

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

NOVEMBER 16, 2023



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Eugene "Red" McDaniel, a six-year POW at the Hanoi Hilton during the Vietnam War, gazes at the flags lining his driveway on Veterans Day. The flags were placed by his Alexandria neighbors in a surprise tribute to the 28-year Navy veteran.

Neighbors Surprise Vietnam POW

McDaniel awakens to Veterans Day tribute.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Eugene "Red" McDaniel, a retired Navy Captain once described by Time Magazine as one of the most brutally tortured POWs during the Vietnam War, awoke on Veterans Day to a surprise at his Alexandria home.

"My dad went out to get his paper this morning and was greeted by this," said Michael McDaniel in sharing a photo of his 92-year-old father on social media. "Someone in the neighborhood lined their driveway and front yard with American, POW, and Navy flags overnight. They have some wonderful neighbors."

"My dad was so excited and appreciative to see what his neighbors had done."

— Michael McDaniel on the tribute for his father, Vietnam POW Eugene "Red" McDaniel

Named a Living Legend of Alexandria in 2019, McDaniel was on his 81st combat mission over North Vietnam when his A-6 Intruder aircraft was shot down on May 19, 1967. The Top Gun pilot was captured and spent six agonizing years as a POW in the infamous "Hanoi Hilton" prison.

"There is no feeling quite like knowing you are in a strange country, surrounded by a people who know no

SEE MCDANIEL, PAGE 4



Navy Capt. Eugene "Red" McDaniel, right, spent six years as a POW during the Vietnam War. He continues to fight for the return of those missing in action, including his navigator James Kelly Patterson.



PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/GAZETTE

There's nothing easy about moving.

Housing Prices Send People Packing Out Of Fairfax County

Some with incomes in the five figures find alternatives down I-95.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

As a resident with deep roots in Fairfax County I was in a conundrum when it came to getting a new house with no stairs and wider doorways to make room for a walker or a wheelchair that is now part of our lives. A one-level house or villa was needed but the \$500,000 pricetag was not, so searching on the web for a new house in our price range meant moving out of the area.

I didn't want to relocate but the price of housing in Fairfax County left me with no choice.

My quest started with a visit to Realtor.com to see if it was really true, are the prices around Northern Virginia that high? I needed a two- or three-bedroom house on one level with

two full baths in the \$350,000 price range. Not a condo either. Fuhgeddaboutit!

In Alexandria, there was a house that met my criteria but the price on Realtor.com was \$750,000 which is more than double of my range, so I expanded my horizons. There was a rambler in Fort Hunt at \$574,000; another rambler in Lorton for \$570,000; a one-level house in Fairfax for \$679,000, and out in Reston a similar place was listed for \$649,000. Ugh. On the lower end, a duplex with stairs was \$539,000 and another for \$509,000 but not in a desired location. Even \$509,000 is way out of my price range.

The average price of a home across the nation has gone up in the last few years and continues

SEE HOUSING PRICES, PAGE 3



8104 East Boulevard Drive, Herbert Springs

Neighboring Old Town Alexandria in this exclusive and distinctive enclave is this two-year-old, custom build which has been carefully curated with detailed high-end finishes throughout. Here are featured the benefits of modern living with fashionably gracious, classic finishes. The high ceilings, large rooms, millwork, and design details are incomparable, and the sweeping staircase sublime. One primary suite is on the main level with a roll-in shower – only one step up takes you into these divine premises. The great room is the heart of the home, and the kitchen features a Lacanche seven-burner stove and custom solid white oak cabinet millwork. Behind pocket doors are quiet work and homework spaces with smart wi-fi; and entertaining flow is well-designed and fluid. There are four levels with six en-suite bedrooms. The Diamond Glass lacquered wet bar, pantry, and 1,000-bottle wine cellar are unparalleled. The three-season living room features a wood-burning fireplace and television connector – for some major football viewing, and there is a grilling porch with hood! Formal spaces and quiet nooks for the most discerning. It will be your great fortune to become the steward of this amazing residence. Whether birthday parties or black-tie galas, this property will host many years of joyous laughter and clinking glasses. DCA is eight miles away! Offered at \$5,000,000.

Celebrating 28 Years of service to my clients and my community!



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PHOTOS BY MIKE SALMON/GAZETTE

Matt Weathers at the film festival.

Film Producer Got Start At Fort Hunt High School

Football player turned business owner, writer and filmmaker.



Matt Weathers.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

He started as one of the only African American football players on the Fort Hunt Federals football team back in the 1970s and now some 50 years later, Matt Weathers is revisiting the whole experience. “I wrote a book about my experiences there,” he said, “I’m going to take that to the screen too.”

This movie in the making comes on the back of a successful film called “The Milkman Vengeance” that he made recently and was honored at the Prince Georges Film Festival. That story was full of good guys, bad guys and politicians and ended on a good note. “The milkman is a hero for the community,” Weathers said.

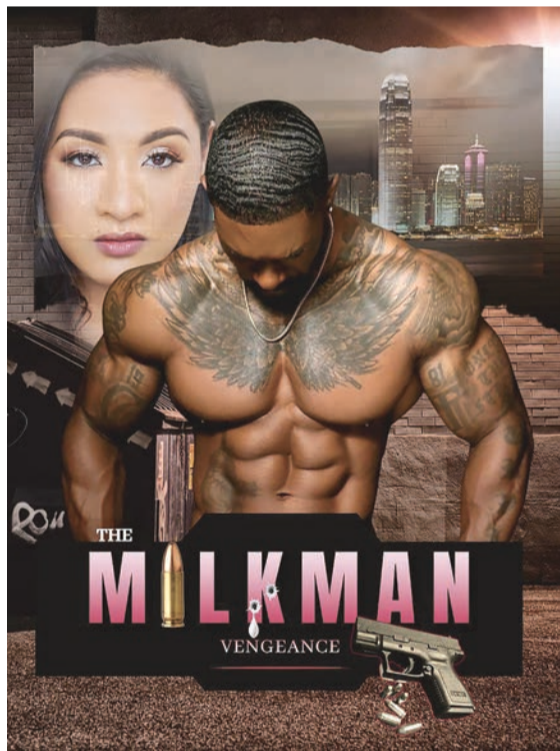
The action film starred some local talent and others from New York City, and in the end the officials at the Prince Georges County Film Festival awarded it an official selection. It ran Sept. 28-Oct. 1.

The film festival “was a nice experience,” he said, “an honor.”

The festival listed it as a “narrative feature,” and the description gives a hint of the crooked officials. “After witnessing the murder of his beloved Grandfather, a Special Operations veteran with a tick enacts his own retributive justice against the bad element of the city and those in power who turn a blind eye,” it said.

When he’s not behind the camera, Matt Weathers is the owner of Weathers Production LLC, a full service production company that specializes in film production management, script writing, marketing, web design and turning a book into a film.

He started out writing at Fort Hunt, and has worn



In “The Milkman Vengeance,” the good guy wins.

many hats as businessman, educator, activist, union representative, lobbyist, actor, writer and now Film Executive Producer. His passion for the entertainment field blossomed as a mass communication major at University of Massachusetts Amherst working with productions in the areas of radio, TV, script writing, journalism, and commercial ads, according to his website.

Although Weather started out writing in his career, the movement into film was highlighted by a conversation he had with Bill Duke, a high-level film producer with links to Hollywood. Duke is known as a character actor, starring alongside Arnold Schwarzenegger in Commando and Predator, and appearing in other films such as American Gigolo, Bird on a Wire and X-Men. “He was very positive and supportive,” said Weathers. Although Duke has a busy schedule, “he carved out two hours to talk to me,” he added.



PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/GAZETTE

The old house will be missed.

Housing Prices

FROM PAGE 1

to climb. According to Rocket Homes, the median price of a home in Virginia is \$385,038, while in Washington, D.C. it is \$649,722. That’s quite a difference in prices, but the Virginia price is statewide, so Northern Virginia is more on the DC level. In California, the median price is \$750,080 while in West Virginia is on the low end at \$214,446. In Lorton, where my house was, the average price is \$665,493.

Realtor.com claims “the average home price in Northern Virginia is around \$700,000, which is significantly higher than the national average.” They said it takes an income of about \$117,561 a year to afford to live in Northern Virginia.

Geographically housing prices start to go down in the outer reaches of Prince William County, Stafford and Fredericksburg.

Candice Bennett, Interim Executive Director at Good Shepherd Housing and Family Services, Inc. has seen the real estate prices scare people away

from buying in Fairfax County. People she’s worked with are looking elsewhere. “It’s not uncommon,” she said. “Going one or two counties over is super significant,” she said.

Fairfax County defines an affordable home as a home where the buyer has enough income to pay housing expenses and still have enough money left over to provide for basic needs like food, clothing and medical care. Ideally the housing expenses should not exceed 30% of buyers income.

Bennett noted the rents at North Hill development in Mount Vernon, which has affordable units, can be \$2200 a month for a three-bedroom. That price range makes it difficult to rent as well.

State and county employees have faced the reality that while they work in Northern Virginia, some cannot afford to live where they work. At Good Shepherd, they worked with a school cafeteria worker who put her kids through school but in the end, she had to move to another state to get something she could afford.

Yacht Haven Garden Club Holds Fashion Show

Benefits National Capital Area Garden Clubs projects and the scholarship fund.

Beautiful fashions by designer Sara Campbell in Alexandria were featured at the Yacht Haven Garden Club's 39th Fashion Show and Lunch, Nov. 8, 2023. Original designs and beautiful colors were well received by the attendees.

Funds generated support the National Capital Area Garden Clubs projects and the scholarship fund. The club contributes to the Honey Bee Project studying the health of bees at the University of Maryland for more than 10 years.

Historical sites, such as River Farm, headquarters of the American Horticulture Society, also receive funding. The club beautifies local sites, such as Sherwood Hall Regional Library, with seasonal annuals.



Group models from left, Nancy Hawkins & Karen Bennett (FS Chairmen), Mary Prunchak, Patsie Uchello, Gail Wood, Angelita Kabler, Denise Wight, Carla Amerau.



Denise Wight.



From left, Millie Schott, Wanda Ragland (President), Guest.



Audience members enjoyed the fashion show.



Mary Prunchak.

McDaniel Awakens to Veterans Day Tribute

FROM PAGE 1
rule but death to the enemy," said McDaniel of his time in captivity. "Still, the one thing they could not take from me was my faith. There were many times in my lonely cell when my victories were known only by me and God."

For three years, McDaniel was listed as Missing in Action while his wife, Dorothy, and three children, Michael, David and Leslie, did not know if he was dead or alive. In 1970, the Hanoi government finally acknowledged that McDaniel was being held prisoner. He was released on March 4, 1973.

McDaniel spoke at a reception at the Capt. Rocky Versace Vietnam Veterans Memorial Plaza in Del Ray in June honoring Retired Army Colonel Paris Davis, recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor in March. McDaniel noted that as a Vietnam soldier at the height of

Capt. Eugene "Red" McDaniel, left, is shown after his release in 1973 following six years of captivity during the Vietnam War. McDaniel was shot down and captured over North Vietnam in May 1967 and was brutally tortured as a POW at the infamous "Hanoi Hilton" prison.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

the conflict, Davis never received the welcome home and accolades he and his men deserved.

"Those of us released in 1973 came home to a hero's welcome," McDaniel said. "Col. Davis never knew that feeling of appreciation for the service and sacrifice he had given for his country. This recognition, this Medal of Honor, is long overdue."

"My dad was so excited and appreciative to see what his neighbors had done," Michael McDaniel said. "He has been trying ever since to figure out who did it ... calling neighbors, asking anyone he sees walking down the block. It's a hoot. But so far the culprit is staying anonymous, which I think makes it more special. It shows there are some great folks here in Alexandria."



JEANNE THEISMANN/GAZETTE PACKET

U.S. Navy Capt. Eugene "Red" McDaniel (ret.) holds the Living Legends of Alexandria portrait presented to him in March of 2022 at American Legion Post 24 in recognition of National Vietnam War Veterans Day.

NEWS

Children's and Teens' Gazette 2023

Yes, we will have the Children's and Teens' Gazette this year, although likely on a smaller scale. Please send submissions no later than Dec. 10.

In December for many years, this newspaper has devoted pages to the creativity of local students, teens and children. The results are always remarkable. It is a keepsake edition for many families. Even readers without children of that age spend time admiring and chuckling over the issue. The Children's Gazette, including Children's Connection and Children's Almanac, is a long-time tradition.

You can see last year's editions by visiting <http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/PDFs/> and scrolling down to Children's Edition.

We welcome contributions from public and private schools, art classes, individuals and homeschoolers. We publish artwork, poetry, essays, creative writing, opinion pieces, short stories, photography, photos of scul-

ture, gardens and any other creative efforts.

We ask that all submissions be digital so they can be sent through email. Writing should be submitted in text format: docx or google docs, or pasted in the body of an email. Artwork should be photographed or scanned and provided in jpeg format. These can be submitted via google drive as well. Please share all google drive files with kimm.mary@gmail.com, or email files to that address.

Please include the full first and last name of the student artist/writer with the submission, along with the name of the teacher, school name, students' age, grade and town name. Use the file name to identify each piece of writing or art.

Please send all submissions by Monday, Dec. 5, 2023. The Children's Connection/Gazette will publish the week of Dec. 20, 2022.

Email submissions for the Children's Connection to kimm.mary@gmail.com

— MARY KIMM

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 IS NOW OPEN

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. 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;

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 7

Top Rated Skilled Nursing Care

Providing short-term rehabilitation services for a return home after surgery or hospital stay, memory care, long-term care and skilled respite care.

We are proud to be Alexandria's leading skilled nursing facility with a 50-year tradition of excellence!

Woodbine Specialty Programs

- Stroke Recovery
- Ventilator Care
- Cardiopulmonary Care
- Wound Care
- Chronic Kidney Disease Management
- Palliative & Hospice Services
- Urgent Skilled Nursing for Emergency Skilled Respite Care

Renovations Underway!

5 STAR RATED CMS+

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SHOP SMALL IN ALEXANDRIA



NOV. 24
Plaid Friday

NOV. 25
Small Business Saturday

Alexandria is the region's top "shop small" destination for the holidays. Don't miss the biggest shopping days of the season November 24-25 with deals and special offers at more than 50 boutiques throughout Old Town and beyond.

Learn more at
ShopSmallALX.com

NEWS

Out with Fall, In with Holidays

On Friday, Oct. 27, the temperature reached 83 degrees and we haven't even gotten through Halloween, but Belle View Shopping Center was getting ready for the December holidays.



Current banners coming down.



New holiday ornament banner in place.

PHOTOS BY
GLENDA BOOTH
THE GAZETTE

United Community Holiday Gift Card Drive

Help make the holidays special for children in our local community. Donate \$25 Target, Walmart, or Visa gift cards to help parents buy gifts. Drop off or mail in gift cards. <https://interland3.donorperfect.net/weblink/WebLink.aspx?name=E3464&id=151>

Gift cards can also be purchased from our Amazon Wish List. <https://www.amazon.com/registries/guest-view/DCXZKRATR2GU>
United Community, 7511 Fordson Road, Alexandria, VA 22306, (571) 255-8979, <https://www.unitedcommunity.org/>

Out with Fall, in with Holidays

FROM PAGE 6

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH/THE GAZETTE



Installing the snowmen banner.



Holiday tree banners going up.

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 5

bread 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
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 Park Authority (FCPA); for more information, visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets.

FOSTER PARENTS NEEDED
Interested in becoming a foster parent?
There is always a need for caring foster
SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 11

Let us know about an upcoming event
www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar

61st HOLIDAY SHOP

Mt Vernon Unitarian Church
1909 Windmill Ln, Alexandria

Saturday, 18 November 9.30am - 4pm

Artisan vendors of many styles and mediums *
Plus Baked and Canned Goods * Jewelry *
Household Collectibles * Lunch * Quilt raffle *
Parking * Credit Cards Accepted

Come and enjoy a day of shopping!

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The Heart of it All'

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THE CONNECTION

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Celebrate
Gum Springs
190th
Anniversary
Gala 2023

Location: George Washington's
Mount Vernon
November 18, 2023
6-9

Thank you, to the 2022 EVENT SPONSORS

Gum Springs Community Center Advisory Board	Bethlehem Baptist Church Gum Springs, Alexandria Virginia	The Protestant Episcopal Theological Seminary, in Virginia
CAPITAL ONE HALL	Christian Relief Services Paul Krizek, Virginia State Delegate	HIPPIE BW
Burke and Herbert Bank	Scott Survovell Virginia State Senator	Four Sales, Ltd.
NAACP Fairfax County Branch 7066	Alexandria Pest Services, Inc. Richard Diggs	George Washington's Mount Vernon

The Gum Springs Historical Society and Museum would like to thank last year's sponsors of the Gum Springs 189 Anniversary Dinner. This year's event promises to be even more enlightening as we examine, and celebrate the oldest African American Community in Fairfax County Virginia, a window into African American History. George Washington's Mount Vernon has once again partnered with the Gum Springs Historical Society and Museum for this year's Event. The evening events will start at 6:00 P.M. ending at 9:00 P.M.

For Sponsorships info and Tickets for 2023 Dinner : gshsfva@gmail.com or call (703) 799-1198 (703) 340-6051- gshsfva@gmail.com

The Society is trying to make it just a little easier for you to buy your 190th Anniversary Gum Springs Dinner Tickets, When you point your camera at the QR Code, it shows a link to eventbrite, on which you can click to get to the dinner tickets.



RAPTORS AT FORT HUNT

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH



Olive, a barn owl and her handler, Kathi



An Eastern screech owl named Little Voss.



A red shouldered hawk named Little Red



A male American kestrel named Pippin.

Enraptured by Raptors

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH

Four owls, a red-shouldered hawk and an American kestrel mesmerized 400 dotting human admirers who got up-close looks at these raptors on Nov. 5. People spilled out of Pavilion A at Fort Hunt Park on a balmy Sunday afternoon.

Liz and Tim Dennison from Secret Gardens Birds and Bees brought the birds to the park for a two-hour educational event sponsored by the Friends of Dyke Marsh and the National Park Service.

Raptors, also called birds of prey, have keen eyesight and hearing, sharp talons and a hooked beak. They typically eat meat. Diurnal raptors like hawks, eagles and vultures mostly hunt during the day. Nocturnal raptors like owls hunt at night. Many catch their prey with their feet.

Each of these birds was injured at some point and cannot survive on their own in the wild. The Dennisons have given each bird a name.

Pippin, an American kestrel, has two distinctive black vertical stripes on his face. The male kestrel has blue on the wings, but the female is mostly rusty brown, Liz Dennison explained. Someone found Pippin near Washington, D.C.'s National Mall, unafraid of people and appearing to beg for food. Because he had imprinted on people, he never learned to hunt or mate.

Little Red, a red-shouldered hawk, is blind in his left eye, probably because a great horned owl grasped its head in an attack. These hawks, between 17 and 24 inches in length, often perch on tree branches or utility wires. In the wild, they eat small mammals, amphibians and reptiles. Also birds.

One pair feasted on three of the Dennisons' chickens, Liz said.

Scarlet, a female barred owl, has a damaged beak from a vehicular collision. Her caretakers have to trim this bird's beak regularly which "she does not like," Liz said. In the wild, barred owls hunt mice, frogs, bats, snakes and other animals. From 16 to 20 inches in length, they fly almost silently because of their velvety feathers.

Olive, a three-year-old perky barn owl, seemed to zero in on her fans. Barn owls have a distinctive white, heart-shaped face and are around 16 inches long. These owls hunt almost exclusively at night and are a favorite of farmers because they eat mice, Liz Dennison commented. One young barn owl can eat eight to ten mice a day. A family can scarf up 6,000 to 10,000 mice a year, she offered.

More on Raptors

www.SecretGardenBirdsAndBees.com
www.fodm.org
www.nps.gov/gwmp

On the topic of mice, Dennison said, "There are no safe poisons." A raptor that eats a mouse that has eaten rat poison will not survive. She recommended a "good snap trap" and consulting Raptors Are the Solution, an organization working to eliminate rodenticides.

Owls eat the whole animal Liz Dennison explained, but they cannot digest bones and fur. They don't "poop them out," she said. Instead, they regurgitate pellets, a clump of indigestible items. She once found a crow's foot in a pellet.

Homer, the great horned owl, the largest owl at Fort Hunt that day, fixated on his many admirers with his big yellow eyes. His head tufts or plumicorns are not horns, Liz Dennison explained. Great horned owls are

SEE RAPTORS AT FORT HUNT, PAGE 10
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

CHRISTMAS

PHOTO BY E PALLORINA FOR VISIT ALEXANDRIA



Alexandria Scottish Christmas Walk On Dec. 2

During Alexandria's Biggest Holiday Weekend, celebrate the return of top signature events, including the 52nd Annual Alexandria Scottish Christmas Walk Parade in historic Old Town Alexandria at 11 a.m. on Saturday, Dec. 2, 2023. The parade is sponsored by Wegmans.

Dozens of Scottish clans dressed in colorful tartans parade through the streets of Old Town, joined by pipe and drum bands, as well as terriers and hounds, community groups and more. Alexandria was founded in 1749 by Scottish merchants and was named after Scotsman John Alexander who owned the land that became Alexandria.

This year's Grand Marshals are Congressman Don Beyer and Director of the Office of Art in Embassies at the U.S. Department of State Megan Beyer.

Some highlights:

More than 120 parade units include nearly 35 Scottish clans from around the D.C. region and other parts of the U.S.

Bagpipers including the Kiltie Band of York and the City of Alexandria Pipes and Drums plus a bag-piping Santa closing the parade.

Scottish country and highland dancers from Northern Virginia Branch, Royal Scottish Country Dance Society and Alexandria School of Highland Dance

More than 10 dog groups including Scottish breeds of West High-

land Terriers, Gordon Setters and Scottish Terriers along with other rescues and clubs

After the last parade unit has finished the parade route, participating pipe bands will reassemble at Market Square under the direction of City of Alexandria Pipes and Drums' Drum Major Joshua Cease to play a few tunes as part of a massed band concert.

Parade-goers and others should plan ahead to avoid traffic delays, taking alternative transportation and, if driving, parking outside of the immediate parade zone. The parade kicks off on S. St. Asaph Street at the corner of Wolfe Street and progresses north to Queen Street, east to Fairfax Street, south to King Street, and west to terminate in front of City Hall. For the best views, spread out along the one-mile parade route. For a map of the parade route, visit ALXScottishWalk.com.

Taste of Scotland

The weekend kicks off on Friday, Dec. 1 with the Campagna Center's Taste of Scotland sponsored by The Goodheart Group, a festive cocktail party at The Atrium Building featuring top-quality Scotch tasting stations and paired cuisine. Proceeds from the event benefit Campagna Center programs.

For more details on the parade route, transportation alternatives and weekend happenings, visit ALXScottishWalk.com.

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RICHMOND HIGHWAY Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)



UPCOMING PUBLIC MEETING Wednesday, November 15, 2023

- » **When:** Open House 6:30-9 PM, Presentation 7 PM
- » **Where:** Bryant High School Auditorium (2709 Popkins Ln)

Fairfax County is implementing a bus rapid transit (BRT) system along North Kings Highway and Richmond Highway from Huntington Metrorail Station to Fort Belvoir. At this meeting, the project team will share a recap of project decisions and milestones.

Join us in person for a presentation with Q&A on the meeting date, or visit the website to walk through materials. Meeting will be conducted in English with live Spanish translation available. Date subject to change – please check the website the day of the meeting for confirmation.

Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT) ensures nondiscrimination in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If you need this information in an alternate format or language, contact FCDOT at 703-877-5600, TTY 711.



The Richmond Highway BRT project is funded in part by the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority.

- fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/richmond-hwy-brt
- fairfaxcounty.gov/alerts ("Richmond Highway BRT Project Updates")



Public Notice

Updated weight limits on Virginia bridges and culverts

In accord with state and federal law, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has imposed new or changed existing weight restrictions and installed new signage indicating the updated weight restrictions on the following bridges and culverts (structures) in Virginia within the last 30 days.

Jurisdiction	Fed Struc Id	Route #	Route Name	Crossing	Posted Date
GRAYSON	8797	603	FAIRWOOD RD.	BIG FOX CREEK	10/26/2023
BUCHANAN	29763	2175	DOOLEY RD.	STREAM	10/26/2023
SCOTT	16776	654	CLIFF MTN. WAY	DRY CREEK	10/25/2023
WASHINGTON	18838	11	LEE HIGHWAY	HALL CREEK	10/24/2023
BEDFORD	2730	639	HURRICANE DR/RT 639	BRANCH OF OSLIN CREEK	10/23/2023
ROANOKE	14809	0F880	BRETHERN RD/RT F880	BRANCH OF BACK CREEK	10/23/2023
FAUQUIER	7359	681	HOLTZCLAW RD.	STREAM	10/17/2023
HIGHLAND	10327	640	BLUGRASS VALLEY RD (RT 640)	S BR POTOMAC RIVER	10/16/2023
ROCKBRIDGE	15547	646	BIG HILL RD (RT 646)	COLLIERS CREEK	10/12/2023
BEDFORD	2823	695	GOOSE CK VLY RT 695	N. FORK GOOSE CREEK	10/5/2023
LOUDOUN	11147	600	NEW RD.	BULL RUN	10/2/2023

The list above is not a comprehensive list of all structures with weight restrictions in the Commonwealth, but shows only structures that have new or changed weight restrictions within the last 30 days. The list contains only basic structure identification and location information and the date the new or changed weight restriction and signage became effective.

For a full listing of all bridge and culvert weight restrictions with detailed information about specific structures, including location data and actual weight limits, visit <https://www.virginiadot.org> and navigate to Info Center/Trucking Resources. This page references a posted structures report and a GIS map tool that contain detailed information about restricted structures in Virginia. To receive email notifications regarding new or updated weight restrictions for structures statewide, complete the sign-up form on the web page.

Notices regarding bridges and culverts with new or updated weight restrictions are published monthly by VDOT. For additional information or questions, please contact haulingpermits@vdot.virginia.gov.

The Virginia Department of Transportation is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any of its programs or activities 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 VDOT's Title VI Program or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, please contact the Virginia Department of Transportation's Title VI Program Specialist at 804-786-2730.

RAPTORS AT FORT HUNT

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH



Tim Dennison and a barred owl named Scarlet.



An owl's eyes are large. Here, using two plastic oranges, Colin Surovell shows the size of an owl's eyes in proportion to its head.



PHOTO BY DEBORAH HAMMER

Homer, the great horned owl



The National Park Service and the Friends of Dyke Marsh had children's activities. Here Jonathan Molineaux shows a youngster animal pelts.

FROM PAGE 8

18 to 25 inches in length, "at the top of the food chain," she noted, and have a grip of 200 to 400 pounds per square inch. They can "carry away a five-pound chicken," but she reassured, probably not a pet dog or cat. They may take over other birds' nests and live 12 to 15 years in the wild.

Smaller but equally impressive, Little Voss, an eastern screech owl, about 10 inches in length, evoked many oohs and ahs and comments like, "He's so cute!" Little Voss also has a damaged eye from a collision. Eastern screech owls are experts at camouflaging, blending into tree bark. They can even make themselves skinny, sit still and close their eyes to resemble a tree branch, Liz Dennison said.

The audience members, from one-year-olds to octogenarians, were totally enraptured by raptors.



Pavilion A was full, with people gathered outside as well.



A Friends of Dyke Marsh banner.

HOLIDAY

PHOTO BY MICHIO FOR VISIT ALEXANDRIA



23rd Annual Alexandria Holiday Boat Parade of Lights

Dec. 2, 2023, Parade begins at 5:30 p.m.;

Dockside festivities 1 to 8 p.m. at Waterfront Park (1A Prince St.)

Canal Center festivities 3 to 7 p.m. (44 Canal Center Plaza)

Parade viewing areas along one mile of the Old Town Alexandria waterfront stretching from Canal Center Plaza (44 Canal Center Plaza) to Ford's Landing Park (99 Franklin St.)

Admission: Free; \$ for food/drink and some activities
ALXBoatParade.com

PARADE VIEWING AREAS

Canal Center Plaza (11 Canal Center Plaza), Rivergate City Park (2 Montgomery St.), Oronoco Bay Park (100 Madison St.), Founders Park (351 N. Union St.), Alexandria City Marina (0 Cameron St.), Waterfront Park (1A Prince St.), Point Lumley Park (1 Duke St.), Robinson Landing (7 Pioneer Mill Way), Shipyard/Harborside Park (1 Wilkes St.), Windmill Hill Park (501 S. Union St.), Ford's Landing Park (99 Franklin St.)

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 7

parents looking to open their homes to foster youth. Get in touch to learn more. Visit fcsvanow@gmail.com or www.FCSVA.org. Or call 703-817-9890.

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

STEM VOLUNTEERS. The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) needs scientists, engineers, mathematicians, and physicians to assist K-12 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) teachers in the Northern Virginia Area, during the 2016-17 school year. In the 2015-16 school year, the numbers of STEM volunteers in Northern Virginia were: Fairfax County - 40, Arlington - 20, and Alexandria - one. Details of the collaboration are worked out between the teacher and the volunteer, and may involve giving demonstrations, assisting in lab experiments, lecturing on special topics, assisting with homework, etc. The hours are flexible, and volunteers attend a one-day training in September before being assigned to schools. To see how volunteers are assisting their teachers, view the video clips

at www.seniorscientist.org. To volunteer, contact donaldrea@aol.com.

Assistance League of Northern Virginia is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that feeds, clothes and provides reading assistance and books to children in need. Assistance League's programs touch the lives of hundreds of children in Fairfax and Prince William Counties and the City of Alexandria. There are many volunteer opportunities for community members to contribute to helping those in need. To learn more, email info@alnv.org, or visit www.alnv.org.

United Community (formerly UCM), 7511 Fordson Road, Alexandria, seeks volunteers for Food Pantry assistance, Early Learning Center teacher aides, basic needs counselors, youth tutors and mentors, office administration/data entry, and community outreach. Flexible hours and schedules. Opportunities for all ages to serve, including community service hours. More info at ucmagency.org/volunteer-opportunities or email volunteer@ucmagency.org.

Volunteer Adult Mentors Needed. Help assist the Department of Family Services' BeFriendA-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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Herney was a misfit, so was Rudolph. They were two of a kind, so these new friends set off to see what they could find.

FALL COLOR



Sweetgum tree leaves



Smooth sumac leaves and fruits



Silky dogwood



Virginia creeper climbing a tree.



Green poison ivy leaves



Yellow poison ivy leaves and red Virginia creeper leaves intertwined.



Red poison ivy leaves



Red honey locust thorns



The Oct. 23 attendees and co-leader Alan Ford studying plants from the boardwalk.



Co-leader Margaret Chatham explained many of the characteristics of plants along the Haul Road trail.



The seed heads of river oats.



Cattails are now releasing their seeds.

Seeing Red

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

On Oct. 23's sunny afternoon, 22 Dyke Marsh visitors "saw red." It was not because they had "become very angry," as per the dictionary explanation of that expression, but because the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve was aflame in red.

The bright orangey-red smooth sumac leaves shimmered in the sun as their clusters of crimson berries pointed skyward. The sweetgum trees' star-shaped leaves were transitioning from green to yellow to orange to red. Silky dogwood leaves were almost maroon. Climbing, firetruck red Virginia creeper vines seemed to reach for the sun.

Poison ivy vines are "showing off," going from green to yellow to deep red, the walk's co-leader Alan Ford declared. Even though poison ivy, a native plant, can cause skin rashes for some people, birds love the berries, Margaret Chatham said.

Even the young thorns of the honey locust were red.

The Friends of Dyke Marsh (FODM) and the Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Na-

Leave the Seeds

In a recent post, Steve Living, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, urged gardeners to resist "cleaning up," to leave spent flowers and dead stalks in their fall gardens.

They are "still working hard to support wildlife," he wrote. "In nature, these stalks and flowers heads aren't cut or trimmed. Winter weather will slowly break them down, leaving room for fresh growth in the spring. In the meantime, these plants still have a lot to offer as habitat." Seed heads from plants like Joe Pye weed, black-eyed Susans and bergamots are winter food for birds and other wildlife. Some bees nest in old hollow stems and some birds use fluffy plant material for their spring nests.

ive Plant Society (VNPS) cosponsored the annual fall colors walk.

Fall brings the growing season's end, but the multi-colored leaves of deciduous plants can raise the spirits. Ford, president of the Virginia Native Plant Society's Potowmack chapter, explained why leaves change colors. Chlorophyll gives leaves their green color, but when it breaks down, other pigments are revealed. Carotenoids produce yellow, orange and brown colors. Anthocyanins produce red and purple colors. Throughout the growing season, these pigments are in the leaf cells. As days shorten chlorophyll production slows and eventually stops. With the green color no longer visible, the other colors reveal themselves. "Leaves exposed to

More Information

Friends of Dyke Marsh, www.fodm.org
Virginia Native Plant Society, www.vnps.org
and <https://vnps.org/potowmack/>
Virginia Department of Forestry, fall foliage reports, <https://dof.virginia.gov/education-and-recreation/fall-foliage-in-virginia/>

sunlight have more red color," he said.

On vines, Chatham cautioned that English ivy, an invasive plant, is present year-round and on trees, the ivy vines can hold moisture and degrade tree bark. Ivy also adds weight that can act like a sail and help fell a tree during heavy winds.

Native vines like Virginia creeper shed their leaves in winter, Ford explained, and also climb trees but do not harm them.

There's More

For plants, fall is also the season for fruits and seeds, said Chatham. The goldenrods' browning blossoms and narrow-leaf cattails' hotdog-like flowers were releasing seeds to the wind. Drooping river oats' seed heads resembled little tan fans.

Invasive plants too were preparing for their reproduction. The fuzzy autumn clematis blossoms looked like a plant having "a bad hair day" and porcelain berry vines sported attractive turquoise and purple berries, but these plants can smother valuable native plants.

Punctuating the landscape were some blue hues, like the deep blue berries of silky dogwoods and Eastern red cedars, favorites of several bird species. White aster flowers dotted the landscape. A few lone yellow jewelweed blossoms and evening primroses lingered from their summer glory. Native grape bunches dangled. The native grapevine's peely bark "looks like it was attacked by an aggressive cat," Ford chuckled.

Nancy Roeper, a Springbank resident, loved the walk and commented, "There's lots to learn and this is an opportunity to learn more."

Chatham, a former children's librarian who lives in the Falls Church area, "has gradually morphed into an environmental volunteer," she says, removing invasive exotic plants and growing native plants. Why native plants? "Most insects have restricted diets. They can eat only the plants that they co-evolved with. Filling our landscapes with plants from other continents that our native insects can't digest is a recipe for ecological disaster. Plant native plants," she urges.

Added bonuses on the walk: Fall warblers were moving through and two bald eagles perched nearby, high above, eliciting oohs and aahs from their admirers.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

ENTERTAINMENT

WEDNESDAYS THROUGH SATURDAYS

Tours Aboard Tall Ship Providence and Sen. John Warner 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://tallshipprovidence.org/>

OCT. 10 TO NOV. 19

"Reflection Unknown" Photography Exhibit by Fred Zafran. At Multiple Exposures Gallery, Alexandria. Opening Reception: Sunday, October 22, 2023, 2 - 4 p.m. Fred Zafran has long been interested in photography as a distinctive means of storytelling. His work examines the artistic possibilities of photographs that combine the poetic with a representational view of the world. The resulting photo essays which Zafran calls "poetic narrative," are post-documentary in that the stories are open ended, subjective, rich in symbolism and metaphor, and encourage consideration and interpretation by the viewer.

OCT. 19 TO NOV. 26

Fleeting Moments | Street Photography. At The Athenaeum, Alexandria. Fleeting Moments features photographs that capture candid moments, revelatory interpretations, and brilliant reflections of the mundane — work commonly referred to as "street photography." In 1943 the New York Times referred to the street photography of Helen Levitt, as, "fleeting moments of surpassing lyricism, mystery and quiet drama." Those qualities are the hallmark of the works selected for this show.

NOV. 3-26

The Housemates exhibit. At Del Ray Artisans Gallery 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Exhibit showcases art from Del Ray Artisans members celebrating the beings we live with. Housemates may have fur, feathers, fins, scales, or be human. Opening Reception: Friday, November 3, 7-9 p.m.. Open Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays & Sundays 12-6 p.m. (Closed on Thanksgiving Day). Plus bring



"Peter and the Starcatcher" can be seen at Mount Vernon High School on Nov. 16-18, 2023.

in donations for cat and dog rescue groups. Details at DelRayArtisans.org/event/housemates

NOV. 16-18

"Peter and the Starcatcher." Thursday to Saturday at 7 p.m.; Saturday at 2 p.m. Presented by Mount Vernon High School, 8515 Old Mount Vernon Road, Alexandria. The show tells the story of Peter Pan's origin story; appropriate for all ages. Tickets are \$10 General Admission, \$8 senior/military, \$7 students, and \$5 for children 5 and under. Tickets are available online, mvhstheatrearts.com.

NOV. 16-18

"The Descendants." Thursday to Saturday at 7 p.m.; Saturday at 2 p.m. At Hayfield Middle School, 7630 Telegraph Road, Alexandria. The Hayfield Middle School Dramahawks are producing Disney's "The Descendants." The show is appropriate for all ages. Tickets are available online, www.hayfielddrama.com, and at the door and cost \$10 each.

SATURDAY/NOV 18

61st Holiday Shop. 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Mt. Vernon Unitarian Church, 1909 Windmill Lane, Alexandria. Artisan vendors of many styles and mediums plus baked and canned goods, jewelry, household collectibles, lunch, and quilt raffle. Come and enjoy a day of shopping. Visit www.mvuc.org.

FRIDAY/NOV. 24

Plaid Friday in Old Town Alexan-



The Hayfield Middle School Dramahawks are producing Disney's "The Descendants" Nov. 16-18, 2023.

dria. More than 50 participating businesses throughout Old Town and Del Ray will open their doors early on Friday, November 24th to participate in Plaid Friday - Alexandria's Small Business Black Friday. Come patronize Old Town boutiques the day after Thanksgiving and enjoy great discounts, mer-

chandise and good cheer, all while shopping small, supporting local businesses and celebrating the plaid vibes that are iconic to Old Town Alexandria. Early shoppers will receive extra discounts. Early Bird Discounts: A special incentive to get up early the day after Thanksgiving are the early-morn-

ing deals offered by participating businesses: 6 AM - 8 AM: 30% off; 8 AM - 10 AM: 20% off; and 10 AM - Closing: 10% off!

SATURDAY/DEC. 2

23rd Annual Alexandria Holiday Boat Parade of Lights. 5:30 p.m. At Waterfront Park, 1A Prince Street, Alexandria. More than 50 brightly lit boats cruise along one mile of the Potomac River shoreline from Canal Center to Ford's Landing Park. Head to Waterfront Park at the foot of King Street for festivities from 1 to 8 p.m. including a pop-up beer garden from Alexandria's Port City Brewing Company with hard cider from Alexandria's Lost Boy Cider. Also at Waterfront Park, from 1 to 5:30 p.m. enjoy hands-on activities from independently owned Alexandria businesses. Head to Canal Center on the Old Town North waterfront from 3 to 9 p.m. for the Canal Center Holiday Art Mart to enjoy family friendly festivities and watch the start of the Alexandria Holiday Boat Parade of Lights on the terrace with parade assembly anticipated between 5 and 5:30 p.m. At 3:30 p.m., Santa and Mrs. Claus will arrive by fireboat at the Alexandria City Marina before attending the annual Holiday Festival at Torpedo Factory Art Center, which takes place from 12 to 6 p.m.

SATURDAY/DEC. 2

52nd Annual Alexandria Scottish Christmas Walk Parade. 11 a.m. In Old Town Alexandria. Dozens of Scottish clans dressed in colorful tartans parade through the streets of Old Town, joined by pipe and drum bands, as well as terriers and hounds, community groups and more. Alexandria was founded in 1749 by Scottish merchants and was named after Scotsman John Alexander who owned the land that became Alexandria. Today, the city continues celebrating its heritage with the iconic parade. This year's Grand Marshals are Congressman Don Beyer and Director of the Office of Art in Embassies at the U.S. Department of State Megan Beyer. The 2023 Master of Ceremonies is Ian Houston, an international non-profit leader in the Washington, D.C. area who is dedicated to promoting cultural links between Scotland and the U.S. For more details on the parade route, transportation alternatives and weekend happenings, visit ALXScottishWalk.com.

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ENTERTAINMENT

Workhouse Arts Center Gala and Auction

The Workhouse Arts Center annual gala is this Saturday, Nov. 18. This black-tie event celebrating 15 years of artistry at the Workhouse will include art activations, dinner, live band, dancing, and silent and live auctions.

If you still want to support the Workhouse, anyone can participate by bidding in our silent auction online. From sporting events and winery experiences, to commissioned artwork and luxury beauty items. A Lekko Skincare gift box can be yours with a starting bid of \$75. Are you a Commanders or 49ers fan? Bids start at \$200 for a pair of tickets - a \$500 value. How about an Open Water SCUBA Diver Certification? Bids start at \$800 for this package valued at \$2000.

The Workhouse Arts Center annual gala is the largest and most significant fundraiser of the year, providing critical support to sustain the accessible and high-quality multidisciplinary arts experiences we bring to Fairfax County every year. Help support and celebrate the art and artists that have shaped our organization by bidding today.

<https://www.workhousearts.org/annual-gala>

More Holiday Happenings at the Workhouse Arts Center

Theater Performances, Comedy Shows, Winter Celebration and More

The Workhouse Arts Center will present several holiday events and activities in November and December for visitors to give back to the community, shop for holiday gifts, attend performances, take a class, and more. For more information visit workhousearts.org.

Toy Drive - Now through Dec. 11

The Workhouse Arts Center is partnering with OAR NOVA, a local non-profit restorative justice organization, to give back to our community. Join us in helping families impacted by the criminal justice system by donating a new, unused toy in its original packaging. Toys can be dropped off in the Workhouse Visitors Center.

Small Business Saturday - 20% Off All Items - Saturday, Nov. 25, 11 am-6 pm

Celebrate Small Business Saturday by supporting artists at the Workhouse Arts Center and get a 20% discount on all items in gift shops, galleries, and artist studios! Shop for one-of-a-kind gifts and save big!

Thanksgiving Weekend Comedy Showcase - Saturday, Nov. 25, 8 pm

The Workhouse Arts Center presents, in collaboration with Rahmein Mostafavi, some of the funniest comedians in the DC area including Dewayne White, Jared Stern, Olivia Vida, Benny Nwokeabia, and Jason Weems for this special holiday weekend of comedy! Tickets are \$20. McGuireWoods Gallery in building W-16.

Creating Beautiful Ornaments with Lightbulbs - Saturday, Dec 2, 10:30 am

In this workshop participants will transform used lightbulb into festive holiday or-

naments. Participants will be shown how to paint, collage and add glitter for a beautiful transformation. Cost, \$70. Building W-3, room 305.

Theater Performance - A Christmas Carol - Saturday, Dec. 2, 7 pm and Sunday Dec 3, 1 pm

Get into the holiday spirit with this season favorite presented in a whole new light. Through the magic of theatre, John Hardy single-handedly performs over 40 roles to bring Charles Dickens' classic holiday perennial tale to life at the Workhouse Arts Center. Tickets, \$25. Building W-3 Theater.

WinterWorks - Season Celebration - Saturday, Dec. 9, 6-9 pm

Our festive WinterWorks event will feature holiday merriment, fun photo opportunities, carol singers, a Raku ceramics activity, dance demonstrations, hot chocolate bar, smores by a fire pit, and more! Admission is free. Art activities, food, and beverages available for purchase. Workhouse Arts Center Campus.

Holidays...Hallowdays Movie Screening - Sunday, Dec. 10, 2 pm

While incarcerated at the Lorton Correctional Complex in the 1960s and 1970s, Rhozier "Roach" Brown led the prison theatrical troupe THE INNER VOICES. They performed original plays, skits, and social dramas at a variety of venues including the Apollo Theater and the Smithsonian Institution. Cost: In place of an admission fee, guests are asked to bring a new unused toy to donate to the Workhouse Toy Drive. Building W-3 Theater.

New Year's Eve Musical Theater Performance - The Who's Tommy - Sunday, Dec. 31, 8 pm

Based on the iconic 1969 rock concept album, The Who's Tommy is an exhilarating story of hope, healing, and the human spirit. The story of the pinball-playing boy who triumphs over his adversities has inspired and amazed audiences for more than 40 years. The New Year's Eve show includes a post-performance reception with midnight champagne. Tickets \$50. Building W-3 Theater. See the website for ticket prices for additional dates and times. Show runs through Feb 11. Fridays and Saturdays 8 pm and Sundays, 2 pm.

New Year's Eve Comedy Show with Antoine Scott - Sunday, Dec. 31, 8 pm

The Workhouse Arts Center presents, in collaboration with Rahmein Mostafavi, a special New Year's Eve comedy celebration. Time to laugh off 2023 and bring in 2024 with an abundance of joy! Join headliner Antoine Scott and a host of other hilarious comics for a one-show-only New Year's Eve comedy event. Tickets are \$50; \$60 front row reserved seats. McGuireWoods Gallery in building W16.

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We Need Your Help Again
We are sincerely grateful and thankful to you for helping in 2021 to save one of America's oldest newspapers, the Alexandria Gazette Packet, publishing continuously since 1784


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CENTRE VIEW

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

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

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

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

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

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 oncoming 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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Cause and Effect



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

What a pleasure the last few months have been for you Kenny-column readers who aren't particularly interested in cancer. Rarely, if at all, has there been a cancer-centric, dare I admit, self-indulgent column for your tepid perusal. Oh sure, there's been the odd reference here or there, but nothing too intense or the least bit intentional to focus you on the ups and downs of life in the cancer lane. A bumpy road if there ever was one.

In fact, it's been over three months since I've droned on about cancer. An amount of time which coincides with the longest interval between scans that I've ever experienced: over four months. And as much as I would like (Oh, how I would like) to say that this reflects a cancer remission, it does not. Instead, it reflects how slowly my thyroid cancer is progressing, and a modest attempt as well by my oncologist to reduce/manage the amount of radiation I've been exposed to, and likely will continue to be exposed to, so long as I shall live, that is. Granted, from what I've been told, the amount of radiation I'm exposed to during one of my C.T. or P.E.T. scans are modest, in the scheme of things. Nevertheless, in my scheme, considering the number of scans I've had over nearly 15 years, there might be a cumulative - and side, effect: cancer. I guess having one cancer doesn't preclude you from getting another. (I think that's sort of unfair, don't you?)

When my oncologist explained his thinking for extending my scan interval to four months from three months, I was 100% for it. Initially he said that obviously my cancer is slow moving, given the almost 15 years we've been involved, so an additional month between diagnostic scans is reasonable/not likely problematic; especially because, he added, after all these years/scans, it is prudent that we try to minimize my exposure to radiation. One doesn't exactly build up an immunity to radiation. Upon hearing that concern, which I don't recall ever hearing or considering before, I perked up and asked "Really? Why now? What's the risk?" His answer was somewhere between ironic and predictable: "Cancer."

Incredulous, I blurted out: "Cancer? Do you mean to tell me that a side effect of my cancer treatment/diagnostic scanning is more cancer and not simply more of the same cancer?" "Yes, he replied." After all these treatment years of chemotherapy and changing my diagnosis from non-small cell lung cancer to papillary thyroid cancer, and beating all the odds, the (I don't want to say end) result might be that I've possibly caused another set of cancer tumors to take hold and threaten my life? "Cheese and crackers," as my late father said many times when surprised and disappointed by something somebody said to him. Or as I might have uttered, when I heard the oncologist's explanation: "Holy s***!" Seems like a dirty trick. But I imagine the choice at the beginning of my treatment was the here and now, not the maybe later. When you're diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer, and given a terminal prognosis as I was, there's often not much talk of a later, so the focus better be on the present. And so, it was. And now, nearly 15 years later, the success of my own unexpected survival has a side effect of its own? As my former co-worker, Monique, would say: "Crazy kookie." Meaning, you can't make this stuff up. How I wish I was.

Well, I'm not going to overreact yet. I'll wait, as my oncologist said, for my late Nov. scan and my mid-November lab work to see if there have been any unfortunate changes. I often joke that the longer I live, the closer I get to the end rather than further away from the beginning. Not that I'm the least bit negative, as you regular readers know, but occasionally when you're aware of your health, as most cancer patients are, you do pay attention to what's happening to your body. And as much as you might want to chalk up any changes to older age, that's probably not the best approach. As my oncologist told me years ago, if I were to experience any new symptoms, particularly ones that persist for a few weeks, please contact him. And over the years, I have gotten better about honestly assessing my situation and making real-time decisions to get medical help, or at least get a medical opinion/evaluation about whatever is happening to me. As much as I'd love to ignore my situation and pretend that it's not as serious as it is, turning a blind eye or a deaf ear to my reality is not likely to solve the problem. Although the cancer I have is "incurable," it doesn't mean that I can't live a relatively normal life. It just means that I'll be undergoing treatment of some kind for the rest of my life. But I can live with that, hopefully. It just requires patience and understanding, and a whole lot of luck.

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



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