

THE CONNECTION

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

Biking to Work for Health and More

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From left, Ryan Madden and his daughter, Capri Madden, pose with John "Mr. Anton" Dudzinsky at the Town of Herndon pit stop during Fairfax County's Bike to Work Day on Friday, May 15, 2026.

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PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION



Spanberger
Vetoes Collective
Bargaining

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McLean Bees
Produce Gold

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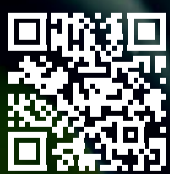
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**VINSON
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Spanberger Signs 25-Bill Package

Fairfax lawmakers drive key reforms on data center costs, gun safety, and healthcare caps.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Gov. Abigail Spanberger signed 25 bills into law on May 13. While the broader package includes legislation from across the commonwealth, members of the Fairfax County legislative delegation heavily influenced the outcome. Local representatives spearheaded six landmark bills in the package, advancing measures to adjust regional public safety policies, utility infrastructure costs, health insurance coverage standards and more.

Three ‘Kitchen-Table’ Bills

These laws alter regulations governing household expenses, healthcare cost structures and insurance standards for families across Northern Virginia.

The \$35 Insulin Cap (HB 1214), patroned by Del. Karrie Delaney, D-Chantilly, concerns health insurance cost-sharing payments for insulin and diabetes equipment and supplies. “As the mother of a T1D child, I am all too familiar with just how costly equipment like CGMs or insulin pumps can be. I’m proud of this legislation, passed unanimously, that will bring real change to Virginians’ lives,” Delaney said.

“We are taking action to bring down healthcare costs,” Spanberger said.

❖ Data Center Cost Protection (HB 1191), patroned by Del. Irene Shin, D-Herndon, requires high-energy-use facilities to undergo local reviews to protect residential utility



PHOTO SCREENSHOT VIA FACEBOOK

Del. Karrie Delaney, third from left, applauds as Gov. Abigail Spanberger signs HB 1214 to lower healthcare costs by capping the price of insulin, supplies and equipment used to manage diabetes at \$35 a month, May 13, 2026. Delaney is the chief patron.

customers from infrastructure cost shifts.

❖ Essential Health Benefits Expansion (HB 328), patroned by Del. Rip Sullivan, D-McLean, directs the state’s Bureau of Insurance to select a new benchmark plan, expanding required baseline coverage to include treatments such as hearing aids, infertility treatments and doula care. “HB 328 will ensure those who need health coverage for things

like fertility treatment, doula care, hearing aids, donor breast milk, and more will have it,” Sullivan said. “It’s a major step in ensuring health care in the Commonwealth covers what Virginians need affordably.”

Three ‘Public Safety and Justice’ Bills

These state statutes outline adjustments

to Virginia’s criminal code and firearm regulations led by Fairfax County representatives.

❖ The Assault Weapons and Magazine Ban (HB 217 and SB 749), patroned by Del. Dan Helmer, D-Clifton and Sen. Saddam Azlan Salim, D-Vienna, prohibits the future sale, manufacture, importation or transfer of defined semi-automatic assault firearms and restricts ammunition magazines holding more than 15 rounds. Salim said, “When I ran for State Senate against an incumbent who voted against prior versions of an assault weapons ban, the people who believed in this vision stood with me to make the impossible possible.”

❖ Weapons Ban in Healthcare Facilities (HB 229), co-sponsored by Del. Laura Jane Cohen, D-Springfield, and Del. Holly Seibold, D-Vienna, restricts firearms in hospitals and psychiatric facilities to reduce workplace security incidents.

❖ Marijuana Conviction Resentencing (HB 26 and SB 62), co-sponsored by Shin and Salim, establishes a court hearing process to review sentences for marijuana offenses legalized or decriminalized under the 2021 updates.

Gov. Spanberger said, “For decades, marijuana enforcement disproportionately impacted minority communities and communities of color, contributing to inequities in the criminal justice system that Virginia must no longer ignore.”

The full list of signed bills is available here. <https://lis.virginia.gov/>

Gov. Spanberger Vetos Collective Bargaining Bill

Unions say the veto violated campaign promises

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

A legislative push for labor rights in Virginia ended Thursday, May 14, when Gov. Abigail Spanberger (D) vetoed collective bargaining bill HB 1263, which aimed “to establish a system for public sector collective bargaining.” Unions said the veto violated campaign promises.

HB 1263, sponsored by Del. Kathy Tran (D-Fairfax) with an identical bill, SB 378, by Senate Majority Leader Scott Surovell (D-Fairfax), would have extended bargaining rights to over 500,000 Virginia public employees — including firefighters, teachers and state and local workers — seeking wages, benefits, and working conditions by overturning bans on collective bargaining.

In April, Spanberger proposed a Governor’s Substitute to delay collective bargain-



PHOTO VIA X

Virginia gubernatorial candidate Abigail Spanberger speaks at a union rally in Henrico County on April 8, 2025, about the positive impact of labor unions on her family.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY SEIU

Members of SEIU Virginia 512 rally outside the Fairfax County Government Center on May 6, 2026, to urge Gov. Abigail Spanberger to sign House Bill 1263.

With the veto, the 2021 law remains the status quo, leaving collective bargaining optional for individual municipalities to adopt via local ordinance.

SEE UNIONS SAY, PAGE 4

Campaigns Suspended After U.S. Supreme Court Order

Local former 7th district contenders re-evaluate next steps.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Following the 18-word U.S. Supreme Court's May 15 order denying an emergency request to stay in *Scott v. McDougle*, Virginia's congressional boundaries reverted to 2021 Virginia court-ordered maps.

The U.S. Supreme Court gave no explanation, nor did justices dissent, and the docket did not disclose the vote. The order left in place a Virginia state supreme court ruling that reversed a lower circuit court decision and invalidated a temporary congressional redistricting map approved by 51.69% of voters in the April 21 special election, upending as many as 12 campaigns in the invalidated "new" 7th Congressional District.

There was outrage at both supreme courts invalidating an election.

Gov. Abigail Spanberger posted, "What do we do with our outrage? We WIN in November. Volunteer, donate, vote, WIN."

Virginia Senate Republican Leader Ryan McDougle said, "The Supreme Court of the United States has affirmed what we always knew: you cannot violate the

Constitution to change the Constitution."

Whether it's a stunning betrayal or procedural sanctity depends entirely on which side of the 2021 map one is standing on.

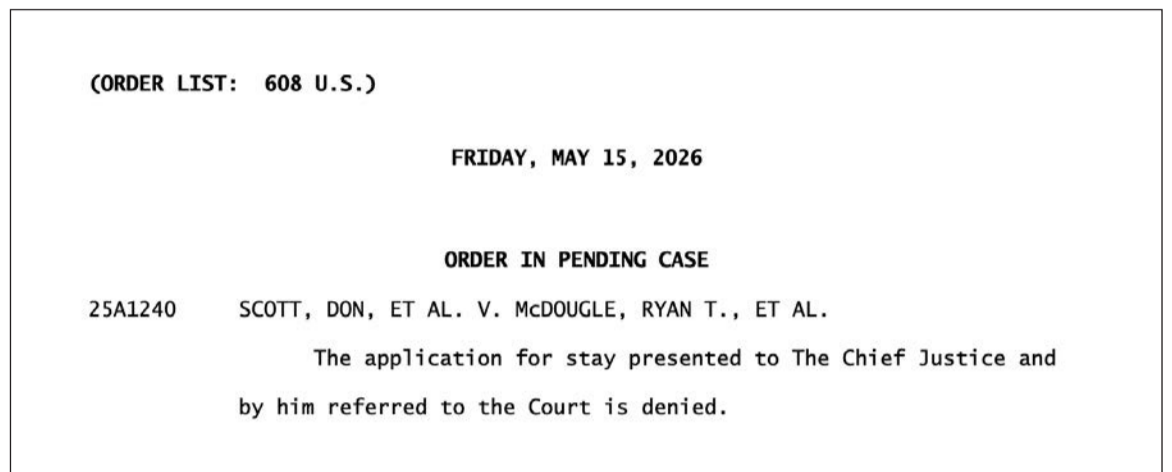
If Virginia wants to change its maps or its court, it will have to win the 2027 state elections and restart the amendment clock.

But it will be too late to counter out-of-turn redistricting in GOP states trying to stem possible GOP losses in November's election for U.S. House.

Northern Virginia candidates quickly shifted focus to their home districts. U.S. Rep. Suhas Subramanyam, continuing his reelection campaign in western Fairfax County, stated the court "decided to let the partisan Virginia Supreme Court overturn the will of millions of Virginia voters."

Del. Dan Helmer returned to his 2027 state delegate campaign in Centreville, noting that while the decision ended his congressional bid, "one court ruling won't change that."

State Sen. Saddam Azlan Salim remains in office through 2027, representing Fairfax and Falls Church, posting, "The movement



SCREENSHOT SUPREMECOURT.GOV

The U.S. Supreme Court order issued Friday, May 15, denies an emergency request by Virginia Democrats to use a new, Democratic-leaning congressional map for the 2026 elections. The 18-word order denies an emergency application for a stay in the case *Scott, Don, et al. v. McDougle, Ryan T., et al.* (Docket 25A1240). The application, filed by House Speaker Don Scott, Senate Majority Leader Scott Surovell, Senate President Pro Tempore Louise Lucas, and the Commonwealth of Virginia, requested the high court to pause lower court proceedings.

we built does not end here."

Other regional Democratic contenders suspended their campaigns with online statements. Former Virginia first lady Dorothy McAuliffe stated she would "keep working for my neighbors."

Del. Adele McClure called the moment "beyond disappointing. ... it is dangerous," urging supporters

to protect democracy.

Former federal prosecutor J.P. Cooney noted, "While my congressional campaign is ending, our movement to take on corruption and lawlessness is just beginning." Alexandria national security expert Olivia Troye affirmed her commitment to "standing up to Trump's and MAGA extremism."

Conversely, the map reversal altered the race for four Republican contenders running outside Northern Virginia: State Sen. Tara Durrant, John Gray, Douglas Ollivant, and Waverly Washington, all also ended their campaigns.

Fairfax County GOP posted, "Democrats tried to change the rules illegally. Spent millions."

Unions Say the Veto Violated Campaign Promises

FROM PAGE 3

ing for local employees without an agreement until 2030. The General Assembly rejected the delay on April 22, returning the version unaltered.

In her veto statement, Spanberger said: "While preserving the enrolled bill's focus on allowing public employees to achieve collective bargaining, my amendments would have also provided flexibility for public employers. ... However, the General Assembly rejected these amendments."

Labor leaders pointed to her April 8, 2025, messaging that she would "look forward to working with members of our General Assembly to make sure more Virginians can negotiate for the benefits and fair treatment that they earn."

Union heads said that the promise was broken. "Collective bargaining is not a privilege – it is a right," leaders from the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) said in a statement. "Governor Spanberger met with our members, stated her support, and

made a promise. Today, she broke it."

IAFF General President Edward Kelly stated: "This veto is a step against every worker who put their faith in Abigail Spanberger to deliver," Kelly said. "Firefighters keep their word every day on the job. The Governor did not do the same." (Read the statement via the IAFF News Portal).

Teamsters General President Sean M. O'Brien added: "Gov. Spanberger's actions in Virginia are a reminder that unions must

demand more of elected officials," O'Brien said. (Read the press release at the Teamsters Official Website.)

At a May 6 Fairfax rally, LaNoral Thomas, president of SEIU Virginia 512, said: "Making Virginia affordable means making sure the public servants who keep this state running can [afford to] live here."

Fairfax County Supervisor Dalia Palchick (D-Providence) said: "We know that when unions are active, our economy is stable." She said

that without labor protections, workers are vulnerable.

Thomas noted the bans were rooted in the 1970s: "When collective bargaining was banned in Virginia over 45 years ago, it was banned because a group of Black women at UVA stated that they wanted the right to collectively bargain," Thomas said.

With the veto, the 2021 law remains the status quo, leaving collective bargaining optional for individual municipalities to adopt via local ordinance.

BULLETIN BOARD

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

FAIRFAX COUNTY OFFERS FREE TREES

Community-based organizations in Fairfax County can apply to receive free trees for planting on private properties, through a program by Fairfax County's

Urban and Community Forestry Division (UCFD) of the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services.

The program, offered in partnership with Casey Trees, is designed to help community organizations in Fairfax County – such as volunteer groups, civic associations and faith-based organizations – obtain high-quality, professionally grown trees suitable for planting. Purchasing top-quality trees can be a challenge for these organizations. This opportunity focuses on increasing tree cover in economically

disadvantaged communities, which typically do not benefit from moderate to high tree cover.

How to Apply: Fairfax County Tree Distribution to Community Organizations | Public Works and Environmental Services

UCFD will prioritize applications for tree-planting sites within or adjacent to Fairfax County-designated highly vulnerable communities, as defined by the county's One Fairfax policy and its associated Vulnerability Index. While planting in highly vulnerable communities will be prioritized, all community

organizations are encouraged to apply for tree delivery, regardless of where tree planting is proposed. The costs of the trees and delivery are covered by the county's Tree Preservation and Planting Fund and will be offered at no cost to participating organizations.

VOLUNTEER DRIVERS NEEDED

Have some extra time to drive a neighbor to a doctor's appointment? You pick the days, times, and places that are convenient for you. There is no minimum driving requirement. Not only do you help

older adults in need, you also get to meet wonderful folks, often with very interesting backgrounds and stories to tell. The Shepherd's Center of McLean-Arlington-Falls Church (SCMAFC), is an all-volunteer, non-sectarian, non-profit organization. Its mission is providing free transportation to seniors for medical and dental appointments or run errands to grocery stores and pharmacies. Visit the website at <https://scmafc.org/volunteer>, or email contact@scmafc.org.

Vienna Town Council Cuts Tax Rate, Adopts Budget

At its regular meeting on Monday, May 18, 2026, the Vienna Town Council adopted the Town budget, real estate tax rate, and water and sewer rates for fiscal year 2027. The adopted \$58.3-million balanced budget reflects a 5.0 percent increase over the current year's budget to manage inflationary pressures. The budget also:

- ❖ Reduces the property tax rate from 19.5 cents to 19.0 cents per \$100 of assessed value.
- ❖ Addresses operating cost increases, mainly through tax revenue increases related to the assessed value of new construction.
- ❖ Funds compensation increases for eligible employees.
- ❖ Increases planning and zoning permitting fees to partially offset the reduction in property tax rate.

The half-cent reduction in property tax rate amounts to a \$400,000 reduction in property tax revenue to the Town, and a savings of an average of \$40 annually for homeowners. Although the property tax rate was reduced, annual property tax bills will still rise by an average of \$80 due to increased property assessments. The Water and sewer rates will also increase by 1.0 percent to address rising costs and infrastructure needs.

Tonight's vote ends a months-long budget process involving several Council work sessions and public hearings. This is the 14th consecutive year there was either no change or a reduction in Vienna's property tax rate.

The FY27 Town budget takes effect July 1, 2026.

The adopted budget will be posted online at www.viennava.gov/budget.

HopeLink Named among 50 Best Nonprofits to Work For

NonProfit Times list cites training as a factor in success.

HopeLink Behavioral Health was named for the 15th time to The NonProfit Times national list of 50 Best Nonprofits to Work For. HopeLink, a regional nonprofit with national reach that helps individuals who live with serious behavioral health issues or that are in crisis, ranked number 49 among the nation's top employers with its focus on training cited as a reason.

"As mental health needs have grown so has HopeLink. Our employees are fundamental to our ability to serve our clients," said Joseph Getch, CEO, HopeLink. "We invest in our talented employee base, ensuring they have the training and benefits to do and be their best."

"Being able to attract and retain a great team helps us achieve our mission to save and change lives," Getch said.

Until two years ago, HopeLink was ranked among medium sized employers. With its growth, the nonprofit is now compared to the largest sized employers. HopeLink has 350 employees that work at its Oakton headquarters and throughout the nation. HopeLink offers a work environment that encourages teamwork, professional growth and work-life balance. It's a culture where employees enjoy coming to work, are accountable and can excel in the services they provide. The organization provides supported resources and training for continued learning and growth, a competitive industry-related salary, and an excellent benefits program.

The NonProfit Times created this nationwide survey and awards program to honor the best employers in the nonprofit sector. The evaluation included a survey of each nominated organization's workplace policies, practices, philosophy, systems and demographics. The evaluation included a much more heavily weighted anonymous employee survey to measure the employee experience.

Results were analyzed and categorized according to eight core focus areas: leadership and planning; corporate culture and communications; role satisfaction; work environment; relationship with supervisor; training, development, and resources; pay and benefits; and overall engagement. Organizations that made the list scored near 92% across all categories.

HopeLink is a leading nonprofit helping those living with diverse behavioral health issues and anyone who faces life crises achieve independence, self-sufficiency, and safety. HopeLink provides the people it serves with skill training and support to help them recover and rebuild their lives through a range of services including Psychosocial Rehabilitation Day Program Services, Mental Health Outpatient Therapy, Mental Health Skills-Building, TIP Children and Youth Mental Health and Substance Use Treatment Navigation, Individual Supported Employment, Peer Support Services, Coordinated Specialty Care, and other services.

HopeLink is a 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline Center and Regional Crisis Call Center answering calls, texts, and chats from across Virginia and the nation. For 24/7 support from HopeLink, call 988. For 24/7 chat support, visit 988lifeline.org/chat. www.hopelinkbh.org

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Nevra Ledwon's honey bee hives.



Kathleen helps scrape the protective wax off the honey bee frames.



Nevra Ledwon inserts the frames into the honey extractor that will spin the honey off the frames.

Neighborhood Bees Produce First Honey of the Season

McLean beehives produce gold.

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

Nevra Ledwon is harvesting the first honey of the season from the bee hives in her backyard in McLean. She has invited friends and neighbors who are interested in the process. They can just watch or they can get messy and help if they want to give it a try.

Ledwon has brought in 12 honeycomb frames which sit in a box

on her kitchen floor. "I made the bees pretty angry out there just now in the backyard by taking away their honeycombs and then aggressively shaking them off."

She picks up a honeycomb frame with nearly all the tiny holes filled with honey. "When the bees get the moisture level to 17 percent, I don't know how they know, they begin to cover the honey with a wax secretion. Our job today is to scrape off the wax so we can harvest the honey."

Kathleen and Denis have come ready to work. "It would take me all afternoon to do it by myself," Ledwon says although she says her son Hendrix often helps. Kathleen picks up a Nevra Ledwon's yellow scraper and begins to work down the frame. It is a little slow going at

first but then she gets the hang of it. The wax, which is still encrusted with some remnants of Nevra Ledwon's honey, falls into a large bowl. Ledwon tells her helpers, "If you like, you can chew a bit of it, enjoy the honey and spit out the wax or swallow it."

Once the honeycombs are free of the wax, they are placed in a large extractor, three at a time, where the honeycombs spin around for several minutes. The honey flies off and drips into the vat. Ledwon slowly turns the spigot at the bottom of the extractor, and the honey slowly oozes into a large bucket through a filter which removes impurities.

Ledwon explains the honey from each batch is different because the bees have made it from the flow-

ers that are blooming at the time. "Some people love the late spring honey the best. It is mostly from the neighboring Black Locust trees that produce a super light taste."

Ledwon says this all started during Covid. "I was driving down the street one day, and I saw bee hives in a neighbor's yard. I stopped and asked a lot of questions, and now here I am."

But she says when she jumped into it she had no idea how complicated or time consuming this would be "or how expensive."

Ledwon has two hives in her backyard and usually extracts two batches of honey a year. She harvests until sometime in July because that's when the bees get treated with the lifesaving Formic-Pro against an endemic mite, and

she doesn't want to eat honey containing it. Also Ledwon wants to make sure the bees have enough honey stored to feed themselves through the winter.

"They get anxious in the fall about whether they have enough food stores for themselves, and this is the time beekeepers complain about the bees' bad attitude."

Ledwon sells her plastic jars of honey to friends and neighbors to help finance the beekeeping. "It turns out to be really expensive but so gratifying to produce an organic food." She has hired Armando who manages the hives for her but she says there is still plenty of work keeping the bees healthy and happy. There's always something buzzing.



Nevra and two helpers, Michael and Kathleen, hold down the juggling extractor.



Honey drips from the extractor through a filter into a bucket.



Nevra Ledwon bottles her honey fresh from the hives.

MPA Berlage Arts & Education Center Crosses the Finish Line

From strip mall detour to regional legacy.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The McLean Project for the Arts has officially expanded into its permanent home, a \$6.5 million downtown landmark. This milestone follows years of navigating complex real estate negotiations and sustaining a major capital campaign through a global pandemic, a journey inspired by a temporary summer strip-mall gallery nearly a decade ago.

The April 30 ribbon-cutting of the MPA Berlage Arts & Education Center inside The Signet condominiums marks the conclusion of the “MPA@ChainBridge” era. By combining professional talent with community grit, the nonprofit turned a brief 2016 detour into a lasting regional legacy at 6845 Elm St., across from Elm Street Park.

“This new space reflects what is possible when vision, leadership, and public-private partnership come together,” Fairfax County Supervisor James Bierman, D-Dranesville, posted. “From expanding arts

education to strengthening downtown McLean as a vibrant destination, the Berlage Center is truly something to celebrate.”

Lori Carbonneau, MPA executive director, applied corporate strategy to execute the expansion and secure the 6,100-square-foot raw commercial shell, acquired for \$2.3 million in 2024.

“Projects like this are only possible through shared vision and collaboration, and we are deeply grateful to our community of supporters, our dedicated board members, Fairfax County and the McLean Revitalization Corporation,” Carbonneau said. At the time of acquisition, she framed the center as an economic catalyst that would “serve as a vibrant hub for community engagement.”

Instead of partitioning the building into storefronts, the layout utilizes a fluid, shared floor plan. The space houses three new art galleries, classrooms, the MPA Clay ceramics studio, and Café Monet — an all-day café and wine bar operated by Knead Hospitality + Design featuring a 1,700-square-foot outdoor patio. To access the restaurant, visitors walk through active gallery spaces currently displaying abstract paintings by Yasmine Iskander.

“Our three new galleries at



PHOTO COURTESY OF MCLEAN PROJECT FOR THE ARTS

The McLean Project for the Arts leadership, community supporters and local officials hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony on April 30 for the new MPA Berlage Arts & Education Center inside The Signet condominiums, marking the conclusion of the “MPA@ChainBridge” era.

MPA Berlage build on that legacy, expanding our ability to present ambitious and thought-provoking work across media — including digital and installation-based art in Gallery Vivienne, our fully equipped black-box space,” said Nancy Sausser, MPA curator and artistic director.

The transformation was made possible by a significant naming gift from longtime supporter Bruce

L. Berlage, alongside funding from the McLean Community Foundation, the Monett family, private donors, and a \$500,000 Fairfax County Economic Opportunity Reserve grant.

The grand opening coincided with the launch of the Spring Solo Exhibitions running through June 7, featuring Iskander at the Berlage Center, alongside concurrent exhibitions by Zsudayka Nzinga, Dar-

lene R. Taylor, and Sabine Carlson at the McLean Community Center.

The galleries are open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Registration for ceramics workshops, STEAM camps, and art classes is available on the MPA website, with discounts for MCC district residents.

Visit facebook.com/McLeanProjectfortheArts and [@mcleanarts](https://twitter.com/mcleanarts) to learn more.

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Public Notice

Updated weight limits on Virginia bridges and culverts

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

Jurisdiction	Fed Struc Id	Route #	Route Name	Crossing	Posted Date
CUMBERLAND	5734	613	SPORTS LAKE ROAD	RANDOLPH CREEK	4/30/2026
CHARLOTTE	4963	693	TERRELL ROAD	BRANCH OF TURNIP CREEK	4/28/2026
PRINCE EDWARD	13995	666N	DOUGLAS CHURCH ROAD	BUFFALO CREEK	4/28/2026
WYTHE	19731	663N	BISHOP THOMAS LANE	PINE RUN	4/23/2026
APPOMATTOX	1582	602	MT. PLEASANT ROAD	CABIN BRANCH	4/15/2026
AMHERST	1441	622E	STAPLETON ROAD	CHRISTIAN MILL CREEK	4/11/2026
CARROLL	4609	100	SYLVATUS HWY/101	ROCK CREEK	4/3/2026

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

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

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

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

Stewart Shares History in the Making

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

Richard W. Stewart, retired Colonel, has newly released a book, "Combat Historian" (Collecting and Writing American Special Operations History from Desert Storm to Afghanistan 1991-2002). His book answers the question, "Why did I become a historian at all, let alone a combat historian." That's all he ever wanted to be (except briefly when he flirted with being a veterinarian or an astronaut as so many children did in the 60s).

Stewart wanted to "understand why the human race does what

Army. He found the compilation of a historical record often took a back seat to other priorities such as press releases, quick turnaround lessons and other more immediate priorities rather than lessons learned for the future.

Stewart explains, "The value of history is self-evident to historians but less to many command and staff officers." But he explains the penalty may be down range, like the impact of a chemical agent. We need to know where the units were and on what day. A combat historian embedded in a unit can do a great deal of good capturing what really happened."

"The value of history is self-evident to historians but less to many command and staff officers."

—Richard W. Stewart

it does and how it has gotten to where it is today."

Stewart studied history and worked toward a reserve commission and wasn't sure how he could combine the two professional inclinations. After continuing with graduate education and facing a poor job market at the time he noticed a position for a civilian historian serving in the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL).

Stewart's book traces the evolving role of combat historians from World War II through 1990. The book takes the reader through the challenges of translating experience and lessons learned into the training and doctrinal base of the

quite willing to talk as long as they knew it was legitimate. Almost all of the support persons were very interested in talking about what they did and how they helped the battle go successfully.

Record keeping was another issue. He says many didn't understand the importance of accurate data; it was at the bottom of their priority list. There was no requirement to keep data and no penalty for failing to do it. Stewart explains computers would seem to make it easy to keep records but it might seem too much work to do, and they thought they had other things more important.

And as he learned, truth can



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Col. Richard W. Stewart with convoy to Kuwait 1991.

have its costs and risks in an organization where commanders sometimes sought the road of protecting their units versus welcoming the information gleaned by the combat historians. Sometimes he says he wasn't allowed to provide the specific proof of facts behind the observations because it could lead to hurt feelings. "Personality and prejudice overrode regulations and perhaps reason."

He faced reluctant officers who tried to avoid having the observations of the historian reflect negatively on their units. There were the complications of the new joint com-

mand as well as the challenge of getting the new historian program institutionalized into the Army so that units would cooperate in providing information. In addition, at a time when resources were tight, "and the fight for positions and resources was cutthroat" a historian position was viewed as expendable. But what really happened should be number one priority to figure out if there is a better way to do things."

Stewart, the long-time Chief Historian for the U.S. Army, has been working on his book for four years.

"I had to figure a way to get my memories in order. It took two years to write it and get the pictures in order and another two years for the final draft."

"I truly felt that I was a 'servant of forever,' since my historical interviews, document collections, and written insights had captured data that other historians could use for decades to come. I captured personal stories as well as official facts and documents. I hope that I helped put a human face on stories of special operations planning and combat."

<https://blog.stetson.edu/faculty-engagement/2012/01/>

Supervisors Approve 'Universal Design' Housing in McLean

Proffer No. 32 requirement tied to land zoning change approval.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved the Spring Hill Development on March 17, a new enclave of 14 single-family detached homes in the Dranesville District. Located on a 5-acre site along Spring Hill Road in McLean north of the Dulles Toll Road, the project aims to transform un-

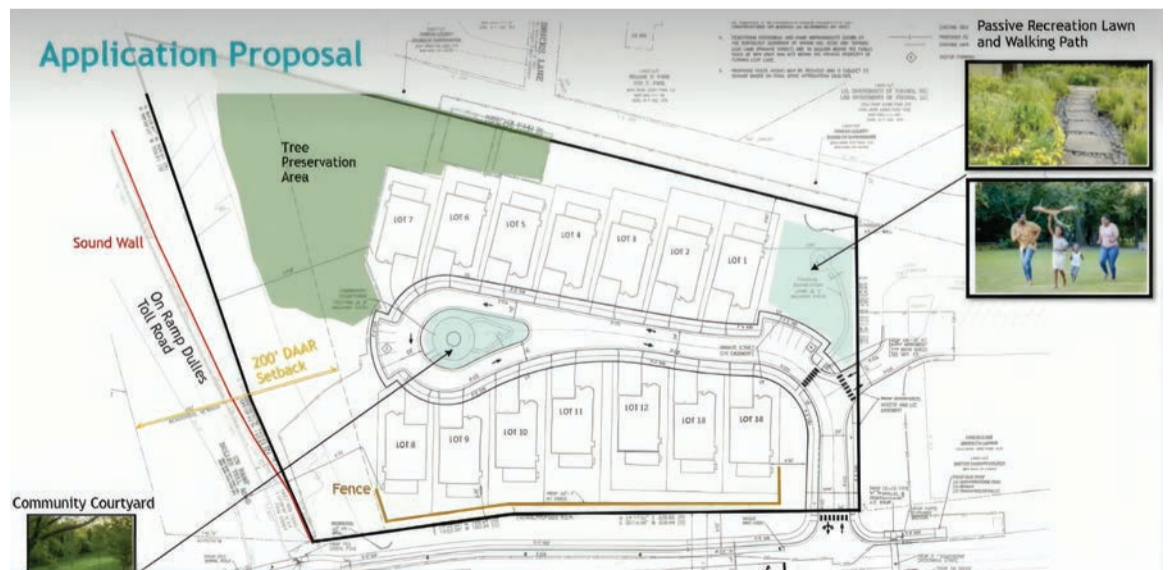
derutilized land into a model for inclusive suburban living. The approved rezoning from the R-1 district to the PDH-3 district allows for a density of 2.82 units per acre.

Beyond Density: The Power of Proffer 32

While many rezoning applications focus solely on density, traffic, and stormwater, the Spring Hill Road project stands out because of Proffer 32, a formal commitment tied to the zoning change. Emerging from a unanimous recommendation by the Planning Commission on Feb. 4, the applicant's counsel, Allison Reynolds, said during her presentation to the Board of Supervisors that the applicant would

SEE SUPERVISORS, PAGE 15

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SCREENSHOT FAIRFAX COUNTY VIDEO

Application Proposal for Spring Hill Development in McLean.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

NEWS

Westfield, Chantilly, Centreville Nominated for Cappies

The local high schools have a long reputation for excellence in theater, and Centreville, Chantilly and Westfield have just received a total of 12 Cappies nominations. Westfield High's eight nods were for its critics and its play, "Puffs;" Centreville High's three were for its critics and stage crew in its play, "The Play that Goes Wrong," and Chantilly High's nomination was for its play, "As You Like It."

The Cappies Gala will be Sunday, June 7, at DAR Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C., at which time the winners will be revealed. Centreville and Chantilly students are competing for these awards against students from many other schools in the National Capital Area.

Centreville's Nominations

Stage Crew – Lena Thepvongsa, Callaghan Crofton, Amelia Loht
Graduating Critic – Madelyn Re-

gan
Critic Team – Centreville Critic Team

Chantilly's Nomination

Comic Actor in a Female Role in a Play – Daphne Lunn

Westfield's Nominations

Special Effects - Jonah Johnson and SFX Team

Best Ensemble - The Puffs
Props - Iris Cooper, Orin Kelly, Arushi Dasgupta, Natalie Talberg
Rising Critic - Caroline Wright
Rising Critic - Janine Khandker
Graduating Critic - Mary Campbell

Returning Critic - Iris Cooper
Critic Team - Westfield Critic Team

See all the nominations at <https://www.cappiesnca.com/nominations-awards>

- BONNIE HOBBS

Fatal Single-vehicle Crash in Oakton

2 adults killed, 2 children injured.

Detectives from FCPD Crash Reconstruction Unit are investigating a fatal single-vehicle crash in Oakton that left two people dead and two children injured.

On May 17, at 12:28 a.m., officers responded to Chain Bridge Road over I-66 for a single-vehicle crash involving a 2020 Mercedes GLA 250.

Preliminarily, detectives determined the driver of the Mercedes, Xiomara Herrera, 30, of Falls Church, was traveling eastbound on the I-66 Express Lanes when she took the exit ramp to Chain Bridge Road. The vehicle continued through the intersection, crossed over the raised median, and struck a concrete barrier.

Herrera was pronounced deceased at the scene. The front passenger, Alejandro Rodriguez Castillo, 27, of Sterling, was transported

to a local hospital where he was later pronounced deceased.

A two-year-old child was transported to a local hospital with life-threatening injuries and remains hospitalized. An eight-year-old child was transported to a local hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.

Preliminarily, detectives believe speed was a factor in the crash and that the eight-year-old was the only occupant who was properly restrained.

Victim specialists from our Major Crimes Bureau's Victim Services Division have been assigned to ensure the family is receiving appropriate resources and assistance.

Detectives would like to speak to anyone who may have information about this case. Please call our Crash Reconstruction Unit at 703-280-0543.

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 **DATE:** Saturday, June 13
(Rain Date: Sunday, June 14)

 **TIME:** 8:00 AM – 11:00 AM

 **LOCATION:** 200 Spring St, Herndon, VA

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COMMUNITY NEWS AT A GLANCE

Happenings and Fun in Fairfax County



Kurt Rose of Reston receives recognition as the Rotary Club of Herndon-Reston's 2026 Citizen of the Year during a celebration on Sunday, April 26, at the Reston Community Center. This marks the 57th year the local club has presented the award. Rose, a community leader and co-founder of the RoSige Community Giving Foundation, was chosen for his community service and his tireless work expanding children's literacy programs such as the Dolly Parton Imagination Library across the Herndon and Reston areas. His dedication to literacy, education and community service has touched countless lives and embodies Rotary's guiding principle of Service Above Self. The Citizen of the Year award honors leaders whose work improves lives and strengthens the community's fabric.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED



From left, Ryan Madden and his daughter, Capri Madden, pose with John "Mr. Anton" Dudzinsky at the Town of Herndon pit stop during Fairfax County's Bike to Work Day on Friday, May 15, 2026. The annual event promotes sustainable commuting and healthy lifestyles by encouraging cycling as a viable transportation option.

PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION



Crowds pack Reston Town Center on Saturday, May 16, 2026, for the opening day of the two-day 35th Annual Tephra ICA Arts Festival. Hosted by Tephra Institute of Contemporary Art, the massive outdoor festival showcased original work from more than 200 painters, sculptors, and photographers.

SCREENSHOT: TEPHRA VIDEO



Celebrating "all degrees of Herndon," the inaugural "Polar Heat on Lynn Street" block party debuted on Saturday, May 16, 2026, with a massive turnout in celebration of Herndon Parks and Recreation's 50th anniversary. Behind the town's new safety barriers, the street was split into two distinct, themed experiences: "The Heat," featuring high-energy rock stages, a community s'mores station, a public jalapeño-eating contest, and a live "Hot Ones" style wing challenge with the mayor; and "The Polar," which balanced the spice with chill acoustic stages, frozen treats, ice-inspired crafts, and a mock-snowball fight.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Renewable Top Honors For Local Students

KidWind Statewide Renewable Energy Competition held at James Madison U.

— MERCIA HOBSON



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

WINNING WITH WIND: Langley High School junior Emma Zheng, from left, freshman Halia Ochieng, and Cooper Middle School eighth grader Aaron Zheng celebrate winning third place in the High School Wind Challenge division at the Virginia KidWind State Competition on April 11 at James Madison University. The team earned a \$100 prize for their custom-designed turbine, which produced 99.3 joules of energy over 30 seconds.



SOLAR POWERED SUCCESS: McLean High School juniors Akshay Sudhakar, left, and Amine Malouche display their second-place trophy at the Virginia KidWind State Competition on April 11 at James Madison University. The duo competed in the solar division, designing a project that uses solar panels to power a model space station on Mars.



PITCHING THE SPONSORS: Cooper Middle School eighth grader Aaron Zheng, left, and Langley High School freshman Halia Ochieng present their wind turbine engineering data to Google sponsors during the Virginia KidWind State Competition. The hands-on STEM event challenged thousands of students to design and test functional renewable energy systems.

Mia Saunders School of Ballet Presents 'Peter Pan'

The Mia Saunders School of Ballet (MSB) will present a magical afternoon of dance with its production, "Peter Pan and Lyrical Works." It's set for Sunday, June 7, at 2 p.m. in the Centreville High theater, 6001 Union Mill Road in Clifton.

Tickets are \$15, adults; \$12, children 5 and under (plus processing fee) at the door (cash or check only); or via www.miasaundersballet.com.

This show marks a fresh creative chapter for MSB, featuring original choreography, new costumes and a unique storyline set primarily to the music of composer Stephen Warbeck. Designed to delight audiences of all ages, the performance blends humor, heart and imagination in a lively, family-friendly retelling of the classic tale.

"This production is something completely new for our studio, and it has been so much fun," said Artistic Director Hannah Gestwick. "I've burst into laughter in rehearsals more than once. Our dancers have really taken ownership of their characters and brought so much personality to the stage."

A hallmark of Mia Saunders School of Ballet's creative process is student collaboration, and this year's production was shaped by the studio's senior class, led by Parker Ellison in the title role.

"I chose 'Peter Pan' because I wanted my last show at MSB to be memorable – not just for me, but for the younger dancers, too," said Ellison. "It's a little different from a traditional ballet, but it really fits who I am and how I want to be remembered here."

The studio's advanced dancers bring the production's lead characters to life, while younger classes round out the performance in imaginative ensemble roles including Pixie Dust, Water Lilies, Crocodiles, Mermaids and Lost Boys – creating a full-cast experience reflecting the depth and spirit of the Mia Saunders School of Ballet community.

"I'm really excited for the fight scene," said Centreville High student Inaaya Malik, playing Tinker Bell. "It brings together multiple dance levels, and the choreography is really fun to perform."

Said Noelle Brosnan, who portrays Captain Hook, "I enjoy per-



PHOTO COURTESY OF MIA SAUNDERS BALLET

Mia Saunders School of Ballet's dancers spread their wings as dragonflies in a previous production.

forming scenes with the crocodiles because our character dynamics bring such a fun, comedic element to the show."

For junior dancer Miranda Smith, as Wendy, this production also captures a meaningful

moment of friendship on stage. "Dancing alongside my best friends and watching the younger dancers grow has been the best part," she said. "Their hard work and dedication is really amazing to see."

With its mix of storytelling, cre-

ativity and community spirit, "Peter Pan and Lyrical Works" offers an engaging performance for families, friends and neighbors in the local area.

– JENNIFER MATUNE SMITH

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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; 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.

NOW THROUGH JUNE 14

SpongeBob Musical. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Theater (Building W3), Lorton. The Workhouse Arts Center invites audiences to experience The SpongeBob Musical this spring, a high-energy stage production inspired by the beloved Nickel-



Vienna’s Public Works Open House will be held Thursday, May 21, 2026 in Vienna.



A book sale will be held May 27-31, 2026 at Richard Byrd Library in Springfield.

odeon series created by Stephen Hillenburg. Showtimes: Fridays & Saturdays at 8:00 p.m.; Sundays at 2:00 p.m. Tickets: \$40 General Admission; discounts available for seniors, military, and students.

WEDNESDAYS, MAY 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 21

Vienna’s Public Works Open House. 2-6 p.m. At Northside Property Yard, 600 Mill Street, NE, Vienna. The annual open house features a chance for the young and young at heart to climb aboard and explore some of the Town’s big trucks and get an up-close look at the heavy machines, vehicles and equipment used for everything from trash removal to public safety. The event also includes public safety displays, a drawing for kids, children’s

activities, giveaways, snacks and facility tours giving attendees a behind-the-scenes look at what it takes to keep Vienna operating smoothly. During the event, Mayor Linda Colbert will host a special “Meet the Mayor” booth where visitors can stop by and chat with her about all things Vienna from 2-3:30 p.m. Visit www.viennava.gov/publicworks.

SUNDAY/MAY 24

West Point Alumni Glee Club Performs. 9:30 a.m. At Lord of Life Lutheran Church, 5114 Twinbrook Road, Fairfax. Join in a worship service crafted for Memorial Day weekend and the festival of Pentecost, featuring songs that remember and honor those who gave their lives in service. All are welcome. Refreshments will be served following the service. The public is invited.

MAY 27 TO 31

Book Sale. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. At Richard Byrd Library, 7250 Commerce Street, Springfield. Wide variety of high-quality used books, CDs,



The SpongeBob Musical can be seen now through June 14, 2026 at Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton.

and DVDs. Revenue supports library programming. Contact the Friends at rbfriends@gmail.com. Preview sale, Wed, May 27, 2 - 5 p.m. Entry fee \$10. General sale, Thu – Sat, May 28 - 30, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m., Free. Bag sale, Sun, May 31, 12 - 2p.m. \$5/bag

THURSDAY/MAY 28

Lunch N’ Life. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. At St. Mark’s Lutheran Church, 5800 Backlick Road, Springfield. Shepherd’s Center of Annandale Springfield Lunch N’ Life with musician Tom Saputo performing hits from the 50s, 60s, and 70s. Shepherd’s Pie, salad, rolls and butter, dessert, tea and coffee. Visit <https://shepherdcenter-annandale.org/lunch-n-life/>

MAY 28-31

Tyson’s Library Book & Media Sale. At Tyson’s Pimmit Regional Library, 7584 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church. Thursday, May 28, 10 am - 5 pm
Friday, May 29, 10 am - 5 pm
Saturday, May 30, 10 am - 5 pm
Sunday, May 31, 10 am - 5 pm: Bag sale. \$10 for a full grocery sack or half price if less
Large selection of books and media for all ages and interests. Visit <https://www.tysonslibraryfriends.org/>

SATURDAY/MAY 30

Classic American Band Concert. 4 p.m. At Veterans Amphitheater on the grounds of Fairfax City Hall, Fairfax. The Fairfax Choral Society and City of Fairfax Band celebrate AMERICA250 with timeless music—from early American roots to contemporary favorites. Free - no tickets required.

SATURDAY/MAY 30

Fairfax Choral Society’s Celebrating America’s 250th Birthday: Let Freedom Ring. 4 p.m. At Veterans Amphitheater, 10455 Armstrong Street, Fairfax
From the birth of a nation to today, experience almost 250 years of American music live, performed by community musicians.

SATURDAY/MAY 30

Clifton 5K Run. 6-9 p.m. At the Town of Clifton, 7139 Main Street, Clifton. A family-friendly race with 5k and one-mile options. Live music, refreshments and an awards ceremony follow at the Red Barn near Clifton’s Main Street area. Cost: 5K:\$30 per person; 1-Mile Fun Run:\$20 per person. Contact: Clifton Betterment Association email info@clifton-virginia.org or (703) 968-0740. Website: <https://runsignup.com/Race/VA/Clifton/CliftonCaboose>. Online registration will remain open until 5:30 p.m. on Race Day. Packet pick-up will be at the Red Barn (7139 Main St., Clifton, VA 20124) on Friday, May 29, from 5:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m. and on Saturday, May 30, from 4:00 p.m.-5:30 p.m. To register online, please go to <https://runsignup.com/Race/VA/Clifton/CliftonCaboose> or the 5k’s Facebook page.

ENTERTAINMENT

SATURDAY/MAY 30

Let Freedom Ring. 4 p.m. At Veterans Amphitheater beside Fairfax City Town Hall, City of Fairfax. Presented by the Fairfax Choral Society and the City of Fairfax Band Association. Experience the sound of a nation's story. Free - no tickets required. Just come and enjoy

MAY 30-31

LEGO Model Train Event. Saturday 12-4 p.m.; Sunday, 1-4 p.m. At Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. Fairfax Station Railroad Museum is hosting a weekend LEGO Model Train Event! We invite everyone to explore the fascinating world of LEGO Trains. Highlights of the Event: Interactive Displays: Enjoy viewing LEGO model trains crafted by skilled brick masters. Most trains were hand designed and built. Running Trains: Watch as trains zip along beautifully designed tracks, it is sure to inspire both young and old. 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. www.fairfax-station-railroad-museum.org, www.facebook.com/FFXSRR, 703-425-9225.

SUNDAY/MAY 31

Burke Historical Society Meeting. 3-4:30 p.m. At Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Mary Lipsey will share several stories of women who fought for America's Independence.

SUNDAY/MAY 31

Jenny Lin, Piano "Melody's Mostly Musical Day". 2 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Ticket price includes one copy of "Melody's Mostly Musical Day," a storytelling concert where pianist Jenny Lin leads children through Melody's day of discovery with 26 short classical pieces- from Tchaikovsky and Mozart to Grieg and Mussorgsky- encouraging young listeners to find joy and playfulness in music (one book per order; three tickets required).

JUNE 4-21

1st Stage Presents "Indecent." At 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill Road, Tysons. From Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Paula Vogel, a deeply moving play inspired by the true events surrounding the controversial 1923 Broadway debut of Sholem Asch's "God of Vengeance"—a play seen by some as a seminal work of Jewish culture, and by others as an act of traitorous libel. Show times: Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays at 7:30 p.m., Saturdays at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., and Sundays at 2 p.m. Tickets: \$25-\$55 general admission, \$15 students, educators, and military. Purchase online at www.1ststage.org or call 703-854-1856.

JUNE 6-7 AND 13-14

Bounce Houses. At Bull Run Special Events Center, 7700 Bull Run Drive, Centreville. Featuring more than 50,000 square feet of inflatable, themed attractions, the Big Bounce America will transform Bull Run Special Events Center into a fully immersive playground filled with live music, laughter, and unforgettable fun for ALL ages, featuring dedicated sessions for younger children, bigger kids, and adults on up to seven massive inflatable attractions with food, and live entertainment available.

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Sport Slam: A high-energy, action-packed arena where bouncing meets friendly competition. Packed with hoops, goals, climbing challenges, and fast-paced games, this inflatable playground lets you dunk, kick, race, and



The Clifton Caboose 5K Run will be held Saturday, May 30, 2026 in the Town of Clifton.



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

battle your way to bragging rights. **airSPACE:** Featuring a towering inflatable alien, multi-lane slides, and endless ball pits, airSPACE delivers an out-of-this-world experience for explorers of all ages.

Other on-site activities: Additional on-site attractions include food trucks, shaded rest areas, and family-friendly entertainment. Guests can bring their own food and drinks or purchase from on-site vendors.

TICKETS: All-Access tickets are available now and include a three-hour pass to the event, featuring a timed session in The World's Largest Bounce House plus unlimited access to all other attractions. Advanced purchase is strongly encouraged, as sessions frequently sell out. Tickets start at \$35. Buy tickets at <https://TheBigBounceAmerica.com/Tour-Dates/>

DAYS/TIMES: Saturday, June 6: 9 a.m.-9 p.m.; Sunday, June 7: 9 a.m.-6 p.m.; Saturday, June 13: 9 a.m.-9 p.m.; Sunday, June 14: 9 a.m.-6 p.m.

JUNE 12-14

Spring Book Sale. Centreville Regional Library, 14200 St. Germaine Drive, Centreville. Friday, June 12, 1-5 p.m.

Saturday, June 13, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Sunday, June 14, 12-5 p.m.

Bag sale on Sunday. Fill a grocery bag with books and DVDs for \$10.

SUNDAY/JUNE 14

Community Blood Drive. 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. At Lord of Life Lutheran Church, 5114 Twinbrook Drive, Fairfax. Lord of Life in partnership with Inova Blood Services are hosting a community blood drive on Sunday June 14th at Lord of Life in Fairfax. Join us for a free breakfast and give the gift of life to someone in need. Visit the website: www.lordoflifeva.org

SUNDAY/JUNE 14

Washington Balalaika Orchestra. 3 p.m. At Capital One Hall, 7750 Capital One Tower Road, Tysons Corner. Join the Washington Balalaika Orchestra's 55-person ensemble this June for a spectacular program, from Tchaikovsky to Gershwin, and waltzes to klezmer. You will hear beautiful arrangements of "Dance Macabre," "Hungarian Rhapsody," music from "Swan Lake," and even the classic 1967 pop song "Love is Blue". We guarantee you'll emerge humming some very familiar tunes.

FREE CONCERTS IN THE PARK

At Burke Lake Park, Burke. 7 p.m. every Wednesday night from June 24 to Aug. 19 at Burke Lake Park for an incredible line-up of bands, food trucks, 2 Silos beer, and Ice Cream. The atmosphere is informal, so bring a picnic blanket, lawn chairs, and relax with friends and family.

SCHEDULE

June 24 – The Road Ducks. Food Trucks: BABU-JI, Cousins Maine Lobster and Ello Gelato
 July 1 – ChumpChange. Food Trucks: Ned's New England Deck, Paisanos and Bruster's of Alexandria Ice Cream
 July 8 – The Magic Trio. Food Trucks: Roaming Coyote, Paisanos and Ello Gelato
 July 15 – SoHo Down. Food Trucks: Kaziville (hot dogs), Cousins Maine Lobster Paisanos and Bruster's of Alexandria
 July 22 – JunkFood Band. Food Trucks: Roaming Coyote, Paisanos and Ello Gelato
 July 29 – The Skip Castro Band. Food Trucks: Kaziville (hot dogs), Ned's New England Deck and Bruster's of Alexandria
 Aug. 5. The English Channel. Food Trucks: BABU-JI, Cousins Maine Lobster and Ello Gelato
 Aug. 12 – The Randy Thompson Band. Food Trucks: BABU-JI, Roaming Coyote and Bruster's of Alexandria
 Aug. 19 – The Soul Shakers. Food Trucks: Kaziville (hot dogs), Ned's New England Deck and Bruster's of Alexandria

SATURDAY/JUNE 27

Lake Fairfax 250th Independence Day Celebration. Noon to 10 p.m. At Lake Fairfax Park, 1400 Lake Fairfax Drive, Reston. As part of Experience Fairfax 250, the Fairfax County Park Authority, in partnership with the Fairfax County 250th Commission and the Fairfax County Park Foundation, will debut its first-ever drone light show. Instead of traditional fireworks, hundreds of synchronized drones will light up the night sky with music, motion and patriotic images that celebrate America's 250th anniversary and Fairfax County's role in our nation's story. Event highlights include: Fairfax County Park Authority's first-ever drone light show. Live music from Reflex, Sonic Boom and School of Rock. Food trucks, drinks and family activities. Access to park amenities, including trails, fishing, picnicking and camping. Guests can also visit The Water Mine Family Swimmin' Hole. Admission is sold separately.

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NEWS



PHOTO BY MIKE SALMON/CONNECTION

The beach is all about soaking up sun but don't forget the sun-screen and umbrella.

Sun Season Is Here and So Is Melanoma

Melanoma Monday was May 4 followed by National Safe Sun Week starting Monday, May 18.

BY MIKE SALMON
 CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

Each spring when May rolls around, everyone is ready to stretch out on the lounge chair by the pool but that has its drawbacks in the form of sun cancer, so early in the month is "Melanoma Monday" to raise awareness.

Melanoma is the most invasive skin cancer and can be fatal. It can start as an innocent looking mole or just normal skin with little signs that can become life threatening in just six weeks.

To kick off the sunny season, MedStar Health is actively spreading the word about Melanoma Monday, and recommends seeing a dermatologist every year for a skin check.

Sunscreen, hats and shirts are the best protection they said.

The whole month of May has been dubbed "skin cancer awareness month," and the American Academy of Dermatology Association notes that every day, about 9,500 people in the United States are diagnosed with skin cancer. But there are precautions to take, and that includes protecting skin from

the sun and avoiding tanning beds. When using sun screen lotion, go for 30 SPF or higher, they said.

Melanoma is the most serious type of skin cancer but if caught early, melanoma is highly treatable, AAD said.

They point out the ABCDE's of skin cancer which hones down the self-examinations to pinpoint causes and places that skin cancer might be. "Early detection is the key," said Darrell Rigel, MD. The doctor who invented the ABCDE's of melanoma:

A for "asymmetry," meaning one half of the spot is unlike the other half.

B is for "border," where the spot has an irregular border.

C is for "color," the spot has varying colors.

D is for "diameter" of the spot which is usually greater than six mm, or the size of a pencil eraser.

E is for "evolving," and this is when the spot changes in size, shape or color.

Treating Melanoma starts with a self-exam, and this includes a full-length mirror and hand mirror to check all the spots. Following it up with a dermatologist visit is always a good idea.

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A monarch butterfly on a swamp milkweed plant.



A monarch butterfly caterpillar.

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH

Keeping Nature's Puzzle Pieces Together

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
THE CONNECTION

Nature is like a puzzle, with all the pieces interconnected, Alfonso Abugattas told an 80-member audience on May 13 in a Zoom program sponsored by the Friends of Dyke Marsh. "We are part of the puzzle too and what we do has consequences," he said. Abugattas is the Natural Resources Manager for Arlington County Parks and founder of the Capital Naturalist blog.

He quoted environmental advocate John Muir who said, "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe."

Nature's Interdependence

Abugattas began by describing how certain plants require fungi to survive. Yellow lady slippers, a type of orchid, have a relationship with mycorrhizal fungi. The root tissues of the fungi and plant have a symbiotic association and grow together. "They rely on each other," he said.

Host plants are also examples of co-dependence in nature. A host plant is a specific plant that an insect or its larvae eat, live on or lay eggs on, a plant with which the insect evolved. Monarch butterflies are one of the

most familiar examples, Abugattas said. The monarch's caterpillars feed on milkweed as do the caterpillars of 12 other insects, like the milkweed tussock moth.

Mistletoe is a hemiparasite, he said. It does not depend totally on a host plant but needs some interaction with its host plant. "Mistletoe anchors on a tree, takes what it needs from the tree and is still green so it can photosynthesize," he said.

Carolina chickadee nestlings are very dependent on caterpillars for food. "They have to have protein. They cannot survive on bird feeders," he said. He cited the work of entomologists Dr. Doug Tallamy and Desiree Narango which confirmed that a clutch of chickadee young eats about 350 to 570 caterpillars per day, depending on the number of chicks. If 70 percent of native biomass is non-native, they won't survive, they'll lay fewer eggs, fewer young will fledge and they will weigh less, he said.

In the mid-Atlantic, 18 species of bats eat insects as their main food source. "Their favorite is moths, so they too need caterpillars," he said.

Abugattas sang the praises of "the mighty oak." He explained, "If it went extinct, over 600 species would disappear because they rely solely on oak trees," including over 40 mammals, 60 birds and 557 caterpillars.

Continuing the theme of interconnectedness, he said that 75 percent of flowering plants rely on animal pollinators to move pollen, including 70 percent of agricultural crops. "Bees are built for being pollinators," he said, and they need their host plants.

Asters host 112 Lepidoptera species, butterflies and moths, like the pearl checkerspot, and eight bee species. Goldenrods host 115 Lepidoptera species.

People may think negatively of galls, but they are "edible homes," he said. Galls, like the "witch hat" galls created by aphids on witch hazel leaves, host critters like mites.

How to Garden Better

Typical Northern Virginia gardens are dominated by non-native plants like bamboo, forsythia, nandina and zelkova trees which few caterpillars feed on. "Ginkgos support zip," he said. "Nothing."

Native plants are key, he emphasized, and people do not need a large space to support natives, like goldenrods.

Returning to nature's puzzle, he said, "We don't want to lose the pieces," reminding attendees of conservationist Aldo Leopold's admonition, "To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering. ... We are part of the puzzle too. What we do has consequences," Abugattas challenged.

Supervisors Approve 'Universal Design' Housing in McLean

FROM PAGE 8

commit to work with purchasers of the units to include universal design features.

Universal design means the homes would be usable by people of all ages and abilities without needing major adaptation, providing proactive accessibility and aging-in-place.

Site Design and Environmental Buffers

Supervisor Jimmy Bierman called the 5-acre parcel "underutilized" and noted officials have considered redeveloping it for "very many, many years." To accommodate the site's proximity to the highway, the

homes are clustered north of the Dulles Toll Road and will include significant buffers and screening.

This includes tree preservation, supplemental tree planting, and a 6-to-7-foot noise fence along Spring Hill Road.

A sound wall currently exists along the toll road.

Along with the rezoning and conceptual development plan, the Board approved a waiver to exceed the 600-foot maximum length for a private street. Planned off-site improvements include a left-turn lane, bicycle lane, striped crosswalks, and a bus shelter, all subject to final Virginia Department of Transportation approval.

Approvals and Support

The project saw broad support leading up to the final vote, with recommendations for approval from both the McLean Citizens Association and county staff, according to Reynolds. This culminated in a unanimous recommendation for approval by the Planning Commission.

Bierman emphasized that the project fits the neighborhood, remains appropriately buffered from the Toll Road, and includes community assets such as open space and sidewalks. Bierman concluded: "I'm very happy to support this application."

Having a Ball, Almost Literally



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

A few weekends ago, I had the opportunity of a lifetime (I exaggerate), when my wife Dina went away for the for a few days and I was left unsupervised. Not that I can't fend for myself, it's more so with Dina away, that's all, other the dog and four cats, I had to tend for. (If we had a fenced-in yard, I wouldn't have had to fend for the dog, but as of now, that's wishful thinking. As it happens now daily, I'm up early and out late - with three additional outings/"walkings" in-between making for four total, between me getting up and me going down.

Though I am referring to the weekend, it's primarily Saturday during the day/early evening that I'll be writing about. Since the Red Sox were not televised where I could watch, the Bruins had been eliminated from the Stanley Cup playoffs the night before, and the Celtics weren't on television until 8 pm, I had some time to fill you might say. So, with remote in hand and my rear end on the couch - and no one's preference to consider, I turned on the television and began "flipping the cable" as my late brother Richard used to call it and see if I could find anything worth watching. Boy did I! And not the usual fare either. As it was found, most of it was programming reminiscent of my formative years growing up in Newton Centre, Ma and sport if you could call it that, that I had never seen on television. The first bit of familiarity was of a dodge ball match/tournament. It wasn't exactly six grade, as adults were competing, but it could have been. There were sides, mostly men but each side included a woman, a line in the center of the gym keeping them apart and balls flying from side to side, some caught and others wayward while still others hitting their opponents with boinks heard all over leading to immediate disqualification. I loved playing dodgeball, but until this afternoon, I had never seen it on television. Watching it brought back memories of my occasional misspent youth.

Soon I became bored watching the competition and "flipped the cable." I couldn't believe what sport I came upon next: kickball. Just like I played on the playground at Bowen Elementary School in the mid 1960s. Men, women on a baseball diamond with a pitcher rolling the ball to the opponent in the former "batter's box" which I now call the "kicker's" box. Other than the swerve the pitcher put on the ball as he rolled toward the kicker, it was just like I used to play 60 odd years ago. But I never saw adults playing kickball on television before. Just like I had never seen dodgeball on television before. After watching the kickball game for a few minutes, I likewise grew bored and "flipped the cable."

I couldn't believe what I happened onto next. Yet another sport, if you even call it, that I spent countless hours playing, mostly in my backyard against Freddie Klashman, our downstairs neighbor, and son of the family who owned the two-family house I grew up in on Athelstane Road.

Whiffle Ball: Can you believe it? In succession. It's as if the television was programming me down memory lane. Taking advantage of my eyes/feelings being the only ones to consider. None of this would have interested Dina, well, certainly not back-to-back-back like I had just "happened-anced." It was surreal almost. One memory after another, and all are great memories - for me anyway.

The next few "flips" were not as productive. I saw more conventional sports: women's college softball, women's beach volleyball, some men's and women's professional basketball, some PGA golf, (no LPGA women's golf however), a bit of Ping Pong, some NHL playoffs but no bowling.

After watching all these sports, I still had not had my fill as I was waiting to watch the Celtics later that night. Unfortunately, the Celtics lost and were eliminated from the NBA playoffs, a totally non-fitting end to what otherwise had been an amazing day.

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

Behind the Garden Gates

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ANDREA HICKMAN

Fairfax County's Historic Garden Week Blooms with Beauty, Hospitality, and Hidden Surprises.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

By the time Fairfax County's Historic Garden Week tour opened its private gates this spring, Andrea Hickman had already been holding her breath for months.

Like so many grand events that appear effortless to the public, this one had been anything but. There had been nearly a year of planning, homeowner coordination, photography, volunteer recruitment, sponsorship outreach, logistics, and storytelling preparation. Then, just hours before tour day, came one final threat: a late freeze.

"We were a nervous wreck," Hickman said, recalling the night before visitors arrived. Homeowners and volunteers scrambled to protect vulnerable blooms, covering what they could and hoping for the best with what they couldn't. "But we really lucked out," she said.

By morning, the cold had broken. The sun emerged. Temperatures softened. And Fairfax County's gardens, those carefully tend-

Historic Garden Week, at its best, is as much about hospitality as horticulture.

ed, deeply personal spaces, were ready.

"It was such a good day," Hickman said. "It was sunny and the temperature was pleasant. It was such a great day to be outside."

For one spring day, Historic Garden Week in Virginia transformed Fairfax County into something rare: a place where private beauty became public generosity.

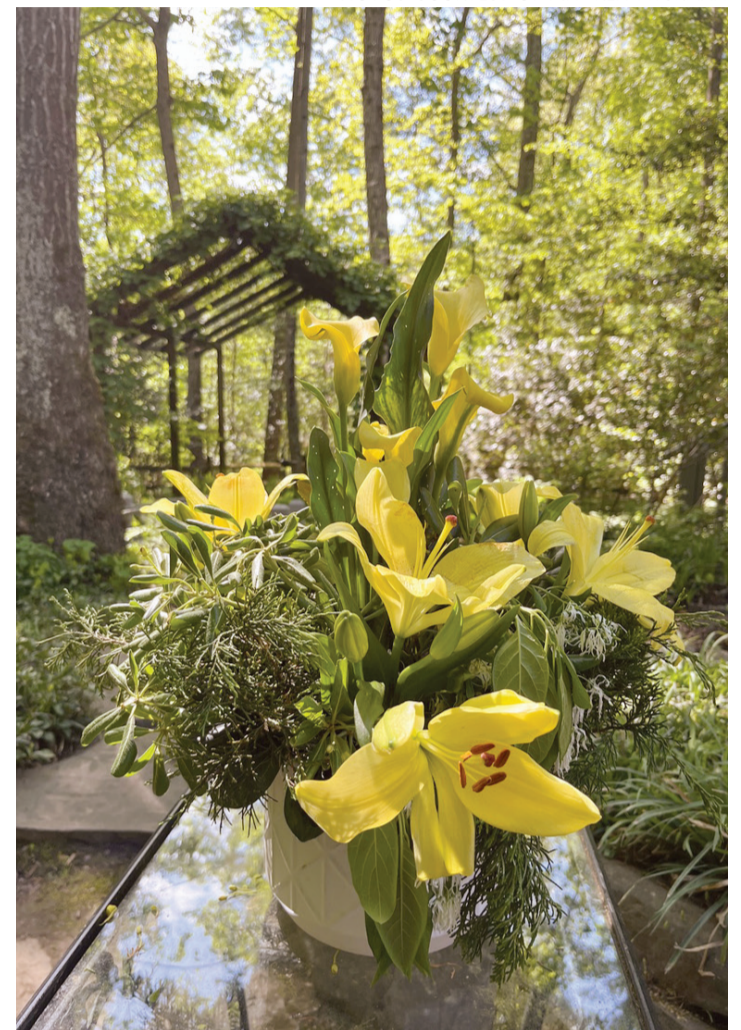
As chair of the 2026 Fairfax County tour, Hickman helped orchestrate one of 29 state-wide tours presented by the Garden Club of Virginia.

But in Fairfax, what unfolded was more than a showcase of architecture and azaleas. It was an invitation into hidden worlds, homes and gardens that revealed not only design sensibilities, but personality, philosophy, and place.

"We had three very different garden styles," Hickman said, each property offering its own interpretation of landscape and home. Some leaned formal, others more romantic, but one in particular surprised visitors most.



Delicate violet blooms rise above fern-like foliage along a shaded garden path featured on the Fairfax County Historic Garden Week tour.



Sunlight filters through a pergola as a vibrant floral display greets visitors exploring the outdoor spaces featured in Fairfax County's Historic Garden Week.

From the street, the house appeared contemporary, clean, updated, polished. Visitors expected modern restraint. What they found instead was something far more layered: an overflowing, almost transportive garden with Asian-inspired influence, lush softness, and unexpected abundance.

"From the exterior, you would not have expected that overflowing garden," Hickman said. "You would have expected straight lines and clean edges."

That tension between appearance and revelation became part of the tour's charm.

And yet, while gardens dazzled, Hickman said one refrain echoed throughout the day even more than praise for flowers or furnishings: "Your people are so nice."

For Hickman, that was one of the greatest compliments of all.

Historic Garden Week, at its best, is as much about hospitality as horticulture. Visitors certainly came for inspiration, garden ideas, interior details, preservation stories, but what they encountered was warmth.

More than 45 volunteers, including Garden Club members, Master Gardeners, local supporters, friends, and even student volunteers, helped shape the day into something deeply personal.

"It's an all-hands-on-deck event," Hickman said.

Docents were not simply stationed in rooms; they were storytellers, trained months in advance with detailed notes on

everything from architectural details to garden philosophy to the provenance of specific objects. Visitors, Hickman noted, tended to fall into two camps: those who simply wanted to take it all in, and those who wanted to know everything.

"Why did the homeowner do this? Where did this come from?" Hickman said, describing the curious guests who wanted every story behind every bloom and every room.

That appetite for narrative is what distinguishes Historic Garden Week from a simple home tour. These are private homes, often inaccessible to the public, opened not just for viewing but for educating.

"There's no other opportunity like this," Hickman said.

This year's Fairfax tour also reflected a broader shift in the gardening world, one that balances beauty with stewardship. Across properties, Hickman noted recurring trends that went beyond aesthetics: intentional environmental choices.

"Native plants are huge. Pollinators are huge," she said. "We really do need to be intentional about respecting our environment."

In that sense, Fairfax County's gardens were not only beautiful; they were increasingly purposeful.

Attendance remained strong despite one logistical hurdle: Fairfax's tour fell on a Tuesday, a difficult day for some working visitors. Even so, there was "never a lull," Hickman

said. Guests arrived steadily throughout the day, including bus tours from well beyond Virginia - one group traveled from Minnesota.

Perhaps that is because Historic Garden Week offers something increasingly rare in modern life: the chance to slow down, step through a gate, and see how others cultivate beauty, not just in landscapes, but in how they welcome strangers.

For Hickman, who has run her own interior design business since 2002 and understands the complexity of making large endeavors look seamless, the event's success rested in countless unseen details. Homes are selected not merely because they are beautiful, but because they can host the public safely and meaningfully. Parking, walkability, interior quality, garden interest and geographic flow all matter.

"It's so much more than just a pretty house or garden," she said.

And maybe that is the true spirit of Fairfax County's Historic Garden Week.

Behind every flowering border and elegant entryway lies something larger: preservation, volunteerism, environmental care, and a distinct sense that opening one's garden can also open conversation, connection, and community.

"By the time people arrive, they're seeing the result of months and months of preparation—but what we hope they really remember is how special it felt to be there."