

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

NOVEMBER 20, 2025



The Mount Vernon Recreation Center's redesigned entrance.



People gathered on the outdoor turf to hear the speeches.

At Mount Vernon Recreation Center's Celebration, 'George Washington' Romped with the Crowd

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

The word of the day was "active." The activity began before the official speechifying when "George Washington" pranced onto the scene and stole the show, delighting all ages at the Nov. 15 grand re-opening of the Mount Vernon Recreation Center at 2017 Belle View Boulevard. Washington is the 10-foot-tall, bobble-headed mascot that runs foot races with some of his presidential counterparts (Racing Presidents) at Washington Nationals' baseball games.

The newly renovated 139,000-square-foot facility has two National Hockey League-sized ice rinks, a fitness area, an elevated indoor track, an Olympic-size swimming pool, locker rooms, a climbing wall and multi-purpose rooms. A steady stream of people celebrated, toured, skated, swam, worked out and played for free, making the \$66 million, 75,000-square-foot expansion a hotbed of Saturday morning activity.

Linwood Gorham welcomed everyone and said that planning for the expansion started 15 years ago. Gorham is the Mount Vernon representative on the Fairfax County Park Authority Board. He recognized many county staffers involved.

SEE AT MOUNT VERNON, PAGE 16



George Washington entertained all, including the luminaries preparing to speak.



George, the one without a pompom, joined the West Potomac High School cheerleaders.



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ACM ATLANTIC COAST
MORTGAGE

OBITUARY

Gum Springs Legend Mattie Palmore Dies at 77

BY MARY PADEN
THE GAZETTE

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 estab-



United Community honored Palmore with its 2020 Gerry Hyland Humanitarian Award which went to “an individual, who through their personal effort will have demonstrated a long-term, sustained commitment to serving people in need through empowering, transforming and enriching their lives.”

lish 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 interests. 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 develop-



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

mental 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 state-wide 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.

SEE MATTIE PALMORE, PAGE 17



Palmore was honored at the 2024 Gum Springs Juneteenth-Community Day Celebration with a General Assembly resolution honoring her community service. New Gum Springs Civic Association president Vince Carter (holding mike), Mateo Dunne, Mount Vernon School Board representative, Del. Paul Krizek, Franconia Supervisor Rodney Lusk, and Mattie Palmore (seated).



Mattie Palmore and Kari Warren, co-founders of the Women’s Group of Mount Vernon celebrate the group’s 10 year anniversary with a cake.

OBITUARY

Gum Springs Legend Mattie Palmore Dies at 77



The Three Musketeers: Karen Stone, Lisa Sales, and Mattie Palmore attend a meeting to advance the creation of Artemis House.

FROM PAGE 3

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 June-teenth-Community 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, min-

isters — 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.laytorrestfuneralhome.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 deep-



The symbolic ribbon cutting for Artemis house domestic Violence shelter: Mattie Palmore, Mount Vernon Supervisor Dan Storck, Nanette, Lisa Sales, Board of Supervisors Chair Jeff McKay, and Karen Stone. Because the location of Artemis House is not public to maintain the safety of domestic violence survivors, the ribbon cutting ceremony was symbolic.



Mattie with colleagues at a summer event: Lisa Sales, Fairfax County Sheriff Stacey Kincaid, Mattie Palmore, Greg Kincaid.

ly 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.”

SEE MATTIE PALMORE, PAGE 5
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

OBITUARY



Partner Fairfax County Commission for Women Helen Colen, Nancy Hopkins, Lisa Sales, Mattie Palmore, Emily McCoy, Sondra Hemenway (June 2019 TPSM Gala).

Gum Springs Legend Mattie Palmore Dies at 77

FROM PAGE 4

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 deter-

mined 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, Mattie 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."



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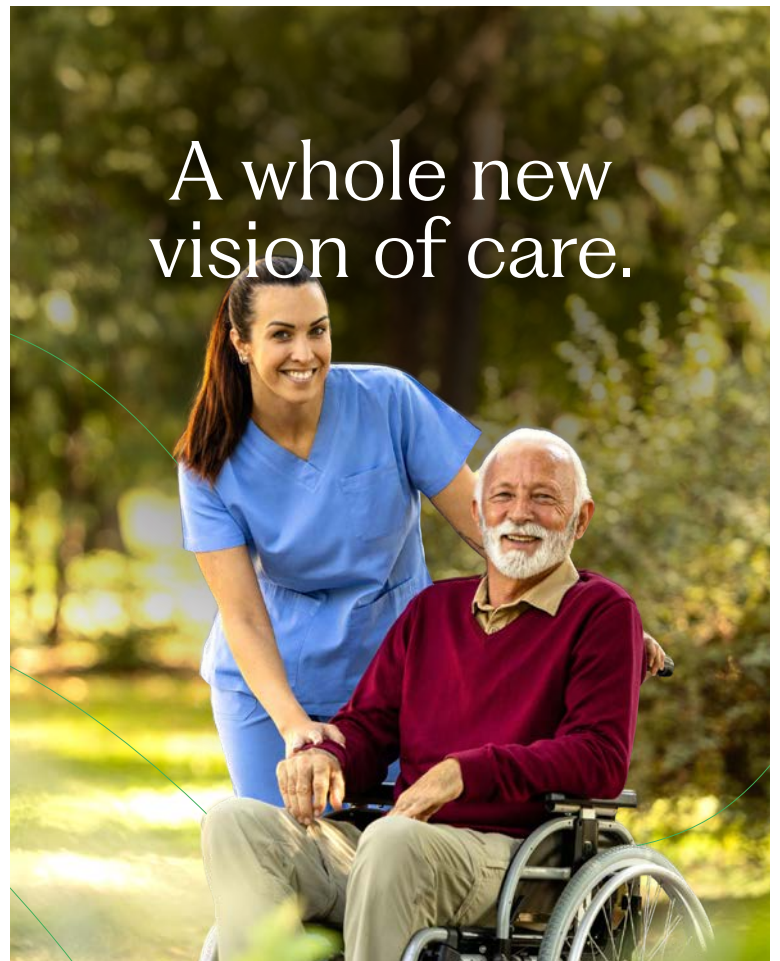
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Police and Emergency Responders Honored at 20th Annual Tribute

By Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber of Commerce

Thirty-two outstanding police officers and first responders from Fairfax County and Fort Belvoir were recognized at the 20th annual Police & Firefighters Tribute hosted by Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber of Commerce and presented by Inova Mount Vernon Hospital on Nov. 7.

“Law enforcement and emergency services are an integral part of our community,” said Roberta Tinch, chamber chairman and President of Inova Mount Vernon Hospital. “We deeply appreciate all these people and their families for the sacrifices they make to keep us safe.”

Award recipients were recognized for going above and beyond the requirements of their job both in their interactions with the public and in their support for other

team members professionally and personally.

Supervisor Dan Storck presented the awards for outstanding personnel from the Mount Vernon Police Station. Award recipients were: Meritorious Service, James Jones; Detective of the Year, Ryan Winchell; Officer of the Year, Brian Mullins; Supervisor of the Year, Seth H. Masterson; Auxiliary of the Year, Gordon D. McCallum

Supervisor Rodney Lusk recognized the recipients from the Franconia Police Station: Police Officer of the Year, Ryan Yorkdale; Detective of the Year, Drew Zirker; Auxiliary of the Year, Gary Gaal; Meritorious Service, Kim Barber; Supervisor of the Year, Ronald Grecco.

West Springfield Police Department awards were given to: Meritorious Service, Scott Henry;

SEE HELPING, PAGE 13



The 2025 Police & Firefighters Tribute award recipients represent the best of public service.



Franconia Police Station award recipients.



West Springfield Police Department award recipients.



Mark Viani and Roberta Tinch congratulate Nicole Fazio with the Fort Belvoir Fire Department. Nicole's mother flew in from Ohio to surprise her daughter at the Tribute.



Millie Ramey received a meritorious service award for her work at the Lorton Police Station. She is accompanied by her two sons, one of whom came from Seattle to be at the awards ceremony.



Fairfax County Fire & Rescue Department award recipients.

OPINION

Volunteer, Donate and Support Your Neighbors This Holiday Season

BY SUPERVISOR DAN STORCK
MOUNT VERNON
DISTRICT SUPERVISOR



Storck

Richmond Highway is more than a roadway, it is the heartbeat of our community, home to a rich diversity of people, cultures and stories. Every day along the corridor, neighbors facing housing insecurity, mental health challenges and substance abuse turn to local community-based and faith-based organizations for support. These groups lift up individuals and families, providing shelter, nourishment, guidance and hope. But they need our help!

Organizations such as Rising Hope and Ventures in Community provide hypothermia shelter (starting Dec. 1), meals and essential services that promote stability, dignity and belonging for everyone. Their commitment ensures that some of our most vulnerable residents have a safe place to turn, not just in moments of crisis but throughout the year.

During this season of thanks, you can make a tangible difference. Volunteer your time to support these organizations directly or donate to help fund these programs. Every hour volunteered, every dollar donated, strengthens our community and uplifts our neighbors striving to rebuild their lives.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we witnessed the extraordinary power of neighbors helping neighbors. That same spirit of unity and compassion will carry us forward as we strengthen the Richmond Highway corridor, not just physically, but socially. Let's make sure every member of our community has the opportunity to thrive because your involvement fuels real change. Work with us to ensure everyone can reach their full potential and ensure no one gets left behind.

If you are ready to help, follow the links to volunteer or donate:

<https://www.risinghopeumc.org/volunteer>

<https://venturesincommunity.org/services>

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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

¹ Fairfax 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.



Employees create arrangements in the production room.

Virginia Florist's New Owners 'Make Magic'

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
NOVEMBER 14, 2025

“We are making 90 centerpieces for the Army Navy Country Club's Thanksgiving,” Kendall Rife nonchalantly commented on Nov. 13, as three employees in the backroom meticulously arranged sunflowers, snapdragons, asters, dahlias, eucalyptus leaves and ornamental cabbage in decorative containers. While making one centerpiece would be a challenge for many people, Rife seemed undaunted by 90.

Earlier this year, Kendall and her husband, Tony, became the new owners of the Virginia Florist, a long-time fixture and local favorite since 1957 in the Belle View Shopping Center. The Rifes bought it from Kevin Green, a Mount Vernon-area resident, the owner from 2000 to 2025.

“I’ve always had a love for flowers,” Kendall Rife said. In fact, she and Tony worked in the shop as West Potomac High School students.

While a student at George Mason University, Kendall did freelance floral work. “I’ve always wanted to own a business,” she said, so a while after she brought her new baby in to see Green and joked about buying the shop, Green told her he was ready to sell. “For me, it was now or never,” Rife said. “It was a sign.” The couple live in the Kirkside neighborhood and have two boys, ages one and three.

Green commented, “I couldn’t be happier that Kendall has taken over the Virginia Florist. She trained with us when she was young and developed on her own into an incredibly skilled and creative florist.

“Kathy and I and our wonderful staff of designers and buyers enjoyed an extraordinary 25 years carrying on The Virginia Florist and developing it into a fun, interesting destination for everyone in our neighborhood. I know that Kendall and Tony will continue to carry it forward through its 75th

year and beyond with the same excitement, verve and elan.”

<cl>Novelties Galore

The shop’s front window displays cheerfully greet customers with seasonal decorations, now transitioning from fall pumpkins to Santa’s elves and Christmas baubles. Ironically, when customers enter the shop, few flowers are in sight. The air is perfumed with mysterious sweet scents. Multiple displays burst forth with a colorful medley of candles, candlesticks, toys, decorations, tableware, wreaths, pillows and knickknacks. Amid the thousands of items for sale are books, tea towels, table runners, figurines, Virginia peanuts and now, Christmas merchandise, from jingle bells to nutcrackers that practically jump off the display tables. After all, it is both a floristry and a boutique.

Toward the back is a 45-square-foot glass cooler stocked with fresh sunflowers, snapdragons, hydrangeas, gerbera daisies, mums, hypericum berries and roses awaiting the creative talents of the shop’s designers. Rife usually has 25 to 30 different types of flowers in the shop. The most popular are roses, hydrangeas and lilies.

Next comes the Kids Room, chock-full of toys, children’s books and other amusements, under fanciful mushrooms suspended from the ceiling.

Flower production happens in the back room (not open to the public) where several employees make arrangements and prepare orders. One wall is lined with shelves of vases. Other shelves store ribbons of multiple widths, colors and design.

Rife buys flowers from wholesalers and prefers to buy from Virginia and Maryland farms, especially in summer and fall. Many of the flowers, like snapdragons, roses and hydrangeas, come from central and South America, Holland and even Japan. Asked if her shop’s been affected by the federal tariffs, she said, “We’ve definitely seen an increase in prices of flowers and merchandise.”

Rife estimates that several hundred customers walk in every week. In addition to serving the walk-ins, she designs flower arrangements for funerals, weddings, holidays and special events. She sees working with flowers as artistry.

She especially enjoys helping brides, offering tips on the type of flower, color and design. One bouquet can cost several hundred dollars and a small wedding centerpiece, \$200.

The shop’s website boasts, “We’re proud to include George Washington’s Mount Vernon estate, the U.S. Supreme Court, the Kennedy Center, the Watergate and many of Washington’s largest law firms, corporations and lobbyists among our regular weekly and special-events clients.”

The shop delivers flowers as far west as

SEE VIRGINIA FLORIST, PAGE 9



Kendall Rife, the new owner of the Virginia Florist, has always loved flowers.



A sidewalk sign greets customers in the Belle View Shopping Center.

PHOTO BY GLENDA BOOTH



The Virginia Florist's flower-themed logo.

FROM PAGE 8

Fairfax City and in Maryland communities around the Woodrow Wilson Bridge.

Her message for Northern Virginians? "Check us out and buy local." Online companies charge a fee; florist shops do not. Plus, a face-to-face florist can suggest options and create unique designs. "You get more bang for your buck," Rife says.

"There's always something new coming

in," she teases. And she's planning some events like flower arranging workshops for the public. "This is where the magic happens," she quips.

Information

The Virginia Florist is at 1632 Belle View Boulevard, Alexandria 22307; telephone, 703-765-3355; open daily except Sunday. Visit <https://thevirginiaflorist.com/>.

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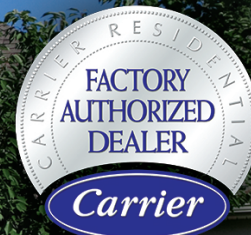
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Matthew Macklin of Big Boy Biscuits cooks eggs for the biscuits at the Mount Vernon market.



A welcoming sign directs customers to Big Boy Biscuits.



Filiberto Ochoa touts his Daikon radishes.

For Thanksgiving, Go Fresh, Go Local

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

Thanksgiving meal planners don't have to venture far to find fresh food for their feast. This time of year, farmers' market tables are laden with fresh, farm-raised fruits, vegetables and meats and many homemade treats.

Start with Breakfast

From the Mount Vernon market, you can satiate early morning appetites with luscious buttermilk biscuit sandwiches from Lorton-based Big Boy Biscuits. Who could turn down a smoky pimento, egg and ham or buttermilk biscuit with sausage gravy? Their eggs and sour cherry, peach and blackberry jams are from Pennsylvania Amish farms.

Valentine Miller of Valentine's Bakery and Meats based in Orange County, Virginia, greets his loyal

fans with ham biscuits, homemade jams and big coolers of meats. Oliver Keckler brings bacon, sausage and scrapple from his Pennsylvania farm to the Thursday Belle View market. What is scrapple? Wikipedia explains, "a traditional mush of fried pork scraps and trimmings combined with cornmeal and wheat flour, often buckwheat flour and spices."

To perk up sleepyheads, pick up some firm green tomatoes from Warsaw, Virginia's Ochoa Produce at the Mount Vernon market and make some classic, crispy golden-fried green tomatoes. For true down-home, southern flair, fry them in bacon grease.

Appetizers

Diners will fight over Karen Arnest's deviled eggs that almost hop off her table at the Mount Vernon market. She melds into the squished eggs Dukes mayonnaise, mustard and crab meat. And put

out a spread of her unshelled oysters if you have eager shuckers. Arnest brings fresh seafood from Hague, Virginia.

Alexandrian Renee Mehrdad makes tasty nuts and confectionaries, like peanut, pistachio and cashew brittle, Cajun lime peanuts and Grand Marnier pecans and walnuts. She wants "to spread the joy of these mouthwatering creations with the world."

Veggies Galore

Piles of fall greens like spinach, collards, Swiss chard and kale greet eager shoppers.

Orange-yellow squashes brighten tables, including squash from Orchard Country Produce and at the Lorton and Mount Vernon markets, Ochoa Produce and Linda Vista Farm from Montross, Virginia. Adventurous gastronomes delight in spaghetti, acorn, butternut, Hubbard, Kabocha and delicata squash. Chefs say that



Fall brings sweet potatoes, a Thanksgiving favorite.



Oliver Keckler and Twin Springs Farm sell cider in the fall.

delicatas are sweet and nutty and have an edible skin. Keckler cuts his small delicatas into half-moon shapes, adds olive oil, salt and pepper and roasts them at 400 degrees for 20 minutes. He also touts the sweetness of his little honeynut squashes.

Fall is the time for root vegetables. Filiberto Ochoa brags about his radishes, especially his carrot-shaped, white Daikons. The insides of his watermelon radishes look like they've been tie-dyed.

SEE FOR THANKSGIVING, PAGE 11



Ochoa grows and sells three types of radishes.



Vendor bins are filled with a variety of squashes.

For Thanksgiving, Go Fresh, Go Local

FROM PAGE 10

Radish fans eat them raw, roasted, braised or sautéed.

Bins are overflowing with Yukon gold, red and sweet potatoes. Mount Vernonite Carolyn Gamble loves Linda Vista Farm's Japanese sweet potatoes which are white inside and "very sweet" when baked, she says. Wayne Pierson from Warsaw, Virginia's Three-way Farm at the Mount Vernon market makes sweet potato casseroles for Thanksgiving.

Ochoa Produce's red buckets bulge with butterbeans and their white turnips are attention-getters. Cindy Johnson sautés them in butter and adds a touch of sugar. "They melt in your mouth," she croons.

All-time Staples

Valentine's and Orchard Country Produce take turkey pre-orders. Keckler says his turkeys are processed the day before delivery so they are very fresh. If turkey's not your culinary "centerpiece," try Karen Arnest's fish fresh from the Chesapeake Bay, including mouth-watering scallops, or a Bos-



Darlene Pierson helps Karen Arnest sell Chesapeake Bay seafood.

ton butt from Pork Storck based in Rhoadesville, Virginia, at the Mount Vernon market. Taste buds might tingle because their pigs' diets are supplemented with distillery mash and breweries' spent grain.

Valentine Miller is bringing his family's favorite cranberry sauce this month.

Pennsylvania's Twin Springs Fruit Farm at the Mount Vernon Market and Orchard Country Pro-

duce sell apple cider, liquid tributes to fall's bounty.

Desserts

To excite your diners' palates, you cannot go wrong with Darleta Valentine's delicious homemade pies, like strawberry rhubarb, blackberry, peach and cherry. The Valentines and Keckler also sell several flavors of Whoopie pies. Grace Banahene from Grace's Pastries at the Mount Vernon market



Healthy greens await shoppers.

makes apple turnovers and decadent muffin cakes.

Twin Springs Fruit Farm is awash in apples, like ever crisp, honey crisp, gold rush, pink lady, Fuji, Nittany and sun crisp, inspirations for turnovers, buckles, crumbles, crisps, crepes and cakes.

The Markets and their Vendors

❖ Mount Vernon Market, Wednesday, 8 a.m. to 12 noon until Nov. 26. www.fairfaxcounty.gov/

parks/farmersmarkets/mccutcheon-mount-vernon

❖ Oliver Keckler's Orchard Country Market, Thursdays, Belle View Boulevard until Nov. 20; and all winter at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 8009 Fort Hunt Road, on Saturdays, 8 to 11 a.m., after Nov. 30. www.orchardcountryproduce.com

❖ Lorton Market, Sundays, until Nov. 23. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets/lorton>



Renee Mehrdad with Suka Nuts offers many unique treats.



Caroline Ross, owner and chef at River Bend Bistro, shops frequently at local markets.



Grace Banahene makes cookies, cakes, twists and more.



Keckler brings his produce and meats year-round from his Pennsylvania farm.

www.connectionnewspapers.com



Oliver Keckler offers many types of squash.



People line up at Keckler's stand all year on Saturday mornings at St. Luke's Episcopal Church.

The Pedestrians Who Never Saw Their Tomorrows

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

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE GAZETTE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Arlington County Board Chair

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NoVa FSS urges the community to advocate to protect pedestri-



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



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



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



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



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

PHOTOS SOURCE:
VIDEO BY SAN WINTER

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

Visit NOVA Safe Streets at <https://novasafeststreets.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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Reclaiming Thanksgiving: A Feast with Roots

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

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE GAZETTE

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

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

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

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



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE PIERCE FAMILY

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

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

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

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

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

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

As the couples began to have children,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Burke and Herbert Bank Gets New Signs

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

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



Mount Vernon Police Station award recipients.

Police and Emergency Responders Honored

FROM PAGE 6

Detective of the Year, Cherise Milligan; Officer of the Year, Andrew Paul; Supervisor of the Year, Alyson Russo; Auxiliary of the Year, Tom Gaetjen

Receiving a meritorious service award from the Lorton Police Station was Millie Ramey, who was recognized for her dedicated service.

Del. Mark Sickles emceed the

awards for Fairfax County Fire & Rescue Department. Receiving awards were: Volunteer Fire Fighter of the Year, Khoa Tran; Company Officer of the Year, Captain Chris Brown; Firefighter of the Year, James Cox; EMT Medic of the Year, Charles Arnston; Meritorious Service, Captain LaTasha Byrd.

The Fort Belvoir Police Department recognized Army Security Guard of the Year, Jessica Harris; Army Security Supervisor of the

Year, Ava T. Nelson; Police Officer of the Year, Jessenia McElroy; Investigator of the Year, Shaine Lukkes; Military Police Officer of the Year, SPC Samuel Rux; Civilian Police Supervisor of the Year, Mark A. Dalton; Fort Belvoir Public Safety Dispatcher of the Year, Sekelia Davis

Honorees from the Fort Belvoir Fire Department were Fire Officer of the Year, Kyle Dean; Firefighter / Medic of the Year, Nicole Fazio; Firefighter of the Year, James Romagna.

SHOP LOCAL

Small Business Saturday:

Ten neighborhood favorites to visit on Nov. 29.



Jim Nicopoulos - Primo Family Restaurant.



Laura Quirk - Royal Global Travel.



Rachel Tyson and Team - Fairy Bronze Mother.

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



Original Campbell & Ferrara delivery truck.

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>.

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Woodlawn & Pope-Leighey House Is Food Collection & Distribution Center

Responding to the need for food assistance in our community.

As of Nov. 13, Woodlawn & Pope-Leighey House, historic house museums in Alexandria, Virginia, which are on grounds that were originally part of George Washington's Mount Vernon, will be a food collection and distribution center in response to the extreme need for food assistance we are seeing in our community.

With the help of our partners and visitors, Woodlawn will provide non-perishable, shelf stable foods in waterproof food pantries outside our front gates at the Quaker Meeting House for people to access at any time and in our parking lot when we are open to the public.

"We noticed a significant increase in the numbers of people in our neighborhood reaching out to area organizations for food assistance," said Heather Johnson, Interim Executive Director. "We

hope to fill this need and serve the community with these food pantries. When we put a call out to our partners and collaborators for help, they immediately responded with monetary and in-kind food donations. We are extremely grateful for their support of our community."

Now through Dec. 29, 2025, each visitor who brings a canned good to the Woodlawn admissions desk will receive a 10% discount off their individual tour admission price. If a family of four brings four cans of food, each visitor receives the 10% discount. Guests are encouraged to increase their donation of canned goods so that we may help as many people as possible at this time.

Woodlawn is open to the public five days a week, Thursdays through Mondays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. through Dec. 29, 2025. Guests are welcome to stroll the

grounds of Woodlawn and Pope-Leighey House for free or purchase a tour ticket. Federal employees who had been furloughed during the government shutdown will

continue to receive half price tour admissions tickets for their entire family until the end of 2025. In addition, through the Museums For All program, visitors may purchase

\$2 general tour tickets for up to four people to attend tours of both houses by showing their EBT card and a photo ID at the admissions desk.



SCAN TO REGISTER

TURKEY TROT

5K

CAN the Bird

RUN & WALK

Donations of nonperishable food items will be accepted by Koinonia.

**THURSDAY
NOVEMBER 27**

Walmart parking lot
5885 Kingstowne Boulevard
Alexandria, VA 22315
8:00am

www.CanTheBird.com



BULLETIN BOARD

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

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

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

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

ALIVE! offers numerous programs that aid low-income families in Alexandria that rely on volunteers: monthly food distribu-

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

Volunteer Drivers Needed. Drivers needed by the American Cancer Society to take cancer patients to treatment in Northern Virginia. To volunteer, call 1-800-227-2345 or go to cancer.org/drive.

RSVP, a volunteer network for seniors seeking service opportunities in and around Fairfax County, Arlington County and the City of Alexandria, offers a wide array of opportunities for volunteers 55 and older. RSVP volunteers enjoy flexible schedules, free accident and liability insurance while serving, optional mileage and meal reimbursement and are invited to volunteer group projects and social gatherings. To sign up for an upcoming orientation, email Carly Hubicki at chubicki@volunteerfairfax.org or call RSVP at 703-403-5360. To learn more about RSVP, visit www.rsvpnova.org.

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



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.

At Mount Vernon Recreation Center's Celebration, 'George Washington' Romped with the Crowd

FROM PAGE 1

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeff McKay thanked people for approving the bond that funded the renovation. "The voters of Fairfax County strongly believe in their parks," he said, noting that 2025 is 75th anniversary of the Fairfax County Park Authority. In 1950, it had \$250, an amount "that wouldn't buy this podium today," he said.

Mount Vernon Supervisor Dan Storck, who exercises at the center, told attendees, "Health and fitness matter. This is the place to do it."

FCPA Director Jai Cole said that the Mount Vernon center is a "regional facility," the only county facility with an ice rink.

Jennifer Miller, the county's Deputy Coun-

ty Executive, saluted the architectural firm, Ritter Norton, and explained that the building has thermal insulation and can support future solar photovoltaic panels. It meets LEEDs silver standards. LEEDs is a green building rating system that sets standards for energy and water efficiency and other environmental factors.

George nearly upstaged the ribbon-cutters. Heightening the action, West Potomac High School cheerleaders performed, chanting "get fired up!" And everyone went inside and did just that.

Action Inside

A warrior combat class exercised in subdued light. People pedaled bikes and exer-

SEE AT MOUNT VERNON, PAGE 17



George looked envious when the cheerleaders lifted Rena Takase.



Carleigh Slight loved her balloon figure, made by a master, Valentino Taguding.



George was a full participant in the ribbon cutting.





George almost upstaged the dignitaries (left to right), Jai Cole, Jeff McKay and Dan Storck.



Youngsters helped cut the ribbon.

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH

Mount Vernon Recreation Center's Celebration, 'George Washington' Romped with the Crowd

FROM PAGE 16

cised on aerobic and resistance machines. Skaters glided around the rink. Swimmers swam laps. Many celebrants relaxed in the 83-degree hot tub.

Representatives of the 1,400-member Washington Figure Skating Club, which has skaters ages four to 82, recruited and sang the praises of Oakton's Ilia Malinin, world champion skater who practices in the Mount Vernon rink at times.

Elgin Smith got involved with the Speed Skating Club when his six-year-old son, now 11, abandoned hockey but still wanted to skate.

Amid the four hours of hustle and

bustle, FCPA employees touted the center's many services like water exercise which they said helps joints and hips. Wearing a belt, people float in 12-foot water where gravity is reduced by 60 percent.

Visitors studied other offerings like Zumba, Pilates, Yoga, cycle spin and core conditioning.

Storck said, "There is truly something for everyone who is looking to challenge their body and mind while having some fun too. For decades, this facility has been a gathering place for our community, and this renovation has helped ensure it will continue to

bring joy for many more decades to come."

As people explored and mingled, a very active George Washington was always at the ready to jump around and entertain.

Interacting and attracting a steady stream of admiring fans, the white-wigged George apparently didn't take a dip in the pool or try the climbing wall, at least during the public event.

For the center's fees and schedule of activities, visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/reccenter/mount-vernon. Paid members can use all nine county recreation centers.



The climbing wall saw lots of action.



Some skaters enjoyed the ice on all fours.



The central foyer was full of activity. Note George watching all the action.

Fairfax County Charities Urge Donations as Needs Rise

Generosity, charity and empathy toward all.

By Mercia Hobson
The Gazette

Local nonprofit organizations and county agencies are urging the public to donate new, unwrapped gifts, gift cards and nonperishable food now through New Year's Eve. No matter the organizers, they hope the immediate need for community support meets high motivation this holiday season.

United Community has a goal to raise \$300,000 immediately to meet urgent needs. Every dollar helps restock their food pantry shelves, purchase essential groceries, to help ensure that no child, parent, or senior goes hungry. <https://www.unitedcommunity.org/>

Whether a giver's motivation is fueled by empathy, tradition, or the pursuit of a tax deduction, much-needed donations help address the heightened demand. This urgency is compounded this year by the increased cost of food essential items, utilities, and the impact of the recent 43-day federal funding shutdown that lasted to Nov. 12. As cold weather descends and financial strain intensifies, donations between Thanksgiving and the end of the year can help meet community needs.

Among the organizations seeking donations is the Stars & Stripes NOVA Committee. Philip Langer, chief of staff for the committee, said that while the nonprofit has always helped veterans in need and their families, they will help not only veterans and military families who are food insecure, but anybody in the community. "We really want to help them. If you can help us, that would be great," Langer said.

The following is a guide to some of the current donation opportunities across the county. Be sure to check with local churches and Board of Supervisors offices in your area for additional giving opportunities.

Toys, Gifts, and Gift Cards

❖ Toys for Tots: New, unwrapped items can be dropped off at every Fairfax County fire station for the campaign.

❖ Police Station Drop-offs: New toys, games, and gifts are also accepted at any Fairfax County police



Volunteers sort coats for distribution.

station or at the lobbies of the Pennington and Herrity buildings (12011 Government Center Pkwy. and 12055 Government Center Pkwy., respectively) in Fairfax.

❖ Northern Virginia Family Services (NVFS) needs donations to purchase toys or gift cards for more than 2,000 children and to help families acquire grocery store gift cards. Visit the Holiday Giving page on the NVFS website, Holiday Giving: Donate Online - Northern Virginia Family Services, for more details.

❖ She Believes In Me: The She Believes In Me Holiday Gifts drive accepts gifts and wrapping supplies between now and Dec. 8 at Four Seasons Recreation Center. Donors can also purchase items from the charity's Amazon Wish List and have them shipped.

Food Donations

❖ Reston Community Center (RCC): RCC is partnering with the Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce and Cornerstones. Donate nonperishable food and essentials at RCC Hunters Woods and Lake Anne, and the Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce office. The drive ends Nov. 26. For Reston and Herndon locations, visit the Reston Community Center website <https://restoncommunity-center.com/event/rcc-thanksgiving-drive-2025-2/>.

❖ FACETS: The organization accepts food donations at its office in Fairfax, 10700 Page Ave., Suite 160. Franconia District Drive.

❖ Supervisor Lusk's office is collecting donations of non-perishable food and household goods to benefit three organizations doing impactful work in the Franconia District: Echo Inc. @echo-inc22150, Koinonia Foundation, and United Community @ucalexandria. The donation box will be

in the lobby of the Franconia Governmental Center through Nov. 30.

Winter Clothing and Gift Cards

❖ Winter Gear: Check with the Providence District Office for current drop-off locations, which have previously included the Jim Scott Community Center, The PARC at Tysons and Dunn Loring Volunteer Fire and Rescue.

❖ Domestic Violence Action Center: The Department of Family Services' Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Advocacy team accepts gift card donations at the Domestic Violence Action Center, 4000 Chain Bridge Rd., Suite 2702, Fairfax.

❖ Police Victim Services: The Police Department's Victim Services Division hosts an annual gift card drive. Donations can be dropped off or mailed to 12099 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA 22035.

❖ General Gift Cards: Britepaths and Northern Virginia Family Services both recommend gift card donations as a flexible way to help families purchase holiday meals and necessities.

No matter the nonprofit, organizers hope the immediate need for community support meets high motivation this holiday season. This urgency is compounded by the rising cost of food and essential items, as well as the lingering impact of the 43-day federal funding lapse. Whether a giver's motivation is fueled by empathy, tradition, or the pursuit of a tax deduction, much-needed donations help address this year's heightened demand.

See The Connection's previous list for many other ideas for how to give locally. <https://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2023/nov/29/where-to-give-for-local-impact/>



Food bags await those in need.



FCPD's Victim Services Division Invites the Community to Bring Joy to Child Victims and Witnesses This Holiday Season. Full story here fcpdnews.wordpress.com/?p=39700

FAIRFAX COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT
12TH ANNUAL

HOLIDAY GIFT CARD DRIVE

BENEFITTING OUR CHILD VICTIMS AND WITNESSES OF DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Until December 19, 2025

Drop off or mail:
Sally Favez
12099 Government Center Pkwy, Fairfax, VA 22035
sally.favez@fairfaxcounty.gov

GIFT CARD IDEAS:
Target • Walmart • Amazon • Grocery • Visa

GIFT CARDS WILL BE DISTRIBUTED TO FAMILIES AT our BREAKFAST WITH SANTA event on December 20th

Holiday Gift Card Drive is underway to benefit child victims and witnesses of domestic and sexual violence.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

SPORTS

West Springfield Football Beats West Potomac

Advances to playoffs to highlight victorious season.

By Mike Salmon

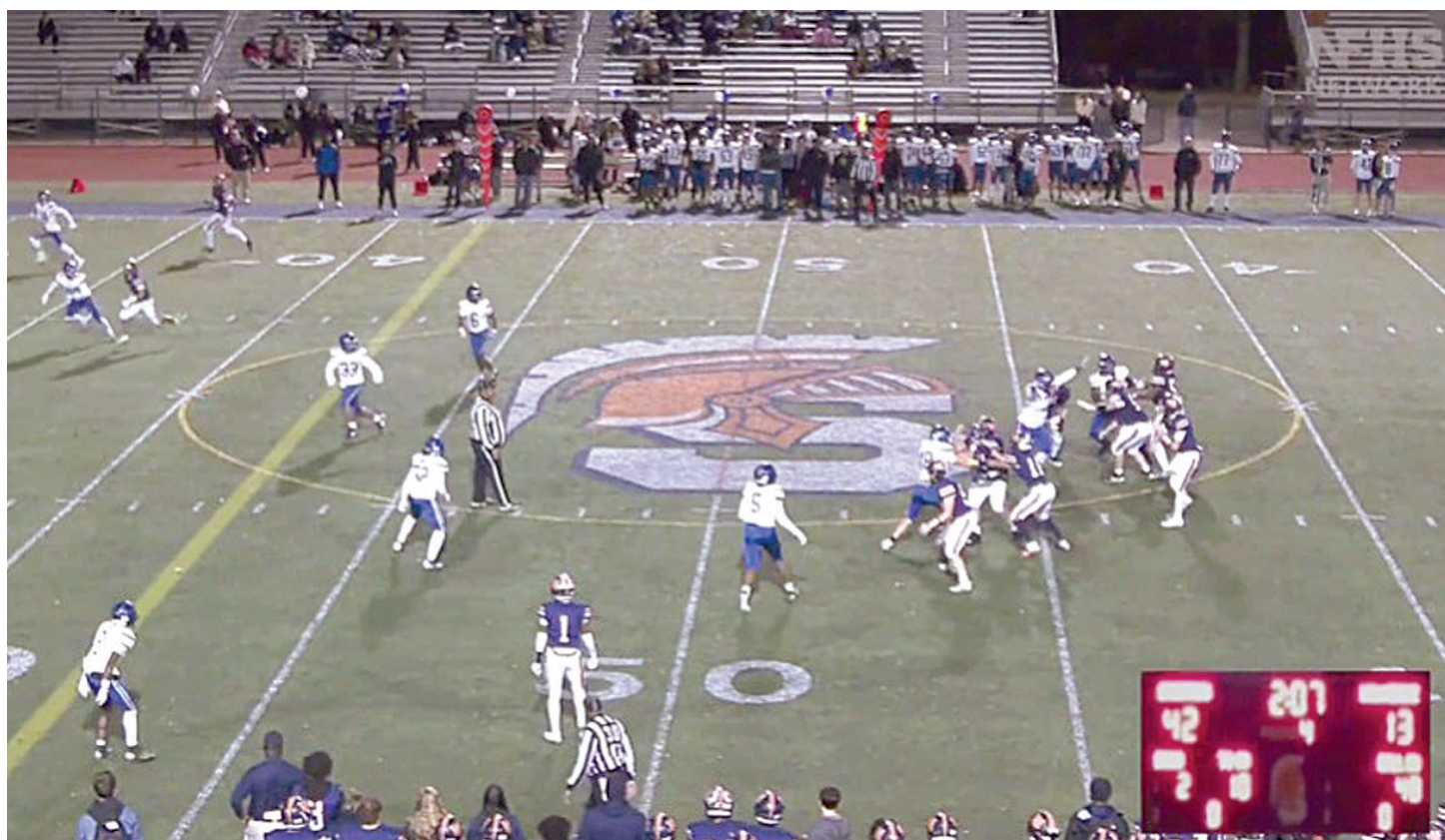
The West Potomac Wolverines held their own on the football field all season but couldn't seem to garner a good pass defense against the West Springfield Spartans.

On Friday night, Nov. 14, the Wolverines fell 48-13 in the first round of the Patriot League playoffs.

After beating the Wolverines, the West Springfield Spartans are heading on to the regional finals against Fairfax next week which could lead to the state championship in December.

The Spartan varsity team won seven in a row leading up to their victory on Nov. 7 where they defeated their division rivalry 34-31. The following Friday was their first playoff game against West Potomac on Friday, Nov. 14. 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.



The passing game of the West Springfield Spartans was too much for the West Potomac Wolverines.

West Springfield head coach Anthony Parker used a balanced approach of runs and passes, but 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 fell into a slump losing 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).

Historic Alexandria Partners with 70 Historic Destinations in Virginia

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

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

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

Beginning Nov. 11, 2025, Passports will be available free of charge at signature sites — VMHC, Colonial Williamsburg, Mount Vernon, Monticello and the JYF's Jamestown Settlement and American Revolution Museum at Yorktown — as well as at the VA250 Mobile Museum, select VA250 events and all 12 Virginia Welcome Centers, each located at gateways along interstate highways. A total of 250,000 copies will be distributed.

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

The Virginia 250 Passport serves as a travel guide, discount book and keepsake. The 64-page commemorative booklet features descriptions of the 70 participating museums and historic sites across five regions of the Commonwealth: Central Virginia, North-

ern Virginia, Shenandoah Valley, Southwestern Virginia and Tidewater.

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

"This collaboration is a wonderful example of how, when Virginians work together, we can show the world the best of who we are," said Gretchen Bulova, Director of the Office of Historic Alexandria. "With support from the Virginia Tourism Corporation and VA250, this statewide effort celebrates Virginia's pivotal role in shaping America's past, present, and future—and serves as an inspiring model of collaboration and shared pride."

The Virginia Department of Education will be partnering with superintendents across the Commonwealth to ensure that schools and teachers are aware of the passport, and are sharing it with students and families statewide.

The Virginia 250 Passport program runs from Nov. 11, 2025, to Dec. 31, 2026. More

information, including sweepstakes rules, is available at VirginiaHistory.org/250Passport.

SIGNATURE SITES

Virginia Museum of History & Culture
Colonial Williamsburg
George Washington's Mount Vernon
Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation Museums
Thomas Jefferson's Monticello
VA250 Mobile Museum Experience
The Sovereign Nations and Indian Tribes of Virginia

NORTHERN VIRGINIA

Alexandria Black History Museum
Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum
Fairfax Museum and Visitor Center
Fauquier History Museum at the Old Jail
Gadsby's Tavern Museum
George Mason's Gunston Hall
Loudoun Heritage Farm Museum
Manassas Museum
National Museum of the Marine Corps
National Museum of the United States Army
Spotsylvania County Museum
Woodlawn & Pope-Leighey House

ENTERTAINMENT

HOLIDAY EVENTS

IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA

Fifth Annual St. Nicholas Market

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

Del Ray Artisans Holiday Market

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

McLean Holiday Art & Crafts Festival

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

Old Town Alexandria Christmas Market and Holiday Craft Show

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

Mosaic Holiday Village

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

Farmer John's Holiday Market

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

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

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

Holiday Lights & Parades:

54th Annual Scottish Christmas Walk

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

Ice & Lights: The Winter Village at

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

Bull Run Festival of Lights

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

Christmas Illuminations

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

Meadowlark's Winter Walk of Lights

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

Alexandria Holiday Boat Parade of

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

Greater Manassas Christmas Parade

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

Santa Lights Manassas

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

next day.

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

More Holiday Events:

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

Holidays with a Twist, Alexandria

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

Concerts at Christ Church: Celtic

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



The Winter Village at Cameron Run.

ENTERTAINMENT

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

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

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

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

HOLIDAY LIGHT SHOWS AT NOVA PARKS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ice & Lights – The Winter Village at Cameron Run

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



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

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

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

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

NOW THRU DEC. 14

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

MEETS EVERY SUNDAY

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

MEETS EVERY MONDAY

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

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

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

MGNV PLANT CLINICS ARE OPEN

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

Courthouse Roads, Arlington operates on Saturdays from 8 - 11 a.m. The Fairlington Farmers' Market Plant Clinic at 3308 S. Stafford St., Arlington, operates on Sundays from 9 - 11 a.m.

YEAR ROUND ON SUNDAYS

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

ONGOING

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

NOV. 7-30

"The Mini World: Small Works of Art" showcases tiny creations by Del

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

NOV. 12 TO DEC. 7

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

SATURDAY/NOV. 22

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

SATURDAY/NOV. 22

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

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 23

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News

FCPS Faces \$180.6M Gap Amid County Revenue Slowdown

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Fairfax County School Board launched its six-month budget cycle on Wednesday, Nov. 12, during its work session. The preliminary Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Forecast reveals a \$180.6 million funding gap primarily for employee compensation amidst a pessimistic county revenue outlook. The fiscal year forecast is not the Superintendent's Proposed Budget.

Fairfax County Public Schools anticipates \$198.8 million in new expenses for FY 2027. These costs are only partially offset by an estimated \$13.3 million in new non-county revenue, forcing the request for a transfer of at least \$180.6 million in additional funding from the Fairfax County government. The need is driven by three major factors: competitive employee compensation required by collective bargaining agreements; inflationary increases in operating costs such as supplies and utilities; and maintaining mandated programs including special education and English language learners.

Dr. Michelle Reid, superintendent of FCPS, framed the budget conversation as one of the most important bodies of work they would engage in this year. Reid described the budget as "the foundation of everything we're going to be able to do as a school division." She continued, "Well sourced divisions are able to provide for their students and subsequently our community in ways that systems that are less resourced are not able to."

Reid's comment contrasted with a warning from County Executive Bryan Hill during the Board of Supervisors Budget Policy Committee meeting on Sept. 16, 2025, that the school board must prepare a "budget of reality." Hill is responsible for preparing the county's annual budget, formally called the "Advertised Budget Plan," which is proposed to the Board of Supervisors each February.

County Constraints and Risk Areas

Fairfax County's ability to fund
SEE CPS FACES, PAGE 23
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ENTERTAINMENT

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

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

SUNDAY/NOV. 23

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

FRIDAY/NOV. 28

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

Bellacara
Bishop Boutique

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

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

DEC. 5 TO 21

Del Ray Artisans 30th Annual Holiday Market.

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

FRIDAY/DEC. 5

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

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

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

SATURDAY/DEC. 6

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

SATURDAY/DEC. 6

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

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

THE BIRCHMERE

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

NOVEMBER

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

FCPS Faces \$180.6M Gap Amid County Revenue Slowdown

FROM PAGE 22

the school system's funding request is challenged by its revenue forecast. The county's financial base is heavily dependent on real estate taxes. The forecast projects a significant slowdown in the residential real estate market, expected to show only 2 percent growth after a high-growth year.

Compounding this, the commercial real estate sector is experiencing a projected 2 percent decline in value, continuing a trend of weakness driven by high office vacancies.

The overall General Fund Revenue is expected to grow at a historically low rate of 2.7 percent.

Although the new Food and Beverage Tax is estimated to bring in \$135.8 million, it is anticipated to only partially offset other shortfalls, leaving the county with an overall shortfall of \$165.52 million across all services, making a large transfer increase to FCPS more

difficult for the Board of Supervisors to accommodate.

During the work session, school board members offered words of caution and facts. Sandy Anderson, the school board chair representing the Springfield District, said, "I do not want us to continue down the path of being in direct conflict with our largest funder."

Robyn Lady, representing the Dranesville District, said, "I am tired of watching our veterans walk out the door to another jurisdiction. I don't think our public fully comprehends what it costs to train up new people."

We have people who have been here 10 or 15 years; they're fantastic. And because they are at the top of our scale, they are leaving us."

Ilryong Moon (At-Large) asked FCPS chief financial officer, Leigh Burden, "Our budget will grow to be about \$4.2 billion next year?" Burden replied, "Yes." The FY 2026 Approved Budget totaled \$3.9 billion.

If the FY 2027 anticipated \$180.6 million funding gap is not met, risk areas detailed by FCPS staff include, but are not limited to, increased class sizes, the loss of support positions, such as classroom monitors, and the cutting of non-mandated programs like the Middle School After-School (MSAS) and VIP Summer Programs.

Key Next Steps in the Budget Process

❖ Dec. 2: Joint meeting between the School Board and the Board of Supervisors to discuss the forecast.

❖ Jan. 22: Superintendent Dr. Reid presents the formal FY 2027 Proposed Budget.

❖ Feb. 17: County Executive Hill proposes the County Budget, including the dollar amount of the school transfer.

View the YouTube video of the Nov. 12 meeting at Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Forecast presentation, School Board Work Session, November 12, 2025.

Dewey? And How!



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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