

A Legacy of Valor Veterans honored at Rocky Versace Memorial.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

The City of Alexandria and the nonprofit Friends of Rocky Versace gathered Nov. 11 at the Mount Vernon Recreation Center to commemorate Veterans Day with a solemn ceremony at the Captain Rocky Versace Plaza and Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

The memorial is named for Alexandria native Captain Humbert Roque "Rocky" Versace, a West Point graduate and Medal of Honor recipient who was executed as a prisoner of war during the Vietnam War after nearly two years of captivity. His unwavering resistance and devotion to duty earned him the nation's highest military honor posthumously in 2002. The plaza, dedicated the same year, also bears the names of 68 Alexandrians who were killed or remain missing in action in Vietnam.

Members of six Alexandria Gold Star families were in attendance: Gold Star Sister Susan Lilly Harvey (Army 1st Lt Lawrence Lilly); Gold Star Brother Robert Lockhart (Air Force Capt. Barry Lockhart); Gold Star Widow Bette Spengler Meuleners with her Gold Star Daughter Melissa and Gold Star Brother Jim Spengler (Army Capt. Henry Spengler); Gold Star Brother Earl Valentine (Army Pvt. Jeron Valentine); and Versace's sister-in-law, Curtis Versace.

Also in attendance were Virginia Del. Elizabeth Bennett-Parker, Alexandria vice Mayor Sarah Bagley, City Councilman Kirk McPike and former Mayor Allison Silberberg.

Gold Star families stood alongside veterans as the names of Alexandria's fallen were read aloud. Among the veterans was Fr. Ray Goins, a newly assigned priest at Blessed Sacrament parish and West Point Class of 2014 graduate. Goins read the name of USMA Class of 1964 Capt. Robert Walters as a representative of the 50 Year Affiliation Class for USMA 1964.

Following the reading of the names, Friends of Rocky Versace representative Kevin Rue emphasized that seven of the 68 men whose names are on the Versace Memorial remain Missing in Action in Southeast Asia from the

Vietnam War. They are: Capt. Rocky Versace; Seaman Apprentice John Winkler; Sgt 1st Class Douglas Blodgett; Maj. Morgan Donahue; 1st Lt Leland McCants; Maj. Joseph Davies; and 1st Lt Larry Lilly. The current number of U.S. military still unaccounted for in Southeast Asia from the Vietnam War is 1,566.

A tribute to Versace written by his fellow Vietnam War POW, Maj. James N. Rowe and found in Rowe's POW Memoir, Five Years to Freedom, was read during the ceremony.

The St. Rita American Heritage Girls Troop 1381 opened the ceremony with the Pledge of Allegiance, while Bishop Ireton High School student Catherine Cassidy delivered renditions of "The Star-Spangled Banner," "America the Beautiful," and "God Bless America."

"Rocky Versace frequently sang 'God Bless America' and other patriotic songs while a prisoner of war to boost the morale of his fellow POWs," noted Rue, who organized the event. Rue and audience members joined in as Cassidy sang the patriotic anthem in tribute to Versace.

The memorial's statue depicts two Vietnamese children with Versace, who had dreamed of working with Vietnamese orphans after the war. The first member of the U.S. Army to be awarded the Medal of Honor for actions performed in Southeast Asia while in captivity, Versace is believed to have been executed on Sept. 26, 1965. His remains have never been found.

"A Gold Star Flag hangs in the Capt. Rocky Versace display case in the foyer of the Mount Vernon Recreation Center," Rue said. "It bears the numeral 68 below the Gold Star on the flag to represent Versace and Alexandria's 68 Vietnam War fallen heroes whose names are on the benches in the Versace Plaza."

Rue presented two U.S. Navy veterans who were on duty in Southeast Asia and contiguous waters during the Vietnam War with the Department of Defense Vietnam War Lapel Pin.

Six classmates of Rocky Versace's USMA Class of 1959, together with one member from USMA 1959's 50



Friends of Rocky Versace representative Kevin Rue, third from right, is joined by West Point Class of 1959 and Rocky Versace classmates at the Mount Vernon Recreation Center Veterans Day ceremony. Pictured are: LTC Jack Bohman, COL Al Phillips, LTC George Day, LTC Mart Lidy, COL Kevin Rue, COL Art Bair, and COL Powell Hutton.

Year Affiliation Class of 2009 presented a wreath at the statuette of Versace and saluted as bugler Lt. Col. Stephen Tracy closed the observance with Taps.

In his closing remarks, Rue noted that the Alexandria Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities Department will coordinate the refurbishment of the Capt. Rocky Versace Memorial in spring, 2027.

"Patriotic Americans in the community have already donated \$10,500 towards the cost of repairs and preventive maintenance for the 23-year-old Memorial," Rue said. "The Plaza is a testament to the resilience, honor, and valor of Versace and all veterans willing to serve and, if necessary, to give their lives to safeguard our freedom."

For more information on the refurbishment or the Friends of Rocky Versace organization, email ForRV59@gmail.com.

PHOTOS BY
ALLISON SILBERBERG



Saint Rita American Heritage Girls Troop 1381 lead the Pledge of Allegiance at the Veterans Day Ceremony at Mount Vernon Recreation Center.

Reclaiming Thanksgiving: A Feast with Roots

The holiday table is both a celebration and a history lesson.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE GAZETTE

In the Hendersons' Alexandria kitchen, the air is thick with steam and history on Thanksgiving Day. A pot of collard greens simmers on the cooktop beside a roasted turkey, its skin glowing beneath a drizzle of honey and herbs. Savory aromas and time-honored friends fill every room of their home.

"This is what home smells like," said Alicia Henderson, wiping her hands on a linen towel. Her sister Danielle Bolger, who drove in from Fairfax that morning, nodded in agreement as she arranged a platter of roasted root vegetables, each piece glistening under a slathering of olive oil.

This has been the scene for what they call Friendsgiving at the Yard, a combination of the Turkey Day moniker and the spirit of the Yard itself, the central outdoor gathering space on historically Black college campuses where students come together to socialize.

The tradition began when a group of friends, all recent graduates of Spelman College and Morehouse College and members of historically Black fraternities and sororities known as the Divine Nine, couldn't afford to fly home for Thanksgiving. So, instead they had dinner with each other.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE PIERCE FAMILY

The Pierce family joins the Friendsgiving tradition by honoring heritage, lifting up history, and passing down the stories that shape who they are and who their children and grandchildren will become.

That first year's menu was a feast on a budget: boxed mac and cheese, a 49-cent-per-pound frozen turkey, and a pumpkin pie that someone picked up at the Giant supermarket.

Today, more than 25 years later, the tradition continues.

Over time they traded freezer-aisle birds for heritage free-range fowl and studio apartments for 8,000-square-foot homes. Though their lives have changed, the senti-

ment: friends, family, and heritage, remains the same.

They cook. They move together easily, trading pans and seasoning by feel. Sweet potatoes caramelize under a torch. Danielle pours cranberry sauce she made herself, laced with orange peel and cinnamon bark. There's laughter, the easy kind that comes from longtime friends who know exactly where the mixing bowls live.

As the couples began to have children,

they added a new tradition. Before the feast begins, those gathered take a moment to share what the families call "the context." It started years ago as a joke when someone teased Marcus Henderson for turning every meal into a history lesson.

"Most people talk about the Mayflower this time of year," Marcus says. "But our story starts before that. It began with the Africans who arrived in Virginia in 1619 on the White Lion and built communities long before the Pilgrims showed up."

At Friendsgiving, the holiday isn't about erasing history. It's about reclaiming it and weaving in the facts that tell their story.

"We wanted our kids to know that we've always been here," Alicia said. "That their roots go deep, deeper than any textbook will tell them."

That sense of legacy doesn't end with the meal.

After dinner one year someone started an impromptu step show, a high-energy tradition in which African American fraternities and sororities use synchronized, percussive movements and chants to express pride in their organizations.

"We can't perform like we did in college. We've got bad knees and might throw out our backs, but we still know how to make the Yard shake," Marcus laughed, referring to the central outdoor gathering spaces on historically Black college campuses where students come together to socialize.

The Friendsgiving feast isn't formal. It isn't even planned. It just happens, the way the best traditions.

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Freedom House

Historic restoration completed at Freedom House.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

The Freedom House Museum, one of Alexandria's most significant landmarks, reopened its doors with a ribbon-cutting ceremony Nov. 8 that marked the completion of an extensive exterior rehabilitation project.

Located at 1315 Duke Street, the museum is a solemn reminder of the city's role in the domestic slave trade and now serves as a beacon for education, reflection and reconciliation.

"From 1828 to 1861, thousands of men, women and children were trafficked through this building to the labor markets of the deep south," said Gretchen Bulova, Director of the Office of Historic Alexandria. "Today this museum honors the lives and experiences of the enslaved and the free Black people who lived in and were trafficked through Alexandria."

Originally the headquarters of Franklin & Armfield, one of the largest slave-trading firms in the United States, the building went on to house five successive slave dealers.

"This work is about more than bricks and mortar," Bulova said. "It's about ensuring that this space



Mayor Alyia Gaskins, fourth from right, prepares to lead dignitaries in cutting the ribbon to celebrate the end of the exterior restoration of Freedom House Nov. 8 on Duke Street in Old Town.

continues to bear witness to the history of the domestic slave trade and the strength of the people whose lives were forever changed here."

The city purchased the building in 2020 and worked with the community to envision the future of the museum.

"The first phase of the resto-

ration was to redo the front façade and then the exterior," Bulova said.

"We needed, as we say in museum field, to 'seal the building's envelop' -- to repoint brick and restore windows. What you are seeing today is what the building looked like pre-1861, which we call the period of significance, which sadly

reflects that period of the trafficking of enslaved people."

In addition to Bulova, the event featured remarks from Mayor Alyia Gaskins and Audrey Davis, Director of the Division of African American History.

"This museum is an intentional declaration that we will not forget

our history," Gaskins said. "We will choose to be intentional in telling the stories of our past and to make sure we create spaces for all to learn about the horrors of the racism, the trauma and the terror of slavery. But we also commit to tell the story in another way -- to tell of the resilience and the perseverance and the hope and the beauty of Black people."

The rehabilitation began in June 2024 and was completed ahead of schedule. Key improvements included modifying the roofline to a side gable design, adjusting window openings to match Civil War-era photographs, and renewing woodwork and siding.

The rehabilitation, led by Oak Grove Restoration Company and Al Cox, FAIA emeritus, was supported by the Commonwealth of Virginia, a Save America's Treasures grant, and individual donors.

"The exterior restoration is the first major step and now we will start fundraising to do some interior work," Bulova said. "That will include making the basement and second floor accessible then redoing all of the exhibitions to really tell the story of the domestic slave trade. I'm optimistic we can do this in the next three years."

www.alexandriava.gov/FreedomHouse



PHOTOS COURTESY CITY OF ALEXANDRIA

Freedom House is shown during the significant exterior restorations at 1315 Duke Street.

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Now known as Freedom House, 1315 Duke Street is shown in 1861 as it appeared during the Civil War when the building was being used by the Union army as a jail.

ALEXANDRIA GAZETTE PACKET ♦ NOVEMBER 20 - DECEMBER 3, 2025 ♦ 3

The Pedestrians Who Never Saw Their Tomorrows

Survivor Leads Northern Virginia Families for Safe Streets during International World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE GAZETTE

Twenty-four chalked body outlines, each representing a fatality in a road traffic crash last year in Northern Virginia, greeted family members who lost a loved one to road violence, crash survivors, concerned citizens, and members of Northern Virginia Families for Safe Streets (NoVA FSS) as they walked into Gateway Park in Arlington on Nov. 16. The solemn procession set the tone for the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims event, held annually on the third Sunday of November.

“Each tragedy, each crash, each fatality, is a story of a family member who was lost, or, in other cases, serious injuries,” said Michael Doyle, executive director and founder of NoVA FSS. “All of these situations could be avoided and that’s what we’re trying to do today, is to raise awareness.”

Doyle opened the two-phase event by detailing the regional crisis, noting there were 133 serious injuries and 24 fatalities last year. He added that year-to-date, there have been 13 fatalities.

Doyle introduced the first speaker, “a brave lady who is a crash survivor, Helen Harris.”

Harris gave a powerful and deeply personal speech as a survivor of traffic violence. Harris recounted the tragic event seven years ago, when a truck made a left turn and struck her as she crossed the street with her four-month-old daughter in a stroller at the intersection of Fort Myer Drive and Langston Blvd — the very location of the remembrance event.

Harris suffered catastrophic injuries, including an above-the-knee amputation. Her infant daughter was uninjured because Harris pushed her toward safety as the truck bore down on her.

Harris described the immense physical and emotional challenges of adapting to life after her injury, but recognized her survival as a form of luck: “I am one of the lucky ones. Unfortunately, there are those who did not make it through to share their stories themselves.” She urged the community to support data-driven solutions, highlighting the passage of SB 1416, which holds drivers more accountable for injuring vulnerable road users.

Arlington County Board Chair

Takis Karantonis said the ceremony was a “symbolic funeral” for lives lost in situations that were, above all, “avoidable.”

“Avoidable is the critical word that we need to work to avoid an accident. Avoidable accident is a kind of a contradiction in terms. Okay, I am a big believer that accidents are actually not accidents, as long as they are avoidable,” Karantonis said.

Karantonis continued that the county’s Vision Zero commitment centers on rebuilding the city to make the “avoidable avoided by design” as he spoke about roadway safety and urban planning.

The policy progress Karantonis referenced was detailed by Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-39), who highlighted the successful passage of SB 1417, the vulnerable road users bill, which aims to implement protective measures such as encouraging local governments to create safer infrastructure.

Del. Patrick Hope described new technology like Intelligent Speed Assistance that Virginia became the first state in the country to adopt for repeat reckless offenders. He described it as a device that can be installed in cars that physically prevents the driver from exceeding the posted speed limit by more than five or seven miles per hour. “And those are for reckless drivers, repeat offenders that we can target to make sure that these tragedies don’t happen again,” Hope said.

Chief Tarrick McGuire of the Alexandria Police Department committed to putting action behind his department’s words. “We want people to be safe,” McGuire said, emphasizing the need for regional collaboration.

The event concluded with a call to action from Ben Allard, president of the Arlington FSS Board, who warned, “The future victims of traffic violence are the people who are still with us today, and so every action that we don’t take is imperiling the lives of people who would be victims in the future.” He urged specific advocacy actions, including expanded local authority to implement speed safety cameras. “The state shouldn’t stop us,” he said. Allard also advocated for car-free zones.

Some members of the demonstrators met up with members of other DMV Families for Safe Streets Chapters for a WDoR rally at the Lincoln Memorial at noon.

NoVa FSS urges the community to advocate to protect pedestri-



Michael Doyle, executive director and founder of Northern Virginia Families for Safe Streets hosts the 2025 World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims in Arlington on Nov. 16.



Crash survivor Helen Harris of Arlington is introduced by Michael Doyle, founder of Northern Virginia Families for Safe Streets, at the 2025 World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims in Arlington on Nov. 16.



Sen. Adam Ebbin (D-39) highlights the successful passage of SB 1417, the vulnerable road users bill.



Chief Tarrick McGuire of the Alexandria Police Department: “We want people to be safe.”



Del. Patrick Hope (D-1) describes the Intelligent Speed Assistance, device that can be installed in cars so that physically you will not be able to exceed the posted speed limit by more than five or seven MPH.

PHOTOS SOURCE:
VIDEO BY SAN WINTER

ans and other vulnerable road users: “Call attention to the issue of traffic pedestrian and vulnerable road user fatalities and serious injuries; elevate the voices of those who have been most impacted by traffic crashes; advocate for traffic regulations that will promote safer streets on our roads, such as broadening the authority to install Speed Safety Cameras on high-crash network roads and promote the Vision Zero goal of eliminating all traffic fatalities and serious injuries in all three Northern Virginia jurisdictions of Alexandria, Arlington, and Fairfax.”

Visit NOVA Safe Streets at <https://novasafestreeets.org/2025/11/05/nova-fss-hosts-2025-world-day-of-remembrance-event/> to learn more.



Ben Allard, president of the Arlington Families for Safe Streets: “The state shouldn’t stop us,” Allard says, referencing speed cameras.



Arlington County Board Chair Takis Karantonis- “Accidents are actually not accidents, as long as they are avoidable.”

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET



Police Chief Tarrick McGuire and Commandant of the Marine Corps League Detachment Michael Jadoo begin the ceremony marking the 250th anniversary of the U.S. Marine Corps Nov. 12 at Alexandria Police Department headquarters.

Semper Fidelis

APD honors Marine Corps' 250th birthday.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

The Alexandria Police Department joined the nationwide observance of the 250th birthday of the United States Marine Corps, hosting a ceremonial event that recognized the service of APD officers who have served as a Marine.

Held Nov. 12 at APD Headquarters, the ceremony underscored the ties between law enforcement and military service, honoring Marines past and present as well as the many veterans who continue their service within APD.

Chief of Police Tarrick McGuire delivered remarks emphasizing the unity of purpose between military and law enforcement.

"Thank you for the sacrifice you have made for our country to keep us safe in a domestic setting but also abroad," McGuire said in addressing the veterans in attendance. "I am grateful that we have men and women in our organization that not only have served in our country but continue to serve to keep our community safe. From a place of gratitude, I thank you."

The program featured a Presentation of Colors, the reading of the Commandant's birthday message and remarks from guest of honor Michael Jadoo, Commandant of the Marine Corps League Detachment.

A highlight of the ceremony was the traditional cake-cutting with

an officer's sword, where the oldest and youngest Marines present shared the first slice as a symbolic passing of knowledge and experience. Established by Maj. Gen. John Lejeune in 1921, the ritual is a cornerstone of Marine Corps heritage.

"This is about sharing experience and passing it on," said Sgt. Maxwell VanArsdale, the youngest Marine at the event. "Every Marine birthday gets better because it reminds us of who we are and what

we stand for."

The oldest Marine Corps veteran at the event was Officer Alex Trapero, a Marine veteran with 23 years in APD.

"The structure and courage we learned as Marines guide us every day in law enforcement," Trapero said. "We have the courage to be the first to respond. That's what binds us — whether in uniform as Marines or as police officers."

www.alexandriava.gov/police



Officer Neale Marquez, center, uses a sword to cut a cake during the Nov. 12 APD ceremony celebrating 250 years of the U.S. Marine Corps. Looking on are Commandant Michael Jadoo, APD Chief Tarrick McGuire, Officer Alex Trapero and Officer Maxwell VanArsdale.



Officer Alex Trapero, Maxwell VanArsdale and Neal Marquez take part in the Nov. 12 APD ceremony marking the 250th birthday of the U.S. Marine Corps. All three are APD officers and Marine Corps reservists.



APD officers Alex Trapero and Maxwell VanArsdale at the Nov. 12 ceremony marking 250 years of the U.S. Marine Corps. Trapero is the oldest APD Marine veteran and VanArsdale the youngest having recently completed four deployments.



APD Officer and Marine Corps reservist Neale Marquez with Courtney Marquez and their new baby at the Nov. 12 APD ceremony celebrating the 250th birthday of the United States Marine Corps.



APD Chief Tarrick McGuire presents a plaque of appreciation to Commandant of the Marine Corps League Detachment Michael Jadoo at the Nov. 12 ceremony celebrating the 250th birthday of the U.S. Marine Corps.



Vaccine clinics offering free vaccines for pets are one of many ways Animal Welfare League of Arlington helps people keep their pets at home.



AWLA Arlington and Alexandria provide help for people struggling to provide for their pets.



than doubled over the last month,” Shackelford said. “We’ve seen a massive increase in people asking for support just to feed their animals, whether it’s pet food or cat litter.”

These pet pantries are core to both the Animal Welfare Leagues of Arlington and Alexandria. Even in the face of upcoming donation uncertainty, the organizations will keep these pantries a priority.

“Like all non-profits, we are confronting the reality that fundraising may be challenging in the near future,” Schindler said. “Still, we have a very firm commitment to continue offering our essential resources — emergency housing, the free pet food and supplies distribution, and no cost/low cost spay/neuter programs that support sustainable pet ownership. We will absolutely find a way to maintain those services ... it’s top of mind.”

Even as the government shutdown ends, and if everything else settles into a rhythm resembling normalcy, the AWLAs encourage local pet owners to be in touch with them through any scenario that threatens their ability to care for their animals.

“This year has shown that everyone can use help,” Schindler said. “There’s no one type of reason or person or situation that creates these situations. With these animal welfare leagues, we make all these processes as simple as possible, whether it’s taking in surrendered animals or supporting people so that they might not have to make that decision. It’s no questions asked beyond getting information to benefit animals in the next outcome.”

To support the organizations, and to volunteer as a short- or long-term foster, reach out to the organizations directly. Both AWLAs have experienced swells of volunteers at their shelters. Fosters and volunteers of all types, and with varying schedules and capacity, have found meaningful ways to spend stressful days amid furlough.

Animal Welfare League of Alexandria: Alexandria Animals - Animal Welfare League of Alexandria | AWLA / (703) 746-4774

Animal Welfare League of Arlington: Animal Welfare League of Arlington - All in For Animals / (703) 931-9241

To donate to Alexandria’s holiday drive, visit: Holiday Food Drives - Alexandria Animals.

To contribute to Arlington, visit: Animal Welfare League of Arlington - All in For Animals

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Not Ordinary Times

Unprecedented challenges, including government shutdown and record deportations, mean more people need pet support.

BY ASHLEY SIMPSON
THE GAZETTE

There is a widespread belief that pet owners who surrender their animals to shelters are selfish, even callous.

This harmful narrative does not hold water, though, especially as unprecedented crises continue to drown Americans.

Amid the longest government shutdown in United States history, the federal reduction of SNAP food assistance, and systemic crack-downs on immigration, animal welfare organizations across Northern Virginia have supported more people this year in making uncomfortable and sometimes painful decisions regarding their animals.

“Since the summer months, and especially over the last month, we’ve seen an increase in requests to help rehome animals,” Erin Shackelford, Senior Manager of Communications and Event Marketing at the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria, said. “There’s a stigma when there shouldn’t be, so often-times we don’t get the full story behind why an animal is being surrendered. Still, we understand that there are so many situations

beyond anyone’s control right now.”

Local animal welfare organizations don’t typically press owners for surrender details, but frequently cited reasons are “housing concerns,” which do encompass situations driven by financial and legal uncertainty.

In Arlington, animal welfare leaders have noticed a recent trend with unclaimed stray

“A recent example included a woman who was deported and had nine cats in her apartment. She was able to contact a neighbor from a deportation facility who was able to pick the cats up and bring them to us.”

— Erin Shackelford, Animal Welfare League of Alexandria

animals that indicate new financial hardships.

“We have noticed a strain in the community,” Amy Schindler, Chief Operating Officer for the Animal Welfare League of Arlington, said. “This year, with our strays, we’ve noted a shift in unclaimed animals. They have been more small animals that looked very well-taken care of — recently groomed, in many cases. As we’ve seen this, it’s easy to

understand that these are not instances of owners not loving their pets.”

While local rescues can’t pinpoint exact reasons why pet ownership is no longer sustainable for so many, Alexandria can attribute a growing number of surrendered pets to deportation.

“A recent example included a woman who was deported and had nine cats in her apartment,” Shackelford said. “She was able to contact a neighbor from a deportation facility who was able to pick the cats up and bring them to us. It’s important to us to support people, who even in their worst times, are fighting to protect their pets.”

The Animal Welfare League of Arlington and the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria — two different non-profit organizations contracted by their counties to provide animal control, shelter, and pet support — have also had an increase in need for help to keep pets in their homes.

In 2025, they’ve offered more resources through pet pantries, which provide free pet food and other supplies for community members in need.

“Normally, we serve 100 to 150 people from the pantry, but that number has more

HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS & SPECIAL EVENTS

Holiday Events, Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities

The holiday season is here, and the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities has a calendar full of events to bring the community together. From tree lightings and concerts to family festivals and teen nights, there's something for everyone to enjoy as we wrap up the year.

Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony

Saturday, Nov. 22, 6-8 p.m.
Market Square (301 King St.), Free
Start the season in the heart of Old Town with Alexandria's annual tree lighting. Enjoy music, carols, and a visit from Santa as we welcome the holidays together.

Grinchmas

Saturday, Dec. 6, 9:30-11 a.m.
Charles Houston Rec Center (901 Wythe St.), \$5
Join us for a Who-ville celebration featuring festive activities, delicious treats, and photos with the Grinch, plus a live reading of How the Grinch Stole Christmas.

Chinquapin Park Recreation & Aquatics Facility's 40th Anniversary

Saturday, Dec. 6, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
3210 King St., Free
Join us this December as we honor four decades of splashes, smiles, and strength.

Enjoy swim demos, pool inflatables, free soft play and racquetball access, giveaways, and special sales.

Family Winter Holiday Fun

Saturday, Dec. 6, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.
Leonard Armstrong Rec Center, \$7
Celebrate the holidays with gingerbread houses, crafts, cookie decorating, games, and Santa's favorite story and movie. Then snap a photo with Santa; don't forget your camera.

Very Merry ALX Jazz Fest

at the Masonic Memorial
Friday, Dec. 12, 5-8 p.m.
101 Callahan Dr. | Free
Get ready to celebrate the holidays at A Very Merry ALX Jazz Fest - a festive gathering of music, art, and poetry.

Breakfast with Santa

Saturday, Dec. 13, 10 a.m.-12 p.m.
Mount Vernon Rec Center | \$25
A holiday tradition. Kids can enjoy breakfast and take a photo with Santa and his elves.

Senior Ugly Sweater Party

Ages 55+
Friday, Dec. 19, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.
SEE HOLIDAY EVENTS, PAGE 10

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AUTHOR'S CORNER



Ross Berkoff.



Berkoff in Gardez, Afghanistan.

Local Author Offers Firsthand Accounts from the Front Lines in Afghanistan

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

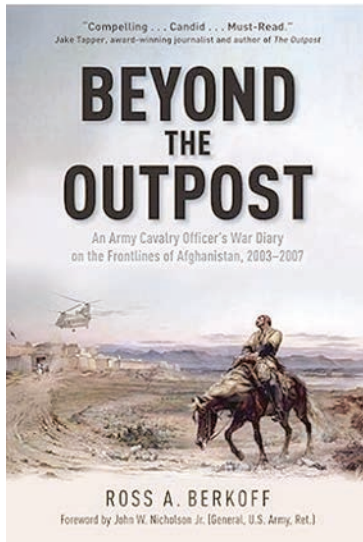
Although most of the war books can be based on theories of war or experiences told from 30,000 feet, Ross Berkoff didn't want that perspective from his experience in Afghanistan, which he's captured in "Beyond the Outpost: An Army Cavalry Officer's War Diary on the Frontlines of Afghanistan, 2003-2007." He was there, he experienced it and he wanted others to read about his front line, day-to-day events which had a big impact on the rest of his life.

It took the television coverage of the evacuation of Afghanistan at the airport to finally inspire action from behind the keyboard. "That's when I dusted off my notebooks," Berkoff said.

"One of my friends took his own life, it really broke me," Berkoff said.

Berkoff wanted to tell his story and didn't want the war to go down in history as a military loss, which he compared to the Vietnam War. There was more to it than the negativity shown on the evening news, he felt. "The legacy should be more than just the outcome," he said.

These notebooks were his account of what happened to him and his unit in Afghanistan on two tours from 2003-2007 with the 10th Mountain Division across the sand dunes of Kandahar and in the mountains of the Hindu Kush where he conducted intelligence missions. Before leaving his home in Chantilly, he planned to write journals about the whole experience and packed his journaling supplies before he was deployed. Much of his inspiration came from Ken Burns and his documentaries to tell the difficult stories. Particu-



said about the fellow author.

This led to his additional work with a filmmaker behind the 2019 film "Outpost," which is the story of Outpost Keating, a small element of the 10th Mountain Division

It is available online and through Amazon.

defending against a deadly attack from the Taliban in 2009. Berkoff acted as an advisor for that film. Now he's on a publicity circuit, and was recently featured on CNN, NPR and has other stops on his schedule including one with the Richmond war museum and a New Orleans Book Festival.

larly the Civil War documentary. "I love that," he said.

He read another book about the Civil War where the writer used first-hand events that put the wheels in motion. Berkoff sent his manuscripts to the Civil War author who got back to him positive feedback, and one thing led to another with a publisher and the book hit the circuit. "He brought my book to his publisher," Berkoff



He interacted with the Afghan military.

ALIVE! Welcomes Assistant Executive Director

At the beginning of October, ALIVE! welcomed our first Assistant Executive Director. Reynard Eaglin brings more than 20 years of experience serving children and families, mostly in the Washington, DC metro area and will play a critical leadership role in advancing ALIVE!'s mission.

"We're excited to welcome Reynard and the leadership and experience he brings to the team. His position reflects how much ALIVE! has grown to meet the increasing demand for our services — and how we're strengthening our capacity and coordination to respond," said Jennifer Ayers, Executive Director.

This position was made possible by generous financial help from the Bruhn-Morris Family Foundation.

In 2019 ALIVE! served 5,000 families in the year, and now serving 5,000 families a month.

Most recently, Reynard served as Chief Program and Operations Officer at the Cam-

pagna Center, was responsible for driving accountability for program-level goals and desired results across educational, health, nutrition, and mental health services for enrolled children and families.

"I am excited to join ALIVE! and help Alexandrians who experience basic needs insecurity with client-centered programs and services," said Assistant Executive Director, Reynard Eaglin.

The largest organization preventing food and housing insecurity in Alexandria, ALIVE! serves 20,000 individuals each month through three key programming areas: Food, Housing, and Financial Assistance.

Each month, ALIVE! helps Alexandrians access food through our two Food Hubs, pantry partners, and distribution sites. ALIVE! Also helps respond to financial emergencies and prevent eviction; and secure other support services and essential needs such as housewares and furniture. More at: alive-inc.org



Workers installed a new sign at the Sherwood Hall Burke and Herbert bank branch on Oct. 26.

Burke and Herbert Bank Gets New Signs

Burke and Herbert Bank, a local Northern Virginia bank founded in 1852, is installing new signs at its branch banks, here on Oct. 26, at the Sherwood Hall branch in Mount Vernon. The new signs are an "update, a deeper blue," said branch manager Ben Zeko.

The bank is also replacing their ATMs (automated teller machines) with ITMs (interactive teller machines) which in 2026 will enable customers to video chat with bank personnel after hours.

NEWS

Those Were the Days

GW High School class of '65 celebrates 60th reunion.

"It was a tough time in the early 60s. We were the kids of those turbulent years."

— GWHS Class of 1965 president Dave Dixon

Members of the George Washington High School Class of 1965 gathered at the Hotel Heron Nov. 1 to celebrate its 60th class reunion.

"My memories of Alexandria are of pure joy," said Dave Dixon, who served as president of the class of 1965. "It was a tough time in the early 60s. We were the kids of those turbulent years, fighting an unpopular war with many veterans never returning home. But Alexandria was a close-knit community and everyone drew together."

Dixon joked that he and his classmates today are focused on one thing — "We are all just trying to stay healthy."

Added Dixon, who played on the school's football team, "The best part of growing up here is that we had the best teachers and the best sports teams, especially basketball."

— JEANNE THEISMANN



Members of the George Washington High School Class of 1965 gather for a group photo celebrating their 60th reunion Nov. 1 at the Hotel Heron.

PHOTO BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Retired Alexandria Circuit Court Judge Nolan Dawkins, left, and the late Kenneth Barnett were members of the George Washington High School class of 1965 basketball team.

Alexandria To Retain NSF Headquarters

From a City release.

The National Science Foundation and as many as 1,600 jobs will relocate to new office space in Carlyle.

On Friday, Nov. 14, 2025, the U.S. General Services Administration announced that the National Science Foundation will remain in Alexandria, moving to 401 Dulany Street in the Carlyle neighborhood, onto the same campus as the US Patent and Trademark Office.

In June 2025, GSA announced that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development would move into the existing NSF headquarters building at 2415 Eisenhower Avenue, bringing 2,700 jobs and the first cabinet-level federal agency to Alexandria.

While the City was excited to welcome HUD, the Mayor and City Council, and the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership were clear that HUD's relocation should not come at the expense of the NSF. The NSF workforce and their vital mission to further science will continue, alongside like-minded federal and private-sector employees in the Carlyle district in Alexandria.

In 2017, the City celebrated the relocation of NSF and its workforce to Alexandria. Similarly, the City welcomes the latest announcement, as it will keep approximately 1,600 NSF headquarters jobs, made up of a mix of federal employees as well as scientists from research institutions working at NSF on a temporary basis.

Alexandria's economy benefits from employers in the city and spin-off activity like hotel stays, restaurant visits, and contractor businesses, said AEDP President and CEO Stephanie Landrum.

Del Ray Turkey Trot Turns 50

Grand Marshal Hon. Jim Clark to run in 50th consecutive race.

By JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

The Thanksgiving morning tradition of the Del Ray Turkey Trot will celebrate its 50th year Nov. 27 as thousands of runners take to the streets of Alexandria with retired Circuit Court Judge Jim Clark leading the way as Grand Marshal.

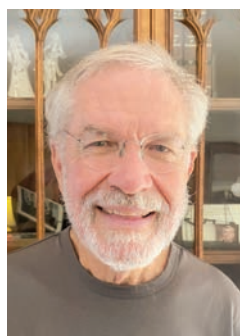
Clark, a varsity runner during his days at T.C. Williams High School (now Alexandria City High School), has run each race since its inception in 1975. He and then-mayor Jim Moran were among the original runners in the 5-mile race through the streets of Del Ray. The 2024 race attracted more than 6,000 participants.

Runners will be joined by walkers, families and furry friends as the race milestone marks half a century of a tradition that blends fitness, community spirit, and holiday cheer.

The race will begin at 9 a.m. at George Washington Middle School, 1005 Mount Vernon Avenue. The school also serves as the finish line for the 5-mile run/walk through Del Ray. Strollers and dogs are welcome, with designated starting areas.

Online registration is open until 6 a.m. on race day, with early packet pickup scheduled from Nov. 23–25 at Alexandria Toyota, Pacers Running in Old Town, and additional pickup on Nov. 26. Race-day pickup runs from 7:30 a.m. to 8:45 a.m. before the 9 a.m. start.

Participants are encouraged to bring nonperishable food items to support ALIVE!, Alexandria's oldest and largest pri-



Retired Alexandria Circuit Court Judge James Clark has been named the Grand Marshal of the 50th anniversary Turkey Trot to be held Nov. 27 in Del Ray. Clark has run the race each year since its inception in 1975.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

The annual Alexandria Turkey Trot will celebrate its 50th anniversary Nov. 27 in Del Ray.

vate safety net organization dedicated to fighting poverty and hunger. Over the years, this event has donated thousands of pounds of food and raised significant funds for local families in need.

The first Alexandria Turkey Trot took place in 1975, drawing 244 runners. Today, it is one of the Mid-Atlantic's premier Thanksgiving Day races. The USATF-certified course attracts both elite athletes and casual runners.

To register or for more information, visit www.alexandria-turkeytrot.com

Barry Keith's 20th Solo Show Opens Dec. 5

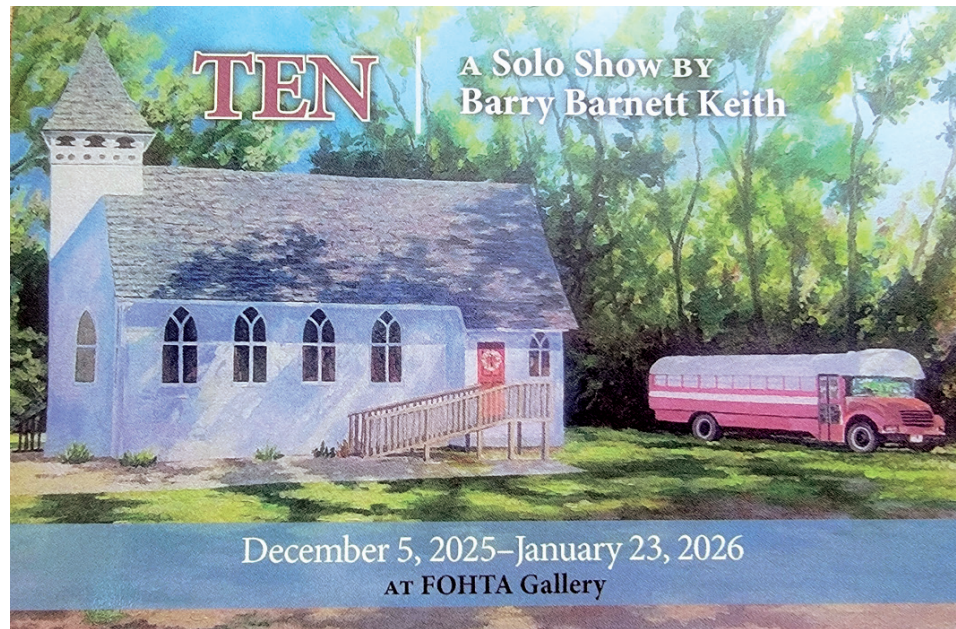
BY SHIRLEY RUHE
THE GAZETTE

Barry Keith's solo show "TEN" opens at FOHTA Gallery in Arlington with an opening night reception on Dec. 5 from 4:30-7:30 p.m. Keith said the show represents ten different visual experiences ranging from plein air landscape painting to portrait painting. "The inspiration for this show stems from developing a love of many different [types of] subject matter from comic book art to drawing architecture and portraiture."

One of the portraits in the show is 12-year-old Natalie. "She reminds me so much of myself at that age — she draws and paints a lot and she is a quiet soul. She is one of my many proteges that I encourage." Keith says he chose Natalie because "She has such an introspective face, and I thought she would make a great portrait."

TEN represents Keith's 20th solo painting exhibition. The show runs from Dec. 5-Jan. 23. The Gallery, located at 2206 S. Monroe, is open 4-7 p.m. Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday, closed Monday and Tuesday. Saturday by appointment only.

Keith grew up in Alexandria where he attended Cora Kelly Elementary School where his friends and teachers there encouraged



Barry Keith's solo show "TEN" opens December 5 with a reception from 4:30-7:30 p.m. at the FOHTA Gallery in Arlington.

him a lot with his art. His teachers put him in a summer program called "The New Horizons" where they allowed him to draw and paint all day and took field trips on Friday. "The impact that program had on me was so profound that today I have an art club of

100 after school. I have that many because I never want to refuse myself or a kid who might go on to love the arts like I do."

He continued on to Alexandria City High School followed by the University of Delaware Art School.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Natalie, one of Keith's proteges, who he encourages in her love of the arts.

Historic Alexandria Partners with 70 Historic Destinations in Virginia

First-of-its-kind statewide tourism journey in celebration of America's 250th.

The Virginia 250 Passport will offer prizes and discounts to historic sites and museums, encouraging individuals and families to explore and experience history together.

The City of Alexandria's Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA) and its museums — including Gadsby's Tavern Museum, the Alexandria History Museum at The

Lyceum, and the Alexandria Black History Museum — are featured as a destination in the newly launched Virginia 250 Passport. This collaborative, statewide initiative — organized by the Virginia Museum of History & Culture (VMHC), Colonial Williamsburg, George Washington's Mount Vernon, the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation (JYF) and Thomas Jefferson's Monticello — encourages Virginians and visitors to commemorate America's 250th by engaging with the Commonwealth's foremost historic sites and museums. The project is supported by the Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission (VA250) and the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC).

Beginning Nov. 11, 2025, Passports will be available free of charge at signature sites — VMHC, Colonial Williamsburg, Mount Vernon, Monticello and the JYF's Jamestown

Settlement and American Revolution Museum at Yorktown — as well as at the VA250 Mobile Museum, select VA250 events and all 12 Virginia Welcome Centers, each located at gateways along interstate highways. A total of 250,000 copies will be distributed.

"This statewide partnership between some of the finest history institutions in the nation is an example of how, when we work together, we can create engaging, meaningful experiences for our fellow Virginians," said Rita McClenny, president and CEO of the Virginia Tourism Corporation. "We encourage you to pick up your passport while supplies last and spend a year with us traveling around our great Commonwealth."

The Virginia 250 Passport serves as a travel guide, discount book and keepsake. The 64-page commemorative booklet features descriptions of the 70 participating muse-

ums and historic sites across five regions of the Commonwealth: Central Virginia, Northern Virginia, Shenandoah Valley, Southwestern Virginia and Tidewater.

Travelers can collect unique stamps while visiting each passport site. Once they have secured a stamp in their passport, they can receive up to a 15% discount at future participating locations that charge admission. Collecting at least five stamps makes them eligible to enter the prize drawing. Prizes will be drawn in December 2026 and include yearlong museum memberships and cash awards up to \$2,500.

"This collaboration is a wonderful example of how, when Virginians work together, we can show the world the best of who we are," said Gretchen Bulova,

SEE HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA, PAGE 15

Holiday Events, Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities

FROM PAGE 7

Patrick Henry Rec Center, Free
Don your most outrageous holiday attire and indulge in holiday crafts, cookie-decorating, lively games and joyful music.

2nd Annual Alexandria Fall Chess Tournament

Grades K-12
Saturday, Nov. 22, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. | Oswald Durant Center | \$20/participant

The official City of Alexandria Championships! Open to students who live or attend school in the City. Four rounds, non-elimination. Arrive by 9:45am. Not US Chess rated.

Alexandria Holiday Invitational Cheer Competition

Sunday, Dec. 14 | 2 p.m.
Alexandria City HS, Ages 4 and Under: Free, Ages 5-12 and Seniors: \$5, Ages 13+: \$10

Get ready to dazzle, dance, and dominate! Support youth cheerleading teams from neighborhood recreation centers and the metropolitan area.

Winter Break Camps

Visit alexandriava.gov/rpca/camps for a list of winter break camps.
Teen Winter Pool Jam
Middle and high school students
Saturday, Dec. 20, 6-8:30 p.m., Minnie

Howard Aquatics Facility, Free

Come warm up at the coolest party with friends, festive vibes, and non-stop fun.

Adult Social Night

Ages 18+
Friday, Nov. 21, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Leonard Armstrong Rec Center, \$9
Unwind with friends old and new during our adult social night.



Mary Lee Anderson



Heidi Travis



Chris Leighton



Larry Lipman

Agenda:Alexandria's November Program "We All Get Old: Let's Get Ready"

Agenda:Alexandria is dedicated to examining local issues from a wide variety of viewpoints. Agenda Alexandria will be focusing on the challenges of aging in Alexandria and addressing potential challenges that face those who are aging and their families.

A moderated panel will discuss expected and unexpected issues that arise in caregiving. Other issues include legal planning and digital safety.

The goal of the discussion isn't to alarm but to empower, offering families clear guidance before life's curveballs arrive. Whether you are planning for yourself or a family

member, you'll want to attend.

Agenda:Alexandria Former Chair Rod Kuckro will moderate the discussion with a panel composed of:

❖ Mary Lee Anderson, Executive Director, Senior Services of Alexandria

❖ Heidi Travis, Certified Care Manager, Executive Director, ElderTree Care Management

❖ Chris Leighton, Attorney in Family Estate issues, Powers of Attorney, Probate Law, etc.

❖ Larry Lipman, Former President, National Press Club, AARP Virginia Speakers Bureau, Speaker on Tech Scams

This program will be held on Monday, Nov. 25, 2025 at easily-accessible The Forum room, Minnie Howard Campus, 3775 W. Braddock Road, Alexandria VA 22304.

The traditional pre-program reception begins at 6:30 p.m. and the program begins promptly at 7:00 pm and lasts 90 minutes. Agenda:Alexandria is a non-partisan 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Membership is available for an annual fee. Non-member attendance cost is \$10. The program will be videotaped for later viewing on Agenda:Alexandria's website, www.AgendaAlexandria.org

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VDOT Virginia Department of Transportation

Public Notice

Updated weight limits on Virginia bridges and culverts

In accord with state and federal law, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has imposed new or changed existing weight restrictions and installed new signage indicating the updated weight restrictions on the following bridges and culverts (structures) in Virginia within the last 30 days.

Jurisdiction	Fed Struc Id	Route #	Route Name	Crossing	Posted Date
LEE	10759	70	ROUTE 70	POWELL RIVER	10/27/2025
ALLEGHANY	1206	782	ROGER'S ROAD (ROUTE 782)	TRIB OGLE CREEK	10/24/2025

The list above is not a comprehensive list of all structures with weight restrictions in the Commonwealth but shows only structures that have new or changed weight restrictions within the last 30 days. The list contains only basic structure identification and location information and the date the new or changed weight restriction and signage became effective.

For a full listing of all bridge and culvert weight restrictions with detailed information about specific structures, including location data and actual weight limits, visit vdot.virginia.gov and navigate to Traffic and Travel/For freight operators/Truck restrictions. This page references a posted structures report and a GIS map tool that contain detailed information about restricted structures in Virginia. To receive email notifications regarding new or updated weight restrictions for structures statewide, complete the sign-up form on the web page.

Notices regarding bridges and culverts with new or updated weight restrictions are published monthly by VDOT. For additional information or questions, please contact haulingpermits@vdot.virginia.gov or the Load Rating Program Manager, Manjil Devkota at 804-786-4064.

The Virginia Department of Transportation is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any of its programs or activities on the basis of race, color, or national origin, as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need further information on VDOT's Title VI Program or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, please contact the Virginia Department of Transportation's Title VI Program Specialist at 804-786-2730 or corina.herrera@vdot.virginia.gov.

ENTERTAINMENT

HOLIDAY EVENTS

IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA

Fifth Annual St. Nicholas Market

(Dec. 7, Alexandria) The Market is held mostly outdoors and will feature 40 local Catholic artists and makers selling their creations for the Christmas season at Saint Rita Catholic Church.

Del Ray Artisans Holiday Market

(Dec. 5-21; first three weekends in December, Alexandria) The 30th annual market offers unique hand-made fine arts and fine crafts from local artists.

McLean Holiday Art & Crafts Festival

(Dec. 5-7, McLean): This three-day indoor show at the McLean Community Center features regional artisans selling a variety of handmade items, including pottery, jewelry, and holiday decor.

Old Town Alexandria Christmas Market and Holiday Craft Show

(Dec. 13, Alexandria): This large holiday market at John Carlyle Square features local artisans, holiday music, and seasonal food and drinks.

Mosaic Holiday Village

(Nov. 22-23; Dec. 13-14, Fairfax): Enjoy shopping at the Holiday Market, which features local artisans, and participate in other festivities in the Mosaic District.

Farmer John's Holiday Market

(Dec. 6-7, Leesburg): Get into the spirit at this festive market with Christmas trees, wreaths, handmade crafts, and hot cider.

The largest indoor art festival in the region, the Capital Art & Craft Festival, returns to Northern Virginia

Dec. 12-14, 2025, with more than 300 juried artisans at the Dulles Expo Center. www.CACF.art

Holiday Lights & Parades:

54th Annual Scottish Christmas Walk

Parade (Dec. 6, Old Town Alexandria): For 54 years, Campagna Center has celebrated Alexandria's Scottish heritage during the holiday season with both the Taste of Scotland and the annual Scottish Christmas Walk parade.

Ice & Lights: The Winter Village at Cameron Run

(Begins Nov. 15, Alexandria): Ice & Lights provides a fun, outdoor family experience to explore new, dazzling light displays, take family pictures or selfies with a variety of festive scenes, enjoy a hot beverage and snack, and take a spin on the ice rink under the stars.

Bull Run Festival of Lights

(Begins Nov. 14, Centreville): Drive through this popular park to see a spectacular festival of lights.

Christmas Illuminations

(Dec. 20-21, Mount Vernon): George Washington's Mount Vernon hosts an evening with fireworks over the Potomac, a historic winter encampment, and tours of the illuminated mansion.

Meadowlark's Winter Walk of Lights

(Begins Nov. 7, Vienna): This popular seasonal event features a half-mile walk through decorated gardens.

Alexandria Holiday Boat Parade of Lights

(Dec. 6, Alexandria): Watch decorated boats light up the waterfront in the 25th annual parade.

Greater Manassas Christmas Parade

(Manassas): A long-running tradition held on the first Saturday in December, featuring floats and performers.

Santa Lights Manassas

(Dec. 5, Dec. 6 Manassas): On the first Friday of December, join the annual tree lighting ceremony to welcome Santa to Historic Manassas. The 79th annual parade takes place the

next day.

39th Annual Santa's Wonderland Parade and Winter Festival (Dec. 6, Colonial Beach): A winter festival kicks off with a parade of decorated floats and vehicles.

More Holiday Events:

Alexandria Jingle Bell Jam (Dec. 7, 8-11 a.m.): A Santa breakfast, DJ and holiday magic show are all part of the fun at the Heritage Ballroom at Hotel Heron! Get your tickets now. Brought to you by Alexandria Living Magazine and Thrivent.

Holidays with a Twist, Alexandria Symphony Orchestra (Dec. 20-21, Alexandria): Alexandria's favorite holiday musical tradition returns featuring stirring choruses from Handel's Messiah. Dancers from BalletNova perform the greatest moments from The Nutcracker. Plus carols, classics and other sparkling favorites of the season.

Concerts at Christ Church: Celtic Music for Christmas

(Dec. 8, Alexandria): Ensemble Gut, Wind, and Wire presents a holiday program of Celtic and English early music, 'Drive the Cold Winter Wind Away'.

National Christmas Tree Lighting (Dec. 4, Presidents Park, DC)

A Christmas Carol (Dec. 5-20, Alexandria): at the Little Theatre of Alexandria (tickets go on sale Nov. 6!)

Del Ray Holiday Season Kick-Off (Dec. 7, Alexandria): Join the Del Ray community for holiday cheer at the Del Ray Holiday Kick-Off on Sunday, Dec. 7.

The Nutcracker (Nov. 28-Dec. 23, Manassas): The Manassas Ballet presents the classic holiday ballet at the Hylton Performing Arts Center.

Santa Train Rides (Dec. 1, 8, 15 and 18, Alexandria): The Virginia Railway Express (VRE) runs special



The Del Ray Artisans 30th Annual Holiday Market takes place Dec. 5 to 21, 2025 in Alexandria.



The Winter Village at Cameron Run.

ENTERTAINMENT

holiday trains perfect for families, roundtrip from Alexandria to Manassas.

Aladdin the Camel (Nov. 26-Jan. 6, Mount Vernon): Meet the Christmas camel at George Washington's Mount Vernon, a nod to a real event from 1787.

Holidays Through the Ages (Dec. 5-29, Woodbridge): Step back in time at the Rippon Lodge Historic Site to see how holidays were celebrated in different centuries.

Santa Stampede 2025 (Dec. 6, Alexandria): Get some exercise at this fun, festive run held in John Carlyle Square.

HOLIDAY LIGHT SHOWS AT NOVA PARKS

Drive, Walk and Skate into the holidays with three unique holiday light show experiences. Tickets for the 2025 holiday season are now on sale and all 3 NOVA Parks light shows will be open as of November 15.

Meadowlark's Winter Walk of Lights Walk a sparkling half-mile garden trail while sipping on a hot beverage for an enchanting evening at Meadowlark's Winter Walk of Lights in Vienna.

Meadowlark's Winter Walk of Lights is an elegant garden trail aglow with countless sparkling lights, perfect for a date night or family holiday outing. The half-mile walk through the enchanting Meadowlark Botanical Gardens (Vienna, VA) features lighted nature themes and animated displays along a paved wheelchair and stroller-accessible trail. Stay warm by sipping on a hot beverage (with or without spirits) as you walk and s'mores to finish out the evening. Treat your pup to their favorite walk of the year on specific dates. The Winter Walk of Lights is illuminating the gardens for its 14th season, bringing joy to more than 100,000 visitors each year.

Open nightly November 7 through January 4. Capacity is limited; reservations are required to ensure access on a specific date. Prices range \$19-24 per person; promo codes available for specific dates. Visit winterwalkoflights.com for details.

Bull Run Festival of Lights Drive through 2.5 miles of dazzling lights at Northern Virginia's largest drive-through light show at the Bull Run Festival of Lights in Centreville.

Experience the magic of the holidays at the Bull Run Festival of Lights, Northern Virginia's largest drive-through holiday light show! A family favorite for three decades, the Bull Run Festival of Lights dazzles with a 2.5-mile display of holiday and fairytale vignettes. Enjoy time with family while staying warm and cozy as you slowly drive through the animated displays in Bull Run Regional Park. New displays are added every year—drive through the Winter Wonderland where it's always snowing and see the tallest light display yet.

Open November 14 through January 4. \$30 per vehicle online; additional discounts available for specific dates with promo code. Visit bullrunfestivaloflights.com for details.

Ice & Lights – The Winter Village at Cameron Run

Skate and explore a winter village wonderland for a playful outdoor experience at Ice & Lights – The Winter Village at Cameron Run in Alexandria.



The Bull Run Festival of Lights runs now through Jan. 4, 2026.

Just minutes from Old Town Alexandria, enjoy ice skating amidst a winter wonderland at Cameron Run Regional Park (Alexandria, VA). Ice & Lights offers a fun, unstructured outdoor family experience to explore unique light displays, snap family pictures or selfies with a variety of displays, and take a spin on the outdoor ice rink.

Tickets are available for the Village Only or Village and Ice Skating. The Winter Village opens November 15 and nighttime ice skating begins November 28. Daytime ice skating begins December 6. Prices range \$9-24 per person depending on activity and date. Capacity is limited; reservations are required to ensure access on a specific date. Ice skating reservations are required. Visit cameroniceandlights.com for details.

Visit novaparkslights.com for more information and to purchase tickets.

NOW THRU DEC. 14

Parallel Lines: A Second Act in Color. At The Athenaeum, 201 Prince Street, Alexandria. Featuring art works by Laura Caligui and Leslie Thornton. Longtime friends and collaborators, Laura Caligui and Leslie Thornton have each embraced bold, creative second careers as visual artists following successful professional lives. This exhibit is a celebration of their reinvention, renewal, and the expressive use of color. Through a shared love of Abstract Expressionism and Color Field painting, the artists explore rich contrasts: vibrant and muted hues, fluid forms, textured surfaces, and lyrical gestures. Their work speaks to spontaneity and emotion, where each brushstroke and each line presents new challenges and unexpected resolutions. The Athenaeum Gallery is open Thursday to Sunday from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m.

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.

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

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/>

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

SATURDAY/NOV. 22

Seasonal Holiday Plants and Bulb Forcing Demo. 1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. (16-Adult) Join Kathy Jentz, Editor and Publisher of Washington Gardener Magazine, for a festive and informative workshop on caring for classic seasonal plants. Kathy will share expert tips on nur-

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 15

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ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 13

turing holiday favorites and introduce a few unique plant varieties that make thoughtful gifts and charming additions to your home décor. You'll also learn the basics of bulb forcing—a fun technique for coaxing spring bloomers like tulips to flower early, brightening your home just when you need it most in the gray days of late winter. As part of the workshop, you'll decorate a pot and plant a bulb to take home—perfect for holiday gifting or bringing a touch of green to your own winter space. Please register for the class and supply fee. \$43 per person.

Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. Code TQL.DO6W

SUNDAY/NOV. 23

Appetite for Art. 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. (Adult) As the traditional season of feasting approaches, consider food as a popular motif in paintings. Enjoy a selection of food-filled masterpieces, some playful, some provocative. Discover how they reveal fascinating details of their time and place in history and explore art that has captured the essence – and overindulgence - of Thanksgiving. \$42 (lecture + tea); \$18 (lecture only). To register, call Green Spring Historic House 703-324-3988.

FRIDAY/NOV. 28

Celebrate Plaid Friday. Some 50 small businesses in Old Town Alexandria are participating. Celebrate Plaid Friday, Alexandria's alternative to Black Friday, where shoppers find huge deals while supporting the local business community. Taking place the day after Thanksgiving, Plaid Friday in Alexandria began in 2009 as a way to highlight Alexandria's vibrant independent retail scene, by offering discounts that compete with big box deals on Black Friday. The name "Plaid Friday" comes from the idea of weaving together many small businesses to create one creative fabric that reflects the diversity of Alexandria. Some shops will open at 6 a.m., giving early shoppers a chance to score the best deals and have the most selection to choose from. Organized by our Old Town Boutique Community, some participating stores include:

Bellacara
Bishop Boutique

Bloomers
Boxwood
Era
fibre space
Made in ALX
Mint Condition
Penny post
Pink and Brown
Pippin Toy Co.
Red Barn Mercantile
Shop Made in Virginia
The Hive

To plan your visit and see the full list of participating businesses, visit <https://oldtownboutiquecommunity.com>.

DEC. 5 TO 21

Del Ray Artisans 30th Annual Holiday Market.

At 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria, VA. Holiday Market is the first three weekends in December (Dec 5-7, Dec 12-14, Dec 19-21). Offers unique handmade fine arts and crafts from local artists. Choose from wall art, pottery, photography, jewelry, glass, and more! Plus 2026 wall calendars support Del Ray Artisans nonprofit. Free admission. Different artists each weekend! Open Fridays 6-9 p.m., Saturdays 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Sundays 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Details: delrayartisans.org/event/holiday-market-2025

FRIDAY/DEC. 5

Taste of Scotland. 6:30 to 10:30 p.m. At the ALX Community Atrium, 277 S. Washington Street, Alexandria. Presented by the Alexandria-based nonprofit Campagna Center, this holiday tradition marks the official kickoff to Alexandria's Scottish Christmas Walk Parade, which benefits Campagna's educational programs that serve more than 2,000 under-resourced children and families each year. Campagna Center puts on its signature fundraising event, the Taste of Scotland, an evening of celebration and community. Guests will enjoy tastings of more than 30 Scotch varieties and other whiskeys from around the world, along with festive entertainment and engaging activities. Additional event highlights include:

Expert-led whisky education and interactive experiences from Macmillan Spirit House
Festive catering and an open bar with beer, wine, and holiday-inspired drinks
Games and prizes, including a Scotch tasting challenge to test your palate
Opportunities to mix and mingle with sponsors, supporters, and Scottie, Campagna's Scottish

Christmas mascot
Guests are encouraged to wear their favorite plaid and enjoy an evening rich in holiday and Scottish spirit. All proceeds from the event support Campagna Center's work. Tickets start at \$150 per person, and the event is open to guests 21+. The parade starts at 11 a.m. and will include a festive line-up of bagpipers, dancers, clans, and decorative floats to celebrate Alexandria's Scottish heritage. For more information visit <https://www.campagnacenter.org>.

SATURDAY/DEC. 6

First Saturday Used Book Sale: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. at Sherwood Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane. Selection of over 20,000 gently used children's books, fiction, history, biography, home and garden, cooking, crafts, sports, religion, travel, CDs, DVDs, and more. Unless specially priced, \$1 for hard backs and large paperbacks, and 25 cents for mass market paperbacks. Visit <https://www.fairfax-county.gov/library/branches/friends-of-sherwood-regional> for information on other days and times for the library's ongoing book sale.

SATURDAY/DEC. 6

MVHS PTSA Holiday Market. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

At Mount Vernon High School, Alexandria. Hosted by Mount Vernon High School PTSA, this event raises funds for student scholarships, teacher grants, and outreach programs supporting our MVHS community. They are also still accepting vendor applications — interested vendors can apply here: forms.gle/wcoz2KBLRKfeYY4B7.

THE BIRCHMERE

At 3701 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. All shows are at 7:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted. Tickets available at [Ticketmaster.com](https://www.ticketmaster.com). Contact The Birchmere at 703-549-7500 or www.birchmere.com.

NOVEMBER

Wed. 19: Debbie Gibson "Newstalgia" Greatest Hits & Beyond \$69.50
Thu. 20: Jonathan Coulton and Paul & Storm \$39.50 (Rescheduled from 9/5/25)
Fri. 21: Paula Poundstone \$59.50
Sat. 22: Paula Poundstone \$59.50
Sun. 23: Vienna Teng \$39.50
Fri. 28: The Seldom Scene & Dry Branch Fire Squad \$45.00
Sat. 29: The Manhattans featuring Gerald Alston \$69.50
Sun. 30: Charles Esten \$59.50

BULLETIN BOARD

Submit civic/community announcements at [ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar](https://www.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

Alexandria Families for Safer Streets - Executive Assistant to AFSS Board of Directors. The agency is seeking an executive assistant to help coordinate a diverse group of tasks necessary to keep us on track and moving forward. Someone with office manager skills would be the ideal candidate. www.volunteeralexandria.org

ALIVE! Volunteers are needed to assist with multiple programs relating to their Food Program, ALIVE! House, and Alexandria Eviction Prevention Partnership Program will distribute food at Mobile Pop-ups and Truck to Trunk events, etc. <https://www.volunteeralexandria.org/ALIVE>

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.

Join Friends' Board. Those who care about mental health, the Alexandria community, and collaborating with fellow residents to make sure the City's most vulnerable residents have a chance to thrive, then consider joining the Board of Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center. The Friends Board is an all-volunteer group of residents that oversees the administration of one of Alexandria's top mental health charities. Friends has no paid staff, so Board members, working on average 10 hours per month, share the day-to-day work needed to accomplish its goals. Interested candidates should email FriendsofAMHC@gmail.com.

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.

ALIVE! offers numerous programs that aid low-income families in Alexandria that rely on volunteers: monthly food distributions, furniture, houseware and emergency food

deliveries, and community food drives. Individuals, families and groups are encouraged to participate. Students can earn community service hours by participating. Visit www.alive-inc.org/volunteer.htm or contact the Volunteer Coordinator at volunteers@alive-inc.org.

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.

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

Dewey? And How!



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

I know about 101 Dalmatians from the 1961 Disney animated film (I was a kid once), and of course "The Twelve Days of Christmas," versing hens, doves, swans et cetera (we sang it in Elementary school) and again, as a former kid, of course I remember the English nurse rhyme "Three Blind Mice," but until the last weekend in September, I didn't know about 278 golden retrievers on the beach, one of whom was mine: Burton. He was part of a group of canines - and masters, attending the fall gathering (there's also a similar event in May) of the semi-annual Golden Jubilee held in Dewey Beach, De. BYOGR: Bring your own golden retriever.

On Friday night, our first exposure to the madness came on an organized walk/heel; goldens on leashes, through some Rehoboth neighborhoods, ending up at the doggie ice cream shop on Main Street in Rehoboth. Though there was a meeting place of the attendees at Lake Gerar Park, where the canine version of testosterone was on full display: non-stop pulling on leashes, sniffing everything, licking everyone, paws shaking, tails wagging, drinking water, tongues flapping, a bit of growling, some dogs even in costume; on balance, however, the occasion was akin to a Woodstock for goldens: peace, love and harmony; we didn't really appreciate the crowd size, if you will, until the next morning.

At about 10:00 am-ish, Dina, Burton and I left our hotel room and began to walk south along Route 1 for a few blocks until we got to VanDyke St. where we turned left and headed up the one block to the beach. Pretty soon the road became sandy and within minutes we were walking through the dunes. After about 10 yards or so we made it onto the beach and saw chaos, with a capital "K." Golden retrievers of every stripe as far as the eye could see, off leash. They were in short: everywhere. Hundreds. Two-hundred, seventy-eight in fact. We had hesitated and worried about cutting Burton loose (off leash), but after taking in the sight of all his fellow goldens running around, untethered and completely free; some in the water, some digging in the sand, same chasing tennis balls, the collective excitement of all these goldens compelled us to let Burton join the fray. And fray, it was. Though afraid for Burton and his whereabouts, we were not. He regularly returned to check on us, so we never worried. This activity, and I mean activity (especially if you know goldens) went on for hours. If you think a dog doesn't smile, let me assure you they do. For Burton, and perhaps many others, this Saturday morning in Dewey Beach was the experience of a lifetime. And as a dog parent, we were thrilled to have provided Burton this opportunity for unfettered - and more importantly, unsupervised, fun.

It was about four hours later that a few raindrops began to fall, and the canine crowd thinned out preparing to return for the 7pm-bonfire on the beach at this same location. Soon, we gathered up our dog and returned to our hotel. After walking up three flights of stairs to get to our room, we all went inside. After a few moments getting ourselves organized, Burton turned left and walked into the bathroom where he laid down on the tile floor snug against the tub and the toilet, where he remained for hours. He wasn't interested in food or water, though of course, it was offered. He was in a word: exhausted. As the raindrops became rainfall, it was clear the bonfire was less likely to be of interest. Which, from what dog clues we could understand, was perfectly acceptable to Burton.

But what a day it was: here a golden, there a golden, everywhere a golden. Old McDonald's farm it wasn't. Rather it was Dewey Beach's Golden Jubilee. And a day I hope Burton will never forget. I know we won't.

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

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