



Fire Chief Corey Smedley, left, with retired firefighter Ed Snyder and Smedley's wife Yolanda at Smedley's retirement celebration Jan. 9 at Charles Houston Recreation Center.



Fire Chief Corey Smedley, second from left, poses for a photo after being presented with a farewell shadow box at his retirement celebration Jan. 9 at Charles Houston Recreation Center.

Hail to the Chief

Smedley retires as AFD/EMS Chief.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

City of Alexandria Fire and EMS Chief Corey Smedley was celebrated Jan. 9 at the Charles Houston Recreation Center as he officially retired from his position effective Jan. 12.

Smedley, who announced his retirement last November, helmed the Alexandria Fire Department for eight years. He began his career in public safety over 30 years ago, joining the AFD as the Deputy Chief of Homeland Security and Emergency Management in 2015. He was promoted to Assistant Chief and ultimately became the city's first African American Fire/EMS Chief in July 2019.

"Working for Chief Smedley has been an incredible experience," said Senior Public Information Officer Raytevia Evans. "That is

because of how great of a boss he is. He is very supportive and is an advocate for his employees and the community. It was easy to be the person who worked with him, collaborated with him and communicated with our community because he really cared about them."

In announcing Smedley's retirement, City Manager Jim Para-

"One of the best things I'd like to be remembered for is building relationships and just engaging with the community."

—Fire Chief Corey Smedley on his retirement

jon praised the accomplishments achieved during Smedley's tenure. These included guiding AFD through the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, spearheading the build-out and opening of a state-of-the-art Emergency

Operations Center, negotiating the inaugural collective bargaining agreement with IAFF Local 2141, improving staffing levels, diversity, and enhancing professional development and training, collaborating with the community to provide outstanding fire protection while maintaining zero fire fatalities, pioneering AFD's efforts to start the accreditation process with the Center for Public Safety Excellence, finalizing construction of Fire Station 203 on Cameron Mills Road, collaborating with stakeholders to create an Alexandria Fire Foundation to support employees and their families, and further incorporating data analytics into decision making and improved communications.

"You always knew that Chief Smedley cared about what happened here," said Evans, who worked with Smedley for six years. "He cared about the safety of the



Fire Chief Corey Smedley with an honorary city street sign at his retirement celebration Jan 9 at Charles Houston Recreation Center.

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

community but he also cared about the employees – he cared that they have a great work environment, that they enjoy their work and grow in their work. All of those things matter to him."

James Schwartz will serve as Interim Fire Chief while the city conducts a national search for Smedley's permanent successor. An Alexandria resident, Schwartz

SEE SMEDLEY RETIRES, PAGE 11

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PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

“Mango” Mike Anderson, shown with his wife Donna, will be the Grand Marshal of the Alexandria St. Patrick’s Day Parade. The parade will take place March 2 at 12:15 p.m. www.ballyshanners.org

‘Mango’ Mike Named Grand Marshal Anderson to lead St. Patrick’s Day Parade.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Local restaurateur and Living Legend of Alexandria “Mango” Mike Anderson has been named as the Grand Marshal of the city’s 41st annual St. Patrick’s Day Parade.

Anderson will lead the parade, which will take place March 2 beginning at 12:15 p.m., through the streets of Old Town.

“This was quite a surprise,” said Anderson. “What an honor it is being named this year’s Grand Marshal. I am humbled and will do my best to live up to the 40 that have gone before me.”

Traditionally held the first Saturday in March, the parade features pipe bands, Irish dance schools, community groups, and other performers and entertainment.

Anderson and his wife Donna, with the help of their daughter Danielle Mammel and son-in-law David Mammel, own and operate HomeGrown Restaurant Group, a six-restaurant group located in the Carlyle and Del Ray neighborhoods of Alexandria. The group includes Pork Barrel BBQ, Holy Cow, The Del Ray Pop Up Bar, Tequila & Taco, Sweet Fire Donna’s and Whiskey & Oyster.

“We can’t wait to see such a fabulous local celebrity lead the parade down King Street,” said parade organizers in making the announcement.

Anderson has been a fixture in the local restaurant scene since 1979 when he opened Shooter McGees. Beginning as a dishwasher at King’s Landing at the age of 22, Anderson has gone on to own and operate 20 restaurants in the DMV area.

His most known claim to fame, Mango Mike’s, a Caribbean restaurant located on the west side of Alexandria, was Anderson’s longest running venture, serving the community for 19 years. A second location in Bethany Beach is still open today.

Recognition for Anderson’s leadership in the food service industry includes a 1997 RAMMY (Restaurant Association of Metropolitan Washington) Award for Mango Mike’s as Best New Restaurant, the 2013 Chamber of Commerce Small Business of the Year Award for Holy Cow, and the Restaurateur of the Year Award from the Virginia Tourism Bureau.

Anderson was named the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce Business Leader of the Year in 1999 and served as the organization’s Chairman of the Board in 2011. In 2014, he was named a Living Legend of Alexandria. Additionally, he was a founding board member of the Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association and past chair of the Alexandria Small Business Development Center.

For parade route or more information, visit www.ballyshanners.org.

See Senior Living, page 8

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The 2024 officers of the Departmental Progressive Club pose for a photo following the installation of officers Jan. 12 at DPC headquarters.



Mark Harper and Merrick Malone embrace following the installation of officers Jan. 12 at Departmental Progressive Club headquarters.

Lewis, Malone Lead DPC Officers

Departmental Progressive Club installs 2024 board.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

The Departmental Progressive Club celebrated the installation of the organization's 2024 officers Jan. 12 at the DPC Headquarters on Gibbon Street.

City Council member Aliya Gaskins officiated the installation of officers, which included Christopher J. Lewis as president of the DPC and Merrick T. Malone as vice president.

"My dad and six of his friends were just teenagers when they formed this club in 1927," said DPC member Mark Harper. "They formed the Departmental Progressive Club to provide a service that the city was



Board member Donal Goff holds a commemorative shovel to recognize his contributions as a Second Century Founder of the Department Progressive Club Jan. 12 at DPC headquarters.

denying people of color."

Harper recalled stories from his mother and aunts about how they "pushed the guys to do something."

"The founding of this club was about possibilities," Harper said. "It was about having the will to hold ourselves together, to be ac-

"[The founders] formed the Departmental Progressive Club to provide a service that the city was denying people of color."

— DPC member Mark Harper

countable to all our people and not rely on the system. These founders provided not just social gatherings but meetings on political issues. I'm proud of them."

Other DPC officers include: Elijah Griffin Sr., financial secretary; Scott A. Price, treasurer; William E. Campbell, house committee chairman; Ramon McMillian, assistant house committee chairman; William E. Chesley, recording secretary; Lawrence P. Robinson, sergeant-at-arms; and L'Allegro Smith, Donal Goff and Daniel Selby as board members.

"Carrying on my family's legacy in this club is in my heart and in my blood," Harper added. "I think there is a story to tell here, that we can do this and that we have a voice."

NEWS BRIEFS

\$5 Million Damage in Warehouse Fire

The Alexandria Fire Department fire marshals' initial investigation of the fire at 4407 Wheeler Ave. revealed that the fire was accidental and electrical in nature, causing approximately \$1.5 million in structural damage and an additional estimated \$3.5 million in damage to the contents of all impacted businesses located in the commercial strip warehouse. The incident, initially reported as a fire alarm around 9:20 p.m. Tuesday, Jan.

2, was quickly upgraded to a 3-alarm fire, bringing more than 100 firefighters from AFD and surrounding jurisdictions to support the fire attack.

With assistance from Arlington County and Fairfax County fire departments, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and the George Mason University and Fairfax City Fire Department Drone Team, the Fire Marshal's Office conducted an origin and cause investigation over the course of three days. While the investigation took place, firefighting activities continued to address hot spots and to extinguish fire debris. Investigators identified a

room in the warehouse as the point of origin, which is where they also found several electrical components. The building's fire alarm system and smoke alarms activated at the time of the incident.

Among the businesses affected by the fire is Jeffrey's Catering – a key provider for the Meals on Wheels program. The owners have made the necessary arrangements to continue services in an alternative location.

No civilians were injured as a result of the fire. One firefighter sustained a minor injury, was treated, and released the same day as the incident. The building was condemned due to fire and structural damage.

The property value saved is an estimated \$696,720.

3 Streets To Be Renamed

Effective Thursday, June 20, the City of Alexandria will rename three streets currently named for Confederate figures and rededicate a fourth.

The four impacted streets are the first to be impacted during what will be a 15-year process of renaming and reded-

SEE NEWS BRIEFS, PAGE 5

Investing in Public Safety

BY SENATOR ADAM EBBIN

Legislators, the public, and lobbyists alike are starting to get the hang of the new General Assembly building, and legislation is now flowing through the committee process. While we have only been in Richmond a few weeks, it feels like we have been here for much longer.

Last Wednesday, I took the gavel of the Public Safety Subcommittee for the first time. Over the course of the next month, the Senate Finance Committee will be working to report the Senate's Budget to the full body for its consideration.

Under the leadership of Democrats in the General Assembly, over the last four years, minimum salaries for state level public safety officers increased \$10,769 on average for entry level positions and \$19,918 on average for the highest ranked positions. This includes correctional staff at the Department of Corrections (DOC) and Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), Virginia State Police (VSP) of-

icers, and also deputy sheriffs and regional jails officers.

Between 2021 and 2023, we also provided significant bonuses for law enforcement and public safety officers. That included \$4,000 for DOC and DJJ correctional staff, and \$3,000 for deputy sheriffs and regional jail officers. We also provided \$5,000 bonuses for VSP officers, as well as up to \$2,000 for relocation expenses, and bonuses of between 2.0 and 8.0 percent of an officer's salary. All of these were in addition to normal bonuses provided by agencies within their existing operating budgets.

As the new Chairman of the Public Safety Subcommittee of Senate Finance, I look forward to continuing that track record of investment to keep Virginia communities safe.

THIS PAST SUNDAY, I hosted a Town Hall at Alexandria City High School along with Delegates Charniele Herring, Alfonso Lopez, and Adele McClure. Special thanks to Virginia public radio journalist Michael Lee Pope for moderating our discussion.

We fielded numerous questions about the proposal to relocate the Washington Capitals and Washington Wizards to an arena in Potomac Yard, including project financing, the potential transportation impact along the Rt. 1 Corridor, and other quality-of-life issues. For more information about the proposed arena project, please visit www.MonumentalALX.com

In addition to discussing the Monumental proposal, we answered questions on an array of other topics, including the proposal to build a casino on the Silver Line Metro corridor in Fairfax County, gun violence prevention, and abortion access.

Thank you again to everyone who came out; for those who are still looking to provide community input, you are still able to fill out my constituent survey, which can be found at adamebbin.com/survey

It is my continued honor to represent the people of the 39th Senate District.

My legislative email address is SenatorEbbin@senate.virginia.gov. You can also reach us at our new Richmond phone number 804-698-7539.

Bills, Bills, Bills

BY DELEGATE PAUL KRIZEK

We are in the midst of the second full week of session down here in Richmond, and our work is picking up quickly! As I reported in last week's column, I am now on nine subcommittees, and serve as the Chairman of three subcommittees: Campaign Finance in Privileges & Elections, ABC & Gaming in General Laws, and Transportation & Public Safety in Appropriations.

The Speaker and his staff have nearly completed referring the almost 1,600 pieces of legislation introduced by me and my colleagues in the House, and subcommittee dockets are full this week.

Today I began the day bright and early at 7 a.m., chairing the Campaign Finance subcommittee where we heard several introduced bills related to campaign donations and reporting requirements. After I adjourned that meeting at 7:30 a.m., I hurried down the hall to the Natural Resources subcommittee on which I sit, where I also had two bills up for a hearing.

This week alone, I had four other bills come up for their first hearing, all of which left subcommittee on unanimous votes. Part of my solar energy bill package, HB 198 directs the Department of Energy to produce a report on the benefits and full potential of solar energy in the Commonwealth. HB 522 empowers the ABC Board of Directors to modernize its online advertising regulations. HB 526 reduces the registration fee for charitable organizations

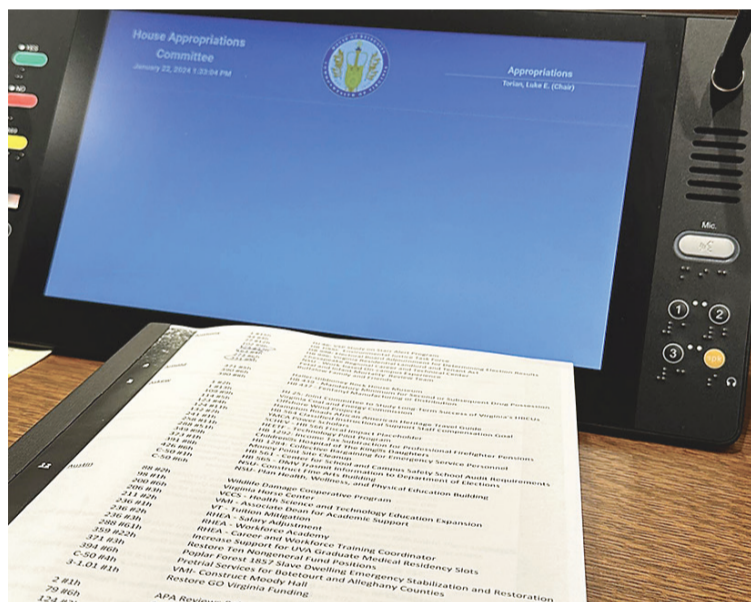
in the Commonwealth. HB 1349 streamlines the process for obtaining an ABC license for performing arts centers. I predict that by this week's end, I will present more than half of my 24 pieces of legislation before subcommittee.

Be sure to visit the Legislative Information System to learn more about legislation my colleagues and I have introduced: <https://lis.virginia.gov>.

As we approach "crossover" on Feb. 13, subcommittee dockets and House floor sessions will grow ever longer. "Crossover" is the day by which all House bills must be voted on and sent to the Senate, and vice versa.

In addition to bills, work has already begun on the House Budget. On Monday, Appropriations members like me heard testimony from all other Delegates on their three priority budget amendment proposals. This presentation is a unique opportunity to hear about budgetary items that will benefit Virginians in all corners of the Commonwealth. Over the next few weeks, I look forward to sharing more of the budget items I requested that will impact the 16th District. I invite you to visit the Virginia State Budget website if you are interested in viewing all budget amendments requested by General Assembly members: <https://budget.lis.virginia.gov/>.

As you know, I also meet daily with dozens of advocacy groups and constituents who visit Richmond to speak to me about their positions on legislation important



View of my desk during the Appropriations Committee hearing on Member Budget Amendments

to them. I rely on constituents sharing their thoughts on bills to inform how I plan to vote on these issues. Please contact my office if you want to visit me in the new

General Assembly Building during this year's session. We are happy to arrange a meeting and an opportunity to sit in the House Gallery to watch a Floor Session.

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13th Anniversary at Port City

To celebrate thirteen years of brewing, Port City Brewing Company will release COLOSSAL Anniversary Ale which is a rich, full-bodied old ale pouring a deep mahogany color and is accentuated by ruby highlights. Sitting at 9.8%, the beer features flavors of dried fruit and toffee which are complemented by a subtle hop presence. This beer is intentionally crafted to be cellared for months, or even years. The beer will be available on draft and in bottles throughout DC, Maryland, and Virginia.

“As the first modern packaging brewery in Metro DC, we’ve seen a lot of change in the beer world over these 13 years,” says owner Bill Butcher. “We are grateful for our community’s support, and look forward to celebrating with everyone.”

Port City will introduce COLOSSAL Anniversary Ale during a two-day release party at the brewery on Friday, Feb. 2 and Saturday, Feb. 3 with market release events shortly following.

In addition to the Anniversary Ale, Port City is releasing a new Italian Pilsner called il Palio. “The beer pours a brilliant straw

blonde, hopped with Saphir and Adeena hops, the aroma and flavor is a rhythmic blend of citrus and herbal notes,” says Port City.

You can also find a few vintage barrel-aged releases at their celebration on Saturday, Feb. 3. Port City is tapping a COLOSSAL Six aged since 2020, Woodford Reserve Barrel-Aged Porter, and a Maple Rye Catoctin Creek Barrel-Aged COLOSSAL One.

RELEASE PARTIES

Tasting Room 13th Anniversary Celebration
Saturday, Feb. 3, 2024, 12-6 p.m.
Port City Brewing Company, 3950 Wheeler Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22304
<https://www.portcitybrewing.com/event-details/13th-anniversary-celebration-1>

Alexandria Port City vs Catoctin Creek Pairing Menu
Sunday, Feb. 4, 2024 Time 4-6PM
Hank’s Oyster Bar – Old Town, 818 N St Asaph St, Alexandria, VA 22314

Alexandria COLOSSAL Anniversary Ale Celebration
Saturday, Feb. 10, 2024, 4-7PM
Chadwicks - 203 Strand Street, Alexandria, VA 22314

Debra Roepke Appointed Executive Director of Alexandria Seaport Foundation

The Alexandria Seaport Foundation Board of Directors has Debra Roepke as Executive Director. A distinguished nonprofit leader and recognized expert in volunteer engagement and management, Roepke will spearhead a transformative journey for the Foundation, leading initiatives to expand the Foundation’s capacity, enhancing the skills-based Apprenticeship Program, and aligning efforts with the evolving needs and aspirations of the young adults the foundation serves.

Roepke is known for her role as the founder and longtime leader of Computer CORE, an Alexandria-based nonprofit dedicated to helping underserved adults achieve career goals through foundational computer and professional skills. She has demonstrated exceptional leadership in building and nurturing effective organizations. Having successfully transitioned Computer CORE into a community asset, Roepke’s influence extends beyond the local level.

Her national-level contributions include

a pivotal role in a collaborative partnership between the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and the Department of Energy. Working on a groundbreaking project, Roepke collaborated with nonprofit utilities across the country to drive the expansion of solar energy projects.

Most recently, Roepke served as Seaport’s interim executive director from March 2023 until her appointment.

“We are thrilled that Deb will lead the Seaport Foundation for the long term,” said Board Chair Helen Morris. “Deb has led transformational work to strengthen our mission as our interim and our work every day to advance our Apprentices.”

The Alexandria Seaport Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that builds skills, self-worth, and community for young adults ages 18-23, who need direction and support. The Seaport curriculum includes carpentry, on-the-water, and boat-building instruction along with training for life and workplace skills.

changes, had opportunities to attend public hearings or send feedback to City Council. The name Charity Earley was suggested by residents in place of the original name that came from the HARC list, and Thomasina Jordan and Harriet Jacobs were the names that residents of those respective streets indicated they most preferred.

The City of Alexandria is committed to making progress but wants to ensure that any changes create the least disruption possible to residents and businesses. An up-to-date Street Renaming FAQ page covers what residents and businesses must do if affected. City Staff will provide additional information to impacted residents and businesses on each street in advance of the change. If you aren’t sure whether you will be impacted, reference the Confederate Street Renaming Map.

NEWS BRIEFS

FROM PAGE 3

icating roadways currently named for Confederate figures. The City is committed to reckoning with its past and the legacy of a 1953 ordinance that ruled that all streets running North-South in the city should be named for Confederate officers. Alexandria City Council voted unanimously on Saturday, January 20, to undertake these changes as the first steps in the City’s Confederate Street Renaming initiative, which aims to foster a more inclusive community in the city.

The Historic Alexandria Research Committee (HARC) compiled a list of streets in Alexandria named for Confederate figures as well as a list of 63 new names for consideration by City Council and the City Council Naming Committee. Community members, particularly those most impacted by



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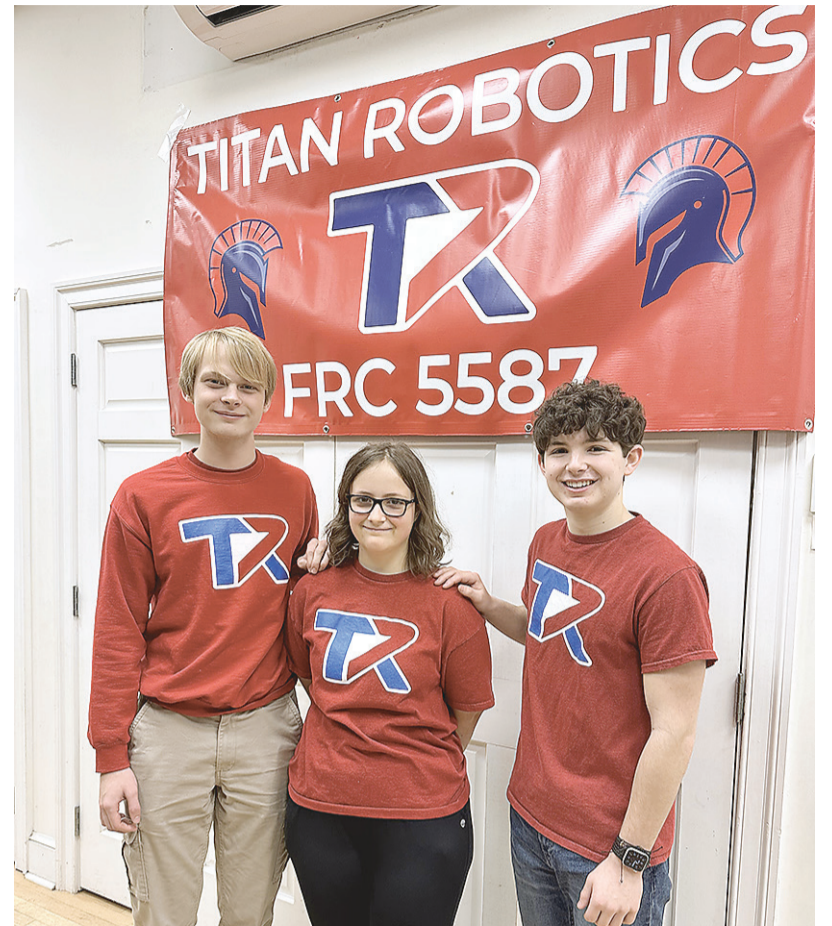


TITAN ROBOTICS

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET



Titan Robotics team members pose for a photo as the 2024 FIRST Robotics Challenge gets underway Jan. 6 at Beverley Hills United Methodist Church.



Titan Robotics team members Taylor Hoganson, outreach lead, Megan Trueblood, marketing lead, and Charlie Sokolove, team president, at the FIRST Robotics Challenge kickoff Jan. 6 at Beverley Hills United Methodist Church.

Circuit Breakers

Titan Robotics begins 10th season.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Titan Robotics kicked off their 10th season as the 2024 FIRST Robotics Challenge got underway Jan. 6 at Beverley Hills United Methodist Church.

FIRST Robotics announced the game Crescendo for the challenge, which is a worldwide competition for student teams to build and test robots. FIRST announces the high school challenge in early January and teams compete in early March with their robots.

“Our high school robotics team received the challenge today and we now have eight weeks to complete that challenge,” said team member Megan Trueblood.

FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) was founded in 1989 to inspire young people’s interest and participation in science and technology. The organization sponsors annual challenges for student teams to test the robots they build in a competition of as many as 3,500 teams from around the world.

Once the challenge was announced, the Titan Robotics team began to brainstorm and strategize for this year’s competition.

“Our robots are built completely from scratch,” said team president Charlie Sokolove. “Then we have to design, manufacture, program and test the robot all from scratch on our own. We need to have a competition-ready robot by March 1 and hope to qualify for the World Championships in Texas.”



The Titan Robotics team strategizes at the first meeting of the 2024 FIRST Robotics Competition Jan. 6 at Beverley Hills United Methodist Church.

Titan Robotics will compete for a chance to win local, regional and global titles. Students have eight weeks to design, manufacture, assemble, and program a robot for the game.

During this time, some team members prepare a presentation detailing the ways the team contributes to spreading STEM in the community to enter the competition for the Impact Award. This award, the most prestigious FIRST award, is given to teams whose work serves as a model for oth-

“We have to design, manufacture, program and test the robot all from scratch on our own.”

— Titan Robotics team president
Charlie Sokolove

ers. The Titan Robotics team has won this award at the local and regional level for the past two seasons. If Titan Robotics is successful again this year, they will head to the FIRST Championships in Houston in April to compete with other teams from around the world.

“Part of our community outreach is sponsoring programs that are free for all students to participate,” said team member Taylor Hoganson. “We have student mentors and create teams at elementary schools and do STEM nights at schools.”

Christina Lytle, whose daughter participated in Titan Robotics prior to her graduation in 2019, is now a volunteer with the program.

“Titan Robotics gives students a window into what their professional lives could be like,” Lytle said. “It gives students a reason to want to take challenging math and science courses and gives them real world skills that employers value. Local company Building Momentum is one of our sponsors and have employed our kids. And we have alumni working for top companies like Space X, Lockheed-Martin, and Tesla. And Google is a mentor for the team.”

A goal of Titan Robotics, a student-led organization founded in 2014, is to spread awareness of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics to the local community by competing every year in the FIRST Robotics Competition and participating in numerous outreach events.

Added Hoganson, “We work hard to get community sponsors so that these programs are free for all, including the students we work with at the Campagna Center. We want people to know what we are doing.”

Learn more on the Titan Robotics website: <https://frc5587.org>.

MLK DAY BLACK AUTHORS

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

“We want to promote literacy for all children but we think it is specifically necessary to support that effort with minority students.”

— NAACP representative
Keisha Culbreth Brooks



Authors Elana M. Neely and Dr. Willie H. Smith hold up copies of their books at the MLK Day Book Nook Dedication and Book Give-Away Jan. 13 at Charles Houston Recreation Center.

The Write Stuff

Neely, Smith highlight MLK Day book giveaway.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Noted authors Elana M. Neely and Dr. Willie H. Smith were the featured speakers at the MLK Day Book Nook Dedication and Book Giveaway held Jan. 13 at the Charles Houston Recreation Center.

The event was sponsored by the Alexandria Chapter of the NAACP in partnership with the Alexandria West Rotary Club.

“We want to promote literacy for all children but we think it is specifically necessary to support that effort with minority students,” said the NAACP’s Keisha Culbreth Brooks. “We are making sure that they understand what it is to be literate and how many doors books can open for you.”

Neely and Smith each read excerpts from their books. Neely is the author of the value-based children’s book series entitled “Blessings for Living,” which combines “shared lessons are a blessing = BLESSONS.” The books encompass 30 life lessons taught in a way that a child would understand.

Smith read from “Eighth Chop From the Top,” an autobiography that chronicles his beginnings in rural North Carolina through his career with the federal government. The book is described as “a compelling story of culture, environment, race, and a range of encounters of a black man in the United States during a time of opportunity and change.”

“We wanted to have authors come in today and be representative of individuals who look like them,” Brooks said.

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Authors Elana M. Neely and Dr. Willie H. Smith discuss their books at the MLK Day Book Nook Dedication and Book Give-Away Jan. 13 at Charles Houston Recreation Center.

Prior to the event, organizers had collected donated books by Black authors, which were distributed to children as part of the Book Nook dedication.

“We know that with technology advancements these children have devices and so many other things that they can be doing,” Brooks said. “But the touch, the tactile piece of a book, is just something that we are losing and we want to make sure children understand the significance and importance of books.”

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Preserve Access to Telehealth For Seniors with Medicare

Current flexibilities will end on Dec. 31 unless the Biden administration and Congress take action.

U.S. Sen. Mark R. Warner (D-VA) joined U.S. Sens. Brian Schatz (D-HI) and bipartisan, bicameral lawmakers to urge the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to work with Congress to ensure Medicare beneficiaries maintain access to telehealth. Current pandemic-era flexibilities will expire on Dec. 31, 2024 without further action, forcing seniors to adapt to new care routines. In a letter to HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra, the lawmakers underscored the urgent need to make pandemic-era telehealth flexibilities permanent.

"We urge you to work with Congress to ensure that all Medicare beneficiaries have permanent access to telehealth services before the temporary waivers expire on Dec. 31, 2024," the lawmakers wrote. "Enacting permanent telehealth legislation will require collaboration between HHS and Congress in the year ahead. We urge you to communicate to Congress and the public the authorities, appropriations, resources, and other supports needed to achieve this goal."

"Telehealth is a cost-effective way to improve access to care, especially for rural and underserved communities," the lawmakers con-

tinued. "Telehealth also allows patients to choose a medical provider that best suits their personal medical needs. Medicare beneficiaries have come to rely on expanded access to telehealth and are satisfied with the care they have received."

Sen. Warner has consistently led efforts to expand telehealth accessibility. He is an original co-sponsor and a tireless advocate for the Creating Opportunities Now for Necessary and Effective Care Technologies (CONNECT) for Health Act, legislation that would expand coverage of telehealth services through Medicare and make permanent COVID-19 telehealth flexibilities. He has also introduced bipartisan legislation to increase access to telehealth services for individuals with substance use disorder and repeatedly pushed on the DEA to institute long-term flexibilities for the prescription of controlled substances via telehealth.

Joining Sens. Warner and Schatz in sending the letter were U.S. Sens. Roger Wicker (R-MS), Ben Cardin (D-MD), John Thune (R-SD), and Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS), and U.S. Representatives Mike Thompson (D-CA-04), David Schweikert (R-AZ-01), Doris Matsui (D-CA-07), and Bill Johnson (R-OH-06).

Tight Knit Circle of Friends

Women gather each week to create and connect.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

The soft click-clack of knitting needles is barely audible over the chatter that fills the library of Margaret Overcash's McLean home. She and three of her oldest friends have gathered for their weekly knitting session.

"We knit, but it's mostly social. Sort of way to staying connected," she said.

They meet each Wednesday to stitch and chat. Over the years they've knitted blankets, scarves and sweaters, some for charity and

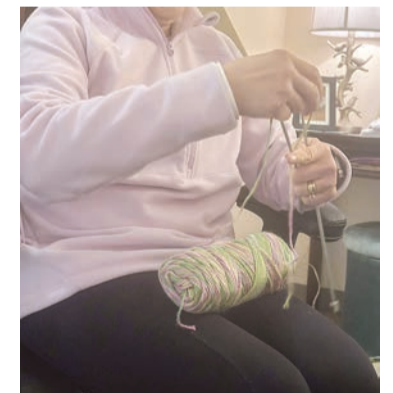


PHOTO COURTESY OF MARGARET OVERCASH
A knitting enthusiast, Margaret Overcash shares her love of the art with her friends.

others for gifts.

The woman began knitting as a group about 10 years ago when Overcash took a community college knitting course on a whim. She gained a love for the art form and wanted to share it with her friends.

SEE WOMEN GATHER, PAGE 11
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ENTERTAINMENT



The “Visible Touch: A Look at Texture” can be seen Feb. 2-24, 2024 at Del Ray Artisans Gallery.

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/>

JAN. 5-27, 2024

“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). DelRay-Artisans.org/exhibits

JAN. 11 TO FEB. 18

A Delicate Balance Sculpture. At the Athenaeum, Alexandria. Curated by Jackie Hoysted and produced by Veronica Szalus, A Delicate Balance is an all-sculpture show that explores the idea of achieving equilibrium. Perhaps more than ever, today we have a greater awareness of how everything operates in such a delicate balance - be it ecosystems, politics, relationships or personal well-being. We must navigate life without tipping too much in one direction so that we can strive for harmony, but at times something radical is required to achieve it.

JAN. 19-28

Alexandria Restaurant Week. For 10 days and two weekends, more than 70 restaurants in Alexandria will offer a \$30, \$40 or \$50 in-person dinner for one during Alexandria Restaurant Week, January 19 to 28, 2024. Special menus are available in-person at participating restaurants throughout Alexandria’s neighborhoods, including Old Town, Del Ray, Carlyle, Eisenhower and the West End. The revised three-tiered pricing structure reflects feedback from Alexandria Restaurant Week participants following the 2023 summer promotion.

FEB. 2-24

The “Visible Touch: A Look at Texture” exhibit features art that explores texture through physical form or visual illusion. Visitors will be allowed to touch some of the art (pieces are marked). Enjoy the visual and the tactile experience! View at Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria VA. Opening Reception: Friday, February 2, 7-9 p.m. Open Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays & Sundays 12-6 p.m. (Closed February 25). DelRay-Artisans.org/exhibits

SATURDAY/FEB. 3

Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Missing Maestro. 3 p.m. At George Washington Masonic Memorial, 101 Callahan Drive, Alexandria. When the orchestra is ready to begin their concert and suddenly discover the Maestro is nowhere to be found they begin to panic. Thankfully the world’s greatest detective is available and agrees to take the case. All the musicians are suspects and thus Sherlock Holmes must investigate each of the instrument families to deduce who is behind the mystery. With Enrico Lopez-Yanez, Guest Conductor.

FRIDAY/FEB. 9

The Thirteen Presents “Path of Miracles.” 7:30 p.m. At St. Luke’s



Alexandria Restaurant Week is Jan. 19 to 28, 2024 at restaurants in Alexandria.

Episcopal Church, 8009 Ft. Hunt Road, Alexandria. In Path of Miracles, British composer Joby Talbot takes the listener on a musical journey on the mystical Camino de Santiago de Compostela. The contemplative progression of the Camino is built into the structure of the work, with the four movements of the work titled after the four main posts along the Camino. Talbot incorporates various medieval texts in many languages and musical styles as diverse as those of Taiwanese Bunun people and medieval chant. Paired with projected images of the cosmos by renowned Italian virtual designer Camilla Tassi, The Thirteen’s performances of Path of Miracles promise to be replete with beauty and wonder.

SATURDAY/FEB. 10

37th Annual Mount Vernon Town Meeting. At Mount Vernon High School, 8515 Old Mount Vernon Road. Times: 7:45 a.m. to 9:25 a.m. - Exhibit Hall Open; 9:30 a.m. to noon - Program: Speakers, Audience Q&A and Virtual Tour; Noon to 1:30 p.m. - Taste of Mount Vernon.

FEB. 10-11

Alexandria Symphony Announces ASO at 80 Project

Saturday, February 10, 2024 at 7:30 p.m. at Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center; Sunday, February 11, 2024 at 3:00 p.m. at George Washington Masonic Memorial.

Four original pieces, commissioned in honor of the 80th anniversary of the Alexandria Symphony Orchestra (ASO), will be presented as part of the ASO at 80 Project. Led by Music Director James Ross, the commissions will premiere throughout the 2023-2024 season as introductions to four of the five performances.

On February 10 and 11, 2024, the program entitled “Do Not Go Gentle” opens with Milad Yousuffi’s Aurora, drawn from his experience as an Afghan refugee and inspired by a poem dedicated to his mother. His works express both his pride in his country of birth and his longing to return. Visit www.alexsym.org.

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.

JANUARY

Wed. 24: Herman’s Hermits starring Peter Noone \$55.00
Fri. 26: Who’s Bad – The Ultimate Michael Jackson Experience \$39.50
Sat. 27: Dar Williams with The Nields \$45.00 SOLD OUT!
Sun. 28: Forever Tina – A Tribute to the Queen of Rock N’ Roll \$39.50

FEBRUARY

Fri. 2: Will Downing \$79.50
Sat. 3: Will Downing \$79.50 SOLD OUT!
Tue. 6: Rosanne Cash: ReInventing The Wheel 1993-2023 with John Leventhal and Band \$79.50
Wed. 7: Rosanne Cash: ReInventing The Wheel 1993-2023 with John Leventhal and Band \$79.50

Thu. 8: Aaron Watson w/ Jenna Paultette \$29.50

Fri. 9: Dave Hollister \$55.00 SOLD OUT!

Wed. 14: Kevin Ross \$65.00

Thu. 15: The Amy Winehouse Celebration: back to BACK TO BLACK \$29.50

Fri. 16: NRBQ \$45.00

Sat. 17: The Dramatics featuring L.J. Reynolds \$59.50

Sun. 18: Neil Diamond Tribute starring DAVID CARLIN KING and The Gold Diamond Band \$45.00

Thu. 22: Corey Smith Band w/ Jeb Gipson – All Standing in the Flex Stage! Doors 6pm \$35.00

Fri. 23: TWEET \$45.00

Sat. 24: Tarsha Fitzgerald Presents DEVOTION: An Earth Wind & Fire Experience \$39.50

Sun. 25: Daryl Davis Presents: Thanks For The Memories 2023! \$39.50

Wed. 28: Sara Evans \$69.50 2nd Night Added!

Thu. 29: Sara Evans \$69.50 SOLD OUT!

Washington Legacy Foundation Announces Essay Contest

Competition open to 7th and 8th grade students.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

The George Washington Legacy Foundation has announced an essay competition for 7th and 8th grade students focusing on the

legacy of George Washington and his impact on Alexandria.

“We aim to inspire students to better understand Washington’s multifaceted relationship with Alexandria as a landowner, community leader, and pivotal political figure,” said Marion Moon, the Foundation’s president. “This is a unique chance for budding historians in our community to showcase their knowledge, analysis, and writing skills.”

The contest is open to stu-

SEE WASHINGTON, PAGE 11

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Obituary

Obituary

Legals

Sally Ann Kernick Krahn

March 7, 1949 to January 9, 2024



Sally Ann Kernick Krahn, of Alexandria, Virginia, died on Tuesday, January 9, 2024, peacefully in Luxor, Egypt, age 74, while on vacation with her family and friends—after a 4-year battle with breast and ovarian cancer. She was the beloved wife of 42 years to Steven Lee Krahn. She is survived by her children Daniel Roy Krahn (Kristen Sue Sefcik) and Elizabeth O'Leary Krahn (Brian John Gullekson); grandmother to Shane William Krahn Gullekson and Isla Clare Krahn Gullekson; she is also survived by her brothers Thomas Winston (Susan) Kernick and Richard "Rock" O'Leary (Linda) Kernick and sister Phyllis

J. Kernick. Sally was a proud graduate of Penn Hills High School and earned a BA in History from Michigan State University in 1971. She worked in university housing administration at Iowa State and the University of Wisconsin (Madison, where she first met her husband-to-be). She moved to Virginia in 1978 to work for the Closeup Foundation until Dan was born. While being a mother was her most important job, her love of books led her to work part-time at several bookstores while Dan & Elizabeth were young. After they were in middle school, she was an executive assistant at ASIS, International and the International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association; she also managed the Ronald McDonald House at INOVA Fairfax Hospital. However, working to improve the community was Sally's passion, she served as aide to Alexandria Councilman Michael Jackson and Mayor Kerry Donley; she was a tireless fundraising volunteer at Blessed Sacrament Catholic School, where she was awarded the Martin T. Quinn award for stewardship; and more recently was she very active in a number of ministries at Our Lady Queen of Peace in Arlington. Sally traveled the world with her family and friends leaving her infectious laugh, optimism, and joyous smile with any new friends she made. She and Steve hosted countless exchange students from around the world...Scottish soccer boys, Ballet girls, friends from Alexandria's sister city, Caen, and the beloved Naka Family from Kosovo. Sally made the "Yellow House on top of the Hill" home to so many people. The world is a better place for the light that Sally Ann brought into it. She will be long remembered for the generosity, hospitality, love, and joy she extended to others. A funeral service will take place on Saturday, February 17 at 12 p.m. at Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church (2700 19th St S, Arlington, VA 22204). Family and friends will be received following the service. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Scholarship Fund of Alexandria, 3330 King St, Alexandria, VA 22302.

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Smedley Retires as AFD/EMS Chief

FROM PAGE 1

retired in 2021 as the Deputy County Manager for public safety and technology in Arlington. Prior to that, he served in the Arlington County Fire Department for 32 years, including the last 11 as Chief.

Schwartz led the Unified Command effort at the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001, where ACFD was the lead responding agency to the terrorist attack that killed 184 people when American Airlines Flight 77 was hijacked and crashed into the Pentagon, killing all 64 people on the plane and 125 people in the Pentagon.

“One of the best things I’d like to be remembered for is building relationships and just engaging with the community,” Smedley said. “This is one of the greatest communities in the world and I just love the city of Alexandria.”



Norma Jean Smedley gives a congratulatory kiss to her son Fire Chief Corey Smedley Jan. 9 at Charles Houston Recreation Center.



Fire Chief Corey Smedley, center, is congratulated by Public Information Officer Raytevia Evans and Special Assistant to the Chief Chris Thompson at Smedley’s retirement celebration Jan. 9 at Charles Houston Recreation Center.

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

A Bit More to Say



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

To dive deeper into my Kenny-with-cancer dilemma, it’s quite possible that my future treatment, or lack thereof, will come down to whether I restart my cancer treatment and irreparably harm my kidneys (leading to dialysis) or don’t restart my cancer medicine and subsequently don’t damage my kidneys/don’t need dialysis but as a consequence, the cancer tumors grow unmedicated which leads to predictable complications that don’t end well for me.

This damned if I do, damned if I don’t situation reminds me of a long ago Three Stooges episode titled “Restless Knights (1935), a period-type story about a time in British history. The Stooges got in trouble for something and were sentenced to death. As they stood in a front of a firing squad, Curly asked if there was another way to die. The man in charge said he could be burned at the stake or hung. Larry asks Curly how he’d like to die. Curly says: “I’d rather be burned at the stake.” Larry asks “Why?” Curly replies: “A hot stake is better than a cold chop.” And Curly laughs, sort of proud of his reasoning. When I consider my cancer verses kidney dialysis choice, I’m not the least bit amused (except as I remember this exchange between Larry and Curly).

Unfortunately, my two options are not mutually exclusive. They could happen simultaneously if the lack of a clear alternative/plan “B” exists. Which if I were to hazard a guess, is not an uncommon outcome for a cancer patient when the side effects of the treatment overwhelm the body’s the body’s immune system and party, so to speak comes to an end. A ‘party’ which, for me anyhow, has been going on for nearly 15 years, to my oncologist’s surprise. He of the original; “13 month to two years” prognosis offered up during the original Team Lourie meeting in late Feb. 2009.

And to invoke the late Maurice Chevalier, “I remember it well.” It was, after all New Year’s Day in 2009 when my symptoms, which had manifested a few days earlier with pain in my left ribcage migrating to my right, got the best of me. On that day, I had difficulty catching my breath/breathing (inhaling in particular) and when getting up off the couch became similarly difficult, I realized that a trip to the Emergency Room was necessary. (On a holiday no less, but that’s how much abnormal pain I was experiencing.) At the time, I never imagined that this initial visit would lead to a stage IV non-small cell lung cancer diagnosis eight weeks or so later. That’s when we all met my oncologist for the first time and heard my “terminal” prognosis. Out of the blue is how I describe it. But after the hearing the oncologist read the reports from all the various doctors (pulmonologist, thoracic surgeon, general surgeon – to include the biopsy, and pathologist) I had visited in the previous two months since that initial Emergency Room visit, I was perplexed as to how and why a lifelong non-smoker in otherwise perfect health, with no cancer history in my immediate family, could be so diagnosed at age 54 and a half.

But that was then, this is now (age 69) . An age when I don’t believe I have as many lives left as I did then. Though I think I’ve taken cancer’s best shot – and lived 14+ years to write about it, I’ve been worried/anticipated this doomsday-type scenario when the complication of side effects might lead to the problem I’ve written about today. Not that I’m describing/feeling that this recent turn of health events/side effect trouble as some sort of self-fulfilling inevitability, nevertheless; I’m not particularly surprised, more grateful that it took so long to get it here. I can’t really say I feel as Lou Gehrig felt on his “luckiest man on the face of the earth” farewell at Yankee stadium, but I have lived to see the Red Sox win two more World Series since I was diagnosed and if I had known then that I’d outlive my prognosis by – 13 years, I might have thought I was the luckiest man. Given that non-small cell lung cancer stage IV was my original diagnosis, the leading cause of cancer deaths by far; in fact, as many deaths as the next three cancer groups combined, (breast, prostate and colon) to have survived – for any reason has been a miracle. You won’t hear any complaints from me.

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

Washington Legacy Foundation Announces Essay Contest

FROM PAGE 9

dents enrolled in any Alexandria Junior High School. Public and private school students are included. Essays should be original works of 700-1,000 words on “George Washington’s Involvement with Alexandria, Virginia.” The prize for the winning essay is \$500.

Submissions will be evaluated by a panel of judges. Entries should be emailed to shawn.eyer@washingtonlegacyfoundation.org. Deadline is Jan. 31 at 11:59 p.m.

The winner will be honored at a community breakfast on Feb. 19 during the city’s annual Washington’s Birthday celebration. In addition to \$500, they will have their work published online by the George Washington Legacy Foundation to educate the wider community about Alexandria’s ties to America’s first President.

The essay competition is sponsored by Alexandria’s Fraternal Order of Eagles Aerie #871.

Full contest guidelines, eligibility terms, submission instructions and foundation background are available at <https://washingtonlegacyfoundation.org>. Questions can



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

“This is a unique chance for budding historians in our community to showcase their knowledge, analysis, and writing skills.”

— George Washington Legacy Foundation president Marion Moon

The George Washington Legacy Foundation has announced an essay contest for local junior high school students. The winner will receive \$500. Deadline is Jan. 31.

be directed to the Foundation’s spokesman, Shawn Eyer at shawn.eyer@washingtonlegacyfoundation.org or 202-425-1025.

Smell the Flowers st Nepenthe

Thursday, Jan. 25 Nepenthe Gallery is teaming up with Hunting Creek Garden Club and The Garden Club of Alexandria to host two fun events at

the gallery — a live floral demonstration by award-winning floral designer Laura Francis at 11 am; and later that day, our ART+WINE+CHEESE event from 6 to

7:30pm featuring stunning floral designs created by garden club members, each inspired by a chosen piece of Nepenthe artwork.

Women Gather Each Week to Create and Connect

FROM PAGE 8

“She’s pretty persuasive and she’s always been sort of like a social activities director for us, so if she suggested it, we’d try it,” said Sarah Young.

Currently, they are knitting caps for women undergoing chemotherapy for breast cancer.

“We’ve made baby blankets for teen mothers, and then sometimes we’ve knit blankets for each other’s grandchildren,” said Fran Conley who is expecting her first great-grandchild in May.

The women have been friends for nearly 50 years. They met as young stay-at-home

mothers, bonding over the need for companionship and support. Together they’ve celebrated milestones and supported each other through challenges.

“Between us we’ve had marriages, divorce, college graduations, first grandchildren, happiness, sadness and you name it, and always come together and circled the wagons around each other,” said Joanie Bridges.

Each woman brings her own talent to the group. Fran has an eye for fashion, Joanie has a good memory and keeps up with dates and Sarah says that she has a nose for juicy gossip and keeps the group informed.

“I keep the group entertained and Joanie makes sure that we remember each other’s birthdays and Sarah is the fashionista who always knits the prettiest things because she can blend together color combinations tastefully,” said Young.

Maintaining friends and social connections is important to aging well. According to one study, people with strong connections to family and friends have a 50% greater chance of outliving those with fewer social ties, as cited by Aetna.

Loneliness has been linked to a higher risk of cognitive decline, dementia and depression.

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