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Alexandria Gazette Packet

Home Life Style
PAGE, 14

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FEBRUARY 15, 2018

'Incredibly Early and Unique'

The long goodbye to
Alexandria's Ramsey
Homes.

BY VERNON MILES
GAZETTE PACKET

Ramsey Homes weren't much to look at. The four squat buildings with their square design and mustard yellow exteriors were always a hard sell for preservation. But beneath the facade were four structures that were once the state of the art in technology and architecture in Old Town.

In 2016, the City Council approved the demolition of Ramsey Homes to be reconstructed into a four-story, mixed income residential complex. There had been discussion of preserving one of the homes for public display, but eventually it was voted to demolish all four existing homes to gain open space on the site.

On Feb 9, one of the four buildings was opened to the public for one last farewell tour to members of the public. John Dumsick, a structural engineer guiding tours through the home, said the homes were a product of the era they were built in. The United States was heavily involved in manufacturing for World War II even before it formally joined after Pearl Harbor, and steel was in demand. In Alexandria, workers settling in Alexandria to work in military-related jobs needed cheap and quickly built housing large enough to accommodate a family. Ramsey Homes were part of a cutting edge technological evolution in home



PHOTOS BY VERNON MILES/GAZETTE PACKET

John Dumsick explains the architectural history of Ramsey Homes.

design: prefabricated homes. All of the walls and structure of the home were built off-site and carried on trucks into Alexandria, where they were set into place. After experimenting with the idea at a military base in California, Ramsey Homes were the first location for prefabricated public housing in America. While it would come to typify architecture of places like the Soviet Union, prefabricated homes of this type never caught on in the United States. The patent for the design was released in 1939, and the homes were built one year later.

"This was where it was introduced in full scale," said Dumsick.

Al Cox, historic preservation manager, said among prefabricated homes, wooden designs were more popular because they could be more easily changed and modified. While there have been some external modifications, the concrete core of Ramsey Homes have made most large structural changes impossible.

"They may have been fabricated in Richmond,

SEE RAMSEY HOMES, PAGE 21



Ramsey Homes.

Batteries Included

Alexandria takes
electric buses
for a test drive.

BY VERNON MILES
GAZETTE PACKET

This last week, as you were waiting in the rain at the side of the road for a DASH to take you across town, the bus that arrived might have looked a little different. It may have been a little cleaner, a little quieter, a little smoother of a ride. When you swiped your pass, you might have noticed that you weren't charged. Congratulations, you were one of the first Alexandrians to test out the new all electric bus.

The all-electric bus was temporary, on loan for a week to let Alexandria test out the functionality of the kind of bus fleet it is



PHOTO BY VERNON MILES/GAZETTE PACKET

Josh Baker, general manager of DASH

slowly working towards. Josh Baker, appointed general manager of DASH one year ago, said DASH has a commitment to eventually replace all of its diesel powered buses with electric ones. So far

SEE TAKING, PAGE 8

Hometown Jams

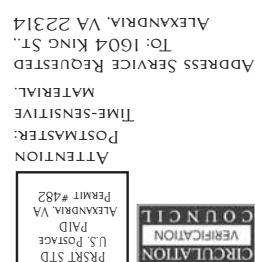
Acclaimed Alexandria musician
returns home for concert
honoring Black History Month.

BY VERNON MILES
GAZETTE PACKET

Edward "Jose" Hernandez used to sneak across from his home on Queen Street

to peek in the windows of the American Legion building. He'd been drawn by the sounds of music, and even sitting at the very fringes of the room, he was en

SEE HERNANDEZ, PAGE 9



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The proposed redevelopment of the triangle park at the corners of Mt. Vernon and Commonwealth avenues.

Gateway Night of Giving

The Del Ray Community Partnership will be having a Del Ray Gateway Night of Giving on Feb. 26 from 5-8 p.m. at Pork Barrel, 2312 Mt. Vernon Ave. The event will raise funds to benefit the transformation of the corner at Mt. Vernon and Commonwealth avenues into a new Gateway, which will include the Nancy Dunning Memorial Garden and a community Spray Park.

Currently at this site are the Colasanto pool and a corner pocket park. The Community Partnership was able to apply for and obtain a matching grant for \$48,000 from the city, to assist with Phase I development and construction of the current site, and while it has raised some money, it still needs to raise just over \$42,000 by June.

To donate and learn more about the The Del Ray Gateway, visit www.delraygateway.com.

Joining Beautification Mission

At the Alexandria Beautification Commission's Jan. 11 meeting, the commission welcomed its newly-appointed citizen members: Kathryn Chaisson, Joseph Crowell, Kevin Dunne, Christina Mazurkevich, and Mellenie Runion. They join fellow members Denise Tennant (chair), Cathleen Curtin, Archer Heinzen, Dana Holmstrand, Anna Smith Lacey, Carol Maxwell, Elizabeth McElwain, Julie Moore, Monica J. Murphy, and Erich Veitenheimer, III, as well as the city's staff liaison, Oscar Mendoza from the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities. All members of the Commission are appointed by the Mayor of Alexandria and City Council.

At the meeting, the commission began planning initiatives and prioritizing projects for the upcoming year, which include creating sustainable landscapes of the city's public spaces, improving vacant and under-utilized lots, growing the city's tree canopy, and providing educational resources to the community.

The Alexandria Beautification Commission was established to advise City Council and help community efforts to improve the city's architectural and landscape environments.

For more information, visit: www.alexandriava.gov/beautification.

15 Years for Arson

An Alexandria man was sentenced Tuesday, Feb. 13 to 15 years in prison for arson after throwing Molotov cocktails and setting fire to an apartment building in Alexandria in June 2016.

According to court records and evidence presented at trial, Josepha Kasai, 24, smashed a Molotov cocktail at the door of a third floor apartment unit, setting fire to the doorway and trapping nine individuals on the third floor. Kasai then went outside and threw another Molotov cocktail at the third floor apartment unit, breaking through the bedroom window. The building was evacuated due to the fire. A victim inside the third floor apartment jumped from his balcony and Kasai chased the victim with what appeared to be a knife. After Kasai's arrest, he informed law enforcement he intended to kill the victim who jumped from the balcony and claimed the victim had previously stolen his iPhone.

Kasai was found guilty by U.S. District Judge Anthony J. Trenga after a bench trial on Oct. 25, 2017.

'Created to Create'

Through the arts, local congregation invests in Alexandria's public life and culture.

BY DAN BRENDEL
GAZETTE PACKET

Lisa Smith pastors Convergence Church, an arts-centered congregation in Alexandria. This is the fourth of an ongoing series of interviews with local religious leaders about religion in the public square. In 2006, then-Fair-Park Baptist Church invited Smith, who's formally trained in theater, to suggest how the church might "restart" itself in a changed demographic context. Based on her life experience as a Christian artist, she wanted to help bridge the contemporary worlds of faith and the arts. Convergence's worship services incorporate interactive artistic practices, like playacting biblical narratives and contemplative prayer singing. The church also supports local artistic entrepreneurship by providing low-cost space for exhibits, theater, and sound recording, as well as a variety of community-oriented programming.



PHOTO BY DAN BRENDEL/GAZETTE PACKET

Pastor Lisa Smith shows Convergence Church's sound studio, which provides affordable space for local musicians to rehearse and record. Numerous groups have recorded numerous albums in the studio since its inception in 2012.

How do you define art, what do you include in that term?

Smith: The number of people who are either creative in some way, or just like being around that, or are interested in living their lives in a more artistic or creative way — that's a lot of people. ... An artist is somebody who spends intentional time to develop craft ... Art is about meaning-making; I think it's one of the best forms for exploring those deep existential questions ... Within our congregation, there's ... an engineer, and we were looking at ... this "rain room,"

where it's raining all the time except when you step in it, it stops raining wherever you are. ... It's designed by these engineers ... And for him, he was like, "Yeah! Engineers can be artistic as well!" I think on the very broad spectrum, a lot of people are maybe disconnected from that part of themselves.

What would you say is the role of art in the purpose that God intends for humankind and for human society? A statement on your website, which sounds like it gets at this question, says that you want to help people "become imaginative visionaries, prophetic critics and culture creators." ...

Smith: We were created to create: ... to make culture, ... families, ... houses, ... the world that we live in. That's everybody; but I think especially for people of faith ... that's a really important thing. ... Mako Fujimura [a Christian artist] ... said that culture is like a stream ... and Christians have tended to stand on the bank further downstream and react to what's coming at them. His call was to say, why don't we move to the source and start putting things in that are generative? ... That's a lot of what we want to be about. ... The "prophetic critic" and "imaginative visionary" come from [the author] Deborah Haynes' ... suggestion of what the call for an artist in this day and age — and she's not a Christian — would be. ... To hold a mirror up to what is; that's the prophetic critic piece. And then to imagine

multiple possibilities for the future. ... How can we share the hope of God's story through the beauty of creation?

My own church [the Catholic Church] teaches [the human mandate to generate and participate in culture] unequivocally. ... [But] certainly the Catholic Church and ... the evangelical churches in America have kind of created this entire parallel universe of the core institutions in which ... culture is embedded. ... You have a whole world of Christian books, ... movies, ... music, ... schools. I don't think that that's ipso facto wrong; but if every Christian musician just plays to Christian audiences, and if you're not plugged into public education, which educates like 8 or 9 out of 10 students in America, I don't see how you can possibly claim to have a stake in [public] culture. I don't know where you draw the line in there.

Smith: We inhabit the rest of the world ... If you ever turn on the TV, you are being influenced. ... It's not just the creating, but helping people understand the importance of curating their lives — what you listen to, what you watch, what you bring in, what you ingest. I think it's very, very easy to be a passive consumer of culture, probably far more than most people realize. ... I don't think we have a responsibility just to create the culture of our little microcosm. ... So a lot of what we do is not only working with Christian artists, but working with local artists of different or no faith backgrounds. ... It's nice to be able to have those conversations [about the spiritual aspect of their art] with a broad variety of people. But also to support the work of artists who are just doing work that contributes in a positive way to our culture, regardless of their faith background. ...

Your church's "CRAVE" event, a dinner to

SEE CONGREGATION, PAGE 19

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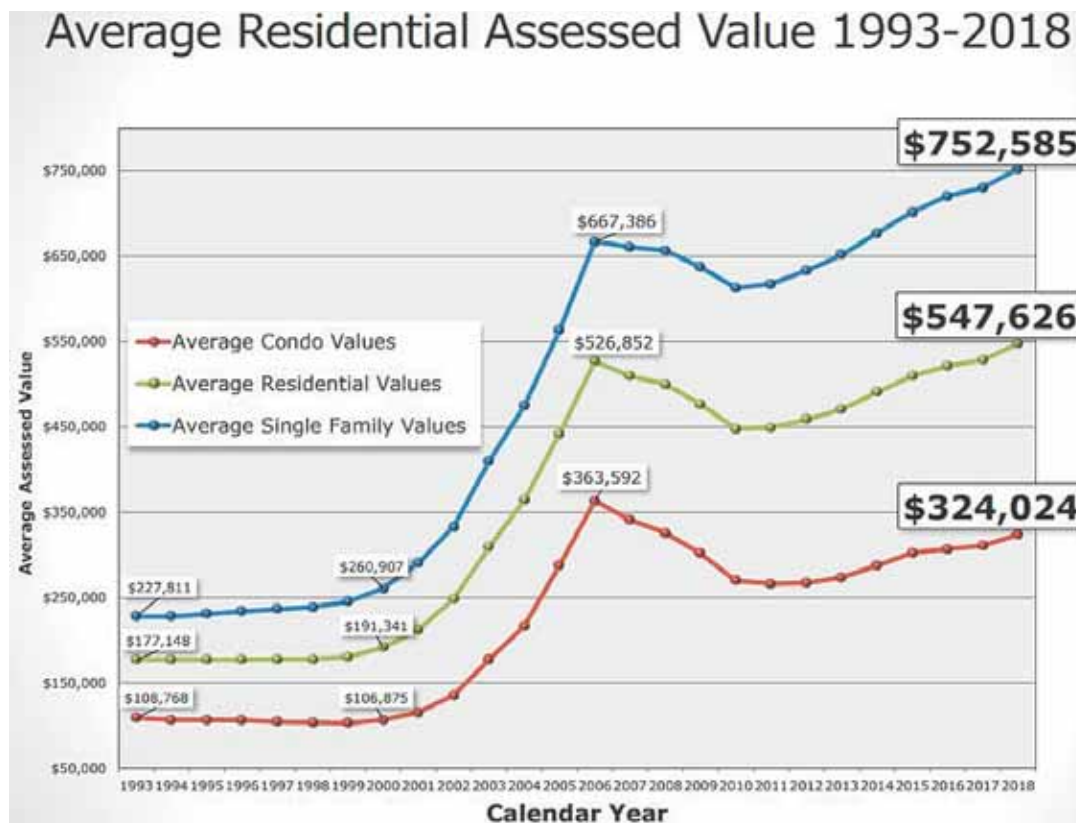
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Assessments on Residential Properties Increase

At the Feb. 13 City Council meeting, information on assessments was released. Locally assessed real property continued to increase, this year by 2.35 percent, from Jan. 1, 2017 to Jan. 1, 2018. The highest increases are in the residential tax base, which increased 3.4 percent or \$751 million. The commercial tax base increased by .93 percent, or \$225 million.

In total, 57.3 percent of the city's tax base is residential, while 42.7 percent is commercial, a divide that has remained consistent for 10 years. Assessments for single family homes had the largest increase, rising by 3.4 percent or \$752,585, while condominiums increased by 3.15 percent or \$324,024.

Commercial properties increased their assessment value by 0.93 percent, but saw a wider stratification in values. The total assessed values were boosted by a 10.99 percent increased value in warehouses and a 7.68 percent increased in value for apartments, while office buildings faced an 8.66 percent decline. Hotels and general commercial saw a downturn as well. Staff said the dramatic decrease in



History of average residential assessed values.

office values could partially be credited to the office building occupied by the National Science Foundation shifting this year from taxable office property to tax-exempt property. Other office locations in Alexandria are also undergoing shifts away from office property and detracting from office value, like 1700 Beauregard's ongoing transformation into a school.

Despite warnings that widespread apartment development could create a glut, staff said apartment values have only been increasing.

Staff also noted that shopping centers, which saw a mild 1.29 percent increase, were being weighed down by the vacancy at Landmark Mall.

March 15 is the deadline to request a review of assessed value with the Office of Real Estate Assessment and June 1 is the deadline to file an appeal with the Board of Equalization. April 16 is the deadline for filing elderly and disabled tax relief applications.

The Office of Real Estate Assessments can be contacted for questions at 703-746-4646.

— VERNON MILES

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PEOPLE

Making Innovative Hand Tools

Four generations in the business.

BY SHIRLEY RUHE
GAZETTE PACKET

A seven-month-old puppy from the shelter bounds to the wicker gate with a welcoming yap for the visitor at Auto-Grip at Alban Station Court in Springfield. Gerry Cooper, from Alexandria, is vice chairman of the company. He says he has partnered the last four years with David Heiby, current president and CEO, but has 52 years of history in tools. Auto-Grip specializes in innovative hand tools.

Cooper says after 20 years with Stanley Tools in the U.S., he spent 15 years with Stanley Tools in the Pacific Rim and then 17 years “with myself. My father and grandfather worked for Stanley Tools so I am a third generation.” Now he says his son has taken over his Asia Tech Source business in Taiwan so there are four generations.

Cooper points to a display of pliers from 1921 to the development of the Auto-Grip in 2016. He says, “Tim Peterson, a blacksmith in Nebraska, tried to invent what we have in the Auto-Grip that would eliminate the screw but he died in 1962.” Peterson left his drawings in a box and a man from Phoenix completed the work but he had to find someone who could market it world wide. “So they found us in 2003.”

He says the advantage is that the Auto-Grip is a groove joint plier that you use with one hand. Auto-Grip locking pliers have a patented locking mechanism allowing them to quickly self adjust and lock on to thick and thin objects without the need to turn a knob. “You can see the advantage for a plumber working in a dark space with a flashlight in one hand.” And he adds that it works much faster which is important for auto mechanics, carpenters and plumbers who use it every day to make a living.”

Copper and Heiby sit pouring through the March issue of Popular Mechanics looking at the competition and for ideas. For instance, he pulls out the auto blade which is an improved utility knife. “You know how the edges of the blade wear out? You just depress this little red button and out comes a new one.” He says, “You can store five of these blades.”

A small warehouse space is located in the back of the office where employees take the raw materials from China and use specially designed tooling to put the grip on the handle and insert the cable ties on the back of the pliers. “Speed is important. She can finish one of these in 40 seconds.” Heiby adds that some of their employees are brain injury survivors.



Special tooling turns raw materials into market Auto-Grip pliers.



PHOTO BY SHIRLEY RUHE/GAZETTE PACKET
Gerry Cooper, vice-chair of Auto-Grip.

in air and water pollution, OSHA protections, fire safety.”

When Cooper isn’t at his office in Springfield or negotiating contracts in China, he is at home at Harbor Place in Alexandria or volunteering to deliver Meals on Wheels twice a month with his wife. He also spends Thursday mornings at Old Presbyterian Meeting House serving breakfast to about 70 homeless. “I’m board chair of Senior Services of Alexandria. We raise funds from donors to provide free services to seniors such as transportation to doctor’s appointments, friendly visitors who chat with people who request a visit, and groceries to go every two weeks.”

It’s time for lunch and Blue sits obediently by waiting for a bite of a turkey sandwich with onions. “He’s a mooch,” Heiby’s wife explains.

People at Work is a weekly column featuring people in the community doing their jobs. Suggestions can be sent to slrbc@aol.com.

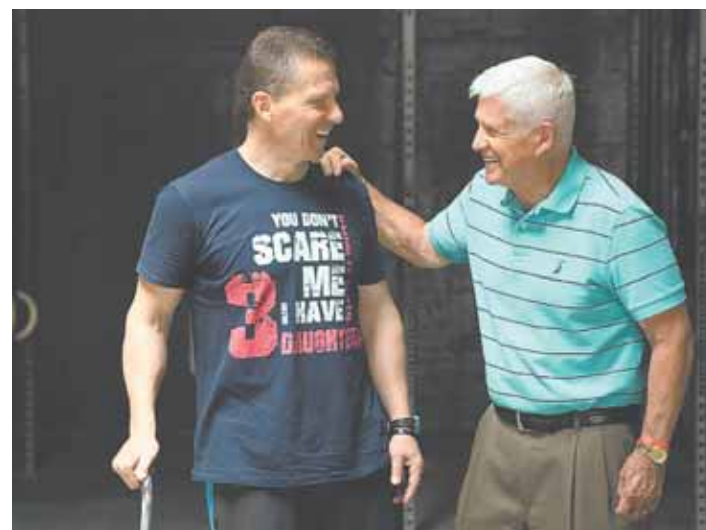


David Heiby, president and CEO of Auto-Grip with office dog, Blue.

“We like to give back to the community.”

Cooper says he and Heiby have both turned up the music and worked in the backroom to help get out the orders when they had a deadline. “We just sold 90,000 to Auto Advantage and Car Quest including the 8” that most mechanics use, the 6” little one and the needlepoint. It was an excellent sale.”

Cooper points out the difference between doing business in China and the U.S. Is “the business ethic, a huge difference.” He says this is why when you pick up a newspaper and read there was a factory fire and 20 people jumped out of windows and the factory was destroyed, you ask how that could happen. “Up until 10 years ago it happened all the time. But U.S. companies didn’t want to read about themselves so they started bringing about changes



Mike Hart of Alexandria with his father, Bud Hart.

Healing the Body

Local resident shares battle against autoimmune disorder.

BY ASHLEY CLAIRE
SIMPSON
GAZETTE PACKET

Whether you walk, run, swim, dance, life long Alexandrian Mike Hart would encourage you to keep your body in motion — even in the midst of illness. After all, should know. More than five years ago, Hart was struck by an autoimmune disorder that could have ended his active life.

As difficult as it has been to push through multidimensional pain, however, Hart maintains that the pursuit of athletic goals keeps him on the road to recovery.

Hart’s tenacity and inspirational outlook on his situation has recently landed him on an episode of “How We Heal,” a series produced by CaringBridge, the global non-profit organization that provides an online forum for patients to communicate and otherwise build a support community as they recover from a full spectrum of illnesses and injuries.

“Just keep moving,” Hart advised in his installment of “How We Heal.” “Persevere ... Whatever you do to make yourself better, it’s going to pay off. And the other thing is, just keep moving. Whatever you do for exercise, just keep doing it. Just move, however you do it.”

The “How We Heal” series is part of CaringBridge’s National Healing Campaign, a movement that the Minnesota-headquartered non-profit started this year as a catalyst for conversation about the healing process.

cess.

“There is so much wisdom and encouragement captured in these stories that we thought we would ask the ‘experts’ about how they heal, in the hopes of helping others,” CaringBridge CEO Liwanag Ojala said. “We wanted to hear from real people from the trenches of recovery. It turns out that there is no true definition of healing and science has yet to quantify it. So we want to start a national conversation around how people heal in the hope that we can all learn from others.”

When the CaringBridge team was looking for inspirational stories to highlight, members were struck by Hart’s journey.

“Mike had a unique story because so much was unknown early on, and yet he found healing in his particular way,” Ojala said. “His choice of how he wanted to heal — distinct from how he could affect his health outcome — was to choose physical activity and ‘keep moving.’ Some people have the perception that people who are ill do just the opposite. Sharing Mike’s perspective, I hope, motivates others to find their own version of what healing looks like. I was also struck by how his healing journey impacts three generations — not only his own, but that of his father and his daughters. Healing isn’t just for the patient, but the community around the patient as well.”

BEFORE DISEASE declared battle on his well-being six

SEE HEALING, PAGE 20



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Taking Electric Buses for a Test Drive

FROM PAGE 1

that's been a gradual transition, with the City Council opting last November to buy 27 new "clean diesel" buses instead of 17 hybrid electric buses to replace the 34 existing old diesel buses that failed to meet environmental standards.

The Xcelsior Charge bus will only be driving around Alexandria for one week as part of a pilot partnership with New Flyer Industries of America.

A computer system onboard the bus will track the bus' progress, battery usage, GPS, and perform other system analysis.

At a special demonstration and display in front of Market Square on Feb. 7, city councilors, staff, and a few members of the public interested in transit packed into the bus to provide cover from the rain. The bus took a loop around Old Town while David Warren, director of sustainable transportation for New Flyer of America, explained the logistics of the bus.

It has 6000 pounds of lithium ion batteries on the top of the bus and runs at four to five times the efficiency of a traditional combustion engine. These are all things bus people care about, but even for those not interested in the technical know-how of Alexandria's buses, the details of electric buses are



PHOTO BY VERNON MILES/GAZETTE PACKET

David Warren, director of sustainable transportation for New Flyer of America, explains the logistics of all-electric buses.

part of an important ongoing discussion about how the city approaches climate change and public transit.

Mayor Allison Silberberg and Vice Mayor Justin Wilson, both running for mayor in the Democratic Primary, spoke in favor of the buses and expressed their commitment to moving Alexandria towards a more environmentally friendly bus fleet.

Coming Out Swinging

Council reviews fees affecting boxing club.

License Agreements can be one of the more bureaucratic parts of a City Council meeting, but at the Feb. 13 meeting, an agreement on the fees for the Alexandria Boxing Club held the future of one of the most prestigious sporting groups in Alexandria in jeopardy.

One of the major items of contention is a line in the license requiring participants in the boxing program who are not city residents but within the ages of 5-17 to pay a daily admission fee.

During the City Council discussion, members of the council expressed concerns that charging admissions to non-resident children could be keeping Alexandria boxers away from sparring partners. The Alexandria Boxing Club has pro-

duced several national champions, often with support and practice from partners outside of Alexandria.

"I'm worried about the loss in opportunity for our participants to get quality interactions," said Councilman John Chapman. "If we're charging every visiting team who comes to play our groups, what's our lost opportunity? I'd love to know that from staff, if we have it, what's the money we're making off these visiting participants? I want to know what we're gaining vs what we're losing in terms of visiting teams. For our boxing clubs, that's a cause for concern."

They're there to benefit our kids, and I want us to look at it that way. We need to take a different swing at how that is put together."

Staff answered that, in the past, sparring partners have not been charged to use the facility, but that the language in the license would be reconsidered

SEE BOXING, PAGE 21

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Hernandez Returns to Perform

FROM PAGE 1

thrilled by the hands he could hear playing. Right then and there, Hernandez said he knew he wanted to be a musician. On Feb. 18, Hernandez is returning to his hometown to the Carlyle Club for a concert celebrating Black History Month.

"It feels great," said Hernandez. "It's my first time in years coming back, other than to see family. I'm coming back to perform for a lot of my friends ... and my mentor Arthur Dawkins."

Hernandez graduated from Parker-Gray High School in 1965 and was already an accomplished musician, performing as the principal oboist National Jewish Community Center Headquarters Orchestra and the National Youth Art Gallery Orchestra as the second oboist. Hernandez has performed with bands like The Whispers, Joe Williams and Patti Austin.

Hernandez said growing up in Alexandria was a unique experience that shaped the evolution of his music.

"My mother was black, my father was Hispanic," said Hernandez. "During the pre-and-post civil rights era, there was a lot of blues and jazz in Alexandria. At the same time, teachers like Dawkins helped me get focused on reading music and giving me a pretty staunch background in the classics. I used all of that experience, put together a band in high school. We used to perform little gigs around town."

Dawkins was a music teacher at Parker-Grey High School, the all black high school in Alexandria that closed when Alexandria's schools were integrated.

"Hernandez was in my last band," said Dawkins. "He was one of the last ones, and he was very tal-

ented as a high school student."

Dawkins said the story of the school is a part of the story of black Americans in Alexandria and the kind of thing he's happy to see the people who lived through it, like Hernandez, honoring. Dawkins said it reminded him of the teachers and the inspiration he had when he was coming up through the same school "The school itself is not as important as the institution," said Dawkins. "The school was a building, I attended it myself in high school. It's the notion of the black experience, of a school in a segregated city, a school that survived and thrived [is what's important]. All the black teachers we had, it made us really celebrate black history. The whole issue of having to work very hard to accomplish as much as we did ... we had good models that we took advantage of."

For Hernandez, his return comes with mixed emotions. The day before the concert he's playing for a funeral for a family member. But there's some excitement as well, because a chance to return to the east coast is a chance to play for family and friends who haven't heard him play before.

"There's a lot of family that hasn't heard me play, but knew I was a musician," said Hernandez. "It will be fun and interesting, gratifying — playing for them. I've got good family and a hell of a lot of good friends. To get a chance on a personal level to perform for my hometown buddies and family, that's a rewarding experience. It's humbling."

The concert will be held at the Carlyle Club on 2050 Ballenger Ave. Doors open at 4 p.m. and the show starts at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$38 in advance.



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OPINION

Send in Pet Photos Now

The Pet Connection, a twice-yearly special edition, will publish the last week of February, and photos and stories of your pets with you and your family should be submitted by Friday, Feb. 23.

We invite you to send stories about your pets, photos of you and your family with your cats, dogs, llamas, alpacas, ponies, hamsters, snakes, lizards, frogs, rabbits, or whatever other creatures share your life with you.

Tell us the story of a special bond between a child and a dog, the story of how you came to adopt your pet, or examples of amazing feats of your creatures.

Do you volunteer at an animal shelter or therapeutic riding center or take your pet to visit people in a nursing home? Does your business have a managing pet? Is your business about pets? Have you helped to train an assis-

tance dog? Do you or someone in your family depend on an assistance dog?

Or take this opportunity to memorialize a beloved pet you have lost.

Just a cute photo is fine too. Our favorite pictures include both pets and humans.

Please tell us a little bit about your creature, identify everyone in the photo, give a brief description what is happening in the photo, and include address and phone number (we will not publish your address or phone number, just your town name).

Email to editors@connectionnewspapers.com or submit online at www.connectionnewspapers.com/pets.

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— MARY KIMM

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



PHOTO BY HAL HARDAWAY

Valentine Elvis

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Be Aware Of Roaming Fox

To the Editor:

On a beautiful raining Sunday afternoon, Feb. 11, a fox decided to take a walk and roamed throughout the neighborhood along the 900 block of Wolfe Street and 600 block of South Alfred Street. It was first spotted at 1:49 p.m. Sunday afternoon in front of 910 Wolfe St., spotted again around 8:30 p.m. at 616 South Alfred St.

The city's Animal Control was contacted by a concerned resident but she was told that nothing could be done about it until Monday; no one was on duty to respond to the complaint of safety and well-being of the community.

Another resident, Ms. Bilquees Gwia, thinking Animal Control thought it was a crank, contacted them by email and sent the video to animalcontrol@alexandriaanimals.org showing it might have mange and was walking with a limp.

Hopefully they will find the fox before it harms someone.

I called the non-emergency number at 703-746-4444 and was told they would forward it to Animal Control and if I see it again I should call in its location.

I hope someone does call if they see it.

Activist Geri Baldwin
Alexandria

Gesture of Kindness

To the Editor:

After a heavy day at work in D.C. and a grueling Metro ride on the Red Line not unlike sardines in a can, with, on top of it all, my cellphone down and thus unable to see whether my bus was yet to arrive or already left, I ran out of the King Street Metro Station in hopes I was still on time to catch it. But no, from the empty benches in front of my bus stop I could easily deduce that the bus had already left. I was doomed to another 20 minutes sitting on a bench in the cold, waiting for the next bus to take me to my temporary home.

And then, out of nowhere, a little man stood in front of me, saying something I could not immediately understand. Dead tired, all I wanted was for the little man to go away. He came closer to me and said, "Don't you recognize me? I am your bus driver, the one who always lets you go in front of the bus to cross the street. I saw you run, and I have come to get you, so you can take my bus."

Incredulous, I stood there, not quite realizing what exactly had occurred. This wonderful bus driver had started to drive away and, looking into his side mirror, recognized the figure who was me running to see if she could still catch the bus. Even though well on his

way, he stopped the bus, got out of the bus and walked back to come and get me.

I was stunned and grateful beyond words.

In a world so full of hatred and divisiveness, this incredibly thoughtful gesture of kindness deserves to be told. Thank you, wonderful bus driver! Yes, there are still wonderful people in this world, but this person beats many!

F. Schreuder
Lake Monticello, Va.

Campaign Donations

To the Editor:

Many people decry the influence of money in politics. Since the U.S. Supreme Court decreed, mistakenly I believe, that money is free speech, our political system is awash in cash and it can be a corrupting force.

Something can be done, however.

Candidates can refuse contributions from individuals or corporations that are doing business before their elective bodies. In the current Alexandria mayoralty contest Mayor Allison Silberberg has declared she will not accept money from persons — including developers and their lawyers — who have business before City Council.

Perusing the first financial reporting from her challenger, Justin Wilson, it is clear he has no such compunctions. He already has taken money from individuals known for having business interests involving the city and City Council.

To their credit, several candidates for Council seats have joined Mayor Silberberg in refusing such contributions.

Perhaps Mr. Wilson should rethink his position, do as other candidates have done, and turn back such money.

Ernie Lehmann
Alexandria

SEE LETTERS, PAGE 12



PHOTO COURTESY OF GERI BALDWIN

Oddly acting fox on Sunday afternoon around Wolfe Street and South Alfred Street.

Alexandria Gazette Packet

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OPINION

Trying To Curtail ‘Double-Dipping’ at Dominion Energy

BY ADAM P. EBBIN
STATE SENATOR (D-30)

One of the most debated and controversial bills of the legislative session, SB 966, passed the Senate on a 26 to-13 vote on Friday, Feb. 9. If the bill were signed into law, it would repeal an electricity “rate freeze” instituted in 2015 — ostensibly to shield ratepayers from potentially-escalating electricity costs associated with complying with the Obama Administration’s Clean Power Plan emission regulations. However, the bill would allow utility monopolies to profit doubly from investments without returning money to ratepayers, fail to resume essential regulatory oversight, and trade on support for investments in renewable energies that market forces are already bringing into play naturally.

Prior to 2015, the State Corporation Commission (SCC) conducted regular biennial reviews that served as crucial ratepayer safeguards, ensuring independent oversight of the electric utility monopolies Dominion Energy (Dominion) and Appalachian Power (APCO). The responsibility of the SCC is to determine whether base rates (the costs of building, closing, and maintaining power plants and the electrical grid) are adequate, or whether electric bills are too high and result in “over-earnings” (excessive profits) for utility monopolies, in which case the

over-earnings would then be rebated to customers.

I voted and spoke out against the 2015 bill that stripped the SCC of the authority to conduct regular reviews of utility monopolies’ earnings, arguing that it was unnecessary to freeze rates (as the Clean Power Plan was likely to be challenged in court or not implemented for other reasons). This turned out to be the case and the SCC estimates that, had the rate freeze not been enacted, ratepayers would have been entitled to as much as \$705.2 million in rebates for 2015 and 2016 alone. Additional over-earnings have yet to be calculated for 2017. One SCC commissioner estimates the total amount that would have been due to customers is as much as \$1.1 billion.

The bill severely limits SCC authority by restricting the frequency of rate reviews from every two years to every three years. Since the SCC can only order base rate reductions after two consecutive reviews show the utility has been over-earning, the new law would lengthen the period of time before ratepayers receive a potential rebate from four years to six.

SB 966 would require Dominion to pass on just \$200 million to ratepayers of the estimated more-than-\$350 million that the company will receive as a result of the recent federal tax cut.

One positive aspect of the legislation is

that the deployment of up to 5,000 MW (enough to power 1.2 million homes) of renewable energy would be declared to be “in the public interest.” However, with the costs of renewables becoming increasingly more competitive, market forces will result in additional renewables being deployed at a faster pace.

Sweeteners were added to the legislation to facilitate buy-in, including projects to underground transmission lines in Prince William County as well as residential communities in other regions with the most outages, and other incentives for rural areas.

Most importantly, while refunds were required to be returned to ratepayers prior to 2015, under SB 966, utility monopolies would be able to keep the over-earnings, as long as they were invested into grid modernization or renewables. Due to the way that the base rates are calculated, it would allow utilities to “double-dip,” or, make excess profit from capital projects.

Prior to 2015, Dominion was allowed to charge customers a 10 percent rate of return on its capital investments. These projects had to be approved by the SCC and any money earned in excess of recouping the cost of the investment plus 10 percent profit would be rebated back to consumers. Under SB 966, Dominion would still gain 10 cents on every dollar invested, but the company could count those over earn-

ings against those same capital projects and keep the rebate, rather than returning over-earnings to ratepayers.

Because of this “double-dipping” provision, the Chesapeake Climate Action Network, the Sierra Club, the Virginia Poverty Law Center, and Attorney General Mark Herring opposed the legislation. Last week, I supported floor amendments offered by Sen. Chap Petersen (D-Fairfax City) that would have eliminated “double-dipping” and returned highly-technical independent oversight to the expert utility lawyers at the SCC, rather than having 140 citizen legislators try their hand at it. As electronic voting mechanisms malfunctioned on the Senate floor due to power fluctuations in Richmond, the amendments were ultimately defeated.

I have long maintained that Dominion, and Virginia as a whole, were far behind the curve in making adequate investments in solar and other renewable technologies. In the end, I opposed the bill. I could not justify asking Virginians to pay twice their fair share for utility investments.

An amendment from Delegate Toscano, (D-Charlottesville) to the House version of the bill removed the “double-dipping” provision. I hope the final bill that makes it to the Governor’s desk will reflect this.

Please consider following me on Twitter @AdamEbbin, liking my facebook page at facebook.com/ebbincampaign.

Some Legislative Successes

BY CHARNIELE HERRING
STATE DELEGATE (D-46)

This week we enter the crossover period of the 2018 legislative session, namely where House bills are considered in the Senate and where Senate bills are considered in the House. Thus far, I have had several legislative successes in the House Chamber including ensuring that a person sentenced above or below recommended guidelines be informed of the reason by the Court for the departure, removing barriers for families to adopt, and pushing for a comprehensive public-school curriculum that provides information on the risks of prescription drugs in response to the opioid health crisis that we are facing in Virginia.

While I have had success so far this year, there have been some common-sense measures that did not pass on partisan votes. I introduced legislation to help ensure that tree canopies that are lost due to construction are timely replaced. This measure helps our environment including enhancing our air quality in addition to improving the aesthetics of our neighborhoods. Additionally, my bill for no excuse absentee did not get to the floor. There are many reasons to vote absentee. The requirement that a person must provide personal information regarding the reason to vote early, one of which is to include a letter from a doctor, is outdated and unnecessary. It is time to make access

to the polls easier and not cumbersome.

We have seen some bi-partisan gains which includes increasing the felony larceny threshold from \$200 to \$500 and reforming our system of restitution so that victims of crime have a better chance of being compensated. The threshold amount hasn’t been raised since 1980 when it was raised from \$100-\$200. Clearly, the conviction of a felony has a large impact on an individual’s life. In Virginia, if you are convicted of a felony, you lose your right to vote & possess a firearm. Additionally, an individual’s employment prospects are hampered especially in our metropolitan region where many jobs require a person to be able to obtain clearance.

In the next few days, we will consider expansion of Medicaid. The bill as filed, HB 338, contains a work requirement for able-bodied adult recipients of medical assistance services. My concern about the work requirement is that it unfairly targets poor people and unnecessarily expands government. Instead of tax dollars going to help people who are in need of healthcare, we would be forced to pay to oversee the requirements of this measure. This simply does not make sense. I believe our goal is to make sure that people who are in need are getting covered. In Alexandria, there are many who don’t have necessary coverage. By expanding Medicaid we can expand coverage and remove some burden from our local emergency room which handles cases of uninsured patients.

THE LOCAL IMPACT OF A NATIONAL CRISIS,
HOW ALEXANDRIA IS RESPONDING
& WHAT WE CAN DO TOGETHER

A Community Conversation

HEROIN & OTHER OPIOIDS

FEBRUARY 28, 2018 | 7 P.M. - 9 P.M.
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**FROM OLD TOWN TO DEL RAY TO THE WEST END,
THE CONSEQUENCES OF OPIOID MISUSE AND ADDICTION
ARE BEING FELT THROUGHOUT OUR CITY.**

The U.S. is experiencing a nation-wide crisis as a result of the dramatic increase in the misuse of opioids, which include pain-relieving prescription drugs like oxycodone, hydrocodone, morphine and fentanyl as well as illegal opioids like heroin. This crisis is a community health emergency in the City of Alexandria, affecting all ages, cultural backgrounds, income levels and neighborhoods.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY & HUMAN SERVICES

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Active Kids in Alexandria: 5 Best Practices

BY BROOKE SYDNOR CURRAN



Did you know that studies strongly correlate active kids with improved scholastic performance? That's right — active kids outperform their less active peers in school.

When we compare brain scans of students, we see that the brain scan of the physically active student has practically all synapses sparking, while the brain scan of the physically inactive student has substantially less activity. Being active literally makes our brains work better, and prepares students to learn and perform at their best.

Kids who are more active during the school day show:

- ❖ Improved performance, focus, and memory,
- ❖ Better behaviors and ability to stay on-task,
- ❖ Higher academic achievement and higher scores both in the classroom and on standardized tests.

It is clear that physical activity gives students an academic advantage, yet many of

our kids are not getting the CDC-recommended 60 minutes of activity per day. Fortunately, there are simple and effective solutions that can be easily implemented during the school week to creatively help get Alexandria's kids moving.

Increasing physical activity has numerous health benefits, like helping to prevent and reduce obesity, lowering stress-levels, and elevating moods. There are specific recommendations that have been found to be most beneficial when working with students to improve their academic performance.

Based on this information and experience working with educators, national experts, and other like-minded programs over the past 9 years, RunningBrooke would like to share these 5 Best Practices for how to implement effective physical activity into the school day and week. Here are recommendations on how to squeeze in the CDC-recommended 60 minutes of daily activity:

- ❖ **Best Practice 1:** Promotion of before, during and after school programs: the use of sports, activity programs, and clubs.
- ❖ **Best Practice 2:** Physically active classrooms: adding movement into academic lessons, short bursts (brain boosts)

at every opportunity before, during or between classes, and lessons that require outdoor activity.

❖ **Best Practice 3:** PE. Time: A PE. that's inclusive and gets everyone's heart rates up.

❖ **Best Practice 4:** Making the most out of recess: an inclusive and active recess with a variety of activities and an encouragement of free play.

❖ **Best Practice 5:** City-wide promotion of safe routes to school.

Over the next 5 weeks, we will share information about each of these practices, ways to incorporate them into the day, and what

parents, teachers, and others can do to help give Alexandria's youth an academic boost through increased physical activity. Please join us for our first Best Practice next week: Promotion of Before and After School Programs.

Brooke Sydnor Curran is the Founder & CEO of RunningBrooke, a twice Iron(WO)man, an ultra-marathoner, and a finisher of more than 115 marathons. Through her work with RunningBrooke, ten of thousands of students across Alexandria have benefited from adding more movement and physical activity into their day. RunningBrooke won't stop until all children in Alexandria have access to programs, teachers, schools, and program leaders that embrace physical activity and spark student's best self.

GET MOVING

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Wonder, Reading, and Learning

From student, Karim

I have been working with Ms. Gillie since I was in third grade. She helps me with reading and we read funny books. We started reading picture books and are now reading chapter books. The last book we read was "Wonder" and then went

MENTOR OF THE MONTH

to watch the movie. I think the movie was better.

Ms. Gillie helps me read and has helped me become a better student. I enjoy it when we play board games. I win every time! I enjoy spending time with Ms. Gillie because she's nice and she helps me all the time. She's the best!



Karim and Gillie

From Tutor/Mentor, Gillie

Karim and I began working together in the Fall of 2017, when he was in third grade. Since then we've practiced vocabulary and read "Wonder" together. After reading the book, Karim and I went to see the movie. He has beaten me too many times to count at Wright to Read's board game, to which I add new words for him to learn and practice. He has read 20 books since we began, progressing from simple picture stories to chapter books.

Karim's family gives him — and me — strong support, and it's a pleasure to know them. I've joined Karim's mother at school conferences. Karim, his mother and I went to the Air & Space Museum. Karim is a smart, curious, engaging boy and I'm lucky to be his tutor.

Wright to Read is outstanding! It makes tutoring really effective, supporting both tutors and students. Students' reading skills get an initial professional assessment, then annual follow-ups. The office has a wealth of reading materials, from which Wright to Read's Program Director, Luisa Reyes, can pick just the right book for a tutee. Tutors get a thorough initial training and are supplied with excellent teaching materials. Without all that support, I couldn't begin to tutor effectively and would quickly get frustrated; instead, I'm energized.

Wright to Read, a program of The Campaign Center, is a member of the Alexandria Mentoring Partnership (AMP). AMP was created in 2006 to ensure that quality mentors and mentor programs are available for Alexandria's youth and young adults in need. To learn more about Wright to Read, visit: <https://www.campaigncenter.org/programs/elementary-level> or to learn more about AMP, visit: <http://www.alexandriava.gov/Mentoring>.



Demolition at the corner of King and Harvard streets.

FROM PAGE 10

Profit over Community?

To the Editor:

Demolition (above photo) of two small buildings and a third three-story beautiful old building has begun to make way for the construction of a six- or seven-story Hyatt hotel with more than 100 rooms. This hotel will make four hotels and one time share within one block.

The City of Alexandria Planning Commission and City Council approved the destruction of the buildings and the construction of a new hotel even after more than 300 nearby residents petitioned against it. The hotel will cover almost one whole block with only the BB&T bank remaining. Planners of the hotel also want to remove four mature trees and widen the sidewalk on Harvard Street, and make Harvard Street a two-way street from King Street to the alley in back of the hotel. Harvard Street is currently only one way. The sidewalk entrance from Harvard Street will be replaced by a brick sidewalk. The construction will

cause massive disruption to the area for two years and remove 6 or 7 parking spots along Harvard Street, a residential block with parking issues already. The hotel is not needed in a city already saturated with hotels and a timeshare. It is a classic example of profit over community.

James Melton
Alexandria

Choose Wisely

To the Editor:

Soon we will have an upcoming city election and voters will be asked to vote for a new Alexandria City Council and mayor. Voters will be peppered with many emails, mailers and phone calls. However, when making your decision on which persons to vote for mayor and council member, voters need to ask themselves the following important questions:

- ❖ Who has accepted donations from developers?

SEE LETTERS, PAGE 13

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OPINION



Before: Zoo Zoo, a 10-year-old Shih Tzu transferred to the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria from West Virginia, arrived with kidney disease and severe dental problems.



And after: Zoo Zoo, cleaned up and feeling much better after recovery from extensive surgery for a severely broken jaw.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF AWLA

Zoo Zoo expresses joy after extensive treatment overseen by the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria. Once declared medically fit, Zoo Zoo was adopted.

Dental Problems Can Be a Silent Threat to Pets' Health

February: National Pet Dental Health Month.

BY BARBARA S. MOFFET
ANIMAL WELFARE LEAGUE OF ALEXANDRIA

Zoo Zoo was a sweet 10-year-old Shih Tzu who found his way to the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria (AWLA) last July. When he arrived, it was clear that he was in very poor condition. Not only was the 10-pound, gray-and-cream dog suffering from kidney disease but he also had severe dental problems.

Zoo Zoo's dental health issues ran much deeper than damaged teeth. Shelter veterinarian Dr. Kaci Angelone scheduled a trip for him to a local veterinary clinic, where Zoo Zoo was found to have a severely broken jaw, assumed to be caused by a dental infection. It's true: An animal's jaw can be broken as a result of a spreading tooth infection. He was then sent on to the Animal Dental Clinic in Vienna, Va., which specializes in complex dental cases.

"Our radiographs (a special imaging technique) showed that it was much worse than a broken jaw," recalled Dr. Barron Hall, a

board-certified veterinary dentist who directs the clinic. "Both sides of Zoo Zoo's jaw were disintegrating, so we had to extract all of his teeth and remove his lower jaw. Then, we performed cosmetic surgery to reshape his chin. It turned into multiple hours of surgery." Even though the surgery was much more extensive than initially planned, it was determined that this was the best course of action to enable Zoo Zoo to live and eat without pain.

Dr. Hall, who has practiced veterinary medicine for 25 years, has made dental work for pets his specialty for the last 16 years. He donates his time to keeping the mouths of animals at the National Zoo healthy and also provides his services at a discount for nonprofit organizations like the AWLA. Dr. Hall stresses the importance of pet owners' vigilance about their animals' oral health. "The most common clinical sign of a pet in distress is nothing," he said. "They don't complain or stop eating the way humans might."

Dr. Angelone says keeping on top of pets' dental health is critical. "It's hard to over-

state the importance of dental care for pets," she said. "Animals are often surrendered to us who have severe dental disease that has not only affected their teeth and gums but also has resulted in severe pain and possible infection that has lasted for quite some time. We encourage all pet owners to regularly assess the condition of their pets' teeth and consult with their veterinarian to address any dental issues."

Dr. Hall said veterinary school taught him little about the complexities of animal dental health — he had to undergo years of specialized training for that — and that it's important for veterinarians to strive to give pets a healthy, pain-free mouth, which only begins with clean teeth. The veterinarian must account for all 42 teeth in an adult dog and 30 in an adult cat as well as what's happening both above and below the gum line, he said.

Small dogs like Zoo Zoo are quite prone to gum disease and bone loss because their teeth can be very crowded together, Dr. Hall said. Cats also fall victim to the problem: He does three or four full-mouth teeth extractions on cats each month. Dr. Hall says cats can get along fine without their teeth: Once healed, they can eat whatever they

want. However, with regular care like tooth brushing, monitoring pets' breath for tell-tale halitosis and other hygiene concerns, and regular dental checkups, tooth extraction should only be a last resort.

Zoo Zoo the Shih Tzu may have had a small mouth, but he displayed a huge spirit. Besides bravely tolerating months of post-surgery treatment, Zoo Zoo befriended two former puppy-mill dogs at the shelter and helped socialize them to prepare for adoption. And, during his months of recovery, he developed a close bond with his foster "mom." In late December, right after Zoo Zoo was pronounced medically fit and ready to seek his family, she realized that Zoo Zoo had been home all along, and made it official by adopting him.

Zoo Zoo spent some happy months in his new home, but in early February suffered cardiac arrest and passed away. His adopter calls Zoo Zoo "an amazing trooper."

The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria, which operates the Vola Lawson Animal Shelter on contract with the City of Alexandria, is an independent, local, 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The AWLA is committed to ending animal homelessness, promoting animal welfare, and serving as an educational resource for the City of Alexandria community. More information is at AlexandriaAnimals.org.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FROM PAGE 12

- ❖ Who has consistently sided with large corporate interests over small businesses?
- ❖ Who supports tax increases on homeowners, retirees and small businesses?
- ❖ Who supports their own pay increase?
- ❖ Who has consistently sided with developers over local citizen's concerns?
- ❖ Who has placed priority funding over city buildings before fully funding our schools?
- ❖ Who has limited citizens speaking at council meetings?
- ❖ Who supported the BID tax, despite significant disapproval by local businesses?
- ❖ Who supported the Waterfront Plan, despite numerous residents' objections?

The answers to these questions are easily found in the City Council meeting minutes. Please do your homework and make an in-

formed vote when voting for our next mayor and council members as the election results will no doubt significantly affect all residents of Alexandria.

You will see from your answers that one mayoral candidate clearly stands out. This candidate has consistently fought against big developers; fought for small businesses; fought to keep our tax increases reasonable; fought for funding our schools; fought to keep council meetings open for all and consistently fought to help all residents of Alexandria on a daily full-time basis. Despite being habitually out-voted 6-1, this candidate never stops fighting to do the right thing for the average everyday person. I don't have to name this candidate, because you know who this is!

Also, please don't get caught up in all the rhetoric of bitter current or former politi-

cians. But, listen to the mayoral candidate that promotes harmony, peace, and hope for all residents so that all can realize their dreams and aspirations for themselves and family members.

Bryan B. Kirkes
Alexandria

Healthy Abstention

To the Editor:

Feb. 14 marks the beginning of Lent, the 40-day period before Easter, when Christians abstain from animal foods in remembrance of Jesus' 40 days of fasting in the wilderness.

The call to abstain from eating animals is as current as the teaching of evangelical leader Franklin Graham, yet as traditional as the Bible (Genesis 1:29). Methodist

founder John Wesley, Salvation Army pioneers William and Catherine Booth, and Seventh-day Adventist Church founder Ellen G. White all followed this higher call.

A meat-free diet is not just about Christian devotion. Dozens of medical studies have linked consumption of animal products with elevated risk of heart failure, stroke, cancer, and other killer diseases. A United Nations report named meat production as the largest source of greenhouse gases and water pollution. Undercover investigations have documented farm animals routinely caged, crowded, mutilated, and beaten.

Today's supermarkets are well in tune with the call to abstain from eating animals. They offer a rich array of plant-based meats, milks, cheeses, and ice creams, as well as

SEE LETTERS, PAGE 15

Styling a Coffee Table

Using décor to make a table pop.

By MARILYN CAMPBELL

There's an art to designing a living room coffee table, says local interior designer Susan Tucker. In fact, when she's helping a client create a living room space, she pays particular attention to creating a stylish and functional table.

"It seems like such a small thing, but when designed the right way, a coffee table can become the focal point of a room and really make it pop," she said. "I believe that there's a right way and a wrong way to put together a coffee table, but it's not hard if you keep certain things in mind."

Vary the height and scale so that each item can shine on its own. "If everything is the same height, none of them will be noticed," said Tucker. "Think a pretty vase of flowers behind a small porcelain bowl."

Work to create balance between small and large items, says Alexandria, Virginia-based designer Steven Gambit. "For example, a smattering of small knick-knacks can look cluttered on a coffee table," he said. "Along the same lines, too many large items on a coffee table can be overpowering. Instead select a few items and group them together by size."

Change items as the seasons or holidays



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE NEST EGG

Books add visual interest and can provide topics of conversation when displayed on a coffee table.

change. "As spring approaches, consider adding a small bouquet of fresh or silk spring flowers," said Tucker. "If you celebrate Easter, consider Easter décor, like a bunny or a basket with eggs. I picked up some elegant Easter items at a local home accessories store last spring. One or two simple items can breathe fresh life in a table design."

Choose items with colors that are found in other places in a room's design. "If you



Consider placing coffee table items on a tray, like this one from the Nest Egg, says Interior Designer Susan Tucker.

have a painting with bright colors, for example, choose one of the colors and find an item in the same color to add to your coffee table. If you have throw pillows in interesting colors, considering using one of those colors on your coffee table."

Consider only decorating one section of the coffee table, especially if the table is large. "It's a good idea to leave some space free, especially if you entertain a lot," said

Gambit. "Your guests will need a place to put a drink. Don't feel compelled to fill every inch of space."

A serving tray can serve two purposes on a coffee table, says Gambit. "An elegant serving tray can make a dramatic statement on a coffee table, and can give a table some structure, especially if it's holding smaller items," he said. "If you need to clear the coffee table quickly, like if you're entertaining, a tray makes it easy."

Think about what the items on the coffee table will look from different places in the room, suggests Tucker. "Stand over your coffee table and get a sense of what the objects look like gazing down at it," she said. "Sit across the room from it. Can the items be seen fully or are the most appealing parts of an item obstructed? I generally discourage clients from putting picture frames on a coffee table because you can't see the main attraction — the photo — from behind."

Be practical and sentimental. "Because people tend to gather around coffee tables, don't put a breakable family heirloom or an expensive pieces on them," said Gambit. "Coffee table books are a good idea because they can be topics of conversation. You can use a coffee table to display things that represent a part of your personality, lifestyle or a hobby."

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OBITUARIES

Living Legend Shirley Tyler Dies

Shirley Virginia Neizer Tyler died on Wednesday, Feb. 7, 2018 at Goodwin House Alexandria. Beloved mother of Richard Tyler and Kathryn Prigmore, she is also survived by her grandchildren, Winona Tyler, Rukaiyah Tyler, Crystal Prigmore and Amber Prigmore; great-grandchild, Chloe Tyler-Carter and a host of other relatives and friends. The family will receive friends at Grace Episcopal Church, 3601 Russell Road, Alexandria, VA 22305 on Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 from 1 p.m. until time of service at 2 p.m. The Rev. Robert Malm, Rector, is the celebrant. Arrangements are by Greene Funeral Home, Inc.

In lieu of flowers consider sending a contribution in my mother's name to Grace Episcopal School (Financial Aid Fund), 3601 Russell Road, Alexandria, VA 22305, 703-549-5067, www.graceschoolalex.org, or The Scholarship Fund of Alexandria, 3330 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22302-3001, 703-824-6730, alexscholarshipfund.org/.

In 2014, she was named a Living Legend of Alexandria. In a March 2014 profile, Alice Morgan wrote:

"For more than 40 years, Mrs. Shirley Tyler has been a community leader in Alexandria. Tyler has been a resident of Alexandria since 1965 when she, her husband, son and daughter moved to Arlandria. They were the first African American homeowners in their neighborhood. Tyler became involved in her neighborhood association because of the problems of flooding from Four Mile Run, rat infestation and drug dealing. There were three major floods in the area, the worst in 1972 after Hurricane Agnes. As a member of the Arlandria Civic Association, Tyler worked tirelessly to bring about what became the Four Mile Run Flood Control Project by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In the aftermath of the floods, the group worked to make sure the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provided support for what, by then, had become a predominantly African American and poor neighborhood. The group's community efforts at resolving the problems with rats led to city rules requiring trash to be placed in cans with lids. Their efforts at curtailing drug traffic were ongoing and led to the establishment of a satellite police facility in the neighborhood. Also, as part of the Arlandria Citizens Association, she fought the intentional redlining by real estate agents where absentee landlords did not keep their property in good shape or illegally subdivided houses and apartments into multiple units.

"Tyler's collegiate education in the social services and preschool education, made it natural for her to become actively involved in the Alexandria public school system which was being forced by federal mandate to desegregate. She worked closely with Living Legends Ferdinand Day and



PHOTO BY STEVEN HALPERSON

Shirley Virginia Neizer Tyler

Lynnwood Campbell and others to assure that her children and all children would receive a first class education. In 1973, Tyler was appointed to the Alexandria School Board. From 1974 to 1976, she served as vice chair and from 1980 to 1982 served as the first African American female chairperson. Tyler was instrumental in creating racial harmony during the redistricting of Alexandria City Public Schools while vestiges of racism prevailed among many. She worked without recognition or fear. Her concern for fair play and equitable treatment while remaining ethical, independent, and open minded is still the foundation of the school board's redistricting which resulted in "All roads lead to T.C. Williams." The end result was the alignment of the schools into the K6-2-2-2 formation and the creation of T.C. Williams into the single high school for the City. K6-2-2-2 was the terminology given to the reorganization of the schools to comply with desegregation law starting in 1971.

"Tyler was an educator. From 1969 to 1979, she was a 2nd and 3rd grade teacher at Grace Episcopal School. In 1975, she became the Headmistress and remained in that position until her retirement in 1989. Under Tyler's leadership the school's scholarship program provided opportunities for children from adjacent impoverished neighborhoods to attend.

"In addition to her community service in education, Tyler volunteered on Block Grant Advisory Committees from 1982 to 1990. She worked closely with Living Legend and former City Manager Vola Lawson and former City Manager Phil Sunderland on allocating limited funds to deserving not for profit organizations. This required her to have a thorough knowledge of the workings of each non-profit requesting funds as well as a thorough knowledge of their financial status. Tyler was also involved with the addition of two recreation centers at Cora Kelly School. For over 25 years, she was involved with voter registration drives for campaigns for city council, congress, senate, and presidential campaigns."

Carl A. Posey

Carl A. Posey, Jr., 84, a prolific author of fiction and nonfiction, died at home of cancer on Feb. 9, 2018. An award-winning magazine writer on science and aeronautics, he was a regular contributor to Air & Space magazine. After nearly 20 years as a public information officer with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), in 1981 he headed the Office of Communications at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), an east-west think tank near Vienna, Austria. In 1984 he joined the National Optical Astronomy Observatories in Tucson, Arizona, as a public information officer. In 1987 he became an editor at Time-Life Books in Alexandria. He left Time-Life Books in 1996 to pursue a freelance career. He is

the author of eight published novels, a score of nonfiction books, and dozens of magazine articles.

Born in the former Panama Canal Zone in 1933, he spent much of his youth in Latin America. He served in the U.S. Army for two years before completing a bachelor's degree in English from Texas A&M. He is survived by his beloved wife Ann Wadia, by four children from his first marriage: Raphael, Robin, Carl III (Gus) and Honor Posey Marquez, and by one granddaughter. The family asks that those who wish to, might donate in his memory to Guide Dogs for the Blind (guidedogs.com).

Cunningham Funeral Home, 811 Cameron St., Alexandria, is in charge of arrangements. See www.cunninghamfuneralhome.net.

LETTERS

FROM PAGE 13

the more traditional vegetables, fruits, and grains. Entering "vegetarian" or "vegan" in your favorite search engine provides lots of meat replacement products, recipes, and transition tips.

Ali Gatlin
Alexandria

Mother of George Washington

To the Editor:

Like many outstanding men, George Washington had a remarkable woman behind him: his mother, Mary Ball Washington. Because his father died when he was 11, she was the parent who most shaped his character.

Born in 1708, in Lancaster County, Va., Mary Ball Washington was orphaned by the age of 13. In 1731, Mary married Augustine Washington, a planter and widower with three children

After bearing her first child, George, in 1732, Mary Washington had five more children. Tragedy struck when her step-daughter Jane died at the age of 12 and her youngest child, Mildred, aged 16 months, died five years later. Three years later, in 1743, her husband died after a brief illness, leaving her a widow with five young children. Defying expectation, she did not remarry and successfully managed her children's inheritances on her own — a remarkable feat for the times.

Her family remembered Mary Washington as a formidable yet loving figure. In a public address Washington referred to "... my revered mother, by whose maternal hand, early deprived of a father I was led to manhood ..." Throughout the 19th-century, she was presented in literature and popular culture as a shining example of American motherhood. Prints, engravings, even porcelain figures were produced featuring Washington receiving his mother's blessing.

In the last century Mary Washington's

reputation took a negative turn after the publication of Douglas Southall Freeman's multi-volume biography of George Washington. Historians accepted his arguments unquestioningly because of his status as a respected biographer. They also characterized her as a critical and demanding parent, unsupportive of her son's achievements.

Washington too was criticized for neglecting his obligations. As the eldest son of a widow, he was responsible for caring for her economically and ensuring that she had a roof over her head. He did his best to fulfill these obligations, but during the American Revolution it was difficult, and at times Mary had to ask her son for money. When she did not receive her expected allowance from her son, Mary Washington wrote to the General Assembly of Virginia to request a pension. This public request for funds was embarrassing for George Washington.

Today's historians have taken his side on this issue and vilified Mary as a greedy, grasping woman who was either oblivious or didn't care that her son was in the middle of fighting a war. They have failed to acknowledge the seriousness of her plight. The harvest had failed in 1778, so she did not have enough food for her slaves and herself. Her other children were also struggling financially during the war.

Like all families, the Washingtons had personal squabbles. Mother and son had very similar temperaments which sometimes put them at loggerheads. However, in practically every surviving Washington family letter, Mary and her children referred to the "pleasure" of seeing the other again.

The Mary Washington House will be celebrating George Washington's birthday on Sunday, Feb. 18 from 12 to 4 p.m. Guests can decorate a cupcake. Especially for children, there will be story time and 18th-century games. The event is free with a paid admission.

Michelle L. Hamilton

Michelle L. Hamilton is the manager of the Mary Washington House Museum in Fredericksburg, Virginia and the author of "Mary Ball Washington: The Mother of George Washington" (MLH Publications, 2017).

ENTERTAINMENT

'The Boys Next Door' at Port City Playhouse

Show features characters with developmental challenges and mental illness.

BY STEVE HIBBARD

Port City Playhouse, which used to be in Alexandria but moved to Falls Church, is presenting "The Boys Next Door" from Feb. 16 to March 3. The story takes place in an urban communal residence in New England, where four men live under the supervision of a "burned out" social worker named Jack. Playwright Tom Griffin brings us into a world where the "little things" of daily life sometimes become momentous – and often funny – and are mingled with moments of great poignancy.

Norman, who works in a doughnut shop, is unable to resist the lure of the pastries and takes pride in the bundle of keys that dangles from his waist; Lucien has the mind of a 5-year-old, but imagines that he is able to read and comprehend the weighty books he lugs about; Arnold, the ringleader of the group, is a hyperactive, compulsive chatterer, who suffers from deep-seated insecurities and a persecution complex; while Barry, a brilliant schizophrenic who is devastated by the unfeeling rejection of his brutal father, fantasizes that he is a golf pro.

Kevin Sockwell decided to direct because it is one of his favorite plays and he performed one of the roles years ago. "The story is about how even mentally challenged people have dreams, goals, aspirations, desires and the need to connect and relate despite their handicaps and limitations. I feel it is important to note how people, even different from ourselves, are people and worthy of dignity and respect," he said.

Producer Mary Beth Smith-Toomey wanted to produce for two reasons: She loves the show and the message it delivers, and Sockwell is a friend who she really enjoys working with. "His insights on this show have been particularly on point because of his professional life and because

he's been in the show," she said.

She said the biggest challenge is getting all the tech people to get this show mounted. "With this show, getting a light designer has proved impossible, so I am designing it myself. Something I have not done since college," she said.

Jerry Gideon plays multiple roles including Mr. Klemper, who has an estranged relationship with his schizophrenic son. "But the father suffers from the same form of the illness as father and son, only the father can function in society, whereas his son has been institutionalized most of his life," he said.

"Primarily because the father cannot demonstrate his affection or deal with his son's inability to communicate with his domineering father, this reunion after nine years is stressful for the son, and ultimately only reinforces the gulf between them, though both clearly had hopes that this reunion might have a different ending," he said.

Matt Williams plays the role of Norman, an intellectually impaired man in his late 30s. "He loves his job working at a local donut shop, although it's caused some sudden weight gain, which is wreaking havoc on his romantic interest, Sheila. Norman is a sweet and romantic guy — more than anything else, he dreams of a lot of things that we all dream of — love, marriage, and family," he said.

Janet Davis plays three smaller characters: Mrs. Fremus, Mrs. Warren, and Clara. "Mrs. Fremus is a deaf widow who lives in the neighborhood and to whom Barry tells his problems. Mrs. Warren is a younger mother who just moved in next door to the boys and meets them while looking for her son's lost hamster. Clara is a new friend to Sheila. They both attend one of the dances for the developmentally challenged at the community center," she said. "I've never played multiple characters in the same play, so that was challenging for me — to create



Cast members of Port City Playhouse's production of "The Boys Next Door" in rehearsals.



PHOTOS BY KYLE MILLER

separate and distinct people for each character."

William Jeffreys is playing the role of Lucien, who has the mental capacity of a 5-year-old. "The great thing about this character is that he is happy go-lucky and easily excitable. However, he is oblivious to a lot of what goes on around him because he focuses on key words, and not the whole picture. However, there are some instances in the play where he is able to zone in on what the other characters are saying, and it makes for a different interaction," he said.

Mary Ayala-Bush is playing the role of Sheila, who is mentally challenged and the love interest of Norman. "She is happy and is attracted to Norman. She loves flowers and frogs. Her focus is on getting Norman's keys as she sees getting his keys as a sign of love," she said.

She said it was a challenge to portray a mentally challenged individual without either being a stereotype or being disrespectful of the person. "Throughout the rehearsal period, the focus was on what would be her motivation and her understanding of what things meant that has driven the characterization of Sheila. I also found myself having a better understanding and respect for individuals that may not be as intellectually gifted as the rest of us, and that love and patience can overcome much of our misunderstanding," she said.

John Wakefield plays the role of Arnold, the ringleader of the four men who live in the group apartment. "He certainly fancies himself the brains of the operation, and he spends most of his time overthinking every moment of his life. Most of the show is spent worrying or despairing about some aspect of his life or another. His workplace bully, his unusual grocery list, some girl named Helen who has a tic, the incident with the rugs, and so on and so forth," he said.

Michael Schwartz plays the role of Barry, a 28-year-old man with schizophrenia who believes he is a pro golfer. "He is highly sensitive partly because of his upbringing and would do anything to impress his father," he said.

He said playing a character with a mental illness is quite challenging, especially in a play that has comedic parts. "Barry is a schizophrenic, and ends up situations that can be quite funny because of his mental illness. That being said, I didn't want Barry to be a cartoon. Trying to be funny and being realistic as possible is a very difficult challenge," he said.

Port City Playhouse presents "The Boys Next Door" Feb. 16-March 3 at Sleepy Hollow United Methodist Church, 3435 Sleepy Hollow Road, Falls Church. Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m.; Sundays at 3 p.m. \$18-\$20. Visit PortCityPlayhouse.com.

CALENDAR

Submit entertainment announcements at www.connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar/. The deadline is noon on Friday.

THURSDAY/FEB. 15

Birthnight Ball Dance Classes.

7:30-9:30 p.m. at Gadsby's Tavern Museum, 134 N. Royal St. In preparation for the Birthnight Ball on the 17th, learn 18th century English country dancing from expert dance instructors. \$12 per class or \$30 for the series. Reservations are recommended: online at alexandriava.gov/Shop or by calling 703-746-4242.

FEB. 15-MARCH 3

U-Street the musical. Various times at the Richard Kauffman Auditorium (Lee Center), 1108 Jefferson St. U-Street, the musical is an exploration of homelessness brought to life with 12 musical numbers, and a 30-

member cast. The production is also a fundraiser to support programs for low-income youth in Alexandria. \$20. Call 703-640-4980 or visit www.momentumcinc.org.

FRIDAY/FEB. 16

Opening Reception.

6-9 p.m. at Principle Gallery 208 King St. Principle Gallery presents Bodies of Work: A Figurative Invitational. Thirteen artists from around the world have been invited to participate in this selective exhibition, and from found object sculptures to traditional figure studies to Magical Realism oil paintings, the show offers a variety of work. Free and open to the public. Visit www.principlegallery.com.

SATURDAY/FEB. 17

Expand Space for Gardening. 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at Green Spring

Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road. If space is at a premium, think vertical when it comes to planning a garden. Find out how rooftops, balconies and terraces can be used to make the most of limited garden space. This half-day symposium is for adults. \$58 per person. Call 703-642-5173 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/greenspring/.

Grio StoryMan. 9-11 a.m. at Bethlehem Baptist Church, Multipurpose Room, 7836 Fordson Road. Troop 1906 presents Grio StoryMan: Baba Jaml Koram. As part of Black History observance, gather around Baba Jaml Koram unfolds children's tales filled with the warmth of the African sun. Each conveys a lesson: of standing up for what's right, caring for the earth and its animals, and believing in the good in everyone. Visit www.bethlehemofalexandria.org.

Puppet Shows. 10 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. at the Durant Arts Center, 1605

Cameron St. The National Capital Puppetry Guild in collaboration with the Office of the Arts will present Beech Tree Puppets at two family-friendly puppet shows. Reservations per show are \$5 for person, including children. Children must be accompanied by at least one adult. To purchase tickets online, visit www.alexandriava.gov/webtrac, select activity number 355211.02 (10 a.m.) or 355211.03 (11:15 a.m.).

Locals' Alley Saturdays. 12:30-2:30 p.m. at The Old Town Shop, 105 South Union St. Meet the makers of local goods, featuring Crum's Hot Sauce tasting. Call 703-684-4682 or visit www.TheOldTownShop.com.

Freedom House Museum Tours. 1-5 p.m. at Freedom House Museum, 1315 Duke St. The Freedom House Museum was once the headquarters and holding pen for the largest domestic slave trading firm in the United States, Franklin and Armfield. Admission is \$5 per person. Space is

limited and reservations are recommended. Tickets can be purchased online, or by cash or check at the door. Visit www.visitalexandriava.com/listings/freedom-house/4676/.

Community "Ceili" Dance. 7-9 p.m. at Del Ray United Methodist Church, Luncford Hall, 100 E. Windsor Ave. Alexandria's own Irish Breakfast Band is hosting a Community "Ceili" dance designed for first-timers and beginners who would like to have some fun learning traditional Irish social dancing. A ceili (pronounced KAY-lee) is similar to an American square dance, with live music provided by friends and neighbors and fun had by all. Free. Call 571-379-3927 or visit www.Irishbreakfastband.com.

SUNDAY/FEB. 18

Revolutionary War Day. 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at Fort Ward Park, 4301 West

ENTERTAINMENT

Braddock Road. Learn about the army life and fighting tactics of Revolutionary War soldiers in this annual Fort Ward Park event presented in conjunction with Alexandria's George Washington Birthday Weekend. The program features a Colonial encampment and a tactical skirmish between British and Colonial troops at 2 p.m. Free. Visit www.alexandriava.gov/FortWard.

Alexandria Wedding Showcase. 11 a.m.-3 p.m. at The Westin Alexandria 400 Courthouse Square. 50+ exhibitors, fashion show, brides across america wedding dress giveaway. Call 703-652-5367 or visit alxweddingshowcase.com/.

Walk with Washington Tour. 2 p.m. at the Alexandria Visitor Center (Ramsay House), 221 King St. Focuses on some of the most important Old Towne sites associated with George Washington. 60-90 min. Free. Recommended for ages 10 and older. Call 703-746-3301.

Benefit Concert. 3 p.m. at Mount Vernon Unitarian Church, 1909 Windmill Lane. The Harmony Heritage Singers, a men's barbershop chorus, will perform to benefit the charity Alice's Kids. Ron Fitzsimmons, founder of Alice's Kids, is a member of the chorus. Free and open to the public; an offering will be taken for Alice's Kids. Email gronbrandt@gmail.com or call 703-765-4779.

Concert. 3-5 p.m. at George Washington Masonic Memorial, 101 Callahan Drive. The Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic introduces three works by American Composers including William Grant Still's Symphony #4, Mark Edwards Wilson's Piano Concerto with acclaimed pianist Thomas Pandolfi, plus this season's WMPA Composition Competition Winner, Zhou Tian's Broken Ink. \$20, children are free. Visit www.wmpamusic.org/.

Art League Patrons' Show

Fundraiser. 4 p.m. in the Torpedo Factory Art Center, 105 North Union St. Each \$225 ticket allows the ticket-holder to participate. On the evening of the Patrons' Show drawing, tickets are randomly drawn and when the name of each ticket-holder is announced, they may select an available work of art from the show. Learn more, view the donated artwork, and purchase tickets at www.theartleague.org/content/patrons_show.

MONDAY/FEB. 19

Annual Breakfast Meeting. 9-11:30 a.m. at Crowne Plaza Hotel, 901 N. Fairfax St. This three-course hearty breakfast meal is hosted by the Friendship Veterans Fire Engine Association. \$35 at www.eventbrite.com/e/friendship-breakfast-tickets-31187603963. Visit www.friendshipfire.net/.

Presidents' Day Open House. 11 a.m.-4 p.m. As part of the parade festivities, visit the following museums for free: Friendship Firehouse Museum, 107 S. Alfred St.; Gadsby's Tavern Museum, 134 N. Royal St.; and Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum, 105-107 South Fairfax St. Visit shop.alexandriava.gov.

TUESDAY/FEB. 20

Homeschool Program: Citizen Firefighters. 10-11:30 a.m. or 1-2:30 p.m. at Friendship Firehouse Museum, 107 S. Alfred St. Join the bucket brigade and learn how community volunteers fought fires in colonial and early 19th-century Alexandria. Designed for family groups, recommended for ages 5 and up. \$8 per child, adults free. Reservations required at Alexandriava.gov/Shop.



PHOTO BY D. HILL

SOUPer Saturday

24th annual SOUPer Saturday collaboration of ceramic artists at the Torpedo Factory to benefit United Community Ministries. For \$20, customers get original ceramic artwork and soup from the Chart House. Saturday, Feb. 17, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at Torpedo Factory Lobby, 105 North Union St. Call 703-819-9990 or visit www.ucmagency.org/.

Shopping Stories. 7-8 p.m. at Cameron Station Clubhouse, 200 Cameron Station Blvd. AAUW Alexandria Branch presents "Shopping Stories: Learning about 18th-Century Women's Lives through Ledgers." How do store ledgers show us how 18th century women living in Alexandria were able to be independent and live their daily lives separate from men? Open to all community members. Email GailLaneAAUWAlex@gmail.com.

Inventors of Color. 7 p.m. at Barrett Branch Library, 717 Queen St. This free program from the National Park Service describes crucial inventions developed by enslaved people and others which helped cultivate the United States. From a slave named Ned, who invented the cotton scraper in 1858 through the 20th century. Visit alexlibraryva.org.

WEDNESDAY/FEB. 21

Oney Judge Historical

Reenactment. 1:30 p.m. at Duncan Branch Library, 2501 Commonwealth Ave. Sheila Arnold Jones, a local storyteller and historical character interpreter, will be performing as Oney Judge, a slave owned by Martha Washington who escaped to the North. This program is for ages 6+. Visit alexlibraryva.org.

Author Talk. 3:30 p.m. at Burke Branch Library, 4701 Seminary Road. Ruthi Postow Birch discusses her memoir, "How to Build a Piano Bench: Lessons for Success from a Red-Dirt Road in Alabama," which shares her humorous and heart-warming story about the life lessons she learned and how she applied that knowledge to build a successful business. Visit alexlibraryva.org.

Black History Month Movie Series. 6 p.m. in the Lee Center Kauffman Auditorium, 1108 Jefferson St. Celebrate Black History Month with a movie highlighting African American contributions and their impact on the nation: Marshall (PG-13). Enjoy free popcorn while supplies last. RSVP at www.eventbrite.com/e/black-history-month-movie-series-tickets-42260523363.

Four Hundred Years of American Chairs 7 p.m. at Beatley Central Library, 5005 Duke St. Oscar Fitzgerald gives an overview that will show how American chair styles evolved over time from the 17th century to the present. This will be followed by a signing of American Furniture. Visit alexlibraryva.org.

FEB. 21-MARCH 4

Art League's Student/Faculty

Show. 10 a.m.-6 p.m., daily; Thursdays until 9 p.m.; Sundays noon-6 p.m. in the Torpedo Factory Art Center, 105 North Union St., Studio 21. The Art League's annual Student/Faculty Show showcases the diversity and talent of more than 6,500 students and 100+ artist instructors. Visit www.theartleague.org/content/student_faculty_2018.

THURSDAY/FEB. 22

Local Author Thursday. 5-7 p.m. at The Old Town Shop, 105 South Union St. Book signing by John R. Maass, "George Washington's Virginia." Light refreshments. Call 703-684-4682 or visit www.TheOldTownShop.com.

Lecture: I Cannot Tell A Lie. 7 p.m. at Gadsby's Tavern Museum, 134 Royal St. Abigail Adams said that truth was George Washington's best eulogy. Professor Peter Henriques examines a number of the various myths that have developed and which keep us from better understanding the remarkable individual who was our first and greatest president. \$12 per person, \$10 for Gadsby's members or volunteers. Call 703-746-4242 or visit www.gadsbystavern.org.

Vegetable Gardening. 7-8:30 p.m. at Burke Branch Library, 4701 Seminary Road. Vegetable Gardening Part 2: Planning and Preparation for the beginning gardener. Learn easy-to-implement practices for selecting the best site and evaluating and improving soil, including which plants grow best in this area. Free. Advance registration requested at mgmv.org. Call 703-228-6414 or email mgaralex@gmail.com.

Air Force Band Concert. 8 p.m. at Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall 4915 East Campus Drive. Special appearance by percussionist Michael Burritt. Visit www.nvcc.edu/schlesingercenter/.

FRIDAY/FEB. 23

"The Audience." 7 p.m. at the Little Theatre of Alexandria, 600 Wolfe St. The Commonwealth Republican Women's Club (CRWC) presents "The Audience," as the club's fundraiser for local candidates. For 60 years, from 1952 on, every Tuesday afternoon, Queen Elizabeth II met in Buckingham Palace in a private audience with her prime ministers. What did they discuss? How candid were they? Before the performance, from 7-8 p.m. attendees will be treated to a buffet with champagne. \$35. Visit www.alexandriacrwc.org/.

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ENTERTAINMENT

Artists Reception. 7-9 p.m. at The Gallery @ Convergence, 1801 N. Quaker Lane. The All City High School Art Exhibition hosted by the Convergence Arts Initiative returns for its third and most exciting year so far. This year's expanded event features over 90 Alexandria high school students and will welcome two additional schools to its juried exhibition; Commonwealth Academy and The Howard Gardner School. Visit www.ourconvergence.org.

Late Shift at the Factory. 7-11 p.m. at the Torpedo Factory Art Center, 105 N. Union St. Alexandria's past comes to life with help from the Alexandria Archaeology Museum. Artists and innovators team up for a night of unearthed secrets, music, and trivia celebrating the region's rich history. Presented in collaboration with the Torpedo Factory Art Center. Free. Call 703-746-4399.

SATURDAY/FEB. 24

Veteran's Meet and Greet. 10-11:30 a.m. at The Lyceum, 201 S. Washington St. All veterans are invited to join the Office of Historic Alexandria for a meet and greet reception at the Lyceum: Alexandria's History Museum. Enjoy coffee, tea, and pastries while catching up with old and new friends. Browse the exhibits for free, including the recently opened World War I exhibit and hear about plans to honor all veterans during the World War I 100th anniversary commemoration. Visit www.alexandriava.gov/Lyceum.

"Kepi to Cartridge Box." 11 a.m.-3 p.m. at Fort Ward Museum, 4301 W. Braddock Road. Learn about the clothing and equipment used by Union soldiers during the Civil War in "Kepi to Cartridge Box: Outfitting Billy Yank." Free. Call 703-746-4848 or visit www.fortward.org.

Inventors of Color. 11 a.m. at Beatley Central Library, 5005 Duke St. This free program from the National Park Service describes crucial inventions developed by enslaved people and others which helped cultivate the United States. From a slave named Ned, who invented the cotton scraper in 1858 through the 20th century. Visit alexlibraryva.org.

Keeping Heritage Alive: African Story Telling. 11 a.m. at Duncan Branch Library, 2501 Commonwealth Ave. Sheila Arnold Jones, a local storyteller, will be a program featuring stories and songs written, told, or passed down through the African-American culture. For adults and kids of all ages. Visit alexlibraryva.org.

Brides for Haiti. 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Brides For Haiti, a fundraising effort of St Mary's Church, will host a discount bridal sale event at the Sheraton in Alexandria. Brides for Haiti will have hundreds of wedding



Visitors

"Terracotta Warriors" in Market Square, on display in Market Square, 301 King St. Two replicas of the famous "Terracotta Warriors." Each replica stands 6 feet tall and weighs about 500 pounds, and will be on display through March 11. Visit alexandriava.gov.

dressers – many that are designer gowns –costing \$199 each, and veils costing from \$15 to \$50. Brides should wear fitting clothes under their normal clothes; changing space is limited during the event. Pre-register for the event on the Brides for Haiti Facebook page or by emailing Brides4Haiti@gmail.com.

Live Owl Prowl. Noon-1 p.m. at Huntley Meadows Park, 3701 Lockheed Blvd. Come meet live owls up close. Soar into the night time world of Great Horned Owls, Barred Owls, and Eastern Screech Owls. \$10 per person for Fairfax County residents and \$12 for out-of-county participants. Call 703-768-2525 or visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/huntley-meadows-park/.

Freedom House Museum Tours. 1-5 p.m. at Freedom House Museum, 1315 Duke St. The Freedom House Museum was once the headquarters and holding pen for the largest domestic slave trading firm in the United States, Franklin and Armfield. Admission is \$5 per person. Space is limited and reservations are recommended. Tickets can be purchased online, or by cash or check at the door. Visit www.visitalexandriava.com/listings/freedom-house/4676/.

Under the Same Roof. 2-3:30 p.m. at The Lee-Fendall House, 614 Oronoco St. Explore the Lee-Fendall House from the perspectives of the enslaved and free African Americans who lived and worked in the home as domestic servants, both before and after the Civil War. This tour will include parts of the house not normally open to the public. Space is limited. \$8 in advance, \$12 at the door, members of Lee-Fendall House free. Visit www.leefendallhouse.org.

Evening of Music: Tom Teasley and Charles Williams. 4-5:30 p.m. at the Alexandria Black History Museum, 902 Wythe St. This concert will focus on the works of Langston Hughes, James Weldon Johnson, and

other important African American figures. Call 703-746-4356.

Gallery Workout. 7:30-8:30 p.m. at The Athenaeum, 201 Prince St. Jane Franklin Dance presents Gallery Workout — movement and sound, a performance in cooperation with Form and Void, visual art show by Ellyn Weiss. \$15. Call 703-933-1111 or visit www.nvfaa.org/events-upcoming.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY/FEB. 24-25

Resist: A Revolutionary Cabaret.

Saturday, 3 and 8 p.m.; Sunday, 3 p.m. at MetroStage, 1201 North Royal St. Roz White pays tribute to Alberta Hunter, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Abbey Lincoln, Roberta Flack, and Nina Simone, depicting their hardships and challenges, and their revolutionary influence on music and pop culture. Call 703-548-9044 or visit www.metrostage.org.

SUNDAY/FEB. 25

Walk with Washington Tour. 2 p.m. at the Alexandria Visitor Center (Ramsay House), 221 King St. Focuses on some of the most important Old Towne sites associated with George Washington. 60-90 min. Free. Recommended for ages 10 and older. Call 703-746-3301.

Opening Reception. 2-4 p.m. at Multiple Exposures Gallery, The Torpedo Factory Art Center, 105 N. Union St., Studio 312. An exhibition of new photographs by E. E. McCollum. Visit www.multipleexposuresgallery.com/.

"The Finishers." 4 p.m. at Beth El Hebrew Congregation, 3830 Seminary Road. Beth El Hebrew Congregation is presenting the acclaimed film "The Finishers" in a sneak-peek preview event. Free, but RSVP for seats and refreshments at tinyurl.com/BethEl-TheFinishers-2-25-18.

Choral Lenten Evensong. 7:30 p.m.

George Washington's Birthday 2018

Celebrate George Washington's Birthday at His Home, Mount Vernon. Four days of events, with free admission on Monday, Feb. 19 and Thursday, Feb. 22. Visit www.mountvernon.org/birthday or call 703-780-2000.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY/FEB. 17-18 (9 A.M.-4 P.M.)

George Washington's Favorite Breakfast – 9 a.m.-noon – Join "General Washington" for a sample of hoecakes prepared by Mount Vernon staff (while supplies last).

Mingle with Costumed Characters from George Washington's World – 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

18th-century Dancing Demonstration with costumed characters.

Wreathlaying Ceremonies at the tomb of George Washington throughout the day.

MONDAY/FEB. 19 (9 A.M.-5 P.M.) FREE ADMISSION.

Visit George Washington's home and burial site. The traditional wreathlaying ceremony at Washington's Tomb takes place at 10 a.m. followed by Mount Vernon's official celebration on the east lawn including a keynote speaker and 21-gun salute to the first president. Special military demonstrations and patriotic music will take place on the Bowling Green at 11:15 a.m. "General Washington" is on the grounds to greet visitors and receive birthday wishes all day.

Special musical tribute – 1 p.m.-1:30 p.m.

Share selected stories with "George Washington" – 2 p.m.

Wreathlaying at the tomb of George Washington – 3 p.m.

Visit the Washington Library for the rare opportunity to tour the reading room and examine replica documents.

THURSDAY/FEB. 22 (9 A.M.-4 P.M.) FREE ADMISSION

George Washington's 286th Birthday – Visit Mount Vernon on George Washington's actual birthday for wreathlaying ceremonies throughout the day. Enjoy a patriotic concert and observe a moving ceremony honoring new citizens. Join "General Washington" for a slice of birthday cake (while supplies last).

Be Washington: It's Your Turn to Lead – Mount Vernon has opened a new first-person interactive experience titled Be Washington: It's Your Turn to Lead in its Donald W. Reynolds Museum and Education Center.

New Objects on View in the Donald W. Reynolds Museum and Education Center

A new installation will highlight objects related to one of the Be Washington's scenarios: the Newburgh conspiracy.

New Revolutionary War 4-D Theater – The new 17-minute film focuses on Washington's leadership and the pivotal campaigns that secured American independence. This experience is included in admission.

The City of Alexandria celebrates George Washington's Birthday with more than a dozen events throughout February. Visit www.washingtonbirthday.net or call 703-829-6640.

George Washington Birthday Parade – Feb. 19, 1-3 p.m., Old Town Alexandria.

Cherry Challenge – Jan. 28-Feb. 11, at various restaurants throughout Alexandria. **Walking with Washington Tours** – Sundays in February 2018, 2 p.m. at the Alexandria Visitor Center, 221 King St.

Washington's Birthday Celebration – Feb. 17-19, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. and Feb. 22, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., at George Washington's Mount Vernon. Visit www.mountvernon.org/birthday or call 703-780-2000.

George Washington's Birthnight Banquet & Ball – Saturday, Feb. 17, 5:30-11 p.m. (9 p.m. if attending the ball only), at Gadsby's Tavern Museum. Reservations required. Visit alexandriava.gov/Shop or call 703-746-4242.

Historic Alexandria Open Houses – Feb. 19, 11 a.m.-4 p.m., various museums throughout Old Town Alexandria. Admission is free at these historic Alexandria sites: Friendship Firehouse Museum, Gadsby's Tavern Museum, Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum and The Lyceum: Alexandria's History Museum.

at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 228 South Pitt St. St. Paul's Episcopal Church will present a Choral Lenten Evensong in memory of the late Raymond F. Glover, a parishioner and international icon in the field of church music, directed by Grant Hellmers. A reception will follow. This service is free to the public, with optional donations going to St. Paul's

Lazarus Ministry, serving those in need. Contact Grant Hellmers at 703-549-3312 or grant@stpaulsalexandria.com.

Movement and Sound. 7:30-9:30 p.m. at The Athenaeum, 201 Prince St. A performance by Jane Franklin Dance in cooperation with Form and Void, visual art show by Ellyn Weiss. \$15. Visit www.nvfaa.org.

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Congregation Invests in City's Public Life and Culture

FROM PAGE 3

connect local artists and donors, is described as aiming “to encourage the role of artists and art making in our community as social and civic engagement;” and also as considering “community engagement” a criterion for good art. ... How is community engagement a deliberate aspect of art? ...

Smith: It could be any number of things. ... [A group of artists in an impoverished Latin American town] began painting the houses in that area these really vibrant colors. ... [An interviewer once asked,] why are you spending all of this time and energy doing this? Wouldn't it be better spent feeding people or doing something economically? And her response was, basically, that man does not live by bread alone. We need more than just the basics to survive. Our souls nurturing as well. ... So art can be community engagement in the sense of awareness building, or it can be bringing people together.

Can you give me an overview of some of the other spheres or sectors of society that you guys are deliberately plugged in to?

Smith: The Alexandria Arts Alliance, the Torpedo Factory, and that kind of stuff. We've connected with the [art] teachers from T.C. Williams and the other schools ... Some of our community members did a mural for the ALIVE House last year — the women's and families' temporary housing. And now we're looking to work with the City of Alexandria to bring the Mobile Art Lab to ALIVE's food distribution at the end of the month to do art projects with the kids ... We're trying to partner with local nonprofits and organizations, other churches, and connect artists to do these kinds of “acts of beauty” within our communities. ... In the past we've been a member of the West End Business Association, and I think that that's something we're going to get back to this year. We've had various interactions with mayors ... Some of the mental health organizations in the area have come here to either do exhibits or teach classes.

Secular mass media ... shapes things in a big way. ... [As a journalist,] I try to be very scrupulous and objective and neutral about it; [but] I'm also keenly aware of the fact that what I write about ... [is] not disconnected from what happens in local politics. It's like Heisenberg: you touch it, you change it ... So I try not to be naïve about that, and [as a Christian] have a deliberate way of, what am I going to cover and why? ... Do you guys try to engage in the world of advertising, videography, whatever, in that very deliberate [way, saying,] I'm going to reach out and touch this [activity or industry] with an ... intention of it reacting?

Smith: We've done a lot of work of culti-



Pastor Lisa Smith shows artwork by local high school students. In partnership with local public and private schools, Convergence Church puts on an annual “All-City High School Art Exhibition” for students to show and discuss their work. This year's exhibit, which runs through March 10, includes over 90 students from Bishop Ireton, Episcopal High School, T.C. Williams, St. Stephen's and St. Agnes School, Commonwealth Academy and The Howard Gardner School.

vating relationships and cultivating our identity as a community and are sort of at this point talking about, how do we go broader, how do we have a larger ... sphere of influence? ... There's this sense of hopelessness, ... frustration, ... not being able to live together. What should our response be as a church? Beyond tweeting something, or reacting, or putting a sign in our lawn, or whatever? ... We try to be a space for listening, where it really is safe to have a diversity of perspectives in the same room, ... not just a preaching-to-the-choir kind of thing. ... We start with these ... larger cultural questions, and then reach out to artists and other organizations to partner with us to create something like a CRAVE, or a discussion series, ... using art as the means for that conversation.

Art is a unique touchpoint into the realm of sex and sexuality. ... [Sex] is prolific in everything. ... That seems like a really critical thing happening in our culture. How does that get [prophetically] criticized from within, how does that get sanctified from within? ... I'm not necessarily suggesting some puritanical ... thing where people just pretend it doesn't exist. But something where it's dignified, or where at least it's dealt with in a real way.

Smith: We had an exhibit by ... a really well respected artist who does these huge paintings of biblical narratives, but they're nude. He has difficulty showing in a lot of places, because he's too Christian for the art world and too nude for the Christian world. ... But it was great ... to have the opportunity to have the conversation about the body and Christian-

Even religious institutions that are not specifically congregations of artists are rich in art [e.g., music, liturgies, artifacts or practices of ethnic heritage, architecture]. ...

How do you leaven the community with that? ... I thought to myself as I was walking around [the Del Ray Arts Festival]: ... wouldn't it be interesting if ... religious congregations brought their artistic assets to bear in a community event like this? ... Do you have any ideas, or have you seen any creative ways, that religious institutions ... have weighed in?

Smith: Not to that extent, although I think that's a fantastic idea, and I think probably it wouldn't cross most people's minds. I think there's a fear from churches that people probably don't really want to have anything to do with them.

A black Christian friend shared how perturbed she is by: everyday, always the white Jesus. White Jesus, white angels, white Mary. How do I explain to my kids that there are no black angels? ... This [illustrated for me how art] is a very formative thing, for better or worse. ... Back to the Heisenberg [analogy]: you touch people with this stuff, and if you're not deliberate about that —

Smith: The last exhibit that we had here was [a sculpture of] ... Mary as a young African woman ... It was pretty powerful for some people ... I think, no matter what the demographic makeup is, theologically it's a good exercise. I think that kind of stuff also helps towards the larger national conversation, as people start to see each other — really see each other.

For more information, visit www.ourconvergence.org or call the church office at 703-998-6260.

BULLETIN BOARD

Submit civic/community announcements at ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar. Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before event.

THROUGH APRIL 14

Tax Assistance. Saturdays, 9 a.m.-noon; Wednesdays, 6:30-8 p.m. at Department of Community & Human Services, 2525 Mt. Vernon Ave., (Mt. Ida side door). Eligible: individuals with income up to \$35,000 and families with income up to \$54,000. Free financial counseling and accessing credit reports may be available to interested persons from the Virginia Cooperative Extension. Visit www.alexandriava.gov/DCHS for eligibility and required documents.

THURSDAY/FEB. 15

Grant Application Webinar. 11 a.m. Registration is required. Login information will be sent upon registration. The City of Alexandria's Office of the Arts will be accepting applications for Arts Program Grant. The Office of the Arts will conduct a series of grant workshops and webinars to assist interested applicants. New applicants or arts organizations who have not applied in the past two years are required to attend.

Due to changes in the granting process, all applicants are urged to attend these free workshops and webinars. Online application forms, instructions, and frequently asked questions for all grant programs will be available online at www.alexandriava.gov/Arts on Jan. 2.

SATURDAY/FEB. 17

Energy Efficiency Improvements. 3-4 p.m. at Barrett Branch Library, 717 Queen St. A member of the Energy Masters Community Engagement team will provide information and techniques geared towards energy efficiency and water conservation for your home. Free. Call 703-746-1714 or visit alexlibraryva.org.

TUESDAY/FEB. 20

FY 2019 Budget Presentation. 7 p.m. in the City Council Chamber in Alexandria City Hall, 301 King St. City Manager Mark Jinks will formally present the proposed budget to City Council, at a special City Council meeting. This will be one of several opportunities for members of the community to learn more about the proposed budget. Proposed budget documents will be available at alexandriava.gov/Budget.

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Obituary

Carl A. Posey, Jr., 84, a prolific author of fiction and nonfiction, died at home of cancer on February 9. An award-winning magazine writer on science and aeronautics, he was a regular contributor to Air & Space magazine. After nearly 20 years as a public information officer with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), in 1981 he headed the Office of Communications at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), an east-west think tank near Vienna, Austria. In 1984 he joined the National Optical Astronomy Observatories in Tucson, Arizona, as a public information officer. In 1987 he became an editor at Time-Life Books in Alexandria, Virginia. He left Time-Life Books in 1996 to pursue a freelance career. He is the author of eight published novels, a score of nonfiction books, and dozens of magazine articles. Born in the former Panama Canal Zone in 1933, he spent much of his youth in Latin America. He served in the US Army for two years before completing a bachelor's degree in English from Texas A&M. He is survived by his beloved wife Ann Wadia, by four children from his first marriage: Raphael, Robin, Carl III (Gus) and Honor Posey Marquez, and by one granddaughter. The family asks that those who wish to, might donate in his memory to Guide Dogs for the Blind (guidedogs.com).

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PEOPLE

Healing the Body through Motion

FROM PAGE 6

years ago, he never missed a Crossfit WOD (Workout of the Day), and the people he exercised alongside were some of his closest friends.

While the start line of the healing process typically starts with proper diagnosis, Hart hasn't halted on his own path toward healing.

His to-this-day "undiagnosed autoimmune disease" has affected the way he walks and talks, but he has remained determined to combat the toll it has taken on his body.

And, prior to inspiring audiences through "How We Heal," he was doing the same for his immediate community through the CaringBridge website.

"I would just tell myself, 'Your community will benefit the more you're involved with it,' Hart said. "I would show how being active enhances your life in ways you can never imagine. Being able to interact with my community was a rewarding kind of experience."

Mike Hart's father, Bud Hart, said that CaringBridge allowed people to rally around his son during a precarious time.

"One of the best things about CaringBridge is that people could visit a website to learn about Mike's status, or to contribute," Bud Hart said. "People continue to be really interested in how he's doing. CaringBridge also made a fundraiser possible, which was necessary because a lot of medical treatments were new and experimental, so they weren't covered by insurance."

Bud Hart watched his son go through treatments at the Mayo Clinic, Johns Hopkins, Sloan Kettering as well as the National Institutes of Health.

Even without a specific diagnosis, Mike Hart has maintained a level of physical fitness that many would never have imagined possible.

"Mike was actually my coach in Crossfit six years ago, and then he got this disease," Bud Hart said. "It was like, 'boom,' he got sick. But, he still goes several days a week and is an assistant coach for Foundations, which is the program for people when they start Crossfit. He's there being an assistant coach with whoever is there at 5:55 in the morning. He can't run or jump, and doesn't have any coordination but still does a whole lot of heavy lifting. His deadlift is still 325 pounds, and his back squat is 250. It's not what it used to be, but that's still really something."

Mike Hart is more modest about his progress and achievements.

"I was doing all this before illness happened to me," he said. "I just kept on doing it. Healing to me meant perseverance and to just keep moving, to continue doing what I wanted to be doing."

It was easier said than done to keep moving forward

"I started to experience symptoms in the fall of 2011," Mike Hart said. "The first serious symptoms



For Mike Hart, physical activity assists in his healing.

came a few months later. Here we are in 2018, about six years later, and it's still considered an undiagnosed autoimmune disorder. There's just no way to treat it. There's no prognosis."

LACK OF MEDICAL PRECEDENT won't stop Mike Hart from healing — and living the life he wants.

"I have moved on from finding out what caused my condition," Mike Hart said. "Many doctors, and health related organizations — and Lord knows I've been to so many that it doesn't matter to me anymore — still don't know the answer to that question. It'd be nice to know, but it's not imperative. What is important to me is what to do now. Not doing anything, no matter what your condition, is never the answer. So exercise, moving, however you choose to do it, makes sense for anybody. Just look at dog owners, for example. Taking your dog on a walk makes you go on a walk too. And that's good for you. Whatever your motivation is just keep moving. I think, if I can do it, anybody can."

He continues to inspire his close knit community at home as a father of three daughters, at the gym, through CaringBridge, and now on a larger scale with "How We Heal," which was filmed by National Geographic photographer and documentary filmmaker David McLain.

"We put the call out to CaringBridge users, many of whom have 'run the gauntlet' and hundreds responded with a willingness to open their hearts, and homes, and share their stories," Ojala said. "We knew these would be powerful stories and we needed a visual storyteller to work with, so we enlisted the help of David McLain, who was able to visit 20 families to kick off what will be the first in a series of episodes on this topic and others. The true purpose of this campaign is to illuminate, with patient and caregiver consent, key learnings from their experience that might help others. We are uniquely able to share these learnings across our widely-used platform, across many health conditions, to anyone in the world."

Mike Hart felt honored to be one of the 20 faces of CaringBridge's National Healing Campaign.

"When CaringBridge contacted me, I thought it was a perfect opportunity to inspire myself and be inspirational to other people," he said. "If I can be inspirational to anyone or to motivate anyone to better themselves, sick or not, it was so worth it."

To watch the full spotlight on Mike Hart, visit <https://www.caringbridge.org/resources/mike-dont-feel-sorry-just-keep-moving/>.

Ramsey Homes

FROM PAGE 1
then trucked up and erected on site,” said Dumsick.

“This was experimental housing. They are easily manageable. These were built to be assembled and disassembled.”

Given their hasty construction, Dumsick says the homes have held up remarkably well. Rather than steel, the bones of the building are built with reinforced concrete. Examining them nearly 80 years after their construction, Dumsick says there are still no cracks in the structure.

Even architecturally, Ramsey Homes were a trendsetter in Alexandria. They were designed by Delos Smith, who was mostly known for his colonial revival style in other parts of Alexandria.

“These were probably some of the first prefabricated concrete dwellings on the East Coast,” said Cox.

“These are some of the earliest examples of bauhaus influence in Alexandria. They did water it down a little, but the box design is simple. By architectural standards, these were incredibly early and unique in Alexandria.”

Originally, the buildings were even more square than their current design. Standing outside the homes, Cox pointed towards the angled roofs with some disdain.

“In the ‘40s, those were flat roofs, but they leaked and leaked,” said Cox. “In the ‘70s they added new angled roofs, which they built directly on top of the original flat roofs.”

The angled roofs were added with little concern for the original modernist architectural concept for the buildings, and the added teal shutters and awning compounded insult to injury. After the tours, demolition is scheduled to begin on the homes throughout the remainder of February.

“Underneath these ugly four square homes is the gem of an early modern house,” said Cox. “This is our going away party for Ramsey Homes.”

Boxing

FROM PAGE 8
to address that before the item came back again for public hearing.

Mayor Allison Silberberg noted that Dara Shen, manager for operations at the Alexandria Boxing Club, was sitting in the audience and asked her to come forward to express her insight on the topic.

“While \$10 fee for non-residents seems nominal, it can be a considerable obstacle for people coming to face us,” said Shen. “I understand where it comes from, I understand need to generate revenue When we look at something as simple as a fee for sparring partners, which is unheard of in the boxing world, I’d hope that the City Council can take into consideration the work we do, history with the Alexandria Boxing Club, and grant us maybe an exception or maybe look into not needing to charge visiting sparring for fees.”

— VERNON MILES

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“AutoMadic”



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

I realize that given the growth and evolution of the world most of us live in, and how business is transacted, there are two words, a phrase actually, whose very existence is threatened: “Bill me.” “C.O.D.” “Cash on delivery” is likely itself on the precipice of extinction, a dodo bird if there ever was one. However, since “Money makes the world go ‘round,” – or at least it made the hit musical “Cabaret” go ‘round in 1966, credit and one’s good name can only stretch the dollar so far. Bills have to be paid or else the world doesn’t “go ‘round” so far. Moreover, if the money is missing, there’s less to sing about.

Ergo an idea/system was devised whereby people/entities to whom you owed money would have semi unfettered access to your money – without having to talk to you/ask permission. Once the consumer/“ower” had signed an authorization granting such access, the game was on and the money withdrawn (debited) regularly, as agreed to.

Occasionally, financial inducements were offered to entice the consumer to subject his money/accounts to such plundering. But eventually, the process became all the rage. Meaning, consumers couldn’t transact business any other way, and despite any hesitations or objections (anger) to the contrary, it was either debit or die. And though this system didn’t cause a revolution or become a motto on a license plate, it did change how we bank, buy and balance.

Within the last few weeks I’ve added two more automatic monthly debits. Payments which I was given no other realistic choice/method to pay other than all at once (not happening,) or once a month, automatically from my bank. And not that I felt held up by the process, but I did feel as if the highway awaited if I didn’t pay their way.

So now I have six monthly debits drafting on five different but recurring days, save for holidays and weekends of course. In addition, I have granted additional bank access to retailers, service providers, Internet-only companies, Amazon, pharmaceutical warehouses and on and on and on; all of whom have keys – so to speak – to my kingdom, such as it is.

Still, I think I know what’s being debited at any given time, but in the context of and conjunction with, all the other transactions that I or my wife make, sometimes I don’t know if I do know, actually, whether my money is coming in or going out or finding a new home somewhere – and one not in this country and likely irretrievable, or disappearing altogether with any other money I may have accumulated.

All of those worst case, possibly everyday scenarios, notwithstanding, what can I do? If I don’t play and in turn, don’t pay, then I am likely having to fend for myself. I may still have plenty places to go to, but what am I going to do when I get there? My wallet (unlike George Costanza’s) isn’t big enough to hold all the cash I’d need to conclude just a few of my transactions. I don’t like ceding control this way, but the joke may already be on me: I don’t have any control. It was taken away a long time ago when the first authorization was signed allowing a second/third party to withdraw money – automatically, and regularly, from the “signee’s” bank account. From that point on, it was, as we say in New England: “Katie bar the door,” meaning: bad news, among a variety of other “unpleasantries.”

Regardless of how I fear all of these companies/“withdrawers” having a way into my bank account in order to get my money out, the reality is, there isn’t a damn thing I can do about it. I just have to pay attention, literally – and figuratively. Otherwise, I’ll be a victim of their circumstance.

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

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Stacey Romm 703-298-8197
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Impeccable style & quality craftsmanship in this beautifully renovated 5BR/3.5BA home. Chef's kitchen with walk-in wine room, landscaped garden, & 2-car garage. \$1,350,000
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UNDER CONTRACT! Beautiful 4 bedroom, 3 bath Colonial with fabulous floor plan in Alexandria! Large living spaces, beautifully updated kitchen & master bath. Screened-in porch overlooking gorgeous backyard with a pool! \$998,500
Lisa Stransky Brown 202-368-6060



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NORTH ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

Spacious 3BR, 3BA home w/ garage on 12,000 cul-de-sac lot in Jamestown, Williamsburg, Yorktown district. Recent eat-in kit, windows throughout, sunroom, remodeled LL w/mudroom. 4771-33rd Street N. Open 1-4. \$899,000
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Downsize perfect with new main level master BR, luxe bath, sitting room open to screen porch. Kitchen flows into family room; fireplaces in the living & rec rooms; 3 more bedrooms with baths. Near Metro. 303 Mount Place. \$879,000
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OPEN SUN 2/18, 2-4

Alexandria | \$969,000

Live in style in this end unit 3-bedroom, 3.5-bath Green townhome. Roof terrace with westerly sunset views. Gourmet kitchen, open entertaining, spacious master with spa bath, 2-car garage, recreation room and home office. 725 N Alfred St. Mary Ashley Rhule 860.214.7474 www.MaryAshleyRealEstate.com



OPEN SUN 2/18, 1-4

Stratford Landing | \$627,000

Rare Colonial with 5 upstairs bedrooms! Huge master suite! Freshly painted & newly-refinished hardwood floors main & upper. Breakfast area in kitchen opens to family room with fireplace. French doors to patio. Garage! 8707 Highgate Road Pete Crouch 703.244.4024 www.CrouchRealtyGroup.com



OPEN SUN 2/18, 2-4

Alexandria | \$879,000

This spacious 4-bedroom, 3.5-bath features a lovely screened-in porch with jacuzzi, flagstone patio and perfectly manicured lawn! Open concept kitchen and family room. Large master and fully finished basement. 2306 Creek Dr. Tracy B. Dunn 571.212.3658 www.tracybdunn.com



OPEN SUN 2/18, 2-4

Alexandria | \$799,000

4-bedroom, 3-bath Cape Cod on a 10,395-SF lot! Beautiful hardwood floors, updated kitchen, walk-out basement, fenced-in backyard. Walk to George Mason Elementary to play or Pizzaiolo for dinner. 905 Circle Terrace Laurel Conger 703.577.6899 www.LaurelConger.com



Collingwood | \$839,000

This lovely 3-bedroom, 2.5-bath house boasts a gourmet kitchen, fabulous master suite and expansive backyard with two-level decking. A front porch creates a farmhouse feel and an undeniable charm! Walkable to Waynewood Elementary. Tracy B. Dunn 571.212.3658 www.tracybdunn.com



Clover | \$899,000

English country-style home sited on private, landscaped lot. Formal living and dining rooms. Kitchen adjoins family room which leads to slate patio. Expanded main-level master suite & 2 upper level bedrooms. Finished lower level. Owner/agent. Susan Anthony 703.795.9536 www.SusanBruceAnthony.com



Alexandria | \$419,900

Quiet Mt Vernon Balley neighborhood in park-like setting. Kitchen & full 'wet bar.' 3 bedrooms, 2 full baths. New carpet & fresh paint. New washer, dryer & water heater. Windows replaced. Huge fenced yard. 1-car garage. Minutes to new Wegmans. Catherine Davidson 703.201.1998 www.cmdrealty.net



Alexandria | \$259,000

JUST LISTED! 2-bedroom, 2-bath, 1260-SF with garage parking space. On-site pool, tennis, exercise room, extra storage, garden plots, 24-hour front desk. The Greenhouse is an exceptionally well maintained condominium. Bob Martini 703.798.7400 www.BobMartini.com



OPEN SUN 2/18, 2-4

Old Town

\$1,020,000

This distinguished SE Quadrant detached home embodies modern luxury. Two blocks to King St and the waterfront, it features 2

bedrooms and 2.5 baths, a remodeled kitchen, deep fenced yard with patio, screened porch, finished lower level with heated floors and ample storage. thegoodhartgroup.com/listings/217-s-lee/

Sue & Allison Goodhart 703.362.3221 www.TheGoodhartGroup.com



OPEN SUN 2/18, 2-4

Stonegate

\$675,000

HELLO, GORGEOUS! Pristine 3-level townhome. 3 bedrooms, 3.5 baths, open layout. Updated kitchen, fireplace,

hardwood floors, & Palladian-style windows. Sumptuous master suite with spa-like bathroom & two walk-in closets. 2-car garage, stone patio. A+ location. 2419 Gorgas Place

Karisue Wyson 703.615.0876 www.KarisueWyson.com



Alexandria

\$599,000

Gorgeous Garage Townhome! All updated this 3-bedroom home sparkles with great proximity and upgrades! 2 red lights to Old Town;

12 minutes to Ft Belvoir back gate! Zip to 495. Walk to Metro! 3 finished levels of lovely in this elegant townhome development.

Janet Caterson Price 703.622.5984 www.JanetPriceHomes.com



OPEN SUN 2/18, 2-4

Old Town

\$885,000

Renovated and in the heart of the Parker Gray district of Old Town. This 3-bedroom, 2.5-bath historic townhome

features fabulous skylights, open concept living, wonderful outdoor space for entertaining, off-street parking and is close to Metro. thegoodhartgroup.com/listings/908-queen/

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