

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

MAY 2, 2024



Afzal Syed and his daughter Zainab share methods of solar cooking.



Parabolic cookers adjust to follow the path of the sun to maximize heat for cooking.



Members of EVA, DC, share their cars, Chris Sharp, Ron Kaltenbaugh, Andy Cooper, Jeffrey Jacobs.

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

What's Cooking in Environmental Issues?

Mount Vernon expo informs.

BY SUSAN LAUME
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

We often hear of the benefits of using solar power to heat, cool, light homes, and recharge batteries for back-up power. Did you know that solar power also can be used for cooking? Have you considered that

your next automobile might be an electric one, but fear you know very little about the new technology? Those attending Mount Vernon District's 6th Annual Environment Expo on April 27 had an opportunity to learn about solar cooking, electric cars, and many other informative subjects related to reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, protecting the environment and environmental services.

Those with interest in environmental issues, and sufficient hardiness to brave the light rain, made their way to Fort Hunt Park on Sat-

urday morning. The Mount Vernon event, although smaller than the County's Earth Day Fairfax 2024 in Sully which drew approximately 7,000 visitors, stood out for the number of nature advocacy groups and county departments present with tables and information to share. On offer were such things as: native plants from Plant NOVA Natives; native wildflower seeds and composting bins from the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services; home energy checklists and ideas on how to save home energy costs from

the Department of Environment and Energy Coordination; and mosquito dunks, from the Health Department.

The environmental event was hosted by Supervisor Dan Storck, in partnership with the National Park Service. These events raise awareness about environmental issues and hopefully stoke our collective consciousness to better support Mother Nature.

Afzal and Zainab Syed exhibited a variety of solar cookers. The invitation to their table suggests being inspired to try this energy saving

method. As they sought to demonstrate, a solar oven can be used just like a crock pot or a normal oven. Solar cooker temperatures can easily reach between 200°F and 300°F, which means they safely cook dishes, even those containing meat — though cooking times will often be longer. There are three main types of solar cookers on the market today — box, panel, and parabolic reflector cookers, which the Syeds had on display. On a rainy day, it is the absence of the sun, rather than the rain that impacts other out-

SEE WHAT'S COOKING, PAGE 5



Health Dept. members Tilde Hoff, Jordenna Hailey, Roberto Carrasco & Devora Brown, make sharing information about protection from disease carrying insects fun.



Beth Hickey & her assistant, Levi Tarter, handed out plants and advice for Plant NOVA Natives.



Troop 52233 members Faith Begues (9), Callas Towles (10), and Reema Khear (9) encourage cleaning trash from waterways.

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Car Hits Bike Trail Bridge in Mount Vernon

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Bridge out of network for a short while, volunteers to the rescue.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

In early April, an errant driver left the northbound lanes of the George Washington Memorial Parkway and hit two trail bridges on the bike trail, damaging the guard rails and leaving the trail with damage that went unrepaired for a period of time.

The location of this accident was at bike trail bridge #20 and #21 just south of the Dyke Marsh area. The accident scene has been cleaned up a bit

Bike to Work Day

Fri, May 17

This year, Fairfax County has 27 different pit stops for bicyclists. To register for a pit stop and reserve a t-shirt, go to <https://www.biketoworkmetrodc.org/>

by the Friends of the Mount Vernon Trail. They made a time lapse video of the clean-up, which is on their Facebook page here [The Nextbase 322GW Dash Cam \(youtube.com\)](https://www.facebook.com/Nextbase322GW). The National Park Service had to replace four sections of railing on this bridge and 25 deck boards, "The Park has begun work on the railings in the shop and will continue

to replace the damaged bridge components which may take a few weeks to complete. It is currently on the top of our list of projects," the NPS reported.

The bridge remains functional and safe for public use and will remain open throughout the repair process, they added.

"Thank you for putting in the time to start cleaning this up. It takes volunteers to actually get work done," Lindsey Miller said in a comment following the video.

There are a few set of eyes on the trail in addition to the National Park Service and that includes the Friends of the Mount Vernon Trail group. After the car hit the bridges, they were on the scene cleaning up and then spent Earth Day cleaning up a lot more in that area. One of their earth day pictures shows a car tire, a big plastic container and many trash bags full of trash.

"Every little bit helps to make the trail a better place," the Friends wrote.

Right next to the damaged bridges, the NPS recently replaced another trail bridge that was not built to current standards when it was built back in 1986. According to the Mount Vernon Trail Corridor Study, it did not meet current design standards, particularly the railing which consisted of just a board at the bottom and a chain for a bar-



Car left the parkway and hit bike trail bridge #21.



Cyclists could still get by if they rode in the center.



A few car parts fell off too.



Bridge pieces following the wreck.

rier. It also sustained some damage during Hurricane Sandy and Hurricane Isabel that caused some unevenness on the deck. Many of the piles had signs of deterioration from a long life outdoors, the NPS said.

The new bridge is 14 feet wide and has

metal helical piers which should be much more durable and decay resistant than the previous wooden piers. A ribbon cutting ceremony is planned for this bridge, Bridge 23, on May 19 at 10 a.m.

Bike to Work Day is coming in a few weeks

and the Mount Vernon Trail is always busy at that time. The trail is a good link to bicyclists on their ride to their job whether it's in Alexandria, Arlington or Washington, D.C. One of the biggest pit stops is on Market Square on King Street in Old Town.

County Budget FY 2025

BY SUPERVISOR DAN STORCK
MOUNT VERNON DISTRICT



Dan Storck

Thank you to everyone who reached out to me regarding the County Executive's Proposed FY 2025 Budget. This year presents one of the toughest budget challenges since I took office. We're still recovering from the pandemic, facing increasing demands for County services, flatter commercial property revenues and rising costs. Like you, the County is seeing higher prices for everything from construction projects to the cost of copier paper.

Thank you to our County Executive Bryan Hill for initiating the FY 2025 budget process by asking each County department to propose a 7% spending decrease. These significant reduction considerations at the beginning of our process helped get us to our proposed budget today. By working together, we are able to propose a lower real estate tax rate increase from 4 cents to 3 cents per \$100 of assessed value and the Board will adopt this budget on Tuesday, May 7.

County investment in the Mount Vernon District has been extraordinary, improving services and the support we deliver to you.

This year alone, we opened the new Lorton Police Station & Animal Shelter, a new trail segment from Mount Vernon Estate to Richmond Highway, began Original MVHS renovations and celebrated the one-year anniversary of the Lorton Community Center, Senior and Teen Center, Library and Park. These types of investments are where your tax

dollars are being spent, providing the resources Fairfax County residents need and expect.

Exceptional County staff are a critical component to help us achieve our goals; from Public Works, Planning and Zoning, Public Safety, Schools, Neighborhood and Community Services and others. 80% of our budget is devoted to the staff compensation necessary to recruit and retain the employees essential to support our residents and businesses.

Maintaining our world class education system continues to be a top priority. This year's school budget is equally challenging, and I know first-hand from my time on the School Board that they need to continue looking at the per student costs and increase teacher pay, while looking for ways to reduce non-teacher costs. A recent state

study revealed Virginia state education funding falling almost \$2,000 per student behind national, regional and nearby state averages. If we received full state funding by this measure or even existing required Virginia education minimum standards, we would be talking about substantial tax decreases today, not increases.

Some elements of this budget package still concern me. The consolidation of the Animal Protection Police Officers (APPO) to the Animal Services Department (ASD) and the reductions in the Fire and Rescue Department are two of those concerns. I will be monitoring these service levels and community impacts. As part of the APPO and ASD consolidation, I would like to see a co-responder system implemented, similar to our existing police and mental health co-responder model.

Looking forward, I will be ensuring that the County stays focused on finding cost savings and capturing all of our entitled existing revenue. Through my role as Chair of the Board's Audit Committee, we will be looking at costs, savings, efficiencies and revenue opportunities. As the Economic Development Committee Chair, we will be increasing our focus on office space repurposing, data facility needs and growing opportunities in AI and Space.

As always, I recognize that the buck stops with us on ensuring a vibrant, supportive and attractive community where folks want to live, learn, work and play. Greater affordability is crucial and getting a fairer deal from Virginia can help that. Currently, the state directly returns about 23% of what County residents contribute in state taxes, although indirect services for higher education, the justice system, etc., account for additional support. Refunding back to us just 1% of the state income taxes we now send to Richmond could allow us to reduce our real estate tax rate by \$.25! Increases in federal and state funding for our renowned schools, best in the U.S. public safety departments, mental health services, affordable housing, childcare, parks and many other priorities would make a big difference in reducing County funding for these services.

I have heard from many seniors and families during this budget process and we, as a Board, must do a deeper budget dive, advocate for more federal and state funding and find more progressive ways to fund County needs. I hope this information helps explain the many budget challenges we are facing together, even as my Board colleagues and I look for ways to reduce costs to you, our most valuable resource.

Amelia Heart & Vascular Center is pleased to introduce

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As the newest addition to our Cardiology team, Dr. Gates specializes in treating various cardiovascular conditions, including coronary artery disease, congestive heart failure, and arrhythmias such as atrial fibrillation, supraventricular tachycardia, and premature ventricular beats. Dr. Gates is a member of the American College of Cardiology and holds board certification in Cardiovascular Medicine. Originally from Pennsylvania, Dr. Gates has called Northern Virginia home since 2011. He obtained his undergraduate education at Pennsylvania State University. Following his graduation from PSU, he attended medical school at Uniformed Services University in Bethesda and ultimately completed cardiology fellowship training at Walter Reed. He served honorably for 26 years in the United States Army before retiring from military service, including positions as the chief of cardiology at Womack Army Medical Center and Fort Belvoir Community Hospital. He is pleased to continue serving the medical needs of the National Capital Region following his time in the military.



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What I'm Most Proud Of

BY DELEGATE PAUL KRIZEK



Krizek

One of my greatest achievements of this General Assembly session was the final passage of HB 1157, which establishes policies and procedures for state agencies to consult with federally recognized Tribal Nations on permits and reviews relating to their environmental, cultural, and historic resources. The bill also directs the Secretary of the Commonwealth to designate an Ombudsman to facilitate tribal consultation, and who will act as a main point of contact for the General Assembly and state agencies with Virginia's Tribal Nations. This significant victory was the top legislative priority for Virginia's Tribes for

SEE WHAT I'M MOST PROUD OF, PAGE 11

Early consultation is a win-win for the Commonwealth, private developers and Tribal Nations, providing project predictability and efficiency by identifying and resolving potential sources of delay early in planning.

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What's Cooking in Environmental Issues?

FROM PAGE 1

door cooking methods, that affects solar cooking.

A contingent of electric cars were on display, part of a new kind of car club, Electric Vehicle Association of Greater Washington, DC. Owners were showing off their vehicles and answering questions to promote electric vehicles as an environmental and energy alternative. The local group, part of a national association, is dedicated to helping others learn more about electric cars now on the market. To view their helpful vehicle in-

formation sheet summary list, see <https://evadc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/EVInfoSheet-20210907.pdf>

Expo information for both children and adults, included learning the importance and methods of reducing green house gas emissions, mitigating climate change to protect ecosystems, and using trees to control flooding and water quality. As a reminder that creatures also depend on healthy, functioning ecosystems, several species of wildlife were on-site for close-up viewing.

Cooler temperatures kept the reptile contingent of "Reptile Wonders' Nature Center on the Go" warm at home, but an interesting collection of insects crawled in as substitutes. Meeting the bugs served as a reminder of the loss of so many species on which birds and plants depend for a healthy ecosystem.

The raptors of "Secret Garden Birds and Bees," including several

owls and hawks, stared back just as wide-eyed as their visitors, who got the opportunity to get within wing distance. The birds, most of which suffered an injury preventing their return to the wild, are now experienced ambassadors, often attending events to share information about their kind. The importance of birds to our ecosystem as major pollinators, seed dispers-

ers, insect controllers, and scavengers, often may be overlooked, but they are appreciated for their song and beauty.

Visitors waited for face painting and popcorn, fished for trash with the Girl Scouts, listened to the Anthony James Band, touched big service trucks and police cars, and roamed over the park's green grass to see and learn.



Young learner views the impacts of agriculture and development of run-off and watersheds.

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

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Samuel Reilly (2), of Alexandria, gets in close to look for Scorpions from Reptile Wonders,



Liz Dennison and Hodor of Secret Garden Birds & Bees educate about raptors place in the ecosystem.



Recently retired after 10 years with Fairfax County, Charles Smith, former branch chief for the watershed project was recognized with a Resolution by the Board of Supervisors.

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MURAL OF HOPE

“It’s meant to be uplifting, like the name of the church, to give people a sense of community.”

— Nico Cathcart, muralist



Nico Cathcart uses a lift to paint murals.



Nico Cathcart painting from the lift

PHOTOS BY
GLENDA BOOTH

A Mural of Hope on U.S. 1

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

There’s a beautiful new lantern glowing on a blue wall and beaming toward U.S. Route 1 at its intersection with Russell Road. On April 23, Richmond muralist Nico Cathcart completed a mural ten feet above the ground on the east wall of Rising Hope United Methodist Mission Church next door to a 7-11 and within view of the busy highway, offering a big splash of beauty and cheer to the corridor.

The mural, 20 feet tall and 50 feet long, has a sparrow on each side of the lantern with a lily at the top and peony on the bottom. Cathcart was inspired by the church’s mission and chose these elements to bring people toward the church’s warmth and light.

“It’s meant to be uplifting, like the name of the church, to give people a sense of community,” Cathcart said.

Rising Hope is a mission church where Reverend Kameron Wilds ministers to the “least, lost, lonely and left out,” typically people unable to support a traditional church. The church has a kitchen, food



Cathcart uses primary colors and mixes them as she works.

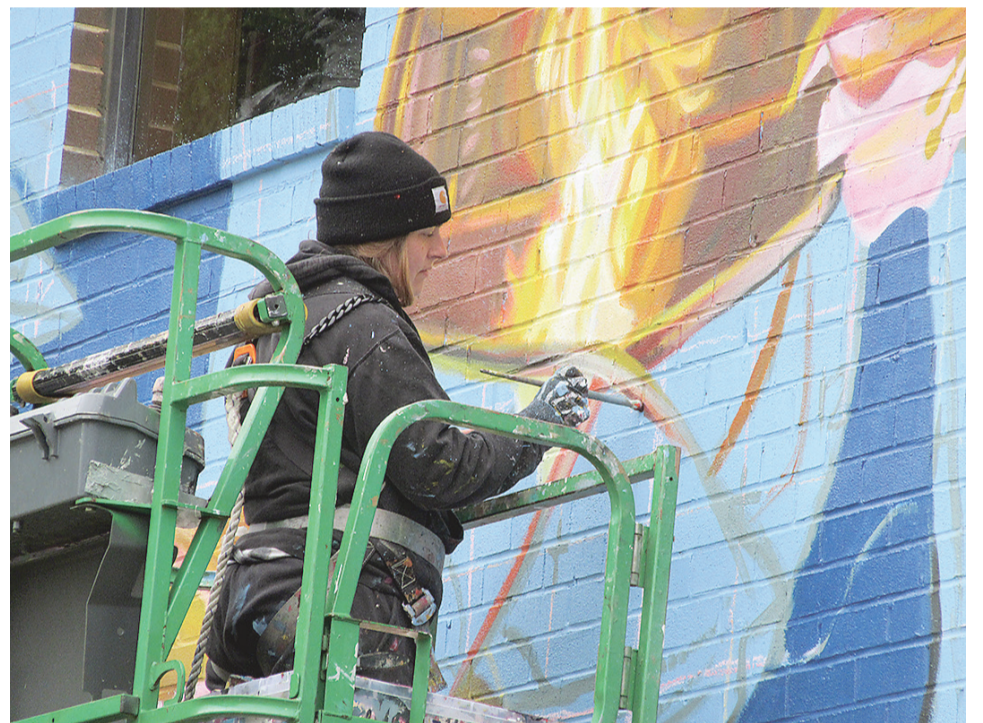
pantry and other services. On cold winter nights, unhoused people can sleep in the fellowship hall.

The church’s philosophy: “Love unconditionally, include everyone and celebrate life.”

THE MURAL’S DESIGN

After talking to Wilds and Evan Kaufman, Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation’s (SFDC) Executive Director, Cathcart prepared several designs and Rising Hope chose this one.

“This is art for people who have historically been denied access to beauty because



The muralist painting from the lift.

of poverty, policy, stigma and other factors. This space is a light that draws people in,” said Wilds.

Wilds added, “We encounter so many people who are hurt, hard up, in pain and suffering trauma. These people are fighting every day. They deserve the access to art that everyone else has, noting, that Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky said, ‘Beauty will save the world.’”

HOW SHE DID IT

Cathcart, 41, raised herself up on a green Sunbelt aerial lift, a vehicle she’s been driving for ten years, which has spurred some second looks, she snickered. “When they see a woman starting up a lift, many people just assume you can’t drive it,” adding, “Street art is very gendered,” observing that the field is dominated by men.

She used six gallons of primer paint and hoisted up the primary colors. “I mix as I

go,” she said. On a chilly April 21, her black pants, sweatshirt and sock cap splattered with paint recalled a Jackson Pollock painting. “It’s dirty work, sunup to sundown. It’s not glorious. It has real high highs and real low lows,” Cathcart noted.

ALWAYS AN ARTIST

Dirty or not, Cathcart never questioned that she would be an artist, starting with a watercolor set as a child. “You don’t choose it. It chooses you,” she believes. She grew up in Toronto, Canada, moved to central New York as a teenager and attended the State University of New York at Oswego and Courtland. She has a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in painting and ceramics. When she moved to Richmond in 2008, she got involved in the Richmond Mural Project. “I never looked back,” she said.

MURAL OF HOPE



The partially completed mural on April 21

Rising Hope's philosophy: "Love unconditionally, include everyone and celebrate life."



The completed mural on April 23.



The lantern completed.



The muralist's signature in the bottom right corner.

FROM PAGE 6

She paints murals all over the United States, in 2023 hitting 23 states. Last year she was honored as one of the best muralists in the national mural awards. She was named as one of the world's top 50 muralists in a book titled "Street Art Women."

SFDC INITIATIVES

This is SFDC's third mural on the U.S. 1 corridor in Fairfax County. Cathcart painted the "Fabric of the Community" on the ZIPS dry cleaning building at 6216 North Kings Highway. At its center is a bald eagle pair, inspired by a nesting pair on the George Washington Memorial Parkway. The mural has local flora and portraits of an El Salvadoran immigrant and a local African American nurse, representing the diversity of the community.

"The Rising Hope mural aligns with our plans to create a stronger identity and sense of place for the corridor community and connects with our larger plan of creating an art corridor," Kaufman said. "Small incremental changes in placemaking including our murals, new public sculpture, parklets and other targeted interventions help create a new perception of the area that begins

"This is art for people who have historically been denied access to beauty because of poverty, policy, stigma and other factors. This space is a light that draws people in."

— Reverend Kameron Wilds, Rising Hope

to attract the types of small businesses and community-focused development projects that we seek." SFDC hopes to have more murals, sculpture, unique landscaping and repurposing of hardscapes.

"This mural is a story of resilience and strength, people refusing to give up," said Wilds.

"Street art is the most accessible art," commented Cathcart. "A lot of public art ig-

nores the people nearby. This is art for them. It's meant to be uplifting and give a sense of warmth. It shows that someone cares."

Information

Nico Cathcart, <https://www.nicocathcart.com/>

Rising Hope Mission Church, <https://www.risinghopeumc.org/>

Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation, www.sfdc.org

SFDC Murals, <https://sfdc.org/blog/mural-progress/> and <https://sfdc.org/blog/new-mural/>

Florida Musician Got Started in Fairfax County

Marcy Brenner overcame obstacles, landing her at the Space Coast Songwriters Festival in April.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

Marcy Brenner got her musical start at Hayfield Secondary School in Fairfax County, and took it to the limit, as the Eagles would say, landing her and her guitar at the Space Coast Songwriters Festival on April 26, strumming out songs from her band “Coyote,” in the warmer temperatures of Florida.

“Marcy Brenner and her band Coyote did a fabulous job and shared some of my favorites, like ‘Phoebe’ and ‘When Words Took Time.’ Mary Kelly and I were singing our parts from the audience. It seems funny to

say that you’re proud of a friend, but all of us were proud to see Marcy share her beautiful music tonight,” wrote fellow musician Tina Eno on social media.

Marcy had links to Mount Vernon too through Brenner’s Bakery in the Belle View Shopping Center. Over 50 years ago, her father Max started the bakery which became such a part of Marci’s life that she put it all in a book, “A Baker’s Daughter: Recipes and Memories From a Family Bakery.”

Somewhere between graduating college, overcoming a bout with cancer, and writing the book, she ended up a resident of Ocracoke Island in North Carolina’s Outer Banks where she performed with Coyote at bars and restaurants there.

Although she loved Ocracoke, the combination of coastal storms and a need to branch out, she moved to Florida with her boyfriend Lou Castro who was also a musician. The two formed the Coyote band and moved to Florida.

That’s how she ended up at the Space Coast Songwriter’s Festival.

Editor’s Note: The Gazette wrote about Brenner’s book in March 2020, read about it here. Appetite: New Book Bakes Up Memories of Alexandria Treats (connectionnews-papers.com)



Marcy Brenner

PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/CONNECTION

Mount Vernon Monster Reappears In Minds of Many

Recent web show revives rumors from late 1970s.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

Ust when the paranormal activity came to a rest in Mount Vernon, inklings of the Mount Vernon Monster have reappeared, bringing this urban legend to life again. This recently started with a new episode of “The InBetween,” narrated by Carol Ann on a YouTube show that examines things like the Lost City of Atlantis, Bigfoot and unsolved murders.

If you were a Mount Vernon teenager in about 1980, you’ll remember the Mount Vernon Monster too.

“Residents began hearing a wailing scream at night,” Carol Ann said, as she presents a compelling account of the monster and lots of evidence, although a majority of the evidence is audio and not visual. In fact, there are no real pictures of the monster that seemed to be lurking around Old Union Farm Road in the Mount Vernon Country Club area. The audio recordings are not very clear either.

Thelma Crisp, a resident of Old



Mount Vernon Monster intro recently released on YouTube.

Union Farm Road, reportedly saw the monster sitting in her backyard, said Carol Ann, but Thelma died July 15, 2006 so there was no further confirmation of this sighting. There is a mention of the Mount Vernon Monster in the book “Urban Legends of Virginia,” by Charles A. Mills and the teaser of the book asks the question: Is Bigfoot stalking George Washington’s Mount Vernon?

On the website “Fairfax Underground,” there are a few people mentioning it as well. One likened it to Bigfoot. “Has there ever been any sightings in Northern VA of Bigfoot? Yes, the Mount Vernon Monster is considered to be Bigfoot,” the Underground’s report said. Another wrote “I grew up in Mount Vernon Manor, as with my father and always loved the sto-

ries he would tell me about the Mount Vernon Monster! I have a lot of fond memories swimming in Miss Crisp’s pool and eating cookies while she told me stories of the monster!”

The monster wandered the woods at night in the area near Union Farm Road right next to Mount Vernon Country Club (there is no ‘Old Union Farm Road’ like Carol Ann said). The monster sightings were also over at Davidson Airfield on Fort Belvoir and through the woods to the Hayfield Farm area, reported Carol Ann. In Hayfield, there was an unexplained destruction of a rabbit hutch and the disappearance of all the rabbits from a house that sat near the Fort Belvoir woods. All that was left was “a blood trail heading into the woods,” she said.



Carol Ann narrates “The In-Between” cable show.

SCREENSHOTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Can I Hear a Witness?

This is where a Hayfield resident named Steve comes in. Most of the trails Carol Ann follows to investigate this monster came from tidbits of information that Steve introduced. This was about 1975 and the monster was last heard from in about 1983. Steve had a few accounts of seeing or hearing it while walking in the Belvoir woods at night, which of course is very dark, so the sightings were difficult at best. He could hear the monster following him in the woods, she said.

Carol Ann said there were previous bigfoot sightings on Fort Belvoir and one UFO incident that was included on the Condon Report, a UFO investigation summary connected with the Federal Government, so this sets the stage for local paranormal activity.

The Mount Vernon Monster was thought to be a Bigfoot, type creature with similarities in the scarce

number of actual pictures and sightings connected to it. At least the Bigfoot enthusiasts have the 1967 Patterson–Gimlin film of a Bigfoot creature shot in Northern California. The grainy 8mm film is 59 seconds long but has one famous frame where the creature looks toward the camera. This is the holy grail for the Bigfoot community.

More recently, the movie “Sasquatch Sunset,” came out to revive the Bigfoot phenomenon but it was more a comedy based the lives of a family of sasquatches in Northern California that go around avoiding contact while they live the lives of a typical sasquatch family, is that possible? In the film, they make grunting noises the whole time but not high-pitched whines like the Mount Vernon Monster.

To see the show, go to Audio PROOF of the Mt. Vernon Monster (The InBetween) (youtube.com)

ENTERTAINMENT

WEDNESDAYS THROUGH SATURDAYS

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

APRIL 4 TO MAY 12

Japanese Inspiration: Sean Donnan, David Gootnick, Yoshiko Ratliff. At the Athenaeum, Alexandria. To complement Washington's festivities celebrating the Japanese cherry blossoms around the Tidal Basin, the Athenaeum Gallery is featuring the work of three local contemporary artists whose work is influenced and guided by traditional Japanese art. Sean Donnan is an illustrator whose fanciful posters are inspired by Japanese mythology, anime, video games, and pop culture. David Gootnick creates lacy and delicate designs out of wood using an ancient Japanese artform called Kumiko. And Yoshiko Ratliff's paintings are bold, but intricately detailed representations of Japanese characters and Kimonos.

APRIL 9 - MAY 19

There and Back Exhibit of Photographic Art by Maureen Minehan. At Multiple Exposures Gallery, Torpedo Factory Art Center, 105 N Union Street, Studio 312, in Alexandria. There and Back reflects Maureen's ceaseless desire to explore the beauty inherent in solitude. Through her artistic vision, she portrays isolated landscapes not as desolate or forsaken, but as sanctuaries where quietude reigns supreme, and narratives yet untold await discovery. Maureen will be at the gallery on Sunday, April 21st from 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.

MAY 3 TO JUNE 2

"The Art of Tea" exhibit at Del Ray Artisans gallery features art that explores themes and stories woven around this aromatic beverage. From tea cups and tea pots to the Mad Hatter or Boston Tea Party, this exhibit intrigues and delights. Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria VA. Reception: Friday, May 3, 7-9pm. Open Thursdays 12-6pm, Fridays 12-9pm, Saturdays & Sundays 12-6pm (June 2, 12-4pm). DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

APRIL 4 TO MAY 12

Special Gallery: "Japanese Inspiration." At The Athenaeum, 201 Prince St., Alexandria. To complement Washington's festivities celebrating the Japanese cherry blossoms around the Tidal Basin, the Athenaeum Gallery is featuring the work of three local contemporary artists whose work is influenced and guided by traditional Japanese art. Sean Doonan is an illustrator whose fanciful posters are inspired by Japanese mythology, anime, video games and pop culture. David Gootnick creates lacy and



Mount Vernon's Revolutionary War Weekend takes place May 4-5, 2024 at George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate.



A Sunset Concert with Soulfire takes place on Thursday, May 30, 2024 at River Farm in Alexandria.

delicate designs out of wood using an ancient Japanese art form called Kumiko. And Yoshiko Ratliff's paintings are bold, but intricately detailed, representations of Japanese characters and kimonos.

THURSDAY/MAY 2

May Coffee & Connections. 8:30 a.m.-9:30 a.m. At The Landing Alexandria, 2620 Main Line Blvd., Alexandria. The Chamber ALX's Professional Women's Network May Coffee & Connections. Hear from ACT for Alexandria President & CEO Heather Peeler who will share her amazing story.

THURSDAY/MAY 2

Maskerade: Moving Tradition Forward. 7 p.m. At the Athenaeum,

Alexandria. In celebration of Asian Heritage month in May, Fiesta Asia & Dance Asia jointly presents Maskerade: Moving Tradition Forward - a dance showcase of mystery and enchantment featuring Asian mask cultures. This presentation will feature works that explore the influence and charisma of masks across different regional cultures. The jovial, the forbidden, the divine, the sanguine, masks are significant elements in many folk and traditional ceremonies, rituals and traditions and are often of an ancient origin. Witness the vivacity of movement and partake in the dance!

MAY 4-5

Mount Vernon's Revolutionary War

Weekend. At George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate, Mount Vernon. Step back in time at Mount Vernon's Revolutionary War Weekend on May 4th and 5th. Mount Vernon's 12-Acre Field transforms into a battleground as Continentals, Redcoats, and Hessians conduct military drills, perform cavalry demonstrations, and engage in 18th-century tacticals.

SATURDAY/MAY 4

Used Book Sale: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. at Sherwood Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane, Alexandria. Selection of over 20,000 gently used children's books, fiction, history, biography, home and garden, cooking, crafts, sports, religion, travel, CDs, DVDs, and more.

Unless specially priced, \$1 for hard backs and large paperbacks, and 25 cents for mass market paperbacks. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/friends-of-sherwood-regional>.

MAY 17-19

Mount Vernon Wine Festival. At George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate. Secure tickets early for the popular Mount Vernon Wine Festival on May 17th, 18th, and 19th. Bring a blanket to relax on the east lawn overlooking the Potomac River while sampling wines from Virginia wineries and enjoying the live music of Bruce Ewan and the Solid Senders.

FRIDAY/MAY 17

The Thirteen: Beautiful as the Sky. 7:30 p.m. At Washington Street UMC, 109 South Washington Street, Alexandria. In this program, The Thirteen explores moral beauty in three guises: the second World War, the American Civil War, and the women's rights movement in America. Poulenc secretly composed his Figure Humaine in Vichy France, with the intention that it should be performed in Paris upon liberation from Nazi rule. Last performed by The Thirteen in 2018, this twelve-part tour de force is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and to the practice of remembrance. Leonard Bernstein Award-winning composer Hilary Purrington writes a new work for The Thirteen that traces the progress and intimate stories of the American women's rights movement. Jeffrey Van's A Procession Winding Around Me sets Civil War poems by Walt Whitman for choir and solo classical guitar with music as evocative and transcendent as the poetry.

SUNDAY/MAY 19

Old Town Festival of Speed & Style. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Across lower King Street in Old Town Alexandria. Sponsored by Burke & Herbert Bank. The event is a high-sensory spectacle for participants, spectators and car enthusiasts, allowing them to experience the "Speed & Style" variety of exotic supercars and vintage motorcycles rarely seen sitting still for up-close viewing. Center-stage at noon, a unique Fashion Demonstration will be hosted by Maria Elizabeth of Alexandria-based Salon DeZEN. Maria will discuss the elegance and importance of natural fashion and its profound impact when paired with beautiful automobiles. An award presentation highlighting cars judged to be the finest in 11 categories, will immediately follow the Fashion Demonstration. In addition to the Festival itself, the pre-Festival High-Octane Ball will take place the night before, on Saturday, May 18th from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. at the Belle Haven Country Club in Alexandria. For more information about the festival and to purchase tickets to the High-Octane Ball, visit www.festivalspeedandstyle.com.

SATURDAY/MAY 25

Singer Kate Campbell. 7:30 p.m. At St. Aidan's Episcopal Church, 8531 Riverside Road, Alexandria. Kate Campbell is a southern singer-songwriter who writes and sings memorable folk songs infused with

SEE ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 11

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Obituary



Alison C. Withers passed away on Easter day, March 31st, 2024, near Alexandria, Virginia at age 69. Alison grew up in the Spring Branch area of Houston, Texas and graduated from Spring Branch High School. She graduated from Texas Woman's University in 1976 and entered the Army Nurse Corps, where she served for 16 years, achieving the rank of Major. Alison met her husband Ben during initial training at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, TX. Being an Army family, Alison and Ben lived in many locations, but she remained a Texan at heart. She served her community in many ways, e.g., school nurse, Sunday school teacher, choir member, and Co-President of West Potomac High's Band Booster Club. Above all, she loved raising her three daughters. A lifelong believer, Alison was a longtime member of Plymouth Haven Baptist Church. Her sharp wit and kind disposition drew people to her and her loss is felt by many. She was predeceased by her sister Susan, and leaves behind her loving family: Ben Withers, Rachel Belkin, Sarah Withers, Leah Brown, seven grandchildren, and brothers Casey and Travis. A Celebration of Life will be held in Houston on May 13, 2024. To honor Alison, consider donating to Capital Caring Health, Adler Center for Inpatient Care. <<https://capitalcaring.funraise.org>>

CALENDAR

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NEWS

**Oakton Alum
Facing Up to
Four Years Prison**

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE GAZETTE

On Wednesday, April 24, a Fairfax County jury found Usman Shahid guilty of two counts of involuntary manslaughter for striking and killing two teenage pedestrians on the sidewalk, Ada Gabriela Martinez Nolasco, 14, and Leeyan Hanjia Yan, 15, on June 7, 2022.

Shadid was 18 years old when the car he was driving crashed into the girls, and just days after he graduated from Oakton High School. Nearly two years later, on Friday, April 26, two days after his guilty conviction, jurors recommended that Shahid serve up to four years total for the two deaths. Shahid could have received up to 20 years, as the felony carries a maximum of 10 years in prison for each count.

Judge Randy I. Bellows, a circuit court judge for Fairfax County's 19th Judicial Circuit, ordered Shahid's immediate jailing on Wednesday after his conviction, despite his attorney's objections to the guilty verdict.

"This is one of the most tragic cases in Fairfax County's history," Commonwealth's Attorney Steve Descano said on Friday, April 26. "My heart breaks for the families, friends, and loved ones of these young girls. While there is nothing that can make up for such an immense loss, I hope that this conviction can help our community finally begin to heal from this tragedy."

The crash occurred at approximately 11:45 a.m. on June 7, 2022 at the intersection of Blake Lane and Five Oaks Roads, south of Oakton High School, shortly after an early school dismissal.

According to a June 23, 2022, press release from Fairfax County Commonwealth's Attorney Steve Descano, when he announced the indictment of Shadid on manslaughter charges, three pedestrians, Oakton High School friends, had just crossed the intersection and were on the sidewalk nearby at the time of the crash which killed Nolasco and Yan and badly injured the third girl.

Prosecutors in Shahid's 2024 involuntary manslaughter case say Shadid did not have a driver's license and was on his learner's permit while driving the white BMW. He reportedly had three friends in the car with him.

In a news release, Commonwealth's Attorney Steve Descano said Shahid is facing up to four years in prison for the two deaths. See OAKTON, PAGE 10
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

What I'm Most Proud Of

FROM PAGE 4

the past several years, and it was my honor to carry it on their behalf each year in the House.

Early consultation is a win-win for the Commonwealth, private developers, and Tribal Nations, providing project predictability and efficiency by identifying and resolving potential sources of delay early in planning before millions of dollars have been invested into projects. While not giving Tribes a "veto" on projects, it gives them a proactive seat at the table to be notified about projects that may impact them and express their concerns.

This landmark legislation culminated decades of work by Virginia's tribal nations to gain appropriate state and federal recognition, and over three years of effort by legislators here in the General Assembly spanning two Governors' administrations. This bill going into effect is a huge step in the right direction of righting historic wrongs.

The Pamunkey Tribe became the first to gain recognition by the federal government back in 2015. In 2018, the federal government recognized six more tribes: the Chickahominy Indian Tribe, the Chickahominy Indians Eastern Division, the Nansemond Indian Nation, the Rappahannock Tribe, the Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe, and the Mo-

nacan Indian Nation. Tribes currently holding state recognition are the Cheroenhaka (Nottoway), Nottoway, Mattaponi, and Patowomeck. Tribal recognition on the state and federal levels is important in establishing a government-to-government relationship, meaning that the state or federal government recognizes a Tribe's right to exist as a sovereign entity. The federal recognition status recognizes a Tribe's inherent right to self-governance and the opportunity to receive certain federal benefits, services, and protection like land trusts, food, and housing assistance.

Native people have lived on this land for thousands of years and they are still here today! Their citizens have suffered untold hardships, discrimination, and loss of land, language, and livelihoods. And yet, they have endured. 13,000 Native Americans died in World War I fighting for the United States, and at the time they were not even considered US citizens.

They are also serving as key conservationists. Virginia's Tribal nations were the first stewards of the Chesapeake Bay and its many tributaries, and many of our tribal nation's names reflect the inextricable relationship between their peoples and the waters of the Commonwealth. For example, Nansemond means "fishing point,"

Mattaponi means "People of the River," and Rappahannock means "river of quick, rising water."

Virginia's tribes continue their long-standing conservation and protection of our shared waters today with projects throughout the watershed. In just the last few years tribal nations on the Bay have engaged in preserving important ancestral land along key tributaries, oyster reef creation and living shoreline projects to restore coastal habitat and water quality, efforts to restore depleted keystone fish populations, and coastal resilience projects to ensure vital coastal habitat can migrate in the face of climate change impacts. Just last week, I had the opportunity to join Chief Anne Richardson of the Rappahannock Tribe to visit the Fones Cliff property, which has become a model for indigenous-led conservation and land repatriation nationwide.

The sacrifice, patriotism, and culture of Virginia's tribes inspires all of us and are woven into the fabric of our great nation.

I encourage you to attend events hosted by Virginia Tribes this year to learn more about their unique heritage. On Memorial Day weekend, the Upper Mattaponi Tribe will host their 35th annual pow-wow in King William, with many more cultural events ahead in the summer and fall.

Ticked Off



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

For approximately 14 and half, years I experienced a very unexpected side effect from my ongoing cancer treatment. It may be a coincidence but ever since I began chemotherapy, my body chemistry apparently became unappetizing to two of our least favorite insects: ticks and mosquitos. Previously, I had been what seemed like a magnet to these two bloodsuckers. I realized that effect my chemotherapy was having (as they seemed to default to my wife instead) and enjoyed every unique minute of their disinterest. I am writing this column, to say that the party, such as it is, is over. And there is yet again a coincidence: I have been off my chemo/targeted therapy for four months or so. As such I am no longer medicated. My warranty, so to speak is up, and my body has once again become a relatively enticing and safe haven for ticks and mosquitos – and I'm not too happy about it. To invoke Don Imus: I am "torqued" off about this change.

In addition to killing cancer cells, the various types of chemotherapy, toxic as there were/are to me, they were even more toxic to the insects. Somehow the word/consequences of taking a bite out of me traveled around the insect world and I was – or so it seemed, off limits and/or the insect advisory was proceed/bite at your own risk. And this was quite noticeable. Instead of representing an unending chemical attraction to insects; all sudden, after a few months of infused chemotherapy, I became anathema to these insects. It was never so clear as it was that first summer (I began infusions in early March) when the insects need to establish their dominance in nature's harmony or something akin to that. And for both ticks and mosquitos, the road to their afterlife involved biting and latching on to me like there was no tomorrow (and when I slapped or picked them off, very often there was no tomorrow). It wasn't exactly a cure for cancer, but it was something of significance, something that made my life as a cancer patient more manageable (like the installation of mobile televisions at the infusion center mounted on flexible arms which enabled the patient to watch television while infusing away your day – and hopefully not your life. But in this context when your life is very much hanging in the balance, "one less thing," as "Forrest, Forrest "Gump" said repeatedly matters disproportionately to the actual task at hand. And no more ticks and/or mosquitos, certainly qualified. Can you I imagine? No more swatting, slapping, spraying, picking "tweezing" and disinfecting. You were, for the first time in your life (and for me, that meant 54- and one-half years), the king of your castle. It truly was "Serenity now"/then. Right this second, I just picked a G. D. tick off my neck as I felt it crawling. It's creepy writing about it but it's creepier when it happens – in real-time, in your safe place no less, in my home office/domain.

This major inconvenience happens, as I said coincidentally with the stoppage of my cancer medicine, which creates its own rather disappointing scenario/problem. In addition to the discomfort (bug wien) I feel when I'm outside – now that the warmer weather is mostly here, I feel tremendous anxiety and fear, if I'm being honest, with respect to my now no-more-cancer-medicine-being-taken. And that medicine is not being taken because I'm cured. Hardly. It has stopped because a side effect of the drug used to treat my thyroid cancer was – and is, possibly damaging my kidneys. Well, those researchers were right. My kidneys are now down to about 25% of normal. Moreover, kidney damage is irreparable so all that the doctors can do, generally, is try and prevent the kidneys from further deterioration. Unfortunately, there's no medicine for that – as there is for almost anything else. As a result, I am now left with untreated cancer, damaged kidneys, and more mosquito bites and tick "embeds" than I've ever had in my life. Talk about adding insult to injury. I can live with the cancer and kidney damage (though possibly for fewer years than I anticipated) but making me suffer while doing so seems like cruel and unusual punishment. (Is there a constitutional lawyer in the reading audience?) Whether there is or not (Jamie Raskin), I do need the best. Moreover, I need someone who can help me beat the thyroid cancer, the damaged kidneys and the encroaching ticks and mosquitos. And do so in a relatively timely manner because every day that I'm left to fend for myself is one less day that I feel like I'm beating the odds. And not beating the odds makes Kenny a very dull boy and one who really hates mosquitos and ticks – for all the wrong reasons.

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

ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 9

undercurrents of delta blues, folk, pop, and country that originate from a musical landscape spanning the less-traveled back roads from Nashville to Muscle Shoals to Memphis. Over the course of 20+ years since her acclaimed debut album *Songs from the Levee*, she has resisted the temptation to follow musical trends but instead chooses to set the pace for her unique musical journey. Advance tickets \$25 at www.focusmusic.org, day-of \$30 (member / congregation as-applicable \$25 at the door) | webcast \$15 | Info: at rob@focusmusic.org or www.focusmusic.org.

THURSDAY/MAY 30

Sunset Concert with Soulfire. 6-8 p.m. At River Farm, 7931 E. Boulevard Dr., Alexandria. Get ready for a soulful evening to remember as the captivating band Soulfire takes the stage at River Farm, headquarters of the American Horticultural Society (AHS). This outdoor family-friendly concert promises an unforgettable evening of music, nature, and stunning views overlooking the Potomac River. The event is free. Donations are appreciated. Parking fee is \$20. For more information and to purchase parking in advance, visit www.ahsgardening.org/sunsetconcert. For more

information, call (703) 768-5700 ext. 114 or visit www.ahsgardening.org.

SATURDAY/JUNE 8

Old Town Alexandria Arts & Crafts Fair. 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. At Waterfront Park, 1 Prince Street, Alexandria. Volunteer Alexandria is thrilled to present the Old Town Arts & Crafts Fair on June 8, 2024, at Waterfront Park located at 1 Prince Street on the Potomac River. The fair is free to attend and features local and regional artisans who showcase their pieces across various mediums including pottery, stationary, fabrics, paintings, jewelry, photography and more. Featuring more than 80-plus vendors including food and drink to purchase.

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.

MAY

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Sun. 26: Maggie Rose: No One Gets Out Alive Tour w/ Fancy Hagood \$29.50
Fri. 31: The Manhattans featuring Gerald Alston \$65.00

Oakton Alum Facing Up to Four Years Prison

FROM PAGE 5

wealth's Attorney Steve Descano said that Shadid, heading south on Blake Lane at speeds well over the 35 mph speed limit, collided with an SUV (a Toyota Four-Runner) that was trying to turn left onto Five Oaks Road.

"Shadid's vehicle then careened onto the sidewalk, striking and killing the two Oakton High School students and injuring a third as the girls walked home from school," Descano wrote.

Prosecutors demonstrated during the tri-

al that Shahid's high speed and lack of evasive action were significant factors that led to both the initial crash and the pedestrian collision, resulting in the deaths of Yan and Nolasco.

A crash expert testified that Shahid's vehicle contained a data recorder, which indicates that Shahid continued to accelerate from 60 mph to 81 mph in the five seconds he approached the intersection before the crash. The data recorder also indicated that Shahid did not attempt to apply the brakes. Shahid's defense attorney, Peter Green-

spun, said that the other SUV driver on Blake Lane was to blame for the crash and that driver received full immunity in exchange for testimony in this case. Shahid saw that the traffic light had turned yellow, accelerated, and collided with the SUV, whose driver was turning left. The SUV driver testified that he had stopped on the road to let the girls cross when the BMW hit him.

A judge will finalize the sentence later this year. The judge has the power to lessen the sentence but cannot increase it.



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