

THE CONNECTION

CENTREVIEW ♦ Chantilly ♦ Great Falls ♦ Herndon ♦ McLean ♦ Oak Hill ♦ Oakton ♦ Reston ♦ Vienna



At Centreville Day festivities, Madi Fortney, 1-½, pets K9 Paisley, who works with the Fairfax County Police Bomb Squad.

Student Murdered
After Threats

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No Kings II

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50 Years of McLean
Community Center

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Centreville Day
Extravaganza

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NOVEMBER 5-18, 2025

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Police Charge Juvenile in Herndon Student Homicide

Student fatally shot after receiving multiple threats.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County police arrested a juvenile suspect in the fatal shooting of 16-year-old Evin Alberto Herrera Campos, a student at Herndon High School, who was shot and killed the evening of Oct. 15.

On Oct. 25, detectives from the FCPD's Reston District Station obtained felony petitions for second-degree murder, use of a firearm in the commission of a felony, and shooting from a vehicle, for the male suspect, who was held at the Fairfax County Juvenile Detention Center.

The victim in the fatal shooting, which occurred Oct. 15 in the 13000 block of Parcher Avenue in the Herndon area of Hutchison, was a 16-year-old boy who attended Herndon High School.

The victim's father alleged, during an Oct. 20 interview with The Connection at the family's home, that school officials and the FCPD school resource officer (SRO) at Herndon High, failed to act on his reports of death threats against his son in the weeks leading up to the attack.

The father, who requested anonymity for fear of his and his family's safety, contended that his son's death was preventable. During the nearly 90-minute interview, father broke down in tears on multiple occasions, as did his wife, who sat beside him. He wrote his son's full name and age, "Evin Alberto Herrera Campos, 16," and the name of his son's mother, who lives in Honduras, on a piece of paper, with permission to print.

During the interview, the father spoke about his son, the events leading up to the fatal incident and the aftermath. He said that his son was a smart student with good grades. He was a dedicated soccer player. Alberto was on a U.S. immigration path toward residency, working with an attorney. But Alberto had been receiving repeated cyber and in-person death threats for weeks.

The threats included the chilling predictions that Alberto would be killed, but "not on school grounds," and that he would not live "to see



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Evin Alberto Herrera Campos, 16, murdered the evening of Oct. 15.

his green card." Photographic evidence of the intimidating text messages on Alberto's cell phone were first shared by Alberto in mid-September, according to his father.

The father said he contacted a school liaison, "the person who connects the school and the family," twice in the weeks before the shooting to report the threats, in mid-September and two weeks later. The father said that he spoke with her on the phone and was told the SRO was unavailable, that he was responsible for the school's estimated 2,500 students, and that he would contact the father when he could. The father said he never received any follow-up response from school staff or the SRO.

All SROs in Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) are specially trained law enforcement officers of the Fairfax County Police Department.

When asked to confirm details, FCPS responded on Oct. 22: "The team at Herndon High School continues to provide appropriate crisis team support to students and staff. ... Any other questions regarding the investigation should be directed to the Fairfax County Police Department."

The FCPD responded: "There is no additional information we are able to provide at this time as this investigation remains ongoing. Our School Resource Officers continue to work closely with students, families, and school staff to ensure the continued safety and security of our community."

The fatal attack occurred at Hutchison Park, a Fairfax County Park Authority soccer field outside the town limits of Herndon, on the night of Wednesday, Oct. 15. Alberto lived with his father, stepmother, and three siblings.

During the interview, the father



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

The victim was a student at Herndon High School, at 700 Bennett St., is one of 55 high schools in Fairfax County Public Schools.

described the night of the shooting and the immediate aftermath. That evening, Alberto told him he was going to the soccer field with two friends. The father recalled saying to Alberto, "Son, come back home soon, because you know how I feel when you're outside in the dark. I don't want you to be home too late." The father said Alberto left home around 5:30 p.m.

The father confirmed receiving a text from his son's phone at 8:39 p.m., stating he was on his way home. Shortly afterward, a family friend who had driven past the soccer field called Alberto's stepmother. The caller reported something was going on and there was "a police presence at the soccer field." She asked about Alberto's whereabouts. The father said he walked the route to and from the soccer field, even went into the nearby 7-Eleven and Taco Bell, but could not find his son.

According to an FCPD news release posted Oct. 16, officers responded to the 13000 block of Parcher Avenue at 9:31 p.m., where they located an unresponsive male with a fatal gunshot wound to his lower body. He was pronounced dead at the scene. Police said in the release, "Preliminarily, this does not appear to be a random act."

Police arrived at their home around 10:30 p.m. and instructed him to accompany them to the station, Alberto's father said. He said

he was left waiting, unaware of his son's fate and without an interpreter. At approximately 3 a.m., he said that the police told him that Alberto was dead.

The father said based on information the police shared with him, the shooting was a targeted drive-by attack, and that multiple people were involved.

The human cost of the tragedy is evident in the father's reflections and the family's immediate displacement.

During the interview held at the family's home, he spoke about his son, saying that Alberto was smart and, upon entering high school, was able to skip his first year and enter as a sophomore because he was advanced. He said his son was dedicated to soccer and loved the sport, hoping to go professional after graduation and, at some point, return to Honduras and help his community there. The father also shared that Alberto's two youngest stepsiblings keep calling out his name when the door opens, unaware of his death. His older stepsibling understands what has happened.

The immediate tragedy has been compounded by displacement. The father said that the landlord told them to move, citing the neighbors' discomfort. The family of five now — the father, his wife, and their three young children, ages 2 to 10 — is preparing to vacate their

rented townhome immediately. Packing materials, filled to their brims, stood in the corner of the living room, but the framed family photos remained on the wall behind the couch. He said they are all sleeping together in one room, on floor mats. "No one feels safe; no one is sleeping," the father said.

Looking forward, Alberto's funeral arrangements remain pending locally. Efforts are underway to repatriate his body for burial to Honduras to be with his mother, who lives there. The nonprofit New Virginia Majority has established a fundraiser, capping the amount raised to cover the costs of the final arrangements.

School Resource Officers in Fairfax County

SROs in Fairfax County Public Schools are certified law enforcement officers of the Fairfax County Police Department assigned primarily to high and middle schools. SROs are specially trained and remain under the FCPD's control.

SROs are generally instructed not to enforce school rules or disciplinary infractions that are not violations of the law. They are directed to collaborate with school administrators to support positive school climates focused on conflict resolution and to seek alternative means to address issues, rather than resorting to arrest when appropriate.



It is a cold start on Election Day, Nov. 4, for Rebeca Borton, a Democratic volunteer in the Town of Herndon, at precinct Herndon No. 2 (320), located at the Herndon Community Center.

Voters Mike and Elisa Cafferky join Erin and Kevin Mahoney outside precinct Reston No. 3 (222) at the Reston Community Center-Lake Anne.

Is Election Day Anticlimatic?

Fairfax County Early Voting Surges 13.61% Over 2021 for Midterm General Election 2025.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Connection went to press before Election Day results were available.

Fairfax County's cumulative ballots cast two days before Virginia's high-stakes midterm General Election increased by 13.61% compared to the last comparable midterm election in 2021, [2025: 189,223 early votes cast; 2021: 166,550 early votes cast] signaling a possible permanent shift in how local voters cast ballots.

The Virginia General Election on Nov. 4, 2025, includes races for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General and all 100 members of the House of Delegates. It is widely watched nationally as a key bellwether for voter sentiment.

The Virginia Public Access Project (VPAPorg.) reported 189,224 early votes cast in Fairfax County as of Nov. 2, 2025, a figure that represents a nearly 14% increase over the 166,550 early votes re-



This voter, at precinct Herndon No. 2 (320), agreed to a photo, but only his back.



Michael Estep of Herndon says, "We don't miss an election; we're extra inspired."

SEE IS ELECTION DAY, PAGE 6

Greenbriar Man Pleads Guilty to Killing Wife

He shot her five times while she slept.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION



Sommer

On Feb. 28, Douglas Sommer, 88, pumped five bullets into his wife while she slept in a recliner. On Oct. 20 in Fairfax County Circuit Court, he pleaded guilty to killing her.

The tragedy occurred inside their home in the 13000 block of Pennypacker Lane in Chantilly's Greenbriar community. Fairfax County police responded there at 6:09 a.m., arresting Sommer and charging him with second-degree murder and use of a firearm in the commission of a felony.

His wife, Marilyn, 87, died at the scene; and since then, her husband has been held without bond in the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center. He was indicted by the grand jury on July 21 and was slated for a Jury trial beginning Oct. 20 but, instead, chose to plead guilty to lesser charges.

Prior to that date, Assistant Com-

monwealth's Attorney Kate Steier and public defender Amy Jordan made a plea agreement stipulating that Sommer's offenses would be amended to voluntary manslaughter and unlawful discharge of a firearm in an occupied dwelling.

Wearing the green jumpsuit of a jail prisoner, Sommer – a former Naval officer for 24 years – entered his guilty pleas before Judge Christie Leary. But before she accepted them, she asked him a series of questions.

"Did you decide for yourself to plead guilty," asked Leary. Sommer replied yes. "Are you entering your pleas freely and voluntarily – and because you are, in fact, guilty of these offenses?" she asked. Again, Sommer answered affirmatively.

"Do you understand that the maximum punishment you could receive for voluntary manslaughter is 10 years in prison, and five years [for the firearm charge]?" asked Leary. "And do you understand

that you're giving up your right to appeal the sentence?" Sommer replied yes to both questions.

She also noted that the plea agreement calls for him to receive a sentence of "active incarceration" for a period between five and 15 years. Then Steier presented what the commonwealth's evidence would have been had this case gone to trial.

"In the early morning of Feb. 28, the defendant got his loaded, .32-caliber pistol, went to the reclining chair in the den where his wife was sleeping, and shot her at close range five times in the head and chest," said Steier. "He then called the police and told them someone had been injured."

Steier said the couple's daughter, Jennifer, who'd been briefly staying with them, was in a bedroom at the time, but came out of her room after hearing two of the gunshots. "Sommer [unsuccessfully] tried to stop her at the kitchen to prevent her from going into the den and seeing her mother.

"She also called the police and, when they came, he calmly told them he'd shot [his wife]. The daughter had been staying there

SEE GREENBRIAR MAN, PAGE 23



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Is Election Day Anticlimatic?

FROM PAGE 4

corded at the same point, two days before the election, in the 2021 election cycle. Both major parties pushed voters in the 2025 election to take advantage of the expanded 45-day early voting window amid the high interest in the statewide cycle.

Virginia's gubernatorial contest is one of only two held in the nation this year, the other being in New Jersey. With only one exception since 1977, Virginia has elected a governor from the party opposite to the one holding the White House. This historical pattern could favor the Democratic candidate, Abigail Spanberger.

Fairfax County's turnout and margin for the Democratic ticket is crucial, as the county is one of the largest and most reliably Democratic in the state, tasked with counterbalancing Republican strength across the rest of the Commonwealth.

On the ground on Election Day, despite the high early turnout, a slow but steady stream of voters arrived at precincts Herndon No. 2 (320) at the Herndon Community Center and Reston No. 3 (222) at the Reston Community Center-Lake Anne. The atmosphere, though, was quiet and focused at both precincts, lacking the high energy often seen on past Election Days. There were no lines; voters completed their ballots and quickly departed, many waving off requests for comments.

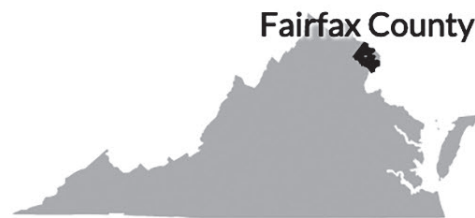
At the Herndon Community Center, chief election officer Scott Fujita reported 53 people had cast ballots by 6:52 a.m., shortly after polls opened at 6 a.m. This flow reflected the overall popularity of early voting and a focused commitment to civic duty.

At the Lake Anne location, election officer Libby Schreffler reported 86 voters by 7:35 a.m.

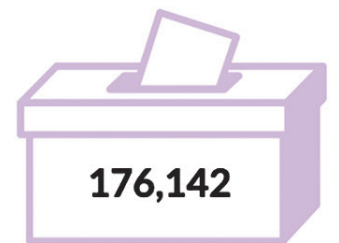
John Gareth of Herndon offered a succinct comment, "Voting — that's what I'm here for."

One anonymous voter encapsu-

Early Ballots Cast



2025
(As of 11/2/25)



2021
(Final total through
11/2/21)

Cumulative Early Ballots Cast

2025 November General
2021 November General

Cumulative ballots cast
2 days before election

2025: 189,223
2021: 166,550

SCREENSHOT VPAP

Fairfax County's early voting 2 days before the 2025, Nov. 4 general election was a 13.61% increase compared to the same point in the 2021 election.

lated the measured mood, stating they came "to do my civic duty: voting, because we are the people and it's important to put balance back in the world."

Michael Estep of Herndon stood out, appearing genuinely enthused. "We don't miss an election; we're extra inspired," he said.

Outside the Lake Anne location, voter Elisa Cafferky, joined by her husband Mike, said she "wanted to vote to keep a good thing going." They stood beside Republican volunteers Erin and Kevin Mahoney, who distributed sample ballots.

Election signs sprout like mushrooms on Nov. 4 for the Midterm Election 2025 at precinct Herndon No. 2 (320) in Fairfax County.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

McLean Art Gallery Opens A Home After 70 Year Wait

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
THE CONNECTION

After 70 years the McLean Art Society (MAS) finally has a "real home" in the newly reimagined Chesterbrook Shopping Center on Old Dominion Drive. The gallery had a grand opening on October 10 from 5-8 p.m.

Although Mike Potashnik, an artist and five-year member of MAS, indicated the gallery is currently a "pop up" home and they have the space through the end of the year. "We don't know after that but I think you can see by the crowd this is going to be popular." As evidence the clicker at the front door had registered 184 visitors by 6 pm, and cars were circling the parking lot wait-

ing for a spot to open up.

Patrons mingled with a glass of wine, stopping at a watercolor, on to a graphic and charcoal, mixed media and collage and acrylic pieces—lingering to listen for a moment to Billy Shelton's jazz guitar.

Each of 35 artists participating was asked to contribute six pieces. Any of the 70 plus MAS members who wanted to exhibit their

work was part of the show. Thirty-five artists participated, and each was asked to contribute 6 works of art.

Jane McElvany Coonce, oil and watercolor artist and Gallery Director, said once MAS learned they got the space at Chesterbrook Shopping Center in June, it took July and August to get things ready;

SEE MCLEAN ART GALLERY, PAGE 9



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No Kings 2 Draws Crowds to Herndon, Reston

Demonstrators cite federal overreach, safety net cuts, job cuts as core concerns.



Across the generations, crowds in Herndon, Va., voice their opposition to Trump administration policies at the corner of Elden and Spring streets during the “No Kings 2” rallies, Oct. 18.



On Oct. 18, No Kings II rallies drew crowds in Herndon, Va., including demonstrators of all ages. at the corner of Elden and Spring streets.



Crowds in Herndon, Va. turned out for No Kings II rallies.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Large crowds gathered nationwide on Oct. 18 for “No Kings 2,” the second major mobilization against Trump administration policies, with an estimated 500 people participating at one location

in Herndon alone, according to Herndon-Reston Indivisible. Participants voiced their concerns on handmade signs over what they viewed as the administration’s actions threatening democracy and civil liberties, citing issues such as authoritarianism, deportations and attacks on the independent

SEE MO KINGS, PAGE 9



Crowds came out in Herndon, Va., for “No Kings 2” on Oct. 18. Millions of people were reported to have turned out for the demonstrations across the country.



Protesters line Baron Cameron Avenue in Reston, Va., during the “No Kings 2” protest, Oct. 18.



No Kings II rallies in Reston, Va., on Oct. 18.

Manslaughter Conviction for Westfield High Teen's Fatal Shooting

Shooter, 20, faces up to 10 years in prison.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Ismael Cruz Delcid, 19, of Herndon, pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter for the killing of a 14-year-old acquaintance in March 2024 and was convicted in the Fairfax County Courthouse on Oct. 20, 2025. Cruz-Delcid faces up to 10 years in prison at his Jan. 9, 2026, sentencing hearing.

According to a statement by Fairfax County Commonwealth's Attorney, Steve Descano, "Cruz Delcid, 20, of Herndon, was sitting in his car in a parking lot on Coppermine Road when he saw two teenage acquaintances, one of them MM, 14, and gestured them over. As MM approached the

vehicle, Cruz Delcid put a loaded firearm in his waistband and exited his vehicle." The conversation between the three escalated, and Cruz Delcid, separating himself from the two teens, fired three shots. Two struck the 14-year-old, MM, in the neck and chest, killing him.

A third round, aimed at the second victim, missed, police said.

"My heart breaks for the victim's family," said Commonwealth's Attorney Steve Descano following the verdict. "His parents deserved the chance to see him graduate high school and pursue his dreams. He had his whole life ahead of him, and I hope that this conviction allows everyone who knew him to continue healing from this terrible loss."

The teenager was a student "in good standing" at Westfield High School, according to Fairfax County Public Schools Superintendent Michelle Reid at the time of the

shooting.

The voluntary manslaughter verdict in Virginia means the jury found the killing intentional, but it lacked the malice aforethought required for a murder conviction. The conviction is a class 5 felony. It carries the penalty of one to 10 years in prison, less than the five to 40 years faced for second-degree murder.

Following the shooting, Cruz Delcid fled the scene, disposing of the firearm and his clothing in nearby woods before going to his girlfriend's residence. Cruz Delcid turned himself in to Fairfax County Police the next day.

The case previously went to trial in June 2025 but resulted in a mistrial due to a hung jury, forcing the Commonwealth to retry it and secure the conviction last week. At the time of the incident, Cruz Delcid had recently graduated from Mountain View Alternative School.



PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION

McLean Art Society (MAS) reception October 10 celebrates opening of first gallery after 70 years.



McLean Art Gallery Opens A Home After 70 Year Wait

FROM PAGE 6

and they opened unofficially September 15. "It's a big job to figure out what goes where and we borrowed the walls and had to get hooks and all kinds of little stuff like cleaning supplies. But we had a lot of experts working on it who had done this in the past."

McElvany Coonce says they are currently planning two more shows for the first Fridays in November and December that will have completely new work. "I don't have a tally but it looks like we have been selling a lot tonight. Things are flying off the walls."

Potashnik, a resident of McLean, stands beside his abstract "Quadrants." "I don't plan what to put in each quadrant in advance; it just comes. I feel as I paint. I have five buyers who want it. I don't know how I'll decide." He says he is in charge of creating an education program to help enrich the McLean Art Society members. "We bring in other artists to talk about techniques and other topics in our monthly

meetings." And he adds that they try to help people who are renovating their houses to think about how to incorporate art.

Diane Evans-Gayer, an Arlington resident, had come to the opening to see the watercolors of Tom Neville, her art instructor for 15 years.

Milka Taherian from McLean, was there with her daughter Samantha. "We have been coming here regularly since it opened several weeks ago. We had already bought some of the glass pieces before the opening tonight. The prices here are very reasonable." Milka says she loves it because it shows the community coming together. Look, local restaurants have donated the humus and grape leaves and sweets, and I've been telling all of my friends to show up tonight. It's very special."

McLean Art Society "welcomes community art enthusiasts of all levels, offering enriching experiences through regular meetings featuring presentations by renowned artists, rotating art displays at local recreation centers, and curated exhibitions."



In Reston, Va., during the "No Kings 2" rally Oct. 18.

No Kings 2 Draws Crowds To Herndon, Reston

FROM PAGE 8

press and the judiciary.

Organized locally by Herndon-Reston Indivisible among others, the event featured visibility corners at eight locations throughout Herndon and Reston, joining an estimated 2,600 related demonstrations held nationwide.

The No Kings movement's name invokes the American Revolution's rejection of abso-

lute monarchy, symbolizing opposition to the expansion of executive power.

Reasons for the nonviolent protest, as seen on signs locally, included the use of federal forces and the National Guard in some cities including D.C., which protesters viewed as an overreach of federal power and the militarization of communities, as well as the recent government shutdown. Broader concerns included cuts

to health care, environmental protections, education, and social and economic policies favoring billionaires.

In Reston, attendees stretched along Reston Parkway at Bowman Towne Drive, reaching as far south as Temporary Road and nearly to Baron Cameron on the north end.

"Biggest crowd I've seen there," said protest attendee John Lovaas.

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News

Ovissi Boutique Open In Reston Town Center

Ovissi Boutique is dedicated to celebrating the art and legacy of Nasser Ovissi, a modern Iranian-American artist and longtime Reston resident.

The Public Grand Opening is Sunday, Nov. 9 from 3-5 p.m. 11932 Democracy Drive, Reston Town Center.

The boutique also features jewelry and ceramics by artists of Iranian heritage, and art

objects for the home. All sales support the Ovissi Foundation, a nonprofit providing annual grants to museums, MFA artists and artists.

This new gallery is a celebration of heritage, creativity and cultural connection, inviting the public to experience the artistry of Iranian American creators who carry forward a tradition of beauty and innovation. galleryovissi.com

Fatal Crash in Reston

Detectives from FCPS Crash Reconstruction Unit (CRU) continue to investigate a fatal single-vehicle crash in Reston that left one man dead.

Oct. 30 at 2:40 p.m., officers responded to Soapstone Drive and Golf Course Square in Reston for a single-vehicle crash.

Preliminarily, detectives determined that the driver of a 2026 BMW X7, Justin Lemrow, 46, of Reston, was traveling southbound on Soapstone Drive when his vehicle

left the roadway into a tree line.

Preliminarily, detectives do not believe alcohol was a factor in the crash. Detectives are continuing to investigate whether speed was a factor in the crash.

Detectives would like to speak to anyone who may have information about this case. Those with information are asked to please call our Crash Reconstruction Unit at 703-280-0543.



SCREENSHOT GOOGLE MAPS

The intersection of Moore Road and Clifton Road in Clifton, Va., where a two-vehicle crash on Oct. 4 resulted in the death of 65-year-old Peter Kavaljian.

Driver Dies Three Weeks After Clifton Crash

**Police say alcohol
was a factor.**

Peter Kavaljian, 65, of Clifton, died nearly three weeks after a two-vehicle crash where police had determined he was driving while intoxicated (DWI). The Medical Examiner's office notified Fairfax County Police detectives on Oct. 21 that Kavaljian died from injuries sustained in the Oct. 4 crash.

Kavaljian was transported to a local hospital at the time with injuries initially believed to be non-life-threatening. Through their

investigation, officers determined alcohol was a factor in the crash, and Kavaljian was issued a summons for DWI before his death.

The crash occurred at the intersection of Clifton Road and Moore Road. Police say Kavaljian, driving a 2008 Ford Ranger eastbound on Moore Road, failed to stop as he attempted to cross Clifton Road. His vehicle was struck on the passenger side by a 2016 Ford Fusion.

The Fairfax County Police Department encourages anyone with information about the collision to contact their Crash Reconstruction Unit at 703-280-0543. Tips can also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers.

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Vienna Council Votes No on FCPS Boundary Plan

Officials urge school board to reconsider scenario 4, which would shift some Vienna students from James Madison High School to George C. Marshall High School.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Vienna Town Council passed a resolution on Monday, Oct. 27, during its regular meeting, opposing the Fairfax County Public Schools proposed redistricting plan that would shift Vienna students from James Madison High School to George C. Marshall High School.

The council's opposition is rooted in concerns that the move would divide community neighborhoods, undermine local cohesion and pride, and lead to longer, more difficult commutes for students and parents.

The resolution noted the division would prevent some town students from participating in longstanding school traditions associated with James Madison High School, such as the Homecoming Parade and annual Madrigals performance.

The resolution urges the FCPS School Board to find a solution that

ensures all Town of Vienna residents remain in the James Madison High School District and specifically requests the board to reconsider "Scenario 4" of the proposal.

FCPS is considering boundary changes for the first time in 40 years to alleviate overcrowding at some schools and to ensure equal access to programs. The Fairfax County School Board is scheduled to vote on the final boundary proposal in late January 2026. The process leading up to this vote involves continued review and discussion of scenarios and community feedback by the School Board and the Superintendent's Boundary Review Advisory Committee through the end of 2025.

The new school boundaries could begin implementation at the start of the 2026-2027 school year. Implementation is generally expected to be phased-in. Incoming students, such as rising ninth graders, would typically be the first to attend the newly assigned school.



TOWN OF VIENNA

The Vienna Town Council passes a resolution on Monday, Oct. 27, opposing the Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) proposed-redistricting plan that would shift Vienna students from James Madison High School to George C. Marshall High School.

According to FCPS, currently enrolled students, such as rising seventh and eighth graders and rising 10th- through 12th-grade high school students, are often given the option to remain at their current school or attend the new school, based on the specific phasing policy the School Board adopted in July 2025. Any details could

change based on ongoing community review and School Board decisions. Some Board members have recently expressed concerns about the pace of the process and information gaps.

Official information, including the timeline, current draft scenarios, and details on community meetings, can be found on the of-

ficial FCPS Comprehensive School Boundary Review webpage www.fcps.edu/about-fcps/maps/2024-2026-boundary-review

The FCPS Boundary Review Scenario Explorer is an interactive tool where residents can input an address to see how it might be affected by the draft scenarios. See <https://www.fcpsboundaryreview.org/>



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Family Fun Galore at Centreville Day

The weather was perfect, and attendees enjoyed themselves at the 33rd annual Centreville Day on Oct. 18.



Dressed as a flamingo, Victoria Barbu holds a lollipop and pinwheel.



Representing Centreville American Legion Post 1995 are (from left) Joe Burke, Linda Noguchi, Mark Miller, Jim Robison, Randy Young and Karen Hunter.



Handing out pinwheels from Lord of Life Lutheran Church (which meets at Liberty MS) are (from left) Bette Hostrup, Chris VanDerHorst, Karen Arnold and Alma Edgerly.



Sharing a funnel cake are Grant Larson, 9, and Dad Jon.



From left, Friends of the Centreville Regional Library's volunteer coordinator, Fran Legendre; and president, Sharon Gottovi. Volunteers are always welcome.



Petting K9 Paisley, with the Fairfax County Police Bomb Squad, is Madi Fortney, 1-1/2.



Vendor Alyssa Samuel holds the children's books she wrote.



German Solis, 10, walks across a monkey bridge in the children's area.

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

News

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



Eden Kassir, 8, (in green shirt) makes his way up the climbing wall.



Chantilly High juniors (from left) Deanna Quist and Joelle Sprowls enjoying cotton candy.



Leilani Hanson, 3, strikes a pose in her witch costume.



Mixed Greens performing "Jessie's Girl" onstage.



Children having fun on the inflatable slide.



Vendor Valerie Miller, of Krafty Phiness, with her fall decorations.

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The children's train traveling through Centreville's Historic District.

Colorful Parade in Centreville Historic District



Boy Scout Troop 577.



SYA cheerleaders.



SYA cheerleaders and coaches.



Girl Scout Service Unit 54-5.



Cub Scout Pack 1859 meets at Union Mill Elementary.



The Sons of the American Revolution float honors the U.S. military.

Centreville Day Honors Citizens of the Year

Connolly, nonprofit and others also receive awards.

BY CHERYL REPETTI
SPECIAL TO THE CONNECTION

Each year, the Centreville Day Planning Committee recognizes and celebrates outstanding citizens, businesses, nonprofits, community partners and historians who've worked to benefit and sustain the community. And at the Oct. 18 event, the committee honored John Boylan as Citizen of the Year and the Scott A. and Phyllis P. Crabtree Family Foundation as Nonprofit Citizen of the Year.

The committee also feted Paul Woods and Megan Hawkins as Community Partners of the Year for their support of Centreville Day. And the Dennis Hogge Community Historian award was presented posthumously to former U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-11th), who died in May.

Citizen of the Year – John Boylan

John Boylan came to Centreville via his military career. Like many before him, once he experienced this community, he never left. When John became the president/CEO of the Dulles Chamber of Commerce, he instituted the three pillars of Commerce, Community and Connections to focus on both the present and future of our part of Fairfax County. He's passionate about the impact of the Metro extension on Centreville and founded the Centreville Leadshare group to further inform citizens and businesses about new opportunities.



John Boylan

Even after retiring from the Chamber, John continued to look out for his community by resurrecting the Centreville Committee, initializing the first State of Centreville for the Dulles Regional Chamber of Commerce, and being an active member of the Centreville Study Task Force.

John sees a future for Centreville in which each family and community member has a heightened awareness of our historic areas, enjoys safe passages for walkers and bikers, and has an eternal view of the impressive mountain ranges during many sunsets.

Nonprofit of the Year – Scott and Phyllis Crabtree Family Foundation

Since its founding in 2018, the Scott and Phyllis Crabtree Foundation has provided grants and other financial support to organizations throughout Northern Virginia. Their efforts have supported daycare facilities, scholarships, animal welfare and children's medical needs.

For example, Western Fairfax Christian Ministries and the Clifton Lions Club have received grants to further their charitable efforts in the community. The Crabtree Foundation recently sponsored a children's book featuring police dogs, and its proceeds will go to support the lives of retired police dogs. And children in our community have benefited from the Foundation's support of the annual winter coat drive sponsored by the Sully District Supervisor's office.

Community Partner – Paul S. Woods

Paul Woods took his role as community developer for the Department of Neighborhood and Community Services very seriously. He knew almost everybody and was instru-



Paul Woods

mental in fostering connections between new and old friends, colleagues and businesses alike.

When the Centreville Day Planning Committee was in a pinch a few years ago, Paul, without hesitation, gave Centreville Day the support it needed to provide shuttlebus service for offsite parking – and that service continues today. For the past two years, Paul attended meetings of the Centreville Community Task Force as an interested audience member and actively promoted citizen involvement with the Centreville Study Survey.

In 2024, Paul was the chair of Fairfax County's Black History Month Committee. Today we express our appreciation for Paul's partnership with Centreville through thoughtful encouragement and synergy between and among all members of our community.

Community Partner – MPO Megan Hawkins

Our community is a safer place due in a large part to the thoughtful efforts of Master Police Officer Megan Hawkins of the Sully District Police Station. She's viewed as a neighborhood officer who's an integral part of the community. For many years Meg supported Centreville Day by gathering a wonderful array of police outreach activities and serving as the department's event photographer.

She enthusiastically engaged community partners such as the Rotary Club of Centreville-Chantilly in collecting toys at Christmas, along with mittens, gloves, hats and socks for students in our elementary schools. Meg's partnership with Centreville is much appreciated, as she reinforces a safe and welcoming environment for all members of



MPO Meg Hawkins

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHERYL REPETTI
our community.

Dennis Hogge Community Historian Award – U.S. Rep Gerry Connolly

The late Dennis Hogge was a community historian, and his grandchildren, Jackson Bohannon and Adelaide Felts, presented this award to Connolly's congressional campaign manager, Donald Brownlee, on behalf of the Centreville Day Planning Committee.

For many years, it wasn't Centreville Day without the joyful appearance of Gerry Connolly. He spoke eloquently on the stage about the growth of Historic Centreville Park, rode in the back of a pickup truck and waved enthusiastically during the parade, and engaged with community constituents as he walked around the event.

During his service on the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, from 1995-2008 – including five years as chairman – Gerry was instrumental in securing funding for the Washington Metro Silver Line extension. He also challenged the Board to dedicate 10 percent of the county's land as parkland – a goal that was key in creating Historic Centreville Park.

Connolly's love of history was evident as he attended the Fairfax County History Commission's annual conferences for nearly 20 years.

He was also a strong advocate for environmental protection; and in recognition of his local work, Fairfax County named the Gerry Connolly Cross County Trail in his honor in 2014.

Today we honor and celebrate Gerry for his commitment and support of history in Centreville and throughout Fairfax County.



Gerry Connolly

PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS

Colorful Parade in Centreville



School of Rock, Chantilly, students performing in the parade.



Rotary International in the parade.

PHOTOS BY
BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Parade marchers in the Walk to End Hunger on behalf of Western Fairfax Christian Ministries.



McLean Community Center Celebrates 50-Year Anniversary

Created by the community.

By Mercia Hobson
The Connection

The McLean Community Center celebrated its 50th anniversary on Saturday, Oct. 18, from 5 to 10 p.m. The community couldn't have asked for a better celebration — music through the decades, dancing, food, drinks, trivia, and more — at the center, which officially opened in October 1975.

Carole Herrick, McLean historian and former MCC board member, led a presentation on the history and formation of the building and the efforts that made it possible. She recalled that it started with “all these new people” over 50 years ago, who said, “Wait a minute. We need a center. We need something to tie us in with McLean.”

“The citizens got together, advocated for a community center, and it was the citizens in effect that built the community center that opened in 1975,” Herrick said.

Notes from the 50th Anniversary Memory Board

“I love being able to serve an area that values community so much that it taxes itself to support a community center, and the residents are a dream to program for.”
-Sarah Schallern Treff.

“The MCC has always been a joyous place for our family.”
- Mike Fischer

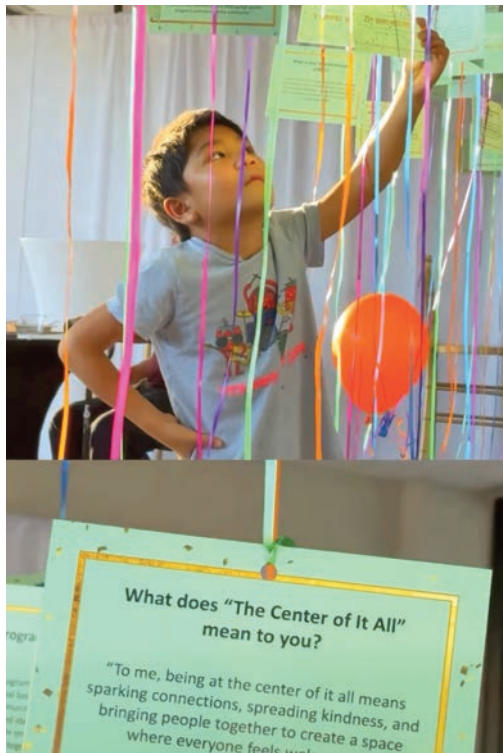
“The McLean Community Center has been and continues to be a place that elicits joy and the most genuine of smiles from those who walk through our doors, and that remains my favorite part of all that we do.”
- Kyle Corwin.

“McLean Community Center continues its tradition of creating memories by sponsoring the restart of the McLean Winterfest Parade. It was such a joy to be able to represent the MCC in this long-standing hometown tradition!”
- Betsy May-Salazar, executive director.

Visit <https://mcleancenter.org/> to learn more about these upcoming events and others.

❖ Saturday, Oct. 25, 5-8 p.m.: Old Firehouse's Festival of Frights and Trunk or Treat, free.

❖ Saturday, Nov. 1, 7 p.m.: Norbert Leo Butz: “Broadway or Busk”



A young boy reads the notes from the 50th Anniversary Memory Board.



A look back over 50 years, as the citizens of McLean led the efforts for the community center.



A look back over 50 years ago, the construction of the community center.



McLean Community Center 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean



Carol Herrick, McLean historian and former McLean Community Center Board member



Dancing the night away at the McLean Community Center 50th Anniversary celebration.



Betsy May-Salazar, executive director of McLean Community Center (2023-current)

(tickets on sale).

❖ Monday, Nov. 3, 8 a.m.-6 p.m.: Fly & Movie, an indoor skydiving, adrenaline rush that will have you floating in mid-air.



Saving the memory with a photo.



Signing the 50th Anniversary Guest Book.



A guest helps color in the artwork.

'Story That'll Make You Want to Hug your Loved Ones'



Antonella Foschi, as Annie, admiring Erik Kaiser, as Daddy Warbucks, who's going to adopt her.



From left, Juan Medrano (Warbucks's butler, Drake) and Macee Schmidt (Grace) look on as Antonella Foschi (Annie), excited about being adopted, hugs Erik Kaiser (Daddy Warbucks).

Centreville High presents iconic musical, 'Annie.'

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

One of America's most beloved musicals, "Annie," is coming to life on the Centreville High stage. Featuring a cast and crew of about 70, it fits perfectly into the theater department's season theme, "A Season of Hope."

"I wanted something that was a traditional musical with toe-tapping songs, and I hope the community will come out to support this show," said Director Patrick McGee. "And with the song, 'Tomorrow,' it gives the message of hope for a better future."

The curtain rises Thursday-Friday, Nov. 13-14, at 7 p.m.; and Saturday, Nov. 15, at 2 and 7 p.m. Tickets are \$15, adults; and \$10, students, at the door or via www.theatrecentreville.com.

Trying to "cultivate young theater makers in the Centreville High Pyramid area," McGee's including several elementary school and Liberty Middle students in this production. Also collaborating with Centreville's performing arts department, the school's choir director, Susie Kraft, is "Annie's" music director, and the orchestra director, Mark Taylor, will conduct the show's live orchestra.

"Centreville students from both band and orchestra will be in our

pit orchestra – our first one in my four years here," said McGee. "I'm excited to see their talents, as well as those of our theater students both onstage and backstage."

The story of Annie, a plucky orphan hoping for a brighter tomorrow, is set in 1933 New York during the Depression. Accordingly, this production's scenes are set in an orphanage, a mansion and on the streets of New York. Men wear suits and servant uniforms, while women wear 1930s-era dresses.

Playing the lead role is senior Antonella Foschi. "Annie's quick-witted and sassy with Miss Hannigan, who runs the orphanage," said Foschi, who's also a choral student. "She's afraid of being confronted, so she has her guard up. But she's also cheerful, with a kid's energy and enthusiasm for life. And because she's an orphan, Annie wants to be loved in a real and profound way – and she finds that in Daddy Warbucks, [his assistant] Grace and the other orphans. She also takes on the role of big sister and leader to the other orphans, who care a lot about her, too."

"Playing Annie is lots of fun and very light. She's a child with so many emotions and intense feelings, while also being happy and joyful. I love singing, and performing and being onstage makes me feel alive, so it's exciting and rejuvenating to portray her."

Foschi's favorite song is "Cabinet Tomorrow," which she sings with others. "The scene is intimate, but fun," she said. "Annie starts singing 'Tomorrow,' and then FDR's [President Franklin Delano Roosevelt] cabinet members join in, one by

one. Everyone adds in their own little piece, and it's so joyful. We're all singing together like a family."

Foschi said audiences will particularly enjoy the show's music and songs. "It's a classic musical familiar and nostalgic to people, and the whole audience will probably be singing along," she said. "People will leave with smiles on their faces. It's a heartwarming, friendly, family-oriented story that makes you want to hug your loved ones. And the costumes are awesome, too. For example, the orphans will wear rompers and dresses made out of bedsheets to replicate the flour-sack dresses they wore then."

An advanced-choir member, Freshman Erik Kaiser portrays Daddy Warbucks. "He's very focused on his goals and his money," said Kaiser. "And he's blunt in the way he treats others. He'll speak his mind and can be too frank with his comments. But over the course of the show, he grows into a more considerate person who understands the value of friendship and learns money isn't everything."

"He's a fun character who's like me in some ways," said Kaiser. "He grows to like people after he gets to know them; and with Annie, he comes to love her. I like playing him because I get to take command of the scenes he's in. I make big, bold movements and get to interact with every character in the show."

Kaiser especially likes the song, "I Don't Need Anything but You," which Warbucks sings with his staff and Annie. "It's a fun song that feels like an ending," he said. "But what follows it will be sur-

prising to the characters." As for the show, Kaiser said people will love the cute orphans, the songs because "we put a lot of effort into them," and the cast – even the ensemble members who each seem like they're living in that world, and not just in the background."

Portraying Grace is junior Macee Schmidt. "She's reserved, polite, strictly professional and doesn't talk about her personal life," said Schmidt. "She speaks with a motherly tone toward Annie but is stern toward Warbucks's servants. She's also very understanding, has a good heart and is a warm, caring person who makes people feel comfortable around her."

"I love playing her. I grew up watching the movie, 'Annie,' and I see myself in Grace because I'm always putting others before me since I want people to feel at home and understood. That's what Grace is all about, so I couldn't imagine myself playing any other character in this show."

Schmidt's favorite song is "Hard Knock Life," sung by Annie and the orphans. "It's rebellious," she explained. "The orphans realize they've spent their whole lives scrubbing floors and cleaning plates, and they're sick of it. I also like the song's fast tempo while there's angst in the background."

Schmidt said audiences will love "what these actors bring to the show. The elementary-school students playing the orphans are perfect for their roles and always make everybody laugh. Our set is also special; it's two levels with three sets of stairs, plus double doors, and looks like the interior of

a real house. It's such an enjoyable show – a classic everyone knows. We're having fun doing it, so people will have fun watching it."

Junior Kylie Henryhand plays Miss Hannigan. "She's a bad person, snippy and blunt, with lots of anger issues," said Henryhand. "If anger was a person, it would be her. She wanted to be famous in some way, but never made it, so that makes her sad – and it turns into anger when she sees Annie doing the things she never got to do."

"I love playing her," continued Henryhand. "Villains can be more dramatic and out there. Hannigan yells a lot, and I'm a youth basketball coach, so I'm used to yelling. Having everyone familiar with this show boosts up the hype of this character and the show in general. But I get to put my own stamp on her."

Henryhand especially likes the song, "Little Girls," which she sings. "Hannigan's by herself, surrounded by kids and toys everywhere, and she realizes this isn't what she wanted for her life. And that makes her go off the rails, switching back and forth between sadness and rage."

Henryhand said audiences will enjoy "all the characters, funny jokes, the set and overall look of the show, as well as the moments that make us shine. It's like a Christmas show – it makes this feel like a warm, safe place. The story has a message of following your dreams, not giving up and having hope – especially when you're going through hard times. And I think audiences will connect with that."



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Friends of Trees Award winners for 2025/2024, after receiving their awards from Tree Commissioner Barbara Ryan.



PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME

Kristen Dubelier was one of three 2025 winners in the Individual Category.

Friends of Trees Awards Presented

Winners for 2025 and 2024 recognized at county ceremony.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

In urban areas, trees compete for space with buildings, roads and parking lots. Despite its urban qualities, Fairfax County is fortunate to have tree canopy covering more than 50 percent of its territory. A 15-member tree commission works to assure that tree cover is maintained and enhanced, providing advice to the County's Board of Supervisors on forest conservation and preservation. To highlight efforts outside of government, the Commission established a "Friends of Trees Award" to recognize exceptional and innovative conservation-based actions by county residents, groups and organizations.

Winners of the award are selected annually based on their work to protect existing trees and habitats, increase the tree canopy with native tree species, and to educate and inspire people to plant more native trees and maintain them. Friends of Trees award recipients have been selected since 1999. This year, honorees for 2024 and 2025 were recognized in a ceremony at the Government Center on Oct. 30.

In opening remarks, Chairman Jeff McKay said "It's great to live in a county where even the youngest [school children] know the stakes" of preserving the environment. Comparing old historic maps with new ones of the county, he said, clearly shows the change from cleared farm land to tree canopy coverage, which brings environmental benefits of cooler tempera-

tures and better water quality. He added, "We have a lot to be grateful for, and the community thanks you for your investment, and awards those who went above and beyond. ... It matters."

Friends of Trees Awards - 2025

Kristen Dubelier - Individual Category

Working on several projects in McLean area public parks, Dubelier has removed invasive species and replanted native plants and trees. She has engaged in efforts to educate the public about the importance of native plant health while serving on civic boards and committees, coordinating a neighborhood tree program, and through social media, library displays, and speaking at homeowner and community events. She is part of the county's Tree Rescuer and Invasive Management Area volunteer network, serving as a site leader.

Jerry Peters - Individual Category

Initiating a project called "Oak Grove," Peters led a restoration effort in a section of Great Falls Grange Park. The approximately one acre section contained older red and white oaks that were in decline due to competition and soil compaction. Peters developed a plan to restore the native habitat and improve the soil conditions. He created educational signs touting the value of native plants and alternatives to turf grass. He was recognized for both conceiving the project and leading its implemen-

tation. Peters is a Fairfax Master Naturalist.

Jeanette Stewart - Individual Category

Founder of the grassroots non-profit organization, "Lands and Waters," which focuses on watershed protection and education, Stewart used her expertise on the Yorktowne Square Condominium Corridor Restoration Project. She designed, organized, and led volunteers in restoring the property's northern edge, to rescue hardwood trees overtaken by invasive vines. Volunteers under Stewart's direction recorded 700 hours toward improvement of the degraded habitat.

Laurel Hill Park Volunteer Team/IMA Site Team - Non-Profit Organization Category

Formed in 2018, the volunteer teams have been working to beautify Laurel Hill Park and remove invasive plants in regular work sessions each week. Over the past fiscal year, over 280 volunteers worked in the park for over 600 hours while enjoying nature and an opportunity to learn about native and non-native plants. Some volunteers were also satisfying an environmental class requirement, or creating a record to impress a college admissions officer or a court judge. The Teams provide an example of what caring residents can do to support the Park Authority and further the tree canopy goals of the Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan (CE-CAP) and Resilient Fairfax goals. The team is led by Virginia Master



The Laurel Hill Volunteer Team/IMA Team was one of the 2025 winners in the Non-profit Organization Category.

Naturalist Susan Laume of Springfield, author of this article.

Nature Forward - Non-Profit Organization Category

Nature Forward planted hundreds of trees and thousands of understory plants at Sequoyah Condominiums and Murraygate Village, both multifamily communities along the Route 1 corridor in Alexandria. Their volunteers, along with property management staff, resident volunteers and Boys

and Girls Club members worked together to plant appropriate and preferred tree species. Nature Forward educated volunteers on ecological gardening principles, in English and Spanish, promoting the concept of "Treecosystem," to plant native ground covers along with native trees to positively counter the urban heat island effect, while benefitting storm water management, water quality and pollinator habitat.

SEE FRIENDS OF TREES, PAGE 19
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Non-Profit Organization: Nature Forward



PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME

Nature Forward also was a winner in the 2025 Non-profit Organization Category.

Friends of Trees Awards

FROM PAGE 14

GordonUS LLC - Business Category

Under the leadership of landscape architect and arborist, Doug Koeser, GordonUS LLC developed the winning concept for the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority. The Lodge at Autumn Willow opened in 2025 providing 150 affordable housing units for seniors. The 20+ acre site preserved over 11 acres of mature trees and critical woodland habitat. Invasive species were removed and over 150 native and climate-resilient trees were planted around the building. The business is recognized for "innovative and environmental stewardship that integrates natural landscaping practices with strategic reforestation and invasive species removal, exemplifying how private industry can lead impactful conservation-based solutions to preserve and expand tree canopy in rapidly developing areas."

Friends of Trees Awards - 2024

Maryam Dadkhah - Individual Category

A well known conservationist in the Vienna area, Dadkhah has worked to educate others about native trees and plants. Her volunteer efforts include: working as a project manager for Fairfax Releaf; improving the appearance and health of area parks with the Town of Vienna; instructing Navy Federal employee volunteers on invasive species removal and native tree and shrub planting; and partnering with the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District and Fairfax Releaf to plant 337 native trees and shrubs, in the Wildwood, Glyndon and Southside Parks. Dadkhah has set a personal example by enhancing her own property with plantings of nearly 80 native trees and shrubs; and by convincing friends and family members to install some 66 additional trees and shrubs. Dadkhah established and maintains a "little book and seed library" on her lawn along a well traveled sidewalk. Those passing can borrow books

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PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Braddock District staff member Andrea Lewis stands at graphic of winners with Susan Laume, who leads the Laurel Hill Park Volunteer Team recognized in 2025

about native plants and their benefits, or select from a collection of free seed packets to encourage native wildflower planting.

Carol Wolter - Individual Category

Volunteering with the Fairfax County Park Authority as an Invasive Management Area site leader, and as the chair of the McLean Trees Foundation, Wolter has worked to protect and increase McLean's forest area. She led volunteer efforts to remove aggressive vines in Churchill Road Park and raised funds for chemical treatment to thwart their return. Turning her efforts toward Lewinsville Park, she worked with scouts and Operation Stream Shield to remove invasive plants, and with park maintenance to plant additional trees about the baseball fields. Wolter's efforts added more than 270 volunteer service hours, over 103 volunteer workdays with a total of 1,132 volunteers participating, removed 12 bags and 26 dumpsters full of invasive plant materials from the parks, and planted 47 7-8ft trees, and 400 tree and shrub saplings. Her work was described by the Tree Commission as "... an astounding individual effort to save a substantial amount of our county's urban forest."

Tysons Forest Community Task Force - Non-profit Category

A 23-person task force was established to preserve and enhance an intact 65-acre urban forest in the Hunter Mill portion of Tysons. Supported by the Hunter Mill and Providence Districts' supervisor staff, community residents, build-

ing owners, office tenants, conservationists, and Park Authority staff, the group developed 24 recommendations. Nine of the recommended projects were completed in fiscal year 2024, including a hotel conversion to expand the forested footprint, an Eagle Scout project with extensive plantings, and an Earth Day clean up with more than 35 volunteers. The Task Force is described as "the embodiment of a community of practice in action at a local level."

Urban Forest Alliance - Non-profit Category

Founded in 2021, the Urban Forest Alliance is a grassroots organization dedicated to preserving and enhancing the native trees and natural beauty of its Dranesville District neighborhoods, Franklin Park and Franklin Forest. The group restored a large tract of neglected highway right-of-way along Old Dominion Drive, by engaging volunteers to clear out invasive plants and trash, and installing a native plant pollinator garden, then planting more than 100 trees. They communicated with the community to educate others, building neighborhood knowledge about native and invasive plants and the importance of reforestation.

The Oct. 30 ceremony also included presentations of Environmental Excellence Awards and James M. Scott Exceptional Design Awards. For information on all the awards and a list of winners, go to <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/environment-energy-coordination/design-and-environmental-achievement-awards-2025>.



PHOTOS BY FAIRFAX COUNTY RESCUE

Arriving in Kingston.

Fairfax County Urban Search and Rescue Team Addresses Hurricane Melissa Destruction

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

Late October was a busy time for Virginia Task Force 1 as they arrived in Kingston, Jamaica as part of the U.S. Department of State disaster response team, addressing the damage from Hurricane Melissa. The task force, consisting of 34 persons and four dogs, was an effort by the Fairfax County Urban Search and Rescue team who joined forces with the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of State and United Nations INSARAG team.

VA Task Force 1 conducted an aerial survey which covered 350 miles, and were part of a team deployed to the Black River, addressing the damage and needs of residents in that area.

Priorities include establishing a base of operations and working with the Jamaican authorities to ensure the opera-

tions meet their needs, they reported. They linked up with the Los Angeles Fire Department during the operation as well.

Mercy Chefs, a non-profit disaster and humanitarian relief organization, arrived in Jamaica after the task force, with 20 people and 600,000 pounds of food to feed as many as they can during and after the operation. Mercy Chefs is based in Portsmouth, Virginia.

To donate to help Jamaica, a few suggestions:

- ❖ American Friends of Jamaica <https://theafj.org/>
- ❖ WalkGood Jamaica Hurricane Relief Fund <https://givebutter.com/walkgoodjamaica>
- ❖ World Central Kitchens <https://www.worldcentralkitchen.org/>
- ❖ MercyCorp <https://www.mercycorps.org/>
- ❖ Support Jamaica Official Relief Portal supportjamaica.gov.jm



Assessing the destruction from Hurricane Melissa.

ENTERTAINMENT

NOW THRU NOV 9

“Fair Play” Extended. At 1st Stage, McLean. 1st Stage is thrilled to announce Ella Road’s “Fair Play,” directed by 1st Stage Associate Artistic Director Deidra LaWan Starnes, has been extended through November 9. The 1st Stage production of Fair Play features Mahkai Dominique and Camille Pivetta, and welcomes the actors to 1st Stage. Visit 1ststage.org/fair-play for the schedule.

NOV. 6 TO FEB. 24, 2026

Bernie Boston, A Retrospective Photography Exhibition. At Pleasant Grove Church and McLean Community Center. Presented by McLean Project for the Arts and The Friends of Pleasant Grove. Sponsored by The Friends of Historic Pleasant Grove, 8641 Lewinsville Road, McLean. Visit www.historicpleasantgrove.org.

THURSDAY/NOV. 6

“Train to Busan.” 1 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Presented by The Alden – Foreign Language Film. A man, his estranged daughter and other passengers become trapped on a speeding train during a zombie outbreak in South Korea. This horror movie has some of the most innovative imagery in the zombie genre. Recommended for audiences over 18 years old.

FRIDAY/NOV. 7

“The Accidental Hero.” 7 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. This completely true story is a multimedia, one-man show about Lieutenant Colonel Matt Konop, a WWII American officer who miraculously liberates the Czech villages of his grandparents. Written and performed by his grandson, Patrick Dewane, “The Accidental Hero” is based on typewritten accounts, photos and rare film footage that his grandfather kept secret until his death. This is an enthralling, humorous and moving adventure of miraculous escapes and astonishing coincidences in which Dewane takes on a dozen different roles.

NOV. 7-8

Antique Shopping! McLean Antiques Show & Sale. Friday, Nov. 7, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 8, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. It’s a tradition! If you love art or history, you’ll love this show. Discover fine antiques, art and collectibles, as well as the unusual from across the globe. Scores of reputable dealers can be found at this highly celebrated show of 49 years. The show features antiques, mid-century decorative accessories and furniture, folk art, porcelain, silver, jewelry, paintings and prints, glass, carpets, vintage clothing and much more. Relax with a cup of coffee or stay for lunch at the onsite café. For more information and a list of dealers, see dfshows.com. New show days this year!

FRIDAY/NOV. 7

Fairfax Symphony Orchestra. At Capital One Hall, McLean. Featuring a full screening of Disney Tim Burton’s The Nightmare Before Christmas, featuring Danny Elfman’s score performed live by the Fairfax Symphony with conductor Jason Seber. Audiences can experience the beloved film like never before as Jack Skellington’s journey unfolds on the big screen, accompanied by the orchestra in perfect sync.

FRIDAY/NOV. 7

Memoir Writing with Shabnam Curtis. 2-3:30 p.m. At Reston Regional Library, Reston. Learn the basics of writing a memoir as well as guidance and feedback on drafts of your own memoirs. Led by published memoirist Shabnam Curtis, author of My Persian Paradox.

FRIDAY/NOV. 7

“The Poetry of Art.” 5-8 p.m. Opening Reception. At McLean Art Gallery, Chesterbrook Shopping Center, 6224 Old Dominion Drive, 20 ♦ THE CONNECTION ♦ NOVEMBER 5-18, 2025



A book sale will be held Nov. 19-23, 2025 at Richard Byrd Library in Springfield.

McLean. Join them for wine and refreshments generously donated by local restaurants, while you meet our artists and view their art firsthand. The show features all new art by our 34 members! For more information and free tickets, visit <https://poetry-of-art.eventbrite.com>.

SATURDAY/NOV. 8

A Different Look at Conflict Resolution. 2-3:30

p.m. Virtual, at Reston Regional Library, Reston. Join us for this workshop with life coach Shabnam Curtis to learn methods that help find peaceful resolutions to disagreements and misunderstandings.

SATURDAY/NOV. 8

Scouting for Food. The Scouting America National Capital Area Council (NCAC) will once again mobilize thousands of youth and

families to collect food donations for neighbors facing food insecurity. In advance of the collection day, Scouts will distribute notes on doors to inform residents about the drive. On Nov. 8, Scouts will return to neighborhoods to gather non-perishable food items left out by community members. Residents who receive a notice on their door are encouraged to leave their donations in bags or boxes on their doorsteps for easy pickup.

SATURDAY/NOV. 8

360 ALLSTARS. 4 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. In its debut at the Center for the Arts, supercharged urban circus 360 ALLSTARS combines spectacular dancing, beatboxing, acrobatics, BMX biking, and more in a fusion of extraordinary artistry, emerging from street culture. Boasting a stellar international cast of world champion and world record-holding athletes and artists, the group has performed for sold-out crowds worldwide including runs on Broadway, at the Sydney Opera House and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

SATURDAY/NOV. 8

Native Seed Exchange. 10 a.m. to noon. At Runnymede Park, 195 Herndon Parkway, Herndon Virginia. At the pavilion near the info kiosk. Event sponsored by Friends of Runnymede Park (FoRP). You do not have to bring seeds to take seeds! All interested community members are welcome and encouraged to come take seeds! This is a gifting, free exchange event. While bringing seeds to share helps add to the inventory and enhance the experience, not having seeds to offer should not be a deterrent! No prior knowledge is necessary to come take seeds.

SATURDAYS/NOV. 8 & 15;

MONDAYS, NOV. 10 & 16

Fairfax Tree Savers PRISM - Join in official launch and Week of Action. Learn how to rescue trees and why you should. PRISM facilitates community-wide efforts by residents and organizations to stem the epidemic of invasive plants, protecting our trees and promoting the growth of the life-supporting plants that are native to our ecosystem. Join in at upcoming events in Alexandria, Annandale, Burke, Clifton, Falls Church, Lorton, Reston, and Springfield. Register at <https://www.fairfaxprism.org/upcoming-events>

SUNDAY/NOV. 9

3-5 p.m. Public Grand Opening of the Ovissi Boutique, 11932 Democracy Drive, Reston Town Center, celebrating Nasser Ovissi, Ira-



The 360 ALLSTARS will perform on Saturday, Nov. 8, 2025 at GMU Center for the Arts.

ENTERTAINMENT

nian-American artist and longtime Reston resident. Also featuring jewelry and ceramics by artists of Iranian heritage. galleryovissi.com

SUNDAY/NOV. 9

“What We Love” Art Exhibition. At JoAnn Rose Gallery, Reston. The show features mixed-media works by Alfa Tate-O’Neill that blend acrylic paint, photography, and hand-applied rhinestones—creating a magical realism on canvas. Each piece begins with a photograph and evolves through layers of color and texture that make memory shimmer in a fresh, modern way. Meet the Artist reception on Sunday, November 9, from 2–4 PM.

SUNDAY/NOV. 9

VCO Concert “One Singular Sensation.” At Capital One Hall, McLean. Part of the Virginia Chamber Orchestra (VCO) concert series, “A Season of Storytelling” to celebrate the orchestra’s 55th year anniversary! Join in a dazzling evening celebrating the unforgettable melodies of one of New York’s and Hollywood’s most beloved composers, Marvin Hamlisch.

SUNDAY/NOV. 9

Hands On Day. 1 to 4 p.m. At Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. The museum is hosting this community event with our Station Master Volunteer, Mario. Join community Model Train Enthusiasts who will be setting up their trains. Come and see local train enthusiasts. This is not a ‘club’ event but rather local families coming together to share their love of Model Trains. Admission: Museum members and ages 4 and under, free; ages 5-12, \$3; ages 13 and older, \$5, \$6 for special events. Seniors, \$4. Military, active and retired, \$4. www.fairfax-station-railroad-museum.org, www.facebook.com/FFXSRR, 703-425-9225.

SUNDAY/NOV. 9

Repair Cafe Event. 12-2 p.m. At Mary Riley Styles Library in Falls Church. They are a group of volunteer repair experts with a focus on community. Once a month, they bring tools and knowledge to a library in Fairfax County to provide repairs and advice for a variety of things. Volunteer link: <https://ide.ali.st/jhung2>

SUNDAY/NOV. 9

Mornings at the Museum. 10:30 a.m. to noon. At Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. Unwind and rejuvenate your spirit at “Mornings at the Museum” a peaceful meditation and sound bath event held at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum. Nestled in a tranquil setting, this unique experience combines the calming practices of meditation with the healing vibrations of sound therapy. To secure your spot, visit the event Meetup Page contact the facilitator at 703.615.4976.

MONDAY/NOV. 10

250th Birthday Celebration. At the National Museum of the Marine Corps. Guests may enjoy a live performance by the string quartet from “The President’s Own” Marine Band, join the official cake-cutting ceremony, and sample slices of the traditional Marine Corps birthday cake throughout the day. The museum’s signature film, *We, The Marines*, screens at various times in the Medal of Honor Theater. Visitors may also stop by the U.S. Mint pop-up in the theater lobby to purchase a 250th USMC Anniversary commemorative coin, dine at the Tun Tavern or Devil Dog Diner, discover hidden 250th limited edition challenge coins throughout the Semper Fidelis Memorial Park and the Chapel, and honor veterans by placing flags along the trails of Semper Fidelis Memorial Park. Visit marine250.com/marine250-at-nmmc.

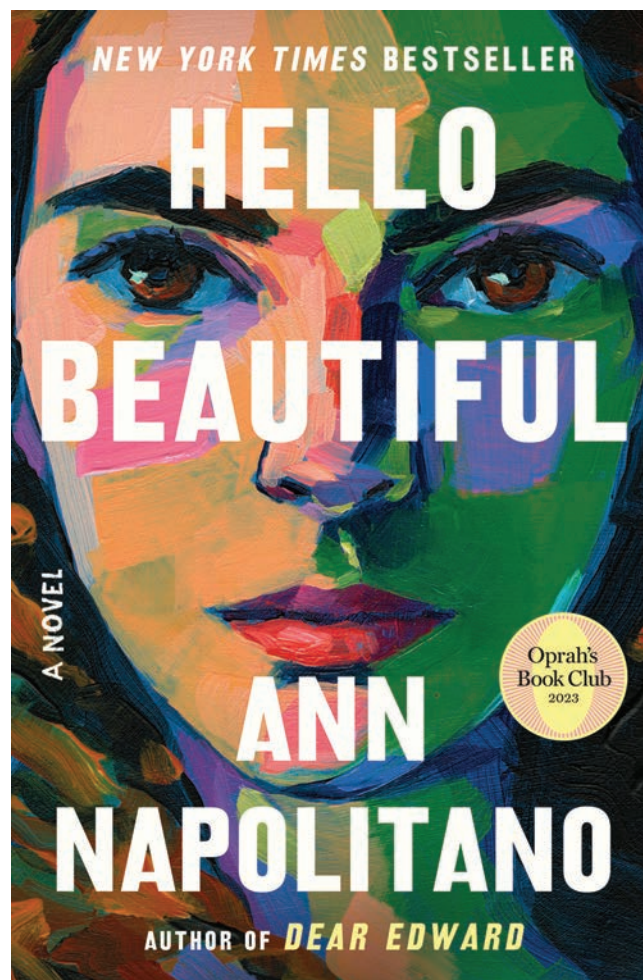
WEDNESDAY/NOV. 12

British Guitarist Clive Carroll. At Jammin’ Java, Vienna. Clive Carroll is one of the UK’s most celebrated acoustic guitarists — a breathtaking performer whose concerts blend technical

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The 250th Birthday Celebration of the National Museum of the Marine Corps takes place on Monday, Nov. 10, 2025.



A Journey Within: Self Discovery Book Club will meet on Wednesday, Nov. 19, 2025 at Reston Regional Library.



The McLean Antiques Show & Sale takes place Nov. 7-8, 2025 at the McLean Community Center.

brilliance, humor, and deep musicality. From delicate Renaissance pieces to fiery jazz, blues, and original works, his shows reveal the limitless possibilities of the guitar, delivered with warmth and effortless charm. Ticket link: <https://www.bandsintown.com/e/107227865-clive-carroll-at-jammin-java>

THURSDAY/NOV. 13

Guitarist Pierre Bensusan. At Jammin’ Java in Vienna. Multi-award winning acoustic guitar virtuoso Pierre Bensusan has returned to North America for a very special tour. The French-Algerian is considered a superstar in Europe, wrapped a sold-out tour of China in May, and since June, has been selling out many of his 110+ run of live concerts across the U.S. and Canada.

THURSDAY/NOV. 13

Transportation Workshop. 6:30 p.m. At Oakton High School, 2900 Sutton Road, Vienna. The Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT) will hold a Community Workshop for the Oakton Congestion Mitigation and Safety Study. The study will include transportation analysis to test the effects on congestion from enhanced, modified, and/or new roadway connections, lane configurations and other improvements. Study recommendations also will factor the impacts to bicycle, pedestrian and bus networks in the study area, while considering expected impacts to safety for all roadway users. For planning purposes, please RSVP for the meeting to timothy.kutz-jr@fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703-877-5600, TTY 711.

THURSDAY/NOV. 13

Safe Community Coalition, in partnership with McLean Community Center
Exploring Boundaries in Parenting: Pros, Cons and Consequences. 7-8:30 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Setting effective boundaries for children and teens helps create healthier family relationships. We will explore setting reasonable expectations and boundaries for different developmental stages. We encourage discussion about scenarios and techniques that you have found effective, and we will provide tools and resources to help with the challenges of parenting.

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 23

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ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 21

FRIDAY/NOV. 14

Jazz4Justice Concert: The Latin Tinge. 8 p.m.
At GMU Center for the Arts, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. This year's concert will feature the Mason Jazz Ensemble (Director Jim Carroll); the Mason Jazz Vocal Ensemble (Director Darden Purcell); and special guest conductor, George Mason University President Gregory Washington. The event raises funds to support vital legal services for low-income Northern Virginians, as well as financial support for the Mason Jazz Studies department, including scholarships, trips, recordings, and student projects. Visit cfa.gmu.edu.

FRIDAY/NOV. 14

Holiday Kick-Off Celebration 2025. 6-8 p.m. At PenFed Plaza, Tysons Corner Center, McLean. Experience:
Santa's grand arrival
Spectacular holiday performances
Dazzling fireworks display
Festive retailer market and giveaways
The Enchant Holiday Light Experience sponsored by George Mason University
Performance Schedule:
6:05 PM – Dance Academy of Loudoun
6:45 PM – Fairfax Ballet
7:15 PM – George Mason University Green Machine

FRIDAY/NOV. 14

Friendsgiving Open House. 6-8 p.m. At Chesterbrook Shopping Center, McLean. Enjoy an evening filled with live entertainment, family fun, and special activities throughout the property, including:
Live jazz performance
Carnival games and giveaways
Photo opportunities with a vintage 1965 Chevrolet C-10 truck styled for the season
Visits with friendly alpacas and baby goats from My Pet Alpaca
Exclusive in-store promotions and activations from Chesterbrook merchants
The McLean High School String Quartet inside the McLean Art Society's Pop Up Art Gallery

FALL BOOK SALE

At Centreville Regional Library, 14200 St. Germaine Drive, Centreville.
Friday, Nov. 14, 1-5 p.m.
Saturday, Nov. 15, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Sunday, Nov. 16, 1-4 p.m.
Fiction and nonfiction for all ages. DVDs, audio-books and more. Bag sale on Sunday. Fill a grocery bag with books and DVDs for \$10.

SATURDAY/NOV. 15

Patriotic Pancake Breakfast. 8 to 9:30 a.m.
Sponsored by the Rotary Club of Herndon-Reston. This heartfelt tradition brings us together to honor the brave Veterans of Herndon and Reston and their spouses/partners. With support from Trinity Presbyterian Church's Men's Club, this event is free for Veterans of Herndon and Reston, as well as their spouse/partner. Veterans are asked to sign up for their breakfast at RotaryPancakes.com. The morning will also include patriotic recitations from the Scouts, music, and words of thanks from community leaders. If you'd like to donate a breakfast and contribute \$20 or more, visit HRRotary.com.

SATURDAY/NOV. 15

Okinawa Karate Seminar. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
At Crowne Plaza Dulles Airport Hotel, 2200 Centreville Road, Herndon. This event brings together practitioners and instructors from around the region to demonstrate and impart knowledge about the traditional Okinawan art form - karate. Visit: <https://offer.traditionalkarate.com/karate-seminar>

SATURDAY/NOV. 15

Maternal Health Forum. 8:50 a.m. to 4 p.m.
At Inova Center for Personalized Health Conference Center, 8100 Innovation Park Dr., Fairfax. Maternal Health Forum: Empowering Our Families through Advocacy, Access, and Action. This event is dedicated to supporting maternal health from conception through postpartum.

SATURDAY/NOV. 15

Celebrate Fairfax Recycles Day with Touch-a-Truck Event. 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. At Backlick VRE parking lot, 6900 Hechinger Drive, Springfield. The following hard-to-dispose of items will be accepted:
Small E-Waste (no bigger than 24" X 24")
Computers – laptops – desktops - hard drives - toner and ink cartridges - cell and smart phones – power supplies - audio equipment – mice keyboards – servers
Please NO Cathode Ray Tube monitors or TV sets!
Household Batteries
This includes single use (AAA, AA, A, C, D, 9-volt) and rechargeable (Lithium-Ion)
Glass Bottles & Jars
Clean, with or without lids on
Books
Only books with ISBN code.
Please NO encyclopedias, magazines, or water-damaged books
SWMP is partnering with the Lions Club and ECHO to accept these donations:
Eyeglasses
Frames with single focal lenses are preferred.
Winter Jackets
Adult and child sizes please, clean and new or gently used. NO stains, tears, missing buttons, broken zippers.
Housewares:
-Operational microwaves and vacuums
-Pots and Pans
-New or gently used linens, including:
Towel sets (bath towel, hand towel, wash cloth)
Sheet sets for Queen, King sizes
Comforters for King, Queen, Full, Twin
Attendees can stop by the Touch-a-Truck area for an opportunity to check out some of the large vehicles and heavy equipment used by DP-WES and other county agencies, such as a fire engine, flusher truck, CCTV truck, and trash and recycling trucks. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/recycling-trash/fairfax-recycles-day>.

SATURDAY/NOV. 15

La Santa Cecilia. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Grammy-winning and Latin Grammy-nominated La Santa Cecilia exemplifies the creative hybrid of Latin culture, rock, and world music. The ensemble's passionate, colorful performances utilize Pan-American rhythms including cumbia, bossa nova, rumba, bolero, tango, jazz, and klezmer music. Named after the patron saint of music, La Santa Cecilia is composed of Jose 'Pepe' Carlos (accordion/requinto), Alex Bendaña (bass), Miguel 'Oso' Ramirez (percussion), and 'La Marisoul' (vocals).

SUNDAY/NOV. 16

Mariza. 7 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. With a career spanning more than two decades and 30 platinum albums, Latin Grammy nominee and "the world's most popular contemporary fado singer" (Guardian) Mariza "is a dazzling, captivating force to behold" (Telegraph). Born in Mozambique and raised in the vibrant culture and music of Portugal, "Mariza is [fado's] biggest star for a reason," Rolling Stone notes. "She sings it not as musty nostalgia but as exuberant 21st-century pop ... remaking Fado's ancient sadness

into a majestic modern sound."

SUNDAY/NOV. 16

N Gauge Model Trains. 1 to 4 p.m. At Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. This special event is perfect for train enthusiasts of all ages, offering a unique opportunity to explore the intricacies of N scale model railroading. Join us for a fun-filled day of exhibits, hands-on activities, and demonstrations that celebrate this delightful hobby. Admission: Museum members and ages 4 and under, free; ages 5-12, \$3; ages 13 and older, \$5, \$6 for special events. Seniors, \$4. Military, active and retired, \$4. www.fairfax-station-railroad-museum.org, www.facebook.com/FFXSRR, 703-425-9225.

TUESDAY/NOV. 18

Climate Fresk Mural Workshops. 1-3:30 p.m.
At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. These workshops on the science of climate change raise public awareness about the nature of the crisis. The objective is to accelerate the understanding of climate issues at the global level and contribute to the actions needed to preserve life on the planet. Climate Fresk is a French nonprofit founded in December 2018. It uses a collaborative applied game based on 44 cause-effect cards where participants draw a fresco or mural that summarizes the findings of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. This workshop will teach you the fundamental science behind climate change and empower you to take action. Instructor: Energy Economist.

WEDNESDAY/NOV. 19

Financial Planning: For Families with Special Needs Children. 6-7 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. As parents, our priority is the care and support of our children. In this seminar, we remind parents to "put your air mask on first." We review the necessary steps to establish sound financial plans for parents and discuss the unique ways they must plan. Extra focus is on the needed estate, retirement and long-term care plans that help ensure parents are in the best place themselves, so they are better able to care for their children. Instructor: Clover Leaf Wealth Strategies.

NOV. 19-23

Book Sale. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. At Richard Byrd Library, 7250 Commerce Street, Springfield. Preview sale, Wed, 2-5 p.m. Entry fee \$10 per adult. General sale, Thu-Sat, 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Free to all. Bag sale, Sun, 12-2 p.m., \$5/Bag. Browse a wide variety of used books, CDs, DVDs, puzzles, and special gift quality items. Revenue supports library programming. For more details (or to volunteer), email rbfriends@gmail.com.

WEDNESDAY/NOV. 19

"Casablanca." 10 a.m. At Reston Town Center movie theater. Part of Reston Association 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.

Greenbriar Man Pleads Guilty to Killing Wife

FROM PAGE 5

to help her parents move into an assisted-living facility. The defendant didn't want to go. An autopsy was performed, and the cause of death was found to be the multiple gunshot wounds."

Sommer's weapon was a 1922 FN Herstal pistol. When first responders arrived, he showed them where he'd placed the gun on their couch.

Following his conviction, the judge ordered a presentencing report to be made

and also noted that it'll contain a possible recommended sentence within the state sentencing guidelines. Sommer will return to Circuit Court on Jan. 9, 2026 to learn how many years behind bars he'll be given.

Afterward, Commonwealth's Attorney Steve Descano issued a statement saying, "Marilyn Sommer's long life ended in her own home at the hands of her own husband. This is a tragic outcome for the whole Sommer family."

Some Reward



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

As a regular consumer of food made by others, outside of our home, I have, when prompted, joined their respective rewards' programs, to accumulate points, which turn into dollars which lower my net expenditures at their establishment. In setting up these accounts, a little bit of information is requested: name, address, email, date of birth, phone number, et cetera. It wasn't until recently, when a new iteration of programs had been installed that when September rolled around, I received a five-dollar credit in my account - for my birthday which is in September. In my nearly 10 years participating in these programs (think supermarkets as the most popular purveyor of these types of programs), I have never, ever received a birthday bump until now.

And so, with my bump in hand, figuratively speaking, I called in a takeout order at one of my local haunts. Ten minutes or so later, I was standing in front of the store's register waiting to pay for my order, which was, per my reward, about to be \$5 less than was quoted to me over the phone. The employee/young man, approximately high school age walks up to the register behind his side of the counter and asks my name. I give it to him, and he quotes the phone price. To which I reply: "I'd like to use my rewards' birthday credit." "Oh, happy birthday. How old are you?" He asks with a smile. "Guess" I reply. Before he could answer, I add: "Unless you think I look like I'm 80." He shrugs his shoulders and not really answering my question says: "I don't want to be disrespectful." I shook my head at his response, laughed and paid for my order. After a thanked him, I turned my head and followed my body back toward the entry/exit door where I then strolled to my car parked a few yards away, snickering and still smiling.

At home, after dinner, I sat down to write of this exchange, in an abbreviated form to make sure that, given my age, I would have sufficient notes to remind what was said so that I could write a column about it. And what preceded this paragraph and what will follow are my recollections and reactions to this employee not wanting to be disrespectful.

In thinking about it then and now, I can't quite determine what the employee meant. Did he think I looked aged 80? Was he afraid to guess an age, not 80 necessarily, but one he thought might offend me because the number was higher/older than I actually am? If truth be told, and it is a hard pillow to swallow (and believe me, due to my cancer diagnosis, I swallow a lot of pills), I am closer to aged 80 than I am to already having been aged 60. And as my fellow near-octogenarian might wonder: what happened to the last 20 years? How could I be that age (OKAY, I'll s, s, s, say it: 71.) I don't understand. I know time flies. But this seems like warp speed.

However, I can imagine that time doesn't fly by nearly as quickly for this young man as it does for me. After all, I was once his age working at Baskin-Robbins, way before they started sharing space with Dunkin' Donuts. So I have shared his one-to-one, up-close experience with customers who were mostly older than me (I was not quite aged 15, a rising 10th grader as would be said today). And I learned that summer, that guessing other people ages is fraught with all kinds of feedback/pushback. Most of it not good.

For me, this 'How old are you question'/my answer to him to: 'Guess,' was simply friendly banter. For him, apparently it was following the golden rule: respect your elders.

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



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