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All ready to fish are (back row, from left) Libby Williams and her niece, Vera Griffin; and (front row, from left) Williams's nephews, Michael Griffin and Vincent Muldoon; and Williams's children, Mark and Mary.



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Willard-Sherwood Project

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PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

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BULLETIN

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

ASSISTANCE LEAGUE OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA

April has been a busy month for Assistance League of Northern Virginia (ALNV). Earlier in the month, they sponsored a Build a Child's Library event (BACL) at Sudley Elementary school in Prince William County. Following that was a wonderful Golf Tournament and Luncheon Fundraiser held at Westfield's Golf Club. Finally, ALNV packed and delivered 1,900 bags of food for children in six Title 1 elementary schools in northern Virginia through their Weekend Food for Kids (WFFK) program. Finally, the monthly Weekend Food for Kids packing event took place at Dominion Energy. ALNV partners with Dominion Energy to pack nonperishable foods for children experiencing food insecurity. Each month, 1900 bags of food are delivered to six schools where they are distributed to children each Friday to take home for the weekend. This month, ALNV was joined by volunteers from HITT Contracting and Nativity Parish at the packing event. Please visit alnv.org to find out what you can do to help support ALNV's programs that provide food, clothing and academic support to local children in need.

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'Please Call the Case'

With no further Supreme Court sessions scheduled until late May, Virginia's redistricting remains in legal limbo.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Chief Justice Cleo E. Powell of the Supreme Court of Virginia opened the 58-minute special session hearing on April 27 with a clear directive: "All of the justices of the court are sitting. Please call the case." The clerk called the matter that has paralyzed Virginia politics: Don Scott, in his official capacity as Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates, et al. v. Ryan T. McDougle, State Senator, et al.

For nearly an hour, the justices heard oral arguments by constitutional attorneys — including Matthew A. Seligman and John E. Lichtenstein for the speaker, and Thomas R. McCarthy for the Republican challengers. They discussed whether the Democratic-led legislature bypassed constitutional safeguards. The hearing focused on two primary questions that could determine the fate of the 2026 midterms: whether the Virginia General Assembly exceeded its authority by passing a redistricting amendment during a session originally called for budget disputes, and if the constitutional requirement for an "intervening election" refers only to the single day in November or if the process became "void" because early voting had already begun when the amendment was first passed.

As of Tuesday morning, May 5, the Supreme Court of Virginia holds the final say on the state's congressional power balance. The court is currently reviewing the contested April 21 redistricting referendum, which introduced a new map that could fundamentally alter Virginia's U.S. House representation.

Although unofficial data from the Virginia Public Access Project (VPAP) shows the amendment passing with 51.69% of the vote, the results have yet to be officially certified.

The Supreme Court's decision to freeze the map has left candidates and constituents in uncertainty, unable to identify their legal districts or representatives as candidate filing deadlines loom. Simultaneously, the State Board of Elections and local registrars face an administrative pause. They can-

not print ballots or assign precincts until the court resolves which maps are valid.

On April 28, the Supreme Court denied Attorney General Jay Jones's request for an emergency stay. The court's order was brief: "Upon consideration whereof, the Court denies the motion." The court's decision kept in place Judge Jack Hurley Jr.'s ruling from the Tazewell County Circuit Court, leaving the April 21 redistricting referendum results uncertified while the justices deliberate on the validity of the amendment process. The court has effectively hit "pause." Because the new map (House Bill 29) becomes legally operative only after the referendum is certified, the state is currently caught between two conflicting realities: the old 2021 commission-drawn districts and the new 2026 legislature-drawn districts.

'Six-Day Map' and Calendar Gaps

For a brief six-day window, spanning April 22 through the April 27 hearing, the new map in House Bill 29 served as the state's presumptive redistricting plan. Under these boundaries, Democrats could gain four seats based on 2025 election performance.

The Supreme Court's intervention effectively froze this process, suspending the redistricting effort championed by Democratic Gov. Abigail Spanberger.

No additional Virginia Supreme Court sessions are listed for early May. The next formal activity on the calendar is a writ panel on May 27. This creates a scheduling gap as candidate filing deadlines approach. While the court typically issues and posts opinions on Thursdays, it has the authority to issue a special order at any time. Without such an intervention, election officials are looking toward Thursday, May 7, or later as the next potential windows for legal clarity.

Resistance and Rhetoric After the Referendum

After the April 21 referendum, Democrats framed the redistricting as a defensive, pro-democracy counter-move, while Republicans characterized it as an unprecedented constitutional overreach.



A voter casts a ballot at a Fairfax County polling place during the special election for a redistricting constitutional amendment, April 21, 2026. The passage of the referendum 51.69% to 48.31% could pave the way for a new congressional map.

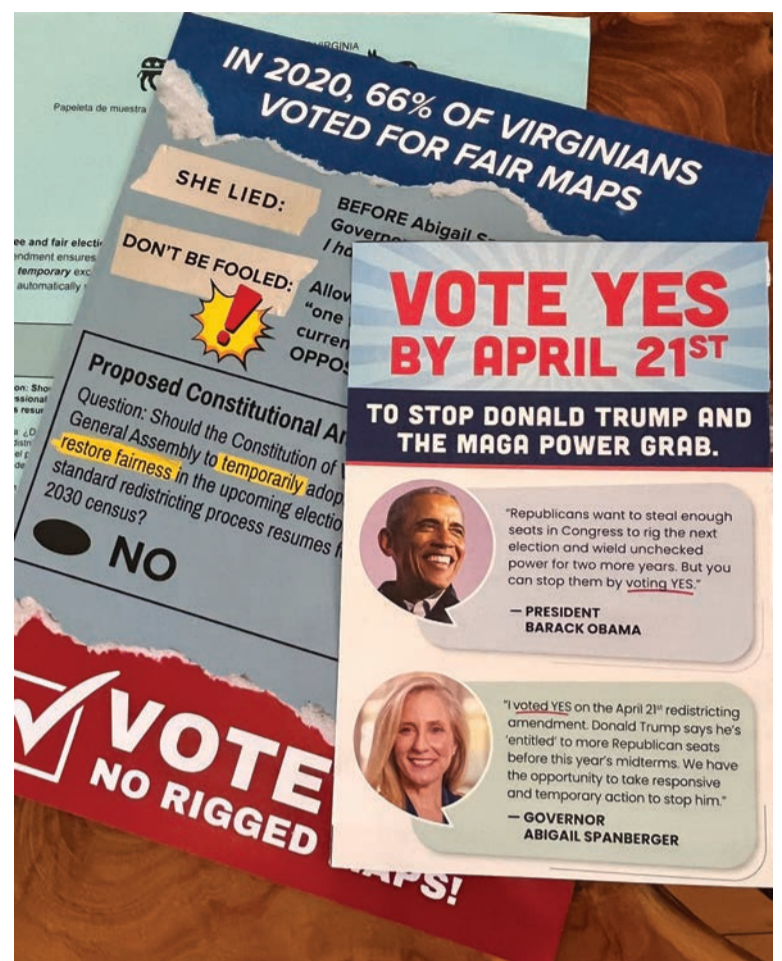
Spanberger said the "Yes" victory was a defensive necessity to counter a national executive branch seeking to expand Republican influence through gerrymandering. "Virginia voters have spoken, and tonight they approved a temporary measure to push back against a President who claims he is 'entitled' to more Republican seats in Congress. Virginians watched other states go along with those demands without voter input — and we refused to let that stand. We responded the right way: at the ballot box."

Senate Majority Leader Scott Surovell (D-Fairfax) described the referendum's "yes" approval as a victory for democracy. "Faced with unprecedented gerrymandering in other states, naked attempts to decide elections before a single vote is cast, Virginians refused to stand idle," Surovell said. "They voted to reclaim the founding principle that maps should reflect communities, not protect incumbents, and that Congress should be chosen by voters, not the other way around."

Jeff Ryer, chairman of the Republican Party of Virginia, signaled that the party's strategy shifted to a constitutional challenge. "The battle now shifts to the courts to determine if the General Assembly has the license to violate the Constitution."

The Republican National Committee (RNC) v. Virginia State Board of Elections successfully "froze" the process. The Supreme Court of Virginia denied the state's request for an emergency stay on April 28, keeping the referendum results uncertified.

Redistricting favoring Republi-



PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON / THE CONNECTION

Campaign literature for and against the redistricting constitutional amendment is displayed at a Fairfax County polling place during the special election, April 21, 2026. Handouts from both parties highlight the national political stakes of the local referendum.

cans moved forward in Texas already for five likely seats, while Virginia's new maps could favor Dems in four additional seats. California appears to be a four seat advantage for Dems. Florida redistricting is a likely plus four for the GOP. And so on.

Multitude of Courtroom Standoffs

The legal battle has currently been fought on legal fronts across the state. In the Richmond City Circuit Court, the case RNC v. Virginia State Board of Elections addressed a preliminary injunction regarding the contested results. Simultaneously, in the case known as Tazewell II (Koski v. RNC), Judge Jack Hurley Jr. ruled the special election "void ab initio" — finding the General Assembly violated Article XII, Section 1 of the Virginia Constitution by bypassing the mandatory 90-day public notice period.

In Tazewell I (Scott v. McDougle), Speaker Don Scott is defending the map's procedural history against State Sen. Ryan McDougle. McDougle argues the process was "void ab initio"—claiming the legislature failed to meet the "intervening election" requirement because the amendment was first passed after early voting had already begun. Attorneys for the Commonwealth and Democratic leaders maintained that the legislature followed the "letter of the law," defining "election" strictly as a single day. The justices' questions focused heavily on whether early voting essentially "starts" an

election, a pivotal distinction that could determine if the redistricting amendment is upheld or struck down.

Candidates and Districts in Limbo

The shifting district lines have left representatives in a state of limbo, effectively campaigning in two different versions of Virginia's districts simultaneously. Rep. Don Beyer (D-8th) could see his seat stretched 150 miles south to reach Williamsburg and Newport News. Rep. Suhas Subramanyam (D-10th) would find his district relocated out of eastern Fairfax and anchored heavily in Loudoun and Prince William counties. Rep. James Walkinshaw (D-11th) faces a district expansion that would reach to the West Virginia border, removing him from some areas in Fairfax County.

Supreme Court of Virginia To Decide

The seven-member Supreme Court panel, led by Chief Justice Cleo E. Powell, and includes Justices Chafin, Fulton, Kelsey, Mann, McCullough, and Russell, must decide whether the mid-decade redistricting referendum is a valid exercise of legislative power or a constitutional overreach. As of May 5, 2026, the Commonwealth awaits a final ruling that will determine the boundaries for the upcoming midterm elections.

Primary elections in Virginia are set for Aug. 4, 2026, with early voting beginning June 18.

Fairfax City Sticking with Willard-Sherwood

Reduced costs made joint project more palatable.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

The Willard-Sherwood project is a go after all. In February, three Fairfax City Councilmembers were prepared to jettison the whole thing because of its cost. But after its price tag was reduced, they changed their tunes and voted with their colleagues last week to move it forward.

At issue was the redevelopment of Fairfax county's Joseph Willard Health Center and the City's Sherwood Community Center into one location for healthcare, wellness and fitness, plus programs for children and seniors. Most City residents have been looking forward to it, and this joint City-county venture has been in the works for 13 years.

Slated for the corner of Layton Hall Drive and Blenheim Boulevard in Fairfax City, the Willard-Sherwood Health & Community Center entails demolition of the current health cen-



Artist's rendition of the Willard-Sherwood Health & Community Center.

ter and construction of a new, 100,000-square-foot facility in its place. It's planned for three stories,

The project's residential tax impact dropped 55 percent, from 9.7 cents to 4.3 cents.

with two levels of underground parking, and would connect to the existing, but expanded, Sherwood Center via a fully enclosed bridge.

The new health building will offer the same healthcare services it does today, while adding a new childcare center, senior-citizen programs from Fairfax City's deteriorating Green Acres Center, plus a two-story gym with an upper-level track. Programs and services from the City's Parks & Recreation Dept. would move there, too. The Sherwood Community Center will continue housing recreational classes, pre-

school, afterschool care, meetings, parties, receptions and special events.

The City approved each phase of the plans and designs for this project and put \$56 million for it in its adopted Capital Improvement Program. But with the current Council less willing to spend money on major projects than previous Councils, it began to look like the City might back out.

However, things changed after Brooke Hardin, the City's director of Community Development and

Planning, presented revised cost figures during the April 28 Council meeting. He also noted City staff recommended Council approve a resolution that night to proceed with the project.

"Project costs have been finalized, and are split between the City and county, based on their pro-rata share of the building – 42 percent, City and 58 percent, county," he said. "The usage requirements for parking are 36 percent, City, and 64 percent, county. An additional \$3 million contribution by the City to the underground parking is included in the cost."

The total project cost is \$127.2 million. The county's share is \$73.4 million, and the City's is \$53.8 million – \$2.2 million less than it allocated for Willard-Sherwood in its adopted CIP (Capital Improvement Program).

"Effort has been made throughout to control costs and reduce them wherever possible," said Hardin. "These costs fluctuated through the design as more detailed estimates were prepared. But since this Council's first work session on this project, a year ago – and with this City's guidance – the City's share of the total project cost is down \$1.1 million, and over \$2.1 million from its highest estimate calculated during the design process."

He said these savings were

SEE FAIRFAX CITY, PAGE 14

'A Place to Gather, Exercise and Build Community'

Residents speak out about Willard-Sherwood project.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

When it seemed as if the objections of some Fairfax City Councilmembers might doom the Willard-Sherwood Health & Community Center project, residents hoping to save it spoke up at the April 14 and 28 Council meetings. Although some people opposed its high cost, the vast majority of speakers beseeched the City to continue with this joint project with Fairfax County.

Anita Light, advisory board chairman of Fairfax City's Village in the City, said, "We support Willard-Sherwood because it would make accessibility [to health and senior services] for older adults easier. And it's a long-term invest-

ment in the City's future.

"Speaking as a City resident, this facility will afford a generational opportunity for programming for older adults and children and support our City's healthcare needs. And because of our partnership with the county, we're able to do more for our citizens – for instance, in social services, emergency dispatch, libraries, court services and schools – than we could do on our own. Without it, the costs to our residents would be significantly more.

"And participating in [senior] programs at the Green Acres is potentially hazardous to my health. All those steps there get increasingly difficult for older adults [to navigate]. The new, modern Willard-Sherwood will help the more than 9,000 older adults in Fairfax



Douglas Stewart



Janet Jaworski

City."

County resident Kevin Anderson, of the Young at Heart Senior Center Council, said Green Acres's building, HVAC system and utilities "could hardly be considered green. Built in 1961, it still has its original single-pane windows, and the anticipated savings in the

energy-efficient, sustainable, Willard-Sherwood facility would be at least 30-50 percent annually."

Douglas Stewart, a 22-year City resident said, "We'll see the costs of this project in our tax bill, but I believe the benefits will far outweigh them. We're talking about a multigenerational community

center – something for all ages, with first-class preventive health services, including dentistry, and outstanding facilities where the whole community can congregate and enjoy themselves. It's going to improve quality of life for so many people in many different ways."

City resident Janet Jaworski said she and her husband have lived here 26 years, and the need for a full-service community center has been "part of the dialogue, the entire time. As a former competitive athlete, I think the walking track, gym and fitness center will be key to both the physical and mental health of our residents. And a population that's happy and healthy, both physically and mentally, is something you can't put a price tag on.

"Our City motto is 'Live Life Connected.' This is a great way we can all connect and share experiences together. And with all the meeting

SEE 'A PLACE TO GATHER', PAGE 14

NEWS

Fairfax High Teen Sentenced for Sexual Assault

Judge says his actions will have a 'lasting impact.'

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Convicted of sexually assaulting nine female Fairfax High students, Israel Flores Ortiz – a junior there – was recently sentenced to approximately a year behind bars. But since most of that time was suspended and he's been in jail since March, it worked out to some 4-1/2 months.

However, the most significant part of that sentence wasn't the incarceration. It was the requirement the judge made that he undergo psycho-sexual evaluation and treatment. She said his actions don't have to define him and, if he successfully completes his treatment, he can go on to lead a productive life.

The incidents – all misdemeanors – occurred in late February/early March in the school hallways.

According to Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Jenna Sands, several girls accused Flores Ortiz of "grabbing their butts. When one girl shared with a friend what had happened, they eventually realized multiple girls had been victimized. He was spoken to and admitted committing the offenses. We have the school's surveillance videos and the defendant's own written statement."

He was arrested March 7 and charged with 13 counts of assault and battery. But in Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court, Judge Melinda VanLowe dismissed one of those charges and found him not guilty of three others. His April 9 trial before her resulted in him being convicted of all nine counts that went forward.

Flores Ortiz returned to court April 21 for sentencing. At the outset, VanLowe said she'd received four victim-impact letters written by students involved in this case. Then Sands told the judge why she believed Flores Ortiz deserved jail time.

SEE FAIRFAX HIGH TEEN, PAGE 18

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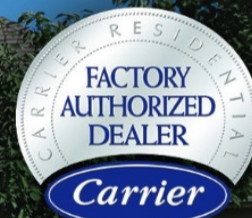
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Localizing Mental Health

HopeLink answers the 988 calls.

BY JOSEPH GETCH
CEO, HOPELINK
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

May's Mental Health Awareness Month is another touchstone to help remind our community about the resources available to them and their loved ones here in our hometown. Chief among these is the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

Behind each call, text, and chat is a real person. I know this because I lead HopeLink, a regional mental health nonprofit that operates the 988 service for Northern Virginia. We have been connected to this community as a provider of behavioral health services since 1963. Our crisis workers are trained in active listening, safety assessment, crisis de-escalation, and to collaborate with callers, texters and chaters to reduce distress and, when appropriate, to connect individuals to appropriate local services.

These dedicated crisis workers answered nearly 400,000 calls, chats and texts last year from individuals that were facing a life crisis. HopeLink's workers are the empathetic voice that listens, providing help, hope and comfort.

As one of our workers explained, "I have spoken to hundreds of callers. While no two calls are exactly alike, I find callers asking the same question again and again: 'Will I be okay?' What I can tell them is yes, one day, they will be okay, and this call is one step closer to breathing a sigh of relief. Together, we sit in that uncertainty and that pain, until they are empowered to seek longer-term support and explore what life might look like around the corner. When a caller tells me



A crisis worker at HopeLink.



Joe Getch

that they see a way forward, that's when I know I've made a difference."

Nationally more than 59 million people experience mental illness and nearly 46% of Americans are expected to meet the criteria for a diagnosable mental health condi-

tion in their life, according to Mental Health America. That's why May's Mental Health Awareness Month is important.

While we shine a light on mental health this May; there are ways each of us can help. It's important to know the signs and ways that you can make a difference. This list provides ways to be part of the solution to change and even save lives:

Listen: Listen for signs of distress from loved ones or friends such as talking about wanting to die, ending their life, having no reason to live, being trapped, or being a burden to others.

Ask: Ask the tough question. When somebody you know is in emotional pain, ask them directly: "Are you thinking about killing yourself?"

Connect: Help connect people to resources. For an immediate crisis, encourage them to call or text the

Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988. Or visit HopeLineBH.org or your county's local community services board for more resources.

Donate: Support local and national mental health nonprofits that are working to save and change lives. It matters and works.

Advocate: Being a voice with local, state, and federal government ensures that mental health is front and center and that funding for mental health programs exists. Write letters/emails to officials in support of mental health funding and legislation.

Much progress has been made in mental health services, but tough times can exacerbate the need. This May, I hope you will join us and Connection Newspapers to make mental health a priority for you, your loved ones, and the community. Tap into the local resources that are available. Learn more tips on our website at HopeLink-BH.org.

Fairfax County's Unaffordable Housing Crisis Is Here, And We Can't Ignore It

BY REV. JONATHAN WILKINS

When my wife and our four children moved from Dallas to Northern Virginia nearly three years

ago, we expected change. What we did not expect was the shock of the housing market.

Very quickly, we realized that Virginia prices were not Texas prices. In some cases, they were

nearly double. Homes that would have been within reach in Dallas were suddenly far beyond it here. We had done what many are told to do — worked hard, built stable careers, prepared for the next chapter — and still found ourselves recalibrating what was possible.

And like many families, our decisions were not just about price, they were about our children. With a four-year-old and a one-year-old at the time, we wanted to be near

good schools, in a community where they could grow and thrive. But proximity came at a cost. To make it work, I found myself working two full-time jobs just to cover the basics and remain close to those opportunities.

That experience was not unique to us. It was a window into a much larger reality, one affecting households across

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Fairfax County's Unaffordable Housing Crisis Is Here, And We Can't Ignore It

FROM PAGE 6

income levels, life stages, and professions throughout Fairfax County. Today, across Fairfax County, families are asking the same question: Can we afford to stay here?

In Fairfax County, you can earn a good salary, work hard, do everything "right," and still not be able to afford a home. That reality is no longer theoretical. It is personal.

OPINION At Mount Olive Baptist Church in Centreville, we see it every day. College graduates with stable jobs are moving back in with their parents. Young professionals are delaying marriage and family plans. Essential workers, teachers, nonprofit staff, and county employees, are commuting farther away because living in the community they serve has become out of reach.

Consider the numbers. The average salary for a public school teacher in Fairfax County is roughly \$70,000 to \$80,000. Many first responders earn in a similar range. Yet median home prices are approaching \$700,000 to \$800,000, with many homes far exceeding that. Renters face similar pressure, with monthly costs continuing to rise beyond what many working families can reasonably afford.

Fairfax County is one of the most affluent jurisdictions in the nation. Yet prosperity has not translated into access to opportunity for all. Lower and moderate income households are disproportionately impacted by the cost of housing. Among renters earning less than

\$75,000 per year, 87% are cost-burdened and spend at least 30% of their income on rent and utilities. Further, 52% of households earning under \$75,000 spent over 50% of their income on rent and utilities, making them severely cost-burdened. These trends raise important questions about who is able to access opportunity in Fairfax—and how we ensure that people across different income levels can continue to live, work, and contribute here.

Northern Virginia's high cost of living is driving residents away, particularly adults aged 25 to 44. In 2022 alone, Fairfax County saw a net population decline of nearly 30,000 residents, even as home prices continued to climb. Statewide, Virginia faces a shortage of approximately 200,000 affordable homes.

Housing is not just a market issue; it is a community issue. County data and housing assessments have increasingly pointed to the same conclusion: without a range of housing options, it becomes harder for the workforce that sustains the county to live in the communities they serve.

A county is not measured only by its median income, but by whether its teachers, first responders, healthcare workers, and young adults can afford to call it home. When workers cannot live near their jobs, traffic worsens, families are stretched thin, and the social fabric begins to fray. When housing costs outpace what working households can

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Fishing Fun at Fairfax City's Ashby Pond

Families and friends flocked to Fairfax City's Ashby Pond on April 11 to participate in its much-loved fishing derby. It was extra special because the pond had been closed over the past year while undergoing a major environmental-restoration project.

The work included dredging, plus removing accumulated silt, sediment and debris from the pond and restoring it to its original volume of water. Turtles relocated while the work was being done were returned to their home here, and the pond was re-stocked with trout.



This large turtle came out of the water for some sun.



Francesco Strazzeri, 9, concentrates on catching a fish.

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



A peaceful scene at the newly restored Ashby Pond.



Brooks Franz, 9, strikes a pose while fishing.



From left, twin brothers, Gus and Julian Medina-Keith, 9, hope to catch some trout.



Vincent Geloso and son Arthur, 7, are enjoying fishing together.



Local residents enjoying a serene, spring morning at Ashby Pond.

Fishing Fun at Fairfax City's Ashby Pond

PHOTOS BY
 BONNIE HOBBS
 THE CONNECTION



Fishing together are Eugene Rhyu, Ben MacMurdo, Colin Hughes, Ethan Coates and Beckett Hughes. The Hughes brothers are twins, and they all attend Fairfax High, except for MacMurdo who goes to Bishop O'Connell.



Fishing instructor Hunter Beckford (in background), with Trout Unlimited, gave pointers to (from left) Frankie Wu-Shapiro, 3, and brother Henry, 7; their aunt Karen Wu and their mom Kelly Wu.



Corey Haiges and son Walker, 3, try their luck.



All ready to fish are (back row, from left) Libby Williams and her niece, Vera Griffin; and (front row, from left) Williams's nephews, Michael Griffin and Vincent Muldoon; and Williams's children, Mark and Mary.

SENIOR LIVING

Information Is Knowledge for Senior Citizens



From left are Mary Beth Crosson and Sonja Gatling of Independent You, providing home care and geriatric-care management.



Representing Demaine Funeral Home are (from left) Brittany Carter and Rachel Harris.



Jane Hughes, of The Boulevard – Post Acute, which offers inpatient rehabilitation care after hospitalization.



Some 250 people attended Fairfax City's Home for Life Expo 2026, held April 10, at the Sherwood Center. There, speakers and vendors gave senior citizens information on many resources available to them.

Heather Suri owns Pathways in Aging, a care-management practice.

PHOTOS BY
BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Sean Maxwell, Northern Virginia franchise owner of Assisted Living Locators.



Jamie Ergas, Fairfax City's Housing Program manager, shares information about home sharing.



Wilbur Hurdle represents Synergy HomeCare.

SENIOR LIVING

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



Promoting Fairfax City's branch of the Fairfax County Public Library are (from left) Rhonda Finberg and Elise Truong.



From the City of Fairfax Community Response Team (CRT) are (from left) police MPO Carrie Johns, CRT Clinician Maleka Walters, and fire Lt. Jay Davison, community paramedic. The CRT deals with people in crisis, often providing follow-up care and connecting them with needed services.



Medical Reserve Corps volunteers with the Fairfax County Health Dept., (from left) Debi McQueen and Virginia Blaeuer give information on emergency preparedness.



From left are Verniecia Bell and Emma Mahler of RAFT older adult mental health and dementia support.



Representing Village in the City, offering services for Fairfax City seniors, are (from left) Advisory Board member Becky Raiger and City Council's liaison to the Village, Stacey Hardy-Chandler.



From left, Eileen Curtis and Tanya Erway, with Fairfax County's Department of Family Services, tell people about services available to seniors, adults with disabilities and family caregivers.



Providing information about programs and classes available at Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) are (from left) Bob Heyer and Debby Mossburg.

Katy Johnson Is Honored as ‘Woman of Influence’

Chosen by Fairfax City residents, Commission for Women.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Each year, the City of Fairfax Commission for Women honors one or two City residents as their Women of Influence. And in an April 14 ceremony at City Hall, it feted this year’s honoree, Katy Johnson.

Speaking first, Brenda Young, the organization’s vice-chairman, said the Commission identifies and advocates for the needs of women in the community. “Our City continues to thrive because of the leadership, dedication and impact of women across every sector – government, childcare, business, education, law enforcement, philanthropy and beyond,” she explained.

“While we honor one award recipient this evening, we recognize that there were many, extraordinary women nominated. To each of you, thank you. Your contributions do not go unnoticed, and our City is stronger because of you.”

Mena Crawford, the group’s secretary, said this honor was established in 2020. “It provides an opportunity to recognize and celebrate outstanding women who live and work in the City of Fairfax,” she said. “Awardees are nominated for their inspiring leadership, active and ongoing community engagement, and level of positive impact within the City of Fairfax.”

“Awardees are chosen from nominations submitted from the community at large. The Commission for Women is appreciative of the community’s support for this award and for every woman recognized through the nomination process.” She then listed the past recipients: 2020 - Susan Barborek and Janet Jaworski; 2021 - Jennifer Passey; 2022 - Hildie Carney and Carolyn Sutterfield; 2023 - Janice Miller and Katy Malesky; 2024 - Kelly O’Brien and Lorraine Kourey; and 2025 - Anita Light.

Said Crawford: “These women model what it means to ‘Live Life Connected.’” (Fairfax City’s motto).

Introducing Johnson was her friend, Susan Kuiler. “Katy has inspired and influenced many to participate in the life of our vibrant and beautiful City,” she said. “Most of you know Katy as a tireless, en-



Katy Johnson with (from left) son Mickey and husband Bill before the ceremony.



Honoree Katy Johnson (with flowers) and Commission for Women members (from left) Brenda Kuhlman, Brenda Young, Heidi Tirjan, Mena Crawford, Trish Bailey, Dorothea Tyree, Lesley Abashian (City staff liaison) and Aalyah Coca-Polo (Fairfax High student representative).

vironmental advocate. She’s also a local business owner, civic volunteer and proud mother of two active young adults.

“Katy’s a personal health trainer who got her start at the Fairfax Racquet Club in 1991, working at the front desk. She rose to oversee the fitness department and is now one of the club’s owners. She’s earned a place in the hearts of many for her patient, enthusiastic and kind approach to health and fitness training. She knows how hard the hurdles can be for many to achieve, reclaim or maintain physical wellbeing, which endears her to her clients.”

Kuiler said Johnson first became involved in the Country Club Hills Civic Assn. by photographing events and handling its social media. She’s also been its president since 2021, focusing on keeping that community informed. Kuiler said Johnson’s outreach enabled those residents to learn about and weigh in on a trail proposed for their area.

“An avid sports enthusiast and international field-hockey competitor, Katy coached field hockey and Gaelic Irish football for FPYC [Fair-



From left, Katy Johnson receives her award from Catherine Read.

fax Police Youth Club],” said Kuiler. “Although she’s always loved the outdoors, Katy’s environmental advocacy began in earnest when she learned of the imminent destruction of woodland and a stream in Fairfax City. She’s since become a certified Fairfax Master Naturalist and a geology enthusiast with Northern Virginia Mineral Club.

“She believes in educating and spreading an understanding – especially among young people – of the importance of the environment around us. A founding member of Tree Rescuers Fairfax PRISM to



Katy Johnson (with bouquet) poses with some of the previous honorees (from left) Carolyn Sutterfield, Anita Light, Janet Jaworski, Hildie Carney and Kelly O’Brien.



From left are Fairfax City Councilmembers Stacey Hardy-Chandler and Rachel McQuillen, Mayor Catherine Read, Katy Johnson and Councilmember Stacy Hall.

control invasive plants, Katy’s on its steering committee and chairs its community representatives committee.”

In addition, Johnson’s a founding member of Fairfax Environmental Forum and the City of Fairfax Home Grown National Park. She also belongs to Friends of Acotink Creek, the Potomack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society, Northern Virginia Bird Alliance Advocacy Committee, and Fairfax Tree Rescuers Public Awareness Committee.

“She also led the rescue and relocation of the turtle population for the Ashby Pond [restoration] project,” said Kuiler. “Katy’s a true force of nature, and Fairfax City’s a better place thanks to her sharing her enthusiasm for the natural world here in our midst.”

Speaking next was Fairfax Mayor Catherine Read. “The Commission for Women adds so much to our City,” she said. “And the fact that these awards are only seven years old makes us wonder why we’ve not been doing this for the entire history of the City. Because women have been an important part of many, many things from the

parks that have been built and advocating for things that help families and children.

“The fact of the matter is that women do a lot of unpaid labor – and without being recognized [for it] – but that’s not why any of us do it. We do it because we’re committed to making life better for our community, families and others. There’s no denying that Katy’s been involved in many things in her tenure here as a resident of Fairfax City. And so it’s with great honor that I call her up here to receive this award.”

Then, gesturing toward the audience, Johnson said, “I really think having influence is because of you guys. And this award should go to so many others who are willing to speak up and stand up. Thank you so much for allowing me to have influence over you. And really, my plea is that you all will know that you have a voice and can make a difference. That’s the most important message I can leave you. Thank you.”

Before the ceremony, she also told The Connection, “I’m surprised and honored. I wasn’t expecting it.”

Music, Food, Culture, Games and Dragon/Lion Dance

Sixth annual Asian Festival on Main is May 17.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Pro tips for everyone planning to attend the upcoming Asian Festival on Main in Fairfax City: Bring your friends and families, wear comfy shoes, come hungry and be ready for a full day of fun.

A vibrant, multi-sensory celebration of Asian cultures, this sixth annual extravaganza on the streets of Old Town Fairfax is set for Sunday, May 17, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Admission is free, as is the large parking garage off University Drive.

“The Asian Festival on Main gets bigger and better every year,” said Fairfax Mayor Catherine Read. “The food, music, dancers, performers, artists and artisans fill up the streets of our City in an unbridled celebration of the many traditions that make up Asian culture. This community event is open to everyone, and we invite you to come embrace the rich diversity that makes this region such an amazing place to live, work and connect with your neighbors.”

This year’s festival celebrates the Year



The upcoming festival’s poster celebrates the Year of the Horse.

of the Horse and, fittingly, mini horses are among the many family-friendly attractions. There’ll also be more than 60 Asian- food vendors and food trucks, 60-plus local artisans displaying and selling their handiworks, live entertainment, cultural demonstrations, games and activities, a cosplay runway, and a beer and karaoke garden.

Festival co-chairs are Jinson Chan, owner of High Side, a craft beer and Asian street



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

The Choy Wun Lion Dance Troupe entertains in Old Town Square.

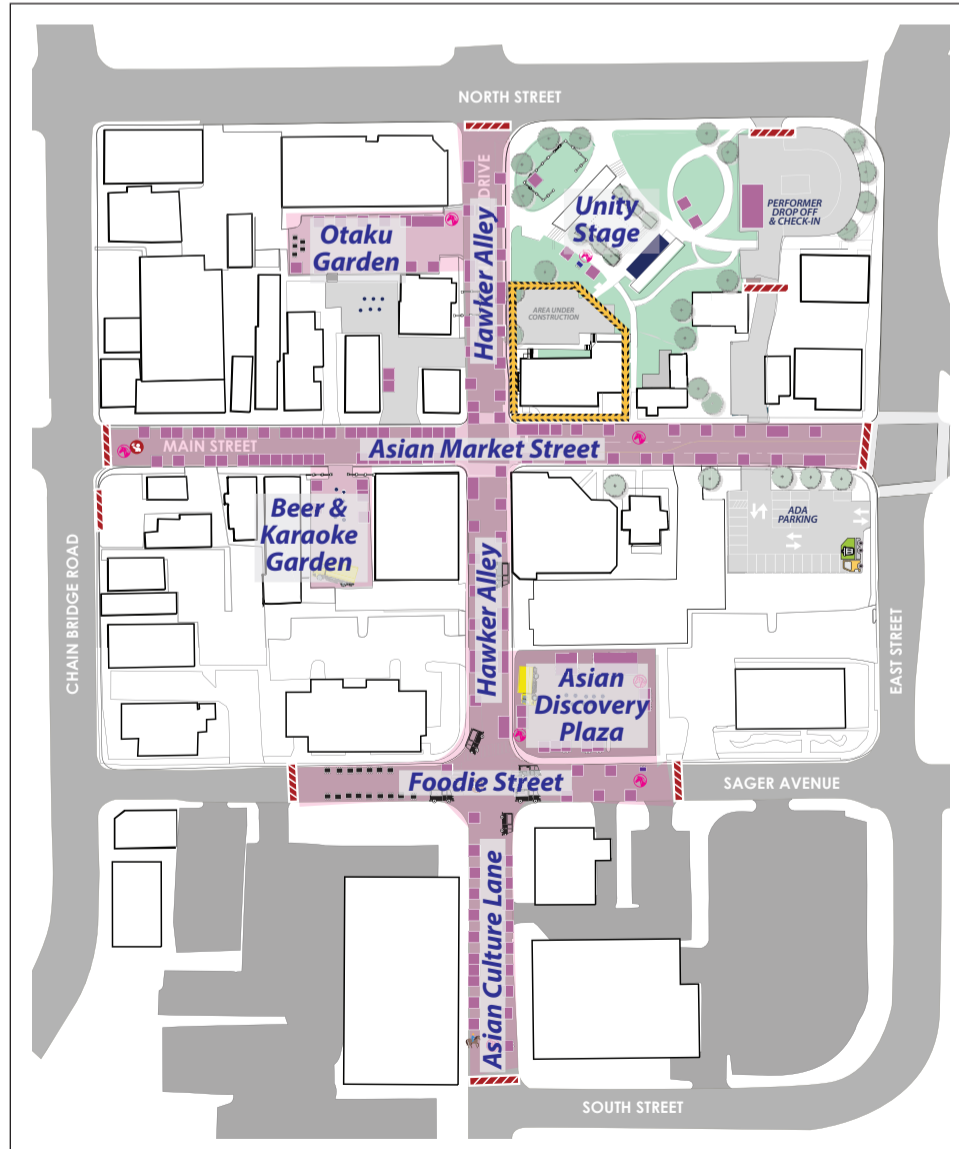
food restaurant in downtown Fairfax, and Tina Disch, executive director of the Old Town Fairfax Business Assn. (OTFBA). And they’re both eagerly looking forward to the upcoming event.

“Asian Festival on Main [AFM] has always been about bringing people together through culture, food and shared experiences,” explained Chan. “What started as a

small, one-block event has grown into a festival that now welcomes tens of thousands of people in a single day – which speaks to how much our community values connection and cultural celebration.

“What makes AFM special is that it’s not just a festival you attend; it’s something you experience. You can try foods from across

SEE ASIAN FESTIVAL, PAGE 19



This year’s Asian Festival on Main map with “renamed” streets

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

11:35 AM	CHOY WUN LION DANCE	Stage	Arrives at Unity Stage
11:40 AM	TINA DISCH, OTFBA	Stage	Welcome Remarks
11:40 AM	MAYOR CATHERINE READ	Stage	Speech
11:45 AM	TINA DISCH	Stage	Introduction of Host
11:45 AM	JENNY NGUYEN EMCEE	Stage	Starts show
11:50 AM	HOUSE OF INDONESIA	Stage / Floor	Indonesian Instruments
12:05 PM	BALI JEJEG	Stage	Indonesian Dance
12:15 PM	FAIRFAX CHINESE DANCE TROUPE	Stage / Floor	Chinese Dance
12:25 PM	SEOUL K	Stage	K-Pop Dance
12:35 PM	ODISSI LAYSA	Stage	Indian Dance
12:45 PM	AVINASH	Stage	Vocalist
12:55 PM	MIGRANT HERITAGE	Stage / Floor	Philippine Dance
1:10 PM	KAWAII KAIJU + FRIENDS	Stage	Dog Show
1:25 PM	KAIZEN MMA	Stage / Floor	Martial Arts
1:35 PM	NAACH DANCE	Stage	Indian Dance
1:40 PM	CERA CHEN	Stage	Vocalist
1:50 PM	WOODSON KPOP	Stage	K-Pop Dance
2:05 PM	KC DANCE	Stage	Nepali Dance
2:10 PM	HALAU HULA	Stage	Hawaiian Dance
2:15 PM	HEIDI HAGER	Stage	Vocalist
2:25 PM	SHAOLIN TEMPLE	Stage / Floor	Martial Arts
2:40 PM	NOVA TBOLI	Stage	Philippine Dance
2:45 PM	KIM RANEY	Stage	Vocalist
2:55 PM	DJ MUSIC / BUFFER		
3:00 PM	COSPLAY		
3:30 PM	PRESENTED BY		
4:00 PM	AFM + KOSUPRE DC		
4:00 PM	NOVA WUSHU	Stage / Floor	Martial Arts
4:10 PM	ZI XIA MUSIC	Stage	Chinese Dance
4:20 PM	LAKE BRADDOCK KPOP	Stage	K-Pop Dance
4:25 PM	VA QI PAO	Stage	Chinese Dance
4:45 PM	WASHINKAN KENDO	Stage / Floor	Martial Arts
5:00 PM	DJ MUSIC / BAND SETUP		
5:00 PM	INFUSION GROVES	Stage	South Asian Band

‘A Place to Gather, Exercise and Build Community’

FROM PAGE 4

rooms there, this’ll be a place to gather, exercise and really build community. It’ll also be walkable for lots of us, and we can get a jumpstart on our workout routine by walking to and from there. It’s accessible for public transportation, and continuing to nurture our relationship with the county is huge.”

Former Councilmember Janice Miller said Willard-Sherwood would be “a long-term, economic anchor and would strengthen downtown vitality due to its central location. It would generate consistent, weekday activity that’ll support downtown retail and ser-

vices. It would increase pedestrian activity downtown and reinforce Old Town as a hub for daily life and not solely for dining out, nightlife and special events.

“Willard Sherwood demonstrates capital leverage and fiscal efficiency. The City avoids the costs of land acquisition, demolition and site preparation. The shared infrastructure and parking reduce capital duplication, and energy-efficient design lowers operating costs.

“It’ll help attract and retain public- and private-sector employees and professional households and reinforce the City’s identity as a service-rich community. By provid-

ing the opportunity for enhanced, business-tax income, this project will deliver sustained economic value that, ultimately, will far exceed its direct fiscal costs. Many people are willing to pay reasonable usage fees and approve of their tax dollars paying for both its capital and operating costs.”

Dale Lestina said it makes sense having this building in the center of the City. And Becky Rager said Village in the City board members and volunteers could work with Willard-Sherwood and Green Acres staff to potentially offer new and expanded services for seniors and people with disabilities at the new facility.

William Pitchford said Willard-Sherwood is good for the City’s infrastructure and economic development. Noting that residents have supported it throughout the past two years of design reviews, he said, “This is probably the most vetted, capital-improvement project this City has ever taken. Another opportunity like this will probably not come around again in our lifetimes.

“Built as an elementary school without air conditioning, Green Acres is completely inadequate to meet the community’s current and future needs.

It was never intended to be a community or senior center. It has

poor ADA compliance and a dangerous parking lot, especially at night.”

Toby Sorensen said approving the project will enable the City to “keep a much-needed preschool here” and continue to have access to important county Health Department services “right in the middle of the City.

“If you don’t approve it, would the county choose a different location – not in the City – for the health center? If so, what would the county do with the land that they own next to the Sherwood Center? Think about the really hard decisions you’ll have to make if you don’t vote to fund it.”

Fairfax City Sticking with Willard-Sherwood

FROM PAGE 4

found via “value engineering, the competitive-bidding process for subcontractors and negotiating the guaranteed maximum price with the construction manager at risk. Similar attention was paid to the operating costs after [the building’s] occupied in 2029.

“They’ve been refined and reduced by closely evaluating staffing needs and reconciling facility-maintenance costs – which will be shared by the City and county – [as will] the staffing costs for the front desk and security.” Managing costs was also applied to the project’s financing, said Hardin, with debt issuance occurring gradually, over three years.

Noting that “The construction drawings are complete and permitting is wrapping up,” he said the county plans to award the construction contract to The Christman Co. – the project’s construction manager at risk. Work is expected to begin this July and continue until completion in summer 2029.

Councilmember Stacey Hardy-Chandler asked how public input was incorporated into the design. Hardin said people mentioned natural light and wanted

the building to be “light-filled, airy and open.” So they added a wall of windows along the rooftop terrace and large windows in the gym and fitness areas.

Meeting areas throughout the building were in response to the community, as was a separate space for seniors on the third floor and rooftop terrace for their activities and senior center. People also requested opportunities for public art, so there’ll be places for it at various spots in the building.

The optional, \$4 million renovation/addition to the Sherwood Center’s performing-arts space isn’t going forward at this time. But the completed designs will be available for later use should the City decide to build it in the future.

Councilmember Anthony Amos thanked City staff for its extensive research and the public for its comments. He was also happy that children and teens living in nearby Layton Hall would be able to play basketball and use the other athletic facilities in the new building instead of having to depend on nice weather to play basketball at Van Dyck Park.

Councilmember Billy Bates also thanked staff for its hard work and for taking resident feedback into

consideration. “It’s really thrilling to see this come to fruition,” he said.

Councilmember Tom Peterson said that after he and Councilmembers Stacy Hall and Rachel McQuillen expressed their concerns about the project’s cost, the financial approach was redesigned. “Staff went back, worked through the numbers in detail, refined operating assumptions, improved cost recovery, tightened financing and worked with partners to reduce the burden,” said Peterson.

As a result, the project’s residential tax impact dropped 55 percent, from 9.7 cents to 4.3 cents. That reduced the average homeowner’s tax bill for it from \$710 to \$316 per year. And operating costs are now projected to break even. So, said Peterson, all that work made Willard-Sherwood “financially responsible. These improvements happened because concerns were raised, questions were asked and expectations were set.

“It’s now more affordable, more efficient and less of a burden on the taxpayers. For those reasons, I’ll be voting ‘yes’ on this tonight.” With the City facing a CIP exceeding \$1 billion over the next decade – including more than \$520 million in the next five years – Peter-

son said each project requires serious scrutiny to ensure it still fits the City’s needs. He said, “We have a responsibility not just to accept, but to reshape and refine – and, when necessary – rethink prior decisions that have been made.”

Hall, too, said she, Peterson and McQuillen worked closely with staff to lower costs and create a “more responsible financial plan. In 2025, the numbers were difficult to support. We were looking at nearly \$4.8 million in annual operating and staffing costs, plus an additional \$3.3 million in debt service, with only about \$600,000 in projected revenue.”

With such a significant potential tax impact, said Hall, she couldn’t support moving forward “without a clearer path to sustainability. My concerns were never about the value of a community health center – they were about ensuring we could deliver it in a financially responsible way for our residents.”

Similarly, McQuillen said she liked how the project supports families and the community’s health. But she said Council should question projects’ financial responsibility, return on investment, plus long-term risks and operating costs, early on so these things may

be addressed sooner.

Council then unanimously approved a resolution reaffirming the City’s commitment to the Phase II design-and-construction agreement the City and county have operated under since December 2022. It authorizes advancing the project to and through construction, along with any necessary amendments to it as work proceeds.

Meanwhile, in a Facebook post the next day, former City Councilmember Tom Ross called it “totally disingenuous” to credit Peterson, Hall and McQuillen alone for the project’s cost reductions.

“[The] Councilmembers I served with all participated in the decisions that were reached,” said Ross. “More importantly, it’s City staff who did the work necessary to find the adjustments and make the recommendations Council agreed to.

“The three Councilmembers who voted in favor of the project heard overwhelmingly from the community that the taxpayers wanted this and were willing to pay for it, even with increased property taxes. Let’s give credit where credit is due, not simply praise three Councilmembers for voting what they heard from the citizens.”

Fairfax County’s Unaffordable Housing Crisis Is Here, And We Can’t Ignore It

FROM PAGE 7

afford, it affects more than individual families; it impacts workforce stability, local businesses, and the county’s long-term economic success.

Some argue the market will correct itself. Others worry that affordable housing will lower property values or alter neighborhood character. These concerns deserve to be heard. But without intentional action, the market will not correct inequality, it will deepen it. Some believe the market will correct itself over time. Others have concerns about how new housing may affect property values or neighborhood character. These perspectives

are important to acknowledge. At the same time, many communities are finding that thoughtful, collaborative approaches can help expand housing options while maintaining community character.

Well-designed, thoughtfully integrated affordable housing strengthens communities. It ensures that the people who sustain our neighborhoods can remain rooted within them. This is where we must move from conversation to action.

Mount Olive Baptist Church sits on 17.5 acres in Fairfax County. Twelve acres support our current ministry. The remaining 5.5 acres

sit unused. We are beginning to ask a deeper question about what faithful stewardship looks like in this moment, how we might thoughtfully evaluate this land and explore new possibilities that serve both our church family and the wider community. We hope to enter into conversation and partnership with others as we discern what that could become. Across the county, there may be similar opportunities, through faith communities, nonprofits and public-private partnerships, to think creatively about how land and resources can be used to meet to-

day’s needs.

This is both an argument and an invitation. It is an argument that Fairfax County must take bold, collaborative steps to address this crisis before more families are pushed out. And it is an invitation to civic leaders, housing professionals, and community partners to join us in reimagining how underutilized land can become part of the solution.

Fairfax prides itself on being forward-thinking. The question is not whether growth will happen, but whether we will shape it in a way that includes the people who serve

this county every day. The goal is not simply more housing, but ensuring that people across a range of incomes and backgrounds have the opportunity to live and contribute in the communities they serve.”

In one of the wealthiest counties in America, will we make room for our neighbors—or allow affordability to become a privilege for a shrinking few?

A community that makes room for its people makes room for its future.

Jonathan Wilkins serves as the Senior Pastor of Mount Olive Baptist Church in Centreville.

Police Oversight Agencies Merge into New ‘Office of Police Accountability’

Tension between efficiency and structural integrity of independent oversight.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors marked up the FY 2027 Advertised Budget Plan on Tuesday, April 28. In an 8-2 vote, the board approved a series of motions that set the final real estate tax rate at \$1.12 per \$100 of assessed value, a quarter-cent reduction from the previous rate of \$1.1225. The plan also sets the General Fund school operating transfer at \$2,802,243,987, leaving a \$44 million gap compared to the FCPS Superintendent’s initial request.

Along with these and other major fiscal measures, the board finalized several agency consolidations in the name of efficiency. The structural changes became official when the board formally adopted the budget on Tuesday, May 5.

In the modern history of Fairfax County, there is no documented instance of the Board of Supervisors changing the budget between its markup and formal adoption. The board treats the markup as the definitive decision point, as the subsequent adoption is considered a procedural finality rather than a period for further negotiation. The board generally adopts the budget in about three minutes with no discussion.

While the tax rate and program cuts dominated the April 28 debate, embedded in the line items of the FY 2027 Advertised Budget Plan is what some could call a potential retreat from the hard-won police transparency of 2015, moving the county away from autonomous oversight and toward a centralized model.

Reorganization consolidates funding and positions from the Office of the Independent Police Auditor (Agency 42) and the Police Civilian Review Panel (Agency 43) into a new Office of Police Accountability (Agency 44). Placing both entities under a single director who could centralize control over the flow of information and institutional interests.

According to the American Civil Liberties Union, such centralized structures can make it easier for departments to “police themselves.” The tension between streamlining oversight and preserving independent checks reflects a broader debate over whether consolidating power clarifies accountability or quietly blurs it.

Historically, a lack of independent police oversight in Fairfax

County led to significant public friction following the 2013 fatal police shooting of Springfield resident John Geer. That incident resulted in a 17-month public information blackout and a subsequent breakdown in community transparency. From August 2013 to January 2015, the county refused to release investigative details. That only ended when a judge’s court order forced the release of thousands of internal documents.

The officer’s fatal shooting of unarmed Geer catalyzed a push for transformative transparency in Fairfax County — a shift defined by its radical nature, systemic impact on county operations, and an unprecedented historical break from the past.

Former Fairfax County police officer Adam Torres’ indictment for second-degree murder of John Geer marked the first time in the department’s 75-year history that an officer was charged for an on-duty shooting. The event catalyzed the formation of the county’s first Police Civilian Review Panel, which was established Dec. 6, 2016, and held its inaugural meeting March 20, 2017.

To ensure police no longer policed themselves, the 2015 Ad Hoc Police Practices Review Commission explicitly designed the Office of the Independent Police Auditor and the Police Civilian Review Panel to be independent. This design, among other things, made prolonged delays in transparency a violation of established county policy and oversight mandates.

The Office of the Independent Police Auditor became operational on April 17, 2017, primarily to review Fairfax County Police Department investigations involving the use of force resulting in serious injury or death. The Civilian Review Panel held its inaugural meeting on March 20, 2017, to review complaints of abuse of authority or serious misconduct. One decade after their conception, the two entities are now merging to report to a single director.

From Autonomy to Gatekeeping

Under Fairfax County’s pre-FY 2027 model, both the auditor and the panel’s staff maintained operational autonomy with dedicated



Richard G. Schott



Adrian Steel



Supervisor Rodney Lusk

staff for each role and structural separation from the county hierarchy.

Under the FY 2027 budget finalized during Tuesday’s markup, the position of Police Civilian Review Panel liaison is reclassified as “panel manager.” The centralized command structure requires the panel manager and the independent auditor to report to a single director of police accountability. According to the position details, the office consists of four authorized full-time positions: one director, two management analysts III, and one management analyst II.

The Case for Efficiency

The county characterizes the move as a “strategic and forward-looking approach” to strengthen oversight by aligning “complementary functions.” According to the budget narrative, the reorganization will “enhance coordination, reduce administrative duplication, and provide a clearer, more accessible framework for community engagement.”

Richard Schott, Fairfax County’s independent police auditor, told *The Connection* on April 20: “I fully support the consolidation ... it will not impact or undercut any transparency or accountability. And ... I think the consolidation will really make oversight that much more efficient.” Schott explained that a unified office prevents confusion for residents and ensures that complaints are routed to the correct entity by the director.

Schott said that under the current system, both he and Police Civilian Review Panel liaison Craig Miles lead separate two-person county agencies, leaving the independent police auditor to juggle oversight work with administrative duties. Under the proposed Office of Police Accountability, there would be a single director — expected to be Miles — and an independent police auditor reporting to that director.

Expert Concerns and Safeguards

Adrian Steel, who served as the

chairman of the inaugural Police Civilian Review Panel and has years of experience in police reform, said in an interview with *The Connection* on April 20 that he is not opposed to restructuring in itself if specific safeguards are in place.

Steel says the auditor’s report must remain the auditor’s report: the auditor must continue to monitor and review investigations and issue reports in their own name. Under the proposed structure, the director of police accountability may review the auditor’s report and publish a disagreement, but cannot change the substance of the auditor’s conclusions. Steel stresses that the auditor must still have the “independent ability to monitor and review the investigations” and that the director should not be able to say, “don’t look at that issue.”

According to national best practices set by the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE), “independence” is the first of 13 defining characteristics of legitimate oversight, referring to an absence of influence from law enforcement or political actors.

The ‘Davis Era’ Use-of-force statistics indicate a shift under Fairfax Police Chief Kevin Davis. For the seven years prior to Davis taking command (2015–2021), the department averaged roughly 1.1 officer-involved shootings per year. Under Davis, that frequency increased to four per year — a total of 10 incidents between 2021 and 2023, including the shooting of Timothy McCree Johnson, a Tysons Corner Center suspect thought to have stolen sunglasses.

A 2023 PERF report noted that five out of seven incidents reviewed during this era involved a mental health crisis. In early 2024, Davis officially disbanded the Police Reform Matrix Working Group, which had advocated for “Item 3.1”—a proposal to grant civilians independent investigative powers.

Fiscal and Work Impact

The county identifies the merger as a cost-saving measure. The \$65,956 reduction specifically tied to Agency 44 is referenced on page 28 of the Agency Reductions table.

Schott noted that the move frees the auditor from administrative duties like budget matters and performance reviews, allowing them to “conduct reviews of investigations full time.”

“[The auditor will be] doing much the same work that I’ve been doing now, absent all of the administrative responsibilities that come with being an agency head,” Schott said, noting that budget matters, employee performance reviews and interfacing with county stakeholders would shift to the director.

Supervisor Rodney Lusk, chairman of the Board of Supervisors’ Safety and Security Committee, has been the primary architect of the county’s police reform efforts since he took office in 2020. Lusk built his brand on police reform and transparency.

Consolidating Agencies 42 and 43 into Agency 44 saves some money by creating a single point, with a single director in charge of the flow of information. It could appear the county is moving away from the independent “checks and balances” model and toward a “gatekeeping” model.

The Fairfax County Independent Police Auditor Recommendations, updated March 26 (based on the Matrix), show several “Not Implemented” statuses — specifically regarding use-of-force on fleeing subjects and mental health crisis protocols. In the current model, these disagreements are public and transparent because the auditor and panel operate as independent agencies. Under the proposed Agency 44, the staff for both functions will report to a single director.

Asked to share specific structural safeguards being built into this new consolidated office to ensure checks and balances remain visible to the public, rather than being resolved or filtered behind the scenes by a single department head, Lusk replied with an emailed statement to *The Connection*.

“While much is left to be discussed and determined regarding the proposed Office of Police Accountability, we remain committed to ensuring transparency is maintained,” Lusk said. “The staff within the Office of the Independent Police Auditor and the Police Civilian Review Panel already coordinate closely due to the nature of their work. The functions of the Panel and the Auditor would remain unchanged, and the goal of this proposal is to provide stability and to further advance the current missions of both.”

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>

FAIRFAX COUNTY

FARMERS MARKETS RETURN

Operated by the Fairfax County Park Authority, these popular markets connect residents with local farmers and food producers at 10 convenient locations. Shop seasonal fruits and vegetables, meats, dairy, baked goods and artisanal products, while enjoying a vibrant, open-air market experience.

WEDNESDAYS

McCutcheon/Mount Vernon: April 22-Nov. 25, 8 a.m. - noon. Sherwood Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane

Oakmont: May 6-Oct. 28, 8 a.m.-noon. Oakmont Recreation Center, 3200 Jermantown Road

Wakefield: May 6-Oct. 28, 2-6 p.m. Wakefield Park, 8100 Braddock Road

THURSDAYS

Annandale: May 7-Oct. 29, 8 a.m. - noon. Mason District Park, 6621 Columbia Pike

Herndon: May 7-Oct. 29, 8 a.m. - noon. Old Town Herndon, 700 Block of Lynn Street by the Red Caboose

FRIDAYS

McLean: May 1-Oct. 30, 8 a.m.-noon. Lewinsville Park, 1659 Chain Bridge Road

Kingstowne: May 1-Oct. 23, 3-7 p.m. In the Giant parking lot, 5870 Kingstowne Towne Center

SATURDAYS

Burke: Apr. 18-Nov. 21, 8 a.m.-noon. VRE parking Lot, 5671 Roberts Parkway

Reston: Apr. 25-Nov. 21, 8 a.m.-noon. Lake Anne Village Center, 1609-A Washington Plaza

SUNDAYS

Lorton: May 3-Nov. 22, 8 a.m.-noon. VRE parking lot, 8990 Lorton Station Blvd.

NOW THRU MAY 31

"Down the Shore" Exhibit. At Reston Art Gallery, Reston. Reston Art Gallery (RAGS) is pleased to announce its May exhibition, "Down the Shore" featuring acrylic paintings by RAGS Director/artist Pat Macintyre. The exhibit captures the beauty and atmosphere of the Eastern Shore, Isle of Wight Bay, and Ocean City. Coastal scenes, images of nearby rural villages reflect the artist's appreciation for the area. Parsonsburg's quaint restaurant's canvas comes with its recipe for muskrat dinner. Several other works include large shells which float on canvases washed with pale colors. A reception will be held on Sunday May 10 from 2-4pm. Guests may meet the artist, enjoy refreshments and experience the collection in the beautiful lakeside gallery.

MAY 1-31

"Wild Life" Exhibition and May Gallery Show.

At McLean Art Gallery, 6224B Old Dominion Drive, McLean. During May, the McLean Art Gallery is pleased to feature "Wild Life," a new seasonal exhibition from the local nonprofit McLean Art Society. The public is invited to enjoy 200 new works from 45 local artists. Included are paintings in oil, acrylic, pastel, watercolor and mixed media;



Pat Hazell's "Permanent Record" can be seen on Saturday, May 9, 2026 at the McLean Community Center.



McLean Day will be held May 15-16 at Lewinsville Park in McLean.

drawings; photography; sculpture; and works in wood, glass, ceramics and jewelry.

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 through 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.

MAY 8-9

OLLI Ideas Festival for Adults 50+. At GMU's Fairfax Campus (OLLI Mason). The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at George Mason University (OLLI Mason) will host its inaugural Ideas Festival on May 8-9, 2026, inviting adults ages 50+ to explore opportunities for lifelong learning, connection, and enrichment. Held on the Fairfax campus, the free, two-day event will feature more than 20 classes, demonstrations, and activities spanning art, music, history, health, and more. Highlights include hands-on sessions such as watercolor painting, tai chi, and chair yoga, as well as a panel discussion, "Global Perspectives on Longevity," on Saturday, May 9 at 3:00 p.m., featuring George Mason faculty and experts. For more information and to RSVP, visit olli.gmu.edu

WEDNESDAYS, MAY 6, 13, 20, 27

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

THURSDAY/MAY 7

Film: "El Norte" (1983). 1 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. When a group of Mayan Indians organize a labor union, their community is violently destroyed by the Guatemalan army. Teenage siblings Rosa and Enrique manage to escape the massacre and decide to start a new life in El Norte—the USA. The story combines magic realism and beautiful imagery.

FRIDAY/MAY 8

Wellness and Safety Expo. 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry St., SE, Vienna. Older adults can take advantage of educational opportunities and giveaways from more than 50 local vendors providing a wide range of resources, including tips for mental, social, environmental, and financial wellness. This year, Matthew Quinn, of Quinn's Auction Galleries, will provide insights into sales trends in the auction world and offer suggestions on what to do with family heirlooms. Attendees may also have one or two items appraised by experts on a first-come, first-served basis (no books please). Appraisals will be available from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. For more information, visit www.viennava.gov/wellness, or call 703-255-7801.

FRIDAY/MAY 8

BYU's Noteworthy and Vocal Point. 7 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, Fairfax. Brigham Young University's two premier a cappella ensembles are coming to the DMV on May 8 with a lively, high-energy, family-friendly performance sure to captivate the young and young at heart. Noteworthy and Vocal Point take hit songs you know and love—from crowd-pleasing pop, country, R&B, and Broadway favorites to beloved hymns like "Amazing Grace" and "Nearer, My God, to Thee"—reimagine them, and deliver a new rendition, with all the complex instrumentation done entirely with their voices.

SATURDAY/MAY 9

Pat Hazell's "Permanent Record". 7-8:30 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. "Seinfeld" writer Pat Hazell goes in search of his own "Permanent Record" in a confessional night filled with humor, heart and humanity. Hazell hired an actual opposition research company to investigate his past, and he is now forced to define himself. Pat opens the vault to his faults, foibles and foul play to turn a stroll down Memory Lane into a high-speed chase down Memory Highway. If you can't laugh at yourself, why not laugh at him?

SATURDAY/MAY 9

Park and Bark. 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. At Walney Visitor Center, 5040 Walney Road, Chantilly. Fairfax County Park Authority and the Ellanor C. Lawrence Park Friends invite families and their four-legged companions to unleash the fun at Park and Bark, a community event supporting Ellanor C. Lawrence Park. Park and Bark offers something for everyone — both human and canine alike. Enjoy craft brews from Lazy Dog Restaurant, gourmet hot dogs and sausages from Kaziville, dog-themed vendors, local crafters and live music from Lucas Mason. Guests can also meet adoptable dogs from A Forever Home Rescue Foundation and explore services, such as on-site mobile dog grooming.

SATURDAY/MAY 9

AANHPI Heritage Festival. 12:30 to 5 p.m. At Mason District Park, 6621 Columbia Pike, Annandale. The Fairfax County Park Authority invites the community to celebrate Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month at Mason District Park.

Event Highlights:

- Cultural performances: Watch traditional and contemporary dance and music from local AANHPI artists.
- Interactive experiences: Try hands-on activities, such as calligraphy, origami and martial arts demonstrations.
- Global flavors: Sample a variety of authentic dishes from local food vendors.
- Art and culture: Explore exhibits featuring works by AANHPI artists.
- Family fun: Kids can take part in crafts, storytelling and interactive activities throughout the day.

SATURDAY/MAY 9

Concert. 3 p.m. At Heritage Fellowship Church, 2501 Fox Mill Road, Reston. The Great Falls Philharmonic and Voce Chamber Singers will perform Beethoven's landmark Symphony No. 9 and Leonard Bernstein's Chichester Psalms. Visit <https://www.gfphil.org/odetojoy> for tickets and more information. The "Ode to Joy," the final movement of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, is one of the most recognizable and enduring musical statements in history—a declaration of unity, freedom, and shared humanity. Bernstein's Chichester Psalms blends Hebrew liturgical texts with rhythmic vitality and lyrical expressiveness. This performance marks a unique collaboration between the Great Falls Philharmonic under director Derek Maseloff and the Voce Chamber Singers.

SATURDAY/MAY 9

Workhouse Arts Center Gala. 5:30 to 10 p.m.

ENTERTAINMENT

At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton. Where Spring blooms and art collide. Act I: Monet's Garden Party 5:30 to 7 p.m. Arrivals. Red carpet. Reception. Champagne. Mingle with fascinating people and browse the Grand Silent Auction. ACT II: Van Gogh's Starry Night | 7:00 – 10:00 p.m. An elegant gourmet dinner followed by the D.C. Transit Band igniting the dance floor.

SATURDAY/MAY 9

Repair Cafe. 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. At Lorton Library, 9520 Richmond Hwy., Lorton. Fairfax County Repair Cafe is a team of volunteer "fixers" with a variety of skills. They diagnose, repair and recommend. Bring your items or questions and join them. Free household item repairs: sewing repairs, small appliance fixes, jewelry repair, computer help, knife sharpening, community fun.

SUNDAY/MAY 10

Mother's Day Craft. 1-4 p.m. At Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. Celebrate Mother's Day in a creative way at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum. Guests of all ages can make beautiful paper flowers as a gift for the amazing Moms in their lives. All supplies are provided. Staff will be available for guided crafting help. While you're at the Station, take some time to explore our exhibits on the history of railroads and model trains as well as the local history of the Fairfax Station area. Admission: Moms are free today! Museum members and ages 4 and under, free; ages 5-12, \$4; ages 13 and older, \$6. Military, First Responders, and Teachers \$5; Seniors, 65+, \$5. www.fairfax.station.railroad.museum.org, 703-425-9225. www.facebook.com/ffxsrr.

<cal1> Thursday/May 14

<cal2> Movie: "Ballet Russes" (2005). 1 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. After impresario Sergei Diaghilev's death, the iconic and groundbreaking Ballet Russes was reborn as Ballet Russes de Monte Carlo. The documentary delves into this new period for the company and includes archival footage of original productions, interviews with surviving dancers, and hot goss on what went on behind the tutus.

THURSDAY/MAY 14

Red Cross Blood Drive. 1-6 p.m. At Christ the King Lutheran Church, 10550 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Register today at www.redcrossblood.org. Questions? Contact Melody Starya Mobley at 571-276-7356. Website: <https://www.gflutheran.org/news-events>

FRIDAY/MAY 15

Bike to Work Day 2026. More than 100 pit stops located across the metropolitan Washington region (777 North Capitol St NE, Suite 300 Washington, DC 20002). Join thousands of area commuters for the 25th annual free event celebrating bicycling as a fun, low-cost, healthy, and environmentally friendly way to get around! Free registration is now open. The first 18,000 to register and attend will receive a free T-shirt. Visit <https://www.bike-toworkmetrodc.org/> for more information!

MAY 15-16

McLean Day. Fri. May 15, 3-9 p.m. | Just Carnival Rides & Governing Board Voting; Sat. May 16, 11 a.m.- 5 p.m. At Lewinsville Park, McLean. McLean's biggest annual festival returns with live music, carnival rides, gourmet food trucks, a beer and wine garden, 100+ exhibitors, games, a petting zoo, commemoration of America 250, and more, drawing over 10,000 visitors each day. Free admission but ride tickets available onsite or online!

SATURDAY/MAY 16

String Theory Presentation. 12-2 p.m. At Reston Regional Library, Reston. Life, the Universe, and Everything: A String Theory Way. Join in a talk with scientist and author Dr. Howard Jeffrey Bender as he gives a light



Enjoy ping pong at OFC Open Game Nights on Wednesdays at the Old Firehouse Center in McLean.



Jenny Lin will perform Piano "Melody's Mostly Musical Day" on Sunday, May 31, 2026 at the McLean Community Center.

description of String Theory. We will learn how it may affect our consciousness and personality, how our universe has developed, and how Dark Matter may be explained. Website: <https://librarycalendar.fairfaxcounty.gov/event/16279696>

SATURDAY/MAY 16

Taste of Tysons Corner. 12 to 3 p.m. At Tysons Corner Center, McLean. Enjoy food samples from 40+ restaurants, live music, chef demos, activations & more. The foodies and shoppers are welcomed for a flavorful afternoon on the Plaza and beyond to explore a range of food and beverage offerings through tastings, live cooking demonstrations, chef appearances, raffles, giveaways, and more.

Event Schedule:

12-1 PM | Passport Pickup + Center-Wide Tastings

Start your culinary stroll by picking up your Passport to Delicious (a returning fan favorite) and explore 40+ participating restaurants throughout the center. Collect stamps along the way for a chance to win restaurant gift cards from Eddie V's, Earls, Barrel & Bushel, and Seasons 52.

1-2 PM | Live Chef Demos + Passport-to-Prize Entry

Head to PenFed Plaza for live chef demonstrations, broadcast on the new PenFed Plaza digital board. Drop your completed passport

at the plaza entry table to be entered into the restaurant gift card raffles.

2-3 PM | Live Music + Giveaways

Stay on the Plaza for live music from Risky Shenanigans, plus giveaways and additional surprises to close out the afternoon.

For more information, visit <https://www.tyson-scornercenter.com>.

SATURDAY/MAY 16

Big Plant Sale. 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. At Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. The Fairfax County Park Authority and Friends of Green Spring Gardens invite plant lovers of all kinds to celebrate the season at the annual Spring Garden Day and Big Plant Sale. This free, family-friendly event is a must for anyone with a green thumb — or hoping to grow one. Browse an incredible selection of plants from dozens of local vendors, featuring everything from native and fruiting plants to colorful annuals, perennials, herbs and hard-to-find varieties. Get expert advice from Extension Master Gardeners, shop garden-themed goods from local artists and businesses and enjoy tasty offerings from food vendors. Don't miss the Friends of Green Spring Bake Sale for homemade treats to power your plant-shopping spree.

SATURDAY/MAY 16

Stronger Together Health Fair. 8 a.m. to 1:30

p.m. At Annandale Fire Department, 7128 Columbia Pike, Annandale. The Stronger Together Health Fair is a free, community-focused wellness event designed to help people get stronger, live longer, and stay connected. Attendees can explore a variety of local health and wellness vendors, meet specialists, and receive free on-site services, screenings, and resources that support long-term health — all with no registration required.

Here's what you'll experience: A Longevity Assessment Scorecard — discover how your strength, balance, and mobility stack up + leave with a personalized plan; FREE chair massages, massage gun sessions & stretch therapy; Chiropractic adjustments & physical therapy screenings; Advanced movement assessments using motion analysis software; Opportunity to get a DEXA scan for real insight into body composition & bone health. Plus delicious food & drinks from Cafe Hive — known for trendy coffee, tea, and chef-crafted pastries

SATURDAY/MAY 16

Polar Heat on Lynn Street. 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.

On Lynn Street, Downtown Herndon. This free, all-day community event will feature two stages of live entertainment, along with additional special performances and interactive experiences. Polar Heat on Lynn Street is built around a simple concept: everything at the event ties into either a "hot" or "cool" theme—from music and activities to food and community booths. The entertainment lineup reflects that approach, with two distinct stages offering different styles of performances throughout the day. Cool Vibes Stage Lineup Laid-back, family-friendly performances and interactive entertainment: • 11:00 – 11:20 AM: Herndon High School Latin Dance Team • 11:30 AM – 12:00 PM: NextStop Theatre "Dance-A-Long" (Songs from Frozen) • 12:15 – 1:00 PM: The Hula Monsters • 1:15 – 1:45 PM: School of Rock Herndon • 2:15 – 3:15 PM: Amanda's Bluegrass Band • 3:30 – 4:30 PM: Chris DeSantis • 4:45 – 5:15 PM: Freeze Frame: The Ultimate Icy Music Trivia Challenge • 5:45 – 6:30 PM: Crossing Elden • 6:45 – 7:45 PM: Al & Caro Hot Beats Stage Lineup High-energy performances and dance-driven acts: • 11:15 AM – 12:15 PM: LineDance4You • 12:45 – 1:45 PM: Good Morning Tomorrow Mailing: 777 Lynn Street, Herndon, VA 20170-4602 | Physical: 814 Ferndale Avenue, Herndon VA 20170-3431 herndon-va.gov • 2:15 – 3:45 PM: Radio Hero • 4:15 – 5:15 PM: Melissa Quinn Fox • 5:45 – 7:15 PM: Orquesta Nfuzion

MAY 16-17

Tephra ICA Arts Festival. At Reston Town Center, Reston. Tephra Institute of Contemporary Art (Tephra ICA) announces the 35th Tephra ICA Arts Festival will take place on May 16-17, 2026 at the Reston Town Center in Reston, Virginia. Over 200 artists will travel from across the country to present original artwork. This annual event attracts tens-of-thousands of people to the unique, outdoor environment of Reston Town Center. Now in its 35th year, this marquee cultural event provides the opportunity to purchase art directly from artists while also enjoying free programs, including performances by Pearsonwidrig Dancetheatre, Glass Blowing Demos with Workhouse Arts Center, a Festival Art Park for all ages hosted by the South Lakes High School STEAM Team, food vendors, guided tours, free concert, and a sip & stroll.

SUNDAY/MAY 17

Monthly Model Train Show. 1-4 p.m. At Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. Every third Sunday, from February through November, the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum hosts our local model train enthusiasts with running model trains in N and T gauge. Admission: Museum members and ages 4 and under, free; ages 5-12, \$4; ages 13 and older, \$6. Military, First Responders, and Teachers \$5; Seniors, 65+, \$5. <http://www.fairfax.station.railroad.museum.org>, <http://www.facebook.com/FFXSRR>, 703-425-9225.

Fairfax High Teen Sentenced for Sexual Assault

FROM PAGE 5

“The defendant’s behavior was deplorable, targeted and a pattern,” she said. “Therefore, incarceration is warranted. It’s behavior not accepted in society and requires treatment. He needs a lengthy period of probation so he can receive it and then function in society.”

Since Flores Ortiz entered the U.S. illegally, his arrest attracted attention from ICE, which threatened to deport him once he’s released. But one of his victims said his immigration status had nothing to do with what he did.

Sands told VanLowe, “One letter I received said, ‘Due to the politics of this moment, this has turned into something different – about immigration. But to me, it’s about a guy in a hallway who did something wrong and made me feel unsafe. It made me question my instincts and affected my mental health. I want to go back to being a normal kid.’”

Public defender Jamie Hospers asked for a sentence of nine days’ incarceration plus a year’s probation so his client could receive a mental-health evaluation and its corresponding treatment. “Israel is 18, with no prior record,” he said. “No criminal history means he had no prior intervention that failed. And he’s felt the maximum impact of his time in jail for the past 1-1/2 months.”

Hospers said Flores Ortiz takes responsibility for his actions and had turned himself in to police. But, he added, “An 18-year-old is young; the adolescent brain is not as fully developed as it is at age 25, so there’s a lack of maturity. He said it was done ‘for fun.’ Only a teen would say something like that.”

“Young people have more potential to change over time as an adult,” continued Hospers. “And this case didn’t involve weapons or speeding cars. But two students testified to more-invasive touching, and he grabbed people in unwanted ways. What do we do in these cases? Sometimes, we elect them president of the United States.”

“We’re not going to talk about Israel’s life as a whole because we don’t want it to be used against him in future weeks and months. The court needs to consider a consequence he could bear – being arrested at home, work or at the courtroom doors, sent to an ICE detention center and deported.

“He’s a quiet person of few words. But he’s told me he realizes the students need to feel safe at school and he’s sorry. He knows his behavior also affected others, and he’s sorry for how it impacted his parents and the fact that they must be so disappointed in him.”

Flores Ortiz then stood and made a statement via a Spanish-language interpreter. “I apologize to the girls and their families,” he said. “I hurt them. I also apologize to my mother and father.”

Judge VanLowe had the final say. “To the students, I believe them and thank them for testifying,” she said. “And I feel very badly that this has received the attention it has nationally, because you’re young kids. So thank you for expressing what you did.”

To Flores Ortiz, she said, “Fairfax High School is a community where people have certain values, including the right to feel safe and respected.

Your actions violated those values. And those girls weren’t having fun when you grabbed them. What occurred isn’t acceptable. Most assault and battery cases wouldn’t receive jail time, but this case is different, and the students’ reactions were different.

“On March 4, one student turned around and confronted you. She pushed you and cursed you out. It was clear what you’d done hurt her as a person. But two days later, you did it again. Some students wrote how your behavior changed how they’ll move through life as young girls. They’ll have to change their behavior to protect themselves in the future.”

Therefore, VanLowe told him, “This showed the lasting impact of your actions and made your behavior aggravated.” She then sentenced Flores Ortiz to 180 days (six months) in the Adult Detention Center on each of the nine counts and ran the sentences consecutively. She also placed him on two years’ supervised probation and suspended 140 days of each sentence, provided he abides by the following conditions:

- ❖ Comply with the rules of his probation and be of general, good behavior;
- ❖ Have no further violations of the law for two years;
- ❖ Undergo psycho-sexual evaluation and treatment;
- ❖ Have no contact with the 13 girls in this case.

The suspended jail time left Flores Ortiz with 140 days total to serve. Subtracting the 45 days he’d already spent in jail by the time he was sentenced – and the 16 days that have passed since then – he now has just over four months’ incarceration left.

Before he left the courtroom, the judge had a few more words for him. “I believe in redemption and that your actions don’t define you,” she said. “If you follow your treatment, I believe you can go on to do great things. But because of your behavior, I believe this sentence is appropriate.”

Legals

NOTICE OF TRANSFER OF MEDICAL RECORDS

This notice is to inform current and former patients of Michael Greene, MD who is retiring effective June 1, 2026 and Marc A. Eisenbaum, MD who will be joining Inova Health System on a part-time basis effective June 1, 2026 that their medical practices are undergoing a transition.

As a result, patient medical records will be transferred to Inova Health System for continued maintenance and care.

Release of medical records

If you would like to transfer your medical records to another provider or receive a copy of your records, visit Inova.org/medicalrecords and request your medical records using the online tool. Upon receipt of the completed transfer request, the records or copies will be sent, within a reasonable time, to the provider of your choice or provided to you. Please note that state and federal laws permit fees to be charged for copies of medical records that are not for continuation of care. You will only be charged the actual costs of copying and mailing or delivering the records.

To make an appointment or for further information contact:

Inova Primary Care - Fair Oaks
3580 Joseph Siewick Dr., 304
Fairfax, VA 22033
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Sixth annual Asian Festival on Main is May 17

FROM PAGE 13

Asia, watch live performances, meet local artists and businesses, and spend the day exploring. It's a space where families, friends and neighbors come together, and where people can discover cultures that may be new to them."

Agreeing, Disch said, "The Asian Festival on Main is OTFBA's signature event of the year and, along with the City, we're looking forward to welcoming attendees from all over the DMV to our beautiful, Old Town Fairfax area. We hope guests discover the charm of our brick-lined streets and historic buildings and are inspired to return as regular patrons of our local businesses."

As always, one of the festival highlights will be the Choy Wun Lion Dance Troupe doing a colorful Dragon and Lion Dance on Main Street at 11:15 a.m. to kick off the day's festivities. The "dragon" will then gyrate its way down University Drive to the Unity Stage in Old Town Square as the first performer there at 11:35 a.m.

It's no surprise then that Chan calls the opening lion and dragon dance on Main Street one of his favorite parts of the day. "It sets the tone for the entire festival and brings incredible energy to Old Town Fairfax," he said. "I also enjoy walking through the vendor areas, seeing the diversity of food and products, and connecting directly with the people behind them."

After Choy Wun entertains on-stage, it'll be followed by a wide array of vocal, instrumental, dance and martial-arts performances representing cultures across Asia. (See Entertainment Schedule). Displaying their talents will be groups and individuals showcasing K-Pop, Indonesian, Hawaiian, Chinese, Nepali, Indian and Philippine songs and dances.

Headlining the Unity Stage musical performers will be INFUSION – a collective of diverse musicians blending Southeast Asian and Western musical traditions into a unique, contemporary sound. Representing cultures from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan, this group reinterprets South Asian music while promoting cultural connection, community and peace. INFUSION will perform at 5 p.m.

This year's emcee is Jenny Nguyen, a community advocate with extensive experience in leadership and service. She's also an administrator with a

Washington, D.C.-based youth organization and a former Miss VietFest United States.

Festival attendees will notice that some of the Old Town streets and parking areas have been "renamed" for the event. (See Map). Otaku Garden is in the Woody's Ice Cream parking lot, Asian Discovery Plaza is the public parking lot behind De Clieu Coffee, and the Beer and Karaoke Garden is in the Standard Barbershop parking lot.

And when it comes to food and beverages, people will have a wealth of options from which to choose. They may quench their



PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION
The Fairfax Chinese Dance Troupe performs at the 2025 festival.



Food vendors are hard at work at last year's event.

thirst with everything from boba tea to matcha drinks, Thai iced tea, smoothies, juices and beer. And food selections will include a real taste of Asian culture via rice and noodle dishes such as Pad Thai, stir fries, dumplings, spring rolls, pho, bao buns (filled with chicken, pork and vegetables), crepes, ube and pandan ice cream, baked goods featuring Asian flavors, individual chicken and fruit kebabs, onigiri (meat, rice and seaweed), Takoyaki (Japanese fried octopus balls), and mango sticky rice.

But that's not all this event offers. "We'll have two mini horses, Teddy and Eleanor, as part of a petting experience to celebrate the Year of the Horse," said Chan. "They'll be at the south side of Asian Culture Lane [University Drive], near South Street, from noon-1:30 p.m. and 2-3:30 p.m."

In addition, he said, "This year, I'm es-

pecially excited about some of our expanded programming. The Otaku Garden creates a dedicated space for anime, cosplay and pop culture, while our cultural showcases and a live podcast with The Hungry Immigrant highlight deeper conversations around food, identity and community."

New to the festival, The Hungry Immigrant's podcast will be held at Asian Discovery Plaza. It'll offer conversations with chefs, creatives and community leaders exploring topics including the evolving, Asian culinary landscape in the DMV.

The host and moderator will be Chef Abang Brian, founder of The Hungry Immigrant, and culinary instructor at the Auguste Escoffier School of Culinary Arts. Featured panels include:

- ❖ 1:30-2:30 p.m. - "From Heritage to Mainstream: How Asian Food Built Community in the DMV," featuring Chef Tim Ma and Chef Patrice Cleary.

- ❖ 3:30-4:30 p.m. - "Who Shapes Taste? Chefs, Communities and the New Asian Food Scene in the DMV," featuring Chef Erik Bruner-Yang and Mya Yin.

One of the largest cultural events in Virginia, this festival regularly attracts more than 25,000 people from across the Washington Metropolitan area. The main sponsor is Hollywood Casino at Charles Town Races.

"At its core, AFM is a community-driven, nonprofit event, and we're committed to keeping it free and accessible to everyone," said Chan. "That's something we're very proud of, and it's only possible because of the support from our partners, sponsors, volunteers and the City of Fairfax."

To help the festival remain that way, anyone interested may make a donation and become a Friend of AFM at www.asianfestivalonmain.com.

Soap du Jour



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

As I'm sure you don't know - and even more sure that you don't care, I prefer using a bar of soap rather than liquid soap/body wash. This point may not be worth making, but as a cancer patient still under treatment, with monthly lab work and quarterly PET scans keeping me on the precipice, I react to things differently than one who was not given - as I was, a "13 month to two-years" prognosis, back in late Feb. 2009. Moreover, having been diagnosed (at the time, it has since changed) with stage IV, non-small cell lung cancer, a killer cancer if there ever was one - and there are many (though lung cancer kills more people than the next four cancers combined); my prospects were not encouraging. Yet, here I sit, pen in hand, 17+ years later alive and reasonably well - all things considered (and you bet I consider all things; it helps to keep my sane); still waiting for the other shoe to drop (expect it really) and viewing my life through a cancer-affected prism.

And through that prism I saw an eight-count package of soap the other day in my local supermarket advertising circular, and since it was my brand, I thought I should buy it, especially since it's not often advertised and rarely available, given the popularity/marketing of liquid soaps - apparently. Seeing this advertisement reminded me of a similar experience I had 17+ years ago during the early, hairless stage of my heavy-duty chemotherapy infusions. I went ahead and instinctively (bulk/value purchases appeal to my consuming nature- then and now) bought the eight-count then without factoring in my mortality (or rather lack thereof - at the time). However, soon-ish after I returned home and incorporated this eight-count of soap into my bathing routine, and realized how long a bar was lasting, I "stopped short" like Mr. Costanza did in his car - on a long ago "Seinfeld" episode, but in my house and I thought/wondered/worried if I had just wasted my money - considering my prognosis. A variation of the common-sense advisory to not buy green bananas if it's presumed that time is not on the buyer's side.

But survived I have - and eventually "soaped up" this eight count. Nevertheless, the purchase/experience made me gun shy and up until this recent advertisement, I hadn't noticed this item for sale anywhere and likewise hadn't purchased another eight count. Though I survived, I always thought that previous soap purchase was a bit of reach. Seeing the eight count of soap once again reminded me of my earlier what-I-subsequently-described as a mistake and as such was not keen to repeat my error/waste my money (I have plenty of other shorter-term needs/pleasures I'd rather purchase that carry no such financial implications - to me anyway).

All of which brings me - finally, to the meat of this column's bone - so to speak: a cancer's patient's presumptive/predicted/anticipated mortality and the effect it has on one's thinking/planning. A constant worry for me - then and now, has been and still is: whenever I buy anything, I consider/calculate - figuratively speaking, if I will live long enough to actually use this product/item. (I still remember cleaning out my uncle's condo in Florida and finding five bottles of mouthwash underneath the bathroom sink.) I'm constantly worrying about whether I might outlive my money. Money which is hardly unlimited. Moreover, it's very difficult to live/plan financially for a definite maybe. This angst is further complicated by the amazingly good fortune I've had to outlive by prognosis. It's been a blessing but when looking ahead, I can't help thinking that my past will catch up to me. A past which hardly guarantees a future.

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



PHOTO COURTESY OF ADAM AINSPAN.

Beau Jangles spent his historic 2025 season banking \$1,688,750, the most ever by a freshman pacer; the three-year-old pacing colt is owned by a U.S. partnership led by Clifton veterinarian Dr. Adam Ainspan.

Vet's Eye for Greatness

Defies odds in the sport of horse racing.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Most of the time, things don't work out for owners in the sport of horse racing. "You have so many things that just do not go your way. I mean, you lose the majority of your races," said Adam S. Ainspan, DVM, of Clifton, co-owner with his wife Mary Beth Roberts of Graham Grace Stables.

Yet, Ainspan has defied those odds with two major winners: Beau "Bo" Jangles, a Standardbred (specifically a pacer) that competes in harness racing, where he pulls a driver in a sulky; and Tour Player, a Thoroughbred in traditional flat racing.

The results have been historic. Bo went undefeated as a 2-year-old in 2025, winning all 12 starts in the North American Grand Circuit. Bo's dominance culminated in being named Horse of the Year in both the United States and Canada simultaneously — the first 2-year-old in history to sweep both honors. As of April 12, Beau Jangles has banked \$1,688,750, making him the highest-earning freshman pacer in history.

Though his champion horses reside at training centers in Florida, Kentucky, and Toronto, Ainspan's roots in the Town of Clifton, a horse-friendly community because zoning requires a minimum of five acres. Combined with his career as a local veterinarian, his experience gave him the "scout's eye" necessary to identify greatness in Bo. His background allowed him

to see past the surface, identifying talent where others saw risk. Ainspan credits that dual perspective — the ability to see a Standardbred through the lens of a Thoroughbred vet — as the secret to his success. A 1989 graduate of the University of Tennessee, Ainspan said he grew up just outside Saratoga Springs, New York, home to Saratoga Race Course.

Ainspan's acquisition of Beau "Bo" Jangles as a yearling was a case study in that intuition. While his partners worried that the horse was too large to ever be athletic enough, Ainspan spotted a detail in a sales video that others missed, the way the colt moved. Ainspan said what caught his eye was Bo's gait as a yearling was "very much like you would see in a ... turf horse," and it "looked way more efficient ... than I would usually see... in a yearling." To him, the colt was "just different than all the other yearlings ... in the efficiency of his gait," and "like a very efficient ... Thoroughbred... horse."

Ainspan said that "without owning both breeds, I don't think I ever would have picked him." With his strategic partnerships in place, Ainspan moved forward with the \$65,000 purchase.

According to racing records and statements from Ainspan, Beau Jangles is the first 2-year-old in history to sweep the Horse of the Year titles in both the U.S. and Canada simultaneously. His undefeated 12-for-12 season in 2025 — which included a world-record-equaling 1:48.3 mile in the Breeders Crown — made him the consensus choice

for voters on both sides of the border, according to Harness Racing Update.

"Beau Jangles, a son of Cattlewash, went 12-for-12 with a Canadian record of 1:48.3 to nail down the honors in the Breeders Crown." Additionally, announced on Feb. 22, Beau Jangles was named the 2025 Dan Patch Horse of the Year. He is the first horse in history to be named the U.S. Harness Writers Association's (USHWA) Dan Patch Horse of the Year without going to post on U.S. soil, according to Ontario Racing.

For Ainspan, success extends across disciplines. Tour Player, a Thoroughbred son of American Pharoah, recently won the \$100,000 Royal New Kent Stakes at Colonial Downs in March. Tour Player is slated to race on the Kentucky Derby undercard in May. "It's not very often you get a horse to race on Kentucky Derby Saturday ... even just to race on Kentucky Derby Saturday is quite a thing," Ainspan said.

The stable remains a family business, and the nickname "Bo," for Beau Jangles, is a tribute to the family's beloved late Great Pyrenees, Ainspan said. He noted that, like their dog, the colt carries himself with a certain regal confidence, as if "this is my world, and you're living in it."

Looking ahead to Bo's 3-year-old campaign, Ainspan said that he remains "cautiously optimistic."

"We're in a good position. But I don't sit here thinking, 'Oh, isn't this great?' because I know what can happen ... We'll just have to see."



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

The front door of the new museum space.

Franconia Museum
7130 Silver Lake Blvd,
Kingstowne, VA 22315

Operating hours are currently limited

Supervisor Lusk attended opening day at the museum.



Franconia Museum Finds a New Home in the New Government Center

Museum gets an upgrade in the new district building on Beulah Street.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

When the local officials moved into the new building on Beulah Street, the Franconia Museum went with them and is now showing off the old Franconia in a brand new space.

Moving a room full of fragile and/or dusty artifacts from a life gone by was more complicated and time consuming than they planned though. Although the new museum space officially opened on April 11, they are only open one day a week for a while until further notice.

Nathaniel Lee is one of the curators that has been with the museum for years and was part of the move.

"It's a beautiful new space," he said.

The original museum opened over 20 years ago in a space in the old building that slowly evolved into a real cornerstone of the Franconia community. There were many farm artifacts, Civil War items, parade pictures and the big "Franconia" train station sign that is going to be part of the new museum too.

This time around, the officials at Franconia Museum are working with a museum expert from the Smithsonian to handle, store and display the artifacts in a more professional manner. Since the Smithsonian was closed during the recent government shut down, this employee was not working so he came over and volunteered at the Franconia Museum.

When they cleaned out the old museum space on Franconia Road, they did dig up an old Civil War ammunition pouch that belonged to a local soldier named Carey Lee, a person related to the Nalls family that is affiliated with the museum and nearby Nalls Produce. It had been on an obscure shelf for nearly 20 years.