

The Arlington Connection

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PHOTO BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

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Audrey Patel, widow of Vikesh Patel, holds the son her husband never had a chance to meet. Vikesh was one of 67 killed Jan.29, 2025 in the collision between American Airlines flight 5342 and an Army Black Hawk helicopter over the Potomac River.

Rebuilding After the Exit

After escaping abuse, an Arlington single mother created a stable, thriving life through a caregiver training program.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Relocating to Arlington did not feel like a beginning. It felt like distance. A physical separation from a life that had already fractured before she ever left it.

For Zenda Daniels, arrival came after a series of exits that were not clean breaks but necessary escapes: leaving a home shaped by domestic violence and financial abuse, leaving work that could no longer be sustained through instability, and leaving behind a version of life that had narrowed to mere survival.

She arrived with her newborn and the quiet fatigue that follows prolonged uncertainty.

Transitional housing became the first step in rebuilding, spaces defined not by permanence, but by shared impermanence. Temporary rooms. Shared kitchens. The steady stream of people trying not to take up too much space in one another's lives while figuring out their own.

Before Arlington, there had been shelter life in New York, days structured around intake appointments, case management meetings, and the careful logistics of rebuilding safety from inside systems designed for emergency, not restoration.

"Every day felt uncertain, but I refused to give up," Daniels said.

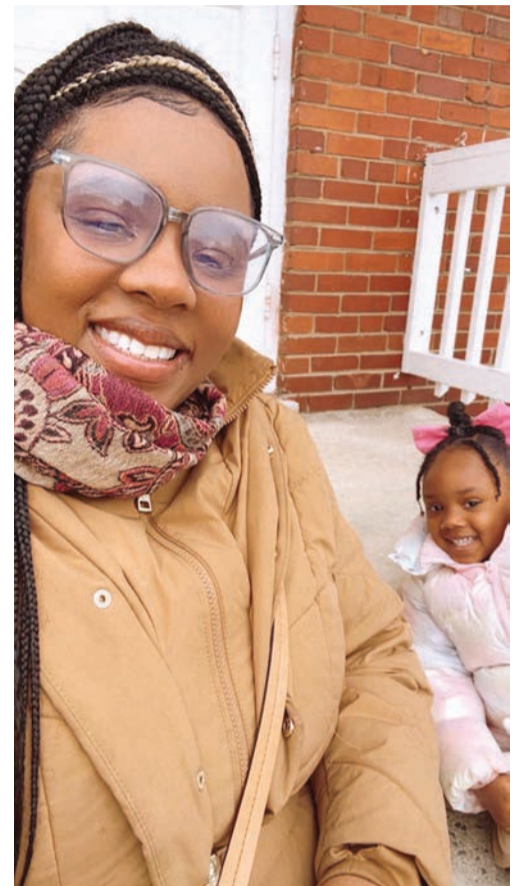
In the United States, domestic violence affects women across all demographics. Research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) show that Black women experience higher rates of intimate partner violence victimization along with greater exposure to overlapping economic and housing instability than other demographics. These intersecting pressures can extend the impact of abuse far beyond the relationship



Zenda Daniels gets a kiss from her daughter Zemira-Grace, a symbol of the quest for restored independence; starting over does not erase tenderness, joy and presence.



Zenda Daniels hopes her daughter Zemira-Grace sees something simple but lasting, that even after abuse and instability, a life can be rebuilt with care, and that her mother did not stop until it was.



PHOTOS COURTESY ZENDA DANIELS
After time in shelters and transitional housing, Zenda Daniels hopes her daughter remembers not only the struggle but the stability she's building now.

itself, shaping employment stability, financial security, and long-term housing outcomes.

For Daniels, those patterns were not abstract.

They were lived reality.

"My breaking point came when I realized survival alone was no longer enough for me or my daughter," she said. "I needed to take back control of my future because I had my legacy watching me."

Daniels found building blocks to take back that control through the From Caregiver to Breadwinner program at Marymount University, an initiative designed for those whose lives have been interrupted by caregiving or crisis. The 12-week training pathway provides training in IT fundamentals, artificial intelligence literacy, and cloud technologies, along with certification preparation, mentorship and job placement support. Since its launch, it has served more than

140 participants.

The program is housed within the Center for the Innovative Workforce and supported in part by a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, along with industry partnerships.

Jennifer Weiser, Project Manager for the Center for the Innovative

Workforce at Marymount University, describes it as a bridge between lived experience and workforce opportunity, helping participants translate resilience into professional capability while providing structure for long-term career development.

"Participants come to us with extraordinary resilience, problem-solving under pressure, adaptability," Weiser said. "What we try to do is help them recognize those skills as transferable, and then give them the structure and confidence to step into careers where those strengths are not only seen, but

valued."

Before the program, Daniels attempted to study technology independently. But without structure or support, the process felt fragmented.

"The hardest part was feeling overwhelmed and isolated," she said.

What changed was not only instruction, but environment. Learning became shared rather than solitary. Others in the program carried similar histories of disruption, caregiving, or instability.

For the first time, education was not something she had to navigate alone.

Over time, she began participating actively, eventually leading study sessions for peers preparing for certification exams. The role shift was subtle but significant, moving her from participant to peer support.

Daniels' existence once was shaped by interruption: psychology studies, customer service roles, nonprofit work, and healthcare support that never fully stabilized due to circumstances beyond her control. Time in shelter and transitional housing required constant adjustment, emotionally, logistically and financially. Even moments

of progress were often temporary.

"My life was centered around survival, motherhood, and trying to rebuild after extremely difficult circumstances," she said.

During her time at Marymount, she continued pursuing certifications and rebuilding confidence in incremental steps. For Daniels, the shift began internally before it became visible externally.

"For a long time, I identified mostly through what I had survived," she said. "The program helped me see myself differently."

Today, stability is no longer defined by crisis avoidance.

"Now it means something much deeper," she said. "It means having vision, structure, goals, and the belief that my daughter and I can build a safe and sustainable future."

That shift does not erase the past. It reframes it.

What remains is not a story of arrival, but of continuation, of building something durable after years in which durability felt out of reach.

And in that space between what was endured and what is now being built, Daniels is still learning what it means not just to survive but to prosper.

When the Past Still Echoes

Freedom Summer survivor uses PTSD Awareness Month to share her truth and says that healing is possible

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Laverne Carter moves through her days in Arlington with a quiet grace that belies the storms she has carried for decades. Even now at 82, the everyday sounds of her neighborhood — a screen door snapping shut, a bus rolling to a stop — can still transport her back to Mississippi summers when danger lived in every shadow, a reminder of how PTSD lingers long after the violence ends. It is a truth she rarely spoke aloud for most of her life. But in this PTSD Awareness Month, she is sharing the story of how those years marked her.

“Some sounds don’t mean danger anymore, but my body hasn’t gotten the message,” she says, “and that’s the part of PTSD people don’t see,” said Carter.

Her PTSD didn’t come from war, though she says it often felt like one. It came from the long, blistering summers of the Civil Rights movement, when she was just 19 years old. She wasn’t an activist who joined sit-ins or marches, but she was there, taking notes and keeping lists of who needed help.

It was 1963 and as a volunteer at her church in her hometown of Greenwood, she traveled with a small group from her church delivering food to families evicted for trying to register to vote.

“We weren’t trying to be heroes,” Carter remembers. “We were just trying to help our people stay alive long enough to vote.”

Carter remembers those dates the way other people remember birthdays. “June of ’63 was when everything changed.” She recalls the March on Washington and listening to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s speech on a radio in the church basement with other women as they fried chicken, boiled collard greens and baked pound cakes.

But the evening that carved itself into her memory came in 1964, during Freedom Summer. She and other church volunteers were assembling meals and preparing them for delivery when a brick shattered one of the church basement windows. She still flinches at sudden noises.

“When you’re eighteen, you don’t realize how long a moment like that can live inside,” she said.

Trying to escape the memories, Carter left Mississippi in 1968, after Dr. King’s assassination, joining cousins who’d moved to Washington, DC. But she learned that trauma travels. For years she startled at slamming doors, avoided fireworks, and slept lightly, always listening for danger.

It wasn’t until 1997, after a panic attack at work, that a psychiatrist at Howard University Hospital finally named what she’d been carrying: post-traumatic stress disorder.

Therapy followed, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), weekly sessions with a psychotherapist and a support group for survivors of violence. She learned grounding techniques, breathing work, and how to recognize when her body was bracing for threats that were no longer present.

Today, Carter manages her PTSD with rituals and community. She attends a weekly session with her therapist, journals each morning, walks the trails at Fort Barnard Park, and attends church. She practices yoga, is part of a faith-based healing circle and visits patients who have been diagnosed with PTSD, sharing a story that she wishes someone had told her decades ago.

“You don’t have to be silent to be strong and healing is possible,” she says. “But the miracle for me is that I lived long enough to heal.”

“You don’t have to be silent to be strong and healing is possible. But the miracle for me is that I lived long enough to heal.”

— Laverne Carter



PHOTO COURTESY LAVERNE CARTER

Once a young church volunteer during the Civil Rights Movement, Laverne Carter visits those who have been diagnosed with PTSD, turning her own history into a path for others.

Reach Out

If you or someone you know is experiencing symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), help is available 24 hours a day. PTSD symptoms can include intrusive memories, avoidance, hyper-vigilance, nightmares, and emotional numbness.

Call or text 988 to reach the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, where trained counselors provide free and confidential support and can connect callers to local resources. Veterans can press “1” after dialing 988 to reach the Veterans Crisis Line, or text 838255 for specialized assistance.

In an emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. A formal diagnosis must come from a licensed mental-health professional

BULLETIN BOARD

Submit civic/community announcements at [ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar](https://www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar). Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before the event.

ARLINGTON’S TRIPLE-AAA BOND RATING REAFFIRMED FOR 2026

For the 26th year in a row, all three credit ratings agencies have reaffirmed Arlington

County’s debt ratings of Aaa/AAA/AAA — the highest possible rating. Arlington is one of just 54 counties in the United States, and one of thirteen in Virginia, to receive this designation. Receiving the highest possible bond ratings means the County can borrow at the lowest level of interest rates possible, ensuring a lower cost to taxpayers.

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. To sign up, visit the website at <https://scmafc.org/volunteer>, or email contact@scmafc.org with questions.

DONATIONS NEEDED

Pet Food Bank. AWLA has established a Pet Food Bank to serve qualifying residents

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 7



Senior game day at Madison Community Center.



Annual July 4th celebration at Lyons Village park.

Arlington Offers a Park for Everyone, Man or Beast

County receives lower scores for equity, with less access for poor neighborhoods and people of color.

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Arlington's park system chalks up one more award this year with announcement of its seventh place ranking in the National Trust for Public Lands ParkScore. This is a repeat of last year's ranking and the 11th consecutive year Arlington's parks have ranked in the top 10.

Arlington earned an overall ParkScore of 76.1 out of 100 which measures how Arlington compares to 100 of the most populated cities in the United States. The overall score includes 15 measures across the following categories: Acreage, Access, Investment, Amenities and Equity.

Arlington scores among the highest in the category of Access which is the percentage of its residents that live within a walkable half mile of a park, which is the distance most people are willing to walk to a destination. Ninety-nine percent of residents live within a 10 minute walk of a park. In the US about one in 3 people don't have a quality park close to home.

Acreage is the relative abundance of destination parks which include large natural areas that provide mental health as well as climate and conservation benefits. Arlington County is only 26 square miles but maintains an above average share of dedicated parkland and is ahead of their goal to acquire 30 acres of new public land by 2030.

The Investment score measures the relative financial health of a city's park system which translates into how well the park system can be well maintained. In Arlington a total of \$303 per resident is spent to support publicly accessible parks, recreational programs and DPR programs, one of the highest for this category.

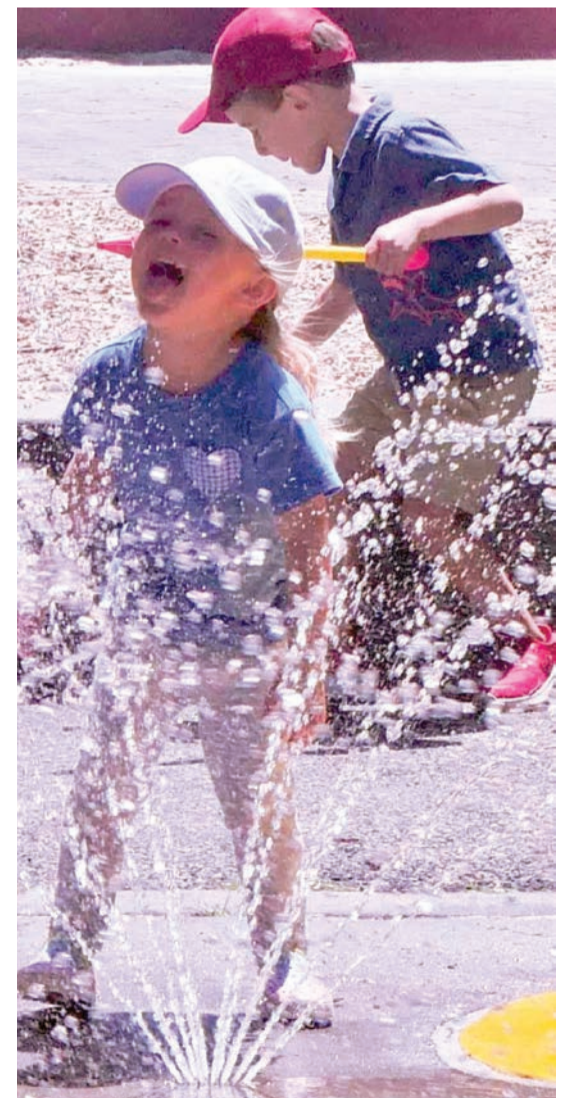
Amenities category reflects the wide variety of programs available including basketball hoops, dog parks, splash parks, playgrounds and senior recreation centers, restrooms and sports fields. Arlington earned 100 in this category.

Equity reflects the fairness in the distribution of parks and park space between neighborhoods by

SEE ARLINGTON OFFERS, PAGE 5



Chestnut Park playground offers children's vehicles to borrow.



Arlington splash parks open Memorial Day.

Arlington Offers a Park for Everyone, Man or Beast

FROM PAGE 4

race and income. While Arlington scores 99 out of 100 on parks within a 10 minute walking distance, the score is lower for both people of color and low-income categories on distribution of park space. In Arlington residents of color have access to 66 percent less nearby park space than those living in white neighborhoods (22 points out of 100). Residents living in lower income neighborhoods have access to 79 percent less nearby park space than those living in higher-income neighborhoods (7 points out of 100).

The Trust for Public Lands (TPL) is a nonprofit organization focused on creating parks and protecting land for people with the goal of ensuring healthy and livable communities for future generations. They describe their goal as working to connect everyone to the joys and benefits of the outdoors.

Gulf Branch nature program explores tadpoles and other critters

FILE PHOTOS BY
SHIRLEY RUHE
ARLINGTON CONNECTION



Male and female mallards take a dip.



Long Branch Park annual native plant sale.



Shirlington Dog park.



One of many park basketball courts available around Arlington.



Langston senior center Spellbinders storytelling program.

Governor's 'Common Ground' Veto Pen Strikes Down Some Progressive Policies

From cannabis to collective bargaining, legislators must wait another year.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Gov. Abigail Spanberger (D) issued a wave of vetoes on progressive priorities that had been sent back to her desk without the amendments she requested from the senators and delegates. A Democratic majority did not guarantee the governor's signature. Of the 31 bills vetoed by Spanberger, 29 were introduced by Democrats and 2 by Republicans. Because the General Assembly is controlled by Democrats, the majority of legislation reaching her desk came from Democrats. The governor signed 972 bills into law.

On Jan. 19, when Spanberger delivered her first address to a joint session of the legislature, her primary theme was encouraging lawmakers to find "common ground." In her official inaugural address on Jan. 17, the governor stated: "Our leaders and our fellow Virginians should join in common cause, find common ground, and pursue common purpose — this is the concept at the heart of what it means to be a Commonwealth."

Spanberger vetoed a total of 31 bills after the first General Assembly session of her term, reported Virginia Public Access Project, VPAP.org. "This includes eight bills that were vetoed directly after the session, as well as additional bills vetoed when the Governor's proposed amendments were rejected by the General Assembly during reconvened session.

Policy Vetoes: Cannabis, Healthcare, and Education

Del. Paul Krizek's (D-Mount Vernon) retail cannabis marketplace bill, HB 642 / SB 542, triggered a veto after lawmakers rejected executive amendments to delay the rollout and cap proposed stores. "The Governor's veto ignores the reality that cannabis is already being sold everyday across Virginia. The only question is whether we as leaders will finally ensure those sales occur within a legal, regulated market or continue turning a blind eye to a booming illicit market while pretending to be outraged by its existence," Senator Aird and Del. Krizek posted in a joint release.

Del. Karrie Delaney's (D-Fairfax) Prescription Drug Affordability Board bill, HB 483 / SB 271, also drew an executive veto. "They are expensive undertakings that other states have either repealed or are considering repealing due to costs and ineffectiveness," Spanberger wrote. "I offered amendments to the General Assembly that would have directed the Prescription Drug Affordability Advisory Panel to study a reference-based pricing system before the state spends millions of dollars on implementation."

Gov. Abigail Spanberger vetoed a high-

er education governance bill (SB 494/HB 1385), introduced by Sen. Saddam Azlan Salim (D-Fairfax) and Del. Lily Franklin (D-Montgomery), citing administrative concerns. The move drew quick backlash from university advocates. Criticizing the veto and the governor's failed amendments, the editorial board of The Cavalier Daily wrote that "it is no longer evident that Spanberger is aligned with these sentiments," signaling a "posture shift from the direct and decisive leader once recognized, to a hesitant and passive leader."

Legal Standards and Public Safety

The governor vetoed a mental health affirmative defense bill, HB 246 / SB 335, introduced by Del. Vivian Watts (D-Fairfax) and Sen. Jennifer Boysko (D-Fairfax). It sought to allow a judge or jury to find a defendant guilty of a lesser misdemeanor instead of an enhanced class 6 felony if a mental health disorder contributed to an assault on law enforcement. "This bill would effectively create a new legal standard applicable to just one criminal charge for a specific group of people, risking increased confusion and inconsistencies in the Commonwealth's legal system," the governor's veto explanation stated.

Spanberger also blocked SB 351 and HB 650, which would have restricted federal immigration enforcement officers from making administrative arrests in sensitive public spaces. "Communicating that immigrant families are protected from immigration action in places they are not by virtue of federal law would put families at risk," the governor wrote, adding that her Executive Order 16 already directs state agencies to develop immigration protocols.

Workplace, Welfare, and Labor Shift

A workplace protection provision adding menopause as a protected health class, HB 1173 / SB 258 by Del. Kathy Tran (D-Fairfax) and Sen. Stella Pekarsky (D-Fairfax), faced a veto over structural regulatory concerns. Tran and Pekarsky responded: "These bills would have strengthened protections against discrimination and ensure employees could seek reasonable accommodations without fear of retaliation." They added, "We remain committed to advancing policies that reflect the needs of workers."

Del. Delaney's child welfare interview-recording bill, HB 1222, was vetoed after the legislature rejected the executive's amendments. "I offered amendments which would ensure the ability to record all interviews, while also providing discretion within social services when such a recording is unnecessary or not to the benefit of the child," Span-



SCREENSHOT VIA X

Virginia Gov. Abigail Spanberger signs the Employee Child Care Assistance Program bill, HB 18/SB 3, during the Virginia General Assembly session, in Richmond, Va. The law, which takes effect July 1, 2026, was part of a session where Spanberger signed 972 bills into law and vetoed 31.

SCREENSHOT VIA FACEBOOK

Virginia Sen. Saddam Azlan Salim, D-Fairfax, released a statement on May 20 regarding Gov. Abigail Spanberger's veto of SB 351. The bill aimed to prohibit federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents from making warrantless civil arrests in protected areas such as courthouses, schools, and hospitals. Salim, who opposed the veto, stated, "I know the fear of being separated from our families due to the Trump administration's lawlessness."



SCREENSHOT VIA INSTAGRAM

Virginia state Sen. Jennifer Boysko, D-Fairfax, speaks on March 26 in support of legislation to address pay inequity. Boysko spoke in favor of her bill, SB 215, and Del. Michelle Maldonado's HB 636, which would prohibit employers from asking job applicants for their salary history and require salary ranges in job postings. Gov. Spanberger signed the legislation.



berger said, noting her amendments were disregarded.

A fracture emerged over legislation expanding public-sector collective bargaining rights, SB 378 / HB 1263, which was vetoed after lawmakers rejected executive amendments that would have delayed implementation and altered local government provi-

sions.

"Shame. Gov. Abigail Spanberger today betrayed half a million of Virginia's public service workers by going back on her campaign promise to support collective bargaining rights for the people who keep our Commonwealth and communities running every

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WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 3

of Arlington County and the City of Falls Church. In consideration of the effect financial obstacles have on a pet owner's ability to afford pet care, the AWLA Pet Food Bank program's goal is to keep family pets out of shelters. If you are an Arlington County or City of Falls Church resident and are in need of assistance in feeding your pet, follow this link and fill out a pre-registration form. Visit goo.gl/forms/s2FuFdaYWdZm4tPw2.

Donations Needed. Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church, 2700 South 19th St., is seeking to replenish its food pantry. Particularly needed are rice (large bags appreciated, the pantry will rebag), dry beans, canned vegetables, soup, small jars of peanut butter, small jars of jelly, pasta and pasta sauce. Donations are collected during Mass each Sunday. Visit www.ourladyqueenofpeace.org for more.

ONGOING

Create a Wildlife Sanctuary. The Audubon at Home Wildlife Sanctuary certification program assists homeowners in restoring their home's natural habitat by providing information on sustainable gardening practices. These practices include using native plants, removing invasive species, reducing use of pesticides and fertilizers, and creating space for native flora and fauna. Visit audubon-at-home-1/ for more.

Naloxone (Narcan) can save the life of someone who is overdosing, if given in time. Anyone who assists

a person in need is protected from liability by the Good Samaritan Law. Naloxone (Narcan) is available without a prescription for a fee at all pharmacies. Obtain it for free by attending a REVIVE! training. Contact Emily Siqveland at 703-228-0913 or esiqveland@arlingtonva.us or visit health.arlingtonva.us/opioid-awareness/ for available training sessions. The Chris Atwood Foundation also offers training to the public. Visit www.chrisatwoodfoundation.org/naloxone for details.

Monthly Memory Café. 1-3 p.m. at 7910 Andrus Road, Suite 6, Alexandria. The Memory Café, a social gathering for individuals living with memory loss and their families, virtually. Registration is free and highly recommended to reserve spots, which are open on a first come first served basis. To reserve a spot, please call 571-210-5551 or email bdesai@seniorhelpers.com. Visit www.dementiacareconnections.com/memory-cafe or www.seniorhelpers.com/arlington-alexandria-va for more.

Aging Matters. 2-3 p.m. Tuesdays on WERA 96.7 LP FM on Arlington's community radio station. Each week host Cheryl Beversdorf interviews individuals with expertise about a broad array of aging related topics affecting the lives of older adults and their loved ones. Visit www.facebook.com/agingmatterswera to listen to programs. <https://www.mixcloud.com/AgingMatters/>

Volunteer Bike Repair Night. First Tuesday of the month, 6-9 p.m. at Phoenix Bikes, Barcroft Park, 4200 S. Four Mile Run Drive. Volunteers

gather to refurbish bikes, sort parts or help with essential tasks. No experience necessary.

Public Financial Fraud, Waste and Abuse Hotline. Arlington County public hotline that offers a confidential and secure way to report suspected incidents of financial fraud, waste and abuse. Anyone can submit a complaint to the hotline at 1-866-565-9206 or at arlingtonva.ethicaladvocate.com. The hotline website is available in English and Spanish. Phone calls can be taken in many languages.

Created by the Arlington Initiative to Rethink Energy (AIRE) in partnership with the Arlington Public Library, the nation's First Energy Lending Library made its debut on Earth Day. Meant to resolve energy issues in the Arlington community, efficiency tools can be borrowed, such thermal imaging cameras, energy meters and books play a vital role in achieving a "greener" home. Open Sun-Sat 10 a.m.-9 p.m. 1015 N. Quincy St. Visit library.arlingtonva.us/locations/central-library or call 703-228-5990.

Arlington Rotary Club Lunches. Thursdays, 12 - 1:30 p.m. Club meetings are at 12:15 to 1:15 on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month. On the 2nd Thursday we meet at a restaurant in Arlington (currently Texas Jacks BBQ). On the 4th Thursday we meet via Zoom (click [HERE](#) to join). Newcomers are welcome to join the Zoom meeting.. Organization comes together for humanitarian services. Listen to guest speakers on various topics of interest. Visit <https://arlingtonrotaryclub.org/>

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Keeping a Closer Watch On the Potomac this Summer

BY STATE SENATOR
SCOTT A. SUROVELL

The Potomac River is the front yard of my district, the 34th- and the lifeblood of the Washington region. The river's shoreline stretches roughly 50 miles Alexandria south through the Mount Vernon area, Fort Belvoir, Mason Neck, Pohick Bay, Occoquan, Leesylvania and on to the Chesapeake Bay. For 220,000 Virginians, the river is where we kayak, fish, sail, paddle, swim and walk. It is also a working waterway and the source of much of our region's drinking water. When something goes wrong on the Potomac, our community feels it immediately.

Earlier this year, something did go wrong. The collapse of the Potomac Interceptor sewer line upstream sent over 240 million gallons of raw sewage into the river. The University of Maryland's School of Public Health described it as one of the largest sewage spills in history. Shortly after, American Rivers ranked the Potomac as the most endangered river in America. Closer to home, we saw a fish kill in Pohick Bay. State agencies told us water quality readings were within recreational standards and attributed the dead shad to spawning stress, but residents and environmental scientists I trust kept asking a fair question: how confident can we really be in the river's health? [Is that what you mean?] and for how long?

Experts say that when sewage is deposited in large quantities, it does not simply wash away. Significant volumes can settle into river sediment and lie dormant for months, only to be churned back into the water column by storms, tides or boat traffic later in the season. That can pull dissolved

oxygen down and put aquatic life under renewed stress long after the initial spill is out of the headlines. From Memorial Day through Labor Day is exactly when our families are back on the river and exactly when we need eyes on the water.

Asking State Officials to Act

On April 27, I wrote to Michael Rolband, the Director of the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), with four straightforward requests. First, commit to regular, frequent water quality sampling throughout the summer at sufficient sites along the Virginia portion of the Potomac and its tributaries, including Pohick Bay. Second, confirm that DEQ has the funding and staff to respond quickly to any new fish kill or algae bloom. Third, post results publicly on a schedule that serves typical weekend river users, by Friday morning, before families decide whether to launch a boat or access the river. And fourth, coordinate with the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and, where appropriate, the Maryland Department of the Environment, so the public is not left guessing which agency to call or which dataset to trust.

On May 4, Director Rolband responded and I am pleased to report that he agreed to all four requests. Beginning in mid-May, DEQ will supplement its routine monitoring with weekly bacteria sampling at nine stations in the tidal Potomac, running from the southern edge of the District of Columbia down to Potomac Creek. Pohick Bay is on the list. Sampling will target Mondays so that lab results are back from the state laboratory on Thursday and posted to the public DEQ



Scott A. Surovell

website by Friday morning. DEQ has confirmed it has the resources to mobilize its Pollution Response Program if another fish kill or algae bloom occurs, and it has committed to coordinate with VDH and Maryland counterparts. Ten weekly sampling events are planned at each station, carrying us through the heart of the recreation season.

This is real progress, and I want to thank Director Rolband, Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources David Bulova and the career scientists at DEQ for taking these concerns seriously and responding promptly. I also want to thank the Potomac Riverkeeper Network, Supervisor Dan Storck and the Prince William County Board of Supervisors for their continued partnership on these issues, and the constituents who flooded my office with calls and emails after the spill. None of this happens without you.

A few honest caveats. Bacteria sampling tells us about ambient conditions on the day the sample was pulled. It is not a real-time swimming forecast and it cannot pinpoint the exact source of any contamination it detects. Local conditions on the river change quickly with storms and tides. As DEQ correctly notes, recreating in any natural waterway carries some inherent risk, and families should continue to consult the Virginia Department of Health's "Swim Healthy" guidance, avoid the water for at least 48 hours after heavy rain and steer clear of any visible discharge, foam or unusual discoloration.

Aging Infrastructure, Report Problems

The longer-term lesson is one

we cannot afford to forget. The Potomac Interceptor failure was not a freak event. It was a predictable consequence of aging regional infrastructure that has been quietly carrying 60 million gallons of wastewater for 54 miles a day for decades.

The Washington metropolitan area for generations has built on top of pipes, treatment plant and stormwater systems that we rarely think about until they break. When they fail, we pay the bill in dead fish, closed beaches, lost confidence in the water and millions of dollars in cleanup. Federal, state and local partners need a serious, sustained capital plan for bolstering our infrastructure, and Virginia needs to keep pulling its share of that load through the budget process. I will continue to push on that front in Richmond.

Here is what I ask of you. Bookmark the DEQ Potomac Interceptor page and check it before you head out to the river. If you see a fish kill, an algae bloom or anything unusual on the water, report it to DEQ's Pollution Response Program first. My staff and I are glad to help connect you. And if you have ideas about how we can do better, I want to hear them.

The Potomac belongs to all of us. Keeping our natural resources healthy, the resources on which we all depend, and keeping the public honestly informed is one of the most basic responsibilities we owe each other.

I am grateful DEQ has stepped up this summer, and I will be watching alongside all of you to make sure that DEQ officials keep the commitments they made in that May 4 letter to me.

Majority Leader & State Senator
34th District of Virginia

Governor's 'Common Ground' Veto

FROM PAGE 6

day," the Virginia Public Sector Labor Coalition said via an AFT press release. The coalition added that Virginia workers received a "crystal-clear message that they are no better off than they were under a Republican governor."

Class-Action and the Budget Standoff

Del. Marcus Simon's (D-Fairfax) consumer class-action framework

bill, HB 449 / SB 229, drew a veto. On April 19, the Virginia Poverty Law Center said, "HB 449 and SB 229 allow class action lawsuits in Virginia courts — we would then join every other state in the U.S. except Mississippi." Spanberger noted: "I offered amendments to ensure that when Virginia adopts its first-ever class action procedure, we do so in a tailored and judicious way — building on longstanding federal precedent while

providing regional circuit courts an opportunity to develop expertise."

State attention now turns to the 2026–2028 biennial budget (HB 30 / SB 30). Because the regular session adjourned without an agreement, lawmakers are operating within a special session framework. The General Assembly must pass a budget before the fiscal year begins on July 1 to prevent a state government shutdown. The House

of Delegates reconvenes its special session on June 18 and the Senate on June 22, with a dispute over data center tax exemptions looming.

Senate lawmakers want to eliminate the industry's \$1.6 billion sales tax exemption, House representatives want to tie the tax breaks to green energy, and Spanberger wants to protect existing business incentives to maintain economic stability.

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ENTERTAINMENT

CENTERS FOR OPPORTUNITY ARLINGTON

The Centers for Opportunity Arlington is a safe, stigma-free place to spend time for those recovering from homelessness, substance use, and mental illness. It has a donation closet that needs adult clothing and shoes. Some participants at the Center are looking for jobs and need the proper attire. Located at 3219 Columbia Pike, Suite 101, Arlington. Contact Greg, Program Coordinator at 703-567-1346.

VOLUNTEER FOR ARLINGTON'S COMMUNITY AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

Arlington Neighborhood Village, in partnership with Arlington County and Marymount University, has started the Community Ambassador Program (CAP). CAP is a volunteer fueled system that identifies "Ambassadors" connected with civic associations, faith communities, senior centers, apartment buildings, etc. These individuals will be trained to be a reliable source of information about the many opportunities available to older adults in Arlington.

Ambassadors will spread the word about programs and support services, opportunities for social and civic engagement, and educational and enrichment activities for older adults in their own neighborhoods. They are actively recruiting ambassadors to act as a bridge between their community and the Arlington safety net, providing information and soliciting feedback to improve offerings that help older adults remain safe, independent, engaged, and connected to their community.

Contact cap@anvarlington.org if this is something you are interested in or want to learn more. Let's work together to create a supported and connected community for all ages!

Receive Support Services: Are you a senior in Arlington? Do you need support services but don't know where to look? Are you looking for fun and enriching activities in Arlington? Email or call 703-509-8057 and they will connect you with an Ambassador.

THE MARJORIE HUGHES FUND FOR CHILDREN

The Marjorie Hughes Fund for Children (MHF), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit serving Arlington Public Schools (APS) students, helps underinsured and uninsured students obtain medical and dental services and other necessary medical care. Established in 1992 to honor the work of public health physician Marjorie F. Hughes, who dedicated her career to public school students in Arlington, MHF is made up of Public Health School Nurses, School Health Aides, APS staff, and community stakeholders. In collaboration with pediatric office staff and dental providers, MHF pays for school entry and sports physical exams, dental treatments, assists with the purchase of medications or medical equipment, and provides transportation via UberHealth rides to doctor and dentist appointments. MHF services are supported entirely by generous donations and grants, and they have helped students throughout Arlington schools, from kindergarten to high school, to be happy, healthy, and ready to learn. To learn more about MHF, its mission, its work, and to make a contribution, visit <https://www.marjoriehughesfund.com/>.

YEAR ROUND ON SUNDAYS

Farmer's Market. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. At Casa Chirilagua Community Center, 4109 Mt. Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Experience fresh foods, native plants, artisan crafts, music and community at Four Mile Run Farmers & Artisans Market in the heart of Arlandria outside the Casa Chirilagua Community Center, every Sunday 9-1 p.m.

FRESHFARM OPEN YEAR-ROUND

FRESHFARM Ballston Market will now operate year-round, providing residents and visitors with continued access to locally grown produce and goods even through the winter months. Located at Welburn Square (901 N Taylor St., Arlington) just steps from the Ballston Metro, the market operates Thurs-

www.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



The band Too Much Talent will appear on Thursday, June 11, 2026 at Rosslyn Live at Gateway Park in Arlington.



The Columbia Pike Blues Festival will be held Saturday, June 13, 2026 in Arlington.

days from 3-6 p.m. The market features a lineup of 20 regular and rotating farmers and producers, and shoppers can enjoy nearly everything needed for a complete grocery shop, from hearty winter squash and leafy greens to eggs, meats, pantry staples, and prepared foods, while supporting regional farmers and producers year-round. Visit freshfarm.org/markets/ballston.

THURSDAY/JUNE 4

Arlington Chamber Networking Event. 8:00 - 9:30 a.m. At The Westin Crystal City Reagan National Airport, Arlington. Breakfast Connection with the Equality Chamber of Commerce. Make connections and build relationships to help achieve your business goals at networking events. The Arlington Chamber offers several networking opportunities each month that attract a diverse range of people and various professional opportunities within the Arlington business community. These events provide the perfect space to gain clients, vendors, and donors, while meeting like-minded individuals committed to growing and maintaining valuable business connections.

FRIDAY/JUNE 5

Lyon Village Blood Drive. 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Lyon Village Community House, Community Room, 1920 N. Highland Street, Arlington.

SATURDAY/JUNE 6

BBQ and Blooms. 4-7 p.m. At Rock Spring Church, 5010 Little Falls Road, Arlington. Culpepper Gardens invites you to an afternoon of live music, food, fellowship and

philanthropy. Tickets \$150. Get ready for a lovely evening featuring delicious barbeque, libations, live music by the DC Starlight Orchestra, and our Legacy of Grace awards presented by Delegate Patrick Hope. Get your tickets today!

SATURDAY/JUNE 6

National Chamber Ensemble Concert. 7:30 p.m. At Gunston Arts Center, Theater 1, 2700 South Lang Street, Arlington. The National Chamber Ensemble closes the season with "Mozart and Bruch: The Great Concertos." Blending grandeur with intimacy, this season finale presents two iconic concertos in a rare chamber setting that reveals their emotional depth and structural brilliance with striking clarity. Internationally acclaimed pianist Carlos César Rodríguez joins NCE for a luminous performance of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's beloved Piano Concerto No. 21 in C major, "Elvira Madigan," celebrated for its elegance, lyricism, and timeless appeal. Artistic Director and violinist Leo Sushansky takes center stage in Max Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor, a cornerstone of the violin repertoire, offering a deeply personal and passionate interpretation of its sweeping romantic lines.

SUNDAY/JUNE 7

2026 Michael J. Fox Foundation Run/Walk. 9:30 a.m. In Pentagon City, Arlington. The following roadways will be closed in order to accommodate the event:
From approximately 6:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.: S. Joyce Street, from 15th Street S. to 16th Street S.
From approximately 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.:

S. Joyce Street from 15th Street S. to Army Navy Drive
Army Navy Drive, from S. Joyce Street to 23rd Street S.

THURSDAY/JUNE 11

Rosslyn Live at Gateway Park, Arlington. 5:30 p.m. Too Much Talent takes the stage at 6 p.m. To start the season in June, Taco Rock will be serving up fan favorites like al pastor, carne asada, and pollo, along with Mexican rice and elote — adding just the right amount of spice to the first Rosslyn LIVE in Gateway Park.

THURSDAY/JUNE 11

State of the County & Public Safety Awards. 7:30 to 10 a.m. At Army Navy Country Club, Arlington. Join the Arlington Chamber of Commerce for the annual State of the County & Public Safety Awards. This community-focused event celebrates Arlington's achievements, our community's future, and those who make Arlington a great place to live and work. Attendees will have the opportunity to learn about the County's economic and developmental status from the Arlington County Board Chair Matt de Ferranti. This event also pays tribute to our public safety personnel and first responders from Arlington County's Fire Department, Police Department, Department of Public Safety Communications & Emergency Management, and Office of the Sheriff, who have exemplified extraordinary heroic actions and exceptional performance of their duties.

SATURDAY/JUNE 13

Comedy Karaoke Trivia Funtime Show. 7:30 p.m. At Highline RxR, 2010 Crystal Drive, Arlington. Bring a team or fly solo and win prizes by dropping knowledge in a trivia competition, then duking it out in a karaoke battle! Hosted by Christian Hunt, this amazing experience features comedy from the DC area's finest comics. Our headliner for June's show is the hilarious Randy Syphax! Visit capitalcityshowcase.com

SATURDAY/JUNE 13

Columbia Pike Blues Festival. 12-8 p.m. At Penrose Square, 2597 Columbia Pike, Arlington. Now in its 29th year, the Columbia Pike Blues Festival is a high-energy summer celebration that brings music, community, and culture to the heart of Arlington's most vibrant corridor. Presented by Columbia Pike Partnership in collaboration with Arlington Arts, the festival showcases the best of the DMV's musical talent while honoring the rich diversity and spirit of Columbia Pike. Festival goers can expect an incredible musical lineup, local food trucks, a beer garden, artisan vendors, and family activities that reflect Columbia Pike's eclectic character. It's a day to come together, support local businesses, and celebrate everything this corridor represents.

FRIDAY/JUNE 19

Juneteenth Celebration 4 p.m. At Wakefield High School, 1325 South Dinwiddie Street, Arlington. This family-friendly event will feature:
A live band to get you moving (En' Novation);
Local food trucks with something for everyone (Food for purchase);
Local artisan vendors and community partner booths;
A vibrant children's area with fun activities and favorite characters;
Special guest speakers sharing words of reflection and celebration.

TUESDAY/JUNE 23

Arlington County Board Candidate Forum. 5:30-7 p.m. At VHC Health - John T. Hazel Center - Auditorium, 1701 N George Mason Drive, Arlington. This engaging, business-focused event will bring together all declared candidates running for the Arlington County Board seat up for election this November for a moderated discussion on issues impacting Arlington's business community and economic future.

Memorial Dedicated To DCA Crash Victims



PHOTOS BY JANET BARNETT/GAZETTE PACKET

Flowers and memorabilia are left on a bench dedicated to the victims of the 2025 Potomac River mid-air collision during a dedication ceremony June 1 at Rivergate City Park.

Families gather to share grief, thank first responders.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
 GAZETTE PACKET

Family members, officials and community leaders gathered June 1 along the Potomac River in Alexandria to honor the 67 lives lost in last year's DCA crash of American Airlines flight 5342 and an Army Black Hawk helicopter, a tragedy that continues to reverberate through families and communities across the country.

The memorial event, held near the crash site at Rivergate City Park, combined remembrance with reflection, as speakers shared deeply personal stories of loved ones and called for continued action to prevent future tragedies. The ceremony marked more than a year since the crash, yet for many, the grief remains immediate and profound.

"This space gives us an opportunity to remember they were more than just victims of that accident," said Sheri Lilley, stepmother to co-pilot Sam Lilley. "That day does not define who they were. They were parents, children, partners, friends, teammates, colleagues, and servicemembers whose lives touched communities around the world."

Among the most emotional moments were tributes from family members describing the lives and dreams cut short. One speaker recalled Wendy Wigstrom, a Minnesota native and chemical engineer, who had been traveling home to North Carolina to be with her young children.

"She just wanted to get home to her boys," said Wendy's mother Mary, recounting her daughter's final words: "I love you, mom."

Others spoke about lives filled with promise — engagements planned, careers advancing, families growing — all interrupted in an instant.

SEE MEMORIAL DEDICATED, PAGE 12



Audrey Patel holds a photo of her husband Vikesh, who was killed in the 2025 mid-air crash over the Potomac River.



Tim and Sheri Lilley speak at the memorial dedication to victims of the mid-air collision June 1 at Rivergate City Park. Their son Sam Lilley was a co-pilot and was killed in the crash.

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SENIOR LIVING

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Office of 55+ Programs
Department of Parks and Recreation
300 N. Park Dr., Arlington, VA 22203
703-228-4721

55+ Programs are in person at 55+ Centers unless otherwise noted. A 55+ Pass is required to participate (starting at a \$30 annual fee). To join or register, go to registration.arlingtonva.us or call 703-228-4747.

Northern Virginia Senior Olympics (NVSO) looking for volunteers to assist event directors at a variety of events, Sept. 9 – Oct. 4 plus a person to write press releases and contact potential Patrons. Experienced volunteer Webmaster also needed. Email Judy Massabny for further details at jmassa@arlingtonva.us. The dates for 2026 are Sept. 9 – Oct. 4. The official opening is Saturday, Sept. 19 at the Thomas Jefferson Community Center in Arlington. The registration fee remains the same at \$20 which covers an unlimited number of events. Registration is online only at www.nvso.us.

55+ Ice Skating, Mondays at the MedStar Capitals Iceplex in Ballston Quarter, parking (\$1) on roof level 8, Fee (\$1) includes skate rental, 8:40-9:50 a.m. Pre-registration required at <https://www.medstarcapitaliceplex.com>, register for Senior Public Skate.

55+ (senior adults) weight room hours, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at Langston-Brown Community Center, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.; Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8 a.m. – 11 a.m., Madison Community Center. For more information, call 703-228-4771. A 55+ Gold Pass is required.

Line dance practice led by volunteers, open to intermediate level dancers, Mondays, 10 a.m. and Thursdays, 1 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Drop-in.

Walk Fit, a free, weekly walking program hosted by VHC Health offers a 45-minute walk on the indoor track at Lubber Run 55+ Center plus a 15-minute guided stretch, Thursdays, 8:30 - 9:30 a.m. Open to all ages; no 55+ Pass required. Drop-in.

Third Act Dance Ensemble, meet weekly to learn an original piece of choreography then rehearse and showcase for the community, Wednesday, June 3-Aug. 26, 1:30 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Cost \$99, 11 sessions. All experience levels welcome. Registration # 914802-01.

Building safer spaces, interactive virtual session led by DHS Program Assistant Ashley Blowe, Thursday, June 4, 9:15 a.m. Explore concepts of sexuality, gender and LGBTQIA+ identities. Registration # 914400-16.

Memory Café for people with dementia and their family caregivers, Thursday, June 4, 1:30 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Meaningful dementia-friendly activities led by Arlington Adult Day and Library staff. For more information and to register, contact Adult Services Librarian Zoe Mann at 703-228-5193 or email, zmann@arlingtonva.us. Open to all ages; no 55+ Pass required. Drop-in.

Acoustic Hour in the Park, relax and enjoy live music on the Plaza at Virginia Highlands Park, Friday, June 5, 1 p.m. Music by PhEd-Up with Friends, Phil Rosen, Ed Girovasi, Judy McVerry and Cameron Fletcher. Bring a blanket or chair. In case of inclement weather, program will be held at Aurora Hills 55+ Center. Registration # 914301-01.

Segregated Soldiers, presented by former U.S. Ambassador to Albania John Withers, Friday, June 5, 1 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Learn about the role that the segregated U.S. military played in liberating Nazi concentration camps. Registration # 914400-19.

Arlington Spellbinders, folks who love to tell folk tales, fables and legends, to intergenerational audiences. Learn more about this group and how to join, Friday, June 5, 9 a.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Drop-in.

Brains and Brawn, challenge your mind and body, walk on indoor track, answer a trivia question after each lap, answer correctly and move on to next lap, miss it and complete short bonus exercise, first and third Fridays beginning Friday, June 5, 1 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Registration # 914106-25.

First Friday Social features a Garden Party theme, seasonal treats and a Guess the Scent activity with herbs, Friday, June 5, 2 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Registration # 914801-01.

Dementia awareness and resource fair, Friday, June 5, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Co-hosted by VHC Senior Health and Insight Memory Care Center. Interactive activities, information booth, memory screenings and caregiving support resources. Open to all ages; no 55+ Pass required. Drop-in.

Brain health as you age, presented by Nina Davis, Insight Memory Care Center, Tuesday, June 9, 11 a.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Learn tips for healthy practices to keep the brain sharp. Registration # 914500-01.

Cooking demonstration of heart healthy recipes by Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Food Volunteers, Tuesday, June 9, 3 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Registration # 914501-01.

Genealogy 101, learn how to use primary sources, DNA services and more to explore your family's roots, Tuesday, June 9, 11:30 a.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Led by experienced genealogist Eileen Bogdanoff. Registration # 914402-01.

Reader's Theater—Radio Plays. Fun reading of vintage radio plays, Tuesday, June 9, 5:30 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Everybody gets a part to read. Registration # 914301-10.

Karaoke time, have fun with friends and sing your heart out to your favorite tunes, Tuesday, June 9, 2 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Registration # 914304-14.

Murder Mystery Dinner Night, uncover clues and reveal secrets, Wednesday, June 10, 5:30 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Bring your own dinner, beverage and dessert provided. Registration # 914801-03.

History roundtable, thought-provoking discussions about pivotal events in history. June's program will feature rivers, Wednesday, June 10, 11:15 a.m., virtual. Registration # 914402-04.

Paper quilling, learn to create beautiful raised images from wide paper strips, Thursday, June 11, 1:30 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Taught by instructor Joni Leonardo. Cost \$20. Supplies provided, Registration # 914310-01.

Smartphone photography, learn how to maximize the use of your camera's features, Thursday, June 11, 10 a.m., virtual. Presented by Nick Englund, DPR staff. Registration # 914403-01.

Records and root beer floats, Thursday, June 11, 6 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Listen to favorite vinyl records, bring records to share or come just to listen. Registration # 914801-06.

Equality in action, insightful presentation by Roland Watkins from Equality NoVa, Thursday, June 11, 3 p.m., virtual. Learn how Equality NoVa works to improve quality of life for the LGBTQ+ community. Registration # 914400-15.

D-Day Girls and Boys from Bedford, VA, program presented by volunteer Tom Curtis, Thurs-

day, June 11, 11 a.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Learn what vital contributions women made in WWII and why the U.S. D-Day Memorial is located in Bedford. Registration # 914400-20.

Mediterranean cruise explored with 55+ volunteer Mary Smolenski, Thursday, June 11, 1:30 p.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Presentation covers her experiences visiting Athens, Santorini, Istanbul, the Dead Sea and more. Registration # 914400-30.

Level Up 55+ Gaming Club play video games with friends at Arlington Mill 55+ Center featuring a gaming room with a 10 play station console and TVs offering a wide range of gaming experiences, Friday, June 12, 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. Registration # 914600-01.

Park and Play, fun-filled event featuring a walk in High View Park and a variety of games, Friday, June 12, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. Registration # 914899-01.

Tea and a movie, "The Color Purple" (1985) (PG-13), Friday, June 12, 12:30 p.m., Aurora Hills 55+ Center. Registration # 914804-04.

Documentary screening of "Phenomena of Emotions," Friday, June 12, 6 p.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Donations accepted to support Lubber Run's 55+ programs. Registration # 914804-07.

Farmers Markets for Seniors, informative presentation by Virginia Cooperative Extension volunteers about the benefits of shopping at local farmers markets, Friday, June 12, 10 a.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Registration # 914501-04.

Stonewall National Monument Ranger will present a program about the history of the 1969 Stonewall Uprising and its impact on the LGBTQ+ civil rights movement, Friday, June 12, 1 p.m., virtual. Registration # 914400-18.

Pride Senior Prom, Friday, June 12, 7 – 10 p.m., Central Library Auditorium. Inclusive night or fun, dress to impress, photo booth, friendly dance contest, Open to ages 21 and over. For more information, visit <https://arlingtonva.libcal/event/15777374>.

Retire well, live well, three informative sessions beginning Monday, June 15, 1 p.m., Aurora Hills 55+ Center. Q&A with Wealth Advisor Brian Fyock. Open to all ages; no 55+ Pass required. Registration # 914404-01.

Colored pencil on a unique surface, draw on both sides of a transparent film to create rich color saturation, Mondays, June 15 – 29, 1 p.m., Arlington Mill 55+ Center. Beginner-friendly lessons taught by art instructor Sandra Philips. Cost \$60. Registration # 914303-04.

Intergenerational painting party with Lubber Run preschool students, led by preschool teacher Amanda Barnes, Monday, June 15, 10 a.m., Lubber Run 55+ Center. Registration # 914310-04.

Fruit and vegetable bingo presented by Virginia Cooperative Extension, Monday, June 15, 11 a.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Prizes will be awarded. Registration # 914600-11.

Euchre, easy to learn, classic trick-taking card game, Tuesday, June 16, 5 p.m., Walter Reed 55+ Center. Taught by 55+ volunteer Ben Childers. Registration # 914600-27.

Hearing aids, beware, be wise. Bonnie O'Leary, hearing loss support specialist will discuss hearing loss in general, how to interpret an audiogram and over-the-counter versus prescription hearing aids, Tuesday, June 16, 11 a.m., Langston-Brown 55+ Center. Registration # 914500-02.

Arlington Mill 55+ Center book club will discuss "True Crime: A Memoir" by Patricia Cornwell, Tuesday, June 16, 1 p.m. Drop-in.

"Are You Talking to Me?"



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Though there were no television and no gun, I still felt what Robert Di Niro felt when he shot out the television in the 1976 film "Taxi Driver," when my wife Dina said to me earlier today: "Kenny, do you know you only have one box of tissues left in the closet (our back-up area)?"

Now she couldn't have been talking to me (or rather needn't have been) because, after nearly 48 years of marital bliss, if she knows anything about me, my needs, my habits and especially my nose, if tissues are not the absolute last thing she need remind me about, it's certainly in the top five. Aside from inheriting whatever my late father had, which caused him to carry a handkerchief with him at all times, I've had years of infusion chemotherapy (there are pills now, depending). And if infused chemotherapy does anything, a side effect is thinning out the membranes in your nose (which often results in nose bleeds which can be so severe in some patients, treatments have to be stopped). Or if you're lucky, you don't experience nose bleeds, you experience a runny nose that's impossible to catch. As a direct result, I have boxes of tissues in nearly every room in the house and in both of our cars. Aside from needing to know where the closest bathroom is when we travel, I'm carrying tissues with me as well. I am forever finding balled up tissues in all of my pants' pockets where one would typically find coins and such. In fact, I might say, if coerced, that tissues (my need for them, actually) is the bane of my existence. I don't leave the house without knowing/preparing my tissue/runny nose options.

To that end, I know every minute of every day exactly what my in-house tissue inventory is. Now I'm not counting the numbers of individual tissues I have remaining and calculating how longer before I'll need to replenish the stock. However, I am fully aware of how many boxes I have in reserve. And if I should have any doubt or need for assurance; I only need to open the closet door in our mudroom; that's where we keep our supply of paper products. For Dina to ask/tell me - out of the goodness of her heart, our tissue situation is almost grounds for divorce. To ask/tell me that question/comment after nearly 50 years of cohabitating, is to completely fail at the presumptive/familiarity with your husband's basic needs. I mean really! "Kenny, do you know you only have one box of tissues in the closet?" Well intended, unselfish, considerate, but nonetheless exhibiting a level of cluelessness about your husband that I didn't think was possible. I am either blowing my nose or needing a tissue to do so or buying them at the supermarket. I'm a "tissueoholic." And Dina is my sponsor, so to speak.

It's not exactly the elephant in the room, but if you were in a room with an elephant, you'd know it. And Dina has been with me in many rooms - and cars, public conveyances, et cetera, for nearly half a century now when I've been blowing my nose, during which oddly enough I've been told that I sound like an elephant when they "trumpet."

And finally, to add insult to injury, I do all the shopping, review all the circulars, click all the appropriate digital coupons - with a particular interest in tissues, among other paper products. As such, that there's simply no way I wouldn't know or hadn't planned their purchase (so I would never run out) way before Dina might notice their dwindling supply or ever feel the need to say to me what she said to me earlier that day. "Are you talking to me?"

"Are you kidding?"

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

Memorial Dedicated to DCA Crash Victims

FROM PAGE 10

“Countless hopes, plans and futures were shattered,” said Sheri Lilley, noting that the tragedy affected not only immediate families but colleagues, neighbors, and communities “around the globe.”

A particularly poignant tribute came from Audrey Patel, who shared how her husband Vikesh’s wedding ring was recovered from the Potomac and returned to her.

“It was such a gift to be able to hold a symbol of our love in my hand,” Patel said.

Speakers also expressed gratitude for the first responders who worked through the night of the crash, emphasizing the compassion shown in recovering victims and supporting families.

“This memorial also stands as a tribute to the First responders who mobilized that night to answer that unimaginable call,” said Tim Lilley, father to Sam Lilley. “We were able to go out with the harbor patrol and meet with the person who pulled our son’s body out of the wreckage. Their diligent compassion and respect for our loved ones so that we could bring them home one final time can never truly be repaid.”

The ceremony also included remarks from Jennifer Homendy, chair of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), who addressed both the emotional toll of the tragedy and the urgency of preventing similar incidents.

“No remembrance ceremony can give you what you deserve, which is to have your loved ones back,” Homendy said.

Homendy emphasized the scale of the loss and the ongoing responsibility to act on safety recommendations issued after the crash.

“On January 29th, the world lost 67 beautiful people who’ve been

missed every hour, every minute, every second since this tragedy occurred,” she said.

She also warned that delays in implementing safety measures pose continued risks.

“Every day that passes without implementation represents a continued and unacceptable risk to public safety,” Homendy said, noting that millions of passengers travel daily across U.S. airspace.

Throughout the ceremony, the recurring message was one of remembrance beyond tragedy and focusing not only on loss but on the lives lived.

“They should be celebrating birthdays, holding their newborn babies, sharing joy,” Homendy said, reflecting on the everyday moments now missing from families’ lives.

As the event concluded, attendees stood in quiet reflection, many looking out over the Potomac River where the lives of their loved ones were lost. The memorial, both physical and emotional, stands as a permanent reminder of a community changed forever and of a collective commitment to ensure such a tragedy is never repeated.

Added Tim Lilley, “We are deeply grateful to the city of Alexandria, to Mayor Gaskins and Congressman Beyer, for dedicating this memorial to the 67 extraordinary individuals we lost that evening.”

PHOTOS BY
JANET BARNETT
GAZETTE PACKET

Bill and Renee Parente with pictures of their son Anthony, who was killed in the mid-air crash over the Potomac River



A group of American Airline pilots gather June 1 at the dedication of a memorial to the victims of the mid-air collision at Rivergate City Park.



Grieving friends and family members join together at the dedication of a memorial to victims of the mid-air collision June 1 at Rivergate City Park.



Mike and Mary Wigstrom lost their daughter Wendy in the 2025 mid-air crash over the Potomac River.



NTSB board chair Jennifer Homendy gives remarks at the dedication to the victims of the Potomac River mid-air collision at Rivergate City Park.



Audrey Patel, widow of crash victim Vikesh Patel, holds the son her husband never had a chance to meet.