

THE CONNECTION

CENTRE VIEW ❖ Chantilly ❖ Great Falls ❖ Herndon ❖ McLean ❖ Oak Hill ❖ Oakton ❖ Reston ❖ Vienna

OPINION, PAGE 11 ❖ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 12 ❖ CLASSIFIED, PAGE 14

PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



Yoseira Valenzuela Barrera with Mountain View Principal Erin Whatley at the school's winter graduation.

Restoring a Piece of
McLean Black History

PAGE 6

Mountain View
Grads: 'Despite
Adversity, You Have
Overcome.'

PAGE 8

Brendan Banfield, 40, Convicted of 2 Counts of Aggravated Murder

Au pair Juliana Peres Magalhaes sentenced for her role in the double-murder plot; Banfield sentencing scheduled for May 8.

Juliana Peres Magalhaes, 25, was sentenced to 10 years in prison for shooting and killing Joseph Ryan, 39, on Feb. 24, 2023. Magalhaes was an au pair for Brendan and Christine Banfield in Reston, Virginia, at the time of the murder, and she and Brendan,

who had begun a romantic affair, hatched an elaborate plot to kill Christine. Together, Magalhaes and Brendan Banfield lured Ryan, a stranger, to the house and staged a situation to make it appear as though Ryan was an intruder who had killed Christine.

Magalhaes pled guilty to manslaughter

on Oct. 29, 2024, in exchange for her cooperation with the prosecution at Brendan Banfield's trial. Magalhaes is a Brazilian national and will be deported at the conclusion of her sentence.

Brendan Banfield, 40, was convicted by a jury of two counts of aggravated murder, use of a firearm in commission of a felony, and child endangerment. His sentencing hearing is set for May 8, 2026, where he faces a mandatory life sentence.

"People all over the world who watched this trial saw that Juliana's testimony was invaluable in helping the jury understand

the convoluted double-murder plot orchestrated by Brendan Banfield," said Steve Descano, Fairfax County Commonwealth's Attorney. "No prison sentence can address the harm created by her actions.

Today's hearing was dedicated specifically to Joe, a beloved son, nephew, and grandson, who was a perfect stranger to Magalhaes and Brendan Banfield and tragically ensnared in their plot. The court cannot bring Joe back to his loved ones, but the court can ensure that Brendan, the mastermind behind this scheme, faces a lifetime in prison for his murder."

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 via email calendar@connectionnewspapers.com.

FAIRFAX COUNTY OFFERS FREE TREES

Community-based organizations in Fairfax County can apply to receive free trees for planting on private properties, through a program by Fairfax County's Urban and Community Forestry Division (UCFD) of the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services.

The program, offered in partnership with Casey Trees, is designed to help community organizations in Fairfax County – such as volunteer groups, civic associations and faith-based organizations – obtain high-quality, professionally grown trees suitable for planting. Purchasing top-quality trees can be a challenge for these organizations.

This opportunity focuses on increasing tree cover in economically disadvantaged communities, which typically do not benefit from moderate to high tree cover.

How to Apply: Fairfax County Tree Distribution to Community Organizations | Public Works and Environmental Services

UCFD will prioritize applications for tree-planting sites within or adjacent to Fairfax Coun-

ty-designated highly vulnerable communities, as defined by the county's One Fairfax policy and its associated Vulnerability Index. While planting in highly vulnerable communities will be prioritized, all community organizations are encouraged to apply for tree delivery, regardless of where tree planting is proposed.

The costs of the trees and delivery are covered by the county's Tree Preservation and Planting Fund and will be offered at no cost to participating organizations.

SNACKS4KIDS!

Kids are active and need a lot of energy to make it through the day. Snacks play an important part in giving elementary students the energy

they need to be focused in school. Unfortunately, not all families can afford to provide school snacks for their children. You can help Assistance League of Northern Virginia stretch our ability to provide snacks for low-income children by making a contribution from our February Wish List which features Goldfish snack packs that school personnel have identified as a popular favorite with students. Use this link: <https://tiny.alnv.org/Snax> or scan the QR code on the flyer to access the wish list. Please select Assistance League of Northern Virginia as the shipping address to assure prompt delivery. If you would prefer not to order through

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 14

Make a Positive Impact in Our Community! Run for a Seat on the McLean Community Center Governing Board



PUBLIC NOTICE OF ELECTION

MCLEAN COMMUNITY CENTER GOVERNING BOARD
SMALL DISTRICT 1A—DRANESVILLE
FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA



McLean Community Center
The Center of It All



This **OFFICIAL NOTICE** of elections to select members of the 2026-2027 Governing Board of the McLean Community Center is officially given to residents of Small District 1A of the Dranesville District, Fairfax County, Virginia (referred to as "Small District 1A"). The McLean Community Center operates as a Special District Agency of the Fairfax County Government through a Memorandum of Understanding between Fairfax County and the McLean Community Center. On February 8, 1984, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors approved the Memorandum of Understanding, which authorizes the elections. The McLean Community Center is funded by residents of Greater McLean for their use through a real estate tax surcharge, the result of a 1970 Small District 1A-Dranesville bond referendum.

Absentee Voting, or early voting, will begin at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, April 1, and will conclude at 5 p.m. on Friday, May 8, which is the DEADLINE for all Absentee Ballots to be received into the ballot box in the MCC lobby. Residents may request absentee ballots for their own household in-person at MCC, by U.S. mail, email (elections@mcleancenter.org), online (mcleancenter.org) or via phone (703-790-0123, TTY: 711).

After the Absentee Voting concludes, in-person voting will be available from 4-8 p.m. on Friday, May 15 (McLean Day Carnival Rides) and 11 a.m.-5 p.m. on Saturday, May 16 (McLean Day) at Lewinsville Park.

Candidate Qualifications:

The Governing Board is a volunteer service. Each resident who is 15+ and lives within Small District 1A is eligible to run

for a seat on the Governing Board. If you need help determining whether you reside in Small District 1A, please contact the MCC at **703-790-0123, TTY: 711**, or by emailing elections@mcleancenter.org.

ADULTS: Candidates must be residents of Small District 1A and must be at least eighteen (18) years of age on or before May 16, 2026.

TEENS: Candidates must be 15 through 17 years of age on or before May 16, 2026, live within Small district 1A, and live in the boundary area for either Langley or McLean high schools. You do not have to attend either high school. You may attend another school, including one that is outside of Small District 1A, or you may be home schooled. You can only run for the seat representing the high school boundary area where you live.

Available Governing Board Seats and Terms:

Four (4) Governing Board adult seats will be filled through the election: three to serve for a 3-year term; one to serve 2 years of an unexpired term. The candidates who receive the three (3) highest number of votes will serve three-year terms on the Governing Board.

One (1) Governing Board youth seat for teens living within the Langley High School boundary area will be filled for a one-year term.

One (1) Governing Board youth seat for teens living within the McLean High School boundary area will be filled for a one-year term.

Candidate Petition Requirements:

ADULTS: Must get the signatures of ten (10) residents of Small District 1A who are 18 years old or older on or before May 16, 2026.

TEENS: Must get the signatures of ten (10) residents of Small District 1A who are 15 through 17 years of age on or before May 16, 2026, and who live within the same high school boundary area as the candidate.

Candidate Packets containing a petition, instructions, and all pertinent paperwork may be obtained at the McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Avenue, McLean, VA, 22101, starting on **Wednesday, February 18, 2026 at 9 a.m.** Candidates must pick up and return their own petitions in person.

DEADLINE: Each resident seeking election to the Governing Board shall submit a completed candidate petition with the MCC at the address shown below by **5 p.m. on Monday, March 16, 2026:**

**McLean Community Center
1234 Ingleside Ave.
McLean, VA 22101**

For more information about the elections, please call **703-790-0123, TTY: 711**, or email MCC at elections@mcleancenter.org.

Liz Lawson, Chair
Elections & Nominations Committee
McLean Community Center Governing Board

Fairfax County Executive's Proposed FY 2027 Budget

No tax increase and school transfer of \$118 million; increase in average tax bill of approximately \$357.43.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County Executive Bryan Hill presented his proposed fiscal year 2027 and fiscal year 2028 multiyear budget plan during a regular meeting of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors held Feb. 17. Hill described the plan as one “that reflects stability in uncertain times, disciplined financial management and a clear alignment with our strategic plan.”

No Change in Real Estate Tax Rate

“This plan invests in our workforce, supports our schools, renews critical infrastructure and protects the county’s long-term fiscal strength, all without increasing the tax rate,” Hill said.

Although the plan keeps the real estate tax rate flat, rising assessments mean the average homeowner’s bill would increase by about \$357, according to Hill. Chairman Jeff McKay (D-At-Large) later reinforced that statement during the meeting. Supervisor Pat Herry (R-Springfield) referenced the same impact but characterized it as a 3.99% increase for the average homeowner and argued the board needs to “work on doing better.”

Hill said real estate makes up nearly 65% of general fund revenues and “residential properties represent nearly 79% of the tax paid.” Hill said overall nonresidential equalization is 0.92% “after two years of declines.” The nonresidential percentage of the total assessment base decreased from 15.58% in fiscal year 2025 to 14.80% in fiscal year 2026, Hill said.

FCPS Funding

Hill acknowledged the budget does not fully fund Fairfax County Public Schools requested operating transfer. The plan provides about \$94.61 million toward Superintendent Michelle Reid’s \$138.4 million requested increase, leaving an unfunded gap of \$43.79 million. Reid presented a \$4.1 billion “needs-based” budget to the school board on Jan. 22. Hill said responsible budgeting is about balance, noting his plan includes a growth rate of just under 4.5% for both county disbursements and school transfers.

Reductions and Investments

Hill cited \$32.85 million in targeted reductions, including the elimination of 107 merit positions. However, he noted the budget still “invests in our workforce and schools. It renews our infrastructure and it

ADJUSTMENTS INCLUDED IN FY 2027 GENERAL FUND BUDGET				
(Amounts shown are in millions, net change over FY 2026 Adopted Budget Plan)				
Projected Revenue Increase				
	County	Schools	Unallocated	Total
Projected Revenue Increases	\$132.71	\$118.09	\$25.10	\$275.90
Redirect Tourism Revenue to Contributory Fund	--	--	(\$6.52)	(\$6.52)
Net Impact of Transfers In	\$1.26	--	--	\$1.26
Total Available	\$133.98	\$118.09	\$18.57	\$270.65
FY 2027 Requirements				
	County	Schools	Unallocated	Total
School Operating Support	--	\$94.61	--	\$94.61
County Compensation	\$102.55	--	--	\$102.55
Debt Service	\$7.42	\$11.40	--	\$18.81
Capital Renewal/Maintenance	\$12.51	\$7.50	--	\$20.01
Contracts/Inflationary	\$17.08	--	--	\$17.08
Information Technology	\$11.93	--	--	\$11.93
Parks	\$3.03	--	--	\$3.03
Programs Transferred to FCPS	(\$4.59)	\$4.59	--	\$0.00
Other Adjustments	\$16.89	--	--	\$16.89
Reductions	(\$32.85)	--	--	(\$32.85)
Subtotal	\$133.98	\$118.09	\$0.00	\$252.07
Reserve for UASI	--	--	\$1.93	\$1.93
Reserve for Tourism moved to Contributory Fund	--	--	(\$6.52)	(\$6.52)
Total Uses	\$133.98	\$118.09	(\$4.59)	\$247.48
Available Balance for Board Consideration	--	--	\$23.17	\$23.17

FY 2027 Budget Summary

- Net County resources are projected to increase by \$270.65 million
- Allocation of resources include:
 - \$133.98 million for County priorities
 - \$118.09 million for Schools
 - \$1.93 million in reserve for UASI
 - (\$6.52) million Reserve for Tourism Promotion transferred to Contributory Fund
 - \$23.17 million balance for Board Consideration
- Schools transfers are 51.2% of General Fund Disbursements in FY 2027
- County’s reserves remain budgeted at target of 10% of General Fund disbursements



SCREENSHOT/ SOURCE: FAIRFAX COUNTY CHANNEL 16

Fairfax County Executive Bryan Hill presents a slide detailing the fiscal year 2027 General Fund budget adjustments during a meeting on Feb. 17. The \$5.93 billion advertised plan proposes \$94.61 million in new operating support for Fairfax County Public Schools and maintains a \$23.17 million balance for board consideration.



Fairfax County Executive Bryan Hill

positions Fairfax County for continued stability and long-term success.” After all expenditures, the plan leaves a \$23.17 million balance available for the board’s consideration, according to Hill’s presentation.

The budget focuses on compensation, including a 2% cost-of-living adjustment for all county employees required under collective bargaining agreements. It also funds increases in performance and longevity for nonrepresented employees. Hill proposed raising the county living wage to \$18.50 per hour in fiscal year 2027, the first step toward reaching \$20 by fiscal year 2029. Benefit costs will rise by about \$15.6 million, driven by health insurance premiums.

Hill said that capital renewal and IT modernization were two areas where they have been “playing catch-up” for years. His plan adds \$7.5 million for county facilities and \$7.5 million for schools to address aging buildings. It also allocates \$3 million for public safety radio infrastructure and \$12 million for IT modernization. The funding is intended to shift the county from “reactive fixes to proactive planning,” Hill said.

Challenges

Hill acknowledged that fiscal year 2028 posed challenges due to uncertainty at the state and federal levels. He said the budget assumes certain funding levels from Richmond and Metro, which the board will revisit in the April add-on package once the General Assembly finishes. The broader context includes federal cuts and shifts in government contracting that make the board

cautious about new programs.

Supervisor Reactions

McKay called Hill’s proposal “a breath of fresh air in many ways,” praising its focus on “funding and supporting our county employees and their compensation” and delivering “a sizable transfer [to] Fairfax County Public Schools” while keeping the tax rate flat.

Supervisor Andres Jimenez (D-Mason) said the plan makes clear the county is “prioritizing our schools again.”

Supervisor Dalia Palchik (D-Providence) addressed “the big elephant in the room” in

relation to unfunded priorities like affordable housing. Palchik noted that housing is an unfunded priority and said she wanted a formal budget question about the cost of moving from 1.25 to 1.5 cents on the housing penny. Supervisor Walter Alcorn (D-Hunter Mill) said that as he looks at this budget, he will focus on “our most vulnerable and folks that rely most on these services.”

Next Steps

Hill said residents can weigh in at district budget town halls and at formal public hearings on the budget set for April 14-16 before the Board of Supervisors, ahead of final adoption of the FY 2027 budget on May 5.

General Fund Budget Highlights

- Revenue projections based on R Estate Tax rate of \$1.1225 per \$100 assessed value, no change from FY 2026. Results in an increase in the average tax bill of approximately \$357.43 due to rising assessments. (Each penny change in the tax rate equals \$82.99 on a taxpayer’s bill)

- Projected value of \$0.01 on the Real Estate Tax rate is \$35.15 million)

- Includes the full-year impact of the Food and Beverage Tax
- Funds an increase of \$118.09 million, or 4.0%, in transfers to Schools

- Funds compensation increases for all employees, including a 2.00% cost of living adjustment and performance/merit/longevity increases

- Fully funds all three collective bargaining agreements

- Provides for other limited, targeted investments to address various needs across the County, including the impacts of inflation, costs associated with maintenance and new facilities, and support for information technology

infrastructure

- Includes reductions of \$32.85 million and 107 positions

- Leaves balance of \$23.17 million for Board’s consideration

2027 Budget Timeline

Feb. 24: Joint County/School Budget Committee to discuss FY 2027 budget and tax rate

Feb. 26: School Board adopts FY 2027 (proposed) Budget Plan

March 17: Board of Supervisors Advertises FY 2027 tax rate

April 14: School Board Presents FCPS Budget to Board of Supervisors

April 14-16: Board of Supervisors holds public hearings on FY 2027 Budget

April 28: Board of Supervisors marks-up FY 2027 Budget

May 5: Board of Supervisors adopts FY 2027 Budget

May 21: School Board adopts FY 2027 Approved Budget

July 1: FY 2027 Budget Year begins



Aftermath of fire on Quail Pond Court in Centreville.

Residents Remain Evacuated From 46 Centreville Homes

Utilities still looking for gas leak from one of 5-6 lines; fiery house explosion on Quail Pond Court.

The aftermath of fire on Quail Pond Court in Centreville has resulted in evacuation of residents of 46 houses and that evacuation zone could expand.

A house exploded into flames related to a suspected gas leak on Sunday, Feb. 15. Two people were injured but their injuries were not life threatening according to public safety reports.

As of Tuesday noon, people living 46 houses on Belle Plains Drive, Buggy Whip Drive and Quail Pond Court that were evacuated earlier remain in the evacuation zone. Fire and rescue personnel are helping residents who need to retrieve essential items from their homes by escorting them, and taking gas readings before going into the home.

Fire personnel are taking readings at all affected houses every hour according to the briefing. As of noon Tuesday, any gas levels were declining; the gas lines are being shut

down by closing valves.

There are six gas lines in the area, according to officials, and at press time, the leak had not been identified. The gas lines range from 2 inches in diameter to 42 inches in diameter.

Washington Gas has multiple dig sites in process looking for the leak. Williams Pipeline Corporation also has gas lines in the area, but they were not digging at the time of the briefing. Lines are layered and criss-crossed, said fire officials, so more than one utility can't digging at one time.

If the largest, 42 inch line were leaking, the evacuation area would need to be expanded to about a quarter of a mile, involving about another 100 homes, a fire official said.

The NTSB is in charge of the ongoing investigation. Various state and federal agencies have personnel on the scene, with Fairfax County Fire/Rescue and Police serving in support.

Because so far the leak has not been identified, the evacuation timeline is unknown, but estimates include 24-72 hours.

It all depends on which line is

leaking. It's a process of elimination, trying to determine which line is leaking.

NTSB has investigative authority, and will meet with residents without press. Fire and rescue were holding meetings with residents in the meantime.

FCPD Capt. Chris Cosgriff said police are providing scene security, traffic control, keeping non-residents out of the area and ensuring the safety of the homes. increased police presence, more patrols,

Washington Gas has announced it will provide hotel accommodations or hotel reimbursement for impacted residents. Residents should email ombudsman@washgas.com and include whether they have pets so appropriate accommodations can be arranged.

Witnesses to the accident or those who may have surveillance video or other information that could be relevant to the investigation are asked to contact the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) at witness@ntsb.gov.

Tributes to Two Iconic Figures

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

During the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors meeting on Feb. 17, the chairman, supervisors and those present observed a moment of

silence, followed by members of the board sharing tributes to two long-serving public servants. Former supervisor Michael "Mike" Frey, (Sully), died Feb.16. Former deputy county executive Verdiana "Verdi" Lee Haywood died Feb. 6.

Former Supervisor Michael "Mike" Frey (Sully District)

Former Fairfax County Supervisor Michael "Mike" Frey died Feb. 16. He represented the Sully District from its creation in 1991 until his retirement in 2015, at age 59. His death marks the loss of a legacy figure in western Fairfax County, who was instrumental in bringing the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center to the district. He was a champion for the Fairfax County Animal Shelter, which was named in his honor in 2017.

Chairman Jeff McKay, said it was "with deep sadness" that the board learned of the passing of Frey. Before his election to the board, Frey worked for Chairman Jack Herrity and Springfield District Supervisor Elaine McConnell, giving him 37 years of service to Fairfax County and its residents,



FILE PHOTO
Mike Frey in 2015.

McKay said.

Supervisor Pat Herrity, R-Springfield, said Frey was "eeply involved in youth sports. Frey was a strong defender of the Fairfax County Police Department "in good times and bad," Herrity said.

Supervisor Kathy Smith, D-Sully, said Frey was someone about whom "you never heard anybody say anything bad."

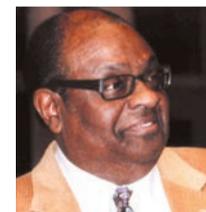
Supervisor Walter Alcorn, D-Hunter Mill, recalled meeting Frey as a 20-year-old intern when Frey was chief of staff to McConnell, saying that even in a "crazy time politically," Frey "was nice to me."

After leaving the board, Frey continued to serve behind the scenes, including caring for geriatric dogs and hard-to-place animals and chairing the Dulles Suburban Center task force.

Former Deputy County Executive for Human Services, Verdiana "Verdi" L. Haywood

Verdiana "Verdi" Lee Haywood died Feb. 6 at age 77. Chairman Jeff McKay called Haywood "the architect of the county's human services delivery system," adding that his work can be seen everywhere in Fairfax County. Haywood served as the deputy county executive for human services for nearly three decades, from 1981 to 2010.

Haywood approached his work with "endless compassion," was pragmatic and brought people together to solve problems, McKay said. He noted that many people whose lives Haywood changed "never met him or never even heard his name." That is because "it wasn't about the attention on



LEGACY.COM
Verdiana "Verdi"
L. Haywood

him, it was about getting the job done for the residents of Fairfax County," McKay said.

Supervisor Rodney Lusk, D-Franconia, described Haywood as a "very simple, caring, committed person."

Lusk credited Haywood as the driving force behind consolidating about 13 human services agencies into roughly six and said the model "still works today, 30-plus years later. ... He was right."

Supervisor Dan Storck, D-Mount Vernon, said Haywood's work along Richmond Highway "brought together an amalgamation of nonprofits and formed a team that greatly expanded the benefits and opportunities."



GOOGLE MAPS

Vehicle Collision with Person Walking in McLean

A person driving an SUV struck an adult male pedestrian who was walking at the intersection of Old Dominion Drive and Beverly Road in downtown McLean the evening of Feb 13. Fairfax County Police reported on X at 7:37 p.m. that the driver of the SUV, a gray Hyundai Tucson,

remained at the scene and was cooperating. The adult male was transported to INOVA Hospital with life-threatening injuries. The eastbound Old Dominion Drive at Beverly Road was closed. Crash Reconstruction detectives are investigating.

— MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2026

Inside the Red-Roofed Gothic Style Former Church on Lewinsville Road



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MICHELLE ARCARI ROSE, BOARD PRESIDENT OF THE FRIENDS OF HISTORIC PLEASANT GROVE

The photograph of Historic Pleasant Grove is by Pleasant Grove descendant and Pulitzer-Prize nominated White House photographer Bernard Boston, 1933-2008. He is laid to rest in Pleasant Grove Cemetery.

Dual narrative of the physical structure and the cultural legacy of the families who built it and those who promote it.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Led by Samuel Sharper, the descendants of freed slaves and Native Americans completed the build of Pleasant Grove Church 130 years ago — a story of faith and perseverance that

mattered then and matters now. Michelle Arcari Rose is the board president of The Friends of Historic Pleasant Grove. Formed in 1983, the nonprofit organization preserves and maintains the historic church, its site and its history on Lewinsville Road in what is now McLean. What sets it apart, among many things, is what is located in

Acknowledgment as Historic Structure
Historical American Building Survey 1971



According to the Washington Post article “Dismantling of Va. Church Stirs Protest” by Thomas Grubisich, published Sept. 7, 1980, Maryon Allen, the wife of a former Alabama senator, purchased the Pleasant Grove church building from the William Watters Methodist Church. The structure was stripped of its historic fabric and contents, including memorial stained-glass windows, pews, wainscoting, decorative trim, cornices, metal wall ornamentation and floors. Allen and her antiques partners, Sloan & Co., left nothing but an empty shell.

Why Places Matter... Telling the Full America

The History of Pleasant Grove



“Why Places Matter” tells the story of Pleasant Grove Church in McLean, its congregations and the impactful events that changed their futures.

the former church’s basement.

“As far as I know, I think we’re the only [and] biggest museum space, so to speak, of African-American and Native American history in the county,” Rose said.

In an interview on Jan. 30, Rose recounted the history of Pleasant Grove Church (1896) as one of survival. Rose explained that the people who built their church were free people of color.

“So part of the story of our communi-

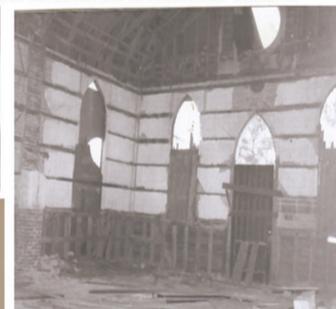
SEE INSIDE THE RED-ROOFED, PAGE 7

Black History Month is an annual monthlong celebration of African-American life, history and culture.

Founded by Dr. Carter G. Woodson in February 1926, the observance originally known as Negro History Week evolved into an effort to research, preserve and disseminate information about Black history to the community.



Documenting the Destruction of Pleasant Grove



Photos show the devastation following Maryon Allen and her partners' stripping of the historic fabric of Pleasant Grove Church. Gaping holes in the walls where the memorial stained-glass windows hung. Only two windows were recovered, the window above the front door with the church's name and the rear circular window.



News stories document “the Destruction of Pleasant Grove,” including gaps where the stained-glass windows hung, the floor removed and more.

Museum

- Updating inventory
- Archiving materials
- Digitization of objects
- Interpretive signage
- Family Trees

Grand Re-Opening of the Frances K. Moore Memorial Museum



Pre-2000s Basement Photo



Photos of the grand reopening of the Frances K. Moore Memorial Museum in the lower level of Historic Pleasant Grove.



The iconic photo is by Bernie Boston (1933-2008), and a copy of it is on exhibit in Retrospective: A Photojournalist, Social Justice Advocate and Family Man, opening Nov. 6, 2025, at the McLean Community Center.

Inside the Red-Roofed Gothic Style Former Church on Lewinsville Road

FROM PAGE 6

ty is that there were all different shades, from light to very dark, of people of color, and that included folks from the Pamunkey tribe, the Wampanoag Tribe of Nantucket and the Tauxenent, people who lived between the Occoquan and the Potomac rivers," Rose said.

After closing its doors in 1968, the building, built in the Carpenter Gothic style featuring proportioned gables and stained-glass windows, was in danger of being demolished by 1983 due to development. The Friends of Pleasant Grove stepped in to save the site.

Its new life, ever evolving and expanding as it is in 2026, is to promote, preserve and now interpret and share information about Black life, history and culture, according to Rose.

Modern Interpretation: Beyond Just Objects

The lower level has been fully reimagined as a museum space, moving beyond a simple collection of items. Rose said there is new lighting, interpretive exhibits and signage, along with photographs of parishioners and families and a full historical narrative of the church, its near-destruction and the community. "A kind of happy story of preservation," Rose said.

Through the Lens: Bernard Boston

A current highlight is the partnership with the McLean Community Center and McLean Project for the Arts, featuring a retrospective of Bernard Boston, the first African-Native American White House press photographer and former member of the congregation.

Boston covered every president from Truman to Clinton, but is perhaps best known for his iconic 1967 photograph, "Flower Power,"

depicting a Vietnam War protester placing a daisy into a military policeman's rifle.

"We have personal photographs of him with all the presidents, and many more photographs on our site, and then the more formal pictures of his work, which are available for purchase at the end of the exhibit, that are framed in the public space at MCC," Rose said. The exhibit closes Feb. 24. She added that Boston helped save the church from destruction in the 1980s.

"He worshiped at our church and took photographs of families and babies that attended our church, helped save the church when it was almost destroyed in 1980 and he is buried in our cemetery," Rose said.

Funding the Future

As the 130th anniversary of Pleasant Grove Church's first service approaches in July this year, the Friends are shifting their focus toward restoration. The primary goal is to return the church to its original 1896 appearance at its first service. The museum is fundraising for a new roof and stained-glass windows, with each window costing an estimated \$9,000. While only two original windows remain, one above the door and one in the rear gable, the Friends hope to recreate the rest. The originals were auctioned off decades ago, but the museum has photographs to ensure accurate reproductions.

"We know the people who probably know where they are, but they're not telling me and they're claiming they don't know where they went," Rose said. "But I don't believe them. But we do have photographs." Rose hopes that grants and possibly corporate sponsorships will provide for restoration and replacement windows. "We'd love to bring the windows back,

and if we can't get them back, recreate them and replace them."

As for future outreach, the museum aims to become a go-to site for Virginia school groups, tying the site's history directly into the state's social studies curriculum.

The Friends of Historic Pleasant Grove is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Contributions are

tax-deductible and go directly toward the restoration of the 1895 sanctuary and the maintenance of the Frances K. Moore Memorial Museum. To donate, checks can be made payable to The Friends of Historic Pleasant Grove and mailed to P.O. Box 6005, McLean, Va. 22106. For online contributions, visit the official website or contact

the board for electronic payment options. Organizations interested in sponsoring a stained-glass window or the roof restoration project can contact Michelle Arcari Rose directly at thefriendsofpleasantgrove@gmail.com. For tours and appointments, call 703-506-8270.

<https://www.historicpleasantgrove.org/>



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.



Diyora Djafarova receives the Citizenship Award from Assistant Principal Tomás Ovalle.



From left, Teacher Leslie Chekin and Principal Erin Whatley with Yosef Alemayehu and his Faculty Excellence Award.



Wahidullah Ahmady receives his diploma from Erin Whatley.

Students Praised for ‘Perseverance, Grit and Heart’

Mountain View High’s winter graduation held Feb. 9.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Mountain View High in Centreville is a school of second chances for students who were struggling elsewhere or trying to succeed in a country and a culture new to them. Yet each year, despite all odds, they indeed overcome their challenges.

Knowing these things, at the start of Mountain View’s winter graduation Feb. 9, Assistant Principal Brittanye Mohrbacher praised the students’ pride, perseverance and purpose. She also said they shared a common bond with other

Mountain View grads who preceded them.

“You’ve been called to carry on our legacy of family, love and respect,” said Mohrbacher. “I recognize your courage and see your tenacity. You allowed no obstacles to make your mission impossible. Whether you were navigating the transition between schools, immigrating to America, mastering a second language, or learning [how to achieve success], you are here. You hurdled obstacles and hardships; and despite the adversity, you have overcome.”

“Class of 2026, as you move forward, remember that even when our paths diverge, we are still walking hand in hand. We strive to live in peace, and we choose not to be afraid. Your resilience runs deep in the American spirit and your Timberwolf soul.”

“We’re all gathered here – parents, guardians, teachers and friends – because we’ve seen your power and know your potential is

beyond measure. Thank you for being the solid foundation that allowed these young people to thrive. And to our graduates, carry the love of this Timberwolf family with you wherever you go.”

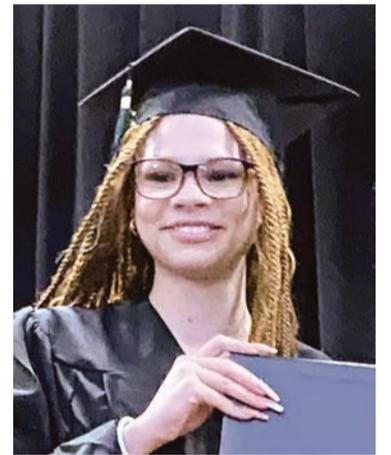
Principal Erin Whatley addressed the graduating seniors next. “Tonight matters,” she said. “Not because of the diploma you’ll receive tonight, but because of what it took to get here. This moment doesn’t belong to the one voice at a microphone. It belongs to every student who kept going when quitting would’ve been easier. To the teachers who refused to let you give up on yourselves. To the families, friends and supporters who believed in you – sometimes louder than you could believe in yourself.”

“This road has not been easy,” she continued. “There were days when simply walking through the doors felt like a victory. Days when the finish line felt so far away you couldn’t even imagine reaching

it. Days when doubt spoke louder than hope. And still, you showed up, pushed through and arrived at this moment. That tells us everything we need to know about who you are.”

“We’re incredibly proud of you. I’ve seen perseverance, grit and heart that can’t be measured by grades, credits or test scores. This class showed up, again and again, even when life made it hard.” What comes next, said Whatley, is a fast-changing, unpredictable and demanding world shaped by “shifting weather, advancing technology, global challenges and voices calling out for something better. You grew up navigating these changes. And instead of shutting down, you adapted, learned and kept moving forward.”

“And that’s why this moment matters more than you may realize tonight. The world doesn’t just need people who know the answers – it needs people strong enough to ask the questions. Peo-



Personal Achievement Award winner Aiyana-Marie Pippen.

ple who think differently and know how to stand back up after being knocked down. It needs your creativity, honesty and courage to question the way things have always been done. It needs you, because you create new ways forward that no textbook could ever

SEE STUDENTS PRAISED, PAGE 9



Diego Baron-Lara is given his diploma by Erin Whatley.



Hamna Tayyab receiving her diploma from Erin Whatley.



Alberth Hinojosa-Zambrana getting his diploma from Erin Whatley.



Allison Inestroza Flores gets her diploma from Erin Whatley.



Grad speaker Yosef Alemayehu with (from left) dad Kinde Gevertsadik, brother Simon Kinde, sister Nafomia Alemayehu, mom Biruktwit Tesfamariam and sister Saron Alemayehu.



Grad speaker Zuhaydee Feliciano (center) poses with her family after the ceremony.

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Mountain View Graduates Share Their Stories

Meet Yosef Alemayehu and Zuhaydee Feliciano.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

During each Mountain View graduation, two or three students share their personal stories of how they conquered serious obstacles to reach that point in their lives. And in many ways, they symbolize the struggles of their classmates and the strength each one had to find to achieve success.

Yosef Alemayehu

"I was born and raised in North-

ern Virginia, I've attended eight different schools, both my parents were born and raised in Ethiopia, and I have one older and two younger siblings. Before I transferred here, I attended Fairfax High School. It was fun, I made new friends all the time, I played sports and I wasn't stressing over my grades. Toward the start of my junior year, I got a little worried because I wasn't exactly sure what I wanted to do.

"I've always had the entrepreneurial mindset, but I wasn't sure how to go about it. I've thought about going to trade school to become an electrician, going to college majoring in business, and many other ideas. Toward the end of my junior year, I was introduced to Mountain View by a friend. I educated myself about the different programs and opportunities they

offered. But what really sold me on coming here was the fact that I could graduate early.

"While attending Mountain View, I noticed some other major things. First was that the staff here really make it feel like a second home, not just another school. There's [an FCPS] survey here every year that students take, asking questions to collect data and make changes if they need to. One of the questions was, 'How many adults in the building would you be able to comfortably speak to about a personal problem?'

"I usually skip over that question, but answering it here at Mountain View made me realize, 'Dang, these are some good people.' They make you feel comfortable here and let you know that it's OK to express how you feel. Another big thing is the opportu-



Yosef Alemayehu



Zuhaydee Feliciano

nities. Of course, schools in Fairfax County all provide many opportunities, but a lot of times, you never know about them. [Here], I learned about them and wish I knew sooner.

"A huge opportunity that only Mountain View offers is a program rewarding students with scholarship money which comes from donors who really care about this

school and its students. This really locked in for me the idea of staying here. This changes students' futures and could be the reason I attend Old Dominion University. After graduating today, I plan on completing my pre-licensing real-estate course, attending college, continuing to work and running my online business.

SEE MOUNTAIN VIEW, PAGE 15

Students Praised for 'Perseverance, Grit and Heart'

FROM PAGE 8

teach – and those qualities matter now, more than ever."

Whether now heading to college, work, the military, starting a business or taking time to figure things out, Whatley told the grads to remember that "the world isn't asking you to fit into a mold. It's waiting for you to show up exactly as you are and help shape what comes next.

"Success isn't just the diploma you receive tonight. It's the courage to keep moving forward. To keep proving – especially to yourself – that you're capable of more than you once believed. Class of 2026, your journey didn't look like everyone else's. You broke the mold, and that's exactly why tonight and this accomplishment matters.

Stand proud. This next chapter is yours, and this moment belongs to you."

Then, after the two student

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speakers shared their stories (see sidebar), the school presented three special awards:

❖ The Citizenship Award is given to a student who's helped build a positive school community. Assistant Principal Tomás Ovalle presented it to Diyora Djafarova.

❖ The Personal Achievement Award goes to a student who succeeded academically and personally, despite having adult responsibilities, such as a job or a child. Science teacher Jenifer Von Fahnestock gave it to Aiyana-Marie Pippen.

❖ The Faculty Excellence Award is given to the student achieving the greatest academic and personal success, despite significant obstacles. Before presenting it to Yosef Alemayehu, English teacher Leslie Chekin said he's "one of those people who always has a plan. He works full time managing, among other things, his own online business. And at school,



Yoseira Valenzuela Barrera with her diploma and Erin Whatley.

his positive attitude, outstanding effort, consistency and excellent attendance demonstrated that he wasn't going to let small things get in his way.

"Yosef has a curious mind and was a quick study; he mastered dif-



Grad Diyora Djafarova with (from left) mom Shahlo Khodjiburbonova, dad Ikromjon Jafarov and sister Marjona Djafarova.

ficult material in his classes. And at the same time, it's really hard not to be impressed by his remarkable humility and his respect for his teachers and peers. He's been a quiet leader in every way, and it's not surprising that he also aspires

to major in business and one day run his own company. So we're delighted to present Yosef with the Faculty Excellence Award, and we're very proud that Mountain View could be part of your journey. Congratulations."

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FCPS' New Western High School Official Name



SCREENSHOT: YOU TUBE

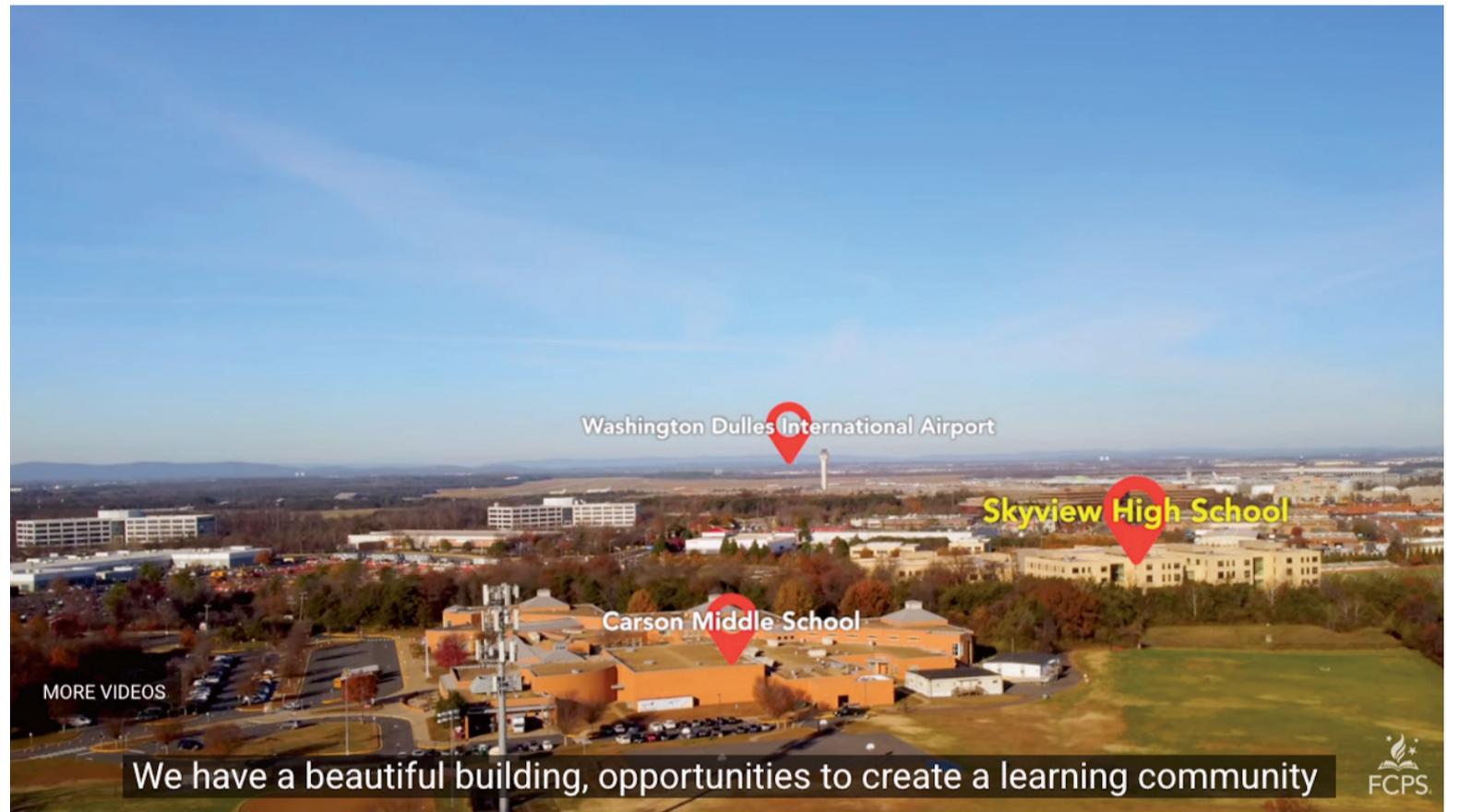
Dave Jagels, principal of Skyview High School in Herndon

Meet Skyview High School's new principal.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Fairfax County School Board unanimously voted Skyview High School as the official name of the division's newest school at its board meeting on Feb. 12. Located at 2949 Education Drive in Herndon, Fairfax County Public Schools finalized the \$150 million purchase of the former King Abdullah Academy on Aug. 15, 2025 and had been temporarily referencing the state-of-the-art facility with its 30 acre campus as the "Western High School." Superintendent Michelle Reid said choosing a name is an important milestone.

"The name 'Skyview' represents



Skyview High School is the official name of the formerly- called Fairfax County Public School's Western High School, purchased as a state-of-the-arts facility on 30 acres for \$150 million in August of 2025.

the limitless potential and opportunities we aspire to for our students as they engage in 22nd-century learning and innovation, and prepare for careers yet to be imagined," Reid said.

In addition to the core curriculum found in the division's traditional high schools, Skyview High School will offer three specific fields: aerospace science, technology, and artificial intelligence and machine learning, creating a future tech ecosystem.

Student enrollment is underway under the leadership of Principal Dave Jagels. "We have a beautiful building, opportunities to create a learning community together, a chance to build culture, climate in sports, athletics, band, performing arts, and all of that together in a

way that's never been done before," Jagels said in an FCPS video. "This is probably the pinnacle opportunity of my career." Jagels oversaw the opening of Westfield High School in Chantilly. Skyview is the division's first new high school since Westfield officially opened its doors in September 2000.

Given that FCPS's comprehensive boundary review has been completed, the process for a new boundary review for Skyview High School begins soon, with new options developed from the ground up and a final decision in June. The upcoming school year starts in August 2026 under an opt-in model. The yet-to-be-determined new boundaries will be implemented for the 2027-28 school year.

Skyview High School to Undergo Full 2232 Review

No public hearing scheduled yet.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County Public Schools is planning to open its new Skyview High School for the 2026-27 school year to 9th and 10th graders who opt in as it seeks to enroll 1,000 students for the opening academic year.

However, Skyview High School is currently undergoing a full 2232 Review Process. This includes a staff report and recommendation, which will be presented to the planning commission at a future public hearing.

Planning Division Director Kelly M. Atkinson of the Fairfax County Department of Planning and Development said in an email to The Connection, on Feb. 12, "No public hearing has been scheduled at this time."

The term "2232 review" is derived from a Code of Virginia requirement under Section 15.2-2232. According to Fairfax County

ty Planning and Development, the county's 2232 review process "determines the compatibility of proposed public facilities with the locational guidelines established in the Comprehensive Plan." Specifically, this process determines if the general or approximate location, character and extent are in substantial accord with the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan.

"The application has been distributed to numerous agencies for review and comment," Atkinson said.

"We are aiming to schedule a planning commission public hearing for mid-spring of 2026.

This date will depend on the continued review of the application and coordination with FCPS, but we do not anticipate any challenges at this time."

While FCPS originally considered the "feature shown" designation, a regulatory shortcut version instead of the full review



SCREENSHOT FCPS.EDU/SKYVIEW

A Fairfax County Planning Commission public hearing for mid-spring of 2026 is anticipated for Skyview High School, Fairfax County Public Schools's newest high school.

with a public hearing, the shift from the private King Abdullah Academy to a public high school with a design capacity of more

than 2,000 students is a significant change in the extent of the facility, thereby mandating a full public review.

Reston Association Election Follows Loss of CEO

With over 22,000 homes, Reston Association is one of the largest homeowners associations in the United States. Unlike smaller associations of condominiums and townhomes in Reston which are self-managed by the homeowners themselves or a local management company, RA is operated by a staff of its own (about 110 full-timers) and employs a Chief Executive Officer recruited through a nationwide selection process. Then there is the Board of Directors, volunteers elected by Reston homeowners and renters to set Association policy and goals and monitor their accomplishment. Since I served three years on the Board with Robert Simon many years ago, I have followed the organization pretty closely. As a political scientist, this sort of comes naturally. From my vantage point, I think RA generally has quality staff doing a good job for its members. On the other hand, Boards of Directors' performance has varied considerably as a function of the people serving on it at any given time, while CEOs have

generally been competent managers at least since the 1990s.

In my personal opinion perhaps the best CEO among them was Mac Cummins who recently resigned after serving three productive years. His record of accomplishment speaks

volumes. For example: 1) He balanced the budget. When he arrived annual budgets submitted by staff and CEOs constantly exceeded implementation. Cummins reduced that excess by about ninety percent! 2) He believed RA needed a signature event for the membership and came up with Winterfest, a concept which staff enthusiastically made a huge success; 3) He expanded and strengthened member services, including "point of sale" facilities at the Reston Farmers Market.; 4) He recruited and hired a strong management team including a new COO, a sorely needed Chief Financial Officer, Environmental Director, and HR Manager. What a difference!; and,



Independent Progressive
John Lovaas

5) Cummins worked to advocate successfully against a casino in Reston!

Some Reston homeowners have grown increasingly concerned about the performance of the Board of Directors, especially so in the last year and a half.

I'm one of them. I found the meetings I attended or saw on YouTube painful to watch. It turned out that others watching the Board meetings were even more concerned than I and had formed a group to monitor Board meetings, analyze Board performance with the help of Chat GPT using established criteria to measure effectiveness and efficiency, and periodically report their findings to the Board. When I learned of the group and met with them, I was amazed at how much their analyses paralleled my own observations.

Despite the efforts of the current Board President, in particular, to keep the meetings orderly and on track to get through agendas, a

few directors constantly made it difficult to finalize decisions and often used various procedural tactics to reopen settled matters. These actions prolonged meetings well past their scheduled three hours, sometimes into the wee hours of the next morning. The lines between policy oversight and governance (the Board's role) and micro-management became blurred. Meetings ended up dominated by process, delay and second guessing. When a board becomes dysfunctional, as I believe this one has, the consequences can be predictable. When the executive leadership is constrained and publicly undermined, leadership turnover can be expected now and in the future until the dysfunction is no more. Let's hope we see positive change in that direction as a result of the upcoming end of Board terms and the RA Board elections.

To see the dysfunction discussed above for yourself, go to YouTube and grind through some tapes of RA Board meetings or you can see summarized AI analyses of them on Facebook under the group named RAMBO.

National School Resource Officer Appreciation Day, Feb. 15

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Fairfax County Police Department recognized National School Resource Officer (SRO) Appreciation Day on Feb. 15, honoring officers who work to secure county public schools and build connections with students and educators. The department has 51 school resource officers (SROs) assigned to high, secondary, and middle schools across the county's public school division, according to the FCPD Public Affairs Bureau.

The program "plays an important role in keeping our schools safe while strengthening relationships between law enforcement, students, families, and school staff," FCPD media relations said in a statement.

The National Association of School Resource Officers established the appreciation day in

2022. SROs often serve as mentors and problem-solvers, frequently taking on additional roles as coaches and club advisors.

According to the department, many officers seek out the assignment for the opportunity to build positive relationships with youth. "Being present in schools every day allows them to be more than just a uniform," the FCPD stated. "They become trusted adults whom students feel comfortable talking to."

FCPD's officers selected for the SRO program receive specialized training in mental health, crisis intervention, and disability awareness.

They also study restorative justice, implicit bias, and cultural competency in partnership with Fairfax County Public Schools. Additionally, officers undergo active violence response training with SWAT to strengthen coordination during critical incidents.



PHOTO COURTESY OF FCPD MEDIA
A Fairfax County Public Schools student stands with a school resource officer.

ENTERTAINMENT

NOW THRU FEB. 24

Bernie Boston, A Retrospective Photography Exhibition. At Pleasant Grove Church and McLean Community Center. Presented by McLean Project for the Arts and The Friends of Pleasant Grove. Sponsored by The Friends of Historic Pleasant Grove, 8641 Lewinsville Road, McLean. Visit www.historicpleasantgrove.org.

AARP FOUNDATION TAX-AIDE PROGRAM

The AARP Foundation Tax-Aide program is returning for the 2026 tax season, offering free federal (and many state) tax preparation and e-filing by IRS-certified volunteers. Services begin the first week of February at multiple locations, with Mason District Government Center and Columbia Pike Library opening slightly earlier on Jan. 30. Eleven centers across Northern Virginia also prepare Virginia returns, and some sites assist with Maryland and DC filings.

Who can participate? Tax-Aide serves taxpayers of all ages, with a focus on low- and middle-income residents and seniors. Counselors handle nearly all types of income and work to ensure clients claim all deductions and credits for which they qualify.

Taxpayers should bring:

- ❖ Photo ID
- ❖ Social Security cards for themselves and dependents
- ❖ Copy of last year's tax return
- ❖ All current-year tax documents (W-2s, 1099s, 1098-T, brokerage statements, pension/IRA statements, etc.)
- ❖ Records for itemized deductions, education credits, and residential energy credits
- ❖ Bank account and routing numbers for direct deposit or debit

For more information and to find a site near you, visit: AARP Foundation Tax-Aide Information <https://www.novataxaide.org/>

FAIRFAX SYMPHONY

ORCHESTRA SCHEDULE

The Fairfax Symphony Orchestra (FSO) continues its 2025 - 2026 season with an exciting slate of performances still ahead. Featuring world-renowned guest artists, cinematic favorites performed live, and orchestral masterworks, the upcoming concerts offer something for every music lover.

March 5 - Patti LuPone 25th Anniversary Tour of *Matters of the Heart*: Three-time Tony Award® winner Patti LuPone returns in her acclaimed theatrical concert celebrating love, heartbreak, and the power of song.

March 7 - Mozart, Leshnoff, Mendelssohn with Demarre McGill, flute: Featuring the World Premiere of Jonathan Leshnoff's *Flute Concerto No. 2*, alongside Mozart's *Flute Concerto No. 2* and Mendelssohn's exuberant *Italian Symphony*.

March 14 - *How to Train Your Dragon In Concert*: The beloved DreamWorks film comes alive as the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra performs John Powell's score live to film at Capital One Hall.

March 29 - Rick Steves' *Europe: A Symphonic Journey*: Travel icon Rick Steves joins the FSO on stage for a musical tour across Europe, blending storytelling, stunning visuals, and orchestral favorites.

May 31 - Prokofiev with Claire Huangci, piano: The season concludes with a powerful program featuring pianist Claire Huangci, Prokofiev's *Piano Concerto No. 3*, and *Symphony No. 5*.

Performances take place at premier venues including the Harris Theatre and Center for the Arts at George Mason University, and Capital One Hall. More information and tickets available at FairfaxSymphony.org

BLACK HISTORY MONTH EVENTS

Honor Black history through meaningful pro-



As part of Black History Month, be sure to catch "The Evolution of Jazz" by award-winning performer Alison Crockett at Sherwood Regional and Centreville Regional Libraries, Saturday, Feb. 21.

grams that explore African American history, culture and lived experiences across Fairfax County. Throughout February and beyond, the Fairfax County Park Authority offers engaging events, exhibits and interpretive programs for all ages that highlight the essential role Black individuals and communities have played in shaping the county's past and present.

From stories of resilience and labor to traditions, skills and community life, these programs invite visitors to learn, reflect and connect with history at park and historic sites across the county.

Programs and Events

Black History Month at the Meeting House Frying Pan Farm Park, Feb. 21, noon–2 p.m. Free Remembrance: Enslaved Lives at Sully Sully Historic Site, Feb. 21, 1–2 p.m. \$10 Enslaved Lives and the Legacy of Slavery Historic Huntley, Feb. 19, 1–2:30 p.m. \$12 Grit and Grain: African American Millers Colvin Run Mill, Feb. 28, 2–3 p.m. \$10

BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2026 IN FAIRFAX COUNTY

Unite, Uplift and Celebrate: A Black History Month Celebration — Fairfax County Government Center, Friday, Feb. 20. Join your neighbors for an evening celebrating Black History Month. Enjoy local performances, interactive activities, enlightening discussion and light refreshments. Festivities kick off at 5 p.m.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH AT LIBRARIES

In celebration of both Black History Month and America's 250th Anniversary, Fairfax County Public Library is honoring the history, contributions and civic impact of Black Americans with a variety of author presentations, children's programs, musical performances, book discussions and more.

Author S.A. Cosby at The Alden at McLean Community Center — Saturday, Feb. 21. Cosby is the author of the critically acclaimed southern crime novels "King of Ashes," "All the Sinners Bleed," "Razorblade Tears" and "Blacktop Wasteland." A book sale and signing will follow the event.

"The Evolution of Jazz" by Award-winning Performer Alison Crockett — Sherwood Regional and Centreville Regional Libraries, Saturday, Feb. 21. Join Alison as she takes the audience through a sonic journey of the language of jazz music from its spiritual beginnings to the present.

Readers of all ages can also learn about and honor the lives of influential Black Americans



Walk in the Woods on Saturday, Feb. 21, 2026 at E.C. Lawrence Park in Chantilly.

by checking out a book from these lists, put together by the Library's Collection Marketing team:

BLACK HISTORY MONTH AT COUNTY PARKS

Embark on a journey of cultural richness and historical significance this Black History Month with our engaging programs across Fairfax County Parks. Join us in honoring and exploring the vibrant tapestry of Black heritage through interactive events for all ages.

Black History Month at the Meeting House — Frying Pan Farm Park, Feb. 7 or 21. The Frying Pan Baptist Meeting House will be open select Saturdays in February from noon to 2 p.m. Interpretive signage will be posted throughout the site for guests to read about the Black history of the Meeting House and stories of the people from the community. Stay for just a few minutes or a couple hours. Registration is free but required to attend.

Remembrance: Enslaved Lives at Sully — Sully Historic Site, Feb. 8 or 21. Learn about the lives and legacy of the people enslaved at Sully Historic Site from the 1700s to the Civil War. This tour includes a walk into the original outbuildings, main house and representative housing for the enslaved. Sully is on the National Register of Historic Places and is part of the National Park Service Underground Railroad Network to Freedom. The tour is held weather permitting. This program links to the VA250 and the Fairfax250 commemoration.

Enslaved Lives and the Legacy of Slavery — Historic Huntley, Thursday, Feb. 19. Join a historian for a tour of Huntley that examines the relationship of the Mason family to slavery and recovers insights into the lives of the Humphrey family and other enslaved people whose labor maintained Mason wealth and social status.

Grit & Grain: African American Millers — Colvin Run Mill, Saturday, Feb. 28. African Americans' labor, experience and knowledge were

crucial to 19th-century grist milling. Explore a historic mill as you discuss the contributions of African American millers in Fairfax County. This program links to the VA250 and Fairfax 250 commemoration.

HERO: The Boy from Troy, A New Musical About Young John Lewis — Friday, March 6 at McLean Community Center. This family-friendly production follows a modern-day student who discovers the inspiring true story of John Lewis's journey from preaching to his family's chickens to becoming a Civil Rights hero who championed "good trouble." With music, history and heart, this 45-minute musical introduces young audiences to the power of courage and community.

"Ain't No Back to a Merry-Go-Round" Movie Screening and Talk-Back with Ilana Trachtman — Wednesday, Feb. 18 at Reston Community Center. In the summer of 1960, five Howard University students defied segregation by riding the whites-only carousel at Glen Echo Amusement Park — an act of quiet courage that ignited a powerful and unexpected alliance with the local white community. Their protest drew national attention, galvanized union support and helped shape a new generation of activists, including ten 1961 Freedom Riders, among them Stokely Carmichael, and a landmark Supreme Court case. The movie brings this long-overlooked chapter of the Civil Rights Movement to life through never-before-seen footage and powerful narration. Stay after the screening for a discussion with director Ilana Trachtman.

Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble — Saturday, Feb. 28. Internationally renowned, the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble brings more than 50 years of African American tradition and modern dance legacy to the stage. Blending the iconic with the innovative, the company delivers performances marked by power, passion and extraordinary beauty. Through movement that uplifts the spirit and resonates deeply, the ensemble offers an experience that is both artistically stunning and emotionally transformative.

ENTERTAINMENT

THIRD SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

Monthly Model Trains Showcase. 1-4 p.m.

At Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Rd, Fairfax Station. Visit the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum for its Monthly Model Trains Showcase, a delightful gathering for model train enthusiasts and families alike! Every 3rd Sunday, from February through November, they invite hobbyists and curious visitors to explore the fascinating world of model trains, featuring either N or T scale model trains. The March model train show is Sunday, March 15, 2026, from 1-4 p.m. Admission: Museum members and ages 4 and under, free; ages 5-12, \$4; ages 13 and older, \$6. Military/First Responders/Teachers (with ID) \$5. Seniors (65+), \$5. www.fairfax-station-railroad-museum.org. 703-425-9225. www.facebook.com/ffxsrr.

FIRST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

Hands On Days at Fairfax Station Railroad Museum. 1-4 p.m.

At 11200 Fairfax Station Road in Fairfax Station. The next Hands On Day is scheduled for Sunday, March 1, 2026, from 1-4 p.m. The museum is hosting this community event with our Station Master Volunteer, Mario. Join community Model Train Enthusiasts who will set up their trains and share their love of Model Railroading. Come and see local train enthusiasts, many allow you to 'drive' their trains. This is not a 'club' event but rather local families coming together to share their love of Model Trains. Admission: Museum members and ages 4 and under, free; ages 5-12, \$4; ages 13 and older, \$6. Military/First Responders/Teachers (with ID) \$5. Seniors (65+), \$5. www.fairfax-station-railroad-museum.org. 703-425-9225. www.facebook.com/ffxsrr.

FIVE-PART BETTER ARGUMENTS WORKSHOP SERIES.

The Better Arguments Project, developed by the Aspen Institute, is part of William & Mary's broader Democracy Initiative, which advances civil discourse, civic engagement, and the skills needed to live and lead in a pluralistic society. William & Mary is a national leader in bringing this work into classrooms, campuses, and communities. The series is free and open to the public, and participants are welcome to attend any individual session - there is no expectation to attend all five.

This free series is hosted by Radhika Murari (W&M '95), a member of the William & Mary Washington Campus Advisory Board in the spirit of William & Mary's commitment to democratic engagement. Each workshop centers on one core Better Arguments tenet:

- ❖ Workshop 2: Prioritize Relationships and Listen Passionately; Mar 10, 2026; 6-8 pm; Reston, VA Focus on building honest connections. Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/WMMarch10>
- ❖ Workshop 3: Pay Attention to Context; Apr 14, 2026; 6-8 pm; Reston, VA Acknowledge the many factors that may influence beliefs. Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/WMApril14>
- ❖ Workshop 4: Embrace Vulnerability; May 12, 2026; 6-8 pm; Reston, VA Consider the benefits of opening up. Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/BetterMay12>
- ❖ Workshop 5: Make Room to Transform; June 9, 2026; 6-8 pm; Reston, VA Be open to new and varied perspectives. Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/WMJune9>

REPAIR CAFE

Fairfax County Repair Cafe is a team of volunteer "fixers" with a variety of skills. They diagnose, repair and recommend. Bring your items or questions and join them.

Examples include sewing repairs, small appliance fixes, jewelry repair, computer help, knife sharpening, community fun. Upcoming dates:

- ❖ Saturday, March 14th, 2026, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. @ Thomas Jefferson Library 7415 Arlington Boulevard, Falls Church.

NOW THRU FEB. 28

McLean Art Society and McLean Art Gallery "From the Heart" Exhibition. At Chesterbrook Shopping Center, 6224B Old Dominion Drive,



The Lion Dance! Honolulu Theatre for Youth will perform "The Great Race: The Story of the Chinese Zodiac" on Saturday, Feb. 28, 2026 at the McLean Community Center.

McLean. This February, the McLean Art Gallery is pleased to feature "From the Heart," a new exhibition from the local nonprofit McLean Art Society. Members of the public are invited to enjoy 170 new works from more than 40 local artists. Included are paintings in oil, acrylic, pastel, watercolor and mixed media; drawings; photography; sculpture; and works in wood, glass, ceramics and jewelry. "Put your heart into art" at our Opening Reception on Friday, February 6 from 5-7 p.m.

NOW THRU MARCH 1

Reston Art Gallery Presents A Touch of Red. At 11400 Washington Plaza W # B, Reston. Reston Art Gallery is pleased to present A Touch of Red, an all-member show that incorporates red across a diverse collection of works. A Touch of Red invites viewers to explore the many meanings and moods associated with the color red. From subtle accents to bold focal points, red serves as a unifying element throughout the exhibition, often symbolizing energy, warmth, and vitality. As an all-member show, the exhibit highlights the breadth of talent within the Reston Art Gallery. Works span a variety of media, including painting, sculpture, mobiles, fabric art, and mixed media created by the gallery's member artists—Pat Macintyre, Julia Tova Malakoff, Sandra Dovberg, Rosemarie Forsythe, Marthe McGrath, Jennifer Duncan, and Cindy Grisdela—as well as adjunct members Doug Fuller and Wayne Schiffelbein. An opening reception will be held on Sunday, February 15, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., and the public is warmly invited to attend.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 18

"Year of the Red Fire House Lunar New Year Celebration" at 7 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Featuring the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company. The show intertwines traditional and contemporary dance, and will also include a

traditional Dragon.

THURSDAY/FEB. 19

"Spettacolo" Film. 1 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. "Spettacolo" is a portrait of the 50-year-old tradition of turning their lives into a play, where the town's piazza becomes a stage and every villager from 6 to 90 plays a part...the role of themselves. The film is rated PG, and admission is free.

FEB. 19 TO MARCH 8

"Between Riverside and Crazy." At 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill Road, Tysons. A play by Stephen Adly Guirgis, directed by José Carrasquillo. When: Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays at 7:30 p.m., Saturdays at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m. Tickets: \$25-\$55 general admission, \$15 students, educators, and military. Purchase online at www.1ststage.org or call 703-854-1856.

FRIDAY/FEB. 20

Les Ballets Africains. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Les Ballets Africains brings Africa's rich tradition of music and dance to the Center for the Arts. Founded in 1952 to serve as cultural ambassador for the Republic of Guinea, the company has toured the world and become known for "dazzling, high-speed footwork" (LA Times) as well as "sheer physical energy and beauty" (New York Times).

SATURDAY/FEB. 21

FocusMusic presents Andrew McKnight and Beyond Borders. 7 p.m. At The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Sterling, 22135 Davis Dr., Suite 104, Sterling. Advance tickets \$25 / day-of and door \$30 (member / congregation as-applicable \$25 at the door). Webcast tickets are \$15. Info and tickets at <https://focusmusic.org/sat-2-21-andrew>



A Facilitator-Guided Journaling Workshop will be held on Wednesday, Feb. 25, 2026 Virtual via Reston Library.



The Burke Historical Society will meet on Sunday, Feb. 22, 2026 at Pohick Regional Library in Burke.

mcknight-sterling

SATURDAY/FEB. 21

Walk in the Woods. 1 p.m. At E.C. Lawrence Park, 5040 Walney Road, Chantilly. Join us for a family-friendly outdoor nature walk with an outdoor Bingo hunt that will be for the enjoyment for kids of all ages (children must be accompanied by an adult). There will be prizes and free hot chocolate and a snack for participants of the walk." Please use the link to register: <https://lordoflifeva.church-center.com/registrations/events/3373342>

SUNDAY/FEB. 22

Burke Historical Society. 3-4:30 p.m. At Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Christopher J. Bright, Ph.D., will speak on the U.S. Army's anti-aircraft defenses in Fairfax County from 1950 to 1974, the community reaction, and Soviet efforts to learn more about these measures.

SUNDAY/FEB. 22

Cold War Lecture. 7 p.m. Zoom only. The next Cold War Conversation Presentation Series Lecture In Extremis Project Management and Crisis Leadership: The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962: Speaker David S. Maurer will talk about his book which explores how the application of project management and crisis leadership principles led to the end of the Cuban Missile Crisis. In the balance was the fate of the entire world. The tumultuous and now famous thirteen days that precipitated the negotiated peaceful resolution have been viewed and reviewed through thousands of interviews, hundreds of books and dozens of documentaries and movies, yet the ordeal has never been analyzed through the lens of project management and crisis leadership. This presentation examines the possible courses of action presented to and conceived by the President and his chosen advisors.

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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Legals

Legals

Legal Notice

Notification is hereby given that JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A., 1111 Polaris Parkway, Columbus, Ohio 43240 has filed an application with the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (the "OCC") on or about February 18, 2026, as specified in 12 CFR Part 5, for permission to establish a domestic branch at the southwest corner of the intersection of Walker Road and Georgetown Pike (aka VA 193), Great Falls, Fairfax County, VA 22066. If you have any additional comments, you can send them to the Director for Large Bank Licensing, Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, 7 Times Square, 10th Floor Mailroom, New York, New York 10036 or LicensingPublicComments@occ.treas.gov., within 30 days of the date of this publication. The public portion of the filing is available upon request from the OCC. The public may find information about the filing (including the closing date of the comment period) in the OCC's Weekly Bulletin available at www.occ.gov.

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BULLETIN

FROM PAGE 2

Amazon, you can pay by personal check for these items. Please send your check, made out to ALNV, to P.O. Box 209, Herndon, VA 20172 and include "Wish List/month" in the memo line. (E.g., if you order in February, please write Wish List/February.)

Give yourself a boost knowing that your generosity will make it easier for students to be focused during the school day. Visit www.alnv.org to learn more about Assistance League.

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. Visit the website at <https://scmaf.org/volunteer>, or email contact@scmaf.org.

VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

Would you like to help a neighbor feel less lonely? Will you help someone get much-needed groceries? Form new connections and make a meaningful difference. Older adults in the Annandale, Falls Church, and Alexandria regions are waiting for volunteer social visitors and grocery shoppers. If you can give the gift of your time, consider providing invaluable support to someone in your community. Learn more about Volunteer Solutions at bit.ly/FXVSVOL or email VolunteerSolutions@FairfaxCounty.gov or call 703-324-5406.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Parent Support Partners, a service of the Healthy Minds Fairfax initiative, are all parents who have received training and are qualified to offer education, support and assistance at no cost to families or caregivers. They provide reliable information that families can use in decision-making and are familiar with services and resources that can help families in distress. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/healthy-minds/fairfax or www.nami-northernvirginia.org/parent-peer-support.html.

The Shepherd's Center of Northern Virginia Caregivers' Support Group takes place the first and third Tuesdays of each month, 10-11:30 a.m. via Zoom. This group is for caregivers of family members with dementia. Meetings are gently facilitated. For more information and to get the Zoom link, contact Jack Tarr at jtarr5@verizon.net or 703-821-6838.

Haven of Northern Virginia Support Group. 703-941-7000, www.havenofnova.org or havenofnova@verizon.net.

Virginia Chronic Pain Support Group Meets from 1:30-3 p.m. the 2nd Wednesday of each month at Kaplan Center for Integrative Medicine, 6829 Elm St., Suite 300, McLean. Group leader, Jodi Brayton, LCSW. 703-532-4892.

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ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 13

On a deeper level, it considers how these advisors formed a team of sorts, identified a leader, developed a process, and presented a set of deliverables (in this case, options) to the President.

FEB. 22-28

Fooduary Event. At National Harbor, Md. Featuring two dozen participating locations, Fooduary is a celebration of food and entertainment with specially priced prix fixe menus, cooking and cocktail demonstrations, wine dinners, and exclusive entertainment offers. Dining options range from a traditional \$55 three-course prix fixe dinner menu, to two for \$55 menu (one shared appetizer, two entrées, and one shared dessert). Additional offerings include a \$40 dinner menu, a \$25 lunch menu, and \$25 weekend brunch. Participating restaurants include SUCCOTASH, The Walrus Oyster & Ale House, Rosa Mexicano, McCormick & Schmick's, Silver Diner, and Mason Famous Lobster Rolls. A \$15 fast casual menu is also available at BurgerFi and mezeh mediterranean grill. For those with a sweet tooth, there's a \$25 sampler bundle from Jamba, Auntie Anne's, Cinnabon, and Carvel. For more information on Fooduary, visit www.nationalharbor.com/fooduary.

SUNDAY/FEB. 22

The Borisevich Duo. 2 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave. McLean. The husband-wife pair is an Alden favorite and attracts larger crowds each year with their sweetly old-world sound and brilliant commentary! Tickets are available at mclean-center.org.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 25

Senior Movie Night: "Anniversary." 10 a.m. Reston Association sponsors senior movies at the movie theater at Reston Town Center.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 25

Facilitator-Guided Journaling Workshop. 6-7:30 p.m. Virtual via Reston Library. This workshop guides participants through a series of structured journaling practices designed to deepen self-awareness, clarify identity, strengthen personal agency, and expand emotional and relational intelligence. Led by

Shabnam Curtis, certified Integral Life Coach. Website: Facilitator-Guided Journaling Workshop - Fairfax Library Calendar - Library Home

FEB. 27 TO MARCH 8

Vienna Restaurant Week. At participating restaurants in Vienna. The annual, 10-day celebration highlights Vienna's diverse culinary scene with specially priced prix fixe menus, exclusive specials, and limited-time dining experiences at local favorites across town. The initial lineup showcases a wide range of cuisines and concepts, everything from cozy cafés and bakeries to global flavors and neighborhood taverns offering something for every palate. Participating restaurants include: Amma Vegetarian Kitchen, Bear Branch Tavern, Ben & Jerry's, Big Buns, Caboose Tavern, Cafe Renaissance, Caffe Amouri, Charlies Bowl, Chef Tan, Chick-fil-A Vienna, Cocoa Vienna, Crumb, Cuco's Peruvian, Evelyn Rose, FRAME Coffee Roasters, Foster's Grille, Ledo Pizza Vienna, Lily's Chocolate and Coffee, Maple Ave Restaurant, Oh My Dak, Peking Express of Vienna, Plaka Grill, Pure Green Vienna, Qamaria Yemeni Coffee, Rita's Italian Ice & Frozen Custard (Rita's of Vienna), Roberto's Ristorante Italiano, Royal Nepal Bistro, Seray, Shilla Bakery, Smoothie King, Social Burger, Sunflowers Vegetarian Restaurant, Sushi Koji, Sushi Yama, Tango Pastry Café, TeaDM, The Red Bird Hot Chicken & Fries, Viet Aroma, Vienna Thai and Bar, and Vivi Bubble Tea.

SATURDAY/FEB. 28

Metropolitan Jazz Orchestra with Vaughn Wiester Presents The Music of Stan Kenton. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Audience favorite Metropolitan Jazz Orchestra returns to celebrate the music of Grammy Award-winning jazz bandleader, composer, and pianist Stan Kenton. Known for his innovative and brassy approach to big band jazz, he developed what became known in the 1940s as "The Wall of Sound."

SATURDAY/FEB. 28

Karate Kids Adventure Day. At Chantilly Family Martial Arts, Chantilly. A fun and active event to encourage physical activity, confidence, and positive social interaction in a safe, welcoming environment. Event activities: Age-appropriate obstacle courses;

Team-based karate games and challenges; Creative coloring stations

Admission is \$10 per child, with parents attending free. New families also receive the opportunity to stay for a complimentary introductory karate class. Registration link: <https://tinyurl.com/CFMAadventureday>

SATURDAY/FEB. 28

Lion Dance! Honolulu Theatre for Youth will perform "The Great Race: The Story of the Chinese Zodiac" at 6 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. It is a beloved tale about the origin story of how each animal earned a place in the Chinese Zodiac. Tickets are available at mcleancenter.org.

SATURDAY/FEB. 28

Reston Association Seasonal Job Fair. 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. At RA Headquarters, 12001 Sunrise Valley Drive, Reston. Ideal opportunity for teens, college students home for the summer, and anyone seeking flexible. With a wide range of temporary positions available in Aquatics, Camps, Maintenance, Tennis, and Member Services, the event is an ideal place to launch a rewarding seasonal job - or even a future career - with Reston Association.

RA's seasonal roles offer a great fit for:

- ❖ Teens looking for their first job
- ❖ College students returning home for the summer
- ❖ Retirees or adults seeking flexible, part-time hours
- ❖ Anyone who wants to work in a supportive, community-focused environment

MARCH 5-8

Tysons Library Quarterly Book & Media Sale. At Tysons Pimmit Regional Library, 7584 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church. Huge selection of books and media for all ages and interests. Proceeds benefit the Tysons-Pimmit Regional Library and related activities. Donations of books and media appreciated. Thursday, 5 March, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Friday, 6 March, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Saturday, 7 March, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Sunday, 8 March, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.: Bag sale. \$10 for a full grocery sack or half price if less.

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.

Mountain View Graduates Share Their Stories

FROM PAGE 9

"Most importantly, I want to continue growing my relationship with God. And I want to thank everyone who's ever given me advice and motivation - and a special shout-out to my siblings. I'm always able to run into my older sister's room any time, for any reason. No matter how mad I get, my little sister always comes and gives me a hug. And my brother is just like my twin - we've got a lot of great memories. They're always supporting me in everything I do, and I'm forever grateful.

"Mountain View has helped me a lot in making these big decisions for my future, and I'll continue staying in touch, even after I've graduated. Thank you everyone for showing up tonight, and congratulations to all our graduates."

Zuhaydee Feliciano

"You all should feel really proud of yourselves. You're doing something today that lots of us, including myself, didn't think we could, so make some noise for yourselves. I moved to New York when I was 10 or 11; before that, I moved to [many] new places. In total, including this one, I've been to 13 different schools. I was a pretty good kid; but, looking back, I realize I was just a young, naïve girl

who wasn't ready for what was to come.

"Not going to lie; I thought high school would be like a Disney movie without the singing. Instead, [it was about] friendships, relationships, life and so much more. I was introduced to new things and people while trying to fit in. Always being the new girl wasn't easy, and I ended up following a path I thought I was ready for.

"Once there, there was no turning back. I skipped school, was fighting and being bad and having a worse relationship with my family. I thought it was easier dropping out multiple times, living life and making money. Then things changed in how I saw people. Life made me realize I could get stuck somewhere without ever [being] free and happy.

"I realized I've got to do what's right for me. The first step was to get my diploma. Mountain View is a small school. But in this building, the love felt for its students is too big for the school to hold. [And] the administration makes you feel welcome, no matter where you're from.

"I moved here two years ago from New York. Originally, I was to go to Centreville High. Due to my past, they told me it would take longer to graduate with them. They recommended Mountain View. I thought about it, talked to my mom, then decided. I truly

don't think I would have ever gotten my diploma, [otherwise]. This school has dealt with my issues, always looking out for me and trying to do its best for me. With my records, no other school would have let me graduate.

"Mountain View gave me more than one chance. No matter the situation, they continued to support and help me through thick and thin. I'm grateful schools like this are still open. Now I can take a little break before going to college or a trade school - wherever my path may lead me. Everyone always asked me what I wanted to do in the future. For a long time, I didn't know. Lately, I made a plan to become an ultrasound technician, and a few other things, just in case.

"Thank you to the staff no longer at Mountain View that had to deal with younger me. Thank you, as well, to the newer staff this year that's gotten to know me and shown patience. Also, [counselor Michael] Todd has been through the most with me here, from attitudes through good and bad days, while continuing to support and help me.

"I also thank my parents for pushing me to the finish. I know I put you through a lot; but thank you for believing in me and seeing more than I could. Congratulations, everybody, and have a great night."

IMAGINE MORE

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