

The Arlington Connection

The 14th annual Empty Bowls event helps raise money for the 200,000 visits a year from AFAC families to get supplemental groceries. Choose a pottery bowl, soup with bread, and then head for the dessert table.
www.AFAC.org

OPINION, PAGE 9 ♦ SENIOR LIVING, PAGE 11 ♦ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 12 ♦ CLASSIFIED, PAGE 14

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Arlington's Peaceful Day
PAGE 3-4

Arlington's Wellness Canine
PAGE 6

Empty Bowls
For AFAC
PAGE 5

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Buddhist monks travel down Glebe Road Tuesday morning at 7 am on their 108th day of their "Walk for Peace."

Arlington Neighbors Gather to Watch the Monks Walk Down Their Street

'Today will be our peaceful day.'

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

It was 6:30 am Tuesday, and lights began twinkling on in houses along Glebe Road. People slowly filtered out of their houses and looked for the best spot amidst the snowdrifts to view the monks walking cross country for peace. It was day 108 of the monks' journey which had started 2,300 miles ago in Texas.

The monks were scheduled to leave Marymount University, where they spent the night, and head down Glebe Road toward Chain Bridge at 7 am.

Lois Milan stood on the corner of Albemarle and Glebe with her grandmother sitting behind her. She held a sunflower which she hoped to hand to a monk passing by.

Susan Berkeley was down the street with two of her grown children, their spouses and all of her grandchildren who had come from Sterling, Arlington and Alexandria. After waiting for a few minutes, she quickly headed back across the street to her house to retrieve a couple of warm blankets to wrap around her grandchildren.

Around the corner a car was parked with a family who had driven in from Centreville. Laura and Nati Gradzka were on their

Wakefield Street corner with their parents and dog Troy. They were hoping to catch a glimpse of the monks before heading to school at the British International School in DC. Their mother said they were late for school "but it was worth it."

Ted Krohn and his wife had walked down from 40th Street to see the monks again. "Yesterday we were at Marymount for the monks' arrival. "They were two hours late but it was worth the wait; their remarks were very moving."

"They've left," someone reported, and speculation began about how long it would take the monks to walk the 9 blocks from Marymount to the neighborhood. "They've been going at a fast clip," someone reported who had been watching the news reports of their local progress.

Finally the headlights of two police motorcycles were spotted in the distance. "There they are," someone yelled. As the monks got closer, the previously noisy crowd stood silent.

A woman held up a handmade cardboard sign with Thai symbols which she said translated roughly into "You are doing good things." One of the monks handed a rose to her as he passed by. "He understands," she said. "Three of the monks are from Thailand."



Police motorcycles signal the approaching arrival of the monks down Glebe Road Feb. 10.



Peaceful protestors follow behind the monks as the monks head for Chain Bridge and then on to the National Cathedral.

Later in the day a number of Arlingtonians joined the crowd at National Cathedral where they held a ceremony for peace and compassion.

Reverend Laura Martin from Rock Spring UCC in Arlington was one of the invited interfaith leaders who stood behind the monks on the steps of the National Cathedral. SEE ARLINGTON NEIGHBORS, PAGE 10

This sign on the side of the vehicle traveling with the monks says it all.



Arlington Has a Peaceful Day

Thousands moved by the gospel of prioritizing peace and forgiveness.

BY EDEN BROWN
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Venerable Bhikkhu Pannakara knew right away why so many people came out to wish him and his monks well. “Do you not have work?” he teased the crowd softly in his accented English. “Why so many of you here?” The crowd at Marymount University shouted back: “Because we love you!” But Pannakara knew the reason: “I see by so many people here today that you really needed this.” The crowd murmured agreement.

In his calm, and calming, voice, he advised: “Practice peace. We can forgive and let go. We have done so many things to hurt others and we can’t forgive ourselves ... but let it go. Give yourself a chance to have peace. Close your eyes, focus on taking breaths, feel the air, hands on heart, feel your heart beating. Picture your parents. Think about the sacrifices they made for you. Maybe you said something hurtful. When you can forgive yourself and others, your family will also have more peace. We don’t need to run to finish; let’s all slow down.”

The crowd was quiet, many were tearful. “The atmosphere completely changed,” said Alina Moore, who attended the gathering downtown the next day. “It was like we were all suddenly on a different plane. People these days have gotten so intense, but it was as though the monks had literally shifted something in the air. We put our stress aside and felt at peace.”

The monks did indeed give off an aura, and this appears to be the reason Aloka the Peace Dog joined them. An Indian Pariah dog, Aloka, decided to walk with the monks as they crossed from India to Nepal. Pariah (outcast) dogs are considered dirty by many Indians, often eat garbage to stay alive, and are more likely to get a kick than a kind word along the way. The monks adopted him and even carried him part of the way when he injured himself. Since then Aloka has been a permanent part of their community.

Pannakara told the crowd how they could start to be more peaceful. He urged them to start their day, not with the cellphone, but with paper and pen, and to write down, “Today is going to be my peaceful day.” He asked the crowd to say the words as they read the sentence, and told them that by



PHOTO BY CATHY VENTURA
Ven. Bhikkhu Pannakara accepts a flower from a bystander along Glebe Road.

doing so, they would allow the sentence to enter into their consciousness more deeply. He reminded them that practicing peace means, “If someone provokes you, and you choose not to react, you win and they lose.” A gifted speaker, whose American education was evident in his ability to articulate his message, Pannakara went on. “The road always has ups and downs. It’s like a rollercoaster. It cannot be flat. Don’t be discouraged.” Pannakara’s group of 19 monks were tested by the weather, illness, and a distracted driver who crashed into the group, causing one monk to lose his leg. That monk chose to view the loss as his “contribution to peace.”

Later that evening Pannakara told a packed auditorium of Marymount students, “Stop carrying around your lover all the time, even sleeping with your lover and even going to the toilet with your lover.” The students laughed. They knew he was referring to the ubiquitous cellphone. “I know what it’s like,” he said. “I’ve been there, done that.”

You are stressed and you think if you reach for your lover, it will help, but it does not help.” In fact, he told the students, “You lose focus and you can’t concentrate, and that just increases stress. Be mindful, breathe, and be aware of your breath. That is the way to regain your focus.”

Pannakara has been there, done



PHOTO BY EDEN BROWN
Daisy Garcia (foreground) and Rebeca Rodriguez, two Marymount students, after the meditation Pannakara led; the tears in their eyes told how moved they were by the simple message.

that. After immigrating from (originally South) Vietnam’s Đắk Lắk Province, he studied at the University of Texas at Arlington and got a degree in Information Technology. An IT engineer, he worked for Motorola until he gave up his job in 2007 to become a novice monk, ordained in 2010. Since then he has followed the Theravada school of Buddhism, adhering to a strict, disciplined lifestyle aimed at enlightenment. These monks live as



PHOTO BY CATHY VENTURA
Children gave the monks drawings and flowers along the way, and the monks were clearly happy to see them.



PHOTO BY EDEN BROWN
The monks were greeted by local Buddhists and Marymount University hosts as they came into Marymount University’s main building.

part of the Sangha (community), relying on alms for food, meditating intensely, and providing spiritual guidance to the laity.

Celibacy, not handling money, and eating only between dawn and noon are just three of their rules for living.

Pannakara is now vice president of the Huong Dao Vipassana Bhavana Center, located in Fort Worth, Texas. He told the crowd he was not at all sure his walk across the

U.S. was the right thing to do until he started seeing the crowds of people who came out to watch the monks walk by. The monks may have moved a great many people along the way, but they were equally moved by the response they received.

To learn more about the Huong Dao Vipassana Bhavana, see: https://www.facebook.com/chua-huongdaotemple/?locale=vi_VN
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



Charles Meng, CEO of Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFAC) tells the capacity crowd at the 14th annual Empty Bowls event about the nearly 200,000 visits last year from AFAC families to get their supplemental groceries.



Choose a pottery bowl, one of six soups with bread to dip and then head for the dessert table.



Susan Anderson serves shrimp and sausage jambalaya donated by Claire and Don's Beach Shak.

Event Raises Funds for Food for Families

Neither cold or wind or snow can stop the annual AFAC Empty Bowls event.

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

The 13 degree weather on Sunday didn't dampen attendance at the annual AFAC Empty Bowls event on Sunday, Feb. 8. Many had been attending this event for a number of years. "Such a great community event—a lot of fun and for such a good cause."

For the price of a ticket you could choose from a hand-thrown pottery bowl, fill a bowl from a variety of six soups donated by local restaurants, accompany the soup with a roll and finish up with a brownie, meringue or cupcake (or maybe even all three). The pottery was donated by local artists and organizations.

You could tell by the noisy crowd that friends and neighbors were catching up. Nearly two-year-old Nicole Bates was riding high in her father's arms. "This is her second year — she's a vet," her father said.

Just underlying the conversations was the string ensemble mostly from George Mason. June Huang, Director of Strings, says she likes to bring her students into the community to do these events through the Spheres Project, a Mason string faculty and student collaboration. "Some of these are scholarship recipients."

Volunteers from H-B Woodlawn circulate around the room refilling water and bread baskets. Penny Nussbaum said some of the students are doing it for community hours credit and, "Some of us are

doing it just for fun." Sisters Alexis and Olivia Quinn stand on the side waiting for a task. "We are assigned tables," Alexis explains.

Susan Anderson stands at the end of the soup distribution table. She is ladling out shrimp and sausage jambalaya donated by Claire & Don's Beach Shak. Next to her is the steaming pot of Carlyle's lobster bisque which seems to be the favorite "although everything here is good."

Max and Maric Grigore, owners of Red Bean Harvest specialty coffees, can hardly keep up with filling paper cups on the 13-degree day. "We buy the beans from Colombia, where my wife is from, and roast them here." Max says they like to appear at community events.

Charles Meng, CEO of AFAC walks to the front of the room and explains to the crowd that AFAC served the families 199,840 times last year. "Since I don't run in an election I guess I can round that up to 200,000. We gave out nearly 5-1/2 million pounds of food, 1-1/2 million from food donations and 3-1/2 we buy ourselves.

"How did we do that? We have 25 staff but we also had 51,000 hours of volunteer time which doubles our staff."

Meng explained that AFAC gets no funding from the Federal government so services weren't delayed last year. Also no state funds. Only about \$1.5 million from Arlington County. So he thanked everyone in the room who

he guessed was either a volunteer, had donated food or made a finan-

cial contribution. "But," he added with a pause, "if you aren't one of

these, you can see Jolie in the back of the room!"



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.

Meet Dottie the Black Lab

Arlington County's newest wellness canine.

BY ASHLEY SIMPSON
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

In early 2025, Arlington County Public Safety Wellness Coordinators Leslie Geer and Donna Young faced the heavy responsibility of helping first responders process the trauma of an unprecedented event: the devastating mid-air collision at Washington National Airport.

Amidst the crisis, they had an unexpectedly by their side to help them support Arlington's hard-working first responders, a wellness dog named Bill who had been visiting from DC Fire. Geer just so happened to be dog sitting Bill for the week.

Geer and Young quickly discovered Bill's uncanny ability to emotionally disarm personnel, breaking through the stigma and hesitation that often surround mental health in these high-stress professions.

"Having Bill there made a profound difference in how we engaged with the community," Geer said. "We saw firsthand how a dog makes people more comfortable seeking support after trauma. We've been advocating for a permanent canine resource ever since."

In January 2026, that vision became a reality. The Office of Public Wellness, serving Arlington's Fire, Police, Sheriff, and Emergency Dispatch teams, officially welcomed its first full-time wellness canine, Dottie. Dottie is a Black Labrador Retriever with an instant, palpable love for everyone she meets.

"She's already passed all her certifications with flying colors, and we are ramping her up," Geer said, explaining that she is in her "lovably defiant teenage" phase at 15 months old. "She marches to the beat of her own drum in the best way possible, and she is incredibly sweet and loves people. In fact, she's already visited several fire stations and the dispatch center, and the only real 'issue' we have is that she never wants to leave when the workday is done."

Her workdays consist of accompanying her handlers, Geer and Young, to appointments and meetings across Arlington County Fire and police stations.

While Geer and Young, both licensed clinical social workers, facilitate therapeutic discussion, Dottie's role is to provide support the best way she knows how, by soliciting pets, accepting treats and spreading a sense of calm energy throughout the room.

"Our office supports all public safety sectors through three pillars: mental health and peer support, family preparedness and financial planning, and physical health and nutrition," Geer said. "Dottie is a vital part of that first pillar, helping to dissolve hesitancy that so much of this population feels about seeking [mental health] support."

She's already been successful, with Geer



PHOTOS COURTESY ARLINGTON COUNTY

Dottie, Arlington County's newest wellness canine.

able to cite same-day examples of her efficacy.

"During a difficult fire debrief this morning, she wandered the room, offering a quiet presence that allowed personnel to pet her while they spoke," Geer recounted. "As one firefighter noted, Dottie was the perfect distraction — filling the awkward pauses and making it easier to push through the discomfort of talking about their feelings."

Young and Geer clarified that they are mindful that not everyone is a 'dog person,' only bringing Dottie into situations where people feel comfortable. So far, though, they've found that welcoming reception to Dottie has been overwhelming.

Facility wellness dogs like Dottie often en-

SEE MEET DOTTIE, PAGE 8



Dottie with kids attending a program at Healing House.



Dottie and her handlers Leslie Geer and Donna Young, plus intern.



Dottie and ACPD Lieutenant Owens.



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
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

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 8



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

Winter Storms Call for Extra Care

FROM PAGE 7

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.

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.



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.



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.

Meet Dottie the Black Lab

FROM PAGE 6

joy long careers, frequently serving their agencies for nearly a decade. Though she is the first dog to serve the Office of Public Wellness and is still early in her tenure, Dottie has already become an invaluable member of the team.

"Right away, people were so excited she is here, and the enthusiasm about her is at an intensity I wasn't anticipating," Young said. "I knew people would be excited, but I didn't know it would be like this. We have had so many requests for site visits with her."

Dottie was born to do this job. Literally.

At eight weeks old, Dottie began training with Heeling Hands, a Leesburg-based non-profit organization that develops dogs to become service animals and facility support resources.

Ashlyn Cohill, the Training Director at Heeling Hands, said it was apparent early on that Dottie was made for the kind of work she is now doing with Arlington County.

"Dottie has always been such a sweetie, so friendly, from the

moment we picked her up from a breeder we work with in Iowa," Cohill said. "It has been so obvious all along that she would enjoy helping lots of people, which is a contrast to lots of our service dogs, who tend to be one-person dogs. Dottie loves people wherever she goes and wags her tail and wants to stay with the people who need her. Every time I work with Dottie for ongoing training, she's game to do anything, and go anywhere. She is going to be a great facility girl for Arlington."

It's not all work for Dottie, who

gets both a fulfilling career and a loving forever home out of this arrangement. When not on the clock, she lives with her handler, Leslie Geer, who makes sure that Dottie has a work-play balance and a healthy dose of affirmation.

"Dottie is still growing into her new job, her personality, and her new paws," Geer said. "We make sure to play a lot of fetch, and although she's still too floppy to be good at it, she still loves a good round. She's also very passionate about bones and gets a solid case of the zoomies after a bath. I never waste

an opportunity to tell her: 'You aren't just a pretty face; you're smart and you're capable.' Our hope is that she grows into the 'goodest girl' for this department. And, she's already proving she's up for it."

Young and Geer encourage members of the public to come say 'hi' to Dottie should they see her around town. She's met people of all ages, including babies, and has yet to meet a stranger.

"Please feel free to show her some love whenever you see her," Young said. "She really does love everybody."

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 serving 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 Com-

monwealth 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 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



Ebbin

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 Virgin-

ians. 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 finally 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.

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

SEE MY FAREWELL, PAGE 15

PREVIEW

Feel the Heritage Festival

Arlington's Feel the Heritage Festival is scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 21 from noon-5 pm at Charles Drew Elementary. This annual celebration of African American history and culture will feature local artists, performers, organizations and musicians to celebrate the rich history of the Arlington African American experience.

A special feature this year will be a dynamic fashion show celebrating Black fashion and style over the past 100 years. In addition, a special kids craft section will give kids hands-on activities inspired by

African-American inventors.

This year's theme, "A Century of Black History Commemorations," will reflect on the people, movements and milestones that have shaped Black history over the last 100 years.

"The Arlington County Board proclaimed February 2026 as Black history month and called on its residents and employees of the County to observe this occasion by recognizing the contributions of Black Americans to our society in general and to Arlington county in particular."

— SHIRLEY RUHE



FILE PHOTO BY SHIRLEY RUHE

Feel the Heritage Festival 2024.

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Arlington Neighbors Gather to Watch the Monks Walk Down Their Street



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Rev. Laura Martin at the National Cathedral with the monks February 10.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Monks and their rescue dog take a rest at the National Cathedral Monday afternoon.



Lois Milan stands on the corner of Albemarle, grandmother seated behind her, holding her sunflower to hand to a passing monk.

FROM PAGE 3

dral and then went inside for a question and answer time. She said she is still working on her thoughts but “It was absolutely sacred,” and after the experience she wrote the following:

Saffron robes and smiles like they know something
Mindful steps taken together
Incense in the air.
They have come through this winter with its bites of wind and ice to tell us that we do not have to travel for peace.
We do not have to walk across far roads, catch the gaze of ten thousand strangers. Put your hand on your heart, they say. Listen.
Breathe. Today will be my peaceful day. Today will be our peaceful day.

PHOTOS BY SHIRLEY RUHE
THE CONNECTION



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Invited clergy participate in a question and answer session with the monks after the ceremony at the National Cathedral.



This woman holds up a cardboard sign with Thai symbols. She explains the symbols signify “you are doing a good thing.” A Thai monk sees the sign and hands her a rose.

BULLETIN BOARD

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

VOLUNTEER DRIVERS NEEDED

Have some extra time to drive a neighbor to a doctor's appointment? You pick the days, times, and places that are convenient for you. There is NO MINIMUM driving requirement. Not only

do you help older adults in need, you also get to meet wonderful folks, often with very interesting backgrounds and stories to tell. The Shepherd's Center of McLean-Arlington-Falls Church (SCMAFC), is an all-volunteer, non-sectarian, non-profit organization. Its mission is providing free transportation to seniors for medical and dental appointments or run errands to grocery stores and pharmacies. To sign up, visit the website at <https://scmafc.org/volunteer>, or email contact@scmafc.org with questions.

Donations Needed

Pet Food Bank. AWLA has established a Pet Food Bank to serve qualifying residents of Arlington County and the City of Falls Church. In consideration of the effect financial obstacles have on a pet owner's ability to afford pet care, the AWLA Pet Food Bank program's goal is to keep family pets out of

shelters. If you are an Arlington County or City of Falls Church resident and are in need of assistance in feeding your pet, follow this link and fill out a pre-registration form. Visit goo.gl/forms/s2FuFdaY-WdZm4tPw2.

Donations Needed. Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church, 2700 South 19th St., is seeking to replenish its food pantry.

SEE BULLETIN BOARD, PAGE 11

SENIOR LIVING



Sherian Lang, Culpepper Garden resident.



Peggy Goldstein, Culpepper Garden resident.



Jeane Enten, Culpepper Garden resident.



Enter the Valentine's Day brunch at Culpepper Garden Saturday noon.



This table of Culpepper Garden residents enjoyed their Valentine brunch on Valentine's Day.

Culpepper Garden Residents Share Memories of Valentine's Day

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Red shimmering streamers fill the doorway to the dining room at Culpepper Garden on Valentine's Day. A table of residents enjoying their lamb chops and mashed potatoes agreed to share their favorite Valentine memories.

Sherian Lang says she was working for a company that prohibited dating your coworker so her boyfriend sent her two dozen red roses with a card from Tra. "His name was Art." She says, "That got things going. We used to stop the elevator and sneak a smooch." Unfortunately she says she lost her job "but god was he worth it."

Peggy Goldstein remembers they

were moving from Southern California and at lunchtime her husband presented her with two dozen red roses. "I was so surprised. I thought 'What are you doing?' It was so sweet, so lovely. Over the years he bought me jewelry and other things but this never happened again."

Jeane Enten says her favorite memory is that her daughter was

nearly born on Valentine's Day. "She was born on Feb. 17. She is a lovely person and takes care of everything for me. Every Valentine's Day she gives me a box of chocolates."

Across the room Derrick Smalls, his first day at work, and Jamal Samuel are serving the buffet featuring lamb chops (the favorite), scallops, mixed vegetables,

mashed potatoes and a choice of salad, with red velvet cake for dessert. The table has a large heart-shaped box of chocolates. On the wall by the doorway is a kissing booth waiting for customers.

Culpepper Garden is an award winning non-profit senior living residence in Arlington for low and moderate income residents.

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.medstarcapitaliceplex.com>, register for Senior Public Skate.

Arlington's Halls Hill, hear the history of this historically Black neighborhood from lifelong resident Saundra 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.

Scale down, a weight loss support group, private weigh-ins, interesting programs, Monday, Feb. 23, 1:30 p.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Drop-in.

Cooking demonstration to celebrate Black History Month, Monday, Feb. 23, 11 a.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Registration # 912501-05.

Aurora Hills 55+ Center book club to discuss "The Good Earth" by Pearl S. Buck, Monday, Feb. 23, 11:30 a.m. Drop-in.

Secrets revealed, an exploration of famous artists and their distinctive techniques, Monday, Feb. 23, 10:30 a.m., virtual. Presented by Jennifer Droblyen, Community Arts Programmer. Registration # 912302-07.

Sorting fact from fiction, learn valuable tools and resources to help you stay safe online, Tuesday, Feb. 24, 1 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Presented by AARP volunteer Larry Lipman. Registration # 912400-08.

Introduction to genealogy and family history, two part series, Tuesday, Feb. 24 and Thursday, Feb. 26, both 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Led by genealogist Susan Court. Registration # 912400-20.

Bunco & Bites, roll the dice and enjoy a slice of pizza, Tuesday, Feb. 24, 5:30 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. No prior experience necessary. Bring your own non-alcoholic beverage. Registration # 912600-09.

Protecting our watershed, join Arlington Parks Naturalist Itzamar Duran Cruz to learn about local conservation efforts, how Arlington is protecting natural resources and how to get involved, Tuesday, Feb. 24, 11 a.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Registration # 912400-36.

The Amazing Walk with teens (11-17) and seniors (55+), Wednesday, Feb. 25, 5 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Walk laps around the gym and stop at stations to do stretching exercises, solve a puzzle and more. No 55+ Pass required. Registration # 912106-19.

Nashville-Style Songwriters Fest Wows Crowd at MoCA

Four local artists warm up the room with original songs and stories.

BY EDEN BROWN
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

The Nashville-Style Songwriters in the Round event at the Museum of Contemporary Art Arlington (MoCA) on Jan. 23, 2026, was just as advertised: an intimate, seated showcase of original music and storytelling. Hosted by Sarah Fridrich at the Tiffany Gallery, the 7-9 p.m. event showcased four local songwriters — Sarah Fridrich, Jason Mendelson, Louisa Hall and Caleb Hacker — performing in a “listening-forward” style. Fridrich, of Arlington, and part of the duo String Mamas, started the round-robin with her bluesy, jazzy, penetrating, emotive songs, ripping sound off her ukulele as though it were a much larger instrument. She joked that she decided not to bring her less portable piano which she typically plays, but who knew the ukulele could deliver that big a sound?

Her most moving song was a reflection of her own mother’s leaving her in day care to work and Fridrich’s feelings about that when she became a mother. “Handing her baby over to a stranger cuz she was a working mother.” Several in the audience were moved to tears as was Fridrich, who says that song gets to her every time. Fridrich used to sing at Iota, the club in Clarendon that closed several years ago leaving a huge void in



PHOTO BY EDEN BROWN

The four songwriters take a bow together after the performance.

the Arlington music scene.

Next up was Caleb Hacker, an Alexandria-born and bred singer/

songwriter who played his heart out, winning the audience with his catchy love song, “Dazzler,” which

at least one person in the audience was singing to herself all the way home. Hacker’s Indie rock/R and B/folk songs accompanied by a very competent six-string guitar are sung in a Michael Jackson velvety voice. “Everything” is equally good, with great lyrics: “I might not dance like Michael, might not even play like Prince, but if there is one thing you taught me it’s that I could be my own blueprint.”

Fridrich admirably said she wished she’d written that line. Hacker has clearly had to fight some battles and his songs show he came out the victor. He takes it up a notch from love songs with, “Day by Day,” an optimistic song he probably plays when working as the Inova Schar Cancer Center Institute artist-in-residence, but which he described as “a message of solidarity with those who are struggling, whether Palestinians, ICE victims, or queer kids.”

Next up was Louisa Hall, who is part of the group “Griefcat,” hailing from Reston. Hall sang her signature song “My Bidet” which is funny and catchy and she won over the crowd when she asked people to sing along. Her “Barista Boyfriend” was equally funny and catchy. And “Revolution! (Poop at Work)” was classic Griefcat, both funny and political. “I recently played this at a retirement community and I will not be invited back,” she joked.

Jason Mendelson, who lives in Strasburg, was the last of the four to sing, and he called himself the “old man” of the group. Mendelson said he is best known for his “Metro Stop” songs (he has done 91 - one for almost all of the area’s Metro stops) and he started out with “New Carrollton.” But his songs have moved on, often reflecting the malaise of the modern man (“Send a Medic”) and “So Late It’s Tomorrow.” He described another catchy song as “his ode ... or eulogy ...” to journalism, “Modern Day Cassandra.” But the tell-tale sign this guy is a master was the acoustic interludes he deployed regularly. Mendelson knows his way around his Martin. d

Adding to the pleasure of listening to four great songwriters taking turns at the mike telling stories and singing was the backdrop of Tiffany windows, the warmth of a crowded community get-together on a cold night, and hot chocolate and cider on tap for those who brought mugs from home. All in all, a 10 out of 10.

To hear these artists locally, check out:

<https://calebhacker.com> (upcoming gig at Harris Teeter)

<https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=griefcat+events&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8> (upcoming performance on March 12)

<https://www.sarahfridrich.com>

Local Musicians’ Original Song Hits #1 on the National Contemporary Folk Chart

Local Artists, Ann Granger from Arlington and Larry Rice from Falls Church City, The Two Peas, released an EP “XOXO” on 9/15/25, which has done very well on radio and Spotify. The song “Coppertone and Maggie Mae,” written by Ann and Larry, went to #1 on Contemporary Folk radio, and the EP went to #1 as well. The artists love that their #1 song was bumped out of that slot by their hero Brandi Carlile’s single “Returning to Myself.” Coincidentally, the first single off of “XOXO,” “You and Me on the Rock,” is another song of Brandi’s on the EP that The Two Peas released as the first single. It’s had steady growth on Spotify, etc. and has had more than 30,000 listens. Not bad for unsigned indie artists.

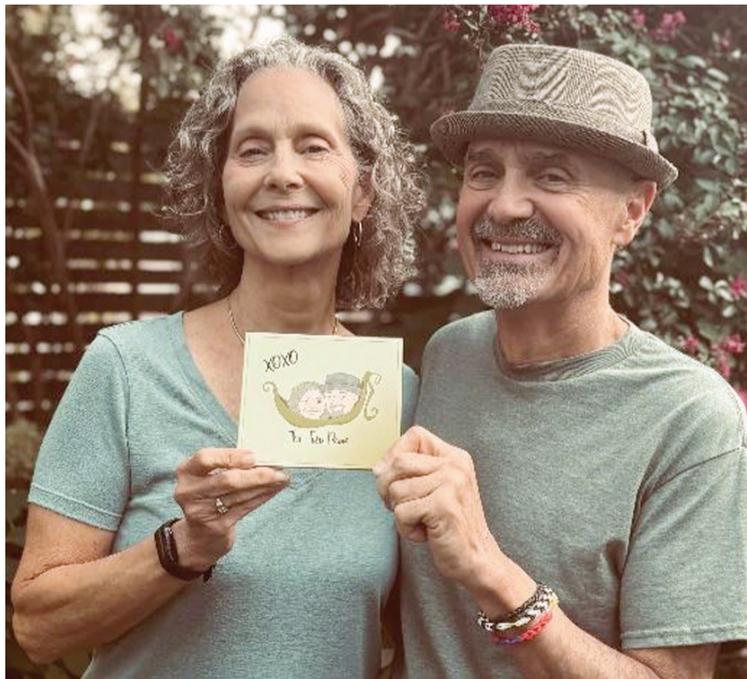
“Coppertone and Maggie Mae”

and “XOXO” are available to stream on all major platforms.

The Two Peas, Ann Granger and Larry Rice, are an acoustic, harmony-based duo performing originals and covers, from oldies to recent hits, on multiple instruments. They’ve been performing around the DMV for four years. Ann, from Arlington, is a potter and an avid indoor rock climber. Larry, a Falls Church City resident for 18 years, is a master gardener and teaches private music lessons on six instruments.

TheTwoPeasMusic.com

The Two Peas, Ann Granger and Larry Rice



BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 10

Particularly needed are rice (large bags appreciated), the pantry will rebag), dry beans, canned vegetables, soup, small jars of peanut butter, small jars of jelly, pasta and pasta sauce. Donations are collected during Mass each Sunday. Visit www.ourladyqueenofpeace.org for more.

ONGOING

Create a Wildlife Sanctuary. The Audubon at Home Wildlife Sanctuary certification program assists homeowners in restoring their home’s natural habitat by providing information on sustainable gardening practices. These practices include using native plants, removing invasive species, reducing use of pesticides and fertilizers, and creating space for native flora and fauna. Visit audubonva.org/audubon-at-home-1/ for more.

ENTERTAINMENT

CENTERS FOR OPPORTUNITY ARLINGTON

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

VOLUNTEER FOR ARLINGTON'S COMMUNITY AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

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

Ambassadors will spread the word about programs and support services, opportunities for social and civic engagement, and educational and enrichment activities for older adults in their own neighborhoods. They are actively recruiting ambassadors to act as a bridge between their community and the Arlington safety net, providing information and soliciting feedback to improve offerings that help older adults remain safe, independent, engaged, and connected to their community.

Contact cap@anvarlington.org if this is something you are interested in or want to learn more. Let's work together to create a supported and connected community for all ages!

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

THE MARJORIE HUGHES FUND FOR CHILDREN

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

YEAR ROUND ON SUNDAYS

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

FRESHFARM OPEN YEAR-ROUND

FRESHFARM Ballston Market will now operate year-round, providing residents and visitors with continued access to locally grown produce and goods even through the winter months. Located at Welburn Square (901 N Taylor St., Arlington) just steps from the Ballston Metro, the market operates Thurs-

www.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



Feel the Heritage will be held Saturday, Feb. 21, 2026 at Charles Drew Community Center in Arlington.

days 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 Hergenrath, Joe Hicks, Heather McMordie, Ally Morgan, Sal Pirrone, Mary Proenza, Tiantette Simpson, and Richelle Soper. Visible or not in a final art or design piece, we all work through iterations of process and concept to achieve our strongest work. Within the exhibition, we've broadly interpreted this theme. Bill Allen's hand-beaded Wedding Dress Ensemble is one in a series of over 60 evening wear garments he has designed and constructed to date. Amanda Buckley offers a group of three early spring oil paintings that share subject, palette, and a sense of surface, highlighting her painterly sensibility. Susan Hergenrath's two abstract ink compositions are so symbiotic that she placed them in a single frame to best communicate their content. Integral to the power of Moira Denson's works are her prolific sketchbook practice and ongoing engagement in workshops. Together, Joe Hicks' ceramics pieces create a composition demonstrating "the iterations of carbon trap shino glazes across different clay bodies and slips." Heather McMordie compounds printmaking's iterative nature as an art of multiples and variations through her "screenprint assemblages" and a six-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. Tiantette 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. 19

Lunar New Year Celebration. 5-7 p.m. At Central Place Plaza, Rosslyn, Arlington. Ring in the Year of the Horse with the Rosslyn BID at the 2026 Lunar New Year event. Join for a free, family-friendly celebration featuring vibrant traditions, live Lion Dance, and festive fun in Arlington.

FRIDAY/FEB. 20

Look Opening Night Performance. 7-9 p.m. At 3130 Langston Blvd., Lyon Village, Arlington. Vocalist and songwriter Cecily (pronounced Ses-Suh-Lee) is known for her agile soprano and honest lyrics. The Washington, DC native has a rich, soothing sound rooted in mid-century Soul and Jazz. Often drawing comparisons to Minnie Riperton and Amel Larrieux, her music is imbued with a unique sensuality that informs not only her vocal approach, but also her self-reflecting lyrics.

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 Century 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.

SATURDAY/FEB. 21
AHS President on Arlington's VA250 Com-

memoration Activities. 2:30 p.m. At Glencarlyn Library, 300 S. Kensington St., Arlington. Glencarlyn Library will host Arlington History Society President Peter Vaselopulos for a special presentation about upcoming Arlington County events to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution. Headlining the events will be the History Fest on May 9 (10-5) at Kenmore Middle School, along with other events.

FEB. 21 TO MARCH 8

Synetic Theater: Antony & Cleopatra. At Thomas Jefferson Theatre, Arlington Heights, Arlington. Synetic returns triumphantly to Arlington after a bombastic run at the Shakespeare Theatre with its epic wordless adaptation of Antony & Cleopatra. Featuring the unparalleled skills of the Synetic ensemble, this passionate love story is a collision of empires, as the ascension and assassination of Julius Caesar gives way to the sweeping love story of the Queen of Egypt, Cleopatra, and Caesar's mighty captain, Antony. Vato Tsikurishvili and Irina Kavsadze star as the pair whose love shakes the foundations of empires.

SUNDAY/FEB. 22

Artist Talk: Julie Wallace. 10-11 a.m. At Central Library, Virginia Square, Arlington. Arlington Public Library spotlights local artists through the Incubator program so that a greater number of diverse perspectives can be seen and more voices can be heard. Julie Wallace draws from painting traditions and graphic illustration techniques to playfully depict scenes of womanhood, domesticity, and simple pleasures. Her art is currently on exhibit on the second floor at Central Library until April 2026.

SUNDAY/FEB. 22

Butterfield's Brigade at Mt. Olivet Church. 3 p.m. At Mt. Olivet Methodist Church, 1500 N. Glebe Rd., Arlington. Mt. Olivet Church was reduced to its foundation during the Civil War, variously used and abused by the US Army as a hospital, storehouse, picket post, and stable. Civil War historian Michael Schaffner will explore the likely actual uses of the building before focusing on the soldiers camped nearby from September 1861 until May 1862, revealing surprising connections to some of the war's great battles, the US Colored Troops, and the Army's early efforts at graves registration.

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.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 25

Coffee and Conversation: Driver Safety & Mobility as We Age. 10 a.m. Are you planning for a driving retirement? It's not easy to talk about, but as we get older, physical changes can make it harder to get around and do things we want or need to do—like driving, shopping, or doing household chores. Our expert guest speaker, Kurt E. Gray of KEG Consulting Driver Safety Services, encourages a comprehensive approach to addressing these issues that essentially impact independence and quality of life. Join us as we discuss the various challenges that aging drivers face—and the tools and resources to

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 15

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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: **BROWNSCHOLARSHIP.VIRGINIA.GOV**

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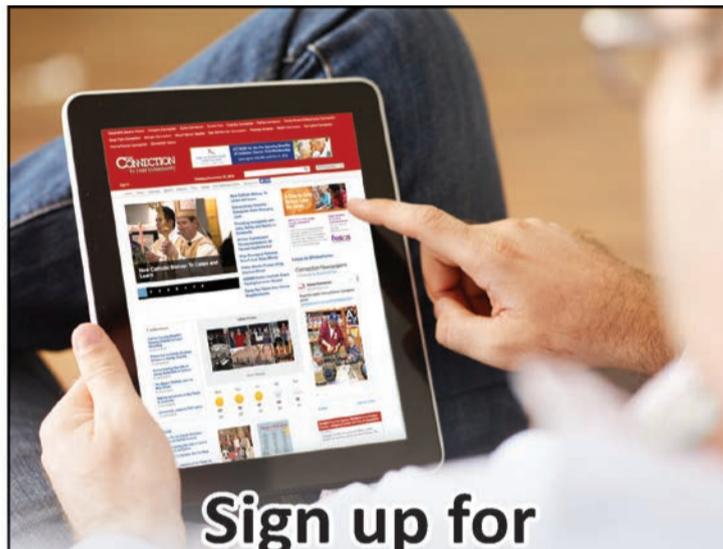
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NEWS

Virtual Opportunity to Help Arlington Students

With over 75 scholarships available, Arlington Community Foundation is seeking volunteers to participate in its annual community scholarship review. The entire process is virtual, and the orientation video and applications will be available by March 2.

Avoid Activity in the Potomac River

Arlington Drinking Water Is Safe

Arlington continues to monitor the recent sewage spills in the Potomac River, while noting that the County's drinking water remains safe, regularly tested, and held to the highest state and federal standards.

Arlington's water is treated at the Dalecarlia Water Treatment Plant run by the Washington Aqueduct, a division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The primary water intake to Dalecarlia (located upstream of the location of the sewage spill, near Great Falls) is not impacted by this spill.

As a precaution, Arlington Public Health (APH) Director, Dr. Deidra D. Parrish "agrees with VDH (Virginia Department of Health) that residents should avoid water recreational activity in the Potomac River."

VDH issued a recreational water advisory for the Potomac River. To prevent recreational water illnesses due to exposure to sewage spill events, people should:

- ❖ Avoid contact with water in the advisory area and observe advisory signage posted at waterbody access points.

- ❖ Avoid any area of the water body where water has a foul odor, dead or dying fish, or discolored water.

- ❖ Promptly wash skin with soap and water if you cannot avoid contact with water in the vicinity.

- ❖ Rinse or wash items that come into contact with the water, including clothing, fishing gear, life vests, ropes and paddles.

While the sewage discharge is not expected to impact Arlington's stream water quality, the County's bacteria monitoring program is collecting additional samples on Four Mile Run to supplement un-

SEE AVOID ACTIVITY, PAGE 15

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ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 13

help them drive safer and longer. This ANV Speaker Series is held each Wednesday from 10–11 am. Join our weekly conversations via Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88948577106?pwd=eW0rN1RTTU5lTmJ5NnF2QXZlbnmdUQT09>

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>

FRIDAY/MARCH 6

Grow Your Own: A Beginner's Guide to Vegetable Gardening, Part II. 10:00-11:30 a.m., ONLINE. In Part II of this two-part class, Extension Master Gardener Faatimah Muhammad explains how to care for your crops throughout the season, manage common challenges, and harvest at peak flavor and nutrition. This session includes tips on watering, pest management, and succession planting to keep your garden thriving. FREE. RSVP online at <https://mgnv.org/rsvp-for-public-education-classes/> to receive the link to participate.

SATURDAY/MARCH 7

Fig Tree Pruning & Hands-on Rooting Opportunity. 1:30 3:00 p.m. at a location near the East Falls Church metro station. Is your fig tree overgrown? Is it so messy and bulky you can no longer harvest the fruit? Or would

you like to start a new fig tree? Fig trees require special pruning techniques to help them thrive and fruit abundantly. As Master Gardeners who have a passion for figs we can help you explore strategic pruning for size, shape, productivity, or all three. Best timing for initial pruning and specific follow-up strategies will be demonstrated and discussed. In addition, following the pruning we will have a rooting demonstration. Attendees will have the opportunity to take home a cutting to create their own Fig Tree. Dress for the weather, bring your hand tools, gloves and your enthusiasm. FREE Register for this in-person class at <https://mgnv.org/rsvp-for-public-education-classes/> to learn the precise location to meet (if walking from the metro, plan for an approximately 15 minute walk).

SUNDAY/MARCH 8

Winter Pruning Hands-on Class. 1:30-3:30 p.m. Duncan Branch Library, 2501 Commonwealth Ave, Alexandria. Winter is an excellent time to prune many trees and shrubs. Learn why and how to prune to remove crossing and rubbing branches, suckers, water sprouts, and damaged wood. Discover the best practices for reducing shrub size, trimming hedges, and carefully removing larger limbs. The results will be trees and shrubs with healthier and fuller growth, better flowers and fruit, and a more attractive home landscape. Join Extension Master Gardeners for a hands-on class in basic pruning techniques. Dress for the weather, bring your tools. FREE. Sign up at: <https://mgnv.org/rsvp-for-public-education-classes/>

MARCH 12-28

Avant Bard Opens The Two Gentlemen of Killarney: A Celebration of Immigration. At

Gunston Arts Center Theatre Two, Arlington. Adapted from Shakespeare's The Two Gentlemen of Verona, the story follows friends-turned-rivals from Ireland to America during the Great Famine, blending Shakespeare's wit with traditional Irish tunes and delivering a dynamic celebration of love, immigration, and humanity. Run time: 120 minutes including intermission.

The Two Gentlemen of Killarney runs:

Thu, March 12, 7:30 pm
Fri, March 13, 7:30 pm
Sat, March 14, 2:00 pm
Sat, March 14, 7:30 pm
Sun, March 15, 2:00 pm
Thu, March 19, 7:30 pm
Fri, March 20, 7:30 pm
Sat, March 21, 2:00 pm
Sat, March 21, 7:30 pm
Sun, March 22, 2:00 pm
Thu, March 26, 7:30 pm
Fri, March 27, 7:30 pm
Sat, March 28, 2:00 pm
Sat, March 28, 7:30 pm

Learn more here: www.avantbard.org.

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 capitalcity-showcase.com.

Avoid Activity in the Potomac River

FROM PAGE 14

derstanding of any impacts in the area. To date, this sampling has not shown an impact on Arlington streams, with low levels of E. coli bacteria.

Sewage Spill in the Potomac River

On Jan. 19, 2026, a portion of the Potomac Interceptor sewer line maintained by DC Water collapsed in Montgomery County, Md., causing an overflow of more than 200 million gallons of wastewater (raw sewage) into the Potomac River.

On Jan 27, DC Water installed a temporary bypass to reroute wastewater around the collapse and back into the District's sewer lines. That bypass failed earlier this

month when a number of pumps were clogged by "flushable" wipes flushed into the DC system. An enhanced bypass is set for completion within days, and DC Water expects to complete emergency repairs on the collapsed portion of the Potomac Interceptor in 4-6 weeks.

DC Water has published monitoring data at multiple locations along the Potomac River that show decreasing bacteria levels over time and with distance from the drainage channel.

Residents should practice caution and follow advisories throughout the Potomac River corridor.

For updates on the repair status, visit DC Water <https://www.dewater.com/about-dc>

water/media/potomac-interceptor-collapse For updates on Virginia impacts and to find links to the Maryland and DC agencies responding to this incident, visit VDH's Sewage Spill in the Potomac River webpage.

Stream Safety

Arlington regularly cautions residents to use streams safely by avoiding swimming or full-body submersion for themselves and pets, due to E. coli bacteria from urban wildlife, pet waste, and other sources. Arlington stream monitoring has shown that bacteria levels are generally safe for wading and fishing and tend to be higher from May to October and in the 48 hours after a large rainstorm.

My Farewell Column

FROM PAGE 9

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

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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