

THE CONNECTION

CENTRE VIEW ❖ Chantilly ❖ Great Falls ❖ Herndon ❖ McLean ❖ Oak Hill ❖ Oakton ❖ Reston ❖ Vienna

“As You Like It” at Chantilly High: Bella Caltagirone, left, and Elle Galhouse as Orlando and Rosalind, respectively.



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PHOTO COURTESY OF BELLA RAFFERTY

**Under the Wire:
Data Center Battles
Stretch Beyond NOVA**

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**High School
Theater Shines**

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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	WHSPRNG 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 and navigate to Travel and traffic/For freight operators/Truck restrictions. This page references a posted structures report and a GIS map tool that contain detailed information about restricted structures in Virginia. To receive email notifications regarding new or updated weight restrictions for structures statewide, complete the sign-up form on the web page.

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

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

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Under the Wire: NOVA's Data Center Growth Creates Trilemma

Growth, power and the battle beyond NOVA, for Piedmont and Central Virginia.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

In February 2026, a trilemma evolved after the regional grid operator, PJM, reported a historic 6,625-megawatt power shortfall, a deficit driven almost entirely by “an unprecedented surge in data center load” and the rapid retirement of coal plants, according to the PJM 2027/2028 Reserve Target Shortfall Report (Feb. 2026). PJM official, Executive VP Stu Bresler, confirmed that the demand forecast jumped by 5,250 MW year-over-year, with nearly 100% of that increase attributed to data centers.

According to the report, the grid’s “transition gap” is driven by the rapid retirement of over 24,000 megawatts of coal generation, a loss that the pace of new entry for wind, solar, and storage cannot offset due to persistent supply chain bottlenecks and local siting delays.

This emergency fast-tracked the proposed Joshua Falls–Yeat Transmission Line Project, a 115-mile “greenfield” transmission line cutting through central Virginia and the Piedmont region to bring power from the Ohio River Valley to Northern Virginia. While the Joshua Falls–Yeat project is planned to cut through those regions, it does not benefit them, confirmed Rob Richardson, the Valley Link transmission communications lead, in a briefing with The Connection on April 10.

SEE UNDER THE WIRE, PAGE 6

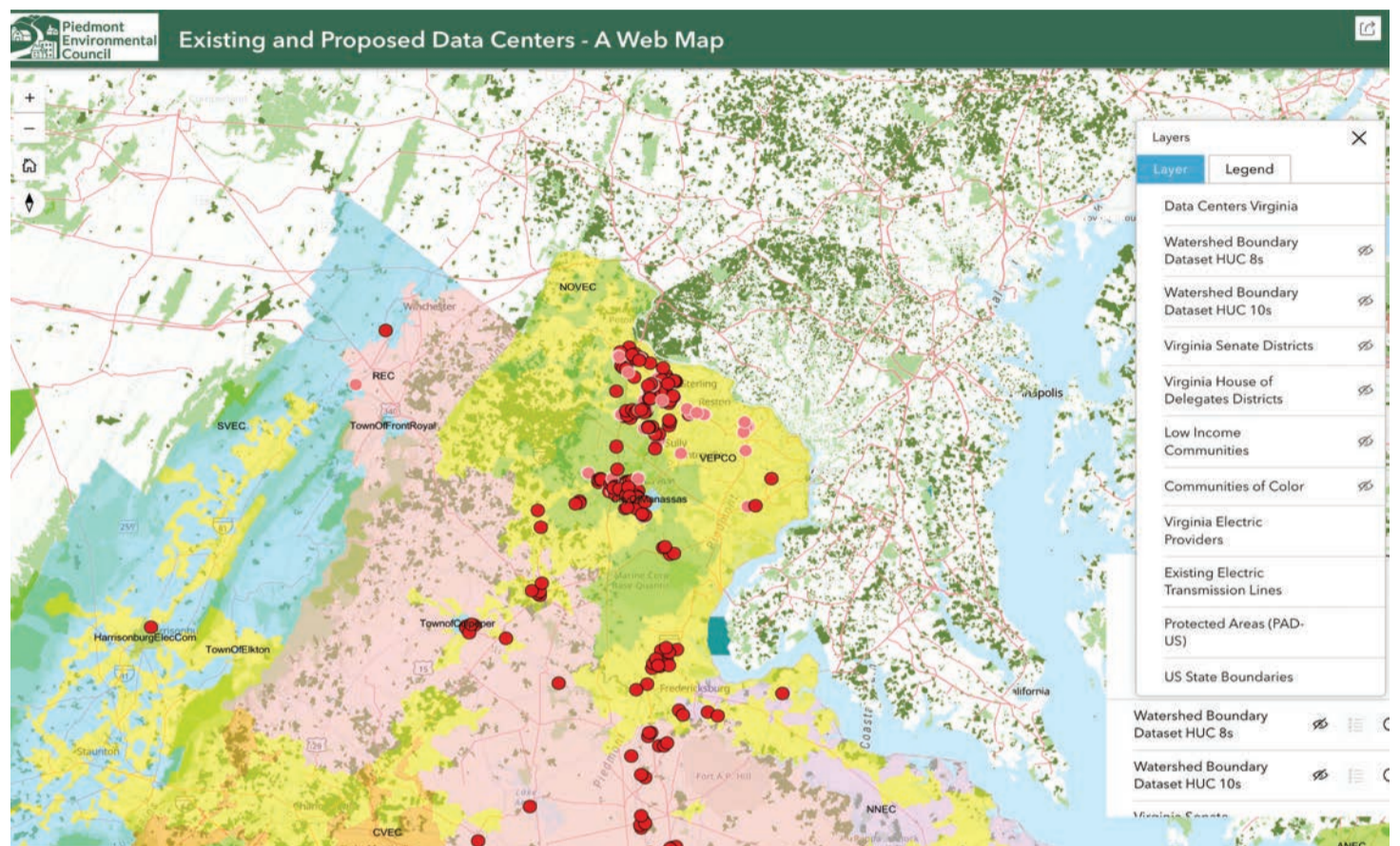


IMAGE VIA PIEDMONT ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

Existing and proposed data centers are concentrated in Northern Virginia, specifically in Loudoun, Prince William and Fairfax counties. The region remains the world’s largest data center hub, though infrastructure projects such as electric transmission towers and lines are increasingly expanding into central Virginia to meet rising power demands.

Opposing Sides on Redistricting Referendum

What happens if voters say “yes”?

The statewide referendum asks voters to decide on a constitutional amendment that would allow the General Assembly to adopt a new, temporary congressional redistricting map through Oct. 31, 2030. A “yes” vote supports a map passed by the General Assembly that could shift the partisan makeup of Virginia’s U.S. House delegation for the next three election cycles; a “no” vote keeps current maps in place.

The proposal came in reaction to GOP efforts in Texas and other red states to undertake mid-decade redistricting to try to keep the Republican slim majority in the U.S. House of Representatives after this November’s mid-term elections.

Since Gov. Abigail Spanberger signed House Bill 29 on Feb. 20, the new congressional maps have been approved. Once the election results are certified and if the majority of voters cast ballots checked “Yes,” the new boundaries in HB 29 take effect automatically. Candidates for the U.S. House in Virginia have already been campaigning as if the new districts are in place.

— MERCIA HOBSON



PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/ THE CONNECTION

Opposing signs stand in neighboring front yards in Fairfax County as early voting continues for the April 21 special election.

Existential Threat for Carter Farms

Interview with Michael Carter, Jr., Carter Farms, Orange County on proposed Valley Link project to carry electricity to NOVA, driven by the explosion of AI-ready data centers.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Carter Farms is a historic century farm in the Piedmont region, Unionville, in Orange County, Virginia. The farm specializes in growing ethnic, African tropical vegetables organically. Michael Carter Jr., an 11th-generation American farmer, is the fifth generation to work at Carter Farms, where he leads workshops on growing and marketing ethnic vegetables.

Carter Farms is under the wire of the Valley Link Project, a joint venture between Dominion Energy, FirstEnergy, and Transource. The proposed project, a “power interstate,” aims to move electricity from the Ohio River Valley to high-demand areas in Northern Virginia via the Joshua Falls – Yeat Project.

The proposed 115-mile, 765-kilovolt transmission line featuring lattice steel towers between 135 and 160 feet tall, would run from Campbell County to a new substation in Culpeper County. According to the project’s FAQ page, Valley Link will purchase easement rights from each affected property owner based on third-party appraisals and negotiations.

This infrastructure is a direct response to the massive energy demands driven by the explosion of AI-ready data centers in “Data Center Alley,” located in Loudoun, Prince William, and Fairfax counties in Northern Virginia, the global leader in the number of data centers and other factors. Dominion Energy projects that Virginia’s electricity demand will nearly double in the next 15 years, almost entirely due to these centers, according to Dominion Energy Virginia: Data Centers & Energy Demand (Piedmont Environmental Council Analysis).

As of April 2026, the project is in the public comment and route refinement phase. It has met significant resistance from residents and elected officials in rural counties such as Goochland, Louisa, and Orange, who say their landscapes are being sacrificed to power data centers in other regions and they get no benefit from it.

On March 13, Carter, who is opposed to the project, participated in a nearly 30-minute, one-on-one interview with The Connection Newspapers, whose readership



Michael Carter Jr., 11th generation farmer.



Carter family members in 1960.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CARTER FARMS

extends across Fairfax County, including parts of Data Center Alley, so readers and elected officials there and elsewhere can understand what is happening through Carter’s eyes.

Legacy, Family History, and Connection to the Land

Carter presents himself as the current family member carrying the responsibility of keeping the farm and its history alive. He explains: “If I leave, the farm is done and the legacy is ... done.” Carter frames his role as steward and connector to the land. “I feel that in this season it is my responsibility to be that connector ... I’m carrying a baton right now for the family.” Carter links his decision to remain on the farm directly to whether the transmission lines are built nearby. If they come, he said, “My son’s not being encouraged to stay, and they would know why I left. So I would have left because of my health ... and just fed up with the fact that you could do this in a rural community.”

Health Concerns

Carter emphasizes that he is “a very health-conscious person” and that the proposed routes would place large transmission towers very close to Carter Farms. “One [route would run my] neighbor’s property, in their pond, one right

behind our property... we’d [be] sandwiched between two of those giant, massive lattice steel towers,” he said. Carter added that because of past experiences with friends’ and family members’ childhood cancers, “I would ideally move out of the state or the country if that were to happen.”

Because he does not trust industry assurances about cancer risks, Carter said, “I would not want to put my grandchildren, my unborn grandchildren, in that particular environment where they could be exposed to a higher percentage [of the power frequency fields of a 765 KV line] than a normal person. ... From everyone who’s done studies with industry, nothing they produce causes cancer. So cigarettes don’t cause cancer. Asbestos didn’t cause cancer. Agent Orange didn’t cause cancer ... so nothing causes cancer when everybody gets it,” Carter said.

[Valley Link states in its Frequently Asked Questions, What is EMF? “Scientists across the globe have studied the potential health impacts of EMF since the 1970s and found no cause-and-effect link between EMF exposure from power lines and negative health impacts. The Valley Link team is studying the EMF of the conceptually designed line. ... Engineers will design lines to minimize EMF”]



The fields of Carter Farms, “a century farm in the Piedmont region, Unionville, Virginia, specializes in growing ethnic, African tropical vegetables organically.” The Valley Link Project, a joint venture between Dominion Energy, FirstEnergy, and Transource, aims to move electricity from the Ohio River Valley through the area of Carter Farms to high-demand areas in Northern Virginia via the Joshua Falls – Yeat Project’s 135-160 foot tall transmission lines.

History of Racial and Environmental Discrimination in Land Use

Carter places the current transmission line proposal in a longer history of “racial, environmental discrimination.” He specifically mentions Lake Anna and Black families whose homes and land were lost, referring to the creation of Lake Anna and the North Anna Power Station in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Authorities “removed several Black families,” Carter said. “They did take houses ... they didn’t take them in a sense of

living in; they took them in terms of flooding them and putting them under water.”

When Virginia Electric and Power Company (VEPCO, now Dominion Energy) moved to build the nuclear plant, they needed a massive cooling system. This required damming the North Anna River and flooding roughly 18,000 acres of land across Louisa, Orange, and Spotsylvania counties. Louisa County Historical Society and regional reports verify at least 14

SEE EXISTENTIAL THREAT, PAGE 7
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NEWS

Guilty Plea to DUI Involuntary Manslaughter

Car crash killed 16-year-old Centreville girl.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Driving home after drinking, Carlos Daniel Parada Hernandez, almost 23, didn't plan on getting into an accident and killing someone with his vehicle. But that's what happened when he drove his car over a double-yellow line and struck another vehicle head-on.

Some 90 minutes later, a 16-year-old Centreville girl – a student at Chantilly High – was pronounced dead. Meanwhile, Fairfax County police had charged Herndon resident Parada Hernandez with driving while intoxicated (DUI). But after she died, his charge was upgraded to DUI involuntary manslaughter.

The tragedy occurred Feb. 27, 2025 on a curvy, hilly and dark section of Pleasant Valley Road near Cox Farms in Centreville. Parada Hernandez has been in jail without bond since then. And on March 31 of this year, in Circuit Court, he pleaded guilty as charged.

At the time of the accident, he was driving a 2023 Toyota Corolla northbound on Pleas-

ant Valley while the teen was driving southbound in a 2013 Toyota Camry. Neither had passengers. The Connection isn't revealing the girl's name because she was a minor and the victim.

After continuances, the case against Parada Hernandez came to Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court on Jan. 16, 2026. At that time, he waived his right to a preliminary hearing. So Judge Divani Nadaraja certified his case to the grand jury, which then indicted him.

On March 31, he entered his guilty plea before Circuit Court Judge Michelle Kaminsky, who asked Parada Hernandez, now 24, a series of questions. "Do you fully understand the charge against you?" she asked, to which he replied, "Yes, Your Honor."

"Are you entering your guilty plea freely and voluntarily – and because you are indeed guilty?" asked Kaminsky. Again, he answered affirmatively. The judge also made sure Parada Hernandez understood that, by doing so, he was giving up his right to a trial and to defend himself against the charge.

SEE GUILTY PLEA, PAGE 15

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Under the Wire: NOVA's Data Center Growth Creates Trilemma



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/ THE CONNECTION

A data center in Fairfax County is under construction in Northern Virginia's Data Center Alley in Nov. 2025. The region is the global leader in data center concentration, though rapid expansion is now pushing the Valley Link transmission line project into central Virginia and its Piedmont regions to address power grid constraints confirmed by PJM.

FROM PAGE 3

On the same day, PJM Interconnection LLC announced an emergency proposal to procure 15 gigawatts of new power supplies to address potential electricity shortages driven by the artificial intelligence boom. The 15 gigawatts is a specific target established in the Statement of Principles, first proposed in January and finalized for the April emergency track, between PJM and the National Energy Dominance Council. It aims to support \$15 billion in new power plants through an emergency auction slated for September 2026.

In a press statement released Jan. 16, 2026, PJM officials warned that the grid wasn't built for this pace of demand, and new generation simply can't come on-line fast enough to keep up. The letter outlines a new "Expedited Interconnection Track" designed to fast-track shovel-ready power projects by August 2026. The situation has become so serious that the Board is now encouraging voluntary "Bring Your Own New Generation" (BYONG) and has directed PJM staff to implement its proposal and associated matrix components related to the Expedited Interconnection Track. This board-approved plan aims to fast-track 15 gigawatts of new power supplies by bypassing traditional interconnection queues for data centers that provide their own generation.

The rapid expansion of Northern Virginia's Data Center Alley, spanning Loudoun, Prince William, and Fairfax counties, coupled with the proposed Valley Link Project, has

created a policy trilemma where economic growth, grid reliability, and land sovereignty stand in direct opposition. The project proposes 765-kilovolt transmission lines, the highest voltage class in commercial use in the United States and among the highest globally.

First proposed in February 2026, the line is designed to tap into the Ohio River Valley's energy reserves, as that region remains a primary hub for large-scale power generation capable of offsetting Northern Virginia's current 6,625-MW deficit. The project is in the early stages of development, and Valley Link is studying potential routes, including those on privately owned greenlands.

Regarding the infrastructure, Jeff McKay, chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, told The Connection on April 10 that the county recognizes the infrastructure needed to support data

center growth affects multiple communities and supports state-level discussions to ensure benefits and impacts are shared fairly.

Fiscal Health: The Driver for Northern Virginia

The proposed steel towers of the transmission lines would be located approximately 100 miles from the Fairfax County Government Center. While Northern Virginia's Data Center Alley jurisdictions collect over \$1.5 billion in annual data center tax revenue, the proposed infrastructure in Goochland, Orange, and Louisa counties involves permanent steel structures on private land in exchange for one-time payments for 200-foot-wide easements. Regarding a recent data center project propos-

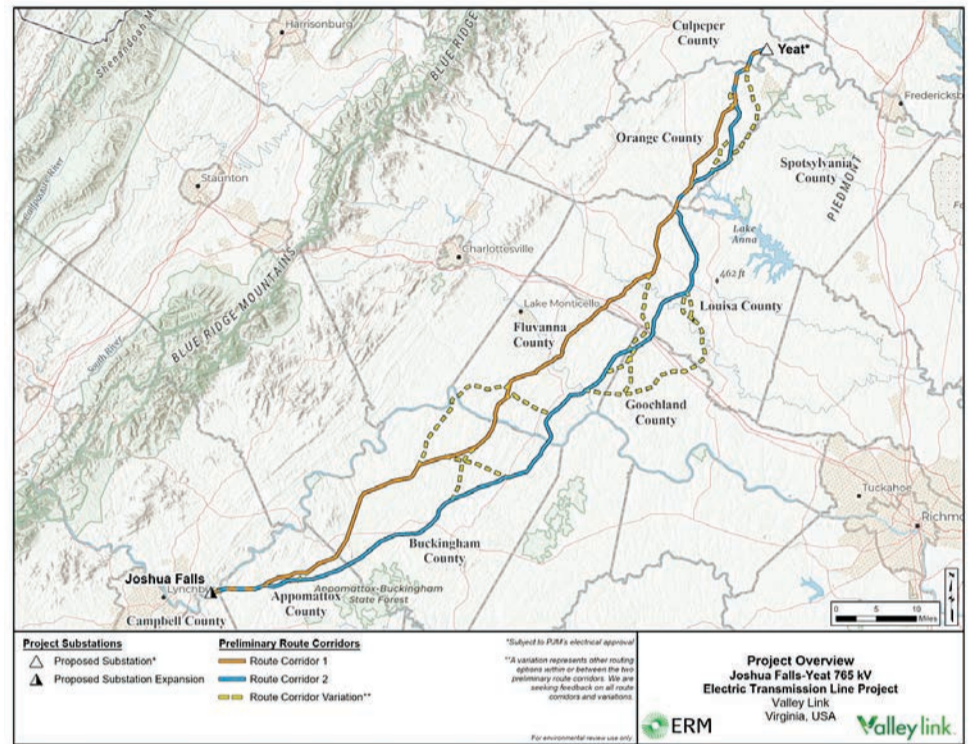


IMAGE VIA VALLEY LINK

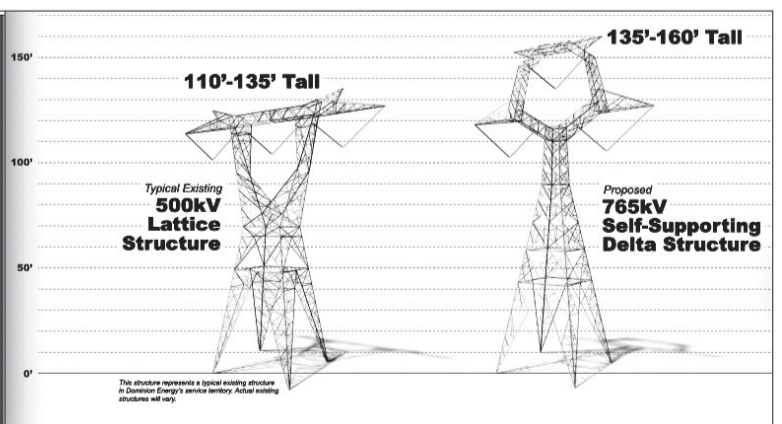
The project overview map illustrates the preliminary route corridors for the proposed Joshua Falls-Yeat electric transmission project in Central Virginia. The proposed line spans several counties, including Culpeper, Orange, Spotsylvania, Louisa, Fluvanna, Goochland, Buckingham, and Appomattox. Notable infrastructure includes a new substation, labeled Yeat, in Culpeper County and a proposed substation expansion at the southern end of the route in Appomattox County.

al, McKay told The Connection on April 10 that the sale of 41.7 acres of the Fairfax County Police Academy land to SCG Global Holdings for \$166.8 million makes it a "natural fit" for industrial use and data centers. The Board approved the purchase agreement on March 17, 2026, with a projected closing date in spring 2027. McKay noted that the opportunity "was not something we sought" and that it provides "funds for capital improvements to modernize police training facilities, saving our taxpayers money."

Fiscal health is the first interest in the Northern Virginia Data

Center Trilemma. It is the primary driver for Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William counties. The conflict is that the counties rely on the data center equipment tax to fund schools, police and housing affordability. In Fairfax County, tax revenue is increasingly earmarked for Affordable Housing Development and Investment funds to combat the high cost of living in the region. In Loudoun County, tax revenue funds have built 36 new schools in 15 years, a growth spurt supported largely by this corporate tax base. In Prince William County, data centers contributed over \$166

SEE NOVA'S DATA CENTERS, PAGE 7



SCREENSHOT VALLEY LINK

Typical structure comparisons for the Joshua Falls - Yeat 765 kV Electric Transmission line project with final design subject to change pending public, engineering, and regulatory review.

Existential Threat for Carter Farms

FROM PAGE 4

families, with some records indicating nine Black families specifically were displaced.

Carter noted that the Lake Anna loss has not been publicly recognized: “At least nine families ... African American families that were displaced, which never gets talked about and they don’t have any type of monuments or any type of recognition for that. ... Those families and that land is lost. Their history is lost, their heritage is lost,” Carter said.

Colonial Pipeline and ‘Pennies’ for the Easement

Carter explains that this is not the first time his family’s land may be carved for infrastructure. “Through our farm now runs the Colonial Pipeline, which is gas; it runs from Pennsylvania to Texas. We got pennies for it,” he said. Carter recalled the payment as

insignificant for the three or four acres taken: “We may have gotten \$1,500 an acre.” He added, “That one-time payment... is not the same as we sold it in 2025 or kept it, you know, for the accruing of land value.” If land is taken for Valley Link, Carter said the payment should include some kind of stake in the company. “To pay a very high premium price, in addition to shares in the company ... so that as the company grows, we grow financially.”

Alternative Routing: Existing Highway / Route 29 Corridor

When asked whether routing along existing highways would allow him to stay on the farm, Carter pointed to Route 29. “It’s going from Campbell County, which is Lynchburg, straight to Culpeper.” Carter notes there is already a right of way: “The space is there ... there’s not a lot of houses. ...

The houses are spaced out well. There’s a lot of trees, woodlands, mountains, etc. It’s not a heavily populated route ... not in comparison to what you’re dealing with here,” he said.

Carter contrasts this with the current proposal: “You’re impacting a lot of individuals across nine counties. You’re not impacting as much going down 29.”

Tyranny, Institutions, and What Is ‘Sacred’ in Virginia

Carter discusses the Virginia motto, Sic Semper Tyrannis, and the idea of resisting tyranny. “We had tyrannical institutions in the form of the enslavement of Africans. But there was this idea that land was what we sought. We stole it from the indigenous people here ... and now we’re having it stolen again for the sake of the devaluing of our communities.” Carter sees data centers and trans-

mission lines as part of a pattern where large projects override local communities. “[Data centers are] pretty much an institution of humanity as we know it.” He added, “I’m always curious about Virginia, what is sacred anymore. I don’t see what’s sacred anymore, besides data centers.”

Data Centers, Future Generations, and Message to State Regulators

Carter makes it clear that he sees the primary beneficiary as data centers, not residents. “At the end of the day, that’s what all of this is for, for electricity, for data centers, which they’ve admitted is not for human, not for citizen consumption.” When asked what he would say to state regulators and county supervisors in Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William, Carter said: “Stop. For the sake of their grandchildren, stop building

data centers. Stop building data centers for the sake of their grandchildren. Forget about you, forget about your children, your grandchildren, your great-grandchildren. Because, unfortunately, you can’t eat a data center. You aren’t going to be able to work in a data center. ... At the end of the day, it’s destroying much more than it’s building up.”

Carter adds that these projects are destroying histories “of families and the fabric of this commonwealth, of this land, for the sake of data centers.” He concluded, “I’m sure that’s not what the indigenous Americans had in mind. That’s not what the Founding Fathers had in mind. That’s not what the enslaved Africans had in mind, for this land to be bought by machines and those ... who desire much more ... to be wealthy than ... keep and maintain [as] the stewards of the land.”

NOVA’s Data Center Growth Creates Trilemma

FROM PAGE 6

million in tax revenue in a single year, funding parks, libraries and public safety infrastructure. For these jurisdictions, stopping data center expansion is a fiscal impossibility.

Land Sovereignty: The Toll on Central Virginia

Land Sovereignty in central Virginia and the Piedmont region is framed as the second interest in the Northern Virginia Data Center Trilemma. On Friday, April 3, representatives from localities impacted by the proposed Valley Link Project met in Louisa County to discuss local impacts and potential paths forward. Attendees included board representatives and staff from Louisa, Orange, Appomattox, Spotsylvania, Culpeper, Fluvanna, Buckingham and Goochland.

Residents in Goochland and Louisa counties are taking a stand to protect their homes, farms and greenland. Local leaders noted that while future power needs across the state are significant, the proposed Valley Link project could negatively affect homes, valuable agricultural and forest lands, and businesses. Property values could be severely reduced, and viewsheds could be irreparably affected. J. Bryan Nicol, Orange County Supervisor and Chairman of the Board, stated that the proposed Valley Link Project is slated to meet electricity demand in Northern Virginia with little to no benefit to rural localities along its path, and that they are not convinced this is the right solution. This sentiment was echoed in Goochland County, where the Board of Supervisors highlighted the threat to agricultural and forested districts in Goochland’s Resolution in Opposition.

Environmental stewardship is a third interest in the Northern Virginia Data Center Trilemma. The Piedmont Environmental

Council (PEC) reports that if the project is constructed, “it would clear thousands of acres, impact hundreds of property owners and irreparably change an entire region.” These steel towers stand approximately the height of the Statue of Liberty and are planned for 200-foot-wide easements taken by eminent domain. For Orange County property owners Casey and Jason Cashell, the proposed line is slated to cut through Mayhurst Estate, a historic plantation built in 1859 by Colonel John Willis, the great-nephew of James Madison. The Cashells have maintained in regional briefings that the 765-kV project would establish permanent industrial infrastructure on the grounds of the estate, which currently serves as a premier historic agritourism destination and a site on the National Register of Historic Places.

This planned route also affects Michael Carter Jr., a 5th-generation farmer whose family has owned Carter Farms in Orange County since 1910. As a designated Century Farm, the property serves as a hub for “Agriculture,” an ethnic vegetable and teaching platform dedicated to the history of Black agriculture. Carter has noted that the intrusion of high-voltage industrial towers would fundamentally compromise the farm’s mission as an agritourism destination and a sanctuary for Black land legacy. The Cashells have yet to respond to The Connection’s requests for comment. See related story on Carter Farms.

Grid Reliability and Energy Demand

Dominion Energy spokesperson Craig Carper, speaking on behalf of Valley Link, told The Connection in an April 10 briefing that they are seeing “explosive demand in energy growth, with data centers among several key drivers, but not the whole pic-

ture,” pointing to population growth, increased electrification, and more extreme weather. Valley Link communications lead Rob Richardson added that they can’t deny data centers are a key driver for new generation and transmission, but reliability is the most important factor; the grid faces serious challenges five to ten years ahead if this infrastructure is not built.

Dominion’s 2026 Powering Virginia Report states that “new infrastructure ... is needed to ensure we can continue to reliably serve you.” On Jan. 16, PJM Interconnection issued a board letter outlining emergency actions to address a “supply-and-demand imbalance that has the potential to threaten grid reliability.” Carper added, “This project is a need, not a want.” Adam McGuire, project manager for Dominion Energy on the Valley Link project via Transource Energy, stated that they “do not take houses” and that co-location opportunities, including highway corridors such as U.S. 29, were rejected because the impacts were too high.

Legislative Framework and Ethical Debates

In early 2026, the Boards of Supervisors in Loudoun, Prince William, and Fairfax counties worked to secure “grandfathered” status for pending data center projects before Gov. Abigail Spanberger signed new regulations on March 13. This “Under the Wire” sprint, which included the Fairfax land deal involving the sale of 41.7 acres of police academy land for \$166.8 million, is part of a regional pattern in which county boards processed rezonings before new state mandates. Legislative Framework HB 889, introduced by Del. Irene Shin (D-Fairfax), requires utilities to prioritize existing utility and highway corridors before proposing paths through private land.

While some residents have requested burying the lines, burying 765-kV lines can cost 10 to 20 times more than overhead systems. At this capacity, underground lines often require wider easements than overhead lines due to heat dissipation requirements; unlike overhead lines cooled by air, buried cables must be encased in massive concrete duct banks, similar to European high-voltage models, which creates a more invasive and permanent physical footprint. Consequently, the project partners (Dominion, FirstEnergy, and Transource) have categorized undergrounding as a “non-starter” for a 765-kV project. The Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions (FACS) has framed the project as a moral issue, stating that prosperity cannot be built on the “sacrifice zones” of our neighbors in the Piedmont.

Regional Resistance and Legal Paths

On March 16, the Louisa County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved Louisa County’s Resolution of Opposition and filed a Resolution of Opposition with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) on March 20. Terri Walden, advocate against Valley Link, told The Connection that the project must be stopped as the Virginia General Assembly has thus far failed to deal with the source of this problem — the overpopulation of data centers.

The General Assembly reconvenes on April 22. Sen. Louise Lucas (D-Portsmouth), chair of the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee, has led the push to end the state’s sales and use tax exemption for data center equipment. Official state data from the January 2026 RD40 Report (Table 1) show that the reported tax benefit for the data center industry surged to \$1,941,390,000 in FY 2025, a significant increase from \$1.29 billion the previous year.

Governor Vetos SB 756

Surovell, McKay and No Fairfax Casino release statements.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Key players in the legislative battle over Senate Bill 756, titled “Casino gaming; eligible host localities,” weighed in with statements April 9 following Gov. Abigail Spanberger’s veto of the legislative vehicle to authorize a casino in Fairfax County by offering a referendum for the county to hold.

The veto effectively halts this year’s effort to bring a gambling hub to Tysons, sparking a divide between state leadership and local officials. While the governor’s decision was hailed by county leadership as a victory for local authority, proponents argued it was a missed economic opportunity for Northern Virginia.

Senate Majority Leader Scott Surovell, D-Fairfax, said, “I am deeply disappointed by Governor Spanberger’s veto of SB 756. This bill was Northern Virginia labor’s number one legislative priority — supported by every major building trades union in the region — and it carried the endorsement of the Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce. ... While we stood still, Maryland ran. The Sphere — one of the most iconic and transformative entertainment venues in the world — is going to MGM National Harbor, not Tysons.”

Surovell added that the bill “was a permission slip, not a mandate” and that “Fairfax voters would have had the final say. Instead,

that choice has been taken away from them by the stroke of a pen.”

Jeff McKay, chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, released a statement the same day as did the No Fairfax Casino Coalition regarding Spanberger’s veto. On behalf of the board and more than 1 million county residents, McKay said, “I would like to thank Governor Spanberger for her veto of SB 756, also known as the casino bill. ... [which] demonstrates the Governor’s respect for local authority.” He noted the governor provided the “opportunity to outline the Board of Supervisors’ and our residents’ concerns,” and that “residents have been clear in their overwhelming opposition to a casino in Fairfax County.”

The No Fairfax Casino Coalition commended Spanberger for vetoing the bill. “Governor Spanberger made the right decision,” the coalition said. Steering committee chair Lynne Mulston praised the veto for rejecting a “special carveout” for Tysons, saying the decision protects public trust and sound governance. The coalition noted the casino’s economic benefits were unverified and lacked independent proof. “The legislation offered unverified fiscal assumptions and questionable economic benefits while ignoring likely added costs ... [and] genuine local input.”

The next morning, Mulston shared “a few thoughts” with the Connection. Mulston called Surovell’s persistence “disappointing” and noted his “continued reliance on revenue projections that have no credible evidentiary foundation.” The coalition added that they “support a vibrant entertainment district for Northern Virginia,” but “a world-class entertainment destination does not require a casino,” and that the “long term plan for Tysons and Fairfax County should not be ignored.”

It’s International Dark Sky Week

Check out “Dark Sky Kits” at county libraries.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

International Dark Sky Week runs from April 13-19 and the Fairfax County Park Authority is asking residents to dim non-essential outdoor lights to protect migrating birds. According to the county’s recent “Turn Lights Out for Birds” proclamation, dimming non-essential lights can reduce bird-window collision deaths by up to 80%.

Since Fairfax lies along the Atlantic Flyway, local action during this window is critical for conservation. The Park Authority is ac-

tively hosting events at local parks, such as Observatory Park at Turner Farm, to raise awareness about the impact of light pollution.

According to the Park Authority, “Artificial lights can turn [bird migration] journey into a confusing and dangerous trek. Bright lights on tall buildings and city skyglow attract the feathered travelers, leading to window collisions or exhaustion from circling illuminated structures.”

A key event for the week is the “Sponsored Night Sky Viewing” on Saturday, April 18. However, residents are encouraged to check the Turner Farm Activity Search early, as these programs often fill up quickly. The Park Authority encourages residents to use red-light flashlights, which are available in “Dark Sky Kits” at county libraries. Unlike white light, red light allows for navigation without disrupting the night vision of humans or the flight paths of “feathered travel-




Bright city lights and skyglow can confuse birds migrating along the Atlantic Flyway, leading to fatal window collisions. Local conservation efforts this month are critical for their safe passage.

ers.”

Residents with library cards can place a hold on a kit through the FCPL online catalog and pick it up

at any of the 23 library branches. Each kit includes a Sky Quality Meter to measure sky brightness, a red-light flashlight to preserve

night vision, and planispheres in both English and Spanish. Kits can be borrowed for up to three weeks.



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
COUNTY OF FAIRFAX
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA 22035

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 9, 2026

Chairman Statement on Governor Spanberger’s Veto of Casino Bill

Fairfax, VA - On behalf of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and our over 1 million residents, I would like to thank Governor Spanberger for her veto of SB756, also known as the casino bill. Governor Spanberger was gracious with her time in affording me the opportunity to outline the Board of Supervisors’ and our residents’ concerns on this matter. This veto demonstrates the Governor’s respect for local authority and being responsive to those we represent. Our residents have been clear in their overwhelming opposition to a casino in Fairfax County.

SCREENSHOT VIA INSTAGRAM

A partial view of Chairman Jeff McKay’s statement on Gov. Spanberger’s veto of Senate Bill 756 on behalf of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.

SENATE OF VIRGINIA

SCOTT A. SUROVELL
MAJORITY LEADER
34TH SENATORIAL DISTRICT
PART OF FAIRFAX COUNTY

P.O. BOX 289
MOUNT VERNON, VIRGINIA 22121



COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:
COURTS OF JUSTICE, CHAIR
COMMERCE AND LABOR
FINANCE AND APPROPRIATIONS
REHABILITATION AND SOCIAL
SERVICES
RULES

April 9, 2026

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: don@scottsurovell.org

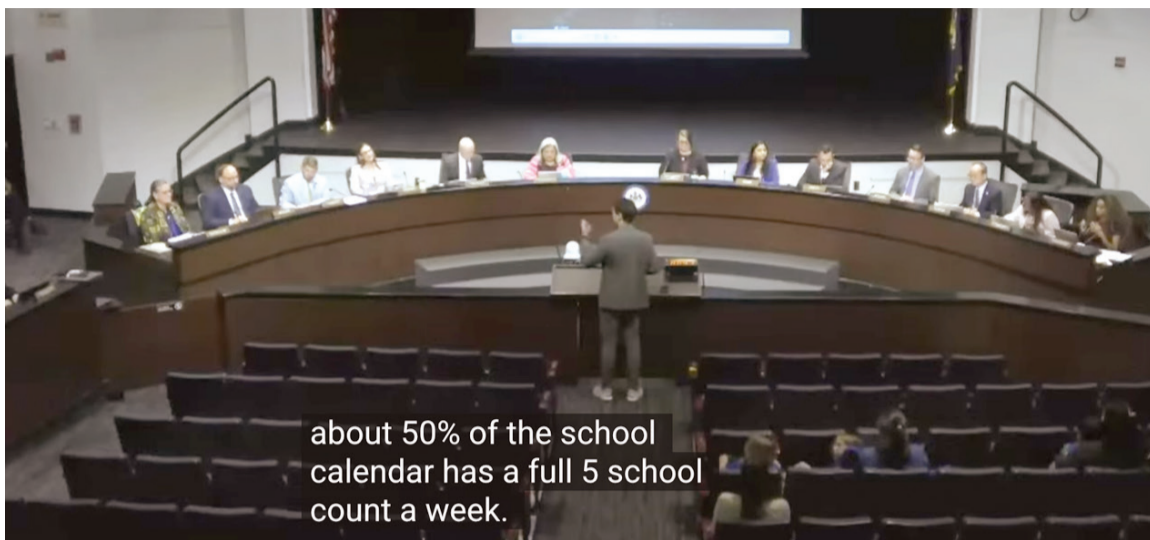
Senate Majority Leader, Sen. Scott Surovell Releases Statement on the Governor’s Veto of SB756

Mount Vernon, VA- Senate Majority Leader Scott Surovell (D-34th) issued the following statement today in response to Governor Spanberger’s veto of Senate Bill 756, legislation that would have made Fairfax County eligible to host a casino entertainment complex in Tysons:

“I am deeply disappointed by Governor Spanberger’s veto of SB 756. This bill was Northern Virginia labor’s number one legislative priority — supported by every major building trades union in the region — and it carried the endorsement of the Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce. Critically, it earned genuine bipartisan support, passing the Virginia Senate 25-13 and the House of Delegates 55-41 with votes from both Democrats and Republicans who recognized the enormous economic opportunity this legislation represented for Northern Virginia and for the Commonwealth.”

SCREENSHOT VIA X

A partial view of Sen. Scott Surovell’s statement on expressing disappointment in Gov. Spanberger’s veto of Senate Bill 756.



about 50% of the school calendar has a full 5 school count a week.

SCREENSHOT VIA VIDEO 4/9/2026 FCPS SCHOOL BOARD MEETING.

Anthony Lampkin speaks on behalf of his two children at Wolf Trap Elementary during the April 9 Fairfax County School Board meeting.

FCPS Board Approves 2026-27 School Year Calendar

Forty days off during school year is a flashpoint for some parents; 33 approved for upcoming year.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Fairfax County School Board finalized the upcoming school year calendar by approving a motion from at-large member Kyle McDaniel with a vote of 8-4 at its April 9 meeting. Fairfax County Public Schools is an outlier in Northern Virginia with significantly more student holidays than neighboring districts.

The decision followed extensive debate regarding instructional time, federal holidays, early release schedules and Indigenous Peoples Day, incorporating three specific motions intended to improve instructional consistency and address calendar concerns.

According to McDaniel in his school board bulletin update the next day, the 2026-27 school year calendar will reduce the number of off days from a “a record-setting 40 days off ... to 33 next year” and “adds three more full five-day weeks.”

The largest change for the next school year that the board approved is the return of Veterans Day as a full instructional day.

“I’ve had many conversations with parents and teachers in the community over the past few weeks, and it’s clear that this year has been uniquely difficult with a record-setting 40 days off,” McDaniel said. “We need to carefully review the school calendar to be responsive to the needs of our diverse communities around holidays and ensure we maximize instructional time, while still balancing the needs of our teachers

for planning and professional development.”

According to current 2025-26 student holiday counts across the region, while Fairfax County has 40 days off, Arlington County has 33 days off; Prince William has 32 days off; Loudoun County has 30 days off and Alexandria City has 29 days off.

The board also committed to further calendar policy work in May and issued a directive for the superintendent to bring recommended calendars for 2027-2029 to the board in July. A follow-on motion was passed directing the superintendent to present recommended calendars for the 2027-2028 and 2028-2029 school years at the July 9, 2026, meeting.

During the public hearing portion of the meeting before the vote, Anthony Lampkin spoke to represent his two children at Wolf Trap Elementary. He expressed his concerns regarding the current school calendar, noting it as the “worst school calendar” and advocating for a “data-driven approach on how to solve the problem.” He said, “I believe we are at about 50 percent of the school calendar having a full five-day week.”

Stephanie Lundquist provided video testimony. “Half of our school weeks are not five-day weeks like this one; a three-day school week for no apparent reason directly after spring break,” Lundquist said. “Aside from the learning disruption for some low-income families, to pay for more childcare is regressive and inequitable. You claim to believe in the concept of equity, but what about the children from low-income households?”

Kimberly Adams, an FCPS staff member and parent, urged the board to reestablish a calendar committee and prioritize student and staff well-being over five-day weeks. “I would encourage you to listen closely to the community and offer room for public discussion at least one full year in advance of any proposed changes,” Adams said.

Past issues of

THE CONNECTION
NEWSPAPERS

back to 2008
are available at

<http://connectionarchives.com/PDF>

Route 7 Widening Fairfax County

Virtual Public Information Meeting

Wednesday, April 29, 2026, 7 p.m.

<https://www.vdot.virginia.gov/Route7Tysons>

Find out about a project that will widen Route 7 (Leesburg Pike) between Route 123 (Chain Bridge Road) and I-495 (Capital Beltway) to provide multimodal improvements including making room for future Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). The project also includes replacing the service roads in select locations with shared-use paths; adding turn lanes on Route 7 from Route 123 to International Drive/Gallows Road; replacing/upgrading traffic signals along the corridor as needed; improving vehicle safety and reducing congestion with access management; and installing high-visibility crosswalks, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) ramps, and Accessible Pedestrian Signals at numerous intersections and ramps throughout the corridor. This project will involve changes in limited access control.

The meeting will be held as a **virtual/online meeting**. Information for accessing and participating in the virtual meeting is available at <https://www.vdot.virginia.gov/Route7Tysons>. The project team will make a presentation beginning at 7 p.m. and answer questions after the presentation.

Review project information and meeting details on the webpage above or during business hours at VDOT’s Northern Virginia District Office, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030. Please call ahead at 703-259-3232 or TTY/TDD 711 to make an appointment with appropriate personnel.

Give your comments during the meeting, or by **May 13, 2026**, via the comment form on the project website, by mail to Mr. Scott Ruffner, P.E., Virginia Department of Transportation, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030 or by email to meetingcomments@VDOT.virginia.gov. Please reference “Route 7 Widening” in the subject line.

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State Project: 0007-029-637, C501, P101, R201

UPC: 123833

Federal: NHPP-5B01(598)

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'It Has Everything – Action, Romance, Coming of Age'

Westfield High presents the musical, 'Anastasia.'

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Set in both Paris and 1920s Russia, "Anastasia" is about a young woman named Anya who teams up with conmen Dimitry and Vlad to pose as the Grand Duchess Anastasia Romanov. Her whole family has been killed in a political takeover, and her grandmother hasn't seen her since she was 6.

But if the grandmother accepts Anya as Anastasia, Anya can claim her inheritance and the conmen will reap a reward for uniting them. The twist is that Anya has lost her memory and really has no idea who she is. But while seeking her true identity, she just may fall in love and find her family.

That's the premise of Westfield High's upcoming production of this musical. Show times are April 30 and May 1, 2 and 8 at 7 p.m.; and May 3 and 9 at noon. The May 1 performance will include an American Sign Language interpreter. Tickets are \$15, adults; \$10, students, at the door or via www.westfieldtheatre.com.

It features a cast and crew of 90, plus a 15-piece student orchestra. "This show has more dance numbers than our previous musicals," said Director Christine Maxted. "It has ballet, folk dancing, jazz and waltz. Students from all areas of the Performing Arts Department are involved. Band, choral and orchestra students are part of the cast and crew.

"For some, it's their first musical production, and others have been doing it all four years of high school. So there's a wide range of talent and experience. Not only are our actors incredibly skilled, but they're constantly teaching others to act – focusing on the success of the whole ensemble, rather than on individual performances."

Two of the leads have understudies who'll perform in their own show, May 8. And, said Maxted, "I've admired the collaboration between the leads and understudies to create their characters. They're building the show together. Even though it's not a Disney musical, it has a Disney princess feel to it. There are themes of family and humor in a story about belonging and identity, in addition to it being a visual spectacle. It's a lighthearted, historical drama; but it's meant for ages 10 and up, due to scenes of political tension."

Actors wear period clothing. There'll be 1920s flapper dresses, ballgowns for the Russian royalty and ballet attire for dancers in the "Swan Lake" number. Russian peasants wear raggedy clothes, and there are also costumes for the Soviet soldiers. Scenes take place inside a Russian palace, a train station, an opera house, a Russian nightclub, on the streets of Paris and inside a rotating train car.

Portraying Anya is junior Kiera McCrea. "She's had amnesia since waking up in a hospital as a child," said McCrea. "So she's



From left Clark Dalton (Vlad), Nikko Luspo (Dimitry) and Kiera McCrea (Anya) are on the train from Russia, while Rebecca Zanotti (dowager empress) awaits their arrival.

on a journey to find out who she is and can become. She wants to find her true home, love and family.

"Anya's fiery and witty and gives quick retorts to anyone doubting her or giving her a hard time. She distrusts people at first and lives on the streets as a poor streetsweeper. But she's also confident and determined and doesn't give up on her dream."

Loving her role, McCrea said, "Anya goes through so much. Dimitry and Vlad trick her into working for them by telling her they'll help her discover her identity. But eventually, she has memories of her past and starts believing she really is Anastasia. I also love her songs; they're fun to sing and beautiful.

"This show takes stamina because I'm onstage almost the whole time. But it's my dream role because I think Anya's not a damsel in distress and can fend for herself. In Paris, she discovers her feminine side, wears beautiful dresses, sees the beauty of Paris and realizes she fits in – especially when she's convinced she really is Anastasia. I enjoy portraying both the strong, determined side and the feminine dreamer."

McCrea's favorite song is "Paris Holds the Key to Your Heart," sung by the cast to open act two. "The choreography includes lifts and turns, and it's an upbeat song signaling the shift from Russia to Paris," she explained. "It welcomes Anya to a bright, colorful world she's never known and inspires hope in everyone. This show has something for everyone, including history, gorgeous costumes and innovative choreography that's exciting to watch."

Senior Nikko Luspo plays Dimitry. "He's a poor peasant but hopes to claim the reward money for bringing 'Anastasia' to her grandmother," said Luspo. "He's a leader, and it's difficult to change his mind once it's made up about something. He's also a scheming con artist and a pickpocket who really loves his country, Russia."

However, added Luspo, "He grows throughout the story to become a totally different person. And I like his connections and interactions with people around him, such as Anastasia and his best friend, Vlad."

astasia's grandmother]."

"Vlad's the comic relief, getting laughs from the way he delivers jokes with poise and finesse," continued Dalton. "And his funniest moments are when he's the focal point of a joke."

Dalton's favorite song is "We'll Go from There," sung by Anastasia, Dimitry, Vlad and a group of passengers on a train leaving Russia. "It's about the anticipation of going to France," he said. "And my part, about looking forward to Lily seeing me again, is especially funny."

Dalton said audiences will particularly like the show's lighting – designed by Ella Mescher, who's won lighting awards at the state theater competition – and acting. "We challenge each other to make bold acting choices and think about how we'd act if we were really our characters," he said. "And all that leads to a surreal, once-in-a-lifetime experience so immersive, people will feel like they, too, are begging on the streets of Russia and complaining about the new regime."

Junior Rebecca Zanotti plays the dowager empress. "At the beginning, she's a loving grandmother, sneaking cookies to Anastasia," said Zanotti. "But after the revolution, she's withdrawn and grieving for her lost loved ones. When it happened, she was already living in Paris. Now she's tired and world-weary, and her last hope is Anastasia – although she's ready to accept that she's dead.

"Many others have pretended to be Anastasia to get the reward, making her bitter and angry.

She acts regal but she's spent. But once she meets Anya and eventually accepts that she's really Anastasia, she's happy and has new hope in life. The knowledge that she's alive is enough to bring her peace."

Zanotti loves her role because she likes showing her character's "different stages of grief and the various faces she presents. To the world, she's regal; with Lily, she drops her mask; and with Anastasia, she's overjoyed because all

her years of searching and grieving have led to [their reunion]. So I get to portray a wide range of emotions."

Zanotti's favorite number is "Quartet at the Ballet," which she sings part of with Dimitry, Anastasia and a Russian officer. "It has a beautiful, four-part harmony, and the ensemble comes in at the end," she said. "And it's the climax of each of the singers' character arcs."

Audiences will love this show, said Zanotti, because "It has everything – action, romance, coming of age. Kids will love the beautiful princess, and adults will like the themes and historical aspects. And our tech is magnificent, including a handmade music box and a train. The set, props, lighting, costumes – plus the acting, singing and dancing – all come together to create a spectacular show." www.connectionnewspapers.com



Anastasia and her grandmother are reunited. From left are Kiera McCrea and Rebecca Zanotti.

He especially enjoys the number, "Journey to the Past," sung by Anya. "It shows how hopeful she becomes once she's in Paris," he said. "And the music builds up to a really long, dramatic note at the end."

Regarding the audience, Luspo said, "The actors are insanely talented, and the show will be really fun for people to see. The songs, singers and dancers are all so good, and the set is gorgeous. And to top it off, the story is terrific."

Portraying Vlad is senior Clark Dalton. "Vlad's a fraud who gets through life by telling jokes," said Dalton. "He doesn't work very hard; and in Russia, he pretended to be a count. But now that the czar is dead, he roughs it on the street with his buddy Dimitry. He acts overconfident but he also has a soft spot for Lily, a countess who's the lady-in-waiting for the dowager empress [An-

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Love, Disguises, Mistaken Identities and Lots of Laughs

Chantilly High's Shakespearean comedy, 'As You Like It.'

BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

A Shakespearean comedy set in modern day, "As You Like It" is Chantilly High's upcoming play. Featuring a cast and crew of almost 70, it's also the school's Cappies entry.

"It combines classic Shakespeare comedy tropes – mistaken identities and disparate characters – and gives the feel of a contemporary rom-com," said Director Andy Shaw. "Love interests meet cute, are forced apart, face obstacles, but are eventually reunited and fall in love."

The curtain rises Thursday, Friday, Saturday, April 23-25, at 7 p.m.; and Sunday, April 26, at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$15, adults; \$10, students, at the door or via chantillydrama.org.

"We hadn't done a mainstage Shakespeare since 2019, and this was the play I did my graduate thesis on," said Shaw. "Shakespeare is always a challenge because of the language so, first, the students had to work hard to make sure they understood what they're saying so they could communicate it to the audience."

"They've also done a great job of making these characters their own. They're making big, physical movements and finding the comedy in what Shakespeare wrote and in their own interpretations of their characters."

In the original story, Duke Frederick banishes the former duke – his brother, Duke Senior – and his daughter Rosalind from the family's castle and they flee to the forest. But Duke Frederick's daughter Celia and Rosalind are best friends, as well as cousins, so Celia leaves with them. In Chantilly's version, a corporate office symbolizes the castle, with the actors changing of fices to signify the shift.

In addition, a CEO had died, leaving his money to his sons, Oliver and Orlando. But the older one, Oliver, takes everything they were supposed to share, leaving Orlando poor, working at a lowly office job and set up to fail. But people like Orlando because he's such a good person with lots of potential, so Oliver then tries to kill Orlando, forcing him to head to the forest, too.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF BELLA RAFFERTY
From left are Bella Caltagirone and Elle Galhouse as Orlando and Rosalind, respectively.

Orlando and Rosalind had met earlier and fallen deeply in love. But in the forest, Rosalind disguises herself as a man named Ganymede to find out how Orlando really feels about women and her. And eventually, even Oliver and Celia fall in love.

Portraying Orlando is senior Bella Caltagirone. "Orlando is a kindhearted 'Golden child,' enthusiastic, romantic, quick-witted and intelligent," she said. "He always tries to see the best in people, even his brother. And I love playing him."

"I've trained for the theater, but never played a man before, so this role challenges me both physically and mentally. I have to shift my perspective on how I approach and think about other people. Portraying a man, I don't have the fear I normally would have as a woman. And Shakespeare is always a fantastic way to train as an actor."

Caltagirone said audiences will love how "the characterizations and plot points are very specific and dramatic. They'll have a really fun time watching people fall in love and go through all those silly experiences. And it's a show that's good for families. The language isn't intimidating, at all, but is easy to understand because the characters emphasize every feeling and word."

Senior Elle Galhouse plays Rosalind. "She's smart, witty and clever, but is underappreciated because she's a woman," said Galhouse. "So she keeps her intelligence on the downlow because her father has been banished and she doesn't want to be next."

"When talking to Duke Frederick, her uncle, she's more formal

and pulled back. But with her cousin Celia and others, her wittiness and adventurous side comes out – especially when she's in the forest and disguised. As Ganymede, she's more playful and herself because she doesn't have to worry about what other people think."

Enjoying her role, Galhouse said, "Rosalind's such a unique character, it's like playing two roles. So it's a challenge, but a fun one. There's a lot of responsibility playing a lead, but I get to do it with my best friend, Daphne Lunn, who plays Celia. I also experiment with Rosalind's dynamics with other people, depending on whether they meet her as a 'man' or a woman."

Galhouse said this show will appeal to audiences because "there are so many goofy characters, and we get to add so much of our own personalities and relationship experiences into them. There are a lot of really joyful moments where you can see that we're all having fun. Because Mr. Shaw gives us a lot of creative freedom, we get to make this play our own."

Portraying Phoebe is junior Kushi Gandhi. "Phoebe's a shepherdess who lives in the forest and is adored by another shepherd, Silvius, but she doesn't reciprocate his love," said Gandhi. "She's also pretty mean and thinks highly of herself."

She's very self-centered and believes the whole world is just for her and revolves around her, and that she should get all the attention, all the time."

Gandhi loves playing Phoebe because "she's different from myself and the other characters I've



Posing in character are cast members (from left) CJ Berejik (Jacques), Daphne Lunn (Celia), Bella Caltagirone, Elle Galhouse, Lin Trinh (Oliver) and Griffin Seburnia (Duke Senior).

played before. She has a strong presence and energy on the stage. I've always played quiet, shy, timid characters under someone else's thumb. But as someone so confident, I get to capture people's attention, and that's fun for me. I think her storyline is comical because she doesn't care about the person madly in love with her – and instead, falls in love with Ganymede, who's a woman disguised as a man."

Gandhi said audiences will like how the corporate framework of this show is so "out there and unusual. We learn about traditional Shakespeare in school, so nobody's going to expect to see it this way, but it works really well."

"And the set will be mind-blowing. Our set designers and builders are extraordinary – and that's an understatement. Taking something familiar and turning it into something completely different will make people talk about this play and even come back to see it again."

For the first third of the show, Shakespeare's castle has become a contemporary office with tall windows and a boardroom containing a 16-foot-long conference table. And the royalty are instead CEOs; so when one CEO's business undergoes a hostile takeover, he and his board members go on a glamping retreat to an upscale campground in the woods for the rest of the show.

There, the set pieces include a tent, a well, refrigerator, picnic table and water tower. But the section of the forest where the shepherds and campground employees live will look dilapidated in com-

parison.

"Modern clothing will also reflect the different societal classes," said Director Shaw. "For example, in the boardroom, the businessmen wear buttoned-up suits with ties. But in the forest, they wear sweaters instead of suit jackets and have undone ties."

"The modern setting makes this play more immediate and easier for the audience to connect to," he added. "And even if people don't understand a couple words, here and there, they'll be surprised how much they're laughing during the entire play."

And many of those laughs will come from senior Reagan Shin's portrayal of Silvius. "He's a love-sick shepherd who's been in love with Phoebe forever," said Shin. "He's goal-oriented and passionate. He puts his whole heart into everything he does. He doesn't have much self-respect. When his passion comes out, that's all that matters to him."

She, too, loves her role because "Silvius is such a darling and is so fun. He has such great energy and physicality. He skips and runs a lot – actually chasing Phoebe. And when someone tells him something he doesn't like, he dramatically collapses to the ground and just lies there. I play him as really lovable."

Overall, said Shin, "Our actors do a great job of getting the story across in Shakespearean language. It's a comedy at heart, and this cast and production team have added in lots of extra bits that really take the comedy over the top, making this play fun for the audience to watch."

ENTERTAINMENT

FIVE-PART BETTER ARGUMENTS WORKSHOP SERIES.

The Better Arguments Project, developed by the Aspen Institute, is part of William & Mary's broader Democracy Initiative, which advances civil discourse, civic engagement, and the skills needed to live and lead in a pluralistic society. William & Mary is a national leader in bringing this work into classrooms, campuses, and communities. The series is free and open to the public, and participants are welcome to attend any individual session - there is no expectation to attend all five.

This free series is hosted by Radhika Murari (W&M '95), a member of the William & Mary Washington Campus Advisory Board in the spirit of William & Mary's commitment to democratic engagement. Each workshop centers on one core Better Arguments tenet:

- ❖ Workshop 4: Embrace Vulnerability; May 12, 2026; 6-8 pm; Reston, VA Consider the benefits of opening up. Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/BetterMay12>
- ❖ Workshop 5: Make Room to Transform; June 9, 2026; 6-8 pm; Reston, VA Be open to new and varied perspectives. Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/WMJune9>

NOW THRU JUNE 6

Syrian Artist Abdulrahman Naanseh.

At Tephra Institute of Contemporary Art (Tephra ICA) in Reston. Tephra Institute of Contemporary Art (Tephra ICA) presents a solo-exhibition by Fairfax, VA-based artist Abdulrahman Naanseh, on view at the Tephra ICA at Signature gallery February 26-June 6, 2026, featuring recent work created during his 2026 residency at Tephra ICA. Naanseh's work reimagines Arabic calligraphy as a deeply personal and contemporary visual language.

APRIL 1-29

A Really Trashy Art Show – Found Object Sculptures by RustDoug.

At Reston Art Gallery and Studios (RAGS), Lake Anne Plaza, Reston. Featuring found-object sculptures by artist Doug Fuller. Meet the artist reception is Sunday, April 12 from 2-4 p.m. Gallery hours for the exhibition are Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays from 12 to 5 p.m., with additional open hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12 to 5 p.m. A longtime Reston resident, Fuller began collecting rusty objects more than two decades ago after noticing a discarded crankshaft beside a dumpster. Intrigued by the forms and textures of abandoned metal, he began assembling found pieces into sculptures that reveal unexpected shapes and meanings. Inspired by the tradition of Marcel Duchamp's readymades, Fuller's work invites viewers to bring their own interpretations to these transformed objects.

APRIL 9-26

"Young Americans." At 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill Road, Tysons. By Lauren Yee, directed by Nikki Mirza. Dates: Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays at 7:30 p.m., Saturdays at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m. Tickets: Tickets: \$25-\$55 general admission, \$15 students, educators, and military. Purchase online at www.1ststage.org or call



A FoodeesFest is coming to Springfield Town Center April 17-19, 2026.

703-854-1856.

APRIL 12-19

McLean Restaurant Week. At 20 restaurants in McLean. This spring, McLean's restaurant offerings will be on full display at the inaugural McLean Restaurant Week, to be held April 12-19 and presented by the McLean Revitalization Corp. (MRC), an all-volunteer nonprofit organization dedicated to improving Downtown McLean. As Restaurant Week approaches, residents and visitors can visit McLeanToday.org/RestaurantWeek to see this diverse mix of offerings. Each participating restaurant will showcase a Restaurant Week special menu or promotion, which may include special prix fixe dinner offerings, discounts across their menu, free desserts and appetizers, and more.

WEDNESDAYS, APRIL 15, 22, 29

OFC Open Play! OFC Open Game Nights. 6:30-9 p.m. Drop in for open game time at The Old Firehouse Center to enjoy relaxed, friendly ping pong or Mah Jongg while connecting with others.

FRIDAY/APRIL 17

Vienna Community Center's 60th Anniversary. 4-7 p.m. At Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry Street, SE, Vienna. The occasion will feature a 1960s-themed celebration complete with a ceremonial cake cutting at 4:30 p.m. Attendees can take a walk down memory lane with self-guided tours, a photo memory wall, giveaways, and a chance to share their own stories from the past 60 years. The vision for the Vienna Community Center began in 1946 when the Vienna Lions Club donated \$1,500 to a grassroots fundraising campaign. It took nearly 20 years to raise the \$125,000 needed to construct the original facility on the 2.6-acre property on Cherry Street. Visit www.viennava.gov/vcc60.

APRIL 17-19

FoodeesFest. At Springfield Town Center, 6500 Springfield Mall, Springfield. Friday: 1:00 PM – 9:00 PM; Saturday: 11:00 AM – 9:00 PM; Sunday: 11:00 AM – 7:00 PM. The traveling food and artisan festival will transform the area into a vibrant gathering place filled with incredible food, local artisans, and a welcoming community atmosphere. Best of all, ticket reg-

istration is completely free, making it the perfect outing for families, friends, and food lovers alike.

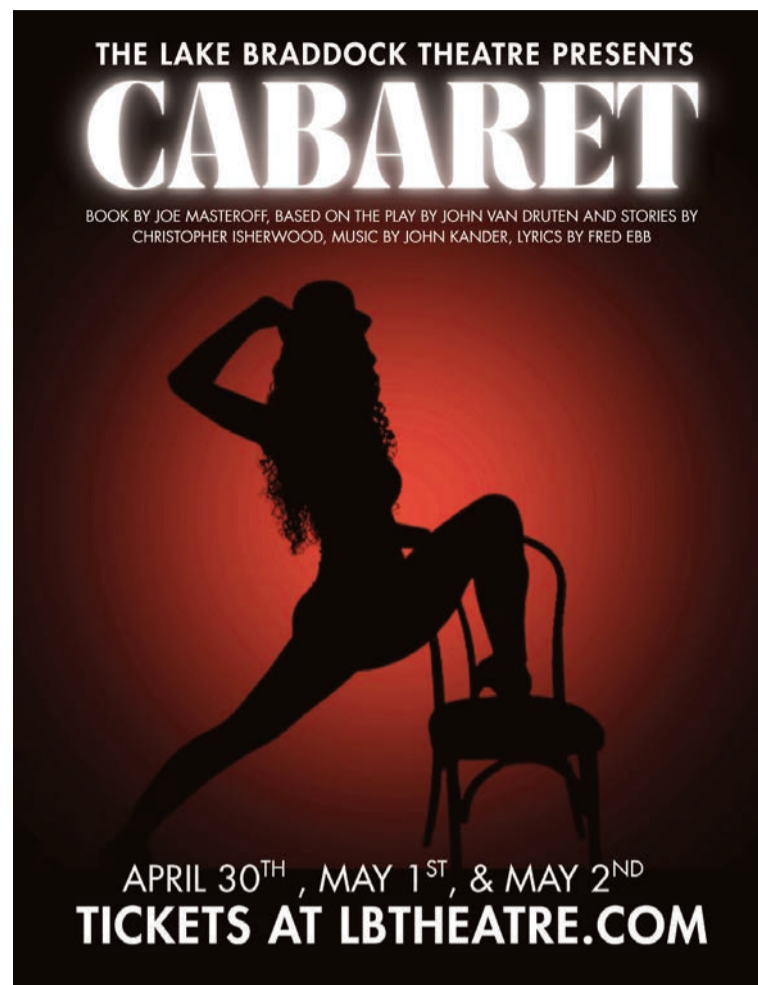
FoodeesFest is known for bringing together a wide variety of flavors and handmade goods, creating a festival experience that highlights both culinary creativity and local craftsmanship. Visitors can expect 40+ gourmet food trucks and food vendors serving everything from bold barbecue and street tacos to decadent desserts and refreshing drinks.

APRIL 17 TO MAY 2

"My Fair Lady." At Vienna Community Center, located at 120 Cherry St., SE, Vienna. In this classic Lerner and Lowe musical, Eliza Doolittle is a young flower seller with an unmistakable Cockney accent which keeps her in the lower rungs of Edwardian society. When Professor Henry Higgins tries to teach her how to speak like a proper lady, an unlikely friendship begins to flourish. The Vienna Theatre Company's performances of "My Fair Lady" are at 7 p.m. on the following Fridays and Saturdays: April 17-18; 24-25, and May 1-2. Matinee performances begin at 2 p.m. on Sundays, April 19, 26 and May 3. Tickets are \$18 each and may be purchased online or in person at Vienna Community Center. Tickets are non-refundable and ticket transfers are not allowed. To learn more about the Vienna Theatre Company and to purchase "My Fair Lady" tickets online, visit www.viennava.gov/theatre.

SATURDAY/APRIL 18

County History Commission Conference. 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Fairfax County Government Center, Fairfax. The theme is Revolutionary Ideas: Fairfax County's American Revolution. Besides presentations that appeal to scholars as well as anyone who likes history, the afternoon will have some all-ages activities. There will be a trivia competition, some hands-on crafts and activities for even young children, an AI presentation, interactive Find Your Roots, student projects (middle and high school), and more. The conference has partners: the Fairfax County Park Authority, which has been a previous partner, and new this year: the Fairfax 250 Commission, George Mason University's Center for Mason Legacies, and the Historical Society of Fairfax County.



Lake Braddock Secondary School presents "Cabaret" from April 30 to May 2, 2026.



The Vienna Community Center celebrates its 60th Anniversary on Friday, April 17, 2026.

SATURDAY/APRIL 18

Liberty Middle School Environmental Fair. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Liberty Middle School, 6801 Union Mill Rd., Clifton. The Lord of Life Connections Team is partnering with Liberty Middle School to sponsor a community Environmental Fair on Saturday April 18, 2026 from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. It promises to be a fun-filled event that raises awareness and appreciation for our natural environment!

SATURDAY/APRIL 18

Both Sides Tour XXXIV – The Battle of Monacacy Battlefield Tour and a Visit to Fort Stevens. The Battle of Monacacy is one of the Civil War's most significant, yet little-known battles! The fighting that day in the corn and wheatfields near Frederick, Maryland, was a full-scale engagement between 12,000

battle-hardened Confederate infantrymen led by Lieutenant General Jubal Early, against 5,800 relatively untested Union soldiers under the command of the future author of Ben Hur, the celebrated Major General Lew Wallace. On June 12, 1864, two days before Union Major General David Hunter set out for Lynchburg, Confederate Commander-in-Chief General Robert E. Lee, sitting and pondering General Grant's next move, made a bold decision of his own. It was a move so risky that if it failed, it would have left Lee extremely vulnerable in Richmond and easily could have given Grant an opening to make a successful final aggressive move against Petersburg and the Confederate capital. However, if Lee's audacity succeeded, it could tip the other direction and force the Union to seek a peaceful

ENTERTAINMENT

resolution to the four-year conflict. The cost of this tour will be \$125. Tour leaves Franconia at 8:15 a.m. sharp. Park at the Olivet Church lot at the corner of Beulah Street and Franconia Road. The bus will leave from Olivet. Contact Don Haken-son at 703-971-4984 or dhaken-son@verizon.net

SATURDAY/APRIL 18

Grow a Greener Fairfax...for Free! 8 a.m. to noon. At Burke Farmer's Market (at the Burke VRE/Amtrak station), 5671 Robert's Parkway, Burke. If you're looking to beautify your yard with more trees, you may find just what you need at an upcoming seedling giveaway. The Fairfax County Tree Commission is conducting the event this spring. Join your neighbors Saturday, April 18, at the opening of the Burke Farmer's Market and pick up a free tree. The bare-root seedlings are small, easy to plant and will be available while supplies last. A variety will be available: Black Gum, Red Oak, Willow Oak, Sweetbay Magnolia, Eastern Redbud.

SATURDAY/APRIL 18

Historic House Tours. 10:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. At Sunrise at Silas Burke House, 9619 Burke Lake Road, Burke. The Burke Historical Society next tour day of the historic house at Sunrise at Silas Burke House will be April 18. 10:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m. Free. No registration required. Tours begin on the side of the house facing the Sunrise building.

SATURDAY/APRIL 18

Spring Cleaning! Spring Community Parking Lot Sale. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Got stuff? Need stuff? This parking lot sale has over 50 vendors! Residents selling gently used household-related items are welcome. At the event you can meet our MCC Governing Board candidates!

SATURDAY/APRIL 18

Nicholas Rodriguez "Sincerely Sondheim." 7-9:30 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Direct from the Tony Award-winning revival of "Company," Nicholas Rodriguez (Arena Stage's "Oklahoma!" and "Carousel") celebrates Stephen Sondheim with "Sincerely, Sondheim"—a nod to both the lyrical and musical genius of the late composer and his reputation for prolific letter writing.

SATURDAY/APRIL 18

Masterpiece Mini Golf Season Opener. 2-5:30 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton. Get ready for an unforgettable day of fun for all ages! The Mini Golf Seasoner Open Golf Tournament is the perfect way to enjoy a sunny Saturday with family, friends, and neighbors. Tickets are just \$15 each if you register online, and only \$20 on-site (if available).

What to Expect:

- Exciting Mini Golf Tournament: Compete for prizes in three age categories—Adults, Teens, and Kids!
- Live Leaderboards & Prizes: Winners announced at 5:15 PM!
- Swag Bags: Every participant receives a swag bag upon entry.
- Delicious Drinks & Vibes: Enjoy themed cocktails and refreshments from Bunnyman Brewery.

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Nicholas Rodriguez "Sincerely Sondheim" will appear on Saturday, April 18, 2026 at McLean Community Center in McLean.

- Explore the Arts: After your round, dive into our art shows, classes, and exhibits throughout the Workhouse Arts Center.

SATURDAY/APRIL 18

Horse Expo Returns to Frying Pan Farm Park. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. At Frying Pan Farm Park Equestrian Center, 2709 West Ox Road, Herndon. This year's Horse Expo features a special appearance by Freedom and Liberty, the Bureau of Land Management's 250th Wild Horse and Burro ambassador team. Freedom is an 8-year-old sorrel gelding from the Salt Wells Creek Herd Management Area near Rock Springs, Wyoming, and Liberty is a 17-year-old gray gelding from the Cibola-Trigo Herd Management Area near Yuma, Arizona. At the Horse Expo, visitors can watch Freedom and Liberty in the Parade of Breeds at 11:30 a.m. and see a training and handling demonstration at 1 p.m. in the Indoor Arena. Then, guests can take part in a Q&A session to learn more about the horses and BLM's Wild Horse and Burro Program. Freedom and Liberty will also be stabled in barn one for a meet-and-greet and photo opportunities.

APRIL 18-19

Free Community Clinic. At Mubarak Mosque, 4555 Ahmadiyya Drive, Chantilly. Remote Area Medical (RAM), in partnership with Humanity First USA, Fairfax County stakeholders, and a coalition of non-profits will offer free medical, dental, and vision services to the public. The clinic is designed to help community members access care at no cost. Clinic opens Saturday and Sunday at 6 a.m.

SUNDAY/APRIL 19

Burke Historical Society Meeting. 3-4:30 p.m. At Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Kate Kelley will join in by Zoom to speak on the Photo Angel Project (identifying persons in old photos, including her recent success with a photo of Burke's Joseph William Dooley. Email: burkehistoricalsociety@hotmail.com

SUNDAY/APRIL 19

The Magic of Rob Lake: Live from Broadway. 4 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Be amazed by the youngest winner of The Merlin Award, also known as the "holy grail of the magic world," and America's Got Talent quarter finalist Rob Lake! In addition to touring across the U.S. and 45 more countries, he also serves as magic and illusion consultant, illusion designer, and creative consultant for incredible productions including Disney's Aladdin on Broadway, The Harry Potter Film Concert Series, Adele's Las Vegas residency at Caesars Palace, and more.

TUESDAY/APRIL 21

2026 Historic Garden Week in Fairfax Tour. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Garden Club of Fairfax will be hosting the Centennial Historic Garden Week Tour. This milestone will be marked by an exclusive, self-driving tour of three distinctive properties in Fairfax County. Attendees will journey through time, beginning with a visit to an 1865 Victorian gem in Fairfax. This historic home offers a blend of classic elegance and contemporary comfort, nestled on nearly an acre adorned with spectacular gardens and over 70 American boxwoods that have flourished for more than a century. The tour continues with two remarkable residences in the Oak Hill area. One property enchants visitors with a tranquil Zen Garden, featuring graceful waterfalls and serene pools, while the other delights with vibrant color and a lush hillside woodland garden. Guests may enjoy the properties in any order at their own pace. Tour co-chairs Andrea Hickman Meleski and Susan Malcolm look forward to welcoming visitors to this memorable event. For more information, contact fairfax@vagardenweek.org.

WEDNESDAY/APRIL 22

Documents for Life: Estate Planning. 6-7 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Estate planning is essential for protecting your loved ones and



Magician Zak Mirz will appear on Friday, April 24, 2026 at McLean Community Center in McLean.

ensuring your wishes are honored. This seminar explores the purpose and importance of estate planning, offering clear guidance on the key documents you need to safeguard your future. Topics include wills, trusts, powers of attorney, health-care directives, and beneficiary designations. You'll learn how these documents work together to manage your assets, provide for dependents, and address health-care decisions in critical moments. Join us to demystify estate planning, gain peace of mind, and take the first step toward securing your legacy.

THURSDAY/APRIL 23

Town of Vienna Green Expo. 7-9 p.m. At Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry St., SE, Vienna. More than 40 local exhibitors will offer resources and information on sustainable practices such as planting natives and eliminating invasives, raising chickens and keeping bees, composting, conserving water, and making homes more energy efficient. New this year is a visit from The Electric Vehicle Association of Greater Washington, which will provide information about EV ownership and give expo-goers a chance to see electric vehicles up close.

THURSDAY/APRIL 23

Shepherd's Center of Annandale Springfield Lunch N' Life. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. At St. Barnabas Episcopal Church, 4801 Ravensworth Blvd., Annandale. Hear Christina DeVera, Physical Scientist, present-

ing "Geology & You: Discovering our shared history through the rocks underneath our feet." Lunch of ham tetrazzini, salad, green beans, dessert, tea and coffee. Cost for lunch and lecture is \$20 per person. Call 703-941-1419 by Tuesday, April 21st by noon to register or send an email to shepherdscas@vacoxmail.com.

APRIL 23-26

Annandale Book Sale. 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. At George Mason Regional Library, 7001 Little River Turnpike, Annandale. Browse thousands of high-quality used books, CDs and DVDs at the George Mason Friends Book Sale. Come early for the best selection and Sunday for half-priced bargains.

FRIDAY/APRIL 24

Blink and You'll Miss It! Zak Mirz, Magician. 7 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Zak Mirz amazes audiences by weaving magic into stories from his experience as a first-generation American. From being a kid growing up in Texas to becoming a father of two, Zak's charismatic style easily connects with audiences and keeps them on their toes. This show will be unlike any you have seen before because you will be the one at the wheel deciding where the story goes next.

SATURDAY/APRIL 25

Sensory Exploration! Sensory Day. 1-4 p.m. At the Old Firehouse Cen-

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 15

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Guilty Plea to DUI Involuntary Manslaughter

FROM PAGE 5

She ascertained that he's a U.S. citizen and also ensured that he knew he could be sentenced to as many as 10 years in prison for his crime.

Kaminsky noted that a plea agreement had been reached in his case. Under its terms, Parada Hernandez would be sentenced to two years in prison, plus probation, and would have his driver's license revoked. He would also be required to undergo substance-abuse evaluation and treatment. And when she asked if the victim's family had been consulted about this agreement, Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Caleb Williams said yes.

Then addressing Parada Hernandez directly, Kaminsky asked, "Do you understand I can [still] sentence you up to the maximum and you won't be able to appeal or take it to a higher court?" He replied, "Yes, Your Honor."

Williams then presented details of what the prosecution's case against Parada Hernandez would have been, had it gone to trial. The night of the accident, he said, police responded around 10:30 p.m. to a report of a two-car crash on Pleasant Valley Road, near Braddock Road.

"Officer [Aaron] Ciarrocchi spoke with the defendant, Mr. Parada Hernandez, as he was being taken from the driver's seat of his car

to a nearby ambulance for medical services," said Williams. "When asked what happened, [he] responded, 'I was going down the street and I veered off.' The defendant also admitted to drinking, about two hours prior to the accident. [He] told Officer Ciarrocchi that he left the Hooter's where he was drinking, about 30 minutes prior to the accident.

"In an interview conducted by Det. Elliott on the morning of Feb. 28, the defendant admitted to having 'a shot or two' of Jameson [Irish whiskey] at a Hooter's restaurant in Chantilly before heading home from work. The defendant also stated that he believed he was going approximately 10 miles per hour over the speed limit. The posted speed limit for that area is 35 mph. The defendant clarified that he veered over the line and hit the victim's vehicle head-on in a collision."

"[Parada Hernandez] stated that he did not consume any other alcohol following the accident," continued Williams. "A search warrant for a blood draw was obtained, and the blood draw was completed at 1:50 a.m., the next morning, Feb. 28, 2025. The victim in the other vehicle was airlifted by [the police helicopter] Fairfax One to [Inova] Fairfax Hospital; she was pronounced dead approximately 4 minutes after midnight on Feb. 28."

Williams said that, "Through investigation, Det. Elliott learned that the defendant

was driving in excess of 10 mph over the posted speed limit. Det. Elliott also learned through crash reconstruction that the crash point from the accident was on the victim's side of the road." The prosecutor then entered into evidence photos of the victim's damaged vehicle taken by the detective.

"Det. Elliott also submitted the defendant's blood for further testing," said Williams. "Results from the lab showed the defendant had an elevated blood-alcohol content well over the legal limit." He didn't state what it was, but entered the lab report into evidence, as well. In Virginia, the legal blood-alcohol content limit for driving under the influence (DUI) is .08 percent or higher for drivers 21 and older.

Williams then related that the results from the medical examiner's report revealed the cause of [the victim's] death was "blunt-force trauma to the head and torso as the result of the motor-vehicle accident with the defendant." Williams also admitted that report into evidence. And he said that same report revealed the victim had no drugs or alcohol in her system at the time of the crash.

Kaminsky then accepted Parada Hernandez's guilty plea and found him guilty as charged. She ordered a pre-sentencing report be made and set his sentencing for June 18 before telling him, "Sir, you are remanded to the custody of the sheriff."

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.

ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 13

ter, McLean. Experience a free, sensory-rich event that invites everyone to explore taste, smell, sound, sight, and touch in support of Autism Awareness Month. This event is free and open to all!

SATURDAY/APRIL 25

Annual Spring Faire. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. At Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 8304 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield. Annual Spring Faire, Craft and Vendor Show. Sponsored by the Women's Club of Springfield. Proceeds benefit the Bethany House. Visit <https://womansclubofspringfield.org/event/april-25-2026-annual-spring-faire-supporting-bethany-house/>

SATURDAY/APRIL 25

RA's Community Yard Sale. 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. At 12010 Sunrise Valley Dr. (near Reston Wegmans), Reston. Join us for one of Reston's biggest community yard sales. With 85 families selling a wide variety of items, this is a fantastic opportunity to find bargains on children's clothes, toys, home essentials, college dorm necessities, and more. Sign up to have a booth or stop by to browse for great bargains. \$45/RA members, booth space. \$55/Non-members, booth space.

SATURDAY/APRIL 25

ChalkFest at eARTh Day. 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. At Reston Town Square Park, Reston. Celebrate creativity, community, and the planet at ChalkFest at eARTh Day 2026, a joyful outdoor art event hosted by Public Art Reston. The event is presented as part of the annual eARTh Day celebration organized by the Reston Town Center Association. ChalkFest welcomes artists of all ages and skill levels—from professional artists to enthusiastic amateurs, families and kids. Registered participants will create their own chalk masterpieces in designated squares, with prizes awarded in categories such as Professional Artists, Amateur Artists, Families & Kids, and People's Choice. Chalking begins at 11:00 a.m., judging starts at 4:00 p.m., and winners

will be announced at 5:00 p.m.

SATURDAY/APRIL 25

Doug Varone and Dancers. At 8 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Doug Varone and Dancers brings the power, beauty, and humanity of dance to audiences worldwide. Touring nationally and internationally, the Company has built a rich legacy reaching audiences of all ages in urban and rural communities alike. It has been presented on major stages from Lincoln Center to London's Queen Elizabeth Hall, Moscow's Stanislavsky Theatre, Buenos Aires' Teatro San Martin, and the Venice Biennale.

SATURDAY/APRIL 25

Academy Day. 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. At the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg. Senator Mark R. Warner will host his annual Academy Day. The event is for high school and middle school students, their parents or guardians, and school counselors. It includes a seated program that will provide a comprehensive overview of the United States service academies and their admission processes. Information will also be shared regarding application procedures for congressional nominations and other military-related options that exist at higher education institutions in Virginia. Following the program, attendees will be able to meet with officials from all five academies as well as representatives from Navy Talent Acquisition Group (NTAG) Richmond, ROTC programs at the University of Virginia, the United States Marine Corps, the Virginia Military Institute, the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets, the Virginia Women's Institute for Leadership at Mary Baldwin University, and the University of Mary Washington at their resource tables. Staff from Virginia congressional offices will also be available to answer questions. As the event concludes, the University of Mary Washington will be offering campus tours. To participate, please meet at their resource table at 1:30 p.m. Information on the nomination process for the service academies is

available on the Senator's website. You may email academy_noms@warner.senate.gov with any questions about the event.

SATURDAY/APRIL 25

Earth Day Fairfax. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Lake Fairfax Park in Reston. Earth Day Fairfax is the county's largest Earth Day celebration, and they are asking for volunteers. This special event will feature games, entertainment, exhibits, workshops, vendors and activities to help increase our understanding of and appreciation for the world around us. They expect around 7,000 people from across Fairfax County to attend. Volunteers are needed to fill shifts throughout the day in a variety of capacities, including:

- Set-up attendants
- Check-in greeters
- Nature and recreation activity attendants
- Guest assistance

This is an ideal service opportunity for students seeking service hours or community members looking to give back. Through a variety of service activities, volunteers will impact the community and the environment while having fun throughout the day.

All volunteers must be 15 years old or older. Multiple shifts are available to accommodate scheduling needs. For additional details about individual volunteer opportunities and to sign up, visit the Volunteer Fairfax website

SUNDAY/APRIL 26

Local Chamber Music Concert - Main Street Chamber Players. 2-3:30 p.m. At the McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. The Main Street Chamber Players are a mixed instrumental ensemble whose collective experience spans more than 35 years. This group, hailing from Fairfax County, has performed in the well-known Classical Cape May Series, Tuesday Concert Series, Lyceum Chamber Music Series and at other local performance venues. They perform works from the standard repertoire, as well as fantastic works by female composers, composers of color and living composers.

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FOR RETIREMENT

Imagine a retirement community investing in your future as thoughtfully as you have invested in your life. Introducing **Project RISE**, the next phase of growth at Vinson Hall. This transformative expansion will add 126 new independent living residences, expanded community spaces, and modern amenities designed to elevate everyday living. Larger apartments. Inviting gathering places. Outdoor courtyards and walking paths that support wellness and connection.

For nearly 60 years, Vinson Hall has served McLean with distinction as a not-for-profit Life Plan Community. On our beautiful 23-acre campus just minutes from Washington, D.C., we're raising the bar on retirement expectations: maintenance-free living, world-class experiences and security of comprehensive care if you ever need it. We invite you to connect with our team to learn more and begin planning your next chapter.

- ▶ MAJOR EXPANSION UNDERWAY
- ▶ INDEPENDENT LIVING
- ▶ ASSISTED LIVING
- ▶ MEMORY CARE
- ▶ LARGE PARK-LIKE CAMPUS
- ▶ NOT FOR PROFIT
- ▶ LIMITED AVAILABILITY



**READY TO START
PLANNING YOUR FUTURE?**
Demand is high for our expansion and
availability is limited. Scan or call
703-935-5209 to learn more.



**VINSON
HALL**

