

Monumental First Step

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Va. House passes bill to advance Potomac Yard entertainment complex; local opposition continues.

By JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Legislation to create a sports and entertainment authority at Potomac Yard in Alexandria passed the Virginia House of Delegates Feb. 13 on a 59-40 vote, one day after the Senate killed a similar bill.

Support was split among Northern Virginia representatives, with Delegates Elizabeth Bennett-Parker (D-Alexandria) and Adele McClure (D-Arlington) voting no while Del.

Charniele Herring (D-Alexandria) voted yes. Bennett-Parker and McClure represent Alexandria's Potomac Yard and Arlington's Crystal City neighborhoods, which are expected to be most impacted by the proposal.

"Today's vote is an important milestone in the efforts to bring a sports and entertainment district to Potomac Yard."

— Mayor
Justin Wilson

based on the merits of the proposal and the benefits it would bring to our community."

HB 1514, the Virginia Sports and Entertainment Authority and Financing Fund, was introduced by Del. Luke Torian. The bill proposes creating a sports authority that would issue more than a billion dollars in bonds to build a sports and entertainment district as a new home for the Washington

SEE MONUMENTAL FIRST STEP, PAGE 2



Members of the Coalition to Stop the Arena at Potomac Yard gather on the steps of the Richmond capitol Feb. 8 to protest the proposal to build an entertainment complex at Potomac Yard.



Members of the Coalition to Stop the Arena gather before dawn Feb. 8 before boarding a bus to Richmond to lobby against the proposed entertainment complex at Potomac Yard.

George Washington's Birthday Parade Is Monday, Feb. 19

The city's annual celebration of George Washington's birthday has returned with events across the city and parade Monday, Feb. 19. This year's parade and celebration coincides with the city's 275th anniversary.

The theme of the 2024 George Washington Birthday Parade is "George Washington: Alexandria's Original Living Legend," and The Living Legends of Alexandria will be honorary grand marshals. The Living Legends of Alexandria is a non-profit organization dedicated to chronicling individuals who have made significant contributions to Alexandria.

The George Washington Birthday Celebration Parade will march on Monday, Feb. 19 in Old Town, Alexandria from 1 to 3 p.m. Historic city museums and sites will open their doors on parade day with free admission for Alexandria residents.



"The participants really have stepped it up this year with creative ways to celebrate Washington's birthday, Alexandria's 275th Anniversary, and community service," said Johnson.

The parade route may be viewed here. <https://washingtonbirthday.com/20234-parade-route-copy>

For a complete schedule of events happening across the city, please visit www.WashingtonBirthday.com. A Parade Order of March with parade unit descriptions will be posted on this site before Parade Day.

The George Washington Birthday Celebration Parade will march on Monday, Feb. 19 in Old Town, Alexandria from 1 to 3 p.m.

Monumental First Step

FROM PAGE 1

Wizards and Capitals near the Potomac Yard Metro station.

Monumental Sports & Entertainment, the teams' parent company with CEO Ted Leonsis at the helm, would repay the loan from revenue generated from events at the facility. Should Monumental default, the loan would fall to taxpayers, which Monumental representatives say is extremely unlikely.

Gov. Glenn Youngkin released a statement following the vote, saying, "Following the MEI Commission's unanimous approval in December, the bipartisan vote in committee and today's bipartisan support on the House floor, the more decision-makers learn about this project the more they realize that the positive impact reaches all corners of the Commonwealth."

More than 60 Alexandria residents and members of the Coalition to Stop the Arena traveled to Richmond Feb. 8 to lobby state legislators to oppose the project.

"We had a great trip to Richmond," said Stop the Arena representative and former vice mayor Andrew Macdonald. "We met with over 30 legislators and held a great press conference at the Bell Tower. We considered the trip successful given that 40 bi-partisan delegates voted against the House Arena Bill."

Macdonald was one of three Coalition members who spoke against the bill as it was being passed in the House Finance Committee.

"Overall, we were very pleased with the vote, though we certainly would have liked it to have been



Former vice mayor Andrew Macdonald, center, makes remarks at a press conference Feb. 8 at the Bell Tower in Richmond as part of the Coalition to Stop the Arena opposition of the proposed entertainment complex at Potomac Yard.

defeated," Macdonald said. "But we are confident now that the momentum is changing and that legislators are beginning to realize that subsidizing a billionaire with one of the largest public subsidies on record is not good for Virginia taxpayers."

The legislation now heads to the Virginia Senate for review, where several lawmakers expressed a

lack of confidence in Leonsis and have indicated they would vote it down.

"If he's willing to renege on the lease on the folks in D.C., what's to say he wouldn't do that to us," said Sen. Louise Lucas (D-18). "I'm not willing to take those risks, not under my watch."

Lucas, who chairs the Senate Finance Committee, declined to

bring the legislation to a vote before the committee, effectively blocking the legislation in the senate. Lucas has been outspoken about her disdain for the proposal, calling it a "half-baked Glenn-dome."

Monumental Sports and developers say the project will create 30,000 jobs, generate \$12 billion in economic impact, and bring two

professional sports franchises to the Commonwealth.

"We are so encouraged by the bipartisan support for this monumental opportunity to create jobs and generate revenue that will benefit the city, the region, and the entire Commonwealth of Virginia," Monica Dixon of Monumental Sports said in a statement. "This is a big step forward in the process, but we know it is not the last step. We believe this is the right project for Alexandria, for Virginia, and for our fans, players, coaches, and employees. We look forward to working with the leadership, members, and staff of the Virginia Senate to answer their questions and earn their support for this transformative economic opportunity."

The last day for legislative action this session is March 9. House Bill 1514 includes a "reenactment" clause that forces the General Assembly to vote again on the bill in 2025.

"I think legislators are beginning to understand that the arena will have unmanageable traffic impacts on Alexandria," Macdonald said. "We are very disappointed that Mayor Wilson and the Council threw its support behind this project before consulting with the public. We have learned recently that Monumental, state and maybe City officials were engaged in secret discussions for two years before the public heard anything about the project. And the City and Commonwealth has still refused to release any of the full economic studies. We will keep fighting until the Bill is defeated."

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NEWS

The Hearts of Del Ray

Dog Store, Duncan Library share annual award.

Record turnout in online voting resulted in the closest results in the history of the Heart of Del Ray award, with The Dog Store/Your Dog's Best Friends and the Duncan Library/Friends of the Duncan Library sharing the 2024 honors.

It is the first time the award, given to the business or organization that represents "the heart and soul of Del Ray," was presented to two local businesses. Voting was determined by a public vote of neighbors and customers.

"The community made it clear that they love these businesses more than anything, so for the first year we are going to actually have two Hearts of Del Ray," said Del Ray Business Association board member Gayle Reuter.

According to the DRBA, The Dog Store fosters community among both two- and four-legged friends in Del Ray by participating in community events, decorating for all the holidays, and doting on the pups in the neighborhood.

"They are always friendly, helpful, and clearly love their community of dogs and humans," read one nomination. "On walks down the Avenue, every pup MUST stop to get love and treats from the staff. Mine drags me in there every time!" wrote another.

One of Del Ray's favorite "third places," Duncan Library brings the community together with programs and resources covering a wide variety of interests and causes -- and, of course, books, said DRBA in a



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Representatives of the Del Ray Business Association gather in Pat Miller Neighborhood Square to present the 2024 Heart of Del Ray Award to The Dog Store and the Duncan Library. It is the first year that the annual award was shared between two businesses.

press release.

"It is the epitome of the heart of Del Ray. It's a gathering place for everyone and it embraces you the second you walk in the door," wrote one nomination. "The library's programming for ALL ages is incredible, the staff is warm and welcoming, and the

Friends of the Library works so hard fundraising behind the scenes to make all the extras that make Duncan so special possible," wrote another.

Nearly 2,000 votes were cast in the online contest. Past winners of the award include A Show of Hands, Jen Walker of McEneary

Associates, Bobi Bomar Homes of Alexandria, The Neighborhood Pharmacy of Del Ray, Greener Cleaner of Del Ray, Del Ray Pizzeria, Mind the Mat Pilates & Yoga, Caboose Cafe, Del Ray Cafe, HomeGrown Restaurant Group, Taqueria Poblano, Ms. Preeti's 7-11, Dolce & Bean, Lena's Wood-Fired Pizza & Tap, and the Del Ray Farmers' Market.

"The community made it clear that they love these businesses more than anything, so for the first year we are going to actually have two Hearts of Del Ray."

— DRBA board member Gayle Reuter

The Del Ray Business Association represents the independently-owned restaurants, retailers, and businesses in the Del Ray neighborhood of Alexandria.

www.visitdelray.com.

— JEANNE THEISMANN

Let the Music Play

James Bland music participants honored.

By JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Winners of the James Bland Music Competition were celebrated at the Lyceum Feb. 4 as participants were named winners by the host Lions Club and Lions of Virginia Bland Foundation.

Elizabeth Hope Stein, a 17-year-old violinist, placed first in the competition. She performed the 3rd movement of the Violin Concerto in A Minor by Antonin Dvorak. Second place went to Chole Lee, 15, who performed the 1st movement of the Violin Concerto in D Minor by Henryk Wieniawski. Patrick Johannes Ostermann-Healey, a 16-year-old student at Alexandria City High School, took third place with a performance of Concerto #3 in B Minor for Violin and Orchestra by Camille Saint-Saens.

"The talent of these young musicians is absolutely phenomenal," said Sheriff Sean Casey, attending the event for the second time. "The fact that we are able to help with their careers moving forward and having an impact on them is amazing. Makes me proud to be a Lion and member of CCNA."

The competition is traditionally held during Black History Month as a memorial



PHOTO BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Mayor Justin Wilson, center back, poses for a photo with participants in the James Bland Music Competition Feb. 4 at the Lyceum. Elizabeth Hope Stein, second from left, took first place, Chole Lee, far right, took second place, and Patrick Johannes Ostermann-Healey, a junior at Alexandria City High School, far left in back, finished third.

SEE JAMES BLAND MUSIC, PAGE 11

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ALEXANDRIA GAZETTE PACKET ♦ FEBRUARY 15-21, 2024 ♦ 3

Investing in Families with Solutions that Work

BY HEATHER PEELER & JENNIFER OWENS

Fifty-percent of Americans have less than \$400 in their bank accounts, putting them one emergency expense from a devastating financial crisis. In Alexandria and south Arlington, more than 30% of families are unable to cover basic needs.

When we ask people about the biggest challenges they face, trouble affording the high cost of living in our region is at the top of the list. For example, the City of Alexandria's Housing Department calculates that a resident needs to earn more than \$37/hour to afford a one-bedroom apartment. Low-wage jobs in childcare, food service, home health care, and construction do not provide enough income to support a family. This means low-income families must rely on a combination of employment income, public benefits, and community supports to survive.

How can we help our neighbors secure a more stable future? Since 2017, more than 100 local communities across the United States, including Arlington and Alexandria, implemented innovative guaranteed income pilots to provide extra support to households on the financial edge. These programs have yielded remarkable results for participants and their communities. Research shows that programs that give parents cash increase employment, parental involvement, and physical and mental

well-being, among other findings.

For example, in Arlington's recently completed pilot called Arlington's Guarantee, income from employment increased by 36% for 200 families that received the monthly recurring \$500, compared to only a 9% increase over the same period for the comparison group. Families report being able to search for better jobs, pay for transportation, and pursue job training with the added slack in their budget.

Alexandria's guaranteed income pilot, ARISE, is approaching its first anniversary. Since February 2023, 170 randomly selected low-income households are receiving \$500 per month for 24 months. The program concludes in 2025 and is already having a substantial impact.

One participant, a single mother, shared: "I use the money from ARISE to buy healthy foods, clothes, and shoes for my kids." Another, a single father, noted: "Now I can finally take classes and upgrade my career, so life can get even better." More than 4,000 Alexandrians earning less than 50% AMI (or \$64,000 annually for a family of 3) applied to participate in ARISE, demonstrating the overwhelming need for assistance.

Efforts like Arlington's Guarantee and ARISE demonstrate the power of cash in the hands of parents. This was also demonstrated by the expanded federal Child Tax Credit (CTC) of 2021, which reduced poverty by a whopping

46% before being allowed to lapse in 2022.

Innovative strategies like these are needed to tackle persistent child poverty in Virginia now. For example, a state Child Tax Credit that provides a \$500 refund for every child under the age of 18 in households making up to \$100,000 in adjusted gross income would help more than 1 million children in over 640,000 Virginia families. It would reduce childhood hunger, improve test scores for students, and improve infant and maternal health.

Fourteen states have implemented a state-based Child Tax Credits. Lawmakers are turning to Child Tax Credits as a powerful tool to put more cash in families' pockets to help put food on the table, buy school clothes, and navigate rising costs. According to a recent statewide poll by Public Policy Polling, 68% of Virginia voters support creating a state Child Tax Credit. And, it has bi-partisan support. Clearly, this is not only a good policy but also a popular proposal.

Northern Virginia is an economic engine for the state and one of the most prosperous regions in the country. However, many residents do not share in this prosperity. Child Tax Credits are one of the many ways to close the gap and help families invest in themselves and their future.

Heather Peeler is President & CEO of ACT for Alexandria and Jennifer Owens is President & CEO, Arlington Community Foundation

Senate Version of Potomac Yard Arena Proposal Hits a Speedbump — or Roadblock?

BY SENATOR ADAM EBBIN

Last November, Gov. Glenn Youngkin announced his proposal to relocate the Washington Wizards NBA team and the Washington Capitals NHL team from DC across the river to a \$2 billion arena to be built in the City of Alexandria's Potomac Yard neighborhood. There is no question that the arena and entertainment district proposal, which also includes a separate 3,000 capacity concert venue, is a unique opportunity for Alexandria to diversify its tax base.

The House of Delegates version of the bill, HB 1514, sponsored by Del. Luke Torian of Prince William was recommended on 17-3 vote by the House of Delegates Appropriations Committee for the consideration of the full House.

The Senate cognate of that bill, SB 718, sponsored by Sen. Scott Surovell of Mount Vernon was not docketed for a hearing before this Tuesday's crossover deadline for all bills to pass in their house of origin. Sen. Louise Lucas, chair of the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee reasoned that the bill put too much risk on the Commonwealth, possibly leaving

taxpayers on the hook for the bonds issued for financing. Lucas also pointed out that the project's proposed financing was not viable without the public bond issuance. She also said it would be atypical and precedent-setting to use the Commonwealth's contingent moral obligation debt to fund a private economic development project.

Even though the bill has not yet been considered by the traditional pre-crossover deadline, the House version of the bill could advance and be considered by the Senate — and the Senate rules do allow for the governor to send down another bill at any time. The project was also included in the governor's proposed budget.

In my opinion, it is critical we don't rush to approve a project that would impact generations of Virginians without answers to important questions. Three components must be in any bill I could consider supporting. First, the protection of the communities that would be most directly impacted — including a deep investment in affordable housing to avoid driv-



Ebbin

ing out families who live in nearby neighborhoods. Second, Northern Virginians need a real commitment from the Commonwealth to the long-term health of the Metro system. And third, I need confidence that the project would include meaningful and binding agreements to create good-paying jobs, in construction, service and hospitality through Project Labor and Labor Peace

Agreements.

The governor's transportation report released from the Kimley Horn firm contains a number of potential improvements — most of which have merit. Unfortunately, the report, just like the governor's introduced budget released in December, includes zero commitment to long-term funding of the Metro system. Unfortunately, the only commitment the governor has mustered is one to consider bud-

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Ideally, letters will be original, about local issues and less than 300 words. Please submit letters by noon Friday before publication week, although letters received on Mondays can be considered. Letters must include your first and last name, home address and a phone number. Letters are routinely edited for libel, length, grammar, good taste and accuracy.

Your name and town will be published with your letter, other personal information will not be shared. If you are a student, your school name, age and grade will also be published.

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NEWS DEPARTMENT:
gazette@connectionnewspapers.com

Editor & Publisher

Mary Kimm
mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com
@MaryKimm

Jeanne Theismann
jtheismann@connectionnewspapers.com
@TheismannMedia

Janet Barnett, John Bordner,
Mark Mogile
Contributing Photographers
gazette@connectionnewspapers.com

Shirley Ruhe
Contributing Photographer and Writer
gazette@connectionnewspapers.com

Eden Brown, Bridgette Adu-Wadier,
Glenda Booth
Contributing Writers
gazette@connectionnewspapers.com

Hope Nelson
Food Writer
hope@kitchenrecessionista.com
@kitchenrecess

Michael Pope
Senior Reporter
michaelleepope@gmail.com
@michaelleepope

ADVERTISING:
For advertising information
sales@connectionnewspapers.com
703-778-9431

Debbie Funk
Display Advertising/National Sales
703-778-9444
debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com

David Griffin
Marketing Assistant
703-778-9431
dgriffin@connectionnewspapers.com

Classified & Employment
Advertising
703-778-9431

Publisher
Jerry Vernon
703-549-0004
jvernon@connectionnewspapers.com

Art/Design:
Laurence Foong
Production Manager:
Geovani Flores

Editor Emeritus:
Mary Anne Weber

CIRCULATION
Circulation Manager:
Ann Oliver
circulation@connectionnewspapers.com

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Open Letter to Ted Leonsis From Andrew Macdonald

Dear Mr. Leonsis:

We want to make sure that there is no misunderstanding that many Alexandrians are angry about the prospect of Virginia taxpayers having to pay to build your sports arena at Potomac Yard.

Sports economists all agree that stadiums and arenas are money losers. There is absolutely no reason that Virginia taxpayers should be paying to build you a new facility a few miles from your current venue. This is robbing Peter to pay Paul. We seriously doubt that Abe Pollin would share your lack of concern for all the businesses that have grown up depending upon the Capital One Arena.

Alexandria's Potomac Yard is not a suitable location for your new sports arena. This project is going to cause horrendous traffic problems. Route 1 is the only major access road to Potomac Yard, and there is one small metro station nearby that was not built to handle large crowds. The transportation study that was released by the Commonwealth of Virginia offers no real solutions to these traffic problems. The fact is, Potomac Yard is not a good place to bring

20-30,000 people to sports and music events regularly throughout the year.

Traffic is a major concern for residents and small businesses. It's a major concern for parents who want to take their children to a sporting event at the soccer field across from Potomac Yard, or someone who wants to get home from work, or to the airport in time to catch a flight. It's of concern to people who live in places like Del Ray, Lynnhaven, Old Town, and parts of Arlington. Crime is a concern for Alexandria's police department.

In order to pay back all the bond debt and to make money for yourself, your arena needs to host hundreds of events each year. Your traffic studies, however, would suggest that there will not be many events that cause traffic problems. This claim is not believable. Either you don't need hundreds of events to pay back a record-breaking public subsidy, or you do, and events at the arena complex will cause traffic chaos locally. Which is it?

SEE OPINION, PAGE 11



Public Notice

Updated weight limits on Virginia bridges and culverts

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

Jurisdiction	Fed. Struc. Id.	Route #	Route Name	Crossing	Posted Date
WASHINGTON	18852	19	PORTERFIELD HWY	LITTLE MOCCASIN CREEK	1/22/2024
GREENE	8985	624	BEASLEY ROAD	BLUE RUN	1/17/2024
GREENE	8996	633	AMICUS ROAD	SWIFT RUN	1/17/2024
GREENE	8997	633	AMICUS ROAD	PARKER BRANCH	1/17/2024
GREENE	9002	634	MUTTON HOLLOW ROAD	SWIFT RUN	1/17/2024
BLAND	3057	805	ROUTE 0805	BIG WALKER CREEK #2	1/8/2024
GRAYSON	8754	58	HIGHLANDS PKWY	MILL CREEK	1/4/2024

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

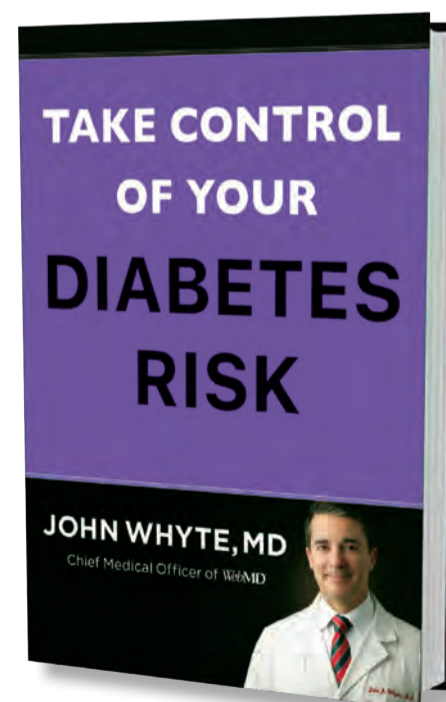
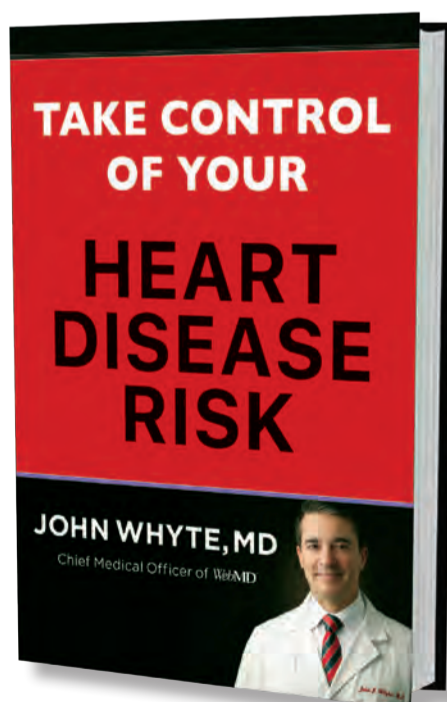
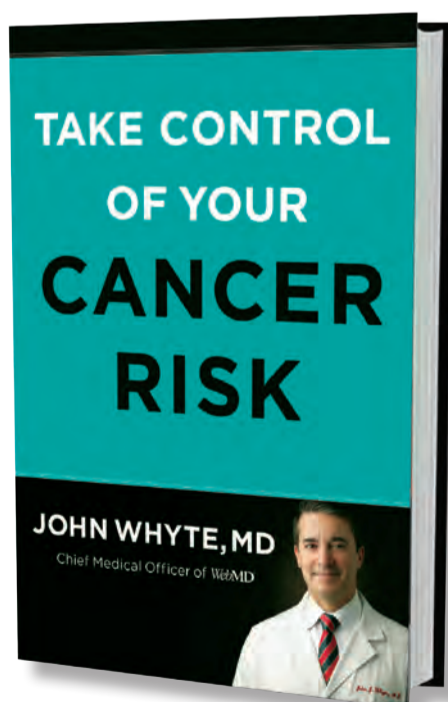
For a full listing of all bridge and culvert weight restrictions with detailed information about specific structures, including location data and actual weight limits, visit <https://www.virginiadot.org> and navigate to Info Center/Trucking Resources. This page references a posted structures report and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

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

The Virginia Department of Transportation is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any of its programs or activities on the basis of race, color, or national origin, as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need further information on VDOT's Title VI Program or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, please contact the Virginia Department of Transportation's Title VI Program Specialist at 804-786-2730.

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African American Heritage Trail

Ribbon cutting
officially opens
South Route.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

A crowd of more than a hundred gathered in Founders Park Feb. 10 to celebrate the official ribbon cutting for the South Route of the city's African American Heritage Trail along the Potomac River waterfront.

"These historic interpretive signs connect to our nation's history and are a part of the story we have to tell," said Mayor Justin Wilson. "We are not only telling the stories of those titans of African American Alexandria history but we are telling the stories of the ordinary Alexandrians who did incredible things to help change our city and

"This is another thoughtful way to engage everyone who comes to Alexandria."

— U.S. Rep. Don Beyer (D-8)

change our country. We are telling the stories of the folks who were part of the fishing industry, part of the war effort at the Torpedo Factory, part of building ships at Lort Lumley. These are the folks whose stories we tell in these signs."

Years of research by city historians and members of the African American Heritage Trail committee went into developing the 2.3-mile trail that includes 30 stops and 11 interpretive signs.

"The footprints of this trail were here before us and will be here long after we are gone," said committee member McArthur Myers. "What is important is that now the story is here and people can see the story. If you know Alexandria history, you know America's history – from the Revolutionary War to the Civil War until now. There are many stories here. Sometimes we have to look back to go forward."

Following the ribbon cutting in Founders Park, a second ribbon cutting was held in Waterfront



PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Mayor Justin Wilson, center, flanked by U.S. Rep. Don Beyer and civic leader McArthur Myers, celebrates following the ribbon cutting to open the African American Heritage Trail South Route Feb. 10 at Waterfront Park.



Civic leader McArthur Myers, center, waves after participating in the ribbon cutting for the African American Heritage Trail South Route Feb. 10 at Waterfront Park.



Retired City Manager Mark Jinks, left, at the ribbon cutting for the African American Heritage Trail South Route Feb. 10 at Founders Park.

Congressman Don Beyer (D-8) speaks at the official opening of the African American Heritage Trail South Route Feb. 10 at Founders Park.



African American Heritage Trail

FROM PAGE 6

Park. The new South Trail Route is the second in a series of trails covering the waterfront.

"We have a huge story to tell here in Alexandria," said Congressman and Alexandria resident Don Beyer (D-8). "This is where the slave markets were. This was the destination of the contrabands early in the Civil

War. While as a community we've done things pretty well, we're not at the end of overcoming the original sin of the American democracy. This is another thoughtful way to engage everyone who comes to Alexandria."

Information and maps on both the North and South routes can be found at www.alexandriava.gov/historic-sites/african-american-heritage-trails



Audrey Davis, director of the Alexandria Black History Museum, makes remarks at the ribbon cutting for the African American Heritage Trail South Route Feb. 10 at Waterfront Park.



Attendees gather at the unveiling of the South Route of the African American Heritage Trail Feb. 10 at Waterfront Park.

BULLETIN BOARD

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

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Alexandria Families for Safer Streets - Executive Assistant to AFSS Board of Directors. The agency is seeking an executive assistant to help coordinate a diverse group of tasks necessary to keep us on track and moving forward. Someone with office manager skills would be the ideal candidate. www.volunteeralexandria.org

ALIVE! Volunteers are needed to assist with multiple programs relating to their Food Program, ALIVE! House, and Alexandria Eviction Prevention Partnership Program will distribute food at Mobile Pop-ups and Truck to

Trunk events, etc. <https://www.volunteeralexandria.org/ALIVE> Assistance League of Northern Virginia is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that feeds, clothes and provides reading assistance and books to children in need. Assistance League's programs touch the lives of hundreds of children in Fairfax and Prince William Counties and the City of Alexandria. There are many volunteer opportunities for community members to contribute to helping those in need. To learn more, email info@alnv.org, or visit www.alnv.org. Join Friends' Board. Those who care about mental health, the Alexan-

dria community, and collaborating with fellow residents to make sure the City's most vulnerable residents have a chance to thrive, then consider joining the Board of Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center. The Friends Board is an all-volunteer group of residents that oversees the administration of one of Alexandria's top mental health charities. Friends has no paid staff, so Board members, working on average 10 hours per month, share the day-to-day work needed to accomplish its goals. Interested candidates should email FriendsofAMHC@gmail.com.

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ENTERTAINMENT

NOW THRU 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.

NOW THRU FEB. 29

Love Is In the Air Exhibit. At Van Landingham Gallery, Torpedo Factory, Gallery 311, 105 North Union Street, Alexandria. The Torpedo Factory Artists' Association presents a group exhibition including jewelry, paintings, photography, mixed media work, hand pulled prints, and more during the month of February. Visit <https://www.torpedofactoryartists.com/> to learn more about the Torpedo Factory Artists' Association.

NOW THRU APRIL 15

Exhibit: "Searching for Truth in the Garden" at Freedom House Museum. At Freedom House Museum, 1315 Duke Street, Alexandria. Gonzaga High School's groundbreaking research on slavery, "Searching for Truth in the Garden," found new life at the

Freedom House Museum. The traveling exhibition, on view through April 15, 2024, delves into the life of Gabriel, a teenager enslaved at Washington Seminary (now Gonzaga) in 1829. Gabriel's story offers a poignant lens through which to examine the complexities of slavery and its lasting impact.

WEDNESDAYS

THROUGH SATURDAYS

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

NOW THRU MARCH 2

Native American Culture & Experience Exhibit. At Nepenthe Gallery, Hollin Hall Shopping Center, Alexandria. This special exhibit includes works by renowned photographer, Cara Romero, and historical painters, Bryant and Pamela White, among others. The exhibit will be up until March 2nd at Nepenthe's flagship gallery at the Hollin Hall Shopping Center in Alexandria.



"The Power of Two" Exhibit will run at Del Ray Artisans Gallery from March 1-30, 2024.

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"The Power of Two" Exhibit.

At Del Ray Artisans gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Features art that showcases two related items in one piece of art; for example, two-of-a-kind, complementary items, double-exposures, duos, twins, or multiple generations. "Double your pleasure, double your fun." Opening Reception: Friday, March 1, 7-9 p.m. Open Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays & Sundays 12-6 p.m. (Closed Sunday, March 31). Details: DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

NOW THRU FEB. 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). DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

Cemetery, Barrett Library and more.

SUNDAY/FEB. 18

Concert: Washington Revels Jubilee Voices. 2-3 p.m. At Alexandria's History Museum at The Lyceum, 201 S. Washington Street, Alexandria. Join Washington Revels Jubilee Voices for an exploration of the Gullah-Geechee culture and life in St. Simons Island, Georgia. This multimedia program, "Wade in the Water," was developed in partnership with Mercer University, blending songs and stories of the Gullah Geechee community and featuring six student films that capture the history, lives and spirit of these proud people, whose numbers are dwindling due to several factors, including increasing development. The event is free, but online registration is encouraged.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 21

Virtual Documentary Viewing: "Still Bill." 7 to 9 p.m. Virtual via Zoom. For African American History Month, enjoy a virtual screening of the documentary "Still Bill" about music legend and Hall of Famer, Bill Withers. Please register with an email address to receive the screening link. Registration closes at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, February 20, 2024. Visit alexandriaconnection.com

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 9

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 8
alibraryva.org

THURSDAY/FEB. 22

Black Dance: Housing the Past and the Present. 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Virtual via Zoom. Join a virtual presentation exploring how colonialism brought an end to authentic African dance with Associate Professor of Dance at George Mason University Lawrence M. Jackson, who in 2011 co-authored and edited a special edition on Black dance in the Journal of Pan African Studies. In this presentation, he explains how Black dance keeps those African cultural traditions alive and is an affirmation of identity and independence. Visit alexandrialibraryva.org

SUNDAY/FEB. 25

Finding the Family of Joseph McCoy. 2 p.m. At Alexandria Black History Museum, 902 Wythe Street, Alexandria. Genealogist Char McCargo Bah will lecture on "Finding the Family of Alexandria's Lynching Victim Joseph McCoy." Join the Black History Museum staff in learning how Ms. Bah, the official genealogist for the Alexandria Community Remembrance Project, discovered the family of the first of Alexandria's lynching victims, Joseph McCoy, who was lynched in Alexandria on April 23, 1897. Learn the secrets to investigating a family tree that does not have many leads. The lecture is suited for beginners or established genealogists. The lecture is free, but space is limited, so register to attend. Registration at Finding the Family of Joseph McCoy - shop. alexandriava.gov.

TUESDAY/FEB. 27

Bright Star Theatre: George Washington Carver and Friends. 6 to 7 p.m. At Charles E. Beatley Jr. Central Library, 5005 Duke Street, Alexandria. Meet Black entrepreneurs and groundbreakers like George Washington Carver, Madame CJ Walker, Thurgood Mar-

shall and more in this interactive theater performance. The event is for children grades K to 5. Visit alexandrialibraryva.org

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 28

Burke Book Club: "Invisible Man" by Ralph Ellison. 3:30 to 5 p.m. Virtual via Zoom. In honor of Black History Month, join a virtual Zoom discussion put on by Ellen Coolidge Burke Branch Library on the 1952 classic novel, "Invisible Man" by Ralph Ellison. This program will take place by Zoom and registration is required. After registering, you will be emailed the link to join this Zoom meeting. If you have questions about the program or need help with set up, please contact Caroline at cpak@alexlibraryva.org. Visit alexandrialibraryva.org

MARCH 5 THRU APRIL 28

Mosaics by Nina Tisara and Photographs by Steven Halperson. At Green Spring Gardens, 4601 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. The Opening Reception is Sunday, March 10, 1-3 p.m. The mother-son team had worked together at Tisara Photography in Old Town for three decades. Steven now manages the Alexandria portrait studio as well as creating painterly photographic images and unique etched copper art. Nina creates intricate mosaics of unglazed porcelain tile which are widely exhibited and collected. Their work may also be seen by appointment at Serenity Place Gallery, Nina's in-home gallery,

FRIDAY/MARCH 8

Women's Leadership Forum. 7:45-10:30 a.m. At The Westin Alexandria Old Town, 400 Courthouse Square, Alexandria. The forum will bring together women (and men) at all stages of their careers for an interactive, "straight talk" panel discussion filled with inspiration and insight. Cost is \$80 for Members | \$105 for Prospective Members.

MARCH 12-18

Spring Book Sale - At Beatley Central Library, 5005 Duke Street, Alexandria. The Friends of Beatley Central Library will hold their Spring Book Sale from Tuesday, March 12 through Monday, March 18. Members' Preview on Tuesday, March 12, 3:00 -7:30 p.m. (\$15 memberships available at the door); Wednesday, March 13, 10:00 a.m.-7:30 p.m.; Thursday, March 14, 10:00 a.m.-7:30 p.m.; Friday, March 15, 10:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; Saturday, March 16, 10:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; Sunday, March 17, Half Price Day, 1:00-4:30 p.m.; Monday, March 18, \$10 Bag Sale, 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. \$4 or less, unless specifically marked: hardbacks, paperbacks, children's books, and media. All genres. Visit www.beatleyfriends.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.

FEBRUARY

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!

Alexandria Fentanyl and Gun Trafficker Sentenced to 15 Years

An Alexandria man was sentenced Tuesday, Feb. 13, to 15 years in prison for conspiring to distribute fentanyl and possessing a firearm in furtherance of drug trafficking.

According to court documents, Carrington Hammond, 29, worked with Arizona-based suppliers and local redistributors to sell kilogram-level quantities of fentanyl in the Eastern District of Virginia.

Hammond's co-conspirators mailed packages across the country to Hammond containing tens of thousands of counterfeit pills. The pills had the appearance of pharmaceutical oxycodone but instead were laced with fentanyl. Law enforcement identified one such package containing 50,000 fentanyl-laced pills.

Hammond also trafficked fentanyl in powder form, as well as cocaine.

In addition to drug trafficking, Hammond sold multiple firearms during the conspiracy. Law enforcement recovered three firearms that Hammond sold to a local drug redistributor, including

a "ghost" gun. A ghost gun is a firearm that is not marked with a serial number and is often made using a 3-D printer, so there is no way to track its origins or owners.

On Aug. 10, 2023, law enforcement searched an Alexandria apartment unit of Hammond and several of his co-conspirators, from which they sold their drugs and firearms. During the search of the two-bedroom apartment, law enforcement seized over five kilograms of counterfeit pills laced with fentanyl, over two kilograms of fentanyl powder, over one kilogram of cocaine, 2.5 kilograms of marijuana, and two firearms.

One firearm was hidden under a couch cushion, and the other was a semi-automatic weapon kept loaded next to a safe containing a kilogram of fentanyl.

Hammond had been prosecuted multiple times at the state level for drug and firearm-related offenses, as well as violent crimes. Three of his charged co-conspirators are scheduled to be sentenced on Feb. 20



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 Virginia Department of Transportation

PUBLIC NOTICE

Section 4(f) *de minimis* Impact Four Mile Run Park

Arlington Ridge Road/Mount Vernon Avenue Bridge Reconstruction Project

Arlington County and City of Alexandria

Pursuant to the requirements of 23 CFR 774.5, notice is hereby given that the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is accepting written comments regarding Arlington County's preliminary concurrence with the Federal Highway Administration's Section 4(f) applicability criteria for *de minimis* impact for a 0.08-acre temporary easement on Four Mile Run Park for the captioned project.

Review the Section 4(f) *de minimis* documentation online at <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Projects/Project-Types/Transportation-Projects/Arlington-Ridge-RoadMount-Vernon-Avenue-Bridge> or by appointment only during business hours at VDOT's Northern Virginia District Office, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030. Please call 703-259-1729 or TTY/TDD 711 to make an appointment with appropriate personnel.

Submit your written comments to Mr. Arun So at the above address by **March 1, 2024**. You may also email Arun.So@vdot.virginia.gov. Please reference "Mt Vernon Ave Bridge *de minimis*" in the subject line.

VDOT ensures nondiscrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended. If you need special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, contact VDOT Civil Rights at 703-259-1775 or TTY/TDD 711.

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Obituary **Obituary** **Employment**



Lawrence (Larry) Dean Miller was born March 21, 1942 in Johnstown, PA to Donald and Mary Ruth Miller. He departed this life on February 5, 2024 and was preceded in death by his parents and younger brother, Gene Miller of Houston, TX. He is survived by his brother, Robert Miller (Judy) of Camdenton, MO, three nephews, two nieces, five great nieces, four great nephews, one great-great nephew and niece, cousins and close friends. Larry spent his younger years in Johnstown and was baptized at Calvary United Methodist Church. The family moved to Alexandria in 1951 where he graduated from Groveton High School in 1960. After graduating, Larry worked at Atlantic Research Corporation, an aeronautical R&D firm. He joined the U.S. Navy in 1964 and completed his entire service at Andrews Air Force Base. While at Atlantic Research, Larry also maintained a part-time job at People's Drugstore in Bellevue. After completing his service, Larry decided to further his education, studying finance at Northern Virginia Community College and then obtaining a management and accounting degree from George Washington University. He worked for the Office of Post-Secondary Education as the Financial Officer where he wrote new policies and procedures for the department and implemented the first travel system for the Headquarters and 10 regional offices. As Chief of the Accounting Department, he assisted in the creation of the department's financial accounting codes to ensure traceability, which are still being used today. He retired in 1996. Larry was a man of few words, but when he spoke, he could make you laugh until your sides hurt. He spent his retirement traveling the world. When he wasn't traveling, you could always find him smoking his cigar in downtown Alexandria or at Montebello greeting neighbors by name. He was loved deeply by his family and will be greatly missed. Per Larry's wishes, there will not be a public funeral. The family will have a closed graveside service at Grandview Cemetery in Johnstown, PA at a later date.

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Let us know about an upcoming event

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OPINION

Potomac Yard Not Suitable for Arena

FROM PAGE 5

In contrast to Potomac Yard, Capital One Arena is surrounded by several metro stations. There is no shortage of road access or parking garages in the area. The Capital One Arena can easily be renovated if necessary which is exponentially less destructive than the construction of your arena will be for the sensitive wetlands around Potomac Yard and the Potomac River.

Then there are the too-good-to-be-true jobs and financial claims that are being made by Monumental Sports, JPMorgan Chase (the asset manager for the trust that owns the land that the arena would occupy), and HRA Advisors which prepared a report for Alexandria's Economic Development Partnership (AEDP). The fact that none of these studies have been shared with the public aside from a summary provided by the AEDP may not bother you, but it's a real sign to everyone else that this project is full of hot air. There has been no real independent cost-benefit analysis of this project. No real economic impact study. It's all been you, Mr. Leonsis, telling us that the project is good for us and expecting us to believe you and accept your numbers. We don't.

There is no reason for taxpayers to be saddled with 40 years or more of debt payments which we may have to pay if your business fails to generate all the revenue you say will be produced. There is no reason that taxpayers should be giving you several billion dollars to help you build a new arena. There is no reason that all the income produced by this project should be siphoned off to pay off this debt. There are plenty of reasons however to consider alternative development scenarios that have far fewer environmental, traffic, and fiscal impacts on Alexandria, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and D.C.

You want us to believe all these revenue benefits but you refuse to share with the

public any of the economic studies so that we can analyze your claims. We don't trust your numbers and neither do any of the sports economists who have seen what little info you have been willing to share.

We object to helping you and your investors, including the Qataris, become wealthier and wealthier at our expense. You want us to help you become a global sports franchise while we want development that is more in keeping with the small area plan for Potomac Yard and Alexandria's many neighborhoods. We don't need your sort of business to thrive. Mr. Leonsis, we don't want to be your next investment objective.

We object strenuously to your lobbying efforts both in Alexandria and Richmond. You stood up on Dec 13, 2023, after months of secret negotiations and announced that a deal had been struck between you, Gov. Youngkin, and City officials to build an arena in Alexandria. Did you ask Alexandrians what they thought about this deal? No. And since then what have you done to solicit our opinion on the deal? You have hired lobbyists in Richmond, dumped your signs and literature around town, and hired marketing firms to call voters and ask them to call their legislators to push them to support the project. This is not a democratic process.

And, we don't like it. We think your arena project is a terrible idea for Alexandria, D.C., and Virginia. You made it clear that you don't care much about the small businesses in DC that rely on you being there. You have made it clear that you care mostly about your franchise and not the community that supports you. So, why on earth would Alexandria want this sort of business as a centerpiece of Potomac Yard? We don't.

So, please don't feel we misunderstand you or that we need to remain more open-minded. Our minds are open but all we have received is a great deal of misin-

Ebbin

FROM PAGE 4

get amendments for short-term Metro funding. The report predicts that Metro could in the future support 50% of the arena traffic to Potomac Yard. Unfortunately, this could never be achieved unless Metro receives long-term, sustainable funding from the Commonwealth.

As I said, for this proposal to win my vote, it must do three things. First, enhance the community's quality of life experience, not harm it. Second, provide good-paying jobs and careers. And third, the project must fit hand-in-glove with a long-term transportation vision for our thriving but traffic-choked region. I prefer that consideration of this proposal not be rushed because it is clear to me that adequate answers have not yet been provided to fundamental questions.

For my part, as long as the Potomac Yard proposal is alive, I'll keep pushing for answers on transportation, affordable housing, and worker protections.

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

formation or simply no information at all. All of which makes us think that it would be far better if Monumental Sports and Entertainment stays in D.C. rather than trying to cross the Potomac at the expense of Virginia taxpayers.

Please don't take this personally. Think of it as a business decision that simply wasn't well thought out and needs to be changed.

Andrew Macdonald
Former Vice Mayor
Coalition to Stop the Arena at
Potomac Yard member

Accommodate This



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Cancer hasn't changed the way most people greet me. Typically, it's the standard "Hello. How are you doing?" Occasionally, the look on their faces or even their body language will give them, and their concern/fear for me, away. Usually, I will respond; accordingly, not too many details though, but something of substance. How do you address a person who's not fine? Most of the time however, people treat me "normally," or at least treat me like other non-cancer/non-terminal types in their social circle. Rarely do I take their questions as encouragement to drone on about my latest cancer blip. For most people who know me and my diagnosis, I must be prodded a bit to speak about it. It's way too heavy a subject (my likely premature death) for introductory-type conversation.

The other day, I saw a good friend who's aware of my condition/challenges and to whom I've uttered some of my usual responses to innocent queries: "Glad to be here. Glad to be anywhere. I'd be crazy to complain," et cetera, as but a few examples. He responded respectfully/sincerely saying I should really be graded on a curve (allowing for my miscellaneous but likely adverse consequences). Immediately, I said "Absolutely! I couldn't agree more."

Let's be honest. Fifteen-year cancer survivors don't exactly grow on trees. And if that survivor, hasn't stopped treatment during this entire decade plus (since Feb. 2009), which I haven't, there's going to be some damage; mentally, physically, spiritually, and/or emotionally. Moreover, as the old joke says: the experience is going to leave a mark. It certainly has. To invoke my friend Frank's self-assessment: "I'm in pretty good shape for the shape I'm in." Nevertheless, I am hardly 'normal. After nearly 15 years of cancer treatment, I'm not exactly a shell of my former self, but neither am I fit as a fiddle. As such, I'm always grasping at anything that can lighten the emotional load of being a cancer patient in treatment. And Jim's suggestion about grading my health on a curve resonated. Compared to non-cancer/non-serious health survivors? "Damn straight" I should.

A "terminal" diagnosis. A "13 month to two years" prognosis. An apparent mistake/misdiagnosis which caused my oncologist to treat me for non-small cell lung cancer, stage IV (non-curable) when the revisionist culprit was slow-moving papillary thyroid cancer, stage IV (curable). But that's a reality, a what-if scenario that given my life now, I can't (to quote the late Don Imus) get "torqued" off about. I must leave it in the past and be grateful for the present/future. A 'present/future' that was not at all guaranteed to me when Team Lourie first met my oncologist and heard my original diagnosis.

And to live in the present, I can't revisit the past. I must accept my circumstances which also means, I must accept the fact that I'll never be normal again - compared to my fellow man, and there's nothing wrong with that. It's sort of like some sports (ski racing, horse racing and/or track and field) where adjustments are made to the starting point or time or weight to make the competition fair for all the participants. Not that I feel as if I'm in a race/constant competition with my fellow man, but I do feel, I am due some accommodations: "This is as fast as I can walk." "Give me a sec., I can't get up that quickly." "Sorry. I'm tired. I need to go lie down." And so many more. Despite this reality, I want to be treated as normally as possible. However, practically speaking, I can't be treated like everyone else. I need to be treated like me: a 15-year cancer survivor still undergoing treatment." In summary, who am I kidding? I haven't been normal for years. 'Normal' left the building in early 2009.

Not that I'm ever meant to feel bad because of my deficits or lack of mobility (bending over/tying my shoelaces is torture) but when you're slowing the group down, it's obvious who's the culprit. Not that I can do much about what ails me, I can live with it. I've been living with it/them for almost 15 years. It seems more difficult for other people though. I must modify expectations for myself, and others must do the same. I'm happy to be involved and I promise I won't play the cancer card (the ultimate Get-out-of-jail-free card/excuse for not doing a million things). Nevertheless, just because I don't talk too much about what it's like having cancer, possibly being misdiagnosed, and likely dying before my time doesn't mean I'm not preoccupied with it. It just means I'm comfortable with it. And the sooner others are as comfortable with it as I am, the sooner the positive vibrations I'll receive in kind will help get me to the finish line with an attitude with which I can be proud.

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

James Bland Music

FROM PAGE 3

to African American musician and composer James Bland, who wrote traditional tunes such as "Oh Dem Golden Slippers" and "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny." The latter was the state song of Virginia from 1940-1997.

Under the sponsorship of the Lions organization, the Bland Foundation has been providing performing opportunities as well as scholarships to gifted music students, both vocal and instrumental, since 1948.

The purpose of the foundation is to promote cultural and educational opportunities for the musically talented young people in Virginia.

The program consists of elimination contests starting at club level and continuing through the state finals competition. The program is open to any vocalist



Mayor Justin Wilson, Sheriff Sean Casey and Col. James Paige, back right, pose with members of the Lions Club and CCNA, both sponsor organizations of the James Bland Music Competition, Feb. 4 at The Lyceum.

or instrumentalist sponsored by a Virginia Lions Club. Any resident of Virginia (or within the club jurisdiction) and attending elementary, junior, or senior high school is eligible to participate. Awards are provided by the State Bland Committee including over \$25,000 yearly in state, regional, district, and local scholarships and cash awards. The

total amount awarded can vary from year to year.

Sponsors included the Concerned Citizens Network of Alexandria (CCNA), the Foundation for the Advancement of Music Education, State Farm agent Rodney M. Louis and the Page 1 Foundation. www.blandfoundation.org

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