

# Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

AUGUST 24, 2023

## Back-to-School Backpacks

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

**Firefighters, volunteers provide backpacks for kids.**

BY JEANNE THEISMANN  
THE GAZETTE

**R**epresentatives of more than 40 schools and nonprofits from across Northern Virginia turned out Aug. 17 at Penn Daw Station 11 for the Firefighters and Friends to the Rescue annual back-to-school backpack and school supply distribution.

Fairfax County Fire & Rescue Department and Firefighters and Friends to the Rescue partnered with numerous businesses and employee groups to give away over 1,100 backpacks with supplies to schools in Fairfax County.

"Once again our sponsors came through this year to ensure that children will have the items they need to succeed this upcoming school year," said retired Deputy Chief Willie Bailey and founder of the event. "As always without their support this annual event

**"So many families are helped tremendously by this backpack drive."**

— Anastasia Morgan,  
Washington Mill  
Elementary  
School counselor

county.

"So many families are helped tremendously by this backpack drive," said Anastasia Morgan, a counselor at Washington Mill Elementary School. "For a lot of families, it relieves the stress, knowing they can rely on their schools to look out for them and get them the resources that they need. For many families we are the first point of contact if they need something."

Twins Madden and Maks Savitteree, seventh graders at Seneca Ridge Middle School, have been volunteering at the event since they were in pre-school.

"We enjoy coming here and being a part of helping other kids," Madden said.

David Broder, president of SEIU VA 512, was a volunteer at the event.

"Fairfax is a wonderful place to live, work



Volunteers from Capital One join Fairfax County firefighters displaying backpacks collected for the Firefighters and Friends to the Rescue back-to-school backpack drive Aug. 17 at Penn Daw Station 11.



Retired Deputy Chief Willie Bailey, center, with volunteers Maks and Madden Savitteree at the Firefighters and Friends to the Rescue back-to-school backpack drive Aug. 17 at Penn Daw Station 11.



Robert Young, Suzette Reynolds, Leslie Houston, Natalie Nguyenwoodruff and David Broder at the Firefighters and Friends to the Rescue backpack distribution Aug. 17 at Penn Daw Station 11.



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## Healthy Habits and School Supplies Dished Out in Lorton

PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/CONNECTION

### Classes in session for the 2023-2024 school year.

BY MIKE SALMON  
THE GAZETTE

**O**n Saturday, Aug. 19, Mount Vernon District Supervisor Dan Storck kicked the school year off with the First Day Ready event at the Lorton Community Center where students could pick up new backpacks and school supplies before the bell rang on Monday morning. The event was highlighted with food, a moon bounce, school supply distributions, face painting, and a health fair.

Just up the street the Mount Vernon Community School barbecue sandwiches were on the lunch menu on Friday, Aug. 18, courtesy of the school's PTA and Pork Barrel BBQ before the school's open house on later that day.

Monday was right around the corner for all the students though, and some Fairfax County Public School students felt they had to cut summer a little short this year when the 2023-2024 school year started on Monday, Aug. 21.

At Mount Vernon High School, the theme this year is "Game On, Majors!" a theme to get everyone ready for the coming school year. "We believe that by embracing the 'Game



Supervisor Dan Storck welcomes all to the event in Lorton.



The weather was perfect so standing in line was not so bad.



Healthy habits were dished out at the health truck.



Face painting and balloon animals are always a big attraction.

On' spirit, our Majors will develop valuable skills that extend beyond the classroom and into their future endeavors," school officials said. It

all started on Thursday, Aug. 17 with an open house night. Back to School Night. Pyramid Night Football Game is scheduled for Friday, Sept. 8.

## Firefighters, Volunteers Provide Backpacks for Kids

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and play because working people come together and take care of each other," Broder said. "It's wonderful to see union members from the fire department, from our school system, from our county's mental health system coming together and making sure that all our kids can thrive and have an amazing school year ahead."

Bailey said that sponsors and volunteers were especially generous this year.

"Our sponsors and volunteers really stepped up for us, including Capital One and The Clifton Community," Bailey said. "Capital One made a monetary donation and collected over 100 backpacks with supplies for us."

Sponsors for the event include: Capital One; Apple Federal Credit Union; Ken Savitteree Foundation; The Clifton

Community; Nationwide Credit Corporation; Promax Realtors; Local 2068; Fairfax County Fire Retirement Association; Progressive Firefighters Of Fairfax County; Fairfax Education Association (FEA); SEIU VA 512; Mediocrity Inc.; Mount Vernon Gazette; Firefighters and Friends to the Rescue and Primo Family Restaurant.

"Apple Federal Credit Union is very passionate about helping out the community," said representative Amanda Aikins-Kwakye. "We thought this would be the right opportunity to come out and help by giving backpacks to less advantaged students."

Added Broder, "Every one of us would want our kids to have a new backpack to get excited about the school year. It's great to see the community come together to see that every kid has that experience."



Volunteers gather for a photo at the Firefighters and Friends to the Rescue backpack distribution Aug. 17 at Penn Daw Station 11.

PHOTO BY JANET BARNETT/THE GAZETTE



# Achieving Fair Pay and Dignity for Workers with Disabilities

BY DEL. PAUL KRIZEK

Until July 1, 2023, many workers with disabilities across the Commonwealth would wake up in the morning and head to work, only to receive lower pay than their coworkers and counterparts in the community, despite performing the same job. This reality was due to the subminimum wage law provision 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), colloquially known as 14(c).

However, earlier this year, the General Assembly acted unanimously with conviction and leadership in a bipartisan effort to phase out this practice and ensure that every Virginian is treated with dignity and paid fairly for a full day's work.

Some still argue that with 14(c) disabled workers can pursue job opportunities that



provide dignity, community, and purpose, and gives employers the chance to support them. Yet, this perspective, although it sounds reasonable on its face, is misguided as it conveys the message to these workers that their labor is worth less than that of their non-disabled colleagues. It implies that the resources Virginia has received to support their employment would be better spent paying them significantly less.

According to CNBC's 2023 ranking report, Virginia is ranked #2 among all 50 states for its business-friendly environment. We firmly believe in the values of entrepreneurship, hard work, economic leadership, and financial independence.

Nevertheless, under this law, half of the disabled workers in 14(c) employment earn less than \$3.50 per hour, with the majori-

ty of them having intellectual or developmental disabilities. Even more concerning, a recent report revealed that between 2012 and 2021, the Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division (WHD) identified over \$15 million in unpaid back wages owed to more than 73,500 14(c) employees due to employers' failure to adequately compensate them.

There are still proponents of 14(c) who argue that abolishing this law will result in job losses for people with disabilities and eliminate a pathway to employment. However, the Department of Labor has recently reported an all-time high in employment for individuals with disabilities. These statistics come after significant efforts by the federal government, states, and organizations holding a 14(c) certificate to reduce employment under 14(c). Service providers and businesses have embraced alternative employment arrangements and expanded their capacity to provide competitive pay within the com-

munity. Consequently, the number of individuals paid under a 14(c) certificate has decreased by tens of thousands, while the employment rates for people with disabilities continue to rise.

The numbers and the voices of disability advocates tell a different story. An essential aspect of shaping policies that impact Virginians with disabilities involves genuinely listening to their stories and understanding their perspectives. As a collective body with a profound responsibility to all citizens, the General Assembly has worked thoughtfully and intentionally to discard the nearly-century-old mindset that has hindered disabled workers from obtaining meaningful, well-compensated employment. Our path forward as a Commonwealth should consistently prioritize policies that encourage dignified work and recognize its contribution to our economy. This entails investing in our people through productive employment and community support services.

## Environmental Groups Sue to Stop Exit from RGGI

Legal action calls for Virginia to remain in Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative and continue participation; challenging Youngkin administration action.

BY MERCIA HOBSON  
THE CONNECTION

On Monday, Aug. 21, the Southern Environmental Law Service filed a petition for appeal in Fairfax Circuit Court on behalf of a coalition of four environmental groups, including Reston-based Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions. The suit challenges the Virginia State Air Pollution Control Board, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, and Michael Rolband, director of Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, for plans to withdraw Virginia from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, or RGGI (pronounced Reggie). The other petitioners are the Association of Energy Conservation Professionals, Virginia Interfaith Power & Light, and Appalachian Voices.

"The primary issue in this case, however, remains simple: Virginia's participation in RGGI is required by law. The Agency Respondents do not have the authority to contradict decisions of the General Assembly and in any event, cannot do so on this record, which lacks evidentiary support for the respondents' changed position," argued counsel for the petitioners, Southern Environmental Law Center.

The action requests the Court, among other things, "invalidate, vacate, and declare null and void the Agency Respondents' approval and issuance of the Final RGGI Repeal; (and that) this Court direct the Agency Respondents to take all necessary steps to reinstate the RGGI Regulation and continue participation in RGGI."



PHOTO VIA COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
**Glenn Youngkin**  
Virginia Governor



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED  
**Andrea McGimsey**  
executive director  
of Faith Alliance for  
Climate Solutions

"The Director must continue selling carbon allowances, the state treasurer must continue distributing the proceeds from such allowance sales into specific accounts, and the responsible state agencies must continue filing annual reports about Virginia's participation in RGGI," states the petition.

The 2020 RGGI Act requires Virginia to participate in RGGI at least through 2030, according to the petition with the Air Pollution Control Board maintaining the RGGI Regulation.

From 2031 to 2050, the 2020 Utility Act "requires the Air Pollution Control Board to maintain a regulatory program to reduce power plant emissions but affords the Board some discretion in how to do so—including allowing the Board to keep the existing 2021 to 2030 RGGI Regulation in place," states the petition.

According to Andrea McGimsey, the executive director of Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions, the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative

has dramatically reduced pollution from power plants while protecting Virginians from the growing effects of climate change.

"RGGI helps us leave a better world to our children and grandchildren, and we will continue to vigorously defend Virginia's participation in this successful, bipartisan program," she said in a FACC Facebook post on Aug. 3. Virginia joined the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative in 2021 after the General Assembly passed a law in 2020 requiring Virginia's participation in the regional program.

The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, established in 2005 by seven governors, includes twelve Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states and one Southern state. These states are part of the mandatory, market-based Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, which seven governors established in 2005. They are Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and Virginia.

The twelve individual state programs function as a regional carbon emissions compliance market. The initiative sets a cap on carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions from fossil fuel-fired power plants with a capacity of 25 MW or higher and allows sources to trade emissions allowances.

On June 9, 2023, carbon dioxide allowances were sold in the 60th RGGI Auction at a clearing price of \$12.73, according to RGGI, Inc.: "The auction generated \$280.4 million for states to reinvest in strategic programs, including energy efficiency, renewable energy, direct bill assistance, and GHG (greenhouse gas) abatement programs."

The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative represents the first cap-and-invest regional initiative implemented in the United States. The program began "by capping emissions at

current levels in 2009 and then reducing emissions 10 percent by 2018," according to the IEA, the International Energy Agency.

"It is critical that we continue our participation in RGGI, a proven climate solution," said SELC Senior Attorney Nate Benforado.

According to the Petition for Appeal, "Virginia has seen significant benefits since joining RGGI. Carbon dioxide emissions from Virginia power plants have declined by 16.8 percent in the first two years of participation. The RGGI auctions have also generated over \$650 million for Virginians, which have flowed to important flood resiliency and energy efficiency programs, as required by the 2020 RGGI Act."

On June 7 this year, the Virginia state regulator, the Air Pollution Control Board, voted 4-3 to repeal Virginia's participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. According to scientists, carbon emissions contribute to global warming, accelerating sea level rise, and worsening extreme weather. On the day the Virginia regulator voted for the repeal, Canadian wildfire smoke caused a local code-red air quality alert.

On Dec. 8, 2021, then-Governor-Elect Youngkin stated that one of his first executive orders would be to withdraw Virginia from the initiative, which he called a carbon tax. "We're no longer going to be part of it," Youngkin said during a speech to the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce.

State law allows utilities to recover the costs of allowance purchases from their ratepayers. The Virginia State Corporation Commission approved on July 12 a modified reinstatement and revision of the rate adjustment clause, designated Rider RGGI. Residential customers will see an additional fee of approximately \$4.44 on their monthly electric bills beginning Sept. 1 to cover the utility's costs of participating in the market between July 31, 2022, and the end of this year. Previously, Dominion Energy added about \$2.39 to the average residential electricity bill.





# Successful County Crisis Intervention Program to Expand

BY SUPERVISOR DAN STORCK  
MOUNT VERNON DISTRICT

The County's Co-Responders Program has successfully redesigned how we best serve our residents experiencing a mental health crisis, while best equipping staff to assist those in need. As a proven leader in providing mental health services to residents, and through programs like the Co-Responders Program, we are setting yet another example for other jurisdictions throughout the country to follow. In Fairfax County, we have learned that asking first responders to deal with issues like mental health alone is not our best strategy. The old model does not work well for anyone – our first responders, those suffering a mental health crisis or the community as a whole.

The County's Co-Responder Program is a partnership between the Police Department and the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board (CSB). Through the program, the County employs co-responder teams composed of one Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) trained police officer and one crisis intervention specialist who provide immediate onsite support to both adults and youth who are experiencing a behavioral health crisis and connect them with countywide and community-based resources as needed. All team members are experienced in working with community members in crisis and receive advance-level training, including intensive scenario-based experience.

The County currently has three co-responder teams that operate in the commu-

nity every day from noon to midnight, and one team that operates three days a week from 2 to 11 p.m. A fourth team will be added this fall. The relationship between our Police Department and CSB is strong and has seen significant success throughout the years.

As of May 2023, the co-responder team model has resulted in the following positive outcomes:

Over 1,100 responses.

Over 50% of calls were resolved in the field with no further action needed.

Close to a third were diverted from potential arrest and/or hospitalization.

26% of individuals were linked to a higher level of care.

This program also aligns with our County's Diversion First initiative by helping to prevent the incarceration of people with intellectual/developmental disabilities or those who are experiencing a mental health crisis, by instead providing them with the mental health support and resources they need.

If you need support for a behavioral health issue, call the Community Services Board at 703-383-8500. You can also call the Regional Crisis Call Center at 703-527-4077, or text 85511. CSB also offers in-person and online training courses and tools to all residents - <https://www.fairfax-county.gov/news/impact-co-responder-program-fairfax-county>.

Please join me to meet the new Mount Vernon District Police Station Commander Marc Mitchell next Wednesday, Aug. 30 at 6 p.m. at Sherwood Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane.

Let us know about an upcoming event  
[www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar](http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar)

**WOODBINE** Rehabilitation & Healthcare Center 2729 King St, Alexandria, VA 22302  
703.836.8838 [WoodbineRehab.com](http://WoodbineRehab.com)



# Dyke Marsh Volunteers Tackle Invasive Plants and Plant Natives

Photos by Glenda Booth



David Padilla helped pull up invasive stiltgrass.



Kathy Killian, Clarence Monteiro and Nancy Herrmann and others pulled up three big piles of stiltgrass on August 19.



Clarence Monteiro watered the native plants put in in 2023.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH  
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

## More Information

In late summer and early fall, clusters of berries in vibrant hues, from aqua to pink to purple, dangle prominently from porcelain berry vines. But beware! Porcelain berry is a highly invasive deciduous vine that grows rapidly and smothers everything within reach. Each berry can have two to four seeds which birds and other wildlife eat and disperse in their droppings.

Two Saturdays a month in all weather, most recently on Aug. 19, Friends of Dyke Marsh (FODM) volunteers tackle invasive plants, like porcelain berry, English ivy, mile-a-minute, stiltgrass, garlic mustard and bush honeysuckle in the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, a unit of the George Washington Memorial Parkway. Around 20 percent of the parkway's plants are not native, maintains the National Park Service (NPS), like the ubiquitous ivy climbing up trees.

## Invasives' Harm

Invasive plants are introduced species not native to an area and

likely to cause environmental and economic harm. They lack the natural controls of their native ranges so they can spread rapidly. They can displace native plants, compete with natives for soil, water, nutrients and light and form monocultures.

University of Delaware entomologist Douglas Tallamy explains in his book, *Bringing Nature Home*, "When a plant is transported to an area of the world that contains plants, animals and diseases with which it has never before interacted, the coevolutionary constraints that kept it in check at home are gone, as are the ecological links that made that plant a contributing member of its ecosystem."

Parkway Superintendent Charles Cuvelier says, "Invasive plants pose a threat to the biodiversity of Dyke Marsh. Through targeted treatments and community involve-

ment, we are making significant progress in our efforts to control these species and promote native plants. As stewards of Dyke Marsh, we recognize the importance of managing invasive plants. By working together with our partners and volunteers, we can ensure the long-term health and sustainability of this valuable ecosystem."

## Planting Native Plants

In 2018 and 2023, in partnership with NPS, FODMers cleared three areas overrun with invasive plants and planted around 4,100 native trees and plants. It appears that around 80 percent of the plants and trees are surviving.

Native plants are those that occur naturally in an area. "Plants and animals evolve together to cre-

ate unique natural communities, weaving a complex web of interrelationships," according to the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. A balanced and healthy ecosystem depends on the interactions of species. "When you try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe," wrote conservationist John Muir.

Native plants that produce nectar, pollen and seeds are food for native birds, butterflies, bees and other wildlife. Many insects, like butterflies, depend on specific plants, called "host plants," with which they co-evolved for their food and shelter. Monarch butterflies, for example, lay their eggs on milkweed; spicebush butterflies, on spicebushes.

Native plants support the native wildlife with which the plants co-evolved. For example, Dr. Desiree Narango, a University of Massachusetts ecologist, explained to attendees at a FODM meeting that native plants support a higher abundance and biomass of caterpillars than non-native plants. She said that a chickadee with four to seven young, needs between 390 to 570 caterpillars every day to feed their

young. Arlington naturalist Alonso Abugattas put it this way in the latest Bay Journal: "It takes 9,120 caterpillars to raise a brood of three young chickadees." Caterpillars are very dependent on certain host plants.

What should people plant? Check out Plant NOVA Natives at <https://www.plantnovanatives.org/>. Abugattas calls oak trees the "grand champion native tree ... with more than 600 species of animals and insects relying on oaks to survive." He also recommends black cherry, serviceberry, dogwoods, elderberry and goldenrods. He notes that many birds eat seeds and berries, but he says, in choosing plants, "Consider planting native flora that bring insects to the table."

The National Audubon Society's website points out that lawns, monocultures of typically non-native grasses, cover over 40 million U.S. acres and support minimal functioning ecosystems.

"By choosing native plants for your landscaping, you are not only helping wildlife, but you are creating a healthier place for yourself, your family and your community," says Audubon.



Swamp milkweed planted in May by FODMers is now blooming.



The native bear's foot or leafcup plant attracts bees and other insects in the native plant area.



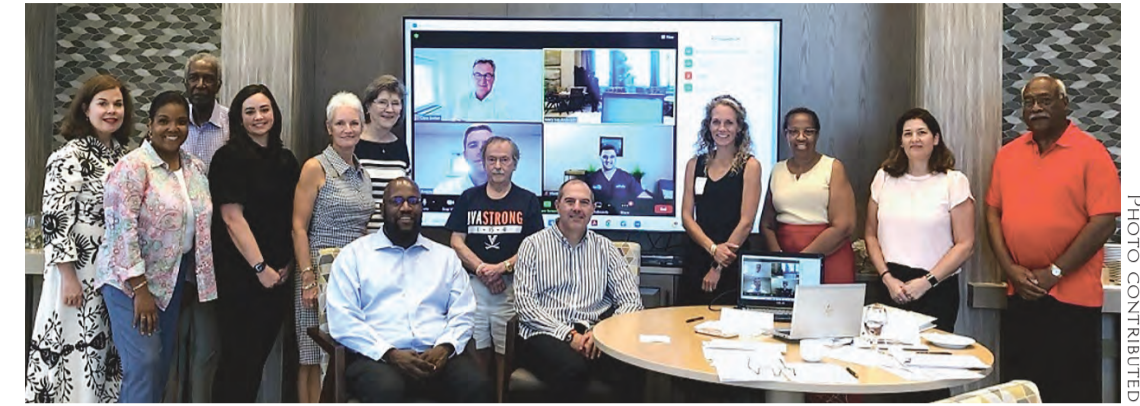
Native passion flower plants naturally returned after invasive plants were removed.



The multi-colored berries of invasive porcelain berry vines stand out in late summer.



PHOTO BY SU KIM



Senior Services of Alexandria will hold "Staying Safe for Seniors" -- Home Tips, Fall Prevention, Scams & Prescriptions, Oct. 19 at Westminster Presbyterian Church.

## No Matter What — Try Really Hard NOT To Fall

BY DEBORAH TOMPKINS JOHNSON  
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE PACKET

Preventing falls has been, continues to be, and likely always will be so very important.

"Stats show us that one-in-four older adults over the age of 65 fall every year," according to Sara Pappa, Coordinator for the Northern Virginia Falls Prevention Alliance and assistant professor at Marymount University's College of Health and Education. "Those are the falls we know about. Obviously, not all falls get reported."

Between 850,000 to 950,000 hospitalizations occur every year due to falls for this age group. Falls are the leading cause of injury and injury-related deaths for people over age 65. Fifty billion dollars, yes, billion with a "b" is spent annually on falls.

We all have been told to make sure our loved ones (or we) do NOT fall. It is a simple statement to make, "Don't fall!"

"It is wise advice," continues Pappa. "And though we cannot control everything, there are measures we can take to help prevent falls."

Simple but important measures that many of us have heard, include holding on to bathroom grab bars and stairway handrails, getting rid of or securing throw rugs, making sure we have adequate lighting and even when indoors, wear shoes with adequate grips on soles.

Of course, preventing falls when we are outdoors is also extremely important. If the fall occurs on asphalt or concrete, our injury could possibly be more severe than an indoor fall. While we know falls can be unpredictable and sudden, the consequences are familiar: Recently, a friend fell on wet grass while taking garbage cans out. Outcome: Broken finger.

Another friend's mother fell several months ago while she was outside on her routine walk. Outcome: Several rehabilitation sessions.

But consider this from the New York Times, July 18, 2001: "Katharine Graham, who transformed The Washington Post from a mediocre newspaper into an American institution and, in the process, transformed herself from a shy widow into a publishing legend, died yesterday after suffering head injuries in a fall on a sidewalk on Saturday in Idaho. She was 84." Graham was healthy and active.

While circumstances of a fall vary, staying alert and aware are key mindsets. For example, simple as it seems, we need to pay attention as we approach and then step down from the curb to cross the street. Also, we should watch out for dips in the road or cracks in the sidewalk that could cause a trip, stumble and then yes, a fall.

There are medical and clinical considerations as well that might not be quite as familiar to us. The Northern Virginia Falls Prevention Alliance recommends these five steps:

♦ Getting an annual medication review by a healthcare provider or pharmacist is crucial. Be knowledgeable of new medications and any changes in dosage. Have a professional check prescrip-

## Safety for Seniors

On Oct. 19, Senior Services of Alexandria will host sessions on Safety for Seniors — Home Tips, Fall Prevention, Scams & Prescriptions to be held at Westminster Presbyterian Church. [www.seniorservicesalex.org](http://www.seniorservicesalex.org).

tions to ensure there is not an interaction that can create an increased risk of a fall.

♦ Get vision and hearing checked annually. All our senses contribute to our sense of balance and safety. If our vision is poor, we are more likely to trip over something. And hearing loss could mean we miss something coming from behind or in our periphery, where we might not move in time to get out of the way.

♦ A gait and balance assessment can be done by a health care provider or a physical therapist. There are also some materials on the Centers for Disease Control website that will help us conduct our own brief falls risk assessment and determine if we are physically susceptible to increased risk of falling.

♦ A home safety check can be conducted by private or non-profit companies or professionals like an occupational therapist. Also, organizations like AARP and the CDC have materials that can be used for self-assessments. These assessments explain how we can go room-by-room to check for possible hazards or situations that are not ideal. A few things included in these assessments suggest looking for any electrical cord that cuts across a room. Couch-chair-coffee table arrangements could put us at risk for a fall if there is not adequate space between the furniture pieces. If there is a threshold difference between two rooms where one is just a little taller than the other, consider a change or repair. Hallways and stairways need sufficient lighting and hand railings on both sides are good fall prevention features.

♦ Being physically fit and focusing on strength, balance and flexibility are important. Many organizations who work with older adults offer exercise and awareness programs that support our need for strength, balance and flexibility.

Through a federal grant administered by Marymount University, the Northern Virginia Falls Prevention Alliance offers these types of programs throughout our region. Localities served include Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax City, Fairfax County, Falls Church, Loudoun, Prince William and the District of Columbia. For example, A Matter of Balance and SAIL — Stay Active and Independent for Life classes are running, now. [www.novafallsprevention.com](http://www.novafallsprevention.com)

Additionally, on Oct. 19, Senior Services of Alexandria will host sessions on Safety for Seniors— Home Tips, Fall Prevention, Scams & Prescriptions to be held at Westminster Presbyterian Church. [www.seniorservicesalex.org](http://www.seniorservicesalex.org).

And please always bear in mind that you can check with your locality's social services department or Area Agency on Aging for fall prevention and other programs for older adults.



## Detectives Investigating in-Custody Death of Inmate Latasha Dove

On Aug. 1, inmate Latasha Dove, 53, was found unresponsive in her single cell at the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center. Deputies immediately began performing life-saving measures. Fire and Rescue personnel responded and transported Dove to the hospital, where she was pronounced deceased.

On Aug. 1, a medical emergency was called at 2:27 p.m. and rescue was summoned when the post deputy found the

inmate unresponsive in her cell. The deputy immediately rendered aid until relieved by ADC medical personnel. Rescue arrived and transported the inmate to the hospital. She was pronounced deceased by hospital personnel at 3:13 p.m.

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner will conduct an autopsy. Preliminarily, foul play is not suspected.

Dove had been in the custody of the Fairfax County Sheriff's Office and incarcerated at the ADC since Jul. 26. She was arrested for simple assault and destruction of property and was being held on bond. FCPD detectives are coordinating with the Fairfax County Sheriff's Office to gather the facts and circumstances surrounding this death.

Fairfax County Sheriff's Office policy dictates that an

in-custody death must be investigated by the Fairfax County Police Department.

## Officer Arrested for DUI

On Aug. 19, an officer assigned to the Mount Vernon District was arrested for driving under the influence following a two-vehicle crash on Route 50 near South Manchester Street in Seven Corners. Seven occupants from the other vehicle were taken to a nearby hospital and treated for minor injuries. The officer was off-duty and driving his personal vehicle at the time of the arrest. Officer Justin Faison, sworn since 2022, has been placed on administrative leave pending the outcome of an Internal Affairs Bureau investigation.

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### BULLETIN BOARD

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

#### GIRLS ON THE RUN REGISTRATION OPEN

Registration for the fall 2023 season of Girls on the Run is open! Registration will close on Friday, Sept. 15 at 11:59 p.m. Girls on the Run (GOTR) is an out-of-school program designed to help young girls build key life skills through dynamic lessons. Teams are led by trained volunteer coaches who lead by positive example and have a passion for helping others be the best version of themselves. Teams typically meet twice a week for 75-90 minutes and are led by volunteer coaches. The 10-week season will begin the week of September 11th and conclude at the celebratory 5K events the weekend

of November 18-19. Each practice has a corresponding lesson from the Girls on the Run research-based curriculum, which focuses on building social, emotional, and physical skills while encouraging healthy habits for life. While many teams meet at schools, GOTR NOVA also offers community teams based out of neighborhoods, community centers, and parks. If a team is not offered at your school, make sure to check out GOTR NOVA's interactive map to find a team near you! Girls on the Run programming is specifically designed for elementary school girls starting in grade 3 while Heart & Sole programming is created for middle school girls. Visit [www.gotrnova.org](http://www.gotrnova.org).

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# ENTERTAINMENT

**NOW THRU AUGUST 31**  
**Creative Summer Programs.**  
**At Del Ray Artisans, 2704**  
 Mount Vernon Ave., Alex-  
 andria. Creative Summer  
 Programs is a series of  
 workshops exploring the  
 arts. Learn techniques in  
 drawing, mixed media,  
 mosaic, jewelry, watercol-  
 or, and more from local  
 artists. Delve into creative  
 exploration solo or with  
 friends. For children and/  
 or adults, free and paid  
 programs are offered.  
 Sign up for what inspires  
 you! Visit the website:  
 DelRayArtisans.org/cre-  
 ative-summer

**WEDNESDAYS**  
**THROUGH SATURDAYS**  
**Tours Aboard Tall Ship**

**Providence and Sen. John War-**  
**ner Maritime Heritage Center.**  
 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. At Alexandria's  
 Waterfront Park, 1A Prince Street,  
 Alexandria. Guests of all ages are  
 recruited into the Continental Navy  
 aboard Tall Ship Providence with  
 legendary Captain John Paul Jones.  
 Recruits are assigned jobs on the  
 ship, learn where they will work  
 and live, how to load a cannon,  
 etc... Tours conclude in the Naval  
 History Theatre with a film about  
 the ship. The Heritage center is a  
 floating museum on the Alexandria  
 waterfront. Visit <https://tallship-providence.org/>

**JULY 25-SEPT. 17**

**Captured: Plants and Places.** 1-4  
 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens  
 Center, 4603 Green Spring Road,  
 Alexandria. Step into the world  
 of plants across the region and  
 in still life at a season-spanning  
 photography exhibit July 25 to  
 Sept. 17 at Green Spring Gardens  
 Horticultural Center. The lyrical  
 collection "Captured: Plants and  
 Places" features botanical imagery  
 drawn from the Washington area  
 to Maine, including studio photos,  
 intimate outdoor vignettes and  
 landscape scenes. The photogra-  
 phers' varying visions and styles in  
 color and black-and-white invite  
 viewers to explore the wonder of  
 wild and horticultural lands. An  
 opening reception with the artists  
 is July 30 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.  
 in the Atrium at Green Springs  
 Gardens Horticultural Center.

**JULY 27 TO SEPT. 3**

**Obscura: Tinam Valk Exhibit.** At the  
 Athenaeum, Alexandria. Reception  
 on Sunday, Aug. 13 from 4-6 p.m.  
 Tinam Valk's work explores the am-  
 biguity of subjects such as oceans,  
 rivers, landscapes, sometimes a  
 combination of land and water,  
 and figures or animals depicted  
 within a land and water environ-  
 ment. Photographs, ranging from  
 60 to 100 years old in combination  
 with sketches and memory and  
 made-up environments, serve as a  
 source for much of this work.

**AUG. 4-26**

**The "Treasures of the DMV" exhibit.**  
 At Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704  
 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria.  
 Features art that celebrates the  
 wonders of DC, Maryland, and  
 Virginia. Come see famous and  
 overlooked regional gems from the  
 perspective of local artists. Opening  
 Reception: Friday, August 4, 7-9pm.  
 Open Thursdays 12-6pm, Fridays



The Around the World Cultural Food Festival will take place on Saturday, Aug. 26, at Oronoco Bay Park in Old Town Alexandria.

12-9pm, Saturdays & Sundays  
 12-6pm (Closed on August 27).  
 DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

**THURSDAY/AUG. 24**

**Book Discussion and Signing.** 7  
 p.m. At George Washington's  
 Mount Vernon Estate. First-Ever  
 Book Discussion and Signing  
 with Four Finalist Authors for  
 the Prestigious George Wash-  
 ington Literary Prize. The authors  
 will discuss their important new  
 books related to the founding  
 of America. The event is free;  
 attendees can submit questions  
 and have their books signed. The  
 2023 George Washington Prize  
 finalists are:

Mary Sarah Bilder, *Female Ge-  
 nius: Eliza Harriot and George  
 Washington at the Dawn of the  
 Constitution.*  
 Fred Kaplan, *His Masterly Pen: A  
 Biography of Jefferson the Writer*  
 Stacy Schiff, *The Revolutionary:  
 Samuel Adams*  
 Maurizio Valsania, *First Among  
 Men: George Washington and  
 the Myth of American Mascu-  
 linity*

**AUG. 25-26**

**Colorful Begonias at Green Spring  
 Gardens.** 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sat-  
 urday; Noon to 4 p.m. Sunday.  
 At 4603 Green Spring Road in  
 Alexandria. Immerse yourself in  
 the enchanting world of begonias,  
 presented by the Potomac Branch  
 of the American Begonia Society.  
 Admire the kaleidoscope of bego-  
 nia varieties as each boasts unique  
 leaf shapes and colors that will  
 leave you in awe. This free event  
 offers a feast for the eyes and an  
 opportunity for society members to  
 guide you in selecting a stunning  
 begonia to elevate your own gar-  
 den. Call 703-324-8700.

**SATURDAY/AUG. 26**

**Around the World Cultural Food Festi-  
 val.** 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. At Oronoco  
 Bay Park, Old Town Alexandria.  
 The seventh edition of the Around  
 the World Cultural Food Festival,  
 the largest outdoor cultural food  
 festival in the Washington D.C.  
 metro area with 50 countries par-  
 ticipating, is back at Oronoco Bay  
 Park. Taste authentic traditional  
 food from the food vendors while  
 watching a diverse folk show with  
 singers and dancers from countries  
 around the world. The festival  
 will be presenting ethnic cuisine  
 from Cambodia, China, Colombia,  
 Greece, Italy, Jamaica, Japan,  
 Korea, Laos, Lebanon, Nepal, Peru,



The "Farther Afield" Exhibit takes place Sept. 1-30, 2023 at Del Ray Artisans Gallery in Alexandria.

Thailand, Turkey, Vietnam and  
 United States of America, tradi-  
 tional dance performances from  
 Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Egypt,  
 Germany, Iran, Ireland, Japan, Pan-  
 ama, Scotland, Turkey and United  
 Kingdom, as well as artisanal items  
 from Angola, Benin, Bolivia, Burki-  
 na Faso, Colombia, El Salvador,  
 Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Honduras,  
 India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico,  
 Morocco, Nigeria, Peru, Rwanda,  
 Sierra Leone, South Africa, Turkey,  
 United States of America and  
 much more. Visit the website [www.  
 aroundtheworldfestival.com](http://www.aroundtheworldfestival.com).

**SUNDAY/AUG. 27**

**Second Summer Sunday with the  
 Arts.** 1-4 p.m. At the 800 block  
 of North Royal Street, between  
 Madison and Montgomery Streets,  
 Alexandria. Hosted by the Old  
 Town North Alliance, this event  
 will be larger than the first, with  
 more than a dozen working artists  
 displaying and selling their original  
 works, from painted landscapes  
 to textiles to concrete. Children's  
 games and activities will be fea-  
 tured in the central area. The band  
 Mars Video will perform. Civic or-  
 ganizations will provide snacks and  
 beverages, as well as neighborhood

informational displays. Lost Boy  
 Cider will join the adjacent Farm-  
 ers Market in Montgomery Park,  
 and several of the other vendors  
 will extend their hours. The public  
 is invited to attend. Admission  
 and children's activities are free.  
 Parking is available on surrounding  
 streets; follow local signage.

**TUESDAY/AUG. 29**

**Simpson Park Demonstration Gar-  
 den:** Tuesdays@10. 10:00 a.m. -  
 11:00 a.m., Simpson Park Demon-  
 stration Garden, 420 E. Monroe  
 Ave., Alexandria. When Mother  
 Nature can't do it all...Simpson  
 gardeners step in to offer a helping  
 hand. Free. Contact [mgv.org](http://mgv.org) for  
 more information.

**SEPT. 1-30**

**The "Farther Afield" Exhibit.** At Del  
 Ray Artisans gallery 2704 Mount  
 Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Featuring  
 art by local artists that takes the  
 viewer on a journey, whether that  
 is someplace an hour away from  
 Alexandria or halfway across the  
 world. Opening Reception: Friday,  
 September 1, 7-9 p.m. Open Thurs-  
 days 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m.,  
 Saturdays and Sundays 12-6 p.m.  
 (Closed on October 1). Details:

[DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits](http://DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits)

**SATURDAY/SEPT. 9**

**Memorial Benefit Concert.**  
 2 p.m. At Aldersgate United  
 Methodist Church, 1301  
 Collingwood Road, Alexan-  
 dria. Benefitting United Com-  
 munity and in memory of Phil  
 Bolin, come to a Memorial  
 Benefit Concert/Recital. Join  
 in this enchanting perfor-  
 mance honoring the memory  
 of Phil Bolin featuring mezo-  
 soprano, Caroline Nielson,  
 and pianist, Eddie Rothmel.  
 Tickets are \$20 for adults and  
 \$10 for students. All ticket  
 purchases are non-refund-  
 able and will be donated to  
 support United Community.  
 Visit [unitedcommunity.org/  
 concerts](http://unitedcommunity.org/concerts).

**SATURDAY/SEPT. 9**

**Virginia Arts & Music Festival.** 12  
 to 8:30 p.m. At The Lyceum, 201 S.  
 Washington Street, Alexandria.

**Festival Program**  
 12-2:30 p.m. — Magic of Color  
 and Shape Visual arts exhibition  
 opening with a complimentary  
 reception. Featured artists: Karen  
 Tyler, Tatyana Shramko, Iryna  
 Smitchkova, Sermin Ciddi, Marcos  
 Teixeira, Sarah Havah Theebaum,  
 Dawn Shuler, Bugra Karaagac and  
 a special tribute to Mirella Monti  
 Belshé, who passed away this June.  
 3-4:30 p.m. — Poetical Insights: All  
 the senses of the heart and mind  
 Poetry and poetical story reading,  
 featuring poems by Wayne David  
 Hubbard, Sola Owonibi, Joseph  
 Jabloski aka 'The Walking Mall  
 Poet', Margot Gotzmann (Sarah  
 Havah Theebaum) and others, as  
 well as poems and stories by Sufi  
 masters.

4:30-5:15 p.m. — Lunch break —  
 complimentary light lunch offered  
 by organizers  
 5:30-6:30 p.m. — Exploring the  
 Musical Journey: Towards the  
 known and the unknown hori-  
 zons — Lynne Mackey — pianist  
 — classical music concert Looking  
 both forward and back, the concert  
 contains an eclectic mix of styles  
 and music. Composers range from  
 Charles Griffes, Henry Cowell and  
 Sergei Rachmaninoff, to Tan Dun,  
 Alexina Louie and Ann Silsbee,  
 exploring the nature of known and  
 unknown horizons.

7-8:30 p.m. — Documenting Beauty  
 and Mystery: Oriental and western  
 architecture and art in movie  
 excerpts and comments — movie  
 tasting  
 Visit the website [www.arts-and-hearts.  
 org](http://www.arts-and-hearts.org)

**SATURDAY/SEPT. 9**

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

SEE ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 10



FROM PAGE 9

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**SEPT. 10, 2023**  
**8th Annual George Washington Patriot 5K and 10-Miler Race.**  
 10-Mile race starts at 7:15 a.m. 5K race starts at 7:30 a.m. At George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate. Race in-person or virtually, and cross the finish line with George Washington's Mansion in view. The Finish Festival will offer each runner music, food and beverage concessions, and a complimentary beer. All participants will receive a commemorative George Washington Patriot Run T-shirt and a finisher medal engraved with George Washington's bust. Awards will be presented to first place overall, by age division, and for the military/first responder categories. Visit <https://www.mountvernon.org/plan-your-visit/calendar/events/george-washington-patriot-run/>

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**MOUNT VERNON NIGHTS, AUG. 25**  
 Fridays at 7:30 p.m. at Grist Mill Park, 4710 Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, Alexandria. Aug. 25, Deanna Bogart (Blues, R&B)

**FRANCONIA NIGHTS CONCERT, AUG. 23**  
 Wednesday evening from 7:30-8:30 p.m.  
 At Leonadus K. Plenty Amphitheater, 6601 Telegraph Road, Alexandria. Aug. 23 Dave Kline Band (World Jazz Fusion)

**OLD TOWN ALEXANDRIA WATERFRONT MUSIC SERIES Free Concert.** Wednesday from 4-7 p.m. At Old Town Alexandria waterfront. Join in the Waterfront Wednesday Music Series. Bring a chair or simply stop by to enjoy some beautiful waterside beats. Free. Weather permitting. August 16 - Delta Spur

**SUNDAY SOUNDS ON THE PROMENADE**  
**Free Concerts.** 11:30-1:30 p.m. At 7 Pioneer Mill Way, Alexandria. Yellow Door Music Concert Series presents a musical lineup of artists on select Sundays.  
 Aug. 27 - Trifilio Tango Music  
 On Aug. 27, in honor of National Dog Day that weekend, Robinson Landing encourages individuals to bring their dog out for a yappy social for play and fun for your furry ones. The full event schedule of Robinson Landing programming is located at [www.RobinsonLanding.com/WaterfrontEvents](http://www.RobinsonLanding.com/WaterfrontEvents).

**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](http://www.Birchmere.com).

**AUGUST**  
 Wed. 23: Steve Earle: Alone Again Tour - Solo & Acoustic w/ Danny Burns \$65.00  
 Fri. 25: Al Stewart with The Empty Pockets \$49.50 (Resched from 3/16/23)  
 Sat. 26: Kim Waters \$35.00  
 Sun. 27: The Robert Cray Band \$59.50  
 Wed. 30: Iris Dement \$45.00  
 Thu. 31: Black Violin - The Black Violin Experience \$90.50

**SEPTEMBER**  
 Fri. 1: Raheem DeVaughn \$85.00  
 Sat. 2: Raheem DeVaughn \$85.00  
 Thu. 7: CLANNAD \$79.50 SOLD OUT!  
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# OPINION

## Mount Vernon District Supervisor's Office: Through an Intern's Lens

BY PAIGE HUMPHREYS

This summer, I had the opportunity to intern at Mount Vernon District Supervisor Dan Storck's office. As my last week comes to a close, I wanted to reflect and share with you my time at the District office and what I have learned.



As a public relations and political science major, I have always had an interest in government, and living so close to D.C. only increased it. I had learned about the federal and state government in school, but never anything relating to the local level. After I got this internship, I was eager to see what I had been missing. It's safe to say that this experience has opened my eyes to all that happens in local government and how involved teens and young adults can be.

Quickly I learned that I never quite grasped how big Fairfax County is and how local governing works. Interning for a Board office provided me with the knowledge about how this County functions and what my role is, not just as a resident, but as a young adult. One of the projects that I worked on was expanding the Supervisor's social media by making posts and videos geared toward teens and young adults. This was hands down one of my favorite parts about this experience. I love all things social media, so playing around with different types of posts and videos was a highlight of this summer. It started with posting the Mount Vernon Favorites summer series and quickly morphed into making intern "day in the life" videos and much more.

Coming into this office was intimidating, I didn't know what to expect. From reading the job description, I knew it would be a fast paced environment, but I wanted to challenge myself. Team MVD welcomed me with open arms, and I have gained invaluable lessons from each one of them. It was the perfect internship experience for what I am studying in school. Each member of the team was extremely welcoming and gave me the opportunity to learn and ask questions about projects and their roles. I have become more well-rounded not just in my District but with local government in general.

This job gave me the opportunity to work on multiple projects, sit in on meetings with other County agencies and officials, and make connections with residents. I have had the pleasure of working with Neighborhood and Community Services, Fairfax County Department of Transportation, Fairfax County Park Authority and many more. During my time, I worked on the monthly newsletter, wrote to constituents, planned events, created posts for social media platforms and learned office skills. I know that the knowledge and advice I have taken from each staff member will greatly benefit me in my future career endeavors.

One of the greatest lessons I have learned from my internship is the art of connection. Local government is all about connecting with people and making them feel heard. In

the Mount Vernon District Supervisor's office, I witnessed this firsthand. Team MVD is immensely dedicated to their jobs and want to connect with each resident and community group. They are here to help you!

Over the weeks that I've been here, I have learned how easy it is for young people to get involved in local government. It is a great place to start if you are interested in your community or just want to learn more about Fairfax County in general. There are tons of meetings and events you can attend if you want to talk to officials, learn more or make your voice heard. I have found that on a local level, it is easier to make genuine connections with staff and officials than it is on a state or federal level.

As I finish my reflection, I want to thank the Mount Vernon District team for giving me this opportunity to learn more about local government and more about my community. I encourage young people and anyone in the community to connect with Team MVD through social media, the website and the monthly newsletter. All can be found on [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mountvernon/](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mountvernon/)

### Mount Vernon Gazette

[www.MountVernonGazette.com](http://www.MountVernonGazette.com)

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

Each local newspaper's mission aspires to provide greater community service, and we do know that our communities are better off if we continue to publish. Last year's financial support from readers and supporters like you bridged the shortfall before 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 in 2020. Some beloved advertisers have stayed the course supporting us throughout, and many more have done what they can. In the fall of 2021 we saw the return of some advertising for events and Grand Openings, but now ominous clouds the horizon in so many ways. Revenue still remains short of expenses despite our greatly curtailed costs.

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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## And So "The Dance Begins"



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

So said my roofing contractor when I told him of the total amount my homeowner's policy/company has agreed to compensate us for the damage to our house caused when a tree crashed onto my roof on July 14. Not that I have much experience with such matters, but even though the adjuster was as understanding and reassuring as a homeowner in distress would hope, I realized after that initial Sat. morning "adjustment" when he arrived at my home and assessed the damage, that it matters less what he says and more what he/the company does (as in valuing the agreed-upon repairs/replacement and compensating me reasonably). At this juncture, all we do is wait and see. However, it doesn't make it any less frustrating. In fact, it kind of makes it worse. I don't want to push, or should I pull, or vice versa.

Sure enough, 15 days after filing the claim (Maryland law mandates that claims must be paid/settled within 15 days), I received a phone call from my adjuster (finally) advising me of the settlement. Given what we all had discussed on that first Saturday – and the damage done: one entire roof including gutters and downspouts, two central air-conditioning units, exterior whole house painted, one interior room painted, two rooms of wooden floors refinished, a new chandelier and associated electrical work to install/repair the chandelier and related switches in the den, and a 6 x 9 Oriental-type rug and pad, all adversely affected by the water leaking through the ceiling/electrical fixture – in Montgomery County Maryland in 2023, and \$38,500 "ain't gonna cut it." (Exactly what my wife, Dina said to me on concerning our presumptive fancy dinner plans to celebrate our 10th wedding anniversary all those many years ago.)

So now, apparently, the burden falls on me, according to my roofing contractor, to up the ante and present my evidence (estimates, and invoices already billed/paid – by us) to the adjuster/company and hopefully prove my loss. I didn't think the financial resolution was as simple as the adjuster seemed to indicate/say during his on-site visit on Sat. July 21, but his manner was so matter-of-fact/agreeable that a part of me was fairly hopeful/convicted that what has actually happened: very little, and an awfully low settlement to boot was not inevitable. Live and learn, or buyer beware; I'm not sure which. But I fear I may soon find out.

Though I'm hoping (expecting not so much) that once the company has reviewed the actual estimates and invoices I will have supplied, that all will be right in my homeowner's policy's world and the company will have no contractual recourse other than to pay what I've been led to believe – by experts, that I'm due. And the process/negotiation likely occurring from now until the damages are fairly valued and settled to my financial satisfaction (as in I and our house are made whole) are likely to be characterized by a series of ups and downs, and fits and starts; all absolutely consistent, as it so happens, with the last 14 and half years of my life as a cancer patient undergoing treatment for an originally-diagnosed-as-terminal, stage IV, non-small cell lung cancer. As such, if anybody can assimilate what I presume lays ahead – with respect to this moving-target-type homeowner's insurance claim, it would be me, my oncologist's self-proclaimed "third miracle." I have not only been there and done that, but I am still doing it going on nearly 15 years. I might even say that this kind of uncertainty is exactly how I roll. Still, I never completely know if I'll be rolling over a cliff as in cancer patients are rarely given guarantees about their future. In fact, my oncologist is usually hesitant to even discuss scenarios; he'd rather wait and see and then assess whatever presents. It's not ideal, but as I've said many times before: "It's a living and it sure beats the alternative."

However, I do have my limitations and the fewer hurdles and blips as possible would be preferred. I don't exactly have an unlimited capacity for such pursuits. I use most of it to withstand the vagaries of my current thyroid cancer diagnosis. After all, I didn't cause the tree to fall on my house anymore than I caused my original diagnosis of lung cancer by smoking cigarettes or generally neglecting my health, et cetera. Nevertheless, as much as one must accommodate a cancer diagnosis, I really don't want to do the same concerning a homeowner's claim. To the company/adjuster: please don't make a bad situation worse. Follow the evidence and follow the money. I'm simply a claimant. Don't make me a victim too.

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

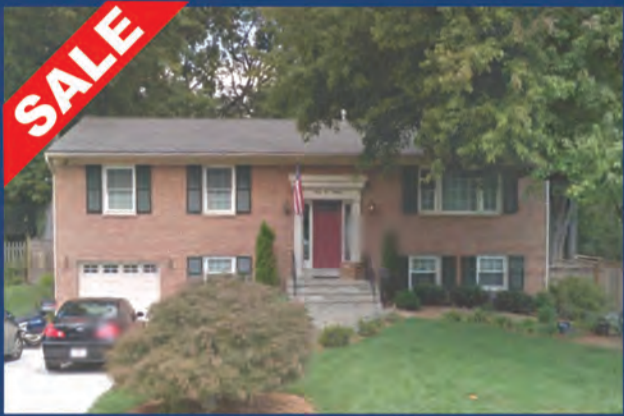




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