

# Alexandria Gazette Packet

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DECEMBER 4, 2025

## 'Tis the Season

Tree lighting  
kicks off holiday  
festivities.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN  
GAZETTE PACKET

**H**undreds braved the chilly temperatures to welcome Santa and usher in the holiday season as they gathered for the annual lighting of the city's Christmas tree Nov. 22 in Market Square.

One of the city's signature events, this year's tree lighting is the last to be held in Market Square as City Hall begins renovations in January that are expected to last through 2028.

"This is going to be our last celebration at City Hall and Market Square while we undergo renovations," said Mayor Alyia Gaskins in remarks to the crowd.

Alexandria's Town Crier, Ben Fiore-Walker, welcomed the crowd as Santa and Mrs. Claus arrived on the King Street Trolley for the festivities. Gaskins was joined by members of City Council in welcoming Santa for the countdown to the lighting of the tree.

The crowd joined in the countdown, cheering as the towering 40-foot artificial tree, adorned with 38,000 lights, was illuminated in Market Square.

Following the lighting, the festivities continued with live performances by Steffenworx Brass, holiday carols, and photo opportunities with Santa and Mrs. Claus.

The tree lighting is the first of several signature holiday events across the city. On Dec. 6, thousands will take to the city streets for the 54th annual Scottish Walk Parade, considered one of the top holiday events in the country.

Also on Dec. 6 is the Holiday Boat Parade of Lights on the Potomac River. The Del Ray Tree and Menorah Lighting will take place the following day, Dec. 7, in Pat Miller Neighborhood Square in Del Ray.

[www.visitalexandria.com/holidays](http://www.visitalexandria.com/holidays)

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT  
GAZETTE PACKET



The Market Square Christmas tree twinkles with more than 38,000 lights after the official tree lighting ceremony Nov. 22.



One of Santa's elves arrives for the tree lighting festivities Nov. 22 in Market Square.



Children await the lighting of the Christmas tree Nov. 22 in Market Square.



Santa and Mrs. Claus arrive by the King Street Trolley to light the Christmas tree Nov. 22 in Market Square.



Santa and his elves gather for a group photo Nov. 22 in the Vola Lawson lobby of City Hall.



Attendees gather for a photo in front of the Market Square Christmas tree Nov. 22



## News

# 'Two Jews, Three Opinions'

## Tony Award-winning playwright keynotes Rabbi Jack Moline Lecture Series.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN  
GAZETTE PACKET

Jonathan Spector, a Tony Award-winning playwright, was the guest speaker at the Rabbi Jack Moline Annual Lecture Nov. 23 at Agudas Achim Congregation.

Spector's keynote was titled "Two Jews, Three Opinions: Creating Jewish Theater in a Post October 7th World."

The internationally acclaimed playwright was making his return to Agudas Achim Congregation, where he grew up and celebrated his Bar Mitzvah. Now based in Northern California, Spector's plays have been produced on and off Broadway, as well as around the world.

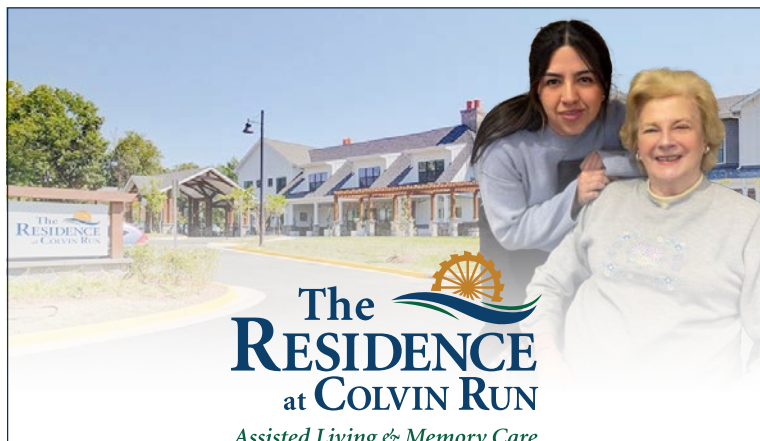
Spector's most recent play, "Eureka Day," won the 2025 Tony Award, the Drama Desk Award and the Drama League Award for Best Revival. Other works include "This Much I Know" (a New York Times Critics Pick and Edgerton Award winner), "Birthright," "Best Available," and "Siesta Key."

The Rabbi Jack Moline Lecture Series was established by Moline upon his retirement in 2014. He served the Agudas Achim Congregation for 27 years and is now Rabbi Emeritus. The focus of the lecture series is Jews in American life.



PHOTO BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Tony Award-winning playwright Jonathan Spector, left, speaks at the Rabbi Jack Moline Annual Lecture Nov. 23 at Agudas Achim Congregation. With Spector is Rabbi Jack Moline.



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# Taking it to the Streets

Del Ray Turkey Trot celebrates 50 years.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN  
GAZETTE PACKET

**T**housands of runners, walkers, families, and furry friends gathered in Alexandria's Del Ray neighborhood to celebrate a milestone — the 50th Annual Alexandria Turkey Trot. What began in 1975 with just 244 runners has grown into one of the Mid-Atlantic's premier Thanksgiving Day races, attracting over 6,000 participants in recent years.

"We have run this for the last five years and wanted to be here

**"We are here to make room for some turkey."**

— Race participant  
Adrien McCulloch

for the 50th," said race participant Adrien McCulloch. "We are also here to make room for some turkey."

The Turkey Trot's roots trace back to a simple idea: start Thanksgiving Day with fitness and community spirit. The inaugural race was led by then-Mayor Jim Moran and Judge James Clark, who famously ran every single Turkey Trot since its inception — even braving a snowstorm the year

SEE DEL RAY TURKEY TROT, PAGE 6



PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Runners line up for the start of the 50th annual Alexandria Turkey Trot Nov. 27 in Del Ray.



Retired Judge James Clark runs his 50th consecutive Turkey Trot Nov. 27 in Del Ray. Clark also served as Grand Marshal of the race.



Nicole James, Sabrina James, Isaac Brooks, Ashley Brooks



Alexandria Living Legend John Porter runs the 50th annual Alexandria Turkey Trot Nov. 27 in Del Ray.





A model walks the runway during the 3rd annual IMPerfeKtlyMade Foundation fashion show Nov.1 at The Garden. The show featured all blind and visually impaired models showcasing fashions from local designers.



Audience members look on as a model walks the runway at the IMPerfeKtlyMade Foundation fashion show Nov. 1 at The Garden.



Model Natasha Jean gets last minute prep before walking the runway at the IMPerfeKtlyMade Foundation fashion show Nov. 1 at The Garden.

# IMPerfeKtlyMade

## Blind models featured in nonprofit fashion show.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN  
GAZETTE PACKET

The IMPerfeKtlyMade Foundation held its 3rd annual fashion show Nov. 1 at The Garden Alexandria on Eisenhower Avenue.

The event featured models who are blind or visually impaired walking the runway to showcase couture by local designers. Fashions included everything from active wear to evening gowns.

Founded by Angela Harris, wife of School Board member Chris

Harris, the IMPerfeKtlyMade Foundation was born from personal adversity. After losing her vision due to a brain tumor, Harris transformed her experience into a mission: to create opportunities for individuals with visual impairments to participate in activities often

considered inaccessible.

"True vision extends beyond sight," said Harris. "It's about imagination and soul."

Tei Pearson-Hall served as host and emcee of the show aptly themed "Unseen."

"This show is important to me,"

Pearson-Hall said. "I, too, have vision loss. I'm a disabled Army veteran with only 25 percent vision in both eyes due to fluid on my brain. But when I hear someone say we can't do something, I am always

SEE BLINDS MODELS, PAGE 5



Emcee Tei Pearson-Hall, center, poses with Takiya Green-Hall and Chris Harris at the IMPerfeKtlyMade Foundation fashion show Nov. 1 at The Garden.



A model showcases a warm-up suit for men during the IMPerfeKtlyMade Foundation fashion show Nov. 1 at The Garden.



Carmen Dennie Dukes, the youngest model in the show, sits on the lap of her mother Lashonwa Dukes, along with models Rosalyn Kennedy and Natasha Jean at the IMPerfeKtlyMade Foundation fashion show Nov. 1 at The Garden.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



# A Nation Remembers

## Wreaths Across America set for Dec. 13.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN  
GAZETTE PACKET

Millions of Americans will unite on Saturday, Dec. 13, to participate in Wreaths Across America, the annual tradition of laying evergreen wreaths on the graves of veterans across the country.

Alexandria National Cemetery is one of the thousands of locations that will honor veterans in what is considered a solemn symbol of gratitude.

"The mission of Wreaths Across America is to remember the fallen, honor those who serve, and teach the next generation the value of freedom," said Col. Jerry Krueger, Commander of VFW Post 609. "Last year over 1,000 Alexandria area patriotic citizens joined

military veterans from several VSOs, along with Scouts, cadets, church groups, and more, in placing wreaths on all 4,229 veterans' gravestones."

VFW Post 609 will again host the event, now in its 17th year in Alexandria. The Alexandria tradition first began in December of 2009.

Wreaths Across America began in 1992 when Morrill Worcester of Maine donated surplus wreaths to Arlington National Cemetery. Today, it has grown into a global movement with ceremonies at more than 5,200 locations in all 50 states, at sea, and abroad, involving over two million volunteers.

The 2025 theme, Keep Moving Forward, symbolizes resilience and unity in challenging times. According to organizers, they hope to inspire communities to overcome obstacles together, just as service members did in defense of liberty.

Volunteers in Alexandria, Arlington and across the country will place wreaths while saying each veteran's name aloud in a symbolic act ensur-

ing their memory endures.

The Arlington Convoy, known as the longest veterans' parade, began Dec. 6 when trucks left Maine to escort the wreaths to Arlington National Cemetery with stops at schools and memorials along the East Coast.

Boxes of wreaths will be unloaded at Alexandria National Cemetery Dec. 12 after delivery from Wreaths Across America.

The Dec. 13 kickoff ceremony for Wreaths Across America at Alexandria National Cemetery will begin at 9:30 a.m. The public is invited to join VFW Post 609, members of other VSOs, church groups, Civil Air Patrol cadets, scouts, and local residents to place several thousand Veterans Remembrance Wreaths at the tombstones of over 4,200 veterans buried at Alexandria National Cemetery. The cemetery is located at 1450 Wilkes Street in Alexandria.

For more information, contact Joseph Mattera at [jmattara1@gmail.com](mailto:jmattara1@gmail.com) or Jerry Krueger at [JerryKrueg@aol.com](mailto:JerryKrueg@aol.com).



PHOTO BY JOHN BORDNER/GAZETTE PACKET

Alexandria National Cemetery will hold its Wreaths Across America ceremony Dec. 13 as part of the nationwide tribute to American veterans.

# Blind Models Featured in Nonprofit Fashion Show

FROM PAGE 4

part of the crew that says 'yes, we can.'

Months of preparation went into the event with volunteers assisting with rehearsals, set design, and guest services, ensuring models felt safe throughout the process.

One model was Natasha Jean, who traveled from Alabama to participate in the event. Jean, author of *The Blind Eye*, has a prosthetic eye as the result of domestic violence.

"This is my first time here," Jean said. "Angela is a friend and this is an empowering event for visually impaired individuals."

Harris' husband Chris Harris introduced

the event's top sponsor, Rev. Ray Razor, president of Washington Metropolitan Ear, which provides reading services for the blind.

Chris Harris then spoke about the name of the foundation.

"IMPerfeKtlyMade came from 'I am perfectly made,'" said Chris Harris. "It is a reminder about embracing every flaw, every scar, and every struggle that shapes who you are. The foundation celebrates inclusion, empowerment and the beauty of resilience."

Added Angela Harris, "Our imperfections make us who we are."

For more information, visit [www.IMPerfeKtlyMade.com](http://www.IMPerfeKtlyMade.com)



A model walks the runway during the IMPerfeKtlyMade Foundation fashion show Nov. 1 at The Garden.



Tei Pearson-Hall escorts a model wearing workout wear on the runway of the IMPerfeKtlyMade Foundation fashion show Nov. 1 at The Garden.

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Retired Judge James Clark, third from right, with his family following the 50th annual Alexandria Turkey Trot Nov. 27 in Del Ray.

# Del Ray Turkey Trot Celebrates 50 Years

FROM PAGE 3

the race was officially canceled. This year, Clark served as Grand Marshal, marking his 50th consecutive run. He finished with a time of 1:22:24.

The five-mile, USATF-certified course winds through the heart of Del Ray, starting and finishing at George Washington Middle School.

The event remains family-friendly, welcoming strollers and dogs with designated starting areas.

Beyond fitness, the Turkey Trot champions philanthropy with participants encouraged to bring nonperishable food donations for ALIVE!, Alexandria's oldest private safety net organization fighting poverty and hunger. Over five de-

acades, the event has contributed thousands of pounds of food and significant funds to local families in need.

This year's race was won by Cameron Miller, who claimed first place with a time of 23:37. He was followed by Jonathan Carmin (24:13) and Mulgeta Feyisaa (24:20). The top five rounded

out with Ryan Witters and Aregawi Charles, all finishing under 25 minutes. Competitive runners vied for \$2,000 in prize money, with bonuses if course records were broken. The standing records (22:50 for men, 25:32 for women) remain unbeaten.

Nicole James and her best friends were joined by 9-year-old

Isaac James and sister Sabrina James. The siblings run track for the Alexandria-based Spartan Chosen track and field team.

"We are here to support the community but also because it's important to keep moving and stay healthy."

For full race results, visit [www.alexandriaturkeytrot.com](http://www.alexandriaturkeytrot.com)



Runners take to the streets of Del Ray for the 50th annual Alexandria Turkey Trot.



Paul Thompson, Hon. James Clark, Mayor Alyia Gaskins, the Turkey Trot mascot, and race director Brian Dana at the 50th annual Alexandria Turkey Trot Nov. 27 in Del Ray.



## NEWS

# Toys4ALX Collection Drive Needs Your Help

**This year's goal is urgent and driven by growing need: collecting more than 3,500 new, unwrapped toys.**

**V**olunteer Alexandria (VolALX) is calling on the community to help brighten the holiday season for local families as it launches its annual Toys4ALX collection drive, running now through December 11. This year's goal is urgent and driven by growing need: collecting more than 3,500 new, unwrapped toys for 700+ children across the city.

Families continue to feel financial pressure from increased living costs, making community support essential. "More and more parents are struggling to support their family due to higher costs. This toy drive helps the 300+ families who registered with the Fund for Alexandria's Child by receiving 3-5 toys for each child, but we depend upon the generosity of the Alexandria community to make this happen," said Marion Brunken, Executive Director of Volunteer Alexandria. To meet registered demand, VolALX must collect

at least 3,500 toys. Additional toys will be shared with key partner organizations including The Miracle League of Alexandria, The Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse Center, and others, ensuring that even more children experience a joyful holiday.

VolALX invites residents, businesses, civic groups, social clubs, and faith communities to join the effort by donating toys or making a financial contribution.

### Toy Ideas:

Science kits; dolls of all ethnicities; Lego and Playmobil; magnetic tiles; earbuds; sport balls; cars; Solar Robot toys; educational toys; STEM Projects; Barbie of all ethnicities with clothing.

### Toy Drop-Off Options:

- ❖ Citywide drop-off sites located throughout Alexandria
- ❖ Direct drop-off at the main collection hub:  
3451 Richmond Highway (former TJ Maxx)  
Tuesday & Wednesday, Dec. 9 and 10  
11 a.m. – 6 p.m.

For a list of drop-off locations, donation guidelines, or ways to support the drive, visit <https://www.volunteeralexandria.org/toydrive>

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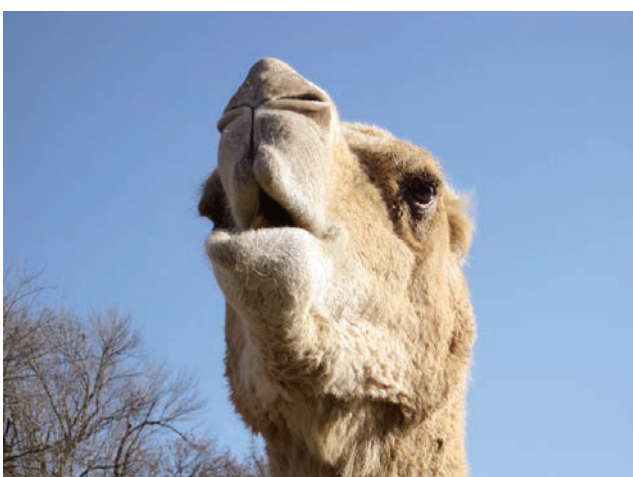
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PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH/GAZETTE PACKET



Lisa Pregent welcomes Aladdin to Mount Vernon every Christmas.



With his long neck, Aladdin can hold his head high.



Aladdin has his own quarters, a shed on the estate.



Pregent and Aladdin bond.



Aladdin has distinctive facial features.



# Holiday Outings with a Different Twist

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH  
THE CONNECTION

Christmas may typically mean tinsel and toys, Santa and stockings, but for a different twist your family could try a 1,500-pound camel and a Civil

War encampment.

## Aladdin, the Camel, at Mount Vernon

Aladdin, a dromedary camel with golf-ball-size brown eyes, welcomes between 500 to 1,000 fans a day at Mount Vernon Estate, there until Jan. 7.

"Mount Vernon is beautiful during the holidays," said Lisa Pregent in a Nov. 26 interview. "There's a magical feel about the place and Aladdin adds to it." Pregent, Senior Livestock Manager, noted that Aladdin's been coming to Mount Vernon for 17 years and said, "He recognizes us, the same

pen, the same faces, the same smells."

Bottle fed as a youngster, he is mostly docile, but when he sees a vehicle coming, he goes on the alert, "waits at the fence and gurgles at us," she said. He's likely expecting a treat. Aladdin first came to Mount Vernon in 2008 at age

11 months. Now 17, he is quieter, calmer Pregent said. Dromedary camels have an average lifespan of 40 years.

Aladdin is about seven feet tall from his hoofs to the top of his bump, an ungulate native to North Africa and the Middle East. He has SEE HOLIDAY OUTINGS, PAGE 11



Aladdin attracts between 500 and 1,000 admirers a day.



Kevin Rawlings has portrayed a Civil War Santa Claus every December at Fort Ward Park for 35 years



Soldiers stacked their guns teepee style to keep them dry and decorated them for the holidays.



# Holiday Outings with a Different Twist



The entry gate to Fort Ward Park.



PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH/GAZETTE PACKET

Re-enactors like to explain what they are doing to their young visitors.

FROM PAGE 10

long eyelashes, heavy fur, large feet and small nostrils, adaptations for desert life, Pregent explained. He munches on hay, eats four to five pounds of grain and drinks five to ten gallons of water daily.

Why a camel at Mount Vernon? In 1787, George Washington brought a camel to his plantation for the holidays for 18 shillings (\$170 today) and recorded, "By the man who brot. A Camel from Alexa. For a show."

In Washington's day, entertainers traveled around with rare or specially-trained animals. A farmer, Washington was interested in animals. He wrote that he saw a tiger, a "Lyoness" in 1766, a "Cugar" and "Sea Leopard" in Philadelphia while President.

Aladdin lives in Fairfax Station the rest of the year and travels to Mount Vernon in a horse trailer.

Pregent, who has worked at Mount Vernon for 30 years, also takes care of the estate's cows, horses, pigs, sheep and chickens.

On Nov. 26, Everett from St. Petersburg, Florida, exclaimed, "Wow! I've never seen a camel before."

This is my first camel." Aladdin was unfazed, focused on Pregent's bucket.

## A Civil War Christmas at Fort Ward Park

On Dec. 13, 12 noon to 4 p.m. at Fort Ward Park in the City of Alexandria, re-enactors will celebrate Christmas as Civil War Union Army soldiers did in December 1861 when they occupied Alexandria. A red-cheeked, jolly Santa Claus in 19th century garb and an authentic beard will greet visitors.

The soldiers will cook a Christmas meal in an iron kettle over the campfire, perhaps turkey and potatoes or a stew. During the Civil

War, the Christmas meal was likely a welcomed switch from the daily diet of eight hardtack crackers, 16 ounces of salt pork or salt beef, beans and dried vegetables.

In 1861, soldiers earned \$13 a month, according to records of that era. "The Regulars were the professional backbone of the volunteer armies," says the Third U.S. Regular Infantry Re-enactors' website, the group portraying these soldiers. Company D was formed at Fort Ward in 2000.

## A Seasoned Santa

Kevin Rawlings from Frederick, Maryland, has portrayed Santa Claus every December at Fort Ward for 35 years. He wears a red-and-white-striped cap with a tassel and a suit made by his wife consisting of red-and-white-striped wool trousers, a Union blue jacket with faux white fur trim and a work coat. His jacket has 35 white stars representing the states, including those that seceded. Santa's attire is based on an 1863 Harper's Weekly magazine cover by Thomas Nast.

Rawlings has "done Santa" all these years because "Children have unconditional love for Santa," he says. They bring their wish list to him in the restored officer's hut where his tree will be decorated with acorns, pinecones and dried pork, decorations described in a soldier's letter.

In 1997, Rawlings wrote a book about Civil War-era Christmas traditions, titled *We Were Marching on Christmas Day*.

Some of Americans' modern-day holiday traditions, like trees, caroling and gifts date back to that time, he says.

Fort Ward, built in 1861, was one of the defenses of Washington ordered built by President Abraham Lincoln around the nation's



The museum at Fort Ward Park displays some Civil War artifacts.



Santa's tree is decorated as it would have been in a Civil War encampment, with pine cones, hard tack and walnut shells.

capital after Confederate troops defeated the Union Army in the first Battle of Bull Run in Manassas. Builders sited forts on strategic heights overlooking turnpikes, railroads, bridges and shipping routes.

Fort Ward helped guard the Leesburg and Alexandria Turnpike, now Route 7, and Alexandria's

port. Fort Willard in today's Mount Vernon Belle Haven community and Fort Scott in Arlington, now parks, are other Virginia examples. Information:

<https://www.mountvernon.org/plan-your-visit/things-to-do/animals/aladdin/>  
<https://www.alexandriava.gov/FortWard>



## IN THE KITCHEN

# In the Kitchen with Chef Giuseppe

**Chef Giuseppe Villari, chef at Il Porto Italian Restaurant on King Street.**

BY SHIRLEY RUHE  
GAZETTE PACKET

**C**hef Giuseppe Villari has been the chef at Il Porto Italian Restaurant on King Street three different times. The last time the owner went to Sicily to talk him into coming back with him. So he did.

Villari explains his wife is a diplomat so he has been a chef wherever her job takes her including San Diego, Montenegro, Guatemala, where he opened a restaurant, and of course three times in Alexandria. Villari explains he can't stay home and "I delight in Italian food, good food that reminds me of my country."

Today Villari is making mezze-maniche. "It means half sleeve," he says pointing to his chef's jacket. The noodle looks like a 2x2 inch flat square. "We make our pasta fresh every day (fettucini, penne, spaghetti and the pasta for today's dish) with an Italian pasta machine. Whenever something breaks, I have to call Italy to get them to send a replacement part."

Villari turns the burner to high and ladles liquid unsalted butter into a nine-inch skillet. He tosses in chopped white onion and stirs the mixture for a minute. Then he adds Italian sausage, previously grilled and cut into diagonal slices. Again he cooks it another minute. Villari explains if he started the sausage from scratch it would take 5-8 minutes to cook "but with 300-400 customers on the weekend, we don't have the luxury to start it from scratch."

In goes a little dry white wine. Villari shakes the skillet to evaporate the wine, then adds a scoop of saffron cream sauce which he has made with cream, saffron, a little salt and chicken broth. He sprinkles on some aniseed.

"In Italy the sausage already has aniseed in it but here I have to add it."

Villari has already precooked the pasta but puts it in a basket along with a stalk of broccolini and plunges the basket into a large vat of boiling water for about a minute to warm it up. He drains the pasta and places it in the skillet with the saffron sausage sauce and gives it a quick stir.

Finally he places the mezze-maniche into a large serving dish, places the broccolini on the top, sprinkles it with parsley and carefully arranges a purple orchid and other edible flowers on the top. "You can eat it all." Grated



**Il Porto Chef Giuseppe Villari,  
Il Porto Italian Restaurant**

PHOTOS BY  
SHIRLEY RUHE  
ALEXANDRIA GAZETTE



**Pasta is mixed with sauce and plated into large bowl.**



**Broccolini and pasta are placed into a basket and plunged briefly into boiling water.**



**Chef Villari begins his mezze-maniche by adding chopped onion and Italian sausage to unsalted butter.**



**Next step a scoop of saffron cream sauce.**

parmesan romano completes the dish.

Villari says this was one of the specials last month. He says the monthly specials seem to be the customer favorite. "My own favorite is the gnocchi which we make by hand with different sauces; this month it is creamy spinach."

Although playing with pasta in the kitchen as a kid was kind of a game in Sicily, Villari says he didn't start cooking until he was about 20 years old. "In Sicily when I was little, men didn't cook in the house. Women were in charge of the kitchen."

But he remembers when he grew up he would wake up at 7 a.m. and smell the tomato or meat sauce his parents were making. "I would have bread dipped in tomato sauce and then I'd have my breakfast."

Then when Villari was 20, his cousin was cooking in Torino. The cousin said, "Why don't you come and work here with me?" I started as a bartender but the bar was right next to the kitchen and I got the smell. I was always starving so I would go and ask for food. In exchange the chef would ask me to help with the salad, etc. and that's how I learned to cook."



**Edible flowers and parsley finish off the mezze-maniche.**



## SENIOR LIVING

# Culture and Community

Brightview hosts 3rd annual Bollywood Extravaganza.

By JEANNE THEISMANN  
GAZETTE PACKET

**B**rightview Senior Living in Alexandria hosted its 3rd Annual Bollywood Extravaganza, a community cultural celebration in Northern Virginia.

Organized in collaboration with the Northern Virginia Senior Resource Network (NVSRN) and supported by numerous local partners, the gathering brought together residents, families, professionals, and community members for music, dance and networking among senior living professionals.

The event featured Bollywood performances, traditional music, and cuisine representative of India. Guests enjoyed henna art and a display of colorful attire that reflected the cultural heritage and history celebrated during the festivities.

The star of the show was the surprise appearance of Sarah, the first horse to attend an NVSRN event. Courtesy of Virk Equestrian Arts and Shadow Falls Equestrian, the unexpected guest was the center of attention and featured in many photo opportunities with attendees.

The event was coordinated by Faiqa Clark and the Brightview Senior Living team, along with contributions from partners such as Care With Love, NurseAmerica, Dream Vacations, VivaNova Real Estate, and Dulles Health & Rehab Center.

A crowd of more than 140 attended the Bollywood Extravaganza, which aims to underscore the importance of cultural diversity and social engagement in senior living communities.

[www.nvsrn.org](http://www.nvsrn.org)



Dancers enjoy the 3rd annual Bollywood Extravaganza Oct. 15 at Brightview Senior Living.



Nancy Coleman, sales manager, and Karen Stewart, executive director of Brightview Senior Living, with Steve Gurney, founder of Positive Aging Sourcebook, and Sarah, the first horse to be featured at the NVSRN Bollywood Extravaganza.



Brightview Senior Living staff at the Oct. 15 Bollywood Extravaganza event.

PHOTOS BY  
JANET BARNETT  
GAZETTE PACKET

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# 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 handmade 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 (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.CACFart](http://www.CACFart)

**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



**Celebrate ice skating with the start of the outdoor ice skating season on Thursday, Dec. 4, 2025 at Cameron Run Regional Park.**

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 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 [winterwalkofflights.com](http://winterwalkofflights.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 [bull-runfestivaloflights.com](http://bull-runfestivaloflights.com) for details.

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

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

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

Visit [novaparkslights.com](http://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 Caligiuri and Leslie Thornton. Longtime friends and collaborators, Laura Caligiuri 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 Sun-

day 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](mailto: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. 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/>

## THURSDAY/DEC. 4

**Celebrate Outdoor Ice Skating. 6-8 p.m.** At Cameron Run Regional Park, 4001 Eisen-  
[www.ConnectionNewspapers.com](http://www.ConnectionNewspapers.com)



# ENTERTAINMENT



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



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

hower Ave., Alexandria. Alexandria Mayor Alyia Gaskins and members of Alexandria City Council will commemorate the start of outdoor ice skating season with a Winter Ice Skating Party & Ribbon Cutting at Alexandria's only outdoor ice skating rink. Attendees can receive half off ice skating and admission to Ice & Lights—The Winter Village at Cameron Run (Ice & Lights), a free cup of hot chocolate and the opportunity to meet animals native to Northern Virginia at Critter Corner. To receive the discounted Village & Ice Skating ticket price of \$10.75 per person, use code MAYOR50 at checkout online. Evening ice skating and the Winter Village will be open daily November 28-December 30. Daytime ice skating will be open: weekends December 6-14; daily December 20-January 4; and weekends and holidays January 10 through February 28. Tickets are available for Village Only admission, Village & Ice Skating or Daytime Ice Skating. Regular 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](http://cameroniceandlights.com).

**DEC. 5-6, DEC. 12-13, DEC. 19-20**  
**Holiday Tours. 5:30 p.m., 6:00 p.m., 6:30 p.m.**  
At Pope-Leighey House, Alexandria. Enjoy hot cider, cookies, and holiday music as you tour the Pope-Leighey House during special evening tours. This is a unique chance to see the home decorated for a mid-century holiday!

**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](http://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](https://forms.gle/wcoz2KBLRkfeYY4B7).

**SUNDAY/DEC. 7**  
**Athenaeum's Member Appreciation Holiday Party. 1-4 p.m.** At The Athenaeum, Alexandria. Join in the 2025 Athenaeum Member Appreciation gathering. This is a celebration for our members who help us keep the historic building in good condition, open to the



**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.

public free of charge, and filled with vibrant arts programs.

**SATURDAY/DEC. 13**  
**Coats, Caviar & Community! 4-8 p.m.** At 6343 South Kings Highway, Alexandria. Join in Coterie Grand's "The Grand Coterie Winter Soiree: Coats, Caviar, & Community" — a beautiful evening centered around generosity, connection, and meaningful community impact. Here's what to expect:  
Donate a new or gently used coat or lightly used winter apparel to support The Next Steps Shelter & FACETS  
Uplifting music and an inspiring community atmosphere  
Food and beverages available for purchase — including a full bar, charcuterie boards, and a pasta bar  
Zora Hughes Coffee on site  
A caviar experience by founder Susan Smallwood for all coat donors  
Terri Long bringing her signature positivity and vibrant energy  
Press coverage capturing this impactful community moment  
A fun photo booth experience for guests  
Monetary contributions welcome if you're unable to attend  
Guests can enjoy rejuvenating 10-minute on-site massage sessions

Must be 21+ to attend  
Payment methods accepted: Cash & Card  
RSVP is required — FREE tickets available on Eventbrite:  
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/grand-coterie-winter-soiree-tickets-1935769270999?aff=oddtcreator>

**DEC. 13-14**  
**The Nutcracker Holiday Ballet. 12 p.m. and 5 p.m. each day.** At Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center, Alexandria. The Metropolitan School of the Arts (MSA) is thrilled to announce its highly anticipated holiday production of The Nutcracker, featuring special guest artists from one of the nation's leading companies, The Joffrey Ballet from Chicago. Joffrey Ballet's Yumi Kanazawa and Blake Kessler will grace the stage as the Sugar Plum Fairy and Cavalier, a highlight set to elevate the production for audiences. Their participation marks a significant collaboration, offering MSA students an inspiring opportunity to share the stage with world-class professionals. The cast also features dancers from the Manassas Ballet Theatre, including: Shaw Wu as the Nutcracker Prince, Masaya Kankeo dancing the Arabian Pas De Deux, and Kuan-Lun Li dancing the Mirliton Pas de Deux. Tickets are \$35 to \$37 at [www.metropolitanarts.org](http://www.metropolitanarts.org).



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# Alexandria's Holiday Parades on Dec. 6

*The 54th Annual Alexandria Scottish Christmas Walk Parade and the 25th Annual Alexandria Holiday Boat Parade of Lights return Saturday, December 6, 2025.*

**A**lexandria, VA – During Alexandria's Biggest Holiday Weekend, spanning December 5-7, celebrate the return of two of the region's top signature events, the 54th Annual Alexandria Scottish Christmas Walk Parade in historic Old Town Alexandria from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and the 25th Annual Alexandria Holiday Boat Parade of Lights along the Potomac River shoreline at 5:30 p.m. with dockside activities from 2 to 8 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 6, 2025.

The Alexandria Scottish Christmas Walk Parade is a celebration of Alexandria's founding in 1749 by Scottish merchants and its naming after Scotsman John Alexander who owned the land that became Alexandria. The 2025 parade kicks off at 11 a.m. and features more than 100 parade units, including dozens of Scottish clans dressed in colorful tartans, pipe and drum bands, terriers and hounds and community groups. This year's Grand Marshal is Alexandria Mayor Alyia Gaskins, and the Masters of Ceremonies are Julie Carey, the Northern Virginia bureau chief for NBC4, and Heather Had-dock, past president of the Scottish American Women's Society of Washington, D.C. The parade is produced by Visit Alexandria in partnership with Campagna Center and the City of Alexandria. Additional support is provided by Wegmans, Scottish Government USA and First Watch Strategies & Events. The parade is sponsored by Wegmans.

The Alexandria Holiday Boat Parade of Lights begins at 5:30 p.m. and will feature more than 50 brightly lit boats cruising along one mile of the Potomac River shoreline from Old Town North to Ford's Landing Park. From 2 to 8 p.m., parade-goers can enjoy dockside festivities at Waterfront Park, including a pop-up beer garden from Alexandria's award-winning Port City Brewing Company, food and beverage vendors and family-friendly activities. The parade is produced by Visit Alexandria in collaboration with the City of Alexandria, City Cruises – Alexandria and the Old Dominion Boat Club. The Holiday Boat Parade of Lights is sponsored by Amazon.

For more information on programming, parade routes, viewing locations, transportation considerations, FAQs and additional weekend happenings, please visit the parade webpages at [ALXScottishWalk.com](http://ALXScottishWalk.com) and [ALX-BoatParade.com](http://ALX-BoatParade.com).

**Alexandria Holiday Boat Parade of Lights from a previous year. This year, it's Dec. 6**



PHOTO BY MANGO MIKE ANDERSON

**Coming up: Del Ray Holiday Kick-Off Christmas tree and Menorah lighting 2025 is Sunday, Dec. 7 at 6 p.m. at the Pat Miller Neighborhood Square. Bring new, unwrapped toys for the Alexandria Sheriff Department's Operation Elf; and travel-size toiletries and non-perishable foods for Carpenter's Shelter.**



PHOTO BY JANET BARNETT

**Alexandria Scottish Christmas Walk from a previous year. This year, it's Dec. 6**



## A Key Moment



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

So, this is what it feels like to be self-sufficient. I've rarely experienced a moment of pride like this. Why? Because if this "it" had to do with yours truly using his hands to solve a problem, the problem usually remained unsolved. As an adolescent, I remember my father having a toolbox in the house, but its purpose escaped me. As a result, I, nor my brother, Richard was groomed for home/car/computer repair. Typically, then and now, if I had a problem that involved using my hands, it pretty much meant using my fingers to make a call to a person or a service to do what I couldn't. But not last Sunday. I faced my problem with a can-do approach rarely seen in my problem-solving history. What was it I fixed? I replaced the battery in the key fob of my 2022 Audi Q3. A first in my 20-plus years of Audi ownership.

As with these many tasks (car, computer, household), I am unhelpful, shall we say. In addition, not only am I incompetent, but mostly I'm just not that interested. As the second son of Barry and Celia Lourie, renters until my father retired at age 70, I was not really exposed to any household/honey-do-type chores. My sole job was taking out the rubbish from under the kitchen sink and depositing it in the "rubbish pale" buried in the ground downstairs/outside near the side entrance to our second-floor home. Occasionally I had to take out the trash "canned up" behind the garage and drag it out to the front of the house for the weekly trash pick-up. That was pretty much it. If anything needed to be fixed, a call was made and arrangements were soon to follow. My primary pursuits were sports and chocolate. (Not lawn care either as we were renters and as such, it was not our responsibility.)

It wasn't until I was married at age 24 that my deficiencies really became apparent. It wasn't so much a problem for me as I had spent my entire life birth to wedding, not having and/or not being able to do anything constructive around the home, car and nowadays, the computer. However, it was much harder on my wife Dina. Her expectation was that as a man I had some intrinsic God-given abilities to be useful. It was a disappointment (I'm moderating her reaction) when she realized that I had no such abilities.

Having spent years showcasing how little I could do, this particular key-fob problem presented an opportunity. Moreover, on the face of it, changing a battery didn't seem insurmountable. In fact, when this key-fob issue arose previously (batteries do run out), I took the key-fob to the dealer, and they happily obliged my incompetence and changed the battery for me. However, not being a complete dunce, I did pay attention as the service person swapped out the battery on my key fob. I have to admit; even by my standards, the battery replacement didn't seem all that complicated. After all, I'm not a complete idiot, despite what some of our regular readers may feel, so I decided I'd give "it" a try.

First, I looked at the key fob to see what I could see. I saw nothing, as in any clues as to how I might solve this problem. I poked and prodded and nothing. Moreover, there was no indication that there was any hope for a future with my changing this battery without some kind of help. Vowing to move on, I asked myself: where might there be information about my car's key fob? And it hit me, just like I was a character on one of those old "Firesign Theatre" albums: the owner's manual. Ta da. Success. Not so fast. I couldn't follow the diagrams (though I could follow the table of contents). As has occurred many times before with me, following written how-to directions like this is next to impossible. Let me clarify, following directions/diagrams presented in this two-dimensional way is not next to impossible, it is absolutely/unequivocally impossible - for me. And as soon as I realized, what I was up against, I closed the owner's manual in disgust. Down but not yet out, I sat back in my driver's side seat and thought. Then it came to me: the internet. There are sites to show people how to do almost anything. Replacing a key-fob battery is child's play (except this child couldn't play). I got out of my car and walked into my house and turned right toward my home office. The one with the computer/internet. I sat down and cautiously typed in "How to change the battery in the key fob on a 2022 Audi Q3?" And there the headline popped up on my computer screen: "Changing the battery in a key fob ...." I clicked on the top entry and viola, a video began. The simple words of wisdom I heard from the host, while he actually, in front of my eyes, changed the battery gave me hope. Hope that one day I could change/replace the battery. And as it turned out, this was that day.

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