

Marel Siteon, left, an art teacher who has been at Barcroft for 29 years and Myrel Umila, a 4th grade teacher who was at Barcroft for the 75th school celebration.

# The Arlington Connection



## Barcroft Elementary Celebrates 100 Years

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## Doorways Asks Community for Urgent Assistance

**Shelter for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault and their families is full and overflowing.**

BY SHIRLEY RUHE  
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

**D**oorways sent out an urgent appeal a few days ago to the community. The shelter for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault and their families is full and overflowing. The capacity of the Doorways Safehouse was doubled last year from 11 to 22 but the need has escalated to an all time high of 40. Doorways is the only safe housing provider in Arlington County, and they don't turn

anybody away.

Arlington County funds support the services needed for 25 individuals but there are currently 40 individuals seeking assistance. The additional individuals and families have been placed in hotels and rental apartments that are paid for out of funds raised by Doorways. Diana Ortiz, Director of Doorways, says it costs on average \$200 or more a night each to house the extra survivors in hotels, and this doesn't cover the cost of food or case management or any of the other services they receive in the residential shelter.

Their Arlington DHS grant covers 48 percent of the Doorways safehousing budget with the additional 52 percent of the budget coming from a variety of sources including donations from individuals.

Ortiz says residents in the shelter receive basic housing, laundry, food, transportation and case management, plus access to mental health services. The children receive backpacks and basic school supplies. The younger ones need diapers and formula.

"We work with the residents on a safety plan, and our housing locator assists with moving them into housing." Last year the average stay in the Safehouse was 30 days but the time that people lived in the shelter varied widely. Some need to stay longer to work out protective orders, child custody or other issues.

"Living in a shelter is not ideal for anyone," Ortiz explains. She says there is a lot of empathy among survivors who have experienced similar traumas, but on the other side of it everyone is feeling high stress, and there are a lot of needs.

Ortiz says when the survivors transition to permanent housing, there are additional needs. "Since they are fleeing violence they rarely come to Doorways with a lot of things. The survivors just come with what they are wearing." She says when they move out of the shelter they have to set up a residence with mattresses, the basic things. "Donations can make a lot of difference. For instance \$500 can pay for a bed and basic

kitchen supplies for the family in the new residence."

The need for Doorway's services has not slowed down since Covid. Ortiz says Covid infection numbers are higher again right now, and this makes things worse. "People are having a really hard time making a living which puts additional pressure on people who may already be prone to violence."

Ortiz says she wants to emphasize that although it is very expensive to house the survivors, "I don't want anyone to hesitate to call. We don't have a waiting list because we take everyone who needs us." She says, "My worry is that people will think it is very expensive for us and we will run out of money but we don't want anyone to focus on this and feel that they don't have a space. So please call." The 24-hour hotline is 703-237-0881.

Doorways is a community-based nonprofit providing services, shelter and supportive housing for survivors of violence and sexual assault and their families. To donate, see <https://www.doorwaysva.org/donate/>

## 10,000 Local Students Fight Food Insecurity During Hunger Action Month

**T**he spirit of Hunger Action Month, a nationwide effort each September to raise awareness about food insecurity and inspire action, was evident as volunteers and community organizations partnered to relieve hunger in local schools.

Nearly 1,000 Food For Neighbors volunteers supported 54 schools and over 10,000 students in Fairfax, Arlington and Loudoun counties by collecting and sorting more than 28,000 pounds of food for local school children on Sept. 13.

"Because of this community, students are starting the year with one less worry and families know their neighbors truly care," said Karen Joseph, Founder and Executive Director of Food For Neighbors.

At a food sorting event at Herndon Middle School, Joseph accepted a \$20,000 grant from Journey for Good Foundation, a 501(c)(3) charity dedicated to fighting poverty through food, shelter, education, and workforce development and the charitable arm of Avolta in North America.

Food For Neighbors, now in its ninth year, helps schools establish in-house food pantries and mobilizes local communities to fill them with food and toiletries donated through the non-profit's Red Bag Program.

Despite Northern Virginia being among the most affluent areas in the state, over 1 in 3 students in Fairfax County and more than 1 in 4 students in Arlington and Loudoun counties qualified for free or reduced-price school meals during the last school year. Food For Neighbors works to ensure that food is readily accessible to students during the school day and to take home over weekends and holidays.

Food For Neighbors invites you to help end teen food insecurity by registering as a Red Bag donor. The group will leave a "Red Bag" with the grocery list and collection dates on your doorstep, send a reminder when it's time to shop, and pick up the donations from your home. It's that easy! To learn more visit <https://www.foodforneighbors.org/get-involved/>.



Food For Neighbors volunteers sorting food donations. One in four Arlington students qualified for free or reduced-price school meals during the last school year.

### BULLETIN BOARD

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

#### VOLUNTEER DRIVERS NEEDED

Have some extra time to drive a neighbor to a doctor's appointment? You pick the days, times, and places that are convenient for you. There

is NO MINIMUM driving requirement. Not only do you help older adults in need, you also get to meet wonderful folks, often with very interesting backgrounds and stories to tell. The Shepherd's Center of McLean-Arlington-Falls Church (SCMAFC), is an all-volunteer, non-sectarian, non-profit organization. Its mission is providing free transportation to seniors for medical and dental appointments

or run errands to grocery stores and pharmacies. To sign up, visit the website at <https://scmafc.org/volunteer>, or email [contact@scmafc.org](mailto:contact@scmafc.org) with questions.

#### DONATIONS NEEDED

Pet Food Bank. AWLA has established a Pet Food Bank to serve qualifying residents of Arlington County and the City of Falls Church. In consideration of the effect financial

obstacles have on a pet owner's ability to afford pet care, the AWLA Pet Food Bank program's goal is to keep family pets out of shelters. If you are an Arlington County or City of Falls Church resident and are in need of assistance in feeding your pet, follow this link and fill out a pre-registration form. Visit [goo.gl/forms/s2FuFdaYWdZm4t-Pw2](http://goo.gl/forms/s2FuFdaYWdZm4t-Pw2).

Donations Needed. Our Lady Queen of

Peace Catholic Church, 2700 South 19th St., is seeking to replenish its food pantry. Particularly needed are rice (large bags appreciated, the pantry will rebag), dry beans, canned vegetables, soup, small jars of peanut butter, small jars of jelly, pasta and pasta sauce. Donations are collected during Mass each Sunday. Visit [www.ourladyqueenofpeace.org](http://www.ourladyqueenofpeace.org) for more.

# SENIOR LIVING

## Flourishing After 55

Office of 55+ Programs  
Department of Parks and Recreation  
300 N. Park Dr., Arlington, VA 22203

55+ Programs are in person at 55+ Centers unless otherwise noted. A 55+ Pass is required to participate starting at a \$25 annual fee. To join or register, go to [registration.arlingtonva.us](http://registration.arlingtonva.us) or call 703-228-4747.

September is Senior Center Month and Fall Prevention Month

New, Memoir Writing group to share and exchange ideas, meets second and fourth Wednesdays, beginning Sept. 10 through Nov. 26, 2-4 p.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Registration # 911402-19.

Coffee or Tea and Thee, Mondays and Thursdays from 9 to 10 a.m., socialize with other 55+ friends at Lubber Run 55+ Center. Drop-in.

Volleyball, all skill levels welcome, Tuesdays, 3:30 – 5:30 p.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center; and Thursdays, 2 - 4 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Both are drop-in.

Introduction to beginners line dancing class with 55+ volunteer Suzie Pratts, Fridays, Aurora Hills 55+ Center. Learn box step, quarter turn and grapevine. Drop-in.

Cribbage, a challenging card game yet easy to learn and play, Fridays, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Drop-in.

Water walking and lap swimming to strengthen muscles at Long Bridge Aquatics Center, Mondays, 8-10 a.m., Wednesdays, 1-3 p.m. No instruction provided. Long Bridge Aquatics Center membership required or pay daily

admission fee. Located at 333 Long Bridge Drive. Drop-in.

Tai Chi practice with experienced volunteers, no instruction provided, Mondays, 2-2:45 p.m., Aurora Hills 55+ Center; Tuesdays, 1-2:15 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center; Fridays, 1-2:15 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. All are drop-ins.

55+ Ice Skating, Mondays, 8:40 – 9:40 a.m., MedStar Capitals Iceplex, roof level parking at Ballston Quarter. \$1 skate rental fee. Pre-registration required at [www.medstarcapitalsiceplex.com](http://www.medstarcapitalsiceplex.com), click on Senior Public Skate.

Memoir Writing group to share and exchange ideas, meets second and fourth Wednesdays, beginning Sept. 10 through Nov. 26, 2-4 p.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Registration # 911402-19.

Play pickleball, 55+ Pass required at the following 55+ centers: Walter Reed, Mondays, 8:15 a.m.- 4 p.m.; Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30 – 4 p.m.; Wednesdays, 2:15 – 4 p.m.; and Fridays, 8:15 a.m. – 4 p.m.; Arlington Mill, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 10 a.m.- 3 p.m., Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12 – 3 p.m. Drop-ins.

Women's drop-in basketball, Wednesdays, 7:15 p.m.-8:45 p.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Drop-in.

Step-by-step painting demonstration led by a community arts programmer, Monday, Sept. 15, 10:30 a.m. –12 p.m., virtual. Register separately for each session. Picture and supply list will be sent prior to class. Registration # 911303-04.

Piano Lounge & Sing-Along with Valerie Welsh, Tuesday, Sept. 16, 2:30 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Enjoy folk classes; lyrics provid-

ed. Registration # 911304-19.

Learn to play Euchre, a classic trick-taking card game, Tuesday, Sept. 16, 5-7 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Registration # 911600-15.

Haiku for you, five sessions begin Tuesday, Sept. 16, 2 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Register for each session separately. Sessions taught by award-winning writer Rick Black, learn the basics of Japanese nature poetry. Registration # 911300-07.

Acoustic Café presents local musicians, The Co-Conspirators with the Sunshine Gang, Tuesday, Sept. 16, 7 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Registration # 911301-01.

“From Exile to Avant Garde: The Life of Princess Natalie Paley” exhibit at the Hillwood Museum and Gardens, will be visited by the 55+ Travel group, Tuesday, Sept. 16. Cost \$86, Arlington resident; \$99, non-resident. Includes a delightful afternoon tea. Registration # 902509-06.

Performance parking 101, join the Arlington Parking & Curbspace team to learn how to use ParkMobile to pay for parking and options to find affordable parking in Arlington, Wednesday, Sept. 17, 11 a.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Registration # 911400-06.

Understanding probate, Wednesday, Sept. 17, 11 a.m., virtual discussion with Martha Motherhood, elder law attorney. Registration # 911404-01.

Opera appreciation group to hear and discuss Part 2 of “Otello” by Giuseppe Verdi, Wednesday, Sept. 17, 1:30 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Professional commentary by George Cecchetti. Registration # 911300-02.

Bookmaking workshop, led by artist Sushmita Mazumda, Wednesday, Sept. 17, 3:30 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Create books to reflect people, places and memories. Registration # 91110-02.

Old-Time & String Band Jam, Thursday, Sept. 18, 5 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Bring our guitars, fiddles, banjos, mandolins, and dulcimers for an open jam. All skills levels welcome. Registration # 911304-13.

Hispanic Heritage Month will feature The Retablo Art Project, participate in hands-on activity and learn about a traditional Latin American folk art of small paintings depicting everyday scenes, Monday, Sept. 22, 12:30 p.m. at Lubber Run 55+ Center. Supplies provided. Registration # 911303-07. Program led by a Community Arts Programmer.

Movie matinee, “Encanto” (2021) (PG), Tuesday, Sept. 23, 1 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Registration # 911804-07.

Stroke awareness, presented by Dr. Edward Alcock, medical director of inpatient rehabilitation at Virginia Hospital Center, Tuesday, Sept. 23, 11 a.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Hear the signs of symptoms of a stroke and the steps to take to act fast. Registration # 911500-06.

Wingspan game night at Long Branch Nature Center, illustrated board game where participants play as bird enthusiasts, researchers, bird watchers, ornithologists and collectors, Tuesday, Sept. 23, 5:30 p.m. at Long Branch. Registration # 911600-03.

Local history discussion, learn about Arlington's rich past, Wednesday, Sept. 24, 1:30 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Registration # 9114022-07.

Plant and cutting swap, trade with fellow gardeners, Wednesday, Sept. 24, 5 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Registration # 911401-02. Please ensure plants and cuttings are pest-free and healthy.

Paint & Sip along with Community Arts Programmers Jennifer Droblyen and Jim Halloran and recreate artworks on display in area museums, Thursday, Sept. 25, 10 a.m., virtual. Registration # 911303-08.

55+ Travel group will travel to Lancaster, PA for the Amish Farm & House Museum plus a late lunch at Miller's Smorgasbord featuring Pennsylvania Dutch favorites, Thursday, Sept. 25. Cost \$160, Arlington resident; \$183, non-resident. Registration # 902509-09.

Pumpkin pair-up, fun, hands-on workshop to decorate pumpkins and share stories, Thursday, Sept. 25, 4 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. No carving, just painting. Supplies provided. Open to all ages. No 55+ Pass required. Registration # 911310-08.

Movie night, “Instructions Not Included” (2013) (PG-13), a touching comedy, Thursday, Sept. 25, 6 p.m. Lubber Run 55+ Center. Registration # 911804-10.

Explore the Spanish-speaking world with Lubber Run 55+ Center Director Ashley Gomez. September's Focus is on Andorra, Thursday, Sept. 25, 1 p.m., virtual. Registration # 911400-26. Andorra is located in Southern Europe between Spain and France.

New, Rhinestone Rodeo, 120 minutes of non-stop dancing at Aurora Hills 55+ Center, Friday, Sept. 26, 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. All skill levels welcome. Bring your own water. Registration # 911802-02.

55+ Travel group will enjoy a Day on the Bay to St. Michael's, MD, explore the charming village then return to Annapolis and tour the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, Saturday, Sept. 27. Cost \$149, Arlington resident; \$171, non-resident. Registration # 902509-10

55+ Travel group will visit the National Gallery of Art to view the exhibits “Photography and the Black Arts Movement” and “Passion and Purpose,” Mon., Sept. 29. Cost: \$12, Arlington resident; \$14, non-resident. Register #902509-11.

Secrets Revealed, an exploration of famous artists and their distinctive, sometimes secretive techniques, Mon., Sept. 29, 10:30 a.m. Virtual. Presented by Community Arts Programmer Jennifer Droblyen. Register #911302-02.

Explore the fascinating world of Virginia's black bears with Jenn Hazen, black bear ambassador, Tuesday, Sept. 30, 6 p.m. Walter Reed 55+ Center. Register #911400-35.

Learn to ride a bike with certified league cycling instructors with the League of American Bicyclists, Tuesday, Sept. 30, 8 a.m. Walter Reed 55+ Center. Bicycle and helmet provided. Class designed for beginners. Register #911206-07.

Opera Appreciation group to listen and discuss “Lohengrin” by Richard Wagner, Wednesday, Oct. 1, 1:30 p.m. Lubber Run 55+ Center. Professional commentary by George Cecchetti. Register #911300-03.

Memory Café, a supportive environment for people with dementia and their family caregivers can enjoy meaningful dementia-friendly activities, Thursday, Oct. 2, 1:30 p.m. Walter Reed 55+ Center. Call Adult Services Librarian Zoe Mann at 703-228-5193 to register. Open to all ages: no 55+ Pass required.

Advanced drawing and painting, beyond the basics painting and drawing techniques taught by Community Arts Programmer Jennifer Droblyen, Thursdays, Oct. 2-30, 1:30 p.m. Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Cost: \$41.50, materials not included. Register #911303-11.

Trivia buffs invited to a fun-filled trivia challenge, Thursday, Oct. 2, 11 a.m. Virtual. Register #911600-13.

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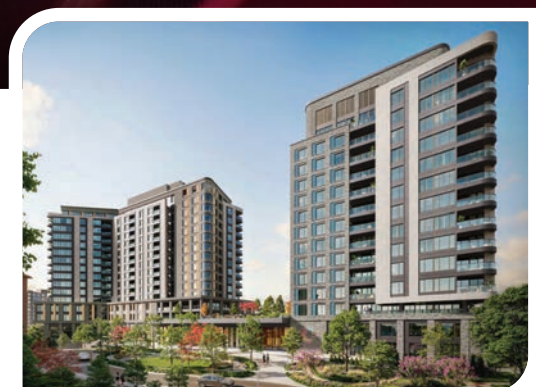
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# Barcroft Links Past and Present Over 100 Years

On Sept. 19  
on S. Wakefield  
Street.

BY SHIRLEY RUHE  
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

**B**arcroft Elementary began with 10 children in a parent's living room in 1906. When the group outgrew the space in 1908, the school moved to a newly built one-room schoolhouse, which was also a church and community center. It was at 800 S. Buchanan Street and had one teacher, Miss Beulah Adams (Young). In 1925 a new brick school building was built at S. Wakefield Street and housed 65 students.

Now on Sept. 19 Barcroft will celebrate 100 years in that same building on S. Wakefield Street. Judy Apostolico, the principal, says the building has been refurbished since it was built but no major renovation. "We still have the tile in the front and the unusual round windows."

But now Barcroft has 480 students including pre-K. "The school has grown in the last seven years since I've been here, and we've added 150 students as more families move into the neighborhood."

**"It is different here. I've been a lot of places and loved all of them but this is where my heart is."**

— Judy Apostolico, principal at Barcroft Elementary School

Apostolico says, "We actually had a little bit of a kick off last spring when we opened a time capsule that had been buried in a cement block in our hallway in 2000 with instructions about the exact date it was to be opened. It had Pokemon cards, a receipt from a McDonalds meal, a Harry Potter book. Kids wrote letters with predictions and hopes for the future—a cure for cancer, a woman president, no war. And it surprised us all, when we opened the time capsule from 2000, we also found a time capsule from 1980."

Alvaro Flores, Assistant Principal, is in charge of organizing the celebration. Flores says the celebration will begin in the morning at the site of the first school building on Buchanan. "The Wakefield High School band will lead a human chain of students from there to our current building showing the connection to the past and all

of the children who have passed through this way."

When the students arrive back at Barcroft, an all-school assembly will reveal the time capsule items to be buried and opened in the next 25 years. "The kids will perform a special song which they have written with the assistance of our music teacher," Apostolico explains. "I heard them practicing it a minute ago. I think it's called 'Barcroft 100 Years of Fun.' I'm super excited. This is bigger than yourself."

An all-school photo will be followed by a bag lunch outside in the schoolyard. Then more fun. The kids will get to choose games that kids played in the '20s like sack races, spoon relays, jacks, tug of war.

A picnic event is being organized for later in the afternoon by the PTA with a parent DJ. Flores says the idea for the celebration originated in a trivia game played by teachers in 2023 during their relaxation time when the question was asked "How old is Barcroft?"

"We realized it was almost 100 years and so we decided we had to celebrate it," Flores explains.

Myrel Umi-la, a fourth grade teacher, stands in the hallway by the copy machine. "I was here for the Barcroft 75th celebration. It was so exciting and fun; it was awesome. There is just some-

thing about this place that makes you stay." As if to prove the point, Mavel Sitron pops her head out of her arts classroom. "I've been here even longer than Myrel, 29 years."

An invitation posted on Facebook by Janet Born, an English learner teacher at Barcroft and a member of the organizing committee for the 100th celebration, has elicited a lot of memories including the visit by George H. Bush in 1991 in which a third grader asked Bush if he is really the President and checked the President's picture I.D.

Memories abounded around the Grade 5 class of 69-70 taught by Miss Storush.

"My brother Billy is in the picture."

"I recognize half the faces but not the names."

"I was just showing my grandson."



Barcroft Elementary School has been in operation in this building since 1925.

PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION



Judy Apostolico, principal at Barcroft Elementary School.



From left: Marel Siteon, an art teacher who has been at Barcroft for 29 years and Myrel Umi-la, a 4th grade teacher who was at Barcroft for the 75th school celebration.



Alvaro Flores, Assistant Principal at Barcroft Elementary and organizer of the 100-year celebration to be held Friday, Sept. 19



Cesar Cells who was in 4th grade at Barcroft when the time capsule was buried and is now in the Barcroft office where he has worked for 15 years.

SEE BARCROFT, PAGE 7



# Barcroft will Celebrate 100 Years

FROM PAGE 6

Steve Bailes remembers the teachers at Barcroft went the extra mile. His first grade teacher was the mother-in-law of his baseball hero Wally Moon. She encouraged his reluctance to read by promising Steve an autographed photo if Steve learned to read the primer. “I did and she did.”

Janet Nightingale—“My dad and six of us eight kids went there.”

Craig Slade remembers he was the Black student who integrated Barcroft in 1963.

Apostolico has been in the Arlington school system serving in a number of different positions for 38 years including resource teacher, for gifted students, assistant principal and supervisor of early childhood programs. In 2019 she was recognized as Arlington County principal of the year. Now at Barcroft for seven years she says, “My favorite time of the day is the morning when I greet the kids. It feels like a large family. I know a lot of people say this but it is different here. I’ve been a lot of places and loved all of them but this is where my heart is.”

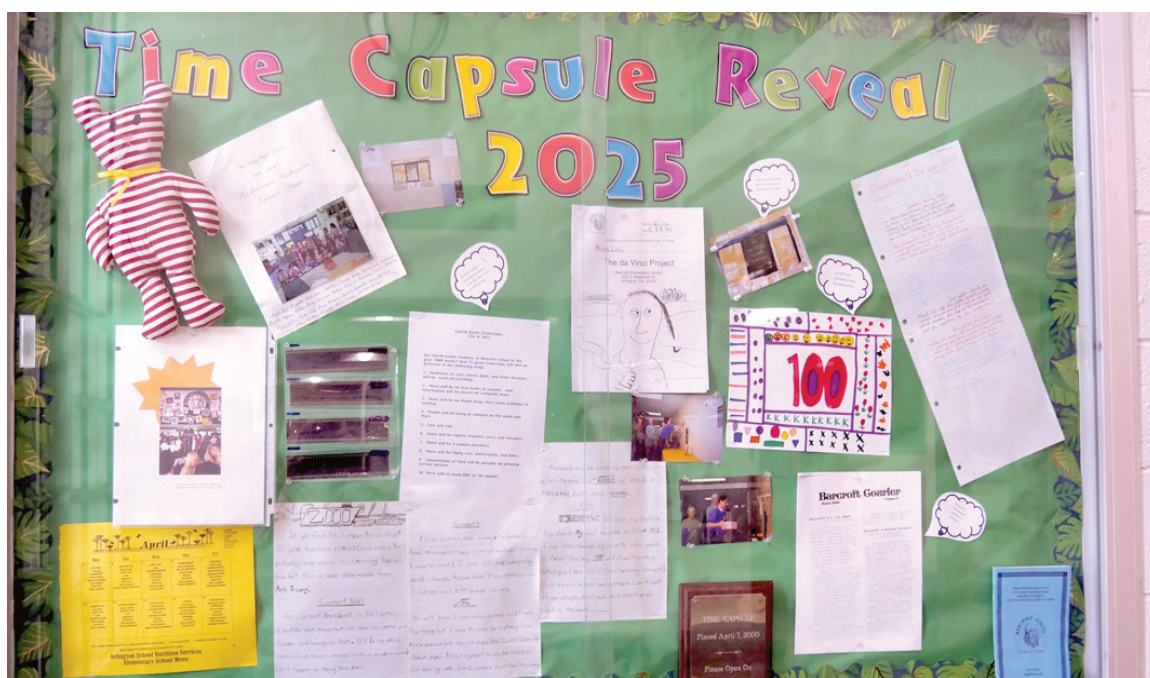


PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUHE  
THE CONNECTION

The time capsule placed in a cinder block in the hallway in 2000 was opened up at an assembly last spring and the contents are displayed on the wall of the school.



Barcroft Elementary students outside at recess Sept. 15.



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# Behind the Scenes in the Big Blue Tent



PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION

Outside the "big blue" circus tent.



Performers relax in open tent space on validation day, two days before opening of "Luzia".

BY SHIRLEY RUHE  
CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

The yard outside the circus tents at Tysons Galleria is scattered with small construction vehicles with workers and visitors wearing yellow safety vests as the show prepares to open in a few days. But inside is a different world. The "big blue" tent buzzes with activity, and excitement is in the air two days before the opening of Cirque du Soleil's "Luzia" on Saturday, Sept. 6.

Today is Thursday, Sept. 4 which is focused on validation, and tomorrow they will run the acts. Charlie Wagner, publicist for "Luzia" says, "Today is to be sure everything is set up in the same way as the last show. Are the lights in the eyes of the performers? Are the seats installed in the right order? We have to look at every one of



Mexican costumes are ironed by an extra, hired locally.

the 2,500 seats to be sure it is in the right place so someone doesn't come in with a ticket and can't find their seat."

Just inside the first tent is an old fashioned ironing board with a rooster-patterned costume having the wrinkles removed by a local hired for this show. Wagner says in

Mexico you see this pattern everywhere you go. A row of costumes with the bright designs associated with Mexico hangs high along the wall.

Across the room a performer is standing on his head, while partners nearby practice a double decker gymnastic routine with



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Gracie Valdez, Artistic Director, Cirque du Soleil's "Luzia," who grew up in Vienna, Va.

## Interview with Gracie Valdez, Artistic Director

Gracie Valdez, Artistic Director of Luzia for just over two years, is happy to be back in the area. Valdez moved to Vienna when she was 8-years-old and grew up there. She says she got her start in the world of drama as a dancer. She performed in the performing arts center in middle school and taught dance in high school. Then attended George Mason University. "Dancing was my entry into this world."

"At that point I knew I wasn't a performer. I knew my own strength. I'm better on this side, managing people. I've had some beautiful mentors and learned to utilize my organization and project management."

Valdez has been with "Luzia" off and on for the last nine years and with Cirque du Soleil for 16 years working on other Cirque du Soleil shows. She says her job as Artistic Director gives her responsibility for the overall quality of the show. "I am responsible for everything, and to make sure people are motivated in the right way." She says she has done over 2,500 shows and, of course, things can happen. "People get sick and also we use a lot of technology. I have a beautiful team but sometimes technology doesn't want to behave. I'm a problem solver."

She says this job is a lifelong dream. "I grew up attending Cirque du Soleil shows, even in California before we moved here. I am a massive fan. When I understood I could work here, I knew I was the luckiest person in the world."

Valdez says she was here 7 years ago with Luzia but selfishly she is happy to return to share it with the next generation. I am excited to be back here. My friends saw the show but now their kids are old enough to come. I want to share it with them, too."

Her favorite scene in Luzia is just before the final bow to the audience. "It has the full cast on stage and is very emotional. I nearly cry every time I see it." She says, "Being outside you would never guess what it is like inside the tent. People come to the circus to escape."

harness attached. A couple relaxes on a floor mat taking a break from their routine, and a ceiling high silver horse stands against the wall.

"Since we don't have live animals in our circus the question is how to include animals. This horse is in the opening act. It takes three people to operate from inside."

As you walk from the light of the practice space into the darkness of the big blue tent, you pass by a wall of props including a rack

of wide brimmed hats and stacked rows of different sizes of candles.

Along the way, small cubicles are arranged for the musical performers with the first including a number of drums and cymbals. The music for the show is performed live by seven musicians including the singer.

"Luzia" is a surrealist play that is described as a "critically acclaimed

SEE BEHIND THE SCENES, PAGE 12  
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



## NEWS

# Annual Green Valley Day Festival

**Green Valley Civic Association holds free, family-friendly event Saturday, Sept. 20.**

The Green Valley Civic Association (GVCA) invites all residents and neighbors to the annual Green Valley Day on Saturday, Sept. 20, 2025, from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. at Dr. Charles R. Drew Elementary School, 3500 S. 23rd Street, Arlington, VA 22206.

Founded in 1844 before the Civil War, Green Valley is Arlington's oldest historically Black neighborhood. This proud community continues to grow as one of Arlington County's most welcoming and diverse areas.

This free event is a beloved community tradition that brings together families, friends, and neighbors to celebrate Green Valley's rich cultural heritage and its bright, inclusive future. The festival offers something for everyone — regardless of age — with a vibrant blend of entertainment, edu-

cation, and family fun.

Green Valley Day will feature:

- ❖ Live Go-Go Music & Performances celebrating the region's cultural roots
- ❖ The Arlington Art Truck — hands-on creative fun for kids
- ❖ Health & Wellness Fair with

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senior village and mental health panel

- ❖ Local Vendors offering crafts, services, and community resources
- ❖ Delicious Food & BBQ to please every palate

Organizers say: "Green Valley Day represents the heart of our neighborhood — where history,

community, and future possibilities meet. It's a time to come together, celebrate our unique legacy, and strengthen the bonds that make this place feel like home."

Special appreciation goes to Platinum Sponsor Vulcan Materials Company; and Gold Sponsor Affordable Homes and Communities (AHC)

#### Event Details at a Glance:

Date: Saturday, Sept. 20, 2025

Time: 12 p.m. — 5 p.m.

Location: Dr. Charles R. Drew Elementary School and Community Center, 3500 S. 23rd St, Arlington VA 22206

Admission: Free and open to the public

Parking: Available on-site. Car-free transportation is encouraged.

For additional details, visit [www.greenvalleyciv.org](http://www.greenvalleyciv.org)

About the Green Valley Civic Association (GVCA):

The GVCA is a nonpartisan, community-led organization dedicated to promoting civic engagement, community pride, and inclusive development in Arlington's historic Green Valley neighborhood.

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## 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
BUCHANAN	29736	2207	RHONDA LESTER BRANCH ROAD	KNOX CREEK	9/5/2025
GRAYSON	8910	732	LAUREL CREEK ROAD	LAUREL CREEK	9/2/2025
HENRY	10152	682	RIVER ROAD 682	JORDAN CREEK	8/22/2025
NELSON	12612	776	GRAPELAWN DRIVE	DAVIS CREEK	8/21/2025
GRAYSON	8943	797	SPENCER BRANCH ROAD	LITTLE HELTON CREEK	8/13/2025
KING WILLIAM	26122	30	ROUTE 0030	PAMUNKEY RIVER	8/6/2025

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 [vdot.virginia.gov](http://vdot.virginia.gov) and navigate to Traffic and Travel/For freight operators/Truck restrictions. 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](mailto:haulingpermits@vdot.virginia.gov) or the Load Rating Program Manager, Manjil Devkota at 804-786-4064.

*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 or [corina.herrera@vdot.virginia.gov](mailto:corina.herrera@vdot.virginia.gov).*



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**Published by  
Local Media Connection LLC**

**1606 King Street  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314**

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## ECOAMBASSADORS PROGRAM

**EcoAmbassadors** is a new climate and energy-centered volunteer training and community engagement program. The EcoAmbassador program will bring together volunteers who are passionate about helping neighbors commit to personal activities that will make our neighborhoods and homes healthier and more livable. The EcoAmbassadors training is centered on the City of Alexandria Energy and Climate Change Action Plan and Arlington's Community Energy Plan and related climate strategies. Specific focus areas include reducing energy use and electrifying the home, shifting to eco-friendly transportation choices, and minimizing waste. EcoAmbassadors is managed by EcoAction Arlington and the Virginia Cooperative Extension with support from Arlington County and the City of Alexandria. Volunteers ages 16 and up are encouraged to apply. The fee for the program is \$110 (free for students), and the deadline for applications is September 24. More information: [ecoactionarlington.org/ecoambassadors](http://ecoactionarlington.org/ecoambassadors) or [bill@ecoactionarlington.org](mailto:bill@ecoactionarlington.org).

## CENTERS FOR OPPORTUNITY ARLINGTON

**The Centers for Opportunity Arlington** is a safe, stigma-free place to spend time for those recovering from homelessness, substance use, and mental illness. It has a donation closet that needs adult clothing and shoes. Some participants at the Center are looking for jobs and need the proper attire. Located at 3219 Columbia Pike, Suite 101, Arlington. Contact Greg, Program Coordinator at 703-567-1346.

## VOLUNTEER FOR ARLINGTON'S COMMUNITY AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

**Arlington Neighborhood Village**, in partnership with Arlington County and Marymount University, has started the Community Ambassador Program (CAP). CAP is a volunteer fueled system that identifies "Ambassadors" connected with civic associations, faith communities, senior centers, apartment buildings, etc. These individuals will be trained to be a reliable source of information about the many opportunities available to older adults in Arlington.

Ambassadors will spread the word about programs and support services, opportunities for social and civic engagement, and educational and enrichment activities for older adults in their own neighborhoods. They are actively recruiting ambassadors to act as a bridge between their community and the Arlington safety net, providing information and soliciting feedback to improve offerings that help older adults remain safe, independent, engaged, and connected to their community.

Contact [cap@anvarlington.org](mailto:cap@anvarlington.org) if this is something you are interested in or want to learn more. Let's work together to create a supported and connected community for all ages!

Receive Support Services: Are you a senior in Arlington? Do you need support services but don't know where to look? Are you looking for fun and enriching activities in Arlington? Email or call 703-509-8057 and they will connect you with an Ambassador.

## THE MARJORIE HUGHES FUND FOR CHILDREN

**The Marjorie Hughes Fund for Children (MHF)**, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit serving Arlington Public Schools (APS) students, helps underinsured and uninsured students obtain medical and dental services and other necessary medical care. Established in 1992 to honor the work of public health physician Marjorie F. Hughes, who dedicated her career to public school students in Arlington, MHF is made up of Public Health School Nurses, School Health Aides, APS staff, and community stakeholders. In collaboration with pediatric office staff and dental providers, MHF pays for school entry and sports physical exams, dental treatments, assists with the purchase of medications or medical equipment, and provides transportation via UberHealth rides to doctor and dentist appointments. MHF services are supported entirely by generous

donations and grants, and they have helped students throughout Arlington schools, from kindergarten to high school, to be happy, healthy, and ready to learn. To learn more about MHF, its mission, its work, and to make a contribution, visit <https://www.marjoriehughesfund.com/>.

## YEAR ROUND ON SUNDAYS

**Farmer's Market.** 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. At Casa Chirilagua Community Center, 4109 Mt. Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Experience fresh foods, native plants, artisan crafts, music and community at Four Mile Run Farmers & Artisans Market in the heart of Arlandria outside the Casa Chirilagua Community Center, every Sunday 9-1 p.m.

## SEPT. 4 TO OCT. 12

**Arlington Artists Alliance: Maximalism! Regional Juried Show.** At Alliance Gallery, Clarendon. This group exhibition is a celebration of excess, abundance, bold visual expression, and sensory richness. Artists from the DC Metro Area explore ornamentation, texture, color, complexity, and emotional intensity in contrast to minimalism's restraint. Juried by Touchstone Gallery Executive Director Abbey Alison McClain. Join on Thursday, Sept. 4 from 5 to 7 p.m. for an opening reception.

## SEPT. 19-21

**Arlington Artists Alliance: It's a Steal.** At 2666 Military Rd., Donaldson Run, Arlington. Arlington Artists Alliance's affordable art fair It's A Steal is back! This free event features hundreds of artworks by 45 local artists, including original paintings, pottery, glass, note cards, prints, and much more. Everything is under \$150! Join for the opening reception on Friday, Sept 19 from 5 to 7 p.m. for first dibs.

## SATURDAY/SEPT. 20

**EcoAction Arlington Trash Tally.** 10 a.m.- noon. The Annual Trash Tally, in partnership with the Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup and Clean Virginia Waterways, will take place at an Arlington County park on Saturday, September 20, 2025. Participants will break out into small groups to tally the collected trash using the CleanSwell app. Families, individuals, and groups are welcome. Registration is required. Location will be sent with registration confirmation. Space is limited so register soon! Rain date is 9/27. Register at: <https://www.ecoactionarlington.org/event/ecoaction-arlington-annual-trash-tally-2025/>.

## THROUGH SEPT. 21

**"The Full Monty."** At Thomas Jefferson Community Theatre, Arlington Heights. In a town where jobs have dried up and egos have taken a hit, a group of steelworkers hatch a wild plan to earn some quick cash: they're going to put on a strip show – and go the FULL MONTY! As the men battle insecurities, societal expectations, family pressures, and their fear of letting it all hang out (literally), they discover the real exposure isn't in taking off their clothes.

## WEDNESDAY/OCT. 1

**Police Host 2025 National Coffee with a Cop Day Events.** The Arlington County Police Department (ACPD) is proud to join communi-

# COFFEE WITH A COP DAY



The Arlington County Police Department will host the 2025 National Coffee with a Cop Day on Wednesday, Oct. 1, 2025.

ties nationwide in celebrating National Coffee with a Cop Day on Wednesday, October 1. To mark the occasion, our Community Engagement Division is hosting two informal engagement opportunities for Arlingtonians to connect with the officers that serve them and celebrate community-police relations. All are invited to attend the morning and afternoon events to ask questions, share concerns and get to know the men and women who keep Arlington safe. Times:

8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.  
Starbucks (Clarendon) – 2690 Clarendon Boulevard  
11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.  
Good Company Doughnuts and Cafe – 1350 S. Eads Street, Suite 80

## FRIDAY/OCT. 3

**2025 Festival Latinoamericano.** 5-9 p.m. At Arlington Mill Community Center, 909 S Dinwiddie Street, Arlington. Arlington County's Festival Latinoamericano is dedicated to celebrating the vibrant and diverse cultures that enrich our community. The mission is to showcase the rich tapestry of Latin American art, food, and culture in Arlington County, providing a platform for local artists, chefs, and performers to share their talents and traditions with the public. By supporting small businesses and entrepreneurs, they aim to foster economic growth and community spirit. This free event is designed to be inclusive and educational, offering attendees of all backgrounds a chance to experience Hispanic Heritage firsthand. Join in commemorating and preserving our cultural heritage while creating lasting connections and memories.

## FRIDAY/OCT. 3

**Free Classical Music Concert.** The Friday Morning Music Club invites you to classical music performances at St. George's Episcopal Church, 915 N. Oakland Street, in Virginia Square. Free one-hour concerts take place from noon to 1 p.m. each of the first Friday of the month. The October 3 program includes: Haydn: Sonata in C Major, Hob. XVI/50. Yuri Chayama, piano  
Milhaud: Sonatine. Heidi Schuller, flute; Dana Smith (guest), piano  
Franck: Sonata in A Major. Amelia Baisden, cello; Irina Kats (guest), piano

# Amazing



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

For those of you regular readers wondering about my most recent scan results - and what it means to my health status, written about a few weeks ago in a column titled, "Clear as Mud," the answer is, to quote Ken Jennings, the current host of Jeopardy, the oncologist wrote "overall, an excellent PET report." As for my 'overall' health, I'm way past one day at a time, and I'm way past my original "13 months to two years" prognosis which I received in late February 2009. I am not however in remission. Nor have I passed the need for quarterly PET scans - to be followed up by quarterly in-office appointments, monthly lab work and five daily pills. I am, as the cover of this quarter's AARP magazine teases: "Living with Cancer."

When I saw that headline on the cover, which of course led to an inside story, I said out loud to my wife Dina, "I could write the book on that." Actually, if you tally up all the columns I've had published (nearly 800 columns on the subject) beginning in June '09 and continuing without interruption through to this very column, I've published a book or two, sort of. F.Y.I., moreover, to give this column a little context, I have published a weekly column since Dec. '97 (beginning Jan. '25, the Connection is now published two times per month). Before the cancer diagnosis, I characterized my columns as "Everything in General About Nothing in Particular." That all changed when I was diagnosed with stage IV, non-small lung cancer, an extremely terminal form of cancer.

But cancer is the exact opposite of 'nothing in particular' as it is also the exact opposite of 'everything in general.' It's as specific as one can get, especially when asked about one's health/life. Nevertheless, short of wearing a tee-shirt emblazoned with "F-ck Cancer" or the more acceptable: "Cancer Sucks," I pretty much keep myself to myself unless asked. If, to quote Lily Tomlin as the kookie switchboard operator "Ernestine," from the irreverent comedy show of the 60s and 70s: "Laugh-In," if "the party to whom I am speaking" doesn't know I have cancer, I will not offer it up for conversation. If on the contrary, inquiries are made about my health status, I have plenty of stories to share about my 16 1/2 years defying the odds and living despite being told a time or two that my chances of surviving beyond two years were in the low single digits.

But here I sit, writing about survival of the not-so-fittest: me. I wouldn't say I've survived by ignoring advice or burying my head in the proverbial/figurative sand - below or above ground. Nor have I read everything on the subject or followed a strict regimen of non-Western alternatives, though I have embraced some: drinking alkaline water, spooning down a tablespoon of purred asparagus at least once a day, mixing Bragg's Apple Cider Vinegar and/or baking soda in my daily drinks, plus swallowing upwards of 60 pills a day (vitamins, minerals, supplements, et cetera), some over the counter, some under the counter and a few even around the counter all selected to flush out the toxins in my body or to build up an immune system ravaged by chemotherapy. Whether, and to what extent, incorporating/adding these 'alternatives' to my Western care: chemotherapy, immunotherapy and targeted therapy, mattered I'll never know.

However, doing all this stuff/being proactive made me feel less a victim and more like a victor. And as they say, "To the victor go the spoils." In my case, the spoils refer to a life I wasn't supposed to live. And not a day goes by where I take any of it for granted.

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



PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION



One of the music booths for the musicians playing live music for the show.

# Behind the Scenes in the Big Blue Tent

FROM PAGE 8

spectacle that immerses the audience in a dreamlike, surreal world inspired by Mexico's rich culture and landscapes, noted for its impressive water effects, breathtaking acrobatics, masterful puppetry, vibrant costumes, and live music."

Cirque du Soleil has a number of different shows in production at the same time all over the world. Wagner says they currently have five in Las Vegas, one in Florida, one in Mexico, one in Hawaii and one about to begin in Berlin. Each one is unique.

"Luzia" has just come from Montreal and will be headed from Tysons to Atlanta. Luzia began in 2016, and Wagner estimates that 15 members of the cast of 47 have been with the show since the beginning.

Wagner says the audiences in different countries react differently to the shows, with audiences in Montreal giving a standing ovation every night; audiences in Spain stamping their feet on the ground; audiences in Korea very vocal all through the show. But she adds there are certain moments that get a reaction wherever they are performing.

Wagner says, "Transportation is the best and worst thing for me about this job. I have been to North America, Europe, Asia but on the other side you are never home for the big occasions."

Inside the big blue tent a large metal disk hangs high over the side of the stage. It represents the Aztec calendar and when it is turned around represents the sun or moon. The crew is busy setting up massive treadmills on the stage so that the audience can see from different angles.

"It's super cool. It doesn't matter where you're sitting in the big top.

You get a good view."

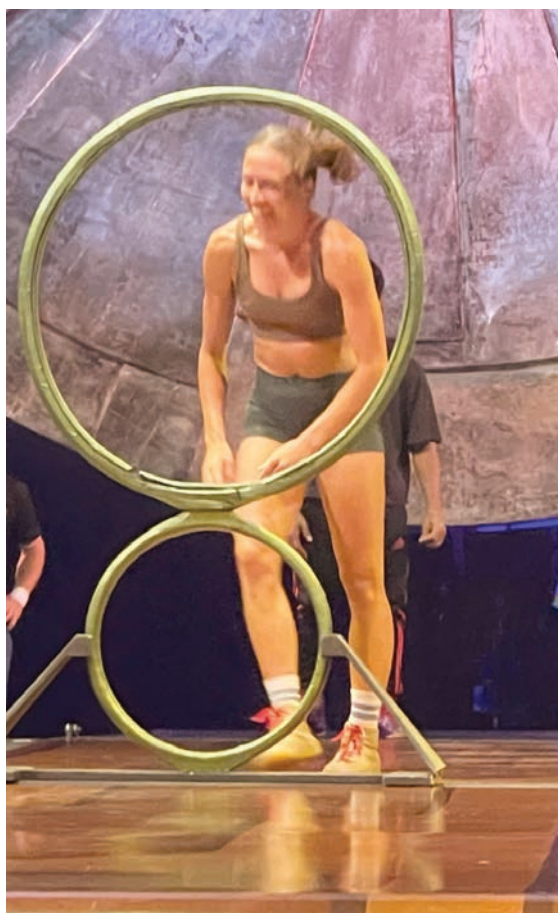
The hoops team is practicing their acrobatics along the treadmill to warm up their bodies. Wagner explains, "They haven't been performing for the last ten days since the last show closed so they need to get back in shape."

After a few practice runs to warm up, two hoops are placed on top of each other over the treadmill. As the performers work their way into the routine, two more hoops will be added on top. The performers, each with their own signature flourish, take a jump and flip dive through the hoops with a final ring of a bell. Wagner explains, "Most of the performers have been training for all of their lives. A couple of them were born into circus families, and some went to circus school."

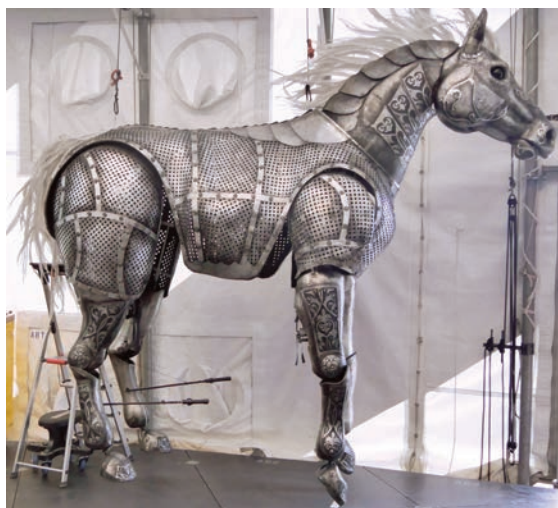
In this Cirque du Soleil show, it is the first time ever in any show to include water as part of the performance, when rain sprinkles down from a hoop in the ceiling, falling on three sisters stranded in the desert. On the stage one of the extras is pushing a machine across the stage back and forth to dry the stage from any accumulated water so that it is safe for the performers.

Wagner says there are 94,000 little holes in the floor of the stage that drain the water into a tunnel forming a pool. It is pumped outside to a large receptacle to disinfect the water and warm it up. "It is super important the water is always circulating, and warmed. Cool water doesn't go well with the muscles of the acrobats."

Today is validation to be sure everything is ready, working and in its place; Friday is dress rehearsal and Saturday is opening day in the Big Blue Tent. Cirque du Soleil is playing at Tysons II from Sept. 6-Oct. 19.



Performer jumps, rolls and flip dives through the hoops during a practice routine Sept. 4.



Large silver horse is manned by three performers during the show.



Gymnasts practice balancing routine.



Muscles ripple with this handstand just for fun.

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