

# Alexandria Gazette Packet

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APRIL 16, 2026



Cantor Jason Kaufman chants the closing prayer as Vice Mayor Sarah Bagley looks on at the Days of Remembrance ceremony April 14 at the Frank and Betty Wright Reading Gardens at the Charles E. Beatley Jr. Central Library.



Guest speaker Elizabeth "Barry" White delivers remarks at the Days of Remembrance ceremony April 14 at the Charles E. Beatley Jr. Central Library.

## Days of Remembrance

City marks 37th annual ceremony to honor Holocaust victims.

By JEANNE THEISMANN  
GAZETTE PACKET

The City of Alexandria observed its 37th annual Days of Remembrance ceremony, bringing residents, civic leaders and faith communities together to honor the six million Jews and millions of other victims of the Holocaust.

The noon ceremony was held April 14 at the Frank and Betty Wright Reading Gardens at the Charles E. Beatley Jr. Central Library on Duke Street, continuing a tradition that has made Alexandria the first municipality in the Washington metropolitan region to formally observe Holocaust remembrance each year. The observance is part of the national Days of Remembrance, a weeklong commemoration led by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum under a congressional mandate.

Elizabeth "Barry" White, Ph.D., a recently retired historian and for-



Sheriff Sean Casey lights a candle during the Days of Remembrance ceremony April 14 at the Charles E. Beatley Jr. Central Library as musicians Sarah Hover and Jane Pollner perform an interlude.

mer research director for the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum's Center for the Prevention of Genocide, served as the ceremony's featured speaker. White previously spent decades at the U.S. Department of Justice, where she worked on investigations and prosecutions of Nazi criminals and other human rights violators. In her remarks, she reflected on the enduring responsibility to remember the Holocaust accurately and to confront hatred and genocide in all forms.

Also addressing the crowd was Rabbi Stephen Rein of Agudas

Achim Congregation. Rein recounted the story of his grandfather's survival during the Holocaust.

"The story of my grandfather is nothing short of a miracle," Rein said. "It is the story of facing unimaginable horror, the story of picking up and moving to a new land with little more than a shirt on his back. It is the story of losing all that he loved and then finding love and building a family. To his dying day my grandfather never forgot what he lost."

Vice Mayor Sarah Bagley served as emcee of the ceremony, leading

the ceremonial lighting of a 54-inch solid brass candelabrum, a central symbol of the city's annual observance. The candelabrum was donated to Alexandria by the late Charlene Schiff, a Holocaust survivor, and her husband, Ed Schiff, in memory of her parents and sister, as well as the millions who were murdered during the Holocaust. Each of the candles represents a commitment to remembrance, human dignity and the rejection of antisemitism and racism.

Bagley emphasized that the ceremony is not only an act of memo-



Members of Agudas Achim Congregation stand before the lit candelabrum donated by the late Charlene Schiff, a Holocaust survivor, and her late husband Edwin Schofield. Pictured are Mercedes Golden, Lori Cooper, Dina Rotklein and David Blumenstein.

rialization but also a call to action. As survivor voices grow fewer with time, leaders underscore the importance of education and public engagement to ensure the lessons of the Holocaust are not forgotten or distorted. The Schiff candelabrum, officials noted, is also made available to local schools and civic organizations studying the Holocaust.

The Days of Remembrance ceremony, organized by the city's Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities, also featured

SEE DAYS OF, PAGE 8

# SPRINGFIELD

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OBITUARY

# Marian Van LANDINGHAM

Visionary Architect of Alexandria's Cultural and Civic Life, Dies at 88.



PHOTO COURTESY TFAS

Marian Van LANDINGHAM, founder of the Torpedo Factory Art Center and longtime Virginia State Delegate, died April 4 at her home in Alexandria. She was 88.

By JEANNE THEISMANN  
GAZETTE PACKET

**M**arian Amelia Van LANDINGHAM, the artist, legislator and civic visionary whose imagination and persistence reshaped Alexandria's waterfront and helped define the city's modern cultural identity, died April 4 at her home in Alexandria. She was 88.

Van LANDINGHAM is best known as the founding force behind the Torpedo Factory Art Center, now one of the nation's most recognized community art spaces. In the early

1970s, when Alexandria's waterfront was dotted with abandoned industrial buildings, she proposed an idea many initially viewed as improbable: transforming a former munitions plant into a working arts center filled with open studios and public galleries.

At the time, Van LANDINGHAM was serving as president of The Art League and working with Alexandria's Bicentennial Commission. With persistence and advocacy, she persuaded city leaders to approve the project as a temporary experiment. The Torpedo Factory

SEE MARIAN VAN LANDINGHAM, PAGE 6



PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Beyer Congressman Don Beyer (D-8) congratulates Marian Van LANDINGHAM at the Sept. 15, 2019, celebration of the 45th anniversary of the founding of the Torpedo Factory Art Center.



PHOTO COURTESY TFAS

Marian Van LANDINGHAM at work in her Torpedo Factory artist studio in the 1970s.



Torpedo Factory Art Center founder Marian Van LANDINGHAM, second from left, with Allison Silberberg, Harlene Clayton and Jayne Clancy at a 2019 reception in Van LANDINGHAM's honor.

# OBITUARY

# Susan Bulkley Kellom Tireless civic leader and Army veteran Dies at 78.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN  
GAZETTE PACKET

**S**usan Bulkley Kellom, a longtime Alexandria resident whose life was defined by public service, quiet leadership and an unwavering commitment to her community, died April 11 at the age of 78.

For decades, Kellom stood at the center of Alexandria's civic and political life, not as a spotlight seeker but as a steady force whose organizational skill, institutional

**“Susan Kellom was a force in Alexandria politics and advocacy for women’s rights.”**

— Alexandria City Councilwoman Jacinta Greene

knowledge and unwavering sense of responsibility helped sustain the city's democratic and community traditions. A U.S. Army veteran, trailblazer for women in public service and mentor to generations of local leaders, she leaves behind a legacy woven into nearly every corner of Alexandria's civic fabric.



PHOTO BY STEVEN HALPERSON/TISARA STUDIOS

Susan Kellom, former chair of the Alexandria Democratic Committee and longtime civic activist, died April 11 at the age of 78.

“Susan Bulkley Kellom was a force of nature paired with a wicked sense of humor,” said former Mayor Justin Wilson in a social media tribute. “She served our nation in uniform and our community in so many ways, big and small. She will be missed, but she is back with her beloved Ben.”

Kellom served in the United States Army from 1968 to 1980 as a military police officer and was

among the first women selected for the Military Police Advanced Course, a distinction that reflected both her capability and her determination at a time when opportunities for women in the military were still sharply limited.

During a posting in Seoul in 1971, she met her future husband, Ben Kellom, then also on active

SEE SUSAN BULKLEY, PAGE 8



PHOTO COURTESY SUSAN KELLOM

Susan and Ben Kellom on their wedding day in 1974.



PHOTO COURTESY SUSAN KELLOM

Susan and Ben Kellom, second and third from right, in an undated family photo.



PHOTO BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Susan Kellom, seated, with Alex Crawford-Batt, Joe Swartz, Vice Mayor Sarah Bagley, Del. Kirk McPike, and Cele Garrett at the 2025 Senior Services of Alexandria Gala.



Ads bombard voters' mailboxes, doorsteps, and media, urging turn-out for the Special Election on Redistricting. The consequences could have national implications.

# Redistricting Vote Looms

Last call - April 21

BY SUSAN LAUME  
THE CONNECTION

In the special election, voters must cast their vote by April 21st. Many report confusion and conflicting political messaging and advertisements. The 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 2040 census?"

At present, Virginia's eleven congressional districts are drawn once every ten years by the Virginia Redistricting Commission, a legislative body made up of eight legislators, and eight citizens, with an equal number of Republicans and Democrats. Virginia's congressional districts were last redrawn in 2021 and would next be redrawn in 2031. However, this year the General Assembly ap-

proved a new proposed district map which would take effect only if the constitutional amendment is approved by voters.

### Voting Yes

A "yes" vote would allow the General Assembly to redraw Virginia's congressional districts before the next ten-year cycle, since other states have done so. The proposed re-drawn district map would be used in the 2026 midterm Congressional elections. Then the responsibility of drawing the congressional districts in 2031 would return to the Virginia Redistricting Commission.

### Who Is Urging "Yes" Votes?

Democrats Governor Abigail Spanberger and former President Barack Obama are appearing in TV ads and other messaging urging the need to counter the GOP-led redistricting in other states. The information campaign is well funded, including by Virginians for Fair Elections, and several other democratic political and social action pacts,

SEE REDISTRICTING VOTE, PAGE 7

**ELECTION NOTICE - CITY OF ALEXANDRIA**  
Special Election - Tuesday, April 21, 2026

**Voters are reminded to confirm their polling location before voting on Election Day, April 21, 2026.**

[elections.virginia.gov/casting-a-ballot/polling-place-lookup/](https://elections.virginia.gov/casting-a-ballot/polling-place-lookup/)

<p><b>Recent changes to the following polling locations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blessed Sacrament</li> <li>• City Hall</li> <li>• George Mason School</li> <li>• The View</li> </ul>	<p><b>Early Voting Ongoing until April 18</b> Office of Voter Registration 132 N Royal Street, Suite 100</p> <p>Visit our website for a full schedule of early voting hours: <a href="https://alexandriava.gov/Elections">alexandriava.gov/Elections</a></p>
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OFFICE OF VOTER REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS  
132 N Royal Street, Suite 100, Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone: 703.746.4050 Email: [voters@alexandriava.gov](mailto:voters@alexandriava.gov)  
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Saturday, April 25 | 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

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**SAFELY DISPOSE OF MEDICATIONS**

The U.S. is experiencing an opioid epidemic and Alexandria is far from immune. The best way to fight this epidemic is to dispose of unused or expired prescription and over-the-counter medication. Individuals can drop off medication at these designated locations during this event or year-round at a permanent drop box location.

To learn more, visit [alexandriava.gov/go/1981](https://alexandriava.gov/go/1981). For questions or reasonable disability accommodation, contact [emma.beall@alexandriava.gov](mailto:emma.beall@alexandriava.gov), 703.746.3670, or call Virginia Relay 711.

**Alexandria Take Back Day Drop-Off Locations\***

<p><b>Alexandria Police Headquarters</b> 3600 Wheeler Ave.</p> <p><b>Alexandria Fire Station 210</b> 5255 Eisenhower Ave.</p>	<p><b>The Neighborhood Pharmacy of Del Ray</b> 2204 Mt. Vernon Ave.</p> <p><b>Walgreens Pharmacy</b> 3614 King St.</p>
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**\*NO NEEDLES ACCEPTED AT THESE SITES**

**Can't make it to Drug Take Back Day? Dispose of medications year-round at one of these permanent drug drop box locations!**

<p><b>The Neighborhood Pharmacy</b> 2204 Mount Vernon Ave. Monday-Friday: 9 a.m.-7p.m. Saturday: 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Sunday: Closed</p>	<p><b>Alexandria Police Headquarters</b> 3600 Wheeler Ave. Just inside the entrance Available 24/7</p>
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PHOTO BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Marian Van Landingham, center, at a 2019 reception in her honor at the Torpedo Factory Art Center.

# Marian Van Landingham

FROM PAGE 3

opened in 1974 and became a permanent cultural anchor that helped catalyze the revitalization of Old Town and the Potomac waterfront.

“With her soft-spoken nature, Delegate Marian Van Landingham broke barriers in Richmond and created a lasting legacy here at home in Alexandria,” said former Mayor Justin Wilson in a social media tribute. “Her brand of civility in leadership is sadly rare but deeply missed. Alexandria will miss Marian and we mourn the loss of a friend.”

Van Landingham also served as the founding director of the Alexandria Volunteer Bureau, now known as Volunteer Alexandria. Her work helped formalize volunteerism as a cornerstone of local governance and community service in the city. The organization honors her legacy through the annual Marian Van Landingham Lifetime Achievement Award.

In 1981, Van Landingham was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates, representing Alexandria and parts of Fairfax and Arlington counties. She served from 1983 until 2006. During her tenure, she chaired the Privileges and Elections Committee and served as a senior member of the Appropriations Committee. In 2005, she chose not to seek re-election while undergoing treatment for cancer.

“Marian was an early supporter of Alexandria Archaeology in the art center,” said former City Archeologist Pam Cressey. “She was a constant believer in the value of art, history, culture and everyone’s access to the Torpedo Factory as a place to create, share,

learn, appreciate and enjoy.”

Born Sept. 10, 1937, in Albany, Georgia, Van Landingham earned both a bachelor’s and master’s degree in political science from Emory University, including a semester in Washington at American University. Before settling in Northern Virginia, she worked in university public relations for Emory University and Georgia Tech, served with the federal government, and later worked as a press aide and speechwriter for U.S. Rep. Phil Landrum of Georgia.

Van Landingham pursued formal art training at the Atlanta Institute of Arts, the Jack Ramsey Workshop, and The Art League in Alexandria, and she maintained her own studio at the Torpedo Factory Art Center. She received numerous honors over the years, including being named a Washingtonian of the Year and being recognized as a Women’s History Month Honoree by the National Women’s History Project.

She was predeceased by her parents, Strauder L. and Myrtle Taylor Van Landingham; her brother, Sam L. Van Landingham; and her sister-in-law, Sandra Van Landingham. She is survived by a nephew, John Taylor Van Landingham of Columbus, Ohio. In accordance with her wishes, a private interment will be held, with a public celebration of life to be announced at a later date.

Van Landingham, selected as a Living Legend of Alexandria in 2008, said at the time, “Because it is a concrete reality, so visible in the City, the Torpedo Factory is what people will remember me for — more so, probably, than for the 24 years of legislative service.”

## Senior Services of Alexandria Brings Awareness to Senior Nutrition Programs during Champions Week

BY MARSHALL HESPE  
SENIOR NUTRITION PROGRAMS MANAGER  
SENIOR SERVICES OF ALEXANDRIA

The month of March is when the city’s Meals on Wheels program brings awareness to the community of the importance of senior nutrition programs. Senior Services of Alexandria and the City’s Division of Aging and Adult Services provide nutritious home-delivered meals to seniors throughout Alexandria City that help them maintain their health and independence. Meals on Wheels programs in Alexandria City, Va. have served our community admirably since 2002. This year we are highlighting the program through Community Champions Week that commemorates the historic day in March of 1972 that authorized funds for a national nutrition program for older adults under the Older American Act. More than 50 years later, nearly 14 million older Americans are still threatened by or experience hunger, and 56% of seniors feel lonely.

The city of Alexandria at its March 24 City Council meeting issued a proclamation in support of Meals on Wheels, and

during Champions Week, city, state and federal leaders came together to see firsthand how much of a difference a healthy meal delivered with a smile can make. We would like to thank this year’s Meals on Wheels Champions for giving their time and care to our city’s older adult population.

### 2026 Meals on Wheels Champions:

- U.S. Congressman Don Beyer
- Virginia State Senator Elizabeth Bennett-Parker
- Mayor Alyia Gaskins
- City Council Member John Chapman
- Former Vice Mayor Amy Jackson
- Sheriff Sean Casey
- Alexandria Fire Chief Felipe Hernandez Jr.
- City Manager Jim Parajon
- DAAS Director Chris Moore

If you are interested in supporting seniors in Alexandria by volunteering with Meals on Wheels, please follow the link below or call our office at 703-836-4414 ext. 112

<https://seniorservicesalex.org/volunteer/>



# Redistricting Vote Looms

FROM PAGE 5

with approximately \$21 million donated.

## Voting No

A “no” vote would leave the authority to draw congressional districts with the Virginia Redistricting Commission process at once a decade and Virginia’s current districts would remain in place until possible readjustment in 2031, based on 2030 census data. In its first and only use following the 2020 census, the Commission failed to pass a plan, so the state supreme court justices took over, in accordance with the statute.

Who is urging “no” votes? Republicans former Governor Glen Youngkin and former Attorney General Jason Miyares, along with the Virginians for Fair Maps, a political action group directed by former Republican Congressional Representative Eric Cantor. Cantor served from 2001 until his resignation in 2014 and has donated \$250,000 to the Redistricting vote campaign.

Also, an information campaign by a former Virginia state GOP delegate, used an image and July 2020 statement of former President Obama critical of gerrymandering. The use of Obama’s image suggests he is opposed to the redistricting, when in fact he supports it, leading to confusion for some voters. The ads drew criticism from the NAACP.

Other endorsements typically fall along party lines.

## How many have voted so far?

Fairfax County’s Office of Elections reported that as of April 9, of the county’s 812,705 registered voters, 78,971 had cast early and absentee votes.

That represents a turnout of 9.7 percent. The report suggests that mail-in voting continues to be popular with a fairly even split of 53 percent of early ballots returned by mail, versus 47 percent by early in-person voting.

Early voting ends April 18. Special Election voting day, the last day to vote, is April 21.

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Susan Kellom served as the chair of the ADC from 1999-2010.

PHOTO COURTESY ADC

PHOTO COURTESY JUSTIN WILSON/FACEBOOK

Susan Kellom, right, with Nancy Perkins, Kerry Donley and Justin Wilson in an undated photo.

# Susan Bulkley Kellom

FROM PAGE 4

duty. The couple married in 1974 and were together for 47 years prior to Ben Kellom's death in 2021 at the age of 90.

Stateside Kellom transferred to recruiting duty in Louisville before the couple was transferred to Louisiana's Fort Polk. In 1978, Ben Kellom was transferred to the military personnel center in Arlington.

"We lived in Burke when we first came to the area since we could not afford Old Town," said Kellom in a 2021 interview with the Gazette Packet. "But when Ben retired and took a job in defense

contracting, we were finally able to make the move to Alexandria in 1983 and we have been here ever since."

Once in Alexandria, Kellom immersed herself in community work. Her service spanned decades and institutions, including early involvement on the Alexandria Commission for Women, where she served from 1997 to 2013 and later on the board of the Friends of the Commission. She also served on the Alexandria Youth Policy Commission from 1997 to 2003 and was a longtime member of the Alexandria Human Rights Com-

mission, including two terms as its chair.

Kellom served as chair of the Alexandria Democratic Committee from 1999 to 2010, a period during which she organized voter forums and debates, strengthened outreach and mentored many future officeholders and political organizers. In 2012, she was appointed chair of the Alexandria Electoral Board, assuming responsibility for overseeing the city's registrar's office and election administration.

At the state level, Kellom served the Democratic Party of Virginia for more than a decade as Public

Information Officer and later as vice chair for Finance and Administration. Her leadership was formally recognized in 2012, when she received the Tom Whipple Party Service Award for her service and mentorship.

"Susan played a huge role in the city and especially in the growth of the ADC," said Mary Lyman. "A wonderful friend with a great sense of humor, she knew everyone and was always up for a gossip chat. Her life was devoted to Alexandria and her Ben. The world is a bit duller without her."

Kellom was predeceased by her

husband, Ben Kellom, who died in 2021. No funeral arrangements have been publicly announced.

"Susan Kellom was a force in Alexandria politics and advocacy for women's rights," said Alexandria City Councilwoman Jacinta Greene. "You would never imagine telling her no, that would not be wise."

I am thankful to have worked with her on many key initiatives, campaigns and projects in our beloved Alexandria. I am forever grateful for her empowering me to lead, her unwavering support and for being an amazing friend."

## Days of Remembrance

FROM PAGE 1

musicians Jane Pollner and Sarah Hover performing musical interludes.

As the ceremony concluded, attendees observed a moment of reflection, honoring the victims and survivors of the Holocaust.

"Please remember the six million Jews, including one and a half million children, murdered at the hands of the Nazis and the collaborators," Rein said in closing. "We remember but this memory must guide us forward. It must lead us to kindness, compassion, civility and action. And it must inspire each of us here today to prove ourselves worthy of being remembered."



Rabbi Stephen Rein tells the story of his grandfather, a Holocaust survivor, at the Days of Remembrance ceremony April 14 at the Charles E. Beatley Jr. Central Library.



PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

A crowd listens to guest speaker Elizabeth "Barry" White at the Days of Remembrance ceremony April 14 at the Charles E. Beatley Jr. Central Library.

# Spring2ACTion Returns April 22

BY JEANNE THEISMANN  
GAZETTE PACKET

Alexandria's community giving day, Spring2ACTion, is set to return on Wednesday, April 22, inviting residents, businesses and supporters to come together in support of local nonprofit organizations across the city.

Led by ACT for Alexandria, Spring2ACTion is a 24-hour online day of giving designed to connect donors with causes they care about while strengthening the nonprofit sector that serves Alexandrians every day. Since its launch in 2011, Spring2ACTion has united tens of thousands of donors and raised tens of millions of dollars to support hundreds of local organizations working in areas such as education, health, housing, arts and culture, animal welfare and environmental sustainability.

In 2025 the giving day generated over \$3.1 million for nearly 200 Alexandria-based nonprofits. Building on that momentum, the 2026 event will once again feature early giving opportunities, prize incentives for nonprofits and community events throughout



PHOTO COURTESY SPRING2ACTION

Spring2Action online giving day returns April 22.

the city.

Early giving is in progress with many organizations holding special events leading up to the April 22 online initiative.

For a complete list of participating organizations or to make a donation, visit [www.Spring2Action.org](http://www.Spring2Action.org)

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## VDOT

Virginia Department of Transportation

### 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
SCOTT	16861	696N	MCMURRY HOLLOW ROAD	BRANCH	3/31/2026
FRANKLIN	8031	1605	WHSRNG CK ROAD 1605	MAGGODEE CREEK	3/19/2026
FRANKLIN	7914	703	AYERS ROAD 703	POPLAR CAMP CREEK	3/18/2026
TAZEWELL	18583	631E	INDIAN CREEK ROAD	INDIAN CREEK #2	3/5/2026
BLAND	2950	42N	WEST BLUEGRASS TRAIL	SPRING BRANCH	3/3/2026

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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:corina.herrera@vdot.virginia.gov).*

# Interview with James Ross, Outgoing Music Director for the Alexandria Orchestra

BY SHIRLEY RUHE  
GAZETTE PACKET

**J**ames Ross has been Music Director of the Alexandria Orchestra since 2018. He has led the National Youth Orchestra USA as Orchestra Director since its founding in 2013 and taught conducting at the Juilliard School since 2011 and the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia since 2022. He served as professor and Director of Orchestral Activities at the University of Maryland for 16 years and was also Music Director of the Orquesta Simfonica del Valles in Barcelona Spain.

**Alexandria Gazette Packet:** Take me back 8 years ago when you started with the Alexandria Orchestra.

**James Ross:** I really dribbled into my relationship with the Orchestra. I had been a guest two years before with a Sibelius and Beethoven program. After that I met the Board and the orchestra players, and I thought 'this is a lovely group.' I applied for the open position of Music Director and was fortunate to be one of the four candidates for that position. I got a call in May that I had been chosen with a contract to start in August. But I spent June and July planning the season. It was exciting working with the Music Committee.

**Q: What were some of the unexpected challenges?**

**Ross:** During the very first concert in September we had an outdoor concert planned at the Virginia Theological Seminary. But unexpectedly a hurricane blew through. We had to move the concert inside to a smaller chapel and all of the other contingencies all on short notice, very unpredictable and exciting.

And of course there was Covid where we spent a year and a half finding safe options for concerts at outdoor venues and making online videos since the Schlesinger Concert Hall and George Washington Masonic Hall were closed. It became a theme. We wanted to continue to be a beacon of culture and explore what it means to be a community in this rough and scary time.

A current challenge, and I'm sorry I won't be here to help with this, is to be here while the orchestra negotiates a union contract. They have always been loose freelancing



James Ross, outgoing Music Director, Alexandria Orchestra.



James Ross as Music Director, Alexandria Orchestra.

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

but we're trying to ensure their future. And there are also the financial challenges to secure the post-Covid world because people got used to watching orchestras on video. It's not clear what the future of live orchestras will be—what we can offer that is better than the computer.

**Q: How do you decide what your concerts will feature in a season?**

**Ross:** It is very messy. The decision involves the Music Committee as well. We try to mix older well-known music with enough new stuff to add something to say. Then we piece it altogether. As long as we start with something familiar that people recognize and come to hear, we can introduce something strange, or unknown that adds variety or sweep in the other half of the program. This is where I add my soloists—a pianist or violist for example. It always looks like disaster until the end.

Also it has been important from the first season to emphasize diversity, that we not close the door to women composers who were not given credit in their time such as Fanny Mendelssohn or Mozart's sister. I tried to include the voices of all diversity—hispanic, the Black experience, make sure we



James Ross as Sherlock Holmes in his Family Concert in 2024.

PHOTO BY SHIRLEY RUHE

didn't get stuck playing only old white men.

**Q: What will be your legacy?**

**Ross:** Concerts can be more than a concert. Music can be a 'people to people' vehicle that shares sympathy or compassion. The notes only tell half of the story. Maybe my particular value suited the community. I love to

tell stories and to weave together composers from 100 or 300 years ago to connect with the community right now. I especially loved the openness of Alexandria to explore other sides.

**Q: What led to your decision to depart the Alexandria Orchestra at this time?**

**Ross:** Things evolved in my life

that made it hard to continue. I was trying to do four jobs at the same time including a full-time job at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia as well as teaching up at Tanglewood in the summer. I am busier at 65-years-old than I have ever been but my body was telling me it was too much. So in December I made the decision to leave.

**Q: I notice there seems to be a theme revolving around Sibelius.**

**Ross:** Yes I had already planned this year's season before I knew it would be my last. Our final upcoming concert on April 25 and 26th features Sibelius. I thought back to my first concert as a guest conductor and realized that Sibelius was bookending my time here—something thrown together in my life. Maybe it was serendipity or maybe it was magic.

Ross's final concerts as music director will be Saturday, April 25 at 7:30 p.m. at the Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center and Sunday, April 26 at 3 p.m. at the George Washington Masonic National Memorial. It will feature Max Bruch Violin Concerto No. 1 and Jean Sibelius Symphony No. 2.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

# Puppy Love

Tails and Tunes as Del Ray Dog Fest supports APF K-9s.



Janice and Karl Hobart prepare Pookie for the dog fashion show at the Del Ray Dog Fest April 12 at George Washington Middle School in Del Ray.



PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET  
Joann St. Peter, Heidi Whalen and Nancy Marchetti with K-9 stuffed animals and trading cards.



Attendees enjoy the Smooch a Pooch kissing booth.

By JEANNE THEISMANN  
GAZETTE PACKET

The Del Ray neighborhood was filled with wagging tails, live music and community camaraderie as the 4th Annual Del Ray Dog Fest returned to the George Washington Middle School parking lot April 12 for an afternoon-long celebration of dogs and the people who love them.

Hosted by the Del Ray Business Association, the outdoor festival welcomed residents, visitors and their four-legged companions to enjoy a wide range of dog-centered activities, food vendors and live entertainment.

“What a gorgeous day,” said announcer Joey Schaljo, the PA announcer for the Washington Mystics WNBA team and a Del Ray resident. “This is proof that mother na-

ture herself is a fan of dogs.”

Sponsored by the Del Ray Business Association, the event featured 52 small businesses, eight animal rescue organizations and 27 sponsors from the area.

A packed schedule was designed to appeal to dogs of all sizes and energy levels. Highlights included a luring course, an off-leash puppy playground, a dog fashion show and the ever-popular distracted dog race, where pups tested their focus amid playful temptations.

New this year was a “Sit Happens” competition, which was a musical chairs type game for dogs.

For owners seeking something a little different, the festival also offered “Pups n’ Poses” yoga, allowing participants to stretch alongside their canine companions, and a

SEE TAILS AND TUNES, PAGE 15



The Puppy Play area at the Del Ray Dog Fest.

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## Talk. They Hear You.

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[PreventItAlexandria.org](http://PreventItAlexandria.org)



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**COMMUNITY &  
 HUMAN SERVICES**

For questions or reasonable disability accommodation, contact [jamie.ciesla@alexandriava.gov](mailto:jamie.ciesla@alexandriava.gov) or call Virginia Relay 711.

# 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](mailto: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](http://VisitAlexandria.com/250).

### 250th Events Itinerary:

❖ May-November: A temporary public art installation from artist Sandy Williams IV will commemorate



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

the signing of the Declaration of Independence as part of the City of Alexandria's Time & Place public art series.

- ❖ June 12-14: Alexandria's major signature 250th event, Sails on the Potomac, will host iconic tall ships as a Sail Virginia 2026 Affiliate Harbor and will feature a weekend packed with activities including Alexandria Jazz Fest performances.
- ❖ June: A new exhibit will open at the Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum. Called Stories of U.S. Collections Capture our History, the exhibit will bring out objects from the collection that are seldom seen.
- ❖ July 3-4: Enjoy evening Fourth of July fireworks shows at George Washington's Mount Vernon on July 3 and 4, and a daytime fireworks show on July 4.
- ❖ July 11: Take part in the City of Alexandria's 277th/USA 250th Birthday Celebration complete with fireworks, music and more at Oronoco Bay Park along Alexandria's waterfront.

## 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.
- 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,



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

- 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](http://alexandriava.gov/RPCA/Events).

## APRIL 3 TO JUNE 12

### More Moments of Art at River Farm.

At 7931 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

# ENTERTAINMENT

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](http://DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits)

## 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
- 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 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. 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](http://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 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,



The Nepenthe Gallery presents an exhibition on Bruce Springsteen, "Greetings from Alexandria, VA" on May 8-10, 2026.

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

317 S. St. Asaph St.: The origins of this property date back to a land grant from King Charles II to Sir Richard Berkeley, the then-Governor of Virginia, dated May 2, 1669. It wasn't until around 1750-70 that a simple "flounder" house was built, consisting of a fireplace room with a bedroom above. Flounders were popular at the time, characterized by a high, windowless back and a steeply sloping roof. It is believed that these relatively inexpensive structures were built to meet the requirement of construction within two years of ownership and included a windowless wall to reduce the then-existing "glass tax." In 1820, the front of the house was constructed, which still features the original staircase. By 1860, a bay window had been added to the façade. The kitchen was originally located in the old smokehouse but was later connected to the main structure. A new kitchen was added in 1980. The garden was designed to bloom sequentially throughout the growing season.

The decorative millstone in the garden was brought from Hanover County, Virginia, in the early 20th century. This property was opened for Historic Garden Week in 1944. Ruthie Birch, owner

## SATURDAY/APRIL 18

**Marketplace @ the Athenaeum. 9:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.** At The Athenaeum, Alexandria. Stop by the Athenaeum as part of a great day of touring wonderful gardens and homes during the Historic Garden Week's Old Town Alexandria Tour. The Hunting Creek Garden Club has curated a fabulous selection of vendors who will display their wares among the beautiful art in the gallery.

## TUESDAY/APRIL 21

**The Chamber ALX's Networking Breakfast. 8:30-10 a.m.** At Westin Alexandria Old Town, 400 Courthouse Square, Alexandria. The Chamber ALX's Networking Breakfast with the Arlington Chamber of Commerce. Exchange business cards, share your elevator pitch, and expand your network with our friends in Northern Virginia.

## TUESDAY/APRIL 21

**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>.

## WEDNESDAY/APRIL 22

**Alexandria Historical Society 2026 History Awards Ceremony. 7 p.m.** At the Lyceum in Alexandria. This year's program will feature keynote speaker Dr. Peter Henriques, Professor Emeritus of History at George Mason University, and will honor recipients of the T. Michael Miller Alexandria History Award, the AHS Special Merit Award, and the Alexandria High School History Awards.

## THURSDAY/APRIL 23

**Poem in Your Pocket. 7 - 8 p.m.** At the Athenaeum, Alexandria. Cristi Donoso, Poet Laureate, City of Alexandria will lead the "Poem in Your Pocket Celebration." Ms. Donoso will be joined by the 2025 Dashing Words in Motion poets, who will have their poems displayed inside the DASH buses and trolleys in April. Limited seating will be available, so reservations are encouraged. If you wish to read a poem, or to make a reservation email [poet@alexandriava.gov](mailto:poet@alexandriava.gov). If you wish to read at the event, please email: [poet@alexandriava.gov](mailto:poet@alexandriava.gov)

## SATURDAY/APRIL 25

**Alexandria Symphony Orchestra. 7:30 p.m.** At Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center, Alexandria. Featuring James Ross, conductor; Alexander Kerr, violin; Missy Mazzoli: Sinfonia (for Orbiting Spheres); Max Bruch: Violin Concerto No.1; Jean Sibelius: Symphony No. 2

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Obituary

**Mary Elizabeth Manning, born June 15, 1956**, in Alexandria, Virginia, was the cherished daughter of Frank and Eva Manning and the loving sister of Kathryn Yarnoff. Mary attended St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School and later Franklin & Marshall College, where she met her college sweetheart, David Parry. Together they built a loving family and welcomed two daughters, Bryn and Leigh. Mary treasured motherhood and was a deeply caring, nurturing presence in her daughters' lives. As her children grew older, Mary helped manage the family's commercial building, Wise's Tavern, a historic property once frequented by George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. She found joy in life's simple pleasures — spending time with her children and grandchildren, caring for her beloved Yorkies, Harry and Libby, gardening, and relaxing at the beach. Mary was beloved by all who knew her for her warmth, kindness, generosity, humor, and larger-than-life spirit. She will be deeply missed. She was preceded in death by her parents, Frank and Eva Manning, and her daughter, Bryn. Mary is survived by her daughter, Leigh; her son-in-law, Chris; and their three children, Emma, Anna, and Henry, who adored their grandmother and will carry her love with them always. A service will be held at Everly-Wheatley Funeral Home at 10:00 a.m., April 28th, followed by burial at Ivy Hill Cemetery. A reception will follow at Leigh and Chris's home. All who knew and loved Mary are welcome to attend.

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**NEWS DEPARTMENT:**  
[gazette@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:gazette@connectionnewspapers.com)

**Editor & Publisher**  
 Mary Kimm  
[mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:mkimm@connectionnewspapers.com)  
 @MaryKimm

**Jeanne Theismann**  
[jtheismann@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:jtheismann@connectionnewspapers.com)  
 @TheismannMedia

**Janet Barnett, John Bordner, Mark Mogle**  
 Contributing Photographers  
[gazette@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:gazette@connectionnewspapers.com)

**Shirley Ruhe**  
 Contributing Photographer and Writer  
[gazette@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:gazette@connectionnewspapers.com)

**Eden Brown, Bridgette Adu-Wadier, Glenda Booth**  
 Contributing Writers  
[gazette@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:gazette@connectionnewspapers.com)

**Hope Nelson**  
 Food Writer  
[hope@kitchenrecessionista.com](mailto:hope@kitchenrecessionista.com)  
 @kitchenrecess

**Michael Pope**  
 Senior Reporter  
[michaellepoppe@gmail.com](mailto:michaellepoppe@gmail.com)  
 @michaellepoppe

**ADVERTISING:**  
 For advertising information  
[sales@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:sales@connectionnewspapers.com)  
 703-778-9431

**Debbie Funk**  
 Disply Advertising/National Sales  
 703-778-9444  
[debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:debfunk@connectionnewspapers.com)

**David Griffin**  
 Marketing Assistant  
 703-778-9431  
[dgriffin@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:dgriffin@connectionnewspapers.com)

**Classified & Employment Advertising**  
 703-778-9431

**Publisher**  
 Jerry Vernon  
 703-549-0004  
[jvernon@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:jvernon@connectionnewspapers.com)

**Production Manager:**  
 Geovani Flores

**Editor Emeritus:**  
 Mary Anne Weber

**CIRCULATION**  
**Circulation Manager:**  
 Ann Oliver  
[circulation@connectionnewspapers.com](mailto:circulation@connectionnewspapers.com)

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Kathryn Martinez with LouLou Lemon prior to the Dog fashion show.



A young attendee enjoys some play time at the Del Ray Dog Fest.

PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET



A young girl enjoys a break at the Del Ray Dog Fest.

# Tails and Tunes as Del Ray Dog Fest supports APF K-9s

FROM PAGE 11

“Smooch Your Pooch” kissing booth sponsored by the Alexandria Police Foundation.

“Lisa Shaw and Marshall Construction donated the kissing booth,” said APF board chair Charlotte Hall. “And it’s one good-looking kissing booth.”

For the second year, Kathryn Martinez entered her four-legged companion LouLou Lemon in the Dog fashion show.

“We waited all year for this event,” said Martinez, who handmade LouLou Lemon’s costume.

Live music added to the festive atmosphere, with Rook Richards performing throughout the afternoon as families explored vendor booths, Rescue Row and the family-friendly activity zones. Food and drink options, including dog-friendly menu items, rounded out the experience, making the festival a full afternoon outing for all ages.

Beyond the fun, Del Ray Dog Fest also served a meaningful purpose. Proceeds from this year’s event benefited the Alexandria Police Foundation’s Caring for K9s Program, which supports essential healthcare for re-

tired police K-9s that previously served the Alexandria community. Organizers highlighted the program as a way for attendees to give back while enjoying one of Del Ray’s most anticipated springtime traditions.

To ensure a safe and welcoming environment, the festival maintained clear guidelines, including standard six-foot leashes, vaccination requirements, and limits on the number of dogs handled per adult, measures designed to keep both pets and people comfortable throughout the day.

[www.visitdelray.com](http://www.visitdelray.com)



A contestant in the dog fashion show at the Del Ray Dog Fest.



A local resident and companion enjoy the Del Ray Dog Fest.

## You Really Want My Opinion?



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

I am so over it, under it and/or around it and any other unflattering way you can characterize it; ‘it’ being asked my opinion regarding the customer service I’ve just received. Spare me. Nowadays, one can’t make an inquiry/purchase/service - via the phone or even in person without being asked for a verbal response or barcode scan (post office comes to mind) or touching tones on your phone, all relating to the exchange with the person/process you’ve just endured before you can be properly excused. That is if you’re being polite.

The cost of doing business/making an inquiry is as much about getting feedback from the paying customer as it is about selling the customer a product or a service, et cetera. Occurring on the figurative backs of former customers who were “always right,” now those customers have an opinion, good, bad or indifferent that payees want to know about - and their rightness is now being compared to other payors to determine who is actually right. And as you might imagine, the customer is much less right than he/she ever was. As Major Frank Burns sort of said on a long-ago M\*A\*S\*H episode: You can’t swing a dead rat without hitting a North Korean, so does it follow that you can’t buy or inquire about anything without your opinion being solicited. Usually, you can politely back out of the exchange, but it doesn’t totally minimize the occurrence. And at least for me, the request for my opinion leaves a mental mark - almost akin to when I see a driver backing into a parking space. Even if I say no, or look away, the damage is done. I can’t unwring the bell as it were.

Moreover, I can’t imagine my two-cents worth, even when added onto all the other opinions ever adds up to a dollar’s worth of value. And though I understand that customer opinion/feedback is part of the engine that keeps the world turning; nevertheless, the current outreach is too much of a bad thing. I am asked my opinion of whatever the previous experience was so often, and in so many ways often beginning with: “How can I give you excellent customer service?” and ending with an “On a scale of 1 - 5, how would you rate your experience?” or a reasonable facsimile thereof, and on and on and on, I’ve pretty nearly exceeded my threshold. As my late mother read back to me, while living in Florida her favorite bumper sticker of full-time Floridians: “Welcome to Florida. Now go home.” It’s simply too much, even of a good thing. It’s exactly how I feel about the octopus-type outreach of all these opinion solicitors. And yes, it’s okay/I understand that this conversation will be recorded - for training purposes.

Quite frankly, that last bit about training is the only thing that helps me endure this never-ending need for my opinion. I can’t help laughing and pitying the poor person who has to listen to all these customer-service phone calls. That has to be torture, a type of torture I would wish on my worst enemy. Listening to callers/reading customer surveys only to occasionally find a kernel of relevance mixed in with all that pabulum. How many hours must staff be subjected to the general public before management takes pity on them and rotates in another poor sap?

Unfortunately, opinions are the lifeblood of any entity that wants to remain in business. The general public must be considered, generally. Running a business, providing a service, et cetera, presumably has a specific purpose. And unless there’s a match between customer server and customer servee, the only purpose served is losing money quickly. You want my opinion? No, you don’t. I don’t know anything relevant to your endeavor. I only know what I want and what I want can’t possibly suite your inquiries. After all, I’m just one of millions not lost at sea but drowning, nonetheless. Stop asking me what I think. Ask me what I know. It will be a much shorter conversation. And that suits me just fine.

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

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