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Views Looking At Challenges Ahead

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Still Enjoying the Holidays

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JANUARY 7-20, 2026

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This young visitor to the live nativity scene at Mount Olivet Methodist Church on Glebe Road with Moses the camel.

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LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026 Viewpoints on Challenges to Come



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Diane Kresh, Director Arlington Public Library



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Kate Bates, Arlington Chamber of Commerce



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Betsy Frantz, Path Forward



FILE PHOTO BY SHIRLEY RUHE

Charles Meng, AFAC



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Chief Andy Penn, ACPD

Interview with Diane Kresh, Director of the Arlington Public Library

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Q: Review 2025 — What were the successes and challenges in 2025?

Diane Kresh, Director of the Arlington Public Library:

The successes and challenges are part of the same thing. The challenge was the new Administration was identifying content that they wanted to change to a different narrative. There is a real danger in agreeing to do that. But the success was this gave people in public institutions the opportunity to stand up for what they believed in. As librarians we are all interested in the truth and to change the narrative leaves people out of the story. People have a tendency to think if I give in now, this will go away in time. But that is foolish; you have principles and values.

Last year the library had 4,200 library programs and 400 outreach events with 95,000 library patrons. But to me that's just widgets. I've been in this business a long time, and to me what's important is what does it mean to be a librarian, to work in a public institution. We're more likely to think about values, stand up for who we are, making sure everyone feels welcome.

Q: Looking Ahead — What are the goals and challenges for 2026?

Kresh: The first goal is to create a budget. The climate is not great, and the library receives all of its funding from the County. The Friends of the Arlington Public Library (FOAL) provides funding separately for the costs of our pub-

SEE DIANE KRESH, PAGE 4
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Interview with Kate Bates, CEO and Director, Arlington Chamber of Commerce

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Q: Review 2025 — What were the challenges and the successes?

Bates: Broadly speaking it was an incredibly challenging year for all businesses, large and small. The Federal workforce reduction had a huge impact even on restaurants and the personal services industry. Since October eight Arlington restaurants have announced closure. Hotel occupancy was down, and Federal contractors had no less than \$2 billion in contracts terminated in Arlington.

People had fewer discretionary funds to spend, and spending in general fuels the whole economy. Even if people weren't directly impacted by job loss, they were worried about their jobs and this was reflected in reduced spending.

The success was that the community really came together. Our community is resilient; we've been through hard times before. We have the right leaders in public, private and nonprofit positions.

From the Chamber perspective our biggest organizational success was the launching of the Children Alliance in June. The purpose is to facilitate licensed in-home small childcare providers to stay in business and improve child care access and affordability. Almost 30 percent of the 100 in-home providers are participating in the pilot program to provide free hands-on training in areas like marketing, enrollment, and budgeting. The Wall Street Journal identified Arlington as having the most expensive childcare in the country, and 80 percent of the people interviewed listed childcare as a major

SEE KATE BATES, PAGE 4

Interview with Betsy Frantz, Director of Path Forward

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Q: Review 2025 — What were the challenges and successes?

Frantz: First the successes. It was a really, really exciting year. We expanded exponentially to add another homeless shelter, the Residential Program Center (RPC) with 42 beds on Columbia Pike. Now we have two shelters as the only provider for male and female adults in the County. But a shelter is no permanent place to live. Our main goal is to help the clients in the shelters to get housed, and we currently have formerly homeless living in 200 scattered apartments.

We went from an \$8 million program to \$12.6 million overnight with the signing of the new contract with Arlington County for the new shelter, and the County also gave us an additional contract to expand the medical services we offer to the homeless to Doorways and Bridges to Independence. We go to each of these organizations once a week to offer flu and COVID vaccines and general medical services.

In addition to the five respite beds in the Homeless Services Center, (HSC) we continue to operate our mobile medical outreach van to reach the homeless on the street. We go at 3:45 am because that's when people are all in one place. We take the homeless meals, try to encourage them to come inside and take a nurse to help with their medical care. We do a lot of foot and wound care. Imagine what it would be like to be outside on a night like last night at 21 degrees. But 41 people stayed outside.

But our goal has always been to move the homeless in our shelters

SEE BETSY FRANTZ, PAGE 4

Interview with Charles Meng, CEO and Director of Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC)

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Q: Review 2025 — What were the challenges and the successes?

Meng: Our big challenge was dealing with the number of families we served last year. It peaked in November with an average of 4,200 families but at some point we saw 5,898 unique families. That was a total record for us.

Also inflation is hurting all of us but when you're buying for 5,000 families it starts to hurt. And changes in SNAP requirements which go into effect in January with the new work requirements will put extra stress on the families.

Our success I think is that we were able to serve all of these families. We are committed to serve all of the families who come to us. And I can rely on a fantastic group of staff members who are committed to the issue and come to work just raring to go and don't complain.

Q: Looking ahead to 2026 what are the challenges and the goals?

Meng: We will face very much the same challenges in 2026 as Federal workers are laid off until there is a change in the administration. We expect the number of families to increase. We live in a generous community who care deeply about food insecurity and so far donations have kept up with the need. The County will give us \$1.4 million this year but it will take almost \$11 million to operate AFAC. In 2025 my food budget was \$1.5 million over the projection for

SEE CHARLES MENG, PAGE 4

ARLINGTON CONNECTION ♦ JANUARY 7-20, 2026 ♦ 3

Interview with Andy Penn, Chief of Arlington County Police Department

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Q: Review 2025 — What were the challenges and successes?

Andy Penn, Chief of ACPD:

The challenge has been to fill our 70 vacant positions to return to our authorized capacity of 377 sworn officers.

But the success for me is the wonderful people who make up the ACPD with the safety of the community as their guiding principle. We have been short staffed for years and are currently operating 70 officers short. But it is incredible the staff really stepped up to provide for the safety of the community and make sure there wasn't a drop in the quality of the service they were receiving. They worked additional hours and overtime. It centers on people to make the ACPD what it is, to make a positive difference every day in our community.

Q: Looking Ahead to 2026 What are the challenges and the goals?

Penn: Our goal is to continue to focus on our four initiatives:

(1) Crime control prevention — identify and hold people accountable and keep crime from occurring.

(2) Transportation safety to keep the roads safe for everybody including cars, bikes, scooters. Police officers in the community can provide enforcement but they can't be everywhere all the time so automated safety such as the new PhotoSPEED program around Arlington school zones assist with the safety efforts. We also believe education plays a key role.

SEE ANDY PENN, PAGE 4

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026

Viewpoints on Challenges to Come

Diane Kresh

FROM PAGE 3

lic programs.

This year we will spend the entire year focusing on the 250th anniversary of our nation, on what it means for the community in many different aspects. It will focus on who we are, on where we're going. It will be unusual for the library to release an entire year's schedule of events around one theme. Our theme is Libraries, Liberties and the Pursuit of Happiness. We will be launching our website with that information in a few days.

As part of the celebration we will continue our Arlington Reads events, a program I established when I came 20 years ago, which has different themes with a particular resonance like climate change, the Constitution, immigrants. I look for things I think are interesting. This year's theme focuses on

The Arlington Public Library system is composed of the Central Library on N. Quincy Street with seven branch libraries scattered around the County.

cooking, food and culture — how we can see people for who they are. We will have a pie contest explaining food and relating it to culture. Then on June 18 we will have an all day event across all our libraries celebrating the 250 years with music, food, games. A little bit of fun will be a map of the U.S. where people can put what they think about, or did, or ate in different locations around the country.

With regard to challenges I'm not a gloom and doom kind of person. I'm still excited about this job after 20 years. I have the kind of mindset that if something troublesome faces us, we'll figure it out.

But if I had my way, we would have more public conversations. There don't seem to be mechanisms available to allow that to happen. People don't get enough information to contribute meaningfully. People talk past one another. I'd like to find a way to change that.

Kate Bates

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concern.

Q: Looking ahead to 2006—What are your goals and challenges?

Bates: Our goal is to continue to make Arlington a vibrant community where all businesses can flourish. Currently 650 businesses and non-profits out of approximately 3,000 in Arlington are members of the Chamber.

We have been working with community stakeholders and state and local policymakers to come up with a policy agenda and advocate for passage of legislation that will benefit businesses. Locally our top priorities remain advocating for Arlington County to build on the success of the Commercial Market Resiliency Initiative, particularly

The Arlington Chamber of Commerce is a non-profit business advocacy organization that promotes economic growth through networking, government advocacy and community engagement.

by allowing more flexible signage regulations and encouraging economic development by removing unnecessary barriers to development. The most significant practical challenges businesses face in Arlington are commercial vacancy and signage regulations.

At the state level we are working for procurement preferences. Currently Virginia doesn't have a procurement preference for Virginia businesses as other states have for their local businesses. In addition, we are working on child care legislation that will create a pilot that addresses cost-sharing issues.

A big challenge will be the incredibly difficult County budget and how things are funded moving forward. The softening of the economy with rising costs, supply chain issues, labor shortages and inflation will continue to impact all of our businesses.

Betsy Frantz

FROM PAGE 3

into permanent housing. Housing first and that's at risk.

The challenge is how to cope with the changes we expect in our housing programs funded by HUD. We expect the \$4 million in funding we receive for our HUD-funded housing programs to be cut by 70 percent. \$3.2 million is at risk. It could literally go away. This will be incredibly challenging.

In addition, President Trump has issued an Executive order that will prohibit the residents in our HUD-funded housing from being gay, transgender or undocumented and requires them to be male or female. When we originally applied for the funding, diversity was one of the criteria. Now that's being totally reversed. We were told in advance it was coming and thought it would happen in November but

Path Forward is an organization paving the way from homelessness to a home by fostering dignity and stability through transformative services and housing solutions.

the government shutdown delayed the change until 2026.

Q: Looking Ahead at 2026 — What are the challenges and goals?

Frantz: We have to prepare for the notice we know is looming and get people in different programs who can no longer stay in the HUD-funded housing at Culpepper. We have a working group and are engaged with the County and other organizations.

Our second goal will be to integrate the best practices that we currently use in our HSC into the new RPC, to be sure the rules are followed and enforced. Our full time staff went from 60 to 85. We'll be working on infrastructure really.

Charles Meng

FROM PAGE 3

the year.

It is a big problem with immigration because of the fear factor. We don't know how many of the people we serve are illegal; it doesn't matter to us, but it creates fear in the community. It is important for AFAC to be seen as a safe place. Biden had excluded food pantries from ICE intervention but not anymore. Thankfully we have not seen ICE activity here but that doesn't mean families aren't scared. There have been two incidents on the block recently requiring police. A lot of families will leave the food line when they see police.

One of our goals has been to focus on how to improve food, to increase the quality and the variety of fresh fruit and vegetables we offer.

Arlington Food Assistance Center is a community based nonprofit organization providing weekly supplemental groceries to families in need in Arlington.

But the real goal this upcoming year will be space more than anything else — receiving, storing and processing what looks like 6 million pounds of food this year. We are at capacity. The whole issue of space and how it affects our mission to continue to operate at capacity — can I find a third building in Arlington or will I need to go outside? Somebody here has to think about the future. That's my job.

Andy Penn

FROM PAGE 3

(3) Community engagement. I truly believe we are at our very best when we work as a team in collaboration to provide for the safety of the community.

(4) Wellness and development. Our wellness initiative and professional development for officers is an important part of the overall package. We focus on career development and leadership skills—there are so many aspects to the police profession.

In 2026 we have a real opportunity to rebuild our ranks with the new starting salary of an officer taking effect on July 1 at \$90,000, now the highest starting salary in the region. There is a big hole to fill. This is a huge opportunity to do some of the things we weren't able to do with limited strength.

The challenge has been to fill the

The Arlington County Police Department was formed on Feb. 1, 1940 with 9 officers and has now grown to an authorized strength of 377 sworn officers and approximately 100 civilian members. Its mission is reduction of crime and making Arlington a place where all people can live safely and without fear.

vacant positions. We are selective in hiring people we think will be successful on the force and hire only between 2.5-4 percent of the applicants. But we have a new class of 20 who just graduated from the Police Academy and should be operational around November. It takes almost a year from the day a police officer is hired — 22 weeks of police academy training, then 3 weeks of localized training, followed by field training. It all adds up.

So we will still be operating at reduced numbers but will find ways to be effective and efficient until we're back to full strength.

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ENTERTAINMENT

CENTERS FOR

OPPORTUNITY ARLINGTON

The Centers for Opportunity Arlington is a safe, stigma-free place to spend time for those recovering from homelessness, substance use, and mental illness. It has a donation closet that needs adult clothing and shoes. Some participants at the Center are looking for jobs and need the proper attire. Located at 3219 Columbia Pike, Suite 101, Arlington. Contact Greg, Program Coordinator at 703-567-1346.

VOLUNTEER FOR ARLINGTON'S COMMUNITY AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

Arlington Neighborhood Village, in partnership with Arlington County and Marymount University, has started the Community Ambassador Program (CAP). CAP is a volunteer fueled system that identifies "Ambassadors" connected with civic associations, faith communities, senior centers, apartment buildings, etc. These individuals will be trained to be a reliable source of information about the many opportunities available to older adults in Arlington.

Ambassadors will spread the word about programs and support services, opportunities for social and civic engagement, and educational and enrichment activities for older adults in their own neighborhoods. They are actively recruiting ambassadors to act as a bridge between their community and the Arlington safety net, providing information and soliciting feedback to improve offerings that help older adults remain safe, independent, engaged, and connected to their community. Contact cap@anvarlington.org if this is something you are interested in or want to learn more. Let's work together to create a supported and connected community for all ages!

Receive Support Services: Are you a senior in Arlington? Do you need support services but don't know where to look? Are you looking for fun and enriching activities in Arlington? Email or call 703-509-8057 and they will connect you with an Ambassador.

THE MARJORIE HUGHES FUND FOR CHILDREN

The Marjorie Hughes Fund for Children (MHF), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit serving Arlington Public Schools (APS) students, helps underinsured and uninsured students obtain medical and dental services and other necessary medical care. Established in 1992 to honor the work of public health physician Marjorie F. Hughes, who dedicated her career to public school students in Arlington, MHF is made up of Public Health School Nurses, School Health Aides, APS staff, and community stakeholders. In collaboration with pediatric office staff and dental providers, MHF pays for school entry and sports physical exams, dental treatments, assists with the purchase of medications or medical equipment, and provides transportation via UberHealth rides to doctor and dentist appointments. MHF services are supported entirely by generous donations and grants, and they have helped students throughout Arlington schools, from kindergarten to high school, to be happy, healthy, and ready to learn. To learn more about MHF, its mission, its work, and to make a contribution, visit <https://www.marjoriehughesfund.com/>

www.marjoriehughesfund.com/.

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.

FRESHFARM OPEN YEAR-ROUND

FRESHFARM Ballston Market will now operate year-round, providing residents and visitors with continued access to locally grown produce and goods even through the winter months. Located at Welburn Square (901 N Taylor St., Arlington) just steps from the Ballston Metro, the market operates Thursdays from 3-6 p.m. The market features a lineup of 20 regular and rotating farmers and producers, and shoppers can enjoy nearly everything needed for a complete grocery shop, from hearty winter squash and leafy greens to eggs, meats, pantry staples, and prepared foods, while supporting regional farmers and producers year-round. Visit freshfarm.org/markets/ballston.

ITERATIONS EXHIBIT

At Cody Gallery, 1000 N. Glebe Rd., 2nd Fl., Arlington. The School of Design and Art at Marymount University presents "Iterations," an exhibition of works by faculty who teach in our Art and Design, Fashion Design, and Interior Architecture and Design programs. Faculty artists featured in the exhibition include Bill Allen, Amanda Buckley, Moira Denson, Susan Hergenrath, Joe Hicks, Heather McMordie, Ally Morgan, Sal Pirrone, Mary Proenza, Tianette Simpson, and Richelle Soper. Visible or not in a final art or design piece, we all work through iterations of process and concept to achieve our strongest work. Within the exhibition, we've broadly interpreted this theme. Bill Allen's hand-beaded Wedding Dress Ensemble is one in a series of over 60 evening wear garments he has designed and constructed to date. Amanda Buckley offers a group of three early spring oil paintings that share subject, palette, and a sense of surface, highlighting her painterly sensibility. Susan Hergenrath's two abstract ink compositions are so symbiotic that she placed them in a single frame to best communicate their content. Integral to the power of Moira Denson's works are her prolific sketchbook practice and ongoing engagement in workshops. Together, Joe Hicks' ceramics pieces create a composition demonstrating "the iterations of carbon trap shino glazes across different clay bodies and slips." Heather McMordie compounds printmaking's iterative nature as an art of multiples and variations through her "screenprint assemblages" and a six-woodblock print. As a pair, Ally Morgan's related gouache paintings emphasize her "reverence for the natural world and humanity's complex relationship with it." Sal Pirrone includes Tennis Ball, a 2014 sculpture, and Circles of Memory, a 2025 memorial project, each marking an evolution in his practice of cast imagery and the re-



Arlington's Martin Luther King Tribute takes place on Sunday, Jan. 18, 2026 at Wakefield High School in Arlington.

lationship of materials to memory. Through numerous work sessions and thousands of brushstrokes, Mary Proenza investigates linked imagery to varied expressive ends in three paintings referencing her studio space. Tianette Simpson's lively iterations seemingly include every visual and conceptual interpretation of keys. Richelle Soper's wall and floor sculptures explore implications of two- and three-dimensional space and combinations of traditional materials and unexpected, found objects. Learn more about Cody Gallery, including exhibition hours: marymount.edu/cody-gallery.

SATURDAY/JAN. 10
Comedy Karaoke Trivia Funtime Show 7:30 p.m. At Highline RxR, located at 2010 Crystal Drive, Arlington. Bring a team or fly solo and win prizes by dropping knowledge in a trivia competition, then duking it out in a karaoke battle! Hosted by Christian Hunt, this amazing experience features comedy from the DC area's finest comics. The headliner for January's show is the hilarious Sandi Benton! Tickets: \$10/\$15 at capitalcityshowcase.com.

SUNDAY/JAN. 18
Arlington's MLK Tribute 2026. 5-6:30 p.m. At Wakefield High School Auditorium, Arlington. Arlington County Parks and Recreation invites you to come together to honor the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. This year's MLK Tribute will continue the theme "Dreams, Faith, and Justice in Action," carrying forward the spirit and vision of last year's planned tribute. Through powerful performances, reflection, and community voices, the evening will highlight Dr. King's enduring message of hope, equality, and service in action.

MONDAY/JAN. 19
MLK Day: W&OD Trail Cleanup with BikeArlington and WalkArlington. 10 a.m.-1 p.m. At the W&OD Trail at Columbia Pike, Arlington. Spend your morning outdoors cleaning up a portion of the Washington & Old Dominion Trail at Columbia Pike. Come when you can and stay

as long as you like. All supplies provided, and all are welcome! This event is part of Volunteer Arlington's annual MLK Day of Service. They will start on the W&OD Trail where it intersects with Columbia Pike. Look for the orange and blue Bike/WalkArlington tent on the trail near the intersection of Columbia Pike and South Four Mile Run Drive! To register, visit: https://connect.volunteerarlington.org/need/detail/?need_id=1166886

SATURDAY/JAN. 31
"Feeding Tomorrow" FOUA Movie Night 3:30 p.m. At Woman's Club of Arlington, 700 S Buchanan Street, Arlington. Farmers, nutritionists and educators work to transform a broken food system. Fighting ecosystem destruction, climate change, inequality and

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 7

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NEWS DEPARTMENT:
arlington@connectionnewspapers.com

Mary Kimm
Editor and Publisher
mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com

Shirley Ruhe
Contributing Photographer and Writer
slrbc@aol.com

Eden Brown
Contributing Writer
arlington@connectionnewspapers.com

ADVERTISING:
For advertising information
sales@connectionnewspapers.com
703-778-9431

Debbie Funk
Display Advertising/National Sales
703-778-9444
debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com

David Griffin
Marketing Assistant
703-778-9431
dgriffin@connectionnewspapers.com

Classified & Employment
Advertising
703-778-9431

Editor & Publisher
Mary Kimm
mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com
@MaryKimm

Publisher
Jerry Vernon
703-549-0004
jvernon@connectionnewspapers.com

Art/Design:
Laurence Foong
Production Manager:
Geovani Flores

CIRCULATION
circulation@connectionnewspapers.com



SENIOR LIVING

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Office of 55+ Programs
Department of Parks and Recreation

300 N. Park Dr., Arlington, VA 22203
703-228-4721

55+ Programs are in person at 55+ Centers unless otherwise noted. A 55+ Pass is required to participate (starting at a \$30 annual fee). To join or register, go to registration.arlingtonva.us or call 703-228-4747.

Armchair visit to Vietnam and Cambodia with 55+ volunteer Mary Smolenski as she shares stories from her visit, Thursday, Jan. 8, 1:30 p.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Registration # 912400-24.

Wild edible plants, learn about Virginia's bounty of berries, mushrooms, fruits, nuts, herbs and plants, Thursday, Jan. 8, 10:30 a.m., virtual. Presented by Park Naturalist Aide Leeanna Pletcher. Registration # 912400-33.

Artist cookbook of art materials that can be made from household items, Thursday, Jan. 8, 9 a.m., virtual. Presented by Community Arts Programmer Jennifer Droblyen. Registration # 912300-07.

Advanced drawing and painting, explore beyond-the-basics techniques in the six-session series with Community Arts Programmer Jennifer Droblyen, Thursdays from Jan. 8 through Feb. 12, 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Previous experience required. Cost \$50. Supply list provided at first class. Registration # 912303-14.

Beginner quilling, learn to create beautiful raised images from coils of paper strips using a few basic tools, Thursday, Jan. 8, 1:30 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Cost \$20. Led by

ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 5

health epidemics, these Innovators build a regenerative and resilient system in their local communities. Cost: Free, donations appreciated.

SUNDAY/FEB. 8

14th Annual Empty Bowls Event. The Arlington Food Assistance Center invites you to join its 14th Annual Empty Bowls - a luncheon fundraiser featuring many delicious homemade soups made by chefs from local restaurants and beautiful hand-thrown bowls created by local area artists. Each guest enjoys a luncheon of soup, bread, dessert, and receives a hand-made bowl to take home as a reminder that there are many members in our community that live weekly with empty bowls. 100% of the proceeds from this event will be used to purchase nutritious groceries to help AFAC feed the more than 4,300 families who come to our doors each week. They encourage all attendees to bring non-perishable canned goods with them to the event to support AFAC's food drive efforts. Also accepting handmade bowl donations prior to the event. Email communications@afac.org <https://afac.org/campaign/14th-annual-empty-bowls/>

SATURDAY/FEB. 14

Comedy Karaoke Trivia Funtime Show. 7:30 p.m. at Highline RxR, 2010 Crystal Drive, Arlington. Bring a team or fly solo and win prizes by dropping knowledge in a trivia competition, then duking it out in a karaoke battle! Hosted by Christian Hunt, this amazing experience features comedy from the DC area's finest comics. The headliner for February's show is the hilarious Chris Sintos! Tickets: \$10/\$15 at capitalcityshowcase.com.

SATURDAY/MARCH 14
Comedy Karaoke Trivia Funtime Show. 7:30 p.m. at Highline RxR, 2010 Crystal Drive, Arlington. Bring a team or fly solo and win prizes by dropping knowledge in a trivia competition, then duking it out in a karaoke battle! Hosted by Christian Hunt, this amazing experience features comedy from the DC area's finest comics. The headliner for February's show is the hilarious Chris Sintos! Tickets: \$10/\$15 at capitalcityshowcase.com.

instructor Join Leonardo. Registration # 912310-05.

Rummikub Night, classic tile game, easy to learn, Thursday, Jan. 8, 5 -7 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Registration # 912600-16.

Legal Services of Northern Virginia (LSNV), learn how to utilize the service and who is eligible, Friday, Jan. 9, 11 a.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Presented by LSNV managing attorney Meredith MacKay. Registration # 912400-01.

Paint, Build, Create is an annual Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math (S.T.E.A.M.) event sponsored by Arlington Department of Parks and Recreation, Saturday, Jan. 10, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., Fairlington Community Center. Free; open to all ages, no 55+ Pass required.

Small steps to health and wealth, tools, strategies and motivation for your health and wellness journey, Monday, Jan. 12, 11:30 a.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Presented by Virginia Cooperative Extension volunteers. Registration # 912500-05.

55+ Travel group will have tea at the elegant Crest Hill Tea Room in The Plains, VA, Tuesday, Jan. 13. Cost \$87, Arlington resident; \$100, non-resident. Registration # 902601-04.

Genealogy 101, learn to use primary sources such as family records, grave sites, DNA services like Ancestry.com and more, Tuesday, Jan. 13, 11:30 a.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Led by experienced genealogist Eileen Bogdanoff. Registration # 912402-02.

Reader's Theater, everyone will have a chance to act in fun reading of vintage radio plays with sound effects, Tuesday, Jan. 13, 5:30 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Registration # 912301-22.

p.m. At Highline RxR, 2010 Crystal Drive, Arlington. Bring a team or fly solo and win prizes by dropping knowledge in a trivia competition, then duking it out in a karaoke battle! Hosted by Christian Hunt, this amazing experience features comedy from the DC area's finest comics. The headliner for March's show is the hilarious Patrice DeVeaux! Tickets: \$10/\$15 at capitalcityshowcase.com.

SATURDAY/MAY 9
Arlington HistoryFest 250. From 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. At Kenmore Middle School, 200 S

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.

VOLUNTEER DRIVERS NEEDED

Have some extra time to drive a neighbor to a doctor's appointment? You pick the days, times, and places that are convenient for you. There is NO MINIMUM driving requirement. Not only do you help older adults in need, you also get to meet wonderful folks, often with very interesting backgrounds and stories to tell. The Shepherd's Center of McLean-Arlington-Falls Church (SCMAFC), is an all-volunteer, non-sectarian, non-profit organization. Its mission is providing free transportation to seniors for medical and dental appointments or run errands to grocery stores and pharmacies. To sign up, visit the website at <https://scmafc.org/> volunteer, or email contact@scmafc.org with questions.

Exploring book arts, learn how to create handmade, one-page sketchbook using a pamphlet stitch, Tuesday, Jan. 13, 3 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Taught by book artist Sushmita Mazumdar. Registration # 912310-09.

Supper Club, you bring your main dish, drink and desserts provided. Wednesday, Jan. 14, 5 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Registration # 912801-07.

History roundtable topic for January is Australia, Wednesday, Jan. 14, 11:15 a.m., virtual. Research and deliver a five minute presentation or listen and learn from others. Registration # 912402-05.

The study of words and the history of the English language as a whole, Wednesday, Jan. 14, 10:30 a.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. A group discussion facilitated by a 55+ volunteer. Registration # 912402-15. Repeated via virtual, registration # 912402-16.

Old-Time and String Band Jam, Thursday, Jan. 15, 5 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Bring your banjo, guitar, fiddle, mandolin and dulcimer. All skill levels welcome. Registration # 912304-15.

Memory Café, supportive environment where people with dementia and their family caregivers can socialize and enjoy meaningful activities together, Thursday, Jan. 15, 1:30 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Drop-in.

Movie matinee, "The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel", Friday, Jan. 16, 12:30 p.m., Aurora Hills 55+ Center. Registration # 912804-02.

55+ Travel group will travel to Chantilly, VA for the Mid-Atlantic's largest indoor flea market followed by lunch on your own at Wegman's, Saturday, Jan. 17. Cost \$28, Arlington resident; \$32, non-resident. Registration # 902601-06.

Carlin Springs Road, Arlington. The Arlington VA250 Committee has announced plans for Arlington HistoryFest 250, a free, one-day outdoor festival commemorating the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution. Programming will feature live reenactments, musical performances, and historical storytelling, hands-on demonstrations, children's activities and crafts, and local food vendors. Thousands of attendees from across the Washington, D.C., area are expected, along with dozens of historical reenactors and over 40 exhibitors. For more information: <https://arlhist.org/arlington-va250/>

DONATIONS NEEDED

Pet Food Bank. AWLA has established a Pet Food Bank to serve qualifying residents of Arlington County and the City of Falls Church. In consideration of the effect financial obstacles have on a pet owner's ability to afford pet care, the AWLA Pet Food Bank program's goal is to keep family pets out of shelters. If you are an Arlington County or City of Falls Church resident and are in need of assistance in feeding your pet, follow this link and fill out a pre-registration form. Visit goo.gl/forms/s2FuFdYWdZm4tPw2.

Donations Needed. Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church, 2700 South 19th St., is seeking to replenish its food pantry. Particularly needed are rice (large bags appreciated, the pantry will rebag), dry beans, canned vegetables, soup, small jars of peanut butter, small jars of jelly, pasta and pasta sauce. Donations are collected during Mass each Sunday. Visit [www.ourladyqueenofpeace.org](http://ourladyqueenofpeace.org) for more.

A Hannukah Miracle



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

No, this will not be a retelling of the legend of the menorah and the Maccabees who, with "one small purse of olive oil" kept their lamp lit for eight days, when they had only enough oil for one. This story will be updated "for your consideration," as Rod Serling used to say to begin the episodes of his "Twilight Zone" television show and whatever "dimensions" he was referring to. The miracle to which I now refer makes this legend hardly worth its holiday association and countless retellings.

It happened on Dec. 18, 2025. I ended up - per my intention, at the new Amazon Marketplace in Silver Spring, Md. It is, for all intents and purpose a supermarket, with a few Amazon touches which are hardly worth mentioning since they are not central to my miracle.

I had selected my items and placed them in my basket as I rolled it around the store until I ended up at the self-checkout area (cash not accepted) to pay for my goods. Naturally, I had to take out my wallet from my right rear pocket to select a credit card. The store was not crowded, and I wasn't the least bit flustered by this task. The register was a bit different than I had become accustomed to. Nonetheless, I figured it out, paid for and bagged up my groceries and then walked to my left to exit the store. Unfortunately, I didn't remember anything more about my wallet. I got to my car where I placed my one bag onto the back seat and then drove on home.

It wasn't until the next afternoon that I realized my wallet was missing. This 'missing' is not so unusual as I've experienced similar misplacements as I've aged into retirement and beyond. After exhausting all possible places in my house and car, I started thinking of places it couldn't or rather shouldn't be: outside the house and car. This exact 'missing' had happened a time or two before and in my retracing of my steps/drive there was a successful ending with wallet and contents remaining exactly where I had inadvertently left them.

As I now recalled that strategy, I had made multiple errand-type stops and realized that Amazon Marketplace was my last stop. In fact, I remembered taking my wallet out of my right rear pocket and laying it across the register's scanning window. A bit unusual, but nothing totally irregular. Moreover, I really can't say I remember placing my wallet back in my pocket. However, over the last 60 years, the number of times I've performed this movement has to be in the thousands. As such, it's become almost like a knee-jerk-type reaction. I have no conscious memory of doing anything with that wallet.

After sorting through my movements, I convinced myself that I had left my wallet at Amazon Marketplace and so I grabbed my car keys and off I drove. Finding the customer service counter, I asked about whether a wallet had been found/turned in since yesterday. The lady manning the window picked up a brown cardboard box and quickly she and I both saw my wallet. I said, "That's it." She grabbed the wallet and took out the driver's license and asked my name and home address. I answered correctly so she returned the wallet to me. Once in my hand I checked for cash and credit cards. All were present and accounted for.

Now that's what I call a miracle.

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

Live Nativity at Mount Olivet Draws a Crowd

Live nativity scene in Arlington includes camel and other animals.

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

It was lively in the yard outside Mount Olivet Methodist Church late afternoon on Sunday, Dec. 21. Mary and Joseph were in the manger alcove with their two young daughters. Children were petting the sheep and investigating the goat roaming around the yard. Some were clutching their warm cup of freshly made cocoa.

But the hit of the event was Moses who was posing for pictures with the children gathered around and fighting for a turn to get a cell phone photo with a real live camel.

As the sun went down, the crowd gathered around for the recitation of the Christmas story interspersed with sing-a-long carols. The electricity flicked off half way through the program but the crowd carried on singing without the keyboard accompaniment and the speakers just spoke a little louder.

Matthew 2:9-10 ‘And lo the star which they saw in the east went before them till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.’



This young visitor to the live nativity scene at Mount Olivet Methodist Church on Glebe Road took a selfie with Moses the camel.



Mary and Joseph “for the night” stood in the manger scene at the live nativity held by Mount Olivet on Dec. 21. Mary explained she was holding a plastic baby Jesus in the swaddling blanket because she said they couldn’t get a volunteer baby from the congregation on such a cold night.



The crowd gathered round to participate in the reading of the Christmas story interspersed with carols of the season.



Everyone wants a turn to feed Moses a little hay.



Five-year old twin visitors clutch their cup of warm cocoa. “So good.”

Children found the goat and sheep hard to resist. “It’s so soft.”

PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION