

Alexandria Gazette Packet



SERVING ALEXANDRIA FOR OVER 200 YEARS • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

MARCH 5, 2026

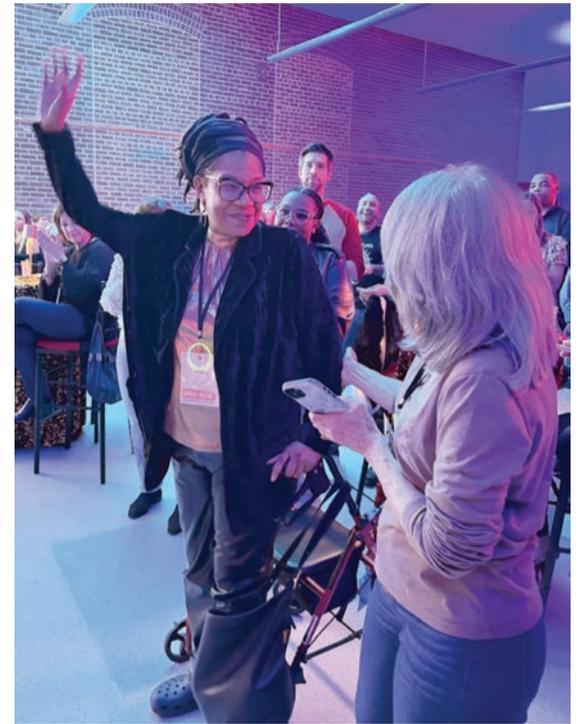


Jill Schaub, Shannon Steene, Virginia Kinneman and Jennifer Ferrara rock out at the Banding Together Gala to benefit the Center for Alexandria's Children Feb. 21 at the Durant Center. The gala raised more than \$146,000 to prevent and combat child abuse.



PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

CAC board chair Melissa Riddy, second from right, stands with honorees Dana Lawhorne, Debra Evans and John Porter at the Banding Together gala Feb. 21 at the Durant Center.



Former Deputy City Manager Debra Collins stands as she is recognized for her work in establishing the Center for Alexandria's Children at the CAC Banding Together Gala Feb. 21 at the Durant Center.

Banding Together CAC raises \$146k to combat child abuse.

By JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Music, community spirit, and a shared commitment to protecting children filled the Oswald Durant Center Feb. 21 as

the Center for Alexandria's Children hosted Banding Together: A Benefit Concert to End Child Abuse. The annual event raised more than \$146,000 to support CAC's work preventing and responding to child abuse across the city.

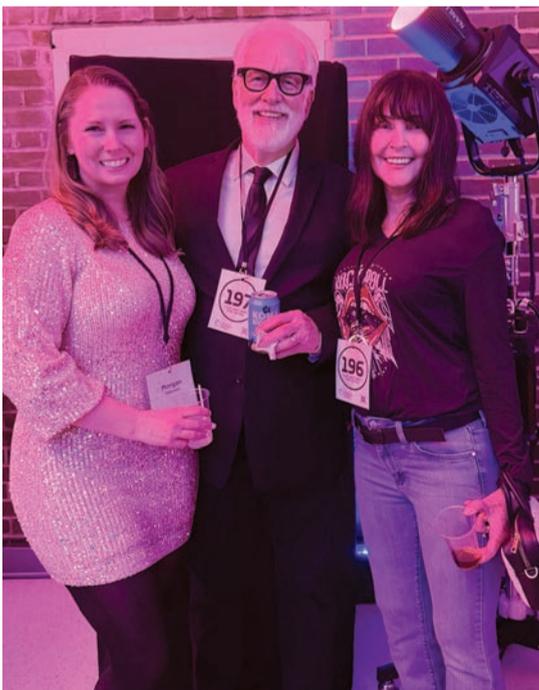
The glam rock-themed evening drew

more than 300 community leaders as guests enjoyed live performances by local favorites Guilty Ghost and School of Rock in Alexandria. Proceeds from the gala support the Center for Alexandria's Children, a nonprofit dedicated to ending child abuse through coordinated investigation, victim support,

prevention education and community collaboration.

A central part of the evening was the presentation of CAC's annual awards, recognizing individuals whose careers and leadership have strengthened safety and opportunity

SEE CAC RAISES \$146K, PAGE 12



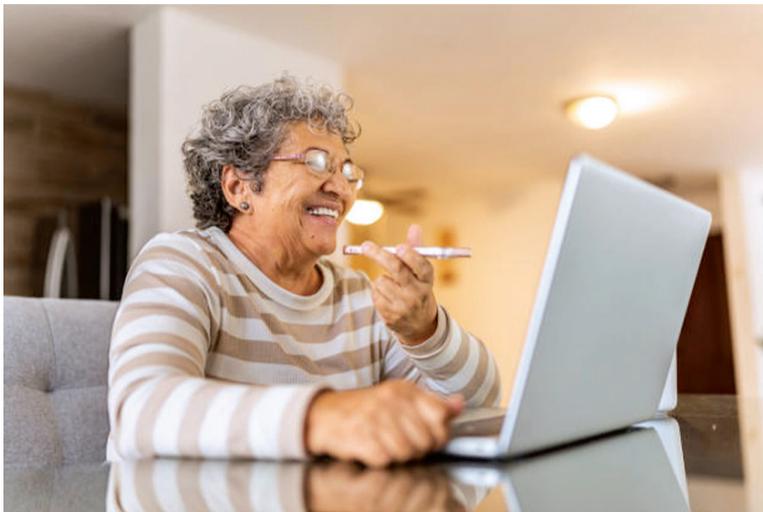
Morgan Babcock with Mike and Donna Anderson at the CAC Banding Together Gala Feb. 21 at the Durant Center.



Farhad Safaie, Pat Barbarito, Kris Clark (back turned), Jon Miller and Bari Duda at the CAC Banding Together Gala Feb. 21 at the Durant Center.



Burke & Herbert Bank vice president Joe Collum, left, presents the Champion for Children award to former Sheriff Dana Lawhorne at the CAC Banding Together gala Feb. 21 at the Durant Center.



SSA Speaker Series Continues

BY MARYANNE BEATTY
SENIOR SERVICES OF ALEXANDRIA

Senior Services of Alexandria's

Having a knowledge of technology is critical in today's world no matter what your age. Being comfortable using technology in a safe and responsible manner will help maintain your independence, stay connected, and make your life a little easier. There are so many tools out there to help and knowing which ones to use for what purpose can make all the difference in the world!

Senior Services of Alexandria's March 11 speaker series will focus on an overview of the latest technology including some specific tools geared toward older adults to make life more enjoyable. Participants will learn about the benefits of using AI and what to look for to make sure it is being used

March 11 Speaker Series
Senior Technology and
Avoiding Scams and Frauds
10-11:30 am
Beatley Library – 5005 Duke Street

effectively.

Attendees will also learn how to better identify and respond to emerging scams while developing smart, proactive digital safety habits.

The event is taking place on Wednesday, March 11, 10am-11:30am at Beatley Central Library, 5005 Duke Street in Alexandria. It is a free event with plenty of parking. Please RSVP online by emailing events@seniorservicesalex.org or call 703-836-4414, ext. 110.

This is a session you won't want to miss!



PHOTO BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Alexandrians Have Heart

Frank Fannon, kneeling, with organizers and donors of the Alexandrians Have Heart food and clothing drive Feb. 14 at the Coal Yard in Old Town. Fannon founded the fundraiser in 2009, which collects food and clothing donations for Christ House, Carpenter's Shelter, and the ALIVE! food bank.



PHOTO BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

RED ALERT -- Celebrating National Wear Red Day at the Alexandria Rehabilitation Center Feb. 6 are Nora Sanchez, Donna Shaw, Jane Hughes, Michelle Burnette, Udy Ekong and Josephine Tarawallie. National Wear Red Day is part of American Heart Month and aims to highlight the importance of heart health, especially for women, who are disproportionately affected by cardiovascular diseases. The day encourages individuals to wear red as a symbol of support and to spark conversations about heart health and prevention strategies.



PHOTO BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Celebrating Black Authors

Deacon Tim Tilghman, second from right, poses with authors CoCo Labo, Valarie Johnson, Elena Neely and Melanie Glynn as part of the Coffee With Local Black Authors Feb. 15 at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Old Town. The event was co-sponsored by the church and the Concerned Citizens Network of Alexandria in celebration of Black History Month. www.ccnalexandria.org



The National Park Service has denied the city to build a proposed pump station in Waterfront Park.



The boundaries of the city's pump station plan are marked off during a petition drive against the plan last September.

NPS Denies City's Pump Station Plan



PHOTO/CITY OF ALEXANDRIA

A rendering of the proposed pump station in Waterfront Park. The National Park Service has denied the city's proposal.

Waterfront Park to remain public park.

By JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

The National Park Service has formally denied the City of Alexandria's request to construct a flood mitigation pump station in Waterfront Park, halting a central component of the city's long-term plan to address chronic flooding along the Potomac River waterfront.

The decision follows a letter sent by the National Park Service to City Manager James Parajon dated Feb. 20, 2026. In the letter, NPS stated it would not support

the deed modifications required to allow construction of the proposed facility, determining that the pump station would be an "impermissible use" of the park.

Waterfront Park, located between King and Prince streets in Old Town, is subject to deed restrictions stemming from a 1981 settlement between the City of Alexandria and the federal government. Under that agreement, the park must remain an open-space public park in perpetuity, with only limited park-related structures permitted and a strict height restriction on any buildings. NPS cited those binding restrictions in its decision to deny the city's request.

"Protecting the Park from being turned into a stormwater storage site has been our top priority since we heard about it nearly two years ago," said Yvonne Callahan, president of the Old Town Civic Association

in announcing the decision of the NPS.

According to organizers against the proposal, the fact that construction of a pump station in the park is prohibited by law was raised repeatedly with every member of City Council, the Mayor and the City Manager.

Hundreds of residents spent thousands of hours getting signatures on petitions, including holding a "Paws for Pause" petition signing event in the park in September. "We should have never had to spend so much time and effort fighting a terrible proposal that has been clearly illegal since 1981," said one resident.

City officials had proposed building a two-story pump station in the park as part of the Waterfront Flood Mitigation Project, which was intended to address frequent flooding affecting public spaces



PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Paws for Pause petition drive garnered hundreds of signatures last September.

and nearby streets, including King Street, Prince Street, The Strand, and Union Street. The pump station was described by city staff as a long-term solution to increasing flood events driven by tidal activity and rising river levels.

The \$145 million project would have closed Waterfront Park and Point Lumley Park until 2028 while the seawall was renovated and a pump station was built.

The proposal had been the subject of sustained opposition from some residents and business owners in Old Town, who raised concerns about the size, location,

and visual impact of the structure within one of the city's most prominent public spaces. A Waterfront Alliance organization was formed and urged the city to consider alternative locations, including an existing vacant office building at 1 Prince Street. In late 2025, the city paused the project to study that alternative site.

While the denial effectively blocks construction within Waterfront Park, city leaders have said they will continue evaluating other flood mitigation options and locations that comply with federal restrictions.

SSA to Celebrate Community Champions

Annual gala benefitting Senior Services coming March 21.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Senior Services of Alexandria will shine a spotlight on community leadership and service at its 2026 Annual Gala, an evening dedicated to supporting programs that help older adults in Alexandria live with dignity, independence, and connection.

The event, themed “A Night of Celebration,” will take place March 21 from 6 to 10 p.m. at the Westin Alexandria Old Town, bringing together city officials, nonprofit partners and supporters from across the region.

The annual gala serves as SSA’s signature fundraising and recognition event, raising critical support for services that include meals, companionship, education and trusted resources for seniors throughout the city. The evening will include a formal dinner, live entertainment, a raffle and a curated silent auction, all in support of SSA’s mission and programs.

A highlight of the evening will be the presentation of three major community awards, honoring individuals whose leadership, service and compassion have made a lasting impact on Alexandria’s senior community.

The 2026 Gala honorees include: Community Leadership Award, Allen Lomax and Donna Shaw; Community Service Award, Deacon Albert and Beverly Anderson; and Community Spirit Award, Gayle Reuter.

Lomax and Shaw will share the Community Leadership Award for their long-standing commitment to strengthening Alexandria’s



Allen Lomax – SSA Community Leadership Award



Donna Shaw – SSA Community Leadership Award



Gayle Reuter – Community Spirit Award

health, aging and care systems. Lomax, following a 30-year career in federal service, has devoted his retirement to public health and community well-being, including leadership roles with local health and suicide prevention initiatives. Shaw is recognized for her decades of service in senior care, including her leadership at Woodbine Rehabilitation and Healthcare Center and her advocacy and volunteer service with Senior Services of Alexandria.

The Community Service Award will honor Deacon Albert and Beverly Anderson for their hands-on service and deep commitment to helping neighbors in need. The couple is widely respected for their faith-driven community involvement and their consistent efforts to support vulnerable populations, including older adults, through outreach and service.

Gayle Reuter will receive the Community Spirit Award in recognition of her dedication to uplifting seniors and strengthening community connections. The award celebrates individuals whose energy, generosity, and commitment embody the spirit of Alexan-

dria and help foster a caring, inclusive community for older residents.

Proceeds from the gala will directly support SSA’s essential programs, which aim to reduce isolation, promote healthy aging and ensure seniors have access to reliable information and assistance.

Tickets and sponsorship opportunities are available and the public is encouraged

to participate, donate or support the silent auction.

Presenting Sponsors for the event are Alexandria Rehabilitation & Healthcare Center and Woodbine Rehabilitation & Health Center.

For sponsorship information or to purchase a ticket to the Gala, visit www.senior-servicesalex.org/gala



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Deacon Albert and Beverly Anderson – SSA Community Service Award



DIPLOMATIC TIES - Alexandria resident and U.S. Ambassador Darryl Nirenberg, left, stands with Romanian Ambassador to the U.S. Andrei Muraru following the Alexandria Rotary Club meeting Feb. 17 at Belle Haven Country Club. “It’s an incredible honor to serve,” Nirenberg said. “I am thankful to President Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio for placing me in this position.” www.alexandriarotary.org

PHOTO BY
JANET BARNETT
GAZETTE PACKET

Early Voting Begins March 6 for The April 21, 2026 Special Election

On March 6 early voting will begin for the April 21, 2026 Special Election in the City of Alexandria. The ballot will include a contest for City Council as well as a proposed statewide constitutional amendment. Any qualified City of Alexandria voter may vote in this election.

All registered voters in Virginia are eligible to vote by mail or in person.

Voting in Person

The deadline to vote early in person is Saturday, April 18, 2026, at 5 p.m. In-person early voting hours are as follows:

Office of Voter Registration & Elections, 132 N. Royal St., Suite 100

- ❖ Opens for early voting on Friday, March 6, 2026
- ❖ Open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Additional and Extended Hours:

- ❖ Saturday, April 11, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
- ❖ Sunday, April 12, 11 a.m.-3 p.m.
- ❖ Monday, April 13, 8 a.m.-7 p.m.
- ❖ Tuesday, April 14, 8 a.m.-7 p.m.
- ❖ Wednesday, April 15, 8 a.m.-7 p.m.
- ❖ Thursday, April 16, 8 a.m.-7 p.m.
- ❖ Friday, April 17, (see above for normal business hours)
- ❖ Saturday, April 18, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Voting by Mail

Applications to request a mail-in ballot must be received in the Office of Voter Registration & Elections by 5 p.m., Friday, April 10, 2026. Access an application in one of the following ways:

- ❖ By visiting vote.elections.virginia.gov to submit

an application online.

- ❖ By downloading the application available on the City's Elections webpage.

- ❖ By calling Voter Registration & Elections at 703.746.4050 to request that an application is mailed to you.

Completed ballots must be either returned to the Office of Voter Registration & Elections by 7 p.m. on Tuesday, April 21, 2026, or postmarked by April 21 and received in the office by noon on Friday, April 24. To vote in person, an application is not required. Applications should not be submitted before voting in person.

Ballot Drop Boxes

Ballot drop boxes will be available at all polling places on April 21, 2026, from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. A secure outdoor drop box, under video surveillance, is available in front of the Office of Voter Registration & Elections, 24 hours a day, through April 21, 2026, at 7 p.m.

Registering to Vote

The deadline for the normal registration period for the April 21, 2026, Special Election is April 14, 2026. Following this, the Same Day Registration period begins and runs through Election Day, April 21, 2026. Visit vote.elections.virginia.gov to register, check registration status, or update an existing registration.

Visit alexandriava.gov/Elections for complete election information, including voter registration requirements, sample ballots, precinct maps and ID requirements.

For more information, contact the Office of Voter Registration & Elections at voters@alexandriava.gov or 703.746.4050.

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Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall

For **FREE** tickets, please visit: www.usairforceband.com

Coming up on April 9: Jazz Heritage Series featuring the music of Charlie Parker and the Air Force Strings!

Living Legends of Alexandria

Gerald File – an exemplary life of service.

BY JUDITH FOGEL

Disciplined. Driven. Dedicated. Alexandria born and raised. Gerald “Jerry” File epitomizes disciplined commitment — from the distinguished service of a decorated Marine Corps officer to decades of civilian advocacy for Alexandria’s youth, and veterans.

His journey from a “blue collar” Del Ray upbringing to military officer and tireless civic leader stands as a testament to service and integrity. For decades, Jerry File has championed Alexandria’s youth, and veterans, leaving an indelible mark on the city’s venerable institutions.

“This Award is particularly memorable for a boy who grew up in Del Ray and received a public school education,” he reflects, a nod to the roots that shaped his lifelong service.

In conversation with File at the Old Dominion Boat Club on an azure afternoon with the river glistening before him, the veteran and lifelong community leader thought back to the simple origins of his relentless drive. He describes his mother as the architect of his character’s foundation.

“When I was about eight or nine and began receiving an allowance of 50 cents each week, she instructed me to place 10 cents into the collection basket at St. Rita’s Catholic Church each Sunday.” This early “sense of charity” soon swung into action, as he volunteered to help the Del Ray Boys Club director raise funds for the fledgling club, a seamless shift from childhood charity to lifelong action.

File’s early life was steeped in the competitive spirit of Alexandria youth sports, propelling him through George Washington High School and on to a football scholarship at the College of William & Mary. After graduating in 1961, his path took him to the United States Marine Corps. As an officer, his rapid ascent was notable. He finished first in his class at the U.S. Army Intelligence School and received a promotion to major in eight years, a rank typically taking 12. File was decorated while serving during the Cuban Missile Blockade in 1962 and as a Captain in Vietnam in key combat operations, including Khe Sanh in 1967.

Later, File took on the role of recruiting diverse officers and embodying the Marine



PHOTO BY STEVEN HALPERSON/TISARA STUDIOS

Gerald File is a Living Legend of Alexandria.

Corps motto: “Gung Ho” or “work together.” File left the military not out of disappointment, but fierce dedication to his family. Promotions were slowing, and with two young children, he worried about college costs.

He returned to Alexandria in 1970 and pivoted to the investment world, using his military success as a sales pitch. “I was successful at getting young men to go to Vietnam,” he recalled telling a manager. “Certainly I’ll be successful getting people to invest money with me, right? Nobody’s shooting at them.” He later became a Founding Partner of Winthrop Financial Company, which grew into the country’s largest private real estate investment bank. The firm’s success was meteoric, raising “more money than Merrill Lynch, EF Hutton and all the big-name firms.”

File applied his considerable leadership talents to civic life, guided by a principle he credits to Ronald Reagan: “Our nation needs MORE volunteer community leaders — rather than MORE government.” His greatest impact lies with the Boys & Girls Clubs, where

he has served as president and board member for 35 years. His visionary direction led to historic changes, including championing the addition of “Girls” to the official name, achieving three years of balanced budgets, and securing the club’s financial stability.

File’s fundraising success is legendary. Drawing on his contacts in the investment industry, he has secured over \$1 million each for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington, Gonzaga College High School, and the Washington Jesuit Academy. His powerful fundraising philosophy is built on belief. “How could you not contribute to the Boys & Girls Club?”

The Alexandria Sportsman’s Club consumes a significant slice of File’s life, where he has faithfully invested 40 years, as a past president, and successful fundraiser. The organization, founded in 1947, nurtures high school athletes and provides college scholarships. File received the prestigious William Hershberger Civic Award at the 1998 annual Awards Banquet.

File lost his wife to cancer five years ago.

He donated \$50,000 to the new Student Health Clinic at Bishop Ireton High School in 2021, named in memory of his beloved wife, Debbie, who was a dedicated volunteer nurse at local schools. He and Debbie were also founding supporters of the Washington Jesuit Academy which has achieved extraordinary success over the last 25 years educating “at risk” young boys.

File remains deeply connected to his local community. When asked to name his favorite Alexandria restaurant, he laughed, “That is the toughest question you have asked me! Alexandria is full of an array of extraordinary restaurants.”

Glancing out the window, he mused, “It’s a tie between Ralph Davis’ Mystic BBQ and Hossein Pishdad’s The Warehouse, both with superb menus, excellent service, meticulous management, and conveniently located in Old Town.”

As a decorated Marine Corps Vietnam veteran, File raised \$10,000 in August for the Alexandria Vietnam War Memorial. Jerry also founded the Marine Corps Birthday Celebration at the Old Dominion Boat Club, an event spanning 32 years.

Sharon “Teddy” McBay, File’s partner, emphasizes that Jerry “has significantly enhanced the quality of life in Alexandria and serves as an inspiration to many others.” McBay and File met 40 years ago as undergraduates at William & Mary. Teddy shared a dorm room with Sarah Brady (née Kemp), and Jerry and his wife developed a lasting friendship with Teddy, and Sarah and James Brady. James Brady, who later became White House Press Secretary, was seriously wounded during an assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan on March 30, 1981.

File’s life philosophy, the ultimate reason he inspires others, focuses entirely on the legacy he leaves for the next generation: “The young people are our future. And I think these groups help these young people become better citizens, which helps our community, helps our state, helps our country.”

File currently has five books on his nightstand. He recently finished a biography of former Secretary of Defense James Mattis. He and his late wife have two married children, five grandchildren, and three great granddaughters.

File lives in Goodwin House and although retired, remains active, his civic footprint running through the city. His selection as a 2025 Living Legend is a deserving tribute to his illustrious career of service, charity, and “Gung Ho” dedication.

BULLETIN BOARD

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

FREE ST. PATRICK’S DAY LYFT RIDES

Preparing to combat that time of the year when, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration figures, more than one-third (34%) of U.S. traffic deaths involve drunk drivers,* a local non-

profit organization announced that free safe rides will be offered to would-be drunk drivers throughout the Washington-metropolitan area on St. Patrick’s Day.

Offered by the nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP), the 2026 St. Patrick’s Day SoberRide program will be in

operation beginning at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 17th (St. Patrick’s Day) and operate until 4:00 a.m. on Wednesday, March 18th as a way to keep local roads safe from impaired drivers during this traditionally high-risk period. During this 12-hour period, area residents ages 21 and older celebrat-

ing with alcohol may download the Lyft app to their phones then enter the SoberRide® code in the app’s ‘Payment’ tab (under the ‘Add Lyft Pass’ option) to receive their no-cost (up to \$15) safe transportation home. WRAP’s 2026 St. Patrick’s Day SoberRide code will be posted at 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday,

March 17th on www.SoberRide.com.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Alexandria Families for Safer Streets - Executive Assistant to AFSS Board of Directors. The

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 15



Irish Ambassador to the United States Geraldine Byrne Nason, center, joins representatives of the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Basilica of St. Mary in presenting a \$20,000 check to Sister Aniliza Juan of Christ House March 1 at St. Mary's school in Old Town.

Irish Hooley Raises \$20k for Christ House

Irish ambassador to U.S. joins in AOH celebration.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

The sounds of traditional Irish music, the rhythm of step dancing and a sea of green filled the Basilica School of St. Mary March 1, as the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) hosted its annual Irish Hooley, one of Alexandria's liveliest cultural celebrations.

The sold-out event drew more than 400 attendees and raised a

oldest Irish Catholic fraternal organization. The Alexandria division of the AOH was founded by the late Pat Troy, a beloved local businessman who also co-founded the city's St. Patrick's Day parade.

Each year, the local Ancient Order of Hibernians uses the Hooley as its largest fundraiser, with all proceeds benefiting Christ House, a Catholic Charities program in the Diocese of Arlington that provides meals, shelter, clothing and emergency assistance to those in need. This year's total surpassed all previous records for the event.

"We broke a fundraising record raising \$20,000 for Christ House on West Street," said Ken Wolfe, AOH division president. "This was the largest single amount ever raised by the AOH for the Hooley."

Irish Ambassador to the United States Geraldine Byrne Nason attended the event, which was catered by Murphy's Grand Irish Pub and featured traditional Irish fare, including shepherd's pie, fish, and corned beef.

Ambassador Nason joined representatives of the AOH and the Basilica of St. Mary in presenting a check for \$20,000 to Sister Aniliza Juan, volunteer coordinator for Christ House.

"It was a special treat meeting and hearing from the Irish Ambassador to the United States," Wolfe said. "We are especially grateful to everyone who made the afternoon such a success in support of Christ House."

"This was the largest single amount ever raised by the AOH for the Hooley."

— AOH division president Ken Wolfe

record \$20,000 for Christ House, a local charity serving people experiencing homelessness and food insecurity.

Held in anticipation of St. Patrick's Day, the family-friendly Hooley transformed the school gymnasium on Green Street into a showcase of Irish heritage. Guests enjoyed live Irish music, bagpipes, and performances by dancers from the Boyle School of Irish Dance and the O'Neill James School of Irish Dance.

The event was organized by the Alexandria division of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, America's



Irish dancers perform at the Irish Hooley March 1 at the Basilica of St. Mary school in Old Town.



Irish Ambassador to the United States Geraldine Byrne Nason, right, greets AOH Alexandria division president Ken Wolfe at the Irish Hooley March 1 at the Basilica of St. Mary school in Old Town.



A bagpiper leads the procession of dignitaries to open the 2026 Irish Hooley March 1 at the Basilica of St. Mary school in Old Town.

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Potomac River Sewage Contamination Declining

Concern about pathogens in the Potomac River remain, but it is now safe for recreation, says DC Water.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
GAZETTE PACKET

The Potomac River in the Washington, D.C. area is safe for recreation, DC Water said on March 2, after over five weeks of impaired water quality warnings following the Jan. 19 spill of over 200 million gallons of raw sewage into the river from a ruptured Potomac interceptor. The interceptor is a six-foot-diameter pipe that carries 60 million gallons of raw sewage a day 54 miles, from Dulles Airport to the Blue Plains Treatment plant in southeast Washington, D.C.

Various entities are monitoring the water. DC Water representatives say there has been no leakage since Feb. 8. They built a bypass to reroute wastewater, using pumps and part of the C&O Canal, hoping to complete repairs by mid-March.

Officials insist that drinking water is not affected. Fairfax Water's intake is located several miles upstream of where the spill enters.

E. Coli, an Indicator

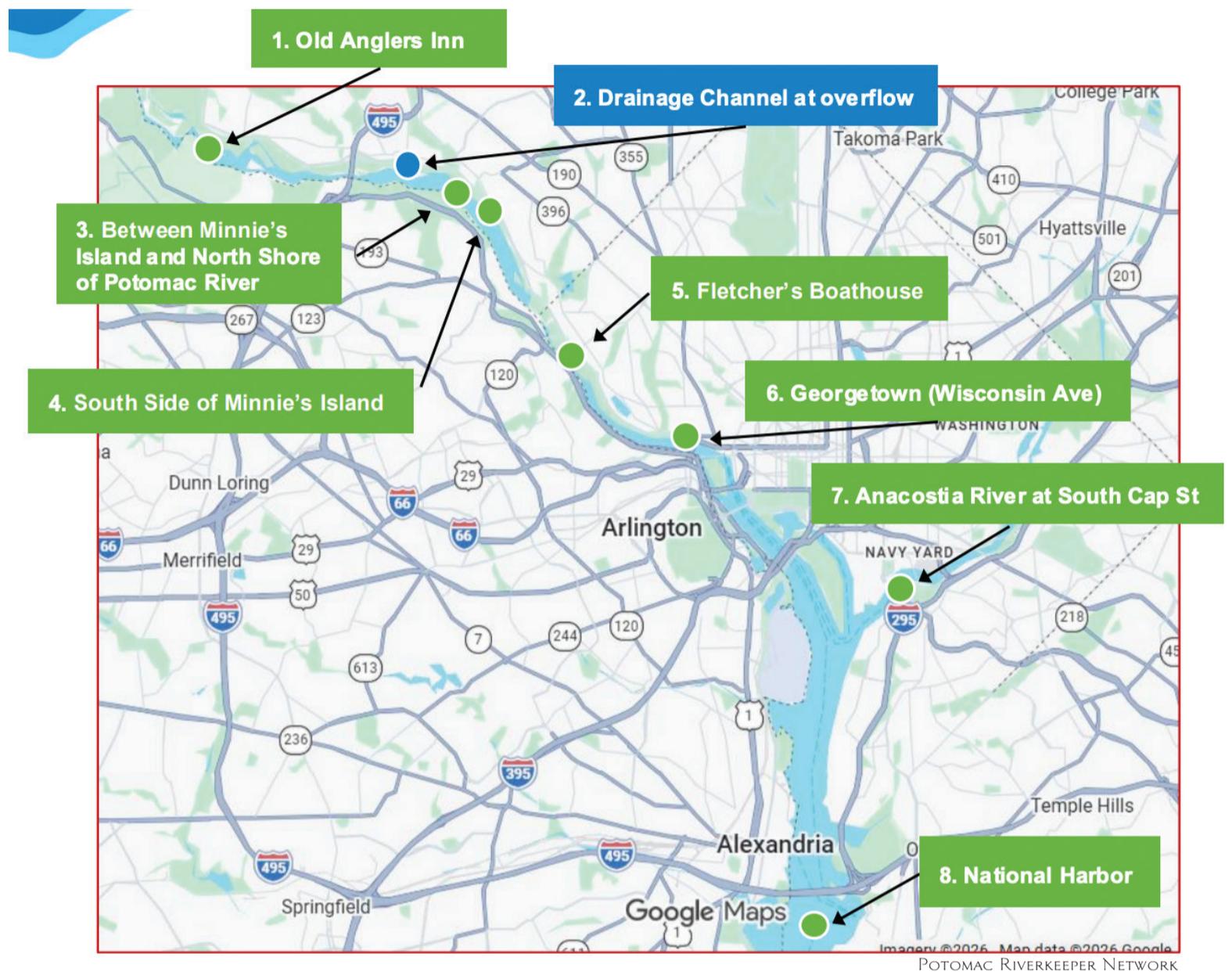
Several entities are conducting water quality sampling, primarily for E. coli. DC Water reports that E. coli levels are steadily decreasing.

DC Water's website says that variability in E. coli results are common. "For the Potomac River, historical water quality data shows E. coli levels may vary from a range as low as 10 MPN/100mL to as much as 5,000 MPN/100mL on a given day ... Swimming is not recommended when E. coli levels exceed 410 MPN/100 mL." (MPN is an estimate of the microbial concentration in the sample, expressed as MPN per 100 mL (milliliters).

The only acceptable level of E. coli in drinking water is zero MPN/100 mL, according to EPA and other sources.

Alexandria, Fairfax County Impacts

At the request of Virginia Senators Scott Surovell and Richard



Raw sewage spill in the Potomac River



Dean Naujoks of the Potomac Riverkeeper Network is taking many water samples to assess the Potomac River's water quality.

Potomac River Sewage Contamination Declining

FROM PAGE 8

Stuart and Delegate Paul Krizek, whose districts border the river, on Feb. 17, Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) collected water samples at 25 locations along approximately 49 miles of the Potomac from the Chain Bridge to the mouth of Potomac Creek in King George and Stafford Counties.

DEQ reported these E. coli levels from those samples at these Northern Virginia stations:

Hunting Creek/Potomac River, 313; Jones Point, 31; Belle Haven Marina, 158; Across from Fort Washington, 10; Little Hunting Creek/Potomac River, 85; Gunston Hall, 20. On Feb. 25, at National Harbor E. coli levels were 105 MPN/100 mL.

On Feb. 13, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) issued a recreational advisory for 72.5 miles from the American Legion Memorial Bridge (I-495) in Fairfax County to the Harry W. Nice Memorial Bridge in King George County, urging people and pets to avoid recreational water activities, such as swimming, wading, canoeing or kayaking.

With D.C. Water's March 2 lifting of the advisory that paused recreation use, activities like rowing teams' practice may resume.

Fairfax County's Deputy County Executive Jennifer Miller said that the county is monitoring the situation, that "Fecal indicator bacterial monitoring show no ongoing downstream impacts from the sewage release, and no long-term impacts are anticipated now that the spill is contained."

What Went into the River?

The Choose Clean Water Coalition reports that University of Maryland found the following:

- ❖ E. coli bacteria levels at the spill site were literally thousands of times above the water safety limit, 410 MPN, on Jan. 21, 28 and Feb. 3.

- ❖ Bacteria levels were over 100 times the contact limit on Feb. 12 and on Jan. 28, E. coli levels were over the safety limit at a site 10 miles downstream from the sewage overflow.

- ❖ On Jan. 21 and Jan. 28, Staphylococcus aureus was detected at the spill site and nine miles downstream. Overall, 33 percent of the sampled sites were positive for the pathogen.

- ❖ MRSA, an antibiotic-resistant strain of the S. aureus bacteria that causes infections, was identified at the spill site.

Impacts on People, the Environment

In a Feb. 27 interview, Dr. Joan

Rose, an international water microbiology expert at Michigan State University, explained that up to 100 different kinds of pathogens can be found in untreated wastewater at varying concentrations. Levels can peak if many people are sick, for example, during the 2020 COVID pandemic.

"It only takes a few pathogens for us to get sick. For example, if we have one million viruses discharged, even if 99 percent die off, we still have 10,000 viruses. You only need five to ten viruses for us to get sick," she explained.

Known as "the poop bacteria," E. coli is a group of bacteria that normally live in the intestines of people and animals. "Everyone has it in their feces. From one to three percent of E. coli are pathogenic," she said. Other pathogens commonly found in sewage include salmonella, hepatitis A and the norovirus. Pathogens in fecal waste can be "quite persistent," Rose said, adding, "They can persist in sediments and some can colonize, grow in sediments and last for months."

Nutrients from sewage, like nitrogen and phosphorus, "can exacerbate hazardous algal blooms, some of which have a toxin that can cause respiratory distress," she said.

Dr. Rose cited a study by Sam Dorevitch at the University of Illinois of the impacts water contaminated with wastewater on "limited-contact water recreation" like boating, canoeing and fishing. Over three years, he studied 11,297 people and the incidence and severity of illness, associations between water exposure and risk of illness.

He found that limited-contact recreation, both on effluent dominated waters and on waters designated for general use, was associated with an elevated risk of gastrointestinal illness.

Ecological Impacts

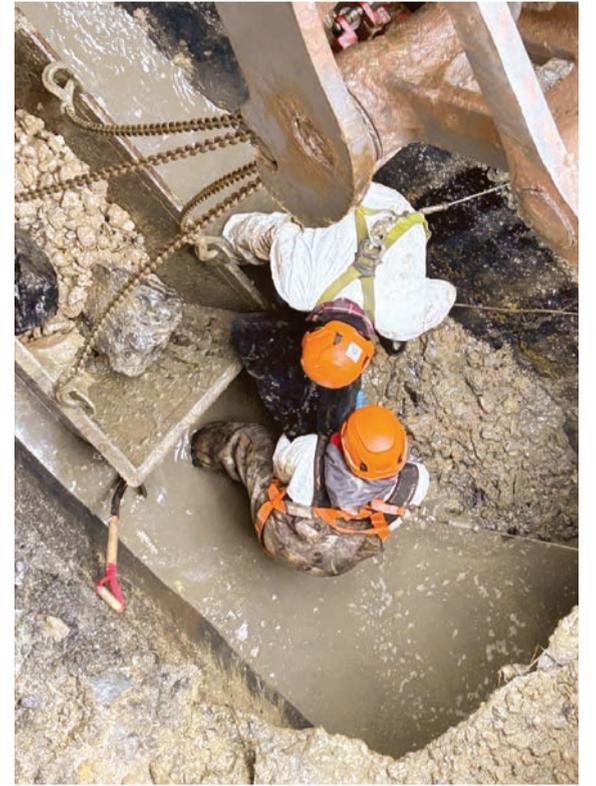
How these pathogens affect natural resources "depends on how much and whether they accumulate along the shoreline or an island," Dr. Rose said. "If water pools, you can get a high organic loading and anerobic conditions which adversely affect benthic and other aquatic organisms that need air to survive. A single sewage spill can have a temporary effect, but consistent inputs of nutrients, from sewage for example, can disrupt ecosystems. A spill is like icing on the cake."

D. C.'s Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) reports, "Solids in sewage can smother



DC WATER

This photo shows the expanded excavation around the damaged section of pipe. As part of that process we install what are called trench boxes for shoring around the excavated section. This was done to reach additional sections of the pipe where a rock and debris dam were located.



DC WATER

Workers inside the damaged section of the 72-inch sewer pipe known as the Potomac Interceptor removing the large rocks and debris inside the initial collapse area.



DC WATER

The process of clearing rocks from the collapsed area includes workers manually shoveling out dirt, muck and debris that was inside.

aquatic habitats. Plants and animals can suffer infections from the bacteria, viruses and other pathogens; they can also suffer from acute toxicity in sewage chemicals. ... DOEE is planning fish and wildlife surveys beginning in the spring (some planned as early as late February) that will help indicate if the sewage spill has larger impacts."

Longer Term Prospects

A Potomac Riverkeeper Network team led by Dean Naujoks has collected water samples at multiple sites. Naujoks urges officials to

"look south beyond the Woodrow Wilson Bridge," and especially to support watermen who make their living from the Potomac. He worries that people will "lose confidence in the river."

"Blue catfish season starts in March," he noted in an interview. "Around 3.4 million tons are fished out of the Potomac each year. Will anyone buy and eat it?" Perception is a big concern so his group advocates for daily monitoring. They'll also work to focus federal dollars on communities impacted for those who make living on the water.

Electeds Call for Funding

Virginia's Eighth District Congressman, Don Beyer, whose district abuts the river, is highlighting the over-60-year-old sewage system's vulnerabilities.

He led ten other Washington-area members of Congress to seek funds to repair and modernize the Potomac interceptor and urged the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) to identify a backup water supply for the Washington region, which currently lacks a secondary water source.

Spaces in Transition: Designing for Life in Motion



PHOTOS COURTESY OF KERITH ECKART

A tufted headboard and deep hues walls make the bachelor's bedroom feel both refined and lived-in.

How Keith Eckart balanced elegance, durability, and the unexpected in two homes for men starting anew.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

It was a deep blue velvet piece—tufted, sculptural, heavier than it looked. The movers tried the front door, then the back, then every angle in between. Old Town

rowhouses don't negotiate. Eckart watched for a moment, then told them to stop. "Bring it through the window," she said. And they did. The sofa rose off the sidewalk, swung gently in the air, and slipped into the living room like it had been waiting for its cue.

That mix of practicality and boldness is the through-line in two homes Eckart recently designed, one for a bachelor rediscovering his own taste, the other for a newly divorced father building a life with his two young sons. Both men SEE SPACES IN TRANSITION, PAGE 11



Kerith Eckart, whose instinct for mixing eras and reading the rhythms of her clients' lives shapes every room she designs.



A stainless steel range sits inside a brick alcove, crowned by a framed portrait of Muhammad Ali, adding a bold burst of personality to a room that could have felt purely utilitarian.



A vintage Porsche crest glows against the wall, setting the tone for a room that wears the bachelor's passions openly.

Spaces in Transition: Designing for Life in Motion

FROM PAGE 10

were starting over. Both needed rooms that could hold who they were and who they were becoming. And both trusted Eckart to get them there.

“The client is always the priority,” she says. “Architecture matters but understanding how someone lives matters more.”

The Bachelor’s House: Confidence, Color, and a Little Chaos Tamed

The bachelor — a lobbyist and drummer — wanted a home that didn’t whisper. He liked strong visuals, bold objects, and the kind of art that announces itself. Eckart saw it immediately, this was a man ready to express parts of himself he’d kept tucked away.

“I could see he was able to express sides of himself he probably couldn’t before,” she says. “I wanted to honor that.”

She built the living room around that blue velvet sofa, grounding it with an animal-print ottoman and a tiger-stripe rug that adds movement without overwhelming the space. The fireplace stayed traditional, but the art above it didn’t. Gold frames, a landscape painting, and a few pieces with attitude created a room that felt layered, not loud.

In the office, a vintage Porsche sign became a kind of emblem — an unapologetic nod to his love of cars and the freedom to display it openly. The kitchen, tucked into the basement, carries the same energy. A photograph of Muhammad Ali hangs above the stove, a punch of personality in a room that could have felt purely utilitarian.

Eckart mixed eras deliberately: 1970s curves, mid-century lighting, early-1900s portraits, rock posters from the late twentieth century. Many designers avoid that kind of cross-current. She leans into it.

“I break rules,” she says. “It’s deliberate.”

The result isn’t chaotic. It’s charismatic. The rooms feel lived-in, expressive, and unmistakably his.

The Father’s House: Elegance That Can Take a Hit

The second client needed something different. Newly divorced, raising two young sons, and renting a historic rowhouse, he needed a home that could be transformed quickly — no renovations, no structural changes, no time to waste.

He wanted elegance. He also



PHOTOS COURTESY OF KERITH ECKART

A round wooden table beneath a lantern-style light, surrounded by a gallery of sketches and paintings that bring warmth to the white walls.

needed durability. Eckart treated those constraints like instructions.

The family room became the heart of the house. A custom ottoman made from vintage Pendleton blankets sits at the center, soft, sturdy, and forgiving. A vintage African side table adds history without fragility. The room feels relaxed, grounded, and ready for real life.

In the dining room, she created depth without touching the walls.

rounded edges that won’t bruise a shin.

The space didn’t sacrifice sophistication to become family-friendly. It absorbed both.

A Designer Who Listens First

Eckart’s background in psychology shapes everything she does. She listens not only to what clients say but to what they linger on, what they avoid, what they don’t yet know how to articulate.

“The creative process is the most fun part,” she says. “Pulling things together from different eras and letting them bring out the best in each other, and in the person who lives there.”

Her rooms contain centuries of conversation: nineteenth-century architecture, twentieth-century art, contemporary upholstery, vintage finds. The effect is layered rather than styled, personal rather than prescribed.

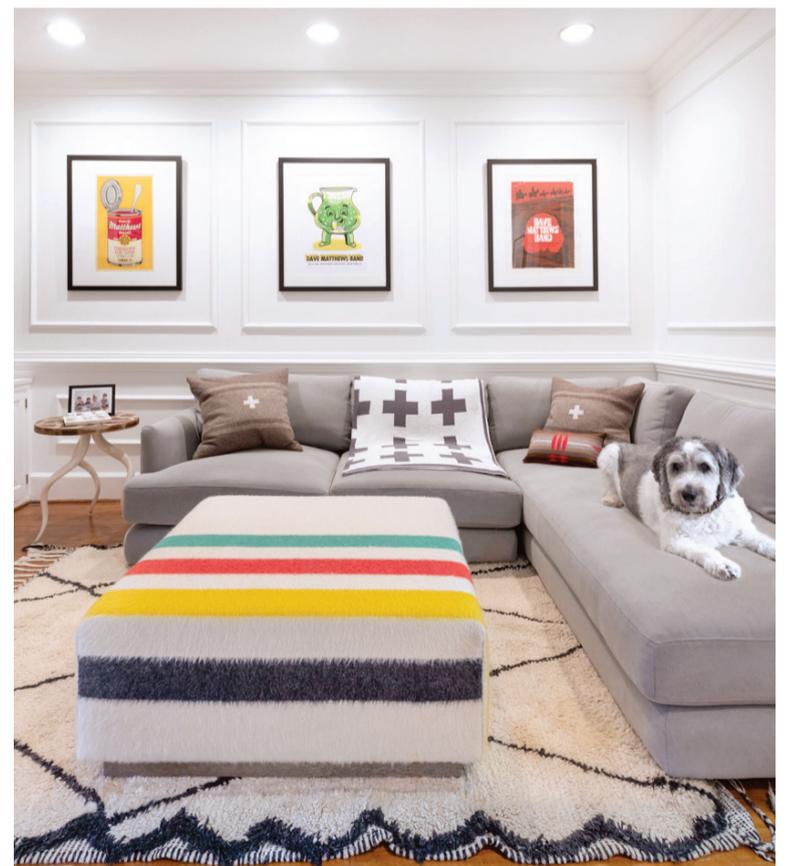
In both homes, the details hold your attention, a chair angled with intention, the edge of a table catching late-afternoon light, a piece of art that makes you pause. Nothing shouts. Everything speaks.

“The creative process is the most fun part, pulling things together from different eras and letting them bring out the best in each other.”

— Kerith Eckart, Kerith Eckart Designs

A gallery arrangement, portraits, landscapes, and pieces chosen for their quiet presence, replaced the dark paint she might have used in a home he owned. The effect is layered, and warm.

The living room is small, even by Old Town standards, but Eckart didn’t fight it. She paired antique pieces with clean-lined modern furniture, letting sculptural shapes and tactile fabrics do the work. Velvet that can take a child’s leap. Leather that ages well. Wood with



A striped ottoman that adds color and playfulness to a family’s living room is proof that comfort and style can share the same space, even with kids and a dog in the mix.

What tied the rooms together wasn’t a theme or a palette. It was Eckart’s ability to listen. She listened to how each man lived, what he gravitated toward, what

he avoided, and what he didn’t yet know he wanted. She mixed eras. The houses didn’t try to be perfect. They tried to be true. And in the end, that’s what made them work.

CAC Raises \$146k to Combat Child Abuse

FROM PAGE 1

for Alexandria's children.

The Champion for Children Award was presented to former Alexandria Sheriff Dana Lawhorne, honoring his more than four decades in law enforcement and his efforts to build trust, prioritize restorative justice and support victims of crime.

One of those victims was Burke & Herbert vice president Joe Collum, a prominent businessman who told the story of working with Lawhorne through his own abuse at the hands of an uncle when he was a teenager.

"I remember the day I walked into the police department at 30 years old and disclosed that I'd been sexually abused from the ages of 12 to 16," Collum said. "That was the day I met Dana Lawhorne."

Collum credited Lawhorne for his persistence in obtaining a grand jury indictment against his abuser and the support he received throughout the trial and sentencing.

"Dana did his job but he also did the things that were not his job — the phone calls he made to me to check in on me because he knew I was struggling and needed help," said Collum, who now serves on the CAC board.

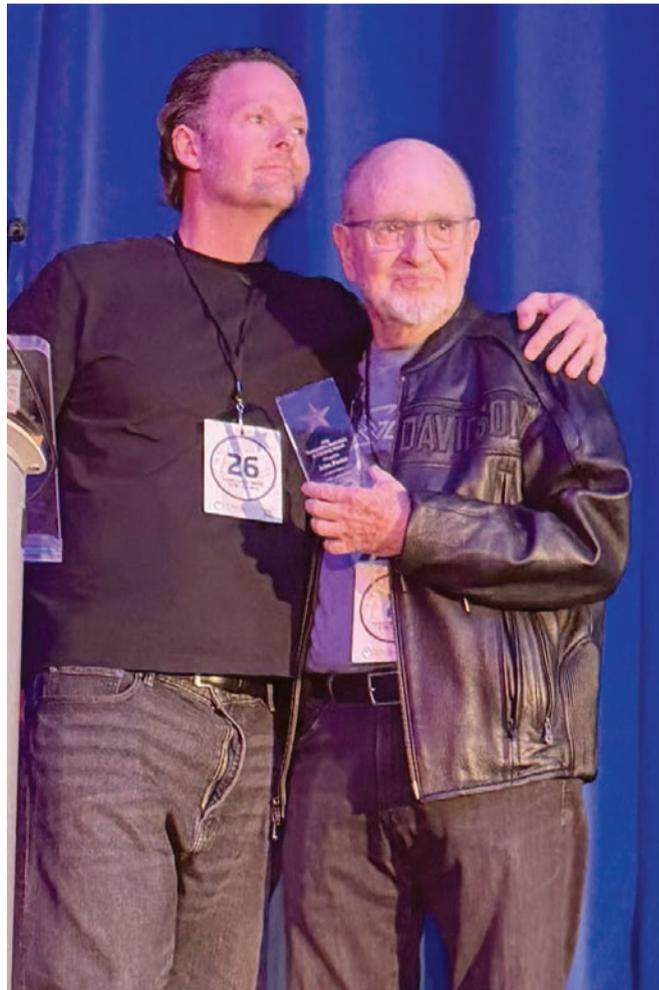
Collum presented the award to Lawhorne, crediting the former sheriff for helping him work through the healing process.

"I've had a lot of struggles in my life but meeting Dana started my path towards healing," Collum said. "I'm still on that journey but can honestly say that I would not be here today if it were not for Dana Lawhorne. He carried the torch for me and hundreds of others whose lives he made better."

The Outstanding Dedication to Children Award went to John Porter, a lifelong educator and community advocate. Porter, a former principal at T.C. Williams High School and a founding leader of ACT for Alexandria, was honored for decades of leadership focused on expanding opportunities for young people and fostering collaboration across education and non-profit sectors.

A third honor, MDT Partner of the Year, was awarded to Debra Evans, Division Chief for Alexandria's Sexual Assault Center and Domestic Violence Program. Evans was recognized for her leadership in victim-centered care and her long-standing commitment to supporting survivors of serious and traumatic crimes.

Funds raised help sustain CAC's multidisciplinary approach, bring-



Alexandria Commonwealth's attorney Bryan Porter, left, congratulates his father John Porter after presenting the Outstanding Dedication to Children award at the Banding Together gala Feb. 21 at the Durant Center.



PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Mayor Alyia Gaskins, right, with honorees Dana Lawhorne and Debra Evans at the CAC Banding Together gala Feb. 21 at the Durant Center.



An attendee rocks out at the CAC Banding Together gala Feb. 21 at the Durant Center.



Dan Edwards and CAC member Whitney Russell at the Banding Together gala Feb. 21 at the Durant Center.



CAC board member Lauren Riley, left, presents an award of appreciation to outgoing board chair Melissa Riddy.

ing together law enforcement, medical professionals, child protective services and advocates to reduce trauma and improve outcomes for children and families.

Said Lawhorne, who praised Collum for the courage in telling his story, "You have to have justice, then the healing can start."

www.centerforalexandriaschildren.org

ENTERTAINMENT

MEETS EVERY SUNDAY

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

MEETS EVERY MONDAY

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

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

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

MGNV PLANT

CLINICS ARE OPEN

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

YEAR ROUND ON SUNDAYS

Farmer's Market. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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

AMERICA'S 250TH BIRTHDAY

Starting now through summer 2026,

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

250th Events Itinerary:

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

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

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

NOW THRU MARCH 8

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

NOW THRU MARCH 8

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

MARCH 6-28

The "Assembly: Together We Grow" art exhibit explores the power of gathering and how it helps us grow, care for one another, and cultivate belonging. From shared meals and family traditions to festivals, and protests, gathering shapes our lives. View the member showcase at Del Ray Artisans, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria



MVCCT presents "Seussical" March 7-15, 2026 at Bryant High School in Alexandria.

VA. Opening Reception: Friday, March 6, 7-9 p.m. Gallery hours: Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays & Sundays 12-6 p.m. Details at DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

FRIDAY/MARCH 6

Joint After-Hours Concert. 7-8 p.m.

At National Museum of the Marine Corps, 1775 Semper Fidelis Way, Triangle. The National Museum of the Marine Corps and the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation will host a special evening performance on Friday, March 6, from 7:00-8:00 p.m., featuring the Dordt University Wind Symphony and the Quantico Marine Band. The concert is part of the university's spring break tour and is led by Dr. Onsbay Rose. Dr. Rose, a former United States Marine musician and conductor, previously performed with Marine Bands in Georgia and Louisiana and served with "The Commandant's Own" U.S. Marine Drum and Bugle Corps. In 2025, his Symphony No. 2, "The Sacred Cloth," was premiered by "The President's Own" U.S. Marine Band, further underscoring his enduring connection to Marine Corps music.

MVCCT PRESENTS

"SEUSSICAL"

Mount Vernon Community Children's Theatre Brings the Whimsical World of Seussical to Life. At Bryant High School, 2709 Popkins Lane, Alexandria. Seussical weaves together classic Dr. Seuss tales, including Horton Hears a Who!, The Cat in the Hat, and Gertrude McFuzz, reminding audiences of all ages that "a person's a person, no matter how small." With colorful costumes, playful choreography, and toe-tapping music, the production promises fun for the whole family. Dates and times: Saturday, March 7 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.; Sunday, March 8 at 3 p.m.; Saturday, March 14 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.; and Sunday, March 15 at 3 p.m. Tickets are \$18 and are on sale now at www.MVCCT.org. Families, friends, and Seuss fans of all ages are invited to join the

adventure!

SATURDAY/MARCH 7

The Ballyshanners 43rd Alexandria

St. Patrick's Day Parade. 12 noon. In Old Town, Alexandria. As the DC region's first St. Patrick's Day Parade, Alexandria's annual celebration—held on the first Saturday in March—brings together pipe bands, Irish dancers, community organizations, and entertainers for a fun-filled day welcoming spectators of all ages. The parade route will begin at Wolfe Street and St. Asaph Street, continuing through Old Town Alexandria. A grandstand will be located at King and Pitt Streets, offering premium viewing for spectators. Additional best viewing locations include St. Asaph and Pitt streets, both north and south of King Street. Spectators are encouraged to arrive early to secure the best viewing locations.

SUNDAY/MARCH 8

American Voices. 3 p.m. and 7 p.m.

At George Washington Masonic National Memorial, Alexandria. Join WashMetPhil and the Alexandria Choral Society in American Voices at the George Washington Masonic National Memorial. Tickets are \$45 per adult and \$5 per child. This performance celebrates spirituality, nature, and human connection. Program includes Kauyumari by Gabriela Ortiz, Symphonic Dances from "West Side Story" and Make Our Garden Grow by Leonard Bernstein, and Earth Symphony by Jake Runestad.

SUNDAY/MARCH 8

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

biology and ecology, global conservation concerns and human-culture conflicts and mitigation strategies.

FRIDAY/MARCH 13

The Thirteen. 7:30 p.m. At Trinity United Methodist Church, 2911 Cameron Mills Road, Alexandria. Presenting Bach's 'digestible delights' to the stage in Bach: The Early Masses II. Bach | Mass in A Major, BWV 234; Bach | Mass in G Minor, BWV 235; Bach | Concerto for two violins in D Major, BWV 1043; and Bach | Brandenburg Concerto No. 5, BWV 1050.

FRIDAY/MARCH 13

The Chamber ALX's 2026 Women's Leadership Forum. 7:45 - 10:30 a.m. At The Westin Alexandria Old Town, Alexandria. This signature morning experience brings together women (and men) for inspiration, connection, and real-world leadership insight. Hear candid conversation from a stellar panel of women leaders right here in our community, enjoy a beautifully curated atmosphere, and walk away energized, supported, and connected to a network shaping the future.

SATURDAY/MARCH 14

Alexandria Baroque. 2 p.m. At The Athenaeum, Alexandria. Join Alexandria Baroque for a program of duos for violin and Baroque lute. The elegant, rarely heard repertoire includes works by Bach, Weiss, Hagen, and Rust as well as a solo by Telemann. Revel in the gracious harmony of this all-but-unknown 18th-century music.

SATURDAY/MARCH 14

The Music of Words Featuring The Band Experiment. 6-8 p.m. At The Athenaeum, Alexandria. KaNikki Jakarta presents The Music of Words featuring The Band Experiment. Sponsored by The Athenaeum. Join us for a night of soulful music and fulfilling poetry. Arrive when the doors open to enjoy complimentary appetizers and beverages. Witness what transpires when poetry and music collide!

THURSDAY/MARCH 19

The Chamber ALX's 2026 General Assembly Breakfast. 8-10 a.m. At The Hilton Alexandria Old Town, Alexandria. They are welcoming our General Assembly delegation—fresh from the action in Richmond! Join them for a timely and lively conversation as our delegation reflects on the 2026 session, breaks down the legislation that will most impact our community, and offers behind-the-scenes insights into the debates, negotiations, and defining moments that shaped the final outcomes. They'll also look ahead to the opportunities and challenges facing the Commonwealth in the months ahead—and what they mean for our region. Bring your questions and be part of the conversation about where Virginia goes next.

THURSDAY/MARCH 19

Send-Off Concert. 7 p.m. At West Potomac High School, Alexandria. West Potomac Band invites the community to attend the West Potomac Band Music For All Send Off Concert. This is a huge honor for West Potomac's Period 1 Band, because they will be the only band from Virginia to participate in the Music For All Festival in Indianapolis.

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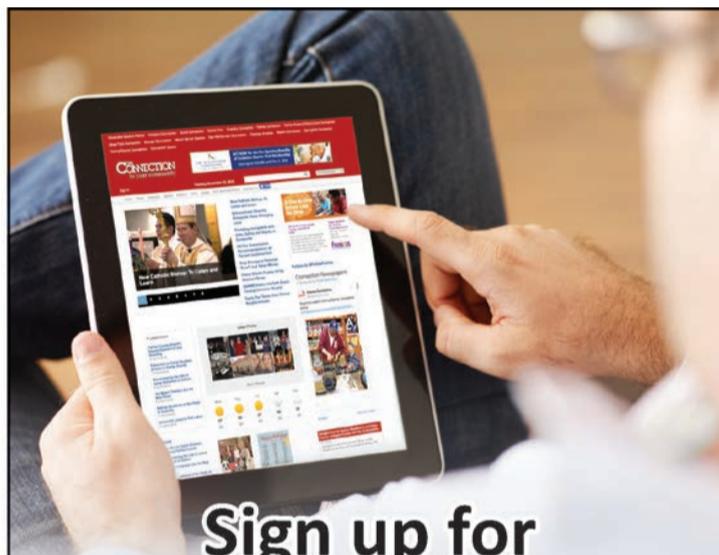
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An independent, locally owned weekly newspaper delivered to homes and businesses.

Published by
Local Media Connection LLC

1606 King Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Free digital edition delivered to your email box. Go to connectionnewspapers.com/subscribe

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A Connection Newspaper

The Alexandria Gazette Packet is distributed weekly to selected homes in the City of Alexandria. Any owners or occupants of premises that do not wish to receive the paper can notify the publisher by telephone at 703-778-9426 or by email to circulation@connectionnewspapers.com, and the distributor will be notified to discontinue service.

Virginia
PRESS
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Award Winning
Newspaper

Front Page News Stands the Test of Time

By MIKE SALMON
GAZETTE PACKET

When my grandmother passed away in the mid 1980's, I was tasked with my nearby relatives to clean out the house and prepare it for selling, a job that's taken on by many families across the country through the years. It's part of life.

My grandfather was an admiral in the Navy and on both sides of the family, we had many links to the military, so the house just outside of Old Town Alexandria was full of Navy memorabilia. As we cleaned out closets and divided up some of the things, everything had a touch of military.

I was down in the basement in a musty closet, clearing old glassware off one of the shelves when I noticed an old newspaper being used as a shelf covering. I cleared the dust off and saw the headline: 250,000 NAZI CHUTISTS PERIL EGYPT, it read. It was a newspaper they brought from their last residence in San Diego called The San Diego Union, dated June 23, 1942. I was amazed at this gripping artifact, but other family members, not so much. "What do you want that for?" they asked, as I tucked it away.

At that point in the war, June 1942, Germany had momentum and things looked pretty bleak on the warfront for our country. Rationing was impacting everyone, people were dying on the battlefield, and the United States had a war in the Pacific too, so everyone was involved. My grandfather had been an officer with a ship in Pearl Harbor when it was bombed 6 months earlier, so after that, they moved to San Diego and read The San Diego Union for their news.

The rest of the front page was covered with WWII news. Other items included a story on paratroopers in Italy, the Royal Air Force bombing German General Erwin



PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/CONNECTION

A stirring front page of news that was used as a shelf covering.

Rommel, the Japanese launching some shells into Oregon and the war on the Russian front where 10 million Germans were killed. There is a photo on the front page of a soldier in Oregon talking to two young children who had a piece of a Japanese artillery shell that landed near their house. The cutline read "Donna Jean Heffling, 3, is shown handing to Col. Carl S. Doney a piece of shell fired by an enemy sub off Oregon. Her sister Jean, 9, looks on. The shell burst near their home. (A.P. wirephoto)". What happened to Donna Jean and her little sister? Who knows.

At that time, a paper cost five cents, and the Sunday edition was 10 cents. How things

have changed, not only in cost but style of writing and formatting.

I found this newspaper at my grandmother's house 40 years ago and kept this bit of history through several moves, hanging it on my office wall from location to location. It's world history woven into family history with a touch of newspaper history all wrapped into one.

Is The San Diego Union still around? Yes, surprisingly, but somewhere along the way it must have merged with a paper known as "The Tribune" so now this San Diego local daily is "The San Diego Union-Tribune." In today's dwindling newspaper world, that's a good thing.

Welcome to the Club, Joan



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

(And I say that with all sincerity.) The 'club' to which I refer to is the cancer club (and neither am I talking about astrological signs). Unfortunately, you may not have a choice but to join - whether you like it or not. To invoke the legendary Groucho Marx: he wouldn't want to belong to a club that would have him as a member. He wasn't talking about cancer (it was a snooty country club that would have him as a member), but the sentiment is certainly similar. Cancer - the disease, would have you as a member - so to speak, regardless of your race, creed, ethnicity, sexual orientation or whether you're a democrat or a republican. If you live and breathe, you could be diagnosed with cancer. It is an equal opportunity life impactor.

For those of us worldwide millions who have already been diagnosed, cancer becomes unrelenting baggage - just so you know. And depending upon your attitude - about your new diagnosis, you will be either pleasant to be around or not (not that any of this is easy). Maintaining an emotional balance about this life-affecting circumstance can, anecdotally speaking, enhance your life, what there is of it (to quote the late Larry Fine from the 1938 Three Stooges short, "Healthy, Wealthy and Dumb"). You can be positive and exude hope, or you can be negative, and suffer the consequences. It's always my intention when I talk to a newly diagnosed cancer patient to listen attentively to their answers and their understanding of how their life will be changing. Cancer will become the first thing they think of when they get up in the morning, the last thing they think about when they try ('try' being the operative word) to go to sleep in the evening, and pretty much most of what will preoccupy their life during the day. How they anticipate and work this reality into their lives is what I'm most interested in learning.

Being diagnosed with cancer is as large an obstacle and impediment to realizing your hopes and dreams as one could possibly imagine/realize. How you deal with it matters. If you deal with your diagnosis with confidence and a can-do approach; I want you on my team. And I want you on my team (part of the club) because I gain your strength and wherewithal from your attitude. We all live with uncertainty and when you express a willingness to walk the walk/talk the talk, it helps me to endure my cancer-related/caused demons. The best help I can get is from my fellow cancer patients. When they're still seeing the world/circumstances as a glass half full - figuratively speaking, I want them in my life. Being selfish now; I can feed off their attitude and that will help me to endure the "slings and arrows" that cancer shoots every day and especially in bed at night when they're alone with their thoughts. To update an old Bette Davis quote: cancer ain't for cissies.

Joan is at the beginning of her cancer experience/indoctrination (into this not-exclusive club) and so far, she's exhibiting all the signs of being a welcome addition. When I talk to her, I come away feeling empowered by her spirit and willingness to face facts and proactively live forward in spite of this potentially devastating predicament. Managing the many appointments, labs, scans, medical appointments, treatment, et cetera, is not easy. In fact, the profession has created a new position: nurse navigator, to help patients stay on track for the best possible outcome as they deal with this treacherous and demanding road, unlike any road they've ever been on, driving or not.

Having been there and done that is never more meaningful than when talking with a new member. Compassion, empathy - and understanding are most helpful when talking to a recent "diagnosee." And more often than not, when talking with Joan, I come away feeling so much better than when it began. Diagnosis to date, she's been a great addition. I look forward to speaking to her again. It will be my pleasure. I only hope she feels the same.

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

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 6

agency is seeking an executive assistant to help coordinate a diverse group of tasks necessary to keep us on track and moving forward. Someone with office manager skills would be the ideal candidate. www.volunteeralexandria.org

ALIVE! Volunteers are needed to assist with multiple programs relating to their Food Program, ALIVE! House, and Alexandria Eviction Prevention Partnership Program will distribute food at Mobile Pop-ups and Truck to Trunk events, etc. <https://www.volunteeralexandria.org/ALIVE>

Assistance League of Northern Virginia is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that feeds, clothes and provides reading assistance and books to children in need. Assistance League's programs touch the lives of hundreds of children in Fairfax and Prince William Counties and the City of Alexandria. There are many volunteer opportunities for community members to contribute to helping those in need. To learn more, email info@alnv.org, or visit

www.alnv.org.

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

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

ALIVE! offers numerous programs that aid

low-income families in Alexandria that rely on volunteers: monthly food distributions, furniture, houseware and emergency food deliveries, and community food drives. Individuals, families and groups are encouraged to participate. Students can earn community service hours by participating. Visit www.alive-inc.org/volunteer.htm or contact the Volunteer Coordinator at volunteers@alive-inc.org.

RSVP, a volunteer network for seniors seeking service opportunities in and around Fairfax County, Arlington County and the City of Alexandria, offers a wide array of opportunities for volunteers 55 and older. RSVP volunteers enjoy flexible schedules, free accident and liability insurance while serving, optional mileage and meal reimbursement and are invited to volunteer group projects and social gatherings. To sign up for an upcoming orientation, email Carly.Hubicki@chubicki@volunteerfairfax.org or call RSVP at 703-403-5360. To learn more about RSVP, visit www.rsvpnova.org.

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