

CONNECTION

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Art: See Yourself and Others in a Different Context

PAGE 4



Governor's Vetoes Dismay Many

PAGE 3

Remembering on Memorial Day

PAGE 8

Carlos poses with some of his colorful artwork at The Lamb Center.



OPINION, PAGE 6 ♦ ENTERTAINMENT, PAGE 12 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 14

PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

JUNE 4-17, 2026

ONLINE AT WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



THISWEEKINTHEDMV.COM

The plaza out in front of JC Penney, where Miss Springfield once reigned.

JC Penney Closes in Springfield Town Center

Sagging retail market hits locally.

BY MIKE SALMON

In late May, Springfield Town Center lost JC Penney as the once retail giant closed, leaving a void that will be tough to fill. They didn't have a strong Christmas this year, which is a big time for retailers, sales figures are down so shutting the doors is the result. Catalyst Brands, which combined

JC Penney and SPARC Group in January 2025, says they cannot continue the current lease terms and could not find another suitable location nearby, said Dustin Fox on ThisWeekInTheDMV.com. The Springfield Town Center location is reportedly one of 138 Penney's stores that are closing.

JC Penney started as an anchor

store from the very beginning in 1973 next to Orange Bowl Pizza on one side and Time Out on the other, and the plaza out front where the Miss Springfield pageant was held for a number of years.

The other anchor store was Montgomery Wards on the other end of then-called Springfield Mall. There's no word on what will fill the large department store space but it could be entertainment, fitness or a restaurant cluster.

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 CIRCUIT COURT AWARDED GRANT TO PRESERVE HISTORIC RECORDS

The Fairfax Circuit Court Clerk's Office has been awarded a grant from the Library of Virginia Circuit Court Records Preservation (CCRP) program in the amount of \$18,370.40. The funds will be used to conserve loose birth registers from 1866 to 1879 and Land Tax Books from 1893, 1897, 1898, and 1899 from Fairfax County and stored at the Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records Center.

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 part-

nership 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

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 5



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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-

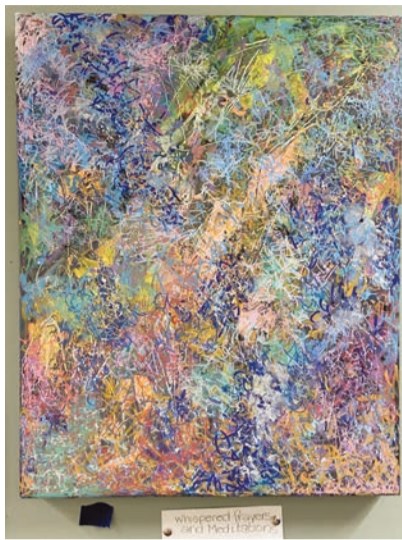
sions.

"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

SEE GOVERNOR'S, PAGE 6



Carlos also did this sailboat.



This work was created by art teacher Marcie Concepcion out of leftover paint.



Carlos works on a painting in the art room. Also pictured in this story are works by some of the other artists at The Lamb Center.

Safe Place for the Unhoused to Express Creativity

The Lamb Center's art program greatly benefits its guests.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

It's a small space with donated supplies, but the art room at The Lamb Center (TLC) in Fairfax City is yielding huge results for those who use it. Besides being a consistent and safe place for guests experiencing homelessness, it enables them to express their creativity and, at the same time, feel better about themselves.

TLC is a daytime, drop-in shelter providing food, clothing, showers

and many much-needed supportive services – such as case management and job counseling – to help those seeking its aid better their circumstances. And its art program is a valuable piece.

“What started as a small, creative outlet has grown into something really special,” said TLC spokeswoman Sierra Scott. “It’s entirely volunteer-run and has grown a lot since it began in early 2023 under the leadership of Marcie Concepcion, who was named our 2025 Volunteer of the Year.

“Guests’ artwork was recently displayed at Mount Calvary Baptist Church and Truro Anglican Church. And it was also showcased in the community as part of an art show featuring work from our guests and volunteer instructors, plus artists from our partner churches.”

Concepcion has taught art for

more than 30 years in public, private and virtual online schools, museum programs, homeschool co-ops and even the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh. She currently teaches art at The Potter’s School, an online international school based in Springfield and is the lead art volunteer at The Lamb Center. She calls her time there “one of the most rewarding and the most humbling.”

“We make do with what we have, and sometimes use the conference room if it’s available, like for our monthly art workshop,” she said. “The life experiences of these guests mean they have much to process and, often, much to give that makes me think. We’re all just one or two big life experiences away from where many of these guests have found themselves. I’ve learned a few things in my time here:

1. To be seen is to heal. So many

of these artists feel unseen and avoided within the greater community. It’s also a place where we’re all on equal footing; this isn’t a top-down, educator-to-student experience. Sometimes, I just need to be present and listen to them.

2. Art speaks from the soul; creating feeds our souls. Even when we don’t know how to process what we’re going through, we still process it a little by creating. Afterward, many artists say they feel more positive about themselves.

3. Art often connects them to younger healthier versions of themselves. Many of the artists create and remember creating when they were children or in school.

4. One thing that’s been repeated to me multiple times is that the art room is a safe space. It’s often the only place our guests feel like they can make a ‘mistake’ and not be punished for it. They can also

relax and just be.

5. Art helps them be OK with not knowing what’ll happen. Much of art doesn’t go the way we plan. I constantly tell my high-school students that good art doesn’t come from talent, contrary to popular belief. You can have loads of talent and not do anything with it. Good art comes from good choices and creative problem solving. Creative problem solving needs to happen when our choices aren’t good ones. Life can be the same way.”

Agreeing, TLC Executive Director Tara Ruszkowski said, “There’s something really special about the TLC art room. It’s a place where we sit side-by-side as equals – guests, volunteers and staff – simply creating together. It brings so much light and color to The Lamb Center; but more importantly, it gives us a beautiful window into our guests’ hearts.”

‘Art Allows Ourselves to See People in Another Context’

Homeless artists have the potential to break stereotypes.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

On a recent Thursday, Chris Elenbaum – a vicar and Lamb Center staff member who oversees its art program – was with artist-in-residence Carlos in the art room there. Both spoke about the program’s importance while Carlos worked on a painting.

“Three years ago, I was a guest here and in a pretty dark place,”



From left, Carlos with Chris Elenbaum in The Lamb Center's art room.

said Carlos. “Then Marcie [Concepcion] started volunteering and teaching art here for the guests’ peace and relaxation. At first, it was once a week for two hours,

with just me. Now, it’s four days a week with 2-12 people.”

“It varies day by day, and everyone works at their own pace.” said Elenbaum. “A surprise is how



Carlos poses with some of his colorful artwork.

many new guests coming in have an incredible gift. For example, a person who came here today is a wonderful illustrator.”

In Carlos’s case, he was a film-

maker and writer. But, he said, “After a bad divorce, I was homeless for three years. When I came to The Lamb Center, its art program

SEE HOMELESS ARTISTS. PAGE 14
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NEWS

Briones Amaya Sentenced for Sexual Battery

Nearly two years have passed since a man sexually assaulted a woman after encountering her at the Fairfax Museum. But in late April, Oscar Briones Amaya, 46 of Alexandria, was sentenced to jail for his crime.

On July 3, 2024, around 4:28 p.m., local police responded to the Fairfax Museum at 10209 Main St. in Fairfax City after receiving a report of an abduction in progress.

Witnesses reported seeing an unknown male carrying an unconscious, adult woman into the nearby wooded area and said he'd fled the scene when confronted.

Officers searched the area but were unable to find him. The woman was taken to a nearby hospital for treatment of minor injuries. According to police, "Investigation revealed the victim and the suspect weren't known to each other and that the suspect had assaulted her."

Forensic evidence was collected from the scene and submitted to the Virginia Department of Forensic Sci-



Briones Amaya

ence for analysis. Detectives were then able to identify Briones Amaya as the suspect and obtained warrants for his arrest. But it wasn't until some 10 months later that they were able to take him into custody.

He was arrested May 15, 2025, and charged with abduction with intent to defile, and aggravated sexual battery of an incapacitated person. Briones Amaya was then held without bond in the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center, pending his court date that August.

However, his case was continued several times until April 28 of this year, when it was resolved in General District Court. At that time, the abduction offense was dropped, and his charge of aggravated sexual battery was reduced to sexual battery. Briones Amaya was then found guilty of that charge and sentenced to 12 months in jail, with six months suspended. He was also placed on 12 months' probation.

-BONNIE HOBBS

NEWS BRIEFS

Population Is Booming in Fairfax City

According to U.S. Census Bureau data released in May 2025, more people are moving to Fairfax City than ever before. Between 2020 and 2025, it saw the fastest population growth rate among Virginia cities and towns having at least 20,000 residents.

The data shows the City's population grew from 24,146 people in 2020 to 26,772 in 2025. Mainly due to the City dramatically increasing its stock of multifamily homes – apartments, condos and townhouses – the number of Fairfax residents rose by 2,626 or nearly 11 percent.

Also reflected in the data, Fairfax City logged its highest growth spurt in one year when 968 new residents moved there between

2023 and 2024.

And with more homes continuing to be available for purchase or rent, the trend continued between 2024 and 2025, when 734 additional people made the City their home.

Fairfax City Plans Juneteenth Celebration

Fairfax City's fourth annual Juneteenth celebration is moving indoors, this year, from Old Town Square to the Sherwood Center, 3740 Blenheim Blvd. in Fairfax. It's also changing from a daytime event to an evening one, slated for Friday, June 19, from 6-9 p.m.

It's free and open to all, and people are encouraged to bring their

friends and families for an enjoyable evening of community and culture. Following the opening ceremony, there'll be children's activities, vendors and a variety of live entertainment.

This year's national Juneteenth theme is "Juneteenth Brings Balance to America's Celebration of Freedom." Marion Dobbins, a historian and ethnographer, will speak about the importance of Juneteenth, and a "Legacy of Freedom" award will be presented to a person whose leadership, service and impact embody the enduring spirit and values of Juneteenth.

Live performances will be given by the Tobago Band, playing steel drums; Eric Kellum, a spoken-word poet; Ni Dembaya African Drumming and Dance Ensemble; and vocalist Bobby Lacey. Little Sweet House Bakery will provide refreshments, and there'll be crafts activities and a balloon artist for children.

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 2

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.

VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

Would you like to help a neighbor feel less lonely? Will you help someone

get much-needed groceries? Form new connections and make a meaningful difference. Older adults in the Annandale, Falls Church, and Alexandria regions are waiting for volunteer social visitors and grocery shoppers. If you can give the gift of your time, consider providing invaluable support to someone in your community. Learn more about Volunteer Solutions at bit.ly/FXVSVOL or email VolunteerSolutions@FairfaxCounty.gov or call 703-

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 7

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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 3

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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FROM PAGE 5

324-5406.

Support Groups

Parent Support Partners, a service of the Healthy Minds Fairfax initiative, are all parents who have received training and are qualified to offer education, support and assistance at no cost to families or caregivers. They provide reliable information that families can use in decision-making and are familiar with services and resources that can help families in distress. Visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/healthymindsfairfax or www.nami-northernvirginia.org/parent-peer-support.html.

The Shepherd's Center of Northern Virginia Caregivers' Support Group takes place the first and third Tuesdays of each month, 10-11:30 a.m. via Zoom. This group is for caregivers of family members with dementia. Meetings are gently facilitated. For more information and to get the Zoom link, contact Jack Tarr at jtarr5@verizon.net or 703-821-6838.

Haven of Northern Virginia Support Group. 703-941-7000, www.havenofnova.org or havenofnova@verizon.net.

Virginia Chronic Pain Support Group Meets from 1:30-3 p.m. the 2nd Wednesday of each month at Kaplan Center for Integrative Medicine, 6829 Elm St., Suite 300, McLean. Group leader, Jodi Brayton, LCSW. 703-532-4892.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Assistance League of Northern Virginia is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that feeds, clothes and provides reading assistance and books to children in need. Assistance League's programs touch the lives of hundreds of children in Fairfax and Prince William Counties and the City of Alexandria. There are many volunteer opportunities for community members to contribute to helping those in need. To learn more, email info@alnv.org, or visit www.alnv.org.

Volunteer Adult Mentors Needed. Help assist the Department of Family Services' BeFriend-A-Child mentoring program. The mentors provide opportunities for companionship, guidance and support to children who have been abused and neglected, or who are at risk of abuse and neglect. Contact Ibrahim Khalil at Ibrahim.khalil@fairfaxcounty.gov or 703-324-4547.

Operation Paws for Homes, a Virginia based 501(c)(3) organization seeks volunteers, especially to foster dogs. See www.ophrescue.org for information and all volunteer opportunities.

RSVP, a volunteer network for seniors seeking service opportunities in and around Fairfax County, Arlington County and the City of Alexandria, offers a wide array of opportunities for volunteers 55 and older. RSVP volunteers enjoy flexible schedules, free accident and liability insurance while serving, optional mileage and meal reimbursement and are invited to volunteer group projects and social gatherings. To sign up for an upcoming orientation, email Carly Hubicki at chubicki@volunteerfairfax.org or call RSVP at 703-403-5360. To learn more about RSVP, visit www.rsvpnova.org.

Shepherd's Center of McLean-Arlington-Falls Church, 1205 Dolley Madison Blvd., McLean continues to have an urgent need for new volunteers to help area senior citizens get to and from their medical and therapy appointments. To find out more about the Shepherd's Center and how you can volunteer to provide transportation and other services, call the Center at 703-506-2199 or e-mail the Center at info@scmafc.org. The Center's website is www.scmafc.org.

Master Gardener Training. The Fairfax County Master Gardener Association offers plant clinics, home turf training or speakers for homeowner's meetings. Fees vary. Visit fairfaxgardening.org or call MG Help Desk at 703-324-8556 for more.

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Fairfax City Honors the Fallen on Memorial Day



From left, Mac McCarl looks on while VFW's Johnny Restivo reads a section of names and others await their turn. Seated in front, from left, are J.D. Johnson and Eric Parkhurst.



PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

The joint American Legion and VFW Color Guard makes its entrance.



Army Lt. Gen. (ret) J.D. Johnson was the guest speaker.



Mac McCarl



Eric Parkhurst



Honoring the flags with salutes and hands over hearts.

They gave their lives to keep America free.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

With all the solemnity and respect an occasion like this deserves, Fairfax City paid homage last Monday, May 25, to American military members who died to keep their country free. And to ensure they're not forgotten, the names of the Fairfax County residents who perished were read aloud.

This annual, Memorial Day ceremony was held at American Legion Post 177 and hosted jointly by both it and VFW Post 8469. More than 100 people attended, and Post 8469 Commander Mac McCarl, the emcee, thanked everyone who came out on a rainy day as a sign of their "respect and reflection."

Dignitaries there included Virginia Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources David Bulova; Del. Gretchen Bulova (D-11th); Del. Dan Helmer (D-10th); Sen. Saddam Salim (D-37th); Fairfax City Mayor Catherine Read; City Councilmembers Anthony Amos,

Billy Bates, Stacy Hall, Stacey Hardy-Chandler, Rachel McQuillen and Tom Peterson; Fairfax City Police Chief Raúl Pedroso; Fairfax City Fire Dept. Battalion Chief Patrick McKay; Virginia State Police Capt. Greg Kincaid; and members of Masonic Lodge 57, plus the local Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution.

"We've all heard the line, 'All gave some; some gave all,'" said Post 177 Commander Eric Parkhurst. "Today we stop to remember those who gave all – and honor them. If it hadn't been for them, our country right now would look a lot different. We may not even be able to meet like we are right now. The rights and freedoms we have are from those that we honor and remember today."

Next came the Presentation of the Colors, the singing of the National Anthem by The Unmuted, and the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. Then VFW Post 8469 Chaplain Dan Allmacher gave the invocation, thanking God for "our comrades who have laid down their lives in the service of our country. May they rest in peace, and may light perpetually shine upon them."

"We also pay tribute to those who have served and those who are serving in our Armed Forces. We're grateful for their dedication, commitment and the countless selfless acts they perform so that we might continue to enjoy freedom. We thank You for

our great land, the wisdom of our founding fathers and for those who, down through the ages, fought the forces of evil."

Following this prayer was a moment of silence to remember those who died to preserve American freedom, those missing in action and those held as prisoners of war.

Then McCarl introduced the guest speaker, Lt. Gen. (ret.) John (J.D.) Johnson, who spent 35 years in the Army and served several combat tours in Iraq. He also commanded the Eighth Army in Korea and held many senior positions within the Defense Department, including Director of its Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization.

Johnson told the stories of some of the military personnel who died serving their country, mixed with history of Memorial Day and how America honors its dead. He also shared a story of the death of a young man in a brigade he commanded.

❖ Beginning with WWII, Johnson spoke about Army 1st Lt. Robert Mathias. On June 6, 1944, he was a 28-year-old platoon leader within the 82nd Airborne Division flying toward Normandy. He and his men were

part of a parachute infantry regiment, and he'd spent two years preparing his platoon to land there.

When they received the signal to jump, Mathias stood in the plane's door while flak from German 20mm anti-aircraft guns and machine-gun tracers filled the air. He was leading the jump and would be the first man out. But, said Johnson, "Flak exploded next to him and hot shrapnel penetrated his chest and blew him back inside the airplane

"Wounded, he could have sought first aid inside the aircraft and might possibly have made it back to England and emergency surgery at a hospital, if he'd stayed aboard. [Instead], he shouted, 'Follow me' and was the first man out the door. No one knows exactly when he died; but 30 minutes later – when his platoon members found him on the ground – he was still in his parachute and he was dead. Bob was the first American killed during the invasion of Europe in Normandy."

❖ Shifting to the Korean War, Johnson spoke about Master Sgt. William Schellinger.

SEE FAIRFAX CITY HONORS, PAGE 9



David Bulova at the podium while wife Gretchen waits to speak.



Flanked by Mac McCarl and J.D. Johnson, Del. Dan Helmer reads some names.



VFW's Aaron Coffin



Karen Cosgrove, junior vice commander of VFW Post 8469, rings the bell after each name.



Billy Bates

Fairfax City Honors the Fallen

FROM PAGE 8

On July 1, 1950, Lt. Col. Charles Smith led the 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 52nd Field Artillery Battalion. He and some 540 soldiers – including Schellinger – were airlifted from Camp Wood in Japan into Pusan, a port city at the southern tip of the Korean Peninsula.

“Smith’s unit moved north along Highway 1 and, on the morning of July 5, was the first Army unit to make contact with North Korean units near Osan, South Korea,” said Johnson. “The North Koreans were equipped with Russian T34 tanks, and Schellinger was leading his B Company, 21st Infantry soldiers along Highway 1 [when they encountered the North Koreans].

“The fighting was chaotic. The [American] soldiers were armed with WWII-era bazooka anti-tank weapons, which were largely ineffective against T34 tanks. Schellinger was among the first soldiers killed in that action and, therefore, one of the first killed during the Korean War. At the time of his death, he was 33.”

❖ Johnson’s next story was about Specialist 4 James T. “Tom” Davis, who lost his life in the Viet-

nam War. Just 25, he was an Army cryptologist, specializing in creating and breaking encrypted communications systems.

“On Dec. 22, 1961, he was leading a Vietnamese direction-finding team on a mission west of Saigon,” said Johnson. “The truck carrying Davis and the South Vietnamese soldiers was struck by a road mine, then immediately hit by a Viet Cong ambush with small-arms fire. He returned fire with his rifle before he was killed – the first Army soldier killed in ground combat in the Vietnam War. He had a wife and 13-month-old daughter.”

❖ Johnson then related an account of a combat loss that hit closer to home for him, since the soldier – PFC Joseph Mayek, 20 – was an Army infantryman in C Company that was part of a brigade Johnson commanded at the time. It was April 2003, and elements of that company, including Mayek, were part of a security detachment in the desert between Kuwait and Baghdad.

“On April 14, while in a security perimeter, Mayek was killed when a Bradley Fighting Vehicle discharged an armored piercing round, striking him in the chest,”

said Johnson. It turned out to be friendly fire, but Mayek’s loss was devastating and was the brigade’s first casualty. Johnson later met with Mayek’s family in what he described as a “very tough visit.”

❖ Lastly, Johnson spoke of the deaths of six Army Reserve members killed March 1 in Kuwait by an Iranian drone. “Their unit was providing logistics/sustainment support for Operation Epic Fury,” he said. “Their command post was struck by an attack drone [of] the kind often used by Russia against the Ukrainians.” Killed were Capt. Cody Khork, Sgt. 1st Class Noah Tietjens, Sgt. 1st Class Nicole Amor, Sgt. Declan Coady, Maj. Jeffrey O’Brien, and Chief Warrant Officer 3 Robert Marzan.

Then the VFW’s Hank Roeder played “Taps” before people attending the ceremony lined up to read the names of Fairfax County’s fallen.

They began with WWI and continued through today; and after each name was read, a bell was rung in that person’s honor. Said McCarl: “When we say their names, they’re remembered – not just as a name on a wall or some place – but as a real person.”

PUBLIC NOTICE

Frontier Drive Extension and Braided Ramps Fairfax County

Environmental Document Available for Review

This project, in partnership with Fairfax County and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), will extend Frontier Drive (Route 2677) from its southern terminus at Franconia-Springfield Parkway (Route 289) to Loisdale Road (Route 789). The project includes a four-lane divided roadway (combination of new construction and improvements to existing Springfield Center Drive) with a shared-use path on both sides; new braided ramps at the Frontier Drive/Franconia-Springfield Parkway interchange; a new intersection at Metro Access Road with Frontier Drive; and reconfigured sections of the Franconia-Springfield Metro station circulatory road and access to parking garage entrances (all existing access points will be maintained). This project will involve changes in limited access control.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and 23 CFR Part 771, an Environmental Assessment (EA) was approved by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and made available for review at a joint virtual location and design public hearing and NEPA public hearing held on July 12, 2022. In accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 and 36 CFR 800, information concerning the potential effects on properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) was included in the EA.

Pursuant to NEPA and 23 CFR 771.119(f), a Revised EA has been prepared to evaluate any design or regulatory changes since the public hearing, including updated information on the project’s potential effects on properties listed in or eligible for listing in the NRHP. The Revised EA is available for public review at <https://www.vdot.virginia.gov/FrontierDrive> or during business hours at VDOT’s Northern Virginia District Office, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030. Please call ahead at 703-259-2424 or TTY/TDD 711 to make an appointment with appropriate personnel.

Submit your written comments by July 6, 2026, to Mr. Steve Varner at the address above or by e-mail to Steven.Varner@VDOT.virginia.gov. Please reference “Frontier Drive Extension and Braided Ramps” in the subject line.

VDOT ensures non-discrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended. If you need more information or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, contact VDOT Civil Rights at 703-259-1775 or TTY/TDD 711.

State Project: 2677-029-204, C501, P101, R201
UPC: 106742
Federal: STP/F-5B01(030)



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Climbing center comes to historic Lorton's Liberty complex.

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME



Pauline de Montebello demonstrates use of hand and foot holds.



Boulder with sets under construction.

New SportRock Comes to Lorton

Bringing Olympic sport to former prison building.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

When people say they are “climbing the walls,” they usually aren’t expressing a good feeling. Not so for enthusiasts of the fast-growing sport of indoor rock climbing, which involves ascending artificial structures to release good exercise endorphins. Rock climbing became an

Olympic sport for the first time at the 2021 games in Tokyo. Now a new opportunity to experience the sport is coming to Lorton through a company called Sportrock.

The facility, which is expected to open in mid June, offers one of the three main disciplines within artificial rock climbing called bouldering. In this style there are short walls, and no use of ropes or harnesses. Instead, climbers ascend using handholds, with thick and springy padding located below the climbing courses, or sets, to cushion any falls. Bouldering differs from other styles, which use high walls with rope clips, called lead climbing; or top rope, where the rope is anchored above. Or speed climbing which emphasizes racing climbs up vertical walls.

Located in the historic Liberty complex, with its set ceiling height and large beautiful windows, the building was best suited to the bouldering format. Sportrock operates three other area gyms, which use climbing wall formats.

Bouldering has a base that slightly resembles the hull of a large ship. The surface features colored plastic holds in sets which can be changed, or reset, to create different courses and keep the experience fresh. Lorton director Pauline de Montebello, an experienced climber and course setter, says, “A team of 15 travels to all the gyms to build a creative effort into the climbs so climbers are never bored.” The sport offers a full-body workout, combining strength and endurance. There’s also a mental aspect, as

climbers solve the strategic puzzle of selecting the best hand and foot holds to reach their goal: either the marked top of the set, or the top of the high wall. It’s an activity for everyone, as even small children can tackle easier sets.

SportRock will have a full exercise gym located in the basement, offer mat pilates and yoga classes, and summer day camps; with sleep-overs available as group events. Expect an official grand opening in late June, a few weeks after the facility opening. Memberships and summer camp sign-ups on offer now. Monthly memberships and day passes are available, along with special event scheduling.

For more information, see www.sportrock.com.

The Bowl and Doily Spider

Inhabiting a mystery world hidden in plain sight.

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

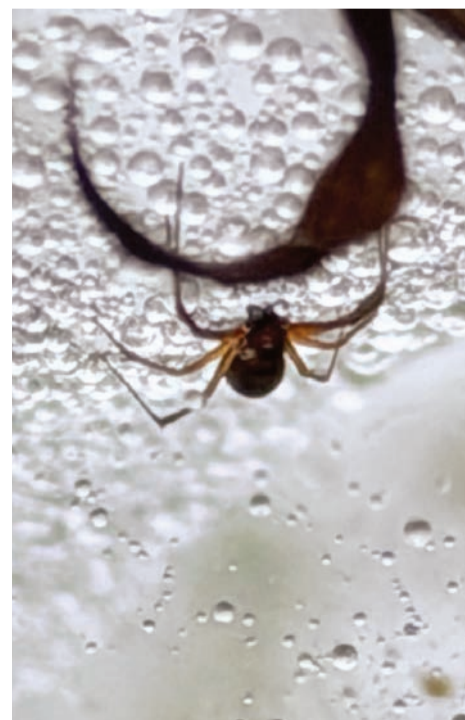
A winter snowfall reveals the magical appearance of footprints and the paths of woodland creatures, which without the snow, would have gone undetected. A spring or summer morning dew also opens a hidden world of spiders, in this case the habitation of the Bowl and Doily Spider (*Frontinella pyramitela*).

A common spider in the United States, one might often pass by their webs in weedy fields or in shrubs and bushes. But their lacy and intricate webs are not easily seen without dew or rain drops to give them away.

The tiny spider, just three or four millimeters in size, waits for its prey, gnats, mosquitos or small flies, within the protection of its web. The complex web, with an inverted round shape, the bowl, is suspended above a horizontal sheet web, the doily. The spider waits, clinging to the underside of the bowl, within the protection of the second tier web. When prey enters the web, the spider sprints to the spot, injecting venom to paralyze the prey. The venom is lethal to small insects, but is not dangerous to humans.

Examine these webs closely in the spring, and you will likely find only a single spider within; a female. By late summer, a male may join the female during the prolonged mating period. They create a co-habitation unusual among spiders, which are typically solitary. The males do not build webs themselves; relying on females for housing and fodder.

SEE INHABITING A MYSTERY, PAGE 11



The tiny spider hides between the two web layers awaiting its prey.



Small beautiful webs evoke fantasies of ghost ships or fairy wings traversing an open meadow.

PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

Virginia Embraces One Person, One Vote Compact

BY SUSAN LAUME
THE CONNECTION

One person, one vote. It's a principle most people in the United States deem fair and favor. It's the basis of determination of every election in the country. Except for U.S. President and Vice-President. Now, a state-based plan for electing the President by national popular vote has a chance of being in place for the 2028 general election.

For many in the United States, the current electoral college system is not well understood. The U.S. Constitution, Article II, Section 2, set up the system. Many believe the founding fathers also determined how the presidential electors would be selected. In fact, the Constitution leaves the method for their selection up to the states. And states have used a variety of methods to choose their official representatives to the college of electors or electoral college, and how to assign those votes. The Constitution states only that the number of electors will be equal to the number of Senate and House representatives to which the State is entitled in the Congress; and that no one holding an office of trust or profit in the U.S. may be an elector. Its use creates the possibility of electing candidates who lost the popular vote.

Winning Presidency Without Winning Popular Vote

A win under the current system requires capturing a majority of electoral college votes; not the majority of all votes cast, that is 270 electoral votes out of the 538. This has, in fact, allowed a president to take the office without winning the popular vote six times in American history: 1824, John Quincy Adams

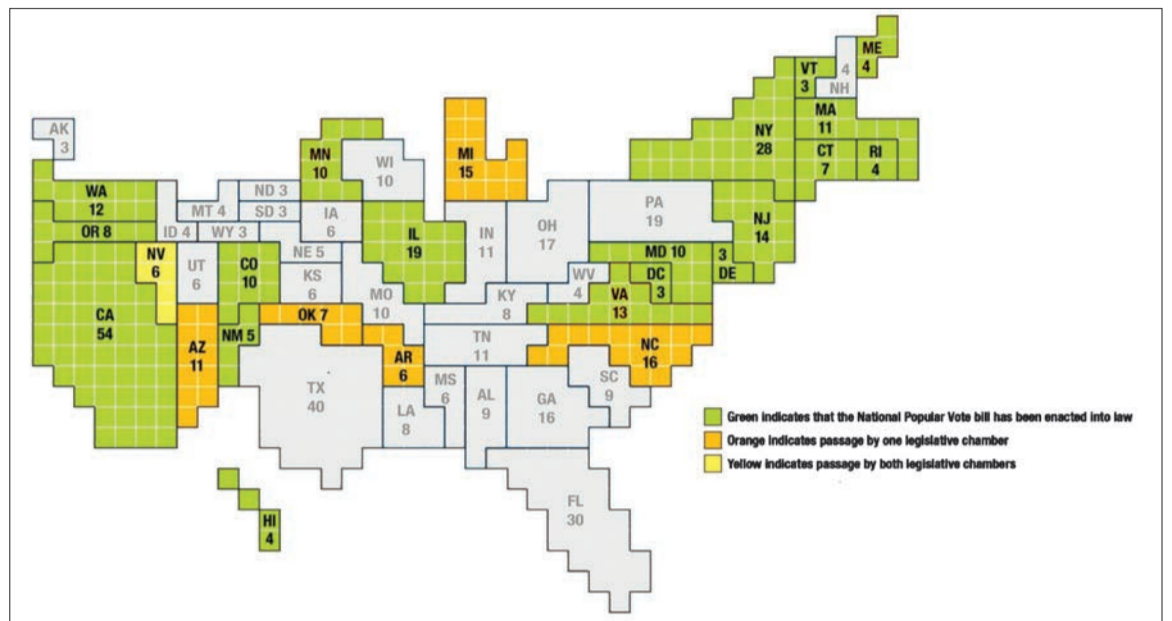
vs. Andrew Jackson; 1876, Rutherford B. Hayes vs. Samuel Jones Tilden; 1888, Benjamin Harrison vs. Stephen Grover Cleveland; 2000, George W. Bush vs. Al Gore; and 2016, Donald J. Trump vs. Hillary Clinton.

A survey by Pew Research Center conducted Aug. 26 to Sept. 2, 2024, found that "more than six-in-ten Americans (63%) would instead prefer to see the winner of the presidential election be the person who wins the most votes nationally." (<https://pewresearch.org>).

If the long and unsuccessful progression of the Constitutional amendment for equal rights (ERA) is an example, then a Constitutional amendment, to change from an electoral college to a popular vote determination, which the majority favor, seems nearly impossible.

National Popular Vote Interstate Compact

Instead of a Constitutional amendment, proponents have urged State legislatures to enter into a compact, called the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact. Those states within the Compact agree to elect the President by popular vote. This year, Virginia enacted language in its Code to join the Compact. Virginia Code now says, "Prior to the time set by law for the meeting and voting by the presidential electors, the chief election official of each member state shall determine the number of votes for each presidential slate ... in which votes have been cast in a statewide popular election and shall add such votes together to produce a "national popular vote total" for each presidential slate. The chief election official of each member state shall designate the presidential slate with the largest national popular vote total as the "national popular vote winner."



COURTESY NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE!

Compact prospects for 2028

Will the Compact be in effect for the 2028 Presidential election? Virginia Code states that use of the agreement takes effect "when states cumulatively possessing a majority of the electoral votes have enacted this agreement in substantially the same form and the enactment so by such states have taken effect in each state." Virginia was the 19th to join the Compact; 18 states, plus the District Of Columbia are included to date. Virginia's vote brings the total electoral votes to 222; that is 48 votes short of the 270 electoral college votes needed to win an election. Executive director of the National Popular Vote! campaign, Christopher Pearson, says, "Virginia provided a nice momentum and has impact for us as we work in other states. What was once dismissed as "pie in the sky" has become probable." Pearson points to a block of six states where there is already a strong base of support. Where

either only the governor needs to change, a couple of seats change party, or where there is already a strong base of support to join the Compact. He says, "We see a clear path where this could work and be in place for 2028."

Adding to the challenge, state legislatures convene on varying timeframes and for different lengths; making the time for action prior to the 2028 November elections with a Compact in place, shorter than it may seem. Pearson acknowledges that 2027 and the mid-terms is their window, as they wouldn't want to change the rules too close to the Presidential election.

He adds, "It was non-partisan, but has become more partisan." Conservative Republicans are less likely to support the change, according to Pew Research, although 46 percent of all Republicans favor popular vote.

What change would Virginians see if the Compact is in play for the

2028 elections? Pearson says Virginia and other states, considered "non-swing" states in past elections, would have a more powerful voice. The National Popular Vote! campaign notes, "In the 2024 election, 94 percent of the general election campaign events took place in just seven states, while 80 percent of the country, including voters in Virginia, sat on the sidelines." Campaigns and candidates that previously concentrated only on swing states would need to contend with the block of electoral votes held by the Compact, of which Virginia would be part. While no campaigns concentrated on Virginia during the 2024 cycle, being in a block of controlling electoral votes, "it becomes about the margins everywhere for more engagement of all voters. It means every voter will matter in every state, and it will guarantee the candidate with the most votes wins." For more information on the Compact, see www.nationalpopularvote.com

Inhabiting a Mystery World Hidden in Plain Sight

FROM PAGE 10

If you find a web, look closely for the tiny reddish brown spider with yellowish legs. Be sure to conduct your search in the dewy, early morning hours. As the morning sun dries the air, the webs will seem to disappear, like the sails of ghost ships, or the wings of meadow fairies, of lore. The webs will still be there, but hiding in plain sight.

The intricate web is two-tiered: a bowl and a doily.



PHOTOS BY SUSAN LAUME/THE CONNECTION

Morning dew reveals a mystery world of Bowl and Doily Spider webs in Laurel Hill Park.

ENTERTAINMENT

FAIRFAX COUNTY

FARMERS MARKETS RETURN

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

WEDNESDAYS

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

Oakmont: May 6-Oct. 28, 8 a.m.-noon. Oakmont Recreation Center, 3200 Jermantown Road
Wakefield: May 6-Oct. 28, 2-6 p.m. Wakefield Park, 8100 Braddock Road

THURSDAYS

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

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

FRIDAYS

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

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

SATURDAYS

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

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

SUNDAYS

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

NOW THRU 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.

SUMMER CONCERT & ENTERTAINMENT SERIES

Reston Community Center (RCC) transforms Reston's plazas and parks into community gathering places with its acclaimed Summer Concert & Entertainment Series, running from just before Memorial Day through September. All are invited to enjoy free live music and family-friendly entertainment set in some of Reston's most beloved outdoor spaces as we head into the heart of summer.

Wednesdays: Midweek Music on the Lake
Sunset Concerts | Schedule

Lake Anne Plaza
Wednesdays, June 24 – August 26
7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Fan favorites return to Lake Anne Plaza for Sunset Concerts on Wednesday evenings, from 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. so audiences can enjoy slightly cooler temperatures and golden hour views by the lake.

Thursdays: Fresh Finds at Halley Rise
Take a Break Concert Series | Schedule
Halley Rise (2025 Fulton Place, Reston)
Thursdays, June 25 – August 27
7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

In its third year, Take a Break Concert Series spotlights fresh talent in one of Reston's newest neighborhoods. This laid-back, open space offers plenty of room to dance or play and a new 7:30 p.m. start time lets the heat ease off a bit.

Fridays: Two Stops, One Great Night
Happy Hour with Darden & Friends | Schedule
Reston Town Square Park
Fridays, May 22 – June 26
5:30 p.m. – 6:45 p.m.

Ease into the evening with jazz at Happy Hour with Darden & Friends at Reston Town Square Park. A cornerstone of the D.C. jazz scene, vocalist and bandleader Darden Purcell curates this series, bringing her warm, swinging sensibility to a relaxed, after-work lineup of top regional talent.



The Vienna Town Summer on the Green Series begins June 5, 2026 in the Town of Vienna.



"Napoleon Dynamite" Live! A Conversation with Jon Heder, Efrén Ramirez and Jon Gries can be seen on Saturday, June 6, 2026 at the McLean Community Center.



The Pack Drumline can be seen Thursday, June 18, 2026 at the Summer Concert Series at McLean Central Park Amphitheatre.

Summerbration Fab Fridays | Schedule
Reston Station
Fridays, May 29 – September 25
7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Then head to Reston Station for the always packed Summerbration Fab Fridays, now

starting at 7:30 p.m. so you can stop by Happy Hour with Darden first. These high energy cover bands turn the plaza into a dance party with favorite hits all night long.
Saturdays: Playtime in the Park
Family Fun Entertainment Series | Schedule

Reston Town Square Park
Saturdays, July 4 – August 22
10:00 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

Saturday mornings bring the Family Fun Entertainment Series to Reston Town Square Park, a summer highlight with puppetry, magic, music, juggling and more! Kids can dance, giggle and get the wiggles out, with plenty of fun for adults too.

Sundays: Classics Under the Sky
Sunday Art in the Park with Shenandoah Conservatory | Schedule

Reston Town Square Park
Sundays, June 21 – August 30
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Spend Sunday evening at Sunday Art in the Park with Shenandoah Conservatory in Reston Town Square Park, where rising classical musicians offer concert quality performances that are friendly, fun and accessible to all ages.

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 Nickelodeon 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.

JUNETEENTH EVENTS ACROSS THE COUNTY

Celebrate Juneteenth through engaging programs and community events across Fairfax County parks that honor African American history, resilience, culture and freedom.

Featured Events

Grit and Grain – African American Millers
Colvin Run Mill, Saturday, June 13 | 11 a.m. to noon

African Americans' labor, experience and knowledge were crucial to 19th-century grist milling. Explore a historic mill as you discuss the contributions of African American millers in Fairfax County. This program links to the VA250 and Fairfax 250 commemoration. \$10 per person

Juneteenth Celebration at Sully Historic Site
Sully Historic Site, Friday, June 19 | 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Free Admission

Honor emancipation through storytelling, guided tours and interactive family activities. Explore the history of Sully Historic Site and reflect on the stories, resilience and contributions of African Americans in Fairfax County. Enjoy food and community celebration.

Exploring Our Historic Meeting House and Grounds

Frying Pan Farm Park, Saturday, June 20 | 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Free Admission

Explore the rich history of the park's Meeting House, one of the oldest religious structures in Fairfax County. Staff and volunteers will offer informal tours of the building and grounds, highlighting the history of African Americans in the area.

Family Skate and Dance Night: Juneteenth Celebration

Franconia Rec Center, Saturday, June 20 | 6 to 9 p.m.

Celebrate at this Juneteenth Celebration Family Skate and Dance Night. Wear red, black and green (yellow too) and enjoy a night skating and dancing with your friends, family and community. This event celebrates the resilience, community and possibilities of things to come. Take this opportunity to come out to this event as an early Father's Day celebration too! \$10 per person

JUNE 3-28

McLean Art Society's "Water Stories" Exhibition and June Members Show. At McLean Art Gallery, 6224B Old Dominion Drive, McLean. The McLean Art Gallery is pleased to feature "Water Stories," a new seasonal exhibition from the local nonprofit McLean Art Society. Members of the public are invited to enjoy 200 new works from 45 local artists. Included are paintings in oil, acrylic, pastel,

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watercolor and mixed media; drawings; photography; sculpture; and works in wood, glass, ceramics and jewelry. The Opening Reception is Friday, June 5 from 5-7 p.m. Meet the artists and enjoy live music, wine and light refreshments.

WEDNESDAYS, JUNE 3, 10, 17, 24

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.

JUNE 4 AND JUNE 10

Foreign Language Film: "Wings of Desire" (1987; German). Thur. June 4, 1 p.m. and Wed. June 10, 6:30 p.m. At The Alden Theatre at McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. All over Berlin, there are invisible, immortal angels who listen to the thoughts of the city's human inhabitants, comforting the distressed. Even though the city is densely populated, many of the people are isolated or estranged from their loved ones. One of the angels falls in love with a beautiful, lonely trapeze artist.

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 Ven-geance"—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: Tickets: \$25-\$55 general admission, \$15 students, educators, and military. Purchase online at www.1ststage.org or call 703-854-1856.

SUMMER ON THE GREEN SERIES

Music lovers of all ages are encouraged to grab a lawn chair or picnic blanket and head to the Vienna Town Green for free summer concerts at 6:30 p.m. beginning in June. The Vienna Town Green is located at 144 Maple Ave., E, Vienna. The Summer on the Green series features a wide range of musical genres, including rock, blues, country, reggae, jazz, and children's music performed by local and regional musical acts.

2026 Schedule

June 5: Sarah Swanner Band - Country, Folk
June 7: Vienna Community Band - Concert Band
June 17: Vienna Moms Inc. presents Rocknocer-ous - Kids Music
June 26: 2nd Sole - Classic Rock
July 10: The Cassaday Concoction - Rock, Blues, Soul, Reggae
July 24: Fat Chance - Rock
July 31: US Army Blues Swamp Romp - Jazz and Folk of Louisiana
Aug. 7: The Maiden Band - Classic Rock 70s to present
Aug. 14: US Navy Band Commodores - Jazz
For more information, visit www.viennava.gov/summeronthegreen.

JUNE 5-6

Big AI & The Jokers Concert. 5:30 p.m. At Reston Town Center, Reston. The Reston Town Center Association and BXP, in partnership with the Embassy of Latvia, present the two-night, exclusive U.S. Premiere of Big AI & The Jokers. Matt Niess and the Capitol Bones are opening. Both events will offer Sip & Stroll from participating restaurants. Big AI & The Jokers are European sensations, bringing their high-energy jive and jukebox sound to sold-out concert venues across the continent.

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,



The Lake Fairfax 250th Independence Day Celebration is Saturday, June 27, 2026 at Lake Fairfax Park.

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.

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.

SATURDAY/JUNE 6

IGNITE at OFC: FIFA World Cup Tournament. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. At The Old Firehouse Center, McLean. Are you the best FC26 player in McLean? Are you an athlete looking to expand how your game translates off the pitch mentally? The Old Firehouse and Mindstate Wellness Center are celebrating the beginning of the FIFA World Cup by testing your skills on the sticks and in the virtual lab. While immersing yourself in the beautiful game, enjoy some food off the grill and cold beverages.

SATURDAY/JUNE 6

"Napoleon Dynamite" Live! A Conversation with Jon Heder, Efrén Ramirez and Jon Gries. 7 p.m. At The Alden Theatre, McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. A \$60 VIP Meet and Greet begins at 5:30 p.m. (purchased separately), followed by a full screening of "Napoleon Dynamite"

and a lively, audience-participatory show with cast members Jon Heder, Jon Gries, and Efrén Ramirez.

SATURDAY/JUNE 6

Paws on the Plaza. 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. At Tysons Corner Center, McLean. Dogs, treats, splash zones and tail-wagging fun are coming to Tysons Corner Center! Join us for Paws on PenFed Plaza for a free community celebration dedicated to our furry best friends, sponsored by PenFed Credit Union.

Bring your pup and enjoy:
A dog park and splash pad
A foam party for dogs
Canine caricature art
The Automatic Treat Machine (ATM)
Giveaways and special surprises
Rescue organizations with adoptable dogs
Pet-focused vendors and local businesses
Participating vendors include Bark and Boarding, Dyson, Homeward Trails, Impact Over Money Companions, Isy's Ways, Paw Mind Body, Pet Wants, Puppy Pawtique, Sassy Woof, VCA SouthPaws, Wooftrap Animal Rescue, Woofie's Mobile Grooming and more to be announced.

JUNE 6-7

Living History Weekend. At Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station



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

Road in Fairfax Station. Step back in time and immerse yourself in the rich history of the 1860's during our Living History Days at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum on Saturday, June 6 from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday, June 7 from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. This engaging event will transport you to a bygone era, showcasing the traditions, skills, and culture of the time. Join us for a day filled with captivating demonstrations, interactive experiences, and lively performances that will delight visitors of all ages.

Event Highlights:

Drilling Demonstrations: Witness the precision and discipline of historical military drill as reenactors showcase the techniques used by soldiers in the 19th century.
Fife and Drum Corps: Enjoy the stirring sounds of our live Fife and Drum Corps.
Victorian Dancing Performances and Guest Lessons: Step onto the dance floor and participate in Victorian dancing performances.
Musket Firing Demonstrations: Feel the thrill as reenactors demonstrate the firing of muskets, gunpowder only, providing insights into the weaponry used during the period. Learn about the techniques and safety measures involved in handling these historical firearms.
Scrimmages: Experience the excitement of historical combat with scrimmages that showcase military tactics.
Demonstrations:
Drilling Demonstrations: Saturday and Sunday ~ 11 to 11:30
Fife and Drum Corp: Saturday ~ 11:30 to Noon, Sunday as available
Victorian Dance Performances and Lessons: Saturday ONLY ~ Noon to 1, 2 to 3, and 4 to 5
Musket Firing (gunpowder only) Saturday 1 to 2, Sunday 12:30 to 1:30
Scrimmages: Saturday 3 to 4, Sunday 2 to 3

Admission: Museum members and ages 4 and younger, 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.

JUNE 6 TO 28

The "CoLab Collage Artists." At Reston Art Gallery and Studios, 11400 Washington Plaza W #B, Lake Anne in Reston. The "CoLab Collage Artists" – Parinaz Bahadori, Jennifer Duncan, Rosemarie Forsythe, Doug Fuller, Julia Malakoff, Molly McCracken, Marthe McGrath, Jennifer Penick, and Doug Schulte – will present works highlighting the benefits of collage as a collaborative medium. This will be the third year in a row that the group of nine DMV area artists has exhibited at RAGS. The artists each incorporate collage techniques into their diverse individual styles, utilizing a wide-ranging assortment of paints, paper, fabrics, and found and handcrafted materials.

TUESDAY/JUNE 9

Blood Drive. 9 a.m.-3 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean.

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 15

Legals

Legals

**TAX NOTICE
CITY OF FAIRFAX
REAL ESTATE TAX PAYMENTS ARE DUE**

Real Estate tax bills have been mailed and are due
Monday, June 22, 2026

We continue to receive a high number of tax complaints that either no paper tax bill was received, or that mailed payments did not make it to city hall.

When paying, please consider using our 24-hour drop box located at 10455 Armstrong Street (at the front of City Hall, near the flag poles) in lieu of the USPS. (Checks only, no Cash)

LATE PAYMENT PENALTY

To avoid incurring a 10% late payment penalty and interest of 10% per annum, **payment in full must be received or postmarked by close-of-business on Monday, June 22, 2026**

Taxes may be paid online, by mail, or in-person to the City of Fairfax Treasurer's Office (City Hall, Suite 234) 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday (excluding holidays)

IMPORTANT

Even if you do not receive a physical bill, to avoid late payment penalties you are still responsible for requesting a copy and remitting payment by Monday, June 22, 2026

For Additional Information, please check the City website at www.FairfaxVA.gov or call (703) 385-7900

NEWS



PHOTOS BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

The cheerful mural that guests painted in The Lamb Center's garden.

Homeless Artists Have the Potential to Break Stereotypes.

FROM PAGE 4

and Bible studies opened up a nice opportunity for me. When you're homeless, art isn't a priority. But doing art here helped me a lot; we share, talk, learn and touch colors."

"It's also a place of pastoral care," added Elenbaum. "We have a lot of important conversations."

Carlos works in acrylics and is learning about charcoal drawing and 3D projects. "This isn't just an art class, it's an expression," he said. "It's a quiet, nice place with music and a different environment where you feel comfortable. Yesterday, a lady finished a painting she'd worked on for two months and said, 'Thank you.' She enjoyed the serenity of working here. She didn't say much, but I could tell how important it was to her."

As for him, Carlos said, "I have a home now, but I still come here to paint. I missed the coffee, the people, the hugs and the sense of community and family."

Indeed, said Elenbaum, "Often, our guests have lost people or have broken relation-

ships and come here for community. So part of our goal here is to bring people together, lift them up in their skills and abilities, and give them a sense of belonging."

For instance, said Carlos, "I was making a painting for Easter – lambs on a reddish background. And when I hung it up on the wall, people came by and made suggestions. So it was a community effort."

He and Elenbaum were also pleased that The Lamb Center guests were able to display some 40 pieces of art this year in a traveling exhibition at six local churches. Elenbaum said validation that others appreciate their work is meaningful to the artists, and it's also a way of bringing awareness of TLC to the churches and their members.

"This was a magic opportunity for me because people then invited me to attend their services, attend receptions afterward and talk about my artwork," said Carlos. "And the feedback has been amazing. They like my art, and I get to experience other communities and people."

SEE HOMELESS ARTISTS, PAGE 15



Some of the birdhouses in the trees outside. Unhoused guests were pleased to build homes for others.

200% OF BUSINESSES
using commuter benefits
to save money say it's a good idea

If this stat is surprising, just see what else free commuter support can do for your team!

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BY DRPT

11 out of 10 BOSSES
agree that commuter benefits
help attract new talent

This math may not add up, but offering your employees commuter benefits makes perfect sense.

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BY DRPT

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FROM PAGE 13

To register, visit redcrossblood.org and enter McLeanCC to schedule an appointment, and save up to 15 minutes by completing your day-of-appointment RapidPass pre-donation materials at RedCrossBlood.org/RapidPass.

THURSDAY/JUNE 11

Performing Arts Movie: "Orchestra of Exiles" (2012). 1 p.m. At The Alden Theatre, McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. "Orchestra of Exiles" is the suspenseful chronicle of how one man helped save Europe's premier Jewish musicians from obliteration by the Nazis during World War II. With commentary by Itzhak Perlman, Zubin Mehta, Pinchas Zukerman, Joshua Bell and others.

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.

JUNE 13 TO JULY 5

Revelations Art Exhibition. At Workhouse Arts Center, 9518 Workhouse Way, Building 10, Lorton. Internationally exhibited artist Fernando Osorio invites the public to experience Revelations, a compelling exhibition of abstract paintings on view from June 13 through July 5, 2026, at the Workhouse Arts Center. The exhibition presents 12 powerful works that explore the expressive language of color, form, texture, and contrast. Through dynamic compositions and an intuitive visual vocabulary, Osorio creates spaces for reflection, emotion, and spiritual resonance. His paintings move beyond representation, inviting viewers into a contemplative encounter with abstraction and the unseen dimensions of experience. Opening Reception: June 13, 2026 from 6:00-9:00 p.m.

SUNDAY/JUNE 14

Washington Metropolitan Accordion Society Concert. 4-6 p.m. At Sleepy Hollow United Methodist Church, 3435 Sleepy Hollow Road, Falls Church. The Washington Metropolitan



The Bennie and the Jets: Tribute to Elton John Concert is Thursday, June 25, 2026 at McLean Central Park Amphitheatre in McLean.

Accordion Society will hold a member concert and open mic. Free admission, all welcome.

SUNDAY/JUNE 14

Train Themed Game Day. 1-4 p.m. At Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road in Fairfax Station. Families and train enthusiasts can come together to enjoy a variety of engaging and interactive games, all centered around the theme of trains.

What to Expect: Interactive Games: Participate in a range of train-themed games suitable for all ages! Family-Friendly Activities: Enjoy a variety of activities designed for families, including scavenger hunts within the museum, train safety, and more! Museum Exhibition Access: Explore our exhibits on the history of railroads, locomotives,

and model trains.

Admission: Museum members and ages 4 and under, free; ages 5-12, \$4; ages 13 and older, \$6. First Responders, Teachers and Military, \$5; Seniors 65+, \$5. www.fairfax-station-railroad-museum.org, [Facebook.com/FFXSRR](https://www.facebook.com/FFXSRR), 703-425-9225.

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

Homeless Artists Have the Potential to Break Stereotypes

FROM PAGE 14

Actually, he said his life began taking a turn for the better, the first time he went to TLC. "After six months sleeping in my car, I came here and got food and did laundry," said Carlos. "This was comforting for me. This place is wonderful, but you have to learn to take advantage of the services it offers. I really learned a lot about life here – and how even people in darkness can be so kind and protective and happy to see each other.

"And now that I've learned to paint, I can put that emotion into my work. So, for me, coming here was a blessing; I'm reborn. I also recommend that people volunteer at The Lamb Center because they'll experience the realities of life here. Even elderly people coming to volunteer a few hours a week find themselves smiling."

Elenbaum noted, as well, that the art program isn't only about painting. "We have monthly workshops on printmaking, drawing spring flowers with pastels, jewelry making and working with different mediums," he said. "Staff, volunteers and guests all participate together."

"We also did a mural in our garden outside and used some Scripture as inspira-

tion," he continued. "Carlos provided the overall theme of 'God's Creation,' and over two months, we asked the guests for their ideas [to illustrate it]. We asked them to either draw or write about them. Carlos and Marcie incorporated their ideas into a concept drawing, and outlines were painted on the wall. Then the guests, plus Marcie and Carlos, painted it."

"The important part was the process and collaboration to create it," said Carlos. And now, guests and others at TLC can enjoy looking at this cheerful and colorful mural while relaxing in the garden.

Elenbaum pointed out that the guests built and painted birdhouses, too, and hung them in the trees by the mural. It meant a lot to them, he explained, because "even though they don't have homes, themselves, they could build a house for someone else."

The artists are branching out in other directions, as well. The art walk that was part of Fairfax City's Spotlight Community Day on May 3 enabled TLC to "bring our artwork into the broader, Fairfax community," said Elenbaum. "This work was done by wonderfully creative people who have something to offer their community but are often the ones who go unseen by its members."

In addition, they'll be painting a mural on

the side of Beacon Landing. A project of TLC and Wesley Housing, it'll provide 54 units of permanent supportive housing in a five-story building now being constructed near Fairfax Circle. Living there will be formerly homeless people who are elderly, disabled and particularly vulnerable.

Besides all the good that the building will do, Elenbaum is also looking forward to its mural coming to fruition. After all, he said, "Art is a way of cracking open our biases and allowing ourselves to see people in another context."

"The art program helps transform the guests' lives, too," added TLC spokeswoman Sierra Scott. "We believe that art is a powerful form of self-expression and spiritual practice. When we create, we're telling our story. We're making sense of who we were, who we are, and who we are becoming – within ourselves and within the community. This kind of expression is sacred and helps us define our place and identity in the world."

◆ ◆ ◆

The Lamb Center is a nonprofit. To donate art supplies or the money for them – or to arrange for a tour of the guests' artwork there – contact Chris Elenbaum at chriselenbaum@thelambcenter.org.

"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.



The animals are part of her Alebrije Skin collection, inspired by the Mexican "Alebrijes," guardian spirits that protect and are loaded with good vibes from Marisela herself.

PHOTOS BY MARISELA RUMBERG
Marisela Rumberg's art is colorful and meaningful.

Positivity and Spirituality is in the Air at the Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton

Local artist Marisela Rumberg created art called 'Zen Meditation' to absorb stress.

BY MIKE SALMON
CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

Art can be a medium of many messages, and this is true with Marisela Rumberg's most recent show called "Abstracts and Color," showing throughout June at the Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton.

One of her art pieces is called "Zen Meditation," and it absorbs stress that may be left over from her other job as a language interpreter for the Fairfax County Public School system.

"All my art has been helping me a lot," she said. Some of her work is in area hospitals to add some positivity to the patients too, especially the cancer sections.

"It does work, totally," Rumberg added.

It hasn't all been easy for Marisela Rumberg though, and getting to the point where she has studios in both the Workhouse in Lorton and the Torpedo Factory in Alexandria took some work. Rumberg started with a degree in international economics which led to a job with General Electric doing imports and exports for several years. In 2019 she started her own language interpreter company, specializing in Spanish to English or English to Spanish. This is valuable in the public school environment where she puts in about 10 hours a week, and also outside conferences and events where interpretation is needed.

But her work in the arts sphere reaps the most benefits for her, she said, and also for the viewer. Inside the exhibit, surrounded by

positivity is a "hug for the soul, to make you feel happy as I do when I make it."

The overall positive environment at the Workhouse is part of her success too. There are different artists presenting various art shows at the Workhouse throughout the year. U.S. Rep. James Walkinshaw (D-11) visited earlier this year for another event, and called the Workhouse "one of Northern Virginia's defining cultural institutions."

In April, Phoebe Twichell Peterson exhibited "Wavelength," consisting of paintings about the ocean that seeks commonality with the viewer through humor and imagination.

Another show in June is the glass art show called "Growing Glass: Instructor Honor Roll."

Workhouse Block Party

As communities across Virginia prepare to celebrate America's and Virginia's 250th anniversary, the Workhouse Arts Center prepares for one of Northern Virginia's summer community celebrations.

On Saturday, June 13, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., followed by Second Saturday festivities from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., the Workhouse Arts Center will host its free community-wide Workhouse Block Party at its historic campus in Lorton, Virginia.

The event combines arts, history, family entertainment, and local culture in one location. Visitors will enjoy artist demonstrations, behind-the-scenes access to *SpongeBob: The Musical*, free tours of the historic Lorton Prison Museum Cell Block, BOGO Mini Golf, art sales, summer art camp

information, live music, food vendors, raffles, and interactive activities for all ages.

The event also serves as a kickoff celebration leading into the Workhouse Arts Center's "Red, White & Boom" Fireworks Festival on June 27, commemorating the 250th anniversary of Virginia and America.

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

- ❖ Explore the Workhouse Campus: Discover the blend of history, arts and culture that makes the Workhouse Arts Center one of Northern Virginia's most vibrant destinations. Guests can enjoy discounted campus walking tours and learn about the fascinating history behind the historic property.

- ❖ Behind-the-Scenes Access to *SpongeBob: The Musical*

Step backstage for an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of *SpongeBob: The Musical*. Guests will get a special

look at the production process and even have the chance to take photos on stage.

- ❖ Meet Artists & Create Something New: Watch live demonstrations from Workhouse resident artists and participate in hands-on make-and-take creative activities throughout the campus. Visitors can explore studios, meet artists, and experience the creative process up close.

- ❖ Family Fun & Interactive Activities: Families can enjoy movement and gymnastics activities with Kid-nastics, musical experiences with Potomac Music, and a variety of engaging activities

Event Details:

- ❖ Workhouse Block Party

Saturday, June 13, 2026

3 p.m. – 6 p.m.

- ❖ Second Saturday Celebration

6 p.m. – 9 p.m.

Workhouse Arts Center

9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton, VA

22079

Smaller Lake Accotink Looks Like the Plan

The future of this Springfield attraction will be topic at upcoming meeting.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Looking toward the dam and Accotink Creek, the low water level has all the signs of a smaller lake.

BY MIKE SALMON
CONNECTION NEWSPAPERS

June 6 Open House

Kings Glen Elementary. 3-5 PM
5401 Danbury Forest Drive
Springfield, VA 22152

For years, the fate of Lake Accotink was explored on slide shows in the cafeteria of a few surrounding schools and it felt as if it was always the lake supporters vs. the county budget minders hashing things out. The sediments were taking their toll and to save the lake completely, it would take millions of dollars, so they are at a compromise for a smaller lake in Springfield. Not all are happy with that resolution.

The plan will be discussed on June 6, a day that will live in infamy in another cafeteria meeting at Kings Glen Elementary School.

"Save the lake as it is. It is a treasure among the suburban sprawl," said Mike Merrigan on the social media page.

At the upcoming open house meeting, attendees will learn about the dam assessment, receive updates on the study's progress, and share feedback. Following the meeting, information and materials shared at the open house will be posted on the public website. Supporters of the lake are hoping things will improve, so they want to gain momentum at the meeting. "Don't let an apathetic turn out lead decision-makers to assume Lake Accotink doesn't matter," read the event ad on social media.

Years ago the smaller lake compromise prevailed, and on Jan. 23, 2024, former Supervi-

sor Walkinshaw (D-Braddock) expressed the compromise. "This morning, the Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to support my motion to advance the smaller lake option at Lake Accotink Park. The smaller lake option was a key finding developed by the Task Force on the Future of Lake Accotink and meets the community's desire to preserve the lake sustainably," he wrote on social media back then.

In two years after that statement, things really haven't changed. Well, Walkinshaw is now Congressman.

The Smaller Lake Accotink Preservation Feasibility Study aimed to better understand the conditions within Accotink Creek and Lake Accotink, while exploring the best methods for preserving a 20-to-40-acre lake at a depth of 4-to-8 feet, said a statement on the "Smaller Lake Accotink," website.

For those not attending the meeting, there is a place on the website to share opinions, save-lakeaccotink.org:

Share Your Thoughts

We want to hear from you. What matters most to you about the future of Lake Accotink? Email editors@connectionnewspapers.com