

Mount Vernon Gazette

MOUNT VERNON'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER • A CONNECTION NEWSPAPER

JUNE 18, 2026

Mount Vernon Opens Redesigned Museum

Redesigned, 21,000-square-foot museum and exhibit, 'George Washington: A Revolutionary Life' comes to life in nine new galleries and six immersive media spaces.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

The man behind that sober image on the one dollar bill and how he became a revolutionary comes to life in Mount Vernon's new, remade Education Center in nine new galleries and six immersive media spaces.

"George Washington was not born as a man with a powdered wig," quipped Anne Petri, the Mount Vernon Ladies Association regent, at the June 11 opening.

Officials unveiled the redesigned, 21,000-square-foot museum and exhibit, "George Washington: A Revolutionary Life," in conjunction with the nation's 250th anniversary on July 4. "There would be no America without George Washington. America was made in Virginia," Carly Fiorina

"There would be no America without George Washington. America was made in Virginia."
— Carly Fiorina

na told the audience. A local, Fiorina is the Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission's honorary Chair.

Doug Bradburn, Mount Vernon's president, said that the new center is more inclusive and complete than the previous one which opened in 2006, one year before the first iPhone came on the market, he noted. The museum immerses guests into the 18th century and tracks how Washington navigated through life with images, media projections, interactive simulations, portraits, documents and objects. Included among objects never before displayed are the swivel chair that Washington used as president and his wartime camp bed.

The theme stretches beyond who this man was and explores the forces that shaped him and the challenges he faced at this pivotal



George Washington at age 15.



Portrayal of an enslaved woman in her cabin on Washington's plantation.



George Washington's teeth on display made of lead and human and animal teeth.



Visitors can turn these cylinders to learn how Washington tried to enrich the soils on his plantation.



time.

Visitors learn that Washington lost his father at age 11 and did not have the educational and other opportunities typical of Virginia's landed gentry. Nevertheless, he set out to make something of himself. At age 15, he copied the Rules of Civility. Visitors can study the surveying tools he used at age 17, like a compass and tripod, that produced almost 200 surveys.

Exhibits spotlight Washington's love of farming, not just production, but the science behind it. He believed mules were stronger work animals than horses so he bred mules and had 60 by the end of his life versus 20 horses. He explored ways to enrich the soil.

Washington wrote that slavery was his "only unavoidable subject of regret." In a digital vignette, guests can be a fly on the wall inside the living quarters of an enslaved family and feel within arms' length of an enslaved woman mourning the death of her baby and planning to ask Washington if she can be a midwife on his plantation.

Objects from the enslaved people's living quarters provide glimpses into their lives, a chamber pot, a shoe buckle, beads, horseshoes and clay marbles. Enslaved people were the forced-labor engine of the 8,000-acre plantation, by farming, housekeeping, making bricks and horseshoes, building buildings and working in the distillery, for example.

Leader of the Revolution and New Nation

Museum-goers can almost feel the bitter cold of the 1777-1778 Valley Forge war camp where the General looms astride his white horse, Blueskin, and snow steadily falls in the background. For tactile and auditory experiences, people can rub a sample of horsehide and touch a button to learn Army drum signals: three thumps signaled the water call.

Viewing the presidential inauguration exhibit, with Robert Livingston administering the oath and Washington swearing in on a Bible held by Samuel Otis, today's visitors feel like they are there in 1789, among the excited celebrants on a



The Mount Vernon mansion, which the Washingtons expanded over time with unpaid labor of enslaved people.

PHOTOS BY GLENDA C. BOOTH

SEE MOUNT VERNON, PAGE 10

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ACM ATLANTIC COAST
MORTGAGE

Summer Palooza Draws a Crowd

From drones to dogs to hot dogs, there was a lot to take in on this very hot day.



Hotdogs from South County Church were a big hit.



An estimated 3,000 people explored Supervisor Dan Storck's Summer Palooza on June 6.



Even Thomas Jefferson showed up at the 250th U.S. anniversary tent.



The 90-plus heat did not deter youngsters at the bounce house.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

Supervisor Dan Storck's Summer Palooza was aptly named for sure. Meteorologists predicted that on June 6, temperatures would exceed 90 degrees and "feel like" 95. By 3 p.m., around 3,000 Mount Vernonites had sweated through a hot, summer afternoon at the Mount Vernon Government Center.

And palooza it was, from goats to drones, from sewage vacuum trucks to a seven-seater Lexus, from legal advice to packing services, from Lions Club devotees to police swat teams, from hot dogs to samosas, 50 vendors in all.

Food lines persisted for free lunches from the South County Church and restaurants like Della J's, Haymi's Barbeque, Honeygrow and Dishes of India. Kids squealed from the inflatable bounce house.

Local Services, Sites

Many local groups touted their services, like the Mount Vernon-area Lions Club chartered in 1999

which offers vision and hearing screenings, for example. People from the English Empowerment Center described their free and low-cost English classes offered at 12 sites, including the Lorton Community Center and Rising Hope Mission Church. Mathnasium helps kids keep up on their math skills over the summer. Ron Chase, President of the Gum Springs Historical Society and Museum, informed festival-goers about the museum and neighborhood, the oldest African American community in the county, founded in 1833.

Environmental causes rippled throughout. Quiet Clean Northern Virginia advocated banning gas-powered leaf blowers. From the Friends of Accotink Creek's tent a stuffed frog dangled bearing a sign, "Give me a break." He appeared to be strangling from a discarded plastic bag caught around his neck.

Jan Kamide with Fairfax Tree Stewards urged folks to protect and plant trees. Her group identifies "tree deserts" and helps people

plant trees at minimal costs.

As for animals, kids of all ages delighted in petting the very docile goats from Herndon's Frying Pan Park. Youngsters colored birds at the Friends of Dyke Marsh station.

Alexandria's Dogtopia promoted their doggie day care and boarding in air-conditioned quarters, playrooms and spa services, like ear cleaning and teeth brushing.

Even the two employees of Pohanka Automotive Group, founded in 1919, boasted about the company's devotion to animals, while showing off a Lexus TX 350, a luxury car with a price tag of \$60,000 to \$80,000. Their cause: Paws of Honor. Pohanka has sponsored 23

SEE SUMMER PALOOZA PAGE 13



Youngsters loved climbing up into the driver's seat of one of the county's recycling trucks.

Celebrating Gardening, Conservation and More



Mary and Roger Bowers co-chaired the gala and helped raise funds for the new tent.



PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH

The lawn reception featured flower-themed tablecloths.

Basking in the glow of saving River Farm forever.

magazine, American Gardener. The organization's mission is "to inspire a culture of gardening and horticultural practices that creates and sustains healthy, beautiful communities and a livable plan-

SEE CELEBRATING, PAGE 15

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

American Horticultural Society celebrates honored heroes, heroines, gardening, a new event tent and saving the organization's headquarters when they gathered on a warm June 6 evening at River Farm, overlooking the Potomac River on East Boulevard Drive in Mount Vernon.

Given the 90-plus-degree day, folding hand fans were almost as popular as plants during the outdoor reception and during the dinner. The welcome table offered a basketful of pinkish fans. Guests in colorful, flower-patterned garb stood out among the 255 attendees.

"Gardens make life better. They inspire curiosity and connection with the natural world," said Rochelle Greayer, editor of AHS's



Virginia Delegate Gretchen Bulova, Secretary of Historic and Natural Resources David Bulova and Scott Plein discussed state policies.



Given the 90-plus-degree day, fans were popular.



Many flowers were in bloom, including Belladonna lilies.



The salad had a pansy, an edible flower.



Sada Dahouk and Ben Zeko with Burke and Herbert Bank enjoyed the event.



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Clark University (Mass.) ♦ Clemson University ♦ College of Charleston ♦ College of William & Mary (5) ♦ College of Wooster ♦ Columbia University
Dartmouth College ♦ Duquesne University ♦ Emory & Henry University ♦ Fordham University ♦ George Washington University (2) ♦ Georgetown University
Howard University (3) ♦ Indiana University (3) ♦ James Madison University (5) ♦ Lehigh University ♦ Louisiana State University ♦ Loyola University (Md.) (2)
Marymount University ♦ Mercer University ♦ Miami University (Ohio) (2) ♦ Morehouse College ♦ Morgan State University ♦ New York University
North Carolina State University ♦ Northeastern University ♦ Penn State University ♦ Penn West California (Pa.) ♦ Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (3)
Rollins College ♦ Springfield College ♦ Stevenson University ♦ Syracuse University (3) ♦ The George Washington University ♦ Towson University
Trinity College (Conn.) ♦ Tuskegee University ♦ University of California-Davis ♦ University of Chicago ♦ University of Cincinnati
University of Colorado-Boulder (2) ♦ University of Denver (2) ♦ University of Florida ♦ University of Mary Washington ♦ University of Maryland-College Park (2)
University of Miami (Fla.) (2) ♦ University of Michigan (4) ♦ University of Mississippi (2) ♦ University of North Carolina-Greensboro ♦ University of Notre Dame (2)
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University of Tennessee ♦ University of Virginia (4) ♦ University of Wisconsin-Madison ♦ Villanova University ♦ Virginia Tech (3)
Wake Forest University (2) ♦ Yale University



Seventeen seniors from local high schools were awarded Education Partnership Scholarships from the Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber of Commerce, reflecting a long-standing commitment to education, workforce development and the future of the community.

Chamber Awards 17 Scholarships to Local Students

Seventeen scholarships were awarded to local high school students by the Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber of Commerce to recognize outstanding achievement by graduating seniors planning to continue their education and pursue careers in business and related fields.

At a reception hosted by the Army Historical Foundation and GEN Burt Thompson (Retired), Supervisor Rodney Lusk, Franconia District, encouraged the scholarship recipients to be open to new opportunities giving examples from his life of how an unexpected invitation or opportunity made a big difference.

The Chamber's 2026 Business Scholars are: Ethan Santos and Kate Hood, Mount Vernon High School; Nicole Cousins and James Song, South County High School;

Andrew Binetti, Lucy Little, Nathan Roeschlein, and Mason Brown, Thomas A. Edison High School; Gavin Clarke and Manas Puri, Lake Braddock Secondary School; Melina Teklu, Christian Sadek, and Aadi Mathur, West Springfield High School; Brooklynn Jones and Preston Simpson, Hayfield Secondary School; Henry Lang, West Potomac High School; Landon Koch, Bishop Ireton High School.

Scholarships were made possible through the generous support of local businesses and organizations, including Andrews Federal Credit Union, AHEAD Technology Consulting, Cisco, Nutanix, Ourisman Automotive Group, Reworld Fairfax, and Star City Grain Storage, as well as funds raised through the annual Chamber Golf Classic.

The Chamber established the

Mount Vernon Springfield Education Partnership, a 501(c)(3) organization, to support local students pursuing higher education. Members of the Education Partnership Board of Directors are Roberta Tinch, Inova Health Systems; Michael Bennett, Ourisman; George Ksenics, Andrews Federal Credit Union; Karen Corbett Sanders; Mike Murphy, Knights of Columbus; Marissa Eyon, FASTSIGNS Springfield; Kathleen Lugarich, Army Historical Foundation; Mark Viani, Bean, Kinney & Korman PC.

Since 1998, the Chamber and Education Partnership have awarded more than \$402,500 in scholarships, reflecting a longstanding commitment to education, workforce development, and the future of the Mount Vernon and Springfield communities.



Supervisor Lusk and Robert MV-2026 Scholarships V2.jpg present a scholarship to Mason Brown. Lusk encouraged scholarship recipients to take advantage of unexpected opportunities.

Rotary Club of Alexandria, Flags for Heroes 2026 Display

Hundreds of American flags honoring local heroes overlooking the Potomac River will create one of Northern Virginia's most inspiring patriotic displays during America 250 celebrations.

The Rotary Club of Alexandria will present the 9th Annual Flags for Heroes 2026, a community tribute honoring veterans, first responders, active-duty military personnel, teachers, healthcare workers, and other local heroes.

The display will feature 300 American flags sponsored by individuals, families, and local busi-

nesses in recognition of those who serve and strengthen our nation and community.

In 2026, the event comes as we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the United States. Located near George Washington's historic Mount Vernon, the display will connect the nation's founding ideals with the service and sacrifice of today's heroes. Visitors are invited to read about each hero being honored on cards attached to each flag.

The striking field of American flags overlooking the Potomac River will offer beautiful, patriotic photo opportunities during the

America 250 commemoration.

WHEN:

Flag display setup work: June 27, 8 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Flags on display: June 27, 1 p.m. through July 10

Opening Ceremony Luncheon: June 30, 11:30 AM

WHERE:

Flag display and ceremonies are all located at:

Cedar Knoll Restaurant, 9030 Lucia Lane, Alexandria, VA 22308

<https://alexandriarotary.org/fh2026-signup-webpage.php>

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
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 donairea@aol.com.

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

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 18

NEWS



PHOTO BY JANET BARNETT

Scholarship Winners

Jack Fannon, president of Rotary Club of Alexandria stands with Rotary scholarship awardees (from left) Jackson Dundon, Khamille A. Muhammad and Victoria P. Hoggard, on June 9 at Belle Haven Country Club.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Please be advised that there will be a 5-minute fireworks display taking place as part of a private evening event at George Washington's Mount Vernon on

Tuesday, June 30
between 9:10 p.m. and 9:40 p.m.

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

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Declaration Day Honors Virginia's Revolutionaries

Insight into philosophy of rebellious colonists who fomented a revolution against British rule.

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

Fairfax County was a hotbed of revolutionary zeal in the 1700s. July 4th will mark 250 years after the Continental Congress voted to ratify the nation's Declaration of Independence in 1776, but three weeks earlier, on June 12, the Virginia General Assembly ratified the Virginia Declaration of Rights authored by George Mason IV of Gunston Hall. Even before that in 1774, George Washington and primarily George Mason wrote the Fairfax Resolves, resolutions rejecting Britain's authority over the colonies.

Gunston Hall celebrated Declaration Day on June 13, with several "returning patriots" offering insights into the events and philosophy of the rebellious colonists who fomented a revolution against British rule.

The Declaration of Rights

"Thomas Jefferson" told a rapt audience, "George Mason was one of the greatest minds I have ever met." The Virginia Declaration of Rights is considered by many to be the first clear statement of principles of the new democratic government. The first article of the Declaration begins, "That all Men are by nature equally free and independent, and have certain inherent rights." The document affirms other rights such as "the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety." Jefferson likely "borrowed" Mason's language when drafting the Declaration of Independence, scholars say, language reflected



George Washington and Thomas Jefferson discussed the forces and voices of the 18th century that shaped American democracy.



Annandale Cub Scouts had many questions for these two dignitaries.



The Old Line Fife and Drum Band sustains colonial music. Left to right: Daniel Wilson, Michelle Wilson, Ben Squier.



Visitors toured Gunston Hall, an 18th century mansion, home of the Masons.

in many subsequent constitutions across the globe.

Doug Thomas, portraying Washington, and Steven Edenbo as Jefferson, had a lively conversation about the origins of America's

government and the drafting of its founding documents. Washington stressed that the Constitution is a "living, breathing document," and its chief feature is that it can be amended by the people, "not by

usurpation."

"A monarch governs by fear," said Jefferson. "A democracy governs by virtue," adding, "We need an informed public so you can hold your leaders accountable."

"How long did it take to write all this stuff?" asked an alert adolescent to audience snickers.

Washington answered, "the Con- SEE DECLARATION DAY, PAGE 9



Red cedars line the lane to the Masons' cemetery.



Rozalyn Gaines portrayed Nell, an enslaved woman at Gunston Hall.



George Mason V (Elliott Rauh) and George Mason IV (David Keltz) greeted visitors.



Organizations promoted their causes to arriving visitors.

Declaration Day Honors Virginia's Revolutionaries

FROM PAGE 8

stitution, the summer of 1787.”

On the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson responded, “Two and a half weeks and I did not wait until the night before it was due,” a comment that elicited laughter.

Rozalyn Gaines, as Nell, an enslaved woman, reminded people, “Change is hard. If something is unfair, the question is, how do you make it fair?”

The day began with the Sons of the American Revolution laying a wreath on the Masons’ tombs in the family graveyard. Visitors toured the mansion, built between 1755 and 1758, and enjoyed a birthday cake.

Activities and Partners

A three-member Virginia women’s group, The Itinerant Band, entertained with pre-Revolutionary War music of the colonies, playing a flute, fiddle, recorder and guitar. Some of their songs are still played today, one said, like “Soldier’s Joy” and “Greensleeves.”

Children played 18th century games, like ring toss with rings made of twine and made tri-cornered hats and cockades.

April Carter made buttons with messages like “freedom of the press” and “Declaration of Rights.”

Visitors tried a “Rights Advocates Matching” game, by turning over cards with photos of American figures like Cesar Chavez, Ida B. Wells and Jackie Robinson.

Along the magnolia-lined lane to the brick Georgian mansion, organizations touted their mission, including George Mason University, the Library of Virginia, the National Museum of the Marine Corps and Fairfax County libraries. Women of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America said they trace their ancestors to the colonies.

Keil Gentry, Director of the Marine Corps museum said, “We’re here to celebrate the country’s anniversary through the eyes of the marines. The Marine Corps’ founding date, Oct. 10, 1775, coincides with the nation’s.”

On June 12, Gunston Hall hosted a naturalization ceremony for 48 people from 22 countries. The guest speaker was Jorge Zamanillo, founding director of the planned Smithsonian National Museum of the American Latino in Washington, D.C.

Saturday’s guests enjoyed a little 18th century humor too when Jefferson asked some youngsters from Annandale Cub Scout Pack 855, “What is my favorite tea?” The answer: Lib-er-tea.



George Mason and his wife, Ann, are entombed at Gunston Hall.

CALENDAR

				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Let us know about an upcoming event

connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar

PUBLIC NOTICE

Please be advised that there will be a 15-minute fireworks display taking place as part of a private evening event at George Washington’s Mount Vernon on

Thursday, July 2
between 9:15 p.m. and 9:50 p.m.

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

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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
Loudoun	11235	663	DOWNEY MILL ROAD	TRIB. CATOCTIN CREEK	5/27/2026
Smyth	17619	639N	SULPHUR SPRINGS ROAD	BRANCH	5/13/2026
Grayson	8733	58	HIGHLANDS PARKWAY	CABIN CREEK	5/6/2026

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.

Mount Vernon Opens Redesigned Museum

FROM PAGE 1

New York street, looking up at the imposing balcony scene. A thread-by-thread replica of the wool suit Washington wore at the inauguration hints at the successful rebellion: The British called its color “London brown,” but colonists called it “Congress brown.”

Washington invented the presidency. “The Constitution was his job description,” one panel says. Eschewing royal traditions, he wrote, “I walk on untrodden ground.”

The Dentures

Washington’s dentures never fail to intrigue. When he was sworn in as President, he only had one tooth. A New York dentist, John Greenwood, made the dentures of lead and animal and human teeth in the 1790s. Docents explain that the dentures were uncomfortable, probably painful, and complicated talking. Washington may be clenching his teeth in many portraits because of the discomfort, they say.

Visitors can also learn about the Revolutionary War in the 4D theater and youngsters can go back to 18th century life in a hands-on room.

Among the June 11 guests were Fairfax County Supervisor Dan Storck, Virginia Senator Scott Sur-ovell, Virginia Delegate Paul Krizek and Sheila B. Coates, founder and president of Black Women United for Action.

The reimagined museum is a \$20 million investment in civic education and Mount Vernon’s “birthday gift to America,” say Mount Vernon officials.



A whimsical, more modern, “kid version” of Washington.

PHOTOS BY
GLENDA BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE



Museum-goers feel like they are on the scene at Washington’s 1789 inauguration in New York City.



Martha Custis Washington, admiring London fashion then, ordered her wedding dress from Britain for her marriage to George Washington. She wore hip pads or panniers under it, as was the style of that era. This is a replica.



One exhibit describes the harsh winter when the Continental Army camped at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Here, the General is on his horse, Blueskin.



Doug Thomas portrayed Washington on opening day, June 11, greeting students from all over the country.



Replicas of the purple satin and silver shoes Martha Custis Washington wore on her wedding day.

Fairfax County Voters Head Back to Ballot Box

Early voting begins Thursday, June 18; quick guide to the Aug. 4 dual primary election.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Virginia Department of Elections has requested a primary election to nominate Democratic and Republican candidates for the U.S. Senate, the U.S. House of Representatives and local offices. Because Virginia holds open primaries, voters may choose either a Democratic or a Republican ballot, but not both.

Early in-person voting for the Aug. 4 dual primary begins Thursday, June 18, a day earlier than the standard 45-day window because state offices are closed Friday, June 19, in observance of Juneteenth.

Depending on where they live, Fairfax County voters are split among Virginia's 8th, 10th and 11th Congressional Districts.

Key Dates, Locations and Deadlines

Early in-person voting runs from June 18 through Aug. 1. Any registered Fairfax County voter may vote early at any county early voting location. Locations and hours vary throughout the voting period. Voters must present a Virginia driver's license, U.S. passport, or another acceptable form of identification, or be prepared to sign an ID confirmation statement.

Locations Opening June 18:

- ❖ Fairfax County Government Center (12000 Government Center Pkwy.): Open weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- ❖ Mount Vernon Governmental Center (2511 Parkers Lane) & North County Governmental Center (1801 Cameron Glen Drive): Open weekdays from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m.
- ❖ Weekend Hours (All three sites): Open Saturdays, July 25 and Aug. 1, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Closed Sundays.
- ❖ Holiday Closures: All locations will be closed June 19 and July 3.

Locations Opening July 22:

Thirteen additional satellite locations (including regional libraries such as Burke Centre, Centreville, Great Falls, Herndon Fortnightly and Tysons-Pimmit) will open for voting. These sites operate on weekdays from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. and on Saturdays, July 25 and Aug. 1, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The deadline to register to vote or request a mail ballot is July 24 at 5 p.m. Same-day provisional registration is available after this date.

Location on Election Day, Aug. 4: Voters must vote at their assigned precinct polling place, which will be open from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m.

What Is on the Ballot?

Only offices with more than one qualified candidate will appear on a primary ballot. Voters can verify their specific congressional district, registration status and assigned

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MERCIA HOBSON/ THE CONNECTION

A multilingual early voting sign marks the start of in-person early voting for the Aug. 4 dual primary election on Thursday, June 18.

Election Day polling place online at elections.virginia.gov.

Democratic Primary Ballots:

- ❖ 8th Congressional District: Features a five-way primary race among Mo Seifeldein, Michael Christian Duffin, incumbent Donald S. Beyer Jr., Adam M. Dunigan and Lorena Thorne Bruner.
- ❖ 10th and 11th Congressional Districts: No Democratic primary elections are being held.

Republican Primary Ballots:

- ❖ 8th Congressional District: Features a three-way statewide primary race for the U.S. Senate among Bert Mizusawa, Kim Farington and David E. Williams. There is no House primary.
- ❖ 10th Congressional District: Features a primary race for both the U.S. Senate (Mizusawa, Farington, Williams) and a four-way race for the U.S. House of Representatives among Dave Beckwith, Julie Perry, Anthony Suttles and Sam Wong.
- ❖ 11th Congressional District: Features a three-way statewide primary race for the U.S. Senate among Bert Mizusawa, Kim Farington and David E. Williams. There is no House primary.

Voting by Mail

Any registered voter can request a mail ballot without an excuse, but the application must specify which party ballot for processing. The deadline to request a mail ballot for the Aug. 4 primary is 5 p.m. July 24.

Mail returns must be postmarked by Aug. 4 and received by noon on Aug. 7. Secure drop boxes are available 24 hours a day outside the Fairfax County Government Center, at any early voting site during voting hours, or at polling places on Election Day before 7 p.m.

Voters can learn more about how to request a mail ballot, track its status, or view a full list of community drop boxes by visiting the county's official website at Fairfax County Elections. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/elections/>

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Conservationists Commit to Saving Nature

The trust raised over \$100,000, exceeding its goal of \$25,000, with the help of the Paul Siegel Memorial Match (Mount Vernon).

BY GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

Saving nearby nature, the motto of the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, was front and center, thematically, verbally and visually as 200 supporters gathered at the trust's "Evening in the Garden" at Meadowlark Botanical Gardens in Vienna on June 4.

Surrounded by plants inside and outside the park's glass atrium, sponsors billed it as a "night of celebration, community and philanthropy." The trust exceeded its fundraising goal of \$25,000 for that night, doubled by the Paul Siegel Memorial Match and raised over \$100,000. Siegel died last year. He and his wife, Betsy Martin, co-founded the Friends of Little Hunting Creek in 2003 and partnered with NVCT to preserve some waterfront land along the creek, a tributary of the Potomac River in Mount Vernon.

Keynoter Adrienne Kotula, Virginia Deputy Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources, told the attendees that as a youngster growing up in Arlington, she played in Four Mile Run. "Parks allow children to connect with nature," she said. Virginia committed to conserving two million more acres of land, she noted, in the 2025 updated Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, a collaboration among six states and the District of Columbia. Representing Governor Abigail Spanberger's administration, she ended, "We want to solve problems."

Virginia Sen. Russet Perry said, "Let me be a warrior with you."

"I was honored to join Northern Virginia Conservation Trust for my first gala with them and celebrate the important work the landowners, advocates and conservation partners do to preserve the places that make Virginia special," Perry added later. "It was also a wonderful opportunity to highlight important conservation victories from this year's General Assembly session, including my bill to better protect conservation easements and open spaces from being used as rights-of-way for massive transmission line projects, ensuring that the landscapes we preserve today, remain protected for future generations." Perry represents parts of Fauquier County and Loudoun County.

Virginia Del. Holly Siebold said,



Adrienne Kotula, Virginia Deputy Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources, discusses the Spanberger administration's goals at the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust "Evening in the Garden."



Mount Vernon-area residents Sarene Marshall and Roger Bowers are NVCT supporters. Marshall is a board member.

PHOTOS BY GLENDA BOOTH



Virginia Del. Marcus Simon and Sen. Russet Perry discuss issues before the General Assembly, past and predicted.



Senator Russet Perry reports on her bill to protect conservation easements.

"NVCT's work to protect open space and natural habitats reflects many of the conservation priorities I've worked on in the General Assembly." This past session, Siebold advanced legislation to address invasive species (HB 109), preserve tree canopy (HB 995) and promote responsible utility vegetation management (HB 492).

"As Northern Virginia continues to grow, we must balance development with conservation and protect the natural spaces that make our communities so special," Siebold said. "Thank you to NVCT and its supporters."

Awards

Executive Director Alan Rowson announced two awards. The Peggy Stevens award, given to the top land steward of the year, went to Adrienne Stefan, a long-time conservation landowner. In an in-



Diners were surrounded by plants inside and out at Meadowlark Botanical Gardens in Vienna.

SEE CONSERVATIONISTS, PAGE 14

Summer Palooza Draws a Crowd

FROM PAGE 3

retired military and police dogs

Artsy youngsters painted at the tables of Arts Fairfax and Mount Vernon Art and Culture, where colorful bottle cap art jumped out in the sun. Raving about the new bottle cap mural at Hollin Meadows Elementary School, Cathy Hoseck said that students at Bucknell Elementary and West Potomac High School will make murals next year.

County Agencies There Too

County services were front and center too. Aspiring young motorists could climb up into the recycling truck driver's seat. Staffers from the county's wastewater agency showed off their sewage vacuum truck with an imposing pipe and hose to scoop up, well, poop.

And on that topic, Gulshank Gupta from Fairfax County Wastewater Management cheerfully reminded visitors to only flush the four p's: pee, poo, paper (toilet) and puke.

The Fairfax County Police drone tent was a popular stop where Rafael Orellano explained that drones dock on top of buildings, ready to launch at all times. Noting that "airspace in Fairfax County is a nightmare" because of many restricted zones, he said that the drone team takes on missing people, search and rescue missions and "hot pursuits" of people on foot. "We watch the guy run and hide in the trash can," he said. For vehicle hot pursuits, officers use helicopters.

Members of the county police swat teams said they handle "high risk" calls, like acts of violence, ac-



Goats in the petting zoo seemed to enjoy the attention.



A bottle cap flower invited visitors to Mount Vernon Art and Culture's station.



Shirley Short is a "volunteer extraordinaire," said Mount Vernon Supervisor Dan Storck, who gave her a certificate of appreciation for her 20 years of service.



Gulshank Gupta warned people to not flush wipes down the toilet, even if packaging says they are "flushable."

tive shooters and hostages.

Supervisor Storck presented a certificate to Shirley Short, whom he lauded as a "volunteer extraordinaire."

A retired firefighter, Short started volunteering for the late Mount

Vernon Supervisor Gerry Hyland 20 years ago and is a familiar face in the supervisor's office still. "She gives her heart to every project and has a 'can-do' spirit," Storck commended.

Commenting on the festival,

Elaine Kolish, a local, said, "It's great for the community to come together and learn about many subjects."

The Highway Legends blasted a steady, robust soundtrack of tunes by Bruce Springsteen and others

from the stage.

Across the street at Walt Whitman Middle School, an alert osprey on the nest atop the ballfield's light pole vigilantly watched all the goings-on while probably awaiting a fish delivery from his or her mate.



Rafael Orellano delighted in discussing the Fairfax County Police Department's drone team's work.



The Friends of Accotink Creek highlighted improperly discarded trash with a plastic bag round this frog's neck.



Ron Chase described the Gum Springs community's history.

A Life of Reinvention

From the Adriatic Coast to Arlington, Vesna Gjaja embraces life with curiosity and optimism.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

The first thing she remembers about America is the snow.

Not just snow, but an abundance of it.

Raised in Split on Croatia's Dalmatian coast, where the climate is Mediterranean and the city rises from the Adriatic with centuries of history behind it, Vesna Gjaja arrived in upstate New York at 19 as a newlywed and found herself staring at a landscape that felt entirely foreign.

"There was so much snow," she recalled with a laugh. "And everything seemed like a village."

Back home, Gjaja had grown up in a bustling city where women routinely pursued careers as doctors, scientists and professionals. In America, she was surprised to meet many young wives who stayed home while their husbands worked.

"I always thought I should work," she said.

She had hoped to become a journalist, but life had other plans. After marrying her husband, a Bosnian scientist who worked for General Electric, Gjaja left her homeland and eventually enrolled at the State University of New York

at Albany.

With no journalism major available, she earned a degree in Italian and comparative literature.

Those years were anything but easy.

While she and her husband pursued their studies, they were also raising two small boys. With no family nearby and no childcare to rely on, she remembers the challenge vividly.

Looking back now, she said simply, "I was very young and I didn't know any better."

That determination would define much of her life as she weathered both successes and setbacks.

Over decades, she built a career that took unexpected turns. After years of volunteer work, she spent eight years in public relations at Macy's before opening her own clothing store. The business closed during the Great Recession.

"I had to lick my wounds and get up," she said.

A lower-paying position with a sports marketing firm which introduced her to work with companies including Coca-Cola, Campbell Soup and Kellogg's. Later came positions in higher education, the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, Washington National Opera, and eventually the Smithsonian, where she helped lead the transition of

Smithsonian Associates programs to online audiences

Through every reinvention, she said, curiosity and optimism carried her forward.

"I believe in people until they disappoint me," she said.

Travel became another passion. She has explored much of the world and counts Botswana among her favorite destinations.

Antarctica remains on her bucket list. Lately, she has become fascinated by artificial intelligence and enjoys learning about emerging technologies.

At The Jefferson in Arlington, where she lives, she stays active through the politics and issues group, an Italian conversation club, trivia competitions, gardening and service on the residents' marketing committee.

Retirement, she discovered, did not bring endless free time.

"I thought I would have more," she said. "But somehow I don't."

Perhaps the biggest adjustment came five months ago, when her husband of 59 years passed away.

Now 79, she finds herself learning how to think not for two people, but for one.

"It's an adjustment," she said quietly.

Still, she remains grateful for her two sons, her three grandchild-



PHOTO COURTESY OF VESNA GJAJA

Born on what is now Croatia's Dalmatian coast, Vesna Gjaja has built a life marked by family, hard work and courage.

dren and a daughter-in-law she describes as being like a daughter.

Asked what she hopes younger generations understand, her answer comes without hesitation.

"Don't wait for things to come to you," she said. "Go after what you want. Work hard. Earn it. That's where the satisfaction

comes."

And perhaps that spirit, the willingness to say yes to opportunity, to begin again, and to remain curious about the world is what carried a young bride from the Adriatic coast to a life rich with family, friendship and new chapters still waiting to be written.

Conservationists Commit to Saving Nature

FROM PAGE 12

interview, Stefan explained that she has almost an acre in Oakton that was all lawn 12 years ago, but today, thanks to her stewardship, is mostly woods and native plants. "I created a little oasis for pollinators," she said.

NVCT gave the Rich Bliss award recognizing the top conservationist of the year to Clifton resident Phoebe Peterson. Peterson is on NVCT's Advisory Council and Marketing and Development Committee, helping expand outreach and fundraising.

Rowsome commented, "We are proud to host conservation champions, business leaders, local elected officials and citizen activists at our annual spring gala each year. It's an

incredible opportunity to make connections, strengthen bonds and shine a spotlight on people making a real difference in their communities, all while exploring new and exciting ways to save nearby nature across our region."

Mount Vernon-area resident Roger Bowers, a first-timer, applauded NVCT for helping save River Farm in Mount Vernon from threatened development. "NVCT can help the region address the Potomac River's troubled waters," he said.

Electeds and Sponsors

Elected officials who attended: In addition to Sen. Perry, Sen. David Marsden; in addition to Del. Siebold, Delegates Gretchen Bulova, Vivian Watts and Marcus Simon; local elected officials included Fairfax County Supervisor



PHOTO BY GLENDA BOOTH

Bartenders offered drinks with plant names.

Andres Jimenez; Loudoun County Supervisors Sylvia Glass and Laura TeKrony; also in attendance, staffers for U.S. Senator Tim Kaine and Stafford County Supervisor Maya Guy.

The celebration had 15 spon-

sors, including Stanley Martin Homes, the American Horticultural Society and Cafferty Commercial Real Estate Services. Patty Butterworth with sponsor Deehan Landscaping said that her company practices organic

and alternative gardening and avoids chemicals and pesticides.

Sponsors showed several videos. In one, a speaker said, "Nature makes us smile." All were smiling that night.

Celebrating Gardening, Conservation and More

FROM PAGE 4

et.” And indeed, many commented on the beautiful setting with guests surrounded by gardens.

Jennifer Jewel, host of the public radio program, Cultivating Place, said that we all worry a lot about climate change, war and pollution, for example. “We should never look away from caring and see all that connects us with the land, sky and plant kingdom,” she challenged.

Suzanne Laporte, AHS President and Chief Executive Officer, told attendees that the gala, in part, was “special because of the new tent.” Under a clear heavy plastic tent offering views of the sky, gala-goers enjoyed a three-course dinner by Occasion Caterers which included elderflower-infused melon, sugar snap peas and a fresh pansy topping the trifle dessert.

Laporte commended outgoing Board of Directors Chair Scott Plein for negotiating and finalizing the property’s conservation easement with the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, noting that his “knowledge of how it works is enormous.” She applauded his success in securing \$2 million from the Virginia General Assembly to help fund new accessible restrooms. Attendees toasted Plein for preserving River Farm forever. He served four years as chair and will continue as treasurer.

Awardees

Laporte presented the Liberty Hyde Bailey Award for lifetime achievement in horticulture to Dr. John Dole who chuckled that he started loving plants as a 4Her and as a youngster learned how to root roses from his neighbor. He is a horticultural science professor and researcher at North Carolina State University.

For helping save River Farm, Laporte gave the AHS Meritorious Service Award to “the faithful three,” Tim Conlon, Laura Dowling and Holly Shimizu. Shimizu remarked, “We regrouped. We began again. We’ve had a fresh start. This land is conserved forever.”

Conlon, head of Conlon Construction, echoed Shimizu’s comments, saying, “AHS is firmly planted at River Farm.

Jane Josoff read Dowling’s remarks, who wrote, “I could not imagine massive commercial development here and that I let it happen. That conviction was my north star.” Dowling was Chief Floral Designer at the White House from 2009 to 2015. Shimizu is a Maryland horticulturalist and educator.

The dinner’s co-chairs were Roger and Mary Bowers who live nearby.

The Threat

River Farm is a 25-acre site on the Potomac River, one of George Washington’s original five farms. In 2020, the AHS Board of Directors announced plans to sell it, prime waterfront property. Many locals and elected officials objected and launched a campaign to save the property and retain public access. Eventually, some board members resigned. Others re-organized and reversed the sale plan.

On May 1, officials hosted a ribbon cutting to announce a conservation easement to



The new tent helped create a festive event.



Many guests wore flower-patterned attire.



protect the property forever. The Northern Virginia Conservation Trust holds the easement which among other provisions prevents subdividing the property, blocks inap-

propriate development, protects the forests and shoreline and provides public access. Founded in 1922, American Horticultural Society is a member-based, national non-

profit organization of over 22,000 gardeners, plant enthusiasts, horticultural professionals and partner organizations. Visit www.ahsgardening.org.

Opposition to Construction of 'Triumphal Arch'

To the National Park Service:

We, the undersigned members of the Virginia General Assembly, write to register our firm opposition to the proposed construction of a 250-foot "Triumphal Arch" at Memorial Circle, at the western terminus of the Arlington Memorial Bridge within the George Washington Memorial Parkway. We submit these comments during the public comment period for the Assessment of Effects prepared under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, 54 U.S.C. § 306108. We respectfully urge the National Park Service ("NPS") to find that the undertaking would have an adverse effect on historic properties and to decline to approve it.

Our districts encompass the Cities of Alexandria, Falls Church, Fairfax, Manassas, and Manassas Park, and the Counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William — the Northern Virginia communities most directly affected by this project.

The arch would be erected on Virginia soil, at the gateway between the Commonwealth and the District of Columbia, on land that our constituents traverse daily and that frames the approach to Arlington National Cemetery. We have a direct and substantial interest in this undertaking, and our constituents deserve to have their voices heard.

The Commonwealth's interest in this decision is not abstract. The proposed structure sits within Virginia, within the viewshed of Arlington House and Arlington National Cemetery, and astride one of the most heavily used commuter corridors connecting our region to the federal capital. For the reasons set forth below, the proposal is incompatible with the historic character of this landscape, with sound transportation and public-safety planning, and with the deliberative process the National Historic Preservation Act requires.

Grounds for Opposition

1. The arch would destroy the historic axis the Memorial Bridge was built to create. The Arlington Memorial Bridge, completed in 1932 and conceived under the McMillan Plan, was deliberately designed with a low, horizontal profile to preserve an uninterrupted ceremonial sightline from the Lincoln Memorial across the Potomac to Arlington House and Arlington National Cemetery. That

axis, symbolizing national reunification after the Civil War, is among the most significant designed vistas in the United States. A 250-foot monument placed at Memorial Circle would sever this protected viewshed and permanently alter a landscape composition that has been carefully safeguarded for nearly a century.

2. The scale of the structure is incompatible with its surroundings. At 250 feet, the proposed arch would stand more than two and a half times the height of the Lincoln Memorial, which rises 99 feet, and would dominate every historic property in the Area of Potential Effects, including the Memorial Avenue Corridor and the National Mall. A structure of this magnitude does not complement the commemorative landscape; it overwhelms and diminishes its significance.

3. The proposal disrespects the solemn gateway to Arlington National Cemetery. Memorial Avenue and Memorial Circle form the dignified, contemplative approach to our nation's preeminent military cemetery, where service members and their families come to mourn and to honor the fallen. It erases the perpetual reminder as viewed from our nation's capital of those who sacrificed to achieve and preserve its greatness. Imposing a monumental arch at this threshold intrudes upon ground that should remain reserved for solemn remembrance, and it does so over the documented objections of veterans and Gold Star families.

4. The project threatens an already strained regional transportation corridor.

Memorial Circle and the George Washington Memorial Parkway carry an enormous volume of daily commuter and commercial traffic between Northern Virginia and the District. The associated plaza development, utility work, circulation changes, and construction staging identified in the planning materials would degrade mobility on this critical corridor during construction and, through permanent changes to traffic circulation, for years to come. The effects would fall disproportionately on our constituents.

5. The location raises serious aviation-safety questions. The site lies beneath the complex and heavily trafficked approach and departure paths serving Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. The introduction of a 250-foot structure into this airspace warrants

rigorous, independent review of its impact on aviation safety before any approval is contemplated. These concerns should be fully resolved, not deferred.

6. The Section 106 process here has been truncated and inadequate. A public comment window of roughly ten days is plainly insufficient for a federal undertaking of this magnitude and sensitivity. Meaningful consultation under Section 106 requires good-faith engagement with the Virginia State Historic Preservation Officer (the Department of Historic Resources), with affected local governments, and with the public. We urge NPS to extend the comment period, to formally invite the affected Virginia localities and the Commonwealth as consulting parties, and to ensure that the Assessment of Effects fully evaluates the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects on all historic properties within the Area of Potential Effects.

7. The proposal circumvents the longstanding planning process that governs National Park Service land in the capital. Since 1986, the Commemorative Works Act has required that any memorial placed on federal land in the District of Columbia and its environs proceed through a deliberate, multi-step framework, beginning with specific authorization by Congress and proceeding through site and design review by the National Capital Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts, in consultation with the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission. The National Park Service and NCPC have long administered this review as a structured, multi-stage process, with heightened scrutiny for sites in the most sensitive areas of the monumental core. That framework exists precisely to prevent ad hoc, individually driven projects from being imposed on the nation's ceremonial landscape. Here, the undertaking has been advanced on an extraordinarily compressed schedule — without the congressional authorization the Act requires and ahead of the completed environmental, historic-preservation, and design reviews the law contemplates. Substituting executive expediency for this established process disregards both the governing law and the careful, century-long planning tradition, rooted in the L'Enfant and McMillan Plans, that has shaped this landscape.

8. The undertaking is an im-

proper use of protected public parkland. This land is held in trust by NPS for the benefit of the public and for the preservation of nationally significant resources. Permanently encumbering it with a monument of this scale — along with the attendant maintenance, security, and infrastructure obligations borne by taxpayers — is contrary to the stewardship responsibilities that govern these grounds.

For the foregoing reasons, the undersigned respectfully request that the National Park Service: (1) find that the proposed undertaking would have an adverse effect on historic properties; (2) decline to approve construction of the Triumphal Arch at Memorial Circle; (3) extend the public comment period and conduct full and meaningful Section 106 consultation that includes the Commonwealth of Virginia and the affected Northern Virginia localities as consulting parties; and (4) give genuine consideration to a no-build alternative and to less intrusive means of commemorating the nation's 250th anniversary that do not compromise this irreplaceable historic landscape.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment and ask that this letter be made part of the administrative record for this undertaking.

Respectfully submitted,

Sen. Scott A. Surovell,
Majority Leader Senate
of Virginia, 34th District
Sen. Barbara A. Favola
Senate of Virginia, 40th District
Del. Adele Y. McClure
Virginia House of
Delegates, 2nd District
Sen. Jeremy S. McPike,
Sen. Danica Roem,
Sen. Russet W. Perry,
Sen. Kannan Srinivasan,
Sen. Jennifer D. Carroll Foy,
Sen. David W. Marsden,
Sen. Stella G. Pekarsky,
Sen. Saddam Azlan Salim,
Sen. Jennifer B. Boysko
Sen. Elizabeth
B. Bennett-Parker,
Del. Patrick A. Hope,
Del. Kirk McPike,
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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.

AMERICA'S 250TH BIRTHDAY

Starting now through summer 2026, Alexandria will host major events and experiences commemorating America's 250th birthday. Located on the Potomac River just minutes from Washington, D.C. and George Washington's Mount Vernon, Alexandria, Virginia invites families, friends and history-lovers to stay in, explore and commemorate America's 250th birthday in a city older than the United States itself with a dynamic lineup of events and immersive experiences. Learn more and find additional details on these and other events at VisitAlexandria.com/250.

250th Events Itinerary:

- ❖ May-November: A temporary public art installation from artist Sandy Williams IV will commemorate the signing of the Declaration of Independence as part of the City of Alexandria's Time & Place public art series.
- ❖ June: A new exhibit will open at the Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum. Called Stories of U.S. Collections Capture our History, the exhibit will bring out objects from the collection that are seldom seen.
- ❖ July 3-4: Enjoy evening Fourth of July fireworks shows at George Washington's Mount Vernon on July 3 and 4, and a daytime fireworks show on July 4.
- ❖ July 11: Take part in the City of Alexandria's 277th/USA 250th Birthday Celebration complete with fireworks, music and more at Oronoco Bay Park along Alexandria's waterfront.



Enjoy Fourth of July fireworks on July 3-4, 2026 at George Washington's Mount Vernon.

CITY OF ALEXANDRIA DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION, PARKS & CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

From glow parties and jazz on the waterfront to family picnics and fireworks on the Potomac, there is something happening in every corner of our city. Grab your calendar. You are going to want to mark a few dates.

- ❖ Events are free unless otherwise stated.

Juneteenth Block Party
Friday, June 19, 4-7 p.m. | Charles Houston Recreation Center

Come and celebrate the people, contributions, traditions and culture of Black Americans who have helped build and shape America. Enjoy food, live music, dance presentations, and recreation programming in celebration of this national holiday.

Alexandria and USA Birthday Celebration
Sunday, July 12 | Oronoco Bay Park
Celebrate Alexandria's 277th birthday and the USA's 250th with live music, food, and a fireworks finale over the Potomac River at 9:30 p.m. A can't-miss summer night.

Live on Top of The Hill Concert Series

Ages 18+
Fridays, June 27 & July 25, 12-3 p.m. | William Ramsay Recreation Center
Relax with live folk, cover, and mariachi music in a welcoming community setting.

Top of The Hill Adult Social
Ages 18+
Friday, July 31, 6:30-9 p.m. | William Ramsay Recreation Center

Connect, unwind, enjoy games and themed nights, and meet new friends in this casual summer gathering.
Explore full details and register at alexandriava.gov/RPCA/Events.

NOW THRU JUNE 28

"Catching the Light" 2026 Art Exhibition and Sale. At Green Spring Gardens Horticultural Center, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria. Artists Reception - Sunday, May 17 from 1-3 p.m. Potomac Valley Watercolorists presents "Catching the Light," the 2026 edition of their annual nature-focused Art Exhibition and Sale. Green Spring Gardens "Art in The Garden Program" sponsored by the Friends of Green Spring invites visitors to enjoy this local, creative event. This annual fine art



Juneteenth events will be held Friday, June 19, 2026 in Alexandria.

show spotlights many of our region's most highly-skilled and well-known water media artists, and features more than 100 original framed works on display and available for purchase. Visit www.potomacvalleywatercolorists.org

JUNE 5-28

The "USA at 250" art exhibit celebrates our country's 250th birthday and captures the spirit of our nation, its past, present, and future, with artworks that highlight the splendor of our landscapes, people and history. View at Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria VA. Hours are Thursdays 12-6 p.m., Fridays 12-9 p.m., Saturdays & Sundays 12-6 p.m. Details at DelRayArtisans.org/exhibits

NOW THRU JULY 26

Story Cloths and the Book: Work by New Image Artists. At the Athenaeum, Alexandria. Artists' Reception: Sunday, June 14, 4

- 6 p.m. In Story Cloths and the Book, New Image Artists explore their relationship with reading, writing, meaning and process by pairing narrative textiles and mixed media with unique artist's books. A story cloth is a textile that contains a narrative that is community oriented, personal or historical in nature. The history of narrative textiles predates the invention of the printing press and books as we think of them today. The broad range of subjects interpreted in this exhibition includes an author of a classic mystery series, individual identity, family histories, the joy of summer and memories of well-loved books.

FRIDAY/JUNE 19

Honoring Juneteenth. 6-8 p.m. At the Athenaeum, Alexandria. Discover the history of Juneteenth through art, African drumming, vendors, and poetry that marks the liberation of Black Americans. For this Celebration, they present Hostess: KaNikki Jakarta and three

SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 18

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ENTERTAINMENT

FROM PAGE 5

magnificent Artists: Ayanna Galant, The HipHopMomma Princess Best aka "The HEALACIST" and 13 of Nazareth. Artisan vendors include: Great Publishing Company LLC, H BOOKS, Aya Cultural Arts Studio, and True Remedy. Attendees will have the opportunity to support the vendors and talk with the artists and purchase their products throughout the event. The Athenaeum is offering Adinkra printmaking activities for all ages.

SUNDAY/JUNE 21

LIVE at the Lyceum: Luke Ratcliffe Piano Concert. 3 p.m. At The Lyceum, 201 S Washington St, Alexandria. Witness Luke Ratcliffe perform two classic Romantic composers live! Program includes Prelude in C-sharp Minor, Fantasy in F Minor, Nocturne in F-sharp Major, Barcarolle in F-sharp Major, Berceuse in D-flat Major, and Ballade No. 3 in A-flat Major by Frederic Chopin, as well as Piano Sonata in F Minor by Robert Schumann.

WEDNESDAY/JUNE 24

History Lecture. 7 p.m. At the Lyceum, 201 South Washington Street, Alexandria. The American Revolution and the Fate of the World, featuring award-winning historian Dr. Richard Bell. As Alexandria and the nation approach the 250th anniversary of American independence, Dr. Bell's presentation will offer a timely and thought-provoking look at the global consequences of the American Revolution and its impact far beyond the 13 colonies.

JUNE 25 TO SEPT. 17

Summer Concerts at Carlyle Crossing. 6-8 p.m. At Carlyle Crossing,

2455 Mandeville Lane, Alexandria. Beginning June 11 and continuing through Sept. 17, the free outdoor series will bring an eclectic lineup of local and regional musicians to the plaza on select Thursday evenings, creating a lively gathering place for residents, visitors, and the surrounding community.

Concert dates:

June 25 – Adrian Duke & The Rascality (New Orleans Blues & Soul)
July 9 – Patty Reese (Award Winning Americana & Roots Rock)
July 23 – Tobago Bay Calypso Band (Caribbean, Soca Steel Drums)
August 6 – Eric Scott (Modern Soul, Funk & Groove)
August 20 – Seneca Creek (Bluegrass)
September 3 – Femi and the Foundation (Funk, Rock, Hip-Hop, R&B)
September 17 – Sol Roots (Funk, Blues, Soul & Rock)

SUNDAY/JUNE 28

Arts & Crafts Fair. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. At Tavern Square in Old Town Alexandria, 415 King Street. Presented by Volunteer Alexandria and Made in ALX. Discover a curated selection of jewelry, pottery, soaps, home décor, and unique gifts while supporting local artists at this free event. This family-friendly gathering invites you to shop local and explore beautiful crafts in the heart of Old Town Alexandria at Tavern Square.

SATURDAY/JULY 11

Write Like A Woman Networking Workshop. 1-3 p.m. At the Athenaeum, Alexandria. Founder and Facilitator, KaNikki Jakarta, welcomes you to year 10 of the Write Like a Woman Networking Workshop. This popular workshop invites amateur and professional women writers of all genres ages 18 – 100. Each workshop centers

on uplifting and inspiring through writing and allows participants to enhance their writing styles through writing prompts and encouragement. Space is limited, please RSVP to greatpublishing@yahoo.com

SATURDAY/JULY 11

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.

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.

JUNE

Thu. 18: Big Bad Voodoo Daddy \$65.00
Fri. 19: Stacey Kent \$45.00
Sat. 20: Ohio Players \$79.50
Sun. 21: Tarsha Fitzgerald Presents VOICES OF MOTOWN Father's Day Celebration! \$45.00
Wed. 24: Amy Grant w/ Braden Hull \$95.00
Thu. 25: Stella Cole \$39.50
Fri. 26: Vincent Ingala \$39.50
Sat. 27: LEZ ZEPPELIN: The Song Remains The Same - 50th Anniversary Celebration \$39.50
Sun. 28: ASGEIR \$29.50

BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 6

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 Parkinson's Disease Support Group of Alexandria meets the 1st Wednesday of each month at 2 p.m. at the Hollin Hall Senior Center, Room 109, 1500 Shenandoah Road. All Parkinson's patients and caregivers are welcome.

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 Alexan-

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BULLETIN BOARD

FROM PAGE 18

dria 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

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.

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.

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, ktoohy@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.

English as a Second Language Class. Charles E. Beatley, Jr. Central Library, 5005 Duke St. Tuesdays and Thursdays, all levels 10 a.m.-12 p.m., intermediate workshop 3-5 p.m. All classes free. Call the information desk, 703-746-1702.

The Talking Book Service at Alexandria Library will now operate Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Patrons may also reach the service at 703-746-1760.

Digital Magazines. Patrons of Alexandria Library will have unlimited access to read digital magazines, which can be viewed on most Internet-enabled devices inside or outside of the library. Accessible through www.rbdigital.com/alexandriava/zinio.

Eligible low income households can now use their SNAP benefits to buy local foods at the Old Town Farmers' Market. SNAP customers are able to use their electronic benefits transfer cards to purchase fresh fruits, vegetables and other eligible food products at the market. The Old Town Farmer's Market is located at 301 King St., and is open on Saturdays, year round from 7 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Opera NOVA has begun collection of used musical instruments. Any instruments welcomed, regardless of type. Snare drums, clarinets,

and violins are just some of the instruments that could bring joy to a home or school. Any recorders donated will be sent to an orphanage in Haiti in order to build a musical presence there. Opera NOVA has tax-exempt status. Contact Miriam Miller at 703-536-7557 or medm1@verizon.net to arrange for delivery.

Free Medicare counseling is available for City of Alexandria residents through the Virginia Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program (VICAP) to help individuals understand and navigate Medicare insurance programs. VICAP Medicare counselors will be available on Thursdays from 1-5 p.m., by appointment only, at the Alexandria Department of Community and Human Services, located at 2525 Mount Vernon Ave. Speakers are also available to present information on Medicare Basic to community groups. Call 703-228-1726.

The Military Officers Association of America's scholarship fund gives out loans and grants to children of military families. To learn more, apply or donate visit www.moaa.org/scholarshipfund.

VCE Master Gardener Help Desk. 9 a.m.-12 p.m. Monday-Friday. Bring fresh samples of problem plants, weeds or insects to ensure accurate identification. VCE recommends carrying samples in plastic bags or other clear containers. No live insects. All clinics and Help Desk are free. 703-228-6414 or mgarlalex@gmail.com.

Five-Star Toastmasters, Club # 9623. Tuesdays, 5:30-7 p.m. at the Pentagon Conference Center. Toastmasters can help participants sharpen their speaking skills, boost their confidence and energize their leadership skills in a team-oriented atmosphere. Visit fivestart.toasthost.com or Club President Charlie DeWitt at 202-997-5087 or Club_President@fivestart.toasthost.com.

Connect with T&ES on Facebook. The City of Alexandria's Department of Transportation & Environmental Services (T&ES) is on Facebook. The T&ES Facebook page will share information on topics such as transportation planning, trash and recycling service, road work and maintenance, traffic, infrastructure and engineering projects, Eco-City Alexandria and environmental initiatives, emergency cleanup efforts, and more. Visit alexandriava.gov/SocialMedia.

Training Courses. The American Red Cross in the National Capital Region will host training courses in CPR, First Aid, and AED in the Alexandria and Fort Belvoir offices. These classes offer a two-year certification. Classes range from \$70-\$110 and will be held on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, or Saturdays, dependent upon the participant's choice. Advance registration is required. To register for a class or find another class in your area, call 1-800-RED-CROSS or visit redcross.org/takeaclass.

Internet Offered for Low-income Families. Internet Essentials is an adoption program designed to help close the digital divide for low-income Americans. A household is eligible to participate if it is located where Comcast offers Internet service; has at least one child who is eligible to receive either a free or reduced price school lunch under the NSLP; has not subscribed to Comcast Internet service within the last 90 days; and does not have an overdue Comcast bill or unreturned equipment. Any household that qualifies will remain eligible for Internet Essentials if at least one child eligible for either a free or reduced price school lunch remains living in the household.

Plant Clinics. 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Thursdays at Alexandria Lee Center, 1108 Jefferson St. From late-April to late-October, the Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia will be holding a plant clinic for the community. Gardeners also staff the Horticulture Help Desk, 9 a.m.-noon weekdays year-round at the VCE office in the Fairlington Community Center, 3308 S. Stafford St. Contact 703-228-6414, mgarlalex@gmail.com or www.ext.vt.edu.

At Home in Alexandria! Those interested in becoming AHA! Friends should call AHA! at 703-231-0824 or download the application

form from the AHA! website at www.athomeinalexandria.org. AHA! supports Alexandrians ages 55+ who prefer to remain independent in their own homes.

<cal1>Volunteers Needed

<cal2>The Energy Masters Training program, which trains volunteers in energy efficiency, water conservation, and community education and outreach, is seeking volunteers. Alexandria joins program partners Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment (ACE), Arlington Thrive, and Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE). The program is accepting applications for community and student apprentice volunteers for the fall training program, which starts in late September. The student apprentice program is open to college students and high school students ages 16 and over. Visit www.ArlingtonEnvironment.org/energy. Volunteers Needed. The city has an ongoing need for volunteers. Visit handsonconnect.volunteerallexandria.org for a complete list of opportunities.

Volunteer Program Professional. This position is responsible for planning, organizing and directing the volunteer programs associated with the Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities, the Office of Historic Alexandria, and the City of Alexandria Library. Organizes and conducts meetings, and provides technical guidance to agencies in volunteer development. The incumbent reports to the Director of RPCA. Visit www.volunteerallexandria.org or call 703-836-2176.

Make Difference in a Child's Life. Volunteer with The Child & Family Network Centers (CFNC) and help to provide caring, high-quality, free early education and related services to at-risk children and their families. Volunteers work alongside teachers in one of 10 classrooms across Alexandria. Read and engage in conversation with children. Support teachers in everyday activities. Volunteer five days a week or one hour a month and change lives for a lifetime. Visit www.volunteerallexandria.org or call 703-836-2176.

Become a Volunteer English Tutor, Teacher and Classroom Aid. The Literacy Council of Northern Virginia recruits and trains volunteer tutors, classroom teachers, class aides, and student assessment specialists to work with adult learners who need help with reading, writing, speaking, and understanding English. LCNV also seeks committed office volunteers to assist with logistics, outreach, and data entry. Classrooms are in Alexandria, Annandale, Falls Church, Herndon, Lorton, and Springfield. Visit www.volunteerallexandria.org or call 703-836-2176.

Alexandria's Juvenile Court Services and Seaport Foundation seek adult male mentors for the new SOHO (Space of His Own) creative mentorship program. Seaport SOHO will meet throughout the school year on Wednesday evenings, from 5:30-8 p.m., at the Alexandria Seaport Foundation, 2 Duke St. Seaport SOHO will provide boys from fragile and fragmented homes with yearlong one-to-one mentoring through engagement in carpentry, fishing and sports activities. No mentoring or carpentry experience is required; SOHO is looking for enthusiastic and innovative men to serve as mentors. Email ashley.snyder@alexandriava.gov.

Pets Bring Joy, a local nonprofit animal rescue organization, is in need of temporary fosters. By offering a temporary loving home to a homeless cat, you are providing a critical link in their transition into a forever home. Email info@petsbringjoy.org if interested in becoming a foster. Visit petsbringjoy.org.

The Campagna Center is looking for volunteers for several different activities including, helping with home tours, Taste of Scotland, holiday events, mentoring, and tutoring. www.volunteerallexandria.org/

Burton Won't Be "Worsen"



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Nearly three and a half years since his birth, Burton is finally learnin'. After two-plus months of misbehaven' we finally hired a dog trainer to get us and Burton back on track. Certainly, after three dogs, we knew not just the basics, but the intermediates, maybe even some of the advanced. Nevertheless, his obstinate behavior made it quite clear that Burton was in control. However, since he would "Sit," usually "Stay," sometimes "Come," once-in-a-while "Shake," non-stop with alternating front paws, and walk on a leash (but rarely "Heal,"), we thought we were in control. We weren't. He was. Although we didn't realize until it manifested in the following behaviors: he did struggle with "Down," regularly jumped and growled at moving cars and always was a "nosy parker," needing to check out everything he saw or heard in our neighborhood; it all seemed relatively normal/familiar - to us; growing pains you might say. But worst of all, and what precipitated our call/need for help; while returning home from any and all walks, Burton would stop and fall/lay down (it's called the "pancake flop" - as seen on the internet) and refuse to get up until he was good and ready. It was not good and he was never ready. Despite our coaxing and/or pulling on his leash/collar - while encouraging (I use that term loosely, yelling actually), Burton would just give me the side eye while continuing to lay on his side, barely moving a muscle. Walking our way home, Burton would flop at least a half-a-dozen times with each flop causing a 5 - 15-minute delay. And what was his absolute worst behavior, once we finally made it back to our house, Burton would refuse to go inside leading to an inevitable tug-of-war which we would lose and resulted in yet another delay. As such, walks with Burton became increasingly frustrating and terribly unpleasant. We were at a loss as to how to survive the ordeal.

As it happened, I needed to pick up some syringes at the vet's office for one of our cats, Andrew, who needs daily steroid injections. After a 10-minute or so drive, I arrived, parked my car and walked inside. As I was standing against their front counter, waiting my turn, I noticed a business card holder in plain sight to my left. I picked up one of the cards. It was for a dog trainer - "35 years' experience." That's a coincidence, I thought, we need a dog trainer, desperately, so I put a card in my wallet to take home and discuss with Dina.

Having already considered changing Burton's dog collar and leash, getting him a full exam, visiting a dog behaviorist and even consulting a pet psychic - which we did over the phone, we decided it made sense to call this dog trainer and hear what he had to say. When we spoke, he sounded very reasonable as he laid out his methodology/philosophy: "Dogs are a pack animal and need a leader." And from what dog misbehavior I was describing, Burton, he said, was "definitely disrespecting me/my authority and treating me like just another member of the pack." Not the kind of relationship I should be having with me dog, apparently. Since we agreed with most of what he was saying, we decided to hire him/give him a chance to change our pack dynamic.

It's been five weeks since the training visits began. Burton's behavior has done an about face. Our joke has been: "who stole our dog and what happened to Burton?" With the help of an "e-collar," and transmitter, Burton has not only turned the corner, he's on the straight and narrow to leash-less living. He is a completely different - and now responsive/obedient, dog. It's amazing. His behavior has evolved from recalcitrant to compliant almost. No more "pancake flops," no more stick eating, no more rock swallowing, no more grass grazing and no more battles to get him in the house. He has become an amazing and wonderful dog. And he comes running when we call his name. Unbelievable. From our perspective, he looks happy. Smiling almost. He has been transformed and per his training, so have we.

Now if I can only find an e-collar for my wife.

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



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