

# The Arlington Connection



Customers linger over powdered sugar beignets and breakfast sandwiches at Bayou Bakery, decorated with a Mardi Gras theme to celebrate its local roots.

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PHOTO BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION

# Local Audubon Chapter Votes to Change Its Name

**John James Audubon claimed ownership of enslaved people.**

BY SHIRLEY RUHE  
THE CONNECTION

**L**ibby Lyons, current president of the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia (ASNV), has already seen 41 different species of birds this morning at Nags Head, North Carolina. She has arrived ahead of the weekend trip organized with the Virginia Society of Ornithology to get a head start. “I saw hundreds of pintails at the Bodie Island Lighthouse and hooded mergansers flying over the water. The avocets were a treat.”

But she has taken a 10 a.m. break to discuss the announcement in the Potomac Flyer released Feb. 1 of the recent decision by the ASNV Board to change the name to remove the reference to John James Audubon.

John Audubon is widely known for his “Birds of America,” painted in the 1800s when he was 35 and containing 435 life-sized watercolors of North American birds. But in recent years it has come to light that Audubon also had a less favorable side.

The newsletter explained, “Many concerns were raised by both supporters and opponents of a name change. These include the need for the organization to be inclusive and welcoming to all Virginians, the potential loss of name recognition and connection with the national Audubon Society and other Audubon chapters and not erasing the many positive contributions that James James Audubon made to American ornithology, while also not honoring Audubon’s ownership of enslaved people, collaboration with eugenics research, and scientific dishonesty.”

Tom Blackburn of McLean, past president of ASNV, had a big part in the effort to consider renaming the ASNV. “We started about a year ago when the National Audubon Society decided to look at the issue of renaming the national organization.” He says he thinks a lot of other things came together on the timing of the decision including Black Lives Matter and the incident in Central Park when a white female dog walker called the police and falsely claimed a Black bird-watcher, Christian Cooper, was threatening her after he asked her to leash her dog.

Blackburn says he would have been quite happy if the national Audubon Society had decided to rename itself and the local chapters could have just followed. The national chapter decided not to rename but indicated the local chapters were free to make their own decision.

Blackburn says that as the largest independent chapter of the 610 chapters around the country, it was important for the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia to evaluate the issue. “I felt that we needed to begin by doing extensive research. I felt some of the things that had been published around the national decision were a little bit too excit-



Libby Lyons, President of the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia, which will now choose a new name.

**Deciding on dropping Audubon from its name: “Not erasing the many positive contributions that James James Audubon made to American ornithology, while also not honoring Audubon’s ownership of enslaved people, collaboration with eugenics research, and scientific dishonesty.”**

ed, and some turned out to be incorrect.”

The deliberation on whether to change the name included over six months of exploration, including a survey filled out by 481 members and reaching out to a dozen or so other chapters who have already changed their name.

Lyons says, “The survey responses totaled over 25,000 words. It was like a small novel. People were so passionate.”

Lyons says they discovered a survey that had been used by a chapter in Alabama and modified it. She says the ASNV survey found 43 percent of the respondents said a name change would have no effect on their decision to join, 23 percent said it would have some impact one way or the other but 29 percent said it would make them somewhat or much more likely to join.

“The younger and minority respondents felt more strongly about changing the name and we need all hands on deck as we look to the future,” Lyons says. “We need to build an intergenerational and intercultural bridge. Nature belongs to everyone.”

Blackburn says the current membership of Audubon is old and white. “If the average age of an Audubon member is 70, we need other people to support it. We need to look forward five-to-10 years to how we continue to thrive. The demographics of Northern Virginia has changed dramatically in the last few years.”

Connie Ericson, a ASNV Board Member from Arlington says, “I’ve been an Audubon member for a lot of years, and I’m sad to see the name go. It was synonymous with

conservation. But all of the information that has come out in the last few years about James Audubon and with so many people in favor of changing the name, it was inevitable.”

She says there were some pretty strong opinions in both directions. She speculates that we live in a diverse area, very urbanized, and it might be a different decision in some of the smaller rural chapters.

Bill Young, a well-known local bird watcher from Arlington who has co-created an extensive website of Monticello Park in Alexandria says, “I actually was indifferent and it wouldn’t upset me to leave the name. But of the two arguments, changing it was a little stronger. I don’t understand how young people think but if they are upset by the name I understand.” He says, “Perhaps I’ve been hardened. It’s not a hot button issue for me. There is so much anger all over that I think people are looking for outlets. I’m not sure it translates into action.”

Lyons says, “The most important thing that everyone had in common was they were all on board about the best thing that would help us in protecting birds. With climate change and the rate of development we need all the help we can get to protect birds.”

As they move forward, the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia will reach out to determine a new name for the ASNV chapter which encompasses all of Arlington, Fairfax, Prince William and Stafford counties, and portions of Fauquier, Loudoun, Rappahannock and Spotsylvania counties. Lyons said they had already received sug-



Pileated woodpecker, symbol of ASNV, taken at Roosevelt Island.



Blackburnian warbler taken at Monticello Park in Alexandria during spring migration.

gestions for a new name from 100 people, and there is a link in the newsletter for further suggestions.

Lyons says, “We plan to move forward in the next several months. We need to make sure we have a strategy for branding and connecting with people to make this a success. One of the serious concerns is lack of name recognition when we choose a new name for our organization.” She says a number of chapters have chosen a name which combines their geographical location with the words Bird Alliance. The first was Golden Gate Bird Alliance; others include Detroit Bird Alliance and Chicago Bird Alliance. “If we choose one name and galvanize around it, it will be more recognizable.

She speculates the new name should probably contain the word bird and many people believe that the word society has an unfavorable connotation and should be dropped.

On the other hand, Blackburn says, “We do a whole lot more than watch birds. The name needs to reflect more of our mission.” He says, “There may be another incredibly good name out there we haven’t thought of.”

Lyons says a number of people thought the name change issue was just a nuisance and distracting from other more important work. “But our local chapter is moving forward with a number of exciting initiatives. We are hiring a volunteer coordinator and will continue our Stretch the Parks activities, expanding the number and variety of nature outings and putting up a Spanish channel on our website. I think we’re changing, which is great.”

## RESTAURANT

# Mardi Pardi with Guas' New Orleans King Cake

BY SHIRLEY RUHE  
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

**H**ead for Bayou Bakery on Courthouse Road if you're in the mood for Louisiana specialties. At this time of the year Chef David Guas, a New Orleans native, turns his talents to Mardi Gras with his restaurant becoming Mardi Gras headquarters with favorites like his famous award-winning King Cake made fresh daily.

The King Cake is filled with Bayou Bakery's Creole cream cheese and cinnamon and finished with icing with hints of vanilla and lemon. Finally a sprinkle of the three traditional colors for Lent—gold for power, purple for justice and green for faith. Hidden inside the cake is a small plastic baby representing the baby Jesus, and the tradition is that the person who finds the baby in their piece of cake buys the next King Cake. Some say alternatively you get good luck.

The card inside each King Cake, explains, "King Cake is to Mardi Gras as pumpkin pie is to Thanksgiving—without it the holiday just wouldn't be the same. Every table in every home, every cafeteria and lounge will be graced by a King Cake at some point between the Twelfth Night and on Jan. 6 and Fat Tuesday, when Lent begins."

The Washington Post has proclaimed Guas' King Cake as one of the five best in the country and the Local Palate also featured it as one of the best in the country. Guas appeared on the Today Show with Katie Couric demonstrating how to make your own King Cake with Pillsbury rolls arranged in a circle and a frosting and the three colors of sprinkles.

Guas says the current King Cake recipe at Bayou Bakery has been through a lot of iterations and is definitely a different style now than in his 2009 cookbook. This dough is laminate in the Danish family and made with all butter. It is rolled right tight with a thin line of Creole cream cheese to give it moisture. "It took lots of trial and error to find our happy place."

The King Cakes from Guas' childhood in New Orleans were mass produced and loaded with preservatives to make them last days and days and to ship all over. His King Cakes are made without preservatives, and a King Cake needs to be ordered in advance and can't be shipped. But he sells thousands locally all over the Northern Virginia and Maryland area.

"I always try to have the bakers make ten to twelve more than contracted for so there are a few for walk-ins but they are gone by ten o'clock. That's the way people are. They go 'oh my God it's Mardi Gras' and they haven't got their King Cake yet. We all do that." It gets really busy the four days before Lent begins.

Guas says there are always people who come in after Lent begins and want to order the Mardi Gras specials. "I tell them we don't do that in Louisiana, and some people are in shock. If we sold something with the gold, green and purple outside of Mardi Gras I tell

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Mardi Gras King Cake offered at Bayou Bakery



COURTESY BAYOU BAKERY

Mardi Gras King Cake offered at Bayou Bakery



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

David Guas, local award winning chef and owner of Bayou Bakery

them I would have to go to my local priest and confess." He says this is part of the pride aspect of Louisiana—we all have something.

As a New Orleans native, Guas draws on

PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION



Headquarters for Louisiana specials at Bayou Bakery



Customers linger over powdered sugar beignets and breakfast sandwiches at Bayou Bakery, decorated with a Mardi Gras theme to celebrate its local roots.

the local recipes and tradition for his classics such as Gulf Shrimp Remoulade, Crawfish Étouffée and Smoked Sausage Gumbo. During the Mardi Gras season he adds specialty items to the menu such as tri-color cookies, Little K's small King Cake donuts offered on Tuesdays and praline scones.

Currently plans are underway for the thirteenth year of his Bayou Gras Mardi Pardi to be held on Fat Tuesday, Feb. 13 from 6-9 pm and featuring jazz by NOLA native Nick Adde. There will be a special prize for best dressed, authentic parade food specials and Mardi Mix Hurricanes and King Cake Daiquiris. Tickets are on sale individually for brew, food and sweets. Each ticket is good

for three in each category with featured Louisiana dishes on the menu.

During the year Guas is always experimenting by adding something new to his menu. In the last few years he put a new freezer inside the front door which he stocks with "provisions" such as gumbo and jambalaya that people can stop by and take home to heat up.

He reflects, "This is a small business but what keeps us going is when we see people order their first King Cake or experience their first beignet, dripping powdered sugar all over the table. These are the little bits of gold that keep you going. It's very fulfilling and emotional. That part doesn't get old."

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# Arlington Students Collect Clothes for Free Pop Up Shop

**EcoAction Arlington and other local groups support 'swap don't shop' event.**

BY EDEN BROWN  
THE CONNECTION

**A**re you ready for a really easy way to get “new” clothing for free? To upgrade your wardrobe with clothes that have that “thrifty look” without the thrift store price tag? Do you have clothes that just don’t fit right or you are sick of them but can’t afford to replace them? Time to learn the vocabulary and get started ... with the upcoming “Free Pop Up Clothing Shop” happening in Arlington on Feb. 18.

Conscious shopping is no longer a rare approach to changing up what’s in your closet. The rise of “slow fashion” and upcycled brands as well as pre-loved recycled clothing platforms like ThredUp, and the proliferation of vintage clothing shops tell the story: there is high demand for second-hand clothes. The ‘swap, don’t shop’ philosophy, once the domain of vintage and thrift shopping aficionados, college students, or the poor, is fast turning into a mainstream activity in the face of increasing environmental concerns and the impact “fast fashion” has on warming the planet.

Swaps prevent unloved and unwanted clothes from being landfilled, reducing an individual’s environmental impact. Americans buy more clothes than they used to and those clothes take a toll on the environment. Each new pair of jeans uses resources like water and contributes to water pollution and solid waste, as well as producing greenhouse gasses due to the energy consumption in refining textiles, weaving, transporting, and packaging. Even India has adopted the trend.

And the best part is, “thrifting” and “upcycling” along with “slow fashion” is fun, helps each person develop their own style, and is a very cool way to dress in an era where sustainability is not just a buzzword but an imperative.

“We want to create an event that is both fun and environmentally conscious,” said one student organizer, Ananya Sinha. “Our goal is to provide an opportunity for students to update their wardrobe without contributing to fast fashion waste. Plus, it’s a great way to socialize and meet new people.”

The local high school students involved in the project on Feb. 18 participate in sustainability clubs in their respective schools. Joe Kilmer, a senior at Wakefield High School and head of the Ecology club there, and Sinha and Cheyenne Klapper from Arlington Tech are sustainability-focused students who hope to make the upcoming “Free Pop Up Clothing Shop” just one of many future efforts to focus on sustainability in Arlington.

The Free Pop Up Shop will be on Sunday, Feb. 18, at the Washington-Liberty High School cafeteria, from 2-5 p.m. Arlington Students for Climate Action, Sierra Club Potomac River Group, NAACP Arlington Branch, and Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions, local high schools, middle schools, and Eco-Action Arlington volunteers will collect clean, lightly used clothing which will be available for free. All are welcome. Clothes will be collected over the next few weeks in schools, at the Central Library, and at Casual Adventure, 3451 Washington Blvd. Arlington, VA 22201. Clothing that has not found a new home by the end of the event will be donated to Goodwill. Questions? Please contact Ruth Woollett, at rgwoollett@gmail.com

For more on thrifting and swapping in Arlington see: <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Programs/Arts/Programs/Arlington-Art-Truck/Making-Fashion-Sustainable>

For more on EcoAction, see: [www.EcoActionarlington.org](http://www.EcoActionarlington.org)

## Arlington Innovation Fund Launches Inaugural Startup Grantees

Arlington Economic Development (AED) announced the selection of five Arlington-based startups as recipients of Catalyst Grants from the Arlington Innovation Fund (AIF). After a rigorous review process involving 22 applications, these companies have demonstrated exceptional promise in driving innovation, fostering economic growth, and addressing critical challenges in their respective industries.

The Catalyst Grants from this round, totaling \$225,000, represent a significant investment in the growing tech-entrepreneur ecosystem of Arlington. The remaining \$425,000 in the Catalyst Grant Program will be available for the second round of applications this month. Funds awarded through the Catalyst Grant can be used for any business operation expenses incurred by the startup and may include adding employees, purchasing equipment, leasing office space, hiring consultants or advisors, and more.

The five grantees and their respective technology verticals are:

- ❖ Dispatchr Technologies, LLC (Cleantech)
- ❖ Freely Payments, LLC - (Fintech)
- ❖ GenLogs Corporation (Artificial Intelligence)
- ❖ Phalanx AI, Inc. (Cybersecurity)
- ❖ Seamless Transition (Medical Devices)

These companies were selected based on their executive and technical capabilities, as well as their potential for revenue growth and societal impact.

“We are excited to support these innovative companies in their startup journey as they launch, scale and advance out-of-the-box solutions right here in Arlington,” said Michael Stiefvater, Director, Business Investment Group.

Applications for the second cohort of Catalyst Grants opened Feb. 5, 2024, and close on March 10, 2024. Visit the AED website for more information about the Arlington Innovation Fund and/or to apply for the next round of funding.

### Inaugural Cohort of Grantees.

Dispatchr is a Cleantech company that develops optimization software for cogeneration plants. Freely is a Fintech company that empowers vendors and suppliers to accept credit card payments. GenLogs is an artificial intelligence company that optimizes ground freight supply chains. Phalanx AI is a cybersecurity company specializing in lightweight data loss prevention and document mapping solutions. Seamless Transition is a medical device company creating a prosthetic knee that mimics the movement of natural human limbs.

For more information on Arlington’s tech ecosystem, please visit the AED website or contact [aif@arlingtonva.us](mailto:aif@arlingtonva.us).

## NVSO Sets 2024 Dates

**T**he Northern Virginia Senior Olympics committee has announced Sept. 14 – 29 as its 2024 dates. Newly elected NVSO chairman Riley Geary of Arlington made the announcement at a recent committee meeting held at Wakefield District Park in Annandale. Riley also said the end date may change as events will be spread out to accommodate possible new events and the growing number of participants. Registration will open Monday, July 1 and close August 29.

Geary reported that opening day will be at the Thomas Jefferson Community Center in Arlington followed by track events where a new electronic timing system will be introduced for the first time.

The public is invited to check out the NVSO website for in-depth information about 2023 results and photos at [www.nvso.us](http://www.nvso.us) and 2024 information as it becomes available. Additional information is also available by emailing: [nvso1982@gmail.com](mailto:nvso1982@gmail.com).

NVSO is sponsored by the cities of Alexandria, Falls Church and Fairfax and the counties of Arlington, Loudoun, Fairfax, Fauquier and Prince William. Information about becoming a Gold, Silver or Bronze Patron is also on the website.

## NEWS BRIEFS

### Wrap up of Saturday, Jan. 20, 2023 Regular County Board Meeting

#### Use Permit Amendment for Reeves Farmhouse

The Arlington County Board approved a use permit amendment to the Reeves Farmhouse Unified Residential Development, allowing for historically sensitive renovations, in keeping with the intended purpose as a residential structure, and site improvements by the intended purchaser – Habitat for Humanity. These are not new modifications and since 2015 the County has been trying to secure a purchaser for the Reeves Farmhouse. Habitat for Humanity has been negotiating with the County since 2020 to acquire this property to operate a home for adults with developmental disabilities – a significant need in Arlington.

As Habitat for Humanity does not currently own this property, the Board also gave its consent to consider this use permit amendment by the applicant as the intended purchaser of the property. This allows the applicant to initiate review of a land disturbance permit so that they may

commence renovations as soon as they acquire ownership of the property and once County funds have been allocated to support this effort.

#### Water Pollution Control Plant Upgrades

The Arlington County approved the award of a contract between the Arlington County Board and PC Construction to provide design-build services for upgrades to the Solid Handling Facilities at the Water Pollution Control Plant. This plant treats wastewater generated in Arlington and in portions of surrounding jurisdictions and produces what’s known as a “biosolids” product — which is expensive to store and dispose of. Current county facilities that carry out this process are beyond their useful life and require replacing. In doing so, this process will yield a higher quality biosolids product, with more disposal options and even potential retail and residential use, and renewable natural

SEE NEWS BRIEFS, PAGE 11

# Virginia General Assembly Needs Input From Voters

## Priority legislation outlined by Virginia Grassroots Coalition.

BY EDEN BROWN  
THE CONNECTION

The annual Virginia Grassroots Coalition's Priority Legislation Press Conference was held on Jan. 12 (virtually, hosted by Network NOVA). Led by Luisa Boyarski, Director of the Virginia Grassroots Coalition, the virtual conference highlighted the Coalition's legislative priorities. Boyarski opened up the conference by reminding attendees to track bills, attend lobby days, and write emails as legislation moves through the session. All the work on bills must be completed by Feb. 13, also known as crossover. The session ends on March 9, giving voters a short time to get their views on the legislation to Richmond.

Boyarski expressed optimism about the current session given the Democratic majorities in both the House and the Senate, making it easier to pass legislation.

She provided some atmospheric on the opening of the General Assembly session: there were younger, more diverse members joining the assembly this year. The opening

of the session by the first African-American Speaker was also noteworthy.

Five working groups in turn described the priority bills they follow: the Climate and Clean Energy Working Group, represented by Sharon Shutler, with Del. Rip Sullivan who is the patron of multiple bills on climate and clean energy, including solar, electric vehicles, and energy efficiency standards for data centers. Sullivan talked about HB 116 which focuses on the environmental impacts of data centers. "The concept of the bill is, we are going to be building these, we should at least make them as energy efficient as possible. It's a simple bill. The Data Center world is digesting it still, but it sets what I think are reachable standards. We don't want old fashioned backup diesel generators."

Sullivan also talked about HB 638, improving some measures of the Clean Economy Act and HB 106 on shared solar. Sullivan said "I was at Waynesboro a few weeks ago and my favorite conversation was with the farmer on whose land the solar is being built who told me, 'This program is going to make it possible for me to keep my farm, save my family farm.'"

The Public Education Working Group, represented by Marianne Burke, listed the group's priority bills and was joined by Sen. Ghazala Hashmi (D-15) and Del. Sam Rasoul (D-38). Hashmi and Rasoul made frequent references to the JLARC (Joint Leg-

islative Audit and Review Commission) on K-12 school funding, a report they have been awaiting and which put a spotlight on the underfunding of Virginia schools.

The Good Governance Working Group, represented by April Breslaw, presented its priority bills on ethics, instant runoff voting, and when to remove a legislator. Breslaw was joined by Del. Elizabeth Bennett-Parker (D-5) patron of a bill to expand electronic meeting access for state, regional, and local public bodies. Bennett-Parker addressed the good government results achieved by expanding equity and access to the diverse voices of public boards and commissions, their staff, and volunteers.

The Families and Workers Working Group, represented by Marie Ann Leyko, presented their priority bills. Leyko was joined by Del. Vivian Watts, (D-39) patron of bills that protect political canvassers and promote equity in the workforce through gender-balanced and diverse corporate boards.

The Campaign Finance Reform Working Group, represented by Nancy Morgan, presented its priority bills. She introduced a video of Del. David Bulova (D-11), patron of a bill that would set campaign contribution limits. Virginia is one of eleven states that impose no contribution limits on individual donors.

The Gun Violence Prevention Working Group, represented by Luisa Boyarski, featured a video of Del. Adele McClure (D-2)

speaking about bills that prohibit individuals convicted of domestic abuse (specifically in dating relationships) from possessing a gun. McClure, a freshman legislator, noted how many people are killed by people with a history of domestic violence, and concluded her talk with the strong statement, "No abusive partner should have access to guns."

Boyarski concluded the press conference with a plea to voters: "It is really important for legislators to hear from constituents on these bills because they have said they can cite figures in committee meetings: 'I heard from 40 constituents' that this is an important issue to them. Contacting a legislator is only an email away."

To get an easy summary of bills and lobby days being planned for voters to lobby in Richmond, see: <https://www.virginiagrassroots.org>

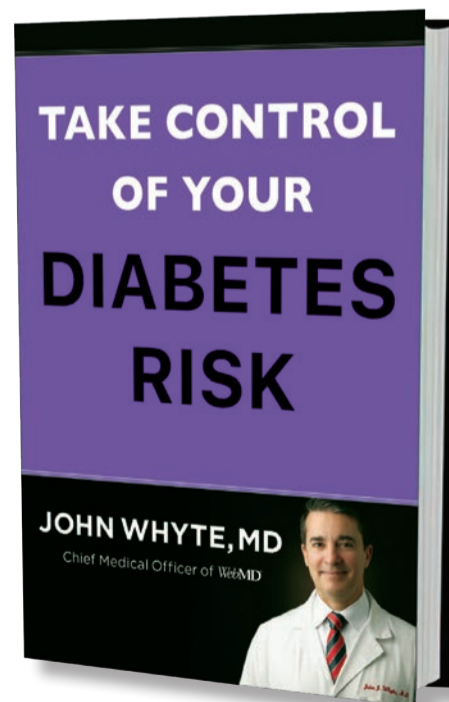
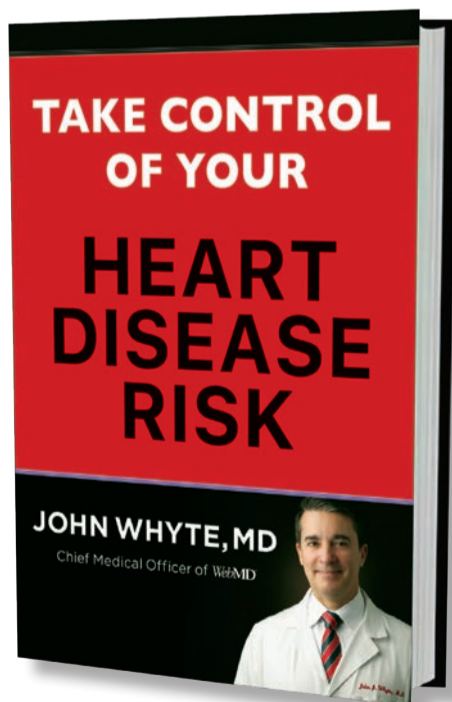
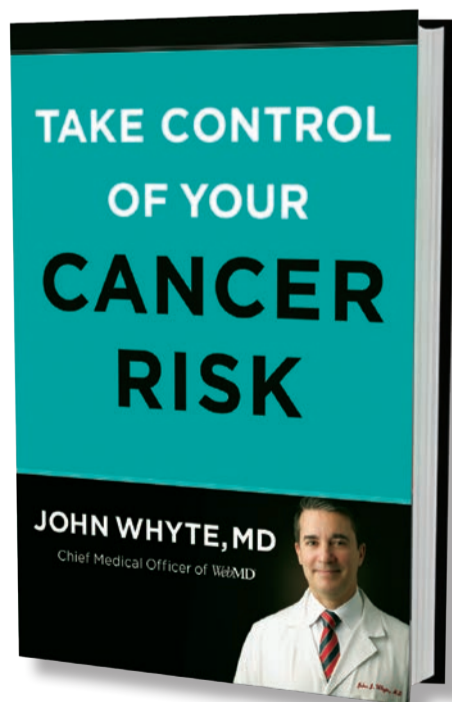
For more on the VA General Assembly see: <https://virginiageneralassembly.gov/>

To track bills as they go through the legislative process, see: <https://www.virginiagrassroots.org/legislation-VA-2024.php?sort=live>

Or <https://lis.virginia.gov/>

To read the JLARC report: <https://jlarc.virginia.gov/landing-2023-virginia-k-12-funding-formula.asp>

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# Funding for Metro

BY SENATOR ADAM EBBIN

**A**s we near the midpoint of the session, I wanted to update you on one of my major priorities: finding solutions for immediate, and long-term funding for Metro.

With 32 Virginia rail stations and 31 bus lines on our side of the Potomac, Metro plays a vital role in the Commonwealth's economy and serves as a critical component of Northern Virginia's transit network. The entire system generates \$1.5 billion in annual revenue from personal income and sales taxes, which goes to support programs and services across the Commonwealth.

Metro is funded by a complex arrangement of federal, state and local sources spread across the capital and operating budgets. The capital budget, which is used mainly to keep existing stations, tracks and buses in a state of good repair, is funded by federal sources, state and local funds from Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia, including funding secured by legislation signed into law in Virginia in 2018. The operating budget, which is used to keep the buses and trains running, is funded by fare revenue and other sources (like advertising), federal pandemic relief funds, and state tax dollars from Virginia, Maryland, and the District. In Virginia, the local governments in Northern Virginia are responsible for paying Metro

and they use a mixture of funds from the regional gas tax, state aid and other local sources to meet this obligation.

The pandemic aid that has sustained Metro since 2020 will be exhausted soon, contributing to a \$750 million operating gap in the FY 2025 budget. Major transit agencies across the country face similar fiscal cliffs. Metro's gap has been driven by lower fare revenue due



Adam Ebbin

tion of the Yellow Line Bridge Tunnel Rehabilitation project, as well as the rebuilding of 11 Metrorail station platforms in Alexandria, Arlington and Fairfax County.

Unfortunately, the legislative compromise reached in 2018 placed a 3% annual growth cap on how much Metro could ask Virginia's local governments to contribute in operating assistance. Without fur-

portation Commission (NVTC), where I serve as a Commissioner, put forward recommendations on Metro funding, accountability and reform, and is studying options for long-term dedicated funding. The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC) has also brought together staff and elected officials from across the region to find short and long-term solutions.

I am disappointed that Gov. Glenn Youngkin did not include any additional funding for Metro in his proposed Fiscal Year 2025 - 2026 budget. If we can't solve this budget gap, we won't have a working Metro system to serve the new Potomac Yard-VT station — and the governor's proposed new arena for the Washington Capitals and Washington Wizards.

I want to extend my appreciation to Sen. David Marsden and Del. Mark Sickles for their proposed amendments to the state budget that would address the operating cap and provide additional state aid to Metro, which would be matched by Northern Virginia local governments. Because these solutions are short-term, I have also introduced SJ 28 to study and develop long-term sustainable funding solutions for Metro and other Northern Virginia transit systems.

It is my continued honor to represent the people of the 39th Senate District. My legislative email address is [SenatorEbbin@senate.virginia.gov](mailto:SenatorEbbin@senate.virginia.gov).

**With 32 Virginia rail stations and 31 bus lines on our side of the Potomac, Metro plays a vital role in the Commonwealth's economy.**

to the rapid expansion in working from home, coupled with a slow return to the office for the federal government and private sector. Inflation and a subsidy credit to state and local governments to help them with anticipated revenue declines during the height of the pandemic also play a role.

In 2018, we came together with the rest of the DMV region and secured \$500 million a year in capital funding for Metro, which included \$154.5 million from Virginia, \$167 million from Maryland, and \$178.5 million from the District of Columbia. This capital funding has been crucial in ramping up repairs to stations, tunnels and bridges. It has also been vital to the comple-

ther action by the General Assembly to lift that 3% cap, along with a significant cash infusion, Metro will be forced to make severe service cuts to close the budget deficit, which would be devastating for Northern Virginia. This would mean the closure of the 10 lowest-ridership stations across the system, and service cutbacks like the closing of stations at 10 p.m. For Metrobus, this would eliminate 67 of 135 routes; and 41 of the remaining 68 routes would see reduced service.

Metro has dug deep and found additional, one time and recurring savings to help close the gap, but regional partners need to do their part. The Northern Virginia Trans-

## 3 Keys to Fostering a Successful Edge City

BY PAUL SCHULMAN AND MARY-CLAIRE BURICK

**M**any young professionals are putting down roots in walkable edge cities located just outside of larger metropolitan areas. These cities offer all of the perks of living in an urban area, like access to retail and restaurant options, at a much lower cost. In recent years, for example, more than 16,000 households have left Washington D.C., while cities just outside D.C. are attracting young professionals and entrepreneurs. Arlington, for one, was ranked third on Niche's list of Best Cities to Raise a Family in America and fifth on its list of Best Cities for Young Professionals in America this year. Amazon also opened its second headquarters in Arlington

earlier this year, a testament to the city's up-and-coming technology scene.

Rosslyn is a particularly exciting neighborhood in Arlington, modeling both the edge and 15-minute city. The area provides residents with the best of both worlds with urban appeal, parks and open space, and plenty of amenities — all within walking distance to Georgetown and just a short Metro ride from D.C.

Rosslyn is an exciting success story that showcases what it takes to create an appealing edge city: innovation, partnerships, and talent. Let's take a closer look at each.

### Innovation

Amazon's Arlington headquarters are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to attracting

tech companies and innovation to the community. Unstuck Labs, an award-winning tech accelerator, recently set up shop in Rosslyn City Center (RCC) — right in the heart of the city. Every Tuesday, Unstuck Labs offers free entrepreneurial workshops for founders looking to level up.

Innovative use of space also sets Rosslyn apart. As people return to work, they don't want to be stuck in a stark office environment, which is why property owners are ditching "traditional" office spaces in favor of vibrant, colorful spaces with plenty of natural light and Rosslyn's iconic views. Amenities like RCC's 30,000-square-foot food hall offer a compelling location for meetings and networking, and its on-site fitness center, Metro station, and retail options provide

everything young professionals need before, during, and after the workday. RCC is just one example of how properties in Rosslyn are getting it right when it comes to attracting innovators from around the country.

### Partnerships

Fostering an exciting edge city requires alignment between everyone in the ecosystem, and Rosslyn has benefitted from close partnerships between local government, property owners, and the Rosslyn Business Improvement District (BID), with everyone doing their part. For example, Arlington County government has paved the way for fresh new concepts through its Commercial Resiliency Initiative, which has helped to reimagine the

SEE EDGE CITY, PAGE 10

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# VA Legislators Aim for Assault Weapon Bans

Will new seats mean new votes?

BY SUSAN LAUME  
THE CONNECTION

Virginia came close to banning sales of assault weapons in 2020 when the House passed a bill banning them by a narrow 51-yes to 48-no vote. In the Senate Judiciary committee that year however, three Democrats: Senators Creigh Deeds, Chap Petersen, and Scott Surovell, surprised many by voting with Republican committee members to fail to move the bill forward in the Senate. Now, four years later, neither that assault bill's patron, former Del. Mark Levine, nor nay voter, Petersen, returned to the General Assembly. Deeds (D-11) is sponsoring his own assault weapon ban this session; and Surovell (D-34) now chairs the committee, titled Courts of Justice, which hears the assault weapon bills, and others related to firearms. Surovell also now leads the Democratic Caucus. The Deeds' bill, SB 2, would prohibit the purchase, possession or sale of assault weapons. The bill by Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-39), SB-99 would prohibit carrying assault weapons in public. And a bill from Sen. Saddam Salim (D-37), SB 327 would expand the definition of "assault firearm" and prohibit sales or purchase to any-

one under the age of 21.

On the House side, Del. Dan Helmer (D-10), who voted for the assault weapons ban in 2020, this session is the sponsor of an assault weapon ban companion bill, HB 2. That bill reported from the Public Safety committee on Jan. 19 and was referred to the Appropriations Committee. Del. Mark Sickles' (D-17), bill HB1174, places an age restriction of 21 on purchase of assault weapons. Del. Marcus Simon (D-13), bill HB175, is the companion bill that would prohibit carrying assault weapons in public. Speakers at the bills' Public Safety Committee hearing included faith and public safety and gun control groups, including Giffords Law, Brady Center, and Chesapeake League of Voters, in favor of the bills. Several members of the Virginia Citizens Defense League, a representative of the NRA, and shooting sports group members spoke in opposition.

As the assault weapon restriction bills successfully work their way through various committees on partisan votes, Surovell at his recent Town Hall, explained what is different about assault weapon restriction chances this session from 2020.

Surovell explained that he has always favored restriction of assault weapons, but that the wording of the 2020 bill needed much more work than could be given to it that year. He and other Senators voted to continue it for study until the following year. But House GOP opponents who controlled the House the next year refused to docket the bill in 2021. Surovell asserts that the 2020 session did pass five major firearm bills that year, among an unusually high volume of work, before they simply



Senator Scott Surovell, Chair, Courts of Justice Committee.



Assault style weapons' sale, carry, and age for possession remain the subject of debate in Virginia's General Assembly.

ran out of time.

Gun rights versus gun control issues continue to roil political activism in the Commonwealth and across the country. Assault weapons are used in a large percentage of mass shootings. A federal assault weapons law, which placed restrictions on the sale and manufacture of some semiautomatic assault weapons expired in 2004. Gun safety advocates opposed allowing the law to expire and called for reinstatement of the restrictions. In December 2012, a 20-year-old gunman killed 20 children, ages

six to seven years old, and six adult staff members, at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut. Enacting gun safety measures in the wake of the massacre of small children seemed inevitable, but it didn't happen.

A new national advocacy group, Moms Demand Action, formed after Sandy Hook with chapters in every state to call for gun reform and increased gun safety measures. In 2022, a federal bill to renew and strengthen assault weapons law passed the House of Representatives but did not pass in the Senate. Today there is no federal law restricting the weapons. Ten states (California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Washington), and the District of Columbia, have enacted laws that ban the sale, manufacture, and transfer of assault weapons. Virginia (Va. Code Ann. §§ 18.2-287.4, 18.2-308.2:01, 18.2-308.2:2, 18.2-308.7, 18.2-308.8) enacted laws that place some additional safety requirements and regulations on assault weapons, but fall short laws enacted in the ten listed states.

Now, about three weeks into Virginia's 2024 legislative session, a significant number of firearms-related bills, as well as the assault weapon bills, have an additional week for hearing in their originating body before the process of crossover begins for successful bills to be heard by the opposite body.

# Tran Sponsors Protection for Elephants

Seeks more humane treatment of kept animals.

BY SUSAN LAUME  
THE CONNECTION

There are no elephants living in Fairfax County. In fact, the county has not seen an elephant housed or visiting within its boundaries since 2016 in the days before the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus retired its elephants. So, northern Virginia Delegate Kathy Tran's 2024 bill to protect elephants may come as a surprise to county residents. Her HB 1531 seeks to prevent cruelty to elephants by banning the use of

pain-inflicting training tools, such as bull hooks, which are used to inflict fear or pain in efforts to control the large animals.

Tran (D-District 18) explains that elephants are not defined in Virginia law as wildlife and so do not come under wildlife law protections. "World-wide care has shifted [for elephants], recognizing their socially complex nature," Tran said. Four years ago, she and others in the legislature became aware that an elephant at a roadside zoo in Virginia was being kept alone and chained in poor conditions, and used to provide many miles of rides for visitors, often forced to carry weights over posted limits. Efforts to change Virginia's law then were not successful. As reports of poor treatment at the zoo contin-



Del. Kathy Tran

PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME

ued, Tran says she was moved by the plight of Asha, the elephant, to sponsor the bill this year in consideration of Asha's on-going struggles. Tran says she feels a responsibility to provide protection for animals throughout the Commonwealth.

Animal welfare advocates have long criticized the use of punishment methods used to control elephants. Last year, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums voted to ban elephant keepers from using bull hooks, except in emergencies. Although an elephant's skin appears tough, it is so sensitive that an elephant can feel the pain of an insect bite and has many sensitive areas on its body where the skin is thin that handlers have exploited. A bull hook is described by the Association as, "an outdated, cir-

cus-style training tool that resembles a fireplace poker and is used to inflict pain and punishment on elephants." It is a heavy weapon with a sharp metal hook.

In December, inspectors from the State Veterinary and Attorney General Animal Law Unit offices seized about 95 exotic and domestic animals from the Natural Bridge Zoo in Rockbridge County which owns Asha. The animal law unit is the same group which garnered acclaim for their handling of the infamous Michael Vick dog fighting prosecution. Their inspection came after a new employee informant reported the elephant's long time handler had instructed, "to always jab them where bone is close to flesh. Make it count."

In January, a Circuit Court judge upheld the seizure of 56 of the zoo animals. An unconfirmed report indicates Asha may be relocated, possibly before the sei-

zure action, to a private elephant facility on 67 acres in northern Florida. That facility has been home to more than 200 elephants in a habitat similar to their natural environment, taking in many elephant rescues over the years.

Details about the timing and reason for Asha's move could not be confirmed. When contacted, the State Attorney General's Office would not comment "due to pending litigation with the Natural Bridge Zoo." Should Asha return, or future circus animals visit, they would be protected from use of negative handling methods under Tran's bill.

Only California and Rhode Island now have bull hook restrictions. Tran's bill, which has passed out of subcommittee, will likely be heard by the full House Agriculture, Chesapeake, and Natural Resources committee on Feb. 7.

# ENTERTAINMENT

## ONGOING

**MoCA Arlington's Innovation Studio + Store is now Open.** At 525 14th Street South, Arlington. MoCA Arlington's Innovation Studio + Store is the museum's second location and is designed to connect visitors with contemporary art and artists! At this 1,500 sq. ft. retail space, you can shop, attend special programs and drop-in sessions, meet the artist-in-residence working within the studio, and make art of your own! The space complements the work of the flagship museum and will inspire you, while you experience contemporary art in an interactive setting. Visit anytime Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

## JAN. 30 TO FEB. 23

**Wish You Were Here: A Solo Show** by Medina Roberts. At Gallery Underground, Arlington. In a series of large-scale paintings depicting D.C.'s City Center, are included the words "Wish You Were Here" — painted in dedication to Syd Barrett, the original front man of Pink Floyd, who, in 1968, left the group after his mental and physical health struggles due to heavy drug use. The artist will donate a portion of her sales from this show to the Addiction Policy and Practice Program at the Georgetown University Master of Science department.

## FRIDAY/FEB. 9

**Free Chamber Music Concert.** Noon. At St. George's Church, 915 N. Oakland Street, adjacent to Virginia Square Metro, Arlington. The Friday Morning Music club will perform a free chamber music concert. The concert will include works by Alma Mahler, Gustav Mahler, Moyse, Fukushima and Hirai (the last two, Japanese female composers). The one-hour concerts continue every first and second Friday of the month through May.

## WEEKEND OF FEB. 9

**Valentine Sweetheart Deals.** McLean Art Society will host a February art show and sale, with "Sweetheart Deals" featuring original art under \$150 by its talented artists the week-end of Feb. 9 at Walker Chapel in Arlington. It promises to offer a great opportunity to find a special, one-of-a-kind gift for your loved ones or yourself. Admission is free and open to the public. Hours are Feb. 9, 5-8 p.m., including a Reception and refreshments, Sat., Feb. 10, 10-4 p.m. and Sun., Feb. 11, 10-2 p.m.

## SATURDAY/FEB. 10

**Comedy Karaoke Trivia Funtime Show.** 7:30 p.m. At Highline RxR, 2010 Crystal Drive, Arlington. Bring a team or fly solo and win prizes by dropping knowledge in a trivia competition, then duking it out in a karaoke battle. Hosted by Christian Hunt, this amazing experience features comedy from the D.C. area's finest comics. The headliner for February's show is the hilarious Shelley Kim. Visit [capitalcityshowcase.com](http://capitalcityshowcase.com)

## FEB. 10-11

**Stand Up to Cancer Fundraiser.** Starting 4:26 p.m. Saturday Thru Sunday at 4:26 p.m. At FireWorks American Pizzeria & Bar, 2350 Clarendon Blvd. in Arlington.



The National Concert Ensemble's Valentine Concert takes place on Saturday, Feb. 10, 2024 at Gunston Arts Center - Theater 1 in Arlington.

## National Concert Ensemble's Valentine Concert

7:30 p.m. At Gunston Arts Center - Theater 1, 2700 South Lang Street, Arlington. This event will showcase the brilliant Argentinian music of the Tango, featuring Astor Piazzolla's "Four Seasons In Buenos Aires," among other masterpieces. The guest host for the evening will be Michelle Isabelle-Stark, Head of Arlington Cultural Affairs. Michelle will guide you through an extraordinary musical journey performed by three virtuoso musicians - violinist Leo Sushansky, cellist Stephen Honigberg, and pianist Carlos Cesar Rodriguez. Program/Ticket info: 703-685-7590.

Patrick "Pat" Malone of Alexandria, retired Air Force veteran and major league cancer survivor will host his 10th annual fundraiser to benefit Stand Up to Cancer. Visit [www.fireworkspizza.com/arlington](http://www.fireworkspizza.com/arlington).

to take home. Also your choice of delicious soups, bread, dessert and more.

## MONDAY/FEB. 12

**"Cheers to l'Amour."** 6-8 p.m. At Lyon Hall, 3100 Washington Blvd., Arlington. The Reims Committee of the Arlington Sister City Association invites you to "Cheers to l'Amour". Guests will enjoy sparkling wines and light hors d'oeuvres. Tickets are \$55/\$60 at door.

## TUESDAY/FEB. 13

**Bayou Gras Mardi Pardi - Fat Tuesday.** 6 p.m. At Bayou Bakery, 1515 N. Courthouse Road, Arlington. A true New Orleans experience for 13 years. NOLA native musician Nick Adde will be Jazzing It Up in the eatery. Chef David Guas and the team in the kitchen will be serving authentic parade food.

## THURSDAY/FEB. 15

**Rock Spring Garden Club Meeting: Beyond Parsley, Sage, Rosemary, and Thyme: Learn to Grow and Use a Dozen Unusual Culinary Herbs with Peg Riccio.** At Little Falls Presbyterian Church, Lower Level Friendship Hall, 6025 Little Falls Road, Arlington. Learn how to grow a dozen unusual culinary herbs. For each herb, discover the best time and method to start, cultural requirements, harvesting and preserving techniques, and methods for using them in the kitchen. Visit <https://rockspring-gardenclub.com/>

## SUNDAY/FEB. 11

**Empty Bowls.** 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; and 12:45 p.m. to 1:45 p.m. At St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 4000 Lorcom Lane, Arlington. Empty Bowls is a community fundraising event and luncheon featuring hot soups donated by local restaurants and served in hand-thrown bowls created by local artists. Each \$55 ticket will include a hand-made bowl as a gift

## FEB. 18

**Free Pop Up Shop.** 2-5 p.m. At Washington-Liberty High School cafeteria. Help your closet and the climate by getting free, gently used clothes. Arlington Students for Climate Action and other community organizations will host a Free Pop Up Shop of lightly used clothing. All are welcome. The event is designed to make clothing more sustainable by recycling clothing that is no longer needed. To contribute clothes, drop off washed, clean, gently used clothes of any size at Wakefield, H-B Woodlawn, Yorktown, Arlington Career Center, and Washington-Liberty, Central Library, or Casual Adventure before Feb. 17.

## FEB. 16 TO MARCH 24

**"Romeo & Juliet."** At Synetic Theater, 1800 S. Bell Street, Arlington. Set amidst the whirring gears of a giant clock, Shakespeare's timeless tale of star-crossed lovers unfolds as a bitter family feud sends the pair on a race against an ill-fated destiny. With masterful physicality and choreography, Synetic Theater's Romeo and Juliet presents a unique and stunningly visual interpretation of a classic story, capturing emotion with every movement. Visit [www.synetictheater.org](http://www.synetictheater.org).

## MONDAY/FEB. 26

**Black History Month Documentary.** 6:30-7:45 p.m. At Arlington Central Library, 1015 N. Quincy Street, Arlington. An abbreviated

screening of the documentary, Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin (1912-1987). This documentary illuminates the lie and work of Rustin, a visionary activist and strategist called "the unknown hero" of the civil rights movement.

## SATURDAY/MARCH 9

**Comedy Karaoke Trivia Funtime Show.** 7:30 p.m. At Highline RxR, 2010 Crystal Drive, Arlington. Bring a team or fly solo and win prizes by dropping knowledge in a trivia competition, then duking it out in a karaoke battle. Hosted by Christian Hunt, this amazing experience features comedy from the DC area's finest comics. The headliner for March's show is the hilarious Jay Agbon. Visit [capitalcityshowcase.com](http://capitalcityshowcase.com)

## SATURDAY/MARCH 16

**Arlington Chorale's "The Stranger."** 5 p.m. At Westover Baptist Church, 1125 Patrick Henry Drive, Arlington. The Stranger: This musical journey was crafted to raise awareness for the plight of refugees worldwide and commissioned by the Together in Hope project, whose mission is changing lives through music with a purpose. Negin Khwalpak, an Afghan conductor, will be featured in this concert. The performance is presented in partnership with Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area, and will also include musicians from the refugee community.



# FLOURISHING AFTER 55

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300 N. Park Dr.,  
Arlington, VA 22203  
703-228-4747

55+ Programs are in person at 55+ Centers unless otherwise noted. A 55+ Pass is required to participate starting at a \$20 annual fee. To join or register, go to [registration.arlingtonva.us](http://registration.arlingtonva.us) or call 703-228-4747.

Opera appreciation group will hear musical selections from "Salome" by Richard Strauss, Wednesday, Feb. 7, 1:30 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Professional commentary by George Cecchetti. Registration # 912300-06.

Acoustic afternoon with music performed by Arlington musicians Phil Rosen, Ed Girovasi and friends, Wednesday, Feb. 7, 2 p.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Event will feature classic pop, folk and blues favorites. Registration # 912301-04.

Pictionary, a fun game where players take turns sketching a randomly assigned picture, while their teammates guess what it is, Thursday, Feb. 8, 6 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Newcomers welcome. Registration # 912600-01.

Latte lounge, homemade by 55+ volunteer Ben Childers, both decaf and regular, Thursday, Feb. 8, 9:30 a.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Registration # 912801-04.

History discussion group led by Dwight Rodgers from Encore Learning, Thursday, Feb. 8, 1 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Registration # 912402-12.

Artists cookbook, learn "recipes" for art materials using household items, Thursday, Feb. 8, 8:30 a.m., virtual. Presented by Community Arts Programmer Jennifer Droblyen. Registration # 912303-10.

Beginners quilling class, create beautiful raised images from paper strips using a few basic tools, Thursday, Feb. 8, 1:30 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Supplies provided. Cost \$18. Registration # 912310-03.

Bunco Bunch, a dice game of luck, no prior experience needed, Friday, Feb. 9, 1:30 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Registration # 912600-11.

55+ Travel group will embark on an exciting excursion to Maryland Live! Casino, Hanover, MD, Saturday, Feb. 10. Cost \$11, Arlington resident; \$13, non-resident. Registration # 902402-04.

Painting demonstration by Community Arts Programmer Jennifer Droblyen, Monday, Feb. 12, 10:30 a.m., virtual. Picture and a supply list sent prior to class. Registration # 912303-18.

Love songs by rock music legends, Tuesday, Feb. 13, 1:30 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center, registration

# 912400-39 or virtual, registration # 912400-40. Live music performed by Carl Gold and Rob Sprouse.

Volleyball games for both beginners and experienced players, Tuesday, Feb. 13, 3:30-5:30 p.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Drop-in.

Valentine's Day afternoon soiree, enjoy sweet refreshments and listen to love songs performed by pianist Valerie Welsh, Wednesday, Feb. 14, 1 p.m., Aurora Hills 55+ Center. Registration # 912890-10.

History roundtable participants will discuss the impact of unsuccessful rebellions, Wednesday, Feb. 14, 11:15 a.m., virtual. Registration # 912402-06.

Discussion of current events in Spanish impacting the Latino community, Wednesday, Feb. 14, 11 a.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Led by 55+ Center Director Ashley Gomez. Registration # 912402-17. Must have at least intermediate knowledge of Spanish.

The study of words, the history of English and languages as a whole, Wednesday, Feb. 14, 10 a.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center, registration # 912402-32 or virtual, registration # 912402-33.

Avoiding guardianship and conservatorship, Wednesday, Feb. 14, 11 a.m., virtual. Presented by Elder Law Attorney Ed Zetlin. Registration # 912404-05.

Open art studio for artists who work at their own pace in a collaborative space, Wednesday, Feb. 14 and Friday, Feb. 16, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Drop-in

Records and root beer floats, bring favorite music on vinyls or just show up to listen, Thursday, Feb. 15, 6 p.m., Lubber Run 5+ Center. Registration # 912801-02.

Canasta, easy to learn card game, Wednesday, Feb. 14, 10 a.m. -12 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Drop-in.

Prepare for hiking and camping, join outdoor enthusiast Carmen Shippy for important tips, Thursday, Feb. 15, 11 a.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Registration # 912400-20.

How to grow fruit trees in Arlington, presented by Urban Forest Manager Vincent Verweij, Thursday, Feb. 15, 2 p.m. virtual. Registration # 912400-29.

Tips for capturing great video, presented by Video Production Manager Jeremy Carpel, Thursday, Feb. 15, 11 a.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center, registration # 912403-06 or virtual, registration # 912403-07.

Acoustic hour at Aurora Hills 55+ Center featuring the Rockin' Chairs Band, Friday, Feb. 16, 1 p.m. Registration # 912301-03.

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The Brown v. Board of Education Scholarship Program was established by the General Assembly to provide educational opportunities for persons who were denied an education in Virginia between 1954 and 1964 due to the closing of the public schools during Massive Resistance. Beginning in 2024, the scholarship program is extended to their descendants. The program is now open to eligible applicants for the 2024-2025 school year. For applications and information on eligibility, visit:

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**OPINION**

**Edge City**

FROM PAGE 6

typical uses of commercial spaces to include businesses like distilleries and breweries, animal boarding, micro-fulfillment centers, and more.

Property owners are doing their part by reimagining office buildings and bringing in the amenities and collaborative spaces employees want into their buildings. The BID then layers in additional amenities in the public realm, beautifying and programming public spaces with activities, events, and installations that bring the community together. When all of these stakeholders work together, they can create thriving cities that offer people what they want and need – in areas where they feel safe, connected, and grounded.

**Talent**

While proximity to Washington, D.C. is appealing to residents of Rosslyn, the district's proximity to large universities is attractive to companies setting up shop there. The University of Maryland just earned its highest-ever ranking from U.S. News & World Report, while its computer science program ranks in the top 10 among public universities. The University of Virginia, which earned a top-three ranking among public schools last year, as well as the Virginia Tech Research Center, Georgetown University, George Mason University's new tech hub, and Marymount University are also nearby. Rosslyn itself is home to UVA Darden and Northeastern University Arlington, as well as a primary school, two secondary schools, and an online university. This provides a robust talent pipeline that is crucial for Rosslyn's long-term trajectory.

**The bottom line**

Large city living will always retain its appeal, but edge cities like Arlington are demonstrating their ability to compete. Many offer the walkability, retail, and restaurants that make urban living exciting without the high cost of larger areas. As property owners, government officials, and businesses work together to create thriving communities, edge cities will continue to thrive. Rosslyn has become a national epicenter for attracting accomplished professionals and fostering entrepreneurship, through innovation, partnerships, and a sustainable talent pipeline. As other edge cities look to attract both residents and businesses, Rosslyn offers an exciting and replicable blueprint for success.

*Mary-Claire Burick is President of the Rosslyn Business Improvement District*

*Paul Schulman is Principal & COO of American Real Estate Partners*

PEOPLE

# Faith-Based Actions for Local Climate Change Solutions

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH  
THE CONNECTION



Christopher Topoleski

**C**urbing the greenhouse gas emissions that are warming the planet and disrupting many traditional weather patterns is a governmental, economic, scientific and environmental challenge. It is also a moral challenge, according to Christopher Topoleski, the new executive director of Northern Virginia's Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions (FACS).

"It's a moral imperative for us, where we live and where we worship," he said in a recent interview, adding that addressing climate change transcends any one religion. "It is negatively affecting our children and future generations. Whatever you believe, we are all on the same planet and have a shared responsibility," he offered.

Climate change is a term generally meaning changes in temperatures and climate patterns attributed largely to burning fossil fuels like carbon dioxide and methane. These fuels produce gases that trap heat and warm the planet.

The Alliance was founded in 2013 "when a small group of passionate people of faith gathered in a church basement in Oakton to reflect on a faithful response to the climate crisis," explains Christine Connelly Montagnese, FACS Community Organizer. It is a region-wide, nonprofit organization composed of many different faiths and people who do not practice any religion. Topoleski seeks to build a strong, diverse network of people and over 190 places of worship, including people from Protestant, Muslim, Jewish, Catholic, Unitarian Universalist, Hindu and Peace traditions.

While addressing climate change is debated in the halls of Congress, state legislatures, parliaments and the United Nations, Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions is focused on local solutions, from supporting solar energy to reducing vehicular emissions.

## Vulnerable Populations

Topoleski, a Reston resident, comes to the position with years of advocacy experience. As the legislative director for the National Indian Education Association (NIEA), he gained a deeper understanding of how Indigenous people view our natural resources. "They were the first people here," he said, "stewards of the land. It all comes down to one Earth, one planet."

He is especially focused on how energy and environmental policies impact vulnerable populations and sees heading FACS as a "perfect opportunity" to highlight solutions. "Some lower and no income people and people of color suffer the most from greenhouse gas emissions," he maintains. For example, some low-income areas have some of the worst traffic congestion and vehicular pollution. In Fairfax County, for example, transportation emissions are 42 percent of all carbon emissions. "It's a social justice issue," he believes.

Working with congregations and individuals, he's building an advocacy army to persuade elected officials to do more. He brings the tools he promoted at the NIEA, tools that are applicable at all levels of government. He's also been a volunteer government liaison with Reston Strong and member of the Social Justice Committee of Reston's Unitarian Universalist Church.

"Current policy is not sustainable," he argues and believes that advocates should not just focus on law or policy changes, but their long-term implementation which too often gets short shrift.

Scott Peterson, FACS Board Chair, lauds Topoleski's talents, saying, "Chris's experience will enable him to communicate with a wide range of stakeholders as we move forward. His expertise in fundraising, development of alliances, commitment to diversity and inclusion and his leadership roles will serve us well."

## FACS's Projects

In 2022, FACS received a U.S. Department of Energy grant to help convert buildings to clean energy sources and energy efficiency measures. Climate activists see clean energy as energy that does not produce carbon dioxide and other pollution from fossil fuels. FACS is developing a pilot program and hopes to eventually scale up to help many home and building owners install solar panels and more efficient hot water heaters, for example.

The FACS Tree of Life campaign helps congregations "green" their outdoor campus by restoring natural habitats, improving soil quality and planting native plants and trees.

Why is my sanctuary so cold? That was the title of a Jan. 16 FACS program on financing heating-cooling systems and energy efficiency and renewable energy products. The organization's solar sanctuaries program leverages the power of faith communities to strengthen energy efficiency and install solar power and battery backup systems. Not only will this reduce greenhouse gas emissions, these places of refuge can provide emergency shelter for the most vulnerable and save lives during power outages.

FACS has local subgroups called "hubs" in jurisdictions like Fairfax and Arlington that work on hyperlocal projects.

As a volunteer, Topoleski manages the Reston Strong free market every Sunday at the Reston YMCA, providing free food, donated by Costco, no questions asked, to up to 150 families. "All anyone has to do is bring a bag," he says.

The father of two adult children, Topoleski calls himself an "avid home chef" and prepares meals from his summer home garden. With vegetables out the backdoor, he's at least not creating greenhouse gas emissions by buying produce hauled across the country. Local change can have global impacts, he believes.

Information: <https://faithforclimate.org/>

## Not Dying to Find Out



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Now that The Connection, most of the editions anyhow, are back on their weekly track, I'll be better able to keep you regular readers interested in Kenny-with-cancer's status. For the current moment, I am living between a rock and hard place. On the one hand I am a cancer patient who is unable, due to some predictable side effects of treatment: kidney damage, to continue to take the prescribed papillary thyroid cancer medicine that has presumably kept me going for the past three and a half years – when my original non-small cell lung cancer stage IV diagnosis was changed/corrected. Since the medicine was never a cure, I remember asking my oncologist about the timeline for the medicine's effectiveness. I was told three years, give, or take. I am now four months into year four. Hardly reassuring then that here I am, in year four, having side-effect issues which has led to a cessation of my cancer medicine. And so far as my thyroid cancer is affected, I can't imagine no medicine will stem the tide. On the other hand, diagnosis to date, to quote my late brother, medically speaking, I have been "the exception that proves the rule." Meaning, I have survived the ordeal of chemotherapy/cancer treatment better than most, according to my oncologist. However, surviving kidney damage caused by the years of treatment might be another risk/problem entirely. And unfortunately, kidneys don't get better if I stop the medicine. They just won't get worse. Which I don't imagine will be the case with my thyroid cancer. If there's no medicine to keep the cancer in check, the kidney damage might be the least of my problems. Either way, I may be damned if I do and/or damned if I don't.

Nevertheless, I'm trying not to focus too much on this reality and my three-year window of effectiveness slamming shut. Throughout my 14-plus years of treatment, often I was not presenting how my oncologist was expecting. I wasn't reacting as he had anticipated. I was doing much better than he expected then when he "prognosed" a "13 month to two years" life expectancy – at age 54 and a half for me at the initial Team Lourie meeting. As such, the experience has helped me manage my expectations – and fears. I can roll with the punches as I go from one lab result to the next, one scan result to the next. Because so far, due to a possible misdiagnosis (and/or an extremely slow-moving thyroid cancer at that) or a better-than-expected patient reaction to most treatments, I've survived nearly 15 years (Feb. 20, 2024, will be my diagnosis anniversary). What this better-than-expected patient experience has taught me is to wait and see, rather than presume the worst. In short, I'm able to wait and see rather than preemptively spend time finalizing my arrangements. However, a side effect with the word kidney in it is somewhat different compared to many of the garden variety (hair loss, fatigue, nausea, etc.) side effects some of you may be familiar with as often characteristic of chemotherapy. It will be about the time this column publishes on Feb. 7 that I will have received the results of my most recent lab work from Feb. 5th. It's likely that my column on Wed. Feb. 12 will address the potential elephant in the room: dialysis – or the avoidance thereof, brought about by an ever-increasing creatinine level (a direct result of years of chemotherapy for a lung cancer that didn't exist, apparently) that is likely confirming irreparable damage to my kidneys (so much so that I'm now being monitored by a nephrologist who has likewise ordered monthly lab work, approximately a half dozen tests or so unique to the kidneys that previously have never been measured). And though I don't like the sound of any of it, I must keep my powder dry and wait until I see the whites of my doctor's eyes (if you know what I mean). If I don't, it means I shouldn't put my cart before my horse (which I don't even own) and wait for actual medical confirmation that my ship has sailed. So, until further notice/clarification that I am in some semi-expected medical trouble, that will most likely affect my life expectancy (and not extending it, I'm afraid), I will stay in port and deal with this health storm as I have going back 15 years: underreaction and calm in the face of potentially really bad news. But until it's really happening, I'm not 'really' worried. Nor am I about to woe is me (and I wouldn't anyway, as you regular readers know). I will keep to my routine, remain positive about the negative and consider that very little of what my oncologist had predicted/anticipated health-wise originally for me has come to fruition (and 15 years of fruition is a long track record). But until it's a definite, as far as I'm concerned, it's a maybe. And I can live with maybe.

And I certainly have experience living with 'maybe.' When my oncologist first met Team Lourie and reviewed with us my previous eight weeks of diagnostic testing with a pulmonologist, thoracic surgeon, general surgeon and pathologist (X-Ray, CT scan, PET Scan, surgical biopsy) with the results all indicating/confirming non-small cell lung cancer stage IV, I couldn't believe what I was hearing. When we asked the oncologist about my chances of survival, he was very discouraging: "2% live beyond two years." Mind you, I was 54 and a half, had never spent a day in hospital; was a lifelong non-smoker with no cancer in my immediate family; and yet I'm receiving this doomsday scenario: living 30 years less than my recently deceased parents (my father died at 87 and my mother died at 86).

I had always figured I would at least live as long as they did. Then I was being told statistically that I'll be lucky to make it to age 57. Now, I'm hearing similarly ominous words. On my next birthday, I'll be age 70. I believed the doctors then as I believe them now. Still, I'll try not to take it personally and presume facts not in evidence. Life is for living, not anticipating dying.

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

## NEWS BRIEFS

FROM PAGE 4

gas—reducing the County's dependence on fossil fuels.

## Red Lion Hotel Site Plan Amendments Will Yield 446 Dwelling Units

The existing Red Lion hotel located at 1501 Arlington Blvd. and the Ellis Arms and Williamsburg Apartments will be redeveloped into an eight-story multifamily residential building. This building will have 446 dwelling units, and the overall project will advance key county goals and objectives.

- ♦ Affordable housing: 22 on-site committed affordable units (CAFs), totaling 42 bedrooms, including four one-bedroom, 16 two-bedroom, and two three-bedroom units;

- ♦ Sustainable design: Makes LEED Gold certification, 20% energy optimization, and additional sustainability commitments in

accordance with the Green Building Incentive Policy at the 0.35 FAR level. In addition, a portion of the existing parking garage will be reused, thereby reducing the amount of embodied carbon;

- ♦ New housing: Creation of 418 net new dwelling units in the transit-rich and multimodal transportation environment in the Rosslyn Station Area;

- ♦ Urban design: Eliminates existing surface parking lots, reduces curb cut widths, creates a continuous building face along Fairfax Drive, and undergrounds overhead power lines along the site frontages;

- ♦ Streetscape and Multimodal Approach: Constructs new sidewalks, increasing the number of street trees along all frontages and new crosswalks and ADA improvements (accessible ramps) at the intersection of Fairfax Drive and North Pierce Street as well as mid-block on Fairfax Drive between the proposed lobby and Arlington Boulevard Trail. In addition, the proposed building placement ensures adequate right-of-way remains for the new Arlington Boulevard Trail capital project, currently in preliminary engineering phase.

# Money Does Grow On Trees

**Virginia Forestry pays for community tree plantings.**

BY SUSAN LAUME  
THE CONNECTION

Virginia's Department of Forestry strives to see many more native trees planted in the Commonwealth. For the second year in a row, they are willing to give money away to make that happen. DOF has \$800,000 in Trees for Clean Water Grant (TCW) money to award in 2024, for projects from \$1,000 up to \$50,000 per applicant. Under the grant program last year, DOF awarded 58 grants totaling nearly \$853,000 across the Commonwealth. Two of the grantees were located in Fairfax County: the Town of Herndon, and the Ridge Road Estates Home Owners Association (RREHOA) in Springfield. So, contrary to the old adage, money does grow on trees.

The program was "established to encourage the creation of long-term, sustained canopy cover to improve water quality across the Commonwealth. This grant is used to fund tree-planting efforts that raise public awareness of the benefits of trees and impacts on water quality," according to the Department of Forestry. Projects could include: riparian buffers, community or street tree plantings, neighborhood-wide projects, converting turf-to-trees, and tree giveaways, or other similar projects. Funds, which are paid on a reimbursement basis, can be used to cover site and soil preparation and amendment, fees of contractors or consultants, purchase of trees and shrubs up to two calibers, essential materials, and maintenance expenses including watering during the grant period.

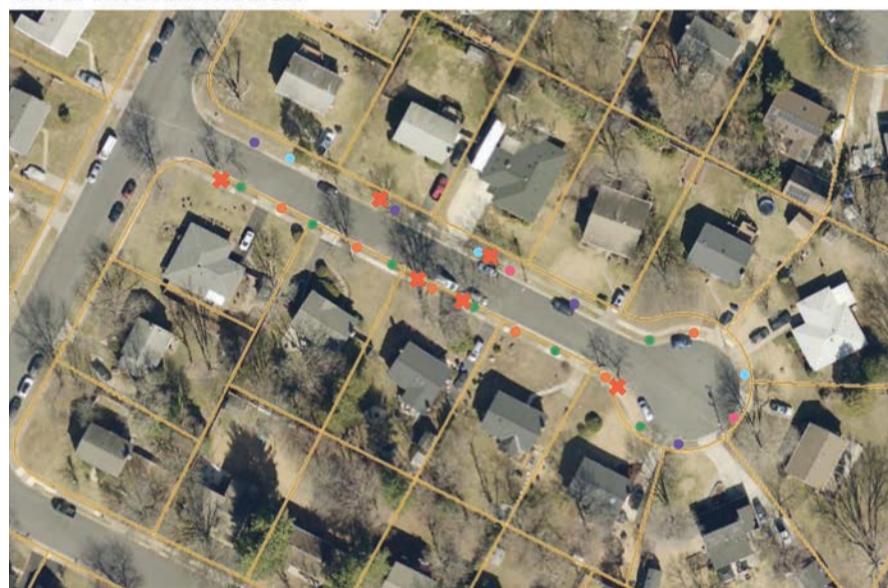
Who is eligible to apply? This is not a program for individual home owners. Grants may be awarded to civic groups, communities, local government, non-profit organizations, neighborhood associations, public educational institutions, state agencies, tribal organizations, and volunteer groups. Some match of awarded funds is expected and can include in-kind and volunteer hours. Applications are accepted electronically at <https://dof.virginia.gov/urban-community-forestry/urban-forestry-community-assistance/virginia-trees-for-clean-water-grant-program/>



Before the Trees for Clean Water Grant project, trees along Herndon's Bruce Court were misshapen, interfering with power lines, and losing branches

PHOTO COURTESY TOWN OF HERNDON

## BRUCE CT: ALL SITE CHANGES



### LEGEND:

- River Birch (6)
- American Elm (7)
- Eastern Redbud (2)
- Star Magnolia (3)
- Okame Cherry (4)
- ✖ Bradford Pear Removal (6)

PHOTO COURTESY TOWN OF HERNDON

Town arborist's Nick Maletta designed a plan to remove poor trees and replant.



PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

RREHOA's common area field before the project has a significant number of non-native Callery Pear trees and required mowing maintenance.

clean-water-grant-program/

The Town of Herndon used its nearly \$21,000 grant to replace trees along their Bruce Court area, a few on Center Street and at the Town Hall. Town Arborist Nick Maletta explained that they

planted 36 trees in total, with the majority replacing invasive Bradford Pear trees along Bruce Court. The existing trees had been dropping branches and interfering with overhead power lines for some time. While the Town spent

maintenance funds for contracted service to remove the existing problem trees, which were not native, the grant provided the funds for their replacement. Maletta selected a mix of overstory and under-story tree species in his plan to accommodate the power lines at the site. Nearby residents had input through in-person meetings and social media. He describes only two hurdles encountered: having to compromise on one or two tree placements for resident considerations, and the lack of availability of some preferred tree species during the available planting period. Maletta says, "the more people who take advantage of the money to plant, the community will only benefit." He hopes to apply again this year.

Must you have a professional arborist available to take on a project? Ridge Road Estates HOA would say no, but you do need a few dedicated volunteers. The

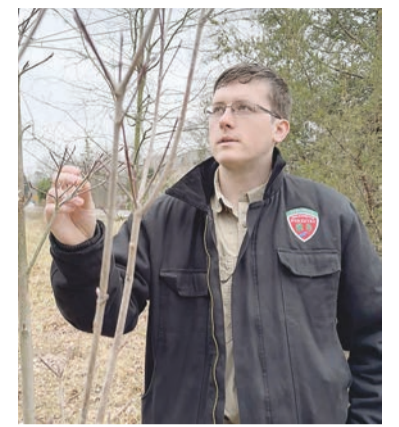


PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME  
THE CONNECTION

Department of Forestry community forester Jacob Zielinski, finds RREHOA's project trees already forming buds during a visit to the project site.

RREHOA's project targeting an open field common area started with removal of 42 Bradford Pear trees, along with a few species of other invasive vines and plants. They used grant funds to plant 16 large new native trees and shrubs. These planting join 37 seedlings planted three years ago in a density meant to eventually shade out grasses, eliminating the maintenance previously required to mow turf grass. Their \$7,300 award project was lead by a resident Virginia Master Naturalist and aided by a small group of volunteers who took on many of the site preparation and tree maintenance tasks. They used grant funds for contractor service in planting the large trees. The neighborhood's children joined in to help with site maintenance, such as gathering non-native tree seeds to prevent them from spouting, and gathering brush to form habitat. The HOA was able to complete their grant fund matching obligation fully with volunteer hours. (For more on the grant program and the HOA's efforts, see Springfield Connection, November 16-22, pg 8-9)

A recent visit by DOF community forester Jacob Zielinski found the RREHOA project area and tree plantings "looking good" with some minimal deer predation, from which the shrubs are likely to recover. New trees are already forming buds. Zielinski estimates they might only need another week to open if milder temperatures continue. The HOA's selection of species, including Dogwood, Eastern Redbud, Fringe Tree, Red Buckeye, and Elderberry and Spicebush, promise a notable bloom display and the ability to attract the pollinating insects which favor them.

If your group would like to apply, applications must be submitted 30 days prior to the estimated planting date for Spring and Fall planting periods at the link provided above.