

CONNECTION

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Anwar Kiyar, a junior at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, chats with (center) Fairfax County school board representatives, Marcia St. John-Cummings and (right) Robyn Lady. Kiyar received a Peace Award; he led a two-week computer programming course for children 9-to-12 years old and initiated a weekly math club.

Voting on Redistricting

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It's a ReMix
Coming to Springfield

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Students
Seeking Peace

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SENIOR LIVING, PAGE 13 ♦ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 16 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 18

PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON / THE CONNECTION

MARCH 5-18, 2026

ONLINE AT WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

NEWS

Hoskins to Leave FCEDA

Fairfax County Economic Development Authority (FCEDA) Commission President and CEO Victor Hoskins will be returning to the private sector this fall, the organization said last week. During his six-year tenure, Hoskins elevated Fairfax County's global competitiveness, drove significant investment and job growth, and strengthened the County's position as the economic engine of the region.

"Victor Hoskins has been an exceptional economic leader for Fairfax County and a strategic force for growth during some of the most competitive and complex times in recent history," said James Quigley, Chairman of the FCEDA Commission. "Under his leadership, FCEDA secured some of the world's most innovative companies, ignited meaningful job creation, strengthened key industries, and cemented Fairfax County's place as a global competitor."

During Hoskins' tenure, FCEDA helped secure nearly 64,000 jobs; facilitated more than 10.5 million square feet of commercial office space and over 4 million square feet of data centers; assisted more than 13,000 small businesses; and gen-

erated close to \$5 billion in earned media, the organization asserted. Over the same period, Fairfax County's GDP grew by more than \$47 billion, reaching \$177 billion.

Major national and international companies announcing new locations or expansions in Fairfax County during this period include Microsoft, Google, Meta, Volkswagen Group of America, StarKist, Amenum, Guidehouse, Qualtrics, Alarm.com, Hilton, Clark Construction, Blue Origin, V2X, and The Aerospace Corporation.

Hoskins also leaves a powerful legacy of developing greater regional collaboration. By forming the Northern Virginia Economic Development Alliance with neighboring jurisdictions and strengthening partnerships across Greater Washington, including Connected DMV, he championed strategic collaboration that positioned the region as a formidable competitor both nationally and globally.

Through his leadership on the Connected DMV board, Hoskins championed global convenings such as the Quantum World Congress — which FCEDA helped found and has grown to more than 1,500 quantum leaders from 31 countries — and

the recent inaugural spaceNEXT conference, further positioning Fairfax County and Greater Washington as premier destinations for quantum and space innovation.

Six years ago, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors funded FCEDA's Talent Initiative to enhance workforce competitiveness across Northern Virginia. In partnership with neighboring jurisdictions, employers, and more than 100 colleges and universities, the initiative has engaged more than 17,000 employers and connected more than half a million job seekers to opportunities.

"With our diversified economy, world-class talent pipeline, and the strong regional alliances Victor forged and elevated, Fairfax County is poised for its next chapter of extraordinary growth, and we are propelled by an enduring foundation for the future," said Quigley.

The FCEDA Commission will soon initiate a search for the organization's next President and CEO. A Commission-led search committee will oversee a comprehensive process to identify a visionary and collaborative leader to build upon the organization's strong foundation. A successor is expected to be announced later this year.

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Peace as Means and End At 2026 Student Peace Awards

Powerful community recognition reaches beyond sports and academic achievements.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Amidst a backdrop of significant international tension, Fairfax County honored 28 recipients of the Student Peace Awards of Fairfax County during a reception held at 2 p.m. Sunday, March 1, at the Sherwood Community Center in Fairfax. Now in its 20th year, the program is presented by a coalition of 15 secular and religious organizations, led by the founding Herndon Friends Meeting and the George Mason University Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution.

Margaret Fisher, an organizer and member of Friends, opened the reception saying that in the past year, there have been eight major wars and 28 other armed conflicts worldwide. Despite this, Fisher said the ceremony highlights a localized reality of peace-building where students “shine their lights” to show that peace is possible.

Ryan McElveen, Fairfax County School Board member at-large, added during speaker remarks that the students are honored because they “chose courage over cynicism, compassion over indifference and service over self-interest.”

“They did not begin their projects seeking recognition,” McElveen said. “They acted because they saw a need.”

The ceremony highlighted the “intentional peacemaking” of students who treat harmony as an active practice rather than a passive goal. Fisher cited a conservative estimate of 240,000 people killed in 2025, with many more maimed, traumatized, starved and displaced. She acknowledges that recent events have added to the suffering and that it’s easy to feel futility that “lulls one into inaction.”

“Why keep struggling when the destructive elements of human nature are so ascendant in human culture?” Fisher asked.

Speaker U.S. Rep. James Walkinshaw, D-11, addressed the temptation to withdraw or accept defeat in the movement toward peace during his remarks. “We cannot afford to do that,” Walkinshaw said. He connects his optimism to the students and to history, noting

SEE PEACE AS MEANS, PAGE 9
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PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

The 2026 Student Peace Awards recipients of Fairfax County gather for a group photo during a reception honoring their achievements at the Sherwood Community Center in Fairfax on March 1.



Sheba Ahmadzai, a Centreville High School senior who coordinated more than 50 volunteers to deliver supplies to 15,000 people in Afghanistan, is joined by her father, Shirshah Ahmadzai at the 2026 Student Peace Awards of Fairfax County.



Damika Ravi, a Fairfax High School senior, codveloped a presentation to school officials to influence local policy and foster a welcoming school environment.



Savanne Clark, center, a Mount Vernon High School senior who created a template for schools to display mental health resources, is joined by Mallory Whitehouse, left, her college and career specialist, and her mother, Michelle Willis.



U.S. Rep. James Walkinshaw, D-11, says young people have repeatedly led the nation “out of the darkness and toward progress.”



Margaret Fisher of the Herndon Friends Meeting speaks during the 2026 Student Peace Awards of Fairfax County ceremony.



School Board member Ryan McElveen praises honorees who “did not begin their projects seeking recognition” but “acted because they saw a need.”

'My Body Aches with a Pain that Has No Cure'

Gret Glycer's family members share their grief.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

After finding Joshua Danehower not guilty by reason of insanity in the murder of Fairfax City's Gret Glycer, Judge Stephen Shannon allowed the victim's family members to testify about the impact his death has had on them.

"It's difficult because the defendant isn't being convicted of the underlying crime," said Shannon. "But it would be unfair not to let them do so."

Taking the stand first was Glycer's widow, Heather. She and Gret knew each other since fifth grade and married in 2018. "Before we were married, Gret spent three years living in Malawi, Africa which, at the time, was one of the poorest countries on the planet," she said. "As a result of his time there – seeing those who were without basic medical care, transportation access, housing and water – he began a crowdfunding charity platform called DonorSee.

"Those wanting to support the less fortunate would receive a video [showing] where their money had gone. This business was a central part of our lives. His mission was to find the best ways to help orphans, widows, the handicapped, the powerless."

She said her husband always pushed her to be the best version of herself. "He was funny, wise, a thoughtful and caring father and my best friend," said Heather. "He was



Victim's sister: Gizan Glycer

always thinking about the future and the best way he could take care of me and the kids, as well as serve the community. His Christian faith defined who he was – which was evident in how he lived his life."

But it all ended abruptly and brutally, said Heather. "On June 24, 2022, at about 3 a.m., a gunman entered our bedroom and shot him multiple times in the head while we were both sleeping," she said. "I woke up in the darkness to the sound of gunfire ringing in my ears and the smell of gunpowder in my nose. When I turned on my bedside lamp, I saw a pool of blood next to me and was so in shock I couldn't fully comprehend the unprovoked violence that had happened a foot away from me.

"My 22-month-old and 5-month-old babies were sleeping upstairs. I never went back to that home after that day and, in fact, lived in five different homes since 2022. Life was chaotic, as I unexpectedly had to plan a funeral, settle an estate and do all the administrative work that comes with death. I suffered with the effects of post traumatic stress disorder for years – most acutely in the days following Gret's murder while the suspect was at large."

She said she only averaged two hours of sleep a night in those early days, and felt as if she were living outside her body. "In the weeks and months following, I slept with my bedroom lights on, was distrustful of strangers and always thought the worst was about to happen when I heard a loud noise," said Heather.

"The manner in which Gret died – and how I experienced his death – was traumatic, and that will live with me forever. [It] not only left me a widow at 32, but also a single mother. My daughter and son are now a kindergartner and a 4-year-old. The work it takes to raise two children – especially when they're so young and very often sick – is exhausting. I do all the things that are meant to be shared between two people."

"I was senselessly robbed of my partner, and my children were robbed of their father," she continued. "They have no memory of their daddy and will never have him to guide and protect them. His death and the way he died will inevitably shape them, no matter what I do to try to give them the best life I can.

"Listening to the evidence presented at the court hearings, I've also become disturbed to learn of the defendant's obsession with me. I seriously worry about the safety of me and my children, and our entire community, if he's ever allowed into society. The last 3-1/2 years have been so difficult. My family, my community and I have lost a husband, a father, a son, a brother and a friend.

Gret was a good man who did a lot of good in this world, and he will forever be missed."

Testifying next was Gret Glycer's mother, Silvia. "Until that horrific night, my son had dreams to see his two, young

children grow up," she said. "He looked forward to taking them to school, going to their games, traveling the world with them and teaching them about God, family, faith, service, friendship and life.

"He'll no longer be able to help the most vulnerable people in the world. His mission was to bring comfort and care to those in need. He'll no longer be able to make a difference to humanity, and his children are now part of the most vulnerable. My grandchildren will not have their father – his love, laughter, joy and affection. My body aches with a pain that has no cure. No one can bring my son back to my arms. My home is quiet without his presence, and my soul is empty."

Grid Glycer, the victim's father, said that, since his son's death, "There's an emptiness and hollowness in my life, and it's not gone away, nor will it ever. The last 3-1/2 years,

SEE GRET GLYER'S FAMILY, PAGE 5

Judge Accepts Insanity Plea for Glycer's Murder

Despite plans and confession, no prison for Danehower.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Before Joshua Danehower killed Fairfax City's Gret Glycer, he methodically typed up a plan detailing how he'd prepare for the crime, execute it and escape afterward. He then carried it out. But because Danehower later pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity, he'll be sent to a mental facility but will never be imprisoned.

On Feb. 19, in a room packed with supporters of Glycer's widow and two young children, Fairfax County Circuit Court Judge Stephen Shannon accepted the plea. However, he did so over the strong objections of the 32-year-old vic-

tim's family.

"We're upset [Danehower] could someday be released," testified Glycer's father, Grid. "And if that happens, I fear for the safety of my son's wife and children."

The findings of two psychologists who'd examined Danehower in a mental hospital and determined he was legally insane at the time of the offense left the judge no choice. Their determination meant he was unable to tell right from wrong then and the prosecution wouldn't be able to prove its case against him at trial. As a result, on May 21, Shannon will officially commit him to a mental facility for long-term treatment.

The tragedy occurred June 24, 2022, shortly before 3 a.m. During Danehower's preliminary hearing in January 2023, Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Eric Clingan



The killer: Joshua Danehower



The victim: Gret Glycer

said Danehower entered Gret Glycer's home and shot him 10 times while he was asleep beside his wife.

A tip from a pastor/friend of Glycer's wife quickly led to Danehower, then 33, becoming a suspect. Four days after the crime, police arrested him and charged him with second-degree murder and use of a firearm in the commission of a felony.

In General District Court, Clingan presented several items of

evidence, including the 9 mm Glock pistol used in the shooting; bullet casings from it; Danehower's fingerprints and written plan; Glycer's autopsy photo and report; and a certificate of analysis stating that the bullets fired into the victim, and their casings found at the scene, all came from Danehower's gun. Clingan said both the gun and the plan were found inside Danehower's Arlington apartment.

The case against him was then certified to the grand jury, which indicted Danehower, and a trial date was set. Meanwhile, he was treated at Central State Hospital and attorneys met several times for status hearings on his mental condition. Eventually, when it appeared as if Danehower was competent to stand trial, another trial date was set; but it, too, was canceled. Still more status hearings,

plus professionals' determination of his mental state at the time of the murder, led to his not-guilty-by-reason-of-insanity plea 3 years, 8 months after Glycer's death.

Before accepting that plea, Shannon asked Danehower, now 37, if he fully understood the charges against him. The judge also asked if he was entering his plea freely and voluntarily, and both times he said yes. Then Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Kaitlin Morgan explained what the prosecution's case against Danehower would have been, had it gone to trial, including the "multiple gunshot wounds" to Glycer's face, neck and arms. "The defendant had a prior relationship with the victim's wife and had recently developed an obsession with her again, after seeing her at a church function," said Morgan.

Besides finding Danehower's plan and gun in his apartment, she said, police also found "a lock-picking kit in his home and learned that he'd taken lessons on

SEE JUDGE ACCEPTS, PAGE 5
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Gret Glycer's Family Members Share Their Grief

FROM PAGE 4

I've spent grieving the loss of my son – compounded by the trauma of how his life was taken. And yet, even that doesn't compare to what Gret's children will go through. I know this because my own father was killed when I was just 3 years old. He was in the Air Force and died in the line of duty in 1958."

Grid said there's been lots of crying in their home since Gret was killed, but that it'll become "even more heart-wrenching" as his children grow older and "start noticing that their friends have someone called dad – and they don't. I'm trying to prepare for my grandchildren's questions about his death – 'Why did this happen to him, and why does everyone get to have a father but me?'" There are no answers to these questions; no one could answer them for me when I was growing up."

Testifying last was Gret's sister, Gizan Glycer. "He was my older brother and gave me advice at every turn," she said. "He made friends wherever he went and, after being in Malawi, he said he'd

found 'direction and purpose' in his life. He realized the difference people could make with charitable donations, and he created a video fundraising platform that raised \$10 million for the most vulnerable people in the world.

"His life impacted thousands, and people all over the world mourned for him. Six hundred people attended his funeral, and hundreds more watched online. Every family event and milestone has been empty without Gret. My parents are in an unimaginable amount of pain. That guiding light he provided to the world and my family has been turned off. All that remains are anger, tears and the image of 10 bullet holes in Gret's body."

"We'll be living in fear for our lives and his children's lives forever," continued Gizan. "And we cannot trust the system that was supposed to protect us [but] has only furthered our trauma. We cannot live full and peaceful lives in this world when there's no justice for Gret."

Afterward, during a press con-

ference outside the courthouse, Gret's sister, Gizan Glycer expressed anger that – although her brother's life was cut short so tragically – the insanity plea enabled his murderer to not be held legally accountable for it. And he could even walk free someday.

But Gizan doesn't believe Danehower's claim for a minute. And learning that he'd created a detailed plan to murder Gret Glycer only underscored her distrust that he was truly insane when he executed his plan.

Indeed, Danehower wrote that he'd bring a loaded Glock and gloves, clear his phone and computer, and wear a mask. Then, after entering the home, he listed, "quick fire, multiple rounds, finishing shot." Under his escape, he'd written, "hop fence, change clothes, clothes in trash bag (dumpster in Arlington next day), get on [I-]66 as soon as possible."

"There was a premeditated nature to his crime," said Gizan. "The killer planned the attack, step by step, of how he was going to both kill my brother and get away with it."

Judge Accepts Insanity Plea

FROM PAGE 4

how to do it." However, she also noted that "the defendant was examined by sanity experts from the defense and commonwealth, and both found him legally insane at the time of the offense."

Shannon then asked Danehower to tell him why he was pleading not guilty by reason of insanity. Danehower replied that, at the time of the killing, he was having problems with his mental health. He added, "I'm taking medication for schizophrenia, but it's not impairing my ability to respond right now." Shannon made sure Dane-

hower understood that, if his plea was accepted, he'd be initially committed to the commissioner of the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services.

The judge also told Danehower he'd have to "talk to the doctors about what happened" and that he'd hold status hearings on him once a year, for the first five years, and every two years afterward, to evaluate his sanity. Shannon also advised him that his "confinement could be indefinite."

Still, the possibility that someday Danehower could be released with no criminal punishment for

Glycer's murder both troubles and worries the victim's family. The reports of the mental-health experts who examined Danehower are part of the official court documents in his case. Information in them says he started having mental-health problems in 2012, made delusional statements and believed Glycer had forced his wife to marry him.

He told the psychologists that, in 2018, he'd concluded that he needed to remedy that situation by killing Glycer. Eventually doing so, Danehower told them, "I think I fired [the gun] like 10 times. I wanted to make sure he was dead."

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.

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 nonprofit 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 celebrating 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.

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 7

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Event logo.

Women's Storytelling Festival Returns to Fairfax

Live performers, March 19-22, at the Sherwood Center.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Hosted by Better Said Than Done, the annual Women's Storytelling Festival returns Friday-Sunday, March 20-22, to Fairfax City. It's the first and only storytelling festival in the country exclusively devoted to women performers.

Stories will be presented live at the Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Blenheim Blvd. in Fairfax. A special, online-only showcase will premiere Thursday, March 19, and the festival will also be live-streamed. And all ticket holders will be able to watch the festival videos for one month after the festival concludes.

Featuring a wide range of storytelling styles, the festival will spotlight 20 performers of spoken-word stories and is intended for mature audiences. In addition, the emcees include two locals, Fairfax Mayor Catherine Read and Del. Holly Seibold (D-12th).

The storytellers will share personal stories, folktales, stories of adventure and magic, plus historical stories – some, marking the United States' 250th anniversary. Performers are coming here from across the nation, from California to Connecticut, Georgia to Ohio –



Jessica Robinson

and even from as far as Ireland – and represent some of today's best-known storytellers.

Among them are authors, content creators, TV stars, podcasters, theater performers and contributors to Risk!, Stories from the Stage, the National Storytelling Festival and the Moth storytelling shows. This festival not only showcases women storytellers – often underrepresented in other national festivals – but also features a variety of stories centering around women's lives and highlighting diverse experiences, cultures and points of view.

Festival founder and producer Jessica Robinson of Fairfax launched Better Said Than Done Inc. in May 2011 to bring the art of storytelling to Northern Virginia, and 2026 is its seventh year hosting this event. "I don't want to say that each year it gets better, because 2020 was fabulous, as was each year since," she said. "But the festival has grown a following of both audience members and storytellers, including this year's lineup."

"Something special happens when storytellers and listeners



Bonnie Gardner

truly connect," continued Robinson. "Because the performers have also had the chance to absorb the previous six years of storytelling, they have a stronger sense of the types of stories that work well with our audience. As a national festival, we've developed a voice of our own."

Some of those voices belong to area residents such as returning storyteller Bonnie Gardner of Vienna. "A festival that centers women's stories, women's perspectives, and women's lived experiences promotes empathy and understanding," she said. "It's a much-needed balm in these fractured times. Listening changes us. When women tell their stories fully, honestly and from their own perspective, audiences leave understanding the world differently."

Besides that, she added, "The sheer diversity of storytelling styles and content you'll find at the festival sets it apart from other performance-based events. Prepare to be surprised, moved and a little awestruck. The storytellers will present their works crafted over months and performed live without scripts. You'll hear from

investigative reporters, business founders, policy experts, immigrants, artists and award-winning storytellers. These history shapers span [the realms of] journalism, entrepreneurship, public service and the arts."

As the U.S. marks 250 years, said Gardner, "This festival asks a simple but powerful question, 'What would our understanding of history look like if we listened to it through women's voices?' For centuries, the nation's story has centered on battlefield victories and political power. But history also unfolds in hospitals, classrooms, communities, churches and factories."

"Mothers give birth to every generation yet rarely hold ownership over how that generation's history is told. In this milestone year, the Women's Storytelling Festival expands that lens through a special showcase that reexamines the United States at 250."

For example, storyteller Denise Page will share her solo show, "Legacy of a Wealthy Slave," about the 2024 discovery by Yale University archivists of her ancestors and their places in history.

"When women tell history, something shifts," explained Robinson. "We begin to see greatness not only in victory, but in resilience. Not only in power, but in empathy. Not only in dominance, but in survival. That shift is tangible. Men often approach storytellers afterward to say, 'I had no idea.' Women leave feeling seen, having finally heard parts of their own lives spoken aloud in a powerful, artful form."

"The festival provides a space where female artists can tell the stories that other venues are frequently too timid to host, and it does so in an atmosphere of celebration and appreciation," said veteran storyteller Jennifer Munro. "It's refreshing to see women take center stage and own it."

"More magic happens in live performance without that fourth wall of theater," added storyteller Kristin Pedemonti. "There's a deep connection between the teller and listener which is palpable and long lasting. When we hear each other's stories, we hear each other's humanity."

◆ ◆ ◆

The Women's Storytelling Festival kicks off Thursday, March 19, at 8 p.m., with its virtual showcase. The in-person and live-streaming performances begin Friday, March 20, at 7 p.m. Ticket prices are \$50 for virtual performances and \$70 for in-person. One-day, in-person passes will be available at the door for \$35/day. People of all gender identities are welcome to attend.

For more information, schedules and to purchase tickets, go to <https://bettersaidthandone.org/womens-festival/>.

*To learn more about the festival's storytellers, visit <https://bettersaidthandone.org/womens-festival/2026-festival-storytellers/>

*For more information about the emcees, go to

<https://bettersaidthandone.org/womens-festival/emcees-and-volunteers/>.

– BONNIE GARDNER

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Domestic Attack in Mantua Leaves Two Dead

Infant's mother and grandmother are killed.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

A brutal domestic attack last week in Fairfax's Mantua community left a 1-year-old baby without his mother and grandmother. Fairfax County police say the child's grandfather murdered his own wife and daughter and nearly killed his son-in-law, as well.

The tragedy occurred early in the morning of Monday, Feb. 23, in the 3900 block of Persimmon Drive. According to police, when officers arrived on the scene, the grandfather, Chhatra Thapa, 54, was in the act of stabbing his son-in-law – the infant's father. And when he allegedly ignored police commands to drop his weapon, an officer shot and killed him.

After receiving two 911 calls, police responded around 5:06 a.m., finding one female victim outside the apartment and suffering from stab wounds. The other female was found inside the home in the same condition. Both women – identified as Mamta Thapa, 33, and Binda Thapa, 52, were taken to a local hospital where they were later pronounced dead.

At press time, the son-in-law, in his 30s, remained hospitalized in critical condition. Police have not released his name.

Later in the day on Feb. 23 – in the parking lot in front of the apartment building where all those family members lived – county Police Chief Kevin Davis held a press

conference and presented some details about what had happened.

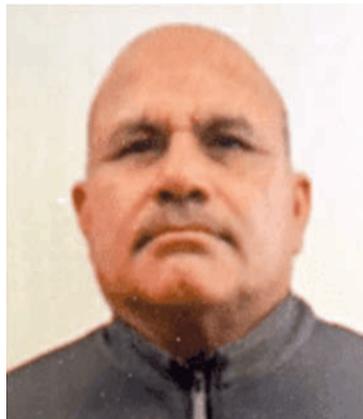
"At some point this morning, the son-in-law was cleaning the snow off his car in the parking lot and heard a disturbance coming from his apartment," said Davis. "A neighbor living in an apartment nearby heard a commotion, too, and both the neighbor and son-in-law called 911.

"The son-in-law goes back into the apartment, finds his wife suffering from stab wounds and sees his father-in-law armed with a knife that I'll describe generally as a curved dagger. It's got about a 10-inch blade and resembles a meat cleaver, and the father-in-law is stabbing his [own] wife. He'd already stabbed and killed his daughter, and then he turned the knife on his son-in-law. So there were three stabbing victims. Thankfully, the baby was unharmed."

When Davis was speaking to the press, he said the assailant's wife and son-in-law were both in "grave, life-threatening condition" afterward and were being treated at a local hospital. But the wife, Binda Thapa, later died.

"To describe this scene as bloody is an understatement," said Davis. "The damage and carnage perpetrated by this man on his own family is unimaginable. Our officers dispatched to his chaotic scene arrived within several minutes. When they [entered] the apartment, the man was literally in the process of stabbing his son-in-law with that curved, long-bladed dagger.

"An officer gave repeated commands – one after another after another – to the perpetrator to drop the knife. Not only doesn't he drop it, but he still proceeds to stab the son in law – who'd made his way back into the apart-



Chhatra Thapa

ment to intervene. So our officer discharged his firearm and killed the knife-wielding man. I can't wrap my head around the turmoil this man was going through that somehow compelled him to stab his own family members like that in a really brutal way."

"The loss of any life is something we all take very seriously," continued Davis. "Our police officer was on the scene literally in a lifesaving effort." Praising his "bravery and grace under pressure," Davis said, "I saw the body-worn camera footage, and this young officer did exactly what we and our community expect him to do."

"Domestic violence can start at a low level and escalate quickly," he added. "So we urge friends, family and neighbors who know domestic violence is taking place anywhere to reach out to the local police department and get us involved to prevent a tragedy like this one from happening."

Police recovered the knife used in the attack, and officers immediately rendered medical aid to Thapa and his victims until fire department paramedics arrived. Despite life-saving efforts, Thapa was pronounced deceased on the scene.

The baby was placed into pro-



Police Chief Kevin Davis

tective custody. The police department's Victim Services Division, in coordination with Child Protective Services, arranged an appropriate family placement for him.

Police said the officer involved in the shooting is a 2-1/2-year veteran assigned to the Mason Police District. As per department policy, he was placed on restricted duty pending the outcome of criminal and administrative investigations.

The Major Crimes Bureau is conducting a criminal investigation

into the use of force, and the Internal Affairs Bureau is conducting a separate administrative investigation which will be subject to an independent review by the Independent Police Auditor. The results of the criminal investigation will be presented to the Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney. In accordance with department policy, body-worn camera footage will be released within 30 days of the incident, and the officer's name will be released within 10 days.

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 5

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 County-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.

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 or-

ganization. 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://scmafc.org/volunteer>, or email contact@scmafc.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.fairfax-county.gov/healthymindsfairfax or www.nami-northernvirginia.org.

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 12

Fairfax City Manager Unveils Proposed Budget

Real estate and meals tax hikes are proposed.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

When Fairfax City Manager Daniel Alexander presented his proposed FY 27 budget to City Council last week, it contained some unwelcome surprises for City residents. They included a 2.5-cent hike in the real-estate tax rate, plus increases in the City's meals tax, as well as its wastewater and stormwater utility fees.

But it's not necessarily the budget that Council will approve in May. Between now and then, the members will hold budget work sessions and public hearings. And residents will also be able to weigh in online via the City's "Engage Fairfax" website.

The increase in the real-estate tax rate would raise the current rate of \$1.055 per \$100 assessed valuation to \$1.08. As a result, owners of an average City home valued at \$726,287 would see their annual, real-estate tax bill increase by \$517.

That amount includes the average 4.6-percent increase in residential real-estate assessments in the City. And according to the budget document, \$335 of the proposed rate hike is due to the assessments and \$182 would be because of the tax-rate increase.

And since residents' stormwater and wastewater bills are proposed to rise by 5 percent and 6 percent, respectively, that means they'd also pay an estimated \$10.19 a year more to the City's Stormwater Utility Fund and \$44.65 a year more to the Wastewater Fund. These fee increases are needed to meet regulatory, operational and required infrastructure improvements.

Real-estate taxes generate nearly half of the General Fund revenue. Some 68 percent of the total amount comes from residential properties, and about 32 percent from commercial properties. And 1 cent on Fairfax's real-estate tax rate equals \$883,929.

As for the meals tax, Alexander proposed a jump of half a percent, from 4 to 4.5 percent. He said it would result in an extra 25-cent charge for a \$50 meal and would yield \$1,252,599 to the City's coffers.

During the Feb. 24 Council meeting, Alexander said, "At its core this budget is about long-term stability, responsible investment and preserving Fairfax financial strength while honoring the commitments we've made to our resi-

dents, schools and our employees.

"It's a fiscal-year financial plan that estimates revenues and expenditures and guides how we allocate resources and deliver services. It reflects community priorities; it's a strategic plan, not simply a spending mandate. This is a stability budget driven by discipline, not expansion."

Alexander said the major drivers of this budget are: \$5 million for the school-tuition contract increase between the FY 26 adopted budget and the FY 27 projection; \$3.3 million for planned debt issuance for school renovations and the Willard-Sherwood Health and Community Center; \$1.3 million for workforce investment – salary increases and fringe benefits; and \$500,000 for one-time expenses, offset by \$1.3 million net operating and maintenance reductions based on project balances.

"A key takeaway – if we made no changes in tax rate or revenue and didn't reduce non-mandated expenses, those drivers alone would translate to the equivalent of approximately \$8.8 million in cost increases and a 9.6-cent real-estate tax rate increase," said Alexander. "I'm not recommending that." But he stressed that this information is essential context for the "measured adjustments" his budget proposes.

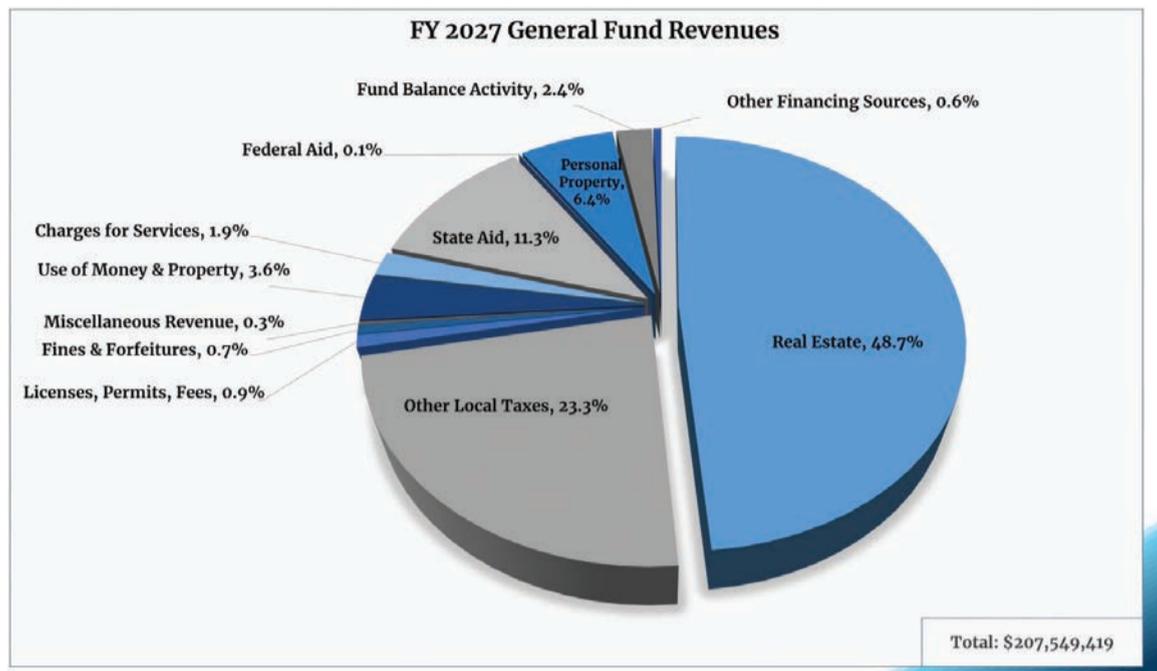
He noted that education comprises the City's largest General Fund obligation, as well as \$208,073,248 – or nearly a third – of its \$637,348,543 Capital Improvement Program for FY 27-31. Fairfax has 84 capital projects in its FY 27-31 CIP.

"The City continues to invest in core infrastructure and asset preservation – streets, facilities, public spaces and long-term maintenance," explained Alexander. "These investments reduce long-term costs and protect service reliability."

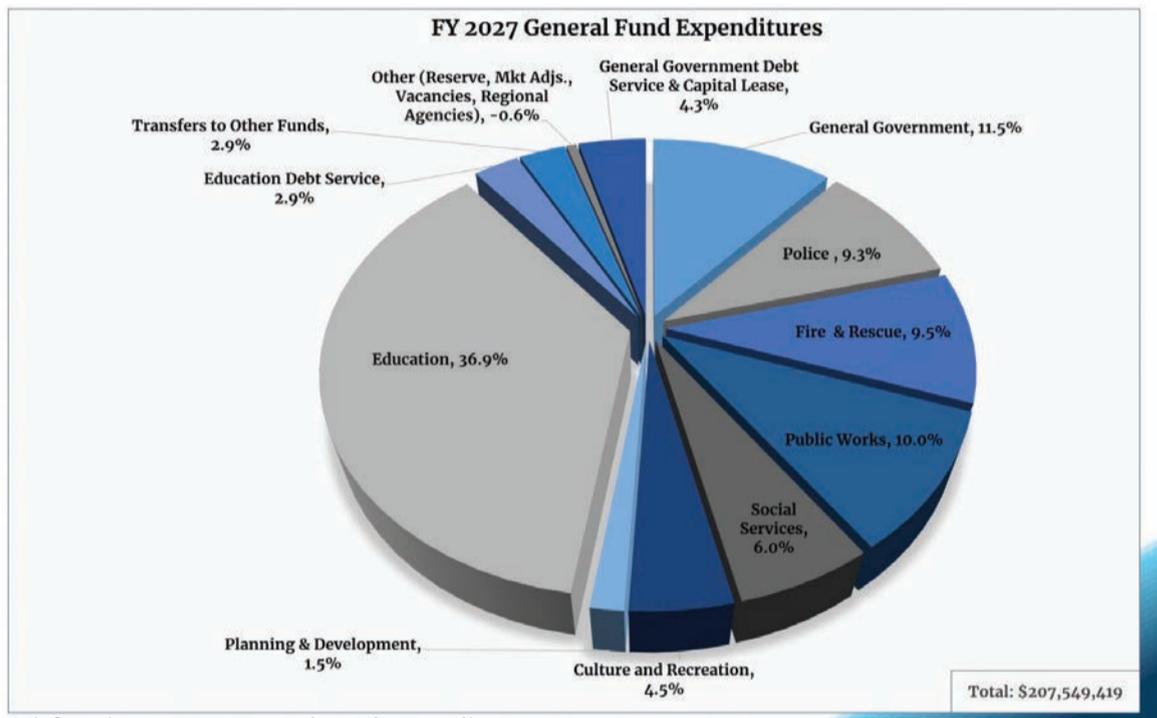
The FY 27 General Fund expenditures total \$207.5 million, reflecting an increase of about 4.5 percent over the FY 26 adopted budget. The school-tuition contract, alone, will cost \$76.4 million to fully fund.

However, no new full-time City employee positions are proposed in the budget, no reduction in current programs and no new initiatives or service expansions. Instead, said Alexander, Fairfax will maintain current service levels and meet its commitments.

"Workforce investments include a 3-percent general salary increase for general employees, step increases for public-safety personnel and a 1-percent cost-of-living increase for all employees – maintaining current staffing levels," he said. "This approach supports retention and competitiveness while holding the line on head count."



City of Fairfax FY 27 General Fund revenues.



Fairfax City's FY 27 General Fund expenditures.

How Each Local Tax Dollar is Spent



How Fairfax City spends each tax dollar.

The proposed budget, including all of the City's funds, totals \$302.6 million.

Besides the recommended hikes to various taxes and fees, Alexan-

der also proposed taking \$5 million from the unassigned General Fund balance to help pay for the City's increased financial obligations.

Public hearings on the budget are set for March 10 and 24, April 14 and 28, at 7 p.m., in Council chambers. Budget adoption is May 5.

Peace as Means and End At 2026 Student Peace Awards

FROM PAGE 3

that for almost 250 years, young people have led the country out of darkness and toward progress.

Walkinshaw cited John Lewis, a teenager from a sharecropping family in rural Alabama who listened to a radio program about the Birmingham bus boycott. Hearing that young people were organizing and fighting for equality and freedom “changed his life completely,” Walkinshaw said. Shortly after hearing that radio program, Lewis joined the boycott, launching a lifetime of advocacy that helped free all of us in many ways.

Attendees included the families and friends of the awardees, as well as Walkinshaw and Fairfax County School Board members Robyn Lady, Dranesville District; Marcia St. John-Cummings, Franconia District; and Ilryong Moon, At-Large.

While there are many awards for academics and athletics, the Student Peace Awards of Fairfax County occupies a niche because of its grassroots origin. Peace is defined by the students themselves. The award consists of a monetary gift for each recipient and a matching donation for a peace-focused charity of their choice, Fisher said.

Sheba Ahmadzai is a senior at Centreville High School. As part of the award, she is gifted \$100 to give to a charity of her choice. Ahmadzai explained that the Afghan

Student Association should receive the donation to help refugees with mentorship and tutoring.

“Our goal is to bring the Afghan community at school together, especially (new) students who came from Afghanistan, refugees who are struggling ... We help them,” Ahmadzai said.

Damika Ravi, a senior at Fairfax High School, said she wants to leave a legacy of networking for change. Her peace work centers on raising awareness of microaggressions and school safety. Ravi explained that the key is making sure research is given to the right people so they can “really get it out there and spread the information and actually create change,” Ravi said.

Savanne Clark, a senior at Mount Vernon High School, said working for peace has changed how she interacts with friends and family.

“I’m learning a lot more about taking bits and pieces of each person’s perspective and then really working on putting them together, possibly to find a solution, and then sometimes not finding a solution, really just creating more understanding,” Clark said. “And I found that understanding is just as impactful as finding a solution.”

Among the many other recipients are Caleb Crawford, a junior at Cedar Lane High School. Crawford assists students who are anx-

ious or have difficulty with peer interactions.

Members of the Verdict school newspaper at Justice High School seek to inform students about current news with recent articles on sports betting, students’ interactions with Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and teen pregnancy.

Alden Walcott, a junior at South Lakes High School, writes about her Indian Nation and produced “How Indigenous Teens Stay Connected with Their Heritage” for PBS.

The award stands apart because 28 schools chose a recipient, including three groups, for the 2025-26 award. Unlike programs managed by government agencies, these are entirely volunteer-run and grassroots-funded. A single Quaker group, Herndon Friends Meeting, started the program in 2006. It has since grown into a coalition of 15 to 20 local organizations. Presented by the Herndon Friends Meeting and the Langley Hill Friends Meeting, the prize structure encourages students to research and engage with the larger world of advocacy.

Closing out the reception, McElveen said peace is not a passive state but a series of choices made every day.

“May your work continue to make Fairfax County and the world a much more peaceful place,” McElveen said.



PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON / THE CONNECTION

Anwar Kiyar, a junior at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, chats with (center) Fairfax County school board representatives, Marcia St. John-Cummings and (right) Robyn Lady. Kiyar led a two-week computer programming course for children 9-to-12 years old and initiated a weekly math club.



Awardees of the 2026 Student Peace Awards and their families fill the seats at the Sherwood Community Center in Fairfax on March 1, waiting for the reception honoring the recipients to begin. Standing (far left) is U.S. Rep. James Walkinshaw, D-11.



Special guests at the 2026 Student Peace Awards include (from left) U.S. Rep. James Walkinshaw, D-11; and Fairfax County School Board members Ryan McElveen, At-Large; Ricardy Anderson, Mason District; Robyn Lady, Dranesville District; Marcia St. John-Cummings, Franconia District; and Ilryong Moon, At-Large. They listen to the opening remarks at the Sherwood Community Center in Fairfax on March 1.

Redistricting Special Election April 21?

Special election preparations begin amid conflicting court rulings.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

An April vote on Virginia congressional redistricting? Maybe; or maybe not. Fairfax County's Office of Elections, reached for comment on Feb. 23, indicated the office was preparing to conduct a Special Election on April 21 and early voting could begin at three sites on March 6.

The office would make "no comment" on pending appeals in the court systems related to the Special Election. With much time and work needed to prepare, the Office of Elections can not wait for a final decision to begin its preparations.

The final decision on holding voting will be made by the courts. But which court? On Feb. 13, the Virginia Supreme Court overruled a Tazewell County District Court stay on the special election. The Supreme Court ruled that the April 21 referendum could proceed in advance of its April 23 scheduled hearing of briefs from the parties. Just six days later, the Republican National Committee, the National Republican Congressional Committee and Virginia Republican Representatives Ben Cline and Morgan Griffith sued the Virginia Department of Elections, in the Tazewell County District Court. That court imposed an emergency injunction blocking the special election for 90 days. Virginia Attorney General Jay Jones has petitioned the court to allow him to submit briefs challenging the injunction, saying the matter is already properly before the Virginia Supreme Court.

So Virginian voters might have an opportunity to weigh in on whether to allow an out-of-cycle redrawing of Congressional Districts. The final outcome depends upon the results of those countering appeals made to the courts. Even if the stay is removed and the Special Election vote is held, the Virginia Supreme Court could ultimately decide if the resulting vote can be considered.

Redistricting Background

Article I, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution establishes that the Representatives of each State will be apportioned based on the population. Forming the voting districts which elect those representatives is left up to the states. Traditionally, after each ten year census, the number of each state's representatives is adjusted as necessary to

align with any population growth or shifts between states. There are now eleven Congressional Districts in Virginia.

It is also typical to adjust voting districts within the states after a census; done in a manner determined by each state. Those districts have often been set to favor the political party in power. In 2020, in what was considered a reform action, Virginia passed a constitutional amendment to stipulate use of a non-partisan, 16 member commission to draw congressional and state legislative district lines. In that first 2020 census cycle, the commission failed to pass a plan, so the state supreme court took over, in accordance with the statute. The seven justices are selected by majority vote of both houses of the General Assembly for a period of 12 years.

Recent Redistricting Action

On Jan. 16, 2026, the General Assembly passed a proposed constitutional amendment (HJ 4) which would allow the legislature to redraw congressional districts, temporarily, mid-decade, if approved by voters. The amendment stipulated that the off-cycle redistricting could only be adopted if any other state adopted a redistricting outside of the 10 year cycle. It further stipulated that use of the out-of-cycle partisan method would be temporary. The method used would again return to the non-partisan commission led effort following the 2030 census.

The redistricting amendment, sponsored by Del. Rodney Willett (D-58), was moved forward through the General Assembly by its Democratic majority, with voting along party lines, and was signed by Gov. Abigail Spanberger (D). The special session and redrawing proposal was in response to the White House calling for heavily Republican states to engage in redistricting to increase the number of GOP seats in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The latest round, in a long history of gerrymandering efforts to gain broader political control, was begun by Texas in July 2025, at the request of President Donald Trump. California voters approved a November 2025 ballot question on redistricting, to offset the Texas action. Missouri's state house voted for a change likely to add one additional GOP seat, but faces an appeal and voter approval. Some states, including Indiana, Maine,



PHOTO BY SUSAN LAUME

Virginians might be able to vote as early as next week on whether to go forward with a redistricting plan.

New Hampshire, and Washington indicated they do not intend to pursue redistricting. Maryland began an attempt but it has not moved forward in the legislature. New York's redistricting, with the potential of four to five Democratic seats, is in the court system. Florida is expected to hold a special session in April with the potential to add four or five Republican seats.

Voting Yes

The group Virginians For Fair Elections, urges voters to vote "yes" by April 21. They argue, "Across the country, Trump and MAGA-controlled legislatures, like Texas, Ohio, and Florida, are taking unprecedented steps to redraw congressional maps, without voter approval; to rig upcoming elections, putting fair representation at risk and threatening to dilute Virginians' voices in Washington." They say that by putting this temporary safeguard in place, the referendum helps restore balance and ensure fairness. The group is affiliated with the Democratic Party.

For more information on this side of the argument, see www.Virginiansforfairelections.com.

Senator Louise Lucas (D-18), the Commonwealth's most senior senator has stated, "The plan is for us to go back to the nonpartisan commission because that's what Virginians voted for," Lucas said. "The only reason we're in this place right now is because of the power grab that started with Trump."

Voting No

The group Virginia Fair Elections, welcomed the Tazewell County Circuit Court decision that the redistricting cannot proceed due to procedural irregularities. The group's chair, Lynn Taylor, said, "Gerrymandered maps are not fair maps. They would push hundreds of thousands more Virginians into seats where their views will be unrepresented by their representatives. This whole amendment screams of political game-playing and a blatant disregard for the principle of self-determination. Whether in the legis-

lature, the courts, or at the ballot box, Virginians must reject this revenge gerrymandering." The group is affiliated with the Republican Party. For more information on this side of the argument, see www.vafairelections.org.

Under Attack

Whether holding the "yes" or "no" vote position, there is agreement between the groups that free and fair elections are the cornerstone of our democracy — and right now, they're under attack.

All Representatives seats in Congress are up for reelection this November 2026, and every two years, including those Districts currently serving Fairfax County, held by: Donald Beyer Jr. - 8th District; Suhas Subramanyam - 10th District; and James Walkinshaw - 11th District.

The date for Primary Elections has been changed for 2026, from the typical date of June 16, to Aug. 4. This change will allow additional time for court decisions candidate preparations.

New Owner Breaths New Life Into Central Springfield Property

Reuse and recycle are part of Mark Harrington's mission at Remix.

BY MIKE SALMON
CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

With roots in Springfield, local entrepreneur Mark Harrington loves the concept of repurposing stuff instead of filling landfills. So he recently bought an empty store in central Springfield to house his second Remix Market, a second-hand furniture, clothing, and home goods retailer focused on sustainability and reuse.

His other business is Junk Luggers so the two work in tandem. Step one is being hired to empty out a place and single out the good stuff, and step two is to set it up on the showroom floor at Remix so customers can get what they need at second-hand prices.

"This project is about giving both the building and its contents a second life," Harrington said. "We're excited to create a space the community can enjoy." He's hoping to have a soft opening in late March or early April.

Harrington started with a Remix store in Warrenton in 2020, and then moved it to Gainesville earlier this year. The space in Springfield is a 6,250-square-foot, two-story building with 40 parking spaces nearby, that will bring an active, community-oriented use to the corridor. The location is expected to create around 10 jobs and operate six days a week.

A portion of all proceeds also benefits the Sweet Julia Grace Foundation, which supports children with complex medical needs and the families who care for them. Their mission is to "Bless, Celebrate, and Love children who are medically fragile, have complex special/medical needs, or are currently facing a medical crisis," states their website. They call their children clients the "raindancers," because despite the storms they face every day, they have learned to "Dance in the Rain."

"She's local, I'm local" said Harrington, an alumna of Forestdale Elementary School and then Lee High School, recently renamed John R. Lewis High School. Julie Grace also grew up nearby. "It's great to partner with her," he said.

This new Remix building was once occupied by MVC videos



The Remix in Gainesville is full of useful household products.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Reuse is in full stride at Remix.

which featured two floors of adult entertainment and novelties. In 2018, MVC moved across Old Keene Mill Road and became "Le Tache Couples Boutique," which is still open today, selling much of the same adult entertainment videos and other materials. Harrington is aware of this past tenant of the space and admitted some have joked about it when they found out where he's opening his store.

Part of the Bigger Plan

A couple of years ago, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors reauthorized a consideration Comprehensive Plan amendment for Springfield Boulevard, and it tar-

gets three surrounding parcels of land, but seemingly not the one slated for the Remix store. For those three parcels, the county recommends a mixed use multifamily residential with ground floor retail at a maximum building height of 85 feet.

On one of the colorful redevelopment maps in the zoning document, the Remix site will be landscaped and bordered by a proposed bike path. Nearby there is a spot identified as a "place making opportunity sites," and possibly a pocket park. Parcels described as "mixed use development," are identified as well, so the area is ripe for improvement.

A whole new vision of care.

Belmont Bay
Rehabilitation & Healthcare Center

Care, anew.

14906 Richmond Hwy, Woodbridge, VA
703.491.6167 / BelmontBayRehab.com

Why Your County Tax Bill Seems Out Of Sync with Current Housing Market

It's the 'Inflation Gap.'

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Sticker shock is hitting Fairfax County homeowners as 2026 residential tax assessments arrive, leaving many scratching their heads at soaring bottom lines. County Executive Bryan Hill has proposed keeping the real estate tax rate flat at its current level, meaning the percentage remains unchanged from the previous year. The proposed tax rate for fiscal year 2027 is \$1.1225 per \$100 of assessed value [1].

Real estate agencies are touting a cooling market and price cuts as spring 2026 approaches. Ryan McLaughlin, chief executive officer of the Northern Virginia Association of Realtors, noted in the NVAR 2026 Market Forecast that the regional housing market may have pulled back from its "frenetic pace of the past few years," as buyers take a "more deliberate approach."

The confusion stems from a disconnect between real-time market sentiment and the local government calendar. Hill, in a budget presentation Tuesday, Feb. 17, in Fairfax, Va., defended the local economy.

"Fairfax County is stable, competitive and positioned for growth," Hill said. "We are stabilizing, and we are also advancing."

While the new assessment is legally effective as of Jan. 1, 2026, the county's Department of Tax Administration arrived at that figure by looking backward, analyzing mass appraisal data based on sales from the 2025 calendar year.

This explains the lag residents are seeing on sites like Zillow and Redfin. Those platforms reflect the real-time market cooling occurring in early 2026. However, the official tax value is based on 2025's market strength.

The inflation gap is where the math explains the strain on local checkbooks. Hill has proposed maintaining the real estate tax rate at \$1.1225 per \$100 of assessed value for the upcoming fiscal year.

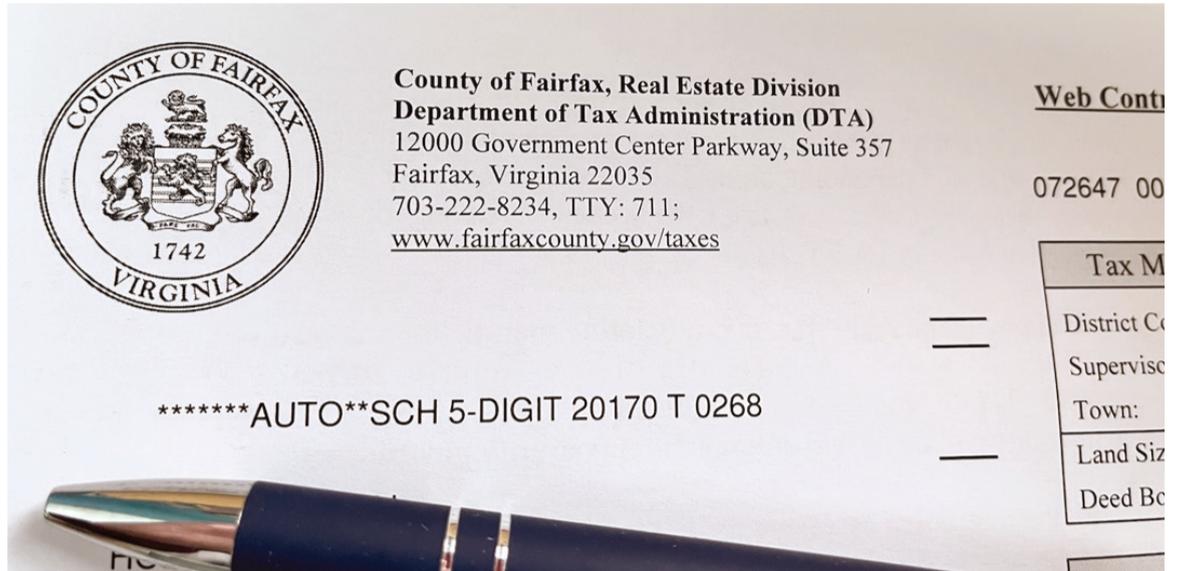
Even though the 2026 tax rate is flat, the amount owed increases because the home's 2025 value has risen. In February 2025, Fairfax County notices showed home values had jumped an average of 6.65%. The notices hitting mailboxes right now show a new average equalization increase of 3.99%, with single-family homes up 4.3%.

Additionally, while this 4.3% increase is lower than last year's spike, it is nearly double the Bureau of Labor Statistics' 2.4% inflation rate for the 12 months ending January 2026. Tax bills rising at nearly twice the rate of inflation is mathematically sound. While the market might feel like it is cooling down today, the 2026 tax bill is still catching up to the "frenetic pace" of 2025.

How to Appeal

The county recommends speaking with an appraiser first at 703-222-8234. If residents believe an assessment exceeds a home's fair market value, they can file a formal administrative appeal by April 1, 2026. If the first step does not resolve the issue, residents can appeal to the Board of Equalization by June 1, 2026.

Online Portal: fairfaxcounty.gov/taxes/real-estate/online-appeal-preface. PDF Form: 2026 Ap-



A Fairfax County 2026 residential tax assessment notice awaits review on a homeowner's desk Wed. Feb 25. While real-time market data on platforms like Zillow show a cooling trend in early 2026, official county assessments are based on 2025's stronger market performance, hence higher assessments.

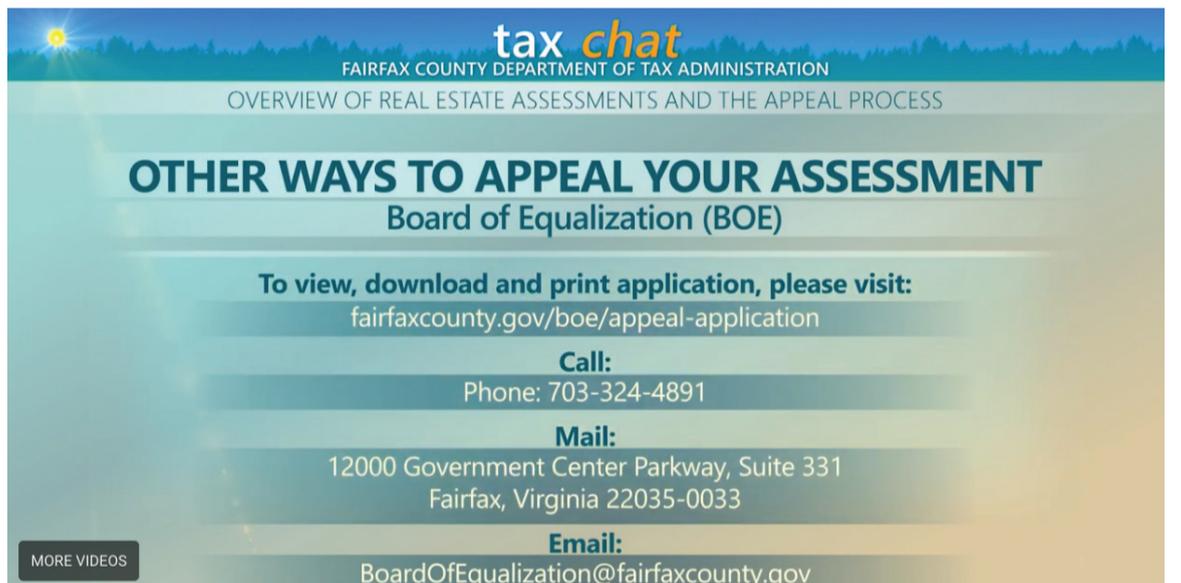


PHOTO FAIRFAXCOUNTY.GOV/NEWS/2025-REAL-ESTATE-ASSESSMENTS

Homeowners can find methods to appeal the 2026 county real estate tax assessments online.

peal Application. Step 2: Board of Equalization (BOE). If the first step doesn't resolve the issue, you can appeal to the BOE by June 1, 2026.

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 7

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.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

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 Coun-

ties 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. Volunteer Adult Mentors Needed. Help assist the Department of Family Services' BeFriendA-Child mentoring program. The mentors provide opportunities for companionship, guidance and support to children who have been abused and neglected, or who are at risk of abuse and neglect. Contact Ibrahim Khalil at Ibrahim.khalil@fairfaxcounty.gov or 703-324-4547. Operation Paws for Homes, a Virginia

based 501(c)(3) organization seeks volunteers, especially to foster dogs. See www.ophrescue.org for information and all volunteer opportunities. 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 up-

coming orientation, email Carly Hubicki at chubicki@volunteer-fairfax.org or call RSVP at 703-403-5360. To learn more about RSVP, visit www.rsvpnova.org. Shepherd's Center of McLean-Arlington-Falls Church, 1205 Dolley Madison Blvd., McLean continues to have an urgent need for new volunteers to help area senior citizens get to and from their medical and therapy appointments. To find out more about the Shepherd's Center and how you can volunteer to provide transportation and other services, call the Center

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 20

SENIOR LIVING

Lunar New Year Celebration Fills Sunrise at Hunter Mill in Oakton

Residents learn about the 2026 Year of the Horse.



Residents of Sunrise at Hunter Mill in Oakton enjoy activities celebrating the Lunar New Year on Saturday, Feb. 28. The celebration began with a performance by the Xuejuan Dance Ensemble in the Bistro, as seen here. The Lunar New Year is celebrated by billions of people across various cultures, including Vietnam (Tết), Korea (Seollal) and Tibet (Losar). For the 2026 cycle, the celebration began on Tuesday, Feb. 17, and will conclude with the Lantern Festival on March 3.



The daily activity board at Sunrise at Hunter Mill details an afternoon of Lunar New Year activities on Saturday, Feb. 28. The schedule includes a dance performance by the Xuejuan Dance Ensemble at 1 p.m., followed by lantern making at 2 p.m. and a screening of "The Joy Luck Club" at 2:30 p.m. The board also commemorates 2026 as the Year of the Horse.

— MERCIA HOBSON

PHOTOS BY
MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS



PUBLIC NOTICE

Proposed Limited Access Control Change Franconia-Springfield Parkway at INOVA Franconia-Springfield Hospital Fairfax County Willingness for Public Comment

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) invites you to review information about a proposed change in limited access control to Franconia-Springfield Parkway (Route 289) at the new INOVA Franconia-Springfield Hospital between Walker Lane (Route 10026) and Beulah Street (Route 613).

Improvements are proposed in the area, requiring the existing Franconia-Springfield Parkway limited access lines to be adjusted to accommodate them. The proposed improvements include two left-turn lanes on eastbound Franconia-Springfield Parkway to Walker Lane, a right-turn lane on westbound Franconia-Springfield Parkway, and two pedestrian connections from the existing shared-use path along the north side of Franconia-Springfield Parkway to the new hospital. This project will involve changes in limited access control.

Materials are available for review online at <https://www.vdot.virginia.gov/INOVA> or by contacting the VDOT Project Manager, Mr. Joseph Webb, at 703-259-2382 or TTY/TDD 711.

The Commonwealth Transportation Board will consider the proposed limited access change at a future meeting.

If your concerns cannot be satisfied, VDOT is willing to hold a public hearing. You may request that a public hearing be held by sending a written request to Mr. Joseph Webb, Virginia Department of Transportation, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030 on or prior to **March 24, 2026**. If upon receiving public comments it is deemed necessary to hold a public hearing, notice of date, time and place of the hearing will be posted.

VDOT ensures nondiscrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended. If you need more information or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, contact VDOT Civil Rights at 703-259-1775 or TTY/TDD 711.

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FAIRFAX COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Results of Fairfax County Purple Can Glass Recycling.

Recycling in Fairfax County, a Mixed Bag

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

Those blue recycling bins that people rumble out to the curb on trash collection day seem ubiquitous around Fairfax County, but recycling rates vary greatly and in some cases are declining, according to the recent report from the Environmental Quality Advisory Council (EQAC).

The Board of Supervisors committed to increase waste reuse and recycling. In the 2021 Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan, they set a target of 90 percent waste reduction by 2040. The Joint Environmental Task Force set a goal of 90 percent by 2030.

At-large EQAC member Eric Goplerud, author of the chapter on waste, said, “We need consistency in what can be recycled and accountability for actually recycling.”

“Recycling is the process of collecting and processing materials that would otherwise be thrown

Coming Up

In an upcoming edition, we will publish an article on how people can recycle to benefit good causes.

away as trash and turning them into new products,” states the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Fairfax County, for example, collects glass containers which get new lives as new bottles or as construction materials. Paper and cardboard become new paper products.

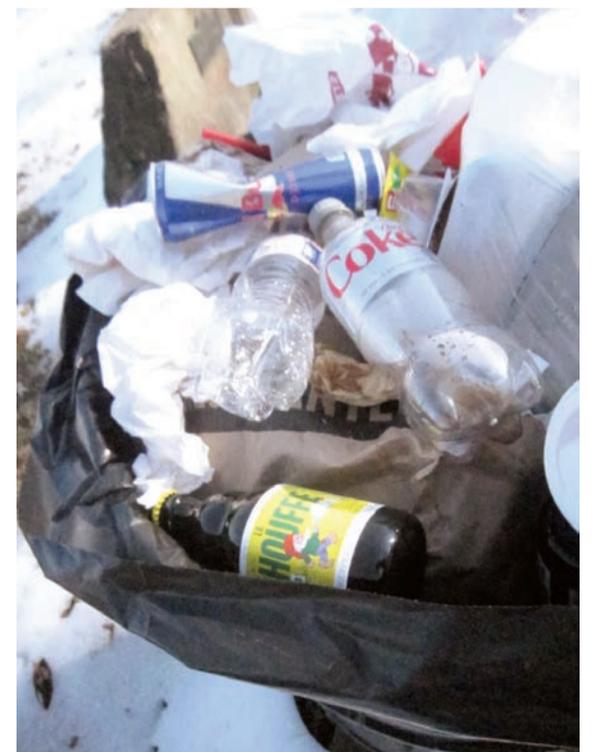
Recycling Rates

In 2024, the overall recycling rate of all waste collected of 44.7 percent was four percent lower than the average of the last 10 years, 48.7 percent. Recycled materials as a percent of overall waste fell by six percent. Paper and cardboard declined

SEE RECYCLING IN FAIRFAX, PAGE 7



Fairfax County provides residents with recycling bins for curbside pickup.



Many items like bottles and cans can be recycled.

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH

Recycling in Fairfax County, a Mixed Bag

FROM PAGE 6

by 26 percent.

“While Fairfax already recovers [recycles] significant amounts of yard waste (64 percent), construction debris (78 percent) and metals (over 50 percent), other major waste streams remain under-recycled,” reports EQAC. “Food waste is recovered at just five percent, paper at 25 percent, glass at 27 percent and waste wood at 31 percent. These materials make up a large portion of what is still burned and landfilled.”

There were “notable increases” in glass, food wastes, construction waste and metals. Though 27 percent of glass is recycled, “We’re still missing three quarters of the glass,” Gopelrud notes. Yard waste rates remained steady.

Recycling advocates boast that from 2022 to 2023 plastic bag use dropped 2.5 percent, and five percent from 2023 to 2024. Many attribute this to the Board of Supervisors’ creation of a .05 per plastic bag tax that retail outlets began collecting in 2022 and generated \$7.7 million between January 2022 and mid-2025.

By December 2024, even though over 3.4 million fewer bags were used, “That leaves a lot of bags, more than 32 million in 2024, still in circulation, still littering Fairfax streets, trees and waterways,” EQAC pointed out.

Many Northern Virginia groceries collect plastic bags which are used to make composite decking and other materials by companies like the Winchester-based firm, Trex.

The Waste Management Hierarchy

EPA’s website has a non-hazardous waste management hierarchy that ranks strategies from most to least environmentally preferred and emphasizes reducing, reusing, recycling and composting as “key to sustainable materials management.”

Reducing waste at the source is the most environmentally preferred strategy. This includes reusing or donating items, buying in bulk, reducing packaging, redesigning products and reducing toxicity.

Next is recycling which includes collecting used, reused or unused items that would otherwise be considered waste; sorting and processing the recyclable products into raw materials; and remanufacturing the recycled raw materials into new products.

Energy recovery is next, converting non-recyclable waste materials into usable heat, electricity or fuel, often called waste-to-energy. Lorton’s Reworld facility, for example, processes over 1,120,000 tons of waste and produces 93 megawatts of electricity around the clock, enough to power 67,000 homes for a year.

The least environmentally-preferred strategy is treatment and disposal. Treatment, like shredding and incineration, can help reduce waste’s volume and toxicity. Landfilling is the most common disposal method.

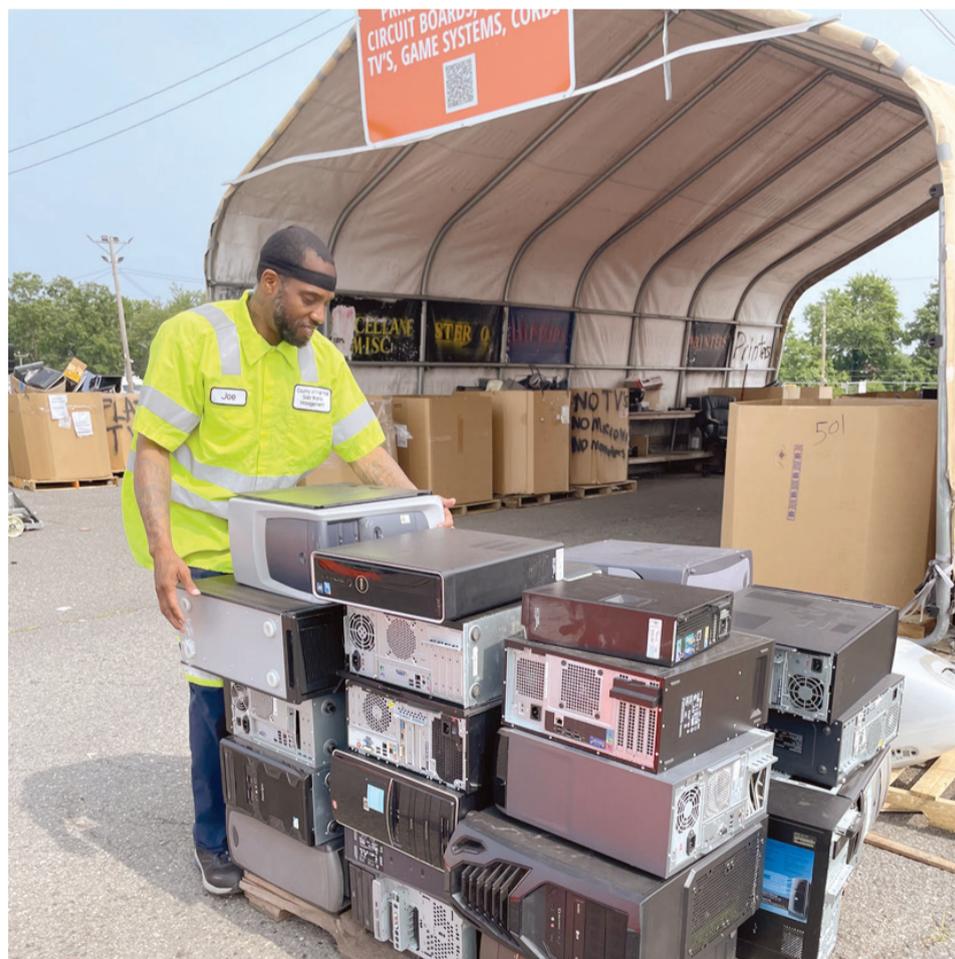
Fairfax County has two facilities: the I-66 Transfer Station and the I-95 Landfill Complex.

How to Boost Recycling

EQAC made several recommendations, including state legislation to allow localities to require haulers to collect organic waste and



Fairfax County provides many ways to recycle, including e-cycling at the I-66 transfer station.



FAIRFAX COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
E-cycling at I-66 Transfer Station.

Information

EQAC Report, <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/environment-energy-coordintion/environmental-quality-advisory-council>

What Goes Where, <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/recycling-trash/residential-materials>

to authorize local jurisdictions to mandate organic waste collection. Del. Kathy Tran and Sen. Scott Surovell have introduced bills to encourage composting.

EQAC also calls for state legislation to authorize counties and towns to ban disposable plastic bags.

For more solutions, Gopelrud points to jurisdictions that require trash haulers to monitor bins for proper recycling and to reject non-compliant containers. The county “could impose pay-to-throw,” he suggests, charge a fee for waste by weight or size. “The more mixed trash you throw in the bin the more you pay,” he explains. “We need to create incentives for people to do the right thing.”

Virginia does not have a “bottle bill” that requires a refundable deposit on some drink containers.

Some people promote extended producer responsibility, an approach that makes producers responsible for the end-of-life management of products. EQAC’s report is silent on this strategy.

“The biggest impediment to increasing the county’s recycling rate is insufficient and inconsistent participation from waste generators,” Matt Adams, a county waste management director, said. “Overcoming this requires a comprehensive approach that engages and supports all sectors. To make a meaningful difference, residents and businesses across the county need to do their part by actively diverting organics, recyclables, construction and demolition debris and hard-to-recycle materials.”

Jen Cole of Clean Fairfax, a litter prevention group, commends the county. “We don’t know why recycling rates dipped in certain categories, but it is heartening to see the glass and food waste rate skyrocket because of the creative endeavors of the County and the commitment to the environment by the residents. More of that please!” she said.

ENTERTAINMENT

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 began the first week of February at multiple locations. 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

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



"HERO: The Boy from Troy, A New Musical about Young John Lewis" can be seen on Friday, March 6, 2026 at the McLean Community Center.



The 2026 Mason School of Dance Gala Concert Performances will take place March 27-28 at GMU Center for the Arts in Fairfax.

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/ffxsr.

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

NOW THRU MARCH 8

Fairfax City Restaurant Week. Fairfax City Restaurant Week features 20+ restaurants and is a 10-day event invites local diners to explore and support the diverse restaurants that define the city's vibrant food Culture. Participating restaurants will offer specially curated set-price menus, making it easy for residents and visitors to experience quality dining at a range of set price points. Website: <https://www.fairfaxcityrestaurantweek.com/>

NOW THRU 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: Tickets: \$25-\$55 general admission, \$15 students, educators, and military. Purchase online at www.1ststage.org or call 703-854-1856.

NOW THRU MARCH 15

Between Riverside and Crazy, by Stephen Adly Guirgis, directed by José Carrasquillo. At 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill Road Tysons. 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: Tickets: \$25-\$55 general admission, \$15 students, educators, and military. Purchase online at www.1ststage.org or call 703-854-1856.

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, Crumbly, 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.

MARCH 4-29

McLean Art Society's "Hints of Green" Exhibition and March Members Show. At McLean Art Society, 6224B Old Dominion Drive, McLean. Winter Show Hours: Wednesday-Sunday, 12-6 p.m. During March, the McLean Art Gallery is pleased to feature "Hints of Green," a new seasonal 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. Opening Reception on Friday, March 6 from 5-7pm. Meet the artists and enjoy live music, wine and light refreshments. The Gallery is located in the Chesterbrook Shopping Center (near Starbucks) with plenty of free parking. Visit mcleanartsociety.org

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

ENTERTAINMENT

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.

THURSDAY/MARCH 5
Matters of the Heart. 7:30 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. The FSO presents Patti LuPone's critically acclaimed theatrical concert *Matters of the Heart*. The show is based on the CD recording of the same name which was released in 1999 and named one of the best recordings of the year by both *The Times of London* and *Time Out/NY*. For tickets, visit FairfaxSymphony.org.

FRIDAY/MARCH 6
"HERO: The Boy from Troy, A New Musical about Young John Lewis". 7 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Jayden is stuck in detention with a book about Congressman John Lewis, but he thinks that history has nothing to teach him. Together, we go on a musical journey through the decades that shows how the heroes of the Civil Rights movement inspired young John Lewis to protest injustice and get into "good trouble." From preaching to his family's flock of chickens (true story!) to becoming an American hero, Lewis' life story is inspiring.

SATURDAY/MARCH 7
Appraisal Roadshow. 10:45 a.m. to 12 p.m. At Reston Association Headquarters, Reston. This event offers a treasure hunt experience in a fun, educational, and rewarding setting. Bring one personal item—such as jewelry, coins, a timepiece, artwork, or other heirlooms—and an appraisal expert will provide insights on its value and what you can do with your treasure, while also educating the group.

SATURDAY/MARCH 7
10th Annual Teen Job and Opportunity Fair. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. At Chantilly High School, Chantilly. Sponsored by Supervisor Pat Herry's office. These fairs focus on students and young job seekers looking for a variety of employment opportunities; full time, after-school, seasonal positions, internship opportunities, and volunteer positions. Students of all ages are encouraged to attend, but most opportunities will be geared toward students ages 16-18.

SATURDAY/MARCH 7
Ashburn Volunteer Fire & Rescue's Chilly Days Chili Cook-Off Fundraiser. At Lost Rhino Brewing Company, 21730 Red Rum Drive, Ashburn. Warm up with AVFRD at the annual chili fundraiser, featuring unlimited tastings of some of the best chili in Ashburn, proudly served by your favorite local restaurants. The cost to attend is a donation to AVFRD at the door.

SATURDAY/MARCH 7
Comicworx. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton. Featuring celebrity guest John Swasey who is the voice actor for *Attack on Titan* to *Fullmetal Alchemist*, *My Hero Academia*, and *One Piece*. Secure your tickets and your chance to meet the one and only John Swasey at workhousearts.org/comicworx.

SATURDAY/MARCH 7
Appraisal Roadshow. 10:45 a.m. to 12 p.m. At Reston Association Headquarters. This event offers a treasure hunt experience in a fun, educational, and rewarding setting. Bring one personal item—such as jewelry, coins, a timepiece, artwork, or other heirlooms—and an appraisal expert will provide insights on its value and what you can do with your treasure, while also educating the group.

SATURDAY/MARCH 7
Chili Cook-Off Fundraiser. At Lost Rhino Brewing Company, 21730 Red Rum Drive, www.connectionnewspapers.com



The Fiesta del Sol takes place on Saturday, March 21, 2026 at the McLean Community Center.

A Children's Consignment Sale takes place on Saturday, March 14, 2026 at Christ Church in Fairfax Station.

Ashburn. Ashburn Volunteer Fire & Rescue is hosting a Chilly Days Chili Cook-Off Fundraiser! Warm up with AVFRD at the annual chili fundraiser, featuring unlimited tastings of some of the best chili in Ashburn, proudly served by your favorite local restaurants! Every dollar raised directly supports the Ashburn Volunteer Fire & Rescue Department and the services they provide to our community. The cost to attend = a donation to AVFRD at the door. This is a family-friendly event. Kids can get an up-close look at a fire truck and experience the Seat Belt Convincer while learning about safety in a fun, hands-on way.

SUNDAY/MARCH 8
Train-Themed Game Day. 1-4 p.m. At Fairfax

Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Rd, Fairfax Station. All aboard for a day of fun and games at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum! Join them on Sunday, March 8, 2026, from 1-4 p.m. for the Train-Themed Game Day, where families and train enthusiasts can come together to enjoy a variety of engaging and interactive games, all centered around the theme of 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.

SUNDAY/MARCH 8
Author Event/Reading. At Reston Used Books,

Reston. Arlington author and small business owner Jen Dary will debut her new book, "I Believe in Everything: A Memoir of Illness, Motherhood, and Magic." In addition to being an author, Jen is a small business owner and the founder of the Arlington-based leadership coaching firm, Plucky, where she's coached professionals from over 200 companies including Facebook, Google, New York Times and many more.

TUESDAY/MARCH 10
Wellness for Cancer Prevention. 6-7 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. There is an abundant amount

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 19

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Published by
Local Media Connection LLC

1606 King Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

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ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 17

of information surrounding how to prevent chronic disease, specifically cancer. There are genetic and biological factors, but what are the steps we can take in our lifestyle to help us decrease our risk? This seminar provides clarity on how to implement healthy habits with direct correlation of decreasing our risk. Instructor: INOVA

THURSDAY/MARCH 12

Red Cross Blood Drive. 1-6 p.m. At Christ the King Lutheran Church, 10550 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Christ the King is having a Red Cross blood drive. Register today at www.redcrossblood.org. Questions? Contact Melody Starya Mobley at 571-276-7356.

THURSDAY/MARCH 12

“Six by Sondheim” 1 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Directed by Tony Award-winner and frequent Sondheim collaborator James Lapine, “Six by Sondheim” is part biography, part music-appreciation lesson and part performance piece. Told primarily in Sondheim’s own words, this feature-length documentary weaves together dozens of interviews with the composer, rarely seen archival material spanning more than half a century (including newly discovered footage of Ethel Merman performing “Gypsy”) and re-stagings of three songs produced especially for the film.

SATURDAY/MARCH 14

“How to Train Your Dragon.” 7 p.m. The Fairfax Symphony Orchestra will present DreamWorks’ How To Train Your Dragon – In Concert, a thrilling live-to-film experience for all ages, at Capital One Hall in Tysons. Audiences will experience the beloved animated adventure in HD, with composer John Powell’s Academy Award-nominated score performed live to the film by the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra. For tickets and further information, visit FairfaxSymphony.org.

SATURDAY/MARCH 14

Children’s Consignment Sale. 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Christ Church, 7600 Ox Road, Fairfax Station. Large, seasonal consignment sale offering everything you need for newborns to teens - all at bargain prices, all in one place! Over 60,000 items from 250+ families. No entrance fee. Quality items. Organized in categories. Awesome deals. Affordable for all.

SUNDAY/MARCH 15

Keyboard Conversations with Jeffrey Siegel: Mozart and Friends—Beethoven, Haydn, and Hummel. 7 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Siegel closes out his season of Keyboard Conversations with the enchanting works of Mozart, Beethoven, Haydn, and Mozart’s extraordinarily talented and favorite pupil, Hummel. The program features Mozart’s Fantasy in D Minor, K. 397; Haydn’s Gypsy Rondo, XV 15; Hummel’s Rondo in E-flat major, Op. 11; and Beethoven’s Variations on God Save the King.

WEDNESDAY/MARCH 18

SIA and Shamrocks St. Patty’s Party- hosted by Seniors in Action. 6-8 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Celebrate St. Patrick’s Day with a little Irish flair at our St. Patty’s Party, hosted by SIA! Join us on March 18 from 6-8 p.m. in Community Hall for music, festive fun, and a delicious mashed potato bar. Don’t miss a lively Irish dance performance by Phoenix Irish Dance Academy at 6:30 p.m. Bring your friends and family – everyone’s welcome for this shamrock-filled evening of community celebration!

MARCH 19-22

2026 Women’s Storytelling Festival. At Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Blenheim Blvd., Fairfax. The festival features 20 storytellers from around the country, across the ocean, and right in Northern Virginia sharing a range of stories - from personal to folk to fantastic - intended for a mature audience.

Ticket holders can attend in-person, watch the livestream, or watch the videos for one month after the festival concludes. As well as stories of lived experience, folktales, and mythology, the WSF will include stories celebrating 250 years of American history. Storyteller Denise Page will share her solo show, “Legacy of a Wealthy Slave,” a deep dive into the 2024 discovery by Yale University archivists of her ancestors and their places in history. Additionally, the showcase History through Women’s Stories will be presented at 2 pm on March 21, 2026. In this special showcase, emceed by 1A host Jenn White, we will hear: Lona Bartlett telling the story of Zitkala-Ša (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin), an influential Native American activist integral to the fight for U.S. citizenship; Kristin Pedemonti performing as Marie Jenney Howe, suffragist and founder of Heterodoxy, an influential feminist debate society; and Megan Wells appearing as Elizabeth Hamilton.

Visit:

<https://betersaidthandone.org/womens-festival/>

FRIDAY/MARCH 20

Danú. 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. One of today’s leading traditional Irish ensembles, Danú takes audiences on a musical journey to the group’s native Ireland through stirring ancient music and vibrant new repertoire. For over two decades, Danú’s virtuosic players on flute, tin whistle, fiddle, button accordion, bouzouki, and vocals have delighted audiences worldwide, including stops at the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles and Symphony Space in New York City.

SATURDAY/MARCH 21

Fiesta del Sol. 5-10 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Get ready because Fiesta del Sol is back! Savor sumptuous cuisine, listen to Latin American and Caribbean music with renowned live bands, see quality artisan exhibitors and enjoy alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. Learn how to dance a variety of Latin dance steps from professional dance instructors throughout the evening. Drink and food tickets are sold onsite and proceeds go to Friends of MCC. Patrons must be 21 years old or older to purchase or drink alcoholic beverages.

SATURDAY/MARCH 21

10th Annual Teen Job and Opportunity Fair. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. At West Springfield High School. Sponsored by Supervisor Pat Herrity’s office. These fairs focus on students and young job seekers looking for a variety of employment opportunities; full time, after-school, seasonal positions, internship opportunities, and volunteer positions. Students of all ages are encouraged to attend, but most opportunities will be geared toward students ages 16-18.

MARCH 21-22

The Alden’s Youth Production of “The Wizard of Oz”. 2 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. When Dorothy drops into the Land of Oz, only one thing is certain: she’s got to find a way back to Kansas. A funny and fast-paced journey down the yellow brick road ensues, as Dorothy and her new friends travel to the fabled Emerald City to meet the Great Oz. When Oz demands a steep price for sending her home, a perilous new adventure begins. This imaginative Alden Youth Production adaptation captures the heart of L. Frank Baum’s classic tale.

SUNDAY/MARCH 22

Silkroad Ensemble with Rhiannon Giddens – Sanctuary: The Power of Resonance and Ritual. 7 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Joined by Artistic Director and Pulitzer Prize-winning multi-instrumentalist Rhiannon Giddens, the GRAMMY Award-winning Mason Artist-in-Residence Silkroad Ensemble returns to the Center for the Arts with its latest project, Sanctuary: The Power of Resonance and Ritual. The idea of trance—leading to a deep peace that is hard to find in modern society—is deeply tied to the communal mak-

ing of music in many different cultures.

SUNDAY/MARCH 22

An Afternoon with Mozart. 4 p.m. At Providence Presbyterian Church, 9019 Little River Turnpike, Fairfax. The Fairfax Choral Society presents An Afternoon with Mozart. Mozart: Requiem - The Symphonic Chorus and Orchestra, Patrick Vaughn, conductor. Mozart: Concerto for Piano and Orchestra (d-minor) K.466 - Mark Irchai, pianist.

MARCH 25

Senior Movie Day. 10 a.m. At Movie theater at Reston Town Center. Reston Association presents Senior Movie Day, sponsored by Friends of Reston. Join them on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Coffee, donuts and OJ are provided, and door prizes are distributed prior to the movie.

March 25: Downton Abbey: Grand Finale

THURSDAY/MARCH 26

Genevive. 1 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. In this musical romance, Genevive (a beautiful young Frenchwoman who works at a small-town boutique selling umbrellas) falls for dashing mechanic Guy. Their brief romance is interrupted when Guy is drafted to serve in the Algerian War. Though pregnant by Guy, Genevive marries an older businessman, Roland, and begins to move on with her life.

MARCH 27-28

2026 Mason School of Dance Gala Concert Performances. Friday at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Saturday at 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. George Mason University School of Dance presents the 2026 Mason School of Dance Gala Concert performances, which celebrate a rich array of diverse choreographic voices. This year’s program showcases George Mason School of Dance majors in five dynamic works: Brannndi Lewis’s Many Brims, Victor Quijada’s Enter Woven, Medhi Walerski’s Romeo + Juliet (Balcony Scene), an excerpt from Alejandro Cerrudo’s It Starts Now, and Andrea Miller’s Sama.

MARCH 28-29

SPRINGPEX Stamp Show. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday (March 28), and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday (March 29). At John R. Lewis High School cafeteria, 6540 Franconia Road, Springfield. Presented by Springfield Stamp Club. SPRINGPEX is the Washington D.C. area’s largest club-sponsored stamp show. It features interesting philatelic exhibits, 20+ dealers, U.S. Postal Service booth, 3rd annual Postcrossing meetup, and free materials for young, beginning, and returning collectors. Free admission and parking. For details, visit springfieldstampclub.org/springpex

SUNDAY/MARCH 29

Burke Historical Society Meeting. 3-4:30 p.m. At Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. NOVA Parks Historian Paul McCray will speak on the Washington and Old Dominion Railroad, sharing some of the thousands of photographs he’s collected. Email: burkehistoricalsociety@hotmail.com

SUNDAY/MARCH 29

Solomon Eichner, Piano. 2-3:30 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Baltimore native Solomon Eichner is a product of some of the best conservatories in the country and winner of numerous international competitions. He debuted at Carnegie Hall in 2016 after winning the “Golden Key Debut” International Competition and has performed in England, Italy, Germany, Austria, Poland and throughout the U.S. His playing is praised for its virtuosity and his ability to make music sing and come alive.

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.

Is Tech a Stable, Lifelong Career Path?

Local author of ‘Impossibly Hard: What’s Driving High Turnover in Tech?’ says there are risks.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Shallon Elizabeth Brown, who holds a doctorate in information systems engineering, is the author of “Impossibly Hard: What’s Driving High Turnover in Tech?” The Reston resident’s book, released Feb. 22, examines the systemic forces behind industry job losses and their hidden costs.

In a Feb. 20 interview with The Connection, Brown said she never envisioned that her “career insurance” — including 22 years of experience and a Ph.D. — wouldn’t prevent her from cycling through jobs and depleting her savings. She said that a “lucrative” career in IT promises great salaries, prestige and independence, but there are real risks.

Brown, a former chief technology officer at North Studio and consultant to the IRS, Johns Hopkins University and the U.S. Department of Education, said she wishes someone told her 20 years ago that tech isn’t a stable, lifelong career path. The reality of constant churn is something she clearly didn’t anticipate when she entered the field. She didn’t know about the financial precarity despite high salaries, the mental health strain and burnout, the unequal impact on women and minorities, the opaque, AI-driven hiring wall and the constant skill pressure.

“I live alone with the dog. I lose my job in a contract, unemployment doesn’t cover 50% of it. I’m bankrupt and go back to live with my parents. I’m 42 years old,” Brown said.

Brown once assumed tech would be like other highly skilled fields — a long-term, stable career without mass layoffs. She expected the Reston-Fairfax region, the “Silicon Valley of the East,” especially

the Dulles technology corridor, to be the place where her tech career would finally be secure.

“What attracted me to this area was the tech and all that comes with that ... and I don’t see a sustainable future here, because of the affordability crisis and because of the high turnover in tech,” Brown said. “And this ‘despite doing everything right.’”

Brown rattled off her data points: The job turnover rate among software engineers stands at 69%. “They will leave the current job they’re in within two years or less,” she said. As for the likelihood of unemployment, “As a result of that, one out of every two of us will find ourselves on unemployment in any given year.”

She connected points about women and minorities, especially Black workers leaving the tech field. “Seven out of 10 women now that get into tech will not stay there more than 10 years. They will switch fields because it is so intense,” Brown said.

She spoke about her own career volatility. “I’ve worked at 54 web companies ... over the course of my 22 years,” Brown said.

She contrasted Black representation in the population with that in tech. “Tech right now, on average ... African Americans... we are 13.3% of the population. We are less than 3.7% of the technology field, and that includes here in Reston and Fairfax. And I find that appalling ...”

Brown stressed heavily that it is not a talent problem but an opportunity problem. Instability falls hardest on women and Black workers. Women are often pushed out within a decade, she said, and Black workers are both severely underrepresented and more likely to be laid off or left behind because they may lack the informal networks that can protect others.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF
SHALLON BROWN

Shallon Elizabeth Brown, Ph.D., of Reston, is the author of “Impossibly Hard: What’s Driving High Turnover in Tech?” The book examines systemic forces behind job losses in the technology industry.

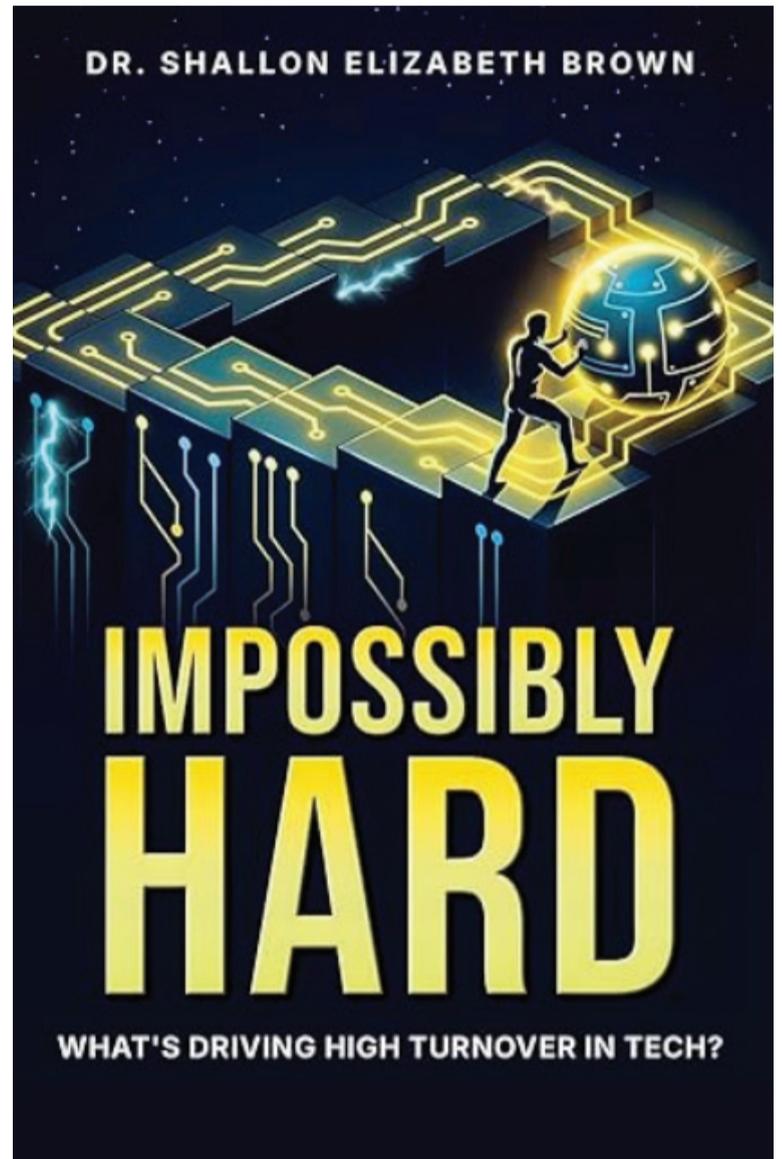
Tenures are tied to the “buddy system.”

“If you’ve been in an underserved community, you don’t have... a lot of those bindings. You weren’t on the golf course ... with the director ... so you don’t have those entrapments to keep you glued, or ... to quickly find something else comparable,” Brown said.

Brown believes the general public and even elected officials’ unawareness of tech’s instability is the issue. She believes the first step is to make both insiders and outsiders understand how extreme turnover and instability in tech jobs have become, and how they affect mental health, families and communities.

Second, she says, there must be policy and safety-net changes. She argues that unemployment no longer covers basic living costs in places like Fairfax County and says the system must be strengthened to keep pace with today’s churn. “I really think we need to strengthen the unemployment system and make it a priority, because if you don’t, then success is going to be a fleeting memory for a lot of us here,” Brown said.

Third, Brown calls for reforms around contracting, hiring and AI. There is an overreliance on short-



Released Feb. 20, “Impossibly Hard: What’s Driving High Turnover in Tech?” is data-driven and draws on 22 years of industry experience and serves as a survival guide for the modern tech professional.

term contracting or gig-style work that bakes in instability, she says. The use of AI in hiring can block qualified people — especially recent grads — from even getting through online filters. Implicitly, she argues for more humane, less automated and more equitable hiring and employment practices with real, not “fluff,” DEI and opportunity-building. Most importantly, Brown wants to equip students entering tech with realistic knowledge.

Brown called her book a “survival guide.” She said job instability

is not a personal failure; it is built into the system. Tech employees absolutely must learn to collect references early, prepare for frequent job changes and protect themselves, financially and mentally. According to Brown, “We’ve got some of the highest rates of mental health crises, we’ve got some of the highest suicide rates. We’ve got some of the highest burnout factor rates.”

Brown said she is scheduling events and book signings. “Impossibly Hard” is available on Amazon.

BULLETIN BOARD

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at 703-506-2199 or e-mail the Center at info@scmafc.org. The Center’s website is www.scmafc.org.

Master Gardener Training. The Fairfax County Master Gardener Association offers plant clinics, home turf training or speakers for homeowner’s meetings. Fees vary. Visit fairfaxgardening.org or call MG Help Desk at 703-324-8556 for more.

Volunteers Needed. PRS is looking for empathetic and caring volunteers to make phone calls to older adults who may be feeling socially isolated. The commitment is one 3-hour shift per week for one year. Located in Arlington. Ages 21 & up. Intensive training provided. Learn more and apply: prsinc.org/caring-volunteering/. Questions? Email lpadgett@prsinc.org.

The Northern Virginia Long Term Care Ombudsman Program needs volunteer

advocates for residents in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Contact Lisa Callahan at 703-324-5861, TTY 711 or email Lisa.Callahan@fairfaxcounty.gov. Also visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/olderadultservices/ltombudsman/.

Fairfax County needs volunteers to drive older adults to medical appointments and wellness programs. For these and other volunteer opportunities, call 703-324-5406, TTY 711 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/olderadults and

click on Volunteer Solutions.

Respite Care volunteers give family caregivers of a frail older adult a well-deserved break so they can go shopping, attend a doctor’s appointment or just have coffee with a friend. Volunteers visit and oversee the safety of the older adult for a few hours each month. Support and training are provided. Contact 703-324-7577, TTY 711, or Kristin.Martin@fairfaxcounty.gov.