

CONNECTION

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Celebrating 101st
Birthday

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PHOTO BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



Just part of the large crowd that attended Fairfax City's July 24 Rock the Block in Old Town Square.

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Local WWII Veteran Celebrates 101st Birthday

A model of courage, resilience and service to others.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Romuald “Rom” Lipinski has lived a remarkable life – from his 1925 birth in Poland to his teens in Siberia to fighting in the Polish Army in Italy during WWII. He later became a civil engineer, moved to America, married and raised a family, never stopped learning and passed on his knowledge to others.

And on July 25 – still sharp as a tack – he celebrated his 101st birthday with his children and friends at Brightview Senior Living in the Centreville area, where he’s a resident. The festivities included Polish pierogies, birthday cake and entertainment by the Wiślanie Polish Folk Song and Dance Ensemble that first performed for him on his 97th birthday.

Afterward, he and his daughters, Eva Lipinski and Yolanda Hipski, told The Connection about his life. (His son Adam had already left).

When war broke out in September 1939, both the Germans and Russians invaded Poland. Rom was 13 then and his future wife, Izabela, was 9, but they didn’t meet until both were adults. And in the early 1940s, the invaders deported both their families to Siberia.

Then in late 1944, the British government helped the Polish people leave there. Izabela went to a refugee camp in Africa for five years, and teenaged Rom joined the free Polish Army – a branch of the British Army. An infantryman, he and his unit went to Sicily and then up through Italy to Rome.

Along the way, Rom Lipinski, then 19, fought in the historic Battle of Monte Cassino – one of the toughest and most significant campaigns of World War II. Monte Cassino was an Italian monastery occupied by the Germans on a high, rugged mountain. The Allies fought them there from Jan. 17 to May 18, 1944, and the resulting Allied victory opened the road enabling them to reach Rome.

Rom was in the 12th Podolski Lancers Regiment from the 3rd Infantry Division, at Monte Cassino



Director of Assisted Living Belinda Griffin and Rom Lipinski enjoying the entertainment together.



Rom Lipinski in 1944 or '45.

from April 30 to May 23, 1944. Finally, on the morning of May 18, 1944, a patrol from this regiment planted its pennant and the Polish flag on the ruins of the Monte Cassino monastery. Before then, however, came fierce fighting.

“The first patrol at Monte Cassino was from my regiment,” said Rom. “We did reconnaissance to find out where the German artillery and soldiers were. Everybody was scared; I was thinking about survival. These memories never leave me. But I considered it my duty to serve. I still keep in touch with the Polish regimental office in Poland.”

After the war ended and he was discharged from the Army, he resettled in England, attending the University of London to continue his education. “That was a feat in itself because, first, he had to learn English,” said Eva Lipinski. “He speaks five languages – Italian, French, Russian, Polish and English.”

“He literally fought for his education,” added Hipski. “He went to ninth and 10th grade in high school; and when he was fighting in Italy, he would take the test to place out of one grade level to another while wearing his battlefield gear. His high school wasn’t as thorough as it should have been. And when he got to college, he had to fight extra hard to get in.

“Then he had to translate everything from English to Polish, understand those concepts in his mind and then translate them back from Polish to English. Later, he taught us that you go for your education. He’d say, ‘They can take everything away from you, but they can’t take your mind.’ And that’s what he conveyed to us and what I



This photo of Lipinski was taken a few years ago.

conveyed to my child.”

While he was in England, in November 1951, “There was a big rally in Manchester, England, and I went there to see my brother,” said Rom Lipinski. “We went to a dance, and I saw this beauty, and there was a spark between us. She came to our table and we hit it off, right away. After many years of

SEE LOCAL WWII VETERAN, PAGE 9



Rom Lipinski with daughters (from left) Eva Lipinski and Yolanda Hipski.



Both children and adults performed for the birthday celebration.



The Wiślanie Polish Folk Song and Dance Ensemble singing at Brightview.

Fairfax City Hopes Voters OK New Sales Tax

Proceeds would be for school repairs and renovations only.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

As part of the Nov. 3 election, Fairfax City voters will be asked whether to allow City Council to levy a 1-percent local sales tax to be used solely for school capital projects and transportation. During its July 14 meeting, Council approved a resolution requesting Fairfax County Circuit Court to order this referendum.

Approval of the resolution doesn't impose the tax; it simply authorizes City voters to decide whether Council should have the authority to levy this tax. And even though the Virginia General Assembly recently said the proceeds could be used for either schools or transportation, Council said it intends to use them only for the City's schools.

Before Councilmembers gave the go-ahead for the resolution, Chief Financial Officer J.C. Martinez presented them with some background on this issue. He said it's not a new initiative and that the City has been exploring the possibility of having a local, 1-percent sales tax for school capital projects since early 2024.

He noted that other jurisdictions throughout the commonwealth also sought authority from the General Assembly to allow local voters to consider this option. But since such authorization didn't exist, none of them could move forward with this matter.

Meanwhile, faced with aging schools in need of repair, Fairfax continued advancing its Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for them. Fairfax High's roof is reaching the end of its operational life and must be replaced sooner than later. And Fairfax City's elementary schools, Providence and Daniels Run, were built 70 and 71 years ago, respectively, and are greatly in need of major renovations.

The residents agreed and, in November 2024, they approved a \$220 million school bond referendum, with nearly 70 percent of City voters in favor of it. Accordingly, for FY 2026, Council provided funds for the initial design, planning and early construction activities for the projects at the three schools. In addition, in its FY 27 budget, it appropriated \$22 million toward them.

And now, a new state law can help further advance these major projects. Martinez then said that, effective July 1, the Virginia General Assembly amended the Virginia Code to authorize Planning District 8 localities – which includes the City of Fairfax and surrounding jurisdictions – to seek voter approval to levy a local general retail sales tax of up to 1 percent.

Revenue from this tax may just be used for capital projects related to the construction or renovation of schools and/or public



J.C. Martinez

transportation. If approved by City voters and subsequently implemented by Council, such a tax is estimated by City staff to yield some \$13.5 million annually.

"It's also worth noting that [this] tax differs from the City's real-estate tax in an important way," said Martinez. "Real-estate taxes are paid primarily by City property owners, while a local sales tax is paid by anyone making taxable purchases within the City – including residents, visitors, commuters and others.

"Consequently, the revenue generated from it reflects contributions from a broader group of individuals than [does] the City's property tax. It represents a potentially significant, dedicated funding source that could help finance eligible, long-term capital investments and reduce the extent to which those costs would otherwise rely on real-estate taxes or other general City revenues."

Clarifying further, City attorney Brian Lubkeman explained that being able to use this money for either public transportation or schools gives Fairfax more flexibility. For example, he said, some years it might need to use the tax proceeds for the schools, if its transportation projects are funded by other sources.

Councilmember Stacy Hall asked if anyone knew whether Fairfax County was going to act on this new, sales-tax possibility. City Mayor Catherine Read replied that, to her knowledge, she didn't know of any other jurisdiction that's "doing anything" with this matter, this year. She also noted that she was present when it was discussed "at length" at a recent meeting of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission.

"We've been talking for several years – and have been clear in all our public meetings – that the intention would be [to use] the 1 percent for our schools," said Read. "When Virginia added the ability to [also use it for] transportation, it was a surprise to the members of the [NVTAC] that they did that.



Catherine Read

So therefore, it's been received with mixed reactions."

Hall said she'd be open to having a stipulation that the City only use the tax money for schools for the first 10 years of its existence. She also asked if it could be used for road infrastructure, or only for public transportation, such as bus and rail service. Lubkeman said the enabling legislation indicates that, if it's used for transportation, it would be for mass transit.

Martinez then said that, besides the legal wording that'll be on the ballot, residents would also receive information from the City, before election day, stating in plain language "what they're being asked and what it would mean to them."

Should this tax be approved, he said the estimated \$13.5 million/year it's expected to generate would "almost completely cover the anticipated, annual debt-service payments of the \$220 million school-bond referendum." Furthermore, said Martinez, the City's financial advisor, Davenport & Co., projected that, "If the sales tax grew over the next 10-12 years, we'd get very close to [reaping] an estimated \$17 million/year from it."

Councilmember Rachel McQuillen asked what coordination about this tax has occurred between the City and its schools. Martinez replied that there have already

been multiple discussions about it with the schools' superintendent and School Board chair. McQuillen then said she believes it's important to trust the voters to decide on this measure and she plans to support it.

Read reiterated that, while it was surprising that the transportation option was only added to Planning District 8, City leaders have told residents for years that they'd only use revenue from this sales tax toward schools. So, she said, "I don't think our residents are going to be confused about this referendum, even if it says 'transportation' on it. We've been very clear about our intention for this, and I think consistency makes an enormous difference. I have faith."

Councilmember Stacey Hardy-Chandler then made a motion to adopt the resolution, and Councilmember Tom Peterson seconded it. He also asked what the financial implications to the City would be if voters rejected the new sales tax.

In that case, said Martinez, "An increase of 20-21 cents on the real-estate tax rate would be needed to pay for the schools' capital improvements. But this 1-percent sales tax would offset that – and anyone purchasing anything in the City would be paying a portion of it."

Councilmembers then voted unanimously to pass the resolution.

Britepaths Collecting Items for Families in Need

Fairfax-based nonprofit Britepaths is in need of several items for the clients it serves. They are: Bar soap and body wash, baby wipes, diapers in sizes 6 and 7, all sizes of Pull-Ups, toilet paper, sanitary pads in various sizes and thicknesses, deodorant, toothpaste

and toothbrushes, shampoo, conditioner, small sizes of laundry detergent, dryer sheets, all-purpose cleaning spray, paper towels, and dog food and cat food.

All donated items may be brought to Britepaths, Monday-Friday, at 3959 Pendler Drive, Suite 200, in Fairfax.

Calendar Overhaul, Screen-Time Limits, New Boundaries

FCPS reshapes the upcoming school year.

By MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

When students return to Fairfax County Public Schools classrooms on Aug. 24, daily life will look markedly different, from fewer days off and physical math textbooks to strict screen-time limits and new bus-tracking smart cards.

Before heading into its annual late-summer recess, the Fairfax County School Board finalized a series of major decisions. The sweeping policy updates span restructured calendar, technology guardrails, attendance boundary, a brand-new high school, and a push for regional funding — actions that collectively reshape daily routines for more than 180,000 students across the division.

Calendar Reset Restores 28 Full School Weeks

Under the 2026-27 academic schedule approved in an 8-4 vote in April, total days off across the 38-week school year will drop from a record 40 days down to 33.

The reset restores 28 full, five-day school weeks — nearly double the 15 full weeks offered during the 2025-26 school year. Elementary early-release days are capped at eight per year (down from 12), and Veterans Day returns as a standard instructional day.

The decision addresses widespread complaints that a fragmented schedule created severe childcare burdens for working families. Official directives instruct the superintendent to maintain Veterans Day instruction in future years alongside a dedicated “Veterans Day observance curriculum.”

New Tech Directives, Physical Math Books, Bus IDs

Formally adopted July 16 following parent pushback over screen time and generative artificial intelligence, the board passed a package of seven technology directives.

Jennifer Cheng is a leader in



SCREEN CAPTURE FCPS

The Fairfax County School Board approved seven motions related to AI, among them that across all grade levels, laptops and tablets must be stored away when not in active instructional use.

FCPS Parents for Intentional Tech, a parent and community group advocating for more intentional use of educational technology. She told The Connection the group formed “in response to ... ChatGPT being offered to the teachers in the classroom” and “very little community engagement from the district about how they were ... integrating artificial intelligence.”

Starting this fall, FCPS-issued laptops and tablets are prohibited for pre-K and kindergarten students, excluding individuals with IEP or 504 accommodations. For the remaining elementary grades, staff must establish an opt-out process by August so parents can decline take-home devices. Across all grades, devices must be stored

The board also ordered a divisionwide generative AI inventory, launched whitelist firewall pilots, initiated a review of YouTube access, and expanded digital wellness instruction.

“I support this resolution because it sends a clear, powerful message to our community,” said Springfield District Board Member Sandy Anderson. “By passing it, we show a unified, consensus voice that this board is taking the future of technology in our schools with the utmost seriousness.”

To bolster student safety, FCPS is introducing mandatory RFID-enabled student identification cards for all school bus riders beginning Aug. 24. Students will tap their card upon boarding and exiting



FILE PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Students across Fairfax County Public Schools’ 223 campuses return Aug. 24 under an updated calendar that reduces total days off from 40 to 33, restoring 28 full school weeks. The first full day of school is Aug. 24, with the last day of regular classes June 16.

imously finalized attendance boundaries, phased enrollment, and a transportation plan for the new Skyview High School in Herndon. The decision adjusts feeder patterns across five western pyramids, impacting 2,544 students (420 middle schoolers and 2,124 high schoolers).

As the division’s first new high school in two decades, Skyview will relieve severe regional overcrowding. Capacity data showed surrounding facilities, including Chantilly High School, operating at 110% to 112% capacity prior to the plan’s approval.

Funding Debates and Infrastructure Backlogs

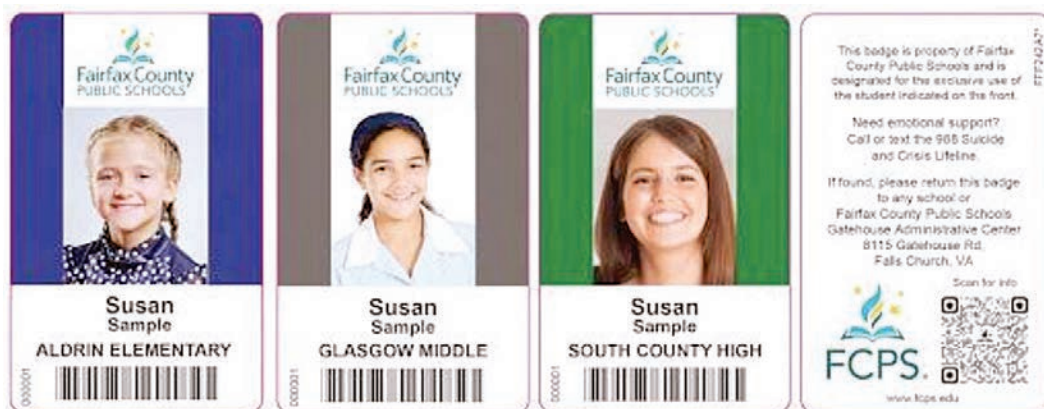
On July 9, the board unanimously requested that the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors evaluate placing a 1% local option sales tax referendum on an upcoming ballot.

School Board Member Mateo Dunne cited an estimated \$400 million deferred maintenance backlog growing by up to 10% annually, warning it could soon reach \$1 billion if unaddressed. Dunne emphasized that delaying infrastructure repairs increases costs long-term as construction prices rise and renovation cycles stretch out.

However, Board of Supervisors members Walter Alcorn and Jimmy Bierman noted in regional discussions that any local tax initiative requires significant coordination across Northern Virginia. Signaling that they will not place the referendum on the November 2026 ballot, supervisor members cited past failed referendums and a lack of regional momentum.

While funding debates carry into future budget cycles, the immediate impacts of the school board’s summer votes will take effect the moment buses roll out and classroom doors open this August.

For additional context on how the new boundary shifts work in western Fairfax County, check out the video guide FCPS Skyview Boundary Map Timeline Explained.



SCREEN CAPTURE FCPS

Beginning with the 2026–2027 school year, every FCPS student will receive a student identification (ID) card as part of a division-wide effort to modernize school transportation, improve communication with families, and strengthen student safety while traveling to and from school.

away when not in active instructional use.

Alongside screen-time limits, FCPS officially approved the adoption of physical, print mathematics textbooks for grades six through 12. The move marks a deliberate shift away from purely digital instruction, ensuring students have tactile learning materials during core classes.

the bus, giving the FCPS Office of Transportation real-time passenger counts.

Later this fall, the division will launch a mobile app offering parents live GPS location tracking and boarding notifications.

Skyview High School Boundaries Finalized

On July 16, the board unan-

SENIOR LIVING

Modern Renovations for a New Era of Healthcare

Fairfax Rehabilitation and Nursing Center shows off changes.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax Rehabilitation and Nursing Center has undergone extensive renovations. And on June 23, it opened its doors to its partners and the community to see what's new at this facility at 10701 Main St. in Fairfax.

Starting things off was Jennifer Rose, executive director of the Central Fairfax Chamber of Commerce (CFCC). "We're very happy to be here to cut the ribbon on the renovations of this absolutely stunning facility," she said. "I haven't been inside here in probably 10 or 12 years, and it's a night-and-day difference – just gorgeous."

"Fairfax Rehabilitation is an iconic City business here in Fairfax; it's been here for a very long time. They employ a lot of wonderful people and help keep our economy going 'round and 'round – and for that, we are grateful."

Speaking next was Vice President of Operations Cody Swartz, who's been with Fairfax Rehabilitation for 4-1/2 years. "We've been through a lot in those years, but we're excited to have our renovations complete," he said. "They were just finished, roughly a month ago, and we had some weather-related hiccups along the way."

"But we'd like to thank you all for coming," continued Swartz. "First, I want to thank the staff and residents who've been very accommodating while we've been doing this renovation. There's been a lot of work, a lot of moving of patients – their families have been very understanding. So it's been a wonderful experience."

"We've also had the pleasure of working with some wonderful contractors – our local marketing folks, our Chamber – and as of this year, we've been around for 50 years in this community. So we look forward to 50 more years, and I hope you all are enjoying your time here."

Then Rose acknowledged some local dignitaries in attendance, including Fairfax City Councilmember Anthony Amos and Vikram Iyer from U.S. Senator Mark Warner's office. There, as well, among the more than 100 visitors was Fairfax Rehabilitation's Interim Administrator Cleo Hall. Proud of all the work that was done, he said, "We want to show our stakeholders in the community that we've invested well in this space."

The center believes in the importance of advancing quality, healthcare services and supporting the needs of older adults and other individuals requiring specialized rehabilitation and nursing care. It provides post-acute, rehabilitation and long-term care services to residents of Fairfax and surrounding communities.

Fairfax Rehabilitation also has several valued partners that help it improve the health and wellbeing of the people it serves. And after the ribbon-cutting, attendees were able



About to cut the ribbon are (from left) CFCC's James Raeford; Kurtis Jones, Divisional Vice President of Operations, Medical Facilities of America; Cody Swartz; Medical Director Amr Behiri; Regional Director of Census Development Jill Tippet; and Jennifer Rose.



Posing at the third-floor nurses' station are (from left) Saraswati Mahatra, LPN unit manager; April Ranger, social services discharge planner; Lesar Luke, social services assistant; Princess Frimpong, social services assistant; and Nicole Nkamshire, activities director.



Jill Tippet shows a revamped patient room to Vikram Iyer.

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

to meet the leadership team and staff and take guided tours of the 200-bed, four-floor building.

All the patient rooms were renovated, as were the common areas and nurses' stations. Swartz also noted that this facility contains its own in-house, dialysis unit "so patients don't have to leave or go elsewhere for it."

The renovations cost some \$1.5 million. Work began in October 2025 and was finished in May. "The building needed modernization; it was time for a refresh," said Swartz. He said this skilled-nursing facility currently has about 194 patients and at least 100 staff members.

"Nurse practitioners are here, Monday-Saturday, and we have doctors who round here regularly," said Swartz. "We also offer 24/7 coverage via telehealth physicians."

Now that the work is all done, he said, "It's very rewarding. We've been anticipating this for a long time. And it makes us happy to see our vision come to life and to be able to provide the next level of care for our patients and the community."

Natasha Boyd, a liaison between this facility and Cherrydale Health & Rehabilitation Center in Arlington, discussed some of the upgrades to the patient rooms. "They got new floors and walls, brighter lighting, new plumbing, plus new beds, linens and wall art," she said.

"The rooms also received upgraded Tapestry health monitors. They monitor the patients' daily vitals – weight, heartbeats, blood pressure. And any change of condition is automatically sent to the clinical team to be addressed as soon as possible."

Pleased with what he saw, Councilman Amos said afterward, "This center is a staple City business and highlights the importance of clinical care for our older adults. With in-house dialysis, a cardiac-care program and physical therapy, this facility goes above and beyond."



Natasha Boyd stands beneath a Tapestry health monitor and holds a card given to patients, thanking them for choosing Fairfax Rehab.

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NEWS

In the Scrum, Yoga Poses Come in Handy

Local yoga instructor prepares Army team for inter-service competition.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE CONNECTION

In early August, local yoga instructor Melanie Latrash intermixed the downward dog with the rugby scrum on the mat, training for an upcoming rugby competition.

She was in her element. "I had the pleasure of teaching a yoga class for these amazing women who are currently training for the All-American Army Women's Rugby Team at Fort Belvoir this past weekend," she said via social media. The rugby team was getting ready for the Armed Forces Championship on Aug. 1-2 at the Naval



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Yoga instructor Melanie Latrash, center, surrounded by the Army Women's Rugby Team at Fort Belvoir.

Academy in Annapolis, MD.

Yoga teacher Melanie Latrash lives in the Kingstowne area and holds regular yoga classes in the Metropolitan School for Arts in

Kingstowne.

Through the years, she has worked with the soldiers at Fort Belvoir, teaching yoga on several levels there as well.

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The U.S. Army Band, Downrange, was a huge hit at Rock the Block.



PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Just part of the large crowd that attended, including people sitting on the grass surrounding Old Town Square.



The band had the crowd on its feet, singing and dancing to "Sweet Child O' Mine" by Guns N' Roses.



Sgt. 1st Class George Waltemire playing electric guitar on U2's "Where the Streets Have No Name."



From left, Staff Sgt. Maya Rodriguez, Sgt. 1st Class Erik Tue and Sgt. Maj. Chad Leader sing Journey's "Separate Ways."



Sgt. 1st Class Erik Tue singing a soulful "I Lose Control" by Teddy Swims.



Community members chatting as an old-fashioned lamp turns on and sunset begins.

Rotary Club of Fairfax Awards Scholarships



Winners of the Paul J. Brown Community Service Award, Alexander Bubb and Madison Malloy flank Paula Brown Kelley. This award was named in honor of her father.

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Each year, the Rotary Club of Fairfax awards college scholarships to Fairfax High School students. The scholarships, which vary in size from \$1,000 to \$5,000, are awarded to graduating seniors who show exemplary effort, academic achievement in high school and financial need and plan to attend a Virginia college.

At the club's June 8 meeting, it awarded Fairfax Rotary Memorial Scholarships to Samuel Kim and Fiona Rice. Corrine Armstrong received the Setty Family Scholarship (in honor of Rotarian Bogram Setty), and Reuben Souza and

Manar Smyta each received Pathways Scholarships to Northern Virginia Community College.

In addition, two community-service awards named for Paul J. Brown – an active member of the club until his death in 2005 – were presented to two students who contributed many service hours to the Fairfax community. Receiving the Paul J. Brown Community Service Award were Alexander Bubb and Madison Malloy.

Then Fairfax High student Isabelle An – who entered the annual Rotary speech contest this spring – gave her speech to the meeting attendees. After competing against students in her own school, she vied against several other high-school students from other Rotary



PHOTOS COURTESY OF PAULA BROWN KELLEY

Back row, from left, Reuben Souza, Dustin Wright, Alexander Bubb and Samuel Kim. Front row, from right, Fiona Rice, Georgiana Aye, Isabelle An, Madison Malloy, Corrine Armstrong, Fairfax Rotarian Barry Gordon, and Fairfax Rotary President Nathan Desnoyers. (Not pictured: Manar Smyta).

clubs in a Districtwide contest.

She was voted the top speaker in Rotary District 7610 (consisting of 53 Rotary clubs) and won a cash prize. The topic of her speech was "Unite for Good," which is the current Rotary theme.

Fairfax City School Superintendent Dustin Wright and Fairfax High Principal Georgina Aye were there, as well. At that time, Wright was inducted as a new member of

the Rotary club. He also announced that Aye, already a Fairfax Rotarian, was recently named the Washington Post's 2026 Principal of the Year.

The Rotary Club of Fairfax, founded in the City of Fairfax in 1931, is one of more than 32,000 Rotary clubs worldwide in more than 200 countries. Meetings at held Mondays, at 12:15 p.m., at Kelley's Oyster House and Bar, 4069 Chain Bridge Road in Fairfax

City. For more information about the Rotary Club of Fairfax, go to www.fairfaxrotary.org.

Rotary International is an organization of business and professional people united worldwide in providing humanitarian service, encouraging high ethical standards in all vocations, and helping build goodwill and peace in the world. Rotary International's motto is "Service above Self."

Local WWII Veteran Celebrates 101st Birthday

FROM PAGE 3

marriage, she told me that, after our second meeting, she went home and started writing, 'Izabela Lipinski.'

However, her family had already applied for visas to move to America – which they did, two months later, in January 1952. Many letters and a long-distance courtship followed; and later that year, Izabela returned to England to marry him. Then in December 1953, they moved to America, settling in Perth Amboy, N.J., where Rom continued his studies. In 1961, he received a master's degree from Newark College of Engineering and became a civil engineer.

"My first job was as a draftsman and designer for a company," he said. "It paid \$56/week." In 1965, he and his family moved to Annapolis, and he became a civil

engineer for the U.S. Navy before working for the federal government. He was a civil engineer for the Atomic Energy Commission, later renamed the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

"He wrote the building code, still used today, for nuclear power plants throughout the U.S.," said Eva Lipinski. "Then in 1989, he left to work in a similar field in the private sector until 1997, when he retired at age 72."

But instead of just relaxing, Rom continued his pattern of being a lifelong learner, taking college classes wherever he lived. He also made it a point to share his knowledge with others.

"After retiring, he took math and philosophy classes at George Mason University," said Hipski. "He also tutored high-school and college students in math. And during his entire career in this area, he tutored students at UVA and NOVA

for their professional-engineering licensing exams. He did this until he was 90."

"He was mowing his lawn until 1993," added Eva Lipinski. "My mother used to yell at him to stop, but he said it was good exercise for him." Izabela died in 2019 at age 90, after 68 years of marriage. Besides their three children, they have six grandchildren, one great grandchild and another on the way.

Growing up, recalled Hipski, "We used to go sailing in our sloop at Occoquan Regional Park and play on a little train there. We also went boating in Burke Lake Park and skiing in Vermont."

"Our dad was very principled and told us to stand up for justice and to fight and persevere in what we believe in. I also convey this to my son. My brother, sister and I were given gifts of freedom of education from our parents and said

we needed to share them with our children and the world."

Pleased with her father's 101st birthday celebration, Hipski said it was planned by the Polish Embassy. "He's always been active in the Polish community and was invited to embassy events, through the years," she explained. "Poland considered him a hero because of his activities at Monte Cassino."

"In 2025, he received a gold medal from the Polish Army's defense minister. And he also got the White Cross from the Polish government." The Polish White Cross symbolizes suffering, an unblemished past and hope for the future. Both the emblem and organization were established to support Polish soldiers abroad and encourage their physical and spiritual wellbeing.

After his birthday festivities, Rom spoke about his life now at Brightview. "I have my good and

bad moments but, overall, I feel good," he said. When asked to what he attributes his many years, Eva Lipinski said his sister lived until 102, so there's longevity in his family. He also does his best to keep his mind and body as fit as possible.

"I watch World War II movies on my iPad and exercise two or three times a day with 2-pound dumbbells," said Rom. "I also exercise my legs, stand up and down and wiggle my feet. I read a lot when my vision was better." He also enjoys listening to classical music and, once a week, a high-school student comes in and plays chess with him.

Appreciative of his birthday party, he said, "It was a nice celebration." He was also deeply touched by the musical performers. "Many of the songs I remembered from my childhood in Poland, and I was really moved."

Drowning Is Silent. Prevention Is Not.

Drowning prevention starts before a child ever enters the water.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

The radio crackles before the ambulance reaches the emergency department.

A child has been pulled from the water.

Within moments, the room begins to transform. Nurses gather equipment. A respiratory therapist prepares oxygen. Blood tubes are laid out.

An emergency physician reviews the information coming from paramedics: a child, water, CPR already in progress.

Everyone knows their role.

What they don't know is whether the next few minutes will end with a child going home or a family leaving the hospital forever changed.

For Dr. Miriam Fischer, an emergency physician with MedStar Health, these are the moments she wishes families never experience.

"I wish I'd put a life jacket on them."

"I wish I hadn't looked away."

"I wish I'd put up barriers."

Those are the words she hears

from parents after a drowning.

"When parents feel like they could have done something differently to prevent this, it's very, very sad," said Fischer who previously worked in the Emergency Department at Inova Fairfax Hospital. "You never want a parent to have that regret."

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), drowning is the leading cause of death for children ages 1 to 4, and the second leading cause of unintentional injury death for children ages 5 to 14 in the United States.

Yet Fischer says one of the greatest dangers is that many parents misunderstand what drowning looks like.

"People envision somebody flopping their arms and screaming for help," she said. "That's not how it usually happens."

Instead, drowning is often silent. "It can take under 30 seconds."

That misconception can be deadly.

Fischer said vacations can also create a false sense of security. At backyard pools, neighborhood gatherings and family vacations, adults often assume someone else

is watching.

"Vacation mode can be wonderful, but also dangerous because everybody's trying to relax," she said. "If parents are sitting on the beach reading a book, having a drink and not watching, that's when we get into trouble."

"You really need to designate a person assigned to watch each child at every moment" Fischer said.

Swimming skills can reduce risk, but they do not eliminate it.

"Kids get tired," she said. "Even strong swimmers can drown."

Fischer said life jackets are one of the simplest and most effective ways to prevent tragedies on the water.

"I wear one when we go boating because I don't want to have to swim all the way ashore if we go overboard," she said. "I also want to set an example for my kids. It is easy to get caught up in currents or not realize how far it is to swim back to shore. There's no shame in putting on a life jacket if you're worried. You can wear one and still have fun."

Virginia law requires one properly fitted, U.S. Coast Guard-ap-

Before Your Family Gets in the Water

- ❖ Designate one adult as the water watcher
- ❖ Put phones away during water supervision
- ❖ Pack properly fitted Coast Guard approved life jackets
- ❖ Know where emergency equipment is located
- ❖ Learn CPR
- ❖ Check pool barriers and gates
- ❖ Identify whether a beach has lifeguards

proved life jacket for every person aboard a boat, kayak, canoe, paddleboard or personal watercraft.

Prevention, Fischer says, is built one small decision at a time. And when a child does struggle in the water, what happens before the ambulance arrives can change everything.

"The one thing I'd want to stress about drowning is that immediate CPR makes a huge impact and really saves lives," Fischer said.

For Arlington CPR instructor Damian Cook, one of the biggest barriers is not ability. It is fear.

"People worry they're going to do something wrong," Cook said. "But the worst thing you can do is nothing."

In CPR classes, parents and care-

givers practice compressions and learn how to respond during the moments when waiting is not an option.

Those skills matter because drowning is not always the end of the story.

"If you see a child struggling in the water, pull them out and start CPR," Fischer said. "You can save their life."

Inside the emergency department, Fischer and her team are prepared for the moments after prevention has failed.

Outside the hospital, Fischer said she hopes her work begins long before an ambulance is ever needed.

"My goal as an ER doctor is to make sure parents never have to experience this."

Non-fatal Officer Shooting Incident

Suspect Charged with Attempted Disarming of a Law Enforcement Officer.



COURTESY FCPD

Officer body-worn camera footage shows Nehemia Fuentes Banegas attempting to take an officer's firearm in a still image released by police.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

On July 28, a 911 call at approximately 10 a.m. reported a husband threatening his wife and stabbing himself with a knife in Fairfax County. Police responded and encountered the suspect — later identified as Nehemia Fuentes Banegas, 26, of Annandale — running from the residence as his wife pointed him

out, Chief Kevin Davis said during a filmed press conference posted on Facebook.com/fairfaxcountyPD.

Davis described the encounter in a wooded area involving a K-9 officer, a patrol officer, and a second lieutenant. The suspect emerged from under a bush and grabbed an officer's sidearm. Davis noted that the top of the suspect's hand was around the top barrel of the firearm, and "the bottom of his hand



COURTESY FCPD

The suspect, who was shot by a Fairfax County police officer, is identified as Nehemia Fuentes Banegas, 26, of Annandale.

was wrapped around the frame of that firearm." As an officer fired three rounds, another officer simultaneously discharged a Taser. One round grazed the suspect's upper right shoulder. Officers immediately rendered medical aid until personnel from the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department arrived. Fuentes Banegas was taken into custody and transported to a local hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.

According to Davis, police later recovered two discarded knives in the area after reviewing nearby

SEE NON-FATAL OFFICER, PAGE 11



SCREEN CAPTURE FACEBOOK FCPD

Chief Kevin Davis gives a media update immediately following the July 28 officer shooting incident.

New AI Platform Helps Job Seekers Screen Employers

Thomas Jefferson High senior launches Raaha to help candidates with some disabilities find the right fit.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Inspired by her mother's experience navigating the workforce with hearing loss, Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology senior Navya Tuteja launched Raaha in June.

The free, AI-powered platform helps job candidates, particularly those with invisible or sensory disabilities, find supportive workplaces by evaluating job descriptions against individual accessibility needs to generate a fit score, custom reports, and interview questions.

"We've spent years building

technology that helps employers screen candidates. I wanted to build something that helps candidates screen employers," Tuteja told The Connection.

Employers rarely disclose environmental sensory conditions, like open layouts with high ambient noise, or pace upfront. Raaha bridges this gap by letting users paste a job posting, complete a brief quiz on their ideal work environment, and hit "analyze."

The AI scans for signals, from "open office" versus "quiet workspace," to "fast-paced" versus "structured," and returns a fit score out of 100, along with suggested

interview and accommodation questions. To protect applicant privacy, the tool requires no account registration and retains no data.

The practical value of the platform is already showing up in users' inboxes. One applicant living with ADHD and sensory sensitivities reached out to Tuteja after using Raaha during a search for senior data analyst positions.

"It helped me see which roles matched the way I work and what parts of a job might be challenging for me," the user wrote, highlighting how the tailored questions helped them evaluate prospective employers before applying. "It is a great tool and has made my job search feel much easier and more transparent."

Rooted in South Asian and Middle Eastern origins, the platform's name reflects its core mission.

"Raaha means path in Hindi, and the tagline is 'find your way,'" Tuteja said. "The name reflects the



PHOTO COURTESY OF NAVYA TUTEJA

Navya Tuteja speaks at an AAUW meeting. Tuteja created Raaha, a free, AI-powered platform that helps job candidates — particularly those with invisible or sensory disabilities — find supportive workplaces by evaluating job descriptions against individual accessibility needs.

idea that Raaha isn't making decisions for people. It's just giving them information they need to find the right path for themselves."

Rather than racing to her next project, Tuteja plans to keep sharpening Raaha and "make it into an

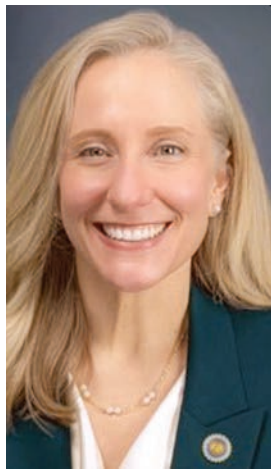
app; get it on the App Store" so more job seekers can screen employers as carefully as employers screen them.

To access Raaha and analyze any job or browse more than 1,400 jobs, visit raaha.ai

COMMUNITY NEWS AT A GLANCE

Locals Appointed to Boards

Gov. Abigail Spanberger oversees nearly 300 state boards and commissions and will make roughly 900 appointments every year. Based on her July 2 announcement, here are the individuals specifically identified as being from



Fairfax, including Fairfax County, Vienna, Reston, and the City of Fairfax: Sara Holtz of Fairfax — Advisory Board on Service and Volunteerism; Mario Flores of Fairfax — Latino Advisory Board; Aaliyah Samuel of Fairfax — Board of Education; Stanley Reid of Fairfax — The Library Board; Robin McDougal of Reston — Air and Space Center Board of Directors; Carrie Ricci of City of Fairfax — Board of Veterans Services; and Steven Arango of Vienna — Veterans Services Foundation Board of Trustees. "I have full confidence that they will use their extensive personal and professional experience to serve their neighbors with dedication and integrity as we advance our shared mission to make Virginia safer, stronger, and more affordable for all — now and into the future," Spanberger said

Non-fatal Officer Shooting Incident

FROM PAGE 10

camera footage. "He cut himself several times in his leg thigh area, and we believe he threatened his wife with those knives as well," Davis said.

Davis noted that the officers involved in the incident had a plan for using lethal and less-lethal force, with one officer designated to carry a deadly-force option and another armed with a less-lethal option. He added that this was not a spontaneous foot pursuit but a "slow, methodical" search through the wooded area.

Davis emphasized the importance of body camera footage in providing transparency: "It informs not only law enforcement leadership about what happened, but it puts me in a position to share that information and those facts with the community." He added: "There should be no such thing as a police officer in America without body cameras. No such thing."

Davis said during the briefing that the suspect will face charges for felony assault against a police officer and attempting to disarm him, while the department looks into

any crimes committed at the home.

Since the incident, FCPD reports that Fuentes Banegas has been formally charged with Attempted Disarming of a Law Enforcement Officer, a Class 6 felony. After being medically cleared, Fuentes Banegas was transported to the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center, where he is being held without bond.

As is standard when an officer discharges a firearm, the department is conducting parallel criminal and administrative investigations into the shooting.

BULLETIN BOARD

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

FAIRFAX COUNTY OFFERS FREE TREES

Community-based organizations in Fairfax County can apply to receive free trees for planting on private properties, through a program by Fairfax County's Urban and Community Forestry Division (UCFD) of the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services.

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

This opportunity focuses on increasing tree cover in economically disadvantaged

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

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

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

The costs of the trees and delivery are covered by the county's Tree Preservation and Planting Fund and will be offered at no cost to participating organizations.

VOLUNTEER DRIVERS NEEDED

Have some extra time to drive a neighbor to a doctor's appointment? You pick the days, times, and places that are convenient for you. There is no minimum driving requirement. Not only do you help older adults in need, you also get to meet wonderful folks, often with

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

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 703-324-5406.

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.



A Summer Concert Series takes place at the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Triangle starting June 18 to Aug. 27.

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.

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 THRU AUGUST 27

Summer Concert Series. 7-8 p.m. At National Museum of the Marine Corps, 1775 Semper



The Burke Historical Society will meet on Sunday, Aug. 30, 2026 at Pohick Regional Library in Burke.

Fidelis Way, Triangle. The Marine Corps Heritage Foundation invites the public to enjoy the 2026 Summer Concert Series at the National Museum of the Marine Corps. From June through August, audiences can experience six free, family-friendly evenings featuring premier U.S. military ensembles representing the Marine Corps, Navy, Army, and Air Force. Concerts are held on the Museum's entry plaza. Guests are encouraged to bring lawn chairs or picnic blankets. Admission and parking are free and open to the public. The Museum, Tun Tavern, and Museum Store will remain open until 6:45 p.m. on concert evenings. Visit the website: <https://www.marineheritage.org/>

Concert Schedule:

- ❖ August 20, 7 p.m. – U.S. Navy Concert Band
- ❖ August 27, 7 p.m. – "The President's Own" U.S. Marine Band

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

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.

FREE CONCERTS IN THE PARK

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

SCHEDULE

Aug. 5. The English Channel. Food Trucks: BA-



The OFC Ignite: Back to School Kickoff & Tailgate Party will be held on Saturday, Aug. 29, 2026 at the Old Firehouse Center in McLean.

BU-JI, Cousins Maine Lobster and Ello Gelato Aug. 12 – The Randy Thompson Band. Food Trucks: BABU-JI, Roaming Coyote and Bruster's of Alexandria

Aug. 19 – The Soul Shakers. Food Trucks: Kaziville (hot dogs), Ned's New England Deck and Bruster's of Alexandria

SOUNDS OF SUMMER: LOCAL CONCERTS IN FAIRFAX COUNTY

Create your own summer soundtrack with the Summer Entertainment Series. Attend free, live concerts taking place at locations all around Fairfax through August. Award-winning entertainers take the stage in this series that is set to enrich the community and promote togetherness in Fairfax County. This season consists of 124 performances at 20 venues. Mark your calendar for some incredible performances including:

Saturday, Aug. 8, 7:30 p.m.: Roberta Lea and the First Take Band, Arrowbrook Centre Park

Wednesday, Aug. 12, 7 p.m.: Junkyard Band, Franconia District Park

Thursday, Aug. 13, 7 p.m.: Brookhouse, Frying Pan Farm Park

Friday, Aug. 14, 7:30 p.m.: Pat McGee, Mason District Park

Thursday, Aug. 20, 7:30 p.m.: Alexandria A Cappella Collective, Nottoway Park

ARTISTS INVITED TO APPLY FOR 2026 MCLEAN ARTFEST

The McLean Community Center (MCC) and McLean Project for the Arts (MPA) is now accepting applications from artists for McLean Artfest 2026, marking the first year the festival will be produced by both MCC and MPA.

The juried outdoor fine arts festival will be held Sunday, Oct. 4, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. in McLean Central Park.

Artists working in all fine art and fine craft media are encouraged to apply. Selected artists will have the opportunity to exhibit and sell their work in one of Northern Virginia's premier outdoor arts festivals, connecting with collectors, art enthusiasts and families from throughout the Washington metropolitan area. The application deadline is Friday, July 31. Artists interested in participating can apply at www.mcleancenter.org/mclean-artfest and should contact Jen Lillis at jlillis@mpaart.org for additional application information.

WEDNESDAYS NIGHTS

Open Game Nights. 6:30-9 p.m. At Old Firehouse Center, 1440 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Come enjoy table tennis, bridge, mah-jongg, arcade games, a sensory lab and more at the Old Firehouse. Children under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

NOW THRU AUG. 7

Dump for Donations Fundraiser. Langley High School students Johnny Lee, Charlie Finkelman, Rayden Wongsangpaiboon, and Connor Lee will be doing a fundraiser for Inova's Schar Cancer Pediatric Institute now thru Friday, August 7. A dumpster has been rented through Bin There Dump That. Throw away your junk in the dumpster and then donate any amount you wish to help buy backpacks, toys, and supplies for young cancer patients. The dumpster will be located at 8423 Weller Ave, McLean.

ENTERTAINMENT

AUG. 3-22

Dog Wash for Fairfax Pets on Wheels Fund-raiser. At Weber's Pet Supermarket in Reston. Every dog wash is \$16 with \$10 going to Fairfax Pets on Wheels.

AUG. 5-30

"Sun-Drenched" Exhibition and Show. At McLean Art Gallery, 6224B Old Dominion Drive, McLean. Opening reception on Friday, Aug. 7 from 5-7 p.m. to meet the artists, enjoy conversation about summer-inspired artwork, and relax with live music, wine, and light refreshments. "Sun-Drenched" captures the warmth, brilliance, and beauty of the season through original artwork inspired by long summer days, flourishing gardens, colorful still lifes, sunlit landscapes, and the simple pleasures of summer.

THURSDAY/AUG. 6

Glow Golf: Drive Change After Dark. 6 to 11 p.m. At Virginia Golf Center, 5801 Clifton Road, Clifton. Join the Junior League of Northern Virginia for its first Glow Golf Tournament at Virginia Golf Center. Proceeds from this fun glow-lit 9-hole golf experience benefit Junior League of Northern Virginia's programs. Individual golfers and teams of 4 welcome—and social tickets are available if you just want to join for the par-tee!

AUG. 7-31

Circus Vazquez. At Tysons II, 8025 Galleria Drive, in Tysons Corner. The production blends time honored circus tradition with contemporary elements to create a vibrant entertainment experience for modern audiences. Show times are 7:00 p.m. Mondays through Fridays; 1 p.m., 4 p.m., 7 p.m. on Saturdays and 11 a.m., 2 p.m., 5 p.m. on Sundays.

DRIVE-IN STYLE MOVIES

Grab your crew and head out to 3650 Historic Sully Way, Chantilly, to sit back, relax and watch movies "drive-in" style — view and listen from your car or bring chairs and blankets to watch from the lawn. Pack a basket for a moonlit picnic or try a new treat from one of our food truck partners and enjoy free entertainment that comes to you as part of the Fairfax County Park Authority's Summer Entertainment Series.

Starlight Cinema brings the community together for wholesome family entertainment with a feature film that begins at dark. Gates open at 6:30 p.m., so come early to get a good spot. Mark your calendars for:

Aug. 8: "Zootopia 2"
Aug. 15: "Finding Nemo"
Aug. 22: "Cars"

TUESDAY/AUG. 18

Trivia Nights in Tun Tavern. 6-9 p.m. At National Museum of the Marine Corps, 1775 Semper Fidelis Way, Triangle. Think you have what it takes to claim the top spot? Assemble your strongest team of up to six and join us for Trivia Nights at Tun Tavern at the National Museum of the Marine Corps! Compete in pop culture, geography, and general knowledge trivia, with a fun bonus round to keep things interesting. Event is free and open to the public. Visit the website: <https://www.marineheritage.org/eventscalendar>

AUG. 20-30

The 1st Stage Logan Festival of Solo Performance will run August 20-30, 2026 at 1st Stage, 1524 Spring Hill Road, Tysons, with performances of each show as follows:

LET IT BE ART!: Thursday, August 20 at 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, August 22 at 5:00 p.m.; Sunday, August 23 at 7:30 p.m.; Friday, August 28 at 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, August 29 at 2:00 p.m.; Sunday, August 30 at 5:00 p.m.

It Ends With Guinea Pigs: Saturday, August 22 at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday, August 23 at 2:00 p.m.; Wednesday, August 26 at 7:30 p.m.; Thursday, August 27 at 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, August 29 at 7:30 p.m.; Sunday, August 30 at 2:00 p.m.

www.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



Circus Vazquez will be at Tysons II on Aug. 7-31, 2026 in Tysons Corner.



The 33rd Annual Middle Eastern Food Festival takes place Sept. 5-6 at Holy Transfiguration Melkite Greek Catholic Church in McLean.

2:00 p.m.

Baron Vaughn: Cycle Breaker: Friday, August 21 at 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, August 22 at 2:00 p.m.; Sunday, August 23 at 5:00 p.m.; Tuesday, August 25 at 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, August 29 at 5:00 p.m.; Sunday, August 30 at 7:30 p.m.

Individual tickets can be purchased online at www.1stStage.org or by emailing the 1st Stage box office at boxoffice@1ststage.org.

BACK TO SCHOOL BOOK SALE

At Centreville Regional Library, 14200 St. Germain Dr., Centreville. Fiction and nonfiction for all ages, DVDs, audiobooks and more. Bag sale on Sunday. Fill a grocery bag with books and DVDs for \$10. Friday, Aug. 21, 1-5 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 22, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Sunday, Aug. 23, 12 to 5 p.m.

SENIOR MOVIE DAY

At Reston Town Center Movie Theater. 10 a.m. Reston Association presents Senior Movie Day, sponsored by Friends of Reston. Join us on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Coffee, donuts and OJ are provided, and door prizes are distributed prior to the movie. Free. Ages 55+
Aug. 26: A Little Prayer (rated R)

THURSDAY/AUG. 27

Lunch N' Life. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. At American Legion Post 1976, 4206 Daniels Ave., Annandale. Join in a Game Day playing board and card games. To register, call 703-941-1419 or email shepherdscas@vacoxmail.com by

August 25th.

SATURDAY/AUG. 29

OFC Ignite: Back to School Kickoff & Tailgate Party. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. At Old Firehouse Center, 1440 Chain Bridge Road, McLean. Start the school year right with games, food, music and tailgate-style fun with friends at OFC Ignite, the monthly themed family play experience at OFC! Drop in to enjoy ping pong, board games, arcade games, refreshments, the Sensory Room, food and more.

SUNDAY/AUG. 30

Burke Historical Society Meeting. 3-4:30 p.m. At Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Mary Lipsey, local historian, will discuss Myra Bradwell, Mrs. Lincoln's friend who successfully got Mrs. Lincoln released from an asylum.

SEPT. 5-6

33rd Annual Middle Eastern Food Festival. Saturday from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.; Sunday from 12:30-5 p.m. At Holy Transfiguration Melkite Greek-Catholic Church, 8501 Lewinsville Road, McLean. The Festival will showcase authentic Middle Eastern cuisine, traditional pastries, music and dancing, vendors, church tours, a silent auction, and activities for all ages. Visit the vendors, take a guided tour of the church, or engage in a game of backgammon or chess. Children also can find plenty to do in the dedicated kids' zone, which includes a petting zoo, two moon bounces, 18-foot slide, face painting and a variety of games. A highlight of the event is the Saturday night, 6:30 p.m. "Hafli" ("party" in Arabic) that will feature live music and dancing, including opportunities to join the "Dabke," a traditional folk line dance. Call 703-734-9566 or visit www.middleeasternfoodfestival.com

SUNDAY/SEPT. 6

Burke Historical Society Meeting. 3-4:30 p.m. At Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Brian Slawski will share research on Joseph William Dooley (1856-1934) and his family of Burke.

SATURDAY/SEPT. 12

Fall Native Plant Sale. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Morven Park, 17195 Southern Planter Lane, Leesburg. Native plants naturally thrive in our local climate. Shop for local flora from five native plant nurseries—Hill House Farm & Nursery, Nature By Design, Seven Bends Nursery, Watermark Woods, and Yellow House Natives. Plus, drop in for free educational talks with plant experts at this Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy event.

THURSDAY/SEPT. 17

19th Annual Erin Peterson Fund Golf Tournament. Join in a day of golf and fun. At Westfields Golf Club, 13940 Balmoral Greens Avenue, Clifton. Registration is now open. To register, visit www.erinpeterfund.org.

SATURDAY/SEPT. 19

Sixth Civil War & Miliaria Show & Sale. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Arlington Fairfax Elks Lodge, 8421 Arlington Blvd., Fairfax. Don Hakenson and Bud Mayo will be sponsoring a Sixth Civil War & Miliaria Show & Sale. Books, Relics, and Memorabilia will be sold from all wars! Admission is \$5 per person. Tables for vendors are \$75 each. Contact Don Hakenson at dhakenson@verizon.net or call at 703-971-4984 or contact Bud Mayo at mayo5304@cox.net or call at 703-389-1505. All vendors and patrons are welcome!

SEPT. 19-20

Celebration of the Arts. At Capital One Center, 1820 Capital One Drive South, Tysons Corner. The festival invites the public to engage with hands-on workshops, immersive art activations, a local artisan market, live performances, and culinary offerings from the region's most exciting creators.

When:

September 19, 12pm-6pm
September 20, 12pm-5pm

Transform Your Bathroom and Change Your Life.

FREE TOILET + \$1,500 OFF*

For your FREE information
kit and our Senior Discounts,
Call Today Toll-Free

1-877-591-9950



*Free toilet with purchase and installation of a walk-in tub or walk-in shower only. Offer available while supplies last. No cash value. Must present offer at time of purchase. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Market restrictions may apply. Offer available in select markets only. CSLB 1082165 NSCB 0082999 0083445 13VH11096000

Virginia Treasury Announces a New Record for Unclaimed Property Funds Reunited to Rightful Owners!



**Over \$150 million successfully
reunited to citizens in FY2026!**

Have you lost track of any dormant accounts or
checks? To locate and claim your unclaimed
funds, visit our free search site today at:



vaMoneySearch.gov
Click and Claim



VIRGINIA TREASURY
Stewardship • Integrity • Excellence

WHAT
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Beyer Urges Denial of Edsall Data Center Substation

Congressman's opposition follows Dominion Energy's technical briefing on proposed Plaza 500 project.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

U.S. Rep. Don Beyer Jr., D-Va., sent an official letter on July 30 requesting that the Fairfax County Planning Commission deny the 2232 permit application for Dominion Energy's proposed substation at the Plaza 500 site (6299 Edsall Rd.).

Beyer cited "serious concerns about the potential impact of this project on residents," writing that data center infrastructure should not be built near homes where its scale is incompatible with adjacent neighborhoods. "As such, I respectfully request the Commission deny the Application," he wrote.

Tyler Ray, founder of the SaveBrenMar Coalition and president of the Bren Pointe Homeowners Association, thanked Beyer for "protecting the 8th District's environment and sustainable growth and development for the benefit of all residents."

Beyer's letter came two days after Dominion Energy presented a technical briefing to the Fairfax County Mason District Land Use Advisory Committee, launching the public review process for application 2232-2025-MA-00007 — a high-voltage substation and 230-kilovolt transmission line proposed at 6295 Edsall Rd.

Because developer Starwood Capital Group's underlying data center campus is permitted "by-right" under light industrial (I-3) zoning rules, the public facility review represents the only formal process for residents and officials to challenge the power infrastructure.

Mason District Planning Commissioner Alis Wang noted in a July 30 email to The Connection that Dominion's presentation "was lacking in detail and left many basic questions from the public unanswered." She stated that the Planning Commission will decide whether the substation's "general or approximate location, character, and extent are in substantial accord with the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan."

The July 28 meeting drew a large turnout of residents, local HOA leaders from Bren Pointe, The Ridges at Edsall and Jefferson Green, and advocates from Nature Forward and the Chesapeake Climate Action Network.

A day before that meeting, a coalition of 33 civic and environmental groups urged Tracy Strunk, director of the Fairfax County Department of Planning and Development, to recommend denying the application. The coalition warned that approving the project would set a "dangerous precedent" by dropping an "unprecedented utility in-fill development" in an established neighborhood. They also argued that Starwood Capital and Dominion Energy have refused to explore viable alternatives, such as co-locating at the nearby Van Dorn substation.

On July 16, before any substation approval, Starwood filed permit plans for the first of two proposed data center buildings at Plaza 500. Those plans remain pending.

Ray noted in a GoFundMe appeal that the project sits just 67 feet from homes — far below the county's average 3,049-foot setback — and pointed to state reports citing the development as "unusually



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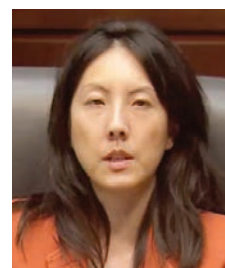
A generic rendering provided in Dominion Energy's community outreach materials showing potential screening walls and landscaping for a substation. Dominion notes the graphic is illustrative and not specific to the proposed Edsall Road parcel.



Aisha Khan



U.S. Rep. Don Beyer



Alis Wang

close to residents."

During the July 28 meeting, Dominion engineers explained that the substation is designed to supply 176 megawatts of electricity, outlining plans for equipment footprints, height, screening, and noise compliance. When The Connection requested the meeting's presentation slides, Dominion media manager Aisha Khan declined to release them, stating they were not formal public submissions. She added, "As with any request for new electric service, we evaluate what infrastructure may be needed to continue providing safe and reliable electric service."

The Mason District Land Use Committee will make its formal recommendation on Sept. 22. On Sept. 24 at 7 p.m., the Fairfax County Planning Commission will hold a public hearing and vote on the substation.

Under Virginia Code § 15.2-2232(B), if the Planning Commission denies the application, the applicant or utility provider has 10 days to appeal to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, which can overrule the decision by a majority vote.

Meanwhile, Starwood Capital is expanding its regional portfolio elsewhere: purchasing nearly 42 acres at 3721 Stonecroft Blvd in Chantilly for \$166.8 million, the county's former police training facility; and developing an 8-acre parcel in Herndon at the former Washington Commanders practice facility, 13832 Redskin Dr., adjacent to its 60-acre Renaissance Technology Park.

Alexandria Police Charge Driver in Fatal Pedestrian Crash

A driver has been indicted in connection with a fatal pedestrian crash that occurred earlier this year in Alexandria.

On April 20, 2026, at approximately 5:30 p.m., Alexandria Police officers responded to the intersection of North Saint Asaph Street and Montgomery Street for a report of a vehicle that had struck a pedestrian. The

pedestrian was pronounced deceased at the scene by Alexandria Fire Department medics.

The victim was identified as Norma Floyd-Sayles, 62, of Alexandria.

The Alexandria Police Department's Crash Reconstruction Team conducted an extensive investigation into the collision. Following the completion of the investigation, the case was presented to the Alexandria Com-

monwealth's Attorney's Office.

On July 15, 2026, the Alexandria Grand Jury returned an indictment charging Tekaligne Shirko, 46, of Lorton, Virginia, with: Failure to Yield to a Pedestrian Causing Death; and Involuntary Manslaughter.

Shirko surrendered July 17 and is being processed through the Alexandria Adult Detention Center. A court date has not been set.

"Two Over-70s, Please?"



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

That's all I had to say - or do, to buy the discounted-for-seniors' tickets at a horse show in Pa. my wife Dina and I recently attended: \$10 per person instead of the \$25-per-person regular price, a 60-percent savings. I was so happy and surprised at such a healthy discount given so readily that it wasn't until the Monday after this Friday event that it hit me. The ticket-sellers never even asked Dina or I for a "valid" driver's license to confirm our eligibility for the discount. It was like an inverted version of having to show one's driver's license to prove you're over 21 - when you're way over aged 21 - and thus be allowed to purchase alcohol. I always joke that if anybody "cards" me thinking I'm not over aged 21, than I sure must look like hell for someone who isn't. Referring back to this "over-70" ticket price; if my age was not questioned then I must be a convincing age 70, appearance wise - which I don't think I am any more than I thought I could possibly look to be under aged 21 at the liquor store. Was my horse-show age taken for granted? How disappointing. And to tell you the truth, a bit of a surprise which is possibly the reason behind my motivation in addressing this subject. Previously, at the liquor store, I wasn't the least bit flattered by the clerk's request. I thought it was ridiculous. In each case though, age/appearance mattered. At the liquor store, apparently; I didn't look old enough while at the horse show, apparently, I did look old enough.

Trying to consider an alternate reason - from the establishment's perspective, given that horse shows might attract an older clientele: good public relations. Would it be well-received if the over-70s are having to show proof of age to buy a ticket rather than it just be presumed? I can just see it now: an elderly (obviously over aged 70) man comes "crutching" up to the ticket booth and after requesting his over-70 ticket/rate, is asked to show his driver's license to prove his age. He then manages to balance himself/ almost falls as he reaches around to a back pocket to grab his wallet and then pick through the wallet with his fingers to find and then extract his driver's license. Or the elderly woman in a wheelchair who rolls up to purchase her over-70 ticket and is likewise asked for her proof of age. She then reaches around uncomfortably to the back of her wheelchair and grabs for her purse. She then brings it upfront, opens it and finds her driver's license and hands it over thinking this request was unnecessary at best and humiliating at worst. (What? The show is expecting a bunch of over 65s-under-70s trying to buy a discounted ticket for which they're not age-eligible? I don't think so. Unlike the under-21s trying to buy alcohol, the non-over-70s who manage to buy the over-70s discounted tickets are unlikely to be stopped on the fairgrounds for being impaired.)

Irrespective of the show's actual policy or my imaginary take, I'm writing about this because this is the first time where my current way-over-aged 21 was an issue of sorts but not one that required proof of age. Usually, I've been asked for proof. Actually, it was the speed of my ticket purchase. Not for a moment was my age-specific request doubted. Either it's the show's policy to treat seniors respectfully or I'm a convincing-looking over 70 (I mean I am nearly aged 72 so I could look the part?)

Having thought about this experience a bit more since then, this 'over-70' ticket purchase has made me think (and as my late brother would say; invoking Moe of The Three Stooges; "Every time you think you weaken the nation." Perhaps I should let it go? I'm more concerned/agitated by all the drivers who insist on backing into parking spaces anyway. There's no discount for doing so. I don't get any it more than I get how anybody - could possibly think I'm not over age 21. As far as being over aged 70; apparently, I'm not getting any younger so I might as well learn to live with it.

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

Braddock Carries on Musical Tradition: Battle of the Bands

Jamming will commence on Aug. 14 and 21

By Mike Salmon
The Connection

Some jam classic rock on stage while others will play Taylor Swift or Maroon 5, competing against each other in the upcoming Braddock District battle of the bands later this month.

Although this is a super local thing with a limited audience, the Braddock District Battle of the Bands competition turned out to be more than just a local thing in 2017 for Caroline Weinroth and the Cinema Hearts Band. The Cinema Hearts Band didn't even win that year, but it gave them a start, and nine years later, they're still rocking with mentions in Rolling Stone magazine, a place on the South by Southwest tour and opening acts for bigger named bands. "I think it's great they offer that opportunity," said Weinroth, who grew up in Fairfax Station. When she's not touring, she teaches music locally.



Back in 2017, Caroline Weinroth, the lead singer of the Cinema Hearts Band, sang for the Braddock District crowd at an early Battle of the Bands.

If You Go...

**Braddock District
Battle of the Bands**
Aug. 14 and 21
Lake Accotink Park
Springfield

Braddock District Supervisor Rachna Sizemore Heizer (D) is carrying on the musical tradition, supporting the arts in any way that she can. She spent the month of July drumming up support for this musical event by reaching out to musicians via social media and posting flyers at local restaurants like Bunnyman Brewing, Fats Fairfax and Mackenzies. Although she isn't a musician, her son Jake Sizemore has been involved in music for most of his life, through School of Rock, Fairfax County Public Schools, and his own bands. He recently graduated from the Berklee College of Music, recording and releasing his own original music. Through her son's passion, the Supervisor has become very familiar with the world of music and the performing arts, believing the arts are core to the human experience,

and that musicians and performers are trained professionals and should be compensated as such. Uplifting local musicians as the professionals they are is a priority for the Supervisor.

Battle of the Bands events in the Braddock District are not new. In 2017, then-Supervisor John Cook held a band competition at Royal Lake in the Fairfax area of the district. Over 300 people attended and many made an evening picnic out of it, courtesy of a few food trucks Cook invited to the event.

Cinema Hearts was part of the battle of the bands in 2017 and now they've gone on musically led by Caroline Weinroth, a former Miss America contender. They've traveled to shows in Texas, Canada, Nashville, NYC, Richmond and Baltimore.

Some of the battle of the bands elements stuck with Weinroth. She met her band members while attending George Mason University where she studied theater and creative writing. While she was a student, she worked at the Cinema Arts Theater, which later became the name for the band.

She teaches music and works with some of the students in their monthly film club.



Past Braddock District Supervisor John Cook sponsored several battle of the bands concerts, and in 2017 the event attracted about 300 people and a few food trucks.



A fish eye look at Caroline Weinroth and the Cinema Hearts Band. Photo by Alec Pugliese.