

THE CONNECTION

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Members of the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue color guard enter Fire Station 25 in Reston, Va., on Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025. (From video)

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PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/ THE CONNECTION

Voter Jason Greenwalt holds his puppy, Quinn, as they meet volunteer Rebecca Borton at the Herndon Community Center, a polling location for the special election in Virginia's 11th Congressional District held on Sept. 9. Greenwalt, Borton and Quinn are all from the Town of Herndon.



COURTESY OF JAMES WALKINSHAW

James L. Walkinshaw (D) at the polls Tuesday, Sept. 9, is joined by Smitty Connolly, former Congressman Gerry Connolly's wife, and his daughter Caitlin.

Walkinshaw Sworn into U.S. House of Representatives

Walkinshaw wins by more than 50 points, seeking to fill Gerry Connolly's big shoes.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Democrat James L. Walkinshaw won the special election for Virginia's Congressional District 11. Walkinshaw, 42, a member of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and former aide to the late Rep. Gerry Connolly, defeated his challenger, Republican Stewart L. Whitson, 45, by a wide margin in the deep-blue district. Walkinshaw secured 75.14 percent of the vote with 113,596 votes.

"The voters of Fairfax have spoken clearly: they want a representative who will fight for our community and deliver results," said Walkinshaw in a post that evening. "I am humbled by the confidence they have placed in me, and I will work tirelessly to make life more affordable for families, protect our freedoms, and ensure that the 11th district has a strong voice in Congress."

Walkinshaw was sworn into the House of Representatives by Speaker Mike Johnson the next day, on Wednesday, Sept. 10, 2025.

Whitson released a statement on the election results saying in part, "I congratulate my opponent and extend my gratitude to every voter who participated in this important election. Democracy is strongest when we all engage, and I am humbled by those who place their trust in me."

Walkinshaw introduced his first piece of legislation, the Limit on Sweeping Executive Reorganization Act, the same day. The bill



SCREENSHOT

U.S. Representative James R. Walkinshaw (D-VA-11).

would prevent a president from unilaterally reorganizing or dismantling federal agencies without congressional approval.

Walkinshaw said in a statement, "Congress — not a President and his billionaire oligarch — must have the final say when it comes to major reorganizations of our federal government."

He is also co-sponsoring the Delete DOGE Act, which would repeal and prohibit the "dangerous DOGE framework."

Virginia's governor set the special election to fill the northern Virginia seat held by the late Rep. Gerry Connolly, who died in office of cancer on May 21. Virginia's 11th



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/ THE CONNECTION

A voter marks his ballot at the Herndon Fortnightly Library, an early voting site for the special election in Virginia's 11th Congressional District, Saturday, Sept. 6, 2025, in Herndon, Va.

Congressional District comprises much of Fairfax County and all of Fairfax City. The Virginia Public Access Project (VPAP) reported the partisan lean of the district's voters

in the November 2024 U.S. Representative elections as 66.7 percent Democratic and

Be Creative Creating Affordable Housing

Chairman McKay outlines 7 ways to push for more housing.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

At its regular meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 9, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors grappled with some of the county's most pressing issues. The supervisors emphasized a new housing initiative, police accreditation, and community health, including vaccinations, while also recognizing citizen action and other matters.

"Housing Initiatives to Increase Production and Sustain Our Economic Advantage," presented by Chairman Jeff McKay (D), featured a robust, seven-point request concerning affordable housing. McKay emphasized the urgency, stressing that every county agency has a role to play in solving the affordable housing challenge.

"This is meant to be all hands on deck," McKay said, calling for a countywide collaborative effort. McKay made clear that affordable housing is a shared priority and requires coordinated action from the entire



PHOTOS COURTESY OF FAIRFAX COUNTY
Chairman Jeff McKay emphasizes the urgency of a new housing initiative at the recent meeting.

county government, not solely the Department of Housing or the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority.

McKay emphasized the need for creative solutions by encouraging staff and departments to use flexibility and creativity in addressing affordable housing. "This is our board signaling to the county executive to be creative, to our departments that are working on this, to be creative and help us meet this moment so that we continue, continue to make progress."

The strategies McKay proposed for review aim to increase affordable housing produc-



Supervisor Rodney Lusk says that nationwide, "The share of homeowners among Americans older than 55 years grew from 44.3 percent in 2008 to 54 percent in 2023."

tion through development incentives, expedited processing, and public-private partnerships, with the goal of adding 10,000 affordable units by 2034.

McKay outlined seven key actions.

"I have a number of initiatives that I am proposing for review as follows, which I expect will be helpful for both affordable housing for low- and moderate-income families as well as for the production of the full spectrum of housing generally," McKay said. "I recognize that this is a robust request with a number of components, but we know that addressing the problem in a multi-faceted,

coordinated and timely manner is required."

- ❖ **Development Incentives and Process:** McKay suggested making it easier and faster to build affordable housing by offering new incentives and speeding up approval processes.

- ❖ **Assisting more individuals in purchasing their first homes,** including the exploration of small, affordable home villages.

- ❖ **Faith Community Properties:** He recommended working with faith-based groups to add affordable housing to their properties.

- ❖ **Public-Private Partnerships and Capacity:** More support and simpler rules for public-private partnerships to build affordable housing.

- ❖ **Affordable Housing Finance:** McKay proposed finding new ways to finance these projects.

- ❖ **Sixth, The Role of the Private Sector.** McKay encouraged private businesses to get involved in creating more affordable and market-rate homes.

- ❖ **Finally, Legislative Priorities:** McKay requested changes to state and federal policies to better support the county's affordable housing goals.

The board matter directed "the county executive to provide a roadmap to address the requested information holistically no later than next spring at a land-use policy

SEE BE CREATIVE, PAGE 13

OWNING A HOME MAY NOT BE JUST A DREAM

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ANY WAY YOU BANK

Avoiding Scams and Fraud, Focus of Talk

Attention seniors, how to steer clear of scammers.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

Fraud is rampant. It's part of life," AARP volunteer Pam Chisholm told a Hollin Hall Senior Center audience on Sept. 5 in a talk titled "Fraud Basics," based on her experience as a Washington, D. C., police detective and an employee of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Scammers and fraudsters especially prey on seniors, she said, who may be gullible because of cognitive impairment, lack of computer literacy and naiveté. "They think you are old and stupid," she stressed.

"We have a dark web," she cautioned. What is that? Science News Today explains: "The Dark Web refers to a specific section of the internet that exists on an encrypted



AARP volunteer Pam Chisholm offered tips on avoiding fraud in a talk at the Hollin Hall Senior Center.

network, intentionally hidden and accessible only through specialized software."

From phishing to identify theft to romance scams, she described examples of fraudulent activity and offered advice.

Telephone Calls

Phony organizations like "Benevolent Friends of the Police" solicit donations over the phone and "they keep harassing," she said.

Many fraudsters call seeking money, making claims like "Your grandson is in trouble. We have him in custody."

People's names, addresses, telephone numbers, age, income range and home ownership are easy to find on the Internet, she said, and that information is sold to scammers. She advised people not to identify themselves if unknown callers ask, "Is this Jane?" Chisholm often responds, "Who are you looking for?"

Some scammers call from a computer which makes it impossible to call back and verify their authenticity. And if you call back the number that pops up on your caller id, you often find it is not a working number.

Her advice: "Just hang up. If you don't recognize the number, don't answer. If you answer, call back to verify the person or organization. Don't disclose your income, social security number or employment status.

"The less you tell them the better off you are," she advised.

Check Washing

Some thieves rob postal employees and steal mailbox keys

and checks from mailboxes. Then they use chemicals to change the payee's name and dollar amounts on the checks and fraudulently deposit them. These schemes peak around the first or 15th of the month when people typically pay their bills.

Chisolm's recommendations: Use a red pen or gel pens because it is harder to change the ink, avoid using checks or set up online bill paying.

The U.S. Postal Service says that postal inspectors recover over \$1 billion in counterfeit checks and money orders every year.

Home Repairs

Senior homeowners may be especially vulnerable to home repair and tree work hucksters. Chisolm cited a man hired to replace windows who convinced the owner to go to the bank with him and withdraw money. He never completed the job and ultimately duped 15 victims in Washington, D.C.

Gift Cards

Some scammers will call or email requesting a gift card. They may say they are "from the govern-

ment" or that you've won a prize.

Some take cards off stores' shelves, use a device to activate them and put them back on the shelf.

Chisolm recommends never to send a gift card to a stranger or suspicious caller, and if you buy a gift card, buy it near the cashier, not off a shelf, and make sure the packaging is not torn.

Credit Cards

Using someone else's card or card information to make an unauthorized purchase or withdrawal is fraudulent, she explained. The fraudster may steal the card or card information online or with a skimming device.

Immediately call your credit card company if you see a questionable charge; notify the company of travel plans; and get a card with a low limit, for example, \$100.00, she suggested.

Shopping Online

Computers and the internet offer ripe opportunities for cybercriminals, like fake companies and advertisers. Unsuspecting customers SEE ATTENTION SENIOR, PAGE 8

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Promise and Oath: 9/11 to Patriot Day 2025

Commitment to ‘never forget’ and a legacy to serve with courage and strength spans generations of first responders.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

A new generation of first responders, many not yet born on 9/11, is learning to live the promise of “never forget.” Upholding their oath of service, they and others are carrying on a mission to serve just as firefighters and paramedics did that day.

The Fairfax County community paused Thursday, Patriot Day, at ceremonies across the county to reflect on the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The events, attended by elected officials, members of the county’s fire and rescue and police departments, U.S. veterans, residents and others, highlighted the theme of remembering and honoring those who died.

Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Chief John Butler spoke during the department’s annual 9/11 ceremony, a tribute to fallen first responders and victims. Held Thursday at Fire Station 25 in Reston, Va., the event was streamed live to all stations across the county.

The departments recognized the 343 firefighters, 60 law enforcement officers and emergency medical services personnel who died on 9/11, along with the 246 passengers, 184 victims at the Pentagon and 2,136 victims at the World Trade Center.

The Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Academy draped a large U.S. flag over its rescue building for the ceremony.

Deputy Chief Brian Edmonston said the attacks’ legacy is a call to action. “It is more than a remembrance,” he said. “It’s a call to live

our values, courage, strength and service every time we put on the uniform.”

At the annual 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony in Great Falls, the keynote speaker was retired Air Force Lt. Gen. Marc H. Sasseville. In 2001, Sasseville was a lieutenant colonel with the D.C. Air National Guard and was one of four pilots given a mission to find and destroy United Airlines Flight 93.

Sasseville and pilot Heather R. Penney, then a first lieutenant, embarked on what could be a suicide mission. They would launch their F-16s without missiles, prepared to ram their jets into the aircraft to bring it down. Sasseville would hit the cockpit, and Penney would ram the tail to unbalance the plane, causing it to tip and crash.

The pilots never completed their mission. Before taking off, they learned that United Airlines Flight 93 crashed in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, after passengers and crew on board stormed the cockpit to fight the hijackers. Having learned of the other 9/11 attacks, the passengers acted to prevent the plane from reaching its likely target in Washington, D.C.

The ceremony, held at the Great Falls Freedom Memorial, honored the six Great Falls residents who died when Flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon, along with all others who lost their lives in the attacks. The Great Falls community paid tribute to retired Marine 1st Lt. Richard P. Gabriel, Ann C. Judge, Barbara K. Olson, Lisa J. Raines, Diane M. Simmons and George W. Simmons.

SEE PROMISE AND OATH, PAGE 7



Members of the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue color guard enter Fire Station 25 in Reston, Va., on Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025. (From video)



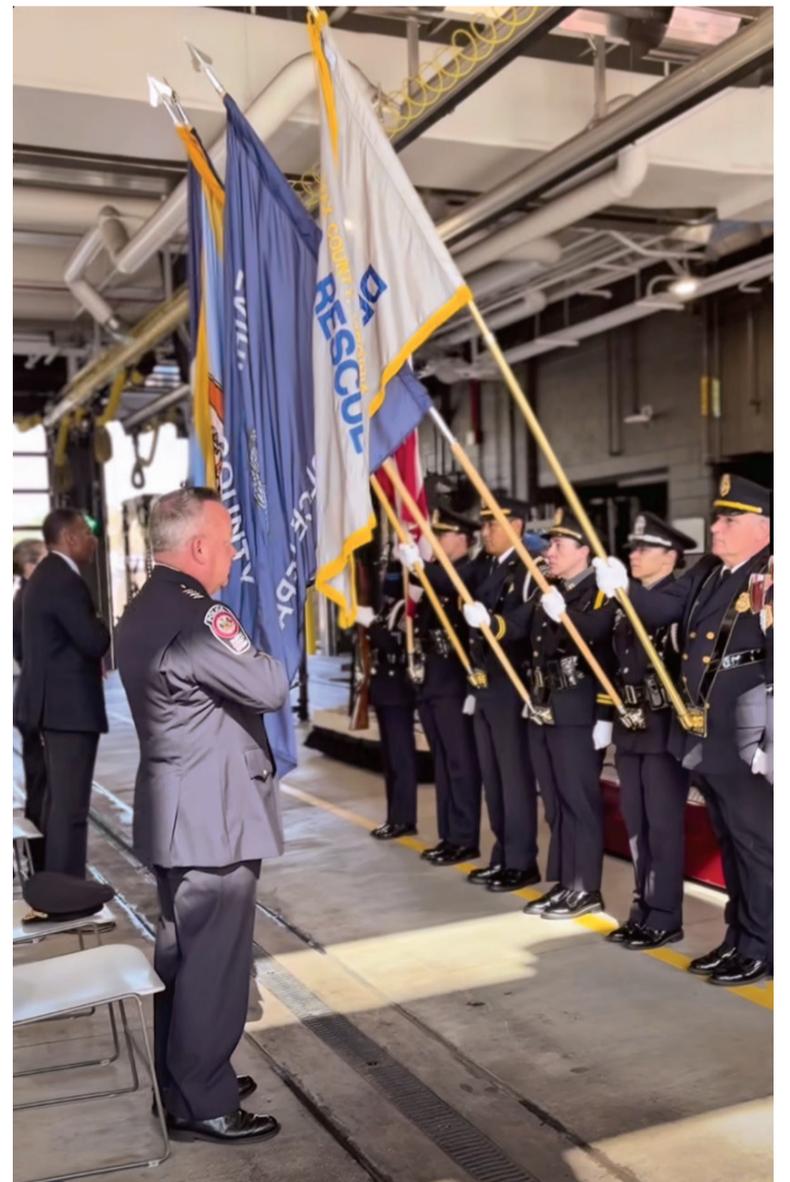
Fairfax County Fire and Rescue personnel and others bow their heads in observance of Patriot Day outside the Public Safety Headquarters in Fairfax, Va., on Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025. (From video)



Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Deputy Chief Brian Edmonston speaks during a 9/11 ceremony at the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Academy in Fairfax, Va., on Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025. (From video)



Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Chief John Butler speaks during a 9/11 ceremony at Fire Station 25 in Reston, Va., on Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025. (From video)



PHOTOS BY COURTESY OF FAIRFAX COUNTY FIRE/RESCUE
During the presentation of colors at Fire Station 25 in Reston for 9/11, Fairfax County Police Chief Kevin Davis (front) and Supervisor Rodney Lusk (D) place their hands over their hearts

Continuing Timeline of Tragedy

On Sept. 11, 2001, two planes struck the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. A third plane hit the Pentagon in Arlington, Va., and a fourth plane, taken over by hijackers, crashed in a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

The 9/11 attacks led to the U.S. launching military operations in Afghanistan. The last U.S. troops departed on Aug. 30, 2021, just before midnight.

The exact number of first responders who have died from related health issues after 9/11 is a complex and ongoing process. The World Trade Center Health Program, a federally funded program that provides medical monitoring and treatment for 9/11-related conditions, had over 6,300 deceased enrollees as of June 2023. The number is constantly increasing as more individuals are diagnosed with illnesses linked to exposure to the toxic dust and debris at the crash sites. A significant portion of these deaths is attributed to cancers, respiratory diseases and digestive disorders

Promise and Oath: 9/11 to Patriot Day 2025

FROM PAGE 6

In a solemn 9/11 ceremony on the Town of Vienna's Freeman Store lawn, U.S. veterans from American Legion Post 180 and others paused Thursday to remember the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. They honored first responders and those who died in the wars that followed. The community event featured remarks from former fire chief Jim Morris, Vienna Mayor Linda Colbert and Post 180 Commander Dave Wallace. The ceremony included live music and the ringing of Vienna Presbyterian Church bells at the exact times of each plane's impact, a reminder to "Never Forget."

U.S. Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., said in a statement, "I'm praying for the loved ones of the victims of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in Virginia, New York and Pennsylvania, and all those who lost their lives in the wars in Afghanistan that followed. Now and always, our veterans and thousands of first responders, service members and others who bravely risked their lives to save fellow Americans and complete dangerous remediation work after



COURTESY OF TOWN OF VIENNA

U.S. veterans from American Legion Post 180 and others attend the 9/11 remembrance ceremony held on the Freeman Store lawn in Vienna, Va., on Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025.

the attack deserve our support."

U.S. Sen. Mark R. Warner, D-Va., also released a statement, saying, "Today we pause in remembrance of the thousands of lives lost on

Sept. 11, 2001. To the families and communities still grieving their loved ones, no matter how many years pass, we will never forget your loss."



COURTESY OF UNITED STATES AIR FORCE VIA FACEBOOK

The Pentagon Memorial in Arlington, Va., is illuminated in remembrance of the victims of the 2001 terrorist attacks. (From video)



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Attention Seniors, How to Steer Clear of Scammers

FROM PAGE 6

ers may make a purchase, get charged and never receive the item.

When visiting a website, beware of spelling errors and make sure you know who you are dealing with. Chisholm counseled, "Be careful what you click on." If you doubt a website, check the link by hovering over it to see the full website address (URL). Research companies before doing business with them.

Use two-factor authentication.

If you fall victim, call your bank immediately. You may have to cancel your card.

Love Scams

Some scammers prey on people who use online dating apps or social networking sites to meet someone. Romance scammers usually seek money, after professing their love and trying to gain your trust. If someone

wants money, stop communicating with them, Chisholm says.

"Everybody can be a victim, even younger people," cautioned Chisholm. "Be smart and stay on top of things."

More Resources

Several websites offer tips on reporting and avoiding scams:

Fairfax County Police, non-emergency

line at 703-691-2131; Financial Crimes Online Reporting (FiCOR) <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police/HowDoI/FinancialCrimes>

Federal Trade Commission (FTC), www.ReportFraud.ftc.gov

AARP Fraud Network, <https://www.aarp.org/money/scams-fraud/helpline/>, 877-908-3360

U.S. Postal Service Inspection Service, www.uspis.gov

LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC OF AN APPLICATION BY COLUMBIA GAS OF VIRGINIA, INC. FOR APPROVAL TO AMEND AND EXTEND ITS SAVE PLAN PURSUANT TO VIRGINIA CODE § 56-604 AND TO IMPLEMENT A 2026 SAVE RIDER IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 20 OF ITS GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS CASE NO. PUR-2025-00099

On August 12, 2025, Columbia Gas of Virginia, Inc. ("CVA" or the "Company") filed an application ("Application") with the State Corporation Commission ("Commission"), pursuant to Chapter 26 of Title 56 of the Code of Virginia ("Code"), known as the Steps to Advance Virginia's Energy Plan (SAVE) Act, for: (i) authorization to increase its currently authorized 2026 SAVE spend cap; (ii) approval to amend and extend its SAVE Plan for two calendar years, calendar years 2027 and 2028 (Phase 6 SAVE Plan); and (iii) approval to implement a SAVE Rider for calendar year 2026, inclusive of costs associated with the Company's Advanced Leak Detection and Repair Program ("Advanced LDAR Program"). Pursuant to Code § 56-604 B, the Commission must issue an order approving or denying the proposed 2026 SAVE Rider adjustment within 120 days of the filing of a complete application.

CVA represents that its SAVE Plan is a program designed to accelerate the replacement of certain components of its gas distribution system infrastructure to enhance system safety and reliability. The Company states that in Case No. PUR-2023-00119, the Commission approved the amendment and extension of the Company's Phase 5 SAVE Plan for three additional years. CVA represents that its SAVE Rider is billed as a fixed charge each month and is designed to recover "eligible infrastructure replacement costs" as defined in Code § 56-603.

In this proceeding, CVA requests authorization to increase the currently authorized 2026 SAVE spend cap from \$73 million to \$87.1 million. CVA states that the Company is projecting to spend \$87.1 million on SAVE-eligible projects during calendar year 2026, which exceeds the currently authorized \$73.0 million plus 10% cost cap. Additionally, CVA is requesting authority to exceed this investment amount by 10% for a maximum 2026 SAVE spend of \$95.8 million.

The Company also proposes to amend and extend its SAVE Plan for an additional two years through 2028. CVA states that the Company's projected spend includes \$187.1 million in 2027 and \$127.7 million in 2028, for a total authorization of \$314.8 million for Phase 6 SAVE-eligible projects, with the ability to exceed the investment by 10% on an annual basis and 10% on a cumulative basis. CVA represents that if approved, the total Phase 6 maximum spend would be \$346.3 million. Additionally, the Company requests authorization to spend up to \$2.0 million in 2027 and \$0.6 million in 2028 associated with CVA's Advanced LDAR Program, with authorization to exceed this investment by 10% on an annual basis and 10% on a cumulative basis, for a Phase 6 maximum spend of \$2.9 million.

The Company states that the proposed 2026 SAVE Rider comprises two components, a Projected Factor and a True Up Factor. CVA states that it is requesting a True Up Factor revenue requirement of (\$9,177) and a Projected Factor revenue requirement of \$15,382,334, for a total 2026 SAVE Rider revenue requirement of \$15,373,156. According to the Company, the 2026 SAVE Rider rate calculations are based on an \$87.1 million projected SAVE-eligible capital program for 2026 and \$1.9 million in projected 2026 costs associated with the Company's Advanced LDAR Program. The Company proposes to use the same methodology to allocate the SAVE Plan cost of service as was approved in Case No. PUR-2024-00103. The Company states that the proposed 2026 SAVE Rider will increase the annual bill for an average residential customer using 61.2 dekatherms per year by \$19.56, a 1.5% increase when compared to the rates in effect on June 30, 2025.

Additional details are set forth in the Company's Application. Interested persons are encouraged to review the Company's Application and supporting exhibits.

TAKE NOTICE that the Commission may adopt rates that differ from those appearing in the Company's Application and supporting documents and may apportion revenues among customer classes and/or design rates in a manner differing from that shown in the Application and supporting documents.

The Commission entered an Order for Notice and Comment that, among other things, directed the Company to provide notice to the public and provided interested persons an opportunity to comment on the Company's Application.

Pursuant to 5 VAC 5-20-140, *Filing and service*, of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure, 5 VAC 5-20-10 *et seq.* ("Rules of Practice"), the Commission has directed that service on parties and Commission Staff ("Staff") in this matter shall be accomplished by electronic means. Please refer to the Commission's Order for Notice and Comment for further instructions concerning Confidential or Extraordinarily Sensitive Information.

An electronic copy of the Application may be viewed on the Commission's website or obtained, at no charge, by submitting a written request to counsel for the Company: Victoria L. Howell, Esquire, Columbia Gas of Virginia, Inc., 1809 Coyote Drive, Chester, Virginia 23836, or victoriahowell@nisource.com.

On or before October 15, 2025, any interested person may file comments on the Application by following the instructions on the Commission's website: scc.virginia.gov/case-information/submit-public-comments. Those unable, as a practical matter, to submit comments electronically may file such comments by U.S. mail to the Clerk of the State Corporation Commission, c/o Document Control Center, P.O. Box 2118, Richmond, Virginia 23218-2118. All such comments shall refer to Case No. PUR-2025-00099.

On or before October 15, 2025, any person or entity wishing to participate as a respondent in this proceeding may do so by filing a notice of participation with the Clerk of the Commission at: scc.virginia.gov/clk/efiling. Those unable, as a practical matter, to file a notice of participation electronically may file such notice by U.S. mail to the Clerk of the Commission at the address listed above. Such notice of participation shall include the email addresses of such parties or their counsel, if available. Pursuant to 5 VAC 5-20-80 B, *Participation as a respondent*, of the Rules of Practice, any notice of participation shall set forth: (i) a precise statement of the interest of the respondent; (ii) a statement of the specific action sought to the extent then known; and (iii) the factual and legal basis for the action. Any organization, corporation, or government body participating as a respondent must be represented by counsel as required by 5 VAC 5-20-30, *Counsel*, of the Rules of Practice. All filings shall refer to Case No. PUR-2025-00099. For additional information about participation as a respondent, any person or entity should obtain a copy of the Commission's Order for Notice and Comment.

On or before October 15, 2025, any interested person may request that the Commission convene a hearing in this matter by filing a request for hearing electronically via scc.virginia.gov/clk/efiling. Those unable, as a practical matter, to file electronically may file a request for hearing by U.S. mail to the Clerk of the Commission at the address listed above. Requests for a hearing shall include: (i) a precise statement of the filing party's interest in the proceeding; (ii) a statement of the specific action sought to the extent then known; (iii) a statement of the legal basis for such action; and (iv) a precise statement why a hearing should be conducted in this matter. All filings shall refer to Case No. PUR 2025-00099.

A copy of any notices of participation and requests for hearing shall be sent electronically to counsel for the Company, Staff, and any other respondents.

The Company's Application, the Commission's Rules of Practice and the Commission's Order for Notice and Comment may be viewed at: scc.virginia.gov/case-information.

NEWS

PFC Henry Viar Is Sully's Officer of the Quarter

Honored for his professionalism, performance and positivity.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

PFC Henry Viar is the Sully District Police Station's Officer of the Quarter for the second quarter of 2025. He was honored at the Sept. 10 meeting of the station's Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). Viar is a nine-year veteran of the Fairfax County Police Department.

James Glassman, a 2nd lieutenant and supervisor of the station's Days A Squad, wrote the letter nominating Viar for this award.

"During that time, he's continued to have an impact on daily squad functions and the departmental mission," wrote Glassman. "Viar is a consistently positive, motivating member of the squad. His proactive attitude and commitment to service are an asset to everyone who works with him, and his performance this quarter has been exemplary."

Glassman wrote that Viar constantly demonstrates a strong work ethic and an unwavering focus on completing every task. He never shies away from a call for service and can always be relied upon to support his fellow officers in navigating their investigations.

"Notably, during the recent Road Shark campaign, Viar's determined efforts motivated his squad members to achieve significant results, amassing a total of 451 documented violations," wrote Glassman. "His own sharp focus led to the apprehension of a speeder traveling at 111 mph – a clear demonstration of his diligence and commitment to traffic safety and education."

"As an experienced officer, Viar continuously invests his time and expertise into training new recruits. This past quarter, he served as a field training instructor for another officer, providing invaluable mentorship that extends far beyond standard



PHOTO COURTESY OF MPO
SCOTT RICHARDS, FCPD

PFC Henry Viar

procedure. Viar effectively communicated department policies, demonstrated proper tactics and acted as a positive role model, all of which are crucial for shaping competent and professional new officers."

In addition, Glassman noted that Viar recently handled a highly sensitive call which required both tact and resolve. "Despite the high-profile nature of the individual and the situation, he handled the call with poise, respect and professionalism, resulting in a lawful arrest," wrote Glassman. "His ability to remain focused and unbiased is a testament to his character and integrity."

Glassman said one of Viar's most noteworthy traits is his unwavering positivity and resilience. "Viar does not complain, accepting any assignment given to him without hesitation," wrote Glassman. "This attitude inspires his teammates and reinforces a strong, mission-oriented culture within the squad. Viar is always willing to help others on calls, demonstrating a collaborative spirit that elevates the performance of the entire team."

For all these reasons – including his positive influence on his fellow officers – Viar is "an invaluable member of the department," wrote Glassman. "His actions this quarter exemplify his commitment to upholding the highest traditions of law enforcement and are a credit to the entire agency."



From left, Maj. Jane Russell, station commander; CAC Chair Karen Bilak; PFC Henry Viar; and Capt. Aaron Spooner, assistant station commander.

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NEWS BRIEFS

Reston Multicultural Festival 24th Year

Saturday, Sept. 20,

The Reston Multicultural Festival celebrates its 24th year on Saturday, Sept. 20, 2025, at Reston Town Center. From 11 a.m. to

6 p.m., the festival offers live music, dance, artisan crafts and family-friendly activities highlighting the region's rich cultural diversity. Presented by Reston Community Center in partnership with Reston Town Center Association (RTCA) and co-hosted by BXP, the festival brings the community together through performances, art and dialogue. Volunteer coordination is provided by Reston Association with green rooms supplied by the Avant.

"For nearly 25 years, the Reston Multicultural Festival has been a vibrant celebration of the arts and the values that make Reston extraordinary – creativity, inclusion and connection," said Beverly Cosham, RCC Board of Governors Chair.

Robert Goudie, Executive Director of RTCA, added, "It is a highlight of our community calendar, drawing over 10,000 people last year."

The festival features three stages

– Pavilion Stage, Park Stage at Reston Town Square Park and Cultural Conversations Stage on Library Street – offering performances that inspire dialogue and engagement with artists. Market Street will host over 40 artisan vendors alongside community organizations with family-friendly activities. Pop-up performances will also take place throughout the day.

Opening the festival is the Howard Gospel Choir of Howard University, the world's first collegiate

gospel choir. The choir, composed of students, alumni and community members, shares messages of peace, restoration and inspiration. NEA Heritage Fellows featured this year include Shaka Zulu, a master of New Orleans Black Masking traditions, and Peniel Guerrier, a master dancer and drummer preserving Haiti's cultural heritage.

Other highlights include Min-nush (Sephardic music), Afro Asia (Thai tunes with funk, jazz and blues), Foley Academy of Irish Dance, the DMV Turkish Music Ensemble, Changing Phases Band (Go-go) and Sumona Apsara Parii (Bollywood-style dance).

For a full schedule, vendor list and community activities, visit www.restoncommunitycenter.com/mcf.

Man in Custody After Fatal Shooting near Dranesville

Detectives from FCPD Major Crimes Bureau arrested a man following a fatal shooting near Dranesville.

On Monday, Sept. 15, at 5:03 a.m., officers responded to a shooting in the 12700 block of Fantasia Drive.

Officers located the victim, Irfan Syed, 45, of Herndon, suffering from gunshot wounds to the upper body. Syed was transported to a local hospital where he was pronounced deceased.

Shortly after, Muhammad Muzammil, 25, of no fixed address, made contact with a community member. That individual called the non-emergency number on his behalf and reported that Muzammil had shot someone. Herndon Police responded and took Muzammil into custody.

Through their investigation, detectives reported that Muzammil rammed Syed's vehicle and then shot him multiple times. Muzammil attempted to flee the area, but his vehicle became disabled. An FCPD K-9 Unit responded to the scene and located the firearm believed to be used in the homicide.

Muzammil was transported to the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center where he was charged with Second-Degree Murder and Use of Firearm in Commission of Felony. He was held on no bond.

Detectives continue to conduct interviews and process evidence recovered from the scene to determine the circumstances that led up to the fatal shooting.

We are asking anyone with information regarding this incident

SEE NEWS BRIEFS, PAGE 11

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NEWS BRIEFS

FROM PAGE 10

to call the Major Crimes Bureau at 703-246-7800, option 2.

VDOT, Transurban Work to Open 495 Express Lanes by Year-End

Drivers asked to slow down, eliminate distractions through the 495 NEXT project work zone in Tysons-McLean area.

Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and its 495 Express Lanes Northern Extension (495 NEXT) project partner, Transurban, have launched a driver safety campaign.

The awareness campaign emphasizes to drivers that active roadway construction and hundreds of workers are directly adjacent to Beltway traffic. The “Closer Than You Think” campaign will leverage ads that will run on radio, as well as various social media platforms, throughout September and into October as “back to work and school” traffic resumes and drivers adjust to post-summer travel patterns.

Crews are actively building four new express lanes (two lanes in each direction) in the center portion of the Beltway. Remaining alert when driving through the 495 NEXT work zone remains critical to ensure the safety of travelers and workers alike.

“VDOT, along with our project

partner and contractor partners, is laser-focused on finishing the 495 Express Lanes northern extension – and doing so safely,” said VDOT Megaprojects Director Michelle Shropshire. Drivers are asked to slow down and eliminate distractions when traveling through the 495 NEXT project area.

Work on the new express lanes will be ongoing through fall during daytime and nighttime hours, as well as over some weekends. Construction activities include:

- ❖ Demolishing retired pavement, jersey barriers and old piers in the highway median for the replaced bridges at Live Oak Drive, Georgetown Pike and Old Dominion Drive
- ❖ Building new drainage infrastructure
- ❖ Paving new express lanes and installing lane markings
- ❖ Finishing construction of new express lanes ramps
- ❖ Installing roadside and overhead signs and new tolling and traffic management systems infrastructure and equipment

In addition to building the express lanes, crews are working to complete the three Beltway bridges that were rebuilt, as well as any finishing work that remains on the four Beltway bridges that were rehabilitated. Work is also underway to finish the installation of new, upgraded noise walls along the corridor.

Bold Bulldozer Theft in McLean Results in Arrest in Kentucky

On Aug. 11, at 10 a.m., officers

responded to Chain Bridge Road and Dulles Toll Road in McLean for a larceny of a bulldozer. The complainant reported that someone stole a bulldozer from a construction site under the guise that it needed maintenance. The bulldozer was towed away from the site only to be tracked by detectives to Laurel County, Kentucky, via GPS tracking two days later.

Detectives coordinated with Laurel County Sheriff’s Office to locate and recover the bulldozer.

The bulldozer was in possession of a victim who purchased it from Facebook Marketplace under false pretense from the suspect.

After further investigation, detectives learned a 34-year-old man from Michigan stole the bulldozer and sold it to the victim. Detectives obtained a warrant for Larceny by False Pretense.

The suspect was arrested by Laurel County Sheriff’s Office and is awaiting extradition to Fairfax County.

CALENDAR

				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Let us know about an upcoming event

connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar

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Mark Your Calendar

Early voting starts Friday for General Election 2025

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

On Nov. 4, Virginia will hold an election for governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, all 100 seats in the House of Delegates and multiple local offices and referenda. The state Senate will not be on the ballot until 2027.

Key dates for the Virginia General Election 2025

www.connectionnewspapers.com

- ❖ Sept. 19: Early voting begins.
 - ❖ Oct. 24: Deadline to register to vote and update registration; deadline to apply for a mail-in ballot.
 - ❖ After Oct. 24: Voters may register and vote using a provisional ballot in person through Election Day.
 - ❖ Oct. 25: Voter registration offices open for early voting.
 - ❖ Nov. 1: Early in-person voting ends at 5 p.m.
 - ❖ Nov. 4: General Election Day
- Apply for a ballot to be mailed to you through 5 p.m., Oct. 24: Your request must be received by your local registrar’s office. Apply for an absentee ballot online using the Citizen Portal. See who is on your ballot by viewing the candidate lists.

Dr. Sarah Cassou D.C.

50 S Pickett St #114, Alexandria, VA 22304

888-483-9084

Walkinshaw Sworn into U.S. House of Representatives

FROM PAGE 3

32.9 percent Republican, with Walkinshaw outperforming those numbers. Voters in Virginia do not register by party, a characteristic of states with open primaries. The district has a total of 555,169 registered voters.

According to VPAP, as of Aug. 20, 2025, Walkinshaw significantly outpaced Whitson in fundraising, raising \$1,061,597 compared to Whitson's \$224,469. Walkinshaw's campaign messages encouraged voting as a way to "take the fight to the president," referenced his goal "to stop the current administration's dangerous agenda and

deliver for Fairfax," and highlighted his close relationship with the Connolly family to honor the late congressman's legacy.

"I voted for James Walkinshaw because he was endorsed by Gerry Connolly. I had great respect for Congressman Connolly," said Andrea Tassan of Herndon.

"I wanted to have someone who would stand up to the Republican Party," said Justin Britt of the Town of Herndon, who voted for Walkinshaw.

Arjun of McLean, a teen volunteer at the polls, also expressed support for this sentiment, stating, "I would vote for James Walkin-

shaw if I were old enough because I believe that he can stand up to Trump and protect Virginia from the excesses of the Republican presidency and legislature."

Whitson aligned himself with the "America First" agenda, outlining a platform with three main pillars: "Fix the Economy," "Protect Our Families," and "Eliminate Waste, Fraud & Abuse." Katie Goraka, the chair of the Fairfax GOP, stated that the party would unite behind Whitson after he won the nomination in a seven-way contest. A fellow Republican candidate in the primary, Mike Van Meter, publicly expressed his support

for Whitson after the nomination, stating on social media that it was "time to give [Whitson] our total support."

What Comes Next

Walkinshaw submitted his resignation to the Fairfax Board of Supervisors, effective at 9 a.m. Wednesday, Sept. 10.

In a social media post earlier that morning, he noted his resignation creates a "temporary vacancy" but that the district "will continue to be ably represented by Chairman McKay." The Braddock District office and staff will remain in place and can be reached

at braddock@fairfaxcounty.gov or 703-425-9300.

A special election will likely take place in December to fill the Braddock District vacancy. Right now, it appears three Democrats, school board members Ilryong Moon (at large) and Rachna Sizemore Heizer (Braddock), and Sabrina Martin, will seek the Democratic nomination.

Republican Ken Balbuena appears to be the only Republican to throw a hat in the ring so far.

If either Moon or Sizemore Heizer were to be elected, it would kick off yet another special election to fill the seat on the school board.

BULLETIN BOARD

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

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. Visit the website at <https://scmafc.org/volunteer>, or email contact@scmafc.org.

VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

Would you like to help a neighbor feel less lonely? Will you help someone get much-needed groceries? Form new connections and make a meaningful difference. Older adults in the Annandale, Falls Church, and Alexandria re-

gions are waiting for volunteer social visitors and grocery shoppers. If you can give the gift of your time, consider providing invaluable support to someone in your community. Learn more about Volunteer Solutions at bit.ly/FXVSVOL or email VolunteerSolutions@FairfaxCounty.gov or call 703-324-5406.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Parent Support Partners, a service of the Healthy Minds Fairfax initiative, are all parents who have received training and are qualified to

offer education, support and assistance at no cost to families or caregivers. They provide reliable information that families can use in decision-making and are familiar with services and resources that can help families in distress. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/healthymindsfairfax or www.nami-northernvirginia.org/parent-peer-support.html.

Haven of Northern Virginia Support Group. 703-941-7000, www.havenofnova.org or havenofnova@verizon.net.

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Creating Affordable Housing

FROM PAGE 4

committee meeting, since many of these items are land-use related, including how they might fit into the update of the housing element of the comprehensive policy plan expected in 2026. Other topics may need to come back to the housing committee or other board committees as determined by staff, my office, and specific committee chairs," McKay said.

Supervisor Pat Herry (R) said, "Clearly affordability in housing is one of the top issues in Fairfax County."

Herry praised the focus on home ownership and its benefits, such as building generational wealth and providing certainty for residents. Herry expressed skepticism about the effectiveness of currently giving away county land and subsidies to build 10,000 units of housing. He highlighted the need for streamlined permitting and zoning processes, saying they are still burdensome and slow, making it difficult for businesses and even for simple improvements. Herry discussed the high regulatory costs, particularly for smaller units, which increase the cost and development time for housing projects. Herry liked the idea of involving industry partners like NVBIA and NAIOP and the in-

clusion of incentives for affordable housing developers.

Supervisor Rodney Lusk (D) shared information on the demographic and generational shift in homeownership, raising a question that remains an open topic for future research and policy consideration for the board.

"It's typical for older Americans to occupy our largest share of home ownership," Lusk said. "The share of homeowners among Americans older than 55 years grew from 44.3 percent in 2008 to 54 percent in 2023. So clearly there is an opportunity here," Lusk said. He asked, "Is there a process or program methodology that we could employ to help maybe some of our younger residents move into their homes?"

The board discussed leveraging AI tools and public-private partnerships to facilitate housing transitions. They emphasized the need for efficient processes to avoid losing talent due to a lack of affordable housing.

Tenant Protections

Beyond the new housing initiative, the board also updated a key county policy to enhance tenant protections, approving revisions to the "Fairfax County Relocation

Guidelines." The revisions provide a framework for negotiation rather than strict requirements, applying to property owners when tenants are temporarily or permanently displaced from affordable housing during redevelopment projects.

Tom Fleetwood, director of the Department of Housing and Community Development, stressed that the new guidelines were developed through a collaborative process involving community stakeholders to address the concerns of affected tenants. "The product before you is the result of a collaborative process where we engaged a number of stakeholders in the community to be able to ensure that we understand their concerns and are addressing the needs of folks who might potentially be affected by redevelopment," Fleetwood said.

Herry raised concerns about the cost implications for developers. "Did we look at what this will cost the developer on a kind of a permit per unit basis to comply with this?" he asked. Herry also suggested that the industry could help estimate those costs. "I just want to clarify that these are recommendations, not requirements, and they wouldn't be a reason for them to be denied or excluded," Herry said.

PUBLIC NOTICE

In-Person Public Hearing on the McLean Community Center's FY2027 Budget (July 1, 2026–June 30, 2027)

**McLean Community Center Governing Board
Wednesday, Sept. 24, 6:30 p.m.**

Small District 1A-Dranesville residents who wish to speak at the Public Hearing are asked to call 703-790-0123, TTY: 711, to be placed on the speakers' list. The draft budget proposal will be available on the center's website and copies can be picked up at the center's reception desk beginning the week of Sept. 14.

Written comments may be delivered to the McLean Community Center (see address below) marked "Attention: Executive Director," or sent by email to feedback@mcleancenter.org. Written comments may continue to be submitted after the Public Hearing through Monday, Oct. 13.



McLean Community Center
1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean VA 22101
703-790-0123, TTY: 711
mcleancenter.org

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Now is the moment we've been waiting for. With new treatments emerging in the fight against Alzheimer's and all other dementia, now is the time for hope. But not the time to stop.

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2025 Walk to End Alzheimer's
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September 27, 2025

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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 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 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.

Behind the Scenes in the Big Blue Tent



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

PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION



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 15
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

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 I4

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. www.connectionnewspapers.com

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 on 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.

ENTERTAINMENT

FILL THE BINS

To help Virginians protect their personal information and support neighbors in need, AARP Virginia hosts Fill the Bins — free paper shred and pantry events in October. Four collection locations — Woodbridge, Lorton, Dulles, and Manassas — make the secure disposal of personal documents available to more people. Examples of documents for shredding might include bank statements, cancelled checks, credit card junk mail and receipts with identifying information. Each vehicle is limited to no more than three bags or boxes of documents; registration for this free event is required.

Fill the Bins event dates, times and locations are as follows:

Saturday, October 4, 2025, between 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. at Parkway Church, 3713 Pennington Lane, Woodbridge

Sunday, October 5, 2025, between 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. at the Lorton Community Action Center, 9520 Richmond Hwy, Lorton

Saturday, October 11, 2025, between 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. at Dulles South Food Pantry, 24757 Arcola Mills Drive, Dulles

Saturday, October 25, 2025, between 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. at Trinity Episcopal Church, 9325 West Street, Manassas

NATURE HIKE WITH A RANGER

Along the George Washington Memorial Parkway. Join a ranger on nature hikes:

Oct. 6 at 9 a.m. at Great Falls Visitor Center Courtyard

Oct. 21 at 9 a.m. at Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve

All hikes will be 1.2 to 2 hours of slow, moderate hiking. Turkey Run hike will have steep stairs both ways. Join NPS Natural Resources Program Manager Brent Steury for a hike. Brent has worked as a scientist in this area for over 20 years.

NOW THRU SEPT. 28

“Layers” Arts Show. At 700-B West Broad Street, Falls Church (Route 7). The artworks of 68 artists will be on display when Falls Church Arts presents its “Layers,” an all-media exhibit, running from August 16 to September 28, 2025. This diverse show will feature the work of emerging and established artists from the Virginia, Washington D.C., and Maryland area, all interpreting the theme of multiple layers in their submissions. Artworks can be viewed online at <https://www.fallschurcharts.org>.

NOW THRU SEPT. 29

Masterpiece Mini Golf. Thursday: 11:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.; Friday & Saturday: 11:00 a.m. – 8:30 p.m.; Sunday: 12:00 – 5:00 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Masterpiece Mini-Golf isn’t just a game—it’s an interactive journey through the world of art like you’ve never seen before! Imagine 18 artist-designed holes bursting with bold colors, iconic imagery, and mind-bending creativity. From Monet’s water lilies to Banksy’s graffiti walls, every twist and turn brings you face-to-face with art history’s greatest paintings—reimagined in wild, surreal, and playable form. It’s part gallery, part game, and 100% fun for all ages. Visit the website: <https://www.workhou->



The Taste of Annandale festival will take place on Saturday, Sept. 20, 2025 in Annandale.

searts.org/masterpiece-mini-golf

WEDNESDAY/SEPT. 17

Journey Within: Self-Discovery Book Club. 6-7:30 p.m. At Reston Library, 11925 Bowman Towne Drive, Reston. A literary discussion that focuses on a character’s personal growth and how it relates to our own. Led by life coach Shabnam Curtis. At September’s meeting they will discuss the novel Olive Kitteridge by Elizabeth Strout. Website: Journey Within: Self-Discovery Book Club - Fairfax Library Calendar - Library Home.

THURSDAY/SEPT. 18

“Every Little Step” Movie. 1 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Follows the plight of real-life dancers as they struggle through auditions for the Broadway revival of “A Chorus Line.” The film also illuminates the history of the show and the creative minds behind the original and revived incarnations. Running time: 1 hour, 33 minutes. Rated PG-13.

THURSDAY/SEPT. 18

JLNV FTGD. 4 to 8 p.m. At Mosaic, 8300 Greensboro RD, L-1, Box 637, McLean. Junior League of Northern Virginia will be celebrating Find the Good Day by spreading kindness across Northern Virginia. Support efforts of Women Helping Women by grabbing a bite at Chipotle, purchasing something at Kendra Scott or attending happy hour at Grand Cata. Your support fuels impactful work all year long. Every dollar given helps us grow our community presence and leadership programs. Visit the website: <https://www.jlnv.org/findthegoodday/>

SEPT. 18 AND 25

Tysons Mixed Market Returns. 4-8 p.m. TCA is excited to present the Tysons Mixed Market at The Boro — a vibrant celebration of local creativity, culture, and community, coming to you every Thursday evening. This curated marketplace will feature a diverse mix of artisans, makers, vintage collectors, food vendors, and small businesses, all coming together to showcase the best of Tysons and beyond. The market will also feature live music and entertainment, and lots of giveaways!

THURSDAY/SEPT. 18

Alloy Project Auction. 6:30-9:30 p.m. at the Signature Grand Room, Reston Town Center. Join in a vibrant evening of contemporary art, an online and live auction, bold flavors from Barcelona Wine Bar, and celebration at The Alloy Project, Tephra ICA’s annual fall benefit and cocktail party. This year’s auction showcases work by the award-winning artists from the 2025 Tephra ICA Arts Festival and beyond and is now open for preview. Online bidding begins Sept. 2 and will culminate at the event on Sept. 18. You can also view the artwork in person starting September 11 at Tephra ICA at Signature.

2025 Artists:

Claire Helen Ashley; Betsy Best; Collette Fortin & Berry Davis; Laura DeNardo; Nicole DePonte; Van Doan; Judith Forst; Danielle Hatch; Hong Hong; Kue King; Sabrina Lee; Lisa Markowitz; Olga Nenazhivina; Jillian Roper; Michael Sorge

SEPT. 18-28

2025 Logan Festival of Solo Performance. At 1st Stage in Tysons

Corner. This innovative festival, acclaimed in The Washington Post with “three plays prove the power of one,” will gather celebrated solo performers from across the country for two weeks of performances, workshops, discussions, and events. The 2025 festival will feature three dynamic productions: SPADURA – Written and performed by Dahéli Hall, an acclaimed comedian, writer, and director residing in Los Angeles, SPADURA unapologetically takes on the baby industrial complex, aging, the physical, emotional, and financial cost of IVF, as well as the unique fertility obstacles faced by Black women in America. SPADURA Dates: Friday, September 19 at 7:30pm; Sunday, September 21 at 5:00pm; Friday, September 26 at 7:30pm; Saturday, September 27 at 7:30pm; Sunday, September 28 at 2:00pm

The Jewish Dog – Filtering the darkest, most dramatic period of modern Jewish history, The Jewish Dog offers a view of the Holocaust through the eyes of a canine unusually fascinated by human affairs. The Jewish Dog Dates: Thursday, September 18 at 7:30pm; Saturday, September 20 at 7:30pm; Sunday, September 21 at 2:00pm; Saturday, September 27 at 5:00pm; Sunday, September 28 at 5:00pm

George – Don’t Do That! Join Catherine Flye as she and her friends celebrate the life of the beloved British comedienne Joyce Grenfell, for an evening of witty songs, amusing sketches, anecdotes and reminiscences of the legendary star. This joyful entertainment provides a glimpse into the lives of a host of funny and endearing characters, in music, song and the spoken word. George – Don’t Do That!

Dates: Saturday, September 20 at 2:00pm; Sunday, September 21 at 7:30pm; Thursday, September 25 at 7:30pm; Saturday, September 27 at 2:00pm; Sunday, September 28 at 7:30pm. General admission tickets are \$20 per show and \$10 per show for Students with valid ID. Individual tickets can be purchased online at www.1ststage.org or by emailing the 1st Stage box office at boxoffice@1ststage.org.

THURSDAY/SEPT. 18

18th Annual Erin Peterson Fund Golf Tournament. At Westfield Golf Club, 13940 Balmoral Greens Ave. in Clifton. Check-in/breakfast is at 7 a.m. To register, go to www.erinpeterpersonfund.org. Annual fundraiser for the nonprofit Erin Peterson Fund (EPF). Just 18 years old, Westfield High grad Erin Peterson was among the 32 victims of the 2007 mass shooting at Virginia Tech. After her death, her parents began EPF in her honor. The fund supports programs for students at Westfield High, Stone Middle School and Centreville Elementary and, to date, has given out 174 scholarships. Email erinpeterpersonfund@yahoo.com.

SATURDAY/SEPT. 20

Bug Fest. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Lake Accotink Park, Springfield. Step into the fascinating world of bugs at Bug Fest — Lake Accotink Park’s annual celebration of all things that crawl, fly and buzz! A day packed with discovery, fun and outdoor adventure. Perfect for families, nature enthusiasts, and curious minds of all ages, Bug Fest invites you to explore the vital role insects play in the environment through hands-on activities, live demonstrations and engaging

ENTERTAINMENT

presentations. Here's what you can experience:

- Insect Safaris** – Embark on a guided trek to find bugs in their natural habitat.
- Live Bug Encounters** – Meet fascinating insects up close.
- Insect Collections & Log Rolling** – Discover hidden critters by turning over logs and inspecting natural habitats.
- Soil Stations & Bug Walks** – Explore how bugs contribute to healthy ecosystems.
- Critter Talks** – Hear from experts who study and care for insects.
- Bug Science & Crafts** – Create your own insect-inspired art and try interactive science activities.

SATURDAY/SEPT. 20

Taste of Annandale. 10:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. At Eileen Garnett Civic Space, 7200 Columbia Pike, Annandale. Here's what's planned so far for the event:

- Food** – Food trucks and other food vendors are offering culinary delights from Thailand, Vietnam, Jamaica, Korea, Latin America, Indonesia, China, and good old American fare like barbecue and funnel cakes.
- 5K** – The Taste of Annandale 5K run will be located entirely at Mason District Park, 6621 Columbia Pike, Annandale, starting at 9:30 a.m.
- Live entertainment** – The performance schedule isn't finalized yet, but the plans call for a lion dance; music and dance groups from Korea, Vietnam, Bolivia, Scotland, and Indonesia; martial arts demonstrations; musical theater; and much more.

SATURDAY/SEPT. 20

2025 South County Marching Band Invitational. 12 p.m. to 7 p.m. At South County High School, Lorton. South County High School Band is hosting a Marching Band Invitational with over 20 marching bands to be participating. General Admission \$10.

SATURDAY/SEPT. 20

Old Firehouse Block Party. 1-4 p.m. At 1440 Chain Bridge Rd, McLean. The Old Firehouse Center is celebrating 35 years of serving the public. OFC was Fairfax County's first fire station. Now it offers a wide variety of programs for youth, including an afterschool program, day camps, local trips and dances. This open house/festival features a variety of free games, crafts, music, food, amusements, giveaways and more! A new mural by artist Jeremy Jarvis, which was commissioned by MCC in recognition of MCC's 50th anniversary, will be dedicated at the start of this event.

SATURDAY/SEPT. 20

Sly the Magician. 6 to 8:30 p.m. At Arts Herndon, 750 Center Street, Herndon. A fundraiser for the Rotary Club of Herndon-Reston. Tickets are \$50 and includes:
- A spread of delicious appetizers
- Wine, beer, lemonade, and tea
- An incredible magic show filled with laughter, mystery, and awe!
Every dollar raised will support local Rotary Club of Herndon-Reston charities and community service projects, making magic happen well beyond the stage.
Reserve your spot today: <https://square.link/u/NoiA5yPy>

SATURDAY/SEPT. 20

MCC 50th Anniversary Mural
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The Old Firehouse Block Party will take place on Saturday, Sept. 20, 2025 in McLean.

Dedication. 1-4 p.m. At The Old Firehouse Block Party, McLean. The rear wall of the Old Firehouse Center takes on new life at the unveiling of the second commissioned 50th anniversary public art project, this community mural created with the input of members of the McLean community.

SEPT. 20 TO NOV. 2

"Evil Dead, The Musical." At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton. The Workhouse Arts Center is raising the curtain on its bold 2025-26 Performing Arts Season this fall with the cult-classic sensation "Evil Dead The Musical," running September 20 – November 2, 2025 at the Workhouse's intimate W-3 Theatre. Perfectly timed for Halloween season and paired with the Workhouse's Haunted Trail, this outrageous rock musical comedy offers a theatrical experience unlike anything else in Northern Virginia—complete with a "Splash Zone" for adventurous theatergoers ready to get (fake!) blood-soaked. Visit www.workhousearts.org.

SUNDAY/SEPT. 21

N-TRAK Model Trains Running. 1-4 p.m. At Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. Join them for the N Gauge (N-TRAK) Model Train Show. Admission: Museum members and children 4 and under, free; ages 5-12, \$3; age 13 and older, \$5, \$6 for special events. Seniors, \$4; Military, active and retired, \$4. <http://www.fairfax-station-railroad-museum.org>, <http://www.facebook.com/FFXSRR>, 703-425-9225.

SUNDAY/SEPT. 21

Mykle Lyons Jazz Festival. 3-8 p.m. At Lake Anne Plaza, 1609 Washington Plaza, Reston. Join in an unforgettable afternoon of music, art, and community at Lake Anne Plaza in Reston. Admission is free, all ages are welcome, and advance premium seating is available online to reserve.

Enjoy performances from some of the area's finest jazz musicians:
3:00pm-3:45pm: SK Jazz
4:00pm-4:45pm: Stickman
5:00pm-5:45pm: Accidental Red
6:00pm-6:45pm: Common Ground
7:00pm-7:45pm: Loudoun Jazz Ensemble
This annual festival celebrates the life and legacy of Mykle Lyons, the beloved jazz bassist and Reston resident who shared his passion for music with the world — from the

Kennedy Center to Montreux — and brought it home to Lake Anne.

SUNDAY/SEPT. 21

Ching-Yi Lin, Piano: "Ravel at 150". 2 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Join internationally acclaimed pianist Ching-Yi Lin in celebrating the 150th birthday of composer Maurice Ravel—most famous for "Boléro," but also a composer of beautiful and fiendishly difficult piano music that requires a balance of technical and artistic challenges. The recital will include works by Bach and Schumann.

SEPT. 24

Senior Movie Day. Reston Association presents Senior Movie Day. Join them on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Coffee, donuts and OJ are provided, and door prizes are distributed prior to the movie. Doors: 9:00 a.m., Movie at 10 a.m. Location: Movie theater at Reston Town Center
Sept. 24: Featuring: The Ballad of Wallis Island

SATURDAY/SEPT. 27

G34.3 Brewing Oktoberfest. 12 to 9 p.m. At G34.3 Brewing Company, 8532 Terminal Road, Suites L,M,N, Lorton. Oktoberfest! Beer, food, live Oompah band & more. They are bringing the Bavarian vibes with: Lenticular Lager 1553 – the fan-favorite Märzen-style beer. Food by The Alpine Chef – bratwursts, pretzels & more! Live Oompah Band – classic tunes, festive dancing, and full stein energy. General Admission is Free – show up and celebrate VIP Ticket: \$44.99 – includes a full Bavarian meal from The Alpine Chef (limited availability)

SATURDAY/SEPT. 27

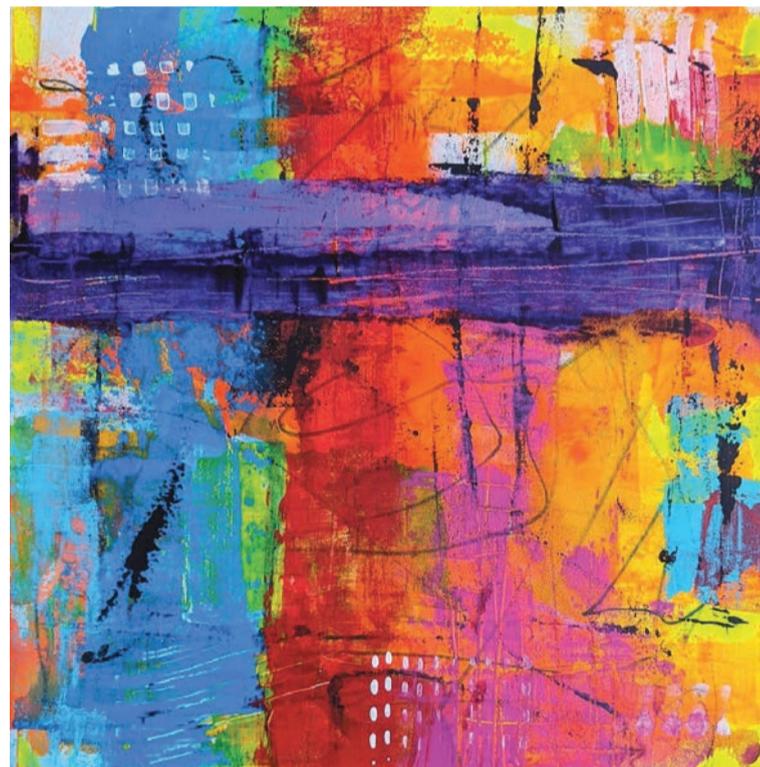
RA's Fall Yard Sale. Location: 12010 Sunrise Valley Drive (Near the Reston Wegmans)

SEPT. 27 TO OCT. 27

Fall Fest. Saturdays and Sundays 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. At Reston Farm Garden Market, 10800 Baron Cameron Ave., Reston. From train rides to moon bounces, it's the perfect mix of adventure and family fun. Children ages 2-12 can enjoy an unforgettable day filled with:
❖ Moon Bounces — jump, bounce, and laugh all afternoon
❖ Petting Zoo — hands-on fun with friendly farm animals
❖ Reston Farm Garden Market Express



The G34.3 Brewing Oktoberfest takes place on Saturday, Sept. 27, 2025 in Lorton.



The "Layers" Arts Show takes place now through Sept. 28 in Falls Church.

Train — a family favorite that kids can't get enough of.

Darren Criss. 8:30 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Tony, Emmy, and Golden Globe Award winner Darren Criss headlines the 20th annual ARTS by George! in a special concert featuring songs from throughout his wildly eclectic career as both songwriter and performer, including those from Fox's hit TV show Glee, StarKid Productions, and the Broadway shows in which he's starred. Visit artsbygeorge.gmu.edu.

SEPT. 27-28

LEGO Model Trains Weekend Show. At Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. Weekend Show of LEGO model trains will be on display and running at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum on Saturday, September 27, 2025, from 12 noon to 4 p.m. and Sunday, September 28 from 1-4 p.m. Admission: Museum members and children 4 and under, free; ages 5-12, \$3; ages 13 and older, \$5; special events, \$6. Military, active and retired, \$4. Seniors, \$4. <http://www.fairfax-station-railroad-museum.org>, <http://www.facebook.com/FFXSRR>, 703-425-9225.

SATURDAY/SEPT. 27

ARTS by George! An Evening with

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 19

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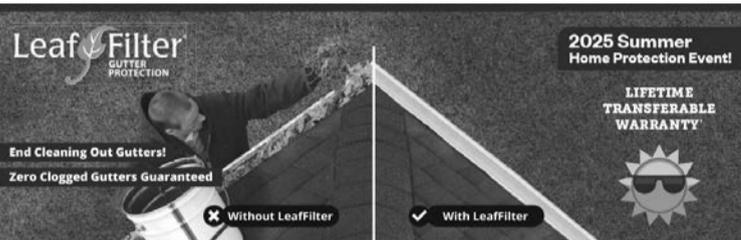
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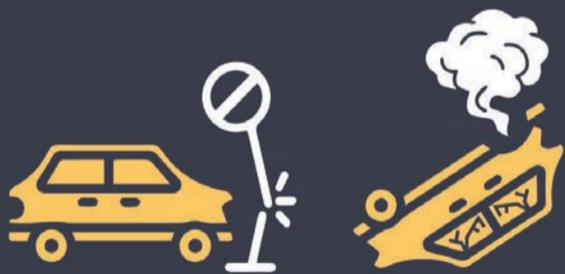


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ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 17

decorate.

SUNDAY/SEPT. 28

Herndon's Runnymede Park NatureFest 2025. 1-5 p.m. At 417 Queens Row Street, Herndon. An annual, family-friendly, hands-on event, spotlighting the plants and animals that live in Runnymede Park in Herndon. Learn about bees and butterflies, see live animals, make a craft, play nature-themed games and more.

MONDAY/SEPT. 29

Rise Above Golf Tournament. 10 a.m.-6 p.m. At Belmont Country Club. The Rise Above Golf Tournament promises a full day of networking, competition, and community building on one of the area's premier golf courses. Participants will enjoy a complete tournament experience proudly sponsored by Tower Club Tysons while supporting life-changing programs for trauma survivors. For tickets, sponsorship opportunities, or details about either event, visit corefoundation.org/rise-above-be-relentless-foundation or contact riseaboveberelentless@corefoundation.org.

FRIDAY/OCT. 3

Academy of St Martin in the Fields Chamber Ensemble. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Join London's Academy of St Martin in the Fields Chamber Ensemble for a riveting program featuring Schubert's Octet in F major, D. 803, considered one of the greatest chamber works of all time; Francaix's witty Octet, commissioned as a companion piece to Schubert's Octet; and a special work commissioned by the Academy.

SATURDAY/OCT. 4

Walk to Stop Suicide. 12:30 p.m. At Mosaic District, Fairfax. Join the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's Fairfax Out of the Darkness Community Walk. Check-in & Pre-Walk Activities Begin: 11:00 a.m. Program Begins: 12:30 p.m. Event Ends: 2:00 p.m. The Fairfax Out of the Darkness Community Walk Support for mental health and suicide prevention is needed more now than ever before, and proceeds raised through AFSP's Out of the Darkness Walks fund lifesaving research, education, advocacy, and survivor support programming.

SATURDAY/OCT. 4

Parktoberfest. 12 to 5 p.m. At E.C. Lawrence Park, 5235 Walney Road, Centreville. The celebration will be filled with live music, local food and drink, artisan vendors, and activities for all ages.

Highlights include:

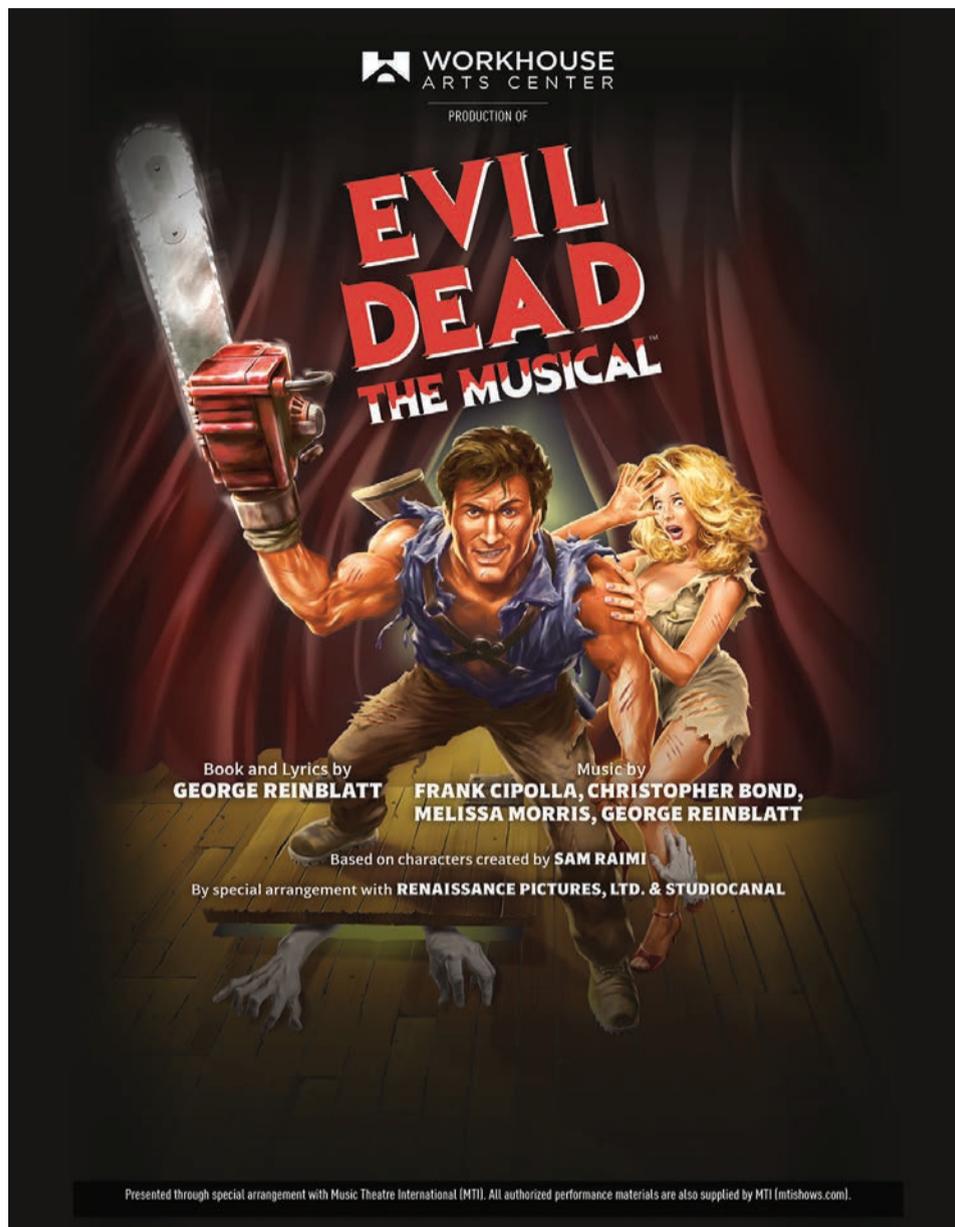
Live performances by The Walkaways, Lucas Mason and Georgia Rae Braun
Craft beer from Ono Brewery and food trucks Burgorilla & TacoOne
Artisan and maker marketplace with local vendors
Tours of the brand-new Woodlands Stewardship Education Center
STREAM Loop adventures for kids and families.

SATURDAY/OCT. 4

Oktoberfest. 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. At Historic Church Street, downtown Vienna. Oktoberfest celebrates its 16th anniversary this year with its biggest festival yet! More vendors, more food, great music & entertainment, plenty of free kids' activities and, of course, locally sourced beer and wine selections! Vienna's 2025 Oktoberfest will feature:

- ❖ Live entertainment on three stages: Beer Garden, Town Green, Mill Street
- ❖ Large Beer/Wine Garden featuring: Caboose Brewing Company, Norm's Beer and Wine, Settle Down Easy Brewing and Vienna Vintner
- ❖ Large selection of multinational food
- ❖ Free kids' activities, inflatables, games and entertainment on the Town Green
- ❖ Business Expo Showcase
- ❖ Large Vendor Market
- ❖ Artisan Market
- ❖ Wellness Expo

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"Evil Dead, The Musical" will take place Sept. 20 to Nov. 2, 2025 at Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton.

- ❖ Free shuttle from Vienna Metro North and James Madison High School
- ❖ Bike Park right off the W&O trail: ride your bike, park and fest!
- ❖ Loads and Loads of Fun! Visit www.viennaoktoberfest.org.

SATURDAY/OCT. 4

Papermoon Puppet Theatre: Puno, Sewing Memories. 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Indonesia's innovative Papermoon Puppet Theatre presents a spellbinding, non-verbal puppetry work. A bittersweet and hopeful piece, Puno tells the story of Tala, a young girl who is coping with her father's passing, exploring how we can hold and appreciate what has been left to us.

OCT. 4-5

Celebration of the Arts. 11 a.m.-5 p.m. At 1803 Capital One Dr, Tysons. Designed for all ages, this immersive two-day outdoor festival will transform the streets of Capital One Center into a multi-block celebration of the arts—featuring interactive installations, hands-on workshops, live music, and culinary experiences for every generation. Guests can engage in participatory artmaking with regional artists and arts organizations, take part in workshops designed for all ages and skill levels, and discover unexpected moments of creativity throughout the campus. The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts' traveling Art-mobile will showcase Love, Laughter, Tears: An Artist's Guide to Emotions—a curated art exhibition featuring works from VMFA's renowned collection spanning over 6,000 years of global history, exploring how artists across cultures and time have expressed universal human emotions through their work. The festival features a full schedule of live music

performances, a curated selection of food and dessert vendors, and dedicated beer and wine tasting experiences. The food and beverage district will also host culinary workshops and highlight the vibrant restaurant offerings within Capital One Center, including Sisters Thai, Ometeo, Star Hill Brewpub, Stellina Pizzeria, and others.

SUNDAY/OCT. 5

Vienna CROP Walk. The Walk begins at Emmaus United Church of Christ, 900 Maple Avenue, Vienna, at 12:45 p.m., with onsite registration starting at 12:30 p.m. The Walk supports local and international hunger relief efforts. It is approximately 2 ¾ miles and takes about an hour. A shorter walk is also available. You can register at the walk or online. To volunteer to help, register, donate, or for more information, go to <https://events.crophungerwalk.org/crophungerwalks/event/viennava> or contact Lisa Hechtman at lhechtman@gmail.com. There is no fee to walk, but walkers are encouraged to donate or to find sponsors who will support their efforts. You can even form your own team. Three-quarters of the funds raised go to Church World Service (a hunger relief non-profit), and for the Vienna walk, one-fourth will go to the Committee for Helping Others (CHO), which provides a food pantry and clothes closet in Vienna and Oakton, as well as other emergency assistance to local residents.

SUNDAY/OCT. 5

Friends of Reston 5K. Join the Friends of Reston for their 5th Annual Friends of Reston Fall 5K, to help raise funds for their scholarship and enrichment programs. All proceeds for this event support the Friends of Reston, a 501(c)(3) supporting organization of Reston Association.

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.



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