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SEPTEMBER 3, 2026

Protecting the Right to Vote Still Requires Vigilance



Women's Equality Day, Aug. 26, attracted 315 people to Lorton's Turning Point Suffragist Memorial.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
THE GAZETTE

Legendary country music singer Dolly Parton may be an atypical woman activist, but on Aug. 26, one day after she died, she was honored at Lorton's Turning Point Suffragist Memorial.

NOVA Parks Executive Director Justin Wilson told the 315 celebrants who gathered for Women's Equality Day that Parton wrote a song titled "19th Amendment" about the U.S. Constitutional amendment, certified on Aug. 26, 1920, that gave some women in the United States the right to vote.

Wilson shared some of Parton's lyrics: "There was just so much back then we weren't allowed to do, but the first bite of that apple I guess revealed the truth. That's when Eve got smart and that's why Adam don't like fruit. ... We had to fight for women's rights."

Calling the area a "sacred site," Wilson explained that in 1917 suffragists called the Silent Sentinels peacefully picketing on the White House sidewalk for the right to vote were jailed in the Occoquan Workhouse.

Pat Wirth who led the memorial's fund raising and building reminded all, "It is a national memorial. It took millions of dollars." Its name comes from the 1917 "night of terror" when prison guards brutally treated the jailed women and word leaked out, news that nudged a recalcitrant President Woodrow Wilson to support the amendment.



Virginia Lt. Governor Ghazala Hashmi gave the keynote address for Women's Equality Day at the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial.

His change of mind was a turning point in the suffrage movement.

Hashmi, a Historic First

Introducing the keynoter, Virginia's Lieutenant Governor Ghazala Hashmi, Camdyn Parker, a 13-year

cookie mom," Hashmi highlighted three key words: persistence, vigilance and engagement. She applauded two South Carolina, enslaved women, Sarah and Angelina Grimke, who in the 19th century agitated for both slavery's abolition and women's rights and challenged the notion that women should stay in the home.

"She made the radical argument that went to the very heart of democracy," Hashmi said. "How can a nation claim that it was ruled by the consent of the governed while systematically excluding half of its citizens from political power?"

Hashmi saluted other heroines, including the late African-American U.S. Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm. Hashmi said, "It's a democratic philosophy that argues if one is excluded, enter. If the in-

Alexandria Girl Scout, said that Hashmi "made history" in 2026 as the first Muslim woman elected statewide in the United States, remarking, "Her election represents a more inclusive democracy."

Dubbing herself a "Girl Scout

"If one is excluded, enter. If the institution was not designed with you in mind, change it. And once you have a seat, make room for someone else."

— Lt. Gov. Ghazala Hashmi

SEE PROTECTING THE, PAGE 9



Justin Wilson, NOVA Parks Executive Director, welcomed attendees.



Laura Greenfield, AAUW Virginia President, described her group's projects.



Patricia Wirth relayed the memorial's history.



Nancy Tate, national League of Women Voters President, said that challenges to voting still persist today.

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH

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News

The August Alexandria Would Rather Forget

And the Discovery That Just Rewrote It.

BY DAVID HEIBY
HISTORIAN

Two hundred twelve years ago this month, Alexandria lived through the most humiliating week in its history — and thanks to a discovery made this past January in a box at the Alexandria Library, we now know the full story of the scandal it left behind.

In late August 1814, days after British infantry under Major General Robert Ross captured and burned Washington, a separate arm of the same campaign — a naval squadron of seven warships — worked its way up the Potomac. The squadron moved under Captain James Alexander Gordon, a one legged Scot who had served under Lord Nelson and whose career, some historians believe, later inspired the fictional Captain Horatio Hornblower. Sent upriver as a diversion and a second line of attack, the squadron became the whole show once Fort Warburton's commander blew up his own fort without firing a shot: nothing now stood between Gordon's guns and Alexandria's waterfront.

The town had already tried diplomacy. On Aug. 25, as a violent storm lashed the burning capital, a small Alexandria delegation, led by the Reverend James Muir of the Presbyterian Meeting House, with the Reverend William Wilmer and Dr. Elisha Cullen Dick, the physician who attended George Washington at his death, fought through the tempest to seek assurances from the British. Four days later, Gordon anchored his squadron in battle formation a few hundred yards from the town's piers and dictated his terms: all naval stores, all shipping, all merchandise. Mayor Charles Simms and the Common Council had one hour to answer. Defenseless, they agreed.

For three days the British loaded their prizes: 16,000 barrels of flour; a thousand hogsheads of tobacco; 150 bales of cotton; wine, sugar, and cigars; plus 21 vessels from the port. Residents had evacuated their horses, so British sailors hitched themselves to the carts and hauled the plunder through the streets like draft animals.

Newspapers across the young nation branded Alexandrians cowards; a mocking cartoon showed the town's citizens groveling before John Bull.

There were moments of defiance. Navy Captain David Porter, watching from Shuter's Hill, now the site of the George Washington Masonic National Memorial, tried to capture a British midshipman caught plundering, a scuffle that nearly brought the fleet's guns down on the town. And when Gordon finally sailed on Sept. 1, it was because American batteries were rising downriver at the White House Landing near

Belvoir. For four days his squadron ran a gauntlet of cannon fire.

Among the twelve Americans killed was 27-year-old Private Robert Allison Jr., grandson of town founder William Ramsay, who rests today in the Presbyterian Cemetery. The enraged British response led directly to the bombardment of Fort McHenry — and "The Star Spangled Banner."

The bitterest wound, though, was self-inflicted. In January 1815, the Alexandria Gazette accused a "highly respectable citizen" of treasonously suppressing an intercepted British withdrawal order during the occupation. The target was merchant Anthony Charles Cazenove —

Swiss-born, a pillar of the town, later host to Lafayette. The charge shadowed his name for two centuries.

Then, this past Jan. 15, historian Catherine Weinraub opened Box 240 of the Cazenove Family Papers in the Alexandria Library's Special Collections and found a roughly 20-page family letter — including General John Mason's sworn testimony to Congress — proving Cazenove had handled the intercepted letter exactly as Secretary of State James Monroe's orders directed, by a method Mason explicitly approved. The accusation was Federalist political revenge against a man who had bought U.S. war bonds. After 210 years, the evidence fully vindicates him.

Cazenove rests in the Presbyterian Cemetery, near Allison and General Robert Young, who commanded the batteries that drove the British away. His epitaph reads "universally respected and beloved." Now we can prove the town was right all along.

The Cazenove letter was discovered by historian Catherine Weinraub of Gravestone Stories, who also serves as Historian/Research Assistant for the Ivy Hill Cemetery Historical Preservation Society.

A frequent research collaborator with the author, her archival work made that portion of this story possible.

David Heiby is a public historian, Superintendent of the Presbyterian Cemetery in Alexandria, and creator of Gravestone Stories (gravestonestories.com), where he shares the history buried beneath our feet. He serves as Treasurer of the Alexandria Historical Society, on Alexandria's America250 Committee, and as Treasurer of the Virginia Trust for Historic Preservation, which owns the historic Lee-Fendall House in Alexandria — where he often portrays Emanuel Ethelbert "E.E." Downham, one of Alexandria's mayors of the 1890s and a colorful figure in the city from 1862 until his passing in 1921.

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OBITUARY

Michael J. Oliver

Community leader,
'Santa' and Living
Legend dies at 88.

BY JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

To generations young and old across the city, Mike Oliver was Santa. It was a role he embodied for decades, even insisting on being photographed in his trademark attire when selected as a Living Legend of Alexandria in 2012. On Aug. 13 the jolly sound of holiday magic fell silent as Oliver died peacefully at his home at the age of 88.

Oliver's passing marks the loss of one of Alexandria's most beloved volunteers, mentors and joyful ambassadors of goodwill.

"Mike was such a jovial and friendly guy," said Janet Barnett, former executive director of Senior Services of Alexandria. "He never turned down a request to play Santa at city events and would visit senior citizen communities when asked. We need many more Mike Oliver's."

Born on February 9, 1938, in Parkersburg, West Virginia, Michael J. Oliver was the second son of Arthur Gregory Oliver Sr. and Lura Burt Oliver. From childhood, he absorbed the values that would define his life — humility, responsibility and a deep commitment to helping others. His father, who served as Santa's local alter ego for the Community Chest, modeled a spirit of generosity and delight that Oliver would carry forward for decades. From the Santa suit to the sleigh bells, Oliver honored his father by wearing the same attire worn by his father decades before him.

Oliver graduated from West Virginia University in 1961 with a degree in Political Science and was a proud member of Beta Theta Pi. A blind date arranged by a fraternity brother introduced him to Mary Linda Burks, the woman who would become his partner in love and service for more than 60 years. They married on Dec. 27, 1961, shortly after Oliver completed basic training at Fort Knox.

A dedicated member of the U.S. Army Reserves, Oliver attained the rank of Sergeant First Class in the 80th Division — his father's World War I unit — before retiring in 1973. After early years in Richmond working for VEPCO, the Oliver family settled permanently in Alexandria's Beverley Hills neighborhood in 1967. There Oliver began a 35-year career with the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, later the Department of Education, serving as a Student Financial Aid Specialist. He retired in 2000 leaving behind a legacy of integrity and compassion, helping generations of students access opportunity.

Oliver's volunteerism was vast and deeply rooted in faith. At The Episcopal Church of St. Clement, he served in countless roles over more than 40 years including Sunday School teacher, Vestry member, Junior and Senior Warden, Christmas tree seller and



Mike Oliver, a Living Legend of Alexandria, died Aug. 13 at the age of 88.

Friends of Alexandria Mental Health Center, the Scholarship Fund of Alexandria and the American Red Cross. He donated more than 35 gallons of blood and platelets over his lifetime.

Oliver was also a devoted PTA leader, serving as president at George Mason, Minnie Howard, and T.C. Williams, and later as president of the Alexandria PTA Council. He coached Alexandria Soccer Association teams throughout the 1970s and was a life-long cheerleader at T.C. Williams football and basketball games, where he and his wife Linda were affectionately known as "Grandpa and Grandma Titan."

But to generations of Alexandria children, Oliver was best known as Santa Claus's number-one helper. For more than 25 years, he donned the red suit at Market Square, Del Ray, North Ridge, Carpenter's Shelter and countless schools and community events. He never accepted payment, instead requesting donations to the ALIVE! Child Development Center. His gentle presence, booming laugh and authentic joy made him a treasured part of the city's holiday traditions.

Oliver embraced life with curiosity and delight. He loved bluegrass, Celtic and folk music; explored museums with enthusiasm; and found peace in trout fishing, camping, canoeing, birdwatching, reading and napping. He shared a lifelong love of trains with his brother Art, a passion passed down from their father and lovingly passed on to his grandson William.

Some of Oliver's happiest days were spent at Shrine Mont in the Shenandoah Valley, where generations of St. Clement families gathered for fellowship. There, he became a legend for teaching children to fish using leftover mac and cheese as bait, a memory cherished by all who witnessed it.

In recognition of his decades of service, Oliver was named the Alexandria Times' Citizen of the Year in 2007 and honored as a Living Legend of Alexandria in 2012, an accolade reserved for those whose contributions have shaped the city's character and strengthened its spirit.

Oliver is survived by his wife, Linda; daughter Kathleen Oliver of Ashburn; daughter Sarah Maceyak and husband Brian of Manassas; and his cherished grandson, William Ronan Maceyak. He is also survived by sister-in-law Margie Oliver; niece Mary Ann Hoel and husband Jeff; and nephew

a dependable presence in the church's Overnight Hypothermia Shelter.

Oliver's service extended across Alexandria through ALIVE!, Carpenter's Shelter, the North Ridge Citizens' Association, Alexandria Soccer Association, Network Preschool,



Mike Oliver reads to children in the ALIVE! Program.

PHOTO/ALIVE!

"We need
many
more Mike
Oliver's."

— Former
SSA executive
director
Janet Barnett

PHOTO BY
NINA TISARA/
TISARA STUDIOS

For decades
Mike Oliver
donned a Santa
suit for events
across the city.



© Nina Tisara



PHOTO BY JEANNE THEISMANN/GAZETTE PACKET

Mike Oliver celebrates St. Patrick's Day at a campaign kick off for Del Pepper.

John Oliver and wife Robin. He was predeceased by his parents and his brother, Art Oliver Jr.

A gathering of friends will be held at Everly-Wheatley Funeral Home, 1500 W. Brad-dock Road, on Sept. 11 from 2-4 p.m. and 6-8 p.m. A Celebration of Life will follow at The Episcopal Church of St. Clement, 1701 N. Quaker Lane, on Sept. 12 at 10:30 a.m. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made

to The Episcopal Church of St. Clement, ALIVE!, or The Goodwin Living Foundation.

Michael J. Oliver lived with purpose, faith and love. He answered every call to serve. And in doing so, he made Alexandria a kinder, stronger, more compassionate community. His legacy endures in the countless lives he touched and the example he leaves behind: a life lived generously, joyfully, and with an open heart.



Tom Cat Reeder with Dolly Parton in Mount Vernon more than 50 years ago.



PHOTOS BY BILL IVEY / CENTRAL PHOTO COMPANY PHOTOS COURTESY OF ROSEMARY IVEY ANTOSHAK
Dolly Parton with a Mount Vernon fan.

Dolly Parton's Legacy Includes 1975 Show at (Old) Mount Vernon High School

She was part of an "all star shindig" that night, Sept. 28, 1975.

BY MIKE SALMON
THE GAZETTE

As the nation mourns country music great Dolly Parton, some of the residents in Mount Vernon feel a little closer to this country music legend because some 51 years ago, Parton put on a show at Mount Vernon High School with a few other country musicians to put the school on the map.

On the official scheduling announcement, Dolly Parton was part of the cast of this "all star shindig," it says. The date was Sept. 28, 1975 and the other musicians included Freddy Fender, Lester Flatt, and Moe Bandy. Admission was \$3.50-\$5.50. Lester Flatt was more famous for his part in the "Flatt and Scruggs" duo that became famous for the Beverly Hillbillies theme song among others. That theme song was officially known as "The Ballad of Jed Clampett."

Allen Case-Sipes was at the Mount Vernon High School show. "I saw Dolly a few times around there, she played a few of the high schools," he said. At Mount Vernon, "she played in like a cafeteria," he recalled. Sipes attended Wakefield High School at the time but traveled around to see country music whenever he had the chance. "We knew each other, Dolly and I did," he said.

This wasn't Parton's first gig at schools in this part of Fairfax County. In 1974, she played at Hayfield Secondary School and Edison High School.

Nashville resident Rosemary Ivey was 14 at the time of the concert and lived in Arlington but she did not like country music, so she declined an invitation to go. But her father Bill Ivey went up there with his camera. He owned a local photography business called Central Photo and took a few pictures of Dolly

Parton at Mount Vernon High School that night. Those photos are part of Central's collection and his niece Madeleine Ivey still runs the operation.

On the Central website, they noted past achievements. "Hailed as 'an American icon' by The Washington Post and recognized by the Library of Congress, Central Photo has photographed Presidents Harry S. Truman and John F. Kennedy, Dolly Parton, generations of students and travelers from around the world," the website reads.

The Commons Mount Vernon

The old Mount Vernon High School is now under redevelopment into an arts and entertainment venue renamed "The Commons." When it opens in the spring of 2027, "entertainment and arts is going to be a big part of that venue," said Dot Johnson, a Mount Vernon resident and a staff member in the Mount Vernon District supervisor's office.

The Commons Mount Vernon is the new name for this "Human Development Center," according to its website.

The 149,000 square foot facility will include:

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<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/capital-projects/the-commons-mount-vernon>



Dolly Parton.

NEWS

Lyles Brothers Compete at USATF Nationals

Noah wins 3rd Straight national 100m title.

BY DERRICK TOUBA JR.
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE PACKET

Alexandria's own Noah Lyles claimed his third national title in the 100 meters at the 2026 USATF Outdoor Championships, running a world-leading 9.79 seconds at New York's Icahn Stadium on July 24, tying his own personal best.

Lyles opened the meet by winning his heat in 9.97 seconds, then blistered his semifinal in 9.76, the fastest time of the round. He credited a training session earlier in the week.

"Last Thursday, in practice, I ran a hand-timed 9.6. So, yeah, I knew that 9.7 was coming soon," Lyles said.

He waved off any suggestion that his recent string of fast times has been anything but expected.

"Seeing it once is nice to see. Seeing it twice is a confidence booster. Seeing it three weeks in a row, that's no inconsistency. That's okay, it's gonna hit one of these days," he said.

In the final, Lyles held off Christian Coleman, who ran 9.93 to finish fourth after winning his own heat (9.96) and semifinal (9.90).

"Christian was on it. He was starting to look like 2019 Christian out there. I was like, put your hand in the pocket and don't let them go. Whenever you take the first two steps, my hand is right in that pocket. This is my race to win," Lyles said.

He framed the win as a response to offseason doubts about whether he remained the sport's top sprinter.

"I think I made that I'm-still-the-world's-fastest-man statement. Everybody's going to tighten up now, because if they're playing around, I must be winning tag," Lyles said.

Two days later, his bid for a record sixth national 200m title ended abruptly. After winning his heat in 20.51, he pulled up about halfway through the final with what he described as a cramping sensation in his hamstring, finishing the race at a jog in 50.88. Garrett Kaalund won the title in 20.04.

"Everything was going fine," Lyles told NBC Sports' Lewis Johnson afterward. "I came off the turn, and I just felt the grabbing sensation. I was like, this is the time to stop. It was somewhat of a cramp. I'm fine, I just need to be stretched out, get some electrolytes in my

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PHOTO @DELLSPOV

Noah Lyles celebrates as he crosses the finish line after winning his third straight 100m national title.

system, but I'll be good."

Also an Alexandria native, Noah's younger brother Josephus Lyles competed in both the 100m and 200m but didn't advance past the early rounds in either. A former USATF 200m finalist and longtime fixture on the national sprint scene, he won his opening 100m heat in

"This is my race to win."
— Noah Lyles on the 100m USATF race

10.26 to reach the semifinals, then ran 10.16 in his semifinal, good for 8th in that heat and not enough to advance.

In the 200m, he was eliminated after the first round, finishing 6th in his heat in 21.14.

For Josephus, the 100m marked his first race back after a lingering Achilles issue. "It wasn't too bad. We've always had some Achilles

issues, so it was my first race in a while. I'll try to get some practice in, some runs in, and I'll feel it better. But for a first race back, I'm pretty happy with it," he said.

He said the road back has only recently become consistent. "I had some issues in the past, so it's been off-and-on training. The last two weeks I've been able to train consistently, but before that, it was hit or miss," Josephus Lyles said.

Asked what part of his race has been hardest to recover, he pointed to acceleration.

"Definitely the acceleration. It's a lot harder to push really hard when you're still feeling it. But I'm still pretty happy with it. Can't complain," he said.

As for the rest of the season, Josephus wasn't ready to commit to a plan.

SEE LYLES BROTHERS, PAGE 6

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Lyles Brothers Compete at USATF Nationals

FROM PAGE 5

"We'll see. I'm taking it day by day," he said.

Noah, on the other hand, had a more concrete answer. With 2026 being the rare year without an Olympics or World Outdoor Championships, he made clear the 200m

setback wasn't one he was too worried about, with his sights already set on the World Athletics Ultimate Championship in Budapest this September.

"It is an off year, but some people take off year as a year not to do stuff. I'm winning and still doing

stuff. We're not particularly looking to peak at any certain meet, but of course, we have ultimate this year. I plan to win that. I'm trying to stay in shape all the way till then, so that means I'm going to show up every time I race," Noah Lyles said.



PHOTO BY JOSH SAWYER

Noah Lyles celebrates with champion Garrett Kaalund after pulling up in the 200m.



PHOTO @DELLSPOV

Noah Lyles on the starting line before the 100m preliminary heat.

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LIVING LEGENDS

Living Legends of Alexandria

Patrick O'Brien – Expanding Digital Horizons.

BY SUSAN LAUME
GAZETTE PACKET

In the 1990s, libraries faced a new and existential challenge — the development of revolutionary digital computer technology. During that period, household ownership of computers doubled, bringing information to one's fingertips at many homes, seemingly with less need to travel to local libraries. Given libraries' ancient beginnings in the Fertile Crescent about 2500 BCE, and their on-going changes over centuries, one might be forgiven for comparing the '90s struggle of libraries to adapt to the computer internet age to Sisyphus' labors with the boulder on the hill.

It was just at that time, in 1992, that Patrick O'Brien came to Alexandria's Library system as the new director. Born in Rhode Island on Saint Patrick's Day, O'Brien had moved around the country to create a career as a librarian, working in several large libraries, including Chicago and Dallas. He accepted the Alexandria job in 1992 after the oil bust in Texas saw funding for libraries there shrinking. He relates, although coming to a much smaller system in Alexandria, he was pleased to find a "welcoming community with total support of library services".

That support included plans, underway when O'Brien arrived, to expand the Queen Street central library to nearly double its size. Under his experienced eye, the existing plan received new scrutiny. Noting missing design elements, he championed use of a professional community needs assessment to review the expansion plans. That review led to a decision to instead build the larger Charles E. Beatley Jr. Library on Duke Street. The new design included a community meeting room, parking and other amenities beyond the original plan for expansion of stack space. It opened in 2000, becoming the new central library. At the time it opened, its new building design and layout, with input from O'Brien, provided an example of how a modern, well-designed building facility could help connect the Alexandria Library to the many diverse needs of its community members.

During the period of O'Brien's directorship, the city's other library branches, the Kate Waller Barrett and the Ellen Coolidge Burke branches, built in 1937 and 1968 respectively, also came under revision under his supervision. In a checkerboard collection of growth and moves, the system saw Beatley house the central collection in its new location; Barrett added space for the city's historic and genealogical research collec-

tions; and Burke closed, with its collection moved to Barrett, then reopened again with a smaller presence. All these major moves, which might have again ignited thoughts of Sisyphus, O'Brien accomplished, calling it all, "A matter of good planning to move the

"My goal was always to elevate the public library to the most used of all public services of the city of Alexandria."

— Alexandria Living Legend Patrick O'Brien

collections and reorient the stars."

When O'Brien arrived in Alexandria, not only did he come to a city in the midst of growing library service needs, he arrived as the city was poised to make decisions about public internet access. Part of his modernization of library services included providing for access to digital services. He sought out seats on the two boards tasked with incorporating the city's technology plans: the Cable Television Commission and the Task Force on Information Technology. As he describes,

"hitting it off" with the cable company provider president, and recognizing the CEO's passion for the new technology, O'Brien was able to secure the donation of two internet capable computers for the Ellen Coolidge Burke Branch to test public library high speed World Wide Web access.

Web access was the first step in bringing information technology to the library, the first area library to do so. O'Brien also designed the library's first web site. It became the first for an Alexandria City department. As information technology systems expanded, O'Brien oversaw the introduction of the first 24/7 remote access to library resources for library patrons. Today many library services are accessed online by patrons, including by those without internet service in their homes. It allowed students to expand their knowledge, complete homework and assure all students had the same internet access regardless of whether there was access to a home computer. The library service also provided adults without home internet service or computers the ability to connect for increasingly necessary computer functions and tasks; as diverse as completing job applications, paying

bills, or just enjoying entertainment. The current cable provider continues to provide free internet service to city libraries, which O'Brien first championed, for an annual savings of about \$35,000.

Even with generous city support, Alexandria's budget experienced periods when the library was asked to reduce expenditures. In such a period, O'Brien found a way to supplement city funding for the library system by establishing private foundations: the Alexandria Library Foundation and the James M. Duncan Foundation. The initial foundation established a goal of \$50,000 in private donations. Achieving that goal in the first year, it continued to raise money even as the city budget situation improved. The money was used to increase popular e-books access, children's story-time programs, and adult classes and programs. The Duncan foundation concentrated on plans to expand the Del Ray branch with a green "living" roof in order to reduce stormwater runoff and pollution to local waterways. Completed in 2005, it became the city's first government building to adopt this conservation strategy.

Both during his working career and following his retirement in 2008, O'Brien engaged in service to the community beyond his library innovations. As a member of the Alexandria Rotary Club, he served as club president; was named 2001 Rotarian of the Year; and received the Rotary International Avenues of Service Award in 2016. A volunteer with both

Senior Services of Alexandria's ALIVE! food distribution program, and with Alexandria Meals on Wheels for several years, he and his wife were named Meals on Wheels Volunteers of the Year in 2016.

These days, O'Brien, a passionate and skilled woodworking artist, helps raise funds for Alexandria student scholarships by donating art pieces for silent auctions and events. He is an art contributor to the annual Taste for Giving event sponsored by the Alexandria Rotary Club to support local nonprofit organizations.

As O'Brien shares, "My goal was always to elevate the public library to the most used of all public services of the city of Alexandria. That goal was achieved by the time I retired, and it has been expanded to even greater use by my successor. The Alexandria Library had over 1.5 million visitors and web users last year. The public library serves kids before schools get them and provides all users with services by professionals, without appointment or question, or regard to their means or station in life."

It seems that includes the professional services of Living Legend Patrick O'Brien, who continues to successfully achieve his aim to serve the Alexandria community.



PHOTO BY STEVEN HALPERSON/TISARA STUDIOS

Patrick O'Brien is a Living Legend of Alexandria.

It's All About Community

United Community's Block Party

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH



Zeke, the "gun-narcotics dog," and his handler, Peter Masood.



Leah Fraley, Chief Executive Officer of United Community.



Cheerleaders from Mount Vernon and West Potomac High Schools greeted arriving "party-goers."

By GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

"Everybody do rumble," 40 synchronized, jumping high school cheerleaders called, as families arrived. "Shake those shoulders, don't shrug," urged D.J. Elle, as she swayed her derriere on stage teaching fans the merengue.

It was a day of rumbling, shaking and coming together -- no shrugging -- at United Community's (UC) Aug. 22 ALX South Block Party at Bryant High School when 700 people from babies to seniors visited 45 vendors and got advice from skin care to savings accounts.

"Nothing is more important than the community and the community feeling safe," offered Major Jeffrey Mauro, Mount Vernon District Police Commander, as he and several officers mingled among the crowd. "Meeting with the community is directly proportional to the

police being successful in keeping people safe. We can't do it without the community."

Mauro was admiring another safety "officer," Zeke, who helps keep local schools safe. Zeke is a "gun-narcotics dog," a German short-haired pointer from the Netherlands, his manager, Pete Masood, explained. With a super sense of smell, Zeke can root out narcotics by smelling six odors. He can search cars, buildings and grounds and "hit on" guns, for example, by smelling a gun's brass and oil odors. "He can find a knife in the bushes," Masood said.

Shauna Cooper welcomed everyone at the UC table, explaining that the non-profit helps families become self-sufficient by linking them with housing and childcare, for example. UC has citizenship and English classes, legal and immigration support, a food pantry and a six-room early learning center at Bryant for children ages six

weeks to five.

Staying Healthy

Health care was front and center. Mariama Kalokoh from the Fairfax County Health Department encouraged people to get flu shots and handed out free home covid tests. Blaire Wesley, a Sentara oncology nurse navigator, helps people get care and comfort and discussed the risks of using marijuana, e-cigarettes and vape pens.

Caitlin Liberatore with U.S. Dermatology Partners on Sherwood Hall Lane offered free sunscreen.

The "sand tray" at River Grove Therapy's table was an attention-getter. Lucas Watling said that clients create scenes in the sand to express their emotions. "There's no right or wrong way," he said.

"We go where the child is," said Shannen Garland with ABA Centers, as youngsters snatched lollipops off her table. Her organization offers autism care to young-



The event attracted 45 local vendors.

sters aged 18 months to 17 years.

John Harris and Melissa McIntosh with the Mount Vernon Lions Club explained that they host vision and hearing screenings, recycle eyeglasses and hearing aids and offer scholarships to visually-impaired students.

Some youngsters climbed up into an ambulance where Will Howe, a county volunteer, explained that the crew uses a mounted Zoll monitor to check a patient's heart rate, blood pressure and oxygen and

SEE IT'S ALL ABOUT, PAGE 15



Melissa McIntosh and John Harris offered Lions Club vision services.



Mount Vernon School Board member Matteo Dunne and "Iris," Spectra Credit Union's kid scientist. The credit union promoted kids' savings accounts.



Blaire Wesley with Sentara's Northern Virginia Medical Center explained that she helps cancer patients navigate the health care system.



PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH

Oriella Mejia, a Prince William Parks Commissioner, donned one of the sashes like those the suffragists wore.

Protecting the Right to Vote Still Requires Vigilance

FROM PAGE 1

stitution was not designed with you in mind, change it. And once you have a seat, make room for someone else.” She exhorted the audience to use “the power that that generations before us fought to secure.”

“Threats to voting rights are greater now than in 60 years,” Nancy Tate told attendees. “The suffragists knew that the fight for equality was never over,” she said, so some went on the found the League of Women Voters in 1920. Tate, an Arlington resident, is the League’s executive director.

Historian Shirley Marshall, author of “An Inside Story of the National Woman’s Party,” said, “The suffragists did more than hold banners and stand around.” Combining through the 1918 letters Elizabeth Kalb wrote from Washington to her mother, Marshall described

incidents, like the police arresting women “for carrying the American flag” and Kalb getting a lump from being “cracked on her head.”

“Police violence was common,” Marshall said, “But mostly out of sight.” Because Wilson initially did not support suffrage, women burned his speeches in Lafayette Square. “Kerosene was the secret, keeping the fires lit. They soaked logs in kerosene,” she snickered.

Many historical accounts portray the suffragists as white women, but suffrage was diverse, Marshall asserted. And she emphasized that even upon the 1920 passage of the amendment, women who were not white, like African Americans, Indigenous women and Chinese women, still could not vote.

Joy Galberth, president of the Fairfax County chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, recalled that the organizers of the suffragists’



The Turning Point Suffragist Memorial in Lorton.

1913 Washington parade insisted that African American women march at the end. “Our sorority marched with dignity even when forced to the back,” she said, adding, “Equality is not a destination but a responsibility.”

Gloria Blackwell, reinforced Hashmi’s themes. “It was a long, courageous effort,” she said. “They persisted. Democracy is not self-sustaining.” Blackwell is head of the American Association of University Women.

Kobby Hoffman, president of the Virginia chapter of the National Organization for Women, read the “Women’s Declaration of Independence” and sought petition signers urging Congress to recognize the Equal Rights Amendment as the 28th amendment to the Constitution.

Marshall quoted Mary Church Terrell, a 1905 African-American civil rights leader: “There is an imperative need of meddlers today, active, insistent and fearless meddlers.” The meddlers are still at it.

“I declare to you that woman must not depend upon the protection of man, but must be taught to protect herself, and there I take my stand.”

Susan B Anthony

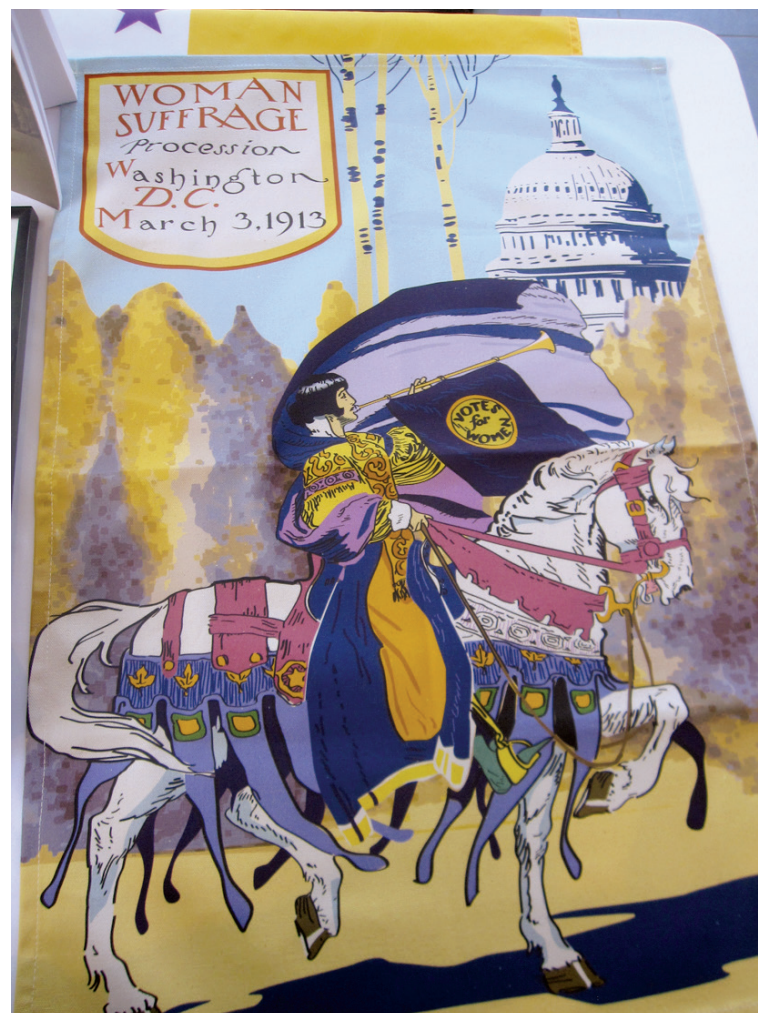
Susan B. Anthony was just one of many suffragists.



Thirteen stations tell the suffrage story.



Lynne Garvey-Hodge portrayed Mrs. Robert Walker, a suffragist.



The suffragists staged a parade in Washington, D. C., in 1913.

Outdated State Standards Collide with SCC Review of NextEra-Dominion ‘Merger’

Herndon-Reston Indivisible holds legislative town hall.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE GAZETTE

A town hall with State Sen. Jennifer Boysko, D-38, and Del. Irene Shin, D-8, at Reston’s North County Governmental Center focused on mobilizing public action over NextEra Energy’s potential \$67 billion acquisition of Dominion Energy.

Speaking to the assembled community members on Aug. 30, organizers and lawmakers urged those present to scan the on-site QR code to submit formal comments directly to the three members of the Virginia State Corporation Commission.

“This is the QR code. It’ll take you directly to the [SCC] website to submit public comment,” Shin told attendees. “Make sure that you’re doing that one way or the other, whether you’re in favor of this acquisition or not,” Shin said. “Make sure you are letting the [SCC] know how you feel as Dominion Energy customers or folks who might be impacted by this decision.”

The event opened with live virtual analysis from Josh Macey, a professor at Yale Law School and expert in energy law and utility regulation. Macey stressed the importance of regulatory oversight, followed by the lawmakers’ comments highlighting community concerns, an audience Q&A, and a closing call to action.

The Aug. 30 event was hosted by Herndon-Reston Indivisible

Expert Context on Utility Risk

Macey cautioned that utility mergers carry risks that standard corporate transactions do not. Macey explained that a combined NextEra-Dominion could shift financial risks and higher costs directly onto Virginia consumers. He noted the merged entity could enter “into above-market contracts with its own affiliates” and use the regulated utility to “guarantee the debt of a riskier venture,” leaving ratepayers exposed if those bets go bad.

Infrastructure decisions after such a merger could disproportionately favor large commercial entities over everyday residents, Macey said.

New transmission could be built so that “cheaper supply goes to data centers” while “funneling more expensive power to the customers who don’t have any choice in who their provider is,” potentially prioritizing tech hubs over residential households.

Virginia could meet its clean-energy goals more cheaply through “a competitive process” rather than relying on voluntary promises from a merged megacity, Macey said.

Macey called for “ring-fencing provisions” prohibiting cross-affiliate financial transactions and requiring independent competitive solicitations subject to comprehensive audits.



From left, State Sen. Jennifer Boysko, D-38, and Del. Irene Shin, D-8, deliver remarks to community members as Josh Macey, an associate professor at Yale Law School and expert in energy law and utility regulation, listens online.



State Sen. Jennifer Boysko, D-38, (left) and Del. Irene Shin, D-8, listen to community members’ comments following a town hall meeting in Reston, Virginia, Aug. 30.



Community members take their seats before a town hall meeting hosted by Herndon-Reston Indivisible, State Sen. Jennifer Boysko, D-38, and Del. Irene Shin, D-8, at the North County Governmental Center in Reston Aug. 30. The meeting focused on mobilizing public action regarding NextEra Energy’s proposed \$67 billion acquisition of Dominion Energy.

Shin Discusses Legal Framework, Commission Structure

Turning to the regulatory landscape, Shin outlined the legal framework governing the transaction. The Virginia SCC will judge the merger under the Utility Transfer Act, a narrow, 1970s-era statute that asks essentially three core questions: does the deal interrupt or disrupt service; are rates still “just and reasonable”; and can ratepayers be held “mostly harmless”?

Unlike Texas and Hawaii, which rejected NextEra acquisitions because their state laws require a broad “public’s best interest” standard, Virginia’s current statute lacks a similar public-interest requirement.

Shin explained that Texas rejected a NextEra acquisition because regulators could not show it was in the best interest of ratepayers and would not shift risk onto them. Hawaii similarly rejected NextEra under its clear public-interest mandate. Shin contrasted those outcomes with Virginia’s Utility Transfer Act, which sets a narrower bar for

utility transfers.

Shin also laid out the State Corporation Commission’s 180-day review structure, which includes an initial 60-day period plus a possible 120-day extension. She noted that because the formal application was filed in mid-July, the statutory clock will run through the November and December holidays.

Addressing ethics concerns surrounding the three-member commission, Shin spoke about SCC Chair Kelsey A. Bagot who is a former senior attorney at NextEra. Shin voiced support for keeping Bagot on the case rather than seeking recusal, explaining that if Bagot stepped aside, the SCC would be left with only two members. Those remaining two commissioners could select a temporary third member without General Assembly oversight — an outcome Shin opposes.

Litigation Outlook and Public Action

Looking ahead, Boysko reinforced that

the 180-day window will not be the end of the NextEra-Dominion Energy story, stating that there will “likely be litigation, no matter what the answer is” and that the matter will “not be solved in 180 days.”

Shin added that if the SCC’s ultimate decision is appealed, the case would bypass lower appellate courts and proceed directly to the Virginia Supreme Court.

When an audience member asked whether the General Assembly could intervene to extend the SCC’s statutory timeline, Boysko acknowledged that while some lawmakers have requested an extension, she does not believe enough legislative support currently exists to pass such a measure.

Asked if the legislature has the technical authority to change the timeline, Shin replied it would be “very unusual and extraordinary” while the case is underway.

Both legislators concluded the meeting by emphasizing that public participation remains the most effective tool for residents, as lawmakers do not vote on utility merger approvals. They reiterated the importance of filing public comments in the official SCC docket.

They advocated for local in-person public hearings so residents do not have to navigate restrictive phone-in testimony systems. Shin reminded attendees that the merger impacts 2.7 million Virginia customer accounts and predicted that the upcoming legislative session will see multiple bills introduced to revise statutory standards for future utility acquisitions.

The Virginia State Corporation Commission announced on Facebook on August 17, “If you’ve been following the news about the proposed Dominion Energy/NextEra merger, you may be curious about how the public can participate.

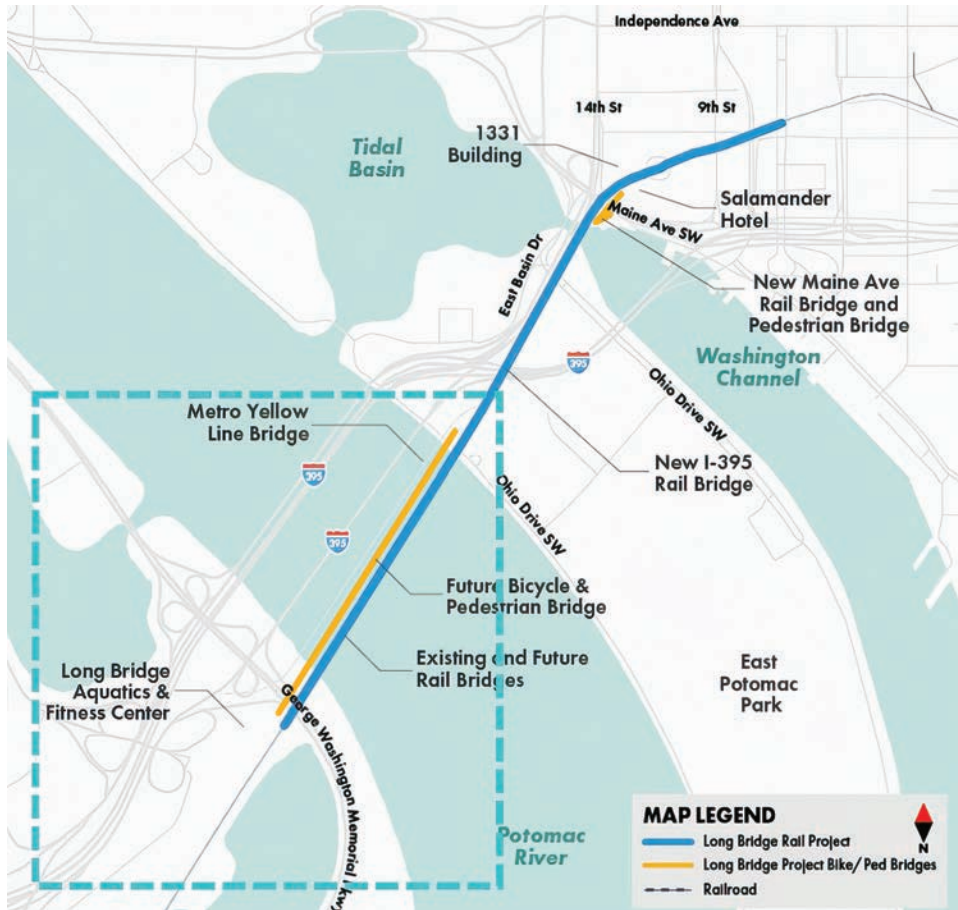
We’ve created the following web page to help! Keep up with important dates and other information relating to the upcoming hearing.

We’ll be updating the page as more information becomes available.”

<https://www.scc.virginia.gov/about-the-scc/dominion-nextera-merger-updates/>

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

Mount Vernon Bike Path Detours Away from Long Bridge



MAPS BY VIRGINIA PASSENGER RAIL AUTHORITY

Once across the Potomac River, the Long Bridge pedestrian-bicyclist bridge links up with the Mount Vernon Trail.



At Gravelly Point, cyclists coming from the Mount Vernon area are detouring away from the river.

Bridge project has many facets including bicyclist implications.

BY MIKE SALMON
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

This summer, cyclists along the Mount Vernon Trail encountered a detour on the northern end of the trail at Gravelly Point due to the Long Bridge Project where impacts include a temporary bypass

and detour.

Beginning July 1, the bypass opened, shifting riders closer to the GW Parkway, with a well-marked maze of fences and cement barriers. It will be in place for the next few years.

Cyclist Trent Bailey captured it all in a video he posted on social media to lessen the confusion,

calling it a “massive detour on the Mount Vernon trail.”

“They’re making a separate bridge for bikers and walkers,” Bailey explained.

The Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling posted a blog about the detour too, noting that it didn’t open on the exact date that was initially targeted but soon after. “The good news is the Mount Vernon Trail will remain open throughout construction,” the blog stated.

The trail detour, separate bike and pedestrian bridge, and rail

work are all part of the \$2.3 billion project that includes more rail tracks to accommodate a projected increase in railroad traffic along this corridor. This includes Amtrak, VRE and CSX Transportation railroad services.

Cyclists on the trail will encounter the detour just past Reagan-National Airport where the trail goes through Gravelly Point. The temporary trail takes them back up to the Parkway, past the Metro bridge, and back down to the riverside path.

On July 30, the project officials

met with the Arlington and Alexandria Advisory Group to update them on the project. The bike trail detour at Gravelly Point was a topic they covered. “Very exciting for us to get this open, we’ve had a lot of compliments,” said project control manager Brian Grayburn.

The Washington Area Bicyclist Association mapped out a route that skips the area entirely. On the WABA map, a bicyclist bypasses the Gravelly Point lot and follows Long Branch Drive, but this requires crossing some busy streets.

BULLETIN BOARD

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

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

ALIVE! Volunteers are needed to assist with multiple programs relating to their Food Program, ALIVE! House, and Alexandria Eviction Prevention Partnership Program will distribute food at Mobile Pop-ups and Truck to Trunk events, etc. <https://www.volunteerallexandria.org/ALIVE>

Assistance League of Northern Virginia is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that feeds, clothes and provides

reading assistance and books to children in need. Assistance League’s programs touch the lives of hundreds of children in Fairfax and Prince William Counties and the City of Alexandria. There are many volunteer opportunities for community members to contribute to helping those in need. To learn more, email info@alnv.org, or visit www.alnv.org.

Join Friends’ Board. Those who care about mental health, the Alexandria community, and collaborating with fellow residents to make sure the City’s most vulnerable residents have a chance to thrive, then consider joining the Board of Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center. The Friends Board is an all-volunteer group of residents that oversees the administration of one of Alexandria’s top mental

health charities. Friends has no paid staff, so Board members, working on average 10 hours per month, share the day-to-day work needed to accomplish its goals. Interested candidates should email FriendsofAMHC@gmail.com.

STEM Professionals Needed. Help assist K-12 STEM teachers as part of the American Association for the Advancement of Science’s STEM Volunteer Program, stemvolunteers.org, during the 2018-19 school year. In the 2017-18 school year, there are 85 volunteers in 6 Northern Virginia school districts. Contact Don Rea at 571-551- 2488, or donaldrea@aol.com.

ALIVE! offers numerous programs that aid low-income families in Alexandria that rely on volunteers: monthly food distributions, furniture, houseware and emergency

food deliveries, and community food drives. Individuals, families and groups are encouraged to participate. Students can earn community service hours by participating. Visit www.alive-inc.org/volunteer.htm or contact the Volunteer Coordinator at volunteers@alive-inc.org.

Volunteer Drivers Needed. Drivers needed by the American Cancer Society to take cancer patients to treatment in Northern Virginia. To volunteer, call 1-800-227-2345 or go to cancer.org/drive.

RSVP, a volunteer network for seniors seeking service opportunities in and around Fairfax County, Arlington County and the City of Alexandria, offers a wide array of opportunities for volunteers 55 and older. RSVP volunteers enjoy flexible schedules, free accident and

liability insurance while serving, optional mileage and meal reimbursement and are invited to volunteer group projects and social gatherings. To sign up for an upcoming orientation, email Carly Hubicki at chubicki@volunteerfairfax.org or call RSVP at 703-403- 5360. To learn more about RSVP, visit www.rsvpnova.org.

Mentors Wanted. Two creative programs that help transform the lives of Alexandria’s preteens are seeking volunteer mentors. SOHO, which stands for “Space of Her Own,” and “Space of His Own,” serves vulnerable fifth graders in Alexandria. The programs pair men and women with youth in need of positive adult role

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 13

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 Athenaeum, 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.



"Blithe Spirit" can be seen now through Sept. 19, 2026 at The Little Theatre of Alexandria.



The Chalk-A-Block celebration takes place on Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 at the TideLock development in Old Town North.

Concert dates:
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 Tifft. Contact: Nina Tisara, ninat@ninatisara.com, 703-625-8313.

NEPENTHE GALLERY IN SEPTEMBER

Location: Nepenthe Gallery, 7928 Fort Hunt Road, Alexandria.
September 10th: Gallery Discussion About Banksy and His Works;
September 17th: New Collection from Tamara Minarchi;
September 24th: Opening of Special Exhibit, Alexandria Experience, by World Renowned Artist, Alexei Butirskiy;
September 25th: Live Painting Demon-

stration by Alexei Butirskiy;
September 29th: Fundraiser for Eden-Spring.

NOW THRU SEPT. 19

"Blithe Spirit." 8 p.m. Thursday to Saturday; 2 p.m. Sundays. At The Little Theatre of Alexandria. A sparkling supernatural comedy that follows novelist Charles Condomine as he invites an eccentric medium to his home for research—only to accidentally summon the ghost of his mischievous first wife, Elvira. As the spirited (and increasingly chaotic) haunting disrupts his marriage to his second wife, Ruth, Charles finds himself caught between the living and the dead in a battle of wit, jealousy and other-worldly antics. Clever, fast-paced and delightfully irreverent, Blithe Spirit remains one of Coward's most beloved comedies.

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>

[fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/friends-of-sherwood-regional](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/friends-of-sherwood-regional) for information on other days and times for the library's ongoing book sale.

SUNDAY/SEPT. 6

The Hot Lanes Concert. 7 p.m. At Fort Hunt Park, Pavilion A, Alexandria. The band is honored to be back for the Fort Hunt Park series and its continued relationship with the National Park Service. Bring a chair or grab a picnic table early.

THURSDAY/SEPT. 10

The Chamber ALX's 2026 Legislative Reception. 5:30-7 p.m. At the Alexandrian Hotel, Alexandria. Don't miss one of the Chamber's premier events of the year—the 2026 Legislative Reception. This annual gathering brings together elected officials, business leaders, and community stakeholders for an evening of meaningful conversations, valuable networking, and connections that help shape the future of Alexandria and the region.

THURSDAY/SEPT. 17

September After Hours. 5:30-7 p.m. At Royal Restaurant, 730 N. St. Asaph Street, Alexandria. Shake off the workday and join the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce for its September After Hours at Royal Restaurant. It's taking over this Alexandria favorite for an evening of drinks, delicious bites, and plenty of good company. Come catch up with familiar faces, make a few new connections, and enjoy a night out.

SATURDAY/SEPT. 19

Chalk-A-Block. 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. At TideLock development, 1111 N. Fairfax Street, Old Town North in Alexandria. Chalk artists will transform TideLock's interior drive into a spectacular temporary canvas, creating large-scale works of art throughout the day. Artist/architect Anila Angjeli, who captivated the crowd last year with her colorful "Wings in Bloom" creation and accompanying interactive art activity, and master muralist Patrick Kirwin will be among the artists returning to Chalk-A-Block this fall. Visitors can watch the artwork come to life while enjoying live music from local favorite The Okays, browse handmade goods from local artisans and makers curated by Made in ALX, and sample food and beverages.

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.

THURSDAY/SEPT. 24

September Coffee & Connections. 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. At Gadsby's Tavern Museum, 134 N. Royal Street, Alexandria. The Chamber ALX's Professional Women's Network presents September Coffee & Connections. Kick off your morning with the Professional Women's Network at the September event—featuring coffee, conversation,

www.ConnectionNewspapers.com

Thrillers, Poetry, History, Memoirs, Literary Fiction

Fall for the Book's 28th Annual Festival includes 'New American Voices Award.'

Fall for the Book's 28th Annual Festival is packed with more than fifty writers, including poets, historians, novelists, memoirists, children's authors, graphic novelists, and more.

Chantel Acevedo's Cages, Bindu Bansinath's Men Like Ours, and Ada Ferrer's Keeper of My Kin, have been named finalists for the New American Voices Award, presented in partnership with Fall for the Book and the Institute for Immigration Research. Celebrating its ninth anniversary, this post-publication award recognizes recently published works that illuminate

the complexity of human experience as told by immigrants, whose work is historically underrepresented in writing and publishing.

In-person and virtual events run from Oct. 6-10, at George Mason University, downtown City of Fairfax, and in Fairfax County Public Library branches.

In addition to headliners Celeste Ng, and Stephen Graham Jones, the festival welcomes featured writers Elizabeth Rusch, presenting the Beck Environmental Lecture with her book "The Twenty-One: The True Story of the Youth Who Sued the U.S. Government Over Climate

Change," and award-winning journalist and PBS NewsHour co-anchor Geoff Bennett with Black Out Loud: The Revolutionary History of Black Comedy from Vaudeville to '90s Sitcoms.

The full schedule is now live and can be found on www.FallfortheBook.org/schedule.

The 2026 Festival will also host many local authors including, novelists Caroline Bock, Lina Patton and Diana Rojas; poets Michele Evans and Danika P. Myers; mystery writers Melanie McCabe and Aggie Blum Thompson; historians George Oberle and Nina Willner;

Maryland state delegate Lily Qi; and folklorist Brittany Warman.

The Fall for the Book Festival partners with the City of Fairfax's 50th Annual Fall Festival on Saturday, Oct. 10 and offers a day of hands-on literary events to readers aged 2 to 13. For the younger kids, Chuchu Wang will launch the morning with an interactive storytime featuring her picture book and lead a drawing demonstration. Next, Marcie Flinchum Atkins will help kids make their own animal handbook followed by Korena Di Roma Howley who will guide them as they make a paper drum.

The middle-grade set will get zany with Adi Rule and make their own cut-out ghost chicken in time for Halloween. Finally, Amanda Foody will reveal the inspirations behind her bestselling series and offer advice on creating magical worlds.

Fall for the Book will host the Ninth Annual award ceremony for immigrant writers: The Institute for Immigration Research New American Voices Award, judged by Angie Cruz, Donna Hemans, and Weike Wang. The three finalists, Chantel Acevedo, Bindu Bansinath and Ada Ferrer, will appear at the festival on Oct. 8.

CALENDAR

and valuable connections with women (and men) from across the region. This quarter, they'll hear a guided look at Women in Business: We Were Always Here, a special exhibit at Gadsby's Tavern Museum that explores the remarkable stories of women entrepreneurs who helped shape Alexandria's past and present.

FRIDAY/SEPT. 25

ALX Pink Gala. 7-10 p.m. At Above ALX Community, 277 S. Washington Street, Alexandria. Join Breast Cancer Collective for the ALX Pink Gala on Friday, Sept. 25 in Alexandria, supporting greater access to breast cancer screening and diagnostic care. Join ALXPinkGala.org.

SEPT. 26-27

Carmen & The Firebird. Featuring Louis Lohraseb, conductor; also featuring Chee-Yun Kim, violin. Saturday, Sept. 26 at 7:30 p.m. At Rachel M. Schlesinger Center, Sunday, Sept. 27 at 3 p.m. At George Washington Masonic Memorial

SATURDAY/OCT. 3

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>.

SATURDAY/OCT. 24

Both Sides Tour. 8:15 a.m. Meets at Franconia Museum, located in the new Governmental Center, 7130 Silver Lake Boulevard, Suite 103, Alexandria. Park in the garage and go to the first floor. The museum will be touring the sites and locations of the famous Black Horse Troop (Company H, Fourth Virginia Cavalry), that was formed in Warrenton, Virginia (where the town changed hands 67 times). During

First Manassas the Black Horse troopers rode black horses and wore black boots, and hats. The tour will be visiting New Baltimore, Cub Run Bridge, the Warren Green Hotel, in Warrenton, General William H.F. Payne's house, Warrenton Cemetery, Waterloo Bridge and Corporal Robert E. McCormick's grave (Don Hakenson's great-great grandfather). If you are interested in attending, send a check for \$130 made out to Don Hakenson, 4708 Lillian Drive, Alexandria, VA 22310. Don Hakenson's cell phone is 703-785-5294.

WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN PHILHARMONIC PRESENTS

ITS 55 SEASON: ILLUMINATE THE SPIRIT

The Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic (WashMetPhil) is proud to announce its 2026|2027 Season: Illuminate the Spirit. As WashMetPhil celebrates 55 years of serving our community through music, we are expanding our season to FIVE fantastic concerts, with guest artists including violinist Robert McDuffie, the Alexandria Choral Society, cellist Laura Metcalf, guitarist Rupert Boyd, pianist Ieva Jokubavičiūtė, and a side-by-side performance with the Washington Metropolitan Youth Orchestra. All performances will be held at the George Washington Masonic National Memorial in Alexandria, Virginia, except one concert on May 23, 2027 which will be at the Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall.

MYTH & MAJESTY

Sunday, October 4 | 3 p.m. | George Washington Masonic National Memorial

Anna Binneweg, Conductor | Robert McDuffie, Violin

Starting the season is Myth & Majesty, featuring Robert McDuffie on Violin. This program opens with the powerful Subito con Forza by Unsuk Chin, followed by the unique Violin Concerto No. 1 by Philip Glass and the iconic Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune by Claude Debussy, ending with the heroic Pines of Rome by Ottorino Respighi.

FESTIVAL OF LIGHT

Saturday, December 12 | 7 p.m. | George Washington Masonic National Memorial

Anna Binneweg, Conductor; Alex-

andria Choral Society | Kathryn Harsha, Artistic Director. Celebrate the holiday season with WashMetPhil and Alexandria Choral Society in Festival of Light. This program opens with the lovely Helios Overture, Op. 17 by Carl Nielsen, followed by the energetic Starburst by Jessie Montgomery, the distinctly American Appalachian Spring Suite by Aaron Copland, and Fantasia

on Christmas Carols by Ralph Vaughan Williams, bringing a little twist to Christmas carols you love and know, and ending the program with the beautiful Illuminare by Elaine Hagenberg.

RITUAL & RENEWAL

Sunday, February 7 | 3 p.m. | George Washington Masonic National Memorial

Anna Binneweg, Conductor. Join WashMetPhil on a musical journey with Ritual & Renewal. This program opens with the progressive Montgomery Variations by Margaret Bonds, followed by the touching Lyric for Strings by George Walker and The Firebird Suite by Igor Stravinsky, ending with the one and only Boléro by Maurice Ravel.

LANDSCAPES OF THE SPIRIT

Sunday, March 21 | 3 p.m. | George

Washington Masonic National Memorial

Anna Binneweg, Conductor | Laura Metcalf, cello & Rupert Boyd, guitar

Join us in reflection with Landscapes of the Spirit, featuring Laura Metcalf on cello and Rupert Boyd on guitar. This program opens with the Peruvian Apu: A Tone Poem for Orchestra by Gabriela Lena Frank, followed by the loving Anahata: Unbroken Heart for Cello and Guitar by Claire Assad, and ending with the beautiful Symphony No. 6 in F Major, Op. 68, "Pastoral" by Ludwig van Beethoven

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 11

models, to help support and guide youth in making healthy choices and succeeding in school and in life. Visit www.spaceofherown.org and www.spaceofhisown.org. For more information on how to become a SOHO mentor, contact Sarah Maroney at sarah.maroney@alexandriava.gov or phone at 703-746-4687.

Farmer's Market Volunteers Needed. To volunteer for the Farmer's Markets, email Brian Morreale, brianmorreale@gmail.com

SUPPORT GROUPS

Postpartum Support Virginia sponsors a free, bi-monthly support group for women suffering depression and/or anxiety during pregnancy or in the first year following childbirth. Meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month at Inova Alexandria Hospital, Health Education Center, rooms 1-2, 4320 Seminary Road. Contact co-moderator Susan Doyle at suzjdoyle@gmail.com or 571-403-0673.

The Caregiver Support Group is facilitated by the Alexandria Department of Community and Human Services Division of Aging and Adult Services.

Meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month at the Adult Day Services Center, 1108 Jefferson St., 4-5:30 p.m. Participants are full- or part-time caregivers providing care locally or long distance to a family member or friend. Participants share their experiences, provide support for each other and receive resources to assist them with caregiving. The next Caregiver Support Group meeting is June 7. For more information or to register, contact Jennifer Sarisky at 703-746-9999 or email DAAS@alexandriava.gov.

The Pink Gala, Friday, Sept. 25

The Pink Gala is more than one evening. Last year, the support raised through this event helped make more than 1,000 mammograms and diagnostic tests possible. This year, Alexandria is coming together again to expand access to care and help more people get the answers and support they need.

All ticket sales go towards providing mammograms and follow-up diagnostics essential to early breast cancer detection.

A limited number of VIP Tickets are available and include a special rooftop reception, 6-7 p.m.

All tickets gain entry to the Gala, food, drinks, and fun.

Food by Purple Onion Catering Co. Expect a wide variety of delicious hors d'oeuvres to circulate all evening. Open bar stocked with soda, beer, wine and a signature pink drink.

ALX Pink Gala. 7-10 p.m. At Above ALX Community, 277 S. Washington Street, Alexandria. Join Breast Cancer Collective for the ALX Pink Gala on Friday, Sept. 25 in Alexandria, supporting greater access to breast cancer screening and diagnostic care.

Join ALXPinkGala.org.
<https://www.alxpinkgala.org/>
@thebreastcancercollective

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Obituary



Michael J. Oliver, faithful servant, died peacefully on Thursday, August 13, 2026 with his loving wife Linda and daughters Kathleen and Sarah by his side. He was born on February 9, 1938 in Parkersburg, WV, the second son of Arthur Gregory Oliver, Sr. and Lura Burt Oliver.

Mike received a BA degree in Political Science from West Virginia University in 1961, and was a member of Beta Theta Pi fraternity. While at WVU, he met his future wife Mary Linda Burks on a blind date set up by her cousin, a fraternity brother of Mike's. They were married on December 27, 1961 after Mike finished basic training at Fort Knox. Michael was in the U.S. Army Reserves, eventually

attaining the rank of Sergeant 1st Class in the 80th Division, retiring in 1973. Mike and Linda moved to Richmond, VA shortly after their marriage, where Mike worked for VEPCO until 1965. That same year, Mike, Linda, and baby daughter Kathleen moved to Arlington, VA. Mike secured a position with the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. In 1967, they settled in their home in the Beverley Hills neighborhood of Alexandria. They had their second daughter Sarah in 1969. Mike retired in 2000 after 35 years of service as a Student Financial Aid Specialist.

Mike lived his life with a servant's heart, truly embodying the spirit of Isaiah 6:8: I heard the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for me?" And I answered, "Here am I. Send me!" Mike was involved in many ecumenical, civic, and community organizations and events. Beginning with serving as PTA President throughout each school his daughters attended, and serving with deep faith in many capacities at The Episcopal Church of St. Clement, Mike's volunteering grew substantially! Among the groups he was proud to help (with Linda often joining) were: ALIVE!, Carpenter's Shelter, North Ridge Citizens' Association, Alexandria Soccer Association, Santa appearances throughout the city for decades (including Market Square), Alexandria's 250th Birthday Committee, Friends of Alexandria Mental Health Center, Network Preschool, Alexandria City Public Schools "Grandpa Titan", The Scholarship Fund of Alexandria, and the American Red Cross. Mike's years of dedication contributed to his being named a Living Legend of Alexandria in 2012.

When Mike wasn't volunteering, he would often be found enjoying bluegrass/Celtic/folk music, exploring museums, trout fishing, camping, canoeing, birdwatching, reading, and napping. Mike and his brother shared a lifelong love of trains, cultivated by their father. "Pepaw" inspired his grandson William to carry on an affinity for all things railroad.

The family enjoyed decades of special memories while spending weekends with their St. Clement family at the Shrine Mont Episcopal retreat in the beautiful Shenandoah Valley. Mike taught generations of children catch & release fishing in the pond- creatively baiting the lines with leftover mac and cheese!

Mike is survived by his wife, Linda, his daughter Kathleen Oliver of Ashburn, his daughter Sarah Maceyak and husband Brian of Manassas, and cherished grandson William Ronan Maceyak. He is also survived by sister-in-law Margie Oliver, his niece Mary Ann Hoel and husband Jeff, and nephew John Oliver and wife Robin. Mike is predeceased by his parents, Art Oliver, Sr. and Lura Oliver, and his brother, Art Oliver, Jr.

A gathering of friends will be held at Everly- Wheatley Funeral Home in Alexandria on Friday, September 11, 2026, from 2-4 p.m. and 6-8 p.m. A Celebration of Life will be held at The Episcopal Church of St. Clement in Alexandria on Saturday, September 12, 2026, at 10:30 a.m.

The family kindly asks that in lieu of flowers, please consider a donation in memory of Michael to The Episcopal Church of St. Clement in Alexandria, ALIVE!, or The Goodwin Living Foundation.

Obituary



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Will Rowe explained how medics use electrodes and leads to measure a patient's electrical signals. Brothers Omkar Bodke (left) and Shree Bodke learned about emergency medicine administered in an ambulance.



Fairfax County Fire and Rescue brought an ambulance for "touch a truck" in the parking lot.

It's All About Community

FROM PAGE 8

alert hospital emergency room personnel about a patient's condition.

Burke and Herbert Bank and Spectra Credit Union employees touted their financial services. AT&T representatives offered a \$200 discount for customers "to switch" to AT&T cellphone and internet services.

Enticing Cuisine

The school's basement level was abuzz with food vendors, like Dishes of India doling out palak paneer and murg makhani.

Haymibbq and International Grocery owners from North Kings Highway teased appetites with beef and tibs, seasoned with special homemade seasonings. Cooper Road's Chalkboard Wings had steady patrons for barbeque and wings. Few could skip Paris X and Puff's stuffed cookies and brownie S'mores.

As she savored Dishes of India's offerings, Deborah Ahenkan said she was impressed with all the vendors and food. Her cousin, Pam McKinley, came from Rose Hill to "learn what's going on in my community."

The Theme: Community

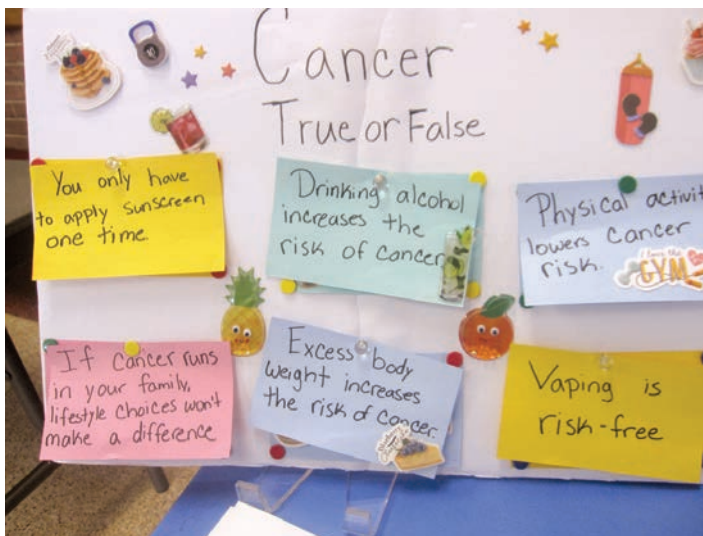
United Community billed the event as a "celebration of community, culture and connection."

"It's all about community," noted Leah Fraley, UC's head. "United Community has always been about community. It's an action word, bringing people together."

Echoing that view, Mount Vernon School Board member Matteo Dunne said, "It a wonderful community event, coming together to celebrate inclusivity and build a sense of community."



Naresh Bhatt and Prakash Bhatt offered delicious food from Belle View Shopping Center's Dishes of India.



Blaire Wesley with Sentara's Northern Virginia displays a cancer quiz on her table.



People could express or cope with their feelings about divorce with these figures of a bride and groom seeming to walk away from each other.



River Grove Therapy had a sand tray with small figures for people to use to create scenes, a form of therapy.



United Community's logo

PHOTOS BY
GLENDA BOOTH
THE ALEXANDRIA
GAZETTE PACKETT

News With Which I Can Live



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

After yet another monthly lab test, my oncologist responded with a brief electronic reply: "Cancer well controlled. Stable creatinine and liver function tests." Why this statement matters, other than the obvious is, that my health situation exists on two simultaneous tracks which unfortunately compound the treatment of either: stage IV papillary thyroid cancer and as a direct result of its previous treatment, stage IV chronic kidney disease. Two for the price of one, you might say, as I did say to the X-Ray tech when I had both a CT scan and MRI consecutively one visit, (I use that term 'visit' loosely). My lab tests measured the usual choices, but as soon as damage was done/creatinine level was too high, my oncologist stopped that original papillary thyroid cancer medicine and went on to plan (B), which I still remain on. (During the time I was being treatment for papillary thyroid cancer, I went to Georgetown University's Lombardi Cancer Center for an evaluation/second opinion. Their thyroid cancer specialist doctor confirmed my papillary thyroid cancer diagnosis and agreed that I was on the best drug available for its treatment.)

However, like many medicines, they sort of have a shelf/effective life and are prescribed until they are no longer effective and another medicine/chemotherapy is recommended. This situation (changing medicines) is not so much a matter of if as it is when. In conjunction with recurring CT scans and MRIs, the indications from your regular lab work might indicate that something might be happening in your body and so changes are made to your treatment protocol, and this routine goes on and on and on (so long as you live on and on).

And since I wasn't promised a rose garden (much of a life/future in Feb. '09 when I was given a "13 month to two years" prognosis), I pretty much consider it a miracle that I'm still alive and take nothing for granted. Moreover, blips on scans and/or abnormal levels on my lab work are all just the cost of doing business, so to speak (remaining alive). As such, none of it really bothers me; it's more that it gets my attention and focus until the situation is addressed/hopefully resolved. The problem that persists is that none of this is guaranteed and most people's least favorite word is cancer is my most necessary word. And as you most of you should equate, cancer is the original "Big Dog," who rarely wants to get off the porch. As much as you (the patient) want to be in control of your life, a cancer diagnosis is the ultimate topsy turvy. Upside down is only the beginning. Whatever was before will never be again. You are a victim of your circumstance. And though there are many cancer patients in the world (heck, there are probably some on your street) from whom you might gain some strength and understanding, there are still times when you're on your own: as in receiving emails from your doctor with results of your recent lab work or scan. This moment is not for the faint of heart. And more often than not, you're by yourself when this kind of news appears on your computer/device.

Sometimes, very often in fact, I have been rewarded with the appearance and/or sound of my most favorite word: stable. I can live with stable. Moreover, I can live with uncertainty of not knowing what happens next. In addition, I can live with the monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly and hopefully even longer intervals between medical assessments I'll call them, to determine where me and my cancer stand in Kenny's world.

It's hardly an ideal existence but it's one I never expected, and one for which I'm eternally grateful.

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

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