

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

APRIL 27, 2023

Expo Emphasizes Environmental Stewardship

Supervisor's annual event at Fort Hunt Park grows every year.

By MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

The sun was out and the rain held off long enough for residents and environmental groups to share ideas on environmental stewardship at Supervisor Dan Storck's (D-Mount Vernon) 5th Annual Environment Expo last weekend in Fort Hunt Park. There were over 45 vendors, a robot, firetrucks and enthusiasm at this annual gathering.

One thing Supervisor Storck has emphasized during his tenure is bicycling as an environmental and recreation element, and the Mount Vernon Bike Trail stretches through his district and sees thousands of riders every year. Coming next month, the new bicycle bridge over Dogue Creek is opening, and this is a much-needed amenity on the stretch of trail from Richmond Highway to the Mount Vernon Trail.

Hopefully the bridge will be open for Bike to Work Day on May 19. Staffers in the district tent guaranteed that Storck will be biking to work that day.

In the Mount Vernon District, it's hard to highlight environment and wildlife without talking about Huntley Meadows Park and one event highlighted was Wetlands Awareness Day, which is May 7 this year. There will be birds, reptiles, amphibians and interactive displays. "We emphasize meaningful



Mount Vernon School Board Member Karen Corbett Sanders, Student School Board Member and South County HS Senior Michelle Togbe, Supervisor Dan Storck and GW Memorial Parkway Superintendent Charles Cuvelier.



Sophie Larson holding a rubber snake in the herpetology tent.

encounters with wildlife," said Mikala Day, volunteer in the Huntley Meadows tent.

Huntley Meadows is home to many snakes as part of the ecosystem, and there was a tent for "Herpetology," the study of snakes. The garter snake may seem like the most common in this area but according to Sophie Larson, a herpe-

logist, the Eastern Worm Snake is more common, if less visible, around here. "They spend the time underground," she said, eating worms and slugs.

The Fort Hunt History tent was away from the others, but closer to the "Eight Inch Battery," ruins. At one time, Fort Hunt was a fort and there were cannons that could

shoot to the Potomac River. It was never used in an actual battle, but in around 1900, they regularly fired practice rounds towards the river, said Owen Hammett, a volunteer with the park service for the past 18 years.

Other stations included the Department of Public Works and Environmental services where "every

day is earth day for stormwater management," said Catie Tortersen. The Friends of Accotink Creek are looking into urbanization, stormwater and invasive plants. The Friends has an upcoming project called the "Accotink Gorge Project," to remove *Wisteria sinensis* (Chinese wisteria) vines, an invasive species.



The "Eight Inch Battery," ruins, former site of cannon practice.



The bike trail bridge over Dogue Creek is nearly complete.

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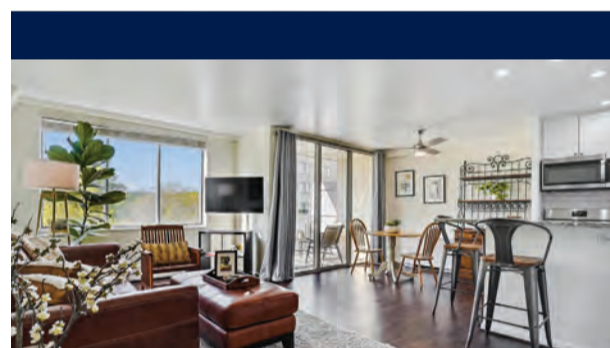
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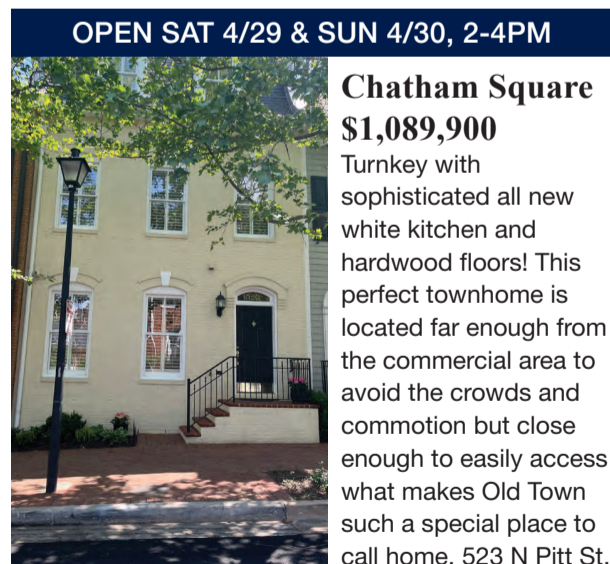
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Members of the Friends group were joined by local officials when they received the award.

Friends of Mount Vernon Trail Recognized

Clipping kudzu, wrestling roots and battling bugs all part of the effort.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

They're out there on the front line in an never-ending battle with the weeds and tree roots to keep the Mount Vernon Bike Trail in shape. And for their efforts, the Friends of the Mount Vernon Trail recently received the 2023 Ellen Pickering Environmental Excellence Award from the City of Alexandria.

This award recognizes the members of the Alexandria community who demonstrate a commitment to protecting the environment and preserving natural resources. The Friends group does all that and more to keep the trail going and in good shape for all users.

With this recognition, they were joined by U.S. Rep. Don Beyer (D-8th), Alexandria Mayor Justin Wilson, Vice Mayor Amy Jackson, Sheriff Sean Casey, Del. Elizabeth Bennett-Parker, Councilmember Sarah Bagley and Alyia Gaskins to recognize their achievement.

"This award is extra special as Ellen Pickering was a co-founder of the MVT. Our group would not exist without the efforts from Ellen's lifelong efforts to the environment," the Friends wrote.

The Mount Vernon Bike Trail was the idea of Ellen Pickering and Barbara Lynch who tossed around the idea in early 1972 and got the whole thing rolling to build the original 4.5 miles of trail between Belle Haven Park and Memorial Bridge. The official ribbon cutting was on April 15, 1972, and there's been a bunch more ribbon cuttings since then as the trail stretched along the river, connecting to other bikeways.

The bike trail is part of the National Park Service, and the Friends group is an official partner of the George Washington Memorial Parkway through a Philanthropic Partnership Agreement.

There is an annual work plan with George Washington Memorial Parkway that outlines the activities that the Friends of the Mount Vernon Trail will conduct. They've been focusing mainly on improving sight lines through vegetation management, pressure washing bridges and edging the trail and coordinating the schedule with the GWMP Trail Manager.

PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/CONNECTION



Volunteers with Friends of the Mount Vernon Trail tackle the weeds along the trail which get out of hand otherwise.



This new bridge over Dogue Creek is a connector to the Mount Vernon Trail on the southern end.

Last year Jack Sullivan won the award for his work on wastewater treatment and in 2019, it went to Kurt Moser for his work with students.

POLICE BRIEFS

Police Pursue Armed Carjackers into Maryland

Two Alexandria men were arrested and multiple firearms recovered after a pursuit that led into Maryland and struck multiple FCPD cruisers, according to police reports.

At 5:21 p.m. April 17, a license plate reader alerted officers to a stolen BMW 535 involved in a carjacking involving multiple armed suspects. FCPD Officers found the BMW and attempted a traffic stop near Arlington Drive and Richmond Hwy. The driver drove away and intentionally struck multiple cruisers. Officers pursued the suspects into Prince George's County where they were able to bring the vehicle to a stop.

Four suspects ran away from the BMW. Officers took an 18-year-old and 21-year-old man, both from Alexandria, into custody.

The 21-year-old from Alexandria has been charged with obliterated serial number of a firearm, two counts of carrying a concealed weapon without a permit, grand larceny of a firearm and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.

The 18-year-old from Alexandria has been charged with obliterated serial number of a firearm, two counts of carrying a concealed weapon without a permit, grand larceny of a firearm, grand larceny, attempted malicious wounding of a police officer and felony speed to elude.

Maryland State Police and Prince George's County Police responded and assisted with the search for the other suspects. Two suspects are still outstanding, including one suspect possibly wearing a Spiderman costume. There were no injuries to FCPD officers or the suspects in custody. The two men were charged by Prince George's County. Additional charges from FCPD are forthcoming, according to police.

— MIKE SALMON

Help ID 7-11 Robbery Suspect

At 9:45 p.m. on April 15, officers responded to the 7-Eleven at 8146 Mount Vernon Highway, for a commercial robbery. Surveillance footage captured the suspect entering the store and demanding money while implying he had a gun. The suspect took cash and then ran from the store. There were no injuries to the victim.



The suspect is described as a slim male, in his early twenties, wearing dark clothing with red shoes. The suspect also had a brown bonnet covering his head during the robbery. Photos of the suspect are below.

Detectives would like to speak to anyone who may have information about this case or other similar cases. Those with information are asked to please call our Major Crimes Bureau at 703-246-7800, option 5. Tips can also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by phone – 1-866-411-TIPS (866-411-8477)

Fatal Pedestrian Crash

Detectives from the FCPD Crash Reconstruction Unit continue to investigate a fatal pedestrian crash that occurred at 5:57 a.m. April 7 at Richmond Highway and Anderson Lane in the Mount Vernon area. Preliminarily, detectives determined that the drivers of a 2008 Chevrolet Impala and 2014 Nissan Altima were traveling south on Richmond Highway at Anderson Lane. The driver of the Impala initially struck Phillip Hester, 62, who was walking outside of a crosswalk. Hester was subsequently struck by the driver of the Altima. Both drivers remained at the scene. Hester was declared deceased at the scene. Preliminary, speed and alcohol do not appear to be a factor for the drivers in the crash.

Anyone with information about this crash is asked to contact the Crash Reconstruction Unit at 703-280-0543.

Presidential Appointment for Mount Vernon's Horticulture Director

President Joe Biden announced the appointment of members to the Committee for the Preservation of the White House on April 14, 2023. Among the individuals is Mount Vernon native J. Dean Norton, the longtime Horticulture Director of George Washington's Mount Vernon.

The Committee for the Preservation of the White House is an advisory committee charged with preserving the White House, the official home and principal workplace of the President of the United States. The Committee is primarily comprised of citizens appointed by the President for their experience with historic preservation, architecture, and decorative arts.

As a member of the Committee, Norton will also serve on the Subcommittee for the Preservation of the White House Grounds. Established in 2019, it considers issues relating to the preservation, care, and design of the White House gardens and grounds and advises on the implementation of approved plans. Norton will provide expertise on the care of historic trees, sensitivity to past planting and landscape features, the need for possible research of past horticultural events, and what is required to care for the storied White House grounds.

"I have always considered it an extreme honor to be the current head gardener for George Washington, our nation's first president" Norton says of his appointment, "To now support the preservation of the home of our current president is pretty terrific. It is the ultimate and continuous Alpha and Omega situation. It has been so special and surreal."

Norton began employment at Mount Vernon estate on June 23, 1969. After receiving a degree in horticulture from Clemson University, he became the estate's boxwood gardener. He was promoted to horticulturist in 1980 and has spent his career applying horticulture's latest plant science and management techniques in a historic setting. For the past 54 years, Norton has devoted considerable time to researching 18th-century gardens and gardening practices. He has led the restoration effort of the principal historic gardens and the overall landscape of the Mount Vernon estate.

Margaret Nichols, the 23rd Regent of the



J. Dean Norton, Mount Vernon's Horticultural Director will serve on the Committee for Preservation of the White House.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MOUNT VERNON LADIES' ASSOCIATION



J. Dean Norton

Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, says, "Dean Norton represents the best of Mount Vernon and George Washington: character, service, and commitment. The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association is fortunate to have benefited from Dean's expertise and spirit for more than five decades, and it is rewarding that he now has the opportunity to share his knowledge and talent in preserving the home and workplace of the President of the United States."

Norton has received awards for conservation from the DAR and the Garden Club of America, as well as the Garden Club of America's prestigious Elizabeth Craig Weaver Proctor National Medal. He is an honorary member of the Garden Club of Virginia and the Garden Club of Providence. Awarded an honorary doctorate from Washington College, Norton serves on the Clemson University Historic Prosperities Committee, on several historic property boards, and lectures nationally and internationally.



J. Dean Norton appointed to Committee for Preservation of the White House, says it's "pretty terrific."

"I have always considered it an extreme honor to be the current head gardener for George Washington, our nation's first president. To now support the preservation of the home of our current president is pretty terrific."

— Dean Norton, Mount Vernon's Horticultural Director

Good Shepherd Partners with Amazon in Housing Quest

Capital Campaign, successful five-year program, coming to an end.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

Housing is a big part of a family budget across the area and in Mount Vernon, Good Shepherd Housing's "Capital Campaign," has helped out low-income families since 2018.

This five-year program is coming to an end, and the nonprofit has secured 97 housing units in Mount Vernon for lower income families. These are split between condominiums and townhouses mostly in the Colchester community, as well as a smaller number in Sequoyah, Mount Vernon Lakes, Pembroke Village, Beekman Place and Hagel Circle in the Lorton area.

"It's been very successful," said Chris Reddick, a board member with Good Shepherd who has spearheaded the effort and worked with donations.

Amazon stepped in and helped with Good Shepherd's campaign, donating \$2 million to purchase 18 units of affordable housing.

Along Richmond Highway where Good Shepherd helps out, many households spend 50 percent or more of their monthly income on rent, leaving little money for food, transportation, childcare or healthcare needs. Good Shepherd provides resources through

partnerships with other community-based organizations, local businesses, faith communities and Fairfax County.

Good Shepherd also works with residents to achieve a brighter future through programs such as financial literacy and skills training for higher-paying jobs. Reddick mentioned their work with the WISH center to get people the training for the higher salaried positions. "We have aligned ourselves with the needs," he said.



The WISH Center is the Fairfax County Workforce Innovation and Skills Hub which was built in an old racquet club near the Gum Springs area. They offer classes and certification programs

so participants can get better jobs to lift them into better circumstances. The Center could be a catalyst for the whole area.

Recently, another program called "Career Power," was established through the contribution of a donor who is focused on helping young people break the generational cycle of poverty. Career Power works with youth, ages 16-24, to help them plan for higher education, or a career in a trade. The goal



PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/CONNECTION

Good Shepherd's programs aim to reduce homelessness and encourage self-sufficiency; The nonprofit received a \$2 million grant from Amazon, and is seeking donations to continue its work.

is that low-income youth and young adults will establish careers that allow them to be economically self-sufficient. "Our vision is to provide the support and resources they need to achieve individual success," Good Shepherd said. <https://goodhousing.org/>

Housing prices aren't standing still though, and Good Shepherd tries to maintain their purchasing power. "The dollars don't go as far as they used to," Reddick said. Nonethe-

less, Good Shepherd has helped many in the past 50 years and will continue their efforts.

Their affordable housing programs have been "reducing homelessness and enabling self-sufficiency among working families, senior citizens and residents with disabilities in the Alexandria area of Fairfax County," and they hope additional donations will allow them to help even more. <https://goodhousing.harnessapp.com/wv2/donate>

FCPD Launches Largest Academy Class in Years

During a time when police staffing levels and applications for police officer candidates are at historical lows across the country, the Fairfax County Police Department is offering up to \$15,000 signing bonus incentivizing a record number of applications.

This week, Chief Kevin Davis welcomed 56 candidates starting their first day at the FCPD Academy. Session 84 is the largest

academy class in almost 10 years.

With the hiring challenges facing police departments across the nation, FCPD conducted an overhaul of its recruiting and retention programs by streamlining the recruiting process without changing their hiring standards to ensure they attract the best candidates.

For sworn officers, FCPD implemented a retention action plan that addresses

morale, motivation, and preferences to retain sworn workforce. They also developed a program consisting of professional strength and conditioning coaches, nutritionists, physical therapists, and others to provide officers with health and wellness training through the academy and throughout their careers.

Of the 56 new recruits in this class, 14 are women (25%), with an overall depart-

ment representation of 29.7% women.

The FCPD Academy lasts 25 weeks and includes basic instruction in the procedures, techniques, and principles of law enforcement, incident report writing, criminal law, traffic enforcement and First Aid. All officers also receive implicit and generational bias training designed to help officers build trust and positive relationships within their communities.

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Every Day Should Be Earth Day

BY DEL. PAUL KRIZEK

Protecting our environment has never been more imperative. As we celebrate Earth Month, we can reflect on the significant progress that we have made, while also taking actionable steps toward a hopeful and greener future. As Delegate of the 44th district, I have made environmental protection a priority during my service, passing bills to target invasive plants, reduce single-use styrofoam, and raise revenue for litter mitigation. I am proud to have received endorsements for my re-election campaign to the new 16th district this year from organizations like the Sierra Club and Clean Virginia.

This year, we preserved the Commonwealth's participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), a multi-state cap-and-trade program on carbon emissions. This pollution reduction program drives down greenhouse gas emissions which improves air quality and public health while also bringing in desperately needed revenue to help Virginia's families with energy bills and flood protection.

My bill HB 1998 was signed into law, encouraging the use of native plants on state-owned properties. Another bill from Del. David Bulova, HB 2096 further defines and educates the public on noxious weeds and invasive plant species.

These pieces of legislation will bolster efforts to combat plants that are harmful to Virginia's environment.

HB 1510 by Del. Dawn Adams provides local incentives to support preservation, restoration, or development of urban green spaces. Not only good for our health and well-being, urban green space also regulates extreme temperatures, freshens the air, reduces runoff, and improves water quality.

We are seeing the results of my 2020 legislation which raised the litter tax and created a litter tax delinquency fine. Even with the 2020 increase, Virginia's litter tax is, per capita, the lowest litter tax rate in the nation, yet these funds are still critical to litter mitigation efforts. In FY2021, the Litter Control and Recycling Fund distributed \$1,708,156 in grant funds to 305 localities that were matched at a rate of 1,138% with \$19,437,533 from local governments through a combination of cash and non-monetary services. VDOT estimates that it spends \$3.5 million a year picking up litter on roadways.

We passed the Affordable Energy Act, which removed restrictions



the Commonwealth. As transportation is one of the leading contributors to pollution, this action is vital.

But, we have much more work to do. Other environmental protection legislation was defeated, including measures to bring solar energy to low-income Virginians through the Low-to-Moderate Income Solar Loan and Rebate Fund.

Now that the weather is warmer, there are many opportunities to participate in environmental cleanups around our community. Sen. Scott Surovell and I hosted our annual cleanup of Little Hunting Creek last Saturday with many phenomenal volunteers. This year

preventing the State Corporation Commission (SCC) from lowering electric utility rates when the SCC determines customers will be overcharged. This change could lead to lower energy costs for Virginians.

We blocked various attempts to repeal the Clean Car Act. First passed in 2021, this legislation requires auto manufacturers to provide cleaner gas-powered vehicles, as well as an increasing number of zero-emission vehicles for sale in

89 bags of trash were collected including seven shopping carts, a mattress and an e-bike! Environmental groups in our area host cleanups regularly to target and remove invasive plant species. You can join the Friends of Dyke Marsh on one of their next cleanups on May 6 and May 20 or June 3 and June 17 from 10am-12pm at the Haul Road Trail entrance.

We only have one planet Earth, and we need it more than it needs us.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Lives in the Balance

Not everyone's understanding of their gender identity lines up with the label they were given when they were born. This is OK. No one is hurt by this. For transgender, non-binary, and gender expansive people to ask to live their lives in dignity and safety is to ask no more than anyone else asks. The pundits, preachers, and politicians pushing the tidal wave of legislation making life miserable for gender nonconforming adults, young people, and their families are deeply wrong and the legislation they are pushing must be stopped and struck down.

Lives are in the balance.

A few cherry-picked Bible verses must not be allowed to outweigh the bright thread woven throughout the Bible that we must love and care for each other, particularly the vulnerable and abused. As a

Christian and a seminary student, it is that bright thread that informs all that I hope to do. I have worked with young people for many years in church, sports, and scouting settings. Several times, I have been the first adult that a young person has talked to about their identity; one of them was my own child. I can still hear the tremor in their voices and the deep breath they took before hearing themselves say words they had clearly practiced in their heads a hundred times but could not be sure would not end up bringing them harm. I wish I were as brave as those young people.

My response was to assure them that they were safe and to ask them what they need. Unfortunately, this is often not the case. Too many LGBTQ youth experience discrimination and abuse, even from their

own families.

Rates of attempted suicide are higher for LGBTQ youth than their non-minority peers and climb even higher when they are abused and rejected.

All any of us want is to be left alone to be who we are. LGBTQ people, young or old, just want the same thing. Contrary to some fears and fantasies, queer kids are not just falling prey to TikTok fads, trans and nonbinary kids are not

faking their way into girls' bathrooms or cheating at track meets, and advocates for LGBTQ acceptance are not recruiting anyone to anything. We need to raise our voices in opposition to those trying to erase our precious LGBTQ siblings.

David Lewis

Fairfax

Lewis, 62, is a first year student at United Lutheran Seminary

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MEMORIES



PHOTO BY BARBARA AUTRY

Fellow dog lovers, who walked together for years at Laurel Hill Park, joined together to donate a bench dedicated to the dogs always at their sides, celebrating the installation together to thank county employees for their on-going care of the park

Donation Program Keeps Memories and Parks

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE GAZETTE

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



PHOTO BY RICHARD KISLING

Not every bench honoree is only a memory, or a human, as Murphy proves with owner Christine Flynn of Lorton


SEE BENCHES, PAGE 14

CALENDAR


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Let us know about an upcoming event

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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/X11TGO>, 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.


The Commonwealth is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of its services on the basis of race, color or national origin, as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need further information on these policies or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, please contact the Virginia Department of Transportation's Title VI Compliance Officer at 804-786-2730 or the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation's Title VI Compliance Officer at 804-786-4440 (TTY users call 711).


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.





Equal Opportunity M/F

Northern Virginia Poised to Lose Influence



Sen. George Barker (D-39), center, is one of the most senior members of the Senate. Now he's facing a Democratic primary challenger, whose victory could deal a major blow to the seniority and status of Northern Virginia.

Democratic primary might shift power to Hampton Roads.

By MICHAEL LEE POPE
GAZETTE PACKET

Just a few years ago, Northern Virginia could boast about being home to House Speaker of the House Eileen Filler-Corn and Senate Majority Leader Dick Saslaw — both from Fairfax County. Now Filler-Corn and Saslaw are among a massive wave of retirements that will reshape the General Assembly this year, potentially shifting power from Northern Virginia to Hampton Roads. That could mean not only a lack of clout but also a lack of funding for schools and transit.

“This is going to be one of the hardest fought campaign cycles in Virginia history,” said Stephen Farnsworth, director of the Center for Leadership and Media Studies at the University of Mary Washington. “Both parties are raising immense amounts of money compared to the past, and both parties are going to be looking at a lot of vulnerable incumbents and promising challengers as they try to reshape the



Stella Pekarsky.

legislature that takes office next January.”

Perhaps the biggest loss for Northern Virginia could be in the newly created Senate District 36, which stretches from Oak Hill and Chantilly through Centreville and Clifton. The incumbent in the

“This is going to be one of the hardest fought campaign cycles in Virginia history.”

— Stephen Farnsworth, director Center for Leadership and Media Studies, University of Mary Washington

race is Sen. George Barker (D-39). First elected in 2007, when he defeated Republican incumbent Sen. Jay O’Brein (R-39), Barker is currently ranked 14 out of 40 in seniority. But because six more senior members are retiring, he’s poised to be one of the most powerful

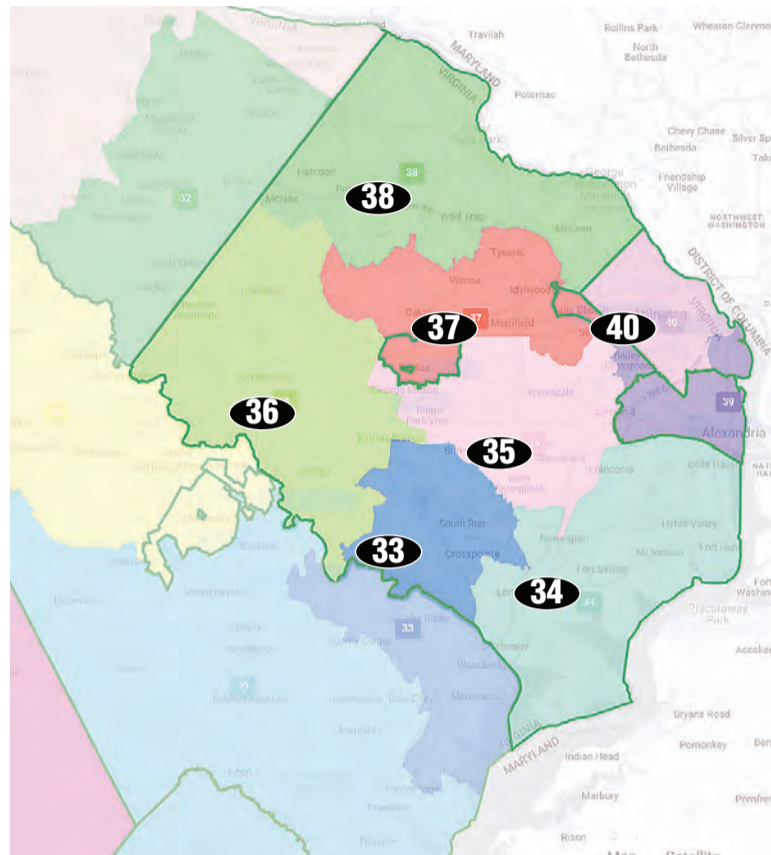
members in the Senate and possibly the dean of the Northern Virginia delegation.

But that’s only if he wins reelection.

Former Fairfax County School Board Chairwoman Stella Pekarsky is challenging Barker from the left, and her election to the Senate would signify a generational shift. But it would also be a huge hit to the seniority and status of the delegation from Northern Virginia. Because he would be one of the most senior-ranking members in the Senate, Barker is poised to become chairman of the influential Senate Finance Committee. But if Pekarsky unseats Barker, that role would almost certainly go to Sen. Louise Lucas (D-18) of Portsmouth. Barker hasn’t faced Democratic primary opponent since 2007, when he prevailed against Democrat Greg Galligan with 61 percent of the vote.

“The more senior members have gotten used to not having contested campaigns and not being challenged within their parties,” said former Republican Delegate David Ramadan, now with the Schar School at George Mason University. “They’re gotten used to having safe districts in the general elections, and now they’re saying, ‘You know what? I’m done.’”

THE LOSS OF POWER and pres-SEE NORTHERN VIRGINIA, PAGE 15



Candidates for Virginia Senate will run under new districts.

SENATE Candidates

Q1 Money Raised (top number)
Cash on Hand (second number)
Source: VPAOrg

District 34
Scott Surovell (D) unopposed
\$83,318
\$665,322

District 35
Heidi Drauschak (D)
\$229,743
\$140,595

Dave Marsden (D) incumbent
\$48,265
\$280,829

Mark B Vafiades (R)
Republican challenger
\$1,534
\$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 challenger
\$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

Democratic Primary June 20; Early Voting Starts May 5

Could new faces, new districts alter the political landscape?

By MERCIA HOBSON
GAZETTE PACKET

One-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.

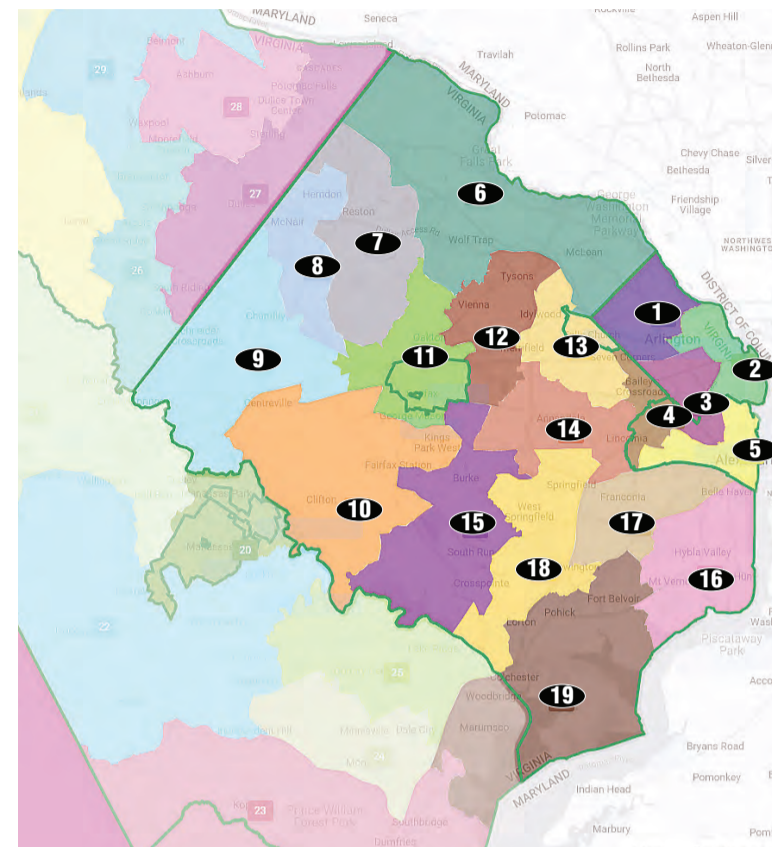
Retirements by some of the county’s heavy-hitting Democratic legislators in the General Assembly, such as Senate Majority Leader Dick Saslaw, who served 48 years, and Del. Ken Plum, who served 44 years, opened the ballot box to challengers who otherwise might not have filed as candidates.

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.

Democrats will nominate their candidates for Senate Districts 33, 35, 36, and 37 and House Districts 7, 15, and 19. 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 parties 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



Va House of Delegates Districts

HOUSE OF DELEGATES Candidates

Q1 Money Raised and Cash on Hand
Source: VPAOrg

House District 1
Patrick Hope (D) unopposed
\$23,053
\$78,566

House District 2
Adele McClure (D)
\$78,729
\$129,461

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

House District 3
Alfonso Lopez (D) unopposed
\$10,643
\$54,160

House District 4
Charniele Herring (D) unopposed
\$86,832
\$408,304

House District 5
Elizabeth Bennett-Parker (D) unopposed
\$21,838
\$84,332

VA State Senate races in Fairfax County on the Democratic Primary Ballot, Tues. June 20, 2023, SD33 is an open seat, partially

House District 6
Kristin Hoffman (R)
Republican challenger
N/A
N/A

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

House District 7
Mary Barthelson (D)
\$9,267
\$7,470

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

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

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

House District 8
Max Fisher (R)
Republican Challenger
\$0
\$0

within a single congressional, state senate, delegate, and magisterial district.

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

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.

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

House District 13
Marcus Simon (D) unopposed
\$30,995
\$107,575

House District 9
Karrie Delaney (D) unopposed
\$15,395
\$40,615

House District 14
Vivian Watts (D) unopposed
\$1,125
\$39,457

House District 10
Dan Helmer (D) incumbent
\$91,932
\$59,319

House District 15
Laura Jane Cohen (D)
\$45,931
\$151,462

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

Eric Schmidt (D)
\$0
\$0

House District 11
David Bulova (D) incumbent
\$13,960
\$121,690

Henri’ Thompson (D)
\$0
\$0

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

House District 16
Paul Krizek (D) unopposed
\$31,110
\$111,392

House District 12
Holly Seibold (D) unopposed
\$6,280
\$15,688

House District 17
Mark Sickles (D) unopposed
\$12,660
\$140,275

House District 18
Kathy Tran (D) unopposed
\$29,275
\$307,716

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

Democratic Primary June 20; Early Voting Starts May 5

FROM PAGE 9

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 and strong schools.

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 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".

BULLETIN BOARD

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

MT. VERNON FARMERS MARKET TO RESUME APRIL 19

A mix of new and familiar vendors will be selling local, farm-fresh produce - including strawberries and asparagus -and more at the McCutcheon/Mt. Vernon

Farmers Market when it opens on Wednesday, April 19. From 8 a.m. to noon every Wednesday (through December 20), 21 farmers and local food producers will sell fresh vegetables and fruits; meats; Chesapeake Bay seafood; breads and pastries; honey, jams and jellies; milk, cheese and eggs; herbs and plants; and more. The market is located at the Sherwood Hall Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane.

This year's vendors are:

- Arnest Seafood - crab cakes, scallops, shrimp, rockfish, oysters and more
- The Big Brine - Fermented foods, pickles and pickled vegetables
- The Fermented Pig- charcuterie and gourmet bacons
- Grace's Pastries - cakes, pastries and breads, with a Caribbean touch
- Great Harvest Bread - breads and pastries

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 12

**JOIN GSH FOR A WINE & BEER TASTING
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Shannon Stockton at 703-245-1950

Visit: goodhousing.org/cedarknoll
to sponsor or purchase tickets.

Cedar Knoll
9030 Lucia Ln. Alexandria, Va 22308

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

Senior Living, fourth week of every month.

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THE CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

RAMADAN

PHOTOS BY EDEN BROWN, THE GAZETTE



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, particularly

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 performance-

different kind of Ramadan. Instead of

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

SEE RAMADAN, PAGE 12

A vibrant community enriched and supported by strong businesses

The Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber of Commerce was created by combining the former Mount Vernon Lee Chamber and the Greater Springfield Chamber into a new regional chamber of commerce. Joining forces expands our reach, offers a stronger support network for businesses, a greater voice to our members and more opportunity for all. The future is bright for a united chamber of commerce working to strengthen our community.



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CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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in Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber of Commerce

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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.

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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.

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 10

- Honeycomb Heroes - Honey and bees-wax-based products
- House of Empanadas - variety of empanadas
- King Mushrooms - variety of locally grown mushrooms
- Layla's Lebanese Restaurant - Lebanese hummus, eggplant dip, garlic sauce and more
- Linda Vista Farm - fruits and vegetables, specializing in Asian and Latin produce
- Misty Meadow Farm Creamery - milk, ice cream, cheese and eggs
- Ochoa Produce - vegetables, herbs and flowers
- Pasta Ilgatto - Fresh, handcrafted pasta and sauces
- PorkStork - Forest-raised heritage pork products, including bacon and

- sausages
 - Salsa Las Glorias - fresh salsas, guacamole and chips
 - Sharkawi Farm - herbs, spices, teas, plants and flowers
 - Three Way Farms - vegetables, melons and herbs
 - Traveling Shepherd Coffee Co. - variety of freshly roasted coffee
 - Twin Springs Orchard - fruits, vegetables, cheese and more
 - Valentine's Bakery & Meats - meats and baked goods
 - WeGrow - Microgreens.
- All of the items sold at the market are grown or produced by the vendors and come from within a radius of 125 miles. The McCutcheon/Mt. Vernon market is one of 10 farmers markets run by the Fairfax County
- SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 15

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

ENTERTAINMENT

NOW THRU APRIL 30

Matthew McLaughlin Art Exhibit. At the Athenaeum, Alexandria. Reception: Sunday, March 26, 4 - 6 p.m.; Artist Talk: Sunday, April 30, 2 - 3. Matthew McLaughlin's work explores how people define space in relationship to themselves on multiple levels, through personal and public forums, by bringing together those themes via mixed-media works from multiple series. The exhibition covers three distinct series, Proxemic Boundaries, Plotting Truths, and Reflective Cartography.

NOW THRU APRIL 29

"A Tale of Two Studios." Del Ray Artisans partners with Art Enables Gallery & Studio in an open-themed showcase of the inspiring art of these two community organizations to convey an essential story about creative expression and art-making. At Del Ray Artisans, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria VA. Opening Reception: Friday, April 7 from 7-9 p.m. Open Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays 12-6 p.m., and Sundays 12-6 p.m. (closed April 30). DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

APRIL 22 TO JULY 15

Alexander D'Agostino: "A Shrine for the Forgotten" Exhibition. At the Torpedo Factory Art Center, 105 N. Union St., Alexandria. Baltimore-based solo artist exhibition recipient, Alexander D'Agostino, presents "A Shrine for the Forgotten." The work explores queer histories and images, through performance, installation, and reclaiming material from queer archives and other cultural resources related to the historic marginalization of LGBTQ people.

WEDNESDAY/APRIL 26

Chamber XCHANGE. 6-8 p.m. At Founders Hall, 106 N. Lee Street, Alexandria. Powered by The Chamber ALX. April presenters: Julie Chapman, Founder and Chair ALX Dog Walk; Cheyanne Dwyer, Chief Strategy Officer of Building Momentum; and Brad Halsey, CEO and Co-Founder of Building Momentum. For more information on the program, reach out to us at Lpatish@thechamberalx.com

THURSDAY/APRIL 27

Poem in Your Pocket. 6:30 p.m. At the Athenaeum, Alexandria. City of Alexandria Poet Laureate, Zeina Azzam, will lead the Poem in Your Pocket Celebration at the Athenaeum. The formal program begins at 7 p.m. She will be joined by winning poets of the 2023 DASHing Words in Motion program, who will have their poems displayed inside the DASH buses and trolleys in April and May. Limited seating will be available, so reservations are required. To make a reservation email arts@alexandriava.gov.

SATURDAY/APRIL 29

Alexandria African American Family Reunion. The Alexandria Public Library is having their very first "Alexandria African American Family Reunion" on April 29, 2023. The library wants you to share your family photos. They will have their scanning machines ready to make copies of your pictures. If you would like your pictures scanned prior to the event, visit the blog at - <http://www.theotheralexandria.com> and while there, read the article on "The Importance of Photos." For additional information on the Reunion, click on this link -

<https://mailchi.mp/alexlibraryva/newsletter-1108914?e=117c38ecbf>

SATURDAY/APRIL 29

Healthy Kids Day. 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. At YMCA Alexandria, 420 East Monroe Ave., Alexan-



The Northern Alexandria Native Plant Sale takes place Saturday, April 29, 2023 in Alexandria.

Native Plant Sale

9 a.m. to 2 p.m. At 1701 N. Quaker Lane parking lot, Alexandria. Largest native plant sale in DC Metro Area hosts 10 vendors from VA, MD, PA, and DC selling native perennials, shrubs, and trees for sun or shade. This event is free. Call 571-232-0375 or www.NorthernAlexandriaNativePlantSale.org.

dria. This free, annual event features all sorts of family-friendly activities to encourage healthy kids, healthy families, and a healthy start to the summer season. Meet firefighters and check out a fire truck, get your face painted, and create something new in our STEAM Maker Space. Enjoy Family Zumba, Family Swim (1-3 p.m.), and a Doggie Parade (12:30-1:00 p.m.). Grab a piece of fresh fruit, courtesy of the American Heart Association, and get up-to-date on important vaccines provided by Giant Pharmacy. Register here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/healthy-kids-day-at-ymca-alexandria-tickets-609846716947>

SATURDAY/APRIL 29

Northern Alexandria Native Plant Sale. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. At The Church of St. Clement, 1701 N. Quaker Lane, Alexandria. Ten vendors from Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and D.C. will be hosted. Visit the website www.facebook.com/NorthernAlexandriaNativePlantSale.

APRIL 29-30

"Cinderella Spring Ballet." At George Washington Masonic National Memorial, Alexandria. Presented by the Metropolitan School of the Arts. More than 40 Metropolitan School of the Arts students will perform Cinderella, including: Justin Roach, who performs as Prince Charming. Roach, grade 12, was accepted into the Syracuse University Musical Theater Dance program in New York with a full tuition scholarship; and Sara Yoon, grade 12, has been at MSA since age 3. Yoon completed her Royal Academy of Dance examinations through the highest level, receiving a high distinction. Dates: On Sat., April 29 at 12 PM and 5 PM, and Sun., April 30 at 12 PM and 5 PM. Tickets are ranging from \$22 to \$25 per person. Go to www.metropolitanarts.org for more information and tickets, or click go to Cinderella tickets.

drers' books, fiction, history, biography, home and garden, cooking, crafts, sports, religion, travel, CDs, DVDs, and more. Unless specially priced, \$1 for hard backs and large paperbacks, and 25 cents for mass market paperbacks. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/friends-of-sherwood-regional>.

SATURDAY/MAY 6

Spring Garden Tour. 10-11 a.m. (Adults) Enjoy a guided tour of Green Spring's beautiful demonstration gardens with an Extension Master Gardener docent. Hear about our 18th century origins and our mission today. Find inspiration in our horticulturists' plant choices and garden bed designs and take their ideas home to try in your own landscape. Garden tours run rain or shine. \$12 per person. Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. Code AUH.WQZD.

SATURDAY/MAY 6

Garden Talk - Problem Plants & Better Alternatives. 10:30-11:30 a.m. (Adults) Fast-growing invasive plants spread like wild-fire, covering your garden and anything that does not move! Give invasives an inch and they'll take over your yard. Learn about Fairfax County's new mandate against bamboo aggression and hear from Extension Master Gardeners about the best native alternatives for your garden. \$12 per person. Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. Code AL8.KOA5.

TUESDAY/MAY 2

Love+Dance. 7 p.m. At the Athenaeum, Alexandria. In celebration of Asian Heritage month in May, Fiesta Asia & Dance Asia jointly presents Love+Dance - An Asian Dance Showcase featuring new & unique fusion dance pieces from diverse cultures with a spotlight focus on female artists.

TUESDAYS, MAY 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

Simpson Park Demonstration Garden, Tuesdays @ 10 - What Bugs You? 10 a.m. - 11 a.m. At Simpson Park Demonstration Garden, 420 E. Monroe Ave., Alexandria. What can homeowners do that is kid safe, pet safe, environmentally responsible, and budget friendly to control those pesky mosquitoes, ticks, and other garden pests that emerge in the spring? And, what about those naughty invasive plants? Stop by the garden from 10:00-11:00 every Tuesday morning where you can get answers to these questions and more from Extension Master Gardeners. Each month, a different "garden of the month" will be highlighted that can inspire ideas for your own garden or even a favorite container.

MAY 5-27

The "Prints in May@DRA: Exploring the Possibilities" exhibit. At Del Ray Artisans gallery features traditional printmaking techniques such as reliefs, intaglios, monoprints and handmade prints with mixed media, along with artworks created using computer graphics programs and other objects enhanced with block prints or imprints. View at Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria. Open Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays 12-6 p.m. (Closed May 28). Details: DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

MAY 6

Used Book Sale: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. at Sherwood Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane. Selection of over 20,000 gently used chil-

THE BIRCHMERE

At 3701 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. All shows are at 7:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted. Tickets available at Ticketmaster.com. Contact The Birchmere at 703-549-7500 or www.Birchmere.com.

APRIL

Wed. 26: Suzanne Vega - An Intimate Evening of Songs and Stories \$55.00
Fri. 28: Ohio Players \$69.50
Sat. 29: Eaglemania - The World's Greatest Tribute to the Eagles \$45.00
Sun. 30: Herman's Hermits starring Peter Noone \$55.00

MAY

Mon. 1: The Wallflowers w/ Lisa Bouchelle \$75.00 SOLD OUT!
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Thu. 4: Raheem DeVaughn \$85.00 SOLD OUT!
Fri. 5: TUSK - The World's #1 Tribute to Fleetwood Mac! \$45.00
Sat. 6: KT Tunstall & Martin Sexton \$49.50
Mon. 8: Cowboy Junkies \$65.00 SOLD OUT!
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Fri. 12: The Manhattan featuring Gerald Alston \$59.50
Sat. 13: The Jerry Douglas Band \$35.00
Sun. 14: Redneck Mother's Day with THE GONZO COMPADRES - A Tribute to Jerry Jeff Walker \$45.00
Fri. 19: THE CURTIS MAYFIELD SOUNDTRACK SHOW - A Curtis Mayfield Tribute- featuring Shelton Price, Roger Chapman, Ignatius, Sonya Chichester, Sonja, Brigitte Johnson, Keith 'Showtime' Busey & The Unit Band \$39.50
Sat. 20: NAJEE \$59.50
Sun. 21: BoDeans \$35.00
Tue. 23: The Lone Bellow Trio "Love Songs For Losers Tour" w/ Lindsay Lou \$45.00
Wed. 24: Christette Michele \$69.50
Thu. 25: Christette Michele \$69.50
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MEMORIES



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

Park Foundation Benches

FROM PAGE 7

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).

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>.

Northern Virginia Poised to Lose Influence

FROM PAGE 8

tige could have dramatic consequences for Northern Virginia. Schools across Northern Virginia would not have a champion in the room when senior members of the money committees cut a deal in secret during conference committee negotiations, which are not open to the public or the press. And funding for Metro is not as pressing to senators who represent Hampton Roads or Southwest Virginia. Even if Pekarsky wins against Barker, she would have to wait decades before she were part of the secret, closed-door conference committees where budget deals are struck.

"A lot of stuff gets done in private," said Del. Alfonso Lopez (D-49), who is running in a newly created House district that includes Parkfairfax and the Bradlee Shopping Center. "That way you can actually have an open and honest dialogue with somebody."

The latest round of campaign disclosure forms show Barker has raised about half a million dollars, which is more than twice as much money as Pekarsky. His big-money donors include \$40,000 from Dominion Energy, \$12,500 from the Virginia Dental Association and \$10,000 from the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees. Pekarsky has raised more than \$200,000, and her major donors include \$100,000 from Clean Virginia, \$50,000 from Sonja Smith of Charlottesville and \$13,000 that was leftover from her campaign for the School Board. Perhaps more significantly, she has a strong base of support in a part of the district where Barker is a newcomer.

"The maps were drawn by our state Supreme Court, not by the politicians," said J. Miles Coleman, associate editor at Sabato's Crystal Ball at the University of Virginia Center for Politics. "So that's maybe one layer of protection this year that incumbent

legislators may not have.

Another Northern Virginia incumbent who has a Democratic challenger is Sen. Jeremy McPike (D-29), who replaced longtime Sen. Chuck Colgan (D-29) in 2015. He is currently ranked 28 out of 40 in seniority, although he's poised to move way up the seniority chain this year if he can manage to get reelected. He's facing Democratic challenger Elizabeth Guzman, who is currently a member of the House of Delegates. McPike has raised \$750,000, including \$50,000 from Clean Virginia and \$25,000 from Accel Entertainment Gaming. Guzman has raised \$240,000, including \$30,000 from AFSME and \$25,000 from Sonja Smith of Charlottesville.

"People give money to politicians because they get their money's worth," said Farnsworth. "If they didn't, they wouldn't give money to politicians going forward."

Other Northern Virginia Senate incumbents are posting strong fundraising numbers. Sen. Chap Petersen (D-34) currently ranks 13 out of 40 in seniority, and he raised \$880,000 compared to one Democratic challenger Saddam Salim, who raised \$87,000; and a second challenger, Erika Milena Yalowitz, who raised \$42,487. Sen. Dave Marsden (D-37) currently ranks 17 out of 40 in seniority, and he raised \$500,000 compared to his Democratic challenger Heidi Drauschak, who raised \$230,000. Sen. Barbara Favola (D-31) currently ranks 21 out of 40, and she raised \$392,000 compared to her Democratic challenger James DeVita, who raised \$12,000. Sen. Jennifer Boysko (D-33) currently ranks 34 out of 40, and she raised \$526,000 compared to her Republican challenger Matthew Lang, who raised \$3,000; Boysko has no challenger in the Democratic primary. Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-30) has no challenger in the Democratic primary, and neither does Sen. Scott Surovell (D-34).

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 12

Park Authority (FCPA); for more information, visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmers-markets.

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AFS-USA, a leader in international high school student exchange for 75 years, is focused on providing opportunities for intercultural exchange that can help lead to a more just and peaceful world.

Those interested in hosting an AFS Exchange Student are encouraged to contact 1-800-AFS-INFO or visit www.afsusa.org for more information. You can also get involved as an AFS-USA Volunteer. Visit www.afsusa.org/volunteer to get started or learn more about opportunities to make a difference.

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LOOKING FOR SOFTBALL PLAYERS

The Golden Girls of Northern Virginia, a senior women's softball league, is looking for players. Any woman over the age of 40 is encouraged to join. All skill levels are welcome. They play most Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings in Vienna from May-July and September-October. For more information, visit the web site www.goldengirls.org.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

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

Operation Paws for Homes, a Virginia based 501(c)(3) organization seeks volunteers, especially to foster dogs. See www.ophrescue.org for information and all volunteer opportunities.

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

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

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

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

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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