

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

AUGUST 6, 2026



As a pedestrian, when crossing, remember to

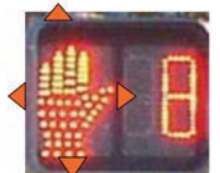
Press the button



Wait for the walk signal to start crossing



Do not enter or start to cross when you see the flashing hand



FAIRFAX COUNTY / HAWK SIGNAL-BACKLICK | TRANSPORTATION

HAWK signals command drivers to stop using a solid red light. They are treated legally as standard traffic signals and are designed for multi-lane arterials, such as Richmond Highway/Route 1.

Pedestrian Fatalities Surge in Fairfax County

Safety Crisis Worsens with 12 pedestrians and 2 other vulnerable road users killed bringing fatalities to 14.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

Fairfax County has matched its full-year totals for pedestrian and vulnerable road user deaths from both 2024 and 2025 in under seven months.

As the death toll for non-drivers climbed to 14 as of July 29, safety advocates warned that simple, life-saving street fixes remain stalled behind red tape and state approval hurdles. Back-to-back fatal collisions in July along Richmond Highway (Route 1) in Hybla Valley have renewed calls for systemic roadway safety improvements across Northern Virginia.

"My colleagues at Safe Streets are deeply disappointed and saddened by the alarming number of avoidable pedestrian fatalities in Fairfax County and Northern Virginia," Mike Doyle, executive director of NoVA Families for Safe Streets, told The Connection on July 25. "Our unofficial count shows 12 pedestrians killed plus two other vulnerable road users. Including Alexandria, a devastating 16 people were killed in Northern Virginia so far this year when walking or riding."

Serious pedestrian injuries are three to



FAIRFAX COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT

Capt. Chris Cosgriff, commander of the Fairfax County Police Department's Public Affairs Bureau, provides updates on a fatal crash involving a 9-year-old boy on an e-scooter near Sully Square in Herndon.

five times higher than fatalities, Doyle noted.

Recent crashes along Route 1 underscore these concerns. On July 2, a driver turning right from Dart Drive onto northbound Richmond Highway struck an adult woman using a mobility device in the crosswalk; she died from her injuries. Police noted speed and alcohol were not factors. On July 3, a vehicle struck 61-year-old Alexandria resident Ju-



PHOTO VIA FACEBOOK
Mike Doyle, founder and executive director of NoVA Families for Safe Streets.

lio Quintanilla in the 7900 block of Richmond Highway near Walmart. Quintanilla died July 18.

The July fatalities followed a deadly 48-hour stretch in mid-June when four pedestrians were killed across Fairfax County: Jerry Harris, 64; Sean King, 38; Jose Sorto Medrano, 68; and Stephen Roberts, 73.

"These crashes are deeply tragic and terrible for the victims and families, as well as for our first responders, drivers, community and me! We all must do more," Mount Vernon District Supervisor Dan Storck told The Connection on July 31.

"We continue to work closely with the police and VDOT to prevent tragedies while advancing improvements along the Rich-



PHOTO COURTESY OF FAIRFAX COUNTY
Supervisor Dan Storck represents the Mount Vernon District, which includes Richmond Highway (Route 1) in Hybla Valley.

mond Highway corridor, but we need a whole-of-community effort for change," Storck said. "We need pedestrians to stay visible and cross at designated locations, drivers to eliminate distractions and travel at safe speeds, more safe places to cross, and stronger enforcement tools for unsafe crossings."

Yet safety advocates argue official calls for vigilance miss the root problem.

Safe Streets data shows over 80 percent of Route 1 pedestrian fatalities occurred near crosswalk gaps of up to half a mile long, with more than half occurring at night. Advocates are urging VDOT and Fairfax County to implement streetlight upgrades, refuge islands, HAWK crossing beacons, and increased speed enforcement.

Doyle questioned whether preventable infrastructure fixes at Dart Drive could have saved a life.

"I wonder whether the killing of the lady in a wheelchair could have been avoided if the driver of the Ford F-250 turning right had a 'No Turn on Red' sign posted at that intersection," Doyle said, noting the junction lacked a complete crosswalk setup. "A 'No Turn on Red' sign might have saved her life. Why aren't there more 'No Turn on Red' signs at these major intersections?"

SEE PEDESTRIAN FATALITIES, PAGE 7

corcoran

MCENEARNEY

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OldTownAlexandriaLiving.com

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Richmond Highway Progress Boosted

Eye-catching 'Faces of ONE' website highlights businesses and people in Mount Vernon.

By Mike Salmon
Mount Vernon Gazette

As the forces in Mount Vernon promote and improve the Richmond Highway corridor in line with the coming bus rapid transit line, the latest initiative called "Faces of ONE," is being launched to bring smiles and colors to this effort with an e-pub collection that highlights businesses, people and community.

"It's more than just a roadway," said Evan Kaufman of the Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation. "We wanted the small businesses to give it character."

Kaufman will be one of the speakers at a breakfast on Aug. 13 when they officially launch the application. He will be joined by JoAnne Fiebe from the Fairfax County Department of Economic Initiatives and Erin Welsh of "Destination by Design," the website specialty company from North Carolina that developed the site.

Faces of ONE, is a \$150,000 business support and marketing initiative with ONE mission: to connect people, promote local businesses, and change the way people see Richmond Highway, its developers said. Over the next 18 months, the program will promote local businesses, share community stories, increase awareness of corridor destinations and services, and provide marketing resources to help businesses thrive during this period of growth and change, their media said.

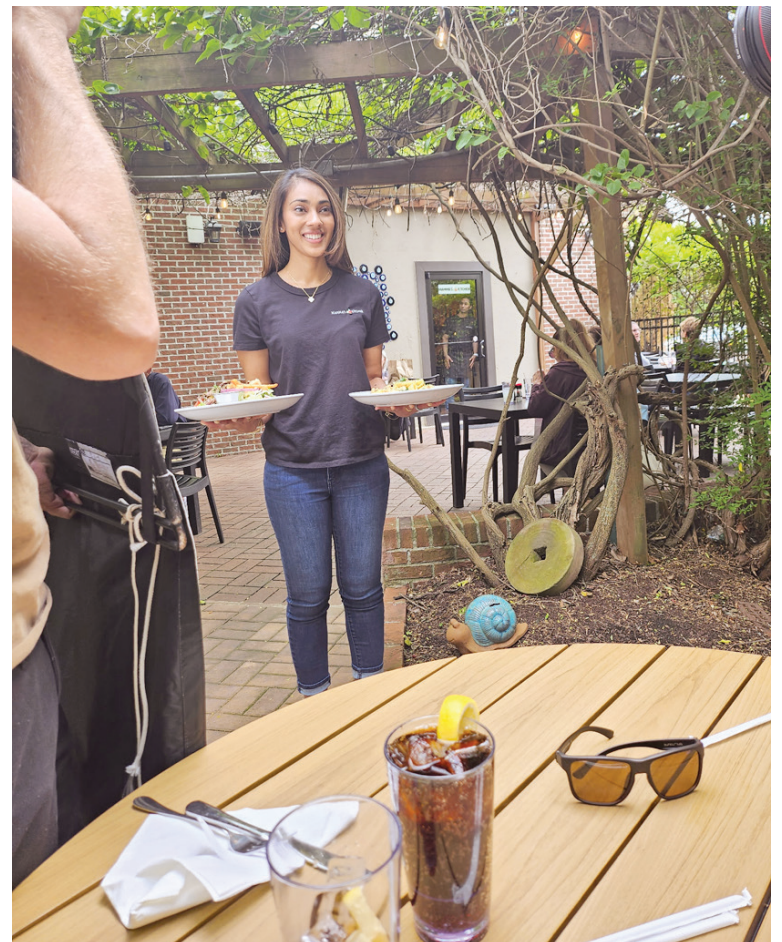
Although it is designed to help Richmond Highway businesses remain visible, connected and successful before and during Bus Rapid Transit construction, the BRT is not the only thing going on through this stretch of historic highway. There is also a 4.5 mile widening effort by the Virginia Department of Transportation and EMBARK Richmond Highway revitalization that will impact everything.

When the small businesses survive, they add to the area and the Mount Vernon restaurants are a place to start. At Sherwood Gourmet Deli, their Rueben sandwich is a local legend, while down the street at Della J's, it's the southern comfort food like shrimp and grits, crispy fried chicken, catfish, or homemade peach cobbler that keeps the kitchen busy. These stories are captured on Faces of ONE.

Other stories are about bird watching at Huntley Meadows, biking on the Mount Vernon Bike



The "Destination by Design" photographer on a food assignment.



One of the Mount Vernon food workers gets a moment in the spotlight.



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

This picture of the Mount Vernon bike trail is part of the marketing in the ONE.

Trail or kayaking on the river. They are all featured with colorful pictures to catch the eye.

Webpage developer 'Destination by Design' helps civic leaders plan, build, and promote Main Streets, destination-quality parks, trails and recreation areas. Other Destination projects include a Watauga County Wayfinding project in North Carolina, a bike park in Boone, N.C. and a community branding project in Harney County, Oregon.

Faces of ONE launching:

When:
Thursday, August 13
8 a.m. thru 9:30 a.m

Where:
Belle Haven Country Club
6023 Fort Hunt Road
Alexandria, VA 22307



It's all about being in the heart of Mount Vernon to capture the feeling of ONE.

Styrofoam Food Containers Now Banned

Restaurants choosing alternatives for carry out containers.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
THE GAZETTE

As of July 1, Virginia's retail food vendors, like restaurants, can no longer use polystyrene containers for customers' prepared food.

Polystyrene, also known as EPS or expanded polystyrene, is more commonly known by its trademark name, Styrofoam. It is a polymer that is converted into foam form and often used for carryout food and beverages. Most of the products, like cups, plates and takeout boxes, are used only once.

The state ban applies to vendors serving prepared food, including restaurants, cafeterias, food trucks, catering companies, grocery stores, schools and government agencies, any entity "that regularly provides food as part of its services," according to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

In the Mount Vernon area, Jimmy Nicopoulos at Primo's Family Restaurant in the Belle View Shopping Center says he'll use plastic and paper. He noted that Styrofoam does not work anyway for tomato sauces. "My goal is for people to get their food home safely." Big Boy Biscuits at the weekly Wednesday Mount Vernon Farmers Market uses compostable paper containers.

Sherwood Gourmet Deli will wrap their quesadillas in tinfoil.

Caroline Ross, River Bend Bistro owner in the Hollin Hall Shopping Center, already uses paper. "I hate Styrofoam," she said recently.

The Problem

In Clean Virginia Waterways' 2024 coastal cleanup, people collected over 1,600 foam food containers, 2,600 foam plates and cups and around 2,500 pieces of foam packaging.

Litter Free Virginia reports that polystyrene does not naturally biodegrade and can leach chemicals into the air and water. It often breaks down into small pieces which can be ingested by animals or humans. Birds and fish, for example, mistake it for food. Little is recycled and in fact, it is difficult to recycle.

"It takes at least 500 years to break down and less than one percent is recycled," says a DEQ flyer. "It is made from styrene, a possible carcinogen. Chronic exposure to high levels of styrene can cause liver and nerve tissue damage."

Industry View

Speaking for the Virginia restaurant industry, Gary Cohen, Executive Vice President of Government Affairs and Franchising, Glory Days Grill, said, "The reason I am against this new law is that it greatly impacts the cost of our carryout containers at a time when restaurants are struggling to survive the rising cost of food, labor, gasoline surcharges, tariffs, credit card fees and out of



Caroline Ross, River Bend Bistro owner in the Hollin Hall Shopping Center, already stopped using Styrofoam. "I hate Styrofoam."



Some food containers are made of plant-based, recyclable materials.

control taxes as well.

"Restaurants have always been a low profit business, and since COVID, profitability has become much worse. According to a recent study by the National Restaurant Association, 42 percent of all restaurants were unprofitable last year. My estimate is that this change in the law will add approximately \$32,000 in paper costs for each of our restaurants per year, based on our new pricing, which is more than triple the cost of Styrofoam. We operate 14 restaurants in Virginia, so annualized our cost impact will \$450,000 per year which is simply unsustainable." He says that other countries recycle Styrofoam. "I thought Virginia could as well."

DEQ's website says that localities may grant vendors an exemption for up to one



PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH

Many food vendors have traditionally used carryout containers like this.



The city of Alexandria posted this sign around town.



Styrofoam breaks down into small pieces that can be ingested by wildlife.

year and people can file complaints for possible violations with their locality.

As for alternatives, DEQ lists reusable containers, recycled paper, plant fibers such as bamboo and wheat straw, foil, metal and recyclable plastic.

Information

<https://www.cleanvirginiawaterways.org/foam-phase-out>

<https://www.deq.virginia.gov/land-waste/waste-management/litter-prevention/foam-free-resources>

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



COURTESY PHOTOS

Republican U.S. Senate candidate Bert Mizusawa won the Republican primary on Tuesday, Aug. 4.



U.S. Senator Mark Warner was unopposed in the statewide Democratic primary.



U.S. Rep. Don Beyer, D-8, won the Aug. 4 Democratic primary for Virginia's 8th Congressional District. He will face Republican candidate Tony Sabio in the November general election.

The Gazette's 2026 Fairfax County Voters Guide, Part 1

August primary results set ballots for Nov. 3 general election.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Editor's Note: To help readers navigate the campaign sprint before early voting for the Nov. 3 midterm election opens Sept. 18, The Connection launches Part 1 of our four-part 2026 General Election Voters Guide. Upcoming editions will feature federal candidates (Aug. 19), Herndon and Fairfax City elections (Sept. 2), and the master voters guide with ballot measures (Sept. 16).

Tuesday's dual Democratic and Republican primaries settled party nominees for the Nov. 3 general election.

Official state figures as of 5 a.m. Wednesday, Aug. 5, show low turnout in Virginia's 2026 August primary elections.

Two prominent Alexandria-area Democrats, U.S. Rep. Don Beyer and U.S. Sen. Mark Warner, emerge in strong positions as the general election campaign begins.

Beyer, who represents Virginia's 8th Congressional District, won the Democratic primary on Tuesday, defeating four challeng-

ers and securing the nomination for what could be his seventh term in the U.S. House of Representatives. The district includes Alexandria, Arlington, Falls Church and portions of Fairfax County.

According to unofficial results, Beyer captured more than two-thirds of the vote (67.60%) districtwide, ahead of former Alexandria City Council member Mo Seifeldin and the other contenders, Michael Christian Duffin, Adam M. Dunigan and Lorena Thorne Bruner.

Beyer, who has represented the district for 11 years (2015-present), will face Republican nominee Tony Sabio in the general election. Sabio secured the Republican nomination unopposed.

U.S. Senate

Democratic incumbent U.S. Sen. Mark Warner, Alexandria resident, was unopposed in the primary. In the Republican primary for U.S. Senate, the three candidates in the statewide contest were Bert Mizusawa, Kim Farington and David E. Williams. Mizusawa won the primary with 51.47% of the vote statewide. Mizusawa is retired U.S. Army major general who served 36 years (1979-2015), is a former corporate attorney and manager of private federal contracting ventures.

What Wasn't on the Primary Ballots

Statewide, Democratic Sen.

Mark Warner faced no primary opposition, automatically securing his party's nomination. In Virginia's 11th Congressional District, incumbent Democratic Rep. James Walkinshaw and Republican challenger Arthur Purves ran uncontested within their respective parties, eliminating the need for primary elections.

Why 2026 Seems Unrelenting for Fairfax County Voters

A statewide referendum on re-districting in April pushed 2026 into three full election cycles, April, August and November. This expanded Fairfax County's active voting timeline to 142 calendar days — meaning local election offices were in active voting mode for over 20 weeks of the year.

Under standard circumstances, every year is election year in Virginia.

An even-numbered election year in Virginia balances two election cycles (a June primary and the November general election), translating to roughly 95 calendar days of active voting windows and about 65 days of open early voting sites.

However, residents living in House District 11 or the Braddock Magisterial District hit the polls even more often due to special vacancy elections.

Early Voting Starts in Six Weeks

Early voting for the Nov. 3 general election opens in just over six weeks, on Friday, Sept. 18.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Please be advised that there will be a 10-minute fireworks display taking place as part of a private evening event at George Washington's Mount Vernon on

**Thursday, August 6
between 9:20 p.m. – 9:50 p.m.**

The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association thanks you for your tolerance and apologizes for any disruption. To receive Mount Vernon fireworks notifications via email, please write to events@mountvernon.org.

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Calendar Overhaul, Screen-Time Limits, New Boundaries

FCPS reshapes the upcoming school year.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

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/MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

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-



Yoga with the All American Army Women's Rugby Team!

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

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

In the Scrum, Yoga Poses Come in Handy

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

BY MIKE SALMON
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

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 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.

Pedestrian Fatalities Surge in Fairfax County

FROM PAGE 1

Advocates emphasize that education and individual vigilance are not enough.

The vulnerability of young road users was illustrated by a recent fatal crash in Herndon, where an unhelmeted 9-year-old boy riding an e-scooter collided with a vehicle.

While Fairfax County updated its ordinance on June 23, 2026, requiring riders under 15 to wear helmets on e-bikes and scooters (aligning with Virginia Code § 46.2-908.1), safety advocates question relying on personal protective gear over safe infrastructure.

The Vision Zero Network uses a framework known as the "Hierarchy of Controls" in its policy guidelines, categorizing personal protective equipment like helmets as the least effective safety intervention. Conversely, engineering controls, physically separated infrastructure, and improved street design rate as the most effective measures to protect vulnerable road users.

Solutions must address dangerous roadway design, high

speeds, and a lack of safe crossings rather than placing the burden of survival on the victim, advocates say.

Meanwhile, despite securing \$754 million in regional support, the \$987 million Richmond Highway multimodal project faces a multi-hundred-million-dollar funding gap. This leaves long-awaited safety infrastructure like dedicated bus rapid transit median lanes, separated multi-use paths, upgraded street lighting, and continuous sidewalks dependent on future grants.

"We all need to take a moment," Storck said.

Residents can meet with public safety and transportation partners at an Aug. 19 Traffic Safety Town Hall at the Hybla Valley Community Center.

"The speed limit on Richmond Highway has been reduced, sidewalks and lighting have been added, and we have begun building an even safer, more bike/pedestrian-friendly corridor. We can each make a difference in keeping our roads safer."

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MEMBER BENEFITS

Revisiting the Revolutionary War



The National Museum of the U.S. Army honors over 30 million people who have served since the Revolutionary War.



Statues of Anna Maria and John Lane, a married couple who served in the Revolutionary War. Few women did.

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH/THE GAZETTE

The National Museum of the U.S. Army at Fort Belvoir offers exhibits that delve into the Revolutionary War.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
GAZETTE PACKET

As America celebrates the signing of the Declaration of Independence, amid the celebratory fireworks, hype and elation, we all need to remember that it was the start of a war, the colonists' revolution for a new nation, fought largely on American soil which finally ended eight years later in 1783 with the Treaty of Paris. Lives were disrupted and lives were lost.

The National Museum of the U.S. Army at Fort Belvoir offers three exhibits that delve into the Revolutionary War, its soldiers and leaders, how it was waged and what it was all about.

High Tech Immersion

The museum's newest exhibit, called "American Revolution: The Augmented Exhibition," seeks to put museum-goers into scenes between 1765 and 1789 using individual portable tablets called HistoPads that immerse you into 360-degree recreations of key historic moments. The tablets can make visitors feel like they are on the scene and can span centuries, comparing 18th century places to the same sites today.

By operating the HistoPad's touchscreen, which promoters call "experiential learn-



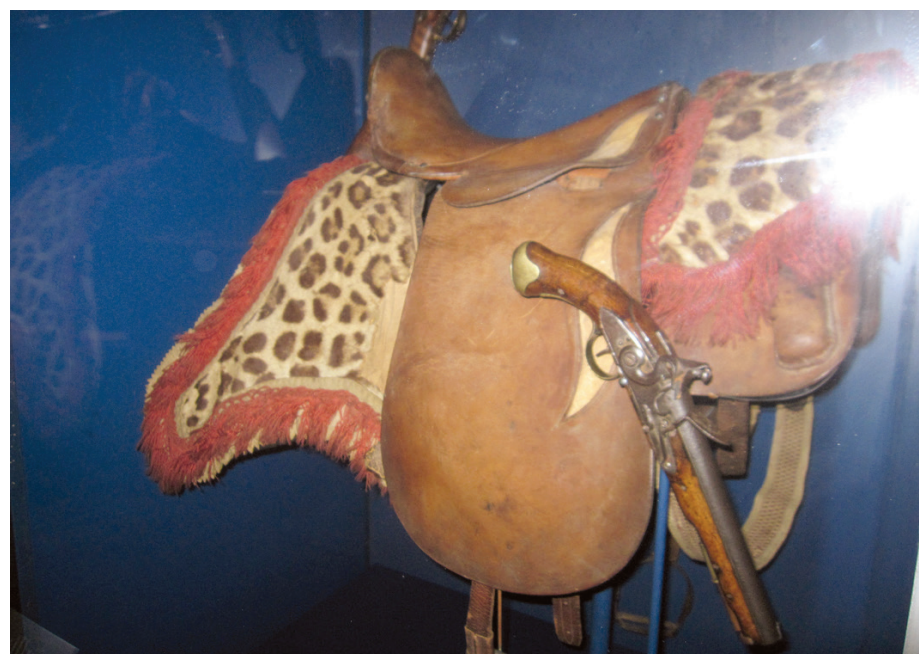
William Seymour served in the Delaware Regiment and wrote that many soldiers went barefoot and suffered "with the greatest patience imaginable."

ing," visitors take a visual and audio journey through 20 defining events of the war, from the Boston tea party to the signing of the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia where figures like Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and Benjamin Franklin "come alive." They actually talk.

In the "Noble Train of Artillery," some may be inspired to "help" the soldiers of 1775 who hauled 59 cannons 300 miles from Fort Ticonderoga to Boston. You may be tempted to cheer as you "stand on the street" in New York in 1776 as patriots topple the statue of the oppressor, Britain's King George III. Visitors can shiver with the troops at the frigid

SEE REVISITING, PAGE 9

One of the immersive scenes using the HistoPad is of colonists pulling down the statue of Britain's King George III.



Major James Drake's saddle has a pistol holder, silk fringe and is partly made of leopard skin.



Revisiting the Revolutionary War

FROM PAGE 8

1777 winter encampment of the Continental Army at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. In the “Creation of a Nation” segment, museum-goers are a fly on the wall inside Independence Hall in the room where the Continental Congress convened in Philadelphia.

Histover, the French company that made the exhibit, “combines world class scholarship and the best in immersive and 3D technologies to create unforgettable, interactive cultural experiences,” promotional materials say.

Call to Arms

A less drowning-the-senses experience is “Call to Arms, the Soldier and the Revolutionary War,” honoring the Army’s founding in 1775, on display through June 2027. “The Army’s history is America’s history,” a panel notes.

The 5,000-square-foot exhibit has 287 artifacts from the original colonies, England, France and Canada, including weapons, uniforms and tools. General George Washington’s silver mounted holster pistols, wooden canteens and weapons like the blunderbuss are among the items displayed.

Especially intriguing are the powder horns for storing weapons’ black powder; hence the saying, “Keep your powder dry.” Many have delicately hand-carved, individualized designs.

Seven cast figures offer the personal perspectives of real people in the war, including Daniel Nimham, the last chief of the Wap-pinger People, who fought with the patriots in Massachusetts; Sylvanus Wood, who captured the first British prisoner at Concord,



Revolutionary War soldiers carved their powder horns with intricate personalized designs.

Massachusetts; and Anna Maria Lane, who fought alongside her husband, John.

The Traditional Way

For museum visitors who prefer a more traditional stop-study-and-read browsing experience, check out the quiet corner of the Fight for the Nation Galleries and contemplate how before the nation had an army, local militias were the colonies’ defense. Washington and his officers had to corral and train a ragtag hodgepodge of amateur militias from the 13 colonies. Over time through several wars, the Army evolved to what it is today.

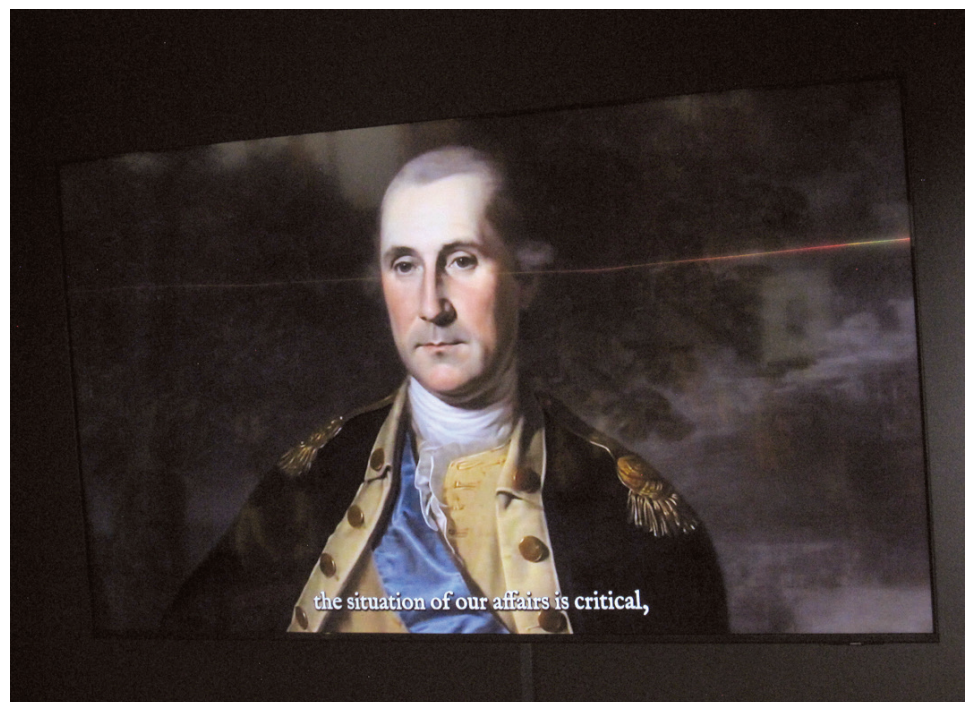
One panel quotes General Colin Powell in 2007: “The American soldier, whether it’s from the Revolutionary War period, Vietnam, World War II or the young men and women who are serving now ... they have never failed to answer the call.”

The museum is free and open seven days a week. Golf carts from the parking lot and wheelchairs are available.

Information
www.theNMUSA.org



Visitors can use a touchscreen device to activate voices and sounds in the augmented reality exhibit.



In the augmented reality exhibit, George Washington “speaks.”

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 GAZETTE

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

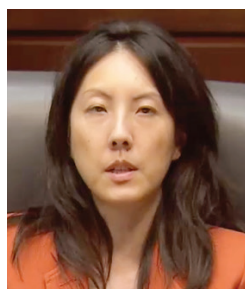
Beyer Urges Denial of Edsall Data Center Substation



Aisha Khan



U.S. Rep. Don Beyer



Alis Wang

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

BY MERCIA HOBSON
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

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 Save-BrenMar 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 Com-

missioner 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 close to residents."

AUGUST 6-20, 2026



DOMINION ENERGY / ERM PROJECT FILING

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.



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE GAZETTE

Representative Example: A high-voltage substation and backup generator array serving an existing data center in the Sully Square area of Herndon illustrates the scale of power infrastructure supporting data facilities in Fairfax County.

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 infrastruc-

ture 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 Coun-

ty 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.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Region Has Serious Drought, Rainfall Deficit

Officials urge saving water.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
THE GAZETTE

Virginia's Drought Monitoring Task Force updated the state's drought status on July 31: "The recent rain has prevented drought conditions from worsening, although severe drought continues in many parts of Virginia."

A drought warning advisory continues for Northern Virginia which includes Arlington, Fairfax, Fauquier, Loudoun, and Prince William counties and the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas and Manassas Park.

The Washington, D.C. region is on track to have its driest year in the last 20 years, officials say.

In its assessments, the Virginia task force uses four classifications, with the most severe being "emergency": normal, watch, warning and emergency. Officials factor in current and predicted precipitation, stream-flow, groundwater levels, reservoir levels, soil moisture, reported agriculture and water supply impacts and the current U.S. Drought Monitor map.

Rainfall Shortfall

The state's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) on July 31 cautioned, "Longer-term precipitation continues to show severe and expansive deficits, with the 180-day Standardized Precipitation Index

"Longer-term precipitation continues to show severe and expansive deficits."

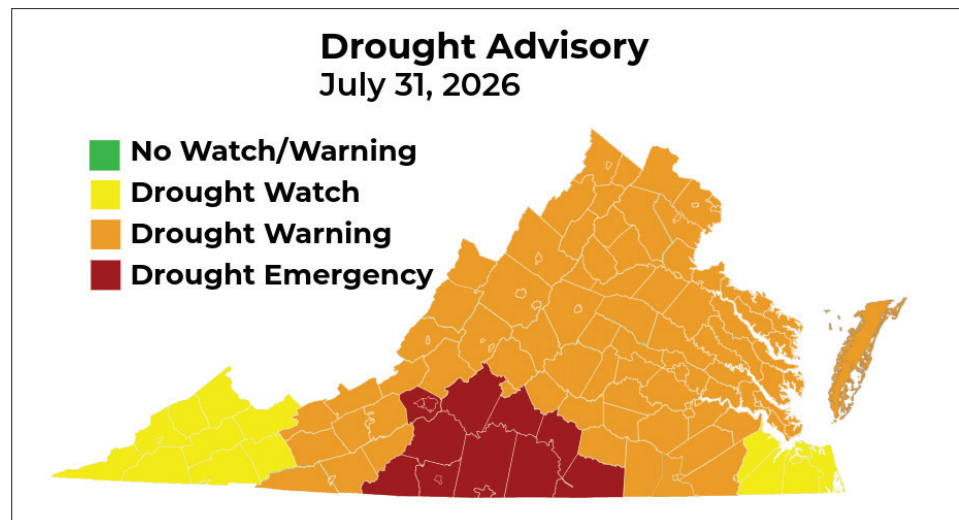
— Virginia DEQ

blend observation showing large areas of severe and extreme dryness throughout central and southcentral Virginia. Except for the Richmond area where normal year-to-date precipitation amounts are present, the rest of the Commonwealth is experiencing deficits ranging from 5.3 inches in Norfolk to 9.4 inches in Danville."

Weedon Cloe, DEQ Office of Water Supply manager, said, "The Northern Virginia drought evaluation region has received approximately 81 percent of the precipitation that would be typical for the water year, which began on October 1.

"Despite the recent rain, streamflows in the region are still well below normal. Groundwater has continued to decline. Of the five groundwater monitoring wells in Northern Virginia, four have water levels below the 10th percentile and the well in Prince William is at its lowest level recorded since 2002.

"We will need sustained, above average precipitation over the coming weeks and



VIRGINIA DEQ

This map shows the current drought advisories as established by the Drought Monitoring Task Force.



This stream in Great Falls National Park in Fairfax County was dry on Sunday morning, Aug. 1.

months for groundwater in the region to recharge."

As for drinking water supplies, "Fairfax Water continues to have adequate supply to meet current customer demand, and our systems are operating normally," emailed Susan Miller, Manager of Public Affairs. "We encourage customers to continue practicing wise water use, but overall water availability remains stable." Around 2.2 million people

in Northern Virginia depend on Fairfax Water for their drinking water.

According to the U.S. Drought Monitor's July 21 reading, Alexandria is in moderate drought, the second mildest of five categories.

Virginia American Water, which supplies water to Alexandria, asks residential customers to voluntarily reduce nonessential water use.

Toilets Can Save Water

"Design improvements have allowed toilets to use 1.28 gallons per flush or less while still providing equal or superior performance. Toilets are by far the main source of water use in the home, accounting for nearly 30 percent of an average home's indoor water consumption. Older, inefficient toilets that use as much as six gallons per flush also happen to be a major source of wasted water in many homes."

— U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

More Calls for Conservation

Governor Abigail Spanberger asks Virginians to voluntarily conserve water use. On June 18, she said, "a significant lack of precipitation has resulted in Virginia recording its driest period since 1941. Precipitation totals are approximately eight inches below average across much of the Commonwealth."

If drought conditions continue, the Governor can declare a drought emergency and by executive order implement mandatory water use restrictions for certain users and industries.

Tips for Conserving Water

The following suggestions for saving water are from multiple sources, including Fairfax Water.

- ❖ Reduce or stop lawn and garden watering.
- ❖ Only water between dusk and dawn to reduce evaporation.
- ❖ Plant drought-tolerant plants and reduce grass.
- ❖ Use mulch and leave the leaves.
- ❖ Turn off ornamental fountains.
- ❖ Limit filling of swimming pools.
- ❖ Do not hose sidewalks and driveways.
- ❖ Use a commercial car wash that recycles water.
- ❖ Reduce shower length.
- ❖ Turn off water while brushing teeth.
- ❖ Wash full loads of dishes and clothes.
- ❖ Keep a container of water in the refrigerator to avoid running water for a drink. Use one glass throughout a day.
- ❖ Do not run water to thaw food.
- ❖ Use a bowl of water to clean and prepare vegetables, instead of letting the faucet run.
- ❖ Compost instead of using a garbage disposal.
- ❖ Fix leaks.

Information

Virginia DEQ, <https://www.deq.virginia.gov/water/water-quantity/drought>

U.S. Drought Monitor, <https://drought-monitor.unl.edu/>

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, drought information: www.mwcog.org/environment/planning-areas/water-resources/drinking-water-and-drought-monitoring/current-drought-conditions/

ENTERTAINMENT

MEETS EVERY SUNDAY

Bird Walks. 8 a.m. At 6401 George Washington Memorial Parkway, Alexandria. Friends of Dyke Marsh organizers lead bird walks every Sunday morning. Meet at 8 a.m. in the south parking lot of the Belle Haven picnic area. Walks are led by experienced birders and everyone is welcome to join.

MEETS EVERY MONDAY

Monday Morning Bird Walk. 7 a.m. Meets at 3701 Lockheed Boulevard Alexandria. The Monday Morning Bird Walk is sponsored by the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park and takes place every Monday at 7 a.m. April-September and 8 a.m. October-March. Following the walk, members of the group gather at the nearby Denny's for breakfast and to compile the morning's bird list. Call (703) 768-2525.

Wednesday Nights

Wednesday Night Bingo. 7 p.m. At Atlas Brew Works, 2429 Mandeville Lane, Alexandria. The Capital City Showcase, the company that brings you some of the DC area's best events, is hosting an amazing night of everyone's favorite game at Atlas Brew Works Alexandria. Win prizes on every round, and the winner of the final round gets a \$50 Atlas Brew Works gift card for your next visit! There's also \$6 select Atlas drafts! Plus pizza served from the world famous Andy's Pizza! Email at capitalcityshowcase@gmail.com

MGNV PLANT CLINICS ARE OPEN

The Alexandria Old Town Farmer's Market Plant Clinic at 301 King St., Alexandria operates on Saturdays from 7 - 9:30 a.m. Del Ray Farmers Market Plant Clinic at Oxford & Mt. Vernon Avenues, Alexandria operates on Saturdays from 8:30 - 11 a.m. The Arlington Farmers' Market at N. 14th and N. Courthouse Roads, Arlington operates on Saturdays from 8 - 11 a.m. The Fairlington Farmers' Market Plant Clinic at 3308 S. Stafford St., Arlington, operates on Sundays from 9 - 11 a.m.

YEAR ROUND ON SUNDAYS

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

NOW THRU SEPT. 13

Rebecca J. White Birth of a Torii. At the Athenaenaeum, Alexandria. The "Birth of a Torii" series re-imagines the origin of a torii, a traditional Japanese gate to a sacred space or shrine. In Rebecca's work, torii's are placed as a mark of reverence or divine protection.

NOW THRU SEPT. 17

Summer Concerts at Carlyle Crossing. 6-8 p.m. At Carlyle Crossing, 2455 Mandeville Lane, Alexandria. Beginning June 11 and continuing through Sept. 17, the free outdoor series will bring an eclectic lineup of local and regional musicians to the plaza on select Thursday evenings, creating a lively gathering place for residents, visitors, and the surrounding community.

Concert dates:

August 6 – Eric Scott (Modern Soul, Funk & Groove)
August 20 – Seneca Creek (Bluegrass)
September 3 – Femi and the Foundation (Funk, Rock, Hip-Hop, R&B)
September 17 – Sol Roots (Funk, Blues, Soul & Rock)

NOW THRU SEPT. 30

Spiritual Expressions: Differences and Similarities Exhibit. At Mount Vernon Unitarian Church Art Alcove, 1909 Windmill Lane, Alexandria. Digital photographic images by Jeanne Tift. Contact: Nina Tisara, ninat@ninatisara.com, 703-625-8313.



The Port to Port Beer Festival takes place Saturday, Aug. 8, 2026 at Port City Brewing Company in Alexandria.

AUG. 7-29

The ChronoScape: Artistic Explorations of Time Travel. At Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Art exhibit explores humanity's enduring fascination with time travel. Join us for an experience that challenges and celebrates the infinite paths of time from ancient worlds to speculative futures. Opening Reception: Friday, August 7, 2026 from 7-9 p.m. Gallery hours are Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays & Sundays 12-6 p.m. Details at DelRayArtisans.org/exhibit.

FRIDAY/AUG. 7

Øra nØir Presents: Kapwa. 7 p.m. At the Athenaeum, Alexandria. An Evening of Live Saxophone Quartet. Join Øra nØir for Kapwa, a program exploring connection, memory, community, and shared humanity through the expressive sound of the saxophone quartet. Taking its title from Tyree Nesbitt's "Kapwa", a work inspired by the Filipino concept of "shared self," the program brings together music by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, George Walker, Jeff Scott, and Tyree Nesbitt. Through moments of lyricism, reflection, and celebration, Kapwa invites audiences into a musical experience centered on storytelling and mutual care.

SATURDAY/AUG. 8

Port to Port Beer Festival. 12-4 p.m. At Port City Brewing Company, 3950 Wheeler Ave., Alexandria. Twenty featured breweries include Perennial Artisan Ales and Great Lakes all the way from St. Louis, MO and Cleveland, OH, respectively, alongside DMV favorites like The Veil and Pen Druid. Visit www.portcitybrewing.com

SATURDAY/AUG. 8

The Music of Words. Featuring The Band Experiment. 6-8 p.m. At the Athenaeum,

Alexandria. KaNikki Jakarta presents The Music of Words featuring The Band Experiment. Join in a night of soulful music and fulfilling poetry. Arrive when the doors open to enjoy complimentary appetizers and beverages. Witness what transpires when poetry and music collide!

AUG. 14-23

Alexandria Restaurant Week. For 10 days and two weekends, restaurants across Alexandria will offer prix fixe dinner menus you won't find any other time of year. <https://visitaalexandria.com/restaurants/restaurant-week>

SEPT. 4-26

Celebrating Hispanic Heritage: Voices Through Visuals Art Exhibit. At Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave, Alexandria. This exhibit honors Hispanic culture, and its rich traditions, resilience, and artistic contributions through a range of media and perspectives, and explores themes like heritage, migration, family, cultural pride, and transformation. Opening Reception: Friday, September 4 from 7-9 p.m. Gallery hours are Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays & Sundays 12-6 p.m. Details at DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

SATURDAY/SEPT. 5

First Saturday Used Book Sale: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. at Sherwood Regional Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane. Selection of over 20,000 gently used children's books, fiction, history, biography, home and garden, cooking, crafts, sports, religion, travel, CDs, DVDs, and more. Unless specially priced, \$1 for hard backs and large paperbacks, and 25 cents for mass market paperbacks. Open every day, various hours. Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/friends-of-sherwood-regional> for information on other days and times for

the library's ongoing book sale.

WEDNESDAY/SEPT. 23

The Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber of Commerce's 29th Annual Chamber Golf Classic. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Laurel Hill Golf Club, 8701 Laurel Crest Drive, Lorton. For almost thirty years, this popular event has provided more than \$365,000 in scholarships for local high school students to study business, preparing the next generation of business and community leaders.

THE BIRCHMERE

At 3701 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. All shows are at 7:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted. Tickets available at Ticketmaster.com. Contact The Birchmere at 703-549-7500 or www.Birchmere.com.

AUGUST

Wed. 5: Three Dog Night \$95.00 (Rescheduled from 7/2. All 7/2 tix honored)
Thu. 6: Dave Hollister \$69.50
Fri. 7: Take Me Home: A Tribute to the Music of John Denver starring Jim Curry \$35.00
Sat. 8: 1964: The Tribute \$45.00
Sun. 9: An Evening with Hot Tuna - Acoustic \$79.50
Thu. 13: Sara Evans w/ Braden Hull \$69.50
Fri. 14: Who's Bad: The World's Greatest Michael Jackson Experience \$39.50
Sat. 15: Matthew Whitaker \$45.00
Thu. 20: An Evening with NRBQ & The Whole Wheat Horns \$39.50
Fri. 21: Robert Earl Keen w/ Race Ricketts \$69.50
Sat. 22: Robert Earl Keen w/ Race Ricketts \$69.50
Sun. 23: Robert Earl Keen w/ Race Ricketts \$69.50
Tue. 25: Robert Glasper \$79.50
Fri. 28: Raheem DeVaughn \$85.00

Drowning Is Silent. Prevention Is Not.

Drowning prevention starts before a child ever enters the water.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE GAZETTE

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."

REMEMBRANCE

Janet Howell (1944–2026)

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE GAZETTE

Former Virginia state Sen. Janet Howell, D-Reston, who served from 1992 to 2024, died Aug. 2 at age 82. Tributes poured in Monday morning from leaders across the state.

Gov. Abigail Spanberger, D-Va., called Howell a "fierce advocate for strengthening Virginia's schools" who "set a powerful example for so many of the women who have followed her in Virginia politics."

U.S. Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., noted that for more than three decades, she championed public education, mental health, women's rights and so much more.

Senate President Pro Tempore L. Louise Lucas, D-Portsmouth, honored Howell, commending her trailblazing work which "touched the lives of countless Virginia families, and our Commonwealth is stronger because of it."

As Virginia Senate Majority Leader Scott Surovell posted in part Sunday afternoon, Howell "served Northern Virginia with fierce determination, sharp intellect, and unwavering integrity. ... She paved the way for generations of women leaders while leaving an indelible mark on our Commonwealth's

budget, mental health system, and public schools."

Sen. Jennifer Boysko, D-Fairfax, described Howell as a "model, a mentor, [and] a leader," adding "I send love, peace and comfort to her husband Hunt and to all who knew & admired her."

During her 32 years in the Virginia Senate, one of Howell's most influential legislative legacies was spearheading the overhaul of state mental health laws following the 2007 Virginia Tech mass shooting. Her landmark reforms overhauled the state's involuntary commitment process, improved emergency evaluations and expanded funding for local community services boards.

Howell also led a legislative overhaul of Virginia's family violence statutes, strengthening protective order enforcement and toughening penalties for sexual predators. She carried key safety legislation, such as Senate Bill 479, requiring individuals subject to final protective orders for domestic violence to surrender or transfer their firearms.

As a senior member of the Privileges and Elections Committee, Howell helped spearhead voting expansion bills, including establishing no-excuse absentee voting in 2020. She also made history as the first woman to chair the Senate Finance and Appropriations



PHOTO VIA WIKIPEDIA

Janet Howell poses for a photo in 2019. Elected to the Senate of Virginia in 1991, she represented the 32nd district in Fairfax County and portions of Arlington County until 2024. She died on August 2, 2026.

Former Virginia state senator blazed trails changing the state.

Committee. Additionally, Howell authored legislation shielding genetic data privacy, prohibiting insurers and employers from discriminating based on genetic testing.

Howell lived in Reston for decades and was deeply involved in local civic organizations, serving as president of the Reston Community Association and receiving the "Restonian of the Year" award in 1984. She retired at the end of her term in early 2024. Jennifer Boysko won the newly created 38th Senate District — including Herndon, Reston and McLean — succeeding Howell.

Howell also co-authored, with her daughter-in-law, Theresa Howell, a children's book, "Leading the Way: Women in Power" in 2019.

Howell received a B.A. degree from Oberlin College and an M.A. degree from the University of Pennsylvania; she taught as a public school teacher in the Philadelphia school district in her early career (1968-1969) and served as a legislative assistant in the Virginia House of Delegates from 1989-1991. She also served as chair of the Virginia State Board of Social Services (1986-1991).

Howell is survived by her husband, Alfred Hunt Howell (married in 1966), two adult sons, Eric Howell and Brian Howell, and three grandchildren. Funeral arrangements have not yet been announced.

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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
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VIRGINIA TREASURY
Stewardship • Integrity • Excellence

WHAT
BROKE



WHAT
THEY CLAIMED



Their lies come out of your wallet. Insurance fraud costs everyone in Virginia \$1,000 per year. Learn how to spot it and report it at TheCostOfFraud.com.

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Non-fatal Officer Shooting Incident

Suspect Charged with Attempted Disarming of a Law Enforcement Officer.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE GAZETTE

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 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 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.

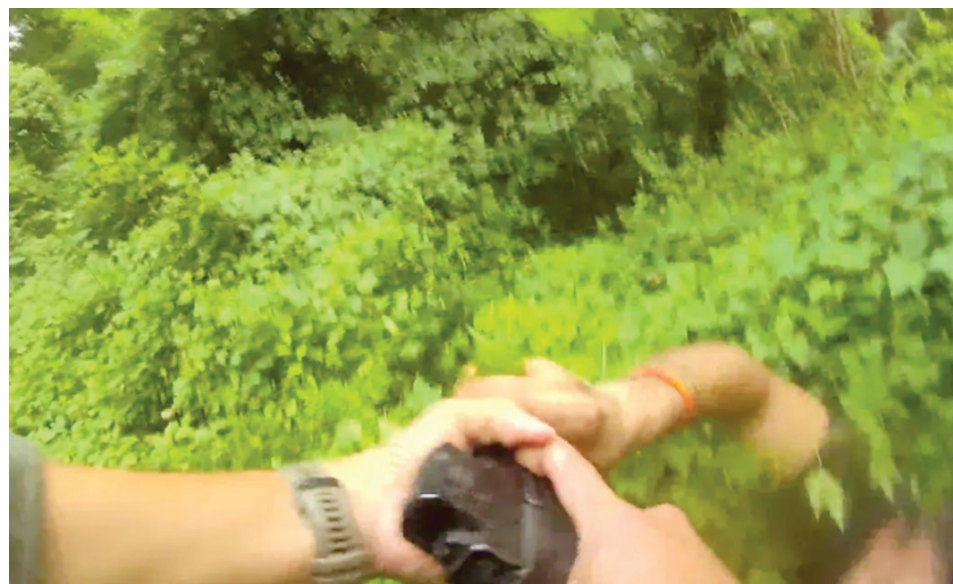
Davis emphasized the importance of body camera footage in providing transparency: "It informs not only law enforcement leadership about what happened, but it puts me in a position to share that information and those facts with the community." He added: "There should be no such thing as a police officer 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



COURTESY FCPD

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



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.



SCREEN CAPTURE FACEBOOK FCPD

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

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.

"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.



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