Alexandria Gazette Packet

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November 19, 2026

Veterans Day

Fort Belvoir ceremony honors lifelong service.

By Jeanne Theismann
The Gazette

Soldiers, veterans, military families and community leaders gathered Nov. 10 at Fort Belvoir for the installation's annual Veterans Day observance, honoring the service and sacrifices of America's veterans.

Fort Belvoir Garrison Commander Colonel Samuel Allen reflected on the history of Veterans Day, noting that President Woodrow Wilson established Armistice Day in 1919 and President Dwight Eisenhower later redesignated it as Veterans Day in 1954 to honor all U.S. veterans.

Keynote speaker COL (ret) G.P. "Jerry" Krueger, commander of Alexandria's VFW Post 609, focused on the meaning of military service and the continued contributions veterans make after leaving the armed forces.

> "Veterans continually demonstrate a lifelong legacy of continued service to our communities."
> — Keynote speaker COL (ret.) Gerald Krueger

"All of course are veterans," Krueger said, emphasizing that the term includes active-duty personnel, reservists, National Guard members, retirees and former service members.



Photos by Deborah Gray

COL (ret.) Gerald Krueger delivers the keynote remarks at the Veterans Day observance Nov. 10 at Fort Belvoir.

Krueger described veterans as individuals who once "wrote a blank check made payable to the United States of America for an amount up to and including his or her life."

While honoring the nation's recognized combat heroes, Krueger highlighted the everyday service of veterans who continue serving their communities through volunteer work, mentoring, youth programs, veteran support services and civic organizations.

"It is now commonplace for Americans to greet veterans by saying, 'Thank you for your service,'" Krueger said. "Might I suggest that it might also be appropriate to add, 'and thank you for still serving.'"

Calling these veterans his "everyday heroes," Krueger praised those who continue giving back long after taking off the uniform.

"They continually demonstrate a lifelong legacy of continued service to our communities," he said.

Krueger concluded by encouraging Americans to remember not only veterans' military service, but also their ongoing contributions to society.

"Let us all hold a moment of silence for all our military veterans," he said, "and then give a shout-out of recognition to all those veterans who continually serve long after taking off that uniform, because they are heroes of the first rate."



Officials gather for the Veterans Day observance ceremony Nov. 10 at Fort Belvoir. L-R: Dr. Christopher Pulley (Fairfax County Veterans Coordinator); COL Samuel Allen, Garrison Commander, Fort Belvoir; COL (ret.) Gerald P. Krueger, Commander, VFW Post 609-Alexandria; Rodney Lusk, Fairfax County Franconia Supervisor; and CSM Brandon Greer, Command Sergeant Major, Ft. Belvoir Garrison.

Men of Courage

Community leaders celebrated with Lifetime Achievement Awards.

By Jeanne Theismann
Gazette Packet

> "Tony Suggs taught me that no matter how old you get there is still a lot of work you can do in the world."
> — ACHS senior Jaylon on Men of Courage founder and mentor Tony Suggs

The spirit of mentorship, service and community leadership took center stage as the Men of Courage Lifetime Achievement Awards celebrated its 11th anniversary, honoring five Alexandria men whose dedication has made a lasting impact on local youth and families.

Held at the Oswald Durant Center, the annual awards program recognized John Perlman, Pastor Anthony Oliver, Sheriff Sean Casey, Cleo Greene and Dave Curtis for their longstanding commitment to service, mentorship and community engagement.

Founded in 2013 by former boxing champion Anthony Suggs Sr., Men of Courage was created to recognize men who invest their time and talents in strengthening the community and guiding the next generation. Over the years, the program has become a cornerstone of community recognition in Alexandria, spotlighting individuals who lead through service and example.

"The evening emphasizes the central theme of the Men of Courage mission: recognizing individuals who 'reach back' to guide and support the next generation," Suggs said.

Suggs reflected on the mentors who helped shape his own life and inspired the creation of the awards program.

"So many times it could have turned another way for me, but I always felt that God brought me through what he brought me through because he wanted me to give back," Suggs said.

See Community Leaders, Page 4

Friendsgiving

Casa Chirilagua brings community together in a spirit of gratitude.

By Jeanne Theismann
Gazette Packet

Families, volunteers, community leaders and supporters gathered Nov. 15 in Alexandria for Casa Chirilagua's annual Friendsgiving celebration, an event that highlighted gratitude, fellowship and the strength of community connections in the city's Chirilagua neighborhood.

The gathering brought together residents from diverse backgrounds to share a meal, celebrate friendships and recognize the relationships that have become the foundation of Casa Chirilagua's work. The Alexandria-based nonprofit serves immigrant and Latino families through youth development, mentoring, educational support, family engagement and leadership programs. Casa Chirilagua describes its mission as building relationships with families to help transform the neighborhood through community and service.

Throughout the event, attendees enjoyed traditional holiday foods, shared stories of personal growth and reflected on the importance of belonging. Organizers emphasized that Friendsgiving is more than a seasonal celebration. It serves as an opportunity for neighbors, volunteers and families to strengthen bonds that continue throughout the year.

Casa Chirilagua operates from the Arlandria and Chirilagua area of Alexandria, a neighborhood known for its vibrant Latino heritage and strong immigrant roots. The organization works alongside more than 100 families through programs that support children, teens and adults while engaging a network of volunteers dedicated to community building.

During the Friendsgiving celebration, participants expressed appreciation for the support systems that help families overcome challenges and achieve educational and personal goals.

Leaders from the organization highlighted the role volunteers play in mentoring youth, assisting families and creating opportunities for meaningful connection. The event also served to recognize the contributions of donors, local churches and community partners who support Casa Chirilagua's mission throughout the year.

For many attendees, the celebration reflected the spirit that has defined Casa Chirilagua for nearly two decades: neighbors supporting neighbors and building a stronger community together.

www.casachirilagua.org



Photos by Janet Barnett/Gazette Packet

Supporters of Casa Chirilagua enjoy Friendsgiving Nov. 15 at the organization's facility on Mount Vernon Ave. in Del Ray.



Casa Chirilagua executive director Hjarman Cordero, third from left, is joined by Mailyn Escala, Pastor Tim Parker, Andres Patino, Linet Salazar and Anass Yahyaoui at the Casa Chirilagua Friendsgiving Nov. 15 at the organization's Mount Vernon Ave. facility in Del Ray.

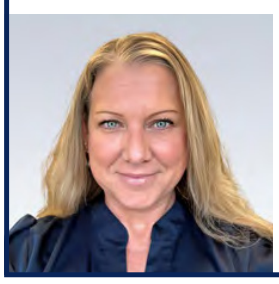
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Mayor Alyia Gaskins, center, leads the groundbreaking for Goodwin Living Seminary Road senior living facility Oct. 7 in the city's West End.

Photos by
Janet Barnett
Gazette Packet



George and Peggy Ward, left, point to the location of their new condo in an artist's rendering of the new Goodwin House Seminary Road facility as John and Joan Renner look on Oct. 7.

Goodwin Living Breaks Ground in West End

Goodwin Living adds $360 million project to local senior living portfolio.

By Jeanne Theismann
Gazette Packet

Community leaders, future residents and local officials gathered on Oct. 7 to celebrate the groundbreaking of Goodwin House Seminary Road, a $360 million senior living community that will reshape retirement living in Alexandria's West End. The project marks the latest expansion of Goodwin Living, a nonprofit organization that has been serving older adults in Northern Virginia for nearly six decades.

Located at Seminary Road and North Beauregard Street, the new development will feature 257 residences across two towers, including independent living, assisted living, skilled nursing and memory care accommodations. All residences were fully reserved before construction began, demonstrating strong demand for senior housing options in the region.

The community will be built alongside The View Alexandria by Goodwin Living, creating a comprehensive senior living campus designed to promote wellness, connection and lifelong engagement. Plans include extensive green spaces, rooftop gardens, wellness amenities, dining venues and an urban arboretum that integrates nature throughout the campus.

During the ceremony, Rob Liebreich, President and CEO of Goodwin Living, emphasized the project's mission of creating a welcoming environment where older adults can thrive.

Alexandria Mayor Alyia Gaskins, city officials and business leaders joined the celebration, recognizing the development's anticipated impact on both residents and the local economy.

Beyond expanding senior housing options, the project is expected to generate significant economic benefits, including construction jobs and approximately 150 permanent positions once the community opens. Scheduled for completion in 2029, Goodwin House Seminary Road represents one of the largest senior living investments in Alexandria and reflects the city's growing commitment to supporting older adults.



Photo by Janet Barnett/Gazette Packet

Guest speaker Col. Mike Prosser (ret.), right, with Major Gerald File (ret.) and Major General Arnold Fields (ret.) at the 251st birthday celebration of the United States marine Corps Nov. 10 at the Old Dominion Boat Club.

Semper Fidelis

ODBC celebrates 251st Marine Corps birthday.

By Jeanne Theismann
Gazette Packet

Members of the Old Dominion Boat Club gathered on Alexandria's waterfront Nov. 10 to commemorate the 251st birthday of the United States Marine Corps, continuing a longstanding tradition that pays tribute to the service, sacrifice and legacy of Marines past and present.

The ceremony honored the founding of the Marine Corps on Nov. 10, 1775, and recognized the commitment of generations who have served under the Corps' motto, Semper Fidelis, meaning "Always Faithful." As is customary at Marine Corps birthday observances worldwide, the event emphasized respect for tradition and the continuity of service between past and present generations.

The formal ceremony opened with the National Anthem and included recognition of Marines past and present. A reading of General John A. Lejeune's message and a video message from current Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Eric M. Smith.

Guest of honor Col. Mike Prosser (ret.) delivered the keynote remarks followed by the traditional cake cutting by Major Gen. Arnold Fields (ret.) and Major Gerald File (ret.).

Founded in 1880, the Old Dominion Boat Club is among Alexandria's oldest civic institutions and remains a prominent presence on the city's historic waterfront. The club has a tradition of hosting events that recognize military service and community engagement.

The celebration was initiated by club member File to honor both the Corps' legacy and the club's respect for military service The event underscored the strong ties between military service and the Alexandria community, which has long been home to veterans and active-duty personnel.

A centerpiece of the evening was the ceremonial birthday observance, which traditionally includes the cutting of a birthday cake and recognition of both senior and junior Marines, symbolizing the passing of knowledge and responsibility from one generation to the next.

The program concluded with the singing of Anchor's Away and the Marine Corps hymn with attendees commemorating the Marine Corps' motto, Semper Fidelis — "Always Faithful."

Community Leaders Celebrated with Lifetime Achievement Awards



The 2026 Men of Courage Lifetime Achievement Award honorees are joined by past recipients Oct. 17 at the Oswald Durant Center. Seated, from left, are the 2026 inductees: John Perlman, Pastor Anthony Oliver, Sheriff Sean Casey, Cleo Greene and Dave Curtis.

From Page 1

A former national boxing standout, Suggs has dedicated much of his life to community outreach and youth mentorship, using his personal story to encourage others and celebrate positive role models throughout the city.

"Tony Suggs helped me a lot," said Jaylon, a senior at Alexandria City High School who is part of Suggs' mentoring program. "He taught me that no matter how old you get there is still a lot of work you can do in the world."

The awards ceremony drew community leaders, past honorees, families and supporters who gathered to recognize the recipients' contributions to Alexandria neighborhoods, schools and civic organizations. Each honoree was praised for demonstrating the qualities that define Men of Courage: leadership, integrity, mentorship and a commitment to helping others succeed.

As the organization marked more than a decade of honoring local leaders, the evening served as a reminder that lasting change often comes from individuals who quietly dedicate themselves to improving the lives of others and strengthening their community.



Photos by Janet Barnett/Gazette Packet

Founder Tony Suggs, center, with 2026 honorees John Perlman, Cleo Greene, Dave Curtis, Sheriff Sean Casey and Pastor Anthony Oliver at the Men of Courage Lifetime Achievement Awards Oct. 17 at the Durant Center.



Founder Tony Suggs, center, stands with young men he has mentored at the 2026 Men of Courage Lifetime Achievement Awards reception Oct. 17 at the Durant Center.

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
HALIFAX	9250	639	ROCK BARN ROAD	BUFFALO CREEK	10/30/2026
APPOMATTOX	1665	700E	TRENT HATCHERY ROAD	BRANCH CUB CREEK	10/30/2026
NELSON	12612	776	GRAPELAWN DRIVE	DAVIS CREEK	10/29/2026
WISE	19495	1135N	LITTLE LEAGUE ROAD	TOM'S CREEK	10/26/2026
HALIFAX	9295	685	LEWIS FERRELL ROAD	BIRCH CREEK	10/22/2026
SCOTT	16704	625N	ANGLERS WAY ROAD	BRANCH	10/20/2026
LEE	10829	624N	ROUTE 625	CREEK	10/15/2026
PITTSYLVANIA	13652	713	BIRCH CREEK ROAD	BIRCH CREEK	10/15/2026
LEE	10745	912E	ROUTE 912 (OLD 58)	BRANCH	10/13/2026
KING & QUEEN	26123	33E	ROUTE 0034	MATTAPONI RIVER	10/6/2026
BATH	2492	618	DUNNS GAP (ROUTE 618)	COWARDIN RUN	10/2/2026
TAZEWELL	29681	0	SAGE HILL ROAD	INDIAN CREEK	10/1/2026
TAZEWELL	18616	643	BRUSHFORK ROAD	NS RAILWAY	10/1/2026
PATRICK	13211	40	CHARITY HWY/ROUTE 40	POPLAR CAMP CREEK	9/30/2026
GRAYSON	8756	58E	HIGHLANDS PKY	HELTON CREEK	9/30/2026
SCOTT	16690	621N	ENGLAND VALLEY ROAD	BRANCH	9/30/2026
TAZEWELL	18614	643E	ROUTE 643	MUD FORK	9/30/2026
NELSON	12521	640	WHEELERS COVE ROAD	DUTCH CREEK	10/31/2026
ALLEGHANY	1031	159N	DUNLAP CREEK ROAD (ROUTE 159)	DUNLAP CREEK	10/20/2026
DINWIDDIE	6050	624	HILLS DRIVE	WHITE OAK CREEK	10/24/2026

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.



Souvenir Virginia Tercentennial of Historic Alexandria (1907), page 65.

H. Baader & Sons, a dealer in stoves, tinware and metals, later did business on the King Street block where seven volunteer firemen died on Nov. 17, 1855. Restaurants and shops now fill the site, including 219 Restaurant and Bollywood Masala.

The Night Alexandria Lost Seven

The dead were not professional firefighters. Alexandria would not have a paid fire department employee until 1866.

By David Heiby

Fire was the great fear of 19th-century Alexandria. Wooden row houses stood shoulder to shoulder with warehouses full of flammable goods, and one spark could take a block. But the fire that broke out on the night of Nov. 16, 1855, was different. Someone set it deliberately, and before dawn it had cost seven lives.

The blaze began in the Dowell China shop in the 200 block of King Street. Volunteers from the city's fire companies fought it through the night. Some worked the upper floors of the adjoining warehouse, and others worked its cellar.

At about four in the morning, the warehouse's west gable wall gave way. Six men died beneath it. A seventh, John Roach, was pulled from the wreckage alive but died of his injuries at home. Six more were hurt. One of them was John Dogan, an African American laborer from Royal Street, who was lamed for life. It remains the deadliest night in the history of Alexandria's fire service.

The dead were not professional firefighters. Alexandria would not have a paid fire department employee until 1866. They were neighbors and tradesmen who answered the bell. G. David Appich, a confectioner, was 21 and the youngest of the seven. William Evans was an English-born plumber. George O. Plain was a painter of 46. Robert I. Taylor was a pavior who helped lay the city's streets. James W. Keene, a woodseller, belonged to the Friendship Fire Company. J. Carson Greene was the grandson of Dr. James Carson. Roach was the only Catholic among them.

Their graves are scattered across the city. Appich was buried in the Presbyterian Cemetery on Wilkes Street. Evans, Plain, Taylor and Keene went to the Methodist Protestant Cemetery nearby, though Keene's exact grave has been lost. Roach rests in St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery. For generations no one knew where Greene lay. In 2025, ground-penetrating radar confirmed his burial beside his family in Christ Church Episcopal Cemetery.

The fire companies did not let the loss fade. Friendship draped its engine house in mourning for six months, and the Star company kept its black bunting up for a full year. In 1856, the cornerstone was laid for a memorial obelisk at Ivy Hill Cemetery, carved with the names of the seven. In that year's memorial procession, John Dogan carried the fire's damaged hose nozzle, engraved with the names of the men who had died around him.

The obelisk still stands. The Friendship Fountain beside it was dedicated in 1970 and rededicated after September 11, 2001.

Every Fire Prevention Week, Alexandria's firefighters still gather there to remember.

No one was ever named as the arsonist. What remains is the memory of seven volunteers who went into a burning building on King Street because their town needed them. Readers can find every grave, along with the fire sites, at gravestonestories.com/fallen-firefighters-alexandria.

This story draws on the research of Catherine Weinraub, historian for the Ivy Hill Cemetery Historical Preservation Society and the Friendship Veterans Fire Engine Association, and author of Friendship Fire Company 250th Anniversary, 1774–2024.

David Heiby is an independent historian, founder of Gravestone Stories (gravestonestories.com), and Superintendent of the Presbyterian Cemetery & Columbarium. He is Treasurer of the Alexandria Historical Society and of the Virginia Trust for Historic Preservation, which owns the Lee-Fendall House Museum, and a member of the Alexandria Archaeological Commission.



Veterans Vociferous in Protesting 'Trump's Arch'

National Capital Planning Commission gets an earful.

By Eden Brown
The Gazette

Rick Silverman was angry. He was also deeply moved. An upbeat, conversational man, he had just turned 83 and came over to Memorial Circle on November 5 to express his unhappiness with the proposed "Trump Arch." He visits the cemetery often as his father is buried there. On one visit, he happened to see a man kneeling by a grave, crying. At a loss for what to do, he went over and consoled the man, asking him about the bottle of Jack Daniels and two glasses sitting by the grave. "This is the bottle I opened with my son when he went off to war," said the man. "I told him when he came home, we would finish it." Silverman looked down at the almost full bottle of liquor that would never be finished. "That is the thing," he said. "This is a place where people come to feel close to their family members. It's hallowed ground. It's not a place for tourists to come gawk or for a president who dodged the draft to put up a monument on a whim."

Protesters, primarily from "Third Act," a group of activists who also helped vote in Democrats during the Mid-terms, knew a lot about the proposed construction. "It's going to take three years or more to build," they noted. "It will cause disruption in family visits to the gravesites. And how will grieving families feel when a nearby construction site includes a place for snipers and drones, instruments of violence in a place where "rest in peace" is enshrined?"

Several mentioned the arch would have elevators, a restaurant, and gift shop. "It's not just an arch," said one member of Third Act, " I've been in the tourist business. This arch will bring busloads of people and congestion. The view down from Arlington House, expressly why the cemetery was built where it was and how it was built with that direct line to the Lincoln Memorial, will be obstructed. " (The straight line was intended to visually unite North and South—linking Abraham Lincoln (the Union) with Robert E. Lee's former home (the Confederacy) across the graves of fallen soldiers.)

Other speakers spoke about out-

See Veterans, Page 14



Rick SIlverman stands in protest near the site of the proposed Arch. He just turned 83 and wanted to stand with other vets opposed to the arch. His father is buried in Arlington Cemetery; he was totally disabled during World War II in the Battle of the Bulge. Silverman is an Army veteran who served in Korea. Coming to visit his father at the cemetery is a cherished way to spend Memorial and Veterans days.



Photos by Eden Brown

Kyriaki Chris of Falls Church served 9.5 years in the Marine Corps and took part in five wars during that time. "This is not right for so many reasons. That's why I came out today."



The protesters constructed an "arch" to bring attention to the project.



Maryanne Vogel came up from Mount Vernon to protest the arch and stayed most of the day. She was encouraged by the number of horns honking support as cars drove past.

Helmet Requirement for Young Riders Expanded

To further protect young riders, the City Council passed an ordinance on Saturday, Nov. 14 extending the requirement to certain electric-powered devices.

Promoting safe, responsible transportation use is a priority in the City of Alexandria. People ages 14 and younger are already required to wear a protective helmet when riding or being carried on a bicycle.

Under the newly passed ordinance, anyone 14 years of age or younger must wear a protective helmet when operating or being carried on the following devices:

* Electric power-assisted bicycles (e-bikes)
❖ Motorized scooters (e-scooters)
❖ Motorized skateboards (e-skateboards)
❖ Electric personal assistive mobility devices (e.g. Segways or hoverboards)

The ordinance is intended to protect heads and reinforce the importance of safety for young riders as the use of electric-powered transportation devices grows in popularity and continues to be part of everyday travel and recreation in our community.

Parents and caregivers are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the new requirement and ensure children have a properly fitted protective helmet whenever riding or being carried on these devices.

Bulletin Board

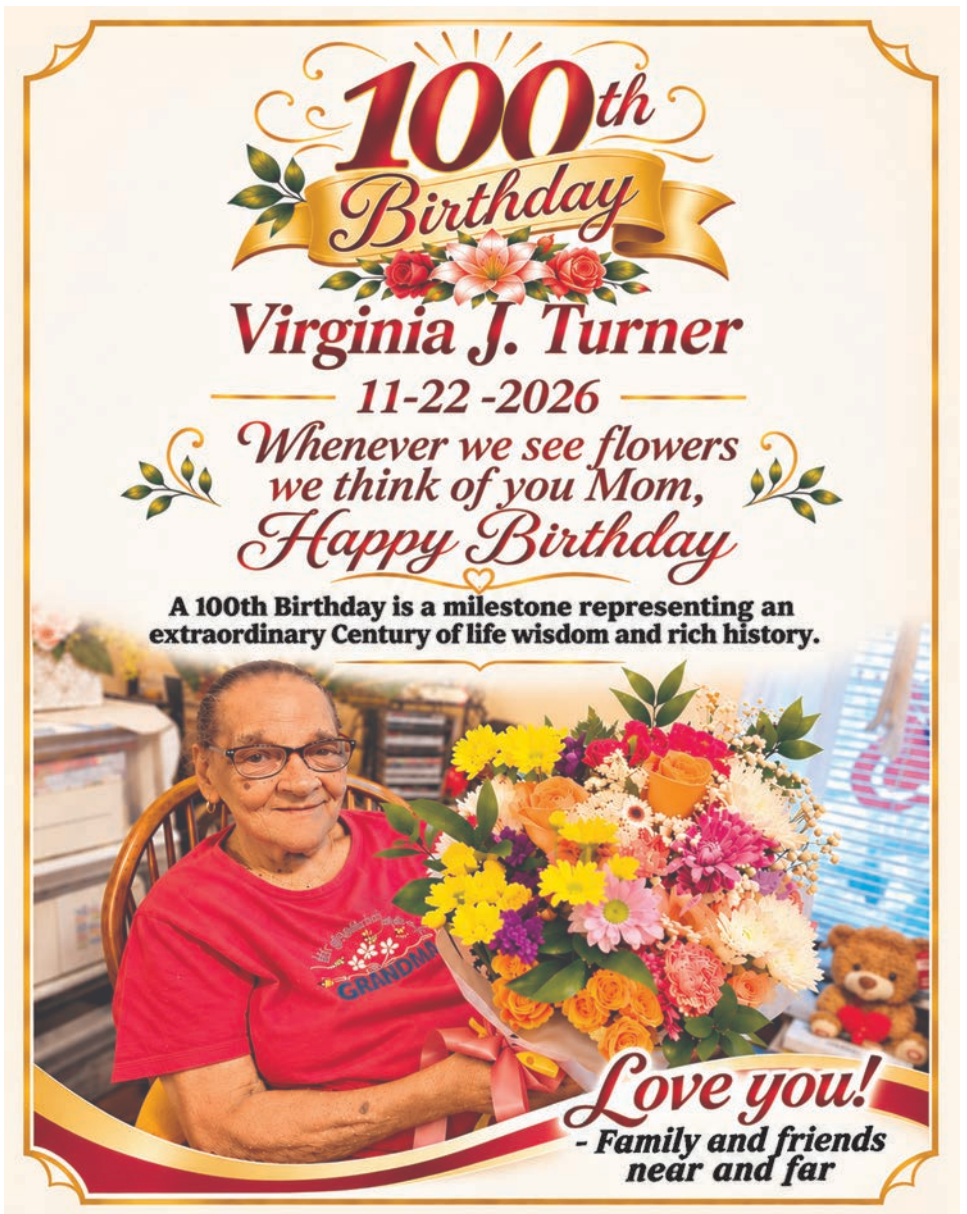
Submit civic/community announcements at ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar. Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before the event. Or email to calendar@connectionnewspapers.com

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

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

Assistance League of Northern Virginia is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that feeds, clothes and provides reading assistance and books to children in need. Assistance League's programs touch the lives of hundreds of children in Fairfax and Prince William Counties and the City of Alexandria. There are many volunteer opportunities for community members to

See Bulletin, Page 11







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Photos by Janet Barnett/Gazette Packet



Alexandria Police Chief Tarrick McGuire, center, with APD staff who served in the military at the dedication of a wall honoring veterans Nov. 10 at APD headquarters.

Continuing to Serve

APD honors veterans.

Alexandria Police Chief Tarrick McGuire unveiled a wall dedicated to APD staff and officers who have served in the military at a veterans' appreciation event Nov. 10 at APD headquarters.

Plaques featuring past and present APD officers were on display with more to be added to include APD retirees. The veterans wall will be a permanent feature at APD headquarters.

Alexandria City High School ROTC cadets, faculty and community members were on hand to honor the APD veterans.

— Jeanne Theismann



Police Chief Tarrick McGuire is joined by Alexandria City High School ROTC students, faculty and command staff at the veteran appreciation event Nov. 10 at Alexandria Police Department headquarters. A wall featuring plaques honoring APD staff who have served in the military was dedicated at the event.

‘The Chokepoint’: Plaza 500 Electric Substation Faces Mandated Fairfax Public Hearing

Section 2232 Review, Planning Commission Meeting Planned for Dec. 2

By Mercia Hobson
The Gazette

Two sides are at odds over the Plaza 500 Electric Substation — officially Dominion Energy’s Edsall Substation, Fairfax County application 2232-2025-MA-00007 — ahead of a scheduled Dec. 2 Fairfax County Planning Commission vote. The Section 2232 application covers the 5-acre Dominion Energy high-voltage electrical substation required to power Starwood Capital Group’s proposed Plaza 500 data center campus. The two-building, 461,444-square-foot project spans 34 acres at 6295 and 6299 Edsall Road in Lincolnia in the Mason District, along the City of Alexandria border.

With pre-construction work looming and other regulatory doors closed, opponents in Bren Mar Park and Lincolnia Park are drawing what could be their final card at the Dec. 2 hearing, hoping to persuade the Planning Commission to halt the project by denying its power infrastructure.

Starwood Capital Group — operating through Starwood Digital Ventures as Plaza 500 LLC — is developing the two-building complex. Because the facility is a “by-right” industrial project, county planners have accepted site plan submittals, the Virginia State Corporation Commission cleared transmission line routing on Aug. 8, 2025, and the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors has no direct land-use veto over the buildings themselves.

The Connection sent five requests for comment before publication and received responses from Starwood Digital Ventures, Mason District Supervisor Andres Jimenez, and Save Bren Mar. Dominion Energy and Fairfax County planning staff did not respond before the deadline late last week.

Developer and Official Responses

On Friday, Nov. 13, a Starwood Digital Ventures spokesperson wrote in an email: “SDV has been investing in Fairfax County since 2019. We remain committed to this project and to our neighbors here in the community.

The planned redevelopment of the Plaza 500 site is an essential opportunity for Fairfax County to deliver a less obtrusive investment that enables its growth, providing high-quality jobs and needed tax revenue and supporting funding for education, first responders and other essential community services. SDV is continuing to work closely with Dominion Energy and Fairfax County to ensure plans for the Edsall Road substation, a public good subsidized by SDV, are community-conscious and low-impact.”

While Dominion Energy did not respond before publication, the utility states on its Edsall Substation webpage that the facility is needed “to meet the area’s growing

See Chokepoint, Page 13

Get Involved

Public Hearing: 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 2, in the Board Auditorium at the Fairfax County Government Center (12000 Government Center Parkway). Sign up to testify in person, by phone or by video on the Planning Commission’s website.

Project Details: Maps and visual simulations are posted at dominionenergy.com (search “Edsall Substation”).

Community Prep: Civic and environmental groups are hosting a Nov. 19 Lunch and Learn on testifying at actionnetwork.org/events/lunch-learn-edsall-substation.

https://natureforward.org/edsall-substation-plaza-500/



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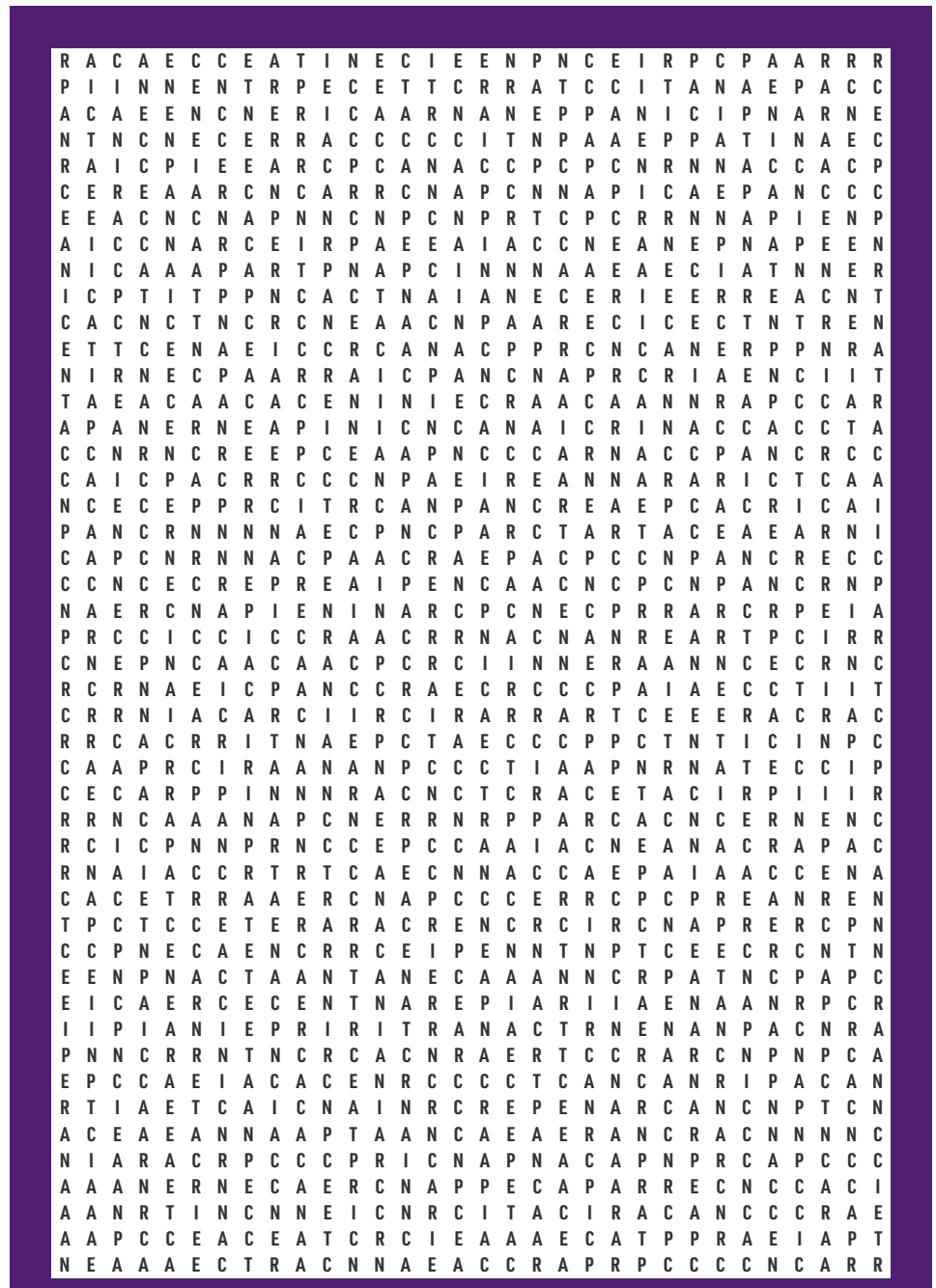
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Neighborhood Health Celebrates Arlington Pediatric Center

Neighborhood Health marked the first anniversary of Arlington Pediatric Center at its current Columbia Pike location with an open house and ribbon cutting on Nov. 10. The center brings pediatric primary care, dental care, behavioral health and vision care together at 2301 Columbia Pike, Suite G.

Arlington County Board Chair Matt de Ferranti and Board members Susan Cunningham and JD Spain joined Neighborhood Health CEO Dr. Basim Khan, clinic staff, and community partners for the celebration. Guests toured the clinic and met members of the pediatric, dental, behavioral health and vision care teams.

Arlington Pediatric Center joined Neighborhood Health in January 2024. Its pediatric optometry program, supported by a grant from the Virginia Health Care Foundation, means that a child whose pediatrician spots a possible vision problem can get an eye exam in the same clinic. Families can also get help ordering prescription glasses at the clinic for children with eligible Medicaid coverage. The Delta Dental of Virginia Foundation helped equip the clinic to provide pediatric dental care.

Neighborhood Health provides care regardless of a patient's insurance status, background, or ability to pay.

Families can call 703-535-5568 to ask about appointments at Arlington Pediatric Center.

Neighborhood Health is a nonprofit Federally Qualified Health Center serving Alexandria, Arlington, and Fairfax County.



Photos courtesy of Neighborhood Health

Neighborhood Health CEO Dr. Basim Khan, center, holds the ceremonial scissors just after cutting the ribbon at Arlington Pediatric Center on Nov. 10. Arlington County Board member JD Spain applauds at left.



Anita Friedman speaks during the Arlington Pediatric Center open house on Nov. 10.



Delicia Claure, administrator of Arlington Pediatric Center, speaks with guests during the open house on Nov. 10.



Arlington County Board member JD Spain, left, takes a selfie with Neighborhood Health CEO Dr. Basim Khan during the Arlington Pediatric Center open house on Nov. 10.



Arlington Pediatric Center administrator Delicia Claure, right, talks with Matt de Farranti during the open house.



Neighborhood Health CEO Dr. Basim Khan greets guests at the Arlington Pediatric Center open house on Nov. 10.



Neighborhood Health CEO Dr. Basim Khan, second from left, and Arlington County Board Chair Matt de Ferranti, right, talk with guests at the open house on Nov. 10.

Bulletin

From Page 7

contribute to helping those in need. To learn more, email info@alnv.org, or visit www.alnv.org.

Join Friends' Board. Those who care about mental health, the Alexandria community, and collaborating with fellow residents to make sure the City's most vulnerable residents have a chance to thrive, then consider joining the Board of Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center. The Friends Board is an all-volunteer group of residents that oversees the administration of one of Alexandria's top mental health charities. Friends has no paid staff, so Board members, working on average 10 hours per month, share the day-to-day work needed to accomplish its goals. Interested candidates should email FriendsofAMHC@gmail.com.

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

ALIVE! offers numerous programs that aid low-income families in Alexandria that rely on volunteers: monthly food distributions, furniture, houseware and emergency food deliveries, and community food drives. Individuals, families and groups are encouraged to participate. Students can earn community service hours by participating. Visit www.alive-inc.org/volunteer.htm or contact the Volunteer Coordinator at volunteers@alive-inc.org.

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

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

Mentors Wanted. Two creative programs that help transform the lives of Alexandria's preteens are seeking volunteer mentors. SOHO, which stands for "Space of Her Own," and "Space of His Own," serves vulnerable fifth graders in Alexandria. The programs pair men and women with youth in need of positive adult role models, to help support and guide youth in making healthy choices and succeeding in school and in life. Visit www.spaceofherown.org and www.spaceofhisown.org. For more information on how to become a SOHO mentor, contact Sarah Maroney at sarah.maroney@alexandriava.gov or phone at 703-746-4687.

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

SUPPORT GROUPS

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

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

FACE Center Support Groups provide parents with a space to share their daily parenting frustrations and triumphs while offering new strategies for helping parents to cope, build positive parent-child relationships and best support their children's learning.

❖ Support Group in English, every Monday, 6-7:30 p.m. at ARHA Main Building, 401 Wythe St.

❖ Support Group in Spanish, every Wednesday, 6-7:30 p.m. at Community Lodgings Brookside Center, 614 Four Mile Road.

Registration not necessary. A light dinner and childcare services provided free. Contact Krishna Leyva at 703-619-8055 or krishna.leyva@acps.k12.va.us for more.

Divorce Workshop for Women. Second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. at Hilton Alexandria Old Town, 1767 King St. The workshops are designed to provide education on the legal, financial, family and personal issues of divorce in a logical, yet compassionate way. The workshop fee is $25. Visit www.novasecondsaturday.com for more.

ONGOING

Robust Walking. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 9 a.m. at Mount Vernon Recreation Center, 2701 Commonwealth Ave. Free 55+ robust walking 1-hour exercise class (with chair exercise option). No class on holidays. Contact jjkingconsulting@yahoo.com.

Backflow Preventer (BFP) Assistance Program. The City of Alexandria has reinstated its sewer Backflow Preventer (BFP) Assistance Program for homeowners in designated areas that historically experience basement back-ups or flooding. The program reimburses homeowners for up to 50 percent of the cost of installing a BFP device by a licensed plumbing contractor, up to a maximum of $2,000. The current program period is through Dec. 31, 2019. Alexandria homeowners should call the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services at 703-746-4014 or visit www.alexandriava.gov/tes.

Seeking Donations. Computer CORE, which is dedicated to helping low-income adults become computer literate is seeking donations. Visit www.computercore.org/contribute.

Senior and Job Programs. 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Queen of Apostles Church, 4650 Taney Avenue, Alexandria. St. Martin de Porres Center offers senior and job placement programming Monday through Friday at the parish. Email Kathryn Toohey, ktoohey@ccda.net.

Be Heard at the City's Monthly Public Hearings. A schedule of the meetings can be found at www.alexandriava.gov. Voice opinions, speak about something on the docket or just speak about something you are concerned about. Sign up in advance to speak through the city's website. Anyone is welcome at any of the public hearings.

Public Space Recycling. Alexandria has placed more than 80 bright blue recycling containers next to public trash cans in the commercial districts along Mount Vernon Avenue and King Street, as well as other public spaces, including parks, recreation fields, and other high-traffic pedestrian areas. Visit alexandriava.gov/Recycling.

Composting and Food Waste. Alexandria now has Resource Recovery Stations, located at the City's Farmers' Markets (Old Town, Del Ray) to collect food waste. More than 270 people have participated in the food waste program over the last several months. Participants drop off items weekly, over eight tons of waste has been collected, to be composted to make a natural fertilizer. To learn more about composting visit alexandriava.gov/YardWaste.



Entertainment

MEETS EVERY SUNDAY

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

MEETS EVERY MONDAY

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

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

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

MGNV PLANT CLINICS ARE OPEN

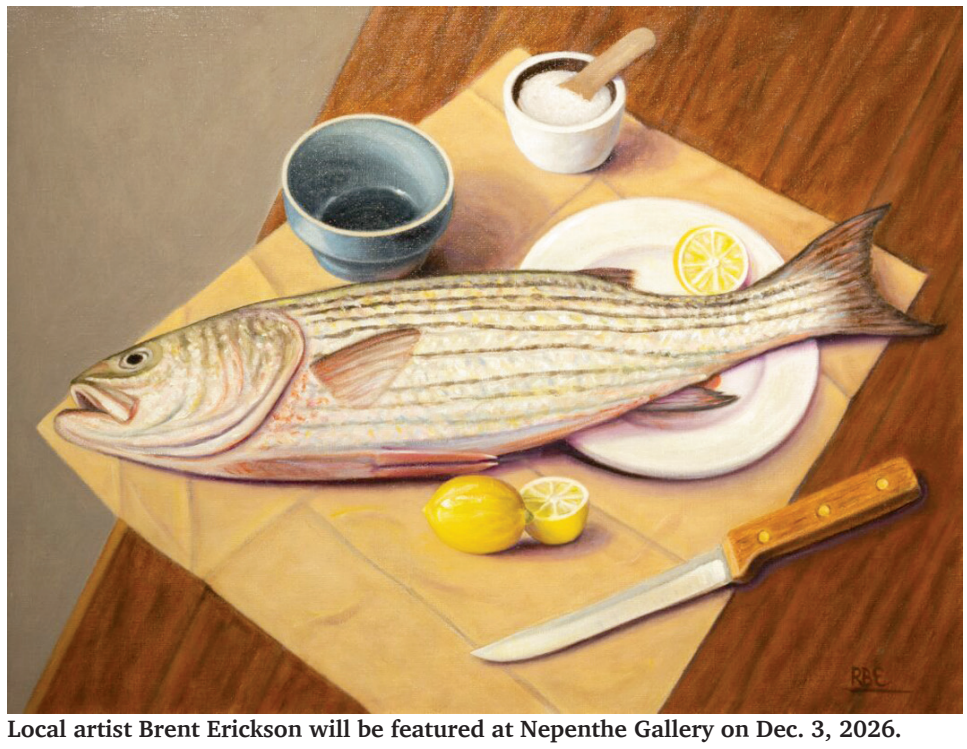
The Alexandria Old Town Farmer's Market Plant Clinic at 301 King St., Alexandria operates on Saturdays from 7 - 9:30 a.m. Del Ray Farmers Market Plant Clinic at Oxford & Mt. Vernon Avenues, Alexandria operates on Saturdays from 8:30 -11 a.m. The Arlington Farmers' Market at N. 14th and N. Courthouse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

YEAR ROUND ON SUNDAYS

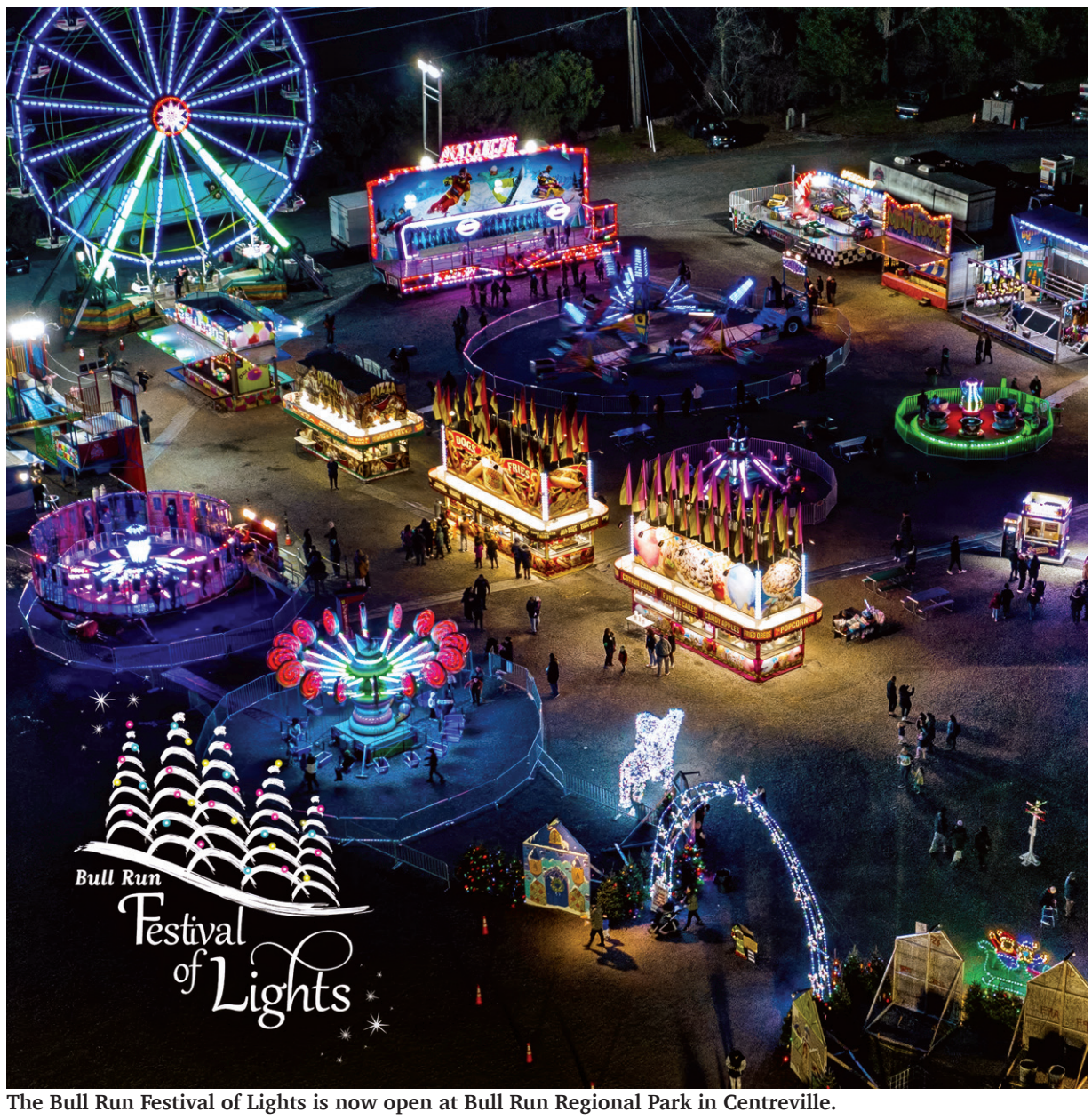
Farmer's Market. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. At Casa Chirilagua Community Center, 4109 Mt. Vernon Ave., Alexandria. Experience fresh foods, native plants, artisan crafts, music and community at Four Mile Run Farmers & Artisans Market in the heart of Arlandria outside the Casa Chirilagua Community Center, every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

NOW THRU DEC. 13

Markmaking Exhibit. At the Athenaeum Gallery, 201 Prince Street, Alexandria. Featuring Kim Abraham, Kung Chee Keong, Bart Dluhy, and Lori Katz. This exhibition explores four artists' shared fascination with the accumulation of marks on a surface, revealing how their interplay produces an aesthetic effect that transcends the sum of its parts. While recurring elements and motifs establish a visual dialogue among the artists' works, each pursues a distinct approach to the possibilities of their chosen materials and surfaces—paper, natural wood, metal, and stoneware—celebrating the unique character and expressive potential of each.



Local artist Brent Erickson will be featured at Nepenthe Gallery on Dec. 3, 2026.



The Bull Run Festival of Lights is now open at Bull Run Regional Park in Centreville.

NOVA PARKS HOLIDAY LIGHT SHOWS OPEN

Drive, Walk and Smile into the holidays with three unique holiday light show experiences. Tickets for the 2026 holiday season are now on sale, and all 3 NOVA Parks light shows will be open as of Saturday, November 14.

Meadowlark's Winter Walk of Lights

Walk a sparkling half-mile garden trail while sipping on a hot beverage for an enchanting evening at Meadowlark's Winter Walk of Lights in Vienna.

Meadowlark's Winter Walk of Lights is an elegant garden trail aglow with countless sparkling lights, perfect for a date night or family holiday outing. The half-mile walk through the enchanting Meadowlark Botanical Gardens (Vienna, VA) features lighted nature themes and animated displays along a paved wheelchair and stroller-accessible trail. Stay warm by sipping on a hot beverage (with or without spirits) as you walk and s'mores to finish out the evening. Treat your pup to their favorite walk of the year on specific dates. The Winter Walk of Lights is illuminating the gardens for its 15th season, bringing joy to more than 110,000 visitors each year.

Open nightly November 11 through January 3. Capacity is limited; reservations are required to ensure access on a specific date. Tickets start at $19 per person; promotions are available for specific dates. Visit novaparks.com/WinterWalk for details.

Bull Run Festival of Lights

Drive through 2.5 miles of dazzling lights at Northern Virginia's largest drive-through light show at the Bull Run Festival of Lights in Centreville.

Experience the magic of the holidays at the Bull Run Festival of Lights, Northern Virginia's largest drive-through holiday light show! A family favorite for three decades, the Bull Run Festival of Lights dazzles with a 2.5-mile display of holiday and fairytale vignettes. Enjoy time with family while staying warm and cozy as you slowly drive through the animated displays in Bull Run Regional Park. New displays are added every year–drive through the Winter Wonderland where it's always snowing and see the tallest light display yet. Don't miss the Holiday Village and Carnival at the end of the drive to visit animals at the stable, roast marshmallows, and new this year, enjoy an extra special treat at the new hot chocolate and dirty soda bar! Open November 14 through January 3. Price per vehicle varies by date. Book now for visits before December 11 for the lowest rates of the season. Visit novaparks.com/FestivalofLights for details.

Bright Nights – The Winter Village at Cameron Run

Explore a winter village wonderland for a playful outdoor experience at Bright Nights – The Winter Village at Cameron Run in Alexandria.

Just minutes from Old Town Alexandria, explore new, dazzling light displays at Cameron Run Regional Park (Alexandria, VA). Bright Nights offers a fun, unstructured outdoor family experience to explore unique light displays, snap family pictures or selfies with a variety of festive scenes and enjoy a hot beverage and snack. New this year, enjoy lighted mini golf, a scavenger hunt, a giant maze, and bring your own camera and capture a special holiday memory with Santa Claus through December 23. Visits and photos with Santa are free with admission to Bright Nights.

Open weekends November 14 through 22, then nightly November 27 through January 3. Admission is $9 online; promotions available for specific dates. Visit novaparks.com/BrightNights for details, hours and Santa's schedule.

Visit novaparks.com/Lights for more information and to purchase tickets.

NOV. 6-29

Del Ray Artisans "$125 & Under" exhibit. At Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Ave., Alexandria. The exhibit showcases members' artwork all priced at $125 or less. The art is sold on an art-to-go basis. The gallery walls are packed with great art at prices all art-lovers can afford. Opening Reception: Friday, Nov. 6, 7-9 p.m. Open Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays & Sundays 12-6 p.m. Closed Thanksgiving Day. Visit DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits.

FRIDAY/NOV. 27

Old Town Alexandria – Plaid Friday. 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Throughout Old Town Alexandria. Skip the big-box crowds and celebrate the Old

Town Boutique Community's independent businesses during Alexandria's beloved Plaid Friday tradition, featuring special promotions, unique finds and one-of-a-kind holiday gifts. https://oldtownboutiquecommunity.com/plaid-friday

NOV. 28 TO DEC. 19

Old Town Alexandria Debuts Small Business Saturday Puzzle Crawl. Kickoff: November 28, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. | Old Town Alexandria. Old Town Boutique District is putting a creative twist on shopping local with the debut of It's a Beautiful Day in Old Town, a new three-week puzzle crawl kicking off on Small Business Saturday, November 28. Inspired by the welcoming spirit of Mister Rogers' Neighborhood, the interactive experience invites residents and visitors to explore more than 35 participating shops, meet local merchants and collect pieces of a limited-edition, 54-piece puzzle featuring original watercolor artwork by Alexandria artist Alexandra Schmeling. The whimsical, storybook-style illustration celebrates Old Town's historic charm and neighborhood character. Throughout the crawl, participants can discover independent boutiques, enjoy special in-store activities and exclusive offers, and support the small businesses that make Old Town a beloved shopping destination. Approximately 200 puzzles will be available, with registration priced at $30 through November 16 and $40 beginning November 17. Each registration includes a puzzle box, neighborhood map and passport to guide the experience. Puzzle boxes must be picked up on November 28, between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m., at Mint Condition (122 S. Royal St.), Bloomers (706 King St.) or Fibre Space (1319 Prince St.). Participants then have through December 19 to explore the shops and collect the pieces needed to complete their one-of-a-kind Old Town keepsake.

EVENTS AT NEPENTHE GALLERY

The Nepenthe Gallery, located at 7928 Fort Hunt Road in Alexandria, had a grand re-opening last week with almost 200 people in attendance. The December Art, Wine and Cheese events are scheduled:

December 3 : Local Artist Brent Erickson

December 10 : Opening of Holiday Art Market. Open until December 22nd.

December 17: Holiday Bluegrass with Dogwood Hollow

SATURDAY/DEC. 5

Alexandria Holiday Boat Parade of Lights. Parade starts at 5:30 p.m.; Dockside festivities 2 to 8 p.m. At Old Town Alexandria Waterfront. Illuminated boats will cruise along the Potomac River waterfront as part of Alexandria's annual holiday celebration. Public viewing information, participating-boat details, and the final event schedule will be posted shortly.

SATURDAY/DEC. 5

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

SATURDAY/DEC. 5

2026 Alexandria Scottish Walk Holiday Parade. 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. In Old Town Alexandria. The Alexandria Scottish Walk Holiday Parade started as a community event more than 50 years ago to highlight the city's Scottish heritage and support the mission of the Campagna Center, then known as the Community Y. The Campagna Center partnered with St. Andrew's Society Washington, DC, Old Presbyterian Meeting House and the City of Alexandria to produce the parade and associated events led by Junior and Supporting Friends of the Campagna Center. In 2026, to elevate this signature event as an ongoing source of civic pride and celebration of Alexandria and its communities, the City of Alexandria took on the role of lead parade producer, with additional support by the Campagna Center and Visit Alexandria.

THE BIRCHMERE

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

NOVEMBER

Wed. 18: Judy Collins: Sweet Judy Blue Eyes – Farewell Tour, with Oakland Rain $79.50

Thu. 19: Jesse Cook $49.50

Fri. 20: Trae Crowder $49.50

Sat. 21: Trae Crowder $49.50

Sun. 22: Marshall Crenshaw w/ Sarah Borges & Eric Ambel $49.50

Fri. 27: An Evening with The Seldom Scene $45.00

Sat. 28: The Manhattans featuring Gerald Alston $69.50

'The Chokepoint': Plaza 500 Electric Substation Faces Mandated Fairfax Public Hearing

From Page 9

electrical needs" and "will support new data center development while helping provide reliable electric service for local homes, businesses and communities."

County planning staff is expected to release its formal Section 2232 report and recommendation ahead of the Dec. 2 hearing.

Meanwhile, Jimenez restated his opposition in a Friday statement. While acknowledging the need for reliable power, he said protecting neighborhoods is his priority. "I do not believe Dominion Energy's Edsall Road Substation proposal, as currently presented, fully explores alternative site locations or design options." He noted concerns over visual impacts, proximity to homes and neighborhood compatibility, adding he would vote against the application if appealed to the Board of Supervisors.

Jimenez's office added that it worked with the Lincolnia Park Recreational Club and Lincolnia Park Civic Association following Dominion's July notice regarding possible investigations on club property, noting the issue is resolved.

Opposition Concerns

Opponents say the proposal conflicts with neighborhood protections in the county comprehensive plan.

"We strongly believe that the County Comprehensive Plan, the basis of the 2232 review, does not support approval of the massive 5-acre data center substation at this location," Tyler Ray of Save Bren Mar wrote in an email. "It is inconsistent with both the Lincolnia Planning District site-specific plan that calls for 'preserving stable residential areas' and that 'infill development must match the character, intensity, and density of existing residential uses,' and the broader County Comprehensive Plan goals relating to land use, economic development, and public facilities."

Ray said approving the facility near homes would set a countywide precedent, comparing what opponents say is a 67-foot setback to prior county approvals.

"If the county staff, Planning Commission, or the Board of Supervisors finds that a substation of this size and scope (can power 40,000-120,000 homes) is appropriate a mere 67 feet from a residential district, they will have to approve all other future data center[s] and other substations that are also in such close proximity," Ray wrote, noting the last four similar county-approved substations sit 900 feet to 5,500 feet from residential districts.

Ray also addressed Dominion's outreach, citing "vaguely worded letters" to the Lincolnia pool and edits to its project webpage, saying residents and officials "simply cannot trust what Dominion is saying." Save Bren Mar also opposes downsizing the substation.

"The proposed Plaza 500 data center is wrong for our community," said Paul Gilbert, a conservationist and former executive director of NOVA Parks who lives in Springfield, in a statement to The Connection. "The way this can be rejected is for the Planning Commission to turn down the power substation. Without lots of power, there is no data center."

Gilbert said that if the Fairfax County Planning Commission "does the right thing and rejects the power substation," the data center company can still "appeal the decision to the Board of Supervisors." He added that the board "usually" does not reverse the Planning Commission.

"We should not approve any new data centers until the carbon pollution, water usage and noise issues have been resolved," Gilbert added. "Let's think globally and act locally."



Screenshot courtesy of Save Bren Mar / Nature Forward

An artistic rendering created by project opponents shows how the proposed 5-acre Edsall Substation would sit next to neighboring townhome communities.



Screenshot courtesy of Dominion Energy

A banner on Dominion Energy's website introduces the Edsall Substation and Transmission Line Project. The Fairfax County Planning Commission is scheduled to hold a public hearing and vote Dec. 2 on the proposed 5-acre substation at 6299 Edsall Road.

Obituary | Obituary

HICKS, Frances Marie (Vaughan)



Frances Marie (Vaughan) Hicks, 84, passed away peacefully on October 28, 2026, surrounded by her three daughters. A devoted wife, loving mother, proud grandmother and passionate activist, she spent fifty years fighting for women's rights.

Born in 1942 in Hampton, Va., Frances served as president of the Bay Area chapter of the National Organization for Women in Texas, testified before the Texas Legislature, and in 1973 filed one of the first federal Title IX complaints in Texas on behalf of her daughter Jeanne. After moving to Virginia, she founded a NOW chapter in Mount Vernon, served on the Fairfax County Commission for Women, testified before the Senate Special Committee on Aging, and taught sociology and women's public policy at Northern Virginia colleges.

She is survived by her daughters, Jeanne Wolak (Bob Russell), Christy Hicks and Melissa Willen (Robert Willen); and five grandchildren, Ethan, Owen, Amanda, Alex and Sam. She was preceded in death by her husband, Claiborne R. (Clay) Hicks Jr.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Society for Women's Health Research (swhr.org) in memory of Frances Marie Hicks.





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Reporting from Memorial Circle

Veterans Vociferous in Protesting 'Trump's Arch'

From Page 6

rage at the lack of adherence to legal requirements such as height limits. "Over 100,000 comments have been submitted to the commission - mostly against," said one speaker. "We saw clearly on Tuesday night the contempt the American people have for the kind of illegal activity this arch represents, and the American people will continue to prevail!"

The National Parks Commission got an earful, with speakers also noting the VVA (Vietnam Veterans of America), a group of 94,000 vets, was not given a voice in the decision and one particularly angry protester pointed out "it was clear the commission had already made up its mind and was "kowtowing" to the whims of a vain president" to bend the rules on construction of this arch.

U.S. Army Colonel (Ret.) Anne Wright was there in army fatigues, a dynamic personality who felt so strongly about the arch she flew here from her home in Hawaii to protest. A woman of principle and a superior officer in both the army and the foreign service, she sent a strongly worded letter to Colin Powell in 2003, resigning from the service because of the invasion of Iraq. She was one of three foreign service officers to resign. She served in all the tough places: Nicaragua, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Mongolia, to name a few.

Protesters (and the roughly 10 reporters camped around the area) planned to stay as long as it took for the Commission to vote, and for U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan to be informed, as she had asked to be within ten minutes of the decision. Once told, she issued a 14-day temporary restraining order halting construction on Trump's proposed 250-foot triumphal arch. On November 10, nine members of the Kennedy family moved to join pending motions seeking a preliminary injunction to block the Trump administration from beginning construction of the arch.

"I just turned 83," Rick Silverman said. "I don't have a lot of time left to serve my country, but I know this is wrong and I will lay down in front of the bulldozers if they start digging tomorrow."



U.S. Army Colonel (Ret.) Anne Wright came all the way from Hawaii to protest. Wright has some experience with protesting. She served in the U.S. Army with distinction and then joined the Foreign Service, again awarded for her superior service. She resigned in protest in 2003 when President George Bush invaded Iraq.



Photos sby Eden Brown

As the afternoon wore on and speaker after speaker addressed the National Capital Planning Commission, protesters gathered in the middle of the circle to greet commuters who may not have focused on the arch construction issue.



The Wheelock family hold certificates of blessings for their pets Sept. 26 at Trinity United Methodist Church. From left: Lindsay with cat Tribbles, Jason, Fletcher with dog Scottie, and Jennifer Wheelock.



Photos by Janet Barnett/Gazette Packet

Tom Tyler, lay minister of Trinity United Methodist Church, blesses Beluca at the Blessing of the Animals Sept. 26 in the church courtyard.

All Creatures Great and Small

Trinity United Methodist church holds annual Blessing of the Animals.

By Jeanne Theismann
Gazette Packet

Tails were wagging as dogs, cats, birds and a variety of beloved companions gathered with their owners Sept. 26 at Trinity United Methodist Church for the church's annual Blessing of the Animals, a tradition celebrating the special bond between people and their pets.

Held in the church courtyard at 2911 Cameron Mills Road, the event welcomed "all creatures great and small" for individual blessings as part of a service inspired by St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals.

Pet owners from across Alexandria brought their furry, feathered and even photo-represented family members to receive blessings and prayers of thanksgiving. Animals unable to attend were remembered through photographs brought by their owners.

The free community event featured individual blessings, treats and water for pets, and commemorative certificates for each animal. According to church organizers, every pet received a personalized certificate as a keepsake honoring the relationship between people and their animal companions.

Set beneath the church's oak trees, the annual gathering has become a popular community tradition, drawing families together for a morning of fellowship, faith and celebration. Organizers emphasized that the event is open to all members of the community, regardless of church affiliation.

As participants departed with blessed pets and commemorative certificates in hand, the annual observance again highlighted Trinity United Methodist Church's commitment to welcoming all God's creatures great and small.



Lay leader Tom Tyler gets a kiss from Woody, a three-month-old Toy Fox Terrier as Susan O'Flaherty looks on during the Blessing of the Animals Sept. 26 at Trinity United Methodist Church.

"Cartality"



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Every month when I receive my paper bill from Audi (the car, not the belly button) to make my monthly payment, I also take notice of how many payments I have remaining (I purchased this SUV and financed it for 60 months after having completed a 42-month lease on the same car). Given my diagnosis, I am also mindful of what my car future may or may not be. It's in this context I remember a conversation I had with Dina's late Italian grandfather: Cesear aka "Chez." It was about cars, specifically the Oldsmobile Omega sedan parked in front of his house. Chez took the opportunity to begin listing all the cars he remembered buying over his lifetime before summarizing that the Omega would be the last car he'd ever buy; acknowledging his own mortality. Being 85-ish, give or take, at the time, "Chez" wasn't driving very much anyway so his comment was hardly a revelation. Still it was funny how he recounted all the other cars that he had owned/had previously driven and laughed at their memory while understanding his car future was over.

I feel similarly about my 2022 Audi Q3. One of two cars we own/lease in our retirement. Additionally, our driving demands are somewhat less than while we were working. As such, our cars are odometer friendly: the miles just aren't adding up. Therefore, there's less wear and tear on both the car and the driver and since I'm not a car guy (sports and chocolate are my areas of expertise), but rather more of a budget guy, I would much rather have two paid-off cars than new/leased cars with payments. As the years have passed, I have gained much less pleasure in making my car payment. Those payments never seemed to be a means to an end as they feel now (not an end to my life but instead an end to car payments). I anticipate the joy I'll feel when I no longer have to pay $631. 30 every month. I think then, this Audi might be my last car. And every month receiving its bill reminds me of my goal and how much closer I am to reaching it. It also reminds me of the time when the late comedienne Joan Rivers burned her home's mortgage on live television after she had paid the balance due. She was free, unencumbered. Likewise, I'll be car rich rather than car poor. Granted there might have been a time in my life when my car mattered more. Not anymore. Now that car payment represents my future. I just hope I get to enjoy it sort of the way "Chez" enjoyed knowing his Omega was going to be his last car. Meaning to me that he was content with his life/what his life had been and the car was incidental.

Unlike "Chez" I won't be aged 85 when my car is paid off; I'll be 75-ish with a few good years likely to have left. Still, I have to temper my anticipation/enthusiasm because I am an active cancer patient still undergoing treatment. And considering one's cancer diagnosis is generally not an ideal way to plan your retirement, it is hopefully not the impediment it used to be. Some cancer survivors are now treated as if they have a chronic disease, sort of like diabetes, with many normal-type years left to live. My "13 month to two years" prognosis back in 2009 is a thing of the past. Nevertheless, for the moment, life goes on and though I'm not throwing caution to the wind (hardly), I am certainly throwing myself into my car as per usual knowing that each trip is getting me closer to heaven on earth: car-payment freedom. And though I'm not exactly planning on how I am going to spend this $600+ monthly windfall, I am looking forward to not having to send it to Audi. I can only imagine the effect it will have on our budget. Can you say "Come to papa?"

The older I get, it's discretionary income that tickles my fancy, and being able to say "yes" to a random demand for my cash. Saying "no" all those previous years was prudent certainly, but in the midst of a cancer-centric life, it was a bit of a, to quote my late father, "confliction." If I didn't have as long to live as I had anticipated/planned/hoped et cetera, budgeting money became a sort of which way the wind/diagnosis was blowing. What seemed to end up most was me spending in the present in a way that might not bankrupt my future. It was a fine line to be sure and one not always appreciated. When diagnosed with a "terminal" diagnosis, it's nearly impossible to not live exclusively in the present. And a big expense like a car is front and center in that spending dilemma. And though I may have driven myself anxious over this issue over the preceding years, I've survived, no thanks to my cancer diagnosis.

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

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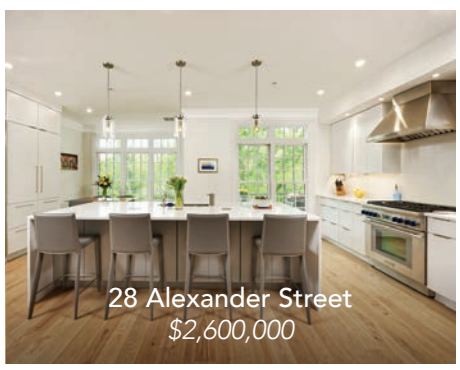

113-115 Lee Street S
$4,025,000


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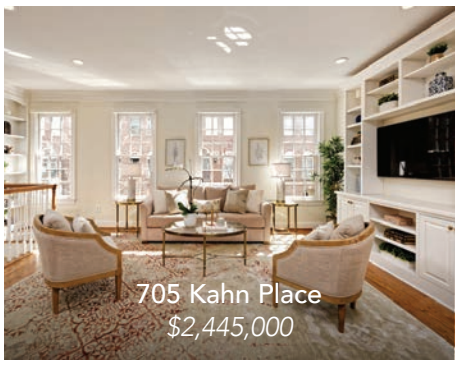

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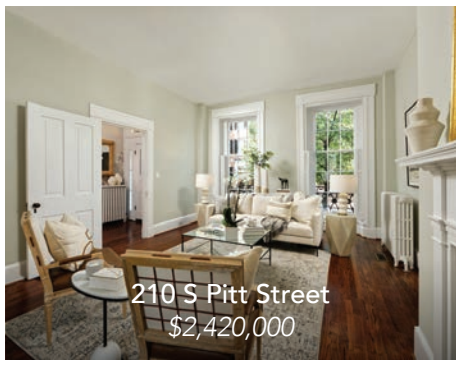

2025 Scroggins Road
$2,686,000


28 Alexander Street
$2,600,000

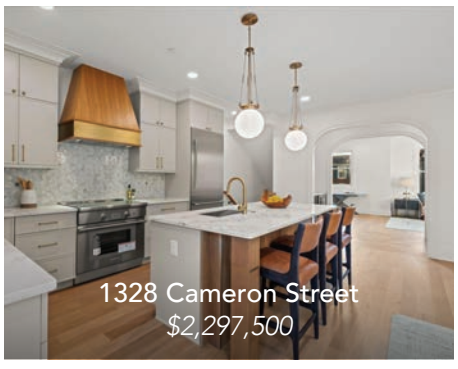

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$2,500,000

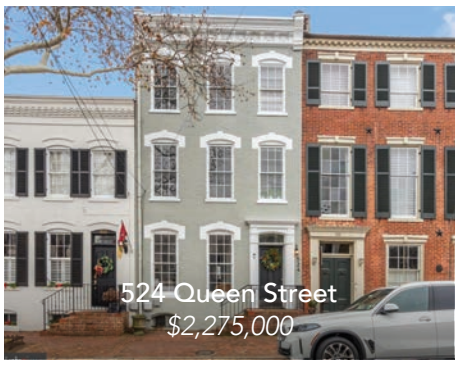

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$2,445,000


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$2,420,000


605 Hilltop Terrace
$2,325,000


1328 Cameron Street
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*Data derived from Bright MLS for properties that sold in the City of Alexandria for more than $1.5M+ from Jan 1-Oct 31, 2026.

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