

Alexandria Gazette Packet

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APRIL 2, 2026

A Night of Celebration

SSA raises \$188k at annual gala.



SSA honorees Gayle Rerter, Community Spirit Award, Allen Lomax and Donna Shaw – Community Leadership Award, and Beverly and Deacon Albert Anderson, Community Service Award.



Community Spirit honoree Gayle Rerter with Jim Moran.



SSA Executive Director Mary Lee Anderson with former City Manager Mark Jinks and Director of Human Services Kate Garvey.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

The stars of Alexandria turned out as Senior Services of Alexandria hosted its 2026 Annual Gala, A Night of Celebration, raising a record-breaking \$188,000 in support of programs for older adults.

Held March 21 at the Westin Alexandria Old Town, the evening highlighted SSA's mission to help Alexandria's seniors live with dignity, independence and connection through essential services and trusted resources.

"It was a fabulous night and our best auction ever," said SSA Executive Director Mary Lee Anderson. "People got dressed up, had a good

"We couldn't be more pleased with the level of support we received from the community."

— SSA Executive Director
Mary Lee Anderson

time and came out to support a good cause. We couldn't be more pleased with the level of support we received from the community."

The highlight of the evening was the presentation of SSA communi-
SEE SSA RAISES \$188K, PAGE 3



Mayor Alyia Gaskins, center, with Greg Gaskins and Arvette Reid.



Synergy Home Care CEO Mitch Opalski, right, with staff members Irene Blair, Deysi Lopez, and Maria Delpizzio.



Sheriff Sean Casey, Elsie Masqueda, Jim Moran and Steve Gurney.



Community Leadership honoree Donna Shaw, left, with Ronnie Campbell, Del. Charniele Herring and Brooksie Koopman.



Everly-Wheatley Funeral Home managing partner Rachel Mackey, seated second from left, with staff members and guests.

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The Artist Who Found Her Voice at 80

A new beginning sewn from all scraps.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
GAZETTE PACKET

When Eleanor Price turned 80, she expected her world to get smaller. That's what people told her aging would feel like—shrinking circles, quieter days, a life that slowly folds inward. But in her cozy brick home near Alexandria's Old Town, something entirely different was happening. Her world wasn't shrinking. It was blooming.

It began with a box.

She found it while clearing a closet one rainy afternoon a weathered cardboard box filled with scraps of fabric she had saved over decades.

Before quilting, Price spent years sewing clothes for her family, and even made her own wedding dress, leaving her with the scraps that would one day become the beginning of her art.

Pieces of her children's old dresses, remnants from curtains she once sewed, a square of her late husband's favorite flannel shirt. She sat on the floor, touching each piece, feeling the weight of memory stitched into every fiber.

For reasons she couldn't explain, she carried the box to her dining table, spread the scraps out like a deck of colorful cards, and began arranging them. Hours passed. The rain stopped. The sky darkened. But Price kept working, her fingers moving with a certainty she hadn't felt in years.

By midnight, she had created her first quilt block.

"When I opened that old box of fabric scraps, I thought I was just cleaning out a closet," she says. "I didn't realize I was opening a door. Each piece brought back a moment I thought I had lost: raising my two children, watching my four grandchildren grow, the years my husband and I built together."

In the months that followed, quilting became her morning ritual. She woke early, brewed coffee and got to work. Soon quilting became her anchor. She stitched in the mornings when the neighborhood was waking up, in the afternoons when sunlight warmed the back room, and in the evenings when the house felt too quiet without her husband's voice.

"Quilting didn't just give me something to do. It gave me a way to understand my own life, one



PHOTO COURTESY OF ELEANOR PRICE

After retiring to Alexandria to be near her two children and four grandchildren, an 80-year-old grandmother discovers quilting as a path to healing, reinvention, and unexpected artistic purpose.

square at a time," said Price.

Price didn't know it then, but that small square would become the beginning of her second life.

"Every stitch steadies me," she says. "It's like my hands know what my heart hasn't figured out yet."

Each quilt she made carried a theme. Her most cherished quilt, though, was the one she called "The Memory Map," a patchwork of fabrics tied to moments of her life. Her wedding dress. Her daughter's baby blanket. A napkin from the café where she and her husband had their first date.

Her quilts grew bolder, river-deep blues, autumn golds, soft pastels pulled from baby clothes. She made quilts for her grandchildren, quilts for friends, quilts simply because the act of making soothed her.

The most meaningful, she said, was a memory quilt crafted from her husband's shirts. When she finished it, she cried, not from sad-

ness, but from release.

Quilting, she discovered, was more than sewing. It was storytelling. It was healing.

Word of her work spread. A neighbor invited her to display her quilts at a local senior center. A friend, also retired, who read books to young children as part of story time at a local library, asked her to come and tell the stories of her quilts.

Soon, Eleanor found herself surrounded by people young and old who wanted to learn from her and hear her stories. There were also those who wanted her to teach them her craft.

At 80, she had become an artist. At 81, she had become a teacher. At 82, she had become a voice.

Eleanor often says quilting didn't just give her something to do it gave her a way to understand her own life. "Every stitch is a choice," she likes to tell her students. "And every choice is a chance to begin again."



PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Community Leadership honoree Donna Shaw and Mike Shaw.

SSA Raises \$188k at Annual Gala

FROM PAGE 1

ty awards. SSA honored 2026 award recipients Allen Lomax and Donna Shaw with the Community Leadership Award, Deacon Albert and Beverly Anderson with the Community Service Award, and Gayle Reuter with the Community Spirit Award. Each honoree was recognized for their dedication to strengthening Alexandria and improving the lives of older residents.

Attendees enjoyed dinner, live entertainment and fundraising

activities including a raffle and silent auction, all in support of programs that provide meals, companionship, education and support for seniors across the city.

The gala also served as an opportunity to recognize individuals whose leadership and service have made a meaningful impact on the community.

"It was a wonderful night," Anderson said. "People came out in droves – it was a very special evening."

www.seniorservicesalex.org



Former Councilwoman Del Pepper, seated, surrounded by Mindy Lyle, Maria Delpizzio and Mitch Opalski.

Living Legends of Alexandria

Charlotte Hall – an anchor in the Alexandria community.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Charlotte Hall has long been a fixture in the Alexandria community. Known as much for her ever-present sunglasses as for her tactful diplomacy, she has adeptly navigated the sometimes contentious relationships between city government, local businesses and longtime residents to bring about positive change to the city.

Arriving in Alexandria from Richmond in 1990, Hall quickly became a driving force in the city's business and civic life. Starting as the sales and marketing lead for Potomac Riverboat Company, Hall rose to vice president and partner, helping build the fleet to 12 vessels and navigating the complex world of city RFPs, advocacy, and business development. Her leadership style was hands-on and collaborative, working closely with captains, crew and sales teams to grow the company and its impact on the waterfront.

"I'm very proud of what we accomplished with the Riverboat Company," Hall said. "We began with a single boat, the Cherry Blossom, and grew it to a fleet of 12 that included water taxis and tour boats."

Throughout her tenure at Potomac Riverboat Company, Hall spearheaded several innovative projects, including the Baseball Boat. Hall tackled city bureaucracy head-on, devising creative solutions like combo-boat-and-parking tickets to address city concerns and make the service possible.

When city leaders doubted the viability of National Harbor, Hall leveraged her Chamber of Commerce connections to advocate for the Water Taxi, ultimately bringing new business to Old Town and connecting Alexandria to the burgeoning National Harbor development.

Other unique offerings such as canine cruises and pirate cruises brought new visitors to the waterfront, enhancing Alexandria's reputation as a vibrant destination.

Hall's foray into the hospitality industry was circuitous. Born in Richmond and raised in Fauquier County, she studied psychology and philosophy at Randolph-Macon College. Her minor was in theater and she worked at the Barksdale Theater in her spare time.

"Those were four of the best years of my life," Hall said.

After college, Hall took a job at Richmond on the James, the predecessor to the Metro Richmond Convention and Visitors bureau. From there she went to work as Director of



PHOTO BY STEVEN HALPERSON/TISARA STUDIOS

Charlotte Hall has been recognized as a Living Legend of Alexandria for her decades of contributions to the community.

Development and Public Relations at the Maymont Foundation, a 100-acre park on the banks of the James River.

"I did the first Maymont Flower and Garden Show, which was a major fundraiser for the foundation," Hall said "I didn't know anything about plantings, but I knew all the right people to make it happen."

When Hall made the move to Alexandria, she expected it to be for two years before heading back to Richmond.

"I wasn't sure I was ready for city life," Hall said. "Back then I thought of Richmond as being very small and Alexandria as being large and cosmopolitan. But after two years I had a ball meeting people and getting involved in the community."

Hall became active with Waterfront4All and supported the Waterfront Development Plan, championing public access and improvements like new parks, Robinson Land-

ing, and the River Renew project.

She has served on numerous boards, including Carpenters Shelter, Animal Welfare League of Alexandria, Visit Alexandria, Chamber of Commerce, First Night Alexandria, and the ALX Promotion Team. Her involvement in community events — supporting organizations like Del Ray Business, the Art League, and the National Breast Center — reflects her belief in the power of community, a value instilled by her upbringing in a small town with an active mother.

Early on Hall recognized the need for a robust tourism organization and helped establish Visit Alexandria. She rallied support from local businesses, advocated for a structured organization, and helped create a board, bylaws, and a dedicated staff. Today, Visit Alexandria is a thriving entity, credited with elevating the city's profile and supporting merchants and restaurants.

One of Hall's most memorable achieve-

ments was the creation of the King Street Trolley. Starting with grassroots fundraising and a rented trolley, she demonstrated the need for public transit in Old Town, ultimately convincing city leaders to make the trolley a permanent fixture. Her vision continues, hoping to see the trolley connect the West End, Del Ray, and Carlyle.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Hall played a pivotal role in launching outdoor dining and the temporary closure of the 100 block of King Street. She navigated city bureaucracy, coordinated with fire and health officials, and created agreements that allowed restaurants to survive and thrive during challenging times.

"One of the biggest challenges was COVID," Hall said. "Talk about 'it takes a village.' For the first time in a long time I saw everybody come together — the business community, the residential community, city staff — we all worked together."

The sale of the boat company has allowed Hall to focus on her many other endeavors, including as chair of the Alexandria Police Foundation board.

The Alexandria Police Foundation, a 501(c)(3), was set up in 2002 by former Police Chief Charles Samarra, City Manager Vola Lawson and a group of concerned citizens.

"We do a lot of fundraising so that we can financially support whatever the city can't or doesn't cover," Hall said. "We fund programs and activities like youth summer camps, ballistic vests for the dogs, and health insurance for the retired K-9s. We help police coordinate youth soccer games and recently funded a family movie night in Chirilagua, a neighborhood that needed some attention. I believe wherever we as a community can help and listen to our police, I think we are better off."

Hall continues to look for opportunities to help the retail and restaurant community and other small businesses.

"I do think there is a lot of attention given to Old Town," Hall said. "Other neighborhoods are fabulous and we need those neighborhoods, but Old Town is the economic engine. It's important that we all know what is happening across the city and it makes us better working with everybody."

Hall's story is one of patience, persistence, and a commitment to working collaboratively with city staff, merchants, and residents. Her legacy is woven into the fabric of Alexandria and her impact continues to shape the city's future.

When asked if she had any plans for retiring, Hall did not hesitate.

"Heavens no. Not in my vocabulary. There's a lot more that I have to do."

BULLETIN BOARD

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

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Assistance League of Northern Virginia is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that feeds, clothes and provides reading assistance and books to children in need. Assistance League's programs touch the lives of hundreds

of children in Fairfax and Prince William Counties and the City of Alexandria. There are many volunteer opportunities for community members to contribute to helping those in need. To learn more, email info@alnv.org, or visit www.alnv.org. STEM Professionals Needed. Help

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

571-551-2488, or donaledge@aol.com.

ALIVE! offers numerous programs that aid low-income families in Alexandria that rely on volunteers: monthly food distributions, furniture, household and emergency food deliveries, and community food drives.

Individuals, families and groups are encouraged to participate. Students can earn community service hours by participating. Visit www.alive-inc.org/volunteer.htm or contact the Volunteer Coordinator at volunteers@alive-inc.org.

Update: Potomac River Sewage Spill

Long-term impacts questioned.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
GAZETTE PACKET

The Potomac Interceptor's January 19 rupture near the I-495/Clara Barton Parkway interchange which discharged at least 243 million gallons of raw sewage into the Potomac River was a "temporary insult," Michael Rolband, Director of the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), told a March 19 gathering at Alexandria's Lee Center.

"We believe the water is safe for contact," he asserted, but "not recommended for swimming." As the sewage flows down the river, "It gets diluted," he offered and state tests show "no significant impacts to fisheries and recreational activities."

The tests at that time showed E. coli bacteria levels "significantly below all the thresholds," Rolband said, meaning they are below the Environmental Protection Agency's level for unsafe swimming.

He emphasized, however, that people should cook any fish from the Potomac and "wash your hands."

"This is an urban river," Rolband cautioned, with dog and cat excrement and other factors contributing to pollution.

Some untreated sewage ends up in area water bodies normally, Rolband said. "While it's disgusting, it actually happens every time there's a significant rain. There'll always be some, but the river is getting much cleaner," recalling that in the 1970s he could not swim through river's the algae mats.

He commended Alexandria and the District of Columbia for infrastructure projects underway to address their combined sewer overflow systems which send sewage into the river during significant rainfalls. Alexandria's project should be finished this summer; D.C.'s, by 2030.

Matthew Brown, DC Water's Chief Operating Officer, said that the pipe, which carries 60 million gallons of raw sewage daily 54 miles, from Dulles Airport to the Blue Plains Treatment plant in southeast Washington, serves half a million people. His agency avoided two billion gallons of overflow, Brown said and workers hauled off 2,341 tons of debris, equal to 1,300 cars and "pulled out enough

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Betsy Nicholas, Potomac Riverkeeper President, shared concerns about the long-term remediation plan.



Dean Naujoks called the spill and his group's response "a wild ride."

bags and wipes to fill a swimming pool."

Flow resumed on March 14 and most recreation advisories have been lifted. DEQ is continuing normal water sampling at Northern Virginia sites like Hunting Creek, Little Hunting Creek, Dogue Creek, Pohick Creek and the Occoquan River.

Local fishing guide Rob Snowhite is hopeful for the spring season. He emailed, "I was hesitant at first and thought the entire year would be a washout. However, the spill was contained and I think we are good to go. I have been selling a lot of shad flies through my ETSY shop so I know local anglers are not discouraged by the spill."

Longer Term

Beyond immediate effects, other impacts like future algae blooms and contaminated sediments concern some people.

George Mason University scientists, in collaboration with the Potomac Riverkeeper, the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin and the Potomac Rivers Fisheries Commission, are studying some long-term spill impacts.

Dr. Cindy Smith at GMU's Potomac Environmental Research and Education Center, said, "We are documenting how water conditions, aquatic life and the river's food web change in real time." From the Woodrow Wilson Bridge south to Piney Point, they are measuring water turbidity, fecal coliforms, cyanobacteria, cyanotoxins, phytoplankton, fish diversity and heavy metals, for example. Others are doing studies upstream. GMU's data "may be collected over multiple years," Smith emailed.

Remediation Plan Questioned

At the March 19 meeting, Aman-



Evan Quinter with the Riverkeepers helped conduct tests.

da Zander, the DC Water's remediation manager, reported that the agency will clean up debris, plant plants and trees, remove materials down to the clay layer and rehabilitate the topsoil, among other steps.

Betsy Nicholas, Potomac Riverkeeper Network President, called the restoration plan "disappointing" at a March 11 gathering at Alexandria's Lost Boy Cider. At that time, there had been "zero public engagement," she charged and said that the plan only focused on the immediate spill area and not long-term impacts. "We need a comprehensive plan," she said.

In a March 27 report, the Riverkeepers called the plan "insufficient to restore impacted communities and the health of the Potomac River."



At the March 19 meeting, Alexandria Mayor Aliya Gaskins said, "There are so many questions that remain."

A 1960s Pipe

What caused the collapse? "The pipe just got old," Rolband said, adding, "It's a collective problem of our society." The American Society of Civil Engineers' 2025 report card gave the nation's wastewater infrastructure a D+ grade and stormwater a D.

Nicholas concurred: "It's a wake-up call on the infrastructure issues we as a society have been ignoring too long."

The federal government built the pipe in the 1960s. Washington-area U.S. representatives, led by Virginia Congressman Don Beyer, are seeking federal funds to modernize the interceptor and the area's aging water infrastructure.

David Gadis, DC Water's head, closed the March 19 meeting saying, "It's been a very tough 57

days. This was an old pipe. We are doing everything we can to make sure it does not happen again."

Opening the meeting, Alexandria Mayor Alyia Gaskins expressed hope that "we can get answers." Many answers are pending.

Information

DC Water, <https://www.dcwater.com/about-dc-water/media/potomac-interceptor-collapse>

Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, <https://www.deq.virginia.gov/news-info/shortcuts/topics-of-interest/potomac-interceptor-collapse>

Virginia Department of Health, www.vdh.virginia.gov

Potomac Riverkeeper Network, <https://potomacriverkeepernetwork.org/>

‘Now or Never’

Public art installation opens at Waterfront Park.

By JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Alexandria’s Waterfront Park has once again been transformed into an open-air gallery, as the city unveiled its 2026 public art installation, *Now or Never*, a large-scale, interactive work by artist Alicia Eggert. The installation is the eighth entry in the City of Alexandria’s annual Site See: New Views in Old Town public art series and will remain on view through November 2026.

Commissioned by the City of Alexandria’s Public Art Program, *Now or Never* features two monumental, billboard-style sculptures positioned face to face across a narrow passageway at Waterfront Park, located at 1 Prince Street. One structure displays the word “NOW,” while the opposing sculpture reads “NEVER,” inviting visitors to physically

“I love the way that Now can mean lots of different things depending on the context in which you use it.”

— Artist Alicia Eggert

walk between the two messages as part of the artistic experience.

The artwork officially opened to the public on March 21 with a community reception and remarks by the artist. The installation is accessible daily from early morning until late evening, allowing residents and visitors to experience the piece at different times of day along the Potomac River waterfront.

“I love the way that Now can mean lots of different things depending on the context in which you use it,” Eggert said at the opening. “It can mean right this very second, it can mean today, it can mean this year or this century. And Never is really like the opposite so for me this was about creating this oppositional moment where people feel like they’re on opposite sides but then when you get up close to them it’s about a shift in perspective.”

Eggert, a Texas-based artist known for text-based sculptures that explore language and time, was selected for the 2026 installation following a competitive review process by the Alexandria



PHOTO BY JOHN BORDNER/GAZETTE PACKET
Now or Never, a public art display, opened March 21 at Waterfront Park.

Commission for the Arts. Her previous work has been exhibited at institutions including the Smithsonian American Art Museum’s Renwick Gallery, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and international venues in Europe and Asia.

Local arts leaders say *Now or Never* continues the Site See series’ mission of activating Waterfront Park as a civic space that blends contemporary art with Alexandria’s historic setting.

More information about *Now or Never* and the Site See: New Views in Old Town public art series is available through the City of Alexandria’s public art program.

PHOTO BY JOHN BORDNER
GAZETTE PACKET

Locals enjoy an alternative use of the art display Now or Never March 30 at Waterfront Park.



PHOTO BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET
Now or Never features two billboards on display at Waterfront Park.

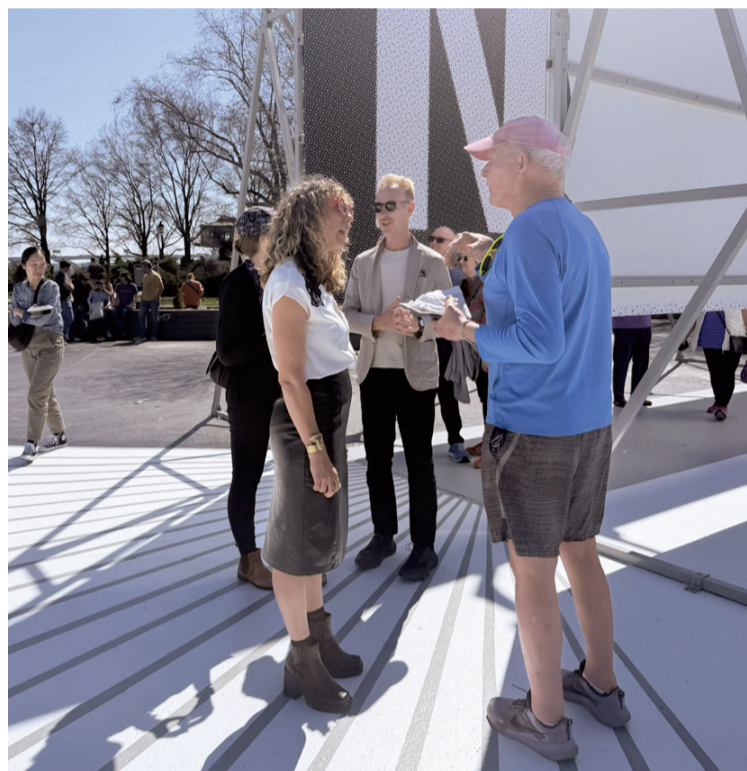


PHOTO BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET
Artist Alicia Eggert, left, speaks with a resident at the March 21 opening of Now or Never at Waterfront Park.

SENIOR LIVING

Plans in High Gear For 2026 NVSO

Michael Coleman of Falls Church and newly elected Chair of the Northern Virginia Senior Olympics has predicted another record year for participation. "For the past few years NVSO has been growing both in participation and recognition," said Coleman. The dates for 2026 are Sept. 9 – Oct. 4 with several events taking place prior to the official opening, Saturday, Sept. 19 at the Thomas Jefferson Community Center in Arlington.

SENIOR OLYMPICS Coleman said that the registration fee remains the same at \$20 which covers an unlimited number of events. Registration is online only at www.nvso.us.

"A new event this year is the popular game of Darts plus other events and venues are being considered," he said. Eligibility to participate include a person must be 50 years of age by Dec. 31, 2026 and live in one of the sponsoring jurisdictions. Sponsoring jurisdictions are the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Fauquier, Loudoun and Prince William plus the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax and Falls Church.

Most events are held in 5, 10 and 20 year age groups and some by gender. Events are held indoors and outdoors, plus all events which take place in venues throughout Northern Virginia are open to the public.

Additional support comes from Gold, Silver and Bronze Patrons which to date include The Beacon Newspapers, CareFirst Blue Cross Blue Shield, The Mather Tysons, United Healthcare, Koons Arlington Toyota, Seniors Helping Seniors and Woodlands Retirement Community.

Photos and results from previous years, rules for each event and information about becoming a volunteer are on the website at www.nvso.us.

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IN THE KITCHEN

Chef Santiago Lopez, Majestic Restaurant

Lopez recently purchased the Majestic which has long been an institution in Alexandria.



Chef Santiago Lopez, Majestic Restaurant on King Street.



Lopez marinates fresh branzino.



Chardonnay added to deglaze garlic and shallots.

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
GAZETTE PACKET

Chef Santiago Lopez fires up two side-by-side skillets in the kitchen at Majestic Restaurant on King Street and puts vegetable oil

in each of them. "I use a neutral oil instead of extra virgin olive oil which can be bitter."

Today he is making branzino with olive-fennel relish. Lopez begins with a 600 gram branzino filet. "I will marinate it with a mixture which combines a couple

squirts of lime juice and lemon juice and about 2 tablespoons of sumac."

He places the branzino in one of the skillets and lightly sears it until the skin gets crispy. "Then

SEE CHEF SANTIAGO, PAGE 9



Branzino seared and ready for oven.



Pancetta sautéed until crispy.



White beans, garlic and onion added to skillet.



Relish spooned onto plate alongside smear of lobster sauce.



Grand finale—Branzino with fennel-olive relish.

'I Have No Regrets'

Charles Nelson Sr. celebrates 95 years.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Charles Nelson Sr., a lifelong Alexandrian who grew up during segregation, celebrated his 95th birthday March 12 looking back on the changes he has seen in the community over his lifetime.

"It's hard to describe all the changes over so many years," said Nelson, who was born March 12, 1931, on South West Street in Old Town. "Television, indoor plumbing. We thought it was the greatest thing in the world when my father gave my mother a washing machine to use instead of the old scrub boards."

Nelson graduated from Parker-Gray High School in 1949 and enlisted in the Air Force in 1952. He served four

years in active duty then continued in the reserves. In total he served 57 years in the Air Force.

"I had two brothers in the Army and knew that is not what I wanted to do," Nelson said. "So instead joined the Air Force and specialized in communications."

Nelson was deployed to Alaska prior to the territory becoming a part of the United States. When he left the military he returned to Alexandria to raise a family.

Nelson had met his future wife, Ethel Chichester, in high school. They married in 1952 and had two children. They were together for more than 74 years before her death.

"I miss my wife more than anything," Nelson said. "More than my parents, my siblings and even my son. There is not a day that goes by that I don't visit her, say hello and talk to her at the cemetery."

A former president of the Departmental Progressive Club, Nelson had one piece of advice for young people today.

"God is keeping me around for some reason and I'm just thankful I have the opportunity to see and experience the things around me."

— Charles Nelson Sr.

"Listen to you mother and father," Nelson said. "That's the one thing I can tell people that will make a difference in their lives."

Nelson was one of 16 children, all of whom have predeceased him.

"I think of all the people around me who are deceased," Nelson said. "But God is keeping me around for some reason and I'm just thankful I have the opportunity to see and experience the things around me. I have no regrets."



PHOTO BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Charles Nelson Sr. celebrated his 95th birthday on March 12.

Majestic Restaurant

FROM PAGE 8

I'll put the branzino in a 500 degree oven for about two minutes to finish cooking." He turns to the second skillet where he adds a nice amount of cubed pancetta and turns up the heat.

As Lopez shakes the skillet, the cubes of pancetta bounce around, shooting flames into the air. "I'll sear the pancetta until it is crisp." The next step is to toss thinly sliced shallots and garlic into the pan and then a large splash of chardonnay to deglaze the vegetables. White cannelli beans join the two alliums along with a little homemade chicken stock. "We make everything fresh here," he explains.

"Now the branzino should be done." Lopez pulls it out of the oven to let it rest while he efficiently finishes off the relish in the second skillet. "In a normal day I would prepare the whole dish in about 7 minutes. Now we finish the relish with a little escarole, some sliced Calabrese peppers, and a little salt. I'm ready to plate it."

Lopez has prepared a lobster sauce with lobster stock, a little cream, tomatoes, smoked paprika and the classic mirepoix and then puréed it until it is thick. This becomes the base on the plate for his masterful branzino creation.

Lopez places a generous portion

of the relish on a large pottery plate. He arranges the branzino in the center of the plate and adds a touch of mixed parsley, dill and olive oil on the top. Next he layers slices of thinly "VERY thinly sliced fennel" he emphasizes that has been soaked in water to make it "nice and crisp."

Add to the top of the branzino a mixture of olives, herbs, peppers and shallots. And finally a touch of curly pickled shallots, pickled in-house. The final beautiful creation is a palette of colors and flavors.

Lopez has recently purchased the Majestic which has long been an institution in Alexandria. He says he has a vision for retaining the familiar community atmosphere but pairing it with his imaginative approach combining fresh balanced flavors with his love for herbs and spices and flair for a Mediterranean touch.

He says his passion for food all started when he was in college studying engineering and cooking for his brother. "I looked at the Food Network and tried to do what they did every day." He started working in restaurants and loved it and, "I realized engineering wasn't for me." But he decided since he had all of the college credits from engineering that he would use them to attend culinary school in Florida.

Lopez cooked his way through entire cookbooks and tried to replicate what he ate in restaurants. Along the way he discovered his style. "I like fresh, balanced flavors, not too much cream, different kinds of dishes with citrus and spices."

Lopez has worked in a number of restaurants on his way here.

A classically French-trained chef and hospitality veteran, Lopez has spent years growing within Alexandria Restaurant Partners, where he developed his skills, leadership style and culinary voice. He gained hands-on experience in building menus, leading teams and understanding what it takes to operate successful neighborhood restaurants.

Lopez has taken ownership of the Majestic from Alexandria Restaurant Partners and is reintroducing the restaurant with a renewed, chef-driven vision. A longtime ARP veteran, Lopez is debuting a menu featuring New American cuisine that feels both comforting and contemporary with Mediterranean elements. Purchasing The Majestic marks the culmination of years of dedication and growth.

Now April 10 he will initiate his own vision for the first time when the Majestic officially launches his fresh chef-driven imagination. "I worry a little bit but I am very very excited."

Easing Your Transition from Hospital to Home.



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900 Virginia Ave, Alexandria, VA 22302

Four Mile Run Conservancy Receives Governor's Environmental Excellence Gold Award

The Four Mile Run Conservancy was among the recipients of the 2026 Governor's Environmental Excellence Awards, announced March 26 at the Environment Virginia Symposium at the Virginia Military Institute in Lexington. The awards recognize successful and innovative efforts that improve Virginia's environment. The Conservancy was a gold medal award-ee for its accessible kayak launch project at Four Mile Run in Alexandria.

The kayak launch features a raised boardwalk ramp and floating dock with a stepped bench and rail, allowing for wheelchair transfer to a kayak or canoe. A roller-entry system provides increased safety while launching and landing, particularly helpful for unassisted or novice paddlers.

Four Mile Run Conservatory Foundation's project to build a public kayak launch was completed in December 2025, providing the metro area with its first fully accessible Potomac River access. The fully ADA-compliant boardwalk, gangway, and floating launch platform are an enhancement to Four Mile Run Park, fulfilling the water access goal of the Four Mile Run Restoration Master Plan.

Four Mile Run is a tributary of the Potomac River across from Washington, D.C. It is an urban



Kayak volunteer uses the roller-entry feature.

stream that forms the border between southeastern Arlington County and the City of Alexandria in Virginia.

"In 2018, we envisioned the lower reach of Four Mile Run as accessible to all," said Kurt Moser, the Conservancy's co-founder and executive director. "This launch is the culmination of that vision. It is by far the largest project that we have ever undertaken, and now, many more people will be able to experience this stream that is a vital part of the community."

Grand Opening Coming Up

The kayak launch grand opening will take place on Saturday, May

9, and it is one of several events planned during the celebration of the Four Mile Run Conservancy's tenth anniversary. In addition to ongoing volunteer opportunities, events include the film premier of Jane Pittman's *Becoming Wild* on April 11, nature walks during the annual City Nature Challenge, and more. Information is available on the events calendar at www.fourmilerun.org.

The Governor's Environmental Excellence Awards program is run annually by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality in partnership with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. The awards recognize the



From left, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality Director Mike Rolband, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Director Nikki Rovner, and Virginia Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources David Bulova present the Governor's Environmental Excellence Award to Four Mile Run Conservancy President Kurt Moser.

significant contributions of environmental and conservation leaders in five categories: sustainability, environmental project, greening of government, land conservation, and implementation of the Virginia Outdoors Plan.

The Four Mile Run Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation and volunteer organization formed in 2016, with a mission to

connect nature, culture, and community at lower Four Mile Run through restoration, advocacy, recreation, and education.

Each year, hundreds of volunteers participate in land- and kayak-based litter clean-ups, native tree/shrub planting, invasive species removal, community science, and outdoor learning programs for youth.

Arlington/Alexandria Bikers Protest Closure of 15th Street Bike Lane

Cyclists hope Virginia senators can use a legislative rider to block bike lane destruction.

BY EDEN BROWN
GAZETTE PACKET

For Arlington cyclists who often use their two wheelers to commute into work in Washington, D.C., the plan to do away with the 15th Street protected bike lane was personal. While the Federal Highway Administration and National Park Service argued the 15th street bike lane restricts vehicle traffic flow and runs counter to their plan to increase capacity for motorists during peak tourist season, some cyclists said this was just pure "Trump administration opposition to urban bike lanes." The 15th Street NW/SW protected lanes that connect to the Na-

tional Mall and 14th Street Bridge were completed in phases, with major segments built in 2021. The initial 15th Street protected bike lane opened in 2010. Crashes have been reduced by almost 50 percent thanks to the bike lanes. About 4,000 cyclists use the lane daily.

The Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) filed a lawsuit to halt the removal, arguing it violates the required public process and reduces safety. The lawsuit delayed dismantling the bike lane to at least March 30.

"We're here to raise awareness," said Dave Knack of Arlington. "Executive branch agencies have been empowered to whatever the hell they want but the consequences

of doing so are serious. It sends to governments across America a message that this stuff (bike lanes and pedestrian safety) is frivolous, and we don't have to have it and the car is paramount. That's a bunch of crap. It's the wrong point of view."

Dana Bres, an Arlingtonian who spent 20 years supporting disaster recovery efforts with HUD and FEMA, commuted into his D.C. office on his bike and came to protest the removal of the bike lane with others who viewed it as a direct attack on those who try to stay fit and safe while reducing congestion downtown. Bres said if the lawsuit fails to stop the bike lane destruction, Virginia's U.S. Senators Mark Warner and Tim Kaine could put a



Dana Bres, who used to commute into D.C. on his bike, came down to protest the closure of the 15th Street Protected Bike Lane, joining hundreds of other angry bikers.

rider on upcoming legislation, using legislative language to cause the District to fix this issue.

For more on the Washington Area Bicycle Association (WABA) see: <https://waba.org>



PHOTOS BY EDEN BROWN / THE CONNECTION

David Bouk is a longtime cycling activist and Alexandria resident who belongs to a group of bikers called the Wednesday Irregulars, and the WABA. He was downtown to bring attention to the destruction of the bike lane, which he compared to other Trump administration decisions altering key public amenities such as the redesign of the Hains Point golf links.

For more on the Bicycle Advisory Commission in Arlington County, see: <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Commissions-and-Advisory-Groups/Bicycle-Advisory-Committee>

‘In Memory of Charlie’ Dozens turn out for annual Charles Hill Park clean up.



Alexandria Police Department retirees gather with volunteers for the annual Charles Hill Park clean up March 22 in Del Ray.



Ginny Hill Obranovich, back right, with Captain Tara May and APD chief of staff Sasha Ritizer at the annual Charles Hill Park clean up March 22.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

Members of the Alexandria Police Department descended on Del Ray March 22 for the annual Charles W. Hill Park clean up in memory of Hill, the last APD officer to be killed in the line of duty.

“We’re here in memory of Charlie,” said retired APD detective Joe Morash. “It’s so hard to think back on that day as it occurred but it’s good to see everybody back together.”

March 22, 1989, began as a routine workday for Hill and his family. A member of the Special Operations Team with the APD, Hill was home early playing with his two sons when he was called to respond to a hostage situation in Old Town. During the standoff Hill was fatally shot, becoming the last APD officer to be killed in the line of duty.

Thirty-seven years later, members of the law enforcement community turned out for the annual clean up and beautification of the Del Ray Park named in Hill’s memory.

“There are a lot of new guys here that didn’t even know Charlie,” Morash said. “That is a real testament to him and everyone that came after him.”

A 13-year-member of the Alexandria police force, Hill was killed when 34-year-old Jamie Wise had taken several hostages in the 300 block of Hopkins Court to collect on a drug debt.

After a five-hour standoff, Wise emerged with a sawed-off shotgun pointed at the head of a teenage hostage. A police sharpshooter shot Wise but not before he was able to fire off two rounds. One fatally wounded Hill and the other severely injured Hill’s partner, officer Andrew Chelchowski.



PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET
Retired APD Lieutenant Jack Compton, center, traveled from North Carolina to join volunteers Dave Huchler and Charles Pak at the Charles Hill Park clean up March 22 in Del Ray.

Just one month earlier, Hill celebrated his 40th birthday. In 1993, Chelchowski, Hill’s partner that day, died of suicide after suffering from PTSD from the incident four years earlier.

“We are here to remember Andy as well,” Morash said. “I think Charlie would have liked having everybody together here in his honor.”

ELECTION NOTICE - CITY OF ALEXANDRIA

Special Election - Tuesday, April 21, 2026

Voter Registration Information

The deadline to register or update an existing registration in advance of this election is

April 14, 2026

Eligible citizens who will be 18 or older by November 3, 2026 may apply to register to vote (or update an address) online, by mail, or in person.

- ★ **Online** at vote.elections.virginia.gov, prior to 11:59 p.m. on April 14, 2026.
- ★ **By mail** by downloading an application at alexandriava.gov/elections or calling 703.746.4050. Applications must be postmarked by April 14, 2026.
- ★ **In person** at our office prior to 5 p.m. on April 14, 2026:

Office of Voter Registration and Elections
132 N Royal St, Suite 100, Alexandria, VA 22314
Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
703.746.4050

Same Day Registration

Available to individuals who missed the standard registration period. Find more info at alexandriava.gov/elections.

Early Voting Information

Find a full schedule of dates and hours on our website: alexandriava.gov/elections. To apply for a ballot to be mailed to you, visit vote.elections.virginia.gov or contact our office. The deadline to apply for a by-mail ballot is Friday, April 10 at 5 p.m.

OFFICE OF VOTER REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS
132 N Royal Street, Suite 100, Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone: 703.746.4050 ★ Fax: 703.746.4540 ★ Email: voters@alexandriava.gov
alexandriava.gov/elections



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:

- ❖ May-November: A temporary public art installation from artist Sandy Williams IV will commemorate the signing of the Declaration of Independence as part of the City of Alexandria's Time & Place public art series.
- ❖ June 12-14: Alexandria's major signature 250th event, Sails on the Potomac, will host iconic tall ships as a Sail Virginia 2026 Affiliate Harbor and will feature a weekend packed with activities including Alexandria Jazz Fest performances.
- ❖ June: A new exhibit will open at the Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum. Called Stories of U.S. Collections Capture our History, the exhibit will bring out objects from the collection that are seldom seen.
- ❖ July 3-4: Enjoy evening Fourth of July fireworks shows at George Washington's Mount Vernon on July 3 and 4, and a daytime fireworks show on July 4.



The Historic Garden Week Old Town Alexandria House and Garden Walking Tour takes place Saturday, April 18, 2026 in Alexandria.

❖ 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.

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.
- 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 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.

APRIL 3 TO JUNE 12
More Moments of Art at River Farm. At 7931
WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

ENTERTAINMENT

East Boulevard Drive, Alexandria. Nepenthe Gallery is pleased to partner with Bob Murray and The von Brahler Ltd. Gallery to present a collaborative exhibit, "More Moments of Art at River Farm," at the American Horticultural Society's River Farm. The exhibit will include a collection of approximately 30 to 40 artworks from a variety of Nepenthe artists as well as artists represented by Bob Murray. The exhibit will open with a reception (light refreshments served) on Sunday, April 6th from 2 to 5pm and close with a reception (light refreshments served) on Thursday, June 5th from 5 to 7:30pm. The receptions will take place in the Manor House at River Farm, where the exhibit will be housed.

APRIL 3-25

The "Fast and Fabulous" art exhibit will impress and delight visitors of driving age and those dreaming of getting behind the wheel. Whether Fords, Ferraris, or flying cars, these interpretations of cars and other fast/fabulous forms of transportation can't be missed. View at Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria VA. Opening Reception: Friday, April 3, from 7-9 p.m. Hours are Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays & Sundays 12-6 p.m. Details at DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

EASTER DINING – APRIL 4-5

❖ Breakfast with the Easter Bunny at Joe Theismann'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-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/>

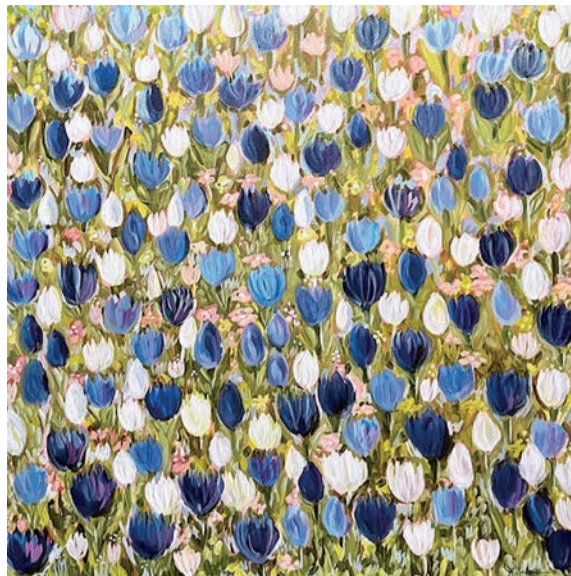
Address: 4053 Campbell Ave., Arlington, VA 22206

Ada's on the River

Celebrate Easter Sunday with a refined brunch at Ada's on the River, featuring elegant seasonal dishes alongside its waterfront setting. Highlights include the South African Lobster Benedict, made with butter-poached lobster, poached eggs, crème fraîche, smoked tomatoes, 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/>

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-inspired 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



More Moments of Art at River Farm runs April 3 to June 12, 2026 in Alexandria.

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/>

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, braciolo, 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://royalrestaurantva.com/>

Address: 730 North Saint Asaph Street, Alexandria, VA 22314

Vola's Docksides Grill

Celebrate Easter Sunday by the waterfront at Vola's Docksides 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://voladocksides.com/>

Address: 101 North Union Street, Old Town Waterfront, Alexandria, VA 22314

SECOND TUESDAY OF THE MONTH

Pop-Up Satellite Services for Circuit Court. Fairfax Circuit Court is pleased to announce the launch of pop-up Satellite Circuit Court Services 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



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

Certified Copies of Court Records

Free Notary Services

Civil Filings into Existing Cases

This program represents a pivotal step in the Fairfax 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>.

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> 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 Christin 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 thoughtful 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 horticultural treasure.

SUNDAY/APRIL 12

Del Ray Dog Fest. 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. At the

George Washington Middle School Parking Lot, Alexandria. Hosted by the Del Ray Business Association, the Del Ray Dog Fest, this dog-centered, outdoor day (rain or shine) promises to be packed with tail-wagging fun, to benefit the Alexandria Police Foundation's Caring for K9s Program.

SATURDAY/APRIL 18

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, 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). Franconia 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/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 Alexandria. 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. Complimentary 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. Specialty 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: 312 Queen St.: The house sits on a lot with a rich

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 15

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Obituary



David Samuel Jackson, a devoted husband, father, grandfather, veteran, and man of deep faith, passed away on March 18, 2026, at the age of 85.

Born on August 29, 1940, in Baltimore, Maryland, David's early years were shaped by resilience and strong family guidance. As a young boy, he was sent to live with his paternal grandparents in Philadelphia. Later, as a teenager, his grandfather sent him to Detroit to live with his great aunt—an experience that would profoundly shape the course of his life. It was in Detroit that David met the love of his life, Judith Ann Jeffries, sang on street corners alongside a young Smokey Robinson, and graduated from Cass Technical High School.

A trailblazer, David was among the first African Americans to attend the United States Military Academy at West Point, graduating in 1963. He went on to earn a Master's Degree in Nuclear Physics from the University of Michigan. His distinguished 30-year military career included service in Vietnam, command of the 6th Battalion, 80th Field Artillery, and advanced studies at the US Army War College. While stationed at the Pentagon, David played a key role in designing the MX missile and leading the Army Space Program. He was also recognized as an innovator and architect of the Strategic Defense Initiative, known as the "Star Wars" program, initiated under President Ronald Reagan; leading to a culmination of his life work in 1990 when Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm was recognized as the First Space War as ARSPACE assets demonstrated the many benefits of space technology.

Following his military retirement, David continued his legacy of excellence in the private sector with successful roles at SAIC and SAS.

David is survived by his loving wife, Judith; his children, David, Teresa (Thomas) Myers, and Kevin; and his grandchildren, Kathyrine and Thomas Myers, II. He was preceded in death by his grandparents, his great aunt, his Aunt Peggy and Uncle Wallace, and his parents, Lawrence and Frances Jeffries.

David Samuel Jackson's life was one of service, leadership, faith, and love—a legacy that will live on in all who knew him.

For all who loved him, they will do their best to "Press On" without him.

Obituary

DAVID LEE OWENS

Passed away March 14, 2026 in Mount Vernon, Virginia.

Born August 26, 1943, son of the late David O. Owens and Helen K. Dickens, David was a life-long Alexandrian. Following graduation from Francis C. Hammond High School, he attended George Mason College. David enlisted in the Army (1964-1966) and served in Vietnam as a member of the First Infantry Division.

His work life involved myriad experiences including postal carrier for the US Postal Service, driving a taxi cab for Alexandria Cab company, and using his understanding of electronics and mechanics as a technician for Kodak's photocopy division in Washington, D.C., but his real interests were writing and photography with both short stories and photographs published in the 1980s and 1990s.

A man of many interests, he was a member of writers' groups, taught photography, and enjoyed his membership in the Boozefighters Motorcycle Club, and American Legion. David held a private pilot's license, collected typewriters, cameras, fountain pens, and motorcycles.

David was charismatic and made numerous friends due to his deep interest in so many various things and the variety of people who shared one or more of his interests.

He was preceded in death by his sister, Sandra Owens. He is survived by his children, Karen Owens of New York City and Erik Owens of Sterling, Virginia and his companion, Karen Skedgell of Alexandria, Virginia.

A memorial service celebrating David's life will be held on April 3, 2026, at 11:00 AM at Aldersgate United Methodist Church: 1301 Collingwood Road, Alexandria, VA. Friends may visit from 10:30 AM until service begins.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made in David's memory to the ASPCA or American Legion.

Obituary

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ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 13

and layered history dating back to the Colonial era. First sold in 1750 to Jonathan Roe with the condition that a structure be built within two years, the property was transferred in 1752 to William Ramsay, an original trustee and the first mayor of Alexandria, who would serve for 36 years. Ramsay's tenure saw multiple informal transfers of the property, including one that same year to his brother-in-law, Daniel McCarty. A copy of the original deed and indenture from this transaction, notably witnessed by a 20-year-old George Washington—then recently appointed surveyor of Culpeper County—is proudly displayed in the home's main room. The original document, believed to still be in the possession of Ramsay's descendants, bears one of Washington's earliest known signatures. Construction of the current dwelling, excluding the later rear kitchen addition, began around 1796–1797 and was completed in 1798 under the ownership of Isabella Shaw and her husband, John Elton, a local carpenter. Over the centuries, the house has remained closely tied to American history. During World War II, Fleet Admiral William "Bull" Halsey owned the home, and his tenant, George Kennan, would later serve as U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union. More recently, the property was owned by Don Beyer, a former U.S. ambassador to Switzerland and current member of Congress, and his wife Megan, until it was purchased by current owner in 2012. Owner: Miguel Estrada

115 Prince St.: Situated on Alexandria's iconic Captain's Row, this elegant townhome combines timeless charm from colonial times, maritime history, and garden beauty. Built in 1783 and surveyed by a young George Washington in 1784, it originally served as a haven for sailors, offering food, lodging, supplies, and a well-used tavern that is now the dining room. After a fire in 1827, the lot sold for just \$100. The current brick house was constructed in 1853 by an Italian ship captain and his Irish wife. From rare documents, we know the history of each owner and have copies of every deed. There are even documented ghost stories. Pine floors, crown moldings, and five fireplaces showcase its enduring character. A detached kitchen once stood in the garden to prevent fires, and the parking space was once a chicken coop. A grand living room, added in 1938, remains largely unchanged. The garden provides a peaceful retreat with blooming camellias, azaleas, star jasmine, roses, and boxwoods. Cheryl Amyx, owner

209 S. Fairfax St.: The exact age of the house is unknown, but John Kempf is believed to have lived here as early as 1787. Before 1811, it housed a tannery and a coach-building shop. In 1833, a prominent Alexandrian, John Green, purchased it. He operated a

furniture factory across the street, now the Green Steam condominiums. It remained in his family until the 1890s, when it was divided into 207 and 209 and handed down to Green's two children. His daughter, Frannie Lee Kemper, received 209. Over the years, many additions were made, such as the dining room and kitchen, after the Civil War. The family room was added a century later, with a second floor built in the early 2000s. In the 1960s, Henry Fowler, Treasury Secretary during the Johnson administration, bought and renovated the home. American Home magazine published an article about it in 1964. The current owners purchased the property in 2015. They excavated the basement to create a wine cellar inspired by Mount Vernon's and added a downstairs bedroom and family room. During construction, they discovered miles of secure telephone lines within the walls, which allowed Secretary Fowler to have direct access to the White House in the 1960s. Adria Villar and Amir Tayrani, owners

511 Prince St.: This historic residence dates to May 7, 1763, when George Washington bought about two acres of land in Alexandria. He built a house for himself on Cameron Street. The remaining land was at the corner of Pitt and Prince Streets, stretching west to what is now 511 Prince Street. Washington constructed two rental houses, and the vacant lots were leased to a builder who, in 1793, built the houses from 503 to 511 Prince Street. After Washington died in 1799, the properties were transferred to Martha Washington. By 1855, William McVeigh, a well-known Alexandria architect and builder, expanded the house. A small hallway room, called a hyphen, between the living and dining rooms, connects the original house to the new addition. By the early 1900s, the house had been converted into a five-unit apartment building; however, by mid-century, it had reverted to a single-family home. Its four finished floors include three bedrooms, a library, a den, an office, and a family room. Initially heated by wood, it contains ten working fireplaces. The current owner has enjoyed this beautiful home since 2001. Dave Cleary, owner

MV Genealogical Presentation.
1-3 p.m. Zoom. Address: 7701 Stone Wheat Court, Alexandria. Jennifer Hollik, will discuss how genealogical records, history, and lived experience, can help us understand our more difficult ancestors. You'll leave with a better understanding of how generational trauma shapes families. Hollik is a genealogical and military researcher who has authored more than 20 books. The Zoom link will be on the website shortly before the event. Go to <https://mvgenealogy.org/index.php>.

Obituary

Obituary

Frank Joseph Krafft

September 16, 1924 – March 20, 2026



Frank Joseph Krafft, age 101, of Dumfries, Virginia, passed away peacefully at his home on March 20, 2026, following a three-year struggle after a major stroke. A native and lifelong resident of Alexandria, Virginia, Frank lived a life defined by faith, family, craftsmanship, and extraordinary service to others.

Born on September 16, 1924, in Alexandria, Frank was the son of Jacob Martin Krafft of Mels, St. Gallen, Switzerland, and Augusta Elizabeth Hirtrieter of Brooklyn, New York. He was preceded in death by his beloved wife Polly and his daughter Marie. He is survived by his children Barbara, Sue,

Jeanne, Don, Marty, Bill, Steve, and Nancy, along with 15 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren, and was the last surviving family member of his generation. Frank attended St. Mary's School in Alexandria and developed an early love of the water. Like many of the Krafft men, he was a sailor, building and racing boats on the Chesapeake Bay and Potomac River and later rowing as a Senior Oarsman with the Old Dominion Boat Club.

During World War II, Frank served in the United States Navy from 1943 to 1946, stationed at a munitions depot in Indiana. After his service, he attended The Catholic University of America, studying architectural engineering.

Frank's professional life was rooted in the construction industry. After apprenticing with the Krafft-Murphy Company, he became its majority owner and president, leading the business from 1953 until his retirement. Under his leadership, the company became known for its work on some of the most notable buildings in the Washington, D.C. area including the Air & Space Museum, the Lyceum in Alexandria, the National Academy of Sciences auditorium, as well as renovations on the US Capitol, the Hirschhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the Kennedy Center, Constitution Hall, and the National Cathedral.

In the early 1950s, Frank built his first home in Alexandria, where he and his beloved wife, Pauline "Polly" Biberstein Krafft, raised their nine children and remained deeply connected to their community and parish.

In 1968, Frank and Polly co-founded Our Little Brothers & Sisters (OLBS), a nonprofit organization supporting the many orphanages, medical facilities, schools and outreach programs of Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos (NPH). Through decades of work, Frank helped build a global network supporting children throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

He continued this mission throughout his life, including work supporting Haiti following the 2010 earthquake and serving as Treasurer of The St. Luke Foundation for Haiti.

Frank's life was guided by deep faith and a steadfast dedication to serving God, children, and his community.

Frank Krafft's 101 years were marked by a remarkable blend of professional achievement, family devotion, and humanitarian impact. His legacy lives on in the lives he touched.

A life so fully lived in service leaves a lasting imprint; one of faith, generosity, and love.

There will be a viewing at Fairfax Memorial Funeral Home (9902 Braddock Road Fairfax, VA 22032) on Thursday, March 26 from 4:00 to 7:00 PM, and a funeral Mass will be held at Holy Spirit Catholic Church (8800 Braddock Road, Annandale, VA 22003) on Friday, March 27 at noon.

In lieu of flowers, donation checks in honor of Frank can be mailed to Our Little Brothers & Sisters Inc (a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, EIN 23-7034358) at 203 Chico Avenue, Santa Cruz CA 95060.

Impractically Speaking



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Due to the closure of my local Truist Bank branch - and its equally accessible ATM, I have been living a non-cash existence. Though I have a supermarket nearby which enables me to get cash back when using my debit card (and by overpaying the supermarket's tab), the damage you might say, has already been done - in my head anyway. To even get to the cash, I have to use a debit card so I'm not exactly avoiding the problem as much as I'm contributing to it. And though I couldn't pay with the debit card unless I had a sufficient balance to the tethered account, nonetheless I feel as if I'm taking from one account to pay for another. It feels almost like churning. Except in this instance, I'm spending my own money, but it's not money that's actually in hand. Rather it's plastic in the wallet. And though it ultimately serves the same purpose/master, it feels - to me, as if I'm taking from Peter to pay Paul - and I'm neither Peter nor Paul. In short, I feel constrained and careless in the same transaction, if that makes any sense?

Underlying the previous paragraph's sentiment; having cash in actual hand/wallet represents - to me anyway, a kind of affordability/success that I don't feel when paying with plastic. Paying with plastic seems like bad planning. Moreover, not having enough cash represents a kind of failure to communicate (not between Paul Newman's character Luke Jackson and Strother Martin, his overseer on a prison farm, from the classic "Cool Hand Luke") but between you and your bank. As if you don't know how to manage - or you don't have enough, money. Either way, you're not going to influence people or make any friends (an ode to Dale Carnegie). Pulling out a credit card to pay your way doesn't carry the same weight/affect as fanning out however many \$100 bills are necessary to pay what's due. Cash seems more impressive/responsible somehow.

I understand that the evolution (or is that a revolution) of our economy from brick and mortar to online and not in person generally prevents the use of cash. These days, cash is no longer king. It's maybe a prince. And if one is not going to become a pauper when always using credit cards, it requires strict adherence to a recurring reconciliation of what's going where and who pays what, when. And that may require a "particular set of skills" or Liam Neeson to manage the incoming and this ongoing outgoing. Or the money will simply be taken with minimal understanding.

I am aware, and it's certainly a choice - but hardly a consideration, that I can debit from non-Truist automatic teller machines. However, I hate the fees associated with those withdrawals almost as much as I hate drivers who back into parking spaces - but that's a whole 'nother column which was published in this space months ago, so I won't bore you on the topic any more than I already have. But I don't see my debit card as a primary payor of stuff as I figure the money in the checking is there for other bill-related reasons. Its use is not supposed to abuse the privilege, so to speak, of having money not yet budgeted. I want to go forward with my money, not backwards and debiting often feels "bassackwards."

I imagine much of this rambling doesn't make any sense - or cents either, and that's exactly my point. Money doesn't grow on plastic any more than it grows on trees. I have to think about how I'm spending if I want to grow rich (sort of Napoleon Hill).

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

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