

Alexandria Gazette Packet



25 CENTS

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DECEMBER 7, 2023

Plaid Tidings Scottish Walk celebrates 52 years.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

The sound of bagpipes filled the streets of Old Town as the annual Scottish Walk Parade celebrated its 52nd anniversary Dec. 2.

The parade and related Scottish Walk Weekend events benefit the Campagna Center, which has been

“In my heart I am Scottish.”

— Alexandria resident
Anandashankar Mazumdar

...serving children and families in the city for 77 years.

“In my heart I am Scottish,”
SEE SCOTTISH, PAGE 7



The 52nd annual Scottish Walk Parade takes to the streets of Old Town Dec. 2.



A nutcracker attraction in the Scottish Walk parade.



Alexandria City High School Army JROTC.





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Turnover At City Hall

As the era of Justin Wilson draws to a close, what comes next?

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE
GAZETTE PACKET

The era of Mayor Justin Wilson is drawing to a dramatic finish, creating an open seat for mayor at City Hall for the first time in 20 years. Now that the two-term mayor has announced he will not be seeking another three-year timer, Councilwoman Alyia Gaskins announced her campaign for the office. Vice Mayor Amy Jackson is widely expected to also throw her hat into the ring. The primary is June 18, so potential candidates have four months to file paperwork.

“I would be thrilled to do this job forever,” wrote the mayor in an email to constituents announcing his decision against running for reelection. “But doing two full-time jobs and being a good husband and father is not sustainable forever. Nor should anyone be in elected office forever.”

The election for mayor comes at a time when the city is at a crossroads. Wilson has worked with advocates for urban development and mass transit to create a city where bike lanes and bus lanes are transforming the streets of Alexandria. Last month, members of the Alexandria City Council voted unanimously with the mayor in favor of a controversial plan to get rid of single-family zoning in favor of a system that would allow developers to build as many as four units on land that had previously been reserved for one house on one lot.

“I would hope that in the future the mayor, whoever that is, would be less divisive,” said former Mayor Allison Silberberg, who says she will not be a candidate for mayor next year. “One crucial role that the mayor has is to listen and be respectful and be open to input

from the public.”

THE LAST TIME Alexandria Democrats conducted a primary election to fill an open seat for mayor was February 2003. That was when Kerry Donley announced that he would not be running for reelection, and Bill Euille snagged the Democratic nomination without opposition. As a longtime member of the School Board and City Council, Euille had built enough support among members of the Alexandria Democratic Committee that nobody wanted to challenge him for the nomination.

“We have more people driving cars than we have citizens, and until we get people in the mindset to get out of their cars and into mass

transit, we aren’t going to make any major inroads,” said Euille after securing the nomination in 2003.

“This means we must improve our mass transit systems and make it easy for people to get from point A to point B. Otherwise, people will continue to use their automobiles.”

Euille was eventually unseated by Silberberg who was unseated by Wilson. The Game of Thrones atmosphere at City Hall has long roots, including a vicious Democratic primary in 1985 when Jim Moran unseated longtime incumbent Mayor Charles Beatley. Voters in Alexandria have never elected a Republican mayor, although Republican mayors were appointed during the Civil War and Reconstruction.

“I’m a little surprised Alexandria has never elected a Republican mayor because there were certainly a number of Republican officeholders,” said John Milliken, a professor at George Mason University who is a former member of the Arlington County Board. “I’m thinking of Connie Ring and Wiley Mitchell and Bob Calhoun. But none of those people were ever elected mayor.”



The Democratic primary for Mayor is June 18, 2024. Voting starts on May 3, and candidates must file paperwork by April 3.



Alyia Gaskins



Amy Jackson

IN AN INTERVIEW about her campaign for mayor, Alyia Gaskins outlined her agenda for the potential three-year term. One of her first priorities would be to put together a strategic plan for reducing crime, documenting a strategy and what resources officers need to make it happen. She also wants to expand a public private partnership with the business community to provide jobs to young people. Another top priority, she says, is to respond “more quickly and more effectively” to complaints with metrics and performance measures.

“This decision has been deeply personal for me, and something that I don’t take lightly. It’s something I feel called to do,” said Gaskins, who was first elected in 2021 and is currently serving her first term. “I believe that our city needs a leader who can face the changes that we have ahead, who can make hard decisions and ensure that we are reaching out and engaging voices, especially the voices of those in our community who have felt voiceless for a very long time.”

When Bill Euille got the nomination 20 years ago, he had already served a decade on the School Board and a decade on the City Council. He was a native Alexandrian whose popularity at the Alexandria Democratic Committee was unquestioned. Now, 20 years later, Gaskins is announcing her campaign to lead the City Council as a relative newcomer during her first term in office.

“I can’t change where I was born, and I can’t change the length of time I’ve been here,” she says. “I can only show you that for every day I have lived here I have worked hard to deliver and serve the people who are my neighbors, my friends, my family and my constituents.”



Alexandria has a weak mayor system, which gives responsibility to the city manager to run day-to-day operations at City Hall. The mayor is in charge of running the City Council meetings and setting the agenda for the city.



Best in Show was Magical Knots sporting the “I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas” theme in the Holiday Boat Parade of Lights Dec. 2.



Best Powerboat went to It’s Always Somethin’ with “Tribute to Jimmy Buffett ‘Thanks for the Memories’” in the Dec. 2 Holiday Boat Parade of Lights.

Pier Pressure

Holiday boat parade lights up the waterfront.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

The pressure was on as more than 60 boats vied for prizes in 10 categories at the 23rd Annual Holiday Boat Parade of Lights held Dec. 2 along the Alexandria waterfront.

Sponsored by Amazon, thousands turned out for the mile-long parade that was led by Alexandria’s Fireboat 201, Fireboat 2 from Washington D.C.’s Fire Department and City Cruises’ Miss Mallory.

Best in Show was awarded to Magical Knots, who presented “I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas,” complete with a costumed crew. Best Powerboat went to It’s Always Somethin’ for “Tribute to Jimmy Buffett: Thanks for the Memories,” immortalizing the late musician with his signature songs and a tropical theme topped off with a glowing shark fin.

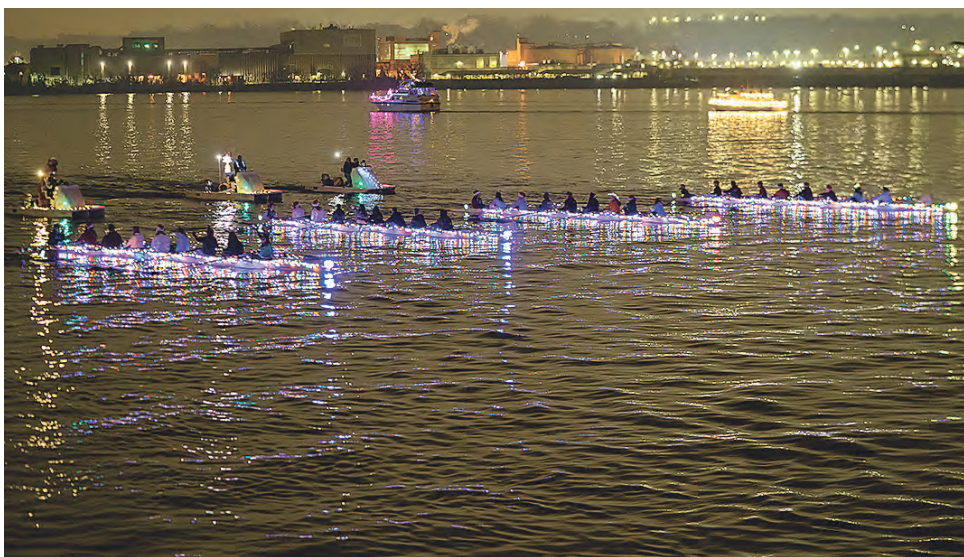


Boats line up for the 23rd annual Holiday Boat Parade of Lights Dec. 2 along the Alexandria waterfront.

Best Movie/TV Theme was Trust and Pixie Dust—Dreams Really Can Come True,” celebrating Peter Pan’s 70th anniversary with an aerialist dressed as Peter Pan performing acrobatics high in the air.

The 2023 winners include: Best in Show - Magical Knots, “I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas”; Best Powerboat - It’s Always Somethin’, “Tribute to Jimmy Buffett ‘Thanks for the Memories’”; Best Sailboat - Lions Paw 2, “Jelly Pandas”; Thinking Outside the Christmas Box - 4Ever Freedom, “Christmas in America”; Most Holiday Cheer, “The Nauti List”; Best Movie/TV Theme - Tuesday, “Faith, Trust and Pixie Dust – Dreams Really Can Come True”; Most Spirited Crew - Big Sky, “Rocking ‘Round the Christmas Tree”; Best Theme - Hold My Pier, “Mojo Dojo Casa Houseboat”; Hardest Soul - Titan Rowing Team, 4 Crew Racing Shells, “Holiday”; Best Try - Happiest Hanukkah, “Brightest Boat Ever.”

The parade was produced by Visit Alexandria in collaboration with the City of Alexandria, City Cruises – Alexandria and the Old Dominion Boat Club.



The Hardest Soul award went to the Titan Rowing Team of 4 Crew Racing Shells in the Dec. 2 Holiday Boat Parade of Lights.



Best Try was Happiest Hanukkah with “Brightest Boat Ever” in the Dec. 2 Holiday Boat Parade of Lights.

HOLIDAY

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET



The Del Ray Christmas Tree lights up the Pat Miller Neighborhood Square following a visit from Santa and lighting ceremony Dec. 3.



Shannon Steele, left, Executive Director of Carpenter's Shelter, accepts a check from Ting representative Irene Laster and Catharine Rice at the Del Ray Christmas Tree Lighting Dec. 3 at Pat Miller Neighborhood Square.

Lighting Up Del Ray

DRBA tree lighting kicks off holiday events.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Hundreds turned out Dec. 3 for the lighting of the Del Ray Christmas Tree in Pat Miller Neighborhood Square.

Former Mayor Bill Euille made the countdown to light the 32-foot-tall tree and was

joined by Santa Claus, Kate Moran of the Rainbow Rock Band and members of City Council.

The festivities included holiday carols and photos with Santa. Windows along Mount Vernon Avenue were hand-painted with holiday art, and Mount Vernon Avenue was illuminated by thousands of luminarias in honor of the late Nancy Dunning.

SEE DEL RAY TREE LIGHTING, PAGE 11

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Youngkin to Honor Local Heroes

Virginia Veterans Care Center to be renamed for Davis and McDaniel.

By JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Two of Alexandria's most decorated Vietnam veterans will be honored by the Virginia Department of Veterans Services as Gov. Glenn Youngkin renames the Virginia Veterans Care Center in Roanoke in honor of Army Col. Paris Davis and Navy Capt. Eugene "Red" McDaniel.

A special renaming ceremony will be held at the Virginia Veterans Care Center Dec. 12 at 11 a.m.

"Governor Youngkin made a surprise call to my dad letting him know," said McDaniel's son Michael. "I knew about the call and my job was to make sure my dad was at home and near the phone. When it rang my dad said, 'it's probably another robo call' but I made sure he answered it. Thankfully, my dad recognized Youngkin's voice. The Governor was very gracious and they had a nice talk. My son and grandson were there as well. It was very special."

McDaniel, 92, spent six years in captivity at the infamous Hoa Lo Prison, otherwise known as the Hanoi Hilton. Time Magazine once declared him as one of the most brutally tortured prisoners of the Vietnam war.

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. For three years, McDaniel was listed as Missing in Action before the Hanoi government finally acknowledged in 1970 that he was alive and being held prisoner. He was released on March 4, 1973, returning to active duty and retiring from the Navy following nearly 30 years of service.

Davis, 84, is one of the nation's most recent recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor. President Joe Biden presented Davis with the Medal of Honor in a White House ceremony March 3. Davis was also inducted into the Pentagon Hall of Heroes.

In June of 1965, a wounded and bloodied Davis, then a Special Forces captain, twice refused orders to quit the battlefield of Bong Son until he had saved multiple wounded teammates in a bru-



Col. Paris Davis received the Medal of Honor in March of 2023. The Virginia Veterans Care Center in Roanoke will be renamed in honor of Davis and Capt. Eugene "Red" McDaniel.



Capt. Eugene "Red" McDaniel, a Living Legend of Alexandria, was brutally tortured as a POW during the Vietnam War. The Virginia Veterans Care Center in Roanoke will be renamed in honor of McDaniel and Col. Paris Davis.



Col. Paris Davis, Capt. Eugene "Red" McDaniel and Navy veteran Mike McDaniel at a reception honoring Davis in June 2023. The Virginia Veterans Care Center in Roanoke will be renamed in honor of Davis and McDaniel.

"Governor Youngkin made a surprise call to my dad letting him know."

— Eugene "Red" McDaniel's son Michael

tal 19-hour hand-to-hand battle with a Viet Cong battalion. Due to his heroics, Davis's entire team survived the battle.

A reception honoring Davis was held in June at the Rocky Versace Plaza and Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Del Ray with McDaniel as a guest speaker.

Members of the public are invited to attend the Roanoke ceremony, which will feature remarks by local, state and federal officials along with the formal renaming of the VVCC to the Davis & McDaniel Veterans Care Center. A reception and tour of the care center will follow the approximately one-hour ceremony.

The VVCC is located at 4550 Shenandoah Ave. N.W., Roanoke, Va. 24017, adjacent to the Salem VA Medical Center. Attendees are encouraged to arrive by 10:30 a.m.

www.dvs.virginia.gov

BULLETIN BOARD

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

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Alexandria Families for Safer Streets - Executive Assistant to AFSS Board of Directors. The

agency is seeking an executive assistant to help coordinate a diverse group of tasks necessary to keep us on track and moving forward. Someone with office manager skills would be the ideal candidate. www.volunteerallexandria.org
ALIVE! Volunteers are needed to assist with multiple programs relating to their Food Program, ALIVE! House,

and Alexandria Eviction Prevention Partnership Program will distribute food at Mobile Pop-ups and Truck to Trunk events, etc. <https://www.volunteerallexandria.org/ALIVE>
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
SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 12

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Scottish Walk Celebrates 52 Years

FROM PAGE 1

said Alexandria resident Anandashankar Mazumdar, who has been attending the parade since

2012. "This year I get to wear my new kilt and enjoy seeing people dressed up and having fun."

SEE SCOTTISH WALK, PAGE 8



Mrs. Virginia American 2023 Andrea Schindler.



The Little Theatre of Alexandria.



The Kiltie Band of York.



Parade attendee Anandashankar Mazumdar.



Scottish walk Parade participants.

Scottish Walk Celebrates 52 Years

FROM PAGE 7

Pipes and drums from the East coast joined Scottish clans, reenactment groups, Scottie dogs and classic cars. Congressman Don Beyer and Director of the Office of Art in Embassies at the U.S. Department of State Megan Beyer served as Grand Marshals.

Serving as the unofficial start of the holiday season, the Scottish Walk Weekend celebrates the Scottish heritage of Old Town Alexandria while benefiting Campagna Center programs that serve more than 2,000 children and families daily across the city.

www.campagnacenter.org



Campagna Center CEO Tammy Mann



Girl Scouts of Alexandria City.



City of Alexandria Honor Guard.



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



One of several signs along the parade route protesting the proposed development of 301 N. Fairfax St.



Bagpipers perform during the Scottish Walk parade.



A four-legged parade participant.

Fort Hunt High School Alumni Association with a cardboard cutout of alumni Hoda Kotb.



Alexandria Sheriff Sean Casey.



Alexandria Police Officer Benny Evans.

PHOTOS BY
JANET BARNETT
GAZETTE PACKET



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Dedication of sign commemorating Botanical Preserve founder Catherine Winkler Herman. Pictured: NOVA Parks executive director Paul Gilbert, and board member Paul Baldino (Falls Church); Alexandria City school board chair Dr. Michelle Rief, and schools superintendent Dr. Melanie Kay-Wyatt; Alexandria mayor Justin Wilson, councilman Canek Aguirre, and council member Sarah Bagley; NOVA Parks board vice chair Sean Kumar (Alexandria)

The 44-acre park gem, Winkler includes trails along water features and hosts native plants, providing a natural oasis amid the developed Mark Center area of Alexandria.

NOVA Parks Commemorates Winkler Founder

Celebrates first year of successes at 44-acre conservation gem.

BY SUSAN LAUME
GAZETTE PACKET

NOVA Parks, the City of Alexandria, and its public schools, commemorated philanthropist and environmentalist Catherine Winkler Herman, founder of the Winkler Botanical Preserve, with the unveiling of a new permanent sign on the grounds on Nov. 28. The event included remarks by Alexandria's mayor, school board superintendent, and NOVA Parks board vice chair. Located in Alexandria's west end, the botanical preserve provides the public with access to a natural respite and protects plants native to the Potomac region amid the well developed Mark Center area of Alexandria.

Herman, who died in 2007, founded the preserve in the mid-1970s. with a gift of land and a substantial endowment in memory of her husband, Mark Winkler, a developer. Mark Winkler and Catherine Winkler Herman's daughter, Tori Winkler Thomas, led the Preserve for more than 25 years before her retirement and was responsible for the Preserve's design, including its emphasis on native plants, and the distinctive log cabin headquarters, Catherine's Lodge. The lodge served as the center for ecological education programs Thomas founded in partnership with the Alexandria school system. The programs served thousands of Alexandria school children for more than 20 years. In the Fall of 2022, the preserve was donated to NOVA Parks, along with an endowment to help maintain and further develop the preserve.

Sean Kumar, NOVA Parks Board Vice Chair, described the new interpretive sign as providing a

"focus on the tremendous contribution that Catherine Winkler made in establishing the preserve. Her vision grew to providing nature education to thousands of children from Alexandria and surrounding area. Under her management, those programs thrived for many years but eventually the program stopped. NOVA Parks has restarted summer camps with a robust schedule. Through the support of Alexandria City government, numerous disadvantaged children were able to attend camp."

Kumar indicated as other field trip programs expand "we hope every Alexandrian student from kindergarten to sixth grade will have a nature experience here at the Winkler Botanical Preserve."

Alexandria mayor Justin Wilson called the property "one of the best green spaces in the city. It's really an opportunity, in a dense urban area, to get our community in nature. I'm so excited about what NOVA Parks has been able to do in a short time and I'm super excited about what we'll be able to do in the future."

During their first year of management, NOVA Parks hosted field trips for 603 third and fourth grade students through the Alexandria public schools, offered nine sessions of summer camp for 56 first through fifth graders, and launched a summer camp scholarship pilot program with the city.

Monthly programming is in progress, including scout merit, art, photography, environmental education, and guided nature hikes. Nature programs are being developed with school staff which incorporate educational standards of learning. And engineering is in progress to expand the small parking lot.

Kumar said, "I'm proud we have taken on this property for the benefit of City residents and our neighbors in the region, and thankful to the Winkler family for entrusting us with its future."

For more on the Winkler Botanical Preserve, see Alexandria Gazette Packet, November 10, 2022, "Winkler Botanical Preserve Promises Ongoing Delights, pg 8.



PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

Catherine's Lodge, the center's headquarters on the preserve, hosted the commemoration event with the sign installed at the nearby pond.



PHOTO COURTESY NOVA PARKS

Newly installed interpretive signage tells the history of the park's origins.

DEL RAY TREE LIGHTING

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET



Ann and Joey Schneider enjoy the festivities at the Dec. 3 lighting of the Del Ray Christmas Tree in Pat Miller Neighborhood Square.

FROM PAGE 5

The event also served as a fundraiser for Carpenter's Shelter as attendees were encouraged to bring donations of various goods for the facility. A check for \$1,000 was presented to Shannon Steele, Executive Director of Carpenter's Shelter, from Ting Wireless representatives.

The event was sponsored by the Del Ray Business Association.

Other DRBA holiday events include the Shops of Del Ray's Sip & Shop Dec. 7 from 6-9 p.m. and the Candy Cane Bar Crawl Dec. 9 from 12:30-6 p.m. Attendees who purchase a ticket will receive food and drink specials, raffles, photo booth, trolley transportation and holiday cheer at 22 participating Del Ray restaurants. The event will benefit Community Lodgings and the Mother of Light Center. visit www.visitdelray.com.



Visitors enjoy the decorations at the Del Ray Christmas Tree lighting Dec. 3 in Pat Miller Neighborhood Square.

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LTA's A Christmas Carol is a holiday delight.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

It's a tale almost as old as time. Ever since it debuted in 1843, A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens has become one of the most endearing stories of the holiday season. The Christmas classic is brought to life at the Little Theatre of Alexandria, playing now through Dec. 16.

"When I was growing up in California, my introduction to this story was through the musical Scrooge," said director Jonathan Mulberg. "I was 7 years old and played Tiny Tim. I had no idea what the story was about or that it was a holiday tradition. I only knew that a grumpy old man somehow became happy."

Taking place on Christmas Eve, the Dickens tale follows Ebenezer Scrooge, a miserly businessman who isn't shy about the fact that he hates Christmas. Scrooge berates his employee, Bob Cratchit, for wanting the day off to celebrate with his family and declines a dinner party invitation from his own nephew, Fred. And despite his success, Scrooge spurns any request for charitable donations for those in need.

Adapted for the stage by LTA's own Donna Farragut, the tale recounts the events of a life-changing Christmas Eve for the protagonist who brought 'Bah Humbug' into the vernacular.

Bob Chaves takes on the role of Scrooge, who is visited on that fateful Christmas Eve by the ghost of his late business partner, Jacob Marley (Steven Malone). Bound in chains, Marley warns of the despair that awaits Scrooge if he doesn't change his ways.

Scrooge is then famously visited by the Ghosts of Christmas Past (Elana Ruiz), Present (Justin Beland) and Yet to Come (Christian Huggard). Beland does double duty as Charles Dickens, who provides narration for the unfolding events.

Producers Mary Beth Smith-Toomey and Sheri Ratick Stroud have assembled a stellar cast that includes



Bob Chaves as Scrooge, Miranda Lacy as Charity Lady, James Senavitus as Bob Cratchit and David McCarthy as Businessman in the Little Theatre of Alexandria production of A Christmas Carol playing now through Dec. 16.



Graham Arnold, Miranda Lacy, Katy Ellis, William Carden as the Cratchit children, with Missy Ledesma-Leese as Mrs. Cratchit, Nina Hall as Tiny Tim, James Senavitus as Mr. Cratchit and Bob Chaves as Scrooge in the LTA production of A Christmas Carol playing now through Dec. 16.



Bob Chaves as Scrooge in the LTA production of A Christmas Carol playing now through Dec. 16

"Dickens himself was a rags-to-riches story and wanted his fellow Victorians to celebrate mankind and be charitable to those in need."

— Director Jonathan Mulberg

James Senavitus as Bob Cratchit, Nina Hall as Tiny Tim, Christian Huggard as Scrooge's nephew Fred, Cristine Casais as Belle, and Garrett Walsh as Young Scrooge.

A rotating cast of talented children brings a contagious energy and enthusiasm to the production.

The creative team includes music direction by Abbie Mulberg, set design by Julie Fischer, lighting design by Arie McSherry, sound design by Gary Zacuto, costume design by Juliana Cofrancesco and Carl Pappas, and hair and makeup design by Natalie Turkevich.

"Dickens himself was a rags-to-riches story and wanted his fellow Victorians to celebrate mankind and be charitable to those in need," Mulberg said. "Dickens was a big proponent of embracing the community around you and we have done that here with this production."

A Christmas Carol runs through Dec. 16 at The Little Theatre of Alexandria, 600 Wolfe Street. For tickets or more information, call 703-683-0496 or visit www.thelittletheatre.com.

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 6

info@alnv.org, or visit www.alnv.org.

Join Friends' Board. Those who care about mental health, the Alexandria community, and collaborating with fellow residents to make sure the City's most vulnerable residents have a chance to thrive, then consider joining the Board of Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center. The Friends Board is an all-volunteer group of residents that oversees the administration of one of Alexandria's top

mental health charities. Friends has no paid staff, so Board members, working on average 10 hours per month, share the day-to-day work needed to accomplish its goals. Interested candidates should email FriendsofAMHC@gmail.com.

STEM Professionals Needed. Help assist K-12 STEM teachers as part of the American Association for the Advancement of Science's STEM Volunteer Program, stemvolunteers.org, during the 2018-19 school year. In the 2017-18 school year, there are 85 volunteers in 6 Northern Virginia school districts.

Contact Don Rea at 571-551-2488, or donaldrea@aol.com.

ALIVE! offers numerous programs that aid low-income families in Alexandria that rely on volunteers: monthly food distributions, furniture, houseware and emergency food deliveries, and community food drives. Individuals, families and groups are encouraged to participate. Students can earn community service hours by participating. Visit www.alive-inc.org/volunteer.htm or contact the Volunteer Coordinator at volunteers@alive-inc.org.

Volunteer Drivers Needed. Drivers needed by the American Cancer Society to take cancer patients to treatment in Northern Virginia. To volunteer, call 1-800-227-2345 or go to cancer.org/drive.

RSVP, a volunteer network for seniors seeking service opportunities in and around Fairfax County, Arlington County and the City of Alexandria, offers a wide array of opportunities for volunteers 55 and older. RSVP volunteers enjoy flexible schedules, free accident and liability insurance while serving, optional mileage and meal

reimbursement and are invited to volunteer group projects and social gatherings. To sign up for an upcoming orientation, email Carly Hubicki at chubicki@volunteerfairfax.org or call RSVP at 703-403-5360. To learn more about RSVP, visit www.rsvpnova.org.

Mentors Wanted. Two creative programs that help transform the lives of Alexandria's preteens are seeking volunteer mentors. SOHO, which stands for "Space

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 14

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/>

NOW THRU JAN. 7

National Treasures | Leanne Fink. At The Athenaeum, 201 Prince Street, Alexandria. National Treasures is a collection of oil and cold wax paintings by Leanne Fink that pays homage to the grandeur of America's National Parks. Inspired by the beauty of the natural world, Leanne is known for her visually dynamic landscapes. The Athenaeum Gallery is open Thursday to Sunday from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m.

DEC. 8-10, DEC. 15-17

Del Ray Artisans 28th Annual Holiday Market. At 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Offers unique handmade fine arts and crafts from local artists. Choose from wall art, pottery, photography, jewelry, glass, and much more! Free admission. First three weekends in December (Dec. 1-3, Dec. 8-10, Dec. 15-17), plus bonus market days Dec. 22 & 23. Different artists each weekend! Open Fridays 6-9 p.m., Saturdays & Sundays 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Hours for Friday, December 22 are 3-9 p.m. Details: delrayartisans.org/holiday-market

BREAKFAST WITH SANTA

"Breakfast with Santa" will take place every weekend in December, from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. in three locations in Alexandria:

Joe Theismann's Restaurant
Mia's Italian Kitchen
Ada's on the River

Tickets range from \$0-\$65 and include a hearty and festive breakfast feast that will delight your taste buds. Children will receive take-home treats to continue the holiday spirit at home, while adults can indulge in some celebratory Prosecco.

Tickets can be purchased here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/breakfast-with-santa-in-old-town-alexandria-by-arp-1039279>

DEC. 8-9

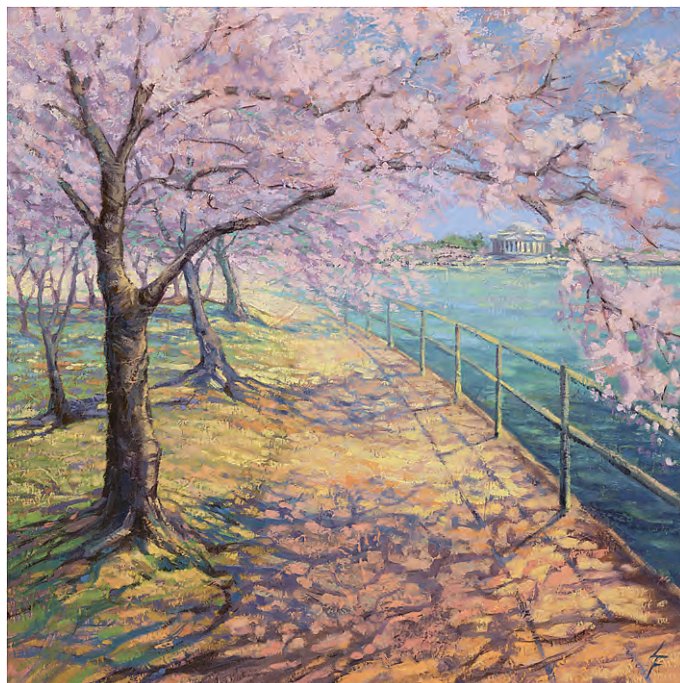
Holiday Pops Concert. Friday and Saturday from 7:30-9:30 p.m.; Sunday at 2 p.m. At Washington Street United Methodist Church, 109 S. Washington Street, Alexandria. Share your spirit for the season. In lieu of a physical gift drive, online donations can be added at ticketing checkout for Alexandria's Carpenter's Shelter. Visit www.Alexandriasingers.com.

DEC. 16-17

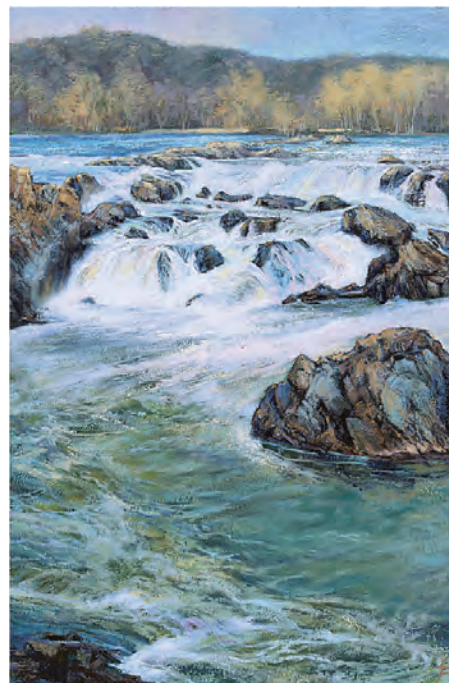
"Holiday with a Twist." Featuring
www.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



First Night Alexandria will be held Sunday, Dec. 31, 2023 in Old Town Alexandria.



Leanne Fink's National Treasures exhibit can be seen now through Jan. 7, 2024 at The Athenaeum in Alexandria.



the Alexandria Symphony Orchestra. Saturday, Dec. 16 at 7:30 p.m. at the Rachel M. Schlesinger Center, Alexandria; Sunday, Dec. 17 at 3 p.m. at George Washington Masonic Memorial, Alexandria. Celebrate the Season "Holiday with a Twist" featuring Joshua Banbury, Baritone and Chris Ullman, whistler. Adults: \$20-89; Students \$15; Youth \$5.

SUNDAY/DEC. 17

Sunday Funday. 3 p.m. At Ainslie Arts Center at Episcopal High School, Black Box Theatre, 3900 West Braddock Road, Alexandria. Sunday Funday will feature a cast of local musical theater talent and singing drag queens, a three-piece band music directed by Marika Countouris, as well as bottomless drinks. Sunday Funday will be hosted by local drag queen and frequent Monumental collaborator Tiara Missou, also known as David Singleton. Individual tickets are

\$30. Artist under 35 tickets are available for \$15 (patrons must show I.D. at the door). A table for four guests can be purchased for \$140. Table tickets include preferred seating and either a bottle of wine or champagne. Patrons may pay \$20 for bottomless specialty drinks or \$25 at the door. Tickets are available online at <https://www.monumentaltheatre.org/>.

SUNDAY/DEC. 31

First Night Alexandria. In locations around Old Town Alexandria. First Night Alexandria, known as the largest family-friendly and affordable New Year's Eve festival of music and more event in the region, returns with its day into night of celebration showcasing performing arts throughout Old Town. The annual event (in its 29th year) will feature a variety of activities, activations, dance parties, live music and more. The

festivities kick off at 2:00 p.m. and conclude at midnight as thousands welcome in the New Year.

A tradition that started in 1994, First Night Alexandria has become a staple in the region to bring in the New Year as an affordable event filled with a lineup of entertainment and activities. Proceeds from the event supports Alexandria's middle and high school students' activities with a musical background in choir, orchestra, and band.

New this Year:
Twilight Fireworks - This year's celebration will feature a twilight fireworks display at 6 p.m. on Alexandria's waterfront geared to families who want to enjoy the show with their kids and loved ones. First Night Alexandria will also still host an abbreviated encore display of the New Year's fireworks at midnight on the waterfront.

Fun Hunt - Add adventure, explora-

tion, and education to the last day of the year! After 5 years, the Fun Hunt returns with new ways to enjoy an afternoon in Old Town Alexandria. Ticketed guests have the opportunity to turn a day of Fun and entertainment into potential prize winnings. The adventure concludes at the Block Party at Market Square just prior to the Twilight Fireworks.

Daytime Block Party - Join us at Market Square from 4 - 6 p.m. for a time of music, a "Cool Happy New Year" demonstration and special fun just prior to the new Twilight fireworks display.

For more information visit www.firstnightalexandria.org

JAN. 5-27

"Visions of Resilience: Art for Climate Justice" exhibit. At Del Ray Artisans, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria, in partnership with the Changing Planet Justice Foundation, raises awareness about climate change and its impact on marginalized communities. By conveying issues through the universal language of image, we encourage action towards a just, climate-friendly future. Reception: Friday, January 5, 7-9 p.m. Open Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays 12-6 p.m. (closed January 28). DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

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.

DECEMBER

- Wed. 6: Squirrel Nut Zippers Holiday Caravan Tour 2023 \$45.00
- Thu. 7: An Acoustic Christmas with Over The Rhine \$45.00
- Fri. 8: Chris Botti \$110.00
- Sat. 9: Chris Botti \$110.00 SOLD OUT!
- Sun. 10: Allison Russell "The Returner Tour" \$35.00 SOLD OUT!
- Mon. 11: Girl Named Tom: One More Christmas Tour \$55.00
- Tue. 12: Karla Bonoff & Livingston Taylor "Home For The Holidays" \$45.00
- Wed. 13: Jon McLaughlin w/ Bobbie Lee Stamper & Leo Sawikin - 2023 Holiday Tour \$29.50
- Thu. 14: Carbon Leaf \$45.00
- Fri. 15: Carbon Leaf \$45.00 SOLD OUT!
- Sat. 16: Pieces of a Dream \$49.50
- Sun. 17: Luther Re-Lives: Holiday Concert featuring William "Smooth" Wardlaw \$49.50
- Wed. 20: A John Waters Christmas \$59.50
- Fri. 22: Tarsha Fitzgerald Presents "The Voices" Christmas Show \$35.00
- Sat. 23: A Very MAYSA Christmas \$69.50
- Fri. 29: Hank Williams Tribute featuring Cathy Fink & Marcy Marxer, Daryl Davis, Jake Blount, Robin & Linda Williams, Patrick McAvinue, Alex Lacquement \$35.00
- Sat. 30: Bela Dona Band \$39.50
- Sun. 31: New Year's Eve with The Seldom Scene & The Porch Delights 7:30pm- \$49.50

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BULLETIN

FROM PAGE 12

Obituary

Obituary



Lee Vance Walter, 62, of Alexandria, Virginia, passed away on November 30th, 2023, surrounded by her loving family after a battle with cancer.

Lee was a loving wife, mother and friend. She will be remembered as a shining light and force for good in the world. Her sense of humor, quick wit and intellect were ever-present as well as her humility and spirituality. She was beloved by everyone that met her, and all were positively impacted by her infectious personality.

Lee was born on January 21st, 1961, to Joanne Claire Vance (Meyer) and Robert Lee Vance Jr. in Fremont, California. Her childhood days were spent in their home of Lafayette, California and at the family cabin in South Lake Tahoe, California.

She graduated from Acalanes High School in Lafayette, California in 1979. While in high school, Lee formed many life-long friends and competed on the women's basketball team that won a state championship in 1978.

She went on to study at the University of California, Berkeley, graduating in 1983 with a bachelor's degree in political science. While at Cal, Lee studied abroad on Semester at Sea, fostering her love for travel and international affairs. She was active in her sorority, Delta Gamma, where she carried on her love of sports and music.

In 1982, Lee worked for the advance team for then-President Ronald Reagan as he hosted Queen Elizabeth II for a state visit in San Francisco. The visit sparked a love for public service and a move to Washington, D.C., kicking off a decades-long career in policy and government affairs where she would have a lasting impact. Most notably, she served the American people at the United States Agency for International Development for 18 years. While at USAID, Lee was a passionate advocate for international disaster and humanitarian relief, economic empowerment, human rights and poverty alleviation. Countless people in need around the world benefited directly from her dedicated work.

In 2008, Lee met the love of her life, James Parker, set up on a blind date by mutual friends. They married in 2012 in Alexandria, Virginia, joining their families in a ceremony in Old Town. Together, they loved to travel, cook and spend time with family and friends. Their love was driven by common dedication to family and their equal adoration for each other.

Lee was most proud of her sons, especially in their development from young boys that she raised into the men they are today. From Donnie and Vance starting families of their own to Matt's successful music career, Lee was their rock and center of gravity. Her influence extends beyond mother, as she brought them through the challenges and joys of life – she was their angel on earth and now in eternity.

Lee is predeceased by her parents, Joanne Claire Vance (Meyer) and Robert Lee Vance Jr. She is survived by her loving husband, James Parker, sons Donald, Vance and Matthew Walter, her daughters-in-law Christine and Sarah Walter, her grandchildren William, Olivia and Charles Walter, her brothers Charles and Robert Lee Vance III, her sisters-in-law Stephanie Golembeski, Julie and Farrel Vance, her brother-in-law Richard Golembeski Jr., her parents-in-law Dennis and Vicki Parker, and her nieces and nephews, Nathan, Nora, Calvin and Brody Vance, Ryan Fischer and Emma and Richard Golembeski III.

A service will be held at 10:00 a.m. on January 20th, 2024, at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Alexandria, Virginia with a reception to follow.



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of Her Own," and "Space of His Own," serves vulnerable fifth graders in Alexandria. The programs pair men and women with youth in need of positive adult role models, to help support and guide youth in making healthy choices and succeeding in school and in life. Visit www.spaceofherown.org and www.spaceofhisown.org. For more information on how to become a SOHO mentor, contact Sarah Maroney at sarah.maroney@alexandriava.gov or phone at 703-746-4687.

Farmer's Market Volunteers Needed. To volunteer for the Farmer's Markets, email Brian Morreale, brianmorreale@gmail.com

SUPPORT GROUPS
Postpartum Support Virginia sponsors a free, bi-monthly support group for women suffering depression and/or anxiety during pregnancy or in the first year following childbirth. Meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month at Inova Alexandria Hospital, Health Education Center, rooms 1-2, 4320 Seminary Road. Contact co-moderator Susan Doyle at suzdoyle@gmail.com or 571-403-0673.

The Parkinson's Disease Support Group of Alexandria meets the 1st Wednesday of each month at 2 p.m. at the Hollin Hall Senior Center, Room 109, 1500 Shenandoah Road. All Parkinson's patients and caregivers are welcome.

The Caregiver Support Group is facilitated by the Alexandria Department of Community and Human Services Division of Aging and Adult Services. Meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month at the Adult Day Services Center, 1108 Jefferson St., 4-5:30 p.m. Participants are full- or part-time caregivers providing care locally or long distance to a family member or friend. Participants share their experiences, provide support for each other and receive resources to assist them with caregiving. The next Caregiver Support Group meeting is June 7. For more information or to register, contact Jennifer Sarisky at 703-746-9999 or email DAAS@alexandriava.gov.

FACE Center Support Groups provide parents with a space to share their daily parenting frustrations and triumphs while offering new strategies for helping parents to cope, build positive parent-child relationships and best support their children's learning.

- ❖ Support Group in English, every Monday, 6-7:30 p.m. at ARHA Main Building, 401 Wythe St.
- ❖ Support Group in Spanish, every Wednesday, 6-7:30 p.m. at Community Lodgings Brookside Center, 614 Four Mile Road.

Registration not necessary. A light dinner and childcare services provided free. Contact Krishna Leyva at 703-619-8055 or krishna.leyva@acps.k12.va.us for more.

Divorce Workshop for Women. Second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. at Hilton Alexandria Old Town, 1767 King St. The workshops are designed to provide education on the legal, financial, family and personal issues of divorce in a logical, yet compassionate way. The workshop fee is \$25. Visit www.nova-secondssaturday.com for more.

ALADDIN THE CAMEL

Aladdin the Camel Brings Christmas Cheer

By GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

Youngsters may be getting giddy visualizing reindeer streaking Santa across the sky, but how about a Christmas camel for some excitement? A dromedary camel named Aladdin is a little-known holiday delight at Mount Vernon Estate until Jan. 7.

Aladdin is a 16-year-old camel that measures about seven feet from his hoofs to the top of his hump, a long-legged ungulate or hoofed animal native to the other side of the globe. He seems quite at home loping around his pen and eyeing visitors in a field at the west end of Mount Vernon's bowling green.

Mount Vernon's managers have hosted Aladdin during the winter holidays since 2008 because in 1787, George Washington brought a camel to his plantation. He recorded in his ledger, "By the man who brot. A Camel from Alexa. For a show." Washington paid 18 shillings which today would be \$170.

In the 18th century, itinerant entertainers traveled the eastern part of the country with rare or specially trained animals and Washington had a great interest in animals. He recorded seeing a tiger, a "Lyonesse" in 1766 for 10 shillings, a "Cugar" and "Sea Leopard" in Philadelphia while President. In Washington's day, these animals had to be rare sights.

The online Britannica encyclopedia says that a camel is "any of three species of large ruminating hoofed mammals of arid Africa and Asia known for their ability to go for long periods without drinking. The Arabian camel, or dromedary (*Camelus dromedarius*), has one back hump, while the domesticated Bactrian camel (*C. bactrianus*) and the wild Bactrian camel (*C. ferus*) have two." Dromedary camels have an average lifespan of 40 years.

Aladdin has golf-ball-size dark brown eyes, two- to three-inch eyelashes and sandy brown fur that thickens up in the winter. He first came to Mount Vernon in 2008 at age 11 months. He eats hay and four to five pounds of grain and drinks five to ten gallons of water daily.

He is domesticated and generally appears to be very docile. Because he was bottle raised, "He can get mouthy," commented Lisa Pregent, senior livestock manager, adding, "He's very loved."

Aladdin lives in Fairfax Station the rest of the year and travels to Mount Vernon in a horse trailer. "We are camel-sitting," jokes Pregent. She observes that when he was younger, he was "very animated," but now has "mellowed out." She thinks he is "goofy," when he "flips his lip." He's been known to chomp off a visitor's hat if the person gets too close.

Pregent has been caring for Aladdin for his 15 years there, along with the estate's cows, horses, pigs, sheep and chickens. Taking care of a camel is "a learning process every year," she commented on Nov. 30.

Thousands of visitors check out Aladdin every year, many en route to their mansion tour, says Julie Coleman Almay, Director of Public Affairs. On Nov. 30, a family of five



Youngsters and their parents from Hawaii delighted in seeing Aladdin on Nov. 30.



Aladdin sniffs his keeper.



Aladdin looks almost regal when he raises his head high.



Aladdin has a distinctive face, nostrils, mouth, eyes and eyelashes.



Aladdin has his own pen and shed.



Youngsters love Aladdin.

from Honolulu were captivated. "He's so cute," said Abigail Beahler, age six.

As Pregent fed him grain from a purple bucket, Abigail's sister, Suzanne, age 10, said, "He's like me. He has a bottomless stomach."

Here's an interesting historical twist: George Washington's farm managers were

probably not familiar with camels, but some of the plantation's enslaved people might have been, having encountered them in trading caravans in Africa before their enslavement in North America.

Information:

<https://www.mountvernon.org/plan-your-visit/things-to-do/animals/aladdin/>

"Daze" Gone By



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

As of the first week in Dec. 2023, I will have been "churning out the dribble," as my late brother, Richard, teasingly characterized my columns me a few years back, for 26 years. Almost without fail, except for one week in Aug., 15 when I was hospitalized for a week due to fluid build-up in my lungs (almost four litters worth). The fluid problem was a side effect of my cancer medication. (Imagine that, a side effect from cancer medication that nearly kills the patient. Who would have thought?) I was told by the attending physician that this side effect caused my lungs to collapse - with no guarantee that they would reinflate. Fortunately, a few days after my surgery to drain the fluid from my lungs, they miraculously re-inflated (later than the doctors had hoped/anticipated, but everybody was happy nonetheless, especially me). But then I was on my way to recuperating and the following week I was home eating solid food again and semi back to normal ('normal' being a relative term, as I was a lung cancer patient after all).

I have been writing a column in "The Connection" for almost exactly 26 years. Multiply the years times the 52 weeks per year the paper published means that I've been at this pursuit of my happiness (writing/publishing columns) without fail - except that one week I spent in SICU for my lungs (actually I did write a column that week while in hospital bed. However, I typed it on a device which due to operator error, never sent my column to the paper for publication), a grand total of 1,352 weeks/columns, if anyone is counting. And I certainly am if you're not. Remembering that my initial (inauspicious) appearance in The Connection was hardly met with any fanfare (I was told I was filler, and a one-column inch filler at that), I summarize that beginning simply and with a nod to Bob Dylan: I was so much younger then, I'm older than that now. Thank God! And still, undergoing cancer treatment. And moreover, "still churning out the dribble."

And I'm especially still thanking God, always a prudent precaution to take, because when I started writing this column, I was cancer-free and years away from becoming the "victim of soy-cumstance" you read about regularly. That unfortunate circumstance/diagnosis of stage IV non-small cell lung cancer (a terminator if there ever was one, not named Arnold Schwarzenegger) became my official reality late Feb. 2009, 12-plus years after I started publishing my slice-of-life-type column ("Daze of My Life") in the first place. To say this diagnosis was a shock is to minimize any and all things that shock. But I persevered and though I didn't sing it, I did invoke Diana Ross a time or two ("I will survive"). And lo and behold, here I am in 2023, slowly creeping up on my 15th "cancersary." (You bet I'm going to "creep," I don't want to bring any unnecessary attention to the fact that I'm still alive, especially around Christmas where lists are often checked twice.)

Considering that a "13 month to two-years" prognosis - at age 54 and a half (out of the blue, a lifelong non-smoker, and minimal exposure to second-hand smoke), came along with the diagnosis, I figured I had to roll punches somehow and buck up and find a way to be positive about this horrifying negative. As a dear friend who exhibited this attitude would often say when prompted: "My attitude is just like my blood type: B+." I don't know what my blood type is exactly, but I do know my attitude is. However, during those first few months of learning this diagnosis and then starting every-three-week chemotherapy, lab work, diagnostic scans, and face-to-face, in-person appointments, your dominant feeling/reaction to your predicament (mine anyway) is disbelief. Though I certainly was curious how this could have happened to me (given what I thought I knew about lung cancer and its cause, very little after all) I never wallowed in "woeing." I saw no future in dwelling on the past.

And for the past 13 years, ever since I shared my diagnosis with you in my June 2010 column entitled "Dying to Tell You, Sort Of", published approximately four months after I began treatment, I have written extensively, if not almost entirely about cancer. And oddly enough, writing about it, whether it's good, bad, or indifferent news still gives me a lift somehow. Since I don't woe is me, neither do I drone on about my challenges. Oh sure, I'll update you readers about any major, potentially life-altering cancer-related news. When I do so however, it's not important that it's me that's being written about (it's never about me, really). It's important because it's about the cancer. As I used to say when asked about my column's subject matter before I was diagnosed: "I'm just the driver. I'm writing about the car."

And even though the car, metaphorically speaking, has some major problems, it's still able to get me where I want to go. Of course the ride can get a bit bumpy at times, but I'm still driving, if you know what I mean?

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

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