Connection

Burke ❖ Fairfax ❖ Springfield ❖ Fairfax Station ❖ Lorton ❖ Clifton

Fall Festival Fun

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Nathan and Alyssa Pernot and son James, 23 months, pose with Sparky the Fire Dog at the 50th annual Fairfax Fall Festival, Oct. 10 in Old Town Fairfax

Celebrating Hispanic Month in Fairfax City

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Election Guide

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Photo By Bonnie Hobbs/The Connection

DID YOU KNOW?

DATA CENTERS IN VIRGINIA FUND NEW ENERGY PROJECTS, ENOUGH TO POWER 325,000+ HOMES.

Virginia data centers are helping upgrade our aging electric grid and funding new energy projects across the state – to deliver more reliable electricity for you.

All while paying for every watt of energy they use.

That's building responsibly.

Get the facts at **VirginiaConnects.com**



GMU Is Official State Climate Center

By Glenda C. Booth
Connection Newspapers

The summer of 2026 was the warmest on record for the contiguous United States in the 132 years of record-keeping, surpassing previous records, set in 1936 and 2021 by .4 degrees, reported the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on Sept. 9.

"But is very clear that—with global warming now heating the world to 1.2 degrees Celsius above its average in the late 19th century – summers are dramatically ramping up," wrote Andrea Thompson in a Scientific American article. Other scientists say that El Nino, warmer oceans and urban heat islands contribute to a warming planet too.

"Virginia was one of only two states in the nation without an operational state climate office."

A year after George Mason University (GMU) issued the state's first climate assessment, the Virginia General Assembly authorized a new state climate office to be anchored at GMU. Virginia is experiencing more extreme heat events, more severe storms, more droughts and rising sea level, for example.

The legislation says that the center will "develop and deliver data, analyses, assessments and expertise about Virginia's weather and climate-related impacts, risks and risk management options to state and local government agencies, businesses and communities of place or practice in the Commonwealth."

Del. David Reid, one of the sponsors, said in an email, "Prior to my budget amendment, Virginia was one of only two states in the nation without an operational state climate office. The other was Arkansas. While GMU, its professors and researchers had assumed responsibility for all the previously collected climate data, there was no official designation.

"That gap left citizens, localities, farmers and businesses without an identified central source for climate information. Hosting the State Climate Office at George Mason puts proven scientists to work for every corner of the commonwealth — collaborating to ensure improved strategic planning, data collection and analysis and information sharing."



Photo by Evan Cantwell/George Mason University

A statue of George Mason at Wilkins Plaza on the Fairfax Campus of George Mason



Photo by Ron Aira/George Mason University

Luis Ortiz graduate level science class at George Mason

Dr. Luis E. Ortiz, Assistant Professor, GMU's Department of Atmospheric, Oceanic and Earth Sciences, explained, "A state climate office provides subject matter expertise and data resources for their state. Right now, those needs are often provisioned either by contracting firms or through individual projects.

"Our vision is to provide a baseline of information, both as a facilitator of data from the federal government and as a creator of value-added products to serve the needs of specific stakeholders. These may be state agencies, municipalities and economic sectors." He clarified, however, "We view our role as providing data and analysis to support decision-making rather than prescribe policy to municipalities and states."

State Senator Stella G. Pekarsky, another GMU center supporter, said in an email, "With the growing threat of climate change and its impact on the Commonwealth, this office will give Virginia a seat at the national table to research and discuss solutions to protect our communities from the worst impacts of climate change."

GMU faculty recently partnered with the Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions on urban heat island mapping this summer and will report the conclusions in October.

Humans Cause Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Greenhouse gases, like methane and carbon dioxide, trap the sun's radiation and warm the Earth. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "Human activities are responsible for almost all of the increase in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere over the last 150 years. The largest source of greenhouse gas emissions from human activities in the United States is from burning fossil fuels for electricity, heat and transportation." Examples of fossil fuels are coal, oil and natural gas.

In 2021, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors adopted a Community-Wide Energy and Climate Action Plan. The plan's goals include energy carbon neutrality in government operations by 2040 and community-wide carbon neutrality by 2050.

The county reports that the transportation sector accounts for over 50 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions. The plan describes several strategies, including electrification of county's passenger and bus fleets or using non-carbon emitting alternatives.

In 2008, then-Virginia Governor Tim Kaine's Commission on Climate Change recommended a statewide 30 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions below business-as-usual levels levels by 2025.

Under this scenario, emissions were expected to continue to increase, reaching a level of 230 million metric tons of CO_2 equivalent, which includes methane and other gases.

According to Dr. Jim Kinter, "In the last year for which data are available, 2021, emissions were well below the targeted reduction. There are no publicly available official estimates of greenhouse gas emissions for 2025, so we can't directly evaluate whether Governor Kaine's target has been met." Kinter is the director of GMU's center.

‘I Want a City Government that Works for Everyone’

Kirsten Lockhart is running for Fairfax City mayor.

By Bonnie Hobbs
The Connection

When the current Fairfax City Council this year threw out decades of precedent by not moving forward with projects approved by previous councils, it angered many residents who’d been eagerly awaiting these projects. The George Snyder trail, for example, had been on the City’s Comprehensive Plan since 2012.

Canceling this and two other trail projects meant the City was effectively thumbing its nose at the nearly $40 million it had sought and been awarded for them by the state – more than $25 million for the Snyder Trail alone. Not surprisingly, the next time Fairfax requested money for a new project, it was denied.



Bonnie Hobbs/The Connection

Kirsten Lockhart

The idea of not following through with already vetted and approved projects is disturbing to City Planning Commissioner Kirsten Lockhart and is one of the many reasons she’s now running for mayor. She also doesn’t like the dysfunction she’s witnessed among the councilmembers.

“Over my 5-1/2 years on the Planning Commission – through two mayors and three councils – I’ve seen the discussions, respect for City staff, and trust among the councilmembers on the dais disintegrate,” she said. “And there’s also been a real departure from the strategic planning that’s supposed to guide the City. So there can be no continuity or consistency in the decision-making if this keeps happening with every project.”

Lockhart also believes City Council has allowed developers to ignore the City’s own guidelines too easily by requesting and receiving special exceptions, waivers and rezonings for their particular projects. Doing so also negates all the hard work City staff put into creating them.

“We should hold the line and be consistent about our Small Area and Comprehensive plans,” she said. “They were extensively coordinated and researched before they were adopted.”

Lockhart also said Councilmembers may disagree with each other about a proposal. But if it’s worthy, they should find a way to make it a reality. “You can have concerns about projects and still work collaboratively and productively with City staff, VDOT and a developer, but not torpedo projects in the name of concern,” she said. “You also have to operate in good faith and work together to reach a mutually satisfying outcome.”

She’s running for mayor, she said, “not just to have my voice heard. It’s about bringing together the data, the community’s voices and the plans.” And she believes her professional career, plus her experience on the Planning Commission, have prepared her well for the job.

Married and the mother of two daughters, 10 and 4, Lockhart has been a City resident since 2017 and grew up nearby in Fairfax County. After graduating from Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, she obtained degrees in government and biology (with a focus on public health) from UVA.

She then worked for Booz Allen Hamilton for 14 years as a management and strategy consultant and eventually ran its Navy infrastructure business. Afterward, she had director roles at several small businesses and still does consulting.

Regarding the Planning Commission, Lockhart calls it “a tremendous learning experience, understanding how City [entities] must work together to present a united front to try to get what we want from developers and investors in the City. And while we worked on the Comprehensive Plan rewrite in 2024, we visited every City department, board and commission to learn their goals, vision for the City, and what they’ve seen over time, to learn what makes the City work.”

Lockhart also detailed her priorities, if elected mayor. “I want to see the return of respect and civility and meaningful opportunities for resident engagement that are outcome- or product-oriented, so people believe they’ve really had a voice,” she said. “I’d also like us to take a holistic look at our budgeting, specifically regarding City-owned property. We need to do it in a way that delivers the most value to the City.”

Lockhart said it’s time for Fairfax to address the situation at the City’s main property yard on Pickett Road.

It contains important equipment but keeps flooding. Money to remedy the problem is in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP), but Council continues shifting it fur-

See Kirsten Lockhart, Page 8



‘We Need to Determine the Community’s Priorities’

Tom Peterson is running for Fairfax City mayor.

By Bonnie Hobbs
The Connection

Finishing up his first term on Fairfax City Council, Tom Peterson believes that experience, plus his work history, would make him the best person for mayor. He and his wife have one adult daughter and have lived in the City for 24 years.

He obtained a BS in biology from William & Mary, a master’s in environmental management from Duke University, and an MBA in finance and marketing from the University of Texas. “I translate science into policy,” he said. “I wanted to have an impact on the environment, take part in the decision making and help others do that.”

So Peterson worked for The Nature Conservancy to protect



Bonnie Hobbs/The Connection
Tom Peterson

land and then worked for a state wildlife-conservation agency in Arkansas for four years as its division chief. He was responsible for its public affairs, helping it better interact with the public so people could take part in its decisions. He also worked for an investment bank to get more finance experience and aided it in raising money for rural hospitals.

Peterson’s next job was as an economist in UVA’s policy office, in the Water and Agriculture division, developing working economic and environmental policies for it. He then worked as a legislative aide to Sen. Joe Lieberman, working on environmental issues, especially climate change. And he continued this work in the Clinton White House for two years.

Afterward, Peterson worked in the EPA’s Office of Transportation and Air Quality, before leaving the Federal government to start his own company, the Center for Cli-

See Tom Peterson, Page 8

To see information on City Council candidates, see https://connectionarchives.com/PDF/2026/100726/BFLS%20100726.pdf pages 11, 18





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Hispanic Heritage Month: Music, Dance and Food

Fiesta Fairfax was held Oct. 3 in Fairfax City's Old Town Square.

Photos By Bonnie Hobbs/The Connection



Mariachi Los Charros began the day's entertainment.



The Fairfax Flamenco Collective.



Las Costeñitas del Ecuador swishing their skirts.



Dancers from the group La Decana performing.



Maria Rodriguez sells handcrafted Mexican art objects via her business, Azul Agave.



Sam Hasting and mom Elsie selling Peruvian alfajores and anise-seed cookies.



These dancers are also part of Las Costeñitas del Ecuador.



Photos By Bonnie Hobbs/The Connection

Some members of the dance group Alma Boliviana pose in their colorful handmade costumes.



Normans Mejia is about to eat these birria tacos from Pako's Fresh Mex.



From left, Ruba Karasneh and Ameer Abdul got birria nachos for dinner.



Frank and Marlene Manja enjoy food from the Colombian Station food truck. Their meal includes a sweet-plantain basket filled with meat, plus a cheese arepa and a chicken empanada.



Lina Cueto and Kenny McGalem sell cookies from Lina's Bakery.





Restoring Voting Rights

3rd amendment provides automatic restoration of voting rights, and protection for people with disabilities.

By Shirley Ruhe
The Connection

Part 3 of a three part series.

Three amendments to the Virginia Constitution will be on the ballot Nov. 3: protection of women's reproductive rights; removing the ban on same sex marriage; and automatic restoration of voting rights for convicted felons as well as strengthening the protection of voting rights for people with disabilities. This is the third of a series of three articles focusing on each of the proposed amendments.



Facebook

Sen. Elizabeth Bennett-Parker

A Constitutional amendment follows a rigorous process in Virginia before it can be put before the voters. The proposed language must be passed in the General Assembly. Then after an intervening election, the exact language must be passed by the General Assembly again. Finally the language goes before the voters.

The language of the third proposed Constitutional amendment reads:

Should the Constitution of Virginia be amended (i) to provide for the fundamental right to vote in the Commonwealth, (ii) to revise the qualifications of voters so that a person convicted of a felony is not entitled to vote during his period of incarceration but is automatically invested with the right to vote on the release from incarceration, and (iii) to update

See Restoring, Page 22



Photo by Shirley Ruhe

Three proposed Virginia constitutional amendments are on the Nov. 3 ballot, with this sign in support of all three.

Tom Peterson Is Running for Fairfax City May-

From Page 5

mate Strategies. "We help governments and stakeholders develop policies and actions that address climate change, energy and economic issues," he said. "And we help localities understand the impacts of these things."

He's also used his expertise in protecting the environment by being on Fairfax City's Environmental Sustainability Committee for 3-1/2 years, mainly as its chairman. "I learned from Sen. Lieberman and President [Bill] Clinton that national change has to start at the local level," said Peterson. "And that's a big part of why I wanted to be in Fairfax City government. The things we do here have a big impact, and transportation and land-use issues affect our environment and economy.

"Being on Council is hard work and involves hard decisions. Federal and state governments use tools that we could learn and use, too, but we're not taking full advantage of them. For example, the number of cars generated by the expansion of housing or commercial development is something that can be measured and can help guide local decisions."

As mayor, said Peterson, "I could work with Council and the community to build common ground and consensus on issues before they come to Council for votes. I do that for a living and believe in letting people know what we want to accomplish and helping them set their goals and options, learn how to address them and understand their impacts."

Furthermore, he said, "I could help others on the Council do this, help the community be involved and the city manager be supportive of the issues before the Council. We need to determine the community's priorities and, if possible, make them actionable." For instance, said Peterson, these items could be road safety, affordability and balanced growth.

"We need price-appropriate housing," he said. "That means determining the income classes we have, and the type of housing people here need.

We also have to figure out how to get the market and developers to respond so we don't have forgotten people."

Peterson said the City must also "formulate partnerships with the private sector to plan with the citizens and the community. That way, we could talk with the partners to determine what's possible, while also taking care of the City's commercial needs."

He said Fairfax residents are concerned, as well, about their taxes going up. "We've been able to reduce the costs of some school, operations and Capital Improvement projects," said Peterson. "But the Council and mayor need to do assessments and strategic planning and identify development partners [to help accomplish some of them].

"We need people willing to take a little more time to build something better," he continued. "We need to do our homework and then have more patience and collaboration with the developers. If we get the commercial sector [of Fairfax's economy] back on its feet, it makes a lot of other things easier, like taxes and the City being able to support its services."

Basically, said Peterson, "I want to help the City. I love it and believe in it, and I think there's a world of good I can do, given my experience and background. I think my facilitative leadership would help the Council, citizens and the City work through the decisions they need to make to move the City forward."

Fully aware that, if he loses the election, not only wouldn't he be mayor, he'd also no longer be on the Council, he said, "I'd rather be a mayor helping people come together to do things, than one person on the Council that may not be able to. And because of my Council and professional experience, I understand how hard it is for people to make these decisions."

As mayor, Peterson said he'd be an independent thinker, but one who also listens to the residents while being able to work collaboratively with others and deliver positive results for the City. And he knows it can be a difficult balancing act to keep real-estate taxes low and control City spending – and at the same time, grow the economy and continue to have a local government able to provide the critical services and quality of life its residents have come to expect.

But Peterson believes he's up to the task, and he's eager to take the reins. All in all, he said, "I want to give people a chance to contribute to their City in a way that's meaningful.

I want our citizens to become more involved in the decisions we make here."

Kirsten Lockhart Is Running for Fairfax City May-

From Page 4

ther into the future. Similarly, she said the City must also decide what to do with the dilapidated Green Acres facility; the park space bequeathed to Fairfax across from Dunkin' Donuts; and the other property yard on West Drive.

In addition, said Lockhart, once Fire Station 3 on University Drive is demolished and a new station built next door, the City must determine what to do with its former site. And, she said, "We could maybe even move administrative functions from the City property yard into the new station."

Noting, as well, the significance of strong regional partnerships, Lockhart said, "The City needs somebody working on establishing and maintaining working relationships with other jurisdictions and regional organizations."

As for the mayor's role, she said, "First and foremost, the mayor carries the City's message into the region. So that person must have a robust understanding of what's happening in the City.

The mayor sets the tone for discussions on the dais and for how City government interacts with its boards, commissions and residents. That person also sets up the Council to make good decisions and should be able to communicate government decisions to the residents."

Discussing what the hardest part of the job could be, Lockhart said, "Because I care what people think, I want everyone to be heard, so I'd be pulled in many directions. And while canvassing, I learned we need a way for neighbors to speak to each other about City projects and learn how to then talk to the City about them."

What would give her the most satisfaction, she said, is "being able to be the City's biggest cheerleader and champion. We're fortunate to live here in this smart, compassionate community. So to represent it – what an honor."

Why should people vote for her?

"I'm really accessible," said Lockhart. "I'm a parent, a resident and a person who commutes to work. So all the things I hear are challenging for City residents are challenging for me, too, and I want a City government that works for everyone."

Donate to Britepaths' SNAP Gap Pantry

Britepaths' SNAP Gap Pantry provides necessary hygiene products for local families in need once a month. These items can't be purchased with SNAP benefits and are increasingly expensive for them to buy. Families struggling to meet basic needs often face trade-offs between food and household necessities, so nonprofit Britepaths appreciates any help the community can provide by donating items to its pantry.

The items most needed currently are: Toilet paper (6-8-packs), paper towels, menstrual pads, laundry detergent (bottles or pods), all-purpose cleaning spray, dish soap, hand soap, shampoo/conditioner/2-in-1, toothpaste, toothbrushes, bar soap (gentle/unscented), body wash, deodorant (men's and women's), large diapers (sizes 6 and 7), baby wipes, dry dog food, both dry and wet cat food, and reusable tote bags.

Britepaths is in Fairfax, and donations are accepted Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Contact Britepaths ahead of time at 703-273-8829 or at info@britepaths.org

to coordinate a specific date and time.

The Lamb Center Urgently Needs Jackets

The Lamb Center, a daytime, drop-in shelter for the unhoused, provides meals, showers, clothing and other services to its guests. But the need continues to increase and the weather is getting colder, and it needs the community's help so it may give warm winter jackets to those desperately needing them.

People may choose a jacket from the center's Amazon wish list (see The Lamb Center's Sept. 24 Facebook post for specific links) and have it sent directly to The Lamb Center, 3160 Campbell Drive, Fairfax, VA 22031. Or donate gently used jackets in person, Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.; and Saturdays, 9-11 a.m.

VDOT
Virginia Department of Transportation

Public Notice

Updated weight limits on Virginia bridges and culverts

In accord with state and federal law, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has imposed new or changed existing weight restrictions and installed new signage indicating the updated weight restrictions on the following bridges and culverts (structures) in Virginia within the last 30 days.

Jurisdiction	Fed Struc Id	Route #	Route Name	Crossing	Posted Date
NELSON	12503	628	RHUE HOLLOW ROAD	BRANCH REEDS CREEK	9/24/2026
BUCKINGHAM	4032	601	MANTEO ROAD	SYCAMORE CREEK	9/22/2026
SCOTT	16849	689E	LUNDSFORD MILL ROAD	BRANCH	9/16/2026
BUCHANAN	3825	600E	HURRICANE CK ROAD	HURRICANE CREEK	9/14/2026
SCOTT	16850	689E	LUNSFORD MILL ROAD	STREAM	9/14/2026
FLOYD	7501	221N	FLOYD HWY S 221	BR OF DOBBINS CREEK	9/11/2026
BEDFORD	2832	699E	BORE AUGER ROAD/699	BR OF BORE AUGER CREEK	9/11/2026
BEDFORD	2816	691E	SHEPERDS ST ROAD 691	WOLF CREEK	9/10/2026
CARROLL	4779	881N	CROSS CREEK ROAD 881	L REED ISLAND CREEK #1	9/9/2026
CAMPBELL	4203	604E	RED OAK SCHOOL ROAD	SOUTH FORK FALLING RIVER	9/8/2026
BUCHANAN	29782	3304	MALLARD ROAD	BIG LICK BRANCH	9/3/2026
BUCHANAN	29789	4080	LOCKHART BRIDGE ROAD	WAR FORK	9/3/2026
FLOYD	7631	785N	BURKS FORK ROAD/785	BURKS FORK	9/17/2026
SUFFOLK	22113	616	ROUNDTREE CRESCENT	CYPRESS SWAMP	9/3/2026

The list above is not a comprehensive list of all structures with weight restrictions in the Commonwealth but shows only structures that have new or changed weight restrictions within the last 30 days. The list contains only basic structure identification and location information and the date the new or changed weight restriction and signage became effective.

For a full listing of all bridge and culvert weight restrictions with detailed information about specific structures, including location data and actual weight limits, visit vdot.virginia.gov and navigate to Travel and traffic/For freight operators/Truck restrictions. This page references a posted structures report and a GIS map tool that contain detailed information about restricted structures in Virginia. To receive email notifications regarding new or updated weight restrictions for structures statewide, complete the sign-up form on the web page.

Notices regarding bridges and culverts with new or updated weight restrictions are published monthly by VDOT. For additional information or questions, please contact haulingpermits@vdot.virginia.gov or the Load Rating Program Manager, Manjil Devkota at 804-786-4064.

The Virginia Department of Transportation is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any of its programs or activities on the basis of race, color, or national origin, as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need further information on VDOT's Title VI Program or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, please contact the Virginia Department of Transportation's Title VI Program Specialist at 804-786-2730 or corina.herrera@vdot.virginia.gov.



Join 11th Annual Tour de Mount Vernon

Begin and end at Workhouse Arts Center.

Before we hit the road, we'll kick things off with a costume contest; choose 40-mile or 20-mile route.

By Supervisor Dan Storck

Grab your bike and join me and the Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling (FABB) for the 11th Annual Tour de Mount Vernon Community Bike Ride on Saturday, October 31, HALLOWEEN! This year, we're starting and ending at the Workhouse Arts Center for a scenic ride through the southern and central part of the Mount Vernon District.

Before we hit the road, we'll kick things off with a costume contest, so come ready to show off your creativity. Then, choose between our 40-mile or 20-mile routes and explore some of the beautiful roads, parks, historic sites and neighborhoods that make the Mount Vernon District such a special place to live, work, play and visit.

Here's what you need to know:

❖ The ride kicks off at 8:30 a.m., check-in will begin at 7:45 a.m.

❖ Riders will explore Lorton and Mason Neck, featuring Potomac Banks' historical, ecological and cultural sites. Including Mason Neck State Park, Gunston Hall, Pohick Bay Regional Park, the National Museum of the U.S. Army, the Gerry Connelly Cross County Trail and more.

❖ Come in costume! We'll hold a Halloween costume contest before the ride starts, with prizes for the top three costumes, courtesy of Bunnyman Brewing, the Workhouse Arts Center and the Park Authority.

Fairfax County Police and ride monitors will be on hand to help riders stay safe and on route. After the ride, you'll return to the Workhouse to celebrate with fellow cyclists, grab your limited edition Halloween tie-dye socks, enjoy music and camaraderie and refuel with La Prima Catering's famous sweet potato chili and beverages for purchase from Bunnyman Brewing.

Whether you're a longtime cyclist or looking for a fun way to spend Halloween morning, the Tour de Mount Vernon is a great way to see our community from a different perspective. Grab your helmet, fill up your water bottle, put together your best costume and join us for another great ride through Mount Vernon District.

Register today at: https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mountvernon/tour-de-mount-vernon-2026

Let's ride!

Don't Stop Personal Importation of Prescription Drugs

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has a dangerous new rule beginning Jan. 20 that will threaten the healthcare of millions of Americans. The rule, "Indefinite Suspension of the De Minimis Exemption for Mail Shipments," will effectively end Americans' ability to personally import their prescription medicines.

Importing prescription drugs from licensed international pharmacies is the only lifeline for seniors on limited incomes, people with high-deductible health plans, and the uninsured. That's why CBP and the FDA have allowed it for decades. Due to the much lower cost of medications in Canada and other countries, imported medicine is their only option.

Many imported drugs can be less than half the U.S. price. These necessary medicines prevent blood clots, treat diabetes, and much more.

This CBP rule will cut off access to the only affordable prescription drugs for millions, and that will lead to unnecessary harm and preventable deaths.

I ask readers to immediately call or write our Senators and U.S. Representatives and demand they stop CBP from implementing any rule-making that restricts Americans from importing personal-use prescription drugs from licensed pharmacies in Canada or other countries.

Aisar Atrakchi
Fairfax Station, VA

National Black Man Voter Day Proclamation at GMU 'Voices to the Polls' Panel

Black men leaders and local officials gather for a non-partisan conversation on voting.

On Saturday, Oct. 24, George Mason University will host "Voices to the Polls: Engaging Black Men, Empowering Communities," an in-person panel discussion featuring Black men from across the region. This will include Mason alumni, local government officials, election officials, and community leaders, on the importance of voting and civic participation.

City of Fairfax Mayor Catherine Read, a Mason alumna, will present a proclamation recognizing Oct. 24 as National Black Man Voter Day in the City of Fairfax. Panelists include Fairfax County Supervisor Rodney Lusk, retired Army Colonel and poll officer Philip Wilkerson Jr., and Mason alumni and student leaders.

A reception and networking hour will follow the panel. This is a non-partisan event; organizers do not endorse any candidate or tell attendees how to vote.

What: Voices to the Polls: Engaging Black Men, Empowering Communities, a panel discussion and National Black Man Voter Day proclamation presentation, followed by a reception

Who: Catherine Read, Mayor, City of Fairfax (Mason alumna) - proclamation presentation

Moderator: Philip Wilkerson, Employer Engagement Consultant, GMU Career Services

Panelists:

Rodney Lusk, Supervisor, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

Philip Wilkerson Jr., Retired Army Colonel and Poll Officer

Renard Carlos, Warrenton Mayoral Candidate and Mason alumnus

John Daniels, Law Student and Mason alumnus

Cam Portis, George Mason University Student Leader

Kevin Glover, District Director, VACAPAF

When: Saturday, Oct. 24, 2026

5 - 6 p.m.: Proclamation and panel discussion

6 - 7 p.m.: Reception and networking

Where: Merten Hall, Room 1202, George Mason University, 4441 George Mason Blvd., Fairfax, VA 22030

Parking: Rappahannock River Parking Deck, George Mason University Fairfax Campus

RSVP: Free and open to the public; registration on Eventbrite

Let Us Know Your View

Connection Newspapers welcomes views on any public issue.
Letters must be signed. Include home address and home and business numbers; we will only print your name and town name.
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Screengrab via YouTube

Fairfax County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Michelle C. Reid addresses the Oct. 8 school board meeting regarding declining enrollment.

Superintendent Explains Enrollment Drop and Next Steps

Reid said that smaller incoming kindergarten classes over the last decade have created a deficit that international move-ins no longer offset. In response, FCPS is reducing hiring, redistributing existing staff to align with attendance, and forming a workforce rebalancing committee to improve demographic forecasting.

–Mercia Hobson/The Connection



Screen grab via Fairfax County

The Fairfax Circuit Court Clerk's Office, with the county's Department of Tax Administration and Department of Information Technology, launches the Fairfax County Property Alert Notification System.

Fairfax County Circuit Court Offers New Property Alerts

Available at no cost through the MyFairfax portal (fairfaxcounty.gov/myfairfax), the service monitors real estate records and automatically emails Fairfax County and City of Fairfax property owners when matching land documents are filed with the court. The system provides early detection for potential fraud, including unauthorized deed transfers and suspicious filings. For details and to sign up, visit the Fairfax Circuit Court website at fairfaxcounty.gov/circuit.

–Mercia Hobson/The Connection



Photo grab via Fairfax County Transportation

Three McLean corridors, Douglass Drive, Baron Road, and Ingleside Avenue, are among ten road segments across three Fairfax County districts, Dranesville, Mason and Providence, selected for a pilot program to lower residential speed limits from 25 mph to 20 mph.

Pilot Program Drops Speed Limit to 20 mph

County transportation officials chose the streets in coordination with district supervisor offices, evaluating pedestrian activity, transit stops, nearby schools, local vulnerability indices and community feedback. Reducing urban speed limits to 20 mph reduces total stopping distance by 20–30%, providing drivers additional reaction time to avoid vulnerable road users, according to the National Association of City Transportation Officials.

–Mercia Hobson/The Connection



Photo via Facebook Supervisor Dan Storck

Supervisor Dan Storck (D-Mt. Vernon) reaches across the dais to shake the hand of a member of Virginia Task Force 1 Urban Search and Rescue during the board's Oct. 13 meeting and recognizes them for their work following this summer's earthquakes in Venezuela.

Board of Supervisors honors Virginia Task Force 1

After the meeting, Storck posted on Facebook, "These highly trained first responders put themselves in challenging and dangerous conditions to help our neighbors in need around the world." He added, "We are incredibly proud of the members of USA-01 who answered the call and represented Fairfax County and Virginia through their skill, dedication and service."

– Mercia Hobson/The Connection



Photo via Facebook Supervisor Dan Storck

Members of Virginia Task Force 1 Urban Search and Rescue stand before the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors as they are honored on Oct. 13 for their overseas deployment.

Fairfax Festival Fun on Perfect Fall Day

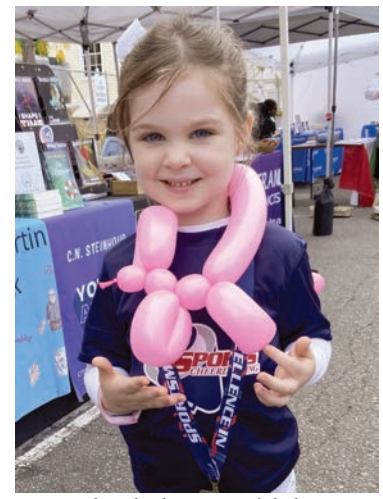


Linda Moore, of Peaches Creations Shop, peeks between two of her Halloween quilts

Photos By Bonnie Hobbs/The Connection



Sandy Smallwood, of Sunflowers on My Mind, with her 3D shadow boxes.



Kennedy Phalen, 5, with her cat balloon.

The 50th annual Fairfax Fall Festival was Oct. 10 in Old Town Fairfax City.



Looking at a fall sweatshirt from Cotton & Clay are (from left) Michelle Dornes and Megan Raeman.



Toimoi Bakery's Annie Pu holds her handmade mooncakes.



Kayleen Naupari is eating a chicken tikka bowl from East India Kebabs.



Olivia Ferrer and son Dean, 8 months, by a fire engine at Station 3.



From left, Haofei Liu enjoys some mango sticky rice; friend Mia Juliano already finished her bratwurst.



Paul Rice and Marilyn Burghart selling GMU merch.

Photos By Bonnie Hobbs/The Connection



Charoen Tomeeboon cooking beef and chicken kebabs for Sarin Grill.



Nick Carter with teriyaki chicken on a stick from Sisters Thai.



José Marin, of Marin Woodturning, holds a segmented bowl he made.



Maggie O'Loughlin, 9, feeds a calf at the petting zoo.



Nathan and Alyssa Pernot and son James, 23 months, pose with Sparky the Fire Dog.



Alyssa Coco, of the Taylor Swift tribute band, Cruel Summer, performing.



More than 30,000 people attended the festival. Here are some of them on Main Street.

The Connection Newspapers 2026 Voter Guide



File photo by Mercia Hobson/The Connection

The Fairfax County Government Center serves as headquarters for the local government of Fairfax County, Va. According to reports from the county's electoral board, Fairfax County has approximately 813,000 total registered voters, including about 730,000 to 750,000 active voters.

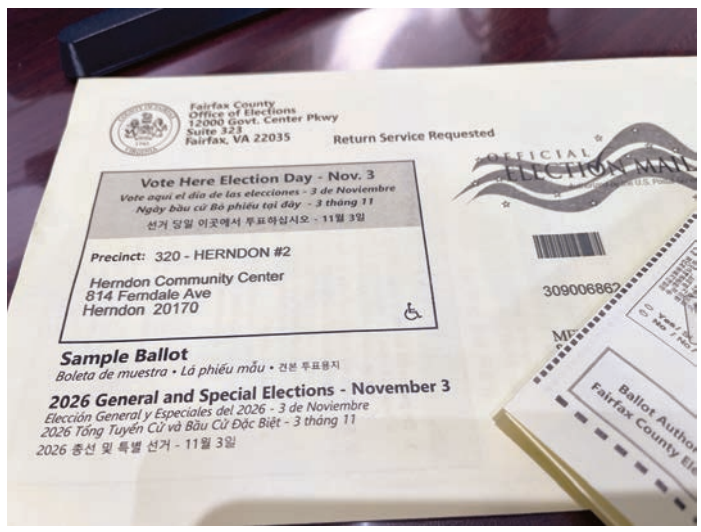


Photo by Mercia Hobson/The Connection

The Fairfax County Office of Elections mails sample ballots to voters for the Nov. 3 General and Special Elections.



Photo via Fairfax County Facebook

Voters line up on the first day of early voting on Friday, Sept. 18, at the Fairfax County Government Center.

By Mercia Hobson
The Connection

The 2026 Voter Guide is designed to help prepare readers for the Nov. 3 general election and early voting.

Our questions for federal candidates focused on key local concerns, to address priorities of the community members they seek to serve.

All participating candidates responded to identical questionnaires with set word limits — 500 words total for congressional candidates. Entries appear unedited in the official sequence set by state election officials; we note candidates who did not respond before publication in their respective sections.

Connection QUESTIONS asked of all Congressional Candidates:

Q1 Housing & Zoning: Under Department of Housing and Urban Development guidelines, housing is considered affordable when costs do not exceed 30 percent of income for families earning up to 80 percent of Area Median Income — including extremely low-income households earning at or below 30 percent of Area Median Income. Given that Virginia's Dillon Rule restricts localities's authority over local revenue and zoning mandates, how will you leverage federal housing grants, housing choice vouchers, federal tax credits, or federal land transfers to expand affordable housing in our district?

Q2 Transit & Infrastructure: Northern Virginia relies heavily on federal partnerships to fund critical transportation networks. What specific federal infrastructure funding bills, transit grants for Metro, or United States Department of Transportation initiatives like Safe Streets and Roads for All will you champion to relieve traffic congestion and protect vulnerable road users?

Q3 Federal Workforce & Economy: Northern Virginia's economy relies heavily on tens of thousands of federal civil servants and contractors, whose spending sustains local small businesses and the regional job market. How will you protect federal workforce jobs and government contracting, and what strategies will you pursue to support Northern Virginia workers and industries impacted by economic shifts?

Q4 Energy Grid & Utility Rates: Following Governor Spanberger's intervention before the State Corporation Commission regarding the proposed Dominion Energy–NextEra merger, and federal concerns over data center energy load and rising utility bills: What federal legislation or regulatory oversight will you pursue to protect Northern Virginia households from rising energy costs while supporting grid reliability?

By Mercia Hobson
The Connection

Candidates for United States Senate, Statewide

Member, United States Senate — Statewide

The Gazette Packet, Mount Vernon Gazette and Connection Newspapers invited candidates on the ballot for Virginia's statewide U.S. Senate race — Democratic incumbent Mark Warner and Republican challenger Bert Mizusawa — to participate in our 2026 Voter Guide. (Mizusawa did not reply.) We asked candidates about issues facing our region, including housing affordability, transit infrastructure, federal job protections and regional utility regulation.. Candidates appear in the official ballot order set by state election officials.

CANDIDATE RESPONSES

Mark R. Warner (Democrat)

Q1 Housing & Zoning: There is a housing crisis in this country and we're millions of homes short. I am proud to have co-authored the bipartisan ROAD to Housing Act, a landmark package of legislation. It has key provisions to boost the housing supply while lowering costs, protect veterans and renters, and prevent housing in rural areas from being bought up by corporate investors. Additionally, I have introduced and supported a range of bipartisan bills to spur new housing construction and redevelopment, including the Neighborhood Homes Investment Act, Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act, New Markets Tax Credit Extension Act, and the Historic Tax Credit Growth and Opportunity Act. I was also the lead author of the Low-Income First Time Homebuyers (LIFT) Act, which would help qualified first-generation homebuyers build equity in their homes by offering a 20-year mortgage with monthly payments comparable to a traditional 30-year loan, and the Yes in God's Backyard (YIGBY) Act, which would help faith-based organizations and institutions of higher education unlock the promise of their existing land holdings by transforming underused property into much-needed affordable housing.



Courtesy Photo

Sen. Mark R. Warner (D)

Q2 Transit & Infrastructure: I was proud to be a key negotiator of the landmark Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), which delivered transformative investments to communities across Virginia. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law has delivered hundreds of millions of dollars for public transit across Virginia, including passenger rail, ferry service, and buses. I have also been a consistent and strong advocate for robust Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority funding. As we work on a full-year of government funding and renewal of BIL, I will continue to fight for Virginia to get our fair share of funding that supports our vital public transit systems.

Q3 Federal Workforce & Economy: Federal workers in Virginia and across the country are the backbone of services Americans depend on. As the Trump administration continues to target federal workers and use them as political bargaining chips, it is critical to defend the job security, pay, and benefits of our dedicated civil service. I have fought against the administration's attacks on federal workers, from trying to access their sensitive data to attempting to weaken longstanding civil service protections. My Federal Worker Credit Protection Act is legislation to protect federal workers' credit histories during a government shutdown. I have also introduced legislation to keep federal wages competitive, prohibit RIFs during a shutdown, and preserve collective bargaining for federal workers.

Q4 Energy Grid & Utility Rates: As I travel around the Commonwealth, I listen to Virginians and I take what they say seriously. Virginians are already being crushed by rising energy costs and they shouldn't have to foot the bill for the data centers in their neighborhood. These companies should have to pay their own electric bills. I've introduced legislation to require greater transparency about energy and water use and other impacts, make data centers pay for the grid upgrades they require instead of passing those costs on to residents, and condition valuable tax benefits on meeting strong efficiency standards.

For information on the mayor's race for City of Fairfax, see pages 4 & 5 of this edition.
For information on City Council candidates, see https://connectionarchives.com/PDF/2026/100726/BFLS%20100726.pdf pages 11, 18

Bert K. Mizusawa (R)

Did not reply.



Courtesy Photo

Bert K. Mizusawa (R) Did not reply.

Candidates for U.S. House of Representatives — 11th District

By Mercia Hobson
The Connection

Member, US House of Representatives — 11th District

The Connection Newspapers invited candidates on the ballot for Virginia's 11th Congressional District race — Democratic incumbent James R. Walkinshaw, Republican challenger Arthur G. Purves and Green Party challenger Dianne L. Blais — to participate in our 2026 Voter Guide. We asked candidates about issues facing our region, including local housing affordability, transit infrastructure, federal job protections and regional utility regulation. We capped responses at 500 words. Candidates appear in the official ballot order set by state election officials.

See Connection questions on previous page.



Photo by Mercia Hobson/The Connection

Substation infrastructure serves high-density data centers in northern Fairfax County, part of Virginia's 11th Congressional District.

RESPONSES

Candidates for U.S. House of Representatives, 11th District

U.S. Rep. James Walkinshaw (D) Incumbent



U.S. Rep. James R. Walkinshaw (D)

Q1 Housing & Zoning: Every American who works hard and plays by the rules should be able to live the American dream, which includes having an affordable home and the opportunity to own a home. On the Board of Supervisors, I worked to put together the complicated financing and approval necessary to build new, affordable housing. In Congress, I've supported bipartisan legislation like the ROAD to Housing Act and worked closely with local officials to help meet our local affordable housing goals.

Q2 Transit & Infrastructure: In my first year in Congress, I secured $13.4 million for Northern Virginia transportation projects, including $3.15 million for safer roads and $2 million for the W&OD Trail. After leading the regional Transportation Planning Board and VRE Operations Board while on the Board of Supervisors, I am now fighting in Congress for increased federal funding for Metro, stronger rail and bus investments, and Safe Streets and Roads for All grants to reduce congestion and protect pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers.

Q3 Federal Workforce & Economy: Our district is home to more than 60,000 federal workers, along with even more federal contractors. They are essential to our economy and to delivering the services Americans rely on. I founded and co-chair the Federal Workforce Caucus, a bipartisan group working to protect federal workers, contractors, and our merit-based civil service. Right now, we're fighting mass layoffs, agency dismantling, and efforts to politicize civil service positions. During last year's shutdown, I helped block the Trump Administration from illegally firing 4,000 federal workers. I introduced legislation requiring congressional approval before a President could carry out reorganizations that slash jobs or budgets or outsource core government functions.

Q4 Energy Grid & Utility Rates: I support coordinating local governments, state regulators, and utilities on infrastructure and environmental standards. Electricity prices are up 13% since Trump returned to office, and families face additional utility rate increases. I'll push for oversight to ensure new grid costs are not shifted onto residential ratepayers and fight to restore clean energy investments cut by the "Big Beautiful Bill." I also support Governor Spanberger's intervention in the proposed Dominion-NextEra merger. If the proposed merger does not protect ratepayers and lower costs, it should be rejected.

Arthur G. Purves (Republican)



Arthur G. Purves (R)

Q1 Housing & Zoning: The federal government is broke. The Social Security trust fund goes broke in six years. With $2 trillion annual deficits and $1 trillion for interest on the debt, any increases in federal spending, even for housing, mean high interest rates and inflation. Despite decades of affordable housing subsidies, housing affordability is worse than ever. The solution is local. If you want affordable housing, let the private sector build more housing. Government regulations account for an average of 32% of total multifamily development costs.

Q2 Transit & Infrastructure: The federal government is also running out of money for transportation. However, there is a solution. The government spends trillions on the chronic disease epidemic caused by ultra-processed food. Eating real food would reverse chronic disease and save trillions in federal spending. Government – and households – are being bankrupted by Big Food that makes us sick and Big Med that profits from chronic disease and has no financial incentive to cure us.

Q3 Federal Workforce & Economy: The region is facing a "crisis without precedent," according to the Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce. That the Fairfax economy relies on one sector – federal government – is the result of decades of bad governance. To attract businesses, lower taxes. But local Democrats have been raising taxes for decades. As a county supervisor, Walkinshaw voted to raise real estate taxes $2,000 in 4 years, and he voted for the meals tax.

Q4 Energy Grid & Utility Rates: It is hypocritical of Democrats to criticize high gas prices due to the Iran war. Democrats deliberately raise gas and oil prices to promote green energy. Governor Spanberger rejoined the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), a carbon tax, which adds $10 to the monthly electric bill. Virginia Democrats indexed the gas tax to inflation, so gas taxes increase every July 1. Democrat carbon caps have shuttered numerous refineries in California, which has the highest gas prices in the nation($5.65/gallon). What Democrats have done to Virginia and California energy prices, they will do to the nation if they win control.

Dianne L. Blais (Green Party)



Dianne L. Blais (G)

Q1 Housing & Zoning: Because my GreenUS efforts aim to allow money to stay in the US, increasing tech research, hopefully creating a new money system to stop inflation and implementing land value tax to stop the increasing disparity between the rich and poor, the number of low-income people would be greatly decreased. The need for vouchers, grants, and tax credits would be greatly decreased. All residents would be housed based upon family size.

Q2 Transit & Infrastructure: My GreensUS program would emphasize free and low-priced public transit to encourage decreasing those needing cars. A world-class train system throughout the US would be a major goal. Transit would utilize modern technology so that accidents would be greatly decreased.

Q3 Federal Workforce & Economy: A Green DOGE would review all positions eliminated by DOGE. Hopefully much of the expertise and scientific know-how lost by DOGE can be again put in place.

Q4 Energy Grid & Utility Rates: AI has many wonderful and horrible repercussions. An intensive review is needed while there is a moratorium on data centers. GreenUS is anti data centers for the many anti-green environmental effects.

A GreenElectric commission would consider improving the electric grid in the US, hopefully establishing the best technology to collect electrical power – probably solar or fusion.

Fairfax County Bond Referendums

By Mercia Hobson
The Connection

Fairfax County voters will decide on two local general obligation bond referendums.

❖ The ballot includes a $180 million Parks and Park Facilities Bond to fund countywide park maintenance, land acquisition, and recreation center upgrades. https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/2020-bond

❖ A $75 million Community Health and Human Services Facilities Bond would finance the expansion of health care facilities and human service centers.

https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/bond/bonds



Photo courtesy of Fairfax County

A health department technician conducts analysis inside a county laboratory. The proposed $75 million health bond would fund the expansion of the JoAnne Jorgenson Public Health Laboratory in Fairfax and support renovations at the Tim Harmon Campus in Chantilly.



Photo by Mercia Hobson/The Connection

Visitors at Frying Pan Farm Park take a tractor-pulled wagon ride along a forested path in Herndon. The proposed $180 million park bond would fund countywide park maintenance, facility upgrades, and recreation expansions.

Proposed Constitutional Amendments on the Ballot.

By Mercia Hobson
The Connection

On Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 3, Virginia voters statewide will be asked to vote "yes" or "no" on three constitutional amendments referred to the ballot by the Virginia General Assembly.

Question 1 addresses the right to reproductive freedom, Question 2 addresses marriage equality and Question 3 addresses voting rights.

Question 1: Reproductive Freedom

What it does: Establishes a state constitutional right to personal reproductive freedom, defined as the right to make personal decisions about reproductive care; protecting medical providers along with patients.

Present Law: Virginia statutes currently permit abortion access, but the state constitution contains no explicit protection for reproductive rights, leaving current policies vulnerable to future statutory changes.

Proposed Law: Adds a section to the Virginia Constitution establishing reproductive freedom. It protects patients and healthcare providers while allowing third-trimester restrictions, except when necessary to preserve a patient's life or health



Ballot Text: "Should the Constitution of Virginia be amended to (i) protect the freedom to make personal decisions about prenatal care, childbirth, postpartum care, birth control, abortion, miscarriage management, and fertility care; (ii) protect doctors, nurses, and patients from being punished for these decisions; and (iii) allow for restrictions on access to abortion during the third trimester of pregnancy except when the patient's health is at risk or the pregnancy cannot survive?"

A "YES" vote establishes a state constitutional right to make personal choices on reproductive health care — including prenatal care, birth control, abortion, and fertility treatments — and protects patients and providers from criminal penalties.

A "NO" vote leaves the Virginia Constitution unchanged, keeps existing state statutes in place, and allows future state legislatures to modify reproductive health care laws through the legislative process.

Question 2: Marriage Equality

What it does: Repeals Virginia's inactive constitutional ban defining marriage as between one man and one woman, replacing it with an affirmative right to marry regardless of sex, gender, or race.

Present Law: Article I, Section 15-A of the Virginia Constitution prohibits same-sex marriage and civil unions. Although unenforceable because of the U.S. Supreme Court's 2015 Obergefell v. Hodges decision, the dormant language remains in the state constitution.

Proposed Law: Removes the inactive ban from the state constitution and establishes a fundamental right to marry, requiring the Commonwealth to grant licenses and treat all lawful marriages between two adults equally under the law.

Ballot Text: "Should the Constitution of Virginia be amended to (i) remove the ban on same-sex marriage; (ii) affirm that two adults may marry regardless of sex, gender, or race; and (iii) require all legally valid marriages to be treated equally under the law?"

A "YES" vote repeals the same-sex marriage ban, affirming a state constitutional right to marry for two adult persons regardless of sex, gender, or race, and ensuring equal legal protection for all valid marriages.

A "NO" vote keeps the existing unenforceable language banning same-sex marriage in the Virginia Constitution.

Question 3: Voting Rights

What it does: Establishes a fundamental right to vote, automatically restores voting rights to individuals with felony convictions upon release from incarceration, and updates the standard for voter disqualification based on mental capacity.



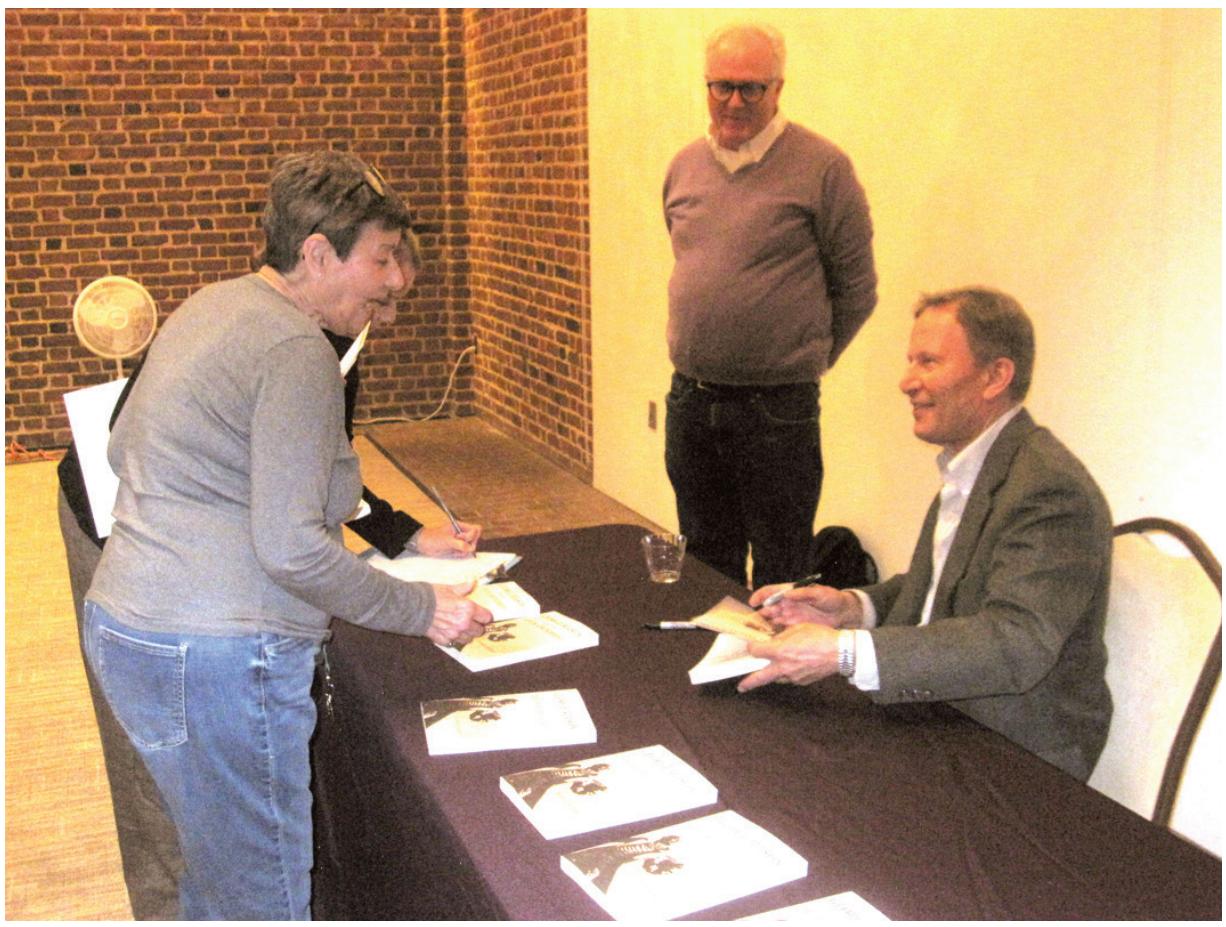
Present Law: Under Article II, Section 1 of the Virginia Constitution, individuals convicted of a felony permanently lose voting rights unless individually restored by the Governor. Additionally, court determinations of mental incapacity automatically revoke voting rights.

Proposed Law: Establishes a right to vote for all qualified citizens. Political rights (voting, juror eligibility, running for office, becoming a notary) are automatically restored upon release from prison. It also requires a specific court finding that a person lacks the capacity to understand the act of voting to disqualify them.

Ballot Text: "Should the Constitution of Virginia be amended (i) to provide for the fundamental right to vote in the Commonwealth, (ii) to revise the qualifications of voters so that a person convicted of a felony is not entitled to vote during his period of incarceration but is automatically invested with the right to vote upon release from incarceration, and (iii) to update the existing prohibition on voting by persons found to be mentally incompetent to instead apply to persons who have been found to lack the capacity to understand the act of voting?"

A "YES" vote creates an explicit constitutional right to vote, automatically restores political rights to individuals upon release from prison, and updates mental capacity standards for voter eligibility.

A "NO" vote retains the requirement for individual gubernatorial approval to restore felony voting rights and keeps the current general mental incapacity standard.



People lined up to get signed copies of the book.

Photos by Glenda Boot



Dr. John C. Rand signed copies of his book, "George Mason and the Tenth Amendment," after his talk.

Local Author Extols George Mason's Significance

By Glenda C. Booth
Connection Newspapers

On Oct. 7, the 228th anniversary of George Mason IV's death, Mason Neck resident Dr. John C. Rand told a gathering that Mason was "the most significant man in America at certain critical times." He argued that Mason's ideas and writings greatly influenced the North American colonies' Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and constitutions of other countries.

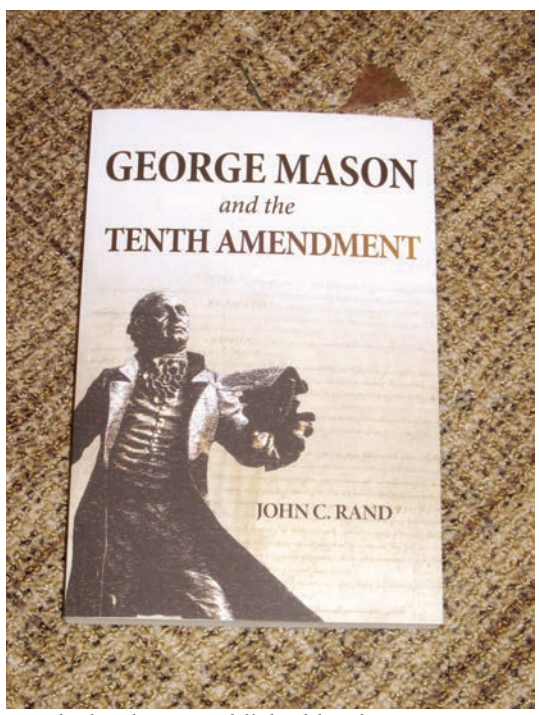
Rand's new book, "George Mason and the Tenth Amendment," was on sale for the first time at the Oct. 7 event at Gunston Hall, hot off the George Mason University Press.

Mason (1725–1792), who owned the Gunston Hall plantation in southeastern Fairfax County, was the chief author of the U.S. Constitution's Tenth Amendment. He also was the primary author of the 1776 Virginia Declaration of Rights, a founding document that historians say was the first to support individual liberties such as freedom of religion and the press.

Mason helped write the Fairfax Resolves, "one of the first documents to question British authority over the colonies," urging a boycott of British goods, Rand said. Mason was the principal author of the Virginia Constitution, a document that inspired Thomas Jefferson in writing the Declaration of Independence.

The 1787 Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia was a "rancorous convention," Rand noted. Mason advocated for provisions guaranteeing individual rights and refused to sign the Constitution because it lacked protections for individual liberties like freedom of speech and assembly.

Once the Constitution was proposed to the states for ratification, "Mason was the face of opposition to the new Constitution," said Rand, because a bill of rights was not included. Mason was "pilloried in the press," Rand told the attendees. The Bill of Rights was added and ratified in 1791.



Rand's book was published by the George Mason University Press

The Tenth Amendment

Having revolted against the British monarchy, the convention delegates had heated debates about the powers of the new federal government versus the states' powers. James Madison and Alexander Hamilton "wanted a strong national government." Mason "was a localist. The division of authority was important to George Mason," said Rand.

The Tenth Amendment to the Constitution reads: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."

"It is one of the most critical Constitutional clauses of the Constitution," Rand opined.

The Tenth Amendment has been used in numerous cases over the years, for example, to support slavery before the Civil War and discrimination against African Americans after the Civil War. "The legal rationale was the same after as well as before the Civil War; the Constitution through the Tenth Amendment had guaranteed states the right to manage their internal affairs," Rand wrote in his book.

Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization, was a 2022, abortion case that overturned Roe v. Wade. In Roe v. Wade, the 1973 landmark, U.S. Supreme Court decision ruled that unduly restrictive state regulation of abortion is unconstitutional. Mississippi argued that the state had the power under the Tenth Amendment to choose to restrict abortions. (The Supreme Court decided the case under another amendment, the Fourteenth.)

On how much power to give the states, Rand said, "We have George Mason to thank for what we have today."

Pohick Episcopal Church's Rev. Daniel Cenci commented that Mason was on the church's vestry for 36 years. Cenci offered a benediction thanking God for "a nation founded on the basis of freedom, liberty and justice" and urged that all "strive for equality."

John Rand, an attorney, received a PhD in American history from George Mason University in 2024.

Verbatim:

"Is there anything in this constitution which secures to the states the powers which are said to be retained? Will powers remain to the states which are not expressly guarded and reserved?

"I wish a clause in the constitution with respect to all powers which are not granted, that they are retained by the states. Otherwise the power of providing for the general welfare may be perverted to its destruction."

– George Mason, 1788

Tenth Amendment to the Constitution

"The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."



Horses and riders take direction from instructor Michael Alway in movement and attention control.

Local Learning In Natural Horsemanship



Photos by Susan Laume/The Connection

Student horses, a bit sleepy in the heat, and owners receive instruction before trying the movement exercises.



Darcy, a 7-year-old Percheron-Morgan cross, seems to have his own take while used to demonstrate the trainer's instructions, as owner Miria Salazar, of Prince William County observes.



Leslie Ralston, of Herndon, and 10 year old Mona, an Irish Draft horse, who have been together 5 years, give their attention to the instruction.

Laurel Hill Equestrian Center provides site for training clinics.

By Susan Laume
The Connection

The Clifton Horse Society held a training clinic with several sessions at Laurel Hill Equestrian Center in Lorton on Sept. 19. Eventing rider, horsemanship trainer and instructor, Michael Alway, co-owner of Viewpoint Equestrian, in Boyce, Va., conducted the clinic at the one of Fairfax County's few facilities devoted to equestrian exercise.

During a break, Alway shared that for those participating in the sessions, "most are looking to build confidence [of the horse] and connection with the horse; and looking for where their attention should be to improve their shared communication." This was his first trip to the Lorton ring. He said that driving in, he asked, "Is there really a horse place here?" The south county area has grown from its rural origins to the point that many are surprised to find an equestrian ring tucked amid the housing developments in the suburban park.

Now the standing silos are some of the few reminders of the area's farming past. Alway said he "loves" the arena, which draws area horse owners as a place to exercise, and local trainers for conducting riding lessons.

Clinic participant Miria Salazar who has been with her Percheron-Morgan cross, Darcy, for two years of his seven-year life, says she, "wanted to learn what makes him tick, so we could communicate better to make riding easier and more fun." Darcy, who Alway chose to work with in demonstrating the exercises in one session, proved a quick learner. Although he was not without his own ideas about the whole process, making his feelings known with a few toothful mouth gestures and bit of frolic bucking.

The Clifton Horse Society periodically holds events at Laurel Hill Equestrian Center and other locations, which can be found listed on their website: cliftonhorsesociety.org.

They organize their Clifton Christmas Parade, which this year will be held on Dec. 5.

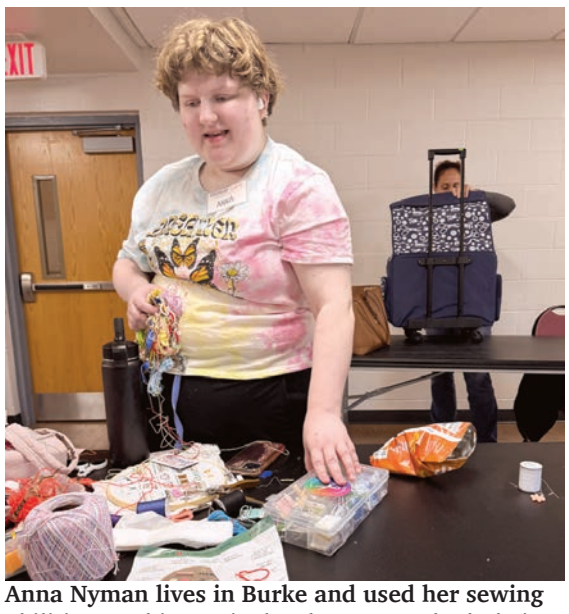


Doug Smith works on a vacuum cleaner holder that broke. After trying multiple hardware fixes, he finally told his customer Audrey Hu (all repairs are free) that some good old fashioned duct tape would be the best way to keep the item in good working order.



Mary Peters asked Frank Losche to help her with a broken wooden box. He put on two hinges and it was good to go. Losche grew up in East Germany, and there weren't a lot of stores with new items on sale, so fixing old items was just something people learned to do.

Photos by Eden Brown/The Connection



Anna Nyman lives in Burke and used her sewing abilities on this particular day to mend a hole in a sweater, stop another piece of fabric from fraying, and other simple tasks that most people don't know how to do anymore.



Doug Smith enjoys showing other "fixers" what he knows; passing down knowledge is one of the things that "nourishes his soul."

International Repair Day Celebrated in Vienna

Americans are learning how to fix, not trash, household items.

By Eden Brown
The Connection

While many Arlingtonians were busy throwing things out at the E-CARE event on Saturday, others drove out to The International Repair Day held in Vienna to see if their old (or new) item could be fixed instead. That is the principle of the repair movement, which started outside the U.S. but is gradually taking hold in the U.S.

The movement in Northern Virginia can thank Ari Nicholas, who began the repair day program two years ago, roughly, and looked around at a room full of volunteers and customers.

Ari is trying to spread the word: Repair keeps things out of the landfill. Repair events bring people together to share resources and build community. Nicholas advocates, "Repair takes power away from corporations and puts it back in the hands of the people. International Repair Day is an opportunity to highlight when our right to repair our own things isn't available, and what a better future might look like."

The volunteers who come and help out with fixing things get their own satisfaction from doing something for their community. Doug Smith said he found it nourishing for the soul.

"The longterm goal is to use Repair Day and Repair Café to advocate for Right to Repair in the region and state, but that's still kind of a Big Idea that hasn't crystallized for most people," Nicholas said. The opportunity for legislation remains possible in the coming year, and following the General Assembly on this issue is a way to support repair.

To follow such efforts, see: https://www.vpm.org/general-assembly/2026-02-17/right-to-repair-diy-digital-devices-farm-equipment-glass-franklin-repair-cafe-rva/

And the learn more about International Repair Day, see:https://repairday.org/#about



On opening day in 2023 at the Crumbl in Kingstowne, a store employee holds the hummingbird cookie.

Crumbl Cookies in Kingstowne Is Chip Worthy for Now

While as many as 60 stores across the U.S. are closing, cookie sales continue in Kingstowne.

By Mike Salmon
Connection Newspapers

Cookie fans across the country may have lost their taste for chocolate chip cookies at $4.99 apiece so business at Crumbl Cookies is suffering in places and they just announced the closing of more than 50 stores across the country. Declining foot traffic and slower sales in some stores are to blame.

The store that opened in Kingstowne in August 2023 was not one of the stores named in the closure but stores in Florida, Connecticut, California, New Jersey, Colorado, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Utah and Mississippi are closing at the end of October, Crumbl Cookies said on their website. Attempts to reach out to the corporate office were unsuccessful.

The price of a large chocolate chip cookie was $4.68 when the Kingstowne store opened in August 2023 and has gone up $.31 in three years. Although it didn't list the potential customer distaste for pricey chocolate chip cookies, "underperforming" stores was one of the reasons for the closings and in the retail world, that can only amount to the number of sales.

Although the company hasn't been very specific on their closings, closures usually happen when a store underperforms, has high operating costs, or the franchise owner decides to cut losses. Some closures are temporary for maintenance or staffing they said on their website.

Several Kingstowne customers left comments on their website. Annette Reed got two large cookies for $12.16 and was satisfied with the price and complimented the staff. Another customer, Marcos Bolanos, claims to be "The Flavor Analyst," and has a favorite but he did comment on the price "so I only get them for special occasions," he wrote.



On opening day in 2023, the crowds came out but since then.

Photos by Mike Salmon/Connection Newspapers

Entertainment

COX FARMS FALL FESTIVAL IS IN FULL SWING!

Cox Farms is celebrating the 20th anniversary of Dino Slide and the debut of the Monster Slide, which replaced the Barn Slide that burned down in 2025. The Fall Festival is open Thursdays through Mondays (closed Tuesday and Wednesday), and the market is open daily. Admission includes all the slides, unlimited hayrides, and other attractions like the Cornundrum cornfield walk and the Imaginature Trail through the forest, apples and cider to enjoy while you're there, and a small patch pumpkin to take home! Fields of Fear is the scary nighttime event on Friday and Saturday nights (plus Sunday, October 11), recommended for ages 12+. In addition to fan favorites like kettle corn and apple cider donuts, they introduced a "dirty slushie" option along with the very popular apple cider slushies. Located at 15621 Braddock Road, at the corner of Braddock Road and Pleasant Valley Road, Centreville.

WEDNESDAYS NIGHTS

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

NOW THRU OCT. 25

Bat Boy: The Musical. At Workhouse Arts Center, Building W3, Lorton. If you remember the Weekly World News tabloid sensation about a half-bat, half-boy creature found in a West Virginia cave, they already know the vibe. This rock musical is campy, hilarious, surprisingly heartfelt, and features a killer score that will have audiences tapping their feet between laughs. Performances run Fridays/Saturdays at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. in September; Saturdays at 5 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. in October at the Workhouse Arts Center's Theater in Building W3.

SEPT. 12 TO NOV. 7

Transformations: Documenting the Pilot Substance Abuse Program at Lorton Reformatory, 1989-1991. At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton. More than 35 years after photographer Lloyd Wolf was given rare behind-the-scenes access inside Lorton Reformatory, his powerful photographs documenting incarcerated men participating in a groundbreaking substance abuse treatment program are returning to the very grounds where they were taken.

SEPT. 26 TO OCT. 31

Fall Fest Returns to Reston Farm Garden Market. At 10800 Baron Cameron Avenue, Reston. The farm marks its 50th fall in Reston with five and a half weekends of moon bounces, train rides, and hand-feeding friendly farm animals — built for kids ages 2 to 12. Weekends 10 a.m.–5 p.m., plus Monday, October 12 (Columbus Day). Fall Fest pairs a full afternoon of kid-sized activities with the pumpkins, mums and fresh-pressed cider that make the season. Parents get a safe, contained, easy-to-navigate site; kids get the run of it.

Includes three main attractions:

Moon Bounces — jump, bounce, and burn off the afternoon

Feed the Farm Animals — hands-on time at the feeding fence with our friendly goats, pigs, and chickens.

The Reston Farm Express Train — the ride kids line up for twice

DJ Chi Dr. Productions keeps the music going all day, and face painter Carolina Tabares Sierra is on site each festival day, along with balloon art — face painting and balloon art for an additional fee.

OCT. 1-31

"Fall Into Color!" At McLean Art Gallery. **"Fall into Color!"** features original artwork inspired by the rich colors, changing light, and distinctive atmosphere of the season. The exhibition reflects the many ways artists find inspiration in the world around us.



Cox Farms is now open in Centreville for Fall Festival.



Fall Fest returns to Reston Farm Garden Market from Sept. 26 to Oct. 31, 2026.



A CROP Hunger Walk will take place on Sunday, Nov. 8, 2026 at Burke Presbyterian Church in Burke.

"Watercolor for All Levels" with Raj KC Five 2-hour classes - $225 Tuesdays: October 6, 13, 20, 27 and November 3 at 1:15-3:15pm Register now! https ://www.eventbrite.com/e/watercolor-for-all-levels by-raj-kc-5-sessions-october-november-tickets 2002394300255?aff=erelpanelorg

"Plein Air Painting" Free Demo Friday, Oct. 23, 11am Raj KC will present a demo on raising your game in watercolor painting. Get free tickets at: plein-air.eventbrite.com/ http://how-to Artist demos held at McLean Community Center at 1234 Ingleside Ave in McLean.

OCT. 3-30

The Haunt. At Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton. Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. This year, they've raised the stakes (and the scares) to bring you an immersive, art-infused haunted experience like nothing else in the area. Think chilling installations, unexpected twists, and a walk-through history that takes a decidedly spooky turn. It's eerie, it's creative, and yes—it's a whole lot of fun. This years' experience promises to be the most immersive yet. Tickets run $25–$35 depending on the night.

OCT. 8-25

"Betrayal." At 1st Stage, Tysons. Show times as follows: Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays at 7:30 p.m., Saturdays at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., and Sundays at 2 p.m. Tickets can be purchased online at www.1ststage.org or by calling the 1st Stage box office at 703-854-1856. Emma, Robert and Jerry have history. As her marriage to Robert comes to an end, Emma reconnects with Jerry, her former lover—and her husband's best friend—as the action unspools backward in time in an inventive retelling by the Nobel Prize-winning playwright.

"AN OLD-FASHIONED FAMILY MURDER"

Presented by Vienna Theatre Company. 7:30 p.m. at Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry St., SE, Vienna. This comedy takes numerous twists and turns on a dark and stormy night when murder-mystery author Arthur Whittington gathers Colonel Claythorne's family at his mansion to announce that the family patriarch has cut one of his daughters out of his will. Upon learning this, tempers flare and someone is murdered, making everyone a suspect. Performances are at 7:30 p.m. on select Fridays and Saturdays: Oct. 23-24 and Oct. 30. Matinee performances begin at 2 p.m. on Sundays, Oct. 25 and Nov. 1. Please note there will not be a performance on Halloween, Saturday, Oct. 31. Tickets are $16 each and may be purchased online at www.viennava.gov/webtrac or in person at the Vienna Community Center.

HALLO-WEEKEND THRILLS AWAIT IN FAIRFAX PARKS!

Step into a Halloween season packed with thrills, treats and traditions across Fairfax County parks. Ghostly golf, costumed parades, harvest festivals and family-friendly haunts fill the calendar with festive fun. Create memories with loved ones, explore new adventures and celebrate the magic of fall at Fairfax County Park Authority events designed for every ghost, ghoul and goblin.

❖ **Halloween on the Farm**

Frying Pan Farm Park, Oct. 23-24

Celebrate Halloween with farm animals, trick-or-treating, crafts, games and a tour of the decorated farmhouse. Choose a one-hour time slot Friday between 5 and 7 p.m. or Saturday between 4:30 and 6:30 p.m. Advance registration is $12 per person through Oct. 22. Children must be accompanied by a registered adult.

❖ **Haunted Mini Golf**

Oakmont Rec Center, Oct. 23-24, 4-9 p.m.

All werewolves, vampires and goblins (and their families) are invited for a fun night of mini golf. Trick-or-treat and win various goodies at Oakmont Mini Golf. Trick-or-treat and get various goodies at every mini golf hole. Come dressed in your best costume and enjoy family fun! Cost is $15 in advance and $18 at the door. Please note that the mini golf course closes at 9:30 p.m.

❖ **Ghost Town**

Burke Lake Park; Oct. 24-25, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

Put on your costume and enjoy a not-so-spooky Halloween celebration with train and carousel rides, mini golf, crafts, trick-or-treat houses and family activities throughout the park. Tickets are $20 in advance and $25 at the door. Free for children younger than 2 with a paying adult.

❖ **Spooktacular Halloween Runs**
South Run Rec Center, Oct. 24, beginning at 3 p.m.
Hustle down to the South Run Rec Center to join in some Halloween fitness fun featuring the Monster Mash 5K Dash, Halloween Fun Run 1-Mile and Spooktacular Tiny Tot Trot. Come in your best costume to enjoy the spooktacular atmosphere with your community. Cost is $25 for the 5K and $15 for other runs.
Halloween Costume Party: Family Skate and Dance Night
Franconia Rec Center, Oct. 24, 5-9 p.m.
Calling all gliding ghouls and goblins — our spooky Family Skate and Dance Night will be skele-fun for the entire family. Gather your favorite spooky crew and head out for this thrilling family-friendly event, with tunes sure to bring you back from the dead. Cost is $10 per person.

❖ **House of Reptiles**
Ellanor C. Lawrence Park Visitor Center and Amphitheater - Oct. 24, 6-8 p.m.
Amazing reptiles call Ellanor C. Lawrence Park home. Play games, test your courage at a touch table and meet these fascinating creatures up close. Then, calm your nerves by roasting s'mores around a campfire while listening to stories before taking a stroll through the darkening autumn woods
Mark your calendars, grab your costumes, and step into a month of Halloween adventures across Fairfax County parks by visiting the Events Calendar website.

SATURDAY/OCT. 24
NEW OFC 7th & 8th Grader Party: Haunted Masquerade. 6 - 9 p.m. At The Old Firehouse Center, McLean. Old Firehouse themed parties raise the energy of the OFC with a live DJ, an open dance floor, and light refreshments for participants. Come enjoy great music and a fun, lively atmosphere. Registration is required and costumes are encouraged!

SATURDAY/OCT. 24
VMBC Marching Band Competition. 12 p.m. to 9 p.m. At South County High School, 8501 Silverbrook Road, Lorton. Experience the excitement, energy, and pageantry of marching band as South County High School hosts the South County Invitational on Saturday, October 24, 2026. Spectators will enjoy powerful music, creative visual performances, colorful uniforms, dynamic choreography, and talented marching bands from across Northern Virginia and the state competing for top honors on the field. General admission is $10, and tickets may be purchased with cash or credit card. Concessions will be available throughout the event. For the performance schedule and additional event information, visit www.vmbc-online.org/soco

SATURDAY/OCT. 24
39th Anniversary. 12-4 p.m. At Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. There will be games and activities outside just for fun. Local train enthusiasts will be selling trains and model train supplies. Join them for this family friendly day of celebration, community, and appreciation as they look back on 39 years. Free entrance. Make it a family day! They will have an all-American lunch, popcorn, cotton candy, and more for sale.

SATURDAY/OCT. 24
8th Annual Halloween Bark Bash. 12-3 p.m. At One Loudoun, 20365 Exchange Street, Ashburn. This outdoor, Halloween-themed festival brings together local pet-focused businesses, animal rescue groups, and pet owners for a day of trick-or-treating, adoptable dogs, music, costumes, and animals galore. This year's festival features over 50 vendors, tenants, and sponsors.

Event highlights include:
Costume Contest: At 12:45 PM, judges from the event's sponsors will choose five finalists, and the audience will decide the top three by applause, with prizes for the winners. One Loudoun swag is up for grabs, including a "Date Night" from The Alamo with two movie passes and two snack passes.
Trick-or-Treat Trail: Multiple stops around One Loudoun offer dog treats, candy and tenant swag. A trail map will list every stop and the promotion each tenant is offering.
Kids' Activities and Photo Booth: The kids' tent will have face painting and a photo booth.
Dog Caricatures: A caricature artist will be on-hand to artistically capture your dog's personality.


A Free Symphony Concert will be held Sunday, Nov. 15, 2026 at St. Andrew the Apostle Catholic Church in Clifton. (Pictured): Maestro Simeone Tartaglione conducts the CUA Symphony Orchestra.



The OFC's Festival of Frights & Trunk or Treat will be held Saturday, Oct. 31, 2026 at the Old Firehouse in McLean.

SATURDAY/OCT. 24
Fall Festival at Tysons Corner Center. At PenFed Plaza,Tysons Corner Center. Celebrate the season with a family-friendly fall event at Tysons Corner Center, featuring live music from the Scott Kurt Band, a retailer market, face painting, fall games and crafts, giveaways, a photo booth, and more. PenFed Credit Union will also be serving up a backyard barbecue experience with plenty of extras, including mini golf, a haystack adventure for kids, barbecue, giveaways, and more. PenFed members can receive a special VIP gift by showing their PenFed email invite or PenFed debit or credit card.

SATURDAY/OCT. 24
Art & Craft Fair. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At United Christian Parish, 11508 North Shore Drive, Reston. They are currently seeking vendors selling handmade crafts, original artwork, jewelry, pottery, woodwork, textiles, and seasonal decor. How to Apply: Interested vendors can find the application form at https://unitedchristianparishartandcraftfair.com/ or contact directly at kevin@ucpreston.org or 703-620-3065.

SATURDAY/OCT. 24
Monster Morphs: A Reptile Genetics Lab. 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. At Dolley Madison Library, 1244 Oak Ridge Ave., McLean. Step into a Mad Scientist Lab for a family-friendly, slightly spooky Halloween introduction to genetics! Meet live reptiles and discover how inherited colors and patterns can be passed from one generation to the next. They'll explore beginner-friendly concepts such as phenotypes, genotypes, and simple Punnett squares through observation, questions, and approachable examples.

SUNDAY/OCT. 25
Borisevich Duo. 2 p.m. At the Alden Theatre, McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Real-life couple pianist Margarita Loukachkina and violinist Nikita Borisevich and their piano prodigy son return to the Alden stage for an afternoon of breathtaking chamber music! Longtime audience-favorites, the group is well-known for creating a rich and intimate musical experience that celebrates artistry, connection and the joy of performing together. Enjoy an inspiring program of classical masterworks performed with passion, precision and heart.

SUNDAY/OCT. 25
Halloween Carnival. 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. At

See Calendar, Page 23

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

WEDNESDAYS
McCutcheon/Mount Vernon: April 22-Nov. 25, 8 a.m. - noon. Sherwood Library, 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane
Oakmont: May 6-Oct. 28, 8 a.m.-noon. Oakmont Recreation Center, 3200 Jermantown Road
Wakefield: May 6-Oct. 28, 2-6 p.m. Wakefield Park, 8100 Braddock Road

THURSDAYS
Annandale: May 7-Oct. 29, 8 a.m. - noon. Mason District Park, 6621 Columbia Pike
Herndon: May 7-Oct. 29, 8 a.m. - noon. Old Town Herndon, 700 Block of Lynn Street by the Red Caboose

FRIDAYS
McLean: May 1-Oct. 30, 8 a.m.-noon. Lewinsville Park, 1659 Chain Bridge Road
Kingstowne: May 1-Oct. 23, 3-7 p.m. In the Giant parking lot, 5870 Kingstowne Towne Center

SATURDAYS
Burke: Apr. 18-Nov. 21, 8 a.m.-noon. VRE parking Lot, 5671 Roberts Parkway
Reston: Apr. 25-Nov. 21, 8 a.m.-noon. Lake Anne Village Center, 1609-A Washington Plaza

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



The Burke Historical Society meets on Sunday, Oct. 25, 2026 in Burke.

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Police Seek Vehicle Believed Involved in Fatal Pedestrian Hit-and-Run Crash in Springfield

Detectives from FCPD Crash Reconstruction Unit are seeking the community's assistance in locating a vehicle believed to be involved in the Oct. 4 fatal pedestrian hit-and-run crash in Springfield.

Detectives are searching for a 2017–2022 white Nissan Rogue missing its driver's side mirror and black fender guards from the front driver's side wheel well.

On Oct. 4 at 8:20 p.m., officers responded to Old Keene Mill Road and Backlick Road for reports of a pedestrian who was struck by a vehicle.

Preliminarily, CRU detectives determined Thomas Gum, 44, of no fixed address, was walking from north to south across Old Keene Mill Road toward Backlick Road, mid-block and not in a crosswalk, when a white SUV traveling eastbound on Old Keene Mill Road in the right travel lane struck him. The driver of the SUV fled the scene without stopping.

Gum was transported to a local hospital by Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department personnel, where he was pronounced deceased.

The investigation into the crash continues as detectives work to identify the driver of the vehicle. Speed and alcohol are under investigation.

Detectives would like to speak to anyone who may have information about this case.

Those with information are asked to call the Crash Reconstruction Unit at 703-280-0543. Submit a tip anonymously through Crime Solvers of Fairfax County by calling the Crime Solvers tip line at 866-411-8477.

Restoring Voting Rights

From Page 8

the existing prohibition on voting by persons found to be mentally incompetent to instead apply to persons who have been found to lack the capacity to understand the act of voting?

State Senator Elizabeth Bennett-Parker, D-Alexandria, the patron of the third proposed Constitutional amendment in the House of Delegates in 2025 and the start of the 2026 session explains, "I think Virginia is one of the most punitive states with their current practice on restoration of voting rights for those convicted of a felony. We are lagging behind."

She explains currently in Virginia a formerly incarcerated person has to apply individually to the governor to have voting rights restored. "This means a person could wait decades to get restoration of the right to vote. One of the problems of the current system is there is no transparency. It is left to a single politician."

The first felony disenfranchisement laws were introduced in the United States in 1792 in Kentucky, and by the Civil War about 24 states had some form of felony disenfranchisement. The growth of these laws led many to conclude that the laws were implemented to target African Americans.

By 2018 most states had implemented policies to restore voting rights upon completion of a sentence but only Virginia and Iowa permanently disenfranchised a former felon unless and until the governor had restored each individual's voting rights.

During his term as Virginia governor, Terry McAuliffe restored the voting rights of more than 173,000 individuals who had been convicted of felonies, one at a time. The Supreme Court of Virginia blocked him from issuing a blanket restoration of voting rights.

Bennett-Parker says during Governor Glenn Youngkin's four years in office, only 10,000 formerly incarcerated people had their voting rights restored but Governor Abigail Spanberger has already restored the rights of 100,000.



This sign in opposition to the first two proposed amendments ("Catholics Vote No") is posted outside the Knights of Columbus on Little Falls Road in Arlington.

"I believe when the Constitutional amendment passes, 230,000 will have their voting rights automatically restored," Bennett-Parker says.

During consideration of the proposed amendment in the General Assembly an amendment was proposed, but defeated, that would have limited restoration of rights to those who had been convicted on non-violent offenses, had paid their restitution and who had completed probation or parole. House Minority Leader Terry Kilgore, R-Scott County supported these changes. He said he supported reform but not the constitutional amendment as written. He says they left Republican votes on the table by not including these changes and putting victims first.

Bennett-Parker explains she disagrees with the changes proposed in that amendment because denying formerly incarcerated people the right to vote until they have paid restitution is a "modern day poll tax."

"Not requiring restitution be paid before restoring the rights to vote doesn't eliminate the obligation to pay restitution.

"Having the right to vote helps a formerly incarcerated person enter society and helps them be able to pay their restitution. The current process lacks transparency. No one knows what to do."

The amendment also strengthens voting rights protections for people with disabilities. "Currently a person under a guardianship loses their right to vote no matter the circumstances. The amendment would ensure that their voting rights are lost only if a court has determined that a person is incapable of understanding the act of casting a ballot."

Entertainment

From Page 21

Fairfax Station Railroad Museum, 11200 Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax Station. Join in a spooktacular day at the Railroad Museum as they transform the historic grounds into a hauntingly fun Halloween Carnival! Families, friends, and thrill-seekers of all ages are invited to celebrate the spookiest time of the year with an array of exciting activities. Bring your friends and family and don your best costumes for a day of fun and memories.

SUNDAY/OCT. 25

Arabian Nights Fair. 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. At Lake Anne Plaza, 1609 Washington Plaza N, Reston. More than 70 vendors from different cultural backgrounds are expected to participate, creating a colorful souk-style experience with international foods and sweets alongside clothing, accessories, perfumes, spices and herbs, home décor, jewelry, crafts, and gifts. Entertainment will continue throughout the day with a DJ, live music, and a fashion show.

SUNDAY/OCT. 25

Burke Historical Society Meeting. 3-4:30 p.m. At Pohick Regional Library, 6450 Sydenstricker Road, Burke. Yankee Doodle Spies: Historical fiction and research. Speaker S.W. O'Connell is a retired U.S. Army officer. Among his publications are four books in the Yankee Doodle Spies series.

MONDAY/OCT. 26

Free Film Screenings. 7 p.m. At Cinema Arts Theatres, 9650 Main Street, Fairfax.

THE LAST OSPREY: The Last Osprey follows one of nature's most remarkable birds of prey, revealing how osprey chicks in the Chesapeake Bay are struggling to survive because of a human-caused decline in their food supply—an issue that also raises concerns about the health of the broader ecosystem. The documentary explores the complex challenges facing the Bay, bringing together conservationists, commercial fishing interests, and policymakers with different perspectives on how best to protect its future.

BECOMING WILD, a meditation on beauty in the natural world: In a neighborhood transformed by gentrification and loss of green space, a backyard becomes a sanctuary and a teacher – alive with creatures who ask for nothing more than a place to live. Through seasons of change, Becoming Wild explores how beauty survives—when we choose to nurture it—and how ordinary people can help rebuild the natural world right where they live.

MONDAY/OCT. 26

Cash-Flow Breakfast Club Fairfax: Your Off-Market Playbook. 5:45–9 p.m. At Fair Lakes Circle, 12700 Fair Lakes Cir, Ste 120, Fairfax. The Cash-Flow Breakfast Club Fairfax, a free monthly education, networking and mastermind meetup for real estate investors, agents and professionals, meets Monday, Oct. 26, 5:45-9 p.m. This month's topic is finding off-market real estate deals: four core strategies investors use, how to spot a motivated seller and what to say when you reach one, with a live software demo and an introduction to creative financing. Free and open to all levels. RSVP at site.cfbcinvestor.com/fairfax.

TUESDAY/OCT. 27

Energy Town Hall. 6:30 p.m. at McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. Learn about your electric bill and the policies that impact energy costs. This event is hosted by Senator Jennifer Boysko and Delegate Rip Sullivan and co-hosted by MCA.

OCT. 27 TO NOV. 18

Virtual Author Series. 6:30 to 7:45 p.m. Upstart Crow, Inc. and Fairfax County Public Library will present free virtual author conversations from Oct. 27 through Nov. 18. The programs are online, open to the public, and sponsored by the library. Registration is on the Fairfax County Public Library calendar. A link to join is sent to registrants.

Tuesday, Oct. 27, at 6:30 p.m.: Shubha Sunder on her novel Optional Practical Training (Graywolf Press), with William Miller. Sunder won the 2025 Whiting Award and the 2025 New American Voices Award. Registration opens at 6:30 p.m. on October 6.

Tuesday, Nov. 10, at 6:30 p.m.: Valerie Tripp, author of the American Girl stories of Felicity, Josefina, Kit, Molly, and Maryellen, with Jennifer Disano. Registration opens at 6:30 p.m. on October 20.

Wednesday, Nov. 18, at 6:30 p.m.: Jane Kamensky, president and CEO of Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, on Declare: A Civic Gospel, with Ken Budd. Registration opens at 6:30 p.m. on October 28.

SENIOR MOVIE DAY

Sponsored by Reston Association. Meets 10 a.m. At the movie theater at Reston Town Center. Registration is not required. Just show up.

Oct. 28: Solo Mio

Nov. 18: Young Washington

Dec. 16: Blue Moon

FRIDAY/OCT. 30

Clemyjontri Park Open House. At 6317 Georgetown Pike, McLean. Explore the wonders of this inclusive play space between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. This free event will feature tables showcasing community resources and opportunities for hands-on nature experiences at the Wonder Wagon Mobile Nature Center. Upon entry, all visitors will receive a ticket to ride the trackless train and the carousel, and to enjoy popcorn and cotton candy and an arts and crafts activity. Registration is not required. Parking is limited, but shuttle service will be available from Cooper Middle School, located at 977 Balls Hill Road, McLean.

SATURDAY/OCT. 31

11th Annual Tour de Mount Vernon Bike Ride. 8:30 a.m. kick off. Take a 20- and 40-mile bike route through Lorton. Starts and ends at Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton. Includes a Halloween costume contest.

SATURDAY/OCT. 31

OFC's Festival of Frights & Trunk or Treat. 5 - 8 p.m. At The Old Firehouse Center, McLean. Celebrate Halloween with festive activities, creative trunk displays, games and plenty of treats at the Old Firehouse Center. Families and kids of all ages can enjoy a free evening of spooky fun, costumes and community spirit!

CONCERTS AT OLD BROGUE IRISH PUB

Each concert has two performances: 4:30–6:00 p.m.; 6:30–8:00 p.m. Meets at The Old Brogue Irish Pub, 760 Walker Road, Great Falls, VA

Sunday, November 1 – Ayreheart

Sunday, November 8 – Infamous Holman Sisters

Sunday, November 15 – Charlie Zahm & Tad Marks

Sunday, November 22 – Piper Jones Band

Sunday, November 29 – Kinnfolk

Sunday, December 13 – Jody Marshall & Friends Annual Holiday Concert

NOV. 6-9

Cirque Italia. At Fair Oaks Mall, 11750 Fair Oaks Mall, Fairfax. Join this cast of acrobats, jugglers, aerialists, dancers, and clowns—a daring team of explorers who sail between worlds, diving deep beneath the waves and soaring high into the clouds. Cirque Italia's Water Circus is filled with nautical wonder, fabulous fountains, and theatrical spectacle that will dazzle and delight the young and the young at heart. Under the stunning White & Blue Tent:

- November 6 – Friday: 7:30 p.m.
- November 7 – Saturday: 1:30 p.m., 4:30 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.
- November 8 – Sunday: 1:30 p.m. & 4:30 p.m.
- November 9 – Monday: 7:30 p.m.

SUNDAY/NOV. 8

AAUW McLean Area Branch Meeting. 2-4 p.m. At McLean Community Center, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. The 2026 Midterm Elections: Results, Implications, and the Political Road Ahead with speaker Stephen Farnsworth, Ph.D. Farnsworth will examine results of the 2026 midterm elections and their implications for the political landscape in the United States.

SUNDAY/NOV. 8

CROP Hunger Walk. 2-4:30 p.m. At Burke Presbyterian Church to Knollwood Church and return. Starting address: 5690 Oak Leather Drive, Burke. Community walk to raise awareness and funds to help fight local and global hunger. Website: Burkecropwalk.org.

FRIDAY/NOV. 13

25th Annual Jazz4Justice in Fairfax. 8-10 p.m. At GMU Center for the Arts, 4373 Mason Pond Drive, Fairfax. Celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Jazz4Justice, an award-winning partnership between the George Mason University Jazz Program and Northern Virginia's legal community. For a quarter century, Jazz4Justice has demonstrated the power of music to unite communities, raise awareness of the justice gap, and support access to civil legal services for those who cannot afford an attorney. The evening will feature the George Mason Jazz Program performing swinging classics from the golden age of the big band.

FALL BOOK SALE

At Centreville Regional Library, 14200 St. Germain Dr., Centreville.

Friday, Nov. 13, 1-5 p.m.

Saturday, Nov. 14, 10 a.m.-5 p.m

Sunday, Nov. 15, 12 p.m.-5 p.m.

Bag sale on Sunday; fill provided grocery bag with books and DVDs for $10.

SATURDAY/NOV. 14

Story Worx Book Festival. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. At Workhouse Arts Center, McGuire Woods, Lorton. They are gathering the brightest minds in literature for a day of panels, sales, and live readings. The Workhouse Arts Center is a hub of creativity — home to 80+ artists and several galleries — making it the perfect backdrop to promote your work to a passionate audience. Email marketing@workhousearts.org.

SATURDAY/NOV. 14

Health Fair. 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. At James Lee Community Center, 2855 Annandale Road, Falls Church. A free health fair offering a variety of services, information, and resources for Mason residents including flu vaccines, hearing and vision screenings, child dental screenings, HIV tests, Hepatitis C tests, and more.

SUNDAY/NOV. 15

Free Symphony Concert. 4-5:30 p.m. At St. Andrew the Apostle Catholic Church, 6720 Union Mill Road, Clifton. Experience the Catholic University of America Symphony Orchestra in a free concert featuring Dukas' Sorcerer's Apprentice, Saint-Saëns' Cello Concerto, and Saint-Saëns' Organ Symphony. All are welcome! Free-will offering is appreciated. Website: www.st-andrew.org/concerts

SATURDAY/NOV. 21

WWII Book Launch. 2-4 p.m. At Truro Anglican Church Community Room, 10520 Main Street, Fairfax. Her family remembered Rita as cold-hearted and self-centered. But what if they were wrong? Come hear about the true story of a half-Jewish mother facing impossible choices in Nazi-occupied Holland. Visit https://ramblingruminations.com/the-truth-was-different

SATURDAY/DEC. 5

Clifton Arts & Crafts Show. 2-7 p.m. At Clifton Town Hall, 12641 Chapel Road, Clifton. Clifton Arts & Crafts Show. Fine Arts, Photography, Jewelry, Fiber Arts, Holiday gifts. Also Horse Parade, Tree Lighting Ceremony, Caboose Open House. Visit www.Artguildofclifton.org.

Are You Listening to Me?



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

I think I crossed the relationship Rubicon in the early days of our marriage, sometime in the early 80s. Dina and I had gotten married in the fall of 1978 and it took a few years to build up the trust and familiarity with one another so that in the following examples, I wasn't being sent totally on a fool's errand.

The first example of my wife having to ask/send me on an errand that was normal for her (but due to miscellaneous physical problems became difficult)/awkward for me was to buy feminine hygiene products for her. (And yes, I would look for a male cashier to lessen my anxiety.) Under the circumstances, I was happy to help; a bit uncomfortable with the process, nevertheless, I did what any good husband would do. However, not having been raised with sisters or having had too many serious girlfriends previously, I was quite inexperienced for the task at hand. That being understood between both parties, and my having failed at previous similar "shoppings," I began to ask Dina for explicit, mind-numbing details - and back-up options as well, to buy exactly what she needed me to buy. And since there were no cellphones back then, I was given those details because if left to my own devices, Dina no doubt would have ended up with a variety not of her preference. After fits and starts and poor choices by yours truly on previous occasions, eventually I learned what options - so to speak, to select and what never to get. Over time and with proper follow-up training, I became a reliable purchaser.

The second similar situation involved the purchase of stockings. Sometimes, Dina would get behind in her preparation - or suffer a stocking malfunction, and once again, yours truly would be thrown into the breach. And quite a breach it was. There seemed to be endless varieties: size, color, "sheer," "opaque," "reinforced toe," "ventilated panel," "reinforced waistband," et cetera. It was all very intimidating, almost equal to the feminine hygiene aisle. "I was," to quote my late brother, Richard, "flying blind." Moreover, I had become aware of the importance of the correct stocking. Likewise, this was no place for an executive decision to be made by you know who. As repeated purchasing opportunities arose, it gave me a chance to right some previous wrongs. I was now writing down Dina's explicit instructions on a piece of paper. Forearmed is forewarned. A necessary step as it had become clear I had bad stocking-purchase instincts.

The final example which re-arose recently are food selections made at the supermarket. Typically, I am the food shopper (Dina is the social director). And since we have different tastes/requirements, again I am thrust into situations where if my instincts take over, I will likely make the wrong selection. Cottage cheese and yogurt are those recent requests where I am at a loss. At least now, after multiple errors or incorrect presumptions, I know to ask specific questions depending on whether the product is available or not. (Obviously cellphones make this current issue less impactful as the two previous examples but hopefully you'll appreciate the problem nonetheless.)

If I were left to fend for myself in the dairy aisle, I would likely come home with less-than-desirable choices. For cottage cheese, I need to know the brand (no substitutions I now know), the size of the container, the fat content, the curd size and the sell-by date. Are there flavors? I don't know. I'm getting plain. As for yogurt: what brand? what size? what fat content? what flavor (very important?) what style (flip top, with or without fruit, Greek or not? Not that I'm a dunce but if I don't my notes in hand, once I'm in store and see all the choices and variables, my mind goes blank. Every product looks and sounds similar enough to what Dina requested - but?

Years ago when I was a rookie husband, these choices were all new to me. Very often I did not fare very well. I was willing but for awhile, it appeared as if I was unable. But I was willing to learn and I was somewhat coachable. Oh sure, I made plenty of mistakes. Generally speaking, I knew what trouble was in the offing by the request and tried to anticipate my inevitable failings. But thanks to my evolution as a husband, I write everything down now and then review it all with Dina before I leave the house. Sure the cellphone eliminates the real disasters but sometimes my instincts kick in and it's 1978 all over again. I never said I was perfect.

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

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