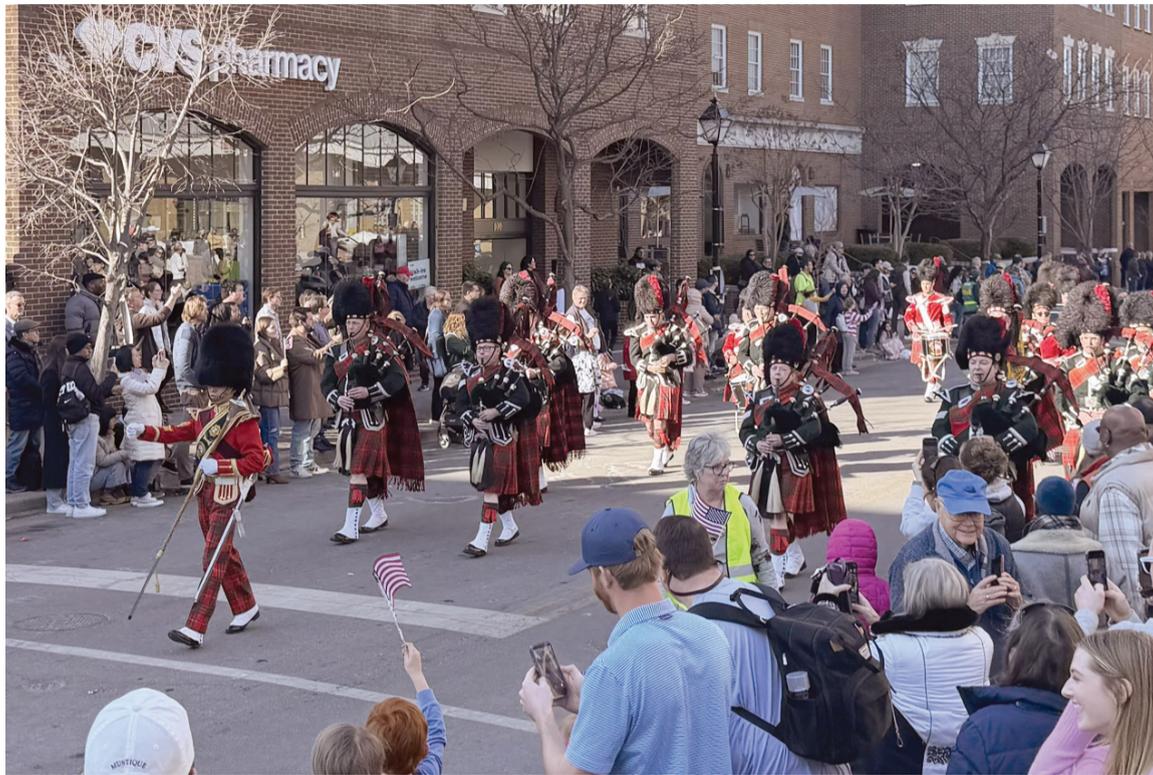


Alexandria Gazette Packet

SERVING ALEXANDRIA FOR OVER 200 YEARS • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

FEBRUARY 19, 2026



The City of Alexandria Pipes and Drums participate in the George Washington Birthday parade Feb. 14 in Old Town.



PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Brian Hilton as George Washington and Benjamin Goldman as the Marquis de Lafayette.

By George!

Parade kicks off city's 250th celebration.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

The streets of Old Town were filled with music, pageantry and patriotic celebration as the annual George Washington Birthday Parade honored the legacy of America's first president in his hometown. The long-standing tradition, first held in 1801, is recognized as the oldest and largest parade of its kind in the nation.

This year's parade was held Feb. 14, marking the first time the celebration was held on the Saturday preceding the national Presidents Day holiday. With the theme "Virginia's Son - America's Founding Father," the parade celebrated Washington's leadership during the 250th Anniversary Year of the Declaration of Independence.

The 2026 parade was led by Grand Marshals Ginnie Sebastian Storage and Michael J. Elston, n-SEE PARADE KICKS OFF, PAGE 8



The U. S. Army 3rd Infantry Regiment Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps.



Children enjoy a curbside seat for the parade.



Members of the John Alexander chapter of the DAR.



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LIVING LEGENDS

Ana Bonilla-Galdamez ACPS social worker champions underserved youth.

BY JUDITH FOGEL

I always want to tell my students that being Latina is my strength. My roots carry the resilience. Our voices carry our power. And our future is limitless,” said Ana Bonilla-Galdamez, Living Legend of Alexandria. “Believe in you. To every young Latino, please don’t ever forget that you belong in every space. Your culture is your gift.”

Ana Bonilla-Galdamez was born in San Salvador, the capital of El Salvador, in 1971. She remembers a happy childhood, playing with cousins. Her comfortable life abruptly ended when the Salvadoran Civil War broke out. “When the war started, we would see people dead in the streets. It was so terrible. Young men were snatched from the streets and taken either to the military or the guerrilla.”

In one powerful memory, she recalls her mother placing a white handkerchief on a stick to signal neutrality while navigating conflict zones. The war forced her family to leave a beloved life for a difficult journey that left her mother weeping, fearing her daughter would never return. “And she was right,” Bonilla-Galdamez reflects. “I never went back. So it was a lot of trauma.”

Bonilla-Galdamez was 12 years old when the family immigrated to the United States in December 1982. They landed in Silver Spring, Maryland. Everything was new. And strange. Bonilla-Galdamez went from a house she loved in San Salvador to an apartment in the U.S. She did not speak a word of English.

“People made fun of my accent, the way I dressed, the way I spoke, the fact that I was taller than a lot of the kids in school. I was placed in English as a Second Language program, which was not very sophisticated back in the day.” Bonilla-Galdamez thought back to those early years.

“There were situations where the teacher would ask me questions, and I just looked like a deer caught in the headlights, because I did not understand what they were saying.”

Bonilla-Galdamez has come a long way since those early confusing years in a new country. She has transformed the trauma of



PHOTO BY STEVEN HALPERSON/TISARA STUDIOS

Ana Bonilla-Galdamez is a 2025 Living Legend of Alexandria.

“Our voices carry our power. And our future is limitless.”

— Living Legend
Ana Bonilla-Galdamez

her childhood into a profound, lifelong mission of service. Her journey was the forge that shaped her into a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) and a fierce advocate for Alexandria’s most vulnerable youth. She epitomizes the strength that comes from lived

experience, relentlessly dedicating decades to the Alexandria City Public Schools since 1997 at both the high school and elementary levels.

Bonilla-Galdamez struggled with undiagnosed learning differences (later diagnosed as ADHD and dysgraphia). The confusion, anger, and sadness led her to “act out at school.”

The experience of feeling unseen became her calling. Bonilla-Galdamez realized, “I wanted to become that person that I always wanted to have in front of me. Someone who believed in me.” She pursued social work, earning her bachelor’s in psychology Cum Laude from St. Bonaventure University and her Master of Social Work in Clinical

Specialization in Children and Adolescents from Catholic University. Her graduate paper, “Abandon and Reunification: The Silent Tragedy of Central American Adolescent Immigrants,” laid the intellectual foundation for her life’s work.

Bonilla-Galdamez’s professional career in Alexandria began in 1993, working as a substance abuse counselor and running HIV/AIDS prevention programs on Mill Road. She currently serves as the Family Engagement Social Worker at Alexandria City High School’s Minnie Howard Campus.

Bonilla-Galdamez’s most lasting legacy is seeing a problem and devising ways to fix it. She recognized unmet needs and created innovative, highly successful programs, often without funding, directive, or institutional backing, which continue to grow and empower the community today. These essential initiatives include:

Youth in Progress (YIP): A mentorship and support program Bonilla-Galdamez founded and coordinates, aimed at improving academic achievement, leadership, and personal growth for over 100 Latino and underserved youth.

LYFE (Latino Youth for Excellence): A critical prevention and intervention program designed to support gang-involved youth and reduce delinquency within the community.

Panda Soles: A shoe drive that successfully collected and distributed hundreds of new sneakers to the neediest children.

Los Padres Hacen La Diferencia: A vital program empowering monolingual Latino parents through culturally and linguistically responsive training.

Mentoring Matters: A sustained initiative that brought public service leaders from the Alexandria Police, Sheriff’s Office, and the U.S. District Court together to mentor at-risk youth.

Bonilla-Galdamez’s work is built on the philosophy that “everybody has a strength.” She views a struggling child not as a deficit, but as an asset waiting for direction. For youth transitioning to high school, she once told them, “In middle school, you were the passenger. Now in high school, you are the driver.” Her role is to guide the kids, not judge them, fostering a bond based on shared experience and humility. “I understood what they were going through,” she says, fighting back tears. “Not because I read it in a book, but it was because I went through it myself.”

Bonilla-Galdamez’s work has earned her local and national acclaim. She has been profiled by The Washington Post under the

headline “By Any Means Necessary” for her dedicated work. Her formal recognition includes the 2025 National School Social Worker of the Year Award from the SSWAA, the 2015 National Social Worker of the Year from NASW, the 2025 Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching & Family Engagement, the 2025 Champion of Children Award, and the Frederic Milton Thrasher Award for Superior Service in Gang Prevention in 2010.

Ana lives in Lorton, Virginia, with her husband of 30 years, Walter Galdamez. The couple has two sons, 23-year-old Tony, and Alex, 21.

Bonilla-Galdamez’s family is her foundation, leading her to fight for her own children when the school system tried to place her native-born sons in an ESOL program. She carries that dogged advocacy into her professional life every day.

Alexandria Sheriff Sean Casey, who nominated Ana and has witnessed her work firsthand since their days collaborating at Minnie Howard, remarks: “She treats every child as if they were her own and will move mountains to ensure they are supported and seen.”

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

The Quiet Crossing: Two Alexandria Sisters Who ‘Passed’ Under Jim Crow Reflect on the Price of Survival

Their reflections reveal a layered African American history of silence, survival and identity.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
GAZETTE PACKET

In a sunlit living room in Alexandria, two sisters sit side by side on a tan velvet sofa, their silver hair catching the light. Though their story begins in the red clay of southern Georgia, they have called Alexandria home for more than forty years — worshipping at Alfred Street Baptist Church, raising children and grandchildren, and becoming part of the city’s quiet, everyday fabric. At 83 and 85, Ruth Anderson and Clara

“We were part of African American history, even if we weren’t in the photographs.”

— Clara Ellis



PHOTO COURTESY OF CLARA ELLIS

Now in their 80s, sisters Ruth Anderson and Clara Ellis, seated side by side in Clara’s Alexandria living room, tell how, as light-skinned Black women who lived during the Jim Crow era, they passed for white to survive.

Ellis speak with the ease of women who’ve lived long enough to tell their truth. This February, that means sharing how, in their late teens, they passed for white in the segregated South.

“We didn’t do it because we thought we were better,” Clara says, her voice steady. “We did it because we were tired of being less.”

The act of a light-skinned African American presenting as white has deep roots in African American history. In the Jim Crow south, it became a strategy for navigating rigid racial lines, granting access to jobs, schools, neighborhoods, and safety otherwise denied. Few talk about it now. Fewer still understand it. But it shaped lives in ways that still echo.

In 1959, Ruth took a job as a telephone switchboard operator, a position reserved for white women. Her skin was pale enough, her hair pressed straight. Clara followed a year later, working briefly as a receptionist at a doctor’s office, where her light skin allowed her to be assumed white without question. They also occasionally passed while traveling by bus, where sitting in the

“white section” meant safety and faster passage.

“We were scared every day,” Ruth says. “You learn to smile just enough. You learn not to talk about your mama or your church. You learn to disappear.”

Raised in a proud Black family in southern Georgia, they knew what passing meant: not just crossing a line but leaving people behind. They didn’t tell their parents. They didn’t tell their younger brother. “It was a kind of social death,” Clara says. “You bury your name, your stories, your people.”

The benefits were real: better pay, safer travel, access to spaces closed to them as Black women. But the cost was steep. Ruth never married. Clara did, but her husband never knew her full story. “I lived in a kind of exile,” she says. “Even in my own home.”

Did they feel superior? “No,” Ruth says. “But we saw how color worked. Even in the Black community, there was a caste system. Light skin meant something. We didn’t invent that. We just survived it.”

Now, decades later, they’re speaking openly about race, identity, and the quiet choices people made to live. Their story isn’t one of marches or megaphones. It’s one of quiet resistance, of navigating a world that didn’t want them whole.

“We were part of African American history, even if we weren’t in the photographs,” Clara says.

Ruth nods. “Sometimes I regret the silence,” she says. “But I don’t regret surviving.”

Walk for Peace City welcomes monks on 2,300-mile trek.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Residents lined the streets of Old Town Feb. 9 as a group of Buddhist monks on a nationwide “Walk for Peace” made their way through the city, sharing a message of mindfulness, compassion and inner calm. The monks, who began their 2,300-mile pilgrimage in October at a Vietnamese Buddhist temple in Fort Worth, Texas, were in the final stretch of their journey toward Washington, D.C.

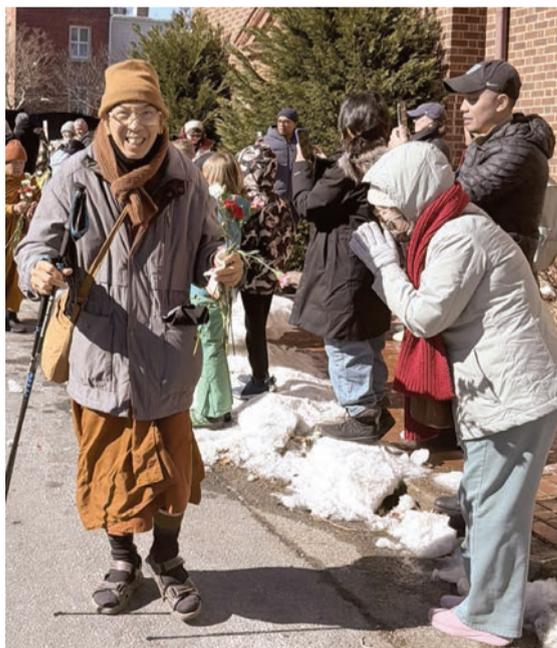
Crowds gathered along South Washington Street and near Christ Church, where the monks paused to address attendees. Despite rain, cold and wind, hundreds welcomed the travelers with signs, gifts and quiet reflection. Many in the audience were moved by re-

marks from Venerable Bhikkhu Pannakara, who encouraged mindful breathing and reconnecting with one’s heartbeat as a way to slow down in a fast-moving world.

“Today is our 107th day,” said Pannakara. “We’re at 2,122 miles already and we are about to come to the final destination, which is the White House.”

City officials coordinated rolling road closures as the procession moved through Alexandria along the George Washington Parkway and into Old Town. Residents were asked to stay on sidewalks, observe quietly, and allow the monks to lead any interaction as part of maintaining the contemplative nature of the pilgrimage. The City of Alexandria also prepared for temporary traffic impacts throughout the day as the group continued toward Arlington.

SEE WALK FOR PEACE, PAGE 11



A Buddhist monk is greeted by well wishers in Alexandria as the Walk for Peace made its way through the city Feb. 9 en route to Washington DC from Fort Worth, Texas.



A Buddhist monk hands out peace bracelets during the Walk for Peace Feb. 9.



Venerable Bhikkhu Pannakara addresses the crowd during the Walk for Peace Feb. 9 at Christ Church in Old Town.

A Conversation on Character

McChrystal to lead ASF Feb. 27 fireside chat.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Few leaders embody the intersection of discipline, service and community impact as fully as General Stanley McChrystal, the retired four-star U.S. Army officer known for commanding Joint Special Operations Command and later U.S. forces in Afghanistan.

While his military career is widely documented, his ongoing commitment to civic leadership, particularly his support for organizations that strengthen communities, receives far less attention. One of the most meaningful examples of this commitment is his connection to the Alexandria Seaport Foundation.

“General McChrystal and his wife Annie have been supporters of the Seaport Foundation for some time now,” said ASF executive director Deb Roepke. “A board



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Retired Gen. Stanley McChrystal will be the featured guest at a fireside chat on building character Feb. 27 at Belle Haven Country Club. The event will benefit the Alexandria Seaport Foundation.

member brought Annie in for a tour of our workshop and she saw the way ASF is transforming the lives of young people at risk.”

McChrystal will be the featured speaker at a special event in support of the Alexandria Seaport Foundation. He will lead a fireside chat on building character Feb.



Matt Roberts, program director for the Alexandria Seaport Foundation, will be a speaker at the fireside chat on building character Feb. 27 at Belle Haven Country Club.

27 at Belle Haven Country Club. McChrystal will be joined by ASF program director Matt Roberts. Roberts holds a Doctor of Education degree from the University of Pittsburgh and will focus on learning in non-traditional settings.

“The fireside chat will focus on building character,” Roepke said.

“They will discuss leadership and building character, highlighting the vital work of the Seaport Apprentice Program. And they will explore insights from the General’s latest book, ‘On Character: Choices That Define a Life.’”

SEE A CONVERSATION, PAGE 14



ALEXANDRIA SEAPORT FOUNDATION PRESENTS

BUILDING CHARACTER: A CONVERSATION WITH GENERAL STANLEY McCHRISTAL

Join us for an intimate evening with Retired General McChrystal and Seaport’s Program Director, Dr. Matt Roberts. They will discuss leadership, building character, and the vital work of the Seaport Apprentice Program.

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My Farewell Column

BY SEN. ADAM P. EBBIN

My last day in the Virginia Senate is today, Feb. 17. Thanks to your support, I'm concluding a 22-year career in the General Assembly with great pride in all we have accomplished together. We leave a legacy of equality, fairness, and meaningful progress for Virginians. Later this month, I will join Governor Abigail Spanberger's administration as a Senior Advisor at the Virginia Cannabis Control Authority.

Serving in the General Assembly has been the greatest honor of my life. Representing Northern Virginia first in the House of Delegates and then in the Virginia Senate has been a responsibility I never took lightly. In the 39th Senate District, I was a voice for 216,000 Virginians who speak more than 127 native languages. I came to public service because I believed government could be a force for good. Not perfect, not always fast, and certainly not easy — but transformative. After all these years, I believe that more strongly than ever.

In 2004, as the first openly gay state lawmaker, I was aware that simply being here carried a responsibility larger than myself. Over the years, Virginia has changed. Today, there are LGBTQ Virginians

servicing openly, authentically, and unapologetically at every level of government. I see them every day around Capitol Square and call them colleagues, future leaders, even Mr. Secretary. That progress did not happen by accident, and I am deeply humbled to have played a role in helping move this Commonwealth closer to a place we can all be proud of.

We experienced many more firsts, including the first women of color to serve in leadership positions, first Muslim members, first transgender person elected, first female and Jewish House speaker, first Black House speaker, the first Black Attorney General and the first Muslim Lieutenant Governor in the country. The General Assembly is a truly much more representative citizen legislature than Thomas Jefferson could have ever envisioned. This alone has led to the ability to craft more compassionate, thoughtful, and inclusive policies.

As Mr. Jefferson said, "I am not an advocate for frequent changes in laws and Constitutions. But laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new



Ebbin

truths discovered and manners and opinions change, with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also to keep pace with the times." I am pleased to say we have.

With your help, we enacted major policies that protect and advance civil rights, strengthen education, expand access to healthcare, safeguard our environment, and stand up for working people. I am grateful to many colleagues whose hard work, tenacity, and moral courage helped us create a better Virginia.

I am particularly proud of our work on modernizing state law to protect LGBTQ people from discrimination in their daily lives, including in employment, housing, and public accommodations. The Virginia Values Act of 2020 established new protections for all Virginians. The law, the first of its kind in the South, passed with strong bipartisan support. Former Delegate Mark Sickles, now Secretary of Finance, partnered with me on the legislation. Former Senator Jill Vogel, a Republican from Fauquier County, provided key support. I shared many fun moments in the Senate with her, Janet Howell, and Jennifer Wexton.

This fall, Virginians will final-

ly be able to vote on the Marriage Equality Amendment, which would cement protections for same-sex unions. It's time for the state Constitution to accurately reflect the law of the land and make sure loving Virginia couples are not mistreated or discriminated against, even if federal protections are stripped away. As a legislator, one of my great privileges has been the ability to officiate at weddings. While I no longer will do that, it gave me great joy to share a couple's special day.

When I first entered the General Assembly, I saw too many lives upended by a simple marijuana charge — jobs lost, futures delayed, families hurt. And for far too long, that harm was baked into our laws. That is no longer the case. The times have changed and so have our laws.

So many people pick up the torch on cannabis. In 2020, House Majority Leader Charniele Herring of Alexandria joined me to sponsor legislation decriminalizing marijuana. The next year, she and Senate President Pro Tempore Louise Lucas of Portsmouth worked closely with me to pass a new law legalizing possession of marijuana. I'm also indebted to Delegate Paul Krizek of Mount Vernon, a steadfast partner on many bills; J.M. Pedini; and David May.

SEE MY FAREWELL, PAGE 7

The World Crafted on King

(formerly Ten Thousand Villages)
Grand Re-Opening
Feb. 21-23, 2026

The World Crafted on King (formerly Ten Thousand Villages) is celebrating its new name this weekend and is inviting the community join.

FRIDAY, FEB. 20

4:30 pm - Ribbon-cutting and City Proclamation with Alexandria Vice Mayor Sarah Bagley
4:30 pm - 7 pm - Celebratory Cake and Light Refreshments featuring Wine Gallery 108

SATURDAY, FEB. 21

10 am - 12 pm - Complimentary Chair Massages with The Garden Wellness Center
12 pm - 2 pm - Fair Trade Tea & Light Refreshments

2 pm - 4 pm - Fair Trade Chocolate & Beverages featuring Wine Gallery 108

4 pm - 6 pm - Light Refreshments & Community Connections. Meet the Board!

SUNDAY, FEB. 22

12 pm - 3 pm - Fair Trade Coffee & Chocolate Tastings

There will be a gift given with purchases throughout the weekend (while supplies last).

These store festivities will usher in the new name of The World Crafted on King, marking its name transition from Ten Thousand Villages. The World Crafted on King will continue to be Alexandria's own independent nonprofit organization dedicated to fair trade practices.

Alexandria's store has been closely linked to the national Ten Thousand Villages US organization since its Alexandria inception in 1994. In 2025, Ten Thousand Villages US embarked on a new business plan to focus exclusively on wholesale channels and online sales. Independent stores like Alexandria's, are rebranding under

their own names.

Alexandria's The World Crafted on King store will continue to be affiliated with Ten Thousand Villages US as a fair trade retailer, supporting the artisans around the world that Ten Thousand Villages US represents. Alexandria will now also be able to expand its fair trade partnerships to bring new and different products to the store. "While our name is new, The World Crafted on King will continue to be a community driven organization with a passion for fair trade," said Mary Hiebert-White, the store manager. She emphasized that "we will be the same store with the same mission, just a new name."

The World Crafted on King will maintain its nonprofit status with a local board of directors while continuing to bring to market hand-crafted, quality artisan products from under-resourced communities from around the world. It is "retail with a conscience" notes Hiebert-White. The brick-and-mortar store will ensure that the people of Alexandria, the D.C. Metro area and visitors to the City

of Alexandria can experience the unique products available for sale while they support the valuable impact of fair trade on our world.

Located on historic King Street, our store was opened in 1994 by a group of dedicated people with a passion for the mission of supporting fair trade practices. More than just a store, The World Crafted on King is a way to shop with intention, shop one's values and connect with global villages. From communities throughout the world, every design is crafted using local materials (usually natural or recycled) and time-honored skills by known makers.

At The World Crafted on King, discover organic clothing and jewelry; home décor and hand knotted rugs; and specialty foods and beverages from over 45 countries. Each hand-made purchase directly impacts the life and community of its maker, helping to break the cycle of generational poverty and igniting social change.

www.theworldcrafted.org

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Frank Fannon To Seek Council Seat

Special election
set for April 21.

By JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET



Frank Fannon

Frank Fannon, a fourth-generation Alexandrian and former City Councilmember, has announced his candidacy for City Council in the April 21, 2026, special election to fill the seat vacated by Delegate Kirk McPike.

Fannon, who is running as an independent, previously served on City Council from 2009 to 2012 and said he plans to bring more independent thinking to City Council.

“For too long, Alexandria’s City Council has moved in lockstep without the independent thinking our community deserves,” Fannon said in announcing his candidacy. “I will bring balance, accountability and a fresh perspective back to local government.”

Neighborhoods are a key issue for Fannon. “Too many of our neighborhoods feel City Council has turned a deaf ear to their concerns,” Fannon said. He pointed to recent street redesigns and decisions on zoning. “There was zero support from single-family homeowners to construct apartment buildings in single-family neighborhoods. It was forced upon them and should be reconsidered.”

Fannon also pegged density as a major quality-of-life issue for Alexandrians. “Alexandria is already among the most densely populated mid-size cities in the United States. Gridlocked streets are just one result,” Fannon said. He added, “It’s time to seriously reconsider plans to add tens of thousands more people to a city of 15 square miles with nowhere to grow.”

Fannon made his candidacy public at the annual Friendship Firehouse Presidents’ Day Breakfast. He has served as a Trustee for eight years for the organization that preserves the city’s historic firehouse.

“History is at the heart of what

makes Alexandria special,” Fannon said. “Our unique history has attracted many of the residents who reside in our city today.

History is what brings hundreds of thousands of tourists to Alexandria every year.

Fannon recently retired from a 32-year career in residential mortgage banking with Crestar/SunTrust/Truist.

For nearly two decades, Fannon has organized “Alexandrians Have Heart,” an annual food and clothing drive held over Valentine’s Day weekend. The drive benefits local charities including Christ House, ALIVE! Food Bank, and Carpenter’s Shelter. He currently serves as President of the Alexandria Aces, the city’s collegiate summer baseball team. He has served as president of Agenda:Alexandria, Volunteer Alexandria, and the Alexandria Sportsman’s Club.

Fannon previously served on the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee, the Alexandria Library Board, the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce, and the board of the United Way of the National Capital Region. He is an active member of the Fraternal Order of Eagles, the Old Dominion Boat Club, and the Alexandria Rotary Club.

In 2020, Fannon was named a Living Legend of Alexandria for his decades of civic leadership and volunteer service.

Fannon is the great-grandson of T.J. Fannon, the son of an Irish immigrant who arrived in Alexandria in 1850 and founder of T.J. Fannon and Sons. Now in its 141st year, it is the oldest 100-percent family-owned business in Alexandria today.

Three generations of Fannons have served on the Alexandria City Council, including T.J. Fannon, who served as Vice Mayor.

The special election will be held April 21, 2026.

Democratic Firehouse Primary Saturday Feb. 21

Kirk McPike served on the Alexandria City Council until January 2026 and resigned to run for Delegate for House District 5.

A firehouse primary to fill this seat will take place on Feb. 21, and the winner will face a Special

Election on April 21. For more information, visit alexandriava.gov/Elections.

The Alexandria Democratic Committee will hold an unassembled caucus, also known as a firehouse primary, on Saturday, Feb.

SEE FIREHOUSE, PAGE 15

My Farewell Column

FROM PAGE 6

With your help, Medicaid expansion became a reality. Immigrant moms now have access to prenatal care. We were able to provide support to victims of human trafficking. I’m proud of our efforts to ban firearms in state-owned buildings. I visited five prisons around the Commonwealth, including the supermax Red Onion Correctional Center, to improve conditions.

During my time as a legislator, there were some special moments. When I first joined the House, looking up at the beautiful ceiling of Mr. Jefferson’s Capitol was a daily reminder of the rich history of the General Assembly. In 2007, I attended the 400th anniversary of the signing of the charter for the Virginia Company beneath the vaulted stone ceilings of the Honorable Society of the Middle Temple in London, where the legal profession was born. And on January 17, I witnessed Governor Spanberger make history and shatter the glass ceiling.

There are so many people to thank. First, I must acknowledge my parents. If they hadn’t campaigned for me in 2003, I never

would have won by 43 votes in a five-way primary. They’re my biggest supporters. I thank my family for their patience and understanding of a job that rarely respects evenings, weekends, or holidays.

I’ve been fortunate to know many great local officials who I’ve been able to turn to for advice and counsel, among them Alexandria Mayor Alyia Gaskins, former Mayor Justin Wilson, Delegate-elect Kirk McPike, and former Arlington Board Member Katie Cristol. Congressman Don Beyer is always accessible and has great ideas. Then-Governor and now Senator Mark Warner appointed me to be his Chief Deputy Commissioner of Labor and Industry. Senator Tim Kaine has been an inspiration as one of the most decent, genuine and honest public servants I’ve ever met. Delegate Patrick Hope of Arlington has been a great friend and ally, on our multi-year effort to stop the sale of vapes to children.

Senator Janet Howell used to say I was the best prepared senator. But the truth is, I only looked good because of some great legislative aides, including Benjamin Jones, Parker Treichel, Chris Leyen, and Henry Watkins. The Senate staff,

Clerk’s office, and the Division of Legislative Services are extraordinary.

However, it’s only with the support of my constituents that I have been able to be a force for progressive change. To the people of Alexandria, Arlington, and Fairfax: Thank you for trusting me to be your voice. I will never forget the people who sent me to Richmond. Senate District 39 will be in excellent hands with Elizabeth Bennett-Parker. She will be a strong advocate.

As I reflect on the past 22 years, the words of a Jesus Jones song come to mind: “Right here, right now, there’s no place I’d rather be ... watching the world wake up from the history.” I’ve been witness to and part of history. Together, we’ve made a difference. The day I was sworn into the house, my late Aunt Janice gave me a note that I always kept behind my desk. It said, “Never forget the little guy.” I hope I have lived up to her words. Thank you for the honor to serve.

Thank you,
Adam P. Ebbin
Member, Senate of Virginia



Public Notice

Updated weight limits on Virginia bridges and culverts

In accord with state and federal law, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has imposed new or changed existing weight restrictions and installed new signage indicating the updated weight restrictions on the following bridges and culverts (structures) in Virginia within the last 30 days.

Jurisdiction	Fed Struc Id	Route #	Route Name	Crossing	Posted Date
CRAIG	5556	692	ROUTE0692	CRAIG CREEK	1/21/2026
LEE	10967	743N	ROUTE743	CLEAR SPRING BRANCH	1/21/2026
PATRICK	13342	677	WILLIS GAP ROAD 677	EAST FORK JOHNSON CREEK	1/16/2026
FRANKLIN	8012	876	BYRD'S MILL ROAD 876	BRANCH PIGG RIVER	1/12/2026
ROCKBRIDGE	15619	691	RURAL VALLEY ROAD (ROUTE 691)	CEDAR CREEK	1/7/2026
ALLEGHANY	1041	159	DUNLAP CREEK ROAD (ROUTE 159)	TRIB DUNLAP CREEK	1/1/2026
WASHINGTON	18854	19N	PORTERFIELD HIGHWAY	HAYS BRANCH	1/1/2026
SCOTT	16553	23N	US HIGHWAY 23	BRANCH	1/1/2026

The list above is not a comprehensive list of all structures with weight restrictions in the Commonwealth but shows only structures that have new or changed weight restrictions within the last 30 days. The list contains only basic structure identification and location information and the date the new or changed weight restriction and signage became effective.

For a full listing of all bridge and culvert weight restrictions with detailed information about specific structures, including location data and actual weight limits, visit vdot.virginia.gov and navigate to Traffic and Travel/For freight operators/Truck restrictions. This page references a posted structures report and a GIS map tool that contain detailed information about restricted structures in Virginia. To receive email notifications regarding new or updated weight restrictions for structures statewide, complete the sign-up form on the web page.

Notices regarding bridges and culverts with new or updated weight restrictions are published monthly by VDOT. For additional information or questions, please contact haulingpermits@vdot.virginia.gov or the Load Rating Program Manager, Manjil Devkota at 804-786-4064.

The Virginia Department of Transportation is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any of its programs or activities on the basis of race, color, or national origin, as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need further information on VDOT’s Title VI Program or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, please contact the Virginia Department of Transportation’s Title VI Program Specialist at 804-786-2730 or corina.herrera@vdot.virginia.gov.

Parade Kicks Off City's 250th Celebration

FROM PAGE 1

tional president generals of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Sons of the American Revolution, respectively.

This year's festivities featured a vibrant cross-section of community groups and youth organizations. Marching units energized the crowd as they made their way through the city's historic corridor. Prominent appearances from reenactors included Brian Hilton portraying General Washington and Benjamin Goldman as the Marquis de Lafayette.

Local schools and civic organizations added their own energy to the celebration. The Bishop Ireton High School Varsity Cheerleading Team performed along the route, while the First Virginia Regiment of the Continental Line offered



Mount Vernon District Supervisor Dan Storck as Abraham Lincoln.



A tribute to military veterans.

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

SEE PARADE, PAGE 9



American Legion Post 24 veterans march in the parade.



Washington Nationals' Racing President George Washington greets spectators.



A clown with the Kena Shriners.



Falun Dafa of Washington DC.



Bolivian folk dancers from Tinkus Kay'Sur-Virginia Branch.



Period reenactors march in the parade.



Members of the Alexandria Kiwanis Club.



The Declaration of Independence Banner Brigade.

Parade Kicks Off City's 250th Celebration

FROM PAGE 8

historical demonstrations reminiscent of Alexandria's Revolutionary-era heritage.

The annual parade is a signature element of Alexandria's monthlong George Washington Birthday Celebration, which includes more than a dozen historical and cultural events ranging from free museum admissions to 18th-century-themed banquets. The broader celebration underscores the city's place in Washington's personal and professional life, with more than 140 local sites connected to the nation's first president.

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT
GAZETTE PACKET



Spectators enjoy the parade.



Singers from the Alexandria Choral Society perform the National Anthem.



A young spectator waves an American flag.



A Washington Commanders band sousaphone musician.



The popular cars of the Kena Shriners of Manassas.



Some dogs relished the chance to frolic in the snow at the Animal Welfare League of Arlington..



A chance to enjoy the snow was a treat for many dogs at the Animal Welfare League of Arlington.



At the Animal Welfare League of Arlington, some dogs had a blast in the snow.

Winter Storms Call for Extra Care

From shelter slumber parties to protecting wildlife.

By ASHLEY SIMPSON
THE GAZETTE

January's Winter Storm Fern, and the sub-freezing temperatures that lingered long after, tested the Animal Welfare Leagues of Alexandria and Arlington in their shared mission to keep all local animals safe in rain, shine, and even snow.

In the week leading up to the storm in late January, local animal welfare organizations prepared their own shelters through creative, out-of-the-box strategies, bracing for the fallout.

As most Northern Virginians salted their driveways and stocked their pantries in anticipation of record snowfall, the teams at the Animal Welfare Leagues of Alexandria and Arlington (each referred to as AWLA) executed contingency plans to keep animals safe.

They proactively reached out to regular recipients of their pantries to coordinate early food and supplies deliveries. And inside the shelters, staff worked to ensure animals would have what they needed in the event of what many experts predicted would be record-breaking accumulation.

The Arlington community stepped up to the plate at a level that pleasantly surprised the Animal Welfare League of Arlington staff. Many Arlingtonians responded to the AWLA's call for short-term fosters, opening their homes for four-legged "snow day" companions.

"Our priority for animal preparation is getting as many animals as possible into foster homes before the weather hits," Amy Schindler, the Animal Welfare League of Arlington's Chief Operating Officer, said. "For Winter Storm Fern, we put out a foster plea and the response was incredible — we moved about 50% of our dog population, and an even higher percentage of our cats and small animals, into safe homes before the snow started."

Some of these short-term arrangements even turned into "foster fails," proving that snow really can produce some magic, even for animals who are in desperate need for permanent homes.

To ensure care for those still in the shelter, the Arlington crew stayed close to the home base.

"There are essential staff — a core crew — including those in animal care who handle feeding and medication distribution, as well as animal control," Schindler said. "We rented an Airbnb within walking distance for them so there were no questions about continuing our service to the public and the care of the animals in the shelter."

For the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria, the snow plan meant a two-day sleepover for dedicated staff.

"A couple of our employees stayed overnight for 'slumber parties' in our community room," said Erin Shackelford, Senior Manager of Communications and Event Marketing for the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria. "They were there for the animals in case the roads were not safe enough for others to get there during the day. A bonus for the dogs was that they got to enjoy the snow after hours."

SEE WINTER STORMS, PAGE 11



At the the Animal Welfare League of Arlington, this dog just wanted to be extra warm.

Winter Storms Call for Extra Care

FROM PAGE 10

But the snow isn't all fun and games, even for dogs who enjoy the powder.

"The snow is fun, but was the longest that it has ever impacted our ability to care for the dogs," Shackelford said. "Between sheets of ice falling from gutters and walking paths turned into solid ice, it's a constant struggle to keep them safe. The ice has really affected our ability to give them physical exercise. We've had to struggle with frozen yards and cut paw pads, leaning heavily on indoor enrichment and mental games while we wait for the melt."

Arlington, too, relied heavily on brain stimulation activities for animals who weren't getting their normal time outdoors.

For wild animals, human responses to snow sometimes bring greater threats than the weather on its own.

"We have seen an increase in deer population near roads; they are attracted to the road salt, which puts them in the path of oncoming traffic," Tony Rankin, the COO at the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria, said. "They like to lick the salt up, and that has caused more car accidents and deer deaths. Also, prolonged winter weather like this has a major impact on aquatic wildlife. The extended salt runoff into our streams kills off plankton, creating a ripple effect that disrupts the entire food chain."

Officials urge residents to remain wary of deer on area roads even after the snow has melted, as salt residue remains an attraction. Rankin also recommends using more environmentally friendly de-icing options than traditional rock salt, which is hard on paws, plants and water.



Jay Oliver White and Kaya Forton are Animal Care Technicians at the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria and Animal Services Officer Sergeant Jennifer Yang, staying overnight at the shelter during the snow storm to care for the animals.



Jay Oliver-White, Animal Care Technician, and Animal Services Officer Sergeant Jennifer Yang, staying overnight at the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria during the snow storm to care for the animals.

The public can contact either AWLA for information on better, more humane options for mitigating ice risks.

As the Animal Welfare League of Arlington reminds the public through social media channels, there are also humane ways to deter wildlife from entering attics and crawlspaces, which does happen during winter months. The public can call the Animal Welfare League of Arlington for tips on re-routing animals away from their homes, or for questions on animals that may raise concerns.

Finally, shelter experts remind the public that even a built-in fur coat has its limits.

"Consider yourself with a light jacket on—how long does it take for you to start feeling cold? That

effect is the same for your dog," Rankin said. "While some breeds like huskies may be more comfortable outside for longer periods of time, no dog is immune to discomfort. A good rule of thumb is: if it's too cold for you to stand around, it's too cold for them to stay out."

Under the Virginia Animal Care Code, temperatures under 32 degrees constitute inadequate shelter, necessitating response from animal control functions.

Whenever the next major snowfall occurs, both AWLAs are ready to provide every level of animal support to their respective communities.

The staff at both organizations insist that the best way to rebuff the cold weather is with a rescue pet by your side.



Kaya Forton, Animal Care Technician with the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria, staying overnight at the shelter during the snow storm to care for the animals.

Walk for Peace

FROM PAGE 4

At Christ Church, Mayor Alvia Gaskins briefly presented the monks with a proclamation recognizing their dedication to peace and compassion. The monks, dressed in saffron and ocher robes and accompanied by their rescue dog Aloka, shared reflections rooted in forgiveness, mindfulness, and healing.

"This is not a destination," Gaskins said. "Peace is a prac-

tice and so today we recognize the venerable monks and the work that they are doing and the efforts and the ways that they are showing us that step by step together we can create a world that is filled with more unity, with more love, and taking more actions to create the peace that we all deserve and aspire to today."

Congressman Don Beyer was among the elected officials welcoming the monks to Alexandria.

"Their walk today sends us a profound message," Beyer said. "It shows us that peace is possible, that hope endures and that each step taken with intention can move

us closer to peace."

Alexandria served as one of the final major stops before the group's planned arrival in Washington, D.C., where they petitioned Congress to recognize Buddha's birthday and day of enlightenment as a federal holiday. Their journey drew national and international attention, amassing millions of followers across social platforms and inspiring supporters who have traveled long distances to meet them in person.

Once in Washington, the monks continued a schedule of interfaith events and public gatherings through the week.



Hundreds gather to see the Walk for Peace Buddhist monks Feb. 9 in Old Town.

Said Pannakara before continuing the journey to Washington, "We have been walking every day and

believe that together we can change this world." SEE MORE WALK FOR PEACE, PAGE 11

JANET BARNETT/CAZETTE PACKET

OBITUARY

Norman Grimm Sr. Lifelong Del Ray resident, former APD Captain, dies at 94.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Norman Grimm amassed some impressive stats during his lifetime. From his glory days as an athlete, to countless stories from his years as a police officer and his victories as a coach, he had all the ingredients for a full life. A proud lifelong resident of Del Ray, Grimm died Feb. 9 at Brightview Senior Living in Fairfax. He was 94.

Norman E. Grimm Sr. was born Sept. 18, 1931, to Henry F. Grimm Sr. and Willie Frances (Smith) Grimm. He was one of six siblings growing up during the Great Depression at 409 East Howell Ave. Grimm attended Mount Vernon grade and secondary school before

“Del Ray was a good little community.”

Norman Grimm on growing up in Del Ray

graduating from George Washington High School in 1950.

Grimm left his mark at George Washington High School, lettering in baseball, football, basketball and track. Following in his father's footsteps, who served as a police officer from 1929-1963, Grimm dedicated 27 years to the Alexandria Police Department, rising to Captain of the Detective Bureau. Upon his retirement, he worked 15 years as Vice-President of Security for Burke and Herbert Bank.

Grimm often recalled the day he applied to be an officer, noting his father was surprised and concerned. Grimm told his father, “Dad, if it's good enough for you, it's good enough for me. I want to be a police officer.” Grimm retired in 1976.

Grimm took on many roles over the years, including serving as a volunteer firefighter to leading as the president of the Alexandria Police Association and Camp Charles H. Grimm in Kilmarnock, the Retired Police and Fire Association, and the Alexandria Sportsman's Club.

Grimm was a coach at Bishop Ireton High School and served as the Athletic Director of the Alexandria Boys Club & Del Ray Boys Club.

Among his many honors were the Chamber of Commerce Valor Award, the City of Alexandria Distinguished Citizen and Humanitarian Award, and the Key to the City. He was also named to the Bishop Ireton Athletic Hall of Fame.



Norman Grimm Sr. died Feb. 9 at the age of 94.



Norman Grimm during his football days at George Washington High School.



Norman and June Grimm in an undated photo.



Norman Grimm stands in front of his childhood home at 409 East Howell Ave. in Del Ray.

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Grimm married his high school sweetheart, June Timer Grimm, at the age of 19 and together they raised two sons in the Del Ray community.

Grimm was preceded in death by his wife, June Cecilia Grimm, his parents Henry F. Grimm, Sr. and Willie Francis (Smith) Grimm, sister Joyce St. Martin, brothers

Charles Herbert Grimm, Henry F. Grimm Jr., and Ralph Grimm; daughter-in-law Karen Grimm, and granddaughter, Cheryl Grimm. He is survived by his sister Shirley Warthen, his sons Norman Edward Grimm, Jr. (Monica), Charles Herbert “Buckey” Grimm II, his seven grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren.

A viewing at Everly-Wheatley Funeral Home in Alexandria will take place on Thursday, Feb. 19, from 4 to 7 p.m. A Funeral Mass will be celebrated at St. Michael's Catholic Church in Annandale on Friday, Feb. 20 at 10 a.m., followed by a burial at Fairfax Memorial Park.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Alzheimer's Associ-

ation at alz.org.

Grimm spoke often of his love for Alexandria and Del Ray in particular.

“In Del Ray, everybody knew everybody,” Grimm told WETA in an interview. “People had low income at the time but we lived like millionaires. Del Ray was a good little community.”



Norman Grimm with his brother Henry, who served in World War II. Grimm lost another brother during the WWII Marine landing in the Battle of Iwo Jima.

ENTERTAINMENT

YEAR ROUND ON SATURDAYS

The City of Alexandria's historic Old Town Farmers' Market will temporarily move to the 100 block of North Royal Street and the courtyard at Tavern Square starting on Jan. 10, 2026. The new location is just across the street from Market Square. This move allows the market to keep operating during the upcoming renovations to City Hall and Market Square. The Farmers' Market has operated uninterrupted at Market Square since 1753. Because City Hall and Market Square will undergo major renovations starting in early 2026, the Farmers' Market must move to keep operating during the renovation. The Market Square Garage will also be closed during construction, and the new location provides easier access to nearby parking options. The Market Square Garage will be closed by Jan. 17. After this time, Farmers Market visitors are encouraged to use the Tavern Square garage (418 Cameron St.), which will offer FREE parking on Saturdays from 6:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. There is also parking at nearby Courthouse Square (111 S. Pitt St.). For a full list of parking locations, visit the Parking in Alexandria page. Shoppers can expect the same variety of local produce, baked goods, flowers, meats, dairy, and specialty items from over 70 vendors, now in a more spacious setting. The Market continues to run every Saturday morning from 7 a.m. to noon, year-round, rain or shine.

MEETS EVERY SUNDAY

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

MEETS EVERY MONDAY

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

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

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

MGNV PLANT CLINICS ARE OPEN

The Alexandria Old Town Farmer's Market Plant Clinic at 301 King St., Alexandria operates on Saturdays from 7 - 9:30 a.m. Del Ray Farmers Market Plant Clinic at Oxford & Mt. Vernon Avenues, Alexandria operates on Saturdays from 8:30 - 11 a.m. The Arlington Farmers' Market at N. 14th and N. Courthouse Roads, Arlington operates on Saturdays from 8 - 11 a.m. The Fairlington Farmers' Market Plant Clinic at 3308 S. Stafford St., Arlington, operates on Sundays from 9 - 11 a.m.

YEAR ROUND ON SUNDAYS

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

ONGOING

Revolutionary War Exhibit. At the National

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> **Continuum: An Athenaeum Sculpture Invitational will be held now through March 8, 2026 at The Athenaeum in Alexandria.**

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

AMERICA'S 250TH BIRTHDAY

Starting now through summer 2026, Alexandria will host major events and experiences commemorating America's 250th birthday. Located on the Potomac River just minutes from Washington, D.C. and George Washington's Mount Vernon, Alexandria, Virginia invites families, friends and history-lovers to stay in, explore and commemorate America's 250th birthday in a city older than the United States itself with a dynamic lineup of events and immersive experiences. Learn more and find additional details on these and other events at VisitAlexandria.com/250.

250th Events Itinerary:

- ❖ March: A new, major exhibit will open at Mount Vernon. Called George Washington: A

Revolutionary Life, the exhibit will immerse visitors in Washington's world through recreated spaces, interactive role-playing, lifelike figures and artifacts.

- ❖ March: A new exhibit will open at Gadsby's Tavern Museum highlighting Hannah Griffith, who ran a coffeehouse there from 1794-1800. The exhibit will explore her resilience during the Revolutionary War, its impact on families and her ties to Alexandria's modern entrepreneurs.
- ❖ May-November: A temporary public art installation from artist Sandy Williams IV will commemorate the signing of the Declaration of Independence as part of the City of Alexandria's Time & Place public art series.
- ❖ June 12-14: Alexandria's major signature 250th event, Sails on the Potomac, will host iconic tall ships as a Sail Virginia 2026 Affiliate Harbor and will feature a weekend packed with activities including Alexandria Jazz Fest performances.
- ❖ June: A new exhibit will open at the Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum. Called Stories of U.S. Collections Capture our History, the exhibit will bring out objects from the collection that are seldom seen.
- ❖ July 3-4: Enjoy evening Fourth of July fireworks shows at George Washington's Mount Vernon on July 3 and 4, and a daytime fireworks show on July 4.
- ❖ July 11: Take part in the City of Alexandria's 277th/USA 250th Birthday Celebration complete with fireworks, music and more at Oronoco Bay Park along Alexandria's waterfront.

NOW THRU MARCH 8

The Last Days of RFK Stadium. At Multiple

Exposures Gallery, Studio 312, Torpedo Factory Art Center, Alexandria. In this exhibition, Eric Johnson documents the ongoing demolition of RFK Stadium, a Washington, D.C. landmark for more than 60 years. His black-and-white photography captures the transformation of the stadium site as it progresses through its stages of demolition. It is both a record of the demolition and a farewell to a neighborhood fixture, marking a moment of transition as the city and team owners prepare for a new stadium and development on the site.

NOW THRU MARCH 8

Continuum: An Athenaeum Sculpture Invitational. At The Athenaeum, Alexandria. Artists' Talk: Sunday, March 8 at 2 p.m. Continuum is a full gallery sculpture show, featuring floor and wall-mounted art as well as site-specific installations that take advantage of the gallery's high ceiling and unique light-filled space. Seven artists were invited to explore the concept of Continuum. Their works explore the connections that persist through continuity and gradual transformation, and the stories that evolve.

NOW THRU FEB. 28

"Lunar New Year: Year of the Horse" Art Exhibit. Del Ray Artisans presents "Lunar New Year: Year of the Horse" art exhibit celebrating traditions, mythology, and the dynamic symbolism of the horse in the zodiac through diverse interpretations inspired by movements, heritage, and storytelling with an emphasis on cultural respect and authenticity. View at Del Ray Artisans, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria. Gallery hours: Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays & Sundays 12-6 p.m. Details at DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 18

School of Rock. 8 p.m. At Little theatre of Alexandria, 600 Wolfe Street, Alexandria. The Board of Lady Managers of Inova Alexandria Hospital invites you to a benefit performance of School of Rock. A music teacher with illusions of rock stardom remakes a classroom of student misfits into a band of rockers -- no one said it was going to be easy -- and the rest is history! Get your groove on for an admission of \$50, \$70 (Patron), or \$130 (Benefactor.) Proceeds benefit the Board's support of continuing advances in the hospital's medical technology. For tickets and info, call 703-548-9485 or go to <http://www.boardofladymanagers.org>.

THURSDAY/FEB. 19

"What's New in 2026". 8:30 to 11 a.m. At George Washington Masonic National Memorial, Alexandria. During this event, Visit Alexandria will talk about travel trends and research shaping our destination; how it's promoting Alexandria as part of America's 250th; and they'll debut the brand-new destination marketing campaign. The event will begin with networking from 8:30 to 9 a.m. followed by the program from 9 a.m. to approximately 10:30 a.m. Immediately following the program, informational tables will be available for a deeper dive into some of the event content.

SATURDAY/FEB. 21

Workshop - Hand-Bound Watercolor Journal. 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road - Alexandria. (16-Adult) Make a hand-bound journal by sewing signatures together filled with watercolor paper and various types of paper. Then create a unique cover and add other special touches to some inside pages. Your journal will be a unique treasure ready to be filled with drawings, paintings or writing. It will be special, but it is made to be used often. \$112 per person. Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. Code Y1S.BZWC

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 15

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**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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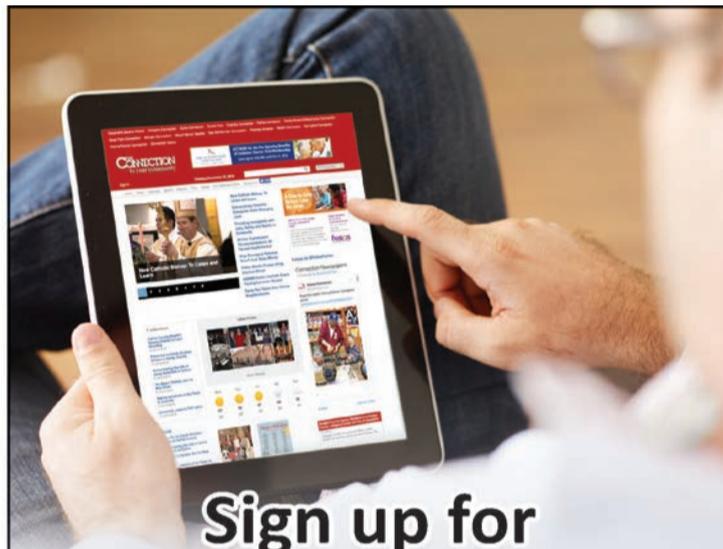
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NEWS

A Conversation on Character

FROM PAGE 5

Located on the Potomac River waterfront in Old Town, the Alexandria Seaport Foundation is a nonprofit dedicated to helping young people build better futures. Its mission centers on workforce development, hands-on learning through boatbuilding, mentorship, and life-skills training, all designed to support youth who face academic, economic, or personal challenges.

The Seaport Foundation's Apprentice Program uses traditional boatbuilding as a vehicle for teaching math, craftsmanship, and teamwork to participants ages 18-23.

Said Roepke, "Participants don't just build boats. They build confidence, discipline and a sense of purpose."

The long-running Apprentice Program remains the organization's cornerstone initiative. Apprentices spend six to nine months immersed in woodworking and traditional boatbuilding, gaining job-readiness skills, life skills, and the support of experienced mentors. Recent updates highlight the program's continued success in helping participants pursue higher education, obtain driver's licenses, and transition into the workforce.

In addition to local programming, the Alexandria Seaport Foundation is elevating its national profile by participating in a year-long Boatbuilding Educator Fellowship through the Teaching With Small Boats Alliance. Roberts and volunteer Katherine Hamilton recently joined other educators in shaping a curriculum for a future national certification in wooden boatbuilding, an achievement that underscores ASF's leadership beyond Alexandria.

The fireside chat event will include a reception and buffet dinner and attendees will receive a signed copy of McChrystal's latest book "On Character." The evening will include a silent auction featuring a private dinner with General McChrystal and his wife.

After leaving military service, McChrystal shifted his focus to education, leadership consulting, and public service. He became a Senior Fellow at Yale University's Jackson Institute for Global Affairs and co-founded the McChrystal Group, a leadership advisory firm headquartered in Alexandria.

The evening is hosted by Rob Dugger and Joan Huffer and all proceeds will benefit the Alexandria Seaport Foundation. Visit www.alexandriaseaport.org for more information.

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ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 13

SUNDAY/FEB. 22

Winter Lecture – Native Roots & Stories. 1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road – Alexandria. (16-Adult) Join Smithsonian Gardens horticulturist, Christine Price-Abelow for a fascinating lecture on the garden surrounding the National Museum of the American Indian. Learn about the carefully selected native plants, their cultural significance, and the stories they tell about the land and Indigenous traditions. Discover how the landscape honors the connection between plants and the American Indian community. \$15 per person. Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. Code T11.XP9E

SUNDAY/FEB. 22

Tea, Glorious Tea. 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road – Alexandria. (Adults) There's nothing quite like it for all kinds of things. Tea can be used in a multitude of different, and surprising, ways – from cleaning Persian rugs to feeding plants. We'll help you get the most out of your used tea bags or leftover brew with a variety of practical uses for tea. \$18 (lecture only). Register online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes> or call Green Spring Gardens at 703-642-5173. *All tea food for this afternoon tea will be made with no gluten-containing ingredients but

cross-contamination is possible.

MARCH 6-28

The "Assembly: Together We Grow" art exhibit explores the power of gathering and how it helps us grow, care for one another, and cultivate belonging. From shared meals and family traditions to festivals, and protests, gathering shapes our lives. View the member showcase at Del Ray Artisans, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria VA. Opening Reception: Friday, March 6, 7-9 p.m. Gallery hours: Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays & Sundays 12-6 p.m. Details at DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

SUNDAY/MARCH 8

Learn about Vultures. 3 p.m. At Mount Vernon Government Center, 2511 Parkers Lane, Alexandria. Wildlife rehabilitator Heather Shank-Givens will make an in-person presentation on Virginia's fascinating vultures and bring wildlife ambassador black vulture, Dusty. Vultures are a critical component of the ecosystem, but they are frequently misunderstood and maligned. Ms. Shank-Givens will explore the natural history of vultures in Virginia, their unique biology and ecology, global conservation concerns and human-vulture conflicts and mitigation strategies.

THURSDAY/MARCH 19

2026 General Assembly Breakfast. 8:00-10:00 a.m. At Hilton Alexandria Old Town, 1767

King Street, Alexandria. Join in a timely and lively conversation as our delegation reflects on the 2026 session, breaks down the legislation that will most impact our community, and offers behind-the-scenes insights into the debates, negotiations, and defining moments that shaped the final outcomes. From budget priorities and education to transportation, public safety, and economic development, this is your opportunity to hear directly from the lawmakers who were in the room where it happened.

Legislators Confirmed:
Senator-Elect Elizabeth Bennett-Parker
Majority Leader Delegate Charmiele Herring
Delegate Alfonso Lopez
Delegate-Elect R. Kirk McPike

THE BIRCHMERE

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

FEBRUARY

Thu. 19: Mohini Dey \$35.00
Fri. 20: esperanza spalding \$96.00
Sat. 21: The Ocean Blue w/ Brian Tighe of The Hang Ups \$39.50 SOLD OUT!
Sun. 22: Daryl Davis Presents: Thanks For The Memories 2025! \$39.50
Mon. 23: Billy F. Gibbons and the BFG Band \$89.50
Fri. 27: Masters of Hawaiian Music: George Kahumoku Jr, Led Kaapana, Sonny Lim \$39.50
Sat. 28: BILAL \$49.50

Christ Church Provides Respite for Monks

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
GAZETTE PACKET

It was day 107 on the monks' 2,300 mile "Walk for Peace" from Texas to Washington D.C. On Monday, Feb. 9 the monks' agenda included a stop at Christ Church for a potluck lunch provided by local volunteers in the community. The Reverend Dr. Noelle York-Simmons of Christ Church explained the monks arrived about 10 am. "They took a rest in one of the rooms and gathered to pray."

York-Simmons explained this was not a public event. The only people in the room for lunch were the monks, the volunteers

who had done the food prep, the monk's planning team, plus U.S. Rep. Don Beyer, several Alexandria City Council members and the mayor (and the monks rescue dog Aloka who joined them later.) "They were very protective of their time and space."

"The head of their group said a blessing, then the monks filled their plates at the buffet and encircled the room chanting a blessing all together. Then they took their plates back to a private room and ate by themselves."

"It was quite powerful to be in their presence, especially when they were chanting; I was almost filled with that beating sound." She explained that interfaith work is important at Christ Church. "To host people who

are practicing faith in their own creative ways and be in their presence is important to who we are."

She said it took a lot of logistics to get this event set up. It started when Megan Beyer, the wife of 8th district congressman Don Beyer, requested assistance from Christ Church in scheduling the monk's time while they were in Alexandria. "There were a lot of details. The City did an excellent job of getting them to and from Christ Church and keeping everyone safe."

"We provided space and were glad to do it. Just a place for them to be safe and warm. It was important to be in the presence of people practicing their faith."

BULLETIN BOARD

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

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Alexandria Families for Safer Streets - Executive Assistant to AFSS Board of Directors. The agency is seeking an executive assistant to help coordinate a diverse group of tasks necessary to keep us on track and moving forward. Someone with office manager skills would be the ideal candidate. www.volunteeralexandria.org
ALIVE! Volunteers are needed to assist with multiple programs relating to their Food Program, ALIVE! House, and Alexandria Eviction Prevention Partnership Program will distribute food at Mobile Pop-ups and Truck to Trunk events, etc. <https://www.volunteeralexandria.org/ALIVE>
Assistance League of Northern Virginia is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that feeds, clothes and provides reading assistance and books to children in need. Assistance League's programs touch the lives of hundreds of children in Fairfax and Prince William Counties and the City

of Alexandria. There are many volunteer opportunities for community members to contribute to helping those in need. To learn more, email info@alnv.org, or visit www.alnv.org.

Join Friends' Board. Those who care about mental health, the Alexandria community, and collaborating with fellow residents to make sure the City's most vulnerable residents have a chance to thrive, then consider joining the Board of Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center. The Friends Board is an all-volunteer group of residents that oversees the administration of one of Alexandria's top mental health charities. Friends has no paid staff, so Board members, working on average 10 hours per month, share the day-to-day work needed to accomplish its goals. Interested candidates should email FriendsofAMHC@gmail.com.

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

Democratic Firehouse Primary Saturday Feb. 21

FROM PAGE 7

21, 2026, from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m..

Five people have announced their candidacy for the Democratic nomination for the open seat on the Alexandria City Council. Their names in the order they will appear on the ballot: Sandy Marks, Tim Laderach, Roberto Gomez, Charles Sumpter, Cesar Madison Tapia.

Polling places for the firehouse primary on Saturday are Charles E. Beatley Jr. Central Library, 5005 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22304 and Leonard "Chick" Armstrong Recreation Center, 25 West Reed Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22304

The general election to replace Councilmember is scheduled for April 21.

Heads Up Or Else



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

As a Bostonian, born, bred and buttered, when snow (or even Washington, DC's version: "wintry mix") is in the forecast or on the ground it doesn't cause my spine to get chilly. But once my car is warmed up and the heated steering wheel is warming up, driving locally becomes as much about awareness, expecting the unexpected, keeping your hands at 10 and 2 and minimizing the use of your cell phone, whether in-hand or hands-free. As for the radio/entertainment center, the radio seems less problematic now as many automobiles feature its controls on the steering wheel. As such, there's not the distraction/loss of focus as when the controls were located solely on the dashboard. Driving in Washington, DC under these wintry conditions then becomes more about survival than it does about getting where you're going. As many Virginia roadside signs used to advise: "Arrive Alive."

And between the municipalities, the car manufacturers, and AAA, among many other car-driving advisory groups, safety of driver, passengers and vehicle has become an ever-evolving business. However, while driving during our most recent storm (snow on the ground for three weeks and counting) I was unexpectedly impacted by a safety feature of my German-engineered car: the "Lane Departure Warning" system. Located/illuminated on the dashboard, under the steering wheel, it's warning words are clear to see. What's not as clear is what to do when the system seizes control of your steering wheel. When it happens, it seems like "The Outer Limits" television show (1963-'65) - and its introductory warning/voice over during the credits, is coming back to scare you. And what the "Lane Departure Warning" system does is take control of the steering wheel to gently-ish get the car you're driving back in its lane without really considering the other variables on the road. I wouldn't characterize it as a design flaw as much as it's a reality check. (By the way, this course correction occurs whether there's snow on the ground or not.) In effect, it's protecting you from yourself. Snow on the ground however complicates the system. The scenario to which I refer is the one which often occurs when snow falls/accumulates faster than the "snowplowers" are able to pile it safely away. As a result, roads sometimes go nowhere, and/or end prematurely - and for this there is no warning. You just have to pay attention.

For perfectly understandable reasons, the late January, "snowcrete," as we've come to title it, caused many familiar problems. Many neighborhoods were left to fend for themselves. However, the snow-related problems also included many "main/numbered roads as well which resulted in a nightmare scenario: snow accumulation being plowed into driving lanes leading to incomplete lane clearance which caused havoc with the lane-sensitive warning systems.

What I'm referring to/have experienced is when the road you're traveling on becomes no more and you have to swerve into the adjacent lane where the drivers already in that lane are not as aware of your car's predicament as you are. In the midst of this observational dilemma comes the problem I mentioned earlier: you have less control of your own car as the "Lane Departure Warning" system has taken hold of your steering wheel. And it's forcing your car back into your original the lane, the one from which you're trying to escape, like it or not. And even though you may not like it, you can't really stay right as you'll drive directly into a snowbank. If you move left, against the warning system's grain - so to speak, you'll potentially cause an accident which will likely take months/year's maybe to adjudicate. As my late father would say: You "have a confliction." Either you'll slam your car into the snowbank blocking your lane or you'll have to "lane" left without having proper time to look/prepare - each choice made with the warning system working against your predicament. Hardly what the manufacturers intended. Presumably, the system was designed/ to avoid accidents, not create them.

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

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MCENEARNEY

OPEN SUN 2/22, 1-3PM



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\$2,985,000 | This spectacular residence features 5 bedrooms, 5.5 bathrooms and over 5800 square feet of living space. you have the best of Alexandria at your fingertips. Welcome Home!

Jen Walker Team : 703.675.1566
JenWalker.com



Alexandria

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Susan Anthony & Rochelle Gray : 703.795.9536
SusanBruceAnthony.com

OPEN SUN 2/22, 2-4PM



Old Town

221 Montgomery Street

\$2,375,000 | Exquisite 3-bedroom, 3.55-bathroom townhome features a private elevator to all floors, white oak floors, chef's kitchen, custom closets, and a rooftop terrace.

Babs Beckwith : 703.627.5421
OldTownAlexandriaLiving.com

OPEN SAT 2/21 & SUN 2/22, 12-2PM



Stratford Landing

2100 Wittington Boulevard

\$1,185,000 | Three finished levels, five bedrooms and a two car garage! This residence offers more than classic architecture, it delivers an exceptional lifestyle.

Janet Caterson Price : 703.622.5984
JanetPriceHomes.com

OPEN SAT 2/21, 12-2PM



Olde Belhaven Towne

6323 Barrister Place

\$899,000 | Location! Brick 4 bedrooms, 3.5 bathrooms, 3 full levels. Hardwood floors, fireplaces, updated kitchen, baths, deck! Belle View shopping, Haven pizza, new Rec Center!

Susan Dickerson : 703.380.0153
CorcoranMCE.com



Alexandria

3335 Beechcliff Drive

\$800,000 | As the largest model in the neighborhood, boasting over 3200 square feet and a two car garage, this residence offers exceptional space, thoughtful design.

Miriam Miller : 703.598.6619
MM-RealEstate.com

OPEN THUR 5-7PM | SAT & SUN, 2-4PM



Old Town Village

1410 Roundhouse Lane

\$770,000 | 2 bedroom, 2.5 bathroom condo with a community saltwater pool! Private ground level entrance with a beautiful designer kitchen and an open main level perfect for entertaining.

Lisa Groover : 703.919.4426
LisaGroover.com

OPEN SAT 2/21, 1-3PM & SUN 2/22, 12-2PM



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1250 S Washington Street #816

\$749,900 | Exceptional value for this home with a VIEW! If you love beautiful sunsets and open views, you'll feel right at home in this inviting two-bedroom residence

Mary Taylor & Pat Tierney : 703.785.5619
MaryTaylorRealtor.com

OPEN SAT 2/21, 12-2PM & SUN 2/22, 2-4PM



Brocketts Crossing

316 N Saint Asaph Street

\$659,000 | This beautifully maintained 2-bedroom, 1-bath rowhome is just steps from King Street, the waterfront, shops, dining, and iconic local events.

Jillian Hogan Homes : 703.951.7655
JillianHoganHomes.com

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