

Alexandria Gazette Packet



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MARCH 19, 2026

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Sláinte!

City celebrates 43rd St. Patrick's Day parade.

By JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

43rd Annual Alexandria St. Patrick's Day Parade. Founded and hosted by the Ballyshanners, the parade is one of the longest-running and best-loved traditions in the region drawing families, residents and visitors to celebrate Irish heritage and community spirit.

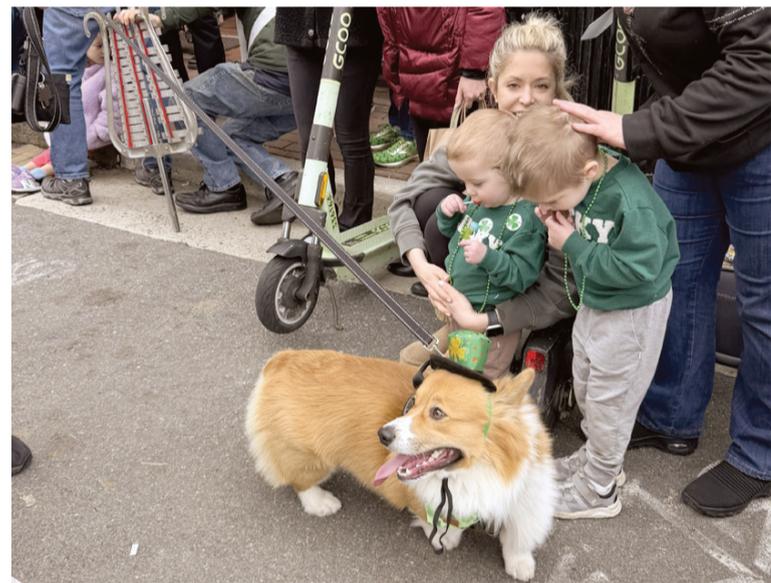
Stepping off around midday, the parade featured pipe bands, Irish dance schools, community organizations and local perform-

SEE CITY CELEBRATES, PAGE 2

Old Town Alexandria turned a festive shade of green March 7 as the city welcomed the



The Washington Scottish Pipes & Drums takes to the streets of Old Town for the 43rd St. Patrick's Day Parade March 7.



A four-legged parade participant



A pipes and drums color guard



Burke & Herbert vice president Joe Collum



Kena Shriners mini-Corvettes

City Celebrates 43rd St. Patrick's Day Parade

FROM PAGE 1
 ers making their way through a newly updated route in Old Town. Organizers worked with the City of Alexandria to design the route so that more neighborhoods could

take part while preserving the parade's historic charm. Alexandria Town Crier Ben Fiore-Walker kicked off the festivities with local entertainer Michael SEE CITY CELEBRATES, PAGE 6

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET



Northern Virginia Firefighters Emerald Society Pipe Band



Friendship Woodridge International Marching Eagles



Irish Dancers



Riders with the Grey Ghost Chapter, Nam Knights Motorcycle Club



Slightly Overweight Fathers of Alexandria (SOFA)



Alexandria Bike Buses



Ironworkers Local 5



Gottaswing dancers

The Commodore Pub

'Five star dive bar' opens its doors in Old Town.



The Commodore features two full-service bars at its newest location at 220 N. Lee Street.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Old Town Alexandria welcomed a new addition to its nightlife and dining scene with the March 12 opening of The Commodore, a self-described “five-star dive bar,” at 220 North Lee Street. The new establishment occupies the former home of Mystic BBQ & Grill and marks the second location for the popular Washington, D.C.-based bar and restaurant.

Owned by Rob Van de Graaff and Executive Chef Steve Kim, The Commodore brings to Alexandria the laid-back, neighborhood-focused atmosphere that helped build a loyal following at its Dupont Circle location. The owners officially celebrated the opening with a ribbon-cutting ceremony in mid-March, using a large trident in a nod to the bar’s nautical theme.

“A lot of locals were there for the opening,” said Founders Park resident Sandy McDowell. “We are looking forward to having a place to go.”

The Alexandria location is significantly larger than its D.C. counterpart, spanning approximately 6,900 square feet and featuring multiple

rooms designed for different experiences. Inside, guests will find two full-service bars, a main dining room, game rooms with arcade machines, pool tables and dart boards, as well as a separate room intended for private events and programming such as trivia. Nautical décor — including a large mural of a diver battling a kraken — reinforces the playful “dive bar” concept.

Food and drink are central to The Commodore’s appeal. The menu closely mirrors the D.C. location while adding Alexandria-exclusive items, including Chicago tavern-style pizzas with thin, cracker-like crusts, pub-style shareables, burgers, sandwiches and pastas. The bar program includes 11 draft beer lines, classic cocktails, and

draft cocktails such as the Navy Grog, along with espresso martinis served on tap.

According to Van de Graaff, the move to Alexandria was driven in part by longtime customers who lived in the area and encouraged the team to open closer to home. During the ribbon cutting, he thanked the City of Alexandria and Old Town residents for their support, describing the opening as a meaningful milestone after operating in D.C. for more than a decade.

With its mix of casual food, games, cocktails, and an intentionally unpretentious atmosphere, The Commodore aims to establish itself as a neighborhood gathering spot in Old Town, adding a new option for locals and visitors along the Lee Street corridor.

www.thecommodorepub.com



PHOTOS BY SANDY MCDOWELL

Owner Rob Van de Graaff, right, and Executive Chef Steve Kim outside The Commodore, the self-described “five-star dive bar” at the March 12 grand opening at 220 N. Lee Street in Old Town.

“[Neighborhood residents] are looking forward to having a place to go.”

— Local resident
Sandy McDowell



The Commodore features pool tables and dart boards in the 6,900 square foot restaurant.

Behind the Garden Gates of Old Town

For those drawn to gardens, architecture or simply the pleasure of discovering places normally hidden from view, the day offers a chance to experience Old Town from a perspective few ever see.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE GAZETTE

Behind Old Town Alexandria's brick walls and wrought-iron gates lie intimate landscapes seldom seen by passersby. For one day this spring, those private worlds will open to the public.

On April 18, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Virginia's annual Historic Garden Week invites visitors to wander through a collection of Old Town residences and their carefully tended gardens. The Alexandria tour offers a rare glimpse into properties whose architecture, plantings and stories reflect generations of stewardship.

"It's a wonderful event that celebrates the history of Old Town Alexandria," said Kim Davis, member and spokesperson for the Garden Club of Alexandria.

Locally, the tour is presented by volunteers from the Hunting Creek Garden Club and the Garden Club of Alexandria. Their work is part of the broader Historic Garden Week in Virginia, a statewide tradition that has showcased private residences and landscapes throughout the Commonwealth for nearly a century.

This year's Alexandria route highlights five homes clustered in the southeastern section of Old Town, allowing guests to explore the neighborhood comfortably on foot. A leisurely stroll between properties reveals shaded sidewalks, historic architecture and pockets of greenery tucked between centuries-old buildings.

Each residence tells a different chapter of Alexandria's past. One house on South Fairfax Street once belonged to former U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry H. Fowler. When the current owners undertook renovations, they uncovered an unusual relic from Fowler's years in government: bundles of wiring from multiple dedicated telephone lines installed to protect confidential conversations.

"Each one of these homes is very different," Davis said, noting that every property reflects its own distinctive heritage and design.

Visitors may step inside the first floor of each residence, where volunteer docents will be stationed throughout the rooms to answer

questions and share details about architecture, renovations and former occupants.

While interiors offer plenty to admire, the outdoor spaces are equally compelling. Courtyard gardens framed by brick pathways, carefully layered plantings and secluded seating areas demonstrate how homeowners balance historic character with contemporary garden design.

Many of these landscapes remain invisible from the street, hidden behind gates and garden walls that have sheltered them for decades.

"Each home's garden reflects the creativity and care of the homeowners who maintain them," Davis said.

Bringing the tour to life requires months of preparation. Homeowners tend beds, refresh plantings and polish interiors, while volunteers coordinate logistics ranging from docent schedules to floral arrangements.

"The garden club ladies who take on the responsibility for organizing the tours spend the better part of a year pulling things together," Davis said.

Beyond the homes themselves, visitors can enjoy several stops throughout the day. Complimentary refreshments will be offered late morning through early afternoon at Saint Paul's Episcopal Church.

Another highlight is the Spring Marketplace boutique at The Athenaeum, where vendors present a curated assortment of artwork, jewelry, clothing, books and handcrafted goods.

Advance tickets cost \$55 per person and may be purchased online. Admission on the day of the tour is \$65. Children under five may attend free with a paying adult, though all other guests require a full-price ticket.

Refreshments: Complimentary light refreshments available at St. Paul's Episcopal Church 228 S. Pitt Street from 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. (the church will also be open for touring)

Facilities: Alexandria Visitors Center, 221 King Street, The Lyceum - Alexandria's History Museum, 201 S. Washington Street, and

The Athenaeum, 201 Prince Street.

Places of Interest:

Carlyle House Historic Park

121 North Fairfax St. Carlyle House will be conducting garden tours on April 18 from 11am-3pm. Garden tours are free, donations appreciated. The house will be open from 10am-4pm and tours run on the half hour. A discounted ticket is available for purchase for \$5 for anyone with a valid Historic Garden Week ticket or wristband on April 18th. The garden was completely restored from funds raised by Historic Garden Week. carlylehouse.org

The Lee-Fendall House Museum & Garden

614 Oronoco St. The Lee-Fendall House was a continuous private home from 1785 through 1969. Built in 1785 by Philip Fendall on land purchased by Revolutionary War General "Light Horse" Harry Lee, the house was home to many members of the prominent Lee family, served as a Civil War hospital from 1863-65, and was the last private residence of labor leader John L. Lewis. Today, the Lee-Fendall House is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is one of Alexandria's most popular museum destinations. With a valid Historic Garden Week ticket or wristband on April 18, 2026, visitors will have the chance to explore the first and second floors of the house, stroll through the museum's iconic garden, and view the temporary exhibition *Shall Not Be Denied: Alexandria Women and the Fight for the Ballot* all free of charge. leefendallhouse.org

River Farm

7931 East Boulevard Dr. River Farm, headquarters to the American Horticultural Society, aims to be a national showcase for environmentally responsible gardening and horticultural practices. One of George Washington's original five farms, the 25-acre site overlooking the Potomac River features a blend of formal and naturalistic gardens including a four-acre meadow, an orchard, a children's garden, and a teaching garden. HGW visitors will receive free admission, park-



PHOTO COURTESY OF GARDEN CLUB OF ALEXANDRIA

A historic home on South Fairfax Street in Old Town Alexandria will be among the private residences open to visitors during Historic Garden Week in Virginia.

ing and a tour of the manor house between 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. More details at AHSgardening.org

George Washington's Mount Vernon

Eight miles south of Alexandria on the GW Pkwy and situated on the Potomac River lies the home of George and Martha Washington. From the end of the American Revolution in 1783 to his election to the presidency in 1789, Washington replaced outbuildings, reshaped gardens, created new lawns, planted trees and even realigned roads and lanes. With funding from Historic Garden Week, the Garden Club of Virginia has helped to restore Mount Vernon's bowling green, one of the major landscape features on this vast plantation. Free admission to the grounds only with a valid HGW ticket/wristband on April 18, 2026. The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, owners. mountvernon.org

Green Spring Gardens

4603 Green Spring Rd. This public garden and historic site include Virginia's only Beatrix Farrand garden, which was recently restored by the Garden Club of Virginia. In 1784, gentleman freeholder John Moss built a brick house on several hundred acres of farmland. In 1942, young power couple Michael and Belinda Straight bought the house and 33 acres and engaged Farrand to design a simple garden room behind the house: a spacious lawn enclosed by a boxwood crescent with a stone retaining wall. The GCV restored the stone wall, rejuvenated the boxwoods, and redesigned a more recently-installed perennial bed to reflect Farrand's signature plant choices. In 1970,

the Straights deeded their house and 18 acres to the Fairfax County Park Authority. fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/greenspring

Gunston Hall

15 mi. south of Alexandria, off U.S. Rt. 1 on Rt. 242 This 550-acre National Historic Landmark was the home of George Mason (1725-1792), author of The Virginia Declaration of Rights. The estate consists of a Georgian mansion, c.1755, and reconstructed kitchen, dairy, laundry and schoolhouse. The Potomac River is viewed from the historic boxwood garden. While not a current restoration project of the Garden Club of Virginia, the GCV assisted Gunston Hall with landscaping work from 1949-53. gunstonhall.org

St Paul's Episcopal Church

228 S. Pitt St. St. Paul's Episcopal Church began in 1809 in a small building on South Fairfax Street between Prince and Duke Streets. In 1817, one of the Country's most famous architects, Benjamin Henry Latrobe, was chosen to design the present church. Appointed by President Jefferson in 1803 as surveyor of public buildings in Washington, D.C., Latrobe completed the U.S. Capitol begun by William Thornton, and designed Statuary Hall and the former Supreme Court room. In 1807, he completed the White House, designed both porticos and later restored the building after the War of 1812. An outstanding example of American architecture, inspired by the gothic churches in Europe, the interior of St. Paul's is said to have been modeled after St. James Church, Piccadilly, London. The exterior is said to be modeled after Peterborough Cathedral. stpaulsalexandria.com

Let the Music Play James Bland Music Competition honors student musicians.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Young musicians from across the region gathered in Old Town Feb. 22 for the James Bland Music Competition, held at the Alexandria History Museum at the Lyceum. The event is part of the long-running Bland Music Scholarship Program administered by the Lions of Virginia Bland Music Scholarship Foundation, which promotes cultural and educational opportunities for musically talented youth throughout the Commonwealth.

The Bland Music Competition honors James A. Bland, a 19th-century African American composer best known for works such as “Carry Me Back to Old Virginny,” official State Song of Virginia from 1940 to 1997, when it was retired and designated state song emeritus because of controversy over lyrics. Bland wrote more than 700 songs.

Established in 1948, the foundation serves as a living memorial to Bland’s legacy while supporting the next generation of musicians

through structured competitions and scholarship awards.

“James Bland was a significant part of African American musical history,” said Lions Club president David Rosenblum. “Since 1948 we have been celebrating his legacy and continue to do that through this competition.”

Students competed in either vocal or instrumental divisions, performing one memorized composition before a panel of judges. Contestants advance through a series of elimination rounds that begin at the local Lions Club level and culminate in a statewide competition held during the Lions of Virginia State Convention.

Violinist Chloe Lee, a 12th grader at National Cathedral School, took first place with her performance of Tchaikovsky’s Violin Concerto in D. Saitchit Mainali, also a violinist, and a 12th grader at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, took second place with a performance of Sergei Prokofiev’s Violin Concerto #1 in D Major. Third place went to Mary Stein, a homeschooled 11th grade student who performed Carl

Maria von Weber’s Andante e Rondo on the viola.

Runners up were Ly-Ly Ouy, a 5th grade homeschooled pianist who performed Franz Liszt’s Valse-Improptu, and Cara Zemariam, a 6th grader at Jefferson-Houston Elementary School, who rendered a vocal presentation.

Judges for the competition were Ronal Butler, Osman Kivrak, and Teri Lazar.

According to the foundation, the Bland Music Scholarship Program awards more than \$25,000 annually in scholarships and cash prizes to qualifying students. These funds are intended to support musical education, including lessons, tuition, and other approved music-related programs. Winners at the district level may advance to regional contests and, ultimately, the 2026 State Competition.

Organizers emphasize that the competition is open to elementary, middle and high school students who reside in or attend school in Virginia and are sponsored by a local Lions Club. By combining performance opportunities with scholarship support, the James



PHOTO BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Winners in the James Bland Music Competition pose for a photo Feb. 22 at The Lyceum. Pictured in back are: Chloe Lee, first place; Satchit Mainali, second place; and Mary Stein, third place. In front are runners up Ly-Ly Ouy and Cara Zemariam.

Bland Music Competition continues to play a significant role in nurturing young musical talent while

honoring an important figure in American musical history. www.alexandriahostlionsclub.org

A Journey of ‘Heart Work’ Ahead at Cornerstones

Shannon Steene, named CEO, officially assumes the role on April 13.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE GAZETTE

In a smooth transition for one of Northern Virginia’s most established safety-net nonprofits, known for its housing and human services role, Shannon Steene will officially assume the role of CEO of Cornerstones on April 13. Succeeding long-time CEO Kerrie Wilson, Steene told The Connection that he intends to lead through two distinct roles: administrator and boots-on-the-ground advocate. To truly understand regional priorities, he says, a leader must be among the community rather than just behind a desk.

Steene, who has led Carpenter’s Shelter in Alexandria since 2015, drew a direct parallel between the two organizations during a one-on-one interview with The Con-

nection on March 5. Both organizations, he noted, are blue-chip brands — trusted, well-known pillars of their respective communities. He emphasized that effective human services require a blend of “hard work” and “heart work,” balanced with the business rigor necessary to support vulnerable neighbors.

The transition follows Wilson’s notable 25-year tenure.

“I know that Kerrie leaves very big shoes,” Steene said, acknowledging her deep history and local credibility. However he remains focused on the future. Steene notes that what was required when he joined Carpenter’s in 2015 is not necessarily what the organization needs now — and similarly, Cornerstones today may require a different vision than it did when Wilson first began.

When asked for his “bumper sticker” message to his new staff, Steene offered a simple invitation: “Let’s go on a journey.”

Steene intends this to be a shared journey, relying on the expertise of the existing team while his own reach grows. His strategy for public engagement is equally

SEE A JOURNEY, PAGE 15



Public Notice

Updated weight limits on Virginia bridges and culverts

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

Jurisdiction	Fed Struc Id	Route #	Route Name	Crossing	Posted Date
GILES	8513	770	STEELE ACRES ROAD770	SINKING CREEK	2/24/2026
LOUDOUN	11332	722	LINCOLN ROAD	TRIBUTARY OF CROOKED RUN	2/13/2026
LOUDOUN	11379	831	YELLOW SCHOOLHOUSE	BRANCH OF BEAVERDAM CK	2/13/2026
BUCHANAN	29736	2207	RHONDA LESTER BRANCH ROAD	KNOX CREEK	2/11/2026
BUCHANAN	29785	3310	MOTT BRANCH ROAD	TRACE FORK	2/11/2026
AMHERST	1520	674	ROSE’S MILL ROAD	PINEY RIVER	2/5/2026

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

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

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

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



Fairfax County Police Honor Guard



Notre Dame DC Alumni Band

City Celebrates 43rd St. Patrick's Day Parade

FROM PAGE 2

"Rook" Richards serving as Grand Marshal.

Founded in 1980, the Ballyshanners, whose name means "Old Towners" in Gaelic, created the parade to promote and preserve Irish culture in Alexandria. Now in its fourth decade, the parade features an energetic symphony of sounds echoing along King Street as spectators dressed in green line the sidewalks.

The 2026 parade continued Alexandria's tradition as home to the D.C. region's first St. Patrick's Day parade, offering a lively kickoff to the spring season and a reminder of the city's continuing community traditions.

www.ballyshanners.org



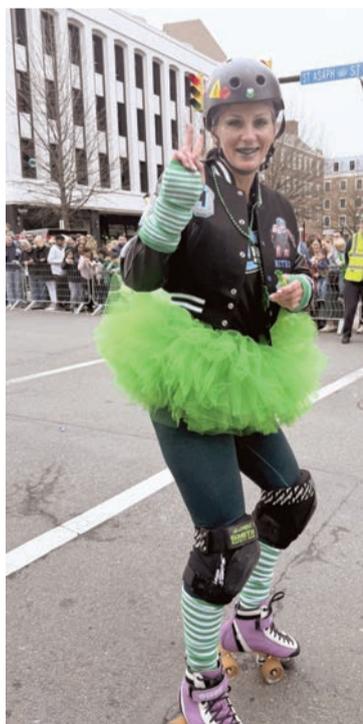
Fairfax County Police Bagpipe Band



Alexandria Jaycees Foundation



A dancer with Centro Cultural Bolivia



A skater with NOVA Roller Derby



Highland School of Dance

Housing in Alexandria: Are There Solutions That We Can Agree on?

Agenda: Alexandria meeting on Monday, March 23

Housing is a contentious issue that has been with us (seemingly) forever. For some housing is an investment and for others it's a human right. Agenda: Alexandria (established in 1998 as a non-partisan, issue-neutral non-profit dedicated to respectful discourse) will host an informed discussion with a panel of experts representing multiple sides of the housing issue. The goal: To shed light where there has been much heat.

It will be on Monday, March 23 at The Forum on the Minnie Howard (high school) campus (3775 W Braddock Rd), starting at 7 p.m. Social starts at 6:30 p.m.

The panel will be asked about the state of Alexandria housing development; the economics of housing (e.g., does increasing supply in Alexandria really lead to reduced cost); density (must we maximize it to create affordability, impacts on city services and city character); how to balance the conflict-

ing interests of developers, homeowners, and citizens-in-need; the impact of federal and state policies on local decisions; Alexandria's role in the regional housing shortage; what do we really mean by "affordable" and other housing buzzwords; property tax implications; and how many affordable units will it take before we are out of the housing crisis?

The panel includes the co-chair of the Alexandria Housing Affordability Advisory Committee (a City panel), the director of Housing Alexandria (a non-profit community developer), an economist who specializes in housing and regional economies; and the chair of the

Coalition for a Livable Alexandria (a group that opposes some of the recent zoning changes).

The panel will address questions posed by the Agenda: Alexandria Board, by those in attendance, and by you by sending them to housing-questions@agendaalexandria.org. Attendance costs \$10 for non-members of Agenda: Alexandria, free for current members.

More program details at <https://agendaalexandria.org>; view video recordings of past programs (including "Is Civil Discourse a Dying Art?" and "Behind the Budget Curtain: How Politics Shape Our Schools") at <https://youtube.com/@agendaalexandria>

Past issues of **THE CONNECTION** NEWSPAPERS back to 2008 are available at <http://connectionarchives.com/PDF>



A TALK ON CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

Healing with joy: Discovering the power of Love

Divine Love, God, frees us from fear, illness, and polarization. This freedom is given impartially to everyone.

Sunday, March 22
at 3:00 p.m.

The Lyceum
201 S. Washington St
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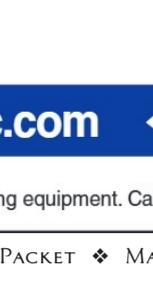
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'Hay Fever'

ACCT present Noël Coward classic.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
THE GAZETTE

"Hay Fever" is one of celebrated playwright Noël Coward's most enduring comedies, a light, dazzling satire of artistic ego and social chaos that is playing now through March 29 at Aldersgate Church Community Theater.

Set over a single weekend in the country home of the Bliss family, the play follows what happens when each eccentric family member invites a guest without telling the others, resulting in escalating misunderstandings and exquisitely awkward encounters.

"The year 2025 was the 100th anniversary of the show's first performance, which was also Noël Coward's first play to be produced in London's West End and on Broadway," said director Bob Sams.

"It seemed a good chance to revisit it. The play is tremendously funny and in these current times we can use a few laughs."

Coward's genius lies in his dialogue: brittle, fast-paced, and wickedly funny. The Bliss family's self-absorption and theatrical excess are played not for cruelty but for charm, exposing the absurdities of polite society and the performative nature of relationships. Beneath the laughter, "Hay Fever" gently mocks the idea of sophisti-

cation itself, suggesting that civility is often just another role people play.

Starring in the ACCT production are Paul Donahue as Richard Grantham, Jessie Duggan as Myra Arundel, Chi as Simon Bliss, Anne Hillary as Clara, Graham Jewett as Jackie Coryton, Andrew Rappa as Sandy Tyrell, Diane Sams as Judith Bliss, Jen Ware as Sorel Bliss, and Stephen T. Wheeler as David Bliss.

"When Mr. Coward wrote "Hay Fever" in 1924, he based Judith on American actress Laurette Taylor, her very word-game addicted family, and a memorable weekend he spent with that family, said Diane Sams, who plays the central

role of Judith. "Accordingly, Judith is theatrical, self-centered, and likely to disregard manners in favor of the fun of playing parts that her guests know nothing about. The pursuit of adoration from any available male is one of her

favorite games and the weekend encompassed by the play gives her a prime field for her preferred pastime."

The show is co-produced by Marg Soroos and Charles Dragonette.

"Producing Noël Coward's "Hay Fever" is a trip down memory lane for me," Dragonette said. "In 2007 I assisted the set painter for Aldersgate's production directed by Roland Gomez. It was my first experience in community theater

"Hay Fever" is tremendously funny and in these current times we can use a few laughs."

— Director Bob Sams



PHOTO BY HOWARD SOROOS

The Noël Coward comedy "Hay Fever" is playing now through March 29 at Aldersgate Church Community Theater. Shown in the cast are (standing from left): Jessie Duggan (Myra Arundel), Andrew Rappa (Sandy Tyrell), Anne Hillary (Clara), Paul Donahue (Richard Greatham), and Jen Ware (Jacky Coryton). Seated left to right: Chi (Simon Bliss), Diane Sams (Judith Bliss), Stephen T. Wheeler (David Bliss), and Graham Jewett (Sorel Bliss).

and it feels right to be immersed in the subversive cleverness of this comedy to enter my 20th year at my home stage."

Clara is the family maid and the calm at the center of the whirlwind. Over the top and theatrical in their actions, the Bliss family delights in winding each other up and provoking dramatic reactions from each other. As the weekend wears on, each guest pairs off with the wrong person with comic effects.

Confused and angered by the strange behavior of their hosts, the guests creep out of the house barely noticed by the family oblivious to their own ill-mannered behavior. As Coward himself called it, "A Comedy of Bad Manners."

Effortlessly stylish and still remarkably fresh, "Hay Fever" remains a masterclass in comic timing and character-driven humor, proving why Coward continues to be celebrated as one of the great voices of 20th-century theatre.

Said director Bob Sams, "We hope that the audience will leave with a feeling of being emotionally and mentally refreshed and renewed. And with a feeling of gratitude for the knowledge that they will NEVER have to spend a rainy weekend with the Bliss Family."

"Hay Fever" is playing now through March 29 at Aldersgate Church Community Theater, 1301 Collingwood Road, Alexandria, VA 22308. For tickets or more information visit www.acctonline.org

Celebrating the Dream

Annual MLK poster contest honors local students.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Alexandria marked the start of February's Black History Month with its annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Student Poster Exhibition, a longstanding youth art contest celebrating the life and legacy of Dr. King. The 2026 exhibition opened with an awards ceremony on Feb. 1 at the Charles Houston Recreation Center, where student artwork was unveiled to families, educators, and community members.

Sponsored by the Alexandria Black History Museum in partnership with the Office of Historic Alexandria, the contest invites



PHOTO BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

A large audience gathered for the MLK poster contest Feb. 1 at Charles Houston Recreation Center.

Attend Film Festival for Free

NOVA International Film Festival & Music Festival in April.

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

Drama, documentaries, comedy and even a little horror — they’ve got it all at the Twelfth Annual Northern Virginia International Film & Music Festival Thursday, April 9 and Friday, April 10. It is being held at the LOOK Dine-in Cinemas at the Boro, Tysons. The film screenings will run from approximately 5 p.m.-11 p.m. both nights.

“We look for films that have quality and that magic—you know that ‘ah ha’ moment,” says Fernando Mico, NOVA Festival Director. “Our brand is glamour, elegance and excellence.”

Mico says no year is the same. “In the first year for some reason we had a lot of horror



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED
Fernando Mico, NOVA International Film & Music Festival Director

film submissions. This year we have the first short film submission from France, and documentaries are up.”

There is also a local connection with “909,” a music video, which was filmed in part in Arlington, and “The Floaters,” a comedy by an Arlingtonian about a struggling musician who takes a last resort job super-

vising misfits at her childhood Jewish summer camp.

And Fairfax County resident and retired federal government employee Michael J. Volpe has won multiple screenwriting awards for a romantic drama he recently completed.

Mico adds, “Although we have films from across the United States and across Europe, we quickly found that many of the filmmakers have some kind of attachment to the DMV area. A big number identify with the area because they have a connection; they know somebody or have a relative, and it is a destination area.”

Mico is from Alexandria where he has lived all of his life “except for a short stint in LA where I took a grown up job for a few months as a colorist for Marvel Comics, all the big titles you still recognize like Spiderman.” He moved back to Alexandria 3 years later and went back to school. “After a few bumps and bruises I learned how films work.”

His work in school won “action film of the year” which he says “was kind of a big deal, it came out of nowhere.” But he said the action films that work in film festivals aren’t necessarily the ones that make it in streaming. As a result he has become a men-

tor to others; outside of the grind it is called “show” business for a reason.

The Festival schedule is online, and films are free but registration is required. The schedule ranges from “No Other Gods,” a music video filmed in Athens; to “The Donut Dollies,” a documentary about 627 young women in their blue dresses and smiles who entertained the troops along the front lines in Vietnam; to “Free Syria” which follows a country at a rare moment of possibility with the new freedom juxtaposed against the hardship.

The Black Tie Festival Awards and Red Carpet Show takes place on Saturday, April 11 starting at 5:30 pm at the Boro where the awards will be presented to the winners in each category. “We’ve changed the format this year from the Oscar style where you show up and have no idea whether you’ve won.” Now, he says, the winners are notified ahead of time so they have more time to think about their remarks and can invite their friends and families to celebrate with them.

To register for the screenings: <https://www.novafilmfest.com/>

<https://www.novafilmfest.com/2026-screening-schedule>



PHOTO BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Amaury Rodriguez Calderon, a 5th grader at Douglas MacArthur Elementary School, shows his poster of Martin Luther King Jr. delivering his famous ‘I Have a Dream’ speech.

Celebrating the Dream

FROM PAGE 8

Alexandria City Public Schools students in grades 2 through 5 to reflect on Dr. King’s message through visual art. Now more than 30 years old, the exhibition has become a signature Alexandria tradition and a key feature of the city’s Black History Month programming.

The 2026 theme, “Dreaming Together: Learning from the Past, Shaping the Future,” encouraged students to connect Dr. King’s vision of justice and equality with their own hopes for the future. Using crayons, markers, paint, and mixed media, young artists explored ideas of unity, fairness and community, producing a diverse and expressive collection of posters.

“I was inspired by Dr. King to create Stop the Gangs,” said Ahamad Sekandari, a 5th grade student at William Ramsay Elementary School. “I don’t want people fighting and getting killed.”

Following the opening ceremony, the posters remained on public display from Feb. 1 through March 1 allowing residents and visitors to view the artwork throughout Black History Month. The annual exhibition is free and open to the public, reinforcing its role as both an educational program and a community celebration.

By pairing student creativity with civic history, Alexandria’s MLK Poster Contest continues to honor Dr. King’s legacy while giving young voices a prominent place in the city’s cultural life.



Introducing our onsite Hemodialysis Unit, in partnership with Nova Dialysis, providing advanced care and personalized services to meet all of your dialysis needs.

Clinical Capabilities

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2729 King St, Alexandria, VA 22302
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Creativity in Bloom

At The Jefferson, residents find freedom, focus and joy through art and gardening.



Bryna Freyer, a retired art historian, paints a delicate blue rim on a clay vessel during a studio session at The Jefferson.



Wendy Kotler with her painting inspired by nature.



Lynn Barton coordinates seasonal plantings in The Jefferson's community garden.

PHOTOS BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE GAZETTE

Carefully and almost meditatively, Bryna Freyer steadies a small clay vessel in one hand and lifts a brush with the other, guiding a thin line of pale blue paint around the rim.

The retired art historian and current resident at The Jefferson, a senior living community, pauses occasionally to study the curve before adding another careful stroke. Nearby, jars of gray, teal, and cream pigments sit open on the table.

"Working with clay in particular is very relaxing," she says. Then she smiles. "With ceramics, I don't obsess about whether mine is good enough anymore. I'm just enjoying it."

Freyer spent much of her career studying museum collections and teaching art history. For years she analyzed great works created by other artists.

Now she is making something of her own.

Around her, residents at The Jefferson gather for a studio session, some sketching still lifes, others mixing watercolor pigments or

shaping clay. The walls display landscapes, flowers and abstract bursts of color, each piece created by someone who lives in the community.

For many residents, creativity here is more than a pastime. It's a way to slow down, concentrate, and lose themselves in the process of making something.

The Quiet Power of Creativity

Wendy Kotler understands that feeling well.

A retired art educator, she worked for public school systems as both a teacher and developer of art curriculum. Kotler still approaches art with the careful eye of someone who spent a career helping students learn to notice the small details all around them, the curve of a leaf, the shift of light across a surface, the subtle changes of color in the sky.

When she paints, she often leans close to the canvas, studying the way light settles on a petal or the subtle shift between shades of purple.

For Kotler, painting often begins with something that others might

overlook. One of her recent paintings was inspired by orange lilies in a bouquet on a table in the home of her sister-in-law.

"When I'm drawing," she explains, "I'm intensely focused on the connection between my eye

"When I'm drawing, I'm focused on the connection between my eye and the subject. Everything else drops away."

— Wendy Kotler

and the subject. Everything else drops away."

In that moment, the outside world recedes, and worries fade.

"If you're anxious or agitated," she says, "once you move into that creative space, it goes away."

Researchers agree. Studies supported by the National Endowment for the Arts suggest that artistic engagement can support cognitive health while reducing depression and anxiety, particularly among older adults.

Kotler traces her own artistic path back to kindergarten.

"We were supposed to draw a person," she recalls. "My teacher leaned over and said, 'Your person has a hand with five fingers. You're really good at this.'"

Encouragement like that, she believes, can shape a life.

"If you talk to people in creative fields," she says, "somewhere along the line someone noticed something and reinforced it."

Creativity Beyond the Studio

At The Jefferson, creativity extends well beyond the art room.

Lynn Barton, chair of the community's garden club, first discovered her love of gardening as a child helping her grandmother in the yard.

Her favorite job was pulling weeds.

"I liked getting rid of the bad things so the good things could grow," Barton says.

Today she helps coordinate plantings around the Jefferson grounds, where residents gather to dig, water, and plan new additions

each season.

"A neighbor once told me the garden is always a work in progress," Barton says. "And that's true."

At The Jefferson, creativity is also woven into daily programming.

Dawn Hamed, activities coordinator for assisted living and memory care, says the key is understanding what residents care about.

"It all starts with building relationships," Hamed says. "We learn what people loved doing before they came here and build activities around those interests."

Sometimes the impact is immediate. Hamed remembers one resident who initially refused to leave his room or attend any activities.

Now he rarely misses one. "He may not follow the instructor exactly," she says. "But he's there doing his own thing. And just being there means he's engaged."

The power of creativity to affect one's mental and emotional wellbeing at any age, appears on studio walls, in garden beds and in the satisfaction of making something by hand.

As Kotler puts it simply: "It's never too late."

Do These Districts Have a Future?

Two locals battle for a possible new Democratic seat in Congress.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE GAZETTE

A political thriller is unfolding across Northern Virginia's power corridor, stretching from Arlington through the south-central and eastern parts of Fairfax County, and into the sprawling commuter hubs of the I-95 corridor. It involves a high-stakes constitutional showdown with national implications and congressional districts that might not exist in a month.

Former first lady Dorothy McAuliffe and Del. Dan Helmer, both of Fairfax County, will vie (along with others) for the 7th district Congressional nomination if voters approve the out-of-turn redistricting. Early voting for the April 21 ballot is already underway.

While currently, Fairfax County, Arlington County and the City of Alexandria, rich in Democrats and population, are represented by (parts of) three of Virginia's 11 Congressional Districts, 8, 10 and 11, proposed redistricting would add parts of two more districts, Districts 1 and 7. Spreading out rather than concentrating those votes could change the party balance in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The battleground is the proposed 7th Congressional District; the western part of the district reaches into the deeply red rural Shenandoah Valley and Southside Virginia, the eastern part the Democratic suburbs of Arlington and Fairfax, which hold most of the voting-age population.

In recent elections, many of the Shenandoah Valley and Southside Virginia counties voted for Republican candidates by margins as high as 70% to 80%.

The Gubernatorial Split

The advent of the McAuliffe-Helmer contest has created an unusual rift between former Gov. Ralph Northam and former first lady Pamela Northam. Ralph Northam is featured prominently on Helmer's campaign website under Endorsements. Pamela Northam is said to be backing McAuliffe.

Still, this version of the 7th District exists only if voters approve a constitutional amendment referendum on April 21, 2026. If the referendum fails, these maps vanish — and with them, the current campaigns.

The Candidates

McAuliffe, a McLean resident and former State Department official, is the wife of former Gov. Terry McAuliffe. She launched her campaign last week with a focus on regional



SCREENSHOT VIA WIKIPEDIA
Dorothy McAuliffe (D)



SCREENSHOT VIA DANHELMER.COM
Dan Helmer (D)

Explanation for PROPOSED Constitutional Amendment to Be Voted On at the April 21, 2026 Special Election

BALLOT QUESTION:

Should the Constitution of Virginia be amended to allow the General Assembly to temporarily adopt new congressional districts to restore fairness in the upcoming elections, while ensuring Virginia's standard redistricting process resumes for all future redistricting after the 2030 census?

<https://www.elections.virginia.gov/media/electionadministration/election-law/4-21-2026-Special-Election-Explanation--Text.pdf>

connectivity. "I look forward to traveling this district — from Arlington to Augusta — and sharing a vision for this community," McAuliffe said in her announcement.

Helmer, who lives in Clifton, is an Army veteran and small business leader who currently serves as the vice chair of the House Democratic Caucus. He is leaning into a coalition of local delegates and veterans.

Battle of the Backers

The primary has become a contest of institutional influence versus local legislative ties.

Dorothy McAuliffe boasts the endorsement of Nancy Pelosi, who said, "Dorothy has never backed down from the fights that matter." Other key supporters include State Sen. L. Louise Lucas, former House Speaker Eileen Filler-Corn, and Anne Holton, the wife of Sen. Tim Kaine.

For Dan Helmer, supporters emphasize his effectiveness in Richmond. Del. Vivian Watts noted that Helmer "works on the hard details that matter."

Former GOP Rep. Denver Riggleman,

who now considers himself an independent, called Helmer "exactly the leader Virginia needs in this fight."

Also backing Helmer is Del. Garrett McGuire, who said, "I'm proud to have worked alongside him this session on gun violence prevention measures that will make Virginia safer for everyone."

Yes or No?

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.

Voter's Timeline

Early in-person voting for the April 21 referendum is already underway and continues through Saturday, April 18. Voters must go to an early voting site in the locality where they are registered.

Fairfax County Locations:

❖ Fairfax County Government Center: Open now (Mon–Fri, 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.) [Source: Fairfax County Government].

❖ Satellite Locations (Opening April 11): Burke Centre Library, Mason Governmental Center (Annandale), West Springfield Governmental Center, McLean Governmental Center, and Tysons-Pimmit Regional Library (Falls Church).

❖ Hours for Satellites: Mon–Fri, 1 p.m. – 7 p.m.; Saturdays, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Arlington County Locations:

❖ Courthouse Plaza (2100 Clarendon Blvd): Open now (Mon–Fri, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.)

❖ Satellite Locations (Opening April 11): Madison Community Center (N. Stafford St.) and Walter Reed Community Center (16th St. S.).

❖ Extended Hours: These sites will stay open until 7 p.m. on Tuesday, April 14, and Thursday, April 16

Key Dates to Remember Referendum

❖ April 10: Last day to request a mail-in ballot (5 p.m.).

❖ April 18: Final day for early in-person voting.

❖ April 21: Referendum Day – Polls open 6 a.m. to 7 p.m., voters go to assigned precinct. [Source: Virginia Dept. of Elections].

Congress

District Boundaries will depend on whether Yes or No won the referendum.

❖ May 26: Candidate filing deadline for Congressional Districts.

❖ June 18: Early in-person voting begins for the primary.

❖ August 4: Primary Election Day.

Please VETO SB388

Dear Gov. Spanberger,

SB388 allows faith institutions and other tax-exempt nonprofits to erect by-right affordable housing multiplexes on their properties and bypass local zoning rules and public input. Allowing, for ex-

ample, a church parking lot or several proximate church parking lots in a low-density neighborhood to be turned into multiplex affordable apartment buildings with streets and sewer pipes designed for low-density zoning might overwhelm the local infrastructure's capacity. An

LETTER

inappropriate multiplex built by a private developer does not magically become an appropriate multiplex merely because the owner is a religious or nonprofit organization.

On March 4 the Senate defeated a similar bill to allow by-right multiplexes in

commercial zones because such by-right provisions would subvert local authority for development planning. You should veto SB388 for similar reasons.

Respectfully,

Dino Drudi
Alexandria, 22314

ENTERTAINMENT

MEETS EVERY SUNDAY

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

MEETS EVERY MONDAY

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

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

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

MGNV PLANT CLINICS ARE OPEN

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

YEAR ROUND ON SUNDAYS

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

AMERICA'S 250TH BIRTHDAY

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

- ❖ March: A new, major exhibit will open at Mount Vernon. Called *George Washington: A Revolutionary Life*, the exhibit will immerse visitors in Washington's world through recreated spaces, interactive role-playing, lifelike figures and artifacts.
- ❖ March: A new exhibit will open at Gadsby's Tavern Museum highlighting Hannah Griffith, who ran a coffeehouse there from 1794-1800. The exhibit will explore her resilience during the Revolutionary War, its impact on families and her ties to Alexandria's modern entrepreneurs.
- ❖ May-November: A temporary public art installation from artist Sandy Williams IV will commemorate the signing of the Declaration of Independence as part of the City of Alexandria's Time & Place public art series.
- ❖ June 12-14: Alexandria's major signature 250th event, *Sails on the Potomac*, will



Enjoy Breakfast with the Easter Bunny at Alexandria restaurants April 4-5, 2026.

host iconic tall ships as a Sail Virginia 2026 Affiliate Harbor and will feature a weekend packed with activities including Alexandria Jazz Fest performances.

- ❖ June: A new exhibit will open at the Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum. Called *Stories of U.S. Collections Capture our History*, the exhibit will bring out objects from the collection that are seldom seen.
- ❖ July 3-4: Enjoy evening Fourth of July fireworks shows at George Washington's Mount Vernon on July 3 and 4, and a daytime fireworks show on July 4.
- ❖ July 11: Take part in the City of Alexandria's 277th/USA 250th Birthday Celebration complete with fireworks, music and more at Oronoco Bay Park along Alexandria's waterfront.

NOW THRU APRIL 19

Ambiguity Exhibition by Photographer Alan Sisen. At Multiple Exposures Gallery, Studio 312, Torpedo Factory Art Center, Alexandria. In this new body of work, Sisen explores the "moment when perception pauses"—a fleeting second when the eye recognizes a form, but the mind cannot yet define it. Through reflection, repetition, and abstraction, his images of familiar places unsettle orientation, disrupt our sense of space, and blur the line between what is seen, what is felt, and what is understood.

NOW THRU APRIL 19

What Will Persist: Elizabeth Coffey and Sally Veach exhibition. At The Athenaeum, Alexandria. Artist's Reception on Sunday, March 22 from 4-6 p.m. Elizabeth Coffey and Sally Veach use layered processes and historically charged materials to examine how meaning accumulates on surfaces. Pattern, fabric, and atmosphere function as both structure and metaphor, allowing traces of earlier marks and histories to remain visible. Veach builds palimpsestic landscapes informed by romantic painting traditions and archival botanical designs. Coffey paints women on lace curtains and expanded textile supports, pairing figuration with language. Seen together, their works present painting as a porous form—one that resists containment and remains open to what persists beneath the surface.

MARCH 6-28

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

City of Alexandria Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities

From glow parties and jazz on the waterfront to family picnics and fireworks on the Potomac, there is something happening in every corner of our city. Grab your calendar. You are going to want to mark a few dates.

❖ Events are free unless otherwise stated.

Spring Highlights and Special Events

Adopt A Park 2026 Season Kickoff

Wednesday, March 18, 6-7:30 p.m. | 2900 A

Business Center Drive

Meet fellow volunteers, request supplies, and get ready for another season caring for the parks we love. New volunteers are always welcome.

World Water Day

\$5 | Saturday, March 21, 10 a.m.-12 p.m. |

Jerome "Buddie" Ford Nature Center

Discover how the water cycle and our Chesapeake Bay watershed keep our planet thriving. Learn through fun, hands-on activities for the whole family on March 21. Register here!

Nature Walk at Dora Kelley

Saturday, March 21, 12 p.m. | Dora Kelley

Nature Park

Join Natural Resource Managers Raychel Frye and Katrina Napora for a guided walk through the woods. Talk plants, explore the trails, and keep an eye out for special spring blooms as the season comes to life.

Armstrong Spring Tech Refresh

Saturday, April 11, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. | Leonard

Armstrong Recreation Center

Clear out unwanted electronics for free and learn about important digital safety topics affecting today's youth. Declutter and learn something new all in one stop.

Le Brunch en Bleu

Saturday, April 25 | 12-4 p.m. | William Ramsay

Recreation Center

Bring blankets, tables, chairs, food, and friends for a relaxed afternoon gathering in Alexandria's West End. All are welcome for connection and community.

RecFest

Saturday, May 2, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. | Patrick Henry

Recreation Center

A celebration of everything RPCA offers. Enjoy demos, meet instructors, explore summer camps, arts, sports, nature programs, and even register on site. It is your one stop shop for fun.

Asian American Pacific Islander

Month Celebration

Saturday, May 30, 3-7 p.m. | Patrick Henry

Recreation Center

Celebrate culture, history, and community through food, live performances, art, youth activities, and storytelling in this vibrant

family-friendly event.

48th Annual ALX Jazz Fest

Friday, June 12, 12-6 p.m.; Saturday, June 13,

12-9 p.m.; Sunday, June 14, 12-6 p.m. |

Waterfront Park

ALX Jazz Fest celebrates its 48th annual event as part of the Sails on the Potomac series honoring the USA's 250th anniversary, featuring three days of music: Americana Roots (Friday), American Jazz and Poetry (Saturday), and Future Sounds of America (Sunday).

Juneteenth Block Party

Friday, June 19, 4-7 p.m. | Charles Houston

Recreation Center

Come and celebrate the people, contributions, traditions and culture of Black Americans who have helped build and shape America. Enjoy food, live music, dance presentations, and recreation programming in celebration of this national holiday.

Alexandria and USA Birthday Celebration

Sunday, July 12 | Oronoco Bay Park

Celebrate Alexandria's 277th birthday and the USA's 250th with live music, food, and a fireworks finale over the Potomac River at 9:30 p.m. A can't-miss summer night.

Kids and Teens

Nerf the Turf

\$19, Ages 7-12

Fridays, April 17 & June 5, 6:30-8:30 p.m. |

Patrick Henry Elementary School

Build teamwork and sportsmanship in this instructor-led foam dart showdown. Bring your gear; we'll provide the ammo.

Dodgeball Fanatics

\$19, Ages 7-12

Fridays, April 24 & May 15, 6:30-8:30 p.m. |

Patrick Henry Elementary School

Duck, dip, dive, and dodge in a safe and structured environment designed for skill building and fun.

Animals in the Park

Saturday, April 25, 9 a.m.-12 p.m. | Windmill

Hill Park

Meet RPCA staff and some of the wildlife from the Jerome "Buddie" Ford Nature Center.

K Pop Hunters Glow Party

\$5, Ages 6-10

Saturday, April 25, 1-3 p.m. | Charles Houston

Recreation Center

Dance to your favorite movie hits, create arts and crafts, and glow under colorful lights with friends.

Alexandria Spring Invitational

Cheer Competition

Price varies, Saturday, April 25, 2 p.m. | Alexandria

City High School

Watch talented cheer squads bring the energy, spirit, and skill to the mat. From high-flying stunts to powerful routines, this exciting competition is packed with teamwork and Alexandria pride.

Mother's Day Spa

\$15, Ages 5 & up

Saturday, May 2, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. | Mount Vernon

Recreation Center

Moms and daughters can enjoy facials, manicures, food, and quality time together for a memorable Mother's Day celebration.

Parents Night Out

\$25, Ages 5-12

Fridays, May 8 & June 12, 6:30-8:45 p.m. |

Mount Vernon Recreation Center

Enjoy an evening out while your kids enjoy games and activities in a safe and energetic setting.

Charles Houston Kiddie Cabaret

\$6, Ages 1-5

Saturday, June 13, 10 a.m.-12 p.m. | Charles

Houston Recreation Center

Dress up, dance to kiddie favorites, enjoy lunch, and celebrate in style with a parent or guardian.

For Adults

ENTERTAINMENT

Charles Houston Line Dance Social
Ages 18+
Tuesdays, April 14 & May 12, 6:30-8:30 p.m. |
Charles Houston Recreation Center
Enjoy an evening of toe-tapping fun. No experience needed. Just bring your enthusiasm.

Live on Top of The Hill Concert Series
Ages 18+
Fridays, June 27 & July 25, 12-3 p.m. | William
Ramsay Recreation Center
Relax with live folk, cover, and mariachi music in
a welcoming community setting.

Top of The Hill Adult Social
Ages 18+
Friday, July 31, 6:30-9 p.m. | William Ramsay
Recreation Center
Connect, unwind, enjoy games and themed
nights, and meet new friends in this casual
summer gathering.
Explore full details and register at alexandriava.
gov/RPCA/Events.

THURSDAY/MARCH 19
**The Chamber ALX's 2026 General Assembly
Breakfast. 8-10 a.m.** At The Hilton Alexan-
dria Old Town, Alexandria. They are welcom-
ing our General Assembly delegation—fresh
from the action in Richmond! Join them for a
timely and lively conversation as our delega-
tion reflects on the 2026 session, breaks down
the legislation that will most impact our com-
munity, and offers behind-the-scenes insights
into the debates, negotiations, and defining
moments that shaped the final outcomes.
They'll also look ahead to the opportunities
and challenges facing the Commonwealth in
the months ahead—and what they mean for
our region. Bring your questions and be part
of the conversation about where Virginia goes
next.

THURSDAY/MARCH 19
Send-Off Concert. 7 p.m. At West Potomac
High School, Alexandria. West Potomac Band
invites the community to attend the West
Potomac Band Music For All Send Off Con-
cert. This is a huge honor for West Potomac's
Period 1 Band, because they will be the only
band from Virginia to participate in the Music
For All Festival in Indianapolis.

MARCH 20-22
**Old Town Bloom Together Spring Preview. In
Old Town Alexandria.** Celebrate spring in
Old Town Alexandria, where you can stroll,
shop, dine and support local business while
having a chance to win big! You are invited
to Bloom Together, where you get the first
glance at the spring collections from your
favorite Old Town boutiques. Grab your
passport, shop and stroll Old Town, and enter
for a chance to win a \$500 or even \$1,000
gift card to the boutique (or boutiques) of
your choice!
Known as a diverse retail district, the Old Town
Bloom Together Spring Preview is a neighbor-
hood passport-style shopping event designed
to welcome more people into local brick and
mortar stores during cherry blossom season
for a chance to win a special incentive. This
event encourages shoppers to explore Old
Town by visiting multiple boutiques over one
weekend and support small businesses by
creating an opportunity to create foot traffic
during one of the busiest times of year.
During the three-day event, shoppers can use a
Bloom Together passport to visit participat-
ing stores and collect stamps. How it works
is the more shops they stop in, the more
chances shoppers have to win a gift card.
Each participating boutique will be listed on
the official passport and be available both in
print and online. Shoppers who visit at least
half of the boutiques will be entered to win a
\$500 gift card to a shop of their choice; while
those who visit all locations will be entered
for a \$1,000 grand prize gift card to spend
at a boutique of their choosing. For more
information, visit <https://oldtownboutiquecommunity.com>.

SATURDAY/MARCH 21
Write Like A Woman Networking Workshop.
www.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

1-3 p.m. At The Athenaeum, Alexandria.
Founder and Facilitator, KaNikki Jakarta,
welcomes you to year 10 of the Write Like a
Woman Networking Workshop. This popular
workshop invites amateur and professional
women writers of all genres ages 18 – 100.
Each workshop centers on uplifting and
inspiring through writing and allows partici-
pants to enhance their writing styles through
writing prompts and encouragement. Space is
limited, RSVP to greatpublishing@yahoo.com

SATURDAY/MARCH 21
Family Skate and Dance Night. Embrace the
spring season with a night out all ages will
enjoy at an upcoming Family Skate and Dance
Night. Gather the crew, whether it's family or
friends, and head out to Franconia Rec Center
as its gym transforms for the night into a skate
rink. Bring your own skates or your dancing
shoes to get moving to music by a guest DJ.
Upcoming events set the stage to celebrate St.
Patrick's Day, the spring season (enchanted
forest theme) and the third anniversary Family
Skate and Dance Night. Tickets cost \$10 for
everyone—purchase online now for these
upcoming events:
Saturday, March 21, 6-9 p.m., Family Skate and
Dance Night: St. Patrick's Day
Saturday, April 18, 6-9 p.m., Family Skate and
Dance Night: Enchanted Forest
Saturday, May 16, 5-9 p.m., Family Skate and
Dance Night: Third Anniversary
All ages and abilities are invited to join in and
build confidence on wheels at this community
event. Food, snacks and drinks are available
for purchase (outside food is prohibited). Fran-
conia Rec Center is located at 6601 Telegraph
Road in Alexandria. For more information,
visit the Franconia Rec Center website or call
703-922-9841.

SATURDAY/MARCH 28
**Let's Just Start From The Beginning... 12:30
- 2:30 p.m.** At the Athenaeum, Alexandria.
Join in a two hour co-ed creative develop-
ment workshop designed and facilitated by
13 of nazareth for the purpose of encouraging
experimentation with style, form and tone, and
supporting expansion beyond creative comfort
zones in order to assist in fine tuning a writer's
process. It can be thought of as having artistic
reinforcements in the battle to be better on
pages and stages.

EASTER DINING – APRIL 4-5
❖ **Breakfast with the Easter Bunny at Joe Theis-
mann's Restaurant**
Saturday, April 4 at 8AM + Sunday, April 5 at 8AM
This Easter weekend, families are invited back for
the popular Breakfast with the Easter Bunny
at Theismann's Restaurant & Bar. Guests
can enjoy two festive mornings filled with
family-friendly fun, including opportunities
for children to meet and take photos with the
Easter Bunny, participate in an Easter egg hunt,
and create their own Easter basket.
The family-style breakfast includes a beverage and
a mimosa and is priced at \$64.82 for adults.
For children ages 2 and older, the experience is
\$36.39, which includes breakfast, a beverage,
and a photo with the Easter Bunny. Adults may
also enhance their celebration with bottomless
mimosas, Prosecco, or Bellinis for an additional
\$22.20.
Phone: 703.739.0777
Address: 1800 Diagonal Road, Alexandria, VA.
Tickets: [https://www.eventbrite.com/e/
breakfast-with-the-easter-bun-
ny-at-theismanns-restaurant-tick-
ets-1982907822676?aff=oddtcreator](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/breakfast-with-the-easter-bunny-at-theismanns-restaurant-tickets-1982907822676?aff=oddtcreator)
Palette 22 – Bottomless Brunch
At Palette 22, Sundays are all about an endlessly
creative bottomless brunch experience. For
\$32.22 per person, guests can enjoy unlimited
selections from the menu, including favorites
like French Toast Sticks, P22 Cheeseburger
Sliders, brick oven pizzas, and Shrimp + Grits.
The experience also features a chef-attended
taco and waffle bar, plus dessert to finish on
a sweet note. To sip alongside brunch, guests
can add Bellinis, Mimosas, or a Create-Your-
Own Bloody Mary for just \$4.22 each. [https://
arlington.palette22.com/](https://arlington.palette22.com/)
Address: 4053 Campbell Ave., Arlington, VA 22206

Ada's on the River
Celebrate Easter Sunday with a refined brunch at
Ada's on the River, featuring elegant season-
al dishes alongside its waterfront setting.
Highlights include the South African Lobster
Benedict, made with butter-poached lobster,
poached eggs, crème fraîche, smoked toma-
toes, and potato pavé, and a decadent Croque
Madame layered with shaved prosciutto cotto,
brioche, and a rich pecorino and gruyère
béchamel. End on a sweet note with a slice of
Carrot Cake topped with cream cheese mousse,
candied pecans, and pineapple jam. [https://
adasontheriver.com/](https://adasontheriver.com/)
Address: 3 Pioneer Mill Way, Alexandria, VA 22314

BARCA Pier & Wine Bar
For a lively waterfront Easter celebration, BARCA
Pier & Wine Bar will offer Mediterranean-in-
spired brunch specials on Easter Sunday
perfect for sharing. Guests can start with a
bright Herbed Yogurt Dip served with warm
pita and pickled vegetables, enjoy a savory
Jamón Ibérico Benedict with a Portuguese
muffin and mojo rojo, or indulge in the Grilled
Lamb & Artichoke Kebab, featuring marinated
lamb loin with herbs and garlic yogurt. [https://
barcaalx.com/](https://barcaalx.com/)
Address: 2 Pioneer Mill Way, Alexandria, VA 22314

**Mia's Italian Kitchen - Bottomless Brunch &
New Hours**
Brunch at Mia's Italian Kitchen in Alexandria
just got even better with new weekend hours
from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Guests can indulge in
Mia's signature Bottomless Brunch for \$32 per
person, featuring unlimited selections from
the brunch menu for an endlessly satisfying
Italian-style feast. Highlights include the Italian
Scramble with pepperoni, roasted peppers,
mushrooms, caramelized onions, basil, and
rustic garlic toast, Brick Oven Pan Pizza, and
house-made pastas like Nonna's Sunday Gravy
with rigatoni, sweet Italian sausage, meatballs,
braciola, and chicken thighs in slow-simmered
tomato sauce. To sip alongside brunch, guests
can enjoy specialty cocktails including Mia's
Bloody Mary, Mia's Rossini, Lavender Bellini,
and Venus Punch. <https://alexandria-va.miasitalian.com/>
Address: 100 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314
The Royal

At The Royal, Easter Sunday brunch brings bold,
comforting flavors with dishes like the Pot
Roast Hash, made with braised beef, sunny
eggs, crispy home fries, caramelized onions,
feta, and roasted garlic aioli. Another standout
is the Vampiro Burrito, packed with house-
made chicken chorizo, scrambled eggs, refried
beans, crispy cheeses, salsa verde, and cilantro
for a hearty holiday bite. [https://royalrestau-
rantva.com/](https://royalrestaurantva.com/)
Address: 730 North Saint Asaph Street, Alexan-
dria, VA 22314

Vola's Dockside Grill
Celebrate Easter Sunday by the waterfront at Vo-
la's Dockside Grill with indulgent brunch and
seafood favorites. The Pecan-Crusted French
Toast features brioche topped with Bavarian
cream, fresh berries, and spiced syrup, while
the Lobster & Crab Cannelloni delivers a rich
combination of Maine lobster, lump crab,
spinach, and Gruyère in a sherry cream sauce.
<https://volasdockside.com/>
Address: 101 North Union Street, Old Town Water-
front, Alexandria, VA 22314

SECOND TUESDAY OF THE MONTH
Pop-Up Satellite Services for Circuit Court. Fair-
fax Circuit Court is pleased to announce the
launch of pop-up Satellite Circuit Court Ser-
vices at the Gerry Hyland Government Center,
8350 Richmond Highway, Alexandria. Starting
April 14, 2026, services will be available on
the second Tuesday of every month, from 9
a.m. to noon. This initiative provides select
court services to residents in the southern
portion of Fairfax County, increasing access and
convenience.
Services Offered Include:
Marriage License Issuance
Certified Copies of Court Records

Free Notary Services
Civil Filings into Existing Cases
This program represents a pivotal step in the Fair-
fax Circuit Court's ongoing efforts to enhance
community engagement and service delivery.
As the largest trial court in Virginia, the Fairfax
Circuit Court (19th Judicial Circuit) remains
dedicated to providing resources that meet
the needs of Fairfax County and Fairfax City
residents. For more information about Fairfax
Circuit Court and its services, visit [https://
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/circuit](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/circuit).

SATURDAY/APRIL 4
First Saturday Used Book Sale: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
at Sherwood Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood
Hall Lane. Selection of over 20,000 gently used
children's books, fiction, history, biography,
home and garden, cooking, crafts, sports,
religion, travel, CDs, DVDs, and more. Unless
specially priced, \$1 for hard backs and large
paperbacks, and 25 cents for mass market
paperbacks. Open every day, various hours.
Visit [https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/
branches/friends-of-sherwood-regional](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/friends-of-sherwood-regional) for
information on other days and times for the
library's ongoing book sale.

APRIL 10-11
2026 Spring Garden Market at River Farm. The
American Horticultural Society (AHS), the
national nonprofit promoting the beauty and
benefits of plants, is excited to announce Chris-
tin Geall as the special guest speaker at the
2026 Spring Garden Market at River Farm. The
popular garden market will take place April
10-11, 2026 at River Farm, AHS' headquarters
in Alexandria, VA.
A writer and floral designer whose work explores
the rich intersections of design, nature, culture,
and horticulture, Christin brings a thought-
ful and creative lens to the world of flowers.
Her new book, *Flora Culture: How Flowers
Shape Our World*, explores our love of flowers
and our relationships with plants, gardens,
and design. Christin will share her expertise
during two sessions at our 2026 Spring Garden
Market:
Creating a Cutting Garden | Friday, April 10, 2026
at 1:00 p.m.
Developing Floral Arrangements | Saturday, April
11, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.
Featuring native plants, herbs, seeds, original
art, gardening tools, and specialty finds, the
much-anticipated Spring Garden Market at
River Farm kicks off the gardening season in
Northern Virginia. Attendees can browse
the garden marketplace, seek advice from
horticultural experts, enjoy delicious food, and
tour River Farm's beautiful gardens and manor
house. With more than 2,000 attendees, this
signature spring event is one of the largest
fundraisers for River Farm, a historic and horti-
cultural treasure.

SATURDAY/APRIL 18
**Historic Garden Week Old Town Alexandria
House and Garden Walking Tour. 10 a.m. to
4 p.m.** All properties are located in Old Town
Alexandria. Tours benefit the restoration of
historic gardens and landmarks in Virginia.
The event is hosted by the Hunting Creek
Garden Club and the Garden Club of Alexan-
dria. Co-chairs are Betsy Regnell and Maureen
Bates. Tickets are on sale for \$55 per person. If
tickets are purchased the day of the tour, they
are \$65. If purchasing tickets on the day of the
tour, visit the Alexandria Visitors Center, at 221
King St. Tour tickets are not sold at the homes
on the tour. A full-priced ticket is required for
all tour attendees. Children under five are free
when accompanied by a paying adult. Compli-
mentary light refreshments will be available at
St. Paul's Episcopal Church from 11:30 a.m.
to 3 p.m. (the church will also be open for
touring). Speciality boutique vendors will be
featured at the Marketplace at the Athenaeum,
from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. 201 Prince St. Bartlett
Tree Experts will have an educational table
and free tree saplings while they last from 10
a.m. to 2 p.m. Visit VaGardenWeek.org for a
complete listing of tours, suggested itineraries,
maps and to purchase tickets. What's on the
tour:

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**Promotional offer includes 15% off plus an additional 10% off for qualified veterans and/or seniors. One coupon per household. No obligation estimate valid for 1 year. See Representative for full warranty details.
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Obituary

Obituary



Marcella M. (Marcie) McCarthy Corbett died peacefully at home March 12, 2026, after a short illness, surrounded by family. A longtime Alexandria resident and active community volunteer with Inova Hospital Auxiliary, Catholic Charities, Twig, The Washington Regional Transplant Consortium and was a Realtor with McEneaney Associates. She was predeceased by her husband, Bernard R. Corbett (d. 2011), daughter-in-law Milagro Corbett, grandson Joseph McKenna, and her parents and several siblings.

She is survived by her children Kim Peele (Buzz), Kasey Corbett, Kevin Corbett (Colleen), Karen Corbett Sanders (Daniel), Kelly Olafsson (Erik), and Kerry Corbett (Toni McKenna); 13 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren; and siblings Kevin McCarthy and Bitsy Bullock.

A Catholic Funeral Mass will be held April 20, 2026, at 10:30 a.m. at Good Shepherd Catholic Church, Alexandria, with a reception to follow. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to So Others Might Eat: <https://give.some.org/campaign/637397/donate>. For more info visit Legacy.com.

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March Is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

Don't wait: 45 is the recommended age for first colonoscopies for people with average risk.

BY EDEN BROWN
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

After an Arlington man in his 80s died of colon cancer, undiagnosed until his intestines were blocked completely, his widow got his genetic testing done and he tested positive for two variants on the chromosome that can increase susceptibility to colon cancer.

An email went out to his six adult children: get a colonoscopy. They did, except for one. Two (in their thirties) had polyps; three had nothing, and the last of the six children did not get a colonoscopy. He said he was okay because he used a test that measures blood in the stool. And he had no symptoms.

There was always some reason for not doing it — Covid, or insurance issues, or his belief that he was okay because of the non-invasive test results.

Finally, 9 years after his father died of the disease, he got a colonoscopy. Result? Stage 3 colon cancer. He now tells people: "Don't wait."

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. MedStar Health recently conducted a national survey to learn what people know about colon health:

- ❖ 77% do not know the correct age for when to get your first colonoscopy (45 is the recommended age for colonoscopies for people with average risk)
- ❖ 75% do not know how often to get a colonoscopy (every 10 years for people with average risk)
- ❖ 47% believe you need a colonoscopy every 5 years
- ❖ Just 13% can identify all symptoms of colorectal cancer
- ❖ 36% of adults who are 45+ have not had a colonoscopy
- ❖ The most common reason for delaying a colonoscopy is because they have no family history (40%).

Nikiya Asamoah, MD, a board-certified gastroenterologist affiliated with MedStar

Washington Hospital Center responded to questions about colonoscopies and colorectal health:

Q.: Arlington Connection (AC): Isn't it correct that you should have a colonoscopy every five years?

A.: Dr. Asamoah: Not necessarily. The frequency of colonoscopy is based on your own risk factors, such as family history of cancers or personal history of inflammatory bowel conditions as well as how many polyps were found on your colonoscopy. Some people require colonoscopy every 1-3 years, while others can go 10 years if they have no risk factors or polyps.

Q.: What is the updated guidance on colonoscopy prep?

A.: Dr. Asamoah: The new guidelines for bowel prep recommend that patients can eat a light meal for breakfast 1 day prior to colonoscopy, which eliminates the long fasting period. Additionally, they suggest that patients should be offered low volume (2L) bowel prep instead of the standard 4L prep.

Q.: Is it the processed food that people eat, the microplastics in our environment, or our more sedentary lifestyle that is causing all this colon cancer?

A.: Dr. Asamoah: Likely all of the above. Many environmental factors and genetics contribute to the risk of colon cancer. It is recommended that people eat a well balanced diet with regular fruits/vegetables, lean proteins and a healthy lifestyle with regular aerobic exercise.

Q.: Is the Cologuard test good enough to detect colon cancer?

A.: Dr. Asamoah: The Cologuard test is a great screening test for colon cancer with a >90% sensitivity for picking up cancer if it is there.

Q.: Is a family history of polyps enough to schedule more frequent colonoscopies?

A.: Dr. Asamoah: No. Your family history often dictates when you should start getting colonoscopies.

Future colonoscopies are based on the findings of your own colonoscopy or if you have family history of colon cancer or cancer syndrome.

Q.: People say age 40 is the new age for a first colonoscopy. Is that wrong?

A.: Dr. Asamoah: Yes, it is wrong. 45 is the recommended age for first colonoscopy for

individuals that are NOT high risk for colon cancer.

Q.: What is the single most frequent reason people say they delayed getting a colonoscopy?

A.: Dr. Asamoah: Concerns about the bowel prep or concerns about having anesthesia.

Q.: Is colon cancer more frequently diagnosed among African Americans and why is that?

A.: Dr. Asamoah: Yes, it is true that African Americans have a higher incidence of colorectal cancer than most other racial and ethnic groups. There are multiple factors that contribute including health and socioeconomic disparities.

Q.: Any other ethnic group where it is more frequent or less frequent?

A.: Dr. Asamoah: American Indian and Alaskan Native people have the highest incidence while Asian/Pacific Islanders have the lowest incidence according to American Cancer Society 2025 estimates.

Q.: Is it true that just taking fiber gummies won't really give you the right kind of fiber to provide colon health?

A.: Dr. Asamoah: That is true. Fiber gummies often have excess sugar or sweeteners and not a significant amount of fiber. Fruits and green leafy vegetables are the best sources of soluble and insoluble fiber.

March became Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month in the year 2000. In addition to the above guidance, spreading the word about preventing colorectal cancer by asking friends and relatives if they have had their colonoscopy, and following this guidance about alcohol, smoking and symptom awareness will also go a long way to bringing down the alarming rise in colorectal cancer diagnoses.

❖ **Healthy Habits:** Reduce risks by eating a high-fiber diet with fruits/vegetables, limiting red/processed meats, limiting alcohol, and avoiding smoking.

❖ **Watch for Symptoms:** Consult a doctor if you experience persistent changes in bowel habits, blood in stool, unexplained weight loss, or abdominal pain.

❖ **Wear Blue:** Support the Colorectal Cancer Alliance and wear blue to raise awareness.

For more information about colorectal health, see: Colorectal Cancer Alliance <https://colorectalcaner.org/>

Penny for Your Thoughts



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Not anymore. As of Nov. 12, 2025, the U.S. Mint has stopped printing/making pennies. From that date onward to the present - and future, the American exact-changer cash payer will be on his/her own. No longer will the penny reserve of the rolls of pennies so regularly broken across cash-register draws be in play. According to the Mint, they're just too expensive. The penny costs more to produce than it does to pay. And so, as a direct consequence, I've already seen signs at miscellaneous businesses - who still collect cash, requesting "Exact change" from their in-store customers. In other cash exchanges, I've received a rounded-up nickel to compensate for the pennies printing demise. In summary, pennies don't make sense anymore. Who would have thought?

It's taken over 250 years for Benjamin Franklin's advisory: "A penny saved is a penny earned" to lose its relevance in history. In fact, for those of you who have saved your pennies in a receptacle at home, it may be time to do your patriotic duty and help your fellow consumer as well as your local brick and mortar store by cashing in your pennies. It's not exactly a rainy day. However, for cash customers and commercial establishments, there will not be pennies from heaven anymore - and certainly none from the U.S. Mint. Perhaps that's a non-buying opportunity. Since pennies might be a disappearing commodity, holding on to your pennies now might actually be penny wise and but pound foolish - for once. Their numismatic value might go up once their availability goes down.

Or perhaps pennies will end up in "the trash bin of history" along with the one-dollar coin and the two-dollar bill (the \$500, \$1,000 and \$10,000 denominations are not in circulation for another reason). Gone but not forgotten, they shall be," to invoke Yoda from "Star Wars." Good riddance, others might say, as our economy grows more online than in person, the penny becomes, especially given its upside-down cost to produce relative to its street value, an unnecessary appendage, so to speak.

Speaking of street value/formerly everyday/common uses of the penny, there's no more obvious example of the penny's outdatedness than "Penny candy." Given what you pay for the "Penny candy," these days, its name should be changed to "Quarter candy." It will be particularly difficult to continue calling it "penny candy" when there are no more pennies. It's more a figure of speech now anyway. Moreover, the fewer pennies there are in circulation/customer pockets, the less appealing these "penny" enticements will be. Otherwise, this is the use of a penny that will be dreadful. Misleading customers generally doesn't result to long-term success.

If there is going to be a present/future without pennies, what might the impact be to those who are named "Penny" (one of my neighbors in fact), will she be asked the origin of such a unique/unfamiliar given name? Will she have to change her name to "Nickel" to keep up with the times - and inflation? When an increase is characterized as "Pennies on the dollar," will an explanation be required (as in "What's a penny?")

Will the expression "For two cents I'd punch you right in the nose" disappear from our jargon (mine anyway)?

I certainly don't know the answers to any of these questions; nevertheless, I thought I'd write you my two-cents worth.

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

A Journey of 'Heart Work' Ahead at Cornerstones

FROM PAGE 5

inclusive; he plans to meet not only elected officials but also the people with informal power and influence across Reston, Herndon, Fairfax County, and Loudoun.

On a personal level, Steene considers it a privilege to join such an engaged community. He is candid about the emotional weight of the mission, recognizing that human ser-

vices can "break your heart in an instant." Conversely, he finds immense hope in the success stories.

"When you see someone grab an honest opportunity and start to put pieces together and they stabilize and they thrive, there is nothing cooler," Steene said.

While he looks forward to these rebuilding journeys, he is also clear-eyed about modern

obstacles, noting that the government is no longer just a safety net.

"We've often thought that the government is there as a backstop," Steene observed. "And what feels the most different in this moment is that the instigator for some of the challenges and changes that we're seeing now is actually springing from the government."

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\$1,995,000 | Built in 1926 and pristinely updated while preserving the classic features, this ideally positioned home is located on the premier flag circle in coveted Belle Haven. With three-stories the Colonial features blend timeless architecture with refined modern luxury. Six bedrooms and four and one half baths on an enviable landscaped lot!

Janet Catterson Price : 703.622.5984
JanetPriceHomes.com

Harborside/Old Town

5 Wilkes Street

\$2,650,000 | 3-bedroom, 3.5-bath waterfront townhome features hardwood floors, a private elevator to all floors, and 2 gas fireplaces. 5 levels plus deeded two car garage parking.

Babs Beckwith : 703.627.5421
OldTownAlexandriaLiving.com

OPEN SAT, 3/21, 2-4 PM



OPEN SUN, 3/22, 1-4 PM



Tauxemont

1304 Gahant Road

\$1,950,000 | Stunning, peaceful half-acre lot. The spacious family room features a gas fireplace with built-in shelving. Energy Star appliances.

Monica Leszczak : 571.246.1314
homes365.co

Old Town

412 N. Royal Street

\$1,199,999 | Chatham Square charmer! 3 BR/2.5BA townhouse with gleaming hardwood floors throughout. Main level has a contemporary open concept flow, with a kitchen any cook will live!

Brian Hong : 703.929.576
BrianandJeryHomes.com

Old Town

123 S Pitt Street

\$1,225,000 | A Rare Piece of Alexandria History! 3 bedrooms, 2 baths with fireplaces, iconic curb appeal, and private garden just moments from waterfront, shops, restaurants.

Lauren Bishop : 202.361.5079
LaurenBishopHomes.com



Stratford Landing

2100 Wittington Boulevard

\$1,150,000 | Three finished levels, five bedrooms and a two car garage! This residence offers more than classic architecture, it delivers an exceptional lifestyle.

Janet Catterson Price : 703.622.5984
JanetPriceHomes.com

Fort Hunt Manor

8620 Fort Hunt Road

\$975,000 | A blend of modern convenience and classic charm. Offering ample space for both relaxation and entertainment. New light fixtures and wood burning fireplace.

Kristy Crombie & Erica Olsen : 706.575.7926
CrombieandOlsen.com

Elmwood

3818 Elmwood Towne Way

\$835,000 | This beautifully updated 3 bed/3.5 bath townhome offers over 1,900 square feet of comfortable living space in a quiet, private gated community.

Mary Kern : 703.994.5246
MaryKernHomes.com

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