 38

Jennifer Boysko (D) incumbent
\$103,330
\$312,488

Matthew Lang (R) Republican will face Boysko in November
\$2,210
\$1,514

DISTRICT 39

Adam Ebbin (D) Unopposed
\$44,654
\$277,300

DISTRICT 40

James DeVita (D)
\$11,726
\$2,784

Barbara Favola (D) incumbent
\$26,707
\$316,064

SOURCE: VPAP.ORG



If these walls could talk...

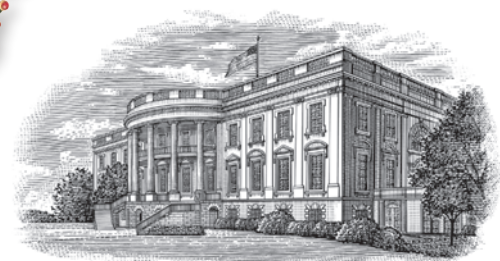
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Democratic Primary June 20; Early Voting Starts May 5

FROM PAGE 3

County School Board. Keys-Gamarra plans to codify women's reproductive rights, ban assault weapons, fund affordable housing and community care programs, and create clean energy jobs.

HD15 is in Fairfax County. There is an open seat with three candidates running. Candidate Laura Jane Cohen intends to combat Youngkin's "extremism." She has been a Moms Demand volunteer for many years, working to prevent gun violence. Henri' Thompson's concerns are climate, criminal justice reform, education, and health care. Eric Schmidt, a product of FCPS, stated that he would prioritize funding for public schools. He supports reproductive freedom

and believes that gun safety begins with keeping guns out of schools.

HD19 is a new House District with three candidates running in the primary. Makya Little is a graduate of Thomas Jefferson High School. She is a creative professional, says she is a practitioner of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and advocate for Education Equity. Rozia Henson is a community organizer, vice president of the Prince William Young Democrats, and vice chair of the Democratic Committee of Prince William County. His platform consists of housing affordability, environmental reform, and transportation. Natalie Shorter wants to work for safer communities and a stronger infrastructure to create a Virginia where families thrive rather than merely "get by".

HOUSE OF DELEGATES CANDIDATES

Q1 Money Raised (top number) and Cash on Hand (second number)

SOURCE: VPAP.ORG

HOUSE DISTRICT 1

Patrick Hope (D) unopposed
\$23,053
\$78,566

HOUSE DISTRICT 6

Kristin Hoffman (R)
Republican challenger
N/A
N/A

HOUSE DISTRICT 8

Max Fisher (R)
Republican Challenger
\$0
\$0

HOUSE DISTRICT 2

Adele McClure (D)
\$78,729
\$129,461

Rip Sullivan (D) incumbent
\$54,661
\$187,817

Irene Shin (D) incumbent
\$12,834
\$24,239

Kevin Saucedo-Broach (D)
N/A
N/A

HOUSE DISTRICT 7
Mary Barthelson (D)
\$9,267
\$7,470

HOUSE DISTRICT 9
Karrie Delaney (D) unopposed
\$15,395
\$40,615

HOUSE DISTRICT 3

Alfonso Lopez (D) unopposed
\$10,643
\$54,160

Paul Berry (D)
\$30,359
\$26,000

HOUSE DISTRICT 10
Dan Helmer (D) incumbent
\$91,932
\$59,319

HOUSE DISTRICT 4

Charniele Herring (D) unopposed
\$86,832
\$408,304

Shyamali Hauth (D)
\$40,983
\$35,415

James Thomas (R)
Republican challenger
\$25,025
\$15,826

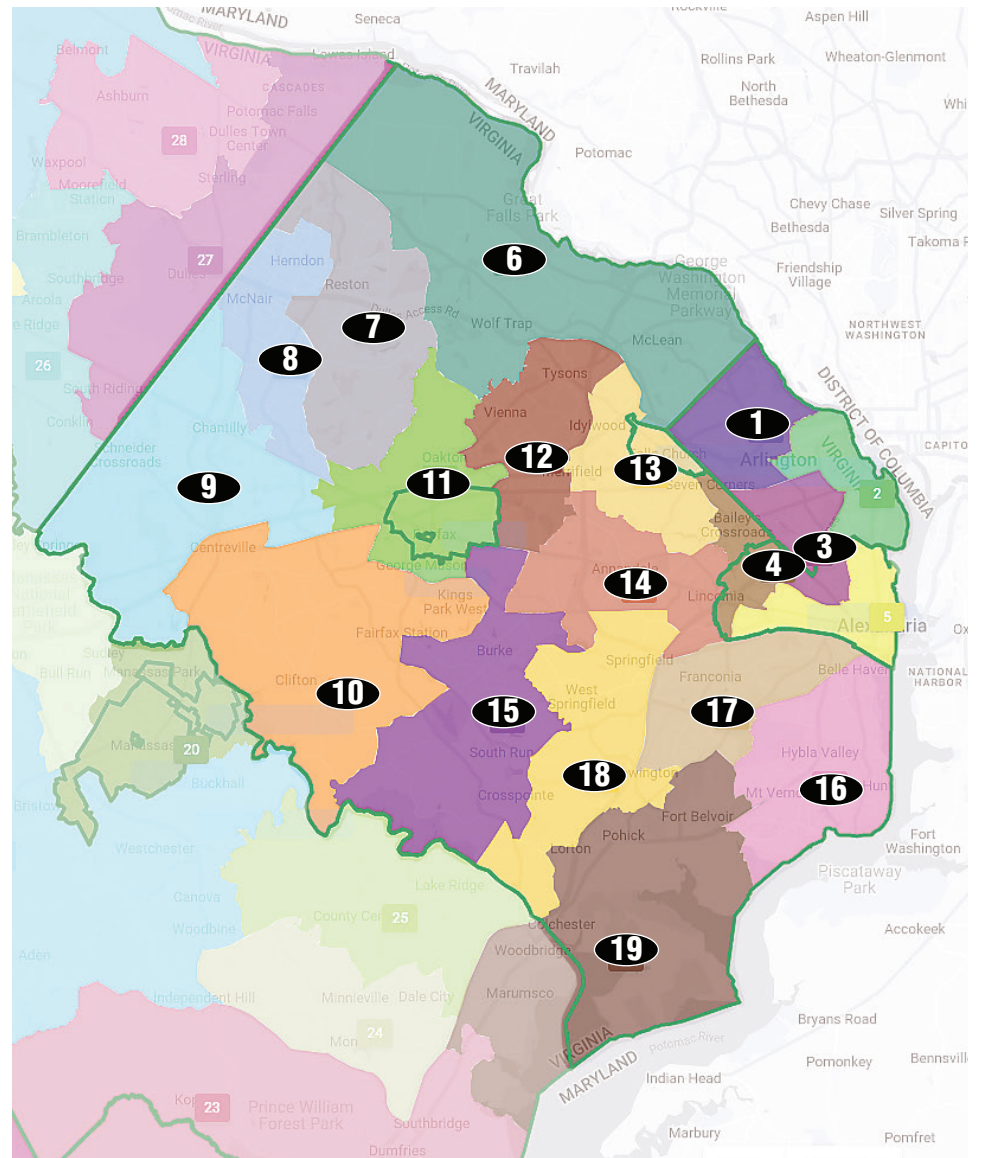
HOUSE DISTRICT 5

Elizabeth Bennett-Parker (D) unopposed
\$21,838
\$84,332

Karen Keys-Gamarra (D)
\$26,493
\$22,054

HOUSE DISTRICT 11
David Bulova (D) incumbent
\$13,960
\$121,690

Almira Mohammed (R)
Republican challenger
\$477
\$125



Va House of Delegates Districts

HOUSE DISTRICT 12

Holly Seibold (D) unopposed
\$6,280
\$15,688

HOUSE DISTRICT 15

Laura Jane Cohen (D)
\$45,931
\$151,462

HOUSE DISTRICT 16

Paul Krizek (D) unopposed
\$31,110
\$111,392

HOUSE DISTRICT 13

Marcus Simon (D) unopposed
\$30,995
\$107,575

Eric Schmidt (D)
\$0
\$0

HOUSE DISTRICT 17

Mark Sickles (D) unopposed
\$12,660
\$140,275

HOUSE DISTRICT 14

Vivian Watts (D) unopposed
\$1,125
\$39,457

Henri' Thompson (D)
\$0
\$0

HOUSE DISTRICT 18

Kathy Tran (D) unopposed
\$29,275
\$307,716

Trees Come Down and Utilities Relocated Along Rolling Road

Flagmen and cones are signs that a project appears to be underway.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

The Rolling Road widening project in Springfield is not scheduled to begin until late 2024 but the trees are coming down already to make way for another lane each way and turning lane.

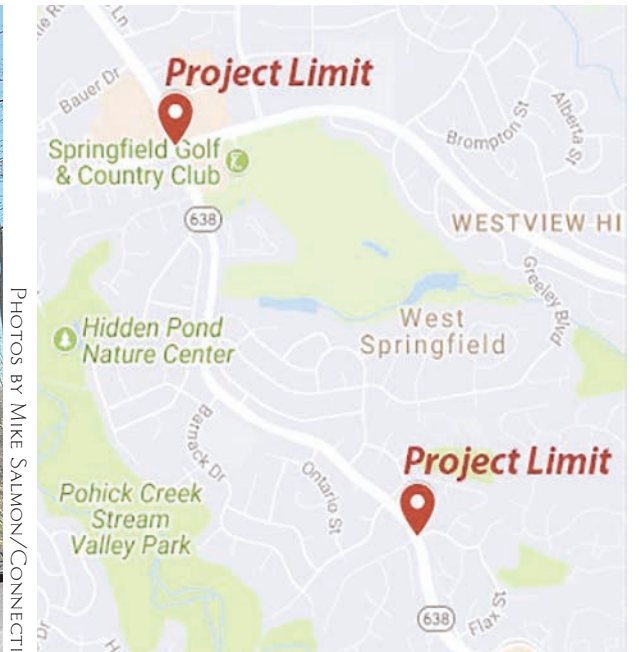
It's the utility work in advance of the widening, said Meredith Martinez Corwin, the Deputy Chief of Staff in the Springfield District supervisor's office. "For the widening, the current poles all need to be moved because where they are currently would be in the roadway. They expect the utility work to be finished within the next year so that the road widening work can begin," she said.

In the road construction world, this is called the utility relocation phase but to the homeowners in this area, the work has begun.

The first phase of this project was known as the Old Keene Mill intersection improvements, was completed in November 2021. A second left-turn lane was added



A flagman regulates the flow of traffic during the week here on Rolling Road.



This map shows the location of the tree work that's going on in April.

to the westbound turning lanes to allow more traffic to head in that direction, another right turn lane to eastbound Old Keene Mill Road was added, the signals were replaced and the pedestrian facilities

were improved. The widening part will occur between Viola Street and Old Keene Mill Road. That portion of the road averages about 19,000 vehicles a day VDOT said. The additional

lanes will come with traffic signal upgrades and a shared-use path. To let everyone know beforehand, VDOT held public information meetings in June 2016, November 2017, and a design public

hearing in February 2018. The whole project is priced at \$78.4 million and is financed with federal, state, county and Northern Virginia Transportation Authority funds.

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Vienna Town Council Adopts Tax Rate Reduction

At its regular meeting Monday night, the Vienna Town Council voted to reduce the Town's property tax rate by one cent to 19.5 cents per \$100 of assessed value. The new rate is 0.75 cents lower than the 0.25-cent reduction in the proposed FY2024 budget presented by the Town Manager in March.

The reduced tax rate means the average increase for homeowners for Town of Vienna property taxes is \$82 a year versus the average of \$162 annually if the tax rate remained the same. The average cost of a home in the Town of Vienna is slightly more than \$1 million.

Overall, a 1 cent decrease in tax rate leads to \$673,000 decrease in Town revenue.

"On average, Vienna real estate assessments increased by 10 percent, which would have resulted in a significant increase in property taxes if we left the tax rate where it was," said Vienna Mayor Linda Colbert. "The Town Council wanted to reduce that burden on taxpayers and asked the finance staff to reevaluate the financial forecast. Thanks to conservative budgeting, no increase in health insurance rates for Town staff and an increase in other revenues reported

later in the budget process, the finance staff determined that Vienna could further reduce the tax rate in the proposed budget and still operate at high standards."

This is the eleventh consecutive year there was either no change or a reduction in Vienna's property tax rate. The lower rate approved at tonight's Council meeting lowers the increase in tax amount for the average assessed value in the FY2023-24 tax year; can be sustained in future years; and allows the Town to maintain an unassigned rainy-day fund balance of more than 18% of the subsequent year budget.

In addition to the tax rate reduction, the proposed \$50.1 million balanced budget funds compensation increases for eligible employees, adds one position to the Public Works Department and one position to the Planning and Zoning Department, and addresses inflationary increases in operating costs.

The Town Council will vote on the adoption of the FY2024 Town budget on Monday, May 15, 2023. To see the proposed budget and to learn more about the budget process, visit www.viennava.gov/budget.

Car Crash Kills Man in Centreville

Fairfax County police haven't revealed why a Culpeper man was fleeing from authorities in his county, but the end result was a tragic crash that took his life, early last Saturday morning, in Centreville. Killed was Ashton Robinson, 39.

Police say the incident occurred April 22; officers responded at 1:18 a.m. to Route 29 and Bull Run Post Office Road after receiving a report of a two-vehicle crash there with one driver ejected.

Preliminarily, detectives here determined that deputies from the Fauquier County Sheriff's Office had pursued Robinson – who was driving a 2011 Dodge Journey – after he drove away from a DWI checkpoint.

According to police, Robinson entered Fairfax County traveling east on Route 29. They say he tried to pass a 2020 Toyota Cam-

ry but was unsuccessful. His SUV struck the Camry, left the road and crashed into a guardrail. He was ejected from the vehicle upon impact and was declared dead at the scene.

The driver and passenger of the Camry were uninjured. Preliminarily, police say, "Speed and alcohol appear to be a factor" in this incident. They also noted that no Fairfax County officers were involved in the pursuit.

Meanwhile, detectives from this county's Crash Reconstruction Unit are continuing to investigate the crash. Anyone with information about it is asked to contact them at 703-280-0543. Tips may also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by calling 1-866-411-TIPS (866-411-8477).

— BONNIE HOBBS



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May 5th

Opening Discussion at the Jewish Community Center, Rockville, MD by Honorable Shashi Tharoor at 7:00 PM

Arundhati Subramaniam, Author, Poet Sahitya Academy Award

Dr. Chitra Banerjee, Author, Top Ten Selling Author

Dr. Rakshanda Jalil, Indian writer, critic and literary historian

Dr. Meenakshi Mohan, Author and Poet

Dr. Harish Naval, Author and Poet

May 6th and 7th

In Person Discussions at Writers Center, Bethesda, MD

Award winning and best selling Authors and Poets like Arundhati Subramaniam, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Rakshanda Jalil, Dr. Meenakshi Mohan, Dr. Anita Nahal, and more.

Limited Seating, Registration Required. Donations Recommended

May 8-14th Virtual Discussions

Please register at: <http://dcsaaci.org/dcsalf/may-2023-schedule/>
Questions: info@dcsaff.com

RAMADAN

PHOTOS BY EDEN BROWN, THE CONNECTION



Ridvan Ince, and Omar, from Fairfax, sat waiting on the lawn to break their fast. They are Turks who recently came to the US, and said coming to the Ramadan tent (and Ramadan in general) helps them stay connected to their culture.



Baby Havva and her grandmother, Nihman, from Sterling, were happy just relating to each other during the event, as Havva's parents enjoyed meeting friends.



Fried balls of dough called Lokma being prepared as the most appreciated dessert. The sweet fritters are then dipped in honey or chocolate and coated with pistachios.

Ramadan Tent Iftar Brings NoVa Muslims Together

Local Muslims celebrate unity and democratic values.

There were Kazaks, Uighurs, Tajiks, Azerbaijanis, Uzbeks, Turks, politicians, a Lebanese Quaker, and a Fairfax principal; there were children playing on bouncy castles, covered and uncovered women, an NBA basketball player, a Presbyterian pastor, students, and young married couples, sitting down at long tables in the tent or sitting on blankets on the lawn of the Presbyterian church in Fairfax. As the Imam began to intone the prayer signaling the time had come to break the fast, barely audible over the chatter, they drank water, which they had not had since before sunrise, and nibbled on a date. There was relief, but there was something else: the communion of 1400 people coming together as one, a family of the faithful, united through fasting and focusing on the message of the Koran during the holiest month of the Islamic calendar.

Over 1400 free meals were eaten under the Ramadan tent on the evening of April 20; 1200 meals were prepared the day before. AFTA, the American Turkish Friendship Association had organized the "grand Ramadan tent" event on both days, opening it to all in the community, in a kind of grand finale to Ramadan and with the goal of promoting cultural exchange and fostering community relationships.

One theme of the event was an emphasis on democratic values. An outspoken comment made by a Turkish-American businessman about politics in Turkey, particu-

larly after the earthquakes, prompted one American to ask if he were concerned about talking so openly given the attention the Erdogan government pays to critics. The Turkish-American laughed. "No!" he said, "I've been in this country (and Canada) for 23 years. I have completely lost my fear of talking in public about these things. I do not even think like a Middle Eastern anymore but like an American. I am free to say what I want here. This is why we came to America, that and the opportunities here. The opportunities to be successful are immense; the streets really are paved with gold if you work hard and make good choices."

More evidence of the emphasis on democratic values at the Ramadan events was the presence of Turkish-American activist, Enes Kanter Freedom, an outspoken critic of authoritarian regimes and former NBA basketball star, and representatives of local members of Congress Gerry Connolly and Abigail Spanberger spoke at the event.



Fairfax elementary school Greenbrier East principal, Dave Pietzman, and his daughters Ella 10, and Hannah, 8 were invited by Mrs. Mutlu, (far left) the parent of a first grader, to attend the ceremony. Daughter Ella said she is learning about Ramadan because she has friends who fast and was very interested in learning more.

Children were a major part of the celebration. Face paints, arts and crafts, games, traditional Turkish music and performanc-

More

To learn more about the American Turkish Friendship Association, see: <https://www.atfa.us>

And for Turkish food that was served at the event, see: <https://www.thezaffron.com>

And for a taste of Turkish food and fresh "simit", see: <https://www.cozmoone.com>

es made the Ramadan tent events festive and family oriented.

The meals were unusually good for large pre-cooked meals, and were done by the restaurant Zaffron, located in Woodbridge. Chicken kebabs, traditional soup, rice, and simmered beans and traditional desserts were offered, but attendees could also buy tickets to even more elaborate treats, like Lokma, sweet fritters eaten plain or dipped in honey and pistachios.

For non-Muslims who attended, the event was an excellent introduction to a different kind of Ramadan. Instead of

RAMADAN



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Enes Kanter Freedom, a Turkish-American basketball player turned activist for democratic values, stands with Fairfax Presbyterian Church Pastor Henry G. Brinton and his wife, who provided the venue for the Ramadan tent.



Rafet Akman runs the Cozmo One Turkish grocery and restaurant in Chantilly. He came to the U.S. 23 years ago as a student. He was at the event with his wife and two children. He emphasized how much he values the life he has in the U.S. and his interest in cultural exchange. On Sundays, his children go to a Turkish school which encourages them to mix with other nationalities and Americans, to familiarize themselves with different cultures. A true global citizen, he wants his children to learn more languages, travel and even live in another country when they are young.

PHOTO BY EDEN BROWN, THE CONNECTION

FROM PAGE 8

hundreds praying together in a mosque before the Iftar, couples strolled in with lawn chairs and picnics, sitting down to socialize. Instead of complete head coverings, the women wore scarves or none at all, and the men didn't

bother. Less solemn and more joyous, the attendees came largely (originally) from Turkey, the Balkans, and northern Asia. The warm hospitality and inclusivity, the goodwill that came from sharing culture and similarities, not differences, were the hallmarks of the event.

CALENDAR

			1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31		

Let us know about an upcoming event

connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar

Public Hearings

Funding the Right Transportation Projects

You are invited to share comments on transportation projects that have been recommended for funding in the FY2024-2029 Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP). Additionally, pursuant to §33.2-202, comments will be accepted for new projects valued in excess of \$25 million. The Commonwealth Transportation Board will take your comments into consideration as it develops the FY2024-2029 SYIP. The program allocates public funds to highway, road, bridge, rail, bicycle, pedestrian and public transportation projects. All federally eligible projects in the SYIP will be included in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program to document how Virginia will obligate its federal funds.

Meeting materials will be available <https://www.ctb.virginia.gov/planning/springmeetings2023/default.asp> before April 20, 2023.

Public meetings begin at 4 p.m. in each of the locations except as noted below:
A formal comment period will be held at these meetings.

Thursday, April 20 Hampton Roads District Hampton Roads District Auditorium 7511 Burbage Drive Suffolk, VA 23435	Monday, April 24 Richmond District Hawthorne Room 2430 Pine Forest Drive Colonial Heights, VA 23834	Monday, May 1, 5 p.m. *Northern Virginia District Potomac Conference Center NOVA District Office 4975 Alliance Drive Fairfax, VA 22030
Tuesday, May 2 Culpeper District Culpeper District Auditorium 1601 Orange Road Culpeper, VA 22701	Wednesday, May 3 Staunton District Blue Ridge Community College Plecker Center for Continuing Education One College Lane Weyers Cave, VA 24486	Monday, May 8 Fredericksburg District Germanna Community College Workforce and Technology Center 10000 Germanna Point Drive Fredericksburg, VA 22408
Monday, May 15 Bristol District Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center One Partnership Circle Abingdon, VA 24210	Tuesday, May 16 Salem District Salem Civic Center Community Room 1001 Roanoke Boulevard Salem, VA 24153	Wednesday, May 17 Lynchburg District Lynchburg Grand Hotel 601 Main Street Lynchburg, VA 24504

*The Northern Virginia District meeting will serve as the required joint public meeting with the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority, the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission, the Virginia Railway Express, and the CTB per § 33.2-214.3 of the Code of Virginia. This meeting will also be streamed online at <https://www.youtube.com/live/ranpvKJOF74?feature=share>.

You can submit comments online at <https://arcg.is/Xi1TG0>, or by email or mail by May 24, 2023.

For roads and highways: Six-YearProgram@VDOT.Virginia.gov, or Infrastructure Investment Director, Virginia Department of Transportation, 1401 East Broad St., Richmond, VA 23219.

For rail and public transportation: DRPTPR@drpt.virginia.gov, Public Information Office, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, 600 East Main Street, Suite 2102, Richmond VA, 23219.

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STATIONARY ENGINEER APPRENTICESHIP

Applications for the IUOE Local 99 Apprenticeship Program will be accepted during the period of May 1—5, 2023, inclusive. Applications must be completed in person by the applicant at Engineer Center 9315 Largo Drive West, Upper Marlboro, MD 20774 from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. \$35 application fee includes drug screen.

For additional information scan the QR Code.

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NEWS

Muslim Community Celebrates Eid

By SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

Members of the United Community of Muslims of the United States celebrated Eid, marking the end of the month-long dawn to sunset fasting of Ramadan on April 21. The Eid prayer is traditionally performed by a congregation in an open area, community center or mosque. Members gathered at Laurel Hill's Central Green for their celebration. The Eid prayer, sermon and supplication, asked for God's forgiveness, mercy, peace and blessing for all in the world.

The local group from Woodbridge seeks to empower youth, provide religious and social activities, prayer venues, and aid during crisis.



PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

Hawa Koroma, Fatamaman Sedate, Mabinty Manimin and Isaca Lamar celebrate Eid wearing traditional celebratory dress.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF KENNETH TARR

Runners take off at the start of last year's Fairfax 5K race.

Feed Fairfax 5K Supports WFCM Food Pantry

Proceeds fund weekend meal packs for local children.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Area residents can get some early morning exercise while raising money for a good cause during the third annual Feed Fairfax 5K and 1-mile fun run/walk. It's slated for Saturday, May 6, at 8 a.m., with participants meeting in the Planet Fitness parking lot.

It's at 13043 Lee Jackson Memorial Hwy., at the far end of the Greenbriar Town Center in Chantilly. But the course, itself, goes through the neighborhood across the street. And the event benefits local nonprofits Western Fairfax Christian Ministries (WFCM) and Food for Others.

Proceeds from the race and walk will support WFCM's Free Food Fridge program and Food for Others' Power Pack program. Over the last two years, this event has raised \$70,000 and donated more than 50,000 meals.

Founded in 1987, WFCM has been serving the Western Fairfax community via a variety of programs. One of them is the Free Food Fridge program. During the school year, it provides food for nearly 600 hungry students each week. The program consists of 11 refrigerators inside local schools, plus another three at community sites, including

Chantilly High School and the Boys & Girls Club of Chantilly. They're stocked with food and, because of them, students in need may obtain food to see them through the weekend.

Food for Others has supported the Northern Virginia community since 1995, addressing food insecurity by providing free groceries to its neighbors in need. Among its operations is the Power Pack program, which serves roughly 3,600 children per week during the academic year. It, too, enables children experiencing food insecurity to have food to eat over the weekend.

At the conclusion of the upcoming race/walk in Greenbriar, participants will lend a hand to this effort by helping fill Power Packs with food for the students. Other race-day activities will include a warmup for the 5K by the YogaSix Burke studio and live music by Nicole DeLoi. Ken Tarr and Shannon Baccaglini will be the emcees. The race will occur, rain or shine.

The cost is: Adults, older than 18, 5K, \$40; 1-mile, \$30; Children 18 and younger, 5K or 1-mile, \$15. Connection Newspapers readers can get 10-percent off by applying the promo code, TheConnection10. Register at Feed Fairfax 5K/Feed Events or at <https://runsignup.com/Race/VA/Fairfax/FeedFairfax5K>.

This event is now part of the Feed Events Race Series. Besides the upcoming May 6 race in Chantilly, the Food for Others Tysons 5K is Sept. 9 in Tysons Corner, and the Feed a Veteran 5K is Nov. 11 in Woodbridge. For more information, go to the Website, Feed Fairfax 5K/Feed Events.

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Back, Teresa Seraphin (as Grover Underwood), (middle row, from left) Graci Vlattas (Percy Jackson) and Scarlett Anthony (Annabeth Chase) continue on a killer quest with help from (in front) Elias Collier (as Ares, God of War).



From left, Graci Vlattas (as Percy Jackson) and Anna Kaplan (as his mother, Sally Jackson) are happy to be reunited.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF KAYLA CADLEY

Westfield High presents 'Lightning Thief: Percy Jackson Musical.'

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

When Zeus's master lightning bolt is stolen and Percy Jackson becomes the prime suspect, he must find and return it to prove his innocence and prevent a war between the gods. But to succeed on his quest, he must travel to the underworld and back, solve the riddle of the Oracle – which warns him of betrayal by a friend – and come to terms with the father who abandoned him.

That's the premise of Westfield High's upcoming show, "The Lightning Thief: The Percy Jackson Musical." Show times are Thursday-Friday, May 4-5, at 7 p.m.; and Saturday, May 6, at 2 and 7 p.m. Tickets are \$10, students; and \$15, adults.

Online ticket reservations at <https://www.etix.com/ticket/v/15474/> are strongly encouraged. Tickets at the door may only be purchased by cash or by checks payable to Westfield High School.

Adapted from Rick Riordan's best-selling book, and featuring an original rock score, the musical has a cast and crew of 50 and is suitable for all ages.

"As soon as it starts, you feel like you jumped on a train that just keeps moving," said Director Enza Giannone-Hosig. "The quote on our show T-shirts is 'Normal is a myth.' Percy doesn't think he's normal; he's impulsive and has ADHD. But his mom tells him to embrace his differences because that's what makes him special."

Scenes take place in some 20 locations –

mainly at a camp in Long Island, N.Y., and in Los Angeles, New York City and the underworld. Costumes feature early 2000s styles – baggy jeans, bright colors and tie dye – juxtaposed against various mythical creatures.

"Because the actors love this story so much and are so invested in it, they have big dreams for this show," said Giannone-Hosig. "It's really high-energy and we're having fun. The kids are a well-oiled machine, work hard and are so passionate, it's a joy to be around them. And our show is something the whole family will enjoy."

Playing Percy, 13, is sophomore Graci Vlattas. "He's a demigod and the son of Poseidon, but he doesn't know it at the start," she explained. "But because of it, he's attacked by a Greek monster, and attacked again while his mom and friend Grover are there. So his mom sends Percy and Grover to Camp Half Blood, where Percy's pushed into the world of Greek mythology and learns he's a demigod with magical powers."

Vlattas plays him as a sarcastic, temperamental teen who's also trying to do his best. "It's fun because I grew up reading all 25 Percy Jackson books in the main series, so I can put myself into the character," she said. "So that's why I wanted to play Percy – I'm obsessed with him. And it's fun switching between all his emotions – oblivious, brave, angsty and a relatable, lovable character."

One of her favorite songs is "The Weirdest Dream," which is mixed with "The Minotaur" number. "It goes from a brutal fight to a funny, dream sequence," said Vlattas. "It's so funny and great to perform."

As for the show, she said audiences will enjoy "the comedy and whimsy of the characters. The story is upbeat and lighthearted and is a fun adventure that's easy to follow. And it's such a fun journey – with big plot twists and dance numbers – so even if you're not familiar with the books, it'll transport you to a new world that you'll love."

Senior Elias Collier portrays Charon, ferryman to the underworld and a struggling

singer. "He's flamboyant, lively and bubbly, with lots of pep," said Collier. "He prefers to have a singing career, instead of his regular job. He's friendly, but professional, and enjoys bringing people to the underworld by car and getting paid for it."

Having fun with his role, Collier said, "I like all his songs and it's fun making exaggerated motions to play him. And he's different enough from me, while similar, which makes it easy to get into character."

"D.O.A." (dead on arrival), which Collier sings, is his favorite number. "It's club-like in its choreography and glow-in-the-dark wave lights," he said. "I wear large, platform shoes – which are fun to dance in – and do my signature move at the end to give it a flourish. It's also high in my singing range, so I get to challenge myself. And it's a light and bouncy, pop-type song, in contrast to my other songs, which are darker rock music."

He said audiences will enjoy themselves because "It's a silly show – a comedy/action adventure with lots of slapstick humor. People should expect the unexpected."

Playing Grover, Percy's best friend, is senior Teresa Seraphin. He's a satyr – half goat/half human – so, said Seraphin, "I get to do lots of bleating, which is fun. When Grover was younger, he was supposed to protect three other people and failed; and one of them, Thalia, was turned into a tree by her father, Zeus. Grover feels terrible about it and believes that, by succeeding on this quest with Percy, he'll prove to everybody – especially himself – that he can be the protector he's supposed to be."

"Grover's also silly, so he's fun to play," continued Seraphin. "I get to laugh a lot, jump around and wear a costume with fur-

ry goat legs, a tie-dye shirt and little horns. And I like performing the song, 'Drive,' with Graci Vlattas and Scarlet Anthony. I sing the first verse and chorus, and then they join in. It's an upbeat, hopeful number before we go on a crazy journey."

Seraphin also choreographed the show, with help from student Annabelle DuBard. "Our big dance number, 'D.O.A.,' was my favorite to choreograph," said Seraphin. "It has a '70s disco feel and brings in real-life pop stars who died too soon and lets them party. I've been dancing since age 5, and choreographing is a great way for me to express myself artistically. It's a cool feeling and very rewarding to see it all come together onstage and all my hard work pay off."

Senior Anna Kaplan portrays Percy's mother, Sally Jackson. "She's kind and a young, fun, cool mom who wants what's best for her son and will do anything to protect him," said Kaplan. "She's also giddy and happy-go-lucky. And she believes that being normal is a myth and the things that make you different make you strong. I like that she's gentle and lovable. She only appears a few times in the show; but when she does, it's impactful."

Kaplan especially likes the song, "Strong," which she sings, with Percy joining in at the end. "It's pretty and has a nice tempo," she said. "It also has a good message – don't be embarrassed to be different from other people. Instead, be proud of it because you'll then be a stronger person."

She said audiences will love this show because "It's a spectacle with lots of cool things to look at, including the special effects and lighting. And the characters are lovable and relatable."

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Woodson High Presents 'Little Shop of Horrors'

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Featuring a cast and crew of more than 100, plus a 12-person pit orchestra, Woodson High presents the musical, "Little Shop of Horrors." They've been rehearsing since February, and Director Chris Rushing calls his actors "incredible."

"The show is double cast because we have so much talent, and both casts are excellent," he said. "A Broadway performer did a musical workshop with us, and he was so impressed, he asked if we were a magnet school.

"It's a combination of their hard work and their support from school resources, especially chorus teacher Amy Moir. The music is phenomenal. It's the first musical I fell in love with as a kid, and it's the first time I've directed it. And it's a timeless tale that's still relevant now because it asks, 'What are you willing to sacrifice to get what you want?'"

The curtain rises Friday, May 5, at 7 p.m.; Saturday, May 6, at 2 and 7 p.m.; Sunday, May 7, at 7 p.m.; and Friday, May 12, and Sunday, May 14, at 7 p.m. Ticket information – including for VIP seats and a meal – is at wtwdrama.org.

Meek flower-shop assistant Seymour has a crush on his co-worker, Audrey, but the store is struggling financially. Things change, however, when Seymour discovers an unusual, exotic plant that attracts new business. But fame and fortune come at a steep price, as the plant has a particular diet and a ravenous appetite that must continue to be satisfied.

"In this play, people are willing to shed blood to get what they want," said Rushing. "And it's one of the first showing the nerd taking a dark turn. He believes he has no option but to turn to violence. This is a play about haves and have nots – and also about the American dream gone very wrong."

Junior Jordan Hershaft portrays Seymour. "He's a bit shy, clumsy and generally reserved," said Hershaft. "And at first, he doesn't know how to show his feelings. He was an orphan, and his boss, Mr. Mushnik, took him in and hired him to work at the flower shop, but Mushnik doesn't treat him well. Throughout the show, a series of events changes him emotionally. He has a crush on Audrey and eventually pursues her, but later realizes his confidence to do that came from the plant. And he feels overwhelmed by his success."

Enjoying his role, Hershaft said Seymour's personality is similar to

his, and playing Seymour gives him more confidence in himself. "It's great having a lead and portraying such an absurd situation," he said. "My favorite song is 'Supertime,' sung by the plant Seymour named Audrey II. It's catchy and Seymour has to decide if he really wants to feed the plant to keep getting all these terrific things."

Hershaft said this show is special because "We portray the characters differently than other productions do. People will like the costume design – especially for Audrey II – as well as all the songs. The audience will get to know us and our personalities a little by how we interpret our characters."

Senior Noah Tajudeen also plays Seymour. "He's timid, but caring, sympathetic and empathetic to others," said Tajudeen. "But he's secretly ambitious because he dreams of making it out of his hardships. Yet the way he does it may not be the safest or most ethical. I see him through the lens of a Faustian tale – not selling your soul for fame and fortune – and that's the moral of the story. Even without a formal education, he's talented at botany. There's a reason the plant targets him – because he's special."

Tajudeen said it's challenging to portray someone so timid, after playing the courageous, confident Sponge Bob last year. But he's happy because "The songs are amazing and let me expand my range. At heart, I'm a vocalist, so constantly improving matters to me. I really like, 'Just the Gas,' sung by the dentist [Audrey's boyfriend] and I. It furthers the plot, is funny and witty, and I sing it really quickly."

He said audiences will enjoy the show's "sincere emotion. And they'll love the plant – both our Audrey IIs are so talented. After they belt out their songs, people will give them standing ovations – they're that good."

Portraying Audrey is senior Rachel Sper. "She's complex," said Sper. "She's a truly genuine and lovely person. But she's broken because she's let the people attracted to her take advantage of her, leaving her feeling she's not worthy of true love. She has lots of joy inside, but it's often overshadowed by her past. But she has sweet intentions and is caring toward Seymour, who's also broken."

Sper loves her part because "Audrey has lots of layers to her, which I've worked to bring out. This show has many dark themes, but she brings joy and levity to it. Despite what happens to her, she still smiles and is there for Seymour." Sper also likes singing, "Call Back



From left, Ella Derrick, Sara Davitch and Yeamlak Tekabe as the urchins, who hang out in front of the flower shop.



From left, Noah Tajudeen (as Seymour) and Alyce Visioli as (Audrey), fixing Seymour's tie before his big radio interview.

in the Morning," as Audrey. "It's fast, with lots of back and forth while she answers different phones and talks to customers at the same time," she said.

"It's an iconic show that we've made our own," said Sper. "Audiences will love the details we've put into our set, the characters' in-

teractions and our songs to show the story's themes through various elements."

Senior Diya Selvan plays Audrey II. "I'm an evil, conniving plant that takes advantage of how naive the other characters are," she said. "She's smart and needs to keep being fed to live. But she

preys on people's negative aspects, like greed, and urges them to feed into those wants and desires. My costume will look like a hibiscus with an intricate headpiece. And because it's so attractive, people don't at first realize she can lure them in like pawns in her game."

Selvan's having fun portraying "this big, extravagant, confident villain and getting to act over-the-top. I have to 'become' the plant. And at times, when I'm onstage but not noticed by the other characters, I learned to really react and listen to what everyone else is saying. I also enjoy my soul-type songs, which aren't always sung in high school."

Her favorite is the finale, featuring everyone. "It's the cautionary tale about the morality of it all, and how you shouldn't let your greed overcome you," she explained. "I think the audience will like that it's not a Hollywood ending. And all the music is spectacular and highlights each character's intentions."

Senior Savannah Rodgers is stage manager and helps run tech. Most productions of this show use a puppet for the plant and portray it as masculine. But, said Rodgers, Woodson's Audrey II is feminine and personified "to be more dramatic and heightened."

"We're also using LED lights to change colors quickly to reflect the mood of the action onstage," she continued. "It's been fun working with everybody, hearing their ideas and seeing it all come together."

Reston Farmers Market—Season 26

INDEPENDENT PROGRESSIVE
JOHN LOVAAS.

The calendar says that Spring 2023 has arrived. On April 29, we'll certify Spring is in fact here by opening the one and only, original Reston Farmers Market still number one in Northern Virginia, for its 26th season. We're already deluged with folks calling to see if the Market has opened yet. That always happens after the first few warm days of the year! We would be open, except that our local farmers (all within 125 miles of here) have to grow their fresh fruits and vegetables before they can sell them. At this point, I can assure you that lots of things have been planted and to date the weather has been good to them. Our meat, seafood, baked goods, flower, prepared food, and other specialty vendors are also chafing at the bit to offer you the freshest and best products you can imagine. Just another few days!

More good news. With the Covid pandemic restrictions behind us,

we are able to move stands back closer together to create space for more vendors. In fact we'll have five new vendors this year for a total of 34, tying Reston with Burke for the title of largest farmers market in Fairfax County sponsored by the Park Authority. (Go to www.restonfarmersmarket.com for details about the vendors and a map of the market.) In addition, the Park Authority has contracted with one of our farmers, Future Acres Urban Farming, to provide a composting service.

All but one of your favorite vendors from last year are returning. They'll be joined by newcomers whom we worked hard to recruit in the off season. The newcomers are: Bites By Sam, a well-known local baker offering delicious sweet and savory pies; Cocoli's, a baker offering Philippine specialty donuts and scrumptious cakes; Coulter Farms, a fully certified family-owned, organic dairy farm filling a gap we've



Lovaas

been trying to fill for years; Pho From Home, homemade, frozen Vietnamese style soups; and Poppi's Hot Sauces, another family-owned business which brings the hottest and tastiest gourmet sauces and rubs. This new all-star lineup will join our returning cast of ten of the best produce farms and orchards within 125 miles of us. Other favorite returnees include: three meat vendors, three top-notch bakers, seafood, pasta, mushrooms, flowers, microgreens, kettle corn, a unique local maple syrup producer, and several other specialty, value-added vendors. To see the entire list, read about each vendor and get your map of the market, go to the website mentioned above.

What makes the Reston Farmers Market the best, you might ask. Obviously, at the top of the list are the terrific vendors, most of whom have been with us for many years. Right behind them, and no doubt attending each Saturday because

of them, are hundreds of wonderful, incredibly loyal shoppers and friends of the RFM. Among these there are some who stand out. One is Virginia Del. Ken Plum who stood with Reston Founder Robert Simon and I on the day we inaugurated the Market in May 1998. From that day to the present, Ken has come to nearly every single market session whenever he was in Reston. Del. Plum recently announced he would no longer stand for election. We hope retirement means that there will be even more Saturday mornings when he'll be with us.

We also thank the Fairfax County Park Authority, sponsor of the Reston Farmers Market, and our hosts at Lake Anne the Lake Anne Condominium Association and Mr. Robert Smoot

Lastly, our all-volunteer team managing the Market has grown since I founded the Market back in the Spring of 1998. There are four co-Managers now: Fran and I, and Keith and Anne Strange. And, we are most fortunate to be joined by young volunteers Kory Wills and Kaitlyn Pineros to better serve you.

Celebrate Earth Day Every Day

BY DEL. KENNETH R.
"KEN" PLUM



Plum

Since April 22, 1970, an event is held each year at the same time to celebrate our environment and to commit to what we can do to protect it for the future. Events are held worldwide with the theme this year being "Invest in Our Planet." More than a billion people are involved in 193 different countries according to earthday.org that somehow attempts to coordinate it all. Certainly the publicity surrounding the many events and the public conversations that result have raised awareness of the state of our environment around the planet.

Young people take the lead on environmental concerns. Schools and clubs have activities organized around the Earth Day date. Trash is picked up along roads and stream banks leaving us to wonder why previous focus on the condition of our environment has not resulted in everyone disposing of their trash appropriately. Others make posters and signs and gather for protests at some governmental or environmental spot.

I am thankful for those who

demonstrate their concerns about the environment in whatever way. Certainly the Chesapeake Bay is getting cleaner, and the air quality has improved at least in our region stemming from actions taken with the heightened awareness of and

concern about the quality of our environment. Much, much more needs to be done, however.

Individuals can and must make a difference. We can recycle in a serious way by making sure we know how to recycle different materials, purchasing products that have the least amount of waste, choose our energy sources that produce the least amount of greenhouse gasses, and do these and more in a way that our families and our neighbors know that we are on board with contributing to a clean environment every day and not just on a holiday. Let's make every day Earth Day.

Our individual actions are critically important, but they alone will not sustain our planet. The problem is greater than we sometimes allow ourselves to realize. Latest scientific findings indicate that the earth is warming and sea level is rising at a rate greater than

had been expected before and that sustaining life as we have known it may have a future shorter than ever before projected.

We have important choices we can make to keep Earth Day and our planet alive. First, every time

SEE CELEBRATE, PAGE 21

Libraries Created Passion for Learning

I am RJ Gaskins, a student at Gonzaga College High School and I will be playing football at Stanford University this fall. My excitement for my future allows me to reflect on the past. In preschool and elementary school I was raised

by a single mother. This meant that we found unique ways of entertainment, one of which was our local public library. The library introduced me to books at a young age. This created a passion for learning

SEE LIBRARIES, PAGE 21

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COMMUNITY



An observer might not understand all the characters, but the messages of love are clear



Loving messages draw observers into a shared community of memory of those lost

Donation Program Keeps Memories and Parks

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

If you visit a park in Fairfax County, you'll likely come upon a memorial or commemorative bench along the trail. These small remembrances of a person, event, or even a beloved animal, honor and perpetuate memories for donors, as well as, support the park system, and provide a place to rest and take in nature for park users.

The Fairfax County Park Foundation, in collaboration with the Park Authority, uses the program as another creative way to raise private funds that supplement tax dollars and user fees in order to meet the community's needs for park land, facilities and services. Monies the Park Authority receives from the county's general funds, through facility and event or program fees, cover about 60 percent of its operating expenses. The park foundation provides support where expenses cannot be supported by other dollars.

The bench program allows donors to choose a new bench where a park manager has identified a need, or select a park with an existing bench suitable for adoption. Sponsorship levels include \$3,500 and up for a new bench, and \$1,500 and up for adopted benches. Funds remaining after plaque design, bench and plaque purchase, delivery, and installation go to help county parks. The program has become so popular that several parks and areas have been removed from consideration so as not to over saturate the natural spaces. Last fiscal year (FY-22), the county received 31 bench donations, and 17 so far this fiscal year (FY023).



Benches often mark a memory of the special person or event in a pleasant park setting, like this one at Lake Mercer

Plaques with wording, subject to Park Authority approval, provide a glimpse into the memories of the donors. Most occupy a scenic spot; many contain praise, and often they lament a passing. Most are lovingly tended or strewn with flowers when marking a special date. The words may recall a literal passage or song or contain foreign phrases. Regardless of content, they draw the observer into appreciation of the commemoration.

More information about the tax deductible bench donation program, and other ways to donate to the park system, can be found at <https://fairfaxparkfoundation.org/our-projects/sponsor-benches-and-trees>.



PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME

County Park Maintenance Operations employees, Alan, Mario, Maynard, Migel and Jerry, pictured with honoree Tia, landscaped the agreed upon bench location along the Cross County Trail, and installed the pad, bench and plaque as one of several they have installed within their maintenance area



PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

BSA Troop 688 poses after their trail map installation

Scouts Improve Park Signage

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

Even before construction could be completed, Laurel Hill Park users made use of a new map to find the location and route of the park's several nature trails. Boy Scouts of America's (BSA) Troop 688 undertook the project in the park's Equestrian Center area. The map is part of an overall project to improve surrounding trail identification, to include new directional trail arrows.

The work was Arman Bajwa's Eagle Scout project. Bajwa led the troop's effort under the direction of the park's Ellie Doyle Service Award recognized volunteer, Michael Applegate.

Bajwa designed the multi-color map content and structure. He was supported by his younger brother, parents and fellow troop members for the installation.

The map, which uses color to identify the various trails, provides an overview of the full area of the park's 1,200-plus acreage. Unstaffed, the park includes an equestrian ring, open



Ekkam Bajwa takes his turn with other troop members to dig post holes and remove earth in preparation for the trail map installation, in support of his brother Arman's (center rear) Eagle Scout project

central green, picnic shelters, playground, disc golf course, and several multi-use paved and nature trails, attracting young scooter users and mountain bikers, dog and nature walkers, picnickers, birders and other nature lovers. The new map, located in the less well known area of the park's southern portion below Lorton Road, will help all to find just the right spot to indulge in their own particular open air pleasures.

Newest Community Garden Plots to Open in Lorton

Rental Offerings Coming Mid-Season.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

Have you ever watched a planted strawberry pot daily as fruit grew, awaiting the perfect moment of red ripeness — only to have a big bite of it disappear, taken by a bird or turtle, or have it snatched away entirely by a chipmunk or squirrel? Would you like to grow a vegetable

garden but are land challenged? Have you tried a backyard garden, but wild critters enjoyed the bounty as their own smorgasbord and you got little or nothing? If you answered 'yes,' then you might like to take advantage of Fairfax County's offering to rent a fenced garden plot. In these little Edens, there is sufficient garden space to nurture a bountiful crop within an area fenced against most hungry garden visitors.

The Fairfax County's Community Garden Plot Rental Program gives residents an opportunity to garden. The Park Authority rents more than 700 garden plots in ten county parks on an annual, next-plot, next-person

basis. Most sites have wait lists of hopeful new renters. Gardeners who keep their plots in compliance are offered renewal leases for subsequent years. And while there's no guarantee of security against all feathered, winged, or furred buffet guests, the fencing does deter a significant number.

Soon new garden plots are expected to open, by mid-summer 2023, in the newly developed Laurel Hill Community Garden. The site, located on the old Nike base at Hooes and Lorton Roads, will offer 19 plots which include three 4 foot by 12 foot raised

SEE GARDEN PLOTS, PAGE 17



Workers prepare 4 x12 foot raised beds with a group of three making up a rental plot

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COMMUNITY

Community Garden Plots

FROM PAGE 16

beds inside an individually fenced area of 20 feet by 30 feet. Water will be available on site from two hydrants. At present, workers are constructing the remaining raised beds. Then stone dust surfacing, the fencing, and water lines will complete the site installation.

An early community garden advocate and Lorton resident, Wes Speer, says of the site: "It's rifles to plow shares; surface-to-air to ground-based growing". He adds that while other area sites were considered, the former base, where Cold War Nike missiles once guarded, was underutilized. Gone too, are the prison guards, who patrolled there when the area was part of Lorton Prison's minimum security area. Notable fliers and guards there these days are bees and osprey. Laurel Hill's plots have the advantage of co-location with a colony of honey bees managed by George Mason University and a pair of ospreys who nest nearby.

Speer hopes to bring another new twist to the term "community garden". He is talking with others about reserving two of the plots as a community volunteer gardening effort. Interested volunteers would work together to learn and apply good gardening techniques, growing vegetables to support local food banks. He sees engaging people to work in nature to produce food for others as beneficial to all involved.

County residents interested in renting an individual plot may submit their registration online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/green-spring/plots.

PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION



Raised beds are placed in the prepared area nearby former minimum security prison dormitories from the site's days as part of Lorton Prison

Select "Laurel Hill", or any other garden plot location on the form. Note that there is a waiting list and the county encourages all interested gardeners to register to secure a place on the list. Plots are issued on a first-come, first-served basis.

County use guidelines state that once rented, your plot must be "active" throughout the regular season, at least May 31 through Nov. 1. This means the plot is at least two-thirds under cultivation; weeds are kept under control; dead and spent plants are removed; and crops are harvested when ready. Active winter gardening is encouraged for crops such as greens and root vegetables, or a cover crop of rye grass may be planted. Gardens are inspected before annual renewals, beginning Nov. 15. Gardeners are expected to remove dead plants and weeds, any damaged or unused items, and store plant supports, hoses, and other equipment neatly.

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Care Standards Coming for Virginia's Nursing Homes

One-fifth of Virginia nursing homes are not meeting expected staffing levels according to Joint Commission on Healthcare.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

Signed into law this year, new legislation tasks the Virginia's commissioner and board of health with establishing new minimum standards for a myriad of health services for hospitals, nursing homes and certified nursing facilities in the Commonwealth. Of particular significance is a new requirement that each certified nursing facility receiving Medicaid reimbursements meet a minimum staffing hours standard.

Del. Vivian Watts (D-39th) has championed the issues of standards and adequate funding of nursing homes and assisted living facilities in Virginia for decades. She introduced her first related bill in 2002.

Watts, who describes herself as "a numbers person", says she also enjoys being involved in human issues, and recognizes the need for tenacity amid the complexity of the state and federal elements that go into health services. She originally became involved 20 years ago over concern for a constituent's aunt and then discovered the extent of the problem. Now she says she finds herself looking at contemporaries, who fear being "cast off because we're old and who don't want to be in a home without humane care." She also appreciates the care industry's concern about government oversight and recognizes that facilities need funding along with accountability. Watts is running unopposed in 2023, positioned to be the senior most Democrat in the House.

In 2021, the Joint Commission on Health Care, tasked with reviewing Virginia nursing home operations, reported significant workforce staffing challenges. The study reported that "one-fifth of Virginia's nursing homes were not meeting expected staffing levels, and are disproportionately impacting low-income residents." The report stated that, "All nursing homes in Virginia struggle to recruit and retain staff," and nearly a quarter of facilities are not providing enough hours of direct care.

The report also recognized that residents with behavioral health needs, which require increased staff time, are not adequately accounted for in Medicaid reimbursement rates, and such needs are increasing in nursing home resident populations. Behavioral health generally refers to mental health and substance use disorders, life stressors and crises, and stress-related physical symptoms.

Medicaid eligibility is determined by each state. About 1.7 million of Virginia's 8.6 million population are enrolled in Medicaid; a program for low-income individuals. Virginia adopts a philosophy of aging in place. So, along with earning and asset limits, the commonwealth requires nursing care facility Medicaid applicants to have limitations in two major life activities, such as caring

for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, walking, or breathing. Changes to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) gave states the opportunity to provide Medicaid coverage to people who earn up to 138 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL); earnings defined as \$20,120 per individual in 2023. In Virginia, 10.2 percent of the population lives in poverty. Virginia accepted the ACA coverage option in 2019 which increased the number of patients with health insurance, and covered by Medicaid. Although Black residents represent just under 16% of Virginia's total senior population (age 65+), they make up 37% of Virginia's Medicaid enrollees. In general, facilities with fewer staff also have a higher concentration of Medicaid recipients and Black residents, according to the commission.

Virginia Lags Behind Other States

Virginia had been one of only 16 states without nursing home standards. "Low staffing increases the risk of low-quality care and more than 60 percent of facilities with low staffing receive poor health inspection ratings," according to the commission.

43% of Virginia's nursing homes received a 1- or 2-star staffing rating in 2021 from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, indicating inadequate staffing. Across the U.S., 31% of nursing homes received 1 or 2 star staffing ratings.

As a result of these staffing shortages, 43% of Virginia's nursing homes received a 1- or 2-star staffing rating in 2021 from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, indicating inadequate staffing. For comparison, across the U.S., 31% of nursing homes received 1 or 2 star staffing ratings. In a system of one to five stars, the 3-star score indicates that the facility is generally meeting but not exceeding expectations. A score of 1 or 2 stars generally means that the facility is performing below average and needs to improve.

Alarming, during the pandemic, COVID related deaths of Virginia nursing home residents were the second-highest in the nation in 2021, according to AARP, at 1.72 per 100 residents. (Sources: <https://states.aarp.org/virginia/virginias-nursing-home-covid-19-death-rate-is-2nd-highest-in-the-nation>)

These are some of the reasons that Watts co-sponsored a bill in the House to address these issues and the reason she says Virginia's legislators made a determined bipartisan



COURTESY PHOTO
Del. Vivian Watts



COURTESY PHOTO
Sen. George Barker



COURTESY PHOTO
Del. Kathy Tran

effort to assure that nursing home standards finally were addressed this year.

Another northern Virginia legislator, Senator George Barker (D-39th), Vice Chairman of the General Assembly's Joint Committee on Health Care, sponsored the companion bill in the Senate. Under the new state code, certified nursing facilities must "provide at least 3.08 hours of case mix-adjusted total nurse staffing hours per resident per day on average" in accordance with the Department of Medical Assistance Services definitions for certified nursing assistants (CNA), licensed practical nurse (LP), and registered nurses (RN).

Virginia nursing home shortfalls vary greatly by type of staff, with the shortfall being greatest for CNA hours. Statewide, 59% of facilities reported CNA hours that

of nursing teachers at colleges. Schools with nursing programs are finding it difficult to attract and retain qualified teachers. Barker said the state budget includes funding for nursing faculty at schools in the state system. This likely will drive salary increases for nursing faculty at private schools as well. In addition,

As another approach to addressing nurse workforce shortages, Del. Kathy Tran (D-42nd) sponsored successful legislation to provide means for nurses trained in foreign certified programs to qualify in Virginia (HB2211).

"We face a critical nursing shortage in Virginia, but we have many immigrants and refugees living in the Commonwealth who were trained abroad as skilled nurses yet have been unable to practice their profession," said Tran. "House Bill 2211 clarifies the process by which internationally trained nurses can get licensed in Virginia. It will help fill our nursing workforce needs while expanding opportunities for these new Americans to provide for their families. I'm proud House Bill 2211 passed unanimously and has been signed into law."

The broad new care legislation provides for imposition of "administrative sanctions" for facilities not meeting standards. The specifics of those standards will be defined by January 2025, using the state's administrative procedures process. Civil penalties in prior Code address violations which could lead to facility license suspension or receivership, while the new administrative sanctions play out over a longer annual review period over several years with a goal of bringing facilities into compliance. All three bills passed nearly unanimously in both houses of the General Assembly, tallying only two dissenting votes, for HB1446.

Staffing, standard definition and funding issues will be challenges; a reason the bill carries a delayed effective date of Jan. 1, 2025. Nor will the issues be solved without increased costs.

Hiring the necessary staff at nursing facilities to meet the new standards also is expected to increase costs for facilities.

For example, the Department of Veterans Services (DVS) currently operates two facilities in the commonwealth and "estimates the fiscal impact of meeting the staffing standards required by this bill to be at least \$4.6 million annually," to add 10 staff at the care centers in Richmond and Roanoke to provide about 78 hours of additional care each day.

This Comedy Is Wonderful for All Ages

Shoestring Theatre presents 'Saturday Morning Garden Club.'

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

The Saturday Morning Garden Club needs new members to continue its century of beautification projects in Big Stone Gap, Va. The newest candidate, a master gardener, could attract more members and save the club. But she might be interested in the club president's son – which doesn't sit well with his mother. Yet finding each other may be exactly what the young couple needs.

A lighthearted comedy, "The Saturday Morning Garden Club" is the newest play from Shoestring Theatre Co. and is part of the Fairfax City Spotlight on the Arts. It'll be presented at the Sherwood Center, 3740 Blenheim Blvd. in Fairfax.

Show times are Sunday, April 30, at 2 p.m.; Friday, May 5, at 7 p.m.; Saturday, May 6, at 2 and 7 p.m.; and Sunday, May 7, at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$20 via <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-saturday-morning-garden-club-tickets-556094201727> and at the door. Additional performances, May 20-21, at Arts Herndon, 750 Center St. in Herndon.

"Set in my real hometown of Big Stone Gap, the play showcases the hard work of local garden clubs in a loving way," said its playwright and director, Amelia Townsend. "And the town's real Dogwood Garden Club worked with us to help develop it." In addition, Big Stone Gap natives Richard Phillips and Friends, plus Tyler Hughes, composed its original music score.

"The message is that love will see you through anything," said Townsend. "The rose's thorns may prick you, but the rose will still be beautiful. We show that people can bicker and have differences of opinions – and still love each other. For example, throughout the show, garden-club members Barbara and Etta give society's point of view through their comedic statements. And everybody who's ever been in a club can identify with all its ups and downs."

She said her nine actors are "absolutely the perfect people to bring these characters to life. They really embody the characters' spirit, and you can't imagine anyone else playing these roles." And, added Townsend, "We couldn't do this without the City of Fairfax, the Fairfax Commission on the Arts and the Fairfax Spotlight on the Arts Festival. Their support gives life to Shoestring Theatre Co."

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Shayne Gardner portrays Macy Gibbons, president of The Saturday Morning Garden Club. "She was widowed young, with a sick child," said Gardner. "He's now 25 and fine, but she's still protective of him. The two constants in her life have been her son and the garden club, so she's controlling of both of them, but in a nice way. She values trust and loyalty because she's a loyal person. She's friendly but can be overly sweet while cutting you to shreds."

Enjoying her role, Gardner said, "I was my condo board's president, so I understand the way Macy runs things. And I like showing her many dimensions – loving, snarky, demanding, warm, visionary and creative."

She said audiences will be able to identify with many of these characters, and it's a "cute story. Boy meets girl, they have a fight and break up, but eventually get back together. In this case, though, the love triangle is boy, girl and mom – because mom does not approve."

Playing Macy's son Larkin is Edmond Turner. "He's lost, not sure what he wants in life and is going through a quarter-life crisis," explained Turner. "He's a bit of a playboy, but not at heart. He's just trying to avoid any responsibilities and feelings he has, so that's why he dates several women. He likes the attention but doesn't want to commit. He can be charming, but also anxious and on edge, a lot of the time. And he's always thinking how he can get out of things."

Turner said Larkin's fun to play because "I'm naturally a shy person, so that helps me tap into this role. Being onstage can be uncomfortable – which Larkin is, most of the time, so I just lean into it."

Overall, he said, "This play has a lot of heart and is personal to the director, which comes through in the production. You get to see a piece of this place where she grew up. And people will also like the characters' interactions with each other. It's a slice-of-life, lighthearted show."

Caroline Kinney portrays Darby Pierpoint, the 22-year-old military widow who catches Larkin's eye. "She's an ambitious, compassion-

ate woman dealing with a big loss and a lot of grief," said Kinney. "Although born in Big Stone Gap, she grew up in Ohio. But with persuasion from her cousin Chyenne, she moves home to find out who she is outside of the grief and loss she's been consumed with. She's friendly but a bit apprehensive, because her family left there a long time ago and she doesn't know anyone but her cousin – and doesn't know if she'll fit in and people will like her."

Kinney said it's wonderful playing someone "similar to me in age and who's felt lost after decisions we've made and big, sudden changes, and is figuring out which specific life path to take next. So it's been great to put myself in Darby's place and explore her feelings."

Since the story takes place in Virginia, Kinney said it'll be nostalgic and familiar to many people. "They'll also relate to the characters and see themselves in them, and they'll love how heartwarming the story is," she added. "And it's perfect for spring because it's about a garden club – and spring flowers symbolize new opportunities and hope for the future. So come support local, community theater and see a show that's wonderful entertainment for all ages."



Top row, from left, are Eddie Perez-Reyes and Edmond Taylor; (middle row, from left) Marielle Baker, Wendy Labenow, Shayne Gardner and Tameka Taylor; and (bottom row, from left) Denen Norfleet and Caroline Kinney.



Caroline Kinney and Edmond Turner play the young couple in love.

❖❖❖
A nonprofit, Shoestring Theatre Co. is dedicated to bringing the authentic culture of Southwest Virginia to life via original stories presented across the commonwealth.

CALENDAR

SPRING WILDFLOWERS

Lace up your hiking shoes, grab your camera and enjoy the ephemeral wildflowers that bloom in our parks. Ephemeral flowers are those that bloom temporarily. Their short-lived beauty allows them to grow and reproduce quickly before the canopy of the forest comes alive. Take advantage of the opportunity to get out, during this limited time, to see many of our native ephemeral blooms including bluebells, toad lilies, spring beauties, may apples and more!

Spring Wildflowers Programs

April 30 (9:30 to 11:30 a.m.):

Managing for Native Wildflowers, Riverbend Park, \$10

May 6 (Noon to 1 p.m.): Wildflowers Walk and Craft, Burke Lake Park, \$8

May 7 (3 to 4 p.m.): Wonderful Wildflowers, Ellanor C. Lawrence Park, \$7

FARMERS MARKETS OPENING AROUND THE COUNTY

The Fairfax County Park Authority hosts 10 markets at locations throughout Fairfax County, where residents can find a variety of fresh and locally grown produce, delicious baked goods, prepared foods and family-friendly market activities, including live musical performances. Check out the full market schedule for the latest times and locations.

WEDNESDAYS

McCutcheon/Mount Vernon

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/mccutcheon-mount-vernon>

April 19 to Dec. 20, from 8 a.m. to noon

Sherwood Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane

Oak Marr

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/oak-marr>

May 3 to Nov. 8, from 8 a.m. to noon
Oak Marr Recreation Center, 3200 Jermantown Road

Wakefield

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/wakefield>

May 3 to Oct. 25, from 2 to 6 p.m.
Wakefield Park, 8100 Braddock Road

THURSDAYS

Annandale

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/annandale>

May 4 to Nov. 2, from 8 a.m. to noon
Mason District Park, 6621 Columbia Pike

Herndon

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/herndon>

May 4 to Nov. 9, from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Old Town Herndon, 700 Block of Lynn St., by the Red Caboose

FRIDAYS

McLean

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/mclean>

May 5 to Nov. 17, from 8 a.m. to noon
Lewinsville Park, 1659 Chain Bridge Road

Kingstowne

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/kingstowne>

May 5 to Oct. 27, from 3 to 7 p.m.
In the Giant parking lot, 5870 Kingstowne Towne Center



The 10 Farmers Markets operated by the Fairfax County Park Authority start this week.

SATURDAYS

Burke

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/burke>

April 22 to Dec. 16, from 8 a.m. to noon

VRE parking Lot, 5671 Roberts Parkway

Reston

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/reston>

April 29 to Dec. 3, from 8 a.m. to noon
Lake Anne Village Center, 1609-A Washington Plaza

SUNDAYS

Lorton

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/lorton>

May 7 to Nov. 19, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

VRE parking lot, 8990 Lorton Station Blvd.

For a complete list of market times and locations, visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets>. For questions, contact the Community Horticulture Office at 702-642-0128.

NOW THRU JUNE 25

Falls Church Arts All Member Show.

More than 155 artists will be featured in the All Member Show at the Falls Church Arts gallery from April 22 to June 25. To handle the expansive show, the exhibit will be held in two parts this year: submissions from members with last names from A-K will be on view from April 22 to May 21. Submissions from artists with last names from L-Z will be on view from May 27 to June 25. The show features the work of emerging and established member artists from Falls Church Arts and encompasses an extensive range of media from the more traditional watercolor, acrylic, mixed media, pastel, fused glass, oil, photography, and sculpture to a wide variety of mixed media and printing techniques. The Falls Church Arts gallery is at 700-B West Broad St. (Route 7), Falls Church. Admission is free and the gallery is open Tuesdays-Fridays from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Artworks can be viewed online at www.fallschurcharts.org. All pieces can be purchased at the gallery or on the website.



The Taste of Vienna will be held Saturday, April 29, 2023 in Vienna.

NOW THRU APRIL 30

Score: Mixed Media Art. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Score explores 20 years of the work of Virginia-based mixed media artist, Joan Dreyer. While developing her MFA thesis at Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia, PA, Joan began taking tools, techniques and imagery that have been historically considered "women's work" and transforming them into innovative, contemporary art that is responsive to the tone and tensions of our times. Created by combining fiber techniques with unexpected materials like X-rays, her work is a subtle art that asks questions about life, loss, symbolism, and the impact of war instead of providing one size fits all answers. The artist's work provides a space for the contemplation of life stages that we all encounter. The result is a body of work that allows for meaningful but also multiple interpretations by the viewer. Visit the website: <https://www.workhousearts.org/score-mixed-media>

NOW THRU MAY 31

Candytopia Opens. At Tysons Corner Center, McLean. Candytopia, in partnership with Tysons Corner Center announces the arrival of its sweet interactive concept to the center. It will feature 16,000 square feet with 14 different interactive environments, Instagram-worthy photo opportunities, and delectable tastes of your favorite sweet treats. There is a

candy art gallery, a state-of-the-art candy confetti room, complete with confetti-farting pigs, a marshmallow pit filled with a quarter-million marshmallows, as well as DMV-inspired elements throughout the experience. The journey includes candy samples throughout the experience. Visit www.candytopia.com.

APRIL 4 TO JULY 27

Senior Slow-Pitch Softball Seasons. 9 a.m. to noon. At Braddock, Wakefield, and Nottaway Softball Fields. Join NoVa Senior Softball, men 50+, women 40+, average age 66. Skill-level assessment. 24 teams, three levels of play. Tuesday/Thursday morning double-headers. Begin Spring Training now. 703-663-7881. Visit the website: www.nvss.org

NOW THRU JUNE 3

"Urinetown." 7:30 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. In a Gotham-like city, a terrible water shortage, caused by a 20-year drought, has led to a government-enforced ban on private toilets. The citizens must use public amenities, regulated by a single malevolent company that profits by charging admission for one of humanity's most basic needs. Amid the people, a hero decides that he's had enough and plans a revolution to lead them all to freedom! Visit the website: <https://www.workhousearts.org/calendar/urinetown>

APRIL 20 TO MAY 7

Mojada by Luis Alfaro. At 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill Road, Tysons. Mojada, written by Luis Alfaro who takes the chilling ancient Greek tale of Medea and re-imagines it in a Los Angeles Mexican-American immigrant community. Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays at 8 p.m., Saturdays at 2 and 8 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m. Tickets: \$50 general admission, \$47 seniors (65+), \$15 students, educators, and military. Purchase online at www.1ststage.org or 703-854-1856.

APRIL 21 TO MAY 7

"Unnecessary Farce." At Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry Street, SE, Vienna. 8 p.m.: Fridays and Saturdays -April 28, 29; May 5, 6; and 2 p.m.: Sundays: April 30, May 7, 2023. "Unnecessary Farce," an award-winning comedy by Paul Slade Smith, combines all the elements of classic farce with a contemporary plot. Two cops. Three crooks. Eight doors. Go! Set in an economy motel, an embezzling small-town mayor is to meet with his female accountant. In the room next door, two inept undercover cops aim to catch the mayor on camera doing the guilty deeds. When the camera catches a bit of unrehearsed hanky-panky and a kilt-wearing, bagpipe-wielding, hit-man stumbles into the fray, comic pandemonium ensues! Visit www.viennatheatrecompany.org.

THURSDAY/APRIL 27

Artful Living: Forward. 7:30-10 p.m. At the Country Club of Fairfax, 5110 Ox Road, Fairfax. Artful Living: Forward is a juried art show, sale and charity event to benefit the families Britpaths serves. The evening will include live music, live and silent auctions and a special guest speaker. Visit the website: <https://britpaths.org/event/artful23/>

APRIL 27-30

Annandale Book Sale. 10:30-5:30 p.m. At George Mason Regional Library, 7001 Little River Turnpike, Annandale. Thousands of books, CDs, DVDs, and more at the George Mason Friends Spring Book Sale. Come early for the best selection, then come back on Sunday for half-price bargains. Visit the website: georgemasonfriends.blogspot.com



Original Jewelry will be on display at the free event, with all artists onsite

9TH ARLINGTON FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS IN CLARENDON

More than one hundred local and national artists, selected by an independent panel of expert judges, will present a sparkling showcase of original paintings, mixed media, life-sized sculpture, one-of-a-kind jewelry, photography, fiber art, leatherwork and more during the 9th Annual Arlington Festival of the Arts. The free event benefiting the Clarendon

Alliance takes place in the heart of the Clarendon district with all artists on-site throughout the duration of the festival.

Saturday, April 29 and Sunday, April 30 from 10 am to 5 pm
3003 Washington Blvd., Arlington, VA 22201

Free and open to the public
www.artfestival.com 561-746-6615.



Painting by Jill Banks



"Remembering Dr. King," printmaking by Joseph Craig English

FRIDAY/APRIL 28

Casino Night. 5-10 p.m. At The Winery at Bull Run, 15950 Lee Hwy, Centreville. Casino Night to benefit Veterans Moving Forward. Enjoy The Winery as it transforms into a casino where guests can play hours of poker, roulettes, slot machines and more, while contributing to a great cause! Tickets are \$60 per person (\$54 for our Wine Club Members), and include \$1,500* in "Bull Run Bucks" to gamble with during three hours of casino play in poker, roulettes, slot machines and more.

FRIDAY/APRIL 28

Campfire at the Mill -- Historic Games. 7-8:30 p.m. At Colvin Run Mill, 10017 Colvin Run Rd, Great Falls. Cost is \$10. Online Registration Required. Call 703-222-4664.

FRIDAY/APRIL 28

Pastel Painting Demo by Bryan Jernigan. 11 a.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingle-side Drive, McLean. McLean Art Society is honored to present Bryan Jernigan giving a demonstration of pastel painting. Skilled in both soft pastels and abstractions, Bryan strives to invent color schemes, interlock organic forms, and use decisive brushwork to create the end result of "touching a place deep inside the viewer... I want there to be an interplay between what is visible on the surface and the layers underneath." His works have earned numerous awards and are held by national and international patrons, and he routinely participates in juried and non-juried art shows and events.

APRIL 28-30

Spring Book Sale. At Centreville Regional Library, 14200 St. Ger-
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main Drive, Centreville. Dates are Friday, April 28 from 1-5 p.m.; Saturday, April 29 from 10-5 p.m.; and Sunday, April 30 from 1-4 p.m. Bag Sale on Sunday from 1-4 p.m. Fiction for all ages, variety of nonfiction, DVDs. Email Friendsof-CRL@gmail.com.

SATURDAY/APRIL 29

Sensory Day. Noon to 4 p.m. Challenge your senses at the Old Firehouse! This unique and fun event supporting Autism Awareness Month will provide all who attend a sensory exploration through taste, smell, sound, sight and touch. This event is free and open to all. Visit www.mcleancenter.org.

SATURDAY/APRIL 29

Colvin Run Spring Tea, 2-3:30 p.m. At Colvin Run Mill, 10017 Colvin Run Rd, Great Falls. Cost is \$15. Online Registration Required. Call 703-222-4664.

SATURDAY/APRIL 29

Live Music at Lewinsville! 5 p.m. Lewinsville Presbyterian Church welcomes professional handbell ensemble the James River Ringers, from the Richmond Metropolitan area, for a special Holy Happy Hour. The concert will feature music for Spring and a variety of handbell music for all to enjoy. Lewinsville Church is located at the corner of Chain Bridge Road and Great Falls Street in McLean.

SATURDAY/APRIL 29

Taste of Vienna. 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. At 400 Center Street South, Vienna. The Vienna Volunteer Fire Department (VVFD) will host the 10th Annual Taste of Vienna. The VVFD back parking lot will be lined

with restaurants, a beer/wine tent, a stage with live performances, and kids activities. Admission is free and attendees will be able to purchase tastes from the individual vendors.

SATURDAY/APRIL 29

2023 Healthy Strides 5K, 10K and Kids Dash. At Burke Lake, 7315 Ox Road in Fairfax Station. Join family, friends, and neighbors – racers of all ages – to ring in spring 2023. The event will include a 5K course that follows a tree-lined, paved road through the park and is wheelchair and stroller accessible. Runners who want to step up their challenge can take on a 10K wooded course that will completely encircle the lake. And don't forget the Tot Dash and Kids Dash for young runners ages 2 through 10. All registered runners/walkers who finish their course will receive a commemorative medal.

This event is a rain-or-shine activity. Race schedule is as follows:
Tot Dash and Kids Dash: 7:35 a.m. start

10K: 7:45 a.m. start
5K: 7:50 a.m. start

For more information about the 2023 Healthy Strides 5K, 10K and Kids Dash, contact Julie Frederickson at Julie.Frederickson@fairfaxcounty.gov.

SATURDAY/APRIL 29

KSR Pet Care 15th Anniversary. 2-5 p.m. At 6304 Kellogg Drive, McLean. Come and meet with their KSR dog walkers and pet sitters as well as the three customer service reps for an exclusive celebration. With live music by Billy T Wilde, appetizers, cake and bar.

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 23

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Legals

Legals

**Public Hearing for the Town of Clifton, Virginia
Proposed FY2024 Town Budget
May 2, 2023**

Notice is hereby given that the Town Council of the Town of Clifton, Virginia will conduct an electronic Public Hearing on Tuesday, May 2, 2023 at 7:30 p.m. using Zoom teleconferencing audio and video service to consider the proposed FYE2406 Town Budget. The Public Hearing will be conducted in accordance with the Town of Clifton's Declaration of a Local Emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic under Virginia Code § 44-146.21.

The FY2024 proposed Town Budget will be posted on the Town's website cliftonva.gov and a hardcopy will be posted at the Clifton Post Office, 12644 Chapel Road, Clifton, VA 20124. All interested parties are encouraged to email the Town Clerk at clerk@cliftonva.gov to receive instructions on how to access the electronic forum in order to express their views with respect to the proposed FY2024 Town Budget. Written comments on the proposed Budget may be submitted via email to the Town Clerk and via regular U.S. mail by sending them to P.O. Box 309, Clifton, VA, 20124 no later than May 2, 2023. Written comments will be entered into the record but will not be read aloud.

Legals

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6035 Burke Centre Pkwy., Suite 120, Burke, VA 22015
703.425.6010

If you would like to transfer your medical records to another provider or receive a copy of your records, visit Inova Primary Care – Burke's practice location website and look for the "patient forms" page to download the medical records transfer form. Upon receipt of the completed transfer request form, the records or copies will be sent, within a reasonable time, to the provider of your choice or provided to you. You will only be charged the actual costs of copying and mailing or delivering the records.

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Employment

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Employment

Small property management company in McLean seeks part-time secretary/bookkeeper two days per week from 9-2. Position will oversee all aspects of front desk administration, and light bookkeeping. Please email applications to Rohrbaugh@verizon.net

Employment

RF Software Engineer (McLean, VA). Master's degree in CS, EE, or rel; 12 mos SW or data engrg exp; Exp w/ RF Planning tools like Atoll, Planet, or MATLAB; Proficiency in C/C++, PHP/Python, HTML, & JavaScript; xlnl knowl of SQL working w/ large data sets; Ability to think analytically & solve tech problems in a compute-constrained sys; Xlnt comm & interpersonal skills. The annual salary is \$110,240.00. Apply to Spectrum Center, Inc., 1451 Dolley Madison Blvd. STE 320, McLean, VA, 22101. Email: rvazquez@spectrum.center.

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OPINION

Libraries

FROM PAGE I4

in me. Now public libraries include more than just books; they have computers, video games, audio books and any other potential learning resource a kid could ask for. I attribute most of my success now to growing up and having access to a public library. The library gave me a place to stay, entertain and educate myself when I was younger. Going to school in DC has helped me learn more about issues in the city, specifically people experiencing homelessness. Something that I have learned is that anyone can experience homelessness. We need to advocate on their behalf. Many people look down upon them because they smell funny or look different, but McLean is one of the wealthiest areas in the US and it is our job to help. The way I believe we can help this issue is through our use of public libraries. Many libraries in DC have extended services that help people experiencing homelessness. This ranges from allowing the homeless to hang out in the library to professional job analysts helping them find work. If these services are replicated in Fairfax County public libraries then we could help get other people out of tough situations and set them up for success. If we provide our libraries with more resources to expand our services then it will create a more safe and balanced community. I believe this will work because of the foundation for success that the public libraries have laid out for me.

RJ Gaskins
McLean

Celebrate

FROM PAGE I4

you have an opportunity to vote be sure to vote for candidates at whatever level of government who are committed to serious and meaningful actions that help to clean up and keep clean and livable our planet. Second, make your consumer choices wisely dealing only with businesses and manufacturers that have policies and take actions that protect our environment. Celebrate every day as Earth Day and be happy that you are helping to make a difference.

I think the leaders of Earth Day 2023 expressed it most clearly: "Get inspired. Take action. Be part of the green revolution. For Earth Day 2023 we need to act (boldly), innovate (broadly), implement (equitably). Businesses, governments, and citizens—everyone accounted for, and everyone accountable. A partnership for the planet!"

CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 21

SATURDAY/APRIL 29

Indigenous Enterprise. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Indigenous Enterprise is on a mission to proudly share their heritage and culture through explosively joyous authentic dance and song. Comprised of champion dancers from Native American and Canadian tribes and Nations, this group first stunned crowds at the Sydney Opera House in 2018, and has been on the rise since. "Indigenous Enterprise is rooted in tradition but also has hip-hop influences, discernible in footwork, bounce, and especially attitude," writes The New York Times. They have appeared in music videos, NBC'S World of Dance, and President Biden's virtual inauguration parade.

SATURDAY/APRIL 29

Clifton Town 121st Birthday Celebration. 4-9 p.m. At the CBA Barn in the Town of Clifton. The Town of Clifton turns 121 this year and we're ready to celebrate! Join your neighbors (past and present) for an afternoon cookout at the CBA barn!

SATURDAY/APRIL 29

Five Hills Garden Club Plant Sale. 8 a.m. to noon. At the Freeman's Store Lawn, 131 Church Street, N.E., Vienna. Selection includes native plants, beautiful hanging baskets, annuals, perennials, and baskets decorated for Mother's Day.

APRIL 29 AND 30

Johann Strauss II's Die Fledermaus. Saturday at 8 p.m.; Sunday at 3 p.m. At GMU's Harris Theatre, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. Presented by the Reva and Sid Dewberry Family School of Music. Audiences will be delighted by the thrilling storytelling and comical antics of Mason Opera's production of Die Fledermaus by Johann Strauss II. This semi-staged presentation will see the interior of Mason's own Harris Theatre transformed to evoke the glorious style of Theater an der Wien, with Mason's Symphony Orchestra performing live with the talented young artists of Mason Opera. This production was originally conceived by Professor John Aler and will be performed in his memory. Professor Aler, who served as an associate professor of music and director of Mason Opera, passed away in December 2022.

SUNDAY/APRIL 30

RachWorks. 2 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Internationally acclaimed pianists Nikita Fitenko and Katerina Zaitseva will present a lecture-recital focusing on the important influences and

specific elements of Rachmaninoff's style, as represented by his selected preludes, Musical Moments, transcriptions, as well as his works for piano 4 and 6 hands. The program also includes short pieces by some influential contemporaries in Rachmaninoff's life, such as Siloti, Tchaikovsky, and Scriabin. Visit the website: <https://www.workhousearts.org/calendar/rachworks>

SUNDAY/APRIL 30

Blood Drive. 7:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. At Lewinsville Presbyterian Church, 1724 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Just one blood donation can save up to three lives and INOVA's inventory is at a critical low - please consider donating at Lewinsville Presbyterian Church's April blood drive. INOVA Blood Services will be accepting donations in Fellowship Hall on the lower level of the building. Volunteers will help guide you to the room. Masks are optional. Please bring a photo I.D. when you come to donate. Walk-ins welcome, but appointments highly encouraged. Sign up today!

<https://www.lewinsville.org/events/blood-drive-2/>

TUESDAY/MAY 2

University Singers Concert. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Under the direction of Dr. Lisa Billingham, the University Singers is a select choral ensemble at Mason dedicated to the performance of advanced vocal chamber music ranging from Renaissance to contemporary and commissioned works.

SUNDAY/MAY 7

Persian Art & Craft Fair. 2 - 6 p.m. At Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry Street SE, Vienna. Just in time for Mother's Day. Artisans, crafters, local businesses, DJ music, dance, raffles and kids activities. Food, beverages and desserts.

SUNDAY/MAY 7

Virginia Psychics Fair 2023. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. At Arlington/Fairfax Elks Lodge, 8421 Arlington Blvd. (Route 50), Fairfax. Metaphysical event featuring 44 vendors. Psychic Fair for both those who are serious and for those who are just curious. Event can be a life changing experience or just a fun time. Many of the best psychics, mediums, healers, and readers of all types, along with related arts and crafts vendors from Virginia and the surrounding areas. Besides all types of readings done at tables, there will also be related arts, crafts, books, oils, crystals, sage, herbs, jewelry, gemstones, candles, soaps, smudge items, etc. Visit the website: <https://va-psychic-fair-2023.eventbrite.com>

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.

APRIL 26-28

Town-wide Spring Clean-Up. In the Town of Herndon. The annual spring clean-up, an opportunity for residents to place large or bulky items curbside for pickup, takes place April 26-28. Pickup is on your trash day only. Items may include:

- ❖ Appliances (remove doors)
- ❖ Furniture
- ❖ Vehicle parts and plumbing fixtures (all under 50 lbs.)
- ❖ Tires (maximum 2 per household)
- ❖ Limited amount of building materials (approximately one cubic yard, lengths not to exceed 4 feet)

Items that will NOT be picked up include loose yard waste, paint, auto parts weighing more than 50 lbs., large quantities of building materials, brick & block, electronics (including televisions, stereos, computers & peripheral) and household hazardous waste. Any of these items set out in the right-of-way are subject to a violation fee, per Town of Herndon code. Items should be placed curbside by 6am on your trash day only, but no earlier than 24

hours prior to pick-up. Please place items in an organized manner with like items set out close together and away from containers used for regular trash collection.

Please note that not all items are collected by the same truck; for instance, metal is collected using a smaller truck as it does not go to the same disposal facility. If you believe an item was missed, please email Public Works at public.works@herndon-va.gov. Include in the email your address, contact information and a description of the items not collected.

Residents may contact the Department of Public Works at (703) 435-6856 or email public.works@herndon-va.gov for more information, or visit the town's website at herndon-va.gov/MyTrashDays.

THURSDAY/APRIL 27

Last Minute College Financing Strategies. 6:30-8:30 p.m. Free virtual session sponsored by Reston Community Center. Learn how you can find and win scholarships even if you're just starting the process or are already in college. Register at www.scholarshipworkshop.com/reston2

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Thank you to the hundreds of supporters who helped 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.

The pandemic has been a bear, financially and otherwise. Revenue plummeted at the beginning of 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.

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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Daze of Future Past



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

As I am thinking more presently about my brother's death on Dec. 3rd (see last week's column, "The Dog's Honest Truth"); even though it's been five-plus months since his passing, there's still a part of my brain that keeps expecting an email, especially every morning when I turn on the computer or a phone call - at any time. The calls and emails happened so frequently over the past almost 10 years that receiving them is almost muscle memory, as if it sort of happens on its own, and I can't do anything about it. And when it doesn't happen, I experience that random wave of grief I talked about recently. For no apparent reason and/or no apparent trigger, I'll feel a subconscious punch to the gut reminding me - for the millionth time, that my brother is dead. And believe me, I don't need any reminding. But 'reminding' I get, all the time.

The effect isn't tangible or even describable other than as a vague emotional blip. It almost stops me in my tracks. It is to invoke a quote from a long-ago Seinfeld episode: "Something." Typically, I'll acknowledge it, shake my head in sadness and then return to my regularly scheduled activity. It's not incapacitating or anything. It's simply a moment in time that regularly occurs, morning, noon, or night. I'm sure it's worse for Vanessa however, Richard's widow living in the house they shared for almost 30 years. I can't imagine the daily (probably minute by minute) reminders that Vanessa experiences. When I've asked her about those kinds of feelings and commended her on her wherewithal under such emotionally difficult circumstances, she replies she "has good days and bad days." Though I knew Richard longer than Vanessa did, and have lots of childhood memories, I've never lived with him or been surrounded - as Vanessa is, 24/7, by all things Richard.

A close friend of mine, and fellow cancer survivor, Lynne, said years ago before I started chemotherapy that it would be the hardest thing I've ever done. And I certainly wouldn't want to wish it on my worst enemy but, my brother's dying has given me a new contender: being the lone immediate family member (cousins and all notwithstanding) still alive/last one standing. All that shared DNA gone, but not forgotten, which is the most difficult aspect of the loss. The primary people I would go to/ask for advice, guidance, encouragement, understanding, and compassion are now all gone. And they are not replaceable. When foundational pieces of your life disappear (through death mostly), your life is never quite the same, or as interesting. I feel, with my brother's passing, I have much less to offer; that there are fewer questions people might have for me about my life (which included him). It's not exactly an awkward silence that follows, it's more an abbreviated conversation. I don't take it personally though. I am less interesting without my brother alive. He was an integral part of my life. I don't expect I'll ever get over the loss. In public, to the untrained eye I'll look as if today is just another day. But from now on those days will be less fulfilling and more somber.

"Forest, Forest Gump," knew, even though he was mentally challenged. Invoking his deceased mother: "Mama always said dying was part of life. I wish it wasn't." From the mouths of babes, or in this case a fictional character, comes brilliance, simplicity, and clarity. And though I suppose I understand and appreciate some of the feelings I've described concerning my brother and his semi unexpected passing (he went in septic shock after all; very serious); nevertheless, it's still a bit unsettling when I experience them. I am sort of grateful that I feel what I do. Though my brother may not be alive, fortunately for me, his memory sure is, and I don't expect that to ever change.

Why this whole experience/loss is so hard for me - and many others, is that Richard was a big presence. His not being places where he usually was is unnerving. It's obvious that something (someone) is missing. And for the moment, I'm still half-expecting a contact somehow because for almost the entirety of my 68 years, I was receiving them all the time. Moreover, since we lived in the same city ("DMV," actually) not only we were emotionally close, physically we were 30 minutes away. Add in the ease/convenience of communication that has come with a cell/smart phone as well as the instantaneous connection enabled by home computers and the lines of that communication were non-stop (let's say frequent). However close we were in life before these technological improvements took hold, we were that much closer after - because we could be. Losing that connection on Dec. 3rd will haunt me for the rest of my life.

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



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Offered for...\$1,449,000

1741 Fairview Avenue, McLean
5BA/4.5 BA colonial nestled on a quiet street in a prime location of McLean. The spacious main & upper lvls feature beautiful rosewood floors; elegant living room w/ dining room with French doors that open to an expansive covered back Trex deck, for easy indoor-outdoor living. The heart of the house features a chef's kitchen with an island/breakfast bar; gas cooking, SS appliances, and a separate breakfast area with a vaulted ceiling. The upper lvl features a 2 story vaulted staircase, 4 spacious BA, 3 full BA and laundry room. The lower lvl offers a spacious rec room, w/ 5th BA and walk-out to lovely patio area. **McLean HS pyramid!**

COMING SOON!



**2049 Rockingham Street
McLean, 22101
\$4,695,000
New CONSTRUCTION!**

For Sale!

OPEN Sunday 2-4pm



Offered for...\$1,298,000

802 Ridge Place, Falls Church City
FABULOUS 4BR/3 full BA brick rambler in sought-after Broadmont location! Moments to E. Falls Church Metro and the Eden Center! You are going to LOVE this inviting home nestled in nature on lush, 1/4 acre lot featuring hardwood floors, updated kitchen with Silestone countertops, Italian tile flooring and breakfast bar peninsula and breakfast room! Super primary bedroom with remodeled bath (2019); tons of closet space; nice additional bedrooms plus office/den; **Broadmont location - Falls Church City Schools!**

SOLD!



**1562 Forest Villa Lane
McLean, 22101
\$1,550,000**

UNDER Contract!



**6631 Tucker Avenue
McLean 22101
\$1,824,750**

SOLD!



**281 Gundry Drive
Falls Church, 22043
\$727,010**

SOLD!



**1930 Relda Court
Falls Church, 22043
\$1,220,000**

SOLD!



**1639 Macon Street
McLean, 22101
\$2,215,000**

SOLD!



**2204 Beacon Lane
Falls Church, 22043
\$1,795,000**

Curious what your home is worth? Call to chat with JD and Ed today!