

The Arlington Connection

By Tuesday the snowplows were in Phase 3 clearing residential streets. This snowplow was a welcome sight until he got stuck and had to shovel himself out.

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PHOTO BY SHIRLEY RUHE/ARLINGTON CONNECTION

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FEBRUARY 4-17, 2026

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Arlington Kicks Into Gear to Tackle the Snowstorm

Sample of operations around the county.

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

On Saturday, Jan. 24, Arlington County manager Mark Schwartz signed a Declaration of Local Emergency for Arlington County in response to the winter storm forecast for the region beginning Saturday night. The County Board ratified this declaration at the beginning of their Tuesday, Jan. 27 recessed meeting. Arlington kicked into gear.

A local emergency declaration allows Arlington County to formally request additional support from the Commonwealth of Virginia when local responses are overwhelmed. Matt de Ferranti, newly-elected chair of the Board says, "I am deeply appreciative of the Manager, county staff and our crews for their collective work this past week. The impacts of this storm were challenging, and the response has truly been an around-the-clock effort." He added, "During this winter storm Board members have been in constant contact with the Manager providing feedback and direction."

Snowplows hit the major roads Sunday afternoon and by Tuesday morning were beginning Phase 3 which is plowing residential streets. But despite round the clock plowing, the storm was too massive to clear the roads in just a few days, and the definition of various phases didn't translate into reality in many places. Many of the major streets had only one passable lane with snow piled in the other lane trapping cars parked along the way.

Betsy Frantz, Director of PathForward says, "Last Saturday night when everyone knew the storm was coming we sent out our outreach team to 35 homeless clients living on the street to make sure everyone knew what kind of weather was coming and try to convince them to come into the shelter. Many that don't usually come in did; only six refused." She adds, "As far as we know they are ok because we haven't heard from the hospital or the police."

"It was really, really encouraging. Every day I wonder if someone has died. It's heartbreak-

ing that some would choose to live outside instead of choosing a warm place with a cot, meals and medical attention but mental health is a challenging thing." She adds PathForward had to suspend the homeless outreach for several days due to the safety of the staff but have started up again.

Frantz says the shelter is completely full and overflowing as well as the hypothermia beds. "But anybody can get in. It's really, really cold. When we run out of cots, we have blow ups, blankets, anything. We do our best." In addition to the regular homeless clients in the shelter, PathForward has a Hypothermia Prevention Program which runs from November-March. This means a homeless client can spend the night in the shelter but must leave during the day. When the temperature is 32 degrees or less, the person can remain in the shelter during the daytime as well.

Arlington Fire Chief David Povlitz moved into his contingency plan for snow and ice. He has done what he could to prepare ahead of time. "We have several different contingency plans depending on whether it is a tropical storm, blizzard or other major event." Povlitz says he up staffed several units including the ladder trucks and command vehicles. He adds, "We usually have 77 personnel but we added an additional 84 staff at times." In some cases he made sure vehicles had chains.

Povlitz also modified the vehicle mix to account for the higher number of dispatches coming in and to keep personnel around for the higher call volume. "On average we had 100 incidents every day this week with Tuesday hitting a high of 140 incidents. We were very, very busy but I'm proud of our first responders. There were no significant vehicle incidents or serious injuries."

Eighty percent of the ACFD incidents are medical with a wide variety this week from illnesses to slips on the ice. There were some power surges and some minor fires but quick to put out. "It helped that schools were closed but we still had a lot of emergencies."

Povlitz says getting to the structure was sometimes difficult because of the significant volume of snow and ice. Some people didn't or couldn't shovel their snow but others did clear a path and also kept their hydrants clear and available. "This wasn't an ordinary snow. It was hard as concrete. And when we used water to put out a fire, it hit the ground and turned to

SEE ARLINGTON KICKS, PAGE 7



PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION



Snowplows hit the road Sunday night.



By Tuesday the snowplows were in Phase 3 clearing residential streets. This snowplow was a welcome sight until he got stuck and had to shovel himself out.

Project for the Fight Against Federal Overreach

Four of nine F.A.F.O. founders are Virginians, creating a local oversight from the D.C. suburbs to Hampton Roads.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Two Northern Virginia prosecutors, Fairfax Commonwealth's Attorney Steve Descano and Parisa Dehghani-Tafti, Commonwealth's Attorney for Arlington County and the City of Falls Church, joined a national coalition Jan. 28 vowing to oversight of federal agents who violate state laws. Called the Project for the Fight Against Federal Overreach (F.A.F.O.), launched following two fatal shootings by federal immigration agents in Minnesota. At stake, among other things, is whether the federal government can take over a neighborhood and investigate its own shootings, or if local authorities have a "concurrent jurisdiction" that the federal government must respect.

The coalition aims to hold federal officials accountable when they exceed their lawful authority, particularly in jurisdictions experiencing "surges" of federal immigration and law enforcement activity. Founding members include nine prosecutors from Virginia, Texas, Pennsylvania, Arizona, and Minnesota, all locally elected. They contend that their duty to state constitutions overrides federal claims of "absolute immunity" when state crimes, such as assault or homicide, are committed.

Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner, a founding member and the coalition's primary national spokesperson, dismissed recent claims of federal immunity as "absolute nonsense" during the virtual launch.[2] "Despite the misinfor-

mation you have heard from the mouth of the vice president, we do have the ability to bring state criminal charges against federal officers and to prosecute those cases to conclusion," Krasner said. "This is a gathering of people who take democracy seriously and are willing to do what their oath requires to uphold the Constitution and the laws of the United States and also their moral oath."

Fairfax Commonwealth's Attorney Steve Descano said that federal agents are not shielded from local authority.

"The chaos you're seeing on the streets — the beatings, the abductions, the killings of everyday Americans just like you and me — these are the natural consequences of a federal government that thinks they're above the law and the rest of us are below it," Descano said. "If you're not on their team, [they believe] you have no rights and your life does not matter."

On Jan. 8, 2026, following the fatal shooting of Renee Good by an ICE agent in Minneapolis, Vance said in a White House press briefing, "The precedent here is very simple; you have a federal law enforcement official engaging in federal law enforcement action. That's a federal issue. That guy's protected by absolute immunity."

Referencing the coalition's acronym, FAFO, Descano added: "Unfortunately for those guys, we're in the 'find out' business around here."

In addition to Descano in Northern Virginia is Parisa Dehghani-Tafti, the Commonwealth's Attorney for Arlington County and the City of Falls Church. "It doesn't matter whether you're local police, coun-

ty sheriff, state patrol, FBI, ATF," Dehghani-Tafti said. "You serve the public, you respect constitutional rights, and you follow the law. And when you don't, we will hold you accountable."

The coalition also includes two other Virginia Commonwealth's Attorneys, Stephanie Morales of Portsmouth and Ramin Fatehi of Norfolk.

Fatehi noted that this geographic spread creates a pincer effect, ensuring that federal agents face local oversight whether they are in the D.C. suburbs or the coastal south.

"Between Steve and Parisa in the North, and Stephanie and me in the South, there is nowhere federal agents can go in this Commonwealth to escape the reach of the law," Fatehi said. "We have effectively ensured that from the D.C. line to the Atlantic Ocean, the Constitution is not a suggestion, it is the mandate. If you are operating in the Commonwealth, you are in our backyard, and someone is watching."

The independence of these offices is anchored in the law. In Virginia, the four prosecutors are protected as constitutional officers under Article VII, Section 4 of the state constitution. This status ensures their independence.

Similar constitutional protections exist for other members of the coalition, including Texas District Attorneys Jose Garza of Travis County and John Creuzot of Dallas County, and Pima County Attorney Laura Conover of Arizona. Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty of Minnesota, while holding a statutory office, maintains similar

Gov. Abigail Spanberger used her executive power to sign Executive Order 10 on Jan. 17, 2026, her first day in office, fulfilling a cam. This order officially rescinded former Gov. Glenn Youngkin's Executive Order 47 (2025). Spanberger fulfilled a campaign promise to remove the mandate requiring state and local law enforcement to assist in federal civil immigration enforcement.

Providing legislative backup, state Sen. Saddam Azlan Salim of Fairfax is guiding three bills through the Senate Committee for Courts of Justice.

As of Jan. 29: SB 351: Prohibits civil arrests at courthouses and requires a judicial warrant for federal agents to enter. SB 352: Prohibits federal and state agents from wearing face coverings or masks during enforcement to ensure they can be identified for accountability. SB 783: Restricts which state officers can perform the functions of a federal immigration officer.

Salim said his bills are designed to keep "the chaos, lawlessness, and violence that we have seen perpetrated against Minnesotans from coming to Virginia."

He added: "The formation of this coalition sends a clear message: Virginia is not a 'no-man's land' where federal agents can ignore the law."

Salim's three bills (SB 351, SB 352, SB 783) are currently referred to the Senate Committee for Courts of Justice.

Salim has until Tuesday, Feb. 17, "Crossover" deadline, to get these through the full Senate.

Del. Alfonso Lopez (D-Arlington) is the chief patron of HB 1440, which would make it a Class 1 misdemeanor for federal agents to conduct "civil immigration arrests" in protected areas like schools, hospitals and courthouses. Agents could enter these areas only with a judicial warrant, a subpoena, or in exigent circumstances.

HB 1440 is moving through the House. The bill was assigned to House Public Safety Subcommittee #3 on Jan. 28. If it passes the subcommittee, it must then clear the full House Public Safety Committee before moving to the House floor. Like the Senate bills, this must pass the full House of Delegates by crossover, Tuesday, Feb. 17.

autonomous prosecutorial discretion under state law.

Krasner, of Philadelphia, described this combination of shared ideology, constitutional independence, and direct accountability to local voters. "We find ourselves in a moment when one of the most potent tools ... to try to preserve

democracy in the United States is state prosecutors," he said.

Participants plan to convene next in February to coordinate accountability efforts across their respective jurisdictions, according to the Official Press Release issued by the Office of the District Attorney, City of Philadelphia on Jan. 28.[9]

An Icy Week in Richmond

BY ADAM P. EBBIN
MEMBER, SENATE OF VIRGINIA

The last week in January was an icy time in Richmond, punctuated by bills passing and special events.

As the snow started falling, I was honored to receive a lifetime achievement award from the Virginia Chapter of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML).

OPINION

It's been my pleasure to work with NORML for many years. I passed a bill to stop the suspension of driver's licenses for all marijuana offenders in 2017. After a multi-year effort, in 2020, I decriminalized possession of less than one ounce of cannabis with Delegate Charniele Herring (D-Alexandria) — meaning we removed criminal penalties. Then in 2021, I legalized the posses-



Adam Ebbin

sion of up to an ounce of marijuana, and allowed Virginians to grow up to four plants at home with Delegate Herring and Senator Louise Lucas (D-Portsmouth). However, some key Senate colleagues were not yet ready to adopt our plan to provide licenses to sell cannabis in a controlled 21+ adult-only marketplace. In 2024 and 2025, Governor Glenn Youngkin vetoed follow up

bills (from me and others) to issue tightly limited licenses to curtail the illicit market. When we finally move marijuana sales off the street corner to behind an age-verified counter, I look forward to Virginia becoming a national model for a safe and prosperous cannabis market.

Wednesday night, I enjoyed attending the Outdoor Caucus reception with Adam Spanberger, the first "First Gentleman" of the Commonwealth, in his first initial appearance since Governor Span-

berger's inauguration.

Last Thursday night, I was flattered and grateful to receive a handmade quilt made by Mothers of Light, an Alexandria nonprofit, presented by Mayor Alyia Gaskins in recognition of my 22 years of representing the city. It was a special opportunity to welcome the members of City Council to Richmond.

SEE AN ICY WEEK, PAGE 16

NEWS

Arlington Author Jen Dary Speaks at One More Page Books

Beating a brain tumor turned out to be a blessing and a book.

BY EDEN BROWN
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Arlington author Jen Dary always wanted to write a book; she'd written in high school and college, took some writing courses, but, she said, with a wry smile, "I didn't have the content and I was busy." Mother of two small boys, full time coach, and fighting a brain tumor, she didn't have a lot of time. But, she said, "I journaled a lot."

Dary was 35 when she was diagnosed with a large brain tumor. She had just given birth to her younger son, Aaron. His brother Noah was a toddler. Many of her friends dismissed her headaches as normal postpartum hormonal ups and downs. As a Silicon Valley leadership coach, she weathered the sleepless nights, dizzy spells, and shattering headaches with her usual can-do attitude. Her doctor finally told her to get an MRI.

Once the ordeal had a name, and her spiritual transformation entered into the mix, Dary realized she now "had content." Again the wry smile. She was able to put together a book about the journey, including much of her humor and parental struggles, her family's support and love, but also what she did to reach deep to find courage and belief in the possible.

The audience was rapt, but no one more than Dary's Third Grade teacher, Mai Jacobs, who had driven down from New York to attend the reading. "I saw this coming, even way back in 1989," Jacobs said. "Jen was one of those students. When she wrote in my book that I do for each end of the year, most kids would say 'Good luck' but she said she hoped the next class would be nice and not talk back or give me a hard time! I am not at all surprised she wrote this book."

Other questions from the audience were things like "When you were going through this, what was the process of making it interesting but also medically accurate?" "How do you end it?" and "Did you take



PHOTOS BY EDEN BROWN

Jen Dary shouted out her 3rd grade teacher, Mai Jacobs, who had driven all the way down from New York to attend the reading and is pictured here acknowledging the shout out, with some emotion.



Jen Dary reads from "I Believe in Everything" at One More Page Books.

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‘Poop Geyser’ on the Potomac After Sewage Spill Not a Joke

Arlington has not issued guidance on threat to residents, fish, the environment.

BY EDEN BROWN
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

The massive Potomac River sewage spill was a funny joke on the Colbert Show last week but so far, guidance from Arlington County has been scarce. We’ve been told there is no impact on the drinking water quality here, because the spill occurred after the intake above Great Falls, although one individual made reference to an intake at Little Falls that is located below the spill and had to be shut down.

But as far as the impact on people, fish and dogs or the need to be on the lookout for impacts to other animal life along the river ... or further down into the Bay (think oysters and crabs) we have heard nothing.

Arlington’s DEQ (Department of Environmental Quality) had no ready guidance as we went to press, Arlington’s Department of Environmental Services spokesperson Katie O’Brien said they were monitoring the situation but said DEQ would have to issue such guidance. One theory was that since the spill was on the Maryland side the Maryland DEQ would have to handle any alerts.

Renee Thompson from the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin located in Rockville, MD said she had not received any advisory information from any of the regulatory agencies about impact to downstream residents to date.

What we do know is from the Potomac Riverkeepers, who released the following information on January 29, see box:

“Potomac Riverkeeper Network (PRKN) today released the results of its testing of contaminated water from the Lockhouse 10 sewage spill along the Potomac, and the data show a far worse impact than originally contemplated, PRKN President Betsy Nicholas announced today.

Nicholas said, “These measurements of E.coli bacteria show contamination which is nearly 12,000



PHOTO BY EDEN BROWN

Two dogs who live in Arlington go down to the water in the Glen Echo area. Frolicking in the Potomac River is not limited to warm weather for dogs like poodles and Labrador Retrievers.

times what authorities limit for human contact. And so far, almost 300 million gallons have entered the Potomac River. The long term impact cannot be overstated. We measured against the standards established by Virginia’s Department of Environmental Quality and Maryland’s Department of the Environment. We were able to get this information thanks to the real-time testing done on Friday, Jan. 23 by Dean Naujoks, Potomac Riverkeeper, and Evan Quinter, PRKN Volunteer Coordinator on Friday.”

Naujoks elaborated: “We sampled the sewage discharging from the broken interceptor pipe to the Potomac River near Cabin John at Lock 10 and the result was 4,884,000 MPN – Most Probable Number for E.coli – which is 11,900 times higher than the 410 MPN limit for safe human contact. Very nearby, samples collected from the river at the Lock House 10 public river access where people

recreate showed values were 7,000 times above the 410 limit. We also sampled roughly four miles downstream in DC waters at Fletchers Cove, [across from Arlington] where testing data revealed E.coli levels were 60 times higher than the 410 standard. As a baseline, we sampled upstream from the sewage spill at Old Angler’s Inn, where we measured 4.1 MPN for E.coli – ensuring river water upstream from the spill is safe and clean for human contact.”

Naujoks continued, “Infrastructure failure is at the root of this disaster – the six-foot diameter sewage interceptor pipe located this close to the river should have been better maintained in order to avoid this catastrophe. DC Water needs to come up with a better plan than using a one hundred year old dry canal ditch to capture and contain future sewage releases instead of discharging hundreds of millions of gallons of sewage to the river!

Feb 11, 2026 12 p.m.

Join Potomac Riverkeeper Network for a deep-dive discussion into one of the worst sewage spills in modern history. On Jan. 19, a 6-foot diameter sewage pipe failed and leaked more than 300 million gallons of raw sewage into the Potomac River. This issue isn’t 100% resolved just yet, but progress is underway.

During this discussion, we’ll talk about: what happened, what has been done to fix the issue, what still needs to be done, what our next steps are, and much more. There will be time for a Q&A session at the end of this presentation.

Register for this free webinar here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84567890123>

One of the largest sewage spills in US history could have been avoided.”

E.coli is a bacterium found in mammalian intestines, including humans and is used as an indicator of water quality and pollution levels, as it comes from sewage discharges, stormwater runoff, and agricultural pollution sources. It also indicates a host of nasty contaminants: fecal matter, sewage, water-borne illnesses, pathogens, harmful bacteria and parasites. Some E.coli strains cause gastrointestinal complications, disease, kidney and nervous system issues, and in the most severe cases, permanent damage. MPN (Most Probable Number) for E. coli refers to a statistical method used in water and food testing to estimate the quantity of E.coli (a fecal indicator bacteria) in a sample, utilizing UV light often used for E. coli confirmation, indicating fecal contamination. It’s a key indicator of sanitation, with results expressed as MPN per volume (e.g., 100 mL) to assess drinking water safety or shellfish quality.

Naujoks concluded, “Our sample data collected right at the sewage outflow revealed shockingly high numbers that could have long term impacts to water quality. The vile and putrid smell from the torrent of sewage discharging to the Potomac River for eight straight days is one of the most disturbing things I have ever seen in 25 years as a Riverkeeper. We are glad the flow of sewage has been reduced but the potential health risks at this level and the long-term impacts to the river are hard to imagine. We have seen no response from public health agencies to determine whether this type of raw sewage will impact public health and the environment. Raw sewage is not

only harmful to humans, but it can also harm the environment through excessive nutrients, toxic contaminants, and disease exposure. This can lead to dead zones in the river, harmful algal blooms, and fish kills.”

For more information about the Potomac Riverkeeper Network, a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with three regional Waterkeeper branches, see: <https://potomacriverkeepernetwork.org>

Several Virginia residents commented on facebook that the Riverkeepers post was the first information they were getting about the impact of the spill. One referred to the closure of an area in Charles County near Port Tobacco, prohibiting shellfishing, which indicated the spill was affecting a large area south of D.C. Several Arlington residents said they wondered why there had been no further information after the notification of the spill.

Maryland’s Department of the Environment put out several warnings about fishing, boating and coming into contact with water in the Potomac, including as far south as Charles County which is considerably further downstream than Alexandria, Arlington, and Fairfax counties. These warnings, dated Jan. 24, were on Everybody’s Maryland Politics Facebook page:

“There is a major raw sewage discharge into the Potomac River upstream of Maryland’s tidal stretch. Until further notice, assume the Potomac is contaminated downstream of the DC area.

WHO SHOULD PAY ATTENTION

❖ Montgomery County – especially anywhere along the C&O Canal
SEE ‘POOP GEYSER’, PAGE 7
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Arlington Kicks Into Gear to Tackle the Snowstorm

FROM PAGE 3

ice.” He says the Arlington Department of Environmental Services gave the ACFD a lot of assistance, working full throttle around the clock to clear the streets.

He says sometimes the staff worked multiple shifts because they knew their team couldn’t get in. “Some packed food for 48 hours or more, sometimes individually or sometimes made a team effort to coordinate meals — something quick to prepare and quick to eat because we were constantly getting calls.”

Charles Meng, CEO of Arlington Food Assistance Center, said they were closed Monday and Tuesday and back in operation Wednesday. “All offsite distributions of food were rescheduled for later in the week. Our suppliers have had trouble reaching us but they have gotten through.”

Meng says in addition, AFAC increased their orders so they would have sufficient stock to handle the supplemental grocery needs of their over 4,200 families for both last week and this week. “We are up and running as normal though parking is difficult.”

The first announcement of school closings came Sunday night at 6 pm.

Frank Bellavia, Arlington Public Schools Director of Communications, says this is standard procedure for APS inclement weather



PHOTO BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION

Hypothermia cots are ready to set up to accommodate homeless clients during the snowstorm at the Homeless Services Center.

warnings. As anxious parents and jubilant children listened in for the remainder of the week, the school closing announcements continued all week long.

Arlington Storm Updates: Local Emergency Ends

Enforcement of the Arlington County Snow Removal Ordinance began at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 3. At the same time, the Local Emergency for Arlington County declared in response to last week’s snow and ice storm will end.

The Snow Removal Ordinance

requires all property owners — both commercial and residential — to clear snow and ice from public sidewalks adjacent to their property in a designated timeframe. The County Manager suspended enforcement of the ordinance after last week’s storm due to the combination of ice and extremely low temperatures.

While enforcement was suspended, the County continued to encourage the community to clear sidewalks at their properties to help ensure safe access to jobs, schools and services, regularly

reaching out to community partners and businesses and assessing sidewalk conditions.

“This snow has made the clearing of sidewalks difficult and slow, but County crews have been chipping away — literally — to ensure County facilities and parks are accessible,” Schwartz said. “Because of the nature of this snow, I didn’t want the County penalizing residents and businesses unfairly, but the responsibility of property owners to do what they could to ensure the safety of our walkways never went away.”

The County’s code enforcement inspectors will begin its rounds across Arlington on Tuesday, looking at both residential and commercial properties. The intent of the ordinance is to identify locations and situations that pose a public safety hazard and to encourage voluntary compliance with snow and ice removal requirements.

Problem areas and blocked sidewalks should be reported via the County’s Snow Issue Form. <https://arlgis.arlingtonva.us/Apps/Snow/SnowPublic/>

Snow Ordinance FAQs

Of the nearly 700 miles of sidewalks in Arlington, Arlington County Government is responsible for approximately 35 miles of sidewalks adjacent to County facilities, including parks, schools, libraries, community centers, transit stops and other public buildings, as well as 12 miles of trails. Staff from the

Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and the Department of Environmental Services (DES) have been working, along with Arlington Public Schools, to ensure these walkways are accessible.

Parking enforcement will also resume this week on a limited basis. Enforcement will focus on cars parked in travel lanes or in ways that obstruct streets, as well as parking lots that have been cleared and are being actively used by the public.

Snow Response by the Numbers

❖ County crews worked 14 consecutive 12-hour shifts starting Saturday, Jan. 24.

❖ More than 1,000 lane miles, 350 bus shelters, 10.5+ miles of protected bike lanes, and 21 bridges and overpasses were cleared by crews.

❖ Each shift by the DES Water Sewer Streets bureau had approximately 80 pieces of equipment working, including County trucks, contractors, and heavy equipment.

❖ DPR crews cleared 63,815 feet of sidewalk and worked at locations 119 times over the past week.

❖ Crews hauled more than 5,000 truckloads of snow out of the County’s commercial corridors to five locations around the County. That equals roughly 55,000–75,000 tons — well over 100 million pounds of snow moved.

❖ Water crews responded to 25 water main breaks in freezing cold temperatures to ensure water service was quickly restored to customers.

‘Poop Geyser’ on the Potomac After Sewage Spill Not a Joke

FROM PAGE 6

nal and Potomac shoreline.

❖ Prince George’s County — all Potomac-facing parks, marinas, and shoreline.

❖ Charles County — marinas, fishing spots, private docks, beaches on the Potomac.

❖ St. Mary’s County — areas near the mouth of the Potomac and adjacent tidal waters.

❖ Anyone in Southern Maryland who boats, fishes, or lets kids/pets near Potomac-connected water.

WHAT NOT TO DO

❖ Do NOT enter the Potomac River or connected creeks downstream of DC until officials say it’s safe.

❖ Do NOT let kids or pets play in, wade in, or drink from the river or shoreline puddles.

❖ Do NOT eat fish or shellfish taken from the Potomac or its immediate tidal creeks right now.

❖ Do NOT hose off boats, gear, or dogs with river water — if it touched the river, wash with clean tap water and soap.

❖ Do NOT assume “it looks clean so it’s fine.” Sewage contamination is invisible but

very real.

WHAT TO DO

❖ Stay away from the river and banks unless you absolutely have to be there.

❖ If you come into contact with river water, wash exposed skin immediately with soap and clean water and change clothes.

❖ Follow county health department alerts for closures, shellfish advisories, and recreation warnings.

❖ If you feel sick after contact with river water (GI issues, fever, skin infection), call your doctor or urgent care and tell them you were exposed to potentially contaminated river water.

DRINKING WATER

❖ At this time, public drinking water systems are separate from the river and are generally drawn from protected/intake-controlled sources.

❖ Do follow any specific guidance from your local water authority if they issue updates, but this is primarily a recreation and contact emergency, not a tap-water panic.

We’ve got a snowstorm coming, which should keep most people off the river. Please share this so the one guy who “just wants a

quick cast” or “a walk with the dog by the water” thinks twice.

If you see updated advisories from your county or town, drop them in the comments so folks in your area can see them fast.”

Arlingtonian Kurt Moser, co-founder and president of the Four Mile Run Conservatory Foundation, an organization focused on nature, culture, and community at lower Four Mile Run in Alexandria and Arlington said he was alarmed by the spill, but hopeful that the size of the river and time of year would mitigate some of the disaster. Moser is also an independent researcher/ecologist, and he knows his way around pollution and fish kills. Did he think it was just a Maryland problem?

“It’s on the DC side. So the plume will probably stay over there, but you just don’t know. I suspect that probably when the tide comes in it is washing some of it a little way up the (Four Mile) Run, maybe by the time it gets down there it will be a bit diluted.” Moser noted that fish in the river would recognize the contaminated water and swim away, and freshwater mussels might hang in there, but oysters would be more vulner-

able. “Environmentally it’s disastrous, but a minor blessing is that it’s a big river, so dilution will be happening. The fact that it was diverted into the C&O canal is also really gross.” He reiterated that the only good news was the time of year — there aren’t that many people out and about on the river; sun exposure will kill off a lot of the bacteria before the weather warms up. Moser said it was the sad reality of living in an urban environment. “This stuff just happens in an aging infrastructure situation.”

Potomac Conservancy newsletter reportedly showed aerial photography of the spill indicated Moser was right, the plume appears to have hugged the D.C. Maryland shore, but as Moser noted, things change and further downstream is definitely affected.

For more see: <https://potomac.org/blog/2026/1/30/potomac-interceptor-sewage-spill-updates>

And https://www.bayjournal.com/news/pollution/nearly-contained-sewage-spill-leaves-serious-concerns-for-the-potomac-river/article_ee4cbf3b-d91f-4686-93cd-d04d4e7bf95a.html



The group gathers on the Stone Bridge on the GWM Parkway every Thursday at 4 p.m.

Locals Stage Weekly Stone Bridge Protests

BY GLENDA BOOTH
CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

It was a nippy 33 degrees at 4 p.m. on Jan. 15 as the sun set, but 17 bundled-up stalwarts braved the cold on the Stone Bridge on the south George Washington Memorial Parkway to express their worries about their country. With homemade signs, original banners, American flags and a paper maché Donald Trump sporting a bright red tie, the demonstrators waved for an hour to rush hour drivers whizzing by. Many commuters waved, honked, flashed headlights and fist pumped – and occasionally one gave a middle-finger “salute.”

Lisa Finn, a lead organizer, said that the group chose the parkway bridge because Stone Bridge Resistance is a Mount Vernon-area, miscellaneous, word-of-mouth

SEE LOCALS SATGE, PAGE 9



PHOTO BY LISA FINN

One member of the group designed special pins.



The paper mache Donald Trump is an attention-getter.



Their homemade signs send messages.

Locals Stage Weekly Stone Bridge Protests



Their homemade signs communicate clearly, succinctly.

FROM PAGE 8

gathering of people who have protested on the bridge every Thursday since June. “It is an icon in our community.” The self-named Stone Bridge Resistance is a Mount Vernon-area, miscellaneous, word-of-mouth gathering of people who have protested on the bridge every Thursday since June. Their signs broadcast messages like “ICE Kills,” “Defend Democracy,” “Demand Accountability” and “Make America America Again.”

Why Do They Do This?

Dolores Brown said, “I’m so concerned about the direction our country is going. All of our institutions are being eroded. Congress is emasculated. The Supreme Court is politicized.”

Steph, who asked that her last name not be published, said, “I spent 25 years in a

military uniform. This isn’t why I served. I served to protect the Constitution, not bend it.”

Beverly Gearing said she shows up every week because she “can’t stand what’s going on against my fellow citizens.”

What’s Gone Wrong?

When asked what they were protesting, Finn reeled off a litany of “so many things.”

“Our democracy is being eroded,” she said. “We are protesting the erosion of due process and free speech, the war in Venezuela, the demise of U.S. Agency for International Development and the total disregard for our federal workers.”

“We are protesting the violation of immigrants’ rights, the attack on science, the attack on truth. We are protesting to remind people that this is not normal and it cannot

be normalized. We are protesting the killing of Renee Nicole Good by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents and the terrorizing by ICE agents that is happening to people every day.

“We are protesting what the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is doing to our planet and our health.”

We are protesting what is happening at the National Institutes of Health and the decisions made that have nothing to do with science. We are protesting the rise of fascism in our country after only one year. We are protesting the loss of allies around the world.”

Finn says that the Stone Bridge Resistance is part of a nationwide movement called the Visibility Brigade which originally chose a New Jersey overpass for a protest. “Anyone can show up and be part of us, no dues or

payments required,” Finn said.

The Visibility Brigade targets overpasses, especially during rush hour, and promotes nonviolent messaging in public spaces, according to the Visibility Brigade website.

The organization’s online toolkit recommends crafting one- to-five-word “pointed” phrases so passing drivers can absorb them quickly: “On overpasses, we literally stand over our messages, waving at passing cars, reminding everyday people that they are not alone in these unprecedented times.”

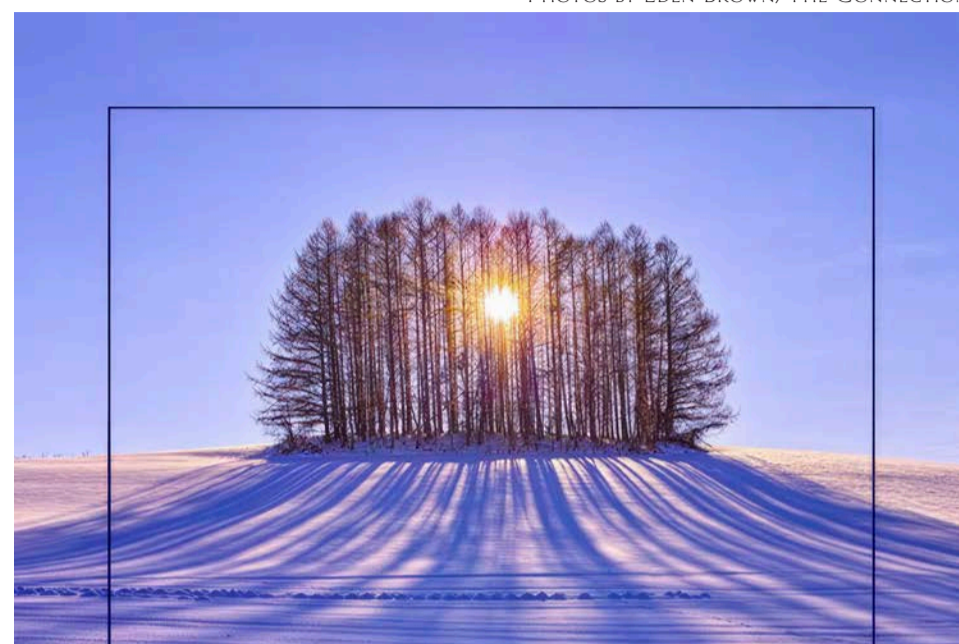
Jasmine Ramirez, a bridge protester who lives nearby said, “I believe it’s important to bring awareness and solidarity in the suburbs. I feel more empowered.”

While their messages may be grim, their spirits were high on Thursday, as they waved their gloved hands and high-fived in the frosty air on that darkening afternoon.



The group made a unique plastic banner that they temporarily hang from the Stone Bridge.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



WHISPERS OF THE SOLSTICE

DECEMBER 20, 2025 7:30 PM
ST. GEORGE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
ARLINGTON, VA

"The solstice is a time of quietude, of firelight, and dreaming, when seeds germinate in the cold earth, and the cold notes of church bells mingle with the chimes of icicles. Rivers are stilled and the land lies waiting beneath a coverlet of snow. We watch the cold sunlight and the bright stars, maybe go for walks in the quiet land ... All around us the season seems to reach a standstill – a point of repose."

- John Matthews, lecturer on Celtic and Arthurian traditions

We are delighted that you have joined us for this special performance. During a time of year that often feels hurried and hectic, there is wisdom in taking our cue from the slowing down of the natural world around us. Tonight, we extend to you the invitation of the winter solstice to join in a moment of repose, reflection, and beauty. We hope that you will leave feeling softened, nourished and better able to carry a calm stillness with you through the remaining weeks of the season.

Matt, Jennifer, Liz & Andrew

The 62-page digital program was full of wonderful art, photographs, drawings, poems and journal challenges for the upcoming year.

All was Calm, All was Bright, and Phones were Off

9th Street Quartet third Winter Solstice concert was a welcome respite and creative gift.

BY EDEN BROWN
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Imagine entering a sanctuary imbued with blue light, twinkling fairy lights on a silver tree, quiet except for poetry and a string quartet. There is no applause. There are no phones. You've left the to-do list, the emails, the Christmas cards, the social media behind and entered, for just a while, a happy hibernation. You might even be sipping a hot mulled wine.

In its third year, the 9th Street Quartet's "Whispers of the Solstice" concert has become a tradition for many — a chance to catch their collective breath and focus on the spiritual: the inner content, not the pinging, the proximity to nature, not the ideology. The palate cleanser, the "shavasana."

As Jennifer Wade, who runs Lifescape Visionary co-presenter of the event, noted in her introduction, the natural world has a plan, and that is to withdraw from the hustle bustle during the winter months. Let the body and soul rest and rejuvenate ... and we

should follow that pattern too. Wade asked the audience to turn off their phones, noting that even though the 62-page e-program is tempting to look at, this is not the time for screens and digital incursions.

The music was wonderful. It spoke eloquently of the Fall finishing and the winter wind arriving. Osvaldo Golijov's "Tenebrae" was a hymn to the season, full of warmth and melody, full of winter's shadows, and the underlying pulse of life insisting on Spring. Equally powerful: "Bird Catching From Above" by Stephen Snowden.

"What Branches Hold"

"This is the hush you've been seeking
Isn't it? Silence lush with listening.
Yes, it's cold, so cold and so?
Haven't you come dressed just for this?
And so you pull the soft wool closer,
Push the fleeced collar higher. Part
The snow-laden branches
And step in, knowing full well
You will be baptized. Allow yourself
To be called deeper and deeper
Into this dense huddle
Of gentle bark and quiet drape. Did you
Ever think you could be so lost and so found
In the same visible breath?"

— POEM BY JOYCE RUPP,
FROM THE PROGRAM
"WHISPERS OF THE SOLSTICE"

ty of room for rumination kept it faithful to the concept of the solstice as contemplative time. Reena Esmail's "This is It. IV - Warp and Welt" was a great addition, and a dis-

The amazing final chord always delights (we have heard this piece before from the Quartet.)

The Prokofiev (String Quartet in F Major, Op. 62) was quite lyrical, drawing on melodies we have heard before, and with little of the darkness often associated with this composer. The pizzicato and short notes, the sonorous chords, and the impression of folk dancing lighten it up, while plenty

covery for several in the audience who had never heard this Indian-American composer. The Eastern overtones of the piece added warmth to the wintery program, a little masala to the mix. And Kevin Puts' "Home: Warm with Rubato" was another of those, a deeply emotional piece. Thank you, 9SQ for always bringing us composers we might not otherwise meet, and sometimes, falling in love with them.

In between each piece were several poems and prose readings, well read by Perry Russell-Hunter, Suzie Bousquet, and Cecilia Berger. Berger is an Arlington native and a second-year chemistry student at the College of William & Mary, who said she has been with the Winter Solstice concert from the beginning and wouldn't miss being a part of it.

For more information on the Ninth Street Quartet and future concerts, see:

<https://www.9thstreetchambermusic.com>

For more information on Lifescape Visionary, see: www.lifescapevisionary.com



Springfield resident Sofia Bezkorovainaya has a lot to skate for.



At 15, Sofia practices daily while attending school virtually.



Somewhere over the rainbow.

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Local Ice Skating Marvel Honors Friend

The ice skating community and one teenage girl lost a lot from last year's helicopter-airliner collision.

By Mike Salmon
Connection Newspapers

The best part of performing is definitely the adrenaline," says Sofia Bezkorovainaya, 15 year old figure skater. "I love the excitement and the feeling of being on the ice in front of an audience."

When skating phenomenon Sofia Bezkorovainaya looks down at the ice, she remembers skating around the rink with her friend Everly Livingston, one of the 67 lives lost on Flight 5342 over the Potomac River last year when the airliner collided with a U.S. Army helicopter.

Sofia's friend Everly was aboard the commercial jet with her whole family, and Sofia is dedicating her routines to Everly. "In the opening and closing moments of the program, when I look up and hug myself, it feels like she's hugging me," said Sofia.

It's a lot for a 15-year-old, but



The ribbons and trophies may be on the Olympic level one day.

her flawless routine shows her level of professionalism and dedication. Her short program music is "Over the Rainbow." The emotion came through to the many who watched it on the Instagram post of Sofia skating. "I got chills, what an amazing tribute," said one. "I cry every time, it's a beautiful program for her dear friend," said another. "In some respects, this is hard to watch, but to see it, and to this song, you HAVE to, so we can remember all of the great skaters and their families whose lives were so senselessly cut short that eve-

ning. R.I.P. Everly. Your friend did a beautiful job in tribute to you," said another.

Sofia is a 15-year-old student at Virginia Virtual Academy from Springfield, born in Alexandria, Va., who recently earned a top-six finish at the U.S. Junior Figure Skating Championships, placing her among the best junior skaters in the country. She trains in Reston, and is widely considered a strong future Olympic contender, with her sights set on the 2030 Winter Games when she becomes age-eligible.



She manages traveling, home life and school.

"Absolutely, the 2030 Olympics are my long-term goal," Sofia said. Meanwhile she is excited to watch the Winter Olympics beginning Feb. 6. "These Olympics are so exciting to watch. ... I'm cheering for all of the Team USA skaters."

Training Home

"I started skating at the Mount Vernon Rec Center. After that, I trained at MedStar and Ashburn," Sofia said. "My current home rink is Reston SkateQuest."

Her virtual school schedule at the Academy allows her the flex-

ibility needed to travel, train and compete nationally while still getting an education. It's a model that has supported her growth for years, dating back to her 2022 Juvenile National Championship.

The XXV Winter Olympic Games, Milano Cortina 2026, is scheduled to take place this month, Feb. 6 - 22. Sofia won't be competing there yet, but she is hopeful for the future.

<https://www.instagram.com/sofiabezkorovainaya/>

<https://usfigureskating.org/sports/figure-skating/roster/sofia-bezkorovainaya/1244>

ENTERTAINMENT

STORM CLEANUP ENTERS NEW PHASE Arlington road crews are in Phase 4 of snow response following last week's storm.

Crews are now focused on additional cleanup of residential streets (particularly narrow ones), primary roads, school routes, and trash collection routes.

The Snow Issue Form is open for requests for streets that need more attention.

Follow the Snow Activity Map to see the progress of plowing.

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/>.

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 & Arti-



The Friday Morning Music Club performs two free Chamber Concerts on Feb. 6 and 13, 2026 in Arlington.

sans 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 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 Hergenrather, 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 Hergenrather'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-wood-

block 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 relationship 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.

THURSDAY/FEB. 5

Private Tour of the Arlington Historical Museum. 10:30-noon. At 1805 South Arlington Ridge Road, Arlington. Private tour of the Arlington Historical Museum led by Arlington Historical Society President Peter Vaselopulos. The museum is housed in the historic Hume School, the oldest surviving school building in Arlington County. Renovated and reopened in May 2025, the Hume School now serves as a vibrant museum that showcases Arlington's history, including exhibits on the county's indigenous peoples, early American settlers, the Civil War, Arlington's urban development, and its evolving population. Visitors can explore the original school architecture and furnishings and learn about the property's historical importance. In addition, Peter will provide an overview of the county's 250th commemorative activities.

FEB. 6, 13

Free Chamber Concerts. 12 noon. The Friday Morning Music club will perform two free chamber concerts in February at St. George's Church, 915 N. Oakland St., adjacent to the Virginia Square Metro. The February 6 concert will feature works by Beethoven and Dvorak; the February 13, music by Sjorgen, Aulin and Mendelssohn. The one-hour concerts continue every first and second Friday of the month through May.

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/>

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 11

Coffee and Conversation. 10 a.m. Topic: Hearing Loss. Sponsored by Arlington Neighborhood Village. Untreated hearing loss is linked to social isolation, depression, loneliness, and cognitive decline. Learn about hearing aids and other strategies for living with hearing loss from Bonnie O'Leary, hearing loss support specialist from the Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons. Bonnie will discuss hearing loss in general: hearing evaluations, how to interpret an audiogram, the difference between an audiologist and a hearing instrument specialist, differences between over-the-counter and prescription hearing aids, and some useful apps.

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 Sintetos! Tickets: \$10/\$15 at capitalcityshowcase.com.

SATURDAY/FEB. 14

National Chamber Ensemble Presents Chords of Desire: Broadway and Opera Favorites. 7:30 p.m. At Gunston Arts Center, Theater 1, 2700 South Lang Street, Arlington. Celebrate Valentine's Day with the National Chamber Ensemble (NCE) in an evening of powerful

ENTERTAINMENT

voices and sweeping melodies. Chords of Desire: Broadway and Opera Favorites explores the universal themes of love, longing, and triumph through beloved selections from opera and the Broadway stage. This romantic concert features the charismatic baritone Anton Belov, renowned for his velvety tone and dramatic depth, alongside the luminous soprano Karin Paludan. Joined by NCE Artistic Director and violinist Leo Sushansky and piano virtuoso Carlos Cesar Rodriguez, the ensemble bridges classical and popular traditions with elegance, passion, and flair. Visit www.NationalChamberEnsemble.org

TUESDAY/FEB. 17

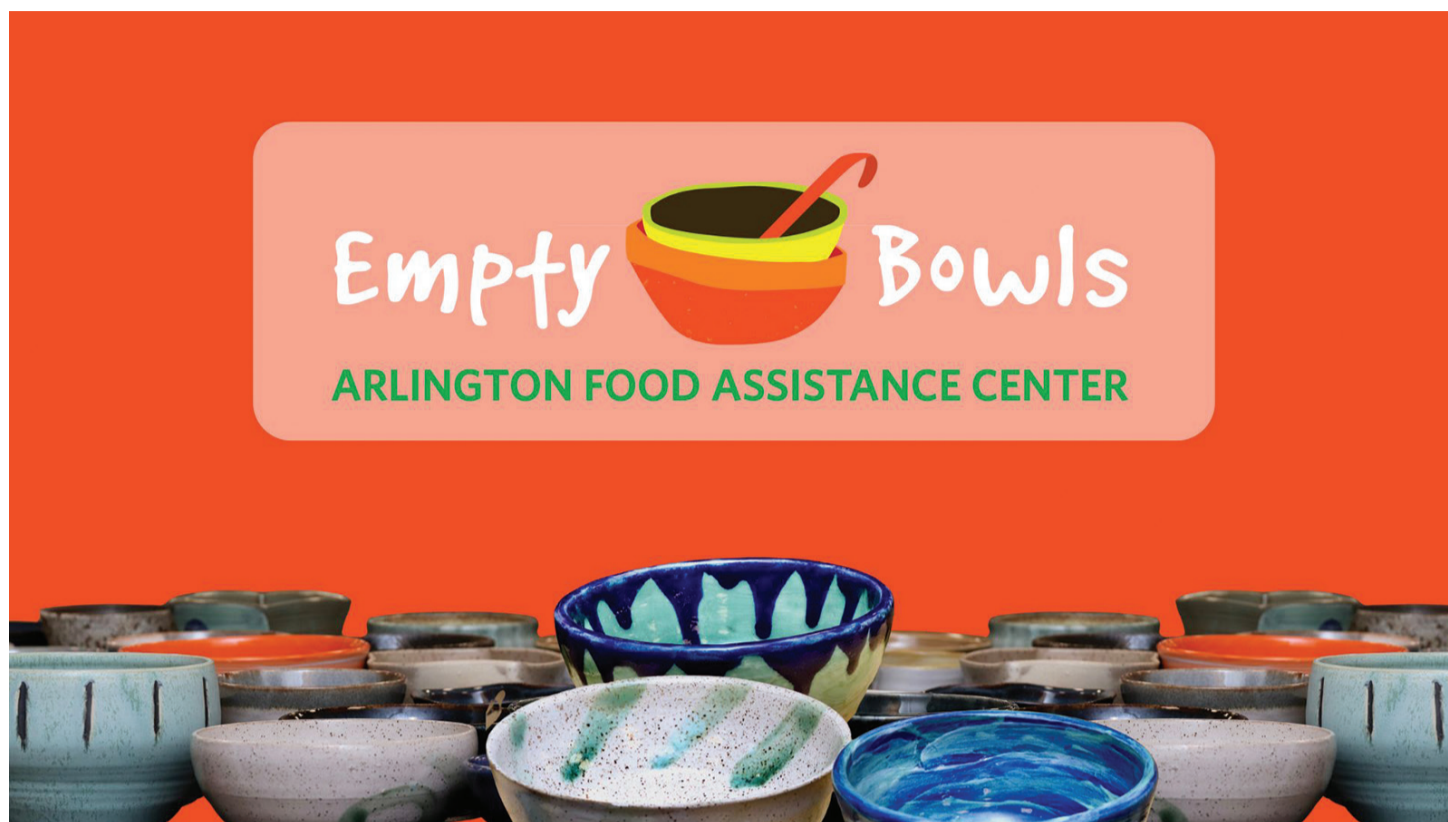
Woman's Club of Arlington, Black History Discussion. 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. At Woman's Club of Arlington, 700 S Buchanan St, Arlington. The Woman's Club of Arlington will be celebrating Black History Month with a presentation by Jessica Kaplan (Arlington Historical Society) and Scott Taylor (Director of the Black Heritage Museum of Arlington). They will discuss Arlington's efforts to "Memorialize the Enslaved of Arlington (MEA)," focusing on the project, its goals, history, successes, and challenges.

FEB. 20 TO MARCH 8

Look: An Unexpected Arts Experience. Fri./Sat./Sun. At 3130 Langston Blvd. | Lyon Village. Art builds community...help us transform a vacant commercial building into a fun, inventive, and interactive POP-UP art space. Over three weekends, the reinvented space will host art exhibits, performances, and hands-on workshops and classes. Funded in part through a grant from an Arlington Arts Creative Placemaking Grant, the gallery is a bold new platform for showcasing the diverse talents of artists from across the DMV area, while also creating space for neighborhood-level engagement and cultural exploration. Look Arlington will host a variety of emerging and established local artists, along with live performances, local food offerings and dining incentives and artist-led workshops.

SATURDAY/FEB. 21

Feel the Heritage. 12-5 p.m. At Charles Drew Community Center, Arlington. Join Arlington County Parks & Recreation for its annual Feel the Heritage, a vibrant community festival celebrating the rich cultural traditions, history, and creativity that shape our community. This year's Festival will celebrate the 2026 national Black History Month theme, "A Cen-



The 14th Annual Empty Bowls Event takes place on Sunday, Feb. 8, 2026 at the Arlington Food Assistance Center.

ture of Black History Commemoration". Feel the Heritage brings together live performances, interactive activities, local vendors, and engaging cultural experiences designed for the whole family. While the event is free to attend and walk-ins are welcome, registration is encouraged.

TUESDAY/FEB. 24

Woman's Club of Arlington, Colonial Skills and Trades discussion. 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. At 700 S. Buchanan Street, Arlington. Come join the Woman's Club of Arlington as they celebrate the Country's 250th anniversary and learn about the skills and trades employed at Mount Vernon and Arlington House during the Colonial period. All are welcome. There is no cost to attend. Ms. Sandy Newton, a docent from both Mount Vernon and Arlington House, will lead this session. Sandy will talk about the methods the Colonial-era population used to produce food and clothing. She will show how cotton, wool and flax were

gathered and woven into clothing. She will also demonstrate how wheat was ground, apples cored and string beans strung for use in family meals.

SATURDAY/FEB. 28

Rain Garden Workshop. 9:30 a.m. -12:00 p.m. At Lubber Run Community Center, 300 N Park Drive, Arlington. This workshop is a partnership between the Northern Virginia Regional Commission, Northern Virginia Soil & Water Conservation District and Arlington County. Visit <https://www.novaregion.org/1641/2026-Rain-Garden-Workshop>

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 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 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://arlist.org/arlington-va250/>

SENIOR LIVING

Flourishing after 55

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.

Northern Virginia Senior Olympics (NVSO) looking for volunteers to assist event directors at a variety of events, Sept. 19 – Oct. 10 plus person to write press releases and contact potential Patrons. Experienced volunteer Webmaster also needed. Email Judy Massabny for further details at jmassa@arlingtonva.us.

55+ Ice Skating, Mondays at the MedStar Capitals Iceplex in Ballston Quarter, parking (\$1) on roof level 8, Fee (\$1) includes skate rental, 8:40-9:50 a.m. Pre-registration required at <https://www.medstarcapitalsiceplex.com>, register for Senior Public Skate.

medstarcapitalsiceplex.com, register for Senior Public Skate.

Cooking demonstration of Valentine sweets, Thursday, Feb. 5, 10 a.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Presented by Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Food Volunteers. Registration # 912501-04.

Game Night at Walter Reed 55+ Center, join 55+ volunteers for an evening of table games, Thursday, Feb. 5, 4 p.m. Bring a game to teach or come to learn a new one. Drop-in.

Memory Café where people with dementia and their family caregivers socialize, build support networks and enjoy meaningful dementia-friendly activities, Thursday, Feb. 5, 1:30 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Open to all ages; no 55+ Pass required. Call Adult Services Librarian Zoe Mann to let her know you're coming at 703-228-5193.

Interactive history discussion group, led by Dwight Rodgers from Encore Learning, Thursday, Feb. 5, 1 p.m., virtual. Discussion topics emailed to participants before each meeting. Registration # 912402-09.

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

Healing Steps: Grief Walking Group, walk about two miles at a relaxed pace while finding connections with others who are grieving, Thursday, Feb. 5, 10 a.m., Long Branch Nature Center. Led by licensed clinical Social Worker and registered volunteer Jennifer Lanouette. Registration # 912106-27.

Sudoku, join us in solving challenging Sudoku puzzles in a group setting, Thursday, Feb. 5, 1 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Drop-in.

55+ Travel group will visit the Dutch Village Farmers Market in Upper Marlboro, MD, Thursday, Feb. 5. Market boasts 13 vendors from Lancaster County, PA showcasing a wide selection of fresh foods and natural products. Cost \$12, Arlington resident; \$14, non-resident. Registration # 902602-01.

First Friday social, relaxed gathering with light refreshments, music and fun, Valentine's Day theme, Friday, Feb. 6, 1 p.m., Arlington Mill

55+ Center. Registration # 912801-04.

55+ Travel group will travel to Norfolk, VA to visit the Chrysler Museum of Art featuring 50 galleries of over 30,000 artifacts plus the Perry Glass Studio, Tuesday, Feb. 10. Cost \$89, Arlington resident; \$102, non-resident. Registration # 902602-03.

Eating well as you age, presented by Kate Chutuape, mgr. of senior health at VHC, Tuesday, Feb. 10, 1:30 p.m., virtual. Registration # 912501-06.

African Safari: Kenya and Tanzania, hear 55+ volunteer Linda Sholl share her travel experiences, Tuesday, Feb. 10, 1:30 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Registration # 912400-28.

Decluttering and downsizing, practical, easy-to-follow tips, interactive presentation by AARP volunteer, Tuesday, Feb. 10, 1 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Registration # 912404-06.

SEE HELPING, PAGE 15

NEW LOCATION 900 TABLES! BUY! SELL! TRADE! VPN

NATION'S GUN SHOW

FEBRUARY 6, 7 & 8

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Brown v. Board of Education SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE

Accepting Applications through April 12, 2026

The Brown v. Board of Education Scholarship Program was established by the General Assembly to provide educational opportunities for persons who were denied an education in Virginia between 1954 and 1964 due to the closing of the public schools during Massive Resistance. The scholarship is now available to those individuals and to their descendants. The program is open to eligible applicants for the 2026-2027 school year. For applications and information on eligibility, visit:

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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
debfunc@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

FROM PAGE 15

Reader's Theater - fun reading of vintage radio plays, Tuesday, Feb. 10, 5:30 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Parts will be assigned and everyone will have a chance to act. Registration # 912301-23.

Exploring book arts, learn techniques to create types of handmade books including Japanese stab-bound books, Tuesday, Feb. 10, 3 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Led by artist Sushmita Mazumdar. Materials provided. Registration # 912310-10.

Supper Club, fun dinner party, you bring your own dinner, 55+ Center provides dessert and beverages, Wednesday, Feb. 11, 5 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Registration # 912801-08.

History roundtable participants will discuss the 13th century A.D., Wednesday, Feb. 11, 11:15 a.m., virtual. Registration # 912402-06.

The study of words and the English language as a whole, Wednesday, Feb. 11, 10:30 a.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center, registration # 912402-17 or virtual, registration # 912402-18, 10:30 a.m. Facilitated by 55+ volunteer Steve Shapiro.

Healthy connections mixer to promote healthy relationships, through speed friending and ice breakers, Thursday, Feb. 12, 1 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Presented by Ashley Blowe, prevention and training specialist from Project PEACE. Registration # 912899-06.

The Civil Rights Movement, learn about people and events that changed the country, Thursday, Feb. 12, 1 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Presented by Cory Cox, 55+ Operations Supervisor. Registration # 912400-11.

Queen City: A Community Displaced. Dr. Scott Taylor, president, Black Heritage Museum of Arlington, will share the story of a once thriving Black neighborhood near today's Pentagon City, Thursday, Feb. 12, 3 p.m., virtual. Registration # 912400-12.

Urban and suburban wildlife and how they survive, presented by Park Naturalist Rob Barnovsky, Thursday, Feb. 12, 10:30 a.m., virtual. Registration # 912400-35.

History discussion group led by Dwight Rodgers from Encore Learning, Thursday, Feb. 12, 1 p.m., virtual. Discussion topics will be emailed to participants prior to meeting. Registration # 912402-10.

Black History Month Luncheon, Friday, Feb. 13, 1 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Keynote speaker Dr. Scott Taylor, president, Arlington Black Heritage Museum. Registration # 912400-13.

Piano for Valentine's Day and Mardi Gras, soulful musical journey with pianist Valerie Welsh, Friday, Feb. 13, 1 p.m., Aurora Hills 55+ Center. Registration # 912301-12.

New Orleans Piano, Mardi Gras music performed by pianist Ken Schellenberg, Tuesday, Feb. 17, 10 a.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center, registration # 912301-10 and repeated at 1 p.m. at the Walter Reed 55+ Center, registration # 912301-11. Open to all ages, no 55+ Pass needed at Walter Reed.

Arlington Mill 55+ Center book club will discuss "The Fourth Daughter" by Lyn Liao Butler, Tuesday, Feb. 17, 1 p.m. Drop-in.

Give line dance a try, intro class prepares you to join a beginner's line dance class, Wednesday, Feb. 18, 10:15 a.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Learn the basics from 55+ volunteer Hanni Cordes. Drop-in.

Reel Meal fundraiser for the Arlington Mill 55+ Advisory Committee, Wednesday, Feb. 18, 12 - 3 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. \$15 fee includes lunch, screening of movie "Chef" (2014) (R), dessert and fun discussion. Registration # 912804-14.

Opera appreciation group to hear and discuss

"Romeo and Juliette" by Charles Gounod with Anna Netrebko, Wednesday, Feb. 18, 1:30 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Professional commentary by George Cecchetti. Registration # 912300-06.

Understanding Trusts, which are legal arrangements used to manage and protect assets, Wednesday, Feb. 18, 11 a.m., virtual. Presented by Elder Law Attorney Ed Zetlin. Registration # 912404-07.

The Amazing Walk brings together seniors and teens for a fun walking challenge which includes laps around the gym at Arlington Mill 55+ Center with fun stops, Wednesday, Feb. 18, 5 p.m. Open to teens 11-17 and adults 55 and over; no 55+ Pass needed. Registration # 912106-18.

Arlington's Halls Hill, hear the history of this historically Black neighborhood from lifelong resident Sandra Green, Thursday, Feb. 19, 2 p.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Registration # 912400-14.

Paint and Sip along with Community Arts Programmers Jennifer Droblyen and Jim Halloran and recreate artworks on display in area museums, Thursday, Feb. 19, 10 a.m., virtual. Registration # 912303-08.

Healing Steps: Grief Walking Group, find community and connection with others who are grieving a loss, Thursday, Feb. 19, 10 a.m., leave from Long Branch Nature Center, walk two miles at a relaxed pace. Registration # 912106-29.

Old-Time and String Band Jam, bring your banjo, guitar, fiddle, mandolin and dulcimer for an open jam of Appalachian (pre-bluegrass) and string band music, Thursday, Feb. 19, 5 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. All skill levels welcome. Registration # 912304-17.

Movie matinee, "The Roses" (2025) (R), Friday, Feb. 20, 12:30 p.m., Aurora Hills 55+ Center. Registration # 912804-03.

"Every Knock's a Boost"



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

If I heard those words of fatherly encouragement once, I heard them a hundred times; words of wisdom from my late (very late now; he died in Dec. 2006) father, Barry. Not only would he be positive about the positive (that was easy), but he would also try to find a way to be positive about any kind of negative as well. Ergo the title of this column. My father had the kind of personality and attitude that invokes a very desirable description of not-every professional athlete: "Good in the locker room." Meaning, great/positive/helpful; he was good in the house, too, where my brother Richard and I not only grew up but were raised.

Born in 1918, my father was a child of The Depression. As a boy of no more than 10 years old, he was already working, selling miscellaneous stuff at Braves Field in Boston, home of the then National League Boston Braves (who eventually moved to Milwaukee and then on to Atlanta where they still play today). You might have heard of their crosstown rival: the Boston Red Sox? After the game ended and my father returned home, whatever coin (literally) he had earned, he would give over to his mother, Besse. She would greet him by spreading open her apron wide for him to donate (I use that term loosely) his days wages for the Lourie family budget. Living in the Jewish ghetto in Dorchester, Ma. with six brothers and sisters and my grandfather who rarely worked (I never received much of an explanation as to why, but my grandmother, Besse, was the breadwinner), all monies earned went to support the family.

My grandmother had a job outside the house, too. She worked for a caterer. In those days, chicken wings were not as popular as they are today, so the caterer had no interest in them. They were refuse, more trash than treat. Unclaimed and unwanted, my grandmother collected this 'refuse' and brought them home to feed her family. Otherwise, on the nights when my grandmother didn't work, the family would have gone hungry. The effect this cycle had on my father? This Depression-era staple - for him, became a lifelong must-have. For the next 70 years or so, my father loved chicken wings. And it formed him as a man and a father. Forever grateful (there's another story he would tell about wanting clean bedsheets since he always slept in the same bed as his siblings), my father never took anything for granted and as his life improved, so did his attitude. Never complaining about what he didn't have, my father was always happy to get a hot meal and sleep in a bed with clean sheets.

My father, in his work ethic, his deeds and actions, showed Richard and I the way forward. And though it may not have been a way paved with gold, it was one brimming with good intentions and confidence-boosting words of encouragement. I learned at a pretty young age, that even though we might not have had a lot, (there's a story I like to tell about the occasional breakfast my mother served/provided, and she did serve us, always: on a dinner-sized plate, she would fill it with the week's leftover breads. There would be a bagel piece, half a bulky roll, a heel of rye bread, another end of pumpernickel, some challah, et cetera, with butter and cream cheese, and American cheese), but we didn't go to school hungry or sleep in the same bed as one another. We might have been depressed but it was no Great Depression. Nor was it a big deal. It was just another day in our life.

A little perspective - and context, goes a long way. At least it did for us.

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

Arlington Author Jen Dary Speaks at One More Page Books

FROM PAGE 5

writing classes?"

Dary did take some writing classes in fiction, and that helped her because one of the most important things in fiction is showing how the character emotionally evolves. She took on-line courses from GrubStreet and Key West Literary Seminar. She had writing buddies.

Dary said her current favorite author - she is really into Irish authors because she finds they only use the words they need - but she loves Ann Lamott, who is not Irish.

Dary said story-telling always came naturally for her: "as a coach I always want to tell others in a way they can feel it." Humor is also part of her make-up and surfaces in her writing. And metaphors. "I'm always looking for metaphors, even in the dog park."

She and her husband Chris set up their own publishing house called Dary House, and published "I Believe in Everything," this year. I hadn't intended to buy another book, but I took this one home. I had to. Somewhere in the book is why she and her family moved to Arlington.



Mai Jacobs knew her student had something special back in 1989 and although she retired from teaching this year, because of all the changes in the classroom that make it so much harder to teach the way she wants, events like this make it so worth it.

PHOTO BY EDEN BROWN

The Third Place Work Environment Continues to Gain Popularity Around Town

BY MIKE SALMON
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

In Arlington, city planners are looking at the 2025 Perception Survey to reinforce the sense of community that's been in place for years in this urban environment, strengthened by the frequency of the "third space," notion throughout the county.

From the survey, there are statistics about feeling safe and walkability, but also the sense of belonging which is partly where the third place locations fit in. While 65% recommend living in the neighborhood, they ranked "restaurants, bars, and dining" as the most important amenity in Rosslyn during the workday to support work-life balance," according to the survey.

The 2025 Perception Survey insights will guide the Rosslyn BID's FY26 Strategic Priorities to best serve its population of over 16,000 residents and more than 25,000 employees. These results will shape Rosslyn's urban character, activate the neighborhood with high-quality events and public spaces, enhance perception through marketing and communication, and deepen engagement with stakeholders, the survey said. When asked what would most improve daily life, 60% said more parks and gathering spaces, and the third place can be that gathering spot.



PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/GAZETTE

In Rosslyn, a study was done last November called the "2025 perception survey," and the third place was part of it.

Third Place Beginnings

If the "Third Place" has any roots in academia, it goes back to a book written by Ray Oldenburg called "The Great Good Place," which defines third places as informal public gathering spots like cafes, bars, and book-

stores that are crucial for community life, democracy, and social vitality, existing outside the "first place" (home) and the "second place" (work).

Oldenburg had a degree in English and Social Studies from Minnesota's Mankato

State University, and a Masters and PhD in Sociology from the University of Minnesota; and then Oldenburg became a professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of West Florida in Pensacola.

The third place can't just be the street corner or a park though. Oldenburg listed criteria of the third place, which has to be on neutral ground, promoting social equity by leveling the status of guests, conversation is the main activity, the mood is playful, strangers are welcome but there are regulars who feel rooted in the place for one reason or another.

Does it need coffee or some sort of magnetic food or drink to draw to inspire the gathering or fuel discussion? Although Oldenburg doesn't mention that up front, it does play a big part in many of today's "third place" settings. Starbucks has a section dedicated to the third place on their website.

In a 2013 movie called "Coffee Town," they've blown the third place concept out of proportion. It features Glenn Howerton who plays "Will" a website manager who considers the coffee shop his office. Conflict arises when the coffee shop manager isn't happy that Will considers it his third place with free wi-fi and his chosen table. When Will finds out it's going to be converted into a bistro and ruin his third place, he hatches a plan to rob it and make the neighborhood seem unsafe so they won't convert it.

OPINION

An Icy Week in Richmond

FROM PAGE 4

Legislative Updates

We have been hard at work reviewing and voting on a wide range of legislation in this 60-day "long session," and I want to share a few highlights with you.

One important bill that I advanced from committee was SB 130, which ensures greater transparency and community input when data centers and new high-energy facilities are proposed. It will require developers to study and share how these facilities could impact nearby homes, schools, and the surrounding environment before local approval is granted, while still protecting existing local zoning authority.

Protecting renters is another top priority. I introduced SB 313, which prevents landlords from charging tenants for routine maintenance or repairs unless the damage was caused by the tenant. The bill also bans extra fees just for paying rent except for actual costs incurred to process a credit card or other electronic payment. SB 313 received a unanimous vote in the General Laws and Technol-

ogy Committee and is expected to pass the Senate today.

Accountability and transparency in government are essential to a healthy democracy. In that same spirit, I introduced SB 699, which requires public bodies to post meeting agendas online ahead of meetings and limits last-minute additions from being voted on unless they are truly time-sensitive. The bill also received a unanimous committee vote and should also pass the full Senate later today.

Protecting our Communities

This year I've introduced two gun safety bills, SB 312 and SB 323, to curb unnecessary tragedies.

The rate of gun related deaths has increased by 19% from 2015 to 2024, with one Virginian now killed by a gun every eight hours. We can change these statistics with meaningful legislation to protect public safety and save lives.

My SB 312 would prohibit the public carrying of semi-automatic long guns, whether loaded or not. In 2019 gun-rights advocates carried military rifles through the Old Town Farmers' Market, causing fear and alarm.

My bill to ban "Ghost Guns," SB 323, passed out of the Courts of Justice Committee on a party-line vote. Ghost guns are untraceable weapons without serial numbers, and are typically bought in kits or in multiple pieces. These weapons are found at many crime scenes and are an increasing problem for law enforcement. Firearms are now the leading cause of death of children. Sadly, ghost guns are specifically marketed to people who could not legally pass a background check, including children, domestic abusers, and previously convicted criminals.

Mark Your Calendar

Tuesday, Feb. 10
6am-7pm, at your regular polling place
❖ Special Election for the 39th Senate District. Delegate Elizabeth Bennett-Parker is the Democratic nominee.

❖ Special Election for the 5th House of Delegates District. Councilman Kirk McPike is the Democratic nominee.

Early Voting Times and Locations:
❖ Alexandria <https://www.alexandriava.gov/elections/key-early-voting-dates-deadlines>

❖ Arlington <https://vote.arlingtonva.gov/Elections>

❖ Fairfax <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/elections/early-voting>

New General Assembly Website

The Virginia General Assembly has a new website designed with constituents in mind. The updated platform makes it easier than ever to stay informed, allowing you to quickly find information about your legislators, watch live committee and floor sessions, and track legislation as it moves through the Assembly.

In Conclusion

Like everyone else, we have been dealing with the aftermath of the winter storm. The General Assembly rarely stops, so we've been in the office and continued to work. While crews work to clear our roads and sidewalks from snow and ice please remain cautious and stay warm.

If you have an issue that our office can help with please email us at senatoreb-b@senate.virginia.gov or call us at (804) 698-7539.