

CONNECTION

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Gwyneth Moon as the Ballerina Doll in last year's "Nutcracker." This year's Fairfax Ballet Company production of "The Nutcracker" features the Chantilly High junior Gwyneth Moon as Clara.

ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 18 ♦ MORE HOLIDAY EVENTS, PAGE 21 ♦ CLASSIFIED, PAGE 22

PHOTO COURTESY OF DEBBIE WERFEL

Breaking Ground to
House the Unsheltered

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Pedestrian Victims

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Veterans Day

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Here
Come
The
Holidays

'THE NUTCRACKER,' PAGE 17

NOVEMBER 20 - DECEMBER 3, 2025

ONLINE AT WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



NOTICE OF WATER RATE AND BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING

December 11, 2025 at 6:30 p.m.

At 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 11, 2025, Fairfax Water will conduct a public hearing on its Proposed Schedule of Rates, Fees, and Charges. The hearing will be held in Fairfax Water's offices at 8570 Executive Park Avenue, Fairfax, VA.

The proposed changes, to be effective April 1, 2026, include the following:

- An increase in the Availability Charge from \$4,930 to \$5,090*.
- An increase in the Local Facilities Charge from \$24,290 to \$24,850.
- An increase in the Service Connection Charge from \$1,840 to \$1,960*.
- An increase in the Account Charge from \$48 to \$50.
- An increase in the Quarterly Service Charge from \$16.55 to \$17.55*.
- An increase in the base Commodity Charge from \$4.03 to \$4.35 per 1,000 gallons of water.
- An increase in the Peak Use Charge from \$4.15 to \$4.20.
- An increase in the Turn Off / Turn On Charge from \$58 to \$61.
- An increase in the Fees for Use of Fairfax Water Fire Hydrants to include the increase in the Commodity Charge and Peak Use Charge.
- An increase in the Overhead Charges for Materials from 12% to 14%.
- An increase in the Installation of Sewer Use Meter Charge Inspection Fee from \$47 to \$48.
- New proposed rate: After Hours Service Restoration Charge of \$58.

*Charges reflect fees associated with a standard 5/8" residential meter. Changes in charges for larger residential and commercial meters are reflected in the Proposed Schedule of Rates, Fees, and Charges.

Fairfax Water is also proposing a \$253 million budget for calendar year 2026.¹ Water sales are expected to provide \$222 million and the remaining \$31 million is expected from connection charges, investment income and other sources.

The major areas of operation and maintenance expense are:

Category	-- \$1,000s --	
	2025	2026
Personal Services & Employee Benefits	\$ 73,630	\$ 81,178
Power and Utilities	14,489	15,070
Chemicals	15,134	16,089
Purchased Water	8,712	9,313
Supplies and Materials	6,981	8,080
Insurance	1,066	1,410
Fuel	793	885
Postage	675	692
Contractual Services	15,510	15,650
Professional Services	2,194	2,310
Other	2,866	3,270
Sub-Total	142,050	153,947
Transfer to Improvement Fund	(12,005)	(12,104)
Total	\$ 130,045	\$ 141,843

Net revenues are expected to be appropriated as follows:

Debt Payment	\$54,018,574
Improvement Fund	\$11,000,000
General Fund	\$45,492,000

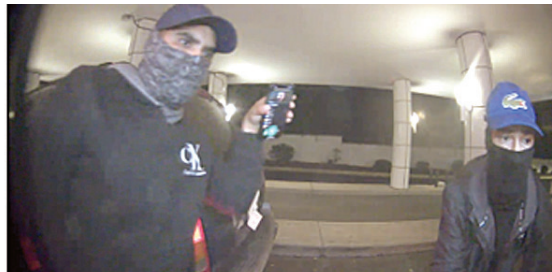
¹Fairfax Water's Board will continue to monitor economic factors and review revenues and expenditures at mid-year to determine if additional action is needed.

Visit fairfaxwater.org/rates to view a copy of the proposed changes.

Those wishing to speak at this hearing or desiring a copy of the proposed changes should call Ms. Jessica Love at 703-289-6029. Interested parties may submit written comments to PublicHearingComments@fairfaxwater.org or mail written comments to:

Fairfax Water
Public Hearing Comments
8570 Executive Park Avenue
Fairfax, VA 22031

All written comments must be received by close of business on **Wednesday, December 10, 2025** to be included in the record of the public hearing.



FCPD Financial Crimes Unit are investigating a series of ATM thefts after Apple Federal Credit Union reported that \$175,000 was stolen from one of its Fairfax branch ATMs.

Police Investigate 'ATM Jackpotting'

Detectives from FCPD Financial Crimes Unit are investigating a series of ATM thefts after Apple Federal Credit Union reported that \$175,000 was stolen from one of its Fairfax branch ATMs last month.

According to police, detectives believe the suspects may be connected to a scheme known as ATM jackpotting.

On Oct. 3, 2025, at 10:18 p.m., an unknown individual approached the drive-up ATM in the 4200 block of Members Way near Fair Oaks and used a key to open the machine. It remains unclear what actions were taken once it was accessed.

The same individual returned on Oct. 4, 2025, at 12:28 a.m., driving a late-model blue Jeep, and again opened the ATM. Around 1:15 a.m., two suspects, including the original individual, arrived in the same Jeep and accessed the machine for about 15 minutes while appearing to record it with their phones.

At 2 a.m., an unmasked suspect in the

same Jeep began withdrawing cash without inserting a card or touching the ATM. He held a phone toward the machine while removing cash, left briefly, and returned at 2:09 a.m., remaining until 2:44 a.m. as withdrawals continued.

In ATM jackpotting, attackers compromise an ATM to force it to dispense large amounts of cash, according to police. This is accomplished by installing malware or a "black box" device to override the machine's security, which can be done through physical access, such as a USB drive, or by intercepting communications between the ATM and its network. The term "jackpotting" comes from the way the ATM rapidly dispenses cash on command — similar to hitting a jackpot on a slot machine.

If you have information regarding this incident or believe you've been a victim, please FCPD our Financial Crimes Unit at 703-246-3533. Tips can also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by phone — 1-866-411-TIPS (866-411-8477)

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'We're Building Opportunity, Safety and Hope'

Beacon Landing project breaks ground in Fairfax.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

During the Beacon Landing ground-breaking ceremony Nov. 3, Lamb Center Executive Director Tara Ruszkowski shared the story of an unhoused woman who recently moved into a home of her own. Battling illness and trauma, she'd lived on the streets for years until The Lamb Center (TLC) helped rescue her.

"For the first time in years, she slept in a bed," said Ruszkowski. "She took a shower without fear. She could close her door and finally exhale. Now she's focusing on her body and mind and beginning to rebuild her life. For her, housing was lifesaving. [But] there are too many vulnerable people like her who remain unhoused."

And since TLC is a daytime drop-in center where those experiencing homelessness may obtain meals, clothing, counseling and other services, they can't live there. That's why the groundbreaking for Beacon Landing – an apartment building shepherded by TLC and Wesley Housing – was so significant. It'll provide permanent supportive housing in Fairfax City for 54 unsheltered people.

"It's so exciting to finally reach this milestone," said Ruszkowski. Realizing the tremendous need for such housing, she explained, became "the spark that ignited Beacon Landing. We struggled for a while. It was an audacious goal, and there were plenty of roadblocks, dead ends and moments when this project could have fallen apart. But we kept going – grounded in our faith and in our absolute belief in this mission and in our partners who refused to give up."

She then acknowledged and thanked some of Beacon Landing's early champions: "Former Fairfax Mayor David Meyer and Councilmember Jon Stehle for your leader-



PHOTO COURTESY OF CLAIRE STAWICK

Breaking ground are (from left) Ed Delany, Tara Ruszkowski, Lenore Stanton, Catherine Read, James Walkinshaw, Barbara Byron, Kamilah McAfee and Kanesha Brown.

ship in securing unanimous City Council approval for the project's special-use permit, and Mayor Catherine Read and the Council for being first to the table with critical funding.

"Fairfax County's Tom Fleetwood and Tom Barnett; the late Gerry Connolly who, I'm sure, is smiling down on us today; and the Wesley and Lamb Center teams. Beacon Landing is truly a community collaboration and will exist because this community recognizes that housing isn't a privilege, but a fundamental human right."

Next, U.S. Rep. James Walkinshaw (D-11th), Connolly's former chief of staff,

SEE BEACON LANDING, PAGE 6



Artist's rendition of the Beacon Landing apartment building.

Details about Beacon Landing in Fairfax City

Homes for impoverished, elderly and disabled people.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

A project of The Lamb Center (TLC) and Wesley Housing, Beacon Landing in Fairfax City will be a five-story apartment building providing 54 homeless people with a place to live. It'll serve those most vulnerable, margin-

alized and at-risk, including the elderly and those with disabilities.

Even more remarkable, it'll be permanent, supportive housing that's modern, environmentally friendly and 100-percent affordable. It's replacing the run-down, demolished Hy-Way Motel on Fairfax Boulevard and will be a block from TLC's daytime, drop-in shelter on Campbell Drive.

Wesley Housing is the project developer and – with TLC's guidance – will manage the property. There'll be 42 efficiency units (350 square feet each); 10 one-bedroom; and two two-bedroom for residents needing caregivers. And

SEE DETAILS ABOUT, PAGE 6



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

From left are Kanesha Brown and Catherine Read.

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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 CONNECTION

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://novasafestreets.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.”



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Beacon Landing Project Breaks Ground in Fairfax

FROM PAGE 3

noted Connolly's commitment to build both TLC's current building and Beacon Landing by securing some \$2 million in federal funding for them. He said TLC was a "labor of love" for Connolly for many decades. But, stressed Walkinshaw, "It really was a Connolly family project, and [daughter] Caitlin and [wife] Smitty – [who were both at the groundbreaking] – deserve as much credit as he does for their commitment to The Lamb Center's continued success.

"The individuals Beacon Landing will house and serve unfortunately are those most under attack in our country right now – the unhoused and food-insecure. I just visited Food for Others, where they're seeing a huge surge in need in our community as a result of what we've experienced over the last 10 months, [including] the [federal government] shutdown and policy decisions in Washington. Your work to support The Lamb Center and organizations like it is more important now than ever."

Walkinshaw said the Housing First model – which prioritizes providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness – has faced some pushback in the federal government. But he challenged its opponents to "join us one evening and visit those in Fairfax County who are unhoused and living in their cars or in the woods. And ask yourself, if you were struggling with mental illness or substance abuse, do you think you could solve that problem while living in the woods?"

"Or would you be better able to if you were living in a safe, secure and stable home like the 54 that'll exist at Beacon Landing? And that's what all of you who've been part of this project will make possible." Walkinshaw then thanked the local political leaders who "had the courage to make this happen and the faith leaders who made sure [they did]."



Tara Ruszkowski



James Walkinshaw



Kamilah McAfee



Lenore Stanton

He said he and Connolly visited TLC and hypothermia shelters around the county many times, and Walkinshaw kept doing so after joining the Board of Supervisors. "When we'd walk back to the car, Gerry would say almost every time, 'There but for the grace of God, go I,'" said Walkinshaw. "The folks The Lamb Center and you all serve could be any one of us. A bad break, a challenge in our lives – maybe even a bad decision we make – and it could be us. So thank you for the opportunity you'll provide to [those] who'll live at Beacon Landing."

Kamilah McAfee, president/CEO, Wesley Housing said she was "excited and proud to stand with partners and a community that's chosen to do something simple and yet so profound – to make sure our neighbors who've been living without a home are not living without hope." She then acknowledged the many individuals and organizations – including representatives from 13 separate funding sources – that made Beacon Landing possible.

"For more than five decades, Wesley Housing has delivered high-quality, affordable housing and resident services across D.C. and Virginia," she said. "We have a longstanding commitment to addressing the housing needs of our most vulnerable community mem-



PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

The Lamb Center staff participates in the groundbreaking.

bers. But, more than shelter, our work is about building up lives.

"So when The Lamb Center approached us in early 2022 with a vision for 54 units of permanent supportive housing, we understood both the challenge and the responsibility: multi-layered financing, community concerns and

operational complexities. But this only happens when the right partners and advocates come to the table and everyone puts their values into action."

"Today is more than a ceremonial milestone; it represents hope turned into reality," said McAfee. "The name Beacon Landing is in-

tentional. A beacon is a guiding light – a marker that orients you toward safety and steadiness when the path ahead is uncertain. Landing is arriving, of finally coming to rest in a place of stability and home. Together we're not just breaking ground; we're building

SEE BEACON LANDING, PAGE 7

Details about Beacon Landing in Fairfax City

FROM PAGE 3

15 percent will be ADA-compliant. The apartments will be fully furnished, including washers and dryers.

Since they're permanent, residents will have their own rental leases with no time limits. Supportive means a variety of services will help them stay in and maintain their homes, find employment/income and address their physical- and behavioral-health needs.

And rents will be no more than 30 percent of a resident's income, or a minimum of \$50/month.

The second floor will feature a community room for the residents, plus space for Lamb Center case managers to assist residents with living independently and make sure they take their medication and obtain the services they need. Property-management staff will be there, too, and a rooftop terrace with solar will help power the

building.

The 1,400-square-foot first floor will be an employment center to help the residents find entry-level jobs, and the front desk will be staffed 24/7. A bus stop will be right outside the building, as will racks for 26 bikes. Fairfax City Council approved this project in December 2022 and, when completed, it'll be the largest permanent, supportive housing facility in Northern Virginia.

The \$33.1M development is funded by a complex financial arrangement including several entities: Capital One Bank, Hudson Housing, Freddie Mac, Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority, Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development Affordable and Special Needs Housing program, the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta, Virginia Housing, the Corporation for Supportive Housing, congress-

sionally directed spending championed by the late U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-11th), and a deferred developer fee.

Construction is already underway, and the first residents are expected to move in by December 2026. Leasing will be handled via the Fairfax County Coordinated Entry System as well as the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services.

Beacon Landing Project Breaks Ground in Fairfax

FROM PAGE 6

belonging, stability and a future.”

Lenore Stanton, who chairs the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority, stressed the “deep commitment of our greater Fairfax community to remove barriers and provide access to opportunities for everyone. Beacon Landing will do just that by delivering vital, wraparound services to people experiencing homelessness.”

She said the FCRHA has a goal of 10,000 net new affordable homes by 2034, adding, “I can’t wait to come back here for the grand opening and welcome [formerly unhoused] people into their new apartments.”

Fairfax City Mayor Catherine Read noted that City residents come to TLC every day “to care for people deserving of dignity, respect and belonging. Ten or 20 years from now, there might not be anyone who remembers the genesis of Beacon Landing. It’ll just be something here, part of the fabric of our community. But within each of us, we carry the story of how this happened, and it comes back to living your values.”

“It takes a long time to get big projects across the finish line; this is a complicated one. You have to believe you’re in good company, locking arms with people who believe as strongly as we do that this is possible. Somebody had to believe from the beginning, and I look at David Meyer and Jon

Stehle and know they were among those people.”

Read said they all persevered, even when wondering how they’d obtain the necessary money and approvals. “You don’t falter,” she said. “Every day, you get up and try, try and try. And when you hit a brick wall, you go through it, over it or around it. And that’s what all of you here have done together. This is a community taking care of [itself].”

“I’m so grateful for those who came before to make today possible and for the people who’ll come after us, keep this going and embrace this project and the people living here. I’ve never been prouder, as mayor of this City, to welcome a project like this into our community.”

Barbara Byron, policy director, Board of Supervisors chairman’s office, said the county believes everyone should have an affordable place to call home. She said the county is halfway to its 2034 housing goal and is actively looking at new ways to reach it. She also called Beacon Landing a “stellar example of an innovative way in which Fairfax County and our partners are addressing the challenge of homelessness.”

Kanesha Brown, community outreach regional manager, Virginia Housing, related a moment when, as a young student, she feared “a group of guys” were going to steal her laptop and possibly harm her. “I felt un-



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION
Deacon Dave Larrabee gives a blessing.

safe,” she said. “But for individuals experiencing homelessness, that feeling isn’t just a moment – it’s constant. It’s a daily reality impacting their mental health, peace and hope.

“That’s why projects like Beacon Landing matter. They don’t just provide housing – they restore dignity, stability and [a feeling of] safety. When people have a home, they have the foundation to rebuild, grow and thrive. So we’re not just building apartments – we’re building opportunity, safety and hope.”

Ed Delany, senior director, community finance, with Capital One Bank, noted the millions of dollars his company invested in this project. He said they’ll enable Beacon Landing to be “the largest, permanent supportive housing development in Northern Virginia and the first of its kind with this level of density.”

“As you’ve learned today, an incredible number of people have come together to get us to this point,” added Ruszkowski. “And we look forward to inviting you all back in December 2026 when we’ll open the doors at Beacon Landing.”

Then before the symbolic groundbreaking, TLC’s Deacon Dave Larrabee said a blessing: “From this dirt, we’ll provide healing for 54 of our most vulnerable friends. Thank You, God, for that. I’m reminded of two, very wise men – one who said housing heals, and the other who said poverty kills. Thank You for the journey we’re on for permanent supportive housing and how far You’ve taken us.”

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Bench Dedicated in Fairfax's School Street Park



PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



Ceremony participants: (back row, from left) are Claudia Lewis, Anthony Amos, Molly Grimsley, Janet Jaworski, Stacy Hall and Rachel McQuillen; and (front row, from left) Marena Amos, Martha Peacock, Catherine Read and Mary Driver-Downs.

Woman's Club of Fairfax members: (back row, from left) Claudia Lewis, Molly Grimsley and Janet Jaworski; and (front row, from left) Mary Driver-Downs, Stacy Hall, Martha Peacock and Rachel McQuillen.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

In a small but meaningful ceremony, Fairfax City officials gathered with members of the Woman's Club of Fairfax on Oct. 25, to dedicate a bench in the City's School Street Park. It's the only bench in this peaceful park in a residential area between School Street and University Drive and is seen as a welcome addition there.

Representing Fairfax City were Mayor Catherine Read and City Council members Anthony Amos, Rachel McQuillen and Stacy Hall. The latter two pulled double duty, as they're also members of the Woman's Club of Fairfax.

"We're dedicating the bench in memory of all our club members who've passed away," said member Janet Jaworski. "Our club adopted this park in June 2023 through the Parks and Rec Department's Adopt-A-Spot program; and since then, we've helped maintain it."

She said the club wanted this pocket park to look attractive since "parents walk their kids through here to get to the Daniels Run Elementary school bus on University Drive." As for the bench, Jaworski said, "We also wanted a place here where people could sit and relax."

The Woman's Club of Fairfax has nearly 50 members, and its president is Martha Peacock, who addressed attendees during the dedication ceremony. And after welcoming everyone there, she, too, said the new bench is for all park visitors to use and enjoy.

"The Woman's Club of Fairfax is a unified

group of women brought together for charitable purposes dedicated to enhancing and strengthening this community," she said. "We've been in Fairfax City for almost 70 years, and many amazing women have been a part of our sisterhood."

"Two years ago, under the leadership of our environmental co-chairs, Janet Jaworski and Mary Driver-Downs, we adopted the School Street Park. We meet here quarterly to make sure the weeds are tended, and we've planted some new plants to beautify the park."

"Then we added a whimsical feature to the park with the installation of Roxie, the painted-rock 'snake,'" continued Peacock. "She welcomes guests when we're not present and shares rocks to brighten people's lives. This past year, we added a yellow-tulip garden to heighten awareness in our community of the stigma surrounding mental illness."

"Today we're pleased to present another addition to the park in the form of a bench which we were able to procure through the City's Parks and Recreation Department. The funds for it were generated by club members and donors who supported the work of our club. The bench will be a permanent tribute to the many women who've been a part of our organization throughout the past 70 years."

"It will be a tangible invitation to rest, linger and enjoy this lovely park," said Peacock. "Furthermore, we've installed a plaque on the bench commemorating members of our club who are no longer living, but whose lives live on in the work of the club."



The dedication plaque on the new bench.



The entrance to School Street Park, with the new bench in the background.

NEWS

Fatal Pedestrian Hit-and-Run

Detectives from FCPD Crash Reconstruction Unit are investigating a fatal pedestrian hit-and-run crash in Annandale.

On Nov. 10 at 7:30 a.m., officers responded to the 6600 block of Columbia Pike in Annandale for the report of an unconscious person. Upon arrival, officers located Steven Davis, 41, of no fixed address, in the wood line of Mason District Park off the roadway. He was declared deceased on scene.

Preliminarily, detectives determined Davis was struck by a vehicle in the eastbound

lanes of Columbia Pike near Mason District Park. The driver of the striking vehicle fled the scene.

The investigation into the crash continues as detectives work to identify the driver of the striking vehicle.

Detectives would like to speak to anyone who may have information about this case. Those with information are asked to please call our Crash Reconstruction Unit at 703-280-0543. Tips can also be submitted anonymously through Crime Solvers by phone – (703)-246-4676.

BULLETIN BOARD

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

ASSISTANCE LEAGUE OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA

Assistance League of Northern Virginia invites community members to support its November Wish List, which is focused on long sleeve shirts for elementary students. Colder weather means students need warmer clothing. Many people will simply rotate in warmer clothes from off-season storage or head to the store for new items. But many low-income families don't have that luxury, and affording new

clothing can be challenging, especially with food costs up and a tight job market. Your contribution from the wide selection of wish list items for boys and girls can allow the students we serve to share in the spirit of Thanksgiving as the holiday approaches. Use this link <https://tiny.alnv.org/eal> or scan the QR code on the flyer to make a selection. Please select the Assistance League of Northern Virginia as the shipping address to assure prompt delivery. If you would prefer not to order through Amazon, you can pay by personal check for these items. Please send your check, made out to ALNV, to PO. Box 209, Herndon, VA 20172 and include "Wish List/month" in the memo line. (E.g., if you order in November, write Wish List/November).

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OBITUARY

Gum Springs Legend Mattie Palmore Dies at 77

BY MARY PADEN
THE CONNECTION

Mattie L. Palmore, beloved matriarch of the Gum Springs community who helped many troubled individuals, influenced county policies to help vulnerable people, and was instrumental in bringing a much-needed domestic violence shelter to Mount Vernon District, died Oct. 30 at age 77.

Her funeral will be Nov. 22, at Harvest Assembly Baptist Church, 8008 Fordson Road Gum Springs, Alexandria, with the viewing at 9 a.m. and services at 11 a.m.

Widely known and loved for her empathy, passion, persistence, and irreverent wit, Palmore became close friends with people at many levels in Fairfax County. She never hesitated to call upon those people to help others. Former Mount Vernon School Board representative Karen Corbett Sanders called Palmore “the Queen of good trouble.”

Unlike many Gum Springs leaders descended from founder West Ford, who had been enslaved by the Washington family, Palmore settled in Gum Springs with her three children in 1982 after fleeing a domestic violence situation in Washington DC.

Eventually, her willingness to share her story inspired others to heal and motivated her to advocate for better policies and practices to prevent domestic violence and care for its victims.

When Palmore arrived in Gum Springs, she found work as a part-time recreation leader at the Gum Springs Community Center. She persistently sought larger roles, becoming director of the Sanders B. Moon Senior Center at the Gum Springs Community Development Corporation from mid-late 80s until 1994.

From the mid-1990s to around 2012 she held two jobs: She was one of the first Black women appointed by the State Supreme Court to serve as a magistrate in Fairfax County. And she was a staff member and eventually director of a program serving homeless families in transition at Good Shepherd Housing.

To help other Gum Springs women facing abuse and other issues, Palmore co-founded the Mount Vernon Women's Group. Because there was no shelter in South County for women fleeing abusive partners, Palmore worked with other women to secure county approvals and funding to establish Artemis House in the Mount Vernon area.

Lisa Sales, who with Palmore and Karen Stone was one of the self-named “Three Musketeers” who helped bring Artemis House to Mount Vernon, recalled: “I first got to know Mattie at the Women's Group she convened following a sexual assault I endured. Mattie created safe spaces for us all, was a champion for women and girls, and the voice of many when they were in their most vulnerable states and had no voice of their own.”

Sales said the Musketeers collaborated with Chairman Jeff McKay and Supervisor Dan Storck to establish a shelter on the Route 1 Corridor, at an undisclosed location for the safety of the residents.

Promoting good police-community relations was one of Palmore's ongoing inter-



Mattie Palmore gives a thumbs up at a Gum Springs Historical Society annual gala at Mount Vernon Estate.

ests. As a member of the Mount Vernon District Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Palmore offered advice to the Mount Vernon District police officers and encouraged community members to attend police barbecues and police-youth basketball games to improve relations and prevent crime.

Because of her experience helping families in crisis, Palmore was acutely aware of the lack of adequate mental health care and spoke out about it.

She was appointed as Mount Vernon representative to the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board (CSB) where she eventually served as vice chair. Virginia law requires that CSBs be formed throughout the state to serve residents with or at risk of developmental delay, intellectual disabilities, mental illness, and alcohol or drug abuse or dependency.

At the CSB, Palmore joined a commission established in 2006 to advise the Board of Supervisors on creating a new direction for mental health services. Progressive recommendations delivered in late 2008 were embraced by the statewide CSB system. They included increased prevention and early intervention; additional services such as stable housing; access to education and jobs; making connections with primary health care; workforce skills training; and program evaluation and accountability.

In 2017, Palmore was named Lady Fairfax of Mount Vernon District for her community service.

For many years, Palmore was co-chair of the Fairfax NAACP Women in the NAACP (WIN) Committee focused on civil rights issues affecting women and children and received the 2024 NAACP community service award.

In his February 2025 newsletter, Mount Vernon Supervisor Storck named her as a Mount Vernon District Community Champion.

Palmore was always rooted in the Gum Springs community where she was vice president of the New Gum Springs Civic Association and a strong community booster.

At its 2024 annual Juneteenth-Communi-

nity Day Celebration, Del. Paul Krizek honored Palmore with a proclamation from the Virginia General Assembly, which listed her accomplishments and commended her “for more than three decades of hard work on behalf of the residents of Fairfax County.”

The Gum Springs Community Service Advisory Board gave her an award and New Gum Springs Civic Association presented her with a medallion.

Palmore thanked the assembly with characteristic quiet humility flanked by her daughter, Ayannah Palmore, and eldest son, D.R. Bacife, both of whom had helped her through repeated bouts of respiratory illness over the previous few years.

Asked her feelings about the ceremony later, Palmore said, “I love my community and I enjoy helping other people. And that's it.”

Despite increasingly frequent trips to the hospital, Palmore continued to conduct “case work” from her home at Spring Garden Apartments calling whoever it took — the sheriff, district police chief, supervisor, housing director, ministers — to get assistance for the many people who called on her.

So many people called that she changed her voice message to say, “God helps those who help themselves,” before blessing the caller and asking them to leave a message.

Palmore is survived by three siblings, Shirley Mallory, Robert Earl Lewis, and Fernard Lewis; three children D.R. Bacife, 55, Gavin Palmore, 53, and Ayannah Palmore, 46, as well as Tremese Palmore (spouse of Gavin) and Hope Howard-Bacife (former spouse of D.R.), 11 grandchildren and one great granddaughter.

The Palmore family has created a GoFundMe page to help with burial costs and to honor her memory at: gofund.me/bear.aura.tick.

Condolences may be shared at the Lay to Rest Funeral Home & Cremation, Springfield, VA, funeral home's website at: www.laytorestfuneralhome.com.

Friends and Colleagues Remember Mattie Palmore

BY MARY PADEN

Jeff McKay

Chair of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

“Mattie was not only a dedicated community activist but also a good friend with an enormous heart. She was a tireless advocate for her community, especially through her unwavering efforts to prevent domestic violence and connect families with the resources they needed to thrive.

“Mattie was a persistent and fearless leader who believed deeply in fairness and equality. When she entered a room, her presence commanded attention — not for herself, but for the causes and people she represented. Her love, dedication, and passion helped shape the inclusive vision we now call One Fairfax.

“Her legacy of compassion and courage will continue to inspire all of us who strive to

build a stronger, more equitable community.”

Vincent Carter

New Gum Springs Civic Association Board Chair

“Over the past three decades, I have had the opportunity to collaborate with some of the sharpest and gifted minds in the Community Building arena. Mattie Louise Palmore was among that group.

“In any area she lacked exceptional skills, Mattie made up for with love and commitment to task — and ACTION! She always acted and she did so with love.

“Mattie was a great woman of God, a devoted mother, and my good friend. She leaves her footprint on the great historical Gum Springs Community, the whole County of Fairfax, and the State of Virginia. Her life was a testament to the goodness of God through mankind.”

Dan Storck

Mount Vernon District Supervisor

“Mattie Palmore was a dear friend whose wisdom, strength and compassion helped shape our entire community, especially Gum Springs. For more than two decades, beginning at Good Shepherd Housing and as an elected Mount Vernon District representative, we worked together to help our most vulnerable neighbors have a home, food, health care, and, in 2019, opening South County's first domestic violence shelter, Artemis House.

“Mattie taught us what it truly means to serve others by ‘helping people help themselves,’ as she often said. Her legacy of courage, advocacy and unwavering love for everyone will continue to guide us/me. I am deeply grateful for her leadership, care, compassion, our 25- year friendship, and I will greatly miss her.”

Lisa Sales

President Emeritus, Virginia National Organization for Women (NOW), Former Chairwoman, Fairfax County Commission for Women

“Mattie and I served together on the Fairfax County Commission for Women and on the Council to End Domestic and Sexual Violence. Mattie also called attention to the crisis of human trafficking in Northern Virginia when few were talking about it. She was determined to hold authorities accountable to make certain they provided and/or improved services to victims.

“She was a force to be reckoned with no matter her own struggles. Fairfax County lost one of its angels and blessings this month, but Mattie will never be forgotten. The women she helped will always carry Mattie in their hearts and minds and we will continue to pay forward her work and legacy.”

Shirley Ginwright

Consultant specialized in building sustainable, trusting relationships between local communities and public safety agencies.

“Mattie was the most selfless person I have ever known. She consistently put others before herself. One moment that truly stands out is when she was in the hospital and learned about a woman forced to flee domestic abuse. From her hospital bed, Mat-

SEE MATTIE PALMORE, PAGE 17
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News

Welcome to Mackenzie's Tunes & Tonics in Fairfax City

Restaurant,
music, friendly
bar with a
'Cheers' vibe.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Josh Alexander grew up watching the TV show, "Cheers," about a welcoming Boston bar where locals met to drink and socialize, and he wanted to someday own a similar place. His dream came true in June 2023 when he opened Mackenzie's Tunes & Tonics in Fairfax City's Old Town Plaza.

Named after his daughter, Mackenzie, now 11, it's at 3950 University Drive, No. 210, across from Bollywood Bistro, and there's free parking in the attached garage that opens onto the plaza. It's also a full-service restaurant that supports the community.

"The art on the walls is all by local artists and is for sale, and our



Josh Alexander in front of the wall signed by the musicians.

ultra-friendly staff is all local residents," said Alexander. "We also host fundraisers, private parties and special events, and we partner with The Colonel's Kitchen to teach veterans how to cook."

And while local bands and singers have casually performed at Mackenzie's, the official grand opening of its entertainment stage will be Thursday, Dec. 4, with a 3 p.m. ribbon-cutting and a 4 p.m. party. After that, it'll offer open-mic night every Wednesday, and

live music Fridays, Saturdays and most Thursdays, starting at 8 p.m.

The restaurant menu was curated by Executive Chef Joe Sullivan, a close friend of Alexander's. "People initially come here either for the music or the cocktails," said Alexander. "And then they return because they've fallen in love with Joe's food – which isn't bar food, but actual restaurant quality."

Some of the most popular dishes are Chef Joe's Meatballs, served

SEE WELCOME TO, PAGE 14



Josh and Mackenzie Alexander outside Mackenzie's Tunes & Tonics.

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Lt. Gen. (ret.) Mike Shields



Eric Parkhurst



James Walkinshaw



Mac McCarl

Community Is Encouraged to Look After Each Other

Fairfax City honors America's veterans.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax City's Veterans Day ceremony last Tuesday, Nov. 11, honored those who served their country and reminded people to always look after each other. American Legion Post 177 hosted the event, along with VFW Post 8469.

Besides local residents and veterans, attendees included U.S. Rep. James Walkinshaw (D-11th), Del. David Bulova (D-11th), Sen. Saddam Salim (D-37th), Del. Dan Helmer (D-10th) and Fairfax County Sheriff Stacey Kincaid and husband Greg Kincaid, Virginia State Police captain. Also present were Fairfax City Fire Chief John O'Neal, City Police Chief Raúl Pedrosa, Fairfax Mayor Catherine Read and the entire City Council.

Following the presentation of the colors, the Pledge of Allegiance and the singing of the National Anthem by The Unmuted, VFW post 8469 Chaplain Dan Allmacher gave the invocation. He asked God to be with them as they paid tribute to America's veterans and those still serving.

"We're grateful for their dedication and commitment, the countless selfless acts they've performed and the sacrifices of their families so that we might continue to enjoy freedom," said Allmacher. "We're mindful of the fact that many of their comrades sacrificed their very lives on the fields, seas and in the air where the battles of war were fought.

"We remember those today with great reverence and thanksgiving. We thank you for our great land, for life, liberty and the freedom to pursue happiness that constitutes the legacy of our forebearers and the ongoing ideals of our republic."

Walkinshaw took the podium next. "We're gathered, as always, on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month," he said. "At this time in 1918, the Armistice to end 'The War to End All Wars' was implemented. At 10:59 a.m., an American private named Henry

Gunther charged a German machine-gun turret and was killed – one minute before the Armistice. Pvt. Gunther's courage and selflessness typifies the courage and selflessness that veterans have demonstrated throughout our nation's history, including many who are here with us today."

"We have a responsibility to honor our veterans on Veterans Day and every day," continued Walkinshaw. "But just as important, we have a responsibility to act to ensure that our veterans get the support and care that they need and deserve when they return home from their service. On the Board of Supervisors, I was proud of the work we did to establish – amazingly, for the first time in Fairfax County's history – a Military and Veteran Families Commission. And I'd done some work with military families to extend tax relief to the spouses of those who died in the line of duty."

He said he was surprised to learn the county didn't already have such an entity that would obtain input from local veterans and their families. And this week, it'll issue its first report to the Supervisors, letting them know what veterans and military families here need to be better cared for and connected. And, said Walkinshaw, "That's the approach I intend to take on their behalf in Congress.

"All of us have a responsibility to honor our veterans. Those of us in a position of leadership – and especially those who didn't serve – have an added responsibility to listen, learn and act on your behalf. And that's what I hope to do, with your help. In the short time I've served in Congress, I've worked on legislation to address PTSD and mental-health challenges that our veterans face, and to improve care and service at the VA [Veterans Administration]."

He's also working on the Maj. Richard Star Act – a bill that would enable combat-disabled veterans to receive both their full, military-retirement pay and their VA disability compensation without a reduction in one benefit if a veteran receives both (as is the case now). And he said how proud he is to have two veterans on his staff whose job is to help other veterans cut through red tape in obtaining what they need.



PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

The presentation of the Colors at the start of the ceremony.

Keynote speaker was Army Lt. Gen. (ret.) Mike Shields. Introducing him, VFW Post 8469 Commander Mac McCarl said Shields has more than three decades of national-security experience, including top posts with the Army and the Joint Staff. "His last active-duty assignment was director of the Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization, where I had the privilege of working for him twice," said McCarl. Shields also earned three Bronze Stars and commanded various battalions and divisions in the U.S.

and in Iraq.

Saying he's honored to recognize the nation's veterans, Shields said they've served in places including the Somme, Normandy, Iwo Jima, Chosin Reservoir, Khe San, Grenada, Panama, Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria. From Normandy in WWII to Beirut in 1983 – and places such as Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Haiti following the 2010 earthquake, the Pentagon on 9/11,

SEE COMMUNITY IS, PAGE 13

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Air Force vet Karen Cosgrove, VFW Post 8469 junior vice commander, stands while the Air Force anthem is sung.



Listening to The Unmuted sing are (from left) Mac McCarl, Mike Shields, Eric Parkhurst and Dan Allmacher.

Community Is Encouraged to Look After Each Other

FROM PAGE 12

Niger in October 2017 and Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria in 2017 – Americans have answered their country's call to service.

"Our veterans are all volunteers," said Shields. "They raised their right hands and [swore to] defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. They stood up when others did not. They accepted risk, hardship, multiple deployments, separation from loved ones and the effects of combat – challenges most Americans will never fully understand.

"They served in times of war and peace, on foreign soil and here at home, to protect the freedoms we sometimes take for granted. Some returned home to build families and careers. Some made the ultimate sacrifice. We remember our Gold Star families like Scott and Lorna Harris of Maine. Their son Dustyn was killed by an improvised explosive device in Bayji, Iraq in April 2006 while serving under my command. I'll meet with the Harrises again, 13 December at Arlington National Cemetery, for Wreaths Across America."

"We remember Veterans like 1st Sgt. (ret.) Westley Bockert who, after years of quietly suffering following an IED strike in Mosul, Iraq, was awarded the Purple Heart in May 2024, two decades later," continued Shields. "We remember our National Guard and reservists – citizen soldiers who've served honorably [in many places]. And we remember

the courageous Alaska Army National Guard crew whose Blackhawk helicopter crashed in January 2006 while under my command in Northern Iraq, killing the four members of the crew and four civilians."

He said Americans also acknowledge veterans "suffering in silence and struggling with invisible wounds. Veterans like Ryan Larkin, a Navy SEAL [who served in] Iraq and Afghanistan and took his own life as a result of internal brain injuries caused by his service. It's a reminder to our nation that taking care of our veterans doesn't end with redeployment, termination of service or retirement.

"Today, we pause to honor and remember all who've served and sacrificed to protect our freedom [and] to remind our civic leaders and teach the next generation that freedom is never free. To all veterans, thank you for your commitment to something bigger than yourselves. Whether you served during peacetime or combat – whether your service lasted months, years or decades – it was meaningful. Our country is better because of you."

Speaking next was American Legion Post 177 Cmdr. Eric Parkhurst, who told attendees to think of that day's event as a call to action. "As a soldier in a foxhole, with that battle buddy next to me, I couldn't care less what color he is, what religion, what political affiliation or about his or her gender or sexual orientation," he said. "There's one thing both of us are there for – to keep the other one from dying. We watch each other's



PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

The Unmuted singing patriotic songs.

backs.

"And I give that call to action to you. Watch out for our veterans and for each other. Your neighbors might need a little help, might not be able to do their yardwork. Your kids' classmates in school maybe don't know what they're going to eat this weekend. Here at the Legion, we have a program called Be the One, that's about watching out for each other [and potential veteran suicide]."

"It's not about being a psychologist or psychiatrist," explained Parkhurst. "But what you can do is be here and listen when somebody needs to talk. He doesn't need advice or for you to tell him what to do. He just needs someone to listen; be there for whatever it is. Every one of us is a battle buddy to somebody. Let's watch out for our neighbors, friends and veterans. God bless you, God bless our veterans and God bless America."

Dustin Wright: New Fairfax City Schools Chief

The City of Fairfax School Board has appointed Dustin Wright as its new superintendent, succeeding Jeff Platenberg, who retired in July. Wright will take over the reins Dec. 1.

He brings with him nearly two decades of leadership experience in Northern Virginia. He began as a teacher at Rachel Carson Middle School and then served as assistant principal at both Fairfax Villa Elementary and the City's Daniels Run

Elementary.

Afterward, Wright was principal at Olde Creek Elementary and Franklin Middle School before serving in division-level roles, including executive director of Strategy and Planning for Fairfax County Public Schools and, most recently, chief of schools for Falls Church City Public Schools.

He holds a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership from George Mason University and has served as an adjunct professor. He and his wife, City residents for the past 17 years,

have three children and are active members of the Fairfax City community.

"As a City resident and City student parent, Dr. Wright understands our schools as a community member, neighbor and educator," said School Board Chair Carolyn Pitcher. "Throughout his career, Dustin has been recognized for his collaborative approach, ability to bring coherence to complex systems, and deep commitment to the success of every student."

As for Wright, he said, "I'm honored to

serve the City of Fairfax and give back to the community that has shaped my family. My focus is clear – advance elementary renovations, support student success in every school and strengthen partnerships with families, staff and City leaders. In the months ahead, I'll listen across the City of Fairfax Schools community to learn from our successes and understand our challenges as we move Fairfax forward."

— CARRIE DORSEY

Small Business Saturday: Ten neighborhood favorites to visit on Nov. 29.

BY DAVID GRIFFIN
MOUNT VERNON SPRINGFIELD
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Small Business Saturday is an ideal time to support the shops, restaurants, and service providers that make the Mount Vernon and Springfield areas special. On November 29, neighbors are encouraged to explore the businesses that strengthen our local economy and give our community its character. Here are ten local favorites to visit as you plan your holiday shopping and seasonal outings.

Fairy Bronze Mother

7011 H Manchester Blvd.,
Alexandria, VA
www.fairybronzemother.com

Fairy Bronze Mother began as a simple idea that grew into a full beauty and wellness studio in the Kingstowne area. Owner Rachel Tyson brings more than ten years of experience in custom spray tanning and has worked with a wide range of clients. The studio now offers custom spray tans, red light therapy, permanent jewelry, IV infusions therapy, an automated booth, fairy hair extensions, and other beauty services. The business began with a mobile setup and has grown into a full shop filled with new equipment, products, and “must haves” for beauty enthusiasts.

Primo Family Restaurant

1636 A Belle View Boulevard,
Alexandria, VA
<https://primofamilyrestaurant.com>

Primo Family Restaurant has been part of the Belle View community since 1988. Owner Jim Nicopoulos is a third generation restaurateur who takes pride in offering Greek, Italian, and American dishes prepared with care. Proteins are sourced from Polyface Farms and ingredients are chosen with attention to quality. Primo is known for

warm hospitality and is proud to be recognized as the number one New York style pizza restaurant in Northern Virginia. Gift cards are also available for holiday present ideas.

Casa Laundromat

7320 Richmond Highway,
Alexandria, VA
www.casalaundromat.com

Casa Laundromat is a family owned laundromat that has served the community since 2008. The business provides a clean and well stocked facility with machines in a variety of sizes.

Friendly attendants are always available to assist customers. Casa Laundromat also offers wash and fold services, commercial laundry services, and pickup and delivery throughout Alexandria, Belle Haven, Rose Hill, Groveton, Mount Vernon, Springfield, and other nearby neighborhoods.

Stress Free Carpet Cleaning

8006 Ferncliff Ct.,
Springfield, VA
www.stressfreecarpetcleaning.com

Stress Free Carpet Cleaning has been serving Northern Virginia since 1998. Owner Joseph Jablonski began in commercial cleaning and later focused on residential carpet care. The company provides carpet cleaning, upholstery cleaning, carpet stretching, and carpet repair. The team uses reliable equipment and environmentally friendly products. Joseph takes pride in offering personal service and building long term relationships within the community.

Campbell and Ferrara Nursery

8351 Richmond Highway,
Alexandria, VA
www.campbellferrara.com

Campbell and Ferrara has been a local landmark since 1945. The third generation family business provides landscape design, installation, and a full garden center. The

team creates custom outdoor spaces that may include patios, outdoor kitchens, gardens, ponds, or waterfalls. Campbell and Ferrara has a long tradition of quality work and friendly service. The nursery remains a favorite destination for homeowners looking to enhance their outdoor living spaces.

ScreenThem

Background Investigations

7900 Andrus Road, Suite 13,
Alexandria, VA
<https://screenthem.com>

ScreenThem Background Investigations has been providing screening services since 1977. The company works with employers, property managers, law firms, and organizations across the country. Services include employment background checks, tenant screening, healthcare sanction screening, international searches, and nanny background checks. ScreenThem is nationally accredited and known for accurate reports and professional service.

Royal Global Travel

8115 Yorktown Drive,
Alexandria, VA
www.royalglobaltravel.com

Royal Global Travel is a luxury travel agency owned by Laura Quirk. The company specializes in curated European itineraries, all-inclusive Caribbean vacations, and a full range of river and ocean cruises. Laura provides fully customized travel planning, including insurance, guidance, and detailed arrangements for clients seeking a smooth and memorable travel experience.

Nothing Bundt Cakes – Springfield

7000 D Brookfield Plaza,
Springfield, VA
www.nothingbundtcakes.com

Nothing Bundt Cakes in Springfield opened in 2019 and has become a popular stop for celebrations of all sizes. The bakery

offers cakes in a variety of flavors and sizes, along with party supplies and small gifts. The shop serves families, businesses, and visitors who want a dessert that feels special. The team is known for friendly service and a welcoming atmosphere.

LIGHT by Alexandria Electric

1602 Belle View Boulevard,
Alexandria, VA
www.LIGHTbyAE.com

LIGHT by Alexandria Electric offers lighting fixtures for every room in the home or business.

The Belle View showroom is staffed with knowledgeable lighting professionals who can help customers choose designs that fit their needs. LIGHT carries fixtures that are not typically found in larger stores and welcomes visitors to book personalized design consultations.

Jerry's Paint and Wallpaper Center

6715 A Backlick Road,
Springfield, VA
www.benjaminmoore.com
(store locator code 10001953)

Jerry's Paint and Wallpaper Center has served Springfield and the surrounding area since 1986. It is a family owned and operated Benjamin Moore, Cabot, and Sikkens dealer offering paint, stain, wallpaper, color consultations, and personalized design advice. Their knowledgeable staff provides expert color matching and guidance for both homeowners and contractors.

Jerry's has earned a reputation for quality products and warm customer service.

Small Business Saturday is a great time to explore the businesses that bring life and character to our neighborhoods. You can find more local shops, restaurants, and service providers by visiting the Chamber's business directory at <https://mountvernon-springfield.com/businesses>.

Welcome to Mackenzie's Tunes & Tonics in Fairfax City

FROM PAGE 11

with crispy bread, parmesan and fresh basil; Bulgogi Party Tots, topped with bulgogi beef and Szechuan aioli; Fire-cracker Shrimp, with sweet and spicy aioli over green-tea noodle salad; and Crispy Brussels Sprouts, featuring an orange-passion fruit teriyaki glaze with pepitas and pomegranate seeds.

Several handhelds are also offered, with the All-American Burger (formerly called Smashburger) being the favorite. It has two patties, lettuce, bacon, white American cheese and a secret sauce on a brioche bun.

In the cocktail arena, Mackenzie's specializes in the classics, such as Whiskey Sours, Old Fashioneds, Gin Gimlets and Daiquiris – traditional ones made with lime, as well as modern passionfruit

ones. But hands down, the Manhattan takes the top spot.

“The Manhattan is the reason I opened a cocktail bar,” explained Alexander. “I couldn't find a decent Manhattan anywhere in Fairfax. It has to have a good, pre-Prohibition-style rye and Antica vermouth – the highest-quality ingredients.”

There's also a rotating stable of craft beers which Alexander gets from local purveyors, Sojourn Fermentary (owned by several Fairfax City residents) and Settle Down Easy Brewing Co. of Falls Church. And the wines are curated by The Wine House next door.

“I have the best neighbors in the best little City,” said Alexander. “And I'm really proud to be a part of it.” Mackenzie's also has a chess club and hosts karaoke every Monday. It offers bourbon tastings and cocktail-making classes, and Alexander plans to start

comedy and spoken-word nights, too. And a murder-mystery dinner set in the 1920s, “Murder at Mackenzie's: Secrets of the Speakeasy,” is set for Friday, Jan. 16.

Mackenzie's also has a guest book where people write messages, draw pictures and offer suggestions.

“I let the customers tell me what they wanted here, in terms of music, food and cocktails, so I could tailor it to their needs,” said Alexander. “The musicians wanted a small, intimate stage – and built it. And they sign the wall behind the stage after they play. When customers suggest a drink, if it's good, I name it after them. So this is an authentic and organic place. It just happened, and I let it grow.”

Overall, said Alexander, “It's been a long and fulfilling road – from growing up in the area, graduating from Mason and moving to

Fairfax City – to now seeing all the different ingredients of my life finally come together into my own version of ‘Cheers.’ In the end, my daughter Mackenzie is my main inspiration to have a friendly, neighborhood gathering place where everybody knows her name.”

◆ ◆ ◆

Mackenzie's is currently open weekdays, except for Tuesday, from 5 p.m.-midnight; Saturday, 1 p.m.-midnight; and Sunday, 3 p.m.-midnight. Performers – including School of Rock, Fairfax – will do original songs and covers in all genres of music. Main sponsors are Honor Roll Remodeling, The Dixon Co. and Songwriters Assn. of Washington. For more information, go to www.mackenziesffx.com.

New Fairfax Tree Savers PRISM Holds Week of Action

New group hopes to attract a representative in every neighborhood.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

As you drive or walk around Fairfax County taking in the scenery, you may have noticed that not all the greenery on trees along your path actually belongs to the trees' own leaves. Many people have seen the massive amount of vine overgrowth on our trees, and are alarmed by the negative effects on trees' long term health. They are determined to save the trees under assault from these predominantly non-native vines. The product of this shared willingness to 'do something', is the newly organized non-profit volunteer group, Fairfax Tree Rescuers PRISM (Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management).

In their kick-off Week of Action, lead PRISM volunteers held tree rescue events at several locations throughout the county, including Alexandria, Annandale, Burke, Clifton, Falls Church, Lorton, Reston and Springfield, on days between Nov. 8th and 16th. Areas tackled included parks, HOA common areas, and school and library land boundary edges. Invitations posted to the public, and sent to elected officials, prompted many, from small handfuls to dozens, to come learn about plans underway to save trees in Fairfax County and to participate in community-wide efforts to stem the epidemic of invasive plants. Such work projects protect native trees and promote the growth of life-supporting plants that are native to, and essential for, a healthy ecosystem that supports native wildlife.

Those who attended the tree rescue events learned to identify non-native species, especially vines, which commonly adhere to trees here. Those vines can kill, even mature trees, by climbing their trunks and branches, robbing trees of ground nutrients and sunlight, and even may topple trees from their weight. Event participants learned how to cut vines, and use herbicides, to best advantage. Perhaps they had not anticipated the events could also be a pleasant opportunity to connect with others. The many smiles suggest participants enjoyed their time making a positive impact on



PHOTO FROM FAIRFAX PRISM

IMA Site Leader, Sara Holt, of Oakton (left) and Fairfax Tree Savers PRISM founder, Margaret Fisher, of Clifton (right) help frame the pleasure that can come from working with others to improve the environment



PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

Fisher (third from right) leads volunteers to a work session on the park grounds near Pohick Regional Library



Fairfax Master Naturalist in training, Kelly Jiron, of Springfield, tackles invasive Multiflora Rose plants near Pohick Library



Margaret Fisher, a Master Naturalist, instructs on techniques to properly remove English Ivy without damaging tree bark



Members of the Campbell family establish a safety ring around a tree, removing English Ivy



Mount Vernon Supervisor Dan Storck stops at Laurel Hill Equestrian Center work session with a message of support for the site's PRISM event and regular weekly invasive management



Steve Swanekamp, with an assist from a sharp hand saw, won the battle against an invasive Callery Pear tree

SEE NEW FAIRFAX, PAGE 23

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BURKE / FAIRFAX / FAIRFAX STATION/CLIFTON/LORTON / SPRINGFIELD ♦ NOVEMBER 20 - DECEMBER 3, 2025 ♦ 15

West Springfield Football Team Goes on To Playoffs to Highlight Victorious Season

BY MIKE SALMON

Sunday afternoon for football fans may be a wash this year with the Commanders recently losing five in a row, but the Spartans at West Springfield High School are picking up the slack, recently winning the Patriot League championship against Lake Braddock and then a playoff game against West Potomac where the score was 48 to 13.

With a big win under their belts, the Spartan's season is not over yet. They are heading on to the regional finals against Fairfax next week which could lead to the state championship in December.

The varsity team won seven in a row leading up to their victory on Nov. 7 where they defeated their division rival 34-31.

The following Friday was their first playoff game against West Potomac on Friday, Nov. 14 where quarterback Scott Lewis completed 12 of 18 passes, five for touchdowns to put the game out of reach. Three of the touchdowns were to receiver Javon Austin.

Other players in the spotlight included Brady Davies at running back, linebacker, Zachary Norton at linebacker and slot receiver, and lineman Ayaan Mirza and Micah Dargan-Coley.

West Springfield head coach Anthony Parker used a balanced approach of runs and passes, and in the end, the Spartans came out on top.

"The win will keep these seniors playing as long as possible," said Parker.

Journey to Victory

The season started off good where they won against West Potomac, but then lost the next two against Chantilly and Madison before going on a six-game winning streak.

"As a Spartan alumnus and booster, I am extremely proud of the team this year and all they have accomplished to date," said Supervisor Pat Herrity (R-Springfield).

Friday night's game will be at West Springfield.



The West Springfield Spartans win their first playoff game against West Potomac.



Spartan Football with the come from behind 34-31 victory over Lake Braddock and the Patriot District Champs.



The thrill of victory for the Patriot District title.



Spartan smiles all around

Fairfax Ballet Co. Presents 'The Nutcracker'



PHOTOS COURTESY OF DEBBIE WERFEL

Chantilly High junior Gwyneth Moon

Chantilly High student dances the role of Clara.

BY DEBBIE WERFEL
SPECIAL TO THE CONNECTION

The Fairfax Ballet Co. will kick off the beauty and magic of the holiday season with its full-length production of "The Nutcracker." It's set for Saturday-Sunday, Nov. 29-30, at 4 p.m., at Fairfax High, 3501 Lion Run in Fairfax City.

This year, the Fairfax Ballet Co. is debuting a brand-new holiday tree that will magically grow as Clara is transported to a fantasy world of sweets with her Nutcracker prince. Tickets are available at

the door or via <https://www.etix.com/ticket/o/15726/fairfaxballet>.

Alyssa Manguiat of Ballet Austin and Solomon Hunter of Ballet Tucson will lead a cast of 50 dancers including Fairfax Ballet Company members and Russell School of Ballet students. Manguiat dances the role of the Sugar Plum Fairy, and Hunter performs as the Cavalier.

The show also features Chantilly High junior and Fairfax Ballet Company member Gwyneth Moon as Clara. Dancing since age 3, she began training at the Russell School of Ballet and joined the Fairfax Ballet in 2021. As a member of its company, Moon has performed in various productions, including "The Nutcracker," "Sleeping Beauty" and "Carnival of the Animals."



Gwyneth Moon as the Ballerina Doll in last year's "Nutcracker."

This summer, she attended Cincinnati Ballet's summer intensive program. In March, Moon performed a variation from "Coppelia" at Youth American Grand Prix in Winston-Salem, N.C. She's looking forward to participating in it again and dancing in the annual spring ballet and jazz, tap and modern-dance showcase.

Jordan Nelson, principal art-

ist with Canyon Concert Ballet in Fort Collins, Colo., is both the Nutcracker Prince and Soldier Doll. Philip Smith-Cobbs dances the roles of Mouse King and Coffee. A former dancer with Atlanta Ballet, he's a current faculty member of the Russell School of Ballet and is part of FBC's artistic team.

❖ The Fairfax Ballet Company will also be performing "The Nut-

cracker" with the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra, Saturday-Sunday, Dec. 20-21, at 4 p.m. at the George Mason Center for the Arts in Fairfax.

Fairfax Ballet Company is a non-profit based at the Russell School of Ballet in Chantilly. Notable alumni have gone on to perform with the New York City Ballet, the Radio City Rockettes and on Broadway.

Gum Springs Legend Mattie Palmore Dies at 77

FROM PAGE 10

tie hurriedly called around to find, and found, a safe place for the woman and her child. Her advocacy for domestic abuse, homelessness and civil and equal rights will be truly missed. I am honored to have been able to call her a friend."

Karen Corbett Sanders

Member, House of Delegates; former school board representative from Mount Vernon District.

"Mattie would light up any room that she went into. She brought a smile to my face when she thought of another way of making this world a better place and asked for help. She always said, 'Let's go get into some good trouble on this one.' Mattie was the queen of good trouble."

"Mattie was passionate about her children and grandchildren and always shared wonderful stories about each of them."

"She will be missed by all who knew and loved her."

Rodney Lusk

Franconia District Supervisor

"Ms. Palmore served her community for over 30 years in different roles, including as a Fairfax County magistrate, director of the homeless transition program at Good Shepherd Housing and Family Services, and co-founder of the Mount Vernon Women's Group."

Most recently, she served on the Fairfax County Community Services Board, the New Gum Springs Community Association,

and the Fairfax County NAACP Women's Committee. Mattie has made so many outstanding contributions to Fairfax County and will be greatly missed. I extend my condolences to her loved ones and community"

Ronald L. Chase

Director Gum Springs Museum, President of the Gum Springs Historical Society

"Leadership is not forced. It is given as a gift. Mattie lived by these words."

ENTERTAINMENT

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 Nov. 7 through Jan. 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.

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



A discussion on Great Women Astronomers and Physicists will be held on Nov. 22, 2025 at Reston Regional Library.

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. 25

Photos with Santa. At Tysons Corner Center, Lower Level, McLean, near Wasabi. Make magical memories with Santa! Walk-ins are welcome, or reserve ahead to skip the line and receive a free personalized digital message from Santa (powered by Portable North Pole). Visits are free, photo packages available for purchase.

NOW THRU NOV. 30

Pet Food Drive. At Pet Evolution, 3903 Fair Ridge Drive, Suite F, Fairfax. Pet Evolution, a growing retail store for healthy pet foods and services, will host a Pet Food Drive during November. The drive will collect pet food, toys and supplies to benefit local food pantries to ensure that pets in need receive the care and support they deserve. During the month of November, customers are encouraged to donate unopened pet food, treats, toys and supplies at any Pet Evolution store. Customers who donate will receive 10 percent off their retail purchase at Pet Evolution that same day.

How to Participate:

1. Visit Pet Evolution in Fairfax (3903 Fair Ridge Drive, Suite F) between Nov. 1-30.
2. Bring donations of unopened pet food, treats, toys or supplies.
3. Receive 10 percent off your same-day retail purchase at Pet Evolution.

NOV. 6 TO FEB. 24, 2026

Bernie Boston, A Retrospective Photography Exhibition. At Pleasant Grove Church and McLean Community Center. Presented by McLean Project for the Arts and The Friends of Pleasant Grove.



Marcolivia, Violin and Viola can be seen Nov. 23, 2025 at the McLean Community Center.

Sponsored by The Friends of Historic Pleasant Grove, 8641 Lewinsville Road, McLean. Visit www.historicpleasantgrove.org.

WEDNESDAY/NOV. 19

Financial Planning: For Families with Special Needs Children. 6-7 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. As parents, our priority is the care and support of our children. In this seminar, we remind parents to "put your air mask on first." We review the necessary steps to establish sound financial plans for parents and discuss the unique ways they must plan. Extra focus is on the needed estate, retirement

and long-term care plans that help ensure parents are in the best place themselves, so they are better able to care for their children. Instructor: Clover Leaf Wealth Strategies.

NOV. 19-23

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

rbfriends@gmail.com.

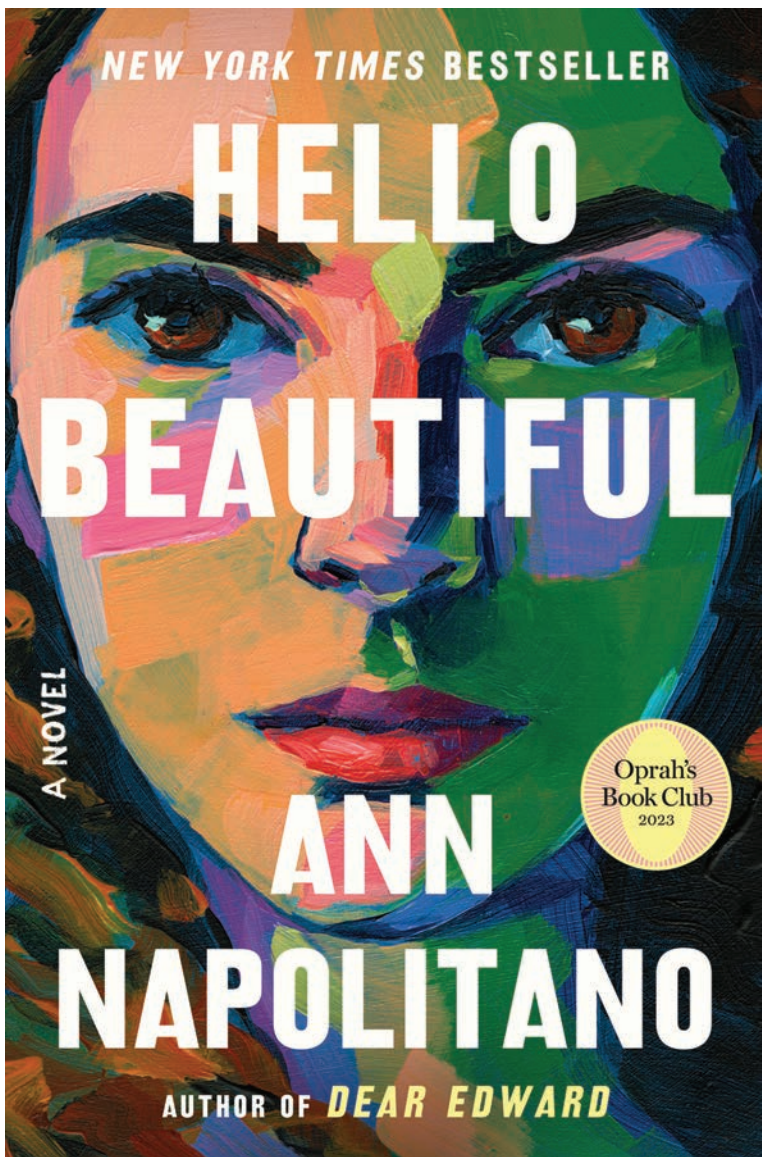
WEDNESDAY/NOV. 19

Journey Within: Self-Discovery Book Club. 6-7:30 p.m. At Reston Regional Library, Reston. A literary discussion that focuses on a character's personal growth and how it relates to our own. Led by life coach Shabnam Curtis. At November's meeting they will discuss the novel Hello Beautiful by Ann Napolitano.

WEDNESDAY/NOV. 19

"Casablanca." 10 a.m. At Reston Town Center movie theater. Part of Reston Association Senior Movie Day. Join them on the fourth

www.connectionnewspapers.com



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

Wednesday of each month. Coffee, donuts and OJ are provided, and door prizes are distributed prior to the movie.

THURSDAY/NOV. 20

“Behind the Burly Q: The Story of Burlesque in America.” 1 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. “Behind the Burly Q” dives deep into the vibrant, often misunderstood world of American burlesque during its golden age in the early-to-mid 20th century. The movie gives burlesque the historical and cultural spotlight it deserves, peeling back the glittery curtain to reveal both the glamour and grit of this uniquely American form of live entertainment. Recommended for audiences over 18 years old.

SATURDAY/NOV. 22

Great Women Astronomers and Physicists. 2-3 p.m. At Reston Regional Library, Reston. Physics professor Michael Albrow, fellow at American Physical Society, will discuss little-known women physicists and astronomers in history. Ages 10+.

SATURDAY/NOV. 22

VVFD Cornhole Tournament. 12 p.m. At Vienna Volunteer Fire Department, 400 Center Street South, Vienna. The VVFD will host its first ever VVFD Cornhole Tournament on Saturday, November 22, 2025 at 12 p.m. until the winner is announced. They will have food and drinks for sale thanks to a partnership with Hawk and Griffin

English Pub and Norms Beer and Wine. Registration is \$40 per person/\$75 per team. There are only 64 people (32 team) slots so don't wait! There is no cost to viewers, so if you don't want to play then come watch the tournament! The winning prize will be awarded \$500!

Nov. 22-23

Virginia Opera: Cinderella. Saturday at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday at 2 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. The Center welcomes back Virginia Opera with Cinderella (La Cenerentola), Rossini's beloved retelling of the classic fairy tale. Amidst the glimmering splendor of 18th-century Italy, a kind-hearted dreamer rises above her misfortunes in search of love and her rightful place in the world. This magical, family-friendly production will captivate with its sparkling music, timeless charm, and a heart-warming happily-ever-after that is sure to leave audiences of all ages smiling. Sung in Italian with English subtitles.

SUNDAY/NOV. 23

Burke Historical Society Meeting. 3-4:30 p.m. At Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Chris Barbuschak will speak on George Truman Ward: Burke's Mid-Century Architect. Discover the many recognizable buildings his firm designed in Northern Virginia.

SUNDAY/NOV. 23

Marcolivia, Violin and Viola. 2 p.m.



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

At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Marcolivia is an award-winning violin and viola duo that performs music from all styles and periods. The duo has been featured on NPR's "Performance Today" and are founding members of the Phillips Camerata, in addition to regularly performing, coaching and adjudicating for Washington Performing Arts events.

MONDAY/NOV. 24

Pet Nights at Santa's Chalet. 6:00-8:00 p.m. At Tysons Corner Center, McLean. Bring your furry friends for their own Santa photo moment! Enjoy pet treats and giveaways during this beloved Tysons tradition.

FRIDAY/NOV. 28

Tysons Corner Center Black Friday. At Tysons Corner Center, McLean. Kick off the biggest shopping day of the year at the region's premier shopping destination with 300+

brands, dining, and entertainment options. Doors open early (around 6 AM) for a full day of unbeatable deals and in-person experiences that prove retail is alive and thriving at Tysons.

SATURDAY/NOV. 29

Shop Local and Win Prizes. Eight small businesses in McLean have partnered on a special "shopping passport" for Small Business Saturday. Shoppers can pick up a passport on November 29th at any of the participating businesses. Visit at least five, collect stamps at each and drop off by the end of the day to be entered to win one of three Grand Prize Baskets which include gifts from each store. Pick up your Small Business Saturday Passport - and collect stamps - at any of these locations: Apricot Lane Boutique, 6224 Old Dominion Drive, Suite 6F Artisan Confections, 1333 Chain Bridge Rd Chain Bridge Cellars, 1351 Chain

Bridge Road Fonts Books & Gifts, 6262 Old Dominion Dr., Unit B McLean Art Gallery, 6224-B Old Dominion Dr. McLean Hardware, 1445 Chain Bridge Rd. Munch and Match, 6888 Elm St Suite 101 Tennistopia, 6262 Old Dominion Dr Suite G More information can be found online: <https://fontsbooks.com/events/3924920251129>

SATURDAY/NOV. 29

A Chanticleer Christmas. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. The holidays shine brighter when Grammy Award-winning Chanticleer returns to the Center for the Arts with A Chanticleer Christmas. Welcome the "world's reigning male chorus" (New Yorker) back in this rich and varied program of both early works and holiday wonders, including traditional carols as

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ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 20
well as gospel numbers.

TUESDAY/DEC. 2

Climate Fresk Workshop. 1 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Global temperatures have risen since the Industrial Revolution. Human activities are mostly responsible for warming the planet. Rising temperatures lead to extreme climate events such as hurricanes, river and coastal flooding, droughts, heat waves, and others, which will only get stronger and more frequent if we fail to stop further emission of greenhouse gases. To achieve carbon neutrality, the transformation of our societies is urgent. Climate Fresk is a French nonprofit active in 160 countries. It promotes the Climate Fresk workshop whose objective is to accelerate the understanding of climate issues at the global level and contribute to the changes needed to preserve life on the planet. It uses an educational game based on 44 cause-effect cards where participants draw a fresco or mural that summarizes the findings of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. This workshop will teach you the fundamental science behind climate change and empower you to act. Register at <https://mclean-center.org/events/climate-fresk-mural-workshops-6/?occurrence=2025-12-02>

DEC. 4-6

Winterfest. 5-9 p.m. At Brown's Chapel Park, Reston. This three-night event at Brown's Chapel Park in Reston is the perfect kickoff to the holiday season, with a walk-through trail with thousands of festive holiday lights and other holiday activities. In addition to the light displays, fire pits with s'mores, Enchanted Forest and lots of food and vendors.

DEC. 4-7

Tyson's Library Quarterly Book & Media Sale. At Tyson's Pimmit Regional Library 7584 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church. Huge selection of books and media for all ages and interests.

Thursday, 4 December, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Friday, 5 December, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Saturday, 6 December, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Sunday, 7 December, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.: Bag sale. \$10 for a full grocery sack or half price if less. Visit <https://www.tysonslibraryfriends.org/>

DEC. 4-21

"Birthday Candles." At 1st Stage, Tyson's Corner. Ernestine Ashworth spends her 17th birthday agonizing over her insignificance in the universe. Soon enough, it's her 18th birthday. Even sooner, her 41st. Her 70th. Her 101st. This poignant and funny play takes its audience through the highlights, heartbreaks and extraordinary moments that make up one woman's ordinary life. Show times as follows: Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays at 7:30 p.m., Saturdays at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., and Sundays at 2 p.m. General admission tickets are priced at \$25 (limited availability), \$40 (limited availability), and \$55. Student, educator, and military tickets are \$15. Tickets can be purchased online at www.1ststage.org or by calling the 1st Stage box office at 703-854-1856.

DEC. 5-7

Norwegian Christmas Festival.

10 a.m. to 5 p.m. At Norway House, 3846 Meredith Drive, Fairfax. Shop indoors for Norwegian giftware, Christmas decor, chocolates, cheeses, fresh lefse. Reserve entry time at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0F4EAE-A62EA46-58479328-norwegian#/>. Visit without reservations outside fun with Fjord horse Sofie, Viking craft demos, kid's music corner and more.

SATURDAY/DEC. 6

Holiday Maker Market and Artisan Fair.

10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Nova Labs Makerspace, 3850 Jermantown Road, Fairfax. Discover a wide variety of handmade gifts perfect for spreading holiday cheer. From one-of-a-kind home decor, wood-turned bowls, crafts, cooking accessories, toys, and chainmail dragons. You'll find something special for everyone on your list. Visit market.nova-labs.org.

SATURDAY/DEC. 6

Living Nativity. 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

At St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, 6320 Hanover Ave., Springfield. Come meet Baby Jesus and pet Delilah the Camel and other animals. Bring family and friends to enjoy the greatest story of all times and live music and refreshments. This event is free. If possible, bring a new toy to donate. Donations of toys will be distributed to local organizations that help families in Springfield. All are welcome! Visit <https://www.saintchristophers.net/>

SATURDAY/DEC. 6

Winter Wonderland. 12-3 p.m.

At The Boro Tysons: 8350 Broad Street, Tysons. The Boro, Tysons' destination for luxury urban living, invites the community to celebrate the holiday season at Winter Wonderland, a festive afternoon filled with seasonal cheer in Boro Park. Guests are welcome to enjoy interactive activities, sweet treats, live entertainment, and special character appearances, creating memorable moments for families and friends.

Meet Santa: Snap magical photos with Santa in front of The Boro's festive gingerbread house holiday installation.

Festive Beats: Enjoy holiday classics and seasonal favorites throughout the event.

Holiday Crafts: Guests can decorate festive stockings and create their own magical reindeer food mix to take home.

Sweet Treats and Giveaways: Complimentary Santa hats, gingerbread men, candy canes, and other festive surprises for all ages.

Hot Chocolate Bar: Warm up with hot chocolate provided by Bluestone Lane.

Glitter Tattoos: Sparkling designs available for children and adults.

Gingerbread Inflatable Slide: Slide into holiday fun in a whimsical gingerbread setting.

SANTA'S COMING TO TOWN!

Holiday Schedule for the Burke Volunteer Fire & Rescue Department.

Wednesday, December 3: 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. Bring your family and friends to the Santa Meet & Greet (in the Banquet Hall at 9501 Old Burke Lake Road, where smiles, laughter, and holiday cheer are



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

guaranteed. Snap a photo with the jolly man himself. Share your Christmas wishes. Create memories you'll cherish forever.

Saturday, December 6: 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Santa and his jolly elves will kick off the 2025 Santa Run season by visiting Burke Lake Road between Lee Chapel/Burke Center Parkway and Burke Road, including Shiplett Boulevard (north of Capella Avenue), Lincolnwood Court, Woodedge Drive, Burke View Avenue and Court, Robby Court, Blincoe Court, Burke Towne Court, Hillock Court, Coffey Woods Place, and Burke Manor Court.

Saturday, December 6: 3:00 p.m. - 7 p.m. Once Santa and the reindeer are recharged, they will be ready to visit the neighborhoods and streets off Zion Drive from Guinea Road to Jib Lane, including Falmead Road (off Guinea Road), Starboard Drive, Wood Wren Court, and Sandy Lewis Drive.

Sunday, December 7: 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Santa and his hoofed helpers will start off today by visiting the following:

Burke Lake Road from Lake Braddock High School to Braddock Road, including streets off Signal Hill and Parliament Drive.

Braddock Road from Guinea Road to Dansbury Forest Drive, including streets off Southampton Road, Dunleigh Drive, Bradfield Drive, and Woodland Way.

Sunday, December 7: 3:00 p.m. - 7 p.m. Once Santa and the reindeer are recharged, they will be ready to visit the following:

Lee Chapel Road from Burke Lake Road up to and including Goldfield Lane including Wooden Glen Avenue, Covered Bridge Road, and Ironmaster Drive (up to Meadowrill Lane).

Shiplett Boulevard between Burke Lake Road up to and including Capella Avenue.

Old Keene Mill Road between Sydenstricker Road and Burke Woods Drive including Burke Wood Drive, Four Oaks Lane, Silas Burke Street, Torrence Street, and Koziara Drive (up to Glenway Court).

Wednesday, December 10: 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. Bring your family and friends to our 2nd Santa Meet & Greet (in our Banquet Hall at 9501 Old Burke Lake Road (click here to view map)), where smiles, laughter, and holiday cheer are

guaranteed. Snap a photo with the jolly man himself. Share your Christmas wishes. Create memories you'll cherish forever.

See the full schedule and plan your festive fun today at <https://bvfrd.org/santa/>

DEC. 6-7

Holiday Train Show.

At Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. The Fairfax Station Railroad Museum will host its 34th annual holiday train show on Saturday, December 6th (10 a.m. to 5 p.m.) and Sunday, December 7th (noon to 4 p.m.) with a multitude of model trains to include N(NTRAK), HO (PMC), LEGO, G (WVMGRS) scales and the European Train Enthusiasts (ETE) group will display in a multitude of scales. Visit our gift shop for holiday gift items. Santa is planning a stop on both days! Adults as well as children 13 and over, \$6; children 5 to 12, \$3; 4 and under, free; museum members, free. Information on the museum and show can be found on the web: www.fairfax-station-railroad-museum.org; Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FFXS-RR>, or call 703-425-9225.

SUNDAY/DEC. 7

McLean Winterfest Parade with Block Party.

The festive day kicks off with the pre-parade showcase at 2:30 p.m. at the Langley Shopper Center on Old Chain Bridge Road. This popular event will feature local dance groups and other performing artists, bringing energy and movement to Downtown McLean. The McLean Winterfest Parade begins at 3:30 p.m. on Old Chain Bridge Road. This year we encourage participants to embrace the spirit of the season by showcasing the "warmth and magic of sharing with others" through creative floats, performances, and decorations. The parade will feature marching bands, community groups, schools, non-profits, and local businesses all coming together to spread holiday cheer. Immediately following the parade, the celebration continues with the debut of the Winterfest Block Party at the Langley Shopping Center, starting at 5:00 p.m. This festive gathering is designed to extend the joy and create a full evening of fun

for all ages, featuring: A special appearance by and free photos with Santa Claus. Live music and entertainment. Fun activities, arts, and a collection of food vendors offering savory and sweet treats.

DEC. 12-14

Capital Art & Craft Festival.

At Dulles Expo Center, Chantilly. Featuring handcrafted, one-of-a-kind art in more than a dozen mediums including glass, jewelry, leather, paintings, prints, photography, pottery, wearable art and wood. Dates: Friday, Dec. 12 and Saturday, Dec. 13: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.; Sunday, Dec. 14: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Tickets: \$10 in advance; \$12 at the door Senior discount available; children under 12 free. Ticket information: www.CACF.art

SATURDAY/DEC. 13

Vienna-Falls Chorus celebrates the Holidays.

At American Legion Post 177 3939 Oak Street, Fairfax. Family Friendly Matinee featuring Crafts, Holiday Market, Photobooth Doors open at 1 p.m. Show starts at 2 p.m. Tickets \$10 for 14 and up Evening Dinner Show featuring Pasta Buffet, Salad Bar, Dessert at 6 p.m. Show starts at 7 p.m. Tickets \$30. Visit www.viennafalls.org

DEC. 13-14

Mia Saunders Ballet Presents The Nutcracker.

3 p.m. At Centreville High School, 6001 Union Mill Road, Clifton. The Mia Saunders School of Ballet (MSB) invites the community to celebrate the holiday season and join in its cherished "Season of Giving" with the 31st annual production of The Nutcracker. This year's production continues MSB's long-standing tradition of giving back to the community. Proceeds from ticket sales, program boosters, and advertisements will benefit the Centreville High School Drama Boosters and the PCD Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to improving diagnosis, care, and research for primary ciliary dyskinesia (PCD). Tickets are \$10 for children ages 5 and under and \$12 for ages 6 and up. Tickets can be purchased online or at the door. For more information, visit www.miasaundersballet.com.

Entertainment, Holiday Markets in Fairfax City

Festival of Lights and Carols offers family fun.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax City always offers fun, tasty food and drink, plus entertainment for the entire family. And it's especially on display during the first two weekends in December when Fairfax presents its holiday markets and Festival of Lights and Carols.

This year's holiday markets comprise the City's ninth annual and offer a great opportunity for people to support local artisans while finding handcrafted gifts for Christmas and Chanukah. And while shopping, they'll also enjoy the sounds of live music, dance and other entertainment on the Old Town Square stage at 10415 North St.

Different vendors will be featured each weekend. The dates are Friday-Sunday, Dec. 5, 6 and 7; and Friday-Sunday, Dec. 12-14. The times are Fridays, 5-8 p.m.; Saturdays, noon-6 p.m.; and Sundays, noon-5 p.m.

To see each weekend's list of vendors, go to <https://www.fairfaxva.gov/Events-directory/Parks-and-Recreation/Special-Events/Holiday-Market>.

In addition, registration for Claus and Cookies is now open. It'll be held Saturday, Dec. 13, at both 11 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. Due to the ongoing renovation of Old Town Hall, this year's event will be held at the Sherwood Center, 3740 Blenheim Blvd. Children ages 10 and under may decorate their own cookies, enjoy crafts activities and have their photos taken with Santa. Cost is \$6/child.

To register for the 11 a.m. seating, go to http://apm.activecommunities.com/.../Activity_Search/16068. For the 12:30 p.m. seating, register at http://apm.activecommunities.com/.../Activity_Search/16069.



PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

The Lyric Choir of the Fairfax Choral Society sings at the 2024 Festival of Lights and Carols.

Entertainment Schedule

- Noon - Daniels Run Elementary Singers and the Fairfax Choral Society Youth Choir
- 1 p.m. - George Mason University Tuba Euphonium Ensemble
- 2 p.m. - UUCF Handbell Choir
- 3 p.m. - Girl Scouts of Fairfax City
- 4 p.m. - The Metropolitan Follies
- 5 p.m. - Vienna-Falls Chorus
- 5:30 p.m. - Tree Lighting Ceremony and Caroling.



Sandra Marino selling hand-painted ornaments on wood at last year's holiday market.

Festival of Lights and Carols

Besides the Holiday Market, Fairfax City's 40th annual Festival of Lights and Carols is set for Saturday, Dec. 6, from noon-6 p.m., in Old Town Square. The fun includes

activities for the whole family. Attendees may enjoy live holiday music, toast marshmallows for s'mores, have some hot apple cider, make holiday crafts and more. Photos with Santa will be available

from 3-5 p.m. And capping off the day's festivities will be the lighting of the City's Christmas tree at 5:30 p.m. while everyone sings Christmas carols to ring in the holiday season.



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.

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PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION



Volunteers Karin Lehnigk, of Oakton, and Maryam Dadkhah, and Steve Swanekamp, of Vienna, relax after clearing fence line behind them at the Laurel Hill Equestrian Center



Volunteers fill a dumpster with invasive plant materials to prevent regrowth from seeds or rerooting



Volunteers Susan and Bob Farmer, Don Shuey, and Nikita Kepezhinskis, of Moount Vernon, pose with the large dumpster they filled and the fence they cleared in Lorton as part of Park Authority IMA Site efforts led by lead Susan Laume.



Working for the environment can be a family effort, as at the South Run Regency HOA event led by Fairfax Master Naturalist Bev Horton

New Fairfax Tree Savers

FROM PAGE 15

the environment together.

Only You Can Save the Trees

Fairfax PRISM organizer Margaret Fisher shared “bad news” with participants at the Pohick Library event on Nov. 8. “There are predictions that in many of our natural areas, meaning our parks, our roadsides, places like that, by the end of the century, [trees] will have ‘failed’, meaning that the trees will have come down. Many of them will have been brought down [some naturally aged] and won’t have been replaced, because there’s so many invasives that the new trees can’t grow.” She indicated a count of affected trees within the county extrapolates to about a million trees which will likely suffer impact and loss. Fisher described the role of the new PRISM organization is partly to strategize how to educate the whole public about the dire situation and motivate every neighborhood and property owner to take action to improve the environment for trees.

One strategy being implemented is to have someone in each HOA, and in every neighborhood, volunteer to serve as a community representative and a conduit for tree saving information. That person will receive information from PRISM on invasive species to share with others in their neighborhood. PRISM invites those who would like to help with this role, or other volunteer opportunities, to sign-up at

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScL-AnEmjYvcHFODovW5ZJaPS-SIP2sDqkSu214VXECARnkV4Q/viewform>.

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Jennifer Wheeler, of Clifton, was one of about a half dozen volunteers who removed invasives at a Clifton Elementary School

As repeated by leaders at each event, for the dozen or so volunteers who came to the Pohick Regional Library grounds event, Fisher gave a brief safety talk, then pointed out several non-native vines outlining the property, to contrast their characteristics with native plants.

Both experienced and non-experienced tree rescuers were soon amidst the overgrowth, ferreting out those plants that would cause harm to the native oaks, maples, holly and other trees on the grounds. Working the tree-line near several athletic fields at the session’s end, Fisher summarized the group’s effort resulting in 42 trees and 20 balls rescued, saying, “I would call that a great success!”

PRISM efforts were supported by several public officials who visited to encourage



Bob Marske, of South Run, with the root puller tool and some of the Wintercreeper vines he pulled during his HOA’s session

volunteers, including Congressman James Walkinshaw, Del. Dan Helmer, Supervisors Alcorn, Palchik, and Storck, and school board member Karl Frisch.

For information on how to get involved, and on future volunteer work sessions being held beyond the Week of Action, see the Fairfax Tree Rescuers PRISM website at <https://www.fairfaxprism.org/volunteer-prism>; and the event calendar at <https://www.fairfaxprism.org/calendar-of-events>.

Fairfax County Park Authority also has a tree rescue program and training for those who would like to work in parks or on other government-owned lands, described at

https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-1vT6M-1bc4eXJ33vrTLL-ju8RQN_a-9vC-xBPQLTRcrlzfEE9qrjljVffYz-5BvJKj6NZ2bWqib99-3zys/pub

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, some 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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