

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

NOVEMBER 6, 2025

Beltway Express Toll Lanes Deferred to 2026

Concerns include impacts on local roads, preserving right-of-way for Metrorail and.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
THE GAZETTE

Building new I-95/495 Beltway express lanes hit a bump in the road on Oct. 15 when the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) voted unanimously to postpone a decision until 2026 and requested additional analysis to achieve more regional agreement.

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) proposes to add 11 miles of express toll lanes from the Springfield interchange (I-95/I-395/I-495) to the route 210 interchange in Prince George's County, Maryland, near National Harbor. The project has drawn concerns from elected officials and others from Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C.

Delay Decision to 2026

The board's resolution defers the project and "encourages VDOT and MDOT to continue to explore project options and work with local jurisdictions towards securing a consensus on this important regional corridor." The board added an amendment that "directs VDOT to provide the TPB a report in 2026 on the status and outcomes of its work with all relevant jurisdictions."

TPB Chair and Fairfax County Supervisor Walter Alcorn said, "This corridor across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge is of great regional and even national importance, and this vote is one that our members have taken very seriously. These decisions are not easy, and that's why it's important for the TPB to serve as a forum for regional deliberation and collaboration. I believe our action today shows that there is more work to be done on the project to achieve the regional agreement necessary to advance."

Alexandria Mayor Alyia Gaskins indicated that the city supports the deferral. "We believe additional work is needed to fully evaluate the impacts and ensure that regional solutions align with community priorities."

The proposed alternative did not adequately address the city's concerns related to environmental, equity and neighborhood impacts," she emailed.

Holly Dougherty, President of the Mount Vernon-Springfield Chamber of Commerce said, "The Chamber is disappointed about the



VDOT estimates that over 200,000 vehicles travel over this segment of the Beltway daily.



Would more toll lanes relieve traffic along this section of the Beltway that 200,000 vehicles travel daily?



The lanes would extend across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge to Maryland's route 210, near the MGM Casino.



Some express concerns about local impacts to roads like U.S. 1 in Mount Vernon and Alexandria.

decision to defer inclusion of the Southside Beltway Express Lanes in long-range transportation planning. The daily congestion on the outer loop between Van Dorn and the Woodrow Wilson Bridge calls for attention."

Multiple Concerns

Among issues raised are those of some Prince George's County residents who believe that express lanes would move the current traffic bottleneck closer to Maryland route 210.

Some people, like Mount Vernon Supervisor Dan Storck, question the impacts on local roads. "Any one who drives this corridor regularly knows how severe the daily backups are along Fort Hunt Road and Richmond Highway caused by folks trying to get into Maryland," Storck said via email. "The TPB's decision to defer adding express lanes to the regional Visualize 2050 plan is the right step, as it allows everyone to step back and address the many unresolved questions surrounding the project, including those raised by Maryland."

"My position has been consistent



VDOT displayed this map of the project at public meetings earlier this year.

from the start: I could support the express lanes if the project delivers funding for key improvements to address our local street backups and if VDOT can clearly explain how it will prevent additional cut-through traffic," Storck continued. "My hope is that this deferral

provides the time needed to work collaboratively with Maryland and our residents to develop transportation solutions that will truly work for everyone."

Some argue that VDOT failed to evaluate multiple options. "VDOT never seriously considered any

alternatives to its widening and private toll lanes goal," contends Bill Pugh, Transportation and Climate Director for the Coalition for Smarter Growth. "There are near-term alternatives that can be implemented sooner than VDOT's

SEE BELTWAY EXPRESS, PAGE 7

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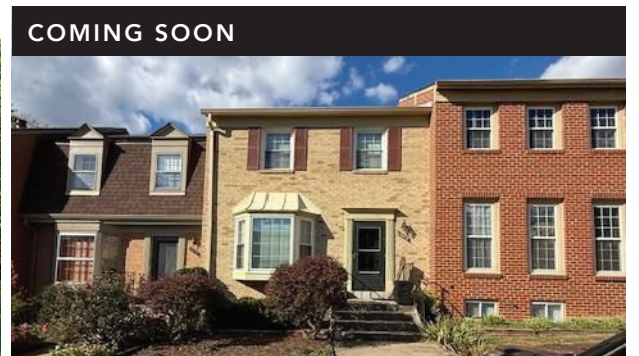
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Beavers Have Value

North America's largest rodent offers ecological benefits.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE



Logo, Human-Beaver Co-existence Fund

“Beavers matter,” Alison Zak told her audience in an Oct. 22 Zoom presentation to the Friends of Dyke Marsh, Friends of Mason Neck State Park, Friends of Huntley Meadows Park and Nature Forward. Zak is the founder of the Human Beaver Co-existence Fund.

She urged people to “reframe their thinking that beavers are pests.” Beavers have a valuable ecological role. They improve water quality, restore freshwater systems, protect wetlands, enhance groundwater recharge and increase biodiversity. Their foraging can promote plant growth. By building dams and creating ponds, they slow water which can reduce harmful sedimentation. A beaver-created wetland can attenuate flooding.

Mount Vernon-area Beavers

Beavers usually inhabit water bodies that have a reliable and plentiful supply of woody vegetation nearby.

Greg Crider, a Williamsburg Manor resident, reports, “For decades beavers have lived in Little Hunting Creek. They come out of Colonel John Byers Park behind our neighborhood and chew their way into our yards on William and Mary Drive. They have also taken down trees and shrubs at our neighborhood entrance on Collingwood Road.”

Beavers are busy in the Stratford Landing area too. Betsy Martin, president of the Friends of Little Hunting Creek, says that beavers have built dams and lodges in the creek there for some time. One industrious “beaver came across the street, Thomas Stockton Parkway, which parallels part of the creek, and gnawed off some big branches on this side of the street,” Martin said.

In Hollin Hall Village, near the swimming pool and Lafayette Drive, beavers took down trees this year, says Leo Milanowski, president of the Hollin Hall Village Citizen Association. “We saw a lot of gnawing marks on big trees,” he reported. “They were not shy about leaving the woods and going into yards.”

Karen Stein, who lives in that area, says that beavers have been active near her house since 2022, chomping down some trees and bushes. This year, they cut down a pear tree in a neighbor’s yard.

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Beavers have been at home in Dyke Marsh off and on over the years. This past spring, some River Towers Condominium residents could watch beavers in the western part of the preserve from their condo windows. Beavers built a lodge and dam there and this summer, the dam was breached, cause unknown.

A Big Rodent

Beavers are North America’s largest rodent and can live into their twenties. “Their ancestors go back at least a million years,” Zak said. They primarily eat herbaceous vegetation, woody and aquatic plants. Beavers build lodges of sticks, branches and mud, usually in the water, with the lodge entrance underwater. They can live in large river systems where water flows fast or deep and may live in river banks, Zak said.

They are adapted for semi-aquatic life, with a broad tail that can “whack” the water, claws for digging and webbed feet like flippers. Their predators are coyotes, bobcats, bears, raptors and at times, people.

Beavers are primarily nocturnal and live in colonies of four to eight related individuals, according to Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) website. “The colony has a home range size of about eight acres,” notes DWR.

Almost Eliminated

Before the 1600s, there were 12-to-14 million beavers in North America, but in the mid-1600s the fur trade took off, said Zak. Beaver pelts were in demand in the U.S. and for trade with Europe and beaver numbers plummeted to an estimated 100,000 at the height of the fur trade. “We almost lost our population of North American beavers,” Zak said.

In Virginia, beavers were nearly extirpated in the early 1900s. In the 1930s, wildlife managers reintroduced them. “Beavers have recolonized much of their historic range,” Zak said. Most beaver



North American beaver



Beaver swimming



Back end of a beaver showing the tail



Beaver eating the bark off a tree branch



Beaver chew on burning bush, Williamsburg Manor

trapping today is what she called “nuisance trapping.”

How to Live with Beavers

Most conflict between people and beavers centers around tree felling and flooding. With their large teeth, beavers cut down trees for food, dams and lodging. To prevent a beaver from chewing down a tree, the most practical solution is beaver fencing or metal cages wrapped around the tree. Zak recommends 14-gauge welded wire, four feet tall with two-inch by four-inch mesh.

Zak’s website offers tips for living with beavers and non-lethal management methods such as pond levelers, flow devices and culvert fences. She said that relocation is not legal in Virginia.

“Beavers teach us to embrace change. This critter shows up and does a lot of changing in a short



A beaver-felled tree on the Dyke Marsh boardwalk

time,” she said.

More Information

Beaver management, <https://coexistwithbeavers.org/> and

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/wildlife/beaver-management>

North American Beaver, <https://dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/information/north-american-beaver/>

New Fireboat Christened

PICTURES CONTRIBUTED

Named for Captain Barry Maham who died earlier this year at the age of 50 from occupational cancer.

BY MIKE SALMON
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

On Saturday morning, Oct. 25, Mount Vernon Supervisor Dan Storck and community members gathered at Pohick Bay to christen the department's new fire boat "The Maham." The boat is named in honor of Captain Barry Maham who died from occupational cancer at the age of 50 earlier this year.

"Saturday's gathering was a beautiful trib-

ute to Barry Maham, a man who devoted his life to protecting the residents of Fairfax County, and especially those in Mason Neck. The Mount Vernon community and I have long recognized the importance of this investment to support waterway safety. Ensuring that FCFRD has the resources to protect everyone who lives, works and plays on the water will always be one of my top priorities. Naming the new state-of-the-art Gunston Fire Boat in his honor is a powerful reminder of his courage and commitment to service. The new boat, The Maham, will continue his legacy of protecting lives on the water he loved so much."

"We christen a promise, a promise to always be there to someone who calls for help" said one of the presenters from Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department.

In 2004, Fire and Rescue Boat 420 "Gunston Hall" was christened.

See Barry Maham's obituary at <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/name/barry-maham-obituary?id=58062795>



Supervisor Dan Storck speaks with Fire Chief John Butler as they push away from the docks in Pohick.



The Maham out on the open water.



There's a landing at Pohick Bay Park that is busy in the summer.



Captain Barry Maham was remembered by Mount Vernon Supervisor Dan Storck and the officers

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 email to calendar@connectionnewspapers.com

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Assistance League of Northern Virginia is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that feeds, clothes and provides reading assistance and books to children in need. Assistance League's programs touch the lives of hundreds of children in Fairfax and Prince William Counties and the City of Alexandria. There are many volunteer opportunities for community members to contribute to helping those in need. To learn

more, email info@alnv.org, or visit www.alnv.org.

STEM Professionals Needed. Help assist K-12 STEM teachers as part of the American Association for the Advancement of Science's STEM Volunteer Program, stemvolunteers.org, during the 2018-19 school year. In the 2017-18 school year, there are 85 volunteers in 6 Northern Virginia school districts. Contact Don Rea at 571-551- 2488, or donaldrea@aol.com.

Volunteer Drivers Needed. Drivers needed by the American Cancer

Society to take cancer patients to treatment in Northern Virginia. To volunteer, call 1-800-227-2345 or go to cancer.org/drive.

RSVP, a volunteer network for seniors seeking service opportunities in and around Fairfax County, Arlington County and the City of Alexandria, offers a wide array of opportunities for volunteers 55 and older. RSVP volunteers enjoy flexible schedules, free accident and liability insurance while serving, optional mileage and meal reimbursement and are invited to volunteer group projects and

social gatherings. To sign up for an upcoming orientation, email Carly Hubicki at chubicki@volunteerfairfax.org or call RSVP at 703-403-5360. To learn more about RSVP visit www.rsvpnova.org.

Mentors Wanted. Two creative programs that help transform the lives of Alexandria's preteens are seeking volunteer mentors. SOHO, which stands for "Space of Her Own," and "Space of His Own," serves vulnerable fifth graders in Alexandria. The programs pair men and women with youth in need of positive adult

role models, to help support and guide youth in making healthy choices and succeeding in school and in life. Visit www.spaceofherown.org and www.spaceofhisown.org. For more information on how to become a SOHO mentor, contact Sarah Maroney at sarah.maroney@alexandriava.gov or phone at 703-746-4687.

Farmer's Market Volunteers Needed. To volunteer for the Farmer's Markets, email Brian Morreale, brianmorreale@gmail.com



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Fairfax Police Chief Answers Questions After Release of Body-Camera Videos of Two Critical Incidents

Officer involved fatal hit-and-run pedestrian crash in Hybla Valley; officer-involved non-fatal shooting in Burke.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE GAZETTE

The Fairfax County Police Department released body-worn camera footage of two critical incidents during its Oct. 23 press conference. Chief Kevin Davis provided statements, and a question-and-answer period followed. Footage was released in accordance with FCPD General Order 402, which requires its release within 30 days of the incident.

Hybla Valley Officer-Involved Fatal Pedestrian Crash

The first incident was the crash in Hybla Valley that occurred on Sept. 23. Police responded at approximately 8:39 p.m. to the intersection of Richmond Highway and

Belford Drive. It began as a fatal hit-and-run pedestrian crash where a woman, Trina Jones, 62, of Alexandria was initially struck by a black Mercedes, which fled the scene. A responding Fairfax County police officer's cruiser then struck Jones while she was still lying in the roadway; Chief Davis confirmed during the press conference that this later contact proved fatal for Jones.

According to Davis, Jones was alive when the police car made contact with her. The officer's speed at the time of contact was between 14 mph and 17 mph. Davis recounted that a civilian driver put their car in front of Jones to shield her from oncoming traffic at the intersection, but then moved their car out of the way when they saw approaching

SEE FAIRFAX POLICE CHIEF, PAGE 12



SCREENSHOT FCPD NEWS CONFERENCE OCT 23

Fairfax County Police Kevin Davis answers questions during the Oct. 23



SCREENSHOT YOUTUBE

Image of scene leading up to the Fairfax County Police officer involved fatal hit-and-run pedestrian crash in Hybla Valley as viewed during the release of the body-worn camera footage of the incident during the Oct. 23 press conference. (Text box inserted by The Connection.)



SCREENSHOT YOUTUBE

Police body-worn camera image of Fairfax County Police non-fatal officer-involved shooting in Burke as the man walks toward police, as viewed during the release of the body-worn camera footage of the incident during the Oct. 23 press conference.



SCREENSHOT YOUTUBE

Image of scene leading up to the Fairfax County Police officer involved fatal hit-and-run pedestrian crash in Hybla Valley as viewed during the release of the body-worn camera footage of the incident during the Oct. 23 press conference.



SCREENSHOT YOUTUBE

Police circle the gun in the waistband of the man as viewed in the police body-worn camera image of Fairfax County Police non-fatal officer-involved shooting in Burke.

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Beltway Express Toll Lanes

FROM PAGE 1

proposed highway widening and toll lanes expansion, which even if there were regional agreement, would still be six or seven years away from completion.

These include exploring peak-period bus shoulder lanes, which are done in a number of U.S. metro areas, and expanding demand management programs and commuter incentives for bus and carpool.

“For example, VDOT and MDOT could collaborate to extend the new Northern Virginia RM3P commuter incentive program along the 495 corridor into Prince George’s,” Pugh said. “Other medium- and longer-term alternatives should also be explored, including transit, alternative managed lanes that don’t require widening and better help all commuters and boosting transit-oriented development.”

Coalition for Smarter Growth also supports preserving the option for Metrorail. Pugh noted, “The region committed to enabling future Metrorail across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge in the bridge project settlement. WMATA’s June 2025 letter to VDOT stated, ‘Key open questions remain unresolved...’ and that ‘VDOT’s preferred alternative increases future risks’ to repurposing the reserved right-of-way for transit.”

Pugh added, “VDOT’s design

plans show a giant express lanes ramp near I-295 landing in the space where their other renderings show future Metrorail running. VDOT has not explained how these ramps don’t severely constrain options for future rail in the corridor and raise the cost significantly.”

Mount Vernon resident Greg Crider commented, “VDOT has continued to press forward with its predetermined approach for express lanes while ignoring concerns of the community and surrounding jurisdictions. Hopefully, VDOT will change its approach.”

Congestion Could Worsen

Over 200,000 vehicles travel on this segment daily, VDOT estimates. At an April 1 hearing, Michelle Shropshire, VDOT’s Megaprojects Director for Northern Virginia, predicted, “Traffic conditions will get much worse.”

VDOT proposed three options: no build, one express lane in each direction from Van Dorn Street to the Maryland 210 interchange and two express lanes in each direction from Van Dorn Street to the I-295 interchange.

More Information

<https://www.vdot.virginia.gov/projects/northern-virginia-district/i-495-southside-express-lanes-study/>



CALENDAR

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SCAN CODE FOR MORE INFO



Over 200 people attended the Oct. 18 conference focused on steps to address climate change's impact on waterways.



Congressman James Walkinshaw expressed serious concerns about policy changes underway at the federal level.

Climate Change Hits Home, Focus of Conference

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
THE GAZETTE

Temperatures are rising. Storms are more intense. Flooding is more frequent, several speakers asserted at the third annual Climate Action Conference on Oct. 18 at Lake Braddock Secondary School. Climate change is here and affecting Northern Virginia, they argued to over 200 attendees.

New 11th district Congressman James Walkinshaw, who organized the first climate conference in 2023 as Braddock district's member of the Board of Supervisors, lauded Fairfax County's climate initiatives. He dubbed the current U. S. Environmental Protection Agency a "climate denial machine" and said, "I've been in Congress for six weeks. It's hard to see what's taking place in Washington, D.C. and not feel deeply alarmed at the moment when the planet is sending every possible warning, like rising seas and record heat. We're moving backwards." Walkinshaw was elected on Sept. 9 after Congressman Gerry Connolly died in May.

More Flooding

"No one has zero risk of flooding," Chris Herrington warned. Herrington is the Director of Fairfax County's Department of Public Works and Environmental Services.

He described three types of flooding: riverine, when water surges over creek and river banks into floodplains; urban flooding in low-lying areas where existing infrastructure is not appropri-



Anna Marie Laura from the Ocean Conservancy gave the keynote address at the third annual Climate Action Conference.



Mason District Supervisor Andres Jimenez lauded Fairfax County's climate change efforts.



Courtney Broderick represented Clean Air Partners.



Four panelists addressed the impact of climate change on water (left to right): Jamie Bain Hedges, Chris Herrington, Chris Koerner, Del. David Bulova, at the third annual Climate Action Conference.

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Climate Change Hits Home, Focus of Conference

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH

FROM PAGE 8

ately sized; and coastal flooding. Because the Mount Vernon magisterial district borders the tidal Potomac and Occoquan Rivers, he said the Mount Vernon area is “at significant risk from tidal surge.” While there is some flood control infrastructure in place, “Once it’s overwhelmed, [flooding] goes into neighborhoods,” he explained.

Storm events are more costly today than in past years. “Who pays for it?,” he posed. “We do.”

Drinking Water

Jamie Bain Hedges, General Manager of Fairfax Water, the local authority that processes 170 million gallons of water daily for two million people, explained that their plant treats water from two sources: the Potomac River, which has a 10,000-square-mile watershed spanning four states, and the Occoquan reservoir, into which water drains from a 590-square-mile watershed.

A warming climate affects drinking water in several ways, Hedges explained. Increasing climate variability leads to more variability in water supply, in part because of longer and more severe droughts and more uncertain stream flows. Intense storms carry more sediments and pollutants into the water supply, which then require treatment. Hotter water promotes algae growth. She cited as an example, a 2024 Potomac River “big event” when “the water was green” from algae growth. “It was a big wake-up call and we had to add more chemicals to treat it,” she said.

Another challenge is winter de-icing salts flowing off roads and parking lots. Fairfax Water cannot remove salt with existing technology, she said.

Warmer, Rising Seas

Keynote speaker Anna-Marie Laura, the Ocean Conservancy’s Director of Climate Policy, reported that 2024 was “the hottest year on record.” Climate change is warming the ocean, she said, which leads to, “heavier, less predictable and more frequent storms” and “more destructive hurricanes.”

Echoing her comments, Virginia Delegate David Bulova, chair of the tri-state Chesapeake Bay Commission, said that sea level rose one foot over the last century and in the next century will rise 1.2 to 1.5 additional feet. Higher sea levels can bring more flooding and inundate coastal wetlands, which are important to water quality and



Seventeen organizations and five county agencies had exhibits.



Stormwater runs off hard surfaces like this Belle View Shopping Center parking lot and pollutes area waters.

flood control. Because designers of much stormwater infrastructure built in the 1980s and 1990s did not factor in climate change, it will need retrofitting, he posited.

Chris Koerner, a Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District board member, said, “Science and facts matter.” He said more impervious surfaces increase stream flow intensity that peaks rapidly, erodes banks, lessens aquifer recharge and sends pollutants like pesticides, oils and salts into water bodies. He recommended more “conservation landscaping, replacing turf with gardens and using rain barrels and rain gardens to retain water on land.”

Mason District Supervisor Andres Jimenez touted Fairfax County’s “science-based solutions” and reported that the county will update the stormwater ordinance to make “failing to maintain stormwater facilities a violation,” for example.

Fairfax County resident Susan Miles said, “I have come to all three conferences and I have learned a lot and gotten actionable information. Here you can talk to

experts. I have made changes. I bought an electric vehicle and installed solar.”

Seventeen organizations and five county agencies had exhibits.

What People Can Do

In a breakout session titled “Rethinking Runoff,” Fairfax Water’s Nikki Bellezza offered a motto: Slow it down, soak it in, spread it out. She recommends that homeowners create a no-mow zone and convert grass to native plants.

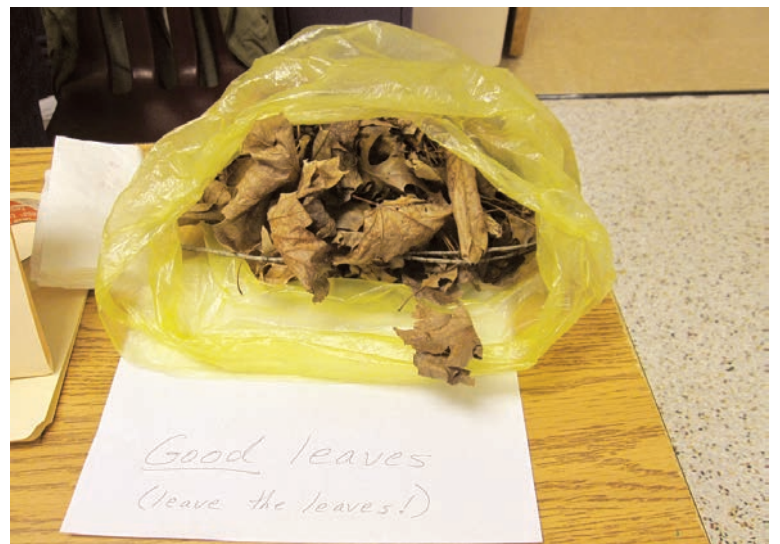
Shannon Curtis, a county public works official, stressed, “Only rain goes down the storm drain.” He listed as common sources of pollutants pet waste, litter, bacteria and pathogens. He urged people washing cars at home to direct the runoff to land, not onto streets because it can pollute streams. He urged the audience to plant drought-resistant native trees and plants and to reduce water use.

On flooding, Herrington advised, “There will always be risk. Know your own risk.”

“You can control what you do,” Curtis challenged.



Clean Air Partners auctioned off an electricity-powered lawnmower, trimmer and leaf blower that are less polluting than gas-powered tools.



The Friends of Holmes Run encouraged people to not rake or blow leaves and to leave their fall leaves to enrich soils and provide a winter home for insects.



The event’s poster welcomed attendees.



Fairfax Water treats 170 million gallons of water daily at its Lorton-area facility.



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 12
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Alexandria Rotary Foundation

On November 7, 2025, the Alexandria Rotary Foundation will host the **18th Annual Taste for Giving** at the Atrium Building in Old Town Alexandria.

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NOVEMBER 7, 2025
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**Atrium Building
277 S. Washington Street
Alexandria, Virginia**

2025 RESTAURANT PARTNERS



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 10

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



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>.

Fairfax Police Chief Answers Questions

FROM PAGE 6

police and fire vehicles. Statements from numerous witnesses indicated that Jones was speaking to them and said that she would wait for the police rather than move out of the road.

The police officer responding to the scene then struck the pedestrian, “who was still in the roadway,” according to police statements. The officer’s spontaneous comment audible on with the video immediately after his cruiser struck Jones was: “Please don’t tell me that I just hit her.”

According to FCPD in an Oct. 3 release, Officer Jalin Phillips, a 2-year veteran of the department, was the officer involved in the crash. Officer Phillips is assigned to the Mount Vernon Police District.

He is on restricted-duty status while the investigation continues.

Asked: during the press conference, “How badly was Miss Jones injured before, or if she was injured at all before our police car made contact with her?” Davis stated, “I don’t know,” regarding the severity of her initial injuries. However, he noted that “she wasn’t injured to the point where she was incapacitated from interacting or speaking” with the other people at the side of the road. Witnesses told detectives they were “in conversation with her, encouraging her to get out of the roadway.” But she indicated she wanted to stay there until the police arrived. Davis emphasized that locating the black Mercedes is “so important” because without it, they cannot estimate the severity of the initial contact or determine if it was minor or serious.

Non-Fatal Officer-Involved Shooting in Burke

The second incident is the non-fatal police shooting incident in Burke on Sept. 28 in the 9700 block of Church Way. FCPD officers from the West Springfield District Station were dispatched at 10:13 p.m. and responded to a call about an intoxicated man in crisis, locked outside his home by his mother. The man was armed with chainsaws, an ax and a blowtorch. “As officers continued negotiating, the man retrieved a gun. He racked the slide, placed the weapon in his waistband, and ignored repeat-

ed commands to disarm himself,” states the transcript.”

After 48 minutes of negotiation and continuing to ignore the officers’ commands, an officer deployed less-lethal projectiles. Then, “An officer then discharged their firearm, striking the man in the lower body,” according to the transcript. The man was transported to a hospital and treated for a non-fatal gunshot wound. Officers rendered first aid until fire and rescue arrived.

Davis affirmed the extensive resources and preparedness of the department for such a scenario: “We had the leadership team there, we had the co-responder team there, crisis intervention officer there. We had the clinician there. We had less than lethal options there.”

He emphasized that the deployment team was ideal, including ranks of major, lieutenant and sergeant — with the sergeant becoming the primary negotiator; a co-responder team that included a crisis-intervention-trained officer and a clinician; and less-lethal options, such as the bean-sack shotgun.

Davis said the officer who deployed the firearm, which resulted in the non-fatal injury, was not only crisis trained but was one of the crisis intervention team officers who goes to work with a clinician in her car.

Davis explained that due to safety constraints, the co-responder clinician was on the scene but couldn’t be used in the immediate contact area.

“One of the questions we always get, would a co-responder team have made a difference in this particular case, if we would have prematurely, or with an abundance of enthusiasm, asked a clinician to put herself in a position to be 40 feet away from someone armed with multiple weapons, I think that wouldn’t have been prudent for us to do. We would have put her in harm’s way.”

Davis concluded the discussion by identifying the underlying issue of the incident: the “mental health crisis” that is “present in our country right now, particularly with adult sons in particular, still living at home with their aging parents.” He stressed that despite their best efforts and the right personnel, “every outcome isn’t going to be like the one you draw up,” because of the decisions the person in crisis makes.

ENTERTAINMENT

MEETS EVERY SUNDAY

Bird Walks. 8 a.m. At 6401 George Washington Memorial Parkway, Alexandria. Friends of Dyke Marsh organizers lead bird walks every Sunday morning. Meet at 8 a.m. in the south parking lot of the Belle Haven picnic area. Walks are led by experienced birders and everyone is welcome to join us.

MEETS EVERY MONDAY

Monday Morning Bird Walk. 7 a.m. Meets at 3701 Lockheed Boulevard Alexandria. The Monday Morning Bird Walk is sponsored by the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park and takes place every Monday at 7 a.m. April-September and 8 a.m. October-March. Following the walk, members of the group gather at the nearby Denny's for breakfast and to compile the morning's bird list. Call (703) 768-2525.

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

Wednesday Night Bingo. 7 p.m. At Atlas Brew Works, 2429 Mandeville Lane, Alexandria. The Capital City Showcase, the company that brings you some of the DC area's best events, is hosting an amazing night of everyone's favorite game at Atlas Brew Works Alexandria. Win prizes on every round, and the winner of the final round gets a \$50 Atlas Brew Works gift card for your next visit! There's also \$6 select Atlas drafts! Plus pizza served from the world famous Andy's Pizza! Email at capitalcityshowcase@gmail.com

MGNV PLANT CLINICS ARE OPEN

The Alexandria Old Town Farmer's Market Plant Clinic at 301 King St., Alexandria operates on Saturdays from 7 - 9:30 a.m. Del Ray Farmers Market Plant Clinic at Oxford & Mt. Vernon Avenues, Alexandria operates on Saturdays from 8:30 - 11 a.m. The Arlington Farmers' Market at N. 14th and N. Courthouse Roads, Arlington operates on Saturdays from 8 - 11 a.m. The Fairlington Farmers' Market Plant Clinic at 3308 S. Stafford St., Arlington, operates on Sundays from 9 - 11 a.m.

YEAR ROUND ON SUNDAYS

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

ONGOING

Revolutionary War Exhibit. At the National Museum of the U.S. Army, Alexandria. The National Museum of the United States Army has opened a special exhibition, Call To Arms: The Soldier and the Revolutionary War. The two-year exhibition commemorates this year's 250th Birthday of the U.S. Army and next year's 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. This 5,000 square-foot exhibition features a rare collection, specially curated by the Museum, that includes Revolutionary War artifacts from the original colonies, England, France and Canada. Among the exhibit's highlights are a pair of General George Washington's pistols, the original flag of the 1st Rhode Island Regiment carried by the Army's first African American Soldiers, and a complete Loyalist uniform—one of the rarest items in the collection. The sword of British General Charles Lord Cornwallis, presented to Washington at the surrender at Yorktown, Virginia, will also be displayed for a limited time.

THURSDAY/NOV. 6

2025 Alexandria Film Festival Filmmaker and Sponsor Reception. 6-8 p.m. At The Athenaeum, Alexandria. Alexandria Film Festival invitation-only reception welcoming filmmakers to the festival and honoring sponsors and Athenaeum members at the Athenaeum gallery. The reception kicks off the 4-day in-person festival starting Friday, Nov. 7th. The festival will screen more than 50 films, and host more than a dozen premieres, with



The Alexandria Symphony Orchestra performs on Nov. 8-9, 2025 in Alexandria.

filmmakers attending from around the world. RSVP to admin@nvfaa.org

FRIDAY/NOV. 7

Garden Talk – Ground Cover Great Lawn Alternative. 1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. (16-Adult) Groundcovers are a great alternative to the traditional lawn. Learn how to use them in areas your lawn just won't grow. They are low maintenance, spread quickly and return each year. Come hear from Extension Master Gardener on how to select, grow and maintain different groundcover options. \$12 per person. Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktates> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. Code 46G.AW65

NOV. 7-30

"The Mini World: Small Works of Art" showcases tiny creations by Del Ray Artisans members in a variety of media and styles. Step into this miniature world and discover the joy of life's little things. View at Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria VA. Join in the Opening Reception on Friday, November 7, 7-9pm. Gallery hours are Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays & Sundays 12-6 p.m. Details at DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

SATURDAY/NOV. 8

Forest Bathing Walk in the Gardens. 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 a.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. (Adults) Experience Green Spring Gardens with all your senses. Join Certified Forest Therapy Guide and co-founder of local nonprofit Capital Nature, Ana Ka'ahanui, for a slow, meditative walk around the gardens. Inspired by the Japanese practice of Shinrin-yoku, this contemplative walk inspires interaction with the surrounding nature in a way that will help reduce blood pressure, boost immunity, and enhance mood and creativity. Decompress and feel a deeper connection with the natural world. The experience concludes with a soothing spot of tea, offering a moment to reflect and savor the essence of nature. Bring something to sit on the ground, which may be damp, and a water bottle. Dress for the weather. \$35 per person. Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktates>

or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. Code ZOY.EP00

SATURDAY/NOV. 8

Seasonal Fairy Garden Workshop. 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. At

Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. (Adults) Create a one-of-a-kind fairy garden scene out of natural materials with the help of instructor Bailey Price. Go on a guided walk to find inspiration

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 15

2025 ALEXANDRIA FILM FESTIVAL NOV 6-9

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A Connection Newspaper



ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 13

and collect items from nature to work with. Learn how to build miniature furniture using hot glue and natural materials such as dried plants, acorns, twigs, and bark. Feel free to bring fairy garden pieces from home to incorporate in your design. Register for both the class and the \$35 supply fee. Bring a box or container that will help you transport your creation home. \$43 per person. Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. Code ZKJ.XQ7J

SATURDAY/NOV. 8

Special Tour: Architecture of Woodlawn and Pope-Leighey House. 12 to 1 p.m. At Woodlawn and Pope-Leighey House, Alexandria. Woodlawn & Pope-Leighey House provide a unique opportunity to put two American styles of architecture – separated by over a century – in conversation with one another. Take a close look at both houses to examine what it was that the architects who built these homes were trying to convey about the people who lived here, the period they lived in, and what they thought the future held.

NOV. 8-9

Alexandria Symphony Orchestra. Nov. 8 at 7:30 p.m. at Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center; Nov. 9 at 3 p.m. at George Washington Masonic Memorial. Featuring James Ross, conductor; Michael Rusinek, clarinet; György Ligeti: Concert Romanesc; W.A. Mozart: Clarinet Concerto; Scott Joplin: Overture to Treemonisha; and Felix Mendelssohn: Symphony No. 4 “Italian”.

SUNDAY/NOV. 9

Georgetown Saxatones. 2 p.m. At The Athenaeum, Alexandria. Get ready to rock the house with everything from alternative to pop to soul with the Georgetown Saxatones! As Georgetown’s only community service a cappella group, they are passionate about sharing their music in support of worthy causes. Donations are welcome during the performance and the Saxatones will donate all of their proceeds to a humanitarian charity.

SUNDAY/NOV. 9

Consume to Destroy. 4 to 5:30 p.m. At The Athenaeum, Alexandria. Confront your fears and phobias through art with Heloisa Escudero’s solo performance Consume to Destroy. In this performance art, Heloisa reverses the process of what phobias do to an individual which is consume their energy. Instead, each participant symbolically destroys their phobias, fears, and/or anxieties by eating a delicious gluten-free vegan rice ball on a wooden skewer and then the skewer is turned into a sculpture.

SUNDAY/NOV. 9

Forest Bathing at Woodlawn and Pope-Leighey House. 9:30 am - 12:00 pm. At Woodlawn and Pope-Leighey House, Alexandria. Forest Bathing, also known as Forest Therapy, is a slow, mindful immersion in Nature. During a two and a half hour period, we move through the Forest and connect with the environment using all of our senses. This practice is deeply grounding and has many health benefits. Leading the session will be Emily Hampton, an Association of Nature and Forest Therapy Guides and Programs (ANFT) certified guide. She is a graduate of Stanford University and a 23 year veteran of the U.S. Navy. Emily is also a certified yoga teacher and Nidra meditation teacher.

NOV. 12 TO DEC. 7

Expressions in Light by Mahua Mazumdar. At the Torpedo Factory, Alexandria. Opening reception & artist talk: Friday, Nov. 14 from 6:30-8 p.m. Visit: <https://www.theartleague.org/gallery/exhibits/>

FRIDAY/NOV. 14

The Thirteen. 7:30 p.m. At Immanuel Chapel at Virginia Theological Seminary



The Georgetown Saxatones will perform on Sunday, Nov. 9, 2025 at The Athenaeum in Alexandria.

Alexandria. The Thirteen invites audiences to experience its work through the intimate configuration of a vocal quartet, with Artistic Director Matthew Robertson at the piano. Featuring Amy Broadbent, soprano; Kristen Dubenion-Smith, mezzo-soprano; Oliver Mercer, tenor; and Gilbert Spencer, baritone. The close alliance between nature and music dates to the earliest written treatises of philosophers and composers. In this concert featuring works by Barber, Brahms, Hindemith, Palestrina, and by contemporary masters, The Thirteen presents music on themes of the natural world and on nature as viewed through the kaleidoscope of love, in all its faces: divine, filial, and romantic.

SATURDAY/NOV. 15

Watercolor Workshop – Botanical Watercolor. 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. (16-Adult) For the beginner or advanced student, artist and instructor Dawn Flores will share watercolor techniques through exercises that help you understand color, composition and improve brush control. Learn about the history and types of paper used in botanical art. Basic drawing skills are helpful for drawing the plant specimen from which to paint an elegant botanical portrait. A supply list will be emailed before class. Bring a lunch. \$112 per person. Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. Code 6CZ.94LD

SATURDAY/NOV. 15

Garden Talk – Winterizing Your Garden. 10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. (16-Adult) Cleaning up your garden beds and pruning this fall can make your spring tasks lighter and improve the overall health of your garden. Learn from Extension Master Gardeners what you need to do to ensure that your plants are prepared for winter, from pruning, transplanting and mulching. \$12 per person. Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. Code 0CW.YFLO

SATURDAY/NOV. 15

Native Plants Tell Indigenous Stories. 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. (16-Adult) Join Smithsonian Gardens horticulturist, Christine Price-Abelow for a fascinating lecture on the garden surrounding the National Museum of the American Indian. Learn about the carefully selected native plants, their cultural significance, and the stories they tell about the land and Indigenous traditions. Discover how the landscape honors the connection between plants and

the American Indian community. \$15 per person. Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. Code T1L.DSNL

SUNDAY/NOV. 16

Open House. 4 to 7 p.m. In a creative partnership with Del Ray Artisans, Serenity Gallery, the in-home gallery of mosaic artist-photographer Nina Tisara, will host an Open House. Twenty percent of all sales (in person and online) will be donated to Del Ray Artisans nonprofit. The art may be viewed at Serenity Gallery (6408 Hayfield Place, Alexandria VA) or online. Please RSVP for the Open House. Details at delrayartisans.org/serenity-place

SUNDAY/NOV. 16

Garden Artists - Plant Poetry and Prose. 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. (9-Adult) Explore nature and spark your creativity. Walk through the garden, discovering hidden poems, then work on putting your own thoughts down on paper. Learn about different poetry forms, from sonnets to limericks to haiku. Whether you love to write or are just starting, this adventure will inspire you and help you feel closer to the world around you. All attendees, including parents, must be registered for the program. \$10 per person. Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. Code UQU.7E12

SUNDAY/NOV. 16

Open house. Mosaics by Nina Tisara and Art Photography by Steven Halperson. At Serenity Gallery/Del Ray Gallery. 4-7 p.m. At 6408 Hayfield Place, Alexandria. Twenty percent of all sales, in-person and on-line, will benefit Del Ray Artisans. Or (all day) online: <https://tisaraphoto.com/mosaics/SerenityGallery.html>. Reservations strongly suggested for in-person visits : ninat@ninatisara.com.

SATURDAY/NOV. 22

Watercolor Workshop- Mono Printing. 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. (16-Adult) Join artist Marni Maree in creating many one of a kind watercolor mono-prints on various types of paper. Learn the unique process of making hand pulled prints using your watercolor palette and some very common household products. A supply list will be emailed before class. Bring a lunch. \$112 per person. Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. Code SOL.RADB

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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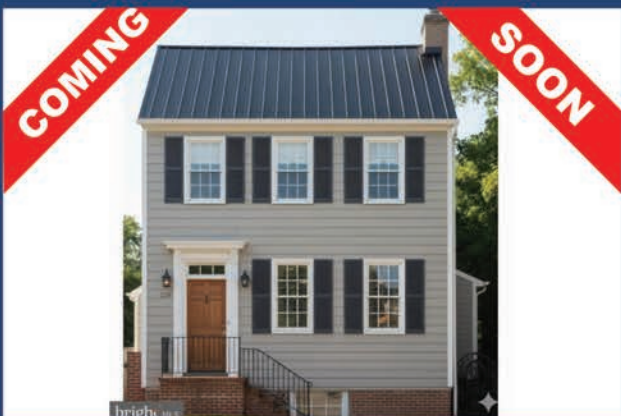
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